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Rajayoga and Hathayoga: A Comparative Study

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Abstract:

We know that rājayoga and hathayoga are separated from each other. If we profoundly search, must see that they are completely related to each other. The relation between rājayoga and hathayoga is like mind and consciousness; that is to say, whole and part. Anybody may practice only hathayoga for good health or diseaseless body but it is not more important than the attainment of ultimate goal (samādhi); because, hathayoga is related to the worldly happiness only. This paper is attempted to show that how hathayoga is included in the rājayoga and without the practice of hathayoga, rājayoga is not possible without any hindrance.

Keywords: rājayoga, hathayoga, samādhi, āsana, prānāyāma, mudrā.

Introduction

If we sincerely think, must find that ‘yoga’ is related with our every step of life. The term ‘yoga’ means ‘union’ or ‘yoke’. Again, in the other sense, the term ‘yoga’ indicates to ‘concentration’. In this regard we may say that everybody is a yogi in his life. However, the term ‘yoga’ has been used in various senses. But, the main aim of yoga is the realization of truth, purification of mind. We are the complexity of body and mind. It is known to all that both of them react to each other’s activity. Our aim should be master over the mind not slave and to keep body fit always. It will be possible only if we hold and practice yoga sincerely for long days. Hence in praise of yoga, it has been mentioned in the Mahābhārata that ‘there is no power equal to yoga’. Swami Sivananda Sarasvati points out, “The main aim of yoga is to reveal the potential divinity of men and to establish in the nature of Brahman or Bhagavat”.

There we find different kinds of yoga viz. rājayoga, bhaktiyoga, karmayoga and jñānayoga. On the other side, yoga is of four kind’s viz. rājayoga, hathayoga, mantrayoga and layayoga. Among all kinds of yoga, rājayoga is the supreme. Hence, Swami Abhedananda says, “The rājayoga is regarded as the ‘royal road’ or the best and highest method”. It indicates that how we may practice yoga systematically and as a result, we can attain our ultimate goal i.e; kaivalya or moksa. Though it is very true that we may attain moksa through the other means also, yet rājayoga is better than others; because, we may attain moksa rapidly in the present life through the kāyabyuha after enjoyment of prārabdha karma.

We know the name of Patañjali as the founder of Yoga Philosophy and at first he is the person who has arranged the yogic methods systematically in his book the ‘Yogasūtra’ which is allowed as an authentic and main text in the Yoga Philosophy. Of course, there was yoga in the world before Patañjali but it was not arranged. We find the name of Anantadeva or Mahādeva (deity Siva) as a founder of yoga. The book ‘Yogasūtra’ has been divided into four parts and it holds 195 verses. As a house is the summation of its accessories like rooms, windows, doors, halls etc. similarly, yoga or rājayoga has eight accessories viz. yama, niyama, āsana, prānāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāranā, dhyāna and samādhi. These steps are co-related with each other. For attainment of samādhi, anyone has to practice each step from the yama.

The first two steps yama and niyama are divided into five limbs which lead us to the way of morality. These five limbs are ahimsā (non-violence), satya (truth), asteya (non-covetousness), brahmacharya (celibacy) and aparigraha (not receiving anything from other). The five steps of niyama are- śauca (cleanliness), santosa (contentment), tapah (austerity), svādhyāya (study of scripture) and Īśvarapranidhāna (complete surrender to God).

The next two steps āsana (bodily posture) and prānāyāma (breathe control) helps us to keep our body fit. Pratyāhāra (withdrawal of senses) leads us to be inner centric. The next three steps (dhāranā, dhyāna and samādhi) are called internal aids; because, these three lead us to feel inner self. The main aim of every human being is the attainment of samādhi.

We find the existence of hathayoga in the various Upanisads viz. ‘Yogacūdā Upanisad’, ‘Yogaśikhā Upanisad’, ‘Yogakundalī Upanisad’ etc. There are various meanings of hathayoga in the ‘Yogaśikhā Upanisad’ viz. the term ‘hatha’ means ‘union between prāna and apāna’. It is possible through the practice of prānāyāma. The other meaning of the term ‘hatha’ is ‘the union between sun

and moon'. Here, the term 'sun' refers to that which is situated in our 'navel centre' and 'moon' is situated in our 'palm'. When we practice 'viparītakaranī mudrā', both sun and moon are united.

We know the name of deity Ādinātha as the chief founder of *hathayoga* by another yogi Svatmarama from his '*Hathayoga Pradīpikā*'.ⁱ The main subject matter of *hathayoga* is to keeping our body fit always. Hence, it prescribes us to practice various *āsanas*, *prānāyāmas*, *mudrās* etc. Svatmarama yogi says that *hathayoga* is necessary for the attainment of *rājayoga*. We have seen that *āsana*, *prānāyāma* have been discussed under *rājayoga* as the third and fourth step. So, it is clear to us that without practice of *hathayoga*, attainment of *samādhi* is not possible. *Hathayoga* has four limbs viz. *āsanas*, *kumbhakas* or *prānāyāmas*, *mudrās* and *nādānusandhānas*.

The first step of *hathayoga* is *āsana*. Svatmarama yogi has defined *asana* as:

"*Kuryāttadāsanasthairyamārogyam ca angalāghavam*". Verse no.19. Patañjali says, "*Sthiurasukhamāsanam*". Y.S. Verse No. 2/46.

That is to say, *āsana* is that posture by which our mind and body become calm, still and steady. There have been noted eighty four lacks of *āsanas* in the '*Gherandasamhitā*'. Among those eighty four lacks, eighty four are best viz. *siddhāsana*, *padmāsana*, *bhadrāsana*, *gomukhāsana* etc. said by Svatmarama yogi.

The second step is *prānāyāma*. After overcoming of *āsanas* a yogi may practice it by the guidance of well known yogic teacher. Patañjali says, "*Tasmin sati śvāsapraśvāsayorgativicchedah prānāyāmah*".ⁱⁱ *Prānāyāma* has divided into three steps viz. *recaka*, *puraka* and *kumbhaka*. Again, *kumbhaka* is of two types viz. *sahita* and *kevala*.

Patañjali does not mention *mudrās* in his book. But, according to Svatmarama yogi, one may attain *samādhi* through the practice of *mudrās*. There is a power namely kundalini situated in front of our *susumnā nārī*. This power is remained in coiled and dormant form. It is awaked through the practice of *mudrās*. *Mudrās* are of ten kinds viz. *mahāmudrā*, *mahāvandha*, *mahāvedha*, *khecari*, *uddān* etc. The last step of *hathayoga* is *nādānusandhāna*. Here, the term '*nādānusandhāna*' refers to *pratyāhāra*, *dhāranā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*.

The activity of *rājayoga* is the mainly development of mind where *hathayoga* deals the development of body. We know that mind and body are co-related with each other. If our body is ill, mind becomes distracted, similarly, if our mind becomes restless, body also becomes restless. Our duty is the mastery over mind and it will be possible then when our body will be under controlled. The main aim of both *rājayoga* and *hathayoga* is to grow concentration power of mind. Because, mind is the principal horse by which we can attain our destiny (*samādhi*). We can attain supreme knowledge in any object only through the extreme concentration power. But, if there are obstacles, we cannot attain our aim. Hence, we have to practice *hathayoga* as remedy of hindrances. Patañjali has mentioned it in his book.ⁱⁱⁱ In this manner, through the practice of *hathayoga* we have to arrest our mind. As a result, our self will be remained in its own essence (*Tadā drastuh svarūpehavasthānam*, Y.S. Verse No. 1/3).

Let us see that how both *rājayoga* and *hathayoga* are complementary to each other.

We know that yoga is practical application. If anybody says that he will attain ultimate goal (*samādhi*) through the study of '*Yogasūtra*' or other yoga related books, never will be succeed. For attainment of *samādhi* he has to practice and hold all the steps of yoga. In the case of perception, there is connection between the object and sense organs, organs are related with the mind and mind is related with the self. In this process if there is absent any connection, perception will not be fulfilled. Similarly, for attainment of *samādhi*, we should practice yoga sincerely for long days all the steps of yoga. Anybody may ask that what is the necessary of *hathayoga*? In reply, it may be stated that the initial necessary of *hathayoga* is fitness of body but chief aim is attainment of *samādhi*. So, we saw here that the main aim of both the yogas is attainment of *samādhi*. If you do not want to attain *samādhi*, want worldly happiness, you have to stay diseaseless and it will be possible through the practice of *hathayoga*. It is very true that there is no medicine or treatment which can keep you diseaseless, fit always.

Again, it may be stated that a banyan tree lives 500 years but it is nothing more than a tree. So, if you practice *hathayoga* for only keep the body fit that will be nothing without attaining *samādhi*. Hence, Svatmarama yogi says:

"*Rājayogapadam ca api labhate na atra samśayah*,

Kumbhakāt kundalīvodhah kundalīvodhato bhavet". H.Y.P. Verse No. 75

And

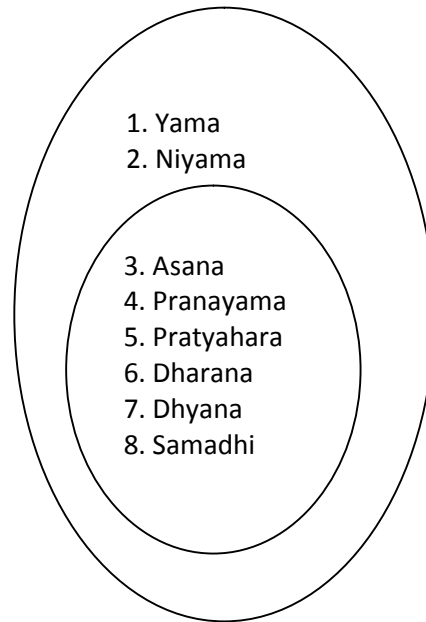
"*Anargalā susumnā ca hathasiddhiśca jāyate*,

Hatham vinā rājayogo rājayogam vinā hathah,

Na sidhyati tato yugmamānispateh samabhyaset". H.Y.P. Verse No. 76

That is to say, one who is able to do *kevalī kumbhaka*, he attains *rājayoga*. *Kundaliniśakti* becomes awaked through the practice of *kumbhaka*. The second verse indicates to that without practice of *hathayoga*, *rājayoga* is not possible; again, without *rājayoga*, *hathayoga* is valueless. Here, the relation between the *rājayoga* and *hathayoga* is shown with a picture in the following:

1. Yama
2. Niyama
3. Āsana
4. Prānāyāma
5. Pratyāhāra
6. Dhāranā
7. Dhyāna
8. Samādhi



Here, the big circle is indicating to *rājayoga* and small circle indicates to *hathayoga*.

In conclusion, we may observe that yoga has been acquired the place of science. Through the practice of *rājayoga* psychiatrists are doing psychotherapy, psychoanalysis etc. Again, physiotherapists are curing many ailments with the help of *hathayoga*. So, nowadays, both *rājayoga* and *hathayoga* have acquired the top position in the course of human good in the world. On the other way, it may be stated that both *rājayoga* and *hathayoga* are identical like whole and part. *Hathayoga* is included in the *rājayoga*; that is to say, *rājayoga* is broader than the *hathayoga*.

References

- i. Yogi Svatmarama, “Hathayoga Pradīpikā”, “ŚrīĀdināthāya namohastu tasmai yenopadistā hathayogavidyā vibhrājate pronnatarājayogamārodumicchoradhirohiniṅva”. Verse No. 1.
- ii. ‘Yogasūtra’, Verse No. 2/46.
- iii. “Vyādhistyānasamśayapramādālasayaviratibhrāntidarśanālabdha bhūmikatvānavasthitatvāni cittaviksepāstehantarāyāh”. ‘Yogasūtra’, Verse No. 1/30.