

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF “PSYCHIC PRANA” IN VIVEKANANDA'S RAJA YOGA

Debashree Sen

Ph.D Research Scholar. Department of Philosophy and
Comparative Religion. Visva –Bharati University Bolpur,
Santiniketan. Bhirbhum, West Bengal

ABSTRACT

Vivekananda introduces his new form of Raja Yoga influenced by Kurma Purana. The fire of Yoga burns all the sins as well as all bondages which arise from the karmas. According to him, his invented new form of Raja Yoga is the foundation of all Dharmas. Because, the daily experiences are the base of the knowledge of Raja Yoga. He said –“Yoga is the science which teaches us how to get these perceptions”. In this regard, he told about the 'exact sciences' which are based on hypothesis and reasoning and practical experience and practical proof. Raja Yoga never allows any kind of dogmatism. Thus one can adopt his method of Raja Yoga as a goal of life. According to him human consciousness can be divided into three plains. These are unconscious, consciousness and super conscious plain of mind. The super consciousness plain of mind is the highest state of consciousness. According to him, it is the state of perfect concentration. He called it as the state of Samadhi. But it can't be reached without the help of Psychic Prana. The Psychic Prana is the coiled up energy of the Muladhara or the Kundalini. In this paper the relation between Prana and Spirituality and as well as the relation between Psychic Prana and Raja Yoga is elaborately presented.

Key Words : Patanjali Yoga, Vivekananda's Raja Yoga, Kundalini, Liberation.

Introduction :

It is said in Mundaka Upanisad's 2/2/8 mantra-“He consist of mind and is the leader of life and body and is seated in food (i.e. the body) controlling the heart. The wise perceive clearly by the knowledge (of Brahman) the blissful immortal which shines forth.” He says- “The Science of Raja-yoga proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically worked out method of reaching this truth”.

Raja-yoga has a distinct method of investigation like all science. Our own body is a good laboratory. The utility of Raja-yoga is it brings truth to humanity. And truth or real knowledge is the best reward. And mind is the best tool of this observation. All general conclusions of sciences come out from keen observation.

A powerful attention can properly guide mind. Thus mind analyzes and illuminates the facts. Mind is the only means to get real knowledge. This strong attention requires a great deal of practice. To stop attention from going outside, to concentrate all the power of attention, to analyze the mind, to know the power of mind, to concentrate in mind itself – is a really hard work. Raja-yoga teaches all these above things. So it is a scientific approach in the world of yoga.

He suggests one should believe on those things which he is able to find through his own experience. But this does not mean knowledge varies to everyone and knowledge or truth depends on everyone's experience. Rather, he wants to say nature behaves same to everyone. Thus real experiences of the truth are always same in nature.

The Main Purpose And Significance :

A Yogi can manipulate his mind and can concentrate on his mind power according his desire. Thus he is able to unfold the inner truth, can realize the Atman. Raja-yoga starts its journey from internal world, to study one's internal nature. Then to control both internal and external world through his internal power. So, exploration is the master-key of Raja-yoga. Keeping anything secret is strongly rejected in Raja-yoga. He admits the authorities of Samkhya and Patanjali yoga. His Raja-yoga also follows the eight steps of Patanjali yoga.

He advised that we must be aware about our each and every inner sensation in every stage during practicing Raja Yoga. We must introspect when we are taking, thinking, eating, meditating etc. Thus we understand our mind-stuff as well as Atman. It is a rest-less process. Following Bhagabat Gita sloka VI, 16 he also advices any tendency of extremeness falls down a yogi. These are like fasts or over eating, keeps awake or sleeps more, works too much or does not work etc. Any extremeness makes stress over body and mind. In this position it is impossible to concentrate. Besides these, he also added the importance of Prayer, Daily practice, Balanced eating, Contemplation of 'OM', Keen observation, Strong will and Introspection, to explore, to correct the own-self.

But Swami Vivekananda gave Patanjali's ancient methodology a new dimension, definition and use. He gave a great importance to Asana, Pranayama and the three internal aids which are altogether called as “Samyama”.

Raja-Yoga emphasizes on the purification of the mind. Mind is the tool of exploration of inner world. The inner world is subtle and the outer world is gross. According to him, the outer world is the reflection of inner world. The outer world is the 'effect' and the inner world is the 'cause'. As cause is always subtle.

He states Yama and Niyama are the basics of yoga. Because, Yama and Niyama prepare any Yogi as a moral being. Without practicing them none can get the fruits of practicing the entire yoga. Asana has a great significance in Vivekananda's Raja -Yoga. Asana makes body firm and fit. Then yogi can sit and continue a prolonged meditation. Besides, bodily sickness and weakness is a great obstacle for build single-pointed concentration. As body influences mind and vice -versa. So, strong concentration needs a strong mind and body.

But Vivekananda gives a new dimension to Pranayama. He says -"This part has been rejected by some as not belonging to Raja -Yoga, but as so great an authority as the commentator Shankaracharya advises it, I think fit that it should be mentioned, and I will quote his own directions from his commentary on the Shvetashvatara Upanishad : "The mind whose dross has been cleared away by Pranayama , becomes fixed in Brahman; therefore Pranayama is declared. First the nerves are to be purified, then comes the power of practice the Pranayama. Stopping the Right nostril with the thumb , through the left nostril fill with air , according to capacity ; then without any interval, throw the air out through the right nostril, closing the left one.....in fifteen days or a month purify the nerves is attained ; then begins Pranayama." He admitted prana as the sum total of all universal force. The knowledge by which we control our prana is Pranayama.

The Psychic Prana is the Kundalini itself. He said "they describe it as triangular in form in which, in the symbolical language of the Yogis, there is a power called the Kundalini, coiled up. When that Kundalini awakes, it tries to force a passage through this hollow canal, and as it rises step by step, as it were, layer after layer of the mind becomes open and all the different visions and wonderful powers come to Yogi. When it reaches the brain, the Yogi is perfectly detached from the body and mind; the soul finds itself free."So, he emphasized on practice until one successfully purifies his nadis or energy channels. And he also told to experience nerve currents flowing all over the body through these energy channels. In this matter, Spinal column has a great role. Thus one should hold the three body parts i.e. chest, neck, and head in a straight line at the time of practicing Asana. Nerve currents can't flow through curve spinal column.

Pranayama is not mere art of breath control. According to Vivekananda, it includes another Secret. That is getting control over the nerves as well as nerve currents , challenging the Kundalini in middle channel, sending the

Kundalini to the last energy centre (the Sahasrara) to get the Super conscious state of mind. This can be possible for any ordinary human being through practicing Raja Yoga. To explain it here he talked about 'Atavism' and the plains of mind. The theory of "Atavism" supports that we can achieve control over our any body part, muscles, nerves through regular hard practice. We can control the movements of lungs and can control the movement of heart also. We also can control the motion and direction of Prana. We can push the Prana in a desired energy channel and energy centre. There are total there energy channels or nadis. These are namely Ida, Pingla and Sushumna.

According to Vivekananda, the left channel is 'Ida'. It carries the 'sensory nerve currents', which are centripetal and afferent by nature. It carries the sensations to the brain. The Right channel is called 'Pingala'. It carries the 'motor nerve currents', which are centrifugal and efferent by nature. It carries the sensation from brain to various body parts. There are also seven plexus or energy centers within the spinal column. These are respectively Muladhara, Swadhisthana, Manipur, Anahata, Visuddhi, Anga and Sahasrara from bottom to top in spinal column. According to Vivekananda, the spinal cord ends in a sort bulb which is Muladhara. But it is not attached to the brain. Rather it floats in one kind of fluid. After reaching here one can achieve the Superconscious State. Among the seven energy centers Vivekananda emphasized on three energy centers these are - Muladhara (the basic) , the Sahasrara (the thousand -petals lotus in brain) and the Manipura (the lotus of the Navel).According to him we can also imagine the energy centers as lotus.

He also described the three plains of mind. These are -1) Unconscious Plain of mind which is associated with our instinct. For example, if a mosquito bites us we automatically slap it. 2) Conscious Plain of Mind which is associated with reasoning. For example, when human beings think, see, judge anything. 3) Super conscious Plane of mind which is associated with Samadhi. According to Vivekananda, Samadhi is the only State where one can achieve the supreme goal of Yoga. Raja -Yoga is the science of train concentration. When the kundalini passes through the energy centers one also passes the various plains of mind. Knowledge is strength and through this one can conquer his own nature, others nature and the each and every part of the universe.

The utility of Pratyahara or sense-withdrawal, Dharana or fixation of mind on any desired thing and Dhyana or meditation bring perfection in concentration. Every former step is the foundation of the later. Sense -withdrawal is nothing but to get victory over the centers of perceptions. All the five sense organs of knowledge are the centers of perception as well as centre of experience. So, there is a need to get control over these senses as we turn those to our desired energy centers to experiences them. But, the

minds of ordinary people are the slave of worldly things and drink the wine of desire. Only a strong internal will free the mind from this slavery. Then mind becomes its own master. This is the usefulness of sense-withdrawal according to him. Then we can fix our mind in desired energy channels, energy centers, nerve currents etc. to get the Super conscious state. So, Pratyahara is a helping tool of Dharana. He said, "When Chitta, or mind-stuff, is confined and limited to a certain place it is Dharana."

Conclusion :

The Sushumna or middle energy channel is closed in ordinary people. According to Vivekananda the practice of Raja Yoga helps it to open up. And the kundalini is the coiled up energy of action. It acts through the network of nervous system. Prana is the finer state of vibration which acts through all over the body. Mind makes all bondages and only mind can break it. The power of mind is concentration. We have to observe and be conscious about all activities of Prana and kundalini during the whole process. He said when we deeply meditate on kundalini following the method of Raja Yoga, it becomes heated up and goes through various energy centers as well as the mental planes. The final destination is the sahasrara. Here all sensual perception will go and we finally perceive the Super conscious perception.

References :

1. Chetanananda, Swami. Meditation And Its Methods, According To Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN- 978-81-85301-37-2.
2. Radhakrishnan, S. (2010) The Bhagavadgita. India: Harper Collins Publishers .P- ISBN- 978-81-7223-898-8.E-ISBN-978-93-5116-066-3.
3. Radhakrishnan, S.(2016)The Principal Upanisads.26th impression. India: Harper Collins Publishers. ISBN-13:978-81-7223-124-8.
4. Tapasyananda, Swami. Four Yogas of Swami Vivekananda, Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN-978-81-7505-089-1.
5. Tapasyananda, Swami. The Philosophical And Religious Lectures Of Swami Vivekananda , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN-978-81-7505-067-9.
6. Vivekananda, Swami. Conquering the Internal Nature Raja Yoga, Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata. ISBN-978-81-85301-16-7.
7. Vivekananda, Swami. Six Lessons on Raja Yoga, Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN-978-81-85301-58-7.
8. Vivekananda, Swami. The Complete Book of Yoga , Teenage Publishers, New Delhi. ISBN(10) : 9385385623 . ISBN (13): 9789385385629 .
9. Vivekananda, Swami. Sadhanas or Preparations for Higher Life , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN-81-85301-28-X .
10. Vivekananda, Swami. Thoughts of Power , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN- 978-81-7505-020-4.
11. Vivekananda, Swami. Personality Development , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata. ISBN- 978-81-7505-224-6 .
12. Vivekananda, Swami. Bhakti or Devotion , , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata. ISBN- 978-81-7505-141-6 .
13. Vivekananda, Swami. Life After Death; None Has The Power To Destroy The Unchangeable , Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata.ISBN- 978-81-7505-002-0 .
14. Vivekananda, Swami. Mon O Tar Shakti , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN-81-8040-370-X.
15. Vivekananda, Swami. Dhyana O Moner Shakti , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN-81-8040-375-0.
16. Vivekananda, Swami. Selections from the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN- 978-81-85301-60-0. (subsidized). ISBN – 978-81-7505-076-1. (Duluxe)
17. Vivekananda, Swami. Teaching of Swami Vivekananda , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN- 978-81-85301-87-7.
18. Vivekananda, Swami. Talks With Swami Vivekananda , Advaita Ashrama , Kolkata.ISBN- 978-81-7505-153-9.