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PATAÑJALI, 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 Yogasūtra. In the course of my studies I have found the following passages in purānic 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-Bṛhadāranyaka (3.3.1) and the Mādhayandina Bṛhadāranyaka (14.6.3.1) speak of one Kāpya Patañjala and not of Patañjala or Patañjali as is wrongly considered by some scholars. The views of the works like Patañjalicarita of Rāmabhadrā Dīṣṭa 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 (siddhāstas) mentions Patañjali. That the expression असुरि: कपलस्वरूप: (6.15.12) refers to Patañjali, the author of the Yogasūtra is beyond doubt, for he is mentioned here with Āsurī—one of the teachers of the Śaṅkhya philosophy.

(B) The Saura-purāṇa has a few verses on the character of the six philosophies. While referring to the Yoga philosophy it says पताकायां गोपालां श्रीतयुक्तकालिन्यते (40.55) — the yogasāstra 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 विष्णु (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 yogīn in purānic lite-

nature. 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 कस्मृत्वा लाभार्थ ... ... 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, Bhujagādhīśa (lord of the snakes) and the like. The Narasīhapañcā (9.7) mentions बिशाद्धरा (one who possesses venom) as the author of the Yoga philosophy. As the Narasīhapañcā is one of the oldest upapurāṇas (being mentioned in the Mātsyā-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 Gopiṅka 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 purānic 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-māhā-

myakhaṇḍa, 33.8.

(F) The commentary by Śadguruṣisya on Kātyāyana’s Sarvāṇukramaṇa quotes a few purānic verses that say that Patañjali was the author of the Mahābhāṣya, the Yogasāstra and the Nidānasūtra (a work on metres concerning the Sāma-Veda). These verses, quoted by Max Müller in his
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 or 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.

1: *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.