



Sunyabrahma and Yoga Darshan of Shree Achyutananda

Dr. Manoj Kumar Mohanty*

Abstract

It is innate in every rational human being to grow from incompleteness to completeness, to move him from darkness to light, and to make himself more conscious rather than unconscious. The more one grows, the more one seeks to outgrow, by transcending the present, to realize the unrealized possibilities. Man is uniquely endowed with the capacity to overcome the limiting factors within and around. He has the sole goal of achieving divineness through some inner practice. The real quest begins when one knows one's ignorance and the sense of humanity. No doubt, ignorance will be destroyed if one makes an effort to understand the real nature of one's own existence, because humans are the crown of creation. Power and potential can be harnessed to achieve the highest goal. 'Yoga' presupposes a view of man, the cause of bondage and suffering and the means to liberation. The purpose of 'yoga' is to help '*Purusa*' to realize its own nature by dissociating itself from the evolutes of '*Prakriti*'. Yogic effort is directed at reaching a state when one has the discriminative knowledge or *Vivekajnana*. Shree Acyutananda's yoga darshan emphasises understanding and realising the '*Rasatattva*'

Keywords: *Jivatma, Paramtmaa, Rasatattva, Sahasrachakra, Astanga yoga and Samadhi*

INTRODUCTION

Shree Achyutananda Das was one of the famous poets in the sixteenth century among '*Panchasakha*'. He was not only a spiritual saint but also a poet, visionary and social reformer. Kindness and detachment were his philosophy. From gross body to subtle, from individual soul to universal soul and from dual to non-dual were his philosophical discoveries. The realization of self can only be achieved through purification, love and divine knowledge. He has written nearly one lakh and eight four thousand scriptures for the welfare of the world. *Sanhita, Gita, Maalika, Rahas, Chautisha, Boli* and other devotional songs are the philosophical discoveries by Shree Achyutananda. The '*Sunya-Sanhita*' and '*Gurubhakti-Gita*' are the most important contributions by him. *Brahmavad, Adaitwavad, Daitavad, Guruvad, Bhaktitattwa, Achintya vedaveda-tattwa, Srustitattwa, Rahasyavad, Pinda Brahmanda-tattwa, Hansatattwa, Vedanta Darshan and Yoga-darshan* are his creations.

The word 'Sunyabrahma' is the subject matter of his philosophy. He believes in both the gross and subtle bodies. Brahma has no physical shape, but exists inside the human body like 'Void' or 'Sunya'. He was a yogi, and through '*Sunyasadhana*' one can get liberation. To attain liberation, he completely dedicated himself and practised yoga inside the cave at 'Bankimuhana', Cuttack. In this article, the 'Yoga Darshan of Shree Achyutananda' can be highlighted.

We are passing through a critical stage between the best possibilities and worst possibilities. Science and technology have oriented the minds of the East and West, almost the physical world. We are more interested in matter and material objects rather than spirituality. We are under pressure at every stage of our life. Material happiness is not the objective of human life. Mental peace and spiritual growth should be the goal of human creation. Eating, comfortable sleeping, and marrying are not the

* Lecturer in Philosophy, BNMA College, Bhadrak



greatest achievements of life. Is it? If it is, then what is the difference between men and beasts? Understanding the mystery of his own creation and existence leads toward the quest of his destiny.

Maharshi Patanjali, the founder of 'Yoga philosophy' and 'Yoga sutra', includes Ashtanga yoga and other kinds of yogic postures. The practice of various kinds of yoga is the subject-matter of 'Yoga-sutra'. Common people believe that yoga is the union between the individual soul and the universal soul. Patanjali's yoga philosophy is a process leading towards the ultimate goal of removing bondage through Ashtanga yoga-sadhna to attain liberation.

Like Patanjali, Shree Achyutanand also realised the essence of yoga in human life, especially those who are followers of spiritualism. India is the land of spiritualism. This land is the living place of '*Rushi and Muni*', and Yoga was the traditional foundation of their daily life. To control the mind, yoga plays a crucial role. Shree Achyutananda realised that the union between jivatma and paramatma is the highest and ultimate achievement of his life. That's why most of the time he was engaged in concentration with yoga, because yoga is the only way through which the spiritual world can be discovered. The spiritual world is the real world, and we all human beings are a small part of that. Once we understand that inner entity, life will be enlightened. Purification of the mind and control over it was the traditional method of all yogic traditions. According to Shree Achyutaanand, purification of our breathing is known as yoga. The essence of yoga is the grand union of *jivatma and paramatma*; this is *Rasatattwa*, the principle of divinity. Further, he explained: *Jivatma is Radha and Paramatma is Shreekrishna*. According to Dvaitavad of Ramanuj, Shreekrishna is Prakriti and Shree Krishna is Purusa. When the jivatma, we the individual self, by our yogic process goes beyond and unites with Shreekrishna, it is the essence of yoga or *Rasatattwa*. For Shree Achyutaananda, Shree Krishna is the divine and men should meet him in this life. A yogi can unite himself with Shreekrishna through activation of '*Pranabayu*' or '*the vital energy of breath*'. Control over the mind is the prime subject matter for a yogi. Yoga is the cessation of the modification of *Mind* or Chitta. The five stages of Chitta are grounded in Chittabhumi. Kshipta: In this stage, Chitta or mind is completely out of control and attracts towards physical objects of the world. Mudha: When the Tamas gunas are overpowered and control the body by sleep. Vikshipta: In this stage, Sattva guna is dominated by Rajas and Tamas guna. Ekagra: When Chitta or mind is fixed with a concentrative attitude on some certain subject, as the burning lamp's flame remains pointing to one side and never flickers. Niruddha: The last stage of Chittabhumi, where the impersonations remain in chitta through the modification of Viskhipta and Ekagra.

Like Maharshi Patanjali, Shree Achyutanand divided yoga into four types:

MANTRA YOGA: When we start yoga by chanting 'AUM'. Through chanting, one can concentrate oneself in the divine. During the time of chanting, one should fix one's eyes at the middle portion of the eyebrows and the forehead. All the ignorance will vanish if someone fixes his eyes on the forehead and starts chanting 'Aum'

LAYA YOGA: Literally 'laya' means concentration or fixation of our mind to achieve something through our action. Laya is also one type of yoga. Laya yoga deals with the arousal, release, and control of latent nerve energy or *kundalini* hidden within



a human's nerve system. It is a process of awakening the kundalini, taking it step by step through six chakras to the *sahasrachakra*, or thousand-petalled lotuses, and of merging laya and uniting with the Brahman. This supreme self resides in the '*sahasrachakra*'. Through laya yoga, the mind is distracted from external sounds and noises. According to Shree Achyutanand, devotion will take place only through our concentration.

RAJA YOGA: Rajayoga literally means the royal road or supreme path of yoga. Shree Achyutanand says to leave the discrimination between body and soul. Dualism is the cause of ignorance. In the book '*Ganesh Bibhuti Tika*', he mentioned that when the moon's journey and the sun's journey work together simultaneously, there will be no Dualism. This is the stage of Raj-yoga.

HATHA JOGA: The fourth type of yoga is Hatha-yoga. The word 'Hatha' is a combination of two letters, i.e., 'Ha' and 'Tha'. The letter 'Ha' represents or belongs to 'Sun' and 'Tha' refers to 'Moon'. Hatha means the union between the Sun and the Moon. 'Apan vayu' or flatulence is known as the moon-vehicle, and Prana Vayu is the sun-vehicle. When they join together through eight-fold ways, that is known as Raj-yoga. These four types of yoga can be followed through the Ashtanga path, or eight-fold ways, of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra.

ASHTANGA YOGA-SADHANA: Patanjali's Yoga-sutra was accepted and practised by the saints and sages of India at different times. Yoga is the only way to control the mind, the body, and the senses. It recommends the perfection of the human mind. A healthy mind needs a healthy physique. The human mind is distracted by sensual passion and attachment. To control and to overcome them, Ashtanga yoga-sadhana is necessary.

YAMA: The first stage of yoga sadhana. Yama is the *Mahavratas of Jainism*. There are five *Mahavratas*, i.e., *ahimsa*, *satya*, *asteya*, *brahmacharya*, and *aparigraha*. It is also called '*Panchaanubrata*' or five vows. The principle of '*Ahimsa*' or Non-violence is completely free from violence, including thought, speech and action. Your speech and thought always follow the principle of '*Satya*' or truth. The principle of '*Asteya* or non-stealing' refers to not stealing others goods and wealth. The principle of '*Brahmacharya*' states to control sexual desires and sexual activities. The principle of '*Aparigraha*' or non-acceptance says to try to live without greed. Because greed is the cause of suffering. Too much of everything is good for nothing. These principles are the foundation of yoga and the beginning of yoga.

NIYAM: Literally, Niyam means the rules and regulations. The actions we perform need certain principles and rules. External and internal purification is an important part of yoga-sadhana. Purification is an important factor for yoga. Before practising yoga, purification is necessary. Purification includes cleaning and washing our body and other parts, and taking vegetarian food and pure water. Contentment or feeling happiness is another part of yoga. A happy person can concentrate on yoga. Physical pain comes during yoga, and we have to adjust; otherwise, one cannot be a yogi. The study of scriptures and sacred books is also needed to understand the reality of this world. Lastly, a yogi should dedicate all his actions and bring himself near to the divine—dedication towards the divine leads to Samadhi.



AASANA: The third stage of yoga is the sitting posture. A yogi should sit in a proper and comfortable position that yoga requires. To concentrate ourselves in yoga, we have to sit properly. There are different postures in yoga, and through yogic postures we cure and make our body and mind fit. The postures are *padmasana*, *bajrasana*, *sirshasana* and *vadrasana*, etc.

PRAANAYAM: The fourth step of yoga discusses how to regulate the breathing system, including inhalation and exhalation. It is the management of the breathing system during the practice of yoga. The breathing system is highly advantageous for meditation of the mind. *Pranayam* has three parts –*Puraka: inhale the breath*, *Kumbhaka: holding the breath* and *Rechaka: exhale the breath*. We take the breath inside the body through *puraka*, keep the breath inside the body by *kumvak* and again leave the breath through *rechaka*.

PRATYAHARA: The fifth step of Ashtanga yoga emphasises controlling the sense organs and withdrawing our attention from external objects that create disturbances. It's usually the natural tendency of our senses to go to outward objects. At the time of practising yoga, the sense organs must be crisscrossed and engaged in the direction of the inner goal by our mind.

DHARANA: The sixth step and internal aids start with Dharana. It is also called meditation, which fixes the human mind on the mid-point of the eyebrows. The mind must be resolute like the unflickering flame of a lamp.

DHYAN: The seventh step of Ashtanga yoga and the second step of internal aids is Dhyana, which states that after control over our senses, the mind starts concentration—the complete dedication towards a particular subject-matter or area of interest. Though there is a common understanding between Dharana and Dhyana, yet both are different from each other. Dharana is the concentration of sense organs, whereas dhyana is the upper stage of concentration. In Dharana, we control our senses, but in Dhyana we fix our mind after control of the senses.

SAMADHI: This is the last, the top and final stage of Ashtanga yoga-sadhana. Samadhi starts with Dharana and Dhyana, then finally reaches its destination. It's the highest level of meditation. It is above concentration, where there is no difference between mind and body. Here the mind completely feels relaxed and absorbed in the object of meditation. Samadhi means the uppermost resources to realize the ending of psychological amendment. The blissful state in which the connection with the peripheral world breaks and the soul moves towards liberation.

Following Vedanta philosophy, Shree Achyutanand also believes in two kinds of Samadhi: Savikalpa, or Conscious Samadhi, and Nirvikalpa, or Supraconscious Samadhi.

SAVIKALPA SAMADHI: Human knowledge has three elements, i.e., *jnana*, *jnanta*, and *jneya*. These play an important role in understanding the world. So, it's the duty of men to understand these three elements. So, Samadhi is the medium through which the internal world can be understood. Savikalpa is also called *Samprajnata*; it means *ekagrata*: the mind continues and focuses on the object of contemplation. The moderator and the object of contemplation are merged and become one; then, the awareness of the object of contemplation continues.



NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI: Asamprajnata, or supra-conscious, is otherwise known as nirvikalpa Samadhi, which focuses the moderator and the object of contemplation. In this stage, no new mental amendments take place. The concentrated mind is checked, though the hidden impersonations may continue. Nirvikalpa samadhi, the highest form of yoga, is the divine madness that attains the perfect mystic of life.

Shree Achyutanand also discusses *Jyoti Yoga*, *Chhaya Yoga*, *Abaada Yoga* and *Dhvoni Yoga*. He believes that Jyoti is Brahma and one should concentrate in the midbow; only then can 'Jyoti-brahma' be realised. By opening our eyelids, if someone concentrates on the sky, he can perceive 'Chhaya-brahma'. To realise the 'Brahman', one should destroy the barriers that are called '*Abaada sadhana*'. When someone raises his breathing and unites all his breathings, it is called *Dhvoni-yoga*.

CONCLUSION

Human creation and existence are tied to action. Life is meaningless without action. Human life is not like that of a pig or a tree. Although there are many living beings and plants, they have no destination for their future life. Human destiny is different. He alone knows the truth and how to attain it in this life. Shree Achyutananda is a great preceptor whose approach to truth is incomparable. The Yoga Darshan of Shree Achyutananda says that our ultimate goal is to reach 'Golakdhama', 'the living place of Shreekrishna'. Our primary duty is to attain the 'Rasatattva' or 'Spiritual bliss'. Therefore, spiritual bliss requires yoga sadhana. There are two types of yoga sadhana: Saakaar sadhana and Nirakaar sadhana. Saakaar sadhana is followed by jantra, or with skillfulness; mantra, or through chanting; tantra, or the techniques needed for sadhana; and chhaya, or with proper concentration. Nirakaar sadhana is followed by haj, or a visit to Vrindaban, because Vrindaban is the birthplace of Shree Krishna. Samadhi is the modification of the mind; rasa is the essence of bliss; and guna is the understanding of the essential quality of sunyabrahma. So a yogi is a saadhak who needs saadhna to understand the mystery of the universe.

References

- Mohanty, A. K. (2005). Gurutattwa. Elite Publications.
- Mohanty, A. K. (2006). Cycle of creation. Elite Publications.
- Mohanty, A. K. (2010). Yoga: Concept and practice. Elite Publications.
- Mohanty, A. K. (2011). Bhakti. Elite Publications.
- Nayak, G. C. (2014). Indian philosophy. Odisha State Bureau of Textbook.
- Rout, B. (2011). Achyutananda Sarasawat Diganta. Chitrotpala Publication.
- Sahoo, N. (2013). Shree Achyuta Darshan. Odisha Book Emporium.
- Sharma, C. D. (1994). A critical survey of Indian philosophy. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Smruti Sansad, A. (2010). Achyutaananda Rachanabali: Rahas khanda. Achyut Smruti Sansad.