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## THE EXPOSITION OF KUNDALINI YOGA IN THE YOGOPANISHADS

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### ABSTRACT

This paper explains the exposition of Kundalini in various Yoga Upanishadas. Kundalini can be defined as the sleeping potential force or energy in the human being. It is located at the of the spinal cord. The word kundalini is derived from the Sanskrit word kundela, which means ring, circle, or coil. The dormant energy is sleeping at the base of the spine in the form of a coil having three and a half circles. So, because of this coiled form, she is named kundalini (that which is coiled). The ancient sages found that this sleeping energy can be awakened with some methods like breathing practices, mantras, yantras, meditation, postures (Asanas) and mudras, etc. They realized that by awakening this divine cosmic energy, one can reach to the ultimate reality while still in this body. (Jivanmukta state). The methods or techniques for awakening the kundalini are called as Kundalini yoga or Kundalini tantra. Kundalini yoga is considered a method of tantra tradition, but during the later period, there was a fusion of Upanishadic and Tantric traditions and the kundalini tantra got absorbed in Upanishads also.

Upanishads are the Jnana Kanda portion of Vedas. There are more than 200 Upanishads. Muktica canon described 108 Upanishads. Katha, Kena, Prashna, Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya, Isha, Mandukya, and Mundaka are the major Upanishads on which there is commentary by Adi Shankaracharya. These Upanishads mainly discuss about the nature of brahman, Atman, creation of the world. They describe the pranasa, nadis, etc. but they do not speak directly on Kundalini. In fact, there is no reference to the word Kundalini anywhere in these Upanishads. In the later period, due to the popularity of Tantras, the later Upanishads were influenced by the tantric methods of the awakening of kundalini, there was an infusion of the concept of Kundalini in these Upanishads. Among these minor Upanishads, there are 20 Upanishads that are devoted to kundalini yoga. These Upanishads are called Yogopanishadas. This paper explains about the methods described in these Upanishads for awakening the kundalini in general. It also focuses on some special techniques adopted by some of the Upanishads. The list of various Yogopanishads is also provided in this paper.

**Keywords:** Kundalini yoga, tantra, Upanishads, Yogopanishadas



## INTRODUCTION

This paper tries to expound on the Kundalini yoga explained in various Yogopanishads. The word yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root 'yuj' meaning to unite. In the yogic parlance, this union is the union of Jivatma with the Paramatma. The aim of yoga is Self-Realization through the union of the individual soul with the Supreme soul. Kundalini can be defined as the sleeping potential force or energy in the human being. It is located at the base of the spinal cord. The word kundalini comes from the Sanskrit word 'kundala' meaning coil. Kundalini is the Cosmic Energy. It resides in every human being in a coiled form, lying dormant at the base of the spine. The ancient sages found out various ways to awaken this sleeping energy. These techniques are called Kundalini Yoga or Kundalini Tantra. The word Upanishad is derived from a Sanskrit root 'sad' meaning to sit along with two prefixes, upa and ni. The word upa, means near and ni means totality. Thus, the word Upanishad means sitting near with complete devotion. Upanishads are the Jnana and portion of Vedas. The Upanishads are the dialogues between the student and the teacher, Students asking questions to the and guru for gaining knowledge and the guru guiding them. So, Upanishad means sitting near the guru devotedly near the guru to acquire knowledge of the Brahman. There are about 200 Upanishads, out of which 108 are enlisted in the Mukhya Upanishad. Adi Shankaracharya wrote commentaries only on 10 Upanishads, so they are called the major Upanishads. And the others are considered as minor Upanishads. All these Upanishads speak about atman, Brahman, Brahma vidya ultimate reality etc. They discuss about the pranayamas, nadis also but there is no reference of Kundalini in most of the Upanishads. There is a group of Upanishads, which discuss about the Kundalini yoga, the various methods of awakening the kundalini etc. so they are considered as Yogopanishads.

**The philosophy of Yogopanishads:** The philosophy of Yogopanishads is based upon the knowledge of ultimate reality and the methods or ways to reach the goal of Self Realization. They discuss various aspects of theory and practice of yogic techniques with varied emphasis on methods and meditation, but they share many similar ideas. In this paper will focus on some special features or techniques described in each of the 20 Upanishads.

**Kshurika Upanishad:** It is attached to Krishna Yajurveda, 31<sup>st</sup> among Mukhya group. Kshurika means knife. This Upanishad shows the way to cut the attachments by using the knife of wisdom and reach the goal of Self Realization. In this Upanishad, the method of contemplation on the 'Marmasthanas' in the body is explained. The Yoganidra technique must have been derived from this Marmasthana contemplation.

## THE FIVE BINDU UPANISHADS

Tejobindu, DhyanaBindu, Amrutabindu, Nadabindu, and Amrita nada Bindu are the five Bindu Upanishads. All the five Bindu Upanishads emphasize the practice of yoga and Aum meditation to perceive the Atman or Self.

**1. Tejobindu Upanishad-** It belongs to Krishna Yajurveda, 37<sup>th</sup> of the Muktika group. The special feature of Tejobindu Upanishad is that, it denotes 15 limbs yoga in addition to the limbs described in Patanjali yoga sutras, seven more are added., namely, Tyaga, Desha, Kala, Mulabandha, Dehasamyā and Drk- sthiti. The 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter explains that Chinmatra is the nature of Brahman providing a new mahavakya “Sarvam Chinmatramevahi”. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter it discusses about the famous mahavakya, “Aham Brahmasmi”

**2. Dhynabinu Upanishad-** It belongs to Atharvaveda. It mentions meditation on Lord Vishnu. It expounds the Absolute Brahman and the Pranava dhyana Ajapa Hamsa vidya, and sixfold yoga as means of attaining this Ultimate state. It describes the meditation on the three Lords. During puraka, meditation on Vishnu, during Kumbhaka, meditation on Brahma and during rechaka, meditation on Rudra is mentioned.

**3. Amrita Bindu Upanishad-** It is attached to Atharvaveda 20<sup>th</sup> of the Muktika group. It is shadanga yoga, consists of pratyahara, dhyana, pranayama, dharana, tarka and samadhi. Dharana comes after dhyana. And tarka is the limb which is not included in any other texts. Like Bhagavadgita, it also states that mind is the cause of bondage or liberation.

It emphasizes on internal Gayatri Japa and Aum meditation.

**4. Nadabindu Upanishad –** Nada Bindu Upanishad is the 38<sup>th</sup> in the Muktika group It belongs to the Rigveda. The nada means the sound heard in the ear during deep meditation.

The sound of aum is the beginning of cosmos. The universe begins from the Bindu and dissolves into the Bindu. The philosophy of the sound Aum is explained in the Nada Bindu Upanishad.

Pranava meditation is described in a symbolic way. It is called Vairajya Pranava Meditation.

#### **Vairaja Pranava:**

Vairaja means the son of Virat Purusha. Virat Purusha is the Brahman in the form of the whole universe. Vairaja Pranava is a specific name of Om. The Upanishad begins with the explanation of the Vairaja Pranava.

The Upanishad says that Vairaja Pranava is the king of birds. The letter A is the right wing of the bird. The letter U is the left-wing of the bird. The letter “M” is the Tail. Ardha-matra (half-matra) is its head. Its leg and terminal point are three Gunas. (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). Its Body is Truth. Its right eye is right conducts. Its left eye is wrong conducts. The Bhuloka is in its feet, The Bhuvarloka is in its Knees, Suvarloka is in its hip. Mahaloka is in its navel, In its heart is the Janoloka, In the throat region is the Tapoloka and the point between the brows is the Satyaloka..



### **Vairaja Vidya:**

The meditation technique explained here is Vairajya Vidya. One can get rid of all his sins through the Mastery of Vairaja Vidya.

**5. Amrita Nada Upanishad-**It belongs to the Atharva Veda 40<sup>th</sup> of Muktika group. It is a shadanga yoga with a little difference from the Hathayoga Pradipika. the limb asana is excluded and another limb is added called Tarka meaning inference. Inference should not contradict the scriptures. Another difference is that the step dhyana comes before the dharana.

Even if asanas are not included as a part of shadangayoga, they are mentioned while doing dhyana. Swastikasana, Padmasana, Bhadrasana or sukhasana is suggested for dhyana. And Aum Japa is prescribed while doing meditation.

**Hamsopanishad-** It is attached to the Shukla Yajurveda, 15<sup>th</sup> of the muktika group. It is a conversation between sage Gautama as the student and sage Sanat-Kumara as the teacher. Like the Bindu Upanishads, it also expounds the doctrine of Hamsa vidya and Nada Yoga through Ajapa Gayatri mantra. The Upanishad says that one should contemplate on Hamsa as Atman in his heart. due to this contemplation on Hamsa, ten kinds of nadas can be heard. They are:

Chni, Chini, Chini, bell, conch. Tantril, Tala, Flute, Bheri, Mridanga, Clouds. By Shaktipata from guru, one can hear the last sound without the previous sounds. Then there is the state of no mind. It is a state of Self Realization.

**Yoga kundalini Upanishad—** It is 86<sup>th</sup> Upanishad from the Muktika group. It belongs to Krishna Yajur Veda. It is a very important text which expounds the Kundaliniyoga. There are three chapters in this text, containing 171 verses.

The first chapter deals with the Hathayoga practices like asana, pranayama, bandhas etc. Then it explains the method of kundalini awakening. Padmasana and Vajrasana is mentioned and Ujjayi, Seetali, Bhastika, and Suryabheda with bandhas and kumbhakas are described.

It is stated that for controlling prana, Mitahara, asana, and Shaktichalana are the three methods. The second chapter explains Khechari vidya, Khechari mantra and mudra.

The third chapter speaks about Jivan-mukti and Videha-mukti.

**Darshana Upanishad--** It belongs to SamVeda, 90<sup>th</sup> from the Muktika group. It is a conversation between sage Dattatreya (who is Lord Vishnu Himself) and his disciple sage Sanskriti. The Upanishad mainly deals with Ashtanga yoga and elaborates each limb in detail by providing separate chapters for each limb.

Names of Asanas-- Swastikasana, Gomukhasana, padmasana, Virasana, Simhasana, Bhadrasana, Muktasana, Mayurasana, and sukhasana. 14 main nadis are described with their location in the body. The spinal column is called as Vina Danda. Five dharanas on the five elements are described along with their Beeja mantras.

### **Pilgrimage placed inside the body**

Sri-Parvata is at the crown. Kedara is located at forehead. Benares is at the junction of brows and nose. Kurushetra is at the chest. Prayaga is at the heart chakra. In the middle of the heart is Chidambaram. Kamalalaya is in Muladhara.

If the internal Thirtha of Chitta (mind) is contaminated, it cannot be purified by ceremonial baths in the rivers like Holy Ganga So They should be purified by ashtanga yoga.

**Yogachudamani Upanishad**--It belongs to Samaveda, 48<sup>th</sup> of the Muktika group. It explains the connection between Kundalini and Sushumna Nadi in the neck region and states that through Sushumna Nadi only, the Kundalini reaches the crown chakra. Kundalini is called Parameshwari. It describes four states of consciousness It enumerates the benefits of Asanas, Pranayama, and pratyahara. It states that the five elements are ruled by the five gods namely Sadashiva, Ishwara, Rudra, Vishnu, and Brahma.

**Yogashiksopanishad**- It belongs to Krishna Yajurveda, 63<sup>rd</sup> from the Muktika group. The forms of brahman are described in a different way than Shandilya Upanishad.

1) Vairajya Brahman-It is the gross form 2) Hiranyagarbha Brahman—it is the subtle form

3) Nada form-It is the nada Brahman. It consists of 3 seed letters A U M and the Aum.

The Upanishad states that the body is a temple of shiva and it has the hidden capacity to manifest occult powers through the awakening of Kundalini shakti. But at the same time, it gives a warning that sadhana should not be done for siddhi or prapti. Patanjali sutra also states that siddis are upasargas in the way of sadhana.

**Shandilya Upanishad**- It belongs to the Atharva Veda, 58<sup>th</sup> of the Muktika group. It states the forms of Braman as follows:

1) Nishkala Brahman: The formless Brahman, Absolute, all-pervading, Sat-chit-Anand Swarup Brahman.

2) Sakala Brahman: It coexists with the Moolaprakriti. It is trigunatmaka.

3) Sakala-Nishkala Brahman:

**Pashupat Brahma Upanishad**-It belongs to Atharvaveda, 77<sup>th</sup> of the Muktika group. It is a conversation between sage Vaishravana and Lord Brahma.

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The Upanishad has two sections- Poorva khanda and Uttara khanda.

Poorva khanda has 32 verses and it mainly deals with Hamsavidya. Uttarakhand has 46 verses and deals with Para vidya.

The Hamsa meditation is named as the “Hamsarka Pranava Dhyana” in this Upanishad.

**Mahavakya Upanishad-** It belongs to Atharvaveda, 92<sup>nd</sup> of the Multika group. It is a very small Upanishad and contains only 12 verses. It describes Atman, Anatman, and Paramatman (Brahman). Hamsavidya or Chidaditya vidya is depicted in this Upanishad. The Chidaditya Vidya is the vidya of the Sun of consciousness or the vidya radiating consciousness.

**Adwaya taraka Upanishad-**Shukla Yajurveda, 53<sup>rd</sup> of the Muktika group It talks about the Adwaya state. (non-duality)

It describes Rajayoga giving knowledge of Brahma Vidhya. It states that yoga is twofold. Taraka yoga and Amanaska yoga.

It explains three types of lakshas.

It describes two types of tarakas. – Murti taraka (Corporeal) and Amurti taraka (noncorporeal)

**Mandala Brahman Upanishad-** It belongs to the Shukla Yajurveda. Normally the yamas and niyamas are five like the Patanjali sutras or ten as described in many other texts. But in this Upanishad, yamas are fourfold and niyamas are ninefold.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, this paper narrates the various aspects depicted in these 20 Yoga Upanishads. The various techniques to awaken the kundalini are elucidated in all these Upanishads. The methods adopted are slightly different from one another. Some Upanishads provide Ashtanga yoga while others give Shadanga yoga. Tejobindu Upanishad lists 15 limbs. The concept of the Pranava is depicted as a bird in Nadabindu Upanishad while in Brahnavidya, the body of Aum is explained differently. The forms of Brahman are elucidated differently in Shandilya and Yoga Sikhopaniashad.





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