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The meaning and definition of Hatha Yoga

Hatha Yoga is known as the science of purification. Its systematic form began to emerge in India some time in the 6th century AD. Of the many authorities of Hatha Yoga, one outstanding personality is Swami Svatmarama who compiled the Hatha Pradipika. It can be translated as 'Light on Yoga'

The Sanskrit word Hatha consists of two letters, ha means sun and tha means moon. Yoga means union. So Hatha Yoga means the union of sun and moon.

The sun refers to day, hot, Pitta, Shiva and Pingala nadi.. The moon refers to night, cool, Kapha, Shakti and Ida nadi. So we also can say the meaning of Hatha Yoga is the union of Pingala and Ida nadi into Sushumna nadi by harmonizing and balancing both nadis.

Some definitions are given below.

1) Siddha Siddhantha Padvati

Ha is the sun and tha is the moon. The union of sun and moon is called Hatha Yoga.

2) Yogashikopanishad

Surya is the name of the right flow and candra is the name of the left flow. One is required to harmonize and balance both of these flows. After that such balanced and harmonized flow of prana will be united with the flow of apana through pranayama.

Aims and objectives of Hatha Yoga

There is a general misunderstanding that Hatha yoga is a physical yoga of a lower category, while Raja Yoga is a higher one. Svatmarama seems to be the first person to remove the confusion about the terms Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga and clearly explained the relationship between the two.

1) Hathapradipika 1/2

After paying respects to his revered Guru, Svatmarama explains Hatha Yoga as a means to achieve Raja Yoga.

2) HP 1/67

Asanas, various Kumbhakas, and the efficient Mudras---all these are to be practiced in the course of Hatha Yoga until the fruit i.e. Raja Yoga is attained.

3) HP 2/76

Neither Hatha Yoga can be perfected without Raja Yoga nor Raja Yoga can be attained without practicing Hatha. Hence one should practice both until the stage of Nispatti.

4) HP 3/122

Without Raja Yoga Prthvi(Asana) is not becoming(is not effective); nor is Nisa(Kumbhaka), nor else the various types of Mudras.

5) HP 1/10

Hatha is a monastery for those who are afflicted by unlimited suffering; and for those who are engaged in the practice of all kinds of Yoga, Hatha Yoga is a supporting tortoise.

Hatha Yoga's two roles

- 1) The sufferers who are living in the materialistic life, they can have shelter in Hatha Yoga.
- 2) Hatha Yoga is a base like tortoise for those who are already living in the spiritual life.