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## Eight Characters in Search of the *Yogasūtra*: The Lively Banalization of Yogic Deathly Silence

Sages and scholars, no less than others, desire to live on and on. Not only continuity of living is desired, but also the indefinite extension of a certain essence of life and identity. Scholars are people; they are what they are. They seek to live on and remain the same. Sometimes they come forward to grope for the unfamiliar and foreign, projecting themselves onto the dark of the unknown. The encounter with the overwhelming otherness of yoga, a tradition particularly inimical to “normal life,” has the mirror potency of stark otherness. Such otherness reflects and refracts the scholar’s identity—nature, concepts, affiliation, education, fears, hopes, incompetence—in the light of day. How does one fill the gap between strikingly unfamiliar otherness and oneself?

Many indeed are the voices speaking for and instead of Patañjali, desperately closing and reclosing the gap between normal consciousness and the dying yogin’s terribly dense innerness. But can it be done? If so, under what conditions? Perhaps Patañjali knows; most probably he too does not. He himself tried to close the gap between his normal consciousness (that of a highly verbal Sāṅkhya philosopher) and the dying yogin’s testimony of the interior.

Here they are, then, approaching the *Yogasūtra*: the Complacent Outsider, the Ultimate Insider, the Romantic Seeker, the Universal Philosopher, the Bodily Practitioner, the Mere Philologist, the Classical Scholar, the Observers’ Observer. These, of course, are archetypes, not found in reality. None of the Spiritual and Romantic Seekers would readily relinquish the scholarly voice and tacit access to objective truth. Though himself a Romantic Seeker, W. B. Yeats advances a general theory on the impact of Buddhism on Indian history.<sup>1</sup> M. Eliade is a great scholar, but also—essentially—a Romantic Seeker. He seeks deconditioning, freedom, and immortality. B. K. S. Iyengar is primarily a Bodily Practitioner, but is also a Spiritual Seeker who moves from the body to the innermost core of the soul. G. Feuerstein is a Seeker offering scholarly speculations on the history of yoga, the structure of

consciousness, and many other scholarly subjects. R. Mehta, a sage and seeker affiliated with Krishnamurti, interprets the *Yogasūtra* as an Existential Seeker, though with much attention to detail such as correct Sanskrit wordings and diacritical signs. He thus understands his mission not only as an expression of his own personal and spiritual values and experience, but also as an exegesis of the *Yogasūtra*.<sup>2</sup>

S. Radhakrishnan—a Universal Philosopher—thinks highly of merging in the Absolute, but he also seems to have a special esteem for family life and brotherly cooperation, which—he admits—are not found in yoga. Thus he is concomitantly a Universal Philosopher and a Hostile Outsider. M. Müller is also a great scholar partially hostile to yoga, which he claims contains—among other things—“all these postures and tortures” as well as materials which are solely “of interest for the pathologist.” Swami Vivekananda is definitely a Seeker, but also precise about diacritics and translation. Paramahansa Yogananda and J. H. Woods are an Ultimate Insider and a Mere Philologist, respectively.

The above is a kind of a commentary on one of Patañjali’s sutras, YS 2.9. Patañjali asserts here that sages as well as fools are activated by a common and forceful current underlying normal life, the desire to preserve one’s essence on and on.<sup>3</sup> This is one of the *kleśas*, omnipresent roots of misery.<sup>4</sup> Vyāsa conceives of *abhiniveśa* as “fear of death” (*marāṇa-trāsa*). Such a fear, he observes, is perceived even in worms which have just been born (*kṛmer api jāta-mātrasya*). Vyāsa seems to wonder whence this fear, for—he suggests—such a desire (to live on) could not possibly have arisen if the quality of death had not been experienced before (*na cānanubhūta-marāṇa-dharmakasyaiṣā bhavaty ātmāśīḥ*). Vyāsa concludes that the pain of death experienced in previous lives (*pūrva-janmānubhūtaṁ marāṇa-duḥkham*) has been inscribed into each creature’s being, and is activated and remembered anew time and again in each life cycle. Thence the consciousness of all creatures: “May I never cease to live; may we live on and on.”

Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* is a collection of 195 short sentences (sutras), composed or compiled around 200 A.D. Several centuries after the life of the Buddha, Pātañjala-Yoga addresses humanity with the diagnosis of life as misery, and seeks remedy in the creation of an alternative yoga universe. Patañjali puts forth the ideal of “yogic death” (*samādhi*) as one such remedial alternative to normal consciousness. *Samādhi* is indeed a “drive from humanity” and a “transcendence of the human condition” in terms of reality and value. Vivekananda puts this blatantly in his introduction to Patañjali’s aphorisms: “Every soul must disintegrate to become God. So, it follows that the sooner we get out of this state we call ‘man,’ the better for us.”<sup>5</sup> The creation of the yoga-reality involves shunning contact with other human beings,<sup>6</sup> a

harshly disciplined lifestyle (celibacy, nonviolence, nonpossessiveness), postures, breathing control, meditation, and absorption. The end result is complete sensory deprivation and darkening of the world, at which point the yoga universe comes into being.

Most probably, none of the commentators mentioned above has shared fully in the yoga universe. The abysmal gap between yoga reality and its interpreters calls for bridges, and these are provided by commentators and scholars in the tradition of Pātañjala-Yoga. Inevitably, they extend or project their needs, fears, preferences, and aspirations onto the yoga universe; thus otherness becomes, in effect, a mirror.

Insufficient contact with the dying yogin's world as well as with its most immediate conceptualization—Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*—is visible in all the attempts to approach Pātañjala-Yoga. The Complacent Outsider preserves his or her “empiricist” identity, remaining aloof and suspicious; the Ultimate Insider exemplifies harmony and lack of discord, taking Patañjali's assertions for granted, making yogic phenomena commonplace, and thus resisting in his or her own way the yogin's otherness. The Universal Philosopher pays attention solely to metaphysical and religious dimensions, and becomes hostile once other components—incommensurable with the scholarly mode of seeking truth—are concerned. The Seekers vary in their mode of rejection of the yogin's mental culture and experience. Many talk of their very own “freedom”—conspicuously different from Patañjali's.<sup>7</sup>

Thus scholars and others act out their wish to live on and on. It is somewhat paradoxical—but true—that the more strikingly unfamiliar (or “other”) the other, the more enhanced its mirror potency becomes. The remarkable variance among contemporary commentaries on the *Yogasūtra* attests to the stark otherness of this tradition.

In his intention to expose the reality behind all sorts of occult phenomena, D. H. Rawcliffe includes yoga.<sup>8</sup> In his exposition of the nature of *samādhi*, he says:

The Yoga trance, like the trances of many mystics, is undoubtedly a source of great happiness and inspiration. Its psychiatric interpretation, however, sheds a ray of disillusion over the whole subject. The trance is almost certainly in most instances the product of autohypnosis. In a few cases a technique of very rapid breathing may result in a cataleptic trance through the exhaustion of the CO<sub>2</sub> content in the blood (as sometimes occurs in hysteria). Otherwise no particular importance can be attached to the acrobatic postures and special breathing techniques in the induction of the trance; they teach the yogi control of the will and the body and no more.<sup>9</sup>

Rawcliffe further elaborates on the yogin's "delusions of significance":

It is through a process of autohypnotisation and autosuggestion that the yogi attains his euphoric trance.<sup>10</sup> The euphoria and delusions of significance which it brings are remembered by the yogi as a blissful experience which makes him long to repeat it.<sup>11</sup>

Rawcliffe is indeed a Complacent Outsider. He is somewhat aloof and superior to the tradition he examines, and his dealing with miraculous phenomena is a paradigm for his interpretation of yoga in general. In the context of his dealing with the "Indian rope trick," he mocks the "gullible and suggestible audiences of the Orient."<sup>12</sup>

The Complacent Outsider does not encourage serious study of the yoga-universe. He pays little attention to what the yogin says, and does not bother with the particular connections made by Patañjali.<sup>13</sup> Although seemingly sober and sincere in his reductionist program as well as in his attempts to expose frauds of yogins and fakirs, he does not make room for pondering the possible value of the other's remote experience. He is not truly challenged by Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*. Exploration into the yogin's domain of experience as a meaningful organic whole amounts—in Rawcliffe's exposition—to research into the dynamics of hallucination.<sup>14</sup>

At the other edge of the continuum is the Ultimate Insider, a devotee who speaks as an actual yogin and who sees into the truths of yoga from within. W. B. Yeats' guru, Shree Purohit Swami, is an Ultimate Insider who often interprets and corroborates Patañjali's statements by reference to his own experience. Thus, for example, he supports YS 3.16 by testimony from his own life:

The sage Bhrigu worked out sometime in the past, the horoscopes of thousands of men, some alive today, some yet to be born. I saw my own horoscope, carved on palm leaves, written in Saṁskṛt, giving an account of my past as well as present life. There are various copies of this collection of horoscopes; I know of one which is at Benares, I saw another which belonged to a pundit from Malabar. It is called Bhrigu-Samhita. Generally three lives are described, or rather one life in relation to the past and the future life.<sup>15</sup>

For ordinary Westerners—largely Complacent Outsiders—such accounts by an Ultimate Insider sound naive and untrustworthy. However, Purohit's translation and commentary on the *Yogasūtra* is straightforward and unpretentious. His testimony about a transformative Kundalini experience is sincere, interesting, and has a ring of truth:<sup>16</sup>

It is a terrifying experience when the kundalinee is awakened. The first day the fire was kindled in me, I thought I was dying, the whole body was, as it were, on fire, mind was being broken to pieces, the bones were being hammered, I did not understand what was happening. In three months, I drank gallons of milk and clarified butter, ate leaves of two nimba trees till they were left without a single leaf, searched everywhere for mudra leaves and devoured those insipid things.<sup>17</sup>

Purohit often refers to his personal experiences when interpreting Patañjali's sutras.<sup>18</sup> However, while Purohit's commentary is often fascinating by virtue of his personal testimony, his contact with the dying yogin's reality—as conceptualized by Patañjali—does not seem adequate. In particular, he seems to maintain a certain monistic type of metaphysics, incompatible with Patañjali's dualism. His statements are sometimes ambiguous. Thus, for example, his assertions that yoga “joins the personal Self and the impersonal Self,” and that “when the three qualities of mind, purity, passion, ignorance, are controlled, the two Selves are yoked,”<sup>19</sup> are characteristically eclectic and inaccurate.

Another Ultimate Insider, Paramahansa Yogananda, considers yoga phenomena to be extensions of nature, and makes use of science to corroborate and support the truths manifested in his own life as a yogin. Although Paramahansa Yogananda does not refer extensively to the *Yogasūtra*, his *Autobiography of a Yogi* is a rumination on the viability and meaning of yogic experiences. Yogananda is an Ultimate Insider, in that he sees the world exclusively through a believer's eyes, relating—for example—with total belief his control over children's kites<sup>20</sup> and his tacit denial of real suffering in the world, a denial made possible by the theory of the relativity of consciousness.<sup>21</sup> Yogananda seems to deny any discontinuity between the normal world and the yoga universe. He looks upon yogic experiences as extensions of ordinary ones where, for the enlightened yogin, suffering disappears.

In this regard, Yogananda tells in detail a personal episode from the time of the First World War:

In 1915, shortly after I had entered the Swami Order, I witnessed a strange vision. Through it I came to understand the relativity of human consciousness, and clearly perceived the unity of the Eternal Light behind the painful dualities of *māyā*. The vision descended on me as I sat one morning in my little attic room in Father's Garpar Road home. For months the First World War had been raging in Europe; I had been reflecting sadly on the vast toll of death (p. 317).

Yogananda continues and tells his story of the dead captain into whose body his consciousness had entered.<sup>22</sup> Then, back in his room, apparently alive and totally confused, he asks the Lord: “Am I dead or alive?” And the answer is given:

A dazzling play of light filled the whole horizon. A soft rumbling vibration formed itself into words: “What has life or death to do with light? In the image of My light I have made you. The relativities of life and death belong to the cosmic dream. Behold your dreamless being! Awake, My child, awake!” (p. 317)

Yogananda integrates this paranormal occurrence with Western science through the notion of light: “With a few equational strokes of his pen, Einstein banished from the universe every fixed reality except that of light” (p. 316). The identification of light as the sole reality provides the yogin’s opportunity: “A master is able to employ his divine knowledge of light phenomena to project instantly into perceptible manifestation the ubiquitous light atoms. The actual form of the projection (whatever it be: a tree, a medicine, a human body) is determined by the yogi’s wish and by his power of will and of visualisation” (p. 316). “[A] yogi rearranges the light atoms of the universe to satisfy any sincere prayer of a devotee” (p. 317). Sympathy for science is associated by Yogananda with the ideal of mastery over nature: “For this purpose were man and creation made: that he should rise up as master of *māyā*, knowing his dominion over the cosmos” (p. 317). Science is viewed as fully compatible with Hinduism: “Twentieth-century science is thus sounding like a page from the hoary Vedas.”<sup>23</sup>

A disturbing question comes to mind at this point: Why don’t the masters of yoga rearrange light atoms in a more satisfactory way?

I. K. Taimni, one of the leading commentators on Pātañjala-Yoga in our age, is also an Ultimate Insider, though much different from Purohit and Yogananda in style and character. Taimni does not speak of personal experiences as they do, but is fully committed to the scientific viability of the *Yogasūtra* as well as to its spiritual value. In his book *The Science of Yoga* he refers to yoga as “the Science of sciences.”<sup>24</sup> He explains the value of integrating yoga with science:

The philosophy of *Yoga* deals with some of the greatest mysteries of life and the Universe and so it must inevitably be associated with an atmosphere of profound mystery. But much of the obscurity of *Yogic* literature is due, not to the intrinsic profundity of the subject, but to the lack of correlation between its teachings and the facts with which an ordinary educated man is expected to be familiar. If the

doctrines of *Yoga* are studied in the light of both ancient and modern thought it is much easier for the student to understand and appreciate them. The discoveries made in the field of Science are especially helpful in enabling the student to understand certain facts of *Yogic* life, for there is a certain analogous relationship between the laws of higher life and life as it exists on the physical plane, a relationship which is hinted at in the well-known Occult maxim, “As above, so below.”<sup>25</sup>

Trying to explain yoga—like Yogananda and Taimni—as extension of the laws of nature, S. Radhakrishnan is an exemplary Universal Philosopher. Yet he is no devotee or Ultimate Insider, and he is conspicuously open to Western culture and values. Radhakrishnan is very learned, and in addition to the commentators of classical yoga—such as Vyāsa, Vācaspati, Bhoja—he discusses Plato, Lao Tse, Tennyson, Plotinus, Schelling, and others. Abstract philosophy is, to him, the “inmost being” of yoga. Other elements—practice, *siddhi* experiences—are irrelevant.<sup>26</sup> In general, Radhakrishnan is not very interested in the yogin’s reality. His interests are primarily textual; in his series of four lectures (*East and West*) he does not mention yoga at all.

As an illustration of the central concept of the *Yogasūtra* tradition—*samādhi*—Radhakrishnan offers Tennyson’s beautiful account of his experience:

A kind of waking trance I have often had, quite from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently, till all at once, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individual itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being; and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest and the surest of the surest, the weirdest of weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming not extinction, but the only true life.<sup>27</sup>

But such remarkable reports of mystical experiences are insufficient to endear yoga to Radhakrishnan. He seems to suspect yoga with respect to family values and morality:

The goal of *jīva* is detachment and independence. It is not compatible with the human relationships of family life, society, etc., and accordingly the Yoga is said to be an unethical system. Ethical considerations cannot have any place in a system that aims at the breaking of all bonds connecting the individual to the world.<sup>28</sup>

According to Radhakrishnan, Pātañjala-Yoga is inherently incoherent. There is in yoga “low naturalism” as well as “high idealism,”<sup>29</sup> and consequently yoga is confused:

The system did not feel prepared to cut off all connection with its surroundings and so incorporated elements which did not belong to its inmost being.<sup>30</sup>

Here the “inmost being” is the philosophy, while attendant elements are deemed lowly, unworthy, and are dismissed: “The habit of drug intoxication prevalent in primitive tribes was mixed up with the higher mysticism of the Yoga.”<sup>31</sup> The Universal Philosopher is thus fortunate in knowing the difference between genuine and specious spirituality:

There is such a thing as unconscious suggestion from the environment, and so the Yoga exhibits features determined by the conditions of the age in which it arose. But it is easy for us to separate these secondary accidental characteristics from the primary and the integral. The *Yogasūtra* does not take any further notice of drugs and spells, thus suggesting its considered conviction that the signs and wonders which the uncultured seek after, even if well authenticated, possess no spiritual value.<sup>32</sup>

While “less universal” than Radhakrishnan, S. N. Dasgupta is also a philosopher who considers the abstract contents of the *Yogasūtra* his main interest.

The philosophical, psychological, cosmological, ethical and religious doctrines, as well as its doctrines regarding matter and change, are extremely interesting in themselves, and have a definitely assured place in the history of the progress of human thought; and, for a right understanding of the essential features of the higher thoughts of India, their knowledge is indispensable.<sup>33</sup>

Many are the Seekers inspired by the *Yogasūtra*. They want radical, existential, metaphysical change. The *Yogasūtra* is indeed a description of a yoga universe drastically different from the normal one. However, it is virtually inaccessible. None of the commentators—Seekers, Mere Philologists, Ultimate Insiders—has ever reached the yoga universe and lived there. Even a person such as Rajneesh, who pours so many compliments on Patañjali—particularly in terms of his *realistic and effective* teaching—cannot be said to have reached yogic death (*samādhi*) and the yoga universe. This is the sunless world of the emaciated yogin’s innerness, which—most probably—even



Patañjali did not actually visit. For Patañjali only met with dying yogins, and was not—as this Observers’ Observer notes—one of them.<sup>34</sup>

Actually being one of them is ostensibly the goal of the Romantic Seeker, who diagnoses life as unsatisfactory, conditioned, repetitive, or disenchanting. Heinrich Zimmer seems tired of the “virtuous fulfillment of the tasks of the decent, normal, human career (*dharmā*).” Once such normal life becomes “stale routine,” “there remains, still, the lure of the spiritual adventure.”<sup>35</sup>

It is likely that Zimmer speaks from his heart when he suggests that our life (in *saṃsāra*, apparently) is “an intolerable bore,” and hence the “possibility of discovering the secret of the workings of the cosmic theater itself . . . remains as the final fascination, challenge and adventure of the human mind” (p. 284). The romantic air is enhanced as Zimmer refers to the inner person revealed by yoga. “Yoga, however, stills the mind. And the moment this quieting is accomplished, the inner man, the life-monad, stands revealed—like a jewel at the bottom of a quieted pond” (p. 285).<sup>36</sup>

But who is this “inner man,” the jewel at the bottom of the pond? He is apparently the puruṣa, the infinitely passive, motionless, unseen and pure subject, dissociated from any trace of objectivity, not even thinking or feeling. Is this state the desired release from intolerably boring life?

Missing in Zimmer’s narrative of yoga is a more sober, less romantic, account of Patañjali’s metaphysics as well as a realistic appraisal of the yogin’s terrible choice. This is not an escape from the “intolerable bore” of the “cosmic theater.” It is the creation of awful inner density, gained by the harshest of disciplines.

Though less personal and somewhat more scholarly than Zimmer, M. Eliade is also a Romantic Seeker. While sounding scientific, there are strong notes of romantic search in his writing. In his introduction to *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, Eliade contemplates the particular compatibility of our time with the core of Indian spirituality:

The problem of the human condition—that is, the temporality and historicity of the human being—is at the very center of Western thought, and the same problem has preoccupied Indian philosophy from its beginnings. . . . What modern Western philosophy terms “being situated,” “being constituted by temporality and historicity,” has its counterpart, in Indian philosophy, in ‘existence in *māyā*.’<sup>37</sup>

Thus Eliade describes the development of different disciplines, sciences, and moods in the West, which he wisely correlates with certain approaches to India. He then articulates the particular correspondence of Western interest in the “conditioning of man” with Indian spirituality: “From the Upanishads onward, India has been seriously preoccupied with but one great problem—

the structure of the human condition” (p. xvi). Obviously, Eliade’s main interest is in the “human condition” (for the sake of its transcendence). He is keenly interested in “deconditioning” and “freedom,” interests which he allegedly shares with fellow Westerners as well as with spiritual India. According to Eliade’s description of the East-West hermeneutic situation, he himself exemplifies the very situation he describes. However, for a happy correspondence between Western mood (or receptivity) and Indian message, the description of spiritual India must be independent of Western interests. This is seemingly the scholarly ideal. But is this possible? A certain sense of circularity, mirroring and cultural colonialism becomes more perceptible as one heeds these generalizations about India’s “one great problem.” It is likely that India also had other interests and problems “from the Upanishads on.” The gap between Eliade and Patañjali is closed at a price—the elision of the yogin’s otherness. The encounter with yogic death (*samādhi*)—a starkly dark and unfamiliar condition—becomes a somewhat familiar, promising, and even comfortable condition, compatible with the seeker’s needs and fulfillment. For Eliade is a resolute Romantic Seeker in quest of “indescribable freedom,” “absolute freedom,” “immortality,” and so forth.

In addition to conditioning and deconditioning, Eliade seems to have other interests and motives which affect his exposition of yoga. Eliade starts his *Patañjali and Yoga* with the story of an unworthy Indian fakir by the name of Haridas.

At about the middle of the nineteenth century Dr. J. M. Honigberger astonished the scholarly world with the story of a yogi called Haridas. In the presence of Maharajah Ranjit Singh and his court in Lahore, Haridas put himself into a state of catalepsy and was buried in a garden. For forty days a strict watch was kept over the tomb. When the yogi was exhumed, he was unconscious, cold and rigid. Hot compresses were placed on his head, he was rubbed, air was forced into his lungs in a kind of artificial respiration, and finally Haridas came back to life. (p. 3)

Why does Eliade tell this story? What is its relevance to his focus, and why does he give it primacy of place? Indeed, Eliade troubles to denigrate Haridas, expressing interest in this lowly man:

But the story of Haridas is significant for another reason too: His mastery of yoga in no way implied a spiritual superiority. Haridas was known, rather, as a man of loose morals. He finally fled with his wife and took refuge in the mountains. There he died and was duly buried according to the custom of the country. (p. 5)

Eliade then reveals his own conviction: “But obviously true yoga should not be confused with the possession of a fakir’s powers” (p. 5). There is evidently a puristic note in this statement; unusual experiences and “powers” are denounced so that pure, legitimate, worthy, absolute, indescribable freedom be possible. Indeed, Haridas’s story might subserve both ends; the purification and reality of absolute freedom.<sup>38</sup>

The most suggestive transition in Eliade’s narrative is that between Haridas’s story and the definition of yoga as a potent means for deconditioning and attaining absolute freedom. In *Patañjali and Yoga*, Eliade does not explicitly connect these two components. Does he tacitly suggest that absolute freedom does not entail freedom from conventional morality? Why begin with the curiosity of the buried fakir? The underlying theme of the fakir’s story is the reality of yogic phenomena. Indeed, in the course of his introduction to *Patañjali and Yoga*, Eliade reaches the point of subscribing to the reality of yoga. Eliade is fascinated by Haridas’s achievement, and he considers it the essence of liberation and yoga. Haridas is, seemingly, the *Jivan Mukta* who embodies in Eliade’s view the yogin par excellence.<sup>39</sup> But such a yogin does not *really* die but lives indefinitely in the body; thus his death is merely “anticipatory death,” “initiatory death,” followed—necessarily—by rebirth.

The Romantic Seeker is thus close to viewing yoga as actual abolition of the profane and effective constitution of the sacred. “For Yoga, the initiatory rebirth becomes the acquisition of immortality and freedom.”<sup>40</sup> However, Haridas’s disappointing end reflects a tension in the scholarly, Romantic Seeker’s mind. Eliade seems undecided about the precise modality of yogic death, immortality, and freedom; towards the end of his—most valuable and informative—book, he sees yoga as essentially and paradoxically involved with “magic” and “mysticism.”<sup>41</sup> Is yoga then a real promise of redeeming transformation (from the impure, profane plane onto the sacred) or a road to unfulfilled aspiration for immortality and freedom? Eliade ends the main body of his most important book with a clearly undecided note of doubt: “Everything depends upon what is meant by freedom.”<sup>42</sup> Unable to resolve ambivalence and ambiguity, Eliade remains with empty freedom and ambiguous immortality.

W. B. Yeats is more aware than Eliade of his own position as a Romantic Seeker: “I come in my turn, no grammarian, but a man engaged in that endless research into life, death, God, that is every man’s reverie.”<sup>43</sup> Yeats identifies himself as different from philologists and other scholars; “I want to hear the talk of those naked men, and I am certain they never said ‘The subliminal impression produced this (super repetitive balanced state)’ nor talked of ‘predicate relations’” (pp. 11–12). Yeats sees in Patañjali a man who “unlike Buddha turned from ordinary men; he sought truth not by the

logic or the moral precepts that draw the crowd, but by methods of meditation and contemplation that purify the soul. The truth cannot be found by argument, the soul itself is truth, it is that Self praised by Yadhnyawalkya which is all Selves” (p. 15). Though an avowedly nonscholarly (“romantic”) seeker, Yeats advances his own scholarly ideas about the development and history of Indian spirituality: “The school of Yadhnyawalkya and its historical preparation replaced the trance of the soma drinkers (I think of the mescal of certain Mexican tribes), or that induced by beaten drums, or by ceremonial dancing before the image of a god, by a science that seems to me as reasonable as it must have seemed to its first discoverer” (p. 15).

Yeats shares the diagnosis of yogic trance with the Complacent Outsider, but he has his own evaluation of the facts: “Through states analogous to self-induced hypnotic sleep the devotee attains a final state of complete wakefulness called, now conscious *samadhi*, now *Tureeya*, where the soul, purified of all that is not itself, comes into the possession of its own timelessness” (p. 15).

Similarly, R. Mehta and Bhagavan Rajneesh are Stimulated Seekers; they express in their own way the dissolution of the yogin’s otherness and thus the banalization of yogic death and Patañjali’s enterprise. The *Yogasūtra* is a stimulus which enables Seekers such as Mehta and Rajneesh to elaborate on ideas and themes already present and well-established in their intellectual and spiritual lives. R. Mehta is an original thinker. His interpretations of many of Patañjali’s sutras are notably different from more traditional or conventional commentaries. Although he seems to pay homage to tradition, with impeccable punctuation of the sutras, Mehta does not consult in his book (*Yoga; the Art of Integration*) any of the Classical Scholars such as Vyāsa or Vācaspati. His commentary is always original and independent of the overt meanings of Patañjali and tradition. Thus, for example, commenting on YS 2.45,<sup>44</sup> Mehta interprets *Īśvara-praṇidhāna* (“surrender unto *Īśvara*”) as “right orientation”, *Īśvara* being “Reality.” “To contemplate is to view with a totality of attention. *Īśvara-praṇidhāna* or right orientation enables a spiritual aspirant to look at everything with total attention” (p. 182). Thus, *tapas* is “simplification,” the removal of unnecessary adornments. Mehta often recognizes his deviation from the conventional meaning of words; “*brahmacārya* is commonly translated as celibacy, but this is not its real meaning. It really means the cessation of the frittering away of one’s energies. One’s energy is frittered away through resistance and indulgence” (p. 167). “Non-possessiveness indicates the rendering of the mind completely homeless” (p. 170). “*Saṁtoṣa* is usually translated as contentment, but its real meaning is self-containment” (p. 177). “The word *antardhāna* appearing in this sutra is translated generally as being physically invisible. To regard this sutra as indicating

a state of physical invisibility would be to interpret it in a very superficial sense” (p. 321).

Mehta’s constant deviation from traditional and conventional interpretation of Patañjali’s sutras signifies originality and independence of thought as well as lack of openness to the other’s import. Indeed, Mehta seems to exclude the other’s existence from that very reality whose heightened contact he so relentlessly advocates.

Similarly to R. Mehta, Bhagavan Rajneesh desires (and educates for) intense openness to reality. Unlike Mehta, he emphasizes Patañjali’s character as a great scientist:

Yoga is pure science, and Patañjali is the greatest name as far as the world of yoga is concerned. This man is rare. There is no other name comparable to Patañjali. For the first time in the history of humanity, this man brought religion to the state of science: he made religion a science, bare laws; no belief is needed.<sup>45</sup>

Rajneesh himself is an Existential Seeker rather than a scientist. His voice is religious, seeking transformation, the abolition of mind and normal existence:

A total frustration is needed—the revelation that this mind which projects is futile, the mind that hopes is nonsense, it leads nowhere. It simply closes your eyes; it intoxicates you; it never allows reality to be revealed to you. It projects you against reality. The mind is a drug. (p. 5)

The Seekers’ identity, ideology, and interests often becloud certain aspects of importance in the *Yogasūtra*. Thus many Seekers disregard Patañjali’s status as a Sāṅkhya philosopher. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood are modern Vedāntins who collaborated in the translation of and commentary on the *Yogasūtra*, disregarding the actual metaphysics contained therein. In their book *How to Know God*, they address the difference between Patañjali’s convictions and their own. They justify their values and mode of commentary by asserting the reader’s welfare as well as the insignificance of metaphysical differences:

Since yoga, prior to Patañjali, was originally grounded in Vedānta philosophy, we have interpreted the aphorisms, throughout, from a Vedāntist viewpoint. In this we differ from Patañjali himself, who was a follower of Sāṅkhya philosophy. But these are merely technical

differences, and it is best not to insist on them too strongly, lest the reader become confused.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, for Seekers like Isherwood and Prabhavananda, Patañjali's otherness as a Sāṅkhya philosopher is explicitly avoided; they superimpose on the *Yogasūtra* their own (Vedāntist) position: "but Prakṛiti is not the ultimate Reality. Behind Prakṛiti is Brahman."<sup>47</sup> They seem to accord primacy to their educational goal, claiming that "the majority of Western psychotherapists do not, as yet, recognize the existence of the Atman, the Godhead within man; and do not, therefore, attempt to help their patients achieve the union of perfect yoga."<sup>48</sup>

At the other extreme of temperament and orientation is the Mere Philologist. James Hawthorn Woods's *The Yoga-System of Patañjali* has received much attention as the epitome of scholarship on the *Yogasūtra*.<sup>49</sup> Woods's interests are patently textual and scholarly, and he avoids any reference to the reality of yoga. Woods refers to the "historical importance" of the yoga texts as "forming a bridge between the philosophy of ancient India and the fully developed Indian Buddhism and the religious thought of today in eastern Asia."<sup>50</sup> Scholarly interest—this historical importance—"emboldens one to the attempt" at exegesis (p. ix). Woods further expounds on the nature of Pātañjala-Yoga as "a bridge": "For this system, together with the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems, when grafted upon the simple practical exhortations of primitive Buddhism, serves as an introduction to the logical and metaphysical masterpieces of the Mahāyāna" (p. ix). Woods is the ultimate Mere Philologist. After a brief reference to his "reasons for taking up the work," his preface addresses "difficulties of comprehending the work," "difficulties of style," "translation of technical terms," "punctuation," and "texts and manuscripts."

The narrative of Woods's introduction focuses on the authorship of the *Yogasūtra*, the "tradition of identity of two Patañjalis," the date of the *Yogasūtra* and the main commentaries. This narrative does not contain a single statement about the *contents* of the *Yogasūtra*. The Mere Philologist's most intimate reference to the reality of the yogin's experience is expressed in his "translation of technical terms," when he confesses to a difficulty in translating the concept of *prasaṅkhyāna*: "I have weakly consented to use 'Elevation' as equivalent to *prasaṅkhyāna*; the original word denotes the culmination of a series of concentrations; the result is the merging of the Self in the object of contemplation."<sup>51</sup> This last statement—quite standard in descriptions of yoga—is the boldest gesture of the Mere Philologist towards the bodily yogins who dimly provide a certain manifestation of *prasaṅkhyāna* and "merging of the Self."

Woods sees Pātañjala-Yoga as a "system" rather than a way of life or reality, not a drama of the human spirit but a mode which resists translation

and acculturation. In his view, “a system whose subtleties are not those of Western philosophers suffers disastrously when its characteristic concepts are compelled to masquerade under assumed names, fit enough for our linguistic habits, but threadbare even for us by reason of frequent transpositions” (p. x).

Totally different from the Mere Philologist—in his interests, language, and mode of disregarding the other’s otherness—is the Bodily Practitioner. B. K. S. Iyengar is one of the leading contemporary teachers of Haṭha yoga. He is well-known as a tough and exacting teacher of *āsana* (posture) as well as a commentator on the *Yogasūtra*. Iyengar’s absorption in the performance of *āsanas* provides him with an intellectual opportunity in the interpretation of life and Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra*. “By studying in depth the performance of *āsana*, I have shown how, even by performing one *āsana*, the entire human system can be integrated.”<sup>52</sup> Iyengar is thus a holistic Bodily Practitioner, and accordingly he criticizes current trends in the dismembering of yoga: “Yet we unnecessarily disintegrate yoga, which, by definition, is an integral subject, when we call it physical yoga, mental yoga, spiritual yoga, *jñāna*-yoga, *bhakti*-yoga, *kuṇḍalini*-yoga, *siddha*-yoga, and so on. It is very unfortunate. Why do we demarcate and divide that which unites each individual from the body to the soul?” (p. 68). Describing the road from *āsana* to *samādhi*, Iyengar sometimes sounds like an Upanishadic sage: “And yet we say that the end of yoga is to forget the body and to forget the mind. As the essence of the tree is hidden in the seed, so the essence of the tree of man is hidden in the seed of the soul. You cannot see the tree in the seed, and you cannot see the self in the innermost seat of the soul” (p. 69).<sup>53</sup> Iyengar the Bodily Practitioner is also an Existential Seeker. “I don’t want yesterday’s experience. I want to see what new understanding may come in addition to what I had felt up to now. In this quest, my body is my bow, my intelligence is my arrow, and my target is my self” (p. 69).<sup>54</sup>

Among the various commentators, interpreters, and seekers of yoga, Iyengar is the only one who is “a yogin.” The others—Romantic and Existential Seekers, Universal Philosophers, Mere Philologists, Ultimate Insiders, and Complacent Outsiders, are all beyond the ken of actual yoga. Yoga has been Iyengar’s preoccupation for his entire life. Practice and teaching for over sixty years have resulted in a well-established perspective on life and yoga, a perspective centered on the value and potency of yogic postures. These postures—to which Patañjali refers as the third limb of *aṣṭāṅga* yoga—are for Iyengar the roots of the tree of yoga. “All the eight limbs of yoga have their place within the practice of *āsana*.”<sup>55</sup>

Sometimes Iyengar interprets his experience with *āsana* in a genuinely interesting way, making new connections among the various practices and insights of yoga:

Suppose that in performing an *āsana* you are stretching more on the right side and less on the left. An unethical state is setting into your body. There is violence on the right side where you are stretching more, and the left side, where the stretch is less, appears to be non-violent. On the right side you are being violent because you are saying, “Do as much as you can! Stretch as much as you can!” It is a deliberate violence because you are overstretching. On the left side, where you are not stretching so much, maybe you have the idea that you are not being violent. But an intelligent practitioner of yoga observes that at the same time as he is consciously doing violence on one side, he is also doing violence on the other. . . . One side thus manifests deliberate violence, and the other side non-deliberate violence (p. 48).

Iyengar elaborates and connects other *yamas* with the “root of the tree of yoga”—the *āsana*:

When the right and the left are integrated, there is truth, which is the second principle of *yama*. You need not observe truth—you are already in truth, but you are not escaping by failing to perform on the weaker side. And where there is total stretch in the *āsana*, there is a tremendous understanding and communication between the five sheaths of the body from the physical and from the spiritual and from the spiritual towards the physical. (p. 49)

However, to this Observers’ Observer the practice and experience of *āsana* do not seem sufficiently powerful as an integrating principle of the yoga universe as a whole. Iyengar’s definitions of the various “limbs of yoga” reveal obvious deviations from meanings accepted by Patañjali. Let us take as an example Iyengar’s definition of *samādhi*. In accordance with his experience with *āsana*, Iyengar reaches an original definition of *samādhi*: “Diffusing the soul into each and every part of the body is *samādhi* ” (p. 69). This statement seems to be an expression of an experience of “wholeness,” most probably an important and real experience of Iyengar. It is, however, remarkably different from Patañjali’s conceptualization of *samādhi*;<sup>56</sup> according to the *Yogasūtra*, *samādhi* is essentially a condition in which the distinction between consciousness and object disappears. It is not impossible that certain of the Bodily Practitioner’s experiences correspond with loss of boundaries between “subject” and “object.” However, Iyengar’s definition of *samādhi* seems particularly compatible with *āsana*-practice, and somewhat removed from yogic death and utter innerness as these are expressed in the *Yogasūtra*.



Thus Iyengar disposes of the other's otherness in his own way. His creative acquaintance with the culture and concomitant experiences of yogic postures makes him see certain meanings and connections. These are often interesting and important; yet, the Bodily Practitioner's perspective reflects his own being, similarly to the other characters who approach the *Yogasūtra*.

Indeed, silence, when approached, is alarming, makes extraordinary attending demands and is easily distorted. The Seekers, Philosophers, Outsiders, Insiders, and Mere Philologists preserve their identity and essence of their life experience. Approaching the silent yogin, they are thus unable to hear and attend to the nature and meaning of his or her silence.

This auditory deficiency is shared by the Classical Scholars. The Classical Scholars—Vyāsa, Vācaspati, King Bhoja, the author of the *Vivaraṇa*, Vijñānabhikṣu—are essentially Mere Philologists. Crucially, they never address the truth value of statements in the *Yogasūtra*. They do not consider observation and experience as major sources of interpretation and they avoid discussion among themselves when strictly practical or experiential topics are the issue.<sup>57</sup>

While eluding our perception, the yogin's life is harsh and wonderful. He knows the pain of separation from "satisfaction," human warmth, and "pleasure."<sup>58</sup> He is also familiar with exceptional experiences, power, control, and unusual insights. The yogin's loneliness, the excruciating discipline of yoga—the yogin's engagement with potent postures, control of breathing, meditation, altered states of consciousness and, in general, the near-death condition—create yoga experience. This is inaccessible and incredible for most people and hence to most scholars.

We Scientists, Seekers, Bodily Practitioners, Outsiders, Philosophers, Observers' Observers, and Mere Philologists are doomed, of course, to a shadowy reflection of essentially foreign territory. Most likely, we will never breathe the crisp air of pleasure-free contact with "objects." We shall not experience total sense deprivation, and our minds will always be hopelessly beclouded by the "veils," conditioned by and consisting of primordial tendencies such as the *gunas* of passion and sloth. We shall probably not even sit stably and comfortably in an *āsana* position, clean-minded, endowed with readiness (*yogyatā*) for meditation. Above all, yogic unconsciousness, yogic death (*samādhi*) and disembodiment, along with its accompanying experiences (the *siddhis*), are beyond our reach. We will not savor this dense and soothing darkness, the yogin's promising, liberating death. And—consequently—we will not reach the miraculous, substantial dreaming available to one who has crossed the frontier into innerness. Thus our contact with yoga is substantially impaired, insufficient even with respect to the more overt, explicit dimensions of the tradition of yoga.

We—Seekers, Practitioners, Scientists, Observers—do feel, however, the reality behind some of the traditional classifications made by scholars of yoga. We have some glimpses into the hierarchy of levels (*bhūmi*) of concentration, awareness, and being. We too have our better and worse moments. We share with the yogin a certain yearning for freedom, transparency, and vision. Thus it is possible to sense some “reality,” “an occasion for meaning,” a distant echo of “experience.” But lacking the excruciating yogic discipline and practice, it is unlikely that we can ever transcend the human condition and have more than a marginal share in the outstanding existence in yoga. Yoga experience is and has been necessarily remote, shared by very few.

By virtue of his observation of these colleagues, the Observers’ Observer is aware of the difficulty involved in interpreting the *Yogasūtra*. He or she perceives the insurmountable gap between the dying yogin’s ultimate silence and the philosopher’s (Patañjali’s) eloquent speech. While Patañjali’s is an immensely significant attempt at closing the abysmal difference of being which lies between himself and the silent yogin, the Seekers, Philosophers, Classical Scholars, Outsiders, and Insiders do not attain the connective and integrative quality of the *Yogasūtra*. In fact, the characters approaching the *Yogasūtra* reenact Patañjali’s primary—though instructive—failure (to close the gap of otherness with the silent yogin). For Patañjali—a Sāṅkhya philosopher—also wanted to live on and on.

Unlike his colleagues, the Observers’ Observer greatly values experience. Yoga experience is the least accessible dimension of the yoga universe, the least intelligible dimension of the dying yogin’s life. The other dimensions—attitude, metaphysics, practice—are more available for thought and understanding. Among the various characters pursuing the *Yogasūtra*, the Philosopher is interested in metaphysics and attitude; the Bodily Practitioner finds meaning in moving from practice to metaphysics; the Seeker looks for means of transcendence through metaphysics and attitude; the Classical Scholar emphasizes the coherence of metaphysics; they all consider the *siddhis* embarrassing.

Unable to have any existence in yoga ourselves, we depend heavily upon Patanjali’s verbal expression of the yogin’s experience and mental culture. Thus we reach out for some understanding of the *Yogasūtra*. Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* is an integrative reflection on yogic life, experience, and practice, on the yoga universe as a whole. The *Yogasūtra* is a unity, not only in its coherence, but also in its expression of an organically whole reality. It is a philosophical work, wondering at the yogin’s dense and unbearable silence and the remarkable, extraordinary experiences of yogins who crossed the boundary between life and “after life.” Accounting for the yogin’s experiences makes sense of the relationship of practice, attitude, experience, and (metaphysical) interpretation. Thus the *Yogasūtra* is an attempt to make sense

of “life-in-yoga” as a whole. Underlying Patañjali’s project is the conviction that the yoga universe, steeped in silence, is valuable as a genuine alternative mode of being, a way to knowledge and liberation; its study, then, is not a world of vicarious fantasy.

The *Yogasūtra* teaches a way of transcendence, culminating in dissociation from externality, and thus crossing the boundary between normal consciousness into dark silence and otherness. It is, indeed, a crisis. In total darkness, practically disembodied, the person experiences an unfamiliar, different “reality.” At this point the reality of yoga experience becomes apparent. Many unusual experiences occur; levitation, extraordinary feats of memory, entering into others’ bodies, unnaturally powerful perceptions of remote and subtle objects, invisibility, telepathy, precognition, understanding animal sounds. These are the *siddhis*, the unusual experiences carefully listed and detailed—and explained, one by one—by Patañjali. These experiences are an integral aspect of the organic whole of yoga. The *Yogasūtra* is a unity, both coherent and referring to an organic whole of some reality, and yoga-experiences are necessary symptoms and unifications of the universe of yoga. Without these unusual experiences the description of yogic practice, attitude, and Sāṅkhya interpretation would lack an essential aspect.

The *Yogasūtra* contains implied metaphysical principles, such as in the following statements: pure subjectivity becomes colored by mind activities;<sup>59</sup> when mind activities cease, subjectivity rests on its own.<sup>60</sup> *Īśvara* is a particular subject, unaffected by karma and *kleśa*,<sup>61</sup> and so on. Such propositions must have emerged after a long process of reflection. They do not have the biting immediacy of proximity to the yogin’s experience. At the other pole of the continuum of expression there are propositions such as: immeasurable happiness comes from the practice of yogic contentment;<sup>62</sup> meditation on the boundaries of body and space produces an experience of unusual lightness and movement in the air;<sup>63</sup> yogic meditation on the bottom of the throat brings about the cessation of hunger and thirst;<sup>64</sup> meditation on the shape of the body brings about the experience of invisibility;<sup>65</sup> meditating on karma as faster or slower to ripen brings about knowledge of the time of death and exit (from the body);<sup>66</sup> there is an experience of the mind entering another’s body,<sup>67</sup> of divine hearing (*divyaṃ śrotam*),<sup>68</sup> and so on. If we consider the class of sutras which are closest to the immediacy of yogic experience, we observe that yoga experience is communicated most directly through the doctrine of the “unusual experiences,” the *siddhis*; and these constitute the essence of the yogin’s otherness, the most foreign dimension of the yoga universe.

Though essential to the structure of the *Yogasūtra*, within the elite culture of commentators and scholars, Seekers, Practitioners, Philologists, and Philosophers, this inaccessible progeny of yoga and thus yogic experience

itself has been denigrated as unworthy, spiritually inferior, dissociated from Vedic culture, even foreign to the essence of yoga. Classical commentators tended to view the *siddhis* as marginal epiphenomena on the yogin's road to liberation. Vyāsa suggests that yogic meditation (*saṁyama*) is practiced for the sake of the "desired objects."<sup>69</sup> Yogins whose minds are open to the world (*vyutthita-citta*)—and pursue the *siddhis*—are inferior to the more superior, "recollected ones" (*samāhita-citta*).<sup>70</sup> The *siddhis*, if useful at all, are "signs" (*sūcaka*) of the yogin's progress.<sup>71</sup> Vācaspati elaborates on this point and says that as the yogin produces certain *siddhis*, he knows what he has already accomplished and what remains to be done.<sup>72</sup> Vijñānabhikṣu distinguishes between the yogin who desires powers (*vibhūti-kāma*) and the one who desires liberation (*mumukṣu*).<sup>73</sup>

Most modern commentators and scholars succumb to this "language of power and desire" in their interpretation of the *siddhis*.<sup>74</sup> Their denigration and rejection of the *siddhis* is much harsher and more pronounced than that of their classical predecessors. Even scholars who are closer to understanding the *siddhis* in terms of "experience" consider them totally insignificant. The great Indologist M. Müller suggests that these supranormal attainments are "superstitions which have little claim on the attention of the philosopher, however interesting they may appear to the pathologist."<sup>75</sup> Müller is pained by the inclusion of the *siddhis* within Patañjali's outlook. He laments his own dealing with these unusual experiences, saying apologetically: "These matters (the *siddhis*), though trivial, could not be passed over, whether we accept them as mere hallucinations, to which, as we know, our senses and our thinking organ are liable, or whether we try to account for them in any other way. They form an essential part of the yoga philosophy."<sup>76</sup> He also says that the inclusion of the teaching of the *siddhis* in the elevated system of yoga, a system which establishes the sublime distinction between the pure subject (*purusha*) and the object (*prakṛiti*), suggests the possibility that the Patañjali who wrote the wonder-full section of the *Yogasūtra* and the Patañjali who composed the more serene parts of this text are not the same person.<sup>77</sup> In the same vein, though more emphatically, the 19th-century mystic Ramakrishna declared that "*siddhis* or miraculous powers are to be avoided like filth."<sup>78</sup> Al-Bīrūnī, the eleventh-century Muslim philosopher and traveler, warns against the appeal of the *siddhis* as an obstacle to liberation. The *siddhis* involve "a sort of self-aggrandizement and pride."<sup>79</sup> Ramana Maharshi suggests that "one should not accept thaumaturgic powers etc. even when directly offered to one, for they are like ropes to tether a beast and will sooner or later drag one down."<sup>80</sup> P.V. Kane also sounds apologetic about dealing with the *siddhis*, explaining his attention to them as a textual constraint: "From the fact that with most yogins the *siddhis* are an important part of the yoga doctrines and the fact that, out of 195 *sūtras* of the *Yogasūtra*, thirty-five (3.16-50) are

devoted to the description of the *siddhis*,<sup>81</sup> the present author is constrained to say that the *siddhis* are an integral part of yoga.<sup>82</sup> Another great Indologist, S. Radhakrishnan, suggests that power yoga infiltrated the yoga tradition by a “popular cult of magic.”<sup>83</sup> He offers his own explanation of the inclusion of yoga experiences in the *Yogasūtra* tradition, an explanation which represents Patañjali as a cunning manipulator: “The attractions of unlimited physical and intellectual power were perhaps employed to induce the worldly to take to the higher life. The foolish always seek after signs.”<sup>84</sup> S. Dasgupta, the great historian of Indian philosophy, sums up his treatment of the *siddhis* by saying that, apart from the contribution of the *siddhis* to the yogin’s faith, they “have no value.”<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, many scholars associate the *siddhis* with temptation and danger. Thus, for example, M. Eliade: “On the one hand, the ‘powers’ are inevitably acquired in the course of initiation, and, for that very reason, constitute valuable indications of the monk’s spiritual progress; on the other hand, they are doubly dangerous, since they tempt the monk with a vain ‘magical mastery of the world’ and, in addition, are likely to cause confusion in the minds of unbelievers.”<sup>86</sup>

P. T. Raju also uses the concept of temptation in his understanding of the *siddhis*. “Patañjali advises the yogi, if he is intent on final liberation, not to be tempted by those powers. To be tempted by them is to be attached to them; and to be attached to them is to be lost in them without rising higher.”<sup>87</sup> A. Danielou perceives greater danger here, viewing the ‘temptation’ that Eliade sees in the *siddhis* as a grave impediment. He includes a description of 38 *siddhis* in his book on yoga. “These attainments are the greatest obstacles of the adept in his journey towards reintegration. Nature herself, in a final effort to keep the adept within her bonds yields him magic powers; if he uses them for any worldly end, he is apt to fall back into the arms of worldly enjoyments. All true seekers, therefore, are careful not to perform miracles except in very special circumstances.”<sup>88</sup>

J. Varenne also warns of the dangerous potential of the utter significance of the *siddhis* in yoga. “Needless to say, there can be no question of the true yogi’s indulging indiscriminately in the use of such superhuman powers. If he did, he would simply be proving that he has not succeeded in annihilating desire within himself, showing that he is still a long way from attaining liberation.”<sup>89</sup> K. Kloistermaier’s reference to the reality of the *siddhis* along with his conception of the nature of *samādhi* are typical of the attitude of power yoga negation:

More than anything else those *vibhūtis* have been described and dreamed about in literature about Indian yogis. Biographies and autobiographies of yogis are full of reports about achievements following

the line of the *Yogasūtras*. In actual Indian life one hardly ever encounters any miracles of this sort. Living for two years in a place where thousands of holy men and women dwelled and where countless rumors of such things circulated, I never witnessed a single incidence corresponding to this idea of the miraculous.<sup>90</sup>

J. Ghosh seems somewhat embarrassed by the *siddhis*, expressing his own linear view of human progress by apologizing for them: “If, however, we bear in mind that science was in its infancy when this system was developed, and that the yogi never set much store by these results, but regarded them as so many obstacles to spiritual progress, we would not let the weakness of the illustrations affect our judgement on the soundness of his main contention.”<sup>91</sup> While conceding that supranormal powers “may be possible,” S. Chatterjee and D. Datta caution that “the yoga system warns all religious aspirants not to practise yoga with these ends in view. Yoga is for the attainment of liberation. The yogin must not be entangled in the quagmire of supernormal powers. He must overcome the lure of yogic powers and move onward till he comes to the end of journey, viz. liberation.”<sup>92</sup>

As we have seen, this view of the *siddhis* as an obstacle is shared by many. J. Filliozat is one of the most sympathetic interpreters of yoga and yoga experiences. He strives to confirm the reality of the *siddhis* while at the same time negating their value. “The powers of action are the least important. Their pursuit is considered rather as a hindrance to an integral realisation of yoga. That is why they are presented as potential: the yogin feels their presence in him without feeling a need to exercise them. What is indisputable is that the yogin must not be attached to them, otherwise he would be unfaithful to his initial intention of keeping out all feeling of appropriation.”<sup>93</sup>

Along with the yogic silence of *samādhi*—conceptualized by Patañjali as the ground from which unusual experiences sprout—the *siddhis* are the epitome of the otherness of yoga. They are also the most intimate unifications of the yoga universe, reflecting the autonomy and essence of the dying yogin’s world; as the immediate and concrete manifestations of *samādhi*, the *siddhis* are extremely unfamiliar, the essence of otherness for the many who attempt interpretation of the *Yogasūtra*. However, Patañjali conceived of them as ultimately real.<sup>94</sup> The yogin’s intense, “absolute” silence, together with the unusual experiences available therein, constitute the hard core of his otherness. Patañjali’s description of yoga as an organic whole is interpreted here as an account of the yogin’s near-death silence and its products. However, Patañjali the Sāṅkhya philosopher is but another character approaching the yogin’s otherness, seeing in him a mirror of his own Sāṅkhya identity.

The Outsider, Insider, Philologist, Philosopher, Bodily Practitioner, and Seeker—a range of humanity—are represented above as failing in their approach to the *Yogasūtra*, as they succeed in their wish to live on and on. Patañjali's success in the representation of the yogin's silence and experience is partial at best, since he succeeds in preserving his mode of life as a philosopher, a Sāṅkhya thinker. The question that may be asked, then, is why the quest for the yogin's otherness if the end result is mirroring? Would the best and most courageous minds—often experimental in their nature—pursue stark otherness for narcissistic reflection, refraction, and satisfaction? This is unlikely.

A more likely hypothesis would be the essential identity of the yogin's otherness with one's innermost being. Such identity—if true—would powerfully attract all creatures capable of consciousness. *Tapas* and renunciation do provide a certain opportunity for freedom; perhaps such yogic freedom and death are connected with “being oneself.” In this case, Patañjali's failure in the primary encounter with the dying yogin, as well as his numerous followers' secondary vicarious reenactments of meeting with the other, are not necessarily uninformative.