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CONTENTS

THE SICK SOCIETY ..	Shri Yogendra	163
A WRONG TRANSLATION OF SIVASAMHITA—VERSE	Prof. R. S. Bhattacharya	166
YOGA EDUCATED PERSON AND THE SOCIETY ..	Shri P. N. Singh	169
YOGA TRAINING FOR THE EXECUTIVES ..	Shri N. Krishnaswami	172
RELEVANCE OF YOGA IN PRESENT DAY LIFE ..	Shri Vijayadeva Yogendra	173
YOGA BHAVAN ..	Donations	178



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## A WRONG TRANSLATION OF THE SIVASAMHITA-VERSE

BY R. S. BHATTACHARYA

It is enjoined in the works on Haṭha yoga that while practising Mahāmudrā one should stretch one's legs alternatively. As to which of the legs is to be stretched at first, we find precise indications in the yogic works. For example, the *Sivasamhitā* says :

अपसव्येन संपीड्य पादमूलेन सादरम् ।  
गुरुपदेशतो योनिं गुदमध्यान्नरालगाम् ॥  
सव्यं प्रसारितं पादं घृत्वा पाणियुगेन वै ।  
(4.27-28A, Venkatesvara edition).

In the aforesaid passage *apasavya* evidently means 'not left,' i.e. right<sup>1</sup>. The meaning of the sentence is: One should press the perineum with the heel of the right leg. Similarly in the third line *savya* means 'left' and the meaning of the line is: Holding the stretched left foot by the two hands.

From a study of *Sivasamhitā*, 4. 27-30 it appears that at first, the left leg is to be stretched and the right heel should press the perineum. This is called *vāmāṅga abhyāsa*. After performing this, one should stretch the right leg and press the perineum with the left heel. These two *abhyāsas* complete the Mahāmudrā.

Rai Bahadur Shri Chandra Vidyarnava in his translation of the *Sivasamhitā* translates *apasavya* as 'left' and *savya* as 'right'<sup>2</sup>. This is wrong and should be corrected.

It is a pity that in the Hindi translation of the *Sivasamhitā* by Rāma Caraṇa Puri we find the same mistake. Here

1. According to lexicons, *savya* means left and *apasavya* means 'not left' but 'right.' Vide also *Manusmṛti*, 3.214; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, 1.232, 1.250. The Pāṇḍava hero Arjuna was called Savyasāchin as he was able to draw the bow with the left hand.

2. I have not seen the English translation by Shri Vidyarnava. The translations of the *Sivasamhitā* passages on the Mahāmudrā have been quoted by Dr. Theos Bernard in his *Haṭhayoga* (p. 73), published in London.

*apasavya* has been translated as *vāmapada* (left leg) and *savya* as *dakṣiṇapāda* (right leg). Even the Bengali translation of the relevant passage of the *Sivasamhitā* (as rendered by the Swami Jagadeswarananda in his book *Sacitra Yaugika Vyāyāma* part II, pp. 100-101) *apasavya* and *savya* have been translated as left and right respectively. We are unable to understand the cause of this blunder except to refer to it as 'copying.'

The *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* treats of the Mahāmudrā in 3. 10-15. It says that at first the perineum should be pressed by the left (*vāma*) heel (*pādamūla*), and the right leg should be stretched. After performing this, one should press the perineum with the right heel and stretch the left leg. Vide the *Jyotsnā* commentary on 3.15 where the technique of the practice has been shown in the clearest terms.<sup>3</sup>

This shows that in stretching the leg, the *Sivasamhitā* and the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* hold two different views. According to the former, the left leg is to be stretched at first, while according to the latter the right leg is to be stretched.

The *Gheraṇḍasamhitā* describes the Mahāmudrā in 3.6-7. It, however, does not expressly state which of the legs is to be stretched at first but enjoins the pressing of *pāyūmūla* (anus) by the left heel. Here *pāyūmūla* must mean perineum through *lakṣaṇāvṛtti*. The Haṭhayogins are in the habit of practising the Mahāmudrā by pressing the perineum (and not the anus) with the heel. This appears to be the first part of the practice. According to the *Sivasamhitā*, this is the second part of the Mahāmudrā as has been stated above.

A similar statement is to be found in the *Dhyānabindu Upaniṣad* (verse 93)<sup>4</sup>. The same verse is found in the *Yoga-*

३. अत्रायं क्रमः वायुर्दक्षिणं तिष्ठति । दक्ष-दक्षिण (right)

4. This verse speaks of slow and gentle exhaling in the practice of Mahāmudrā. The commentator, Upaniṣadbhāmayogin, remarks that the exhaling should be through *idā*, i.e. the left nostril. But the question is: When the two palms are engaged in holding the right foot, how can one exhale through the left nostril? Does it indicate that one palm should be placed on the right foot and one on the nose? The Upaniṣad, however, uses the expression *हस्ताभ्यामनुधारयन्* (Holding by two hands).

*cūḍāmaṇi upaniṣad* also (verse 66).<sup>5</sup>

I understand that these different views on stretching the legs alternatively are not immaterial. I request yogins to throw light on this point.

5. The *Yogacūḍāmaṇi* also speaks of slow and gentle exhalation. The commentator, Upaniṣadbrahmayogin observes that the *recaṇa* should be performed through the *pingalānāḍī* i.e. the right nostril. Mark the difference of opinion of one and the same commentator in his two different commentaries. Is this difference based on the particular leg stretched?

### We must remind ourselves...

"We must remind ourselves as often as possible that our true life is not this external, material life that passes before our eyes here on earth, but that it is the inner life of our spirit, for which the visible life serves only as a scaffolding—a necessary aid to our spiritual growth"

*Tolstoy*

(selected by Dr. Jayadeva Yogendra as a guideline to one's married life)

## YOGA EDUCATED PERSON AND THE SOCIETY

by P. N. SINGH

A YOGA educated person was and is a part and parcel of the society. Before taking to yoga, his behaviour pattern, his attitude, his way of life, his philosophy etc. were similar to all others in the society. After his yoga training, he now looks at the society from a different angle altogether. His behaviour, attitude, way of life etc. have changed radically, even though he is still there in the society. He has his old commitments, his memories, family attachments, etc. He cannot forget all of them suddenly and live quite separate from the society because he is yet not a perfect yogi. He however has a fixed goal and that is to elevate himself. The questions which arise are how does his society look at him? How does he look at the society? What way is he going to contribute his share in promoting yoga in the society?

He is by now looked upon by the society from different angles. Some persons in the society may give him respect for his simple living and integrated personality. He may earn respect from the weaker sections of the society for his altruistic service because he helps them selflessly without expecting anything in return and naturally wins their respect. Some in the society seem to realise that he is now a much happier person, always cheerful, never getting excited. He does not display mental tension and short temper as before. He is having a good radiating health without much fuss and help of modern expedients. They therefore naturally get attracted towards him and may even seek his guidance for better living. There are the persons who respect him also as a leader or guide. Though in general, he has great sympathy of the society, many a times he suffers a setback because he adheres to the yoga principle of *ahimsā* and *satya*, e.g., his income tax officer may ask for bribe even though his account is quite clear; and, if he does not give him the bribe, he threatens to take him to the court. In order to avoid the trouble, if he offers the bribe — because he knows that he