

Yogasūtra (translation by Stephen Phillips)

Yoga is both the name of a classical Indian philosophical school—the Yoga school—and the word for meditational, devotional, and ascetic practices of “self-discipline” (bodily postures, breath-control, self-study, etc.). Thus the *Yoga-sūtra* (*YS*) both defines the *Yoga* school and spells out various exercises of *yoga*. That is, it spells out a system of yoga practice framed by a metaphysics. The Yoga philosophy of the *YS* is distinct from, for example, the theism of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, though the *Gītā* advocates yogic practice no less than the *YS*. The supreme good according to the *YS* is a rupture separating an individual conscious being, *puruṣa*, from nature, *prakṛti*. The *YS* presents a metaphysical dualism of an infinite plurality of individual conscious beings, on the one hand, and a single nature, on the other. Most of us have lost our true identity through confusing our true self with body, life, and mind. God, according to the text (more precisely, according to the classical Yoga interpretation of the text by commentators beginning with Vyāsa in the fifth century), is the archetypal “liberated” conscious being, never sullied by worldly distractions. Otherwise, God is just like each of us, or our true self, *puruṣa*. This is a notion distinct from that of the *Gītā*, where the Supreme Being is conceived along lines not so different from the theology of Western religions.

Thus in addition to its delineation of yogic practices in the style of a how-to book or meditation manual, the *YS* attends to questions about reality, especially about the relation of consciousness to nature. Its theory may be interpreted as a view of the ontological underpinnings of the enlightenment or liberational experience, i.e., as an explanation how such an experience is possible. There is also an intermediate level of psychological theorizing, which models various cognitive and motor functions. The psychology constitutes a bridge between the practice teachings and the metaphysics of Yoga (though rickety in some places).

Although portions of the *YS* probably date to very early, the final version of the text belongs to the period after the Buddhist Nāgārjuna (c. 200 CE) who provoked a professional turn in Indian philosophy such that disputants of all schools pay close attention to overall ideative coherence as well as supporting argument. The *YS* commentators are all professional reasoners aware of a wide range of competing metaphysical systems and beliefs.

Modern commentators sympathetic to traditions of Indian spirituality try to restore a sense of the *sūtras* outside the systematic Yoga

interpretation of classical commentators. Furthermore, classical theorists outside the Yoga school, such as the Tantric Abhinavagupta (c. 1050), also read the aphorisms differently than Vyāsa and classical philosophers of the Yoga school. Abhinava says, for example, that the word *īśvara* in *YS* 1.23—which is translated below as “Lord” and by other translators as “God”—means “higher self,” *ātman*. Indologists have seen the *YS* as a compilation of distinct texts. Classical commentators, in sharp contrast, presuppose its unity. Modern yoga-sympathizers and apologists, such as B. K. S. Iyengar, Georg Feuerstein, and Swami Satyananda Saraswati, not only try to restore an original “experiential” or “phenomenological” sense, as mentioned, but also, in the case of Iyengar in particular, in their commentaries import much traditional folklore.

Our method will be to try to learn from everyone but also to try to make sense of the text on our own.

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Now, a work in progress, a new translation of the *YS*.

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om śrīśrīsarvatyai namaḥ

Salutations to Patañjali! om namo namaḥ |

The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali

samādhi-pādaḥ

1.1. atha yoga-anuśāsanam |

Now instruction in yoga.

Comments. The word *atha*, “now,” is viewed within traditional circles as a ritually auspicious way to begin a text (*maṅgala*).

1.2. yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ |

Yoga is the stilling of fluctuations of thought and emotion (*citta*, “mind”).

Comments. The term *citta* is a nominalized past passive participle of *cit*, “to be aware.” The “mind” connects the world and consciousness. With respect to consciousness, *citta* is object (compare the idea of sense data), like the things of the world. But with respect to the world, it is subject, having an object-directedness or intentionality, among other features. In relation to consciousness, the “mind” can be controlled in meditation, but “thought’s” intentionality is by objects determined, in veridical perception, for example, by the objects perceived, which the perceptions indicate. Similarly, a person can check remembering (remembering is a form *citta* takes), but any remembering would be about something or other experienced previously.

Clearly *citta* is used to comprise thought, emotion, and perception, including internal perception (e.g., of desire), as well as dreaming. Perhaps the conscious being has a native perception, but all conceptualized perception, *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa*, would be a formation of *citta*. Emotion is thought to color *citta* in common classical conception, but there are few explicit statements about emotion in *YS*. Patañjali himself lists five types of fluctuation of *citta* just below (*YS* 1.6). From 1.15, we might expand the idea to include desire. (See also *YS* 4.10.) Controlling desire is in any case considered necessary to still the mind, since desire is given voice by the mind.

It is not until chapter four (4.4ff) that Patañjali takes up *citta* expressly within his philosophic psychology. In the sūtras of chapter one, which are philosophic and abstract but also, especially in comparison with chapter four, practice-oriented, it seems pretty safe to say that *citta* is used generically to mean the “stuff” of all varieties of mental occurrence (“mind-stuff” is the translation of James H. Woods).

1.3. tadā draṣṭuḥ sva-rūpe avasthānam |

Then the seer (the conscious being, *puruṣa*) rests in its true form.

Comments. The concept of the *puruṣa* is introduced called here the seer. This sūtra together with the next sets up the simple dualism of self and nature, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, which has been criticized in several chapters above and in particular in chapter one (pp. xxx–xx).

1.4. vṛtti-sārūpyam itaratra |

At other times, fluctuations are identified with.

Comments. This is an old Upaniṣadic theme, now commonly identified with the Sāṃkhya school. Sāṃkhya (the word means analysis) proposes careful understanding of one's nature and personality—to include subtle presentations of thoughts and emotions, *citta*—as the means for the true self to disidentify with the body and mind. Fluctuations of *citta* are viewed as part of nature and external to the *puruṣa*. All personality is a mask, to be analyzed away as a distraction from consciousness's native state of self-absorption and bliss. According to Yoga—and indeed, with qualifications, to almost all the classical schools (even the Buddhists who deny an enduring self)—the individual conscious being is subject to rebirth where he or she takes on most literally another persona. In other words, one's true self is discovered through achieving a mental silence that allows consciousness to pull back into itself, disidentifying with its changing mind, body, and personality.

1.5. vṛttayaḥ pañcatayyaḥ kliṣṭa-a-kliṣṭāḥ |

Fluctuations are of five types, and are detrimental or non-detrimental (to the practices of yoga).

Comments. Probably what is meant is that these are five major types, not that all fluctuations of *citta* fall into a clear subcategory. Emotions, for example, seem to be left off the list that follows.

1.6. pramāṇa-viparyaya-vikalpa-nidrā-smṛtayaḥ |

The five are knowledge sources (and knowledge), the opposite, thought and imagination, sleep (and dreaming), and memory.

Comments. The style of a sūtra text such as this is to use conceptual shorthand; sūtras are meant to be memorized. If we understand fluctuations of *citta* as occurring in the present, the list would be, then, using a slightly expanded terminology: (1) veridical cognitions (perceptions, conclusions drawn by inference, and bits of occurrent knowledge gained by testimony), (2) non-veridical cognitions (perceptual

illusion, inferential error, false testimony), (3) talking to oneself and day-dreaming, (4) dreaming, and (5) remembering.

1.7. pratyakṣa-anumāna-āgamāḥ pramāṇāni |

The knowledge sources (along with the veridical awarenesses to which they give rise) are perception, inference, and testimony (including scriptural tradition).

Comments. Books have been written on each of the three: perception, inference, and, of these the most controversial, testimony. Testimony as referred to here in this sūtra is probably to include scriptural testimony, the revealed words of the Upaniṣads, for example, as well as what we learn from friends and teachers. Buddhists relegate knowledge from testimony to a combination of knowledge from perception and from inference. If a chain of testimony does not originate in veridical perception or inference, it would be unreliable, they argue. More on this later.

1.8. viparyayo mithyā-jñānam a-tad-pratiṣṭham |

The opposite to the knowledge sources amounts to false awareness indicating that something is what it is not.

Comments. This is a definition of non-veridical cognition that sounds a lot like that of the realist school known as Nyāya, which was discussed in chapter one.

1.9. sabda-jñāna-anupātī vastu-śūnyo vikalpaḥ |

Thought and imagination (*vikalpa*, the third item on the list of five), which are devoid of real objects, are dependent on words and concepts.

Comments. We daydream in the words and concepts we have acquired through experience and training. Patañjali takes an empiricist approach to imagination. The mind is malleable, shaped by experience, but also, in imagination, capable of separating and recombining colors, shapes, etc., and creating fictions.

1.10. a-bhāva-pratyaya-ālambanā vṛttir nidrā |

Sleep (along with dreaming) comprises the mental fluctuation whose object is a stream of ideas about things not present.

Comments. Sleep is an important opportunity for yogic practice according to, e.g., the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*: yogic sleep (*yoga-nidrā*) is conceived as bodily sleep in which there is continuity of awareness with the waking state. Patañjali, by classifying sleep, or dreaming, as a fluctuation of *citta* (which is to be stilled, by the definition at 1.2), anticipates the conception of *yoga-nidrā*.

1.11. anubhūta-viṣaya-a-sampramoṣaḥ smṛtiḥ |

Memory is not letting experienced objects escape.

Comments. There seems to be a pragmatic contradiction between the sūtras being put forth for memorization and this teaching that remembering is, like other fluctuations, not to be indulged. Of course, the text is only a tool. Its value is instrumental and derived. Presumably, advanced yogis would block even its memory. (But would the blocking itself, in virtue of its conformity with the *YS* teaching, be a kind of remembering, an informing of the act by the teaching? The contradiction, or tension, is not, perhaps, so easily avoided.)

1.12. abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyāṃ tan-nirodhaḥ |

Restriction of them (of all five types of fluctuation) is accomplished through practice and disinterestedness.

Comments. This sūtra connects with 1.5. Sūtras 1.6 through 1.11 constitute a minor digression into definitions of types of fluctuation. Now we are back to the properly yogic theme of how to bring all to a halt. Practice is defined in the next sūtra, and disinterestedness at 1.15.

1.13. tatra sthitau yatno abhyāsaḥ |

Practice is effort to hold fast the restriction.

Comments. The definition connects with the definition of yoga at 1.2.

1.14. dīrgha-kāla-nairantarya-satkāra-āsevito dṛdha-bhūmiḥ |

Effort becomes firmly established when it is put forth for a long time continuously.

Comments. Yoga is like perfection of a skill, requiring daily effort for a long period.

1.15. dṛṣṭa-anuśravika-viṣaya-vitr̥ṣṇasya vaśīkāra-samjñā vairāgyam |

Disinterestedness is the consciousness of being in control (of appetites), on the part of someone who has no thirst for objects directly perceived or reported.

Comments. Yoga clearly involves control over desire as well as thought and emotion. Although desire is not on the list of types of fluctuation at 1.6, the picture of *citta* probably should be extended to include it.

1.16. tat-param puruṣa-khyāter guṇa-vaitr̥ṣṇyam |

Superior to that is (the absolute disinterestedness of) lack of desire for (manifest or unmanifest) phenomena (*guṇa*, “qualities”) because of perception of the *puruṣa* (“true person”). [Alternatively: Afterwards, from perception of the *puruṣa*, there is lack of desire for (manifest or unmanifest) phenomena.]

Comments. Vyāsa reads the word *param* as “superior,” and practically everyone, it seems, follows him.

1.17. vitarka-vicāra-ānanda-asmitārūpa-anugamāt samprajñātaḥ |

***Samādhi* (“mystic trance” or “mystic accomplishment”) has two forms, one of which is supported by wisdom in accordance with reasoning, discrimination, bliss, and sense of identity (“I-am-ness”).**

Comments. The great scholar of yoga, Mircea Eliade, coined the term “enstasy” as a translation of *samādhi*. Unlike ecstasy (“standing outside

oneself”), enstacy (“standing within”) consists of an inner bliss. Others, of course, have offered alternative renderings; my view is that the word should be anglicized (as it has been already in some circles). As an interpreter, I would prefer a translation with a voluntarist spin, something along the lines of “mystic accomplishment.” After all, *samādhi* is a *siddhi*, an occult power. An accomplished yogin has the ability to enter mystic trance, but he or she also has the power to return to ordinary consciousness. At least, this is one way of thinking about *samādhi*. We shall return to the topic with later sūtras. And we may decide that *samādhi* as talked about throughout *YS*, as opposed to what is said here, has more than two forms. These may be two among a range of types.

1.18. virāma-pratyaya-abhyāsa-pūrvāḥ saṃskāra-śeṣo anyāḥ |

The other, in which only subliminal activators remain (*saṃskāra*, “mental dispositions,” the subconscious bases of habits of mind and action), is preceded by effort to hold steady ideas intent on contentment.

Comments. “Dispositions” (*saṃskāra*) are the topic of the first section of chapter two, above, pp. xxx–xx. These are the vehicles of karma, of talents, habits, and skills, some of which span lifetimes. Other sūtras in which *saṃskāra* are mentioned are: 1.50, 2.15, 3.9, 3.10, 3.18, 4.9, and 4.21. See sūtra 4.11 for discussion of *vāsanā* (“deep disposition,” “karmic activator”), which appears to be the distinct type of *saṃskāra* that bridges lifetimes.

1.19. bhava-pratyayo videha-prakṛti-layānām |

Disembodied yogins and those merged with nature attain *samādhi* through being intent on birth (i.e., just by being born).

Comments. The idea seems to be that one can develop *samādhi*-prone dispositions such that one is compelled into the state without much effort, i.e., yogic practice, in the current birth. Sūtra 4.1 repeats the idea with respect to *siddhis*, “powers,” among which I would count the ability to enter mystic trance.

1.20. śraddhā-smṛti-samādhi-prajñā-pūrvaka itareṣām |

Others attain it through faith, energy, remembering (i.e., meditation), and wisdom deriving from *samādhi*.

Comments. There is more than one way to attain *samādhi*, as is clearly stated at 1.24 and later. The traits mentioned here would seem likely, however, to be found with all accomplished yogins—except, of course, as stated in the previous sūtra, those rare souls who are born adept spiritually (cf., Purāṇic stories of the child Krishna).

1.21. tīvra-saṃvegānām āsannaḥ |

It settles in for those who are exceptionally intense.

1.22. mṛdu-madhya-adhimātratvāt tato api viśeṣaḥ |

Even among those (who are exceptionally intense), there are differences: the barely so, the moderately so, and the extreme.

1.23. īśvara-praṇidhānād vā |

Or, (restriction occurs) from opening to (or, “devotion to,” *praṇidhāna*, “meditation on”) the Lord (or, one’s higher self).

Comments. Of course, this is not the “Lord of Heaven and Earth” familiar in Western theology. Possibly, the indication is to a “God within” (the suggestion of several students) or to an ideal of what one oneself can be once free from false identification with body, life, and mind. Below, *YS* 2.45 connects this practice with *samādhi*, mystic perfection. Interesting, the immediately preceding sūtra, *YS* 2.44 connects the practice of “self-study” (with respect to a sacred text), *sva-adhyāya*, with the power, or *siddhi*, of achieving contact with one’s own “preferred divinity,” *iṣṭa-devatā*. That conception is henotheistic and in line with mainstream theistic Hinduism: one worships the form of the One that it is easiest to worship, the form to which one is personally drawn.

1.24. kleśa-karma-vipāka-āsayair a-parāmrṣṭaḥ puruṣa-viśeṣa īśvaraḥ |

By “Lord” is meant a particular conscious being (*puruṣa*) who (unlike us) is untouched by obstacles to enlightenment or by the stores

of ripening karma (habits and moral debts acquired through action).

Comments. Classically, the addition of *īśvara*, the “Lord,” is the principal distinction of Yoga as a philosophy over and against Sāṃkhya. Perhaps, as suggested by Mircea Eliade (*YFI*, pp. xxx–xx), the *īśvara* is mentioned as an archetypal yogin, an object to be meditated upon. However, richer interpretations are possible.

As mentioned in the comments to 1.20, the little word *vā*, which means “or,” “alternatively” and which is often overlooked (so powerful the attraction of the word *īśvara* which can mean “God”), is most significant. At 1.34 another *vā* appears, and each of the following five sūtras also repeats the word. It of course functions as a sentence connective. But it carries the sense of a certain methodological pluralism, as will become clear. At 1.33, a synonym for *citta-vṛtti-nirodha* (above, *YS* 1.2, the definition of yoga as “stilling of the fluctuations of *citta*) is used: *citta-prasādanam*, “calming illumination of the mind.” The goal is targeted, put in one’s sights, not through, e.g., meditation on the Lord, as here, but through breath control. The point of the use of the connective “or” is that such mental silence can be achieved through different means. Not everyone has to follow the same route. Devotional yoga is the topic of *YS* 1.23–32, which is a rather long stretch of text, but the devotional method of arriving at calming illumination is only one alternative.

Similarly, one might view the “practice and distinterestedness” spelled out at 1.12ff. However, these words appear generic. Every yogic means is a practice requiring effort, and all have to be done religiously over a long period. Nevertheless, the methods of yoga differ considerably, and those of 1.33 and following, which need not include devotional yoga, etc., are also to be counted as potentially leading to the common goal of “stilling of the mind.”

1.25. tatra niratiśayaṃ sarvajña-bījam |

The seed of omniscience (present in everyone) is unsurpassed in the Lord.

Comments. Later we learn that every *puruṣa* is capable of a kind of omniscience: 3.49. Indeed, every power that we can develop as individuals the Lord has already to the maximum degree.

1.26. pūrveṣām api guruḥ kālēna an-avacchedāt |

The Lord is the guru even of the ancient teachers in not being limited by time.

Comments. A common argument for the existence of God in classical Indian philosophy is that each human craft—by definition, learned from a teacher who has learned from a previous teacher, e.g., grammar—has to have an originator, a first guru.]

1.27. tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ |

The Lord is indicated by the syllable *om*.

1.28. taj-japas tad-artha-bhāvanam |

(Devotional yoga consists in) repetition of OM and meditation on (or enlivening of) its meaning.

1.29. tataḥ pratyak-cetana-adhigamo apy antarāya-a-bhāvaś ca |

From that comes understanding of inward consciousness as well as negation of obstacles.

1.30. vyādhi-styāna-saṃśaya-pramāda-ālasya-a-virati-bhrānti-darśana-a-labdha-bhūmikatva-an-avasthitatvāni citta-vikṣepās te antarāyāḥ |

Obstacles are illness, listlessness, doubt, heedlessness, laziness, non-abstention, wrong outlook, and failure to attain a certain level or to stay there. They make the mind (*citta*) unsteady.

1.31. duḥkha-daurmanasya-aṅga-mejayatva-śvāsa-praśvasā vikṣepa-sahabhavaḥ |

Symptoms of unsteadiness include pain, bad mood, shaky limbs, and uneven in and out breaths.

1.32. tat-pratiṣedha-artham eka-tattva-abhyāsaḥ |

For the purpose of checking them, practice should be maintained within a single system (or, by a single principle, *eka-tattva*).

1.33. maitrī-karuṇā-muditā-upekṣāṇām sukha-duḥkha-puṇya-a-puṇya-
viṣayāṇām bhāvanātaś citta-prasādanam |

Calming illumination of the mind (*citta*) is furthered through practicing (or, enlivening), towards objects pleasant, painful, virtuous, and full of vice, (respectively the balancing attitudes of) friendship, compassion, gladness, and indifference.

1.34. pracchardana-vidhāraṇābhyām vā prāṇasya |

Or, it (calming illumination, stilling of the *citta*) can be brought about by controlled exhalation and holding of the breath (*prāṇa*, “vital energy”).

Comments. Is there a tie between the breath-control practices of *prāṇāyāma* and the oxygen deficiency, “anoxia,” some researchers link to “near-death” experiences?

1.35. viṣayavatī vā pravṛttir utpannā manasaḥ sthiti-nibandhanī |

Or, (it arises from) the advent of sense-object-centered activity binding the mental organ (*manas*).

Comments. This seems to say that mental silence arises from observing sense experience. Vyāsa, however, gives a different spin: by concentrating on a particular sense-organ activity along with the nature of its objects in general, e.g., the tasting organ and taste in general, one gets an experience of a subtle, pre-physical evolute of Nature, *prakṛti*. This is important feedback for it confirms a person’s trust in yogic teachings and practices, and thus helps to lead to mental silence.

1.36. viśokā vā jyotiṣmatī |

Or, (it arises with) activity that is free from sorrow and luminous (such as concentration on the heart center or the center between the eyebrows).

Comments. This is the reading of the modern yogic commentators B. K. S. Iyengar and Swami Satyananda in particular who follow a suggestion of Vyāsa's.

1.37. vīta-rāga-viṣayaṃ vā cittam |

Or, when the mind (*citta*) contemplates beings who have transcended passion. [Or: A mind (is quiet and restrained) whose objects are no longer colored by desire.]

1.38. svapna-nidrā-jñāna-ālambanaṃ vā |

Or, (another means is) the mind brought to knowledge of sleep and dreams.

Comments. ‘‘Luminous dreaming’’ involves being aware of a dream as a dream while one is asleep. The practice is different from what is called ‘‘yogic sleep’’ (*yoga nidrā*) in that the latter does not involve dreaming but only remaining awake, so to say, while the body sleeps.

The idea that the goal of yoga as mental stillness can be achieved through such a discipline alone is indicated by use again of the sentence connective, *vā*, as I have argued (at 1.23).

1.39. yathā-abhimata-dhyānād vā |

Or, from meditation in accordance with (an individual's) proclivities.

1.40. parama-aṇu-parama-mahattva-anto asya vaśīkāraḥ |

The (self-)control of the yogin extends from the smallest atom (of his body) to the largest magnitude (contemplated in meditation). [Or, in line with 2.21: His control extends to the smallest atom and largest magnitude.]

1.41. kṣīṇa-vṛtter abhijātasya iva maṇer grahīṭṛ-grahaṇa-grāhyeṣu tat-stha-tad-añjanatā samāpattiḥ |

The person whose mental fluctuations have become attenuated achieves *samāpatti*, ‘‘yogic balance,’’ with respect to things subjective,

sensational, and objective, like a polished jewel that takes on the color of that on which it lies.

Comments. The technical term, *samāpatti*, has been variously translated and interpreted. Integration of the parts of the being in a yogically balanced fashion is one reading, with *samāpatti* as “yogic integration” (a rendering that is true to the etymology of *sam* + *ā* + the root, *pat*).

1.42. tatra śabda-artha-jñāna-vikalpaiḥ saṃkīrṇā savitarkā samāpattiḥ |

The type of *samāpatti*, “yogic balance,” called “the higher rational,” *savitarkā samāpatti*, has verbal and other cognitions blended in.

1.43. smṛti-pariśuddhau sva-rūpa-śūnyā iva artha-mātra-nirbhāsā nirvitarkā |

The type of *samāpatti*, “yogic balance,” called “beyond the rational,” *nirvitarkā samāpatti*, occurs after the memory has been purified, shining in pure awareness of whatever object, devoid of self-consciousness, as it were.

1.44. etayā eva savicārā nirvicārā ca sūkṣma-viṣayā vyākhyātā |

This explains both types of mental balance no matter how subtle the content.

1.45. sūkṣma-viṣayatvaṃ ca a-liṅga-paryavasānam |

Content can be subtler and subtler until it is the “unmanifest” (i.e., nature undifferentiated).

1.46. tā eva sabījaḥ samādhiḥ |

All these (stages and types of mental balance) are called *samādhi* “with seed,” *sabīja*.

1.47. nirvicāra-vaiśāradye adhyātma-prasādaḥ |

After becoming expert in non-discursive mental balance and *samādhi*,

the spiritual opens its light.

1.48. ṛtam-bharā tatra prajñā |

“Truth-conscious,” *ṛtam-bhara* (“bearing the divine mind,” “in tune with the cosmic order”), is the yogin’s wisdom and awareness (*prajñā*) there.

Comments. The word, *prajñā*, is employed in Mahāyāna Buddhism very commonly, for instance, to capture the sixth and best attribute of a Bodhisattva, the “perfection of wisdom and insight,” *prajñā-pāramitā*.

1.49. śruta-anumāna-prajñābhyām anya-viṣayā viśeṣa-arthatvāt |

Its object and scope is other than that of the wisdom of scripture and reasoning, since its purpose is unique. [Alternatively: . . . since particulars are its object.]

1.50. taj-jaḥ saṃskāro anya-saṃskāra-pratibandhī |

The subliminal activators created by this state block the firings of other subliminal activators.

1.51. tasya api nirodhe sarva-nirodhān nirbījaḥ samādhiḥ |

When these too are checked, there is “seedless” *samādhi*, since all have been checked.

. . .

2.20. draṣṭā dṛṣi-mātraḥ śuddho api pratyaya-anupaśyaḥ |

The seer (the conscious being), although pure (i.e., although pure consciousness), appears to see through thoughts and ideas.

2.21. tad-artha eva dṛśyasya ātmā |

Only for the sake of the seer is the seen in its essence.

Comments. This, the famous “teleological sūtra” (for its teleological conception of *prakṛti*), generalizes the link mentioned in 2.18.

2.22. kṛta-arthaṃ prati naṣṭam apy a-naṣṭam tad-anya-sādhāraṇatvāt |

Although destroyed (for the liberated) yogin whose purpose is accomplished, nature is not destroyed for others (who are not liberated), because she is common to everyone.

2.23. sva-svāmi-śaktyoḥ sva-rūpa-upalabdhi-hetuḥ saṃyogaḥ |

The conjunction between the powers of phenomena and the powers of their controller (the conscious being) is caused by perception of (the two’s) identity. [Alternatively: Conjunction is the cause of awareness of the essential nature of the powers of the owned (nature) and the owner, (the controller, the conscious being).]

2.24. tasya hetur a-vidyā |

Spiritual ignorance is its cause (i.e., the reason the conjunction endures).

2.25. tad-a-bhāvāt saṃyoga-a-bhāvo hānaṃ tad-dṛṣeḥ kaivalyam |

When spiritual ignorance is no longer, the conjunction is no longer. This is the relinquishment, the “aloneness” (*kaivalya*, i.e., the *summum bonum*) of the seer (the conscious being).

2.26. viveka-khyātir a-viplavā hāna-upāyaḥ |

Unbroken practice of discriminative discernment is the way to that relinquishment.

2.27. tasya saptadhā prānta-bhūmiḥ prajñā |

For such a yogin, sevenfold wisdom and insight (*prajñā*) are the boundary of his attainment.

2.28. yoga-aṅga-anuṣṭhānād a-śuddhi-kṣaye jñāna-dīptir ā viveka-khyātiḥ |

By practice of the “limbs of yoga” (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*) impurity is attenuated. Cognition is illuminated up to discriminative discernment.

2.29. yama-niyama-āsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇā-dhyāna-samādhayo aṣṭāv aṅgāni |

Ethical restraints, personal constraints, āsanas, breath-control, withdrawal of the senses from their objects, (and three stages of meditation) *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* are the eight “limbs of yoga.”

Comments. Each of the “limbs,” including the three stages of meditation, are defined below.

2.30. a-hiṃsā-satya-a-steya-brahmacarya-a-parigrahā yamāḥ |

The restraints are non-injury (*a-hiṃsā*), truthfulness, non-thievishness, sexual restraint, and non-possessiveness.

2.31. jāti-deśa-kāla-samaya-an-avacchinnāḥ sārva-bhaumā mahā-vratam |

These practiced universally irrespective of station and circumstance of time and place constitute the “great vow.”

2.32. śauca-santoṣa-tapaḥ-sva-adhyāya-īśvara-praṇidhānāni niyamāḥ |

The personal constraints are cleanliness, contentment, asceticism, self-study (in the light of a sacred text), and opening to God (or one’s higher self).

2.33. vitarka-bādhane pratipakṣa-bhāvanam |

In order to check disturbances one should enliven counter-attitudes.

Comments. For example, thought and feeling of non-injury to check a feeling of wanting to injure someone.

2.34. vitarkā hiṃsā-ādayaḥ kṛta-kārita-anumoditā lobha-krodha-moha-

pūrvakā duḥkha-a-jñāna-an-anta-phalā iti pratipakṣa-bhāvanam |

Disturbances are a feeling of injuriousness and so on, perhaps actually acted out, perhaps caused to be acted out, or perhaps simply approved of and acknowledged. Their symptoms or precursors are greed, anger, confusion, and they come in slight, middling, and extreme intensities. Their fruits are endless suffering and ignorance.—This thought itself is an “enlivening of a counter-attitude.”

2.35. a-himṣā-pratiṣṭhāyāṃ tat-saṃnidhau vaira-tyāgaḥ |

When “non-injury” is firmly established, then in the person’s presence all animosity disappears.

2.36. satya--pratiṣṭhāyāṃ kriyā-phala-āśrayatvam |

When truthfulness is firmly established, then what has been said becomes the basis for action and results (promised and foretold results come about).

2.37. a-steya-pratiṣṭhāyāṃ sarva-ratna-upasthānam |

When refraining from stealing is firmly established, all jewels come near (i.e., the yogin or yogini lives in an atmosphere of abundance, impersonally enjoying, so to say, the wealth of the world).

Comments. This interpretation is due to Swami Satyananda Saraswati.

2.38. brahmacarya-pratiṣṭhāyāṃ vīrya-lābhaḥ |

When sexual restraint is firmly established, (great) energy and vitality are gained.

2.39. a-parigraha-sthairye janma-kathantā-sambodhaḥ |

Upon achieving steadiness in non-possessiveness, the yogi or yogini comes to know the how and the why—the meaning—of his or her birth.

Comments. The classical interpretation is that, freed from the concerns of acquiring wealth, one is relaxed enough to remember—by way of the triggering of *samskāras* formed in previous births—activities in previous lives including what one did to form one’s current personality and station in life. Swami Satyananda’s theistic interpretation has it that, cleansed of personal interests, one can discern God’s reason for giving the current birth along with one’s individual *dharma*, what one should do or be.

...

3.18. saṃskāra-sākṣātkaraṇāt pūrva-jāti-jñānam |

Through direct acquaintance with subliminal activators comes knowledge of previous births.

3.19. pratyasya para-citta-jñānam |

From *saṃyama* on ideas (or ideative currents) comes knowledge of other minds (the *citta* of others).

3.20. na ca sālambanaṃ tasya a-viṣayābhūtāt |

That does not include the substratum or representational nature of the other’s *citta* (e.g., the language employed), since that is outside the range of *saṃyama*.

3.21. kāya-rūpa-saṃyamāt tad-grāhya-śakti-stambhe cakṣuḥ-prakāśa-a-saṃprayoge antar-dhānam |

By performing “conscious identification” (*saṃyama*) on the body’s visible form, another’s power to grasp it is suspended, there being a break between the light (necessary for perception) and the operation of the other’s visual organ: (hence comes the *siddhi* of) invisibility.

[3.21’. etena śabda-ādy-antar-dhānam uktam | (This sūtra does not appear in most editions.)

By this is explained the disappearance of sound and so on.]

3.22. sopakramaṃ nirupakramaṃ ca karma tat-saṃyamād aparā-anta-jñānam ariṣṭebhyo vā |

Karma ranges from active to dormant. From *saṃyama* on it comes knowledge of (time of) death. Or, it may be known from unfavorable symptoms [“omens,” according to some].

3.23. maitra-ādiṣu balāni |

From *saṃyama* on friendliness and so on come powers (of friendliness and so on).

Comments. Friendliness, compassion, happiness, and indifference are the attitudes, says Swami Satyananda, that the yogi or yogini needs to cultivate.

3.24. baleṣu hasti-bala-ādīni |

From *saṃyama* on powers come such powers as the strength of an elephant.

3.25. pravṛtṭy-āloka-nyāsāt sūkṣma-vyavahita-viprakṛṣṭa-jñānam |

From casting the higher light on any effort, the object of the effort is known, whether subtle, hidden, or distant.

Comments. Knowledge is a power, a *siddhi*.

3.26. bhuvana-jñānaṃ sūrye saṃyamāt |

Knowledge of the cosmic becoming comes from *saṃyama* on the sun.

Comments. Vyāsa explains that the “cosmic becoming,” or “universe,” consists of seven worlds, or planes of being, ranging from our world of earth (*bhū*) to the three worlds of the Brahman, with three intermediate worlds.

...

4.1. janma-auśadhi-mantra-tapaḥ-samādhī-jāḥ siddhayaḥ |

“Powers,” *siddhis*, come by birth, from herbs, mantras, asceticism, and *samādhī*.

Comments. The opening stretch of sūtras in this chapter continues voluntarist themes of chapter three, here the idea that latent metanormal abilities—some of the *siddhis* or “powers” mentioned previously—can be brought out by ingesting herbs, reciting mantras, and spending time in mystic trance, as well as by the asceticism previously emphasized. Indeed, some people are born with metanormal abilities, presumably by having practiced yoga in a former birth.

Swami Satyananda says explicitly that the herbs mentioned do not include “ganja and LSD” and refers us to the teachings of Ayurveda, which is the traditional medical science.

Note that if powers flow from *samādhī*, “mystic trance”—which can itself be viewed as a power, as I have argued above—then *samādhī* cannot involve an entire separation of consciousness from its embodiments.

4.2. jāty-antara-pariṇāmaḥ prakṛty-āpūrāt |

Transformation into a different type of being (or, into another birth) comes about from a superabundance of natural potentiality.

Comments. Especially at death one is said to have the opportunity to change into another type of being, not only through the loss of a particular persona but by a core individuality becoming manifest in ways that were hitherto hidden. Vyāsa insinuates that sometimes humans become gods.

Practicing yoga does not, according to Patañjali, change one’s core nature. Rather, it triggers latent wonders of consciousness.

4.3. nimittam a-prayojakaṃ prakṛtīṇāṃ varaṇa-bhedas tu tataḥ kṣetrikavat |

Practicing yoga does not impel transformations of nature. Rather, like a farmer (irrigating, weeding, etc., to let plants grow), yogic practices break up coverings or obstacles (so that one’s true nature can become manifest).

Comments. One’s nature is not transformed from the outside, like a potter shaping a vessel of clay, but rather from the inside, like a caterpillar into a butterfly. Yoga practice removes obstacles to a self-manifestation that, once set off, unfolds on its own. That is, once obstacles are destroyed, the wonders of mystic trance, etc., occur naturally.

Note that throughout Hinduism mantra-like prayers—addressed to Viṣṇu, Kālī, the elephant-headed Gaṇeśa, and so on—ask the deity to remove obstacles (*vighna*).

One can also see here the idea that the yogic ideal of perfect balance of body, life, mind, and self does not have to be manipulated but rather is the natural state, though without “mental stillness” (*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*) it remains elusive.

4.4. *nirmāṇa-cittāny-asmitā-mātrāt* |

“Mind,” *citta*, is shaped by the yogin solely from the principle of egoity.

Comments. On *citta*, see the comments to *YS* 1.2.

Taking cues from the Sāṃkhya system, we probably should see the “egoity” mentioned, *asmitā*, as the Sāṃkhya principle of individuation. According to the *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, the principle is responsible, in the unrolling of universal nature, for differentiations of individuals of a type.

Surprisingly, this is not the reading of the classical *YS* commentators. Here they read the sūtra less abstractly than is their custom: the accomplished yogin capable of mental silence has the ability to individuate, i.e., create, a new “mind,” *citta*, for himself *by* himself, or herself, as opposed to having one created for her by universal nature. Normally, a self or person is not very responsible, it seems implied, for the cast of his or her mind.

The classical interpretation thus both lines up with, in stressing the yogin’s power, and opposes, in assuming that ordinarily mind is determined by universal nature, the voluntarist themes I have emphasized. On the other hand, we could see this as a very clear statement of Yoga’s self-determination thesis, which I argued (in chapter one) is at the core of all Yoga philosophy, Patañjali’s or another’s or our own, defined by its championing yoga practices as discussed.

Interestingly, one could also read the sūtra as proposing a teleological conception of the *puruṣa*, not of *prakṛti* (as pronounced earlier, *YS* 2.21):

the conscious being is impelled to embodiment. Thus we would have a conception similar to the Whiteheadian concept of God, who is always necessarily embodied.

On the dualist metaphysical reading, it is unclear whether the shaping of a mind would be from the outside or from within. But let us imagine, in line with the immediately preceding sūtra, 4.3, that the it is to be from within. Note again there would be tension in the dualist conception of a nugget soul or *puruṣa* somehow enveloped by nature, *prakṛti*, but shaping and controlling her. The *puruṣa* would have no way out, it seems, though somehow *prakṛti* would be, thankfully, malleable and responsive. She would also be, however, not conscious.

Thus a charitable reading of the sūtra is in this case in line with the more practical reading suggested in this case by Vyāsa and company: given that our minds are shaped to a large degree by our culture and social relationships, this sūtra asks us to view the yogin as the poet or artist or critic, the innovator capable of new “mind,” *citta*. At a minimum, he or she would not be as bound to conventional wisdom as the non-yogin. In this way, the sūtra would continue the *siddhi* themes of chapter three.

4.5. pravṛtti-bhede prayojakaṃ cittam ekam an-ekēṣāṃ |

For all the great diversity of effort and action, there is *citta* that directs it. That is a single (type of) thing belonging to many (persons).

Comments. All voluntary action has *citta*, “mind,” as the *puruṣa*’s instrument or intermediary. Persons are numerous, and they act in diverse ways, but an action on anyone’s part involves *citta*, which is of a single type for everyone. As remarked, some have translated *citta* as “mind stuff” (e.g., J. H. Woods). In Sāṃkhya, and sometimes in Vedānta, too, it is considered a kind of subtle matter. It is the receptacle of psychological dispositions, such as skills, memories, and habits, as we have discussed, though some may not want to think of it as a separate substance. It is my view that it is pretty consistently treated by Patañjali as a third basic kind of existent, along with consciousness (*puruṣa*) and nature (*prakṛti*), though of course the official Yoga position is to make it part of *prakṛti*.

4.6. tatra dhyāna-jam an-āśayam |

Among these (individuated *citta*s belonging to different persons), that

born of meditation is without stores of ripening karma.

Comments. Compare, above, YS 1.24, where the Lord (*īśvara*) is said to be untouched by stores of ripening karma. The difference would be that this state is achieved by meditation, whereas the Lord has by nature no karma and is thus unaffected by any ripening, according to Patañjali.

4.7. karma-a-śukla-a-kṛṣṇaṃ yoginas trividham itareṣāṃ |

Karma is neither good nor bad that belongs to the yogin. For others, it is of three types (good, bad, or a mix).

Comments. The yogin aims to transcend all karma. Of course, it is said by the commentators that transcendence is easier when the karma is good, when one's nature has been made "sattvic."

The obvious implication would seem to be that the yogin makes no karma, but perhaps the idea is a little subtler. The yogin's karma could be of such a universal or harmonious order that it invites no karmic payback. In any case, the sūtra does not deny that the yogin acts and thereby makes karma.

4.8. tatas tad-vipāka-anuṅānām eva abhivyaktir vāsanānām |

"Subliminal activators (across births)," vāsanā, manifest just according to the ripening (in good or bad deeds as well as in moral payback) that results from the (moral) types of karma.

Comments. This is the first time the word *vāsanā* has been used. Previously, the theory of karma had been couched in terms of *saṃskāra*, "subliminal impressions, memory impressions (with a certain charge)." Georg Feuerstein distinguishes between "subliminal activators" and "subliminal traits." As discussed in chapters two and three in particular (pp. xxx–xx and xxx–xx), the suggestion is similar to an idea of C. J. Ducasse, who in considering presuppositions of rebirth distinguishes (a) deep dispositions and talents (e.g., a musical ear) that might be characteristics had by a person from birth to birth, and (b) memories and dispositions formed only in the current lifetime and not continuing into the next birth (e.g., the ability to speak a particular language).

4.9. jāti-deśa-kāla-vyavahitānām apy ānantaryaṃ smṛti-saṃskārayor eka-rūpatvāt |

Since remembering conforms to “memory impressions,” *saṃskāras*, causal sequences of *saṃskāras* occur despite divisions of type (or birth), place, and time.

Comments. Continuity of memory is a prime component of personal identity. Memory is secured by “memory impressions,” *saṃskāras*. See chapter two, in particular section one where various dimensions and types of “mental disposition” are discussed.

4.10. tāsām an-āditvaṃ ca āśiṣo nityatvāt |

And these *vāsanā* have no beginning, since desiring (*āśiṣ*) is permanent.

Comments. Here we are presented with an idea of connection, albeit obscure, between mental dispositions and desire, or, as say the commentators, “desire to live,” *āśiṣ*. The next sūtra says that it is a causal connection, and Vyāsa and his followers try to spell it out more precisely. I speculate that Patañjali sees the eternity of the *puruṣa* projected into nature as a desire to continue forever in one’s current identity. Vijñānabhikṣu constructs an argument about the permanence of *citta*, the substratum of desire and mental dispositions. It echoes the following argument from Udayana (the Nyāya philosopher, c. 1000). That desire requires cognition is the missing link.

And, if it were the body that has consciousness, then a (newborn) child would not be able for a first time to make effort (to acquire something desired or to avoid something disliked). For, without desire or aversion, effort makes no sense. And without recognition of how the desired is to be acquired, desire makes no sense. Inasmuch as (under the circumstances) there would be no memory (on the part of the newborn child) of the connection which has not been experienced in the current lifetime, such recognition would not happen (whereas in fact the newborn desiring milk reaches for the breast of its mother). And with respect to what has been experienced in another birth, the experiencer (presuming, *ex*

hypothesi, that it is the physical body), having (been cremated and) turned to ashes, there could be no remembering by another (body, that is, still supposing counterfactually that it is the body that is the locus of consciousness). Furthermore, in this very lifetime the causal relation between (*saṃskāra*-forming) experiences at the one end and effort (and action) at the other is known with certainty. And so, in the absence of the one (experience, etc.), there is absence of the other (desire, etc.)—a proposition that is easy to grasp. (However, there is desire, etc., and so there must have been experience, etc.) Otherwise, there would be untoward consequences (as pointed out). (Udayana's *Ātmatattvaviveka*, ed. Vinthyesvariprasada Dvivedhin and Lakshmana Sastri Dravida (Calcutta: Asiatic Society: 1986), pp. 808–09.)

This is the stock argument throughout classical philosophy for reincarnation, and as in the current sūtra, the beginninglessness of karma and desire.

Effort, *pravṛtti*, is analyzed as intentional. Effort prompts voluntary action, which is behavior guided by an idea of a goal or purpose. Desire is also analyzed as intentional, having a directedness towards an object conceived under a certain predicate, for example, something known as a ripe mango (and not the same thing known, e.g., as a physical thing of determinate size). There are easily discernible correlations, which are commonly cited, between (a) action and (b) effort, known introspectively, with respect to ourselves, as well as between (b) effort and (c) desire—we normally do not make effort and action except to realize a desire. Desires correlate with (d) cognitions. That is, desires depend on what we know about things, especially our own experiences of pleasure and pain as brought about by previous encounters. So, typically, an action has as one of its necessary conditions previous experience.

Now in the case of a newborn child, its reaching for its mother's breast (or whatever first-time action) marks it, like you and me, as an agent. The action, the reaching, is goal-directed. It flows from effort on the child's part motivated by desire to be fed. The desire, which is not itself conscious nor necessarily an object of consciousness (though desires can be introspected), depends nevertheless on previous experience and on certain *saṃskāra* having been formed. This correlation is easy to grasp. We do not desire what we have no idea of—I might say to make the point plausible against the modern prejudice to view instinct as originating

without experience. So, on Udayana's suppositions, the baby's action presupposes desire and the desire previous experience. The *saṃskāra* formed by the previous experience cannot, however, belong to the baby's body, since the child is only moments out of the womb, and any body had by the child's self in a previous lifetime would by then have been turned to ashes assuming the standard ceremonies. The *saṃskāra* that inform the newborn's desire, effort, and action must therefore rest in the self, which is a locus or substratum of psychological properties enduring through bodily death, according to Nyāya. The *YS*, of course, takes a somewhat different view of self and consciousness. But this argument of Udayana's seems suggested, at least, as mentioned, by Vijñānabhikṣu, the fifteen-century commentator. An early version of the argument appears in the *Nyāyasūtra*, which scholars count as prior to the *YS*.

The *YS* position voiced in this sūtra echoes Buddhist teaching. Compare the Second Noble Truth: "Suffering comes from desire (which has no beginning)." It's as though near one's core, though not part of one's genuine essence, there is a desire component, perhaps common with all life.

Finally, note that Swami Satyananda sees *citta* as a form of *prāṇa* ("breath," "life"), a universal vital substance to which desire is natural. Thus he reaffirms the Vedāntic tradition of a *prāṇamaya-kośa*, a "body of breath." (Cf., *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* x.x.)

...

4.29. prasamkhyāne apy a-kusīdasya sarvathā viveka-khyāter dharmameghaḥ samādhiḥ |

The *samādhi* called Cloud of Dharma occurs for a person who has no interest even in elevated awareness, whose awareness is in every way directed to discrimination (of the conscious being from nature).

Comments. Various theories have been offered, none obviously superior to the rest, why the state is called Cloud of Dharma. I would like to say, with a touch of sarcasm, that it is because Dharma is clouded, that is, duty abandoned along with the world, a kind of indulgence of expectation of self-bliss.

4.30. tataḥ kleśa-karma-nivṛttiḥ |

Thence afflictions and karma cease.

Comments. They may cease for the “liberated,” but the world of course goes on.

4.31. tadā sarva-āvaraṇa-mala-apetasya jñānasya anantyāḥ jñeyam alpam |

Then, since awareness is unlimited when parted from coverings and impurities, what remains to be known is trivial.

Comments. This may be read as an argument in favor of world-abandonment. There remains little of interest once one has had a taste of self-absorption.

4.32. tataḥ kṛta-arthānām pariṇāma-krama-samāptir guṇānām |

Thence the completion of processes of transformation on the part of the strands (*guṇas*), their purpose fulfilled.

Comments. Apparently, the individual nature of the yogin, that portion of *prakṛti* making up his body and mind (and whatever his subtle bodies, too, presumably), would decompose back into the generic elements or principles (*tattva*) into which Nature can be analyzed. No longer would there be individual embodiment and continuity of karma across lives.

4.33. kṣaṇa-pratīyogī pariṇāma-apara-anta-nirgrāhyaḥ kramaḥ |

Process, which is relative to the units of time, is apprehensible at the end of a transformation.

Comments. This sūtra seems to say—partly by the pragmatics of its placement near the end of the text—that just before passing into the state of utter self-absorption known as *kaivalya*, “aloneness” (an aloneness of contemplation of contemplation, so to say), the yogin can see the process propelling him to the *summum bonum*. If this is right, I should like to remind us that such a person could not report his or her experience, since reporting requires use of mental and bodily instruments.

4.34. puruṣa-artha-śūnyānām guṇānām pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyam

sva-rūpa-pratiṣṭhā vā citi-śaktir iti |

Aloneness (*kaivalya*, the *summum bonum*) entails the reversal of the course of the strands or qualities of nature (*guṇas*), now empty of meaning and value for the conscious being. Or, it may be understood as the power of consciousness returned and established in its own true self.

Comments. The use of the word *citi* here for the *puruṣa*'s power of consciousness supports reading *citi* at 4.22 (see above) as indicating a conscious power inherent to the conscious being and distinct from *citta*. However, I stand by my rendering.

Here ends the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali.

om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ