

Prana Body is the Bridge between Body and Mind

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The prana or energy body exists as a bridge between physical body and mental body. The functioning of the body's involuntary life giving system depends upon the prana. The mental processes also are fueled by prana.

The physical body is the grossest of all three. Prana body is subtler than physical and occupies control over body. But mental body is subtler than both physical and prana bodies; hence mind has control over both physical and prana bodies. This means that if you had mastery over mind the prana body would be subservient. But as long as mind is ruled by unconscious habits and belief systems, both the physical body, and the prana body hold and reflect our personal chronic block revealed as mental and emotional disturbances and physical imbalances.

What is stored in the physical and prana bodies is not accessible to the conscious mind, but all of our thinking is affected by what is held in the unconscious mind. Our physical and prana bodies act out all the limitations of our habits and belief systems. These blocks limit the workings of higher intelligence that carries out all involuntary functions, maintains the physical body in a perfect healthy condition, and initiates evolutionary processes.

It is almost impossible to remove the existing blocks in physical and prana bodies through the medium of mind. It is like having a thief for a policeman. Mind only causes more disturbances, resulting in more habits and inhibitions. Conscious mind is a tool of the survival instinct and is under siege of unconscious karmic patterns which invariably show up as reaction to what is. Every reaction is for ego protection.

But if we develop facility to move into the higher bodies of spiritual dimensions, which are subtler than the mental body, we have the facility to think and act deliberately and consciously (willfully) rather than reactively.

Each body has its own vibratory existence. The body of Bliss has the highest vibratory rate. It is beyond pairs – of happiness and unhappiness, pleasure and pain. Bliss is beyond opposites.

Physical, prana and mental bodies work through pairs of opposites, called polarity. Just as the earth functions through night and day, the body works because of heat and cold, tension and relaxation, expansion and contraction, positive and negative. But both the physical and prana bodies are limited by acquired blockages reactive disturbances generated in the mind due to the existing blocks in lower bodies.

If we are working on the mental body predominantly, we use the witness consciousness and willful disciplines. Willful disciplines can harness conscious action to lead beyond the experience of mind. The basic purpose of all stages of Ashtanga Yoga is removal of habitual blocks, which cause disturbance and restlessness in the mind. Hatha Yoga postures and all kriyas (cleansing actions) predominantly work with physical blocks. Pranayama (breath and energy control) predominantly works on purification of the energy and physical bodies, where our karmic patterns (belief systems, likes and dislikes, habits and chronic limitations) are stored. The karmic patterns that are stored in these two bodies are unconscious and inaccessible to us in the waking state. The only way we come to recognize their presence is through mental and emotional reactions that surface when our karmic patterns are triggered by life situations.

Our physical and prana bodies communicate through sensation - urges and impulses that arise directly from our instinct or subconscious forces. Animals live and act entirely by instinctive urges. But humans act from instinctive urges plus acquired karmic influences and mental-emotional reactions. Human beings are gifted with mind that can bypass, control, manipulate, and interpret instinctive impulses. Human beings are also gifted with capacity to move beyond both the instinctive impulses and the mental fluctuations into the pure state of being. This is the true definition of yoga.

Thus we see that body and prana, or energy, act together in a limited field of involuntary functions. They have no capacity to direct the mind but the condition of body and energy affects the state of mind. All that gets stored unconsciously acts impulsively – automatically – mechanically. Unconscious drives are powerful with compelling power of survival. It all comes under the survival instinct. Mind, however, can direct involuntary functions, instinctive urges, and also act willfully and consciously. It is through willful action that alignment with higher

witness consciousness progressively emerges. When mind is aligned to higher consciousness, prana functions as an agent of higher consciousness and carries out evolutionary functions. At this stage, the energy body is considered to be “awakened” to consciousness.