

All About Harmonious Breathing - An Interview with Fabio Andrico

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The Mirror: Fabio, since the system of Harmonious Breathing is essentially something you proposed, can you tell us about its origins?

Fabio Andrico: Yes. Sometime ago I tried to find a way to help people understand breathing more in depth and find some way to help people have an experience of what we call the fluid breathing in Yantra Yoga. For people who have absolutely no experience at all, fluid breathing is not necessarily so easy. I have seen that most people find it very difficult to have a basic understanding of how to breathe from below coming up, as it is indicated in the instructions from the text of Vairocana for the Nine Breathings. We have the example of pouring water in a bottle, meaning we should breathe in starting from below and moving up and breathe out in the reverse way.

In reality, it started some time ago in Margarita (Venezuela) when people who had no experience of Yantra Yoga at all, people who could not do Yantra Yoga, or were just new, approached me and wanted to understand what the *kumbhaka* was. I understood that it was essential that they needed to understand the correct way to inhale, otherwise it would be quite complicated. So for that reason, I tried to find a way for people who do not necessarily do Yantra, who have no possibility, no capacity, maybe they are too old, or their body has some obstacles, or maybe simply they do not want to do Yantra Yoga, but they still want to understand about the breathing.

For that reason I tried to find ways to have people understand and have some kind of practical help to do that. My main understanding comes from the practice and teaching of Yantra Yoga, but before that I had also practiced some other forms of yoga. I tried to look into what I had also learned from other traditions, and find some simple exercises that would help people to have some kind of experience of a complete breathing that is smooth and fluid.

Since the time when I was just trying to help people understand the basics about breathing, the training has become a little more structured. For me these exercises are warm ups for the breathing, like the warm ups for the body. Now more and more and from many fields, from medical fields, wellness, stress control, etc., more and more there is a focus on the importance of breathing

correctly. There is a focus on the importance of a deep breath, of diaphragmatic breathing, and all the different action it has on our well being and our state of mind.

People have started to say that these kinds of exercises are helpful, they are nice to do, they are not difficult, and so slowly we started to structure the training because more and more people were interested. I also started to teach people to help other people to learn. After that came the idea of a website (www.harmoniousbreathing.com) where people can learn through the website, so now there is also this website managed by Patrizia Pearl.

The Harmonious Breathing project is still a work in progress, and we will see where it is going. I do not have a particular intention and I insist that for me it is a method to help people apply a harmonious and full breath correctly, possibly relaxed and free of tension, and this is something that is good for everyone. It can be especially useful for people who cannot do Yantra Yoga. I consider it this way: it is a method to have a more complete, fluid, harmonious, tension free breathing. In my experience it is something that can bring benefit without thinking it is such a magical thing. Breathing, we have to breathe, so instead of breathing in a strange, tense, and fragmented way, we can breathe in a normal, more coordinated and fluid way. I am sure that breathing this way is definitely better.



Fabio Andrico

M: There are now many systems of breathing being researched and applied. In what way do you

see this system as having particular benefit?

FA: As I said before, in terms of Yantra Yoga I see this system as something like a warm up for the breathing, the same as a warm up for the body. And if someone does not do Yantra Yoga, and breathing exercises are the only thing they can do, it can surely bring some benefit. Also when I teach the breathing I always teach some simple warm ups for the body because it is interdependent. In order to breathe correctly you always need to have a good posture, for example, of the spine, so some simple warm ups can help. My idea is that this breathing technique is something really simple. The basic routine of harmonious breathing can be done by anyone, because it can also be done with some support, and there are also some static positions that can help with tension in the back. It is not Yantra Yoga at all, but it can be useful for people who are not doing many things because they might feel it is too difficult or intimidating. Harmonious Breathing is not trying to create an alternative, not at all, it is something that gives more possibility.

Of course, my understanding of the process of the respiration comes absolutely from the practice of Yantra Yoga. What I see, and therefore really believe, is that when we apply the breathing in the way it is explained in Yantra, inhaling from below up and exhaling from top to bottom, that this is the closest thing to the spontaneous movement of respiration that I know of. Without wanting to criticize anything, since different systems have different goals, the purpose of Breathe (Harmonious Breathing) is to deconstruct the conditioning of the breath, and therefore allow it to be as spontaneous and natural as possible. That in reality is the real purpose; allowing the breath to move in a spontaneous and fluid way. And I truly believe that anyone who can do that will have some kind of benefit.

M: Have you had any feedback about how harmonious breathing impacts people's practice of Yantra Yoga?

FA: I don't know how to really answer that because Yantra Yoga is a complete system in itself. The point is, if you do Yantra Yoga once every six months and you think you can have some benefit, then it is complicated. I don't think Harmonious Breathing could ever be an alternative.

M: I did not mean as alternative, I am wondering if Harmonious Breathing enhances the practice of Yantra Yoga.

FA: Well I insist that if you use warm ups for the body and the breathing exercises are warm ups for the breathing, and if these two forms of warm ups help, then it can help. Every time I do a course I do this serious joke, Yantra is a fantastic system with one big flaw...if you don't do it, it doesn't work. That is very simple.

M: Some people are confused about the nature of harmonious breathing and if it is inside the system of Yantra Yoga, and if it is related to the transmission or not. Therefore there is some confusion as to who can be trained to become an instructor of Harmonious Breathing and how.

Can you clarify that?

FA: No, Harmonious Breathing is not related to Yantra Yoga or the transmission. My experience of Yantra Yoga and my desire to try and help people understand how to breathe correctly in order to be able to do other things, led me to find a way to do that and that is the origin of the Harmonious Breathing.

M: So if someone wants to learn Harmonious Breathing or to receive training to become an instructor, can you clarify how people can access the training to do it and/or to teach it?

FA: I have been training people to teach Harmonious Breathing and then the instructors can apply it however they want to once they are trained. As I have said, one Teacher's Training is not really enough and it takes a little time, but in these times we are always rushing things. Once the people are trained, they are free. Of course, if the instructor is also an instructor of Yantra Yoga, I hope they understand the reason they are applying it and that doing it is still related to the work done with Yantra Yoga, therefore they still might want to contribute to the Dzogchen Community.

For example, in the statute of the Harmonious Breathing website (www.harmoniousbreathing.com) where the breathing is taught on line, it is written that a certain percentage goes to the Dzogchen Community. That was the idea, that the website could be something that people from the Community could do that is something commercial and also of benefit to people. Maybe instead of going to make pizzas or selling houses, someone would prefer to teach something to help coordinate our breath and at the same time having some benefit for the person who is teaching, some benefit for the recipients and also for the Community.

M: Are there any other related materials available besides courses and the website?

FA: I have written a book which should be available soon that explains the theory and practice of Harmonious Breathing, also offering warm ups, exercises and routines. This book will be distributed by Shang Shung Editions. There will also be some routines available on the website, to use for practice purposes and, in the near future, to supplement learning on the website and through live courses.

M: Thank you Fabio. Is there anything else you would like to add?

FA: Let's breathe well!

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