

Chapter 2

Literary research

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2.0. LITERARY RESEARCH ON TRĀṬAKA

2.1. BACKGROUND & SCOPE:

The literal meaning of the Sanskrit word *trāṭaka* is “to gaze steadily”. Looking intently with an unwavering gaze at a small point until tears are shed is known as *trāṭaka* (*Hatha Yogā Pradipika*, Ch:2, V:31). It consists of a steady gazing, without blinking the eyes, at any small object at one-meter distance e.g., the flame of a candle or oil lamp, a small point or the distant objects like rising Sun, planets, Moon etc.; until tears start rolling down (*Gharote, 1984*). Though *trāṭaka* is very simple, it is a very powerful practice and has got many benefits. *Hatha Yogā pradipika* mentions that the practice of *trāṭaka* eradicates all eye diseases, fatigue, and lethargy (*Hatha Yogā pradipika*, Ch: 2.32).

Trāṭaka is classified in to two types i.e., *bahiranga trāṭaka* (external) and *Antaranga trāṭaka* (internal). *Bahiranga Trāṭaka* is performed by steadily gazing, without blinking at a small object. A candle flame is good for this practice. *Antaranga trāṭaka* is done by visualizing the symbol or image. *Antaranga trāṭaka* is difficult to practice in the beginning.

2.2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF LITERARY RESEARCH

- To understand the concept of *Trāṭaka*
- To explore the methods & effects of *Trāṭaka*

2.3. MATERIALS AND METHODS: SOURCE MATERIAL

- *Pātañjalayogasūtra*
- *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*
- *Ġhereṇḁa Samhitā*
- *Haṭaratnāvalī*
- *The khecarīvidyā of Adhinatha*
- *Bhagavadgītā*
- *Haṭatatvakaumudī*
- *Upaniṣad*
 - ❖ *Yoga Sara Upaniṣad*
 - ❖ *Advaitamrita Upaniṣad*

2.4. Concept of *Trāṭaka*

2.4.1. Concept according to *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*

Haṭhayogapradīpikā is one of the important text Yoga written by sage *Svātmārāma*. It has four chapters; in the second chapter it describes *kriyas and pranayamas*.

धौतिर्बास्तिस्तथा नेतिस्त्राटकं नौलिकं तथा ।

कपालभातिशचैतानि षट् कर्माणि प्रचक्षते ॥ २२ ॥

dhautirbastistathā netistrāṭakaṁ naulikaṁ tathā
kapālabhātiśacaitāni ṣaṭ karmāṇi pracakṣate// (HYP Ch 2.22)

Dhautī, basti, neti, trāṭaka, nauli and kapālabhāti; these are known as *shatkarma* or six cleansing processes.

निरीक्षेन्निशलदृशा सुक्ष्मलक्ष्यं समाहितः ।

अश्रुसंपातपर्यन्तमाचार्यैस्त्राटकं स्मृतम् ॥ ३१ ॥

nirīkṣenniśaladr̥śā suksmalakṣyaṁ samāhitaḥ
aśrusampātaparyantamācāryaistrāṭakaṁ smṛtam// (HYP Ch 2.31)

Trāṭaka means to gaze steadily and to look intently with an unwavering gaze at a small point until tears are shed, is known as *trāṭaka* by the acharyas (teachers).

मोचनं नेत्ररोगाणां तन्द्रादीनां कपाटकम् ।

यत्नतस्त्राटकं गोप्यं यथा हाटकपेटकम् ॥ ३२ ॥

mocanaṁ netrarogāṇāṁ tandrādīnāṁ kapāṭakam
yatnatastrāṭakaṁ gopyaṁ yathā hāṭakapeṭakam// (HYP Ch 2.32)

Trāṭaka eradicates all eye diseases, fatigue, and sloth and then closes the doorway creating these problems. It should be carefully kept secret like a golden casket.

2.4.2. Concept according to *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*

धौति बस्तिस्तथा नेतिलौलिकी त्राटकं तथा ।
 कपालभातिश्चैतानि षटकर्मणि समाचरेत् ॥
dhauti bastistathā netirlaulikī trāṭhakaṃ tathā |
kapālabhātīścaitāni ṣaṭakarmmaṇi samācaret //

Verse (Part I, 52)

निमेषोमेषकं त्यक्त्वा सुक्ष्मलक्ष्यं निरीक्षयेत् ।
 पतन्ति यावदश्रूणि त्राटकं प्रोच्यते बुधैः
nimeṣommeṣakaṃ tyaktvā sukṣmalakṣyaṃ nirīkṣayet |
patanti yāvadaśrūṇi trāṭakaṃ procyate budhaiḥ

Gaze steadily without winking at any small objects, until tears being to flow. This is called *trāṭaka* by the wise.

Verse (Part I, 52)

एवमभ्यासयोगेन शांभवी जायते ध्रुवम् ।
 नेत्ररोगा विनश्यन्ति दिव्यद्रुष्टिः प्रजायते ॥५३॥
evamabhyāsayogena śāmbhāvī jāyate dhruvam |
netrarogā vinaśyanti divyadrusṭiḥ prajāyate ||53||

By constant practice of *trāṭaka*, the Shambavi Mudra is verily facilitated; diseases of the eyes are cured and acute vision acquired

Verse (Part I, 53)

2.4.3. Concept according to *Haṭaratnāvalī*

In this Text, *Srinivasa yogi* mentioned eightfold cleansing processes, such as *cakri*, *nauli*, *dhauti*, *basti*, *gajakariṇī*, *trāṭakaṃ*, and *mastakabhrānti* (*kapālābhāti*) were motioned as purificatory procedures of different systems of the body.

चक्रिनौलिधौतिबस्तिच गजकरिनि ।

त्रतकम् मस्तकभ्रिन्तह् कम्न्यस्तौ प्रचक्षते ॥

*cakrinaulidhautibastiśca gajakariṇī ॥
trāṭakam mastakabhrāntiḥ karmāṇyaṣṭau pracakṣate ॥*

haṭha ratnāvalī Ch: 1.26//

The eight karmas, (purificatory processes) like cakri etc., follow the tradition of our guru.

निरिक्स्य निचलद्र्श सुक्षमलक्ष्यम् सम्हितह् ।

अवसुसम्सपर्यन्तम्व्यरौख्तकम् स्मृतम् ॥

*nirikṣya niścaladrśā sukṣmalakṣyam samāhitaḥ ॥
akṣusampātaparyantamācāyrauṣṭrāṭakam smrutam ॥*

Haṭha ratnāvalī Ch: 1.54

One should constantly gaze at a very minute object, remaining one-pointed, until tears roll down. According to the adepts, this is *trāṭaka*.

स्फोतनम् नेत्रोग्रम् तन्द्रद्गम् कप्तकम् ।

प्रयत्नत्रतकम् गोप्यम् यथ रत्नसुपेतकम् ॥

*sphotanam netrarogāṇam tandrādīnām kapṭakam ॥
prayatnātrāṭakam gopyam yathā ratnasupetakam ॥ ॥*

Haṭha ratnāvalī Ch: 1.55

This technique removes eye diseases drowsiness and the like. Therefore, it should be carefully guarded like a casket of jewels.

2.4.4 The Khecarividya of Adhinatha reference of Antaranga trataka:

आन्तर्लक्ष्य-विलिन-चित्त-पवनो योगि सद वर्तते
ड्स्त्य निस्चल-तरय बहिर्-अधह् पस्यन्-नपस्यन्नपि
उद्र्-एयम् खलु सम्भवि भवति स लब्ध प्रसदद्-गुरोह्
षुन्य-असुन्य-विलक्सनम् स्फुरति तत् तत्त्वम् परम् सम्भवम्
Antarlakṣya-vilina-citta-pavano yogi sada vartate !

Drstyā niscalā-tarayā bahir-adhah pasyan-napasyannapi !!
Mudr-eyam khalu sambhavi bhavati sa labdha prasada-guroh !
Suny-asunya-vilaksanam sphurati tat tattvam param sambhavam

The eyes become clear and bright, and, by inducing a strong sense of Ajna chakra it begins to create changes in the perception of all psychosomatic experiences. *Trāṭaka* calms, stills, and focuses the mind, developing concentration and willpower; it begins the journey into Internal Yoga, the deeper levels of Mind (GS indicates clairvoyance and subtle manifestation). This is the stepping-off point from physical cleansing to esoteric cleansing.

2.4.5. According to *Bhagavadgītā*

तत्रैकाग्रं मनः कृत्वा यतचित्तेन्द्रियक्रियः |
 उपविश्यासने युञ्ज्याद्योगमात्मविशुद्धये || 6.12||
 समं कायशिरोग्रीवं धारयन्नचलं स्थिरः |
 सम्प्रेक्ष्य नासिकाग्रं स्वं दिशश्चानवलोकयन् || 6.13||

tatraikāgraṁ manaḥ kṛtvā yata-chittendriya-kriyāḥ
upaviśhyāsane yuñjyād yogam ātma-viśuddhaye
samaṁ kāya-śhiro-grīvaṁ dhārayann achalaṁ sthiraḥ
samprekṣhya nāsikāgraṁ svaṁ diśhaśh chānavalokayan

Seated firmly on it, the yogi should strive to purify the mind by focusing it in meditation with one-pointed concentration, controlling all thoughts and activities. He must hold the body, neck, and head firmly in a straight line, and gaze at the tip of the nose, without allowing the eyes to wander.

2.4.6 According to *Haṭhatatvakaumudī*

ळक्स्यम् समहितमतिह् स्थिरलोचनभ्यम्
 इक्स्येत् सुसुक्स्ममतिवस्पनिपतसिमतत्
 दूतकम् सकलनेत्रगदपहरि

टन्द्रदिपतनकरम् भ्रसम् गोप्यते तत्

Laksyam samahitamatih sthiralocanabhyam

Viksyet susuksmamativaspanipatasimatat

Tratakam sakalanetragegadapahari

Tandradipatanakaram bhramam gopyate tat

One gazes at a very subtle object with raft attention till tears roll down. This is *Trāṭaka* which cures all eye diseases & lethargy. It has been kept very secret **2.4.7. According to Upaniṣad**

2.4.7.1 Yoga Sara Upaniṣad

बुद्धिप्रयुक्तं मनो बाह्येन्द्रियं द्वारीकृत्य विषयं प्रतिपद्यते ।

buddhiprayuktam mano bahyendriyam dvārikṛtya viṣayam pratipadyate |

Perception comes only when the mind is connected with the center & an external instrument

यं कंचिद्विषयं बाह्यमाभ्यन्तरं वा अनुसन्दधात्यस्य चित्तैकाग्र्यं धारणा

yam kañcidviṣayam bahyamābhyantaram vā anusandadhātyasya

citaikāgrayam dhāraṇā

(Mantra 11)

Dharana or concentration is fixing the mind on an ideal or a point or object either external or internal

2.4.7.2 Advaitamrita Upaniṣad

संहृत्य मनः सर्वेन्द्रियविषयेभ्यःशश्वदेकाग्रं साधय ॥

तदात्मन्यसकृत्संयोजय भयमपहाय दिव्यभावप्राप्तौ दृढव्रतो भव ।

samhṛtya manaḥ sarvendriyaviṣayebhyaḥśaśvadekāgram sādahaya |

tadātmanyasakṛtsamyojaya bhayamapahāya divyabhāvaprāptau dṛḍhavrato bhava |

(Mantra 6)

Withdraw the mind again and again from all sense objects. Make it one-pointed. Fix it again and again on the Self. Become fearless. Be firm in the vow of Divine Life.

2.5. BENEFITS OF TRĀṬAKA:

2.5.1. According to *Hāthayogapradīpikā*

मोचनं नेत्ररोगाणां तन्द्रादीनां कपाटकम् ।

यत्नतस्त्रातकं गोप्यं यथा हाटकपेटकम् ॥ ३२ ॥

mocanam netrarogāṇāṃ tandrādīnāṃ kapāṭakam |

yatnatastrātakam gopyam yathā hāṭakapeṭakam || (HYP Ch 2.32)

Trāṭaka eradicates all eye diseases, fatigue, and sloth and then closes the doorway creating these problems. It should be carefully kept secret like a golden casket.

Traditionally, *Trāṭaka* benefits not only the eyes but a whole range of psychological and mental functions. It has a beneficial therapeutic effect on depression, insomnia, allergy, anxiety, postural problems, low concentration, and memory.

2.5.2. Spiritual Benefits

- *Nāśikāgra trāṭaka* – Gazing at the tip of the nose reduces (*kleśa*) (Mental Tensions) (Taranatha, 1962).
- *Bhrumadhya trāṭaka* – Gazing at the eyebrow centre facilitates the attainment of (*khecari*) mudra (Higher yogic practice) (Cidghananandanatha, & Harshe, 1970).
- By constant practice of *trāṭaka*, (*divya*) (*dr̥ṣṭi*) (clairvoyance) is developed (Narayana, 2000).
- *Bhakti sāgara* claims that whatever idea is contemplated during the (*trāṭaka*) practice, it will be fulfilled (Satyananda, 2009).
- *Trāṭaka* helps to develop concentration and improves memory (Vishnudevananda, 2002).

- The practitioner develops willpower as it gets invoked while controlling blinking (Vishnudevananda, 2002).
- *Trāṭaka* is excellent preparation for meditation (Gitananda, 1988).
- *Āgnācakra* activates with the practice of (*trāṭaka*) (Gharote, 1986).
- *Trāṭaka* is a fine exercise for a wandering mind. It gives total concentration and is thoughtless (Vishnudevananda, 2002).
- *Trāṭaka* helps to attain perfection in (*saṁyama*) (higher yogic state) (Omananda, 2005).
- Doing (*Trāṭaka*) decreases the (*rajaḥ*) component and thus the proportion of (*satva*) component increases (Gitananda, 1988).
- Activation of a subtle sense of vision “(*prakāśabhāśa*)” (Comprehension of the language of light), along with (*pranayāma*) one can comprehend the language of sound “(*nādabhāśa*)” then one can interpret any language, even that of birds and animals (Ramachandar, 2000; Vasu, 1966).
- Practitioners whose *prakāśabhāśa* is activated can be able to view the aura around a person or object and also able to get a vision of deities (Vasu, 1966).

2.5.3. Psychological Benefits:

- During the initial practice of (*trāṭaka*), the subconscious and the unconscious mind gets activated and thus help to bring back certain repressed experiences to the level of consciousness (Gore et al., 1990).
- The intensity of the thoughts disappears in the long practice and one gets relaxation, calmness, lightness, and pleasant feelings and wishes to continue (*trāṭaka*) with these feelings (Satyananda, 1981).

- *Trāṭaka* gives improved sleep patterns, a more balanced state of mind and improves memory, and emotional stability (Bernard, 1944).

2.5.4. Physical Benefits:

- *Trāṭaka* exercises and strengthens eye muscles. (Subhash, 2000)
- *Trāṭaka* vitalises vision (Birendra, 2002).
- The practice of (*trāṭaka*) also destroys microbes through tears (Umeshi, 1998).
- The practitioner gets a soothing effect on the cranial nerves (Satyananda, 2007).

2.5.5. Therapeutic Benefits:

- *Trāṭaka* is known to correct refractive errors (Subhash, 2000).
- Beneficial in relieving nervous tension (Bhole, 1971).
- People with anxiety and Insomnia benefit greatly (Omananda, 2005).
- Many eye disorders are due to a lack of proper blood circulation. So, (*trāṭaka*) helps in improving circulation and overcoming eye disorders related to blood circulation (Subhash, 2000).

2.6. SUMMARY:

Trāṭaka is one of the six cleansing techniques according to *Haṭha* yoga. The practice involves focussing on an object without blinking the eyes. This practice enhances the mind becoming one pointed and leads to a meditative state. Regular practice of *trāṭaka* has a therapeutic effect on eye disorders, depression, insomnia, and memory.