YOGA EDUCATION

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In fact the pseudo-yogis and pseudo-spiritualists can be compared to actors that act out with great fervour the roles of Gods and Goddesses, on the stage. Such actors appear so much like the Gods they represent, except that they themselves have no real Godly feelings or divine consciousness.

Here is an illustration to the point. The saintly Paramahamsa Madhavadasa visited a very rich admirer, and lived with him for a few days in his palatial house. Shri Yogendraji who was with Madhavadasa noticed an ordinary looking servant looking too ordinary, working in the house—appearing unintelligent and a simpleton. He was involved in petty chores all day, never keeping any time for any other activity. There was no question of his taking to any religious or spiritual acts during the day. The servant was one day ill running high temperature, and Shri Yogendraji after completing his duties was about to retire into his bed, when he heard some sounds emanating from a cellar room. Out of curiosity, he entered the room to hear words and sentences such as “My Lord! my God! my Everything!” These words were being continuously repeated. Shri Yogendraji took a lantern in his hand to see who was so lost in God consciousness at this late hour. He was surprised to see in the dim light of the lantern, that that very ordinary looking servant, was lying in the bed and muttering these sentiments even while asleep. “Oh God! How merciful you are! How wise!” was being exclaimed by this illiterate man, as Shri Yogendraji stood there, wondering at the heightened awareness this ordinary man possessed — an awareness that permeated his entire being. How poor in comparison are those well to do persons, who display their religiosity through external paraphernalia of idols, flowers, candles and incense sticks etc.

Shri Yogendraji observed the behaviour of this man for the next few days while he carried out his work. The man was found to be utterly selfless and very sincere. Here was a man who had reached great heights in spiritual consciousness, but made no pretence of it at all.

From Paramahamsa ni Prasadi
by SHRI YOGENDRAJI

A REFERENCE TO ASTANGA YOGA IN THE UPANISAD

Dr. Bhattacharya establishes the authenticity of the concept of eightfold path of Yoga, right from early times, and rejects Sankaracharya’s (not the Adi Sankara) interpretation of the eight in an old Upanisad as devāṣṭaka which is also not accepted by the commentator Narayana. So too Dr. Bhattacharya rejects the concept of Dhitāśaṭṭaka advanced by Shankaracharya. The dhitus or the material composing the body is seven in Indian Medicine and in Yoga, he argues.

MODERN scholars are found to hold the view that no original Upanisads mention the path of aṣṭāṅga yoga (eightfold path of Yoga) expressly, though here and there these Upaniṣads speak of almost all the aṅgas (aid) of Yoga, often using names different from those stated in Yogasūtra and similar works. The question of the non-mention of the path of aṣṭāṅga yoga is of high importance, especially, when we find that there is a clear mention of sādāṅga yoga in the Maitri-Upaniṣad (6.18). That the method of Yoga practice is Vedic is beyond doubt, for even those teachers (e.g. Sankaracarya) who did not accept yogic ontology as Vedic, regarded the yogāṅgas as Vedic. It is to be noted further that the Mahabharata declared that the path of aṣṭāṅga yoga is in accordance with the Vedic view.

The question of non-mention of the path of aṣṭāṅga yoga in the Upaniṣads is a problem that requires a solution. It is hardy to hold that the path belongs to a later period, as has been stated by Gough in his Philosophy of the Upaniṣads.

I understand that the path of the aṣṭāṅga yoga is alluded to in the expression अष्टकाः प्रमहिस्न: (six ogloads) in the Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad (1.4) — one of the original Upaniṣads belonging to the Kṛṣṇajurveda. The aforesaid expression speaks of six groups, each containing eight members. We can reasonably place aṣṭāṅga yoga in these six ogloads. According to us the group of the eight aṅgas of Yoga may be included in these six ogloads. Such an inclusion is in full consonance with the context, for all the expressions in this Upaniṣad verse, speak of Śāmkhya categories all of which are accepted by the Yoga philosophy.

R. S. BHATTACHARYA