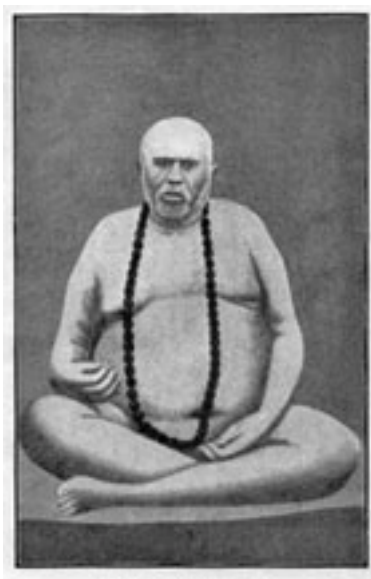


Introduction to a biography on Tailanga Swami

by Shyam Sundar Goswami



Tailanga Swami

Of all the yogis - and their number is vast - having appeared in India in the Christian age, who adopted different processes and preached different aspects of yoga, the towering personages of Shangkara, Chaitanya and Tailanga stand foremost.

In the 8th (or 2nd) century A.D., Shangkara came. He was a spiritual genius and expressed the highest spiritual truth, realizable only in samadhi, in a highly refined and technical language. Buddha's samadhi experiences, about which he himself was silent, were given a cognizable form by Shangkara's language, and the dregs associated with it and accumulated during the course of time, were refuted by Shangkara's exceptional intellectual power. Shangkara expounded asmita samadhi by transforming his own realization into a highly refined thought-form and expressed it by his own language, Upanishadically tuned.

The high spiritual model of Shangkara, which was based on samadhi, was

shaken later, and samadhi-perception was mostly replaced by monistic altercation. At this time of crisis, Chaitanya came. It was the 15th century A.D. Chaitanya pointed out that spirituality is not a matter of verbosity and argumentation; it is the expression of divineness through the realization of Divine Truth. He showed by his own example that direct divine contact is possible by transforming feeling into divine love raised to the ragatmika (all-love) stage, when love-concentration culminates into ananda samadhi. It is a most important contribution to yoga that the first stage of spiritual samadhi (that is ananda samadhi) is to be perfected by bhakti and then the divine-knowledge-form of samadhi (that is asmita samadhi) is to be adopted. At this stage, Shankara's "So'hang" (I am He) and Chaitanya's "Mui Sei" (I am He) are the same.

In the 17th century A.D., Tailanga came as Lord of Yoga. Tailanga's life is a revival of ancient yoga. He followed the rishi method of practice - from the basic yoga to its fourfold elaboration, giving plenty of time to each for its perfection. In fact, Tailanga was an example of living yoga. His interpretation was not so much verbal. He wanted to infuse into our minds the truth that yoga had to be experienced by practice, and the practice should be continued until it was perfected.

Tailanga did not want to make any 'ism' or institution of his own. So he was not so widely known and his spiritual and practical systems of yoga also remained mostly hidden. Of course, a limited number of his pupils knew him better than we do and, reasonably they had better access to his immense treasure of perfect knowledge of yoga.

Just as Krishna found that ancient yoga had almost been lost to the world towards the end of the 28th Dwapara (about 3000 B.C and therefore devoted himself to its revival, so Tailanga found that true yoga was declining, and he attempted to revive yoga by devoting himself to its continued practice for over 120 years until perfection. It was his silent exposition of yoga.

However, Tailanga's advanced pupils have not said a word about his

revelation of yoga as a spiritual system and a method of physical perfection. It may be that they kept his teaching to themselves without allowing it to be spread abroad. But why?

As it was not possible for me to approach Tailanga directly (he abandoned his body before I was born), I undertook a research about him, because I accepted him as the greatest of all yogis in modern times. I met a number of aged yogis from whom I collected information about him. The most important of these was Narayana Swami's account which has been presented in this work.

Fortunately, I have deep knowledge about Tailanga's high order of mental

life and his spiritual attainment from a magnificent Sanskrit work, entitled Mahawakya Ratnawali, written by Tailanga himself. We do not know whether he had written other books. It has been stated that he had a number of manuscripts. However, the Mahawakya Ratnawali has been known to us thanks to the inclination and effort of the late Mr. Umacharana Mukhopadhyaya, a disciple of Tailanga Swami. Certainly, he did not like that all his master's knowledge would remain buried. He made a Bengali translation of the Sanskrit text, and the text with translation was published by his son, the late Mr. Yogendranath Mukhopadhyaya in 1324 era), from Calcutta (India). We are all indebted to the late Umacharana.

The Mahawakya Ratnawali is the essence of Upanishadic truth and thought and presented in the Upanishadic language. As the Gita is like milk, milked by Krishna from all Upanishads, the Mahawakya Ratnawali is the spiritual essence revealed to Tailanga and expressed by him in a highly spiritual language My study of this work indicates that Tailanga achieved the highest mental samadhic asmita, and then passed into the mind-transcendent asamprajnata samadhi, beyond which there is nothing higher, more noble or spiritual. It is the non mental pure spiritual.

Tailanga's life was a life of harmonization of yoga.

My special study on the chapter of samadhi of the book has revealed that Tailanga's statements are mostly citations from different Upanishads.

It indicates firstly that Tailanga had profound knowledge of the Upanishads, which implies that he had deep study on the subject; and secondly that he specially adopted the Upanishadic method in the practice of samadhi, and his own realizations in samadhi were identical with what has been expressed by the Upanishadic mantras. So Tailanga preferred to use the mantras themselves instead of his own language.

It may be mentioned here that the rendering of the Sanskrit text into English is my own.

There are a number of books in Bengali about Tailanga's life and teachings. Of them, the book entitled "Mahatma Tailanga Swamir Jiwana Charita Tattwopadesha" by the late Mr. Uma-charana Mukhopadhyaya, and recently republished by Dr. Wishwanatha Mukhopadhyaya, is the original and more comprehensive one. It may also be mentioned here that our work is the first in English about Tailanga. We believe that English-speaking readers will thereby get an opportunity of knowing about Tailanga also for the first time.

Our attempt has been to know Tailanga's life and activities from a yoga viewpoint. In that sense, it is a technical study. But as yoga is an indispensable factor in our everyday life, because of the necessity of achieving thought-control and a purified vital body, this study became inevitable so the readers will find in this book the whole of yoga in an abridged form.

Tailanga is the embodiment of yoga. He has shown the possibility of achieving a harmonious development of the body and mind through the practice of yoga.

This book is an attempt to present to the readers the facts in relation to Tailanga's life, activities and teachings, so far as we have been able to trace them, which are directly connected with man's spiritual development

along with physical healthfulness, power and control.

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