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LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF HIRANYANABHA

The life of the ancient teacher of Yoga Hiranyanabha, who taught Yoga to Tājñāvalkya himself, is constructed here.

A PURĀNIC verse 'Kṣatriya Janakādyāstau' etc., quoted by Brahmānanda, in his commentary on the Ṣanhitayogaprādipikā (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 ātmavīdā, 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 Hiranyanabha, a Kṣatriya king (born in the dynasty of Rama), who taught yoga-vidyā to sages. Hiranyanabha is mentioned as a teacher of Yoga, in Bhāgavata and Śivapurāṇa. The Praṇa Upaniṣad mentions one Hiranyanabha, and informs us that he is a rājaṇ Putra (Kṣatriya by birth) who, while a kumāra (crown-prince, yuvādīya), approached the sage Bharadvāja with the desire to know the "Puruṣa" possessing sixteen parts (soḍasa-kalā puruṣa). There is not the slightest doubt about the identity of these two Hiranyanabhas mentioned in the Upaniṣad and in the Purāṇas.

Hiranyanabha 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 Hiranyanabha taught some yogic treatise to his disciple (yogam adhyātapamāsa), it can rightly be presumed, that he composed some work on Yoga. The finite verb adhyātapamāsa undoubtedly suggests the existence of a definite treatise.

The Bhāgavata and the Śivapurāṇa speak of the essential characteristics of Yoga as taught by Hiranyanabha. The Yoga is said to be (i) adhyātmad, or adhyātmam samājaka (one whose name is adhyātmam), (ii) mahodaya and (iii) hṛdayagranthibhedaka or hṛdayagranthibedana (one that breaks the knots of the heart).

Adhyātmastha means adhyātmika i.e., a system that deals with the categories, which are signified by the term ātmam; they are the body, mind and self. Since Yoga deals with adhyātma, a yogin is often called adhyātmacinataka, ahyātmajā or adhyātmavīdā. (Vide Śāntiparvan 275.18; 310.10; 310.15; 202.4; Āśvamedhaparvan 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 antahkaraṇa; arise owing to the proper application of the yogāṇas. In the Muktika- upaniṣad 2.39, the word mahodaya is used in the sense of manonāśa (destruction of manas).

Hiranyanabha is said to be Kauśalya or Kausalya in the Purāṇas. Śankara explains the word Kauśalya (with a dental s) as 'an inhabitant of Kosāla' (Kosālayāṁ bhavaḥ). Kosalā or Kosala or Kosala (also used in masculine gender) is the same as the Ayodhya janapada through which flowed the Sarayu (Rāmāyaṇa 1.5.5). Kālidāsa asserts that Hiranyanabha ruled the Uttarkosala janapada (Raghuvanaṇḍa 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 88.20). 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 Hiranyanabha. 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 Raghuvanaṇḍa of Kālidāsa (18.27) mentioned the name of the son of Hiranyanabha as Kauśalya.
The name of the father of Hiranyanābha, is Viśvasaha according to Viṣṇupurāṇa IV.4.48 and Brahmadeśapurāṇa, II.63.206, while according to Bhāgavata IX.12.3 it is Vidhṛti. It is worthwhile to note that Kalidasa, in his Raghuvanaśa, 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 Yājñāvalkya was taught by Hiranyanābha in Yoga.

1. Tasmād adhigato yoga Yājñāvalkyaṇa dhīmatā (Vāyu-p. 88.208; Brahmadeśa -P. II.63.208);
2. Hiranyanābhah; Yato Yājñāvalkya yogam avāpa (Viṣṇu -p. IV.4.48);
3. Tato Hiranyanābhahobhūdh yogācāryastu Jaimineḥ Śisyah Kuśalya Adhyātman Yājñāvalkya dhya-gād yataḥ (Bhāgavata IX.12.3-4).

Who was this Yājñāvalkya? Most probably it is the same Yājñāvalkya, who had two wives, viz. Maitreyi and Kātyāyaṇī and whose wisdom has been admirably depicted in the Bhadāranyaka-upaniṣad. We understand that the extant works on Yoga associated with the name of Yājñāvalkya (viz. the Yogīyājñāvalkya in the dialogue of Yājñāvalkya and Gārgi and the Bhadyogi-yājñāvalkya) are based on the original teachings of this Yājñāvalkya. This Yājñāvalkya is said to be an inhabitant of Mithilā (Bhadyogi-yājñā-valkya 1.1.) The author of the Yājñāvalkya Śṛṅgi is also said to be Mithilāśṭhā (residing at the Mithilā janapada) in 1.2—a fact which tends to show that this Śṛṅgi has the teachings of Yājñāvalkya, as its original source. There are striking resemblances between the Yājñāvalkya Śṛṅgi and the Bhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, which is connected with Yājñāvalkya. That Yājñāvalkya, associated with the Sukla 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 Yājñāvalkya to approach Hiranyanābha of the Kosala 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 Śāvā (vide Skandapurāṇa, Nāgarakhaṇḍa 131.37). Some may say that since Hiranyanābha was a great teacher of the Sāmadeva (vide Viṣṇu p. III.4.6; Vāyu -p. 60-61; Brahmadeśa 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 Vṛṣṇi, divided the Sāmadeva. According to the Purāṇas Hiranyanābha appeared after Jaimini, the Sāma-teacher; therefore, it can be surmised, that the longlived sage Jaimini imparted yoga-siddha 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 śīya (student or follower) of Jaimini.

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

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

R. S. BHATTACHARYA