

Umbilical Breath and Hara Toning



Ani Williams February 26, 2023

Breathing, chanting, and toning from the belly is a powerful way to shift our state of being and voice quality. I originally learned to focus the breath and energy from the *hara* (dantian) naval center during classes in Aikido, and later discovered a similar belly centered breathing during an extended course in Sanskrit traditional chanting. Expanding the belly, instead of the lungs, allows the body to center, ground, relax, and increases the chi, vital energy.

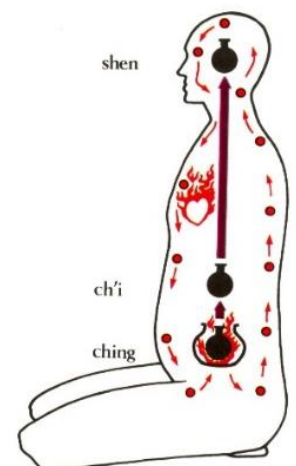
The hara (dantian or tanden) is the **elixir field**, where life is created, the center of ki (chi) creative, vital, and sexual energy. It is the sacral chakra, and in Sanskrit, Swadhisthana, located two finger-widths below the navel. As Japanese author and Zen teacher Katsuki Sekida wrote in *Zen Training: Methods and Philosophy*, **“It is the correct manipulation of the lower abdomen, as we sit and breathe, that enables us to control the activity of our mind.”** In other words, hara breathing is a gateway to enlightenment, just as sound is a direct pathway to awakening.

Many of my clients in Voice Analysis¹ speak from the upper part of the body, originating the sound from the throat or head. This creates a thin tone, without depth, resonance, or power. The deeper harmonics created with Hara breathing and toning are more potent for moving energy, healing, and have a grounding effect. In today’s stressful world, buzzing with the multitudes of subtle waves and frequencies of technology, most people need grounding.

When toning, if one imagines the sound and breath arising from the deep cave of the belly, the Hara, the power of this cauldron of fire is projected throughout the body, and the voice expands in depth and with more harmonic overtones. When our voice is fully embodied, with deep, expansive resonance, people listen, and the universe responds to us, hence, manifesting our visions becomes easier. Our voice is constantly informing the world how to respond to us, repatterning our reality. The ancient traditions of sound science have known this for ages, such as the Sufi tradition:

“The voice is a barometer of our state of being. The voice indicates one’s character and the expression of one’s spirit.” – Hazrat Inayat Khan, *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*

To practice “Hara Toning”, one can use the basic vowels **oh, oo, ah, ee**, and visualize the sound rising effortlessly from the Hara up through a hollow bamboo or crystal tube like an internal flute. The tone is not forced but is allowed to emerge effortlessly from the belly, passing through the throat and out the mouth. Try toning from the head and then the belly and compare the tone quality between the two. The voice which is grounded in the belly has more potential to resonate the bones, tissues, and stimulate all the energy centers. In Taoism, these subtle centers are called **cauldrons of fire** as illustrated in the image to the right. This umbilical center is connected to our origins, the source of nourishment from our mothers and the cord of connection to all of creation. Ancient people believed they could travel to the stars on this umbilical cord (chord?) of connection with all of life.



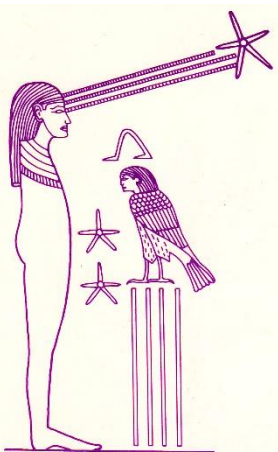
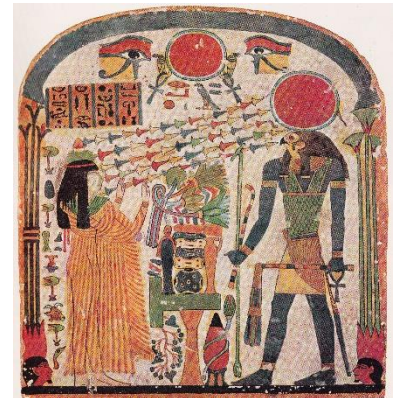
Another seat of power, the third chakra, **Solar Plexus** is used in the ancient practice of Nahua Sun Yoga. For many years I worked in Mexico doing concert tours and sound trainings and it was during one of these times that I attended the annual Spring Equinox gathering



of Aztec and Mayan elders in Mexico City. The term *Nahua* basically means “**clear sound or language**” in the Aztec (Nahuatl) language of central Mexico.

To begin, the instructor had us sit in a lotus position, or if needed, in a chair, with back straight, but relaxed, facing the rising sun. He explained the importance of the Solar Plexus, located above the navel and below the diaphragm as a network of radiating nerves, sending information and energy to all parts of the body, like the illuminating rays of the sun. In the Vedic system of India, it is called *Manipura*, meaning “**lustrous city of jewels, or shining gem.**” The instructor guided us to draw the light of the rising sun into the Solar Plexus with the breath for quite some time before circulating the vital force.

This circulating of the vital force can be compared to the Taoist practice of opening the *Secret of the Golden Flower* and the micro-cosmic breath of Buddhist Tantra practice. By simply following the breath with one’s awareness, as it rises and falls is a simple beginning meditation. (Placing the tongue on the roof of the mouth helps to complete the circuit.) I call this practice the **Golden Cobra** meditation, inspired by the Egyptian initiates who display the cobra uraeus at the third eye. The Egyptian Queen to the lower right has developed all seven initiatory centers, or chakras, which are illustrated with seven cobras on her crown, and the double Re Herakti of the Rising Sun at her brow.



A variation of Nahua Yoga can be practiced by drawing the rays of the rising sun into the *Ajna* (“Third Eye”) rather than the Solar Plexus, and on the exhale, sending gratitude for the sun’s warmth and life-giving radiance. One can do this imbibing star energy and knowledge from other luminaries, such as Sirius, Antares, or the star of your choice. This is illustrated in the image to the left with starlight entering the Third Eye of the Pharaoh.



¹ Voice Spectrum Analysis, <https://aniwilliams.com/voice-spectrum-analysis/>

² Learn more and listen to Songaia Sound: <https://aniwilliams.com/product/songaia-mp3-set/>

