

"ABHYĀSA" AND "ANUṢṬHĀNA" WITH REFERENCE TO ĀSANA AS YOGĀṅGA IN PĀTAÑJALA YOGA SŪTRA - A REVISIT

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ABSTRACT

Author has tried to establish that the postural training required in Padmāsana etc. is to be given as a part of Kriyāyoga training and this could be termed as the 'abhyāsa' of āsana. On the other hand, the 'anuṣṭhāna' of āsana as a yogāṅga manifests itself as a part of other yogāṅgas.

Key Words : Yogāṅga, kriyāyoga, abhyāsa, anuṣṭhāna, aṣṭāṅgayoga

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Patañjali, the author of *Yoga Sūtra*, uses the terms 'abhyāsa' (P.Y.SI/12) in the context of *cittavṛttinirodha* and 'anuṣṭhāna' in the context of the *Yogāṅgas* (P.Y.S. II/28) however, the traditional, as well as, the modern commentators of *Pātañjala Yoga Sūtra* (PYS) have chosen to interpret the term 'anuṣṭhāna' merely as a synonym for 'abhyāsa'. This seems to cause confusion regarding the intention of Patañjali, for; he had clearly avoided the use of the term 'abhyāsa' while prescribing *Yogāṅgas* for the development of discriminative insight (*vivekakhyāti*). If we accept that these both terms are conveying the same connotation, as is commonly done so far by the commentators, then the question arises why Patañjali, as a *Sūtrakāra*, avoids the term 'abhyāsa' and introduces new term *anuṣṭhāna*, in the context of the *Yogāṅgas*. Perhaps, there could be a mistake either on the part of Patañjali or, in the part of commentators. In this paper, therefore, an attempt has been made to examine the usage of these terms 'abhyāsa' & 'anuṣṭhāna' in the context of Patañjali with special ref. to *Āsana* as *Yogāṅga*.

Concept of Abhyāsa

The term 'abhyāsa' is used by Patañjali for the first time in the *Samādhipāda* for the attainment of '*vṛttinirodha*' (PYS I/12) and against the recurrence of '*vṛttisārupya*' (PYS I/4) that implies the presence of '*One fixed end in view*' (i.e. *ekārthatā*). *Abhyāsa* is reported to gain a firm ground i.e. *dṛḍhabhūmitva* (PYS I/14) in the '*desired end*' which requires repeated efforts as explained by

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Patañjali (PYS I/13). The choice here is between '*vṛttinirodha*' and '*vṛttisārupya*' and therefore the '*repetition of effort*' conveyed by the term '*abhyāsa*' is for the attainment of '*vṛttinirodha*' only. The success in the '*abhyāsa*' here means '*dṛḍhabhūmitva*' in the condition of '*vṛttinirodha*' that can be cultivated over a long period, without interruption and with a receptive attitude (P.Y.S.I/14).

Patañjali uses again this term '*abhyāsa*' in a similar context while discussing the remedial measure against the impediments i.e. '*antarāyas*' (PYS I/30-31). The tendency of the *citta* is to slip back again and again into the condition of '*cittavikṣepa*' that obstructs the manifestation of tranquil/peaceful state of *citta* i.e. '*cittaprasādanam*'. (PYS I/33) Patañjali, therefore, prescribes a remedial measure, as *ekatattvabhyāsa* i.e. concentration on any one principle (PYS I/32), against the *cittavikṣepas*.

Herein, the choice before the sādḥaka is between '*cittaprasādanam*' and '*cittavikṣepa*'. So the '*abhyāsa*' prescribed here is only with '*one fixed end in view*' i. e. the attainment of tranquil/peaceful state of *citta*. Thus, whenever Patañjali uses the term '*abhyāsa*' in his *Sūtras*, he also provides a specific and *fixed end* (i.e. '*ekarthata*') to be achieved by the sādḥaka alongwith appropriate '*abhyāsa*' to get '*dṛḍhabhūmitva*' in the chosen end in each of the above contexts.

Concept of Anuṣṭhāna

The term '*anuṣṭhāna*' used by Patañjali only in the context of '*yogāṅgas*' (PYS II/28) implies '*commencement*', '*carrying out*', '*undertaking*', '*acting in conformity with*' etc. Patañjali seems to talk in terms of getting established (i.e. '*pratiṣṭhā*', '*sthairya*', '*yogyatā*') in the '*yogāṅgas*' through their '*anuṣṭhāna*'. The sādḥaka has to fall in line with or *be in tune with* or *fulfill the requirements of or act in conformity with to the requirements of* the *yogāṅgas* which are inseparable among themselves by nature.

Obviously, this could be the reason why Patañjali avoids the usage of the term '*abhyāsa*' in this context of *yogāṅgas*. However, the commentators of the *Yogasūtras* have confused the term '*abhyāsa*' with the term '*anuṣṭhāna*' which led to much of the misinterpretations regarding the *yogāṅgas* and their real significance and importance as envisaged by Patañjali.

Concept of Āsana

Āsana is the third one amongst the eight *Yogāṅgas*. The traditional commentators are unanimous in their opinion that the very foundation of the '*aṣṭāṅgayoga sādhanā*' is laid by the first two *yogāṅgas*, namely *yama-niyama*, which precedes the Āsana. The commentator Baldeva

Miśra (on P.Y.S.II/49), for instance, has clearly mentioned that the very effectiveness of all the *Yogāṅgas* depend on the first two *āṅgas* (i.e. *Yama & Niyama*).

Moreover, Patañjali has enumerated the various capabilities (P.Y.S. II/35-45) that get bestowed upon the *sādhakas* who have got well established in the '*anuṣṭhāna*' of *yama-niyamas* that facilitates the onset of the later *yogāṅgas* like *āsana*. However, the '*anuṣṭhāna*' of *yama-niyama* is not easy for a *sādhaka* so long he is under the powerful grip of the afflictions i.e. *kleśas* viz *avidyā*, *asmitā* etc. The *kleśas* are so deep rooted in the consciousness that unless and until the *Sādhaka* cultivates the essential knowledge and insights and makes them comparatively weak, his going directly into higher yogic realms like *aṣṭāṅgayoga* may set violent reactions and inner-resistances and may get blocked once for all with pitfalls. For, he may get totally discouraged and disillusioned about *yogasādhana* itself. On the contrary, with a firm footing in *kriyāyogasādhanā* he is enabled greatly to reduce the onset as well as recurrence of such pitfalls. These *kleśas* even intercept the '*anuṣṭhāna*' of advanced *sādhakas* for which Patañjali has suggested to develop positive feeling in the face of negative ones i.e. '*pratipakṣa-bhāvanam*' as a remedy (P.Y.S.II/33). Therefore, without a thorough weakening of the *kleśas*, the '*anuṣṭhāna*' of *yamas* and *niyamas* does not come into being. This could be the reason that Patañjali prescribes *Kriyāyoga* for weakening the grip of these *kleśas* in the beginning of his *Sādanapāda* (P.Y.S. II /1-2).

According to Swāmi Digambarji (Ex. Director of Kaivalyadhama, Lonavla), *Kriyāyoga* is a synonym for '*Abhyāsayoga*' and through the practice of *Kriyāyoga* one develops a spiritual inclination of '*śraddhā*' and '*adhyātmaprasāda*' (Yoga Mimāṃsā Vol.XV, No.I), So it appears that with the development of *śraddhā* and *adhyātmaprasāda* through *Kriyāyoga*, one gains almost all the qualities and capabilities that are essential for the proper '*anuṣṭhāna*' of all *Yogāṅgas*.

Most of the traditional, as well as, the modern commentators (on P.Y.S.II/46) seem to have interpreted '*āsana*' mostly in terms of bodily postures like *padmāsana* etc.. However, according to Baldeva Miśra (on P.Y.S.II/48), a body posture like *padmāsana* cannot be counted as a *yogāṅga* unless it is closely linked to *Prāṇayāma*, *Pratyāhara*, *Dhāraṇā*, *Dhyāna* and *Samādhi*. No doubt, the postural techniques of *padmāsana* and others have their use at the level of *Kriyāyoga*.

Swāmi Digambaraji used to teach '*Tapas*' in the context of *Kriyāyoga* implying verily the practice of *Prāṇayāma*. Thus, all the postural trainings suggested as '*abhyāsa*' of *āsanas* takes place as a part of the *Prāṇayāma* training required under *Kriyāyoga*.

A careful analysis of the sūtras on *āsana* we may get some indications of how the commentators might have got into confusion. Let us take up the sūtra '*sthīrasukhamāsanam*' (PYS II/46). Most

of the commentators seem to have divided the compound word '*sthiraasukham*' into two independent words '*sthiram*' and '*sukham*'. Though this is grammatically admissible, in a practical context as in the case of '*āsana*', it seems to have led to misinterpretation of the related Sūtra. Thus some of the commentators have given the meaning '*niścalam*', '*niśkampam*' for the term '*sthiram*' (Bhāṣya of Vallabhācārya pp 241-252, Sarlā Ṭīkā on Yoga Kārikā pp 29-30) & (Bhāṣvati pp 266-269, Pada Candrikā pp 32-33).

Naturally, the word '*sthiram*' got directly related to the term '*āsanam*' which they have defined as - '*āsyate aste vā anena iti āsanam*'. As a result, '*to sit steadily and comfortably*' came to be accepted as the characteristics as well as the technique of '*āsana*' and as a consequence of this interpretation, it seems the next Sūtra (P.Y.S.II/47), which really provides the technique of '*āsana*', has lost its real significance in its practice i. e. effortlessness (*prayatnaśaithilya*) and engrossment with infinite (*anantasamāpatti*). Due to which '*āsana*' is generally taken to be related solely to the physical body or body positioning.

In fact, the term '*sthira*' should directly qualify the term '*sukham*' (as '*sthira*' is an adjective of term '*sukham*') so as to get the meaning of '*sukha-sthirata*' i.e. '*continuous flow of comfort*', if we accept this the meaning of '*sthiraasukhamāsanam*' will be '*a state (of mind) wherein the continuous flow of comfort is maintained*' which could automatically lead to the manifestation of '*āsana*' as *yogāṅga*.

Similarly if we carefully analysis of the Sūtra - '*tasminsati śvāsapraśvāsayoḥ gati-vicchedaḥ prāṇayāmaḥ*' (PYS II/49) — it shows that the '*anuṣṭhāna*' of '*āsana*' automatically leads to '*prāṇayāma*'. The '*śvāsa-praśvāsa*' which is one of the indicatives of '*cittavikṣepas*' (PYS I/31) gets '*broken off*' '*vicchedaḥ*' in a specific manner in '*prāṇayāma*'. Patañjali indicates four specific manners in which such '*breaking off*' of the flow of the breathing activity can take place during '*prāṇayāma*'. By using the term '*paridṛṣṭaḥ*', Patañjali seems to indicate that '*prāṇayāma is seen to happen*' in such four specific manners. But most of the commentators seem to interpret these four categories of *prāṇayāma* as four specific techniques of '*prāṇayāma*' for its '*abhyāsa*'. These, again as in the case of '*āsana*', the commentators seem to have confused the characteristics of four kinds of *prāṇayāma* as four different techniques thereof (PYS II/50 & 51). As such Patañjali does not seem to have given any sūtra to provide a direct technique for '*prāṇayāma*'. From this, we may deduce that by the removal of the assault of the '*dvandvas*', the '*anuṣṭhāna*' of *āsana* reduces or eliminates the causes of '*cittavikṣepa*' and in due course of time when the 'phenomenon of *prāṇayāma* takes place as a natural outcome. We may also note, in this connection, that a parallel phenomenon of progression from one *aṅga* to another takes place in the case of '*dhāraṇā*',

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'dhyāna' and 'samādhi' (PYS III/1-3). In the same manner, it seems that the 'anuṣṭhāna' (not the 'abhyāsa') of āsana, leads to the manifestation of 'prāṇayāma' which by itself, in its turn, leads to 'dhāraṇā' and so on. Of course, the element of 'pratyāhāra' is present in each and every 'aṅgas', without which it is doubtful if any 'anuṣṭhāna' of them is at all possible.

The above line of interpretation / thinking seems to receive experimental support from the work of Dr. Trigant Burrow as quoted by Swāmi Kuvalayanandaji and Dr. S. L. Vinekar (1963) in their book 'Yogic Therapy'. Moreover, remarks made by Swāmi Kuvalayanandaji based on his personal experience and observations of other Yoga Sādhakas seem to substantiate this line of thinking.

From the above discussions, it becomes clear that the term 'abhyāsa' means 'the process of becoming' whereas, the term 'anuṣṭhāna' implies the process of remaining established in a particular state of being. Effort or 'yatna' is implied in 'abhyāsa' whereas 'prayatna-śaithilya' seems to be essential in the anuṣṭhāna of yogāṅgas, particularly, in the case of 'āsana'. Finally it may be concluded that proper re-interpretations of PYS can help us to understand the importance and significance of 'āsana as a yogāṅga' through differentiating 'abhyāsa' from 'anuṣṭhāna' and to switch over from the former to the latter in the practical application of aṣṭāṅgayoga.

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A DISCEPANCY REGARDING THE INTERPRETATION OF PATAÑJALI S YOGASŪTRA - APHORISM NO. I:10 ON SLEEP

JOSHI KALIDAS*

ABSTACT

Author disagrees with the Bhāṣya of Vyāsa of the YogaSūtra I:10 on sleep as a fluctuation or mode of the human mind (vṛtti). He has suggested a slight change, not in the sūtra but in its Bhāṣya and also suggested his own interpretation on this sūtra which is quite different from Vyāsa and other commentators.

Key words : *Nidrā, vṛtti, Bhāṣya of Vyāsa*

Introduction

Saga Patañjali is believed to have composed the authoritative text on Yoga, called Yogasūtra, around 200 years B.C. His commentator Vyāsa wrote his almost equally authoritative commentary (Bhāṣya) on the Yogasūtra nearly six hundred years later. Both these scriptures of yoga, considered sacrosanct, have come down to us without any change even of a single word or syllable so far. No one has ever suggested any change in them yet, on any consideration whatsoever. In this paper I have put forward a difficulty in accepting the Bhāṣya of Vyāsa on aphorism no. I:10 of the Yogasūtra on sleep as a fluctuation or mode of the human mind (vṛtti). I have come to suggest a slight change, not in the sūtra itself, but in its interpretation. My own interpretation of that sūtra is quite different from the interpretation of it given by Vyāsa and the still later commentators.

The topic involved in this controversy is that of the fluctuations of the human mind, called vṛttis. Patañjali has declared that there are five vṛttis of the mind (Y.S. I:5), and has named them respectively as i) right knowledge (pramāṇa vṛtti), ii) false knowledge (viparyaya vṛtti), iii) linguistic illusion based merely on the use of words (vikalpa vṛtti), iv) sleep (nidrā vṛtti) and v) memory (smṛtti vṛtti) (Y.S. I:6). Patañjali has further defined each one of the five vṛttis in separate sūtras (Y.S. I: 7 to 11).

According to Vyāsa, the meaning of Patañjali's sūtra on sleep is : The vṛtti which has the support (ālambana) of i.e., which is caused by the experience (pratyāya) of absence (abāva) of objects is nidrā-vṛtti (sleep).

* F-305, Ramyanagari, Bibwewadi, PUNE - 411 037, Maharashtra