

A Post-Kantian Patañjali? Surendranath Dasgupta on the Ethics of the Yoga Sūtras

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Drawing upon the work of Surendranath Dasgupta (1887-1952), this paper explores a set of deep and unexpected parallels between the ethical theories of Patañjali and the post-Kantian philosopher J. G. Fichte. In *Yoga as Philosophy and Religion* (1924), Dasgupta claims that Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* put forward two essential requirements for reaching ultimate liberation: (1) an ethical ideal of absolute freedom and (2) a path of action that leads towards this ideal. Dasgupta terms this “yoga ethics”—and he hints at a parallel in the western philosophical canon in Fichte's notion of striving for self-sufficiency. My paper proceeds in three parts: §I examines the evidence of Dasgupta's familiarity with Fichte's *Das System der Sittenlehre* (*The System of Ethics*, 1798), demonstrating his awareness of its systematic affinities with classical Yoga. §II turns to a comparative analysis of the ethical principles of the *Yoga Sūtras* and Fichte's moral philosophy, highlighting their common notions of ethical practice, moral perfection, and freedom. Finally, §III briefly reflects on the significance of such cross-cultural encounters in the history of ethics, recognizing the value of exploring diverse intellectual traditions across geographical boundary lines.

Author: WARE, Owen (University of Toronto)

Presenter: WARE, Owen (University of Toronto)

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