CHAPTER - VI

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It seems that the earliest account of yogic practice is reported in the early Vedas. "The rites of the Vedic priests... p.35. Feurstein...approach to enlightenment."

1. Once mokṣa is set by the Upaniṣads as the highest goal of human life, various forms of concentration techniques leading to mokṣa also come into existence. Each of these techniques called itself yoga and we have now many schools of yoga, such as Karma-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Mantra-yoga, Laya-yoga, Ḥaṭha-yoga, Kuṇḍalini-yoga, Dhyāna-yoga, etc. As the elaborations were not committed to writing, i.e. as the rules of performing the yoga were handed over from the Guru to his śiṣyas (disciples) orally, it is possible that they might have undergone many modifications, such as additions, interpolations, deletions, etc.

The term 'Yoga' as we have seen does not stand for any one particular school of yoga. Though it is true the word means both a goal and a means to the goal, it is also true it applies to various schools of yoga, which advocate their own philosophical doctrines and their own practices, to reach the goal, mokṣa. Again their concepts of the final goal are themselves different from one another. For example, while Karma-yoga and Bhakti-yoga speak of eternal companionship of the soul with a loving God as the final goal, for Jñāna-yoga the highest goal is experiencing oneness with featureless Brahman. When Buddhism and Sāṅkhya-yoga set mokṣa or nirvāṇa as the goal of life, they deliberately avoid reference to God. But
most other schools consider the final goal as liberated souls returning to the ultimate reality, God, from whom they were temporarily separated. While all schools speak of unbroken continued existence of the liberated soul in some form or the other, somewhere or the other, Buddhism alone describes the final goal as non-being.

2. Another important feature, which we cannot fail to notice in our consideration of the different schools of yoga, is that not only there is no contradiction between them, but also there is a good deal of cordial relationship between them. Though we speak of Jñāna-yoga as different from Karma-yoga, or Bhakti-yoga, the difference between them cannot be regarded as opposition. They are not mutually exclusive; rather some of them are mutually inclusive. For example, what we technically call Jñāna-yoga, is really inclusive of both Bhakti-yoga and Karma-yoga. If anybody includes Pātañjala-yoga or Haṭha-yoga, the value of Jñāna-yoga is not lessened, its meaning does not become contradictory. Similarly, Karma-yoga requires both Jñāna-yoga and Bhakti-yoga. If we include Dhyāna-yoga and Mantra-yoga in it, it does not become vitiated nor does it cease to be Karma-yoga. If we notice that Kuṇḍalini-yoga includes Haṭha-yoga, Pātañjala-yoga, Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Mantra-yoga, etc., our stand that no school of yoga is mutually exclusive of the other schools, is justified. There is actually an element of cross-yogic discipline among some of them.

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In justification to the title of the thesis, "Philosophical Foundations of the Yogic Schools", it is shown in the previous chapter that each of the seven yogic schools, namely, Jñāna-yoga, Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga,
Pātañjala-yoga, Bauddha Yoga, Kuṇḍalini-yoga and Haṭha-yoga, has its own philosophical foundation. The philosophical doctrines which constitute the foundation of these schools (and other schools not dealt with here) can be grouped under two broad heads: (a) The doctrine of soul which survives death, the doctrine of karma and rebirth, the doctrine of avidyā (or ignorance) as the root cause of all misery, the doctrine of liberation, are the foundation of all the schools of yoga. That without these concepts yoga cannot be founded can be briefly shown as follows.

As we have seen in the INTRODUCTION, misery is so universal that it can neither be ignored nor be avoided. Death cannot be regarded as the end of misery. Because the ancient Indian philosophers (with the sole exception of the (Cārvākas) believed in the doctrine of karma and rebirth, according to which, the soul, which is constitutionally different from the physical body, senses, mind etc., does not die when the body-mind complex dies, it is reborn in some form or the other, and is again subjected to misery of some form or the other.

All Indian philosophers (excepting Cārvākas) trace the origin of misery to beginningless avidyā (metaphysical ignorance). They argue that owing to avidyā, we begin to develop selfish desires, passions, infatuation, lust, anger, etc., which impel us to do all kinds of actions, which in turn lead us to rebirth in which also we suffer these psychical limitations, as a result of which again we are pushed another rebirth. This goes on endlessly unless we make serious yogic efforts to mitigate and eradicate them. The end of the yogic effort is sometimes just freedom from misery, ignorance and rebirth, and in some other cases, bliss added to these.
The different schools of yoga have their own theories of soul, their own theories of mokṣa, their own methods of reaching the goal but they cannot do without these philosophical doctrines. Therefore, we are sufficiently justified in considering these philosophical doctrines as the foundation of all yogic schools.

In addition to these philosophical doctrines, which are common to all schools of yoga, there are also philosophical doctrines, which are particular to each school of yoga. Thus, for example, the philosophical doctrines of Baudhāyaṇa-yoga are not the foundation of Bhakti-yoga. Buddhism speaks of a continuously changing aggregate of aggregates as soul, which disintegrates after the death of the liberated person, whereas the Bhagavagītā speaks of an indestructible, eternal soul which attains to the inseparable and unending companionship with God after mokṣa. The concept of personal God which forms the foundation of Bhakti-yoga is not the foundation of Baudhāyaṇa-yoga or Pātañjala-yoga. However, it must be noted that some of the philosophical doctrines of one schools of yoga are shared by others also. For example, the personal God conceived in the Karma-yoga, to whom all results of selfless actions (niṣkāma-karmas) must be renounced plays a dominant role in the Bhakti-yoga also. Similarly, the dualistic relationship between God and the liberated soul (i.e.: the soul which retains its individuality even after liberation), the concept of eternal companionship of the liberated soul with God as the highest ideal are shared by both Karma-yoga and Bhakti-yoga.

Now let us examine the claim of each of the schools of yoga that its course of yogic discipline is justified by its own philosophical presuppositions. Our examination consists in seeing (1) whether we can
retain the course of yogic action and replace the existing philosophical foundation with a different philosophical foundation and (2) Whether we can retain a particular philosophical foundation of a yogic school and change the yogic discipline; only if we succeed in showing that both of these are impossible then we can arrive at the conclusion that there is sufficient justification in the claim that each school has its philosophical doctrines as its foundation and there is a necessary relation between them. If, on the other hand, we succeed in showing that a particular yogic discipline can have a different set of philosophical doctrines than the existing one, then it becomes clear that there is no necessary relationship between philosophical doctrines and the yogic school that cherishes them. It can also be said that philosophy is just an ornament for yoga practice and the latter can do very well without the former.

So far as the relationship between a school of yoga and its philosophical foundation is concerned, it should be said at the outset that there are at least two schools of yoga which lose their structure if their philosophical foundations are withdrawn. These are (1) Ārya Aṣṭāṅgi-kar-mārga of Buddhism and (2) Jñāna-yoga of Advaita Vedānta.

(1) The Bauddha-yoga (Ārya Aṣṭāṅgi-kar-mārga) begins with Right View (samyag-dṛṣṭi). That is, a kind of philosophical indoctrination is built into the very structure of Bauddha-yoga. Thus one who vows to follow Bauddha-yoga, ought to believe that all things, including human personality, are composite, that there is nothing self-existent or substantial, that all things, including human consciousness are momentary, that pari-nirvāṇa consists in decomposition of the aggregates (skandhas), etc. Therefore, we
cannot fail to notice that there is such a necessary relationship between the Bauddha-yoga and its philosophical doctrines that we cannot question whether we can offer a different perhaps a better, philosophical foundation for the Bauddha-yoga.

(2) Similarly, the jñāna-yoga of Advaita is built on the philosophical doctrine that one must know the distinction between the enduring reality and the fleeting changes. This knowledge of the distinction is represented by the word ‘viveka’ (wisdom). Śaṅkara insists that one who embarks on Jñāna-Yoga must first of all believe in the necessity of viveka, which is defined as nityānitya-vastu-viveka (knowledge of the distinction between the eternal and momentary). That is, he must believe that it is better to strive for the former than the latter if one wants mokṣa. In fact, mokṣa itself belongs to the category of that group. If one does not know the worth of what he is searching for, one’s journey is totally futile.

However, we cannot hope to find the same kind of relationship between the other schools of yoga and their respective philosophical foundations.

The ideal of the Śaṅkara-yoga is kaivalya - complete separation of the puruṣa from prakṛti, so that it is never again perturbed by the guṇas of prakṛti. The Pāṇḍjala-yoga offers an eight-limbed scheme in order to reach the goal, kaivalya. Here we have a peculiar case. Though the two schools have a common goal, kaivalya, there is a difference between them in their metaphysical scheme, as also in their spiritual programme. In the Sāṅkhya spiritual programme (not discussed in this thesis) God has no place, but in the Pāṇḍjala-yoga he has. If by following the Sāṅkhya method, which is
meditation leading to Jñāna, one can achieve kaivalya, then both Aṣṭāṅga-yoga and God are redundant. One may then argue that the eightfold practice could have an atheistic metaphysics as its foundation without weakening the spiritual programme constructed on it.

Similarly, retaining the same goal, kaivalya, it is possible to change the course of discipline leading to it. For example, the same ideal can be realized by means of jñāna-yoga. Misery according to Śaṅkhya-yoga stems from the beginningless avidyā (ignorance) owing to which we mistake puruṣa, which is not agent (kartā) or experient (bhoktā) of happiness and unhappiness, for agent and experient. It is possible that by a discipline suggested by Śaṅkara we can overcome avidyā and realize the separateness of puruṣa from prakṛti. By regular practice of renunciation, by constant sravaṇa, manana, nidhiyāsana, but avoiding the āsānas, prānāyāma, etc., suggested by Pātañjala-yoga, we can achieve kaivalya. In fact, the way suggested by Śaṅkhyaśas in order to achieve kaivalya, is an atheistic jñāna-yoga, devoid of aṣṭaṅga-yoga of Patañjali. In other words, there is no necessary relation between Aṣṭaṅga-yoga leading to Kaivalya and its philosophical foundation.

Similarly, there seems to be no necessary relationship between the goal of Kuṇḍalini-yoga and its philosophical foundation. The Śāktas define the goal of human life, mokṣa, in terms of the union of Kuṇḍalinī-śakti which lies dormant in the mūlādhāra cakra with Śiva in the sahasrāra cakra. They describe the union in the Advaitic terms. That is, the individual soul loses its individuality in the infinite Consciousness. Here also we can notice that the philosophical concept of goal is the same while the methods of
achieving the goal are different. If that is the case, it is not meaningless to ask, “Can we retain the spiritual programme (Kuṇḍalinī-yoga) and replace its existing philosophical foundation by the metaphysics of Advaita, without disturbing it?” “Is it not possible to explain the mokṣa of the Kuṇḍalinī-yoga as the soul becoming an inseparable part of Śiva or Viṣṇu, that is, in terms of the Viśiṣṭādvaitic metaphysics?”

Having considered the possible or necessary relationship between the yogic schools and their respective philosophical foundations, we cannot ignore or evade the question which naturally comes up, namely, “Are there really different yogic intuitions which have different philosophical origins? Or, is there only one yogic intuition, which is differently interpreted by different schools of yoga?”

At the outset the question seems insoluble. Because, yogic intuition is so private that it cannot be verified by others. For example, the yogic perception of the pure self is assessable neither to others’ sense perception nor other mystics’ perception. Therefore, we are not in a position to decisively establish whether different mystics have different mystic experiences or all of them have the same mystic experience. Even if, therefore, one tells a lie about his yogic perception, it remains both unverified and unfalsified.

However, on second thought, it appears that the question is soluble, if we notice that, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as pure or uninterpreted yogic intuition. W.T. Stace compares this feature of yogic intuition to that of sense experience. He argues that just as all our sensations become known to us only after they are interpreted (e.g. the
sensation I had was the sensation of red colour and it is the red colour of red book) and we are never aware of a sensation which is not yet interpreted. “Yet, although we may never be able to find sense experience completely free from interpretation, it can hardly be doubted that a sensation is one thing and its conceptual interpretation is another thing. That is to say, they are distinguishable, though not separable.”1. Stace’s argument is supported by the fact of more than one interpretation of a single sensation. When I see something and interpret it at time1 as snake and interpret the same sensation at time2 as rope, it becomes a fact that a sensation is distinguished from its interpretation. Similarly reading a passage can give rise to more than one interpretation. Some or all of our interpretations may be wrong. But there is no uninterpreted experience.

Extending this feature to mystic experience, Stace argues that there cannot be such thing as uninterpreted mystic experience.

The difficulty of deciding what part of mystic’s descriptive account of his experience ought to be regarded as actually experienced and what part should be taken as his interpretation is indeed far greater than the corresponding difficulty in the case of sense experience. And it is of vital importance to our enquiry that the distinction should be admitted, should be grasped and held before our minds, and that we should make every possible attempt to apply it to our material as best we can, however, difficult it may to do so.2

This gives rise to another, related question: Can a non-yogi interpret the yogic experience? If an outsider interprets it will it be valid? The answer
to both of these questions is in the affirmative. Suppose a patient who suffers from a particular disease reports pain in a particular part of the body. The doctor who has heard similar reports from similar patients accepts the report as valid, although he has not himself experienced that pain as a result of that disease. Similarly, a philosopher, who is not himself a mystic, can construct mystical philosophy on the basis of several mystics’ reports. In fact, it is precisely this possibility, which has induced William James and others to write on mysticism. On the basis of this the psychologists, philosophers and theologians have arrived at the conclusion that the yogic experience is the same always and only its interpretations differ. The interpretations differ either because of one’s discipline in a particular school of philosophy or because of non-philosophical reasons. For example, a mystic who interprets his intuition as union of individual soul (jīva) with the universal soul (Brahman) might have an Advaita Vedānta background. Some mystics who are afraid of possible punishment, may interpret their mystic experiences in terms of dualism, although their experiences could be justifiably described in terms of pantheism or monism.

So the difference in the accounts of yogic perception is due to the philosophical discipline one has undergone along with other, related aspects of spiritual programme and not due the yogic experience itself, which, as shown in the previous passage, is the same always.

REFERENCES
2. Ibid., p.32.