Yoga and the Path to God Realization
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From the Agamas

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Before Patanjali, the Saiva Agamas explained attainment of the inner realms

Kirana Agama is one of the 28 Saiva Agamas. This excerpt is from verses 12 to 77 of the section on yoga from the unpublished translation by Dr. S. P. Sabharathnam. It describes meditating upon the chakras, the associated nadis or nerve currents, and planes of realization sought. According to Dr. Sabharathnam, these instructions on yoga in the Agamas are the source of Pantalaji's Yoga Aphorisms.

Having assumed a recommended posture, he should keep the joined palms just below his navel and should hold a straight posture. Keeping his mind on the heart-lotus, he should keep himself detached from the external objects and senses. He should remain in this state of restraint so long as he is in the yogic practice. This kind of retention of mind is known as pratyahara. One should then do the three phrases of breath control, pranayama, three times before the commencement of the yogic process. Through the practice of pratyahara and pranayama, one can free himself from the tumults of impeding causes arising out of external objects and thereby become an accomplished yogin.

[Having achieved a state of dhyana, contemplation] he mentally rises above the plane of heart-lotus to reach a place belonging to Vishnu where there are sixteen nadis, nerve currents, occupying the region of the ears. Above the plane of this second lotus, there is a lotus region which is very pure. This is in the region occupied by the palate. There are 24 nadis running around the lotus petals. Rudra is to be contemplated upon as being surrounded by these 24 nadis and as endowed with His own divine form.

Above this, there is a lotus in the region of the forehead, belonging to the Lord Anantesvara, to which the aspirant can ascend by the foregoing practice. This lotus is furnished with four nadis; and the fourth syllable, va, of the mantra Namasivaya

is at the center. The names of the four nadis are: nivritti, prastishtha, vidya and shanti. These nadis are subtle and pure. Through the practice of this kind of dhyana, aspirants become endowed with the eight siddhis, or supreme powers, such as the power to become very tiny, very heavy, understand the inner thoughts of all beings, etc. Through the practice of dhyana, fixing his mind in the forehead lotus, without doubt, one can attain supreme accomplishments.

Above the place of the forehead there ascends a path which is as subtle and long as the subtle thread of lotus stalk. This is the place for Lord Sadasiva, where innumerable sounds, like the loud noise of clouds, can be heard internally. Lord Sadasiva is to be meditated upon as shining forth with His own divine form, made of kala mantras and adorned with rising snakes. He is seated on the lotus surrounded by four nadis: indika, dipika, rechika and mochika.

Above the region of Sadasiva mandala exists Shakti mandala, known as kundalini. This is beyond the reach of sound, and it is subtle in form. Shakti is seated there, surrounded by four nadis: sukshma, susukshma, amrita and mrita. Through the practice of this kind of dhyana, one can become the knower of all and the doer of all.

Above the place of Shakti is the mandala of Parashakti in which there are four nadis: vyapini, ananta, anatha and anashrita. She is seated at the centre of lotus with a subtle and impeccable form. Through the practice of this kind of dhyana, one can achieve the power of vyapakatva, omnipresence, the power which is not to be attained even by divine and celestial beings. The place existing above Parashakti mandala is nishkala. It is eternal and everlasting. It is of the nature of consciousness, and it is as still as motionless air. A yogin who ascends to that highest mandala and gets absorbed in it, samadhi bhavana, through the gradual practice of the dhyana process never comes back to his mundane state. The all-powerful Lord becomes favorably disposed toward the aspirant on account of his devotion and continued meditation.

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The Vedas and Agamas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures,

shruti, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1200 bce), Bible New Testament (100 ce), Koran (630 ce) or Zend Avesta (600 bce). The present versions we have of the Saiva Agamas, such as Kirana, are dated to the early first millennium ce; Dr. Sabharathnam places their origins as far back as 8,000 bce.