

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

# Yoga in Transformation

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# Yoga in Transformation

Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

With 55 figures

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## Introduction

### 1. Context, Scope and Structure of the Present Volume

Ever since the emergence of yoga-related practices and teachings in South Asia around 500 BCE, yoga has shown a protean flexibility and creativity, constantly reproducing itself in dependence on changing social, cultural and religious contexts. Thus, the history of yoga is a complex and multifaceted one, and still remains far from having been exhaustively investigated. Furthermore, the roughly two decades of academic research on yoga since the late 1990's have brought new insights, methodological approaches and questions concerning the history of premodern yoga, the interpretation of yoga-related literature, and the early impact of the phenomenon on other Asian cultures. What is more, the investigation of modern transnational yoga has established itself as a multi-disciplinary field of study in its own right. Studies on the history and contemporary state of modern yoga have caused ongoing public and academic debates about the relation between so-called traditional and modern yoga and about issues like authenticity, authority and ownership. Moreover, the motives and experiences of contemporary practitioners and their global networks are being investigated with methods of the social sciences and cultural anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

In view of these vibrant developments, the editors of the present volume convened an international conference on “Yoga in Transformation: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on a Global Phenomenon” at the University of Vienna, which took place on 19–21 September 2013.<sup>2</sup> For the sake of coherence and optimisation of synergies, its focus was on the exploration of the phenomenon of yoga from the point of view of South Asian studies, the study of religions,

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1 The pertinent literature is far too comprehensive to be reviewed here. However, in combination the reference sections of the individual chapters of the present volume will provide a good overview of the recent special and general literature on the above-mentioned aspects of yoga research.

2 See <http://yogaintransformation.wissweb.at> (accessed 3 November 2017).



sociology, cultural studies, theology and history of religions. The investigation of yoga from the perspectives of psychology and medicine, interesting and relevant as they may be, thus remained outside the scope of the conference. The editors were fortunate to attract many of the key players in current yoga research of the described types as well as acknowledged specialists in the afore-mentioned areas of yoga-related research to the conference, either as speakers or as participants in the panel discussions. The vast majority of them also kindly agreed to elaborate and expand their papers and turn them into chapters of a book on the conference topic. The present volume is the fruit of their combined labours. In line with the conference agenda, it explores yoga from a broad perspective, but definitely does not aspire to be encyclopedic. Thus, the volume examines different strands and specific issues of South Asian and Tibetan yoga in the premodern period as well as developments within its practices and theories. It also investigates forms of modern yoga in their complex historical contexts and addresses recent developments and the current transformation of transnational modern yoga. Moreover, it considers aspects of the encounter of the Islamic and Christian traditions with the theory and practice of yoga in the past and present. In general, in keeping with the current trend in yoga-related studies emphasis has been put on the practice of yoga and its immediate theoretical underpinnings. Thus, even though several papers inevitably also touch upon philosophical aspects of yoga and consider, next to the social and religious contexts, also the philosophical context of the development and transformation of yoga practice, the philosophy, or rather: philosophies of yoga properly speaking do not play a prominent role in the present volume.

The volume consists of altogether sixteen chapters that make up its two parts of approximately equal size and with different historical and geographical foci. Part A, “Yoga in South Asia and Tibet”, is mainly devoted to the study of premodern yoga on the basis of primary sources in several South Asian languages, in Arabic and in Tibetan, whereas Part B, entitled “Globalised Yoga”, deals with aspects of modern and post-modern forms of yoga that are investigated primarily on the basis of sources in European languages and with empirical methods. The following survey is meant to provide an overview of the content of the individual chapters and at the same time to show their coherence and interrelatedness.

## 2. Synopsis of Part A: “Yoga in South Asia and Tibet”

The initial contribution, “Some Problematic Yoga Sūtra-s and Their Buddhist Background” by **Dominik Wujastyk** emphasises the importance and need of an informed historical and philological approach in order to arrive at a full understanding of the *Pātañjalayogasāstra*, Patañjali’s masterpiece on yoga which

was composed from a Brahmanical perspective. Drawing special attention to the three technical Sanskrit terms *asaṃpramoṣa*, *anantasamāpatti* and *dharmamegha* that occur in the *sūtra* text of *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 1.11, 2.46–47 and 4.49, respectively, Wujastyk demonstrates that these *sūtra*-s were frequently misunderstood throughout the reception history of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* due to a lack of awareness on the part of its interpreters about the original meaning of the above terms which were actually coined and used in the Buddhist tradition of South Asia. By drawing upon parallels to the employment of the three technical terms in Buddhist literature, Wujastyk highlights the deep intellectual influence of Buddhism on Patañjali. In this way, he defines familiarity with South Asian Buddhist thought, religious concepts and meditation practices as a necessary condition for an appropriate understanding of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* before its intellectual backdrop and in its original intellectual milieu in late fourth- or early fifth-century South Asia.

The chapter by **Philipp A. Maas**, “*Sthirasukham Āsanam*’: Posture and Performance in Classical Yoga and Beyond”, is also largely devoted to the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and the history of its reception. More specifically, Maas investigates Patañjali’s treatment of yogic postures (*āsana*), starting with a contextualisation of the role of *āsana*-s within the yogic path to liberation. He then analyses the passage *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.46–48 and demonstrates that the two *sūtra*-s 2.46 and 2.47 should be understood as a single sentence. This is followed by a discussion of the list of posture names in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* as well as of the possible nature of the postures themselves from a philological perspective. Maas’ critical edition of the text of *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.46 provides the basis for a detailed comparison of various descriptions of posture performance in medieval commentaries on the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and in the authoritative Jaina yoga treatise by Hemacandra. This comparison reveals that designations of *āsana*-s and the descriptions of their performance may differ from source to source. However, all analysed sources agree in presenting *āsana* as a complex of psycho-physiological practices meant to enable the yogi to undertake long sessions of exercises, such as breath control, and of various kinds of meditation, rather than mere performances of bodily configurations as means in themselves.

“The Proliferation of *Āsana*-s in Late-Medieval Yoga Texts” by **Jason Birch** continues the investigation of yogic posture practice, which he carries on to the historical setting of late medieval South Asia. Birch bases his exposition on newly discovered Sanskrit manuscripts that list and describe a considerably larger number of yogic postures than earlier sources. Their descriptions are here for the first time analysed and compared with descriptions of *āsana*-s in earlier and roughly contemporary Haṭha and Rāja Yoga texts. In the final analysis, Birch’s presentation and interpretation of the newly discovered manuscript evidence shatters the belief in a recent historical narrative concerning the origin of many

modern yogic postures. According to this narrative, a radical historical rupture of *āsana* practice occurred in colonial India when all of a sudden a large number of previously undocumented complex and physically demanding postures became fashionable, exactly at the time when European body building and gymnastic exercises appeared on the stage of physical culture in South Asia. Birch's research reveals that many of the physical yoga practices allegedly introduced during the colonial period were actually not innovations, but had predecessors in the tradition that have so far remained unnoticed simply because they are not to be found in the widely known published Haṭha Yoga texts.

The aim of the chapter "Yoga and Sex: What is the Purpose of *Vajrolīmudrā*?" by **James Mallinson** is also to overcome a wide-spread preconception concerning the history of Haṭha Yoga, namely, the view that the origins of haṭhayogic practice have to be sought in Śaiva tantric sex rituals. The evidential basis for this narrative is usually considered to be the *vajrolīmudrā*, the practice of drawing up liquids through the urethra. The *vajrolīmudrā* figures prominently in Haṭha Yoga, and it seems to have an obvious connection with sex. However, by taking into consideration textual, ethnographic, experiential and anatomical data in order to determine the history, method and purpose of *vajrolīmudrā*, Mallinson arrives at the conclusion that this practice was most probably developed in a celibate ascetic milieu. Its purpose in Haṭha Yoga is the absorption of semen in the body of a practitioner who wants to enjoy intercourse, even after ejaculation. Thus, *vajrolīmudrā* emerges from Mallinson's research as a means for yogis to have sex and yet remain continent, rather than a component of tantric sex rituals.

In "Yoga in the Daily Routine of the Pāñcarātrins" **Marion Rastelli** leads her readers to the religious ambience of tantric Vaiṣṇavism or, more specifically, to that of the Pāñcarātra tradition of South India. Rastelli describes in great detail the performance, role and meaning of yoga as the fifth and final constituent of the "five times" or "five time periods", i. e., the five daily ritual duties performed by a Pāñcarātra devotee. In doing so, she surveys a wide spectrum of pertinent sources comprising the Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās, Veṅkaṭanātha's *Pāñcarātrarakṣā* and Purāṇic literature. In her final analysis, Rastelli demonstrates convincingly that yoga is an essential part of life for all followers of the Pāñcarātra tradition. Yoga may figure as a set of ritual techniques or as an autonomous practice that is largely disconnected from ritual contexts. It may be performed in many different forms daily before sleep, between two phases of sleep, or after sleep. The benefit that Pāñcarātrins derive from yoga consists in mental training, an awareness of the nature of God, and insights concerning God's relationship to man, particularly to his devotees. The time period before falling asleep and an interval of wakefulness between two phases of sleep suggest themselves as ideal times for yoga practice, because then the insights provided by yoga can be intensified during the following phase of sleep. The specific contents of these yogic insights,

however, depend on the theology propounded by the devotee's particular tradition or sub-tradition.

“The Transformation of Yoga in Medieval Maharashtra” by **Catharina Kiehnle** is focussed on yoga in the context of another Vaiṣṇava tradition, different from the one discussed by Rastelli. Kiehnle deals with the role of yoga in the so-called “nominal Vaiṣṇavism” of the Vārkarī religious movement, which developed in Maharashtra during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Her study is based on the Marathi-language *Jñāndev Gāthā*, a collection of songs attributed to the poet-saint Jñāndev. In these songs, multiple and partly conflicting attitudes towards yoga and other forms of religious practice are reflected. Kiehnle suggests that the Bhakti Yoga (“yoga of devotion”) of the Vārkarīs was developed for lay practitioners as an alternative to forms of yoga that were practised mainly in ascetic circles. In the *Haripāth* and related literature of the Vārkarīs an outright rejection of yoga can even be observed. This dismissive attitude may be explained as a result of the missionary endeavour of early Vārkarīs who wanted to convince as many potential followers as possible of the advantages of their less demanding way towards liberation.

In the chapter “On al-Bīrūnī’s *Kitāb Pātanḡal* and the *Pātāñjalayogaśāstra*” by **Philipp A. Maas** and **Noémie Verdon** the thematic focus shifts from the description and analysis of yoga in individual religious and philosophical traditions of premodern South Asia to the cultural transfer of yoga from South Asia to the Arab intellectual world in the Middle Ages. After providing an introduction to the life and work of al-Bīrūnī, the famous Perso-Muslim polymath who lived at the turn of the first millennium CE and spent some years in north-western South Asia, Maas and Verdon survey previous scholarly attempts to identify the Sanskrit source of his *Kitāb Pātanḡal*, an Arab rendering of a yoga work in the tradition of Patañjali. The two authors arrive at the novel hypothesis that al-Bīrūnī may have used the *Pātāñjalayogaśāstra* (i. e., the *Yogasūtra* together with the so-called *Yogabhāṣya*) as the main source of the *Kitāb Pātanḡal*. This finding provides the basis for a new assessment of this work as the result of different literary transformations, some of which necessarily had to be highly creative in order to transfer the philosophical and religious content of a Sanskrit yoga work of the late fourth or early fifth century into the intellectual culture of medieval Islam. Taking into consideration these creative aspects of the *Kitāb Pātanḡal*, Maas and Verdon demonstrate that the aspiration of the Perso-Muslim author was not merely to provide a translation faithful to the wording of its source text, but to make the spiritual dimension of yoga accessible to his Muslim readership.

Also **Ian A. Baker**’s “Tibetan Yoga: Somatic Practice in Vajrayāna Buddhism and Dzogchen” deals with a cultural transfer of yoga, namely, the transfer of haṭhayogic practices from South Asia to Tibet. Baker highlights the early occurrences of the word *haṭhayoga* and of haṭhayogic techniques in South Asian

Buddhist tantric literature in works such as the *Guhyasamājatantra* and the *Amṛtasiddhi*. He then describes five practices, namely the “axis of awareness”, “yoga of breath and movement”, the “heart essence of Tibetan yoga”, “yoga of spontaneous presence”, and “yoga of active perception”, all of which occur in Buddhist tantric sources like the *Kālacakratantra*, the commentarial literature on them and further tantric treatises composed by Tibetan scholars. Baker then contextualises these yoga techniques in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. He concludes his detailed account of Tibetan somatic practices by suggesting that the “yoga of active perception” may be the quintessence of Tibetan yogic practice with a large potential to alter embodied experiences and to create “forms of awareness that transcend perennially limiting perspectives and preoccupations”.

### 3. Synopsis of Part B: “Globalised Yoga”

In the initial chapter of the second part of the volume, “Yoga within Viennese Occultism: Carl Kellner and Co.”, **Karl Baier** investigates the role of yoga within the occultist movement that flourished in Vienna during the last decades of the Habsburg Empire. The focus of this chapter is on the industrialist and occultist Carl Kellner. Kellner and other members of his milieu displayed a positive attitude towards Haṭha Yoga, although many influential theosophical publications of the time warned against body-centered yoga practices. Baier shows that the interpretation of yoga within the occultist movement was prompted by the teaching of certain physical exercises in the Rosicrucian tradition represented by Johann B. Krebs and Alois Mailänder. Furthermore, Baier substantiates a hypothesis concerning yoga practice and ritual sex within the so-called Inner Occult Circle of the Sovereign Sanctuary, a high-degree masonic order in which Kellner operated as financial sponsor and spiritual teacher. This small group plays an important role within the historiography of modern occultism, as time and again it is considered to be the hotbed of the later *Ordo Templi Orientis*. The coda of the chapter examines Herbert Silberer’s views on yoga. Silberer was the most talented representative of second-generation Viennese occultism and his work foreshadows later developments such as Carl Gustav Jung’s interpretation of alchemy and the Eranos circle.

**Joseph S. Alter**’s “Yoga, Nature Cure and ‘Perfect’ Health: The Purity of the Fluid Body in an Impure World” discusses the correlation between purification and embodied perfection to highlight how postures (*āsana*), breathing techniques and exercises (*prāṇāyāma*) came to be understood within the framework of nature cure in modern India. Alter argues that the combination of nature cure and yoga provided a practical solution to the problem of contingency in health care. Nature cure shaped the practice of yoga and, in turn, yoga provided a

justification not only of different body-centred purifying practices, but also for the purification of mind by means of meditation practices. Without doubt, this synthesis of yoga and nature cure had an enormous impact on the global practice of yoga, but it also initiated a historical development within modern India that continues until the present day. Alter builds a bridge between Swami Sivananda – an Indian medical doctor who in the first half of the twentieth century integrated elements of yoga and nature cure, renounced the world and established the Divine Life Society – and more recent political innovations in India, namely, the establishment of the Central Council for Research on Yoga and Naturopathy (CCRYN) and its incorporation under the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH).

A bridge of a different kind is addressed in the chapter “Sāṃkhya in Transcultural Interpretation: Shri Anirvan (Śrī Anirvāṇa) and Lizelle Reymond” by **Maya Burger**. Burger analyses the writings of the Bengali author Shri Anirvan (1896–1978) and the Swiss author of books on Indian spirituality Lizelle Reymond (1899–1994), who was Shri Anirvan’s disciple and translator. Burger demonstrates in a paradigmatic way the tight connections between India and Europe in the modern interpretation of yoga. In this context, she draws special attention to the concepts of Sāṃkhya philosophy that Shri Anirvan employed in order to explain his experience of yoga. Steeped in the local tradition of the Bauls of Bengal, Shri Anirvan also enjoyed a classical training in Sanskrit. He was interested in modern science and (e.g., as translator of the works of Aurobindo into Bengali) familiar with Indian thinkers who reflected the confluence of cultures. Reymond was one of the intellectuals who introduced French-speaking Europe to the spiritualities of India, founding a book series that later became the important series “Les spiritualités vivantes”. Burger investigates the reinterpretation of yoga that took place in the collaboration of Shri Anirvan and Reymond by analysing key terms like *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* as well as the concept of the “void” that was inspired by the Greek–Armenian occultist George Ivanovich Gurdjieff. She concludes that Shri Anirvan and Reymond presented a psychological and mystical interpretation of Sāṃkhya that made this ancient Indian philosophical tradition suitable for the modern world.

In “Christian Responses to Yoga in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century” **Anand Amaladass** addresses a further bridge provided by yoga, not between regional or national cultures, or between tradition and modernity within the same culture, but between two different religious traditions, namely, the Hindu and Christian traditions. However, his chapter shows that the Christian reception of yoga during the last century was not only rather ambiguous but by and large negative. The explanation that Amaladass offers for this state of affairs draws upon the Orientalistic typology of “the West” and “the East”. Influential intellectuals like Carl Gustav Jung and Hermann Hesse, who were interested in

India and Indian studies, were nonetheless averse to Europeans having recourse to Asian methods of prayer and meditation in general and to yoga in particular. Additionally, many Christians may have had an especially reserved attitude towards yoga due to their theological presuppositions. The Christian “missionary” thrust aims at giving a unique message to the whole world, but Christian traditions were frequently not ready to receive inspiration from outside. Moreover, the distinction Christian theologians made between their “revealed” religion and all other “natural” religions put them in an asymmetrical position – religiously and culturally. The negative response to yoga is a consequence of these attitudes. Nevertheless, there were exceptional individuals who wrote appreciatively on yoga from a Christian perspective, both in India and abroad. They took to its practice seriously and profited personally from it. In line with their experiences, some Christian authorities interpreted yoga as a helpful discipline that may be resorted to by Christians for their spiritual development and can be adapted within a Christian theological framework.

Concerning the broad, truly transnational dissemination of yoga and its theoretical aspects, **Beatrix Hauser’s** “Following the Transcultural Circulation of Bodily Practices: Modern Yoga and the Corporeality of Mantras” is particularly critical of two models: that of a linear and primarily bilateral transfer from India and that of a global distribution in the form of global distribution networks. She proposes to replace these conceptualisations by introducing recent theories of global flows into Modern Yoga Studies. In her theorisation of global flows, Hauser argues that a consideration of the sentient human body as a source of re-contextualisation and meaning production in its own right is of essential importance. The ethnographical part of her study investigates the chanting of mantras in contemporary yoga classes in Germany. Teachers explain the usage of mantras not only with reference to tradition but also with reference to sound as a type of energy that prompts attentiveness towards various sensorial spaces within the body. The latter point corresponds to older therapeutic concepts that were developed in Germany at the crossroads of voice training, breath therapy and autosuggestive techniques. The idea of chanting mantras for mental and physical benefit has seemingly superseded earlier concepts of vocal therapy. Hauser takes this as a confirmation of the view that yoga practitioners assess any of their somatic sensations in relation to previous experiences and sociocultural categories that shape the experiential repertoire.

The chapter “Living4giving: Politics of Affect and Emotional Regimes in Global Yoga” by **Anne Koch** explores socio-political aspects of modern yoga. She discusses a prominent social manifestation of contemporary yoga, namely the Yoga Aid World Challenge (YAWC). This public yoga event gathers thousands of people across nearly thirty countries worldwide every year. On a certain day, yoga teacher teams compete for donations by offering yoga classes in public spaces

around the globe. Koch examines the political economy of this new form of organised global yoga and explains how neoliberal elements like competition permeate it. The success of YAWC depends on several factors: an emotional regime in the sense of a recognisable subcultural pattern, virtual and marketing communication, a corporate identity aesthetics, and the imagination of a global yoga space created by joint body practices. According to Koch, this new configuration of yoga is based on a transformation of social belonging and the offer of a specific purpose in life. By means of a certain “politics of affect” altruistic behaviour is generated as something distinct from late-modern spirituality that at the same time presents itself as a kind of self-empowerment concordant with it.

Similar to Beatrix Hauser’s chapter, **Suzanne Newcombe’s** “Spaces of Yoga: Towards a Non-Essentialist Understanding of Yoga” interlinks questions of methodology and conceptualisation with a more empirical objective. Drawing on Jim Knott’s spatial analysis of religion, she examines the physical and social spaces of contemporary yoga. At the same time Newcombe argues for an approach to yoga that introduces instrumental and situational terms instead of essentialist definitions. On this note she presents the different locations and spaces connected with the practice of yoga: the stage used for yoga performances, public schools, typical contemporary yoga studios in cosmopolitan, multi-cultural areas, and, last but not least the yoga mat as a sacred ritual space where physical and psychological re-orientation take place. In this way she enquires not so much into what yoga is but into where yoga is practised and into the different meanings that emerge when yoga is practised in these different spaces. Her close look at the spaces yoga occupies in contemporary society reveals a great variety. Furthermore, Newcombe concludes that yoga is neither a necessarily religious or spiritual practice, nor a purely secular activity. It can be private, but sometimes it also assumes social and political dimensions.

In the final chapter of the present volume, “*Nāga, Siddha* and Sage: Visions of Patañjali as an Authority on Yoga”, **Gudrun Bühnemann** also turns to spaces where yoga is practised nowadays. She points out that statues and other visual representations of Patañjali have become an important component of the visual culture of contemporary yoga. These representations also provide a link between South Asian and globalised yoga. Bühnemann argues that two factors created the modern interest in visual representations of the legendary author of the *Yoga-sūtra*: (1) the canonical status that the *Yogasūtra* has gained in many modern schools of yoga and (2) the recitation of stanzas in praise of Patañjali at the beginning of yoga sessions in globalised yoga studios. Searching for links between tradition and modernity, she traces the development of Patañjali’s iconography, starting with the earliest representations in the tradition of the Naṭarāja Temple at Cidambaram in Tamilnadu, South India. Against this backdrop, Bühnemann then examines the more recent iconography of Patañjali in the



tradition of the twentieth-century yoga master Tirumalai Krishnamacharya. Furthermore, she treats representations of Patañjali as an accomplished being (*siddha*) absorbed in meditation, which she considers a distinct phenomenon that may also have originated in Tamilnadu. Bühnemann concludes her chapter with a look at recent representations of Patañjali that experiment with new forms and modes of expression.

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## **Part A.**

### **Yoga in South Asia and Tibet**



## Chapter 1

# Some Problematic Yoga Sūtra-s and Their Buddhist Background

Dominik Wujastyk

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Dominik Wujastyk

## 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.

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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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> In both contexts, these virtues are presented as the appropriate objects for meditation (*bhāvanā*).<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> 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?<sup>6</sup>

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. *mṛdūtā* (“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?”