

A NOTE ON KRIYA YOGA

M. VENKATA REDDY* & B. RAMA RAO**

ABSTRACT

Kriyayoga is an important aspect of Yoga and received varied and divergent interpretations. Some scholars opine that the Patanjali's Sūtras is a compendium of five independent *sūtra* texts, and that *kriya yoga* text extends from II-1 to II-27. Deussen deems *kriya yoga* to be a preparatory stage and also to be a former name of Hathayoga. Several interpretations of the word *kriyayoga* are also given.

Tapas, svadhyaya and *ishwarapranidhana* are the three components of Kriyayoga. A manuscript entitled Kriya Yoga by Gannepudi Adivenkatayogi attributes the origin of Kriyayoga to Agastya, which appears to be an original method, now lost to us. Kriyayoga in vogue today is Shuddhikriya-cleansing process.

Introduction :

Kriyayoga (KY) is an important aspect of yoga in general and traditional Yogic thought in particular. Kriyayoga (KY), however, received varied and divergent interpretations at the hands of different traditional Yogic scholars as well as modern Yogic thinkers. Some have interpreted it to signify a moral code of rules while others have interpreted in the sense of Hathayoga, Tantra Yoga or as a combination of Yoga and Ayurveda. An attempt is made in this article to present the importance of Kriyayoga and views of various scholars in it.

Kriyayoga according to Patanjali :

Patanjali not only collected the different forms of Yoga practices but gleaned the diverse ideas which could be associated with Yoga. Vachaspati and Vijnanabhikshu, the commentators on Vyasabhashya agree that Patanjali was not the founder of Yoga but was only an editor. Analytical study of the *sūtras* also brings the conviction that the *sūtras* do not show any original attempt, but a masterly and systematic compilation which was also supplemented by fitting contributions.¹

J. W. Hauer suggests that the vulgate (Patanjali's Yogasūtras) in four *padas* is a compendium of several independent *sūtra* texts of diverse historical periods and divides into five distinct traditions :

* Yoga Supervisor, Vemana Yoga Research Institute, Secunderabad-3.

** Asst. Director, Indian Institute of History of Medicine, Hyderabad.

1. Nirodha text	I.1-I.22
2. Isvarapranidhana text	I.23-I.51
3. Kriyayoga text	II. 1-II. 27
4. Yoga-anga text	II. 28—III. 55
5. Nirmana Chitta text	IV. 1—IV. 34.

Georg Feuerstein states that Yogasutra is a composite of two blocks of traditions—one is the so called *kriyayoga* and the other the well known *ashtangayoga*.² According to P. Deussen the Ashtanga section of the Yogasutra extends from II.28 to III.55 and in his opinion it is not the most valuable of the several tracts present in the vulgate. He also rates KY exposition (II. 1—II. 27) as the most important part.³

Deussen like many other scholars fails to appreciate the significance of KY tradition in the Yogasutras. He deems it to be a preparatory stage out of which evolved the Hathayoga. The equation of KY with Hathayoga is also accepted by Max Muller⁴. Pandit R. G. Kokje Shastri observes that Jnanayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Hathayoga seem to be only three kinds of Yoga respected from ancient times. KY seems to be the former name of Hathayoga. Later KY was known as Hathayoga.⁵ G. Jha translates the compound *Kriyayoga* as disciplinary *yoga* arguing that it is suited for *yunjana* (i. e. the second of the three stages of Yogic accomplishment) whereas the Ashtanga Yoga is for the beginner or Arurukshu.⁶ Only J. W. Hauer and A. Janacek recognise the independence of the Kriyayoga tradition.⁷ Not only is Kriyayoga not a preparatory stage to Ashtangayoga but it is a type of Yoga in its own way and is one which is theoretically far more advanced than the Ashtangayoga tradition.

S. Takagi examines the three components of KY viz : *tapas*, *svadhyaya* and *ishwarapranidhana* in their historical context. He concludes that KY was not a mere arrangement on the part of the author but that it existed as an independent form of religious practice⁸.

The term KY is an interesting one. According to G. A. Jacob, the word *kriya* is not to be met with in the earlier *upanishadic* literature. Possibly its first occurrence is in Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* (iii-3-100) and the compound KY is used in Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* (i-1-14)⁹. Presumably *Kriya* like its synonym *karman* simply denoted the action or activity originally. May be as the word *karman* came to be increasingly more invested with an eschatological meaning viz : action determinant, the term *kriya* gradually acquired the sense of rite or ritualistic activity. In Mahabharata the compound KY is mentioned only twice. Both references were first pointed out by E. W. Hopkins.¹⁰ He interpretes the one instance *jnanasiddhikriyayogaih* (xiii-14-22) in terms of "the kind of Yoga science characterised by

necessary external actions as compared with that characterized by discarding this in favour of physical perfection”, in other words as Hathayoga but the text fails to bear him out on this. Of greater interest in relation to the Yogasutra is the second reference, viz (iii-2-22) :

“these (physical afflictions are to be dealt with) by swift countermeasures and always by (proper) reflection but the healing of psychological ailments is by means of KY.” One cannot avoid the conclusion that in this epic, KY foreshadows the KY of Patanjali. The self-contentedness of the Yoga-anga section is moreover borne out by the fact that the three components of KY viz : *tapas*, *svadhyaya* and *ishwarapranidhana* are all listed in the Yoga-anga text (II-32) as members of *niyama*. There they are mentioned together with *saucha* and *santosha*.

In the Yogasutras the term *tapas* seems to be used in a generic and multivalent way. In KY tradition *svadhyaya* has probably a less sectarian meaning. It signifies a self study. The third constituent of the triad of practices characteristic of KY is *ishwarapranidhana*. Quite possibly it is this feature which has misled so many interpreters in believing that KY is a mere ritual activity and preparatory to the Ashtanga path.¹¹

The second chapter of Yogasutras opens with a definition of KY, which was taken by previous scholars to be the commencement of an entirely new and independent treatise and not merely as the beginning of new chapter. Following the lead of Deussen both Hauer and Janacek assign to this supposedly autonomous text the series of *sutras* from II.1 to II.27. Finally Feuerstein sums up his views on KY as follows:¹²

“It is evident that the KY of Patanjali is not a mere preliminary ritual to the Ashtanga Yoga tradition but an independent type of yoga with its specific practical and theoretical framework”.

Further he says “it is interesting to observe that the ritualistic character of KY has been retained or revived in the doctrinal sphere of the Puranas where the old association of *kriya* with ritual action has not been forgotten by reason of the active cultic worship among the *vaishnavas* and the *saiwas*. This leads one to conclude that only in the strictly philosophical Yoga *darshana* did *tapas*, *svadhyaya* and *ishwarapranidhana* acquire a non-ritualistic meaning”.

According to Swami Yogananda, KY is the union with the infinite through a certain action or rite-*kriya*. According to Swami Satyananda Saraswati in KY no effort is made to quieten the mind, but to create

activity in the mind. This brings about the development of certain parts of the brain activity in the nervous system and awakening of mental energies.

The practices of KY are described in the Sanskrit text of Tantric literature, a few of which were translated by St. John Woodroffe. The total number of *kriya* practices is 75 out of which 27 are already known to most teachers of *kriya*. The preparations for *kriyayoga* are perfection of breath consciousness, discovery of the physical passage and preliminary *kriya* methods. Also the aspirant of *kriyayoga* should have proficiency in a few *mudras* and *bandhas*.

Traditional sources :

The learned commentators like Vachaspati and Vijnanabhikshu accepted the influence and utility of *rasayana* school on Patanjali. Not only Yogic tradition but medical works also support this view.

Atmarama,¹³ the greatest exponent of Hathayoga mentions in the fifth chapter of his treatise Hathapradipika - in all diseases the skilful physician should carefully administer treatment according to the methods prescribed by the science of medicine and also administer *yogic* treatments. In the fourth *patala* of Khechhari *vidya*,¹⁴ some information about medicines is given :

औषधेन विना योगी न क्वचित्सिद्धिमाप्नुयात् ॥

Anandakanda, said to have been revealed by Mahabhairava, is a book on Ayurveda and *rasa*. It also gives some *yogic* practices. It is supposed to belong to late medieval period.¹⁵ The manuscript of Tattvabindu yoga¹⁶ available in Asiatic Society Calcutta mentions 15 Yogas including Kriyayoga, Jnanayoga Charyayoga Hathayoga, Mantrayoga, Rajayoga and Siddhayoga. The treatise is written by Ramachandra Paramahansa in 1754 A. D. This is more or less a type of KY which is described as mental control.

The Ayurvedasutra¹⁷ a work by Yoganandanatha of 16th century A. D. attempts to connect Ayurveda with Patanjali's Yoga system. It endeavours to show how different kinds of food increase the *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* qualities and how Yoga practices, fasting and the like, influence the conditions of the body.

Andhra School of Kriyayoga :

In Andhra there appears to have flourished a school of KY, the origin of which is attributed to Agastya and not to Patanjali. A work entitled

Kriyayoga¹⁸ by Gannepudi Adivenkatayogi attributes KY to Agastya. Adivenkatayogi was an expert in many *shastras*. He says :

बहुशास्त्राणि बहुधा ज्ञात्वा गुरुमुखादपि ।
अनुभूय विरचितः क्रियायोगो मयाधुना ॥

This work contains two chapters treating yogic practices in the first i.e preparation of *rasyana* like *sindhuram*, its utility along with *yogic* practices and the greatness of *Ramataraka mantra* in the second. Even though the author was a Vaishnava he bowed to the Almighty Lord Shiva who taught the lore of *rasayana* first. Here the author upholds the great sage Agastya as the originator of KY. This is clear in the following verse:

उत्पन्नो योगमार्गोऽयं भवता स्थापितः पुनः ।

From this it appears that there existed an independent *yoga* method which was lost and now re-established. At other places in the work Agastya is mentioned as the originator.

क्रियायोगं प्रवक्ष्येऽहमगस्त्योक्तं महामते । I-49

अगस्त्यो योगिनां श्रेष्ठः क्रियायोगमकलयत् । I-63

अयमेव क्रियायोगो ह्यगस्त्यमुनिना कृतः । I-69

From these it appears that there existed an independent treatise on KY by Agastya.

Kriyayoga is considered to be greatest of all the *yogic* practices. The fear of death is removed and all the diseases are cured. It will give strength, energy, skill and tranquillity of the mind. This is the aim of *kriyayoga* described in the text as follows :

क्रियायोगक्रमोऽयं हि महायोगैकसाधनम् ।
मृत्युभीतिप्रशमनं सर्वरोगनिवारकम् ।
बलपुष्टिप्रदं प्रज्ञाचित्तशान्तिकरं पुनः ॥ I-52

All in all shortly it has the aim “Kaya Siddhi” through *Simdhura Bhasma*.

भक्षयेत् कायसिद्ध्यर्थं सिन्दूरं सर्वसिद्धिदम् ।

From this we can fairly assume that this was a new modification of the *kriyayoga* doctrine, as the author mentions *Rasayana* as a means of salvation. The idea of *Ausadhi* is the same as we find in the *Yogasutra* (IV.1), that *siddhi* can be attained even by the application of herb or medicine as stated in *Yogasutra*.

“Janmausadhi mantra tapah samadhijah siddhayah”

In the commentary on this aphorism Vyasa and Vachaspati say that Siddhi by Aushadhi refers to the schools of Yogins who attained perfection with the help of ‘Rasayana’¹⁹.

Some of the Yogic traditions may now be mentioned in general and Andhra Yogis in particular who support the Rasayana school in their works. There is nothing improbable in the Yogic texts. Not only some Yogic texts but also tradition gives a number of such examples. From the present available evidence, originator of “*Kriyayoga*” is Agastya and not Patanjali. Though the *kriyayoga* is here described as a rare combination of Rasayana with Yogic practices, the author of *Kriyayoga*, Adivenkatayogi was aware of the Yogasutra of Patanjali and his doctrine of *kriyayoga*. Adivenkatayogi’s doctrine of *kriyayoga* is also different from that of Patanjali. Now there is a general belief in Yogic teachers that *kriyayoga* means *shatkarmas* or *ashtakarmas*.²⁰ In short *kriyayoga* in vogue today is *shuddikriya*.

Some of the statements in *Kriyayoga* of Adivenkatayogi lead us to believe that there must be an original method of *Kriyayoga* of Agastya, which unfortunately, is not available to us now. Though the method of *kriyayoga* is lost to us, we are informed about the sources of the technique as described in Padmapurana. This indicates that the technique of *kriyayoga*, was an authoritative one. The above survey of the origin and evolution of the concept of *kriyayoga* signifies one very important doctrine in the historical aspect of yoga.

REFERENCES

1. S. D. Dasgupta, A History of Indian philosophy—Vol-1, Motilal Banarsidas p. 22
2. Georg Feuerstein, The Yogasutra, Arnold-Heinemann, 1979 p-90.
3. Ibid-p-90
4. Ibid-p-97
5. Swamy Digamberjee. Collected papers on Yoga, Kaivalyadhama, Lonavla, 1975 p-20.
6. Georg Feuerstein, YS-p-97
7. Ibid-p-97
8. Ibid-p-98
9. Ibid-p-98

10. Ibid-p-99
11. Ibid-p-101
12. Ibid-p-104
13. Swamy Digambarjee, Hathapradipika, Kaivalyadhama, (1970) pp-186.
14. Dr. R. C. Harshe, Satkarma Sangraha, Kaivalyadhama.
15. It is interesting to note here Tirumular's Tirumantiram, a book of Tantra, Mantra, Yantra and Yoga. It is a combination of Yoga & Siddha.
16. Ramachandra paramahansa—Tattvabinduyoga, a microfilm from the Asiatic Society, Calcutta.
17. Dr. R. Shama Sastry, Editor, Ayurveda-Sutra, University of Mysore, 1922, Introduction.
18. Gannepudi Adivenkatayogi—Kriyayoga, a transcript from T.M.S.S.M. Library, Tanjore, No. 6716 and Burnell's catalogue No. 9909, page. 112, Sub. Palm leaf, size, $16\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, leaves-30, script—Telugu, No. of grandhas—800, Not printed.
19. S. D. Dasgupta, Obscure Religious leults, p-193.
20. Ashtakarmas mentioned in Hatharatnavali: Hatharatnavali ed. by M. Venkatareddy (to be published)

सारांश

क्रियायोग पर एक लेख

ले० एम्. वेंकटरेड्डी तथा बि. रामाराव

योग का महत्त्वपूर्ण पक्ष क्रियायोग है तथा वह विविध व अपसारी व्याख्याओं को प्राप्त किया है। कुछ विद्वानों का कहना है कि पतञ्जली के सूत्र, पांच स्वतंत्रसूत्र के पाठ का संग्रह है और क्रियायोग का मूलपाठ II-1 से II-27 तक विस्तृत है। ड्यूसन समझते हैं कि क्रियायोग एक प्रारम्भिक स्थिति होगी और हठयोग का पूर्ववर्ती नाम भी जान पड़ता है। क्रियायोग शब्द की अनेक व्याख्याएँ भी दी गई हैं।

तप, स्वाध्याय तथा ईश्वरप्रणिधान—ये त्रियायोग के तीन अंग हैं। गन्नेपूडि आदिव्यंकट योगी द्वारा लिखित क्रियायोग नामक पाण्डुलिपि जो की हमें अब प्राप्त नहीं, अगस्त्य को क्रियायोग के मूलवर्ता मानता है और त्रियायोग एक मूलपद्धति दिखाई देती है। आज की क्रियायोग शुद्धिक्रिया के रूप में प्रचलित है।