

Meditation in Hatha Yogic Text: A review

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The **Hatha Yoga Pradipika** is a classic Sanskrit manual on Hatha yoga, written by Svami Svatomarama, a disciple of Swami Gorakhnath. Said to be the oldest surviving text on the hatha yoga, it is one of the three classic texts of hatha yoga, the other two being the Gheranda Samhita and the Shiva Samhita. A fourth major text, written at a later date by Srinivasabhata Mahayogaindra, is the Hatharatnavali.¹

The text was written in 15th century CE. The work is derived from older Sanskrit texts and Svami Svatomarama's own yogic experiences. Many modern English translations of the text are available. The book consists four Upadesas (chapters) which include information about asanas, pranayama, chakras, kundalini, bandhas, kriyas, Shakti, nadis and mudras among other topics. It runs in the line of Hindu yoga (to distinguish from Buddhist and Jain yoga) and is dedicated to Lord Adinatha, a name for Lord Shiva (the Hindu god of destruction and renewal), who is believed to have imparted the secret of hatha yoga to his divine consort Parvati.

Hatha yoga or hatha vidya (the science of hatha yoga) is commonly misunderstood and misrepresented as being simply a physical culture, divorced from spiritual goals. Hans-Ulrich Rieker shows the error of this idea by explaining the changes which take place, through the practice of hatha yoga, in the practitioner's body, mind and self. He makes the reader aware of the subjective transformation that occurs as the consciousness penetrates inwards towards the Self, and as the Self diffuses outwards. He shows that hatha yoga is not just physical exercise, but an integrated science leading towards spiritual evolution.²

The text is divided into four major chapters. The first explains *yamas* (restraints on behaviour), *niyamas* (observances), *asanas* (posture) and food. The second describes *pranayama* (control or restraint of energy), and the *shatkarmas* (internal cleansing practices). The third deals with *mudras* (seals), *bandhas* (locks), the *nadis* (channels of energy through which *prana* flows) and the *kundalini* power. The fourth expounds *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and *samadhi* (absorption).

In all, the text contains 390 verses (*floras*). Out of these, about forty deal with asanas, approximately one hundred and ten with pranayama, one hundred and fifty with mudras, bandhas and Shatkarmas and the rest with pratyahara, dharana, *dhyana* and samadhi.³

In Hatha Yoga Pradipika explanation of the mystical terms nada, *bindu* and *kala* is praiseworthy. Nada means vibration or sound, bindu is a dot or a seed and kala means a sprout, or to shine or glitter. Here, bindu represents the Self; kala, the sprout of the Self, that is, consciousness; and nada the sound of the inner consciousness. A return journey from nada to kala, kala to bindu is the ultimate in hatha yoga. Svatomarama says that if the consciousness is the seed, hatha yoga is the field. He enjoins the student of yoga to water the field with the help of yogic practice and renunciation so that the consciousness becomes stainless and the Self shines forth.

In Pradipika this union of Human Consciousness and Super Consciousness has been explained in following steps: *Arambha Avastha*, *Ghata Avastha*, *Parichaya Avastha* and *Nispatti Avastha*.

Arambha Avastha.

brahma-granther bhaved bhedo hy ānandah □
śūnya-sambhavah □ |
vicitrah □ *kvanako dehe'nāhatah* □ *śrūyate*
dhvanih □ ||
divya-dehaś ca tejasvī divya-gandhas tvarogavān |
sampūrna-hr □ *dayah* □ *śūnya ārambhe yogavān*
bhavet ||⁴

Meaning: When the Brahma granthi (in the heart) is pierced through by Pranayama, then a sort of happiness is experienced in the vacuum of the heart, and the anahat sounds, like various tinkling sounds of ornaments, are heard in the body. In the arambha, a Yogi's body becomes divine, glowing, healthy, and emits a divine smell. The whole of his heart becomes void.

Ghata Avastha.

dvitīyāyām □ *ghatīkr* □ *tya vāyur bhavati*
madhyagah □ |
dr □ *dhāsano bhaved yogī jñānī deva-samas tadā* ||
vis □ *nu-granthes tato bhedāt paramānanda-*
sūcakah □ |
atiśūnye vimardaś ca bherī-śabdah tadā bhavet ||⁵

Meaning: In the second stage, the airs are united into one and begun moving in the middle channel. The Yogi's posture becomes firm, and he becomes wise like a god. By this means the Visnu knot (in the throat) is pierced which is indicated by highest pleasure experienced, and then the Bheri sound (like the beating of a kettle drum) is evolved in the vacuum in the throat.

Parichaya Avastha.

tr □ *tīyāyām* □ *tu vijñeyo vihāyo mardala-*
dhvanih □ |
mahā-śūnyam □ *tadā yāti sarva-siddhi-*
samāśrayam ||
cittānandam □ *tadā jītvā saha-jānanda-*
sambhavah □ |
dos □ *a-duh* □ *kha-jarā-vyādhi-ks* □ *udhā-nidrā-*
vivarjitah □ ||⁶

Meaning: In the third stage, the sound of a drum is known to arise in the Sunya between the eyebrows, and then the Vayu goes to the Mahasunya, which is the home of all the

siddhis. Conquering, then, the pleasures of the mind, ecstasy is spontaneously produced which is devoid of evils, pains, old age, disease, hunger and sleep.

Nispatti Avastha

rudra-granthis □ *yadā bhittvā sarva-pītha-*
gato'nilah □ |
nis □ *pattau vainavah* □ *śabdah* □ *kvanad-vīnā-*
kvano bhavet ||
ekībhūtam □ *tadā cittam* □ *rāja-yogābhīdhānakam* |
sr □ *s* □ *ti-sam* □ *hāra-kartāsau yogīśvara-samo*
bhavet ||
astu vā māstu vā muktir atraivākhanditam □
sukham |
layodbhavam idam □ *saukhyam* □ *rāja-yogād*
avāpyate ||
rāja-yogam ajānantah □ *kevalam* □ *hatha-*
karminah □ |
etān abhyāsino manye prayāsa-phala-varjitān ||
unmany-avāptaye śīghram □ *bhrū-dhyānam* □
mama sam □ *matam* |
rāja-yoga-padam □ *prāptum* □ *sukhopāyo'lpā-*
cetasām |
sadyah □ *pratyaya-sandhāyī jāyate nādajo layah* □
||⁷

Meaning: When the Rudra granthi is pierced, and the air enters the seat of the Lord (the space between the eyebrows), then the perfect sound like that of a flute is produced. The union of the mind and the sound is called the Raja-Yoga. The (real) Yogi becomes the creator and destroyer of the universe, like God. Perpetual Happiness is achieved by this; I do not care if the mukti be not attained. This happiness, resulting from absorption (in Brahma), is obtained by means of Raja- Yoga.

In next verses Hatha Pradipika states that those who are ignorant of the Raja-Yoga and practice only the Hatha-Yoga, will, in my opinion, waste their energy fruitlessly. Contemplation on the space between the eyebrows is, in my opinion, best for accomplishing soon the Unmani state. For people of small intellect, it is a very easy method for obtaining perfection in the Raja-Yoga. The Laya produced by nada, at once gives experience (of spiritual powers).

Hatha Pradipika further discusses that the happiness which increases in the hearts of

Yogiswaras, who have gained success in Samadhi by means of attention to the nada, is beyond description, and is known to *Sri Guru Natha* alone. The sound which a muni hears by closing his ears with his fingers, should be heard attentively, till the mind becomes steady in it. By practicing with this nada, all other external sounds are stopped. The Yogi becomes happy by overcoming all distractions within 15 days. In the beginning, the sounds heard are of great variety and very loud; but, as the practice increases, they become more and more subtle.

In the first stage, the sounds are surging, thundering like the beating of kettle drums and jingling ones. In the intermediate stage, they are like those produced by conch, *Mridanga*, bells, etc.

In the last stage, the sounds resemble those from tinklets, flute, Vina, bee, &c. These various kinds of sounds are heard as being produced in the body. Though hearing loud sounds like those of thunder, kettle drums, &c., one should practice with the subtle sounds also.

Leaving the loudest, taking up the subtle one, and leaving the subtle one, taking up the loudest, thus practicing, the distracted mind does not wander elsewhere. Wherever the mind attaches itself first, it becomes steady there; and when it becomes absorbed in it. Just as a bee, drinking sweet juice, does not care for the smell of the flower; so the mind, absorbed in the nada, does not desire the objects of enjoyment. The mind, like an elephant habituated to wander in the garden of enjoyments, is capable of being controlled by the sharp goad of anahata nada.

*sarva-cintām □ parityajya sāvadhānena cetasā |
nāda evānusandheyo yoga-sāmrājyam icchatā ||
nādo'ntaraiga-sāraiga-bandhane vāgurāyate |
antaraiga-kuraigasya vadhe vyādhāyate'pi ca ||
antaraigasya yamino vājinah □ parighāyate |
nādupāsti-rato nityam avadhāryā hi yoginā ||⁸*

Meaning: The mind, captivated in the snare of nada, gives up all its activity; and, like a bird

with clipped wings, becomes calm at once. Those desirous of the kingdom of Yoga, should take up the practice of hearing the anahata nada, with mind collected and free from all cares.

Nada is the snare for catching the mind; and, when it is caught like a deer, it can be killed also like it. Nada is the bolt of the stable door for the horse (the minds of the Yogis). A Yogi should determine to practice constantly in the hearing of the nada sounds.

Hatha Pradipika further states that the Mind gets the properties of calcined mercury. When deprived of its unsteadiness it is calcined, combined with the sulphur of nada, and then it roams like it in the supportless akasa or Brahma. The mind is like a serpent, forgetting all its unsteadiness by hearing the nada, it does not run away anywhere. The fire, catching firewood, is extinguished along with it (after burning it up); and so the mind also, working with the nada, becomes latent along with it. The antahkarana (mind), like a deer, becomes absorbed and motionless on hearing the sound of bells, etc.; and then it is very easy for an expert archer to kill it. The knowable interpenetrates the anahata sound when it is heard, and the mind interpenetrates the knowable. The mind becomes absorbed there, which is the seat of the all-pervading, almighty Lord. So long as the sounds continue, there is the idea of akasa. When they disappear, then it is called Para Brahma, Paramatmana.

Whatever is heard in the form of nada, is the sakti (power). That which is formless, the final state of the Tatwas, is the Parameswara. All the methods of Hatha are meant for gaining success in Raja-Yoga; for, the man, who is well-established in the Raja-Yoga, overcomes death. Tatwa is the seed, Hatha the field; and Indifference (Vairagya) the water. By the action of these three, the creeper Unmani thrives very rapidly. All the accumulations of sins are destroyed by practicing always with the nada; and the mind and the airs do certainly become latent in the colorless (Paramatmana). Such a one does not hear the

noise of the conch and Dundubhi. Being in the Unmani avastha, his body becomes like a piece of wood. There is no doubt, such a Yogi becomes free from all states, from all cares, and remains like one dead.

*khādyate na ca kālena bādhyate na ca karmanā |
sādhyate na sa kenāpi yogī yuktah □ samādhinā ||
na gandham □ na rasam □ rūpam □ na ca
sparśam □ na nih □ svanam |
nātmānam □ na param □ veti yogī yuktah □
samādhinā ||
cittam □ na suptam □ nojāgrat smr □ ti-vismr □ ti-
varjītam/
na cāstam eti nodeti yasyāsau mukta eva sah □ ||⁹*

Meaning: He is not devoured by death, is not bound by his actions. The Yogi who is engaged in Samadhi is overpowered by none. The Yogi, engaged in Samadhi, feels neither smell, taste, color, touch, sound, nor is conscious of his own self. He whose mind is

neither sleeping, waking, remembering, destitute of memory, disappearing nor appearing, is liberated. He feels neither heat, cold, pain, pleasure, respect nor disrespect. Such a Yogi is absorbed in Samadhi. He who, though awake, appears like one sleeping, and is without inspiration and expiration, is certainly free. The Yogi, engaged in Samadhi, cannot be killed by any instrument, and is beyond the controlling powers of beings. He is beyond the reach of incantations and charms. As long as the Prana does not enter and flow in the middle channel and the *vindu* does not become firm by the control of the movements of the Prana; as long as the mind does not assume the form of Brahma without any effort in contemplation, so long all the talk of knowledge and wisdom is merely the nonsensical babbling of a mad man.

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