

## **Desikachar Breathing Technique Question:**

We talk about Desikachar Breathing (DB) technique in our lineage. One of my students asked:

Is there any difference between DB and the pranayama that I'm familiar with (Ujjayi, Dirgha, Nadi Shodhana, Kapalabhati, and Bhastrika)?

This is a great question! Please read below for clarification. If there are any questions, don't hesitate to reach out. We can video or Zoom for further clarification.

### **Answer:**

The difference is not so much in the actual pranayama selected, but in the focus on where you bring the breath with DB. Another difference is that you can 'close the chest' on an inhale instead of an exhale. Let me explain further.

In Thirumoolar's Lineage, we do 2 types of breathing.

One way, we do focus on bringing breath into the chest (front lobes of the lungs) and may think about making the belly move slightly. Not *forcing* belly movement but drawing awareness to the rise and fall of the belly or to the *front of the chest*.

The other way is a DB technique where we do not think about the front of the chest or belly...just let the belly do whatever it does. Instead, we focus on *3 dimensional breath* into the lungs by filling the lung lobes that run along the back instead of in the front of the chest.

So, you could definitely do Ujjayi multiple ways. For example, you could (1) Focus strictly on the throat and sound (2) Focus on the rise and fall of the belly and/or drawing awareness to the front of the chest and moving in a traditional way of "inhale as you open the chest and exhale as you close the chest" or (3) Focus on bringing breath into the lung lobes that run along the back (DB breath).

Some pranayama might be better suited to putting the focus on the front of the chest or belly (bellow's breath maybe) while others are easily adapted to DB breath. BTW, DB is the practice used in Integral yoga (Yogaville) so you see it in the US, but not as much as you tend to see belly breathing techniques. D also taught all different styles of breathing, but he's known for his approach that we call DB because he was the first one to really focus on breath in this way (so he was called the Backward Breathing Yogi).

Another major difference in DB breathing is that D encouraged us to not always breathe "arms up toward the sky, inhale, close the chest down, and exhale" but to mix that up sometimes. Because Viniyoga is a D lineage, you'll see this a lot in that tradition. Try this: Stand in mountain. Abduct the arms to 90 degrees. Now inhale, taking the arms slightly behind you as you open the chest. Exhale, close the chest as you round the back, drawing the arms towards each other in front of the chest (think cat/cow type movement). Where were you breathing? If you are like most of us, unless you consciously changed it, you were breathing into the front of the chest.

Repeat the movement, still thinking about breathing into the front of the chest, but this time inhale as you close the chest. You can't really do it, can you? You can't get a good breath. Do it again (close the chest on the inhale) but this time draw awareness to bringing the breath into the back lobes. Now you can breathe! Simply shifting that awareness makes a huge difference.

D encouraged us to mix up our patterns in this way. Don't always inhale, arms up to sky, exhale, forward fold, but do it the other way sometimes.

Just as you can pair multiple pranayama techniques (equal ratio with 3 part breath, ujjayi with breath retention), you can also pair DB technique with different pranayama. Try ujjayi with the exercise listed above. You can use ujjayi while you inhale and open the chest, so you'll draw the breath into the front of the lungs, and then use ujjayi while inhaling and closing the chest, drawing the breath into the back of the lungs. However, when I first introduce DB technique to students, I usually keep it simple and just ask them to breath into the back of the lungs, maybe in a child's pose or other forward fold or even in Sukhasana, where it's a little easier for them to focus and learn the new technique before I add it to another pranayama.