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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL ..	174
EXPOSITION OF THE YOGA SUTRAS .. Shri Yogendraji	175
SIGNIFICANCE OF PADMA .. Dr. R.S. Bhattacharya	178
TESTING OF CONCENTRATION .. Dr. Shanti Auluck and Raka Prasad	181
ANATOMY OF TENSION .. Shri H. Sequeira	183
GATHERINGS FROM SHRI YOGENDRA LIBRARY .. Shri Gerhard Unger	185
BETTER LIVING .. Smt. Hansa J. Yogendra	187

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SIGNIFICANCE OF PADMA IN PADMA ASANA

The symbolism of the lotus is utilised in explaining the essential spirit of the earlier meditative āsanas viz., comfort and stability.

In the following pages an attempt is being made to disclose the significance of *padma* (a lotus) in the *yogic* posture named *Padma*. It is a matter of great regret that the many modern works on Yoga are silent on this point.

It cannot, however, be denied that the name is significant, and as such the *Padma āsana* must be regarded as possessing similarity with the lotus. The absence of any alternative names (as are found in connection with a few *yogic* postures) also shows that the posture does possess similarity with the lotus (some synonyms of *padma* are however found in the name of this posture).

It should be noted in this connection that the similarity of lotus is not of one kind only. The similarity of lotus in connection with the eye must be different from the similarity of lotus in connection with the face, (*mukha-kamala*) or foot (*pada-padma*), or a particular kind of composition of verse (*padmabandha*).

It is however needless to assert that this similarity must be such as has some bearing on the successful practice of the āsanas, so far as *yogic* ideal is concerned.

In disclosing similarity, we are to discover the particular aspect of a lotus to which the *yogic* posture has been compared. It can easily be understood that as the comparison cannot have any connection with the pericarp, filament, or calyx of a lotus, it must have its connection with petals. There is no possibility of finding similarity of the colour, smell, etc. of a lotus with the *yogic* posture.

Though apparently no similarity is found between the petals of a lotus and the *Padma* posture of Yoga, yet a careful observation brings the similarity to light. Thanks to the author of the *Koḍaṇḍamaṇḍana* (a work on *Dhanurveda*, the science of war) who clearly pointed out this similarity while dealing with the eight *sthānas* (the position or posture of the body while shooting, etc) in the 10th chapter, namely *Āliḍha*, *Pratyāliḍha*, *Vaiśākha*, *Samāpada*, *Kūrma*, *Padma*, *Dardura* and *Garūḍa*.

After describing the *Padma* posture (which seems to be the same as the *yogic* posture) in the first half of the verse no. 9, the author remarks that the posture resembles a full blown lotus, all of whose parts (*i.e.*, the petals) are properly arranged in all directions, in such a way as not to cover or touch (with undue pressure), one another (*i.e.* all petals are seen separately).

It is this particular position of the petals whose similarity is found in the *Padma* posture of Yoga. To be explicit: in practising the *Padma* posture care must be taken in placing the limbs in the aforesaid manner, *i.e.* each limb should remain without being painfully pressed (as far as possible) by other limbs; each limb should remain in such a way as not to interrupt the pleasing position of other limbs, each limb is to remain separately (as far as practicable).

Practitioners of Yoga are aware of the fact that this position of limbs is highly favourable to effortlessness or restfulness. This is why the properly performed *Padma* posture, enables one to practise meditation in a easier way. One can remain in this posture with ease, for a long period. A good practitioner can sit in the *Padma* posture for 3 to 4 hours with pleasure, and without facing any difficulty.

I believe that the eulogistic verses on the *Pādma-āsana* in the Yoga works are due to this quality of the *Pādma-āsana*. As the *Siddha* posture also possesses this quality, it is also similarly praised. In some respects the *Padma* posture seems to

be of the highest importance. This is why it is remarked in some works that the Padma posture belongs to the Creator.

The foregoing consideration shows that 'the holding of the toes by the palms, turning them backwards' (prescribed in some yoga-texts as a part of the *Padma* posture), cannot be regarded as an integral part of the *padma* posture. Moreover this position does not possess any similarity with the aforesaid position of the petals of a lotus. 'The holding of big toes by both palms' seem to be a new factor added afterwards with the *Padma* posture, with a view to deriving bodily benefit. All verses prescribing this practice with *Padmāsana* invariably declare that the *Padma*-posture is a powerful means of eradicating diseases. This practice does not seem to help one in practising meditation in an easier or more fruitful manner.

It can be observed that more ancient texts define *Padmāsana*, without mentioning the act of holding the toes by the palms; vide the verses of Dāttatreya, Kāsikhaṇḍa, and *Graha-yāmala* quoted in *Yogakarṇikā*, ch. 13 and in other works. The *Gheraṇḍa Samhitā* (2.8) prescribes 'crossing the hands behind the back and catching hold of the toes of feet' which is also stated in *Haṭhayoga-pradīpikā* (1.44). The author Svātmārāma however mentions the original practice (as shown by us) in verse 1.45-46 with the remark that 'this practice is prescribed by some' मतान्तरे तु. We, however, are of the opinion that the practice described in 1.45-46 is original.

That the practice of holding the toes by the palms is not an integral part can be proved by the fact that in some works this posture is called by a separate name as *Baddha-padmasana* which is not found in any of the lists of the āsanas in old works.

R. S. BHATTACHARYA

A PSYCHOLOGY TEST

TESTING CONCENTRATION POWER

Results of a study undertaken by a psychologist, on the participants of the Yoga Education course conducted by Pandit Shambhunath.

THE term Yoga, refers to both a philosophy and highly evolved technology, to help man in realising his potentialities, and experience more through stages of existence. At the most elementary stages of practice, the changes may be experienced in the form of comparatively calm state of mind, with less of anxieties and emotional fluctuations, and an improved concentration. In order to find out the validity of such claims an experimental investigation was carried out two years ago. The problem with which the study was mainly concerned was, that, does Yoga help in improving the concentration of mind ?

In order to test the concentration power, a task was designed—which consisted of the presentation of 1 to 9 digits in random order. These randomly presented digits, spoken at the rate of one per second, were pre-recorded on the tape, and were presented through earphones to minimize environmental distraction. The subjects had to listen to these randomly spoken digits continuously for one hour and detect three consecutive odd digits followed and preceded by even digits. Such configurations were only 15 throughout the one hour presentation.

The sample chosen for this study comprised of two groups (a) those practicing Yoga at least for six months, (b) non-yoga subjects. The groups consisted of 10 subjects each, and all of them were males. These subjects were matched for age, sex, and extroversion, as these variables have been known to influence. The age range of the subjects in the two groups was 35-50 years.

All these subjects were tested for their concentration and neuroticism stability. The statistical analysis of the data re-