

The Deliberation of Yoga in the Yogatatvopaniṣad

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Abstract : *Yoga is discussed quite frequently in the Upaniṣads, many of which predate Patañjali's sutras. Yogatatvopaniṣad explains how the paramātmā which transcends all states of existence manifests as jīva. It also discusses the way of liberating jīva from the illusionary world. It also elaborates types of Yogas and their benefits. It also elaborates on the meaning of AUM and videhamukti.*

Keywords : *Yogatatvopaniṣad, Yoga in Vedas and Upaniṣads, eight fold practice and twelve subdivisions of Yoga, Prāṇāyāma and its merits*

1. Introduction :

According to Pāṇini, , the term yoga can be derived from either of two roots, yujir yoge (to yoke) or yuj samādhau (to concentrate). In the context of the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali, the root yuj samādhau (to concentrate) is considered by traditional commentators as the correct etymology. Vyāsa the commentator of the Yoga Sutras, states that yoga means samādhi (concentration). In Patañjali's Yoga Sutra, yoga is defined as the cessation of the perturbations of the mind *yogaścitta-vrtti-nirodhaḥ*. The Pātañjalayogasutra indicates that the ultimate goal of yoga is a state of permanent peace, or kaivalya, a prerequisite for self-realization. The concept of self-realization and universal consciousness are the metaphysical teachings of the Upaniṣads. Yoga has lots of names for the consciousness: Ātman, Īśvara, Puruṣa, , the witness, and the knower are but a few of the more popular ones. Upaniṣads taught, it as all-knowing, pure, and infinite. Everything resides within the consciousness, and nothing exists outside of it. It was both the knower and the known, and even the process of knowing. Yogis had to practise karmayoga (the path of action) and jñānayoga (knowledge or meditation) to achieve true liberation.

2. Yoga in Vedas and Upaniṣads :

The word yoga has its first mention in the Ṛgveda. It, defines yoga as 'yoking' or 'discipline,' but offers no systematic practice. The Ṛgveda (5.81.1) which reads, "Seers with yogic practise control their mind and their intelligence", shows that at least the seed of the entire yoga teaching is contained in this most ancient text. The term yoga turns up again in the Atharvaveda, where it refers only to a means of harnessing or yoking, but focuses on the breath that needs controlling. The Vratya Kanda of the Atharvaveda introduces a group of men, the Vratyas, who worshipped Rudra, the god of the wind, with the songs they composed. They found they could sing their songs a lot better, and probably hold the notes longer if they practised prāṇāyāma, a type of breath control. Here, is the first mention of Yoga as a physical action as part of a discipline or practice. Yoga plays a more prominent role in the Upaniṣads. It is referred to as a discipline used or path taken to achieve liberation from suffering. Two yoga disciplines in particular gained prominence during this time: karma yoga, the path of action or ritual, and jñānayoga yoga, the path of knowledge or intense study of scripture. Yoga is discussed quite frequently in the Upaniṣads, many of which predate Patañjali's sutras. The earliest reference to meditation is in the Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, one of the oldest Upaniṣads. Chāndogyopaniṣad describes the five kinds of vital energies (prāṇa). Taittirīyopaniṣad defines yoga as the mastery of body and senses. The term 'yoga' appears in the Kaṭhcopaniṣad where it is defined as the steady control of the senses, which, along with cessation of mental activity, leads to the supreme state. Śvetāśvataropaniṣad elaborates on the relationship between thought and breath, control of the mind, and the benefits of yoga. This text also recommends meditation on om̐ as a path to liberation. A description of an early form of yoga called nirodha-yoga (yoga of cessation) is contained in the Mokṣadharmā section of the Mahābhārata. Nirodha-yoga emphasises progressive withdrawal from

the contents of empirical consciousness, such as thoughts, sensations etc. until the Self is realized. The Maitrāyaṇīyopaniṣad is one of the earliest Upaniṣads to teach specific yoga meditation practises. It defines yoga as a means of binding the breath and the mind using the syllable *om̐*. According to this Upaniṣad, the oneness of the breath and the mind, and likewise of the senses, and the relinquishment of all conditions of existence is designated as yoga. The Maitrāyaṇīyopaniṣad takes the concept of yoga a step further by presenting an actual method or discipline for joining or yoking the Universal Brahman with the *ātman* within all beings. This six-fold yoga path includes controlling the breath (*prāṇāyāma*), withdrawing the senses (*pratyāhāra*), meditation (*dhyāna*), concentration (*dhāraṇa*), contemplation (*tarka*), and absorption (*samādhi*). The Yogayājñavalkya is a classical treatise on yoga attributed to the Vedic sage Yājñavalkya. In the Yogayājñavalkya, yoga is defined as *jīvātmaparamātmasaṃyogaḥ*¹, or the union of the self (*jīvātma*) with the Divine (*paramātma*) is said to be yoga. Many yoga texts like the Haṭhayogapradīpika, the Yogakuṇḍalinī and the Yogatatvopaniṣad have borrowed verses from or make frequent references to the Yogayājñavalkya².

3. Yoga in the Yogatatvopaniṣad :

The Yogatatvopaniṣad is the forty-first Upaniṣad among the 108 Upaniṣads and is a part of the kṛṣṇayajurveda. It mainly deals with:

- four kinds of Yoga namely Mantra yoga, Laya yoga, Haṭha yoga and Rāja yoga,
- four stages of progress namely āraṃbha, ghaṭa, paricaya and niṣpatti,
- eight fold practice and its twelve subdivisions,
- four important postures namely siddha, padma, simha and bhadra
- the supreme state of resting in Brahman.

Altogether, it contains one hundred and forty two verses to explain the concept of yoga. It opens with the verse that the contents are meant exclusively for yogis.

yogatatvaṃ pravakṣyāmi yogināṃ hitakāmyayā |
yacchrutvā paṭhitvā ca sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate ||

Here the essence of yoga is explained to Lord Brahma by Lord Viṣṇu. The way of liberating *jīva* from illusionary world is possible only with the acquisition of the knowledge of Brahman. The liberation, otherwise called as the state of *Kaivalya*. The state of Brahman which is capable of self - manifestation could neither be explained by the Vedas nor by the Sastras as it is beyond the words of expression. The state of *jīva* is apparently the *paramātma* only. It is explained how the *paramātma* which transcends all states of existence, which is devoid of attachments manifests as *jīva*. At first its manifestation is like the water moved by gentle breeze. Therein manifests self-consciousness followed by five subtle elements and five gross elements. This becomes the *piṇḍa*, bound by the *dhātu* or seven humours (blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow and semen) conditioned by the three *guṇas*. When associated with misery and happiness the term *jīva* is applied to *paramātma* which is pure. The only means to destroy this bondage is *jñāna* along with yoga.

tasmādoṣavināśārthamupāyaṃ kathayāmi te |
yogahīnaṃ kathaṃ jñānaṃ mokṣadam bhavati dhruvam ||
yogo hi jñānahīnastu na kṣamo mokṣakarmaṇi |
tasmājjñānaṃ ca yogaṃ ca mumukṣurdr̥ḍhamabhyaset ||
ajñānādeva saṃsāro jñānādeva vimucyate |
jñānasvarūpamevādau jñānaṃ jñeyaikasādhanam|| (14-16)

The right knowledge alone enables one to recognise within himself the real nature of saccidānda Brahman. And the Yoga is essential for the undifferentiated knowledge in the absolute. Yoga, according to practise, is differentiated into Mantrayoga, Layayoga, Haṭhayoga and Rājayoga. Mantrayoga is the practise in which the aspirant utters the mantras with *mātrika* for a period of twelve years, and gradually attains wisdom along with special powers like *aṇima* and the like. Layayoga is the meditation upon the Supreme even while walking, standing, eating or sleeping. Haṭhayoga is the strict practice of yoga with its eight divisions and twelve subdivisions.

yamaśca niyamaśca āsanaṃ prāṇasaṃyamah |
pratyāhāro dhāraṇā ca dhyānaṃ bhrūmadhye hariṃ
samādhiḥ samatāvasthā sāṣṭāṅgo yoga ucyate ||
mahāmodrā mahābandho mahāvedhaśca khecarī

¹ saṃyogo yoga ityukto jīvātmaparamātmanoḥ

² krishnamacharya :His life and teaching P.127

*jālāndharoḍḍiyāṅśca mūlabandhaistathaiva ca ||
dīrghapraṇavasandhānaṃ siddhāntāśravaṇaṃ paraṃ
vajrolī cāmarolī ca sahajolī tridhā matā || (24-27)*

And the Rājayoga is the highly progressive stage and it results in the complete oneness with the Supreme with the rise of right knowledge. The four stages called *ārambha*, *ghaṭa*, *paricaya* and *niṣpatti* are enumerated along with all these yoga. Among the innumerable postures, the *siddha*, the *padma*, the *simha* and the *bhadra* are the most important.

4. Prāṇāyāma and its merits :

The practice of *Prāṇāyāma* and its results are elaborated thereafter. To practise the *Prāṇāyāma* one should assume the *padma* posture and keep the body erect. Fill in gradually the vital air through *Iḍā* (left nostril) for duration of sixteen mātra and hold it for a duration of sixty four mātra and expel it through the *Piṅgalā* (right nostril) for a duration of thirty two mātra. (The time taken in making a round of the knee with the palm of the hand, neither very slowly nor very rapidly is called a mātra) Once again filling in air through the *piṅgalā*, the process should be repeated with due control. When practiced constantly it will result in the purification of *nāḍī* along with external symptoms like the lightness of the body, lustre etc. Thus attains the power to hold the breath as long as desired. This state called *kevalakumbhaka* when attained; there is nothing in the whole world difficult for attainment for that practitioner. Many super human skills arise in him. He should not disclose to others his powers otherwise it will become an obstruction in the path of his progress. Further practice gains him yogic powers like *bhūcārā* (wandering over the earth freely) and finally he becomes fit enough to conquer all the creatures on earth. He becomes as beautiful as the god of love himself. Nearly fifty verses (60-110) are dedicated to mention the various modes of practises and various stages of progress till he reaches the ultimate stage called *samādhi*. It is a stage in which *jīvātman* and *paramātman* are of equal state. If the yogi decides to lay aside his body he can do so. If he does not desire to get absorbed in *paramātman*, if his body is dearer to him he can live as long as he wish in this world with all the yogic powers which he had acquired.

5. Meaning and importance of om̐

*trayo lokāstrayo vedāstisraḥ sandhyāstrayaḥ svarāḥ/
trayo: 'gnayaśca triguṇāḥ sthitāḥ sarve trayākṣare
trayāṇāmakṣarāṇām ca yo: 'dhīte: 'pyardhamakṣaram
tena sarvamidaṃ protaṃ tatsatyam tatparaṃ padam || (134-135)*

As the smell of the flower, as the ghee in the milk, as the oil in the gingely seed, so is the lotus situated in the heart. Its face is downwards and its stem upwards. Its *bindu* is downwards and in its centre is situated the *manas*. By the letter 'a' the lotus becomes expanded; by the letter 'u' it becomes opened. By the letter 'm' it obtains *nāda*; and the *ardhamātra* (*m̐*) is silence. This is the truth, the supreme seat. As the tortoise draws its limbs within itself, by the process of yoga, the yogi becomes free from any turmoil and remains intact. It concludes thus – '*niścitaṃ tvātmamātreṇāvaśiṣṭaṃ yogasevayetyupaniṣat*'. The yogi will attain the conviction through the right knowledge that while every other thing has left no trace, but the ātman alone is something left. Thus he attains *videhamukti*. Thus concludes the Yogatvopaniṣad.

6. Conclusion :

It is true that the sage Patanjali systematised yoga in his Yogasutra. But yogic methods can be found in all branches of Indian spiritual literature like Vedas, Purāṇās, Tantra etc. Yogadarśana of Hiranyagarbha is the earliest treatise that discusses the philosophy of yoga, which got mentioned in the Mokṣadharmā of Mahābhārata. And also, some twenty Upaniṣads deal with the philosophy of yoga alone, and one among them is Yogatvopaniṣad.

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