

Geographic Specifications of India and the Appearance of Yoga

Vukica Janković*

Institute for Improvement of Education, Belgrade, Serbia

Abstract: *The article brings out specific geographic characteristics of India, as well as their correlation with the beginning and development of yoga as a philosophical system and philosophy of life. Besides geografic specifics, India has huge spiritual heritage. Compound natural and anthropogenic emanate from elementary knowledge of everything that exist. If we want to comprehend the spiritual, we have to be open to the nature that surrounds us. Studying the geographical characteristics of one climate, we could search for specific quality, habits and lifestyles of people that live in certain natural conditions. Geographical specifics of India may affect its inhabitants and the art of their activity, as well as forming a deeper thought process, that we can consider as one of the factors in the appearance of yoga system in India.*

Key words: *geography environment, yoga philosophy, Himalayas mountain, river Ganges, India.*

Relation toward nature

Relations between humans and nature can be perceived as an integral relation of overlapping their mutual impacts. A human with their activity influences the natural environment and make geographical environment, and the nature influences people's existence and activity. With this in mind, specifics of geographical environment that surrounds us or in which we grew up, are interwoven in our lives, considering that we are part of that. "If we want to show religions, cultures and civilizations what they are, we need to perceive the geographical and economic environment in which they began. Landscape speaks a lot about that." (Group of Autors, 2005).

Geographical environment represents gathering physical-geographical and social-geographical elements and factors that are correlated, interacted, and conditioned. Physical-geographical complex consists of: landscape, climate, waters, soil, plants and animal world. Social-geographical complex consists of: population, settlements and human work activities (economy). Between them there is constant exchange, overlapping of natural and antropogenic... "All parts of geographical environment are mutually connected, interacted and influence each other in multiple ways." (Gnjato, 2002). Integrity is law, whose essence reflects in comprehensive and unique understanding of interaction between physical-geographical and social-geographical components of an environment.

Primarily, nature has a big influence on people's existence and forming of permanent habitations, villages and cities. If the geographical conditions are good for their development, the settlement develops, and if they are not, it slows down or disappears. Formation of the first settlements is connected to landscapes that had good conveniences for life, and primarily water, fertile land and isolation, and relative security. "Natural factors of formation and development of settlement are crucial. They determine location, provide possibility of further development, expanding and maintenance. Natural factors refer to natural location, ground determines possibility and economy of building, climatic and microclimatic characteristics comfort of living and resources (mineral, water, soil nad biogene) environments provide economic and communal development of a settlement." (Ristić, 1993)

* Corresponding author: jankovic.vukica@gmail.com

It's no accident that certain cultures and civilizations appeared and developed on special territories. Their development was conditioned by the existence of specific geographical and historical circumstances. Primarily habitants were usually tied to fertile plains of rivers, because people could use easily accessible river potential, water and fertile alluvial ground. "A man could survive mostly where there is water and if latitude and elevation allow him to produce food" (Stamenković, 1992). River valleys were the most suitable places for people's life in the past. That is typical for civilizations that sprung and developed in valleys of Tigris, Euphrates, Nile, but also in valleys of Indus and Ganges. Man has always tied his settlements to places where there is water, on lesser altitude and in zones of lower latitude. For areas of South Asia and India it is characteristic that the populations live in upper and middle big river valleys flow, but also foothills of big mountains.

But not only existence, philosophy of living and religion are also conditioned by the nature that surrounds people. Religious thought of life and the world is usually conditioned by the environment in which it appeared, as well as the lifestyle...(Group of Authors, 2005) Characteristics of geographical environment influence forming people's deeper values, that concern relations of an individual to nature, to other people and other creatures. Searching for natural impacts of yoga philosophy and geographic characteristics of India, poses a question: what are physical-geographical and social-geographical characteristics of India that determine its character and that had the most significant influence on life and people's development on its ground?

Elementary geographic informations about India

India occupies most of Indian peninsula in South Asia. It borders six states: Pakistan in the West, China, Nepal and Butan in the North, and Bangladesh and Myanmar in the East. In the South is the Indian Ocean, in the Southwest is the Arabic Sea, and in the Southwest Bay of Bengal.

Surface of its territory is 3,29 million km² which is 73,2 % of the total area of South Asia. It is the biggest state in South Asia. It spreads from North to South for approximately 3 214 km and from East to West for 2 933 km. Considering such a big area, great diversity in terms of relief, climate, ground, vegetation, but also ethnical groups, languages, cultures and religions is characteristic of India.

Ethnical structure is: Indo-european people - 72 %, Dravidi in the South of India - 25%, Mongols and others - 3 %. In the religious structure Hinduists prevail - 80, 5%, then Muslims - 13,4%, Christians - 2,3 %, Sikh - 1,3%, Buddhists - 0,8%, Jainists - 0,4%, and others - 0,7%.

According to state organization India is a parliamentary republic. It is divided in 28 states and 6 federal territories. Official languages are Hindi, English and 16 regional languages.

By the number of population India is the second largest state in the world. It has a really big population growth. By the census from 2003. the number of population was 1 065 462 000, with the average population density of 336,5 per km. Population lives mostly in villages and they are engaged in agricultural production. As much as 72 % population of India lives in villages. There has been a lot of unemployment, as well as illiteracy and poverty. Due to the low standard, people live very short: the expected life for men is 62,2 and for women 63,5 years.

India possesses huge resources: fertile ground on which different cultures of rice, tea, sugar cane, cotton, tobacco, wheat etc. grow. India possesses great mineral resources, primarily iron, coal, manganese, thorium and naphtha. It is well known for its textile and film industry, that are well developed.

Yoga appearance on the Indian ground

We can connect yoga appearance on the Indian ground to two elements: first are the geographical characteristics in which it appeared and developed and the second is social, spiritual, ideal, essential in people what serves for realization of higher values. Essential connection to nature permeates yoga tradition from its beginning to the

modern period. Impacts of geographical environment on the appearance and development of yoga philosophy were permanent, because they immediately influenced the development of a certain way of thinking.

Indian people passed their culture and philosophy from generation to generation orally. "Even the simplest farmer, illiterate, carries a deep inside elementary view of the world and things, that can not be formulated clearly, but which is committed to general rejection of terrestrial and searching for happiness in god." (Gupta, 2007).

First appeared religion, and then yoga philosophy developed from it. Religion represents beliefs and philosophy thinking about life. Life wisdom and spiritual richness existed for centuries: about that there are records that are kept in Vedas oldest papers."India has saved, by retiring before the invaders, the intensity of its spiritual life, which it expresses by looking back from everything which is outside to this which is in man, to the spiritual". (Gupta, 2007).

Yoga is directed to inside, encouraging all that tremble in our essence. Permanent contact to nature that we initiate is essential energy of joy, union with nature that surrounds us, respect to all creatures..." We can't be indifferent to the landscape that we watch, the land we live in, the air we breath, water we drink, plant and animal world that surround us, the ground theat feeds us. The environment shapes our lifestyle, view of the world, culture and tradition."(Group of Autors, 2005).

Yoga represents a complex philosophical system that appeared in complex physical-geographical and social-geographical conditions of India. Landscape and climate of India with their important characteristics influence the other components, natural as well as antropogenic.

Considering the great area, India has a great climate diversity that goes from tropic monsoon climate in the Himalayas, through warm steppe climate in south-west India to warm desert climate in desert Tar. The word warm is characteristic for all types. Climate determines not only the art and tempo of human activities, it even affects the physical appearance of people, food, thoughts. The effects of climate on the human organism are reflected in several climate elements, such as temperature, air humidity, winds, drop in air pressure etc. Temperature of ambient air is the main factor that irritates nerv end on body surface: The depth and frequency of breathing, speed of blood circulation, supply of cells with oxygen depend on air temperature... And not only temperature but also air pressure and other climate elements have great influence on human organisam. (Dukić, 1998).

"Indian thought is developed in an environment that has a warm climate, rich ground, great productivity and easy communication. Its relation to nature is not fight; it is harmony; it isn't revolution – it is evolution. That fundamental moral conscience didn't watch the world, like it is ful of evil, but as the place where law, kindness and justice exist and people should adjust their lives to them".(Group of Autors, 2005). Warm climate of India affects the development of certain characters and tempers of Indian people.

India is under the influence of tropical monsoons that have a very special and great influence on people's life, as well as on their activity and existence. Indian population is forced to accommodate to the local climate conditions, wanting to use weather conditions as best as possible during the year. Life of Indian population depends a lot on rain that brings summer monsoons. Summer and winter monsoons rotate during the year. Those are winds characteristic for landscapes with tropical climate. They appear due to different air pressures that are made above shore and sea. In the winter, monsoons blow from the shore. Summer monsoon comes from southwest and crossing the Indian Ocean collects water vapor, which has been condensating above mountain Chats and south slope of the Himalayas. Then a lot of rainfall is produced. The place Cherapunji is the place with the most rainfall in the world. The rain season lasts from June to September. At the end of Decembre the dry season begins, and then dry northeast continental winter monsoon blows until March. Winter monsoon comes from the area of Pehjabi and foothills of the Himalayas. Then comes the mild pre-monsun period, and then suddenly comes rainfall with the summer monsoon. That monsoon shift has certain regularity, cyclicity and continuity." How long has watching regularity in continuity of natural processes affected Indian thought? The result is the feeling that moral law is only the extension of nature laws. It has been like that from the beginnig,

Indian conscience accepted the principle belief that moral consequences of each action are defined and derived.” (Group of Autors, 2005).

In physical-geographical sense India is divided in 3 big regional parts: in the North is “high India” / Himalayas and Karakorum. Between the Himalayas and Dekan plateau and Arabic sea and Bengal bay is “low India” / the Himalayas depression, with flows of Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra. In the middle and the South is “peninsular India” – Dekan plateau, mountains East and West Chats and coast (Malabar and Coromandal coast). Within this are 13 regional parts: Kashmir, Sivalik, valley of river Ganges, Asam, Bengal, Orisa, Penjab, desert Tar, Kac, Katjavar and Gujerat, West or Malabar coast, North Dekan, South Dekan and East or Coroman coast. Each of this has its own specific and physical-geographic, as well as social-geographic. This different landscape and India with the biggest mountains and numerous river valleys has been influenced people’s life in first settlements, in different climate types, different ground types and the art of economy activity, generally, the landscape influenced the characteristics of life in the widest sense.

Although each of this parts has its own specific, it seems as the mountain Himalai and Gang depression are especially important for India. That has been always the biggest spiritual centres, and today they have big religious importance and represent the pilgrimage places. Spiritual centres are placed in piedmont of Himalai, for instance the place Rishikesh, the oldest centre of yoga philosophy.

Genesis and formation of these three regional parts are also interesting because it can be contributed to appearance of yoga philosophy in India, especially Himalai because they ensued on collision of lithospheric plates. The hardest collision was between Indian continental block – that goes toward north – and Eurasian continental block – that goes towards Himalai. In that collision, due to withdrawal Indian block under the Euroasia, Himalai are formed, the biggest and the most widespread mountain wreath in the world. So powerful heaving has been followed by great energetic blowing from center of earth. Living tectonic activity in Himalai lasts even today, and that confirm numerous reasearches.

Long-term erosion activity which here was especially strong conditioned rinsing of great amount of erosive material from Himalai that have been settled down in his piedmont that fertile applied in Gang depression in which flew Ind and gang.

Wide and fertile river valleys are special characteristics of Indian relief. The widest and fertiliest river valleys are on the north of India. From plateau Dekan that represents old plateau rivers interflow to west and east. They also have big importance to local community, eventhough the west rivers are more important. Rivers had always great influence.

Himalayas – highest peaks in the world

Himalayas have always been spiritual centres, especially piedmont of Himalayas, where are numerous ashrams and centres for learning yoga and meditation. Special ambient of Himalayas with its width and peaks wakes up the special feeling of admiring them.

When we watch Indian card we can see its north board are mountain wreaths that splits it from central Asia. Himalayas had always big influence of people’s life. They influenced spreading old cultures. They determined direction of people’s motion outside the Indian semiisland, as well as its isolation from outside influences.

With its diffusion and height, Himalayas prevent motion in any shape and represent natural shield from 2 500 km, that spreads from Pamir mountain on southeast, Himalayas ascend above depression of Hindustan and apparts India from the highest and biggest plateau in the world – Tibet, in China. Protected from north, with wide system of young wreath mountains, Indian semiisland is apparted from other parts of central Asia. North parts of Indian semiisland are very inaccessible for all types of motion, and especially for migration and conquests. “People’s groups that settle isolation areas are like closed and they had separate development to some extent that is different from other group’s extension, that are settled in areas of connection and interaction.” (Cvijić, 2000).

On this way protected first civilizations in valleys of rivers Ganga and Indus developed their culture. “Unaviable height of Himalayas whose peaks close to sky and are always covered with snow and ice, defend on the north continent of India from central Asia and make the dam that enabled India to live its life and had its own destiny.”(Gupta, 2007).

We don't know for sure from where come first residents. “But still that time was time of high culture, which show discovered settlements with canalizations and water systems.” (Gupta, 2007). The preserved traces these cultures was on the same level as the one in Nil, Tigar and Euftrat depressions. Archeologists discovered rests of cities with houses, streets, water systems and canalizations...

In that time the nature was really different then it is today. First civilizations were settled in depression of river Indus, that then had much wetter climate then it is today. Climate got drier and population was moving towards east in valley of Ganga and in Himalai's piedmont.

Isolation that enabled Himalayas, we can see as geographic specification of India, that predisposed undisturbed development of culture and civilization on its ground. “Closed with that practically impassable natural opsticles from other world, India inflorescenses in high culture, when in Europe was nothing that would looks like state and life organization.”(Gupta, 2007).

The only passage which was aviable existed in west parts of Himalayas, toward Iran plateau. They enabled penetration fromperiphery to inside. In literature have been menshend indoeuropean tribes Aryan, who dropping from Kashmir, passed through tough viable valleys of west Himalayas slopes and settled in valley of Indus, and then in whole width of river gang, banishing local population on plateau Dekan. They brought their own culture that was pretty much developed from the culture of local population and on this way thay influenced on development of philosophic systems that were later developed in this area.

In area of Himalayas stand out a few mountain areas. These are Kashmir, Ladak and Sivalik. Population edeals with cattle breeding, because the Himalayas slopes abound with rich pastures.

It were not the natural shild that enabled development of civilizations that existed in its piedmont, but they influenced on forming good climate to whole place. Himalai represent climate bound between tropic, monsoon climate which is characteristic to India and dry continental climate in Middle Asia. With its own width and height Himalayas hold the wet air masses which come from Indian ocean and on that way they inhibite them to cross to central Asia. On that way, local community gets a lot of rainfalls which are necessary for survival. “This is typicall example of how relief with its exposition impacts on rearrangement of population. Epecially that comes to the fore when we compare extreme exposition / north and south. South slope of Himalayas describes wet monsoon climate, and north dry, mountain / desert climate. This climate difference conditioned very uneven population of two opposite mountain sides, concentration of popularity on south and dispesity on north slope of Himalayas.” (Dukić, 1998) Himalaya also prevent penetration of cold air masses from space of central Asia in inside of India.

Himalayas are covered alls the time with snow and ice what mark and its name on sanskrt meands “residence of snow”. That eternal snow and ice that cover Himalayas peaks feeds with water springs of great number of rivers thatdescend from Himalai incorporating in bigger rivers in their piedmont. On Himalayas are springs of Indua and Ganga, two most important rivers in India.

Saint river Ganga

Hidrografy of India is very colorfull and different. It is a big number of rivers and fertile river valleys. Important is water system that makes thick network of canals by river lows.

Indian popularity attached importance to rivers. They influenced on its existency, but they had also a big spiritual importance, as piligramce places, and generally rivers have a big power. People of India believe in ritual bath that cleans body and spirit form all dirtyness. The most important rivers are Indus, Ganga,

Brahmaputra, Jamna, Narmada, Godavari, and Kaveri, they flow towards east and west side of semiisland and flow in Arabic sea and Bengal bay.

In Indus valley appeared first civilisations, that then spread valley of Ganga. By fertile river valleys flowered agronomy and on that way appeared one of the oldest civilizations. Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra have spring in Himalayas.

Ganga is for Indian people the holiest river, it has a special place in history of Indian people's development. Ganga (2 580 km) springs on Himalayas, on height of approximately 7000 m, becoming water from glacier Gangotri. In Himalayas, Ganga has all marks of mountain river with big down of river bed and big speed of river bed. And then it is real plain river to delta in Bengal bay. Big amounts of alluvium and mud that mountain tributary wash from Himalai's slopes, downsize height of river bed, so in the time of monsoon rains it effuses out of its bed and floods the ground.

River Ganga has a big economic influence. Population settled its fertile valley. Its alluvial plants very prolific and enables growing the most different cultures, rice, sugar cane, wheat and cotton. That's why the area of river Ganga is the thickest settled in whole India. Thanks to fertile river floods, agroecology is the major economy part. Big part of population who live in villages works in agroecology. Permanent contact with ground influenced on appearing Indian special character, which is humble, love and spiritual cleanness.

For Indian people river Ganga has special meaning in spiritual and religic sense. That is "saint river" that has a big importance in life of every Indian from birth to death.

Ganga is a place of pilgrimage and spiritual harbor. "People say very often, that history of Indian love to Ganga is history of Indian civilization." (Group of Authors, 2005) Many pilgrimage proceed to river beds towards its spring, and in case of Ganga that is 6 years.

Many centre for yoga learning are in spring parts of Ganga, while along the stream and estuary are places of pilgrimage and religious

For the time of religious holidays population migrations are very intensive and in valley of Ganga comes more than ten thousand of people. So strong religious impuls hold on until today with the same intensity as before. The special feeling of admiring and respecting river Ganga is the reflect of strength of spiritual heritage. The feeling of union with nature and other people develops spiritual openmindedness, benevolence, mildness, respect, commitment.

River Ganga has been waking up for ages that special feeling of respect and admiring.

Conclusion

Appearance and development of population and civilisations can not be seen isolated and separated from geographic and historic context in which they appeared and developed. Searching for law of yoga appearance in India, we can conclude that certain geographic specificness of India enabled development that philosophic view on the world. Nowhere in the world there are no Himalayas, which enabled uninterrupted development of first civilisations that appeared in its piedmont. Warm climate was good for developing positive ideas, attitudes and beliefs. In relief overcomes the system of river valleys and the holiest is Ganga. Its fertile alluvial ground enables survival of people. Importance that Indian people gives to Ganga, makes it "saint river". River Ganga has a special place in life of every Indian man.

We could say that for the appearance of philosophic yoga system is important array of specific geographic harbor of environment in which it appeared and by the way, it has a very big influence.

Believes are that yoga could appear anywhere in the world, but coloring of India as well as in physical-geographic sense, and also in social-geographic sense gives a conclusion that the integrity of specific natural and antropogenic factors influenced that yoga comes up on its ground.

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