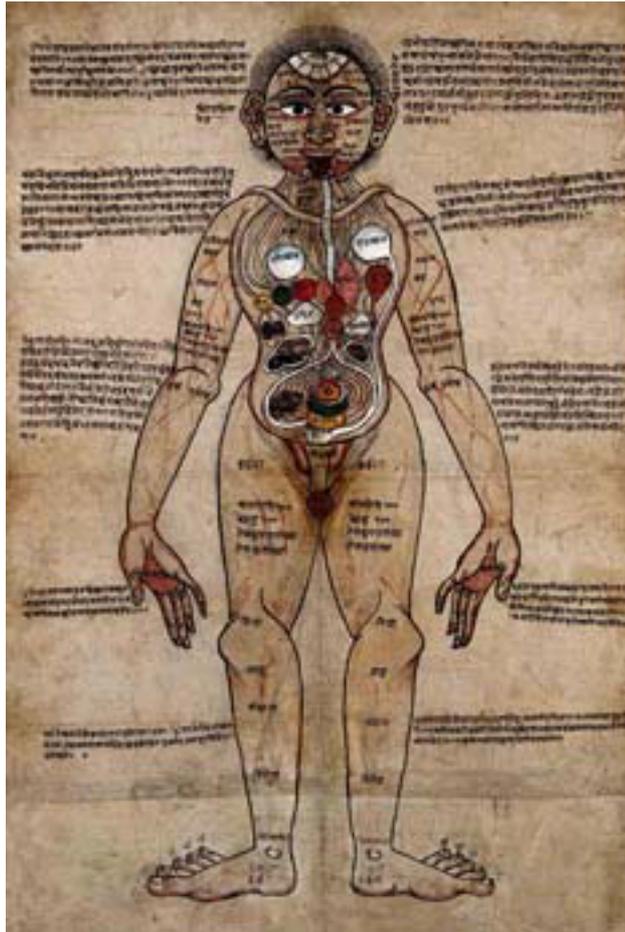


The presence and actions of Prāṇa Śakti



Generally the purpose of Yoga is to bring about a change within the prominence of awareness and its subsequent impact on the attitude and function of the individual.

Whether this change is explored as a yoking of two opposites, as in [Prāṇa](#) and [Apāna](#), or an unyoking of two seemingly inseparable aspects, as in [Puruṣa](#) and [Prakṛti](#), time and a process are involved. Also this notion of change may be initiated within an individual's physical body, energetic processes, mental attitude and emotional responses.

However, within Indian thought there is a concept that is common to the different philosophies and to the different aspects of the individual. This concept is the presence, power and actions of [Prāṇa](#).

Whether we are looking at change on a physical, energetic, mental or emotional level we are involved in the flow and movement of the bio-energy called [Prāṇa](#). In fact some Yoga texts, for instance the [Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā](#), define what Yoga is in relation to what [Prāṇa](#) is.

For example one meaning of the word [Hatha](#) is the conjoining of [Prāṇa](#) and [Apāna](#), two primary aspects of [Mahā Prāṇa](#).

apānamūrdhvamutthāpya prāṇaṃ kaṇṭhādadhō nayet |

Raising Apāna upwards and taking Prāṇa downwards from the throat.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā Chapter Two verse 47

However, the ultimate intention of [Haṭha](#) Yoga is to see that [Prāṇa](#) eventually only reaches deep into the one channel or [Nāḍī](#) known as [Suṣumnā](#). The [Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā](#), defines Yoga as the ability to direct [Prāṇa](#) into the [Suṣumnā Nāḍī](#) or the fire channel.

prāṇasya śūnyapadavī tadā rājapathāyate |

Then Suṣumnā becomes the royal road for Prāṇa.

- Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā Chapter Three verse 3

As in the [Yoga Sūtra](#) of Patañjali the importance of channelling the mind is emphasised. Yoga emphasises a close relationship between [Prāṇa](#) and [mind](#); if you influence one, it influences the other.

mārutasya vidhiṃ sarvaṃ manoyuktaṃ samabhyaset |

*All the practices involving Vāyu (Prāṇa)
should be done only with a concentrated mind.*

- Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā Chapter Three verse 127

dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā mansaḥ |

*(Moreoever from the practice of Prāṇāyāma)
and fitness of the mind for Dhāraṇā (concentration).*

Patañjali Yoga Sūtra Chapter Two verse 53

Also, according to [Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā](#) the [mind](#) follows [Prāṇa](#) and movement of [Prāṇa](#) can influence the mental fluctuations or [Citta Vrtti](#).

cale vāte calaṃ cittaṃ niścale niścalaṃ bhavet |

As is the breath so is the mind.

- Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā Chapter Two verse 2

We can infer that [Prāṇa](#), [breath](#) and [mind](#) are interrelated. Whatever happens in the [mind](#) influences the [breath](#) and vice versa.

That is also part of why the pulse rate increases and the breathing becomes faster when we are excited, and when the breathing becomes very long, the pulse is slower and we are stiller. Thus this mind-breath interactive relationship is an ongoing reality and with

[Prānāyāma](#) breathing practices we use the [breath](#) to do something with the [mind](#) so that the [Prāṇa](#) increases in its intensity yet decreases in its fluctuations.

As an occidental approaching the study of Indian bio-energy systems we can have problems relating these ideas to our own belief systems. Furthermore, texts like the [Yoga Sūtra](#) or [Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā](#) presuppose an understanding of what is [Prāṇa](#), from where it originates and how it functions within the individual.

For an understanding of the nature of [Prāṇa](#) we must look to other texts such as the Praśna Upaniṣad and Yoga Yājñavalkya.

Well-being is being well, being well means to have an awareness of what is going on within and without. This awareness or force works through contact between the [mind](#), the [senses](#), and the [external world](#). This contact or relationship is the essence of Yoga because this contact can be a cause for disturbance or because of how we choose to skilfully use that relationship.

The clarity and strength of this awareness or force is reflected in the clarity or strength of the flow of bio-energy called [Prāṇa Śakti](#).

[Prāṇa](#) is the force that keeps us alive and within the body. The stronger or more concentrated the [Prāṇa](#) the more alive we are, and therefore have a greater sense of well-being.

Factors such as clarity, understanding and memory as well as the strength and efficient action of the various body functions are dependent upon the power of [Prāṇa](#).

According to [Āyurveda](#) the improper use of the mind, senses and body will disturb or diffuse the flow of [Prāṇa](#) and therefore affect our sense of well-being and ultimately lead to disease of dis-ease.

[Āyurveda](#) aims at maintaining the [Prāṇa Śakti](#) because to lose the power of [Prāṇa](#) is to lose the power of life. Death in [Āyurveda](#) and Yoga is seen as a dispersion of [Prāṇa](#) from the body.

This is why both [Āyurveda](#) and Yoga say there should be resonance of the movement of [Prāṇa](#) throughout all of the channels of the body.

The subtle channels in which [Prāṇa](#) flows, if obstructed in any way, cause the obstruction of [Prāṇa](#), and the result is the same as for the disturbance of [Vāta](#) or Air principle in its physical channel, ie there is disharmony, disequilibrium and disease.

Health is harmony, disharmony of either the three principles or of

[Prāna](#) means disease. Deranged [Prāna](#) deranges the principle of Air, Fire and Water. Derange the principles of Air, Fire and Water and you derange the flow of [Prāna](#).

This is why Yoga places such emphasis on the clearing of the channels through which [Prāna](#) flows, and [Āyurveda](#) on the harmony between the three principles. Also, both respect and include the other's ideas in working with the refinement of well-being and awareness of the factors that limit it.

For instance the function of [Apāna](#) is the discharge of stools, urine, menstrual fluids, gas, ovum, sperm, foetus. The role of [Apāna](#) is to move downwards, an imbalance, aggravation or vitiation reflects in an increase or decrease of its natural tendency. It will become overactive or under active.

This in turn can disturb the other aspects such as [Vāta](#) or Air principle. So when [Apāna](#) is controlled or balanced this helps to balance the other aspects of the Air principle. [Apāna](#) is sometimes called the scavenger of the body, so its efficient function is vital for health.

In Yoga we have postures such as Apānāsana to help balance [Apāna](#). This efficient function of [Apāna](#) also reflects in the verse quoted earlier in this article from the Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā C2 v47, in that the onset of old age is deferred and health maintained by controlling [Apāna](#) and [Prāna](#).

So to summarize the "wholeness" or "intensity" of our bio-energy field is the concern of both [Āyurveda](#) and Yoga. [Āyurveda](#) concerns itself more with the physiological factors that disturb this wholeness or intensity.

Yoga concerns itself more with the psychological factors that distend our bio-energy field. Each overlaps and regards the two areas as inseparable.

*"Whatever affects the mind affects the body and
whatever affects the body affects the mind."*

We have seen from this article that the common bond for the mind and body is [Prāna](#) and the quality of the [Prāna Śakti](#) or intensity of the bio-energy field is expressed through the breath.

A further post will continue to develop and explore ideas on how Yoga views the nature and purpose of [Prāna](#).