



CONNOTATIONS OF THE TERMS YOGA, HATHA YOGA AND RAJA YOGA IN TRADITIONAL YOGA LITERATURE

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Yoga is one of the six orthodox Indian philosophical systems called *Shad Darshanās*. Etymologically, the word ‘yoga’ as it occurs in the *Rgveda* has been derived from the Sanskrit root ‘Yuj’ or ‘Yujur’ which means in various senses such as ‘yoking’ or ‘harnessing’, ‘acquiring the un-acquired’, ‘connection’ and so on. During Panini’s time (6th B.C) the word ‘Yoga’ had attained its technical meaning, he distinguished root ‘Yuj samadhau’ (Yuj in the sense of concentration) from ‘Yujir’ (root ‘yujir’ in the sense of connecting).¹ It is allied to the English word *Yoke*, the German *Joch*, the Latin ‘*Iungere*’ and ‘*Iugum*’, the French ‘*Joug*’, Russian ‘*igo*’, Spanish ‘*Yugo*’ and Swedish ‘*Ok*’.²

In the Sanskrit scriptures we find numerous compound words that end with the term ‘yoga’. Here the word ‘yoga’ means more general significance of ‘practice’. For instance, the compound word “*buddhi-yoga*” means the “practice of discriminative knowledge”, and “*samnyasa yoga*” denotes “the practice of renunciation”. Other instances include “*dhyāna-yoga*” (practice of meditation), “*samādhi yoga*” (practice of ecstasy) and “*guru-yoga*” (practice which has the spiritual teacher as its focus). Other compounds represent a more specific orientation, such as *nāda-yoga* (yoga of the inner sound), “*kriya yoga*” (yoga of ritual action).

Vâchaspati’s³ lexicon gives about fifty different meanings of the word ‘Yoga’, according to the several branches of art or science. The *Amara Kosha*⁴ gives five different meanings of it as armour, means, meditation, union and junction.

Besides the above meanings the word ‘Yoga’ has the following connotations in several branches of Arts & Sciences:

- In Arithmetic⁵ yoga is termed as ‘yoga-anka’ or addition, and ‘yoga-vibhāga’ which is meant ‘addition and subtraction’.
- According to Astronomy ‘yoga’⁶ means i) *Vishkamba* i.e twenty-seven occurrences depending upon the movements of the Sun and the Moon; ii) A rare union of *Thithi*, *Vāra* and *Nakshatra* like *Siddhi Yoga*, *Ardhodaya Yoga* and *Dagdha yoga* etc., iv) certain position of Planets in particular *lagna* of Zodiac like *Raja yoga*, *Nabhāsa yoga* etc., and v) position of Planets in certain places like *Kendra* and *Cona*.
- According to Grammarians⁷ ‘Yoga’ means joining of letters and words or usage of words and sentences.
- In the *Nyāya* philosophical⁸ system yoga means the power of the parts taken together.



- In the *Mimâmsa* philosophy⁹ ‘Yoga’ means a kind of power (*yogabalam*) which denotes *Samâkhyâ*. ‘*Samâkhyâ*’ means a ‘word’ which has a meaning along with its parts.
- In the *Vaisesika* philosophical system¹⁰ ‘yoga’ is described as the union of the mind with the self, in which state a person experiences neither grief nor joy.
- According to Patanjali,¹¹ ‘yoga’ means restraining the mind with the senses
- According to the *Advaita Vedânta*¹² *Yoga* is the union of *Jivâtma* and *Paramâtma* or union of Individual soul with the Universal soul.
- According to the *Visistadvaita*¹³ of Ramanuja, ‘Yoga’ is complete and attached devotion to the God. This is also the view of *SriVaisnavâs* whose philosophy is based on the *Nârada Pancharâtra*.
- According to some Buddhists¹⁴ ‘Yoga’ means an effort to obtain an object which is not previously obtained.
- The Physicians¹⁵ interpret ‘Yoga’ as a medicine which is of a mix up of so many ingredients.
- In another view of scholars,¹⁶ yoga is expertise in performing rituals.
- In Rhetoric¹⁷ (the art of composition), *Yoga* means the union of lovers or intercourse of a hero and heroin.
- *Yoga* is also meant as *Upâya* i.e an instrument or kind of effort and ‘*Yukti*; i.e reasoning, Logic or argumentative statement.¹⁸
- In the *Bhagavad Gita*,¹⁹ *Yoga* is differently explained as “unperturbed sameness in all conditions,” and also as “skill in Action”

Esoteric connotations of the term ‘Hatha-Yoga’ :

Etymologically the word ‘*Hatha*’ is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘*Hath*’ which means “forceful, violence, oppression, rapine, obstinacy, suddenly”²⁰. ‘*Yoga*’ as defined by Sage Patanjali is a means of restraining or controlling the mind with the senses. Thus ‘*hatha-Yoga*’, in one sense is a kind of “forced *Yoga*” or “abstract meditation” which may be further elaborated as forcing the mind to withdraw from the external objects.²¹

In another connotation, ‘*hatha-Yoga*’ means, the yoga or union between ‘*Ha*’ (*prâna*) and ‘*Tha*’ (*Apâna*) In other words, ‘*hatha-yoga*’ is the meditative technique which involves the forceful suppression of one’s senses and control of one’s bodily process.²² It is a way to attain the ‘*Samâdhi*’ by the aid of the union of *Prâna* and *Apâna* or harmony of the individual breath (*vyastiprâna*) with the cosmic breath (*samasthiprâna*). It is a direct way to realize *Paramâtma* by virtue of controlling the mind through the practice of activities like *Prânayama* etc., without the help of Raja yoga.²³

According to different hatha-yogic texts the word ‘*Hatha*’ which consists of the two syllables ‘*Ha*’ and ‘*Tha*’ have deeper esoteric connotations. In the *Yoga Sikhopanisad* and Gorakhanath’s *Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati*²⁴ hatha-yoga is described as follows:

“ ‘*Ha*’ is said as Sun and ‘*Tha*’ is as Moon, the union of Sun



and Moon is characterized as hatha-yoga.”

According to Srinivasabhatta Mahayogindra's the *Hatha Ratnavali*²⁵ the syllable 'Ha' stands for 'Surya' and the syllable 'Tha' denotes 'Chandra'. The balanced condition of *Chandra* and *Surya* is called *Hatha Yoga*.

Ugaladâsa Yogindra's the *Yoga Marga Prakasika*²⁶ describes the syllables 'Ha' and 'Tha' as 'Siva' and 'Shakti', the combination of which is called *hatha Yoga*.

Besides the above, in the *Hatha Ratnavali*²⁷ two syllables 'Ha' and 'Tha' are denoted by several terms according to which 'Ha' is variously called as *Surya*, *Prâna*, *Pingala*, *Dakshina*, *Yamuna*, *Retas*, *Bindu*, *Rajas*, *Rudra*, *Kalâgni* and *Siva*; and 'Tha' is represented by *Chandra*, *Apâna*, *Ida*, *Vâma*, *Ganga*, *Rajas*, *Nâda*, *Tamas*, *Vâli*, *Sashi* and *Shakti*. These two component syllables, 'Ha' and 'Tha' are frequently explained as standing for the microcosmic 'Sun' and 'Moon' respectively, while yoga is the 'union' between these two principles. Hatha is the equalization and stabilization of the "Sun Breath" i.e., the breath which flows through the right nostril and the "Moon Breath" i.e., the breath which flows through the left nostril.

Various connotations of syllable 'Ha', 'Tha' include Right Nostril and Left Nostril; Right Brain and Left Brain; and Right and Left Half of the Body respectively.²⁸ 'Ha' and 'Tha' symbolize the polarity found in each Human being such as the two genders in each man the two breaths in the two nostrils, the main channels of the subtle body.²⁹

According to Brahmananda the celebrated Commentator of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the word 'Hatha' is composed of the syllables 'Ha' and 'Tha', which are meant as the Sun and Moon, i.e., *Prâna*, *Apâna*. Their yoga or union, i.e., *prânayâma*, is called as *hatha Yoga*.³⁰

Swami Satyananda Saraswati interprets the word 'Hatha' as the combination of two *bija mantras*, 'Ha' and 'Tha' of which 'Ha' represents *prâna*, the vital life-force, and 'Tha' represents mind, the mental energy. Thus 'hatha-Yoga' means the union of the pranic and mental forces.

According to another interpretation *hatha-yoga* is the union of the *prâna* and mind with the Self and union of the *Kundalini* with *Ida* and *Pingala* in the *Ajna chakra*. Further Satyananda Saraswati drew a significant distinction between the terms 'Yoga' and 'hatha-yoga'. According to him *yoga* means a union of *Siva* (consciousness) and *Shakti* (energy) and "hatha-yoga" means union of the *Shakti* with *Ida* and *Pingala* in the *Ajna chakra*.³¹

According to the Tantric model of the human body, the axial channel (called *susumna*) is entwined by the helical *ida* and *pingala* nâdis. The 'ida' is the carrier or flow of the lunar force on the left of the bodily axis and the 'pingala' is the conduct or flow of the solar force on the right.

The syllable 'ha' in the word 'hatha' also represents the solar force of the body, and syllable 'tha' represents the lunar force. The term *yoga* stands for their



conjunction, which is the ecstatic state of identity between subject and object

According to Aviyogi Suren³² predominance of syllables result in corresponding bodily functions. When 'Ha' is predominant the body will be subject to feverishness, poor psyche, average plus activity of the heart and deficiency of the white corpuscles. If 'Tha' is more active, the subject will be prone to cold, dizziness and some imbalance of blood-cells; proper practice of hatha yoga is the way to make psychosomatic balance between 'Ha' and 'Tha'.

Hatha-Yoga is one of the four kinds of yoga mentioned in the *Upanisads* and it consists of Patanjali's eight *yogangas* and twelve more practices.³³ The system of 'Hatha Yoga' starts with the human body.

Connotations of the term Raja-yoga:

Although the term 'raja yoga' does not appear in the *Yoga sūtras*, it refers specially to the yoga system of Patanjali which belongs to 2 c.B.C and is most commonly used to distinguish Patanjali's eight-fold path (*astanga yoga*) from hatha-yoga. It is also meant that in the word 'raja' a hidden reference to the "Transcendental Self" which is the ultimate ruler or king of the body- mind.

The word 'Raja' which is derived from the root 'raj', is meant both 'to shine' and 'to govern', and hence "raja yoga" may be variously translated as 'kingly', 'ruling', 'regal' or 'radiant' yoga.³⁴

Since the medieval ages the term "Raja-yoga" has been used by the followers of different traditional of yoga systems and practiced by them. We come across this term raja-yoga in the hatha-yoga treatises viz., *Yoga Sastra of Dattatreya*, the *Yoga Bija*, the *Yoga Sikhopanisad* the *Yogatattvopanisad*, the *Amanaska Yoga*, the *Hatha Yoga pradipika*, the *Hatha Ratnavali* and the *Gheranda Samhita*. These treatises have been taken the terms raja-yoga and Samadhi as synonyms of each other. The *Yoga Sikhopanisad* gives a complete esoteric interpretation to Raja-yoga as conjunction of the *Rajas* with the *Retas*.

In one of the yoga treatises, in the *Amanska-yoga* the word Raja-yoga has been given and the *Amanaska yoga* itself has been declared as Raja-yoga. The *Amanska Yoga* while describing the form of raja-yoga, states that the *sadhana* carried out by practicing the ten external postures (*bâhya mudrâs*) namely *Mahamudrâ*, *Mabandha*, *Mahavedha*, *Khechari*, *Uddiyanabandha*, *Mulabandha*, *jalandhara-bandha*, *Viparitakaranimudrâ* and the *Saktichalanimudrâ* along with the internal postures (*antara mudrâs*) like *Sambhavi* etc., is known as *raja-yoga*.³⁵

In the *Yoga Bija*³⁶ raja-yoga is said as the combination of the two-*prânas* (ingoing breathing life-force) and *Apâna* (outgoing breathing life-force), *Rajas* (pollen, illumination) and the *Retas* (semen), *Surya* and *Chandra* (transmission of breathing force through the *Chandra* and *Surya nâdis*) and the *Jivatman* (individual Being) and the *Paramatman* (Supreme Being). In the same hatha-yoga manual it is further elucidated that when by *prânayama sadhana* combined with *jalandharabandha*, *mulabandha* and *uddiyanabandham* the *prâna* and *apâna* are combined with the practice of *kumbhaka* (retention of breath) and along with which one's own *Rajas*



and *Retas* are combined is known as raja-yoga.

In the *Siva Samhita*³⁷ *sadhana* to attain for *samadhi* has been termed as “raja-yoga”, but the process of *sadhana* described there in is some what different from other yoga treatises. According to this treatise the *sadhaka* becomes worthy of “raja-yoga” by constant practice of meditation on the Ajna-chakra (the eyebrows centre). In addition to Raja-yoga a Rajadhiraja-yoga has also been described in the *Siva Samhita*.

The *Sitha Ramanjaneya Samvadam*,³⁸ which is a Telugu poetical work on yoga described Raja-yoga as combination of three components viz., *Taraka yoga*, *Samkhya yoga* and *Amanaska yoga*. It is further said there in that the practice of *Taraka yoga* purifies the mind, *Samkhya yoga* gives discrimination of the Self knowledge and *Amanaska yoga* gives experience of the Self.

The Relation of Hatha-Yoga and Raja-Yoga:

From the above connotations we may infer that the term “raja-yoga” does not exclusively refer to the system of Patanjali’s *astanga-yoga* but it can be understood as the complete absorption in *dhyâna* by any means.

Today the concept of raja-yoga, has been very much confused with Patanjali’s yoga, especially, after Vivekananda’s³⁹ famous treatise on the subject. However, from the ancient literature on the subject, it can easily be seen that it is a name given to the inner experience and pure psychic practice, especially after the arousal of the *Kundalini Sakti*. In this state, deliberate physical practices lose their meaning and the practitioner remains always firmly rooted in the Absolute.

In Patanjali’s *Yoga Sûtras*,⁴⁰ the three component aspect of *Samyama* viz., *Dhâraṇa* (concentration), *Dhyâna* (meditation) and *Samâdhi* (identification) are termed as the *antaranga yoga* (inner limbs of yoga) and from *yama* to *Pratyâhâra* are termed *bahiranga yoga* (outer limbs). Sometimes hatha yoga is distinguished from raja-yoga, since hatha yoga is concerned only with external aspects while raja-yoga constitutes the real practice of yoga. In the Hatha-yoga treatises themselves hath-yoga is indeed viewed as a necessary precursor to raja-yoga, but it should be pointed out that the latter term is used principally as synonym for the highest state of samâdhi,⁴¹ not to denote any process extrinsic to hatha itself. Hatha is held to be a complete system, and constitutes the means by which the goal known as ‘raja’ is achieved.⁴²

Svatmarama, the author of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*⁴³ considered that *hatha-yoga* and *raja-yoga* are two sides of the same coin. Hatha-yoga is the system to control the mind and senses by applying forceful physical techniques whereas raja-yoga is the system to restrain the mind and senses by applying mental practices such as *pratyâhâra*, *dhâraṇa*, and *dhyâna*. Hence S.G. Desai⁴⁴ rightly observes that the relation of *raja-yoga* to *hatha-yoga* is like that of *Aranyakas* to the *Brahmanas*. Just as *Aranyakas* attempt a philosophical explanation of the sacrifices described in the *Brahmanas* so also raja-yoga endeavours to provide a philosophical interpretation of the processes described in the hatha yoga. The ultimate goals of both raja-yoga and



hatha-yoga are the same i.e., *Samâdhi*. That is why all the hatha yogic texts⁴⁵ strongly emphasize that there can be no success in raja-yoga without hatha-yoga, and vice versa. All the hatha yogic practices such as *âsanas*, *prânayama* and *mudrâs* are means to attain the state of raja-yoga i.e., *Samâdhi*.

Hatha-yoga is said primarily to be a means for the attainment of raja-yoga i.e., *samâdhi*.⁴⁶ It is like a staircase which leads to the aspirant to the high pinnacled raja-yoga.⁴⁷ The purpose of a hatha-yogi is to get the knowledge of controlling the two energies 'Ha' and 'Tha' i.e., *Prâna* and *Apâna*. Without this knowledge it is very difficult to gain the control over the mind, which is called 'raja-yoga'. Where as raja-yoga deals with the mind, hatha-yoga deals with the *prâna* and *apâna*.

Hatha-yoga is not merely the performance of physical feats, since it is a practical way to control the mind through the control of the *prâna* owing their mental relation i.e. *prâna* and mind. There is no real difference between hatha and raja-yogas. Raja-yoga and hatha-yoga are the mental and the bodily sides of one and the same discipline. The goal of as 'raja-yoga' cannot be achieved without the practice of hatha, and practice of 'hatha-yoga' remains incomplete until raja-yoga is attained.

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