Dharmamegha Samadhi in the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali.

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D.C.H. Taylor-Rugman
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The meaning of the terminology employed within the *Yoga Sutra* provokes much academic debate. This dissertation aims to examine the meaning and use of the term *dharmamegha samadhi* within the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali. This new exploration of these terms is prompted by Ranganathan’s (2008) idea that *dharma* acts as a synonym for morality throughout the text and that in the *dharmamegha* state the yogi has achieved moral perfection. A study of the use of *dharma* and *dharmamegha samadhi* in the *Yoga Sutra* will allow us to draw tentative conclusions about what Patanjali meant by these terms and how he employed them. This will involve a close textual examination of the *Yoga Sutra* and of the writings of various translators and exegetes, ancient and contemporary, including several scholarly articles that have, within the past 10 years, dealt exclusively with interpretations of *dharma* and *dharmamegha samadhi* within Patanjali. Further background to the historical usage of *dharma* and *dharmamegha samadhi* will be gained from studying the works of the other Indian philosophical traditions, via secondary sources. Ranganathan (2008) asserts that *dharma/morality* is at the very heart of the *Yoga Sutra*. The findings from this research suggest that whilst an ethical and moral component is found with the *yama* and *niyama* section of the *Yoga Sutra* (2.30ff), the terms *dharma* and *dharmamegha samadhi* are used in a specialised and highly specific manner, actually referring to the essential nature of something, rather than acting as a moral or ethical term. A close reading of Patanjali leads me to conclude that *dharma* and morality are not used synonymously within the *Yoga Sutra*. Additionally, the terms *dharma* and *dharmamegha samadhi*, when compared to other contemporaneous texts, appear to have specialised meanings and are used in specific ways.

Keywords: Patanjali, *dharma*, *dharmamegha samadhi*, morality, *Yoga Sutra*.
Introduction

This dissertation will examine the meaning of the term *dharmamegha samadhi* within the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali (henceforth referred to as *YS*). This is a timely review of this area of the *YS* and seeks to explore the ideas of Ranganathan (2008). He proposes that *dharma* is used as a direct synonym for morality in Indian philosophy and that the entire yoga project, as outlined in the *YS*, is geared towards the yoga practitioner achieving moral perfection. This moral perfection that finds its expression in the *dharmamegha* stage. (Note: I will use a lower case ‘y’ to refer to yoga as a practice and upper case ‘Y’ for Yoga, the school of philosophy).

The term *dharmamegha* appears just once in Patanjali’s work (*YS* 4.29) but it is reasonable to assume that this *samadhi* state is central to the whole yogic endeavour as outlined in the *YS*. The introduction and description of the *dharmamegha* state appears within in the last ten *sutra*-s of the *YS*, at a point where the yogi is on the threshold of achieving *kaivalya*, the aloneness that marks the fruition of the yogic journey. I will attempt to establish whether an accurate and plausible understanding of *dharmamegha* can be established. In order to do this I will refer a variety of translations of the *YS* and also examine the available literature on this topic by other scholars. Ranganathan’s hypothesis, contained in his 2008 translation of the *YS*, proposes the idea that the entire text of the *YS* is concerned with the moral improvement of the practicing yogi. Central to Ranganathan’s argument is the assumption that the term *dharma* is used exclusively as a synonym for the English word morality within in the *YS* specifically, and in Indian philosophy generally. According to Ranganathan the culmination of the yogic process is the attainment of the state of *dharmamegha samadhi*, the “Rain Cloud of Morality Liberating State of Absorption” (2008:299), a state of consciousness that heralds the moral perfection of the yogi. I wish to examine the veracity of this claim in greater detail.

I believe that an investigation into *dharmamegha samadhi* is both necessary and timely. Since the 1990s there has been an explosion in the number of people in the West, and more recently in Asia generally and India specifically, practicing yoga. What those forms of yoga are, and how the term yoga is used or misused, often in the name of commercial gain, need not concern us here. What is relevant here is that many of the people who are undertaking forms of praxis that they define as yoga are also interested in exploring the philosophical underpinnings of the practices that they undertake. In
2008 Yoga Journal, the USA’s largest circulating yoga magazine, commissioned market research on yoga within American. They reported that 15.8 million people in the USA practiced yoga, spending over $5.7 billion a year on classes, books and products. Many of the books bought were translations of the YS. Ranganathan notes that the YS is “no doubt the most commonly translated and widely read” text of formal Indian philosophy and he attributes this to the “recent, global popularity of yoga, as a practice of posture flows” which has led to a “ubiquitous interest” in the YS (2008:1-3). When delivering philosophy lectures to yoga students Ranganathan found the existing translations of the YS problematic and was motivated to provide a new rendering of the text to overcome two specific objections. Firstly he believed that the moral content of Patanjali is generally overlooked by translators and secondly that commentators frequently read contrary systems of philosophy into the text of the YS. Many currently available translations of the YS are in some way problematic. Most YS translations offer extensive commentary on the first two of the YS’s four pada-s (chapters), but have little to say about the remaining two pada-s that complete the text. From 20 years of personal inquiry and experience as an asana teacher working with western yoga practitioners, the bias towards the first two pada-s is clearly reflected in the knowledge of most students, many of whom are largely unaware of the content of the YS’s third and fourth pada-s. The privileging of certain sections of the YS allows distortions in the nature of yoga practice and its accompanying philosophy. Ranganathan’s translation is attempts to overcome the specific drawbacks that he perceives plague modern translations. He states that “a distinct feature of Patanjali’s system ... is his moral philosophy” (2008:62) which finds its sine qua non in the state of dharmamegha, something outlined in the fourth pada exclusively. The focus of other translations toward the first half of the YS therefore distorts the true meaning of Patanjali’s thoughts on yoga practice, its means and its ends. As we shall discover, few scholars have concerned themselves with an in depth examination of the concept of dharmamegha. Ranganathan has attempted to place the dharmamegha, and its implications for the yogi, at the centre of his translation by arguing that dharma is used exclusively by Patanjali as a synonym for morality. He attempts to demonstrate that the whole yogic enterprise is geared towards the moral perfection of the yogi, finding its expression in the dharmamegha state.

I have reviewed a number of translations of the YS including that of Ranganathan. I believe that drawing on the available translations and scholarship pertaining to the YS it is impossible to come to a universally acceptable definition of the dharmamegha state.
that fully expresses the meaning it held for Patanjali. During a certain epoch the term was obviously philosophically significant and pregnant with practical meaning, as its usage is not confined to the *YS*. The term appears in a range of Buddhist literature and some Hindu sources outside of Patanjali but remains relatively obscure. My argument is based on three factors. Firstly, the number of scholars devoting their time to exploring the *dharmamegha* is limited, as the focus of their efforts usually falls on other, more well trodden, parts of the *YS*. Until more scholars devote time to understanding *dharmamegha* its meaning will remain clouded. Secondly, I will demonstrate there is no commonly held understanding of the implications of *dharmamegha* between those scholars who have examined the term in depth. An attempt to reconcile the existing scholarship is long overdue. Finally I will argue that due to the polyvalence of its meanings any definition of *dharma*, whether in a limited philosophical or in a more general sense, is unlikely to completely convey the meaning that the word held for Patanjali. By extension this means that teasing out a precise meaning for *dharmamegha* is problematic.

A number of issues presented themselves in the completion of this work. Firstly, the *YS* is written in Sanskrit, a language that I have a limited understanding of. I will therefore be comparing secondary sources, English translations, of the *YS*. Translation of the *YS* is sometimes problematic as it is written in the form of terse aphorisms (*sutra*-s) where the normative rules of grammar are often ignored. Many of the *sutra*-s, which range in number from 194 to 196 depending on which edition you consult, lack a verb and this can allow a wide and often contradictory range of meanings to be derived from one *sutra*. I have referred to a number of translations and commentaries in order, as much as possible, to overcome this problem.Translations can sometimes be overtly overshadowed by an exegete’s desire, conscious or unconscious, to read into the source text their own ideas and views. There is, for instance, a notable tendency by some translators to read the *YS* through the filter of other, competing philosophical viewpoints, most notably the Advaita Vedanta school of philosophy or from a crypto-Buddhist perspective. It is hoped that by referring to multiple translations these biases can, where they exist, can be noted and observed. Since so many translations of the *YS* exist selecting translations judiciously, with an eye on their particular biases, will help me to develop a balanced picture of what the source text is actually saying. An additional problem is that almost two millennia separate us from the original text. The meaning of words and phrases changes over time as language and culture evolve and we
must be careful to avoid reading modern ideas into historical texts. Finally, the YS is a work of philosophy. We must be clear to establish whether the words and terms in the YS are being used in a highly specialised, technical philosophical manner or in the vernacular. Cross-referencing with other philosophical texts roughly contemporaneous with Patanjali can help us to gauge how terms were used technically.

In order to achieve my two stated aims I will firstly introduce some background to the YS, its author and its composition. I will offer a brief investigation into the translation of the term dharmamegha to ascertain whether a workable and agreeable English translation can be accomplished. I will then examine some of the philosophical underpinnings of the Patanjala Yoga darsana (system of philosophy) and establish the degree to which Patanjali drew his ontology from the Sankhya darsana, another of the astika or orthodox darsana. (Orthodox means that the darsana in question accepts the authenticity of the revelations of the Vedas and is therefore acceptable to Brahmins). A survey of astika and nastika (non-orthodox) literature for references to dharmamegha samadhi will demonstrate whether other philosophical strands are discernible within the YS. From there we will then investigate the two different types of samadhi that Patanjali explains; samprajnata (samadhi with consciousness) and asamprajnata (supercoscious samadhi) (YS 1.17,18). An examination of these two categories will then allow an exploration of whether the dharmamegha samadhi falls into either of these categories or if it is of another type of class of experience completely. I will then examine how Patanjali uses the term dharma throughout the YS to see if that can develop our understanding of dharmamegha. Finally, I will question the claims of Ranganathan that the whole text of the YS is orientated to the moral perfection of the yoga practitioner.

**An Overview of the Yoga Sutra**

The YS is the canonical work of the Yoga darsana, one of the six astika darsana of Indian philosophy. “A darsana, obviously, is not a system of philosophy in the Western sense (darsana means view, vision, understanding, point of view, doctrine, etc.); it comes from the root drs meaning to ‘to see’, that is to contemplate, to understand, etc. But it is nonetheless a system of coherent affirmations” which aims “to deliver man from ignorance” (Eliade 1976:11). Many controversies exist regarding the translation and meaning of the philosophy of the YS. In this thesis I wish to examine just one of the
controversies, the usage and meaning of the term *dharmamegha samadhi*. The term appears once in the *YS* (4.29) but, coming at the summation of the entire Patanjalian yivic process, its importance should not be overlooked.

We have no substantial biographical details regarding the life of Patanjali, the supposed author of the *YS*. The name means one who has fallen – *pat* – into the hands when they are held in the *anjali mudra* – with the two palms touching. This gives us little to work with. Even to date the Patanjali who authored the *YS* is difficult. Eliade says that “nothing is known of him. It is no known even whether he lived in the second or the third century before Christ or even in the fifth century after Christ” (1976:13). Doniger (2009:505) sees somewhere around 150 BCE as the composition date for the *YS* but most recent scholarship tends toward a more modern date. Ranganathan suggests somewhere “around the second or third century CE” (2008:1) and this is supported by Whicher (1998[a]:1). Older scholars and most modern day yoga teachers, Indian or otherwise, tend to ascribe a much earlier date to Patanjali. Perhaps this is an example of antiquity frenzy, the assumption that the greater the antiquity of an idea or a text, the greater the authority it bestows. The name Patanjali appears in association with two texts in addition to the *YS*. The *Mahabhasya* (Great Commentary) on Panini’s *Ashtadhyayi*, a Sanskrit grammatical treatise, is ascribed to a certain Patanjali the Grammarian. Additionally, a work on ayurveda is also ascribed to a Patanjali. It is generally agreed by academics that these three texts were almost certainly not written contemporaneously or by the same author. Focusing on Patanjali the Yogi, Whicher (1998[a]:317 footnote 134) states that although “the historical identity of Patanjali the Yoga master is not known, we are assuming that Patanjali was, as the tradition would have it, an enlightened Yoga adept.” Ranganathan supports this view, arguing that because “the *Yoga Sutra* is the most definitive account of yoga” it must have been, by extension, written by a great Yogi (2008:2).

The *YS* is a collection of *sutra*-s divided into four *pada*-s. Traditionally, the key to understanding each *sutra*-s is held to be via reading commentaries on the *YS* by later exegetes and then studying the *YS* with a living guru. Vyasa (circa 5th century CE) is almost universally believed to have been the earliest extant *YS* commentator. His *bhasya* (commentary) is therefore widely seen as the most authoritative and is the foundation on which other exegetes build their commentaries. This may not be the complete picture.
for three reasons. Firstly we do not have a manuscript of the *YS* without Vyasa’s *bhasya*. Indeed the

“recently released critical edition of the first chapter of the Patanjalayoga has confirmed that there is no manuscript evidence in favor [sic] of the autonomous existence of a Yogasutra (*YS*). Manuscripts present a whole text, the Yogasastra, later divided into two parts, *YS* and Yogabhāsyā (the latter traditionally attributed to Vyasa). The extraction of a *YS* from the Yogasastra is evidently possible, but it is not obvious whether the result is a coherent work that conveys a clear message” (Ferraz 2009:249).

Rather than being a name Vyasa may in fact be a title. It literally means the “arranger” or “compiler” (Monier-Williams 2002:1035). The title *Vyasa* is given to the compiler of the *Vedas* (*Veda-Vyasa*), and to the author of the *Mahābhārata* (*MB*) and the *Purānas*. Given the vast period of time between the compositions of these texts it is clear that they were not authored by one individual, regardless of Indian tradition which supposes common authorship of the three texts.

Secondly, certain scholars are now casting doubt on the internal unity of the *YS*. Rukmani argues that the *YS* is a “bringing together of various yogic traditions” by Patanjali and that it is an attempt to “systematise and arrange in an orderly way the various yogic traditions” which had large followings at the time of the composition (1989:147). For Rukmani this is most obviously displayed in *YS* 1.33–39 where a multitude of practices to achieve steadiness of the *citta* (mind) are described. None are given preference. Several scholars suggest that the *YS* is not an original composition but rather was compiled by Patanjali from a number of different texts. Feuerstein (1979) divides the text into two, a “Kriya Yoga Text” extending from 1.1 to 2:27 and from 3.3 or 3.4 to 4.34, and an “Astanga Yoga Text” from 2.28 to 3.2 or 3 and including 3.55. Deussen (1920) and Hauer (1958) argue that the text of the *YS* was pieced together from amalgamating five different texts. However, they disagree with each other on the exact origin of each *sutra*. It is reasonable to assume that Patanjali was drawing on material that was contemporaneous but also on ideas that predated him and it is obvious that a variety of disparate influences exist within the *YS*. Chapple concludes that these “speculations are possible” but adds that “Vyasa does not in his commentary mention these ‘sub-texts’ or refer to different traditions or authors. Nor does the style of Patanjali indicate that he in fact is borrowing texts from others” (1994:88). The idea that Patanjali was a compiler (*a vyasa?*) of existing ideas and texts aside, there seems to be an assumption that once composed the *YS* has remained unchanged over time. We must not
forget that it is not “impossible that the original text of the Yoga Sutras may have been revised by many hands in order to adapt it to new “philosophical situations’” (Eliade 1976:14) and separating the original core text from the later additions may be difficult, if not impossible, to do.

Thirdly, the general absence of grammatical structure and the terse nature of each *sutra* in the *YS* often suggests ambiguity and this has allowed the text to be interpreted and reinterpreted over the centuries in a variety of, sometimes contradictory, ways. Modern day yoga teachers almost uniformly use the *YS* as a source text to authenticate and validate their particular types of praxis. For example, *YS* 2:46 tells us that *sthirasukham asanam* – that posture (*asana*) should have the dual qualities of stability (*sthira*) and comfort (*sukham*). Traditionally the word *asana* meant the posture of sitting. Only much later did the word come to refer to a variety of physical contortions which might better be termed *tapas* (austerities). Despite this the overwhelming majority of Modern Postural Yoga (MPY) teachers use *YS* 2:46 to authenticate a plethora of posture-based ‘yoga’ practices (which they term *asana*) and legitimise their ‘traditions’ (De Michelis 2004). However the modern day style of posture flows of the MPY practitioner that *YS* 2:46 is used to legitimise were unknown before the early modern era (Singleton 2010). Some yoga teachers even used terms from the *YS* when naming their yoga styles. Examples abound, such as K. Pattabhi Jois (1915-2009) who named the strenuous posture-based practice that he taught “Astanga Yoga”, referring to the eight-part path outlined in the second *pada* of the *YS*, and the practices taught by Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952), which he labelled as “Kriya Yoga”, referring to *YS* 2.1.

I noted above that *sutra*-s often appears to be ambiguous, but is this idea warranted? Rukmani (1989 [4]:151), one of the foremost translators of the *YS*, clearly believes not. She states that a “sutra has to be short and unambiguous.” Certainly Patanjali starts the *YS* by clearly stating the aim of yoga:

\[
yogas cittavrttinirodhah
\]

“Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:33).

Contrary to the assertion of Rukmani, Ranganathan argues the exact opposite, emphasising that it is the exegete’s job to accurately represent what each individual *sutra* means. He states that each “line of a *sutra*, or the individual *sutra* verse, is
comprised of words chosen for their multiple significances. The more significances a word can conjure, the greater work each verbal component of a *sutra* can play in compressing a large text within short, dense lines” (2008:31). My limited knowledge of Sanskrit makes it difficult to assess whether the claims of Ranganathan or of Rukmani are correct, but it is clear that any work of philosophy is open to (mis-) interpretation. Consider how the Nazis manipulated the work of Nietzsche. Regardless of whether Patanjali was seeking specificity or ambiguity, it is clear that over time multiple interpretations have developed for many of the *sutra*-s. Clearly, the emphasis of the text has been shifted to accommodate the changing ideas and mores of new eras. The *YS* is largely concerned with the various stages of meditation and with *siddhi* (powers). Almost all of the third *pada*, approximately one quarter of the *YS*, is concerned with the gaining of *siddhi*. In spite of the clear weight of the *YS* towards *samyama* (binding together) and the acquisition of *siddhi* these types of praxis are almost unknown in the modern era. We are separated from the composition of the *YS* by approximately two millennia. Given that language usage evolves and changes I would argue that accurately assessing exactly what Patanjali means in any particular *sutra* or phrase can sometimes be extremely challenging and perhaps impossible. Despite this reservation, I wish to examine one of the key phrases of the *YS*, *dharmamegha samadhi*, attempting to discover if an accurate and unambiguous meaning for the term can be found. The phrase appears just once in the *YS*, towards the end of the fourth, and final, chapter (*YS* 4.29):

*prasamkhyane’pi akusidasya sarvatha viveka-khyater dharma-megha-samadhih.*

“In the case of one who has no interest left even in the highest state of elevation (*prasamkhyana*) (and) who has continuous insight (*vivekakhyati*), there arises the samadhi known as *dharmamegha*” (Rukmani 2009:132).

*Dharmamegha samadhi* is an unusual term, rarely found in Indian literature. I wish to explore if we can accurately translate it into English. Certainly Ranganathan (2008) believes that the term is easily translatable. But is this is not, I believe, the whole story.

**Translating *dharmamegha samadhi***

Translation theory is a complex and specialised academic field. For the purposes of this thesis space does not permit a detailed examination of the pertinent issues. That being said, it seems axiomatic that most modern translations of the *YS*, regardless of whether they are translated by academics or others, are seeking to present a translation that is
accurate to the spirit of the text and linguistically meaningful to the modern reader rather than simply offering a word-by-word breakdown of the text, an approach often found in older translations. The work of Chapple and Viraj (1990) is an example of a text which offers us everything: a definition and grammatical analysis of each individual word and term within the *YS* and also a meaningful English translation. Certain words and terms within the *YS* consistently trouble translators. Many translators choose to simply leave the terms in the original Sanskrit, allowing the reader to attribute their own meaning to the word. Other translators attempt to find English synonyms. Both approaches have their benefits, but we shall leave that open for the moment.

*Dharmamegha samadhi* is a term that has proved problematic to translators since the *YS* was first encountered by Europeans. I shall give a brief definition of the term now and re-examine it in more depth later. Klostermaier observes that “the term dharmamegha has not yet been studied properly” (1984:208) and therefore finding an approximation in English that adequately conveys its meaning is difficult. There is a long standing academic interest in the *dharmamegha*. “Starting with Mircea Eliade, who worked intensively in the field of Yoga, scholars have been intrigued by the concept of dharmamegha-samadhi. There is no uniform understanding of this important stage in samadhi among Yoga scholars” (Rukmani 2007:131). So what did Eliade, the man who started the interest in *dharmamegha*, have to say on the matter? He states that “Dharma-megha-samadhi, the ‘cloud of dharma,’ (is) a technical term that is difficult to translate, for dharma can have many meanings, but that seems to refer to an abundance (‘rain’) of virtues that suddenly fill the yogin” (Eliade 1990:84). Eliade makes no attempt to define or to explain these “virtues”, what they are and how they “fill” the yogin. Perhaps the difficulty in translating *dharmamegha samadhi* is due, as Eliade points out, to the polyvalent meanings of the word *dharma*. Let us examine the phrase more closely and see what we discover. The phrase *dharmamegha samadhi* is a composed of three words; *dharma, megha* and *samadhi*.

*Dharma*, which is masculine word and comes from the root *dhr* meaning “to hold.” Monier-Williams informs us that *dharma* means “that which is established or firm, steadfast decree, statute, ordinance, law.” Following these come synonyms such as “morality, religion, religious merit, etc.” (2002:510). With reference to the *YS* Taimni points out that the “significance of the phrase *Dharma-Megha* will become clear if we assign to the word *Dharma* the meaning .. of property, characteristic or function”
(1986:432). He then points out that this definition of dharma is drawn by referencing YS 4.12, one of the few sutra-s in which Patanjali uses the word. The relative merits of this line of inquiry will be developed more fully later.

Megah, which is masculine and takes the nominative, singular case. Megha means “a cloud” or “a mass” (Monier-Williams 2002:831) and is “a technical term used in Yogic literature for the cloudy or misty condition through which consciousness passes in the critical state of Asamprajnata Samadhi when there is nothing in the field of consciousness” (Taimni 1986:433).

Samadhih, a feminine word, in the nominative singular, has multiple meanings. These can include “putting together” and “bringing into harmony.” Samadhi also means “concentration of the thoughts, profound or abstract meditation, intense contemplation of any particular object” and is the name for “the eighth and last stage of Yoga” as well as being “the fourth and last stage of Dhyana” for Buddhists (Monier-Williams 2002:1159). In order to completely understand Patanjali it is crucial to develop an understanding the concept of samadhi within the YS according to Kesarcodi-Watson. He argues that “samadhi most literally means, ‘together (or, same)-joining (or, bringing).’ It refers to the ‘oneness’ we must attain to know the true-nature of anything” (1982:79). Chapple and Viraj agree, translating samadhi as “absorption” or “putting together”, citing the two roots sam (together) and dha (to place) which combine to form the word (1990:41). Monier-Williams actually lists and translates dharmamegha as a specific phrase. It is, he says, “a particular Samadhi” and mentions that it is one “of the 10 Bhumis” of the Buddhists. He makes no mention of it in relation to the YS, even though it was a text known to him (2002:511).

**Discerning the elements of Sankhya within the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali.**

Of the six Indian astika darsana there are clearly close links between the Yoga and the Sankhya darsanas. The two terms are often used together, as if reflecting two sides of the same coin; Sankhya as theory, Yoga as praxis. For example, in the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita (BG) Krishna exhorts his warrior disciple Arjuna to fight in the forthcoming fratricidal (and therefore potentially adhar mic) battle which is about to be waged at Kurukshetra in order to maintain and uphold dharma. Krishna outlines to Arjuna the theory of the immortal atman and tells His disciple that to fight would
enhance Arjuna’s reputation, whereas to flee would only bring shame upon the warrior. Arjuna remains, at this point, undecided. Krishna persists, and in BG 2.39 he tells Arjuna:

\[ \textit{esa te’bhihita samkhye, buddhir yoge tvimamsrnu} \]

“This wisdom has [now] been revealed to you in theory; Listen now to how it should be practised” (Zaehner 1973:139).

The clear implication here is that Sankhya is the theoretical underpinning of Yoga. Sankhya, meaning “enumeration” or “discriminating” (Monier-Williams 2002:1199), “appears to be a very ancient school of thought” (Ranganathan 2008:44) with “roots that date from the time of the Upanishads and [that] are important in the Mahabharata (especially the Gita)” (Doniger 2009:505). In the MB Sankhya-Yoga is repeatedly referred to and the terms often seem synonymous. Since the oldest parts of the MB are acknowledged to have been extant by 400 BCE (Brockington 1998:26), it is safe to assume that the linking of Sankhya and Yoga was a standard convention by the time Patanjali authored the YS, and “codified yogic practices that had been in place for centuries” (Doniger 2009:505). The Sankhya darsana also has origins that can be traced back to the Charaka Samhita, an ancient Indian medical treatise, written around 300 BCE (Dasgupta 1997:213-217). Sankhya was once a “widely influential school to judge from references to it in the Mahabharata and kindred literature” (Hiriyanna 2005:267), unlike today where Vedantic thought tends to dominate philosophical matters in India. The Sankhya school is said to have been founded by the sage Kapila but there is no evidence to prove or disprove that texts attributed to him, the Sankhya Pravacanana Sutra and the Tattvasamasa, were actually composed by him. Kapila cannot be easily or accurately dated, but if he existed it would seem that he lived around 500 BCE.

The canonical text of the Sankhya darsana is the Sankhya Karika (SK) of Isvarakrishna, written sometime early in the common era, perhaps around the third century CE (Doniger 2009:505). In the SK Isvarakrishna tells us that he belongs to an unbroken tradition of succession from Kapila, but this claim cannot be authenticated. Currently the YS is widely regarded as the canonical work of the Yoga darsana, but there are many other works on Yoga, both earlier and later than the YS, which could be considered equally authoritative. It is highly likely that the YS preceded the SK by several centuries. In the YS it is clear that Patanjali did “make great use of the dualism of Sankhya,” taking his “basic cosmology, and some of his metaphysics” from the
Sankhya darsana, but this “was not his only inspiration” (Ranganathan 2008:44-45). There are also Vedic, Jain, and Buddhist elements in the YS. There may also be influences from unknown sramana (ascetic renunciation) traditions that have added elements to Patanjali’s darsana. Certainly Sankhya “undergirds Patanjali’s arguments (especially sutra-s 2.15-27)” (Chapple 1998:150), with Yoga borrowing “to a large extent its ontology and epistemology from the allied system of Sankhya” (Rukmani 1989:196). However simply

“to foist, as many have done, this radical dualistic perspective – one that has been inherited from interpretations of Classical Samkhya – onto Patanjali’s system results in a parochialization and trivialization of Classical Yoga, marginalizing its importance and reducing its overall integrity as one of the six major orthodox Hindu darsanas” (Whicher 1998[a]:291).

However the “distinctly Sankhya idea, that persons are absolutely passive spectators and that all activity in life is a function of Nature” (Ranganathan 2008:45), is not apparent in Patanjali, where we see demonstrated that the philosophy of “Yoga, in contradistinction to the Samkhya teachings, recommends the active approach” (Jakubczak 1999:177), for individuals. The active role of agents in Patanjali has positive outcomes when ascending towards liberation as, according “to the Patanjala Sankhya theory, dharma (merit) can only be said to accrue from those actions which lead to man’s salvation; and adharma (demerit), from the quite opposite course of conduct” (Dasgupta 1989:73). Here Dasgupta uses dharma to indicate the merit derived from an action, rather than the morally-infused action that Ranganathan would have us believe is the characteristic of the liberated yogi.

Rather than seeing the Sankhya and Yoga darsana as compatible yet mutually distinct, it might be advantageous to see Patanjali’s YS as a work of pre-SK Sankhya. There are certainly elements of “proto-Sankhya or Sankhya in the making” in the epics (Hiriyanna 2005:106) and it seems entirely reasonable that many versions of Sankhya existed before its eventual codification by Isvarakrishna. One key noticeable feature in the development of the Sankhya darsana is that the early “Sankhya philosophers argued that god may or may not exist but is not needed to explain the universe; later Sankhya philosophers assumed that god does not exist” (Doniger 2009:505). According to this criterion Patanjali could be offering us a style of early Sankhya since in the YS (1.23, 1.24, and 2.1, 2.32, 2.45) he makes reference to Isvara, the Lord. Some modern scholars, such as Ranganathan, acknowledge the existence of elements of Sankhya
within the YS but then often tend to fixate on reasons why the YS should not be seen as a work of Sankhya, due to discrepancies between the YS and the SK. Rather than acknowledging areas of philosophical evolution, this line of argument assumes that there existed an unchanging, fixed Sankhya philosophy for many centuries before Isvarakrishna codified it in the SK. We know that the Sankhya doctrine predates Patanjali, and since we can confidently assume that Isvarakrishna wrote the SK, the canonical work of Sankhya, some centuries after Patanjali, we might argue that the YS represents an authentic, but pre-Isvarakrishna, version of Sankhya. Perhaps the YS describes one amongst many competing expositions of Sankhya. Indeed Dasgupta repeatedly refers to the “Patanjala Sankhya” and the YS is often referred to as the Patanjali Sankhya Pravacanana (1989:66, 69, and passim). No text exists within a vacuum. We might agree that the “originality of Patanjali within the Indian tradition begins with the manner in which he blends and synthesises the various traditions he draws from” (Ranganathan 2008:59) but we must also acknowledge that all texts draw on other earlier as well as contemporary sources. There is nothing original or unique in blending other people’s ideas to formulate your own ontological system. Not to do so would be impossible. There are a number of key logical problems within the philosophy of the Yoga darsana and therefore propose that yoga should be taken more “as a discipline to be followed rather than to be understood intellectually” (Rukmani 1997:623). Perhaps Patanjali and Vyasa, (remembering that this title seems to have been given to any great typical compiler or author” (Monier-Williams 2002:1035) synthesised what they considered the best of the traditions available to them. Bronkhorst (1984:209) suggests that the text of the YS was composed by the author of the accompanying Yogabhāsya, Vyasa with the bhasya containing the comments and background notes of the individual who compiled the YS. Bronkhorst however argues that there are some mistakes in the organisation and ordering of the sutra-s that lead to interruptions in the flow of the text.

One might also question whether the YS could always legitimately claim to be the canonical work of the Yoga darsana. Patanjali is almost universally assumed by most modern day MPY enthusiasts and teachers, both in Indian and the west, to present the quintessential exposition of ‘Classical Yoga’. This of course assumes that at some historical time there existed a form of praxis that we can label as ‘Classical Yoga’. The YS is then used, as previously noted, to legitimise and authenticate a whole range of practices and beliefs, many of which are not included or even hinted at within the text of
the YS. The YS has therefore come to symbolise and authenticate contemporary yoga practice in its myriad of forms. “It is by no means self-evident, as many modern practitioners assume, that the YS has always been the ultimate authority on the practice of yoga, nor indeed that Classical Yoga has ever really constituted a distinct practice lineage in its own right” (Singleton 2008:78). It is arguable that the idea of the YS as both the philosophical underpinning of the Yoga darsana and as a practice manual is a late modern idea, as “among mid-nineteenth century orthodox Benares Pandits, Patanjala Yoga was simply not a living philosophical system” (ibid:80). Certainly many yoga traditions, such as the Saivite sects, have their own body of texts and do not rely on Patanjali for authentication of their practices and beliefs. And many of these yoga traditions were being practiced in mid-nineteenth century Benares, totally decoupled from the legitimisation and authority of Patanjali. Yoga practice has a rich and diverse history which draws from a variety of sources, written and oral. It seems unrealistic that a text written almost two thousand years ago is, or ever could be, universally accepted by all yoga practitioners as authoritative as there “exist uncountable ‘popular’ forms of yoga, which are not systematized, and there are also non-Brahman yogas” (Eliade 1976:10). Perhaps, as Singleton suggests, the prominence of the YS is more a reflection of modern Orientalist scholarship and of Vivekananda’s visit to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 than it is of historical longevity. “It seems clear that the particular status enjoyed by the YS in the modern age itself derives greatly from various endorsements of the text’s authority by early modern translators and scholars on the one hand and by Vivekananda himself on the other” (Singleton 2008:80).

Within the text of the YS there are undoubtedly many strands of Sankhya philosophy alongside ideas drawn from other intellectual traditions that were prominent at the time of composition. Ranganathan diminishes the influences of other traditions on Patanjali when we writes that “Patanjali wrote a distinct text called the ‘Yoga Sutra’” and not a “text titled Sankhya Sutra or Yoga of Advaita Vedanta.” This version of events plays down the importance that Sankhya and other darsana play in Patanjali’s text. Vyasa clearly uses the term Patanjala Sankhya Pravacana when referring to the YS. Contrary to Ranganathan, Dasgupta clearly believes the YS to be a particular Sankhya school of philosophy, calling it the “Patanjala Sankhya doctrine” (1989:71). The term dharmamegha is not one that is used by Isvarakrishna in the SK. Neither is it a term that is used in other works, such as the BG or the MB that draw close associations between
Sankhya and Yoga. We will therefore need to look for evidence to see whether dharmamegha samadhi is a term that is used in other texts and traditions.

**Other textual references to dharmamegha samadhi**

The term dharmamegha samadhi does occur within texts other than the YS and its commentaries. Two astika texts mention the term and several nastika (non-orthodox) Buddhist texts use the term. When looking for references to dharmamegha in Hindu and Buddhist sources

“Western scholars of Indian literature, not restricted by traditional Indian orthodoxies, and not bound by the astika-nastika exclusivism, quite early pointed out that the Yogasutra and Buddhist texts on meditation had rather much in common. It became one of the major points of scholarly debate whether Buddhism borrowed from Yoga or Yoga from Buddhism. Apart from that controversy, their study focussed on verbal expressions common to Buddhist texts and the Yogasutras” Klostermaier (1986:254).

Awareness of the usage of dharmamegha outside the YS can help us to develop a fuller picture of the possible meanings of the term within Patanjali. We can then try to establish links between the various Indian philosophies and acknowledge the debt that the various traditions owe each other. As Klostermaier has pointed out “in spite of some polemics against some Buddhist schools, both the terminology and the underlying philosophy of the Yogasutra suggest close connections” between the two schools even though Yoga is astika and Buddhism nastika (1984:205). For Sectarian practitioners this inter-relatedness is sometimes difficult to acknowledge, but nothing exists within a vacuum. Buddhism in its initial phases was largely a reworking of existing yoga techniques. It drew from, and developed alongside, multiple forms of yoga praxis in India, many of which may be unknown. By the time of the composition of the YS Buddhism had become powerful politically, culturally and intellectually in India. Whilst the YS has very close links ontologically to Sankhya “it is highly probable that in his metaphysics of time” and in certain other areas, “Patanjali was directly inspired by the high-powered speculations of the Sautantrika Buddhists” (Feuerstein 1982:95). Indeed there is a strong Buddhist essence that runs throughout many areas of the YS.

Klostermaier states that he knows only one astika work outside the YS that mentions dharmamegha samadhi; Vidyaranya’s Pancadası (VP). In VP 1.60 dharmamegha samadhi is described as the highest stage to be reached in yoga. The dharmamegha is
“that condition in which the mind gradually abandons the notion of meditator and meditation (dhyaatrhdhyane parityajya) and is merged in the object of meditation (dhyeyaikagocaram).” In the state of samadhi the mind is likened to a steady flame of a lamp in a well-sheltered place (nivatidipavat cittam). BG 6.19 is used in support of this idea. Achieving this dharmamegha samadhi destroys all of the karma accumulated by the yogi over innumerable lives and allows the “growth of pure dharma (suddho dharma vivardhate).” Additionally the text tells us that the experts in yoga call this samadhi dharmamegha because it pours “forth countless showers of the nectar of dharma (varsaty esa yato dharmamrtadharas sahasrasah).” The net of vasana (unconscious dispositions) is destroyed and all karma (accumulated impressions), whether meritorious or non-meritorious (punyapapakhye karman) is destroyed (Klostermaier 1986:253-4). This description sounds very similar to the YS’s description of dharmamegha in YS 4.26ff where Patanjali proposes that, in the state of dharmamegha, the samskaras cease to function and the yogi remains in an uninterrupted state of absorption. As the VP can be dated to the 14th century CE it is clearly drawing on, and making use of ideas expressed by Patanjali.

Building on Klostermaier’s work Feuerstein points out that the dharmamegha samadhi is “also defined (in similar ways) in the Adhyatma Upanisad (38) and the Paingala Upanisad (3.5)” (1987:342). The Adhyatma Upanisad (AU) explains the purity of the soul and talks about the relationship between humans and Lord Brahma as well as the power of the Lord. It “is the Seventy-third among the 108 Upanisads and forms part of the Sukla-yajur-veda, after dealing with the exposition of the real form of the innermost Atman of all beings, it ends with the description of the eternal verity of the character of Narayana” (Ayyangar 1941:12). The AU is very similar in wording and essence to the VP. It states:

“By (the practice of) this (Samadhi), the crores of Karmas, accumulated through the beginningless cycle of births in this world, meet with dissolution and pure Dharma increasingly thrives. The most exalted knowers of Yoga call this Samadhi, the Dharma-megha, for the reason that it rains, in thousands, showers of the nectar of Dharma. (37, 38)

“When the hosts of Vasana-s (previous impressions) have been completely dissolved through this (Samadhi) and the accumulated Karmas, known as Punya (virtuous) and Papa (sinful), uprooted root and branch, what secret lay hidden in the Vedic Text before, manifests (itself) as Sat, (existence), rid of all obscurity, and the direct knowledge (of the Atman) is generated, as of the fruit of the myrobalan placed on the palm of the hand” (39,40)” (Ayyangar 1941:21).
Meanwhile the *Paingala Upanisad (PU)*, which also belongs to the *Sukla Yajur Veda* (Radhakrishnan 2008:901), is in the form of a dialogue between Yajnavalkya and his pupil Paingala. It discusses meditation, the nature of the world and the nature of release of the soul. *PU* (3.5) contains the following line:

\[ \text{tato'yoga-vittamah samadhim dharma-megham prahuh} \]

“Therefore the adept in yoga call this highest enlightenment ‘the cloud of virtue’” (Radhakrishnan 2008:915-6).

Radhakrishnan footnotes the term *dharmamegha*, stating that “the realised soul is virtuous by nature” (ibid). There is no mention however of what specific virtues the realised soul actually has. It is difficult to date either the *AU* or the *PU*. Radhakrishnan notes that Sankara (circa 788-820 CE) refers to the *PU* in his *Brahma Sutra Bhasya*, which would date it, like most *Upanisads*, as being extant before the eighth century (ibid:21). It is therefore slightly more challenging to chronologically place this text in relationship to Patanjali and to determine any relationship which might exist. It is reasonable to assume that both the *AU* and the *PU* were composed after Patanjali. They are therefore either drawing on his ideas or reiterating ideas about a concept that was well known by yoga practitioners of the period. Link the *YS* the *AU* and the *PU* refer to the *dharmamegha* as the pinnacle of the yogic experience but they shed little light on the technical meaning of the *dharmamegha*.

From these brief references we get an overall impression of *dharmamegha samadhi*. *Karma*, whether black, white or grey, is destroyed and the yogi becomes established in a field (in the scientific sense) of pure *dharma* or virtue. We are no clearer as to what constitutes the field of pure *dharma* however. Is it, in the positive sense, the uplifting of the yogi to a point of moral perfection as Ranganathan would have us believe, or is it something else? What is the *dharma* that the yogi holds? If *dharma* is, as Ranganathan believes, a synonym of morality, what are the characteristics of this moral perfection? It can be argued that ideas pertaining to morality are specific to culture, time and place and that there are no underlying ideas or activities that are purely and intrinsically moral. Below we shall see how Ranganathan uses the *yama* rules (*YS* 2.30, 31) as an expression of a universal and timeless morality. This is, I will argue, a questionable assumption. We are aware that, negatively, *dharmamegha samadhi* is a state where the residual seeds of *karma* and *vasana* have been destroyed, but this describes only what is not there. The *YS* does not offer a description of what it actually feels like to be in the

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dharmamegha state. Since the interplay of the guna-s, the idea that characterises normal existence, has ceased, it is possible to conclude that the experience of the yogi in the dharmamegha is the exact opposite of everyday life.

If our limited Hindu sources, all of which are highly Vedantic in leaning, cannot help us, perhaps casting our net wider to include Buddhist texts will allow us to flesh out our understanding of dharmamegha. This is covered in detail in Klostermaier who cites the work of a number of other scholars. I shall give a brief overview of Klostermaier’s work (Full references are available in Klostermaier 1986). Louis de la Vallee Poussin’s Le Boudhisme et le Yoga de Patanjali, written in the 1930s points to a parallelism between “YS IV, 26 ff and the Buddhist systematization of bhumis (stages) which the bodhisattva has to master.” Additionally Emile Senart wondered if the dharmamegha of yoga was merely a synonym of the “ambrosia of law” that a bodhisattva experiences at the highest level. The German J.W. Hauer’s pioneering study Der Yoga als Heilsweg contains the line “Dieser Ausdruck stammt aus dem Buddhismus”, literally “this term (dharmamegha samadhi) is drawn directly from the Buddhists.” Hauer clearly assumes that the YS is using a late Buddhist term and also using it in its Buddhist sense, which he takes to mean “the sustaining primeval power of the universe.” This is supported by the Dasabhumikasutra, a Mahayana Buddhist text which, according to P.L. Vaidya, “occupies a position of paramount importance in the Mahayana system of thought.” Here dharmamegha is explicitly mentioned as the last bhumi (stage), and other late texts, which extensively enumerate the stages of progress of the Bodhisattva.” Klostermaier (1986:255) develops these ideas when he writes that

“modern interpreters, Indian as well as non-Indian, while recognizing the Buddhist flavor (sic) of an expression like dharmamegha, and being – on the whole – quite open to the mutuality of influences between early Buddhism and early forms of Yoga, have not – as far as I can see – actually tried to utilize Buddhist texts to throw some light on this strange term and the stage of development of the yogin it describes.”

The Buddhist sources cited by Klostermaier, and there are many, list a number of stages that an aspirant must pass through, but “neither the number of bhumis nor their names are uniform in the various Mahayana texts which deal with the ascent of the bodhisattva” (1986:259). This, in itself, is not so important. Various texts within the same Indian traditions often contain minor deviations of form and content yet retain canonical status. For example, Patanjali proposes the astanga (eight-part) path of yoga (YS 2.28ff): yama (restraint), niyama (observances), asana (postures), pranayama
(control of breath), *pratyahara* (withdrawal), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and *samadhi* (absorption) (Chapple and Viraj 1990:69). The *Maitri Upanisad* (*MU* 6.18) describes a *sadanga* (seven-limbed) yoga practice comprising *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dhyana*, *dharana*, *tarka* and *samadhi*. *Tarka*, contemplative inquiry, replaces *asana* as an *anga*. The *MU* contains “material from different periods.”

There are links to the *Taittiriya*, one of the earliest *Upanisads*, but the “main body of it appears much later, and includes references to astronomical ideas that were probably not current until the second century CE” (Roebuck 2003:XXV). *Yama* and *niyama* which Patanjali includes as *angas* are omitted. The *YS* lists five *yama* and five *niyama*. In contrast the much later *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (*HYP*), authored by Swatmarama around the 14-15th century CE, describes ten *yama* and ten *niyama*, but does not list them as specific *yoganga*-s (*HYP* 1.17-18). If we then turn to the *Gheranda Samhita* (*GS*) (circa 16th century CE) we find the *saptasadhanam satkarma*, a list of the seven acts of yoga, *asana*, *mudra*, *pratyahara*, *pranayama*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* (*GS* 1.9-11). Despite the differences outlined above between Patanjali, Swatmarama, Gheranda and the *MU* all are still accepted as authoritative by yoga practitioners.

Klostermaier has examined the Buddhist literature for *dharmamegha* references and surveyed the work of other scholars working on Buddhist texts. He concludes that neither the number of *bhumis* nor their names are uniform in the various Mahayana texts which deal with the ascent of the *bodhisattva*. Seven *bhumis* are listed in Asanga’s *Yogacarabhumi*. The highest is called *Nisthagamana* and is compared by Nalinaksa Dutt, the editor of the text, with *dharmamegha*. D. Seyfort Ruegg mentions a text in which *dharmamegha* is listed as the eleventh stage, just before the twelfth and final one. Candrakirti’s *Madhyamakavatara* attempts to fit the *paramitas* (perfections) in with the ten *bhumis*: “the tenth bhumi – Dharmamegha – is taken to be the Buddhabhumi, though complete Buddhahood is still far off.” The *Lalitavistara* describes how “the gods persuade the Bodhisattva residing in the Tusita heaven to descend to earth again – in which the motive of the rain-cloud and the cessation of afflictions are brought together with the coming of the Buddha.” The *Madhyanasutralathakra* describes *dharmamegha* as the highest *bhumi* by those who are about to reach complete *mukti* (liberation), where the *karmas* are completely known after they have ceased to be an obstacle. H. V. Guenther, refers to a Tibetan work which enumerates the ten *bhumis*, naming the last as ‘Cloud of Dharma’ (*dharmamegha*) which “extinguishes the raging fire of all kinds of instability.” (Full references are available in Klostermaier 1986).

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So where does that leave us? The Hindu references to dharmamegha above offer little to work with. They are relatively obscure and, to my knowledge, only have recently authored commentaries. Additionally they appear to all postdate Patanjali. I am inclined to believe that dharmamegha seems to be a term used to describe an advanced state where klesa (afflictions) and karma have both ceased to trouble the yogi. The “use of the term dharmamegha samadhi in YS IV, 29 does not appear to be arbitrary or purely technical in the sense that Patanjali could have chosen another term, as a quark could well be known by any other name” (Klostermaier 1986:260). The yogi appears to be residing on the very cusp of kaivalyam or Buddhahood. Rain is therefore an apt metaphor as it “extinguishes fire, washes away impurities, and provides a necessary condition for growth” (ibid). Here however, Klostermaier offers a significant difference between the yogi and the Buddhist. We have accepted that the distinction between “dharmamegha samadhi and the kaivalya of Yoga, or between bodhisattvahood and Buddhahood at the stage of dharmamegha of Buddhism, is virtually imperceptible” (ibid). This state, however it is framed, implies a disinterested flow of discriminative insight (viveka). However a key distinction exists. The Buddhist bodhisattva will forego heaven and instead rain down the dharma on those still afflicted by the klesa-s and by karma. Dharmamegha here represents “the state of the bodhisattva who is ready to enter nirvana but no longer strives for it, instead spontaneously bestowing the blessing of insight on others” (Collins (2009:70). According to the YS, the effects of dharmamegha, exist for the individual yogi alone. However, whether bodhisattva or yogi, dharmamegha samadhi represents “ideal forms of culture” (ibid), a utopia ideal that offers a truly “authentic culture” (ibid). The essence of which is gaining “insight into the true nature of purusa and prakrti” (ibid).

Types of Samadhi within the Yoga Sutra: Samprajnata and Asamprajnata

If we are going to examine the role of dharmamegha samadhi within the YS we should be aware of how Patanjali discusses samadhi within the YS text. Following the precedent set by Vyasa most interpretations of the YS agree that two different types of samadhi are outlined by Patanjali in YS 1.17 and 1.18. They are samprajnata (samadhi with consciousness) and asamprajnata (super-conscious samadhi).
“Samprajnata [arises] from association with discursive thought, reflection, bliss, and I-am-ness.

“The other (state) has samskara only and is preceded by practice and intention of cessation” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:40).

Ranganthan translates this as:

“The cognitive state focusing on the single object (for example, the person) can be brought about by logical analysis, introspective inquiry, bliss or the keen awareness of individuality.
“The other (state of) abiding is preceded by a condition of cessation, in which only the stores of residual imprints remain” (Ranganathan 2008:91, 92).

The distinction between the two states mentioned in YS 1.17,18 is seemingly clear. The state called *samprajnata* has four elements to its experience: *vitarka* (discursive thought), *vicara* (reflection), *ananda* (bliss), and *asmita* (I-am-ness). Patanjali implies that any one of the four elements outlined in YS 1.17 can produce the *samprajnata* state. In the *samprajnata* stage the mind develops *prajna*, discriminative knowledge, but that *prajna* is not deep seated and “occasionally the phenomenal states of consciousness are seen to intervene” (Dasgupta 1989:102). *Prajna* as well as “the high-level discriminative vision (also called prasamkhya in the texts) is the fruit of *samprajnata-samadhi*” (Whicher 1998[a]:283-5). This is gained by the constant orientation towards cessation (*cittavrttinirodhah, YS 1.2*) gained in the *samprajnata* state. In the early stages of correct practice the yogi enters the *samprajnata* state and *prajna* dawns but the yogi is still using one of the four seeds (*bijas*) of *vitarka-vicara-ananda-asmita* in order to achieve the state of cessation. The “ethical problem of the Patanjala philosophy is the uprooting of *avidya* by the attainment of true knowledge of the nature of the *purusa*” (Dasgupta 1989:101). By constant practice of abiding in the *samprajnata* state the yogi slowly destroys *avidya* and overcomes the need to have seeds to establish the mind in cessation and the flow of *prajna* becomes constant. YS 2.1, 2, which states that

\[
\text{tapah-svadhyaya-isvara-pranidhanani kriya-yogah}
\text{samadhi-bhavana-arthah klesa-tanu-karana-arthas ca}
\]

“Austerity, self-study, and dedication to Isvara are kriya-yoga.
“[It is] for the purposes of cultivating samadhi and attenuating the afflictions” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:57).

The five afflictions (*klesa-s*) to be attenuated are outlined in YS 2.3, 4. *Avidya*, delusion or lack of wisdom, is the main affliction that confronts individuals. This *avidya* is the
origin of all of the other afflictions; asmita (a sense of I-am-ness), raga (attraction), dvesa (aversion), and abhinivesah (the desire for continuity). All practice by the yogi must therefore be directed towards the uprooting of avidya (non-wisdom) as “the uprooting of the avidya, with its vasana-s, directly follows the attainment of true knowledge called prajna, in which the state the seed of false knowledge is altogether burnt and cannot be revived again” (Dasgupta 1989:101). This then is asamprajnata, the other stage. Here the yogi is established in knowledge without the need for external seeds and this stage is often thought to be synonymous with dharmamegha.

It is the refinement of samprajnata samadhi which leads to asamprajnata samadhi. The “process of ‘cessation’ (nirodha) deepens from cognitive (samprajnata) (YS 1.17) samadhi into supracognitive (asamprajnata) samadhi where it can be said that the seer abides in its own form/intrinsic identity (tada drstuh svarupe ‘vastanam)” (Whicher 1998[a]:283-5). The resting of the seer in its own form or intrinsic identity results from cittavrtti nirodhah (YS 1.2), the cessation of the mental modifications. “The other (state)” of YS 1.18 is, following the precedent set by Vyasa, is asamprajnata samadhi. It is characterised by the presence of samskara; what Ranganathan calls “residual imprints”, alone. In the asamprajnata state only the residual imprints, the samskara toward samadhi produced by spending considerable time in the samprajnata state, remain. Asamprajnata samadhi is a more refined samadhi state brought about by spending considerable time in, and following directly from, samprajnata samadhi.

What then is the relationship between samprajnata samadhi, asamprajnata samadhi, dharmamegha samadhi and kaivalyam, the isolation denoting the end of the yogic journey? Is asamprajnata samadhi the stage before dharmamegha samadhi or are the terms synonymous? Perhaps confusion about the specific states being examined is certain since dharmamegha and asamprajnata are amongst the 11 terms “introduced by Vyasa very early under the second sutra of Samadhipada” and they are “being used more or less in the same sense” (Rukmani 1997:619). The practice of samadhi “leads directly to kaivalya. It (samadhi) is divided into a lower and a higher form known respectively as samprajnata and asamprajnata samadhi. The latter is the goal, the former serving but as a stepping-stone to it” (Hiriyanna 2005:296). This simple bifurcation into a lower and higher form of samadhi holds a myriad of more subtle layers as “there are many stages in samprajnata and asamprajnata samadhi-s” (Rukmani 1997:614) and the yogi will oscillate between them until their practice is
firmly grounded. Using the imagery of the yogi passing through a raincloud, Taimni says that after becoming firmly established in samadhi the “passage through the Dharma-Megha-Samadhi completes the evolutionary cycle of the individual and by destroying Avidya, completely and for ever, brings about the end of Samyoga of Purusa and Prakrti” (1986:433).

This view is reinforced by Watson who believes that “a-samprajnata can only refer to kaivalya-expressing samadhi, the oneness also called, dharmameghasamadhi,” which Taimni correctly interprets to mean, ‘oneness devoid of all thingness (dharma)-befogging (megha)” (1982:87). This view is also supported by Whicher (1998[a]:283-5) “dharmamegha-samadhi is more or less a synonym of asamprajnata-samadhi and can even be understood as the consummate phase of the awakening disclosed in enstasy, the final step on the long and arduous yogic journey to authentic identity and ‘aloneness.’” This aloneness is kaivalyam, mentioned in the final sutra of the YS as the culmination of the yogic process. However it is only by becoming permanently established in the prasamkhyana state (discriminative discernment) that “there arises the ‘cloud of dharma’ samadhi” (Whicher 1998[a]:283-5) and aloneness (kaivalya) follows as the result. Dharmamegha samadhi is also seen to follow from the awakening of vivekakhyatti (discriminative discernment) and “presupposes that the yogin has cultivated higher dispassion (para-vairagya) – the means to the enstatic consciousness realized in asamprajnata-samadhi” (ibid). This is the precursor to aloneness. For Taimni there is a clear distinction between the asamprajnata state and kaivalyam and the dividing line is the entering and passing through the dharmamegha state. Before passing through dharmamegha, the raincloud of dharma, there exists for Taimni the possibility of the yogi’s purusa falling backwards out of the asamprajnata stage, leaving the samadhi state completely, and becoming re-ennmeshed in maya (illusion) and samsara (conditioned existence). It is only after passing through the dharmamegha stage that “the process is irreversible” and thereafter it “is not possible for the Purusa to fall again into the realm of Maya from which he has obtained Liberation” (1986:433). “The borderline between the dharmamegha samadhi and the kaivalya of Yoga ...is virtually imperceptible: it is only a question of fulfilment of a process, which from then on has only one direction” (Klostermaier 1986:260). Indeed Ranganathan supports this view when he says that dharmamegha samadhi is the event that changes the yogi into someone who is no longer a practitioner but instead has accomplished the very goal of yoga, the kaivalyam state. There is apparently no “practice of yoga after the
“dharmameghasamadhi.” The cessation of the practice of yoga is because the “dharmameghasamadhi liberates the yogi” and allows him to rest in kaivalyam permanently (2008:301).

Samadhi is also explained by Patanjali (YS 1.46 and 1.51) as having two other characteristics, a simple and straightforward division into sabija and nirbija (with and without a seed). These terms are again, more or less synonyms for samprajnata and asamprajnata. There are eight sabija samadhi-s “plus one other possibility” (Watson 1982:8), the possibility of seedless samadhi. All samadhi-s with “articulable views” of the Self portray the Self as “some manner of object” and are “in other words, samprajnata. As such, they cannot truly be of me” (ibid). The difference between samprajnata and asamprajnata samadhi “lies in the presence or absence of a Pratyaya in the field of consciousness”, a pratyaya being a “technical word used in Yoga to denote the total content of the mind … using the mind in its widest possible sense” (Taimni 1986:34). If there is a pratyaya, or seed, the “direction of the consciousness is from the centre outwards” (ibid). This is samadhi with a seed, sabija. So, if samprajnata or sabija samadhi are not the full experience, since traces of the Self remain, “the only possible kind of understanding, hence of knowing-oneness, of me, the unmitigated self, must be at once nirbija and a-samprajnata. If I can effect this, I then have effected dharmameghasamadhi, that ‘oneness lacking in all thingness-befogging’” (Watson 1982:89). If the samadhi is asamprajnata, and hence without a seed (nirbija), “there is nothing to draw the consciousness outwards” (Taimni 1986:34). At this point the seer must rest in its own true nature (YS 1.2-4), rather than taking the forms of the mental fluctuations and this is kaivalyam, the final form of asamprajnata samadhi, where “the buddhi is thus concentrated on the self, it vanishes once for all, leaving the purusa apart and alone” (Hiriyanna 2005: 296).

From the reading of YS 1.17,18 and Vyasa’s bhasya there is both an historical precedent and a convention that samprajnata and asamprajnata are samadhi states. Ranganathan acknowledges that he gives “special place to the classical Sanskrit commentary of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras by Vyasa” (2008:28). However, in this instance, he seems quite willing to dismiss the Vyasa’s ideas. Ranganathan completely rejects the ideas that samprajnata and asamprajnata are samadhi states. He translates samprajnata as “cognitive trance” (2008:91) and distinguishes it from samadhi, the “liberating states of absorption” (ibid: passim). Ranganathan refutes the generally held opinion of most
commentators that *samprajnata* and *asamprajnata* are *samadhi* states. Firstly he points out that Patanjali does not directly refer to *samprajnata* or *asamprajnata* as *samadhi* states. We are usually “obliged to understand Patanjali as intending the full range of meanings associated with a word” (ibid:91) and despite what Vyasa says we should, in this case, ignore the convention that *samprajnata* and *asamprajnata* are *samadhi*-s for two clear reasons. Firstly Ranganathan argues that Patanjali is “very critical of intellectual reasoning” (ibid) and therefore because *vitarka* (logical argument) is mentioned as being present in relation to *samprajnata* it cannot be a *samadhi* state. Ranganathan draws our attention to YS 1.47 to support this argument. His translation might be said to be rather embellished, hence I have contrasted his translation with that of Chapple and Viraj.

*nirvicara*-vaisaradya’dhyatma-prasadah

“The skilled, clear intellect that eschews (discursive) inquiry has the disposition of tranquility and good humour belonging to the real self” (Ranganathan 2008:122).

“In skill with *nirvicara*, clarity of authentic self arises.” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:20).

Additionally Ranganathan believes that Patanjali clearly distinguishes between *samadhi* and states of bliss, a spiritual ‘buzz’. He mentions that YS 3.3 draws a clear distinction between true absorption (*samadhi*) and bliss.

*tad-evarthamatra-nirbhasamsvarupasunya-ivasa-madhih*

“Its only purpose is the singular radiance that reveals one’s nature (or essences in general) and nothing else – on the way to this goal comes the liberating state of absorption (*samadhi*)” (Ranganathan 2008:213).

“When the purpose alone shines forth as if empty of own form, that indeed is samadhi” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:24).

I remain unconvinced by Ranganathan’s argument here. His refutation of the views held by the overwhelming majority of scholars and practitioners alike since the time of the Vyasa seem insubstantial and the *sutra*-s he draws our attention to do not seem to particularly support or add weight to his views, despite his somewhat elaborate translations. Ranganathan is clear that many translations of the *YS* “are produced by yogic practitioners, whose primary concern is not historical or philosophical (or historical) accuracy” yet he seems at this point to be falling into the same trap by rejecting the precedent of Vyasa (2008:24).
Ranganathan’s basic argument is that dharmamegha samadhi is the pinnacle of the yogic experience, but that it is not directly linked to or synonymous with the asamprajnata samadhi state. As we saw above, Whicher has pointed out that dharmamegha samadhi seem to be a refinement of the samadhi state of asamprajnata. 

YS 4.26-29 would seem to support this. Here Patanjali explains that although the mind is directed towards kaivalyam at the later stages of the yogic process breaks still arise in the intention towards cessation due to the existence of residual samskara. It is by the eventual cessation of the samskaras that the mind can rest, uninterrupted, in the state of dharmamegha samadhi, an extension of the asamprajnata samadhi. Vyasa would seem to support this. His bhasya on YS 4.29 states that “due to the dwindling away of the seeds (samskara) of subliminal- impressions, other thoughts do not arise. Then he attains the ‘samadhi’ known as ‘dharmamegha’” (Rukmani 1989:120).

**Patanjali’s use of dharma in other contexts in the Yoga Sutra**

If we are seeking to understand the term dharmamegha samadhi an investigation into Patanjali’s usage of the term dharma in other contexts within the YS is necessary. The word dharma appears in four sutra-s (YS 3.13, 3.14, 3.46, 4.12) outside of YS 4.29, the dharmamegha samadhi sutra. (Note: YS 3.46 appears as 3.45 in certain editions of the YS, such as Chapple and Viraj, which omit sutra 3.20 and thus have only 195 sutra-s). Patanjali tells us (YS 3.13,14) that:

_Etena bhuta-indriyesu dharma-laksana-avastha-parinama vyakhyatah_  
_Santoditavyapadesya-dharmanupati dharma_

“By this the property, character, and condition-transformations in the elements and the sense-organs are also explained.  
“The substratum is that in which the properties – latent, active or unmanifest – inhere” (Taimni 1986:301-304).

There are three parinama-s, or types of transformations, that relate to the sense organs. These parinama-s are dharma, transformation of the property or essential nature of the element, laksana, transformations of the character or definition of the element, and avastha, transformation of the condition of the element. Mastery over these three parinama-s, gained by intense and prolonged sadhana (spiritual practice), allow the yogi to control or manipulate natural phenomena. This mastery then allows the yogi to “exercise extraordinary powers which are called Siddhis” (Taimni (1986:301). A
description and exploration of these siddhi-s forms the main subject of the YS’s third pada. YS 2.18 explains how the action of the bhuta-s, the five fundamental elements which make up all matter, on the indriya-s, the five human senses, leads to sensual perception. The specifics of this theory of perception need not detain us here. What is clear however is that it is the action of the bhuta-s on the physical and chemical properties of matter which “make us see colours, hear sounds and produce the innumerable sensations which form the raw material of our mental life” (ibid:302) and that the bhuta-s, by their action on the indriya-s, “produce all kinds of sensuous perceptions” (ibid). It is the properties of the bhuta-s, in their totality, which “are called Dharma in the present context” (ibid:302). Indeed the appearance is called “the dharma (the attribute) and that particular arrangement of atoms or guna-s which is the basis of the particular appearance is called the dharmin (the substance)” (Dasgupta 1989:60) and the “basic medium or repository of all properties is called Dharmi in the next Sutra [YS3.14]” (Taimni 1986:302). Dharmi is clearly identified as a collective noun for the “basic medium in which all properties have become latent and the Dharmi is present in a perfectly quiescent state” (ibid). This dharmin has no moral or ethical component for Taimni or Dasgupta, it is merely a technical word denoting the collection of all properties, a basic and underlying substratum and this substratum “which is the root of all properties is none other than Prakrti” (ibid). Dharmi, in the masculine, nominative singular form, means the “holder of dharma” being composed of the word dharma plus the Sanskrit possessive suffix “in”, (Chapple and Viraj 1990:85-6), where dharma means “nature, character, essential quality” (ibid). Dasgupta states that the state of prakrti is one in which “the gunas perfectly overpower each other and the characteristics (dharma) and the characterised (dharmin) are one and the same” (1989:36). He then goes on and describes the relationship between the dharma and the dharmin extensively (ibid:62ff). The dharmin, as the substance, is something that remains constant whereas the dharma refers to its present quality or appearance. He uses the metaphor of a piece of earth. The piece of earth can appear in multiple forms, as dust, as a lump or as a piece of pottery. The earth is a common characteristic of all of these forms whether they are latent (santa), current (udita), or unpredictable (avyapadesya, the potential future states). The earth element is a constant (dharmin) but its appearance changes due to time and potential. The change is referred to as dharmaparinama.

Taylor-Rugman: Dharmamegha Samadhi in the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali. 30
Rather than following the convention that dharma and dharmin refer to the essential nature of an object Ranganathan focuses on what he sees as the inherent moral elements of these terms. In both YS 3.13 and 3.14 he translates dharma as meaning “moral, ethical, virtue, evaluatable [sic] characteristic or principle” (2008:223-4). In YS 3.14 he translates dharmi as “that which does good by something else, that which upholds it, substance, fundamental character” (ibid). He believes that the “yogi not only understands the particular marks of sensory objects, but also their generic moral character” (ibid), and this generic moral character can be “understood as referring to the guna-s that characterize objects of sensory perception” (ibid). This means that the ultimate aim of Nature is to allow the yogi the “appreciation of the moral significance of objects and events.” This is something that I find problematic in two ways. Firstly, Ranganathan’s translation of dharma and dharmi is confusing. He continually, unceasingly and unerringly, insists on dharma having a moral or ethical element in each and every context and allows no wider meaning for the words. He does not specifically link dharmi to its root dharma as Chapple has done, nor does he acknowledge the word’s polyvalent meanings. To me, Ranganathan appears to be reading his morality-focused interpretation into the text, rather than allowing the YS to convey its own message. If dharma has a moral element then dharmi, its possessive form, must have a moral element too. Ranganathan’s translation of dharmi as “that which does good by something else” is vague and forced. The second potential problem here is Ranganathan’s idea that everything in Nature has a generic moral character linked to the theory of the guna-s. Patanjali (YS 2.15-26) outlines his theory of the operation of the guna-s. From YS 2.15 we learn that

parinama-tapa-samskara-dukhhair guna-vrtti-virodhac ca duhkham eva sarvam vivkinah

“For the discriminating one, all is dissatisfaction, due to the conflict of the fluctuations of the gunas and by the dissatisfaction due to parinama, sorrow, and samskara” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:62-63).

This dissatisfaction can be avoided however. Its cause is the union of the seer with the seen. As we were told in YS 1.2-3 if we achieve citta-vrtti-nirodhah, the cessation of the mental fluctuations, the link between the seer and the seen will be severed and the seer will rest in its own true nature (tada drasstuh sva rupe’vasthanam). YS 2.18 tells us that the purpose of the guna-s is twofold, to give the purusa experiences but also to allow liberation, called here apavarga. We are also told in YS 2.26, that
viveka-khyatir aviplava hanopayah.

“The means of escape is unfaltering discriminative discernment” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:67-68).

“The uninterrupted practice of the awareness of the Real is the means of dispersion (of Avidya)” (Taimni 1986:200).

At no point here is there any mention of the generic moral character of the world or of Nature. The means of escape is “unfaltering discriminative discernment” of the Real from the non-Real, not moral perfection. Having the discernment to discriminate between purusa and prakrti, between avidya (ignorance) and prajnata (knowledge), and between the parinama of the guna-s are the marks of this viveka or discrimination. The guna-s exist to provide the playing field on which the yogi may find kaivalyam, but there is no mention here that the gunic field has any inherent characteristics other than those of prakasa (light), kriya (activity) and sthiti (remaining inert) (Chapple and Viraj 1990) as Patanjali (YS 2.18) denotes the three forms of the guna-s which are more commonly denoted as sattva, rajas and tamas (light, activity and inertia). No other commentator or translator I could find emphasises, as Ranganathan does, the guna-s as having a specifically moral element. Nature exists to allow the yogi to achieve kaivalyam, but objects do not have to have a generic moral character as Ranganathan insists. Ranganathan mentions (2008:154) that in YS 2.18 that the term sila is used.

prakasa-kriya-sthiti-silam bhutendriyatmakam bhogapavargarthaṁ drṣyaṁ

“The seen has the qualities of light, activity, and inertia, consists of the elements and the senses, and has the purposes of experience and liberation” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:64).

“Luminosity, action and stillness are the morally praiseworthy conduct of the elements constituting the nature of things seen. Their purpose (in existing) is to provide edifying experiences for the sensory apparatus and thus facilitate liberation of the purusa” (Ranganathan 2008:153).

Sila is translated as “quality, character, nature” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:64) and as “habit, custom, usage” (Monier-Williams 2002:1079). Ranganathan (2008:153) goes further with his translation and sees sila as denoting “social morality, conduct, good behaviour, principle of conduct.” Certainly Monier-Williams suggests that in the MB the term sila is used to denote morality and he then goes on to link sila with the Buddhist paramitas (perfections). Here I would argue that Ranganathan seems to be
erring into a selective reading of the *YS*. Again he seems to be reading his theory, that the whole of the Patanjalian project is centred on the moral perfection of the yogi, into the text rather than allowing the *YS* to speak for itself.

As we have seen above a jug will be made of the *dharmin* or substance of earth and will contain a combination of the three elements of the *guna*-s in that state. I find it difficult to see how my water-carrying vessel has an inherent and active ethical role to play in my life. Ranganathan seems to be arguing that Nature is teleologically geared to allowing *purusa*-s to understand their true form. Using teleological in its wider sense, it might imply that the wider goal of Nature is to assist the *purusa* in achieving its goal of *kaivalyam*. He has to carefully translate *YS* 2.21 in order to maintain this line of argument. He tells us that

\[ \text{tad-artha eva drsyasyatma} \]

“The only purpose of what is seen is (to serve) the self” (Ranganathan 2008:157).

The addition of “to serve” in parentheses gives the impression in Ranganathan’s translation that Nature actively facilitates the *purusa* in the pursuit of *kaivalyam*. Indeed in his commentary on this *sutra* he adds that “Nature is goal-directed” and that the “goal of Nature is to help *purusa*-s gain liberation.” I would argue that this overstates the case. From *YS* 2.18 we learn that *prakrti*, the seen, has two functions, to provide experience and liberation for the *purusa*. There is no implication that the seen is actually doing anything, it is merely the field of play in which experience and liberation occur. The seen is not actively working towards the liberation of the individual *purusa*; Nature is not “goal directed” as Ranganathan insists. The seen merely exists as the stage on which the drama unfolds as Vyasa points out in *YS* 3.13 where he states that “the action of the gunas consists in ceaseless activity. The nature of the gunas is said to be the reason for the activity of the gunas” (Rukmani 1987:22).

The commentary on *YS* 3.13 is the longest exegesis by Vyasa of any *sutra* in the *YS*. This implies that this *sutra* is at the very heart of the yoga hermeneutic. Throughout the *bhasya* there is no mention of the *dharma* or *dharmin* having a moral or ethical component. Indeed translating *dharma* and *dharmin* as meaning moral within the *bhasya* would render the commentary meaningless. Moving forward, *YS* 4.12 states

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Taylor-Rugman: *Dharmamegha Samadhi in the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali*. 33
Atitianagatam svarupato‘sty adhva-bhedad dharmanam.

“The past and the future exist in their own (real) form. The difference of Dharmas or properties is on account of the difference of paths” (Taimni 1986:403).

Ranganathan tells us that that dharma, a term he translates as “moral character”, “might be Patanjali’s way of referring to the guna-s, which are each ethical qualities working in unison to bring about the liberations of persons” (2008:283, my italics). Writing at length about the relationship between the dharma and the dhamin Dasgupta (1989) at no point mentions or even hints at dharma having any kind of moral element. We are told by Ranganathan that “Nature moves closer to its morally praiseworthy goal of liberating persons” (2008:283) yet there seems to be a contradiction here. Ranganathan believes that “Patanjali regards liberation to be a direct result of the effort that persons put into the practice of yoga, geared as it is to moral perfection” (ibid). When critiquing Advaita Vedanta and Sankhya Ranganathan states that “in both systems, ethics, or dharma, does not directly lead to liberation, but at best to more favourable circumstances, such as birth in heavenly regions” (ibid). Indeed “morality can be a distraction from liberation” (ibid) in the Advaita Vedanta system of Sankara in stark opposition to Patanjali view that “dharma, or ethics, is essential to the achievement of liberation for all” (ibid). So is the individual yogi working towards liberation, or does Nature and the guna-s also have a moral role to play? It is usually thought that the guna-s exist in their varying quantities and qualities in all things but are essentially passive in the role of the yogi’s liberation.

Ranganathan’s translation of YS 2.23 implies that the yogi can use Nature as the backdrop on which to achieve liberation.

sva-svami-saktyoh svarupopalabdhi-hetuh samyogah

“The reason for the conjunction of (persons with Nature) is (to grant persons) the powers to be their own spiritual masters and to apprehend their own form” (Ranganathan 2008:159).

It also breaks away from the usual convention that insists that a yogi cannot become established in kaivalyam without the assistance and guidance of a guru. It does not imply that Nature has any role in the actual work towards liberation. Therefore, why is Nature and the guna-s ethical or moral? If “Prakrti is the state of the equilibrium of the gunas” they can in no way “be of any use to the purusa” which is generally held to be
eternal, as “all other states are held to be non-eternal as they are produced for the sake of the *purusa*” to experience life (Dasgupta 1989:36).

The “path taken by the course of events, if we analyse it carefully, is nothing else than a particular series of phenomena in a particular order, each element of this series, in its turn, being nothing more than a particular combination of properties or *Dharmas* which are all inherent in *Prakriti*” (Taimni 1986:405). The *dharma*-s referred to here are amoral properties or characteristics. Taimni’s assertion that the path taken by a course of events is just a sequence of phenomena infers that the moral element is in the reaction of the yogic practitioner to external circumstances, rather than the circumstances themselves having an inherent moral component. In effect, it’s not what happens but how you react that matters. And, as we all know, various individuals, due to their unique conditioning (*samskara* and *vasana*), will react quite differently to the same set of circumstances. One man’s meat is another man’s poison. The reaction to events is where the morality is apparent, but it is the morality of the individual that will become clear, rather than events and objects having an inherent moral element to them.

In the second half of the third *pada* of the *YS* there is a description of many of the *siddhi*-s (powers) that a yogi can acquire via *samyama*, the practice of *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi*. Ultimately the yogi can gain mastery over the *pancabhuta*-s, the five essential elemental materials of which the world is comprised. *YS* 3.46 describes the culmination of these *siddhi*-s.

```tatah-anima-adi-pradurbhavah kaya-sampat tad-dharma-anabhigatas ca
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“From these arise powers such as the ability to become as small as an atom, and to manifest a perfect body. These (powers) can help a yogi lead an ethical life, free from disturbances” (Ranganathan 2008:254).

“Hence the appearance of minuteness and so forth, perfection of the body, and unassailability of its *dharma*” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:100).

The “unassailability of its *dharma*” refers to the yogi’s ability to maintain a particular embodiment without the normal limits imposed by his experience of the elements” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:100). This is completely in keeping with the idea that *dharman*dharmin represents the essential natural elements of a physical thing. Since the “whole of the phenomenal world is a play of the *Panca-bhuta*” mastery of the five elements will naturally lead to the yogi “becoming one with the Divine Consciousness”
and this alignment will allow the yogi to exercise “Divine powers” (Taimni 1986:358). Taimni here highlights that this is in accord with the Vedantic idea that “verily, all is Brahman” (ibid). The earth does not resist the working of the yogi’s body and there is a distinct hint here that the yogi will know the essential nature of any object he comes into contact with. Ranganathan adds that the yogi can now “carry on their practice according to dharma or ethics” (2008:254). Since at this stage the yogi seems to be working with rtam (accordance to the cosmic order), one might question if this means ethics, but we shall leave that for the time being.

Is Dharma used as a synonym for morality within the Yoga Sutras?

As mentioned earlier the polyvalent meanings of dharma present us with many challenges when translating the YS. Is dharma used within the YS as a synonym for morality as Ranganathan suggests? In most of the modern day Western countries a division, of differing levels of subtlety, exists between church and state. As a result one can detect lines of separation between morality, as a philosophical question, and religion. There exists “in the West a rather narrow view of what is ethics or ethical, based on roughly mingling utilitarianism and traditional Judaeo-Christian values” (Sutton 2000:293). Various philosophical movements, such as Humanism and Consequentialism, have developed secular moral frameworks outside of the context of religion. Indeed the argument that religion is, or should be, the sole source for morality has been seen as highly questionable by many in the West since at least the times of Socrates (469-399 BCE). Statistics often suggest that Christians in the West behave less morally than atheists. For example an January 8, 2000 article in the Denver Post, cited statistics that show that members of U.S.-based religious groups were more likely to divorce, a practice forbidden in all but the most extreme circumstances by the Bible, than atheists. The division between morality and religion was less evident in previous eras and it is possible to argue that this separation did not exist at all in some pre-industrial societies. The division is still not as evident in some societies today, for instance in much of the Islamic world. In India at the time of the MB we know that no rigid distinction was “observed between secular and spiritual spheres of life” and that it was believed that “society should be structured and governed in accordance with divinely ordained regulations” (Sutton 2000:57). Historically the term dharma appears to functions a synonym for religion as well as for morality in the Indian subcontinent. And all religion, in this sense, can be seen to pertain to morality. Dharma is not just a
way of behaving. It is not just a law. It is not just morality. *Dharma* is a subtle combination of all of these things and more. In the *MB* we are repeatedly told that “dharmasukhsmah”, *dharma* is subtle. From the polygamous marriage of the five Pandava brothers to Draupadi, to the disrobing of Draupadi by the Kaurava Duhsasana, and the battlefield antics of Krishna, the epic again and again reminds us that to act correctly, effectively “with *dharma*”, is subtle and open to various and often contradictory interpretations. This ambiguity presents individuals, as moral agents, with difficult choices. To act *dharmically* is not just to accept the existing rules but also to interpret those rules in relation to the situation that the moral agent finds themselves in.

“Time and again when a character finds that every available moral choice is the wrong choice, or when one of the good guys does something obviously very wrong, he will mutter or be told, ‘Dharma is subtle’ (*sukshma*), thin and slippery as a fine silk sari, elusive as a will-o’-the-wisp, internally inconsistent as well as disguised, hidden, masked” (Doniger 2009:278).

The idea that *dharmamegha samadhi* is the “Rain Cloud of Morality Liberating State of Absorption” (Ranganathan 2008:299) gives the clear implication that at this stage of the individual yoga practitioner’s development there is a perfection of morality within the yogi and that leads to liberation. There appears here to be the assumption by Ranganathan that there is a universal, all-encompassing *dharma* or morality to which all people, at all times, subscribe, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary in the *MB*, which clearly sees the shifting, circumstantial nature of what is *dharmic* and *adharma*, often dependent upon one’s *svadharma* (personal obligations to society).

Ranganathan refers to the *yama* rules (*YS* 2.29ff), which he translates as “moral conduct” (2008:165), contained in the *YS*. These *yama* rules, also referred to as the *mahavrata*-s (great vows) are, according to Ranganathan’s translation of Patanjali (*YS* 2.31) universal in application.

*jati-desa-kala-samayanavacchinnah sarva-bhauma mahavrataṁ*

“This Great Duty (adherence to the *yama* rules) is to be followed throughout the world, irrespective of station at birth, country or place, time or custom” (Ranganathan 2008:169).

According to Ranganathan translation there is no question in Patanjali’s mind that all people can adhere to these *yama* rules regardless of race, culture or time. But given that Patanjali lived around 2,000 years ago, in a period of limited travel, how much authority to inclusiveness can this statement about the universality of the *yama* rules claim? It is highly unlikely that Patanjali knew the customs and habits of peoples outside of his...
immediate geographical area, so his ability to see if these yama rules held sway cross-culturally, “throughout the world” as Ranganathan phrases it, is remote. It is unlikely that Patanjali had any cross-cultural anthropological knowledge. Even if Patanjali is claiming that the yama rules are all encompassing he is making assumptions based on his own, extremely limited, knowledge. There is an Indian historical precedent for the idea of a general, universal of dharma within India. The famous Indian Emperor Ashoka (ca. 304-232 BCE) tried to “define a dharma that could be all things to all men, a dharmadhama so general (sadharana, ‘held in common’), so perpetual (sanatana) that it applied to all right-thinking people always, transcending the differences between the various sects” (Doniger 2009:285). To what extent he succeeded in establishing this perpetual, general dharma over his subjects is debatable and his influence certainly seems to rapidly wane with his death. Depending upon how you translate the Sanskrit a rather different emphasis can be drawn from YS 2.31 however.

“When not limited by life-state, place, time, or circumstances in all occasions [these constitute] the great vow” (Chapple and Viraj 1990:22).

This translation seems is far more in keeping with the yogic message espoused by Krishna contained in the BG about what is dharmic and adharmic. It is reasonable to argue that the BG was known to the author of the YS. In the BG Krishna urges His disciple Anjuna to fight in the fratricidal war at Kurukshetra. Anjuna is told by his guru/charioteer that not to fight would be adharmic. In this case Krishna is clearly saying that the practice of yoga, characterised by nishkama karma (action without desire), is compatible with the undertaking of one’s svadharma (personal duty), proscribed by one’s situation at birth within the jati and varna systems.

“Krishna’s declaration to Arjuna in the Gita that ‘it is better to do your own duty poorly than another’s well’ (echoed in Manu [10.97]) ignored the fact that Arjuna’s own duty as a warrior would forever doom him to relative inferiority vis-a-vis Brahmins whose sva-dharma just happened to conform with the universal dharma that dictated nonviolence” (Doniger 2009:287).

Patanjali may well be arguing for a universal yama system to be adopted by all yoga practitioners, but we can see clearly that texts written contemporaneously with the YS clearly suggest that this was not a universally held view by all yoga philosophers, teachers and practitioners. The BG is revolutionary in its statement that yoga can be
practiced by householders whereas Patanjali’s intended audience is unclear. It is reasonable to infer that Patanjali described and proscribed the *yama* rules for those practicing Yoga exclusively. It is impossible to say definitively whether or not he intended the *yama* rules to be applied by those not undertaking Yoga practice. The *sutra* style with its minimum amount of words makes it difficult to accurately assess exactly what Patanjali means here. Taimni (1961:218-220) lays a lot of emphasis on these *mahavrata* but it would appear from his commentary on *YS* 2.30–31 that he sees the *yama* vows as being pertinent to the practitioner of yoga alone and that these vows do not, necessarily, extend to wider society. They are therefore specific, not universal and general. These *yama* and *niyama* rules and the *brahmavihara*-s of *YS* 1.33 are perhaps specifically forms of yoga practice that are best viewed as “accessories for cleaning the mind” (Dasgupta 1989:119) of their existing *samskaras* rather than as tools to live successfully within society. These disciplines “represent the mental endeavours to cleanse the mind and to make it fit for the proper manifestation of sraddha, etc., and thus to steady it towards attaining the true discriminative knowledge” (ibid:120). It is this discriminative knowledge which characterises the *dharmamegha*. Ranganathan is not alone in suggesting that the *sadhana* (spiritual journey) of the yoga practitioner is a morally infused one. Whicher (1998[a]:287) argues that the “yogin’s spiritual journey – far from being an ‘amoral process’ is a highly moral process” but he balances this view by accepting that personal morality can be quite different from a societal ethic. The idea of the universality of morality in Indian society as supposed by Ranganathan is a questionable assumption. With no central religious authority such as the Roman Catholic Vatican, no universally accepted texts, and no universally agreed points of dogma, Indian society and its religious practices have always tended towards the local and the immediate community rather than the universal. “One of the basic arguments of modern Western moral philosophers, especially since Kant, has been that a sound moral system must be universally applicable in order to be worthy of the name” (Dhand 202:347). But does this extend to India? I believe that we can challenge Ranganathan’s assertion that the *mahavrata*-s extend to include everyone in all circumstances as viewing Indian texts through Western-tainted spectacles.

Morality, from the Latin *mores*, refers to the customs and habits of a group and has both descriptive and proscriptive qualities. It is usually used interchangeably with ethics and ethical, from the ancient Greek *ethos*. Any specific group, at a particular place and time,
have a set of commonly held beliefs and customs which evolve over time. Morality is never fixed. Glucklich, discussing Indian morality of the Epic period, points out that

“there are rules against shooting someone – even an enemy – in the back. And there are rules for Brahmins against sinning – at the cost of losing one's caste and funeral rites. But both the ancient and the modern heroes were locked on the horns of ethical dilemmas they could solve only tentatively. How can a modern ethicist move from the specific rules of dharmic conduct to more general principles of justification, both in order to resolve ethical conflicts and to understand the basic moral values of Indian society?” (1999:463).

Rama, the hero of the Ramayana, is seen throughout India as the great champion of dharma in its most general meaning. Rama sought the assistance of the monkey army of Kishkindha whilst searching for his wife Sita when she had been kidnapped by Ravana. Rama made a pact with Sugriva, the usurper to the throne of Kishkindha. He promised to kill the rightful monkey king Vali and allow Sugriva to rule. Sugriva engaged Vali in battle and, at an opportune moment, Rama shot Vali in the back with an arrow. As Glucklich points out above, there are rules against this sort of thing. And there are also rules about killing kings. Yet however adharmically Rama acts when he kills Vali, the end of regaining his wife Sita is seen dharmically to justify the means. Even though a huge body of dharmasastra-s exists that are theoretically concerned with the role of dharma in everyday life “Hindu moral ideals, universal and particular, are encoded into the personalities of epic characters, and I believe that it is by focusing here that any discussion of Hindu ethical theory will bear its most fruitful results” (Dhand 2002:369).

We must be careful not to look at aspects of South Asian texts “in isolation from the ethical frameworks in which they are embedded” (Hibberts 1999:457) as there can obviously be differences in the understanding of what it means to take seriously “indigenous theoretical frameworks on ethical topics produced by the traditions themselves” (ibid:438). We can only accurately examine ethical frameworks within their cultural and historical context. What is ethical and moral in one epoch may be totally unethical in another time and place.

Ranganathan believes that the “common problem with translations of Indian philosophy is that they fail to retain the moral philosophical significance of the Indian philosophical tradition” (2008:2) and this results in the “marginalization of the ethical or moral content of Indian philosophy” (ibid:3). He attributes this marginalization to Western colonial and cultural imperialism and this has led, he argues to the situation where ethics is seen by Western academics to be “poorly represented in the history of Indian
philosophy” a view that is “historically wrong” (ibid:4). But is this really the case? “There is no ready equivalent in Hindu discourse to the Western theological and philosophical discipline of ‘moral philosophy’” (Johnson 2009: entry under ‘ethics’). However this should not obscure the fact that

“ethics in the more general sense – how individuals and societies as a whole should behave in relation to each other, and in relation to the power or powers that are thought to govern life, time, and the universe – are, of course, as essential to Hindu traditions as they are to all other cultures” (ibid).

Within the Hindu literature “the formal discussion of principles and rules governing correct behaviour is most obvious in the dharma literature” (ibid). Johnson and Dhand may see different genres of Indian texts as the best source for examining ethics and morality in Hinduism, but neither suggests that philosophical works from the six āstika darsana or the various nastika darsana are major factors. To see a pseudo-Christian, all encompassing morality or dharma within a particular Indian text or set of texts, as Ranganathan seems to be doing with the YS, is often to do the text in question a disservice. It is also a view that has been foisted onto indigenous Indian systems of thought as

“the question of to what extent, dharma represents a system of universal as opposed to particular, or context-bound values (sadharana-dharma vs varnasrama-dharma) has exercised various Neo-Hindu in the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in the face of challenges from Protestant Christian missionaries who claimed to have access to the uniquely saving truth” (ibid).

The very idea of a universal, Christian-style, dharma is variously challenged within the Indian traditions. The practices of Tantra, for instance, operate within a different contextual and sociological framework to other Indian traditions.

Vamacarin-s (left-handed Tantrics) use the panchamakara, the five M substances, in their sadhana. These are the consumption of madya (wine), mamsa (meat), matsya (fish), mudra ( parched grain), and the undertaking of maithuna, (ritualised sexual intercourse). The panchamakara are seen as highly adharmic by the wider Hindu tradition. They are however only utilised in particular circumstances and by specific people. The actions of Tantric-s, people who consider themselves and are considered by others as yogis, is not supported by the interpretation of dharma as being universal. It is clearly context that makes an act moral or immoral, dharmaic or adharmic. The yogi, regardless of his tradition “is said to be attached to neither virtue nor non-virtue, and is
no longer oriented within the egological patterns of thought as in the epistemically
distorted condition of *samyoga*” or normal day-to-day contact with material,
conditioned existence (Whicher 1998[a]:287). When discussing the *dharmamegha* stage
the *YS* tells us that the *samskara*-s have been burnt away, implying that the yogi is
acting spontaneously, rather than from a position of conditioning. We might then
conclude that normal, human conventions or morals will not apply to the yogi at this
stage, but this burning away of the *samskara*-s

“does not mean, as some scholars have misleadingly concluded, that the spiritual
adept or yogin is free to commit immoral acts, or that the yogin is motivated by
selfish concerns. Actions must not only be executed in the spirit of unselfishness
(i.e., sacrifice) or detachment, they must also be ethically sound, reasonable, and
justifiable. If action were wholly contingent upon one’s mood or frame of mind,
it would constitute a legitimate pretext for immoral conduct” (ibid).

We have examined the usage of *dharmamegha samadhi* in a variety of other texts and
been largely unable to reach a satisfactory conclusion about the term’s deeper meaning.
In the *YS dharma* seems to be used in a specific, qualified manner. “The appearance is
called the *dharma* (the attribute) and that particular arrangement of atoms or *gunas*
which is the basis of the particular appearance is called the *dharmin* (the substance).
The change of appearance is, therefore, called the *dharmaparinama* (change of
attributes)” (Dasgupta 1989:60). If we imagine some earth, we can see it as being in a
variety of forms: as dust, as a lump of mud and as a jug. The essential ‘earth’ is the
same (*dharmin*) but it undergoes changes in quality called *dharmapar*inama. Its present
form and quality, its *dharma*, has the potential for future states to exist. This view is
supported by the majority of other scholars. For example, Taimni, when examining *YS*
3.13, 14, 45 and 4.12 and 29 (1986:301, 304, 403, 431) translates *dharma* as ‘property’
or ‘properties’. There is no mention or indication of *dharma* having any ethical or moral
component in this text. He supports Dasgupta’s view that *dharma* is used in a special,
technical, philosophical sense within the *YS* rather than in a more vernacular sense. The
various properties or *dharma*-s are “all inherent in *Prakrti*” (ibid:405) and are “nothing
but different combinations of the three primary *Gunas*” (ibid:408). It is the action of the
*bhuta*-s (the elements) and the effect this action produces on the *indriya*-s (sense
organs) that produce sensuous perceptions, and “these properties in their totality are
called *Dharma* in the present context” (ibid:302).

Ranganathan would initially seem to agree with this view when he says that “if one
wishes to translate philosophy, one must acquire an institutional knowledge of the

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textual features of philosophy.” He adds that although philosophers present “different theories in philosophical texts … what remains constant is the criterion that connects the use of … key philosophical terms with the theories that they are used to articulate and debate” (2008:13). In other words, thinkers from various, sometimes contradictory, traditions might disagree about how to interpret phenomena, but the meanings and definitions that they individually ascribe to words remain constant so that informed debate on key issues rather than on semantics can take place. Indian philosophers, Ranganathan assures us, “did use ‘dharma’ to articulate theories that they chose for their social implications” and this “generality holds across the board among Indian philosophical schools” (ibid:14). Additionally, Ranganathan reassures us that dharma “in all its variegated uses in Indian philosophy, is the correlate of ‘ethical’ or ‘moral’” (ibid:21) and that yoga practice in the YS is geared “to moral perfection” (ibid:23). This view can clearly be disputed however from a reading of texts from other darsana. Dhand (202:348) points out that “we know that Hinduism involves dharma.” He then asks the pertinent questions “does it also do ethics?” and “Are dharma and ethics the same thing? How are they similar and how different? What are the points of convergence and difference between the two?” He goes on to argue that philosophical inquiry into Hindu ethics is a modern activity and adds that in India as a whole there was no interest in systematic discussions of ethics per se.

There is a scholarly consensus that no one, single English term adequately expresses the subtleness and polyvalence of the meaning of dharma. Ethics is, according to Dhand (202:347), a “Western term, developed as a discipline in Western philosophy” and a range of assumptions are embedded in its use. Dhand goes on to argue that “one of the concerns of Western moral philosophy, at least as far back as the Stoics but particularly in modern times has been to has been to identify universal principles upon which systems of ethics may be based” (ibid:348). The implication of this is that the general is preferred to the particular and the specific. Systems which are more encompassing and inclusive are therefore, according to this idea, better. Ethics and morality concern themselves with two key questions “What we ought to do? and “Why we ought to do it?” (Perrett 1998:1). Ethical theories therefore present us with two essential components, “a theory of the Right and a theory of the Good” (ibid). In the West various thinkers have come up with answers to these questions that are universal to all moral agents and apply to their relationships with other moral agents. In India “schools such as Samkhya and Yoga ... are in agreement about what constitutes the good: moksa,
‘freedom’, ‘liberation’, ‘release’” (Dhand 2002:350). The source of moral codes for these schools is the same: the Vedas. Philosophical arguments are therefore held within the parameters of a religious, Vedly-inspired backdrop and are “orientated towards moksa” (ibid) however that is specifically described by the darsana in question.

Western philosophers tend to speak about moral agents as being equal within society and examine rules that are universally applicable to all agents at all times. Indian thought places more emphasis upon the moral agent’s wider identity within the society; one is not simply a moral agent, a person, but rather must fit into an “idealized system of class and life stage (varna-ashrama-dharma)” (Doniger 2009:29). An individual is a member of a community, a varna, and is living at one of the four stages of life (ashrama). That moral agent therefore has duties incumbent upon them relative to their stage of life and situation. Indian dharma rules are therefore contextual not general. The dharma duties that are prescribed for a male Brahmana student during the brahmachari-ashrama will be quite different for those described when he enters the grihasta-ashrama or householder stage. And a kshatriya will have different duties again. “Implicit in this understanding of the moral agent is the contention that codes of conduct are not generalizable to all human beings. An act that may be very wrong for one person in a given situation may be quite defensible for another person” (ibid:352).

Codes of behaviour are relative to the right time, the right place and only for the correct amount of time.

These differences between the constitution, and therefore the duties, of a moral agent are explained via the theory of the three guna-s. Differences in the ratios of the guna-s within each individual moral agent at any particular time determine which particular dharma-s are applicable to that moral agent and therefore varying codes of moral conduct are expected and accepted.

If we accept that the “true principle of Yoga is the setting of the mind on one truth, principle or object” (Dasgupta 1989:110) then we can see, by examining the YS that this one truth is discriminative knowledge. Therefore the “yogangas not only remove the impurities of the mind but help the mind by removing obstacles to attain the highest perfection of discriminate knowledge” (ibid:117). We can then see that in the fourth and final YS chapter, the Kaivalya-Pada, “‘aloneness’ (kaivalya) is said to ensue upon the attainment of dharmamegha-samadhi, the ‘cloud of dharma’ samadhi. This samadhi follows from the discriminative discernment (vivekakhyata) and is the precursor to
‘aloneness’” Whicher (1998[a]:284). When this knowledge dawns we see the “rise of dharmamegha,” whereby “the succession of the changes of the mental states is over” (ibid). At this point the yogi reaches a state of “absolute freedom when the gunas return to the pradhana, their primal cause” (Dasgupta 1989:103). The limbs of Yoga, the yoganga-s “help the maturity of the yogic process by gradually increasing the lustre of knowledge. They represent the means by which even an ordinary mind (viksiptacitta) may gradually purify the mind and make it fit for the highest ideals of Yoga” (ibid:114).

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the meaning of the term dharmamegha samadhi within the YS and attempted to establish a clear and precise translation of term. Building off this I have explored Ranganathan’s hypothesis that dharma functions as an exact synonym of the English term morality and that the entire yoga project outlined in the YS is geared towards the moral perfection of the yogic practitioner characterised in the dharmamegha samadhi stage. Patanjali mainly draws his ontology and epistemology from Sankhya and despite differences to the later canonical SK I believe we should view the YS as Patanjala Sankhya; an elaboration of Sankhya described by Patanjali.

Given the current scholarship it is challenging to arrive at a satisfactory understanding of the dharmamegha state of consciousness. I see three key reasons for this. Firstly, the bias towards the first half of the YS means that limited scholarship exists on dharmamegha samadhi. Secondly, it is unclear whether dharmamegha is a synonym for asamprajnata samadhi or exists as an intermediate state between asamprajnata and kaivalyam. Vyasa’s bhasya states that when the “seeds of subliminal-impressions” have dwindled and that other thoughts no longer arise, that the yogi is in a state of “discriminative-discrimennt” and is free of desires (Rukmani 1989:121). Vyasa does not directly link the dharmamegha state to being either the end of samprajnata and hence the asamprajnata state. Neither does he indicate that dharmamegha is a stage above asamprajnata. The YS and the bhasya are inconclusive and are open to a variety of interpretations. In YS 1.2 Vyasa’s bhasya indicates that asamprajnata and dharmamegha are two of a multitude of terms referring to the same state of consciousness. “It is difficult to reconcile the technically precise requirements that all things be restrained (nirodha) with the more poetic proclamations of cloud of dharma samadhi” and to decide whether these two things are “competing goals or different
descriptions of the same experience” Chapple and Viraj (1990:11). Patanjali has “purposefully presented an artful array of possibilities” whereby techniques “coexist in complementarity, not competition” (ibid:15). The aim of the yogic project is clearly stated to be cittavrttinirodah, the cessation of the mental modifications (YS 1.2). Above that, the precise technical details become confusing. This argues against Ranganathan’s claim that moral perfection is the YS’s cornerstone. Thirdly, the limited use of dharmamegha makes it difficult to construct a meaningful cross-textual understanding the state it refers to. The Upanisads mirror Patanjali, describing how in the dharmamegha state the karma-s and samskara-s are extinguished and that dharma rains down. The characteristics of this dharma are uncertain. Dharmamegha is used widely by Buddhists in connection with the bhumi-s but these references do not help us gain greater clarity. I believe that we are too removed from Patanjali in time to conclusively arrive at a full understanding of the dharmamegha and the consciousness it describes. Patanjali uses dharma it in its philosophical, technical meaning, denoting the essence or combination of gunic qualities within an entity throughout the YS. Extending this definition of dharma to the dharmamegha is possible, but this does not seem to adequately express the full meaning of the dharmamegha samadhi state.

I believe the dharmamegha state is an extension of the asamprajnata state where all of the residual habitual tendencies (samskara-s) have been destroyed. The asamprajnata state alluded to in YS 1.17-18 seems to leave the yogi in the position of still having stores of samskara-s remaining. Vyasa’s bhasya would indicate that even the samskara-s are burned up in the dharmamegha state. It would therefore appear that, as Whicher argues, dharmamegha is a more refined form of asamprajnata which directly precedes kaivalyam. Taimni supports this when he says that on entering the dharmamegha state the yogi is like a “pilot in an aeroplane who comes out of a cloud bank into the bright sunlight and begins to see everything clearly” (1986:433). Surely this is the moment when the seer of YS 1.3 is resting in his true nature and that “Dharma-Megha-Samadhi, therefore, means the final Samadhi in which the Yogi shakes himself free from the world of Dharmas which obscure reality like a cloud.” Ranganathan opposes most scholarship in denying that samprajnata and asamprajnata are samadhi states, but I feel that his reasoning here is unconvincing.

The usage of dharma in the YS leads me to believe that the word is used in its philosophical technical sense where dharmi is the collection of all properties within an
object. Dharma describes the essential nature of a thing. YS 1.3 tells us that when the mind is stilled the seer rests in its true nature. Translating dharma to mean true nature, untainted by samskara and vasana, seems to make sense. It seems likely that the purusa’s true nature would be free of arbitrary, societal constraints rather than morally perfected. When Hamlet tells Rosencrantz that “there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison” (Hamlet, Act 2, scene 2, 239–251) he expresses the idea that our conditioning or thinking is responsible for our interpretation of events. When the seer is resting in its true nature the samskara-s or conditioned modes of thinking have been eliminated and the yogi clearly sees action and inaction for what they are. This is clearly indicated in the BG, a text almost certainly known to Patanjali. In BG 4.18 Krishna tells Anjuna that “He who perceives inaction in action, And action in inaction, Is wise among men; He is a yogi and performs all action.” Krishna then adds that (BG 4.19) this yogi has “consumed his karma in the fire of knowledge, Him the wise men call a sage” (Sargeant 1994). This sounds very similar to the ideas of Patanjali about dharmamegha; a stage where the karma-s are no longer operating and a state where action takes place, but in an manner untainted by previous conditioning.

Ranganathan’s assertion that dharma is consistently used in the YS as a synonym of morality and that the entire yogic process is one that results in the moral perfection of the practitioner is, to me, highly problematic. Ranganathan unequivocally insists that all Indian philosophy contains a moral element. He is constantly seeking to establish the validity and worth of Indian philosophy in comparison to Western philosophy, almost at the expense of overlooking India’s unique cultural heritage and contribution.

“The installation of the YS as the Classical Yoga text in the modern age is bound up with several dialectically interlinked, ideological currents. These include colonial transition projects intended to inculcate the critical habits and values of European philosophy in Indian minds via Hindu scripture and subsequent reclaims of these texts by Indian cultural nationalists seeking to identify and interpret the definitive canon of modern Hinduism” (Singleton 2008:77).

I believe that Ranganathan’s work displays many of these features. His hypothesis rests on too many unsupported assumptions and he produces no conclusive evidence to support his claims. There appears to be no equivalent Sanskrit term to adequately express Western notions of morality and ethics within classical Indian philosophy. These terms, and many more, come under the broader banner of dharma within Indian

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thought. It is not that Indian thought does not do ethics and morality, it just does it differently. I have demonstrated this idea of philosophy being both universal and generalised is a characteristic of Western, not Indian, forms of philosophy. The work of Dhand and others clearly demonstrates that even today modes of behaviour within India are not seen as universals but are delineated and proscribed by one’s individual situation at any given time. In his introduction Ranganathan argues that “one of the most serious problems affecting contemporary scholarship on Indian philosophy is the marginalization of the ethical or moral content of Indian philosophy” (2008:3). Ranganathan privileging ideas gleaned from Western philosophy, most notably the notion of the universality of ethical and moral norms above a closer examination of Indian philosophy which, I would argue, clearly proposes moral frameworks, but moral frameworks determined individually according to one’s situation. It is certain that in previous eras “some Hindus took pride in every aspect of Hinduism that appealed to Europeans”, and held up a “sanitized brand of Hinduism that is now often labelled as sanatana dharma, ‘perpetual, eternal and universal’ Hinduism, although that term was previously used in a very different sense” (Doniger 2009:598). Certain Westerners continue to examine Hinduism through a Eurocentric lens, rather than letting the texts speak. Attempting to bring morality into the yogic endeavour implies that the yogi is concerned with the world at large, yet “the Yogasutra seems to be interested in the benefit of the dharmamegha samadhi for the sake of the yogin only: his klesa and karmas are eradicated, his knowledge is infinitely enlarged, his kaivalya is secured, which means the attainment of ‘being his true self’” (Klostermaier 1986:260).

Ranganathan argues that the “marginalization of the moral philosophical content of Indian philosophy” by scholars and others “has thus always been in the interests of western domination” (2008:3). I doubt the veracity of this claim. Ranganathan’s translation appears to offer a reading of the YS which resonates with the Judeo-Christian ideas of morality of his intended readership; American and European MPY practitioners. Making a translation meaningful to its intended readers by foisting a range of suppositions onto the text is unhelpful and leads to misrepresentations of the source text. Ranganathan’s desire to install ideas of a universal morality seems to require his reading into the text ideas that no other scholarly text I consulted supported. YS 1.2 is an example of Ranganathan inserting additional words into his translation to change the meaning of the sutra in question. A style of pseudo-Christian morality is, for Ranganathan, at the heart of the yogic journey. I have demonstrated that there is little
support for this view within the wider academic community, nor is this view supported by many of the more populist, less academic translations available that I consulted. Ranganathan’s view clearly sets him up as a polemicist, but whilst one may laud his courage I have argued that I do not feel there is sufficient weight to his claims to accept them unquestioningly.

In conclusion I would suggest that it is difficult, even after consulting a number of translations of the YS and also examining a variety of wider sources, to come to a complete and truly meaningful translation of the term dharmamegha. The evidence suggests that dharma is used in the YS to indicate the essential nature and properties of a thing. Ranganathan’s view is worthy of consideration, lest we run the risk of misrepresenting Patanjali by not taking into consideration a wider definition. It appears to me more likely that at the pinnacle of the yogic journey “the insight into the nature of everything as ‘dharmic’ is irrevocable: the purusa will never be able to mistake any particular object as real after the unreality (in ultimate terms) of everything has been intuited” (Klostermaier 1986:261). At the state of dharmamegha rather than being confined to behave and conform within a man made system of morality the yogi is able to clearly distinguish Self from non-Self and behave with all of the spontaneity and freedom that the Highest Reality allows.

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List of Abbreviations

AU Adhyatma Upanisad
BG Bhagavad Gita
YS Yoga Sutra of Patanjali
HYP Hatha Yoga Pradipika of Swatmarama
GS Gheranda Samhita
MB Mahabharata
MU Maitri Upanisad
PU Paingala Upanisad
SK Sankhya Karika of Isvarakrishna
VP Vidyaranya's Pancadasi