

Anugîtâ, an exposé on sâmkhya and yoga doctrines in the Mahâbhârata

by Guy Vincent

(Hatha Yoga Conference, Bitche, Tuesday, 25th July 2006)

Translated into English by Gilles Schaufelberger

Everybody here knows that the *Mahâbhârata* is the epic par excellence of the Indian world: it relates the conflict between two branches of the same family, conflict that will end in a total war marking the end of an era, the transition from Dvâpara to Kali age, the worst. But it would reduce the importance of this epic to confine it to a warlike genre, for it provides endless minor stories, reflections in order to postpone the conclusion, all kind of speculations. These developments, parallel to the main stream, constitute in fact another stream just as much essential, like a reflexive thought on what is going on.

Among the developments or the bends taken by the narration, 34 speculative chapters are found in book XIV, whose general heading is *Anugîtâ*, « continuation of the Gîtâ ». *Anugîtâ* is actually meant to be a follow up to the well known *Bhagavadgîtâ*, an other speculative passage, also included in the *Mahâbhârata*. But as much the *Bhagavadgîtâ* received a general audience, as much the *Anugîtâ* remained confidential, not to say unknown, in India as well as in Europe. I would like to reveal it to the audience.

Since 25 years, with my friend Gilles Schaufelberger, we set about, twice a week, translating in French precisely all these additional and parallel stories to revive the integrative and creative power of the *Mahâbhârata*, where the few French translators privileged rather the main story. Three volumes of our translations just came out from the Presses de l'Université Laval (Quebec), and our translation of the *Anugîtâ* is in Vol. III, pp. 477 to 640. We are grateful to the Hatha Yoga center to have invited us, which allows us to inform you about our long-maintained work.

Further, it has to be known that the *Mahâbhârata* is a very huge work (between 160,000 and 200,000 lines) and that the critical edition of the text took thirty years for a whole team of scholars, sorting out the variants between more than a hundred manuscripts. We have worked on this critical edition, which is important to specify, as there are so many manuscript's variants that the very sense of a passage may be different from an edition to the other, with no way to know which version is preferable. The epic is a living work which grows, changes, becomes richer during the centuries, and nothing can let us think that the original text could be reconstructed. So it is, and we have to accept it.

I. PRESENTATION OF THE ANUGÎTÂ

a) Synopsis :

The *Anugîtâ* is a speculative text of 34 chapters written in *shloka* (the epic verse, two lines of 16 foot each), divided in three parts: first a discussion between a Perfect (Siddha) and a Kashyapa's descendant, then a discussion between a Brahman and his wife, finally a discussion between a Master and his disciple. These three discussions are reported by the god Krishna himself to Arjuna, his comrade-in-arms and friend. Krishna relates what he has heard previously.

The first discussion (XIV, 16-19) is about rebirth and the way to final emancipation. The Perfect points out that the sacrifices offered to the gods bring only a perishable

happiness hereafter: « The celestial abodes are never eternal. Repeatedly we come down from a high position acquired with difficulty, repeatedly we die, repeatedly we are born again, we take many meals, we drink from many breasts, we know many successive fathers and mothers, we are subjects alternatively to happiness and misfortune » (XIV, 16, 29-32). Thus we have to escape this law, in order not to be born again. But Kashyapa's descendant wants to know, how the soul leaves the body and how it grows heavy with the weight of the acts.

The Perfect then describes the erratic attitude of the man: « He makes use of the positive effects of the acts accomplished in a previous incarnation to build here below his health and his fame, but his merits become completely exhausted. He uses then the negative effects of his previous actions and destroys his health ... He eats sometimes to excess, sometimes nothing. He eats highly spiced meals and sleeps all day. He catches lethal diseases ... A heat shakes his organism, kindled by an heavy breathing, it overruns the whole body and blocks all the vital breaths. This burning heat breaks the places where resides the life, and straight away, in the middle of sharp pains, the soul leaves the body ... His body being no more irrigated, he understands that he is sent back to the five elements » (XIV, 17, 6-20). The individual soul is likened to a wind which takes away the weight of the acts, and the Brahmans discern if one has done either good or evil: « With the eyes of the knowledge, they see it as one sees with one's own eyes a glowworm piercing here and there the darkness » (XIV, 17, 30).

The Perfect continues his lesson on the future of the soul, either going up to heaven or down to hell, until it has to become an embryo: « Just as melting iron takes the shape of the mould, know that the soul slips into the embryo. Just as a lit lamp lights a room, the conscience lights the body » (XIV, 18, 9-10). We have to break this chain by a mental discipline based on renouncing : to remain the same, to envy nobody, to be without enemies, without parents, without children, to own nothing. « To imagine oneself without sense of smell, without sense of touch, without sense of hearing, without prehension, without shape, without means of knowledge » (XIV, 19, 10), such is the way to the spiritual training named « yoga ». The soul is then able to contemplate the Spiritual Principle (Mahant), which has « thousand feet, thousand hands, countless eyes, heads and mouths » (XIV, 19, 45). Here will be recognized Krishna's image as depicted in *Bhagavadgîtâ* (VI, 33, 23). And here ends this first secret teaching.

The second discussion. (XIV, 20-34).takes its origin in a Brahman's wife worrying about her lot hereafter. What kind of salvation is waiting for her ? The Brahman then reminds that the Absolute is inside everybody: « I have understood that the temple was inside me: this temple can not be smelled by the nose, nor tasted by the tongue, nor felt by the touch. Its access is through the mind » (XIV, 20, 9; 12). From there come the five breaths. Following that, a description is given of the action of the five breaths in the body, of the seven perception's organs (nose, tongue, ears, eye, skin, mind and intelligence), of an internal sacrifice where seven sacrificers pour seven offerings into seven fires (it means that he who smells, tastes, hears. and so on, pours into his organs of perception the perceived informations). The sacrifice becomes internal.

But conflicts shake the body, as the conflict between the mind and the organs of the senses (the senses point out that without their help the mind couldn't apprehend anything); the five breaths argue also between themselves (among the five, which one is the most important ?); the discussion concerns the life to be lead and the difficulty to understand within the forest of the knowledge (for example, the syllable « om » isn't understood the same way by all: the snakes think that it means « to bite », the demons « to deceive », the gods « to give », the sages « to have self-control »), the necessity for the nonviolence (the warriors are condemned because they use brute force: the king Alarka

discovers the power of the mind that none of his arrows are able to reach or to kill; another king, Janaka, discovers as for him the futility of any territory's possession.

The discussion ends on the fact that there isn't an single way to final emancipation, but a myriad of them. « Then, the Brahman's wife opted for the destruction of her bodily soul. From her former soul another soul rose up » (XIV, 34, 10). Krishna then reveals to Arjuna that his mind (manas) is the Brahman and his intelligence (buddhi) the Brahman's wife. All the truths are not understandable by the intelligence only.

The third discussion (chapters 35 to 50) takes its origin in a very brief question a disciple asks his Master: « The best, what is it ? ». The answer get organized on the theme of the components of the human being, the three tendencies (guna), which act inside ourselves: Virtue (sattva), Desire (rajas) and Instinct (tamas). In changing proportions, depending on each and on the the kind of life he leads, these three tendencies constitute the whole universe : « the light of the sun, it is the Virtue, its heat the Desire, its eclipses the Instinct : in such a way, the three tendencies spread in all the stars» (XIV, 39, 15-16).

The discussion then continues, taking up typical notions of sâmkhya, explaining how the world is built from the Unmanifested (avyakta) to the Great Soul (mahat), then to the self-awareness (ahamkara), then to the material and subtle elements. The Sâmkhya is a dualistic system, separating the mind from the matter : the matter spreads in order that, at the end, the mind does no more need it, and discovers its profound independence. That is illustrated by the image of a dancer or bayadere bewitching her spectator until the latter discovers the illusion represented by this dance. Besides, the discussion puts the emphasis on the impermanence of this world, on the necessity to end his own life as an hermit « who brings from all sides his senses back into himself as a tortoise its limbs» (XIV, 46, 42) to obtain the Sacred (brahman): « He who, at the time of his death, withdraws into himself, not becoming confused if only the time of a sigh, he who masters his breathing by means of respiratory exercises, repeated ten or twelve times, even twenty four times, obtains immortality » XIV, 48, 2; 4).

Finally the discussion ends by an invitation to meditate.

This summary shows how the *Anugîtâ* is rich in topics and is meant to be a witness of the main philosophical and mystical concerns of the then Indian world. It isn't the least of its difficulties: within this combination of conventional subjects, which part of its originality is hidden or shown ?

That's why we have to specify the context into which appears this triple teaching, deliberately secret, reserved to Arjuna alone. To which extent is it esoteric, given the seemingly conventional aspect of its thoughts ?

b) Narrative situation

The book XIV is named « Horse's Sacrifice Book (Ashwamedha Parva) »; war is over, and the victorious king Yudhishtira, elder brother of Arjuna, has to perform a horse's sacrifice in order to be proclaimed king of earth¹. It is an old Indo-European ritual, very complex; a horse is set free to roam during one year over the earth, accompanied by young people; it is then suffocated; the royal queen feigns a mating with the dead animal. As it is a very expansive ceremony, with the many riches that have to be given to the Brahmins, it would be necessary to fetch them. During the preparations, Arjuna and the god Krishna return to the capital, Indraprastha. Their friendship is strong, bound up by hours of fighting. They take advantage of this interlude to talk to each other, to have a more general conversation. One thing is sure: the teaching given by Krishna isn't fit for a

¹ Yudhishtira is told also that, by offering this sacrifice, he could purify himself from his sins (XIV, 03, 03; 11).

warrior, a kshatriya, but for a hermit or a Brahman: Arjuna isn't cut out to practise asceticism or to renounce, while his elder brother, the king Yudhishtira, is much more attracted to such a way of life and would easily give up his royal duty. This inadequate choice surprises us: why did Krishna chose this interlocutor ? But that isn't the only difficulty.

The first translator of the *Anugîtâ* into an European language, that is to say into English, is Kâshinâth Trimbak Telang, in 1882, (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 8, Oxford). He points out other areas of obscurity: are the three parts of the *Anugîtâ* sign of three different texts as some manuscripts think ? Is their autor the same ? Is their author another than the author of the *Mahâbhârata* ? At which time could the *Anugîtâ* have been written ? How long before the *Bhagavadgîtâ* or how long after ? He tries, by some comparisons with the *Upanishads*, by noting down some societal facts present in the text, by words that could be borrowed from Buddhism or Jainism, to work out the text better, but no answer seems satisfactory to him. The very fact that two Indian commentators allude to it, Samkara the one, in a treatise named *Sârîrabhâshya*, Vijnânabhiksu the other, in *Sâmkhyasâra*, hardly brings new information. The *Anugîtâ* remains enigmatic, without possibility to define its date. It is impossible to say either if it precedes sâmkhya's and yoga's doctrines in their building stage, or if it is only a versified echo of them. Unlike the *Bhagavadgîtâ*, whose message is conveyed by a god, the *Anugîtâ* follows the outline of the oldest *Upanishads*, where eminent men were keen enough to bring transcendent messages.

It looks thus like a sacred text that has not found its audience during centuries, or has not aroused any interest for its wording. And yet, this speculative text doesn't lack assets, and we would like to redeem it through our translation into French. Our translation doesn't rely on Trimbak Telang's one, which we have not consulted to be free of any influence. Trimbak Telang's translation is an accurate one, with many footnotes referring to other related texts; it retains Sanskrit words to express the notions. Reprinted in 1986, it is available on the site <http://theology101.org/index.html>, or, more precisely, on its page « hinduism » at <http://theology101.org/hin/sbe08/index.htm>.

Our translation solves in another way the text's difficulties. But we wish that other translators embark on this work, as for the *Bhagavadgîtâ*: Concerning Sanskrit, plenty of translations doesn't harm.

c) Comparison with the *Bhagavadgîtâ*.

The *Anugîtâ* has suffered from the *Bhagavadgîtâ*'s presence, whose fortunes are considerable. Admittedly, these two texts are meant to be sacred, esoteric ones, where reasoning is combined with pure revelation. But in the *Bhagavadgîtâ*, there is a beauty, a force of images, that doesn't exist in the *Anugîtâ*. Moreover, the narrative context itself inclines toward the *Bhagavadgîtâ*: in the VIth book of the *Mahâbhârata* (Bhîshma Parva), on the first day of the battle, the two armies are facing each other. Arjuna is standing on his chariot driven by Krishna; he stops it in the middle of the armies, seized by an extreme despondency because, in front of him, he recognizes friends, relatives, people he thinks highly of, people he will have to fight with; Krishna then reveals to him his true nature and the yoga of moral sufferings' release. The *Anugîtâ* doesn't take place in the same setting: Arjuna has a rest in his palace, and confesses he has forgotten what Krishna has taught him. Krishna tells him how much he is disappointed and declares: « I can not trust you, ô Pându's son, you are narrow-minded » (XIV, 16, 10). Finally, it will be noted that the *Anugîtâ* does not lead to some devotion to a god, to Krishna, to his power of salvation, but remains centred on the human means of salvation, while the *Bhagavadgîtâ* ends with a demonstration of divine omnipotence in which everything will be reduced.

The fact that these three elements (images, context, devotion) were not so well represented, that the dramatization was not so great, must have played a role against the *Anugâtâ*. Nevertheless, it contains valuable aspects, if only for the choice to pass on speculative notions in various and illustrated forms. The text isn't an arduous exposé on categories and concepts, it knows how to use pleasant images, anecdotes, and a great expressiveness of the vocabulary. We will come back on this aspect.

Let us enter more inside the text 's spirit by looking on some notions that structure its thinking.

II. TAPAS AND YOGA

a) To practise austerity

Many times the epic mentions the asceticism of men or women who embark themselves in firm penances in order to obtain a son, magical weapons, merits to go up to heaven in the abodes of the gods, or supernatural powers. It is a technique of want that forces the gods to give a boon. One deprives himself of food, one takes refuge alone in a forest or a mountain, one remains motionless for years if needed, and so on. Without judging too severely this kind of piety, we will note its self-interested nature, even if the expressed need is often legitimate and shows one's willingness to redress an injustice. But even demons (asura) are seen practising such austerities, with the intention of dominating the world and enslaving the gods. The Sanskrit world corresponding to this is the word « tapas », meaning « intense heat », as if this exercise, based on immobility, was producing an energy, was an activity. The ascetic is called « tapasvin, the one who possesses heat ».

Sacrifice (yajna) is of another nature: it doesn't aim for obtaining a power, it regulates instead the order of the world and the social order, it protects the world from the risk of being destroyed by demons or broken by death, but it isn't free either from certain interests: well celebrated, it brings to the sacrificer consideration, fame and vital energy, it brings to the social group rain and crops for example.

Yoga differs from asceticism and from sacrifice as well. From the first chapter of the *Anugâtâ*, the Perfect (Siddha) warns: « By different sacrifices and by a relentless discipline, mortals obtain success here below and even a stay in the abode of the gods. But their happiness doesn't last, the celestial abodes are never eternal » (XIV, 16, 28-29). There is better to be done, the spiritual training, or yoga, which is the way. Its use is described in XIV, 19, 14 sq:

« I will teach you the wonders of yoga:

He who goes through its doors perceives the universal soul that resides inside him...

Disciplined, always concentrated, keeping himself and his senses as well under control, he who reaches perfect meditation, sees by himself the universal soul...

Mastering meditation, he bends the very divinity of the gods to his will...

Let him think of the region he knows from a long time, then let his mind turn to the inside of the town he lives in, forgetting the outside.

Inside the town, let him concentrate his mind on the house he lives in, its outside and its inside.

Having mastered his house in his mind, let him meditate on the body he lives in, neglecting the outside.

Having mastered all his senses in this silent and lonely retreat, let him meditate on the inside of his body, dealing only with that.

Let him focus his mind on his teeth, his palate, his tongue, his throat, his neck, his heart, and even on his heart's veins ... »

Thus, yoga is beyond asceticism and sacrifice, because it tries to extract itself from the world rather than to change it or to take advantage of it. Yet, it doesn't exclude them, it includes them, for it tries to be ascetic and sacrificial. Besides, the yogin is called « yati », i.e. « he who endures, he who supports »; he starts from asceticism that aims at mastering body and mind and offers in sacrifice the elements and the organs of perception that make his being up before reaching perfection or final emancipation. Let us take the story of the king Alarka (XIV, 30) who gives up the kingdom he has conquered and tries to conquer his body and his mind, imagining he could shoot arrows at them to make them obedient « When I hear many sounds, I covet them ! So, at my ears, I will shoot arrows ... When I see many objects, I covet them ! So, at my eyes, I will shoot my sharpened arrows ... ». Every organ answers him he will just die. Then, weary of pursuing a losing battle, he takes to yoga, killing his senses with only one arrow and reaching the universal soul. That shows up yoga not only diverts asceticism and sacrifice toward richer aims, farther horizons, giving an increase of spirituality, but also brings them together in the same effort of transcendence. The *Anugîtâ*, based on the sacrifice's rules, is more qualified for giving a practical method of progression (describing stages) than the *Bhagavadgîtâ* that develops asceticism and divine revelation in what they have of ecstatic.

b) The warrior and the yoga

As a result, it could be believed that yoga came out after the techniques of asceticism and the practices of sacrifice. And yet, before becoming such a notion, questioning the value of sacrifice and the interest of asceticism, the yoga existed as a test proposed to a warrior to prove his merit or to obtain magical weapons. Thanks to the *Mahâbhârata*, a kind of yoga's archaeology is thinkable. Yoga's was probably practised prior to sacrificial rites and to asceticism. Between this very ancient stage and *Anugîtâ's* one, an evolution of yoga can be observed. Admittedly, yoga's origins are still discussed, but in a paper dated 1998, « The Indo-European Prehistory of Yoga », N.J. Allen, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Oxford, points out a very strange similarity between the ordeals to which Arjuna is submitted for obtaining divine weapons in the blessed abode of Indra, and those to which the Greek hero Odysseus is submitted during his journey back from Calypso's island to Pheacians' country. In that case, Arjuna is definitely a yogin, and that would explain that Krishna completes or confirms his training. But if yoga helps to obtain divine gifts useful for a warrior, in what is it different from tapas, this asceticism practised to obtain merits and powers ? The episode analysed by N.J. Allen could give us an answer: the tapasvin obeys to a personal choice, the yogin is entrusted with a mission. Shall we find again this dimension of a call and a qualifying ordeal in the *Anugîtâ* ? It is not sure.

Let us recall the episode of Arjuna going to Himâlaya. The five *Mahâbhârata's* heroes are in exile in the forest (III, 37-45) and suffer from the situation, when Vyâsa appears: he orders Arjuna to go on a trip in order to receive magical weapons from various divinities including Indra the last. Arjuna leaves, and after days and nights of uninterrupted walk, he reaches Himâlaya, where during four months, he practises tapas in honour of the god Shiva. First, he eats only fruits and roots, then only drinks water, finally fasts completely and remains standing on the toes, arms upward. Then Shiva becomes incarnate in a hunter and fights a duel with a thin Arjuna: the fight proceeds with arrows first, then with one's bare hands Arjuna is reduced by Shiva to a shapeless mass, a ball of flesh (pinda, name of the pellet which is offered to the dead ancestors), all his limbs are broken. He faints, regains consciousness and asks the god to forgive him. Shiva touches him and gives him again shape and strength. He gives him also a magical weapon. Arjuna then meets

the four cardinal points' guardians (lokapâla), three of them give him other weapons, the fourth is Indra himself in a disguise, who sends him his celestial chariot to fly him to the heaven, in the divinely beautiful city of Amarâvatî. A nymph, Urvashî, tries and seduces Arjuna. The latter shares the throne with the king of the gods, Indra, who offers him a magical weapon. All these obtained weapons will be used in the future war.

This episode is rich in lessons to be learned:

- 1) First of all, it is similar to the Odysseus' return, leaving Calypsô who keeps him for many years on a desert island (the island is equivalent to the forest) sailing seventeen days without sleeping, running into a tempest that wipes him out and breaks his boat, facing the wrath of Poseidon (equivalent of Shiva) and the combined violence of the four winds (the cardinal points' guardians), rejected nude and grazed on the shore (let us think to the flesh ball), begging the god to be favourable, fainting, falling asleep to recover his strength, entering on a chariot driven by mules the Pheacians' city where an endless spring prevails, meeting Nausicaa, the king's daughter who thinks she has found a husband in him (like Urvashî). If the comparison is valid, that means that the yoga dates back to a time situated before the separation of the Indo-European peoples, i.e; 3000 B.C. at least, since the same story happens to be in India and in Greece.
- 2) Then, the episode follows the stages Patañjali, the oldest theoritian of yoga, describes pointing to the difficulties encountered by the yogin; he names them « anga » (limbs); five external (yama or self-control by abstinence; niyama or restraint; âsana or posture; prânayama or breathing's control; pratyâhâra or withdrawal of the senses) and three internal (dhâraṇa or mind's focusing; dhyâna or meditation; samadhi or ecstasy); let us notice that Arjuna practises asceticism during four month and then meets with Shiva in a duel in which he is deprived of form (the five external limbs), is visited by three guardians (the three internal limbs) and finally reaches Indra (found unity); Patañjali himself refers even to « high-ranking persons' offers » (3, 51), modest wording to refer to carnal temptation (willing nymphs). N.J. Allen notices also similarities in *Shvetâshvatara Upanishad*, which proves that Arjuna's journey describes on the narrative mode the stages of the yogin toward the wished perfection.

This paper is thus invaluable to make us understand yoga's nature at its origin and how the *Anugîtâ* is an expression of its evolution. The aim of Arjuna's asceticism was to equip the hero with weapons that would save his side from the demonic hold of its enemies, an altruistic aim; in the *Anugîtâ*, the yoga arises out of a questioning of asceticism's and sacrifice's effectiveness, it tries to be transcendent. In a sense, the yogin offers others the way he has opened.

- 3) The three guna, or tendencies. A group of three notions enjoys also a special handling in the *Anugîtâ*: there is sattva, « the very fact of being », associated with the values of Virtue, kindness, light, purity, happiness. That proves that existing is not contemptible or regrettable ! Then there is rajas, « the dust », associated with Desire, impurity, passion, feelings, activity, misfortune. Finally there is tamas « the darkness » i.e. Instinct, ignorance, apathy, error. These three tendencies are the three constituents of all the beings. Each being has a more or less great amount of these constituents, « guna » in Sanskrit, But here we have a problem of translation, as the word guna refers also to the qualities of the objects (the flavours, bitter, sharp, mild for example, are guna). Here, it is question of the fundamental qualities that weave the fabric of the world. We have chosen « tendencies » in the sense that the beings are taken away by these lines of direction, follow their plans of organization and express them in every possible way. Doesn't the text say for instance: « Three currents arrive permanently in the mind, three vessels get into it » (XIV, 36, 3) ? Moreover, to take

into account this notion of tendencies, we have translated sattva by Virtue, rajas by Desire and tamas by Instinct to avoid a too hierarchical system. Actually, we think traditionally that only Virtue deserves to be honoured, and that everything must be done to let it dominate inside us and control the two others. This moralizing point of view is not the one adopted by the *Anugîtâ*, which takes a more neutral eye: the three tendencies are in us and weave our life. To remove one of them is impossible and insane. Here is what is written (XIV, 39, 1 sq.):

« Anyway, it is impossible to speak separately of the tendencies: Instinct, Desire and Virtue are inseparable.

They are tied the ones to the others, they depend the ones on the others, they obey the ones to the others...

They go together, they are united and they work together...

They live together, they are inversely proportional. The shortcoming of one of them leads in every case to the excess of the others...

Also they are imagined very distant, they work together...

All that exist here under has these three tendencies, although they act in an invisible way »

Admittedly, Virtue is privileged, but it can't erase the two other which are always present, if only in the three castes: « Instinct for the people, Desire for the noblemen, Virtue for the Brahmans » (XIV, 39, 11) – old rest of trifunctionality – or in the divisions of the reality: « The nature of the day is triple, triple the one of the night ... The nature of the giving is triple, triple the one of the sacrifice, triple the worlds, triple the gods, triple the sciences and the ways to emancipation. The past, the present, the future, ... the ascending, descending and upward breaths, all are provided with the three tendencies » (XIV, 39, 18-20).

The *Anugîtâ* offers thus a holistic much more than moral view of the existence, of which it notes carefully the components. If it goes in this way about things, it is to act with a full knowledge of the facts, in order to strive for perfection. By which means? It adopts the divisions of the *sâmkhya* (subtle and rough elements, organs of the senses, organs of action, mind and intelligence) but keeps not to cataloguing what exists: it tries to take it as it is in order to get out of it a lever, or, as the text says: « to reach the opposite bank » (XIV, 49, 28).

It is not possible to summarize all the original aspects of the *Anugîtâ*, but we would like to mention its way of teaching and its wording.

III. ANALOGIES AND EMBEDDING

a) Analogies

The *Anugîtâ* is an account of the way the world builds itself, from the point « alpha » (let us call it this way) to our thinking, feeling and acting body. A complete succession of levels is given, as well as a division of the living. The human being is broken down in series of levels (soul, 3 tendencies, 5 subtle elements, 5 breathings, 11 organs of the senses, 5 rough elements) and there is nothing to indicate that plants or animals are different (they are rather absent). The succession of levels is not one-way: it is not only a degradation (from the purest to the most perishable), it could be a graduation (a climb up toward the purest). The only knowledge of these levels is already an opportunity to make progress. Truly, the *Anugîtâ* attempts a certain representation of the world, very close to *sâmkhya* as we have said before. But also, like the *Upanishads*, it makes use of a

metaphorical system or device that consists in establishing identities (this is that: for example the eye is the sacrificer, the seen object is the sacrificial victim or the oblation, the eyesight is the fire that burns the offering), according to a principle of analogy puzzling but fruitful: to report, to compare, to find an internal unity, that manifests the work of the mind. But not everything can be compared nor matched up. Very far from it, thinks also the Hindu sage. And the questioning will be about the drawing up and the preparing of the fields fit for such an analogy. The experiment prepares for a system making analysable the scene of the future analogy. It is not rough matter which is juxtaposed, but two states, better two futures, rather than two sections or two fragments of the matter.

Let us take a first example showing that not everything is comparable (XIV, 21, 7 to 9):

« I will tell you the argument between mind and speech: both of them went to Brahmâ and asked him: « Take a doubt away from us: Which one of us is the best ? »

You have to understand « the best » as « the first ». The Lord answers that the mind is the first, but they are surprised:

« When speech was not yet existing, how could the goddess of speech, Sarasvatî, express herself ? »

Then, the Lord mentions that speech is born into the body and is mobile, while mind is immobile. Thus, both, mind and speech, aren't comparable.

It is only from a shifting on two different levels that an analogy can appear. That is the fundamental key in the logic of the connections appearing in this text. The whole operation of preparation is a start-up, a development

« The wheel of the time has for hub the intelligence, for axle tree the mind and for spokes the senses. It has for metallic rim the five elements, and for hoop the instants.

It rolls with old age and sorrows, and makes its way through adversity and illness. It goes all over time and space, and has for squeaking tiredness and grief...

It has for axle the words with their stress, it turns at mind's speed »

In this passage, the metaphor compares the movement of time to the movement of a chariot, as it compares the movement of life, made of misfortunes, feelings and words to the movement of the same chariot. As a result, both circular movements (time/life) are comparable, and teach us, for example that matter is a driven sheath (vishkambha, « metallic rim, bolt, pole, diameter »).

The *Anugâtâ*, for who cares to pay attention (and this aspect is often ignored), resounds with such paths to be taken upwards or inwards to mind, with such verbs of movement or conduction, with such images of chariot or journey, because two objects are comparable only according to an intellectual search, to a material evolution. As Rada Ivekovic (« Dynamisme ou staticité dans la pensée indienne » in *Les Cahiers de la Philosophie*, n° 14, pp. 215 to 225), puts it, the journey is always physical and mental, since « the movement of the thought is in a way natural as the effort to think the movement ». The stages of life, the levels of knowledge, the classifications, are possible divisions only for lines of speed. *Dharma* is here at issue: this concept with many meanings (justice, duty, cosmic or personal order, norm, law, sacred custom, honour, code of ethics, line of conduct) doesn't find its explanation, as one could believe, in the idea that everything in the universe strives for a « line of conduct », a speed that puts it in accord with other speeds with which it has to compromise. If the beings and the things do not compromise, nothing conceivable is left. Now, every one of them has its own *dharma*, with which they can be conveyed, which makes them accessible, analogical therefore. *Adharma* or disorder comes from Desire (rajas), profit, ownership, withholding (of donations, of sacrifices), it is the fact of moving away from the meant way (demeaning), of getting bogged down and

of losing the right speed, and the fact of no more knowing that various speeds exist according to age, caste, rank. If speeds weren't codified, the mind wouldn't be able to establish its connections, it would be chaos.

To determine these speeds, to codify their variability, becomes thus an urgent task. It is not conducted according to a metric, as in Europe; India chooses another point of view: the notion of *brahman* is called for as absolute speed. According to our level of knowledge, we accelerate our speed until making it identical with Absolute's. *Samsâra*, or the cycle of reincarnation, is only a series of speeds, whose slowing down measures our distance from *brahman*. To free oneself from it, means to concentrate oneself and to unify oneself in such a degree nothing can resist by its friction to absolute speed. Let the organs of the senses retract themselves as the tortoise's limbs: if the slow-moving tortoise is given as example, that is to inform us of our mediocre speed, of our weight, while its back is a curve to enable us to conform ourselves to the including approach of the Being. What is present in the heart of the reed, says the *Anugîtâ*, it is also the arrow. « The arrows represents *brahman* » (XIV, 19, 21-22)..It is normal to consider the latter as transcending the opposites, since absolute speed, following the example of a top, appears with both these aspects in the same time: mobility and immobility, diversity and unity, movement and point.

Thus, according to this perspective, beings and things are coexistential, without necessary anteriority. They appear to us according to evolving directions of which the sage knows the perfect culmination that makes them comparable. Each being and each thing are determined in comparison with a central point, identical to the absolute speed that is *brahman*. That is why the *Anugîtâ*, like other *Upanishads*, dares this connection (XIV, 42, 27 to 39) :

« The ear is *adhyâtman* (the supreme Being, he who knows himself) ... The skin is *adhyâtman* ... », until « ... The anus is *adhyâtman* »

This kind of sentence is nonsense, unless referring to the idea of an absolute anchorage point, repeating for the perceptions and the places where they occur the general configuration of the central *brahman*. They are not the organs of the senses that are mentioned, but their ability to be a point of reference for all that moves around them: a place (space for the ear), a perception (a sound), and a divinity (here, the cardinal points), these three elements move, their movement takes its meaning being compared with an absolute movement. They are not themselves the supreme Being .

How then can we measure them and compare one to the other ?

1. First, drawing up « chains ». One chain is about the five subtle elements (sound, contact, form, smell; flavour) that are to be understood as qualities by which the objects are accessible, the five rough elements (water, earth, air, fire, ether) - to those ten the self-awareness is added, to make eleven. The same for the chain concerning the five organs of senses and the five organs of action, to which mind is added to make also eleven.
2. These two chains are comparable. There is still to weave the links of identity, of generation, of association. And to build analogies. To do that, we will use the ternary structure of the sacrifice that needs a sacrificer, a sacrificial victim that is offered (oblation) and a way to kill it and to transport it to the gods (the fire, called *hutâsha*, « he who eats the oblation »).
3. The implementation follows on this way: elements are taken in the two chains: **fire** corresponds to the five subtle elements (first list, where sound, form, contact, and so on, are likened to perceptible qualities): it has to be understood that these elements, in a way, transport the objects to us, because they endow the objects with qualities by which we can grab them, just as the fire transports the victim to heaven; the **sacrificer** will be the organ of the senses (second list, where the fact of hearing is seen as a knowledge); the **oblation** will be the perceptions taken in the diversity of the

world, all that is grasped by the senses thanks to the qualities the objects receive from the subtle elements (objects are also called « gunin », i.e. « what is provided with qualities »).

The oblation belongs neither to the first list, nor to the second one, it has an intermediate status. The multiplicity and the variety of the world are reduced to the status of offerings. That refers to the conception of sâmkhya: Nature arrays itself to please mind until mind loses interest in this sight.

<i>list's codification sacrifice</i>	<i>list 1 5 subtle elements 5 rough elements self-awareness</i>	<i>list 2 5 organs of senses 5 organs of action mind</i>	<i>alia</i>
fire	subtle elements or qualities making the objects accessible		
priest		organs of the senses or operators of perception	
oblation			special perceptions or perceived data (gunin: object provided with qualities)

These connections (this one is only an example: others are possible, where the organs of senses and action could be the ten sacrificers, the rough elements the fires, the perceived objects, the oblations) delimit in a way segments of similarity and revelation, that have the effect to create a feeling of dizziness or of amazing relativity. The origin escapes from us, the hierarchies fade, the classes are mobile and their elements substitutable in a preferential order, nose before smell or the contrary, the ear is a womb in which space spreads, but space is anterior to this operation for it has the quality of sound. If there was a doubt about the unreality of the world, or its diversity, such reasonings would remind us of that. It is maybe about a didactic intention peculiar to Hindu wisdom. Nobody comes unharmed out of it.

On a probably new way, we say that there is a point alpha, and identify it with the absolute speed. Let us observe what the *Anugîtâ* says about.

b) Brahman

The ultimate point to clear is the Unmanifested (avyakta), in other places *brahman*. To have recourse to *brahman*, this neutral principle, is to say that the divinity is a potential for possibilities promised not an annihilation, but the achievement of the most absolute they contain. All beings, moved by their *âtman*, or eternal vital principle, build trajectories next to it, according to their various degrees of proximity. The best of them move close to it, more in the way of asymptote or differential calculus than of fusion, or union, or annihilation: *âtman* and *brahman* are connected (samprayoga), and the texts specifies (XIV, 48, 12): « In the same way, a fish is different from water, but there is a connection ».

That explains the meaning one has to give to the word *nirdvandva*: not to be double, not to be dual. is indeed to be reduced to one dimension, but also so many ways to be a volume, to occupy a spacetime, to make work partial symmetry and oppositions between the two parts. *nirdvandva*, translated by « to transcend the opposites », defines actually a

dynamic point and also its absorption. One should come nearer the curve, be this point with thousand of other points. That requires of course lapses, the permission to get lost, a freely agreed effort within the reality. The *Anugîtâ* declares (XIV, 48, 14):

« When one looks for the Absolute, he makes progress thanks to the lamp of reality »

Contrary to the monistic position of the *Vedânta*, the real is far from being contemptible or illusory: even if it is transient, it goes with a quest the divinity all in all has wanted to be successful. It is not itself it saves and frees (it would be the case if brahman and âtman were the same reality) but really an « other »

What is the nature of this « other » ? That is the last question we have to mention because it haunts Hindu mind, taking the form of: « who is he the one who transmigrates ? » If *âtman* is the immutable part of the human being, and if perfection consists in reaching it, freed from the deposits of previous lives and from the weight of acts, and to discover it is *brahman*, then, as G. Bugnault points so clearly out, in a discussion with F. Alquié (*L'Inde pense-t-elle ?* P.U.F., Paris 1994, pp. 70 to 73), « breaks the paradox: only he who is already free has the ability to free himself ». *Sub specie æternitatis*, the Absolute, God, The One – whatever the chosen term – lives in every one of us: our final emancipation sanctions only an emancipation already into effect. What is the point of freeing a « non-prisoner » ? The answer to this paradox is different for Hindus and Buddhists, the first set out to say that even this contradiction must be solved to be perfect, the others put the emphasis on the emptiness of he who thinks he is an « I » with an *âtman*. But the *Anugîtâ* seems to suggest a simpler solution: the « other » is a process whose evolution is unfinished, and it is the process that must be saved. « We must be able to give up our chariot in a mountain, to abandon our boat on shore, in order to go further on foot » (XIV, 49, 21 to 30). Other sensations are waiting for us beyond, they are other possibilities of opening to the Absolute, but for that, conditions for spiritual life must be invented, an internal space of anticipation and knowledge, an intense place (the order of a point, remember ?) where the Unmanifested will inhabit. To create these conditions is a didactic project. Is it not true that the *Anugîtâ* is an educational book ?

« The grace of a spiritual state is recognizable by that: it is similar to the dream » (XIV, 50, 35).

Dreams inhabit it, of a higher truth, for sure ...

CONCLUSION

The *Anugîtâ* is an intelligent part of the *Mahâbhârata*, and we hope sincerely this text will finally find its audience. This continuation of the *Bhagavadgîtâ* has good reason for being. Other fights are waiting for Arjuna of a more internal and personal nature.

Let us come back to this passage where the king Alarka is disturbed by the fact he has conquered everything but his mind. This confusion is echoed in R. Calasso's *Ka* (Gallimard 2000, p. 209): the author imagines a discussion between the seven rishis, these seven sages who govern the populating of the world; he puts these words in the mouth of Vishvâmitra (« the friend of all »): « The way it happened has been strange. Because of this thought, we have lost history. As if, at the time when it draws itself, a sword fallen from the heaven had cut our hands. We stayed paralyzed in the gesture we were making The often violent gestures of conquerors coming from high plateau and burned mountains to the plain too vast, too bushy and torrid we were invading – and that was to invade us. ... It was this thought that stopped us, nothing else. We didn't move beyond, but sporadically, to discover other rivers and other forests. As a result, it was the impulse that failed us. Something had destroyed us, forever. Something that had emptied us of

everything else... » Another sage, Atri, expresses this strange discovery (p. 207): « When we wake up, the Awakening: that is the only physiological phenomenon having to do with that. Try to think of a second awakening: of an awakening occurring within wakefulness, that will not add itself to the waking, but would multiply it by an « n » we will never be able to specify. For us, that has been thought. That is thought

There are, in the *Anugîtâ*, perspectives that rich.