

Karl Baier: *Yoga auf dem Weg nach Westen. Beiträge zur Rezeptionsgeschichte,* Königshausen und Neumann: Würzburg 1998

Summary provided by the author, **Karl Baier**, University of Vienna

Inspired by the historical chapter in Fuchs' *Yoga in Deutschland*, I extended the research on the history of Yoga in the West by focussing on the different Western approaches to Yoga, as connected with specific images of India and their respective religious, cultural and biographical contexts.

I start the discussion by reviewing various hypotheses concerning the possible influence of Yoga on ancient Europe. A comprehensive chapter deals with Medieval Hesychasm. Here I treat the so-called Methodos, the oldest document presenting a Christian meditation practice, which shows significant parallels with certain elements of Indian Yoga, such as breathing techniques and concentration on different areas of the body like the navel and the heart. The different stages of hesychastic prayer as described in the Methodos are interpreted and compared with Yoga texts. I also discuss the possibility that Yoga could have been transferred to Christian monasteries by wandering Sufis. An indirect influence of Yoga on the ecstatic Kabbalah may also have taken place (mediated through Christian hesychasts with whom Abraham Abulafia had contact). Two chapters deal with Yoga in the travelogues of the Early and Later Modern Times, among them Paul Brunton's famous *A Search in Secret India*. My analysis of the discussions on Yoga in German philosophy of the 19th century (Schopenhauer, Hegel, Schelling, Deussen) reveals an almost unknown chapter in the history of continental philosophy.*

The chapter on Yoga in modern esotericism deals with the early esoteric reception of Yoga in Eliphas Lévis' *L'histoire de la magie* (1859) which draws a negative picture of Indian mysticism from the point of view of ceremonial magic. Madame Blavatsky on the contrary is very appreciative of Yoga and strongly emphasizes differences between Hatha-Yoga (lower, physical) and Raja-Yoga (higher, spiritual): this subsequently becomes a very popular pattern. My treatment of the Russian tradition of esotericism is probably the most interesting part of this chapter because there is little academic research on this topic. Gurdijeff and Ouspensky place Yoga within their concept of a „fourth way“ beyond the way of the fakir (similar to the theosophical, merely *physical* Hatha Yoga), monk (Christian devotional religiosity) and the Yogi (= Raja Yoga understood as mental exercise). Thereafter I treat psychological and psychoanalytical theories of Yoga which flourished in the second half of 19th and the beginning of 20th century. C.G. Jung's understanding of Yoga is treated in detail with a number of references to Jung's biography and to his overall view of Indian culture. The concluding chapter deals with Mircea Eliade and Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, leading Yoga researchers of their times, who were engaged in the totalitarian movements of their home countries Romania and Germany. I link their interpretations of Indian religion and the history of Yoga to this political background and point out the affinities and differences between the two.

* On a related topic, and more specifically on the hegemonic uses of translated Sanskrit texts by Schlegel, von Humboldt and Hegel, see the Italian text by Saverio Marchignoli, „Che cos'è lo yoga? Traduzione ed egemonia alle origini dell'Indologia tedesca.“, in Federico Squarcini, ed. (2002) *Verso l'India, Oltre l'India: Scritti e ricerche sulle tradizioni Intellettuali Sudasiatiche*, Mimesis, Milano :87-102.