

Ethnobiological Analysis from Myth to Science XIII: Pancha Yajnya (Five Sacrifices) - Rationalisation through Yoga

Sachidananda Padhy

*Ethnobiologist's Forum, "Anandamaya", # D/4, Bhaba Nagar, 1st Lane,
Berhampur 760 004, Odisha, India
E-mail: sachi_padhy@rediffmail.com*

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ABSTRACT Yoga is the practical science of realisation, its philosophical basis is *Saamkhya Darssan*; the later is the study of the principles of cosmic evolution by rational analysis. The yogi controls breath, the life force (*Bhoota Yajnya* - Sacrifice for biosphere); diverts his vital sex energy into a super form, the *Oojas* (*Pitru Yajnya* - sacrifice for the secured flow of genetic system); activates the vortexes (power points) that exists with in the spinal column (*Deva Yajnya* - sacrifice for different environmental powers) and finally attains the supreme knowledge of self realisation (*Rrushi Yajnya* - sacrifice for the source of knowledge). All these are possible in a human body if practised with self regulation (*Nrru Yajnya* - sacrifice for humanity), for upliftment of self and all concerned. This enables the yogi to offer his sacrifices automatically being indifferent and unattached; thus he honours his environmental responsibility as *Pancha Yajnya*, the highest ecological philosophy of ancient Indians as depicted in *Manusmruti*.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Yoga' comes from the root Sanskrit word *Yuj*, means to join. Yoga is the practical science of realisation, its philosophical basis is *Saamkhya Darssan*; the later is the study of principles of cosmic evolution by rational analysis. The laws of *Saamkhya*, that governs the evolution of the universe, can be extended to the spiritual evolution of an individual. The individual is being assumed as a microcosm of the macrocosm that is, the universe. Mathematically, yoga means addition; the meaning is often spiritually referred to joining of the self (*Aatman*) with the almighty (*Paramaatman*). When the Hindu mythological icons are deeply looked into, the three supreme Gods viz: Brahmaa, Vishnu and Ssiva, those who represent the cosmic ecological principles of creation, maintenance and destruction. They perform yoga to implement their yogic power in proper direction to balance the nature.

'Geetaa' is known as *Yogassastra* (compendium on Yoga), its revealer *Bhagawaan* Krishna, is honoured as *Yogesswara* (The supreme of Yoga). Every chapter of Geetaa is envisaged as a separate Yoga lesson.

Krishna said: Arjuna, perform your duties established in yoga, renouncing attachment, and even tempered in success and failure; evenness of temper is called yoga (Chapter 2 / Verse 48).

In the Patanjali's *Yogadarssana*, the second aphorism of Chapter-I says: '*Yogah Chitta Vritti*

Nirodha', means Yoga is restoring the mind stuff (*Chitta*) from taking various forms (*Vrittis*) (Padhy 2006). The mind as a whole is called *Antahkarana* (the internal doer), exists with a group of departments such as: (i) controlling power of sense organs (*Indriyas*), (2) the mind (*Maanas*), (3) the determinative faculty (*Buddhi*) and (4) egoism (*Ahamkaara*). *Chitta* is the mind stuff, the point of interplay of the later three aspects where the *Maanas* perceives and presents, the *Ahamkaara* - arrogates and the *Buddhi* discriminates, decides and resolves which finally leads to rise of an action with *Indriyas*. The waves of thought in the *Chitta* are called *Vrittis* and the aim of yoga is to check, control and stop the root function of the mind i.e. thought.

Broadly, yoga can be divided into two categories - 1) *Hatayoga* and 2. *Raaja yoga*. The former is mostly aimed for body fitness while *Raajayoga* has a greater purpose for self realisation through conquering of the internal nature. But, however, both the sections are complimentary to each other. Yoga has eight limbs (*Anga*) which are summarised as follows:

By the practice of the different parts of yoga, the impurities of mind are being destroyed; knowledge becomes effulgent up for discrimination. Moreover, out of the above eight limbs, one has to practise the former four and the later four are the results of some one's efforts. Yoga, being expanded up from simple mathematics of addition upto realisation of the ultimate reality,

Part of Yoga	Elaborations
Yama (Five sections)	Ahimsaa (Non-killing); Satya (Truthfulness); Asteya (non-stealing); Brahmacharya (continence); Aparigraha (Non-receiving).
Niyama (Five sections)	Souha (Internal and external purification); Santosha (contentment); Tapa (Mortification); Swaadhdhaaya (Study); Isswara Pranidhaana (Worship of God)
Aasana	Posture of sitting which should be firm and pleasant.
Praanaayaama	Controlling the motion of the exhalation and the inhalation.
Pratyahaara	The drawing in of the organs by giving up their own objects and taking the form of the mind-stuff, as it were.
Dhaaranaa	Holding the mind on to some particular object / concept.
Dhyaana	An unbroken flow of knowledge in that object (referred above).
Samaadhi	Giving up of all forms (i.e. external part is given up in meditation), reflects only the meaning (unexpressed in any form) A self realisation condition. The super concentrated state of Dhyaana.

is correlated in this communication as a symbol of *Pancha Yajnya*. In the five sacrifices, one is expected to offer for his source of knowledge (*Rrushi Yajnya*); for his parents and ancestors (*Pitru Yajnya*); for the ecological factors, from whom he gets the unclaimed gifts (*Deva Yajnya*); for the biodiversity around him (*Bhoota Yajnya*) and for the fellow human beings of his society (*Nrru Yajnya*). This Vedic based *Pancha Yajnya* philosophy depicted in *Manusmruti*, elaborated earlier (Padhy 2008a, b, c, d, e) finds a practical root in practise of yoga, that enables a yogi to offer his sacrifices automatically being unattached; thus he respects and completes his ecological responsibility.

Bhoota Yajnya

Among the eight limbs of yoga, the *Praanaayaama* holds a central position around which the other limbs are associated. *Yama*, *Niyama* and *Aasana* are necessary to be practised to accomplish *Praanaayaama* while *Pratyahaara*, *Dhaaranaa*, *Dhyaana* and *Samaadhi* are the results derived out of it. The word *Praanaayaama* is elaborated as *Praana* (life force) + *aayaama* (to control). Patanjali has specified broadly that controlling the motion of exhalation and inhalation is *Praanaayama*. In fact, breath is the vehicle through which the universal

Praana enters into a living system and controlling the breathing is only one of the exercises through which one gets into the real *Praanaayaama*.

According to the philosophers of India, the whole universe is composed of two basic components, one, the *Aakaass* (Ether) and the other *Praana*, needs elaboration. *Aakaass* is universal and omnipresent. *Aakaass* (1) being prime along with (2) *Vaayu* (air), (3) *Tejas* (fire), (4) *Aapa* (water) and (5) *Kshiti* (earth) constitute the five *Mahaabhootas*, the earliest possible recognition of the ecological factors. Each of the *Mahaabhootas* is conditioned and evolved from its, immediate predecessor placed in order of proceeding as ether, air, fire, water and earth. Each element has its own special property in addition to the general qualities of the other, from which it is evolved. *Aakaass* possesses the property (*Tanmaatras*) sound (*Sabda*); *Vaayu* - sound and touch (*Sparsha*); *Tejas* - sound, touch and form (*Roopa*); *Aapa* - sound, touch, form and flavour (*Rasa*) and *Kshiti* - sound, touch, form, flavour and odour (*Gandha*). Scientifically, if we consider the factors in the order of decreasing tangibility; for any thing to be solid (*Kshiti*), it must have been liquid (*Aapa*) previously; for liquification heat (*Tejas*) is required; to generate heat some combustion of gases (*Vaayu*) is required and all these interplay occurs in space (*Aakaass*). So anything that can be sensed and exists, are from the products of the original substance *Aakaass*. It is beyond all ordinary perceptions which can only be viewed when taken in a gross form. At the beginning of creation, there was only *Aakaass* and at the end, all solids, liquids and gases will disintegrate into *Aakaass* again.

Praana is the infinite and omnipresent manifesting power of the universe. By the power of the *Praana* only, *Aakaass* is manufactured into this universe. *Praana* is the universal energy manifested as a force like gravitation, magnetism, electricity, heat etc. In a living system the actions and functions of the body, the nerve currents, the thought process, the pumping action of the heart, the flow of blood, expansion and contraction of chest etc, are the manifestations of the *Praana*. The sum total of all the forces of the universe, either physical or mental reiterated to their original form *Praana*, turn to the potential energy at the end of the creation.

If the *Yogi* understands the *Praana* perfect-

ly, realises its generalised manifestation of force and could control it as a result, all the powers of the nature comes under his control. He, who controls his *Praana*, is capable to control his mind (and body); following the generalised formula by which all the other minds that exists, comes under his control. The *Praana* is the vital force in every living-being (*Bhoota*) when considered from biodiversity point of view. Since, all the eco-systems are interconnected to each other forming the whole globe as a single eco-sphere; similarly, all the life forces are intermingled to form the Biosphere / *Praana* sphere. Thus by following the process to control the life force through *Praanaayaama*, a *Yogi* performs the *Bhoota Yajnya*; a symbol of his obligation for the biodiversity around him.

Deva Yajnya

The science of yoga states that in every human body there are 72,000 interconnected spiritual nerves (*Naadi*) which connects a human body with the whole universe, as if, the total nature interplay inside a corporeal frame.

A saying from Kathoupanishada (2,4,10) states that, "What is even here, that is there; which is there, the same is here, from death to death he proceeds who here beholds the difference."

Amongst these Yogic nerves, one is the most important named as *Sushumnaa*, responsible for perception of the self (*Aatman*), is placed within the spinal column being extended from the lowest vertebral upto the brain. Two more spiritual nerves, *Edaa* (the left) and *Pingalaa* (the right), carry the energy current for the maintenance of the body, in turn both run with *Sushumnaa*.

The central nervous system (*Sushumnaa*) inside the spinal cord has six spiritual energy centres which has a metaphysical structure named as *Chakra* (wheel) or *Padma* (lotus) in yogic language. In English, they are called as Vortex (Fig. 1). These vortexes are: (1) *Mulaadhaara*: Placed at pelvic plexus or Coccygeum ganglion, (2) *Swaadhishtaana*: Hypogastric or abdominal aortic plexus, (3) *Manipura*: Solar plexus, (4) *Anaahata*: Cardiac plexus, (5) *Bissuddha*: Cervical or carotid plexus and (6) *Aajnyaan*: Cavernous plexus and a seventh *Chakra* at the top of the head. The *Chakras* / *Padmas* / vortexes are ornamented with different number of petals with which the different *Devataas* (energy) are associated. These *Chakras* also recognised as the centres of the

gross ecological factors or *Mahaabhootas* as discussed earlier, have a co-ordination with the body physiology and as well, the energy concerned with each vortex is named after a *Devataa*. The seventh *Chakra* is called *Sahasraa*, the highest one (thousand petaled lotus) at the top of the head. The *Sushumnaa* starting from *Mulaadhaara*, passing through the *Padmas*, reaches at the *Sahasraa*. It is realised that the whole vital energy of the human body being connected with the universal energy, is concentrated in the *Mulaadhaara*, named as *Kundalini*. By yogic manipulation the dormant *Kundalini* energy can be activated and driven through the *Sushumnaa* to reach at the *Sahasraa*. Elaboration of this special yogic technique is beyond the scope of this communication. Broadly, the yogi mentally directs his life energy (*Praana*) to move, upward and downward through the six spinal centres; that energizes the *Sushumnaa* which facilitates to give passage (way) for the movement of the *Kundalini* energy. Since all the *Devataas* in different energy forms are positioned on the *Padmas* of the *Sushumnaa*; the concentration and mental movement of the yogi, is regarded as the highest grade of worship. This completes the *Deva Yajnya*. As the *Yogi* progress with his practice, the different energy centres come under his control; explained in yogic language that the particular *Devata* is worshiped, or the power concerned is brought under his control to which he conquered. This is how the *Yogi* directs that power to work for his self upliftment and benefit of others, as well.

Pitru Yajnya

All energy in a human body can be transformed into a highest form called the *Ojas*, as per the *Yogis'* claim. The *Ojas* are stored up in the brain, are most powerful and responsible for the intellectual and spiritual power of a man. The yogi is capable of transforming all his electrical and magnetic powers of the body into *Ojas*. It is claimed that the sex energy (*Virjya* / *Reta*), which gives immense sensual pleasure on release, can be converted into *Ojas*, when checked and controlled its way out. Such a yogi is called *Urrdwaretaa*, who has upwardly directed sex energy. That is why continence on sex and chastity is given prime importance in yoga, as well in all other religious orders of the world. The monks give up marriage, avoid sexual perseverance into their mind and adopt different yogic techniques to transform their sex energy into *Ojas*.

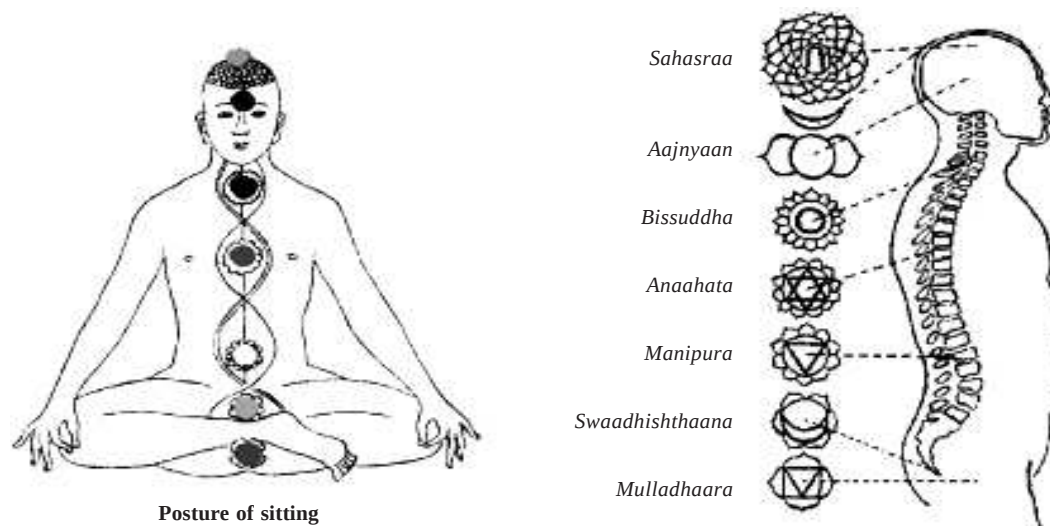


Fig. 1. Location of the *Chakras* inside the *Sushumna*

Through the process of reproduction, we are linked with our ancestors and successors (off-springs). Sex, no doubt a behavioural character of the biological world; but human beings are given full liberty of its use; of course, bounded with ethical and social norms. The ethics of sex for the society is reflected in *Manusmruti*, as early as the immediate post Vedic period. In ancient India, after the birth of the first child (called *Dharmaja Putra*: a son as divine gift) seldom learned people preferred to have more children (called *Kamaja Putra*: born out of lust). The modern birth control techniques are certainly scientific; but they have little to do with the transformation of sex energy into *Ojas*. There is a saying in Sanskrit "*Putraarthe Kriyate Bhaaryaa*", means wife is meant for bestowing a son (child in present contest) only; this again refers to sex compassion in marriage is secondary. In fact, *Pitru Yajnya*, is not only to show moral obligation to forefathers as the source of genetic trait; but also one is equally responsible for the conservation and diversion of the reproductive energy in right channel and fostering the future generation in right direction, which a Yogi does through his supernatural activity.

Rrushi Yajnya

This refers to some one's obligation for his teacher (Guru) and source of knowledge. Broadly, the Yogi is advised to have self-study

(*Swaadhdhaya*) under the second limb of Yoga that is, *Niyama* as explained earlier. Moreover, conveying of the earned knowledge to the next generation is also a prime duty concerned to this sacrifice. Among the limbs of yoga, *Dhaaranaa* is holding the mind on to some particular aspect, and *Dhyaana* is an unbroken flow of knowledge on that. In Yoga, the practice of rhythmical breathing (*Praanaayama*) makes all the motions of the body perfectly rhythmical. The physical breathing exercise puts impact on the body physiology through the respiratory centre to control the other centres. Similarly, the mind has co-ordination with the breathing of an individual. Between the mind (*Chitta*) and breath, the former is an abstract principle and the later is physical one. If any one of them is disturbed the other gets disturbed automatically; otherwise calmness of any one induces calmness in the other (Padhy 2006). The yogi reaches the mind with the help of the breath, as the synchronised breath leads to calmness and serenity. Ultimately, the mind comes under subdue and gets free from unwanted thought vibrations either induced internally or influenced externally; finally leads to a thoughtlessness condition. Such a yogic mind is very powerful, acquires the power of creation, maintenance and destruction at a will. In such a state of mind, the perception of the self (*Aatman*) is realised and all the doors of knowledge of the universe gets opened for a yogi, if a perfect condition of *Dhyaana* is achieved.

The movement of the *Kundalini* through the *Sushumna* is discussed earlier. As the *Kundalini* power travels from vortex to vortex and finally reaches the brain (*Sahasra*), layers after layers of the mind get revealed out for the Yogi under thoughtlessness conditions. The yogi attains the divine wisdom, super consciousness perception and realisation of the universal spirit. In yogic language the *Sahasra* is the place where the divine foot of Guru is established. This explanation is symbolic and can be coordinated with the obligations of a yogi for the source of knowledge on attaining such a state as *Rrushi Yajnya*. The raise of *Kundalini* energy can also be achieved through immense love for God (*Bhakti-Devotion*) or through strong renunciation (*Bairagya*) or one may achieve by the mercy of his *Guru* through blessings. As a general principle, wherever there is any manifestation of supernatural power or wisdom in a human being, there must be a little current of *Kundalini* in its way towards the *Sahasra*. Excitation of *Kundalini* and following its own way is the end point of any worship to achieve the supreme stage of knowledge. This is how the yogi offers his obligations to the source of knowledge as *Rrushi Yajnya*.

Nrru Yajnya

The human body is superior to the animals, because of the upright and straight placement of the spinal column as claimed in *Yoga Sssastra* (*Yoga lessen*). It is also superior to the body of Gods. The later concept is a demand in Hindu mythology, as the Gods are blessed with specific powers; but they can not rise up in the spiritual evolution to join with the almighty. Because of the straight spinal column a human being can do so through yoga, a fact of anthropogenic significance. As described in *Puraanas* - the Gods urge to take birth as human beings on this earth for their upliftment. Progress in Yogic line is not simple and it is equated; rather comparable with walking on the cutting edge of a knife. A yogi has to maintain self-discipline, strictly follow the first four limbs of yoga and progress in the line steadily; otherwise at every step there is the possibility of derailed or dropping down.

The yogi has to regulate his food habits because all the working forces of the body are produced out of food energy. Pure food is amenable

for a pure mind. *Aayurveda* has advised: *Hitta Bhookku, Mitta Bhookku* and *Ritta Bhookku* - means eat what is healthy, eat less as required and eat out of rightly earned income. A yogi must avoid the extremes of luxury and austerity; should not fast nor over eat; neither sleep more nor awake more than requirement; should not work more nor does work at all. All the herculean task of yoga he has to perform being single minded keeping pace and balance with time and space. The body of the yogi turns as the temple of his worship. All these crisscross activities of yoga is equivalent to *Nrru Yajna*, the highest ethics of benefit for the human society. Because the yogi never works for self, his life is sacrificed for others only. The vibration of his yogic activity spreads all around and influences the minds of thousands around him, induces positive thoughts in the society. The thought vibration is a human ecological factor which has much to do with the social harmony (Padhy 2006). The great spiritual leaders of the world Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammad and Gurus in every religious sector, were selfless and dedicated themselves for others. They have awakened and uplifted others to be at par with them. This is the right way of *Nrru Yajnya* attained through yoga. Geeta says: such people are rare in the society.

Hardly, one among thousands of men strives to realise me; of those striving yogis, again, some rare one knows me in reality (Geeta: Chapter 7 / Verse 3).

DISCUSSION

Patanjali's '*Yoga Darssana*', the authoritative compendium on yoga, is presented in the form of aphorisms; but discussion of any topic goes with the story of six blind men visited an elephant and explained its shape and size as they have perceived. In India, there are a good number of Yoga schools of thought. They differ from each other from their performance point of view; but the basic philosophy and aim of achievement remains the same. It is difficult to explain any Yoga technique through this communication, as there are ethical restrictions. Often, it is misinterpreted that the techniques are the monopoly of a school of thought or *Guru*. But, the reality is far off from the misunderstanding as a disciple is expected to learn the Yoga lessons from a

bonafide Guru, practice them under his direct supervision; otherwise, failure must inevitable. All the spiritual sciences are called “*Guru Mukhi Vidya*” that means the lessons are to be verbally transmitted directly from teacher to taught, not even through a book. Practice of yoga, by reading books or learning from unauthorised persons or from any media, is dangerous and negatively reflective.

There have been efforts to understand the physiological changes in human body during meditation by clinical examination of subjects (Wallace and Benson 1972). Such an attempt can fulfil the scientific curiosity; but little to do with the real achievements of yoga. The attempts made in this communication to co-relate the philosophy of *Pancha Yajnya* with the practical implication of Yoga, certainly opens new lines of thought to understand the Human ecology in finest form (Padhy 2006). Moreover, expansion of yoga can provide solutions to solve the sociological problems, which are crucial in a society; rather than defining the environment as a conglomeration of biotic and abiotic factors only.

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