

Dharmamegha Samadhi in the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali.

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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 *kaivalyam*, 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, 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* (super-conscious *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 yogic 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 Patanjalyoga 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 Yogabhasya (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 *Mahabharata* (*MB*) and the *Puranas*. 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 *sthiraasukham 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 dharmamegha-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 “*Dharmamegha-samadhi*, the ‘cloud of *dharmamegha*,’ (is) a technical term that is difficult to translate, for *dharmamegha* 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 *dharmamegha*. Let us examine the phrase more closely and see what we discover. The phrase *dharmamegha samadhi* is composed of three words; *dharmamegha*, *megha* and *samadhi*.

Dharma, which is masculine word and comes from the root *dhṛ* meaning “to hold.” Monier-Williams informs us that *dharmamegha* 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.

Meghah, 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 *adharmic*) 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:

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 *Yogabhasya*, 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 he 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 *Pancadasi (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 (*dhyatrdhyane 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 dharmo 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:

tato 'yoga-vittamah samadhim dharmamegham 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 *dharmamegha* or virtue. We are no clearer as to what constitutes the field of pure *dharmamegha* 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 *dharmamegha* that the yogi holds? If *dharmamegha* 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

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 Bouddhisme 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 Buddhahumi, 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).

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*).

*vitarka-vicara-ananda-asmita-rupa-anugamat samprajnatah
virama-pratyaya-abhyasa-purvah samskara-seso 'nyah*

“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).

Ranganathan 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 *prasamkhyana* 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 (*bija*) 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

*tapah-svadhyaya-isvara-pranidhanani kriya-yogah
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 drastuh svarupe vastanam*)” (Whicher 1998[a]:283-5). The resting of the seer in its own form or intrinsic identity results from *cittavrttinirodhah* (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 ecstasy, 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 *vivekakhyati* (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-enmeshed 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-avartha matra-nirbhasam svarupa-sunyam-iva-samadhih

“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 dharmalaksana-avastha-parinama vyakhyatah
Santoditavyapadesya-dharmanupati dharmi*

"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*.

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 *dharmin* 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 *dharmin* 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 *dharmin* 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 *dharmin*, its possessive form, must have a moral element too. Ranganathan’s translation of *dharmin* 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-dukkhair guna-vrtti-virodhac ca dukkham 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 drashtuh 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 bhogapavargartham drsyam

“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

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

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 *Prakrti*” (Taimni 1986:405). The *dharma*-s referred to here are a-moral 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-anabhidatas ca

“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 *dharma/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 Sūtras*?

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 function 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 *adharmic*, 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-samayana vacchinnah sarva-bhauma mahavratam

“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 *dharma/dhamma* 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” (Hibbets 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 *astika 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, *dharmic* 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 *dharmaparinama*. 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

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 *dharmā* “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 *dharmā* 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 *dharmā*. 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 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, Vedicly-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 (*vivekakhyaata*) and is the precursor to

‘aleness’” 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-discernment” 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 *cittavrttinirodhah*, 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* 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 a 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 reclamations 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

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 *karman* 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

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