

ENLIGHTMENT THROUGH *ASHTAANGA YOGAM*- A REVIEW ON SIDDHA LITERATURES

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ABSTRACT

Human beings are the God's unique creation. He can do anything as he wishes. Everyone is provided with their own mind that carries out actions through thoughts. The life which we need is just a temporary one where we live in a small circle giving place only to *Maayai* (unreal happiness). We fail to realize ourselves to embody mental emotions with the physical one to attain spirituality. Human beings are created with the motive to exempt their Karma and lead a birthless life. For this, Siddhars have mentioned a discipline of eight steps that is mentioned as *Ashtaanga Yogam*. They have mentioned this for the sake of uniting the body with the soul. In this paper, we have discussed in brief, the eight steps of *Yogam*, by which people could come into an understanding that *Yogam* is something that is apart from *aasanam*.

KEYWORDS

Ashtaanga Yogam, Siddha, Body and Soul, Enlightenment

INTRODUCTION

As centuries have passed, people are now becoming unaware of the ultimate aim of birth. We speak, behave, live, eat as we wish. There are repeated insistences regarding the art of living in Siddha literatures. Siddhars have insisted to be good and do good. Apart from it

they have also provided us the way of keeping ourselves and our surroundings pure. Leading a healthy lifestyle and practicing a good food habits are documented. Also, an ample of medical evidences is provided with, for maintaining a healthy body, mind and soul. Amidst these, there raises the question why to be so. And this is where many of us are lacking behind. The aim of the birth is not only to lead a fruitful life, but also to attain enlightenment. Attaining the enlightenment is not such an easy process. For this, first of all, the body and mind should be healthy and thereby the soul. This *Ashtaanga Yogam* is nothing but the steps of attaining wisdom and liberalism.

ASHTAANGA YOGAM

Ashtaanga Yogam involves the eight steps to lead a meaningful life. *Ashtaanga Yogam* can be viewed as two subparts - One for the body and mind and the other for the soul.

For rejuvenating the body and the mind

- *Iyamam*
- *Niyamam*
- *Aasanam*
- *Pranayamam*

For the strengthening the soul

- *Prathyaagaaram*
- *Dhaaranai*
- *Dhyaanam*
- *Samaathi*

IYAMAM

Iyamam deals with controlling the mind from distracting oneself in the unethical activities. Only then, the mind remains pure and healthy. It insists every human being that the activities they are carrying out just for the sake of self-satisfaction and happiness are not a permanent one. Once a person realizes and comes out from the temporary circle, he/she gets through enlightenment. There arises the question why to control the mind from diversion. A person remains well and healthy only when his mind and body is pure. When a person's complete focus is in his mind, then there is no possibility of involving himself in any unwanted activities. Insight into the mind-body relation gives an idea about this *Iyamam*.

This is because; “physical health is greatly affected by emotional and behavioral factors, as a result of biological and hormonal involvements” as said by William Atkinson.

NIYAMAM

Niyamam is involving ourselves only in Good activities. This includes meditation, prayer, offerings etc. A man in the way of *Niyamam* should ensure the following

- *Thavam* (Meditation)
- *Jebam* (Prayer)
- *Makizhvu* (Keeping oneself and ensure happy)
- *Dheiva nambikkai* (Faith in worship)
- *Kodai* (Offering)
- *Viratham* (Fasting)
- *Unmai kettall* (Truth analysis)
- *Velvi* (yagna)
- *Irai aaraathanai* (Worship)
- *Sothi Tharisanam*

AASANAM

The term *Aasanam* refers to the sitting posture. Yogaasanas are carried out in order to rejuvenate the body. Any illness to the body remains as a barrier for entering the forthcoming stages of *Yogam*. That’s why Yogaasanas are carried out. An ample of *Yogaasanam* are mentioned in the Siddha literatures. Body’s blood circulation, metabolic activities, Physiological functions etc. can be properly maintained through *Aasanams* and so, the life span of a body extends; thereby the oneness of the body and mind can be attained.

Though many aasansams are mentioned, a few remain essential for every human being. The most basic *aasanam* for Yogic pathway is the Padhmaasanam - the *aasanam* mentioned by Siddhars for attaining the eternity. *Surya namaskaaram*, a 12 stepped *aasanam* helps maintaining a sound mind and sound body.

Various *aasanams* are mentioned for different diseases by Siddhars, which is mentioned here.

Kuruthi azal Noi (Hypertension)

- *Patchimothaasanam*

- *Utthanaasanam*
- *Athomuka savaasanam*

Athi sthoola Noi (Obesity)

- *Surya Namaskaaram*
- *Artha chakraasanam*
- *Patchimothaasanam*
- *Dhanuraasanam*

Serimaana Noigal (Digestive Problems)

- *Vajraasanam*
- *Yoga mudhra*
- *Mayuraasanam*
- *Paatha hasthaasanam*

Karppa kolaarukal (Uterine disorders) and Malattu thanmai (Infertility)

- *Halaasanam*
- *Sarvaangaasanam*
- *Moola bandhaasanam*
- *Bathakonaasanam*
- *Padhmaasanam*

PRAANAYAAMAM

Praanayaamam refers to controlling of the breathe in order to stabilize the mind. In Siddha, Thirumoolar says that the air that is eternal, if controlled and regularized, then the nervous system get strengthened, and life span of a human extends. He quotes that even an ol-aged man can turn younger. *Praanayaamam* is a discipline that brings a balance in physical, mental and spiritual health.

Yugi states that the breathe begin from the *Moolaathaaram* and pass 12 inches through nostril, then passes 8 inches in and 4 inches get wasted. This is mentioned as *Maathirai alavu* by Thirumoolar.

Praanayaamam include three stages

- *Poorakam* - Inhalation (16 maathirai)

- *Kumbakam* - Controlling the breathe (64 maathirai)
- *Resakam* - Exhalation

Normal breathe rate is 21,600. This should be in the ratio of 1:4:2. There are several ways to undergo the *kumbakam*. They are

- Controlling the breathe by inhaling through mouth (*Ujjayi*)
- controlling the breathe through nostril (*Seethali*)
- Controlling the breathe through tongue (*Basthirika*)

Naadisuthi

This is one of the methods of *Praanayaamam* where the air is inhaled (*Poorakam*) through the *Idakalai* (Left nostril) and controlled for a while and exhaled through *Pingalai* (Right nostril). By this, the nervous system gets strengthened. Respiration gets normalized. Gaseous exchange in the lungs happens in a proper manner and thus unwanted dust particles flushes off the lungs and the body remains pure.

PRATHYAAKAARAM

Prathyaakaaram is the act of keeping control over the oscillating mind. Human beings are living in an unreal illusionary life stage. *Prathyaakaaram* is the transformation of soul from this usual life to a real eternal one. It insists to exempt the soul from darkness of ignorance and pay towards mysticism. If one succeeds in having focus on a single point without any distractions over the mind, then he is eligible to attain the next stages of *Yogam* that helps him enter towards permanent oneness of the body and soul.

DHAARANAI

Human body is subjected to many false happiness. *Dhaaranai* is the practice of governing the mind over external illusions (*maayai*) which the body enjoys. In simple, it is the refine of our thoughts and actions. It is mentioned as *Gnyaana Yoga dhaaranai* in Literatures. There are six types of *dhaaranai*. They are

- *Bhootha dhaaranai*
- *Praana dhaaranai*
- *Karma dhaaranai*
- *Thatthuva dhaaranai*
- *Brahma dhaaranai*

Thoughts are directly related to one's bodily health. A man reaches the refinement only when he has governance over his thoughts and actions. Restrictions of the continuously arising thoughts are a representation of one's way of enlightenment. Though it is a difficult task, it can be easily gained if the person has succeeded in the previous five steps of *Yogam*.

DHYAANAM

Dhyaanam refers to focusing on a single thing (*Ondrayae ninaithal*). Only then no other external factors strike over the mind and body. When one achieves in this stage, then he is completely capable of entering the world of enlightenment. It helps in releasing the trapped mind on unusual things and brings the consciousness of living. At this stage, the man concerns to realize his aim of birth and slowly attains an enlightened stage. His body starts getting united with his mind and the oneness within him is brought out.

SAMAATHI

This is the final step of the Yoga journey. This is the peak of *Yogam* where the body completely unites with the soul. Five types of *samaathi* are

- *Thathuvalaya samaathi*
- *Vikarppa samaathi*
- *Nirvikarpa samaathi*
- *Sanjaara samaathi*
- *Arulperukum samaathi*

Samaathi is a complete energy level of soul that attains the immortality. This is the ultimate everlasting refinement where one's soul lasts in ages. It awakens and frees the man from reincarnation.

CONCLUSION

Thus *Yogam* is one which deals with uniting the mind, body and the soul. The ultimate aim of every creature is the attainment of eternity. Each and every human being should realize the purpose of birth and live accordingly. This can be achieved only by practicing the *ashtaanga Yogam*. Thoughts influence actions, which in turn influences the well being of an individual. So controlling the thoughts through ashtaanga yogic practice help leading a purposeful and a meaningful life.

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