

UDC 1(540):233-852

## HOW VINDHYAVĀSIN TURNED INTO VEDAVYĀSA: VĀCASPATI MIŚRA'S CASE FOR PĀTĀÑJALA YOGA

*Dimitry Shevchenko*

PhD (Philosophy)

Department of Philosophy

Ashoka University

Sonapat, Haryana 131029, India

[dimitry.shevchenko@ashoka.edu.in](mailto:dimitry.shevchenko@ashoka.edu.in)

This paper explores the role that Vācaspati Miśra – an influential Indian philosopher from the 10<sup>th</sup> century – played in the promotion and canonization of Pātāñjala Yoga in India. Vācaspati Miśra was a polymath, traditionally known by a rare sobriquet *sarva-tantra-svatantra* (“the one who owns all the systems”) and composed highly influential commentaries and independent treatises on nearly all major Brahmanical philosophical traditions. I argue that Vācaspati’s versatile scholarly activity within the milieu of Mithila, the reputable center of Brahmanical learning, effectively promoted two relatively inconspicuous systems in this period – that of Pātāñjala Yoga and Advaita Vedānta. In the present inquiry, I focus on the former system.

Vācaspati composed his *Tattvavaiśaradī* commentary on the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* and identified its author with Vedavyāsa – the mythological compiler of the Vedas and the composer of the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas. It is not a coincidence that Vācaspati also ascribed the authorship of a fundamental text of another tradition, namely, the *Brahmasūtra*, to Vedavyāsa. As far as I can tell, these ascriptions have no precedence in the history of the two texts and are meant to enhance their status within the orthodoxy. As the so-called Vedavyāsa’s commentary came to be regarded as the decisive canonical interpretation of the Yoga philosophical school, and as all the following commentaries rely on Vācaspati’s *Tattvavaiśaradī*, we may consider Vācaspati’s commentarial activity (along, perhaps, with institutional enterprises about which we know nothing) as the turning point in the history of the Yoga philosophy, after which the trio of the *Yogasūtra*, the *Bhāṣya*, and *Tattvavaiśaradī* assumed almost absolute authority within the tradition, with alternative lines of interpretation doomed to oblivion.

**Keywords:** Vācaspati Miśra, Indian philosophy, Pātāñjala Yoga, Advaita Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, *Yogasūtra*, Vedavyāsa

### *Introduction*

Starting with the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE<sup>1</sup>, we witness a wave of renewed interest in Pātāñjala Yoga in India. Vācaspati Miśra (flourished in 950) composed, perhaps, the first commentary<sup>2</sup> on the *Yogasūtrabhāṣya* (henceforth YSBh)<sup>3</sup>. In 1030, Al-Biruni translated the *Yogasūtra* (henceforth YS), along with a commentary<sup>4</sup>, into Arabic. Discussions of and references to the system are found in the works of the philosophers of this period, such as Śrīdhara (flourished in 990), Abhinavagupta (950–1020), and Kṣemarāja (ca. 975–1050). Arguably, among these thinkers, the most lasting influence on the subsequent understanding of the Yoga system was that of Vācaspati Miśra (henceforth Vācaspati). As Larson

© 2022 D. Shevchenko; Published by the A. Yu. Krymskyi Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS of Ukraine on behalf of *The World of the Orient*. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

rightly points out, the trio of the YS, the YSBh, and Vācaspati's own commentary *Tattvavaiśaradī* formed the standard and authoritative formulation of the Yoga system, on which all subsequent commentators relied [Larson 2018, x–xi; Larson & Bhattacharyya 2008, 65]. However, what is acutely lacking and urgently needed is the reevaluation of Vācaspati's role in the promotion of Pātāñjala Yoga in the context of his polyvocal activity as the commentator of nearly all major Brahmanical philosophical schools.

In this article, I will explore Vācaspati's advocacy of the YSBh. First, I will situate his attribution of the YSBh to Vedavyāsa in the context of the authorship controversy around this text. Next, I will defend my claim that Vācaspati's choice of Vedavyāsa was intentional and constituted a part of his general move of Brahminization and canonization of the Yoga philosophical texts. I argue that Vācaspati raised the prestige of the *bhāṣya* and of his own sub-commentary by identifying the author of the *bhāṣya* (possibly Vindhyavāsin from the fourth century) with the mythical “divider of the Vedas.” At the same time, this move is in line with Vācaspati's general position voiced in several of his works that regarding extra-natural matters, including the content and nature of yogic vision, *śruti*, *smṛti*, *purāṇa*, and *itihāsa* are the only authority.

### ***The Yogasūtrabhāṣya's authorship controversy***

In modern scholarship, the traditional ascription of the YSBh to legendary Vyāsa or Vedavyāsa, the author of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Purāṇas*, and the “divider” of the Vedas, is not considered authentic. There are two major hypotheses as to the personality of the real commentator. One hypothesis, based on several traditional references, is that the author of the commentary is the same as the author of the *mūla* text, i.e., Patañjali. Thus, according to one of the accounts, both texts may have been composed between 325 and 425 CE, although many of the *sūtra* aphorisms may have been of a much more ancient origin [Maas 2013, 62, 65].

According to another hypothesis, the *bhāṣya-kāra* was a different person from the author of the YS. His views on several issues are very close to those expressed by a Sāṃkhya teacher Vindhyavāsin (also known as Vindhyavāsa). Thus, the *bhāṣya-kāra* was either someone, who belonged to Vindhyavāsin's tradition, or even Vindhyavāsin himself. This hypothesis is further strengthened by Vādirājasūri's (11<sup>th</sup> century) ascription of several passages from the YSBh to Vindhyavāsin [Larson & Bhattacharya 2008, 40; Maas 2013, 64; 2006, xiii]. The time span of the composition of both texts may have been the same as for the proponents of a single-authorship theory – between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Before I offer my two cents on this question – although I am not going to take sides – let me draw your attention to the fact that the contemporary scholarly controversy in fact reproduces the same controversy, which has arisen around the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries. While Śrīdhara, Abhinavagupta, and Hemacandra believed Patañjali was a single author of the *sūtra* and the *bhāṣya* [Maas 2013, 57], Vācaspati and Vādirājasūri thought the commentator and the *sūtra-kāra* to be two different persons. Further, Vācaspati identifies the commentator as Vedavyāsa, and Vādirājasūri as Vindhyavāsin [Maas 2006, xii–xiii]. It is not entirely clear whether Al-Biruni believed in a single or a separate authorship theory. On the one hand, he called his free translation of the YS with a commentary *Kitāb Bātanjāl*, thereby, perhaps, attributing the authorship of the *bhāṣya* to Patañjali [Maas 2013, 59]. On the other hand, he used the appellation “a commentator” (*al-mufassir*) [Pines & Gelblum 1966, 304], thereby, perhaps, making a distinction between the *sūtra* and the *bhāṣya-kāra*. Moreover, Pines and Gelblum suggest that there are some reasons to believe that Al-Biruni was relying on a commentary different from the one known to us [Pines & Gelblum 1966, 303], which is a further evidence for separate authorship of the YS and the YSBh<sup>5</sup>. Further, Kṣemarāja identifies Vyāsa as the author of the *sūtrabhāṣya*, which could mean that Vyāsa was either the author of the “*bhāṣya* on the *sūtra*” –

in agreement with Vācaspati – or of both “the *sūtra* and the *bhāṣya*”, thereby possibly replacing the Patañjali’s single-authorship theory with a theory of Vyāsa’s single-authorship [Maas 2006, *xii*].

Apparently, at this period, there was already an uncertainty regarding the authorship of the YSBh, for which there might have been several reasons. One possibility is that the text’s author remained anonymous for several centuries, just like the author of the *Yuktidīpikā*, an important commentary on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* from the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Another possibility is that what was believed to be the authorship during previous centuries came to be contested. For example, it could be the case that a theory of a single-authorship was an older theory, which has been doubted due to some discrepancies between the *sūtra* and the *bhāṣya*<sup>6</sup>. Or vice versa, an older theory of separate authorship has been revised in favor of a single authorship, to justify the growing reliance on the *bhāṣya* for understanding Patañjali’s aphorisms.

There is one important difference between the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century controversy and the contemporary one. As opposed to elaborate arguments for and against single authorship in the modern period, classical philosophers did not engage explicitly in any debates and did not provide any reasons for the authorship of Patañjali, Vedavyāsa, or Vindhyavāsin, nor attempt to refute the opposite views. In fact, I am not familiar with similar arguments about the authorship of any philosophical texts. It is as if questions of authorship have been bracketed outside philosophical debates and were excluded from the topics to be discussed in the *śāstras*. Even if such debates took place (and they probably did), we know nothing about them.

On the other hand, questions of authorship of *śruti* and *smṛti* texts are legitimate topics for discussion. The most famous are the debates about the authorship of the Vedas – whether they have a divine or human origin or no author at all – although no suggestions of any historical or legendary person have been raised. I would like, however, to briefly mention Jīva Gosvāmī’s (16<sup>th</sup> century) discussion of the authorship of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, as it may help to understand Vācaspati’s advancement of Vedavyāsa’s separate authorship of the *bhāṣya*. In his *Tattvasandarbhā*, Jīva aims to demonstrate that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* – the fundamental text of the Vaiṣṇava tradition – is a reliable testimony (*śabda*), having both a Vedic nature and excelling all other sources of knowledge. In the next section, I will show that Vācaspati’s scattered arguments defending the authority of the Yoga texts indicate a pattern similar to that of Jīva Gosvāmī. Here I will briefly narrate the argument as summarized by Bryant [Bryant 2009, 544–547].

First, Jīva establishes scriptural testimony of the Vedas as an exclusive means of cognition about matters transcending perception and inference, because the Vedas are not prone to mistakes, delusions, inconclusive judgments, and other defects, which may occur in perception and inferential reasoning. The Vedas are infallible, because, presumably, they do not have a human author (*apauruṣeya*), to whom any kinds of mistakes or an intention to mislead could be attributed. So far, Jīva does not deviate from the standard Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta arguments for the infallibility of the Vedic scriptures.

Next, Jīva demonstrates that the reliability of the Vedas (*śruti*) in “non-ordinary” matters extends also to traditional texts, known as *smṛti*, which include the great epics, the *purāṇas*, the *dharma-śāstras*, and other texts, which have human authors. Such an extended authorization is given by the Vedic texts themselves, as demonstrated by certain passages from the Upaniṣads, where the epics (*itihāsa*) and the *purāṇas* are regarded as “the fifth Veda”.

What is left to Jīva is to show that one particular *purāṇa*, namely the *Bhāgavata*, is preeminent not only among other *purāṇas*, but even among the Vedas. In order to do that, he first appeals to the testimony of other *purāṇas*, such as the *Matsya* and the *Padma*, which classify the *Bhāgavata* as belonging to the *sattva guṇa*, the most pure and subtle among the three fundamental powers of nature. Thus, among the eighteen major *purāṇas*,

the *Bhāgavata* appears as the purest expression of divine matters. At this point, Jīva considers the reliability of this text established, and may turn to the testimony of the *Bhāgavata* itself.

*Bhāgavata* testifies about its own origin that it was created by Vyāsa, after he divided the originally one Veda into four, composed the *Brahmasūtra*<sup>7</sup>, and a *Purāṇa Saṃhitā*, or a singular *ur-purāṇa*. His students further divided this one *purāṇa* into eighteen *purāṇas*. However, as the *Bhāgavata* tells us, Vyāsa's guru Nārada insisted that even after all this massive production of knowledge, Vyāsa has not yet described the ultimate goal of all knowledge. The composition of the *Bhāgavata* was motivated, thus, by crystallizing the essence of the Vedas, the *itihāsas* and the *purāṇas*, and therefore the text excels all these. Vedavyāsa here has an important function of turning a relatively late purāṇic text into the fifth Veda, both bestowing upon it the Vedic authority and indicating that the text supercedes the Vedas.

I would like to argue that for Vācaspati, Vedavyāsa performs a similar function, making the YSBh into the expression of Vedic knowledge, rather than treating it as one of many human compositions of doubtful reliability. I would like to provide some evidence for my hypothesis, after which I will attempt to reconstruct Vācaspati's move.

### *Vedavyāsa is a bridge*

Let us start with a curious discrepancy between Vācaspati's argument against the epistemic reliability of yogic perception in his earliest work and his serious treatment of yogic experiences in the TV, noticed by John Taber [Taber 2009, 81]. In the *Nyāyakaṇikā* – his commentary on Maṇḍana Miśra's Mīmāṃsā treatise *Vidhiviveka* – Vācaspati argues against the Buddhists, according to whom the Buddha's knowledge of the four noble truths has been discovered through meditative states culminating in a direct experience of matters inaccessible to ordinary senses. Vācaspati holds that just like an intense meditation on imaginary fire may lead us to actually experience it, or like a lover constantly contemplating the woman he loves may have a very vivid cognition of an object of his obsession, so also a meditation on any other object, such as the four noble truths may be purely imaginary [Taber 2009, 81–82]. Yogic perception is not a reliable means of cognition, because its objects are sometimes not real. Hence, we cannot trust the Buddha, as his perception of the four noble truths may well have been imagined.

However, when Vācaspati approaches the YS, along with the *bhāṣya*, he encounters the same problem in respect to his own “client”: the means of liberation for Patañjali are meditative efforts resulting in direct experience of *puruṣa*'s separation from *prakṛti*. Whether this experience is purely imaginary or real, yogic perception by itself cannot tell. And how does Patañjali know what he tells us? From his own experience? Is he not in the same position as the Buddha in this respect? What advantage is there in Patañjali as *pramāṇa* over the Buddha as *pramāṇa*? Further, who is the author of the commentary, and what is the epistemic basis for his elaboration of the yoga philosophy?

Although the TV does not explicitly raise questions of this kind, the objection is posed as to the abundance of people claiming to be omniscient, such as “many Jain ascetics, Buddhas, Arhats, the seer (*ṛṣi*) Kapila, and so forth” [Larson 2018, 229]<sup>8</sup>. This objection comes in the context of Vācaspati's claim that only God (*īśvara*) is omniscient. The state of direct perception of supersensory matters – i.e., yogic perception – is indeed possible to a greater or lesser degree<sup>9</sup>, but only God has knowledge of all things in full measure. The objection also raises questions regarding the epistemic viability of reliable testimony (*āgama*), as there seem to be many testimonies regarded by the people to be reliable, which nevertheless contradict each other.

Vācaspati responds to the above objection:

The meaning here is that what is taught by the Buddha, and others, is only a semblance of *āgama*, but not really authentic *āgama*. This is the case since it is clear that teachers such

as the Buddha and so forth are caught up in a situation of deception (*vipratilambhakatva*). They teach doctrines such as momentariness, no self (or substancelessness), and so forth, which are destructive of all correct means of knowing (*pramāṇa*).

The expression “scripture” (“*āgama*”) has to do with the means for attaining spiritual release (*nihśreyasa*) and prosperity (*abhyudaya*) because of that (*āgama*). These means lead to a correct mental attitude (*buddhi*). They occur from *āgama* [literarily “what comes forth”] as defined in Śruti, Smṛti, Itihāsa and Purāṇa [Larson 2018, 229]<sup>10</sup>.

What distinguishes the right kind of *āgama* from the bogus *āgama* is the effectiveness in producing spiritual liberation and prosperity in this life and the next. This point, however, is controversial, as the Buddhist, the Jain, and other *āgama*-s may claim the same. Vācaspati, however, appeals here to *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa*, the origin of which is either God or great teachers, themselves taught by God. Since only God is omniscient, only he can be considered an authority in otherworldly matters.

For example, commenting on the YSBh definition of reliable testimony (*āgama*), Vācaspati argues that the matters of *dharma* are objects of perception and inference only for God. Thus, Manu, the author of the *dharma-śāstra*, is merely a mediator of the knowledge contained in the Vedas, whose real author, according to Vācaspati, is God, considered as the “primal speaker” (*mūlavaktr*) [TV 30,19–31,4]. Elsewhere in the text, Vācaspati includes the quartet of *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa* under the single term *śāstra*, and defines its relation to God as that of “being spoken” (*vācya*) and “the speaker” (*vācaka*). *Śāstra* – in this narrow sense – is the product of God’s “excellent *sattva*” (*prakṛṣṭasattva*) [TV 68,18–69,21].

One may, of course, doubt the existence of God. Vācaspati claims that our source of knowledge about God is the same *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa* [TK 68,29–31]. And we can trust them on matters otherworldly, based on their reliability in respect to matters, which could be tested in this world:

First of all, regarding the mantras and the medical science, taught by God - their validity is established, due to the unfailing ascertainment of their contents and because they are efficacious. Even in a thousand human life-spans, nobody applying ordinary means of knowledge can establish the rules and the exceptions in respect to various (medicinal) plants and the particular combinations among them, as well as in respect to the mantras, by sorting them out (my own translation)<sup>11</sup>.

Vācaspati points to the efficacy of the medical science and the science of magical spells as a proof of the validity of those parts of Vedic knowledge which are testable within the framework of ordinary experience. Were Vācaspati to say that based on the validity of those parts of the Veda, its other parts, teaching about extraordinary matters, are also reliable, this would be an unwarranted conclusion<sup>12</sup>. His point, however, seems to be that the volume and the precise fitness of various remedies for solving various human problems is beyond human capacities to discover<sup>13</sup>. It should be remembered that whereas modern medicine provides innumerable examples of the capacity of human beings to discover powerful formulas for treating all kinds of diseases, it is quite possible that the physicians in classical India attributed their knowledge to the authoritative texts of Āyurveda, even when they continued to make daily discoveries. Thus, Vācaspati argues that even those parts of the Veda which can be verified demonstrate its extraordinary, extra-human origin, as well as its extraordinary efficacy. From this, one can make a plausible conclusion that the Veda is similarly authoritative in non-verifiable extraordinary matters.

So far, the argument parallels the first and the second steps of Jīva Gosvāmī’s justification of the *Bhāgavata* – demonstration of the exclusive and absolute authority of *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa* in “extraordinary” matters. It should be noticed that while Jīva is ambiguous on the meaning of *apauruṣeya* – whether *āgama* is of non-human authorship or of no authorship at all – Vācaspati is clear that the *āgama* teaching is uttered by

God. Thereby he adopts the Nyāya, rather than the Mīmāṃsā stance, given the theistic presuppositions of the YS and the YSBh.

After establishing the divine source of the true *āgama*, Vācaspati moves to arguing that the teaching of the Yoga system should also be traced to God. This move has two goals: 1. demonstrating that the teaching of this apparently non-vaidika system is compatible with *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa*; 2. giving the advantage to Yoga authorities, which the *nāstika* yogis, such as the Buddha or Mahāvīra, do not have – namely, the divine approval of yogic perception, which otherwise could have been merely imaginary.

Vācaspati identifies two primary sources of the teaching of the Yoga – Kapila, the legendary teacher of Sāṃkhya, and Hiraṇyagarbha, a divine figure, said to be the first-born of the manifest creation as intellect (*buddhi*) [Larson & Bhattacharya 2008, 69]. Whereas the tradition recounts that Kapila was born fully liberated, and thus regarded as the “primary knower” (*ādividvān*), Vācaspati cares to point out that “Kapila’s attainment of knowledge was communicated at the moment of his birth *through the grace of Maheśvara*” [Larson 2018, 232, italics are mine]<sup>14</sup>. Thus, Kapila can be accepted as the “primary knower” (*ādividvān*) only in a sense of being the “primal released one” (*ādimukta*) and the “primal teacher” (*ādiguru*), whereas only God can be properly called the “primary knower” (*ādividvān*) as preceding in knowledge even Kapila, and as having omniscience as his essential property [TV 77,28–78,3; 78,18–21]. Moreover, “it is usually also established that the figure Kapila, by name, is a particular (incarnational) embodiment (*avatāra*) of Viṣṇu” [Larson 2018, 232]<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, Kapila is the reincarnation of the omniscient God.

Curiously enough, in the *Tattvakaumudī* – Vācaspati’s commentary on the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā* – he provides yet another reason to consider Kapila’s inborn gnosis to be grounded in *śruti*:

To the primeval Kapila, in the beginning of the Kalpa, we may attribute the reminiscence of the *śruti* studied in his previous birth, as we recollect, after the night’s sleep, the occurrences of the previous day [Jha 1896, 18]<sup>16</sup>.

Vācaspati does not provide any proof from the traditional sources for this explanation, but his reduction of Kapila’s intuitive knowledge to a mere recollection of the scriptures is clearly meant to eliminate the possibility of a valid yogic perception that is not based on *āgama*, as well as to reject non-vaidika *āgama*-s as valid means of knowledge. It should also be noticed that in his position as a *nirīśvara* Sāṃkhya Vācaspati is careful not to ascribe any divine status to Kapila, whereas as *seśvara* Yoga philosopher he feels free to describe Kapila as Viṣṇu’s *avatāra*<sup>17</sup>.

Vācaspati treats the second primal knower of Yoga – Hiraṇyagarbha – in exactly the same manner, albeit more briefly:

The self-existent one (*svayaṃbhū*) is also known as Hiraṇyagarbha. According to the Veda, the origin of Sāṃkhya-yoga came from him. The meaning is that he (Hiraṇyagarbha) is God, whether called by the name, Kapila, Viṣṇu or Svayaṃbhū. Also, it might be said that God (*īśvara*) is the source of all Self-existent ones (*svayaṃbhuvānām*) [Larson 2018, 232]<sup>18</sup>.

Commenting on this passage, Larson insightfully adds:

It might be said that Vācaspati is suggesting here that all “primal knowers” whether Kapila, Viṣṇu, Svayaṃbhū, or whomever (known from the authority of the Veda or Śāstra) – or put another way, all *vikalpa* or verbal-forms of God – derive from the beginningless *īśvara* or God [Larson 2018, 232].

Larson is absolutely right. For Vācaspati, genuine spiritual realization through one’s own efforts, independent of divine guidance, is impossible. Those true teachers – whether

Kapila or Hiraṇyagarbha – who apparently reached the knowledge of supersensory matters by themselves, must be God’s reincarnations.

What about Patañjali, the author of the YS? What is the source of his authority? Vācaspati explains that Patañjali’s teaching should be regarded as a “repeated” or a “follow-up” instruction (*anu-śāsana*), as opposed to Hiraṇyagarbha’s “original instruction” (*śāsana*) [TV 2,21–3,1]. In other words, Patañjali merely expounds the teaching of Yoga, originally formulated by a divine figure.

Vācaspati also hints at two alternative explanations of Patañjali’s authority. In the opening verses of the TV, Vācaspati refers to Patañjali as a *ṛṣi*, thereby, perhaps invoking the status of the Vedic *mahārṣi*-s, to whom the Vedic knowledge has been revealed [TV 2,4]. Immediately after that, Vācaspati calls Patañjali *bhagavān* [TV 2,6], a word which could simply mean “the blessed one” and express respect, but could also be translated as “God”. In fact, it is possible to read the opening verses as identifying Patañjali with Śiva:

I bow down to Vṛṣa-ketu [Śiva], the cause of the origin (or manifestation) of the world, (who is our) advantage, (and) who is devoid of the afflictions, karmic ripenings, and so forth. (1)

Having paid homage to the Ṛṣi Patañjali, a commentary or explanation (*vyākhyā*) which is brief, clear and substantive is being set forth in regard to the commentary composed by [or attributed to] Vedavyāsa [Larson 2018, 94]<sup>19</sup>.

The absolutive form of the verb  $\sqrt{\text{nam}}$  (*natvā*) in the third *pāda* suggests that the homage to Patañjali has already been paid in the preceding verses, from which one understands that Patañjali is Vṛṣa-ketu<sup>20</sup>. The hint, however, is subtle, as my interpretation does not entirely rule out the possibility of a sequential praise first of Śiva and then of Patañjali. In my opinion, Vācaspati is intentionally ambiguous here. The *śloka* and the appellation *bhagavān* are suggestive of the divine origin of Patañjali, but Vācaspati is not ready to proclaim this wholeheartedly, perhaps because this would constitute an unfounded innovation. Nevertheless, Vācaspati’s innuendos play a rhetorical role in reverberating the idea that the teaching of Yoga is divine through and through.

The same verse also recognizes the author of the YSBh as Vedavyāsa. And here we are back on track to the main question explored in this essay. Aklujkar and Larson hold that *vedavyāsa* in the opening verses might be a corruption of *vindhyavāsa* [Aklujkar 1999, 116; Larson & Bhattacharya 2008, 40]. Moreover, as mentioned at the beginning of the present article, Vādirājasūri has explicitly quoted verses from the YSBh and attributed them to Vindhyavāsin (or Vindhyavāsa), and there are some striking parallels between the YSBh and the teaching of the Sāṃkhya teacher.

I would like to argue, however, that the transformation from Vindhyavāsa into Vedavyāsa was not some scribe’s typo (unless manuscripts mentioning *vindhyavāsa* will be discovered), but an intentional move by Vācaspati. First, in his *Bhāmatī*, Vācaspati identifies Bādarāyaṇa – the author of the *Brahmasūtra* – also with Vyāsa [Bhāmatī 2,11]. It is not a coincidence that, as far as we know, Vācaspati bears the earliest testimony to an identity of the two philosophers with (Veda)Vyāsa [Nicholson 2010, 227, *fn.* 19]<sup>21</sup>. A single invocation of Vedavyāsa might have been a mistake; making it twice in two different texts already indicates a pattern.

Second, the TV is heavily spiced up with purāṇic references. In particular, Vācaspati has a wonderful and consistent tendency to explain almost all practical aspects of meditative techniques on the basis of this or that purāṇic text – most often the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*<sup>22</sup>. This tendency has a reason already discussed above: Vācaspati does not accept yogic insights as epistemically valid, unless they are backed up by the quartet of *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa* (collectively designated by Vācaspati as the *śāstra*). Some modern scholars expressed an opinion that Vācaspati was not a practicing yogi, perhaps due to the complete absence of any personal input into the theory of meditation [Larson & Bhattacharya 2008, 67; Bryant 2009, xli, 511, *fn.* 62]. Whether Vācaspati was a practicing

yogi or not is hard to tell. It is quite possible that the answer is affirmative, given his preference for Pātāñjalayoga as a par excellence *sādhana*, expressed in his commentaries on other philosophical systems<sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, as Vācaspati was a lay householder (at least, according to tradition), it is also possible that his interest in Yoga and meditation was theoretical or that he dedicated just a limited amount of time to spiritual practice. What is important is that his personal experience may not be a source of knowledge, given Vācaspati's repeatedly stated objection to yogic perception being an independent *pramāṇa*. Only *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa* are valid sources of information about yoga, and as most of the information relevant to Pātāñjalayoga system is found in the *purāṇa*-s, Vācaspati appeals to these sources. To justify his reliance on the *purāṇa*-s as continuous with the message of the YSBh, it would be useful if Vedavyāsa, the legendary author of all the *purāṇa*-s, could also be found to be the author of the YSBh. Vedavyāsa performs here a similar function to a role he plays in Jīva's authorization of the *Bhāgavata*. He is a bridge between the authoritative *purāṇa*-s and the anonymous YSBh, bestowing upon the latter the halo of the divine. In this way, the relation between Patañjali and the author of the YSBh is presented as between a divine teacher and his divinely inspired expositor, whose authority is sanctioned by tradition.

If we further assume that there were other competing *bhāṣya*-s to the YS – one of which possibly a commentary translated by Al-Biruni – this could mean that by attributing the authorship of the YSBh to Vedavyāsa, Vācaspati was promoting the YSBh as more authoritative than other commentaries. Given the canonical status of the YSBh for all the subsequent commentators, Vācaspati's efforts can be judged as phenomenally successful. At the same time, by demonstrating the authoritativeness of the YSBh, Vācaspati simultaneously forms a prestigious tradition, an essential part of which his own commentary turns out to be.

To sum up, my hypothesis that Vācaspati's identification of the *bhāṣya-kāra* with Vedavyāsa is intentional is corroborated by 1. similarly unprecedented identification of Bādarāyaṇa with Vyāsa in the *Bhāmatī*; 2. appeals to *purāṇa*-s (believed to be composed by Vedavyāsa) as the sources of information about yogic praxis; 3. an analogous move by Jīva Gosvāmi, who used Vedavyāsa as a source of legitimation and respectability for the *Bhāgavata*; 4. Vācaspati's overall tendency to deify the teachers of Sāṃkhya and Yoga and to show the compatibility of their teaching with *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa*.

Vācaspati does not explain his claim that the YSBh was composed by Vedavyāsa – a claim which might appear unfounded to his critiques. The similarity between the names Vindhyavāsa and Vedavyāsa might have been the possible grounds for this assertion. Most probably, a theory that the author of the text was Vindhyavāsa might have been already circulating at Vācaspati's life time, as evidenced by Vādirājasūri, who lived slightly later. Vācaspati could argue that the attribution of the commentary to Vindhyavāsa was itself a mistake, based on a similarity of the name to Vedavyāsa, who was the real author.

Maas has correctly pointed out that Vācaspati made contradictory claims regarding the authorship of the YSBh, because in the *Nyāya-vārtika-tātparyā-ṭīkā*, Vācaspati attributed the quotes from this text to Patañjali, and not to Vedavyāsa, thereby holding to a single-author theory [Maas 2006, *xiv*]. The problem, however, can be easily solved, because in the *Nyāya-vārtika-tātparyā-ṭīkā*, which is Vācaspati's earlier text, he probably was not concerned with the question of the YSBh authorship, and simply reiterated the commonly held view of Patañjali's authorship of both texts. In the TV, he had to deal with the questions of legitimacy of the Yoga system, and found it beneficial to attribute the *bhāṣya* to Vedavyāsa. One may object that it would be more economical and equally authoritative to see the *sūtra* and the *bhāṣya* as the creation of Patañjali, as Vācaspati has to defend the latter's authoritativeness anyway (e.g., by calling him a *ṛṣi* or hinting at his divine origin). Vācaspati's motivation for choosing a separate-authors theory in the TV is difficult to guess. Perhaps, he came to a conclusion that the YS and the YSBh were composed by



two different people based on similar considerations put forward by contemporary advocates of a separate authorship theory – differences between the texts, the similarity between Vindhyavāsin’s ideas and the YSBh, Buddhist elements in the YS vs. anti-Buddhist rhetoric of the YSBh, etc.

### Conclusion

As should already be clear, it was not the intention of this article to resolve the authorship of the YSBh, but rather to put forward a hypothesis explaining the reasons behind the promotion of Vedavyāsa’s authorship by Vācaspati Miśra. Reflecting back on Vācaspati’s impact on nearly all subsequent commentaries of the YSBh, there are good reasons to believe that he was aware of his role in the formation of a distinct line of interpretation of the Yoga philosophical system. His efforts to establish Yoga as a respectable, authoritative *śāstra*, and simultaneously himself as a distinguished Yoga scholar, have little to do with bold doctrinal innovations or an original input into a theory of yogic practice. Rather, Vācaspati worked on a smoother incorporation of Pātāñjala Yoga into Brahmanical ideological framework by resolving problems of authority – textual, divine, and human. His efforts seem to go in two directions. On the one hand, he attempted to make Yoga more compatible with *śruti*, *smṛti*, *itihāsa*, and *purāṇa*. On the other hand, throughout his non-Yoga writings<sup>24</sup>, he argued repeatedly that Pātāñjala Yoga is almost an exclusive means of achieving *mokṣa*, thereby advocating this system as a properly Brahmanical soteriology. Vedavyāsa’s assigned role in Vācaspati’s project was to bridge between the Brahmanical and the less-Brahmanical worldviews, played along with similar “brahmanization” of such figures as Kapila, Hiranyagarbha, and Patañjali.

Vācaspati’s efforts to establish a distinct line of interpretation of the Yoga tradition were repeated in his *Bhāmatī* in respect to Advaita Vedānta. *Bhāmatī* came to be known not merely as the title of Vācaspati’s last text, but as the name of one of the two major “sub-schools” of Advaita. It looks like both of Vācaspati’s projects came out successful, given the centrality of the commentarial traditions initiated by him in both schools. The subtle, but skillful transformation of Vindhyavāsin into Vedavyāsa is an exciting example of tradition in the making.

<sup>1</sup> Nothing is certain about these dates, although I rely on the latest and least objectionable approximations. It looks, however, that the philosophers I mention here lived and acted in relative proximity in time to each other.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the dating of *Pātāñjalayogaśāstravivarāṇa* (henceforth PYSV), another candidate for being the first commentary on the YSBh, see fn. 5 of the present study.

<sup>3</sup> The authorship of the *bhāṣya* will be discussed further.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Biruni does not mention the commentator’s name, and it is unclear whether the text Al-Biruni was translating was the well-known YSBh or some other unknown to us *bhāṣya* [see Pines and Gelblum 1966, 304; Maas 2013, 59–60]. I will tackle both possibilities further on.

<sup>5</sup> If Larson is right that the author of the *Pātāñjalayogaśāstravivarāṇa* (henceforth PYSV), another important commentary, should be roughly Vācaspati’s contemporary [Larson 2018, 5], then he should also be considered in the context of the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century controversy over the authorship of the YSBh. The actual dating of the PYSV, traditionally ascribed to Śaṅkara, (as well as its authorship), has not been resolved and ranges between the eighth and fourteenth centuries. As the author of the PYSV makes a clear distinction between the *sūtra*- and the *bhāṣya-kāras*, although he does not mention any names, it is possible to locate him in the camp of the separate-author theory. Maas also points out that both appellations might have been used to designate the same person [Maas 2013, 58–59].

<sup>6</sup> Such as those discussed in [Chapple 1994].

<sup>7</sup> About the identification of Bādarāyaṇa, the author of the *Brahmasūtra*, with Vedavyāsa see below.

<sup>8</sup> *nanu santi bahavas tīrthakarā buddhārhatapakilarṣiprabhrtayah/* [TV 77,21–22]. In this article, I will be using Larson's latest translation of the TV, and not the classical translation by J. H. Woods from 1914, which is more archaic.

<sup>9</sup> *buddhisattvāvarakatamo' pagamatāratamyena yad idam atītānāgatapratyutpannānām pratyekam ca samuccayena ca vartamānānām atīndriyāṇām grahaṇam, tasya viśeṣaṇam alpam bahv iti, sarvajñabījam kāraṇam/* [TV 77,6–9]. "There is cognition (*grahaṇa*) (of things) which are functioning beyond the sense capacities in the past, future and present, either individually or collectively, and are proportionately distributed (divided) in terms of their being free from the *tamas* covering ordinary awareness (*buddhi-sattva*). The scope of such cognition is either small or great (among various sentient beings). The cause of such cognition is known as 'the seed of the omniscient' (*sarvajña-bīja*)" [Larson 2018, 228].

<sup>10</sup> *buddhādipranītaś ca agamābhāso na tv āgamah, sarvapramāṇabādhitakṣaṇikanairātmyādīmārgopadeśakatvena vipralambhakatvād iti bhāvah/ tena śrutismṛtīhāsapurāṇalakṣaṇād āgamata āgacchanti buddhim ārohanti asmād abhyudayaniḥśreyasopāyā ity āgamah/* [TV 77,24–27].

<sup>11</sup> *mantrāyurvedeṣu tāvad īśvarapranīteṣu pravṛttisāmarthyād arthāvyabhicāravinīscayāt prāmānyaṃ siddham/ na ca auśadhibhedānām tatsamyogaviśeṣānām ca mantrānām ca tat tad varṇāvāpoddhāreṇa sahasreṇa' pi puruṣāyusair laukikapramāṇavyavahārī śaktaḥ kartum anvayavyatirekau/* [TV 69,4–7]. This argument was presented for the first time by Vātsyāyana in the *Nyāyabhāṣya* [Taber 2009, 74].

<sup>12</sup> Kataoka discusses a similar problem with warranting the teaching of the Buddha about extraordinary matters based on his teachings which could be verified, and the way that Dharmakīrti deals with this gap [Kataoka 2011, 255–256].

<sup>13</sup> A parallel argument is made by Al-Ghazali, who appeals to the medical science and astrology as a proof of the possibility of a prophetic revelation inspired by God. "Whoever researches in such matters knows of necessity that this knowledge is attained only by Divine inspiration and by assistance from God most high. It cannot be reached by observation. For instance there are some astronomical laws based on phenomena which occur only once in a thousand years; how can these be arrived at by personal observation? It is the same with the properties of drugs" [Kessler 2007, 259].

<sup>14</sup> *kapilasya api jāyamānasya maheśvarānugrahād eva jñānaprāptiḥ śrūyata iti/* [TV 78,21–22].

<sup>15</sup> *kapilo nāma viṣṇor avatāraviśeṣaḥ prasiddhaḥ/* [TV 78,22–23].

<sup>16</sup> *ādividuśaś ca kapilasya kalpādaḥ kalpāntarādhītaśrutismaraṇasambhavaḥ, suptaprabudhasya iva pūrvedyur avagatānām arthānām aparedyuh/* [TK 13,19–20].

<sup>17</sup> I would like to thank Alex Watson for drawing my attention to this point.

<sup>18</sup> *svayambhūḥ hiranyagarbhaḥ/ tasyāpi sāmṅhyayogaprāptir vede śrūyate/ sa eva īśvara ādividvān kapilo viṣṇuḥ svayambhūr iti bhāvah/ svāyambhuvānām tv īśvara iti bhāvah/* [TV 78,23–25].

<sup>19</sup> *namāmi jagadutpattihetave vṛṣaketave/ kleśakarmavipākādirahitāya hitāya ca/ natvā patañjalim ṛṣim vedavyāsenā bhāṣite/ saṃkṣiptaspaṣṭabharthā bhāṣye vyākhyā vidhīyate//* [TV 2,2–5].

<sup>20</sup> The divine nature of Patañjali is also alluded to in the first benedictory verse of the YSBh, where the god Ahiṣa is praised (Larson considers these verses a later interpolation). Later tradition identifies Patañjali with the lord of snakes [Larson & Bhattacharya 2008, 59].

<sup>21</sup> The reasons for Vācaspati's identification of Bādarāyaṇa with Vyāsa are the object of my ongoing study to be published in the future.

<sup>22</sup> The 1971 edition of the TV (pp. 479–475) lists in its index the following pages with references to various *purāṇa*-s (sometimes several references in the same page): 60, 77, 78, 136, 175, 201, 229, 248, 259, 263, 271, 272, 277, 278, 279, 280, 283, 341, 403, 419, 422. The same index (pp. 477–478) finds only one (!) reference to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, and zero references to other *purāṇa*-s in the YSBh.

<sup>23</sup> My research on Vācaspati's "yogic agenda" in his non-yogic commentaries is in progress and will be published in the future. One may get a glimpse on this agenda in [Shevchenko 2017, 870–880].

<sup>24</sup> See fn. 23 above.

## REFERENCES

- Aklujkar A. (1999), “The Prologue and Epilogue Verses of Vācaspati-Miśra-I”, *Rivista degli studi orientali*, Vol. 73, Fasc. ¼, pp. 105–130.
- Bryant E. F. (2009), *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, North Point Press.
- Bhakti Yoga: Tales and Teachings from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (2018), Macmillan.
- Bhāmatī* – Suranarayana Sastri S. S. and Kunhan Raja C. (ed. and tr.) (1933), *The Bhāmatī of Vācaspati on Śaṅkarāś Brahmasūtrabhāṣya (Catuṣsūtrī)*, Adyar, Theosophical Publishing House, Madras.
- Chapple C. K. (1994), “Reading Patañjali without Vyāsa: A Critique of Four Yoga Sūtra Passages”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 62, No. 1, pp. 85–105.
- Jha G. (1896), *An English Translation with the Sanskrit Text of the Tattva-Kaumudī (Sāṃkhya) of Vāchaspati Miśra*, T. Tatyā, Bombay.
- Kataoka K. (2011), “Manu and the Buddha for Kumārila and Dharmakīrti,” in Helmut Kresser, Horst Lasic, Eli Franco and Birgit Kellner (eds), *Religion and Logic in Buddhist Philosophical Analysis Proceedings of the Fourth International Dharmakīrti Conference, Vienna, August 23–27, 2005*, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, pp. 255–269.
- Kessler E. G. (ed.) (2007), *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader*, Thomson Wadsworth.
- Larson G. J. (2018), *Classical Yoga Philosophy and the Legacy of Sāṃkhya with Sanskrit Text and English Translation of Pātañjala Yogasūtra-s, Vyāsa Bhāṣya and Tattvavaiśaradī of Vācaspatimiśra*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.
- Larson G. J. and Bhattacharya R. Sh. (eds) (1987), *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, Vol. IV: Sāṃkhya, Motilal Banarsidass.
- Larson G. J. and Bhattacharya R. Sh. (eds) (2008), *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, Vol. XII: Yoga: India’s Philosophy of Meditation, Motilal Banarsidass.
- Maas P. A. (2006), *Samādhipāda. Das erste Kapitel des Pātāñjalayogaśāstra zum ersten Mal kritisch ediert. The First Chapter of the Pātāñjalayogaśāstra for the First Time Critically Edited*, Shaker Verlag, Aachen.
- Maas P. A. (2013), “A Concise Historiography of Classical Yoga Philosophy”, in Eli Franco (ed.), *Periodization and Historiography of Indian Philosophy*, Sammlung de Nobili, Institute für Südasiens, Tibet und Buddhismuskunde der Universität Wien, Vienna, pp. 53–90.
- Nicholson A. (2010), *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History*, Columbia University Press.
- Pines Sh. & Gelblum T. (1966), “Al-Bīrūnī’s Version of Patañjali’s ‘Yogasūtra’”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 302–325.
- Shevchenko D. (2017), “Natural Liberation in the Sāṃkhyakārikā and Its Commentaries”, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 45, No. 5, pp. 863–892. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10781-017-9326-2>
- Taber J. (2009), “Yoga and Our Epistemic Predicament”, in Eli Franco (ed.), *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness*, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien, pp. 71–92.
- TK – *Tattvakaumudī* – Jha G. (1896), *An English Translation with the Sanskrit Text of the Tattva-Kaumudī (Sāṃkhya) of Vāchaspati Miśra*, T. Tatyā, Bombay.
- TV – *Tattvavaiśaradī* – *Pātāñjalayogadarśanam Vācaspatimiśraviracita-Tattvavaiśaradī-vijñānabhikṣukṛta-Yogavārttikavibhūṣita-Vyāsaśāṣyasametam* (1971), Bharatiya Vidya Prakasan, Varanasi.

Д. Шевченко

**Як Віндг’явасін перетворився на Ведав’ясу:  
вплив Вачаспаті Мішри на йогу Патаньджалі**

У цій статті досліджується роль, яку Вачаспаті Мішра – впливовий індійський філософ Х століття – відіграв у просуванні та канонізації в Індії йоги Патаньджалі. Вачаспаті Мішра був ерудитом, відомим в індійській традиції як носій рідкісного титулу *сарва-тантра-сватантра* (“той, хто володіє всіма системами”). Він написав незалежні трактати та дуже впливові коментарі до майже всіх головних брагманічних філософських традицій. Автор

статті стверджує, що різноманітна наукова діяльність Вачаспаті в атмосфері Мітхіли, авторитетного центру брагманського навчання, ефективно сприяла розвитку двох систем – йоги Патаньджали та адвайта-веданти, – які тоді були порівняно непримітними. Пропоноване дослідження зосереджене на йозі Патаньджалі.

Вачаспаті написав “Таттва-вайшьяді”, коментар до “Йогасутра-бгаш’ї”, та ототожнив її автора з Ведав’ясою – міфологічним упорядником Вед і автором “Магабгарати” й пуран. Не випадково Вачаспаті приписав Ведав’ясі також авторство “Брагмасутр”, фундаментального тексту іншої традиції. Автор статті зазначає, що не бачив в історії двох текстів більш ранніх прецедентів такої атрибуції, покликаної підвищити їхній статус в ортодоксальному середовищі. Оскільки “коментар Ведав’яси” став розглядатися як вирішальне канонічне тлумачення філософської школи йоги і позаяк усі наступні коментарі спираються на “Таттва-вайшьяді” Вачаспаті, коментаторську діяльність Вачаспаті (можливо, разом з інституціональними ініціативами, про які ми нічого не знаємо) можна сприймати як поворотний пункт в історії філософії йоги, після якого трійця “Йога-сутри”, “Бгаш’я” і “Таттва-вайшьяді” дістала в традиції статус майже абсолютного авторитету, тоді як альтернативні лінії тлумачення були приречені на забуття.

**Ключові слова:** Вачаспаті Мішра, індійська філософія, йога Патаньджалі, адвайта-веданта, санкх’я, “Йога-сутри”, Ведав’яса

*Стаття надійшла до редакції 22.10.2022*