

Yogic Ideals of Better Life in Samaveda

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Abstract— The ancient seers of the Vedic times thought of human well-being and its practice through their well thought discourses to the disciples. It was handed down with authoritative principles to the posterity in order to lead a healthy life in a society. The yogic practices are some of the means to achieve that goal which is found in the Vedic literature. The Veda of course deals with cosmic *prāṇāyāma* types of air in the body and power of air. More than that it has prescriptions on food for a spiritual practitioner, his activity of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*, the necessity of *śraddhā*, right spiritual path, self-restraint, penance, concentration, devotion, eulogy and worship of gods, purity, Communion with the Divine, activity spiritual life, and Revelation-cum- Divine relish. This paper aims at discussing the yogic ideals for better life in Samaveda.

Keywords— Yoga, *prāṇāyāma*, *Stuti*, *upāsana*, *śravaṇa*, *cakra*, *dharma*, *manana*, *śraddhā*.

I. INTRODUCTION

Patañjali defines Yoga as the suspension of the activity of mind.¹ But actually that is the primary requirement of the connection between the *ātmā* and *paramātmā*. In the suspension of mental activity, the working of the nature on the human psyche is kept in abeyance as a result of which the yogini's soul experiences the communion and reciprocation with the Supreme Being. In *Skanda Purāṇa* this connection and then identity between the two is called *yoga*:

*yatsamatavaṃ dvyoratra jīvātmaparamātmanoḥ/
sa naṣṭasarvasaṅkalapaḥ samādhirabhidhīyate//
paramātmātmanoryo yamavibhāgaḥ paramātpa/
sa eva tu paro yogaḥ samāsātkathitstava//*

In *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* also this connection between the two is declared as *Yoga*:

*samādhīḥ samatāvasthā jīvātmaparamātmanoḥ/
samīyogo yoga etyukto jīvātmaparamātmanoḥ//*

Divine Communion

S.V. recognizes the existence of duality (in the form of Supreme Being and individual Soul) in human body- *dvitā yo 'bhūdamrtā martyeṣu* / (S.V., 1555). And the latter goes to connect with the former like a drop of water finding its path to the ocean. *dratsaḥ samudramabhi yajjigati* / (S.V., 1848). This Supreme Being is symbolized as Indra and Agni etc. in the Vedas. Souls eagerness to attain them is variously suggested in the S.V.:

*pra vāmarcanyukthino nūthāvīdo jaritāraḥ/
indrāgrī eṣa ā br̥ne// (S.V., 1575)*

Devotees come to the sacrificial altar and sing prayers for the superme God —*upprayonto adhvarṃ mantraṃ vocemāgraye* / (S.V.,1379). God also comes to listen to the eulogy of sages in the sacrificial performances of human beings- *ṛṣīṇām suṣṭutīrupa yajñam ca mānuṣāṇām* (S.V., 1030). For such a

prayer a sage or has to the practioner of Truth, which later was recognized as a primary requirement³ for a yogin: *kavimagrimupa stuhi satyadharmānamadhvare* / (S.V.,32). It is not because of its outer nuances a *yajña* is not a part of *yoga*, for S.V. clarifies that *yajña* is actually a divine consciousness which spreads during its performance.

*indrāgni jaritūḥ sacā yajño jigāti cetanaḥ/
ayā pātamiṃ sutam// (S.V., 670)⁴*

In the post-Vedic Yoga-system both the idea of truth and of connecting with Brahman are very clear. Truth is the Supreme Being Himself. So a spiritual practitioner wishes to get connected with him.

*yadvarco hiranyasya yadvā varco gavāmuta/
satyasya bramhaṇo varcostena mā saṃsṛjāmasi//
(S.V., 624)⁵*

Eulogy and Worship

Both *Stuti* (eulogy) and *upāsana* (worship) are also recognized as a part of yoga in the S.V., since they also connect man with God. However, *stuti* has two aspects. (i) Mindful analysis of the power and glory of the God and (ii) facilitating the listeners to perform the spiritual listening (*śravaṇa*). S.V. stresses upon the existence of these two aspects that have supreme love (*puru-priyam*) as the essence:

*viśoviśo vo atithiṃ vājayantaḥ purupriyam/
agriṃ vo duryaṃ vayaḥ stuṣe śūṣasya
manmabhiḥ/(S.V., 87)⁶*

Both *stuti* and *śravaṇa* are delighting when they are expressed through sweet hearing songs. Therefore S.V. took the responsibility of spiritual songs which are pure and beautiful and which give God's blessings.

*eto nvindaṃ stavāṃ śudhena sāmnā/
śudhairukthaivavīḍhvāsāṃ śudhairāśīrvānmamattu//
(S.V., 350)*

There is also a trace of the idea of six *cakras* (*parvaṇs*) in the body on which meditation is effected- *cintayantaḥ parvaṇāparvaṇā vyaṃ* (S.V., 1065) During *stuti*, the Vedic sages were using the ancient and holy ballads on gods- *tam gāthayā purānyā punānamabhyānūṣata*/(S.V., 1633). S.V. also recognizes the the purifying effect of singing holy songs for the divinities.

*sakhāya ā ni śīdat punānāya pragāyata/
śīsum na yajñaiḥ pari bhūṣata śriye// (S.V.,568)*

And those who eulogise the god through their songs are not common people. They are wise and pedantic- *pāvakaṅkavāṇāḥ śucayo vipāścīto bhīṣṭaumairanūṣata*/(S.V., 250). They seem to be do not sing high of God always solitarily. They seem to be doing *stuti* in congregation inspiring one another - *tam vaḥ sakhāyo madāya*

punānamabhi gayata (S.V., 569). So by singing *stuti* in the Vedas the ancient sages have inspired what is, latter, called *kīrtana* in the tradition of Bhakti.

Besides eulogizing the God, the sages were also practising worship of him. Such worship was never devoid of the knowledge. Vedic worshippers were highly talented and wise.

*arcata prācarta naraḥ priyamedhāso arcata/
arcantu putrakā uta puramit dṛṣṇavarcata//* (S.V.,

362)

It seems that in the process of worship, some were chanting mantras or singing songs⁷ and some others were engaged in the physical activity of worshipping – *pra gāyatābhyarcāma devān* (S.V., 535). Therefore, Vedic worship was a great conglomeration of songs, rituals and knowledge.

Devotion

Vedic *stuti*, *stotra* and *upāsanā*. Clearly propagate the method of bhakti- yoga. A person constantly in touch with God was called devayuta (S.V., 1011) and jarit. (S.V., 1458), Because of his complete surrender (*śaraṇa*)⁸ to him, he gets wealth and fame automatically.⁹ There is also a fragrance of d.syabh.va (servitude) when a devotee says- *eme ta indra te vayam/* (S.V., 373). There is also a hint of the activity of *japa* (muttering God's name) when the sage says- *na hi tvadanyo girvaṇo girah/* (S.V., 373). The idea of 'God's mercy' (*bhagavat kṛpa*) has its roots in the Vedas too -

hiranyapāṇramimīta sukratuḥ kṛpā svaḥ // (S.V., 464)¹⁰

Yogic Practices

The yogic practice of a spiritual aspirant is hinted sufficiently in different places of S.V. An aspirant desires for a knowledge backed by good concentration (*dhiti* or *dhāraṇā*). When Indra is praised for his self – restraint (*vaśītvā*), in another place soma God (deity connected to mind) is prayed purify a self-restrained (*samyata*) man so that he can eat in a collective dining- *ese pavasva samyatam /* (S.V., 906).¹¹ Indra is prayed to urge the devotees on right path (*nṛtasya* patha) as per his duty (*dharma*) though he is handsome (*susriyah*).¹³ Devotees wish to go on right path prescribed by Indra along with the wise sages and thereby to surpass their ocean of sins.¹⁴ Vedic poets praise the yogic process of *manana* (deliberation) by which one becomes a great seer. They also find *śraddhā* (faith) as the mother of all spiritual realizations.¹⁵ They also assert that only the right action is a fragrant garment wearing which the soul realizes the Supreme Being.¹⁶ They say that by meditating in solitary places like the caves in mountains and in confluences of rivers man becomes wise.

*upahvare girīnām saṅgame ca nadīnām/
dhiyā vipro ajāyata//* (S.V.,14)

Vedic sages knew that an immature man devoid of any penance cannot realize God.¹⁷ Just as the pure person of soma, the great penance, spreads in heaven,¹⁸ a man can also do so by penance, gods with powerful minds, are capable of tottering the whole universe.¹⁹

S.V. even gives right prescriptions for the food of yogins. It prohibit the eating of meat and advises to destroy those who

eat meat.²⁰ It advises to protect cows at home, because that is the home where cows stay.²¹ So milk and milk-products become right staple for a yogin.

Purity (*śauca* or *pavitratā*) of life is greatly stressed in S.V. surrounding should be holy and the mind of the yogin should also be pure. Then only one enjoys the company of Hari, the Supreme God.

tvām rihanti dhītayo hariṁ pavitre aduḥ// (S.V., 1017)

The sages of S.V. also pray the Sun-God to remove the physical and material deficiencies and diseases.²² Sages except that even the prayers of devotee should also be pure i.e., not infested with evil intention or negative thoughts. Then only Indra, the god, will be happy and bless- *śudhairāśīrvām mama ttu śudhairukthairvāvrhdhvāsam/* (S.V.,1402). Actually the propagation of this purity or . aucat. Is intended for making the man come at the parlance of pure gods. Gods are pure and holy.

*indra śudho na ā gahi śudhaḥ śudhābhirutibhiḥ/
śudho rayiṁ ni dhārāya śudho mamadhi sāmya//*

(O Indra, you are pure. You holy come to us along with your intentions. Fetch us pure wealth. O handsome, as you are pure, make me pure too. (S.V., 1403)

Whatever Indra does, he does it having been pure. His vouchsafing wealth to devotees, his killing the demons like Vṛtra and his producing crops., everything is intrinsically a pure activity.

*indra śuddho hi no rayiṁ śuddho ratnāni dāśuḥ/
śuddho vṛtrāṇi jignase śuddho vājam siśāsasi//* (S.V., 1404)

Therefore, in order to approach this God a devotee has to be pure himself. This is the real import of ' *devo bhutvā devaṁ yajet* ' / A yogin pure in body and mind is not harmed by gods- *na saṁskṛtaṁ pramimīta/* (Aśvins do not harm a pure devotee). S.V.,1753.

Prāṇāyāma

S.V. has very deep revelations on *prāṇāyāma* (exercise of inner air). It shows how an incessant cosmic *prāṇāyāma* is going on in the Nature where the trees and creepers of forests draw in the carbon- dioxide and throw out oxygen in the atmosphere.

tamit samānam vaninaśca vīrudhī'ntarvataiśca suvate ca viśvāhā // (S.V., 1824)

The sages of S.V. reveal that it is the effulgence of Brahman which roams inside body in the form of *prāṇa* and *apāna* (upper and lower streams of air) like a buffalo showing off before the sun.

*antaścarati rocanāsyā prāṇādapānātī
vyakhyana mahiṣo divam//* (S.V., 631,1377)

Friendship of Air with Indra in the Vedas is also symbolic of the spiritual power chummed out of the air- streams. So the sage says. O Indra, may there be lasting friendship of air with you- *marudabhirindra sakhyam te arastu/* (S.V., 324). Because of this power of air that indra has, he is capable of pumping strength in the weak- *asi dabhrasya cid vṛdhaḥ* (S.V., 1003). In other words, exercise of air creates physical, psychic and spiritual power and well being -*ādityairindraḥ sagane*

marudibharasmabhyam bheṣajākarot/ (May Indra and his troop along with the Suns and air-streams give us freedom from diseases. S.V., 1112).

Air flows in the body like a stream of medicine. It is good and pleasing for heart too – *vāta ā vātu bheṣajam śambhu mayobhu no hr̥de* (S.V., 1840). It has nectar secretly placed inside itself. (S.V.,1842). So holding air results in the importance of air, soul is described as abird with golden wings- *hiranyapakṣam varuṇasya dūtam*(S.V., 1846) implying that that it is air in the body which gives rise and progress to the spirit in the body. The spirit swims upward in the stream. And this give him the highest realization.²³ It is a hint about the consciousness crossing six *cakras* from *mulādhāra* to *sahasrāra*.

The thought of S.V, on yoga involves the spiritual revelation and divine relish as the final fruit. It take mind to a level of spiritual joy urging it to cross over ephemeral obstacles.²⁴ *Yoga* is to prepare and purify mind so that it can unite with the Divine. Just as a calf goes to unite with its mother so also once inspired (by *Yoga*) Soma mingles with the soul after being mentally purified and being and being an aspirant of the Divinity.

*saṁ vatsa eva mātṛbhirindurhinvāno ajyate/
devāvīrmado matibhiḥ pariṣkṛtaḥ//* (S.V., 1099)

It is to be noted that here Indu or Soma symbolizes a purified mind. This purification is made by putting it into air – streams and by storing it with air stored through a repeated activity. Once pure pure through repeated (*prāṇāyāma*) activity, it bestows spiritual jewels of realization, having been the newly discovered source of cosmic law (*Rta*). ‘As soon as the golden consciousness rises’ it “unites to release our wants through ideas (devas)”²⁵

*punānaḥ soma dhārayāpo vasāno arṣti/
ā ratnadhā yonimṛtasya sīdasyutso devo hiranyayaḥ//*
(S.V., 511)

The Soma which is brought to spiritual use through the practice of *prāṇāyāma* is actually the powerful omniscient God and is the master of mind. It rises to action (of giving spiritual realization) by the yogic activities of people. *esa vājī hito nrbhirviśvavinmanasapatih* (S.V., 1280). It may be the proto-aiva in the Vedic literature, for Soma or moon became a crescent on the head of the *Purāṇic* aiva later and for Soma is declared as the creator of Indra and Viṣṇu- two gods of different generations- *janitendrasya janitota viṣṇoḥ* (S.V., 527, 943).Incidentally aiva is more connected to the source of Indian Yogic tradition.

However, for attaining the compassion of Soma (or *aiva*), S.V. prescribes an active and routine life. It inspires to get up with strength. *uttiṣṭana ojasā saha/* (S.V.,988). Its sage prays to connect to the Brahman in the form of truth. *Satyasya brahmaṇo varcastena mā saṁsṛjāmasi*(S.V., 624). He says to

Indra. O lord of strength, do not be lazy like Brahma. *mo ṣu brahmeva tandryurbhava vājānām pate*(S.V., 826). Those men who are constantly squeezing (*sunvantam*) air (doing *prāṇāyāma*), are desired by gods who do not like slumber. This is because those who work tirelessly attain spiritual delight (*pramāda*):

*ecchanti devāḥ sunvntam na svapnāya sprhayanti/
yanti pramādamatndrāḥ//* (S.V., 721)

S.V. shows how Agni is well-placed in the spiritual world, as he is ever-awake in spiritual practices:

*yo jāgāra tamṛcaḥ kāmāyate'grirjāgāra tamu sāmāni
yanti/*

*yo jāgāra tamāyam soma āha tavāhamasmi
sakhnyokāḥ/*

*agrirjāgāra tamṛcaḥ kāmāyate'grirjāgāra tamu
sāmāni yanti/*

*agrirjāgāra tamāyam soma āha tavāhamasmi
sakhnyokāḥ//*(S.V., 1826,1827)

Especially the Brahmanas who are in charges of society are advised to remain vigilant of their spiritual life. *ā jāgrutvirviprah /* (S.V., 1357). This is because awakened mind and intellect are the nourishers of age-old nectar of yogic life. *cikitvinmanasam dhiyam pratnāmṛtasya pipyuṣim*/(S.V.,884)

REFERENCES

- [1] *yogaścitavṛti- nirodhaḥ/ Patañjali- yoga-Sūtram*(P.V.S.),1/2.
- [2] Indra ! I honour(worship) and unite with you, for bestowal of nourishment; you guide the devotee to knowledge to cross over (ignorance). *SāmaVeda*(S.V.), Tr. (Eng.) by S.V. Ganapati, Motilal, Delhi, 1982,p.324.
- [3] (a) *P.V.S., 2/30*
(b) *Ibid.,2/30*
- [4] *Ibid., p.138.*
- [5] *Ibid.,p.128.*
- [6] *Ibid.,p.17*
- [7] *stotraṁ rājasu gāyata / S.V.,255*
- [8] *S.V.,97.*
- [9] *abhi dymnambrhad yaśa eṣaspatē didīhi deva devayutam/ S.V., 1011.*
- [10] ‘His golden hands gladden us here by doing good to us in compassion himself’. S.V. Ganapati, op.cit. p.94.
- [11] *Vaśīhi śakraḥ/ S.V., 648.*
- [12] *cikīṭvo abhi no naya/ S.V.,645.*
- [13] *asṛgramindavaḥ pathādharmatṛtasya suśriyaḥ/ S.V.,1128.*
- [14] *Ibid.,1683.*
- [15] *Ibid., 90*
- [16] *vasāno atkaṁ surabhiṁ dṛṣe kam / (S.V.,1847)*
- [17] *atptatanūrna tadāmo aśnute/ (ibid.,565).*
- [18] *Ibid., 876*
- [19] *Ibid., 1857*
- [20] *anudaha sahamūrān kravyādaḥ/ ibid.,80*
- [21] *astam yam yanti dhenavāḥ/ (Ibid.,425).*
- [22] *Ibid., 397*
- [23] (a) *dharmaṇā vāyumāruḥ/ ibid.,921*
(b) *vāyumā roha dharmaṇām/ (ibid., 83,1235)*
- [24] *Ibid., 1057*
- [25] S.V.Ganapati, op.cit.p.103.