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INTRODUCTION TO HATHA YOGA

Hatha yoga is an ancient spiritual yogic practice. The word 'Hatha' is composed of two syllables 'Ha' and 'Tha' which denote the 'Pingala' and the 'Ida', the vital and the mental, the solar and the lunar energies in the human system. It is the science of creating a harmony between these two energies within us so as to help us to achieve a higher consciousness in life.

Classical Hatha yoga has five limbs, which are;

➤ **Shatkarma:** This is the six purificatory or cleansing practices, namely;

- Neti
- Dhauti
- Basti
- Nauli
- Kapalbhathi
- Trataka





Notes

- **Asana:** This is the physical postures. It is to gain steadiness of body and mind, freedom from disease and the lightness of limbs.
- **Pranayama:** This brings the purification of the Nadis, The experience of the Pranic field, increase in the quantum of Prana and eventually leads the mind into meditation.
- **Mudra:** This is a gesture which controls and channelize the Prana (life force) in a particular way.
- **Bandha:** This means to lock or to stop. In the practice of a Bandha, the energy flow to a particular area of the body is blocked.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain the importance of Hatha yoga in physical, mental, social and emotional level and
- practice Hatha yoga in correct posture.

3.1 IMPORTANT TEXTS OF HATHA YOGA

Hatha Yoga starts from the Annamaya Kosha (physical level), which helps to create a balance between the mind and body. Although Hatha yoga begins with the Annamaya Kosha, if performed correctly, the practices of Hatha yoga impact the subtler Pranamaya (Vital force), Manomaya (Mental) and Vijnanamaya

(Intellectual) Koshas as well. As one practices Hatha yoga techniques, one's physical and mental potential begin to increase and unfold. Many yogis have written the Hatha yoga texts.



Notes

Hatha yoga practices start from following:

Proper Diet- The Hatha yoga texts emphasize on moderate eating or consuming a measured diet. Hatha yoga pradipika suggests that

- One's eating habits should not be driven by cravings.
- A proper diet is one which is tasty, likable and nutritious.
- The diet should be able to fulfill all the required nutritional needs of the body entirely.
- It also suggests that one should eat only when hungry and not otherwise.

Proper Body Cleansing- Hatha yoga suggests a list of cleansing techniques known as shat-karma

- Dhauti- Cleanse teeth and body
- Neti- Cleanse nasal passages
- Basti-Cleanse bladder
- Trataka- Cleanse eyes

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- Kapalabhati-Cleanse phlegm
- Nauli-Abdominal massage

Proper Postures- Asanas are specialized postures of the body often imitating many of the animal postures. Large number of Asanas exists.

The main four Asanas are:

- Padmasana
- Sukhasana
- Siddhasana
- Vajrasana

Proper Breathing- Pranayama is a breathing technique. This practice will consciously regulate our breath combined with focused muscles exercises. There are several ways in which one can regulate the breathing. The following are the few examples of Pranayama:

- Nadishuddhe
- Bhramari
- Shitali
- Ujjayi

Mudra's and Vital Energies- Mudra's or hand gestures are



important while performing meditation as these are vital to reach out as well as manipulate the dormant vital energies in the body.

Hatha Yoga Texts

- **Hatha Yoga Pradipika:** The author of this text is Nath Yogi Swatmarama.
- **Gheranda Samhitha:** This text is a conversation between Rishi Gheranda and King Chandakapali.
- **Hatha Ratnavali:** This is an important treatise on Hatha yoga and Tantra written by Srinivasa Bhatta Mahayogendra.
- **Shiva Samhitha:** This text is written from the point of view of the lord Shiva, writing to his consort, Parvati, and is one of the oldest surviving texts based on Hatha yoga.
- **Gorakshasatkam:** This was written by Guru Goraknath.
- **Yoga Rahasya:** This was written by Nathamuni.
- **Siddhasidhant Paddhati:** This was written by Guru Goraknath.

I. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RAJA YOGA AND HATHA YOGA

Hatha Yoga is the physical practice of yoga which focuses first on the Kriya and Asana practice. Hatha yoga is part of the integral



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system of Raja Yoga and focuses on the subtle energy flow in the body known as Prana.

Hatha Yoga is the ladder leading to Raja Yoga. We can find the reference of this in Hatha Yoga Pradipika.

प्रणम्य श्री-गुरुं नाथं स्वात्मारामेण योगिना ।
केवलं राज-योगाय हठ-विद्योपदिश्यते ॥ २ ॥

praëamya çré-guruà nãthaà svãtmãrameëa yoginã |
kevalaà räja-yogäya haöha-vidyopadiçyate || 2||

Meaning

Prostrating first to the guru, Yogi Swatmarama instructs the knowledge of Hatha yoga only for the Raja Yoga (the highest state of yoga).

Raja yoga is the royal path of yoga consisting of eight steps. The first steps, Yama and Niyama, are the moral foundations for the yoga practice followed by Asana, Pranayama, sense withdrawal, concentration, and culminating with meditation and Samadhi. Raja yoga is about controlling the mind and thought waves in the mind.

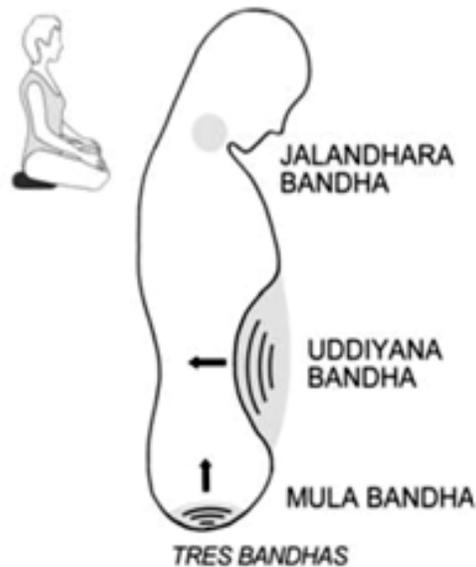


INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.1

1. Hatha yoga suggests a list of cleansing techniques known as
2. Yoga Rahasya was written by.....
3.is a breathing technique.

3.2 WHAT ARE BANDHAS AND MUDRAS?

Bandha



Notes

Bandha means to lock, close-off, to stop. In the practice of a Bandha, the energy flow to a particular area of the body is blocked. When the Bandha is released, this causes the energy to flood more strongly through the body with an increased pressure.

There are four types of Bandhas:

- Mula Bandha - Anal Lock
- Uddiyana Bandha - Lifting of the Diaphragm
- Jalandhara Bandha - Chin Lock
- Maha Bandha - Practice of all three Bandhas at the same time.



Notes

Mudra

Mudra means a 'sign' or a 'seal' in sanskrit. The word mudra has a number of different meanings in yoga which include meditation practices. Here, 'Mud' means 'to delight' or 'to be happy' and 'Ra' means 'to give'. An action that gives us delight or extreme joy. Mudra's are most commonly associated with various hand gestures.



The fingers are related to different types of energies and when they are brought together in specific ways, they produce subtle effects.

The Basics of Mudra's

- Thumb-The fire (Agni)
- Index finger-The air (Vayu)
- Middle finger-The ether (Aakasha)
- Ring finger-The earth (Prithvi)

- Small finger-The water (Jala) so as to bring back the balance in the five elements, there are some specific methods of touching and aligning the fingers with each other.



Notes

The following are the few examples of Mudra



- Chin Mudra
- Chinmaya Mudra
- Adi Mudra
- Bramha Mudra



INTEXT QUESTIONS 3.2

1. There are types of Bandhas.
2. In the practice of a Bandha, the energy flow to a particular area of the body is



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

You have learnt about Hatha yoga and its five classical limbs. You also came across the objectives, main texts of Hatha yoga and the difference between Hatha yoga and Raja yoga. And also about Mudra and Bandha.



Notes

**TERMINAL QUESTIONS**

1. What is Hatha Yoga?
2. List the five classical Hatha Yoga limbs.
3. Write the four texts Hatha Yoga.
4. What is Raja Yoga?
5. What is Mudra and Bandha?

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****3.1**

1. Shat-Karma
2. Nathamuni
3. Pranayama

3.2

1. Four
2. Blocked