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*Prices quoted against order*

THE YOGA INSTITUTE, Santa Cruz, Bombay 400 055.

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Owner : The Yoga Institute, Bombay-400 055.  
Edited and Published by Dr. Jayadeva Yogendra for The Yoga Institute,  
The Yoga Institute, Santa Cruz, Bombay-400 055 and printed by him  
at The Examiner Press, Medows St., Bombay 400 023.



# JOURNAL OF THE YOGA INSTITUTE

VOLUME XXV

APRIL 1980

NUMBER 9

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# THE YOGA INSTITUTE

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## LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF HIRANYANABHA

*The life of the ancient teacher of Yoga Hiranyanābha, who taught Yoga to Yājñavalkya himself, is constructed here.*

A PURĀNIC verse 'Kṣatriya Janakādyaṣtu' etc., quoted by Brahmānanda, in his commentary on the Haṭhayoga-pradīpikā (4.15), expressly states that the Kṣatriyas like the king Janaka and others achieved perfection through Yoga. From the Gītā (9.33), the Viṣṇupurāṇa (IV-5:14) and the Bhāgavata (IX 13.27) it appears that a good number of Kṣatriyas were well-versed in self-knowledge. The Upaniṣadas also speak of a few Kṣatriya kings, who were ātma-vids, and taught self-knowledge to their disciples.

In the present paper, we are going to give an account of the life and activities of the great *yogin* Hiranyanābha, a Kṣatriya king (born in the dynasty of Rama), who taught *yoga-vidyā* to sages. Hiranyanābha is mentioned as a teacher of Yoga, in Bhāgavata and Śivapurāṇa. The Praśna Upaniṣad mentions one Hiranyanābha, and informs us that he is a *rājaputra* (Kṣatriya by birth) who, while a *kumāra* (crown-prince, *yuvārāja*), approached the sage Bharadvāja with the desire to know the "Puruṣa" possessing sixteen parts (*ṣoḍaśa-kalā puruṣa*). There is not the slightest doubt about the identity of these two Hiranyanābhas mentioned in the Upaniṣad and in the Purāṇas.

Hiranyanābha seems to be not only a practitioner of Yoga, but also a teacher of Yoga. Most probably he was the promulgator of a yoga-school. From the statement of the Viṣṇupurāṇa (IV 19.13) that Hiranyanābha taught some yogic treatise to his disciple (*yogam adhyāpayāmāsa*), it can rightly be presumed, that he composed some work on Yoga. The finite verb *adhyāpayāmāsa* undoubtedly suggests the existence of a definite treatise.

The Bhāgavata and the Śivapurāṇa speak of the essential characteristics of Yoga as taught by Hiranyanābha. The Yoga is said to be (i) *adhyātma*, or *adhyātma samjñaka* (one

whose name is *adhyātma*), (ii) *mahodaya* and (iii) *hṛdayagranthibhedaka* or *hṛdayagranthibhedana* (one that breaks the knots of the heart).

*Adhyātma* means *adhyātmika* i.e., a system that deals with the categories, which are signified by the term *ātman*; they are the body, mind and self. Since Yoga deals with *adhyātma*, a yogin is often called *adhyātmacintaka*, *adhyātmajña* or *adhyātmavid*. (Vide Śāntiparvan 275.18; 310.10; 310.15; 202.4; Aśvamedhparvan 39.24; Manu 6.82).

The epithet *mahodaya* requires some explanations. According to the commentator Śrīdhara, the epithet suggests that the Yoga is endowed with supernormal powers. The word *udaya*, 'rising' may be taken in the sense of *siddhis*; for *siddhis*, lying in a dormant state in the *antaḥkaraṇa*, arise owing to the proper application of the *yogāṅgas*. In the Muktika-upaniṣad 2.39, the word *mahodaya* is used in the sense of *manonāśa* (destruction of *manas*).

Hiranyanābha is said to be Kauśalya or Kausalya in the Purāṇas. Śāṅkara explains the word Kauśalya (with a dental sa) as 'an inhabitant of Kosalā' (*Kośalāyām bhavaḥ*). Kośala or Koṣala or Kosala (also used in masculine gender) is the same as the Ayodhyā *janapada* through which flowed the Sarayū (Rāmāyaṇa 1.5.5). Kalidasa asserts that Hiranyanābha ruled the Uttarkosala *janapada* (Raghuvamśa 18.27).

The Rāmāyaṇa informs us that the Kosala country was divided into two halves by Rāma. Kuśa, Rama's son, ruled over one part of Kosala while Lava ruled over the Uttarakosala (Rāmāyaṇa VII.107.17; Vāyu purāṇa 88.200). Curiously enough the Bhāgavata (IX.12.14) and the Śivapurāṇa (V.39.26) employ the epithet Kauśalya or Kausalya to the sage Yājñavalkya, who is said to be a disciple of Hiranyanābha. It is difficult to solve the problem. As the great *yogin* Yājñavalkya was an inhabitant of Mithilā, he cannot be taken as an inhabitant of the Kosala country, unless there are proofs to say so. It is surprising to note that the Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa (18.27) mentioned the name of the son of Hiranyanābha as Kausalya.

The name of the father of Hiranyanābha, is Viśvasaha according to Viṣṇupurāṇa IV.4.48 and Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, II.63.206, while according to Bhāgavata IX.12.3 it is Vidhṛti. It is worthwhile to note that Kalidasa, in his Raghuvamśa, informs us that Viśvasaha became an ascetic after appointing Hiranyanābha king of his kingdom.

The Purāṇas inform us that Hiranyanābha was born in the dynasty of Kuśa, the son of Rāma of the Solar race (Bhāgavata IX.12.3-4; Viṣṇu IV.4.48). The Purāṇas mention more or less 16 kings who appeared after Kuśa and before Hiranyanābha. The Purāṇas expressly declare that the celebrated yogin Yājñavalkya was taught by Hiranyanābha in Yoga.

1. Tasmād adhigato yoga Yājñavalkyena dhīmatā (Vāyu-p- 88.208; Brahmāṇḍa -P. II.63.208);
2. Hiranyanābhaḥ; Yato Yājñavalkyo yogam avāpa (Viṣṇu -p- IV.4.48);
3. Tato Hiranyanābho'bhūd yogācāryastu Jaimineḥ Śiṣyaḥ Kauśalya Adhyātmam Yājñavalkyo' dhyagād yataḥ (Bhāgavata IX.12.3-4).

Who was this Yājñavalkya? Most probably it is the same Yājñavalkya, who had two wives, viz. Maitreyī and Kātyāyaṇī and whose wisdom has been admirably depicted in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad. We understand that the extant works on Yoga associated with the name of Yājñavalkya (viz. the Yogiyājñavalkya in the dialogue of Yājñavalkya and Gārgī and the Bṛhadhyogi-yājñavalkya) are based on the original teachings of this Yājñavalkya. This Yājñavalkya is said to be an inhabitant of Mithilā (Bṛhadhyogiyājñavalkya 1.1.) The author of the Yājñavalkya Smṛti is also said to be *Mithilāsthā* (residing at the Mithilā janapada) in 1.2—a fact which tends to show that this Smṛti has the teachings of Yājñavalkya, as its original source. There are striking resemblances between the Yājñavalkya Smṛti and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, which is connected with Yājñavalkya. That Yājñavalkya, associated with the Śukla Yajur-Veda, belonged to the dynasty of Viśvāmitra, was known to former

teachers. In ancient times Mithilā (the vadehanagarī as the Viramitrodaya commentary observes), had some close connection with the Kosala country, as both of these countries are often jointly mentioned in the Vedic works. Thus it was quite possible for Yājñavalkya to approach Hiranyanābha of the Kośala country, with a desire to know *ātman*.

Hiranyanābha is said to have been taught in Yoga by one Jaimini, a great yogin (*mahayogīśvara*) (Viṣṇupurāṇa IV.4.18). One Jaimini was the husband of the female ascetic Śāṇḍilī (vide Skandapurāṇa, Nāgarakhaṇḍa 131.37). Some may say that since Hiranyanābha was a great teacher of the Sāmaveda (vide Viṣṇu p. III.4.6; Vāyu -p. 60-61; Brahmāṇḍa I.34.35; Bhāg XII 5-7; Agni p. 271), Jaimini, the *guru* of Hiranyanābha must be supposed to be the sage who, being instructed by Vyāsa, divided the Sāmaveda. According to the Purāṇas Hiranyanābha appeared after Jaimini, the Sāma-teacher; therefore, it can be surmised, that the longlived sage Jaimini imparted *yoga-vidyā* to Hiranyanābha at his old age. If the period between Jaimini and Hiranyanābha seems to be so long, as prevents us to take Hiranyanābha as the disciple of Jaimini, it may also be surmised that Hiranyanābha was instructed in Yoga by a direct or indirect *śiṣya* (student or follower) of Jaimini.

It should be noted in passing, that there is nothing to prevent us from recognizing Jaimini the Sāmaveda-teacher as a sage well-versed in Yoga. It is a wellknown fact that the *sāmans* are highly helpful in acquiring one-pointedness (*ekāgratā*) or realizing *brahma* (Yājñavalkya smṛti, 3.112). An account of Hiranyanābha's contribution to the Sāmaveda is to be found in the Purāṇas.

The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa XIII.5.4.4 vouchsafes that Hiranyanābha was an *āṭṭnāra*; *āṭṭnāra* means '*atanaśīla*' (One whose nature is to roam about) i.e., a *parivrājaka*. This shows that Hiranyanābha became a *sannyāsin*, in the later āpart of his life (vide Bhagavadatta: Vaidika Vāṅgamaya ka Itihāsa Vol. II, pp. 137-138).