Views of Agathiyar, Bogar, Pulathiyar and Thirumoolar about Ashtanga Yogam

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ABSTRACT

The body, which is the temple of the spirit is not an eternal one. However, the spirit and the mind can be made one through the practice of Yoga. Ashtanga Yogam or the Eight Limbs of yoga serve as the base for the proper practice of Yoga. The most commonly practiced yoga being the ‘Patanjali Yoga’, there were several other Siddhars who have made massive contributions in the field of Ashtanga Yoga. This article aims at throwing light on the concepts made by the various Siddhars on Yoga.

KEYWORDS Ashtanga Yoga, Patanjali, Agathiyar, Bogar, Pulathiyar.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term “Yogam” refers to the inhibition (thaduppu) of the modifications (maatram) of the mind (sitham). This statement means that the aim of Yoga is the control of earthly desires and the attainment of salvation through the control of the mind and which serves as the root cause of all desires. The most common practice of Yoga, in current trend is derived from the ‘Patanjali Yoga Sutram’, which consists of a compilation of verses by sage Patanjali. However, even before sage Patanjali, there were several other Siddhars who have established the practice of yoga. The chief objective of this review article is to focus on the quotes made by a few of the most important Siddhars on Ashtanga Yogam.

2. YOGA

In the yogic view, the body is a temple of spirit, the care of which is an important stage of our spiritual growth. Through the practice of asanas, people develop the habit of discipline and the ability to concentrate, both of which are necessary for meditation. The preliminary stages which are useful for the practice of Yoga are compiled under the term ‘Ashtanga Yogam’.

2.1. Ashtaanga Yogas

The so called “Ashtanga Yoga” or the ‘Eight limbs of Yoga’ serve as the base for Yogic practices. Here too, the most practiced Ashtanga Yoga are derived from the same Patanjali Yoga Sutra. There have been many ancient Siddhars who have established the importance of the Eight limbs of Yoga Theory by the name ‘Ashtanga Yogangal’ (அஷ்டாங்க யாகங்கப்).

While some Siddhars have spoken about all the eight limbs, few others have quoted only some of the most commonly practicable ones. This article focuses on the Ashtanga Yogangalas quoted by Siddhars (சி஡்஡஧்கப் அஷ்டாங்க யாகங்கப்).
Table 1. The Ashtanga Yogangal as said by Patanjali and other Siddhargal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Patanjali Yoga Sutra</th>
<th>Siddharterminologies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yama</td>
<td>இத஥஥்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Niyama</td>
<td>சி஦஥஥்</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Asana</td>
<td>அகச஥்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pranayama</td>
<td>பி஧ா஠ா஦஥்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Prathyakara</td>
<td>பி஧஡்தி஦ாகா஧஥்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dharana</td>
<td>ச஥ாதி</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dhyana</td>
<td>தி஦ாண஥்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Samathi</td>
<td>சஹந஥்</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The descriptions of these in brief are as under:
1. Iyamam - Ethical standards
2. Niyamam - self-discipline
3. Adhanam - Posture
4. Pranayamam - Breath control
5. Prathyakaram - Withdrawal
6. Dharanai - Concentration
7. Dhyanam - Meditation or contemplation
8. Samadhi - State of Ecstasy

3. SIDDHAR VIEWS ON ASHTAANGA YOGANGAL

The important Siddhar Paadalgal (சி஡்஡஧்தாடன்கப்) that speak about the Ashtanga Yogangal and their efficiency are given in this article.

3.1 Agathiyar

Siddhar Agathiyar is considered the Sage who invented the Grammar basics for Tamil language. He is the direct descendant of Lord Muruga, when it comes to the field of Siddha. He is known for his expertise in treatment of diseases using internal medicines. His famous books are Agathiyar Paripashai Thirattu (அகச஥ியார் பரிபாசைத் திராது), Agathiyar 1200, Agathiyar 400, etc.

He has quoted about Dhyanam in his book, Agathiyar Poorana Soothiram (அகச஥ியார் பூ஧஠சூத஧ித஥்) as follows:

Through this, it is clear that Agathiyar has stated Dhyanam as the highest form of Ashtaanga Yogam through which one can attain Cithhi (Salvation).

Pranayamam or the fourth limb refers to the breathing control that should be practiced in order to improve one's lifespan. This practice
has been quoted as an equivalent to Yoga Siddhi by sage Agathiyar.

Again, the same Agathiyar has explained about all the limbs of Ashtaanga Yogangal in his book, Agathya Moola Thirumanthiram (அக஡்தி஦பெனதிய௃஥஢்தி஧஥்) and is summed up here.

3.1.1 iyamam

The first limb, iyamam, deals with one's ethical standards and sense of integrity, focusing on behaviour and how we conduct ourselves in life.

3.1.2 Niyamam

Niyamam, the second limb, has to do with self-discipline and spiritual observances.

Praying, meditating, etc., come under Niyamam practice. Though it has not been made clear through this verse, it includes:

Saucham: Cleanliness
Santosham: Contentment
Tapam: Heat; spiritual austerities
SuyaAivu: Study of the sacred scriptures and of one's self
SaranAdaidhal: Surrender to god

3.1.3 Asanas

Asanas, the postures practiced in yoga, comprise the third limb. Through the proper and controlled practice of Yoga, one can easily attain betterment of the mind and body.

3.1.4 pranayamam

Gaining mastery over the respiratory process while recognizing the connection between the breath, the mind, and the emotions. As implied by the literal translation of pranayamam, "life force extension," yogis believe that it not only rejuvenates the body but actually extends life itself.

3.1.5 Pratyahara

Pratyahara, the fifth limb, means withdrawal or sensory transcendence. It is during this stage that one makes the conscious effort to draw our awareness away from the external world and outside stimuli. Keenly aware of, yet cultivating a detachment from the senses, one can direct the attention internally.
This stage helps us to deal with the distractions of the mind and focus on our inner self to bring about higher concentration.

3.1.7 Dhyanam

Dhyanam refers to the maintenance of a proper position and then the meditation that follows afterwards. However, Pulathiyar has stated that the Dhyanam procedure can be fulfilled only when the person performing the procedure repeats the Om chanting and brings his or her mind to a single point focus.

3.1.8 Samadhi

This is the state wherein the one practicing Ashtanga Yoga attains divineness or the experience of bliss at being one with the Universe.

These first four stages of Ashtangayogam concentrate on refining the personalities, gaining mastery over the body, and developing an energetic awareness of oneself, all of which prepare human beings for the second half of this journey, which deals with the senses, the mind, and attaining a higher state of consciousness.

3.2 Pulathiyar

Pulathiyar was the Siddhar who wrote books such as Pulathiyar Karpam 300. He has stated the following about Yoga Dharanai in his book.

3.3 BOGAR

Bogar is a Tamil Siddhar who lived between the 550 and 300 BC. It was during this period that he constructed the Navapaashanam statue of lord Murugan. He was also the author of various books on Yoga, Siddha Pharmacognosy.
Through this verse, Bogar has quoted that in the *Ashtanga Yogam*, the primary *Yogam* is the *Iyamam*, next the *Niyamam*, *Pranayamam*, *Prathyakaram*, *Dharanai*, *Dhyanam* and *Samathi*. He too has quoted that the most respected one is the *Dhyanam* through which one can attain Salvation or *Samathi*.

### 3.4 Thirumoolar

Thirumoolar is the author of the book ‘*Thirumanthiram*’ which consists almost 3000 verses that contain medical references. He has spoken about the *Ashtanga Yogangal*(eight components of Yoga).[5]

### 4. DISCUSSION

The above said are the *Ashtanga Yogangal* that are in practice in the field of Yoga. They have been correlated to the medical field as follows:

- **Iyamam** - Sympathy towards mankind (and) the cleanliness of the inner soul
- **Niyamam** - Observance of Rules (and) the cleanliness of the body
- **Adhanam** - Posture
- **Pranayamam** - Breath Control
- **Prathyakaram** - Analysis of the patient
- **Dharanai** - Observing the patient
- **Samathi** - Being at the same state of the patient.

It is mandatory for any Siddha expert to know about these *Ashtanga Yogangal* as they form the basis for the practice of Yoga and Medicine. Also, they should be aware that not only Patanjali but also, several other famous Siddhars have also made valuable contributions to the yoga field.

### 5. CONCLUSION

The ancient Siddhars have spoken much about *Ashtanga Yogam*. One may follow the same to have a blissful life.

### REFERENCE

6. Thirumoolar, Tamil moovaayiram.