

Building a Bridge of Physical and Mental Health with Oriental Wisdom-On the Cultural Logic between the "Bionics" of Five Animal Exercises and the "Purification" of Hatha Yoga

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Abstract

China has the traditional Five Animal Exercises for health preservation, while India has Hatha Yoga. Under the guidance of the Chinese government, the Five Animal Exercises have gained increasing attention domestically, whereas Hatha Yoga has become popular worldwide with numerous practitioners. The Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga, as cultural products of China and India—two ancient Eastern civilizations—represent the lifestyles, philosophical thoughts, and cultural heritage of China and India respectively. Despite geographical separation and cultural and linguistic differences, China and India both embody the Eastern philosophical concept of "unity of body and mind." The Five Animal Exercises were the first Chinese project to incorporate exercise into medical prevention, marking the pioneering work of Chinese sports medicine. Centered on "bionics," it mimics the forms and spirit of five animals—tiger, deer, bear, ape, and bird—to achieve the goals of controlling breathing, regulating qi and blood, unblocking meridians, and stimulating physical vitality. Hatha Yoga, on the other hand, purifies both body and mind through controlled breathing, meditation, postures, and relaxation techniques. This article explores the uniqueness and commonalities of these two Eastern mind-body practices from three aspects: cultural roots, core logic, and practical approaches. It also examines the dialectical relationship between "following nature" and "transcending nature" in the Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga, providing theoretical foundations for the integration and development of modern health preservation culture.

Keywords: Five Animal Exercises Hatha Yoga Bionics Purification Integrated Development Cultural Logic

Introduction

Dual Perspectives of Eastern Mind-Body Practice

As human civilization progresses with the relentless march of history, cultures across nations have continuously evolved within their own territories. The earliest documented account of Dao Yin (a form of qigong) originated in the "Lüshi Chunqiu: Ancient Music" Hua & Huang(2025), compiled by Lü Buwei during the Warring States period (239 BCE). Later, during the Eastern Han Dynasty, Hua Tuo elevated Dao Yin to a systematic practice method by

creating the Five Animal Exercises, activating physiological rhythms through symbolic resonance between the human body and natural forces. This became a millennium-old health treasure cherished by the Chinese.

Yoga was defined by the ancient yoga sage Patanjali in India during the 1st-2nd centuries AD as "conscious movement for mental regulation." The essence of yoga lies in harmonizing spirit, intellect, and physical being to achieve unity between inner and bodily well-being, ultimately merging life with nature in its most perfect state. Strictly speaking, yoga is defined as spiritual-body integration practice Patanjali(2007). The emergence of "the light of Hatha Yoga" in the 15th century marked its evolution from traditional yoga into an independent mind-body practice system. Though not religious, Hatha Yoga originated from India's spiritual traditions. Mr. Lü Sa, Executive Director of Patangalijha Greater China Region, stated: "Yoga is the science of the soul, the science of spiritual practice, and the foundation of all religions." Extensive historical records show that while yoga itself is not religious, it has maintained close ties with philosophy and religion throughout its evolution, while also intertwining with scientific, artistic, and athletic ideologies Li (2020). Master Vivekananda's 1984 speech at the World Congress of Religions in Chicago, centered on "de-religiosizing yoga," "systematizing its philosophy," and "paving the way for cross-cultural communication," laid the ideological groundwork for yoga's global expansion. This event marked the foundational transition of yoga from India's indigenous spiritual tradition to worldwide practice.

The Five Animal Exercises originate from ancient China, while the Hatha Yoga comes from ancient India. With the global recognition of these two ancient civilizations, these two distinct health practices are considered "Eastern health techniques" and interpreted under a unified framework, yet they possess entirely different cultural genes and core differences. While both systems pursue mind-body integration, they are grounded in two divergent civilizational paradigms: the Chinese correlative cosmology of "bionic resonance" and the Indian metaphysical paradigm of "spiritual purification." Understanding this distinction is essential for avoiding cultural homogenization in cross-cultural health studies.

The Five Animal Exercises are based on yin and yang, using animals as prototypes to correspond to the five viscera. The knowledge learned from the Inner Canon of Yellow Emperor can perfectly integrate the five elements, five colors, and five flavors, combining the theories of yin-yang, qi and blood circulation, meridians, and acupoints to transform the natural life rhythms of China into practical techniques for the human body, embodying the Chinese philosophy of "harmonizing with nature and the unity of heaven and humanity." Hatha Yoga employs the metaphor of the "sun (Hatha)" and "moon (Tara)" as a unity of opposites, harmonizing the duality of body and mind through specific techniques to embody the ancient Indian cosmology of "the unity of Brahman and ego."

Exploring the cultural logic of "bionics" and "purification" in Hatha Yoga through five animal asanas is not merely a simple comparison of merits and demerits, but rather reveals how the dialogic encounter between "bionic resonance" and "transcendental purification" offers complementary paradigms for addressing contemporary mind-body imbalance crises. In an era marked by stress, alienation, and ecological destruction, rediscovering the cultural logic embedded in these traditions may open diverse pathways to holistic health and provide multifaceted solutions for modern individuals grappling with mental and physical dissonance.

Cultural Roots: Different Cognition Paradigms of Body and Mind

The core logical differences between Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga stem from the distinct worldviews and cognitive systems of mind and body in China and India. These cognitive differences are not isolated but deeply intertwined with the philosophical and medical theories of their respective cultures, forming radically different foundations for physical and mental practices.

Five Animal Exercises: Natural Bionic Cognition under the Concept of "Harmony between Heaven and Man"

In the book "Zheng Meng Gan Ming Pian" during the Northern Song Dynasty, Zhang Zai of China wrote: "Confucian scholars can achieve sainthood by being born of heaven and leaving no beginning for humanity, due to their clarity and sincerity, thus achieving the unity of heaven and humanity, and becoming sainthood through their learning." He believed that humans and nature are an organic whole, mutually dependent and capable of mutual care. The "Zhou Yi: Xi Ci Shang" proposed that "the great virtue of heaven and earth is called life," viewing "life" as the fundamental law of the universe. As part of nature, the human body must engage in life activities that conform to natural laws to achieve balance. "Life" is the fundamental law of the universe.

The Inner Canon of Yellow Emperor posits that the five human organs are intrinsically linked to the five elements (wood, fire, earth, metal, water), five cardinal directions (east, south, center, west, north), five climatic conditions (wind, summer heat, dampness, dryness, cold), five musical tones (jue, zhi, gong, shang, yu), and five colors (green, red, yellow, white, black). It further establishes a correspondence between the five viscera and the five flavors (sour, bitter, sweet, spicy, salty) as well as the five sensory organs (eyes, tongue, mouth, nose, ears). This concept is articulated in the Inner Canon of Yellow Emperor's "Zang-Xiang Theory", where the imbalance of the five viscera reflects a disruption in the harmony between the human body and nature.

In ancient China, the physician Hua Tuo fully integrated the guidance techniques of previous generations' imitation of nature when creating the Five Animal Exercises. He combined the health-preserving philosophy of "blowing and breathing, exhaling the old and inhaling the new" from the "Zhuangzi" with the guiding movements recorded in the "Huainanzi", such as "bear stretching and bird extending," selecting the images of five animals—tiger, deer, bear, ape, and bird—to create this health-preserving and fitness exercise. Hua Tuo aimed to regulate the flow of qi and blood and strengthen the body by imitating the postures of animals. The earliest records of the Five Animal Exercises appear in the "Records of the Three Kingdoms: Biography of Hua Tuo", written by Chen Shou of the Western Jin Dynasty, but there was no detailed description of the movements of the "Five Animal Exercises" at that time. It was not until the "Record of Nurturing Life and Extending Longevity" by Tao Hongjing of the Liang Dynasty during the Northern and Southern Dynasties that the key movements and content of the Five Animal Exercises were specifically explained. Keeping the human body in constant motion ensures the smooth flow of qi and blood, preventing the onset of diseases, just as a door hinge does not rust Liang and Hong (2017). When Hua Tuo created the Five Animal Exercises, it was based on the understanding of "the isomorphism between nature and humanity." Through long-term observation, he discovered that the majesty of the tiger, the agility of the deer, the steadiness of the bear, the flexibility of the ape, and the

expansiveness of the bird represented different forms of vitality. These forms could effectively alleviate the stagnation of qi and blood caused by prolonged sitting or lying down and emotional distress. In Hua Tuo's Five Animal Exercises, there is a saying that the tiger exercises bones, the deer exercises tendons, the bear exercises the spleen and kidneys, the ape exercises the heart, and the bird exercises the skin and fur. For example, the tiger exercises "sitting in a cave and moving its claws" and "lying in a mountain cave," simulating the tiger's strength and power, which can stimulate the liver's qi and regulate qi and blood. The deer exercises "the deer stretches its waist" and "turns its neck and moves its jaw," imitating the deer's lightness and expansiveness, which can unblock the Ren and Du meridians, promote qi through the three gates, replenish essence to nourish the brain, strengthen the waist and knees, regulate liver qi, and strengthen tendons and bones. This effectively prevents and treats diseases of the neck, shoulders, elbow joints, and knee joints, as well as prevents and improves vision (Ha(2014)). This bionic logic of "using natural forms to compensate for human deficiencies" essentially translates the vitality of natural life described by Laozi, the ancient Chinese thinker of China, in the "Tao Te Ching"—which practices "man follows the earth, the earth follows the sky, and the sky follows the Dao"—into health-preserving resources for the human body, thereby achieving "the Dao follows nature."

Hatha Yoga: Purification of Consciousness under the "Unity of Brahman and Self"

"Brahman" represents the core cosmological concept of ancient Indian philosophy, which posits that the ultimate reality of the universe is "Brahman," while the individual soul "Atman" is its manifestation. Though fundamentally one, these two exist in complete separation due to "karma" (the law of cause and effect), "ignorance" (the lack of true understanding caused by illusions), and the loss of rationality, resulting in physical and mental suffering and imbalance. This concept is embodied in yoga's "Subtle Body" theory, which describes the human body as composed of five layers: the coarse body (Annamaya Kosha), the energy body (Pranamaya Kosha), the mind body (Manomaya Kosha), the intellect body (Vijnanamaya Kosha), and the joy body (Anandamaya Kosha). The impurities in the coarse body and the stagnation in the energy body are external manifestations of the separation between "Atman" and "Brahman." Swatthamarama (2017)

The "purification" principle of Hatha Yoga originates from this fundamental concept. As stated in the opening of "The Light of Hatha Yoga" Swatthamarama (2017). : "Hatha Yoga aims to purify the body and awaken Kundalini—the tangible life force residing at the tail end of the human spine—to achieve liberation." This "purification" transcends mere physical cleansing, involving dual cleansing of both the material and energetic layers. Through Asanas (postures), meridians are stretched to remove impurities from muscles and joints. Pranayama (breathing control) regulates the life force "Prana" and unblocks energy channels "Nadi," while Bandhas (constriction techniques) stabilize energy flow to prevent loss. For instance, the Triangle Pose cleanses impurities from the waist and spine through lateral body extension. Diaphragmatic breathing regulates lung function to facilitate energy exchange, while perineal contraction awakens lower-body energy. The ultimate goal of this purification logic is to achieve spiritual clarity through bodily cleansing, ultimately realizing the state of liberation through "the unity of Brahman and Atman."

Core Logic: The Path of Physical and Mental Regulation of "Bionics" and "Purification"

The cultural roots of Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga serve as their foundational principles. Five Animal Exercises employs biomimetic practice, while Hatha Yoga achieves its goals through purification. Though these two traditions follow distinct paths, both adhere to the core methodology of technique-energy-body-spirit balance, with each stage in their evolutionary process demonstrating unique logic and manifestation.

Five Animal Exercises: "Biomimicry"-Guiding Qi by Shape and Adapting to Natural Rhythm

The "bionic" logic of Five Animal Exercises begins with "form," activating the body's "qi" by simulating the "form" of animal movements, ultimately achieving the goal of "unity of form and qi" for physical and mental balance. This logic can be divided into three levels: first, simulating similar things by imitating the external form and functional rhythms; second, guiding the generation, circulation, and dispersion of the body's "qi" through regulating movements, posture, and breathing, ultimately achieving the physical and mental regulation goals of "unity of form and qi" and "smooth flow of qi and blood," thereby regulating energy. Third, aligning bionic movements with the "unity of heaven and humanity" in traditional Chinese medicine, corresponding to the four seasons and day and night, by adjusting movement intensity, practice duration, and the involvement of internal organs, making the body's "form and qi" resonate with natural rhythms, thereby enhancing the effects of smooth qi and blood flow and physical and mental balance. In China, there is a saying: "Nourish yang in spring and summer, and yin in autumn and winter." The Great Treatise on Regulating the Spirit in the Four Seasons in the Yellow Emperor's Inner Canon states: "The yin and yang of the four seasons are the foundation of all things." Therefore, the sages cultivate yang energy in spring and summer and nourish yin energy in autumn and winter, following the laws of nature, fundamentally grasping the changes of things, and thus coexisting and growing with all things in a state of vitality. Yao (2010).

In morphological simulation, Five Animal Exercises transcends mere imitation of animal movements. It extracts the most representative life characteristics from animals and transforms them into human techniques. For instance, the Tiger Play captures the tiger's "powerful and vigorous" traits. When performing "Sitting in the Cave with Claw Movement," the practitioner must flex fingers while raising hands forward with force, mimicking the tiger's forward-claw motion. During "Tiger Lying in the Mountain Cave," the practitioner must maintain focus without distractions, avoiding physical relaxation, emotional tension, or muscle stiffness. When squatting into a horse stance, the waist should remain tense, hips held tight, chest slightly concave, and shoulders relaxed. Claw movements should not rely on upper back or leg strength, but rather activate yang energy through powerful arm and torso movements. The Deer Play embodies the deer's "light and graceful" qualities. The "Plum Deer Stretching Waist" during upper limb rotations enhances joint flexibility, relaxes shoulder muscles, and prevents shoulder peri-arthritis. Rotational movements engage back muscles, stretch gluteal tendons, strengthen arm power, improve overall flexibility, stimulate vital points like Mingmen (Life Gate), Shenshu (Kidney Shu), and Duma (Conception Vessel), promote blood circulation, fortify the kidneys, replenish kidney energy, and nourish yin energy. This core principle of "imitating external forms and functional rhythms to simulate similar phenomena" transforms animal life traits into human energy characteristics, achieving the health goal of "using animal forms to nourish human qi."

In energy regulation, the Five Animal Exercises emphasize "form follows qi movement, qi follows form." The "Five Animal Exercise Manual" records: "Tiger exercises strengthen the kidneys and bones; Deer exercises strengthen the liver and tendons; Bear exercises strengthen the spleen and muscles; Ape exercises strengthen the heart and meridians; bird exercises strengthen the lungs and skin" Hua (2013). This means each animal exercise corresponds to specific organs and qi-blood pathways, directly affecting corresponding organs through physical movements. For example, the bear exercises "Black Bear Claw Exploration" and "Clumsy Bear Body Swinging" simulate the bear's stability and weight. Through arm swings and neck movements, these exercises alternate between relaxing and tightening the ribs to soothe the liver, regulate qi, and adjust emotions. They primarily stimulate acupoints along the Belt Meridian (Dai Mai) – Zhangmen, Dazhui, and Weilv – while unblocking the liver-gallbladder meridian and foot yin-yang meridians. These exercises also improve hip mobility, reduce tremors in lower limb muscles and joints, stimulate the spleen-stomach meridians, regulate spleen-stomach qi, and alleviate indigestion. The ape exercises "White Ape Joyful Jump" and "White Ape Rotation" mimic the agility of apes. Through wrist rotations and body jumps, they stimulate the heart meridian, adjust mental focus, and alleviate anxiety and insomnia. These exercises also strengthen tendons and bones. Since the liver and kidneys share the same origin, they also help improve kidney function.

At the level of rhythmic adaptation, the movement design of Five Animal Exercises follows the Chinese theory of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, with its "bionic" logic deeply integrated with natural rhythms. Zhou Lu jing of the Ming Dynasty adjusted the movement forms of Five Animal Exercises in his work "Chifengsui" and enriched its health-preserving mechanisms, promoting research on the connection between Five Animal Exercises and the regulation of qi, blood, and organs. Based on the Five Elements theory in traditional Chinese medicine, which associates the liver with wood (spring) and the heart with fire (summer), corresponding to the Five Elements content in Inner Canon of Yellow Emperor, traditional Five Animal Exercises practice should emphasize "left-right balance, practicing tiger exercises in spring to soothe the liver, practicing ape exercises in summer to nourish the heart, practicing bear exercises in late summer to strengthen the spleen, practicing bird exercises in autumn to nourish the lungs, and practicing deer exercises in winter to nourish the kidneys." This adaptation is rooted in the philosophical concept of "harmony between heaven and humanity," aligning the energy characteristics of animal exercises with the Five Elements rhythms of the seasons, achieving resonance between "human rhythms and natural rhythms."

Hatha Yoga "Purification": Clearing Obstacles with Techniques and Harmonizing Dualistic Opposition

Hatha Yoga's "purification" philosophy begins with techniques, employing postures, breathing, and meditation to eliminate physical and mental "obstacles," ultimately achieving a state of "yin-yang balance." This philosophy can be divided into three levels: first, "targeted" obstacle removal; second, "yin-yang harmony" energy equilibrium; and third, a "progressive" purification ladder.

In the realm of obstacle clearance, Hatha Yoga techniques demonstrate clear "targeted effectiveness," with each method addressing specific physical or energy blockages. For instance, the "King of Birds Pose" involves single-leg support with the other leg in a coiled

position, seated cross-legged, maintaining spinal alignment to stretch back muscles, strengthen lower limbs, and enhance arm flexibility through arm wrapping. This practice also compresses internal organs, alleviates spinal stiffness, and helps expel turbid energy from the body. The "Alternating Nose Breathing Technique" regulates the body's "Sun Energy" (Pingala Nadi) and "Moon Energy" (Ida Nadi) by alternately blocking both nostrils, clearing obstructions in energy channels. The "Nasal Purification Technique" (Jala Neti) uses saline solution to rinse nasal passages, removing impurities from respiratory tracts. The "Gastric Purification Technique," derived from ancient Indian medical knowledge about human anatomy, involves swallowing boiled disinfectant strips (3-4 meters long) and pulling them out after ingestion to cleanse the esophageal and gastric mucosa. This method ensures purification is scientifically grounded and effective, avoiding blind practices. Swatthamarama (2017)

At the level of energy balance, the essence of Hatha Yoga's "purification" lies in "yin-yang harmony." The term "Hatha" itself signifies "sun and moon," representing the body's positive and negative energies. In his book "The Light of Hatha Yoga", SkinmaAlma states: "When the energies of the sun and moon meet in the chakra, physical and mental liberation is achieved." Thus, Hatha Yoga's techniques are designed around "yin-yang harmony" —such as pairing forward bends (yin) with back extensions (yang) to balance the body's yin-yang energies; alternating chest breathing (yang) with abdominal breathing (yin) to harmonize lung energy exchange; switching between right nostril breathing (yang) and left nostril breathing (yin); and practicing sun worship and moon worship poses in the morning and evening to balance the body's yin-yang state.

In the purification hierarchy, Hatha Yoga follows a progressive logic of "from simple to complex, from coarse to refined." It begins with learning basic external postures, progresses to precise breath control, and culminates in sensing energy exchange. The practice of "The Light of Hatha Yoga" is divided into four stages: "posture practice—breath control—asana-vipassana—meditation," where each stage builds upon the previous. For instance, postures first purify the physical body, preparing it for breath control; breath control then purifies the energy body, enabling it to awaken life force; and meditation ultimately achieves spiritual purification, reaching the ultimate goal. This step-by-step logic ensures the safety and effectiveness of the purification process.

Common and Fusion: The Unified Core of Eastern Body-Mind Practice

While the "bionic" nature of Five Animal Exercises and the "purifying" essence of Hatha Yoga differ in cultural origins and practice methods, both serve as quintessential Eastern mind-body practices. They share a unified core philosophy: "body-mind unity," "energy alignment," and "practice-oriented approach." These shared principles not only form the foundation for understanding Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga but also constitute the pivotal point for integrating contemporary mind-body wellness cultures.

Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga uphold the holistic philosophy of "body and mind as one." While Five Animal Exercises begins with physical movements, it consistently emphasizes the unity of form, energy, and spirit. As stated in the "Hua Tuo Five Animal Exercises Atlas": "The essence of the exercise lies in the spirit, not the form." Hua Tuo's Five

Animal Exercises teaches that physical mimicry must be paired with mental focus to achieve optimal results.

Similarly, Hatha Yoga, though starting with "body purification," explicitly states that "the body is the vessel of the mind." The "Light of Hatha Yoga" underscores: "Without a purified body, there can be no stable mind." Hatha Yoga also incorporates cleansing techniques, where practitioners purify their nasal, gastric, and intestinal tracts. Both Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga oppose the separation of body and mind, viewing them as an inseparable organic whole that influences each other.

Furthermore, both Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga adhere to the principle of "harmonizing energy." Five Animal Exercises's "guiding qi through physical movements" and Hatha Yoga's "regulating energy through techniques" fundamentally aim to modulate human energy. Five Animal Exercises stimulates the body's inherent "qi" through biomimetic forms, while Hatha Yoga channels life energy via specific techniques. Both practices recognize the smooth flow of energy as the cornerstone of mind-body equilibrium. This emphasis on "energy" distinguishes Eastern holistic practices from the Western "mechanistic view of the body." Marcum (2005)

Ultimately, both Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga adhere to a practice-oriented approach. Five Animal Exercises, originating in the Eastern Han Dynasty, has been passed down through oral transmission between masters and disciples, emphasizing the integration of practice and cultivation. Similarly, Hatha Yoga prioritizes practical application, with its content in "The Light of Hatha Yoga" focusing on detailed technique explanations rather than theoretical discussions. This practice-centered nature allows both Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga to transcend abstract philosophical debates, transforming them into accessible methods for physical and mental well-being that ordinary people can learn, practice, and benefit from.

Contemporary Value: Enlightenment of Mind and Body Health Preservation in the Context of East-West Integration

The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) report released at the World Health Summit on October 12, 2025 reveals a dramatic escalation in mental health challenges worldwide, with anxiety disorders surging by 63% and depression increasing by 26% (WHO, 2025). In our fast-paced modern society, where stress has become the defining feature of contemporary life, practices like Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga emerge as vital remedies for mental and physical well-being. Their biomimetic principles and detoxification philosophies offer profound insights for modern wellness, with value extending beyond personal health maintenance to cultural integration.

In personal wellness practices, Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga offer complementary approaches. Five Animal Exercises' nature-inspired movements are gentle and easy to learn, making it ideal for middle-aged and elderly individuals or those with physical limitations as a daily wellness routine. Hatha Yoga, with its precision-focused techniques, is particularly effective for younger people or those with specific health concerns like spinal stiffness, anxiety, or insomnia. For office workers experiencing chronic sedentary syndrome symptoms such as slowed digestion, reduced appetite, bloating, and constipation, Bear Exercise's

abdominal rotations can help regulate the spleen and stomach. Combined with Tree Pose, Boat Pose, and Downward-Facing Dog Pose stretches, these exercises effectively alleviate neck pain, back stiffness, and abdominal discomfort, achieving a synergistic balance of nature-inspired movement and detoxification.

In the realm of cultural integration, the dialogue between Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga has established a paradigm for East-West exchanges in mind-body culture. While Five Animal Exercises' "unity of heaven and humanity" Ha (2014) and Hatha Yoga's "unity of Brahman and ego" Huang (2010) differ in phrasing, both embody the Eastern holistic worldview that challenges Western reductionist thinking. Scholar Liu Minghai notes that Western behaviorism's core idea—tying psychological states to behaviors—reduces mental states to observable actions or behavioral tendencies, thereby erasing their independent existence Liu (2012). This Eastern holistic approach offers fresh perspectives for holistic wellness. The Western "natural medicine" movement, for instance, draws inspiration from Five Animal Exercises' "bionics" logic. American practitioner Deepak Chopra, in his book "Chopra on Ayurveda", describes energy exercises like the Cat-Bull variation in Pita energy balancing Dipak(2019), which mirrors Five Animal Exercises' principles. Scholar Kabir Jaffee posits: "Energy follows thought—where your mind goes, energy follows. Your focus determines its flow" Kabir (2024). Both "energy healing" and Hatha Yoga's "energy regulation" share a common belief: only through mind-body unity can one achieve optimal qi-blood circulation, benefiting physical and mental health. The cultural dialogue between Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga not only promotes the global dissemination of Eastern holistic wisdom, but also fosters the multicultural integration of wellness practices worldwide. In terms of practice scenarios and spatiotemporal adaptability, Five Animal Exercises has minimal venue requirements. It can be performed in open spaces like parks, courtyards, or homes, with flexible durations ranging from 10 to 30 minutes. This makes it ideal for middle-aged and elderly individuals, as well as those seeking "fragmented outdoor wellness" routines. It is also suitable for teenagers and seniors. In contrast, Hatha Yoga requires relatively quiet enclosed spaces (such as yoga studios) and may involve auxiliary tools like yoga mats, bricks, or belts for certain poses. It is better suited for people with regular immersion-style practice habits. Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga can complement each other in different settings, allowing for customized practice to meet the needs of various individuals across different times and spaces.

In the synergy between breathing and intention, Five Animal Exercises emphasizes the "unity of form, energy, and spirit," where breath naturally follows movements (e.g., in Tiger Play, "anal contraction and breath retention" mimics the tiger's ferocity, fingers curved, claws powerful), while the mind focuses on the simulated scenarios of the movements. Hatha Yoga employs precise breathing techniques like "diaphragmatic breathing" and "laryngeal breathing," such as the "candle-blowing pose" paired with "drishti" (a visual fixation point) to concentrate the mind. The interplay between the breathing-intention logic in Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga enriches the pathways for mind-body regulation.

In terms of cultural transmission and innovation, the Five Animal Exercises primarily rely on traditional master-apprentice inheritance and community morning exercises as "acquaintance-based social" models. In recent years, with strong government promotion, innovative methods have been adopted, such as integrating VR technology in museums

for visitor experiences. Initiatives like the "Six-Entry Project" (entering government offices, schools, communities, scenic spots, rural areas, and enterprises) and the "500,000 People Practicing Five Animal Exercises Together" campaign have been implemented. The exercises are also popularized through simplified versions of square dancing and short videos, as well as overseas lectures at Confucius Institutes. Hatha Yoga, on the other hand, has gained traction through "business + social" models, including commercial institutions, online courses, and community check-ins. By cross-pollinating the dissemination paths of Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga, we can modernize traditional health preservation culture. From the perspective of stage-appropriate physical and mental interventions, Five Animal Exercises features gentle movements that require minimal physical flexibility, making it particularly suitable as a foundational intervention for "sub-health prevention" and "early postoperative rehabilitation." Meanwhile, Hatha Yoga achieves "deep muscle activation" through advanced poses like the inverted pose and "precise emotional regulation" via meditation. The combination of Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga forms a step-by-step wellness system encompassing "prevention, regulation, and progression."

From the perspective of coordinated regulation, the Five Animal Exercises and yoga differ in approach. Currently, neither the Five Animal Exercises nor yoga practice has specific or specially arranged music. However, ancient Chinese believed that "the sky has five tones (gong, shang, jue, zhi, yu), each corresponding to different organs and meridians. Through the unique melodies and resonant energy of music, the five tones were attributed with the attributes of the five elements in traditional Chinese philosophy Wang and Zhang (2015)." Corresponding to modern musical notes (do, re, mi, sol, la) Lu et al. (1996). The earth is governed by the Five Elements (earth, metal, wood, fire, water), and the human body by the Five Viscera (spleen, lung, liver, heart, kidney). These elements maintain fixed correspondences. Thus, the Five Animal Exercises and yoga form a "sound-action-pollution" resonance system. The Gong note is serene and profound, solemn and majestic; the Shang note is powerful yet melancholic, piercing yet robust; the long, clear Jue note is crisp and warm; the Zhi note flows gracefully, elegant and noble, tender as water; while the Yu note is pure and crystalline, clear and unobstructed. These qualities stem from the spiritual influence of the Five Tones. Thus, "Hearing Gong tones brings warmth and openness," "Hearing Shang tones fosters benevolence," "Hearing Jue tones evokes compassion for lovers," and "Listening to sounds inspires kindness and generosity." "Hearing Yu tones cultivates order and propriety." During practice, therapeutic music is selected to suit the practitioner's needs, ensuring pleasant and engaging experiences. The theory of Five Viscera sounds holds profound significance in health preservation and recreational activities Bian (2013). This approach utilizes music as therapeutic accompaniment: For stomach ailments, patients may listen to the palace-tone rendition of "Spring River Moonlit Night," Johann Paul's "Canon in D," or the piano solo "River Flows in You." Those with pneumonia could enjoy "Yangchun Baixue" (a classical Chinese zither piece) and piano performances like "Snow Dreams" and "River Flows in You." Eye strain or liver conditions may benefit from the horn (mi) tone pieces "The Wind of Life" and "Ping Sha Luo Yan." Heart patients might find solace in "Zizhu Diao" (a bamboo flute and zither pure-tone version) and "A Summer Day." Kidney or bladder inflammation patients could appreciate zither performances such as "Flowing Water" and "Moonlight Piano Solo." These practices, grounded in the Five Elements and Five Viscera theory, help practitioners and patients overcome their ailments.

Conclusion

The "bionics" of Five Animal Exercises and the "purification" of Hatha Yoga are the physical and mental practice logics formed by China and India based on different cultural genes. China's Five Animal Exercises is rooted in the concept of "harmony between heaven and humanity," achieving the harmony of qi and blood by simulating natural life, allowing qi to move through the blood and qi and blood to flow smoothly. Hatha Yoga, on the other hand, centers on the "unity of Brahman and ego," achieving yin-yang balance by clearing physical impurities and mental obstacles. Although Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga follow different paths, they share the core of Eastern wisdom: "the unity of body and mind," "adapting to energy," and "practice as the foundation."

In the current context, examining the cultural logic of Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga is not about comparing their merits, but rather about uncovering the shared values of Eastern holistic practices. The "natural adaptation" of Five Animal Exercises and the "precision purification" of Hatha Yoga can complement each other as wellness approaches. The Eastern holistic philosophy embodied in both practices offers new perspectives for global health and wellness culture. As East-West cultural exchanges deepen, the integration of Five Animal Exercises and Hatha Yoga will undoubtedly provide humanity with more diverse, comprehensive, and enriching wisdom for physical and mental well-being.

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