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Defining Īśvara: A New Perspective in the Hermeneutics of Classical Yoga

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

DEFINING *ĪŚVARA*: A NEW PERSPECTIVE IN THE HERMENEUTICS OF
CLASSICAL YOGA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

by

Daniella Vaclavik

2013

To: Dean Kenneth G. Furton
College of Arts and sciences

This thesis, written by Daniella Vaclavik, *Defining Īśvara: A New Perspective in the Hermeneutics of Classical Yoga*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS
DEFINING *ĪŚVARA*: A NEW PERSPECTIVE IN THE HERMENEUTICS OF
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by

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Florida International University, 2013

Miami, Florida

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The mere presence of the term *īśvara* in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* has come to affect the meaning of both the path and the goal of Classical Yoga as well as the meaning of the term Yoga itself. The frequent translation of the term *īśvara* as God leads to the system of Classical Yoga to be labeled as theistic, particularly obscuring the interpretation of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, a functional component of the system, as well as perpetuating a syncretic trend that has led to the popular understanding of Yoga as 'union with the divine'. From identifying problematic hermeneutical trends and their underlying causes, as well as understanding the term within the constraints of the original text in its original Sanskrit, the term *īśvara* emerges as the archetype of an ultimate reality functioning as a practical and experiential tool providing the *yogi* with a direct glimpse of its true nature.

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PREFACE

Since I began my journey into Yoga I have been extremely lucky to have been exposed to highly qualified and exemplary teachers, yet I noticed many of my teachers would use conflicting ideologies as support arguments for their positions, thus attempting to reconcile Classical Yoga with several other ideologies. The most intriguing statement came from my Yoga Guru, Śrī K. Pattabhi Jois,¹ or ‘Guruji’, as students affectionately address him. When describing his lineage of *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga he would say: “*Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga is Patañjali Yoga”. Since I had been studying the text for some time, I had a particular understanding of what that entailed. To me, it meant he adhered to the philosophy Patañjali followed, mainly, a dualistic model, quite contrary from that of Advaita Vedanta or Bhakti Yoga. Furthermore, when asked by one of his students to define Yoga, Guruji responded: “Yoga is when you see God everywhere”. His definition of Yoga, to me, seemed like a complete contradiction of Patañjali’s ontology. I was even more intrigued, when I noticed his reconciliation between caste, religion, and practice, for this meant he had different allegiances and ideologies as a *Brahmin* (priestly caste), a *Śaivaita* (follower of Śiva), and a Patañjala Yoga guru. For him, it seemed, the contradiction of these three paths was not the least problematic, which seems to be a very common attitude among many practitioners. However, I believe the problem arises when this attitude is translated from personal practice to scholarship, as it may feed the

¹ Śrī K. Pattabhi Jois (1915-2009) was an Indian guru from Mysore, India, and the founder of the Kṛṣṇa Pattabhi Jois Aṣṭāṅga Yoga Institute (previously the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga Research Institute).

reductionism of unique and complex systems of thought during the process of reconciliation.

I began graduate school knowing I wanted to further explore the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, yet I was unsure what I wanted to focus on. While studying the text I came across a subject I had purposely ignored since I first became interested in Yoga philosophy: *īśvara*. All of the teachers I had come across in the past would be reluctant to fully define the nature of *īśvara* as well as its purpose and functionality within the tradition in a way that satisfied my inquiry. Some simply translated it as God, and additionally, others dismissed it completely as an optional path because of the presentation of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*² in the first chapter of the *Yogasūtra* and completely ignored its involvement in the second chapter. The more objective scholars are on the topic, the more reluctant they seem to make a definite conclusion. Even though some scholars attempt to stay true to the ontology Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* follow, nevertheless they contribute to the obscurity of the identity and nature of the term *īśvara* by continuing to use the terms 'God' or 'Lord' as a suitable translation. Thus, my motivation for the present study arises from my frustration in attempting to find an answer to the following questions: Who is *īśvara*? What is Yoga? And how does the definition of these two relate to each other? It is my sincere hope to be able to shed some light on this topic through a new perspective in the hermeneutics of Classical Yoga.

² While these terms and concepts will be explored further throughout this study, particularly in Chapter 5, *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is presented in the first chapter of the *Yogasūtra* in *sūtra* I.23 as *īśvarapraṇidhānavā* (*īśvara* + *praṇidhāna* + *vā*). The word *vā* is translated to 'or', which is a possible reason why it is sometimes interpreted as an alternative to other methods. However, this is only valid if the first chapter is isolated from the rest of the text, since *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is foundational to *kriyāyoga* and *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga, presented in the second chapter, therefore, it should not be completely dismissed as an optional path. As this analysis will demonstrate, it is rather a functional method within the system of Patañjali Yoga.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Classical Yoga: The *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali

In many cases, and certainly most popularly, the term Yoga, deriving from the Sanskrit verb root ‘*yuj*’, meaning to yoke, has been translated as union. This translation prompts the need to define what is being joined, and hence how that definition of Yoga relates to the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali and the path it propounds. Therefore, the primary motivation for the present study arises from the deceptively simple question: ‘what is Yoga?’ And how and to what extent the understanding of the term *īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra* is a determinant of such definition. In an attempt to define Yoga,³ it considers two opposing definitions: Yoga as ‘union’ and Yoga as ‘harnessing’, since the definition of the term would be directly related to the goal the system it comes to represent. Given the ambiguity of the term *īśvara*, its interpretation and translation would come to directly affect both the path and the ontology of Classical Yoga, as well as the interpretation and thus the understanding of the term Yoga itself.

The *Yogasūtra* is a work attributed to the Sage Patañjali, who, while his identity is not entirely clear, is understood to not have been the creator of the system of Yoga, but rather a compiler of an older system, or possibly a collection of different Yoga techniques. The identity of Patañjali as well as the date of the text are both uncertain.

³ Yoga. m. √yuj - “the act of yoking, joining, attaching, harnessing, putting to (of horses)... self-concentration, abstract meditation, and mental abstraction practiced as a system (as taught by Patañjali and called the Yoga philosophy)” (Monier William 856).

While some attach him to mythological characters considering him to be the “incarnation of the thousand-headed serpent *Ananta* or *Adiśeṣa* ” (Burley 26), others have connected him with Patañjali “the grammarian and author of the *Mahābhāṣya*” (Müller 313), the great commentary on Pāṇini’s work on Classical Sanskrit grammar, the *Aṣṭadhyāyī*, thus placing the text around the second century BCE. “Scholars such as R. Garbe and S. N. Dasgupta maintain that the grammarian and the yoga writer are identical”. On the other hand, others place it as late as 500CE; however, many agree “that the *Yogasūtra* is a product of the second or third century CE” (Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana* 42).

Of all the different practices of Yoga that have existed, Patañjali’s Yoga was considered to be the authoritative text to represent the system of Classical Yoga at the time the six *Darśanas*⁴ began to be categorized, most likely, because it is the most thorough text that devotes itself exclusively to the topic of the practice of Yoga. Furthermore, Patañjali “supplied Yoga with a reasonably homogenous framework that could stand up against the many rival traditions” (Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana* 43), as he had a greater focus on the practical application of the system rather than seeking to present a philosophical treatise in its own right. Instead of propounding a particular ontology in the text itself, Patañjali largely builds on the ontology of Classical Sāṃkhya, a system that has very often paired up with Classical Yoga as a consequence of their similar approaches.

⁴ *Darśana*: A philosophical category of the Classical Hindu philosophy literally meaning ‘to view or see’. The six categories or darśanas that together come to form Classical Hinduism are: Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, and Uttara Mīmāṃsā.

The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa is regarded as the authoritative text of Classical Sāṃkhya, and “the earliest available text on the Sāṃkhya philosophy”, considered to date at around the third century CE (Burley 16). While there is no known earlier Sāṃkhya text, it is generally assumed that the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* draws from a much older source, since not only the Yoga system derived from its philosophy, but there is also a wide range of texts throughout history that have drawn upon its concepts. Proto-Sāṃkhya is an unorganized pre-philosophical tradition that traces back Sāṃkhyan elements in other older texts, such as several major *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. While it is considered by many to come from an earlier theistic philosophy (Nicholson 74), this conclusion seems to derive from the interpretation of the texts where these elements appear, for since there is no older Sāṃkhya text, it is impossible to determine the meaning of those elements in their own right (Krishna 195). In this light, Proto-Sāṃkhya appears to be the remnants of an ancient philosophy from where other philosophies either built upon or borrowed from without necessarily implying a complete adherence of these to the full ontology of the ancient Sāṃkhya, given there was ever such an organized system in the past.

The ontology of Classical Sāṃkhya (*Sāṃkhyakārikā*) is based on a dualistic model of “subject and object and which maintains that the fundamental error consists in their confusion or identification in any form or at any level” (Krishna 202). Sāṃkhya philosophy describes the universe to be made up of only two independent elements: *puruṣa*⁵ and *prakṛti*,⁶ which “are thus two ultimate, eternal and independent principles of

⁵ *Puruṣa* is everything that *prakṛti* is not. In contrast, it is the seer, or *draṣṭṛ*, that which only has the ability of seeing, but not the quality of being seen.

existence. *Puruṣas* are many, *prakṛti* is one” (Tiamni 189). The present study will demonstrate that Patañjali makes very clear that these two elements exist independent from each other as well as the fact that there is not one *puruṣa* or transcendental reality but rather a multitude of seers⁷ in *sūtra* 4.15: “In view of the multiplicity of consciousness [as opposed] to the singleness of a [perceived] object, both [belong to] separate levels [of existence]“ (Feurstein, *The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali* 134), as well as *sūtra* 2.22, where he explains that even though the perception or experience of *prakṛti* ceases to exist as such for the liberated seer, *prakṛti* itself does not.

The *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, as the name implies, is a Yoga text written in *sūtra* style. A *sūtra* can be translated as ‘thread’; it is a popular style of writing in India, used by several systems of thought, where the aphorisms are used as a mnemonic device in the memorization of a particular text. Thus, by definition, a *sūtra* is concise and accurate, using the least amount of words possible in order to illustrate a particular point while maximizing the potential for expounding meaning. The *Yogasūtra* uses nouns almost exclusively, and rarely uses verbs. Because of the style and structure of the *sūtras*, they are mainly concerned with providing definitions, in many cases, in a very brief manner. The *Yogasūtra* is comprised of 196 *sūtras* or aphorisms, divided into four *pādas*, or chapters. The first chapter, *samādhipāda*, focuses on the different practices that lead to the attainment of *samādhi*. The second chapter, *sādhana-pāda*, expands on several of

⁶ *Prakṛti* is everything material, even in its most subtle forms, consisting of elements and sense organs, and is for the sake of *puruṣa*’s experience and transcendence.

⁷ Throughout the present analysis the word ‘seer’ will be used as a translation for *puruṣa*, not to be confused with the ṛṣis, or ‘ancient seers’.

those practices and goes deeper into the nature of *samādhi*. The third chapter, *vibhūtipāda*, focuses on the great powers that may arise in the path of Yoga, and the fourth and final chapter, *kaivalyapāda*, explores the nature of the journey towards *kaivalya*, the final stage of Yoga. The relationships between the different *sūtras* are not always linear, are often interconnected, and thus, different connections and relationships within the text need to be considered.

Defining *Īśvara*: A New Perspective in the Hermeneutics of Classical Yoga

There are several issues that arise in the endeavor of textual interpretation; from language and translation, historical and cultural context, to interpretation and application, thus, it becomes impossible to fully determine the intention and purpose of the original author, as well as the interpreters of such text, for more often than not, interpretation can be aligned with an attempt to perpetuate tradition and power. In many instances, since many commentators, whether intentionally or not, tend to interpret texts in a way that their work supports either their own personal world-views, or the systems they subscribe to, a particular text can be interpreted in a myriad of ways depending on what aspect of the text the commentator chooses to focus on, and which aspects they choose to ignore. Hence, inaccurate interpretations, even of a single term within one text, can lead to the inaccurate interpretation of the essence of the text, and come to misrepresent an entire system of thought, as well as perpetuate the authority of the different allegiances of such commentators.

There are many words and concepts in the Sanskrit language that do not have a direct translation into English, thus in many instances, translations have been made in

order to accommodate an author's particular point of view. Indologist Max Müller speaks of the importance of translation and interpretation in "Sacred Books of the East", stating that "we want to know the ancient religions such as they really were, not such as we wish they should have been" (Müller 636). Therefore, in cases where accuracy in translation is impossible to achieve, it becomes essential to work towards accurate interpretation, without making undue assumptions, and most importantly, without trying to fit foreign concepts into them in an attempt towards understanding.

The first problem that arises is the ambiguity of the term *īśvara*, for it has been used throughout history in different contexts and thus conveyed different meanings (see Chapter 4). While it becomes impossible to know the intention behind Patañjali's decision to use such an ambiguous term, it is possible to at least try to understand its different uses throughout history as an attempt to identify the common use of the term contemporary to Patañjali, in order to understand the context in which he used this term. The second problem is the theistic interpretation of the term leading to the translation of *īśvara* as God, which has more serious consequences (see page 10). Thirdly, the elevation of certain commentaries to be as authoritative, and in some instances, more authoritative than the original text, as in the case of Vyāsa's *Yogabhāṣya* (see Chapter 2), perpetuates certain trends as facts, when in reality, they are not part of the original text.

Out of the total 196 *sūtras*, the term *īśvara* appears in the following eight *sūtras*, and out of those eight, after introducing *īśvara*, four are dedicated to defining it:

I.23 *īśvarapraṇidhānadvā* - presents the concept of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*

I.24 *kleśakarmavipākāśayairaparāmṛṣṭaḥ puruṣaviśeṣa īśvaraḥ* - describes *īśvara*

I.25 *tatra niratīśayam sarvajñabījam* - describes *īśvara*

I.26 *pūrveṣamapi guruḥ kālenānavacchedāt* - describes *īśvara*

I.27 *tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ* - describes *īśvara* and the method of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*

II.1 *tapāḥ svādhyāyeśvarapraṇidhānāni kriyāyogaḥ* - defines *kriyāyoga*

II.32 *śaucasantoṣatapaḥsvādhyāyeśvarapraṇidhānāni niyamāḥ* - defines *niyama*

II.45 *samādhisiddhirīśvarapraṇidhānāt* - defines the effect of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*

Patañjali first introduces the term in *sūtra* I.23: *īśvarapraṇidhānādvā*, a concept which appears again in the second book of the *Yogasūtra*, first in *sūtra* II.1 as one of the three elements of *kriyāyoga*, and then in *sūtra* II.32 as one of five elements of *niyama*, the second limb of *Patañjali*'s eight-fold path. The term *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is a compound of the following two words:

īśvara able to do, capable of, liable, exposed to, master, lord, prince, king, mistress, queen, husband, God, the Supreme Being, the Supreme Soul (*ātman*), *Śiva*, one of the *Rudras*, the god of love, of a prince (Monier Williams 171).

praṇidhānāt laying on, fixing, applying, access, entrance, exertion, endeavor, respectful conduct, attention paid to, profound religious meditation, abstract contemplation of, vehement desire, vow, prayer (Monier Williams 660).

Only after '*īśvara*' and '*praṇidhānāt*' have been put together do they typically get translated as 'devotion to the Lord' or 'devotion to God', thus implying a theistic interpretation, rather than a more accurate representation of the functionality of the term within the system (explored further in Chapter 5). According to the following definition, theism is a "worldview that perceives the orders of existence (physical things, organisms,

persons) as dependent for their being and continuance on one self-existent God, who alone is worthy of worship...Theists hold that God, transcendent creator of the orders, remains an indivisible unity as he sustains them in accordance with their capacities and his ultimate purposes” (Bertocci 9102). Such definition implies a God whose existence is independent from the realities and elements of the universe, as well as a creator and sustainer of everything that exists. However, the present study will demonstrate that in Classical Yoga, as in Sāṃkhya, creation “is from *prakṛti* [nature, the seen] alone without the assistance of any outside agency. The proximity of *puruṣa* [spirit, the seer] and *prakṛti* is a sufficient condition for the evolution and involution of the world” (Rukmani, “God/Īśvara in Indian Philosophy” 134). Therefore, the usage of the terms in relation to the system of Yoga, ‘God’ and ‘theism’, are both deemed as misplaced and misleading, for they consequently come to affect, and in some instances define, the meaning of the text and the system as a whole.

The present study proposes that the frequent translation of the term *īśvara* as ‘God’ presents several problems: first of all, it does not accurately represent the intent of the use and purpose of the term *īśvara* as used in the *Yogasūtra*, specifically obscuring the interpretation of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, a functional aspect of the system. Secondly, it has directly led to the common understanding of the main distinction between Sāṃkhya and Yoga as the former being atheistic while the latter theistic, labels that come to misrepresent both systems. Lastly, it allows for the confusion regarding the path of Patañjali. It obscures this path of discrimination, separation, involution and isolation towards liberation, to a point where it can lend itself to be interpreted and accommodated to fit into other ideologies, thus enabling a syncretic trend that has led to the popular

understanding of Yoga as ‘union with the divine’. The present study describes Classical Yoga as an esoteric practice that follows a path of involution towards the pursuit of liberation; it does not seek a connection with an external reality but rather strives to separate from it. Thus, the root of the problem resides within the commentarial tradition: starting with the early theistic interpretation of the term *īśvara* which led to its translation as ‘God’, and the subsequent interpretation of its functionality within the system of Classical Yoga.

Because of many discrepancies and interpolations into the text, particularly regarding this issue, it becomes crucial to determine the identity and purpose of *īśvara* in order to fully understand Patañjali’s system of Yoga, particularly in regards to *īśvara*’s placement in the path of Yoga. The present study also attempts to answer the following questions: If *īśvara* is defined as an outside agent who has the power to actively get involved in the world and grant liberation to those who worship him, as some suggest, what is the purpose of the rest of his very elaborate system? Furthermore, if the path is understood as a means to interact and merge with an outside agent, which is a common theistic interpretation, would the meaning of the ultimate goal Patañjali describes, that of standing in isolation in one’s own nature (YSI.3, YSIV.34),⁸ not become contradictory and ultimately obsolete?

The purpose of the present study is threefold: (1) to define the use of the concept of *īśvara* in the system of Classical Yoga as found in Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra*, (2) to determine the theistic/atheistic nature of the concept and therefore the system of Classical Yoga, and

⁸ YS - yogasūtra (Patañjali)

(3) to identify the nature of the circumstances that have led to the obscurity of this subject. The present study attempts to define the concept of *īśvara* in the context of the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, through the analysis of Patañjali's path, while attempting to identify the source of the many conflicting views regarding this issue. It does not seek to neither prove nor disprove the actual existence of God in any capacity, but rather focuses on the presence and relevance of theism within the path Patañjali proposes in his *Yogasūtra*.

The present study will follow a textual analysis of the *Yogasūtra* in its original Sanskrit in addition to its commentarial traditions, aiming to consider the commentaries independent of the original text in order to find the discrepancies between the core text and its commentaries, as well as analyze the commentarial works on the *Yogasūtra* in order to identify the hermeneutical trends that have led towards the discrepancies regarding the nature and purpose of *īśvara*. In turn, these hermeneutical trends will aid to establish the spectrum delineated by scholarship regarding the nature and purpose of *īśvara* within the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, from utterly useless to predominantly essential, within which reside a multitude of competing theories, and further attempting to place *īśvara* in the appropriate space within this spectrum.

On the one extreme Garbe describes the purpose for the inclusion of the term *īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra* to be an attempt by Patañjali to appeal to both the Vedic⁹ authorities and

⁹ Vedic: of the Vedas. This study considers the Vedas to not extend beyond the Saṃhitas, or collections: Ṛgveda (oldest, chants), Sāmaveda and Yajurveda (Melodies and sacrificial formulas), Atharaveda (youngest). Some early sources consider only three Vedas, while some scholars consider the Upaniṣads to be part of the Vedas. Chapter 3 (p. 32) describes the development of *Brahmanic* (Vedic) and *Śramanic* traditions as parallel yet radically different.

theistic popular beliefs¹⁰ (Feuerstein, *Philosophy of Classical Yoga* 3), thus making his system of Classical Yoga more appealing, as well as using this as an attempt to elevate Sāṃkhya philosophy through its association with his Yoga system (Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy in Relation to Other Systems* 248). On the other extreme of the spectrum there are scholars such as Vijñānabhikṣu who refer to *īśvara* in terms of the highest God, *Parameśvara*, describing him as the one who is “able to change the world, to bring it into existence and to make it disappear, just by his desire”. According to his definition *īśvara* is thus a creator, preserver and destroyer God (Rukmani, “Vijñānabhikṣu” 133), and moreover, the revealer of the Vedas.

Furthermore, many commentaries often diverge in their grammatical understandings of Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra*, which proves to be a very common trend, where Classical Yoga concepts are accommodated by the commentarial tradition with incompatible ideas, as an attempt to reconcile Yoga with other more prominent systems of thought. These inconsistencies can be seen as early as Vyāsa’s *Yogabhāṣya*, the first known commentary of the *Yogasūtra*, with his doctrine of *sattva*, which is original to *Vyāsa*, and not to Patañjali, as is the understanding of subsequent commentators. This situation proves to be particularly problematic since the status of Vyāsa’s commentary is elevated to the authority level of the original text, thus leading these interpolations to be perpetuated as fact often effecting modern scholarly understandings.

Therefore, the analysis of the present study will cover several levels of interpreting Patañjali’s *Yogasūtras*, and the different ways in which these interact. (1) Firstly, the

¹⁰ Indigenous and/or popular traditions, mostly dealing with strong devotional practices.

grammatical understanding of the original text, without the influence of the commentarial tradition. (2) The early commentarial tradition, Vyāsa's *Yogabhāṣya*. (3) The medieval commentaries of Vācaspatimiśra and Vijñānabhikṣu. (4) Modern indigenous scholarship, particularly the way in which Swami Vivekananda presented Hinduism to the West; elevating Vedānta as the main philosophy of Hinduism and adapting it for a Christian audience. (5) Modern Western scholarship, focusing on Orientalists such as Müller and Deussen. (6) Finally, contemporary scholarship, such as Larson and Feuerstein, among others, and their respective understanding of the text. Thus, the present study seeks to explore an issue that has been often neglected, and in many instances, approached with great misunderstanding and misplaced assumptions, in an attempt to present a new perspective in the hermeneutics of Classical Yoga.

Description of Chapters

Having stated and briefly explored the different issues that arise when attempting to define the term *īśvara* in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, the following chapters will delve deeper into the matter. The organization of the present study's chapters is as follows:

Chapter 2, "The Commentarial Tradition", is an analysis of the commentarial tradition of Classical Yoga, in an attempt to identify and categorize the different hermeneutical trends that have led to the obscurity of the subject, introducing prominent commentators and their trends in order to identify the different issues of translation and interpretation that arise from these.

Chapter 3, "Deconstructing Hinduism", as an expansion of Chapter 2, is an analysis of the underlying reasons for some of these hermeneutical trends, by placing Patañjali's

Yogasūtra in the general context of the development of Hinduism, as well as an attempt to understand the classification of Classical Yoga as a Hindu *Darśana*, along with its consequences.

Chapter 4, “The etymology of the term *īśvara* and its Pre-Classical History”, is a survey of the pre-classical use of the term *īśvara*, tracing its origin and use in different Indian texts throughout history, from its use to denote a worldly lord, to its use as a personal God, as well as the influence of devotional sectarian practices that have contributed to its interpretation as God.

While it becomes impossible to know the intention behind Patañjali’s decision to use such an ambiguous term, it is possible to attempt to understand the context in which he used it. Chapter 5, “The Path of Classical Yoga: Reading Patañjali without commentary”, is the product of a grammatical analysis of Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* without relying on the use of commentary, primarily focusing on the translation of the first chapter, *samādhipāda*, and a selection of *sūtras* from the second chapter, *sādhanapāda*, as well as deeper grammatical analysis on the *sūtras* that directly deal with the issue of *īśvara*, in order to understand Patañjali’s path of Yoga independent of commentaries, and the role of *īśvara* in the system of Classical Yoga exclusively. It contrasts this interpretation with those of the commentarial tradition from Chapter 2, specifically addressing the issue of the identity of *īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra*, as well as defining the functionality of *īśvarapraṇidhāna* in the path Patañjali proposes.

Finally, Chapter 6 is the conclusion of the present study, where the term *īśvara* emerges as the representation of an empirical concept and a functional component of the path of Yoga, rather than an ontological concept per se. Thus, much rather than being or

representing God, and thus being the determinant for the system of Classical Yoga to be classified as theistic, *īśvara* represents the ultimate ideal of the goal of Yoga: a *puruṣa* that has never lost its identity to its misidentification with *prakṛti*, and as such, it functions as a practical and experiential tool, by being an archetype of this ultimate reality, providing the *yogi* with a direct experience of *puruṣa*, where he is able to get a direct glimpse of its true nature. The role of *īśvara* is therefore akin to the instruction manual Patañjali presents: a series of practical tools that facilitate a series of experiences which lead towards an ultimate goal: *kaivalya*, or isolation of self.

CHAPTER 2

THE COMMENTARIAL TRADITION

Although the *sūtra* style presents sets of rules or philosophical points of views in a way which facilitates for strict memorization, thus preserving the identity and accuracy of a text, it comes along with a commentarial tradition that, while necessary for the understanding of the *sūtras*, allows for interpretation - or a series of interpretations - that can at times depart far away from the original text and furthermore be taken as an authoritative text itself. As commentators attempt to reconcile the text they are commenting on with their other areas of studies as well as their own personal viewpoints and philosophical and/or religious beliefs, the product of these attempts is a new text that is taken as an authority in the field and thus used by subsequent commentators as an authoritative source for their own work, in many cases without questioning the motives behind the work of these previous commentators, contributing to the diluting of certain concepts as they perpetuate conflicting ideas and confusion. In most cases the end product is an authoritative work that is a commentary of a commentary of a commentary; a work that is the result of an amalgamation of conflicting ideologies borrowed from other schools of thought which yet leaves no specific trace of their origin and the reasons for having been included in such a way, thus leaving the only conclusion of being an attempt at reconciliation due to the commentators' own personal motives.

Chapter 2 is an analysis of the hermeneutics of Classical Yoga, focusing on the identity, purpose and use of the term *īśvara* in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, from translation and interpretation of the term itself, as well as the commentators' theistic/atheistic

classification of the text as a whole. It attempts to identify and categorize the different hermeneutical trends that have led towards the discrepancies regarding the nature and purpose of *īśvara*, covering the different categories of interpreting Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, and the different ways in which these interact both between each other, as well as with the original text. The chapter addresses two of the main issues that arise in the endeavor of textual interpretation described in Chapter 1: firstly, the theistic interpretation of the term leading to the translation of *īśvara* as God, and secondly, the elevation of certain commentaries to be as authoritative, and in some instances, more authoritative than the original text, as in the case of Vyāsa's *Yogabhāṣya*.

The Commentarial tradition of Classical Yoga can be divided into 5 different categories, according to time period and geographical location. (1) The early commentarial tradition, dating back to the 7-8th century CE (Woods xx), with the first commentary of the *Yogasūtra*, Vyāsa's *Yogabhāṣya*. (2) The medieval commentaries of Vācaspatimiśra's *Tattvavaiśārādī* of the 9th century CE (Woods xxi) and Vijñānabhikṣu's *Yogavārttika* of the 16th century CE (Rukmani, "Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu" 3). (4) Modern indigenous scholarship, of the late 19th century to early 20th century CE, with the works of Dasgupta and Radhakrishnan. (5) Modern Western scholarship, focusing on Orientalists such as Müller, Deussen and Garbe. (6) Finally, contemporary scholarship, such as Eliade, Larson and Feuerstein, among others. While each author has, for the most part, a particular position on the issue of *īśvara*, there are certain trends that are particularly prevalent to certain time periods and locations. The underlying causes for these trends will be addressed in Chapter 3, as it becomes necessary to place the text in the context of Classical Hinduism, and its categorization as a Hindu *Darśana*, for the

present study argues that some of these trends are directly related to the distinction between Classical yoga and its ‘partner’ *Darśana*, Sāṃkhya, as the former being theistic and the later atheistic.

Vyāsa’s Doctrine of *Sattva*

One of the elements not obviously defined by Patañjali is the degree of activity and involvement of *īśvara* in the *yogi*’s path towards realization. If *īśvara* is a *puruṣa* (I.24), and thus by definition inactive within *prakṛti* (Majumdar 52), in which way or form does he indeed “favor” the *yogi* due to “[this *yogin*’s] profound-desire” (Vyāsa qtd. in Woods 48)? Vyāsa’s attempt to solve this problem, which was fully accepted and supported by Vācaspatimiśra and Vijñānabhikṣu, is by explaining that *īśvara*, “by its own nature, cannot intervene in the spatio-temporal processes of Nature”, therefore, he must acquire “a medium through which He can exert his influence”: perfect *sattva*¹¹ (Feuerstein, “The Concept of God in Classical Yoga” 386). Vyāsa thus considers *īśvara* to be “a special kind of Self” (Vyāsa qtd. in Woods 49) who is “at all times whatsoever liberated” (qtd. in Woods 50) and, “through his perfect *sattvic* state, active in the world as a remover of obstacles” (qtd. in Woods 62).

Vācaspatimiśra presents a yet stronger *Brahmanic*¹² position than Vyāsa, as he legitimizes the omniscience of *īśvara* by the authoritativeness of the Vedas, and

¹¹ *Sattva*: *Prakṛti* or nature is made of the interaction between three qualities or *guṇas*: *Sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. *Sattva* “connotes the bright, light, buoyant, wise, good, transparent aspects of nature” (Potter 3709).

¹² *Brahmanic*: of the *Brahmins*, or India’s priestly [and highest] caste. A tradition that is rooted in the Vedas, and is characterized by being exoteric, this-worldly, and intensely ritualistic.

delegitimizes the authoritativeness of other authors, such as the Buddha and the Sage Kāpila, by describing their work as “pseudo-sacred-words” and “deceitful”, hence elevating the *Brahmanic* tradition as the only legitimate source of authority (Vācaspatimiśra qtd. in Woods 57). He not only agrees with the doctrine of *sattva* proposed by Vyāsa, stating that *īśvara* “reflects, and assumes a *sattva* of perfect quality” (qtd. in Woods 52), as well as the fact that the proof of *īśvara*’s existence and ability to interact in this world to be his revelation of the *śāstras* or “sacred books”, “[which] are composed by the *īśvara*” (qtd. in Woods 53), but he further validates and strengthens these positions, clearly perceiving Vyāsa as the highest authority in understanding Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra*. He then sustains this point by going back around and stating that, since “there is no possibility of error or deceit” in a state of “perfect *sattva*”, it “[then] is established that sacred books have their proof in the perfect quality of His *sattva*” (qtd. in Woods 54). Hence, he uses a circular argument in order to prove *īśvara*’s appropriation of *sattva*: the proof of *īśvara*’s omniscience is in the infallibility of the *śāstras*, and the authority of the *śāstras* is in the omniscience of *īśvara*. According to Dasgupta, Vyāsa had resorted to the *śāstra* argument as proof of *īśvara*’s *sattva* due to the fact that he had no other way of substantiating his position, for his doctrine of *sattva* “had no place in the system” (Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy in Relation to Other Systems of Indian Thought* 249).

Feuerstein challenges Vyāsa’s doctrine of *sattva* by asking: “If liberation signifies the unconditional transcendence of the *sattva* (together with all other qualities of Nature, and thus Nature itself), then, how can the Lord be perpetually associated with a *sattva* without forsaking his condition of Freedom?” (Feuerstein, “The Concept of God in

Classical Yoga” 393). Unfortunately, he concludes there is no answer for this question. “Vyāsa’s (YBh I.24)¹³ answer is a dogmatic assertion that the association of the Lord with a pure *sattva* is beginningless”, Vācaspatimiśra (TV I.24)¹⁴ states “the perfect *sattva* of the Lord can neither be conceived nor inferred” and considers its proof to be the scriptures which he believes are revealed by *īśvara* himself, while “Bhoja (RM I.23)¹⁵ bluntly argues that one should not ask this question, because the logical problem involved is one of what we would call the chicken-and-egg variety” (Feuerstein, “The Concept of God in Classical Yoga” 394).

On the surface, Vyāsa’s theory might be a viable solution to explain *īśvara*’s activity in the world, however, it appears to be a pure fabrication, as it makes no reference to the original text, which he uses to prove his presentation of *īśvara* as an active and powerful agent in the evolution of both *prakṛti* and man towards realization. As “the authorities of Classical Yoga ultimately make this doctrine a matter of belief” (Feuerstein, “The Concept of God in Classical Yoga” 394), it becomes clear from comparing the original text and Vyāsa’s commentary that Vyāsa’s doctrine of *sattva*, however a clever attempt to solve an important discrepancy, is original to Vyāsa, and not Patañjali. This distinction, however, is not implicitly made by neither Vyāsa or by subsequent commentators, and thus it is regarded as Vyāsa’s clarification of Patañjali’s work, rather than a doctrine that is exclusively original to him. Thus, Vyāsa’s doctrine of

¹³ YBh - yogabhāṣya (Vyāsa)

¹⁴ TV - *tattvavaiśārādī* (Vācaspatimiśra)

¹⁵ RM - rājamārṭāṇḍa (Bhoja)

sattva has been used in subsequent commentaries as if it was original to Patañjali, and as a consequence, perpetuated as fact.

Vijñānabhikṣu's Syncretic Trend

Vijñānabhikṣu is the most prominent exponent of the syncretic trend in the hermeneutics of Classical Yoga. A *yogi* at heart (Matilal 9595) at a time in which, “in the philosophical field, Vedānta¹⁶ was at its height and on the other hand, in the religious field, *Bhakti* was gaining supremacy”, Vijñānabhikṣu attempts to reconcile his personal beliefs with the current trends “in order to establish Yoga in a Vedāntic [and *Bhakti*] atmosphere” (Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu* 8). He speaks of *īśvara* in terms of the highest God, *Parameśvara*, stating that he “is able to change the world, to bring it into existence and to make it disappear, just by his desire”. *īśvara* in his view is thus a creator, preserver and destroyer God (Rukmani, “Vijñānabhikṣu: A Maverick Philosopher” 133).

Rukmani does not consider Vijñānabhikṣu to be “faithful to the text he professes to comment on”, for he is too intent in “conceding a *bhakti* viewpoint into the Yoga philosophy”, going against the path Patañjali describes in the *sūtras* themselves (further detailed in Chapter 5) as well as Vyāsa's commentary. He further attempts to substantiate his theistic and *bhakti* views by explaining “*sūtras* I.23-24 in terms of how *īśvara* can bring about quickly *asamprajñāta-yoga* and *kaivalya*¹⁷ for the devotee who practices

¹⁶ Vedānta: *Veda + anta*. Translates to End of the Vedas. Main collection of texts: *Upaniṣads*. As a *Darśana*: Uttara Mīmāṃsā.

¹⁷ *Asamprajñāta-yoga* and *kaivalya*: *asamprajñāta* is the highest form of *samādhi* before attaining

bhakti”; elevating the functionality of *īśvara* in the text, through *īśvarapranidhāna*, as essential for achieving liberation (Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu* Vol.2 xi) and “emphatically dismisses Sāṃkhya” and its position that “liberation (*kaivalya*) can be achieved through reasoning” (Rukmani, “Vijñānabhikṣu: A Maverick Philosopher” 135). The result of his attempts to reconcile these different systems of thought ultimately misrepresents the *Bhakti*, Vedānta and Yoga traditions, for, Rukmani states, “in his hands *Advaita* Vedānta, Yoga, and *Bhakti* all get transformed” (Rukmani, “Vijñānabhikṣu: A Maverick Philosopher” 143).

Another important issue of interpretation is when a commentator presents conflicting views, either within the same publication or in their different works. This situation appears in many cases and at different levels. On the milder side, there are commentators, such as Feuerstein, who translate the term *īśvara* as ‘Lord’ yet speaks of him in theistic terms. Then there are those, such as Eliade, who actually use the term ‘God’ as a translation of *īśvara*, however giving the term God a new definition in this context that is more in line with the ontology the *Yogasūtra* follows. On the most extreme cases, there are those, such as Dasgupta, who have complete contradictory views of the identity and purpose of *īśvara* in different publications.

Feuerstein, in spite of considering the common translation of *īśvara* by the “totally ambiguous word ‘god’” as problematic, for the *īśvara* “is neither the creator, upholder or destroyer of the universe, nor is he judge over good and evil, right and wrong, nor supreme arbiter of human fates” (Feuerstein, *The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali* xi), his choice

kaivalya, or isolation of self, the goal of Patañjala Yoga.

of language is not always in line with this statement. For example, when speaking of *samprajñāta samādhi* described in YS I.17, Feuerstein states that the *cittavṛttinirodah* (cessation of mind processes) is not enough to attain this level of *samādhi*, supporting his argument with *sūtra* II.45, *samādhisiddhirīśvarapraṇidhānāt* (perfection of *samādhi* comes from *īśvarapraṇidhāna*), taken out of context, and declaring: “It appears that the ‘grace’ of the ‘lord’ (*īśvara*) is also required” (Feuerstein, *The Yogasūtra of Patañjali* 37). His choice and use of the words ‘grace’ and ‘lord’ in this context appear to have a very theistic, and rather Christian tone.

Eliade states *īśvara* “is not a creator god, for the cosmos, life, and humanity proceed from the primordial substance, *prakṛti*”. For him, *īśvara* “plays a rather minor role” as an alternative path for “devotional *yogins*” (YS I.23). Despite his new definition of the term God, Eliade uses the term God as a translation for *īśvara* (Eliade, “Yoga” 9896). This proves to be very confusing for those readers who have a preconceived idea of the meaning of God. The introduction of a new and different definition for the term ‘God’ does not suffice in redefining the understanding of a word loaded with a very specific meaning for such a large population.

Dasgupta presents very different views regarding the nature and purpose of *īśvara* in three different books. In *Yoga Philosophy in Relation to Other Systems of Indian Thought* Dasgupta does not portray *īśvara* as a necessary intelligence for the functioning of *prakṛti*, stating that the mere proximity of *puruṣa* to *prakṛti* is enough to spark and sustain evolution, and the doctrine of *karma* being enough to sustain order in the world (Dasgupta 235-236). As *īśvara* does not quite fit “its system of metaphysics” it is “but loosely introduced, more as a matter of traditional faith than as having a place in the

system of philosophy. He is introduced as only one of the alternative objects of concentration”, albeit an object of superior importance over all others, for *īśvara* can “remove the obstacles and make the attainment of the goal of the *yogin* much easier” (Dasgupta 246).

In *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Dasgupta portrays a much more active *īśvara*, as an “intelligent Being who should help the course of evolution” (Dasgupta 260). He does not consider *īśvara* to be the creator of *prakṛti* but rather a *puruṣa* himself, although one who is able to disturb “the equilibrium of the *prakṛti*”, whose by his “permanent will... the *guṇas* follow naturally an intelligent course of evolution for the service of the best interests of the *puruṣas*”. Furthermore, this *īśvara* helps *prakṛti* “to follow an intelligent order by which the fruits of karma are properly distributed and the order of the world is brought about” (Dasgupta 260). Thus *īśvara* here is not only the initial trigger of evolution but fully active in the world, the one who controls the order of the *guṇas* and the distribution of the “fruits of *karma*”.

In *Yoga as philosophy and Religion* he begins to use the terms *īśvara* and God interchangeably. He does acknowledge “that the *Bhāṣya*¹⁸ or the *sūtras* [do not] ever mention Him as having anything to do with the controlling of the modifications of the *prakṛti* by removing the barriers”, but he states, “all the latter commentators agree in holding him responsible for the removal of all barriers in the way of *prakṛti*’s development” (Dasgupta 87). While he states that “it is on account of God that we can do good or bad actions and thus acquire merit or demerit”, on the very next line he

¹⁸ *Bhāṣya*: commentary.

continues: “Of course God is not active and cannot cause any motion in *prakṛti*” (Dasgupta 87). He concludes that somehow he accomplishes this “in such a way that he stands ultimately responsible for the removal of all obstacles” in the development of both *prakṛti* and man, so that perhaps he is not fully active, but can somehow have an effect in the world (Dasgupta 88).

Ultimately, in his “God in Yoga” chapter, he presents Yoga as *karmayoga*, *jñānayoga*, and *bhaktiyoga*,¹⁹ the last of which he declares to be the “easiest means of attaining salvation” (Dasgupta, *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion* 159). In this book he presents a fully theistic and Vedic notion of *īśvara*, as the source of the Vedas and able to preside over the laws of *karma*, and who, “just as a king, ...punishes or rewards people as they deserve” (160). He further interprets *īśvarapraṇidhāna* in full *bhakti* style: “By devotion (*bhakti*) *īśvara* is drawn towards the devotee ... and by his grace he removes all obstructions of illness, etc ... So for a person who can love or adore *īśvara*, this is the easiest course of attaining *samādhi*” (161). It thus becomes impossible to fully comprehend Dasgupta’s point of view regarding the identity of *īśvara*, for it is ever changing.

Issues with the Functionality of *Īśvarapraṇidhāna*

When coming at odds with attempting to reconcile a theistic interpretation of *īśvarapraṇidhāna* with a strict dualistic ontology, some scholars, such as Garbe, have simply attempted to either downplay *īśvara*’s role or make away with the extent of

¹⁹ The Bhagavadgītā describes Yoga as being of three types: *karmayoga*, *jñānayoga*, and *bhaktiyoga*.

īśvara's functionality in the Yoga system entirely. Garbe considers *īśvara* to have been included by Patañjali in order to appease the Vedic authorities and elevate his work in an atmosphere where theism prevailed. (Garbe, "Outlines of a History of Indian Philosophy" 588). For Zaehner, *īśvara* appears as a disposable aid in the *yogi*'s path, having been introduced "for no other purpose than to help the soul towards isolation", most likely being "borrowed from one of the current theistic systems", once "this purpose has been served, the God is discarded and the *yogin* passes beyond him to the real business of mental concentration, the achievement of *kaivalya* or 'isolation'" (Zaehner 127). Rukmani considers *īśvara* to be "only one among many supports in meditation", having "been accommodated in a backhanded manner into Yoga philosophy by Patañjali", for it does not seem to be compatible with the rest of the system (Rukmani, "God/Īśvara in Indian Philosophy" 134).

Müller states that Patañjali's use of the term *īśvara* was not such a source of debate in the past, or at least there is no evidence in there being a philosophical debate on the matter (Müller, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* 319). He considers *īśvarapraṇidhāna* to be an optional path (Müller, *The Six Systems of Yoga Philosophy* 308), and the inclusion of term *īśvara* in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* to not necessarily be a determinant in qualifying the whole text as theistic, as he defines *īśvara* as "originally no more than one of the many souls, or rather Selves or *Puruṣas*, but one that has never been associated with or implicated in metempsychosis, supreme in every sense, yet of the same kind as all other *Puruṣas*. The idea of other *Puruṣas* obtaining union with him could therefore never have entered Patañjali's head". According to Müller, "the highest object

of the *yogin* was freedom, aloneness, aloofness, or self-centeredness” (Müller, *The Six Systems of Yoga Philosophy* 325).

Yet, *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is not mentioned only once, but in three different places in the text: first introduced as an alternate path of meditation in YSI.23, then as one of the three elements of *kriyāyoga* in YSII.1, and lastly as one of the five *niyama*, or observances of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* in YSII.32 and YSII.45. It is not mentioned loosely in three places, but rather as part of three different paths the *Yogasūtra* puts forward. Although it seems more manageable to label *īśvara* as not a relevant or important part of the Yoga system, this proves to be as much a fabrication and as inaccurate and misleading as considering *īśvara* to be synonymous with God or *Brahman*. This, most likely, is the result of a reaction to both a strong syncretic and theistic trend, both of which have been present, to a certain extent, since the time of Vyāsa.

While some commentators attempt to define *īśvara* as a philosophical concept and its placement in the Yoga ontology, others have focused on the more practical aspects of the concept. According to Burley, Patañjali’s very definition of *īśvara* as a ““special self” (*puruṣa-viśeṣa*) is crucial, as it implies that *īśvara* is not to be regarded as constituting a distinct ontological category” (Burley 50), but rather in the experiential realm (Feurstein, *Classical Yoga* 3). “Considering the distinctly pragmatic orientation of his Yoga”, (Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana* 84) Patañjali must have included the concept of *īśvara* in his work because, according to Eliade, “*īśvara* corresponded to an experiential reality” resulting from a long tradition of yogic techniques. Thus, *īśvara* represents the ideal for the *yogi* to reach, “an archetype of the *yogin* - a *macroyogin*”, whose concept might have been inherited from his position as “a patron of certain *yogic*

sects” (Eliade, *Yoga* 75). Thus, according to Whicher “*īśvara* might have met primarily psychological and pedagogical needs rather than providing a purely ontological category” (Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana* 85).

Conclusion

The conflicting variety of not only different translations and interpretations but different approaches to defining the term *īśvara* as well as its placement and function within the Yoga system has, on the one hand, contributed to the many misconceptions on the subject, since, without much further and deeper investigation, and a full understanding of the system as a whole, it can lend itself to people picking and choosing whatever views are in agreement with their own. On the other hand, it is a testimony of the wealth of the commentarial tradition of Classical Yoga, one which, by attempting to peel away the layers of intentions, traditions and allegiances, is available to potentially illuminate on the subject rather than obscure it.

CHAPTER 3

DECONSTRUCTING HINDUISM

The very nature of the *sūtra* style of writing prompts a dependency on commentary which, while at times can be enlightening, in many cases, it can depart so far away from the original text that it creates a series of contradictions and discrepancies that further obscure the essence of its meaning. Since the many approaches and discrepancies regarding the identity and purpose of the term *īśvara* in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* are not arbitrary, it is not only important to understand its nature and functionality within the constraints of the original text (see Chapter 5), but it also becomes imperative to identify the circumstances that have led to the numerous approaches and discrepancies that have contributed to the obscurity of this topic.

After reviewing the commentarial tradition of Classical Yoga and the most prominent hermeneutical trends that arise from them in the previous Chapter, the next step in this analysis is to place both philosophy and term within the context of the development of Hinduism, as well as attempting to understand the underlying meaning of the classification of Classical Yoga as a Hindu *Darśana*, along with its consequences. Hence, Chapter 3, as an expansion of Chapter 2, is an analysis of the underlying reasons for some of the hermeneutical trends that have led towards the discrepancies regarding the nature and purpose of *īśvara*, in order to fully understand them, instead of simply dismissing certain interpretations and labeling as incorrect.

The catalyst for the syncretic trend that plays an essential role in the misrepresentation of Patañjali's path of Yoga is a homogenizing trend that primarily

arises from a necessity to perpetuate Vedic authority that starts as a reaction against the rise of the *Upaniṣadic* movement. Further, this homogenizing trend is then continued by the need to categorize Hinduism into a cohesive system with agreeable components, arising from the necessity to organize against the rise of traditions, such as Jainism, but particularly Buddhism, that vehemently denied the authority of the Vedas. This gave birth to the ambiguous categorization of the *āstikas* and the *nāstikas*, the agreeers and the deniers, which are directly tied to the emergence of the six *Darśanas*, or orthodox systems of thought, as the philosophies that constitute Classical Hinduism. This homogenizing trend is further strengthened by the desire to elevate Hinduism as a world religion as a reaction against the negative depiction of Hindu traditions by Christian missionaries during the British colonialism of India, which, further strengthens Vedic authority and ultimately legitimizes Hinduism as a world religion, finally emerging not only as a homogenous system but further presented, in many instances, as a monotheistic religion, and thus, elevated to the authority of the Abrahamic religions.

While there are advocates of both sides of the spectrum, “the idea of Hindu unity is neither a timeless truth nor a fiction wholly invented by the British to regulate and control their colonial subjects”, the later which is caused by “tendentious readings based on a modern tendency to homogenize and oversimplify pre-modern Indian history” (Nicholson 2). The present study agrees with the theory that the use of Hinduism as a religious term is not considered to have been in use until after India’s medieval period (Nicholson 196). Hence, it is more aligned with the view that the homogenizing trend was an indigenous trend that developed slowly throughout centuries, and that eventually was perpetuated and strengthened as a reaction to foreign control and influences.

“The word ‘Hinduism’ is loaded with historical and political resonances, ... with proponents and detractors, open to varied interpretations” (Nicholson 1), demonstrating to be much more complex than a religion or a set of philosophies. It is a multiplicity of intertwined world-views in constant interaction with each other, agreeing and disagreeing, approving and disproving. From exoteric rituals and esoteric practices, oral traditions and ancient texts, familial lineages and popular celebrations, all of these come together to form what has come to be labeled as Hinduism. From its heterogeneous nature arises the need to reconcile the different conflicting ideologies and practices that comprise it. While this approach is perfectly acceptable and understandable for someone’s personal practice in order to form their own particular set of beliefs and world-views, in academia, it presents a very problematic situation. It thus becomes the scholar’s responsibility to be able to understand different ideologies in their own right, abstaining as much as possible from the necessity to resolve the many differences that will arise, but rather being able to understand and embrace the uniqueness of the myriad of traditions.

Brahmanism vs. Śramanism

In spite of the many proposers of the concept that Modern Hinduism can be traced all the way back to the Vedas, and perhaps beyond, in an unbroken line of transmission, there is a clear divergence in the intention and practice between the Vedic and the *Upaniṣadic* traditions. From the two main classifications in the development of philosophy and religion in India, the former belongs to the *Brahmanic* tradition and the latter to the *Śramanic* tradition. Garbe considers *Śramanic* traditions to have developed

parallel to the *Brahmanic* tradition in India “as lineages that, having begun with an individual or small group of philosopher-sages, then followed a line of descent running from guru to disciple. Over time, because a single teacher can have several disciples, a number of lineages would tend to develop”, and as these were oral traditions, in time, they gave rise to a number of different systems of thought which held certain commonalities, such as Sāṃkhya, Yoga, *Upaniṣads*, and Buddhism (Burley 38).

The main general distinction between *Brahmanic* and *Śramanic* traditions is their contrasting paths and goals. The intention of *Brahminic* practices is focused on rituals for the maintenance of the order of the universe (ṛta) by sacrifice to the gods, as well as rituals that sought to maintain order within nature and society, being conducted and thus controlled by the *Brahmin* or priestly caste. “Centered around the household fire sacrifice” (Herman 52), this was a path towards prosperity, both material (food, wealth, etc) and immaterial (after life in Heaven - svārga) in this world (Herman 54), rather than a vehicle towards transcending it. Furthermore, the source of wisdom in the *Brahmanic* tradition is external, and thus ‘heard’, instead of realized.

Revelation in Hinduism is of two categories; *śrūti* and *smṛti*. *Śrūti* is direct revelation, literally meaning ‘heard’ (Dhavamony, “Revelation in Hinduism” 163), while *smṛti* is considered indirect or secondary, as it is revelation based on memory of *śrūti* (Dhavamony, “Revelation in Hinduism” 164). The Vedas are considered *apauruṣeya*, or impersonal *śrūti* (Hiltebeitel 3994) as its wisdom was literally ‘heard’ by the ancient seers or *ṛṣis* of India in the form of speech, or *Vāk*, and transmitted orally for centuries (Dhavamony, “Hindu Spirituality” 10). Thus revelation is of utmost importance, as it is considered to reveal truths that would be impossible to attain otherwise. Even though

there are supernatural elements attributed to the *ṛṣis* (Dhavamony, “Revelation in Hinduism” 166), they are not considered to be the authors of the Vedas, but rather passive transmitters of information (Watson 36). The revelation of the Vedas, therefore, is extrinsic to the *ṛṣis* that received it, which, implied by the term *śrūti* (heard), came to them in the form of sound or words.

While the *ṛṣis* are the witnesses or receptors of such revelation, the source is not always as clear as it is, for example, in the Abrahamic religions. At the time of the early Vedas the *ṛṣis* did not seem to have a concept of a Supreme Being or creator. The gods and myths seem to arise from the minds of people who were in awe at the powers of the universe, who in an attempt to explain and control the world around them, “imagined that each of the great provinces of the universe was directed and animated by its own separate deity” (Muir 339). The gods were seen as personified representations of the powers of the universe, embodying the qualities of the elements they represented. The gods, as the *ṛṣis*, are seen as intermediaries, albeit more powerful, between men and the underlying power of the universe.

In this passage from the *Rgveda* (10.129), known as the Hymn of creation, it is obvious that even then they did not fully understand the origin of the universe, nor did they attempt to reach a definite conclusion. There is an understanding, however, that the gods were not the creators, since they were created themselves after the creation of the universe, and furthermore, not capable to solve the mysteries of the universe.

There was neither nonentity nor entity; there was no atmosphere nor sky above...

There were impregnating powers and mighty forces, a self-supporting principle beneath, and energy aloft. Who knows, who here can declare, whence has sprung,

whence, this creation? The gods are subsequent to the formation of this [universe]; who then know hence it arose? From what this creation arose, and whether [any one] made it or not – He who in the highest heaven is its ruler, he verily knows, or [even] he does not know. (qtd. in Muir 345)

The second line suggests a very abstract conception of *Brahman*, a powerful energy that supports and sustains the universe. “The name ‘*Brahman*’ initially meant any sacred or magical formula. As time passed by, ‘*Brahman*’ came to be identified, not with the words or chants that conjured up the gods and their power but with the Power itself” (Herman 62). But the concept of *Brahman* as unattached from Vedic ritual is not fully developed until later, in the development of the *Brāhmanas* (Hiltebeitel 3991). The last line suggests that perhaps there is no creator; for if the highest God does not know about the origin of creation, creation could have preceded Him as well.

In many instances *Brahman* is translated as ‘God’, which can present as an obstacle in the search of a definition. Since many assumptions are made by the use of this word, the result can be of inaccuracy and confusion. In many instances *Brahman* is perceived as a deity, therefore, early Vedic religion is seen as polytheistic, being centered on a pantheon of anthropomorphic deities. In this view, the word ‘God’ for *Brahman* is easily confused with the word ‘gods’ for the deities. Also to be considered is the fact that in the Vedas, several different gods are regarded as the source of knowledge and creation. However, also found within the Vedas are statements that explain that in the end, all gods are the same, “They call him *Indra*, *Mitra*, *Varuṇa*, *Agni*; and (he is) the celestial well-winged *Garutmat*. Sages name variously that which is but One” (Muir 342).

In time, many of these early deities that the *ṛṣis* received the *śrūti* from “would disappear eventually or take secondary place in the Hindu pantheon” (Dhavamony, “Revelation in Hinduism” 166). However, there is still a focus on their power and its ability to interact in the maintenance of the universe (Muir 341), which towards the later parts of the *R̥gveda* allows the *Brahmins* to directly engage with that underlying energy or power during the action of ritual. This power behind all elements of the universe, that can be interacted with during Vedic ritual, begins to be identified independently from attachments, leading to be conceived as the Absolute. “Stripped of mythical and ritualistic elements, it becomes identified with the universal Self (*Brahman*) or the Absolute” (Dhavamony, “Revelation in Hinduism” 180). Thus “the stage was set for seeking solutions not by turning outwardly to the gods, whether with priestly help and sacrifices or not, but by turning within oneself to where *Brahman* resides” (Herman 64), beginning the transition from the exoteric practices of the Vedas towards the esoteric practices of the *Upaniṣads*.

With a clear shift from exoteric to esoteric practice and intention from the Vedas to the *Upaniṣadic* movement, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, a transitional text between the *Āraṇyakas* and *Upaniṣads*, presents the intention of text as being very different from the Vedas: “Lead me from the unreal to the real. Lead me from darkness to light. Lead me from death to immortality” (Prabhavanada and Manchester 93). Long gone is the desire to connect with external gods and the need to control the world through ritual. The focus is internal, the intention individual, as the goal shifts from attaining prosperity in this world and ensuring after-life in *svārga* to transcending this world through self-realization

and thus achieving liberation from the bondage of *samsāra*. It is thus a declaration for the quest towards knowledge, truth and liberation.

Some stories in the *Upaniṣads* illustrate a clear break from the authority of *Brahminism*. The following story questions the validity of the caste system as prescribed in the *R̥gveda*. The significance of this is that as part of the Vedic *dharma* is questioned, it opens the possibility to question the whole of the Veda. In the *Chandogya Upaniṣad* there is the story of a young boy who asks his mother about his caste, as he wants to study the Vedas. His mother, who was a servant, tells her son to call himself by his given name, clearly stating the irrelevance of his caste. When the boy expresses his desire to study the Vedas to a teacher, he is questioned on his caste. The boy repeats what his mother told him, to which his teacher responds: “None but a true *Brahmin* would have spoken thus. Go and fetch the fuel, for I will teach you. You have not swerved from the truth” (Prabhavanada and Manchester 74–75). And so, the teacher accepts him as a student regardless of his non-*Brahmin* caste. Since caste is determined by birth, not by attitude or action, according to this view, acting as a *Brahmin* could lead to be accepted as one, presenting a clear break in tradition.

The Caste System and the Monopoly of the *Brahmins*

Since the concept of caste as it is deeply ingrained in Indian society and religion, it is therefore essential in understanding their development. The four basic castes or *varṇas*, directly related to occupation and status, are inherited and permanent. These are the *Brahmins*, or priestly caste, the *Kṣatriya*, or warrior caste, the *Vaiśya*, or merchant caste and the *Śūdra*, or servant caste (Herman 52). There are also people who do not

belong to any caste and are therefore considered to be lower than the *Śūdras*; these as the non-caste and the untouchables. Throughout the years many have attempted to abolish the caste system, and while it has been possible to create some progress against the discrimination of the lower castes, the system itself still stands in India today. The caste system is so hard to dissolve mainly because of the fact that it is described in the Vedas as part of the *dharma*, or duty. As it is in the Vedas, and the Vedas are *śrūti*, as the Vedas are considered by many to be absolute truth, so is the concept and implementation of the caste system; hence observing the caste system is part of Vedic *dharma*.

The only caste that was allowed to learn and perform the various Vedic rituals was the *Brahmin* caste. Furthermore, only the next two lower castes, the *Kṣatriya* and *Vaiśya* had access to the rituals through the *Brahmins*. The *Śūdra*, the non-caste and the untouchables were not allowed to be part of the Vedic rituals at all (Herman 52). One of the problems this presents, is that a large number of the population had no access to any opportunity of prosperity, the other, is that the population that had access to it was forced to use the *Brahmins* as intermediaries. Considering the fact that the household rituals were intended for the assurance of prosperity, along with the fact that the *Brahmins* were the only vehicle towards such prosperity, the *Brahmins* came to be extremely powerful. “The religion became power oriented, excessively ritualistic, priest dominated and aristocratic” (Herman 63); the *Brahmins* were no longer just ‘intermediaries’, but rather the administrators and proprietors of the religion.

The attempt to preserve *Brahmanic* authority prompts a homogenizing trend in India that inspired the work of philosophers such as *Vijñānabhikṣu*, who “claimed that, properly understood, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vedānta and Nyāya were in essence different

aspects of a single, well-coordinated philosophical outlook”, dismissing their abysmal differences as a mere “misunderstanding” (Nicholson 3). The Vedic *saṃhitas*, with the designation of śrūti, were of the highest authority since they were considered revelation. The authority of the *Brahmins*, as well as that of the *saṃhitas*, led to a tendency of connecting *smṛti* works to the philosophy of the Vedas to be perceived as “an authoritative addition to the Vedas” in order to elevate the validity of the work (Minor 1). Furthermore, the Vedic solution against the perceived threat of the rise of the *Upaniṣadic* movement was to absorb the new movement into the Vedic canon, renaming it Vedānta, literally meaning the end of the Veda, hence reducing it to being commentaries on the Vedas, as opposed to being a movement in its own right, even though it clearly presents an opposingly different philosophy, world-view, purpose, and goal than those of the Vedas.

The Six *Darśanas* Strengthening the Homogeneity Trend

The homogenizing trend that arises from the need to reconcile the Vedic tradition and the *Upaniṣadic* movement in order to perpetuate *Brahmin* authority was further continued and strengthened when once again Vedic authority was questioned. “The age of the Buddha [563-483BC] represents the great springtide of philosophic spirit in India” (Radhakrishnan and Moore 349), as its propositions stimulated a dialogue between the many different existing philosophies that continued for centuries, and eventually gave rise to Classical Hinduism. As “the conservative schools were compelled to codify their views and set forth logical defenses for them, all logical attempts to gather the floating conceptions of the world into some great general ideas were regarded as *darśanas*. This

conception led to the view that the apparently isolated and independent systems were really members of a larger historical plan” (Radhakrishnan and Moore 349).

The philosophies that are considered to recognize the validity of the Vedas are labeled *āstika*, or ‘agreer’, and are further categorized within the six *Darśanas*, or ‘views’, while those which are considered to not accept the Vedas are labeled as *nāstika*, or ‘denier’, and include Buddhism, Jainism and Cārvāka. Only after the late medieval period “it became almost universally accepted that there was a fixed group of Indian philosophies in basic agreement with one another and standing together against Buddhism and Jainism” (Nicholson 3). The reductionist and absolutistic categorization of multiple and widely different philosophies as ‘*āstika*’ inevitably implies a reference to Vedic authority, “falsely suggests a uniformity concerning the importance that was placed by Classical Indian philosophers upon one’s attitude to Vedic authority, and serves to mask the diversity of philosophical positions within each of the broad religious categories” (Burley 2). Since “the acceptance of the Veda implies that all the systems have drawn from a common reservoir of thought” (Radhakrishnan and Moore 353), the emergence of the six *Darśanas* further strengthened the homogeneity trend.

Causing further problems is the translation of the terms *āstika* and *nāstika* as orthodox and heterodox, for they have come to be commonly known, in several instances, that what they agree with and deny is the existence of God. Therefore, it leads to the orthodox systems to be understood as theistic, allowing for the atheism of the unorthodox systems. Orthodoxy in this context does not mean the adherence to a particular doctrine such as the belief in God, but only focuses on the acceptance of the authority Vedas. Furthermore, “atheism in the Indian context does not carry with it irreligiousness.

Atheism involves disbelief in a Creator, but is quite compatible with belief in salvation... Nor is it incompatible with prayer to the gods,” for they are neither creator nor sustainers of the universe, and as human beings, bound to the reality of *samsāra* (Smart 23). Thus, the concepts of theism and atheism, in their definition and understanding in inevitable reference to the Western or Abrahamic concepts of religion, God, creation, and the universe, cannot fully apply to Indian systems, for these systems are simply too different.

The tendency to attempt to understand Indian religions through the lens of Christianity was first established by the early missionaries and the early Orientalists. “To the Westerner, however, the Oriental was always *like* some aspect of the West; he also seeks to convert each aspect of Oriental or Occidental life into an unmediated sign of one or the other geographical half” (Said 247). Therefore, the many Indian traditions that came to define Hinduism were interpreted through their comparison with Christianity, and under the constraints of the model the later had already established. This not only led to misinterpretations, but also to great generalizations, where single isolated elements were taken as the representative of the whole.

Elevating Hinduism as a World Religion

The desire to elevate Hinduism as a world religion as a reaction against the negative depiction of Hindu traditions by Christian Missionaries during the British colonialism of India further strengthens the homogenizing trend. The British Missionaries’ depiction of the Hindus as “heathens” with “monstrous and ridiculous” gods, as well as their effort to convert and thus save them, prompted the Hindus to begin to present their beliefs in foreign terms, portraying Hinduism as a homogenous religion (Pennington 50).

Furthermore, the British blamed the source for the inherent immorality of Hinduism, fueled by stories of violence, human sacrifice, idolatry, and obscenities, on their polytheism (Pennington 82), and hence established their superiority, as Christians, on their monotheism. Thus, the negative portrayal of the Hindus by the British Missionaries prompted their need to respond by presenting their religion in a cohesive and unified way, with one god and one collection of books, founded upon revelation, and as such, elevating their religion to the same authority level as the Abrahamic traditions. In time, the concept of Hinduism as a single system becomes accepted as it is established as a world religion, particularly after Swami Vivekananda's address in 1893 at the World's Parliament of Religions.

Swami Vivekananda is the foremost contributor to the propagation of Vedānta in the world. His teachings have had unprecedented effects both in the West and in India. By “planting the seeds of independent thinking and in creating a pride in India's past among the youth” (Rajamani 55), his mission elevated Hindu religion and society, having a direct impact on the Hindu Renaissance, eventually leading to the independence of India. He was able to present Hinduism to a Western audience not only in a way that they could understand, but most significantly, in a way they could come to embrace and eventually hold as their own.

Vivekananda presented Vedānta as ‘the’ Hindu religion (Vivekananda 1:387); a universal (Vivekananda 2:375) “religion of non-dual philosophy” (Vivekananda 1:502) that could be applied to any religion. In the West he preached monotheism (Vivekananda 1:331), barely used Sanskrit terminology, de-emphasized cultural remarks and furthermore translated concepts into a language adapted for Western Christians: using

‘God’ or ‘Father’ instead of *Brahman*. Philip Goldberg sees this as "a conscious decision to emphasize a universal, adaptable Vedānta-yoga", by not openly disclosing beliefs and practices that could be perceived "as cultist or idolatrous" (Goldberg 80). In America Vivekananda never publicly mentioned the extent of his devotion to his *guru* and his status as an *avatar*, nor his *guru's* devotion to the goddess *Kālī*. His success in this endeavor not only opened the doors for other *gurus* and thinkers, but also created a model that many have followed in adapting Eastern teachings for a Western culture.

Conclusion

The classification of Patañjali’s Yoga as a *Darśana* does not come without a series of implications and consequences. It implies its affiliation into a cohesive and unified system of thought, its allegiance to the authority of the Vedas, and it defines itself as distinct from those who are not considered *āstika*, drawing an alleged clear demarcation between itself and the *nāstikas*, when in reality, in many ways, “Yoga holds closer affinity with Jainism and Buddhism than with its Vedānta and Bhakti cousins” (Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous* ix). Furthermore, its frequent paring with the system of Classical Sāṃkhya, it allows for *īśvara* as the main distinction between the two systems, labeling the former as *saiśvara* and the later *nīrīśvara*, which are often translated as theistic and atheistic, terms that come to misrepresent both systems.

CHAPTER 4

THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE TERM *ĪŚVARA* AND ITS PRE-CLASSICAL HISTORY

The categorization of Classical Yoga as a theistic text is directly rooted in the consequences of the presence of the term *īśvara* in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*. Chapter 2 addresses the consequences that arise from certain prevalent hermeneutical trends that have led to the theistic interpretation of the term and the concomitant translation of *īśvara* as God. Furthermore, it reviews the commentarial tradition of Classical Yoga as well as the elevation of certain commentaries to be as authoritative, and in some instances, more authoritative than the original text, further perpetuating such misconceptions. Chapter 3 further expands on the nature of these trends, identifying them as consequences of an indigenous homogenizing trend that arose as a method to perpetuate Vedic authority and was perpetuated in order to elevate Hinduism as a world religion.

The third problem mentioned in Chapter 1 is the ambiguity of the term *īśvara*, for it has been used throughout history in different contexts and thus conveyed different meanings. However, the discrepancies in the understanding and application of the term are not exclusive to its use in different periods of time, but also prevalent in systems that are contemporary to each other. "Each system sets forth its special doctrine by using, with necessary modifications, the current language of the highest religious speculation" (Radhakrishnan and Moore 353). Hence, the different systems have used the most common philosophical terms, however, they do not necessarily use them with the same understanding, meaning, or in the same context. In order to demystify the term *īśvara*, Chapter 4 is an analysis of its etymology, primarily focusing on its pre-Classical history

and development. Since in many cases the translation of *īśvara* as God is almost automatic, Chapter 4 is an exploration of the meaning of the term, tracing its development as far back as possible, from its secular origins and its transition from worldly lord to personal God. Further, it explores the concept of theism in Indian systems, its connection to the development of the term, and the Abrahamic influence on the interpretation and thus translation of Hindu terms.

In order to address the issue of terminology, an important distinction needs to be made between the following categories: (1) Functional deities, such as the Vedic gods *Indra*, *Agni*, *Varuṇa*, etc., who are individual, particular, and related to a specific aspect or activity of the universe. (2) Sectarian traditions, such as those focused on the worship of *Viṣṇu* or *Śiva*, which have specific beliefs that are unique to their respective traditions, and that may vary from one tradition to another. (3) Widespread doctrines, such as the concepts of *karma* or *mokṣa*, which are concepts that have been generally accepted by the different Hindu traditions, whether they necessarily adhere to them or not. The development of the term *īśvara* will be traced from its Vedic origins, addressing the different stages in the understanding of the term and its use by different texts and systems of thought, as well as placing the term in the context of these three categories, and how these relate to theism in the development of Hindu thought.

The current most popular use of the term *īśvara* in Hindu thought is “in the sense of ‘omnific, omnipresent Supreme God’. Excepting the sectarian words like ‘*Śiva*’, ‘*Viṣṇu*’, ‘*Rāma*’, ‘*Kṛṣṇa*’, there is probably no other non-sectarian word which is so commonly used among the Hindus for the idea of God, as the word ‘*īśvara*’ (or ‘*Parameśvara*’)” (Shastri 487). However, the concept of *Parameśvara* in this sense did not exist until after

the time of the Buddha (Shastri 498). This is precisely the position of M. D. Shastri, as he argues that, if the concept of *īśvara* in the sense of *Parameśvara*, a supreme and only creator God, had been established in India at the time of the Buddha, “the rise and great expansion of a godless system like Buddhism” would have been unattainable (Shastri 502).

Secular Origins of the Term *īśvara*

Examples of the secular origin of the term *īśvara* can be seen in the *Aṣṭadhyāyī* of Pāṇini, the most authoritative work on Classical Sanskrit and the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali (the grammarian), the great commentary on the former. In both cases the term “has been consistently used ... in the sense of a *rājā* or an administrative head” (Shastri 487). Furthermore, in the *Mahābhāṣya* “the words ‘*rājā*’, ‘*ina*’, and ‘*īśvara*’ are clearly regarded as synonyms and king Puṣyamitra is spoken of as ‘*īśvara*’” (Shastri 492), which clearly demonstrates the secular use of the term. Considering that Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭadhyāyī* “has been placed in the 5th century BCE by some and in the 4th century BCE by others” (Joshi 14), it would make the *Aṣṭadhyāyī* contemporary to the time of the Buddha, as well as to at least some *Upaniṣads*, for the oldest are considered to be dated by Dāsgupta and Müller between the 6th and 5th century BCE (Joshi 13), and the earliest at around the 2nd century BCE (Pflueger 4771). The *Mahābhāṣya* however is considered to be dated around the 2nd century BCE, therefore, at least until that time, there was no widespread understanding of *īśvara* in the sense of *Parameśvara*.

Īśvara in the Vedas, Brāhmanas, and Upaniṣads

The term *īśvara* first begins to be used in the *Atharaveda*, the youngest of the Vedic *saṃhitas*, in five passages; however, it is not used in the sense of *Parameśvara*, as it is “used only in the ordinary sense of a lord or master” (Shastri 489). In the *Ṛgveda*, the term does not appear at all, and only uses “the epithets *īśāna* or *īśā* (from the same root) to designate the power of such deities as the universal sovereign *Varuṇa*, guardian of the cosmic order; *Agni*, the god of fire; *Indra*, lightning-hurling leader of the gods; and *Puruṣa*, the Cosmic Person” (Pflueger 4751). The term *īśāna*, a noun meaning “possessing, wealthy, reigning” and in its masculine form as “a ruler” or “master” (Monier Williams 171) appears “in the *Ṛgveda* in the sense of ‘a ruler’ and is generally used for *Indra* and other gods” (Shastri 488). Furthermore, none of all these functional deities represent a highest God, since none of them seems to be consistently above the rest. Additionally, as illustrated in Chapter 3, the *Ṛgveda* takes a rather agnostic position regarding the nature of the creator of the universe, and further states the many deities are not the creators, for they were created after creation took place.

Throughout the *Brāhmanas* the god *Prajāpati* is elevated “as the embodiment of Vedic sacrifice” and begins to be connected to the Absolute *Brahman* (Pflueger 4751). However, the suffix *pati* in *Prajāpati* is another word that has been used in earlier times in the sense of a lord which did not become as widespread as the terms derived from *īś* (Gonda 133). In the ten older *Upaniṣads*, the term *īśvara* “not only has not been used in the sense of *Parameśvara*, but also, excepting the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, it has not been used at all”, the latter in which it is used in the sense of “capable of” (Shastri 494). The importance of the concept of *Brahman* arises in the *Upaniṣads*; however, it cannot be

equated to the later understanding of *Parameśvara*, for the Vedāntic concept of *Brahman* does not imply an external worship of an external entity or being, as is the case with the devotional understanding of *Parameśvara*. In the *Upaniṣads* *Brahman* emerges as the Absolute; it is the subtle and the concrete, the big and the small, the in and the out, the Self and the Absolute.

In the *Upaniṣads*, the *ātman*, or Self, is seen as the microcosm of *Brahman*. While *ātman* is often times translated as soul, this is not the understanding that the Self is individual and particular of the person who embodies it. The misunderstanding that arises in the interpretation of Vedāntic doctrine from later devotional practices has led to the understanding that the Self searches to merge with *Brahman*. However, this is not the case, as the Self is not considered to be separate from *Brahman*, for *Brahman* and the Self are one and the same. The cognitive error in this case is due to the perception that they are separate, thus, the solution, and hence the goal of the system is the realization that the separation is an illusion; there is no merging, for they have always been one. Furthermore, *Brahman* was never really perceived as a popular deity: “The very fact that it is conceived in neuter gender shows that it can never be the object of popular worship. The god of popular worship is always conceived in masculine or feminine gender” (Shastri 497).

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* describes the eternal qualities of *Brahman* in terms of the Self, illustrating their homogeny. Furthermore, it clearly states that *Brahman* “is neither the cause nor effect”, for it is the Absolute, which is outside the Western understanding of God.

It is – *Om*. This syllable is *Brahman*. ... The Self, whose symbol is *Om*, is the omniscient Lord. He is not born. He does not die. He is neither cause nor effect. This Ancient One in unborn, imperishable, eternal: though the body be destroyed, he is not killed (Prabhavanada and Manchester 8).

From Worldly Lord to *Parameśvara*

The transition of the understanding of *īśvara* from worldly lord to the sense of *Parameśvara* begins with the rise of sectarian traditions as *Vaiṣṇavism* and *Śaivism*, “which were occasioned by [the rise of] Buddhism” (Phillips 111). As a reaction to the Buddhist worship traditions that began after the death of the Buddha, the *Brahmin* trend of appropriating doctrines into their tradition in order to maintain their popularity and authority extended to them giving “prominence to the gods, *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva*” and “clustered around them in Epics and *Purāṇas*” (Phillips 46). It is only when the term *īśāna* begins to be identified as “a synonym of *Śiva*” that the transition of the term *īśvara* towards *Parameśvara* begins. “In the *Śvetāśvatara* and other older *Śaiva Upaniṣads* ‘*Maheśvara*’ and not ‘*īśvara*’ has been used for *Śiva* ... but gradually in the *Śaivaite* literature itself ‘*īśvara*’ came to be used for ‘*Maheśvara*’”, and later in the *tantras* the term *īśvara* is used as a synonym of *Śiva* (Shastri 501).

The path of devotion, or *bhakti*, that arose in sectarian traditions and “percolated throughout India by the medieval period” (Siegel 422) “continues in the sectarian literature of the epics and *Purāṇas*, becoming from the medieval period to modern times the mainstream of Hindu spirituality” (Pflueger 4752). The devotional and thus exoteric understanding of *īśvara* in the sense of *Parameśvara* could not have become widespread

until as early as the medieval period. As devotional traditions become increasingly popular it became necessary, in order to legitimize the devotional approach, to reconcile them with the most prominent *āstika* systems, and thus connect them to Vedic authority. The need for reconciliation gave rise to a syncretic trend that has been perpetuated and popularized until contemporary times, its most prominent exponent being Vijñānabhikṣu, who “was active at a time when, on the one hand, in the philosophical field, Vedānta was at its height and on the other hand, in the religious field, *Bhakti* was gaining supremacy” (Rukmani, “Vijñānabhikṣu: A Maverick Philosopher” 8).

In his *Yogavārttika* Vijñānabhikṣu not only presents *īśvara* in the sense of *Parameśvara* as the efficient cause of the universe (Rukmani, “Vijñānabhikṣu: A Maverick Philosopher” 133), but he further considers *īśvara* to be able to “bring about quickly *asamprajñāta*-yoga and *kaivalya* for the devotee who practices *bhakti*” (Rukmani, “Vijñānabhikṣu: A Maverick Philosopher” 135), thus irrevocably redefining *kaivalya* in terms of its dependency on *īśvara*, thus elevating the devotional path. This understanding of *īśvara* is perpetuated by later commentaries such as Dasgupta’s, as he not only considers devotion of *īśvara* to be “the easiest course of attaining *samādhi*”, but he states that “by his grace he removes all obstructions” (Dasgupta, *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion* 161), making *īśvara* an active agent in the path of the *yogi* towards *kaivalya* and thus elevating the role of *īśvara* in the path of Yoga even further. All of these understandings prove as a series of misplaced assumptions regarding Patañjali’s Yoga system.

Theism and Atheism in Indian Thought

The *bhakti* tradition became increasingly widespread throughout India over time, and in the process, it intermingled with other prominent traditions, lead the masses to adopt a devotional approach towards several other sectarian traditions. This Hindu devotional approach, however, cannot be necessarily understood as theism in the same sense as the Abrahamic traditions. The following passage is a description of the syncretic approach common to Hindu practitioners as well as the incompatibility of Hindu thought with theism:

My own teacher in India is a devotee of *Kṛṣṇa*; he also practices Yoga, makes offerings to *Agni*, *Gaṇeśa*, *Sarasvatī*, and the lot, and without any feeling of contradiction speaks of *samsāra* as *Brahman*. He is, I believe, typical of Indian teachers when he asserts that there is really no difference between *Śaṅkara* and *Rāmānuja*, between *Śiva* and *Viṣṇu*, between *tantra* and *bhakti*. Is he a theist? I would not dare ask him for the same reason that I would not dare wonder if Indian thinking is theistic (Siegel 420).

Theism, as stated previously, implies the belief in an entity who is the creator and sustainer of the universe, all-powerful, all knowing; “a god who is only one, only external, only distinct from his creation” (Siegel 420), which is not in line with Indian understandings of deity or creation. Furthermore, the concept of *karma* would make a complete contradiction to the Western concept of God, for in most Indian systems, *karma* has more power in affecting people’s destinies than God, for the laws of karma cannot be broken, even by the most powerful deity (Garbe, “Outlines of a History of Indian Philosophy” 585). Since in India “God can be one and many, external and internal, even

real and unreal” (Siegel 420), it is obvious that this understanding of God is completely different from the concept of God in the Abrahamic religions, therefore, the term theism would not accurately represent the complexity of the Hindu concept of deity, as it would be greatly misleading. In this line, the use of the term theism in Hindu thought would thus define the systems that do not adhere to the same beliefs as atheistic, leading to further misrepresentation and confusion, for the concept of atheism is vastly different in Hindu thought from Western thought. “Atheism in the Indian context does not carry with it irreligiousness. Atheism involves disbelief in a Creator, but is quite compatible with belief in salvation, ... [and] with prayer to the gods, conceived as beings who are inside, rather than transcendent to, the empirical cosmos” (Smart 23).

Conclusion

The development of the use of the term *īśvara* is thus parallel to the development of the devotional approach in Hindu thought. The concept of creation takes an agnostic approach in the Vedas, with the appearance of functional and utilitarian deities yet no definite concept of creator or ultimate single sustainer of the universe. The concept of *Brahman* emerges as the Absolute during the *Upaniṣads*, which in time begins to be tied with sectarian devotional traditions that spread throughout India during the medieval period, giving rise to a pseudo-theism that has become a widespread doctrine of Modern Hinduism.

The term *īśvara* developed from the terms *īśā* and *īśāna*, which share the same verbal root, used in the earlier Vedas, while *īśvara* itself was not used until the latest of the Vedic *Samhitas*. However, none of these terms were used in the sense of

Parameśvara, but rather in the sense of a worldly lord, which was a customary address for the many functional deities. The term was used as well in completely secular environments and contexts, as is the case with the *Aṣṭadhyāyī* of Pāṇini and the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali in the sense of *rājā* as an address to kings and worldly lords. Only when connected to *Śaivism*, which was a sectarian traditions at that time, does it begin to be used in the sense of *Parameśvara*, and only after the popularization of bhakti leading to the devotional approach to many other systems of thought becoming widespread does it not begin to be translated as God. This translation is further perpetuated in the face of Muslim and subsequent British invasions, as an attempt to legitimize the Hindu religion (Pennington 3).

In spite of the many efforts to elevate Hinduism as a world religion through attempting to filter and translate it into Abrahamic terms, Hindu traditions can and should be understood for what they truly are. Hence, this study proposes, in order to avoid further misunderstandings and confusion, that terms which are irrevocably tied to Abrahamic traditions not be used as suitable translations for Hindu terms, such as God or Lord for *īśvara*. The former has been established throughout the present study as misleading for several reasons, and the later has contributed to the understanding of *īśvara* as God due to its common use in Christian literature and popular parlance to denote God. Rather, it would lead to increased accuracy to retain the terms in their original Sanskrit, in the same way this has been done with terms such as Yoga, *karma*, and *guru*, so much so, that they have already become part of common parlance in the West.

CHAPTER 5
THE PATH OF CLASSICAL YOGA: READING PATAÑJALI WITHOUT
COMMENTARY

It has been previously stated that the frequent translation of the term *īśvara* as God presents several problems: (1) it does not accurately represent the intent of the use and purpose of the term *īśvara* as used in the *Yogasūtra*, specifically obscuring the interpretation of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, a functional aspect of the system. (2) It has directly led to the common understanding of the main distinction between Sāṃkhya and Yoga as the former being atheistic while the latter theistic, labels that come to misrepresent both systems. (3) It allows for the confusion regarding the path of Patañjali, obscuring this path of discrimination, separation, involution and isolation towards liberation, to a point where it can lend itself to be interpreted and accommodated to fit into other ideologies, thus enabling a syncretic trend that has led to the popular understanding of Yoga as ‘union with the divine’. In order to address these issues most accurately, and particularly due to the ambiguity of the term as well as the inability to decipher with certainty the intention behind Patañjali’s use of this term, it becomes imperative to understand its nature and functionality within the constraints of the original text.

Hence, Chapter 5 is the product of a grammatical analysis of the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali (starting on page 70) without relying on the interpretations presented by commentary, and the particular translation and interpretation of the text that arises from it. It focuses on the *sūtras* that are most relevant in describing the path proposed by Patañjali, as well as the *sūtras* that most illustrate the nature and functionality of the term

īśvara. It is thus both a narrative of the path proposed by Patañjali, strictly based on the original text, as well as an analysis of the identity, purpose and use of the term *īśvara* and the functionality of the concept of *īśvarapraṇidhāna* within the *Yogasūtra*, and how these two relate to his proposed path as a whole, in order to clarify the aforementioned points.

The Ontology of Classical Sāṃkhya

The ontology of Classical Yoga, as that of Classical Sāṃkhya (*Sāṃkhyakārikā*), is based on a dualistic model of “subject and object and which maintains that the fundamental error consists in their confusion or identification in any form or at any level” (Krishna 202). Sāṃkhya philosophy describes the universe to be made up of only two independent elements: *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, which “are thus two ultimate, eternal and independent principles of existence. *Puruṣas* are many, *prakṛti* is one” (Tiamni 189). Patañjali makes very clear that these two elements exist independent from each other, as well as the fact that there is not one *puruṣa* or transcendental reality but rather a multitude of *puruṣas* or seers, and only one universal reality of nature, or *prakṛti*. This is illustrated in *sūtra* II.22, where he explains that even though the perception or experience of *prakṛti* ceases to exist as such for the seer who has accomplished the aim of the path, *prakṛti* itself does not, due to its universal nature, and to the multiplicity of *puruṣas*.

Prakṛti is everything material, even in its most subtle forms, consisting of elements and sense organs, the latter that include the mind and thought processes, which are for the sake of *puruṣa*'s experience and transcendence. Having the character of brightness (*sattva*), action (*rajas*), and inertia (*tamas*), these are further defined as its primary constituents, or *guṇas* (see YSII.1). It is the seen, or *drśya*, which only has the quality of

being seen, but not the ability to see. *Puruṣa* is everything that *prakṛti* is not. In contrast, it is the seer, or *draṣṭṛ*, that which only has the ability of seeing, but not the quality of being seen (see YSII.20). Due to their opposite characteristics they attract each other and interact, the purpose of that connection (*samyoga*) being the cultivation of the perception of the own nature (*svarūpa*) of the power (*śakti*) of both *puruṣa* (the owner) and *prakṛti* (the owned) (see YSII.23). Furthermore, the existence of *prakṛti* (the seen) is strictly for the purpose of *puruṣa* (the seer) (see YSII.21), in order for it to become established in its own nature (*svarūpa*) (see YSI.3), and thus achieving a state of Yoga (see YSI.2).

In a way, *prakṛti*, like a body of water, becomes the mirror for *puruṣa* to see its reflection upon, which, due to its exclusive nature of seer, is unable to do on its own. In that process, *puruṣa* becomes so identified with its reflection, that it loses its identity completely as it becomes absorbed in its own reflection. This misperception (*viparyaya*) is identified by Patañjali as one of the five-fold fluctuations (*vṛttayah pañcatayyah*) of the mind (see YSI.5), which is the mistaken knowledge (*mithyāñjānam*) on the foundation of an appearance that is not what it appears to be (see YSI.8). Hence, the main cognitive problem arises when, in the process of this interaction, which is supposed to illuminate the nature of both *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* independently, *puruṣa*'s misidentification with *prakṛti* leads to *puruṣa* to lose the awareness of its own identity. Patañjali describes this misidentification as *avidyā*, or ignorance (see YSII.24), and only through its destruction (*abhāva*), and thus the dissolution of that connection (*samyoga*) between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, can the isolation of seeing (*kaivalya*) be achieved, which is the goal, ergo the end, of the path (see YSII.25).

The Path of Patañjala Yoga

This isolation or abstraction of seeing (*kaivalya*) is the return to the original state (*pratiprasava*) of the primary constituents of nature (*guṇas*), devoid of purpose for *puruṣa* (*arthaśūnyānām*), as well as the grounding (*pratiṣṭhā*) of *puruṣa* in its own nature (*svarūpa*) by this cultivated power of awareness (*citiśakti*) (see YSIV.34). Thus, the attainment of *kaivalya* is often times interpreted as liberation; however, while it is very appropriate to interpret it as such in terms of *puruṣa* having transcended its cognitive bond with *prakṛti*, this does not necessarily imply any type of salvation or release from *saṃsāra*, or *mokṣa*. Patañjali, in fact, ends his fourth and final chapter with this previous *sūtra* (YSIV.34), and fails to elucidate further on what happens to the liberated *puruṣa* once *kaivalya* is attained. It appears that Patañjali describes *kaivalya* exclusively in terms of *prakṛti*, as this is the realm where the practice takes place. Once transcended, perhaps it becomes impossible to describe its *puruṣa* experience or reality in *prakṛtic* terms.

The solution Patañjali proposes, is that since a connection between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* has been established, *puruṣa* can use its transient *prakṛtic* vehicle (body and mind) as a tool to follow a path of involution back towards the abstraction of *puruṣa*'s nature, until that connection completely dissolves, and *puruṣa* can stand in its own nature (*svarūpa*) in a state of *kaivalya*. While *Samādhipāda*, the first chapter, describes the path in terms of *samādhi*, or mental concentration or absorption, *Sādhanapāda*, the second chapter, describes it more in terms of practice. Throughout the text, several techniques are discussed, in order to address the many different practitioners, with their different temperaments, who are in different stages of the path. At the beginning of the text, Patañjali defines Yoga as the restriction (*nirodha*) of the fluctuations of the mind

(*cittavṛtti*) (see YSI.2), further describing the path and some of the techniques in terms of this definition. Further, he defines the result of the practice of Yoga as the establishment, or rather remaining (*avasthānam*), of the seer (*dr̥ṣṭu*) in its own nature (see YSI.3), and the failure of achievement (*itaratra*), as the identification with those fluctuations (see YSI.4).

The first means towards the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind to achieve the goal of Yoga (YSI.2-3) is practice (*abhyāsa*) and dispassion (*vairagya*) (see YSI.12). From this definition, Patañjali begins to describe the different levels of commitment and intensity of practice and dispassion, as them being weak (*mṛdu*), intermediate (*madhya*), and intense (*adhimātra*) (see YSI.22). While he describes dispassion as the conception (*samjñā*) of the mastery (*vaśīkāra*) of being free from desire of that which is seen or heard (see YSI.15), the highest form of dispassion is the lack of desire for the constituents of nature (*guṇa*), or the non-attachment to *prakṛti* (YSI.16). In the same way, in order for practice to become grounded (*bhūmi*), it must be cultivated with reverence (*satkāra*), uninterruptedly (*nairantarya*), and for a long time (*dīrgakāla*) (see YSI.14). For those who have this highest level of commitment in their practice leading to its full establishment, and thus an intense desire of emancipation (*tīvrasmvega*), the goal of Yoga is near (see YSI.21). However, for those who do not, there are a series of alternatives, which are denoted by the word ‘or’ (*vā*).

***Īśvarapraṇidhāna* as Concept and Method**

The first alternative he mentions is *īśvarapraṇidhāna* (YSI.23), after which he dedicated the following six *sūtras* (YSI.24-29) to elucidate on that technique, defining its

nature and its effects. After listing the obstacles (*antarāya*) (YSI.30-31), he prescribes the way to transcend them as the practice of a single reality (*ekatattva*) (see YSI.32), followed by the other alternative techniques: the retention of breath (YSI.34), the cognition of a sensory object that creates steadiness of mind (YSI.35), by engaging in activities that are sorrowless and illuminating (YSI.36), by directing the mind towards objects in order to transcend attachment (YSI.37), by cultivating knowledge in dreams and sleep (YSI.38), or, through *dhyāna*, meditation (YSI.39). The sequence of these seven alternatives to the intense commitment to practice and dispassion seem to follow a pattern of internalization, from the most external and concrete, the retention of breath, to the most internal and abstract, *dhyāna*. Therefore, at least in this chapter, *īśvarapraṇidhāna* appears to function as a starting point towards the process of internalization, leading to meditation (*dhyāna*).

However, this is not the only place in the text where *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is mentioned. While in *Samādhipāda* *īśvarapraṇidhāna* seems to be but one of several methods or approaches, in *Sādhanapāda*, the second chapter, it appears as one of the three elements of *Kriyāyoga*, which is itself contained in the *Niyamas*, one of the elements of *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga. *Sādhanapāda* in fact opens with the introduction of *Kriyāyoga*, perhaps establishing its practice as an entry point to the techniques to follow, and defining it as being composed of three components: *tapas*, *svādhyāya*, and *īśvarapraṇidhāna* (see YSII.1). Further, it defines the purpose of its practice as leading towards the cultivation of *samādhi* and the attenuation of the afflictions or *kleśa* (YSII.2) (afflictions defined in YSII.3-10), and states the ultimate method for the eradication of the fluctuations (*vṛttaya*) arising from such afflictions to be *dhyāna*, or meditation (see

YSII.11). Further along the text, Patañjali introduces the concept of *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga, or the Eightfold Path of Yoga, as being for the cultivation of discernment (*vivekakhyaṭi*) (YSII.28). *Kriyāyoga* appears here again, contained within the second component of the path, *Niyama*, or restraints, along with two more components, purity (*śauca*) and contentment (*santoṣa*) (see YSII.32). Here, he elaborates on the components of *Kriyāyoga*: *Tapas*, or austerity, is the destruction of impurities, the perfection of the body (*kāya*) and sense organs (*indriya*) (see YSII.43), *svādhyāya*, or self study, is the means for a connection (*samprayoga*)²⁰ to a chosen deity (*iṣṭadevatā*) (see YSII.44), and *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, the means for the perfection (*siddhi*) of *samādhi* (see IYSI.45).

Up to this point, *īśvarapraṇidhāna* has been mentioned in two different chapters: in the first chapter as perhaps an optional method, and in the second chapter, as more of a foundational method of this path; however, wherever *īśvarapraṇidhāna* is mentioned, or whatever it is connected to, in all cases it leads to *samādhi*, specifically through *dhyāna*, or meditation. The term *praṇidhāna* can mean ‘attention’, ‘vehement desire’, ‘abstract contemplation’, ‘fixing’, or ‘vow’. However, in order to reach the most accurate translation of this word, it is necessary to trace the formation of the word *praṇidhāna* to its smallest components: ‘*pra + ni + dhā + na*’. The verbal root $\sqrt{dhā}$ means ‘placing’, ‘putting’, or, ‘holding’, ‘possessing’, ‘having’. When combined with the suffix ‘*na*’ it

²⁰ Note the difference between Patañjali’s choice of term here for the connection between a *yogi* and his *iṣṭadevatā*, and the term used for the connection between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. In the former, he uses the term *samprayoga*, while in the latter, *samyoga*. The words are identical except for the prefix ‘*pra*’ in the former. This can be understood as a deliberate choice by Patañjali in order to make a distinction between these two different types of connection. While the *yogi* requires action and effort (denoted by ‘*pra*’) in order to connect to its own concept of deity as part of a method towards concentration and thus internalization, the *puruṣa* does not strive to connect with *prakṛti*, and thus, this connection can be understood as an unintended misidentification.

comes to mean ‘containing’, ‘holding’, ‘receptacle’, or ‘case’. So far, it can mean either ‘placing’ or ‘holding’ something somewhere, however, there is still the contribution of the prefixes ‘*pra*’ and ‘*ni*’ in this construction to consider. The prefix ‘*pra*’ as an adverb means ‘forward’, or ‘forth’, and as an adjective, ‘like’, or ‘resembling’. First of all, whether in use as an adverb or adjective, ‘*pra*’ denotes an action, something that is performed. Adding the adverb ‘*ni*’, which can mean ‘in’, ‘into’, or ‘within’, adds yet another dimension to its meaning. Thus, when combined with the term *īśvara*, *praṇidhāna* can be interpreted as the action of placing or holding forth into *īśvara*, or resembling what is contained or that which resides within *īśvara*, the essence of *īśvara*.

The Identity and Use of *īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra*

After the introduction of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, Patañjali describes *īśvara* as a special or distinct (*viśeṣa*) *puruṣa*, its distinction resting on the fact that he is untouched by the accumulations of *karma* that arise from afflictions (*kleśa*) (see YSI.24), and in which the omniscient (*sarvajña*) seed (*bīja*) is unsurpassed (*niratiśaya*) (see YSI.25), as he is the teacher (*guru*) of the ancestors (*pūrveṣam*) from not being limited (*ānāvachchēdāt*) by time (*kāla*) (see YSI.26). The fact that *īśvara* is deemed a *puruṣa* means he is not outside the Sāṃkhya-Yoga model of duality, therefore, as a *puruṣa*, he is by definition a seer, a witness of the seen, or *prakṛti*, and hence unable to interact with *prakṛti* in a way in which he could have any effect or influence upon it. From Patañjali’s definition, *īśvara* appears to be a representative of the highest ideal of the path, rather than an external deity, and certainly, much different from a creator or sustainer God. Thus, by having included a definition of *īśvara* that contradicts the popular theistic meaning of the term,

presents a possible deliberate intention of Patañjali to separate his use of the term from its use by other systems of thought or traditions (see Chapter 4 for the pre-classical history of the term *īśvara*).

Upon defining the identity of *īśvara*, Patañjali proceeds to explain the method of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, as the recitation (*japa*) of the *praṇava* (*oṃ*), *īśvara*'s sound (see YSI.27), which leads to the nature (*artha*) of essence or meditation (*bhāvanā*) (see YSI.28). This chanting or repetition (*japa*) of the *praṇava* (*oṃ*) serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it is an abstract or vibrational representation of an ideal reality (*īśvara*), and on the other, it is a tool in this process of internalization, standing as a link, through action (chanting), between the conceptual *īśvara* and the fully internalized experience of transcendence. By being used as a point of focus, going beyond the identity of *īśvara* in worldly terms, using the *praṇava* as an abstract representation of the archetype of the ultimate reality, through a process of internalization, from the *japa* or repetition, which represents a gross element or reality, to *bhāvanā* or essence/meditation, which represents a subtle or abstract element or reality, thus emerging as a deep empirical experience in the realm of meditation. As a result, the recitation of *oṃ* allows the yogi to have an experience beyond body and mind, beyond *prakṛti*: an experience of *puruṣa* itself. Meditating on *īśvara*, who is a *puruṣa* that has never lost its identity to *prakṛti*, the pragmatic approach of Yoga allows the *puruṣa* to use *īśvara* as an alternate mirror, so to speak, in the process of bringing awareness back to an internal and subtle place, and eventually back to its true nature (*svarūpa*).

As far as *Kriyāyoga*, if *Niyama* is understood as a restraint, the question arises, what is it restraining? Patañjali defines the path of *Aṣṭāṅgayoga* to be for the purpose of

the cultivation of discernment, or *vivekakhyāti*, of the own identity of *puruṣa* from its misidentification with *prakṛti* (YSII.28). The *Niyama* elements additional to *Kriyāyoga*, *śauca* and *santoṣa*, establish a desire to protect one's body (*svāṅgajugupsā*) (YSII.40), a mastery (*jaya*) of the sense organs, one-pointedness (*aikāgrya*) and right understanding (*saumanasya*) (YSII.41), as well as unsurpassed (*anuttama*) happiness (*sukha*) (YSII.42). These are further combined with the results from the practice of *Kriyāyoga*: the destruction of impurities and the perfection of the body and sense organs through *tapas* (see YSII.43), the connection to a chosen deity (*iṣṭadevatā*) through *svādhyāya* (see YSII.44), and the practice of *īśvarapraṇidhāna* as the means for the perfection of *samādhi* (see YSII.45). Clearly, the nature of these methods restrain the mind from engaging in further misidentifications, and hence in activities that lead away from the achievement of discernment (*vivekakhyāti*), as they support a self-centered, inward-minded approach. Even in the case of the use of *iṣṭadevatā* through *svādhyāya*, since this is followed by *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, it can be understood as an external point of focus in order to achieve one-pointedness (*aikāgrya*), and to be fully internalized through the practice of *īśvarapraṇidhāna* in order to cultivate right understanding (*saumanasya*).

Through the practice of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, the yogi attempts to establish a connection with *īśvara*, yet *īśvara* here is not an external element or deity to worship, but rather a direct experience of *puruṣa*, where the *yogi* is able to get a direct glimpse of its true nature. In contrast, the concept of *iṣṭadevatā*, presented by Patañjali as an element of *svādhyāya*, or self study, would function as an external deity, yet still, not one to worship particularly, but rather one to establish a connection or identification with (*samprayoga*) for the purpose of self study (see YSII.44). In this context, it seems the role of *īśvara* is

described as a tool in the process of internalization necessary to fulfill this goal. If truth is to be defined as the closest approximation to a particular ultimate reality, in this sense, *īśvara* is proposed to be an archetype of this ultimate or rather ideal reality, which attainment is the goal of Yoga. The attainment of this reality does not imply going anywhere or merging with anything external, but rather realizing one's own nature. Thus, *praṇidhāna* becomes more of a concept that aids in a process of internalization, or a transference of identity of the essence of *īśvara* with that of the *yogi*, which are the same in nature, *puruṣa*, rather than a seeking to attempt an external union or devotion.

Classical Yoga vs. Vedānta

From the present analysis, it thus becomes evident that the many common syncretic trends between Classical Yoga with other systems of thought, particularly those that lead to the popular understanding of Yoga as 'union with the divine', are nothing more than a misplaced reconciliation attempt, based on assumptions and interpretations that are in fundamental contradiction with the original text. The path Vedānta proposes is immensely different from that of Patañjali, as the nature of the cognitive error, as well as the solution, are completely opposing concepts. In contrast with Classical Yoga and Sāṃkhya, in the *Upaniṣads* there is only one element in the universe: *Brahman*; "incomprehensible, for it cannot be comprehended; un-decaying, for it never decays; unattached, for it never attaches itself; unfettered, for it is never bound" (Prabhavanada and Manchester 127). It is the subtle and the concrete, the big and the small, the in and the out, the Self and the Absolute. The *ātman*, or Self, is seen as the microcosm of *Brahman* and not as a separate entity; therefore, *Brahman* and *ātman* are precisely one

and the same. As in Classical Yoga, the error is due to *avidyā*, however, in Vedānta, the nature of this error is not due to a coming together, but rather a coming apart, when the *ātman* forgets its *Brahmanic* nature, as the fact that it and *Brahman* are one and the same.

If Vedānta were to be translated into Sāṃkhyan terms, it could be said that there is only *puruṣa*, which is only one, and the illusion lies in perceiving *prakṛti* as real as well as the separation between the many *puruṣas* as real. Realization then comes in realizing this illusion and uniting the seemingly separate and individual *puruṣa* with the one *puruṣa* that is eternally divine (*Brahman*). Since Sāṃkhya presents a dualistic model and Vedānta a non-dualistic model, the solution for the error in both systems is fundamentally different, thus their approaches towards liberation, completely opposite. ‘Yoga’, as a vehicle of correcting this primordial error, etymologically derives from the Sanskrit verb root ‘*yuj*’, meaning to yoke, can be defined as either joining or harnessing. In this light, while the term joining applies to Vedānta, the term harnessing would definitely be much more appropriate for Patañjali’s Yoga. Therefore, “the fact that some interpreters have tried to read into them [*Sāṃkhyakārikā* and *Yogasūtra*] both theism and Vedāntism... [is] a violation of the spirit of Sāṃkhya as a distinctive philosophical position” (Krishna 198).

Īśvarapraṇidhāna as an external concept can be seen as a vehicle towards a process of abstraction that leads to the deep internalization of an experience of an ideal reality. If one mistakenly perceives the path as the goal, getting stuck on the vehicle rather than pursuing the destination, the destination will never be reached. Thus, the conception of connection with or worship of *īśvara* as the goal of Yoga would create a situation in which the path is mistaken for the goal, staying in the realm of devotion and eternally waiting to receive *mokṣa* from *īśvara*, getting lost in the misidentification of the self with

the path, creating attachment, and hence completely losing the experiential nature of this path. Much like learning how to drive a car, once one achieves some basic competency in the activity, attachment is formed to the feeling of driving, and thus one begins to drive aimlessly for the sake of driving. Since for a beginner the goal of learning how to drive seems to be simply the ability to perform the act of driving, the more advanced driver should understand that learning how to drive is only a means to reach a destination. This logic would leave the one who did not, or perhaps could not go past the beginner stage, driving around in circles.

The Concept of God in Patañjala Yoga

In order to accommodate the concept of God into a strictly dualistic model such as that of Classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga, God would have to be either *puruṣa* or *prakṛti*, as he cannot be both, and he cannot be neither, appearing as a distinct entity or reality, since there are no realities that exist outside or above *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Even if it was said that there is a reality that exists above these two, such as is the position of some theistic commentators, “in either case the God is irrelevant from the perspective of salvation of the individual *puruṣa*” (Larson 237). Having established that *īśvara*, existing within the constraints of Sāṃkhya-Yoga’s dualistic cosmology, is a *puruṣa* who has never been bound by *prakṛti*, and that the path Patañjali proposes follows a path of involution towards isolation, it becomes evident not only that *īśvara* is not God, but that the existence or not existence of a theistic God is irrelevant in the path of Classical Yoga. According to G. M. Coleman, “Patañjali Yoga technique prescind from whether someone admits a God or denies him” (qtd. in Feurstein, *The philosophy of Classical*

Yoga 13). Larson considers the concept of a creator God to be irrelevant in the ontology of both Classical Yoga and Classical Sāṃkhya, and relates this to Sartre’s position of theism regarding existentialism: “Existentialism is not an atheism in the sense that it would wear itself out in trying to demonstrate that God does not exist. It declares rather: even if God existed, that would change nothing” (qtd. in Larson 237). Whether *īśvara* is perceived by some as an “inactive deity” (Deussen qtd. in Burley 39), the Supreme Creator *Brahman* (Vijñānabhikṣu), or an experiential reality, since it is not a creator, nor sustainer, and has in fact, by definition, no means to function within *prakṛti*, and thus has no role in the liberation of *puruṣas*, the existence or non-existence of a theistic God is utterly irrelevant in Classical Yoga.

Sāṃkhya as Atheistic and Yoga as Theistic

Another problem of the translation of the term *īśvara* as God in Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* is the common understanding of the main distinction between Classical Sāṃkhya and Classical Yoga as the former being atheistic while the latter theistic, labels that come to misrepresent both systems. The only determinant leading to this labeling appears to be the either presence or absence of the term *īśvara*, as while the term does not appear in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, it does in the *Yogasūtra*. Hence, in terms of the presence or absence of the term *īśvara* in the two different texts, Yoga has been labeled as *saiśvara* (with *īśvara*) and Sāṃkhya as *nirīśvara* (without *īśvara*). Having established that Classical Yoga, following the same ontology as that of Sāṃkhya, adheres to a strict dualistic model that could not possibly accommodate a theistic concept of God, their *saiśvara* and *nirīśvara* classifications should not reflect their respective adherence to or

rejection of a believe in God. While there is a difference between the two texts the systems which they represent, the nature of their distinction in terms of theism appears to be rooted in the mistranslation and misinterpretation of the term *īśvara* as God.

Conclusion

From the present analysis, the term *īśvara* and its functionality within the *Yogasūtra*, particularly pertaining to the concept of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, emerges as the representation of an empirical concept and a functional component of the path of Yoga, rather than an ontological concept. Its functionality is defined by the experiential nature of the system itself, for it does not seek to present a philosophical point of view but rather presents a series of techniques to be used in order to achieve a series of experiences leading towards the ultimate goal of yoga, *kaivalya* or isolation in one's own nature. The role of *īśvara* is therefore akin to the instruction manual Patañjali presents: a series of practical tools that facilitate a series of internalizing experiences aimed at the attainment of an ultimate goal. Thus, much rather than being or representing God, and thus being the determinant for the system of Classical Yoga to be classified as theistic, *īśvara* represents the ultimate ideal of the goal of Yoga: a *puruṣa* that has never lost its identity to its misidentification with *prakṛti*, and as such, it functions as a practical and experiential tool, by being an archetype of this ultimate reality, designed to aid the yogi in its path towards liberation.

Grammatical Analysis

Key

m masculine

n neuter

f feminine

p pronoun

adj. adjective

adv. adverb

ind. indeclinable

sing. singular

dl. dual

pl. plural

Nominal Cases

1 subject

2 direct object

3 'by/with'

4 'to/for'

5 'from'

6 'of/'s'

7 'in/on/at'

I SAMĀDHIPĀDA

I.1 *atha yogānuśāsanam*

now the instruction of yoga

<i>atha</i>	‘now’	ind.
yoga		m(a)1sing.
<i>anuśāsanam</i>	‘instruction’	n(a)1sing.

I.2 *yogaścittavṛttinorodhaḥ*

yoga is cessation of the fluctuations of the mind

yoga		m(a)1sing.
<i>citta-</i>	‘mind, thought’	
<i>vṛtti-</i>	‘turning, moving, existing’	
<i>cittavṛtti-</i>	‘continuous course of thoughts’	
<i>norodhaḥ</i>	‘process of ending’	m(a)1sing.

I.3 *tadādraṣṭu svarupe ’vasthānam*

then the seer remains in its own nature

<i>tadā</i>	‘then’	ind.
<i>draṣṭu</i>	‘of the seer’	m(r)6sing.
(<i>draṣṭṛ</i>)	‘looker, one who sees’	
<i>sva-</i>	‘own’	
<i>rūpe-</i>	‘in nature’	m(a)7sing.
<i>avasthānam</i>	‘remaining’	n(a)1sing.

I.4 *vṛtti sārūpyamitaratra*

elsewhere it remains identified with [those] fluctuations

vṛtti-

sārūpya ‘similarity, sameness in form’ n(a)1sing.

itaratra ‘elsewhere’ ind.

I.5 *vṛttayah pañcatayyah kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ*

fluctuations are five-fold; obstructing and non-obstructing

vṛttayah plural of *vṛtti* f(i)1pl.

pañcatayyah- ‘five-fold’ f(ī)1pl.

kliṣṭa- ‘obstructing’

akliṣṭāḥ ‘non-obstructing’ f(a)1pl.

I.6 *pramāṇaviparyayavikalpanidrāsmṛtayah*

[fluctuations are] evaluation, misperception, conceptualization, sleep, memory

pramāṇa- ‘evaluation’

viparyaya- ‘misperception’

vikalpa- ‘conceptualization’

nidrā- ‘sleep’

smṛtayah ‘memory’ f(i)1pl.

I.7 *pratyakṣānumānāgamāḥ pramāṇāni*

evaluation is direct perception, inference, testimony

<i>pratyakṣa-</i>	‘direct perception’	
<i>anumāna-</i>	‘inference’	
<i>agamāḥ</i>	‘testimony’	m(a)1pl.
<i>pramāṇāni</i>	‘evaluation’	n(a)1pl.

I.8 *viparyayo mithyāñjānamatadrupapraṭiṣṭham*

misperception is mistaken knowledge, the foundation of not that form

<i>viparyayaḥ</i>	‘misperception’	m(a)1sing.
<i>mithyā-</i>	‘mistaken, false’	
<i>jñānam</i>	‘knowledge’	n(a)1sing.
<i>a-tad-</i>	‘not that’	ind.
<i>rūpa-</i>	‘appearance, form’	
<i>praṭiṣṭham</i>	‘foundation’	n(a)1sing.

I.12 *abhyāsa vairagyābhyām tannirodhaḥ*

that cessation, is both practice and dispassion

<i>abhyāsa-</i>	‘practice, vigilance of awareness’	
<i>vairagya</i>	‘by non attachment, dispassion’	n(a)3dual
<i>tad-</i>	‘that’	ind.
<i>nirodhaḥ</i>	‘cessation’	m(a)1sing.

I.13 *tatrasthitau yatno ’bhyāsaḥ*

staying there [in its own nature] is the purpose of practice

<i>tatra-</i>	‘there‘	ind.
<i>sthiti</i>	‘staying in a particular condition’	f(i)7sing.
<i>yatna-</i>	‘attempt, effort‘	
<i>abhyāsa</i>	‘practice‘	m(a)1sing.

I.14 *satu dīrgakālanairantaryasatkārāsevito dṛḍhabhūmiḥ*

moreover, that [practice] has firm ground when cultivated with reverence,
uninterruptedly, for a long time

<i>sah-</i>	‘that‘	m(p)1sing.
<i>tu-</i>	‘moreover‘	ind.
<i>dīrga-</i>	‘long’	
<i>kāla-</i>	‘time’	
<i>nairantarya-</i>	‘uninterruptedness’	
<i>satkāra-</i>	‘reverence, consideration, attention’	
<i>āsevita</i>	‘practiced assiduously’	m(a)1sing.
<i>dṛḍha-</i>	‘firm, fixed, steady’	
<i>bhūmi</i>	‘position, ground‘	m(i)1sing.

I.15 *dr̥ṣṭānuśravikaviṣayavitr̥ṣṇasya vaśīkārasañjñāvairāgyam*

dispassion is the conception of the mastery of being free from desire of that which
is seen or heard

<i>dr̥ṣṭa-</i>	‘visible, seen’	
<i>ānuśravika-</i>	‘according to hearing’	

<i>viṣaya-</i>	‘subject matter’	
<i>vitṛṣṇasya</i>	‘(of) free from desire’	m(a)6sing.
<i>vaśīkāra-</i>	‘subjugating, mastery’	
<i>saṃjñā</i>	‘conception, clear knowledge’	f(ā)1sing.
<i>vairāgya</i>	‘non-attachment, dispassion’	n(a)1sing.

I.16 *tat param puruṣakhyāter guṇavaiṛṣṇyam*

that supreme [*vairāgya*] is the lack of desire for the constituents of nature, from the identification with puruṣa

<i>tad-</i>	‘that’	ind.
<i>para</i>	‘supreme’	n(a)1sing.
<i>puruṣa-</i>		
<i>khyāti</i>	‘(from) name, title, identification’	f(i)5sing.
<i>guṇa-</i>	‘primary constituents of nature’	
<i>vaiṛṣṇyam</i>	‘free from desire’	n(a)1sing.

I.21 *tīvrasaṃvegānāmāsannaḥ*

of [those with an] intense desire of emancipation, [*nīrodhaḥ*] is near

<i>tīvra-</i>	‘acute, intense’	adj.
<i>saṃvega</i>	‘desire of emancipation’	m(a)6pl.
<i>āsannaḥ</i>	‘proximity, nearness’	m(a)1sing.

I.22 *mṛdumadhyādhimātratvāttato 'pi viśeṣaḥ*

there is also a distinction from weakness, mediumness, intenseness

<i>mṛdu-</i>	‘mild, weak’	
<i>madhya-</i>	‘center, middle’	
<i>adhimātratva</i>	‘(from) excessive (ness)’	n(a)5sing.
<i>tataḥ-</i>	‘from there’	ind.
<i>api-</i>	‘also’	ind.
<i>viśeṣaḥ</i>	‘difference, distinction’	m(a)1sing.

I.23 *īśvarapraṇidhānadvā*

or from *īśvarapraṇidhāna*

<i>īśvara-</i>	‘ideal, ruler, lord, master, supreme soul’	
<i>√īśa</i>	‘to rule over’	
<i>-vara</i>	‘best, preferable’	adj.
<i>praṇidhānāt</i>	‘(from) meditation/transference’	m(a)5sing.
<i>pra</i>	‘forward, forth’	adv.
	‘like, resembling’	adj.
<i>ni</i>	‘in, into, with’	adv.
<i>√dhā</i>	‘to hold, to maintain, to give’	
<i>vā</i>	‘or’	ind.

I.24 *kleśakarmavipākāśayairaparāmrṣtaḥ puruṣaviśeṣa īśvaraḥ*

īśvara is a special/distinct *puruṣa* untouched by the accumulations of *karma* that arise from afflictions

<i>kleśa-</i>	‘affliction’	
<i>karma-</i>		
<i>vipāka-</i>	‘effect, result, ripening’	
<i>āśaya</i>	‘(by/with) receptacle, abode’	m(a)3pl.
<i>aparāmrṣta</i>	‘untouched’	m(a)1sing.
<i>puruṣa-</i>		
<i>viśeṣa</i>	‘distinction, special (adj.)’	m(a)1sing.
<i>īśvaraḥ</i>		m(a)1sing.

I.25 *tatra niratiśayam sarvajñabījam*

there the omniscient seed is unsurpassed

<i>tatra</i>	‘in that case, there, therefore’	ind.
<i>niratiśaya</i>	‘unsurpassed, perfect’	adj.
<i>sarvajña</i>	‘all-knowing, omniscient’	
<i>bīja</i>	‘seed’	n(a)1sing.

I.26 *pūrveṣamapi guruḥ kālenānavacchedāt*

also, [he is] the teacher of the ancestors from not being limited by time

<i>pūrveṣam</i>	‘of the ancestors’	m(a)pron.6sing.
<i>pūrva + eṣām</i>	‘of’	pron.

<i>api-</i>	‘even, also‘	ind.
<i>guruḥ</i>	‘teacher‘	m(u)1sing.
<i>kāla</i>	‘(by/with) time‘	m(a)3sing.
<i>ānānavacchedāt</i>		m(a)5sing.
<i>an</i>	‘non‘ + <i>avaccheda</i> ‘limitation‘ (from)	

I.27 *tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ*

his sound is *om*

<i>tasya-</i>	‘his‘	ind.
<i>vācaka</i>	‘word, significant sound‘	m(a)1sing.
<i>praṇava</i>	‘syllable <i>om</i> ‘	m(a)1sing.

I.28 *tajjapastadarthabhāvanam*

this recitation leads to the essence/meditation of essence/meditation

<i>tad</i>	‘that, this‘	
<i>japa</i>	‘repetition of a recitation‘	m(a)1sing.
<i>tad</i>	‘that, this‘	m(a)1sing.
<i>artha</i>	‘meaning, purpose, aim‘	n(a)1sing.
<i>bhāvanā</i>	‘essence, nature, meditation‘	n(a)1sing.

I.29 *tataḥ pratyakcetanādhigamo ’pyantarāyābhāvaśca*

from there, the attainment of the involution of consciousness and also the disappearance of obstacles

<i>tataḥ-</i>	‘from there’	ind.
<i>pratyak-</i>	‘backwards, in the opposite direction’	
<i>cetanā-</i>	‘consciousness, sense, understanding’	
<i>adhigama</i>	‘mastery, act of attaining’	m(a)l sing.
<i>api-</i>	‘also, even’	ind.
<i>antarāya-</i>	‘impediment, obstacle’	
<i>abhāva</i>	‘absence, annihilation’	m(a)l sing.
<i>ca</i>	‘and’	ind.

I.32 *tat pratiṣedrārthameka tattvābhyāsaḥ*

the practice of a single reality is for the sake of preventing that [obstacle]

<i>tad-</i>	‘that, this’	m(a)l sing.
<i>pratiṣedha-</i>	‘prevention, warding off’	
<i>-artham</i>	‘for the sake of’	ind.
<i>eka-</i>	‘one’	
<i>tattva-</i>	‘true/real state, element, reality’	
<i>abhyāsa</i>	‘practice’	m(a)l sing.

II SĀDHANAPĀDA

II.1 *tapah svādhyāyeśvarapraṇidhānāni kriyāyogaḥ*

the tree components of *kriyāyoga* are *tapas*, *svādhyāya*, *īśvarapraṇidhāna*

tapas ‘heat, austerity, deep concentration’

svādhyāya ‘self study, reciting to one’s self’

īśvarapraṇidhānāni n(a)1pl.

kriya ‘action, purification, means’

yogaḥ m(a)1sing.

II.2 *samādhībhāvanārthaḥ kleśatanūkaraṇārthaśca*

the purpose/meaning is the cultivation of *samādhi* and the attenuation of the afflictions

samādhi-

bhāvanā- ‘essence, nature, meditation’

artha ‘meaning, purpose, aim’ n(a)1sing.

kleśa- ‘affliction’

tanū- ‘thin, diminish’

tanūkaraṇa- ‘attenuation, dilution’ n(a)1sing.

karaṇa- ‘making, effecting’

artha ‘meaning, purpose, aim’ n(a)1sing.

ca ‘and’ ind.

II.11 *dhyānaheyāstadvṛttayaḥ*

those fluctuations [arising from afflictions (II.3-10)] are abandoned by meditation

<i>dhyāna</i>	‘meditation’	
<i>heyāḥ</i>	‘to be abandoned, gone’	f(ā)1pl.
<i>tad-</i>	‘that’	ind.
<i>vṛttayaḥ</i>	fluctuations	f(i)1pl.

II.18 *prakāśakriyāsthitiśīlam bhūtendriyātmakam bhogāpavargārtham dṛśyam*

the seeable/seen has the character of brightness (*sattva*), action (*rajas*), and inertia (*tamas*). it consists of elements and sense organs. [they are] for the sake of experience and transcendence.

<i>prakāśa-</i>	‘brightness’	
<i>kriyā-</i>	‘action, purification, means’	
<i>sthiti-</i>	‘inertia’	
<i>śīlam</i>	‘character, tendency’	n(a)1sing.
<i>bhūta-</i>	‘elements’	
<i>indriya-</i>	‘sense organs’	
<i>-ātmakam</i>	‘consisting of’	n(a)1sing. suffix
<i>bhoga-</i>	‘experience’	
<i>apavarga-</i>	‘absolution, fulfillment’	
<i>artham-</i>	‘for the sake of’	ind.
<i>dṛśyam</i>	‘visible object/world’	n(a)1sing.

II.20 *draṣṭā dṛśimātraḥ śuddho 'pi pratyayānupaśyaḥ*

the seer [has the quality of] seeing only, although pure, perceiving intellect

<i>draṣṭā</i>	‘seer’	m(r)1sing.
(<i>draṣṭr</i>)	‘looker, one who sees’	
<i>dṛśi-</i>	‘seeing’	
<i>mātraḥ</i>	‘only’	m(a)1sing.
<i>śuddhaḥ-</i>	‘pure, absolute, simple’	m(a)1sing.
<i>api</i>	‘though’	ind.
<i>pratyaya</i>	‘conception, idea, intellect’	
<i>anupaśyaḥ</i>	‘seeing, perceiving’	m(a)1sing.

II.21 *tadartha eva dṛśyasyātmā*

the existence of the seeable/seen is indeed for the purpose of that [seer]

<i>tad-</i>	‘that’	ind.
<i>arthaḥ</i>	‘meaning, purpose, aim’	n(a)1sing.
<i>eva</i>	‘only, truly, indeed’	ind.
<i>dṛśyasya-</i>	‘(of) seeable, seen’	n(a)6sing.
<i>ātmā</i>	‘soul, principle of life, existence’	m(an)1sing.

II.22 *kṛtārthaṃ prati naṣṭamapyanaṣṭaṃ tadanyasādhāraṇatvāt*

with respect to what purpose is accomplished, that [the seen] has vanished, although

that [the seen] has not vanished due to its universality

<i>kṛta-</i>	‘obtained, accomplished’	adj.
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<i>artha</i>	‘meaning, purpose, aim’	n(a)1sing.
<i>prati-</i>	‘with respect to’	
<i>naṣṭam-</i>	‘vanished, disappeared’	adj.
<i>api-</i>	‘though’	ind.
<i>anaṣṭam-</i>	‘not vanished, not disappeared’	adj.
<i>tat-</i>	‘that’	p
<i>anya-</i>	‘other’	adj.
<i>sādhāraṇatvāt</i>	‘(from) universality’	n(a)5sing.

II.23 *svasvāmīśaktyoḥ svarūpopalabdhihetuḥ samyogaḥ*

that connection is the cause of the perception of the own nature of the power of both the owner [*puruṣa*] and the owned [*prakṛti*]

<i>sva</i>	‘property, wealth’	
<i>svāmi</i>	‘owner, master’	
<i>śaktyoḥ</i>	‘(of the two/both) <i>śakti</i> ’	f(i)6dl.
(<i>śakti</i>)	‘energy, power’	
<i>svarūpa</i>	‘own nature’	
<i>upalabdhi</i>	‘perception, understanding’	
<i>hetuḥ</i>	‘cause, reason’	m(u)1sing.
<i>samyoga</i>	‘union, combination, connection’	m(a)1sing.

II.25 *tadabhāvāt saṃyogābhāvohānaṃ taddr̥śeḥ kaivalyam*

from that destruction [of *avidyā* (II.24 *avidyā* is the cause of *saṃyoga*)] comes the destruction of the connection [between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* (II.23)]. that [resulting] cessation [at the end of the path] is isolation of seeing (*kaivalya*).

<i>tad-</i>	‘that’	ind.
<i>abhāvāt</i>	‘(from) annihilation’	m(a)5sing.
<i>saṃyoga-</i>	‘union, combination, connection’	
<i>abhāvah</i>	‘annihilation’	m(a)1sing.
<i>hānaṃ</i>	‘cessation, non-existence’	n(a)1sing.
<i>tad-</i>	‘that’	ind.
<i>dr̥śeḥ</i>	‘(of) seeing’	m(i)6sing.
<i>kaivalyam</i>	‘isolation, abstraction’	n(a)1sing.

II.32 *śaucasantoṣatapaḥsvādhyāyeśvarapraṇidhānāni niyamāḥ*

the *niyamas* are: *śauca*, *santoṣa*, *tapas*, *svādhyāya*, *īśvarapraṇidhāna*

<i>śauca-</i>	‘purity’	
<i>santoṣa-</i>	‘contentment, satisfaction’	
<i>tapas-</i>	‘heat, austerity, deep concentration’	
<i>svādhyāya-</i>	‘self study, reciting to one’s self’	
<i>īśvara-</i>		
<i>praṇidhānāni</i>		n(a)1pl.
<i>niyamāḥ</i>	‘rules, restriction, restraint’	m(a)1pl.

II.43 *kāyendriyasiddhiraśuddhikṣayāt tapasaḥ*

tapas is the destruction of impurities, the perfection of the body and sense organs

<i>kāya</i>	‘body‘	m(a)1sing.
<i>indriya-</i>	‘sense organs’	
<i>siddhiḥ</i>	‘perfection, attainment‘	f(i)1sing.
<i>aśuddhi</i>	‘impurity‘	f(i)1sing.
<i>kṣayāt</i>	‘(from) destruction, removal’	n(a)5sing.
<i>tapasaḥ</i>	‘austerity, asceticism, heat’	m(a)1pl.

II.44 *svādhyāyādiṣṭahevatāsamprayogaḥ*

a connection to a chosen deity is from *svādhyāya*

<i>svādhyāyāt</i>	‘(from) self study/recitation’	m(a)5sing.
<i>iṣṭa-</i>	‘beloved, cherished, respected’	
<i>devatā-</i>	‘deity, image of a deity’	
<i>samprayogaḥ</i>	‘union, conjunction, connection’	m(a)1sing.

II.45 *samādhisiddhirīśvarapraṇidhānāt*

the perfection of *samādhi* is from *īśvarapraṇidhāna*

<i>samādhi-</i>		
<i>siddhiḥ-</i>	‘perfection, attainment’	f(i)1sing.
<i>īśvarapraṇidhānāt</i>		n(a)5sing.

IV KAIIVALYAPĀDA

IV.34 *puruṣārthaśūnyānām guṇānām pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyam svarūpapraṭiṣṭhā vā citiśaktyoreriti*

thus, isolation/abstraction (*kaivalya*) is the return to the original state of the primary constituents of nature, empty of purpose for puruṣa, or the grounding in its own nature by the power of awareness/understanding.

puruṣa-

<i>artha</i>	‘meaning, purpose, aim’	n(a)1sing.
<i>śūnyānām</i>	‘(of) empty, blank’	m(a)6sing.
<i>guṇānam</i>	‘(of) primary constituents’	m(a)6sing.
<i>pratiprasavaḥ</i>	‘return to the original state’	m(a)1sing.
<i>kaivalyam</i>	‘isolation, abstraction’	n(a)1sing.
<i>svaṛūpa-</i>	‘own condition, nature’	
<i>praṭiṣṭhā</i>	‘ground, foundation, stability’	f(ā)1sing.
<i>vā</i>	‘or’	ind.
<i>citi-</i>	‘understanding, awareness’	
<i>śakti-</i>	‘(by/with) energy, power’	f(i)3sing.
<i>iti</i>	‘thus*’	ind.

*in this context, to indicate the end of the text.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The mere presence of the term *īśvara* in Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* has come to affect the meaning of both the path and the goal of Classical Yoga as well as the meaning of the term Yoga itself. The ambiguity of the term *īśvara* has greatly contributed to its susceptibility to theistic interpretation and concomitant translation as God, for it leads to the obscuring of this path of discrimination, separation, involution and isolation towards liberation, to a point where it can lend itself to be interpreted and accommodated to fit into other ideologies, thus enabling a syncretic trend that has led to the popular understanding of Yoga as 'union with the divine'. In turn, this has become the primary determinant to label the system of Classical Yoga as theistic. The purpose of the present study is to shed some light on the subject, not only by analyzing the term within the constraints of the *Yogasūtra*, but also by identifying the several trends throughout the development of Hinduism that have contributed to the most prominent hermeneutical trends that have led to the obscurity of this subject.

The conflicting variety of not only different translations and interpretations but different approaches to defining the term *īśvara* as well as its placement and function within the Yoga system have directly contributed to the many misconceptions on the subject, since, without much further and deeper investigation, and a full understanding of the system as a whole, it can lend itself to people picking and choosing whatever views are in agreement with their own. The rich philosophical history of India has propounded a myriad of approaches and traditions, however, after the establishment of Classical

Hinduism through the categorization of the six *Darśanas*, subsequent works were irrevocably “reconciled with the doctrines of the other of the existing systems, and put down as faithful interpretations of the system in the form of commentaries”. Amidst a defensive environment in which the different systems constantly tried to elevate their own school and lineage over the others, tradition inhibited the development and succession of independent thinkers and interpretation (Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* 64). Their work depended on previous commentaries, and for one reason or another they were unable to look past the shadows casted upon the works they were commenting on to be able to provide a fresh perspective rather than perpetuate the misinterpretations of their predecessors who were biased by their intent to elevate their own belief systems and allegiances.

The catalyst for the syncretic trend that plays an essential role in the misrepresentation of Patañjali’s path of Yoga is a homogenizing trend that primarily arises from a necessity to perpetuate Vedic authority that starts as a reaction against the rise of the *Upaniṣadic* movement. Further, this homogenizing trend is then continued by the need to categorize Hinduism into a cohesive system with agreeable components, arising from the necessity to organize against the rise of traditions, such as Jainism, but particularly Buddhism, that vehemently denied the authority of the Vedas. This gave birth to the ambiguous categorization of the *āstikas* and the *nāstikas*, the agreeers and the deniers, which are directly tied to the emergence of the six *Darśanas*, or ‘orthodox’ systems of thought, as the philosophies that constitute Classical Hinduism. This homogenizing trend is further strengthened by the desire to elevate Hinduism as a world religion as a reaction against the negative depiction of Hindu traditions by Christian

missionaries during the British colonialism of India, which, further strengthens Vedic authority and ultimately legitimizes Hinduism as a world religion, finally emerging not only as a homogenous system but further presented, in many instances, as a monotheistic religion, and thus, elevated to the authority of the Abrahamic religions.

The classification of Patañjali's Yoga as a *Darśana* implies its affiliation into a cohesive and unified system of thought, ensuring a false sense of continuity and coherence within the development of 'Hinduism', advocating an absolutism that has reduced a plethora of different practices, philosophies and world-views to a single religion. Furthermore, it presents a questionable allegiance to the authority of the Vedas, and it defines itself as distinct from those who are not considered *āstika*, drawing an alleged clear demarcation between itself and the *nāstikas*, when in reality, in many ways, "Yoga holds closer affinity with Jainism and Buddhism than with its Vedānta and *Bhakti* cousins" (Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous* ix). Furthermore, its frequent paring with the system of Classical Sāṃkhya, it allows for *īśvara* as the main distinction between the two systems, labeling the former as *saiśvara* and the later *nīrīśvara*, which are often translated as theistic and atheistic, terms that come to misrepresent both systems.

The syncretic trend that has led to the many discrepancies and misunderstandings obscuring the path of Classical Yoga are the product of an indigenous homogenizing trend stemming from the perpetuation of Vedic authority that starts as a reaction against the rise of the *Upaniṣadic* movement. This is continued by the need to organize Hinduism into a cohesive system of agreeable components standing strong against the rise of Buddhism, giving birth to the categorization of *āstikas* and *nāstikas*, the emergence of the six *Darśanas*, and ultimately, Classical Hinduism. As a reaction against the negative

depiction of Hindu traditions by Christian Missionaries during the British colonialism of India, the homogenizing trend is further strengthened as a necessity to elevate Hinduism as a world religion. Further, the syncretic trend is not confined to Indian traditions. In order to legitimize Hinduism as a world religion in a Christian dominated West, in many cases, Hindu traditions have been presented after a process of filtering through foreign terms and concepts, which have come to reduce a myriad of rich heterogeneous traditions to an easily translatable and adaptable ‘way of life’ that can be ‘attached’ to other religions and practices. This leads to the complex system of Yoga to come to be so divorced from its roots to such an extent that it can easily be reduced to a mere series of calisthenics.

The consideration of the popular understanding of the term Yoga as union prompts the necessity for clarification in order to determine what is being joined with what. In this understanding, the concept of union with the divine would imply, assuming the common theistic interpretation of *īśvara* and thus *īśvarapraṇidhāna* as devotion to God, that the goal of Yoga is to achieve union with *īśvara*. Therefore, the path Patañjali proposes would be centered on puruṣa somehow merging with *īśvara*, however, Patañjali does not speak of merging or uniting with *īśvara* at all. First of all, he clearly defines Yoga as the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind (YS I.2). As these fluctuations are a natural involuntary process of the mind, the endeavor towards cessation would imply voluntary effort, and thus a determination towards action. In this sense, “*Yuj*, from meaning to join, came, by means of a very old metaphor, to mean to join oneself to something, to harness oneself for some work. Thus *Yuj* assumed the sense of preparing for hard work” (Müller, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* 309), and not necessarily in the sense of physically

joining, as the word *saṃyoga*, for example, denotes. Furthermore, he uses the word *saṃyoga* in negative terms, as it is the bond that keeps *puruṣa* misidentified with *prakṛti*. It is the dissolution of this bond that leads to the goal of the path (YS II.25).

Secondly, Patañjali clearly defines the result of the practice of Yoga as the establishment, or rather remaining (*avasthānam*), of the seer (*drṣṭu*) in its own nature (YSI.3), through a state of samādhi towards the attainment of kaivalya, and the failure of that achievement (*itaratra*), as the identification with the fluctuations that were not controlled (YSI.4). The means he prescribes in order to achieve that goal is through practice (*abhyāsa*) and dispassion (*vairagya*) (YS I.12), further describing different techniques in order to adhere to that means. The *yogi* reaches the goal of standing in its own nature through the attainment of *kaivalya*, which Patañjali defines as the destruction of the connection (*saṃyoga*) between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, which follows the destruction of *avidyā*, or ignorance, which is the root cause of the cognitive error (YSII.25). Therefore, as per Patañjali's path, it is discrimination or separation, rather than union, that leads to the achievement of the goal of Yoga, for Patañjali "did not mean union with God, or anything but effort (Udyoga, not Saṃyoga), pulling oneself together, exertion, concentration" (Müller, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* 310).

Thirdly, even in the Vedāntic understanding of *Brahman*, to which many have attempted to read theism into as well, there is no such thing as union of the *ātman* with *Brahman* per se. The misunderstanding that arises in the interpretation of Vedāntic doctrine from later devotional practices has led to the understanding that the Self searches to merge with *Brahman*, and hence describes the goal of the system as union with the divine. This, however, is not the case, as the Self is not considered to be separate from

Brahman, for *Brahman* and the Self are one and the same. The cognitive error in this case is due to the perception that they are separate, thus, the solution, and hence the goal of the system is the realization that the separation is an illusion; yet there is no merging or union, for they have always been one. In this light, at least in the cases of the Vedānta and Classical Yoga, a more accurate translation of the term Yoga would be in the sense of harnessing or discipline.

A devotional or pseudo-theistic understanding of the term *īśvara* would define him as an outside agent who has the power to actively get involved in the world and grant liberation to those who worship him, as some suggest, as is the following example: “It appears that the ‘grace’ of the ‘lord’ (*īśvara*) is also required” (Feuerstein, *The Yogasūtra of Patañjali* 37). The term grace, with a highly Christian connotation due to its use in their literature as well as common parlance, is regarded as “the generous saving activity of God manifested toward humankind” (O’Meara 3644). This understanding implies an agent who is a creator and more importantly sustainer of the universe, which would hence exist outside the strict dualistic model of the ontology of Classical Yoga, as well as that of Classical Sāṃkhya. Since it has been established that Patañjali makes very clear that there are no realities that exist outside or above *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, it would be impossible that Patañjali ever had in mind an exoteric understanding of his path as well as a devotional role of *īśvara*, leading to the conclusion that all theistic interpretations of Classical Yoga are a complete imposition on the reading of the text.

Much rather than God, from the present analysis, the term *īśvara* and its functionality within the *Yogasūtra*, particularly pertaining to the concept of *īśvarapraṇidhāna*, emerges as the representation of an empirical concept and a functional

component of the path of Yoga, rather than an ontological concept. Its functionality is defined by the experiential nature of the system itself, for its focus is not exclusively philosophical in the sense that it seeks to present a new philosophy in its own right, but rather presents a series of techniques to be used in order to achieve a series of experiences leading towards the ultimate goal of yoga, *kaivalya* or isolation in one's own nature. Thus, much rather than being or representing God, and thus being the determinant for the system of Classical Yoga to be classified as theistic, *īśvara* represents the ultimate ideal of the goal of Yoga: a *puruṣa* that has never lost its identity to its misidentification with *prakṛti*, and as such, it functions as a practical and experiential tool, by being an archetype of this ultimate reality, providing the *yogi* with a direct experience of *puruṣa*, where he is able to get a direct glimpse of its true nature. This appears to be the extent of the functionality of *īśvara* in the system, as well as the extent of his role of the *guru* or teacher of the *yogi* in his path towards liberation. Hence, the presence of the term *īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra* serves a utilitarian role by allowing the *yogi* to be directly engaged with the concept of *puruṣa* in a space of experiential interaction rather than attempting to expound on a particular philosophy.

Having established that *īśvara*, existing within the constraints of Sāṃkhya-Yoga's dualistic cosmology, is a *puruṣa* who has never been bound by *prakṛti*, and that the path Patañjali proposes follows a path of involution towards isolation (*kaivalya*), it becomes evident not only that *īśvara* is not God, but that the existence or not existence of a theistic God is irrelevant in the path of Classical Yoga, for the path of Classical Yoga demonstrates to be beyond the classification of both theism and atheism, as it does not actively seek to neither prove nor disprove the existence of God. Whether *īśvara* is

perceived by some as an “inactive deity” (Deussen qtd. in Burley 39), the Supreme Creator *Brahman* (Vijñānabhikṣu), or an experiential reality, since it is not a creator, nor sustainer, and has in fact, by definition, no means to function within *prakṛti*, and thus has no role in the liberation of *puruṣas*, the existence or non-existence of God is utterly irrelevant in Classical Yoga.

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