

reconsideration of the Coḷa Empire and its historiography, but also with a methodological challenge. In its subtle yet persistent challenge of the structuralist norms of historiography, Cox reveals the breadth of material at our disposal as interdisciplinary scholars of the South Asian past to recover the diachronic and the agentive within events often emplotted as static, pre-given structures.

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GERALD LARSON:

Classical Yoga Philosophy and the Legacy of Sāṃkhya with Sanskrit Text and English Translation of Pātañjala Yogasūtra-s, Vyāsa Bhāṣya and Tattvavaiśārādī of Vācaspatimiśra.

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Throughout his career, Gerald Larson has shone a light on the technical complexities of classical Indian Sāṃkhya and Yoga philosophy. In his view, Sāṃkhya is one of the “truly important” intellectual achievements in India’s intellectual history (p. ix). Larson’s doctoral thesis, *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of Its History and Meaning*, published in 1969, is still one of the most authoritative studies of Sāṃkhya, and he has always argued for a hand-in-glove relationship between Yoga and Sāṃkhya as a common tradition (*samāna-tantra*). Yet, as he himself states in his new book, even after a lifetime of scholarship, “the full significance” of the *Yogasūtra* “remains elusive” (p. 1). This latest publication furthers Larson’s project of illuminating the meaning of the *Yogasūtra*, by providing a new English translation of the *Yogasūtra* and two of its commentaries, thereby presenting the “three most important texts of classical yoga” (p. 1).

As Larson explains, the *Yogasūtras* are “laconic utterances that are largely unintelligible taken solely by themselves” (p. x). Even the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* is, in Larson’s estimation, “hardly a model of clarity” (p. x). This is due to the “long tradition of oral interpretation”, the model of *guru-paramparā*, which has been lost over time (p. 1). Hence the necessity of turning to later commentaries. New translations of the *Yogasūtra* and its first commentary, the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya*, are always a welcome addition to the academic field. Larson relies on the Sanskrit text as constituted by Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, which is based mostly on KS Āgāṣe’s 1904 edition. However, the most significant contribution in Larson’s latest work is his “new, accessible” English translation of Vācaspatimiśra’s commentary, the *Tattvavaiśārādī* (p. x).

Vācaspatimiśra, who flourished in the tenth century CE, was a philosopher of Advaita Vedānta, and, like most of the great medieval scholars, wrote a number of commentaries on the root texts of the classical *darśanas* (schools of philosophy). As well as the *Tattvavaiśārādī*, he composed the *Tattvakaumudī*, a terse commentary on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa. Larson argues that the *Tattvavaiśārādī* is not only useful in decoding the *Yogasūtra* and its *bhāṣya*, but that it influenced *all* subsequent commentaries on both Sāṃkhya and Yoga up to the present day (pp. 3–4). But from the other landmark medieval commentators (e.g. Bhojarāja or Vijñānabhikṣu) why does Larson value Vācaspatimiśra’s text so highly?

According to Larson, Vācaspatimiśra does not impose his own Advaita Vedānta framework onto Patañjali's material, but rather Vācaspati is a "reliable commentator on traditions other than his own" (p. 4). Therefore Larson sees the *Tattvavaiśārādī* as providing a reasonably clear window onto the Sāṃkhya philosophy that underpins the *Yogasūtra*. He also argues that Vācaspatimiśra's is the first sub-commentary on the *Yogasūtra* and therefore discounts the argument that the *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivarāṇa* was written by Śāṅkara in the eighth century (p. xi). Larson classifies Vācaspatimiśra as a classical rather than a medieval scholar and describes the period of the classical as extending from 100 CE to the early eleventh century CE. However, as has been widely debated in the field, periodization in Indian philosophy and the authorship of the *Vivarāṇa* are both contentious issues.

Prior to this offering, there were the only two translations of the *Tattvavaiśārādī* in English: those of Rāma Prasāda (1912, in the Sacred Books of the Hindus series) and James Haughton Woods (1914, in the Harvard Oriental Series). Larson critiques both as now "quite dated in terms of English usage" and hence "nearly unintelligible" (p. xi). Furthermore, Larson argues, neither translation gets its right when it comes to representing the Sāṃkhya philosophical framework. Larson's translation is crisp and clear, and is accompanied by the Sanskrit in the devanagari script (which neither of the previous two translations provided). His stated aim is the interpretation of the philosophical or religious significance of the text and not a philological undertaking (p. 78). In his aim to be accessible, Larson dispenses with footnotes and intersperses his own scholarly clarifications in the translation (in the traditional style of Indian commentary).

Beyond the translation, the volume includes a range of comprehensive appendices, such as preliminary translation notes on how Larson understands terms such as *citta* or *asamprajñāta*. The book also includes an in-depth introduction with extensive footnotes, which makes excellent overview reading for teachers and students. For Larson, classical yoga was "very much an 'interpretation' or 'explanation' of Sāṃkhya (that is, a 'sāṃkhya pravacana')" (p. 25). His representation of Patañjali's text, then, is as a single philosophical position called *sāṃkhyayoga*, which is a "distinct and unique way of thinking" (p. 26). Larson restates his well-argued hypotheses that the "Sāṃkhya reformer" Vindhyavāsin (or his student) is the author of both the *Yogasūtra* and its *bhāṣya* (pp. 19–20) and that debates with Buddhist philosophers (including Vasubandhu) account for the saturation of the discourse of the *Yogasūtra* and its *bhāṣya* with "Buddhist terminology" (p. 18).

The layout of the translation has some features to distinguish the different authorial voices. The *sūtras* are printed in caps – unusual, but clear. The *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* (which Larson refers to as the *Vyāśabhāṣya*) and the *Tattvavaiśārādī* are always prefaced by 'VB' and 'TV' respectively. At first glance the two can be difficult to distinguish, because they are identical stylistically; one has to search for the preceding 'VB' or 'TV' to find out which commentary one is in. The devanagari pages are easier to navigate visually. Larson renders the commentaries *vākya* by *vākya*, taking *vākya* to be "coherent utterance" (p. 79) – and each utterance is marked with a dash. Larson admits that this breaks up the flow of the prose but is "a much more precise and readable rendering of the original Sanskrit" (p. 80). I liked this feature as it gives a sense of the systematic ordering of points and the logical flow of thought.

Larson's new work makes a substantial contribution to current scholarship on classical Indian philosophy and offers three rigorous and accessible new translations. It is a beacon of clarity on the philosophical nuances of classical Yoga and Sāṃkhya.

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