

A Literally review of various Kumbhak Kriya – Pranayama described in the Kumbhak Paddhati text of Acharya Raghuvira.

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Abstract –

Background: Pranayama practices efficiently balance all the dimensions of health. It is useful in many diseases as well. In many psychosomatic diseases efficacy of Pranayama is proven with clinical research. People are accepting the importance of Pranayama practices in day-to-day life. Pranayama techniques described in the "Kumbhak Paddhati text" are not studied. Today it's our need to search in depth the hidden or ignored knowledge to expand the Pranayama concept. To enlighten this knowledge, the present study is helpful.

Purpose: A literature review of the various Kumbhak Kriya – Pranayama described in the Kumbhak Paddhati text of Acharya Raghuvira.

Methods: In this study, the "Kumbhak Paddhati" textbook and Pranayama content from Hathyogpradipika, and Patanjali Yogdarshana both are studied. Both are compared and similarities and differences between them are noted. Peculiarities of various types of Kumbhak Paddhati are noted.

Results: After the study of Pranayama content of "Kumbhak Paddhati text" and present textbooks, although there is a similarity seen in some techniques, a higher number of different kumbhak kriya types are yet to study. In this text, both principles of Ayurveda and Yoga are seen.

Conclusion – From the observations, it can be concluded that the knowledge of 'Kumbhak Paddhati' will definitely expand the dimensions of basic physiology and efficacy of Pranayama. This study can be baseline for further clinical research that will also confirm its therapeutic efficacy.

Key words – Kumbhak kriya, Pranayama, Yoga.

Introduction –

In Manusmriti Pranayama is defined as "Pranayamam param tapa." It means Pranayama is a great austerity. From ancient times Pranayama had been practiced. It is the fourth content of Ashtanga Yoga. Maharshi Patanjali has described Pranayama as "Tasmin sati svasprasvasyorgativicchedah pranayama". He also described the psychological and spiritual significance of pranayama. Practically, if anyone brings a skillful pause during the breath cycle or in between two cycles, then it is called pranayama. Purak, Rechak, and Kumbhak are the three main components of Pranayama. Kumbhak – breath holding is a key component in it. Technically Maharshi Patanjali explained pranayama as Kumbhak kriya. The classification of Pranayama is given in various textbooks. Routinely there are so many types of Pranayama techniques which is practiced. In the progress of the Pranayama study, Purak and Rechak kriya become secondary. Studies proved that practices of Kumbhak kriya are essential to see the therapeutic effect in a particular condition. Acharya Raghuvira had written three manuscripts on Kumbhak kriya. Dr. M L Gharote sir and Dr. Parimal Devnath have edited firstly all the manuscripts and collaborated all in the "Kumbhak Paddati" text. There is about 289 Sanskrit Shloka present in Kumbhak Paddhati, comprising 57 types of Pranayama (kumbhak paddhati) with 45 stages. Here, Kumbhak word is for Pranayama. In this text, kumbhak paddhati or kumbhak marg is described which originated from Shiva. Therapeutic applications of Pranayama practices and their importance have been proved through various research studies. As the breathing process and mind-body activities are correlated with each other, practices of Pranayama are beneficial in treating psychosomatic disorders. The application of different types of Pranayama, mentioned in the Kumbhak Paddhati text is yet to be studied. For this purpose first literature study of these Pranayama techniques is important. Apart from the valuable contribution of Dr. Gharote and Dr. Devnath, no one has reviewed or studied these techniques. Therefore this will be a sincere effort to study these Pranayama techniques.

Aim –

This study aims to review various types of kumbhak kriya described in the kumbhak paddhati text of Acharya Raghuvira.

Objective –

The objectives of the study were

1. To review the literature of the Kumbhak Paddhati textbook.
2. To study the difference between various types of kumbhak kriya and today's practices of pranayama

Material and method –

This is a literature review of various types of Kumbhak kriya – Pranayama given in Kumbhak Paddhati texts. For this study, textbooks on Pranayama – Hathयोगpradipika, Patanjali Yogdarshana, and Kumbhak Paddhati textbook have been studied.

Findings of Kumbhak Paddhati text can be categorized as follows –

1. Structure of the book
2. Writer and Editors of the book
3. Kumbhak Paddhati classification
4. Comparison between current Pranayama practices and kumbhak kriyas

Structure of the book –

There is about 289 Sanskrit Shloka present in Kumbhak Paddhati, comprising more than 57 types of Pranayama (kumbhak paddhati). Here, Kumbhak word is for Pranayama. Dr. M L Gharote sir and Parimal Devnath have edited firstly all the manuscripts written by Acharya Raghuvira. In this text, kumbhak paddhati or kumbhak marg is described which originated from Shiva. Manuscripts of kumbhak paddhati J & A are deposited in Rajasthan Oriental research institute and Royal Asiatic society Calcutta respectively.

Writer and Editors of the book –

Acharya Raghuvira has given brief information at the beginning of the kumbhak paddhati textbook. His father, Sivarama, was a descendant of kusta gotra and was Udichya brahmana from Kashi. Sat-karma-sangraha and Misraka are other literature of Raghuvira. He was from royal family background and his work is basically on pranayama.

About Dr. Gharote and Dr. Parimal Devnath (Editors of the book) –

Dr. M. L. Gharote established Lonavla Yoga Institute (India) in Lonavla where the scientific Yoga movement was started by Swami Kuvalayananda. He specialized in Physical Education and varied aspects of Yoga like Scientific research, Literary research, Yoga training, and Yoga therapy. He received various prestigious honors and awards including one for medical research in Yoga. Dr. Parimal Devnath has written various books as an author or co-author with Dr. Gharote. Some of the names of his books are Hathapradipika with Commentary Yogaprakasika, Traditional Theory of Evolution and Its Application in Yoga, Therapeutic References in Traditional Yoga, Amanaskayog, etc.

Kumbhak Paddhati Classification –

- a) Sagarbha
- b) Agarbha

Agarbha kumbhak is divided into following types

1. antah	13. utkarsaka	25. kak canchu	37. krama	49. kanthi vetali
2. bahih	14. apakarsaka	26. bhut shuddhi	38.netra	50.bhoralika
3. candra	15. sahaj	27. bhrasrika	39.trishuka	51. kevvali
4. urdhvaja	16. daksinavart sankha carkra	28. antarang	40.meru	52.suuyaka kumbhaka
5. mrga	17.vamavarta sankha carkra	29. bhramari	41.ghati bandha	53.keval
6.saman	18. gada	30. murcchana	42. kalangi	54.trinetra
7.vyan	19. nadi shuddhi surya candra	31. svanga skrunkhala	43.nada	55.surya bhedan
8.krtti-sreshtha	20. tatva	32. plavini	44.utkranti	56.candra bhedan
9.prakrti	21. ujjayi	33. jivacala	45.vama	57.agni soma
10.naga	22.kumbha raja	34. sadanga	46.bhujangi	58.sam

11.kurma	23. sitali	35. kamala	47.bhuyagamana	59.santha
12.krkkar	24.sitkari	36. kumuda	48.tratak	60.suddhi

Kumbhakas are broadly divided into sahita and kevala. ābhyanantara and bahya-kumbhakas come under the category of sahita. All the kumbhak are called ameru against meru which is kevala. A brief description of kumbhak is as follows:

Abhyantara kumbhak (internal retention of breath) - When prana is retained in suṣumnā nāḍī it is called antah kumbhaka.

Bahya kumbhak (external retention of breath) - When the breath is held outside after exhalation, it is called bahya kumbhak.

Chandra kumbhak - After inhalation one holds the breath simultaneously applying mula-bandha to stimulate apana vayu, which is candra-kumbhaka.

Urdhvaja kumbhak - After holding one breath when one practice rechak, one should visualize the moon at the base of the spine and concentrate from place to place going upwards along the spine.

Mrga kumbhak - When apana is held in the back of the hip region continuously, it is known as mrga kumbhak.

Samana kumbhak - When samana vayu is held at the navel region with concentration, it is samana kumbhak.

Vyāna kumbhak - Inhale deeply and hold breath by contracting the whole body with subtle concentration.

kṛtti-śrestha kumbhak - The technique consists of holding the breath with a progressive concentration in the throat, palate, mid-brow, and top of the head and maintaining it there.

Prakṛti kumbhak - Sucking the air in with a loud sound and holding the breath is known as prakṛti kumbhak.

Naga kumbhak - In this swallow the air into the throat like taking morsel of rice. Then retain the breath to the capacity with firm jalandhara bandha and expel the air from the throat.

Kūrma kumbhak - When the blinking of the eyes is controlled and one becomes perfectly steady devoid of movement of the eyes and the whole body it is called kurma kumbhak.

krukara kumbhak- When there is a possibility of sneezing one should rub the index and ring fingers with the thumb. This controls sneeze and is known as krkara kumbhak.

Sahita kumbhaka - When kumbhaka is accompanied by pūraka and recaka it is termed as sahita kumbhaka.

Agni-soma kumbhak – it's like Anulom vilom but with forced Rechak kriya.

Sama kumbhak - Without exhalation or inhalation one should mentally attend to the vital points like navel etc.

Santa-kumbhak - When the breath is held internally or externally between the two vital points imagining its presence inside and outside, it is called santa-kumbhak.

karsaka kumbhak - It is two-fold depending on point of concentration: utkarṣaka and apakarṣaka

Sahaja kumbhak - Inhale the prana through the nose carrying it along the kundalini and hold it comfortably.

Daksinavarta-cakra kumbhak -Take the breath through surya-nādi (right nostril) and after retaining it in the chest, exhale through the candra- nadi (left nostril).

Vamāvarta-cakra kumbhaka -The reverse of the dakṣiṇāvarta-cakra kumbhaka.

Daksināvarta-saikha-ku - Take a breath through the right nostril, retain it, and exhale through the left nostril.

Vāmāvarta-śaikha-ku – The reverse of above Daksināvarta-saikha-ku.

Gadā kumbhak - Inhale through both nostrils and after holding the breath exhale through the right nostril.

nādi-śuddhi kumbhak - Visualisation with Anulom vilom kriya for purification of Nadi.

Suddhi-kumbhak (sūrya) - Inhale through the right nostril and hold with a concentration in the navel.

Suddhi-kumbhak (candra) - Inhale through the left nostril and hold your breath with visualization.

tatva kumbhak – Puran kriya with visualization of control over five tatva.

Sūrya-bhedana kumbhak - Inhale the outside air fully through the right nostril with sound and after holding it firmly, exhale through the ida or left nostril.

Candra-bhedana kumbhak – This technique is just the opposite of surya-bhedana.

Ujjayi kumbhak - Inhale through the two nostrils, hold the breath judiciously, and exhale through the left nostril.

Kumbharaja - One should forcefully inhale the air and hold the breath by closing the nose to its capacity before one exhale.

Sit-kāri kumbhak - Raise the tongue and inhale the air making a 'sit' sound. Hold the breath and exhale through the nose.

kaka-cañcu kumbhak - Forming the tongue into a tube takes the air in through it. After holding the breath exhale through the nose.

Mātrā kumbhak - When particular time units are used during kumbhak it becomes mātrā kumbhak (ek, dvi, tray matra).

Bhūta-Suddhi kumbhak - When mātrā kumbhak is practiced with a progressive concentration on all the six regions (of Chakras).

Bhastrikā kumbhak – Three different types are described – bhrastrika, antar, antaranga.

Antaranga-ku - Retain the breath after sudden exhalation and inhalation.

bhrāmari-kumbhak - Inhale rapidly producing the sound of a black bee and after retaining the breath exhale slowly with same sound.

Mūrccana kumbhak - Hold the breath after complete inhalation and while adopting Jalandhar-bandha, exhale.

plāvini kumbhak - After taking the breath fully and adopting jalandhara- bandha lies on the water which causes floating on the water.

Svanga śrikhala - One should inhale the air followed by the retention and again and again try to inhale and retain repeatedly until one is exhausted.

kumbhāntara śrikhalā - Kumbhaka followed by the kumbhak as instructed by the guru.

Jivacāla - During kumbhak one should activate prāṇa vāyu in upward and downward directions.

Sadanga kumbhak - Mūlabandha, pūraka, jalandhara-bandha, kumbhaka, uddiyana and recaka are the six components of sadanga kumbhaka.

kamala kumbhak - Inhale through the surya nadi and after holding the breath exhale through the candra nādi.

kumuda kumbhak - Inhale through the left nostril and after retaining the breath exhale through both nostrils.

krama-netra-ku - Inhale quickly through the right nostril. Hold your breath and then inhale through the left nostril. After holding the breath exhale in the same order (krama).

Vyutkrama – reverse of krama ku.

netra-kumbhak - Inhale through the right nostril, hold the breath. Again inhale through the left, hold the breath with effort, and exhale in a similar sequence.

trineta-kumbhak - Inhale quickly through the left nostril and hold the breath followed by inhalation through the right nostril and retaining the breath. Then inhale the breath again through both nostrils, and hold the breath systematically before exhalation.

trisūla-kumbhak - Inhale through the nose and mouth simultaneously and hold the breath before exhalation.

eka-meru kumbhak - When the period of kumbhak increases with the knowledge of internal and external movements of prana or determining the number of mātrās, respirations or with devotion to God, it is called meru ku.(ek, dvi, tri)

ghati-bandha-ku - One should tie up the joint of an hourglass made of copper with a hole at the bottom and fill it with sand and use it for measurement of time for kumbhak.

47 various stages (levels of spiritual development) are there in the attainment meru -

1. Sparsa	17. gandhavati,	33. prākāmya,
2. Mūdhā	18. rasaprada,	34. mahimā,
3. sthāna-vāhā	19. rupa-grahaṇa-kārini,	35. ísitvam,
4. dhātu-soṣaṇā	20. sparsavatikā,	36. vaśitvam,
5. pustidā,	21. sabda-suśruti,	37. kāmāvasayitā,
6. jitāsanā,	22. buddhida,	38. nivartikā,
7. anāhatā,	23. śruti-bodhana,	39. bhūmayi,
8. subhasubha,	24. jaya,	40. toyamayi,
9. smarahara,	25. vak-siddhida,	41. tejomayi,
10. margadā,	26. citra-darśanā,	42. vāyumayi,
11. sakti- bodhini,	27. vegavati, m	43. vyomamayi,
12. śakti-calanā,	28. anojava-dāyini,	44. pradhana-jaya-dāyini,
13. citta-kampā,	29. gati- prada,	45. viveka-khyāti,
14. jitāsanā,	30. anima,	46. dharma-megha,
15. jyotiṣmati,	31. laghimā,	47. brahma-mayi
16. mātrā- prakāsā,	32. prāpti,	

Current practices of Pranayama – types of Kumbhak –

Types of Pranayama mentioned in Gherand samhita, Patanjali darshan, and Hathayog pradipika are practiced commonly in day-to-day life. As mentioned earlier Purak Kumbhak and Rechak are the three main components of Pranayama. Kumbhak is classified as Aabhyantar, Bahya, and Keval. Aabhyantar and Bahya types are practiced with conscious efforts and again classified into eight different types – Suryabhedhi, Ujjayi, Shitali, Sitkari, Bhrastrika, Bhramari Murchha, and Plavini. Dheergha Shvasan and Anulom vilom are also practiced. Certain legacies are having particular types of Pranayama practices like – Sudarshankriya etc.

Comparison between current Pranayama practices and kumbhak kriyas –

Similarity	Difference
<p>1. Pranayama word is used for Kumbhak kriya. Here in these all literatures importance of holding the breath is mentioned.</p> <p>2. Currently practices of all pranayama types are similar to some types of kumbhak kriya. For example – Anulom vilom kriya and Nadi Shodan kriya Purak rechak and antah – bahy kriya , Sitkari , Bhramari , Shitali and Kak chanchu kriya ,ujjayi and murchana kriya, Surya Chandra nadi bhedan, Plavini are having similarity.</p>	<p>1. As per other samhitas, Pranayama is fourth Anga of Ashtang Yoga. Which means it should be practiced after the successful practices of Yam, Niyam and Asanas. On the other hand in Kumbhak Paddati there is no need to do so.</p> <p>2. Maatra and Meru kumbhak kriya are specialty of this textbook which is not given in other textbooks.</p> <p>3. 47 stages – levels of spiritual development in the attempt of Meru kumbhak is another unique feature of this text.</p> <p>4. Very minute classification of Kumbhak kriya with visualization and its benefits is given in this book.</p> <p>5. Only pranayama practices are given not other Ashtangas like Asan etc.</p> <p>6. 10 vayus and their kumbhak kriya along with their therapeutic benefits is the key feature.</p> <p>7. Therapeutic approach of kumbhak kriya is given in brief but specific.</p> <p>8. For psychological disorders pranayama importance with benefits are given.</p>

Discussion –

From the Vedic era, Pranayama is practiced for health as well as therapeutic benefits. As time passes many research works have been taking place and new techniques of Pranayama are invented. Pranayama has been proven effective in many diseases. Basically, in psychosomatic diseases, its efficacy shows amazing improvements in patients. But these have limitations too. For this purpose, more research on the application of these techniques should be done. The knowledge from “Kumbhak Paddati” is ignored and it is time to study this to expand the dimensions of Pranayama. The Sanskrit Language of these shlokas is very ancient and difficult to understand. Dr. Gharote sir and Dr. Parimal sir edited these manuscripts to make them understand easily. Some of these types are similar to all current practicing types of pranayama, but many of them are not. From the data available from the study some new points are added in some popular Pranayama types which are practiced routinely – Shitali Pranayama can be performed with three different techniques; Bhramari pranayama efficacy is not limited to just mind concentration; Murchhana kriya technique is different from current practices etc. The therapeutic efficacy of Pranayama is given which shows a practical approach. Like other books importance of Asan practices is not given. Meru kumbhak kriya is the key feature of the book. Today every other day humans are suffering from new types of disease. In this situation to maintain a healthy life and to boost recovery, we should not ignore the hidden knowledge of the therapeutic effect of these kumbhak kriyas.

Conclusion –

From an overview of this “Kumbhak Paddati” text, it can be concluded that- The literature of this text shows both Yoga and Ayurveda principles and their correlation. Unfolding the knowledge of ‘Kumbhak Paddhati’ will expand the dimensions of basic physiology and efficacy of Pranayama. Also, with a clinical study, these pranayama techniques should be evaluated for their therapeutic efficacy.

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