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An overview of Upasana techniques in yoga Karnika

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Introduction

Yoga Karnika which has around 1340 shlokas was composed and compiled by Swami Aghoranandanatha arguably in the 19th CE. Author's name indicates that he belonged to Kanphat sect of Northern India. The book has 15 chapters dealing with various facets of Hatha yoga and Rajayoga. The Unique factor of this book is it deals with Tantric rituals which involve different types of Upasana.

Upasana

Purpose of Upasana

Upasana seen as a technique is a combination of a Deity, Mantras and specific ritualistic activities. The purpose of Upasana is to create a psychic connection with the Deity being worshipped so as to attain a specific result or a Siddhi. (Psychic power).

The ultimate purpose of Upasana is Chitha Ekagratha leading to Mukti (Liberation)

Bahirmukha and Antarmukha Upasana

Upasana may be External or Internal or both, depending upon the Decision of the Guru after considering the status of the Sadhak (seeker/disciple)

Bahirmukha sadhana

Upasana is termed Bahirmuka Upasana (External worship) when it is done with a solid form of a deity with respective mantra chanted aloud, along with associated procedures using water, fire, flowers, lamps etc. termed as Shodasa upachara Pooja. This may be done at a temple, or it may be done at a Pooja gruham. In special cases for specific purpose, it may be done at river bed or even burial ground.

Antarmukha sadhan

Upasana is termed Antarmuka Upasana (Internal worship) when it is done in the Mind without any external aids. It involves the visualization of the deity in detail in three dimensional form along with all the specified rituals done within the mind which the seeker goes through with closed eyes. The Internal Upasana is considered superior as the seeker has to be a spiritually Evolved personality to do it. Upasana leads to "Sampragnyatha Samadhi" in which the seeker loses his identity and the Form of deity alone remains revelling in a blissful state of consciousness.

The Alambanam (form of deity taken for Upasana) is taken under the Guidance of Guru. In Upasana it is mandatory that the seeker should have Ishwara Pranidhanam (Surrender to God). Seeker trusts in Guru and words of guru invokes the surrender to God.

Upasana in Yoga Karnika

Upasana in YK are Antarmuka Upasana invoking Guru, Ganapathy, and Bhujangini Devi. It also has abstract Upasana on Chakras and Shodasa Aadhaara. It elucidates a separate Visualization in Anahata Chakra (Heart centre)

Guru Vandanam

Guru is visualized on the Top of the Head seated in a white lotus adorned in white clothes with palms gesturing Varadabhayankara mudras (Gestures of Savior and a bestower of Boons.

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He has his consort with a blue lotus in her hand seated on his lap. He is seen as an incarnation of Compassion and personification of peace and all the ritualistic ceremonies are done in the mind. After Manasa puja to Guru, Aym Beeja is chanted and the oblations are offered in the right hand of Guru. Then Guru is glorified as parabrahman in human form and worshipped.

Ganesha Upasana

Whenever one chants Mantras it increases the Tejas of the practitioner. But it is said that if one forgets to worship the Ganesha before this activity, he takes away that Mantra Tejas. Here the author names him as Chora Ganapathy denoting this act. So the Author advises Ganesha Upasana to safeguard the Mantra Siddhi. Ankura Beeja mantra is invoked first and relevant Beeja mantras are chanted along with the visualization at respective body parts as advised by the Guru. Then Ganesha is visualized and worshipped in the Mind by doing Manasa Pooja.

Bhujangini Devi Dhyanam

Kundalini Shakti is visualised as Bhujangini Devi (Cobra) coiling around the crystal Svayambulingam in a triangle at Mooladhara. She is an embodiment of all mantras (Sarva mantra Svarupini). She is seen as the primal cause (Mother) who bestows Mystical powers and boons (Siddhidhey varadey Mata) The prayer is for Mukti (Raksha maam Janma samsara Sagaraat) The Pranic energy within the body is visualised as a snake and the energy is manipulated to flow in the proper way inside the body in the prescribed channels. Later *Nine chakras* are described. Apart from the regular seven chakras namely *Mooladhara, Swadishtana, Manipuraka, Anahata, Vishuddhi, Agnya, Brahmaraandra* and their respective positions, *Madhyama chakra* and *Maha shoonya* too are denoted. *Madhyama chakra* is positioned in the middle portion of palate. The *Maha shoonya* is visualized above *Brahmarandra*. This Dhyanam is a preparation for the chakra related worship.

Mantra Upasana

A Mantra is a sacred syllable potent with capability to invoke energy in the seeker.

A large repository of Beeja mantras and the respective form of Deity associated with it is discussed in detail in this book. The purpose of Japa is to attain "*Mantra Chaitanyam*" (attuning oneself with Mantra).

Mantra Siddhi (Immersion of oneself in the mantra)

Author describes various techniques to attain Mantra Siddhi through which the seeker attains spiritual evolution and enhances one-pointedness of mind.

- The deity and the respective mantra are taken. Each syllable of the mantra is (Nyasa) visualized at a particular body part. Depending upon the number of syllables, the methodology of visualization becomes expanded or reduced.

The Deity is seen as an embodiment of Mantras

The Yoni Mudra as per Tantra shastra is denoted

From Mooladhara all the six chakras are visualized with their respective number of petals and colours. Then Ascendance (Arohanam) of observation of chakras from the base, and descendance (Avarohanam) of chakras from head, is visualised, immersing each chakra with nectarine flow leading to the Bliss.

- Let one do Japa of his Mantra 1008 times. Then do Anga-Nyasa (visualising, positioning mantras at suggested body points)

Let him do Chandra Beda Pranayama with mantra chant in the ratio of 16:64:32 of purakam, Kumbhaka, rechakam. The Nasikagra mudra for doing the same is described.

Lakshadi yoga (Meditation on Focal points)

This Upasana is done using the Visualization of Light in order to attain siddhis. The flow of the Points denote a pathway of a Nadi which when purified leads to the siddhis denoted. The Right Big toe as start is preferred as it has an effect on Chandra Nadi which is conducive for Yogic techniques of Raja yoga. *Shodasa adhara* – Focus with visualization of Light at 16 points of body

- Pada angushta (Big Toe)
- Pada mula (Root of the heel)
- Aswini mudra (movement of anal region)
- Lingadhara (Procreative organ)
- Jataradhara (Abdomen)
- Nabhi-adhara (Navel)
- Hridhaya-adhara (Heart Centre)
- Kanta-adhara (Throat Centre)
- Ghantika-adhara (Root of the Tongue)
- Talavagra (tip of the tongue)
- Talu (Upper palate)
- Dvandva-adhara (tip of the tongue against front two teeth)
- Vayugati in nasika (Nasal passage)
- Nasikagra (Nose tip gaze)
- Bhrumadhya (eyebrow Centre)
- Netra-adhara (fingertip at clear closest visual point)

The benefits of this practice given are Bliss, Conquest of death, ability to compose poems, eliminate all diseases, creativity and Omniscience.

Critical points of observation

Author Aghorananda being a Natha sampradaya yogi has presented these compiled techniques in a particular way.

Guru Upasana is done first.

Like any Hatha yoga text, yoga Karnika too is technical and cryptic at times which may be misinterpreted without a Guru. This can lead the seeker in a wrong direction. So the Guru is given the first and foremost pedestal in the Upasana.

Ganesha Upasana follows Guru.

Ganesha is said to represent the Mooladhara chakra.

The Ganapathy Atharva seersham too says

"Tvam Mooladhaarey stithosi Nityam".

Mooladhara (Base chakra located between the thighs) represents Earth element and Stability. The Chaura Ganapathy Dhyanam is done to for stability.

- The Kundalini Shakti is the Life force and worshipping her as mother follows Ganesha Upasana, as it becomes the base for the visualization of chakras in different parts of the body.
- A large repository of Beeja mantras and respective deity, Techniques of Mantra siddhi in detail denotes the width and depth of the wisdom of the Author.

Conclusion

Yoga Karnika authored by Aghorananda Natha yogi is a commendable compilation of Upasana techniques of different domains, a rare feature of an Hatha yogic text comprising salient aspects of “Ishawara Pranidhana” (Surrender to God).

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