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Research Article



CONCEPT OF KUNDALINI IN HATHA YOGA PRADIPIKA: AN ANCIENT YOGIC TEXT

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ABSTRACT

Kundalini or serpent power is represented as the energy goddess or sleeping serpent resting in a coiled form at the base of the spine waiting for arousal. It is the primordial energy supposed to be instinctive or libidinal force within the body. In Sanskrit 'Kundalini' is defined as an adjective synonym with circular or coiled. The human body has six chakras which are the abode of spiritual power. Kundalini energy generally lies dormant at the base of the spine i.e. Muladhara chakra and by practice of different specific yogic kriyas, this energy is awakened, which then passes through several chakras transcending one after another. If it gets access to seventh chakra, enlightenment is achieved, as told in yoga scriptures. Hatha yogic texts have many descriptions about kundalini practice and methods of her awakening. Hatha Yoga Pradipika is one of the classic texts in yoga which describes different postures, methods of arousal of Kundalini, sound meditation and other yogic practices.

Keywords: Hatha, Hatha Yoga, Matha, Kundalini, Serpent Power, Muladhara, Nadanu Sandhana, Brahmanadi, Ida, Pingala, Susumna, Saktichalanam, Mahaveda, Triveni

INTRODUCTION

Hatha Yoga Pradipika is one among the three classic texts of hatha yoga, the other two texts being *Gheranda Samhita* and *Shiva Samhita*. This is a classic yogic text of fifteenth-century, which was written by Svami Svātāmarama, a disciple of great Yogi master Gorakṣanāth.

The speciality of this text is, introduction of the practice of physical purification to make the body suitable for higher meditation or yoga. The text describes postures, breathing techniques, locks and meditation on sound for attaining higher state of realization.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* there is a list of thirty-five earlier Hatha Yoga gurus, including Adi Natha, Matsyendranātha and Gorakṣanātha. The text contains chapters that covers detailed information about purification or satkarma, posture or asana, breath control or pranayama, spiritual centres in the body or chakras, coiled power or kundalini, force postures or bandha, kriya, power or sakti, subtle/gross physical channels or nadi and gestures or mudras, among other topics. The more developed understanding of hathayoga has been possible by the modern research on the system. From the analysis of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and other works by Svātāmarama, better access to the understanding of the origins of hatha yoga, understanding the concept and effects of yoga have been possible. In this article, the concept of kundalini as depicted in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* has been discussed.

Practice of Matschendrasana and effects:

Matschendrasana has a wide effect in awakening kundalini. It is described by Svatmarama yogi as follows.

*Matsyendrapitham jathare pradiptam
Prachanda rughmandalakhandastram
Abhyasatah Kundalini prabodham
Chandra sthiratvam cha dadati pumsam .*

Matschendrasana was prescribed by Sri Matsyanatha yogi. It boosts the appetite and is a tool for eradicating most deadly ailments. By its practice, the kundalini energy is awakened and the nectar shedding from the moon (Chandra) is blocked in people which in turn imparts mental stability.

Practice of Padmasana and effects:

According to Svatmarama yogi,

*Krutva samputitau karau drdhatvam baddhva tu padmasanam
Ghadham vakshasi samidhaya chibukam Dhyayamscha tachchetasi .*

The yogi advises to keep both the hands together in the lap and to perform the padmasana firmly, keeping the chin fixed to the chest. He has to contemplate on Him in the mind, by drawing the apana vayu by performing moolabandha. He has to push down the air after inhaling it, combining thus the prana and apana in the navel. By the way one gets the highest intelligence because of the awakening the sakti(kundalini).

Virtues of kundalini:

In the following stanza yogi Svatmarama describes the virtues of kundalini as follows:

*Kundali bodhakam kshipram pavanam sukhadam hitam
Brahmandi mukhe samsthakaphadyarghalanasanam.*

While describing the benefits of kundalini following benefits are attained. The system gets purified. Awakening of kundalini gives pleasure and is highly beneficial for yogi. Phlegm and the impurities existing at the entrance of the Brahmanadi are removed by this.

Kundalini as the support:

As told by Svatmarama, Kundalini is the support of all practices in his text(Tritiyopadesah)

*Sasaila vanadhatrinam yathadharoahinayakah
Saroesam yogatantranam tathadharo hi kundali.*

Like the chief of the snakes is the support of the earth having all the mountains and forests on it, similarly the Tantras(yoga practices) rest on the kundalini. (the vertebral column)

Grace of Guru:

The grace of teacher is very important and can never be ignored as told by the yogi Svatmarama.

When the sleeping kundalini gets awakened by favour of a guru then all the lotuses (in the six chakras or centres)and all the knots are pierced through.

Susumna as royal road and synonyms:

*Pranasya sunyapadau tada raja pathayate
Tada chittam niralambam tada kalasya vanchanam.*

Susumna (sunya padavi) becomes a main road or royal passage for the journey of prana, and the mind becomes free from all attachments with its objects of enjoyments. By the way death is then conquered, Sushumna.

Sushumna sunyapadavi brahmarandhra mahapathaha

Smasanam, sambhavi and madhyamargha are the names of one and the same thing.

Role of locks

By practice of locks or bandhas, Kundalini can also be awakened as described below by Swami Svatmarama.

Jalandhara bandha: *Kanthe bandham samaropya dharayedvayumurdhvatah*

Yatha dandahata sarpo dandakarah prajayate

Rjvibhuta tatha saktih kundali sahasa bhavet

Tada sa maranavasta jayate dviputasraya.

By blocking the throat region in Jalandhara Bandha the air is drawn from outside and carried down. Just as a snake stuck with a stick becomes straight like a stick, similarly sakti(susumna) also becomes straight at once. Then only the kundalini, becoming as it were dead leaves both the Ida and the Pingala and enters the susumna nadi(the middle passage)

Triveni and Mahabandha:

The nadis Ida, Pingala and Susumna have been described by Swami Svatomarama as follows,

Kalapasamahabandhavimochanavichakshanah

Triveni sangghamam dhatte kedaram prapayenamah.

One of the lock position is Maha Bandha which is the most skillful means for cutting away the traps of death. Thus the conjunction of the Triveni(Ida, pingala and susumna) is possible and it carries the mind to kedar, which is the space between the eye brows and the seat of Siva.

Mahaveda

Similarly while describing the Mahavedha, Hatha Yoga. Pradipika states-

Sama hastayugho bhuma spichau sanadayechchanaih

Putadvayamatikramya vayuh sphurati madhyagah

The practitioner has to raise both the hands equally on the ground and should raise himself a little. He should strike his buttocks against the ground gently. The air, thus leaving both the passages names Ida and Pingala starts flowing into the middle one.

Ida and Pingala:union and immortality:

Somasuryaghni sambandhe jayate chamrtaya vai

Mrtavastha samutpanna tato vayum virechayet

The union of the Ida and the pingala brings about immortality. When the air becomes as it was dead (by leaving its course through the Ida and the Pingala. when it has been kept confined), then it should be expelled.

Somarasa and Atma:

Yatpralayam prahitasushiram

Meru murdhantarastham-----

Soma rasa(nectar of Chandra) exists on the top of the meru(vertebral coloumn), concealed in a hole . The wise whose intellect is not overpowered by Raja and Tama gunas and have predominat Satva gunas, there is the (universal spirit) Atma in it. It is the source of the down going Ida, Pingala and Susumna Nadis, which are nothing but the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati.

Five streams and Khechari mudra:

Sushiram jnanajanakam pancha srotah samanvitam

Tisthati khechari mudra tasmin sunye niranjane.

This hole(described in previous paragraph) is the generator of knowledge and is the source of the five streams(Ida, Pingala etc). In that colourless vaccum, khechari mudra should be established.

Tena kundalini sputa santapta samprabudhyate

Dandahata bhujangiva nisvasya rjutam rrajat.

Mulabandha

The kundalini, which is dormant all this time gets well heated by this means and awakens well.It then becomes straight like a serpent, struck dead with a stick.

Bilam pravistaeva tatobrahmanadyamtaram vrajat

Tasmannityam mulabandham kartavya yoghibhi sada

Like a serpent entering its hole it (kundalini) enters the Brahmanadi. Thats why, the yogi should always practice this Mula Bandha.

Saktichalanam:

Kundalini, many names and attributes:

Kutilangi (crooked bodied), Kundalini, Bhujangi, She serpent, Sakti, Ishwari, Kundalini, Arundhati- all these are synonymous.

*Udghatayet kapatam tu yatha kunchikaya hatha
Kundalinya tatha yogimokshadvaram vibhedayet.*

A door is opened with a key, Similarly the Yogi opens the door of mukti(liberation) by awakening Kundalini by the practice of Hathayoga.

*Yena margena gantavyam brahmasthanam niramayam
Mukhenachchadya tadvatam prsuapta paramesvarim.*

Seat of Brahma is free from pain. Covering the hole of the passage, parameswari(kundalini) sleeps and one can go to the seat of Brahma which is free from pains by proper practice.

*Kandordhve kundali saktisuptamoksaya yoginam
Bandhanaya cha mudhanamyastam vetti sa yogavit.*

Moksha and bondage:

Kundali sakti sleeps on the bulb, for the purpose of giving moksha to yogis as well as bondage to the ignorant. He who knows it, knows yoga.

*Kundali kutilakara sarpavat parikirtita
Sa saktischalitayenasa mukto matra samsaya.*

Kundali is of a bent shape like a serpent. He who has moved that Sakti is no doubt released from bondage and becomes free(mukta)

Ascetic Kundalini:How to catch:

Catching by force:

*Gangayamunayormadhyebalarandam tapasvinim
Balatkarena ghriyittadvishnoh paramam padam.*

Kundalini is a a youngster Tapaswini(a she ascetic) which is lying between the Ganges and the Yamuna, (Ida and Pingala) and should be caught hold of by force, to get the highest position.

Catching hold of tail:

*Puchhe pragrahyabhujangghim suptamudbodhayechchtam
Nidram vihayasa saktirurdhvamuttisthate hathat*

By catching hold of her tail, this sleeping she serpent should be awakened. By the force of Hatha, the Sakti (Energy) leaves sleeping mode and starts upward movement.

*Avasthitachaiiva phanavati sa
Prataschasayam praharardhamatram
Prapurya suryatpandhanayuktya
Praghrhyanityam parichalaniya.*

This she serpent is situated in muladhara(root chakra). She should be caught and moved daily, morning and evening, for ½ a prahar(1/2 hrs), by filling air through Pingala by the process known as Paridhana method.

The bulb:

*Urdhvam vitastimatram tu vistaram chaturangulam
Mrudulam dhavaalam proktam vestitambar lakshnam.*

The bulb is located above the anus which is a vitasti(angula) long and measured 4 angulas(inches) in extent. It is soft and white and appears as if a fixed cloth.

Awakening the power by Bhastika:

*Vajrasane sthitoyogichalayitva cha kundalim
Kuryadanantaram bhastram kundalimasubodhayet.*

The yogi should sit in vajrasana and move kundali. He should perform Bhastrika to awaken the Kundali soon.

*Bhanorakuchanam kuryatkundalin chalayettatha
Mrtyuvaktraghatasyapitasya mrtyu bhayam kutah*

One should contract the navel, so that Bhanu(Surya, near the navel) will be contracted, which will move the kundali. The practitioner escapes death even if he has entered the mouth of death.

Muhurtadvaya paryantamnirbhayam chalanidasau

Urdhvatmakrushiya kimchithushumnayamsamudghata.

By moving this, for two muhurtas, it is drawn upon little by entering the sushumna(spinal column)

Conclusions

The author salutes the primeval Lord (Shiva), who imparted Goddess (Parvati) the Hatha Yogic knowledge, which is similar to a stairway for the aspirants intending to attain the lofty Raja Yoga(Royal Yoga). Svatmarama Yogi, having saluted his Lord and Guru starts teaching the Hatha Vidya exclusively for the attainment of Raja Yoga. People wander in the darkness of confusing and conflicting doctrines, being ignorant of the knowledge of Raja Yoga. For those ignorant seekers the compassionate Svatmarama Yogi offers the light of Hatha-Vidya. Matsyendra, Goraksha, and other yogis had profound knowledge of the Hatha Vidya. The Yogi Svatmarama learned it by the grace of these great gurus. Shiva, Matsyendra, Shabara, Anandabhairava, Caurangi, Mina, Goraksha, Virupaksha, Bileshaya, Manthana, Bhairava, Siddhi, Buddha, Kantadi, Korantaka, Surananda, Siddhapada, Carpati, Kaneri, Pujyapada, Nityanatha, Nirañjana, Kapalini, Bindunatha, Kakacandishvara, Allama, Prabhudeva, Ghodacolin, Tintini, Bhanukin, Naradeva, Khanda, Kapalika and other great Siddhas got victory over time by the power of Hatha Yoga, and moved about the universe. The Hatha Yoga is a sheltering monastery for people scorched by three types of pains. For yoga practitioners, Hatha Yoga is like the supporting tortoise for the world. The Yogi intending perfection or Siddhi should keep Hatha Yoga secret. It is told that, it is powerful when kept secret and fruitless when open or revealed. Hatha Yogi should live alone in a small hermitage located in a place free from hazards of rocks, water and fire to the extent of a bow's length and in a well-administered kingdom free of disturbances. The Matha should have a small door, and also be without any windows; it should be leveled without any holes and should neither be too high, too low, nor too long. It should be very clean, well smeared with cow dung and free from all insects. Externally, it should be attractive with a small hall, a raised seat and a well, and should be surrounded by a wall. These are the characteristics of a Matha as laid down by the masters or Siddhas of Hatha Yoga. Living in such a hermitage and being free from all cares and anxieties, the seeker should do only Yoga all the time, in the manner taught by his teacher. Yoga fails by the six ways, those are --overeating, over-exertion, excessive talk, the observance of disciplines, promiscuous company and unsteadiness. Yoga is fruitful by the six things such as--zeal, determination, bravery, knowledge, firmness and renunciation of company of unsuitable persons. In impure nadis, the energy does not flow into the middle(Sushumna), so how can there be Unmani-Avastha(state of unmani) How then can there be attainment of the goal without this state of unmani?Only when all the Nadis get purified, then the Yogi become master in the control of energy. So control of energy (Pranayama) should be practised daily with the mind in which the sattvika or pure elements are prevalent. till the Sushumna nadi gets free from impurities. When the energy is drawn in by the Ida, it should be released by the other nadi(Pingala) if drawn in through the Pingala after retention, it should be released through the left nadi (Ida). Those who are perfect in Yama, by regular practice of energy control according to the prescribed instructions through the left and right channels, their Nadi's get purified in not less than three months. Ananta is the Lord of Serpents which supports the earth with its mountains and forests, similarly Kundalini is the support of all Yogic practices. When the sleeping Kundalini is aroused by the favour of the guru, then all the lotuses and knots of the body get pierced. Then Sushumna (nerve channel) becomes the royal road for the passage of Prana. Then only the mind remains objectless. Sushumna, Sunyapadavi (the great void), Brahmarandhra (the entry to Brahman), Mahapatha (the great road), Smasana (the burning ground), Shambhavi (pertaining to the auspicious Sambhu) and Madhyamarga (the central path)--these are all synonymns and represent the same thing.

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