

Yoga and Yoga Sutra of Patanjali With Reference to Buddhism and Āyurveda.

Yoga is generally understood in context of its application. In the older Vedic tradition it was considered a means of communion with other realities, reaching them through trance perhaps. Today, in stark contrast, yoga is applied as a physical science that represents a comprehensive form of exercise. Comprehensive in the sense that the benefits accrue as much psychologically as they do somatically. For example, its success not only on the football field but also in prison populations.

In fact, the common historical record shows radical shifts in focus from Patanjala Yoga Śāstra to the next most commonly quoted and studied yoga text: Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā of Svātmarāma. The fact that numerous enlightening texts delineating the course of those shifts are not taken into consideration is because they were not translated (Mallinson, James)

Yoga has moved beyond its Indian roots and language into a Universal tree with many languages as platforms. Like most Indian subcontinent philosophies it adapts to the world it encounters. One could also say that yoga has *devolved* as have we. For instance, the Yoga Sutras could be about how to transcend our animal nature

(Chapter 2), embrace our human possibilities (Chapters 1 and 3) and even transcend them (Chapter 4). As we have gradually and over time, more than any other animal perhaps, sunk deeper instead into our animal nature, embracing our wants more than our needs, we have by necessity made our yoga more physical. So that even by the 10th Century we had assembled approximately 84 āsana, expanding not just our repertoire but it's original meaning. By the 1800's not only had we gone through the types of changes that made the roots unrelated, such as mercenary yogi's, but also split into traditional meditation practices resulting in aloof sages paired against hatha yogis practicing gymnastic pyrotechnics (Singleton, Bryant) and raising the bar on āsana to over 200 in BKS Iyengar's book Light on Yoga.

We can never say that yoga does not have multiple influences. Even the YS is influenced not only by the philosophy of Sāmkhya, the idea of Vaiśnava worship as a path of salvation, or later the tantric influences of Śaivism and all along, the praxis of Buddhism, especially in the Brahma Vihāra and concept of Dharmamegha (Mallinson, Bryant). The Bhagavad Gita, best dated post YS, seems to offer a multitude of pathways in the seventeen yoga chapters that attempt to answer the malaise of Man outlined by Arjuna in the first chapter. Many philosophies can be found in here including duality of mortal and immortal remaining always separate to mortal merging into immortal. The concept

of the Supreme Soul however remains its constant refrain, separating yoga from Buddhism in an irredeemable split. Or does it?

The YS was written some centuries after the Buddha. From the teachings of the Buddha arose Buddhism. Buddhism itself split into two paths, creating a chasm between the Way of the Elders and the Path of the Bodhisattva and so by the time we get to the YS, Buddhism is multi-faceted and a forest of views. Prior to that, the yogin's path was also the Buddha's path, especially as the Buddha was considered and referred to as a yogin himself. It may be contemplated that we always find what we are looking for. The answer is always beholden to the question. In this case, it can be stated that the yogin asks: 'Who am I?' and thus he is destined to find a Self. On the other hand, the Buddha chose to ask 'Why is their suffering?' and was able to find 'emptiness' where the yogin found an eternal Self. With the YS, Patanjali widened that gap by not only agreeing with Sāmkhya that there are eternal souls, but upped the ante by adding the concept of Ísvara. This viśeśa puruśa, because of it never having been tainted by experience of suffering, is worthy of worship and in fact, by just the worship of this entity alone, Samadhi can also be achieved. It may just be that which is beyond identity completely and thus the only thing truly worthy of worship: pranidhāna. If we take this view, we can conclude that there is more than one pathway to Samadhi. And it has been argued that once

Samadhi through the path of prajna or wisdom enlightens us, enlightenment for each of us can be different! A simple response to this conundrum is the answer of whether you are an eternal soul or dissolved past all identities into sheer bliss of non-identity, will be the one you find when you get there and not before!

Similarly, comparisons between yoga and Āyurveda can also show us the immensely wide scope of yoga. For the practice of yoga is also a renunciates' toolbox for staying healthy while detached from doctors and medicine. As a yogin had no time or inclination for money, even relying on others for food, the question of seeing an Āyurvedic physician (vaidya) was out of the question. It has been contemplated that the śātkarma are isolatory stand in's for Āyurveda's pancakarma.

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika is replete with suggestions for keeping the doshas in check, mostly kapha. But it is in the Caraka Samhita that the concept of Sattvavajaya Cikitsa is touted and seems to match almost identically with the Pratipakśa Bhāvana concept in YS. It could be argued that the conquest of sattva is in fact what yoga is all about, at least until we get to the end game: kaivalya. And here we are eerily back with something that seems straight out of the Buddha's playbook: 'And one abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world' (Satipatthāna Sutta) and YS III.55, where Patanjali says: 'When the mind reaches a complete state of equilibrium (stillness) and remains in a pure and unchanged state,

that is independence (kaivalya)' Kaivalya is in fact freedom from clinging. It is abiding independent of any qualities as all the qualities are in equilibrium and thus not active and consequential. We may be left with the eternal question of whether this is fullness or emptiness and the possibility that this question is only answered by you for you.

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, coupled with the commentary of Vyāsa, collectively known as the Patanjala Yoga Śāstra, did not arise in a vacuum and to understand them better, we need to contextualize them in the field they arose in: the various darśanas or philosophical treatises of the Indian subcontinent. The influence or awareness of Buddhism and Āyurveda are clearly visible to anyone who studies this text carefully. Furthermore, the eight-limbed path revealed in Chapter II of the YS is in fact a path of therapy: heal the negative impulses of the mind, cultivate the positive ones, make the body strong and supple enough for extended periods of sitting, control the flow of the breath to sharpen and expand the mind, withdraw the senses so that the mind can seek within, make the mind one-pointed, expand its potential even further and finally sink into the absorption that is necessary for entering enlightenment itself, that from which one never returns to suffering. Thus it is a path to health first and foremost, which it shares with Āyurveda, and a path to spiritual freedom as an end goal, which it shares with Buddhism in particular.

