

Yogic Tenets in Devibhagavata Purana

Dr. Manugayatri Rath, Lecturer in Sanskrit, KIIT School of Social Sciences, KIIT University, Bhubaneswar. email:

Abstract

Yoga has a great impact on all aspects of human life since ancient time. It has found expression in various art and literature since ancient days. Devi-Bhagavata Purana consists of 12 skandhas (books), 318 adhyayas (chapters) and 18,000 verses. It is a dialogue between Parvati and her father Himavat. In Devi-Bhagavata Purana, when Himalaya asks Maheswari about the Yoga with all its Angas (limbs) giving the knowledge of the Supreme Consciousness so that, he may realise himself, when he practise according to those instructions. Thus, by practicing all the aspects of yoga, one will be free from this Samsâra, and sorrows and sufferings of the world.

Key words: *Yoga, skandhas, Yama, Niyama, Âsana, Prânâyâma, Pratyâhâra, Dhâranâ, Dhyâna, Samâdhi, Prânâyâma, Upanishad, astanga, jnana, karma and bhakti, etc.*

Introduction

Yoga has its lasting impact on all aspects of human life since time immemorial. It has found expression in various art and literature since ancient days. Devi-Bhagavata Purana consists of 12 *skandhas* (books), 318 *adhyayas* (chapters) and 18,000 verses. It is ascribed to sage Krishna Dvaipayana Veda Vyasa . The first *skandha* consists of 20 chapters. The second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh *skandhas* consist of 12, 30, 25, 35, 31 and 40 chapters respectively. The last nine chapters (31-40) of the seventh *skandha* is known as the Devi Gita. It is a dialogue between Parvati and her father Himavat. It deals with the universal form of the Devi, meditations on the major texts of Upanishads, *astanga yoga*, the yogas of *jnana*, *karma* and *bhakti*, locations of the temples dedicated to the Devi and the rituals pertaining to her worship.

Depiction of Yoga in Devi-Bhagavata Purana

In Devi-Bhagavata Purana, when Himalaya asks Maheswari about the Yoga with all its Angas (limbs) giving the knowledge of the Supreme Consciousness so that, he may realise himself, when he practise according to those instructions. Parvati replied that "Yoga does not exist in the Heavens; nor does it exist

on earth or in the nether regions i.e. Patala. The Yoga experts mention that the realization of the identity between the Jivatma and the Paramâtmâ is "Yoga." Further Parvati says that the enemies to this Yoga are 6. They are lust, anger, greed, ignorance, vanity and jealousy. The Yogis attain the Yoga when they become able to destroy all these 6 enemies by practicing the accompaniments to Yoga. There are eight limbs of Yoga like Yama, Niyama, Âsana, Prânâyâma, Pratyâhâra, Dhâranâ, Dhyâna, and Samâdhi.

Yama

Yama comprises Ahimsâ (non-violence); truthfulness (Satya); Asteyam (non-stealing); Brahmacharya (continence); Dayâ (mercy to all beings); Uprightness; forgiveness, steadiness; eating frugally, restrictedly and cleanliness (external and internal).

Niyama

On the other hand, Niyama includes also ten qualities :-

- (1) Tapasyâ (austerities and penances)
- (2) Pleasure
- (3) Âstikya (faith in the God and the Vedas, Devas, Dharma and Adharma)
- (4) Charity (in good causes)
- (5) Worship of God
- (6) Hearing the Siddhântas (established sayings) of the Vedas
- (7) Modesty (not to do any irreligious or blamable acts)
- (8) S'raddhâ (faith to go do good works)
- (9) Japam (uttering silently the mantrams)
- (10) Homam (offering oblations daily to the Sacred Fire).

There are five kinds of Asanas (Postures) that are praiseworthy:

- Padmâsan
- Svastikâsan
- Bhadrâsan
- Vajrâsan
- Vîrâsan

Padmâsan and Svastikâsan

Padmâsan consists in crossing the legs and placing the feet on the opposite thighs (the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh) and catching by the right hand brought round the back, the toes of the right foot and catching by the left hand brought round the back the toes of the left foot; sitting then straight and with relieve. By practicing this one can raise oneself in the air. But according to some, the hands need not be carried round the back; both the hands are crossed and placed similarly on the thighs. In case of Svastikâsan, place the soles of the feet completely under the thighs, keep the body straight, and sit at ease.

Bhadrâsan

On the other hand, Bhadrâsan consists in placing well the two heels on the two sides of the two nerves of the testicle, near the anus and catching by the two hands the two heels at the lower part of the testicles and then sitting at ease. This Bhadrâsan is very much liked by the Yogis.

Vajrâsan and Vîrasan

Vajrâsan can be done in placing the feet on the two thighs respectively and placing the fingers below the thighs with the hands also there, and then sitting at ease. Vîrasan consists in sitting cross on the hams in placing the right foot under the right thigh and the left foot under the left thigh and sitting at ease with body straight. Taking in the breath by the Idâ (the left nostril) so long as we count "Om" sixteen, retaining it in the Susumnâ so long as we count "Om" sixty-four times and then exhaling it slowly by the Pingalâ nâdi (the right nostril) as long as we count "Om" thirty-two times. (The first process is called Pûraka, the second is called Kumbhaka, and the third is called Rechaka). This is called one Prânâyâma by those versed in the Yogas. In this way one should repeat with his Prânâyâma. In the beginning, try with the number 12, *i. e.*, as we count "Om" twelve times and then increase the number gradually to sixteen and so on.

Prânâyâma

There are two kinds Prânâyâma like (a) Sagarbha and (b) Vigarbha. When Prânâyâma is performed with repeating the Ista Mantra and Japam and meditation, it is called Sagarbha. When "Om" is simply counted and no other Mantram, it is called Vigarbha Prânâyâma. When this Prânâyâma is practised repeatedly, perspiration comes first when it is called of the lowest order; when the body begins to tremble, it is called middling; and when one rises up in the air, leaving the ground, it is called the best Prânâyâma. (so, one who practices Prânâyâma should have to continue it till he becomes able to rise in the air).

Pratyâhâra, Dhâranâ and Dhyâna

The senses travel spontaneously towards their objects, as if they are without any check. To curb them forcefully and to make them turn backwards from those objects is called "Pratyâhâra," To hold the Prâna Vâyû on toes, heels, knees, thighs, sacrum genital organs, navel, heart, neck, throat, the soft palate, nose, between the eyebrows, and on the top of the head, at these twelve places correspondingly is called the "Dhâranâ." Concentrate the mind on the consciousness inside and then meditate the Ista Devatâ within the Jîvâtâmâ. This is called as Dhyâna.

Samâdhi

Samâdhi always identify the Jîvâtâmâ and Paramâtâmâ. Samâdhi is of two types (1) Samprajñâta, or Savikalpak and (2) Nirvikalpak. When the ideas the Knower, Knowledge and the Thing Known, remain separate in the consciousness and yet the mind feels the one Akhanda Sachchidânanda Brahma and his heart remains, there, that is called Samprajñâta or Savikalpak Samâdhi; and when those three vanish away and the one Brahma remains, it is called Asamprajñâta Samâdhi. This is all about the Yoga with its eight limbs.

Yogic structure of human body

Further Parvati tells Himavat that this body is composed of the five elements, and with Jîva endowed with the essence of the Sun, the Moon, and the Fire and Brahma in it as one and the same, is denominated by the term "Visva." There are the 350,000 nâdis in this body of man; of these, the most important are ten. Out of the ten, the three are most prominent. The foremost and first of these three is Susumnâ, of the nature of the Moon, Sun, and Fire, situated in the centre of the spinal cord (it extends from the sacral plexus below to the Brahmradhra in the head at the top where it looks like a blown Dhustûra flower). On the left of this Susumnâ is the Idâ Nâdî, white and looking like Moon; this Nâdî is of the nature of Force, nectar-like. On the right side of the Susumnâ is the Pingalâ Nâdî of the nature of a male; it represents the Sun. The Susumnâ comprises the nature of the all the Tejas (fires) and it represents Fire.

The innermost part of Susumnâ is Vichtrâ or Chitrinî Bhûlingam nâdî (of the form of a cobweb) in the middle of which resides the Ichchâ (will), Jñâna (knowledge) and Kriyâ (action) S'aktîs, and glitters like the Millions of Suns. Above Him is situated Hrîm, the Mâyâ Vîja Harâtâmâ with "Ha" and Chandravindu representing the Sound (Nâda). Above this is the Flame, Kula Kundalinî (the Serpent Fire) of a red colour, and as it were, intoxicated. Outside Her is the Âdhâra Lotus of a yellow colour having a dimension of four digits and Comprising the four letters "va", "s'a", "sa", and "sa". The Yogis meditate on this to reach

their goal. In its centre is the hexagonal space (Pîtham). This is called the Mûlâdhâra for it is the base and it supports all the six lotuses. Above it is the Svâdhisthâna Chakra, fiery and emitting lustre like diamond and with six petals representing the six letters "ba", "bha", "ma", "ya", "ra", "la". The word "Sva" means "Param Lingam" (superior Male Symbol). so the sages describe this "Svâdhisthân Chakram. Above it is situated the "Manipura Chakram" of the colour of lightning in clouds and very fiery; it comprises the ten Petals, comprising the 10 letters da, dha, na, ta, tha, da, dha, na, pa, pha. The lotus looks like a full blown pearl; hence it is "Manipadma." Visnu reside here. Meditation here leads to the picture of Visnu. Above Manipadma is "Anâhata" Padma with the twelve petals representing, the twelve letters Ka, Kha, Gha, ma, (cha), (chha), (Ja), (Jha,) Îya, ta, and tha. In the middle is Bânalingam, resplendent like the Sun. This lotus emits the sound Sabda Brabma, without being struck; therefore it is called the Anâhata Lotus. This is the basis of pleasure. Here the Yogi find Rudra, the Highest Person of Yoga."

On the other hand, above it is situated the Visuddha Chakra of the sixteen petals, comprising the sixteen letters a, â, i, î, u, û, ri, ri, li, lri, e, ai, o, ar, am, ah. This is of a smoky colour, highly lustrous, and is situated in the throat. The Jîvâtmâ perceives the Paramâtmâ (the Highest Self) here and it is purified; hence it is called Visuddha. This wonderful lotus is termed Âkâsa. Above it is situated between the eyebrows the exceptionally fine-looking Ajñâ Chakra with two petals consisting the two letters "Ha," and Ksa. The Self resides in this lotus. When persons are stationed here, they can see everything and know of the present, past and future. There one gets the commands from the Highest Deity. Hence, it is called the Ajñâ Chakra. Above Ajñâ Chakra is the Kailâsa Chakra; over it is the Rodhinî Chakra. This is all about the Âdhâra Chakras. The famous Yogis say that above that again, is the Vîndu Sthân, the seat of the Supreme Deity with thousand petals. Thus , Parvati declare the best of the paths leading to Yoga.

After that Parvati explains Himavat regarding the other steps like First by the "Pûraka", Prânâyâma, fix the mind on the Mûlâdhâra Lotus. Then contract and arouse the Kula Kundalinî Saktî there, between the anus and the genital organs, by that Vâyû. Pierce, then, the Lingams (the lustrous Svayambhu Âdi Lingam) in the several Chakras above-mentioned and transfer along with it the heart united with the Sakti to the Sahasrâra (the Thousand petalled Lotus). Then meditate the Saktî united with Sambhu there. There is produced in the Vîndu Chakra, out of the intercourse of S'iva and S'aktî, a kind of nectar-juice, resembling a sort of red-dye (lac). With that Nectar of Joy, the wise Yogis make the Mâyâ Saktî, yielding accomplishment in Yoga, drink; then pleasing all the Devas in the six Chakras with the offerings of that Nectar, the Yogi brings the Saktî down again on the Mûlâdhâra Lotus. By daily practicing this, all the

above mantras will no doubt, be made to come to complete success. Thus, by practicing all the above aspects of yoga, one will be free from this Samsâra, and sorrows and sufferings of the world.

Conclusion

Thus in the Devibhagavat Purana, it is described that one must practice with Japam and Homam the Mantram till his mind be not dissolved in me and myself. By this practice of meditating on the Mantra, Brahma is transformed into knowledge. One thing is clear that the Mantra is futile without Yoga and the Yoga is futile without the Mantra. The Mantra and the Yoga are the two infallible means to realize Brahma. As the jar in a dark room is visible by a lamp, so this Jivâtma, surrounded by Mâyâ is visible by means of Mantra to the Paramâtma (the Highest Self). This is all about the Yogas with their Angas (limbs) which Devi Parvati described to Himavat. Thus, Devi Bhagavat has many useful tenets for the benefit of mankind.

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