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ISSN (Online) : 2455 - 3662  
SJIF Impact Factor :4.924

EPRA International Journal of  
**Multidisciplinary  
Research**

Monthly Peer Reviewed & Indexed  
International Online Journal

**Volume: 3 Issue: 11 November 2017**



**Published By :**  
**EPRA Journals**

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## CONCEPT OF NADIS IN TEXTS AND TRADITIONS

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### ABSTRACT

*Nadis refer to the subtle channels of the body which forms the passage for the flow of the vital forces of prana. Ancient yogic texts speak of fourteen main nadis out of which Ida, Pingala and Sushumna are most vital. Ida nadi is at the left half of the sushumna “ and is otherwise known as the lunar nadi of the body. Ida is supportive and cool in nature and it reflects the female aspect of our personality. Our mental activities are controlled by ida. Similarly at the right half of “sushumna”, there is “pingala nadi” which controls all crucial somatic activities. Nadi sodhana is the yogic way to create equilibrium of nadis .Hatha yoga practices focus on bringing ida and pingala into equilibrium. The author has made an attempt to describe the concept of nadis in this article based on the explanations made in texts and traditions.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Ida Nadi, Kundalini, Muladhara, Pingala, Sahasrara, Sakti, Sushumna.*

### INTRODUCTION NADI MEANING

The origin of word nadi is from Sanskrit root “nad ” which means flow or channel .The prana or life force flows along the subtle channels known as nadi. According to tantras they are network of subtle channels through which the prana-the life force circulates.

Nadi concept is almost 3,000 years old in Hindu philosophy. Ancient yogic texts describe that the human body consists of seventy two thousand nadis. There are fourteen main nadis according to Shiva Samhita out of which **Ida, Pingala and Sushumna** are considered most vital. Sushumna is the central passage through which the awakened Kundalini moves upward .Nadis do not mean nerves of physiological system. The location of nadis is not in the physical body having physiological counterparts.

On the other hand, they consist of astral matters and visible only to persons having psychic vision.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF NADIS

#### IDA

- Left channel
- White color
- Feminine nature
- Cool
- Represents moon and river Ganga.
- Meaning –comfort
- Path-Follows the path from left testicle to left nostril.
- Other name-Chandra nadi,sasi
- Location-left side of the spine
- Introverted
- Lunar nadi

## PINGALA

- Right channel
- Tawny (brown) or golden color
- Masculine nature
- Hot
- Represents the river Yamuna
- Meaning- tawny
- Path- Originating in Muladhara, Pingala ends up in the right nostril.
- Other name-Surya nadi,mihira
- Location-Right side of the spine
- Extroverted  
Solar nadi

## SUSHUMNA

- Central channel
- Meaning-very gracious or kind
- Path-along the spinal cord in the middle through seven chakras or psychic centers.
- Represents river Saraswati.
- The lower face of Sushumna is blocked until the arousal of Kundalini happens. It has its interpenetration into cerebrospinal axis.
- As described in Swara yoga, Sushumna has the characteristics of opening of both nostrils and free passage of air. It interconnects the root chakra to the crown chakra.
- One can make the mind quiet by following Yama, Niyama, Asana and Pranayama as suggested in Patanjali Yoga Sutra. As a result .the stage of pratyahara or withdrawal begins and the person in this state never experience dispersion of mind. The movements in sushumna are exhibited in the subtle body now.

## OTHER NADIS

Vajra, Chitrini and Brahma nadi are the three subtle channels within the Sushumna nadi. Movement of Kundalini occurs from just below Muladhara chakra to Sahasrara chakra at the crown of the head through these nadis.

## KANDA

The *kanda* is otherwise known as “Yukta Triveni “and is located in Muladhara chakra .Yukta means "combined", tri means "three “and veni means "streams".The three nadis have their junction at this point..

In mooladhra there exists Svayambhu linga at the base of the spine which forms the central axis., Shakti exists around the linga blocking the entrance to

Sushumna with mouth. The Shakti is , the static unmanifested Kundalini which is symbolized by a serpent in sleeping mode coiled into three and half circles.

## NADIS IN ANCIENT TEXTS

In many Upanishads, like Chandogya and Prasna Upanisad.we get discussion regarding the concept of nadis .The susumna nadi which has been referred to in Kathopanishad, is a crucial notion in Hatha Yoga.

Upanishad tells that in the heart dwells verily the *Jivātmā*.

According to the **yoga theory**, prana (life force energies) is carried by nadis. Blood, Air, water, nutrients and other body fluids are transported by the nadis in the physical body. The other name of he physical body is *Shula sarira (gross body)*.

The nadis are similar to the veins, arteries, bronchioles, capillaries, lymph canals, nerves and so on. .

The nadis carry the intellectual, vital, seminal, cosmic and mental energies in the subtle or causal body. Regarding the number of nadis in the human body there are different views in yogic texts. According to Hatha Yogic texts, there are 72,000 nadis, each of which branches off into 72,000 nadis. Ancient text Shiva Samhita speaks of 350,000 nadis originating from the navel center.

## NADI IN SWARA YOGA

Swara yoga is a science which deals in great detail with the changing flows of the nadis. As per Shiva Swarodaya there exist ten important nadis connecting to the 'doorways' leading in and out of the body.

Chakras are like sub stations situated along the spinal column.

Of these ten the most important nadis ida, pingala and sushumna like the high voltage wires which conduct the energy to the chakras.

There are seven lesser nadis known as gandhari, hastihiva, pooscha, yasawini, alambusha, kuhu, sankhini.

## NADIS AND THEIR RELATED ORGAN

GANDHARI-LEFT EYE

HASTIJHVA-RIGHT EYE

POOSHA-RIGHT EAR

YASHASWINI=LEFT EAR

ALAMNUSHA-MOUTH

KUHU-REPRODUCTIVE ORGAN

SANKHINI-RECTUM

Upanishads describe 14 to 19 nadis which are listed below.

- Jihva
- Kurma
- Payaswini
- Saraswati

- Saumya
- Shura
- Varuni
- Vilambha
- Vishvodar.

However in Swara yoga no description regarding the nature or function of above nadis is available. Since three nadis ida, pingala and sushumna govern the whole system of the nadis and body processes, concentration on only these three nadis is essential.

### **POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECT OF NADIS:**

Ida and pingala belong to one prana or Shakti but possess opposite aspects. Maha prana ranges varying from gross to subtle or tangible to intangible in macrocosmic level. In microcosmic level, polarization of prana into ida and pingala occurs in the body level. The negative and positive aspects of nadis or prana are symbolic and are purely descriptive terms and those should not be confused with positive and negative ions or with positive and negative mental states.

### **TRIUNE ENERGY SYSTEM**

Depending on the flow of energy and magnetic pull of positive and negative forces body is divided into two divisions or zones. The two adjoining sides meet in the central axis and thus the positive and negative energies become equalized creating a neutral energy field which runs straight up and down through the centre. In yoga we call this important pathway as sushumna nadi. Sushumna nadi also emerges from the spinal base like ida and pingala, but it does not get diverted to right or left and travels directly up through the centre. Piercing the main chakras and plexuses along the way it joins with Ida and pingala at ajna chakra in the region of the medulla oblongata. This sushumna may be assumed to correspond with cerebrospinal nervous system (CNS which is the carrier of impulses to the whole system). Running from the base of the spine to the brain sushumna occupies the same position. Sushumna is dormant at the present stage of evolution of human being. It possesses tremendous potential, but some particular methods are needed to arouse it. At the present rate of evolution, its activation will take thousands of years. Therefore, yogis devised the means of awakening sushumna through manipulation of swara.

### **NADI IN HATHA YOGA TEXTS**

There are six techniques in hatha yoga for purification of the body. They are known as Shatkarmas. The yogi can bring balance of flow between the prana in ida and pingala, (ha = sun, tha = moon), which is the main aim of hatha yoga. There exist 350000 nadis as per Shiva Samhita out of which 14 are very important. Out of these 14 only three are most vital.

There is another classical text on chakras and nadis known as **Sat-Cakra-Nirupana** (1520As per this text ida, pingala and sushumna bear the names of Sasi, Mihira and Susumna respectively. Sushumna nadi has threefold Gunas and exists in the middle. Different forms like that of Fire, Moon, Sun, and even water also may be assumed by Sushumna

### **TANTRIC CONCEPT OF NADI**

Tantra practitioners of ancient India developed the methods of mappings of the different ways of energy circulation within us. The most important discovery of early tantric tradition was the concept the *nadis*. The energetic irrigation system of the body which keeps us alive is represented by the nadi.

As per tantric concept Shiva and Shakti are the twin forces which exist within each individual. We can perceive them as brain and pranic body in form of ida and pingala. It gives the idea of two minds i.e. positive and the other negative. This strengthens the idea of existence of a male and female side in everyone of us.

Many Tantric texts speak of 72,000 nadis in the body, through which the prana is channelized to every cell. Out of these nadis some are wide and rushing; while others are a mere trickle. A free and smooth nadi system reflects a healthy body of the individual. On the other hand, when the nadi system is weak or congested, the person suffers with poor physical as well as mental health. The pranic flow of energy in our bodies is strengthened by Hatha yoga practices. One cannot see nadis by microscope as they are subtle body parts like the chakras (psycho energetic power centers) and prana. In traditional yoga system subtle body is assumed to be real which is not accepted in modern medical science which relates them to the realm of the merely metaphorical. In current yoga culture much emphasis is given on gross physical anatomy and this perception will only be counterbalanced by the proper understanding and working with nadi theory and function. Three nadis carry much importance and interest in the part of yogis. The *sushumna* nadi is the passage for movement of *kundalini Shakti* (the latent serpent power) which is capable to fuel the higher spiritual consciousness. The sahasrara chakra (thousand petalled lotus) is at the crown of the head which is the true abode of the kundalini. Awakened kundalini rises up from its origin at the *muladhara* chakra and moves towards sahasrara passing through other chakras along the sushumna nadi, the path to enlightenment.

The ida and *pingala* nadis appear like the double helix of our DNA as they run spirally around sushumna crossing each other at every chakra. One can get a rough idea of ida, pingala and sushumna relationship if he or she visualizes the caduceus, the

symbol of modern medicine. Ajna (command) chakra, midway between the eyebrows. Is the meeting point of all the three nadis together. Ida nadi whose other name is lunar nadi runs at the left side of sushumna. By nature it is nurturing and cool by nature. All our mental processes are controlled by ida. This nadi also reflects the female aspects of our personality. The white colour of ida represents its subtle vibrational quality. Pingala is otherwise known as solar nadi at the right of sushumna. Its nature is stimulating and warm and all vital somatic processes are controlled by it. Pingala reflects the male aspects of our personality. The pingala nadi has typical vibrational quality which gets represented by red colour. We can equate the interaction between ida and pingala with the activities of right and left brain hemisphere, the internal dance between intuition and rationality, consciousness and vital power. Irrespective of our knowledge, one of these nadis always found dominating in our day to day activities. Though the predominance of one nadi alternates throughout the day, still one nadi tends to be ascendant more often and for longer durations than the other. The person may be identified as pingala or ida-like personality depending on the predominance of the nadi in behavior and personality. Below is a summary of ida and pingala type of individuals' characteristics:

#### IDA LIKE INDIVIDUALS

- The individuals may have lunar or nurturing qualities.
- Necessary urge to sustain a strong yoga practice may be found lacking in them.
- They are full of potential.
- **Suggestion:** They should develop their pingala side otherwise their potential will never get manifested in either worldly affairs or spiritual development.

#### PINGALA LIKE INDIVIDUALS

- Endowed with solar qualities.
- They are type A personalities having lots of creativity and abundant vitality in most of the cases.
- **Suggestion:** They should concentrate on developing their pingala side.

We will not find nadis if we cut and look into the body. But by developing awareness one becomes able to notice that energy movement is not at random. It is the energy or prana which is set into motion. The real life really is initiated only at the time of entry of energies into Sushumna. Shiva and Shakti are the personification of the basic duality in the existence and this duality is represented by Ida and Pingala represent the basic duality in the existence which we personify as Shiva and Shakti. It can be called as logical or intuitive aspect of us or masculine and feminine nature of individual. Based on this principle, life is created.

At the beginning stage, everything is primordial having no existence of duality. Once creation takes place, duality arises and without these two dualities, existence of life in present form would not have been possible.

#### NADI SODHANA: YOGIC WAY TO CREATE EQUILIBRIUM OF NADIS

Hatha yoga practices focus on bringing ida and pingala into equilibrium. The term hatha signifies this equilibrium or balance. Hatha means "forceful" in Sanskrit, in other sense it is made of two parts *ha* and *tha*, two esoteric *bija* (seed) mantras. *Ha* and *Tha* stand for the solar qualities of pingala and the lunar qualities of ida respectively. Balance of solar and lunar energies or equilibrium of sun and moon, or pingala and ida, hastens the process of awakening and arousal of kundalini. When either ida or pingala is dominating, sushumna remains blocked and the kundalini is dormant. The balancing of ida and pingala can be effected through nadi sodhana. Nadi sodhana is same as alternate-nostril breathing practice. Because of the direct link ida nadi with the left nostril, and the pingala nadi with the right nostril, nadi sodhana brings effective result in our physical and mental health. One has to perform few rounds of this basic pranayama practice at the end of an asana session. The imbalances caused during the practice are removed and equilibrium between the two nadis is established.

#### BY PRACTICE OF ASANA

In addition to Nadi Shodhana practice, asana also can be experimentally performed as a method of balancing ida and pingala. At the outset, one has to sit and observe the breath to observe which nostril (hence, which nadi) is dominating. In case of dominance of the left nostril, it can be inferred that ida is in charge and one has to concentrate on invigorating saunas like backbends, standing poses, inversions, and twists to engage the pingala nadi. If the right nostril dominates in breathing, one should perform the seated poses and forward bends so that the cooling, calming energy will be available for the benefit of the practitioner. By pausing between poses, the nadi which is dominant in the breathing can be ascertained by developing awareness of ida and pingala in a session. The practitioner's mind-states as well; their correlation with the nadi, which is ascendant, can be well noticed. If a person is agitated and active he/she is pingala-like, and if one is calm and receptive, he/she is ida-like personality. Which poses activate one nadi or other and which nadis are responsible for creating physical and emotional equilibrium can be ascertained. Gradually it will help in developing our awareness,

#### TECHNIQUE OF KUNDALINI YOGA

In Kundalini yoga practice the techniques involves to use the vital air Prana and to guide its circulatory movement through Ida and Pingala down to the base of the spine into the space where Kundalini

lies coiled .The meeting of the three principal nadis in Ajna chakra is termed as Mukta Triveni (Mukta: "liberated").

QUALITY	IDA	PINGALA
Guna	Tamasic	Rajasic
Breath	Left nostril	Right nostril
Temperature	Cold	Hot
Sex	Female	Male
Quality	Mental	Physical
Metal	Silver	Gold
	Colour	Blue
		Red
Energy	Negative	Positive
Nerves	Parasympathetic	Sympathetic
River	Yamuna	Ganges
Planet	Moon	Sun

The most important nadi, sushumna, begins to flow only when the purification and balance of nadis occur along with the control of mind. To be successful in meditation, flow of sushumna is essential. Flow of pingala makes the body restless, and the flow of ida flows makes the mind tend to think too much. Arousal and ascent al of kundalini through the chakras follows the flow of Sushumna in human physiology.

**CONCEPT OF NADI IN OTHER TRADITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS CHINESE**

Traditional Chinese Medicine system believes in an energy concept called qi. Qi is in motion through meridians like nadis.

**TIBETAN**

Through the influence of Tantric Buddhism, Tibetan medicine system borrows many concepts from Yoga. .In the *Hevajra Tantra* and *Caryāgiti*, the concept of chakras were introduced about 8 th century CE in Buddhist texts as per opinion of White.. *Cakka*, *padma* (lotus) or *pitha* (mound) are the synonyms of Chakra..

There are description of only four chakras in these medieval Buddhist texts, while more number of chakras are dealt in later texts like the *Kubjikāmata* and *Kaulajñānanirnaya* .

In contrast to White, Feuerstein is of the view that early Hindu Upanishads mention *chakra* in the

sense of "psycho spiritual vortices", along with other terms like : *pranaor vayu* (life energy) ,*nadi* etc.. Galvin Flood, views that *chakra* and kundalini-style yoga theories are not presented in ancient texts, though early Vedic literatures refer these words in many contexts. It is found that in the medieval era Hindu and Buddhist texts used the word *chakra* in the sense of four or more vital energies.

**CONCLUSION**

The main aim of yoga is purification of mind and attainment of a blissful state. However to achieve this certain practices like shatkarma or body cleansing processes have to be done. Then again one has to balance the breath in both the nostrils. Establishing equilibrium in nadis (ida and pingala) brings control over mind control easily. In traditional yoga texts and texts of Swarayoga, nadis and the flow of breath in them have been explained. It is the prime aim of yogi to awaken the dormant kundalini energy at the base of the root chakra and channelize it through sushumna channel.Ascending upward through various chakras ,kundalini reaches at sahasrara,giving the experience of higher consciousness and realization.Nadis are very important so far as kundalini yoga is concerned.

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