

The Power of Yantra Yoga and Breathing: An Interview with Fabio Andrico

[Anfitrión]: This is our first... our first meeting of the year. As previously scheduled, we will have one meeting per month. For us, it is quite an adventure to delve into a subject that deviates from our usual path since we founded this "Librería del Palacio" bookstore fifteen years ago; we will celebrate that anniversary in April. It is an adventure because we have always focused on topics related to literature, poetry, music, and artistic expression. However, we have a line of work that links spirituality with books. Our approach has naturally been to seek unity among the topics that interest people, with quality, using the book as an instrument and a tool for connection between human beings.

What a way to begin! What a way to start this year, with the presence of a personality who deserves all our respect. If one takes the time to read a few words about his work and watch some of his videos—which are readily available on social media and elsewhere—one feels... that feeling manifests when we are before someone who has lived a full life. Not only does he have life, knowledge, and experience, but above all, he possesses a human vocation to share ("convidar"). The vocation to ensure that what he has cultivated reaches others. We often use the word "convidar" (to share/invite). And there is one word that has become very fashionable in Argentina, Fabio, which is "inclusion." Because there are people who exclude others, and what this is about is including, sharing, and bringing people together. As a colleague said just now: "May this exceed my own square meter," the diameter of one meter that surrounds me as a person; may it transmit, communicate, and inspire others.

Well, after these few words, I offer you my gratitude. People will continue to arrive; there is someone coming now who needs assistance. After these brief words of thanks for your presence, and an enormous thank you to Fabio Andrico for sharing part of his time during these last few days in Córdoba—which, as always, are worth much more than that which is excessive and abundant—what we desire is to hear him speak. We will wait a moment for you to get settled. Can we hear his words above all? As a book editor, I appreciate that in these meetings we can hear that which is not necessarily written in books. And my first question, Fabio—and I must thank you—is: What was the step that began your long journey in yoga?

[Fabio Andrico]: Now... is it audible? Good. First, I want to thank you for inviting me. "Moltissime grazie" (thank you very much). It is true. In short... I was in my small town in northern Italy and a friend said to me: "Do you want to come with me to India?" She wasn't my girlfriend or anything; just a friend, the girlfriend of a friend of mine. She had nothing to do with this story, she simply didn't want to go alone and, since she had the financial means, she told me: "I'll pay for everything and I'll also give you," at that time, "five hundred dollars." Which, back then, was a lot. "E io che dico no?" (And what do I say, no?). Of course, I said yes. So we went.

I eventually ended up in Bangalore, which is in the south of India. A very beautiful city on a plateau, with a fantastic and very peaceful climate. In the whole area where we were, the Vedas were chanted at night and so on. It was all very Indian. I had come from a life experience that would now be called "alternative"; I was living in the countryside with friends, with different types of animals, working the land... I liked it very much. So my body was quite strong, with muscles for carrying weight and doing tasks. And so, the first thing that happened when I went to this ashram in Bangalore was that they gave me the possibility to join. I stayed for almost three months and I believe that for a month and a half, at least, we fasted. Fasting, practicing, fasting, practicing.

Literally, I practiced what my yoga teacher taught me. "Letteralmente" (literally), five, six, eight, or ten hours a day. Always, every day. And once when I asked him if he would teach me something else, he said: "Who are you to come here and already want more? I have studied my whole life to reach this point, and who are you to ask for more now?" "Excusez-moi" (excuse me). Well, it was a moment... it sounds like one of those stories, but it was a moment of a little trembling. Then he said: "Come, let's go up to the terrace, and I'll show you something else." "Ciao," that was it. They taught me almost nothing; they only showed me something.

But what I was saying is that my body changed completely over the course of those three months. The muscles became more elastic and slender; I lost bulk but gained flexibility and everything else. Truly, my body changed, and my mind changed as well. So my idea... Well, my biography is becoming too long. My idea was to return to Italy because I was studying naturopathy, and to study the whole diet in accordance with the elements: fruits are air, cereals are earth... all that combined with fasting; the "nature cure" approach. I wanted to study medicine to become a doctor, but also to use yoga to help people, integrating Western medicine with yoga and everything else.

In the end, since I had attended an arts high school, I had to do an integrative year. While I was doing that year to later try for medical school, I met my Master, Chögyal

Namkhai Norbu, who introduced me to Yantra Yoga. So I decided on something totally different: to go and study Oriental philosophy. I graduated —the term used in Spanish is "me licencié"— in Modern Foreign Literature with a specialization in the Orient. Afterward, I began working with my Master in Yantra Yoga, with all the other wisdom that the Master gives to us all.

Perhaps because I already came from a prior yoga experience, he suddenly put me... he often realized that I had a foundation and set me to teaching. Since then, I have never stopped practicing and teaching Yantra Yoga. In fact, as the presenter said earlier, Yantra Yoga can be defined as a "dance of energy." "Perché è sesso" (because it is that). That is the principle of Yantra Yoga. It is not necessary to have a super flexible body; of course it helps, but it is not the point. The point is that through the practice of Yantra and its sequence of movements —because it is movement, given that energy is movement— the energy moves. If it is blocked, then you cannot express its potential.

So, everything is movement, but the movement of the body provides a form that influences how the breath moves. And this is the fundamental point of Yantra: the breath. How we work with the breath, and the different ways of breathing and retaining the breath. The main principle is to reach the point of coordinating the aspect of energy. Nowadays, if we speak of yoga, we speak of "prana." Some consider prana as something external; thus, some teachers say that if one wants to practice truly well, one must go to a place with beautiful trees and pines, and certainly not stay behind a truck in the city. That does not help, no. Because there is also a dimension where the air is more "alive" or at least less contaminated. Especially here in Córdoba, this is understood very well.

But the principle of working with prana energy is that it is connected to Ayurvedic and Tibetan medicine. Although they have different names and lineages, it involves the internal function of the energy of breathing, which is called "prana." Because the internal energy of prana governs more or less all functions: the fact that we can think, that women can give birth, that we go to the bathroom, that we can move... All of this is also controlled by the internal function of prana, the energy connected to breathing.

From the standpoint of "internal science," they have discovered and come to describe that breathing is the "remote control of the mind." We can all understand this. If we are very agitated, we breathe a certain way. If we are frightened, we breathe another. "Se stiamo calmo" (if we are calm), we probably breathe in the most peaceful way. Why? Because through breathing, the sympathetic or parasympathetic systems of the nervous system are activated. And vice versa: when we are agitated, we cannot breathe well, and when we can breathe well, we

are calmer.

Yantra revolves around all of this. The body... the body position in Yantra is a servant to the breath. And breathing is not just what is commonly understood in yoga, which is generally associated more with external inhalation. "Internal breathing" is when the retention of the breath ("kumbhaka") is performed. Because this, even at the cellular level, is much more powerful and influences the absorption of energy and everything else that happens there much more.

In Yantra Yoga, there are four different types of breath retention that work and influence this internal prana energy in different ways, depending on how the movement gives form to the breath, especially during retention. Thus, from there, work is done in depth at the level of our energy. And if the energy is coordinated, the mind is coordinated, because our purpose is to be in a situation of equilibrium between body, energy, and mind. This is the mission of our existence at an intrinsic level. It is an element of total equilibrium.

That is why it can be said that Yantra Yoga is a "dance of energy"; it dances with energy so that it can manifest. And then, in addition to being healthier in various ways, the final point is the mind. Because if the mind is agitated, one cannot encounter a form of "perception de la réalité" (perception of reality) that is not totally passive or conditioned by all our limitations —especially by the mind that is always jumping and cannot be calmed for a moment, which creates many problems.

In the end, one of the fundamental qualifications for the posture is the breath, because the breath is also coordinated with the posture. For example, those who practice craniosacral therapy —though it varies by school, they more or less know it well— know that breathing and spinal health are extremely interdependent. If one breathes poorly, it is very difficult to have a healthy, problem-free spine. "Perché" (because), when one inhales correctly, it signifies a "diaphragmatic" inhalation. In reality, the diaphragm is always the main muscle, the lead actor in breathing. The lungs are fundamental, but they are passive; they cannot inhale or exhale on their own. If the rib cage opens, they can expand; if it remains closed, they cannot; they are prisoners inside.

They are very important, but the actor of breathing is the respiratory diaphragm. The eight diaphragms are also connected to posture and the alignment of the spine: the laryngeal diaphragm, the tentorium diaphragm, the thoracic diaphragm... Those who practice craniosacral therapy know this very well. The tongue and the glottis also have a direct connection with the respiratory diaphragm. Thus, if one keeps the glottis contracted, for example, one will only breathe up here. If one can keep the glottis relaxed, one will be able to breathe more from below.

In practice, to put it simply, the most natural form —as seen in babies when they are born— is breathing from the bottom up and exhaling from the top down. This is the way of breathing, and it is the basis of all Yantra practice: fluid breathing that begins from below and expands upward (diaphragmatic), and then from the top down, being soft and as long as possible. There are many studies, for example, on respiratory frequency. A very healthy breath —meaning the stomach has been relaxed— should be around six breaths per minute (inhaling and exhaling), and through the nose.

One can breathe through the mouth, but the mouth is not the organ of breathing; the organ of breathing is the nose. Moreover, the nose... although mine is quite large, it is much larger on the inside. It is directly connected to the cerebral cortex. It is an extremely important apparatus from the standpoint of the brain and how we function. This is how we should normally breathe. Clearly, we normally breathe differently, perhaps fifteen, eighteen, or twenty times per minute. But if we breathe at that lower frequency, it means that one... honestly, it is difficult to be healthy and relaxed. It is truly difficult because it constantly activates the sympathetic system, which is where one is constantly on alert. Nowadays, when this is done too much, it leads to stress.

In ancient times, it was a reflex that saved us from a lion. So, "grazie" (thank you), please: everything shuts down, digestion stops, adrenaline is sent, and off we go. But there are not many lions today; we have the lions here inside, unfortunately. And we have "stress from being stressed." That is a problem. And one of the tools that can truly change this is diaphragmatic breathing. Apart from Yantra, I also teach a system called "Respira," specifically to train this fluid breathing so that the person doesn't have to think: "Oh yes, I have to breathe this way or that way." Why? Because thinking doesn't help.

It is like describing an ice cream from "Rapanui" to someone who has never tasted ice cream. "Have you never tried chocolate?" And you explain and explain... But you put a piece of Rapanui chocolate in their mouth and there is no doubt what it is, because we only learn through experience. What we read can take us to different worlds, but the only way we truly learn is through experience. It is like that: one can explain for hours what heat is, but just put a finger on the stove — "Ciao." Do you still have doubts? It is just that we learn through experience; as our Master used to say, we only learn through experience.

And why? Because we can have any number of experiences that enrich us, but in life what truly matters is that, in a certain sense, due to the characteristics of the posture and how one is at the end of a Yantra session... that moment of relaxation,

the ability to be relaxed. Being "relaxed" does not mean being asleep, nor is it like when you go to the doctor. "I'm like this in my mind," like when the doctor examines you and tells you things... that is obviously not being relaxed. "Relaxed" means that one has no tension, but has "presence." Relaxed but present. If one is relaxed and present, one can be aware of the circumstances of life.

In the end, this is what Yantra Yoga should help with. From the standpoint of someone who has decided to follow a spiritual path —like what the Master taught— Yantra Yoga was an instrument so that the same ability to be conscious and present would translate into daily life. So that when one is cutting a tomato, one doesn't cut a finger, or when driving a car, one doesn't have an accident. Because distraction occurs when one is not there where one should be; as the hippies used to say: "be here and now." That means being conscious and present. If one is distracted, different things can happen; if one is present, one can manage one's life much better.

That is why, in Yantra, the first thing taught is a technique called "The Nine Purifying Exhalations." Because if we breathe poorly, the air doesn't do its job well and parts of the lungs are not properly ventilated or refreshed. It is said that there is "impure air" that stays there. Thus, it has to be eliminated, because everything is interdependent. If that was created by a pattern or connected to a condition of being tense, it is there, in the neural connections. Because everything is activated by neurons communicating with each other and, when they continue that type of communication, "firing together, they bind together." They continue to communicate and that becomes stronger; it is your memory. This is the habit we develop. The habit becomes a force and it is more difficult to break, because it is a memory that becomes more and more ingrained. We are a collection of genetic, ancestral, and other types of memory.

In fact, studies of memory are extremely interesting. Now they have discovered that the brain is plastic; it is not static, and "neurogenesis" can take place. One of the types of exercises that help to refresh things are specifically dynamic exercises that require balance and are connected with inhalation; these are the best for brain health. This is a recent discovery in science.

So, the beginning... one of the characteristics is to be in the posture relaxed but present. "Present" means not being distracted, which is understood, but also being conscious of what one is doing. "Awareness." In Italian, the word "coscienza" is used. Thus: "presence and awareness." Being present and conscious, being there. Not being elsewhere. Now, these new neuroscientists are making a slight distinction with what they call "conscious awareness." It is almost redundant, like saying "conscious of being conscious." Being truly present in the state of being

conscious. And they distinguish, for example, "distraction" from "interruption."

For example, if someone says "Fabio" now and I hear my name, do I get distracted for a moment? Yes, but I come back immediately. That is simply an interruption. If I, on the other hand, start thinking that this talk is not interesting, that is a distraction. That difference is interesting. Because if one has a presence that is a bit more relaxed, that interruption happens but it doesn't condition you. If we are tense, it sweeps us away. It is an interesting thing.

And finally, at the end of a session, it is said that one should be in a condition of "natural relaxation." This means that, supposedly, whether we have done a short, medium, or long session —it doesn't matter— if we have done it well, it will have helped us coordinate our energy. Thus, it should be possible to be in a condition where we are less conditioned by all our tensions. In that way, what is at the original root of our nature can be present for a moment. This experience should be like a seed to later cultivate in normal life. In this way, one could live more in this manner: more relaxed, more conscious, with less tension. And who wouldn't want that? With the mind a bit more focused and the body functioning a bit better. No one is harmed if their body works a little better.

The other thing to understand is that complicated things are not necessarily more effective. In a certain sense they can be, but it is quality that counts. If one can learn something simple that, for that person in that condition and at that moment, works... that is the only important thing. Because many times we always seek something new because it seems more exciting, but as my yoga teacher in India used to say: "Be careful not to be 'loco per tutto e maestro di nulla'" (a jack of all trades and master of none). Because that's how it is: one always disperses and gets distracted. And in the end, what remains if there is nothing concrete that one can apply in their life that provides a benefit? It's not very useful.

Because one day, just as we inhaled when we came into the world, we will exhale and depart. No one can escape this. Between that first moment and the last, we are always inhaling and exhaling. Sometimes we retain the breath, sometimes knowing how to do it and sometimes just because we are nervous or frightened. Yantra Yoga revolves around all of this. As I told you, the body is a servant to provide a form and coordinate the breath, especially the different types of retention, to coordinate our energetic condition more deeply. This is something that awakens; it is like a dance of energy.

[Anfitriona]: That was the step. The question was, what was your first step, and we are halfway through. Personally, I am particularly struck by the future of children and young people, those who are up to twenty years old today, and who have

—like us all— that little device which measures only a few centimeters and yet is that great, enormous engine of permanent distraction and dispersion. Beyond another engine that moves me more, which is hunger, a much stronger engine to address as humanity. But let's look at one that is more approachable and workable: the issue of this enormous dispersion caused by being connected. I sometimes say that "we sleep with an IV drip," because the cable is near our forearm and it seems that at any moment they will hook us up and plug us in... well, that is the goal. The diaphragm, I say, is a nervous and indomitable muscle. And the mind... well, it cannot be said to be indomitable. What can we say? Because all of us, when we leave here, will probably be in contact with someone younger. What can we bring to those people who are much more immersed in technology, which by its very nature distracts us and keeps us attentive to a multitude of stimuli so that, as you just said, we do not go deep into any of them?

[Fabio Andrico]: Miracles? There isn't even one. This meeting today is a miracle too. But nowadays everything is... these sciences are millenary. This type of Yantra Yoga that my Master transmitted is supposedly based on a text from the 8th century. From there, this knowledge has been transmitted, not only in yoga; traditions, when they continue, are a way of transmitting this type of knowledge. Last year, when I was in what used to be the Soviet Union, they took me to the Bolshoi. It was a miracle to be in a box near the authorities' box. The stage design was by a "hero of the people"... the dancer was a hero, and the scenery looked like a painting by Chagall. And when he lifted that ballerina, it seemed as if she didn't touch the ground. Then I thought: "Of course, they have studied everything, but look at where they are doing it." For me, all the people who have cultivated this knowledge, who have practiced it, felt it, loved it, suffered and trained... clearly that imprint is there. To me, it is the same now; in the sense that all the people who have practiced this, trying to do it in a pure and conscious way during all this time, when one practices it —more or less— one also comes into contact with that millenary wisdom.

And these devices that we can no longer live without are a form of distraction. With the subject of artificial intelligence, honestly, I don't know what will happen; it cannot be understood. That is why I believe that if we could at least dedicate a "small island of the day" to something different, perhaps we would not be so conditioned by this monster that we cannot live without at this point. The Master, as I was saying, never had a smartphone. But he worked a great deal with the computer, because he was not at all against evolution or progress; it is human nature which comes from the divine ("di Dio"). The point is that today, with all that is happening, there are many ethical problems. It is a swampy terrain. I read a book about four years ago —I don't remember exactly— about a conference involving psychologists and neuroscientists, about seven or eight of them, who gave talks.

They were never in agreement with each other, but a book was published explaining everything. The only thing they had in common was that they all agreed that "free will does not exist."

I am not saying whether I believe it or not. I'm saying it because of what this "super" fellow said, well, what the author said. Because there is also that experiment by a certain Libet, I believe, which says that according to his results, one is conscious of what happened about half a second after it already occurred. Imagine the enormous ethical implications this has: if one isn't actually conscious of what one is doing, how can one be responsible? If it is a very complicated physical process... Neuroscience is doing extremely complex things. I read some books out of interest, without understanding everything, because the language they use is complicated for someone without the background. But there are things that are difficult to grasp. So, what will happen with artificial intelligence? I don't know where the boundaries will be. Whether it will truly help us or not... But the point is that unless something happens with this "transhumanism" or the "cyborg" movement—I don't know what that will be—I also read a bit from David Chalmers' book; he is a very famous neuroscientist and quantum physicist, and the book is called "Reality Plus." It's more than six hundred pages just to explain that we cannot be certain in any way that we are not living in a simulated reality. But personally, after two pages, I had enough.

The point is that, even in some spiritual paths, it is said that everything is an illusion ("maya"). But what do we do now that we are here? That is the only thing that matters. With the tools we have at this moment, what we do is the only thing that matters, because it is the only thing that has an appearance of reality.

[Anfitriona]: We were speaking, while the minutes passed before the starting time, about these books that are on the table and which, by the way, you can acquire and have signed by Fabio. We were speaking specifically about this one I have in my hands, called "Tibetan Yoga of Movement," of which Fabio is a co-author. He mentioned that twenty-three people participated in it. I believe that any great project is only possible if wills are joined and everyone contributes what they know and have; whether because one is a wealthy heir or because life in the humblest place has forged them. The important thing is that together we are a community moving forward. There is no master without the antecedents of the 8th century and before. That is why it is so important for us to be together, to meet, and when leaving, to "convidar": to investigate, to share, and to bring others closer. I believe that is where the possibility of this being replicated and reaching more people lies. If it doesn't reach more, it dies.

Well, this microphone is for sharing. Adriana Batiti is here, she was the architect of this whole meeting. We met by chance at an art event, at a tribute to a very important Córdoba painter, Washington Riviere. We met Adriana there, and it was the starting point for speaking about the possibility of bringing Yantra Yoga also to this part of the city, as her project is particularly active in the northern zone. Adri, I give you the floor to say something brief.

[Adriana Batiti]: Fabio says it's not necessary to convince anyone to practice Yantra Yoga or follow the teaching. "Absolutely not," because anything we do must come from within. Any external structure that tries to condition us is false. The principle of proselytizing does not exist in the minds of those of us who follow our Master. Everything must come from the individual and be spontaneous. Anything built artificially, the Master says, "goes into the trash" ("va al tacho," local expression for something useless). It has to be born from a real interest on the part of the person. That is what creates the desire to continue practicing if one sees that it works.

[Anfitrión]: Indeed, I believe so. That's why I spoke of the "seed." It was something that wasn't planned or sought after, but rather it just happened. When there is inspiration, when one sees there is work and seriousness, and can study a bit and realize that... well, that's what we have at hand. That's why it's so important to share and connect. This microphone is for everyone; we have little time, but it's for everyone, so if anyone wants to ask something, they can stand up.

[Adriana Batiti]: As Fabio was saying, this is about the daily wisdom we must apply every day. You don't need to have a serious illness to start; it's about being more relaxed every day and making our daily lives easier and happier. Calm, without great expectations, and step by step. Cristina here wants to ask something.

[Fabio Andrico]: Well... yes, we can. I'm going to teach you something very simple. As I explained, the basis of Yantra is the breath; it is fundamental. The body helps to provide form and so on, but the breath is the main part in order to reach the mind. It is said: "Body, breath, and mind." The inhalation is received within us. The fluid breath must be direct, without fragmentation. Always through the nose. If someone has very serious problems, they can exhale through the mouth, but they must always inhale through the nose for a number of reasons, including the temperature change and the chemical processes that are activated. Breathing through the mouth, especially if it becomes a habit, is honestly bad. There is a very famous book by James Nestor called "Breath" which explains this; it is a bestseller. After Covid, many people realized the importance of the lungs.

So that it is not just a concept, I thought of some exercises so that you have a "small piece of chocolate" of experience. After this, we can look at rhythmic

breathing. This is something that already comes in all phones and smartwatches, but I "have a beef" with that, because most of them tell you that you can regulate the rhythm however you like but they don't tell you *how* to breathe. They tell you "inhale four, retain four, exhale four," but the "how" is fundamental. According to the knowledge of the East, it changes completely if it is done in a relaxed way or not. So we will do an exercise to have an experience of fluid breathing and then something quick with rhythmic breathing. There is a "4-7-8" system by an American doctor who says that if practiced before going to bed, it helps those with insomnia. Rhythmic breathing does the same.

The principle is that the fluid inhalation begins from the bottom up. We usually spend a lot of time sitting in chairs, and that causes the breathing to change. If we are hunched over in the car or on the sofa, it leads us to breathe more with the chest. Thoracic breathing is not bad, but it is bad if it is *only* thoracic. We have to once again inhale from below. The diaphragm has to be truly involved, not just in words. Sometimes we think we "take in" air, but in reality, we should "let the air in." The diaphragm is the main muscle; the intercostals are secondary or auxiliary and intervene if we want to inhale or exhale more volume, by opening or squeezing the rib cage.

The largest lobes of the lungs are at the bottom. If one breathes through the mouth, one breathes only up here. It is difficult to be healthy or relaxed that way. That is why we designed the technique to not only breathe vertically but to "open the breath to the sides." This is how one breathes better. The back should also move. With Covid, they discovered that if they put people face down, they began to expand the back, where 40% of the lung mass is located. The perception of the breath should be like a sphere, not a flat surface.

For example, if you are sitting like this, try to take a deep breath through the nose. Almost certainly you will lift your shoulders and feel tension in the lower part of the spine. Now, simply do this: breathe without forcing. Feel how the sides of the rib cage expand and the shoulders no longer lift. The spine feels more aligned automatically. This is using the position of the body to influence the breath, which is what Yantra does.

Changing the body position, even a little bit, changes the breath in an impressive way. The other thing is perception. There is much talk now in psychology and neuroscience about "proprioception" and "interoception." It is extremely interesting how this activates receptors in the brain. I asked a neuroscientist: "If I want to direct the breath to the abdomen, it's not so easy if one isn't accustomed to it." She told me: "It's not simple." But if you put a hand above the navel, it's much easier. Why? Because by putting the hand there, proprioceptive processes are activated.

Interoception refers to the deep internal dimension.

It's very simple: you put your hand there and feel how the ribs move. After a moment, you feel it move a bit in the back as well. We are designed to breathe this way. If one breathes like this, many spinal problems are avoided. So: posture, perception, and now the mind. If I put my hand here and feel how the abdomen expands, I concentrate on the perception of the hand, on that little warmth. We focus on the warmth the hand transfers to the abdomen. Then we remove the hand but maintain the perception of that warmth. You'll see that it's felt a bit less, but the breath continues there. And now use only the mind: focus the mind toward the navel as if you wanted to touch it with the mind. Maintain that fixation. Now distract yourself intentionally... and the warmth is gone. We have these three tools: position of the body, perception, and focus of the mind.

[Anfriona]: It happens to me that as soon as I start breathing like that, by the second breath I already start yawning. I relax immediately.

[Fabio Andrico]: That is because the parasympathetic system is activated. But you have to manage it according to your specific condition. The root of the inspiration has to be down there. Well, this was an exercise to activate a more diaphragmatic breath. For rhythmic breathing, the ideal position is with the legs slightly apart. The rhythm should be based on the heartbeat of a relaxed person. You have to count: one, two, three, four as you inhale (which is about five or six seconds). When retaining the breath, we also do it in four counts, but the retention should be like a passive continuation of the inhalation: without blocking or forcing anything, as if it continued to expand. Then we exhale for six counts. Exhalation has two parts: the active exhalation and then a "void retention" (not inhaling immediately), which is also a passive continuation of the exhalation, letting everything settle.

So: inhale for 4, retain for 4, exhale for 6. Let's try: Inhale... peaceful, open, relaxed retention... Exhale... void retention.

A few words on the spine: you will have noticed that with this rhythm, the spine is "chocha" (a local term used by the interviewer meaning very satisfied/happy). Ideally, you should stretch your arms beside your ears to extend the flanks, and maintain that extension as you lower your hands. Pull the chin in slightly so there's a line between the nose and the navel. It's a mechanical thing to ensure alignment, because if the spine is well aligned, diaphragmatic breathing arises on its own; and if we breathe well, the spine aligns naturally.

Sometimes, when you feel annoyed or nervous, you can do slightly faster exhalations, putting your elbows to the sides as you exhale to discharge. "Begone,

annoyances!"

[Adriana Batiti]: Fabio, should we maintain this way of breathing all the time, when we are on the street or at home, or only at certain moments?

[Fabio Andrico]: In theory, that should be the correct and permanent movement of the breath in life. It is defined as the "the wave of breathing" or the "tidal wave." One shouldn't have to think about breathing; it happens unconsciously, even when we are unconscious. The diaphragm is a muscle that, like the heart, never stops working day and night.

[Anfitriona]: But it is disobedient, indomitable. We cannot control it entirely, can we?

[Fabio Andrico]: People who always breathe through the mouth hardly make the diaphragm work. If used poorly, the intercostal (auxiliary) muscles have to do all the work to create the vacuum and let the air in. They are called auxiliaries because they should be helpers, not the main characters. If the diaphragm doesn't work well, the sympathetic system becomes over-activated: stress and tension in a chain of misfortune.

As I was telling you, there is the normal unconscious "wave," and then the extra volume of inhalation when we decide to inhale more. That is active and activates the sympathetic system (fight or flight). When we take a large breath, everything is activated. Exhalation, on the other hand, is always more passive. If we want to exhale more than the normal volume, we have to push the diaphragm upward and squeeze the muscles; that is also active. This is vital because the first thing done in Yantra is the deep exhalation to eliminate the impure air from the lower lobes, which are the ones that are not activated with superficial breathing. One has to exhale deeply in order to then be able to inhale deeply and reactivate everything.

A simple exercise to feel those lower lobes: sit comfortably, inhale normally, retain for a second, and inhale a bit more. Where does the air go that second time? It goes down. This is proven; you can look up the "Huberman Lab" on YouTube, which is very famous and speaks about these things.

[Anfitriona]: Well, Adriana reminds us that the books being presented today are masterfully illustrated. Each chapter begins with the complete sequence of the technique. It is an excellent work by a huge team. Fabio will stay a little while longer to sign copies and answer questions.