

Role of Kriyayoga in Patanjala Yoga Sutra (P. Y. S.)

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Self-Realization is the ultimate aim of yoga. Self-realization is that state in which the purusa (the Seer) gets established in its own original form which can be attained only through 'cittavrtti-nirodha' i. e., the cessation of all the mental processes¹. Maxmuller has so aptly observed that "the aim and end of yoga is not to unite, as is generally believed, but to disunite, to separate, to isolate the purusa from prakrti, giving back to him his essential and original purity. It is only in the forms of mysticism, which make use of yoga, that the latter has union as its end"² Gita seems to convey the same message 'tam vidyat dukkhasam-yogaviyhgam yogasamjnitam' – that state is known as the yoga where there is viyoga, that is, disunion from any contact of pain³. By these statements it becomes clear that why Patanjali gives so much emphasis on the restraint and the elimination of the mental processes. If the mental processes are not restrained, the purusa gets carried away along with the mental processes and thereby gets identified itself with them which is known as 'vrittisarupya' according to Patanjali.⁴

Patanjali suggests various ways and means to achieve the state of 'vritivirodha'. If we make a careful analysis of these paths, we can find that each and every path is intended to effect a re-orientation or perfection in some part of our being, such as 'abhyasa-vairagya'⁵ 'astangayoga'⁶ and 'kriyayoga'.⁷

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According to Patanjali Kriyayoga consists of three components : 'tapas' i. e., austerity or purification, 'svadhyaya' i. e., study of the scriptures or self-study and 'isvara-pranidhana' i.e., devotion to God which means resignation of all actions to the God. However, these very components of kriyayoga get again included among the components of 'niyama' in astangayoga dealt by Patanjali in the later sutras of the Sadhanapada.⁸ Naturally, the question arises as to why Patanjali has placed these three components in two entirely different contexts at all. Either this is a needless repetition or it is intended to serve a definite purpose. The fact becomes clear when we see that Patanjali prescribes kriyayoga for the attenuation of klesas as well as for the cultivation of samadhi⁹ whereas, in the context of astangayoga, he says,—"through the anusthana of yogasanas consisting of eight components, the light of knowledge culminating in 'vivekakhyaati' gets developed along with the systematic destruction of impurities'.¹⁰

All the traditional commentators are unanimous while commenting on the Sutra II.1, that the practice of kriyayoga is essential for those who have not attained a balanced state of body and mind. But later on, while commenting on the sutras related to the eight components of yoga, they seem to interpret these components of kriyayoga merely in terms of astangayoga¹¹. They say that all the practices described in the yogasutras are all well-integrated in astangayoga itself¹². Thus, they do not seem to give much weightage or any unique role to kriyayoga as such in the Patanjalean yoga-sadhana. As a result, there is a prevalent underestimation regarding the need for kriyayoga among the sadhakas. In this article, therefore, an attempt has been made to highlight the key and significant role assigned by Patanjali to kriyayoga so that its practical

utility for the students and yoga-sadhakas for making better progress in yoga may become clear.

Patanjali has presented kriyayoga in the first Sutra itself of Sadhana-pada, indicating that the sadhana or actual practice of yoga begins verily with kriyayoga. The sadhaka should undergo the kriyayoga discipline to acquire the necessary knowledge and for the weakening of the powerful grip of the klesas¹³ like avidya, asmita, raga, dvesa and abhinivesa upon his being. These klesas are at the root cause of his sufferings and bondages. Unless and until he cultivates the essential knowledge and insights and make the klesas comparatively powerless, his going directly into higher yogic realms like astangayoga¹⁴ may set violent reactions and inner-resistances and get blocked once for all with pitfalls like vitarkas, viksepas etc. For, he may get totally discouraged and disillusioned about yogasadhana itself, on the contrary, with a firm footing in kriyayoga-sadhana, he is enabled greatly to reduce the onset as well as recurrence of such pitfalls, whereby he could adopt necessary remedial measures to overcome any difficulties experienced in his sadhana.

To get an insight into the role of these three elements of kriyayoga, viz., tapas, svadhyaya and isvara-pranidhana, we only need to examine the religious routines among the ancient Indians, particularly the orthodox Hindus. Here we see that tapas, svadhyaya and isvara-pranidhana, is one form or another, had been the part and parcel of the religious life of our ancient seers and savants.¹⁵ It should be noted here that it is these very elements of the ancient Hindu religious practices that are directed with the singular objective of attaining samadhi-bhavana through reduction/weakening of klesas, it becomes Patanjali's kriyayoga-sadhana.¹⁶

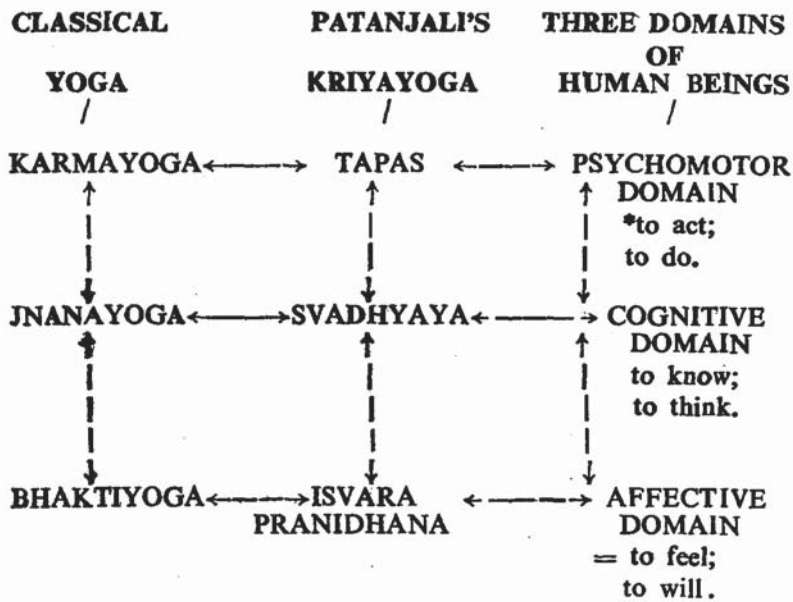
Even from the modern educational psychology point of view, we come across these three components of kriya-yoga in the form of three domains of human behavior, namely, the cognitive domain, the affective domain and psychomotor domain.¹⁷ In other words, it is obvious that both ancient religious life of Indians and the modern educational psychology tackle man through his three basic capabilities : (1) To know; (2) To feel; and (3) To act.

Within the context of classical yoga itself, we get the three schools of yoga, viz., Karmayoga, Jnanayoga, and Bhaktiyoga.¹⁸ In fact, every school of yoga presents an integral approach to avoid imbalance development of the three basic aspects of human beings and therefore, one cannot make water-tight compartments of these schools of yoga. Thus, it cannot be said that the follower of one particular school of yoga negates or excludes the practices that belongs to the other two schools. The selection of a particular school of yoga for one's own practice mainly depend on one's inclinations and specific qualities. And the essential elements of the other two schools remain solidly in the background. Tilak, the author of 'Gita-Rahasya' says : "The aim of Gita is to set forth Karma-yoga which is rooted in jnana in which Bhakti is dominant and which ultimately leads to moksa - 'jnanamulakabhakti-pradhanakarmayogaha'.¹⁹ It means that any action becomes karmayoga only when it is performed with bhakti as a form of worship and such bhakti is available only to the one who has the jnana, i. e., knowledge. This is obvious even in the cases of bhaktiyoga and jnanayoga.

Thus, Patanjali has taken an integrated view of all these three systems in his kriyayoga. The school of karma-yoga can be counted under 'tapas'; jnanayoga under 'svadhyaya'; and bhaktiyoga under isvarapranidhana. According

to Patanjali the three components of kriyayoga have got equal importance emphasising that these three have to be mutually supportive and well-integrated to get the desired end. Patanjali makes this fact clear by using the term 'kriyayogah' in its singular form.

Similarly, within the context of the three domains of human behaviour we can have an integrated view of kriyayoga of Patanjali. Accordingly, the 'tapas' aspect of kriyayoga can be counted under the psycho-motor domain, svadhya under the cognitive domain and isvarapranidhana under the affective domain of human beings. Kriyayoga, therefore, tackles the fundamental nature of human beings and thereby contributes to the all-round and balanced growth and development of a sadhaka which is essential for his advancement towards the higher realms of yoga like astangayoga.



A sadhaka can easily get dominated and carried away by any one of these three domains of his being. Let us take the example of Will. Without the Will an individual cannot involve himself in any action. Will, therefore, is absolutely essential for the practice of yoga. One is expected to attain the desired goal oneself with the help of one's own force of will. Krishna says in Gita : "one should liberate oneself," etc. (uddharedatmanatmanam).²⁰ Even the Lord cannot give or take away anything against the individual's Will. But un-trained will (unsupported with knowledge and action) is not enough. It must be properly directed. Will manifests itself through the medium of action. Therefore, well-directed will is thus co-eval with well-directed action and even the knowledge which essentially required will then be there. This is what the practice of kriyayoga proceeds to do by which the sadhaka develops his spiritual inclination or sraddha which sets forth the momentum needed for his progress in yoga sadhana.

Here, with reference to the 'astangayoga' we need to note one important factor : Patanjali uses the technical term 'anusthana' with reference to astangayoga instead of the abhyasa thereof.²¹ But, it must also be noted that the commentators have chosen to interpret the term anusthana merely as a synonym for abhyasa.²² This seems to be the one reason for the prevalent confusion regarding the intention of Patanjali. For, Patanjali has clearly avoided the usage of the term abhyasa in the context of yogangas (astangayoga) for the development of **vivekakhyaati**²³

The word 'kriya' is more akin to abhyasa, i. e., the 'process of becoming' whereas the term anusthana implies 'the process of remaining established in a particular state or being'.²⁴ 'Yatna' or effort is inherent and implied in

abhyasa whereas 'prayatna-saithilya' seem to be the characteristic of the anusthana related to yogangas (i. e. astangayoga).²⁵ Anusthana of yogangas, therefore, seems to be a subtler form of yoga-sadhana which becomes possible only when the klesas have been attenuated and the samadhi-bhavana has been adequately developed. For a sadhaka, who is still under the powerful sway of the klesas, the various components of astangayoga like ahimsa, satya etc. remains totally unintelligible and therefore as of little practical significance to him.

From the above considerations, we may come to the conclusion that Kriyayoga has its own definite purpose as originally intended by Patanjali. Sadhana of kriyayoga leads a sadhaka towards the successful anusthana of astanga-yoga sadhana. His very success and rate of advancement depends to a large extent on his mastery of kriyayoga. Therefore, we should neither underestimate nor ignore the key role played by kriyayoga-sadhana in Patanjalyoga as such.

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