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## Concept of Prana and Mind in Hathayoga

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### Abstract

The goal of hatha yoga and other spiritual practices is to awaken the immense cosmic power known as Kundalini Shakti. Yoga is an ancient spiritual philosophy that has helped people achieve tremendous success in their physical, mental, and spiritual health. Hathayoga is one of the spiritual way in the schools of yoga. It is the self-illuminating conducive for yoga aspirants and which illumines a multitude of physical, mental and spiritual problems for aspirants. In their hathayoga, famous hatha yogis stressed the significance of combining prana and mind to achieve higher states of yoga. The primary goal of this research was to demonstrate the relevance of prana and mind in achieving a higher level of spirituality by awakening the Kundalini Shakti as stated in hathayoga scriptures published by Hatha yogis.

**Keywords:** Hathayoga, Prana, Mind, Kundalini

### Introduction

Hatha yoga is an ancient yogic method in yoga traditions. It bloomed by various eminent Hatha yogis from 500 A.D to 1800 A.D. There are lot of credible texts on hathayoga accessible in yogic literature such as *Hatha pradipika* by yogi Swatmarama, *Goraksha Samhita* by yogi Goraksanath, *Gheranda Samhita* by renowned sage Gheranda muni, and *Hatharatnavalli* by Shrinivasabhatta Mahayogindra. All of these works regarded as the greatest hatha yoga manuals available. The above-stated yogis in their texts recommended various practices for achieving physical, mental health, farther attain spirituality and liberation through Hatha yoga practices. Such practices contain asana, purification techniques, pranayama, mudras, dhyana and nadanusandana. Along with that, they also focussed on the importance of mental activity and respiratory activity. The main objective of Hathayoga is to create an absolute balance between interacting activities and processes of the physical body, mind and energy. Hatha yoga strongly emphasises on 'Prana shakti' (life force) and 'Manas shakti' (mental force) that are the two fundamental creators that prevail in a human body. Hatha yoga further acknowledges the potentiality of creating the balance between mind and life forces, resulting to awakening 'Kundalini' through 'Sushumna Nadi'.

**The limitations of this paper:** This paper tries to examine hathayoga. Though hathayoga speaks about attaining Rajayoga, this paper tries to limit to prana and mind in the process of attaining Rajayoga.

### Terminological clarifications

This paper tries to address the major terms that are associated with Hatha Yoga, thereby facilitate in developing a conceptual clarity on the paper.

### Prana

The word "pran" signifies "life," and "a" denotes "movements of breath," therefore, the term "prana" literally means "flow of life." As a result, prana is a life-sustaining electromotive force. One of the fundamental elements in the cosmos is prana. The prana covers the entire cosmos. Everything that we perceive is a manifestation of prana, yet it moves through our bodies in a unique way. Prana has been divided into two categories: gross and subtle. While gross prana takes the form of breath, subtle prana takes the form of energy. In the human body, life force is divided into five main and five minor pranas depending on their location and

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functions. While naga, koorma krikara, devadatta, and dhananjaya are the minor pranas, the main pranas are prana, apana, samana, udana, and vyana. All are responsible for different functions in the human body. Prana is concentrated in the chest and keeps the heart and respiratory system working properly. Apana it operates in the pelvic region between the navel and perineum and sustains the functions of kidney, bladder, bowels, excretory organs and reproductive organs. It is responsible for expulsion of gas, faeces, urine and semen. The samana, which is located between the navel and the diaphragm, it acts as a balancer between the opposing energies of prana and apana. It is in charge of metabolism as well as activating and maintaining the digestive system. Udana is a force that moves in the extremities and is in charge of regulating the brain's activity as well as the sensory organs, leg, arm, and neck movement. Vyana permeates the entire body and serves as a backup energy source for the other pranas when they need an extra push. Additionally, it controls how muscles move. Similar to this, even minor pranas have distinct bodily functions, such as naga, which causes belching and hiccups. Koorma facilitates eyes to blink and thereby enables in maintaining the health of the eyes. Krikara promotes yawning, quenches, thirst, hunger, and also helps with breathing. Devadatta aids in sneezing and breathing. Dhananjaya permeates the entire body and supports the muscles, arteries, veins, and skin. This is the final prana to leave the body after death, and it is also what causes the corpse to decompose<sup>[1]</sup>. All of these pranas to function in the body use seventy-two thousand nadis. For this reason, hatha yogis said that in order to reach a higher stage of yoga, nadis should be cleaned via practise of asanas and pranayama in order to allow for the natural flow of vayu.

### Mind

The literary equivalent of the mind is chitta. It simply signifies individual awareness and has three different mental states. Its root term is chit, which means to see. These mental states include the conscious state, the subconscious state, and the unconscious state. The mind works through the five sensory and action organs in our body. According to yoga and ayurveda activities of the mind works based on the three gunas, which are sattva guna, rajo guna and tamo guna. The mind directly influenced by their interaction. If there is predominance of the sattva guna then the mind become quiet, highly concentrated, pure, and there will be no disturbance to mind. Predomination of the tamas causes to slow thinking, dull mood, inactive, sluggish and nothing in the world can keep you active, spiritual or blissful. If the rajas dominants then this guna will make the mental condition scattered, dissipated, angry, fickleness, duality, restless, aggressive and developing a split in the personality. Hatha yogis recommended a variety of techniques and a yogic balanced diet to help create a stable and sattvik mind. The hathayoga text Gheranda Samhita quotes the sage Gheranda muni as saying that one may manage one's mind by exerting control over or removing one's sense organs from external objects.

### Correlation of Prana and Mind

The definition of hathayoga must first be understood in order to make this notion obvious. The word Hatha is the combination of two syllables that which 'Ha' and 'Tha'. 'Ha'

represents prana and 'Tha' represents mind. Therefore, that hathayoga means the union of the pranic energy and mental energy<sup>[2]</sup>. Prana and mind plays a vital role in attaining the success in hathayoga. All yogis explained about relation and importance of combination of prana and mind in their treatises. The well-known treatises on hathayoga among them are referred to as hathayoga pradipika. The idea of prana and mind was explained by the famous hatha yogi Swatmarama. They stated:

“Chale Vate Calam Chittaim Niscale Niscalam Bhavet/  
Yogi Sthanutvamapnoti Tato Vayum Nirodayet//2//<sup>[3]</sup>.”

So long as breathing goes on, the mind remains unsteady; when it stops, the mind becomes still and the yogi attains complete motionless. In the fourth chapter of hathapradipika stated, “When prana moves through sushumna and manas merges into the sunya”<sup>[4]</sup>. It signifies that when manas merges into sunya this is the state of complete inactivity of mind. Hence, one should restrain one's breath. When prana is present in the body, it indicates life; otherwise, it indicates death. The human body has seventy-two thousand nadis via which prana travels throughout the body. Three of them, sushumna, ida, and pingala, are extremely significant nadis. The prana does not enter or flow if the nadis are impure. Poor vayu channelling makes it more likely for us to develop illnesses including headaches, asthma, coughing, and eye and ear pain. All of them lead to mental instability. Hatha yogis strongly advised asana, shat karmas, and pranayama as techniques for clearing impurities from the nadis. When breathing is restricted, the mind also stabilises, and when the mind is under control, breathing also stabilises. For instance, many individuals experience worry and anxiety before giving a speech or giving a presentation in front of an audience. If they take deep breaths in and out, it will help them feel a little more relaxed and less stressed. For this reason, they advised kumbhakas practice every day to control breathing as well as mind.

### The role of Prana and mind for awakening the Kundalini:

Kundalini is the vital spiritual energy which dormant resided in human body at the pelvic region that known as muladhara chakra. It signifies much more than simply the idea of a little snake living at the base of one's spine, though. Kundalini was believed by the yogis of ancient India to be their link to the holy and divine force of the cosmos and of creation itself. They referred to such power as prana, the energy of creation. From the muladhara chakra, the three prominent nadis—sushumna, ida, and pingala emerged. There are seven chakras (energy centres) present into the sushumna nadi, this nadi travels throughout the spinal cord from pelvic region to crown of the head (brahma dwara). Muladhara is the first chakra from bottom, which situated at the base of spine; second, one is swadistana present at genital organs, manipura chakra is in the navel region, anahata is resided at heart. Vishuddhi is located in the area of throat, ajna located in between the eyebrows and sahasrara is the last and ultimate chakra

<sup>2</sup> Swami Digambarji and PT. Raghunath sahstri kokaje (2018). Hathapradipika of Svatomarama. Kaivalyadhama Samiti Lonavla. Page no. 1

<sup>3</sup> Swami Digambarji and PT. Raghunath sahstri kokaje (2018). Hathapradipika of Svatomarama. Kaivalyadhama Samiti Lonavla. Page no. 35

<sup>4</sup> Page no. 134

<sup>1</sup> Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Four Chapter on Freedom. Yoga Publication Trust, Munger, Bihar, India. Page no. 96-97.

situated at crown of the head. Kundalini Shakti is sleeping at muladhara chakra and it is like opening door for attaining the liberation. Hatha yogis recommended a variety of yogic practises, including diverse asanas, shat karmas, different types of pranayama, and mudras, to control breath, stabilise the mind, connect the prana and apana Shakti, and awaken the kundalini Shakti. Prana vanishes as the kundalini awakens.

According to hatha yoga Prana and mind together plays an important role in awakening the kundalini and attain liberation. Both are interdependent. Therefore, whenever mind is ceased, maruta also become ceased similarly mind is active maruta also become active. Hatha yogi's mental and respiratory activities resemble to the mixed state of milk and water respectively. When prana and apana together enters into sushumna amaroli, sahajoli and vajroli will be accomplished. In that time mind attains deepest concentration and external consciousness disappears. The constant flow of prana into susumna pierces all the chakras one by one. The practitioner will get feeling of bliss. Later they become highly influenced by spirituality and attain the state of super consciousness. This leads them to attain liberation.

### Conclusion

Hathayoga is a magnificent science that everybody can do in accordance with their individual abilities. Even though it is difficult to practise all the skills at least a handful of it can be done every day. For the majority of people, hathayoga's asana, pranayama, and meditation approaches are enough. Finally to conclude daily practice of asana will improve physical health, while pranayama practises limit the mind from wandering and also raise the mind to a higher level of consciousness.

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