

The first mention of Yoga in the history of Indian literary tradition is, the fact is well known, in the youngest of the ancient Upaniṣads, the *Maitrī-Upaniṣad*, or, following other classifications, in the first one of the group making the transition to the younger Upaniṣads which show the first ideas connected with bhagavatism or theistic concepts.¹

This passage, very important for the history of Yoga, is itself related to other problems. The *Maitrī-Upaniṣad* is supposed to have been composed after the Buddhist revolution, and the sixth chapter is considered, because of its unusual length and the heterogeneity of its teaching, as only loosely connected with the rest of the Upaniṣads.² M. Eliade has pointed out also the frequent expression *athānya-trāpyuktam* which shows, he thinks, the dependency of this chapter's author upon another or upon previous tradition. He interprets similarly the first line in Patañjali's *Yoga* as being a confession of the author that he is not the author, but only the editor of a tradition much older than himself.³ The term that Eliade interprets thus is

¹ P. Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads* (1906), pp. 385–86; Richard Garbe, *Samkhya und Yoga* (Strassburg, 1896), p. 36; S. N. Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy* (Calcutta, 1930), p. 65; J. W. Hauer, *Der Yoga ein indischer Weg zum selbst* (1st ed., 1932; 2d ed. rev. and completed, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1958), p. 102; Mircea Eliade, *Le Yoga, immortalité et liberté* (1st ed., Paris-Bucharest, 1936; 2d ed. revised and completed, Paris: Payot, 1954), pp. 133–34 (English translation: *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* [New York, 1958], pp. 124–26).

² A.-M. Esnoul, Introduction, p. 9, to her edition and translation of the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* in the collection published under the direction of Louis Renou (Paris, 1952); Hauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 455, n. 8.

³ Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

anusāsanam, whose first meanings are somewhat different (Hauer translates it *Unterweisung*), but his interpretation (if we take *anusāsana* in the sense of a traditionally imparted instruction) is quite acceptable. S. N. Dasgupta also thought that the *Yogasūtras* are only a compilation of previous technical texts⁴ because they are divided into chapters (*pada*) according to the most important topics, whereas the division of the traditional Indian texts is in books (*adhyaīya*) and chapters, or books and lessons (*āhnikā*). That is the reason why the mention of the *Maitrī-Upaniṣad* of the six-member Yoga instead of the eight-member one of Patañjali is important. Eliade, after S. N. Dasgupta, has pointed out also the “adapted” character of the work of Patañjali and the superficial theism which he has imposed on the Sāṃkhya philosophical system. If one accepts the artificiality of the *Īśvara-pranīdhāna* within the Yoga systematic ideology, then one is allowed to have doubts about the traditionalism of the eightfold Yoga. One may therefore consider the first two members of Patañjali’s Yoga, *Yāma* and *Niyāma*, if not added to the traditional sixfold Yoga, at least to be connected with this theistically oriented Yoga whose first editor was Patañjali.

Thus far, this impression was not supported by philological references other than the old *Maitrī-Upaniṣad* and a few late medieval Yoga Upaniṣads: the *Amṛtanāda* 6, *Dhyānabindu* 41, and *Yogacūdāmani* 1–3.⁵ All the other Yoga-Upaniṣad have kept the Patañjali version of the eightfold yoga. Unfortunately, the history of these late Upaniṣads and the influences they have had is still quite obscure, and nobody has tried to use them against, or in favor of, Patañjali. An isolated mention outside India, in Cambodia, is a *pancaratra* inscription—although traditionally following the eightfold Yoga⁶—dated Śaka 879 (A.D. 957). The existence of this inscription shows that the medieval Yoga-Upaniṣads did not represent only a didactic, dead, philological reproduction of an ancient tradition, but that it was alive enough to be carried abroad, in teaching and probably in practice.⁷ The god to whom the inscription is dedicated is Viṣṇu-Vasudeva: “*Siddhi Svasti om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya om . . . yaś . . . dharmmo dharmmavidām ajādinīdhano vedyo ya eko vibhruḥ sevyo yaś ca ṣaḍaṅga yo [ga]—viśadairyyogipravānair hr̥di śreyah—prāptyabhilāṣibhih*” (“who is the

⁴ Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁵ A. Mahādeva Śāstri (ed.), *Aṣṭottasaśatopaniṣatsu Yoga-Upaniṣadaḥ* (Adyār, 1920; G. Śrīnivāsa Murti [ed.]; trans. T. R. Śrīnivāsa Ayyangar). (Adyār, 1952), pp. 10, 158, 279.

⁶ Cf. *Ahīrbudhnyā Samhita* of the *Pancaratra Agama* (Adyār Library, Madras, 1916), Introduction by Otto Schrader, p. 124, and text, pp. 292–308.

⁷ G. Coedès, *Inscriptions du Cambodge* (1954), VI, 133–36.

Dharma of these who know the Dharma, first receptacle of Ajā, to be known as unique lord. The one who has to be worshiped by those expert in the sixfold yoga, the versed yogins, who have the desire of receiving the excellency in their heart").

There is a difference between the *Maitrī-Upaniṣad* passage and some of the late Upaniṣads: *Maitrī* and *Amṛtanāda* have the following list: *pranayāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhyana*, *dharana*, *tarka*, and *samādhi*. *Dhyānabindu* and *Yogacūḍamaṇi* have *āsana*, *pranayāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhyana*, *dharana*, and *samādhi*. Eliade has shown⁸ that, as a technical term, *āsana* is mentioned for the first time in the newest Upaniṣads⁹ and in the *Gītā* (VI, 12) although he is convinced of the antiquity of the importance accorded to the "sitting." Hauer has given a few Buddhist references,¹⁰ which could be multiplied by several pages. We cannot explain either the presence or absence of *tarka*, intellectual awareness and speculation, but we would consider it also as having a certain Buddhist flavor.¹¹

Whatever may have been the original list of six members, with or without *tarka*, the *Maitrī-Upaniṣad* version has a chance of being the original version common to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.¹² Whether one accepts the antiquity of the list with *Yāma* and *Niyāma*, at least in its technical tendencies,¹³ or one considers the *Maitrī* list as the one prior to the separation of Yoga from Saṃkhya,¹⁴ a pure technical one, in view of obtaining supernatural results (*siddhis*),¹⁵ it is important to follow the history of the sixfold Yoga.

It reappears in the last part of a Tantric text, the *Guhyasamājatantra*¹⁶ and, probably because of the extraordinary prestige of this text in the whole Tantric literature, it became common in the later forms of Buddhism. The Kālacakra system holds it in great esteem, and

⁸ Eliade, *op. cit.*, pp. 371–72.

⁹ *Śvetasu* I. 10.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 167 f.

¹¹ Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 65; Hauer, *op. cit.*, p. 102. ¹² Hauer, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹³ Adolf Janacek, "The Methodical Principle in Yoga according to Patañjali's Yoga-sutras," *Archiv Orientalni* XIX (1951), 3–7, 514–67. Janacek brings into discussion for the first time the *Nyāya* and the *Vaiśeṣika-sūtra* with passages quoting lists of Yogangas (p. 516)—the whole context needs further consideration.

¹⁴ S. N. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 66; *History of Indian Philosophy* (2d ed.; Cambridge, 1951), p. 1236.

¹⁵ H. Jacobi, "Über das ursprüngliches Yoga system," *SPAW*, XXVI (1929), 602.

¹⁶ Ed. B. Bhattacharyya, *GOS* (Baroda, 1931), LII, chap. xviii; cf. G. Tucci, "Some Glosses upon the Guhyasamaja," *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* III (Bruxelles, 1935). 339–53.

Naropa (Nādapāda) in his work *Sekoddeśaṭika*¹⁷ quotes the passage from *Guhyasamāja* and until the end of his work¹⁸ he glosses and explains the six members. It is true that Naropa had been initiated in the *Guhyasamāja* system as well as in *Kālacakra*,¹⁹ and that *Guhyasamājantra* was a text that he knew quite well.²⁰ Yet although it seems that the *Ṣadaṅgayoga* became the only yoga technically admitted in the Tantric Buddhism and in Lamaism, actually, besides some technical treatises of Indian origin included in the Tibetan canon (in the school of Nagarjunagarbha: *Ṣadaṅgayoga* [and its commentary by Candrakīrti: *Ṣadaṅgayoga Ṭikā*], and in the school of Jñānapāda, Candraprabha: *Āṣṭadaśapatalavyakhyana*; Jinadatta: *Śrīguhyasamājantraprañjika*,²¹ *Guṇapūrṇi-nama Ṣadaṅgayogaṭippanī*, etc.), we have several texts commenting on this type of yoga composed by, or under the direction of, Tsong-Kha-pa, as a part of the *utpanna-krama* in the *Kālacakra* initiation,²² following the Naropa and Anupamarakṣita tradition²³ and by this authoritative channel, it penetrated the official school of Lamaism.

This Tantric yoga, no more than *Maitrī-Upaniṣad*, has *āsana* as a technical term, although the posture is very important (as in the *Upaniṣads*). The order of the members is the following: *Pratyāhāra*, *Dhyāna*, *Prāṇāyāma*, *Dharana*, *Anusmṛti*, *Samādhi*, slightly different from the *Maitrī-Upaniṣad*, but the important fact is the subsistence of *tarka* under the form of *Anusmṛti*, a quite similar concept.

The first one, *Pratyāhāra*, is a withdrawal, an interiorization (*Svavṛtti*) of the senses united with their objects, the fields or “provinces” (*yul*), following the Tibetan terminology, the senses and the satisfactions or pleasures involved (one has to read *Kāmāhāra* with the manuscripts A, Naropa, and the Tibetan version).

Once this outside world of pleasure is interiorized, one proceeds to the second member, *Dhyāna*, united and identified with the primordial *maṇḍala* of the five *jinās*—a commentary attributes to each Buddha an object of sense, *Vairocana* (form), *Akṣobhya* (sound), *Ratnasam-*

¹⁷ Ed. Mario Carelli, *GOS* (Baroda, 1941), XC.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–74.

¹⁹ G. Roerich, *The Blue Annals* (Calcutta, 1949), I, 358–85.

²⁰ H. Hoffmann, “Literarische Bemerkungen zur Sekoddeśaṭika des Nādapāda” in *Beiträge zur indische Philologie und Altertumskunde* (Walter Schubring zum 70 Geburtstag dargebracht) (Hamburg, 1951), pp. 140–47.

²¹ Pekinese ed. Rg. gr. XXXVI, chap. i, 331 b3–367 a7.

²² *A Catalogue of the Tohoku University Collection of Tibetan Works* (Tohoku, 1953), Nos. 5004, 5006 A-B-C-D, 5008, 5010, 5352, 5375, 5376, 5388.

²³ Cf. Roerich, *op. cit.*, index, for the important role of this teacher in the *Ṣadaṅgayoga* tradition.

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bhava (flavor), *Amitāyuh* (taste), *Amoghasiddhi* (touch). They are sifted through five stages: *vitarka*, *vicāra*, *pṛiti*, *sukha*, and *ekāgratā*. The first four: reasoning, judgment, joy, and happiness, are reminiscent of the canonical fourfold *dhyāna* of Buddha (*Mjjh.-Nik. Sūtra* 26). The fifth one, concentration, mentioned in the *Bhagavad Gīta* (VI, 12) and in the commentary of Vyāsa to the *Yoga-sūtra* I, 1,²⁴ are explained in different ways following the Tantric tradition (*guhya-tan-treṣu sarveṣu vindhā parikīrtitāḥ*), but the general meaning is that of gradual assimilation of the sensual pleasures until they are calmed down (*Kṣama / Zad-pa*). Now comes the breath exercise, *prāṇayāma*, which is post-dhyanic, not an exercise of discipline but a type of meditation at a higher level.

“The (inner) breathing, made of the five (primordial) Buddhas, calm, well-established in the sensual pleasures (now assimilated) made of the fivefold *Jñāna* (characteristic for each category of Buddha), identified with the five elements—breathing it out, one imagines it as a little pill (*piṇḍa*) sitting on the tip of the nose, a great gem made of five colors.” Some of these identifications are understood by those who know the Tantric tradition as the five colors symbolizing the five Buddhas. Others, like the identification of the senses with the five elements, are given by the commentaries explaining the *Pratyāhāra*. The most important element is the *piṇḍa*, the pill, or the drop, *bindu*, corresponding to the Bodhicitta of the later Tantric and Hathayogic texts, all these identifications mentioned in different commentaries. It is the essence of the *dhyāna*, consequence of the *sva-vṛtti* (*pratyāhāra*) and *nirvṛtti*, or *nirodha*, the involution of the objective world realized mentally as an essence of the whole organic life and moved by means of the respiration.

The following moment is the retention (*dhāraṇa*) of the personal *mantra* in the heart and of the respiration (*prāṇa*) in the “gem” of the senses. It seems, although it is not very clear, that one makes a distinction between breathing (*śvāsa*), the organic activity of the winds and movements, projecting the imaginary drop, and the definite function of respiration (*prāṇa*) fixed in the *bindu*, at the same time with the fixation (*nyāsa*) of the *mantra* in the emptied heart.

The fifth member, *anusmṛti*, corresponding to the mysterious *tarka*, is a controlled vision in the mind, perfectly stopped and mastered. This vision is the imagined appearance of five apparent signs (*nimitta*): that of a mirage (*marīci*), of smoke (*dhuma*), of atmospheric luminosity (*khadyota*), of a lamp (*dīpa*), and, finally, of a lasting light (*sadā-*

²⁴ Cf. Eliade, *op. cit.*, pp. 50 f.

loka, “like a cloudless sky”). The basic text does not detail these apparent signs, creations of the yogic mind, but the commentaries give an explanation, probably imparted orally, because it is found fairly often in the Tibetan canonical translations.

The material elements are gradually dissolved—one in another—every time a *nimitta* creates the dissolution. The more the dissolution is advanced, the more the visual signs are refined or, more exactly, the more one is able to visualize purer controlled hallucinations, the more the gross elements are resolved into the finer ones. Finally, all is absorbed in the pure “nothingness” of pure light. The mirage is the dissolution of the earth in water; the water is absorbed by fire during the vision of smoke. When one sees the atmospheric light, the fire is evaporated in the wind. The suppression of the wind in the element of mind (*vijñāna*) is created by the vision of the lamp, and, finally, the mind is dissolved in the “spotless light of a midday sun in a cloudless sky.”

This is the version of the commentary of Nagarjunagarbha and others; Candrakirti has other variants. Both the first version and the second are that of a *sūtra* unfortunately lost or included in an unknown text, but frequently cited by many authors, that of *Ṣaḍ-dhātusūtra*, which has puzzled Vasubandhu²⁵ as well as Buddhaghosa.²⁶ Stanislaw Schayer has discussed a few facts implied by that *sūtra*, the *pudgala* identifiable with the six elements,²⁷ but the references from the Pali canon, interestingly connected with the history of *Śūnyatā*, could be multiplied.

The inner elements thus dissolved are irradiated in the whole universe by the firm way of the symbol of the “diamond” (phallus, nose, or adamantine mind). This irradiation (one should read *samspharet*, not *samsaret*) is in conformity with the Buddhist Mahāyāna doctrine either for the benefit of the countless beings or, as Nagarjunagarbha and Candrakirti say, by the virtue of the Buddha’s mystical body, the *Dharmakāya*.

The final member, *Samādhi*, is as always the most difficult to understand: it seems to be a reabsorption of the irradiation, a unity at the level of the yogin expressed by the common Tantric image *Prajñopāya*, and the spiritual realization of the Tantric absolute, the *Mahāvajradhara*. Nagarjunagarbha and Candrakirti speak even of a *Jñānakāya*, a gnostic body, perhaps one of the several types of the fourth body of Buddha mentioned in the Tantric literature.

In conclusion, the Tantric sixfold yoga, which became canonical in

²⁵ Kośa I, 49 f.

²⁶ Visuddhimagga 787.

²⁷ “Pre-Canonical Buddhism,” *Archiv Orientalny*, VII (1935), 1–2, 125–32.

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different Tibetan Buddhist schools, represents, perhaps through an unknown Buddhist channel, the most ancient yogic attestation. There was in this system no room for *yāma*, *niyāma*, and *āsana*, moral or preliminary preparation, and even less for something like the *Īśvara-praṇidhāna* or any *praṇidhāna* at all (the last mention of *Mahāvajradhara* is obviously a late Tantric addition). In this type of ancient yoga, the goal is not so much the control of the body as its reduction and controlled dissolution, an extraordinary form of technique of spiritualization. The original starting point is in the body itself, not in the nature. Nothing cosmogonic is present in the speculation except in the beginning, the world from which one withdraws and, at the end, the empty space where one projects the transformed personality. The elements of mystical physiology, inner winds and sexual energy, seem to be quite secondary, as a setoff against which one has a strong psychology, and a curious type of mentally controlled biological alchemy.