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Compilation on various perspectives of Pranayamam in Siddha literatures

**Dr Thivyasundari M .¹, Dr Gurulakshmi @ Kavitha R.², Dr Saibudeen K.³,
Dr Sateesh Kumar A⁴**

¹Post Graduate, Department of Siddhar Yoga Maruthuvam, Govt Siddha Medical College,
Chennai-600106, Tamilnadu, India.

²Post Graduate, Department of Siddhar Yoga Maruthuvam, Govt Siddha Medical College,
Chennai-600106, Tamilnadu, India.

³HOD/Professor, Department of Siddhar Yoga Maruthuvam, Govt Siddha Medical College,
Chennai-600106, Tamilnadu, India.

⁴GRADE II Lecturer, Dept of Siddhar Yoga Maruthuvam, Govt Siddha Medical College, Chennai

Abstract

Background: *Pranayamam* means *moochupayirchi* which is a branch of yoga practice and extremely beneficial to mankind in maintaining physical and mental health of the body. There are various perspectives on pranayamam. Collection, compilation and interpretation of these views from various school of thoughts is a necessity today. **Aim & objective:** To collect, compile and document various perspectives of pranayamam in *Siddha literatures*. **Methodology :** Many classical texts of Siddha system, Tamil literatures from various libraries like Ambedkar Library, GSMC, Chennai, CCRS library, Chennai, Connemara library, Chennai, Tamarai library, Chennai., Anna centenary library, Chennai., Saraswathimahal library, Thanjavur and from various standard search engines, authorised journals were reviewed and the obtained data was compiled and documented. **Result:** The knowledge about various aspects of pranayamam will be perceived. The methodized procedure for practicing pranayamam is formulated and it will be an initiative for further study on pranayamam. The results and explanations from this study will justify the incorporation of *Pranayamam* as part of our lifestyle in promoting health.

Keywords: Pranayamam, *vaasitharanai*, *vayutharanai*, *saram*.

Introduction

Siddha system of medicine is one of the ancient systems of medicine conceived by *siddhars*, who lived a spiritual life in the southern region of India. *Siddhars* were the embodiment of divine knowledge, with which they served the people to cure diseases, this practice has been hereditarily nurtured by their successors for generations.

The siddha system of medicine is not only used to cure but also to prevent diseases and in turn to increase the life span of human beings. The *siddhars* pursued to protect the mortal body free from the ravages of old age and death. Therefore, the concept of siddha system of medicine is **“To treat the man as a whole and not merely the disease alone”**. According to the siddha medicine, various psychological and physiological functions of the body are attributed by the combination of seven UDAL THATHUKAL & three VITAL HUMOURS.

Yogam is a part of the *siddha* system and it is practiced in the form of ASANAM, PRANAYAMAM and DHIYANAM. PRANAYAMAM contains two segments PRANA-vital force and YAMAM-control. It is performed for controlling the flow of vital energy that governs all the physiological process in the body. In humans, the breath is vital and its an active connection between the body and mind. Being so, *siddhars* underwent this technique to enhance their inner soul and longevity of life. Concentrating in one's own breathing with eyes closed, leads to enhancement in physiological and psychological states of the body. In short, PRANAYAMAM is the *“art of relaxation”* and here it will be discussed of its various postulates. So, hereby I chose this topic to compile and document the various perspectives of Pranayamam.

Aim & Objective:

The aim of this study is to collect, compile and document various perspectives of pranayamam in *Siddha* literatures.

Methodology

Literature search:

The various classical texts of Siddha system, Tamil literatures from the libraries of all the over Tamil Nadu and from the standard search engines were reviewed and the collected data was compiled and documented. The data's are collected from the following libraries:

- J Ambedkar library, GSMC Chennai.
- J Library ,GSMC palayamkottai,
- J CCRS library, Chennai.
- J Connemara library, Chennai.
- J Tamarailibrary, Chennai.
- J Anna centenary library, Chennai.
- J Saraswathimahal library, Thanjavur.
- J Authorised journals & books.

Search strategies:

The key phrase used to retrieve the data from the libraries,websites,journal was required for this study was **Pranayamam, vaasitharanai, vayutharanai, saram, பிராணாயாமம், வாசிதாரணை, வாயுதாரணை, சரம்**. Overall, we have visited 7 libraries and reviewed some types of literatures.Among them some were related to *Siddha* texts, *Yogam*texts , Tamil literatures &alsofew were from standard search engines.

Siddhar Yogam:

In *Thirumanthiram*, *Thirumoolare*emphazise a new type of yoga called Siva Yogam. Siva yogam deals with individual soul with the removal of ignorance, once the wisdom dawns. It is also a method by which *athma* identifies itself with Siva. It is process of drinking the ambrosial juice oozing from the *sahasaram*. Siva yogam can be referred as *kundalini yoga*.

He mentioned Sun (*Pingalai*), moon (*Idakalai*) and fire (*Sulumunai*) through which he reaches cranium (*Sahasaram*). Thirumoolar does not used

the term *Kundalini* yoga, but the above steps clearly indicate the *kundalini* yoga itself.

Thirumoolar explained the following aspects of yoga:

-) *AttangaYogam*
-) *KesariYogam*
-) *ChandhiraYogam*
-) *PariyangaYogam*

AttangaYogam:

“*Eyamam, Niyamam* and *Asanam* numberless, *Pranayamam* whole some and *prathiyakaram* alike *Tharanai, Thyanam* and *Samathi* to triumph, these eight are the steely limbs of *Yoga*”

Eyamam: The ten *eyamams* are non-violence, truth, honesty, sexual continence, forbearance, attitude, kindness, straight forwardness, bodily cleansing. Making a habit of constantly practising *eyamam* purifies words, thoughts and deeds.

Niyamam: The ten *niyamam* are austerity, contentment, belief in God, charity, worship of God, listening to explanation of doctrines, scriptures, modesty, having a discerning mind, repetition of prayers and sacrifice.

Asanam:Thirumoolar described that, *asanas* are countless; however, he emphasised few *asanas* to attain *Yoga Siddhi*. *Pathirasanam, Veerasanam, Padhumasanam, Kukkudasanam, Komugasanam*.

Pranayamam :It is an exact science. It is the fourth *Angam* or limb of *AshtangaYogam*. Regulation of breath or the control of *Pranan* is the stoppage of inhalation and exhalation, which follows after securing that steadiness of posture or seat, *Asanam*.

Prathiyakaram: It is the restraint of the senses and the withdrawal of the mind from external things. It maintains an inner focus and avoidance of dispersion and distraction.

Tharanai: It means to retain the mind and keep it steadfast inside, which has been obtained by *prathiyakaram*.

Thiyanam: It is consistent, uninterrupted meditation.

Samathi: It is the final goal of *AttangaYogam*. It is attainment of tranquillity. It is an eight limbed yoga.

PRANAYAMAM: It is a practice of ordered breathing. The process of *pranayamam* consists of three acts, namely *Pooragam* (inspiration) *Kumbakam* (retention) and *Resagam* (expiration). The above terms are used by Tantrics and Siddhars and not only by Patanjali. The inspiration should be of twelve *mathirai* and expiration should be of eight *mathirai* and retention should be of four *mathirai*. The breathing occurs through both the nostrils alternatively.

❖ **Principle of pranayamam:**

There are the two nerve-currents one on either side of the spinal column. The left one is called *Idakalai* and the right is known as *Pingalai*. The Moon moves in the *Idakalai* and the Sun in the *Pingalai*. *Idakalai* is cooling. *Pingalai* is heating. *Idakalai* flows through the left nostril and the *Pingalai* through the right nostril.

❖ **Way of breathing :**

The breath flows through the right nostril for one hour and then through the left nostril for one hour. *Sulumunai* is the most important of all the *Nadis*. It is the sustainer of the universe and the path of the universe and the path of salvation.

❖ **Nadis – general perspective:**

Nadis 72,000 in number. Of those the chief ones are ten and they carry the *Pranas*. *Idakalai, Pingalai, Sulumunai, Siguvai, Purudan, Athi, Gandhari, Alampudai, Kuhuh* and *Sankhini* are said to be the ten important *Nadis*. *Idakalai, Pingalai* and *Sulumunai* are said to carry *Pranan* and have Moon, Sun and Agni as their *Devatas*. *Pranayamam* is said to be the union of *Pranan* and *Apanan*. It is of three kinds—expiration, inspiration and retention.

❖ Purifications of pranayamam:

By the practice of Pranayamam, the purification of the Nadis, the brightening of the gastric fire, hearing distinctly of spiritual sounds and good health result. When the Nadis have become purified, certain external signs appear on the body of the Yogi. They are lightness of the body, brilliancy in complexion, increase of the gastric fire, leanness of the body, and along with these, the absence of restlessness in the body. They are all signs of purification.

❖ Time period :

The practice of Pranayamam should be commenced in spring or autumn because in these seasons success is attained without any difficulty or troubles. The SPRING is the period from March to April. The autumn, lasts from September to October. In summer do not practise Pranayama, in the afternoon or evening. In the cool morning hours you can have your practice.

❖ Qualities required:

One who has a calm mind, who has subdued his Indriyas, who has faith in the words of the Guru and Sastras, who is an Astika (i.e., one who believes in God) and is moderate in eating, drinking and sleeping and one who has an eager longing for deliverance from the wheel of births and deaths—is an Adhikari (qualified person) for the practice of Yoga. Such a man can easily get success in the practice. Pranayamam should be practised with care, perseverance and faith.

❖ Diet :

The proficient in Yoga should abandon particles of food, which are detrimental to the practice of Yoga. One should give up salt, mustard, sour, hot, pungent and bitter things, asafoetida, worship of fire, women, too much walking, bathing at sunrise, emaciation of the body by fasts, etc. During the early stages of practice food of milk and ghee is ordained; also food consisting of wheat, green pulse and red rice is said to favour the progress. Take wholesome Sattvic food half

stomachful. Fill a quarter with pure water. Allow the remaining quarter free for expansion of gas and for propitiating the Lord.

❖ Restrictions:

One must not practise Pranayama just after meals. When you are very hungry, then also you must not practise. One should empty the bowels before doing Pranayamam. A Pranayama-practitioner should observe Samyama (control) in food and drink. Highly seasoned dishes, hot curries, chutnies, meat, fishes, chillies, sour articles, tamarind, mustard, all kinds of oil, asafoetida, salt, garlic, onions, urad-ki-dal (black gram), all bitter things, dry foods, black sugar, vinegar, alcohol, sour curd, stale foods, acids, astringents, pungent stuff, roasted things, heavy vegetables, over-ripe or unripe fruits, pumpkins, etc., must be avoided. Onions and garlic are worse than meat. All food-stuffs contain a small quantity of salt. Giving up salt helps you in controlling the tongue and thereby the mind also and in developing will-power too.

❖ Asanas:

➤ **Padmasanam** comes foremost. It is the best Asanam for contemplation. Rishis like Gheranda, Sandilya, speak very highly of this important Asanam. This is highly agreeable for householders. Even ladies can sit in this Asanam. Padmasanam is suitable for lean persons and for youths as well.

➤ Next to Padmasanam comes **Siddhasanam** in importance. Some eulogise this Asanam as even superior to Padmasanam for the purpose of Dhyanam (contemplation). If you get mastery over this Asanam you will acquire many Siddhis. Further, it was being practised by many Siddhars (perfected Yogins). Hence the name Siddhasanam. Even fatty persons with big thighs can practise this Asanam daily. In fact this is better for some persons than Padmasanam. This is not suitable for ladies.

❖ **Pranayamam in literatures:**

“Let the defects be burnt up by Pranayamam”

Vishnu Purana speaks of Pranayama as an accessory to Yoga .“ The mind becomes fit for concentration” (Yoga Sutras, II-53). One will be able to concentrate the mind, nicely after this veil of the light has been removed.

❖ **Benefits of pranayamam:**

The body becomes lean, strong and healthy. Too much fat in the body is reduced. There is lustre in the face. Eyes sparkle like a diamond. The practitioner becomes very handsome. Voice becomes sweet and melodious.

❖ **Considerations to follow:**

Without observing moderation of diet, if one takes to the Yoga practices, he cannot obtain any benefit but gets various diseases. You should not expect the benefits after doing it for 2 or 3 minutes only for a day or two. At least you must have 15 minutes daily practice in the beginning regularly for days together. There will be no use if you jump from one exercise to another everyday. You must have a particular exercise for your daily Abhyasa, which you should improve to a high degree.

Other exercises of course, you can have for occasional practice along with the daily exercise. You must have Bhastrika, Kapalabhati and ‘Easy Comfortable Pranayama’ for your daily practice; and Sitali, Sitkari, etc., can be practised occasionally. Spread a fourfold blanket. Over this spread a piece of white cloth. Then sit for the Pranayama practice facing the North.

❖ **Research aspects:**

Though many treatments and therapies are available, PRANAYAMAM is considered as specialized technique to improvise health and

well being of the life. And nowadays its followed by many people around the world knowing its advantages. Many researches had been underwent on this technique for various diseases and found positive outcomes. Some of them are *KABHALAPATHI PRANAYAMAM* for bronchial asthma, respiratory problems etc., *NADISUDHI PRANAYAMAM* for stress relief which plays major role nowadays and for relaxation of mind. In short, its technique for relaxation of the mind. Even in the present pandemic disease ie., novel *CORONA VIRUS -19* as a supportive treatment it played a major role as it purifies air inside the lungs ,reducing stress and also said to increase immunity which is much needed for this to be cured. So we have to still undergo many researches on this technique to initiate a new way of healthy lifestyle & led a disease free world.

Conclusion

Acquiring knowledge about the Pranayamam technique is not a tiring part when compared to learning other basics. Updating one’s knowledge about the rudiments is a mandatory one in every system of medicine. From ancient days to till now this unique methodology can only taught through guru votary method by which they carted this technique to next generation through verbal communication. To uphold our technique in this scientific world we should be strong enough in our basics.

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