



Concept Of Nadishuddhi As Per Hatha Texts

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Abstract

Every living being is alive and functions because of a pranic energy (life force) that circulates through our bodies through different channels known as Nadi. Similar to our nervous system, our astral body has thousands of channels that energy flows through. These channels are nadis and are a vital part of a yogi's journey.

The Sanskrit word "Nadi" means "tube" as we all call the nadis "channel." It refers to the astral channels that energize our astral body. Just like our physical body has an elaborate central nervous system, our astral body has one too, a network of nadis which are not tangible like blood vessels or arteries but one can experience only through self-enlightenment. Nadi Shodhana is a powerful breathing practice done to purify the nadis in our body. Nadi means "channel" and Shodhana means "Purification". Prana can only reach every part of the body when the nadis are clear and strong. Blocked nadis block prana flow and result in physical and mental health complications. NadiShuddhi is aimed at clearing and purifying the subtle channels, balancing the sun and moon energies in our body to attain harmony between the body, mind, and soul allowing prana to move freely bringing balance to the system as a whole.

Vasistha Samhita contains insightful information in terms of nadishuddhi

Keywords: Prana, Nadi, Astral, NadiShodhana, Channels, Purification.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore what nadis are, different types of nadis in humans, and the significance of nadis to help understand and get more clarity in the process of Nadi Shuddhi by comparing the text of Vasistha Samhita and Gehranda Samhita for correct application of NadiShuddhis.

Nadis in different texts

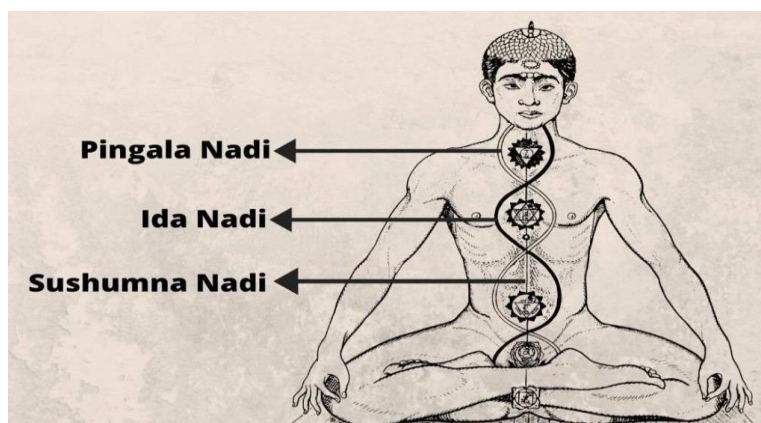
This number of fourteen principal Nadis is mentioned in many ancient texts about Yoga, for instance, in the Shandilya Upanishad, the Darshana Upanishad, and Shiva Samhita scriptures. They're also known as the Caturdasha Nadi (i.e. "fourteen Nadis").

The Darshana Upanishad mentions: "The Nadi located in the middle of the knot of the navel is Susumna. Seventy-two thousand Nadis stand around it. Among them, fourteen Nadis are important." Ch.4

In the Shiva Samhita text it's stated that: "In the body of man there are 350,000 Nadis; of them the principal are fourteen."

The Shandilya Upanishad stated that there are fourteen Nadis based on the kundalini situated in the middle. ch.1/15

Then, another example, in the Bhavana Upanishad: "Alambusa, Kuhu, Visvodara, Varana, Hastijihva, Yasovati, Payasvini, Gandhari, Pusa, Sankhini, Sarasvati, Ida, Pingala and Susumna are the fourteen spiritual nerves." Mantr 15



NADIS AS PER VASISTHA SAMHITA

Vasistha Samhita is a conversation that takes place between sage Vasistha and his son Shakti who shows his eagerness in learning the process of Nadishuddhi. According to Vasistha Samhita, the topic of purification of nadis is dealt after the topic of asana and before that of pranayama.

Description of the body:

According to Vasistha Samhita, the extent of the body of a human being is of measure of ninety-six (of one's) fingers. The number of the bones of the spinal column in the human body is 32 whereas the nadis on the two sides of the spine are 72 thousand (chapter II, verse 5-6). To understand the purification of nadis, knowledge of the various parts of the body and the passage of vayu through these nadis is essential.

According to rishi vasistha, among the 72,000 nadis, the following 14 are important among them:

1. **Susumna:** The nadi which is situated at the centre of kanda is called susumna. All that stay in the periphery of this kanda are called nadis. The susumna originating from the kanda transverses upwards by the back-bone and reaches the centre of the head. All other nadis are situated around it. Susumna, which abides in the Brahmarandhrar is path of liberation. It is unmanifested, fine and is known as Vaisnavi. This susumna transcends the time factor, the secret of which is explained in Vasistha chapter II, verse 30.
2. **Ida:** Ida Nadi emerges from the kand on the left side of susumna and also known as Chandra nadi. Ida nadi indicates Tamasa. (II, 27-29). Ida is stretched up to the left nostril (II, 39). Ida nadi spirals upward around the sushumna until it reaches the left side of the "hypothalamus" in the brain and finally ends at the left nostril (CHY, pg 46).
3. **Pingala:** Pingala nadi emerges from the kand on the right side of susumna and circles upwards in a reverse pattern until it reaches the right side of the hypothalamus and ends in the right nostril. It is known as surya nadi. It indicates Rajasa. (II, 27-29). Pingala occupies the right side and goes upwards upto the right nostril. (II, 36).
4. **Sarasvati:** This nadi holds position on the sides of the susumna and is situated in the upper part of the tongue (VS II, 31, 37). This Nadi empowers your mouth, tongue and throat. It begins at the Muladhara Chakra and ends at the Vishuddhi Chakra, which is located at the base of the throat.
5. **Varuni:** This nadi is situated between Yasasvini nadi & Kuhu nadi (VS, II-32). This Nadi brings energy to the whole body through the nervous system. It begins at the Muladhara chakra and ends at the Anahata chakra.
6. **Pusa:** It is situated behind Pingala and moves upward upto right eye. (VS, II-31, 36). Beginning at the Muladhara Chakra, and ending at the third eye chakra, this Nadi provides energy to your right eye.
7. **Hastijihva:** It is situated in the front of Ida nadi and moves upto the left toe. (VS, II-31, 39). It begins at the Muladhara chakra and ends at the Manipur chakra. It provides energy to the left limb.
8. **Yashasvini:** This nadi is situated in front of the Pingala and spreads in the right side upto right toe (VS, II-31, 35). Yashasvini Nadi brings energy to the right limbs, through the Muladhara chakra and ends at the Manipura chakra.
9. **Visvodara:** This nadi runs between Kuhu and Hastijiva nadis. It pervades the entire left region (VS, II-32, 40). This Nadi begins at the Muladhara chakra and ends at the Manipura chakra. It provides energy to the digestive system.
10. **Kuhu:** This nadi holds position on the sides of the susumna and occupies front side of susumna extending upto the end of the genitals (VS, II-31, 34). This Nadi begins at the throat and ends at the genitals, and provides energy to this area.
11. **Sankhini:** This nadi hold its position between Gandhari and Saraswati nadis and is stretched upwards upto the left ear (VS, II). It provides energy to the left ear. This Nadi begins at the Muladhara chakra and ends at the Ajna chakra.
12. **Payasvini:** This nadi is situated between Pusa nadi and Saraswati nadi. The Payasvini Nadi begins at the right side, and flows up the body to end at the right ear. (VS, II 33-37)
13. **Alambusa:** An alambusa is situated below the centre of kanda and is in the left part stretching downwards from the lower part of the anus (VS, II 34, 40). It emerges from the kanda and transverses downwards and goes all the way up the body to the mouth (Classical Hathayoga). This Nadi helps to bring energy to the organs and parts of the body that eliminate toxins and waste.
14. **Gandhari:** The Gandhari Nadi begins at the Muladhara Chakra, at the base of the spine, and ends up at the Ajna, or third eye, chakra. This provides energy to your left eye. It is situated behind Ida upto the left eye (VS, II 31-38) Many other nadis originate from these nadis mentioned above. They are considered origin of others as one can find a leaf of a fig tree (VS- II 41). Of these 14 three viz Ida, Pingala and Sushumna are more important as shown in the diagram.

From the above 14, the Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna are of utmost importance and move through the spinal cord and chakras. These 3 main Nadis are termed Trividha Nadi.

Shiva Samhita states that in between Trividha Nadi, there is a Nadi in a subtler form called **Chitra Nadi**. **Trividha Nadi** or 3 main nadis are situated near the spine, resembling the stalk of lotus facing downwards (Adhomukha Padma).

Ida Nadi is situated towards the left side and Pingala Nadi towards the right side of Sushumna Nadi. Ida and Pingala nadis spiral around the Sushumna Nadi resembling the double helix of human DNA. They cross each other at certain points along the spine, forming Chakras.

"Each Nadi is responsible for the functioning of one opening." (Yoga Chudamani Upanishad)

“Thus the ten Nadis conduct through the ten apertures.” (Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati)

“The body is a city of ten gates. Ten kinds of airs travel through the ten kinds of high-ways of Nadis there. It is connected with ten organs of perceptions and motor actions.” (Yoga Shikha Upanishad)

As per classical hathayoga all other nadis emerge from the kand except the Sushumna which has special distention of piercing it. Ida and Pingala nadis spiral around the sushumna along the path corresponding the spinal column like two snakes. Ida and pingala are pathways for the polar opposite of the vital currents which flow within us. Ida is negative, feminine, and cooling in effect, hence is called Chandra nadi. Pingala on the other hand is positive, male and heating in effect and is called Surya nadi. The Ida, pingala and Sushumna nadis form a holy trio that meets at the hypothalamus in the brain where the subtle Brahmastrandha or gateway to the supreme lord is found.

Vasistha Samhita mentions 10 vayus, whereas Classical hatha yoga mentions 10 vayus, 5 major vayus described as samanyakaran vritti (balancing activity within) which controls and harmonize the subtle activities of the internal cognitive functions such as consciousness, intellect, ego, mind, knowing, feeling, and willing. The other five vayus are mentioned as minor vital airs known as upa-pranas, which are also important as well with Naag Vayu governing belching, Kurma vayu governing sneezing, krikal vayu activating hunger and thirst, devadatta vayu governing yawning and sleep, and Dhananjay vayu playing an important role in stiffening the body after death.

Thus knowing the system of nadis as well as the places of vayus one should perform carefully the purification of nadis according to the directed method.

Below then an enumeration of the fourteen primary Yoga Nadis, with inclusion of their differing spellings and/or alternative names.

1. **Sushumna Nadi** (Susumna, Brahma, Saraswati, Agni, Jnana);
2. **Ida Nadi** (Chandra, Eda, Candra, Sasi, Sashi, Shashi, Vali, Vala, Vama, Bhagavati, Ganga);
3. **Pingala Nadi** (Pingalika, Surya, Dumbhini, Yamina, Yamuna, Aksara, Kalagni, Rudri, Candi);
4. **Gandhari Nadi** (Ghandari, Gandahari, Gandhara, Gandharika);
5. **Hastijihva Nadi** (Hasti-Jihva, Hastajihva, Hasit-Jivaha, Hastijihvika, Jihva, Hasti Jeeva, Ibhajihva, Karijihvika, Hasta Jihva);
6. **Yashaswini Nadi** (Yajasvini, Yajasvini, Yashaswani, Yajaswani, Yashasvina, Yashasvati, Yasovati, Eka);
7. **Pusha Nadi** (Pusa, Poosa, Pushaa);
8. **Alambusha Nadi** (Alambusa, Alamboosa, Alampusa);
9. **Kuhu Nadi** (Kuhuh, Kuhoo, Guhu);
10. **Shankhini Nadi** (Sankini, Sankhini, Shamkini);
11. **Payaswini Nadi** (Payasvini, Hamsini);
12. **Saraswati Nadi** (Sarasvati, Suvani);
13. **Varuna Nadi** (Varuni, Varana);
14. **Vishvodhara Nadi** (Visvodara, Vishwadora, Vishwodari).

NADI SHUDDHI AS PER VASISTHA SAMHITA

1. One by following all the yamas and Niyamas and abandoning all the attachments, he should find a beautiful place grooved with abundant fruit, root and water, or a bank of river, or a temple. (VS. II, 56-57).
2. He should build a beautiful monastery at this beautiful place. He should take bath thrice a day, besmearing the body with white ashes, and should calm his mind. He should spread a kusha mat or deer skin on a soft seat (VS. II 58-59).
3. He should worship Lord Vinayaka with fruit, root, and water and then bowing down to the favorite deity one should sit in padmasana facing east or north with back, neck, head stretched erect being quite and steady. (VS. II 60-61).
4. Placing the right hand on the nose and again gazing the luminous orb of the moon on the tip of the nose, he should inhale the breath through Ida with mantra “Vam” 12 counts and meditate on fire surrounded by a line of flashing flames. (VS. II, 63-64).
5. Then he should meditate on “Ram” within the circle of fire and exhale slowly through the Pingala nadi. (VS. II, 65).
6. Then again he should inhale through the right nadi and should exhale slowly through Ida nadi. This makes one round of nadishuddhi.
7. He should practice this for 3-4 years or even 3-4 months, he should practice this process intently 6 times at every event of three times a day. (VS. II, 67).
8. The signs of purification of nadis can be observed through lightness of body, effulgence, increase in gastric fire, and manifestation of the Nada. One should continue practice until he finds these signs.

NADI SHUDDHI AS PER GEHRAND SAMHITA

In Gehranda Samhita, Sage Gehranda explains nadishuddhi to King Chandrakapila. According to sage Gehranda Nadi-Shuddhi is considered to be important before starting pranayam. Pranayam means regulating prana inside our body. This yogic breathing practice helps remove impurities from our Body. Initially, the practitioner understands prana only in the form of physical breath, and his experiences with it are restricted to the material plane. As he progresses to the advanced stages of practice he begins to identify prana with the subtle vital airs. Prana can be awakened or can move freely only when all the nadis are free from impurities for which Nadi-Shuddhi should be practiced for cleaning the

Nadis of your body. Nadi Shuddhi helps to remove impurities and improves blood flow towards brain which helps to relax your mind.

Mahashri Gheranda explains king Chandakapali that when there is impurities in the nadis then prana cannot move freely through the channels without which pranayama cannot be attained and without which ttatvgyan is also not possible.

According to Gehranda Samhita there are 2 types of Nadi Shuddhi

1. Samanu Nadi Shuddhi
2. Nirmanu Nadi Shuddhi

Nadi Shodhan done with beej mantra is Samanu and one done with Dhauti Karma is Nirmanu.

PROCESS OF SAMANU NADISHUDDHI

- First Yogi should attain padmasana and should do Guruvadi-Nyas. Then with the instruction of Guru he should start Nadishodhan.

Guru-Nyasa is a practice in which consciousness is rotated around different parts of the body, to the feet, knees, fingers, chest, back, face etc so that if there is any kind of tension in any part of the body, one becomes aware of it and the stiffness is removed. Sage Gheranda has mentioned nyasa here in order to bring the body into a state of relaxation. He also says that the nadis of the body are purified by this practice. In this practice one touches each part of the body and the different chakras with one's awareness, along with the chanting of mantras.

There are 2 techniques of nyasa, the first is tantric and the second is vedic. In the vedic technique the names of the parts of the body are recited in the form of mantras for example. Om namo angushthaabhyaam, kartalaabhyaam naman, anamikaabhyaam namah etc. This recitation of the appropriate mantra is done with concentration on each part of the body. The only difference between the vedic nyasa and tantric nyas is that in vedic nyasa the mantras are recited along with pronunciation of the names of those organs, whereas in tantric nyasa those organs are visualized in chidakasha.

1. After Guru-Nyas, one should bring his awareness to Vayu Bheej Mantra "Yam" imaging his body in the form of a smoke. Visualizing the pranamaya kosha (the energy body) in the form of a smoky body (image as a smoke observed rising from the light of a burning candle near a window).
2. Chanting the mantra "Yam" counting 16 times one should inhale through left nostril. He should consider this vayu beej mantra as Tejyukt Dharmavarna, agni ttatva. Concentrating the attention on the light of fire, he should focus on the navel centre. Then he should retain it for 64 counts and then slowly exhale through left nostril counting 32.
3. Then inhale through right (surya nadi) inhaling until 16 count with beej mantra "Ram". Then retain for 16 counts & slowly exhales until 32 count through Chandra Nadi. Thus the breathing process through the nostrils should be in the ratio of 1:4:2. This completes one round of Nadishuddhi.
4. Sage Gehranda then mentions the third process. In this one has to imagine the shining moon at the nosetip and inhale through the left nostril along while chanting "tham" bija mantra 16 times, then practice internal retention up to a count of 64 with "vam" and exhale through the right repeating "Lam" 32 times. In this practice also the ratio of the breath should be 1:4:2. The technique described here is a higher technique and related to other practices such as tattva shuddhi purification of the elements.

NIRMANU NADI SHUDDHI

The second process, *nirmanu nadi shuddhi* is primarily a physical one and is mentioned in chapter 1 of Gheranda Samhita under *dhauti kriya*. *Dhauti kriya* cleanses and removes defects of the lungs and the respiratory and digestive systems and the internal organs become free from disorders. Awakening of the *pranas* is then automatically achieved and at that time an effort is made to direct the *prana* in the *nadi* network.

CONCLUSION

According to Vasistha, one should practice pranayama only after purifying the nadis. He emphasizes that even though one follows all other steps of yoga, beginning with pranayama, but without purifying the nadis his efforts would be futile. Sage Vasistha explains all the important nadis and vayus along to make nadishuddhi understand more clearly.

Sage Vasistha recommends seclusion for nadi shuddhi. The method of purifying the nadi is described by sage vasistha has one special feature and that is he omits khumbhaka (retention) and prescribes only puraka (inhalation) and rechaka (exhalation). Sage vasistha who gives a procedure for purification of nadis which is controlled inspiration and expiration without kumbhaka.

Sage Gehranda in his process of nadishuddhi mentions the new step of Guru-Nyas (awareness to different parts of the body) for relaxing the body before starting nadishuddhi with proper mantra chanting. This method is more focused in relaxing ones awareness with the beej mantra with different parts of the body. Sage Gehranda explains nadishuddhi with inhalation, khumbhaka, and exhalation in the ratio of 1:4:2. Sage Gehranda emphasizes to practice nadi shuddhi

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