

ON YOGA TEXTS

S. RAMASWAMI

There are many fascinating works on yoga in agraharams and certain households. They are treasures of yogic information, experiences and instructions written by different yogis, munis and siddhas. They contain instructions about many unknown and less known asanas (Gupta asanas), therapy, meditative techniques, etc. Except for a few, many have not seen the light of the day. According to my Acharya—who himself has done considerable research on these ancient works and has evolved his yogapaddhathi—it will be very rewarding for a research worker in yoga. The present day teachings of a few asanas, assorted meditations etc., only touch the surface of one of the brilliant facets of our ancient heritage.

PUBLISHED WORKS ON YOGA

Quite a few of the texts have however been edited and printed. The most prominent of them all are perhaps the Patanjala Yoga Darsana, and Hathayogapradeepika of Swatmarama. There are many other less known works and a brief description of some of them is attempted in this write up.

A very important text useful from all aspects, including therapy (chikitsa) is yoga rahasya of sage Nathamuni, a descendent of the great Natha group of yogis. In a chapter on "Sarira Aadhyam", he gives practical

gynaecological hints, which may be of interest.

" Paasaasanam Yoganidra garbhapindaasanam
Bhadrakam I
Matsyendraasanam Ithyethe Sarvagarbha
Nirodhakaha II

A few asanas are specified as effective as garbha nirodhaka, or those that prevent conception. The postures mentioned are Paasaasanam, a posture that requires twisting the spine and encircling the bent knees with the arms from a difficult position called Utkataasanam. It resembles to me Sri Markandeya hugging Sivalingam. Yoganidra is a highly complicated exercise, so also garbhapindasanam which produces a tremendous pressure on the pelvic region and the abdomen. Matsyendraasanam, a very graceful and majestic asana, requires twisting and contraction of the pelvic muscles, uterus and a definite positive pressure exerted by the embedded heel. These postures according to Sri Nathamuni prevent conception, (possibly they prevent embedding of the ovum) if done daily. Evidently these are contraindicated for pregnant woman, who desire pregnancy to continue. These asanas are to be done with expert guidance considering the condition of the individual. These are fairly complicated postures, requiring practice from early age and as a mass method of contraception will be of little use.

Should asana practice be totally abandoned during pregnancy? No, according to Sri Nathamuni and my Acharya He has some specific postures that help the healthy growth of foetus.

" Purvataana Dvipath Baddhakona Padmachatushtayam I
Sirsha Sarvaanga Pavanaasyaamaihi Garbho Viverdhate II.

Parvataana, the posterior stretching posture. Baddhakona, an extension of Mahamudra, Desk posture and Padmansanam. it could be observed, help to stretch the muscles of the pelvis, the abdomen and also the low back—which is a trouble area for women carrying—and help in the progress of pregnancy. It could be observed by yoga practitioners that these postures are entirely opposed to those mentioned for garbhanirodha. A good stint of Praanayama practice (Sitali, nadisodhana, Ujjayi) also is to be done by the garbhini, possibly as it helps in meeting the higher demand of oxygen and also as Pavanaabhyasa has a tranquilizing effect.

HELPFUL DURING PREGNANCY

I have seen my Acharya encourage some of his adept students, during even in their advanced stages of pregnancy to do Headstand. It and Sarvangasanam are helpful during pregnancy as they have a preventive effect against varicose veins, oedema of the legs—common conditions during pregnancy. They also help in mildly massaging the uterine region, and also relieve pelvic congestion. Evidently these antenatal exercises cannot be started effectively after pregnancy. It will be a great boon to women if they start yoga and master the postures when they are young (preferably starting before puberty) to derive the gynaecological benefits of yoga. Later on, well, they could teach yoga to their sluggish husbands and the fun owing children too!

It has been the custom to recommend to pregnant women (barring complicated cases) to do regular household work so that childbirth could be normal and without tears. Nathamuni has this to say about normal delivery.

Aadyam Jatera Bhagesya
Vivritihl Konam Panchakam
Sitali Naadika Sudheha
Sukhaprasava Hetukaha

Firstly Jatarapravrithi the five kona Asanas (e-g. Trikona, Upavishtakona, Urdhwakona, Parsvakona, Baddhakona etc.) to be done. Then Sitali pranayama and Nadi Sodhanam should be practised to help normal delivery. These exercises help strengthen the muscles of abdominal and perineal regions and others which help to bear down at the time of delivery.

Yoga encompasses a variety of disciplines and therapy is certainly one of them. Many yogic texts prescribe a course of asanas and pranayama for specific ailments, but the claims of some of them appear to be somewhat exaggerated, obscure and incomplete. Further, different schools and teachers have developed their own combinations and methods making claims that raise genuine doubts among the lay public and even understandable resentment among medical men not subscribing to indigenous medicine. However, one cannot deny that there is considerable scope for dispassionate study of yogic texts, systems and practices to derive maximum benefits for modern times. One has to approach the yogic texts with full faith, at least in the initial stages as they are the works of great Rshis. And a Rshi is one who speaks the Truth.

Rishayas satya vachasaha I

Having started writing about the therapeutic approach of yoga, it may be worth while to consider the ailments that are

supposed to respond to yogasanas and Pranayama.

1. Sirorogam-Many types of headaches. Obviously not all, but some do respond to yoga. 2. Pratisyayam or Pinasayarogam-Diseases of the nose. 3. Jwaram-Fever. 4. Soolam - Shooting pain especially in the stomach. 5. Bhagadaram-Diseases of the generative organs. 6. Gulma Rogam - Disease of the spleen. 7. Arsa or Guda Rogam-Disease pertaining to rectum, especially piles. 8. Swayatu-Different kinds of Inflammation. 9. Spotum-All Dermatological conditions. 10. Swasam - respiratory ailments, dyspnoea, asthma etc. 11. Chardhi -vomitting - liquids, blood and sputum 12. Akshirogam - Ailments pertaining to the eyes. 13. Athisaaram - diarrhoea. 14. Kushtam-Kushta is said to be of two varieties Sweta - white and Krishna - Black. According to a school Eczema is a variation which may be dry or weeping. 15. Meharogam - diseases of sex organs, - SID. 16. Murcha-Epilepsy. 17. Apasmaaram - loss of memory. 18. Nirnidra - Sleeplessness - Insomnia. 19. Kampanam - Tremours. 20. Ukku - Stammering. 21. Yakrithu - Liver diseases - Jaundice. 22. Hridrogam - Palpitation. Weakness of the heart.

AUTHENTIC WORK ON YOGA

Further, yoga recognizes mental or psychological diseases (which are attempted to be corrected by siddhanta, yoga practice including Pranayama and dhyana). They are Kama (infatuation), krodha (anger), Bhaya (fear), Dwesha (Hatred), Lobha (greed), Vishadam (confusion), Shoka (sorrow), Asuya (intolerance), Avamaanam (guilt or loss of self - respect) Irshya (Envy) Maatsaryam (Malice).

Apart from Patanjala Yogadarsana, there are many yoga works that are published. Hathayogapradeepika which is perhaps the

most authentic and exhaustive work on Hathayoga consists of four chapters or upadesas. A detailed commentary by a sage called Brahmananda written in simple Sanskrit makes it a very useful reference work. The four Upadesas are (a) Asana (b) Kumbhaka (c) Mudras (d) Nadanusandhanam. The first three are Hathayoga and the fourth is Rajayoga in which the main practice is Nadanusandhanam. According to Brahmananda, Nadanusandhanam includes the later four aspects of Patanjala Ashtanga yoga, viz. Pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi which have been treated albeit insufficiently in the earlier issue. The author also refers to many yogis who have preceded him, such as Adinatha (Sri Siva) Matsyendra, Saabara, Aanandabhairava, Chawrangee, Meena, Goraksha, Virupaksha, Bilesaya, Manthana, Bhairava, Korantaka, Surananda, Siddhapada, Kcneri, Pujiyapada, Nityanatha, Niranjana, Kapali, Bindunatha, Kakachandi, Alla, Prabhudeva, Narada, apart from such yogis as Jalandharanatha and Munis as Yagnyavalkya. Special asanas or yoga treatises with the name of the various yogis are also available. For instance yoga yagnyavalkya, yoga Kurantam, Vriddha Saatapatam, Gherunda Samhita are some. Asanas bearing some of the sages, names include Vasishtasanam, Durwasasanam, Kalabhairavasnam, Sayanaasanam, Budhasanam, Marichasanam, Bharadwajasnam, Kasyapasnam, Kaundinyasanam, etc.

The other main Hathayoga texts are Siva Samhita and Gherunda Samhita.

Yet another important source of yogic information is the Upanishads. Twenty of the 108 Upanisads, starting from Isavasya for which Sri Upanisad - Brahmayogin has written commentaries are termed yoga upanisads and describe different kinds of yogas. Then Svetasvatara and other major Upanisad like Chandogya, (especially Dahara vidya, Bhuma vidya) are important ones for a yoga student.

Sandilyopanisad is of Atharvana Veda. The first chapter describes the Ash-tanga yoga, but follows the Hathayoga authorities in prescribing 10 yamas and 10 10 niyamas for the first two angas. The 8 asanas described are Swastika, Gomukha, Padma, Vira, Simha, Bhadra, Mukta and Mayura.

There are interesting observations about positions of nadis and chakras. The 14 nadis described are Ida, Pingala, Sushumna, Saraswati, Varuna, Pusha, Hasthijihva, yasa-swini, Viswodhara, kuhoo, Samkhini, Payas-wini, Alambusha, Gandhari and the important nadisodhana pranayama. It is followed by a description of samantra pranayama. The various Bandhas and mudras are then described, so also the different kinds of descriptions or visual attention (Drishtis).

The fifth anga, Pratyahara, is described as 5 different kinds, based on different schools of yoga. With due effort withdrawing senses is one. To observe in everything the self (Atmabhava) is Pratyahara. Renouncing the fruits of all prescribed activities is the third. Total indifference to all things. (Parangmukhatwam) Directing attention to the 18 vital positions in the body (Marmasthana) is the fifth kind of Pratyahara.

The sixth anga-dharana is referred as five types. Dharana is focussing the mind and keeping it bound at a place, the heart region (Daharaakasa), or in the outer space, Panchamurti dharanain.

Dhyanam is of two kinds. Sagunam and Nirgunam. Saguna, according to Sandilya is meditating the form of the Lord (Murti dhyanam) Nirguna is meditating on the

self itself, which is beyond the three gunas, constituting the observed (drisya).

Samadhi is the state of unity of Jiva and Parama, without the distinction of the observed, observer and observation (Triputi).

Jivatma Paramatma Aikyavastha Triputirahita
Paramanandas warupa Sudhacharithanyatikwa
Bhavati

It is Asampraguata samadhi.

OTHER YOGA TEXTS

The other yoga texts that may be of interest are :

- 1) Dhyabandopanisad 2) Adwaya tarakopanisad 3) Svetaswataropanisad 4) Garbhopanisad 5) Yoga Kurantam 6) Vridha Saatapatam 7) Tejabindoopanisad 8) Gherunda Samhita 9) Yoga Taravali 10) Yoga Siropanisad 11) Aswitanadopanisad 12) Trisikhibrahmanopanisad 13) Siva Samhita 14) Brahma Vidyopanisad 15) Yogasikhopanisad 16) Yoga Kundalyupanisad 17) Nadabindoopanisad 18) Darsanopanisad 19) Amritabindopanisad 20) Yogachudamanyupanisad 21) Yogatatwopanisad 22) Sambhu Rahasyam 23) Yoga Rahasyam 24) Suta Samhita 25) Yoga Yagnyavalkyam 26) Yoga Vasishtam

There are many other works. The Puranas contain valuable hints on yoga texts. Some Tantric texts are also good sources. So also the Vaishnava, Saakta and Saiva Upanisads. With the renewed interest in yoga, there is plenty of scope for both practice and research in yoga.

