

# Sāṃkhya and Yoga: Missing Links

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*Sāṃkhya* and *yoga* are normally discussed either as topics in philosophy or as subjects of historical and philological inquiry. Indeed, research on the evolution of the terminology and notions currently found in the *Sāṃkhyakārikās* and the *Yogasūtras* proves quite revealing. There is at least some indication that these ideas might be rooted in earlier Brahmanic reflections on Vedic ritual. The stories invented to legitimize these rituals and the various speculations generated by such practices seem to indicate that it is not enough to harness oneself to a specific task. It is just as important, if not more so, to be enlightened by an appropriate discrimination or discernment. I will attempt to demonstrate that, before separate and complementary developments appeared in this area, at least some Brahmins held to the idea that the attitude needed for the correct performance of any ritual is a sustained effort guided by sound judgment. In this paper, I come at this question from four different angles, but always with a similar train of thought. I first analyse Kapila's actions in the Sagara episode, then move on to a consideration of a brief scene in the Nala episode. The double presence of a *yogācārya* and a *sāṃkhyācārya* in certain cosmogonies provides a third approach to the question; the final angle being a study of the significance of the double emphasis on *kratu* and *dakṣa* in the Vedic context. In fact, I am convinced that these apparently disconnected themes point in a single direction and directly impact the way in which the relationships between *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* came to be construed in the Epic and Purāṇic texts.

## 1. Kapila and Sagara's horse-sacrifice

Kapila, the sage reputed to be the founder of Sāṃkhya and Yoga, appears in the *Vanaparvan* of the MBh as one of the protagonists of the Sagara episode (MBh 3.104-106; see also HV 10.46-66; Rām 1.38-39; Brahmāṇḍa-P. 2.3; etc.). A summary of the entire episode will be necessary if we are to understand why Kapila acts as he does in this context. I use the standard version found in the MBh, and will refer in the footnotes to the important variants found in other versions.

King Sagara has two wives, Vaidarbhī and Śaibyā<sup>1</sup>, but is still sonless. He decides to worship Śiva on Mount Kailāsa<sup>2</sup>. Performing great austerities, fully harnessed with *yoga* (*sa tapyamānaḥ sumahat tapo yogasamanvitaḥ*, 104.10ab), Kapila approaches god Śiva and begs him for a son. Śiva promises: « Sixty thousand valiant sons, the best of men, boasting in battles, shall be born to you by one of your wives. They shall all perish together, King, but one hero shall be born from the other wife and be the one who will maintain the lineage (*vaṃśadhara*) » (104.14-15)<sup>3</sup>. After some time, Vaidarbhī gives birth to a

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<sup>1</sup> Keśinī, a daughter of the king of Vidarbha, and Sumati, a daughter of Ariṣṭanemi or Kaśyapa and the sister of Garuḍa, according to Rām. 1.38.3-4); Keśinī et Sumati, according to Brahmāṇḍa-P. 2.3.49.59c;

<sup>2</sup> He went to Himālaya on an offshot called Bhṛguprasravaṇa, to honor sage Bhṛgu, according to Rām. 1.38.5; to the hermitage of sage Aurva (Brahmāṇḍa-P. 2.3.50.32ab);

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise stated, I quote Van Buitenen's translation.

pumpkin-gourd instead of a foetus (*garbhālābu*)<sup>4</sup>, and Śaibyā gives birth to a son who is given the name Asamañjas<sup>5</sup>. As the king is casting away the gourd, he hears a voice from the sky: « Do not act rashly. Do not reject your sons. Take the seeds out of the pumpkin and let them be carefully kept, each in a steaming pot filled with *ghee*. Then you will obtain sixty thousand sons, O King » (104.20-21)<sup>6</sup>. Śiva has thus ordained the birth of your sons, do not decide otherwise (*anena kramayogena mā te buddhir ato 'nyathā*) (104.22cd). The king does as he is told and sixty thousand sons are born, the Sāgaras. On the one hand, Vaidarbhī's sons are presented as ferocious, cruel of deeds and slow-witted (*mandabuddhi*, 105.5b; cf. 106.3d). Given their numbers (*bahutvāt*, 105.3c), they despise all creatures, including immortal creatures. The creatures seek refuge with Brahmā who predicts their downfall. Meanwhile, Śaibyā's son, Asamañja, begins to grab the defenceless sons of the townspeople by their feet and throw them into the river. Asamañja's ruthless behaviour causes his father Sagara to tell his ministers to banish him<sup>7</sup>. Fortunately, Asamañjas's son, called Aṃśumant, is the great son who will eventually rescue the whole lineage.

Actually, days later, when King Sagara is initiated (*dīkṣita*) through the ritual of horse sacrifice<sup>8</sup>, the sacrificial horse is ritually bathed, set free to roam openly for about one year, guarded all the while from a distance by armed soldiers. The animal suddenly strays into the waterless ocean and disappears, mysteriously stolen (105.11). This sets off a wave of panic among the soldiers<sup>9</sup>. Upon hearing this, Sagara asks his sons to search the entire earth in order to find the horse, but without any success. Urged by their father's wrath, finally, the heroic sons see a gaping hole (*bila*) in the earth and start digging down. Killing all the creatures they encounter (*asuras*, snakes, *rākṣasas*, etc.), « the raging sons of Sagara dig down to the netherworld, and there they see the horse grazing on the ground: and they also see the great-spirited Kapila, a matchless mass of splendor (*tejorāśi*), blazing with his austerities like a fire in flames » (*vidārya pātālam atha*

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<sup>4</sup> *garbhatumbha*, Rām 1.38.17b; *garbhālābu*, Brahmāṇḍa-P. 2.3.51.39b;

<sup>5</sup> *asamañjasa* meaning “a good-for-nothing fellow”, Asamañjas might be a commonly accepted nickname for Pañcajana attested to in the *Harivaṃśa* (10.58,63) (even if a few versions of the text [D<sub>6</sub> T<sub>2</sub> G<sub>1-3.5</sub> M<sub>3</sub>] have Asamañja also).

<sup>6</sup> According to Rām., nurses immediately place the seeds in jars full of ghee and the sixty thousand of them become vigorous sons. Asamañja used to spend his time catching hold of young children and throwing them into the waters of the Sarayu river, and is exiled by his father Sagara; nevertheless he has a son, named Aṃśumān, whose conduct is righteous and who is beloved by all the people. According to *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa* 2.3.51.39-48, on seeing Sumati's child, the king wishes to throw it away. Sage Aurva happens to come and explains that the gourd contains the seeds of sixty thousand sons. All the seeds are preserved in separate pots of ghee and a year later children are born, unassailable and ruthless.

<sup>7</sup> According to *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa*, Asamañjana is possessed by a Piśāca, begins to act foolishly. For example, he kills boys and young men and throws them in the Sarayū river. His father is forced to banish him (2.3.51.53-69).

<sup>8</sup> According to Rām 1.39.4-6, the sacrifice was performed between the Himālaya and Vindhya mountains, the land referred to elsewhere as Āryāvarta, i.e., set aside for sacrifices.

<sup>9</sup> The disappearance of the horse is variously presented.

*saṃkruddhāḥ saḡarātmaġāḥ | apaśyanta hayaṃ tatra vicarantaṃ mahītale || kapilaṃ ca mahātmānaṃ teġorāśim anuttamaṃ | tapasā dīpyamānaṃ taṃ jvālābhir iva pāvakaṃ || 105.24-25). « Seeing the horse, King, they shivered with excitement and without paying heed to the great-spirited Kapila, since Time drove them on, they dashed furiously forward in order to recover the horse. This angered that great hermit Kapila, King, that great hermit Kapila whom they call Vāsudeva. He opened his eyes wide and shot his splendour at them. And the splendiferous seer burned down the slow-witted Sāḡaras » (te taṃ dr̥ṣtvā hayaṃ rājan saṃprahr̥ṣtatanūruhāḥ | anādṛtya mahātmānaṃ kapilaṃ kālacodithāḥ || saṃkruddhāḥ samadhāvanta aśvagrahanakāṅkṣiṇaḥ || tataḥ kruddho mahārāja kapilo munisattamaḥ | vāsudeveti yaṃ prāhuḥ kapilaṃ munisattama || sa cakṣur vivṛtaṃ kṛtvā tejas teṣu samutsṛjan | dadāha sumahātejā mandabuddhīn sa sāḡarān || (106.1-3; cf. 3.45.25-26 just as it is said that a form of Hari destroys the Sāḡaras darśanād eva, « with a mere glance »). The seer Nārada sees the scene and reports the news to Sagara who, for a moment, stands absent-mindedly by (*vimanas*, 106.5a). Recalling Śiva’s promise, Sagara, who has already banished Śaibyā’s son, Asamañjas, from the city, decides to summon his grandson Aṃśumant and asks him to bring back the horse of the sacrifice so that he can be saved from hell (*naraka*) (106.19). According to the traditional explanation, a son is rightly called *putra* since he saves (*trai*) his father from a hell called *put*. Aṃśumant goes to the place where the earth has been rent asunder. He enters the ocean and finds Kapila with the horse (106.20-21). Upon discovering the ancient *ṛṣi* specifically depicted as a mass of fire (*tejaśo rāṣi* 106.22), he bows his head to the ground and asks him what he should do (*kārya*).*

The *ṛṣi* is pleased with Aṃśumant’s behaviour. Learning that Kapila is a granter of boons (*varada*), he asks for two favours: first the recovery of the horse for the benefit of Sagara’s sacrifice; second, water to purify his father (*pitṛn*) Sāḡara (cf. 117.19b). « Bless you, blameless Prince, I will give you whatever you seek. On you are founded patience (*kṣamā*) and Law (*dharma*) and truth (*satya*). Through you Sagara shall be fulfilled, and your father shall have sons. And by your power the Sāḡaras shall go to heaven, and, after he has satisfied the Great Lord, your grandson shall bring the River-of-the-Three-Courses [i.e., Ganges] down from heaven to purify (*pāvanārtham*) the Sāḡaras. Bless you, bull among men, bring home the sacrificial horse (*hayaṃ... yajñīyam*)! The sacrifice of the Great-spirited Sagara must be concluded, my son! » (106.25cd-28). Through Aṃśumant, Sagara completes his sacrifice, is feasted by all the gods and adopts Samudra (the ocean, Varuṇa’s realm) as his son. When he becomes old, Sagara hands his kingdom over to his son Aṃśumant and finally goes to heaven. A son named Dilīpa is born to Aṃśumant; he in turn has a son called Bhagīratha. This son finally succeeds in bringing the Ganges River down to earth. The dead bodies of the Sāḡaras are purified with these waters and can therefore go to heaven (chs. 117-118).

Even if, to my knowledge, this episode has never been analysed within the context of a discussion of Sāṃkhya and Yoga, I proceed from the premise that Kapila’s role in this

narrative is coherent with his later traditional function. I will now examine the episode with this in mind.

First of all, a survey of the main versions of this episode indicates that the outline of the story appears to be firmly established. The underlying problem is one of having sons capable of maintaining Sagara's lineage and supremacy over the whole world. After having had unworthy sons (either a single son or a multitude of sons), Sagara finally has a grandson, Aṃśumant, who is able to give his grandfather the ritual credibility which is so important for him if he is to act as a sovereign, and therefore literally to be « saved ». This is made possible through the intervention on his behalf of a true manifestation of Viṣṇu and through the double purification by fire and water that follows.

The narrative itself is based on three main characters: King Sagara, his grandson Aṃśumant, and the mediator Kapila. (1) Sagara is said to be able to perform *tapas* and *yoga* (3.104.10ab). Worshipping Śiva (or other gods or sages), he does everything in his power in order to beget praiseworthy sons. Despite his desperate efforts, all the sons turn out to be useless brutes. (2) Aṃśumant has an important role, since at the request of his father, he meets Kapila, requests favours of him and recovers the sacrificial horse. Nevertheless he always acts under the direction either of his father Sagara or of Kapila. (3) Kapila (« brown, tawny, reddish », MW) is the most important of these three characters, described variously as an ancient *ṛṣi*, a *mahātman*, an excellent hermit (*munisattamaḥ*), a mass of fire and as Vāsudeva himself (3.106.2). According to the HV, when digging the ocean, the one whom the Sāgaras discover is « the god who is the Man of origins, the *prajāpati* Hari Kṛṣṇa, the Man Viṣṇu, sleeping at that time in the guise of Kapila (or of a reddish fire) » (*tam ādipurusaṃ devaṃ hariṃ kṛṣṇaṃ prajāpatim | viṣṇuṃ kapilarūpeṇa svapantaṃ puruṣaṃ tadā* II, HV 10.48cf). Whereas other versions do not clearly explain the horse's disappearance, the *Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa* explicitly states that Kapila was the one who was responsible for it (1.18.7). Be that as it may, Aṃśumant must meet Kapila if he is to realise his mission: he is the one who consumes the Sāgaras, recognizing Aṃśumān's value as a son by bestowing two favours upon him and by returning the horse to him.

Sagara begets either a great number of slow-minded sons (*mandabuddhi*)<sup>10</sup> — the Sāgaras, who are consumed by Kapila — or a single son called Asamañjas, who is so violent and unjust that his father Sagara is forced to banish him. Since the first generation of sons is discounted as incompetent and useless, Sagara is unable to perform the *aśvamedha* that would have confirmed his universal sovereignty. The horse of sacrifice now lost, he is symbolically emptied of his power, resembling a dead man. It appears clearly that King Sagara and his grandson Aṃśumant would be nothing without Kapila, i.e., without the manifestation of Viṣṇu. To re-establish the situation, Kapila uses a specific weapon, his eye, undoubtedly an eye of wisdom (*prajāñācakṣuḥ*), that consumes all disorder. Sagara finally comes back to life, but only through the mediation of a true son, who, thanks to Kapila's wisdom and help, rescues the sacrificial horse and saves his father Sagara from hell.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. for example *Kaṭha Up.* 2.2, where the wise (*dhīra*) is opposed to the slow-witted or foul (*manda*).

The myth, already clear, becomes even clearer when read from the point of view stated in MBh 3.211.21. Manu's wife is said to beget five Fires (*pāvaka*, purifier), respectively called Vaiśvānara (related to all men), Viśvapati (sovereign of the universe), Saṃnihita (all prepared, ready), Akalmaṣa (immaculate, pure), and Kapila (reddish): « The Kapila fire is the great seer whom the ascetics call Kapila, the *sāṃkhyayogapravartakaḥ* » (*kapilaṃ paramarṣiṃ ca yaṃ prāhur yatayaḥ sadā | agniḥ sa kapilo nāma sāṃkhyayogapravartakaḥ* II). Fire Kapila is presented here as a *sāṃkhyayogapravartakaḥ*, that is, as one who sets in motion or introduces *sāṃkhyayoga*, or, as the compound is usually translated the propounder, the promulgator, or the founder of Sāṃkhya and Yoga (see Van Buitenen 1975, p. 645; Brockington, « Epic Sāṃkhya » 1999, p. 481). While this translation is of course possible, the word *sāṃkhya* being the *vṛddhi* of *sāṃkhyā*, meaning not only « numeration, calculation » (MW), but also « deliberation, reasoning, reflection, reason, intellect » (MW), and even discrimination, a more obvious translation of *sāṃkhyayogapravartakaḥ* could be « the one who sets in motion a Sāṃkhya type of Yoga » (as suggested by Schreiner, « Who comes first... », p. 763). It is also possible to consider *sāṃkhyayoga* as a *samāhāra-dvandva*, with the meaning of « the unit composed of [the science] related to enumeration and of harnessing ». The point here is not to deny that *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* became two specific systems of thought (*darśanas*), as the analysis of later texts clearly demonstrates, but to suggest that this episode might reflect the existence, probably centuries before the common era, of two separate forms of knowledge: certain people specialized in the practice of mental harnessing (*yoga*); others, in analysis by enumeration (scientific analysis, in our words). One can also imagine that a whole series of informal discussions must have taken place between these two groups. Midway between yogins, dedicated entirely to ascetic practices, and yogins, dedicated to the pure analysis of reality, Kapila's message in the *Vanaparvan* of the MBh may be that both views must be integrated within a *sāṃkhyayoga*, that is, a *yoga* based either on an analysis of reality, or closely connected to an exhaustive analysis of data.

In order to liberate the sacrificial horse, Kapila first burns Sagara's sons and then purifies them in the waters of the Gaṅgā, thereby granting them immortality. Acting through fire and water and in accordance with Purāṇic cosmology, Vāsudeva-Kapila brings the reader directly to the conflagration and deluge that, together, structure the end of the *kalpa*. Some versions evoke the *kalpa* explicitly, demonstrating that Indian readers pick up on the nuances and allusions found in the MBh version. That said, the gist of this story is, in my opinion, that *tapas* and *yoga* operating separately are ineffective, since they lead to violence or self-destruction. Only when Kapila's actions are directed by authentic discrimination—comprised of *kṣamā* (patience), *dharma* and *satya*—do they allow auspicious rituals (rites favouring life) to be performed. The eye of wisdom destroys a world based on *darpa* and violence at the same time as it finds a world in which sacrifices are encouraged. Kapila appears to be the promoter of a *yoga* based on effective discrimination (he is *sāṃkhyayogapravartakaḥ*), and thereby destroys an old world as he recreates a new one.

## 2. Dice and horse expertises in the Nala episode

Grammar (*vyākaraṇa*) analyzes a sentence (*vākya*) by breaking it down into various *pada* or meaningful elements, such as nouns, verbs, and so on. Āyurveda or medicine begins

by establishing the number of constituent parts in the body. The *Sāṃkhyakārikās* present an analysis of the elements which make up *mūlaprakṛti* (primordial nature), considered separately from the spiritual principle, the *puruṣa*. According to MBh 1.70.6, « [t]o the assembled sons of Dakṣa whose number is one thousand, Nārada taught liberation as an unsurpassed knowledge based on enumeration [of principles] » (*mokṣam adhyāpayām āsa sāṃkhyajñānam anuttamam | sahasrasaṃkhyān samitān sutān dakṣasya nāradaḥ* ||). To be understood properly, this definition of ultimate liberation as the capacity to distinguish the constituent parts of the human being and the ability to enumerate them has to be set against a literary background in which enumerations of all sorts are to be found. It is said for example in the MBh that the experts who know everything and are familiar with arithmetic (*saṃkhyāgaṇitatattvajña-*) are able to tell how many footmen, horses, chariots and elephants there are in any given army (MBh 1.2.13-25). To be knowledgeable about the origins of generations of beings is to be able to quote their numbers precisely (*yathāvat parisāṃkhyāto*, MBh 1.59.38). Of course, it would be altogether too tedious to list all the enumerations found in the MBh (including the exact number of books, chapters, and verses in the MBh itself [MBh 1.2]). In Indian thought, a strict or rigorous approach to any given sector of reality begins necessarily by breaking things down into simpler elements. This is so clearly the case that the notion of “exhaustive enumeration” (*saṃkhyā*) seems to be another name for knowledge or science. In contrast with a numbered reality, the innumerable (*asaṃkhyeya*) is either beneath or beyond human science.

This general rule also applies to time. When Pūru accepted to exchange his youth for his father’s old age for a period of a millennium, King Yayāti, having all the time he could wish for, eventually became sated and worried. « Then when he, being expert in Time (*kālajña*), judged that the millenium was full, having counted the minutes (*kalā*) and the seconds (*kāṣṭhā*), the mighty king spoke to his son Pūru » (MBh 1.80.8, my translation) and told him to take his own youth back. This means that the expertise in time which is necessary to appreciate the change of time is defined by a capacity to calculate (*parisaṃkhyā*) even the smallest units of time. Good dice players possess a similar skill in calculation, the name for thrown dice being identical to the names of the periods of time called *yugas* (*krta*, *tretā*, *dvāpara*, and *kali*, the worst of them). In my opinion, the episode of Nala and Damayantī illustrates the point perfectly.

The *asura* Kali wants to marry Damayantī but arrives late at the wedding, i.e., after the *svayaṃvara* ritual was over. To avenge himself for Nala’s success, Kali decides to take possession of his rival. In order to do so, he *enters* the dice with the assistance of Dvāpara, Nala’s brother. Twelve years later, taking advantage of a moment of impurity, Kali takes possession of Nala, and asks Dvāpara to play dice with him. Nala accepts the challenge and loses game after game. The play goes on for months, the dice always being against him. Nala loses everything except Damayantī herself, his twin children having already been led safely by the charioteer Vārṣṇeya to Damayantī’s parents who live in the city of Ayodhyā. After a period of time together in the forest and many incidents, Nala and Damayantī are forced to separate. Damayantī finally introduces herself as a servant at King Subāhu’s palace in the kingdom of the Cedis, whereas Nala walks up to King Ṛtuparṇa’s palace at Ayodhyā and is hired as a cook and charioteer under the name of Bāhuka. At once, Bhīma, Damayantī’s father, sends Brahmins in search of Nala and his wife. One of them recognizes Damayantī while another indirectly identifies Nala in

Ayodhyā. A false *svayamvara* is organized for Damayantī at Vidarbhā where Bāhuka is ordered to drive King Ṛtuparṇa. During the trip, King Ṛtuparṇa shows himself to be a skilful dice player, proving his ability at dice when he instantly counts the leaves and nuts in a *vibhītaka* tree; which coincidentally is the very tree which provides the nuts used as dice. The text is worth reading.

As Nala was speaking, King Bhāṅgasvari entered the forest upon a *vibhītaka* tree in full fruit, O King. Seeing it the speeding king said to Bāhuka, “Now you too watch my great talent at counting (*saṃkhyāne paramaṃ balam*), O charioteer! No one knows everything, nobody is omniscient (*sarvajño*) — knowledge does not reside in any single person (*naikatra pariniṣṭhāsti jñānasya puruṣe kvacit*). In this tree, Bāhuka, the difference between the leaves and the nuts still on the tree and those fallen on the ground is a hundred and one: one more leaf and one hundred more nuts, Bāhuka. Both those branches have five crores of leaves. Take off the two branches and their twigs and you get from them two thousand one hundred and ninety-five nuts.” Bāhuka jumped off the chariot and said to the king, “You boast of something that seems beyond me (*parokṣam iva me*), enemy-harassing King! But there is nothing mysterious about your count (*te gaṇite... vidyate na parokṣatā*), great King. I shall count the leaves and nuts in the *vibhītaka* tree while you watch. For I do not know whether your count is right or wrong. I shall count (*saṃkhāsyāmi*) these nuts in your full sight. Let Vārṣṇeya take over the reins of the horses (*raśmīn yacchatu*) for just a moment.” The king replied to the charioteer (*sūta*), “We have no time to tarry!” But Bāhuka said with the greatest insistence. “Wait just a moment, or hurry on by yourself. The road is easy from here on. Go on, let Vārṣṇeya drive (*yāhi vārṣṇeyasārathiḥ*).” Replied Ṛtuparṇa in a soothing voice, O scion of Kuru, “You are the driver and no other on all of earth (*tvam eva yantā nānyo 'sti pṛthivyām api*), Bāhuka. It is because of you that I have hopes of reaching Vidarbha, horse expert (*hayakovida*)! I have counted on you (*śaraṇaṃ tvam prapanno 'smi*), don't put obstacles in my way. I shall do what you want, if only you tell me, Bāhuka, and if you drive at once to Vidarbha and show me the sun rise there!” Bāhuka said, “I shall count the *vibhītaka* nuts and then go on to Vidarbha. Do what I tell you.” Reluctantly the king said, “Go count them (*gaṇayasva*)!” The other alighted from the chariot and quickly cut down the tree. Then, totally astonished, he arrived at exactly the same count as the king (*gaṇayitvā yathoktāni tāvanty eva phalāni ca*) and said to him. “This is a marvel of marvels (*atyadbhutam*), King. I have seen your strength (*bala*)! I want to know the magic by which you knew their number (*śrotum icchāmi tām vidyām yathaitaj jñāyate*), King!” The king, who was in a hurry to go, replied, “Know that I know the secret of the dice and am expert in counting (*viddhy akṣaḥṛdayajñam māṃ saṃkhyāne ca viśāradam*).” Bāhuka said, “Give me the magic lore (*vidyā*) and in return take from me the secret of the horses (*aśvaḥṛdayaṃ gṛhāṇa*), bull among men!” (MBh 3.70.6-24).

The counting scene is of utmost importance. Even if King Ṛtuparṇa is in a hurry to reach Vidarbhā, Bāhuka-Nala stops and takes the time to check the king's talent for himself. The pace of action becomes artificially slow. The narrative effect is to focus the attention of the reader on the scene and bring it to the forefront. Ṛtuparṇa is an expert at counting and, consequently, knows the secret of dice also, taking care to add that it is impossible to know everything. Many incarnations of *asuras* are expert in dice only. This is the case of Puṣkara who, with Kali's help, becomes a winner and is able to get rid of King Nala in spite of all his qualities (« Truth, endurance, liberality, austerity, cleanliness, self-control, and serenity are lodged firmly with him », 55.9) and, as it will later be revealed, of his expertise in driving horses (64.2). Duryodhana, with the help of Śakuni, challenges Yudhiṣṭhira, wins all the Pāṇḍavas's wealth and finally condemns them all with the wife their share to twelve years of exile in the forest and to one year of wandering incognito in the open (MBh 2.64). Of course —says Śakuni—, « [t]he insightful player who follows the number (*saṃkhyā*), knows how to deceive, tosses the dice untiringly, and knows gambling, supports everything during the course of the play » (*yo 'nveti saṃkhyāṃ*

*nikṛtau vidhijñāś ceṣṭāsv akhinnaḥ kitavo 'kṣajāsu | mahāmatir yaś ca jānāti dyūtaṃ sa vai sarvaṃ sahate prakriyāsu || MBh 2.53.4, my translation). Time itself, through Śakuni's handling of dice, defeats the Pāṇḍavas who learn from their experience and come back stronger than ever, determined to defeat their adversaries. In the long run, experience at dice is not enough.<sup>11</sup>*

Mastery of numbers and skill at dice are explicitly said to be equivalent. Moreover, even if it is not specified, the secret of the horses has to do with a capacity for harnessing all types of horses, including the senses. Actually, in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (3.4), *buddhi* (intelligence) is said to be the charioteer, *manas* (mind) the reins, and *indriya* (senses) the horses. The comparison goes on: « When a man lacks understanding, / and his mind is uncontrolled; / His senses do not obey him, / like bad horses, [do not obey] a charioteer. / But when a man has understanding, / and his mind is always controlled; / His senses obey him, / as good horses, [obey] a charioteer / » (*yas tv avijñānavān bhavaty ayuktena manasā sadā | tasyendriyāṇy avāśyāni duṣṭāsvā iva sārathēḥ || yas tu vijñānavān bhavati yuktena manasā sadā | tasyendriyāṇi avāśyāni sadaśvā iva sārathēḥ || ibid.*, 5-6; Olivelle's transl.; cf. BhG 2.67-68). Yoga is perceived as a wide range of means used to restrain one's senses and to direct one's body (or chariot, *ratha*) with a controlled mind (*yuktena manasā*) and therefore to be in possession of one's intelligence (*buddhi*) and be firmly established in wisdom (*prajñā*). King R̥tuparṇa knows the secret of dice and is an expert at counting, but relies on somebody else (Vārṣṇeya or Dārūka-Nala) to drive his horses. On the contrary, Dārūka-Nala possesses strength (*bala*), power (*vīrya*), energy (*utsāha*), horsemanship (*hayasaṃgrahaṇa*, 3.69.34), along with the knowledge of horses (*hayajñatā*, 3.69.23, 33; *vidyā, jñāna*, 3.69.33). He is an expert driver, but a slow counter; and this is probably the reason why he was defeated by Puṣkara. Nala drives horses perfectly, which also means that he has the control of his senses, but does not master numbers, dice and time, and is thus literally crushed down by Puṣkara and Kali. At the end of the tale, both R̥tuparṇa and Nala have become experts in numbers as well as with horses. The exchange proposed by Dārūka-Nala has the effect that both R̥tuparṇa and Dārūka-Nala become sovereigns, possessing both the knowledge of horses and the secret of dice. There is no real science of time, no real mastery of dice without a mastery of one's senses, that is, without *yoga*. Since the secret of dice necessarily implies an ability to count, the double science put forward by the episode, found in a single person, might also be interpreted as an actual *sāṃkhyayoga*.

### 3. The double presence of a *yogācārya* and a *sāṃkhyācārya* in certain cosmogonies

When examining the Sagara episode, it became evident that Viṣṇu's action through the mediation of the sage Kapila is presented within the same thematic framework as the cosmic renewal of the end of the *kalpa*. Kapila destroys the old world through the flames of his eye and then the waters of the celestial Ganges flow down on to earth as an agent of purification. The consequences of Kapila's action should also be visible from the very beginning of a new world: a renewed world should be, explicitly or not, under the banner of both *sāṃkhyā* and *yoga*.

<sup>11</sup> At the marriage of Aniruddha and Rukmavati (Rukmin's granddaughter), Saṃkarṣaṇa (Baladeva) beats Rukmin at dice. This victory must also be analysed from this point of view (HV 89).



Given that the HV contains an accurate summary of the Sagara episode (10.46-66), we can conclude that its author knows the Kapila story well. The twenty-six chapters of the *Puṣkarapradūrbhāva* of the HV that take place in the Vulgate of the text (3.7-32), have been considered as a later addition by the critical editor P. L. Vaidya and therefore relegated into App. I, no. 41. They contain a curious version of the cosmogony (lines 439-574 / vulg. 3.14; also found in *Matsya Purāṇa* 171 and *Padma Purāṇa* 1.40-48-108 [Venkateshvara and Nag Publishers] / 5.37.50-110 [Anandāśrama Sanskrit Series]), where Brahmā, having defeated Madhu and Kaiṭabha, duplicates himself into a *yogācārya* (that is, a master in harnessing, or in skilful means) called Nārāyaṇa and a *sāṃkhyācārya* (a master in everything related to thorough analysis) named Kapila. Both ascetics approach Brahmā and praise him, emphasizing his capacity to give birth to a great number of sojourns on account of his own aptitude to multiply himself (line 450a, *bahutvād bahupādaś ca*). « You are the essence of the universe, the support of the world (line 450b, *viśvātmā jagataḥ sthitiḥ*) », he adds. Brahmā listens to this praise, and, with three famous utterances (*vyāhṛti*), creates the worlds. It is said that Bhū, Bhuva and Bhurbhava, three spiritual sons obtain liberation rapidly, having been born from his mind (*manas*). (1) Brahmā explicitly asks Bhū to submit to Kapila and Nārāyaṇa (lines 459-460). When he agrees, both of them tell him he has to focus his attention on the *brahman*. He goes north, becomes *brahman* and is liberated. (2) Bhuva approaches Brahmā who is accompanied by Kapila and Nārāyaṇa, goes north and is liberated. (3) Bhurbhava acts similarly. He realizes his *dharma* and is also liberated (lines 475-476).

First of all, both *yogācārya* Nārāyaṇa and *sāṃkhyācārya* Kapila clearly appear to be the unfolding of one and the same Brahmā. This means that it is impossible to display the world of living beings without resorting to these two masters and their attendant disciplines. The world of multiplicity generated by Brahmā presupposes effective harnessing or positive exertion (*yoga*) as well as an appropriate analysis of reality (*sāṃkhyā*). This specific cosmogony says, first of all, that the three mānasic sons acquire liberation when they submit to Kapila as the *sāṃkhyācārya*, and Nārāyaṇa as the *yogācārya*, that is, when practicing their own *dharmas* through *sāṃkhyayoga*. Having generated three sons from his mind (*manas*), Brahmā shifts to generation through sexual activity (*maithuna*). He continues to perform extreme ascetical practices. Suffering from loneliness, he exerts himself (*na rarāma tato brahmā prabhur ekas tapas caran*, line 481), and produces an auspicious spouse from one half of his body. Through *tapas*, *tejas*, *varcas*, *niyama*, he produces a spouse similar to himself, able to emit worlds and the living beings that inhabit them (*lokān*). He takes pleasure with her and emits *prajāpatīs*, oceans and rivers, as well the Gāyatrī who generate the Vedas. The worlds are born from thirteen *prajāpatīs*, beginning with Viśveśa (the Lord of the universe), followed by Dharma, and then Dakṣa, Marīci, Atri, and so on. Dakṣa, the third *prajāpati*, has twelve daughters who are given to Marīci's son, that is, Kaśyapa, and from Kaśyapa's unions with each of Dakṣa's daughters, gods, humans, and animals are born.

Throughout this story, the *yogācārya* Nārāyaṇa and the *sāṃkhyācārya* Kapila play an overarching, structuring role. Both masters control the cosmogony, emphasizing the fact that the creatures to come, ascetics as well as householders, cannot live without hard work and intelligence, exertion and discernment. Of course, this cosmogony enlarges Kapila's role but nothing here conflicts in any way with the role he plays in the Sagara episode.

In this complex setting, Dakṣa also plays a very specific role. Among the *prajāpatis*, he is the one who generates daughters to be given as wives to Kaśyapa, a sort of skilful means used to activate (or promote) generation. This *prajāpati* is the most important one from the point of view of effective activity (*yoga*): he provides the means necessary to fill the worlds with living beings. In fact, in his specific activity, Dakṣa continues what Brahmā has begun, producing from himself a spouse and thereby living up to his name which means « the Clever or Dexterous One » (Long 31). If we remember that Dakṣa was already a creator in the Vedas, his presence here cannot be mere chance and merits further research.

#### 4. The significance of the double emphasis on *kratu* and *dakṣa* in the Vedic context

Of course, in the Vedic texts, Dakṣa appears to be both a deity and an impersonal principle (*dakṣa*). In an excellent article entitled « Dakṣa: Divine Embodiment of Creative Skill » (1977), J. Bruce Long collected the principal references to the deity and to the underlying concept. Among others, he quotes Louis Renou's remarks in « Études védiques et pāṇinéennes » [EVP], which emphasize the complementarity of *dakṣa* and *kratu*. These observations are particularly useful in the present context.

Summarizing his research in *Études sur le vocabulaire du Ṛgveda*<sup>12</sup>, Renou, having mentioned the overlap between both terms, says:

S'il faut établir une distinction entre ces deux termes complémentaires *kratu* et *d[akṣa]*, qui définissent à eux deux les forces intellectuelles, un passage tel que X.31.2 montre la voie: *kratu* est la force délibérante, celle qui permet à l'homme de « se consulter » (*sam-vad-*); *dakṣa*, la force de réalisation (cf. l'expression *dakṣasādhana*), la voie vers l'acte concret, ce qu'on « saisit » (*grbh*) par la pensée (*manasā*).

For a better understanding of what Renou means, here are a few examples of the ways he translates the specific passages in which *kratu* and *dakṣa* are juxtaposed.

- ṚV 1.2.8-9 (*ṛtena mitrāvaruṇāv ṛtāvṛdhāv ṛtasprśā | kratuṃ vṛhantam āśāthe || kavī no mitrāvaruṇā tuvijātā urukṣayām | dakṣam dadhāte apasam ||*): « Par l'effet de l'Ordre, ô Varuṇa et Mitra, ô (dieux) invigorés par l'Ordre, ô (dieux) en contact avec l'Ordre, / vous avez atteint-pour-toujours le haut pouvoir-spirituel (*kratu*). Les deux Poètes Varuṇa et Mitra, de puissante sorte, de vaste résidence, / nous ont conféré la pensée-agissante (*dakṣa*) active »<sup>13</sup>.
- ṚV 3.14.7 (*tubhyaṃ dakṣa kavikrato yān imā deva martāso adhvarē akarma | tvaṃ viśvasya surathasya bodhi sarvaṃ tad agni amṛta svadeha ||*): « C'est pour toi (Agni), ô Pensée-agissante (*dakṣa*), ô dieu ayant le pouvoir-spirituel (*kratu*) d'un poète, (que sont les choses) que nous avons faites, nous mortels, en vue du rite; / toi, fais attention à tout (sacrifiant) doté d'un beau char ! Tout ce (sacrifice), ô Agni immortel, laisse t'en délecter ici ! »<sup>14</sup>.
- ṚV 4.10.2 (*adhā hy agne kratō bhadrasya dakṣasya sādhoḥ | rathīr ṛtasya vṛhato vamūtha*): « Car tu as-toujours-été, ô Agni, le conducteur-de-char de l'heureux pouvoir-spirituel, de la volonté-agissante (*dakṣa*) / efficace, du haut Ordre »<sup>15</sup>.
- ṚV 10.31.2 (*pari cin marto draviṇaṃ mamanyād ṛtasya pathā namasā vivāset | uta svena kratunā sam vadeta śreyāmsaṃ dakṣaṃ manasā jagrbhyāt*). Renou only translates the second part of the verse: « S'il

<sup>12</sup> Louis Renou, *Études sur le vocabulaire du Ṛgveda*, Pondichéry, Institut français d'Indologie, 1958, p. 31-32

<sup>13</sup> Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, 15, Paris, De Boccard, p. 98.

<sup>14</sup> Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, 12, Paris, De Boccard, p. 60.

<sup>15</sup> Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, 13, Paris, De Boccard, p. 14.

se consulte en son pouvoir-délibérant (*kratu*), il saisira (en définitive) la décision (*dakṣa*) », or in other words, « il prendra une meilleure décision par la pensée »<sup>16</sup>.

According to these examples, *kratu* refers to the deliberation which precedes action, and is therefore translated as « le pouvoir-délibérant », « le pouvoir spirituel », whereas *dakṣa* is translated by « la décision », « la pensée-agissante », « le pouvoir-spirituel », as well as « la force agissante » (RV 1.59.7<sup>17</sup>). Translating *dakṣa* in RV 1.156.4 by « la force-agissante », he refers to « la séquence usuelle *kratu* comme force théorique, *dakṣa* comme “praxis” »<sup>18</sup>. Renou restricts the use of these notions to the sphere of poetry. He explains that « les termes complémentaires *kratu* « force » (d’imagination, d’inspiration) » et *dakṣa* « capacité (de réalisation selon les structures imposées) », concernent directement l’activité du poète ». He adds: « Le *kratu* se réalise au moyen du *dakṣa*: l’un est (en général) le propre des dieux, le don des dieux à l’homme, l’autre appartient (plutôt) aux humains par nature... »<sup>19</sup>. *Kratu*, he says elsewhere, « souligne la qualité requise [d’un poète]: la faculté de comprendre, qui précède immédiatement l’acte créateur (*kr-*, *poiēsis*) »<sup>20</sup>.

Even though Renou studies these words strictly from a philological angle, they are surely open to broader meanings. *Dakṣa* and *kratu* are combined not only in some abstruse verses drawn from the *Ṛgveda*, but are also used together in a well-known *mantra* presented in the form either of *mayi dakṣakratū* (« May will and insight dwell in me », Oldenberg’s transl.) (*Āpastambaśrautasūtra* 4.3.12; *Āśvalāyanagrhyasūtra* 3.6.7; *Hiranyakeśighyasūtra* 1.5.16.2), or of *mayi dakṣo mayi kratuḥ* (*Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* 38.27; *Maitrayaṇi Saṃhitā* 4.9.13: 134-5; *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 3.7.9.4; *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 14.3.1.31; *Śaṅkayāyanaśrautasūtra* 7.16.8: « (May there be) [...] in me the fitness, in me the intelligence », Caland’s transl.]. Such mantras clearly wish to establish that action alone is insufficient and must always be enlightened by an appropriate insight or intelligence. Ritual, that requires strength, energy and self-control, does not work without a well-defined project, intention or decision. Some ritualists seem to be aware that sacrificers are necessary to protect themselves against all sorts of actions that take place automatically. In the Vedic references alone, *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 4.1.4 deals at length with the complementarity of *kratu* and *dakṣa* and deserves a closer examination here. The author intends to justify the relevance of the *maitrāvaruṇa graha*, that is, a drawing of *soma* juice for libation to both Mitra and Varuṇa. I will begin by providing a translation inspired by Eggeling’s, standardizing the transliteration and adding the relevant Sanskrit words into parentheses as I go.

<sup>16</sup> Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, 16, Paris, De Boccard, p. 129.

<sup>17</sup> Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, 12, Paris, De Boccard, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, 15, Paris, De Boccard, p. 39. See also Louis Renou, « L’ambiguïté du vocabulaire du *Ṛgveda* », *Journal asiatique*, avril-juin 1939, p. 201; « Les éléments védiques dans le vocabulaire du sanskrit classique », *Journal asiatique*, juillet-septembre 1939, p. 376; « Les pouvoirs de la parole dans les hymnes védiques », *Studia Indologica Internationalia* (Poona) I, 1954 [repris dans *L’Inde fondamentale*, Paris, Herman, 1978, p. 53].

<sup>19</sup> Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, 1, Paris, De Boccard, p. 17-18.

<sup>20</sup> Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, 2, Paris, De Boccard, p. 88. See Armand Minard, *Trois énigmes sur les cents chemins*, Paris, De Boccard, 1956, p. 295, who refers to EVP 1, p. 17, and EVP 2, p. 58. Also Jan Gonda, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, The Hague, Mouton, 1963, p. 111

1. Mitra and Varuṇa are intention and execution (*kratūdakṣau*), at least on the personal level (*adhyātmam*). When one has this desire in his heart: ‘Would this were mine! I might do this!’, that is intention (*kratu*); and when it is accomplished, this is execution (*dakṣa*). Now Mitra is intention (*kratu*), and Varuṇa is execution (*dakṣa*); and Mitra is the power of the *brāhmaṇas* (*brahman*), and Varuṇa the power of the *kṣatriyas* (*kṣatra*). The *brahman* power understands (*abhiṅantṛ*), the *kṣatra* power acts (*karṭṛ*).

2-3. Now, in the beginning (*agre*), these two, the *brahman* power and the *kṣatra* power, were separate (*nānā*); then Mitra, the *brahman* power, could stand without Varuṇa, the *kṣatra* power. Not Varuṇa, the *kṣatra* power, without Mitra, the *brahman* power: whatever deed Varuṇa did, unsped by Mitra, the *brahman* power, therein, forsooth, he succeeded not.

4. Varuṇa, the *kṣatra* power, then called upon Mitra, the *brahman* power, saying: ‘Turn unto me; let us mix together! I want to place you in front of me, and not act unless sped by you!’—‘So be it!’ So both mix together; and therefrom resulted that drawing (*graha*) called *maitrāvaruṇa*.

5. Such is the office of *purohita* (‘the one placed in front’, chaplain). This is the reason why a *brāhmaṇa* must not desire to become the *purohita* of any one *kṣatriya* (he may meet with), as both of them would mix auspicious action (*sukṛta*) and inauspicious action (*duṣkṛta*). Nor should a *kṣatriya* make any *brāhmaṇa* (he may meet with) his *purohita*, as thereby auspicious action (*sukṛta*) and inauspicious action (*duḥkṛta*) mix in them.—Whatever deed, sped by Mitra, the *brahman* power, Varuṇa thenceforward, did, in that he succeeded.

6. Therefore it is quite proper that a *brāhmaṇa* should be without a king. But were he to obtain a king, it would be conducive to the success (of both). It is, however, quite improper that a king should be without a *brāhmaṇa*, for whatever deed he does, unsped by Mitra, the *brahman* power, therein he succeeds not.

Wherefore a *kṣatriya* who intends to do a deed ought by all means to resort to a *brāhmaṇa*, for he verily succeeds only in the deed sped by the *brāhmaṇa*.<sup>21</sup>

ritual level	cosmic level	personal level	social level	dharmic level
maitrāvaruṇa graha	Mitra	kratu (intention)	brāhmaṇa (purohita)	sukṛta (auspicious actions)
	Varuṇa	dakṣa (execution)	kṣatriya (king)	duḥkṛta (inauspicious actions, violence)

Mitra, also known as *brahman*, or intention, can exist by themselves, but not Varuṇa, or the *kṣatra*, or the execution. Written from the point of view of the prescribed action (*karman*), the passage is built on a series of equivalences at various levels, stressing everywhere distinct but complementary elements before finally showing that there is no effective action without reflection. In the same way that Mitra is distinct from Varuṇa but superior to him on the cosmic level, *dakṣa* (execution) is submitted to *kratu* (intention) on the personal or psychological level; and, on the social level, the king who is led to

<sup>21</sup> Eggeling’s translation, modified according to Louis Renou’s translation (*Anthologie sanskrite*, Paris, Payot, 1961, p. 32-33); this text has also been translated by Jean Varenne (*Mythes et légendes extraits des Brahmanas*, Paris, Gallimard, 1967, pp. 80-81 and 182).

perform violent deeds has to submit himself to the capacity of discrimination of his chaplain. The ritual explanation of the oblation of Soma to both Mitra and Varuṇa is understood to be homologous on both the personal and social levels. This text helps to understand why discussions of *kratu* and *dakṣa* are not mere abstractions, but also, and inseparably, questions of cosmic understanding, of ritual efficiency and of relevant social behaviour.

When discussing *kratu* and *dakṣa*, Renou, and Long, in the article referred to, never, to my knowledge, establish any connections between *kratu* and *dakṣa* on the one hand and *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* on the other. Nevertheless, when situated in the general development of Brahmanic thought, these poetic or ritual notions appear to deal with concepts similar to those used by Kṛṣṇa in the BhG where he insists on distinguishing between but not on separating from one another theoretical considerations and the practice of a discipline, that is to say distinguishing between but not separating from one another *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* (2.39). « This advice has been given to you according to *sāṃkhya*; hear it according to *yoga*. When yoked with the faculty of discrimination (*buddhi*), Pārtha, you will get rid of the bond of *karman* » (2.39; my transl. for the first part, and Malinar's transl. for the second); and a few verses further: « Yoke yourself in order to obtain self-control (*yoga*)! *Yoga* is skill in performing acts » (*yogāya yujyasva yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*, 2.50, my transl.). It is my guess that the position defended by Kṛṣṇa may be an indication that discussions between ritualists and yogins not only existed, but that various attempts were made to establish sound links between what earlier texts had referred to as *kratu* (a deliberative power) and *dakṣa* (an effective will). If *buddhi* (or what older texts called *kratu*), or all that concerns discernment (*sāṃkhya*), is logically prior to the decision of harnessing oneself to a specific task (*yoga*, partly referred to by the term *dakṣa*), this means that both are necessary for enlightened action. This is precisely Kṛṣṇa's position, a position that appears to be in continuity with what many Vedic texts say. If, as I suggest here, the speculation around *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* are a continuation of earlier discussions, it should not be at all surprising to witness some repercussions in the social field, as is clear in the BhG and the *Śāntiparvan*.

## Conclusion

In light of the preceding discussion, it seems reasonable to conclude that much of Indian thought seems to be polarized around *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* as two opposite points of view. Pure idealism or blind pragmatism? Should theoretical speculation prevail, or ascetic practice? Rather than support one side or the other in this argument, many Epic texts present a more balanced view than those defended by later sectarian groups. This is the case in the BhG, and in the passages in the MBh and in the HV cosmogony studied here. The *sāṃkhya* and *yoga* debates seem to attest to a fundamental opposition and to an overarching structure which serves to underscore the existence of two sets of values. Discussions of the complementarity of Brahmins and Kṣatriyas, or of the purity of Brahmins and the violence inherent to *rājadharmā*, found in the *Śānti-* or *Anuśāsana-parvan* also appear to be variations on this basic pattern. In the first half of the twentieth century, the noted scholar Louis de La Vallée Poussin<sup>22</sup> (showing that old Hīnayāna texts

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<sup>22</sup> Louis de La Vallée Poussin, « Muṣīla et Nārada. Le Chemin du Nirvāṇa », *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* (Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises), Vol. 5 (1937), pp. 189-222. Also by the same

had already discussed the opposition between mystics dedicated to meditative practices and rationalists who sought to penetrate the depths of reality using only their intelligence (*prajñā*) and without touching the ultimate with their bodies) did not shy away from suggesting a similarity between mystic and rationalist emphases on the one hand and Sāṃkhya and Yoga on the other. Behind the metaphors of the Epics and the discussions found in the speculative books of the MBh, the same issue appears to surface. We should not be afraid to reject the balkanisation of the debate and to look at these texts from a broader perspective.