

THE PHILOSOPHY OF
CLASSICAL YOGA



GEORG FEUERSTEIN

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Foreword

by Professor Corrado Pensa

The study of oriental philosophical-religious texts, especially of the Indian genre, presents considerable and particular difficulties. In many instances there is a lack of adequate historical and chronological data, and frequently all that remains are the name of the author and a few vague and more or less legendary reports about him. Furthermore, the terms which confront one are so polyvalent and stratified as to constitute often a very real challenge to anyone who seeks to gauge their full meaning.

In the face of all these difficulties it is of primary importance to develop a valid methodology in order to determine the parameters necessary for the most correct interpretation of eastern texts. It gives me, therefore, great pleasure to preface this book by Georg Feuerstein, who has been researching into Yoga for many years with investigative passion and has already given us several works of capital importance for the comprehension of this subject. His previous books *Reappraisal of Yoga*, *The Essence of Yoga* and *Textbook of Yoga* testify to an increasing appreciation of Yoga, which is considered each time from a different angle, always enriching our understanding of this phenomenon.

In his methodology Feuerstein adopts an approach to research in which accurate linguistic analysis is inseparable from the analysis of the various contexts in which a given term or concept appears, thus ensuring that all possible meanings and values are identified. This particular question has been treated in some depth in the companion volume to the present work entitled *Yoga-Sūtra: An Exercise in the Methodology of Textual Analysis*.

The central premise of this methodology is the rejection of all simplistic unilateral interpretations. For this reason Feuerstein also correctly criticises in the aforementioned work E. Conze's reduction of Yoga to a mere assemblage of techniques, whereas what we are in fact dealing with is a 'theory-practice continuum'. Hence, again, his refusal to blindly trust the interpretational keys proffered in the exegetical Sanskrit literature postdating the *Yoga-Sūtra*; as he points out there is a considerable intervening chronological *and* ideological distance. Although taking due note of the commentaries, Feuerstein prefers to concentrate on an immanent critique of the original text itself.

In contrast to the approach adopted by many Orientalists who *a priori* tend to deny the unity of the text under examination, fragmenting it into so many parts of heterogeneous strata until nothing remains, Feuerstein rightly asks in his methodological study whether this compulsive search for incongruencies and textual corruptions is not the expression of an ethnocentric rationalising mentality which inclines to project everywhere its own need for abstract and absolute logic.

and hence is particularly prone to misinterpret paradoxical expressions so common in eastern thought, which has a *penchant* for transcending dualism and therefore in part also rational language as such.

The principal merit of the present volume lies in that it provides us with a highly original overall picture of Classical Yoga. Instead of giving a contracted description of this school of thought – which would be at least partly second-hand – Feuerstein undertakes a thorough analysis of the key concepts, arranging his findings in a systematic fashion so that in the end there spontaneously emerges a complete picture of the entire spiritual *iter* of Classical Yoga. His detailed semantic examination demonstrates once again – if that should still be necessary – that the meaning of the complex and polyvalent Sanskrit terms (hardly even translatable into our languages by a single word) must be sought through an accurate comparison of the various contexts in which they occur.

The other great merit of this work is that it never loses sight of the psychointegrative and experiential matrix of a great many key concepts of Classical Yoga. Thus *īśvara*, considered by a number of Orientalists as a later superfluous interpolation added from the outside to a system already complete in itself, is here linked up with the *yogin's* profound experience of the archetypal *yogin*, *i.e.* the macrocosmic reflection of the *puruṣa* innate in everybody, which in its turn is not an abstract concept but a concrete numinous experience whose connections with the conditioned mental complexes (the *punctum dolens* of many exegetes and scholars) are here analysed with considerable precision.

Also with regard to the concept of *prakṛti* the author's observations are stimulating and original, particularly in his recognition of two distinct levels – 'deep structure' and a 'surface structure', which opens up new lines of research. The same may be said of certain parallels which he draws between the *gunā* theory and recent discoveries in nuclear physics.

Yoga is here interpreted in terms of a profound transformation of consciousness culminating in *gnosis*. After having shown in his probing study that it is essentially a bi-polar process of gradual internalisation, he reaches a conclusion of enormous significance which, in my opinion, is fundamental to all Indian thought: 'the ontogenetic models are originally and primarily maps for meditative introspection'. This homologisation between cosmological and psychological structures is truly a modality of thought intrinsic to the Indian religious consciousness, as was noted already by M. Falk in her brilliant and unfortunately little known study *Il mito psicologico nell' India antica* (Rome, 1939).

It is to be hoped that works such as Georg Feuerstein's present study will serve as a stimulus so that other scholars may enrich their own methods of research in order to contribute to a more valid and differentiated view of Indian religiosity.

Rome, 197

Preface

Yoga, in particular Patañjali's variant of this great Indian tradition, has captivated my professional interest over many years, and my published findings and thoughts on the subject reflect the various stages of this protracted research. The present volume consists of a series of detailed analyses of the key concepts mustered by Patañjali to describe and explain the enigma of human existence and to point the way out of conditioned existence, to stop the perpetual motion of the 'wheel of becoming' (*bhava-cakra* = *saṃsāra*).

I have adopted an historical approach combined with a system-immanent interpretation founded on my own rigorous textual studies on the structure of Patañjali's work, the *Yoga-Sūtra* (see my 1979 methodological study). This book differs from previous publications in that it seeks to wrest from Patañjali's aphoristic statements themselves the philosophical edifice of Classical Yoga and thus to combat the overpowering influence exercised by Vyāsa's scholium, the *Yoga-Bhāṣya*, on all subsequent efforts at exegesis. By contrast, I have tried to tentatively relate Patañjali's conceptions to *earlier* epic teachings from which, after all, he must have drawn some inspiration. In fact, there appears to be a far greater continuity between Classical Yoga and antecedent (pre-classical) formulations than is normally thought. However, the present work does not develop this point further, and the parallels introduced have the chief purpose of illuminating Patañjali's teachings.

There are naturally many details of this intricate *darśana* which, of necessity, had to be relegated to a secondary place, although they could profitably form the substance of further problem-specific studies. My principal aim has been to present a reinterpretation of the main bearings of the metaphysical framework of Classical Yoga. The single most important finding of this piece of research is the fact that Patañjali's system cannot be subsumed under the heading of Sāṃkhya. Classical Yoga is exactly what its protagonists claim: an autonomous *darśana* with its own characteristic set of concepts and technical expressions. The popular scholarly impression according to which Classical Yoga is some kind of parasite capitalising on the philosophical efforts of Classical Sāṃkhya, is shown to be in need of urgent and radical revision. The concluding chapter is a thumbnail sketch of the crucial differences between these two schools which should set this whole issue into the proper perspective.

Some readers may be puzzled by the sparing treatment afforded to the famous schema of the 'eight members' (*aṣṭa-aṅga*) of Yoga, frequently misinterpreted as 'stages'. The reason for this is twofold. First, I have dealt with this aspect of Classical Yoga fairly extensively in a previous book (see my 1974 publication) and, second, I have come to regard this particular systematisation of the yogic path as of subsidiary importance in the overall structure of Patañjali's school of thought.

In fact, it is highly probable that he adopted this eightfold classification from earlier sources for the sake of expositional convenience, whereas his own view seems to be that *kriyā-yoga*, which can be equated with Classical Yoga *per se*, essentially the combined practice of asceticism (*tapas*), self-study (*svādhyāya*) and devotion to the Lord (*īśvara-praṇidhāna*) (see aphorism II.1), which leads to the cultivation of the enstatic consciousness (in *samādhi*) and consequently to the abrogation of those factors which are the true causes of human bondage and man's mistaken self-identity.

The observations, thoughts, suggestions and speculations presented in this fascicle have all matured on the soil prepared by previous researchers, and my criticisms of some of their contributions, though necessarily committed, in no way seek to detract from the merit of their valuable labour. I am particularly indebted to the work of the late Professor J. W. Hauer, which first introduced me to the exciting possibility of a text-immanent interpretation of the *Yoga-Sūtra*. To what degree I have succeeded in achieving this programme, future studies will undoubtedly evince.

Several friends and colleagues have made various contributions at different stages in the writing of this book. My special thanks go to Professor Dr Arnold Kunst and Dr Tuvia Gelblum for their comments; to Professor Corrado Pensa for the generous remarks in his Foreword; to Mr J. H. M. Shankland for Englishing the Italian Foreword; to Mrs Mary Newman for reading through the entire script and righting a number of linguistic wrongs; to Mrs A. Mitchell for tackling so efficiently the typing of a fairly complicated manuscript; to Dr Richard Lawless and the secretaries of the Middle East Documentation Centre (Durham), especially Miss Avril Yeates, for various favours and kindnesses; and not least to the library staff of the School of Oriental Studies (Durham), in particular Dr I. Char and Mr Malcolm Ferguson, for their considerateness and help in procuring seemingly unprocurable works.

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Preface to the New Edition

I am grateful to Ehud Sperling, publisher of Inner Traditions International, for giving this book a new lease on life, after having been out of print for many years. Its subject matter is as relevant today as it was when I wrote about it sixteen years ago, and I am happy to say that the present work, short as it is, still offers the most systematic, in-depth analysis of the principal concepts of Classical Yoga.

This monograph is complemented by some of my other books, notably *The Yoga Sutra of Patañjali: A New Translation and Commentary*, also published by Inner Traditions International, and *Wholeness or Transcendence? Ancient Lessons for the Emerging Global Civilization*, published by Larson Publications.

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The Concept of God (*īśvara*)

The ontology of Classical Yoga, or *kriyā-yoga*, has three major foci, viz. *īśvara*, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. These are deemed irreducible ontic ultimates. The most distinctive feature of the ontology of Patañjali's school of thought and, I wish to contend, of any form of Hindu Yoga, is the concept of 'the Lord' or *īśvara*.

The word *īśvara* is a derivative of the verbal root $\sqrt{\text{īś}}$ ('to rule'), current already at the time of the ancient Vedic *saṃhitās*. Synonyms are *īś*, *īśa* and *īśana*, *īśvara* being the more prevalent form in later periods. It conveys the notion of a higher personal god, at times endowed with certain anthropomorphic characteristics but never totally divorced from the concept of the impersonal absolute, the *brahman* of philosophical discourse. The term *īśvara* is ultimately bound up with the history of theism in India.

Repeated attempts have been made in the past to trace the evolution of this crucial religio-philosophical concept. One of the first scholars to apply himself to the study of the history of theism was M. Müller. He distinguished three principal stages, all of which can be evidenced still in the Vedic age; they are (1) Polytheism, (2) Henotheism (or Kathenotheism), (3^a) Monotheism and (3^b) Pantheism.

Thus on the most archaic level M. Müller (1916⁴) envisaged a kind of theological pluralism in which the thirty-three known gods of the Rgvedic pantheon were regarded as embodiments or abstractions of natural phenomena. On the basis of this diffuse conceptual stage the need arose for a unification of the multiple *deva* populating the heavens. According to M. Müller, the notion of the *viśve-devas* ('all gods') was a gambit in this direction. Certain gods were identified with each other or coupled together, as in the case of Mitra-Varuna and Agni-Soma, etc. On the next stage, in M. Müller's evolutionary scheme, a single god was invoked under the temporary forgetfulness of all other gods. For this phenomenon he devised the term Henotheism (also: Kathenotheism). From then on the development proceeded in a bifurcate line. On the one hand it gave rise to monotheistic conceptions and on the other hand to Pantheism with its impersonal absolute.

The entire problem was renewedly investigated by H. Jacobi (1923). In principle accepting M. Müller's (1916⁴) classificatory model, he modified somewhat his formulation of the nature of Henotheism in that he preferred to regard it not so much as a direct pre-stage to Monotheism, but as a rejection of the gods as totally independent entities and thus as a preparatory stage for the development of the concept of an impersonal quintessence (or *brahman*) of the manifest world.

The concept of *brahman* (neutr.) was of first-rate importance in the religious and philosophical speculations of the post-Vedic period, and, as S. Dasgupta (1963⁵, I, 20) remarked, it 'has been the highest glory for the Vedānta philosophy of later days'. In one sense it is antipodal to the idea of *īśvara*, yet in another sense

it can be said to complement it, or perhaps even partially define it. For in the formulation of the notion of a personal god the idea of the omnipresent and omnitemporal ground of being is never quite lost sight of.

The idea of a personal deity is anticipated in the ṛgvedic conception of the 'unknown god' (M. Müller's phrase) eulogised in X.121, as also in the conception of Prajāpati, Dhātṛ, Viśvakarman, Tvaṣṭṛ and Puruṣa (see X.90). Whether or not one interprets these, according to some preconceived evolutionist system, as the culmination of a primitive polytheist medley, it is clear that by the time the bulk of the *Mahābhārata* had been composed the concept of *īśvara* was firmly lodged in the religious sector of Indian culture. The theism of the epic is largely analogous to that of the metric Upaniṣads, such as the *Śvetāśvatāra-* and the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and not least the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. This highlights an interesting point, namely it brings out the close relation which exists between the concept of *īśvara*, Sāṃkhya onto-logical ideas and yogic practice. Their joint occurrence in the post-buddhist period is certainly remarkable and calls for an explanation.

B. Kumarappa (1934, 3), in a slightly different context, suggested that theological speculation was originally triggered off by the primary question 'Whence this universe?'. He thus linked up theism with cosmological and etiologi- cal considerations, which would seem to have the supportive evidence of the many creation theories in the *Upaniṣads*. But perhaps this is merely half the full answer. A different solution to this problem is possible if one places proper emphasis on the fact that it is not only the more speculative Sāṃkhya which is bound up with the *īśvara* concept, but also the age-old experimental tradition of Yoga. Basing myself on R. Otto's (1959) hypothesis of an innate capacity in man for numinous experiencing, I wish to propose that *īśvara* is essentially an *experimental construct* arrived at primarily on the basis of yogic self-absorption rather than pure theological ratiocination. In this respect it can be aligned with the other ontological categories of pre-classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga which, as I will show, are most appropriately understood as being phenomenological distillations of meditative-enstatic experiences. However, I hasten to emphasise that this line of argumentation in no way implies either an affirmation or a denial of the objective reference of any of these categories of experience.

It has not always been appreciated that theism is woven into the very fabric of *hindu* Yoga. Thus, in R. Garbe's (1894) opinion, Yoga is a theistic reinterpretation of the *nirīśvara* (atheistic) tradition of ancient Sāṃkhya. He speculated (p. 50) that this acceptance of *īśvara* into Yoga was the likely result of an effort to make Yoga more acceptable to the popular strata of society. H. Oldenberg (1915, 281) probed further: 'Did this belief originally pertain to Yoga as an essential element? Have Sāṃkhya and Yoga always been differentiated in the way the epic has it and as they are differentiated in their classical forms: as an atheistic and a theistic system respectively? This seems doubtful. The practice of Yoga obviously does not necessarily presuppose the notion of god [. . .]. Visible proof that a system greatly suffused with yogic elements could nonetheless reject the belief in god is supplied by the doctrine [. . .] of the Buddha.'

This stance has been challenged early on in the controversy by H. Jacobi (1921).

39), who wrote: 'This assertion of īśvara has been interpreted as a concession of Yoga to Brahmanism, which is surely wrong; rather one should admire the audacity and the courage of a school of philosophy which, in the face of the prevalent atheism in philosophical and orthodox circles, dared to put forward the existence of īśvara [. . .] as one of its doctrinal axioms.' H. Jacobi thus reaffirmed von Schroeder's (1887, 687) contention that 'Yoga has a distinct theistic character'.

This has been definitively confirmed by more recent research into the pre-classical configurations of the Sāṃkhya school of thought. In an outstanding contribution, K. B. R. Rao (1966) has conclusively demonstrated the intrinsic theistic nature of the pre-classical Sāṃkhya schools. His comprehensive study fully corroborates and consolidates F. Edgerton's (1924, 8) findings: 'Where then, do we find that "original" atheistic view expressed? I believe: *nowhere*. My study of the epic and other early materials [. . .] has convinced me that there is not a single passage in which disbelief in Brahman or God is attributed to Sāṃkhya.'

H. Jacobi (1923) saw a connection between the employment of austerities (*tapas*) and the belief in *īśvara*. He pointed out that not infrequently the declared purpose of the fearful ascetic practices was to get the attention of a particular deity who, impressed and gratified with the *tapasvin's* self-inflicted hardship and unflinching endurance, would bestow a boon on him. He mentioned in passing that in such a context the deity was generally known as *varada* or 'bestower of the boon'. He speculated (p. 29): 'For the popular conception at least, the grace of the deity was a necessary precondition for the recompense of ascetic exertion. It seems but natural that Yoga should adopt the recognition of *īśvara* into its system.'

This view is reiterated in many modern studies, especially on the history of religions. Thus N. Smart (1968, 30), a representative proponent of the misconception, wrote: '. . . Yoga has borrowed a concept from popular religion and put it to a special use.' As he asserted elsewhere (1971, 163), Yoga is essentially an atheistic system. No reasons were supplied. At least H. Jacobi (1923) offered some kind of explanation even though it is unacceptable. For what his interpretation amounts to is the reduction of the conception of a personal god to one of two actors in a process of bargaining: the ascetic excels himself and is rewarded or 'paid off' by the deity. I do not contest that this may be exactly the essence of many of the ascetic 'deals' recorded in the epic. But I find it unsound reasoning to take this as a historical prelude to the act of grace (*prasāda*) spoken of in later Yoga. I prefer to understand such legends as folkloristic interpretations of a phenomenon which could well be a parameter of mystical experiencing: the ultimate crossing of the threshold of phenomenal existence interpreted as a transcendental act which appears to be initiated as it were from 'outside' or 'above'.

The idea implicit in H. Jacobi's (1923) suggestion that Patañjali in a way made a compromise to placate the orthodoxy is preposterous. Imputing to the famous Yoga teacher such hypocrisy, it is hardly surprising that his precise philosophical

position has never been appraised adequately.

Less objectionable but similarly unconvincing is M. Müller's (1916², 326) psychological explanation. Rejecting the historical argument according to which Patañjali merely sought to appease the orthodox *brāhmanas*, M. Müller instead suggested that it was the natural human craving for a first cause which led Patañjali to the postulation of *īśvara*. If this were correct one would expect *īśvara* to have at least one definite cosmological function; yet 'the lord' is neither the creator nor sustainer or destroyer of the universe. The 'first cause' of which M. Müller spoke is, in Patañjali's system, the world ground or *prakṛti*, the eternal creative matrix of the manifest world.

Against the above historical and psychological explanations of the concept of *īśvara*, I wish to propose that its origins lie in the realm of yogic experiencing itself. This is also M. Eliade's (1973³, 75) conclusion: 'Patañjali nevertheless had to introduce *īśvara* into Yoga, for *īśvara* was, so to speak, an experiential datum . . . This of course does not imply that Patañjali's formulation of the concept is a creation *ex nihilo*. It is obvious from a perusal of the *Mahābhārata*, especially certain portions of the twelfth *parvan*, that the conceptualisation of *īśvara* in Classical Yoga has its epic antecedents.

Philosophically the most important treatment of the theistic component in epic Yoga is to be found in section XII.296¹ of the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata*. Here *hiranyagarbha-yoga*² is dealt with, which K. B. R. Rao (1966, 278) wrongly identified as the philosophy of the epic Yoga system *par excellence*. However, this slip does not detract from the general merit of his acute analysis of this particular branch of Yoga. On the basis of P. M. Modi's (1932) earlier work, he succeeded in achieving a complete reinterpretation of the above passage, which has been lamentably misconstrued by F. Edgerton (1965) and others. He managed to reconstruct a good deal of the philosophy sketched in these extremely difficult and obscure verses.

Accepting, in principle, the general epic theories about the twenty-three evolutes of the unitary world-ground, the *hiranyagarbha* school of Yoga introduced the noteworthy distinction between the Self which has recovered its innate enlightenment, *viz.* the so-called *buddhyamāna*, and the ever-enlightened *buddha* or *prabuddha*. In comparison with the latter, *i.e.* god, the enlightened Self is said to be *abuddhimān* (see vs. 17). Thus there is no simple identification of the twenty-fifth *tattva*, *viz.* *buddhyamāna*, with the twenty-sixth, which is the supreme godhead. The latter principle is also referred to as *īśvara*, *mahā-ātman* and *avyakta-brahman*. The *buddhyamāna* is also called *puruṣa* and *buddha* (which confusingly enough is also applied to the twenty-sixth *tattva*). The twenty-fourth principle, which is the insentient world-ground, is known by the name of *prakṛti*, *abuddha*, *avyakta* and *apratibuddha*.

It is said of the *buddhyamāna* (see vs. 2) that it creates, upholds and withdraws the primary-constituents (*guna*) of the world-ground and that it 'knows' or apperceives the world-ground (see vs. 3) whilst itself being *nirguna* (see vs. 4) and hence 'unknown' by the *avyakta*. On the other hand, the *buddhyamāna* does not apperceive the lord (see vs. 6), who is pure, incomprehensible, eternal and always

apperceiving (see vs. 7). This *mahā-ātman* or great being permeates both the visible and the invisible (see vs. 8). When the *buddhyamāna* or Self identifies itself with something that is external to its being, it is known as *avyakta-locana* (see vs. 10). Taking his cue from XII.296.18 (= XII.284.18 crit. ed.), K. B. R. Rao (1966: 282) interpreted this term as 'wearing the spectacles of *prakṛti*' or 'seeing through the *avyakta*' by means of the organ of cognition (which is *buddhi*) rather than understanding this interesting compound in the plain sense of 'seeing through the *avyakta*'.

The goal of this Yoga is naturally also quite different from that enunciated in the contemporaneous Sāṃkhya and Pāñcarātra schools, which advocate a merger of the phenomenal self with the transcendental Self. This difference is evident from such phrases as *buddhatva* (XXI.296.11), *kevala-dharma* (vs. 12) or *kevala-samāgama* (vs. 13). These appear to imply that the *buddhyamāna* attains to the 'estate' of the twenty-sixth principle without becoming identical with it. In other words, *īśvara* always remains transcendent (*para*). He never becomes involved with any of the lower *tattvas*. Thus emancipation can be said to be a condition of the *buddhyamāna* qua the *buddhyamāna* in the 'company' (*samiti*) of the lord (see XII.296. 27 ff.).

The metaphysics of this prominent school of Yoga in epic times seemingly provided the paradigm for the peculiar ontology of Classical Yoga. This was first pointed out by P. M. Modi (1932, 81): 'The idea of God in the Yoga System was not arrived at by superimposing it on an atheistic Sāṃkhya System with twenty-five principles, but by distinguishing the Jīva from God on practical grounds.' This is endorsed by K. B. R. Rao (1966, 290): 'Probably the Epic Yoga lays the inchoate foundation for the classical Yoga conception of a detached *īśvara*.' However, he felt compelled to remark (p. 291) that the conception of *īśvara* in the ancient *hiranyagarbha-yoga* is 'utterly naive and simple', since it depicts god as 'motionless and frigid witness' who is not even interested in the *yogin's* struggle for emancipation. He also deemed the more activist conception of god as expressed in the *Yoga-Bhāṣya* (1.25) a positive advance on this view. Evidently K. B. R. Rao's criticism is somewhat biased.

Although no mention is made in the relevant epic passage of the lord's soteriological function, one must nevertheless ask oneself why a need should have been felt to philosophically recognise the superlative status of *īśvara* if the concept would not somehow have had a compelling experiential basis. This line of argumentation would seem to be supported by the strictly pragmatic approach of Classical Yoga, with its emphasis on experiment and personal verification. Nor is the absence of any reference in the above passage to the idea of grace or *prasāda*, which looms large in other contexts, a positive proof of its irrelevance in the yoga process as envisaged in *hiranyagarbha-yoga*.

A different hypothesis about the historical precursor of Classical Yoga was put forward by E. H. Johnston (1937). He proposed that 'the Sāṃkhya side of Patañjali's doctrine is based on the teaching of Pañcaśikha' (p. 9). His principal reason for this assertion was that Vyāsa, in his *Yoga-Bhāṣya*, cites Pañcaśikha on many occasions. Actually, Vyāsa himself nowhere mentions Pañcaśikha by name.

but the appropriate identifications are exclusively supplied by Vācaspati Miśra who is many generations later still. As P. Chakravarti (1951, 115) has made plausible, the quotations in question are probably from a work by Vārsaganya. Also, in one instance at least, the *Yukti-Dīpikā*, which is older than the *Tattva-Vaisārādī Tattva-Vaisārādī*, definitely contradicts Vācaspati Miśra, viz. in ascribing the fragment quoted in *Yoga-Bhāṣya* III. 13 to Vārsaganya and not to Pañcaśikha. Vārsaganya, of course, is not an exponent of Yoga at all, but a renowned Sāṃkhya teacher (see *Mahābhārata* XII.306.57).

Patañjali's association with the *hiranyagarbha* school of Yoga is tentatively corroborated by the tradition preserved in the *Ahīrbudhnyā-Samhitā* (XII.3-38). The exact date of this intriguing work is still unsettled. E. H. Johnston (1937, 70 fn.1) maintained that 'the system set out can be very little older than the S [Sāṃkhya-Kārikā]'. F. O. Schrader (1916, 97) fixed its *terminus ad quern* at A.D. 800. On the other hand, since the *Ahīrbudhnyā-Samhitā* is aware of the three schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism - viz. *skandha-vāda* (= *sarvāsti-vāda*), *vijñāna-vāda* and *sūnya-vāda* - it cannot, in his opinion, be earlier than A.D. 300. As it mentions the *Jayakhyā* and the *Sāttvata-Samhitā*, it must be later than these two important works. E. Krishnam-acharya (1931) assigned the *Jāyākhyā-Samhitā* on linguistic and palaeographic grounds to the middle of the fifth century. Hence we arrive at a date for the *Ahīrbudhnyā-Samhitā* between A.D. 500 and A.D. 800. In other words, it is definitely later than the *Yoga-Sūtra* and the *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā*. Consequently, we must treat its information about the lost Sāṃkhya treatise entitled *ṣaṣṭi-tantra* and about the Yoga of Hiranyagarbha with the necessary caution. Yet the relatively late date of the *Ahīrbudhnyā-Samhitā* need not mean that its knowledge of these ancient Yoga and Sāṃkhya tracts is necessarily unauthentic.

After this brief excursion into the epic antecedents of Classical Yoga, I will next scrutinise Patañjali's theological formulations. He defines 'the lord' (*īśvara*) in the following way: *kleśa-karma-vipāka-āśayair-aparāṃṛṣṭaḥ puruṣa-viśeṣa īśvarah*, or 'The lord is a special Self untouched by the causes-of-affliction, [by] action [and its] fruit [and by] the deposit [of subliminal-activators]' (1.24). In the Yoga and Sāṃkhya ontology the entire spectrum of existence is analysed into the two primary modalities of Self (*puruṣa*) and non-self (*prakṛti*). The former embodies the principle of pure awareness roughly corresponding to the Kantian 'transcendental intelligible subject', whereas the latter is the womb of all creation. P. Bowden (1971, 168) circumscribed these as the 'principle of consciousness' and the 'principle of materiality' respectively. Understandably *īśvara* could not but be included in the former category, as has been pointed out long ago by Vātsyāyana in his commentary to *Nyāya-Sūtra* IV. 1.21.

Thus god is defined as a Self *sui generis*, and his separateness from the 'ordinary' transcendental Self or *puruṣa* is explained in negative terms: the lord is unaffected by any of the modifications which the ordinary *puruṣa* is subjected to by reason of his involvement with the world-ground and its products. To put it differently, *īśvara* at no time forsook, or will forsake, his perfect condition of transcendence as pure Being-Awareness. Because of his 'inactivity', by which

not meant mere abstention from action but perhaps the kind of condition which the *Bhagavad-Gītā* calls 'actionlessness' or *naiṣkarmya*, no *vipāka* (karmic fruition) ever accrues to him, and for the same reason he is also never subjected to the causes-of-affliction which are the natural concomitants of any implication in phenomenal existence.

This raises the question of whether Patañjali subscribed to the epic Yoga model of twenty-six principles. According to P. Chakravarti (1951, 66), Patañjali – even though envisaging a certain distinction between the ordinary Self and the Lord – does not make a radical enough distinction to be able to speak of the Lord as a wholly separate principle. Possibly this whole issue is misconceived. Unlike the epic teachers, Patañjali does not turn the number of fundamental ontological categories (*tattva*) into a *principium individuationis* by which he can conveniently contrast his own school with other traditions. He does not even employ the term *tattva* in that specific sense. On the contrary, his ontological model can be regarded as a decisive break with this numerative trend of the epic schools. Neither do Vyāsa and Vācaspati Miśra give this issue any attention, but simply accept Patañjali's novel cosmo-genetic schema without relating it to the prolonged controversy about twenty-five *versus* twenty-six principles.

Patañjali was possibly wiser than his predecessors, the epic *īśvara-vādins*, who, misunderstanding the Sāṃkhya teaching about the *buddhyamāna*, unjustifiably dubbed their adversaries *an-īśvara-vādins* and perhaps unduly inflated the significance of their own doctrine of a twenty-sixth principle, *i.e.* the total undynamic *īśvara*.

M. Müller (1916⁴, 321) remarked that the lord 'may be *primus inter pares*, but as one of the Purushas, he is but one among his peers. He is a little more than a god, but he is certainly not what we mean by God.' Yet Patañjali's definition of *īśvara* implies that he is not only a special and unique species of Self but that he also has a positive aspect. This is clear from I.25–I.28: *tatra niratiśayaṃ sarva-jñāna-bījam; pūrvesām-āpi guruh kālena anavacchedāt; tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ; tad-āraṇya-jāpataḥ japas-tad-artha-bhāvanam*. This can be rendered as follows: 'In this [*īśvara*] the seed of omniscience is unsurpassed. He was also the teacher of the former [*yogins*], since there is no temporal limitation [for him]. His signature is the *praṇava* [*i.e.* *om*]. The recitation of that [*praṇava*] [leads to] the realisation of its meaning.' These statements must be read in conjunction with the concept of *īśvara-praṇidhāna* or 'devotion to the Lord'.

Aphorism 1.25 is of special interest, as it has always been understood as 'proof' of the existence of god. Thus the *Yoga-Bhāṣya* (1.25) has: *yatra Kāṣṭha-prāptir-jñānasya sa sarva-jñāh sa ca puruṣa-viśeṣa iti*, or 'In whom the limit of knowledge is reached, he is all-knowing and he is a special Self'. By 'seeing' Vācaspati Miśra understands 'cause' (*kāraṇa*), whereas Vijñāna Bhikṣu, in his *Yoga-Vārttika*, explains it as 'mark' (*liṅga*). Our 'supra-sensuous grasping' (*atīndriya-grahaṇa*), as Vācaspati Miśra observes, depends on the degree to which *tamas* obscures *sattva*.³ The moderate capacity for knowledge displayed by the worldling contains the seed of higher knowledge and, even, omniscience. There comes an upper limit which cannot be surpassed, and this is the omniscience of

the lord.

As G. M. Koelman (1970, 61) correctly noted: ‘The absolute extension of the lord’s knowledge is unambiguously asserted. But there is no word, no insinuation even that the lord’s knowledge is different in essence, is a more perfect way of knowing.’ Vyāsa explains the unexcellible knowledge of *īśvara* as the result of the utter purity of the *sattva* reflecting his transcendental Awareness. His knowledge extends to all objects and all periods, and it is this which distinguishes him from such seers as Kapila or the Buddha.

It is difficult to decide whether or not these observations by the classic exegetes were in fact intended as a kind of ‘proof’ of the existence of god. Patañjali himself, again, is far too concise to win such an interpretation from *sūtra* 1.25. Probably it simply refers to the fact that, in contrast with the awareness of the ordinary *puruṣa*, the *īśvara*’s awareness is perfectly continuous, that is to say uninterrupted by *prakṛti*, since *īśvara* at no time and not even for an instant falls victim to nescience (*avidyā*). Maybe aphorism 1.25 entails not so much a gradation of omniscience, which would make little sense, as a statement about the fact that what constitutes a potential for the ordinary being is a permanent actuality for *īśvara*. I cannot agree with S. Radhakrishnan’s (1951⁶, II, 369) assertion that ‘Patañjali proves the omniscience of God by means of the law of continuity, which must have an upper limit’. Instead I prefer to see in Patañjali’s cryptic statement parallel to the Mahāyāna notion of the *tathāgata-garbha* as the seed of consummate enlightenment, temporarily obscured by defilements of a cognitive and conative nature, viz. *vikalpa* (conceptual construction) and *abhinivesa* (mundane attachment), whilst in reality it is transcendental and *nirvikalpa* (transcending conceptual). As long as this seed has not sprouted, cognition is distorted and things are not seen as they are (*yathā-bhūta*).⁴

That the lord is not conceptualised as a being who is of complete irrelevance to mankind clearly emerges from 1.26, where *īśvara* is called ‘the teacher of the former [*yogins*]’ This is in keeping with the traditional pre-classical interpretation of the concept of god as expressed, for instance, in the following stanza from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (IV. 1): *imaṃ vivasvate yogaṃ proktavān-aham-avyayam, vivasvān manave prāha manur-īkṣvākave’bravīt*, or ‘To Vivasvat I expounded the imperishable Yoga; Vivasvat related it to Manu; Manu told it to Īkṣvāku.’ Unless one presumes this doctrine to be no more than a forced concession to revealed tradition (*śruti*), which would be incongruous with Patañjali’s generally self-reliant approach, there is one difficult question which calls for an answer.

This is: how can a perfectly transcendental being assume a teaching role? Vyāsa, in his *Yoga-Bhāṣya* (1.25), attempts to solve this problem by introducing anthropomorphic features: *tasya-ātma-anugraha-abhāve’pi bhūta-anugraha-prayojanaṃ, jñāna-dharma-upadeśena kalpa-pralaya-mahā-pralayesu saṃsāriṇaṃ puruṣa-anuddhariśyāmi-iti, tathā ca-uktam-ādi-vidvān-nirmāṇa-cittam-adhiṣṭhaya-kāruṇyād-bhagavān paramarṣir-āsuraye jijñāsamānāya-tantraṃ provāca-iti*, or ‘Although he has no [feeling of] self-gratification, [the lord’s] motive is the gratification of beings: “By instruction in knowledge and virtue, at the dissolution [of the world] [at the end of] a world-age [or] at the great dissolution [or the

entire universe], I will uplift the Selves [immersed] in conditioned-existence.” And likewise it has been said: “The first knower, assuming a created mind out of compassion, the exalted, supreme seer declared this teaching to Āsuri who desired to know.” ’

This passage epitomises the popular and orthodox belief that *īśvara* is the author of the Vedas by whose teachings the staunch believer transcends all ill. Within the framework of Patañjali’s philosophy such an interpretation makes little sense. A more sophisticated solution is called for which does not in any way interfere with the definition of *īśvara* as transcendence *per se*. The classical exegetes are of no help here. Their interpretations of the nature of *īśvara* and exclusive attempts to somehow relate his existence to the mechanisms of the world-ground and to the destinies of the sentient beings ensnared by *prakṛti*.

If one excludes the possibility of *īśvara* actively entering into a teaching situation by mysteriously phenomenalising himself, there remains only one logical alternative, and this is that his role as a teacher is in fact entirely passive. His very existence is a sufficient challenge to the *yogin* who either has come through faith (*śraddhā*) to believe in him, or whose spiritual discipline has brought him to the margins of conditioned existence where experiential proof of his existence may be found. In other words, *īśvara* is the archetypal *yogin* who ‘instructs’ by his sheer being.⁵ Pressing this metaphor still further, one could say that ‘communication’ between him and the aspiring *yogin* is possible by reason of the ontic co-essentiality of god and the inmost nucleus of man, *viz.* the Self (*puruṣa*). M. Eliade (1973³, 74) pertinently circumscribed this with the phrase ‘metaphysical sympathy’.

On the transcendental level the relation between *īśvara* and *puruṣa* is one of ‘enclosure’ by coalescence; the Self is eclipsed by the being of *īśvara*. Empirically, however, the relation is a one-way affair in which the believing *yogin* emulates *īśvara*?, condition, which is co-essential with the condition of his inmost Self. This is the idea implicit in the concept of *īśvara-Praṇidhāna*, which is a channelling of one’s emotive and cognitive life to god by endeavouring to ‘simulate’ his unconditioned nature. For the purpose of this *imitatio Dei* the *yogin* symbolises god in the form of the *praṇava* which is the sacred phoneme *oṃ*. As Vyāsa, in his *Yoga-Bhāṣya* (1.27), aptly points out, this symbolisation is not due to convention (*saṅketa*), but the connection between *īśvara* and *oṃ* is a natural (inherent) and permanent one. In other words, *oṃ* is an experience rather than an arbitrary verbal label. It is a true symbol charged with numinous power. Experiencable in deep meditation, it is a sign of the omnipresence of *īśvara* as manifest on the level of sound. Access to this experience is gained, paradoxically, through the vocal or silent recitation of *oṃ*. Thus *oṃ* is both expedient and goal. In other words, the human voice is employed to reproduce a ‘sound’ which is continually ‘recited’ by the universe itself- an idea which in the Pythagorean school came to be known as the ‘harmony of the spheres’. On the Indian side it led to the development of the Yoga of sound (*nāda-yoga*).⁶

By now it should have become evident that, notwithstanding the precarious philosophical interpretation of *īśvara* in Classical Yoga, god is of no mea

importance in its practical sphere. I cannot therefore endorse G. M. Koelman (1970, 57) contention that it 'is striking how the mention of the *īśvara* in the *Yoga Sūtras* is quite casual' and that we 'could very well cut out the *sūtras* relating to the Lord, without in any way impairing the systematic coherence of the *Pātañjala Yoga*, without even leaving a trace of the excision' (p. 58). This is of course a recapitulation of R. Garbe's (1917², 149) view, which, *inter alia*, was also accepted by S. Radhakrishnan (1951⁶, II, 371, fn. 3) and N. Smart (1968, 30).⁷

G. M. Koelman (1970, 63 f.) elucidated his position further: 'If we said that the *īśvara* does not answer any logical need in the *Pātañjala Yoga*, we do not maintain that either Patañjali himself or the Yogis in general cannot be true devotees of the *īśvara*. The only thing we mean to say is that the whole Yoga philosophy and the psychological technique of liberation it stands for are atheistic in nature. If some one yogi, even if all yogis, did admit *īśvara*, as somehow God, this would be due not to Yoga doctrine, but to the yogis' individual religious dispositions. We might say that *Pātañjala Yoga* technique prescind from whether someone admits a God or denies him.'

Yet, strangely enough, in the very next sentence the author stated: 'We believe that *Pātañjala Yoga* is essentially theistic. But as G. R. F. Oberhammer has proved [*sic!*], the *Pātañjala* doctrine of the Supreme Lord had to express itself in terms of a philosophical school, the *Sāṅkhya* School, which has no room for God.' Despite his unusual objectivity on other points, the author - a Jesuit - apparently found it difficult to suspend his preconception of what god ought or ought not to be.

The fact is that the doctrine of *īśvara* is an integral component of the philosophy of Classical Yoga and that, moreover, *īśvara* figures prominently in the practical structure of Yoga, and any attempt to exorcise this concept would amount to a crippling of both the theoretical superstructure and the practical substructure of Yoga. It is correct, as M. Eliade (1973³, 73) observed, that *īśvara* is a god only for the *yogins*, the spiritually awakened who are prepared to take him as the *Vorbild*. Before him, P. Deussen (1920³, 545) drew the following interesting parallel: 'There is here a similarity with the system of Epicurus; like his god *īśvara* in Yoga does not interfere in the least in mundane affairs or in the destinies of the soul. But just as Epicurus was unwilling to do without the gods as ideals of happiness, even though they dwell in total isolation from the world processes in the *inter mundi*, so also in Yoga devotion to God, *īśvara-Praṇidhāna* [. . .] is recommended as one of the several means to promote Yoga meditation.'

However, since it is implied in the philosophy of Classical Yoga, as in all other *darśanas*, that the *summum bonum* of human life is to transcend contingent existence, god can, and in terms of this ethical model should, be meaningful also to the laity. Shocking as the attenuated theism of Classical Yoga must be to the committed deist, it is a curious fact that rather cognate views can be found in the writings of some of the greatest intellectual mystics, such as Meister Eckehart and Plotinus. This may be instructive in that it entails the warning not to look at the question from a purely theoretical point of view but to take cognisance also of the realities of spiritual practice and of experiential 'Verification'.

The Self (*puruṣa*)

Like the notion of *īśvara* the concept of the Self (*puruṣa*) is not purely hypothetico-deductive postulate. It is best understood as circumscribing particular yogic experience of the numinous. This 'experience', however, is not of the nature of what is ordinarily meant by this term. Owing to the radical dualism between Self and non-self (or *prakṛti*), as envisaged in Classical Yoga, there can strictly speaking be no experience of the Self at all. This holds true of *īśvara* as well, being defined as he is as a *puruṣa sui generis*. As will be shown, Patañjali does make certain provisions, though, which allow one to speak of a 'Vision of the Self (*puruṣa-khyāti*) or 'Self gnosis' (*puruṣa-jñāna*).

In view of the experiential derivation of the concept of *puruṣa* proposed here, explanations which seek to establish the *logical* necessity of the Self within the conceptual lattice of Classical Yoga, or which try to make a case for the *theoretical* inadequacy of this doctrine, must be relegated to a subsidiary position. The preeminently practical orientation of Yoga has not always been duly appreciated by Western scholars. Thus when R. Garbe (1917², 356) insisted that the *puruṣa* is primarily a philosophical postulate inferred from empirical data, he blatantly ignored the fact that, whatever role ratiocination may play in Classical Sāṃkhya, its foundations are, like those of Classical Yoga, to be found among the diverse traditions of *consciousness technology* current at the time of the *Mahābhārata*. The classical proofs adduced for the existence of the Self must therefore be looked upon as afterthoughts to consolidate what originally constituted an experiential (but not empirically observable) datum.

Nonetheless, the 'rationalisation' and 'moralisation' - R. Otto's (1959) terms - of the encounter with the numinous in Yoga are potent in themselves, because they are the building blocks of the soteriological formulations in the doctrinal structure of both Classical Yoga and the Sāṃkhya of *Īśvara Kṛṣṇa*. Treating the interrelation between Self and non-self, A. Bharati (1970³, 204) offered another suggestion which lies midway between the experiential and the rationalistic answer. He regarded the *puruṣa* as a 'postulate of intuition rather than of discursive reasoning'. Elsewhere (p. 16) he explained his use of the term 'intuition', which he sets off from gnosis or *jñāna*, and consequently one must appraise this interpretation as inadequate as the rationalist conjecture.¹

The history of the word *puruṣa* and its association with the experience of the numinous in Yoga is a long and interesting one. It is remarkable that the Yoga and Sāṃkhya traditions should have adopted this designation rather than the synonym *ātman*, which enjoys such a great popularity in the Vedānta schools of thought. The etymological derivation of the word has given rise to a considerable amount of speculation. Native Indian tradition proffers several, more or less

fanciful, etymologies. The oldest reference is to be found in the *Atharvaveda* (X.2.28, 30) which has a pun on the word *pur* or 'citadel' to the effect of stating that *pur-uṣa* is a derivative of it. This etymology is also mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (XII.294.37), following *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (II.5.18), where *puruṣa* is analysed into 'he who lies (*śete*) in the "citadel" (*pura*)' of the unmanifest world-ground. In the *Nirukta* (VII. 13) a further derivation from *pur* + \sqrt{sad} (*purīṣāda*) and also from \sqrt{pr} ('to fill') is suggested. Another, less popular etymology is given in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (I.4.1), where the word is broken down into *purva* + \sqrt{us} ('to burn'). According to R. Garbe (1917², 356) the correct etymology of the word *puruṣa* and its synonyms *puṃs* and *puṇāṃs* is the one suggested by E. Leumann ([?], 10-12), namely the compound *pu-vṛṣa*, both components of which signify 'man'.²

In its earliest recorded conception, *puruṣa* stands both for the mortal 'person' and, more significantly, for the cosmic creator who, like the giant Ymir in teutonic mythology, is the *causa materialis* and the *causa efficiens* of the manifested universe; he is the demiurge and the primordial substance from which the world is fashioned. This double role is possible because the act of creation is understood as the self-dismemberment of the macrocosmic Person. Symbolically this is interpreted as the primal sacrifice (*yajña*), of archetypal importance to the pan-Indian sacrificial cult. In most instances, this gigantic *puruṣa* is thought of as transcending the world which he emits from his own body.⁴ It is this cosmogonic model which was destined to exert a decisive influence on subsequent thought in India, as can readily be appreciated from a study of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and other works of the Pāñcarātra school, as well as the memorable passage in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (I.2),⁵ where the primordial Being, tired of his loneliness, decides to create an *alter ego* out of itself.⁶

In the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (VIII. 10.1) a record of popular psychological theory has been preserved according to which the *puruṣa*, conceived as a 'mannikin', departs from the body of the sleeping person. This notion of an indwelling 'ghost' is part of many folk philosophies, and it figures, among other ancient non-Indian literary documents, in Homer's *Odyssey* (e.g. X.493). E. H. Johnston (1937, 41 ff) speculated that the later 'soul theory', as he called the doctrine of *puruṣa*, was arrived at through the gradual fusion of the primitive notion of an immaterial principle or principles animating the human body and of the equally archaic notion of a separate psyche which acts as the carrier of a person's *post mortem* identity. He thought (p. 43) that the *Ṛgveda* 'contains traces of both conceptions and of the beginning of their amalgamation'. This historical approach, which treats conceptualisations of a different type and degree of complexity as causally linkable and chemically mixable substances, as it were, is entirely inapt and inconclusive. One can take this as a typical instance of what A. N. Whitehead (1938⁸, 66) called the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness'.

Following up the development of the concept of *puruṣa*, E. H. Johnston (1937) found that in the early metric *Upaniṣads* and in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (except for chapters XIII-XVIII) *puruṣa* denotes the individual psyche. He conjectured (p. 53

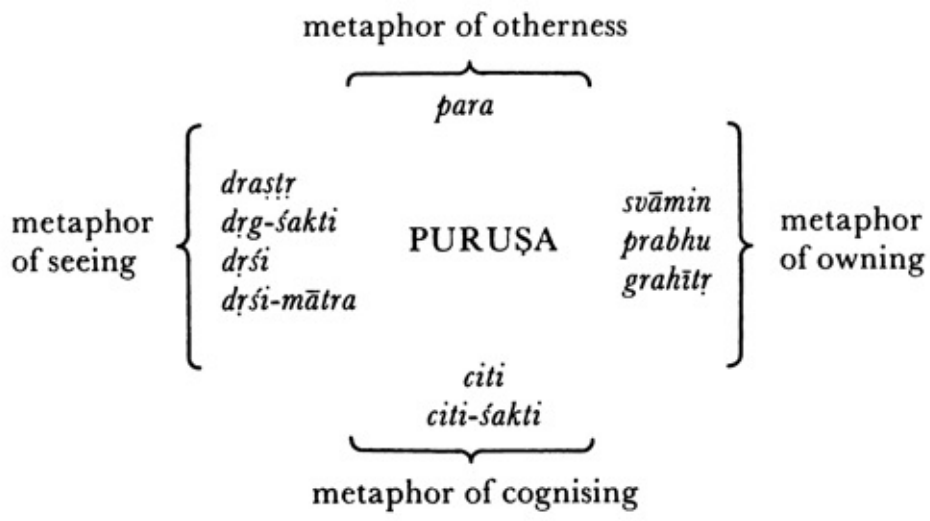
that this term replaced the concept of *ātman kṣetrajña* in the older texts. He also maintained that those epic passages which equate the *puruṣa* with *ātman* belong to a more recent period.

J. W. Hauer (1958, 64) made the interesting point that the frequency of the word *puruṣa* is higher in the *Atharvaveda* than in the *Rgveda*, which far more often employs the term *ātman*. He even went so far as to suggest that the word *puruṣa* is specific to the *vrātya* tradition as recorded in the *Atharvaveda* (see especially book XV) and that it came to be introduced into the doctrinal sphere of orthodox Brāhmanism as a result of the large-scale conversions of these *vrātyas*.

The heterodox origin of *puruṣa* is in fact strongly indicated by the fact that the ancient litany on Rudra, the god of the *vrātyas*, viz. the so-called *Śatarudriya* found in the *Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā* (XVII.11-17; cf. XXI.6) represents, according to J. W. Hauer, the oldest version of the famous *gāyatrī-mantra*. It links up Rudra with *puruṣa*: *tad-puruṣaya vidmahe mahā-devāya dhīmahi tan-no rudraḥ pracodayā* or: 'This [litany] we have invented for the Puruṣa; let us meditate the great god may Rudra promote us this [meditation]'.⁷

H. Oldenberg (1915, 224) made this pertinent observation: 'It is significant that linguistic usage tends to connect *ātman* with the genitive case in order to express whose *Ātman* is referred to, whereas *puruṣa* occurs more often in conjunction with a locative in order to indicate wherein this Puruṣa dwells. In view of this one would suspect that the preference for the designation Puruṣa for the spiritual principle in Sāṃkhya is related to the strict separation and confrontation, peculiar to this system, between the spirit and nature.' I am not sure to what extent this proposition is valid, but certainly *puruṣa* tends to be associated, if not with spatial metaphors, then with the related idea of rulership and proprietorship. This is quite evident in the phraseology of the *Yoga-Sūtra*, which on this point reflects the general trend of the upaniṣadic period.

Patañjali employs the term *puruṣa* altogether eight times (viz. 1.16, 24; III.3 twice; III.49, 55; IV.18, 34). He also avails himself of a number of synonyms such as *draṣṭṛ* (1.3; II.17, 20; IV.23), *svāmin* (11.23), *grahītr* (I.41), *dṛg-śakti* (11.6), *dṛśi* (11.25), *dṛśi-mātra* (II.20), *prabhu* (IV. 18), *citi* (IV.22), *citi-śakti* (IV.34) and *para* (IV.24). With the exception of the word *para* ('the other') these are all 'loaded' terms in so far as they are modelled on the empirical relations of perceiving, cognising and owning and for the sake of communication ascribe content to something which is by definition without all differentiae (*nir-guṇa*) and hence strictly speaking incommunicable in words. The full latitude of the meaning of *puruṣa* is brought out when one maps the above synonyms in the manner of the diagram.



If one were to place the concept of *īśvara* into this semantic grid, it would have to be accommodated to the far right by virtue of the strong connotation of 'lordship' attached to this term. Most of these synonyms of the word *puruṣa* belong to the old stock of yogic terminology and occur already in the metric Upanisads and the *Mahābhārata*, but *dṛśi*, *dṛśi-mātra*, *dṛśi-śakti*, *citi* and *citi-śakti* are more recent coinages which may possibly have originated under the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Nowhere in the *Yoga-Sūtra* is there a full-fledged definition of the concept of *puruṣa*, and the most probable reason for this is that by the time of the composition of Patañjali's *vade mecum* its precise meaning was perfectly evident. The opposite must have been true of the concept of *īśvara* which Patañjali carefully demarcates from its popular usage in the sense of 'creator'. From the few references in the *Yoga-Sūtra* it is clear beyond doubt that the concept of *puruṣa* is remarkably akin to certain conceptions delineated in the epic and other pre-classical Sanskrit works.⁸ It expresses the notion of man's 'transcendent identity', here rendered with 'Self' or 'transintelligible subject', as distinct from the world-ground (*prakṛti*) both in its noumenal form as *pradhāna* and in its manifest form as the objective universe (*dṛśya*). The Self is an aspatial and atemporal reality which stands in no conceivable relation to the composite world of phenomena nor to their transcendental source. It is sheer awareness as opposed to consciousness-of and in this respect is the exact antithesis to the world-ground which is by definition insentient. This Self is considered the authentic being of man.

Since the mental apparatus, with its consciousness-of, is regarded as an evolution of the world-ground, the Self is necessarily also quite distinct from the mind (*citta*). Viewed psychologically, the Self is the 'seer' (*draṣṭṛ*) of the on-going psychomental processes or *vṛtti* (see I.3). As long as the empirical consciousness is operative and man's transcendent identity is obscured, this watchman is said to be 'of the same form' (*sārūpya*) as the psychomental whirls. This is to say, the loss of authenticity is due to the shifting identifications within the discontinuous states of experience: 'I am this sensation; I am that thought', etc. This perpetual process of constructing false identities is known as *asmitā* or 'I-am-ness'. It is the power, generated by 'nescience' (*avidyā*), which is responsible for the erection of

man's inner world, *i.e.* his motivations, cognitive schemata and emotive response patterns and so forth.

The Self is set apart from all these mechanisms which are founded on the energetic character of the primary constituents of the world-ground, the so-called *guṇas*. Properly speaking, the *puruṣa* is neither an actor nor a passive enjoyer of the experiences which occur in the mind, even though some Sāṃkhya works speak of it metaphorically as the 'enjoyer' (*bhoktr*) of all experiences.⁹ The Self does not intend, feel or think. The involvement with the discontinuous contents of consciousness, as implied by the phrase *sārūpya*, is merely an apparent one. It is 'affected' (*parāmrṣṭa*) by the *kleśa-karma-vipākā-āśaya* sequence only in so far as these factors are instrumental in cluttering the empirical consciousness and thus in relinquishing its capacity for emptying itself, which is the only way in which the presentation of the transcendental Self to the mind can take place.

The 'correlation' (*saṃyoga*) between the 'seer' and the 'seen' (see II. 17) is a peculiar one and ranks among the most problematic issues of the dualist metaphysics of Yoga and Sāṃkhya; for it is difficult to comprehend how the Self, which is defined as 'mere seeing' (*dṛśi-mātra*) and 'pure' (*śuddha*), can apperceive the presented-ideas (*pratyaya*) as stated in aphorism 11.20. We are told that the mental on-goings (*vṛtti*) are always apperceived *because* the *puruṣa* does not suffer any alteration but it is a perfect continuum (see IV. 18).

M. Bowes (1971, 169) summed up the situation in this way: 'Indian philosophers, when faced with the objection that there is no such thing as consciousness as such, meaning that there is no empirical experience of such a thing, stress that even if all consciousness is consciousness of something there must be a function called "consciousness" to be conscious of this something. Many would object no doubt that this is hypostatizing consciousness which arises only in a particular context of contact with objects and which is not to be thought of as an entity by itself, but the Indians claim that consciousness performs a distinctive function, that of manifestation (equivalent to Sartre's revelation and Husserl's constitution function) of the object it is conscious of as well as of itself - a function which cannot be performed by anything which is non-conscious and so it must be thought of as there, as a reality of a distinct sort.'

For Patañjali this puzzle is no puzzle at all, but an eminently practical issue. As long as the 'correlation' (*saṃyoga*) between Self and world obtains, there is also suffering (*duḥkha*). Since the root of this correlation, or rather phantom correlation, between Self and non-self is nescience (*avidyā*), it is this which must be terminated. The prescribed expedient for the removal of the correlation condition is *viveka-khyāti*, the 'vision of discernment', a high-level ecstasy which eliminates all one's false identities not by way of mere intellectual acrobatics but in a process of clarification and purification of consciousness. First the mind is withdrawn from the external stimuli, then all presented-ideas are obliterated and ultimately the subliminal traces (*vāsanā*) themselves are rooted out, which amounts to the total dispersion of the consciousness-of (*citta*).

Ordinary experience is possible only on account of the massive identity confusion arising from the overpowering influence of the subliminal traces which

habitually throw the consciousness outside itself, thus forcing it to gather in continually new impressions, thereby replenishing the stock of subliminal traces (*vāsanā*) in the depths of the mind. In other words, the fundamental confusion about man's true identity is built into the psychomental organism whose growth and decay the individualised consciousness is witnessing. In fact, without this cognitive mix-up no experience would be possible.

Experiencing, called *bhoga* in aphorism III.35, is an intrapsychic process which does not actively involve the Self; the *puruṣa* simply apperceives the presented ideas in the experiencing mind. Patañjali promulgates an extreme dualism when he insists that the Self and the most translucent aspect of the consciousness complex, the *sattva*, are eternally 'unmixed' (*asaṃkīrṇa*) (see 111.35), and that precisely because of this perfect separateness the recovery of Self-authenticity is at all possible.¹⁰

Parenthetically it may be observed that by reason of the professedly transcendental nature of the Self any qualitative ascription is, in the last analysis, tantamount to a falsification. This is as true of the description of *puruṣa* in terms of awareness (see *citi*, *citi-śakti*) as it is of the more obvious tropological predications. Unlike the anonymous author of the *Sāṃkhya-Sūtra*, Patañjali does not seem to favour negative descriptions of the nature of the Self but prefers, as we have seen above, metaphors of seeing, cognising and owning which are in keeping with his psychological rather than metaphysical approach.

One last important point remains to be discussed. This is the controversial question of the singularity or plurality of the Self as conceived in Classical Yoga. M. Eliade (1973³, 32-3) gave vent to the popular view on this matter when he claimed about Sāṃkhya and Yoga that they 'affirm that there are as many *puruṣas* as there are human beings. And each of these *puruṣas* is a monad, completely isolated; for the Self can have no contact either with the world around it (derived from *prakṛti*) or with other spirits. The cosmos, then, is people with these eternal, free, unmoving *puruṣas* - monads between which no communication is possible.'

Apart from the objection which one may wish to raise against M. Eliade's use of concepts such as 'monad' and 'communication' and also against his metaphor of 'the Selves' populating the cosmos,¹¹ another more serious criticism must be brought against his unquestioning acceptance of the testimony of rival schools which ascribe to Yoga the doctrine of the plurality of the transcendental Selves. He obviously relied in his judgement on the work of his teacher, S. Dasgupta (1930, 167), and others. But is this doctrine really a part of Patañjali's system of thought?

There can be no question that this strange doctrine is part and parcel of the philosophy expounded in the commentarial literature on the *Yoga-Sūtra* and also in Īśvara Kṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā*. The latter text has a stanza (18) which reads as follows: *jana-maraṇa-kāranānām pratiniyamād-ayugapat-pravṛtṭeś-ca, puruṣaḥ bahutvaṃ siddhaṃ trai-gunya-viparyayāc-ca-eva*, 'The multiplicity of the Self is established by reason of the idiosyncrasy¹² of [a person's] birth, death [and deed]¹³ and because of non-simultaneous activity and also on account of the

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