

(E) *Yoga-sūtra* 1.48–1.51 and 4.3–4.9 (sūtras in bold, commentary by S. Phillips)

1.48. **“Truth-conscious,” *ṛtam-bhara* (“bearing the divine mind,” “in tune with the cosmic order”), is the yogin’s wisdom and awareness (*prajñā*) there (in this state of mystic trance and accomplishment, *samādhi*).**

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. **Its object and scope is other than that of the wisdom of scripture and reasoning, since its purpose is unique.**

1.50. **The subliminal activators (*saṃskāra*, “mental dispositions”) created by this state block the firings of other subliminal activators.**

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

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4.3. **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 *samādhi*, etc., occur naturally.

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

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

Comments. Taking cues from the Sāṃkhya system of philosophy, we probably should interpret 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. They read this sūtra less abstractly than usual: 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 including karma from other lives. In other words, normally a self or person is not very responsible, it seems implied, for the cast of his or her mind. For non-yogins, this would be a combination of the inheritance of karma and universal nature, but the yogin has the ability to create new patterns.

The classical interpretation thus both lines up with a power theme in Yoga philosophy, in stressing the yogin’s supernatural capabilities, and opposes that theme, in assuming that ordinarily mind is determined by impersonal forces. Self-determination is, in my view, at the core of all Yoga teaching, philosophic or practical, Patañjali’s or another’s, ancient or modern, defined by a commitment to yoga practices. In other words, a practice-oriented reading is suggested here 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 continues the *siddhi* (“perfection,” “occult power”) themes of *YS* chapter three.

4.5. 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. Some scholars have understood (and 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 or locus of *saṃskāra*, of mental dispositions, such as skills, memories, and habits, 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. Among these (individuated *cittas* belonging to different persons), that born of meditation is without stores of ripening karma.

4.7. 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” or intelligent and pure.

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. “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*, “mental dispositions” thought of as resting in *citta*. Georg Feuerstein distinguishes between “subliminal activators” and “subliminal traits.” 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. Since remembering conforms to “mental dispositions,” *saṃskāra*, causal sequences of *saṃskāra* 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 “mental dispositions” as has been discussed.