

## ĀGAMA IN THE YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

As humans, we live and move and have our being in our use of words. Although animals can use signs and sounds to signal one another it would seem that humanity alone possesses the ability to think and speak, and at the same time to be aware of what he or she is thinking and speaking. Aristotle established the classical Western conception of humanity as the beings who have language (*logos*). Even to criticize its limitations, sometimes to the extent of negating it, we have to use language. When a speaker makes use of words to convey the meaning of something not present on the scene, and when this is understood by the hearer, language functions. Today the question being asked is, "How neutral or unbiased is the word communication process?" In modern thought both structuralism and feminism see past word use to be an alien system weighing down human consciousness. For many today it seems that the comfortable "dwelling house of language" has become Nietzsche's "prison-house of language."<sup>1</sup> Implicit in all of this is a return to the awareness of language as power — power to obscure or to reveal.

The obscuring or revealing power of words was well-recognized in the Indian speculations upon language. Indeed the major *āstika/nāstika* division of the schools of Indian philosophy is predicated upon the degree of revealing power allowed to words, particularly the words of the Veda. Thus an essential point of focus for the study of any school of thought is "How do ordinary words, and the special scriptural words, reveal or obscure reality?" And implied within that question is the further, and perhaps more crucial question, "Is the revealing power of words a way of salvation or release?" The focus of this essay is upon the way in which these two questions are answered in

Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra*.<sup>2</sup> To begin with the *Yoga Sūtra*'s analysis of the revealing (and obscuring) power of ordinary words will be examined. Then the special spiritual power of Īśvara's words (scriptural words) will be studied. This second aspect is of special interest as the *Yoga Sūtras* are not usually thought of as championing 'scripture, or meditation upon scripture, as a way of release. However, in the wake of the recent attention being given to the Vivaraṇa sub-commentary (attributed to Śaṅkara) on the Vyāsa-bhāṣya,<sup>3</sup> and Gerald Larson's suggestion that the core of Śaṅkara's teaching is really a Vedāntinization of Sāṅkhya-Yoga<sup>4</sup> an accurate assessment is needed of the role of word and scripture (*āgama*) in the *Yoga Sūtras* and its commentaries.

### I. The Power of Ordinary Words

Does ordinary or everyday word-use reveal or obscure reality? Do such words convey knowledge? These questions are addressed in *Yoga Sūtras* 1:7. *Sūtra* 1:7 identifies verbal communication (*āgama*) along with perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*) as sources of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*). *Āgama* is defined by Vyāsa in his commentary as follows:

An object perceived or inferred by a competent [trustworthy, *āpta*] man is described by him in words with the intention of transferring his knowledge to another. The mental modification which has for its sphere the meaning of words is the verbal cognition to the hearer. When the speaker has neither perceived nor inferred the object, and speaks of things which cannot be believed, the authority of Verbal Cognition fails. But it does not fail in the original speaker [Īśvara] with reference to either the object of perception or of inference.<sup>5</sup>

The essential aspects of this definition are repeated again by Vyāsa in his discussion of truthfulness as one of the *Yamas* described in *Yoga Sūtra* 2:29.

Veracity consists in thought and word being in accord with facts. Speech and mind corresponds to what has been seen, heard and inferred as such. Speech is uttered for the purpose of transferring one's knowledge to another. It can only be said to have been employed for the good of others and not for their injury, if it is not deceptive, confused or barren in knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

The answer of Patañjali and Vyāsa to the question "Do ordinary or everyday words convey knowledge?" is clear. Words convey knowledge if they are true and not deceptive or confused. This requires that the speaker have a purified mind — a mind that does not selfishly twist in the telling what has been seen or inferred — a mind cleansed of karmic obscuration. Such a mind is found in a trustworthy or competent person (*āpta*). When a clear-minded person speaks of something that has been seen or inferred, that knowledge is transferred via the hearing of the spoken word to the mind of the listener, and verbal communication (*āgama*) has taken place. Vāchaspati Miśra points out in his gloss that the essential requirement for *āgama* to take place is that the speaker be an *āpta* — a competent, trustworthy person, one who has clear comprehension of the other two *pramāṇas* (perception and inference), as well as being skilled and compassionate in the passing on of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> All of this is clearly exemplified in the case of a true teacher. To succeed in *āgama* or verbal communication the teacher must perceive reality (the object) clearly (*pratyakṣa*) or reason about reality without confusion (*anumāna*), and then pass on the knowledge so obtained with compassion for the student and without any twisting for the purposes of personal fame or fortune. Such a teacher is *āpta*, competent trustworthy. Such teaching is *āgama* or the verbal communication of valid knowledge. The teaching or verbal communication may still fail if the mind of the hearer is too covered with karmic impurity or too distracted to pay attention. This would seem to be the reason for the restriction of Vedic study to the upper three castes

—to those who have purified their minds sufficiently to meet the entrance requirement for becoming a student.

In his gloss on Vyāsa's commentary Śaṅkara stresses that the authority ascribed to *āgama* is normally to be understood with reference to the hearer rather than the speaker. For the hearer the authoritativeness of the knowledge arises not from a direct perception of the object or from inference since these cognitions took place in the mind of the speaker. Authority, for the hearer, is thus vested in the trustworthiness of the speaker. Authority comes into *āgama* on the side of the hearer who has to accept the knowledge of the speaker as authoritative since he has not had the first hand experience of perception or inference.<sup>8</sup> For the speaker, by contrast, the authority of the knowledge rests not with the process of verbal transmission (*āgama*), but with his prior experience of perception or inference (the original experience which is words report). And here provision is made in Vyāsa's commentary for the identification of unauthoritative or invalid *āgama*: "When the speaker has neither perceived nor inferred the object, and speaks of things which cannot be believed, the authority of *āgama* fails."<sup>9</sup> Vachaspati offers an example, "These ten pomegranates will become six cakes." — an incredible thing which the speaker has neither seen nor inferred, and which produces a verbal communication that, as J. H. Woods puts it, "wavers."<sup>10</sup> The question is then raised in Vachaspati's gloss "If that be so, then the verbal communication even of such persons as Manu would waver [and thus not be authoritative], for even they declared things which they themselves had not seen or inferred."<sup>11</sup> Manu is rescued, however, by the answer that since he only says what is in the Veda, what he says is trustworthy because the Veda is trustworthy. How do we know that the Veda is trustworthy and authoritative? We know so because it was spoken by the Original Speaker, Īśvara, who himself had directly seen or inferred the things spoken in the Vedas.

At this point in the discussion the commentaries raise the question of the validity of the metaphysical knowledge of the Veda. Although the description of *āgama* offered in 1:7 may be acceptable as far as knowledge from ordinary everyday word-use is concerned, it seems to break down when related to the metaphysical knowledge which the *Ṛsis* of the Vedas and sages such as Manu claim to convey. For the moment this problem is summarily answered by invoking *Īśvara* as the Original Speaker who was omniscient and therefore of unquestionable authority. But later in the *Yoga Sūtras* a detailed explanation as to how this is the case is offered.

As a postscript to our discussion of *Yoga Sūtra* 1:7, it is of interest to note that in his commentary Śaṅkara argues that analogy (*upamāna*) presupposes words and therefore is not a separate *pramāṇa* (as the Vedāntins claim) but a sub-case of *āgama*.<sup>12</sup> This interpretation is noteworthy on two counts. First, it shows Śaṅkara being true to the Indian scholarly tradition by which to be judged a good scholar one must be able to exegete an opponents position with such skill that the result is accepted by the opponent as a valid contribution to his own thought. To do so in this passage Śaṅkara has to go against his own Advaita Vedānta position which treats *upmāna* as an independent *pramāṇa*. The second aspect of interest is that those who deny *upmāna* usually absorb it under inference, not *āgama* as Śaṅkara has done.

On a quite different note Swami Hariharānanda Āraṇya, suggests that mental telepathy involves thought transference and thus ought to be understood as a special case of verbal communication (*āgama*). How is this so? Some persons, he suggests, are specially gifted with the power to find out what is in another mind, or to communicate one's own thought to another. Such persons are "mind-readers" and possess the power of thought-transference or telepathy. He offers the following example:

If you think that a book is in such and such a place, that thought will at once rise in their mind, i.e., they will come to have a knowledge of the existence of the book in that place. How does the cognition come to the thought-readers? Not by direct perception. The words uttered mentally by one person and the sure knowledge arising out of their meaning affects the other mind and produces similar knowledge in that mind.<sup>13</sup>

Such a cognition, says Āraṇya, is certainly from either direct perception or inference. It must therefore be a special case of verbal communication (*āgama*) in which the words are mentally spoken, but not uttered aloud, and a purified mind "sees" them and thus receives the knowledge contained in the unspoken but thought sentence.

## II. The Power of Scriptural Words

How is it that the scriptural words of the Veda, invoked by the Ṛṣis and sages, reveal reality? Since the objects of scriptural words are metaphysical (i.e. they cannot be seen or inferred) how can such words be trusted as *āgama* or valid verbal knowledge? Do such words have the power to effect release? These questions are taken up in *Yoga Sūtras* 1:24-29.

We recall that in *Yoga Sūtra* 1:7 the question was raised as to how the words of sages such as Manu could be judged as *āgama* or authoritative since they spoke of metaphysical things which they had neither seen nor inferred. The quick answer given in the commentaries on 1:7 was that words of Manu and the sages were trustworthy in that they merely repeated the words of the Veda which had been directly seen by the original speaker Īśvara. *Yoga Sūtras* 1:24-29 examine this answer in detail. As we analyze *Yoga Sūtra* 1:24-29 Śaṅkara's Vivaraṇa gloss on the Vyāsa bhāṣya will be given special attention as it is in Śaṅkara's treatment of Īśvara and the Vedas that "the Vedāntinizing

of Sāṅkhya-Yoga" suggested by Gerald Larson should be most evident. Larson's suggestion needs careful assessment as it would change current thinking, which sees Śaṅkara's philosophy as a direct descendant of Mīmāṃsā and/or Buddhist thought, to instead seeing Śaṅkara as a direct descendant of Sāṅkhya-Yoga.

In *Yoga Sūtra* 1:24 the so-called Original Speaker, Īśvara, is defined as a special kind of *puruṣa* which is beginninglessly untouched by the taints of *karmas*, or their fruition, or their latent impulses (*vāsanā*). The taints or hindrances, of which Īśvara is free include ignorance, ego-sense, desire, hatred, and clinging to life. Īśvara has never been touched by any such experiences and thus is a unique *puruṣa*. While all other *puruṣas* have to break their bonds with such experiences to realize release, Īśvara has always been and always will be free. Yet he is at the same time in the world, in *prakṛiti*, because, as Vyāsa puts it, he has assumed a body of pure *sattva*. It is this pure *sattvic* body which enables Īśvara to function as a mind in the world. Vachaspati Mīśra notes that Īśvara takes on this pure *sattva* body due to this wish to help those *puruṣas* still in bondage. Unlike others whose *sattva* is tainted by admixtures of *rajas* and *tamas*, Īśvara's *sattva* is free of the other *guṇas* and this enables him to be in the world, yet untouched by it. Vachaspati offers the analogy of the actor who takes on the role of Rama and yet does not confuse his identity with that of Rama. Just so Īśvara enters into the world of *prakṛiti* to help others, but never confuses his identity as *puruṣa* with that of the worldly *prakṛiti*. In answer to the question as to what causes Īśvara to take on this *sattva* body, the answer is given by Vachaspati that at the end of each cycle of creation Īśvara thinks to himself, "after this period of latency finishes I must again assume a pure *sattva* body so as to continue to help the world." This thought lays down a seed or memory trace which causes Īśvara to take on a *sattva* body at the start of the next creation cycle. Again Vachaspati offers an analogy. Īśvara's action between the



cycles of creation is like that of Chaitra who contemplates, "Tomorrow I must get up at day-break" and then having slept gets up at that very time because of a *vāsanā* or memory trace laid down by his contemplation.<sup>14</sup>

In answer to the question "what is the function of this *sattva* body that *Īśvara* takes on at the start of each new creation cycle?", Vyāsa replies that its function is to reveal the scriptures. Indeed, in response to an opponent who asks for proof of the existence of *Īśvara*'s special *sattva* body, the existence of the scriptures are cited. Furthermore, the authority of the scriptures comes from the fact that they are a manifestation of *Īśvara*'s *sattva*. Clearly this argument is circular and Vyāsa admits: there is a beginningless relation between the scriptures (with their authority on spiritual matters) and *Īśvara*'s *sattva* body. This is the presupposition upon which the *Yoga Sūtra* definition of the authority of *āgama*, with regard to supersensuous matters, is grounded. In his comment on Vyāsa, Śaṅkara takes the further step of arguing that all of this is established by inference as follows: because *Īśvara*'s *sattva* body has never been tainted, it is unique and therefore it is unsurpassed by any other power (all others have been tainted). Thus the special *sattva* of *Īśvara* and the scriptures it reveals can never be equalled. "Therefore this Lord is one whose power has none to equal or surpass it, and it is established that the Lord is a special *Puruṣa* apart from *pradhāna* and other *Puruṣas*."<sup>15</sup>

Having established the existence of *Īśvara*'s special *sattva* body on the basis of testimony and inference, *Yoga Sūtra* 1:25 goes on to examine its special quality of omniscience. Unlike our minds in which the proportion of *tamas* present prevents us from knowing supersensuous things, and thus restricts our use of *āgama* to words based on inference and sensuous perception, *Īśvara*'s pure *sattva* reflects all of reality, the sensuous and the supersensuous.

All certain knowledge, of past or future or present or a combination of them, or from extra-sensory percep-



tion, whether that knowledge be small or great, is the seed of [Īśvara's] omniscience.<sup>16</sup>

The characterization of this omniscient knowledge in Īśvara's *sattva* is a "seed" (*bija*) is consistent with the idea that it "sprouts" or manifests itself anew in the Vedas at the start of each cycle of creation. Out of all the *puruṣas*, only Īśvara has the power to fulfill this crucial role beginninglessly since only he has a *sattva* which has never been tainted by *karma*. The great saints such as the Buddhas or Jinas were all at one stage immersed in *karma*, and due to that limitation do not have the same fullness of omniscience as Īśvara since he has never been limited by *karma*. Thus, as Patañjali says, Īśvara is the most perfect *puruṣa* in whom the seed of omniscience is at its utmost limit or excellence (*Yoga Sūtra* 1:25).

In his commentary Śaṅkara adds some helpful examples. By virtue of his pure *sattva* body, which is free of the limitations such as senses like the eye that constrain the rest of us, Īśvara is in simultaneous contact with every object, and so can perceive everything. For example, says Śaṅkara, if a light is set inside a clay jar with holes in it, its light will illumine only what is directly outside of the holes. But this same light, when its covering jar has been shattered illumines everything without being dependent on the holes for a path. Just so the *sattva* body of Īśvara, being beginninglessly untouched by any covering *karma*, has perception of absolutely everything at the same time.<sup>17</sup> Thus the superiority of Īśvara's knowledge over the knowledge of all others.

In passing it might be noted that Śaṅkara finds himself quite at home with the description of Īśvara put forth in this *sūtra*. Indeed the stress on the unlimited nature of Īśvara leads smoothly into Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta notion of Brahman. Indeed, Śaṅkara, in answering an opponent who claims that Īśvara must perceive nothing because of his lack of sense organs, says that if the opponent insists

on understanding perception through limitations or sense organs he could think of Īśvara as experiencing "everything through the sense organs of all living beings, into which the inmost self, itself without sense organs, has entered as into a house."<sup>18</sup> Suddenly the Advaita Vedānta notion of *saguṇa* Brahman has appeared. The only change required was to universalize Īśvara, so as to absorb all other *puruṣas*, and making Īśvara into the inmost self, the *Ātman*. By focusing on the omniscience of Īśvara we see the ease with which Śaṅkara could, as Larson suggests, Vedāntinize the *Yoga Sūtras*.

The last part of Vyāsa's commentary on *Yoga Sūtra* 1:25 emphasizes the motivation of Īśvara — to help the persons caught in the whirling vortex of *saṃsāra*. Since this motivation is for others, and not for himself, Īśvara remains free from the taint of *karma*. His freely chosen purpose, as explained in *Yoga Sūtra* 1:26, is to give help by teaching knowledge and *dharma*. In doing this Īśvara is the first or original speaker who may be thought of as dictating the Vedas to the *Rṣis* at the start of each creation cycle. Because the words of the Vedas are based on the direct (but supersensuous) perception of Īśvara they qualify as *āgama* — the special *āgama* that gives valid knowledge of extra-sensory or divine reality. Vachaspati in his gloss on 1:25 defines *āgama* as including *śruti*, *smṛti*, the Epics and Purāṇas. The *āgama* or scripture is characterized as that from which the spiritual means for worldly happiness and final bliss come to one's mind. From this scripture, also, comes information about Īśvara such as his name and his special qualities. Śaṅkara, in his commentary on 1:26 points out that the expression "first knower or speaker" should not lead us to think of Īśvara in terms of an absolute beginning. Rather "first" or "original" expresses that fact that Īśvara is not limited or particularized by time. He has always been there. And since the Vedas have a beginningless relation with Īśvara's *sattva*, they too have always been there. However, the *Rṣis* and other sages are limited by time.

Having established the eternality of Īśvara and of his speaking of the Vedas as valid *āgama*, the way is now cleared for the final question to be answered. "Do these Vedic words, now seen to be valid knowledge (*āgama*), also enable one to realize release?" To answer this question *Yoga Sūtra* 1:27-29 may be taken together. In his gloss on *Yoga Sūtra* 1:23 Vachaspati Miśra states that by devotion of mind, speech and body to Īśvara, release may be realized. Later in the text, when the *angas* or aids to yoga are being discussed, the contention is again stated — by devoting all actions to Īśvara, with no thought for oneself, one is freed from doubts (*vitarka*) and the seed of rebirth is destroyed (*Yoga Sūtra* 2:32). How does one perform such devotion to Īśvara? *Sūtras* 1:27 and 28 gives us the answer. In 1:27 we are taught that *AUM*, the *praṇava* or sacred word connotes Īśvara, and in 1:28 that by the devotional chanting (*japa*) of *AUM* release may be realized.

Śaṅkara, commenting on 1:26, observes that devotion upon things which cannot be known directly (i.e. by perception or inference) is to be done through the medium of the word. It is Īśvara who is expressed by the word *AUM*; the sound of the word evokes its meaning. The theory of language implied here is given detailed analysis later in the text under *Yoga Sūtra* 3:19. The relationship between word and meaning is shown to be eternal, and grounded in the *sphota* or meaningful illumination of Īśvara's sāt̥tvic consciousness. It is worth noting in passing that the theory of language assumed in the *Yoga Sūtras* is consistent with the views of the Grammarians found in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* and Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*.<sup>19</sup>

An opponent raises the question does the ability of *AUM* to evoke Īśvara arise from conventional usage or is it something fixed like the relation between a lamp and its light? The intent of the question is to suggest that a convention is involved and that the word *AUM* should not be seen as necessarily evoking Īśvara — *AUM* could just as well be related to another name such as Śiva. Vyāsa responds

that the relationship between *Īśvara* and the word *AUM* is fixed like that between a lamp and its light. So even at first hearing, *Īśvara* is evoked, just as the sun is evoked by its light. Conventional or ordinary usage only directs attention to that relationship between *AUM* and *Īśvara* which has existed beginninglessly. It is like the relationship of father and son which is inherently fixed, but which is made clear by conventional usage of words such as "He is that man's father" or "That man is his son." The conventional usage of words serves only to reveal the fixed relations and meanings that have permanently existed. Śaṅkara's gloss effectively summarizes the meaning of Patañjali's *sūtra* and Vyāsa's commentary.

If there were not the fixed relation between this expressive word and what it expresses, it would not be true that through the form of *praṇava*, *Om*, the Lord [*Īśvara*] is met face to face. . . . But since there is a fixed relation between this expression and what it expresses, it is proper to employ *Om* as a means for practising worship of God [*Īśvara*], and this is the purport of the whole commentary.<sup>20</sup>

Having recognized the power of *AUM* to reveal *Īśvara*, the yogin is directed to repeat it and meditate upon its meaning. From the perspective of modern secular consciousness it is easy for us to miss the depth of meaning implied in this *sūtra*. The modern mind, unacquainted with the subtleties of yogic concentration, probably envisages the simple-minded chanting of the *mantra* by a devotee with a rosary in hand. The thought that such a primitive ritual could lead to a full revelation of the Lord is likely to be quickly dismissed as meaningless and empty ritual. Witness, for example, the judgment of Friedrich Heiler in his modern classic on the history and psychology of prayer. Ritual devotional prayer, he concludes, is no longer a free outpouring of the heart: "It becomes a fixed formula which people recite without feeling or mood of devotion, untouched both in heart and mind."<sup>21</sup> Contrary to such a simple-

mind misperception of what is implied, *Yoga Sūtra* 1:28 specifies that the chanting of *AUM* with deep yogic concentration brings not only the full meaning of *Īśvara* to mind but takes one beyond even that to a direct supersensory, "face to face" encounter. The psychological process by which this takes place is spelled out in detail in *Yoga Sūtras* 1:42-44. What Vyāsa describes under 1:28 as coming to *know well* the relation between the word, *AUM*, and its meaning, *Īśvara*, through constant repetition and habituation of the mind, is given technical analysis in the later passage. Four stages of increasingly pure habituation of the mind are described. In *Yoga Sūtra* 1:42 the lowest and most impure level is that in which the chanting of *AUM* evokes an experience of its object *Īśvara* which is mixed up by the conventional usage of the word and the meanings (*artha*) that the conventional usage have signified (e.g. *Īśvara* as "God", "Lord", "Master Yogi" or even Eliade's "macroyogin").<sup>22</sup> This is the *saṁvārtakā samādhi* experience of *AUM* (and its supersensuous object *Īśvara*), and to reach even this level considerable study and practice is presupposed. The mixing up or distortion (*vikalpa*) that the chanting of *AUM* is evoking in our minds at that stage results from the habitual way in which we have used the *mantra* in this and previous lives and the meanings (theological and otherwise) we have been conditioned by convention to attach to it. Such conditioned cognitions are either accepted from the traditional systems of thought or may be made up by one's own imaginative thinking. For example, this would seem to be what is happening when Śaṅkara interprets the *Īśvara* of Yoga in such way as to appear co-extensive with the Brahman of Advaita Vedānta. Thus at this lowest level of *samādhi* or devotional meditation, even when we manage to block out external distractions and concentrate our minds sufficiently so as to become "caught up into oneness" with the *praṇava* (*AUM*), the *samādhi* achieved, although manifesting *Īśvara*, is obscured and distorted by our habitual way of speaking and thinking.

As one continues to concentrate only on the *praṇava*, through chanting, the force of the habitual accretions is weakened (through non-fruiting) until such karmic seeds exhaust themselves and disappear from the mind. One's chanting of *AUM* now evokes only its natural and eternal reference, *Īśvara*. As Vyāsa puts it in his commentary on 1:42, only then is the *sattva* aspect of the devotee's consciousness freed from the *rajas* or emotional obscuration so that the object (*Īśvara*, this case) makes its appearance in the mind in its own distinct nature. This is the *nirvitarka samādhi* of *Īśvara*. From the reports of yogis like Patañjali and Vyāsa, in this experience one comes to know *Īśvara* as the original speaker of the Vedas to the *Rṣis* — although, of course, to put this into conventional words, as we have just done, already reduces us back to the level of *savitarka*. To know it in its *nirvitarka* purity, one must experience it for oneself.

The third level of *savicāra samādhi* is reached through yet more repetition of the chant and is described in *Yoga Sūtra* 1:43. Śaṅkara suggests, in his comment on this *sūtra*, that at this stage the devotee should be repeating *AUM* mentally rather than aloud. At the *savicāra* level one "perceives" *Īśvara*'s pure *sattva* body. In *savicāra* experience the flow of consciousness so completely identifies with the object (*Īśvara*) alone that the devotee's mind is, as it were, devoid of its own nature. I take Vyāsa to mean by this that there is a complete loss of ego consciousness. This does not mean that one lapses into some sort of stupor, a Jung insists on maintaining.<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, what is implied is that one is so "caught up" into *Īśvara* that there is no room left for a separate awareness of one's own ego as the thing that is having the experience. One has forgotten oneself. *Īśvara*, in all its vividness of external characteristics (the *praṇava* "sprouting" into the Vedas) and internal qualities (a pure *sattva* body), totally commands one's attention. The only distinguishing characteristics are provided by the object (*Īśvara*) itself. The devotee's knowledge ("knowing by be-

coming one with Īśvara") is complete, but it is knowledge only of the present moment in space and time.

The final stage of *nirvicāra samādhi* differs from the *savīcāra* stage in that in the *nirvicāra* the limitation to the present moment in time and space is overcome (*Yoga Sūtra* 1:44). Now the devotee is so completely one with Īśvara that Īśvara's relationship with the *praṇava* and the Vedas (of which it is the seed) is seen to have existed in all previous cycles (beginninglessly), to be manifest in the present cycle, and to be potential in all future cycles. As Vyāsa puts it in his commentary on 1:28 "When Om repetition and yoga come to perfection, the supreme Self (*paramātman*) shines forth."<sup>24</sup> Or as Śaṅkara elaborates:

When he [the yogin] is not disturbed by other ideas . . . ., he is perfect in repetition and in yoga; by that perfection in repetition and meditation on the supreme Lord (*parameśvara*) the supreme (*paramātman*) who stands in the highest place (*parameṣṭhin*) shines forth for the yogin.<sup>25</sup>

This result is surely far removed from empty mindlessness that the ritual chanting of *AUM* implied to Heiler — and I suspect to most modern persons.

Finally, the text then asks, when the yogin has reached the *nirvicāra* state of the full realization of Īśvara's perfection, what happens to him then? From the *nirvicāra* state, says *Yoga Sūtra* 1:29, comes realization of the devotee's own self, and the absence of all obstacles. Vyāsa comments:

As a result of devotion to the Lord [Īśvara], there are none of the obstacles like illness, and he has a perception of his own true nature. As the Lord is a *Puruṣa*, pure, radiant, alone, and beyond evil, so the *Puruṣa* in him, witness of the buddhi, knows him to be.<sup>26</sup>



Śaṅkara notes in his gloss that the words "As the Lord is a *Puruṣa* . . . , so . . . " highlight the difference between the *puruṣa* of Īśvara and the devotee's realization of his own *puruṣa*. While the devotee had to free himself from the bondage in *karma-saṃsāra*, Īśvara is different and unique in that he has always been free.<sup>27</sup>

Our careful study of *Yoga Sūtra* 1:24-29 has shown in a most detailed way how the power of scriptural words (*āgama*) as manifested in Īśvara gives not only supersensuous or divine knowledge but also a practical means for the realization of release. According to the Yoga tradition it was this route of devotion to Īśvara that was chosen by the majority of yogis as their path to release.

### III. Conclusion

In contrast with Nietzsche's view of language as a "prison house" or the modern structuralist view of language as an alien system weighing down human consciousness, the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali offer an analysis of language as having inherent within itself the power to convey knowledge (both sensuous and supersensuous) and to realize release. The *Yoga Sūtras* claim that ordinary words which report the perceptions and inferences of a clear mind can convey that knowledge by verbal communication (*āgama*) to another person. *Āgama* in this sense is judged by Yoga to be a *pramāṇa* or source of valid knowledge, along with inference and perception. When it comes to knowledge of the supersensuous or divine, *āgama* can also help us but it must be the *āgama* or word of a special person — *puruṣa* who was never obscured by karmic obstruction. Īśvara, claims the *Yoga Sūtras*, is such a special *puruṣa* and his words are the Vedic scriptures given to the *Ṛṣis* at the beginning of each cycle of creation. Through these Vedas then, we have valid knowledge of the supersensuous which Īśvara has directly "seen." But can these special words of scripture enable us to realize from *karma-saṃsāra*. "Yes" answers the *Yoga Sūtras*, especially the special

word "AUM" which as the beginningless utterance of Īśvara is the seed from which the Vedas arise. By meditatively chanting AUM, the devotee will gradually purify his or her mind until the highest level of *nirvicāra samādhi* is realized. Then fully purified perception of Īśvara as the eternally pure *puruṣa* and original speaker of the Vedas opens the door to the devotee's realization of his or her own *puruṣa* as also pure and free.

The *Yoga Sūtra*'s attribution of knowledge and spiritual power to āgama, as anchored in the pure *sattva* body of Īśvara, calls into question Eliade's rather flippant remark that when all is said and done Patañjali's introduction of Īśvara into Sāṃkhya soteriology is perfectly useless.<sup>28</sup> In strictly theoretical terms Eliade may be correct in his view that there was already a soteriological impulse in *prakṛti* and therefore no special help from Īśvara on the Vedas is needed. But the fact remains that without Īśvara, āgama would be no special knowledge from the Vedas or special help via the chanting of AUM. While it would still be theoretically possible to realize self-knowledge, in practice it would be most difficult since the last two *niyamas* would have been removed, along with all of *Yoga Sūtras* 1:24-29. According to the Yoga tradition *Īśvara-pranidhāna* and *svādhyāya* (in the form of the chanting of AUM) has been the core practice of most yogis. Add to that the evidence that it is precisely the Īśvara aspect of Yogic āgama that Śaṅkara seems to have Vedāntinized in his *Vivaraṇa* gloss on Vyāsa's commentary, and it is clear that more attention must be given to Īśvara and āgama in the *Yoga Sūtras* than Eliade was prepared to allow.

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## NOTES

1. Pamela McCallum, "Editorial", Issues of Language volume of *Ariel*, 15, 1984, p. 3.
2. *Yogadarśanam of Patañjali*. Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidyā Prakāśana, 1963. English translations referred to include the following. *The Yoga System of Patañjali*, trans. by J. H. Woods. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966. *Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras with the Commentary of Vyāsa and the Gloss of Vāchaspati Miśra*, trans. by Rāma Prasāda. Delhi: Oriental Books, 1978. *Yogasūtra of Patañjali with The Commentary of Vyāsa*, trans. by Bangali Baba. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1976.
3. *Pātañjala-Yogāsūtra-Bhāṣya Vivaraṇam* of Śaṅkara-Bhagavat-pāda, edited by Polkam Sri Rama Sastri and S. R. Krishnamurthi Sastri. Madras: Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, 1952. An English translation of Book I has recently been published: *Śaṅkara on the Yoga-Sūtras*, translated by Trevor Leggett. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.
4. Gerald Larson, "The Vedāntinization of Sāṃkhya", an unpublished lecture given at the Annual Meeting, American Academy of Religion, 1982.
5. Translation by Rama Prasāda (cited above in note 2), pp. 15-16.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
8. *Śaṅkara on the Yoga-sūtras*, trans. by Trevor Leggett, p. 49.
9. Translation by Rama Prasāda of *Yoga Sūtra* 1.7, pp. 16-17.
10. Translation of J. H. Woods, p. 23.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Śaṅkara on the Yoga Sūtras*, p. 50.
13. Swami Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, trans. by P. N. Mukerji. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1977, p. 29.
14. See Vāchaspati Miśra's gloss on *Yoga Sūtra* 1:24.
15. *Śaṅkara on the Yoga Sūtras*, p. 89.
16. Vyāsa on 1:25 as quoted in Śaṅkara's Vivaraṇa and translated by Trevor Leggett, p. 89.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
19. See my survey of this viewpoint in *The Sphoṭa Theory of Language*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980.
20. Translation quoted is by Trevor Leggett, *Śaṅkara on the Yoga Sūtras*, p. 124.

21. Friedrich Heiler, *Prayer: A Study in the History of Psychology of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 65.
22. M. Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969, p. 75.
23. As an example see *C. G. Jung Letters*, vol. 1. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, p. 247.
24. Translation by Trevor Leggett, *Sāṅkara on the Yoga Sūtras*, p. 124.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
28. M. Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, p. 74.

