

## STRETCHING TRADITION. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, BODY, AND HEALTH IN MODERN AND CLASSICAL YOGA

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*Summary:* In this paper we develop a contrastive analysis of some aspects of Modern and Classical yoga. With this purpose we first provide a brief discussion of what has been labelled 'modern postural yoga,' addressing the transformation that, according to specialists, yoga has undergone in the last century and a half. This process, scholars argue, led to an emphasis in postural exercise and health, and located the focus of the practice on the body. We then analyse, in the second part of the work, Patañjali's *Yogasūtras*, its relation to āyurvedic ancient literature, and concentrate our attention on the elements related to health, the body, and the physical activity we will propose are present in Patañjali's treatise. In the third part, we discuss the respects in which the contemporary transnational yoga phenomenon represents a continuation of the ancient tradition of which Patañjali's text is an expression. This contrastive analysis provides us an excellent opportunity to examine aspects of the classical yoga treatise that have yet to play a significant role in the discussion regarding the relationship between Modern and Classical yoga.

*Key words:* *Yogasūtras*, *Āyurveda*, *Modern Yoga*, *āsana*, *tapas*

### Introduction

The last couple of years have been highly important for the history of Yoga. As is well known, on the 27 September 2014, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke at the General Assembly of the United Nations urging the world to adopt the International Day of Yoga. Less than three months later, on the 11 December, 177 countries approved the proposal, establishing the 21 June as the International Day of Yoga (IDY). In the following year, hundreds of cities organized massive Yoga gatherings and classes to celebrate the first IDY, and the phenomenon was repeated in an even greater scale in the following years (1).

The last two decades have also seen the birth of a new field of research called Modern Yoga Studies (Singleton, 2010: 16 ff.). This recent area of study focuses on those types of yoga that evolved mainly through the interaction of

Western individuals interested in Indian religion and a number of more or less Westernized Indians over the last 150 years (De Michelis, 2005: 700). The identification of this phenomenon as such evolves from the perception that modern yoga is in relevant ways different from its classical form, and even from *haṭha-yoga*, and from this arises the need to study it as a different branch, at least, of the tree of yoga, and the youngest one (for example, De Michelis 2004, 1 ff.). The main difference that scholars have pointed out between classical Yoga and its modern versions, as we shall see, is the stress, laid by the new Westernized trends of yoga, on the bodily postural practices and the health benefits that these bring along. The emphasis on these aspects, according to the specialists, contrasts with the exiguous attention paid to physical activity and health in the classical yoga text, the *Pātañjala-Yoga-Śāstra*.

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In the present paper we develop a contrastive analysis of these aspects in Modern and Classical yoga. With this purpose in mind, we provide a brief discussion of what has been labelled modern postural yoga (MPY), addressing the transformation that, according to specialists, yoga has undergone in the last century and a half. This process, scholars argue, led to an emphasis on postural exercise and health, and, hence, located the focus of the practice on the body. We then analyse, in the second part of the work, Patañjali's *Yogasūtras* with its *bhāṣya* and center our attention on the elements related to health and medicine, the body and physical explicitly and implicitly present in it. In our last part we discuss the respects in which the contemporary transnational yoga phenomenon represents a continuation of the ancient yoga tradition of which Patañjali's text is an expression. We focus, thus, on the points of contact, though not denying the divergences, between classical yoga and its modern counterpart. This contrastive analysis provides us a good opportunity to examine aspects of the *Pātañjala-yoga-śāstra* that have not yet played a significant role in the discussion regarding this relationship between classical yoga and the body.

### Modern (Postural) Yoga

Aligned with the proposal of establishing the IDY noted above, India's Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) has created a *Common Yoga Protocol (CYP)* with the intention of giving "a brief overview about Yoga and Yogic practices to orient one towards comprehensive health for an individual and the community"

([sic] *CYP*, 2016: 2). The related booklet issued by the Government of India contains a six page introduction about yoga, its history and benefits; thirty pages dedicated to physical movements and postures; five pages devoted to breathing techniques; and two pages in which inner practices such as *dhyāna* (meditation), *sankalpa* (commitment) and the recitation of a sacred verse (2) are explained. There is also an interesting paragraph in the booklet entitled "How yoga can help" which, after succinctly stating that "yoga is essentially a path to liberation from all the bondages", provides the following points about the benefits yoga offers:

- "Yoga is beneficial for physical fitness, musculoskeletal functioning and cardiovascular health.
- It is beneficial in the management of diabetes, respiratory disorders, hypertension, hypotension and many lifestyle related disorders.
- Yoga helps to reduce depression, fatigue, anxiety disorders and stress.
- Yoga regulates menopausal symptoms."

The section ends with the statement that "in essence, Yoga is a process of creating a body and mind that are stepping-stones, not hurdles, to an exuberant and fulfilling life" (*CYP*, 2016: 8).

The first thing to be noticed in this short passage is that two characterizations of Yoga are provided: the first one, as a path to liberation from all the bondages, and, the second one, as a process towards an exuberant and fulfilling life. Both of them are presented as the essence of yoga and one might ask if they are not contradictory or, at least, if they clash in some way. Secondly, one immediately notices the medical

frame in which the discourse on yoga is presented. In this regard, Elisabeth de Michelis, one of the forerunners of Modern Yoga Studies, points out that modern yoga has been studied in two main ways, one of them being from the point of view of the medical, sports and fitness sciences. This approach, she states, has been primarily concerned with testing selected and adapted yogic practices in order to assess their therapeutic and healing potential and the ways in which they work, and also to find out how they may be used for the cultivation of psychophysical fitness, health and well-being (De Michelis, 2007: 2). Indeed, an increasing amount of research has been carried out in the last decades in order to explore the effects of postural and meditational yogic practices, and these have helped to withdraw yoga from its religious Hindu aura and to transplant it in a therapeutic, scientific landscape (Alter, 2004: 77 ff.), which has allowed yoga to be perceived as universally valid, by both many westerners as well as Indians (3).

This approach, as we can appreciate from the *Common Yoga Protocol*, is not only the outsider scholar's point of view, but practitioners and advocates of yoga have incorporated it themselves, framing in it their presentation of the discipline, and its purposes and fruits. However, one can ask to what degree this approach remains simply a frame for legitimating the field, or whether, as we will argue, by implanting the graft of ancient yoga onto new roots in foreign terrain, the result is a new plant which nonetheless retains much continuity with its ancient stock. These kinds of questions have been addressed by specialists in Modern Yoga Studies, and have in fact led them to coin the

expression 'Modern Postural Yoga' for delimitating the (new) field of their interest.

In order to examine such problems, let us first refer to the five-fold distinction of modern types of yoga suggested by De Michelis. A distinction should be made, according to De Michelis, on the basis of the specific practices emphasized and how these are used within the schools and in terms of wider social dynamics (2008: 21 ff.). The first type is the modern *psychosomatic* yoga of Vivekananda, enshrined in his *Rāja Yoga* first published in 1896. The bedrock of this variety, notes De Michelis, is a school's interpretation of Patañjali's *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, to which other elements from (neo-)Hindu or Western esoteric traditions are attached (4). The second kind is the *neo-Hindu* style of Modern Yoga. This brand of yoga is especially receptive to influences from the martial and gymnastic traditions of both indigenous and Western origins. It often encompasses either irenic or more confrontational notions of Hindu revivalism, nationalism and / or supremacy (5). Thirdly, De Michelis mentions *postural* forms of modern yoga. These include elements of the two former forms and started to develop from the 1920s onwards. The modern postural yoga schools put a much stronger emphasis on postural practice and have contributed the most to the development and codification of relatively advanced and sophisticated canons of postural theory and practice. Their religio-philosophical aspects are relatively unfocussed and polyvalent, says De Michelis, which make these trends mostly compatible with transnational secularization and / or acculturation. When people talk about yoga in everyday English, this is the type of practice that is intended (6).

*Meditational* yoga, as the fourth kind of yoga, presents a more complex situation. Also arising in the 1920s, these schools focus primarily on their own specific set of meditational practices and are often headed by charismatic founders or leaders, whose authority pervades the institution. Their teachings may develop towards idiosyncratic forms of belief, which in turn stimulate the creation of specific practices or of specific interpretations of the practices (7). These developmental trajectories, explains De Michelis, often bring them progressively closer to the fifth type, *denominational* forms of yoga, which promote their own forms of (meditational) yoga, worldviews and lifestyles, instead of connecting them with wider societal, ideological or religious webs of meaning (8). As De Michelis points out, the most widely diffused in many Western cities and commonly referred to nowadays by the word “yoga” is the third kind of postural practice. In relation to this, Mark Singleton holds that modern transnational yoga is predominantly an Anglophone phenomenon, and he has consequently engaged in the study of English sources in which different forms of yoga were formulated and transmitted in a dialogical relationship between India and the West through the medium of this language (2010: 9-10). The conclusion he arrives at after his examination of the sources of “transnational Anglophone yoga”, as he prefers to identify it, is that the term “yoga”, in so far as it refers to modern postural practice, is a homonym and not a synonym, of the yoga associated with the philosophical system of Patañjali or the one that forms an integral component of the *Śaiva Tantras* or the *Bhagavad Gītā*. This is not to say that he understands contemporary yoga to

be necessarily divorced and isolated from other prior traditions of yoga: he holds, however, that in its dissemination in the Western world, yoga underwent a radical transformation in response to the differing worldviews, logical predispositions and aspirations of modern audiences (*ibid.*, 16-17). In his work, Singleton carries out a brief overview of yoga in the Indian tradition with particular reference to *haṭha* yoga in order to show that the modern postural orthopraxis does not really resemble the yoga forms from which it claims to derive. After examining the reasons for the exclusion of *haṭha* yogic practices from the modern yoga renaissance, he then shows the way in which *āsana* was refashioned as a key component of transnational yoga practice by means of its interaction with the worldwide physical culture movement. Gymnastics and bodybuilding movements in India, often linked to nationalistic manliness-building projects (see Rosselli, 1980: 121-148), were active in the second half of the nineteenth and beginnings of the twentieth centuries with the supreme aim of uplifting India from “the mire of physical decadence” (*ibid.* 95. See also Alter, 2004: 142 ff.). “Harmonial gymnastics” is also indicated as a key ingredient and Singleton asserts, in this regard, that “the breathing, stretching and relaxation classes attended every week by thousands of twenty-first-century Londoners as yoga recapitulate the spiritualized gymnastics undertaken by their grandmothers and great-grandmothers in the 1930s”. The fitness oriented yoga available in virtually every health club in London today, he adds, may represent a historical succession from those regimes of quasi-mystical body conditioning and calisthenics devised exclusively for women in

the first half of the twentieth century. Despite their lack of the “spiritual India” trappings, contemporary yoga remains strikingly similar to these regimes both in form and content, he claims (*ibid*, 152).

As we can appreciate from our brief survey of the research carried out by these specialists, it seems that modern yoga, including the one advocated by the *CYP*, cannot be understood simply as “an invaluable gift of ancient Indian tradition” (*CYP*, 2016: v). The developments evinced by the study of its modern history suggest that the trunk from which this young branch is growing cannot be considered to be rooted exclusively in Indian soil and to have sprouted purely from Hindu seeds. Indeed, if we continue the metaphor of the tree to explain modern postural yoga we might rather say that it is the result of the conjunction of branches from trunks rooted in distant lands and grown from dissimilar grains, whose offshoot bears a resemblance with the original Indian fruit but carrying a distinctly different fragrance and flavour. Conceived as such, the main “flavour” of modern postural yoga seems to be associated with fitness, health and well-being, while the understanding of yoga as “a path to liberation from all the bondages”, as it is stated in the *CYP*, seems to have faded out.

We have already seen that the *CYP* emphasises the health benefits of yoga and that, in essence, yoga is (also) the process of creating a body and mind that are stepping-stones “to an exuberant and fulfilling life” (*CYP*, 2016: 8). Congruent with this point of view seems to be Alter’s observation that modern postural yoga owes more to Eugene Sandow, the father of modern bodybuilding, than to Aurobindo

or Vivekananda. “There can be no doubt that Vivekananda and Aurobindo defined the broader intellectual context within which there was a renaissance in the practice of Yoga *āsanas*, *kriyās*, and *prāṇāyāma*. But the history of this renaissance seems to “slip past” these men, since there is a much more direct link between innovative Indian experimentation in the 1920s and transnational ideas about health, strength, and physical fitness all over the world in the mid to late nineteenth century and early in the twentieth” (2004: 28). Furthermore, the effect of the tendency alluded to by Alter has, according to Singleton, exercised a profound effect even on the shape of yoga today (2007: 135), and has led to a transmutation of yoga into a system of stretching for health and fitness (2013: 38). Chakraborty, along similar lines, argues that this transmutation of yoga can also be clearly appreciated in contemporary India, where the popularity of Guru Ramdev’s fitness program broadcasted on the Aastha television channel is a demonstration of how Hindu “ascetics” are dipping into a new era of the fitness consumer. “He offers his fitness regimen,” asserts Chakravorty, “as a national program for the improvement of the nation’s health and for a redefinition of the “self” [and...] promotes a somaticised religio-nationalism as an alternative lifestyle” (2006: 387-390).

As we noted above, the transformation which Modern Yoga is undergoing seems not to be explainable in terms of the relocation of an ‘Oriental’ seed in ‘Occidental’ grounds. Rather, it has been understood as a re-enculturation process in which (postural) yoga was exported to the West, due largely to the Hindu Renaissance, where it gained popularity and then sub-

sequently also gained popularity among urban Hindus in India as a consequence (see Flood, 1996: 267-268). This kind of phenomenon, labeled in the field of religious studies as the *pizza effect*, illustrates the dialogical interaction between Indian and western protagonists involved in the constitution of yoga as we know it today. In summary, our brief discussion of modern yoga's bibliography has tried to show that the *pizza effect* applied to yoga should not be understood merely in terms of a growth in its popularity after its westernization, but as a transformation in the ingredients of the original recipe and in the way they are combined together. Furthermore, applying to yoga what Stephen Jenkins has pointed out in relation to pizza (2002: 71-83), we can say that the re-enculturation of yoga allowed westerners to delight themselves when finding in (re)Indian(ized) yoga a reflection of their own fitness and self cultivation tendencies, (9) which in turn they re-import to the west as "authentic" Indian Yoga. After all, writes Jenkins quoting his rigorous yoga teacher in India, "Americans always want a workout" (2002: p.81). In this way, contemporary western image-mediated vanity manages to see itself replicated in the catwalk of spiritual progress clothed in ancient eastern ascetic wrappings. This process, we can add, though contorting Indian yoga, has stretched considerably tourism-related incomes in India (see Aggarwal, 2008: 457-464).

### **Physical Activity, Body and Health in ancient Yoga: a contextualized analysis**

Let us now turn to the analysis of the *Pātañjala-Yoga-Śāstra* regarding the classical

exposition on yoga (10). This text comprises both the *Yogasūtra* and its most ancient commentary, the *bhāṣya*. While for centuries the *sūtra* has been attributed to Patañjali and the *bhāṣya* to Vyāsa, current scholarship suggests that both are the work of a single author (see Maas, 2013: 57-69). The date of its composition seems to be around the fourth century AD (*ibid*, 66), though it certainly draws on pre-existing traditions and (oral) texts, which the author indirectly acknowledges and masterfully synthesizes in a compact and well structured treatise. Historically, yoga and *sāṅkhya* have been closely related and in many cases yoga has been considered a theistic variant of *sāṅkhyan* philosophy (11). Consequently, though early yoga is generally considered independent, and later as one of the six major Indian philosophical currents or *darśanas* (12), it is probably more accurate to consider it an ancient ascetic practice at some point assimilated to the *sāṅkhyan* world view, which later progressively differentiated itself from the latter (see Jakobsen, 2011: 74-82) (13). Notwithstanding the discussion of the (non)existence of an ancient history of yoga as an independent *darśana* (Bronkhorst, 1981: 316), there is a well documented textual tradition stemming from the *Pātañjala-Yoga-śāstra* which extends itself until the present time (14). The fact that our text integrates the yogic practices and doctrines in a *sāṅkhyan* ontological framework should not be overlooked. Modern promoters of the *Yogasūtra*, in contrast, tend to cushion the strict dualism of *sāṅkhya* inherent in the treatise encapsulating it in a neo-vedantic interpretation. This reading, in fact, is an important part of the history of modern yoga and of the popularization of our treatise. We

have to bear in mind, in this regard, that two of the most important protagonists of modern yoga renaissance, Swami Vivekananda and Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, played a key role in the establishment of Patañjali as a source of authority for yoga in the modern global era (15). And both of these thinkers, and even Krishnamacharya's disciples, contributed to the canonization of such a neo-vedantic reading (16). This interpretation, moreover, was applied not only to Patañjali's text but also to the general widespread contemporary conception of yoga, of which, once again, the already cited *Common Yoga Protocol* gives us a clear and recent expression. "According to Yogic scriptures, the practice of Yoga leads to the union of individual consciousness with the universal consciousness" (CYP: 3). This statement, though broadly applicable to other *yoga-sāstras* (17), does not follow from a close reading of the *Yogasūtra*, to which the *CYP* refers to on the next page as the systematization and codification of the ancient yogic practices, along with their meaning and related knowledge, accomplished by Patañjali (*CYP*, 2016: 3-4). We now need to discuss a contextual aspect of Yoga in antiquity that is relevant to our analysis. So far we have outlined how the discourse on MPY is characterized as being presented in a medical framework, and by its stress on the health benefits of yoga. Scholars, in fact, point out these features as a hallmark of MPY that distinguishes it from its classical predecessor. However, there are textual evidences that in Ancient India yoga and medicine have also been closely related. It is to these references that we now turn.

Buried in one of the earliest medical treatises

in Sanskrit, there is a short tract on the yogic path to liberation. Dominik Wujastyk has recently provided a new translation of these verses and has shed important light on the relationship between ancient ascetic traditions such as buddhism, yoga, and *Āyurveda*. The passage contains thirty nine verses and occurs in the Chapter on the Embodied Person in the *Compendium of Caraka* (*Caraka Saṃhitā*, *Śārīrasthāna* 1, verses 137-155), probably the earliest surviving complete treatise on classical Indian medicine. Scholars agree that this yoga tract predates Patañjali's yoga system and should be dated between the first century BCE and the first two centuries CE. It is a syncretic text about the path of yoga in which the presence of citations from early treatises on *Vaiśeṣika* and *Sāṅkhya* are evidence of a willingness to synthesize across philosophical divides. The text expounds a very early eight-fold path in which *smṛti* (recollection) plays a central role in the acquisition of supernatural powers and ultimate liberation. The Buddhist technical vocabulary and the text's focus on mindfulness suggest that the archaic yoga method integrated in the medical treatise owed its origin to Buddhist traditions cultivating *smṛti* (18).

In another important ancient medical treatise, the *Suśruta Saṃhitā* (SS), there is an interesting statement that also connects yoga and Ayurveda. In the third chapter of its first section, the treatise introduces the different parts of *Āyurveda* and mentions the numerous topics included in the whole text (19). Right before alluding to the section dedicated to the body and the ten topics included in it we find: "These ten concerning the body have been pointed out by the great sage (Suśruta) with the purpose of

the knowledge of the body for the physicians and even for the yogins” (20). This statement, though brief and isolated, reinforces the idea just discussed that medical knowledge had close associations with yogic practice. It even provides an interesting contrast with the information provided in the *Caraka Saṃhitā* (CS), since while the latter treatise relates yoga with inner meditational practices and the cultivation of recollection (*smṛti*), the *SS* mentions the usefulness of anatomical and physiological data for yogins. In both texts, however, the reference to yoga is associated with the Chapter on the Embodied Person (the *Śārīrasthāna*).

Additionally, the yoga passage of the *CS*, despite its emphasis on meditation, has some other interesting features that can be highlighted. One of the outcomes of the yogic discipline described there is the end of all pains (*duḥkha*) (21), but another and more important one, is the achievement of supernatural powers, one of which is beauty (*kānti*). In fact, the description provided by Caraka about the yogic powers is very much in line with Patañjali’s teaching on *siddhis*, which we discuss below (Wujastyk, 2012: 34). In relation to the close connection between yoga and medicine, it should be also noticed that the composition of a medical treatise was attributed to Patañjali himself, in addition to grammatical and yogic texts. The first testimony of this tradition is found in the opening lines of Bhoja Rāja’s (XIth. century) commentary to the *Yogasūtra*. There, Bhoja asserts that Patañjali had contributed to the removal of impurities from the body, speech and mind (22).

### **The *Pātañjala-yoga-sāstra*: health, the body and physical activity**

The *Pātañjala-yoga-sāstra* itself also confirms this close connection between yoga and medicine and, thus, its concern about health and the body. Let us first quote an explicit parallelism between yoga and medicine that we find in the commentary to *sūtra* II 15 of the *bhāṣya* section (23).

*“As the science of therapeutics (cikitsā śāstra) has a four-fold arrangement, disease, the cause of disease, absence of disease and the practice of healing, likewise, even this science has a four-fold arrangement, namely, the cycle of rebirth (saṃsāra), the cause of the cycle of rebirth, liberation and the path towards liberation. Of these, the cycle of rebirth, abundant in pain, is to be avoided. The association of the puruṣa with nature is the cause (of what is) to be avoided. The cessation that reaches beyond the association is the destruction (of pain). The path towards the destruction (of pain) is accurate contemplation”.*

If we accept the already mentioned identification defended by Maas between Patañjali and the *bhāṣya-kāra*, this passage gives us clear evidence that Patañjali had a systematic knowledge of a medical system and that he also expected his audience to share it. An analogy, in fact, operates as a means of explanation when one of the members of the analogy is known and can be used as a means for elucidating the other less known member. It also suggests that Patañjali might be thinking his soteriological philosophy in the frame of a therapeutic paradigm. He identifies, firstly, the fourfold



arrangement of the medical system, which he calls *cikitsā śāstra*, consisting of disease, the cause of disease, health and the means to obtain health; (24) and then offers a parallel fourfold arrangement of his own science (*śāstra*): *saṃsāra* or the cycle of rebirth, the cause of *saṃsāra*, liberation and the means to obtain liberation. The *yoga-śāstra*, hence, is presented as the therapy for the disease of *saṃsāra* that afflicts the self, a therapy which, when successfully applied, leads to the recovery of the essential, liberated, “healthy” state of *puruṣa* (see Halbfass, 1992: ch. VII).

Our text also presents other specific evidences of medical knowledge. In *sūtra* I 30, we find a first reference to disease. In this aphorism Patañjali enumerates the obstacles that produce distractions for the mind which prevent the yogi from achieving *samādhi* or the state of supreme concentration. Disease (*vyādhi*) is the first distraction mentioned, and is defined in the *bhāṣya* as unevenness (*vaiṣamya*) in the *dhātus*, *rasas* and *karaṇas*, terms that make allusion to the respective humours recognized by Āyurveda, the different qualities of food and drinks, and the organs of action and sensation of the body. It is very relevant to note that in the CS (*Sū.* IX 4) disease is defined precisely as *dhātu-vaiṣamya*, and is there directly associated with pain (*duḥkha*) (25). The next *sūtra* of the PYŚ (I, 31) states that *duḥkha* is the counterpart of disease and of the other obstacles in general. The *bhāṣya* here distinguishes three kinds of pains: *ādhyātmika*, *ādhibhautika* and *ādhidaiivika*. This classification makes reference to the origin of diseases, which can be relative to one’s self (*ātmika*), other living entities (*bhautika*) and environmental (*daiivika*). This

threefold division also provides a close link to Āyurveda, since it is explicitly mentioned in the *SS* (*Sū.* XXIV).

A further connection is provided by *sūtra* III 29, which states that by concentration (*saṃyama*) on the navel chakra knowledge of the arrangement of the body (*kāya-vyūha*) is attained. Bhoja’s commentary to this *sūtra* states that this region is the root of the subtle channels and, in fact, the ancient medical texts hold that the origin of the twenty four different ducts of the body have their origin in the navel (26). The *bhāṣya* to this *sūtra* provides further information that in the body there are three *doṣas* and seven *dhātus* and gives an enumeration of both kinds of components. These lists, though not free from textual problems, also have a high degree of consonance with the Āyurvedic theories expounded in the early medical treatises (Maas, 2008: 125-162).

These ingredients of our text, if taken together, confirm that the author of the PYŚ was acquainted with an early version of Āyurvedic medical knowledge which played an important role in his understanding. Obviously, if Maas is correct, this means that Patañjali himself had made this connection. But even if one is not convinced by Maas, we have to accept nonetheless that yoga was associated with Āyurveda both before Patañjali, as the Āyurvedic texts discussed above show, and also a century or so later, as the *bhāṣya* evinces. Either way, all this provides a frame for thinking about the *yoga śāstra* in terms of a therapeutic science. In other words, medical knowledge appears as an integral element inside the larger purview of the classical yogic path. The relationship between yoga and medicine in the PYŚ, hence, appears

to be of mutual inclusiveness, since medicine is presented both as a general model for explicating yoga and also as a specific aspect related to the body (and the body-mind complex) in the broadest path of yogic endeavor.

Furthermore, yoga appears to surpass medicine even in relation to the body. There is, in fact, an important section of the treatise devoted to the exposition of different extraordinary powers that the practitioner achieves as a result of the practice of yoga. Larson, for example, divides these into cognitive capacities and powers (Larson and Bhattacharya, 2008: 119 ff.), Sarbacker into abilities of knowledge and of action (2011, 204), while Key Chapple points out that according to one of the approaches present in the text, the accomplishment of yoga brings about bodily perfection (2011, 234). Let us concentrate, hence, in the extraordinary powers related to action and bodily perfection, due to which yoga would appear as a superior option to medicine with regards to the fruits that both disciplines bring about in relation to the improvement of the body.

The first *sūtra* of the fourth book called *Kaivalya Pāda* states that the yogic powers (*siddhi-s*) arise as the result of supreme concentration (*samādhi*), practice of austerity (*tapas*), repetition of mantra, birth or from drugs (*oṣadhi*). This last option refers us again to Āyurveda, since the scientific study of medicinal plants and herbs is an important part of the discipline, though it had been carried out even in the Vedic period (27). It is also relevant to note in this regard that the *bhāṣya* here relates *oṣadhi* to *rasāyana*, a very important notion for Āyurvedic science. The *Caraka Saṃhitā*, in fact, dedicates a lengthy section to the description of

*rasāyana* at the beginning of the sixth chapter or *Cikitsā Sthāna*. In this section, we read that one of the two branches of *bheṣaja* or therapeutics promotes strength in the healthy while the other one restores health (VI, I 4). The division described as promoting strength in the healthy is, in turn, described as being either *rasāyana* (promotive treatment) or *vṛṣya* (aphrodisiac) (VI, I 5). In the sixth verse we are even told the fabulous results obtained from *rasāyana*: a long duration of life (*dīrgham āyur*), memory (*smṛti*), mental vigour (*medhā*), absence of disease (*arogyā*), the vigor of a young person (*tarunaṃ-vayaḥ*), splendour in figure, tone of voice and generosity (*prabhā varṇa-svara-audārye*), a superior strength of the senses and the body (*dehendriyabalaṃ param*), perfection of speech (*vāksiddhi*), respectability (*praṇāti*), and beauty (*kānti*) (I 7-8). It seems to us that the author of the *bhāṣya* intended to make reference to these outstanding results of the application of herbal promotive treatments as examples of yogic perfections attained from drugs.

We will focus now, however, on one of the other options mentioned as the cause of yogic powers: *tapas* or austerity. Patañjali gives a very important role to *tapas* in his system. The first element included in the yoga of action or *kriyā-yoga* (II 1) is, in fact, *tapas*, and it also appears as one of the *niyamas* or observances (II 32). The *bhāṣya* (II 1) even states that for the person not engaged in *tapas* yoga does not succeed (*sidhyati*), and in the commentary to *sūtra* II 32 different kinds of austerities are enumerated: endurance of the pair of opposites such as hunger and thirst, cold and heat, standing and sitting, the absence of all expression, the absence of speech, fasting, etc. Patañjali further

elaborates in *sūtra* II 43 that the perfection of the body and the senses (*kāyendriya-siddhi*) occurs because of the practice of austerities, due to the destruction of impurities that they bring about (28). The perfection of the body and the senses alluded to in this aphorism can be considered to be a state of perfect health. We must remember that disease is understood as a distraction that prevents the mind from attaining *samādhi*, so it would be difficult to imagine that Patañjali conceives of a body and senses that are perfect and, at the same time, suffering some sort of disease. But the kind of perfection dealt with in this *sūtra* also implies the manifestation of certain extraordinary powers. The *bhāṣya*, in fact, makes a quick reference here to the powers, attributing *aṇiman* (becoming small as an atom) and others to the body, and clairaudience, clairvoyance and others to the senses.

Two other aphorisms deal with the notion of bodily perfection. *Sūtra* 45 of the third book states that a special type of meditation (*saṃyama*) results in the absence of limitations of the natural abilities of the body and in the attainment of its perfection (*kāya-sampat*). In the commentary to this *sūtra* the complete list of the eight powers (*aṣṭāvaiśvaryaṇi*) is provided. These powers include mastery over the elements and the absence of obstructions from them. This absence from obstructions, we can infer, apart from allowing the yogin to perform extraordinary actions, would make him remain in perfect health. The following *sūtra* (III 46) provides more details about the notion of perfection of the body: it implies beauty (*rūpa*) grace (*lāvanya*), strength (*bala*) and adamant hardness (*vajra-saṃhanana*).

Once again, Patañjali insists in the ability that yoga has to act upon the body by providing it with different extraordinary as well as ordinary qualities, though the latter would be achieved to the highest degree. These features of yoga relate it to medicine, making yoga a complement to medicine since they yield similar results. But yoga, nevertheless, goes far beyond medicine, firstly, because of the spiritual goals of yoga if we consider, at least, that these are not attained in medicine, an opinion the *Caraka Saṃhitā* seems to challenge. And, secondly, because of the powers obtained by the yogic practice, though, again, their inclusion in the yoga passage of the *CS* (together with the possibility of obtaining them through drugs) make it difficult to exclude the acquisition of (at least some) powers altogether from the sphere of results attained by medical knowledge.

We would like to discuss, lastly, the role of physical activity in the *PYS*. This topic has been the subject of a great deal of debate in the last decades about the differences between modern and classical yoga, as we pointed out in the previous section. In this regard, Mark Singleton, for example, makes the following statement. “Even—perhaps especially—in the *āsana*-heavy systems that have become synonymous with yoga for many Westerners, the Y[oga]S[utra] is today habitually invoked as a source and authority for practitioners, in spite of the infrequency of material on *āsana* in the *YS* and its commentaries (beyond terse references to static meditation “seats”) and the fact that there is ‘no evidence’ for an ‘ancient tradition’ of *āsana* practice” (2008: 91). Indeed, the allusion to the “scarcity” of information provided by Patañjali in relation to *āsana* and

its contrast to the great emphasis given to it in MPY has become a common place in recent academic literature (see Singleton, 2010: 27). Let us examine, hence, the role of *āsana* in our treatise.

One of the most famous, though not necessarily well-known, aspects of the *Yogasūtra* is its eight-fold synthesis. In the *sūtra* twenty nine of the second book, the *Sādhana Pāda* or Book of Practice, Patañjali enumerates the eight (*aṣṭa-*) limbs (*aṅgāni*) of yoga: *yama* (restraint), *niyama* (observances), *āsana* (posture), *prāṇāyāma* (regulation of breath), *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the senses), *dhāraṇā* (concentration), *dhyāna* (meditation) and *samādhi*. The first thing to note is that the term *aṣṭāṅga* (eight limbed) is so common in Āyurvedic literature that it later became a synonym for Indian medical science (Wujastyk, 2012: 31). Patañjali's choice of terminology (and numbering), hence, seems not arbitrary, especially considering that there were also available previous systematizations of yoga that included only six members (29). Patañjali's preference for an eight-fold yogic path, just like Caraka's and in close terminological relation to Āyurveda as it appears alluded to in the *Mahābhārata* (30), might also indicate the therapeutic frame of reference in which he presents his yoga *śāstra*.

*Āsana*, in particular, is the third member of the sequence and Patañjali dedicates three *sūtras* and some brief comments in the *bhāṣya* to explain it. In the forty sixth *sūtra*, *āsana* is described as steady (*sthira*) and comfortable (*sukha*). We may understand that the relevance and function of *āsana* for classical yoga are to train the body so that it does not disturb or distract the mind of the yogin in any way when

sitting in meditation, that is why it needs to be pleasant and still (Bryant, 2009: 284). In fact, later texts claim that meditating when moving around is distracting while while lying down provokes sleep (31). This could explain why Patañjali adds *āsana*, which actually means “seating posture”, to the pre-existing lists of limbs of yoga (32). The *bhāṣya* enumerates different kinds of *āsanas* that can be rendered as follow: the Lotus Posture (*padmāsana*), the Good Fortune Posture (*bhadrāsana*), the Hero Posture (*vīrāsana*), the Lucky Mark (*svastika*), the Staff Posture (*daṇḍāsana*), the Supported (*sopāśraya*), the Couch (*paryāṅka*), Sitting Like a Sarus Crane (*krauñcaniṣadana*), Sitting Like an Elephant (*hastiniṣadana*), Sitting Like a Camel (*uṣṭraniṣadana*), Being Situated Flat (*samasamsthāna*), Steady Calm (*sthitaprasrabdhi*), and As is Comfortable (*yathāsukha*) (Wujastyk, 2015). Though Patañjali does not describe these postures, Śāṅkara's commentary does explain their distinctive features. It must be noted, as well, that the *bhāṣya* ends his list with an *ādi* (“beginning with” or, simply, “etcetera”), which implies that the catalog of postures provided is not exhaustive. Śāṅkara, in fact, states that one should understand the *ādi* as referring to any other posture which has been taught by the teacher. This comment allows us to infer that yoga teachers, at least at the end of the first millennium when the *Vivarāṇa* was composed, would include the teaching of diverse *āsanas* in their instruction.

It is also worth mentioning that the natural consequence of accomplishing a firm posture which requires no effort is that the yogin is not overcome by the pairs of opposites such as heat and cold (33). This outcome of *āsana*

connects it closely to *tapas*. As we have seen, in the *bhāṣya* to II 32, when describing the different *niyamas* or observances, the *bhāṣya-kāra* states that *tapas* consists in endurance of the pair of opposites and the same traditional example of heat and cold is included. If we look closely at both passages, we can understand the connection between these two practices as implying that when *āsana* is conquered (*jaya-*), as the practitioner is not overcome by the pair of opposites, he is practicing (a kind of) *tapas*. Patañjali, however, does not explicitly assert that the correct practice of *āsana* is a form of *tapas*, in fact, he includes them as different elements of the eight-fold path. Nevertheless, the inclusion of *tapas* as an element of the second *aṅga* does not prevent Patañjali from assigning to it a broader and more encompassing role in the system. *Tapas*, we have already noted, is one of the three elements of the other systematization that the treatise provides in II 1, *kriyā-yoga*, or the yoga of action. And in the *bhāṣya* to II 52, where we find that the result of practicing *prāṇāyāma* is the weakening of the karma which binds the yogin to *saṃsāra*, we also read: “(there is) no superior *tapas* than *prāṇāyāma*!”. Thus, if we bear in mind that the regulation of *prāṇa* is the fourth of the eight limbs, we have grounds to suggest that the notion of *tapas* is in fact taken as a comprehensive practice that exceeds the second limb. Additionally, if we consider that *bhāṣya* II 49 states that when there is conquest of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* may occur, we have further reasons to assume that perfected *āsana* is at least a preparatory *tapas* to the supreme form of *tapas* which is the control of *prāṇa*.

Let us now address a last issue regarding *āsana*

such as it is conceived in the *PYŚ*: whether it can be understood as a kind of physical activity. We must bear in mind, firstly, that its treatment is included in the *Sādhana Pāda* or Book of Practice, and that it could be identified with a kind of *tapas*, which is a constituent of *kriyā-yoga* or yoga of action. From these points, together with its characterization given in II 46 and the catalog of *āsanas* provided in the *bhāṣya*, we can affirm that *āsana* is an initially active though eventually static practice which *results* from bodily training in order to be able to abide steadily and comfortably an otherwise strained physical posture during prolonged times of *prāṇāyāma* and inner meditative practices. Whether this can be taken as a form of physical activity or not, we can evaluate it through a definite modern conception of this notion.

The World Health Organization, for example, defines physical activity as “any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure” (34). This definition, we can say, hits the nail right on the head. Of course, *āsana* does not involve movement. On the contrary, a perfected *āsana* is not only a still posture but it even excludes the slight trembling of the motionless limbs (35). In fact, the stillness of *āsana* seems to reduce energy expenditure as much as possible. What implies movement and demands energy expenditure is the training necessary for being able to accomplish the *āsana comfortably*, which would involve stretching and maybe the strengthening of certain muscles. The alluded definition of physical activity, hence, is not applicable to *āsana* if we understand it solely as a *result*. However, if we include in the category of *āsa-*

na the needed training to completely achieve the posture taught by the teacher, in contrast, then it is reasonable to apply to it the notion of physical activity. I understand, from the above analysis, that Patañjali is thinking of the notion of *āsana* in the first sense, as the complete *result* of a training process which, when achieved, is at the same time a total abandonment of that effortful process. It is interesting to consider in this regard Vācaspati Miśra's comment on II 47. "This natural effort of the body does not bring about the posture that is meant to be taught. It is, in fact, its antagonistic.[...] Therefore, he who practices posture as an observance taught here should employ an effort which consists in suppressing the natural efforts of the body. Otherwise, the posture taught here will not be accomplished" (36). As we can see, Miśra understands that *āsana* is not an exercise that implies applying an effort (37). In fact, if effort arises, he says, the *āsana* is not being accomplished. The commentator, hence, seems to take *āsana* in the first sense, which, though requiring a previous training process, implies nonetheless that the effort involved in the training is no longer present.

### Concluding remarks: stretching tradition

In this last section we discuss how we consider that our analysis of *āsana*, body and health in the PYŚ can contribute to achieving a better understanding of the relationship between classical and modern postural yoga. One of the most evident conclusions in this regard is that the emphasis laid by Modern Postural Yoga in health, and that the medical discourse which frames its presentation, are far from

being unprecedented phenomena, as we have attempted to demonstrate by our analysis of classical sources of yoga and Āyurveda. Naturally, modern western medical knowledge and discourse is in relevant ways different from ancient Āyurveda. But as long as we acknowledge ancient Āyurveda as a historical form of medicine we are forced to accept that the connection between medicine, health and yoga has existed for many centuries and that Modern Postural Yoga should not be conceived as divorced, in this regard, from *Pātañjala* yoga (38).

Somehow less evident is the link between contemporary yoga's stress on physical activity and the concept of *āsana* included in the yoga systematized by Patañjali. In order to shed some light on this relation let us recall, firstly, that *āsana* is not included in the eight-fold yogic path described in the *Caraka Saṃhitā* (Wujastyk, 2012: 41). The list of the six-limbed yoga (*ṣadaṅgā...yoga*) provided in the *Maitri Upaniṣad*, which includes *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhara*, *dhyāna*, *dhāraṇā*, *tarka* (reasoning or inquiry) and *samādhi* also exclude *āsana* (39). The *Bhagavad Gītā*, in contrast, does include the term *āsana* in the chapter on *Dhyāna-yoga* or Yoga of Meditation, in the description of how the yogin has to prepare himself for meditation, but the meaning of the term there is simply "seat", not "posture" (40). We believe that the fact that these pre-Patañjalian treatises do not include the term *āsana* as Patañjali uses it, neither in the systematizations of the yogic path provided on the first two texts noted above, nor in the description the *Gītā* gives, could be understood as a sign of Patañjali's innovation (41). Our author, thus, seems to be introducing into the orthodox textualized understanding

of yoga an aspect of the practice that previous texts preferred to maintain unmentioned. And if the *sūtra* gives this aspect of the practice the status of a “limb” of yoga, the *bhāṣya* moreover supplies a catalog of postures, mentions the physiological effects of a perfected *āsana* and provides enough details of what is conceived as *āsana* in order for the yogin to know when it has been achieved and when he is still at a training stage.

Though in strict terms this last distinction seems to disqualify physical activity from the notion of *āsana*, it does acknowledge the existence of bodily training involved in the process of achieving the perfected posture. Hence, though not a “limb” of yoga, this feature allows us to consider the preparatory physical activity for accomplishing a successful *āsana* at least an essential preliminary exercise for this limb. Can anyone really imagine practicing completely effortlessly any of the postures catalogued in the *bhāṣya* without previously undertaking a training routine? Although scholars have frequently stressed the insignificant number of *sūtras* that Patañjali dedicates to this aspect of the practice, I believe that the quantitative approach might have eclipsed the qualitative change that our text is introducing in relation to previous textual systematizations of yoga. Unless we are willing to rule out *āsana* from Patañjali’s codification, just like the previous systematizations of yoga did, we have to accept that from Patañjali onwards physical activity is a key ingredient of, at least, those orthodox textualized yogic traditions that stem from the *Pātañjala-yoga-śāstra*. Therefore, in the light of our conclusions, if contemporary yoga claims a pedigree that stretches back to

Patañjali, we should accept that the *PYŚ*, with its inclusion of physical activity, is indeed an important antecedent in the orthodox textualized conception of yoga, which can be seen in full expression today. Moreover, maybe the latest expression of this normative orthodox current can be seen in the *Common Yoga Protocol*, where physical activity as well as the body and health (and even Patañjali) play an important role.

We would like to focus attention finally, on the relationship between *tapas* and *āsana* as it is understood in some currents of Modern Postural Yoga. We have already discussed that the *PYŚ*, in virtue of the common results accrued from both (II 32, II 48) and of the comprehensive character of the category of *tapas* which explicitly includes *prāṇāyāma* in the *bhāṣya* II 52, would also admit subsuming the category of *āsana* under that of *tapas*. This seems to be how some trends of MPY also conceptualize *āsana*. Smith, for example, has underlined the importance that *tapas* has in Pattabhi Jois’ writings and teaching of yoga, and the central role that it plays in Patañjali’s *Yogasutras* in this regard (2008: 140-160). He also points out that *āsana*, with its close relation to the production of inner heat (and sweat), is conceived as a form of *tapas* undertaken in order to purify and strengthen the body as a preliminary stage in the practice of yoga (2008: 146).

B. K. S. Iyengar, in his *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, also explicitly considers *āsana* as a practice of *tapas*. “*Tapas*, writes Iyengar, is a burning desire for ascetic, devoted *sādhanā*, through *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana* and *prāṇāyāma*” (Iyengar, 2002: xv) (42). It is also worth mentioning how Iyengar understands *āsana*.

In the same book he devotes some pages to characterizing the different “yogic disciplines”; regarding the third of them, *āsana*, he writes: “In the beginning, effort is required to master the *āsana*. Effort involves hours, days, months, years and even several lifetimes of work. When effortful effort in an *āsana* becomes effortless effort, one has mastered that *āsana*. In this way, each *āsana* has to become effortless” (*ibid.* 31-32). This description seems coherent with what we have discussed regarding Patañjali’s treatise, though we concluded that the stage that included effort should not be strictly identified as (perfected) *āsana*. However, if we take into consideration that Iyengar defines *tapas* as “burning desire to practice yoga and intense effort applied to practice” (*ibid.* 23) we could suggest that by associating effort and *tapas*, on the one hand, and *tapas* and *āsana*, on the other, the inclusion of the effortful training stage as a facet of *āsana* is the result of considering it as a practice of *tapas*. This association, which implies a broadening of the notion of *āsana* justified by its inclusion under the category of *tapas*, might shed light on the fact that many trends of Modern Postural Yoga see intense physical exercise as an essential part of yoga and also why this should not be considered so incompatible with Patañjali’s conception of yoga. This last brief comment on how modern versions of transnational yoga tend to conflate *āsana* and *tapas*, which should certainly be developed in further detail, provides us further insights into the link between modern and *Pātañjala yoga*. It would be an overstatement to say that Patañjali’s conceptualization of *āsana* and *tapas* has a direct bearing on the modern conception of their relationship, since numer-

ous later texts and traditions have also contributed to the modern phenomenon (43). However, the link should not be underestimated and its study could contribute, in my perspective, to a better understanding the ways in which modern postural transnational yoga manages to synthesize later haṭha-yogic traditions and texts (as well as physical culture) with the *PYŚ*.

In conclusion, contemporary yoga definitely presents distinctive features that set this global phenomenon apart from the now almost two thousand year-old Patañjalian text. Modern Yoga Studies have provided valuable contributions to our better understanding of this world-wide heterogeneous movement, its development and the factors involved in its constitution as we know it today. However, a closer dialogue between Modern Yoga studies and Classical Yoga studies could certainly help to put into perspective some of the conclusions to which both fields of research have arrived. From our point of view, the strong connection that the *Pātañjala-yoga-śāstra* evinces with Āyurvedic sciences, the therapeutic frame in which classical yoga is presented (not only in the metaphorical sense of a therapeutic for the self but also regarding the importance given to health and bodily perfection), and the explicit and innovative inclusion of physical activity as *āsana* and *tapas* in the orthodox textualized yogic tradition, allows us to consider that the connection between Modern Postural Yoga and its classical antecedent is more robust than has hitherto been recognized by scholars.



**Notas**

1. We must also mention that in 2016 Yoga was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.
2. “*śantiḥ pātha*”, CYP 2016, p.38.
3. “There is little doubt that the modern medical domain, both orthodox and alternative, has proved to be the most successful context within which globalized forms of Modern Yoga have progressed toward acculturation in most developed societies”. (De Michelis, 2008: 25-26). See also Hoyez, 2007: 172 ff..
4. In this first group the author includes Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh and his many pupils who established yoga-promoting organizations worldwide and the Himalayan Institute of Swami Rama.
5. Contemporary examples of this type are, according to De Michelis, the Bharatiya Yog Sansthan and the “yoga phenomenon” of Swami Ramdev. “The Santa Cruz (Mumbai) Yoga Institute and the Kaivalyadhama Institute at Lonavla (Maharashtra) should probably be classified as combinations of these first two types (i.e., psychosomatic and neo-Hindu)”, says the author (2008: 30).
6. De Michelis (2008: 40) includes the Influential and widely known postural schools established by some of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya’s pupils, B.K.S. Iyengar’s Iyengar Yoga, Pattabhi Jois’ Ashtanga Yoga, and the yoga taught by T.K.V. Desikachar (formerly Viniyoga). The latter, adds the author, could also be seen to be veering toward the psychosomatic mode. She also mentions the more postural aspects of Swami Vishnudevanda’s Sivananda Yoga and Bikram’s Yoga.
7. The examples cited are the Self Realization Fellowship of Swami Yogananda and Brahma Kumaris (2008, 40).
8. De Michelis mentions the Transcendental Meditation movement of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and ISKCON, among others (2008: 30 note 43).
9. Liberman, for example, describes the typical day of a yoga student in Varanasi or Rishikesh, Kovalam or Goa, Mysore or Poona (2004: 23-32).
10. Singleton suggests that the monolithic deference to the authority of the *Yogasūtra* is a modern phenomenon and that the manifold practice traditions of India do not necessarily owe any significant debt to this text (2008: 78 ff). Gordon White discusses interesting textual evi-

- dence that opposes Singleton's suggestions (2014: ch.9).
11. Cfr, for example, *Bhagavad Gītā* V 4 and Madhava's *Sarvadarśanasanġraha*, where Yoga is described as *Seśvara Sāṅkhya* or *Sāṅkhya whith Lord*.
  12. For example Müller (1899: ch.VII) and Hamilton (2001).
  13. For a discussion on the different approaches regarding the relationship between *Sāṅkhya* and Yoga see Burley (2007: ch.II).
  14. For a brief discussion on the varieties of ancient yogic traditions see Muñoz (2016: 465-479).
  15. In this regard, on Krishnamacharya see Singleton (2012: 337-352) and Gordon White (2014: ch.12). On Vivekananda see De Michelis (2004) and Gordon White (2014: ch.7).
  16. Cfr. for example, Iyengar (1979: 22).
  17. The *Bhagavad Gītā*, for example.
  18. For a brief explanation of the (two) meaning(s) of the term see Wujastyk (2012).
  19. Wujastyk (2012: 31) believes that the *Caraka Saṃhitā* might be earlier than this. Meulenbeld (2001, p.2) suggests that the *Suśruta* might represent a later stage, due to its reference to Dhanvantari, unknown in the Vedic tradition. Patterson (2001, p.118), on the other hand, dates the *Suśruta Saṃhitā* to around 100 BC.
  20. *Suśruta Saṃhitā* I 3, 17. *Nirdiṣṭāni daśaitāni śarīrāṇi maharṣinā Vijñānārthaṃ śarīrasya bhiṣajām yogināmapi*
  21. For similar characterizations of yoga in previous and later texts see Bryant (2009: 10 ff.)
  22. Bhojadeva *Rājamārtanḍa* verse 5. Larson and Bhattacarya (2008: p.57) refer, as well, to Bhartṛhari's *Vākya-padīya* I 147 (V c. CE), where the author also states that the impurities related to the fields of intellect, speech and body are completely cleansed with the treatises of yoga (*adhyātma*), language and medicine.
  23. We follow in our work Maas' conclusion, already alluded to, that the *bhāṣya* is the work of the same author of the

- sūtra. yatha cikitsāsāstraṃ caturvyūham*  
| *rogo rogaheturārogyaṃ bhaiṣajyamiti*  
| *evamidamapi śāstraṃ caturvyūhameva*  
| *tadyathā saṃsāraḥ saṃsāraheturmokṣo*  
*mokṣopāya eveti | tatra duḥkhabahulaḥ*  
*saṃsāro heyah | pradhānapuruṣayoḥ*  
*saṃyogo heyahetuḥ | saṃyogasyātyan-*  
*tikī nivṛttirhānam | hānopāyaḥ samyag-*  
*darśanam |*
24. This fourfold division presents some similarities with that offered in *Caraka Saṃhitā*, *Sū.* IX 19.
25. On the relationship between the definition provided in the *PYŚ* and the *Caraka Saṃhitā* see Maas (2008, pp.125-162).
26. Cfr. *Suśruta Saṃhitā*, *Śā.* 9, 2.
27. Cfr. *Oṣadhi sūkta*, *Ṛg Veda* 10.97.
28. For a detailed discussion on *tapas* see Carpenter (2003: 25-50).
29. *Maitri Up.* VI 18.
30. *Mahābhārata* 2, 5, 80. (*cikitsāyām-aṣṭāṅgāyām*). Cfr. Wujastyk (2003: p.394) where there seems to be, however, a typological error in the reference to the passage.
31. *Vedānta Sūtras* IV 1, 7-10.
32. *Āsana* is not a limb in the six-fold path of the *Maitri Upaniṣad*.
33. *PYŚ* II 48.
34. [http://www.who.int/topics/physical\\_activity/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/physical_activity/en/)
35. Cfr. *PYŚ* I 31.
36. Vācaspati Miśra, *Tattvavaiśārādī* II 47. The translation is from Rāma Prasāda (1924: 171).
37. Though it could be thought as an effort to reduce the effort.
38. In the light of these conclusions, statements such as the following seem too short-sighted, “breathing techniques (*prāṇāyāma*) and posture practice (*āsa-na*) have been associated with health and curative effects from the 1920s onwards. Following Singleton, teaching the health benefits of yoga goes back to Shri Yogendra [...]”. (Hauser 2013: 110).
39. *Maitri Up.* VI 18. Note that five out of six limbs coincide with Patañjali’s eight-fold path. Only *tarka* is not taken

up by Patañjali. The translation of the other five is provided in our discussion of Patañjali's *aṣṭāṅga yoga*.

40. *BhG.* VI 11. Van Buitenen (1981: 95) even translates “stool”, since the text explains how the yogin must prepare the seat with grass, a deerskin and a cloth. In chapter 11, verses 15 and 42, the term *āsana* appears again. Only in the first case it could be understood as related to yoga, but the meaning of the term is, again, “seat”. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (II 8) gives a brief description of how the body must be kept straight and erect during meditation, but the word *āsana* is not used.
41. We intend to carry out in a following work an analysis of the notion of *āsana* in the *Mahābhārata* in order to contrast it with the present hypothesis.
42. See also table 18 in Iyengar, 2002: 316.
43. For a detailed analysis and for the textual references regarding the development of the notions of *āsana* and of the yogic body in works later than the *Pātanjala-yoga-śāstra* see Mallinson and Singleton, 2017: ch. 3 and 5. See also Maas, 2018: 49-100 and Birch, 2018: 103-179.

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### Resumen

En el presente artículo presentamos un análisis contrastivo de algunos aspectos del yoga moderno y del yoga clásico. Con tal finalidad brindamos, en primer lugar, una breve discusión acerca de lo que se ha denominado “yoga postural moderno” y abordamos la transformación que, de acuerdo con los especialistas, el yoga atravesó en el último siglo y medio. Este proceso condujo, según los estu-



diosos, a un énfasis en el ejercicio postural y en la salud y situó el foco de la práctica en el cuerpo. En una segunda sección, analizamos el Yogasūtra de Patañjali, su relación con la literatura antigua del Āyurveda y concentramos nuestra atención en los elementos relacionados con la salud, el cuerpo y la actividad física que, tal como nos proponemos poner de manifiesto, están presentes en el tratado de Patañjali. En una tercera parte, examinamos algunos puntos respecto de los cuales el yoga contemporáneo transnacional representa una continuación de la tradición antigua de la cual el texto de Patañjali es una expresión. Nuestro análisis contrastivo nos provee una buena oportunidad para examinar aspectos del tratado clásico del yoga que todavía aguardan ser tenidos en cuenta en la discusión especializada acerca de la relación entre el yoga moderno y el yoga clásico.