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An Old Problem Revisited:
The Relation Between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism

The purpose of my paper is to suggest a reconsideration of an important dimension in the early history of Indian philosophy, namely, the historical relation between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism. Nearly a century ago (specifically the 1890s) both H. Jacobi and R. Garbe argued that Sāṃkhya and Yoga were ancient and non-brahmanical systems that pre-dated the rise of Buddhism, and ever since there has been a vigorous and continuing debate in European and American Indology about the problem. If Jacobi and Garbe represent one extreme in the debate, namely, that Sāṃkhya and Yoga are archaic, non-brahmanical systems that deeply influenced, and possibly even occasioned, the rise of Buddhism, surely the other extreme is represented by the work of Keith, Edgerton and van Buitenen who have argued that Sāṃkhya and Yoga as philosophical systems can hardly be attested prior to the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa and the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali (together with the *Bhāṣya* of Vyāsa), thereby suggesting that Sāṃkhya and Yoga as philosophical and/or metaphysical systems, rather than being at the source of early Indian philosophizing, are rather derivative, later systems influenced by the Upaniṣads, early Buddhism, the *Mokṣadharmā*, and the *Bhagavadgītā*. Garbe contemptuously dismisses this latter sort of evidence as "... eine unklare, zum Teil sinnlose Mischphilosophie" (p. 36, *Die Sāṃkhya Philosophie*), whereas Edgerton, reviewing the so-called evidence for ancient Sāṃkhya and Yoga as philosophical systems, summarily comments: "Nowhere is there a suggestion that it (Sāṃkhya) - or Yoga either - means any particular system of metaphysical truth" (p. 6, "The Meaning of Sāṃkhya and Yoga," *AJP*, XLV 1 (1924, 1-46). Van Buitenen basically concurs with Edgerton's judgement and comments: "There must have been scores and scores of more or less isolated little centres where parallel doctrines were being evolved out of a common source [in the early centuries of the Common Era] ... At this stage to credit these little centres with the name "schools" is to do them too much, or too little honor ..." (pp. 101-102, "Studies in Sāṃkhya (III)," *JAOS*, 77 (1957), 88ff.).

As, of course, is always the case in vigorous debates, there are the mediators who refuse to be coopted by either extreme but, instead, carefully sift the evidence on both sides and try to attain a balanced perspective that is less dramatic, much more complex, and alas, probably much closer to the truth. In such a mediating role I would place the work of such giants as Hermann Oldenberg, Th. Stcherbatsky, E. Sénart, Louis de La Vallée Poussin, and perhaps most recently, Erich Frauwallner, all of whom worked closely with the texts, attempted bit by bit to piece together a plausible scenario for the early history of Indian speculation, and for the most part kept an open mind regarding the relation between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism. Stcherbatsky, for example, while favoring to a large extent the precedence of some sort of Sāṃkhya system prior to the rise of Buddhism, nevertheless expresses the issue in a much less historically loaded manner when he comments: "It is impossible to speak about the basic ideas of Buddhism without comparing it (*sic*) with Sāṃkhya ideas" (p. 753, "The Dharmas of the Buddhists and the Guṇas of the Sāṃkhyas", *IHQ*, X (1934), Calcutta, 737-760). Likewise, L. de La Vallée Poussin in his "Le Bouddhisme et le Yoga de Patañjali" (*Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques*, 5, 1936/37, Bruxelles, 223-242) comments:

Les indianistes ont signalé de nombreux points communs entre les théories bouddhiques et les dires de Patañjali et de ses commentateurs. Mon propos est, non pas de compléter, mais d'enrichir la liste. Le problème des relations du Bouddhisme et du Yoga, du Bouddhisme et du Yoga-Sāṃkhya, ne sera pas dans une notable mesure éclairé par cette recherche: mais du moins disposerons-nous de quelques renseignements nouveaux (p. 223).

I offer the results of my own research very much in the spirit of de La Vallée Poussin in what follows. In other words, I do not claim to have solved the problem of the relation between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism in any final way, but I am prepared to argue that there are some new bits of evidence ("quelques renseignements nouveaux") which place the problem in a somewhat new light, thereby justifying a reconsideration of this old problem.

My own reflections regarding this old problem have been occasioned by (a) my own research on the texts of Sāṃkhya and Yoga for the *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, especially the *Yuktidīpikā* (and the related work

of Frauwallner, Oberhammer, and Wezler) and the *Pātañjalayogaśāstravivaraṇa* (and the related work of Hacker, Vetter, Wezler and Halbfass) and b) research in Buddhology (including L. de La Vallée Poussin, Lamotte, P. Jaini, Robinson, Hattori, Wayman, Warder, Seyfort-Ruegg, *et. al.*).

In calling for reconsideration of this old problem of the relation between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism, I would offer five areas for further exploration as follows:

(1) First and foremost, a clarification is needed regarding what we mean when we use the expression "Indian philosophy." I am inclined to think that many Indologists and Buddhologists become involved in an anachronism and/or an equivocation with respect to the word "philosophy" in a South Asian context. One reads, for example, about the "philosophy of the Veda and the Upaniṣads" or the "philosophy of the Bhagavadgīta" or the "philosophy of the epic" even in as sophisticated a work as Frauwallner's *Geschichte der indischen Philosophie*. Frauwallner is fully aware, of course, of the fundamental difference between what might be called speculative intuition in an environment of received authority, on the one hand, and systematic reflection that seeks overall coherence and persuasive presentation, on the other. There is considerable evidence that the former, namely, speculative intuition in an environment of received authority, is as old or older than the Vedic tradition itself. The former, namely, systematic reflection that seeks overall coherence and persuasive presentation, is much more recent. Interestingly, the terms *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* appear to be crucial in tracing the latter from the former. That is to say, there are a number of contexts in which *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* appear to mean little more than "speculative intuition of a cognitive sort" (*sāṃkhya*) and "speculative intuition of a conative sort" (*yoga*). The important work of Franklin Edgerton is well-known in this regard, and Edgerton is surely right when he suggests that it is a fundamental error in historical judgment to assume the existence of a Sāṃkhya system or a Yoga system whenever one finds the terms *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* in such texts as *Kaṭha*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Mokṣadharmā*, *Bhagavadgītā*, *Caraka*, *Suśruta* and *Buddhacarita*. In all of these environments the terms *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* do not refer to philosophical positions in the sense of systematic reflection that seeks overall coherence and persuasive presentation. They refer, rather, to spiritual methodologies "vierge du métaphysique", to use La Vallée Poussin's

idiom, and it is very likely the case that early Buddhist traditions were very much in the same mold. Van Buitenen has put the matter well: "There must have existed scores of more or less isolated little centres where parallel doctrines were being evolved out of a common source ... Most of the process must elude us necessarily, but we stand a better chance of recovering the little that is left by allowing for the greatest diversity, rather than the greatest uniformity of doctrine (*Ibid.*, p. 102)." This, then, is a basic point of departure for any reconsideration of the problem of the relation between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism, namely, that for a considerable period of time (possibly as late as the speculative portions of the epic) there was no relation whatever inasmuch as Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism had not yet become systematic philosophical systems.

(2) If such is the point of departure for reconsideration of this old problem, it cannot, alas, be our ultimate conclusion, for recent research suggests that Sāṃkhya and Yoga became systematic positions long before Edgerton and/or van Buitenen think they did. I am referring, of course, to the evidence of the *Yuktidīpikā* which indicates that Īśvarakṛṣṇa's *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* rather than being the beginning of systematic Sāṃkhya (as Edgerton and many others tended to assume) is more adequately to be viewed as coming at the end of the first creative phase of philosophical Sāṃkhya, as has been discussed in a preliminary way in the important work of P. Chakravarti (*Origin and Development of the Sāṃkhya System of Thought*, Calcutta, 1951) and, of course, E. Frauwallner (*Geschichte der indischen Philosophie*, I, Salzburg, 1953). In terms of identifying the locus of the first attempts at systematic formulation, one thinks immediately of the reference in Kauṭilya ("... *sāṃkhyāṃ yogo lokāyataṃ ca iti ānvikṣiki*"), which has been noted by many, but more to the point is the testimony in almost all of the literature of classical Sāṃkhya that the *locus classicus* for the systematic presentation of Sāṃkhya philosophy *qua* philosophy is the *śaṣṭitantra* ("the system of sixty topics") (and see Appendix A to the present paper). Whether *śaṣṭitantra* was an actual text or simply a tradition for systematically discussing Sāṃkhya philosophy is difficult to decide. Equally opaque is the issue of authorship. *śaṣṭitantra* is sometimes ascribed to Kapila, sometimes to Pañcaśikha, and sometimes to a certain Vārṣaganya. Chakravarti and Frauwallner have suggested the possibility of several editions of *śaṣṭitantra*. My own view is that *śaṣṭitantra* may have been simply a format

for doing Sāṃkhya philosophy or possibly even an old name of the system (which has the merit of encompassing F. Otto Schrader's view that there were many versions of *śaṣṭitantra* - although Schrader's notion that the *Ahīrbudhnya* version is the oldest version is, in my view, clearly wrong). In any case, I am inclined to think that *śaṣṭitantra*, or in other words Sāṃkhya philosophy *qua* philosophy, was taking shape from about the second or first-century B.C.E. through the first-century of the Common Era. Moreover, on the basis of the *Yuktidīpikā* I am inclined, furthermore, to link *śaṣṭitantra* with the work of Vārṣaganya and the "followers of Vārṣaganya" (*vārṣagaṇāḥ*). This roughly coincides with comparable systematic work in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma (and possibly other traditions of Buddhist Abhidharma as well). Here again, however, what strikes me is not the parallel in doctrinal development - I am still persuaded by van Buitenen's point about allowing for the greatest diversity rather than the greatest uniformity even in this period - but rather the predilection towards what Garbe long ago called "pedantic enumerations" in both Sāṃkhya (*śaṣṭitantra*) and Buddhism (Abhidharma).

(3) Regarding the formulation of systematic Yoga philosophy, it has long since been recognized that it incorporates a number of theoretical strands, not the least important of which are (a) Sāṃkhya ontology and epistemology, (b) Buddhist psychology and/or meditation-theory, and (c) the notion of *īśvara-praṇidhāna*. The work of Hauer, and more recently Feuerstein, has underlined the need to look at the *Yogasūtra* in terms of the *sūtrapāṭha* and to be somewhat cautious about the interpretations of Vyāsa which may have "sāṃkhyacized" the *Yogasūtra* more than the *sūtrapāṭha* itself would warrant. More to the point of this paper, however, is the interesting work of La Vallée Poussin already mentioned earlier ("Le Bouddhisme et le Yoga of Patañjali," and see above, p. 130, for full citation). La Vallée Poussin, using primarily the *sūtrapāṭha*, has systematically studied the terminology of the *Yogasūtra* vis-à-vis comparable terminology in Buddhist texts and especially as found in the *Abhidharmakośa* and *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* of Vasubandhu (II). I have cited many of the more important of these in Appendix B of the present paper. There is little doubt in my mind that the only reasonable conclusion to draw from these citations is that the *Yogasūtra* is heavily dependent on Buddhism and probably via the Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika formulations as set forth in

Vasubandhu II's *Abhidharmakośa* and *Bhāṣya*. Moreover, if one compares the network of terms as set forth by La Vallée Poussin with the network of technical terms of the *śaṣṭitantra* - in other words, if one compares the terms in Appendix B with Appendix A - it becomes immediately apparent that the Buddhist terminology that has been absorbed by the *Yogasūtra* is totally absent from the *śaṣṭitantra*. My own conclusion from all of this is that there were two streams of early systematic philosophizing in India, namely the *Śaṣṭitantra* of Sāṃkhya and the Abhidharma of Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika (and possibly other Buddhist traditions as well). In the first centuries of the Common Era, or at about the time of Vārṣaganya, these two traditions began to interact with one another, and systematic Yoga philosophy is a hybrid form of that interaction probably occasioned by the *Abhidharmakośa* and *Bhāṣya* of Vasubandhu II (ca. 350-450 of the Common Era).

(4) Returning again to systematic Sāṃkhya philosophy, not only do we have the testimony regarding the *śaṣṭitantra*, we also now have clear evidence that there were three quite distinct interpretations of *śaṣṭitantra*, namely Vārṣaganya and the followers of Vārṣaganya (*vārṣaganāḥ*), Vindhyaśin and, of course, Īśvarakṛṣṇa. The latter's interpretation of *śaṣṭitantra* is reasonably well-known, for it is the substance of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (which, of course, purports to be a simple summary of the *śaṣṭitantra* as understood by Īśvarakṛṣṇa). Regarding the interpretation of *śaṣṭitantra* by Vārṣaganya and his followers and by Vindhyaśin, I have prepared Appendix C and Appendix D respectively to this paper. While not providing by any means a complete picture of their views, there is more than a little of interest in the material for the historian of early Indian philosophy. It becomes clear, for example, that there was considerable debate concerning the nature of the "internal organ," with Vārṣaganya and, finally, Īśvarakṛṣṇa maintaining *saṃkalpaka*, *abhimāna* and *adhyavasāya* as separate functions but Vindhyaśin considering the three as simply modalities of one function (which looks suspiciously like the *citta*-doctrine of later Yoga philosophy, as has been noticed by Chakravarti and Frauwallner). On a number of other points as well (as can be seen in Appendix C and Appendix D), Vārṣaganya, the followers of Vārṣaganya, and Īśvarakṛṣṇa would appear to favor a "pure," or perhaps better, an original or older form of *śaṣṭitantra*, while Vindhyaśin seems willing to innovate (and in each instance generally in the direction of the later Yoga philosophy). This general picture from the *Yuktidīpikā*, of course, receives external confirma-

tion from the Chinese tradition of Paramārtha, and so forth, in which it is maintained that there was a vigorous tradition of debate between Vindhyaśin, on the one hand, and Vasubandhu, the Kośakāra, on the other. For a variety of reasons (some of which are mentioned in Appendix C and others of which are set forth in the Sāṃkhya volume of the *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, vol. IV, Princeton University Press, 1987), I am inclined to place Vārṣaganya in the first or second-century C.E., Vindhyaśin in the latter part of the fourth-century, and Īśvarakṛṣṇa as a younger contemporary of Vindhyaśin. It is to be noted, however, that Īśvarakṛṣṇa does not generally follow the innovations of Vindhyaśin. He clearly prefers an older form of the doctrine which could possibly be explained by the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* being primarily an "in-house" textbook of the Sāṃkhya school rather than a polemical text directed at the Buddhists. In any case, to the extent that the *Yogasūtra* is a hybrid form reflecting the interaction between *Śaṣṭitantra* and Abhidharma, its formulation can probably be traced to the work of Vindhyaśin.

(5) Finally, a brief word about the *Pātañjalayogaśāstravivaraṇa* and a brief concluding comment about the relation between Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Buddhism. My comment about the *Vivaraṇa* is really extraneous to my paper as a whole, and it is only really an expression of a scholarly wish-fulfillment. Should it prove to be the case that the *Vivaraṇa* is an authentic work of Śaṅkara, or at least a reasonably accurate treatment of an early phase of the Advaita school, this would neatly fit into the historical scheme that appears to be emerging in my own research. The scheme would look something like the following:

500 B.C.E. - 200 B.C.E. - "middle" Upaniṣads, *śramaṇa*, *yati* traditions, etc.

sāṃkhya-cum-yoga
("vierge du métaphysique")

200 B.C.E. - 100 C.E.	- Śaṣṭitantra	Abhidharma
100 - 200	Vārṣaganya	Sarvāstivāda
200 - 300	vārṣaganāḥ	Sautrāntika
350 - 450		Vindhyaśin - Vasubandhu II
350 - 450	Īśvarakṛṣṇa	
450 - 500		<i>Yoga-sūtra</i> -pāṭha
500 - 600		Vyāsa-Bhāṣya
500 - 600		Gauḍapāda
ca. 700		Śaṅkara
		Advaita

What is apparent in the scheme overall is that in the original systematic phase of the early history of Indian philosophy, namely, that of Śaṣṭitantra and Abhidharma, two types of philosophizing emerged: (a) what might be called "*viññāna*-philosophy" of Sāṁkhya - the word *viññāna* from Kārikā 2: *vyaktāvyaktajñā-viññānāt*; and (b) what might be called "*nirodha-samādi*-philosophy" of Buddhist Abhidharma. Vinhyavāsin in polemical encounter with the great Vasubandhu (the Kośakāra) conflates the two types of philosophizing into a "*viññāna-cum-nirodha-samādhi* philosophy" which becomes the basis subsequently for the hybrid classical Yoga philosophy as well as later Vedānta philosophizing. Īśvarakṛṣṇa pulled back from the innovations of Vinhyavāsin and attempted to reconstitute the old Sāṁkhya of Vārṣaganya.

Whatever merit my own reconstruction has, I would invite you at least to concede that the relation between Sāṁkhya, Yoga and Buddhism is still a vital issue in our studies. It is, indeed, an old problem well worth revisiting.