



The YOGA SŪTRA of PATAÑJALI

translations and commentary

WIM VAN DEN DUNGEN



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Living amid ignorance
considering themselves intelligent and enlightened
the senseless people go round and round
following crooked courses
just like the blind led by the blind

Kaṭha Upaniṣad

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Male Yogi ? – Mohenjo-Daro (third millennium BCE)
Islamabad Museum (NMP 50.296)

Preface

'It is hard indeed to notice anything for which the languages available to us have no description.' – Alan W. Watts

The practice of yoga entered my life in 1982. I was 21 years old. Initiated by a monk named Amitabha, I first took a series of moral and soteriological vows and then received a mantra with an instruction.

Amitabha belonged to a Hindu, Tantric group based in Calcutta, called 'the Path of Bliss' or *Ananda Marga*. I was attracted to them because they cherished and applied, besides a sound system of practice, a neohumanist social theory.

For seven years, I put in the diligent effort and had the good fortune to train, meet up, and discuss with meditation experts, monks, and senior monks.

In 1985, I majored in logic and epistemology. Two years earlier, the *Yoga-Sūtra* of Patañjali, mentioned by Anandamurti, the 'guru' of the group, had already caught my attention, inviting me to study Sanskrit well enough to understand the text at hand, which is not the same thing as speaking and reading Sanskrit daily.

However, decades of study and practice did not eliminate the tension between an essentialist interpretation of the absolute and direct spiritual experience sustained by daily spiritual exercises.

In 2006, I took refuge in the Three Jewels. To satisfy the conditions of Buddhist meditation, I ceased theist practice. Persistent scientific and philosophical conflicts slowly started to dissolve.

Valid conventional truth harmonized with the prehension of the ultimate. Process-based thinking and awakening walked together. The theo-ontological, substantial God became 'the God*' of the

philosophers', designated as the Grand Architect of process, compared with the Primordial Buddha (*Critique of a Metaphysics of Process*, 2020), the Buddha of the Now (Longchenpa).

Classical Yoga still has validity, even to someone committed to the Buddhadharma. The idea of integrating what, to me, is the outstanding points of the *Yoga-Sūtra*, hand in hand with a clarification of the theist and substantialist areas of contention, guides the commentary on the text.

My perspective identifies Yoga as a pan-Indian practice of spiritual cultivation or meditation (bhāvana). It involves the end of ignorance and, therefore, of suffering. *Grosso modo*, its two branches, are 'Hindu' and 'Buddhist.' Hindu Yoga unyokes (vi-yoga) the Divine, impersonal substance of man (ātman, puruṣa) from Nature (prakṛti). Buddhist Yoga ceases the false ideation superimposing (samāropa, adhyāropa) substantial nature on any phenomenon, the Divine included.

I wish to thank Indologist Jozef Deleu for introducing me to Sanskrit. Also, special thanks to the Indologist and yogi Georg Feuerstein for his excellent work on the text (cf. *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali : an Exercise in the Methodology of Textual Analysis*, 1979). Thanks to this work, it became more comfortable for me to translate the *Yoga-Sūtra* in English and French (*The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali*, 1997), allowing different connotations to work together. Somewhat later, a Dutch translation followed.

In the present publication, just below the English text in bold, charged with the necessary technical jargon, the reader finds another, rather laconic English translation.

Mistakes are due to my ignorance. May all who encounter the *Yoga-Sūtra* realize the importance of practice.

May all recognize their Buddha Within and find total cessation of suffering.

Introduction

'The wise, by means of an inner concentration on the "ātman," thinking him who is placed in the cavity (in the heart), whose abode is impervious, who exists from times of old, leaves both grief and joy.' – *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*, II.12.

'Verily, there is no merit higher than Yoga, no good higher than Yoga, no subtlety higher than Yoga ; there is nothing higher than Yoga !' – *Yogaśikhā-Upaniṣad*, I.67.

'With mindfulness of the body established, control over contact's sixfold base, one who is always concentrated can know Nirvāṇa for himself.' – *The Udāna*, 3:5.

'When you forget yourself and put your wholehearted effort into facing every moment, you can do something, and simultaneously you can rest in the continuous flow of life energy. Then you really enjoy your life.' – Katagiri, D. : *Each Moment Is the Universe*, Shambhala – London, 2008, p.25.

The *Yoga-Sūtra* of Patañjali consists of about 1200 words in 195 Sanskrit aphorisms, forming a system codifying the best (rājā) yoga practices. Classical, Royal or Rāja Yoga (the name for Patañjali's system in the *Bhagavad Gītā*) became known as one of the six schools (darśana) of orthodox (āstika) Hindu philosophy, teachings retaining allegiance to the *Vedas*, in contrast to Jainism and Buddhism, rejecting the tenets of these scriptures. The six schools are : Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, and Yoga. The first reference of Yoga as a distinct school can be found in the writings of Śaṅkara (Bronkhorst, 1981). By the end of the first millennium, the organization of Hindu thought into six schools was completed.

The underlying soteriology of Hinduism seeks to liberate the soul (ātman, puruṣa) from suffering and so from cyclic existence (saṃsāra), the wheel of becoming (bhava-cakra). This soul is *not*

ordinary consciousness, conventional, nominal mind (buddhi, citta, manas). The soul is *not* part of Nature but embedded in it. Mind is part of Nature or the seen. To separate seer and seen is the goal of Pātañjala Yoga. The metaphysical union of the Divine in each of us with the Absolute Being (Brahman) is a datum of direct experience, not merely a philosophical abstract.

As this sordid entanglement of consciousness with Nature, this ever-changing continuum of transformations, is deemed the root cause of ignorance and so suffering, the yogi is required to altogether *retire* from it.

Grosso modo, Indian spirituality rooted in the *Vedas* advanced three paths towards this aim to be liberated from suffering : (1) ritual activity (as in the Vedic, Brahmanical tradition), (2) mystical devotion (bhakti), and (3) Yoga, ‘calling upon nothing but the will and personal powers of the ascetic’ (Eliade, 1973, p.76). These strands promote different approaches and influence one another.

‘... Yoga evolves on the periphery of Vedic religiosity and beyond the parameters of mainstream Vedic orthopraxy. Yoga is clearly in tension with Vedic ritualism ...’ – Bryant, 2009, p.xx.

The mystical strand of popular devotion and (neo) Vedic ascetics calls to worship the omnipotent Creator-God with *pathos*, gaining deliverance thanks to Him. Brahmanism entertains a strictly regulated ritual relationship with God, thus guaranteeing the cosmic moral order of the world (ṛta) and their ascent to heaven in the afterlife. While this Supreme Being remains self-powered, it manifests as a pantheon. Not monotheism, but very sophisticated henotheism is at hand.

The oldest school of the six schools, Sāṃkhya, the so-called ‘sister school of Yoga,’ rejects any concept of God (Īśvara), and deems Nature (prakṛti) to collaborate in man’s deliverance. The cosmic substance itself causes the world to exist and delivers the innermost individual self (puruṣa), not God. The self is embedded in Nature. Only by ceasing the entanglement of consciousness with matter can this impersonal, metaphysical ‘upaṇiṣadic’ self be realized. Sāṃkhya Yoga is dualistic, atheistic, and intellectual. It does *not*

posit God to deliver us. By way of the *yogic will* is liberation achieved (cf. Aristotle's '*enkrateia*' or 'to be in power over oneself'). Archaeology revealed the sophisticated ancient Indus-Sarasvati civilization or Harappan culture, covering modern-day northwest India and Pakistan, dating from circa 3000 to 1900 BCE. Figurines seated in yogic posture were found, suggesting yoga may have been practiced on the Indian subcontinent for well over four thousand years. Famous among these is the square seal in steatite depicting a nude male with three faces, seated in yoga posture on a throne, wearing bangles on both arms, and an elaborate headdress.

The oldest Vedic text, the *Ṛg Veda*, mentions ascetics practicing yoga. In the late Vedic age (1100 – 500 BCE), defined by the speculations of the *Upaniṣads*, practices also found in Pātañjala Yoga were first articulated. These involve techniques to realize 'Brahman' as the universal, impersonal '*ātman*' *within us*.

Yoga is foremost a method of *training body and mind*. It is a practical *science of life* aiming at deepening the direct experience of absolute reality, thereby ending suffering, rather than a way to describe or explain the latter (in theology or Buddhology). Yoga is a cluster of techniques and procedures (instructions) pervading the spiritual practice of ancient India.

With the *Yoga-Sūtra*, Hindu Yoga was systematized close to the *direct experience* of the practitioner ; focused on observation, not philosophy.

'They represent the strict, sober and sincere trend in Yoga as it was followed by generations of earnest truth-seekers over many centuries, a trend that had previously found expression only in Buddha's eightfold path, from with Patañjali obviously benefited.' (Werner, 1980, p.134).

The word 'yoga' is derived from the root 'yuj,' meaning 'to join,' 'unite' 'connect,' 'bring together,' 'yoke,' 'hold fast,' also found in the French '*joug*' and the Latin '*jungere*.' Yoga designates any physico-mental technique of liberation or method of spiritual practice. Yoga implies *spiritual cultivation* or meditation (*bhāvana*). It is the living experience of personal deliverance accomplished by

training the will. Experience is paramount. It forms the basis of practice and the long process of dispassion, calling either for the gradual restriction of the impact of Nature on consciousness (as in ātman-based Hindu Yoga and its 'Platonic' Sāṃkhya ontology) or for the arrest of the reification of all possible sensate and mental objects (as in dharma-based Buddhist Yoga and its strict nominalist ontology). Each time the aim is *to better one's personal existence*. And in principle, this is attained by cultivating the will of the yogi, nothing more. Insofar as magic is *change according to will*, Yoga is a form of magic (Eliade, 1973).

Foremost, yoga is *daily spiritual cultivation* (bhāvana). Salvation does not necessarily require God. Nevertheless, Patañjali, undertaking to collect and organize *all* yogic technology whose *efficacy* had been *confirmed* by previous yogis within the Vedic fold, integrates devotion to God. Both Eliade (1973) and Feuerstein (1979) rightly think this happened because the Lord corresponds to *an experiential datum*. Yogins, who appealed to Him, indeed gain liberation, although they could have realized this too without concentrating on Him. And so Patañjali brings the mystical tradition onboard, the bond of love between the yogi and the Lord. As will become apparent, I think the devotional component is stronger in Patañjali's cherished practice (Action Yoga) than most authors care to admit. For Eliade, Patañjali's devotion to his Lord is rarified and intellectual, in a way comparable with Spinoza's '*Amor intellectualis Dei*.' I beg to differ. Without the Lord, no union ...

How can Patañjali's bond with the Lord be rarified and intellectual if it stems from the direct, living experience? Historically, the *Yoga-Sūtra* is the second of the two integral expositions of Indian Yoga preserved, the first being the 'yogas' incorporated in the many live discourses of Buddha Śākyamuni (ca. 563 – 483 BCE) with his disciples, who did not refer to God. The *Yoga-Sūtra* is more elaborate and systematic, summarizing the actual technology more scholastically than in the *Pāli Canon*. Buddhist Yoga intends to awaken the mind to its ultimate potential : the irreversible cessation of suffering based on emptiness (śūnyatā), the radical absence of any substantial existence whatsoever (anātman). The first exposition is Platonic and accepts universal substance ; the second

is strict nominalist (Ockhamist) and rejects self-existence or inherently existing properties. It is a fundamental difference.

The *Yoga-Sūtra* is short, condensed, and impersonal, giving us no clues about who Patañjali was. He is said not to be a founder nor the leader of a new movement but rather a codifier or redactor of the yoga lore of his time. If so, the text is a *vade mecum* of sorts.

Despite these various opinions, nothing of any degree of historical certainty is known about the author of the *Yoga-Sūtra* himself. Whether he is identical with Patañjali who wrote the *Mahābhāṣya*, a commentary on the grammar of Pāṇini composed mid-second century BCE, is not established with certainty.

Most Western scholars today do not think this is the case, nor do I. Estimates of the date of composition of the *Yoga-Sūtra* range from 400 BCE to the fifth century CE. It could indicate the range of the experiential database from which Patañjali collected and systematized. We know the ascetic movement started around 700 – 600 BCE. The text could be a millenarian storehouse. Feuerstein (1979) situates Patañjali in the third century CE, placing him *outside* the Sāṃkhya and identifying his system as Kriyā-Yoga instead of the traditional ‘aṣṭa-aṅga’ Yoga and/or ‘Sāṃkhya with Īśvara.’ The treatise cannot be dated with exactitude.

Many legends about Patañjali exist. According to the most prominent one, Patañjali was the incarnation of the serpent-king Ananta, a serpent race associated with guarding esoteric lore (the ‘nāgā’-theme also reappears in Buddhist lore). It is also said he was the initiator of a school, while others claim he was a solitary yogi. ‘Patañjali’ would be the name given to a string of authors. For some, he is the same person as the grammarian. For others, merely a compiler who auto-commented his own work under the name ‘Vyāsa,’ etc. Where we find two scholars, we find at least three opinions ...

Finally, more than one contemporary ‘svāmī’ claims to belong to a line of succession (paramparā) going back to Patañjali, said to have established a sacred string of Yoga gurus. The *Yoga-Sūtra* has a remarkable biography (White, 2014).

Elements of the scheme advanced in the *Yoga-Sūtra* had been known before Patañjali. Especially parts of the techniques constituting the Eightfold path (aṣṭa-aṅga) can be traced in earlier *Upaniṣads* like the *Kaṭha* (ca. 300 – 100 BCE) and the *Śvetāshvatara*. *Kaṭha* refers to sense-withdrawal, breath, and ‘keeping the senses steady as yoga’ (II.iii.10). *Śvetāshvatara* has posture, breath, sense-withdrawal, and concentration. In the later *Maitrī Upaniṣad* (second century BCE), six limbs are mentioned (VI.18 – ‘āsana’ is absent).

Scholars like Max Müller (1899), Paul Deussen (1920), Richard Garbe (1897), Jacob Wilhelm Hauer (1958), and Erich Frauwallner (1953) understood the text as a patchwork, with Dasgupta (1922) and others adding nuances to this position. However, one first looks for internal structure and semantic coherency in work like this before assuming a sudden break indicates later insertion. Modern notions of linearity are not a good criterion when dealing with a text such as the *Yoga-Sūtra*. Recent scholarship found internal consistency in most of the text (Feuerstein, 1979 and Bryant, 2009).

Patañjali, unyoking or disuniting (vi-yoga) of ‘seer’ (draṣṭṛ) and ‘seen’ (drṣṭa), may be associated with Sāṃkhya, the oldest of the six orthodox schools, mainly related to spiritual cultivation (bhāvana) based on scriptural interpretation and the yoga of knowledge (jñāna yoga). The term ‘sāṃkhya’ means ‘discrimination’ (Eliade, 1973), pointing to dualism, the dissociation of spirit (puruṣa) from matter (prakṛti), but ‘investigation’ has also been proposed (Garbe, 1894).

Sāṃkhya philosophy consists of the ‘enumeration’ of twenty-five principles (tattvas), of which two are fundamental : spirit (puruṣa) and matter or Nature (prakṛti). In addition to itself, matter is divided into twenty-three internal components. It is constituted by three ‘guṇas’ (sattva, rajas, and tamas), always present together and continually operating mutually in various permutations. Spirit and matter are beginningless or all-pervasive, allowing for a continuous process of unfolding factors within matter, including intellect (buddhi, mahat), I-am-ness (ahaṅkāra, asmitā), mind (manas), five sense capacities (buddhīndriyas), five motor capacities (karmendriyas), five subtle elements (tanmātras) and five gross elements (mahābhūtas). ‘Sattva’ largely rules intellect, I-am-ness, mind, sense capacities, and motor capacities. ‘Rajas’ energizes the

ongoing transformations of materiality, and 'tamas' largely rules the subtle and gross elements. 'Puruṣa,' while one, in essence, is multiple in manifestation. 'Prakṛti,' while apparently plural in manifestation, is one in number. The dimensions of ordinary experience or consciousness (citta), namely subject, object, and the sensing linking both, are both material and ontologically isolated (kevala, kaivalyam) from spirit (puruṣa). As 'puruṣa' is a translucent witness, it appears *as what it is not*, i.e., the same as matter. As witnessed by spirit (draṣṭṛ), matter seems that *what it is not*, i.e., conscious. Yoga intends to isolate awareness (puruṣa) from (ordinary) consciousness (citta).

Sāṃkhya's earliest treatise is the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* of Īśvarakṛiṣṇa (not later than the fifth century CE). The text refers to Kapila as the mythical founder of the system (6th century BCE). It is said Pātañjala Yoga to be a 'common tradition' (samāna-tantra) with Sāṃkhya. But we know Yoga is not intellect-based, but action-based (karma, kriyā), using the *experiential method*.

Recent scholars like Feuerstein conjectured Patañjali's approach probably was Kriyā Yoga, or Action Yoga, constituted by devotion to the Lord (Īśvara-praṇidhāna), self-study ('svādhyāya,' exegesis of scripture) and asceticism ('tapas,' effort, the application of yogic technology, practice). Note the importance of devotion. Some scholars (Stoller-Miller, 1996) translate 'praṇidhāna' as 'commitment. So 'devotion' or 'surrender' would not be the case. Instead of understanding the text as 'Sāṃkhya with Īśvara,' I would suggest 'Kriyā with Īśvara' to be a better designation.

In my view, the role of devotion (praṇidhāna) to Īśvara is crucial. Although all major categories of Hindu Yoga are present, Patañjali places devotion on high, for in his Action Yoga, 'Īśvara-praṇidhāna' and the study of the sacred texts (speaking of Him) come first. The role of the Lord in asceticism (tapas) itself is also considerable, for He is the role model of the yogi, without whom there would have been no Yoga. And with 'His grace' (prasāda), as experience testifies, the Lord brings forth seedless union ... Does union without the Lord remain possible? Reading II.45, the answer seems contrary. So understandably, to me, 'prasāda' does not just mean 'serenity' ...

No historical commentary on this authoritative aphoristic digest by a member of the school of Classical Yoga has yet been found. The two traditional commentators (Vyāsa in the 5th and Vācaspati Miśra in the 9th century) were outsiders. Vyāsa ('collator,' 'editor,' or 'divider') belonged to the school of Sāṃkhya. His commentary, the *Yoga-Bhāṣya*, provides the key to all other exegetes and can be considered as a canon (in the period before 1000 CE, many Sanskrit authors claimed Vyāsa and Patañjali to be the same person). Vācaspati ('talk-meister') Miśra was a 9th or 10th-century philosopher of Advaita Vadānta who wrote the *Tattva-vaiśaradī* ('Expertise on the Truth'). Another famous commentary is the *Vivaraṇa*, attributed to Śaṅkara in the eighth to the ninth century but probably dating between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries (Raveh, 2012). In the 11th century CE, al-Bīrūnī translated the *Yoga-Sūtra* into Arab, the *Kitāb Pātañjala* (*Book of Patañjali*), contemporary with the *Rāja-mārtanḍa* (*The Royal Sun*) of Bhoja Rāja. In the fifteenth century, the *Yoga-vārttika* (*Critical Annotations on Yoga*) of Vijñānabhikṣu was written, deemed by some as the best commentary next to Vyāsa.

In the past forty years, a flood of translations in over forty languages emerged. The text was first introduced to the West by Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1756 – 1837), read by Hegel, Blavatsky, Yeats, Eliot.

Two types of translations of the *Yoga-Sūtra* are the case. On the one hand, scholarly translations, not very accessible to the common practitioner and, on the other hand, renderings marketed to the yoga community. My approach lies in-between. I recommend Woods (1977) but also learned a lot from Feuerstein (1979), Āraṇya (1981), Taimni (1991), Leggett (1990), Stoller-Miller (1996), Larson (2008), Bryant (2009), Verma (2010) and Raveh (2012). I aimed to produce a text in English, French, and Dutch.

Because of its brevity (there are only four verbs in the entire text), the Sanskrit is challenging to follow. So the balance between accuracy and meaning is not easy to maintain, as the available variety of renderings evidence. Thanks to the commentary of Vyāsa, unpacking the verses, a more precise understanding becomes possible. The language of the *Yoga-Sūtra* is closer to

'Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit' than to the Classical Sanskrit of Hindu scripture and commentary. So for Angot (2008), the first three chapters are a Buddhist work written no later than the first century CE. In contrast, the last chapter would have been composed by a Hindu named Vyāsa, perhaps as late as the sixth or seventh century (the Arabic and Old Javanese versions omit the fourth chapter entirely).

'In either case, we can be certain of several things : that the book you have been reading is the reception history of a work that may or may not be titled the *Yoga-Sūtra* ; that the author of that work may or may not have been named Patanjali ; and that that work may or may not have been the subject of an original and separate commentary by a person probably not named Vyasa.' – White, 2014, p.234.

This author has been digesting the text for over three decades, often returning to Feuerstein's *The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali : An Exercise in the Methodology of Textual Analysis* (1979), advocating a method combining terminological clarity with critical analysis while stressing yogic experience. My earlier translations of the Sūtra in English and French (*The Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali*, 1997) were influenced by his take. Although the English translation presented here remains close to many of his solutions, all translations have been revised. To the English translation, a new, shorter one has been added. It aims to be concise, free, and poignant, less preoccupied with the Sanskrit, and offers, when possible, an alternative sense.

Raveh (2012) explicitly mentions his source text. While we know there is no such thing as 'the text' of the *Yoga-Sūtra*, translators often do not specify which Sanskrit text they used.

Maas (2010) investigated 22 printed editions of the text and its commentaries and 25 manuscripts and identified the politics of formatting the text. He distinguished between 'northern' and 'southern' manuscript groups, a division dating towards the end of the ninth century. Eventually, the 'northern' group became the normative recension. We see a transmission calling for copying, editing, correcting, and amending the text.

I used the Sanskrit text found in *Āraṇya : Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, Calcutta University Press – Calcutta, 1981, as well as the transliterations given by Feuerstein (1979), Bryant (2009), Verma (2010), and Raveh (2012).

In *Exploring the Yogasūtra* (2012), Raveh makes clear every translation is an interpretation, ‘a text “made mine,” written with my own pen, chiseled with my own creativity. This is especially true concerning the Yogasūtra, which is not merely an ancient text rooted in a different cultural and textual milieu, but even more so a sūtra, that is text written in “shorthand,” in concise yet very condensed sentences, which “inherently” invites interpretation.’ (pp.112-113).

All my previous translations have been revised. ‘Puruṣa,’ ‘ātman,’ ‘prajñā,’ ‘prāṇa,’ ‘sattva,’ ‘guṇa,’ ‘Dharma’ and ‘Īśvara,’ ‘maṇipūra-cakra,’ ‘viśuddha-cakra,’ ‘anāhata-cakra’ and ‘kūrma,’ one of the subtle veins, are left in the Sanskrit original. In a Derridean sense, they represent the ‘asterisked words’ or ‘transcendental signifiers.’

‘Yoga is the restriction of the fluctuations of mind-stuff.’
Woods, 1977, p.8.

‘Yoga is the restriction of the fluctuations of consciousness.’
Feuerstein, 1979, p.26.

‘Yoga is the suppression of the modifications of the mind.’
Āraṇya, 1981.

‘Yoga is the inhibition of the modifications of the mind.’
Taimni, 1991, p.6.

‘Yoga is the cessation of movements in consciousness.’
Iyengar, 1993, p.50.

‘Yoga is the stilling of the changing states of the mind.’
Bryant, 2009, p.10.

‘Yoga is the cessation of mental activity.’
Raveh, 2012, p.127.

In his *Light on the Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali* (1993), Iyengar (1918 – 2014), deemed ‘the world’s most respected yoga teacher,’ translates II.22 as : ‘The relationship with nature ceases for emancipated beings, its purpose having been fulfilled, but its processes continue to affect others.’ (p.131). Compare this with Feuerstein’s version :

‘Although (the seen) has ceased (to exist) for (the yogin whose) purpose has been accomplished, it has nevertheless not ceased (to exist altogether), since it is common-experience (with respect to all) other (beings).’ (p.74).

Feuerstein painstakingly follows the Sanskrit text, allowing one to understand the text with precision, reducing poetic impact.

Compare four translations of the crucial I.41 :

‘(In the case of a consciousness whose) fluctuations have dwindled (and which has become) like a transparent jewel, (there results) – (with reference to) the “grasper,” “grasping” and the “grasped” (a state of) coincidence with that on which (consciousness) abides and by which (consciousness) is “anointed.”’

Feuerstein, 1979, p.52.

‘Identification-in-samādhi is when the mental process has dwindled, and the mind rests on either the knower or the knowing process or a known object, and like a crystal apparently takes on their respective qualities.’

Leggett, 1990, p.152.

‘And when fluctuations have dwindled, consciousness is like a transparent jewel ; there results with reference to the “grasper,” “grasping,” and the “grasped” a coincidence with that on which consciousness abides and by which it is “anointed.”’

van den Dungen, 1997.

‘The yogi realizes that the knower, the instrument of knowing, and the known are one, himself, the seer. Like a pure transparent jewel, he reflects an unsullied purity.’

Iyengar, 2002, p.93.

‘*Samāpatti*, complete absorption of the mind when it is free from its *vṛttis*, occurs when the mind becomes just like a transparent jewel, taking the form of whatever object is placed before it, whether the object is the knower, the instrument of knowledge or the object of knowledge.” – Bryant, 2009, p.142.

'In the case of (a yogin whose) mental activity has decreased, (whose consciousness is as clear) as a transparent jewel, a merging of perceiver, perception, and perceived object takes place.' Raveh, 2012, p.129.

The *Yoga-Sūtra* is divided into four books :

BOOK I : Samādhi-Pāda – path to union – 51 verses

BOOK II : Sādhana-Pāda – path to realization – 55 verses

BOOK III : Vibhūti-Pāda – path to power – 55 verses

BOOK IV : Kaivalya-Pāda – path to aloneness – 34 verses

In Book I, the basic concepts of the text are advanced : the seer (*puruṣa*), the seen (*prakṛti*), union (*samādhi*), and the Lord (*Īśvara*). In the auditorium, the teachers of yoga are seated. This book summarizes the 'view' of Classical Yoga, defining yoga as the *radical separation* of seen and seer and pointing to the role of the Lord, who is the archetypal yogi, the 'guru' of all previous teachers. What can be gained without His example ? The view reveals an attempt at integration of knowledge (*jñāna*), devotion (*praṇidhāna*) and 'karma' (*kriyā*). I argue that the devotional component outweighs the other two (although the *Yoga-Sūtra* does not mention 'bhakti').

In Book II, the aspirant and the means of attainment are targeted ; not directly but in terms of what the teacher *ought to teach*. Starting with the fact of suffering, the causes of woe and their mechanics are identified, and the root cause : the association between the seer and seen, the presence of entanglements with Nature. It ends by introducing the outer limbs of the 'aṣṭa-aṅga' path, namely morality, posture, breathing, and sense-withdrawal. These are the foundation of practice. This exposition leaps over in Book III, addressing the inner limbs of concentration, contemplation, and union, brought together under the heading of 'constraint' (*saṃyama*). The discussion of 'nirodha' is followed by the relationship between substratum and characteristic. It closes by enumerating the many powers to be attained by applying constraints on various coarse and subtle objects.

Books II and III represent the 'path' of Classical Yoga, how the goal (total liberation) can be achieved.

By some considered a kind of supplement or summary, Book IV is a study of the philosophy underpinning the path and its fulfillment, aloneness (kaivalya). It considers the 'fruit' of the 'royal path,' accomplishing by 'vi-yoga,' the isolation of the seer from the seen. Addressing the yogi, it describes the phenomenological, ontological, moral, and spiritual tenets implied by the fruit, the aloneness of the seer.

In the commentary on the English translations, the *Yoga-Sūtra* is approached with the Buddhadharma in mind. The view expounded by Patañjali differs from what the Buddha taught. It begs the question of the similarities and differences between Hindu and Buddhist Yoga.

Patañjali's types of coincidence (samāpatti) and the Jhānas (as described in the *Pāli Canon*) are similar. We know Jhāna Yoga can be traced to Hindu Yoga, particularly regarding rituals and yogic practices involving the *quaternio* of elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air), representing the '*mundus*,' in this case, the coarse side of the physical plane. Seeded union and the four 'form' Jhānas, as well as seedless union and the four formless Jhānas, offer fertile points of comparison.

Patañjali's contribution to the clear understanding of concentration (dhāraṇā), contemplation (dhyāna) and union (samādhi), together constraint, is also highlighted as teaching enriching the Buddhist view on meditation (bhāvana). Buddhists often translate 'dhyāna' as 'meditation,' or as 'concentration,' some even identify it with 'samādhi' ... a confusing practice also found in the *Mahābhārata*.

But the notable difference between the ātman-ontology advanced by Patañjali and the Dharma teachings of Buddha involves the contrast between substance (svabhāva) and its absence (niḥsvabhāva, asvabhāva, Buddha's 'anātman'). While this may seem metaphysical or philosophical, it does have a severe impact on practice. In short, all Hindu Yoga is substantialist, accepting essences existing from their own side, self-powered and self-contained. In contrast, Buddhist Yoga is strictly nominalist and so process-based, rejecting substances *in toto*. Hindu Yoga will,

therefore, need to focus on Nature to escape her. Buddhist Yoga focuses on the mind misrepresenting existence.

As in Sāṃkhya Yoga, Buddha returns to the original, 'magical' sense of yoga, implying the empowerment or initiation of the individual to attain cessation of suffering *without* any help from God. But unlike Sāṃkhya and Vedānta, he rejects inherent existence (svabhāva). While Śākyamuni does not deny the actual existence of the Lord (he is not atheist), he does not refer to Him in his soteriology (non-theist) and proceeds to identify a supramundane, nirvāṇic alternative (transtheist).

We know from the *Samyutta-nikāya* (II.106) the Tathāgata had 'seen the ancient way and followed it.' His teachers were advanced masters of Hindu Yoga. Ārāḍa Kālāma taught a pre-classical Sāṃkhya at Vaiśālī, while Udraka Rāmaputra was an adept of Yoga. Gautama rejected the exaggerated asceticism of these Upaniṣadic ascetics because it did not end suffering irreversibly. He opposed Brahmanic ritualism. His way was beyond metaphysical formulas and mystical rules and regulations (deemed '*idola mentis*'). In his analysis of psychomental life, no 'ātman' or 'puruṣa' was found ...

The self is a process, not a permanent nature. As a process, it is impermanent, as are all things, Buddhahood included. So the 'anātman' view moves Buddhist Yoga away from Hindu Yoga altogether. It is one of the reasons it became non-orthodox (like Jainism). In ātman-based approaches, the self is self-existent, independent, permanent and isolated.

'Having meditated on the "ātman," as bodiless among bodies, as permanent among the impermanent, and as vast and pervasive, the wise man grieves not.' – *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I.ii.22.

When Hindu Yoga turned theist, it did so in terms of an *inherently existing* Supreme Being. The latter is an eternal Being known as the 'Creator of the Universe' (sṛṣṭikartā) and given many names : 'Brahman,' 'Īśvara,' 'Ādi puruṣa,' 'Ādi Daiva,' 'Paramātman,' 'Parama puruṣa,' 'puruṣa Viśeṣa,' 'Viśvacetana,' 'Antaryāmin,' etc. In Hinduism, the self is permanent, self-powered, and self-existing.

Rampant substance-obsession is found everywhere and is the universal human condition. It was already there in Ancient Egyptian religion (*Ancient Egyptian Readings*, 2016) and, thanks to the Greeks, got solid in monotheism (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). It even infested epistemology (cf. Kant's ontological illusion) and can, in actual method, not be divorced from sound scientific practice. In the West, this philosophy of presence was countered by only a handful of thinkers : Herakleitus, Ockham, Kant, Bergson, Whitehead, Wittgenstein (II), and Derrida.

Śākyamuni advocated a strict nominalist view, a spiritual path to salvation, and a continuously present sacred fruit lacking any self-power from its own side. Some claim the man was nothing more than a Hindu sectarian. Not so. He introduced 'anātman' to indicate he rejected the self-existing, inherently existing, unchanging (avasthitam) nature (svabhāva) of what exists, selfhood included, be it psychological (the ego) or metaphysical (the higher self, Buddha-nature). Buddha Śākyamuni was not a theologian but an experientialist. Saying he rejected the impermanence of the personal self, but not the Permanent Beingness of the upaniṣadic 'ātman' is incorrect, as is equating the latter with 'nirvāṇa,' despite the fact both traditions (the orthodox and the unorthodox) accept the existence of the absolute and aim to end suffering by cutting the root of ignorance.

Hindu thought, as in Platonism, does so by positing two ontological orders: the seen (temporal becoming) versus the seer (eternal being). Buddhist philosophy rejects these two ontological worlds and advocates the conventional existence of the absolute, the pansacrality of the sea of process, the one unbounded wholeness.

Buddha was not the leader of a Hindu sect who accepted the universal 'ātman' (as discussed in the *Upaniṣads*). Still, a radical nominalist who, without rejecting something real does exist, did away with substance, replacing it with the process of dependent-origination, the 'king of logics.' He rejected permanency, the false ideation of an objective thingness existing *from its own side*, ascribing process to the absolute, as well as to the relative. The 'ātman' of the *Upaniṣad* is not a process but an immortal eternalized Platonic plenitude of Being.

Whether a universal or personal self existed was not Buddha's concern. What counted is to see the self *as it truly exists* (yathā-būtham), i.e., lacking inherent existence (empty of a permanent self) but fully interconnected with all possible other phenomena. The self is not found to exist inside or outside the body but is designated based on the body (form) and the mind (will, affect, thought, sentience). Take away the body-mind-complex, and no self is found. It is the opposite of the Hindu view, namely liberation by ending the mind's entanglement with Nature, thereby realizing the eternal self (ātman).

Obviously, 'nirvāṇa' is not the abundance of permanent, eternalized Beingness, but the dynamics of impermanent holomovements (Guenther, 1989), exceptional dependent-arisings impermanent as all other phenomena, but, contrary to the latter, *continuous*. Perfect dancers, sublime swimmers, the best lovers.

The absence of *any* inherently existing self (universal, as in the *Upaniṣads*, the Advaita Vedānta, or psycho-phenomenological) is a revolutionary doctrine, making Buddha's view leave the Hindu fold becoming unorthodox. Most of both Eastern and Western philosophy is substance-obsessed. So any process-driven view stands out and makes a huge difference, mainly when manifesting as the view of the community of Buddhist practitioners (sangha). This absence of a permanent self is *not* the rejection of the self as such (as empirical ego or higher self), nor linked with the impossibility of absolute truth and reality to exist conventionally, as a datum of yogic practice. The Buddhadharmā embraces bliss as long as it is as continuously truly peaceful as it is impermanent.

For Śākyamuni, salvation is the sole result of a *personal effort* to calm the mind and understand reality, i.e., experimentally know the Two Truths, relative and absolute. The absolute truth is that all phenomena are processes. Understanding must exceed mere speculation, and the experiential approach may never overwhelm the unconditional. One is 'saved' by attaining 'nirvāṇa,' moving beyond the plane of profane, mundane experience, being reborn (possibly in this life, so Mahāyāna affirms) into the supramundane *sacred life*, one cannot define or describe. It is not the plenitude of a permanent Beingness, but the *full-emptiness* of all that exists.

In the Buddhadharmā, this principle of universal relativity (svabhāva-śūnyatā) is carried through and so even applies to Buddhahood and absolute truth. The Lesser Vehicle, seeking salvation for oneself alone, focuses on the absence of an inherently existing self. In Mahāyāna, realizing the importance of the awakening of all sentient beings, all phenomena are attended, also the so-called 'outer' objects (meditating with eyes half-open).

In the highest conceptual tenet system of Buddhist philosophy, the Prasaṅgika-Madhyamaka or Middle Way School founded by Nāgārjuna (c. 150 – c. 250 CE), all sensate and mental objects lack own-form or essential, substantial, inherent existence. The Middle Way school rejects eternalism (substances, i.e., permanently existing essences) and nihilism (the absence of foundation), recognizing the absolute as the *uncontaminated* property of every impermanent, relative momentary phenomenon. Hinduism is eternalist. Patañjali endorses this. By contrast, Buddha steers between both extremes. Everything does exist as impermanent dependent-arisings. In all change, the absolute resides while no substances are found.

What is at stake here? If substance is out, then how can the absolute be 'absolute,' in other words, without permanent, eternal Being? What is the 'absoluteness' of the absolute? How to understand the absolute, if not permanent, substantial and inherently existing from its own side? If there is no self-powered entity, how can anything peaceful, stable and blissful, or supramundane be found? If there is no Archimedean point, then why does the world not collapse? The Platonic argument of old. Without the world of ideas, becoming is impossible. As in the *Allegory of the Cave*, the latter is the shadow of the former, deriving its existence from it. If the Absolute Being, as 'substance of substances,' no longer guarantees the 'beingness' of the world, how is existence even possible? Why is there something rather than nothing? Without God, the world must inevitably end! If Śiva would close his eyes but for a moment, the universe would collapse ... If the absolute is no longer defined as substance (*ousia*, *substantia*) or essence (*eidos*), i.e., by its inherent property of 'Beingness,' then what makes the absolute *stand out* so it can be identified as absolute? How can there be anything in existence if no absolute Being shared this 'Beingness' with its creatures, making

Nature come into existence, sustain its presence and then cause its destruction for it to reappear renewed ? To the eternalist, existence without substance is unthinkable, and philosophy of becoming inconsistent.

When substance-thinking has bewitched the mind for a very long time to the point of substance-obsession and ontological illusion, it seems as if the absence of substance would be the affirmation of nihilism or annihilationism, the notion ongoing becoming has nothing permanent in it, the perspective all is indeed mere perspective, eclipsing the other possibility, namely absolute existence, the pivot necessary to let relativity stand. In truth, all is but a perspective. The absolute exists *in the presence of relativity itself*, as a holodynamic in the Net of Indra of universal dependent origination, with its contaminated (saṃsāric) and uncontaminated (nirvāṇic) impermanent processes. The ultimate is a special, unique process, *sui generis*.

The Middle Way avoids the charge of annihilationism because, after the false ideation superimposing substance on impermanent process has been removed from the mind, *something remains*. This something is the *totality* of phenomena *as they are* (dharmadhātu), the complex network of dependent origination, the *sea of process* constituting the togetherness of all actual occasions in every moment of existence, in every actual occasion. Unsubstantiality (the absence of substantial existence, not of other-powered existence) does not imply absolute non-existence, the absence of ontological principle (nihilism). When substance is negated, what remains is the dependent interconnectivity between all possible things ; they exist as entities-in-relation. While designated by the conceptual mind in terms of concepts, phenomena exist as interconnected, relative wholes with impermanent, changing determinations and conditions. When the wise see emptiness, they see dependent origination and *vice versa* (Chandrakīrti).

The Middle Way has absolute truth (nirvāṇa, Dharmakāya, tathāgatagarbha, sugatagarbha) existing conventionally, but never ontologically different or transcendent. The ultimate is a *distinct* property of every object. There is no Platonic separation or gap (*chōrismós*) between two ontological planes or worlds, one relative

(becoming) and one absolute (being). Relative and absolute truth are *both* impermanent and so other-powered dependent-arising, not existing *from their own side*. The difference is merely one of substantiation. Relative, conventional reality reifies its objects.

It is a *contaminated* dependent-arising. Absolute, ultimate reality squarely and with no exceptions *negates* all possible reification (substantiation, essentialisation).

In ultimate logic, not a single substance is found. Independent (svatantra), substantial (svabhāva), and thinglike (dravyasant) objects, be they sensate or mental, are *not established* and so deemed, for all practical purposes, non-existent. As objects nevertheless appear as established, the conclusion is warranted ; they are illusionary in the sense of dream-like, indeed, like optical illusions, operational but deceptive. Ultimate logic argues that positing substance leads to invalid consequences (*On Ultimate Logic*, 2009).

All of existence, both relative and absolute, is found to *lack substantiality* (fixed essences or a 'self') and so is deemed 'empty' (śūnyatā) of a 'permanent' self (ātman). It is empty of substantial, essentialist existence (the *actual* state of the world) is not sheer nothingness or voidness, but merely *the absence of inherent existence*, nothing more or less (*Emptiness Panacea*, 2017). Thus attending selflessness (anātman) is experiencing dependent origination.

Study and reflection lead to *understanding* emptiness. It initiates Buddhist philosophy. But only meditation realizes anything and helps the yogi to 'see' emptiness.

The difference is central. In the former case, the best conceptual insight (prajñā) is at work. In contrast, substance-obsession can be stopped entirely with direct, experiential prehension (jñāna) in the latter case. Buddhist meditation aims to *exist in what appears*, whatever that is, entering what exists *as it is*. This 'dharmadhātu' or suchness is the whole of dependent-arising logically and functionally defining it, of which the awakened mind (Dharmakāya) is the prehension. So Buddhist philosophy (logic and ontology of how things actually exist) always walks hand in hand with Buddhist meditation. It can be indirect and conceptual but ends in a direct, non-conceptual experience of interconnectedness.

The first point.

The absolute is an *uncontaminated* dependent-arising.

The first point has strong backing, warranted by multiple ways of analysis.

Suppose, so the substantialist argues, the *absence* of substance is indeed the case. Then how can anything absolute stand ? If the absolute exists conventionally, how can it escape the transient nature of the latter ? How avoid the view perspectivism is absolutely relative, in other words, that no absolute can be found ? How can the ever-changing landscape of becoming be combined with the notion of something being complete and accurate in all situations, for all possible things ? How can the everlasting be found in the transitory ? Or, as Kierkegaard asked, how can the finite contain the infinite ?

At first sight, this seems impossible, much like finding silence in a lot of noise. Buddha nevertheless consistently clarified this crucial issue in all process-based approaches. While there is no substantial ground, *there is order*. The efficacy of Dharma at work, thanks to emptiness, is his most excellent teaching.

One way to 'explain' the absolute without having recourse to the substantial definition of something being an *ever-fixed measure* or principle *in itself*, without any remaining trace of Platonic or Platonizing ontology, is saying it cannot be conceptualized, the absolute being ineffable (the '*via negativa*'). Although this holds, and part of Buddha's view, such an '*argumentum ex silentio*' avoids the question by meta-level and so is somewhat unsatisfactory.

Another apt solution is to say the absolute is not permanent, in the enduring, immobile, fixed, substantial, inherently existing sense, but *continuous ; holomovements displaying extraordinary non-linear, dissipative dynamic characteristics* (Guenther, 1989).

While Buddhahood is a dependent-arising, a radiant form-in-movement and impermanent, with *absolute characteristics*, relative truth lacks, for (a) absolute truth is an *uncontaminated* dependent-arising and (b) absolute truth is *continuous*.

The second point.

The absolute is a *continuous* process.

Absolute truth is uncontaminated means *not* defiled by the delusion of permanent own-form existing *from its own side*. It is the same as saying being 'pure,' or empty of a permanent self, lacking essential nature. Ultimate truth, while unsubstantial, is not non-existing but an interconnected, *unbounded whole*. The absolute is a dependent-arising, i.e., a process or state of becoming, but one without any trace of self-power, wholly other-powered. Nature is *not* the cause of suffering, but our wrong conceptualization is. This substance-obsession conjuring the 'dream of Being,' of 'I Am,' is the cause of our predicament. Where the Hindu tradition presents a naturalized ontic view on ignorance, Śākyamuni is foremost epistemic.

Besides being uncontaminated, i.e., impermanent and 'pure' (unmixed with ignorance), these extraordinary, nirvāṇic dependent-arising are *continuous*, meaning they exhibit a *well-defined, perfect movement* featuring a special and unique kinetography *sui generis*, one remaining, while always moving, constant over time and space, dissipating entropy. This holomovement is a perfect symmetry-transformation, a dance of space, time, and movement. Indeed, the mind of a Buddha (Dharmakāya) is the union of nature and wisdom. While all Buddhas share the same nature (emptiness), the wisdom of each Buddha is unique insofar as the actual compassionate path of this awakened mind is original.

Holomovement is like a perfectly executed dance, bringing to bear the sublime, dynamic continuum of a constant awakening change, solely depending on factors outside itself. It is a perfect symmetry transformation *sui generis*, everlasting and enduring in terms of the *specific style* of its dynamic flow. It writes like a differential equation, covering all possible different movements of the (nirvāṇic) holomovement at hand while remaining formally identical with itself (not changing insofar as the form of the equation itself is concerned). In heaven, so the tradition goes, the Buddha appeared playing music. Music comes close to mimic what a holomovement is all about ; a *form-in-movement*, a Divine, full-empty dance of energy, information, and shared consciousness.

In the Third Turning, the root of consciousness is called Buddha-nature (tathāgatagarbha) or ‘womb of Buddhahood’ (i.e., awakening-potentiality). Buddha did not use this concept. But in the *Pali Canon*, we find its equivalent, namely ‘luminous mind.’ Later texts refer to ‘brightly shining mind’ (prakṛti-prabhāsvaracitta) or ‘radiant light’ (prabhāsvara).

‘Luminous, bhikkhus, is this mind, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements.’ – *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, I.10 (49/9).

These concepts refer to the intrinsic purity at the base of the mindstream (Tib. ‘*sems-rgyud*’); the empty nature of Bodhi-mind. In the Fourth Turning (or Tantrayāna), this nirvāṇic mind is called ‘very subtle mind,’ or mind of ‘Clear Light’ (Tib. ‘*od gsal*’). This mind is the luminous, spontaneous, aware (Tib. ‘*rig pa*’) aspect of the mind, always fresh, vast, and beyond conceptualization. This mind is ultimate and distinct from the rest of consciousness (the coarse and subtle minds still belong to ‘saṃsāra’).

But whereas the luminous mind, in the interpretation of the Middle Way, is not a substance, ‘puruṣa’ clearly is. Patañjali, and with him Hinduism, never relinquish substance, entirely on the contrary. Self (puruṣa), seer (draṣṭṛ), power of awareness (citi-śakti), the owner (svāmin) and Lord (Īśvara) all refer to the ontologically transcendent and inherently existing root-consciousness.

For Patañjali, the root of consciousness is ‘aloneness’ (kaivalya). In contrast, Buddha-nature is an uncontaminated and continuous dependent-arising, one fundamentally interconnected with all other dependent-arisings, whether uncontaminated (Buddhas) or not (sentient beings). In Hindu Yoga, disconnecting from Nature is the task, and so both approaches radically differ.

Together with morality and insight into reality (wisdom), Śākyamuni viewed meditation (bhāvana), or the practice of yoga, as training all practitioners needed. Much later, Tsongkhapa (1357 – 1419) defined the Buddhist discipline through three modalities: study (listening and reading), reflection, and meditation. Without meditation, only superficial knowledge is gained. Without direct prehension, only an *approximation* of the absolute is possible (by

way of the generic idea of emptiness). The wisdom realizing emptiness may be scholarly, subtle, refined, and highly intellectual (prajñā). Still, without direct yogic experience and integrated realization (jñāna), this remains quite useless for the set purpose of irreversibly ceasing suffering.

Yoga is a *salvific technology* transforming the mind of the practitioner. It calls for a direct, non-conceptual experience of the Divine, be it theist, non-theist, or transtheist.

In Buddhism, realization means recognizing, knowing, and fully rest in one's luminous, radiating, very subtle, original (primordial) mind or 'mind-as-such' (Tib. '*sems nyid*'). Patañjali witnessed enlightenment as the irreversible end of the fluctuations of consciousness covering its root, 'puruṣa,' the seer. Śākyamuni experienced the root of consciousness as a pure and perfect continuous movement interconnected with all possible things.

Patañjali points to the substantial aloneness (kaivalya) realized when the mind is totally poised and so able to recognize the power of awareness itself, and this totally devoid of any outer object, absolutely divided (divorced) from Nature, absolutely sātṭvic and so turned inward, only aware of objectless consciousness. Buddha never stops repeating duality and anything else for that matter, all being impermanent, *in itself* pose no problem, for only reification is ignorance. By stopping projecting substance, *sacred relatedness* unfolds. The absolute is found in the relative.

Patañjali accepts the reality of Nature but no longer wishes to be impressed. His text brings final liberation (Dharma-meghaḥ-samādhi) as unity, oneness, absolute singularity (aloneness). This ultimate fruit, the final liberation, occurs when the emancipatory purpose of Nature has born fruit, and the entanglement with matter has been undone, the ego transformed into an absolute self, into the seer.

Both Hindu and Buddhist yogis seek the cessation of suffering by ending ignorance. The former tries to disentangle from Nature. Here ontology plays. The latter identifies the culprit as false ideation of the mind. Here epistemology plays.

My commentary tries to trace this fundamental difference in ontological view between both systems of Yoga. It also highlights certain correspondences between Jhāna Yoga and the higher limbs of Yoga. It compares the Nine Stages of Calm Abiding with constraint, the application of concentration, contemplation, and union in one practice session.

Because Nature needs to be precisely known to escape her, Hindu Yoga describes the categories of matter necessary to realize its divisive yoga. Interested in Nature, their yogic technology is adapted to investigate any object's coarse and subtle layers. By a flash-like insight, find the proper way to deal with what happens.

The spectacle of Nature, her endless dance, cannot be stopped, only witnessed. This is the sheer seeing of the seer of the eternal self. It is beyond science and logic, beyond reason. The unmixed somehow interacts with the 'sattva' of consciousness. Unthinkable (in terms of substances), it nevertheless is a datum of yogic experience and so accepted as an object of devotion, to which the highest compliments and praise are due.

Instead of approaching this remarkable text as a kind of academic work on Yoga, I read it as a highly organized compendium of aphorisms on the core-business of Patañjali, namely detaching from Nature *with the mysterious help of the Lord* ; ending the mind to enter sheer seeing, abiding in the essence of consciousness, eternally and substantially separated from Nature.

Now we turn to the text of the *Yoga-Sūtra* and try to understand.

BOOK I : Path to Union

All spiritual traditions hold particular *views* about how to attain what they deem ultimate. A given look accommodates a *path* of practice, bringing about, if effective, a spiritual *fruit*.

Views bringing benefits to a large number of sentient beings are worthy of respect. These 'vehicles' or 'paths' help the individual cross the ocean of suffering and find better physical, psychological, social, economic, and spiritual conditions. Such increased happiness and surplus always benefit others as well.

The Buddhadharmā points to three universal vehicles (yānas) :

1. the human vehicles : invented by human beings for human beings. These secular systems try to guarantee their basic needs : food, housing, health care, education, family life, social services, a system of law, democracy, etc. Despite the many international organizations, humanity has not yet established a just human vehicle worldwide. Even today, when this could already be the case, it is shamefully not so ! On the contrary, the division between those who benefit from such systems and those who do not is becoming increasingly broader. Social injustice is rampant worldwide ! Hence, may one doubt the stand-alone effectiveness of these vehicles ? It seems as if they incorporate the very causes of the suffering they intend to stop ;

2. the Divine vehicles : invented by the Deities or Deity for human beings, these paths call for a plurality of Deities (polytheism), one Deity with many faces (henotheism), or a singular Deity opposing plurality (monotheism). In the latter case, the Absolute Being (called 'God') is essentially One and Alone and establishes a covenant with humanity allowing it to be saved. The hidden essence of the Absolute Being of the Judaic, Christian, and Muslim God is for Him Alone. At the same time, Divine existence can only be experienced by exceptional individuals (like prophets, saints, and mystics). But if the experiences of the latter conflict with their fundamental theology (based on the revealed scriptures of each monotheism), most organized religions prefer Divine absence above new revelations (Shia Islam being the exception – cf. the Mahdi).