

Yoga for Healthy Life: Siddhar Thirumoolar's Concept in Siddha System of Medicine – An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Yoga has gained popularity all over the world. Asanas are now focussed as the prime factor of Yoga. Currently this yogic posture has been taken up by the spa industry too. But the Indian philosophy of Yoga differs with the current trend. Self-realization is the main motto of doing yoga. Siddha system of medicine describes yoga as one of the components of *kaya karpam*, i.e., rejuvenation. Even though many Siddhars have mentioned about yoga, this paper deals with the concepts of yoga by Siddhar Thirumoolar.

KEYWORDS Accomplishment, Mutthirai, Subtle body, Thirumandhiram.

1. INTRODUCTION

Yoga originated from the ancient Indian civilization. It is a way of attaining oneness with the soul through specified techniques, attitudes and spiritual values.^[1] Now-a-days yoga is accepted universally and the focus is on the asanas or postures. But Indian concept of yoga uses yoga asanas as a special tool to attain self-realization. Asanas are considered to be physical tool to transform an individual into multiple level of spiritual values.^[2] The goal of doing yoga asanas is to reach the state of "accomplishment".^[3]

2. BRIEF HISTORY OF YOGA

Yoga asana's archaeological evidences were found in the Indus valley civilization (2500-1800 B.C). Yoga asanas depicted in soapstone and terracotta were also found in the valley. One of the depicted yoga asanas has been accepted as prototype of Hindu Lord Siva or great Yogi.^[4] Tamil language was spoken and used by people lived in Indus valley civilization and it has been proved by

archaeological evidences^[5]. These early origin on yoga were eventually submerged by the Aryans invasion in Indus valley civilization between 1800 and 1300 B.C. This was marked as an important event in the history of yoga. Aryans introduced Sanskrit as their language and formed basis of sacred texts of yoga. Slowly the concepts of yoga prevailed in Indus valley civilization were engulfed by Aryans and introduced it in their Vedic practice. There were instructions to priests, common man to perform asanas before doing Vedic rituals. *Vratyas* – a non-Aryan ascetics have been experimental source of Yoga for thousands of years, continuing up into present. These techniques were documented in Sanskrit language.^[1] Patanjali yoga sutras (200 A.D) is the first codified text of yoga practice. It is not fully developed until Tantric period about the depth of yoga and their relationship with cosmology.

Tantric period (800 A.D – 1500 A.D) focussed the human body as a spiritual centre. With Tantric resolution, the asanas became an

instrument for the perfection of body.^[6] In all of the previous literature on yoga before Tantra, yoga asanas were not dealt in depth, but explained briefly as yogic practice.

Tantric Siddha movement flourished in India has many renowned spiritual scientists, *Thirumoolar* is one among them. He emphasised the bodily based spiritual transformation and thus asanas flourished as an instrument of spiritual practice. In *Thirumanthiram*, *Thirumoolar* says "when the body perishes, the life forces departs, concentration on preserving the body, cherishes the life force".^[7] *Thirumanthiram* is a flagship work of Siddhar *Thirumoolar* about Siddha yoga. There are many claims of age of Siddhar *Thirumoolar* as 3000 years. But it could not be established. He lived between sixth to ninth century.^[8] *Thirumanthiram* consists of 3047 poetic verses explains the essences of Siddha yogam. It also explains about divine power (Siva), the power of love and devotion, the efficacy of *manthiram*, the connection between mind and breath, ultimate God realization, serpent power (*Kundalini*) and subtle body.^[9]

3. CONCEPTS OF YOGA BY THIRUMOOLAR

In *Thirumanthiram*, *Thirumoolar* emphasize a new type of yoga called Siva Yogam. Siva yogam deals with individual soul with the removal of ignorance, once the wisdom dawns. It is also a method by which *athma* identifies itself with Siva. It is process of drinking the ambrosial juice oozing from the *sahasaram*. Siva yogam can be referred as *kundalini yoga*.

He mentioned Sun (*Pingalai*), moon (*Idakalai*) and fire (*Sulumunai*) through which he reaches cranium (*Sahasaram*). *Thirumoolar* does not use the term *Kundalini yoga*, but the above steps clearly indicate the *kundalini yoga* itself.

3.1 Aspects of Yoga by Thirumoolar

Thirumoolar explained the following aspects of yoga

- *Attanga Yogam*
- *Kesari Yogam*
- *Chandhira Yogam*
- *Pariyanga Yogam*

Attanga Yogam

"*Eyamam Niyamam* and *Asanam* numberless, *Pranayamam* whole some and *prathiyakaram* alike *Tharanai*, *Thyanam* and *Samathi* to triumph, these eight are the steely limbs of *Yoga*"

Eyamam: The ten *eyamams* are non-violence, truth, honesty, sexual continence, forbearance, attitude, kindness, straight forwardness, bodily cleansing. Making a habit of constantly practising *eyamam* purifies words, thoughts and deeds.

Niyamam: The ten *niyamam* are austerity, contentment, belief in God, charity, worship of God, listening to explanation of doctrines, scriptures, modesty, having a discerning mind, repetition of prayers and sacrifice.

Asanam: *Thirumoolar* described that *asanas* are countless; however he emphasised few asanas to attain Yoga Siddhi. *Pathirasanam*, *Veerasanam*, *Padhumasanam*, *Kukkudasanam*, *Komugasanam*.

Prathiyakaram: It is the restraint of the senses and the withdrawal of the mind from external things. It maintains an inner focus and avoidance of dispersion and distraction.

Tharanai: It means to retain the mind and keep it steadfast inside, which has been obtained by *prathiyakaram*.

Thiyanam: It is consistent, uninterrupted meditation.

Samathi: It is the final goal of *AttangaYogam*. It is attainment of tranquillity. It is an eight limbed yoga.

Pranayamam: It is a practice of ordered breathing. The process of *pranayamam* consists of three acts, namely *Pooragam* (inspiration) *Kumbakam* (retention) and *Resagam* (expiration). The above terms are used by Tantrics and Siddhars and not by Patanjali.[8] The inspiration should be of twelve *mathirai* and expiration should be of eight *mathirai* and retention should be of four *mathirai*. In second section of *Thanthiram*– 3, Thirumoolar deals with measurement of life span and breath rhythm in days of week. If one knows the rhythm of breadth, one is aware of “*Nadai*”. The *Nadai* and God are one in consciousness. The breathing occurs through the nostrils alternatively. The air passing through the left nostril is called *Idakalai*, while the air passing through the right nostril is called *Pingalai*. The left one is also known as *Chandhira Naadi* while the right one is known as *SuriyaNaadi*. Persons who have obtained mastery over *Pranayamam*, his/her breathing through middle one is called *Sulumunai Naadi*. A person who attained mastery over *Pranayamam* is physically, mentally healthy and ready for higher spiritual practices.

Bandham and Muthirai^[8]

Along with *Asanam*, *Bandham* and *Muthirai* plays a vital role in spiritual practices. *Bandhamis* special bodily manipulation to confine the life force within the trunk and thereby stimulate it. Thirumoolar deals with *Moola bandham*, *Ottiyana Bandham*, *Jalanthara Bandham*. *Moola Bandham* is executed by contracting the perineum and Vaginal muscles. *Ottiyana bandham* is performed by drawing back the abdominal muscles. *Jalantharabandham* is executed by

pressing chin and the chest together tightly. These *bandhams* are performed to withdraw the *pranan* from the *idakalai* and *pingalai*. The extracted *pranan* enters the *sulumunainaadi* and travels upwards towards *sahasaram*.

Muthirai are psycho energetic gestures involving the hands, fingers, eyes or tongue while performing meditation or breathing practices. Thirumoolar explains the Yoni muthirai, *Sambhavimuthirai* and *Kesarimuthirai* for rousing the kundalini.

4. DISCUSSION

Yoga sutras which was written in Sanskrit is familiar with yoga students, but there are number of extraordinary works on Yoga composed in languages other than Sanskrit. Thirumoolar’s *Thirumanthiram* in Tamil language is one of the extraordinary work on Yoga.^[9]

Yoga may be associated with religion per se, but It is distinctly distinguishable from religion and religious practices. Religions deals with God realization; Yoga emphasizes self-realization. Tamil Siddhars insisted the vital importance of *Gnanam* in attaining realization. They are against the fundamentalist attitude of religion. The Siddhars are against any institutionalised religion, which produces habits, customs and ritualistic practices which prevent one from being spiritually alert and fully conscious.^[8]

Thirumoolar’s *Thirumanthiram* explains the spiritual and the material dimensions of life. It deals with all the aspects of life, which makes life worth living by dealing with *Dharmam* (Charity), *Artha* (prosperity), *Kamam* (sensual love), *Mukthi* (freedom from suffering), *Thavam* (intensive practice), *Yoga Jnana* (wisdom), *Siddhi* (perfection), *Buddhi* (the intellect), the art of breathing, *manthiram*, *thanthiram*, meditation, medicine, etc. In short, it is a Tamil

encyclopedia of philosophical and spiritual wisdom rendered into verse form.

Thirumoolar's concept on yoga as bodily practice can be viewed as a way of exploring, cultivating, observing, transforming, and knowing all aspects of oneself as expressed through the body. The primary techniques of Thirumoolar's concept on yoga -asana (postures), *pranayamam* (breath extension), (focused gaze), *bandhams* (containment of internal energy), *manthiram* (sound), and self-observation are the means for achieving self-realization. The awareness developed through the techniques of Thirumoolar's concept extends throughout the body from the surface into the interior. The practice of Thirumoolar's concept can thus be seen as a practice of embodiment that permeates the body with consciousness. That embodied consciousness is cultivated during the practice as a tool for self- awareness in everyday life.^[10]

Thirumoolar also quoted the person who does not know the way to realise the ultimate spiritual truth as an illiterate. He emphasises that education is knowing the purpose of union of body and soul. It urges each and everybody to liberation.

5. CONCLUSION

Thirumoolar's Thirumanthiram is an important yoga literature from Tamil civilization.

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