

## **The Specific Advantages of Hatha Yoga**

We talk about the mind-body relation – the influence of the one upon the other – because we think that it will be useful in our life if the relation between body and mind can be better known. The subject is important both from spiritual and psychological points of view, but still more so for the fruitful management of our day-to-day lives. On this earth-plane, our existence clearly depends upon the body, although the body is not all that we are. There is also the mind. The relationship between these two appears to be inseparable, yet still it is relative, differing with age, circumstances and constitution.

Each thought-pattern, molded at a particular instance, is not exclusively a mental phenomenon. If we are very sick and depleted, we are not only physically weak. Also, the mind ceases to work and there is not sufficient energy left to think or desire. In this way, a sick body influences the mind and makes it almost paralyzed.

In such a physical and mental state, we have little power to move and deal with things. But if some positive stimulus comes about, such as perhaps news about some successful business venture or the like, it can so electrify and stimulate that one forgets one's sickness and suddenly can get up and be strong. What is this phenomenon? The revitalization of the mind influences the body as well.

A similar situation may occur when the mind is paralyzed, for example by a deep sorrow. We may then find ourselves disinclined to eat, to take care of the body, or to engage in otherwise familiar habits, all in the absence of any physical disease. In such circumstances, effort must be put forth to continue to meet the minimum demands of the body, for the body can help to normalize, cure and relieve the mind from its grief.

Each mental state (but especially an intense emotional state) is linked to a certain state of the body and will cause alterations with regard to the depth and frequency of breathing. However, since the mind is linked to the body, breathing can also alter the state of mind. Thus it is possible, by consciously and

intentionally altering the state of one's breathing, to produce an alteration in the continuum of the mind-body relation. Our mind is linked to the breathing process, and a careful refinement of the breath can thus bring about a right condition in the mind.

It is not necessary to wait until the mental stage of distress, disintegration or paralysis to begin to apply such methods. According to Hatha-Yoga, it is often easier to approach the whole problem by using the body for mind-development. Success in this endeavor necessitates a strong and healthy body.

We all know that the health of the body is important, but do we really understand what health is? Are we really healthy? When there are clear disease-symptoms, we know that we are not healthy, but this does not mean that the absence of disease-symptoms is true health. This recognition is important. Real, complete, vital health gives a feeling of joyousness without any special cause, simply from within. It gives full enjoyment in all doings, inclusive of sleeping and eating, and allows the possibility of gaining of refreshment from everything. It gives an unlimited source of energy within, to think one's own thoughts joyfully – to act

joyfully – and allows the possibility of work without exhaustion. It is possible to build up real, vital health by the right means. Hatha-Yoga presents one such means to achieve this end.

The development of real, vital health in the physical body provides a solid foundation for refinement of the breathing, which is the link to the mind. Most people are ignorant of the subtleties and dynamics of breathing. To inhale and exhale is all we know, and that we cannot stop breathing for any length of time because of our hunger for oxygen. However, properly developed and refined breathing can give more important strength than any mechanical movements. Additionally, this will allow for the development of mental concentration, without which the fine, complicated movements required for more advanced Hatha-Yoga techniques are not possible to execute.

All this shows the interrelation of the body and mind, the influence of the one upon the other. The knowledge of these matters will make us more successful with everything we do in life.