

Karl Baier / Philipp A. Maas / Karin Preisendanz (eds.)

Yoga in Transformation

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Chapter 1

Some Problematic Yoga Sūtra-s and Their Buddhist Background

Dominik Wujastyk

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Chapter 1: Some Problematic Yoga Sūtra-s and Their Buddhist Background*

1. Introduction

In this paper, I discuss a small selection of *sūtra*-s from the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* that are sometimes misunderstood, or mistakenly considered to be problematic, by contemporary interpreters and even some early Sanskrit commentators. Some of these interpretative difficulties arise out of a lack of specific historical knowledge, especially of the language and content of early Buddhist literature. Several of the interpretations I shall present are not entirely new to Indological studies, but their importance has been overlooked, especially by some recent interpreters. For example, the pioneering study by Émile Senart published in 1900 argued compellingly that the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and the Pali *Tiṭṭaka* contained passages and concepts that were either parallel or even conceptually identical. Louis de La Vallée Poussin (1937) continued Senart's work, and revealed further strong influences of Buddhism discernible in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*.

With this background, I shall clarify some points of interpretation and discuss selected *sūtra*-s from the point of view of their value as diagnostic tests for the quality of interpreters' understandings of early yoga texts. I shall give special attention to the historical background of the technical terms *dharmamegha*, *asampramoṣa*, and *anantasamāpatti*. I shall argue that one cannot correctly or fully understand much of what Patañjali said in his *sūtra*-s and commentary without understanding something about Buddhism, and especially the Buddhist thought and terminology that evolved to discuss meditation and the path to liberation.

* I am most grateful to colleagues who commented on an earlier version of this paper, especially Eli Franco, Birgit Kellner, Chlodwig Werba and Philipp A. Maas. They raised extremely interesting points that deserve much further thought and research, but I have only been able to take up their suggestions to a limited extent in this paper. I also thank Isabelle Ratié and Ferenc Rusza for their corrections and comments.

To bring this point home in a contemporary context, I would like to suggest the following parallel. Suppose you become aware of a new religious movement that is attracting members in the city where you live. Supposing further that you are handed a leaflet by an enthusiast in the street. The leaflet praises the virtuous life, encourages protecting the environment, and speaks about realizing one's personal potential. And amongst other phrases, you see the expressions, "the ten commandments" and then later, "our saviour" and "redemption". You would, I think, draw the conclusion that this new religious movement owed at least part of its thinking to a Judeo-Christian background. These key words and phrases spring out of the text like flags, immediately indicating at least one of the sources of the leaflet's inspiration.

That is what it is like for the cultural historian of India, reading Patañjali's masterpiece on Yoga. As one reads through the work, keywords from Buddhist thought leap out of the page. Given an awareness of Buddhist history and language, these signals are unmissable.

This is not a particularly new point. As mentioned, it was made over a century ago by Senart and has been repeated by many distinguished scholars throughout more than a century since then.¹ Of course it is helpful and fascinating to see how Patañjali reprocessed and integrated Buddhist ideas and language in his classic work on Yoga. And more research specifically on this topic is much needed and will prove interesting and enjoyable. But this point by itself is not the main focus of the following argument. What I am addressing in the present study is a slightly different issue. I am focussing specifically on some of the cases where *not* knowing the Buddhist background to what Patañjali said can lead one seriously astray, where one can fail to understand what Patañjali was talking about.

1.1. Émile Senart

The pioneering study by Émile Senart published in 1900 argued compellingly that the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and the Pali *Tipiṭaka* contained passages and concepts that were either parallel or even conceptually identical.²

For example, he compared the category of the *brahmavihāra*-s – benevolence (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and detachment (*upekṣā*) – that are mentioned in *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* (PYŚ) 1.33 with their

1 E.g., Senart 1900, Woods 1914: xvii–xviii *et passim*, Kimura 1934, La Vallée Poussin 1937, Larson 1989, Cousins 1992, Yamashita 1994, Larson & Bhattacharya 2008: 42–43, Angot 2008: 91–94, Bryant 2009: 69–70.

2 Following the arguments of Maas (2006, 2013), and the colophons of most manuscripts, I refer to the *sūtra*-s and their commentary, the *Bhāṣya*, as a single work, with the title *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*.

description in Buddhist texts.³ In both contexts, these virtues are presented as the appropriate objects for meditation (*bhāvanā*).⁴

This is an example of a case where the *sūtra*-s are reasonably clear, and the fact that the key terms receive their earliest exposition in the Buddhist *Tipiṭaka* is not critical to understanding them. We can struggle through, ignoring Buddhism, and still have a pretty good idea of what the *sūtra*-s are saying, even if the nuances and cultural background escape us.

It has to be said, however, that even in so apparently obvious a case, there is a small problem that would worry the careful Sanskrit scholar. As Louis Renou (1940: 373) pointed out, the word *muditā* (“sympathetic joy”) is not well-formed Sanskrit. It is a feminine of a verbal noun in *-ta*, which is not a grammatical form normally found in classical Sanskrit. It is, however, a type of word that is well known in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.⁵ So this keyword used by Patañjali already creates a small problem for classical Sanskrit readers, a problem only soluble by reference to Buddhist Sanskrit.

Senart himself expressed the general idea that I am addressing, namely that there are concepts used by Patañjali that are inexplicable without the Buddhist background, when he said:

One is surprised by the strange word *dharmamegha*, “cloud of the law”, which Yoga uses to designate the ultimate *samādhi* that confirms the destruction of the *kleśas* and of *karman* (YS. IV, 28, 29). How can one separate it from Buddhist phraseology and from this “ambrosia of the law” that the Buddha’s teaching causes to fall as rain upon the world?⁶

I shall look more deeply into this word *dharmamegha* below (on p. 35ff.).

3 Patañjali does not mention the actual word *brahmavihāra*.

4 Senart 1900: 353. For a depth study of the *brahmavihāra*-s, see Maithrimurthi (1999), who argues that these categories were originally absorbed by Buddhism from much earlier Brāhmaṇa sources.

5 Edgerton (1953: 434) noted that Senart thought the word might be formed from *mudutā* ← Skt. *mṛdutā* (“softness, gentleness”). Edgerton was less convinced, because the meaning of *muditā* really does seem connected with the verbal root *mud* “delight”. Maithrimurthi (1999: 131) notes the difficulty and suggests that the form is analogical with *karuṇā* and *upekṣā*, or that it once qualified an unexpressed feminine substantive.

6 Senart 1900: 353: “On s’est étonné du nom si étrange de *dharmamegha*, ‘nuage de la Loi’, dont le Yoga désigne ce *samādhi* ultime qui assure la destruction des *kleśas* et du *karman* (YS. IV, 28, 29). Comment le séparer de la phraséologie bouddhique et de cette ‘ambrosie de la Loi’ que l’enseignement du Buddha fait pleuvoir sur le monde?”

1.2. Louis de La Vallée Poussin

Over thirty years later, La Vallée Poussin continued Senart's work, and delved further into the strong influences of Buddhism discernible in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*.⁷

While La Vallée Poussin showed the utmost respect for Senart's work, which had after all inspired him to take the subject further, he made one very important correction to his predecessor's ideas. This concerned the question of relative chronology. Senart had written on the assumption that a developed Yoga philosophy, what Larson usefully called, "a systematic reflection that seeks overall coherence and persuasive presentation",⁸ had developed before the time of the Buddha, and that the Buddha was using the ideas of classical Yoga in his teaching. Thirty years later, La Vallée Poussin already knew that this was not so, and that the direction of influence had certainly been the other way round: Buddhism was much older than the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, and the influence had flowed from Buddhism to Patañjali.⁹

La Vallée Poussin studied more *sūtra*-s and specific philosophical terms than Senart had done, including,

1.25 īśvara	2.47 ānanyasamāpatti
1.33 brahmavihāra-s	3.13, 4.12 Sarvāstivāda ideas
1.48–49 prajñā ṛtaṃbhārā	3.20–21 paracittajñāna
2.5 avidyā	3.26 bhuvanajñāna
2.12–13, 31, 34, 4.7 karman	3.48 manojavitva
2.15 duḥkha	3.46 a yogi's four śampad-s
2.25, 3.50, 55, 4.26–34 kaivalya	3.51, 4.28–29 bhūmi-s/dharmamegha
2.27 the seven prajñā-s	4.1 siddhi-s
2.39 janmakathāṃtā	4.16ff. theory of knowledge
2.42 saṃtoṣa	

For example, La Vallée Poussin noted that the five means to acquiring supernatural powers that are described in PYŚ 4.1 are paralleled in the Buddhist philosophical work called the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (AKBh) (7.53) composed by Vasubandhu (born c 350 CE).¹⁰ In PYŚ 4.1, a yogi is said to be able to acquire supernatural powers by virtue of the following five causes: birth (*janma*), herbs (*oṣadhi*), invocations (*mantra*), askesis (*tapas*) and meditative integration

7 La Vallée Poussin 1937.

8 Larson 1989: 131, contrasted with "speculative intuition in an environment of received authority".

9 Maharaj (2013: 77) discusses the older views of the chronological precedence of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* over Buddhism. See also Jacobi 1931; Keith 1932; Renou 1940.

10 La Vallée Poussin 1937: 241–242. On the much discussed issue of Vasubandhu's date I here follow the arguments of Deleanu (2006: 1.186–194). See also Anacker 1984: ch. II, Willemen et al. 1998, Kragh 2013, etc.

(*samādhi*).¹¹ The powers (*ṛddhi*-s) listed in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* are produced through exactly the same causes, in a different sequence: meditation (*bhāvanā*), birth (*upapatti*), invocations (*mantra*), herbs (*oṣadhi*), and by certain ascetic actions (*karma*).¹² It is beyond possibility that these two lists could be independent. There must be a connection between the Buddhist Abhidharma tradition transmitted to us by Vasubandhu and the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* of Patañjali. La Vallée Poussin noted further parallels between these two authors, and we shall return to Vasubandhu below.¹³

1.3. Mircea Eliade

Mircea Eliade had a huge effect on the study and understanding of yoga in the latter part of the twentieth century. It is no exaggeration to say that for many scholars and students, yoga was no more and no less than what Eliade said it was. His book was extraordinarily influential, as has recently been confirmed through the reception studies of Guggenbühl (2008) and Liviu Bordaș (2011, 2012). Both studies show how important Eliade was in moulding scholarship on yoga in the second half of the twentieth century. In fact, La Vallée Poussin (1937) himself was aware of the first edition of Eliade's famous book, which came out in French, just a year before La Vallée Poussin's article.

However, Eliade's book is now obsolete in many respects. While it offered new materials in the first half of the last century, it is now superseded by more accurate and insightful scholarship on almost all aspects of the history of the yoga tradition. In particular, Eliade's chapter on the relationship between yoga and Buddhism is no longer a reliable source of information or interpretation.¹⁴ Although Eliade describes various forms of meditation, the acquisition of magical powers, and forms of metaphysical knowledge in Buddhism, he does not draw many close parallels with the classical Yoga tradition of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*. And for the most part, discussion of the topics raised by Eliade has simply moved on in the research literature. The trenchant criticisms offered by

11 Āgāṣe 1904: 176: *janmauśadhimantratapaḥsamādhijāḥ siddhayaḥ* || 1 || .

12 Pradhan 1975: 428–429: *avyākṛtaṃ bhāvanājam trividhaṃ tūpapattijam | ṛddhir mantrauśadhābhyaṃ ca karmajā ceti pañcadhā* || 7.53 || *samāsataḥ pañcavidhām ṛddhiṃ varṇayanti | bhāvanāphalam upapattilābhikaṃ mantrajām auśadhajām karmajām ca* | . French translation by La Vallée Poussin (1923–1926: V/121–122), translated into English by Pruden (1988–1990: IV/1176). Discussed by Pines and Gelblum (1983: 281). Citing parallel passages in the *Bhagavadgītā* (*karma* in 5.11 compared with *tapas* in 17.14–16) Pines and Gelblum (ibid.) argue convincingly that Vasubandhu's use of the word *karma* can be interpreted as referring specifically to *tapas*, thus paralleling the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* exactly.

13 La Vallée Poussin 1937: 232, 239.

14 Eliade 1970: ch. 5.

R. Gombrich (1974) have undermined all the main arguments put forward by Eliade about the relationship between Yoga and Buddhism. Eliade's views on this topic need not detain us further. The recent historiographical survey of yoga studies by Maas (2013) is the most up-to-date guide to the current state of the field.

2. Three *Sūtra*-s Examined

In what follows, the *sūtra*-s I shall discuss include

- Samādhipāda 11: *anubhūtaviśayāsampramoṣaḥ smṛtiḥ*
- Sādhanapāda 46–47: *sthīrasukham āsanam prayatnaśāithilyānantasamāpattibhyām* and
- Kaivalyapāda 29: *prasāṅkhyāne 'py akusīdasya sarvathāvivēkakhyāter dharmaṃ mameghaḥ samādhiḥ*

These are just a small selection of the *sūtra*-s that could be chosen to exemplify the point being made in this paper.

2.1. Samādhipāda 11: *anubhūtaviśayāsampramoṣaḥ smṛtiḥ*

This *sūtra* gives Patañjali's definition of *smṛti*, a word meaning memory or mindfulness.¹⁵ Roughly speaking, Patañjali says that memory is having no *sampramoṣa* (*a+sampramoṣa*) of the sense objects that have been experienced. What does this awkward word *sampramoṣa* mean? Just using common sense, we can work out that it must mean something like “forgetting”, or “losing”, because after all, in addition to meaning “mindfulness” or “self-remembering”, *smṛti* is also an ordinary-language word in Sanskrit, often meaning “memory” in the simplest sense, as in, “I remember what I had for breakfast.”¹⁶ Patañjali is trying to firm up the definition for philosophical purposes.¹⁷ After all, *smṛti* is one of the five *vṛtti*-s that yoga is meant to block, so he needs to clarify what exactly it is. But

15 See Wujastyk (2012) and Maharaj (2013) for recent discussions on the interpretation of yogic *smṛti*.

16 A real example: *uktam āpadgataḥ pūrvaṃ pituḥ smarasi śāsanam* || “When you get into trouble, you remember the instruction your father said before.” *Mahābhārata, Bhīṣmaparvan* (6), *adhyāya* 124, verse 20 (Krishnacharya & Vyasacharya 1906–1910: 5/188).

17 Franco (1987: 373) was the first to point out that Prabhākara may have taken and used the term *pramoṣa*, in the context of discussing *smṛti*, from the *Pātañjalayogasāstra*, when he was developing his theory of cognitions of illusions. I am grateful to Eli Franco for observing in a personal communication that *smṛti* in philosophical discourse is never a faculty of mind, but rather a momentary mental event.

if breakfast is the sense impression that I have experienced, then memory must have at least something to do with retaining knowledge of that experience, so *asaṃpramoṣa* must mean something along those lines.

The *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* commentary on this *sūtra* does not help, since it took for granted that we know the meaning of this word, and did not explain it. Sanskrit commentators are often very good at helpfully explaining and paraphrasing awkward vocabulary. The fact that Patañjali did not do this suggests that the word *saṃpramoṣa* was sufficiently obvious to him so that it never occurred to him that it would need explaining. That is interesting.

The next commentator, Śaṅkara (8th or 9th century),¹⁸ glossed the term as “not taking away (*anapaharaṇa*)” and “not disappearing (*atirobhāva*)”.¹⁹ Like Patañjali, Śaṅkara seemed reasonably comfortable with the word, but he introduced the sense of “not taking away” or “not removing” although he had the confidence to add the more intuitive “not disappearing”.

But the next main commentator, the influential Vācaspati Mīśra, who lived in about 950 CE, felt a stronger need to explain the term. In his very first sentence, Vācaspati told us what he thought the word meant.²⁰ For him, it was “not stealing (*asteṃya*)”. So the *sūtra* was apparently saying, “memory is the non-stealing of the sense impressions that have been experienced.” This is very odd. But Vācaspati’s interpretation became standard for later commentators, and indeed for modern translators.

Two examples, separated by a century, will have to stand for the scores of translations that struggle with the idea of stealing experienced impressions. Both are books of great merit. Prasāda (1910: 24) translated: “Memory is the not stealing away along with objective mental impressions (retained) (i. e., the reproducing of not more than what has been impressed upon the mind).” Bryant (2009: 43) translated: “Memory is the retention of [images of] sense objects that have been experienced.” Bryant, perhaps influenced by Śaṅkara, finessed the point, noting that *asaṃpramoṣa* meant “not slipping away, retention”.

Quite inexplicably, Woods (1914: 31) translated *asaṃpramoṣa* as “not-adding-surreptitiously”, a translation that bears no relation that I can think

18 Maas 2013: 18; Harimoto 1999: 136. The identity of this Śaṅkara is still under scholarly discussion. Several of the arguments raised in the important study by Halbfass (1991: ch. 6) are still open, although Harimoto makes the telling observation that the author of the *Vivarāṇa* used the same vocabulary and ideas as Śaṅkara the theologian, and avoided using any Advaita terminology from a later period (2014: appendix “Materials for the Authorship Problem”, p. 247). If the author of the *Vivarāṇa* was not the Śaṅkara, then the internal evidence suggests that he was a person of the same period, and therefore earlier than Vācaspati Mīśra.

19 Rama Sastri & Krishnamurthi Sastri 1952: 39.

20 Āgāśe 1904: 16.

of to anything whatsoever.²¹ He translates the *sūtra* as follows: “Memory (*smṛti*) is not-adding-surreptitiously (*asampramoṣa*) to a once experienced object.”

Why do all these commentators and translators get stuck on the concept of “stealing”? The answer is not difficult. One of the most advanced fields of knowledge in ancient India was grammar, specifically Sanskrit grammar. And the grammarians of about the fourth century BCE developed a list of about 2000 seed-forms of words, or elements of language, called *dhātu* in Sanskrit, “roots” in English usage, from which all other words could be derived. Shortly after this list had been created, a grammarian called Bhīmasena added a word or two to each root, just to pick out its main meaning, or to disambiguate similar roots.²² Bhīmasena’s additions do not constitute a dictionary as such, but they were often used as if they were definitions, not just indicators.²³ And in this list, the root *muṣ*, that lies at the heart of *a-saṃ-pṛa-moṣ-a*, is given the meaning $\sqrt{muṣ}$ (9.58) = *steye* “steal”.²⁴

The main modern dictionaries of classical Sanskrit – Monier-Williams (1899), Apte (1957–1959), Böhtlingk & Roth (1855–1875) – all give the meaning “stealing”.²⁵

Now we can see where the problem came from. The early commentators followed the grammarians, and so do the modern Sanskrit lexicographers. But what did Patañjali himself mean? Was he really talking about not stealing memories?

If we turn to historical phonology, we find that there is a normal Indo-Aryan root, $\sqrt{mṛṣ}$, whose meaning is simply, “forget”.²⁶ This root appears in many derivative words in Middle Indo-Aryan languages, as documented in Turner’s *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages* (see Figure 1).

The pronunciation of this family of words changed in Buddhist Pali and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, generating forms such as the Pali “*pamussati*”, “he forgets” and “*pamuṭṭha*”, “forgotten”.²⁷ Although we have these verb forms, there

21 Perhaps Woods was thinking about Vācaspati’s “stealing”, as something surreptitious? And perhaps stealing is not-adding?

22 Skeat (1968: xii) noted the same use of meanings in his own etymological dictionary, “a brief definition, merely as a mark whereby to identify the word.” An etymologist is not a lexicographer.

23 Bronkhorst 1981.

24 $\sqrt{mūṣ}$ (1.707) also = *steye*.

25 Böhtlingk and Roth also give “wegnehmen”, which is a bit more helpful, and under *saṃ-pramoṣa* (1855–1875: VII/745) give “das Nichtvergessen”, but specifically citing PYŚ 1.11. Mayrhofer (1986–2001: 383f.) relates $\sqrt{muṣ}$ only to “stehlen, wegnehmen, rauben”.

26 Werba 1997: 366, see also Mayrhofer 1986–2001: 2/332 on $\sqrt{marṣ}$.

27 Rhys Davids & Stede 1921–1925: V/39, 40.

8730 ***pramṛṣati** ' forgets ' . 2. ***pramṛṣyati**. 3. Pp. ***pramṛṣta** -- . [*pramṛṣē* inf., *prāmamaṛṣa* perf., *pramāṛṣiṣṭhāḥ* aor., *mṛṣyatē* RV. -- √*mṛṣ*]
 1. Pk. *pamhasai*, °*mhusai*, °*mhuḥai* ' forgets ' (*mh* from **pamharai* < *prasmarati*), Pr. *puṣ* -- . Dm. *pramuṣ* -- , Gaw. *plemuṣ* -- , Kal. *prāmuṣ* -- .
 2. Pa. *pamussati* ' forgets ' , Paś.kur. *śamaś* -- (← a dialect like uzb. with *š* -- < *pr* --).
 3. Pa. *pamuṭṭha* -- ' forgotten ' , Pk. *pamhaṭṭha* -- , *pamhuṭṭha* -- ; Ash. *pumiṣṭ*, *pāmiṣṭ*, *pumuṣṭ* ' forgot ' , Wg. *pramuṣṭoi*, *pramuṣṭ* -- , Kt. *pāmiṣṭyo*, *prāmuṣṭyo*.
 ***pramṛṣta** -- , ***pramṛṣyati** ' forgets ' see prec.

Figure 1: Turner 1966–1985: #8730.

appears to be no Pali or Prakrit noun form **pamosa*.²⁸ Nevertheless, other verbal and participial derivatives from this root with the prefix *pra-* do appear in Vedic Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit, as Turner showed.²⁹

What is not in doubt is that the word *asampramoṣa* was used in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, meaning “not forgetting”.³⁰ The word is in fact quite common in Buddhist Sanskrit texts, including especially those from the same period as the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*.³¹ The word *asampramoṣaṇa* often occurs in sentences with *smṛti* “memory”. One text uses Patañjali’s exact compound expression, *smṛtyasampramoṣaṇa*.³² Even more striking is Aśaṅga’s *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, also from the same period, that uses the word *asampramoṣa* in a definition of recollection (*smṛti*) that almost exactly parallels Patañjali’s *sūtra*.³³

We can take one clear message from all this: Patañjali’s *asampramoṣa* has an older and much more diverse history than the later Sanskrit commentators seem to have credited. In Buddhist circles, and amongst speakers for whom the Prakrit languages were less remote, the meaning of the word *asampramoṣa* “not forgetting” was clear. Patañjali knew what it meant and felt no need to explain the

28 A point kindly drawn to my attention in a personal communication from my colleague Chlodwig H. Werba.

29 Across many IA languages, Turner’s dictionary has a number of interesting entries related to the roots *muṣ* and *mṛṣ* “wipe away, forget”. These suggest the possibility that words sounding like *muṣ* or *mṛṣ* had a primary meaning connected with “forgetting” both in very early language like that of the *R̥gveda*, and in related Iranian languages such as Pahlavi. It would be interesting to apply the methods of historical phonology to the hypothesis that an old Sanskrit formation *mṛṣa* “wipe away, forget” evolved into a Prakrit *moṣa*, which was then taken back into Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit unchanged. Once in Sanskrit usage, the word’s connection with *mṛṣ* “wipe, forget” was forgotten, and the grammarians started to try to connect it with the quite different root *muṣ* “steal”.

30 Edgerton 1953: 83.

31 E.g., *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (Conze 1974), *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (Dutt 1966: 76, 88, 142, 221, 279), and many others.

32 *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* (Bagchi 1967: 55).

33 Pradhan 1950: 6: *smṛtiḥ katamā | saṃsmṛte* [v. l. *saṃstute*] *vastuni cetasaḥ asampramoṣo ’vikṣepakarmikā ||* . Trans. Rahula 2001: 9: “What is mindfulness (*smṛti*)? It is non-forgetting by the mind (*cetas*) with regard to the object experienced. Its function is non-distraction.” Cf. the same expression in *Pāncaskandhaprakaraṇam* 35.

term. But as centuries passed, its use in this sense was gradually forgotten even by the Sanskrit commentators.

Using what we have learned from the Buddhist sense of the word, Patañjali's *sūtra* means "memory is not forgetting the elements of awareness that have been experienced." There is no stealing involved. But one only arrives at this by understanding the Buddhist use of language.

2.2. Sādhana-pāda 46–47: *sthira-sukham āsanam prayatna-saithilyānanta-samāpattibhyām*

As Philipp A. Maas has explained elsewhere in this volume, this *sūtra* can be translated as "A steady and comfortable posture [arises] from a slackening of effort or from merging meditatively into infinity."³⁴ Maas concentrated on the first part of the *sūtra*, and mentioned in passing that "merging meditatively in infinity" was connected with specifically Buddhist traditions of meditation.

The idea that this is a kind of meditation on infinity is supported by the earliest commentator on the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, namely Śāṅkara (8th or 9th century). In explaining this passage, he says, and I quote the translation by Philipp A. Maas and myself,

Or, it is merged (*samāpanna*) in infinity. Infinity (*ananta*) means the All (*viśva*); infinitude (*ānantya*) is the fact of being infinite (*anantabhāva*). Being merged in that, having pervaded it, mind (*citta*), established as being the All, brings about, i. e., makes firm, the posture.³⁵

There are two key points here. First, Śāṅkara was firmly describing a kind of meditation on infinity. Second, the way he expressed himself in Sanskrit makes it absolutely certain that the text of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* that he was looking at has the word "ānantya", "infinitude" and not the word "ananta" that means "infinite", that is printed in most modern editions of the text.

Different manuscripts of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* transmit two different readings of this phrase. Some say "ananta", while others say "ānantya". As Maas has said, the most conservative and original manuscripts of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* have the latter reading, "ānantya", and Śāṅkara seems to have had access to these manuscripts.³⁶

34 See the chapter by Philipp A. Maas on p. 60 of the present volume, and Maas & Wujastyk (in preparation).

35 Maas & Wujastyk (in preparation). Sanskrit text in Rama Sastri & Krishnamurthi Sastri 1952: 227.

36 See section 3.3.2 in the chapter by Maas in the present volume.

Why did the reading change from “*ānantya*” to “*ananta*”? I would like to suggest that it goes back – again – to the tenth-century commentator Vācaspati Miśra. In Indian mythology, there are stories about a snake, called “Unending” or “*ananta*” in Sanskrit. Vācaspati wanted to make this *sūtra* into a reference to some kind of meditation on the mythological snake, Ananta. In order to do this, he needed to read “*ananta*” in the *sūtra*. Vācaspati said, and again I quote the translation by Philipp A. Maas and myself,

Alternatively [to relaxation], the mind (*citta*) produces posture when it is merged meditatively (*samāpanna*) in Ananta, the Leader of the Snakes, who supports the earth with his thousand very steady hoods.³⁷

To the best of our present knowledge, Vācaspati Miśra was the first person to introduce the idea that the *Pātāñjalayogaśāstra* was here talking about a mythological snake.

Several later Sanskrit commentators followed Vācaspati Miśra’s interpretation, including,

- Vijñānabhikṣu (*fl.* 1550)³⁸
- Bhāvagaṇeśa (*fl.* 1600)³⁹
- Rāmānandasarasvatī (*fl.* 1600)⁴⁰
- Nāgojibhaṭṭa or Nāgeśabhaṭṭa Kāle (*fl.* 1750)⁴¹

Many modern translators from the twentieth century onwards have followed Vācaspati’s interpretation. Woods (1914: 192), to pick one prominent example, gave us the snake Ananta, without comment: “By relaxation of effort or by a [mental] state-of-balance with reference to Ananta–...”.⁴²

Prasāda (1910: 170–171), to choose another, gave the opaque translation “by thought-transformation as infinite”, and Vācaspati’s “Great Serpent”, without comment. Prasāda’s translation has been reprinted continuously up to the present time, and is widely read. Many more such translations could be cited, including some in the twenty-first century.

37 Maas & Wujastyk (in preparation). This is an image from the mythology of Ananta, the giant serpent who supports the earth. See Sörensen 1904–1925: 199b for references to the *Ma-hābhārata* version of the story. It also occurs in the Purāṇic literature, e. g., the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (cited by Mani 1975: 35).

38 Nārāyaṇamiśra 1971: 263: *prthivīdhāriṇi sthīrataraśeṣanāge samāpannaṃ*.

39 Dhuṇḍhirāja Śāstrī 2001: 105: *prthivīdhāriṇi ... śeṣanāge*.

40 Dhuṇḍhirāja Śāstrī 2001: 106: *nāganāyake*.

41 Dhuṇḍhirāja Śāstrī 2001: 105: *anante: prthivīdhāriṇi śeṣe*.

42 In note 1 on the word “Ananta” in the *bhāṣya*-part of PYŚ 2.47, Woods provides the following information: “Compare Bh. Gītā x.28. Ananta is Vāsuki, the Lord of Serpents. See also MBh. i.35, 5ff.”

But not all later Sanskrit commentators and English translators have been comfortable with Vācaspati Mīśra's snake idea. For example, the eighteenth-century south Indian commentator Sadāśivendrasarasvatī said that the meditation in question should involve a certain inwardness and commitment to mental expansion: "I am the same as that which is infinite." Such a meditation is steady concentration of the mind in the infinite."⁴³ An even more notable exception was another eighteenth-century scholar, Anantadeva. He noted that there were two different readings of the text in his manuscripts, and that these readings led to two different meanings: "'Ananta' means meditation on the snake, while 'ānantya' means meditation on space (ākāśa)."⁴⁴

So we see that some early interpreters were really thinking about meditative practice seriously – by which I mean mental states that engage with infinitude – and were in some cases even aware of the instability of the textual tradition they were studying. And some translators similarly preferred to stay with infinity, which seemed more appropriate in the context of meditation. But other commentators and translators have hedged their bets by retaining reference to the serpent, presumably because it was so ubiquitous in the tradition following Vācaspati Mīśra and the spread of the variant reading *ananta* in the manuscripts.⁴⁵

If we look into the earliest Buddhist sources, we find that a meditation on infinitude formed one of the very first teachings on meditation that occurred in the Buddha's life as recorded in the Pali Canon. The *Ariyaparyesanasutta* is perhaps the earliest biographical account of the Buddha's search for enlightenment and his first teaching.⁴⁶ As recorded in this work, the Buddha taught four meditations (Pali *jhāna*-s, Skt. *dhyāna*-s) followed by four further states called *āyatana*-s. All these eight meditative achievements are, in later Buddhist texts, called the eight *samāpatti*-s or "eight attainments". The fifth and sixth of these states are described in the *Ariyaparyesanasutta* as follows:

5. Then again the monk, with the complete transcending of perceptions of [physical] form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, [perceiving,] 'infinite space,' enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. ...

6. Then again the monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, [perceiving,] 'Infinite consciousness,' enters & remains in the di-

43 Dhuṇḍhirāja Śāstri 2001: 106: *yo 'yam anantaḥ sa evāham asmīti dhyānaṃ cittasyānante samāpattiḥ*. Most of these commentators also gloss *samāpatti* as "steady concentration (*dhāraṇā*)", or "meditation (*dhyāna*)".

44 Ibid.: *ananta ānantyeti pāṭhadvaye arthadvayam | prathamapāṭhe śeṣasamāpattiḥ; dvitīye ākāśasamāpattiḥ || 47 ||*.

45 Bryant (2009: 287–288), for example, keeps both explanations.

46 Wynne 2007: 2.

mension of the infinitude of consciousness. This monk is said to have blinded Mara. Trackless, he has destroyed Mara's vision and has become invisible to the Evil One. ...⁴⁷

These Buddhist *samāpatti*-s or “attainments” are widely discussed in the Pali Canon as part of one of the standard discourses on stages of meditation. Since two of these early Buddhist meditative attainments concern forms of infinitude, and since the words are identical to the words of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, it appears that these words form part of a single discourse about meditation phenomena that has gone through a process of gradual cultural change. The *samāpatti*-s, “attainments”, including *ānantyasamāpatti*, “the attainment of infinitude”, form part of a world of discourse that is wider than just the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, and which appears in earlier Buddhist meditation treatises that pre-date the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* by several centuries.

2.3. Kaivalyapāda 29: *prasaṅkhyāne 'py akusīdasya sarvathāvivekakhyāter dharmameghaḥ samādhiḥ*

Finally, we come to the *dharmamegha*, the cloud of *dharma*. In this *sūtra*, Patañjali was describing a particular type of *samādhi*, or integrated realisation, that is experienced by someone who has no interest or investment (*kusīda*) in contemplation (*prasaṅkhyāna*), and who has, in every respect, the realisation of discrimination.⁴⁸

Patañjali's *sūtra* means, broadly, “he who has no investment even in contemplation, who has the realisation of discrimination in every respect, obtains *dharmamegha samādhi*”.

The word *dharmamegha* is a compound of the word *dharma*, meaning “virtue, law, Buddhist doctrine”, and the word *megha*, which means “cloud”. This

47 Trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu 2015. Pali text: Trenckner & Chalmers 1888–1925: 1/ sutta 26: 38. *Puna ca paraṃ bhikkhave bhikkhu sabbaso rūpa-saññānaṃ samatikkamā paṭigha-saññānaṃ attha-gamā nānattasaññānaṃ amanasi-kārā ananto ākāsoti ākāsānañcāyatanam upasampajja viharati.* || *Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave bhikkhu andhamakāsi Māraṃ,* || *apadaṃ vadhitvā Māraccakkuṃ adassanaṃ gato pāpimato.* || 39. *Puna ca paraṃ bhikkhave bhikkhu sabbaso ākāsānañcāyatanam samatikkamma 'Anantaṃ viññānaṃ' ti viññānañcāyatanam upasampajja viharati.* || *Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave bhikkhu 'andhamakāsi Māraṃ,* || *apadaṃ vadhitvā Māraccakkuṃ adassanaṃ gato pāpimato.* || Another translation: Nānamoḷi & Bodhi 1995: 267–268.

48 Endo (2000) surveyed the history and meaning of the term *prasaṅkhyāna*. The study is valuable, although in my view Endo (pp. 78–79) failed to engage sufficiently with the *api* and alpha-privative of *a-kusīdasya* in PYS 4.29. Endo's interpretation that *prasaṅkhyāna* is a step towards *vivekakhyāti* does not seem to me to be what the *sūtra* says. In general, this *sūtra* and its discussion in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and the *Vivaraṇa* contain many difficult and interesting points that deserve fuller treatment.

compound expression, that occurs only this one time in the *sūtra*-s, was not explained by Patañjali.⁴⁹

The early commentator Śaṅkara explained that it is a technical term so called because the highest *dharma*, called Kaivalya, rains down.⁵⁰ As we shall see, Śaṅkara was right in his brief interpretation, although he shows no evidence of knowing the full underlying metaphor from which the expression originally arose.

If Śaṅkara's brevity does not fully satisfy, Vācaspati Miśra's explanation is little better. He had the cloud of *dharma* raining down "all kinds of knowable things (*dharma*-s)".⁵¹

The expression "virtue-rain (*dharmamegha*)" has continued to puzzle interpreters of Yoga since Vācaspati, including modern translators, who almost uniformly flounder with this term. When discussing this *sūtra*, Eliade had the rain of *dharma* falling on the yogi:

a technical term that is difficult to translate, for *dharma* can have many meanings (order, virtue, justice, foundation, etc.) but that seems to refer to an abundance ("rain") of virtues that suddenly fill the yogin.⁵²

In an article published nearly thirty years ago, Klaus Klostermaier offered an exhaustive survey of all the ways in which translators and interpreters had struggled with this term.⁵³ Klostermaier reminded the reader that Senart, La Vallée Poussin and others had pointed out that *dharmamegha* is explicitly mentioned in the Mahāyāna Buddhist text *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, "The Sūtra about the Ten Stages", as the last and culminating stage of spiritual awakening. It also occurs in many other Mahāyāna texts as either the name of the final or the penultimate stage of liberation. Having gathered all the necessary evidence and come tantalizingly close to solving the problem of *dharmamegha*, Klostermaier did not finally make a clear argument for the origin of the term.

The oldest occurrence of the term known in Indian literature is in a very early text, the *Milindapañha*, which may have been composed over a period of time starting in about 200 BCE. In that text, the term *dharmamegha* is introduced naturally in a beautiful metaphor describing the wise yogi:

49 In his remarks at PYŚ 1.2, Patañjali used the expression *dharmamegha* as a qualifier for meditation (Maas [2006: 5] *dharma-megha-dhyāna*-). In the commentary on PYŚ 3.32, he used *dharmamegha* as a synonym for *samādhi*.

50 Rama Sastri & Krishnamurthi Sastri 1952: 363: *kaivalyākhyam param dharmam varṣatīti dharmameghaḥ iti samjñā*.

51 On PYŚ 4.31 (Āgāse 1904: 203): *ata eva sarvān dharmān jñeyān mehati varṣati prakāśaneti dharmamegha ity ucyate* | Trans. Woods 1914: 343.

52 Eliade 1970: 84.

53 Klostermaier 1986.

12. ‘Venerable Nāgasena, those five qualities of the rain you say he ought to take, which are they?’

‘Just, O king, as the rain lays any dust that arises; just so, O king, should the strenuous yogi, earnest in effort, lay the dust and dirt of any evil dispositions that may arise within him. This is the first quality of the rain he ought to have.’

13. ‘And again, O king, just as the rain allays the heat of the ground; just so, O king, should the strenuous yogi, earnest in effort, soothe the whole world of gods and men, with the feeling of his love. This, O king, is the second quality of the rain he ought to have.’

14. ‘And again, O king, as the rain makes all kinds of vegetation to grow; just so, O king, should the strenuous yogi, earnest in effort, cause faith to spring up in all beings, and make that seed of faith grow up into the three Attainments, not only the lesser attainments of glorious rebirths in heaven or on earth, but also the attainment of the highest good, the bliss of Arahatsip. This, O king, is the third quality of the rain he ought to have.’

15. ‘And again, O king, just as the rain-cloud rising up in the hot season, affords protection to the grass, and trees, and creepers, and shrubs, and medicinal herbs, and to the monarchs of the woods that grow on the surface of the earth; just so, O king, should the strenuous yogi, earnest in effort, cultivating the habit of thoughtfulness, afford protection by his thoughtfulness to his condition of Samañaship, for in thoughtfulness is it that all good qualities have their root. This, O king, is the fourth quality of the rain that he ought to have.’

16. [411] ‘And again, O king, as the rain when it pours down fills the rivers, and reservoirs, and artificial lakes, the caves and chasms, and ponds and holes and wells, with water; just so, O king, should the strenuous yogi, earnest in effort [yoga], pour down the rain of the Dhamma according to the texts handed down by tradition, and so fill to satisfaction the mind of those who are longing for instruction. This, O king, is the fifth quality of the rain he ought to have.’⁵⁴

Here in the early Buddhist tradition, we find the term “cloud of *dharma*” in a beautiful and evocative literary context that makes perfect sense of the expression as a metaphor of cool, soothing abundance. This is the cool, soothing flow of virtue that rains from a wise man upon the world, dousing its flames of passion, hatred and delusion. The metaphor is an old one, central to the Buddha’s opposition of his cooling, watery (*saumya*) teaching to the fiery, burning (*āgneya*) traditions of Brāhmaṇa religious practice.⁵⁵ The metaphor was still in use by the Buddhists of Patañjali’s time, since it became the technical term for the tenth and highest level of a Bodhisattva’s realisation. Asaṅga (*fl.* 330–405) used it in his

54 Trans. Rhys Davids 1890–1894: 356–357, with my “yogi” replacing Rhys Davids’ “Bhikshu”. Pali text, last paragraph (Trenckner 1880: 411): *Puna ca param mahārāja megho vassamāno nadītālākapokkharāṇiyo kandara-padara-sara-sobbha-udapānāni ca paripūreti udakadhārāhi, evam eva kho mahārāja yoginā yogāvacreṇa āgamapariyattiyā dhammamegham abhivassayitvā adhigamakāmānaṃ mānasaṃ paripūrayitabbaṃ.*

55 On these metaphorical oppositions, see, e. g., Gombrich 1996: ch. III; Wujastyk 2004; Jurewicz 2000, 2010.

Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra, and his younger half-brother Vasubandhu (fl. 350–430) commented on it.⁵⁶ As we shall see below, Patañjali was familiar enough with Vasubandhu's writing to cite them directly. This almost final level of attainment of Patañjali's yogi is the final level of attainment for the Buddhist meditator described in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*:

Thus it is said [of the enlightened Bodhisattva] that he is consecrated, has increased immeasurable merits and varieties of knowledge, and has abided in the Bodhisattva-stage called Cloud of Doctrine [*dharmamegha*]. ... Again, O son of the Conqueror, a Bodhisattva who abides in the Bodhisattva-stage (called) Cloud of Doctrine and holds the power of his own vow, raises up the cloud of great compassion and sympathy, the roar of splendor of great doctrine, ... and he tranquilizes the dust-flames of all the passions arisen from the ignorance of living beings according to their intentions by pouring down the rain of nectar of great merit. Therefore this stage is called the Cloud of Doctrine [*dharmamegha*].⁵⁷

With this Buddhist metaphor in mind, Patañjali's use of the word in his *sūtra* as the name of the penultimate state of yoga would have made perfect sense to his contemporaries, for whom the ancient story of the wise yogi cooling the earth with the rain of his *dharma* was still a vivid image of the generosity of the realised sage.

3. Patañjali's Use of *Vibhāṣā* Materials

At the beginning of this paper (p. 26f.), I noted that La Vallée Poussin drew attention to a parallel between Vasubandhu and the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* as long ago as his publications of 1923–1926. I also noted that the meaning and even wording of PYŚ 4.1 is directly related to Vasubandhu's text. Exciting new research is bringing to light even more parallels between Patañjali and Vasubandhu.⁵⁸

The philosopher Vasubandhu was an Indian Buddhist monk from Gandhāra who probably lived in the period 350–430 CE. He was born in Puruṣapura, modern Peshawar, and developed initially as a thinker in the Buddhist Sarvāstivāda tradition. We have an account of his life from the scholar Paramārtha, who lived a century after Vasubandhu, as well as from much later Tibetan and Chinese authors. Under the master Saṅghabhadra, Vasubandhu studied the *Vaiḥḥāṣika*

56 *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* IX.5–6, XI.46, XX–XXI.38b (ed. Lévi 1907–1911: 1.34, 66, 183, trans. Thurman et al. 2004: 74f., 83, 332). Squarcini (2015: 158f., 189) provides references to this metaphor in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* and many other Buddhist texts of Patañjali's general period. I am grateful to Philipp A. Maas for drawing my attention to these sources. On the dating for Asaṅga and Vasubandhu see footnote 10, above.

57 Rahder 1923: 86, 89–90, trans. Honda 1968: 269–270.

58 Maas 2014.

tradition of Kashmir that had developed in the centuries before his time as a tradition of commentaries on the Abhidharma, in particular the commentaries on the *Jñānaprasthānasūtra* of Kātyāyanīputra.⁵⁹ Vasubandhu later became the abbot of Nālanda, where he was the teacher of many famous pupils, including Dinnāga.⁶⁰

Vasubandhu composed a treatise on the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma that brought together his understanding of the Vibhāṣā literature. Called the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, it was structured as a series of verses with Vasubandhu's own commentary (*bhāṣya*). The Sanskrit original of the work was lost for centuries, and was known only through Chinese and Tibetan translations. The work was of such importance to the history of Indian thought that in the 1930s, the great scholar Rāhula Sāṅkrīyāyana (1893–1963) even re-translated the verses into Sanskrit, from Tibetan, and wrote his own Sanskrit commentary on them. However, during a subsequent visit to Tibet, Sāṅkrīyāyana discovered an ancient palm leaf manuscript of 367 leaves that had not only Vasubandhu's verses, but his lost commentary.⁶¹

AKBh 5.25 (Pradhan 1975)	PYŚ 3.13 (Āgāśe 1904)
1. dharmasya-adhvasu <i>pravartamānasya</i>	dharmasya dharmiṇi vartamānasya <i>eva</i> adhvasv
2. bhāva-anyathātvaṃ bhavati	<i>atītānāgatavartamāneṣu</i> bhāva- anyathātvaṃ bhavati
3. na dravya-anyathātvam. yathā suvarṇa-	na <i>tu</i> dravyānyathātvam. yathā suvarṇa-
4. bhājanasya bhittvā <i>anyathā</i> kriyamānasya	bhājanasya bhittvā <i>anyathā</i> - kriyamānasya
5. saṁsthāna -anyathātvaṃ bhavati na varṇa-	bhāva -anyathātvaṃ bhavati na suvarṇa-
6. anyathātvam	anyathātvam <i>iti</i> .

Table 1: Patañjali's and Vasubandhu's wording compared. Reproduced from Maas 2014, with kind thanks. (Roman = identical; **bold** = important changes of sense; *italic* = unimportant variations.)

In 1967 and then in a revised edition of 1975, Pradhan finally published the original Sanskrit text of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, Vasubandhu's great work summarizing earlier traditions of the Vibhāṣā school of Buddhist philosophy.

In the past, scholars had noted the general similarity of Patañjali's text, and even some of the ways in which he seemed to be responding to Vasubandhu's

59 Dutt 1988: 383 ff.

60 Dutt 1988: 390.

61 Pradhan 1975: ix.

work.⁶² But impressions were based only on Tibetan and Chinese sources. However, with the discovery and publication of the original Sanskrit text of Vasubandhu's work, it has become possible to compare Patañjali's and Vasubandhu's words textually, in the original Sanskrit. The results are startling, and are just beginning to be evaluated in detail by my colleague Philipp A. Maas.⁶³ As we see in Table 1, there are word-for-word correspondences between Patañjali's and Vasubandhu's texts. Although the wording is very close, in fact the point being made by Patañjali is subtly different from that made by Vasubandhu, and we can be sure, because of the direction of the history of thought, and the changes in language and formulation, that it is Patañjali who is reworking Vasubandhu's view, and not vice versa.⁶⁴

Much of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* narrated, in the form of miniature dialogues, a debate or conference that took place during the early second century CE, that was allegedly convened by the Śaka king Kaniṣka (*fl.* c 120 CE). The names of the chief participants in this debate are preserved: Bhadanta Vasumitra, Bhadanta Dharmatrāta, Ghoṣaka and Buddhadeva.

This becomes relevant in relation to another passage in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*. This is a passage that has become famous amongst historians of science because it is one of the first passages in world history that clearly mentions the combination of decimal numbers and place-value notation.

Patañjali was explaining the difference between an entity in and of itself, and the change in its significance according to its relationship to another entity. As one example, he gave the case of a woman who is a single entity in herself, yet is spoken of as a mother, a daughter or a sister, depending on her relationships to others: "And similarly, although there is singularity, a woman is called a mother, a daughter, and a sister."⁶⁵

This passage is a reworking of the viewpoint of the Sarvāstivāda monk Bhadanta Buddhadeva, as reported by Vasubandhu.⁶⁶ See Table 2.

AKBh 5.26 (Pradhan 1975)	PYŚ 3.13 (Āgāśe 1904)
<i>yathaikā</i> strī mātā vocyate duhitā veti	yathā <i>caikatve</i> 'pi strī mātā cocyate duhitā <i>ca svasā</i> ceti

Table 2: Patañjali's and Vasubandhu's wording compared. (Roman = identical; *italic* = unimportant variations.)

62 Woods 1914: xvii–xviii.

63 Maas 2014.

64 Maas (*ibid.*) develops these points and describes the philosophical innovations that Patañjali made.

65 PYŚ commentary on 3.13 (Āgāśe 1904: 130). Other translations include Prasāda 1910: 188–193; Bryant 2009: 320–324.

66 *Abhidharmakośa* 5.26 (Pradhan 1975: 297).

Patañjali's other example was place-value notation. He said, "Just as a single stroke is a hundred in the hundreds' position, ten in the tens' position and one in the ones' position."⁶⁷ This passage has been cited as the earliest unambiguous description of written place-value notation using digits, and Patañjali's version is datable to the period 375–425.⁶⁸

But Patañjali was in fact reworking Buddhist arguments reported by Vasubandhu about how things in the world may evolve in some respects and yet stay the same in other respects. Vasumitra said, according to Vasubandhu: "Just as a single wick (*vartikā*) thrown down into the mark of one says 'one', and in the mark of hundreds says 'hundred', and in the mark of thousands says 'a thousand'."⁶⁹

Vasubandhu's description may refer not to writing but to placing a strip or tube on a marked board, perhaps analogous to an abacus.⁷⁰ The word *vartikā* that he used means a wick, stalk, paint-brush, or twist of cloth. It is not clear what Vasumitra was describing.⁷¹ Bhadanta Vasumitra, to whom Vasubandhu ascribed this particular passage, may perhaps be placed in the second century CE.⁷²

Once again, we see the detailed influence of Buddhist discussions on the foundations of Patañjali's yoga system.

A recurring question for historians is why Buddhism disappeared from India. Numerous social, religious and economic arguments have been put forward as explanations. In the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, I believe we see a conscious absorption of Buddhist meditation and philosophy doctrines into an orthodox Brāhmaṇa framework. The work re-frames the ideas as being those of an ancient yoga sage called Kapila. Text-historical scholarship shows quite clearly in many cases that Patañjali's sources were Buddhist. Yet for centuries Yoga has been a socio-religious force in India divorced from the memory of the Buddhist world that surrounded Patañjali, and that he absorbed and transformed.

67 PYŚ commentary on 3.13 (Āgāśe 1904: 130): *yathaikā rekhā śatasthāne śataṃ daśasthāne daśaikā caikasthāne*.

68 Woods 1914: 216, n. 1; Maas 2006: 65–66; Plofker 2009: 46.

69 Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* on 5.26 (Pradhan 1975: 296): *yathaikā vartikā ekānke nikṣiptā ekam ity ucyate śatānke śataṃ sahasrānke sahasram iti* | (trans. Pruden 1988–1990: 3, 809).

70 See also Plofker 2009: 46.

71 One of the sources referred to by Pradhan (1975: 296), possibly the commentator Yaśomitra, gives the variant *gulikā*, meaning "little ball, pill". This variant might suggest a counting stone.

72 Anacker 1984: 12.

4. Conclusions

The *sūtra*-s of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* seem to speak directly across the ages to us, if sometimes mysteriously. But this is a false impression. They are deeply embedded in history and culture of their time.

Some of Patañjali's *sūtra*-s cannot be properly understood without an awareness of the Buddhist background to Indian philosophical thought at the time they were composed.

It seems that some of the earliest Sanskrit commentators, including Vācaspati Miśra, misunderstood some of Patañjali's *sūtra*-s because they had lost an awareness of Buddhist thought.

Contemporary interpreters who limit themselves to the commentarial tradition of Brāhmaṇa householders and later ascetics, but do not look at the Buddhist sources, continue to be puzzled and misled by the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*.

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