YogaAnatomy.org

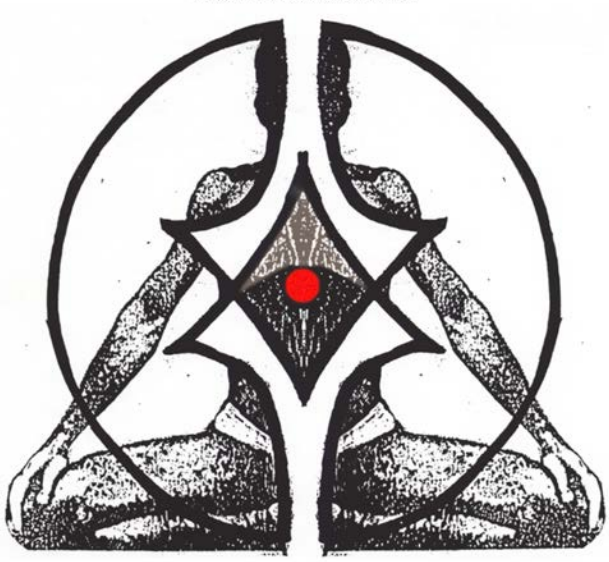
Leslie Kaminoff's esutra blog, teaching and touring schedules

SONDER YOGA, OCT 30-NOV 1 2026:

Leslie Kaminoff

Breath and Bandhas

Prana apana samayogah pranayamah iti iritah.
Pranayama is the balanced joining of the in-breath and the out-breath.
YOGA YAJNAVALKYA 6:2



Prana logo by Leslie Kaminoff based on the photo of T. Krishnamacharya from "The Heart of Yoga"

PRANA AND APANA NYASA

Om namo pranayá

Pranaya nama om

Pranaya swahä

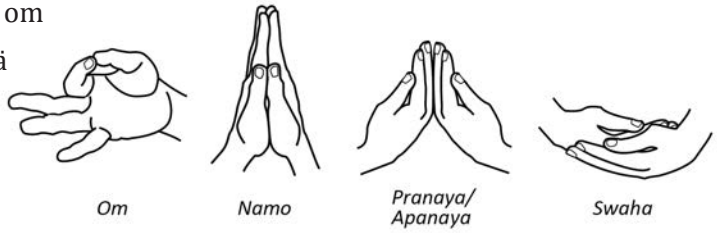
Om namo apanayá

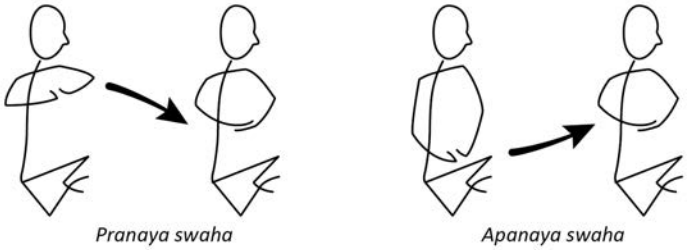
Apanaya nama om

Apanaya swahä

Om swahä

Haríh om





Still photos may be posted to social media if you tag lkaminoff (Facebook)/ leslie.kaminoff (Instagram).

- leslie@yogaanatomy.org
- Facebook: bit.ly/fb-yogaanatomy
- workshop page: yogaanatomy.org/sonder-26

- survey: http://y-an.org/student
- LeslieKaminoff.yoga

Print on-demand selections from Lydia Mann's anatomy art collection available at bit.ly/anatomy-art

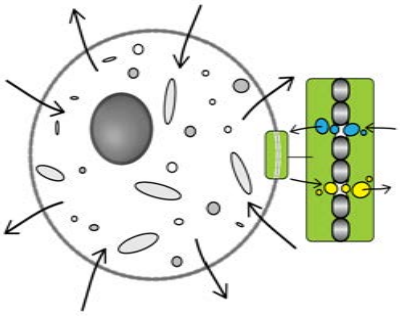
Breathing as Shape Change

BASIC CELLULAR ACTIVITY

- Nutrition in = prana
- Waste out = apana

THE SEMI-PERMEABLE MEMBRANE

- Stability = sthira
- Permeability = sukha



THE SHAPE, LOCATION AND

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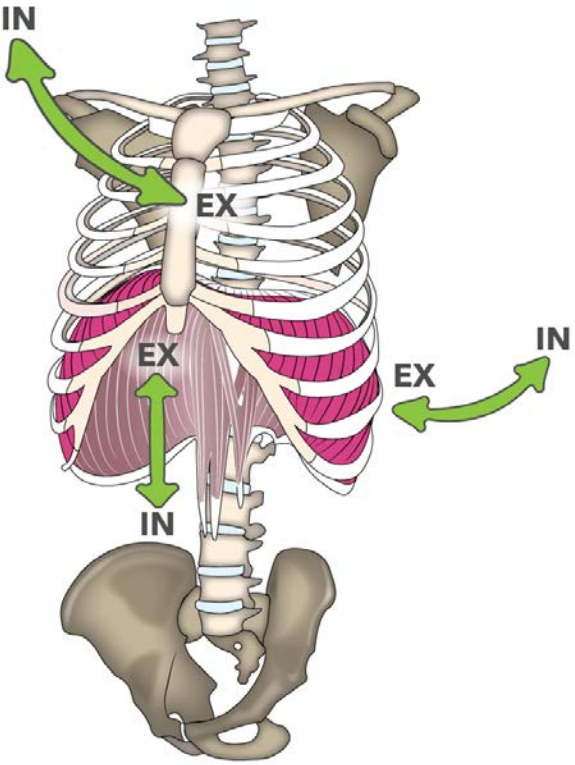
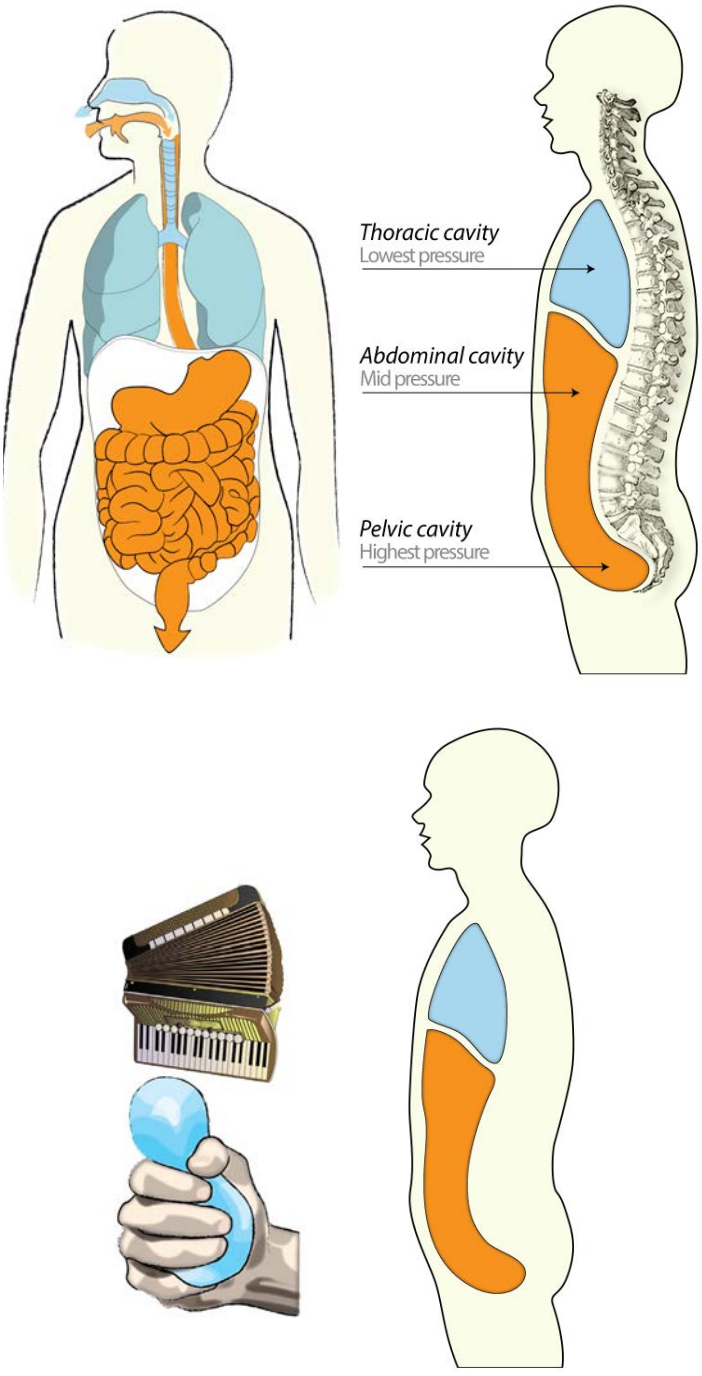


PRANA AND APANA

- Air enters and exits at the top. Solid and liquid enter at the top, exit at the bottom.
- Breathing is the shape change of the abdominal and thoracic cavities
- The spine is the back of the cavities



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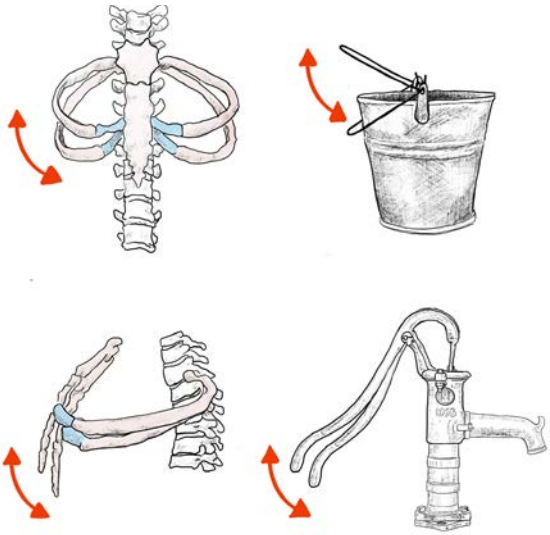
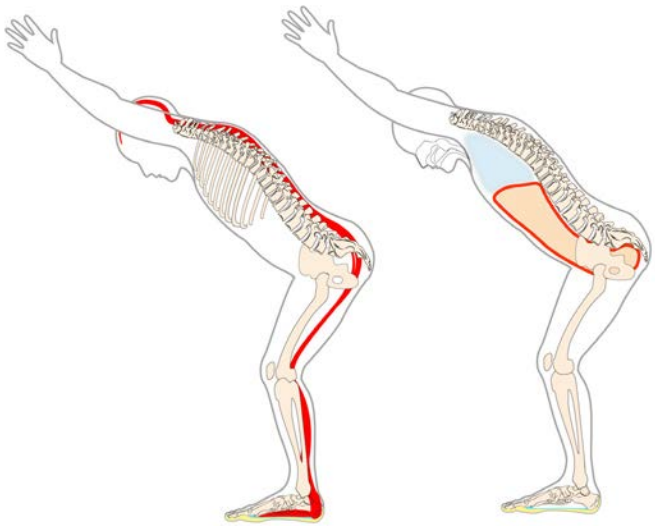
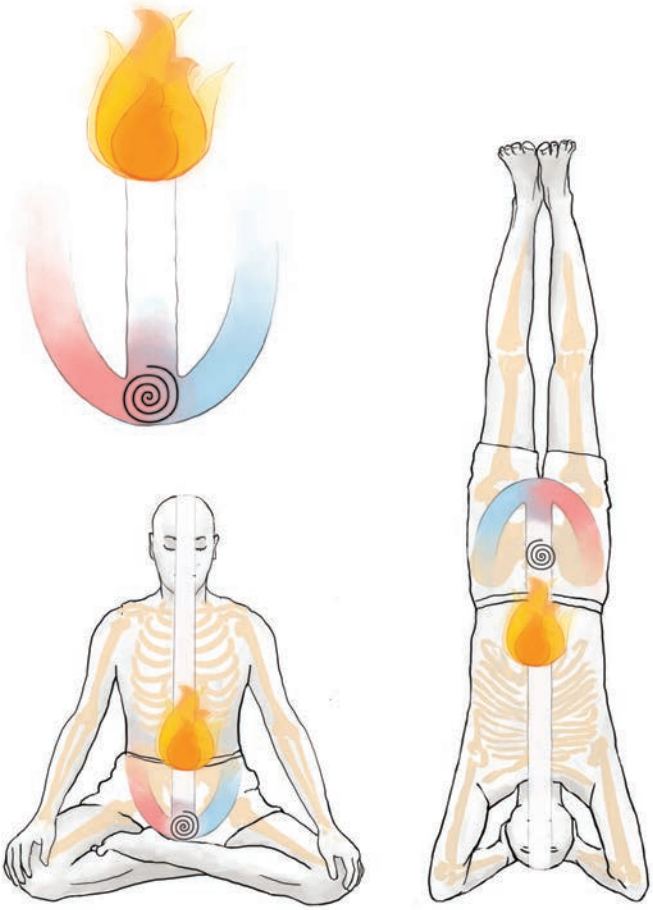
RIB MOVEMENTS CREATED BY THE DIAPHRAGM



THE DIFFERENCE THAT BREATH SUPPORT MAKES FOR THE SPINE:



KUNDALINI, SHUSHUMNA, AGNI



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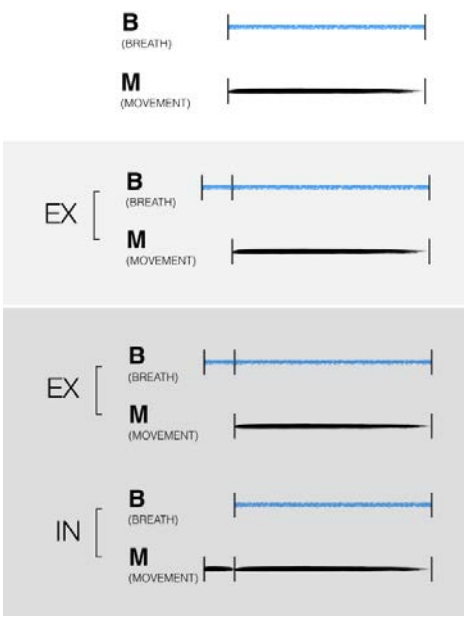
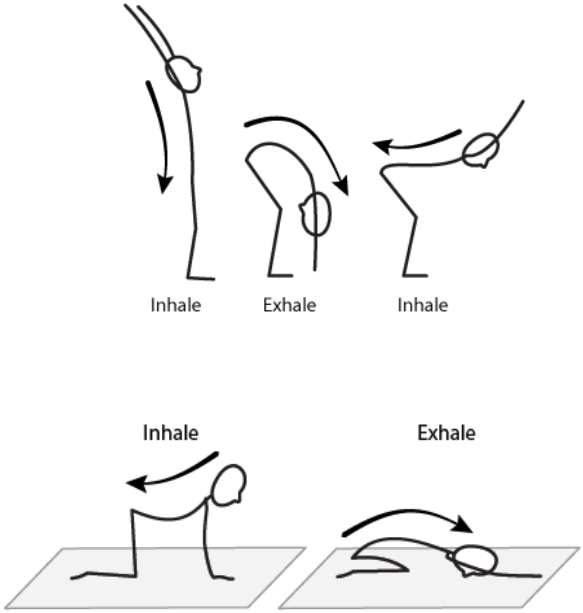
Integrating Bandha into Asana Flow: Theory and Practice

Part of Desikachar's methodological legacy – at the root of much of his teachings' therapeutic benefit – was derived from his unique way of linking breath and movement.

FOUNDATIONS, WITH VARIATIONS

- One breath per movement
- Synchronous initiation
  - Variation: Asynchronous initiation
- Continuous breath action
  - Variation: Discontinuous breath action (krama/steps)
- Inhale on spinal extension / exhale on spinal flexion
  - Variation: Exhale on spinal extension / inhale on spinal flexion
- Direction of breath flow linked to direction of spinal action
  - Variation: "Free breathing" unlinked from spinal action





- All these techniques structure breath to movement with a sequential, linear, 2-dimensional focus.
- Desikachar offered limited explanation from a Western anatomical, biomechanical perspective.

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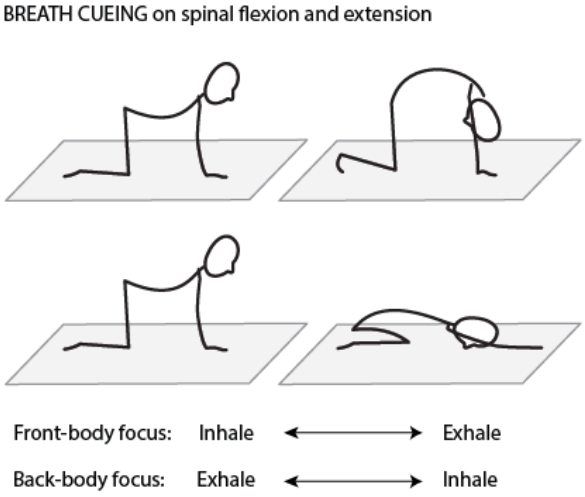
Individualized anatomical, multidimensional, unstructured breath and movement

ANATOMICAL

Standard breath cueing of inhaling on extension and exhaling on flexion is based on an anatomical assumption that privileges the front body over the back body.



MULTIDIMENSIONAL

Desikachar's foundational breath cueing divides the in-breath (prana) from the out-breath (apana) and locates them in the chest and abdominal regions respectively. Additionally, the direction of flow of the inhale is oriented into the body from the head region downwards, while the direction of flow of the exhale is oriented from the belly upwards towards the head. It is possible, however, for the breath to be everywhere, all at once, and moving simultaneously in all three dimensions.

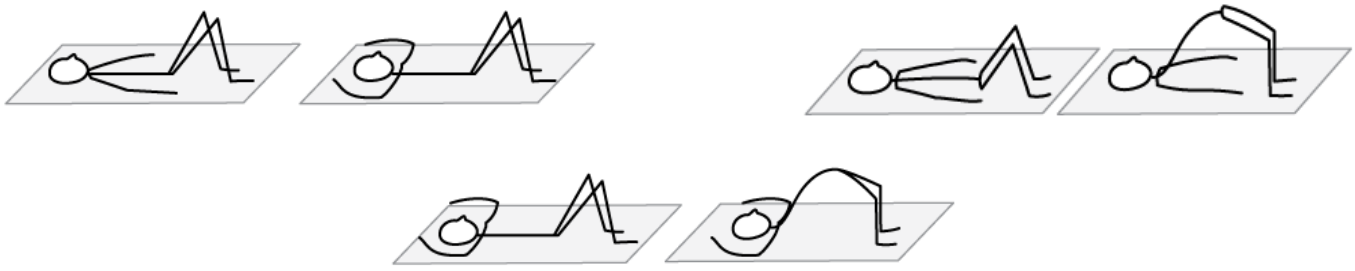
SEESAW BREATH

- Division
- Initiation
- 3-D



UNSTRUCTURED

Structured breathing links breath and movement in a variety of ways. It is also possible to unlink breath from movement by making the movement length exceed breath capacity or vice versa.



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Technique for breath release/bandhas

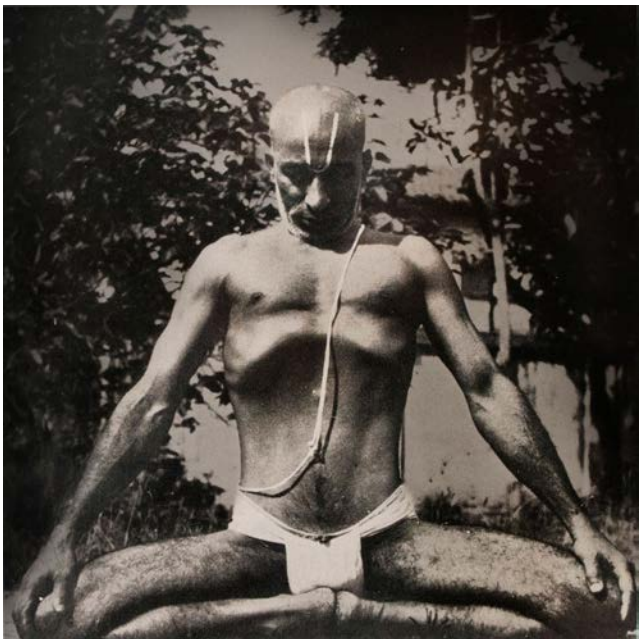
(MOVEMENT BEFORE BREATH)

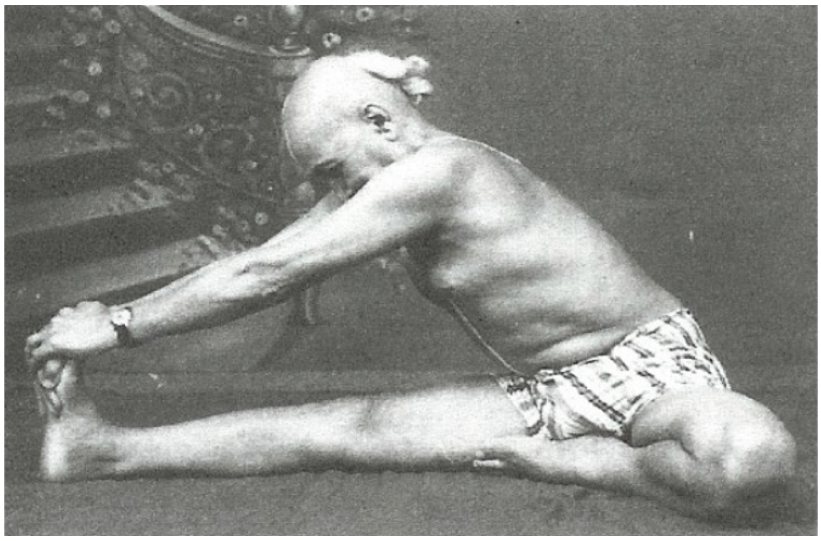
Dwipada Pitham exploration of all three bandhas. Breath sequence:

- Lift on exhale
- Stay lifted to inhale and notice sternum rising towards chin
- Exhale without letting sternum drop away from chin
- Roll down through spine on external retention (bhaya kumbhaka)
- "Thermometer" breath on final inhale









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From "Teachings" by Clude Marechal:

"…the inhaled breath must be brought to meet with the exhaled breath. Krishnamacharya stipulates how to correctly use the thoracic, dorsal and diaphragm musculature in the work of inhalation in order to feel it as a movement descending towards the epigastric region. Likewise for exhalation, the Professor explains how to employ the abdominals with a view to instigating the sensation of an ascending movement towards the epigastric region.

Beginning from these principles, all the technology of pranayama is designed, ordered, justified, and acquires its coherence. In this perfect edifice, the bandhas naturally find their place in serving the union of the prana and apana vayus. The famous notion of kundali is similarly clarified. The coiled serpent sleeping at the entrance to the path of liberation (middle path or shushumna nadi) symbolizes the inertia of the mind troubled by ignorance (avidya)."

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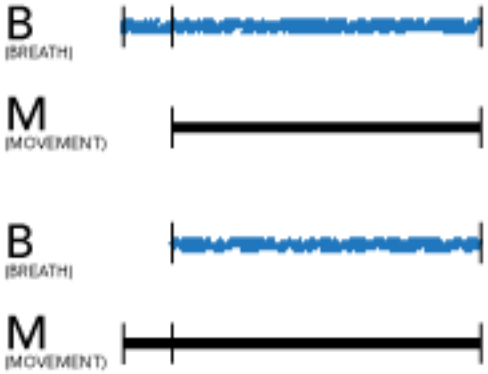
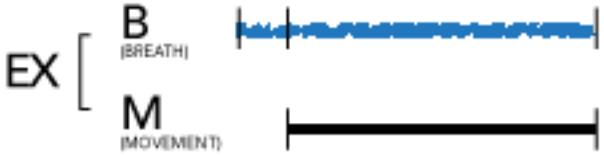
SIMULTANEOUS ACTION



BEGINNING OF ACTION



EXHALE PRECEEDS MOVEMENT (MULA BANDHA)



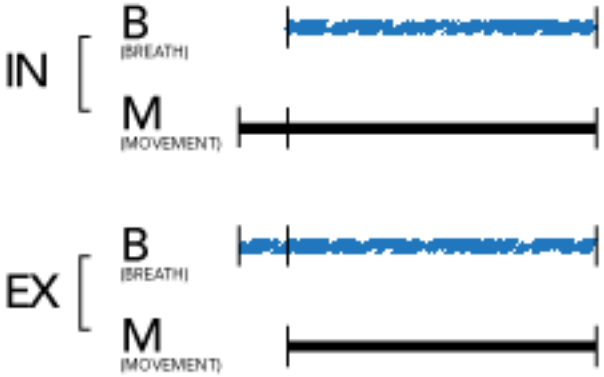
MOVEMENT ON BHAYA KUMBHAKA



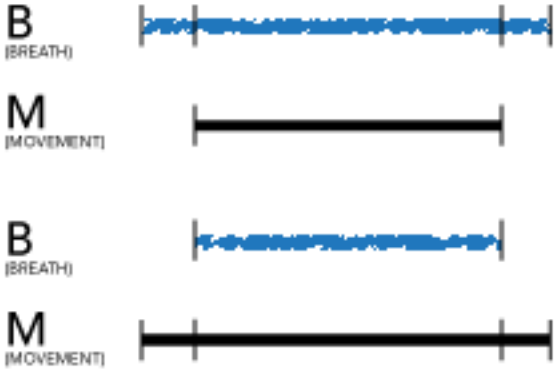
END OF ACTION



FULL BANDHA PATTERN



ENVELOPE ACTION



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