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**Hatha Yoga: Tradition And Texts : A Brief Review****Satyanarayan Mishra,**

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**Abstract**

Hatha yoga is a branch of yoga which gives emphasis on physical exercises to master the body along with mind to withdraw it from external objects. Hatha yoga practice harmonizes Pingala nadi and Ida nadi in the body or the solar (surya) and lunar (Chandra) energies within us to elevate to a level of higher consciousness. Some scholars are of the opinion that Hatha yoga has been originated from the Nath yogi tradition of Shaivism. The prominent hatha yogic texts include : 'Hatha Yoga Pradipika' by Swami Swatmaram, Goraksha Shatakam, Goraksha Samhita, Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati of Gorakhnath, Gherand Samhita of sage Gheranda, Yoga Taravali of Adi Shankaracharya, Hatha Ratnavali of Srinivasa Bhatta Mahayogendra, Shiva Samhita etc. In this article the author has tried to explain in brief the concept, definition, origin, tradition and texts related to Hatha yoga.

**Key words :-** Hatha yoga, Pingala, Ida, Sushumna, Shatkarma, Asana, Pranayama, Mudra, Bandha, Kundalini

**Introduction**

The word haṭha has a meaning similar to "force" in Sanskrit.

The word 'ha' refers to Sun, 'tha' to Moon. Ha means "sun" and tha means "moon", It indicates both "hot" and "cool" postures.

Hatha is meant for balancing the Moon and Sun energies in us. Hatha yoga practice harmonizes Pingala nadi and Ida nadi in the body or the solar (surya) and lunar (chandra) energies within us to elevate to a level of higher consciousness. It is nothing but a science which activates the third, central nerve channel- Sushumna - which is the path to attain enlightenment.

Hatha has also a meaning of being adamant or making an effort. In other words "Hatha yoga is stretching your boundaries a little bit. We define our boundaries and stay there. Hatha yoga says, okay, stretch a little bit. Extend your boundary, little by little." ..... Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Hatha yoga practice starts with force or exertion. Our body may refuse to do more practice". Our mind may not accept the very word "Yoga. Still we stay firm and determined. We just do it for sake of it irrespective of pain or pleasure we experience..

In a classical sense, Hatha yoga practice is meant to bridge the gap between our body and higher states of consciousness. It prepares our body and ensures that meditation practice and its effects bring blissful experience instead of a painful one. Hatha yoga effectively balances the three gunas or qualities of our system.

By adhering to hatha yogic practices, Tamas, which is the quality of inertia, ignorance and delusion and Rajas, which is the quality of activity, enjoyment and selfishness will be reduced. While Sattva, the quality of harmony, peace and goodness will prevail predominantly.

Hatha yoga focuses on asanas or postures which work most effectively on the spine. . Bikram, Yin, Vinyasa are other popular subgroups within hatha yoga.

**Origin and aim**

Credit of Hatha yoga origins goes to the Nath yogi tradition of Shaivism. Particularly to Gorakhnath yogi by some scholars.. According to James Mallinson, this conclusion is incorrect and Hatha yoga is more ancient system of yoga. In hatha yoga practice diet, internal cleansing of body, breathing practices and asana schedule are given priority. Sun salutation or Suryanamaskar practice is included also in the sequence often.

The aims of Hatha yoga include perfection or physical siddhis (special powers) or benefits like slowing the aging process and ultimate spiritual liberation (moksha, mukti).

During the 20th century, Hatha yoga practices like asanas became a popular form of physical exercise supposed to give flexibility, relaxation, strength and concentration etc. The hatha system in course of time has developed into new movements and styles, like Iyengar Yoga, which are not same as the old and traditional Hatha yoga.

Ashtanga, Vinyasa, Iyengar and Power Yoga are also included in hatha yoga.

The word "hatha" as already told can be considered in two ways: as "forceful" or "willful", it is the yoga practice of activity, and since "sun" (ha) and "moon" (tha), it also refers to the yoga of balance. These Hatha yogic practices are meant to design in aligning and calming our body, mind, and spirit so that we can be absolutely fit for meditation.

As per opinion of James Mallinson, persons irrespective of caste, creed, class or sex can practice hatha yoga without any bias. It is the only practice which leads to success as claimed by many texts. Teachings associated with metaphysics or sect specific practices are excluded and ignored in many hatha yogic texts.

According to Paramhans Swami Maheshwarananda (Swamiji)

Hatha Yoga is more than physical exercise. True Hatha Yoga is the practice of bringing harmony to the two main energies (moon and sun) in the human body.

Hatha is a Sanskrit word that can be broken down into two smaller words: ha, meaning "sun," and tha, meaning "moon." The word may also mean "willful" or "forceful."

Hatha yoga practices bring total mastery of the physical body and its functions. Kundalini gets stimulated spiritual and physical wellness are achieved. Diseases are also eliminated by regular and specific practices.

**Tradition of hatha yoga**

Guru tradition and lineage are given reference in many yogic texts for the help and evolution of the followers. This hathayogic tradition was founded by Sage Matsyendranath and his disciple Sage Gorakhnath. The great yogi Matsyendranath was the founder of the "Nath" sect. He had laid the spiritual guidelines for the followers. Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath had designed wonderful techniques from Tantras ignoring the ritualistic portion. Both yogis were instrumental in synthesizing these two parts together and devised a safe as well as logical approach for achievement of perfection and higher state of consciousness.

Development of Hatha Yoga took place mainly between 6th and 15th century A.D. It seems that hatha practices had been influenced by tantric traditions like shakta tradition, buddhism, Kapaliks and kauls etc. Observation of celibacy, ethics, morality, character and noble deeds were the requirements laid down by Gorakhnath yogi for success in hatha yoga. Gradually it gained popularity and many other sects were merged in to this tradition. Later the followers forgot the founders or originators of the individual groups and accepted Gorakhnath as their Guru.

Buddha's moral teachings had great influence on many sections of the Indian society before the rise of hatha yoga. The ethics and morality prescribed in the teachings of Buddha and Mahavir were guiding many people in their day to day life. Practice of meditation was also in vogue. The biggest disadvantage of this system was that the preliminary preparatory practices were not followed and much importance was given to the ethics laid down by the founders.

Gradually Hatha Yoga system addressed this issue in a logical manner, giving priority to physical cleanliness and mental stability prior to meditation and higher practices. The mind can experience and reach the higher states provided the body is healthy and in coordination with mind. This was the basic theme of Hatha Yoga which brought popularity to this system later on.

**Texts on Hatha yoga:-** Here is a list of hatha yogic texts as follows:

1. Hatha Yoga Pradipika written by Swami Swatmaram
2. Goraksha Shatakam
3. Goraksha Samhita
4. Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati of Gorakhnath
5. Gherand Samhita of sage Gheranda
6. Yoga Taravali of Adi Shankaracharya
7. Hatha Ratnavali of Srinivasa Bhatta Mahayogendra
8. Shiva Samhita

According to Malinson, Sanskrit epics of Hinduism and Pali canon of Buddhism are the earliest sources of hatha yoga. About the 11th-century B.C, the use of term "Hatha yoga" was observed for the first time in Sanskrit texts.

Hatha yoga overlapped with major traditions of Hinduism of the 1st millennium, and elements of Hatha yoga can be traced to the Vedic religion, Vaishnavism and Shaivism of that era. (Malinson) Dattatreya yogasastra text is said to have developed earlier to Hatha yoga techniques. We do not find the phrase "Hatha yoga", in ancient Sanskrit texts but their verses refer physical exercises and postures (asanas) which appear in later Hatha yogic texts. For example, Pancaratika teaches non-seated asanas like mayurasana.

In this context Vimanarcanakalpa patala (9th-century), Padma samhita yogapada and Ahirbudhnya samhita can be taken into consideration.

The Pancaratika doctrines are crystallized by the first two centuries of the common era says Nicholas Tarling. According to Gerald Larson and other scholars date of the yoga-containing Vaishnava Pancaratra text - Ahirbudhnya Samhita may be somewhere between 300 and 800 CE. Hatha yoga in earlier texts does not contradict Patanjali yoga rather supplements it. Hatha Yoga described in these texts aim to conserve bindu (semen) which is physical essence of life and far less discussed rajas (menstrual fluid) of the woman. In contrast, later texts depict awakening of kundalini energy through a system of chakras and mention that practice, preservation and use of energy through Yoga is a means to achieve various attainments or siddhi (special powers). Description regarding Khecharividya, the practice of pressing the tongue against the palate is available in the three passages of the Pali canon (Suttanipata). Two of these passages mention that they help bringing "mind under control", while the third passage mentions that it suppresses thirst and hunger. These Buddhist texts also mention that Buddha tried the Khecharividya practice as well as a



posture where pressure is given on the perineum with the heel, which is similar to even modern postures utilized for stimulating Kundalini energy.

### Medieval Hatha yoga-related texts

Prior to the composition of the Hathapradipika (also called the Hatha Yoga Pradipika), all medieval Hatha Yoga related literature was written in Sanskrit. Some medieval Hatha yoga-related texts include:

- A wide range of Hindu texts from the 1st millennium CE, such as Nishva satattva samhita of Shaivism, Agamas and the Puranas of Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism, though they do not use the phrase Hatha yoga, but teach asanas, mudras and meditation which were found in later Hatha yoga related literatures. According to Mallinson, the systematization of seated asanas likely occurred in Shaivism, while non-seated asanas developed in Vaishnavism..
- There is a text Amṛtasiddhi which does not teach Hatha yoga, but teaches mudras and terminologies found in Hatha yoga including mahabandha, mahamudra and mahavedha.
- There is a text known as Dattatreya yogasastra which teaches mahabandha, mahamudra and, kheccarimudra, jalandharabandha, uddiyananandha, mulabandha, viparitakarani, vajroli, amarol and sahajoli.
- The Vashistha samhita, a Vedanta and Vaishnava Hindu text composed before 1300 CE, describes asanas, pranayama and Kundalini yoga. However it skips the discussion of teaching or practice of mudras.
- Shiva samhita and Yoga bija are both Shaiva Hindu texts which mention the phrase Hatha yoga and teach the techniques along with knowledge for Moksha.
- The Sarangadharpaddhati, a Hindu text, is a compilation of verses on a wide range of subjects compiled in 1363 CE, including Hatha Yoga .
- The Vivekamartanda, a Shaiva Hindu text by Gorakhnath written probably in the Deccan region contemporaneous with the Dattatreya yogasastra teaches nabhomudra, mahamudra, viparitakarani including the three bandhas.
- The Gorakṣasataka, another Shaiva Hindu text also composed probably in the Deccan region by Gorakhnath, contemporaneous with the Dattatreya yogasastra combines Shaiva yoga techniques with Advaita Vedanta metaphysics. This text teaches sakticalanimudra along with the three bandhas. This Sanskrit text contains some of the earliest teachings of Hatha yoga
- A Hindu text Khecharividya teaches the method of Khecharimudra.
- The Amaraughaprabodha, a Shaivism text attributed to Gorakhnath, explains physical Hatha yoga techniques skipping metaphysics and philosophical speculations,. Along with Dattatreya yogasastra, Gorakṣasataka, Vivekamartanda and Vashistha samhita, Amaraughaprabodha is an important source of verses which were borrowed by later treatises on hathayoga.

The texts like Amṛtasiddhi, Dattatreya yogasastra, Vivekamartanda prescribe the methods to conserve bindu (semen). The texts like Vivekamartanda, Gorakṣasataka and Khecharividya involves raising kundalini. Shiva Samhita, Yogabija, Amaraughaprabodha, and Sarngadharapaddhati are the texts older than the Hathapradipika which teach Hatha Yoga mudras.

**Classical Hatha Yoga texts****Hathapradipika**

The Hathapradipika also called Hatha Yoga Pradipika is one of the most important texts of the Hatha yoga compiled by Svatanmarama in the 15th century CE.

Hatha Yoga Pradipika gives a list of 35 great yoga masters or siddhas starting with Adi Natha (Hindu god Shiva) followed by Matsyendranath and Gorakshanath. This text includes information about methods like shatkarma (six acts of self purification), 15 asana (postures: seated, laying down, and non-seated), pranayama (breathing techniques) and kumbhaka (retention of breath), mudras (internalized energetic practices or gestures), dhyana (meditation), chakras (energy centers), kundalini, nadanusandhana (concentration on inner sound), and other related topics. It is one of the best known and most widely used Hatha yogic text consisting of 389 verses in four chapters.

Chapter 1 with 67 describe the proper environment for yoga, ethical duties of a yoga practitioner, and asanas (postures). Similarly Chapter 2 with 78 verses deals with the satkarman (body cleansing). Chapter 3 with 130 verses describes the mudras and their effects. Chapter 4 with 114 verses describes meditation and samadhi.

**Post-Hathapradipika Texts**

Post-Hathapradipika texts on Hatha yoga include Amaraughasana which discusses khecarimudra,

**Other texts are:**

- Hatha ratnavali: This is a 17th-century yogic text. Ten mudras, eight cleansing methods, nine kumbhakas and 84 asanas (compared to 15 asanas of Hathapradipika) are dealt in this text. Description on nadanusandhana (inner sound) technique as in Hathapradipika has been ignored in this text.
- Hathapradipika Siddhantamuktavali: This is an early 18th-century text which expands on Hathapradipika by including practical insights and citations to other Indian texts on yoga.
- Gheranda samhita: This is a 17th or 18th-century text which presents Hatha yoga as "ghatastha yoga", according to Mallinson. Gheranda Samhita is a hatha yogic treatise composed by sage Gheranda in form of advice and suggestions to disciple Chanda Kapali. Gheranda Samhita describes seven fold yoga in the form of Shatkarma, Asana, Mudra, Pratyahara, Pranayama, Dhyana and Samadhi for cleansing, strength, steadiness, calming the mind, lightness, perception and isolation respectively. These two texts: Hatha Yoga Pradipika and Gheranda samhita are derived from older Sanskrit treatises.
- Jogpradipaka: This is an 18th-century text written in Braj-language which presents Hatha yoga simply as "yoga", composed by Ramanandi Jayatarama. This text describes 6 cleansing methods, 84 asanas, 24 mudras and 8 kumbhakas.

**Modern era**

The school of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya was responsible in framing so called Modern hatha yoga as seen in the West. Among the famous students of Krishnamacharya, prominent in popularizing yoga in the West were K. Pattabhi Jois, famous for popularizing the Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga style, B. K. S. Iyengar, Indra Devi and Krishnamacharya's son T. K. V. Desikachar.

The Divine Life Society was another better known school of Hatha yoga in the 20th century, founded by Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh (1887–1963). Among his many disciples were Swami

Vishnudevananda, founder of International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres; Swami Satyananda , founder of the Bihar School of Yoga; and Swami Satchidananda of Integral Yoga.

1975 onwards, yoga has spreaded and yoga techniques have become increasingly popular globally, in both developed and developing nations. The Bihar School of Yoga, Munger has become one of the largest Hatha yoga teacher training centers in India. In the West, Krishnamacharya schools are more well known. Other hatha yogic systems are Astanga Yoga, Anusara Yoga, Bikram Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Integral Yoga Kundalini Yoga, Jivanmukti Yoga, Kriya Yoga, Kripalu Yoga, , Siddha Yoga, Vinyasa Yoga, Viniyoga, and White Lotus Yoga.

### Conclusion

Hatha yogic practices include many elements having both behavioral and of practical importance. The Hatha yoga texts describe certain characteristics of a successful yogi. As per. Section 1.16 of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika mention these characteristics as are: utsaha, sahasa, dhairya, jnana tattva, nischaya and tyaga. As per perception in Western culture, Hatha yoga is understood as practice of asanas and it can be done as such. However in the Indian and Tibetan traditions, Hatha yoga is much more beyond that. It extends well beyond physical exercise system integrating the ideas of principles or ethics, diet, cleansing techniques, pranayama (breathing exercises), dhyana (meditation) and a system for spiritual development of the yogi.

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