The Nature of Compassion in Yoga: Illuminating its Modern Role through an Examination of Historical Texts

Keren Eshed
Loyola Marymount University, eshedk@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
Eshed, Keren, "The Nature of Compassion in Yoga: Illuminating its Modern Role through an Examination of Historical Texts" (2023). LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations. 1240.
https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd/1240

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.
The Nature of Compassion in Yoga:
Illuminating its Modern Role through an Examination of Historical Texts

by

Keren Eshed

A thesis presented to the

Faculty of the Department of
Yoga Studies
Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Yoga Studies

May 1, 2023
# The Nature of Compassion in Yoga: Illuminating its Modern Role through an Examination of Historical Texts

## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 - Ethics and Compassion in the <em>Upaniṣads</em></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 - The <em>Yogasūtra</em> and Compassion</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 - Compassion as a Core Element in the <em>Mahābhārata</em></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 - The <em>Yogavāsiṣṭha</em>’s Morality and Compassion</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 - Compassion in <em>Haṭhayoga</em></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6 - Conclusions</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1 – <em>Mahābhārata</em> Book 13, Chapter 5 Translation</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2 – <em>Bhagavadgītā</em> Translations</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3 – <em>Yogavāsiṣṭha</em> Translations</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Compassion is a key element within many spiritual traditions and religions. Yet in modern mainstream culture, it is often linked with Buddhist thought and tends to highlight the role of compassion in personal and collective healing. This could be attributed to how some aspects of Buddhism have been transmitted to the West through a Western lens that repackaged the tradition. Modern yoga often highlights compassion as a core element with little or no reference to the traditional literature of yoga.\(^1\) While compassion is an integral part of Buddhist literature,\(^2\) at first glance it seems to be less prominent within the historical literature of yoga. As will be explored throughout this paper, Buddhism and Yoga have been intermingling and exchanging ideas and practices for centuries. Yet, these days the fast cross-cultural exchange and assimilation have further blurred the lines between the two traditions. While historical philosophical schools often debated and distinguished themselves from one another, in the modern era, there is more of a hybrid synthesis of these traditions, without specific acknowledgment.

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of research into the benefits of self-compassion for health and well-being, suggesting that people who are self-compassionate tend to be happier and demonstrate better psychological strength.\(^3\) Even though Buddhism is often acknowledged as the source, little is mentioned about the nature of compassion in Buddhism. Medical terminology and goals are widely embedded within Buddhist literature, yet it seems that these Buddhist principles have extended far beyond their origins. For example, Mindful Self-

---


\(^2\) It should be noted that there is no single or authoritative account for the concept of compassion within Buddhism, yet it is still a continuous and central theme.

Compassion (MSC) is a mindfulness-based program that states self-compassion stems from Buddhist psychology. Nonetheless, it does not mention Buddhist sources and defines self-compassion as “being touched by one’s own suffering, generating the desire to alleviate one’s suffering and treat oneself with understanding and concern,”⁴ or simply, “treating yourself the way you would treat a friend who is having a hard time.”⁵ While essentially self-compassion is an inherent part of compassion, Buddhist ontology and texts accentuate benefiting others and this in return benefits the self.⁶ Mindfulness and self-compassion programs have made their way into hospitals, therapies, the military, corporate spaces, as well as yoga classes, consequently, impacting the understanding and role of compassion within modern yoga.

Beyond the role of compassion in individual healing, modern yoga also highlights the importance of turning compassion into action in the social domain. Recent years have seen a growing movement of using yoga practices and concepts as tools for social change, often referred to as “yoga off the mat.” This movement can be anchored in the traditional teachings of yoga and has historical roots in transformative figures such as M.K. Gandhi. Nonetheless, the movement also draws from modern Western ideas such as human rights and reflects the ongoing interaction between yoga, modernity, and transnationalism. It should be noted that this movement is not unique to yoga; it reflects a wider phenomenon within spiritual communities and parallels the “Engaged Buddhism” movement.⁷

---

⁴MSC was developed by Christopher K. Germer, PhD, a clinical psychologist and lecturer on psychiatry (part-time) at Harvard Medical School, and Kristin Neff, PhD, a researcher in the field of self-compassion. See: Kristin D. Neff and Christopher K Germer, The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook: A Proven Way to Accept Yourself, Build Inner Strength, and Thrive (New York: Guilford Publications, 2018), 1-2.
⁵Ibid.
The movement views the purpose of yoga as stretching beyond personal liberation to include social justice, thus, utilizing yoga as a force for social change. The practices of yoga which are often internal become interpersonal tools to undo societal harms and confront systems of oppression. Consequently, the capacity for compassion in modern yoga is often seen as a remedy for the collective by recognizing suffering and taking action to make amends. Both the self-compassion emphasis and the social justice movement highlight the role of compassion in modern yoga as a tool for personal and collective healing.

While the synthesis of ideas and new forms of practice are a natural unfoldment of spiritual and religious traditions, it is valuable to be clear about what the traditional texts have said about compassion. Through textual analysis, the importance of context and philosophy is emphasized, and modern practices can be thoroughly comprehended. Hence, my intention is to bridge this gap and highlight the nature of compassion in the traditional literature of yoga.

The word compassion in English originates from the Latin root “passio,” to suffer, and “com,” together, thus meaning to suffer together. This points to a relationship between suffering, compassion, and the existence of others. Yet, Charles Goodman and Sonam Thakchoe suggest that the Latin root is cognate with English words such as “passive,” and therefore expresses the inactive nature of compassion and the conception of emotions as negative things that happen to us.8 There are many Sanskrit words that can translate as compassion, such as karuṇā, kṛpā, dayā, anukroṣa, anukampa, and ānṛśaṃsyasya. As will be explored throughout this paper, in yoga traditions, the terms for compassion have different connotations varying according to the tradition, specific text, socio-cultural background, and audience. Therefore, this paper will

---

use examples to demonstrate the subtle nuances in various terms and shed light on the nature of compassion.

It is noteworthy that early Buddhist literature mainly uses the term *anukampa*, which is derived from the prefix *anu* (alongside) and *kamp* (to tremble). This resembles the English origin of the term, both capturing an unpleasant experience, or suffering with another, as the foundation for compassion. Later Buddhist texts mainly use the term *karuṇā*. The etymology of the word *karuṇā* is ambiguous and thus it is open to interpretation. Some possible roots for *karuṇā* are *kṛ* (to make, act) *kṛt* (to cut, break), or *kṝ* (to spread, disperse).9 Buddhaghosa, an important early commentator in the Buddhist Theravada tradition presented a philosophical interpretation of the word *karuṇā*: “When others suffer it makes the heart of good people tremble (*kampa*), thus it is *karuṇā*; it demolishes others' suffering, attacks and banishes it, thus it is *karuṇā*; or it is dispersed over the suffering, is spread out through pervasion, thus it is *karuṇā*.10 This suggests an active component to the word compassion that requires an action to relieve the suffering of others in early Buddhism. With the emergence of the bodhisattva ideal in the Mahāyāna tradition, compassion became even more primary.

This paper will explore the nature of compassion within various yoga traditions and clarify its role through historical and textual examination. In doing so, I will discuss relevant Buddhist notions of compassion as they apply. As mentioned, the notion of compassion is spread across vast Buddhist literature; therefore, the methodology of this paper will be qualitative and will focus on collecting and analyzing principal narratives within early Buddhism. Consequently,

---

10 Ibid.
this is not an exhaustive list of the role of compassion within Buddhism. It should also be noted that yoga is a principal component within many South Asian traditions and thus this paper will be limited to Brāhmaṇa traditions of yoga.

I will explore key texts within the yoga traditions that address compassion and highlight the qualities attributed to compassion. As will be demonstrated, while compassion is commonly present within the texts, it varies in meaning and significance within these texts and often is not perceived as central to the text’s teachings. I will begin this exploration by examining teachings from the Upaniṣads that address moral conduct and the nature of transformative knowledge. Second, I will examine verses from the Yogasūtra. In doing so, I will discuss the brahmavihāras and their understanding in Buddhist literature. Third, I will examine verses and concepts from the Mahābhārata, in which compassion can be seen as an important theme. Then, I will turn to the Yogavāsiṣṭha, a narrative text based upon the tales of the Rāmāyaṇa and explore its view on ethics and compassion. These texts clearly present a correlation and exchange between Buddhism and yoga. Hāṭhayoga texts present a shift within the conception of compassion and address compassion as part of the yamas within the aṣṭāṅgayoga framework, a representation that carries through to the Yoga Upaniṣads. Lastly, I will elaborate on the implications and significance of compassion within yoga, discuss the main Sanskrit terms, and address possible threads that demonstrate the evolution of compassion within yoga’s literature. I will argue that there is a correlation between the importance of compassion within a text to the text’s target audience as ascetics or householders. I will further demonstrate that the prominence of compassion within a text signifies the accessibility of the text, its teachings, and the practice of yoga to a wider audience.
Chapter 1 - Ethics and Compassion in the Upaniṣads

The Upaniṣads provide a wide framework to inquire into the nature of the self, the nature of existence, and human existence within the cosmos. The Upaniṣadic corpus is considered the foundation of many of the South Asian philosophies including the six systematic philosophical schools (darśanas). The corpus is considered pivotal in the emergence of South Asian traditions and these texts often indicate a shift in the sociopolitical and religious landscape; from the nomadic toward the urban, from the external toward the internal, and from the ritual toward the philosophical and ascetic. The Upaniṣads are linked to the Vedas and are traditionally referred to as Vedānta (the culmination of knowledge). The principal Upaniṣads include thirteen to fifteen texts, dated roughly between the seventh century BCE to the second century BCE. Upaniṣad literally means “to sit down nearby,” traditionally referring to a student sitting at the feet of the teacher to receive the teachings. Another meaning of the term when it is used within the texts refers to the means to show an esoteric, obscure, and hidden connection. The texts do not reveal their authorship; they have different authors at different times, and some may be compilations; consequently, they are not necessarily chronological.

The Upaniṣads emphasize the transformative nature of knowledge and introduce themes that are later developed in various yoga traditions, including the essential concept of Ātman and Brahman. Ātman usually refers to the Self or spiritual essence of the human being; nevertheless, it can also indicate the physical body. Brahman means the formulation of truth and usually refers to the ultimate essence of the cosmos; however, the meaning can vary according to context. The

---

12 Lindquist, “Narrating the Upaniṣads,” 303.
14 Olivelle, The early Upanishads, 22.
Upaniṣads equate these terms - Ātman the essential Self is Brahman the ultimate truth. The great sayings of the Upaniṣads or Mahāvākyas express this intimate relationship as in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, tat tvam asi (“You are that”).¹⁵ This unity is described in terms of macrocosmic and microcosmic symbolism and the equation of the human body to the cosmos has shifted from external ritual practice in the Vedic period to an internalized contemplative practice. Truth is reached by going within.

Knowledge is central to the Upaniṣads and is understood as a tool for transformation. As suggested by the term Upaniṣad itself, the knowledge in the texts is often obscured or hidden. When one knows the hidden relationships between the human as the microcosm and the macrocosm, then he reaches transformation both externally (one attains prosperity and wealth) and internally (one is calm and collected). This transformation can be described as a reorientation or modification of being.¹⁶ The Praśna Upaniṣad states that “they who seek the Ātman by austerity, chastity, faith, and knowledge...they do not return” [to the cycle of samsāra].¹⁷

Thus, knowledge means to understand ultimate or metaphysical truths. The search for knowledge and unity within has affected all realms of life and as such had ethical implications.¹⁸ The Upaniṣads do not discuss ethic or morality in a systematic manner. Accordingly, compassion is not discussed in the texts. However, in this part I will introduce explicit and implicit eclectic

---

¹⁵ Lindquist, “Narrating the Upaniṣads,” 312-313.
¹⁸ Hume, The thirteen principal Upanishads, 61.
teachings that might offer guidance and shed light on ethics in the Upaniṣads and are valuable to understanding the development of notions of ethics and compassion in later traditions.

There are several verses in the early Upaniṣads that seems to express that one who has knowledge is freed from all evil deeds as well as from the karmic results of his deeds. In a verse from the Kauśītakī Upaniṣad it is said that one who knows Ātman, “by no deed whatsoever of his is his world injured, not by stealing, not by killing an embryo, not by the murder of his mother, not by the murder of his father; if he has done any evil, the dark color departs not from his face.”¹⁹ This has been interpreted by some to mean that knowledge cancels past sins and permits continuing evil deeds without consequences.²⁰ However, these verses are referring to the nature of the knowledge which elevates the knower beyond the world of dualities. As such, distinctions are concepts of partial knowledge as they are derived from verbal distinction,²¹ “Verily, if there were no speech, neither right nor wrong would be known, neither true nor false, neither good nor bad, neither pleasant nor unpleasant. Speech, indeed, makes all this known.”²² This might mean that ethical life implies duality that does not align with the nature of Brahman and sets forth constant conflict and can only exist so long as there is duality; thus, the nature of ethical life is duality. Some scholars conclude that since our nature is Brahman, then if Brahman is beyond ethics, then so is the one who knows.²³

¹⁹ Olivelle, The early Upanishads, 329.
²⁰ Hume, The thirteen principal Upanishads, 60
²¹ Hume, The thirteen principal Upanishads, 63; See also: Olivelle, The early Upanishads, 125.
²² Olivelle, The early Upanishads, 259.
The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* states that “If the slayer thinks to slay, If the slain think himself slain, Both these understand not. This one slays not, nor is slain.”24 This suggests that the wise know that they are unborn, that the self is not killed when the body is killed, therefore if one thinks that he can kill or be killed, he does not know. This teaching has reached the *Bhagavadgītā*, where Kṛṣṇa paraphrases this verse when he encourages Arjuna to fight.25 As Robert Hume acknowledged, the Upaniṣads recognize that these teachings can be misapplied as conveyed in the story of Virocana, Prajāpati’s student, who received this teaching and used it in a way that reflects complete selfishness and utilitarianism. Such understanding was rejected by Prajāpati and the author.26 This could indicate an ethical concern in the text, yet could also refer to the notion that in the enlightened state there is no self to be selfish about.27 Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish that the Upaniṣads do not promote unethical actions, and in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, good conduct is equated to knowledge “Not he who has not ceased from bad conduct...Can obtain Him by intelligence.”28 This perhaps implies the importance of moral conduct before transformative knowledge. Moreover, the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* expresses the idea that one who knows the self will see the self in all beings, teachings that might indicate ethical implications for the one who knows.29

Another prominent teaching from Yājñavalkya in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* explains that “Not for love of the wife is a wife dear, but for love of the Soul a wife is dear.” Similarly, “not for love of sons, wealth…the worlds, the gods, things, anything, are they dear, but for love of the Soul they

---

are dear.” This can be interpreted to indicate that the Upaniṣads don’t address ethics or morality in a sense of regarding another. On the other hand, this teaching can also be interpreted to convey the idea that within everyday experiences one can find “the great doctrine of the individual self-finding his selfhood grounded in, and reaching out towards, that larger Self which embraces all individuals and all things.” Thus, family and all forms of social interactions are also based upon the sense of unity the Upaniṣads highlight and it is the individualistic sense that is absent.

Personality is at the core of ethics and morality and as suggested might present conflict in the Upaniṣads as it is in the realm of duality. Nonetheless, some teachings address personality characteristics. For example, in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Yājñavalkya states that the one who knows becomes calm, restrained, withdrawn, patient, and composed and asserts that knowledge changes one’s personality and behavior for the better. This has led some scholars to conclude that when one is knowledgeable, one necessarily acts morally and will abstain from evil. Some scholars describe this as a progression in which the finer the knowledge, the conduct becomes more graceful. Conversely, others claim that the ethics of personality and individuality cannot find full expression in the unity of the Upaniṣads.

The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad is the earliest trace to the foundational concept of karma: “A man turns into something good by good action, and into something bad by bad action.” The notion of karma might indicate ethical implications; good (puṇya) actions lead to a good birth,

32 Olivelle, The early Upaniṣads, 127.
while bad (pāpa) actions lead to evil births. Moreover, in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Uddālaka teaches that people who are pleasant will enter a “pleasant womb” while people of foul behavior will enter the womb of a dog, a pig, or an outcaste.37 Thus these effects on samsāra can have positive implication and be seen as an incentive toward ethical actions. Some argue that these teachings on karma are the “impersonal moral force” that governs existence and implies the moral consequences and interconnectedness of all beings and their actions.38 However, some scholars claim the criterion of good (puṇya) and bad (pāpa) are not ethical concepts and that this verse should be limited to the concepts of samsāra and liberation, arguing that punya in this context does not mean good toward others and doesn’t require moral standpoint.39 Furthermore this verse can be interpreted as advocating for self-control rather than an explicit moral preference.

Another key teaching is given in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, where Yama, the lord of death, advises Naciketas to choose śreya over preya. Preya refers to pleasure-seeking or sensory enjoyment and śreya is often translated as choosing good or that which is better,40 perhaps pointing to seeds of ethic inclinations or the theory of karma. Some claim that an accurate translation of śreya is “control” thereby expressing the importance of controlling the outcome or consequences. Such a translation might indicate deontological ethics with emphasis on personal duty.41 It should be noted that the Kaṭha and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad describe some early practices to achieve control of the senses, breath, and body, practices called Yoga in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad; these concepts are developed in later traditions.

37 Olivelle, The early Upanishads, 235.
39 Jones, Mysticism and morality, 84.
40 Hume, The thirteen principal Upanishads, 346.
Many Upaniṣads discuss the role of desire and express the idea that it is the desire that drives actions and lead to rebirth. For example, the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* asserts “As is his desire, such is his resolve: As is his resolve, such the action he performs; what action he performs, that he procures for himself.” And thus the notion of becoming free from desire or detachment is emphasized in many teachings. There is no conclusive effect on moral conduct, since becoming desireless or detached can have positive implications on conduct yet can also imply no conduct at all. Yet these seeds are explored in later texts such as the *Mahābhārata*.

The teachings presented have resulted in a wide variety of interpretations. Some conclude that the Upaniṣads’ ontology conflicts with ethics and the two cannot coexist, hence, the Upaniṣads are not concerned with ethics and morality as it relates to the reality of others. This view also excludes selfishness, and thus, the Upaniṣads are nonmoral or morally indifferent. Some scholars conclude that the Upaniṣads “show that a nonmoral value-system is one option in mystical ways of life,” and that the Upaniṣads were a time of an “unsettling of the accepted ethics and a substitution of knowledge for religion and morality.”

On the contrary, some scholars conclude that it is the ontology of the self that establishes ethics, and that knowledge gives rise to morality. When one attains knowledge, he becomes a person of good character. Thus “the very doctrine of the One Ultimate Reality is the strongest support and foundation of morality and the social sense or feeling.” As will be explored, later

---

traditions developed systematic ways to cultivate virtues on the path to knowledge, such as the eight limbs in Patañjali’s Yogasūtra. Still, some argue that the Upaniṣads presuppose those virtues as inherent when one attains knowledge. ⁴⁸ For example, non-violence (ahimsā) can be logically deducted: if we cause harm to ourselves, we cause harm to others since the Self is in each of us. ⁴⁹ Yet it should be noted that this view does not align with the Yogasūtra’s ontological standpoint. Another opinion in academia is that ethics are a prerequisite to knowledge and are implicitly carried into the enlightened life. ⁵⁰

Conclusion

There is no simple answer to the role of compassion and ethics in the Upaniṣads that could encapsulate the complexity of the texts, in the same way as there is no single philosophy in the text. Thus, drawing extreme conclusions based on isolated verses might also be problematic or incomplete. The Upaniṣads are primarily focused on the inner life, though it is also evident that that inner transformation has profound effects on all aspects of life. And so, even though the explicit teachings on ethics or conduct are sparse, the inner transformation shapes moral conduct. The unity traced through interconnectedness between the macrocosm and microcosm applies to all things and beings. This view was expressed by Joel Brereton: “each Upanishadic teaching creates an integrative vision, a view of the whole which draws together the separate elements of the world and of human experience and compresses them into a single form. To one who has this larger vision of things, the world is not a set of diverse and disorganized objects and living beings, but rather forms a totality with a distinct shape and character.” ⁵¹ Moreover, perhaps more than

---

⁴⁹ Jones, Mysticism and morality, 90.
⁵⁰ Jones, Mysticism and morality, 91.
providing answers or conclusions, the Upaniṣads emphasize the importance of raising these fundamental questions of existence, questions that were addressed by later traditions. The underlying interconnectedness becomes a lens to understand life as a whole. Through “arranging” the inner world one will become ethical. Therefore, even though compassion is not discussed in the texts, ethics and morality are still part of the Upaniṣadic corpus; they set the foundation for ethical and moral conduct through the impacts of knowledge on *karma* and *samsāra* and the underlying interconnectedness, both through incentive and the conception of Ātman and Brahman.
Chapter 2 - The Yogasūtra and Compassion

The relationship and exchange between Buddhism and Patañjali’s Yogasūtra has drawn scholarly attention, often pointing to the influence of Buddhist thought on the Yogasūtra. Nevertheless, the classical period is characterized by a plurality of yoga forms and a complex landscape consisting of the yoga in the Mahābhārata, later Upaniṣads, the Purāṇas, proto-tantra, Yogācāra and Vajrayāna Buddhism, and Jain yoga. Consequently, distinguishing between traditions and practices is often not definite. Nevertheless, exploring and understanding the concepts used by Patañjali and their roots offers a distinct perspective and awareness to the text.

There are several shared themes between the Yogasūtra and Buddhist thought such as impermanence, suffering, the elimination of saṃskāras, and the eightfold path. The term compassion, karuṇā, is mentioned in the text once in sūtra 1.33 as part of the brahmavihāras. The correlation between the Buddhist brahmavihāras and sūtra 1.33 has been identified by early scholars such as Émile Senart who wrote about the Buddhist influences on the Yogasūtra and the origins for the brahmavihāras. Yet it should be noted that sūtra 1.33 does not mention this term. The four brahmavihāras are friendliness (maitrī), compassion (karuṇā) sympathetic joy (muditā) and equanimity (upekṣā); these virtues are presented in both traditions as objects of cultivation through meditation (bhāvanā). In sūtra 1.33, the brahmavihāras are said to be practiced toward beings:

---


53 Karen O'Brien-Kop, Rethinking ‘Classical Yoga’ and Buddhism: Meditation, Metaphors and Materiality (Bloomsbury, 2021), 147; interestingly, the sūtras leading to the description of the eightfold path parallel the Buddhist Four Noble Truths in which an eightfold path is described as a remedy. Thus, it could point to a similar medical framework of Patañjali’s eightfold path as a remedy.

54 Wujastyk, “Some Problematic Yoga Sutras and their Buddhist Background,” 24
“By cultivating an attitude of friendship toward those who are happy, compassion toward those in distress, joy toward those who are virtuous, and equanimity toward those who are non-virtuous, lucidity arises in the mind.”55

It should be noted that the practice is part of a series of sūtras that describe practices and techniques for controlling the mind. The meditative practice leads to a lucid mind of the nature of sattva guṇa, an essential component for the attainments of one pointed concentration.56 In this regard, Śaṅkara, an eighth-century commentator and formative figure in Advaita Vedānta, quotes the Bhagavadgītā and relates these to the attitude of non-attachment.57 Vācaspati Miśra, a ninth-century commentator on the Yogasūtra, suggests that compassion toward those in distress means wishing to remove someone’s miseries as if they were your own and results in the removal of the desire to inflict harm on others.58 Christopher Chapple suggests that the practice of the brahmavihāras in the Yogasūtra aims to minimize our separation from others and to weaken our emotional patterns.59

Yogasūtra 1.33 is a part of a list of practices Patañjali offers to support the mind in meditation.60 The result of these practices is stated in sutra 1.41:

“samāpatti, complete absorption of the mind when it is free from vṛttis, occurs when the mind becomes just like a transparent jewel, taking the form of

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Christopher Key Chapple, Yoga and the Luminous: Patanjali’s Spiritual Path to Freedom (State University of New York Press, 2008).
60 Bryant, The yoga sūtras of Patañjali, 142.
whatever object is placed before it, whether the object be the knower, the instrument of knowledge, or the object of knowledge.”

Chapple suggests that this sūtra points to a close relationship between the Yoga school and the Buddhist Yogācāra school. In the Laṅkāvatāra sūtra, a Yogācāra text, the transparent jewel metaphor is used to describe the state of the bodhisattva. While the schools are theologically different, Chapple points to a correlation between their processes of transcendence.

The brahmavihāras are not explicitly referred to again in the Yogasūtra, yet they are implied in several contexts as pointed to by several commentators. Bhoja Rāja, an eleventh-century commentator on the Yogasūtra, states that cleanliness, one of the niyamas (or observances), is both external and internal; external cleanliness refers to the body and internal cleanliness refers to the cleansing of the impurities of the mind. He states that internal cleanliness is achieved through friendliness, maitrī, and so forth, thus, relating cleanliness to the practice of the brahmavihāras.

Moreover, Yogasūtra 3.23 states that the practice of samyama on friendliness and so forth results in strengths. This sūtra also refers to the practice of the brahmavihāras. Hariharānanda, a nineteenth-century commentator on the Yogasūtra, states that by samyama on the feeling of friendliness one becomes free of malice and hardness, and no thoughts of harming others darken his heart. Vācaspati Miśra states that by samyama on the feeling of compassion, one can lift the

---

61 Ibid.
62 Chapple, Yoga and the Luminous, 224.
63 Ibid.
64 Bryant, The yoga sūtras of Patañjali, 2.32.
65 Bryant, The yoga sūtras of Patañjali, 2.32, p.253; Rājamārtanḍa, Bhoja Rāja’s commentary on verse 2.32: śaucam dvividham. bāhyam ābhyantraram ca. bāhyam mrjjalādibhiḥ kāyādipraśālanam. ābhyantraram maitryādhibhīścittamalānāṃ prakṣālanam.
66 samyama refers to the practice of dhāraṇā, dhyāna, samādhi performed together. See: Bryant, The yoga sūtras of Patañjali, 3.4, p.310; Bryant, The yoga sūtras of Patañjali, 3.23, p. 350: maitryādiṣu balāni.
suffering out of people’s pain.\textsuperscript{67} Therefore, these commentaries suggest the strength of the mind as a result of these practices emanates, expands, and affects others.

\textbf{Compassion and the brahmavihāras}

The Buddhist literature is vast and diverse, therefore drawing a firm conclusion is impossible. Nevertheless, in this part I will explore the Buddhist notion of compassion within the brahmavihāras and highlight themes that are relevant to the understanding of the practice within yoga. In various Buddhist sources the brahmavihāras are seen both as a tool for cultivating meditative skills and morality, as well as the comportment of the enlightened and an ethical end.\textsuperscript{68} Jay L. Garfield suggests that the cultivation of the brahmavihāras enables one to see the world from a nonegocentric perspective.\textsuperscript{69}

Compassion is often featured in the early Buddhist discourses as the second among the four brahmavihāras, often called the immeasurables: loving-kindness (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), empathetic joy (muditā) and equanimity (upekkha). They were systematically detailed in the Visuddhimagga. In earlier texts, the meditative cultivation of the brahmavihāras is often presented as boundless radiating in all directions. In the Madhyama-āgama for example, the cultivation of compassion is expressed as pervading all directions:

\begin{quote}
“Being endowed with diligence and virtue in this way, having accomplished purity of bodily deeds and purity of verbal and mental deeds, being free from ill will and contention, discarding sloth-and-torpor, being without restlessness or conceit, removing doubt and overcoming arrogance, with right mindfulness and right comprehension, being without bewilderment, the learned noble disciple
\end{quote

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Garfield, \textit{Buddhist ethics: A philosophical exploration}, 131.
\textsuperscript{69} Garfield, \textit{Buddhist ethics: A philosophical exploration}, 149.
dwellings having pervaded one direction with a mind imbued with compassion, and in the same way the second, third, and fourth directions, the four intermediate directions, above and below, completely and everywhere. Being without mental shackles, resentment, ill will, or contention, with a mind imbued with compassion that is supremely vast and great, boundless, and well developed, [the learned noble disciple] dwells having pervaded the entire world.”

This discourse also relates the practice of compassion to moral conduct, thus suggesting a moral basis for meditative practice and wholesome mental states.

In later texts, the meditative cultivation of the *brahmavihāras* includes beings as objects for meditation. As such, the *Visuddhimagga*, describes the practice as involving beings such as a friend, a neutral person, and an enemy. Nevertheless, Anālayo argues that this practice is portrayed as an initial stage of practice towards a boundless radiation of compassion. This is supported by the claim that the *Visuddhimagga* is a text that bridges the gap between monastics and laity. Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* characterizes karuṇā as actively alleviating suffering and the inability to bear suffering, while the manifestation of karuṇā is described as lack of cruelty.

Jenkins suggested that in early discourse mettā subsumed karuṇā, and accordingly, it is the most frequently mentioned *brahmavihāra*. He argues that in early Buddhism the term mettā tends

---

71 Anālayo, *Compassion and emptiness in early Buddhist meditation*, 22.
72 Anālayo, *Compassion and emptiness in early Buddhist meditation*, 27.
73 Anālayo, *Compassion and emptiness in early Buddhist meditation*, 27.
75 Garfield, *Buddhist ethics: A philosophical exploration*, 137; See: *Visuddhimagga*, IX.94.
to indicate a predominantly ethical context and anukampā, another common term for compassion, was also seen as part of mettā.76

Mettā, the first of the brahmavihāras, is translated as loving-kindness or benevolence. The quality of mettā has been depicted in the mettā-sutta as the protection of a mother:

“Just as a mother who has an only son would protect her own son with her life, so one should cultivate a boundless mind towards all living beings.”77

This implies an active component of protection towards others that extends beyond mental cultivation alongside a detached boundless mind.78 In the Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra, mettā is said to be the foundation of compassion and depicted as the water that nourishes the roots of compassion. Therefore, the practices are seen as interrelated; thus, based on mettā, compassion grows and develops. Anālayo suggests that framing compassion within the brahmavihāras provides support to possible self-centered drawbacks and diminishes one’s sense of self.79 Thus, it points to the importance of the practice of compassion alongside the other virtues.

It should also be noted that mettā (and as extension compassion) is also portrayed as having mundane benefits. For example, the Aṅguttara-nikāya mentions that one’s sleep becomes peaceful, and one is protected, loved, and respected by others.80 Moreover, in the Ekottarika-āgama, the cultivation of compassion is said to give rise to joy:

“Being pervaded within by this mind of compassion one has gained gladness and joy, and the mind has become straight.”81

---

77 Anālayo, Compassion and emptiness in early Buddhist meditation, 30.
78 Ibid.
79 Anālayo, Compassion and emptiness in early Buddhist meditation, 71.
80 Anālayo, Compassion and emptiness in early Buddhist meditation, 52; Stephen L. Jenkins, “Benefit of Self and Other: The Importance of Persons and their Self-Interest in Buddhist Ethics,” 7.
81 Anālayo, Compassion and emptiness in early Buddhist meditation, 24.s
The Objects of Compassion in Buddhism

A common claim regarding the nature of compassion in Buddhism is the perceived conflict between living beings and the concept of emptiness or no-self. As Jenkins asks, “who is the object and who is the agent of this compassion? Yet the ontological concept of emptiness or no-self does not negate the reality of existence, rather it suggests that living beings are empty of a substantial and permanent self. Consequentially, being empty of self relates to all phenomenon of experience, internally and externally, towards self and others. Furthermore, Anālayo suggests that cultivating compassion towards living beings does not contradict the idea of emptiness “as long as these living beings are seen with insight as the impermanent products of conditions, and thus as not-self.”

Another common claim is that compassion arises due to the realization of emptiness and is grounded in ontological perspectives. While it also arises from the realization of ontological truths, compassion is presented as the means to the realization and a prerequisite for it. Hence, this implies a motivational aspect for the practice of compassion.

In several Mahāyāna traditions, compassion is classified as threefold according to its objects, ālambana. The first is compassion with sentient beings as its object. The second is compassion with dharmas as its object; although not consistent in the literature, it tends to refer to the Buddhist view that beings are compounded. The third is compassion with no object that originates from the realization of emptiness. Each category is a mode of realizing sentient beings.

---

82 Anālayo, Compassion and emptiness in early Buddhist meditation, 94.
83 Cowherds (Authors), Moonpaths: Ethics and emptiness (UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 97.
84 Anālayo, Compassion and emptiness in early Buddhist meditation, 98.
85 Ibid.
87 Cowherds (Authors), Moonpaths: Ethics and emptiness, 103.
88 See: Cowherds (Authors), Moonpaths: Ethics and emptiness, 100.
89 Cowherds (Authors), Moonpaths: Ethics and emptiness, 101.
Jenkins highlights that the third type of compassion is rare as it refers to those who reach the realization of emptiness. Therefore, for most Mahāyāna Buddhists, compassion involves sentient beings as their object and the conventional awareness of the suffering of sentient beings.90

Possible Origins for the Brahmavihāras

The brahmavihāras are well established as a Buddhist practice and principle. While the brahmavihāras are not found in any Brāhmaṇa or Jain scriptures, several Buddhist sources imply that the brahmavihāras were known and practiced in other traditions which affirm the existence of a Self.91 As presented above, compassion with sentient beings for its object is shared between Buddhism and the Yogasūtra’s conception of the brahmavihāras. Johannes Bronkhorst suggests that “at least for some time the Brahmic States were practiced identically by Buddhists and certain non-Buddhists.”92 He further suggests a possible relationship between the brahmavihāras and the Jain reflections on infinity.93

Rhys Davids, Mudagamuwe Maithrimurthi, and others argue that the brahmavihāras have Brāhmaṇa origins.94 Barbara Stoler Miller points out that early Buddhist terms and practices were often reinterpretations of Brāhmaṇa sources.95 She examines the term brahmavihāra and suggests a technical meaning as a foundation for the Buddhist conception. As such, Miller argues that the use of the term Brahma in a compound tends to indicate something extraordinary, yet not the

90 Cowherds (Authors), Moonpaths: Ethics and emptiness, 102.
91 See for example, the Bodhisattvabhumi: Jenkins, The Circle of Compassion, 197; The Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN V. 115f)
92 Johannes Bronkhorst, The two traditions of meditation in ancient India (Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1993), 68.
93 Bronkhorst, The two traditions of meditation in ancient India, 69.
ultimate ideal. She further argues that the term *vihāra* indicates transposition such as the exchange of *pādas* within a hymn to achieve specific results in the ritual. Thus, this implies a magical transportation which Miller suggests underlies the concept of the *brahmavihāras*. She concludes that this reinterpretation highlights the Buddhist view of internalization of Vedic ideas: “One can achieve even the goals of Vedic ritual by practicing the brahma-viharas by magically transmuting egotistical emotions into the four immeasurable virtues of love, compassion, joy, and impartiality.”

**Notes on Ethics in the Yogasūtra**

The *yamas*, restraints or rules, are the first limb of Patañjali’s eightfold path. Referring to both the *brahmavihāras* and the *yamas*, Chapple underlines that “Ethics plays a central, foundational role in the eightfold path outlined by Patañjali.” The five *yamas* are nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), not stealing (*asteya*), sexual continence (*brahmacarya*) and non-acquisitiveness (*aparigraha*). Nonviolence, *ahiṃsā*, is said to be the foundation of the *yamas* and results in the absence of hostility in the presence of the practitioner. Stuart Sarbacker suggests that explicitly *ahiṃsā* refers to restraint from killing living things, yet may also refer to harmful speech and thought. While compassion is not explicitly mentioned as a part of the *yamas* within the *Yogasūtra*, it could be argued that compassion is subsumed within nonviolence, the foundational practice for ethics in the *Yogasūtra*. This is an argument that I will examine in chapter 6.

---

96 Miller, “On cultivating the immeasurable change of heart,” 214.
97 Ibid.
98 Miller, “On cultivating the immeasurable change of heart,” 213.
99 Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 33.
100 Bryant, *The yoga sūtras of Patañjali*, 2.30.
These restraints predate Patañjali and are found in the Ācārāṅga Sūtra (fourth-third century BCE) of the Jain tradition. Moreover, seeds for the conception of the yamas can also be found in the Mahābhārata. The Mahābhārata contains several lists of ethical virtues to follow. For example, the Śāntiparva, chapter 262.37-38 mentions:

“non-cruelty, forbearance, tranquility, nonviolence, truthfulness, honesty, absence of malice, lack of pride, modesty, patience, calmness. And these are the path of a Brahmin (on) the path. By these, a wise person attains that highest, which he should know through the mind, action (and) firm belief.”\(^{103} \)

Another ethical aspect is discussed in the Yogabhāṣya on sūtra 2.33. The sūtra suggests the practice of pratipakṣa-bhāvanam for countering harmful thoughts. The Yogabhāṣya states that when wrong thoughts of violence arise the practitioner should contemplate:

“While being baked in cyclic existence, I have taken refuge (śaranam) in the practice of yoga (yogadharma), by giving protection to all living beings.”\(^{104} \)

Taking refuge in the dharma and the use of the term śaranam echoes the Three Jewels of Buddhism: the Buddha, the dharma, and the saṅgha.\(^{105} \) Moreover, the emphasis on the protection of living beings further establishes an ethical foundation in the Pātañjalayogaśāstra.\(^{106} \)

---

\(^{103} \) Mahābhārata 12.262.37-38: ānṛṣaṃsyam kṣamā śāntir ahiṃsā satyam ārjavam adroho nābhimānas ca hrīṣ titikṣā śamas tathā 38. panthāno brahmaṇas tv ete etaiḥ prāṇapati yat param tad vidvān anubudhyeta manasā karma niścayam.

\(^{104} \) Yogabhāṣya on sūtra 2.33, translated by Zoe Slatoff.

\(^{105} \) The threefold refuge in Buddhism: buddhaṃ śaranaṃ gacchāmi, dhammaṃ śaranaṃ gacchāmi, saṅghaṃ śaranaṃ gacchāmi

\(^{106} \) The Pātañjalayogaśāstra refers to the Yogasūtra along with the Bhāṣya.
Conclusion

Compassion, karunā, is not part of the yamas or the eightfold path of Patañjali. It is mentioned in Yogasūtra 1.33 as part of the brahmavihāras. As explored, the brahmavihāras are foundational in Buddhist literature and are seen as meditative skill, moral cultivation, as well as the characteristics of the enlightened being. While this practice is given in the Yogasūtra among other meditative practices, it seems likely to also address moral cultivation. As discussed, compassion with a sentient being for its object is shared between Buddhism and the Yogasūtra conception of the brahmavihāras. The origins of the practice remain vague, yet it is clear that the practice was known and shared between several traditions. Nevertheless, the Buddhist influences on the Yogasūtra are well established and the reference to compassion in the text draws directly from Buddhism.
Chapter 3 - Compassion as a Core Element in the Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata is an epic text, or itihāsa, which translates to “thus it was.” The Mahābhārata is considered an all-encompassing epic with complex narratives, and intentions, with philosophical inclinations. Even though it is a “remembered” (smṛti) text, it is also referred to as the Fifth Veda, conveying its importance and elevating the authority of the epic to a “heard” (śruti) text. The epic was initially composed by poets from the kṣatriya or warrior class, but later was passed to brāhmaṇa traditions. It is considered to contain all the knowledge necessary for religious, social, and material aspects of life. Consequently, extracting a cohesive and precise conclusion is challenging. The historical composition of the Mahābhārata is roughly estimated between fourth century BC to fifth century CE and thus it has been composed over approximately seven to nine hundred years. There is a scholarly debate as to whether the Mahābhārata is a combined text. Some suggest it was initially an epic and the didactic components were inserted into it, while others suggest it is a unified text with intentional and cohesive meaning.

This period in India saw major shifts in the social, political, and cultural spheres. James Fitzgerald notes that these changes impacted the Brahmins due to the rise of other religious groups that received acknowledgment and patronage and thus grew in political power, as in the case of the Buddhist emperor Aśoka. According to Fitzgerald, the Mahābhārata is a new kind of Brahmin text that presented a shift from the exclusivism of the Vedas for the Brahmin tradition to a Veda for all society. He argues that the text can be seen as an attempt to reclaim the Brahmins’

---

107 Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 108.
108 Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 111.
status by grounding a new vision of a Brahmanic ideal and dismissing the kingship of the kṣatriya class as violent and divisive.113

Hence, the Mahābhārata represents the changing social and cultural climate in India during the early centuries of the Common Era and the reshaping of the importance of Vedic dharma, the integration of renouncer ideology into householder contexts, the tension between the kṣatriya warrior-ideology of dharma and the renouncer ideology of yoga and ahimsā, as well as countering the śramaṇa traditions’ rejection of Vedic worldview. It is also the foundation for the later development of bhakti traditions.114 Upon this complex background, the main narrative tells the story of the Pāṇḍava princes from the kṣatriya class defending dharma—law and duty—in the face of adharma, injustice and disorder.

While the Dharmaśāstras provide rules of conduct and coherent instructions to deal with dilemmas, the Mahābhārata raises questions concerning dharma’s complex nature and tends to provide multiple answers. The text often states that dharma is atisūkṣma (extremely subtle), and offers various perspectives to what constitutes dharma, which raises the question of whether dharma is contextual.115 Fitzgerald suggests this conveys the idea of the complexity of human life and the acknowledgment that action requires the evaluation and rating of virtues.116 He stresses that dharma in the context of the Mahābhārata does not signify the cosmic natural law, rather meaning law, right, or virtue.117

---

114 Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 112.
Dharma is a pivotal concept in the Mahābhārata with vast dialogues and narratives that examine various elusive terms that shed light on the understanding of compassion. In particular, the last third of the text consists of instructions and discussions on dharma between Bhīṣma and Yudhiṣṭhira. \(^{118}\) Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, is depicted as the embodiment of dharma and is often referred to as dharmarāja, the dharma king. In the beginning of the epic, he is also referred to as the truthful knower of compassion (satyaṃ karuṇavedinam).\(^{119}\)

Notes on Buddhist Influence on the Mahābhārata

The debate on the boundaries between the religious traditions of Southeast Asia during the period of the Mahābhārata is an old one. Particularly, the influence of Buddhism on the text has received much attention in scholarly literature. While a text of this magnitude might have absorbed and assimilated Buddhist references passed down through many centuries, scholars tend to argue that Buddhism had a significant influence on the text due to the cultural and political atmosphere at the time.\(^{120}\) However, scholars reach different conclusions as to the implications on the text. For example, Fitzgerald sees the character of Yudhiṣṭhira as a “dark” representation of King Aśoka seeking to restore the authority of the Brahmins, while Nicholas Sutton sees his character as a representation of Aśoka as a figure of non-cruelty and forgiveness.\(^{121}\) Thus, they see the Buddhist influence through a historical and political lens. Nevertheless, it seems more likely that Buddhism is referenced in various ways just like the other concepts in the text.\(^{122}\) Thus, traces of Buddhist

\(^{118}\) Fitzgerald, “The Great Epic of India as Religious Rhetoric,” 619.

\(^{119}\) The Mahābhārata 1.129.7


\(^{121}\) Hiltebeitel, “Buddhism and the Mahābhārata: Boundary Dynamics in Textual Practice,” 114.

thought are spread across the epic, such as the reference to the eightfold path of Buddhism and using various terms associated with Buddhist doctrines.\(^{123}\)

For example, in chapter twelve of the *Bhagavadgītā*, which discusses the yoga of devotion, Kṛṣṇa declares that “one who has no hatred for any living beings, friendly (*maitra*) and compassionate (*karuṇa*) indeed,” is dear to him.\(^{124}\) Charan Gaya Tripathi suggests that using the terms *maitra* and *karuṇa* “must be regarded as a terminus technicus of Buddhism which has lent this word a special connotation,” and highlights the significance of the pairing of the two virtues in this verse.\(^{125}\) She further point to the Buddhist origin and connotation of the term *sarvabhūtānām*, “all living beings.”\(^{126}\)

The ideal of *ānṛśamsya*

The word *ānṛśamsya*, often translated as non-cruelty, is an important concept and is often related to the understanding of compassion in the epic. Numerous discourses explore the meaning of *ānṛśamsya* and illustrate Yudhiṣṭhira’s character as evolving and embodying *ānṛśamsya* throughout the text. Mukund Lath argued that *ānṛśamsya* is the ideal for the path of action, *pravruttimārga*, as opposed to the ideal of non-violence, *ahiṁsā*, which is associated with the path of renunciation, *nivruttimārga*.\(^{127}\) Alf Hiltebeitel suggests that *ānṛśamsya* is a critique and alternative to the śramanic traditions’ emphasis on renunciation through the concept of absolute

\(^{123}\) The Mahābhārata, 3.2.71, 3.2.73cd-75.

\(^{124}\) The *Bhagavadgītā* 12.13ab: one who has no hatred for any living beings, friendly and compassionate indeed, who is unselfish, free from egotism, indifferent to suffering and happiness, patient; *adveṣṭā sarvabhūtānāṁ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca nirvāṁ prabhakarāh sama-duḥkha-sukha kṣamī.


\(^{126}\) Ibid.

ahiṃsā. He identifies that the epic explores the tensions between three values that are considered the highest dharma: truth, non-cruelty, and non-violence. Hiltebeitel explores the distinctions between ānṛśamsya and ahiṃsā and demonstrates that ānṛśamsya is said to be the highest dharma more than any other ideal in the epic.128 Ahiṃsā is characterized by the desire not to kill or harm creatures and on a deeper level represents the desire to overcome the desire for life.129 On the other hand, ānṛśamsya is often explored as a family value, hence he suggests it is a relational virtue with a “spiritual sense” that honors the bonds that connect “all forms of life through the spiritual presence that permeates all beings.”130

Sibaji Bandyopadhyay argues that the Mahābhārata illustrates the limits of non-violence through a discourse between a meat seller, Dharmavyadha, and a Brahmin. Dharmavyadha’s profession as a meat seller entails violence, however, he strives to follow the path of dharma and lead a moral life.131 Bandyopadhyay analyzes Dharmavyadha’s argument:132

1. “Ahimsa is the highest dharma, which is founded upon truth.

2. But even though men of learning and wisdom have advocated non-violence from the earliest times, reflection shows us that there is none who is non-violent.

---


130 Hiltebeitel, *Dharma*, 81.


132 Ibid.
3. Hence, the best way to resolve the paradox is to temper the exacting demands of 'non-violence' by emphasizing 'leniency' or 'non-cruelty' and, for all practical purposes, replacing the commandment 'ahimsa is the highest dharma' with 'anṛṣaṃṣya is the highest dharma'.

Non-violence is an unattainable ideal and therefore ānṛṣaṃṣya is recommended. Bandyopadhyay further suggests that the ideal is based upon a personal attitude rather than the action and is based on non-attachment.133 Sinha Kanad argues that Yudhiṣṭhira represents the criticism against the violent duty of the kṣatriya class rather than the renunciant traditions’ strict adherence to ahimsā.134 He proposes that the text portrays a gradual evolution of the ānṛṣaṃṣya ideal through the character of Yudhiṣṭhira.135 Interestingly, at the end of Yudhiṣṭhira’s journey he relinquishes heaven and chooses to stay with his lifelong dog, referred to as his bhakta or devotee, out of his commitment to ānṛṣaṃṣya.136 According to Kanad, this narrative establishes ānṛṣaṃṣya as an end goal for one’s life as opposed to the attainment of heaven in kṣatriya dharma or the liberation from saṃsāra in śramaṇic dharma.137

The epic consists of sub-tales or upākhyānas which focus on the conception of dharma (dharmyāṇi).138 Hiltebeitel notes that the sub-tales often include discussions on unofficial laws and address grey areas.139 In a discourse in book 13, the Anuśāsana Parvan, Yudhiṣṭhira asks

---

133 Ibid.
136 Sinha, “Redefining Dharma in a Time of Transition: Ānṛṣaṃṣya in the Mahābhārata as an Alternative End of Human Life,” 155; this relationship will be further explored in the chapter.
139 Hiltebeitel, “Among friends: Marriage, women, and some little birds,” 224.
Bhīṣma about the nature of ānṛṣāmsya. Even though it is not considered a sub-tale, the chapter is situated in a series of sub-tales and supports the main narrative of the epic. The nature of ānṛṣāmsya is explored through the following story:  

Yudhiṣṭhirā said,

I wish to hear all the characteristics of non-cruelty and moral conduct of devoted people.

Tell me that, O’ Grandfather.

Bhīṣma said,

In the kingdom of King Kāśi, a hunter departing the villages,

having taken with him a poisonous arrow, hunted for deer.

And there, in the big forest, having seen deer nearby,

an arrow was discharged by the hunter greedy for prey.

There, by he who desired to kill, whose arrows were hard to restrain,

with an arrow that was off the mark of its target, a big forest tree was pierced.

That tree, shot with great force by an arrow smeared with poison,

letting go of its fruits and leaves, became dried up.

See appendix no. 1 for the full translation with Sanskrit breakdown.
When the tree became thus, the parrot, who had dwelt for a long time in the hollow of the tree, did not abandon his habitation, out of his devotion to the forest tree.

Not moving, fasting, weary, and also silent,

the parrot, grateful and virtuous, withered along with the tree.

Indra, the instructor of the ignorant, was surprised,

having understood him as generous, with noble essence, superhuman behavior and indifferent to suffering and happiness.

From that, a sorrowful thought occurred to Indra.

How could this bird be engaged in non-cruelty, not suited for one born as an animal?

“Or else there is nothing extraordinary here,” was the thought of Indra.

For all beings in this world are seen as acting in every way towards all.

Then, assuming a human form, with the appearance of a Brahmin,

Indra, having descended to earth, said to the bird:

“O’ Best of Birds, O’ Parrot, Sir, Granddaughter of Dākṣa, who possesses good offspring due to you,

I ask you, why don’t you abandon this withered tree?”
Then, being questioned, the parrot answered, having saluted him respectfully by bowing his head, “Welcome King of the Gods! I have recognized you by my austerities.”

Then, by Indra, with the ten thousand eyes, “Excellent! Excellent!” was said.

Thus, honored by his tapas, then he thought, “Oh, he is very knowledgeable!”

Thus, Indra, the destroyer of Bala, even knowing that parrot as possessing pure action and highly virtuous, asked about the attainment of that [reason for not abandoning the tree].

“Why do you stay in the withered tree, who is leafless and has no fruit, and is not fit to be the refuge for birds, when this forest is vast?

In this great forest, there are also many other beautiful trees, whose hollows are covered with leaves, with abundant paths.

O’ Steadfast One, surely consider with wisdom, this unsteady and decaying tree whose life is gone, whose essence is diminished and whose splendor is diminished.”

The distressed and virtuous parrot having heard that which was spoken by Indra, sighing deeply, said these words:

“O’ Husband of Śaci, the gods are not to be dishonored. O’ Lord of the Gods, listen to that.
Where there was non-existence, there I came into existence.

I was born in this tree, and in this tree I was endowed with the virtues by the seers, and in this tree, I was protected in my youth and not defeated by enemies.

O’ Sinless One, why have you made an issue out of the fruitlessness of my compassion?

I am devoted to non-cruelty and filled with devotion.

Compassion is indeed the great characteristic of virtue of good people, and compassion always brings joy to good people.

You alone were questioned by all the gods about their doubts on virtue, From that, you were established in sovereignty among the god of gods.

O’ Thousand-Eyed One, it is not worthy of you to suggest abandoning this tree at this time, having offered me livelihood when it was capable.

Certainly, out of devotion, how can I abandon it this day?”

Indra, the punisher of the demon Pāka, delighted and pleased with his lovely words and non-cruelty, replied to the dhārma-knowing parrot:

“Choose a boon.”

Then, that parrot in the hollow of the tree who possessed the highest non-cruelty, asked for the boon of the existence of that tree, forever.
Knowing that firm perfection of morality in the parrot, Indra was pleased.

Therefore, he sprinkled the tree with nectar.

Then, that tree obtained beautiful fruits, leaves, and even branches, because of the firm devotion and radiance of the parrot.

And the parrot by that action, performed out of non-cruelty,

O’ Great King, at the end of his life, obtained residence in the same world as Indra.

Thus, O’ Best of Men, fixed in devotion alone, one obtains success in all things.

Just as the tree, attaining fulfillment through the devotion of the parrot.

Through this discourse I would like to point to several observations about the nature of non-cruelty and compassion:

1. The forest tree got hurt by a hunter who was hunting for deer. Interestingly, the act of hunting itself is not condemned in the story. This echoes an early narrative where a sage and his wife in the form of deer were killed while they were making love. In this narrative the killing is said to be lacking *ānṛśaṃsyā* since it was done while they were making love.141 This distinction might express the critique about strict adherence to non-violence, indicating that some forms of violence may be accepted when done in accordance with the personal *dharma* of class.

141 Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahabharata: a reader's guide to the education of the dharma king*, 200.
2. The parrot refuses to abandon the decaying tree out of his devotion to the tree that nourished him and protected him all his life.\textsuperscript{142} Thus, the story establishes bhakti as an important component of ānṛśaṃsyā. This association is also observed in the relationship between Yudhiṣṭhira and his dog (referred to as his bhakta) mentioned above.\textsuperscript{143} Hiltebeitel points to a broader association between birds and friendship in the text and traces it back to the Rgveda which tells the story of the friendship between two birds who live in the same tree. This relationship is reinterpreted in the Muṇḍaka and Śvetāśvatara Upanisads with a bhakti element between the soul and the Lord.\textsuperscript{144} Accordingly, the ānṛśaṃsyā ideal includes sentiments of devotion and friendship.

3. One of the Sanskrit words used for a bird is dvija, or twice-born which also refers to a Brahmin. As Hiltebeitel points out, sub-tales that incorporate birds might be discussing dharma that applies to Brahmins. Nevertheless, he recognizes that some birds are “more brahmin than others.”\textsuperscript{145} In the translation below, the word dvija is used within a verse that distinguishes class:

“How could this bird be engaged in non-cruelty, not suited for one born as an animal?”\textsuperscript{146}

In the following verse, Indra admits the ideal is suitable for all beings. This seems to emphasize that ānṛśaṃsyā can be practiced by all beings and toward all beings, regardless of class distinction. In this regard, Hiltebeitel argues that ānṛśaṃsyā has an expandable quality. While ahimsā is addressed in the epic as hypocritical and exclusive,

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{142}] The Mahābhārata, 13.5.6.
\item[\textsuperscript{143}] Shalom, Re-ending the Mahabharata: The Rejection of Dharma in the Sanskrit Epic, 81.
\item[\textsuperscript{144}] Hiltebeitel, “Among friends: Marriage, women, and some little birds,” 232.
\item[\textsuperscript{145}] Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{146}] The Mahābhārata, 13.5.9.
\end{itemize}
ānṛśamsya “is a matter of a human heart that can expand and contract as character and circumstances allow.” He argues it begins with absence of harm toward a man (nṛ) and expands to a fellow-feeling for all beings, including a tree. The expanding quality of ānṛśamsya along with the link to friendliness and devotion could be seen as echoing the Buddhist ideal of mettā (or maitrī in Sanskrit) and the practice of the brahmavihāras.

4. Anukrośa, is an essential virtue for understanding the nature of ānṛśamsya. Anukrośa literally means crying alongside, through it has also been translated as commiseration, to feel another’s pain, pity, or compassion. The literal meaning resembles the English meaning of compassion, both capturing an experience of suffering with another. This translation points to an emotional component to compassion. In the narrative above, I suggest it indicates compassion:

“Compassion is indeed the great characteristic of virtue of good people, and compassion always brings joy to good people.”

Compassion is regarded as the highest characteristic of dharma of virtuous people. Beyond the benefits compassion provides to others, it is also seen as benefitting the self as it brings virtuous joy. Hence, compassion can be seen as the moral course of action.

5. Many virtues or normative ideals in Sanskrit are expressed by negation (through an initial a), such as the yamas. While ānṛśamsya is derived from nṛṣamsa negated with a, it is then turned into an abstract noun that starts with ā. Nevertheless, Lath

---

147 Hiltebeitel, Rethinking the Mahabharata: a reader's guide to the education of the dharma king, 212.
148 [Refer to the relevant chapter]
149 Hiltebeitel, Rethinking the Mahabharata: a reader's guide to the education of the dharma king, 212-213.
150 The Mahābhārata, 13.5.23.
argued “the word has more than a negative connotation; it signifies good-will, a fellow feeling, a deep sense of other.”

To conclude, the perfection of morality in this chapter is accomplished through the ideal of ānṛśamsya which subsumes the virtues of devotion and compassion. Ānṛśamsya accepts that violence is sometimes inevitable. Drawing from the Bhagavadgītā’s teaching, the ideal might imply skillful action based on nonattachment, as will be further discussed below. Whether ānṛśamsya is intended as a response to renouncer traditions’ strict adherence to non-violence (such as Buddhism or Jainism) or as a response to the violence of the kṣatriya class, it can also be understood as a relational virtue which applies to all beings and enables one to attain the heavenly realms.

“And the parrot by that action, performed out of non-cruelty,

O’ Great King, at the end of his life, obtained residence in the same world as Indra.”

Notes on Terms That Shed Light on Compassion

In the opening scenes of the Bhagavadgītā, Arjuna stands on the battlefield and is “filled with the highest pity, falling into despair” (kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo viṣīdan), because of the sight of his enemies, whom he identifies as friends, uncles, and teachers. The Sanskrit word kṛpā is translated as pity, tenderness, or compassion.

---

152 The Mahābhārata, 13.5.31
153 The Bhagavadgītā, 1.28.
Graham M. Schweig translates *kṛpā* as compassion, while Hiltebeitel suggests that *kṛpā* means pity instead of compassion.\(^{154}\) He argues that broadening Arjuna’s sentiments to include aversion to war or killing is not accurate.\(^{155}\) I agree that *kṛpā* indicates Arjuna’s pity as he reveals the source of this sentiment as stemming from the attachment to his relatives, the fear of becoming a sinner, the tension between his renunciation and social commitments,\(^{156}\) and the *dharma* of the four classes.\(^{157}\) Pity, as opposed to compassion, can be seen as a state in which one is overcome by an emotional response to suffering and thus an obstacle because it amplifies suffering. Arjuna’s pity is rejected by Kṛṣṇa stating it is “not agreeable with you, does not lead to heaven, it causes disgrace,”\(^{158}\) and addressing pity as weakness of heart (*ḥṛdayadaurbalya*), he encourages Arjuna to flight.\(^{159}\) Arjuna then admits his “being is afflicted by the fault of pity” (*kārpanyadosopahatasvabhāva*),\(^{160}\) and asks for Kṛṣṇa’s guidance to overcome his confusion. Thus, compassion is not dismissed, rather it is pity that is based upon states of confusion and ignorance.\(^{161}\) While pity seems virtuous, ultimately it is egocentric. In his answer, Kṛṣṇa defines yoga as equanimity and skillfulness in action.\(^{162}\) He encourages performing actions without attachment to the fruits of the actions.\(^{163}\) This suggests that Arjuna’s *kṛpā* is dismissed as it is intermingled with attachment.

---


\(^{155}\) Hiltebeitel, *Dharma*, 113.

\(^{156}\) Sargeant, *The Bhagavadgītā*, 18-19; The Bhagavadgītā 1.40-45

\(^{157}\) Sargeant, *The Bhagavadgītā*, 18; The Bhagavadgītā 1.41.

\(^{158}\) Bhagavadgītā, 2.2.

\(^{159}\) The Bhagavadgītā, 2.3.

\(^{160}\) The Bhagavadgītā, 2.7.

\(^{161}\) Sargeant, *The Bhagavadgītā*, 26; The Bhagavadgītā 2.11.

\(^{162}\) Sargeant, *The Bhagavadgītā*, 38-39; The Bhagavadgītā, 1.50, 1.47.

\(^{163}\) Sargeant, *The Bhagavadgītā*, 38; The Bhagavadgītā 1.47.
Similar to *krpā*, the word *dayā* translates as pity, tenderness, mercy, or compassion. In chapter sixteen, of the *Bhagavadgītā*, Kṛṣṇa lists *dayā bhūteṣu*, compassion for living beings, as one of the characteristics of those born to a divine destiny.\(^{164}\) Furthermore, book twelve of the *Mahābhārata* includes a presentation of yoga in which *dayā bhūteṣu* is said to be achieved by the yoga of knowledge and yoga of harnessing of the senses.\(^{165}\)

**Conclusion**

The *Mahābhārata* represents the formation of new dharma ideals at a time of dramatic changes in the social and political landscape. Within the context of violent war and rivalry, the epic encourages morality through sentiments of sympathy and becomes pivotal to the understanding of the nature of compassion. As noted, the time in India involved the rising of various traditions and thus an exchange of ideas and concepts is expected. Generally, *karunā* seems to indicate a Buddhist influence and means compassion explicitly. Other terms are less clear cut and denote an array of sentiments; *ānṛśamsya*, non-cruelty - a crucial ideal - subsumes the ideals of compassion, *anukrośa*, and devotion, bhakti. *Dayā* and *krpā* could refer to sentiments of pity, tenderness, or compassion. Nevertheless, in the narratives explored above, *dayā* usually translates as compassion and *krpā* as pity. These notions of compassion in the epic are not absolute and recognize that harm or violence might be necessary in the material world of action. Therefore, they can be interpreted as attitudes accompanied by skillful action established in non-attachment.\(^{166}\)

---

\(^{164}\) The Bhagavadgītā 16.2


\(^{166}\) This argument echoes Sibaji Bandyopadhyay assessment of *ānṛśamsya*.
Chapter 4 - The Yogavāsiṣṭha’s Morality and Compassion

The Yogavāsiṣṭha is a narrative text based upon the tales of the Rāmāyana. It is dated roughly between the sixth to the fourteenth century CE, and parts of the text may have been composed at different times. Sarbacker suggests that the text links the itihāsa tradition to the continuous developments of ideas and practices of yoga.

The Yogavāsiṣṭha demonstrates influences from Vedānta schools, Jainism, Sāmkhya, Mahāyāna Buddhism, and Śaivism. Chapple notes that the Yogavāsiṣṭha is unique due to its emphasis on the doctrine of mind-only associated with the Yogācāra school of Buddhism. Hence, it negates the reality of the world which originates from the constructive power of the mind and is shaped by past influences (vāsanā) and stresses the importance of meditation as the means to enlightenment. Yet as opposed to Buddhism, the Yogavāsiṣṭha also highlights Vedānta ideas of the bliss of self-realization.

The text narrates spiritual instruction given by the sage Vasiṣṭha to prince Rāma over six books which describe Rāma’s progression towards enlightenment. The soteriological ideal of the text is similar to the Vedānta liberation in life, jīvanmukti, and ultimately the attainment of nirvāṇa at the time of death. In this ideal, the text demonstrates a balance between world-affirming and world-rejecting and allows Rāma to fulfill his social duties equipped with

---

167 Christopher Key Chapple, The Concise Yoga Vasistha (Suny Press, 2010), introduction p. x.
168 Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 115.
169 Ibid.; Chapple, The Concise Yoga Vasistha, introduction p. xii
170 The Concise Yoga Vasistha, introduction p. xiii
172 Chapple, The Concise Yoga Vasistha, introduction p. xii.
173 Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 115.
Similar to the *Mahābhārata*, through the character of Rāma, the text bridges between *Brāhmaṇa* ideals and social duties and stresses there is no need to renounce action in the world. Yet, Rāma is not facing an ethical dilemma, rather he is struggling with mundane flavorless life.\(^{175}\)

Chapple suggests that Rāma becomes the symbol of compassion and Maurice Winternitz suggests he represents a Buddhist influence on the text.\(^{176}\) The text’s *Advaita Vedānta* influence sets the struggle to explain the importance of moral conduct in an unreal world of illusion and unity; this paradox was explored and demonstrated in the Upaniṣads notion of unity.\(^{177}\) In the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, separation between individuality and multiplicity exists only in the world of phenomena and thus moral action seems to contradict non-duality. Menaha Ganesathasan argues that Vasiṣṭha overcomes this paradox by developing the analogy of a dream.

> “1. The world is nothing but a long dream.

> 2. Just as in the dream, the dreamer is caught up in the dream and sincerely believes that her experiences of objects and events are real, and the awoken individual is so entangled in the machinations of the world that she regards her sense experiences as constituents of reality.

> 3. Given the psychological impact of this phenomenological snare, particularly in the generation of pain or pleasure, it is necessary to introduce rules of moral conduct in order to reduce suffering and increase happiness.”\(^{178}\)

\(^{174}\) Ibid.

\(^{175}\) Menaha Ganesathasan, “The kingdom within the hut: ethical education and story-telling in the Yogavāsiṣṭha” (PhD diss., University of Hawai‘i, 2004), 3.


\(^{177}\) See chapter 1; Menaha Ganesathasa, “Dreams, Fictions, and the Quest for Morality in the Yogavāsiṣṭha,” in *Engaged Emancipation: Mind, Morals, and Make-Believe in the Moksopaya (Yogavasistha)*, eds. Christopher Key Chapple and Arindam Chakrabarti (SUNY Press, 2015), 189.

Therefore, the symptoms triggered by the world of illusion should be alleviated through moral conduct. This also suggests that moral conduct is part of the path to liberation and the ultimate state. David Schulman suggests that the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* seeks to wake us up into the illusion that the mind creates as opposed to *Advaita Vedānta* that seeks to awake us from the illusion.\(^\text{179}\) Ganesathasan highlights that Vasiṣṭha advocates for moral conduct even for the one who is driven by desires to ensure harmony and order in society.\(^\text{180}\) She demonstrates that the text portrays a fiction analogy. As such, through story, creative imagination, and identification between reader and character in the text enhances one’s moral capabilities and allows for the liberated being to evolve into the ideal moral being.\(^\text{181}\) Chapple argues that the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*’s emphasis on action holds a deep ethical message; the ultimate good requires purification of desire and reengaging in the world following a transformative experience.\(^\text{182}\)

The liberated person is said to be a great doer (*mahākartā*), great enjoyer (*mahābhoktā*), and great renouncer (*mahātyāgī*). While he is active in the world, his attitude is of non-attachment, not swayed by dualities. Bhikhan Atreya suggests that these concepts could be seen as Vasiṣṭha’s transcendental ethics.\(^\text{183}\) Thus, moral conduct is the inherent nature of the liberated person’s state of equanimity.

Ganesathasan argues that Vasiṣṭha’s morality promotes empathetic identification and compassion. Seeing the world as illusion fosters the removal of the distinctions between

---


\(^{180}\) Ganesathasan, “The kingdom within the hut: ethical education and story-telling in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha,*” 6.


\(^{182}\) Christopher Key Chapple, “Ethics and Psychology of the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* in the *Upāśama Prakaraṇa,*” in *Engaged Emancipation: Mind, Morals, and Make-Believe in the Moksopaya (Yogavasistha),* eds. Christopher Key Chapple and Arindam Chakrabarti (SUNY Press, 2015), 184.

\(^{183}\) Atreya, *The philosophy of the Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha,* 511.
individuality and multiplicity and enhances compassionate identification with the other. She highlights that “the compassionate identification of the reader with the fictional character, in the form of the witness, provides the explanation as to why the enlightened being continues her work, even though she knows that the world appearance and all its occupants are illusion. The sage is both witness to the world appearance and participant in the world appearance.” Therefore, the liberated being continues to act morally in the world equipped with wisdom.

The Growing Tree of Samādhi

In book 6, Vasiṣṭha describes the tree of samādhi (samādhānatarum), which grows in the field known as the heart of the wise. Its seed “should be sprinkled, [watered] by the fresh milk (…nourishment…) of the company of good people, which is pure, loving, sacred, sweet, beneficial to oneself, like lunar nectar.”

Thunderstorms and lightning that devastate the field and could destroy the tree are said to manifest in the form of transient enjoyments (bhogabhaṅgurāḥ). “These all should be prevented by steadiness, generosity, compassion (dayā), and mantras, by chanting, ablution, austerities, and self-control, and by bearing the trident whose meaning is OM.”

Thus, because the seed of the tree was preserved, “the seed of meditation comes forth as a beautiful new sprout whose aspect is discernment.” As a result, “by that (seed of meditation), the ground of the mind shines brightly, [and] blossoming, it becomes beautiful in appearance, just

---

186 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 44, verse 2.
187 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 44, verse 4; Swami Venkatesananda, Vasistha's yoga, 560.
188 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 44, verse 14; Swami Venkatesananda, Vasistha's yoga, 560.
189 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 44, verse 15.
190 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 44, verse 16.
as the new moon [in] the sky.”191 Eventually, when the tree is grown it is said to be “thick with the flavor of nonattachment, the purpose of scriptures, and contact with virtuous people; it does not even tremble slightly by the monkey-agitation of likes and dislikes.”192

“Then from that appearance adorned by knowledge, [the tree] produces these branches, shining with water, spreading all places, far and wide.”193 These branches of wisdom are “correctness, truth, goodness, strength of mind, unwavering, equanimity, peacefulness, friendliness, compassion (karunā), splendor, and honorable behavior.”194

This narrative explores the path to samādhi through the analogy of a growing tree. It describes the right conditions for it to grow and flourish and eventually become stable and strong. The narrative also places importance on the means of scriptures, company of the wise as role models, and meditation to attain liberation.

Compassion is initially described as an instrument to counter worldly desires and thus it is the moral behavior to grow the seed and provide the right conditions for the path to liberation. When wisdom is gained, the mind is said to shine bright. This implies a mind predominated by the sattva guṇa and resembles the result of the practice of the brahmavihāras in yogasūtra 1.33.195 It should also be noted that friendliness is also part of the brahmavihāras linked to the Buddhist practice and concept. Ultimately, when one is no longer swayed by rāga and dveṣa, likes and dislikes, compassion is a byproduct of wisdom and thus is inherent to the nature of the liberated

191 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 44, verse 17.
192 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 44, verse 21.
193 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 44, verse 22.
194 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 44, verse 23.
195 See p. 17.
being. As Ganesathasan notes, egolessness results in a spontaneous emergence of virtuous qualities.196

It is interesting to note that the initial “instrumental” compassion is denoted by the word dayā, and the ultimate compassion is denoted by the word karunā. Moreover, this narrative did not place the suffering of others or empathetic identification as the basis for compassion, rather compassion is the result of self-effort and the realization of the self. The narrative ends in describing the experience of peace and bliss attained in the shade of the tree of samādhi.197 The text emphasizes that when one is freed from desire, the self reveals itself as the pure experience of bliss (ānanda).198 Bliss is the nature of the Ultimate reality, Brahman, as pure consciousness and is presented as the source of all happiness and delight. The Yogavāsiṣṭha emphasizes Brahman as fullness.199 Consequently, the subject of compassion is ultimately the same Brahman and its source is not rooted in lack, rather it comes forth from the realization of unity, bliss, and fullness.

Furthermore, book 6(2) chapter 102 explores the nature of the liberated being and highlights his nature as one of compassion and generosity (karuṇodārayā).200 His great compassion is said to be unpitied (nirdayo'byantakaruṇo).201 The text clarifies that in contrast to compassion, pity is a state in which one is overcome by an emotional response to suffering and therefore an obstacle because it amplifies suffering.

---

197 Swami Venkatesananda, Vāsishtha's yoga (SUNY Press, 1993), 561.
199 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 3, verse 11; The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 50, verse 2.
200 Book 6(2), 102, 47.
201 Book 6(2), 102, 7; In the context of this verse, nirdaya seems to highlight the quality of compassion which is without egocentric pity.
Conclusion:

As examined, the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* highlights the importance of ethical conduct throughout the path to liberation and after one is liberated. On the path, compassion is described as a tool to counter desire and reduce suffering. When one has no desire and ego, the *mahākartā*, great doer, is described as naturally friendly and compassionate to all beings. This compassion arises from the newly gained wisdom centered upon bliss and fullness. *Vasiṣṭha* states that the result of knowledge is that “the world with all its beings is one. From stupidity, one’s essence is not reached. From knowledge one speaks of two mutually. Knowledge bestows friendliness.”202 Thus, the liberated being is free from duality and yet he is friendly to all beings.

---

202 The Yogavāsiṣṭha, book 6 (part 1), chapter 45, verse 61.
Chapter 5 - Compassion in *Hathayoga*

*Hathayoga* as a term began appearing in textual history in the tenth century CE.²⁰³ *Hathayoga*, “the yoga of force,” encapsulates a range of methods and techniques for manipulating the yogic body for the purpose of perfection, liberation, and power. Medieval formulations of *hāṭhayoga* emerged out of a synthesis between classical Patañjali’s *āṣṭāṅgayoga*, Tantra, and asceticism. Its soteriological orientation was also influenced by *Advaita Vedānta* which began to incorporate *hāṭhayoga* practices from the thirteenth century.

According to Sarbacker, the term *hāṭhayoga* encompasses “a wide range of medieval, and especially tantric, innovations in the practice of yoga…acting as a nexus for the consolidation of a range of classical and medieval practices.”²⁰⁴ Many *hāṭhayoga* texts are compilations drawing their instructions from various sources and highlight techniques; thus they pay less attention to philosophy and the cohesiveness of the text and themes. While moral or ethical conduct is not a substantial theme within *hāṭhayoga*, many of *hāṭhayoga*’s teachings have been formative for the modern development and understanding of yoga. As will be explored, *hāṭhayoga* reinterpreted Patañjali’s five *yamas* and expanded them to include compassion. Yet, these *yamas* are less known and referred to in modern yoga.

*Hathayoga* altered the number of *yamas*; some texts added more behavioral guidelines to their list while others omitted the *yamas* completely. The texts that include the *yamas* tend to follow Patañjali’s eightfold format (*āṣṭāṅgayoga*), while those who omit them follow a different *aṅga* system. Most texts that omit the *yamas* are dated between the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.

---

²⁰³ James Mallinson and Mark Singleton, *Roots of Yoga* (London: Penguin, 2017); However, it should be noted that some of its techniques can be traced back at least a thousand years earlier.

CE. Jason Birch highlights that the sadāṅgayoga format is associated with tantric Śaiva traditions that included behavioral guidelines outside of the aṅga format of the yamas. He further suggests that since hathayoga was practiced by people from different traditions, the texts may be “morally neutral” while expecting their audience to follow the behavioral and moral guidelines of their own tradition. However, Csaba Kiss suggests that the omission of the yamas and niyamas might indicate that some practices taught in these traditions might not be in line with these rules. Therefore, the lists of yamas were adapted based on the tradition attributed to the text and its intended audience.

The Śāradātilaka is a twelfth century Orissan tantric text that dedicates a chapter to teachings on yoga. It incorporates elements from different systems, such as hathayoga and mantrayoga, within the aṣṭāṅgayoga format. Gudrun Bühnemann, argues that the concise presentation of the teachings on yoga highlights the familiarity of its audience with the subject, pointing to the popularity of aṣṭāṅgayoga in that period. The Śāradātilaka lists ten yamas: non-violence (ahīṃsā), truthfulness (satya), not-stealing (asteya), celibacy (brahmacarya), kindness or compassion (kṛpā), sincerity (ārjavam), patience (kṣaṇā), steadiness (dhṛti), moderation in eating (mitāhāra), and purity (śauca). Interestingly, the Śāradātilaka is predominantly based on the

Prapañcasāra, however, the Prapañcasāra lists only eight yamas and does not include compassion.212

As discussed in chapter 3, kṛpā translates to pity, tenderness, or compassion,213 yet in the context of behavioral guidelines it likely indicates compassion or kindness.214 In a bhakti context, the term also denotes grace as seen in the Purāṇa literature, which was formative to the theistic Hindu traditions.215 Bühnemann translated kṛpā as forbearance,216 perhaps pointing to the text’s ontology and theistic origins.

The Vasiṣṭhasamhitā is a Vaiṣṇava vedānta text composed between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.217 The text lists ten yamas in a list that seems to parallel the Śāradātilaka: non-violence (ahimsā), truthfulness (satya), not stealing (asteya), celibacy (brahmacarya), steadiness (dhṛtī), patience (kṣamā), compassion (dayā), sincerity (ārjava), moderation in eating (mitāhāra), and purity (śauca).218 This list seems to echo an earlier list from the Purāṇa literature, particularly the Devībhāgavatapurāṇa and the Dattātreyaapurāṇa.219 It then became

---

212 Prapañcasāra 19.17 lists 8 yamas: satyam ahimsā samatā dhṛtih asteyaṃ kṣamā ārjavaṃ vairāgyam
213 See p. 40.
218 Śāradātilaka 1.38: ahimsā satyam asteyaṃ brahmacaryam dhṛthiṃ kṣamā ārjavam mitāhāraḥ śaucaṃ caiva yamā daśa.
even more common in later texts such as the Yogayājñavalkya dated between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{220}

The Haṭhapradīpikā was compiled in the fifteenth century by Svātmārāma. Verse 1.3 states that the compassionate (kṛpākaraḥ) Svātmārāma composes the Haṭhapradīpikā for those who are ignorant of rajā yoga through wandering in the darkness of too many opinions.\textsuperscript{221} This verse might point to the grace of the guru and the notion that compassion involves alleviating ignorance through teaching and knowledge.

Interestingly, the original manuscripts of the Haṭhapradīpikā do not include the yamas and niyamas and verses concerning them were inserted into modern versions of the text.\textsuperscript{222} The modern versions list ten yamas, thus following the early medieval texts and the Purāṇas. Birch suggests that modern versions of the text borrowed the yamas from the Jyotsnā, a nineteenth-century commentary by Brahmānanda.\textsuperscript{223} The yamas that were added in the Jyotsnā are non-violence (ahimsā) truthfulness (satya), not stealing (asteya), celibacy (brahmacarya), steadiness (dhṛti), patience (kṣamā), compassion (dayā), sincerity (ārjavaṃ), moderation in eating (mitāhāra), and purity (śauca).\textsuperscript{224} This list is said to be stated by those who are proficient in the scriptures of yoga (samproktā yogaśāstraviśāradaiḥ).\textsuperscript{225} Therefore, Brahmānanda inserted a list that was well

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{220}Birch, "The meaning of Hatha in early Hathayoga," ,528; Bühnemann, “The Śāradātilakatantra on yoga: A new edition and translation of chapter 25,” 216 note 21; Yogayājñavalkya 1.63; Mallinson and Singleton, Roots of Yoga, 477 note 7: Other tenfold lists occur, for example, in the Śivayogapradīpikā, and in three Pāñcarātra/Vaikhānasa texts: the Pādmasaṃhitā, the Vimānārcanākalpa and the Ahirudnīyasaṃhitā.
\item \textsuperscript{221}Muttusvami Srinivasa Aiyangar, The Hathayogapradīpikā of Svātmārāma: With the Commentary Jyotsnā of Brahmānanda, and English Translation (Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1972), 21; verse 1.3: bhrāntyā bahumatadhvānte rājyogam ajānatām haṭhapradīpikāṃ dhatte svātmāraṇaḥ kṛpākaraḥ.
\item \textsuperscript{222}Jason Birch, “The meaning of Hatha in early Hathayoga,” 4; Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 174.
\item \textsuperscript{223}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{224}Srinivasa Aiyangar, The Hathayogapradīpikā of Svātmārāma: With the Commentary Jyotsnā of Brahmānanda, and English Translation, 32.
\item \textsuperscript{225}Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
established as common knowledge to practitioners at the time of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and therefore it was not repeated and elaborated upon in the text.

Nevertheless, verse 1.38 indicates a different list;

> “Just as *mitāhāra* [is the principal] among the *yamas*, and *ahimsā* [is the principal] among the *niyamas*,

> *Siddhāsana* is the principal one among the *āsanas* [for] the accomplished wise [ones].”

This seems to contradict Brahmānanda’s list since *ahimsā* is mentioned as part of the *niyamas*. The verse parallels the verse from the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* that recognizes that there are ten *yamas* and mentions moderation in eating as the most important *yama* and non-violence as the most important *niyama*. This suggests that the list which the *Haṭhapradīpikā* referred to was different than the list of ten *yamas* mentioned above. Regardless, this also points to the fact that the ten *yama* lists, which include compassion, were understood as foundational and widely accepted at the time of Brahmānanda.

The list of ten *yamas* is also incorporated in several late medieval texts referred to as the Yoga Upaniṣads, in particular the *Darśana Upaniṣad*, *Śāndilya Upaniṣad*, *Varāha Upaniṣad*, and *the Triśikhibrāhmana Upaniṣad*. According to James Mallinson, the Yoga Upaniṣads borrowed

---

226 *The Haṭhayogapradīpikā* verse 1.38: *Yameṣviva mitāhāram ahimsām niyameṣviva mukhyam sarvāsaneṣvekaṃ siddhāḥ siddhāsanam viduḥ.


228 Bühnemann, “The Śāradātilakatantra on yoga: A new edition and translation of chapter 25,” 216 note 21: *Darśana Upaniṣad* 1.6 and 2.1; *Śāndilya Upaniṣad* 1.4 and 2.1; *Varāha Upaniṣad* 5.12cd –14ab; *Triśikhibrāhmana Upaniṣad* 2.32cd –34ab.
substantially from the *hathayoga* corpus and represent the orthodox acceptance of *hathayoga* in the late-medieval period.\(^{229}\)

The *Darśana Upaniṣad* 2.1 defines *dayā* as:

“The knowledge with respect to all beings as the self, through the body, mind, and speech, that alone is said to be compassion by the knowers of *vedānta*.\(^{230}\)

The verse echoes earlier texts such as the *Mahābhārata*.\(^{231}\) This view of compassion points to the *vedānta* ontological basis of non-duality.

**Conclusion**

*Haṭhayoga* texts focus on methods and techniques drawing from various yoga traditions such as Patañjali’s *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, Tantra, and asceticism. Accordingly, morality and ethical conduct are not discussed extensively. Most texts that address moral conduct follow the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* format and thus their guidelines are encapsulated within the *yamas*. The list of *yamas* change in numbers, although the most common list consists of ten *yamas* and includes either *kṛpā* or *dayā*. As demonstrated, these expanded lists probably originate from the *Purāṇa* literature. While these terms can translate to pity, tenderness, or compassion, I suggest that they indicate compassion in this context.

\(^{229}\) Mallinson and Singleton, *Roots of Yoga*, introduction, xx.

\(^{230}\) *Darśana Upaniṣad* 2.1: śvāmavatsravabhāṣeṣu kāyena manasā girā anujñā yā dayā saiva proktā *vedāntavedibhīḥ*; *anujñā* translates to permission, yet in this context it might have Buddhist origins, thus meaning knowing or consideration.

\(^{231}\) *Mahābhārata* 3.281.34-35.
Chapter 6 - Conclusions

The Evolution of the Conception of Compassion

This paper has set out to explore the nature of compassion in the traditional literature of yoga and to clarify its role through historical and textual examination. In doing so, I traced its conception and development across various texts. The Upaniṣads do not provide a simple answer to the role of compassion and ethics. Perhaps more than providing answers the Upaniṣads emphasize the importance of raising fundamental questions that were addressed by later traditions. As primarily ascetic texts, the Upaniṣads are focused on one’s inner life; however, it is evident that the inner transformation has profound effects on all aspects of life. And so, even though the explicit teachings on ethics or conduct are sparse, it seems that the inner transformation shapes moral conduct. The Upaniṣads set the foundation for ethical and moral conduct through incentive, the conception of Ātman and Brahman, and the impacts of knowledge on karma and saṃsāra.

The Yogaśūtra presents the evolution of the seeds planted in the Upaniṣads and clearly addresses ethical conduct in the form of the yamas. Nonetheless, compassion is not part of the yamas or the eightfold path of Patañjali. Karuṇā is mentioned in Yogaśūtra 1.33 as part of the brahmavihāras. While the practice in the Yogaśūtra is among other meditative practices, they likely also promote ethical cultivation as seen in several Buddhist contexts. As discussed, the practice of compassion with a sentient being for its object is shared between Buddhism and the Yogaśūtra’s conception of the brahmavihāras. The origins of the practice remain vague, yet the practice was known and shared among several traditions. Nonetheless, as described, the Buddhist influences on the Yogaśūtra are well established and the source of the Yogaśūtra’s conception of compassion draws directly from Buddhist sources and notions.
The *Mahābhārata* represents a time of dramatic changes in the social and political landscape. It displays the tensions between renouncers and householders. The *Mahābhārata* incorporates renouncer concepts into householder life and increases the accessibility to these practices and knowledge. Accordingly, it sets forth the formation of new ethical ideals by placing greater emphasis on relational values. As demonstrated, the epic encourages morality through sentiments of sympathy and becomes pivotal to the understanding of the nature of compassion.

In the examined narratives, the term *karuṇā* indicates a Buddhist influence on the text and translates as compassion. Other terms vary according to context and denote an array of sentiments; *ānṛṣaṃsya*, non-cruelty, includes the ideals of compassion, *anukroṣa*, and devotion, *bhakti*. Both *kṛpā* and *dayā* can refer to sentiments of pity, tenderness, or compassion. Nevertheless, in the narratives explored above, *kṛpā* translates as pity and *dayā* translates as compassion. As the *Mahābhārata* repeatedly stresses, no ethical value is absolute and thus the text recognizes that harm or violence might be necessary in the world of action. The solution might be to interpret compassion as an attitude accompanied by skillful action founded upon non-attachment. While not absolute, it should be noted that compassion is repeatedly said to be practiced toward all beings, including animals and trees.

Similar to the *Mahābhārata*, the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* advocates a world-affirming view, emphasizes action in the world, and incorporates many different viewpoints and traditions. The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* sets the ideal of liberation in life, *jīvanmukti*, and it attempts to provide a solution to the tension between nonduality and ethics. In the text, ethics are of utmost importance both on the path to liberation and after it. First, compassion is described on the path as a means for reducing suffering and counteracting desire. Then, the one who is free of desire and ego is described as a *mahākartā*, great doer, who eliminated self-centeredness and therefore is naturally friendly and
compassionate toward all beings. The mahākartā's compassion is rooted in bliss and arises from his wisdom.

Medieval Haṭhayoga texts focus on methods and techniques drawing from various yoga traditions such as Patañjali’s aṣṭāṅgayoga, Tantra, and asceticism. The emphasis on ascetic practices, tantric methods, and celibacy varies based on the text’s origins. Some texts are meant for renouncers while others for householders, nevertheless Haṭhayoga texts appealed mainly to an elite brāhmaṇa ascetic audience. As demonstrated, morality and ethical conduct are not discussed extensively. It is typical for texts that follow the aṣṭāṅgayoga format to address moral conduct within the yamas. While there are several lists of yamas, the most common include ten yamas and either kṛpā or dayā. By the time of the Yoga Upaniṣads, Haṭhayoga became widely acknowledged and accepted as authoritative. While the Yoga Upaniṣads emphasize ascetic discipline, they also refer to worldly attainments and are diverse in their ontological views. Several of the Yoga Upaniṣads present an expanded list of yamas that includes compassion, dayā, drawing from different sources.

The different examined texts vary in their goal and nature of liberation as worldly or transcendent. These differences are often tied to the text’s audience as renouncer, householder, or an integration of these models. These could be also seen as world-affirming, pravṛtti, and world-negating, nivṛtti, emphasis. The evolution of compassion can be seen as following the adaptations of traditions and texts to suit a wider range of practitioners and followers.

The Upaniṣads and the Yogasūtra emphasize renunciation and asceticism which places a higher value on achieving mental stillness. The Yogasūtra’s audience consisted mostly of

---

232 Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 30.
233 Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 63.
234 Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 19.
brāhmaṇa practitioners.\textsuperscript{235} While the Yogasūtra correlates between ethical transformation (the yamas) and progression on the path of yoga, it does not include compassion and it could be argued that the emphasis on ethics is primarily meant to support the goal of renunciation and to counter desire.\textsuperscript{236} As part of a progressive path, the yamas are prerequisites for the ascetic’s goal. It should also be noted that renunciate traditions often had caste restrictions and limited the accessibility to participation.\textsuperscript{237}

Narrative texts such as the Mahābhārata and the Yogavāsiṣṭha seem to appeal to broader audiences, thus increasing accessibility to their teachings and practices. These texts place greater emphasis on relational values such as compassion, rather than strict renouncer ideals. Narrative texts also enable greater relatability between the reader and the characters, thus evoking emotional responses for the reader.

Haṭhayoga texts and the Yoga Upaniṣads do not articulate a cohesive goal for renouncers or householders. Yet the medieval period is characterized by the establishment of ascetic orders. Accordingly, they tend not to highlight relational feelings or compassion. Nevertheless, with the growing popularity and acceptance of Haṭhayoga, an expanded list of yamas became more common and even read back into texts. Since Haṭhayoga repurposed the aṣṭāṅgayoga model, the yamas can be seen as preparatory practice or ethical cultivation depending on the specific text and audience.

Modern Yoga is the result of this continuous tension between renunciation and householder traditions as well as questions revolving around accessibility and inclusion. Yoga traditions have always evolved alongside culture, politics, and society. Today, yoga is no longer an ascetic

\textsuperscript{235} Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 93.
\textsuperscript{236} As will be elaborated upon later, these yamas originate from the Jain tradition which emphasize the adherence of vows to purify karma.
\textsuperscript{237} Sarbacker, Tracing the Path of Yoga, 29.
practice, rather it is often used as a tool to live a fuller life and enhance the ways one relates to the world. This reflects the common modern ontological understanding of yoga as union.

Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, also known as the “Father of Modern yoga,” systematized an approach to yoga that impacted much of the yoga practiced today. Krishnamacharya studied extensively and is known for his ability to merge teachings and concepts from various traditions and sources. He adapted his teachings to suit the changing socio-culture climate of his time, resulting in increased accessibility to yoga. His teachings also changed over the decades he taught, from rigorous physical movements to an individualized form of practice that emphasizes therapeutic applications, thus, conveying Krishnamacharya’s willingness and effort to adjust the practices of yoga to a wider audience.

The *Yoga Rahasya* is a text attributed to the *Vaiṣṇava* saint Nāthamuni, though it is said to have been received by Krishnamacharya in a vision at the age of sixteen. Yet, it is likely that Krishnamacharya composed the text himself. The *Yoga Rahasya* consists of four chapters and weaves together many teachings aimed for householders. The text also emphasizes the therapeutic application of yoga; as such, it states that diseases are removed by the practice of *aṣṭāṅgayoga*. Therefore,

> “Knowing this, the student must learn from the teacher, what is appropriate for him. He must then practice with compassion (*dayā*) for himself as well as for the sake of others.”

---

240 Ibid.
It is noteworthy that in the Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra*, the description of the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* model is preceded by *sūtras* that echo the Buddhist foundational Four Noble Truths which are presented in a medical diagnosis scheme.²⁴³ This model frames the Buddhist path in medical terminology in which an eightfold path is described as a remedy to the disease of suffering. Therefore, it could point to a parallel medical framework of Patañjali’s eightfold path as a remedy and shed light on the *Yoga Rahasya*’s association with healing.

Interestingly, the *Yoga Rahasya* encourages practicing an individualized form of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* with self-compassion in order to remove one’s disease first and then practice for the sake of others. This conveys the idea that unless we are healthy, we cannot help others.²⁴⁴ While yoga recognizes the benefits of compassion for the self, it does not address self-compassion explicitly. This notion of compassion is tied to the experience of suffering and resembles the modern understanding of compassion as a tool for personal healing. It echoes the growing emphasis on health and self-compassion, as seen in programs like the MSC in the Buddhist context. Hence, the *Yoga Rahasya* represents the transformation and adaptability in the teachings of yoga that contributed to this modern role of compassion in yoga. Furthermore, it demonstrates the correlation between the increasing importance of compassion and the growing accessibility to the householder audience.

Another recent development in yoga is the “yoga off the mat” movement. This movement is rooted in engagement in the world and often understands yoga as a tool for collective liberation rather than for individual liberation. Accordingly, it highlights putting yoga principles into action for the social benefit of the collective. Even though the movement can be grounded in the historical literature of yoga, its concepts are often being interpreted to suit the contemporary social domain.

²⁴³ See for example sutra 2.24; Bryant, *The yoga sūtras of Patañjali*, 232.
For example, the *yamas* which are formulated in a negative form (through the *a* prefix) as restraints are interpreted positively to prioritize action in the social justice context. As such, Jivana Heyman, the founder of the Accessible Yoga Association, interprets *ahimsā* as compassion and caring for everyone equally. In the social domain this can be expressed as universal healthcare.²⁴⁵

He suggests that modern yoga should further be adapted for the contemporary householder practitioners: “It’s time to let go of the image of a yogi meditating alone in a cave divorced from society and examine the way we are practicing right now and the way it impacts not only ourselves but the community around us.”²⁴⁶

This view emphasizes that modern yoga enhances social justice by making it more inclusive, accessible, and for the benefit of the collective. Accordingly, this approach places compassion at the heart of yoga for the sake of its householder audience.

Compassion’s role in modern yoga is two-fold; some movements focus on individual healing while others focus on collective healing. Nonetheless, they are not unrelated; as the historical texts suggest, compassion enhances our lives - by benefiting others we ultimately benefit ourselves. While the concept of compassion has adapted to suit the modern context, I have identified that it reflects the relationship between the growing importance of compassion and the growing demand for yoga’s householder accessibility. This echoes and continues compassion’s evolution as traced in the historical literature of yoga.

**Compassion and Nonviolence**

*Ahimsā* is a concept of great importance in yoga traditions. It is the fundamental practice of the *yamas* and demonstrates the progressive path to liberation in the *Yogasūtra*. Its primacy in

---

modern yoga is linked to the immense influence of Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra* in many modern Gurus’ teachings. As demonstrated, some modern yoga movements interpret the *yamas* as positive action in the social domain.

The origin of the *yamas* is the Ācārāṅga Sūtras (fourth-third century BCE) in the Jain tradition. In the Jain context, they are called *mahāvrata*, great vows, which are meant to encourage self-perfection. The vows are strongly linked to *karma* theory and seen as necessary tools to purge the accumulated *karma*. The idea of *karma* purification through the *yamas* is also central in the *Yogasūtra*. Chapple suggests that the *yamas* allow self-correction and thus are necessary for the cultivation of personal ethics. However, while the *yamas* lead to personal ethics, they also reflect ideals of world renunciation and social disengagement. *Ahimsā* is an ideal that reflects renouncer ideologies; the desire not to kill is essentially the desire to overcome the desire for life. Practically, progression on the path of renunciation and achieving higher states of consciousness is impossible while engaging in immoral actions.

Compassion is not explicitly mentioned as a part of the *yamas* within the *Yogasūtra*. It could be argued, as some modern yoga movements do, that compassion is subsumed within the concept of nonviolence, *ahimsā*, in the *Yogasūtra*. Nevertheless, I would like to point out several justifications to distinguish the two. First, the Sanskrit language, *Samskṛta*, literally means refined, polished, or well-formed, and implies its highly meticulous use of words. There are many terms to indicate compassion in Sanskrit yoga texts, and thus if compassion was intended it would have been stated as part of the *yamas* as some *Haṭhayoga* texts have done.

---

247 Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 34.
248 Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 45.
249 Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 47.
250 Hildebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahābhārata: a reader's guide to the education of the dharma king*, 203.
Second, to view *ahimsā* as an all-encompassing term aligns with an ontological view of union that might not be a part of *ahimsā* in the context of the *Yogasūtra*, in which the ultimate goal is separation (*kaivalya*). The modern popularity of non-duality and the definition of yoga as union could hinder relevant intellectual distinctions and accurately represent the yoga tradition. This argument might be more applicable to texts or traditions that highlight the interconnected nature of all beings. As the nature of compassion is described in the *Darśana Upaniṣad*:

“The knowledge with respect to all beings as the self, through the body, mind, and speech, that alone is said to be compassion by the knowers of *vedānta.*”

Cultivating compassion entails more than ontological aspects. In this context, it could be argued that compassion is the basis or motive of nonviolence that manifests as the desire for acting with nonviolence. Thus, conveying a positive aspect which is also seen in the composition of these words, nonviolence is expressed negatively (through the *a* prefix) while compassion is expressed positively. As examined, this approach is prevalent in modern yoga and echoes Vācaspati Miśra’s commentary on the *brahmavihāras* who suggests that compassion results in the removal of the desire to inflict harm on others. Furthermore, the view of compassion as the motive for action points to the possibility of compassionate acts of violence that can be seen as nonharmful.

As discussed, *ahimsā* is often seen as a renouncer ideal, one that cannot be absolute or applied to all. The *Mahābhārata* suggests that relational ideals of *ānṛśaṃsyā* are an alternative to

---

251 *Darśana Upaniṣad* verse 2.1: svātmavatsravabhūteṣu kāyena manasā girā anujñā yā dayā saiva proktā *vedāntavedibhibhiḥ*.

252 Bryant, *The yoga sūtras of Patañjali*, 128-129.

253 This idea is implied in the teachings of the *Mahābhārata*; In a Buddhist context this points to the importance of the intention of compassion. See: Stephen L. Jenkins, “Buddhism: Confronting the Harmful with Compassion,” in *Nonviolence in World Religions*, Ed. Mark Juergensmeyer (Routledge, 2022).
the absolutism of *ahimsā*. While no ideal is absolute in the *Mahābhārata*, the texts emphasize that it is applied to all beings. The end of Yudhiṣṭhira’s journey conveys ānṛśaṃsyas’s importance in the *Mahābhārata*; Yudhiṣṭhira enters the heavenly realms after demonstrating ānṛśaṃsyasya for his dog and being congratulated for his capacity for feeling compassion, *anukroṣa*.\(^{254}\) *Ahimsā* is still regarded as the highest *dharma* in several instances, yet as Hiltebeitel demonstrates, it is mainly applied to Brahmins.\(^{255}\) He argues that while *ahimsā* tightens the great chain of beings, ānṛśaṃsyasya softens it with compassion that cuts through the great divides.\(^{256}\) Furthermore, in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* the liberated being is described as compassionate and friendly while rarely described as nonviolent.

Compassion and nonviolence are not unrelated as many texts recognize and the cultivation of compassion can be associated with the practice of non-violence. Yet the principal difference seems to be their intended audience or practitioners and consequently affects the accessibility to the teachings. While nonviolence is mainly correlated to renunciation ideologies and has the imprint of ascetics, compassion is seen as an ideal that can be cultivated by all and toward all and ultimately indicates that liberation is available for all.

**The Nature of Compassion**

Many Sanskrit words can translate as compassion, such as *karuṇā, kṛpā, dayā, anukroṣa*, and ānṛśaṃsyasya. These terms can vary according to the tradition, specific text, socio-cultural background, and audience. Therefore, the following conclusions are based solely on the texts and discourses examined in this paper.

\(^{254}\) Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahabharata: a reader's guide to the education of the dharma king*, 272.
\(^{255}\) Hiltebeitel, *Dharma*, 85.
\(^{256}\) Hiltebeitel, *Rethinking the Mahabharata: a reader's guide to the education of the dharma king*, 213.
The term *karuṇā* tends to indicate Buddhist influences on a text and is often accompanied by *maitrī*, as seen in the *Yogasūtra* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. Moreover, in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* the term *karuṇā* implies a higher state of compassion which is achieved in the ultimate state of the awareness of one’s own bliss, as opposed to *dayā* which is cultivated on the path. This indicates that *karuṇā* is more than a sentiment but rather an attitude towards all beings.

Other terms for compassion are less clear-cut and denote an array of sentiments. In the examined texts, *dayā* which translates as pity, tenderness, mercy, or compassion is used to denote compassion. Drawing from the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, it indicates compassion that is cultivated. In the *Mahābhārata*, *dayā bhūteṣu* (compassion for living beings) is the result of practicing yoga. Furthermore, *dayā* became part of the *yamas* in some *Hathayoga* texts and thus further strengthens its role as seen as a preparatory cultivation.

*Kṛpā* translates as pity, tenderness, mercy, or compassion. As seen in the *Bhagavadgītā*, it denotes pity. Pity, as opposed to compassion, can be seen as a state in which one is overcome by an emotional response to suffering and thus an obstacle because it amplifies suffering. In the *Śāradātilaka*, *kṛpā* is mentioned as a part of the *yamas*; in later texts, the term is replaced with *dayā*. This could point to the origin of the text in the tantric Śaiva traditions in which *kṛpā* tends to denote mercy or grace.

The ideal of *ānṛśamsya* in the *Mahābhārata* translates as non-cruelty and becomes a crucial ideal that subsumes compassion, *anukroṣa*, and devotion, *bhakti*. *Anukroṣa* literally means crying alongside and indicates an emotional component to compassion in relation to other beings’ sufferings.
The nature of compassion is as diverse and dynamic as yoga itself; it is to be cultivated in practice and inherent in the ultimate state of liberation, partial and absolute, emotion and attitude, benefits the self as well as others, and is related to both suffering and bliss. While it is the intermingling and exchange between modern forms of Buddhism, Western culture, and yoga that influenced compassion’s role within modern yoga, this paper exhibited that compassion is widely embedded within the literature of yoga. Compassion’s evolution correlates to the unfoldment of yoga through the centuries, from renunciation to householders and from exclusivity to accessibility. This study allows modern practitioners to sustain a connection to historical traditions while moving forward and shaping modern yoga for the needs of contemporary society.
Appendix 1 – *Mahābhārata* Book 13, Chapter 5 Translation

1 yudhiṣṭhira uvāca

yudhiṣṭhira – m.nom.sin - yudhiṣṭhira
uvāca – 3rd, sin, red. Perfect – said

Yudhiṣṭhira said,

1 ānṛśaṃsasya dharmasya guṇān bhaktajanasya ca śrotum icchāmi kārtsnyena tan me brūhi pitāmaha

ānṛśaṃsasya – n.gen.sin – non-cruelty
dharmasya – m.gen.sin – moral conduct, dharma
guṇān – m.accu.pl - characteristics
bhaktajanasya – KD - m.gen.sin - devoted people
c – ind. - and
śrotum – infinitive - hear
icchāmi – 1st, sin, present – I wish
kārtsnyena – ind. – all in all, entirely
tan – n.acc.sin - that
me – dative.sin – to me
brūhi - 2nd, sin, imperative, 2p - speak
pitāmaha – m.voc.sin – name for Brahman, O’ Grandfather

I wish to hear all the characteristics of non-cruelty and moral conduct of devoted people. Tell me that, O’ Grandfather.

2 bhīṣma uvāca

bhīṣma – m.nom.sin
uvāca - 3rd, sin, red. perfect - said

Bhīṣma said,

2 viṣaye kāśirājasya grāmān niṣkramya lubdhakaḥ saviṣaṃ kāṇḍam ādāya mṛgayām āsa vai mṛgam

viṣaye – m.loc.sin – kingdom, territory
kāśirājasya – KD - m.gen.sin – King Kāśi
grāmān – m.accu.pl - village
niṣkramya – gerund – going out, leaving
In the kingdom of King Kāśi, a hunter departing the villages, having taken with him poisonous arrow, he hunted deer.

And there, in the big forest, by the hunter, greedy for prey, having seen deer nearby, an arrow was discharged.
There, by he who desired to kill, whose arrows were hard to restrain, with an arrow that was off the mark of its target, a big forest tree was pierced.

5 sa tīkṣṇaviṣadīghena śareṇātibalātkṛtaḥ
utsṛjya phalapatraṇi pādapaḥ śoṣam āgataḥ

sa – m.nom.son – he, that
tīkṣṇaviṣadīghena – m.ins.sin – Gen TP – smeared with poison
śareṇa – m.ins.sin - arrow
atibalā – KD m.abl.sin – from great force
kṛtaḥ - PPP m.nom.sin – made, shot
utsṛjya – gerund – abandon, give up, let go
phalapatraṇi – m.accu.pl – dvandva – fruit + leaf
pādapaḥ - m.nom.sin - tree
śoṣam – m.accu.sin – dried up
āgataḥ - PPP m.nom.sin – arrived, occurred

That tree, shot with great force by an arrow smeared with poison, letting go of its fruits and leaves, became dried up.

6 tasmin vṛkše tathābhūte koṭareṣu ciroṣitaḥ
na jahāti śuko vāsaṃ tasya bhaktyā vanaspatēḥ

tasmin – m.loc.sin – in him
vṛkše – m.loc.sin - tree
tathābhūte – m.loc.sin – of such qualities or kind or nature
koṭareṣu – n.loc.pl – hollow of a tree
ciroṣitaḥ - m.nom.sin – ppp – one who has dwelt for a long time
na – ind. no
jahāti – 3rd, sin, present, 3p – leave, abandon (translated as past)
śuko – m.nom.sin - parrot
vāsaṃ - m.accu.sin - habitation
tasya – m.gen.sin – of him
bhaktyā – f.abl.sin – devotion
vanaspatēḥ - m.abl.sin – forest tree

When the tree became thus, the parrot, who had dwelt for a long time in the hollow of the tree, did not abandon his habitation, out of his devotion to the forest tree.

7 niśpracāro nirāhāro glānaḥ śithilavāg api
kṛṭajñaḥ saha vṛkṣena dharmātmā sa vyaśuṣyata
Not moving, fasting, weary, and also silent
the parrot, grateful and virtuous, withered, along with the tree.

8 tam udāraṃ mahāsattvam atimānuṣaceṣṭitam
samaduḥkhasukhaṃ jñātvā vismitaḥ pākaśāsanaḥ

Indra, the instructor of the Pāka, was surprised,
having understood him (the parrot) as generous, noble essence, with superhuman behavior
and with indifference to suffering and happiness

9 tataś cintām upagataḥ śakraḥ katham ayaṃ dvijaḥ
tiryagyonaś asamāṁśyaṁ śaṁśyaṁ samāsthitaḥ

Indra, the instructor of the Pāka, was surprised,
having understood him (the parrot) as generous, noble essence, with superhuman behavior
and with indifference to suffering and happiness

tam – m.accu.sin - him
udāraṃ - m.accu.sin – great, beat, generous
mahāsattvam – BV m.accu.sin – great essence
atimānuṣaceṣṭitam – BV PPP m.accu.sin – superhuman behavior
samaduḥkhasukhaṃ - m.accu.sin – BV + dvandva – indifference to suffering and happiness
jñātvā - gerund – knowing
vismitaḥ - ppp m.nom.sin – surprised
pākaśāsanaḥ - m.nom.sin – gen TP – the instructor of the ignorant (name for Indra)
dvijaḥ - m.nom.sin – bird, twice-born, brahmin
tiryagyonāv – m.loc.sin – born as an anial, animal creation
asaṃbhāvyam – fpp, m.accu.sin – not + to be respected, suited
ānṛśaṃsyayāḥ - m.accu.sin – non cruelty
samāsthitaḥ - m.nom.sin – engaged in, standing upon, abiding in

From that, a sorrowful thought occurred to śakra (Indra).
How could this bird be engaged in non-cruelty, not suited for one born as an animal?

10 atha vā nātra citraṃ hīty abhavad vāsavya tu
prāṇinām iha sarveṣāṃ sarvaṃ sarvatra drṣyate

atha – ind. – then, also, now
vā na- or, either not
atra - here
citraṃ - m.accu.sin – bright, clear
hīty – ind. indeed + thus
abhavad – 3rd, sin,imperfect - was
vāsavya – m.gen.sin – Indra
tu – ind. But, and
prāṇinām – m.gen.pl – living beings
iha – in this place or world
sarveṣāṃ - m.gen.pl - all
sarvaṃ - m.accu.sin - all
sarvatra – ind. Always, everywhere, at all times
drṣyate – 3rd,sin,passive,4a

“Or else there is nothing extraordinary here” was the thought of Indra.
For all beings in this world are seen as acting in every way towards all.

11 tato brāhmaṇaṇaṣeṇa māṇuṣaṃ rūpam āsthitaḥ
avaṭṭiya mahīṃ śakras taṃ pakṣiṇam uvāca ha

tato – ind. From that, thence
brāhmaṇaṇaṣeṇa – gen TP, m.ins.sin – with the appearance of a brahmin
māṇuṣaṃ - f.accu.sin – human, human being
rūpam – n.nom.sin – form
āsthitaḥ - ppp, m.nom.sin – abiding in, undertaken
avaṭṭiya – gerund – having descended
mahīṃ - f.accu.sin - earth
śakras – m.nom.sin - Indra
Then assuming a human form, with the appearance of a Brahmin, Indra, having descended to earth, said to the bird.

12 śuka bhoḥ paksiṇām śreṣṭha dākṣeyī suprajās tvayā pṛcche tvā śuṣkam etaṃ vai kasmān na tyajasi drumam

śuka – m.voc.sin
bhoḥ - ind. – sir, voc
paksiṇām - m.gen.pl - birds
śreṣṭha – ppp, m.voc.sin – best, most excellent
dākṣeyī – f.nom.sin – granddaughter of Dākṣa
suprajās – f.nom.pl – BV – good offspring
tvayā – ins.sin – by you
pṛcche – 1st,sin,present,1a - ask
tvā – accu.sin - you
śuṣkam – m.accu.sin – withered, dried up
etaṃ – m.accu.sin - this
vai – ind. – indeed, certainly
kasmān – ind. - why
na -ind. - not
tyajasi – 2nd,sin,present – leave, abandon
drumam – m.accu.sin – tree

O’ best of birds, O’ parrot, sir, granddaughter of Dākṣa, who possesses good offspring due to you,
I ask you, why don’t you abandon this withered tree?

13 atha prṣṭaḥ śukaḥ prāha mūrdhnā samabhivādyā tam svāgataṃ devarājāya vijñātas tapasā mayā

atha – ind. – then, now, also
prṣṭaḥ - ppp, m.nom.sin – asked questioned
śukaḥ - m.nom.sin – parrot
prāha – 3rd.sin,red.perfect – answered
mūrdhnā – m.ins.sin – forehead
samabhivādyā – gerund – salute respectfully
tam – accu.sin – him
svāgataṃ - m.accu.sin – welcome (goes with dative)
devārājāya – gen TP, m.dative.sin – king of gods
vijñātas – ppp, m.nom.sin – known, understood
tapasā – n.ins.sin –austerities
mayā – ins.sin – me

Then, being questioned, the parrot answered, Having saluted him respectfully by bowing his head,
I have recognized you by my austerities.
14 tato daśaśatākṣeṇa sādhu sādhv iti bhāṣitam
aho vijñānam ity evaṃ tapasā pūjitas tataḥ

tato – ind. From that, thence
daśaśatākṣeṇa – BVm.ins.sin – ten thousand eyes
sādhu – m.voc.sin - excellent
sādhv - m.voc.sin - excellent
iti – quote
bhāṣitam – ppp, m.accu.sin – said, spoken
aho – ind. Oh! (implying joyful surprise)
vijñānam – n.accu.sin – knowledge, understanding
ity - quote
evaṃ - ind. Thus, so in this way
tapasā – n.ins.sin - austerties
pūjitas – ppp, m.nom,sin – respected, honored
tataḥ - ind. From that, thence

Then, by the one with the ten thousand eyes (Indra) “excellent! Excellent!” was said. Thus, honored by his tapas, then he thought, "Oh, he is very knowledgeable/realized!" from that and by means of his tapas.
15 tam evaṃ śubhakarmāṇaṃ śukaṃ paramadhārmikam
vijānann api tāṃ prāptiṃ papracccha balasūdanaḥ

tam – m.acci.sin -
evaṃ - ind. – thus, so in that way
śubhakarmāṇaṃ - BV m.accu.sin – bright, beautiful+ action
śukaṃ -m.accu.sin - parrot
paramadhārmikam – BV m.accu.sin – highest best + virtuous
vijānann – m.nom.sin – sage, wise knowing
Thus, Indra, the destroyer of Bala, even knowing that power as possessing bright action and highly virtuous, he asked about the attainment of that (reason for not abandoning the tree)

16 niṣpatram aphaļaṃ śuṣkam aśaranyam patatriṇāṃ
kimarthamḥ sevase vṛkṣaṃ yadā mahad idāṃ vanam

niṣpatram – BV m.accu.sin - leafless
aphalaṃ - BV n.accu.sin no-fruit
śuṣkam – m.accu.sin - withered
aśaranyam – fpp, m.accu.sin – not fit to protect
patatriṇāṃ – m.gen.pl - bird
kimarthamḥ pronominal – why + purpose, what for
sevase – 2nd,sin,present 1a - dwell
vṛkṣaṃ - m.a
yadā -ind. - when
mahad – n.accu.sin – great, vast,big
idaṃ - n.accu.sin - this
vanam – n.accu.sin – forest

Why do you stay in the withered tree, who is leafless and has no fruit, and is not fit to be the refuge for birds, when this forest is vast.

17 anye 'pi bahavo vṛkṣāḥ patrasaṃchannakoṭarāḥ
śubhāḥ paryāptasamcārā vidyante 'smin mahāvane

anye – m.nom.pl - other
api – ind. – even, also
bahavo – m.nom.sin – in great numbers
vṛkṣāḥ - m.nom.pl - tree
patrasaṃchannakoṭarāḥ - m.nom.pl- ins TP, BV – leaf, covered, hollow of a tree
śubhāḥ - m.nom.pl – bright, beautiful, virtuous
paryāptasamcārā – m.nom.pl – BV – sufficient, abundant + roaming, path
vidyante – 3rd,pl,present,passive – exist, to be
In this great forest, there are also many others, beautiful trees, whose hollows are covered with leaves, with abundant paths.

18 gatāyuṣam asāmarthyaṃ kṣīṇasāraṃ hataśriyam
vimṛśya praṭijñāyā dhīra jahīmaṃ hy āsthīraṃ druṃam

O’ steadfast-born one, consider with wisdom,²⁵⁷ this indeed unsteady and decaying tree whose life is gone, whose essence is diminished and whose splendor is diminished.

19 tad upāsrutaḥ dharmātmā śukāḥ śakaṇaḥ bhāṣitam
sudīrgham abhiniḥśvasya dīno vākyam uvāca ha

²⁵⁷ I chose to translate the gerund as an imperative.
ha – ind. Indeed

The distressed and virtuous parrot having heard that which was spoken by Indra, sighing deeply said these words.

20 anatikramaṇīyāni daivatāni śacīpate
yatrābhavas tatra bhavas tan nibodha surādhīpa

anatikramaṇīyāni – n.nom.pl – not to be avoided, dishonored
daivatāni – n.nom.pl - gods
śacīpate – m.voc.sin – husband of śaci (Indra)
yatra – ind. - where
abhavas – m.nom.sin – non- existence
tatra – ind.there
bhavas – m.nom.sin - existence
tan – n.accu.sin – that (referring to the answer)
nibodha – 2nd.sin,imperative - listen
surādhīpa m.voc.sin – lord of the gods

O’ husband of śaci, the gods are not to be dishonored. O’ lord of the gods, listen to that.
Where there was non-existence there I came into existence.

21 asminn ahaṃ drume jātaḥ sādhubhiś ca guṇair yutaḥ
bālabhāve ca saṃguptaḥ śatrubhis ca na dharṣitaḥ

asminn – m.loc.sin - this
ahaṃ - I
drume – m.loc.sin - tree
jātaḥ - m.nom.sin – ppp – born, brought into existence
sādhubhiś – m.ins.pl – sage, seer
cā – ind. - and
guṇair – m.ins.pl – virtue, good quality
yutaḥ - m.nom.sin -ppp – united with, endowed with
bālabhāve - m.loc.sin – young, child + being, becoming
cā – ind. – and
saṃguptaḥ - m.nom.sin – ppp – guarded, protected
śatrubhis – m.ins.pl - enemy
cā – ind. - and
na – ind. - no
dharṣitaḥ- m.nom.sin -ppp- overcome, defeat
I was born in this tree, and in this tree I was endowed with the virtues by the seers, and in this tree I was protected in my youth and not defeated by enemies.

22 kim anukrośavaiphalyam utpādayasi me 'nagha ānṛśaṃsy e 'nuraktasya bhaktasyānugatasya ca

kim – ind. – why, what
anukrośavaiphalyam – gen TP, m.accu.sin – compassion + fruitless
utpādayasi – 2nd.sin,causative,present – born, arise, originate
me – gen.sin – of me
anagha – m.voc.sin - sinless
ānṛśaṃsy e – m.loc.sin – non-cruelty
anuraktasya – m.gen.sin – ppp – devoted, beloved, loyal
bhaktasya – m.gen.sin -ppp – devoted, worshipped
anugatasya – m.gen.sin – ppp- followed, acquired, filled with
c a – ind. – and

O’ sinless one, why have you made an issue out of the fruitlessness of my compassion?
I am devoted to non-cruelty and filled with devotion.

23 anukrośo hi sādhūnāṃ sumahad dharmalakṣaṇam anukrośaś ca sādhūnāṃ sadā prītiṃ prayacchati

anukrośo – m.nom.sin – compassion
hi – ind. - indeed
sādhūnāṃ - m.gen.pl – seer, sage, virtue
sumahad – n.accu.sin – abundant, vast
dharmalakṣaṇam – m.accu.sin – gen TP - characteristics of virtue, right conduct
anukrośaś – m.nom.sin – compassion
c a – ind. - and
sādhūnāṃ - m.gen.pl – seer, sage
sadā – ind. always
prītiṃ - f.accu.sin – pleasure, joy
prayacchati – 3rd.sin,present – to offer

compassion is indeed the great characteristic of virtue of good people and compassion always brings joy to good people.

24 tvam eva daivataiḥ sarvaiḥ pṛcchyase dharmasaṃśayān atas tvaṃ devānāṃ ādhipaty e pratiṣṭhitaḥ
You alone were questioned by all the gods about their doubts on dharma, right conduct. From that, you were established in sovereignty among the god of gods.

O’ thousand-eyed one, it is not worthy of you to suggest abandoning this tree at this time, having offered me livelihood when it was capable. Certainly, out of devotion, how can I abandon it this day?

O’ thousand-eyed one, it is not worthy of you to suggest abandoning this tree at this time, having offered me livelihood when it was capable. Certainly, out of devotion, how can I abandon it this day?
Indra, the punisher of Pāka, was delighted and pleased with his lovely words and non-cruelty, 
he replied to the dharma-knowing parrot.

27 varam vṛṇīṣveti tadā sa ca vavre varam śukaḥ 
ānṛśaṃsyaparo nityaṃ tasya vṛkṣasya saṃbhavam

“Choose a boon.”
Then, that parrot in the hollow of the tree who possessed the highest non-cruelty, asked for 
the boon of the existence of that tree, always.
Knowing that firm perfection of morality in the parrot, Indra was pleased. Therefore, he sprinkled the tree with nectar.

Then, that tree obtained beautiful fruits, leaves, and even branches, because of the firm devotion and radiance of the parrot.
And the parrot by that action, performed out of non-cruelty,
O’ great king, at the end of his life, obtained residence in the same world of Indra.

Thus, O’ best of men, fixed in devotion alone, one obtains success in all things.
Just as the tree, attaining fulfillment through the devotion of the parrot.
Appendix 2 – Bhagavadgītā Translations

2:

1.28 kṛpayā parayāviṣṭo viṣīdann idam abravīt
dṛṣṭvemaṃ svajanaṃ kṛṣṇa yuyutsuṃ samupasthitam

kṛpayā – f.ins.sin – by pity/compassion?
parayā – f.ins.sin – highest, supreme, greatest
āviṣṭaḥ - ppp – m.nom.sin - entered, filled with, full of, overpowered or overcome
viṣīdann – m.nom.sin – he who is + sink down, exhausted, dispirited or cast down,
afflicted or sorrowful, despond, despair;
idad – n.acc.sin – this
abravīt – 3rd,sin,imperfect 2p – speak
dṛṣṭva – gerund – see
imaṃ - m.accu.sin - this
svajanaṃ -KD – m.accu.sin - self+people – my people
kṛṣṇa -m.voc.sin
yuyutsuṃ - desiderative m.accu.sin – desiring to fight
samupasthitam – ppp – approach, come to

Translation:
filled with the highest pity, falling into despair, he spoke this:
Having seen my people, Kṛṣṇa, desiring to fight, approached.

2.2 kutas tvā kaśmalam idaṃ viṣame samupasthitam
anāryajuṣṭam asvargyam akīrtikaram arjuna

kutas - ind. - From where, whence
tvā -accu.sin - you
kaśmalam – m.accu.sin - dirty, disgraceful, ignominious, dejection of mind, weakness, despair
idad -n.acc.sin - this
viṣame – m.loc.sin - uneven, rough, rugged, irregular. difficult, hard to understand, mysterious, painful, troublesome, very strong, adverse, unfavorable,
samupasthitam – ppp m.accu.sin - appeared, come to, fallen to, arisen
anāryajuṣṭam – ppp m.accu.sin loc/ins TP- practiced, observed, possessed, agreeable + non- ārya
asvargyam – m.accu.sin – UTP not leading to heaven
akīrtikaram - m.accu.sin – UTP causing disgrace
Translation:
From where has despair come to you in this difficult time?
It is not agreeable with you, does not lead to heaven, it causes disgrace, O’ Arjuna.

2.7

kārpaṇyaḍoṣopahatasvabhāvāḥ pṛcchāmi tvāṃ dharmasamāṃḍhacetāḥ
yac chreyah syān niścitaṃ brūhi tan me; śiṣyas te 'haṃ śādhi māṃ tvāṃ prapannam

Translation:
My being is afflicted by the fault of pity, my mind is perplexed of my dharma, I ask you
which should be better, for certain? Tell that to me, your student. Instruct me, who has
resorted to you.
16.2 ahimsā - f.nom.sin – non-violence
satyam – n.nom.sin – truth
akrodhas – m.nom.sin – free from anger
tyāgaḥ - m.nom.sin - renunciation
śhāntir – m.nom.sin - peace
apaiśhunam – n.nom.sin – non-calumny
dayā – f.nom.sin - pity, compassion
bhūteśhu - n.loc.pl – living being
aloluptvaṁ - n.nom.sin – freedom from desire
mārdavaṁ - n.nom.sin – gentleness, softness
hrīr – m.nom.sin - modesty
achāpalam – n.nom.sin - not fickleness, steadiness

Translation:

non-violence, truthfulness, freedom from anger, renunciation, peace, non-calumny, compassion for living beings, freedom from desire, gentleness, modesty, non-fickleness.
**Appendix 3 – Yogavāsiṣṭha Translations**

**Translations book 6, 44:**

2

samādhānatarum - tree of samādhi – n.nom.sin -gen tp

7

śuddhaiḥ snigdhaiḥ pavitraiśca madhurairātmanohitaiḥ |

śuddhaiḥ - m.ins.pl – pure, clean BV

snigdhaiḥ - m.ins.pl – loving, affectionate, friendly BV

pavitraiś – m.ins.pl – sacred, holy BV

cā - and

madhurair – m.ins.pl – sweet, charming, delightful BV

ātmanaiḥ — m.nom.sin - self, soul

hitaiḥ - m.ins. pl – put, laid, placed, held, taken, beneficial, friendly, kind, affectionate, well-disposed

satsaṁgama-nava-kṣīrair – m.ins.pl – company of the good people– m.ins.pl – sap of trees, water, milk + fresh KD + gen tp – by the fresh milk of the company of good people

aindavair -m.ins.pl - lunar

amṛtair – m.ins.pl - nectar

iva -just like, as

Translation:

[watersed] by the fresh milk of the company of good people, which is pure, loving, sacred, sweet, beneficial to oneself, like lunar nectar.

14

bhogabhaṅgurāḥ - m.nom.pl – enjoyment+ transients –accu-tp - transient enjoyments
These all should be prevented by steadiness, generosity, compassion and mantras, by chanting, ablution, austerities, and self-control, and by bearing the trident whose purpose (meaning?) is OM.
vivekākhyo – m.nom.sin - viveka + ākhyo? –discernment + (f) ākhyā - appellation, name, total amount, appearance, aspect –BV – whose appearance/aspect is viveka

navāṅkuraḥ -nava+aṅkura m.nom.sin – nava - new, fresh, young, recent + aṅkuraḥ - A sprout, shoot, blade KD

Translation:
Thus, because that was preserved, the seed of meditation come forth as a beautiful new sprout whose aspect is discernment.

17
tenā sā cittabhūrbhāti saprakāśā vikāsinī |
bhavatyālokaryā ca khaṃ yathābhinavendunā
tenā -m.ins.sin – by him
sā - f.nom.sin – she, that
saprakāśā –f.nom.sin – sa - with + brightness, light, radiance vikāsinī – f.nom.sin – blossoming, blooming, expanding
bhavati – 3rd,sin, present – be ālokaryā – f.nom.sin – gen tp appearance, seeing, beholding, sight + pleasing, pleasant, delightful
cā - and khaṃ - n,accu.sin – ether, space, sky
yathā – just as abhinavendunā – f.nom.sin – KD – new, fresh, blooming + moon, bright drop, soma
Translation: by that (seed of meditation), the ground of the mind shines brightly, [and] blossoming, it becomes beautiful in appearance, just as the new moon [in] the sky.
śāstrārthasādhusamparkavairāgyarasapīvaraḥ |
rāgadveṣakapikṣobhairna manāgapī kampate

śāstrārthasādhusamparkavairāgyarasapīvaraḥ - m.nom.sin – śāstrārth – gen tp – object of scriptures; sādhusaṃparka – gen tp + contact with virtuous (people); vairāgyarasa – gen tp – flavor of detachment; pīvaraḥ - ins tp - thick, stout,
rāgadveṣakapikṣobhair – m.ins.pl - rāgadveṣa – dvandva – passion, aversion; kapikṣobhair – KD – monkey+ shaking, agitation

na - no

manāk – ind. – only, merely, slightly

api -even, also

kampate – 3rd.sin,present – tremble

Translation:

thick by the flavor of nonattachment, the purpose of scripture, and contact with virtuous people, it (the tree) does not even tremble slightly by the monkey-agitation of likes and dislikes.

atha tasmātprajāyante vijñānālaṃkṛtākṛteḥ |
latā rasavilāsinya imā vitatadesagāḥ

atha – then, now
tasmāt – from him

prajāyante – 3rd.pl,present – born, bring forth, produce

vijñānālaṃkṛtākṛteḥ – f.abl.sin – ins tp +ppp + KD - knowledge +decorated, adorned + form, appearance – from the appearance adorned by knowledge

latā – f.nom.pl – creeping plant, branch

rasavilāsinya – f.nom.pl – ins tp – flavor, taste, water, fluid+ vilāsin - shining, beaming, radiant, wanton, sportive, playful

imā – f.accu.pl - these
vitatadeśagāḥ - m.nom.pl – dvandva + UTP – wide + place + go,come

Translation:
then from that appearance adorned by knowledge, [the tree] produces these branches, shining with water, spreading all places, far and wide.

23
sphuṭatā satyatā sattā dhīratā nirvikalpatā |
samatā śāntatā maitrī karuṇā kīrtirāryatā || 23 ||
abstract F nouns
sphuṭatā – f.nom.sin – correctness, distinctness, manifestness
satyatā – f.nom.sin – truth, love of truth, truthfulness
sattā – f.nom.sin – goodness, existence, being
dhīratā – f.nom.sin – strength of mind, wisdom
nirvikalpatā – f.nom.sin - unwavering
samatā – f.nom.sin -equality, sameness, impartiality, equanimity
śāntatā – f.nom.sin – calmness, peacefulness
maitrī – f.nom.sin -friendliness
karuṇā – f.nom.sin -compassion
kīrtir – f.nom.sin – fame, renowned, celebrated, glory,
āryatā – f.nom.sin – honorable behavior

[the branches of wisdom are]: correctness, truth, goodness, strength of mind, unwavering, equanimity, peacefulness, friendliness, compassion, splendor, and honorable behavior.

Translation book 6, 45.61
61
bodhādekaṃ jagadbhāvairjāḍyāṇnātmatvamāgatam |
mitho bodhāddvividatim maitrīṃ bhajati bodhataḥ
bodhād – m.abl.sin - knowledge

ekam - n.accu.sin – one, unity

jagad- n.accu.sin – the world

bhāvair – m.ins.pl – being, existence, object, state of being

jāḍyān – m.abl.sin – dullness

na – no

ātmatvam – m.accu.sin – selfness, nature, essence

āgatam – ppp – arrived, came, reached– m.accu.sin

mitho – m.nom.sin – mutually, with each other

bodhād - m.abl.sin - knowledge

dvi- two (cardinal)

vadati – 3rd.sin, present – speak, tell, say

maitrīṃ - f.accu.sin – friendliness

bhajati – 3rd.sin,present – adore, love honor, , grant

bodhataḥ- m.nom.sin – understanding

Translation:

From knowledge, the world with all its beings is one. From stupidity, one’s essence is not reached. From knowledge one speaks of two mutually. Knowledge bestows friendliness.
Bibliography


