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Pranayama

Differences between Patanjali's & Hatha Pradipika

We have been studying the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and we all do Hatha Yoga when we hit the mat. Yoga is designed to refine your consciousness and take you from the lower to the higher. It's just the methods that differ. Hatha Yoga acknowledged that the body was actually an amazing tool for shifting our consciousness. If we work with the body and change it in specific, special ways, we can also affect the higher consciousness. Basically, it starts at the beginning, with the body. Patanjali starts quite far along the road and goes straight into an area that is very difficult to work with: the mind.

On Monday, Shri R.S. Bodhe pointed out to us that, though superficially Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and the later Hathapradipika might appear to be in contrast with each other, a closer look shows that they compliment each other; Hatha Yoga is Patanjali's Yoga made simple. But what makes the two systems of spiritual evolution *appear different in their treatment of pranayama?* That is what we are going to look at today.

First, understand the nature of both treatises - Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is a collection of yogic knowledge *compiled* by Sage Patanjali around 400BC expounding upon the *principles of yoga*. HathaPradipika is a *yoga manual of techniques compiled* by Swami Swatmarama in the 15th century. Both are Astika, accepting the authority of the Vedas as the means of knowledge.

Both recognize the relation between breath and thoughts has been recognized for thousands of years by philosophers and yoga practitioners. Patanjali says that the distraction of

the mind is indicated by disturbances in the respiratory rhythm. (PYS 1:31) and as a remedy he describes some modifications of breath to calm the mind. (PYS 1:34). Hathapradipika says that fast breathing indicates a disturbed mind and slow breathing indicates the controlled thought condition. (HP 2:2)

Before describing pranayama as part of eight limbs of ashtanga yoga in the second chapter of the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali made a mention of pranayama in the first chapter (1:34) while describing the methods of citta prasada or how to cleanse the citta. So it is very clear from Patanjali's point of view that the purpose of doing pranayama, and the goal of all yoga practices, is to get the mind purified. The practice of pranayama facilitates "Dharana" the ability to focus the mind on a region or an object, practices essential for the preparation of concentration or meditation.

Patanjali puts Pranayama as the fourth step of ashtanga yoga, where in chapter 2, he devotes 5 sutras (PYS 2:49 - 2:53) to define, explain the how-tos, and the benefits, (the why.)

At the very beginning, Patanjali makes it clear that pranayama should only be practiced in a seated position¹ (PYS. 2:49) and that the asana are a prerequisite for practicing pranayama. This is contrary to Hatha yoga which does not give that sequential relationship between asanas and pranayama. In the Hathapradipika, pranayama is discussed in detail in chapter two.

For Patanjali "prana" means breath and that's all he wanted to convey in his pranayama (prana = breath; ayama = pause or extend/expand). Whereas, the authors of Hathapradipika often used the word "prana" to convey a life force or subtle psychic energy.² Pranayama is the technical word for Kumbhaka. In the time of Hatha Yoga, the word "kumbhaka" became the synonym of pranayama. Also many breathing varieties (puraka and recaka) became popular along with kumbhaka. Patanjali does not use the technical terms we find in Hatha Pradipika e.g. puraka, recaka and kumbhaka. Although he does refer to these actions, he doesn't name them specifically in the four types of pranayama he describes. Patanjali also uses the word Vidharana

¹ Hathapradipika states that Ujjayi can be done while standing or walking (2:53)

² Pranayama ©Swami Kavalayananda, 1966 Kaivalyadhama, Lonavla

for Kumbhaka. (PYS 1:34). Prachardana which occurs in the same sutra as Vidharana is clearly Patanjali's word for Recaka. There is, however, no word in the sutras for Hatha Yoga's process of Puraka, although Patanjali does recognize the action it designates.

In Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, the word Nadi occurs only once (PYS 3:31), but in later yogic literature such as the Hathapradipika the Nadis played a very important role. Pranayama begins the journey to expand the personal life force and connected the yogi with flows of energy. Bandhas and mudras are then added to the practice where energy is powerfully re-directed into the channels of the body that influence higher consciousness, preparing the yogi for the ultimate stage of Hatha yoga, the awakening of the Kundalini Shakti. This activation of the chakras give the yogi access to the highest levels of consciousness.

Patajali gives four types of pranayama, the distinction being based upon the nature of the pause. The first one, the pause is after exhalation (Bahya vritti) the second one, the pause is after inhalation (abhyantara vritti). Both the first and second the yogi is require to make a special effort to holding the breath. In the third (abhyantara vritti) , where breathing is suspended whether after inhalation or exhalation it depends on the practitioner, no special effort is required to hold the breathe. And the fourth (chaurthah) happens spontaneously after years of practice of pranayama, sometimes referred to as the suspended breath. The absence of effort in maintaining the pause is common to both the third and fourth types of pranayama (In the language of the later Yogic literature the first two are Bahya Kumbhaka, Abhyantara Kmubhaka and the third and fourth are Kevala Kumbhakas). These four pranayamas are regulated in three ways i.e. to see the effect of the breath in view of desha (signs on the body), kala (time of breath cycle or one sitting of the practice) and samkhya (number of pranayamaic breath and the rate of inhalation-holding and exhalation holding). Patanjali also described psychological and spiritual significance of pranayama.³

The Hathapradipika uses a different principle of division in distinguishing the pranayamas according to the nature of the inhalations and exhalations. The kumbhaka is the same in all

³ Pranayama - Mudra and Meditation by Dr. Sharadchandra Bhalekar ©Kaivalyadhama, Lonavla, India, 2017

eight, just the inhalation/exhalation is different. Once the pranayamas are mastered, they are enhanced by adding the practice of Bandhas, where energy is powerfully re-directed into the channels of the body that influence higher consciousness. This bandha practice is largely done with the breath paused in kumbhaka for long periods. The bandhas are followed by the addition of Mudras, which are special, unique energetic flows that take the consciousness to a higher level. Many are done with the hands and fingers but there are lots of other mudras that involve the whole body. They are meant to create pranic flows in very specific ways that prepare the yogi for the ultimate stage of Hatha Yoga.

Ultimately, both Patanjali's Yoga and Hatha Yoga realize the same goal: the activation of the highest consciousness but the way they get there can appear slightly different. And their use of the breathing methodologies to achieve these goals reflects this difference.