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PATANJALI, THE AUTHOR OF THE YOGASUTRA

The author partially fulfils a need for more information on Patañjali by his study of the Purāṇas.

IT is a pity that we find hardly any valuable information regarding the life of Patañjali, the author of the Yoga-sūtra. In the course of my studies I have found the following passages in *purāṇic* literature on Patañjali and his work on Yoga. In the Vedic literature there is no reference to the sage Patañjali though the Patañjali gotra is mentioned in a few *Sūtra* works. The Kāṇva-Bṛhadāraṇyaka (3.3.1) and the Mādhyandina Bṛhadāraṇyaka (14.6.3.1) speak of one Kāpya Patañcala and not of Patañjala or Patañjali as is wrongly considered by some scholars. The views of the works like Patañjalicarita of Rāmabhadra Dikṣita affords little help in framing a historical life of Patañjali, for these works were composed in later times and they are full of exaggerated views mixed with myth.

(A) The wellknown Bhāgavatapurāṇa, in its list of the persons perfected through Yoga (*siddheśas*) mentions Patañjali. That the expression आसुरिः सपतञ्जलिः (6.15.12) refers to Patañjali, the author of the Yogasūtra is beyond doubt, for he is mentioned here with Āsuri — one of the teachers of the Sāṃkhya philosophy.

(B) The Saura-purāṇa has a few verses on the character of the six philosophies. While referring to the Yoga philosophy it says पातञ्जलं योगशास्त्रं शैवंतच्छास्त्रमिष्यते (40.55) — the *yogaśāstra* called Patañjali (a treatise composed by Patañjali) is to be known as Śaiva, *i.e.* in this *śāstra* Śiva is regarded as the highest deity. Though this assertion is wrong, for neither the sectarian deity Śiva is regarded as the highest deity, nor शिवसायुज्य (communion with Śiva) and the like are regarded as the ultimate goal by the Yoga philosophy. Teachers of later ages have regarded it as a Śaiva work as Śiva is always depicted as a *yogin* in *purāṇic* literature.

ature. This wrong idea became so strong in later times that a verse depicting and eulogizing the sectarian deity Śiva was interpolated in the Vyāsabhāṣya on the Yogasūtra; (vide the benedictory verse यस्त्यक्त्वा रूपमाद्यं . . . in the Vyāsabhāṣya). The fact that the Śaiva views on Yoga practices are largely based on the views of the Yoga philosophy may be taken as one of the causes for regarding the Yoga philosophy as a Śaiva work. It is to be noted in this connection that a host of teachers of different philosophical schools refer to the author of the Yogasūtra by such names as Ahipati, Bhujagādhiśa (lord of the snakes) and the like. The Narasimhapurāṇa (9.7) mentions Biṣadhara ('one who possesses venom') as the author of the Yoga philosophy. As the Narasimhapurāṇa is one of the oldest upapurāṇas (being mentioned in the Matsya-purāṇa 53.5.9) we may say that the belief that Patañjali, the author of the Yoga Sūtra was an incarnation of the lord of snakes is not of recent origin.

(C) The Cidambaramāhātmya section of the Skandapurāṇa (it seems to be the southern recension of the purāṇa) informs us that Patañjali (the incarnation of the snake king) the son of the Brahmin lady Goṇikā composed a treatise of Yoga. Though the view stated here (see at the end) is coloured with myth, yet it clearly speak of Patañjali's authorship of the Yogasūtra.

(D) The Bhaviṣya-purāṇa (pratisarga-parva, ch. 35) speaks of an incident concerning the life of the grammarian Patañjali. As we do not accept the identity of this Patañjali with the yogin Patañjali the aforesaid *purāṇic* account and the similar accounts found in the works on grammar, etc. have no bearing on the life of the author of the Yogasūtra.

(E) Mere mention of the Yogasūtra is found in one or two places in the *purāṇas*; vide Skandapurāṇa, Setu-māhātmyakhaṇḍa, 33.8.

(F) The commentary by Ṣaḍguruśiṣya on Kātyāyana's Sarvānukramaṇi quotes a few *purāṇic* verses that say that Patañjali was the author of the Mahābhāṣya, the Yogaśāstra and the Nidānasūtra (a work on metres concerning the Sāma-Veda). These verses, quoted by Max Müller in his

History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature (pp. 238-239) are however not found in the printed edition of the commentary.

The purāṇas and the Mahābhārata contain a considerable number of verses that possess such striking similarity with the Yogasūtras that we are inclined to take them as based on the sūtras of the Yoga philosophy. Only 10 verses are given here by way of sample :

- (1) Bhāgavata 4.6.9 and Yogasūtra 4.1.
- (2) Liṅga-purāṇa 2.9.47 and Yogasūtra 1.26.
- (3) Saura-purāṇa 13.5 and Yogasūtra 3.36.
- (4) Skanda-purāṇa, Kumarikākhaṇḍa 12.52 and Yogasūtra 1.24.
- (5) Bhāgavata 2.2.15 and Yogasūtra 2.46.
- (6) Devībhāgavata purāṇa quoted by Bhāskara in his bhāṣya on the Lalitasahasranāma, p. 94 and Yogasūtra 2.4.
- (7) Viṣṇu-purāṇa 6.7.43 and Yogasūtra 2.54.
- (8) Kalikā-purāṇa quoted in Yoga cintāmaṇī, p. 195 and Yogasūtra 3.40.
- (9) Liṅga-purāṇa 1.9.52 and Yogasūtra 3.37.
- (10) Śānti-parvan 195.15 and Yogasūtra 1.17

R. S. BHATTACHARYA

HEALTH

YOGA FOR WOMEN*

Yoga can contribute to woman's physical health, as much as to her emotional stability.

IN our society, too many notions prevail regarding Yoga as well as regarding women. A young man once commented "I only know that there is one thing common to Yoga and women. Both are mystical, beyond my level of comprehension! The Yogi claims to walk on water, while this delicate woman refuses to walk on the firm concrete earth even for half a mile. The Yogi stands on his head, while this delicate woman refuses to stand on her own two feet even for half an hour. I can't understand them, I give up!" This is not surprising, keeping in view the fact that even Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology as late as in 20th century, once wrote to his friend, "Despite 30 years of my research into feminine soul, I have yet to answer the great question, what does a woman want after all?"

Well, this is precisely why we have gathered here, to gain some better understanding of what Yoga really is, and what is so peculiar about women's psyche. To put it very simply, Yoga is the supreme integration of the mind and the body. Yoga offers the best of both. It gives perfect health, perfect physical form, fitness, immunity to diseases, vitality, strength and overall beauty. On the mental side, it provides correct approach, an outlook to life leading to an integrated, balanced, personality. It frees one from mental stresses and strains. It makes one harmonious and at peace. Thus Yoga provides the best of physical and mental health.

Now let us take up the study of women and how Yoga is beneficial for them.

I: *Physical aspect:* If I make a statement that biologically a woman is superior to man, majority of you would disagree. But it is fact that if nature has given greater overall muscular

*A talk delivered by Miss Gira Bhatt as part of "Yoga for Women" programme on 1st June 1981, Mother's birthday.