On Yoga and Yogācāra: The Yogasūtra in Light of Buddhist Sources

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The Yogasūtra of Patañjali: A New Introduction to the Buddhist Roots of the Yoga System by Pradeep Gokhale, Delhi: Routledge India, 2020. ISBN-10: 0367408988, ISBN-13: 978-0367408985, 250 pages.

In his book The Yogasūtra of Patañjali: A New Introduction to the Buddhist Roots of the Yoga System*, Pradeep Gokhale reveals a new picture of the Yogasūtra. He shows us, verse after verse, Buddhist influences on this classical text, which is usually seen as rooted in the Sāṃkhya tradition. Gokhale does not merely argue that Patañjali borrows from Buddhist sources; he substantiates his argument with numerous detailed examples, traveling back and forth between Patañjali and Buddhist thinkers such as Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Gokhale further argues that Vyāsa, Patañjali's most authoritative commentator, makes a political move in his commentary by distancing Patañjali from the Buddhists and situating him on the "right side" of the philosophical map, namely the āstika side, the side of the loyalists of the Veda. The implications are far-reaching. First, Patañjali and Vyāsa cannot be one and the same person, as claimed by solid Yogasūtra scholars such as Philipp Maas. Second, the Patañjali of the Yogasūtra cannot be identified with his namesake, the author of the Mahābhāṣya, "The Great Commentary" on some of the themes discussed by Pāṇini, the forefather of Indian linguistics. Patañjali, the linguist, is dated to the 2nd or 3rd century BCE; Patañjali of the Yogasūtra would now have to be pushed forward to the 5th century CE as Gokhale implies. Like Daya Krishna before him, Gokhale highlights the contribution of Buddhist texts and thinkers, often undermined or marginalized in the narrative of the history of Indian philosophy, at least as it is sketched in India. In this respect, I briefly visit Daya Krishna's essay "Was Ācārya Śaṅkara responsible for the disappearance of Buddhist Philosophy from India?" (1999). Finally, I mention Karen O'Brien-Kop's research. Like Gokhale, she makes an attempt to join the dots between Pātañjala-yoga and the Buddhist Yogācāra.*

Key words: Pradeep Gokhale; Yogasūtra; Patañjali; Buddhism; Vasubandhu; Asaṅga; Daya Krishna; Karen O'Brien-Kop

Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* (YS) is usually seen, both traditionally and scholarly, as rooted in the Sāṃkhya tradition, adopting Sāṃkhyan metaphysics and vocabulary. Sāṃkhya metaphysics sets forth a dualistic worldview comprising of *puruṣa*, the selfhood beyond everything worldly, and *prakṛti*, matter, which includes everything which is not *puruṣa*, from stars and volcanoes to the human consciousness. (Yes, the consciousness belongs to the category of "matter.") Sāṃkhyan vocabulary includes terms such as *puruṣa*, *prakṛti*, and *kaivalya*. *Kaivalya* stands for the ultimate distinction and separation between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, and entails freedom—freedom of the self, of "pure subjectivity," from the world and the worldly, from everything objective, including the content of our consciousness. Mādhava Vidyāraṇya, in his renowned fourteenth century *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha*, a compendium of different philosophical schools, refers to Pātañjala-yoga as "sa-īśvara Sāṃkhya," i.e., "Sāṃkhya with īśvara (god)," or "theistic Sāṃkhya," thus locating Patañjali within the Sāṃkhyan milieu. Every Yoga scholar knows that there

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are "touches" of Buddhism in the *Yogasūtra*, from the *Brahma-vihāras*, "the sublime attitudes" (YS 1.33) and the notion of *prajñā*, "wisdom" (YS 1.48-49) in chapter 1 of Patañjali's treatise, through the therapeutic paradigm, what the Buddhists refer to as the *catvāri āryasatyāni* ("four noble truths") in chapter 2 (YS 2.16-17 and 2.25-26) and the family-resemblance of the *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* (eight-limb-yoga), still in chapter 2 of the *Yogasūtra* (YS 2.29 onwards), and the Buddhist *aṣṭāṅga-mārga* (eightfold-path), and finally the debate with Yogācāra Buddhism in chapter 4 (YS 4.19-21). But Gokhale's claim is more radical: according to him, Patañjali relies on Buddhist sources as much, or even more than on the Sāṃkhya tradition. He asserts:

> In my survey, I found that more than 50 percent of the *Yogasūtra*'s aphorisms can be said to have a background in Buddhism, directly or indirectly. Less than 40 percent of the aphorisms can be said to have a background in Sāṅkhya or other orthodox [*āstika*, namely non-Buddhist and non-Jaina] sources, directly or indirectly (12).

When asked in a Q&A session after an online talk for the University of Delhi whether Patañjali himself—besides being influenced by Buddhist sources—also influenced later Buddhist thinkers and texts, Gokhale replied: "I did not find any such evidence."[1] Gokhale's answer is straightforward. He does not speculate or share his impression but works with textual evidence. This is one of the merits of the book under discussion.

Back to Gokhale's move: He points out and discusses Buddhist junctions in the *Yogasūtra* besides other influences or borrowings of Patañjali, such as from the Jaina tradition. Furthermore, he sees a rift (he speaks of "discrepancy" and "hermeneutic gap") between Patañjali and Vyāsa, his Bhāṣyakāra, i.e., his foremost commentator. The former is influenced by Buddhist sources; the latter strives to take the text away from its Buddhist influence. Gokhale provides us with numerous examples to substantiate this proposition. I will mention only two: Patañjali versus Vyāsa on the phrase "īśvara-praṇidhāna" ("one's desire or vow or resolve to become like īśvara") and their different vision of prāṇāyāma ("breath-regulation"). "The term īśvara-praṇidhāna," Gokhale argues, "cannot have [in Patañjali] the connotation of theistic or devotional practice, but Vyāsa gives a theistic turn to Patañjali's concepts of īśvara and īśvara-praṇidhāna" (Unless a page number is mentioned, All quotes are from Gokhale's abovementioned online lecture that recaps the main arguments of his book.). This phrase, according to Gokhale, is about purifying the mind through meditation until the yogin—the practitioner of yoga—becomes pure like *īśvara*, god, who stands here for sheer purity and is not a creating god. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, Gokhale explains, the Bodhisattva (the aspirant of Buddhahood, or "awakening") makes a resolve (*praṇidhāna*) that through "moral-spiritual practice," he will become a Buddha. The implied comparison between the yogin and the Bodhisattva, and between the *praṇidhāna* or resolution of the latter to reach Buddhahood and the attempt of the former to achieve purity such as that of *īśvara*, is intriguing. For Gokhale, Patañjali's *īśvara* is not very different from the ideal of Buddhahood. They both lack, at least initially, that measure of religiosity that was later added both in the Yogic and Buddhist traditions. In both cases, the comparison suggests, the striving is of the consciousness to purify itself. For Patañjali, this purification amounts to an act of emptification. The consciousness empties itself of both *vṛttis* and *saṃskāras*, fluctuations of the mind, and karmic residue.

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Another option, I would add, regarding the phrase *īśvara-praṇidhāna* is that it denotes meditation on *īśvara*, one's chosen deity as object of meditation. Gokhale is aware of this possibility and, drawing on YS 1.27, speaks of meditation on "him" through the syllable "Om." But for Vyāsa, as Gokhale rightly suggests, the divinity is hardly objectified, and a measure of Bhakti or religiousness comes into the picture. "Vyāsa describes īśvara-praṇidhāna as a special kind of devotional practice (bhakti-viśeṣa)," Gokhale says, and "as surrendering all actions to īśvara or sacrificing the fruits of all actions."

Another interesting example Gokhale provides for the different approaches of Patañjali and Vyāsa has to do with *prāṇāyāma* (discussed by Patañjali in YS 2.49-53), the fourth limb of the aṣṭāṅga-yoga body. According to Gokhale's analysis, which focuses on the word *gativiccheda* in YS 2.49, Patañjali sees and prescribes *prāṇāyāma* as observation of one's breathing, with emphasis (YS 2.50) on its place in the body, its length, and the frequency of inhalation and exhalation. This practice, Gokhale suggests, is "closely similar" to the Buddhist notion of *ānāpanasmṛti*, mindfulness in breathing. But if for Patañjali, *gativiccheda* is "distinct cognition," or "observation," then Vyāsa reads this phrase as denoting suspension of breathing, taking a cue—Gokhale further suggests—from the *haṭhayoga* tradition, which sees *prāṇāyāma* as an act of "controlling the breath through artificial stoppage or forced activity" (I still quote from Gokhale's online talk; the same point is discussed in his book on pages 104-09). Again, we see a gap between Patañjali, who is closer to the Buddhists, and Vyāsa, his commentator. In the first illustration, the *īśvara-praṇidhāna* illustration, I agree with Gokhale about the religiouslessness of Patañjali, against the Bhakti overtones of his commentators, from Vyāsa onwards. But regarding *prāṇāyāma*, I am more hesitant since the idea of stoppage, or suspension (I read the phrase *gativiccheda* like Vyāsa as "suspension of the flow" of breathing) sits well with nirodha (YS 1.2), the "ultimate yogic stoppage." For me, *prāṇāyāma* (and especially the fourth type of *prāṇāyāma*, explicated in YS 2.51) anticipates *sarva-nirodha*, or total-cessation at the level of consciousness, which is the crux of the *Yogasūtra* as I read it.

Gokhale's overall reading of *sūtra* and *bhāṣya* leads him to the conclusion that Vyāsa makes a political move (yes, politics in the realm of ideas) by aiming to distance Patañjali from the Buddhist camp and to situate him on the "right side" of the map, the *āstika* side (the Buddhists are on the other side, the *nāstika*, namely the allegedly "heretic" side). In his paper "Politics of Interpretation: Two Instances from Vācaspatimiśra's Commentaries on Sāṅkhya and Nyāya Texts," Gokhale explains:

> The rivalry among the philosophical schools in India was not purely intellectual, but it had far-reaching social implications. The rivalry between Vedic and Non-Vedic schools had a socio-political dimension (Gokhale 2020a: 61).[2]
>
> Hence the philosophers of Vedic schools are seen to be making special efforts to refute Buddhism, and Buddhist philosophers seem to be taking special interest in refuting Vedic schools. Commentaries played an important role in this conflict (Gokhale 2020b).[3]

And Gokhale further adds that "as a political tool, a commentary, at least sometimes, becomes a manipulative act rather than a transparent reflection of the source text." I remember Gokhale Saab presenting this paper before an ensemble of pandits, classical scholars, at the University of Pune in February 2019. When he completed his presentation, one of the participants, a distinguished pandit,

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passionately asked-remarked: "Why tarnish philosophy with politics?" Gokhale dismissed the comment with a hand gesture that seemed to imply that even King Janaka's court (I have chapter 3 of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* in mind) and Plato's academy were not free from politics and agenda.

In this paper, Gokhale argues that Vācaspatimiśra, the 9th or 10th-century polymath, who wrote commentaries on a myriad of texts belonging to different schools—Advaita, Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, Sāṃkhya, and Yoga—makes an attempt in his commentary on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (SK) to recruit this famous text to the āstika or Vedic camp, despite the fact that the author of the text—Īśvarakṛṣṇa—rejects the authority of the Veda (in SK 2).[4] And if Īśvarakṛṣṇa is recruited, we can imagine that owing to the proximity of Sāṃkhya and Yoga, Patañjali of the *Yogasūtra* will also be counted within the Veda camp, even if, like Īśvarakṛṣṇa, he rejects the authority of the scriptures (āgama) in YS 1.7. Vācaspatimiśra, then, twists or bends the text according to his political agenda. Gokhale further shows that in his commentary on the *Nyāyasūtra*, Vācaspatimiśra develops a two-fold double-staged theory of perception, which he borrows (with a slight amendment) from the Buddhists, without giving them credit, claiming that it is implicit in the *Nyāyasūtra* text and its *Bhāṣya*, the commentary which preceded his own exegesis.

All this probably sounds very technical for anyone who is not acquainted with classical Indian philosophy. The bottom line is that in his paper, Gokhale reveals a hidden political strand, i.e., a commentator's incentive to fortify the status and stature of the Veda against the so-called *nāstika*s (non-*āstikas*), who refuse to accept its authority, and most notably the Buddhists. Gokhale further implies that Vācaspatimiśra undermines and hides the philosophical contribution of the Buddhists.

Along similar lines, contemporary Indian philosopher Daya Krishna speaks in his paper "Was Ācārya Śaṅkara Responsible for the Disappearance of Buddhist Philosophy from India?" of "the injustice done to Buddhism by the historians of Indian philosophy" (Daya Krishna 1999).[5] These historians, he claims, undermined the centrality of Buddhist philosophy in the first millennium until Nālandā, the main Buddhist center, was destroyed by Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1193 CE. Yes, Buddhism was dominant until the destruction of Nālandā by the Muslim invader. "The myth of Vedic Hinduism [namely Śaṅkara] swallowing up all the other non-Hindu religious traditions of India," Daya Krishna writes, "so persistently propagated by certain vested interests, is really a myth, unsubstantiated by any evidence whatsoever" (Daya Krishna 1999: 127). The answer to the question in his paper title, then, is negative. Śaṅkara was not responsible for the disappearance of Buddhism from the Indian scene; the ruination of Nālandā was. Buddhism continued to flourish for more than two hundred years after Śaṅkara (usually dated to the 8th century), as Madhumita Chattopadhyay of Jadavpur University, Kolkata, underscored in a recent online lecture about the writings of the 11th-century Buddhist thinker Ratnākaraśānti. And Daya Krishna finally adds, and this is the crux of his critique of the myth about Śaṅkara and the Buddhists, that "philosophical schools do not die of criticism; they get a new life and rigour" (Daya Krishna 1999: 128). Like Daya Krishna, Gokhale fights the "non-appreciation" of the Buddhists, as he puts it. In his aforementioned paper, he points his finger at Vācaspatimiśra, in *A New Introduction* at an even earlier commentator, namely Vyāsa, Patañjali's Bhāṣyakāra. "Vyāsa," he writes, "must have been aware of the Buddhist background [of the *Yogasūtra*], but he seems to have knowingly avoided acknowledging the Buddhist influence. He interprets the whole of the *Yogasūtra* as a Sāṅkhya text. He acknowledges the Buddhist position only when it is to be criticized or when the Sāṅkhya position is to be defended against it" (11). And if this is not enough, he adds:

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> Unfortunately, the Bhāṣyakāra's narrow interpretation of *Yogasūtra* came to be treated as authentic at the hands of the later commentators, and the Buddhist background got completely side-tracked (11).

On his own deep interest in Buddhist philosophy, Gokhale writes in his essay "My Pursuits in Philosophy," which illustrates the interlacement of the personal and the philosophical in his thought:

> One of the driving forces in my intellectual journey has been my view that if the Indian social order is to be rid of the caste system and made more rational and moral as well as less superstitious and unjust, the centrality of Brahmanical schools has to be replaced by that of non-Brahmanical schools. […] Non-Brahmanical schools [Buddhism, Jainism, and Lokāyata "which is traditionally identified with Indian materialism"] reject the sanctity of caste-varṇa hierarchy and ritualistic practices addressed to other-worldly beings (Gokhale 2018: 135-36).[6]

Daya Krishna speaks of injustice toward the Buddhists in the standard narrative of the history of Indian philosophy. Gokhale shares his attempt to rectify the situation. But their fight is not just against injustice in the realm of ideas, but also—in fact primarily—against social injustice. In this respect, Gokhale mentions the contribution of B.R. Ambedkar and Ambedkarite Buddhism. In the same essay, Gokhale confesses that he was always attracted to the *pūrva-pakṣin*, the philosophical opponent, who raises questions and objections and formulates a counter-perspective. Like Daya Krishna, Gokhale is interested in discussion and debate. Like Daya Krishna, he believes that philosophical schools hardly die of criticism. On the contrary: a good critique injects life into the philosophical discourse.

Gokhale's picture of the of the Buddhist roots of Pātañjala-yoga has far-reaching implications. First, Patañjali and Vyāsa cannot be one and the same person, against the belief of authoritative *Yogasūtra* scholars such as Philipp Maas, the compiler of a critical edition of the first chapter of what he refers to as *Pātañjala Yogaśāstra*, namely of Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* and Vyāsa-Bhāṣya together. "According to manuscript colophons and secondary evidence," Maas writes, "both texts [the *Yogasūtra* and Vyāsa's commentary] taken collectively bear the common title *Pātañjala Yogaśāstra* and probably have one single, common author named Patañjali. This author collected the sutras from different sources and furnished them with explanations, which in later times came to be regarded as the *Yogasūtra-bhāṣya*" (Maas 2009: 264).[7]

I had my doubts even before reading Gokhale, owing to several verses in chapter 3 of the *Yogasūtra*, the siddhis (powers) chapter, where I felt that Vyāsa is too silent with regard to the connection between the long list of prescribed meditations on different objects (the term used here for meditation is *saṃyama*) and their effect (the *siddhis*). Is it a matter of not sharing this dimension of yoga publicly and leaving it for the more intimate *guru-śiṣya* (teacher-student) interaction? Or a matter of distance between the author/compiler (Patañjali) and commentator (Vyāsa)? Al-Bīrūnī's 11th-century translation of the *Yogasūtra* into Arabic also raises questions regarding the equation between Patañjali and Vyāsa that I cannot delve into at present. But if Gokhale is right when he claims that Patañjali is rooted in Buddhist sources and Vyāsa works to distance his text from these sources, then the author and commentator are surely different from one another.

Gokhale's narrative has another significant implication regarding the authorship of the *Yogasūtra*. Some identify the author of the *Yogasūtra* with a linguist by the same name, Patañjali, author of the

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Mahābhāṣya, "The Great Commentary" on some of the themes discussed by Pāṇini, the forefather of Indian linguistics. Among those for whom the linguist and the author of the *Yogasūtra* are one and the same person is Bhojarāja (king Bhoja), the 11th-century king of the Paramāra clan, who ruled over the Mālavā region and its capital Dhārā (in today's Madhya Pradesh). Besides his duties as a king, he was interested in literature, medicine, architecture, poetry, phonetics, and yoga. Bhojarāja is the author of the *Yogasūtra* commentary titled *Rājamārtāṇḍa-vṛtti*, or simply *Bhoja-vṛtti*. The problem is that the former Patañjali (the linguist) is usually dated to the 2nd or 3rd century BCE, whereas the latter (author of the *Yogasūtra*) is to the 3rd or 4th century CE. Therefore, most scholars prefer to distinguish between the yoga writer and his linguist namesake. Yet the question—two Patañjalis or one?—remains open. But if Gokhale is right when he shows us that Patañjali's text is influenced by Buddhist thinkers such as Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, then the two Patañjalis must be different from one another. The linguist lived too early to have known and to have borrowed from these Buddhist thinkers. In light of Gokhale's work, Patañjali of the *Yogasūtra* would have to be pushed even forward to the 4th or even 5th century CE. These implications of Gokhale's work are discussed by him in his effective introduction.

Earlier, I mentioned the rift between *Sūtra-kāra* and *Bhāṣya-kāra*, Patañjali and Vyāsa, in Gokhale's reading of the *Yogasūtra*. I also spoke of the importance of the *pūrva-pakṣin*, the philosophical opponent who challenges and raises questions. I now wish to take the stance of a *pūrva-pakṣin* and point out two instances where Vyāsa, in his commentary, seems to be borrowing from Buddhist sources just like Patañjali, contrary to Gokhale's broad argument.

The first instance is Vyāsa's commentary on YS 1.47, one of a series of verses in which Patañjali prescribes his path of meditation. On this path, Gokhale writes:

> Patañjali describes the journey of the meditation practitioner from absorption with seed (*sabīja-samādhi*) to absorption without seed (*nirbīja-samādhi*), which is made possible by the truth-bearing wisdom which arises from the practice of the former (19)

In YS 1.47, Patañjali elucidates a subtle stage of meditation (*nirvicāra-samāpatti*), which gives rise to *ṛtambharā prajñā*, rendered by Gokhale as "truth-bearing wisdom." In this meditative state, Patañjali writes, a special clarity (*adhyātma-prasāda*) occurs. In this light and clarity, Vyāsa suggests, the yogin, i.e., the meditator, can see things "as they are" (*bhūtārtha*). What does it mean? He further quotes a verse (by a *parama-ṛṣi*, a great seer, the commentators after him explain), which resembles *prajñā* ("wisdom") to the lucid vision from the top of a hill. From this (inner) hilltop, the yogin who stepped out of sorrow is in a position to see the *śocyatā*, the suffering, or misery, or miserable condition of those who are still "down there," or "in there," in the shadowy Platonic cave. *Prajñā* is presented here as the outlook of a yogin who is no longer involved in or determined by the phenomenal, mundane experience. It is an outlook that reveals phenomenal existence as mixed with *śoka* or sorrow. I would like to suggest that the voice of the so-called parama-ṛṣi is, in fact, a Buddhist voice. Gokhale himself acknowledges the present Buddhist current in Vyāsa, even if it does not fit his larger thesis. "In his commentary," he informatively writes, "Vyāsa quotes a verse [the *parama-ṛṣi* verse] which consists of the last two lines of the Sanskrit rendering of the three-line Pāli verse from *Dhammapada* 2.8" (59).

Another instance of Buddhist influence on Vyāsa is found in his Bhāṣya on YS 2.15. In this commentary, he introduces *sūtras* 2.16-17 and 2.25-26, where Patañjali uses the terms *heya*, *heya-hetu*,

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hāna, and *hānopāya*, referring to "that which is to be eliminated" (the malady), the cause (of malady), possible elimination (that is, cure), and the prescribed method (remedy) to achieve elimination or cure. This therapeutic paradigm is reminiscent of the Buddhist "four noble truths." Vyāsa in his commentary compares "the science of yoga" (*yoga-śāstra*) to medical science (*cikitsā-śāstra*), suggesting that both stand on four legs: diagnosis of the disease (*roga*), revelation of the cause of sickness (*roga-hetu*), prognosis that the disease is curable, or that a state without disease (*arogya*) is attainable, and prescription of a medicine (*bhaiṣajya*). A similar formulation can be found in the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosa (roughly a contemporary of Vyāsa), who rearticulates the "four truths" as *roga, roganidāna, rogavūpasama* and *bhesajja* (illness, the cause of illness, no-illness and the medicine), just as in Vyāsa's formulation (I draw on Halbfass 1992: 246).[8] Vyāsa, in his Bhāṣya on YS 2.15 further suggests, or rather explains, that *saṃsāra* (worldliness) is the malady, the mixture (*saṃyoga*) of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* (the selfhood beyond and everything worldly—a mixture which amounts to the Sāṃkhyan notion of *avidyā*, or "misconception," that Patañjali adopts in YS 2.5) is the cause, cessation (*nivṛtti*) of this mixture is the cure, and *samyag-darśana* or "discerning view" (which makes a clear-cut distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*) is the remedy. Apropos Gokhale's narrative, how should we understand Vyāsa? Does he borrow from Buddhist sources, or does he hint that Patañjali works with a medical model (not a Buddhist model) that the Buddhists parallelly have in mind? Still, in his commentary on 2.15, Vyāsa suggests that it is the sensitivity of the yogin that differentiates him from the ordinary person (the non-yogin, or pre-yogin), like the eye, which is more sensitive than any other body organ. In the same way that the eye alone can sense a falling cobweb, only the yogin can "feel" the all-pervasive *duḥkha*, suffering, seen and unseen, which Patañjali depicts in *sūtra* 2.15.

How does Gokhale read Patañjali and Vyāsa on YS 2.15? First, he speaks of Patañjali, who, according to him, constructs a concept of *duḥkha*, suffering, or worldliness as suffering, which draws both on the Buddhist and on the Sāṃkhyan treatment of this term. "Patañjali generally depends on Buddhism for the empirical," Gokhale writes, "and on Sāṅkhya for the transcendent. Hence, after giving an empirical explanation of suffering in terms of defilements based on Buddhism, and also the general causal framework of the four noble truths, Patañjali is now pouring Sāṅkhya metaphysical content in them" (81). With reference to Vyāsa, Gokhale suggests that the eye metaphor is borrowed from Vasubandhu. And the comparison to the medical science, he writes, goes back to the Buddhist sūtras. But why would Vyāsa, depicted by Gokhale as distancing the *Yogasūtra* from its Buddhist roots, borrow from Buddhist sources himself, even if he adds nuances of his own based on "his own preference for eternalism," as Gokhale puts it (82)?

As for the structure of Gokhale's book, it looks and works like a classical commentary on the *Yogasūtra*. It is divided into four chapters, the *Yogasūtra* chapters, and verse after verse, Gokhale provides us with the *sūtra* in Sanskrit, his English translation, and a commentary, a belated *Ṭīkā* if you wish, which highlights rather than conceals Buddhist and Jaina influence. Had my canvas been larger, I would have touched on Jaina influence (for example, in the phrase *mahāvrata*, "the great vow," with reference to the five yamas, Patañjali's principal ethical principles in YS 2.31).

Gokhale supplements his *Yogasūtra* with three interesting appendixes: first, "Buddhist conceptions of meditation, yoga and the Bodhisattva's spiritual journey vis-à-vis Pātañjala-yoga," where he visits the Buddhist texts that, according to him, had an impact on Patañjali's text. Second, "Asaṅga on forms of supernormal knowledge and powers." So much is written on the *Yogasūtra* today, both popularly and academically, but chapter 3 of this treatise is hardly discussed (Yohanan Grinshpon's *Silence Unheard*,

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SUNY 2002, is a rare exception). A long list of siddhis (powers, or special capacities, or yogic attainments) to be acquired through meditation is expounded here. Each of the prescribed meditations results in a certain siddhi. Many of these siddhis are, in fact different types of knowledge (*jñāna* is the word used by Patañjali), from knowledge of the universe and knowledge of the arrangement and movement of the stars, through knowledge of the content of other minds and knowledge of previous births, to knowledge of the distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Other siddhis vary from the capacity of becoming invisible or miniaturizing one's body to the capacity of determining the time of one's death at will. The Buddhist terminology differentiates between supra-ordinary types of knowledge and supra-normal powers or capacities, referring to them as *abhijñā* and *ṛddhi*, respectively. In his appendix, Gokhale takes us to Asaṅga's *Śrāvakabhūmi*, where like Patañjali (or according to Gokhale, Patañjali like him), "he gives a detailed description of different supernormal powers and explanation of the meditational technique which leads to them" (212). Gokhale translates from Sanskrit what he refers to as "the relevant section which can be used as a point of reference for understanding Patañjali's account in a clearer way" (212). In his commentary on chapter 3 of the *Yogasūtra*, Gokhale touches on Buddhist parallels in the relevant *sūtras*, and there are many parallels. In his appendix, he shows us—through the translated paragraphs from Asaṅga—why he thinks that Patañjali borrows from him. Asaṅga himself, Gokhale suggests, draws on Pāli sources such as the *Dīghanikāya* (*Pāṭikavaggo*) and the *Saṁyuttanikāya* (*Ayogulasuttam*). But the philosophical question that needs to be asked is what is the place and role of the siddhis, the supra-normal powers, and knowledges, in Patañjali and in the Buddhist context. In Patañjali, it leads to another crucial question regarding the continuity or ambivalence between siddhi and kaivalya as possibly inverted concepts of freedom, freedom as omnipotence (siddhi), expounded in chapter 3 of the YS, versus freedom as disengagement (kaivalya), expounded mostly in chapter 4. According to Gokhale, it is, in fact a question about agreement or conflict between Buddhist (siddhi) and Sāṃkhya (kaivalya) influences on the *Yogasūtra*. In this respect, Gokhale remarks that "Patañjali's system of Yoga is not a coherent system because it is an attempt to synthesize two soteriological systems—Sāṅkhya and Buddhism—which are mutually inconsistent in many ways" (13).

Gokhale is not alone in reading Patañjali vis-à-vis Buddhist sources. Karen O'Brien-Kop works in the same direction. I did not find her work in his bibliography or his in hers, but they are definitely on the same page. In his analysis of the notion of *dharmamegha* (rendered by him as "the virtue-showering cloud") in his commentary on YS 4.29, and in her paper "Dharmamegha in Yoga and Yogācāra: the Revision of a Superlative Metaphor" (2020), where she renders *dharmamegha* as "the cloud of dharma")[9], Gokhale and O'Brien-Kop point at the same Buddhist roots. Gokhale writes on 4.29:

> Here Patañjali is referring to the highest state of meditative absorption, which he calls dharmamegha-samādhi. Neither Patañjali nor Vyāsa give any explanation as to why the highest samādhi is so called. Patañjali seems to have borrowed this term from the Mahāyāna Buddhist theory of ten planes (daśa-bhūmi) of the bodhisattva's spiritual progress. The highest plane is called dharmameghā bhūmi (179).

Both Gokhale and O'Brien-Kop are joining the dots (her phrase) between Buddhist sources, primarily Asaṅga, and Patañjali. "If Pātañjala-yoga post-dates Yogācāra, and it most likely does," O'Brien-Kop writes in alignment with Gokhale's comprehensive project, "this strengthens the argument that Patañjali knowingly references key Yogācāra paradigms" (O'Brien-Kop 2020: 631). In their distinct

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ways, both Gokhale and O'Brien-Kop explain how the borrowing of *dharmamegha* works for Patañjali within the framework of his *Yogasūtra*.

To sum up: Gokhale's book is a genuine gem in a yoga Bazaar in which the *asli* is much rarer than the *nakli*. It is essential reading for anyone interested in the philosophical dimension of yoga, in Patañjali, in classical Indian philosophy at large, and in the intricate relationship (and in this sense, Gokhale's book transcends the Indian context) between text and commentary. *A New Introduction* is a work of a pandit, a classicist in the best sense of the word, and Gokhale's *Yogasūtra* translation and commentary contribute immensely to the understanding of this ever-intriguing classical text.

Postscript: Three years have passed since the publication of Gokhale's book. Karen O'brien-Kop published two books during these years: *Rethinking 'Classical Yoga' and Buddhism: Meditation, Metaphors and Materiality* (London: Bloomsbury 2022), and recently, *The Philosophy of the Yogasūtra: An Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury 2023). It is time that we read the *Yogasūtra* in light of Patañjali's interaction with Buddhists sources. Gokhale and O'Brien-Kop pave the way for such new, fresh, interesting reading of Patañjali's famous treatise.

Daniel Raveh is author of *Exploring the Yogasūtra* (Continuum 2012) and *Sūtras, Stories and Yoga Philosophy* (Routledge 2016). His latest book is *Daya Krishna and Twentieth-century Indian Philosophy* (Bloomsbury 2020). He is also the co-editor (with Elise Coquereau-Saouma) of the recent anthology *The Making of Contemporary Indian Philosophy: Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya* (Routledge 2023).

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1 Pradeep Gokhale, "Re-understanding Patañjali," Lecture XII of The Mahābhārata Project (Delhi University and Kamala Nehru College), 29.8.2020: https://youtu.be/9SZFbwyGSj8 I was disappointed to see that the questions and answers were redacted. Sometimes (in fact often) the discussion, the interaction, is as interesting as the talk itself.

2 Pradeep Gokhale, "Politics of Interpretation: Two Instances from Vācaspatimiśra's Commentaries on Sāṅkhya and Nyāya Texts," *Journal of World Philosophies* 5, no. 2 (2020a): 61-72.

3 Draft shared with author.

4 Dimitry Shevchenko reminds me that even though in SK 2, Īśvarakṛṣṇa claims that the ānuśravika (Vedic) means are not more effective than dṛṣṭa (perceptible) means for curing duḥkha, suffering, as the human predicament, in SK 4-5 he accepts the Veda (āptavacana) as a pramāṇa (means of knowledge) which pertains (if not to mokṣa, ultimate freedom and cure, than at least) to dharma, prosperity at the worldly realm.

5 Daya Krishna, Was Ācārya Śaṅkara Responsible for the Disappearance of Buddhist Philosophy from India?," *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 17, no. 1 (1999): 127-30.

6 Pradeep Gokhale, "My Pursuits in Philosophy," *Journal of World Philosophies* 3 (2018): 135-41.

7 Philipp Maas, "The So-Called Yoga of Suppression in the Pātañjala Yogaśāstra," in *Yogic Perception, Meditation, and Altered States of Consciousness*, ed. Eli Franco and Dagmar Eigner (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009) 263–82.

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[8] Wilhelm Halbfass, "The Therapeutic Paradigm and the Search for Identity in Indian Philosophy," in *Tradition and Reflection: Explorations in Indian Thought* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992), 243-57.

[9] Karen O'Brien-Kop, "Dharmamegha in Yoga and Yogācāra: the Revision of a Superlative Metaphor," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 48 (2020): 605–35.

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