

Satyam Speaks Ida and Pingala



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With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

Satyam Speaks

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Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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Swami Satyananda Saraswati

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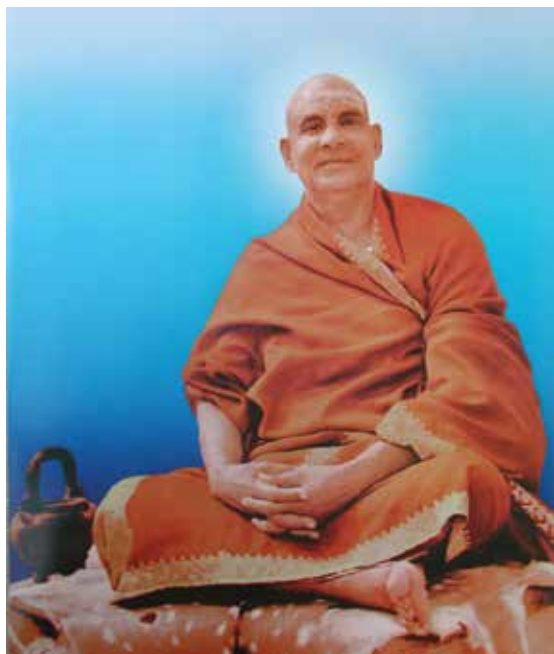
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Dedication

*In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.*



Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*

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1

Introducing Ida Pingala



The centring of the ida and pingala and detachment to both the inner and outer world is not easy. In fact, you cannot make it happen consciously. It can only happen spontaneously. But at least bear it in mind in your daily life encounters and when you practise yoga techniques. It is this centring, this razor's edge between the ida and pingala principles that is the essence of spiritual life.

The word 'yoga' signifies the state of harmony, and the word 'hatha' signifies the solar and lunar energies, the two forces that reside in the human body. These two forces are known as ida and pingala. They represent the sun and moon, Shiva and Shakti, or consciousness and life. These two channels flow throughout the body and in modern scientific terms, they are known as the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Ida carries the force responsible for thinking and mental activities; pingala carries the force representing prana or vital action. These two forces are spread throughout the body.

The force of bio-energy, or *prana*, is one through which we live, and the force of consciousness, or *chitta*, is one through which we think and feel. These two forms of energy control each and every function in the human body. They are responsible for our mobility, our thinking and our total physical and mental existence. When there is disharmony between them there is disease, restlessness and disturbance; and when there is harmony between them, there is peace and good health. Through the practices of hatha yoga, these energies are balanced and regulated, the chakras (*chakra* meaning pranic or psychic centre) and the whole body are purified, and a state of union, harmony and peace is achieved.

When prana is flowing in the correct voltage, one feels strong, energetic, enthusiastic, and all the sense faculties are sharp. When the voltage falls, one feels physically weak and exhausted. When the body is healthy and the nadis allow free flow of prana it is like a well-tuned radio, picking up with perfect clarity the surrounding energies. An unhealthy body is like an old, dilapidated radio. It does not tune in as well as it should to the surrounding energies.

The role of ida and pingala

Man today is suffering both physically and mentally from a blockage of energy. This is very difficult to understand because people have become so materially minded. They know many things about the physical nature, but very little

about the spirit, the final sphinx. When people hear music they start jumping because it affects their gross body. The mind is limited to the material base of experience, so they are unable to perceive the subtle sound vibrations of the music. How to break this addiction to materialism?

Man should begin to see the mind behind the mind, the matter behind the matter. Scientists could see, so they came up with the concept of energy. For the ordinary man, matter was just matter, but for the scientist it became the base of energy. Therefore, he could liberate energy from matter. In the same way, we should conclude that mind and consciousness are final and absolute and that it is impossible for man to transcend this realm and have a wider range of experience.

There seems to be a cataract on our inner vision and due to that we are unable to experience life as it should be experienced. Improper experience creates pain. Experience depends on the quality of consciousness. How can we improve the quality of consciousness? This must be done practically, not intellectually, through the practice of hatha yoga.

Hatha yoga practices like neti, kunjal, shankhaprakshalana, uddiyana bandha, and many more are not merely physical purifactory processes. They do purify your physical body, it is true, but they also purify the major and minor chakras, which are related to negative and positive energy, ida and pingala. After the awakening of the chakras, you have to deal with the flow of energy in the body. The nadis are the conductors of energy. Mental energy or ida is responsible for mental functions; pranic energy or pingala is responsible for life and activity, and the spiritual energy flow or sushumna is responsible for spiritual experience.

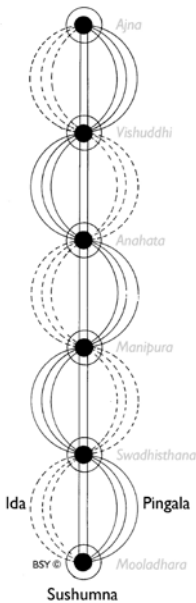
The progression of hatha yoga

Hatha yoga does not denote yogasanas. *Ha* stands for *Surya*, the sun, or pingala nadi, the vital energy, prana. *Tha* stands for *Chandra*, the moon, or ida nadi, the mental energy. Hatha yoga is meant to effect harmony between the discordant

principles in the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Sushumna nadi is the central nervous system. If purity, peace, harmony and strength prevail in the nervous system, the psychic centres become awakened.

Hatha yoga is not only the union of prana and mind. It means the union of prana and mind with the Self. In the spine, there are three nadis known as ida, pingala and sushumna. Nadi here does not mean nerve; it is not a physical channel. It means flow, like the flow of electricity within a cable. One wire carries the negative force, and another carries the positive force of electricity. In hatha yoga, ida nadi represents the negative force, the flow of consciousness; pingala nadi represents the positive force, the flow of vital energy, and sushumna nadi represents the neutral force, the flow of spiritual energy.

Ida and pingala are within the framework of the spinal column and these two channels flow from the bottom to the top, crossing each other at four junctions or *chakras*.



Finally, they unite with each other in the medulla oblongata in ajna chakra. The two points where the two forces originate and terminate are most important for the awakening and sublimation of this energy. The third channel, sushumna, flows within the spine intersecting at the four main junctions or chakras. From these four chakras, thousands of channels carry prana and consciousness throughout each and every part of the body. In hatha yoga it is said that 72,000 channels carry pranic and mental force in the body. The union, the connection between these three flows, occurs in ajna chakra. Commentators have said union between ida and pingala is hatha yoga. But I say that union of ida and pingala with sushumna is hatha yoga.

Ida-pingala aspects

The ida and pingala nadis are the pathways of the two different aspects of prana. They represent the two opposite poles of the same energy. Associated with these two nadis are various attributes or qualities. Some of these are as follows:

Quality	Ida	Pingala
<i>Breath</i>	left nostril	right nostril
<i>Temperature</i>	cold	hot
<i>Sex</i>	female	male
<i>Activity</i>	mental	physical
<i>Energy</i>	negative	positive
<i>Planet</i>	moon	sun
<i>Tao</i>	yin	yang

The number of possible attributes for ida and pingala are endless, for we see this dual property in all of nature. In the human body, both the macrocosm and the microcosm are based on these two polarities, for examples – arteries/veins, sympathetic/parasympathetic nerves, sodium/potassium in the conduction of nerve impulses.

We live in a world of duality: day/night, light/dark, good/bad, introversion/extroversion, knowledge/action. We inhabit a world of polarities, which has been symbolically represented in yoga as ida and pingala, and in many other philosophies, for example, the yin and yang of Taoism. These symbols can be used to help us understand our universe at all levels.

These two nadis are associated with the two nostrils: pingala with the right and ida with the left. The ancient yogis, with their detailed awareness of the human body, found that the flow of breath did not pass equally through each nostril. At any given time, it was more than likely that the flow of air through one nostril would be greater than the other nostril.

This is an aspect of our body that even physiologists have never seriously researched. No one seems to have asked the question, “Why have we got two nostrils?” There should be a good reason and perhaps it is directly related to ida and pingala.

The yogis of antiquity discovered that when the left nostril had the predominant flow of air then the pranic flow in ida nadi was also predominant. When the right nostril had the greatest flow the pingala had the greatest flow of prana. The flow of air through the nostrils and consequently the pranic flow continually alternates. Under normal conditions the flow through the left nostril is predominant for about 90 minutes and then the right flow becomes predominant for about ninety minutes. During changeover from one to the other, flows are equal and the prana flows through the sushumna nadi. This generally lasts for a few minutes. These flows can also be artificially altered in response to individual needs. The study of these flows, their meaning and implications in life is the subject of the science of swara yoga.

Each of us fluctuates between periods of mental and physical activities. Generally, due to the type of work we do we tend to either do too much mental work or too much physical work. We are either too introverted or too extroverted. There are times when we attempt mental work yet find it more difficult than usual. We generally force ourselves and end up with a headache or in a bad mood. At other times we want to do some physical work yet our mind is not on the job; we are thinking of everything else but the physical work involved. At other times just the opposite is the case – mental work comes easily and without effort; or conversely we can do physical work with zest and enthusiasm. There are auspicious times when we are tuned in to certain types of work. If we are introverted, then we are more likely to successfully undertake mental tasks; if we are extroverted then we are more likely to accomplish physical or active work with more success.

A sure indicator of which type of work is suitable is the predominant flow of air in the nostrils. If the right nostril

has the greatest flow, then we are most likely to be actively inclined. We are more suited to physical work. The mind is extroverted and the body generates more heat. If the left nostril has the greatest flow, then the mind is introverted and any kind of mental work can be undertaken. During sleep ida is dominant. If pingala is flowing it is normally more difficult to sleep. Ideally during meal times pingala should flow. If it doesn't then the digestive processes may not be as efficient as they should be.

These two aspects of prana, which are particularly characterized by the flows in the ida and pingala nadis, represent the two most obvious characteristics of each human: the abilities to think and act. The flow of breath through these nostrils and the flow of prana through their corresponding nadis greatly influence our lives. Generally, the flows are involuntary, but it is possible to manipulate the flows using willpower and various yogic techniques.

One can make either of the air flows predominate for a specific reason. For example, if there is work to be done but we feel sleepy, it is possible to muster the necessary physical energy by artificially activating the flow of air in the right nostril and curbing the flow in the left nostril. This in turn ensures that pingala is dominant and that ida is subservient. However, under ideal circumstances the flow in each nostril should be dominant for a total of about twelve hours over each daily cycle of twenty-four hours. Under these circumstances one is neither too physically or mentally active.

In yoga practices the aim is to make the flow in each nostril exactly the same. Again, this is done by means of pranayama. When the flow of air is equal in each nostril then the flow in the ida and pingala nadis is also the same and prana begins to flow in sushumna, the most important nadi in the bioplasmic body. This is the most auspicious time for the spontaneous occurrence of meditation. In fact, it is said that prana must start to flow in sushumna for the experience of meditation to take place. Without this,

meditation cannot occur. Under these circumstances one is neither too physically restless nor bombarded with excessive thoughts. One is content in the middle point between the two extremes. This is why pranayama is so important in yoga. It is an excellent tool in preparing the body and mind so that they become a perfect receiver of higher awareness. Pranayama practices help to prepare the ground for meditation.

When there is equilibrium between these two forces in the physical body, which you can achieve either through pranayama, shatkarmas or bandhas, then there is an awakening of a third energy force – sushumna, the autonomic nervous system. This particular sushumna nadi does not operate. It remains dormant. It is always in a state of rest. As long as ida and pingala nadi are functioning, and thereby the mind and prana are functioning, it will not work. When there is balance, at once, an awakening of the sushumna nadi takes place.

There were two birds, black and white, tied to a peg with two ropes. They flew for a while but had to come back, since they were tied. Thus they flew many times. Ultimately, they got tired and slept peacefully near the peg.

The above-mentioned illustration refers to ida and pingala. They are two birds, as it were. The flow in the right nostril corresponds to pingala or surya nadi and the flow in the left nostril corresponds to ida or chandra nadi. The alternate functioning of ida and pingala keeps one away from one's inner consciousness. So long as they alternately work, samadhi cannot be attained. It is only when the two birds, ida and pingala, are tired and retire at the centre, the heart or the self, that sushumna awakens and the process of meditation becomes automatic.

According to swara yoga, when both of the nostrils flow equally it indicates that sushumna is flowing. At this time one should give up all worldly work and meditate. It is a common experience that sometimes the meditation is wonderful. It is because there is harmony in the entire system. When sushumna does not function, one does not get concentration

even with effort. It is important that the functioning of ida and pingala should be in harmony by meditating on them, thus making it possible for sushumna to function.

Nadis – the paths to total experience

Nadis are visible as currents of light to a person who has developed psychic vision. In recent times, the word nadi has been translated as ‘nerve’, but actually nadis are blueprints for physical manifestation. Like the chakras which are not part of the physical body, although they correspond with the nerves. Nadis are the subtle channels through which the pranic forces flow. Out of the large number of nadis in the psychic body, ten are major. Of these, three are most significant: ida, pingala and sushumna. The most important of these three is sushumna. All the nadis in the psychic body are subordinate to sushumna.

The sushumna nadi runs within the spine. It should not be confused with or identified with the physical spine that we are normally aware of. This nadi runs from the region of the perineum (between the anus and sexual organs) to the region of the brain. It connects mooladhara chakra in the perineum to ajna chakra, in the mid-brain at the top of the spine passing through various other chakras en route. Again these chakras should not be regarded as physical entities; they are part of the bioplasmic or pranic body. As such they are located within but are not of the physical body.

The nadis are the medium for the flow of consciousness throughout the physical structure of man. The mental energy, the pranic energy, and the spiritual energy flow through and through the body by the medium of the nadis. As the negative and positive forces of electricity flow through complex wires, in the same way prana shakti and mental shakti or *manas shakti* flow through every part of our body via media which are known as nadis. Sushumna, the central nadi, conducts the spiritual energy. It transcends the other two forces. At present, because sushumna is dormant, ida and pingala are supplying energy to the whole physical body.

Right now, every single thing we do is on account of ida and pingala interacting with each other. From dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn, we are nothing but a manifestation of the interaction of these two forces. When there is disharmony between ida and pingala, ill health invariably results. If there is a disturbance in the pranic force, physical diseases originate. If there is turbulence in the mental force, psychological diseases originate. However, you must remember that disturbances never occur only in prana or only in manas. If prana is deranged, manas will then be affected and if manas is in disorder, prana will suffer the consequences. Therefore, no disease is purely physical or purely psychological; every disease is a combination of psychic and somatic factors.

The ida system is responsible for the mind, pingala is the channel for the flow of prana, and sushumna is the channel for the awakening of the spiritual consciousness. Prana shakti or pingala, the manas shakti or ida, and atma shakti or sushumna, pranic force, mental force, and spiritual force – these three are the constituents of our existence. Man is nothing beyond these three. If man is to have knowledge of himself, he has to have knowledge of these three. Purifying the nadis is done through the process of hatha yoga. By this process we clear the channels of prana and the channels of mental shakti. The practices of asana, pranayama, concentration and meditation are all intended to awaken the various nadis and pathways of energy.

2

Physiology of Ida Pingala



Yoga is a perfect practical system of physical, mental and spiritual health. According to the basic yoga philosophy, man is a composition of three basic constituents: life force or prana shakti, mental force or chitta shakti, and spiritual force or atma shakti.

Prana is the universal life force, and this body has a certain amount of it. Our existence is a miracle of prana shakti. It is on account of prana that we live, move and grow. This prana shakti is not the air we breathe; it is inherent in us; we are born with it. For up to four months the foetus lives on the mother's prana, but from the fifth month on, it develops an independent pranic unit. Life is the manifestation of prana.

Besides prana, there is another shakti in the body called mind or consciousness through which we are able to think, remember, analyze and differentiate. There are so many mental faculties within us and they are all the play or manifestation of the mental shakti.

Prana shakti and mental shakti are represented in this physical body by two important flows known as pingala nadi and ida nadi respectively. In every electric bulb you have two wires, positive and negative. In the same way, in every organ and part of the body, there is a combination of both of these shaktis. Prana shakti and mental shakti pervade the whole body of man.

Pranic force is positive and mental force is negative. When these two are connected, they create energy. If there is any disconnection, what happens? If you remove one of the wires from a switchboard, the light will not burn. It is the same in the lower and higher organs. If one of the energies flows and the other does not, then the organs do not function. Therefore, according to yoga, there should be a balanced distribution of energy to every part of the body from head to toe. If there is any imbalance, there is illness.

This life force and mental force permeate the whole body, not only the parts of the body which are perceptible but every interior component and cell of the human body. When there is no prana there is death. Without chitta there is no awareness. Consciousness and prana move within the body, but normally remain separate. When they do unite and are in perfect balance with each other at the top of the spinal cord, the mind undergoes a state of fission and energy issues

forth. There is an explosion of knowledge, a moment when you see everything as luminous.

The moon means the mental energy of chitta. It is the subtle force which is concerned with the mental layers. The pranic force is like the sun, dynamic and active. The two create the extremities of introversion and extroversion. It is the practice of hatha yoga which enables the fluctuations between these two energies to become harmonious and unified into one force. The word energy is used here in the physical sense, this is not about psychic energy, this is about physical energy which scientific instruments can and do register in amps or cycles per second.

Prana shakti and chitta shakti are both physical energies. Atma shakti, the third type of energy, is spiritual. It is non-physical, it is transcendental, formless energy. Mooladhara chakra produces both the physical and spiritual energy, but the spiritual energy is produced by a larger generator. This energy cannot be conducted by either ida or pingala. For this there is another line called sushumna which conducts the spiritual energy from mooladhara straight up to sahasrara in order to open the whole brain.

Yogis realized the existence of these forces and understood their relationship. They said that man has three main flows of energy, ida, pingala and sushumna, which have been roughly translated as mind, body and spirit. The third flow is the result of the balanced interaction of the first two. They also said that man functions mainly in the first two areas of body and mind, pingala and ida, the third aspect being dormant until it is stimulated by yoga or some other discipline.

Yogis did not describe the nadis in terms of structures, though structure exists to handle them. They described them in terms of energy, *prana*, vital and life-giving for pingala, and *chitta*, consciousness and knowing for ida.

The attributes of ida-pingala

Ida and pingala have many meanings. The following list indicates a few of these characteristics:

Ida	Pingala
breath flow through left nostril	breath flow through right nostril
parasympathetic nervous system	sympathetic nervous system
introversion	extroversion
awareness	energy and action
mind	prana
moon	sun
subjectivity	objectivity
white	red
<i>tha</i>	<i>ha</i>
coolness	heat
inactive	active
yin	yang
female	male

Pingala can be defined as the dynamic, active, masculine, positive, yang energy within our personality. It has a physical and mental side. Its material qualities are light, heat, solar, energy accumulating, creative, organizing, focused, centripetal and contractive. The positive, dynamic mental side within Freud's system is Eros, the pleasure principle, and in Jung's system it is the conscious personality, the rational discriminating side. We can say that pingala is psychosomatic energy, outwardly directed, mind acting on body to motivate the organs of action, the *karmendriyas*. It is the basic energy of life.

Ida is the energy within the personality, which is passive, receptive, feminine, negative, yin. At the physical level it is dark, cold, lunar, energy dissipating, disorganizing, entropic, expansive, centrifugal and relaxing. At the mental plane Freud called it Thanatos, the death instinct, and Jung called it anima, the unconscious female within, emotional, feeling, intuitive and non-discriminating, the background on which the differences can be seen and which unifies. This is the somopsychic aspect of man, where energy is inwardly directed, and the body acts on the mind. Ida controls the sense organs or *jnanendriyas* and, therefore, gives us knowledge and awareness of the world we live in.

The third force

Another force exists in nature which is little understood or even appreciated, but which is of vital importance. It is a fact that when two opposing forces are equal and balanced, a third force arises. Strike a match on a matchbox and you create fire, bring positive and negative currents together and you can work machinery, unite body and mind and a third force called *i*, spiritual energy, arises. This is one of the aims of yoga, because only when sushumna awakens can the super power of kundalini, this maximum force, ascend safely to fuel, power and create cosmic consciousness. Sushumna is a high tension power line, and ida and pingala carry the domestic lines to power the basic necessities.

These three nadis – ida, pingala and sushumna – should be understood in an absolutely technical sense. They are not religious or symbolic expressions, but actual physical structures.

Functioning of the nadis

The nerve on the left controls the functions of consciousness, and the nerve on the right controls the functions of vitality and mobility. They function serially and not simultaneously. You must have observed your nostrils – one of them is freely flowing while the other is blocked. When the left nostril is

open, the lunar energy is flowing. When the right nostril is open, the pranic energy is flowing. It has been noted by investigators that when the right nostril is free, the left hemisphere of the brain is more actively functioning than the right. Similarly, when the left nostril is free, the right hemisphere of the brain is more actively functioning.

This finding has great significance as the left and right hemispheres of the brain govern all of our linear and spatial faculties. In addition, investigators found that the left nostril is cooler than the right. This is how these two nadis control the events of life. If they could be made to function simultaneously rather than serially, then both the hemispheres of the brain could participate and regulate the mental and vital processes. But this simultaneous function only occurs when sushumna nadi, the central nerve channel, is connected with the source of energy.

Carl Jung outlined the tantric view when he described the driving force of self-realization, which he called 'individuation', as a dialectical interaction between the opposites, beginning with conflict and culminating in synthesis and integration. When perfect balance is achieved, stabilized and perfected, a state of dynamic peace is also achieved, which is a paradox, a union of opposites, the synthesis of doing and not doing, a totally new way of perceiving and experiencing life.

Few of us realize this third, spiritualized state and most of us oscillate from one state to another. Every 90 to 180 minutes ida and pingala alternate their dominance and only for a few seconds or minutes does sushumna come into potential being. It is the goal of all yogic techniques to balance and harmonize ida and pingala, life force and conscious awareness, so that they join at ajna chakra to create the inner light of knowledge and bliss and reveal the truth.

In order to balance the flows of energy, yoga prescribes various techniques, asana, pranayama, shatkarma and meditation, which activate either ida, pingala or sushumna. This does not mean we are activating one structure but are,

via yoga, able to manipulate the energies underlying the three possible modes of existence.

The functional modes

Nadis are flows of energy, which move through each and every part of our body, the subtle counterpart of the physical flows such as nervous energy and blood. All of the thousands of nadis in the body are based on ida and pingala which spiral around the spinal cord. These are the basic two modes of function on which all of our bodily and mental processes work. Sushumna is the royal road, which takes us to higher awareness and transforms the function of ida and pingala.

Each and every cell of our body, every organ, the brain and mind, everything is polarized and interconnected at both the physical and subtle levels, and this allows us to think, speak and act in a concerted, balanced, synchronous manner, every part working to help every other part. There are two basic systems in the body that control this, ida and pingala, and if we stimulate any component of one system we turn on the whole system. This is how asana, pranayama, meditation, and the whole armamentarium of yogic techniques work, and this is what is meant when we say that yoga affects the nadis.

Research on the functioning

Arthur Deikman of the Department of Psychiatry, University of Colorado Medical Centre, USA, describes the two main modes of man's being from the perspective of modern psychology. At the same time, he describes the nadis ida and pingala using modern psychophysiological jargon. He states:

Let us begin by considering the human being to be an organization of components having biological and psychological dimensions of organization: an 'action' mode and a 'receptive' mode.

The action mode is a state organized to manipulate the environment. The striated muscle system and the sympathetic nervous system are the dominant physiological agencies. The main psychological

manifestations of this stage are focal attention, object-based logic, heightened boundary perception, and the dominance of formal characteristics over the sensory; shapes and meanings have a preference over colours and textures. The action mode is a state of striving, oriented towards achieving personal goals that range from nutrition to defence to obtaining social rewards, plus a variety of symbolic and sensual pleasures, as well as the avoidance of a comparable variety of pain.

Deikman describes *ida*, the receptive mode as organized around intake of environment rather than its manipulation. The sensory-perceptual system is dominant and parasympathetic function predominates. The EEG tends to alpha waves, muscle tension decreases, attention is diffused, boundaries become hazy, and so on. It is a state of not doing.

The epitome of the active mode is the state of body and mind a taxi driver would be in while driving through peak hour traffic. The epitome of the receptive mode is the deep relaxation of *yoga nidra*, or the introverted state of formal meditation. The true meditative state, which few scientific researchers really appreciate but which is the main aim of yoga, is an example of the third mode, or *sushumna* functioning, in which active and passive are fully balanced. Someone in this state is simultaneously externally and internally focused. For example, we should be driving a taxi and at the same time be in a state of total relaxation or 'not doing'. Or we would be sitting absolutely still and be filled with the dynamic energy of *shakti* so that we are fully awake and active internally. This is a very difficult state to describe.

We know that our active mode is designed to ensure survival and the passive mode is designed to ensure rest and recuperation of energy in the endless struggle for life and existence. Telepathy and psychic phenomena in general fit into this picture and we can hypothesize that telepathy is also designed to ensure survival. For example, we know that under conditions of extreme stress and in emergencies, people have

sent psychic calls for help to close friends or relations, the emergency somehow powering this previously latent faculty. Many 'primitive' peoples also utilize these powers and take them for granted wondering why it is that 'civilized' people make such a fuss about them.

Yogis also tell us that when we practise yoga, purify our nadis and become stronger and more aware, *siddhis* or powers must manifest as part of our spiritual development, though these are only side-effects and not the main aim of our practice of yoga. This, it seems, is because we develop a more synchronized functioning of all the components of our body and mind and awaken areas which have been dormant.

The need for balance

Though ida and pingala and their modes of activity are opposite, they are complementary and must be balanced for total health and peace of mind. More than this though, balance can open the door to the transcendental and to a new mode of functioning.

Most of us spend our lives in an unbalanced state. We tend to spend increasingly longer periods in the active mode as we grow out of our childhood and find it difficult to relax into the receptive state. This is probably a major factor in the spiralling incidence of psychosomatic disease today. Deikman's research emphasizes the fact that our imbalance is reflected in every activity as well as in our social, cultural and political organization. He stresses that the often devalued ida, the receptive, feeling and intuitive mode, is far from inferior or regressive and is in fact an essential component in our highest abilities.

Such research suggests that there is a very deep and urgent need for the reintroduction of concepts such as ida and pingala at the grassroots level of society and that the recent explosion of interest in yoga, meditation and esoteric philosophy is the result of deep-rooted pain and tension resulting from imbalance in the nadis. It points to the fact that our whole approach to ourselves, our science, society

and culture will require complete review and revision from the more total yogic perspective.

The nadis in the brain

Important research from neuroscience has shown us that the brain fits into the dual nadi model of human personality as handed down to us by yoga. In a radical and last ditch attempt to cure severe, unremitting epilepsy, Roger Sperry and his associates divided the brains of their patients down the midline structure linking the two brain hemispheres, the *corpus callosum*. To their surprise, not only did the epileptics cease seizures, but they came up with startling new findings which are radically altering our neurophysiological understanding of how the brain works and are revolutionizing our whole concept of man.

We have always known the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body, and vice versa. Sperry's findings, though still in the initial stages and requiring more research, show us each side of the brain handles a completely opposite but complementary mode of consciousness. This finding is extremely important as it verifies the yogic viewpoint.

Yogis and scientists, using different terminology and approaches, have come up with the same conclusions: that man is divided into two main modes of functioning. The circuits of the brain are based on ida and pingala nadis, consciousness or knowledge, and action or physical energy. We see ida and pingala at all three major levels of the nervous system.

1. *Sensory-motor nervous system (SMS)*: All electrical activity in the body moves in one of two directions, into the brain (afferent), ida, and out of the brain (efferent), pingala. Yogis have called the sensory nerves, which are governed by ida, jnanendriyas, and the motor nerves, governed by pingala, karmendriyas. These nerves are concerned with perception of and activity in the world.
2. *Autonomic nervous system (ANS)*: This is divided into the outward directed, stress handling, energy utilizing,

pingala dominant, sympathetic nervous system, and the inwardly directed, rest handling, energy conserving, ida dominant, parasympathetic nervous system. These two systems control and regulate all the autonomic body processes: heart, blood pressure, respiration, digestion, liver and kidneys and so on.

3. *Central nervous system (CNS)*: This consists of the brain and spinal cord and contains the controls for the SMS and ANS. The brain contains much more than this though, for it is a huge, ultimately complex computer, which stores and integrates information and puts our decisions into action in a superbly synchronized and orchestrated performance. Its functioning is definitely much more than its parts. Within the infinite circuitry of the brain resides more potential than we can realize in one lifetime; however, with regular practice, the techniques of yoga systematically clear and strengthen these circuits.

This is what the yogis have been telling us, that the circuitry for nadis and chakras exists within the CNS, along the spine and in the brain. If we are able to tap, purify, strengthen and reconnect these circuits via the various yogic techniques, we can totally transform our mind-body complex. The basis for yogic techniques lies in the fact that there is a nadi-chakra system, which can be seen, at the physical level, as being the sum total of the input and output of the various sections of the nervous system and the parts of the body which connect to it. This total body-mind complex functions on the power of the three basic types of energy – ida, pingala and sushumna. We can therefore begin to understand why so many yogic techniques are specifically aimed at balancing the ida-pingala flow and increasing our awareness of its fluctuations.

Left versus right

Scientific study of the hemispheres of the brain by Sperry, Myers, Gazzaniga, Bogen and later researchers, has shown us that the left side of the brain is usually concerned with

speech, logic, analysis, time and linear function, whereas the right side is silent, dark, intuitive, feeling, spatial, wholistic in function, and does not require linear, structured analysis for its knowledge, though how it does know is a mystery. The right side of the brain is the physical side of ida nadi, and the left brain, of pingala. Thomas Hoover, a researcher comparing Zen with neurological discoveries, sums up the situation when he states, ‘The hemisphere that speaks does not know; the hemisphere that knows does not speak’.

A number of word opposites have been used to describe and help us understand this view of brain function. Though the situation is not so simple, and each hemisphere must work in an integrated fashion, there is a definite trend to separate modes of function:

Left brain (pingala)	Right brain (ida)
analysis	understanding
verbal	spatial
temporal	‘here and now’
partial	wholistic
explicit	implicit
argument	experience
intellect	intuition
logic	emotion
thinking	feeling
active	passive

We could also add light versus dark, conscious versus subconscious, talkative versus silent, solar versus lunar, positive versus negative, mathematics versus poetry, rational versus mystical, objective versus subjective, digital versus analogue, and many others to aid our understanding.

Emotions in the split brain

Research by Marcel Kinsbourne, neurobiologist and neuropsychologist, director of the Department of Behavioural Neurology at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Centre for Mental Retardation in Waltham, Massachusetts, USA, throws light on brain functioning which points to the fact that the brain has two main modes of emotional activity. He has found that the two halves of the brain support different emotional states.

Research indicates that the left hemisphere governs happiness and positive feelings and the right brain governs sadness and negative feelings. In the abnormal situation, patients with right brain damage are often cheerful, elated and indifferent to their abnormal state. Left brain damage, on the other hand, can lead to a gloomy outlook on life and unjustified anger, guilt and despair. Most of us fluctuate from one state to another even in the normal situation, though not to the extremes found in brain damaged subjects. Still the experience of fluctuation can be distressing if we are not balanced and healthy.

The fact that the left brain is associated with bright, cheerful thoughts and the right with sad and depressing thoughts, Kinsbourne theorizes, points to the conclusion that this dual action of the brain is designed to handle our likes (pingala) and dislikes (ida). The things we like are handled by the left brain, which focuses on and then approaches the object or situation. This fits in with our active mode, the concept of the externally directed pingala nadi. We try to avoid or withdraw from the things we dislike and we tend to be much more concerned with the overall picture in this situation. This is handled by the right brain and fits in with our receptive mode, introversion and ida nadi concept.

The necessity of the right brain

The brain has two major modes or systems, which must work together and be harmonized if we are not to lose the essentials of our human existence. The nadis must be balanced for optimal functioning, for sushumna to function,

and for us to maximize our human elements and potential. Unfortunately, few of us are really balanced and most of us, especially men, tend towards the purely external, materialistic and technological pingala side rather than the subtle, intuitive, feeling ida side. When imbalance between the nadis is minor we may not even notice its effect, though it must manifest in our personality, behaviour, relationships and so forth, in ways that are baffling to us, and which can make our lives miserable. What happens in the normal situation can be better understood when we look at an extreme example.

Howard Gardner and his colleagues studied people with severely damaged right brains (ida) and found that they became robot-like, minus their essential human understanding. He found that only when both hemispheres of the brain are working together can we appreciate the moral of a story, the measuring of a metaphor, words describing emotion, or the punch line of a joke.

Without the right brain we lose our understanding and take things very literally. For example, someone might say that he has a broken heart and the right brain damaged person will ask, "How did it break?" They see the explicit, the facts, but cannot understand what has been implied. These people also tell jokes at the wrong moment, their sentences become meaningless and they confabulate – make up things. The important points in their sentences are lost and are submerged or flattened, becoming part of the background. There is just a stream of words without meaning or purpose. They also accept the bizarre and argue with what should normally be accepted. It is obvious then that the right brain, which yogis called ida or the receptive mind, is vital in the appreciation of relationships, of seeing how the parts fit together as a whole, in understanding.

There is also evidence to show that the right brain is not only important for normal understanding, but also holds the key for intuition and higher experience. Eugene D'Aquili, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School, USA, feels that split brain research indicates

that the circuits which underlie higher mental states, from flashes of inspiration to altered states of consciousness, lie within the right brain, ida, and are powered by the emotions. D'Aquili has formulated a neurological description of 'the intuitive perception of God' in which one sees reality as a unified whole, experiencing a feeling of oneness with the world. He feels it is a product of the *parietal-occipital* lobe on the right, 'non-dominant' side of the brain, which somehow takes over the brain's functioning. Time is experienced as standing still and a sense of absolute and complete unity of self with the cosmos is felt. Both are features of right brain function and this experience is long lasting and totally transforms people's lives so that they find new motivation and a healthier, more fulfilling perspective of their relationship with life.

This research indicates that unless we begin to take more notice of and develop the right brain, we cannot partake in the experience of higher consciousness. According to yogis, the right and left brain, ida and pingala, must be balanced for such an experience to take place.

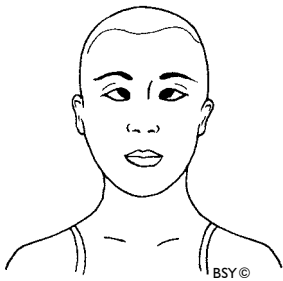
Scientific studies on the balanced view

Most of us fluctuate from one side of our brain to the other in well-documented 90-minute cycles of rest (ida) and activity (pingala). A study by Raymond Klein and Roseanne Armitage of the Department of Psychology at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, found that performance of tasks involving left and right brain activity comes in 90 to 100 minute cycles. For 90 minutes, subjects could do well on right brain tasks and then switch over to doing well in left brain related tasks. This also corresponds with the 90-minute fluctuation in nostril dominance and points to agreement with the yogic theory that there is an intimate relationship between the breath and the brain and their cyclical activity.

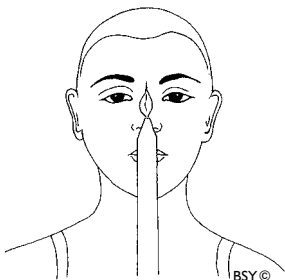
If we are unhealthy, then our brain cycles may become abnormal in rhythm, duration, quality of function, or in some other way. Our whole life is disturbed and this situation

actually occurs much more than any of us, even medical science, has previously realized. Yogis diagnosed dysfunction of brain rhythm by examining the flow of air in the nostrils.

Yogis have repeatedly asserted that there is a strong link between not just the nostrils and the brain but between the eyes and ears and all body organs. Of course, today we know from our anatomy and physiology that this is so, however, yogis were saying the same thing thousands of years ago. In meditative experience they could feel the flows of energy in the nerves moving into and out of the brain and the rest of the body. They were able to perceive even more subtle levels of their being because they invented techniques, which developed a great deal of sensitivity and strength. These techniques also allowed them to assert control over the nadis, the brain and all bodily processes.



Shambhavi mudra



Trataka

Shambhavi mudra and trataka are two of the most powerful techniques of kundalini yoga, designed to awaken ajna chakra by balancing ida and pingala. If this is so, and if the nadis described by yogis are in the brain then it means that yogic techniques can balance the brain hemispheres. Research from split brains is revealing that this is so. We know that in normal people, pictures appearing on the left side of our viewing field and sound in the left ear, both transmitted to the right brain, are less agreeable than when they are presented to the other side, according to Kinsbourne. Other research shows us that when we are gloomy we tend to gaze to the left, affecting the right hemisphere, whereas happiness causes the opposite to occur.

Motoyama has worked out that by measuring values of electrical skin resistance at acupuncture points in response to a small electric stimulus on both sides of the body, and then comparing the values from the left and right sides, any imbalance in the readings indicates that disease is present in the organ linked to the meridian being measured. He found that any percentage difference greater than 1.21 indicated disease. For example, when the heart meridian value on the left was more than 1.21 times greater than the right, the EEG might show an abnormal rhythm. One patient who was found to have imbalance in the liver, gall bladder and stomach meridians, but who only had symptoms of stomach upset was found on X-ray to have gallstones. One of Motoyama's laboratory assistants showed a large difference between the left and right bladder and kidney values shortly before being diagnosed as having cystitis.

It is interesting to note that yogis are also found to have abnormally high readings, but without disease, and Motoyama states that this indicates a greater range of activity of the nervous system as a result of yogic techniques.

These findings are very important because they indicate that pranic energy, or 'ki', which yogis have experienced as flowing in the nadis, is real. Yogis state that an imbalance in the nadis, especially ida and pingala, will cause disease and that yogic techniques can rectify this situation by acting on the nadis. Motoyama's work substantiates this. It points to the fact that not only is prana real, physical and measurable, but that its balanced activity is vital to our health and that we can use our measurements of pranic activity in the various organs of the body to diagnose impending or existing disease and thereby either prevent or treat the condition before it becomes too far advanced.

Such research is paving the way for new diagnostic techniques in medicine. We are beginning to absorb the subtler aspects of our existence into our modern scientific understanding of the body and are utilizing this knowledge in our armamentarium against disease to better our lives and to uplift society.

Imbalance in the nadis

The fact that the nadis are related to the nostrils is the basis for the science of pranayama. By manipulating the flows of breath we can learn to control the deeper and more subtle aspects of our body and mind, to release energy and to send it to areas of the body that we wish to energize, heal and awaken. This relationship between the flow of breath and the nostrils has been demonstrated by research from Romania.

Dr I.N. Riga, an ear, nose and throat specialist from Bucharest, Romania, studied nearly 400 patients suffering from one-sided nasal obstructions due to distortion and deviation of the nasal septum. He found that 89 percent of cases breathed more through the left nostril and were more prone to certain types of respiratory diseases such as chronic sinusitis, middle and inner ear infections, partial or total loss of the senses of smell, hearing and taste, recurrent pharyngitis, laryngitis and tonsillitis, and chronic bronchitis.

He also found these left nostril (ida) breathers were more likely to suffer from one or more of a wide variety of more distant disorders, such as amnesia, intellectual weakening, headaches, hyperthyroidism, heart failure, gastritis, colitis, peptic ulcer, poor liver function, constipation and reproductive problems, such as a decreased libido and menstrual irregularities. Patients whose breath flowed predominantly through the right nostril were predisposed to hypertension. Riga found that correction of nasal deformities helped to relieve the disease situation.

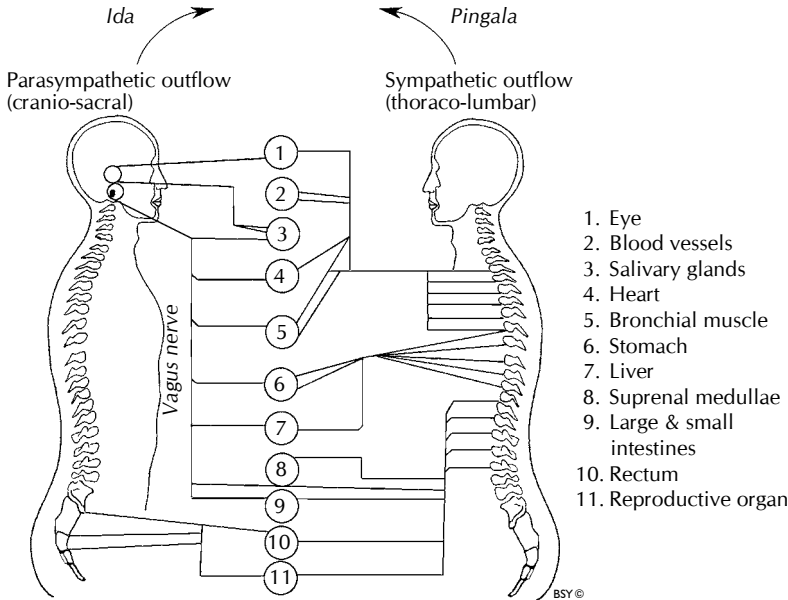
Implications of sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems

The two flows of breath are directly associated with the functioning of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, which regulate and maintain equilibrium of the different functions of the body. They are antagonistic; if one predominates, the other is subordinate. One system tends to conserve energy while the other tends to expend it; one system tends to prepare the body for external action, while the other

tends to rest the body and direct energy to internal processes. In general, the sympathetic nervous system speeds up the processes of life, such as the heartbeat, the breathing rate and raises body temperature. The parasympathetic nervous system, on the other hand, slows them down, conserving the body's reserve energy. They function night and day, governing the output of the heart, the blood pressure and the speed at which the body's organs operate. Most of these functions are carried out automatically; because of this, we are rarely aware of the activity of these two vital counterbalancing systems.

The flow of breath through the left nostril tends to stimulate all the physical organs and nerves associated with the parasympathetic nervous outflow; the flow of breath through the right nostril stimulates organs and nerves of the sympathetic nervous outflow.

This diagram illustrates only the main nerve connections. There are many more, as well as numerous interconnections between the different nerve pathways.



To clarify the diagram, the list shows how stimulation of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nerve outflows affect the different organs. The chart is an oversimplification, but it illustrates that the sympathetic system tends to mobilize the forces of the body for external action while the parasympathetic system tends to mobilize the forces for internal functioning. Ida is the parasympathetic outflow; pingala is the sympathetic.

Organ	Sympathetic Outflow	Parasympathetic Outflow
<i>Eye</i>	<i>Stimulation gives:</i> Dilation of pupil	<i>Stimulation gives:</i> Constriction of pupil
<i>Blood vessels of head</i>	Constriction (increases brain efficiency)	
<i>Salivary glands</i>		Secretion of saliva (digestion)
<i>Heart</i>	Rate quickens	Rate slows
<i>Bronchial muscles</i>	Relaxation, constriction; air intake increase	Constriction; air intake reduces
<i>Stomach wall</i>	Relaxation (digestion stops)	Contraction (digestion begins)
<i>Liver</i>	Mobilization of glycogen (for sudden energy needs)	
<i>Suprarenal medullae</i>	Secretion of adrenaline (to face emergencies)	
<i>Small intestinal walls</i>	Relaxation (tends to stop digestion)	Peristaltic contraction (stimulates digestion)
<i>Large intestine (colon)</i>	Relaxation (prevents bowel evacuation)	Peristaltic contraction (empties bowels)
<i>Rectum</i>	Constriction (prevents bowel evacuation)	Peristalsis (emptying of bowels)
<i>Reproductive organ</i>	Constriction of blood vessels	Dilation of blood vessels

The functions associated with the sympathetic nervous system tend to come into play when the breath flows predominantly through the right nostril. Conversely, all the functions associated with the parasympathetic nervous system tend to come into operation when the breath flows predominantly through the left nostril. At any time in the day, the flow in one nostril is usually greater than that in the other. This predominance also alternates gradually during the day, so that after some time the other nostril will have the greater flow of air.

There are many factors which determine which nostril will have the greater air flow. These include:

- Mental and emotional states
- Activity, whether physical, mental or strenuous
- Influence of moon, sun, planets, stars
- Time of day
- Climatic conditions such as temperature, humidity
- Illness

The number of factors is vast. The air will flow spontaneously according to the combined interaction of these factors. The study of these factors is called *swara yoga*, the yoga of rhythms.

The predominance of air flowing in either nostril determines whether the operation of the sympathetic or parasympathetic system is more dominant. There are also times when the flow of air in each nostril is the same. This occurs when this predominance of flow is changing from one nostril to the other. At this time there is perfect balance between the two nervous systems and a condition of physical equanimity. The *ida* and *pingala* are balanced at a physical level. But this also leads to a degree of mental and emotional balance in the individual because the mind is intimately related to the physical body. They are part of a total interrelated system. Therefore, balance of the two flows of the *ida* and *pingala* in the physical body also implies a tendency towards mental and emotional harmony. This time of perfect balance is the ideal time for meditational practices. In yoga, this balance

can be purposely induced through asanas, pranayama and other techniques.

Distribution of energy

Each and every fibre of the body is connected with this pranic current through a complex system of energy channels or nadis. The nadis have been researched and their function can be compared to that of an electrical system. Energy is distributed in our physical body in the same way as the electrical system distributes energy from the generating station to your room.

Mooladhara chakra is the generating station. From here, the energy is distributed through three high tension wires – ida, pingala and sushumna nadis, to the various chakra points or substations situated along the spine. From the chakra points, the energy is distributed through the main poles or major nadis to the different organs and parts of the body. From the major nadis another distribution takes place through thousands of minor nadis which carry the energy to each and every cell of the body.

Where there is no electricity, there is no light; where there is no energy, there is no life. You know what happens when there is a short-circuit in the electrical system – the lights go off for a minute. Or sometimes, due to overload, the voltage falls very low and all the lights go dim.

In this physical body also, the prana shakti sometimes undergoes a lot of alterations and depressions. From the different chakras, prana is distributed to all the major organs and parts of the body. At some stages there is an excess of energy and at others there is an energy drop. Everyone has experienced energy loss from time to time.

Some people frequently enter into states of depression in which their energy is so low that everything appears miserable and clouded and they do not like anything. Sometimes, although the major nadis are conducting prana, there is a failure in the minor nadis. Then the body does not work properly. Major disturbance, blockage or imbalance

in the energy channels results in what is termed in medical language a 'nervous breakdown'. So, all these conditions such as depression, breakdown, energy blockage, excessive energy are due to the various states of pranic energy.

Biological rhythms of ida-pingala

The specified times for practice are important in relation to body rhythms and solar and lunar activities. At these times there is a changeover of body and external energy rhythms, and sushumna nadi is more likely to become active.

Early morning means an hour and a half before sunrise. It is called *brahmamuhurta*, the period of Brahma. At this time the subconscious mind is active and if one is sleeping there are likely to be dreams. It is a time when unconscious experiences are more likely to manifest.

Evening, around the time of sunset, is called *sandhya*. *Sandhya* is the meeting of day and night. It represents the time when ida and pingala merge with sushumna in ajna chakra. The external influences of the sun setting, or the evening commencing, affect body rhythms and functions, making it conducive to the merging of the pranas in sushumna.

Similarly, at midnight and midday there is a changeover in the external and internal energies. All becomes tranquil. Midnight in particular is the time for sadhakas to awaken shakti. It is called the 'witching hour' because the 'ghosts' in the mind become active. Brain functions operate differently at night and different chemical hormones are released.

At these specified times there is a change in the levels of energy in ida and pingala. During each cycle of ida and pingala there are high and low phases when energy reaches either a peak or a low. In between each cycle there is a period when the energy is stable, and this is the most appropriate time for sadhana and breath retention. The times recommended for the practice of retention have been chosen on account of the biological and pranic activities that are taking place then.

Conclusion

You know that only one part of the brain is functioning; nine parts are locked. These nine parts of the brain contain infinite knowledge, experience and power, but we are not able to utilize it because there is no conscious force. When sushumna conducts this spiritual energy to sahasrara chakra, the dormant parts of the brain become active. Then they not only give you mental health, but also spiritual wealth. When the practitioner of yoga is able to awaken kundalini and connect it with sahasrara through sushumna nadi, he becomes the master of the body, mind and spirit.

Therefore, the secret of human health is the proper distribution of the three shaktis – prana, mind and spirit. In yoga this is done through the practices of hatha yoga which purify the physical body; pranayama which purifies the channels or nadis through which energy is distributed; and meditation which stops the flow of prana and mind and leads the spiritual energy directly to the brain, sahasrara chakra.

While scientists search for wonder drugs, external stimuli to probe the deeper aspects of man, yoga provides a concise and precise theoretical framework, within the nadi-chakra system, for a deeper understanding of the total human range of existence and the techniques by which to manipulate our internal environment, to stimulate internal secretions and to maintain balance, optimal health and higher awareness.

It is time we realized that the subtle and intangible aspects of human existence are as important as the tangible, solid and easily measurable materialistic side. It is because of our reliance purely on technology, the solid facts, and the external, pingala side of our universe that we have not found happiness, real and lasting security or peace of mind, because these things lie within us and are of the mind – ida, and subtle. Yoga offers the techniques to bring about balance in our lives, to not only realize the subtle, but, through a science of enhanced intelligence, intuition and creativity, to make the subtle side of life a practical reality and experience, a valid and important part of our lives as individuals and within society.

3

Ida, Pingala and Sushumna



The physical body has three forms of energy. One is mental energy, which can be measured with the most sophisticated instruments today. Another is pranic energy or vital energy, which can also be measured by scientific instruments. The third energy is known as spiritual energy and nobody has measured it yet. These are the three forms of energy. Out of these three energies, the first two function regularly in the body. The third energy is called in yogic terms sushumna, and it has to be awakened.

The two nadis, ida and pingala, respectively feed the two hemispheres of the brain, which in turn control every activity of the body. Ida and pingala function alternately and directly influence the temperature of the body, digestive and hormonal secretions, the brain waves and all the bodily systems. Ida and pingala nadis are responsible for the mundane existence. Pingala conducts the life that is in your body and ida conducts consciousness. Ida and pingala must be disciplined or made to function according to the laws of nature. Only when there is harmony between these two nadis can sushumna be awakened.

When a wire is to be connected to the main plug, the connections must be in good condition or else short circuits will occur. In the same way, the body must be purified. It should be free from toxic matter. When the awakening of energy, *shakti*, takes place in mooladhara chakra, the shakti is going to be conducted to the higher centres of the brain in the same way a wire is connected with the main – this connection is known as yoga.

This particular channel already exists in the human body, but it is not active, not operational. The practices of hatha yoga bring this channel into activity. Asanas, pranayama and the hatha yoga shatkarmas provide the best means of purification. Surya namaskara and surya bheda pranayama purify pingala nadi and the shatkarmas and pranayama will purify and awaken sushumna. There are specific asanas that are very important for purifying the nadis and inducing a mild awakening in the chakras.

Sushumna nadi

Sushumna is a symbolic passage or nadi which connects all the main chakras, through which the kundalini ascends from mooladhara to sahasrara. It is regarded as connecting all the different levels of consciousness.

In Sanskrit sushumna is ‘something very gracious and kind, and one of the seven principal rays of the sun, supposed to supply light and heat to the moon’. Here the number seven

occurs, the six chakras plus sahasrara. The sun may possibly represent the sahasrara which provides light (consciousness) to man (the moon). Also sushumna is gracious for it facilitates the ascent of kundalini and the resulting bliss and knowledge.

Sushumna is far more subtle than the physical body. However, for the purpose of yogic practices, it is regarded as being located in the centre of the spine, from top to bottom. Sushumna is the central pathway between the ida and pingala nadis. Ida and pingala have vast implications. They represent the internal and external aspects of existence. Sushumna implies the balance between them. Kundalini arises when there is perfect harmony between the outside and inside worlds.

Sushumna is regarded as a hollow tube in which there are three more concentric tubes. Each is progressively more subtle than the previous tube or nadi and contains the previous tubes within it. These represent the three aspects or *gunas* of nature: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*; and consciousness. The tubes or nadis are as follows:

1. *Sushumna* – signifying *tamas*
2. *Vajrini* – signifying *rajas*
3. *Chitrini* – signifying *sattwa*
4. *Brahma* – signifying consciousness

Tamas indicates ignorance, laziness and negativity; *rajas* indicates passion and activity; and *sattwa* represents purity, harmony and knowledge. The three aspects interplay throughout nature, in plant life, mineral life, animal life and the life of man. In an individual, any one of these aspects tends to predominate at a particular time. To raise levels of awareness *tamas* must be transmuted into raising of the kundalini through the central and most subtle passage, the *brahma nadi*.

Sushumna is regarded as being closed at its base near the mooladhara chakra. This is called the *Brahma dwara* – the gate of Brahman. This is the first gate that must be opened in order to ascend through the chakras. Yoga practices open

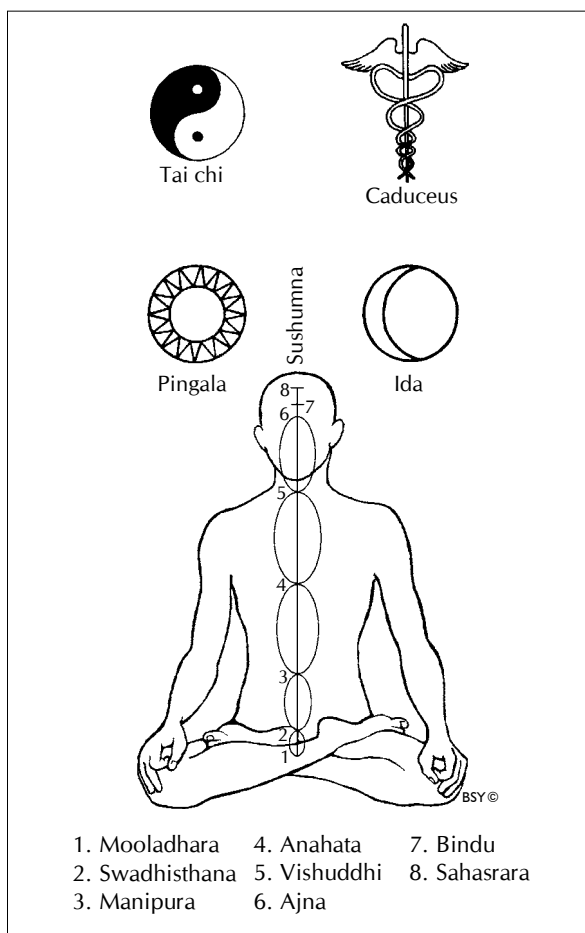
this door and allow the kundalini to rise upwards through sushumna. Sushumna originates from mooladhara chakra and terminates at sahasrara.

Ida and pingala mean much more than is widely known. The two nadis are depicted entwined about the spine or central axis, criss-crossing each other at the chakras. Ida and pingala begin at mooladhara chakra of the perineum. Mooladhara chakra corresponds to the stage of human development where awareness begins to unfold. From this chakra the pingala makes a semi-circular curve upwards on the right side of the spine. It crosses the spine again at swadhisthana chakra and proceeds on a similar curved path on the left side of the spine, until it crosses the spine again at manipura chakra. In the same manner, pingala continues upwards, crossing the spine in turn at anahata and vishuddhi chakras until it reaches and ends at ajna chakra at the top of the spine in the middle of the head. This is clearly illustrated on the diagram opposite.

The ida path follows a similar path as the pingala but in the opposite sense. They are reflections of each other. As pingala crosses to the right of the spine, ida crosses to the left and vice versa.

The central axis of ida and pingala is sushumna nadi. This nadi portrays the path of the mystics, the path of yoga, the narrow razor's edge between the path of ida and the path of pingala. It is depicted as rising straight upwards through the centre of the spine, meeting ida and pingala at the points where they cross the chakras. Sushumna starts at mooladhara chakra and passes through all the chakras in turn. Eventually it terminates in sahasrara – the absolute oneness. This is the realm, or non-realm, of *nirvana* or *kaivalya*, onlyness. It is within the sushumna that the kundalini rises, the progressive ascent of knowledge associated with higher states of awareness as the chakras are opened up.

The three paths are also known as *Ganga* (pingala), *Yamuna* (ida) and *Saraswati* (sushumna) after rivers in India, the last being a mythological junction where the two other



rivers actually join in Prayag, Allahabad. Ida and pingala indicate time, while sushumna is the devourer of time, since it leads to the timeless or eternity.

On the spiritual path, it is the integration and harmony of opposites at all levels that is important. The aim is to combine the opposites associated with duality so that they perfectly merge. This is the meaning of sushumna. It indicates balance and fusion of the opposite principles of ida and pingala.

Ida	Sushumna	Pingala
tha	hatha	ha
coolness	temperateness	heat
subjectivity	absolute	objectivity
yin	tao	yang
inaction	actionless action	action

There are many more possible characteristics that could be listed. In spiritual life all opposites must be balanced as one progressively expands awareness. This is symbolized by the crossing of ida and pingala at the chakras. The chakras represent the progressively higher levels of awareness.

The path of ida

This is the path of mental unfoldment, when one becomes aware of the inner potential of the mind. If one is totally concerned with this path, there is a tendency to unleash mental (psychic) powers, which are often used for selfish ends.

Many of the scriptures clearly state that concern only with this path of ida can eventually lead to a block on the spiritual path, and can even lead to a downfall. Many occult schools, operating without a competent guru, follow this path. They develop psychic powers amid an atmosphere of selfishness. Inner awareness is developed, but there is always a limit. Many people who are concerned only with this path develop neuroses and psychoses because they confront their inner seed problems or *samskaras* too quickly and too suddenly. They don't allow the *samskaras* to be exhausted through interaction with the outer world through work. This is also generally the case with drugs. They open up inner psychic awareness too quickly and can cause many (though not all) people to be suddenly overwhelmed by their inner complexes, phobias, etc. There is also a tendency for

many drug users to become concerned only with personal experiences and pleasure. This is the path of ida. This one-sided development eventually becomes an obstacle to further unfolding of one's potential on the spiritual path.

Knowledge of the inner world is an essential part of the spiritual path. Over-concern with exploring the inner world to the exclusion of all else can be a block. It can lead to a certain stage after which there will be no progress. One will either find that one's efforts to explore the mind will lead to states of unconsciousness or *laya* or one will be tempted to misapply one's knowledge, depending on the individual and the degree of success in exploring the mind. The ida path should not be followed to the exclusion of all else. Balance it with pingala, the path of external expression. It is only in this way that one can work out and remove one's problems, selfish motives and attitudes towards others. It is only in this manner that one can gradually develop understanding, love and positive relationships with other people and the world in general.

The path of pingala

This is the path that most people in the world are now following – the *pravritti marga* – the path of external action and enjoyment. It is the path of trying to attain knowledge through understanding of the outside world. Little significance is attached to understanding the inner world. One acts in the world mostly for personal gain and one's own welfare. One tries to manipulate other people and the immediate environment for one's own satisfaction and motives. Always there is a personal motive. Total concern with the outside world, the path of pingala alone, is an obstacle on the spiritual path.

From experiences in the world, from exhaustion of ambitions, from gaining satisfaction through the attainment of personal aims and finding that they give little happiness, will come a stage where one starts to question one's relationship with life, asking questions such as: What am I?

Where am I going? What is this life all about? What right have I to consider myself as being more important than others? Is this life really functioning according to the law of the jungle? When these questions are asked seriously, then a person will take positive steps to find answers. This is the start of spiritual awakening where the pingala path is supplemented by the ida path. One begins to combine outer activities with inner awareness.

Ida and pingala paths are usually depicted as starting from mooladhara chakra. But with respect to spiritual life, it is probably truer to say that pingala extends into the lower chakras, the chakras associated with instinctive life in man, animals and lower life forms. Ida, however, does start at mooladhara, for it is here that individual awareness starts to unfold. Below mooladhara there is no awareness, but external actions do exist. Therefore, pingala really has a nebulous beginning below mooladhara where life functions in its most primitive, basic and simple forms. This is only a concept.

Integration of ida and pingala

When the dual aspects of ida and pingala merge, a third force comes into existence. This force is the flow of spiritual energy in the sushumna nadi. Its awakening can only occur when ida and pingala are perfectly balanced. In an individual, this awakening of sushumna correlates with the awakening of energy in the spinal cord. The energy liberated transports the individual awareness to the transcendental spiritual realms beyond time and space. Before this awakening can occur, however, the mind and body must be adequately prepared over a long period of time, and the energies must be flowing sufficiently and evenly.

By combining the paths of ida and pingala, one's potential is unfolded in a balanced manner. Inner potential and awareness are expanded with a corresponding change in the actions and relationships with the external environment. The word kundalini means power and potential combined with awareness, understanding and a sense of identification

with other people. This understanding is necessary so that one acts for the good of others as well as oneself – for the overall good of everything. Kundalini rises in accordance with the level of ego effacement. This occurs for a short duration during intense meditation practices or more permanently through a total harmonization of one's life at all levels.

At ajna chakra, ida and pingala join and also end. This implies that after this point, the barriers and differences between the inner and the outer realms of existence are broken down. They become one harmonious whole. This is symbolized by sahasrara and is nirvana.

The integration of ida and pingala is profoundly important. It is impossible to make progress on the spiritual path beyond a certain point unless one slowly erases the power of the ego. This is done, by harmonizing inner life with outer life. This will not happen overnight. It must be progressive and spontaneous. The distinctive characteristic feature of a great yogi or a saint is a lack of ego. They have not achieved their illumination while maintaining a strong sense of individual ego. One cannot exist with the other in the same way that total darkness cannot exist at the same time as total daylight.

The best way to progressively reduce the power of the ego is to combine the ida and pingala paths. Integrate your duties and work in the world with meditational practices. This will help you to gain understanding of the inner world. The knowledge that you gain of the inner world will automatically reduce your egotistical tendencies in the outside world, and your new relationships with the external world will in turn help you to go deeper into the realms of the inner being. In spiritual life it is essential to balance inner awareness with external expression. Ida must be in balance with pingala.

The brain has ten compartments, and of these, nine are dormant and one is active. Whatever you know, whatever you think or do is coming from one-tenth of the brain. The other nine-tenths, which are in the frontal portion of the brain, are known as the inactive or sleeping brain.

Why are these compartments inactive? Because there is no energy. The active portion of the brain functions on the energies of ida and pingala, but the other nine-tenths have only pingala. Pingala is life and ida is consciousness. If a person is living but is unable to think, we say he has prana shakti but not manas shakti. Similarly, the silent parts of the brain have prana, not consciousness.

We know how to awaken fear, anxiety and passion, the basic instincts, but most of us do not know how to awaken these dormant areas of the brain. In order to arouse the silent areas of the brain, we must charge the frontal brain with sufficient prana, with sufficient vital energy and consciousness, and we must awaken sushumna nadi. For both these purposes we must practise pranayama regularly and consistently over a long period of time.

Sushumna and the chakras

Prana shakti and manas shakti collect in the chakras and form swirling masses of energy. Each chakra is a conjunction point for many nadis. There are numerous chakras in the body but the seven major ones, situated along sushumna nadi, are specifically concerned with human evolution.

At present, as sushumna is dormant, ida and pingala are supplying energy to the whole physical body. The bodily organs and systems are directly connected with ida and pingala. In between the two points where they emanate and terminate – mooladhara and ajna chakras – there are four junctions, swadhisthana chakra, manipura chakra, anahata chakra and vishuddhi chakra. In the process of awakening kundalini, the sadhaka must not only clear the energy channels or nadis, but also increase the quantity and quality of prana and store it in the chakras. Purification of the chakras and nadis is the first step to physical and mental health and the awakening of kundalini. Therefore, the chakras and nadis must be strengthened and purified and the four junctions should be put into proper working order through the practices of yoga.

From these four junctions, the pranic and mental energies branch off to the rest of the body. From each chakra, energy is distributed to various parts of the body. Each chakra is represented by a lotus with a certain number of petals. These petals symbolize the expression of outlet of energy. Ida is the mental energy and pingala is the pranic energy. These forms of energy are like positive and negative lines. When they come together, they produce an action. If the positive and negative lines are separated, then action does not take place, the light will not burn, the microphone will not work.

The importance of awakening sushumna

For awakening of sushumna, ida and pingala have to be suppressed. When both nadis are suppressed in kumbhaka, immediately after you will find that both nadis are flowing simultaneously.

In yoga and tantra it is very clearly indicated that when ida and pingala flow simultaneously for a long period of time, and sushumna begins to flow, then it is time to prepare for a spiritual event. Therefore, one should be conversant with swara yoga, the science of the breath cycle, and keep a close watch over the breathing process. The breathing pattern in the nostrils normally changes every fourth day, according to the cycles of the moon, but when both nostrils have been functioning equally well for at least fifteen days, that is an advance warning of an impending spiritual breakthrough.

Awakening of pingala nadi will awaken one portion of the brain and awakening of ida will awaken another portion. However, when kundalini enters sushumna, it affects the whole brain. In the ancient texts of tantra it has been clearly indicated that it does not matter if kundalini enters another passageway. If there is an awakening in pingala, one becomes a healer or a siddha, one who has control over nature, matter and the mind. When there is awakening in ida, one can predict things; one becomes a prophet. But when sushumna awakens, kundalini ascends straight to sahasrara and one becomes a *jivanmukta*, a liberated soul.

The deeper significance of hatha yoga

Hatha yoga is the best known of the yogic paths because it is the yoga that deals directly with the physical body. Hatha yoga has far more implications than physical fitness alone.

Hatha yoga is intimately concerned with the balance between ida and pingala. Hatha yoga is concerned with balancing the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. It is concerned with balancing flows in the psychic realms of being; with balancing the tendency of mental introversion and extroversion. It is concerned with balancing and harmonizing inner awareness with external expression and relationships and of inaction with action.

Sushumna, ida, pingala and meditation

Ida and pingala both indicate the realm of time. They represent the inner psychic realms and the outer world respectively, both of which are under the sway of time. Meditation is concerned with the timeless and therefore ida and pingala should be balanced. In this way, the kundalini is able to flow up the sushumna and one enters the realm of timelessness. In the scriptures it is said that kundalini is the devourer of time: 'One should control the sun (pingala) and moon (ida) because these are the day and night of time; the secret is that sushumna (the passage of kundalini) is the eater of time' (*Hatha Yoga Pradipika* 4:17). That is, when ida and pingala are balanced in all senses, then time is dissolved.

Meditational practices are concerned with resolving dualities. Balance of ida and pingala implies a degree of resolution of duality; balance throughout the entire spectrum of the chakras implies total non-duality, which is the aim of spiritual aspiration. This is clearly stated in the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:57): 'One should think neither of the outside world nor the internal world; in fact one should not think any thoughts'.

This thoughtlessness can only arise when ida and pingala are balanced. This is why ida and pingala are so relevant to meditational practices.

Bhrumadhya (and ajna) is the centre where ida and pingala end and merge with sushumna. For this reason, bhrumadhya is also called *triveni*, the three strands, *mukta triveni*, the place of three strands from which one gains liberation, and the *trikuti*, the dwelling or meeting place of the three nadis.

Subtle influences

The ida and pingala principles also apply at the pranic and mental levels of being. They represent the two distinct forces within the human environment, the positive and negative aspects – the ebb and flow of human existence. They do not represent two specific psychic passages as is often understood, but rather the total pranic and mental currents. Ida represents the mind and pingala represents the pranic body.

The mind corresponds to the ida aspect of man's psychic realm. It is within this ida aspect that man can develop the so-called supernatural powers such as clairaudience, clairvoyance, telepathy. These powers are merely a part of the vast potential that lies within the grasp of each human being. The negative repercussions of prematurely unfolding and utilizing these powers for selfish ends should not be overlooked.

Pingala is associated with action, while ida is associated with thought. This tendency towards a predominance of thought or action is related to the predominant flow of breath in the left or right nostril, in the same manner that the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems are intimately related to the same flows.

In the duration of the twenty-four-hour day, there should be an overall balance between the two flows of ida and pingala. The flow through ida should predominate for about twelve hours, and the pingala also for about twelve hours. The total time is twelve hours, composed of smaller durations. If these intervals are equal, then it means that there is a balance between thought and action, between extroversion and introversion.

During daylight hours, pingala generally predominates. This certainly applies to people who have to use a lot of physical exertion in their occupation; it also applies to people who do a lot of mental work, for thought has to be translated into external action. Ida will also flow, but it will tend to be subordinate to the pingala flow. Work generally implies dealing with other people and outside events; pingala will therefore tend to predominate during the daytime.

In order to maintain balance of ida and pingala, ida will tend to predominate during sleep at night, which counteracts the predominant pingala flow during the daytime.

The average person is totally absorbed in his or her work, the sincere yoga practitioner tends to do everything with a greater sense of detachment; that is, he maintains an attitude of introversion even during strenuous work, maintaining a greater balance between introversion and extroversion throughout the day. This implies greater balance between ida and pingala. Other people need more sleep to compensate for the greater flow of pingala during the daytime. Of course, even great yogis tend to need some sleep because there is always some imbalance. There are also other factors such as moon, sun, climate, which affect the ida and pingala flows.

Spiritual implications

In the psychic realms, ida corresponds to the mind and mental forces of man, and pingala corresponds to the pranic or bioplasmic body. Pingala corresponds to universal prana, shakti or the energy of manifestation and ida with awareness. This is clearly indicated in many scriptures such as the Upanishads and tantras. The physical, pranic and mental aspects are included and encompassed by this higher definition. This universal prana is *prakriti* – the power behind all manifestation, force, energy and matter. Awareness is the witnessing principle, the actionless aspect that is associated with consciousness, *Shiva* or *purusha*. This wider, more comprehensive definition of ida and pingala has vast implications and significance on the spiritual path.

We have already said that ida and pingala are depicted as crossing each other at the chakras. It means that as one opens up the potential of the mind there should always be a balance between inner awareness and action, inner knowledge and external expression in the world. If one of these aspects predominates then there is imbalance. This is why spiritual awakening should be slow and progressive, to allow one's actions to match one's level of inner understanding, one's expression and relationships in the outside world to match and balance the inner expansion.

The chakras represent a stage of rest where one recuperates and balances action with understanding. Failure to do this, leads either to a block to further progress, or a fall.

At the level of ajna chakra, the differences between prana and consciousness are broken down. The principle of ida merges with the principle of pingala to become one.

Selfishness and selflessness

Selfishness and selflessness are mutually exclusive. Where there is one, there cannot be the other. If a person is selfish in an action or thought, then he cannot also be selfless. One leads to awakening of human potential while the other prevents it. Selfishness is an obstacle, while selflessness is a necessity. But of course, selfishness cannot be wiped out instantaneously; it takes time. This is the purpose of yoga sadhana.

Intuition

Intuition is as commonplace and necessary as eating and breathing. If our lives are to be happy and creative we must bring it into action more. Even simple situations require intuition, for example, knowing when to shift gears in a car, knowing when a cake in the oven is baked, knowing when it is the right time to say something nice to a friend, or how much strength is required to turn a screw. We have to feel what is required using our right brain. There is no book and no one who can give us this information. There can be

no linear-structured analysis of what must be a non-verbal, intuitive knowledge that springs from within, the intuitive flash has no time dimension and defies logic. Within less than a second a total picture can be presented to our mind, the key to unlocking the mysteries of science is gained and the seeds for hours and years of inspired work and research may be planted.

For many people intuition is an unknown and unknowable commodity. Years of unhealthy living, lack of direction, purpose and meaning, consistent overstimulation of sensory nerves, leading to dulling of senses and an inability to find contentment and satisfaction, plus unresolved, ongoing mental tension and anxiety (unhealthy ida), added to lack of exercise, sedentary lifestyle and overeating (unhealthy pingala), all contribute to damaging the intuitive apparatus in the right side of the brain and may even damage the logical, reasoning capacity of the left side.

Conclusion

This balanced attitude towards life is very important. There has to be a balance between ida and pingala. You have to develop inner awareness, relate this to the outside world and change your attitude to other people and things along harmonious lines. One must develop understanding of both oneself and others and try to follow the rule: 'Do to others as you would wish them to do unto you'.

The balance of ida and pingala is the 'middle path'. It is basically the same path that Buddha advocated but put in different words. This balanced attitude towards life, both internally and externally, will bring greater selflessness. It will arise spontaneously through understanding brought about by the simultaneous development of inner awareness and outer expression. It arises through simultaneous balancing of ida and pingala at all levels.

4

Benefits of Ida-Pingala Balance



Cultural, historical, political or economic evolution is not the evolution of man. Until man is able to tame the two infinite, universal energies within this microcosmic unit, prana shakti and chitta shakti, there is no yoga and no evolution. We will continue to behave like animals, both in our physical form and in our level of awareness. Evolution means movement. For our spirit to move any further, the

pranas must be balanced through hatha yoga – asanas, pranayama, mudras and bandhas. Chitta must be purified by nada yoga, kriya yoga, laya yoga and mantra yoga.

The implications of ida and pingala are at the following levels:

1. *Physically* in relation to the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, and the organs and functions of the entire body. Balance of ida and pingala at this level helps to maintain or bring about perfect health.
2. *Mentally and pranically* with regard to energy flows and direction of thoughts. Overstimulation of either the ida or pingala aspect of the psyche can bring disharmony. There must be balance.
3. *Inner awareness and outer expression*. Failure to develop inner awareness and also rejection of external actions both act as obstacles on the path to higher understanding and bliss. There must be detachment from both inner and outer events, but with continued participation in the world and simultaneous development and intensification of inner awareness.

Balance of ida and pingala at all levels is most important if you want to have good health, peace of mind and understanding of your own being.

Purpose of hatha yoga

The purpose of hatha yoga is to bring about the union of *chitta shakti*, the mental energy, which flows through ida nadi, with *prana shakti*, the dynamic energy, which flows through pingala nadi. This union results in a state of complete inner harmony and equilibrium, and is achieved by consistent sadhana of hatha yoga practices. Ida and pingala, the twin forces, flow at varying strengths in every individual, depending on one's inherent nature and interaction with life. When these flows are out of balance, their energies are experienced as duality. In order to create harmony and eliminate stress, these two forces are to be harmonized. It is

when there is no harmony between these two forces that the problems begin.

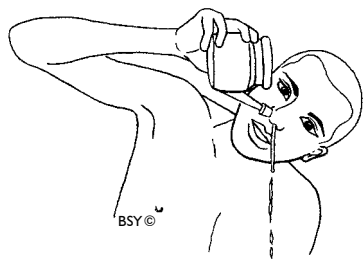
From the hatha yoga point of view the cure for tension and stress is a balance between these two forces. When ida and pingala nadis are purified and balanced, and the mind is controlled, then sushumna, the most important nadi, begins to flow. Sushumna must be flowing for success in meditation. If pingala flows, the body will be restless; if ida flows, the mind will be overactive. When sushumna flows, kundalini awakens and rises through the chakras.

This balance can be created through the hatha yoga kriyas such as shatkarmas, asana, pranayama, mudras and bandhas. In the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, it is said that the forces of the mind and prana, or ida and pingala, are so intimately connected with each other that control of one spontaneously leads to the control of the other. As the prana can be controlled through the breath, hatha yogis utilize the practice of pranayama to induce a tranquil state of mind.

Shatkarmas

Hatha yoga comprises the six fold purificatory practices, called the shatkarmas or shatkriyas: neti, related to the nasal passages; dhauti, related to the alimentary passage; basti related to the excretory passage; nauli, related to the rectus abdomini; kapalbhati related to the frontal brain; and trataka, related to the pineal gland. Hatha yoga says that shatkarmas must be practised first. The purpose of emphasizing shatkarmas is to prepare a base for the higher practices of pranayama.

Shatkarmas purify the whole system and remove blockages on the paths of ida and pingala nadis. When there are no blockages on these paths, the breath in both the nostrils flows systematically. With the guidance of an experienced teacher, the shatkarmas are done according to one's requirements and capacity. The practices of shatkarma ultimately bring about a union of ida and pingala, and when ida and pingala unite, sushumna awakens.



After you have practised the shatkarmas for one to two years, harmony is attained within the nervous system, the parasympathetic and sympathetic, ida and pingala nadis. If either of these nadis is disturbed, then you have dis-

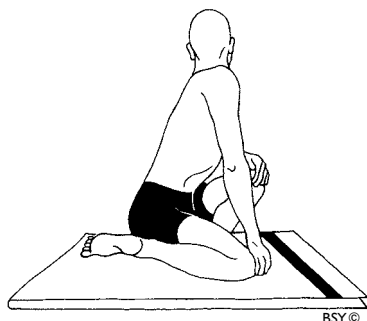
eases born of either manas or prana shakti. By hatha yoga, therefore, we are actually purifying all the flows so that they are homogeneous and uninterrupted. When the flows in ida and pingala are correctly energized and balanced with respect to each other, the third flow, sushumna, is automatically activated. When this happens, meditation becomes spontaneous.

Asana

Yogasanas awaken and regulate the glandular secretions and pranic forces, resulting in physical, mental and spiritual efficiencies. Awakening the pranic forces in the body intensifies the awareness, and the higher unexplored brain centres are harnessed. Therefore, yogasanas, if done scientifically and with full precautions, give astonishing results.

Asanas in general will tend to balance ida and pingala, especially if they are done in a systematic manner, correctly, and as a part of a regular practice program. This is not really surprising, since most asanas have a symmetrical influence on all parts of the body. Also, if asanas are done correctly, then one will keep the eyes closed and fixed on the breath, an inner symbol or any other suitable object of attention which includes introversion, the flow of ida. But at the same time there must be a degree of extroversion in order to execute and maintain the physical position of the asana; in this manner, the pingala aspect is also simultaneously included. This tends to develop balance of ida and pingala, without too much extroversion or conversely too much absorption in mental

and psychic fantasies. It is for this reason that asanas, when perfected, are indeed meditative techniques. This is one reason why asanas are so useful in bringing about good health – a factor that is usually overlooked when trying to explain how asanas bring about benefits.



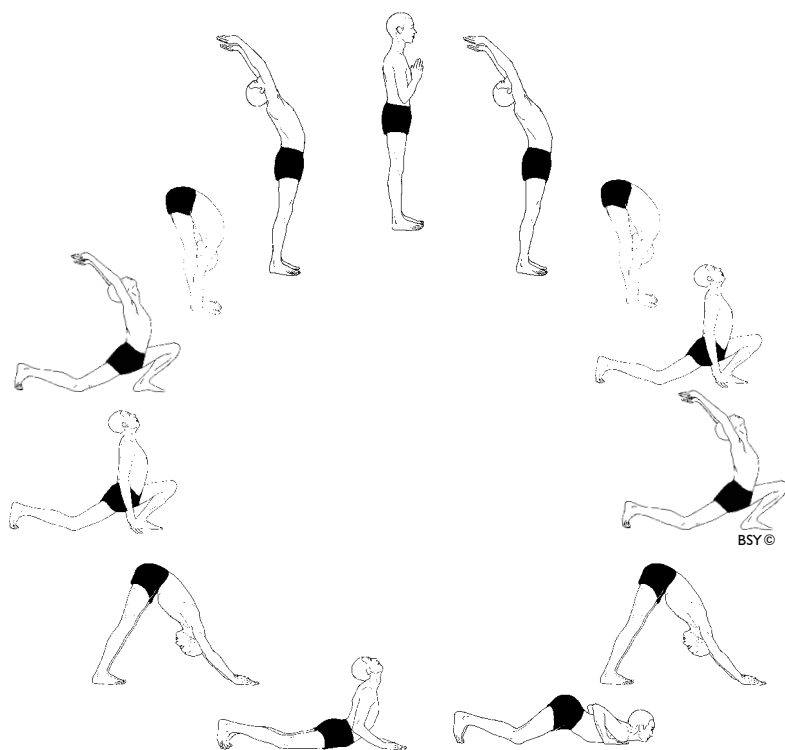
Pawanmuktasana teaches control of the pranas – by this method one tries to expand their prana to the higher body. When the pranas shrink from the body, the body becomes ill and when the pranas are properly distributed to all parts of the body, the body becomes vigorous. To ensure proper distribution of prana to all parts of the body, pawanmuktasana should be performed, as it releases the prana from wherever it has been blocked. It also eliminates unwanted toxins.

Sometimes this energy is blocked or in excess. Whether there is too much or too little, there will be trouble. There are certain chakras which distribute the energy of pingala, and other chakras that distribute the energy of ida. Pawanmuktasana helps improve and awaken the chakras. It has been found that the subtle flows of energy, ida and pingala, become smooth as the energy blocks are removed by these practices.

Surya namaskara

Surya namaskara is composed of three elements: form, energy and rhythm. The twelve postures create the physical matrix around which the form of the practice is woven. These postures generate prana, the subtle energy which activates the psychic body.

When surya namaskara is practised slowly, less emphasis is given to pingala nadi and more time is given to mental development. The practice transforms itself from a series



of asanas to a series of mudras leading to a more balanced development. It is for this reason that a combination of both fast and slow practice is recommended, for most people require a little extra pingala stimulation and refinement due to the nature of modern lifestyles.

The pranic channels of the body are cleansed by the enhancement and control of the movement of prana in the body. As each asana aids and accentuates the natural flow of prana up and down, blockages are removed. After the series is completed, these flows move with greater ease and improve body functions. This is constructive channelling of energy rather than allowing it to dissipate.

Constructive channelling, or rather rechannelling due to the unblocking effect, is enhanced by manipura chakra

stimulation. Manipura is profoundly affected by the practice and at the same time lends power to the flows of energy in pingala nadi. It is seen that through the synchronized journey of the physical sun through the various degrees of the heavens, the asanas can represent the state of one's vital energies, of the pingala nadi, from their peak at dawn, to their lowest.

Regular practice of surya namaskara regulates pingala nadi, whether it is underactive or overactive. Regulation of pingala nadi leads to a balanced energy system at both the mental and physical levels. The benefits gained through regular practice of surya namaskara far surpass ordinary physical exercise and yet at the same time they enhance sports and other forms of physical recreation. Surya namaskara forms a basic part of the ongoing release of pranic energy and the balancing of pingala nadi. A healthy body and an active life are the basis for spiritual development.

Pranayama

The rishis and munis did not design pranayama for the sake of supplying extra oxygen to the body. It is one of the most powerful tools available for the awakening of sushumna nadi or kundalini shakti.

There are thousands of billions of cells in the brain which live in a chaotic way, without any discipline or unity. This is shown as random brainwave activity when measured on an EEG machine. How are they to be blended together as one pulsating unit? These cells are very important because they are the jumping forms of energy, shakti. They are the bindu shakti, *Om* shakti, manas shakti, and chitta shakti. They comprise the totality of a person's brainwave activity.

When the basic elements of a person's brain are moving in a chaotic fashion so will that person's thinking processes. Pranayama has a scheme for it. The chaotic elements of the brain cannot be organized or disciplined or brought to order without first awakening the kundalini. The brain is controlled by the chakras and nadis. Unless a balance is created between

ida and pingala nadis through the practices of hatha yoga, including pranayama, it is not possible to create a balance within the mind. The practices of pranayama are of major importance because they help to first purify and balance the flows of ida and pingala nadis, which awakens sushumna nadi and kundalini.

The practice of pranayama recharges the energy in the physical body which is then conducted by ida and pingala nadis in the form of electrical impulses to all parts of the body, including the brain. Scientists have observed that when pranayama is practised both hemispheres of the brain are active and there are great changes in the brain's electrical impulses. Regular, ongoing and correct practice of pranayama activates sushumna nadi. Normally the energy in the nadis fluctuates from ida to pingala, but when the energy is equally balanced in both, they cease to function and the energy rises through sushumna.

Through the practices of pranayama, a certain amount of heat or creative force is generated in the entire body which influences the existing quantity of prana, just as if heat is produced in this room, the air will be heated. A certain amount of prana then makes its way through pingala nadi into ajna chakra. When sufficient heat is generated within the system, ajna chakra sends the message back to the base of kundalini and the actual awakening of the great prana takes place. This, in short, is the purpose of pranayama.



This means that pranayama is not only a breathing exercise or breath control, it is a system for training the different centres in the brain. An example of voluntary breathing is alternate nostril breathing. Scientific studies have observed that when one breathes in the left nostril, activity increases in the right hemisphere of the brain, and when one breathes in the right nostril, activity increases in the left hemisphere

of the brain. When the breath is held, both hemispheres of the brain are equalized.

The two channels play a large part in determining whether one thinks, on the one hand, or performs externally orientated activities; that is, whether one is extrovert or introvert. For good health it is essential that there is a reasonably equal balance between these two opposite modes of being during the day and nadi shodhana stages 1 and 2 help to bring this about. Another important benefit of balancing the flows of breath in the two nostrils is that the ida and pingala flows are simultaneously equalized. This leads to peace of mind, a rare occurrence in the modern world. Furthermore, this condition of balance is conducive to the spontaneous occurrence of meditation.

Mudra

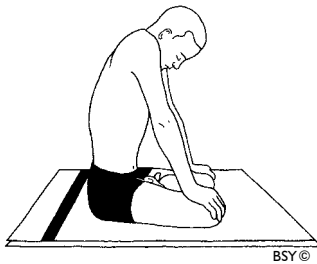
Mudras manipulate prana in much the same way that energy in the form of light or sound waves is diverted by a mirror or a cliff face. The nadis and chakras constantly radiate prana which normally escapes from the body and dissipates into the external world. By creating barriers within the body through the practice of mudra, the energy is redirected within.

Mudra is one of the very important aspects that hatha yoga has inherited from tantra to expand the consciousness. The *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad* states (verse 65): 'Maha mudra is a practice which purifies the entire network of nadis, balances ida and pingala and absorbs *rasa* or the nectar of bliss, so that it pervades one's whole being'.

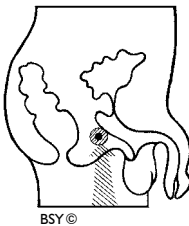
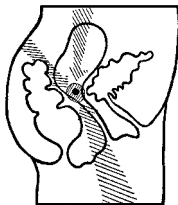
Concentration becomes much easier through the practice of shambhavi, and the brainwaves can be controlled at will. The moment shambhavi mudra is practised, concentration takes place, and when concentration takes place there is union between ida and pingala nadis in ajna chakra. When these two nadis touch each other then there is an explosion of light.

Bandhas

The Sanskrit word *bandha* means to 'hold', 'tighten' or 'lock'. These definitions precisely describe the physical action involved in the bandha practices and their effect on the pranic body. The bandhas aim to lock the pranas in particular areas and redirect their flow into sushumna nadi for the purpose of spiritual awakening. There are four bandhas: *jalandhara*, *moola*, *uddiyana* and *maha*. The last of these is a combination of the first three.



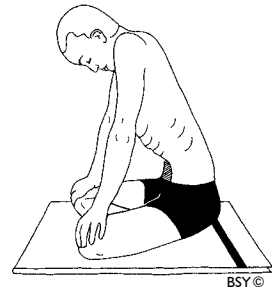
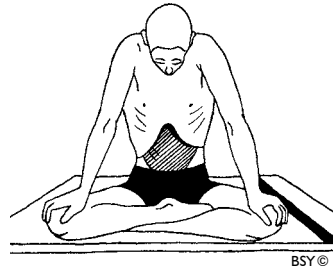
1. *Jalandhara bandha*: Jalandhara bandha controls the net or network of nadis in the neck. These nadis can be blood vessels, nerves or pranic passages. The 'fluid' or stream can cover all these different levels of subtlety, for jalandhara bandha will influence all of them.



2. *Moola bandha*: When you practise moola bandha, you control the area, which is related to the excretory, urinary and reproductive systems, then you have an immediate effect on the nose. As soon as you practise moola bandha, ida and pingala nadi immediately change their rhythm and both nostrils begin to flow. When both nostrils begin to flow, then automatically there is peace, calmness and tranquillity. When pingala nadi, the right nostril, is flowing, the *karmendriyas*, the motor organs, are stimulated.

When ida nadi, the left nostril, is functioning, the sensory organs, the *jnanendriyas*, are stimulated. When both nostrils are flowing equally, then neither prana nor mind is disturbed. At that time, the spirit wakes up.

3. *Uddiyana bandha*: The Sanskrit word *uddiyana* means 'to raise up' or 'to fly upwards'. This practice is so called because the physical lock applied to the body causes the diaphragm to rise towards the chest. This lock helps to direct prana into sushumna nadi so that it flows upwards to sahasrara, awakening the chakras. This awakening of chakras implies a progressive expansion of awareness, until the cosmic awareness (sahasrara) is attained.
4. *Maha bandha*: Maha bandha gives enhanced benefits of all three bandhas.



Meditation

The sympathetic and the parasympathetic systems oppose the operation of each other, so that the operating condition of the organs at any given time is a compromise between the two opposing forces. The sympathetic system tends to mobilize the whole body so that it can perform external activities. The parasympathetic system, on the other hand, tends to make the individual become introvert to encourage him to think and reflect. Neither of these extremes is good for meditation. If one thinks too much, then meditation is impossible. If one's attention is continually directed to the outside environment, meditation is again impossible. The ideal condition is where the two systems are balanced.

Meditation may be a spiritual practice but its effects on the body are definite and physiologically verified. Alpha waves become intense, respiration becomes minimal, consumption of oxygen decreases, blood pressure and temperature



drop. The rishis realized these effects and therefore instructed the use of particular asanas for meditation and also the use of mudras, especially khechari. When sushumna is active, the heart rate and blood pressure drop, and at that time khechari should be used. Mudras definitely affect the quality of meditation.

When sushumna is active, meditation occurs by itself. If one wants to bring light to a room, electrical connections must be made. In the same way, activation of sushumna must take place before the awakening of kundalini. Sushumna is the sattvic nadi, surya nadi is the rajasic nadi, and the chandra nadi is the tamasic nadi. When both the nadis, surya and chandra, are flowing together, it is sushumna that flows. Therefore, to attain better meditation, it is necessary that ida, pingala and sushumna should flow together. It is said that the fruit or the outcome of good actions is sattwic and pure; the fruit of rajas is pain; and the fruit of tamas is ignorance.

Most people only use a small percentage of their mental potential. The brain contains infinite knowledge, experience and power, but it cannot be used, as there is no conscious force. When sushumna conducts this spiritual energy to sahasrara chakra in the crown of the head, the dormant parts of the brain become active. They then give not only mental health, but also spiritual wealth. When the practitioner of yoga is able to awaken kundalini and connect it with sahasrara through sushumna nadi, he becomes the master of the body, mind and spirit.

Sadhana

In regard to sadhana, both extroversion and introversion must be practised together. Neither must be rejected. One

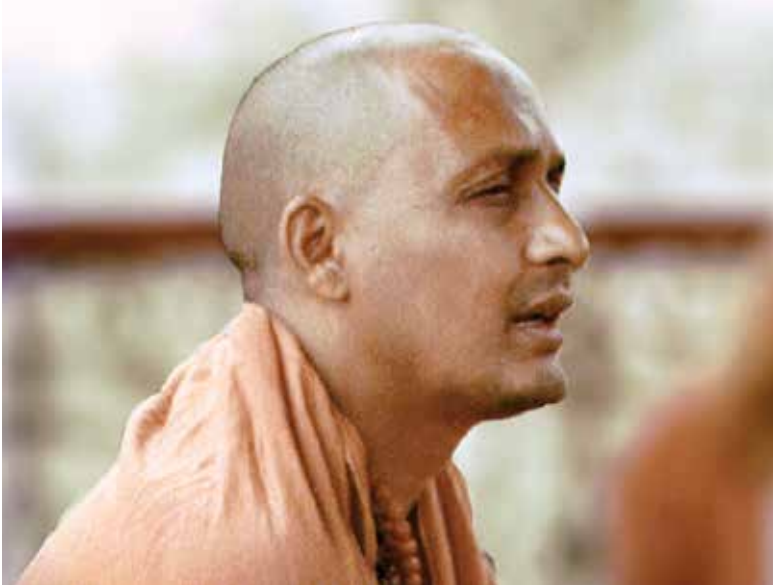
must simultaneously do meditation practices to unfold inner awareness and also work. There should be continual observation of and alertness to the inner process of the mind, while simultaneously acting in the world. This is the path of light, the path of the devas. One becomes a person of inner knowledge while acting in the world. Both *karma yoga*, the yoga of action, and *dhyana yoga*, the yoga of meditation, are combined and integrated into one's life.

To maintain balance of ida and pingala, it is necessary to combine karma yoga with dhyana yoga. Continuing to act in the world is essential for spiritual awakening, but the work and actions should be done with as much awareness as possible. Work is the means to recognize problems, and it also helps to express and remove them. Do not think of rejecting work or action, but remain detached and transform mere work into karma yoga. Try not to be affected by the ups and downs of work, and do not stop working.



5

Effects of Ida-Pingala Imbalance



What is a disease? There may be many definitions, but the yogic definition says that disease is nothing but an imbalance in the energy distribution in the body. The body is not made up of bone, blood and marrow – one lives by prana and thinks by mind. These are the two forms of energy, controlled respectively by pingala and ida. If one of these nadis is not functioning properly, the body falls sick.

Ida and pingala are the two energy principles. If they are not supplied to different parts of the body, one suffers, just as one suffers from malnutrition. For example, if someone can't get to sleep at night, what can be done? People take tranquilizers because they only know that much. But yoga knows a little more: change the nadi, and sleep will come.

In this physical body these two great forces, the life force and the mental force, is what I am and you are. If there is any imbalance between these two forces in the body, it can cause a physical disease or a mental disease and can take you to the mental hospital. It can also create cancer. Therefore, in yoga balance, harmony, a concord and accord must be effected between the life force and the mental force.

If there is an excess of life force and less of mental force a man becomes a terrorist, he becomes a criminal. If there is more of mental force and less of life force, he becomes crazy and goes to the mental hospital.

Imbalance of the nadis

For most people, total health, which ultimately leads to spiritual awakening, cannot be obtained. They constantly experience a fluctuation in energies, moods, periods of health and ill health, and the general ups and downs of life. This is the normal life process and is explained in yogic terms by the continual shift of energies from ida to pingala and back again in approximately 90-minute cycles. The normal individual becomes ida predominant for 90 minutes and pingala predominant for 90 minutes. They are rarely in the balanced sattvic state for more than a few minutes at a time. Balance occurs at the crossover point of each cycle.

A disease situation arises when an extreme shift in energy occurs outside of the normal range of flux experienced by relatively healthy individuals, or if the rhythm of shift is broken. For example, if we dwell excessively on our thoughts or on some event in our life, we evoke a continuous stream of mental energy, which may be inappropriate. This is a neurotic situation. An extreme accentuation of internal mental

pressures can cause an already unbalanced or weakened mind to break – the psychotic situation.

It is possible through our lifestyle to live in a predominantly pingala, extrovert existence or in a predominantly ida, introvert existence. Though there is no extreme or acute stress, this situation invokes a generalized, chronic and weakening imbalance, which can eventually lead to an acute breakdown and the manifestation of true illness later in life. At the same time, such imbalance is detrimental and not conducive to a happy existence.

The pingala dominant individual

A person who is mainly extrovert has very little access to internal experiences, seeking to fill the inner void with external pleasures, desires and ambitions. Constantly grabbing outwards for securities and happiness cannot satisfy inner needs. This leads to increased frustrations and inner tensions, which in turn motivate more outward seeking behaviour. Such pingala dominant individuals tend to over activate their sympathetic nervous system, secreting too much acid, causing ulcers, producing angina pectoris or raising blood pressure. They are constantly in a state of preparation for ‘fight or flight’, secreting too much adrenaline and performing too little exercise to burn up the excessive chemical secretions. Diseases manifest from the imbalance of endocrine secretions and metabolic processes. Such individuals may be restless and irritable, suffering ‘disease’ in interpersonal situations.

The ida dominant individual

A person who is predominantly introvert by nature is a daydreamer who thinks a lot but does not act on his thoughts. Such individuals are acutely aware of their feelings and usually oversensitive to outer events and interpersonal experiences. They may think of catastrophes and usually have little perspective on reality. There is little inner happiness due to a generalized inability ‘to get things together’ on

the outside. These people are rarely active, physical types. They do not have enough vital energy to act efficiently in the world and are unable to carry out their plans, although the less severely unbalanced may be able to express themselves externally. In an extreme case, physical vitality is very low and diseases such as constipation, depression, anxiety, ulcerative colitis, eczema and a host of psychosomatic conditions develop in this climate. Therefore, we see two main patterns of disease:

1. High physical energy diseases, usually pingala predominant, a rajasic or dynamic state.
2. Low physical energy diseases, usually ida predominant, a tamasic or passive state.

Two forces flow into the body through the cables of ida and pingala nadis, like positive and negative currents of electricity. If there is a faulty connection or a short-circuit, the energy stops flowing. There is always an imbalance between the two energies – not only in the physical body, but everywhere in nature. This imbalance between the pranic forces and the mental forces, between the solar energy and the lunar energy, is universal.

In our physical body, the two flows of energy function continuously. Whenever there is sickness – not cholera, or typhoid or smallpox or that type of disease – but chronic diseases that are common nowadays, such as diabetes, blood pressure, sleeplessness, migraine, sinusitis or digestive upsets, it shows that something is fundamentally wrong in the body's balance of energy.

This energy should not be misunderstood or confused with the energy one gets from vitamins or calories. This is the fundamental energy which was assigned in the third month inside the mother's womb. That is the energy, those are the two batteries, right and left.

Psychic and somatic disease

The energy in ida and pingala nadis is both physical and psychic in nature, and is distributed from the junction points of the chakras to all the cells, tissues and organs of the body. When there is some sort of weakness or shortage of energy in ida nadi, then the organs associated with ida suffer. Similarly, when there is a blockage in pingala nadi, or in the energy which it conducts, then the organs related to pingala are affected. All psychic and somatic diseases originate in precisely this way.

Diseases do not originate only in the mind; they also originate in the body. The body is part of the mind, and the mind is part of the body. Mind and body are not two separate realities. At different stages of manifestation, we know them as body and mind, but in essence they are one.

Diseases are usually considered as either psychic or somatic. Somatic diseases are related to pranic energy and psychic diseases are related to mental energy. Therefore, ida nadi is responsible for psychic diseases and health, and pingala nadi is responsible for the diseases and health of the physical body. We suffer not only from psychosomatic diseases, but from somopsychic diseases as well. Sometimes a disease begins in the physical body and is transferred to the mental body, and sometimes a disease originates in the mental body and is transferred to the physical body. Therefore, it is very difficult to determine whether a disease is primarily psychic, somatic or both.

Depression

The 72,000 main channels conduct the pranic energy and the mental energy throughout the body and feed the system. The two nervous systems the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems act as shock absorbers. Each and every sense experience passes through these nervous systems. If the sense experience is normal, these nervous systems act normally. If, however, the sense experiences are explosive, the nervous system receives shocks. Therefore, in yoga, nervous

depression and nervous breakdown are considered to be two different illnesses.

Nervous depression is a vague expression. These nervous systems are directed by the ida and pingala nadis. Nervous depression could be on the plane of pranic energy. Before yogic treatment is undertaken one has to analyze which type of depression it is. If the nervous depression is in the realm of the nadis that conduct mental energy, raja yoga must be practised. If the depression is due to imbalance in the pranic channels, one has to practise pranayama.

Nervousness

Who becomes nervous? One who cannot handle the burden of his feeling and thinking becomes nervous. If ten tonnes of load are put on a truck, it can carry it. If ten tonnes are put on a horse cart, it will break. That is called nervous breakdown. When one thinks beyond the capacity of one's mind, when one feels beyond the capacity of one's mind, when one is happy and sorry beyond the capacity of one's mind, and when one functions beyond the strength of one's mind, the nervous system fails.

This nervousness is of two types: either the mental energy is down, or the physical, pranic energy is down. These two forces are like negative and positive energies which are flowing in one's body. They are actually energy. They have been calculated, they have been registered, they have been examined by modern instruments.

First it is called nervousness, then it is called nervous depression, then it is called nervous breakdown; this indicates weakness of mind and weakness of nerves. These nerves carry electrical energy and often there is an imbalance between the two, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic nervous systems. Both these nervous systems are attached to the cerebral cortex in the brain. In nervous breakdown, there is an imbalance and they are not able to continue, they are not able to supply the required energy. Nervous breakdown means that the nervous system refuses to function.

Long-term dominance of ida or pingala nadi

If one is excessively worried about work (or any other external preoccupation), and if the body is being pushed beyond its limits, pingala will tend to be the predominant flow, day and night. If this imbalance continues over a long period of time, the physical and pranic bodies become disharmonized, and illness results. This is the situation for many people in the modern competitive world, who are too active and tense. Such long-term imbalance and disharmony is one of the reasons for the prevalence of diseases such as cancer. People who have this imbalance cannot meditate; they are restless and can never relax.

On the other hand, a person who broods a great deal, who continually dwells on problems and who does little work or has few outside interests will have a predominance of ida. He will also suffer eventually, whether from lack of physical exercise, or from mental problems such as neurosis. This type of person cannot concentrate or meditate as the mind is totally uncontrolled and lost in thought.

Balance between ida and pingala is essential. There must be equilibrium between introversion and extroversion. When this is not the case, the human system eventually takes steps to compensate for the imbalance. This takes the form of conditions such as illness, fatigue and depression. It is a natural law; if this law of the body is broken, then the penalty must be paid.

If you feel tired, then rest; if you feel active, then work or play hard. Try to follow the natural rhythm of body and mind. It is when the body is pushed too hard due to ambition, fears, desires or whatever, that imbalance occurs. One must listen to one's body and mind and follow its laws. This is not easy, but through the practice of yoga it becomes progressively easier.

Sushumna

Sushumna flows as the outcome of harmony between ida and pingala. We can discover through observation that either the right or the left nostril is flowing and the other will be

blocked, or sometimes both will function simultaneously for a minute or so. If both nostrils are flowing for a longer time, let us say five minutes, then you have to be very careful. When sushumna functions and you are involved in physical activity, there is a tendency towards destructive behaviour such as crime, murder, sexual assault or suicide. However, if you are not involved in action but are involved in meditation, then the tendency is to unite with the Self.

That is why it is advisable to completely abandon physical activity when sushumna is active, when both nostrils are flowing equally. If physical activity is not abandoned, then there will be a big disaster. Under these circumstances, sages whose sushumna has become awakened, leave this material world, go into retreat and remain in meditative states, doing sadhana. Otherwise they are doomed. History stands witness to this. If I go into the world of karma, I will also be doomed. The shastras give us this warning.

Restless mind

Generally, restlessness is due to excessive thinking and desiring, and it indicates that the mind is not under control. When one feels restless, it means the mental energy is high and the pranic energy is low; there is an imbalance, the sense organs are very active and the motor organs are less active. In hatha yoga language, we call this an imbalance between *ida* and *pingala nadis*, or in modern scientific terms, an imbalance between the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems.

There are two ways to approach the problem. Either limit the amount of mental energy or increase the amount of pranic energy. The purpose of hatha yoga, raja yoga, or in fact, any form of yoga, is to create this harmonious situation. In order to reduce excess mental energy, mantra repetition is the best practice. Alternatively, hatha yoga says, try to increase the level of prana in the body.

Additionally, there are certain hormonal secretions which contribute to restlessness. The most disturbing hormones

are adrenalin and testosterone. If the outflow of these hormones can be controlled, the physiological causes leading to restlessness can be overcome. By regularly practising asana, pranayama and meditation, hormonal production is controlled, mental and pranic energies are harmonized, and problems such as restlessness do not occur.

Desires and the nadis

There is an overwhelming tendency for human endeavour to be completely absorbed in the outside world. Everything in society, in education and so forth is orientated towards outside aspiration and activity. In fact, any tendency to be introvert is widely regarded as abnormal. The direction of man's life is almost totally fixed on the pingala path. This results in disequilibrium in life because the pingala is not supplemented and balanced by the ida path of introspection. This is one of the main reasons for so much mental turmoil and dissatisfaction in the world today. Attention is continually directed outwards, so that one never knows the nature of the inner world. And balance between the inner and outer realms, ida and pingala is essential in order to find spiritual bliss and knowledge.

Every desire and thought which comes into the mind is a manifestation of energy; it is not a psychological substance. Desire, thought, passion, love and hatred are not psychological; basically they are energy.

If the desire is abnormal, it means the ida complex is out of harmony. If hunger, passion, anger or aggression is excessive, the pranic force is out of harmony. When ida nadi is predominant and pingala nadi is subservient, the desires are insatiable. When pingala nadi is predominant and ida nadi is subservient, all the physical actions are agitated. Desire is a mental disease, but its root has to be discovered in the physical body.

In order to resolve the unnecessary desires, something has to be done. If nothing is done, the physical and mental diseases will definitely creep into the body. Sublimation

is a way to handle desire. One has to exhaust and express the inherent desires and ambitions, otherwise they merely remain in a dormant state in the mind. The *samskaras* – latent problems, drives and attachments to the enjoyments of the world – have to be worked out.

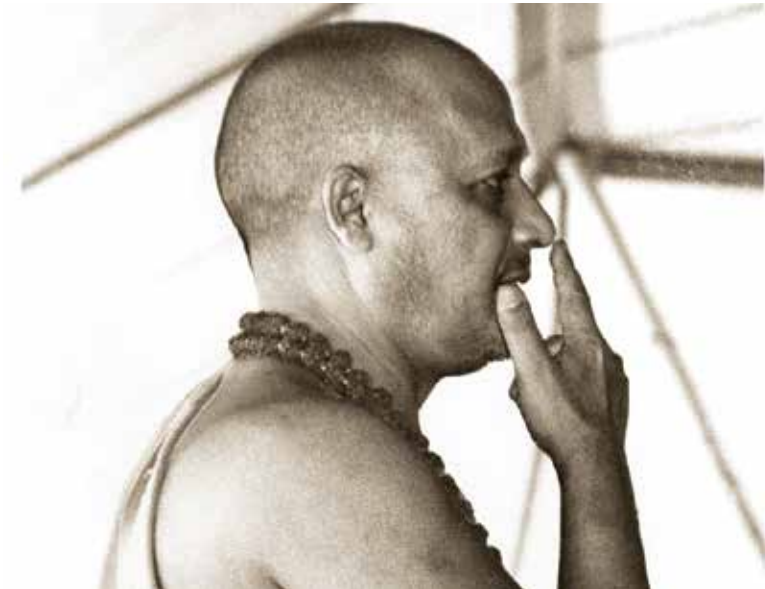
This can only be done by interacting and working in the world, by following the principles of karma yoga to the best of one's ability. This is the means to clean the mind of its latent problems. This is the pingala aspect. At the same time, one should also follow the path of ida, by trying to be aware while working and acting, and by trying to expand inner awareness through meditational practices. This is the way to spiritual unfoldment. It is not by becoming a hermit and rejecting the world.

The importance of action and work in spiritual life is clearly illustrated by the following experience: "Before being initiated as a swami, I could never go past the state of laya in meditation. I asked Swami Sivananda. The first thing he told me was, "You have to work hard and work out your *samskaras*." He could have said, "Go and practise meditation for a few years in a quiet place." He said, "Work hard." He knew that this was the only way to resolve inner disharmonies. Swami Sivananda knew that meditative practices have to be balanced by external action. The mind has to be opened up and purified through karma yoga and meditative practices.

It is very easy to talk about the realization of the absolute, but there are so many obstacles confronting you on the way. Balance, harmony and equilibrium in these two great nervous systems can be brought about by nothing else except the practice of hatha yoga.

6

Ida-Pingala Approach in Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga



In hatha yoga it is said that in the spinal column, there are two nadis. They flow from the right side and the left side, from the bottom up to the top. At the bottom end is the tailbone, at the top is the medulla oblongata. These nadis flow within the framework of the spine, carrying a certain type of energy and force. They carry two different types of force, and these forces are distributed throughout the body,

right and left, making one conscious, making one alive. Ida nadi and pingala nadi are the technical names used for these two forces in yoga. At times the right one is flowing and at other times the left one is flowing: when they flow together, for a period of ten or fifteen or twenty minutes, meditation happens by itself. This is the contention of the hatha yogis.

Hatha yoga is not only asanas and pranayama. Technically speaking, hatha yoga means those practices by which you bring about the union of the two forces in the body. If you have been practising hatha yoga and sushumna begins to awaken, then no other method is necessary. You don't need any sadhana or any technique. Just close the eyes and become meditative. Even if you have hundreds and thousands of problems, the moment of sushumna awakening is the moment of transcendence. That is why yogis say, 'Awaken sushumna!'

Hatha yoga culminates in the union of ida, pingala and sushumna in ajna chakra, whereas raja yoga culminates beyond this, when kundalini reaches sahasrara chakra.

Raja yoga is the other system by which you regulate your living habits, eliminating the complications in your life and practice. Here, just a little asana and pranayama are done. Then the meditation techniques are practised. In raja yoga, one has to fight with the mind. Each and every fluctuation of the mind has to be controlled. By deep concentration, by steady and stable asana, by pranayama, whenever the mind runs away, it must be brought back. Whenever there are fluctuations arising in the mind, one must calm the mind, by this way or that way: this means controlling the fluctuations of both the pranic force and the mental force.

When we begin practising yoga and meditation, we try our level best to stop the dissipation of energy. The yamas and niyamas are usually recommended for this, but of course everyone is not able to practise them. I think we have to express everything in our lives and let the yamas and niyamas occur naturally. If we try to develop them by restraint, we are likely to be suppressing and we may be causing more harm

than good. Many people try to practise yama and niyama and they force themselves into a rather rigorous situation.

The spadework which we have to do in order to make yama and niyama the natural expression of our being is the practice of hatha yoga. Purification of the 72,000 nadis which carry the computerized impulses throughout the body, and the six hatha yoga body purification techniques, create a psycho-biological harmony, and this harmony ultimately creates spontaneity of the positive dharma in us.

I am peaceful within and without, not because I am forcing myself to be, but on account of the great transformation that has taken place in the structure of my psycho-biological system. It has become my nature to be non-violent and full of love and understanding. It is not bad to be truthful; it is not bad to be non-violent, but sometimes we are not able to handle the psycho-emotional situations arising in our life through the practice of these dharmas.

Therefore, in order to handle this situation, we have to first purify the whole body and the whole group of nadis. That is why in hatha yoga we have the system of purification of ida and pingala. I do not have to force myself to practise brahmacharya, because my body has been purified. My psychological and emotional structure has been properly adjusted by balancing the impulses of ida and pingala. Therefore, I am able to retain the hormones in the higher centres. So brahmacharya has become a spontaneous and natural expression of my consciousness. I don't have to practise it; it is my nature. This is how a positive dharma has to be developed in the form of yama and niyama.

Now, where does hatha yoga fit into this? There is a stage of niyama which is called *saucha* or purification and hatha yoga is a part of this. You should purify your body but how do you do it? You purify the external body, the internal organs, the nadis, the blood, the humors. For this hatha yoga is practised.

The *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali say that yoga means controlling the impulses of the mind. The hatha yoga

books say that yoga is the creation of a balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Some yogis start by controlling the pranas – they are the hatha yogis. Others start with the mind – they are the raja yogis.

The system of raja yoga, which is a more advanced yoga, advocates direct control of the forces of the mind. Raja yoga says control the mind and thereby the pranas are controlled. Hatha yoga says control the prana and thereby the mind is stilled. Both create a balance between the two forces of ida and pingala. In the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* it says (2:2):

*Chale vaate chalam chittam nishchale nishchalam bhavet;
Yogee sthaanutvamaapnoti tato vaayum nirodhayet.*

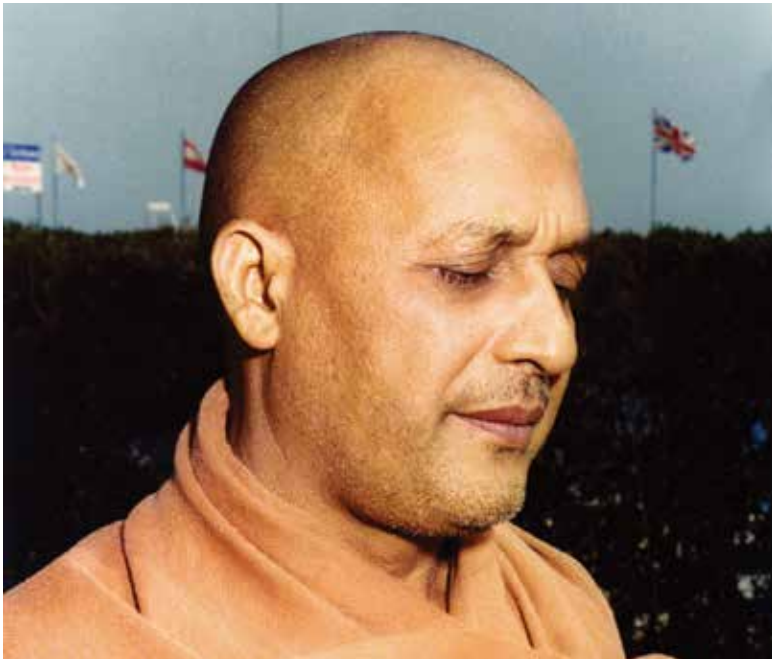
When prana moves, chitta (the mental force) moves. When prana is without movement, chitta is without movement. By this steadiness of prana the yogi attains steadiness and should therefore restrain the vayu (pranic air).

Therefore, you must approach dhyana by one of the two methods, either directly or through the practices of hatha yoga, and one day you will find you are in meditation. The hatha yoga system is firstly the purification of the body, secondly asanas, and thirdly pranayama. Beyond that, there is nothing that you have to do – everything just happens.

The science of yoga works from both ends. The practices of hatha yoga improve the physical health and this influence is transferred to the mental body. The practices of raja yoga improve the mind and this influence is transferred to the physical body.

7

Ida Pingala in Other Traditions



The ida-pingala principle represents a universal truth. It is therefore part of every spiritual system in some form. Often the same idea of balance is conveyed by completely different symbols, but usually the symbology is strikingly similar.

Knowledge survives according to the culture of the people, so when the concepts of yoga, prana, the chakras, ida and pingala nadis and pranayama went to China, they were adjusted according to the understanding of the people. So the Chinese have yin and yang, meridians and acupuncture points. The systems of pranayama that are taught in yoga, in China and Japan are not basically or fundamentally different.

Many ancient systems depict the route of spiritual life as a path or series of steps. Often the moon (ida) is shown in one corner and the sun (pingala) in the other. Sometimes spiritual life is depicted as a winding path which ascends the side of a high mountain. Again, the sun and the moon are shown. The mountain is symbolic of the sushumna and is very common in medieval European secret or mystical societies.

I have been to Scandinavia and spoken to the village folk there. The concept of ida, pingala and sushumna, which is symbolized by the snake in Indian yogic scriptures, is part of their ancient culture too. Long before this present civilization, in fact, many thousands of years ago, the yogic culture was spread across the world. This idea of balance is common to every spiritual system and is symbolized in many different ways.

Alchemists

Alchemical pictures are particularly notable for their clear illustrations of ida and pingala. Like yogic symbolism, ida is often represented by the moon and pingala by the sun. Other symbols are also used, such as the phoenix, the deer, the lion and so forth, with various meanings, but always the emphasis is on balance.



The nocturnal world (internal knowledge) is shown merging with the sunlight world (external expression). the seemingly irreconcilable opposites are shown unified. This harmony and integration of opposites leads to regeneration or transmutation of the individual into higher states of receptivity and being. The regeneration of man is called the philosopher's stone, where his whole nature is refined so that it shines with luminosity. The average person is like an uncut diamond, dull and lustreless. When the diamond is cut and polished it radiates knowledge and bliss. This arises when ida and pingala are balanced at all levels of being.

The alchemists speak of various forces at work in the human body. From the four elements come the three principles of sulphur, salt and mercury, which in turn produce two, a male and a female (pingala and ida). The union of the two produces an incorruptible one (sushumna and higher consciousness) in which, it is said, the four elements (body, emotions, mind and spirit) exist in a purified and transmuted state, and there is eternal peace and goodwill. This describes dhyana.

Baphomet

The Goat of Mendes is also known as Baphomet. This is a very evocative mythical figure that tends to induce strange sensations in the psyche of many people. It is a hermaphrodite figure of human form with a goat's head. It symbolizes transcendental magic. Pictures of Baphomet show a black moon in the bottom left hand corner, with Baphomet's arm pointing downwards.

The black moon symbolizes the ida path used for selfish purposes. The pointing arm indicates that the misuse of psychic powers, such as in black magic, will eventually lead to a downfall and adverse personal repercussions. It seems that all people who tread the ida path for selfish reasons have a tendency to crash and pay the penalty. In the book *The Occult* by Colin Wilson, one will be firmly convinced of this fact. All the famous occultists whom he mentions suffered through

misuse of their powers. They rarely find happiness in life.

The other hand of the Baphomet points upwards to a white moon in the top right hand corner. This shows that the path of ida can lead to spiritual ascension, if psychic powers are not used for selfish purposes.

The ida and pingala pathways are also shown in pictures of Baphomet. They are only depicted rising from mooladhara chakra through swadhisthana to manipura chakra. They ascend no further. In context it may mean that selfishness in outer activities (pingala) or in inner psychic abilities (ida) will prevent the individual rising above the level of understanding represented by the manipura chakra.

Egypt

Hermes was the ancient Egyptian personification of wisdom. He is also associated with Hermes Trismegistus who is believed to have originated the science of alchemy. Hermes is usually depicted holding a unique rod in one hand, with two wings at the top end and entwined with two serpents. This is called a *caduceus* and the symbol is none other than the ida, pingala and sushumna of yoga.



Caduceus

If you count the number of intersections of the two serpents, you will find that there are six. These represent the junction of ida and pingala at each of the six chakras from mooladhara to ajna. The two wings at the top of the caduceus are the exact equivalent of the two lotus petals that symbolize ajna chakra in yoga, the highest chakra where ida and pingala merge to become one. This mystical symbol is the exact equivalent of ida, pingala and sushumna of yoga.

Incidentally, this caduceus is the official symbol of the medical profession. In this context it is called the *Staff of Aesculapius* (the wand of Hermes and Mercury). The adoption

of this symbol is perfectly logical. Medicine is concerned with balance, for it is imbalance that causes disease. Balance means good health while imbalance implies illness or bad health. This balance or lack of balance is directly associated with ida and pingala. Illness can be caused by physical, pranic and mental imbalance. In a wider sense, illness is caused by spiritual imbalance. One can say that only a person who has achieved the highest stage of spiritual life or union, is truly healthy. The balance of ida and pingala is the prime concern of any system of healing, including medicine, which is why the caduceus is used as the symbol of medical science.

The ancient Egyptian worship of Isis, the Gnostic system of Abraxas and many other old systems were concerned with the balance of ida and pingala. This is very clear from the surviving symbols of these ancient cults. The same applies to systems that are still active, such as the Rosicrucians and Freemasons – balance of opposites is of prime importance.

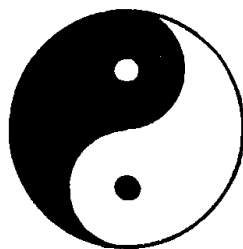
Persia

The cult of ancient Persia, the cult of Mithra, had a similar symbol. It is widely accepted that much of the Bible was influenced by this Persian cult, or conversely that the system of Mithra was influenced by the Old Testament. There is a well-known symbol of Mithra where two snakes – good (*ahura mazda*) and evil (*ahriman*) – face each other and devour the cosmic egg. The egg is in the mouth of each snake. The egg represents perfect harmony at the highest level – sahasrara. These two snakes and the tree of good and evil in the Bible, represent the ida and pingala, the opposing forces or aspects of existence. When the egg is consumed by the ida and pingala snakes then there is perfect fusion in the sahasrara, where all opposites are resolved.

China

Yang and yin of ancient Chinese philosophy represent the dual relationship existent in nature, symbolized by the sun and moon, or pingala and ida in yogic philosophy. Yin is

female and earthly, while yang is male and heavenly. They represent opposite forces or aspects at all levels from the physical to the more subtle, from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic. There is nothing that does not come under their influence. Ida and pingala can be applied to everything. The same is true of yin and yang. Harmony between them leads to health and implies that one's inner being is perfectly in tune with the outside world; disharmony means illness, unhappiness and disequilibrium in one's being and relationship with the outside world. When there is harmony and balance of yin and yang then the result is Tao. These are beautiful, expressive symbols crossing language boundaries and time. They apply to everyone in any race, place and era. Symbols retain the purity of the meaning, for they only reveal themselves when one is ready to understand.



In his book, *Theories of the Chakras*, Dr Hiroshi Motoyama described this as the stage where one 'faces the abyss of absolute void', and due to this experience worldly attachments fall away. This is the prerequisite step before the place of total perfection and accomplishment can be entered. There, the indwelling bliss of an undivided mind is experienced, and this is the source of effortless and natural inner enjoyment and contentment. In Buddhism, this corresponds to the fifth shoonya out of the eighteen types of shoonya. The characteristic sound heard at this stage of expansion and dissolution of mind is described as the beat of drums.

Buddhism

Buddha was illumined, but he did not stop acting in the world. He is usually depicted sitting in padmasana or sometimes lying on one side. This does not mean that he remained motionless like a corpse after his illumination under the boddhi tree in Gaya. Had he done this then the

system of Buddhism would never have arisen. His compassion compelled him to teach. Furthermore, he urged his disciples to teach the 'Dharma' to others; he instructed them to work for the good of man.

Zen Buddhism continually emphasizes this balance of the outer with the inner. The Zen masters strongly imply that spiritual life should be in the world of everyday events and they practised what they preached. This is perfectly illustrated by the following Zen story given in *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*, compiled by Paul Reps:

Hyakujo was a Chinese Zen master. He worked with his disciples even when he was eighty years of age. He would work in the garden, clean the ground and prune the trees. The disciples were not very happy to see the old master work so hard, but they knew that he would never stop. They decided to hide his tools. For three days the master took no food. Then the disciples realized that he was angry and that they had better return the tools. As soon as the tools were returned the master again ate food. In the evening he told his disciples, 'No work, no food'.

Christianity

The story of Genesis in the Bible mentions the tree of good and evil and the tree of life. The tree of good and evil can be seen to be ida and pingala, the tree of life being sushumna.



The cross in Christianity has many meanings, but surely one of them implies balance. All opposites are harmonized and equalized at the centre. The cross is also very similar to the yogic symbol for ida, pingala and sushumna. The left side of the cross is ida, the right side pingala and the vertical line or post is sushumna. Their meeting point is ajna chakra. The upper line or

sushumna continues on to the sahasrara (oneness). At the crossing point, in the middle of the cross (ajna) there is no ego. It was on the cross that Christ was crucified, meaning that he lost his sense of ego, which he sacrificed at the centre.

Work but with awareness

Mohammed was a husband and a father with many duties. He was an active man, but amidst his external activities he expanded his inner knowledge. He was illumined in a cave on Mount Hira. He continued working, but combined his work with awareness, balancing the ida and pingala aspects of his being. Krishna and Rama were both active. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna tells Arjuna time and time again to know the meaning of action within inaction, to be totally aware while acting with intensity. Krishna did not tell Arjuna to escape from the battlefield at Kurukshetra and go to the Himalayas to meditate and practise austerities. Arjuna was told to fight, but with awareness.



8

Scriptural References



The path of darkness and the path of light

In the Indian scriptures, concern only with the ida, or concern only with the pingala, is called the dark path – the path of the *pitaras* or ancestors. This is the path of delusion. Simultaneous awakening and balance of the ida and pingala is called the path of light – the path of the *devas* or divine beings. This is the path where there is simultaneous expansion of inner awareness combined with corresponding action in the outside world.

This is such an important topic that it is mentioned in many texts. Many of the Upanishads devote much space to describing prana and its implications. The earlier Upanishads – the *Brihadaranyaka*, *Chhandogya*, *Taittiriya* and others were fully aware of the fact that prana is the substratum behind all life forms. They describe the psychic pathways which exist within, but not of the physical body, through which prana flows, including the all important nadis, ida, pingala and sushumna. In the later Upanishads such as the *Prashnopanishad* and the *Kathopanishad* this theme was further developed. The different forms of prana within the body were mapped out according to the functions performed and it is stated that there are seventy-two thousand *nadis* or pranic channels within the body. The concept of the *kundalini*, psychic and spiritual power, in the form of a serpent within the body is also indicated.

The Ishavasya Upanishad

In the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, slokas 9, 10 and 11 emphasize the importance of balancing ida and pingala, and the importance of karma and dhyana yoga.

Those who only follow the path of avidya (action in the outsideworld) enter into blinding darkness. Conversely, those who are engrossed only in vidya (inner knowledge of the mind or more specifically meditational practices) also enter into blinding darkness. (verse 9)

This is a clear statement: both those who try to open up the ida (inner world) alone through meditational practices and those who are concerned only with the pingala (worldly activities), remain deluded. The same idea is further expanded in the next verse.

The wise have told us that meditational practices alone and external activity alone will each give a different result. (verse 10)

A certain level of understanding is attained through total concern with worldly activities; another level of understanding is attained through total concern with exploration of the mind through meditational practices. But each eventually becomes a block to further progress. The text continues:

He who knows both vidya (the inner world) and avidya (the outer world) crosses the abyss of death through avidya and attains immortality through vidya. (verse 11)

These three verses are probably the most important verses in the entire literature of the Upanishads.

Both extroversion and introversion must be practised together. Neither must be rejected. One must simultaneously do meditational practices to unfold inner awareness and also work. There should be continual observation of and alertness to the inner process of the mind, while simultaneously acting in the world. This is the path of light, the path of the devas. Balance is given to both the ida and pingala. One becomes a man of inner knowledge while acting in the world. Both *karma yoga*, the yoga of action, and *dhyana yoga*, the yoga of meditation, are combined and integrated into one's life.

The word 'death' given in verse 11 does not mean death in the usual sense of the word. It means the death of delusion – the death of *laya* or loss of awareness, during meditational practices. This *laya* is the greatest block during meditational techniques; it is the obstacle of unconsciousness. People reach a certain stage in their practices where they are unable to maintain awareness. They get lost in a hazy reverie or fall asleep. To progress in unfolding one's dormant potential and to tread the spiritual path, one must pass beyond this *laya*.

The method of overcoming this obstacle is by doing *karma yoga* and by interacting with the outside world. This *laya* is excessive *tamas* in one's nature. By intense *karma yoga* one can elevate one's nature so that it becomes more *rajasic*. This will counteract the tendency for *laya* to occur in meditative practices. It is through work in the outside world that one will exhaust one's *samskaras*, problems and

negative attitudes. It is these samskaras that cause this unconscious state to arise. They tend to clog the mind and prevent clarity. It is through karma yoga and interaction with other people and life in general that one recognizes and eventually removes one's problems. It is by doing karma yoga that one is able to cross the barrier of unconsciousness – the 'abyss of death' (according to verse 11). When the mind has been harmonized and purged of gross phobias, problems, neuroses, etc., then one can maintain awareness to cross the sea of laya or unconsciousness. It is after this point that one starts to explore the superconscious realms of being.

Gaining 'immortality through vidya' in verse 11 means that when one has crossed the 'valley of death' – the tendency to become unconscious in meditation – then one expands awareness to an unlimited degree. One is able to transcend the fetters of existence and eventually merge into a state of samadhi, the state of immortality, beyond the limitations of the mind.

Verse 11 contains the essence of spiritual life. It emphasizes that the serious spiritual aspirant should be both extroverted and introverted, practising meditation or watching the process of the mind to develop inner awareness, while simultaneously working in the world to resolve any mental and emotional problems. This is the path of light where ida is balanced with pingala. It is this path of light that leads to the rising of the kundalini within sushumna. It is this path of light that leads to spiritual awakening.

The Bhagavad Gita

The path of light or *devayana* and the path of darkness or *pitriyana* are also mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gita* (8:23–26), where they are called the northern and southern paths of the sun:

*Yatra kaale twanaavrittim aavrittim chaiva yoginah;
Prayaataa yaanti tam kaalam vakshyaami bharatarshabha.*

*Agnijyotirahah shuklah shanmaasaa uttaraayanam;
Tatra prayaataa gacchanti brahma brahmavido janaah.*

*Dhoomo raatristathaa krishnah shanmaasaa dakshinaayanam;
Tatra chaandramasam jyotir yogee praapya nivartate.*

*Shuklakrishne gatee hyete jagatah shaashwate mate;
Ekayaa yaatyanaavrittim anyayaa'vartate punah.*

Now I will tell thee, O chief of the Bharatas, the times departing at which the Yogis will return or not return!

Fire, light, daytime, the bright fortnight, the six months of the northern path of the sun (northern solstice)—departing then (by these), men who know Brahman go to Brahman.

Attaining to the lunar light by smoke, night-time, the dark fortnight or the six months of the southern path of the sun (the southern solstice), the yogi returns.

The bright and the dark paths of the world are verily thought to be eternal; by the one (the bright path) a person goes not to return again, and by the other (the dark path) he returns.

The subject of work and action combined with meditation is one of the main themes of the *Bhagavad Gita*. It constantly emphasizes that actions should never be renounced, only their fruits and attachment to actions and work should be renounced. The *Bhagavad Gita* urges the spiritual aspirant to work according to the dictates of *dharma*, one's natural role in life, but at the same time to try to become more aware of the inner psychic world through meditation practice in *sadhana*. In this sense, the *Bhagavad Gita* is really discussing the balance of *ida* and the *pingala*, without actually mentioning them by name.

Other spiritual texts

The Upanishads are the background or the basis and foundation of vedantic philosophy. If Vedanta is to be explained in a simple way, it is that one is ultimate and the multiplicity is the expansion of one. However, tantra does not talk of the ultimate experience, but of the process of enlightenment. In tantra there is duality; there are two realities – Shiva and Shakti. As in hatha yoga you have ida and pingala nadis representing chitta and prana, in the same way, on the cosmic level, you have Shiva representing matter and Shakti representing total energy.

Shiva is a tattwa. Parvati is a tattwa. The dance of Shiva is the dance of jiva. The dance of Parvati is the dance of jivatma. Both of these occur on the spiritual plane and are events of spiritual life. The form of Lord Shiva in the *Shiva Mahimna Stotra* is about the concept of twofold energy. It explains how, when the energy becomes operative, you can interpret and understand it; how you can equate Shiva and Parvati scientifically in time and space; how you can equate or compare Parvati in metaphysics.

In physics when time and space come together at the nucleus, then when both meet at a particular point, an explosion takes place. That is precisely the process of a nuclear explosion. Time and space are important concepts in physics and they are also important concepts in yoga. The only difference is in the terminology. Yoga calls it ida and pingala, metaphysics calls it Shiva and Parvati, Vaishnavism calls it Vishnu and Lakshmi.

The *Shiva Samhita* (3:60–61) describes the state of *parichaya avastha* or ‘the state of increase’:

Tatah parichayaavasthaa yogino'bhyaasato bhavet. Yadaa vaayushchandrasooryam tyaktvaa tishthati nishchalam. Vaayuh parichitaa vaayuh sushumnaa vyomni sancharet.

Kriyaashaktim griheetvaiva chakraanbhattvaa sunishchitam. Yadaa parichayaavasthaa bhavedabhyaasayogatah. Trikootam karmanaam yogee tadaa pashyati nishchitam.

After this, through practice, the yogi reaches the parichaya avastha. In this state, the vayu does not move through the moon and sun (ida and pingala) but remains steady in sushumna.

This takes place when one has control of kriya shakti or pingala and has pierced the six chakras. Then the yogi sees the three-fold effect of karma.

In the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (2:41) it is said:

*Vidhivatpraanasamyaamairnaadeechakre vishodhite;
Sushumnaavadanam bhittva sukhaadvishati maarutah.*

By systematically restraining the prana, the nadis and chakras are purified. Thus, the prana bursts open the doorway to sushumna and easily enters it.

If pranayama is practised incorrectly, it could create an imbalance but nothing disastrous will happen. If done specifically as instructed by the guru, it will definitely arouse kundalini in this lifetime. When pranayama is done correctly, it is like sowing potent seeds in fertile soil. When practised incorrectly, it is like planting small stones in the soil, believing them to be seeds and expecting plants to grow. No matter how much you water the stones they will never develop into plants.

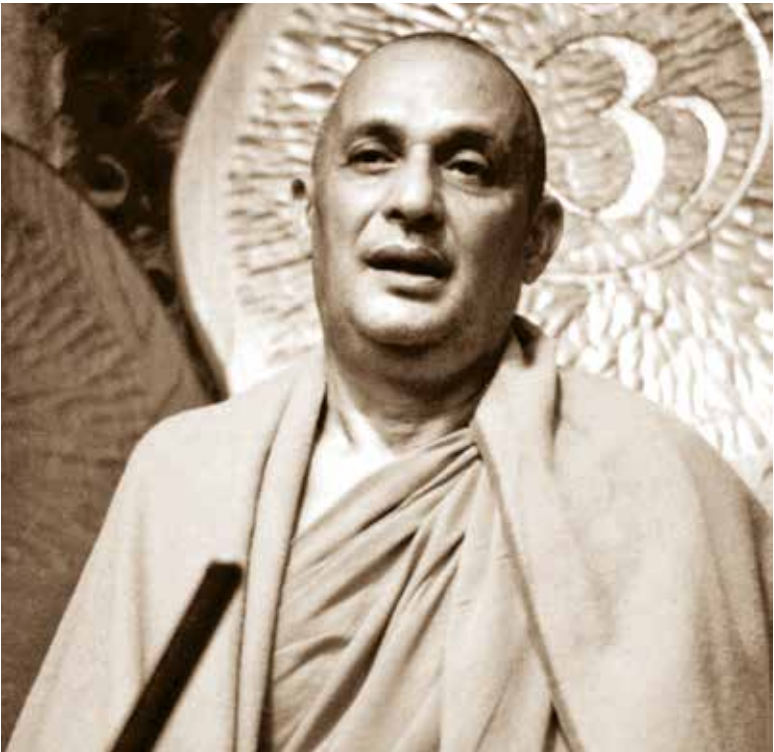
Patanjali, in his *Yoga Sutras*, gives a wide range of techniques to slowly harmonize the mind and gradually induce more subtle perception. His system is known as *ashtanga yoga* as it consists of eight stages – yama (social code), niyama (personal code), asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi. The first five stages negate consciousness while the last three stages expand consciousness. The stages up to pratyahara gradually remove external distractions and the practices from dharana onwards eradicate disturbing thoughts and psychic manifestations so that the mind ceases to function. Ida (the inner world) is

balanced with pingala (the outer world) so that sushumna (the transcendental) begins to function in samadhi.

In the Upanishads, alternating activities of ida and pingala nadis are said to ensnare the consciousness like a bird which is tied to its perch. It tries to fly away time and time again, but is constantly pulled down. In the *Varaha Upanishad* it says:

The breath follows life in the same way that a shadow follows an object. Uddiyana is the practice that makes the ever-restless breath fly upwards.

However, if the shakti of ida and pingala can be brought together and released through sushumna, it will ascend and ultimately be freed in sahasrara chakra, the highest heaven.



9

Conclusion



When a person practises meditation, or dhyana yoga, he is playing with his consciousness, more specifically, the left side of the consciousness. While practising karma yoga, a person is playing with the right side of his consciousness. Ida and pingala are the two wings of a yogi. A bird cannot

fly with one wing; it can only fly with two wings. In the same way, karma yoga and raja yoga are the two wings of the practitioner, just as chitta and prana, consciousness and vital force, are the two wings of the soul. Karma yoga improves the quality of prana. Meditation improves the quality of chitta or consciousness.

I have been talking about yoga for over two decades. I don't belong to a yoga cult. Yoga is not my tradition; my tradition or cult is Vedanta. But I found that, without a foundation, you can't raise a superstructure. If the union between ida and pingala does not take place, if the awakening of the chakras does not take place, if sushumna is not awakened through the practices and if kundalini does not awaken, man lives in the human body but his consciousness is equal to an animal.

The ida-pingala principle applies to all aspects of life. It implies moderation in all activities – in food, between work and play, between mental and physical activities. It implies a balance between passivity and dynamism, ambition and no ambition, between sleep and wakefulness, like and dislike, effort and no effort, victory and defeat and between considering things that matter and things that don't matter.

This principle is not merely a useless philosophical concept; it is an indicator, a guideline for living one's whole life in a harmonious manner. It points out that one should live right in the centre, untouched by opposites.

If you live in a family, then you can only be a perfect and integrated member by harmonizing your inner being and simultaneously having concern for other members of the family. It is the same with the spiritual path, when done for personal motives it is immediately self-defeating.

There has to be the aspiration for self-perfection combined with interest in the welfare of all other people and things. This is implied in the balance of ida and pingala; it is the balance between inner knowledge and external expression. This is the middle path. The regard for oneself and others is essential.

Spiritual life

The path of spiritual life should not, and cannot, be selfish. Though you may be treading the spiritual path as an individual, it really includes everyone and everything else.

There should be a continual process of adjustment. The awareness of the inner world is expanded and from this the relationships and understanding of the outside world are adjusted. It is a continual process of synchronizing the ida and pingala principles so that they are always balanced. Balance should slowly rise so that one's being progressively passes through the ascending chakras.

Ida (inner awareness) is matched with pingala (outer awareness and expression) so that they balance each other at each of the chakras in turn. Many aspirants want to completely absorb themselves in sadhana practice, ceasing to take an active part in the world and often retiring to a quiet retreat. Many sincere and genuine sadhakas have done this for years and have achieved nothing, apart from frustration and disillusionment.

They have followed only the ida path, failing to gain the illumination in sadhana they so desperately wanted. They did not realize that illumination cannot come until the karmas have been worked out. All the emotions which have been avoided and suppressed need to come out. The karma which was holding up one's evolution will have to be worked out. The inherent desires and ambitions have to be exhausted and expressed, otherwise they merely remain in a dormant state in the mind as barriers between one's present state of existence and the absolute experience.

Everyone must face fear; there is no use avoiding it. In as much as happiness, comfort, pleasure, love, compassion and charity are wanted, so unhappiness, agony, death, separation, undesirable events, fears, destruction, devastation and so on must be accepted. This can only be done by interacting and working in the world, by following the principles of karma yoga to the best of one's ability. This is the means to clean the mind of its latent problems. It is the pingala aspect.

At the same time, a sadhaka should also follow the path of ida, by trying to be aware while working and acting, and by trying to expand inner awareness through meditation practices. This is the way to spiritual unfoldment, not becoming a hermit and rejecting the world.

The aim is to maintain awareness (sushumna) while conducting the affairs of the world. In a sense, there has to be perfect balance between sleep and wakefulness. This is called *yoga nidra* (sleepless sleep); one should be asleep to the world while acting perfectly in it, but awake to the realm of consciousness. This is action in inaction, the union of Shiva and Shakti. It is not easy, but this is the aim.

The path of the wise

Well-known sages illustrate the common principle of balance and harmony of the ida and pingala. Christ was illumined, yet he continued to act in the world. He taught his disciples, apostles and followers and travelled all over Galilee. He acted with total awareness. Saint Teresa de Avila was an illumined saint, but she did not stop working, she did more and more work and urged her followers to do the same. Kabir was an illumined bhakta, but he continued to earn his living by weaving and expressed his illumination through his ecstatic songs. They lived in the world and beyond the world, combining these two seemingly contradictory modes of being.

Ramana Maharshi was illumined and although he never did very much intense work, he taught and guided his disciples, working in the ashram that grew up around him, preparing food and so forth. Swami Sivananda was the same. He did not stop work, but continued to express himself in many different ways, from writing books to working in the ashram. Endless other examples could be given of other sages who continued to act in the world. There seem to be no exceptions, they all combined illumination with external work. They all worked in the world, but with awareness of the underlying nature of everything.

They integrated the realm of the phenomenal and relative or *samsara* with the transcendental or *nirvana*. They combined the limited with the unlimited. They acted as a crossroad between the finite and the infinite, the temporal and the eternal. They balanced the inner with the outer, they balanced the ida with the pingala.

Therefore, follow the example of these illumined sages. Don't reject work. Change your attitude to work, try to be more detached, renounce the fruits mentally and be aware, but don't stop. If you are lost and totally involved in external actions, as are most people, then take steps to unfold inner awareness (ida). Start to practise yoga. On the other hand, if you are excessively introverted with a tendency to brood about your problems and deficiencies, then try to take more interest in the outside world (pingala). Do intense one-pointed work, but try to be aware at the same time. The important thing is that there should be balance between ida and pingala. For this is the way to open up your potential and understanding of what sadhana really is. It is the way to live the divine life.





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