

**‘A Psychological Understanding of the
Yogasūtra of Patañjali (sūtra 1 to 6)
with a Comparative Phenomenology
of Samādhi and Flow’**



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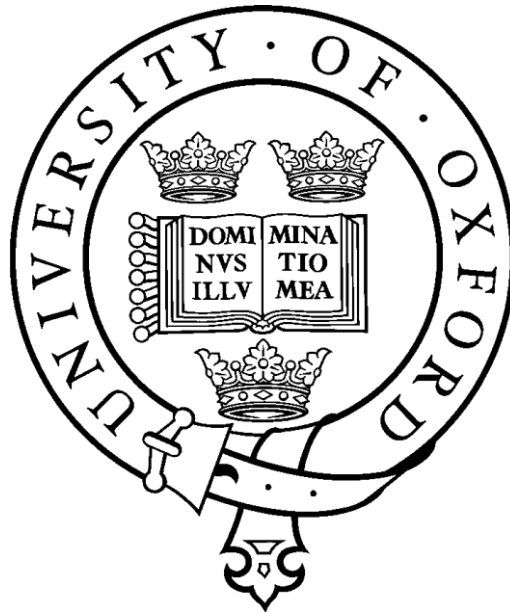
Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford

A thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements

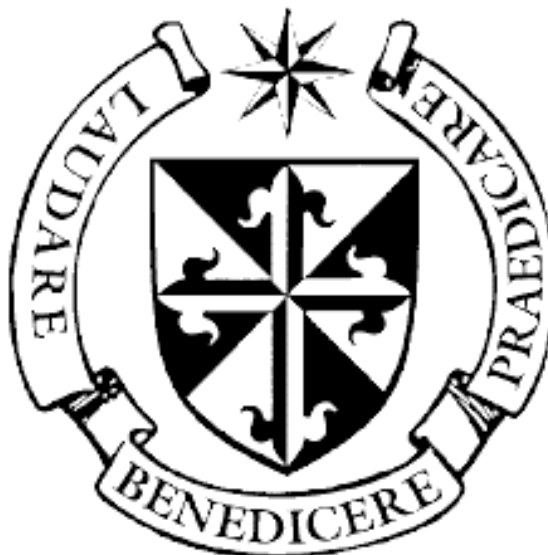
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LIST OF DIAGRAMS:

Abbreviations:

YS – Yogasūtra (YS followed by number gives the Chapter and sūtra; e.g. YS I.3 refers to sūtra 3 in Chapter I).

VB – Vyāsa bhāṣya (commentary of Vyāsa; VB I.3 refers to the commentary on sūtra 3 in Chapter I).

TV – Tattva Vaiśaradi

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In the Hindu tradition the penultimate stage of life is the *vānaprasthā*, where one begins a steady withdrawal from worldly affairs to turn towards the spiritual in the latter part of one's life. In my case having reached this stage, I decided to go back to a passion I had for academia from my earliest days. It was an unusual and difficult decision, for I have four grown up children, the youngest one just finishing her secondary education. It needed courage and determination to take this step and with enthusiastic encouragement and super support from all those who touched me in this journey, I have reached this stage of completion of my doctoral studies. In between I got two of my eldest children married off, and it was a great blessing to witness the beginning of their journey.

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ABSTRACT

‘A Psychological Understanding of Yogasūtra of Patañjali (*sūtra* 1 to 6)

with a Comparative Phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow’

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Over the past thirty years, academic dialogue on the relationships between science and religion within historical, theological and philosophical contexts has flourished, with the importance of this dialogue being positively expressed. In particular, at the intersection of psychology and religion there is a triple relationship between these domains and in this thesis, we bring the Hindu tradition of Classical Yoga into this discourse, aiming for a psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra of Patañjali as the primary text of this tradition. With a ‘psychology *in* religion’ perspective we identify key psychological concepts in the first six *sūtra* of the text, explicate and explore its psychological dimension, through referencing with other key *sūtra* or aphorisms in the Yogasūtra. With a robust methodology consisting of a hermeneutic and phenomenological based close reading of the text and rigorous conceptual analysis, we construct a detailed model of the mind contextualised within the principles and practice of Yoga. We discuss the modifications and states of the mind, the underlying subliminal factors; the nature of embodiment, identity and subjective experience, and the affective and volitional aspects of the individual, as explicated from the text.

In Section Three of this thesis we take a dialogical and comparative approach at the intersection of psychology and religion. Csikszentmihalyi has asserted that there is a close resemblance between Yoga and Flow, the latter being developed within the domain of Western Positive Psychology. We carry out a detailed comparative analysis of the phenomenology of Flow and *Samādhi* presented within a proposed methodology and framework of dimensions of subjectivity and consciousness, to investigate this claim. Clarifying the conceptual differences, establishing parallels and demonstrating common topographical and functional areas in the two phenomena, opens the possibility for an empirical investigation, which we propose. Finally, we point out the contributions of this study and suggest future directions for research in this field.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

‘A Psychological Understanding of Yogasūtra of Patañjali (*sūtra* 1 to 6)

with a Comparative Phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow’

Ramesh Pattni, Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford

We situate our studies at the intersection of psychology and religion and bringing the Hindu Classical tradition of Yoga into this domain, we argue that there is a psychological dimension contained within the text which can be explicated through a close reading of the text with a methodology based on the principles of hermeneutics and phenomenology. This is in acknowledgement of the view that non-Western religious traditions have a significant contribution to make in this field and that approaching the textual content from a ‘psychology *in* religion’ perspective, which considers the material in its own terms and context, leads towards insights into indigenous psychological conceptualisation. This method is in contrast to looking at the material through the lens of Western ‘mainstream’ psychological theories, which is a psychology *of* religion approach.

In Section Two of the thesis, we address our first specific research question in relation to this general approach: ‘What is the psychological understanding of the nature and processes of human consciousness, subjectivity and experience explicated in the first six aphorisms of the Yogasūtra of Patañjali?’ This requires us to ask questions about the conceptual framework within which this question is going to be addressed. We clarify what we mean by ‘psychology’, *which* psychology and indeed *whose* psychology. Indigenous psychology, we argue is the broad framework within which the approach of ‘psychology *in* religion’ naturally falls, as it has a ‘bottom-up’ approach, where the experience and interpretation of distinct cultural groups become the primary data for abstraction into typologies of meanings and construction of conceptual models. With rigorous conceptual analysis, based on the principles of hermeneutics and phenomenology, our aim is to carry out a ‘close reading’ of the text to identify the psychological system of the Yogasūtra with a clear exposition of the psychological elements, their relationships and processes, supported by a robust methodology. In Section Two we delineate the Yogasūtra ‘Science of Mind’, considering in detail the nature of *citta* and its constituent elements, its modifications and the subliminal elements which give rise to these modifications of the mind. We then consider Yoga practice giving further insights in understanding the psychological dimensions of the text. We bring these analyses together to construct, with a defined methodology, a detailed model of the Yogasūtra mind and describe its

various aspects, including subjectivity, consciousness, its conscious and subliminal elements, perception, cognition, attention and memory.

Csikszentmihalyi, analysing the subjects' self-reported descriptions of the quality of their experiences while performing complex tasks, identified Flow, or optimal experience, in these subjects. The experience of Flow was formulated by him as 'a complex and highly structured state of deep involvement, absorption and enjoyment'¹. That there is a close relationship between the phenomenon of the Flow and the Yoga practice is stated by Csikszentmihalyi who claimed that 'the similarities between Yoga and Flow are extremely strong; in fact, it makes sense to think that [Patañjali's system of] Yoga is a very thoroughly planned Flow activity'². Although he pointed out this similarity between two apparently diverse phenomena, he did not specify in detail the nature of this resemblance, nor give a clear idea about which aspect of Yoga bears this resemblance to Flow. Taking a dialogical approach in understanding Csikszentmihalyi's assertion, we address our second research question: 'What are the features and nature of the resemblance between Yoga and Flow and how can this question be approached through an appropriate framework and methodology for carrying out a comparative analysis of these phenomena?' The Yogasūtra psychological system, and in particular the phenomenon of *Samādhi* (meditative absorption), is the focus of a comparative analysis based on a proposed phenomenological method for investigating the convergence and divergence between this phenomenon and that of Flow. Taking the limitations of both the phenomenological reading of a text and the conceptual and methodological difficulties with the concept of Flow itself, we suggest a way in which a systematic comparative study of these phenomena can be carried out. Certain key features arise out of empirical studies of Flow which have been constructed into a multidimensional model based on Western psychological theories related to attention and motivation. Starting with an argument that phenomenology is the common ground at the interface of science, philosophy and religion for a comparative dialogical enquiry, we explore the phenomenology of the experiences of *Samādhi* and Flow in detail. Clarifying the conceptual differences, establishing parallels and demonstrating common topographical and functional areas in the two phenomena, opens the possibility of, and widens the scope for further dialogue and research. Recognising the limitations of such a comparative study between the phenomena, we propose an empirical phenomenological method of

¹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1975), 2.

² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, (New York: Harper-Collins, 1990), 105.

investigation for addressing some of these shortcomings. This approach is based on both a descriptive and a retrospective questionnaire empirical phenomenological method.

The main purpose of this study then, is to present a detailed psychological understanding of the first six aphorisms of the Yogasūtra, as a basis for explicating the whole text within this perspective. We set out the concept and context of the studies in Section One, explaining the approaches of ‘psychology *in* religion’ and ‘psychology *in dialogue* with religion’ which we intend to take and delineating the scope and structure of the thesis in Chapter One. The outline of the contents and structure of the text of our studies, the Yogasūtra of Patañjali, together with a brief comparison with another Hindu tradition, the Sāṃkhya, is given in Chapter Two. Here we also clarify the use of psychology and what we mean by a ‘psychological understanding’ and how the approach of Indigenous Psychology is appropriate for our purposes to identify the ‘Science of Mind’ as contained in the Yogasūtra.

Chapter Three considers the two strands of the methodology which we will employ in our studies, the first being a ‘close reading’ for explicating the psychological dimension of the text and the second, a method of comparative phenomenological analysis of the phenomena of *Samādhi* and Flow. Section Two (Yoga Psychology) accomplishes the first purpose of the thesis, starting in Chapter Four with the conceptual analysis of *citta*, or mind, its elements and their interrelationships; an examination of the modifications of the mind as described in the text and their psychological significance in Chapter Five; describing the subliminal factors that influence the functions of the *citta* and the roots of suffering in relation to these factors in Chapter Six.

In Chapter Seven we look at the practice of Yoga and how it relates to our psychological understanding of the mind. In Chapter Eight, we take the analysis to another level of abstraction with the construction of a model of mind, with the methodology of Bhawuk, describing the aspects of the mind in terms of cognition, the Self and the self; identity and embodiment, Consciousness and awareness, the conscious and the subliminal, perception, attention, and memory. Chapter Nine forms the link between the psychological understanding developed in Section Two and Section Three, which focuses on the phenomena of *Samādhi* and Flow.

The second purpose of the thesis is to use the insights developed from the close reading of the text to explore, from a ‘psychology *in dialogue with* religion’ perspective, the Yogasūtra *Samādhi* and Flow in the field of Positive Psychology, based on a phenomenological methodology. In Section Three, Chapter Ten is devoted to describing the concept of Flow and the conceptual and methodological issues associated with it. In Chapter Eleven we set out the

rationale for and the limitations of using the phenomenological approach in studying the two phenomena of *Samādhi* and Flow, give their detailed phenomenology, carry out a rigorous comparative analysis of the two phenomena within a framework developed by Walsh and others, give a proposal for addressing some of the limitations of such a study and suggest how the investigation the two phenomena can be carried out in more detail. An empirical phenomenological methodology consisting of descriptive and retrospective questionnaire methods is outlined for this purpose. In the concluding Chapter Twelve, we offer an overview and reflections on the value and significance of the studies.

SECTION ONE:

INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTS AND CONTEXT

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

a. Psychology and Religion: the overall context of the study

This thesis is located at the intersection of psychology and religion and although the study of these disciplines can stand apart in various ways, it is generally recognised that there is a potential for ‘mutual influence’ between them as a form of constructive dialogue³. Over the past thirty years, academic dialogues on the relationships between science and religion have flourished, albeit primarily within Judeo-Christian historical, theological and philosophical contexts, with the importance of this dialogue being positively expressed, for example, by McGrath⁴. Yet there is an acknowledgment in the current view⁵ that non-Western traditions have a significant contribution to make to this dialogue. At the intersection of psychology and religion a general triple relationship can be discerned between these domains and a constructive dialogue can potentially take place between them on the one hand, and Western and non-Western religious traditions on the other⁶:

1. Looking at religious ideation and practice through the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of psychology, firstly, is the relationship of ‘psychology of religion’. Applying established psychological theories, such as attribution or attachment theories⁷, to religious precepts and practice would define such an approach.

³ Fraser N Watts, *Theology and Psychology (Ashgate Science & Religion Series)*, (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Publishing, 2002).

⁴ Alister E McGrath, *The Foundations of Dialogue in Science and Religion*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 34 : ‘At points of major importance, the methods and theories of the natural sciences are genuinely illuminating to those concerned with religious matters. Equally, there are points where religious beliefs and approaches cast considerable light on issues of scientific method. The investigation of these convergences is mutually enlightening and significant’.

⁵ James M Nelson, *Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality*, (New York, NY: Springer-Verlag New York, 2009), 57, for example, says that the study of psychology of religion would not be complete without the contributions of non-Western religious traditions.

⁶ Diane Jonte-Pace and William B Parsons, *Religion and Psychology Mapping the Terrain: Contemporary Dialogues, Future Prospects*, (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁷ Peter C Hill and Nicholas J. S. Gibson, “Whither the Roots? Achieving Conceptual Depth in Psychology of Religion”, *Archive for the Psychology of Religion / Archiv für Religionspsychologie* 30, no.

2. The second relationship is a dialogical approach where there is a ‘conversation’ between the two domains such as, for example, a dialogue between the psychological and religious concepts of the human individual.
3. Thirdly, the ‘psychology *in* religion’ approach looks at psychological paradigms within religious traditions themselves, with their own context and assumptive base, concepts, theories and methods. An example of this is investigation of local psychological concepts within a given culture, or explication of psychological ideas from a religious text within its own tradition and understanding, without the imposition of any external conceptual framework. This approach resonates with the concept and context of Indigenous Psychology as we explain later.

Psychology *in* Religion: In our studies we will consider both Eastern and Western psychologies. On the one hand, we look at the psychological system expounded in the ancient Hindu text – the Yogasūtra of Patañjali and, on the other, the concept of Flow in Western Positive Psychology. Hinduism with all its complexity and rich traditions has well defined psychological paradigms which can dialogue creatively at the intersection of psychology and religion. With its vast number of religious texts written over many centuries, it is a rich source of material which can be of significant value in explicating indigenous psychological concepts and theories as well as engaging in dialogue with other disciplines and traditions. Although we have chosen only one such Hindu text, there are many others which can be said to have an equally interesting content of psychological material in different religious traditions⁸. Bringing the Hindu tradition of Classical Yoga into the psychology/religion discourse, the first part of the thesis takes the perspective of ‘psychology *in* religion’ with the explication of the psychological dimension of its primary text, the Yogasūtra of Patañjali. Here ‘psychology’ is taken in the widest sense of human consciousness, subjectivity and experience and the objective is to

1 (August 1, 2008): 19–35. This paper discusses psychological theories such as attribution processes, attachment styles, and religious coping, as bases for research in psychology *of* religion.

⁸ J Pilch, “Psychological and Psychoanalytical Approaches to Interpreting the Bible in Social-Scientific Context”. *Biblical Theological Bulletin*, vol. 27 no. 3, (August 1997): 112-116; the Bible, for example, is a text which has been widely explored from a psychological viewpoint.

identify key psychological concepts in the first six *sūtra*, or aphorisms, of Patañjali's text and build a model of *citta*⁹, or mind, through referencing with other key *sūtra*¹⁰. With rigorous conceptual analysis, based on the principles of hermeneutics and phenomenology, our aim is to carry out a 'close reading' of the text to identify the psychological system of the Yogasūtra.

Psychology in dialogue with religion: Western Positive Psychology was developed as a response to what was perceived as a negative approach towards abnormality in the domain of psychology. The focus of Positive Psychology is on 'valued subjective experiences of well-being, contentment and satisfaction; hope and optimism, Flow and happiness; it is a science of optimal human functioning'¹¹. The second part of the thesis ventures into the realm of Positive Psychology with a comparative analysis, as a case study in Eastern and Western psychologies, of the phenomena of Flow and that of *Samādhi* in the Yogasūtra text which apparently bears a remarkable resemblance to it. Csikszentmihalyi, analysing self-reported descriptions of the quality of experiences while performing complex tasks, identified Flow, or optimal experience, in the subjects. The experience of Flow was formulated by him as 'a complex and highly structured state of deep involvement, absorption and enjoyment'¹². The Yogasūtra phenomenon of *Samādhi* (meditative absorption) explicated in detail will be the focus of a comparative analysis, based on a phenomenological method, for investigating the convergence and divergence between this phenomenon and that of Flow. That there is a close relationship between the phenomenon of the Flow and the Yogic tradition and practice is clearly suggested

⁹ In this work, as a rule, Sanskrit words are italicized. Proper names are not italicized. Yoga, as a word in common usage in English, is not italicized. Sanskrit words used as adjectives, such as Vedic, are not italicized. Text names are not italicized. The Sanskrit diacritical marks used are according to the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Translation (IAST).

¹⁰ We will not indicate plurals of Sanskrit terms by adding 's' or '-s' after the term unless they occur in a quotation; the context will indicate the number of these terms.

¹¹ Martin E. P. Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Positive Psychology: An Introduction", *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology* January 1, 2014: 279–298.

¹² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, 2.

by Csikszentmihalyi¹³: ‘The similarities between Yoga and flow are extremely strong; in fact it makes sense to think that [Patañjali’s system of] Yoga is a very thoroughly planned Flow activity. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to view Yoga as one of the oldest and most systematic methods of producing the Flow experience’¹⁴. This claim by Csikszentmihalyi is the focus of the comparative study between the phenomena of Flow and Yoga *Samādhi*. The reasons and value of such a study are given later in the thesis, although it is to be noted here that some previous comparisons have been inadequate as they have tended to consider the general category of ‘Yoga meditation’ and, therefore, conflated various finely differentiated stages of *Samādhi* as described in the Yogasūtra text¹⁵. Clarifying the conceptual differences, establishing parallels and demonstrating common topographical and functional areas in the two phenomena, opens the possibility of, and widens the scope for further dialogue and research.

b. Research questions

There are two primary research questions which the studies will aim to address:

1. ‘What is the psychological understanding of the nature and processes of human consciousness, subjectivity and experience as can be understood in the first six aphorisms of the Yogasūtra of Patañjali?’ This will require an explication of the psychological dimension from the Sanskrit text, through a close reading of the aphorisms and the commentaries on these by Vyāsa and other scholars.

We devote Section Two to addressing the first question about the psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra through a close reading of the text with a defined methodology. This Section

¹³ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, (New York: Harper-Collins, 1990), 105.

¹⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, 2.

¹⁵ See for example, Antonella Delle Fave, “Chapter 6: Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well Being” in *Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience Across Cultures*. edited by A Delle Fave, F Massimini, M Bassi, (New York: Springer, 2011), 111-128.

delineates what we call the Yogasūtra ‘Science of Mind’, and considers in detail the nature of *citta* or mind and its constituent elements, its modifications and the subliminal elements which give rise to these modifications. We also consider Yoga practice which gives us further insights in understanding the psychological dimensions of the text. We subsequently bring these analyses together to explore the various psychological themes, including subjectivity, consciousness, perception, cognition, attention and memory and construct a model of the mind. Section Two is, therefore, devoted to the studies at the intersection of psychology and religion as ‘psychology *in* religion’ – the reading of the text within its self-understanding of mind.

2. In Section Three of the thesis we ask a related question: We have mentioned the assertion by Csikszentmihalyi that there is a strong resemblance between Yoga and Flow¹⁶. He did not, however, specify the nature and details of this resemblance and our task is to use the insights gained in the first part of the studies to explore and address the second research question: ‘What are the features and nature of the resemblance between Yoga and Flow and what is the appropriate framework and methodology for carrying out a comparative analysis of these phenomena?’ Taking the phenomenological approach, we carry out a comparative analysis of the two phenomena and we also propose a qualitative empirical research method with which we can further explore the comparison between Yoga and Flow. The triangulation of the three methods of textual analysis, comparative analysis and empirical qualitative analysis is a rigorous approach for the studies and suggests a novel way in which the various intersections of such studies can be brought together. Our studies on the comparative analysis between Flow and *Samādhi*, is an example of ‘psychology *in dialogue* with religion’.

c. Purposes of the studies

Thus the purposes of the studies are firstly, to present, from the point of view of ‘psychology *in* religion’, a detailed psychological understanding of the first six *sūtra* (aphorisms) of the

¹⁶ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 105.

Yogasūtra as a basis for explicating the whole text within this perspective; secondly, to construct a conceptual model of the mind from this understanding based on methodologies developed, for example, by Bhawuk¹⁷. Using the insights of the psychological systems developed in these steps, thirdly, we explore, from a ‘psychology *in dialogue* with religion’ perspective, the points of convergence and divergence between *Samādhi* and Flow, based on a phenomenological methodology. The claim by Csikszentmihalyi that similarity between the two phenomena is strong, and that Yoga is one of the oldest systematic methods of producing the Flow experience, can be investigated through these approaches.

These studies are an investigation of the complex relationships between psychology and religion, and between psychology in ancient texts and psychologies, both Western ‘mainstream’¹⁸ and Indigenous. There are three primary reasons for choosing to work in this domain of psychology and religion and in particular to explore the Yogasūtra text:

- i. There is little doubt, even after a cursory examination of the text, that it has a significant psychological content and, therefore, our desire to explicate its content and disseminate it as a contribution to Eastern or Indian psychology.
- ii. The mutual influence and dialogue between Eastern and Western psychologies has not been explored to any great extent. A desire to engage in a fruitful dialogue between these psychologies is another reason for taking up the study.
- iii. The interdisciplinary study of psychology and religion has, as mentioned above, mainly focussed on Judeo-Christian traditions and, therefore, a desire to develop this in relation to non-Western faith traditions, in particular Hinduism.

¹⁷ D. P. S. Bhawuk, “Methodology for Building Psychological Models from Scriptures: Contributions of Indian Psychology to Indigenous and Universal Psychologies”, *Psychology & Developing Societies* 22, no. 1, (March 1, 2010): 49–93.

¹⁸ We mean by ‘mainstream’ psychologies (cognitive, evolutionary, developmental etc.) those that ‘rest on critical realist epistemology and employ both qualitative and quantitative research methods, thus modelling themselves on the empirical natural sciences’ – see page 17.

d. Delineation of the scope of the studies

Firstly, we do not intend to engage in detailed metaphysical analysis of the Yogasūtra. The studies which have been carried out so far on the text have been of two kinds: those that relate to translations of the aphorisms and its associated commentaries (see the Bibliography for a list of these texts) and those of a secondary nature which explore mainly various philosophical and metaphysical dimensions of the text¹⁹. These aspects of the text, however, will be discussed where appropriate and relevant to the discussion.

Secondly, the research does not intend to make comparisons with other texts, or Indian schools of thought, in terms of their psychological understanding. For example, it will neither compare the Yoga understanding with the *Bhagavad Gītā* nor the Non-Dualist Vedānta understanding. If appropriate these may be mentioned as a contrast to clarify the Yoga understanding and may be done in relation to other Indian traditions. The thesis will not consider making comparisons with Buddhist psychology which, it must be acknowledged, has many common terms with the Yogasūtra and equivalent concepts to it.

Thirdly, we will not dwell on the various textual aspects of the Yogasūtra, for example, questions regarding the integrity of the text or questions regarding the authorship or a comparison of the various commentaries available. Feuerstein²⁰ has written an excellent treatise on this subject.

Fourthly, we do not intend to carry out historical analysis of the Yogasūtra. The recently published work by White²¹ dwells on this subject and ‘retraces the strange and circuitous

¹⁹ Examples of these are: Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy in Relation to other Systems of Indian Thought*. 2nd ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Dass, 1974); Georg Feuerstein and Jeanne Miller, *A Reappraisal of Yoga: Essays in Indian Philosophy*, (London: Rider, 1971); Mircea Eliade and Willard R Trask (trans)., *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. 2nd ed. (New York, NY: A Princeton University Press, 1969).

²⁰ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali, An Exercise in the Methodology of Textual Analysis*, (New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann Publishers, 1979).

²¹ Gordon White, *The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali: A Biography*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014).

journey of this confounding work from its ancient origins down through its heyday in the seventh through eleventh centuries, its gradual fall into obscurity, and its modern resurgence since the nineteenth century'²². Having clarified the context and research questions, the purposes and scope of the studies, we now consider the structure of the thesis for an overall perspective.

e. Structure of the thesis

Section One ('Introduction: Concept and Context') has three chapters which are an introduction to the thesis giving the background, the research questions and the methodology which will be employed for addressing the various aspects of the studies. There will be a brief outline of the primary text, the Yogasūtra, describing its structure and giving a synopsis of the various chapters. Since the study is primarily focused on the psychological dimension, we consider the questions about what we mean by the term 'psychology', which kind of psychology is appropriate for our study, and the conceptual and methodological difficulties involved in such a study. This section also sets out the methodology for the two main aspects of the studies: the explication of the psychological dimension of the Yogasūtra and a comparative analysis of the phenomena of Yoga and Flow.

Section Two ('Yoga Psychology') has six chapters and focuses on the detailed analysis of the Yogasūtra's first six aphorisms, their psychological terms and understanding, expanding this analysis to identify and explicate the connecting strands of thought in the rest of the text to construct a coherent picture of human experience, subjectivity and consciousness. The Section begins with the exploration of the concept of *citta* or mind and is followed by an explication of the different categories of its modifications, their nature and relation to the overall goal of Yoga. The focus of Yoga practice is the control of the modifications of the mind and, therefore,

²² Gordon White, *The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali: A Biography*, preface.

we look at these practices, placing them in relation to our understanding of the mind for more insight into the psychological dimension of the textual content. Pulling all the strands of the psychological understanding from this study, we construct a model of the mind including the dimensions of perception, attention, memory and the states and subliminal processes of the mind. We consider the outcomes of Yoga, laying down the ground for a comparison of the phenomenon of *Samādhi* with that of Flow. This forms the bridge to the next Section which then focuses on a dialogue between Eastern and Western Psychologies.

Section Three ('The Phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow, a case study in the relations between Eastern and Western Psychologies) has three chapters including the conclusion and takes up the dialogue as a comparative phenomenological analysis of the experiences of *Samādhi* and Flow, clarifying the approach, identifying the issues with and outlining the rationale for the analysis. This takes us to a brief consideration of a proposal for a phenomenological empirical exploration of the Yoga *Samādhi* and Flow for future studies. Finally, in Chapter Twelve, the thesis considers the value of this work and suggestions for future directions. We now consider the focus and context of the studies in more detail.

CHAPTER TWO: FOCUS AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDIES

a. The primary text for study: Yogasūtra of Patañjali

Patañjali (c200 – 300 CE) is the reputed author of the formulation of the Yoga *darśana* (perspective, or school of thought) in the text Yogasūtra, a ‘truly climactic event’²³ in the development of Yoga philosophy and practice. Little is known about the author of this text and Feuerstein expresses frustration about the almost complete lack of knowledge about him²⁴. According to tradition, Patañjali is considered to be an incarnation of the thousand-headed serpent known in Hindu mythology as *Ananta* (unending or infinite). Since the eleventh century, when Bhoja’s commentary on the Yogasūtra is dated, Patañjali is sometimes identified with the author who composed the ‘great commentary’ Mahābhāṣya or Vyākaraṇamahābhāṣya on Pāṇini’s Sanskrit grammatical work called Aṣṭādhyāyī and also with the commentator on Caraka’s compendium on Āyurveda²⁵. The matter of the authorship of the Yogasūtra has not been resolved but there is a general tendency to reject the identity of the author of the Yogasūtra with the other works.

There are many translations of, and commentaries on, the Yogasūtra starting with the classical commentary of Vyāsa (‘Yogabhāṣya’, c650 – 850 CE), based on a Sāṃkhya metaphysic which has influenced many of the subsequent commentaries and studies over the centuries. There are also sub-commentaries based on the main commentary of Vyāsa: 1. Vācaspati Miśra who wrote the ‘Tattvavaiśāradi’ in the middle of the ninth century; 2. Vijñānabhikṣu who wrote the ‘Yogavārttika’ in the beginning of the twelfth century and Śaṅkara in the eight century who

²³ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana, A Reconsideration of Classical Yoga*, (Delhi, D K Printworld, 2000), 41.

²⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali: A New Translation and Commentary*, (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1989), 12: ‘To the western audience which is accustomed to fairly detailed biographies of its literary heroes, such anonymity is inexplicable’.

²⁵ Surendranath. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy, Volume I*. 2nd ed., (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, India, 2004).

wrote the ‘Pātañjala Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivarāṇa’, although the identity of this Śaṅkara with the founder/commentator of the Non-Dual Advaita Vedānta school has been disputed. Other important commentaries on the Yogasūtra were written by Bhoja Rāja in the eleventh century namely ‘Rājamārtaṇaḍa’ and ‘Maṇiprabhā’ by Rāmānanda Sarasvati in the seventeenth century. Our intention is to critically refer to mainly one of these commentaries, that by Vyāsa, to elucidate the psychological dimensions although we will be referring to other commentaries where relevant and appropriate. It is to be noted that there is a variance of opinion in terms of the usefulness of the commentary of the Yogasūtra by Vyāsa²⁶. We may mention briefly here that on the one end of the spectrum is Whicher’s view that Vyāsa is a great authority on Yoga who illuminates the *sūtra* with insight and depth. On the other end of these viewpoints is the opinion that this commentary is an unnecessary distraction on the meaning of the *sūtra* and there is an imposition of a Sāṃkhya bias on the reading of the text. For our purposes, Vyāsa’s commentary provides a level of consistency in the interpretation and explanation of the *sūtra* that will be useful in our own critical analysis.

i. Yogasūtra: Structure and Outline

Patañjali composed the Yogasūtra at a time of ‘intense debate and ongoing philosophical speculation in India’²⁷. In this composition, he appears to have created a framework of theory and practice that could stand up to and apart from other Hindu traditions²⁸. The text itself was composed in *sūtra* style which is a style adopted in the religious texts of the orthodox schools within Hinduism. ‘*Sūtra*’ literally means a thread and conveys meaning in a highly condensed form of literary construction and a *sūtra* composition is ‘a work comprised of mostly simple,

²⁶ For this thesis, we use the publication of the Yogasūtra by Swami Hariharananda. Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali Containing His Yoga Aphorism with Vyāsa’s Commentary in Sanskrit*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984).

²⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 43.

²⁸ Georg Feuerstein, *The Deeper Dimension of Yoga Theory and Practice*, (Boston: Shambhala, 2003).

pithy aphoristic statements that taken together provide one with a ‘thread’ linking together all the noteworthy ideas representative of that traditional perspective’²⁹. We will discuss more about this style of writing and its implications for our methodology later in this Section.

The Yogasūtra text consists of 195 *sūtra* distributed over four chapters:

- **Chapter One: *Samādhi Pāda*:** consisting of 51 *sūtra* on the core concepts and principles of Yoga.
- **Chapter Two: *Sādhana Pāda*:** consisting of 55 *sūtra* on Yoga praxis.
- **Chapter Three: *Vibhūti Pāda*:** comprising 55 *sūtra* on attainment of powers through practice of Yoga.
- **Chapter Four: *Kaivalya Pāda*:** comprising 34 *sūtra* on ‘state of aloneness’ – *Kaivalya* – the liberated state.

The following is a brief synopsis of each chapter:

Samādhi Pāda, the first chapter, sets out the core concept of *citta* or mind, its modifications and states. The five categories of modifications and the techniques of concentration leading towards various states of absorption or *Samādhi* are described. The idea of *Īśvara* (God) is given in this chapter referring to its important role in the practice of Yoga, as a means of attaining single-pointedness of the mind. The nine obstacles which arise in the practice and methods of overcoming them are considered. The primary results of these practices are described towards the end of this chapter – the attainment of the Yogic states of *ekāgratā* – single-pointedness of the mind, and *nirodha* – cessation of its modifications.

The second chapter, *Sādhana Pāda*, describes the ways of establishing full concentration by means of a set of techniques called *Kriyā* Yoga. Here Patañjali states the five afflictions, or *kleśa*, which are minimized by the practice of these techniques. In this chapter are stated the mechanisms by which the latent or subliminal impressions continue to be perpetuated through

²⁹ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 46.

repeated experience of the afflictions. The eight limbs of Yoga practice (*Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga) are given in detail which, when practiced, are a means of destruction of the ‘impurities’ of the mind and the rise of enlightenment. This chapter concludes with the details of the fifth limb of *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga, namely *pratyāhāra* – the withdrawal of the senses from the object of its attention.

The third chapter, ***Vibhūti Pāda***, considers *Samādhi* in its various forms, and their characteristics and consequences, after describing the remaining two limbs of the eightfold system of practice – *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*. With the mastery of the continuous attention on an object with these practices, the means of attaining the final state of ‘non-cognitive’ *Samādhi* are given. The effects of *saṁyama*, taken to be the combined triple practice of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *Samādhi*, the manifest powers, or *siddhi*, are described substantially in this chapter with a caveat on the danger to the practitioner in getting attached to such powers.

Kaivalya Pāda, the fourth chapter of the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali conveys the nature of *mokṣa* or spiritual freedom. The basis of attaining this state of freedom, the influence of latent impression and their complete removal, are also described. This attainment leads to a state of enlightenment where the ‘rain cloud of virtues’³⁰ is manifested in the practitioner.

The first four *sūtra* of the text can be considered as foundational to our studies. For our purpose we choose to include *sūtra* five and six as the basis of the psychological understanding in relationship to the ideas in the first four aphorisms. Philosophically, the third *sūtra* is of importance as it identifies the nature of the pure Consciousness or *Puruṣa* and the abidance in this identity through the practice is indicated in the psychologically important second aphorism, referring to the cessation (*nirodha*) of the modifications (*vr̥tti*) of the mind (*citta*).

³⁰ *dharma-megha-samādhi*: ‘rain cloud of dharma absorption’, *Yogasūtra* Chapter IV *sūtra* 20 - YS IV.20. We will be using this abbreviated form of referring to the *Yogasūtra* aphorisms. Klaus K. Klostermaier. “Dharmamegha Samadhi: Comments on *Yogasutra* IV, 29.” *Philosophy East and West* 36, no. 3 (July 1986): 253–262, gives an analysis of this phenomenon.

b. The unique formulation of Patañjali's Yoga

Berger states that ‘philosophers in the *Brāhmanical* culture of classical India developed extraordinarily sophisticated conceptions of the human intellect, the mechanisms through which it functions, the nature of its awareness, and its metaphysical status’³¹. He also notes that the Hindu ‘conceptions of the mind...or the inner agent (*antaḥkaraṇa*) arose within the significantly different context and were invoked to markedly different philosophical requirements.’³² In the Sāṃkhya system, a closely related system of thought to Yoga, can be found some of the earliest depictions of the structure and function of the mind capable of producing ‘cognition, reflection, and introspection’, as depicted in the Sāṃkhya Kārikā³³. We briefly compare some these Sāṃkhya ideas with equivalent concepts of Yoga, in Section Two of the thesis to give the latter a sharper focus.

Although there is a common metaphysical basis between Sāṃkhya and Yoga, Patañjali does not always use Sāṃkhya terminology, and where he has a unique term or concept, it is within the wider framework of the Yoga precept and practice. For example, *citta* is more than the cognitive mind, representing cognition, conditioned memory, higher aspects or intelligence, subliminal factors and the egoity or sense of self—all of the elements which make up what may be deemed as the total ‘mental apparatus’³⁴. Also the Sāṃkhya term *ahaṃkāra* is replaced by the term *asmitā* in the Yogasūtra, although again there are differences in the connotations of these terms in the two traditions, which we shall discuss.

The Yogasūtra provides more detail and insight into the psychological dimension, in particular the modifications of the mind and subliminal factors, all working within the sphere of *karma*,

³¹ D. L. Berger, “Chapter 14: Intellect”, in *Studying Hinduism, Key Concepts and Methods*, edited by S Mittal and G Thursby, (London: Routledge, 2008), 194.

³² Ibid., 195.

³³ This is the earliest primary text of the Hindu Sāṃkhya school attributed to Īśvarakṛṣṇa (c 350 CE)

³⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, (Vermont: Inner Traditions International, 1996), 19.

the law of cause and effect. For example, in the text, the subliminal traits (*vāsanā*) are said to be formed by the impressions created in the transactions of daily experience. There is described the circularity in the mechanism of *vāsanā* and modifications of mind where the former give rise to the latter and these in turn affect the former, this loop continuing in life and experience. The Table 1 summarises some essential differences between the two systems of thought³⁵.

	SĀMKHYA	YOGA
METHODOLOGY	-Salvation through metaphysical knowledge. -Relies on power of ratiocination and discernment. Termination of suffering through <i>vijñāna</i> (knowledge). -Disentanglement of the principles of <i>Puruṣa</i> and <i>Prakṛti</i> through knowledge - logical method.	-Liberation through meditation - Metaphysical knowledge prepares the ground only. -Founded on personal experimentation/verification. - Disentanglement through cessation of modifications of mind.
DOCTRINE		
a) Theology	Concept of God - <i>Īśvara</i> not mentioned; considered atheistic.	<i>Īśvara</i> central to the practice of Yoga to attain one-pointedness.
b) Ontology	Ontology describes ‘cosmogenetic evolution’.	Practical ontological ‘map’ to guide <i>yogin</i> to higher states of being – ‘psychogenetic involution’.
c) Psychology	‘ <i>liṅga</i> ’ indicates various elements of the inner world separately – static, analytical.	‘ <i>citta</i> ’ is centralising, unifying and integrating psychic structure with dynamic interactions.
TERMINOLOGY	For example, <i>ahaṁkāra</i> , <i>liṅga</i> , <i>anupalabdhiḥ</i> , <i>mahat</i> , <i>vyaktam</i> (the Manifested), <i>priti-apriti</i> (pleasure/pain), <i>saṅghāta</i> (all composite products).	For example, <i>aliṅga</i> , <i>liṅga-mātra</i> , <i>asmitā-mātra</i> , <i>aviśeṣa</i> , <i>citta</i> , <i>vṛtti</i> , <i>pratyaya</i> , <i>Īśvara</i>

Table 1: Some significant differences in the systems of Yoga and Sāṃkhya based on the Yogasūtra and Sāṃkhya Kārikā.³⁶

³⁵ J Sugg, *Dependence of the Yoga Sūtra on the Sāṃkhya Kārikā*, doctoral thesis, (Saybrook Graduate School and Research Centre, 2007), gives a detailed comparative analysis of the two texts of the traditions of Yoga and Sāṃkhya.

³⁶ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 112-120.

c. The use of Psychology in these studies

Our stated research task is to give an understanding of the psychological dimension of the Yogasūtra. This raises several questions: what do we mean by ‘psychological understanding’ and in turn what do we mean by the term psychology? *Which* psychology is being talked about, and if we admit a cultural dimension to this idea, *whose* psychology? We have already indicated that this research is located at the intersection of psychology and religion and we have pointed out the different relationships between these disciplines and how we intend to understand the Yogasūtra through its own psychological conceptualisation. In order to answer these questions, we briefly examine the Western traditions of psychology and move towards an Eastern understanding as Indigenous Psychology.

As we have noted, Western psychology originated from and developed primarily in the United States and Europe, and over the past century this psychology has been the dominant one worldwide. Theoretical frameworks and practical techniques of alleviating psychopathologies have been devised by psychologists. What can be described as ‘mainstream’ psychologies (cognitive, evolutionary, developmental etc.) all ‘rest on critical realist epistemology and employ both qualitative and quantitative research methods, thus modelling themselves on the empirical natural sciences’³⁷. Postmodern psychologies which have emerged in the past few decades lean towards a social constructionist epistemology and have developed methods of investigation which include, for example, discourse analytic approaches. Indigenous psychology falls within this latter group which is increasingly influential at the edge of ‘mainstream’ psychologies where a group of psychologists contend that theories and principles of the West may not reflect those found in other cultures. Thus there are different *research*

³⁷ J Collicutt, “Bringing the Academic Discipline of Psychology to Bear on the Study of the Bible”. *The Journal of Theological Studies* 63, no. 1, (April 1, 2012): 1–48, 7.

traditions which exist currently in psychology and Kim³⁸ identifies three approaches which he says have influenced this tradition: the universalist, the contextualist and the integrationist. The common basis of existing psychological theories is tested by the universalist approach in which there is an attempt to demonstrate the universality of psychological principles in subjects from different cultures. Allwood and Berry³⁹ make the point that paradoxically, the search for the universals of human experience and behaviour, requires an examination of their diversity around the world and further that this concept of universals is related to three core features of psychological life: psychological processes (day to day experiences such as perception and learning), competence in dealing with the environment (abilities, attitudes and values) and performance in an appropriate social/cultural context.

Cultural psychologists, however, affirm that the *context* of the research is important: ‘every culture possesses its own unique characteristics, and they [psychological theories] should be understood from within the culture’⁴⁰ and that the ‘universals’ are presumed to be Western impositions. Cross-cultural psychology on the other hand rejects absolute universality and relativism and considers that an integrationist approach should include the ‘content and context of culture’⁴¹. Kim⁴² further identifies two integrationist approaches: the indigenous psychologies and the derived ‘etic’ approach. Local knowledge is integrated in the existing theories through a process of adaptation in the ‘derived etic’ integrationist approach. The indigenous approach is, on the other hand, a ‘bottom-up model building paradigm’ and its primary goal is to understand cognition and behaviour of people within an identified cultural context.

³⁸ Uichol Kim, “Indigenous, Cultural, and Cross-Cultural Psychology: A Theoretical, Conceptual, and Epistemological Analysis”. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 3, no. 3, (December 2000): 265–287.

³⁹ Carl Martin Allwood and John W. Berry, “Origins and Development of Indigenous Psychologies: An International Analysis”. *International Journal of Psychology* 41, no. 4, (August 2006): 243–268.

⁴⁰ Uichol Kim, “Indigenous, Cultural and Cross-Cultural Psychology”, 265.

⁴¹ Ibid., 265.

⁴² Ibid., 266.

The Indigenous Psychology approach can be considered as an attempt by non-Western societies and cultures to develop a psychological science that has an assumptive base rooted in their own society and culture, and through this self-understanding, reflect their own socio-cultural context. Yang reviews the various definitions of Indigenous Psychology and concludes that the essential aspect of this discipline is that it ‘effectively reflects, describes, explains, or understands the psychological and behavioural activities in their native contexts in terms of culturally relevant frame of reference and culturally derived categories and theories’.⁴³ Indigenous Psychology thus approaches research by examining the local phenomena, sometimes incorporating ‘thick description’ and proceeds to develop a psychological understanding reflecting the local cultural context. Our approach to the Yogasūtra is from this perspective of a ‘bottom-up’ approach through a close reading of the text with its psychological content. The question arises about the rationale in using such a text for explication of psychological concepts and theories.

The extensive use of texts by psychologists in research can be clearly acknowledged. The reliance on textual material generated through interviews, questionnaires and various other means is commonly accepted within the scientific community. There are also refined quantitative and qualitative methodologies which have been developed for ‘reading’ these ‘texts’. It can also be acknowledged that many of the *sacred texts* contain psychological themes and give accounts of human and divine thought and action. Descriptions of inner thought and outer action are sometimes stated clearly in such texts. For example, Arjuna in the middle of the battlefield expresses his mental condition: ‘My limbs fail and my mouth is parched, my body quivers and my hair stand on end. My Gāndīva bow slips from my hand and my skin burns all

⁴³ Kuo-Shu Yang, “Monocultural and Cross-Cultural Indigenous Approaches: The Royal Road to the Development of a Balanced Global Psychology”, *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 3, no. 3 (December 2000): 241–263.

over. I am also unable to stand and my mind is reeling around as it were. And I see adverse omens...' *Bhagavad Gītā*, Chapter I, verses 29-31⁴⁴.

The Yogasūtra is a text which can be said to contain a significant number of psychological concepts and systems which centre on the nature of the mind, consciousness and experience. 'Patañjali's narrative is psychological, as it is based on and calls for an in-depth investigation of the multilayered human consciousness...[and] aims at confronting a sense of *duḥkha* which is not just theoretical but tangible and literally painful'⁴⁵. It is a text for the *practitioner* of Yoga and describes in detail the inner psychological processes that the individual needs to be aware of, and control through specific prescriptive practices, to reach the goal of Yoga. The Yogasūtra text can be considered as a source of psychological structures and systems which are revealed through a close reading of the text with a rigorous methodology. Our assertion is that 'data' for analysis can be obtained either through the acknowledged methods of qualitative research, or from ancient texts such as the Yogasūtra through a close reading. The qualitative data obtained from an identified sample population is the description of the lived experience of individuals within the sample. The analysis of this data will follow certain defined methods. In the same way the *content* of an ancient text can be considered as data which describes the lived experience of individuals within a certain culture, articulated in the language and words of the text.

We acknowledge, however, that there will be several issues in approaching an ancient text as a source of psychological material in this way. Firstly, ancient texts were written in a specific time and context for a specific group of people in the local culture and it can be argued that any reading of such texts would need to guard against imposing contemporary world views on them. The argument of 'anachronism' is that there is a distance between modern psychology and

⁴⁴ Swami Chinmayananda, *The Holy Geeta*, (Bombay: CCMT, 1992), 28-29.

⁴⁵ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasutra: Philosophy and Translation*, (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2012), 49.

ancient texts in terms of time, place and context and, therefore, it is not appropriate to read these texts through the lens of modern ‘mainstream’ psychology. However, the commentarial tradition within Hinduism which spans over centuries can arguably be considered as a response to the anachronism of the original text – as making sense of the assumptions and concerns of the old in terms of the current view. Reading the Yogasūtra in its own terms and context from the indigenous perspective as ‘psychology *in* religion’ can also be considered as addressing the anachronistic argument.

Secondly, from the point of view of reading the text, structuralism argues that the written text has no origin, the author merely inhabiting pre-existing structures that allows them to make up the text, and that language itself is considered as self-referential. On the other hand, post-structuralism says that the author’s intended meaning is secondary to the meaning created by the reader and a text has no single meaning, purpose or existence. The postmodernist view is that the meaning of a text is created by the reading community in the discursive environment in which it takes place and that may, for example, be psychological in nature. Although these ideas relate to the tradition of literary criticism, the methodology we are proposing for the reading of the Yogasūtra acknowledges these views and the meaning we give to the text is transparently derived and clearly stated in the thesis.

Thirdly, it may be argued that an ancient text does not have a ‘psychology’ as it is understood in the West now. However, within a broad definition of psychology and with an Indigenous perspective, the text can be said to have a psychological dimension that can be identified and understood. It is to be noted that the boundaries between what can be called psychology and philosophy can be considered as ‘porous’ within the Hindu traditions. The descriptive psychology in the Yogasūtra is intertwined with ontological assertions about the immanent psychological individual and the transcendental *Puruṣa*. This is in the very nature of the underlying metaphysic and soteriological context of Yoga itself.

Fourthly, it is sometimes argued that psychology, in search for universal principles for explaining human thought and action, is formulated mainly in the industrialised Western world, and cannot be applied to cultures outside this realm. Such objections to a psychological reading of an ancient text such as the Yogasūtra can be overcome by locating the study within the realm of Indigenous Psychology from the perspective of ‘psychology *in* religion’ that focuses on in-depth, thick description of small and local phenomena which may have a certain degree of generalisability outside its local context.

We have stated the uses of psychology in our thesis and indicated that the approach we intend to take is from the indigenous perspective as it fits in with our purpose of a ‘bottom up’ analysis of ‘data’ of the Yogasūtra. We have also pointed out the issues arising from such an approach and how these can be addressed.

d. Psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra

Our contention is that the development of Indigenous Psychology has created a space for the investigation of psychology from a different set of premises than those underlying Western Psychology. We have mentioned that the search for universals paradoxically requires an investigation of the global diversity of experience and behaviour. We have also stated that there are sound reasons why an ancient text can be studied through a psychological lens locating it within the field of Indigenous Psychology and investigating it with an appropriate qualitative research methodology. This is made possible through making explicit the assumptions of such a psychology with a close reading of the text and a detailed description of the phenomena. We believe that such an approach of a psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra has something unique to contribute at the intersection of psychology and religion.

When we refer to a ‘psychological’ understanding of the text we mean, in the first place, the mental constructs, experience and phenomena which occur in the human being. Patañjali in the Yogasūtra gives us an understanding of the nature, processes of the structure and function of the

citta or mind. This is the starting point for the *yogin* (the practitioner of Yoga) to understand what the nature of this *citta* is, and what the psychological means are, by which the *yogin* can cease (*nirodha*) its fluctuations (*vyrtti*). Our task is to identify and give a critical analysis of the elements of the mind and its processes followed by construction of a model of the mind as can be explicated from the text.

Feuerstein cautions against the ‘compartmentalisation’ of the homogenous structure of Yoga theory into divisions of ‘psychology’, ‘ethics’ or ‘philosophy’. Such an approach may be an ‘artificial means of promoting the analysis and understanding’⁴⁶ from a particular perspective, although we think this can be a fruitful way of gaining insight into the psychological dimension of the text. There have been comparisons of this dimension with Western psychological theories and methodologies. These, however, can only be considered as conditional and reductive. For our purposes, an analysis of the semantic, psychological and philosophical content of these key concepts will allow us to create a detailed picture of the mental processes in terms of the text itself. This is what we designate as ‘Yoga Psychology’ or ‘*citta śāstra*’ - ‘Science of Mind’ – the Yogasūtra perspective, explicit and implicit, on the nature of mind, consciousness, subjectivity and experience. A ‘psychological understanding’ of the Yogasūtra as ‘Science of Mind’, therefore, entails looking at varieties of conscious experiences which are continuously changing and shifting, their causes and the methods of controlling these modifications to reveal a deeper level of consciousness.

There have been some attempts at exploring and articulating psychological perspectives of Yogasūtra by practitioners and teachers (e.g. Abhedānanda⁴⁷, Akhilānanda⁴⁸, Chidānanda⁴⁹.)

⁴⁶ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 57.

⁴⁷ Swami Abhedananda, *The Yoga Psychology*, (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedānta Math, 1960).

⁴⁸ Swami Akhilananda, *Hindu Psychology: Its Meaning for the West*, (New York: Routledge, 1965).

⁴⁹ Swami Chidananda, *The Philosophy, Psychology, and Practice of Yoga*, (India: The Divine Life Society, India, 1984).

where there is generally a lack of academic rigour, or academics like Coward⁵⁰ who have focussed on a narrow psychological perspective. There have been other works which have ventured into the field of psychotherapy and mental health (e.g. Pal⁵¹, Rama⁵²). Mishra, a medical doctor known as Shri Brahmānanda Sarasvati, wrote a book on Yoga Psychology⁵³ in the late nineteen fifties, an early attempt at exploring this subject.

e. Summary

In this Chapter we have looked at the general context and the focus of the thesis within this realm as the Classical Yoga *darśana* focussing on its primary text – the Yogasūtra of Patañjali. An overview of the main text of Patañjali's Yogasūtra was given followed by an explanation of the psychological dimension of the Yogasūtra with an overview of the term 'psychology' and the concept of Indigenous Psychology. Within this framework we positioned Yoga Psychology as a 'Science of Mind' and considered what we mean by the term 'a psychological understanding' of the Yogasūtra. We now look at the methodology for arriving at this understanding to construct the psychological model of the mind from the text.

⁵⁰Harold G Coward, *Yoga and Psychology: Language, Memory, and Mysticism (Surya Series in Religious Studies X)*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002).

⁵¹ Pal Kumar, *Yoga and Psycho-Analysis: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy, Academy of Learning Series, vol. I*, (New Delhi: Dr. Bhagavan Das Memorial Trust, 1966).

⁵² Swami Rama, Rudolph M. Ballentine, and Swami Ajaya, *Yoga and Psychotherapy: The Evolution of Consciousness*, (Glenview IL: The Himalayan International Institute, 1976).

⁵³ Ramamurti S Mishra, *The Textbook of Yoga Psychology: The Definitive Translation and Interpretation of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras for Meaningful Application in All Modern Psychologic Disciplines*. 3rd ed., (New York: Baba Bhagavandas Publication Trust, 1997).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

a. Introduction

We have noted that the intersection between psychology and Classical Yoga has been little explored and that the thesis aims to address this lack by providing a conceptual framework and methodology that can lead to a greater insight into the psychological dimension of the Yogasūtra. There are a few Indian thinkers who have looked at ancient Hindu texts and brought them into view of Western psychological concepts and theories and there is a growing interest in Indian Psychology in India itself. However, there has not been any specific, systematic and detailed work on the psychological system of the Yogasūtra and whatever has been written has either been fragmented, without sufficient depth, or has been written by practitioners lacking in academic conceptual and methodological rigour.

One of the aims of the thesis is also to contribute to the literature on the Yogasūtra of Patañjali, in particular from a psychological perspective. As will be pointed out later in the section, there is a fair amount of scholarship on this text although it has been mainly within the metaphysical and philosophical framework and ‘new’ translations of the text and several commentaries have appeared over the past decades. The remarkable and detailed understanding of human experience and subjectivity in the text, if it has been neglected, is perhaps because of a dismissive attitude⁵⁴ based on the requirements of a rigorous empirical enquiry and the idea that this category of texts has little or no contribution to make to scientific study of psychology. We have given the rationale for approaching the text from an Indigenous Psychology perspective,

⁵⁴ See Harold Coward, *Yoga and Psychology, Language, Memory and Mysticism*, 51: ‘Modern Western psychology has rejected Yoga as a valid form of psychology. Yoga is dismissed as yet another version of Eastern metaphysics and mysticism.’ Coward then goes on to highlight the crucial differences between Western psychological views and *Yogasūtra* perspectives and sees a valuable contribution made by *Yogasūtra* in terms of its understanding of perception and memory, supporting our approach to studying the text.

which enables a psychological understanding of the text with a certain acceptable and defined methodology, which we now discuss.

b. Two strands of the methodology

Appropriate to the scope and context of our tasks, we propose two approaches in order to establish a rigorous methodology for our studies:

1) The first strand is a close and thorough reading of the text: In the tradition of literary criticism ‘close reading’ refers to the careful, sustained interpretation of a text either in parts or as a whole. Such a reading places great emphasis on the single particular over the general, paying close attention to individual words and the ideas as they unfold when the text is studied. The commentarial tradition in Hinduism itself can be considered a ‘close reading’ as such, where a commentator uses a well developed methodology to establish an understanding of the text, as we point out later. There are many such examples of a close reading of texts in the Hindu traditions, the commentary of Vyāsa on the Yogasūtra being a case in point.

An exegesis of the text consists in translation, interpretation and explanation of the primary text of the 195 aphorisms of the Yogasūtra, together with the Sanskrit commentary of Vyāsa. This is the major task of the thesis, not only requiring a thorough reading of the whole text, but a careful, consistent, comprehensive and coherent analysis of each of the psychological concepts, establishing the primary relations of its elements and processes within and between these elements.

The text which has been used for this study is the edition by Swami Hariharananda Aranya⁵⁵ although the translations and commentaries by other authors are also referred to, for example,

⁵⁵ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*. It must be noted that there are points at which the commentary of Aranya appears to have a Vedāntic interpretation.

the one by Arya⁵⁶. There are considerable differences in the translations of the Yogasūtra as well as the interpretation of Vyāsa's commentary by various scholars. We find Aranya's work⁵⁷ consistent and coherent to a fair degree and, therefore, a suitable starting point, although his own sub-commentary is often inadequate and inappropriate in several places. We will point out variances with the translations and interpretations of the various commentators where appropriate to our study. The methodology pointed out above is the basis on which decisions are made regarding the choice, or otherwise, of the translations or interpretations. Other primary texts which have been used in our studies are listed in the Bibliography.

2) The second strand of the methodology will focus on the *phenomenology* of Yogic states and Flow. This consists of two aspects: firstly, we carry out a comparative analysis of the phenomena of the Yogic state of *Samādhi* and Flow based on an identified framework for this comparison. Taking the Yogasūtra and its commentaries to explicate the phenomenology of *Samādhi* and researching the literature on Flow to construct a phenomenology of Flow, we compare them in terms of stated dimensions of experience and subjectivity. We have noted the issues relating to explication of phenomenological descriptions from texts, whether they are from an ancient text or from transcripts of interviews. The question for our methodology is about the *status* of phenomenological descriptions derived from a text, in particular an ancient text such as the Yogasūtra. It is important to note that the phenomenological description of *Samādhi* in the text can be taken as an 'appropriation' as considered by Ricoeur⁵⁸ and not an access to the direct experience. This would apply to reading of any textual material whether ancient or modern and in this sense also applies to transcripts of interviews regarding the

⁵⁶ Usharbudh Arya, *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali with the Exposition of Vyāsa: A Translation and Commentary: Samādhi-Pāda*, (Honesdale PA: Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy of the U.S.A, 1986).

⁵⁷ It is to be noted that P N Mukerji's English translation of Aranya's work on the Yogasūtra is used in this thesis. The original translation and commentary by Aranya was written in Bengali.

⁵⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation (the Terry Lectures Series)*, (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1977).

experience of Flow. The ‘possibility of capturing the intention of an author fades’ in written discourse, such that, ‘any appropriation of meaning must always remain an *approximation*. Appropriation is the way in which we attempt to interpret meaning’⁵⁹. Ricoeur’s view was that the text can be taken at its face-value and described from the phenomenological perspective, and subjected to a hermeneutic interpretation. His primary philosophical inspiration came from Husserl and Jaspers and he wrote about the latter’s existential approach to phenomenology. Later on in his work, he combined the method of phenomenological description and hermeneutic interpretation and maintained that hermeneutics is a necessary presupposition of phenomenology⁶⁰.

Secondly, in relation to the second strand of our methodology, we give a brief proposal for a detailed qualitative empirical study of the phenomenology of *Samādhi* in Yoga practitioners and Flow in another group of participants. The methodology applied to this aspect of the research is that of phenomenological psychology which we consider in more detail in Section Three of the thesis. Using this methodology, we aim to investigate empirically the claim by Csikszentmihalyi about Yoga and Flow. Let us look at the first strand of the methodology in more detail.

c. Close reading: Translation and conceptual analysis

The historicity of an original text, which is often composed a long time ago, defines its nature and context and the metaphysical and cultural references in it, may often not be directly understood or translatable. Appropriate strategy in terms of specific material is also required to ensure that the essence of these references is adequately brought out which, therefore, raises some practical questions about translation of the Sanskrit text of Yogasūtra into English.

⁵⁹A Davidson, “Phenomenological Approaches in Psychology and Health Sciences”, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 10: (2013): 318–339.

⁶⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Chakkuvarackal⁶¹ gives some practical guidance for translators of the Bible into Indian languages which, although a reversal as it were of the process, we can consider as an approach for our own purposes. Based on the issues which confront translators, including linguistic styles, semantics, morphology and syntax, linguistic barriers, language and cultural factors in translation, he suggests practices useful for the translator:

- Have an adequate knowledge of both the source language of the text and the target language of the translation.
- Carry out a close reading of the original source(s) as the primary approach for translation.
- Have the capacity for a textual critical approach to the sources, that is, ‘to accumulate, distribute, and evaluate the evidences, and to analyse the transcriptional and intrinsic probabilities’.
- Have a wider understanding of the text as well as the context in which the translation needs to be done so that variations in readings can be effectively evaluated.
- Align the translation with the objective for which the translation is being carried out.
- Take into account the descriptive linguistics such as phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon, for an effective translation.

Translation itself is not a straightforward task as there are difficulties in finding English terms that come nearest to the Sanskrit words⁶². As such it requires not only a translation of the terms but a thorough conceptual analysis of these key terms so that the boundaries of the concepts are as clearly demarcated as possible. The purpose of concept analysis is to provide ‘a knowledge base by offering clarity thus enabling understanding rather than mere knowing’⁶³.

⁶¹ T J Chakkuvarackal, “Important issues in the translation of the Bible in the Indian Context”. *The Bangalore Theological Forum*, Volume 34, Number 1, (June 2002): 163-175.

⁶² Samuel Ijsseling, “Hermeneutics and Textuality: Questions Concerning Phenomenology”. *Research in Phenomenology* 9, no. 1, (January 1, 1979): 1–34.

⁶³ John Wilson, *Thinking with Concepts*, (Cambridge UK: Cambridge [Eng.] University Press, 1970).

Therefore, a rigorous analysis of a concept is necessary for its understanding which brings about ‘clarification, identification and meaning of words’⁶⁴ to whatever extent is possible. Wilson emphasises that *meaning* is the central aspect of conceptual analysis. Further he points out that: ‘Concept analysis gives framework and purposiveness to thinking that might otherwise meander indefinitely and purposelessly among the vast marshes of intellect and culture’⁶⁵. Clarification through conceptual analysis is essential in critically analysing claims of knowledge gained through reason or experience. Considering that the formulation of conceptual boundaries may lead to a reductionist approach, Rodgers offers an evolutionary cycle of concept development⁶⁶. The development of concepts, she claims, is influenced by three aspects, ‘significance’, ‘use’ and ‘application’ agreeing with Becker who notes that ‘the precise meaning of a concept is thus dependent upon the context in which it is employed’⁶⁷.

The translation of the Yogasūtra written in Sanskrit in the *sūtra* form, confronts us with several issues as noted above. Keeping these in mind a sensible and practical methodology of translation and conceptual analysis will be adapted which will fit our purpose of examining the psychological dimension of the text. We now consider a further approach for an empathic and close reading of the Yogasūtra to give greater depth in understanding and meaning to the translated terms.

d. Close reading: the Hermeneutic and Phenomenological Approach

Kim and Berry define Indigenous psychology as the scientific study of human behaviour or mind that is native, that is not transported from other regions and that is designed for its

⁶⁴ Catherine M Norris, *Concept Clarification in Nursing*, (Rockville, MD: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 1982).

⁶⁵ John Wilson, *Thinking with Concepts*, 37.

⁶⁶ B Rogers, “Concept Analysis: an Evolutionary View”. In *Concept Development in Nursing: Foundations, Techniques, and Applications*, edited by B Rodgers and K Knaf, 77–102. 2nd ed., (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 2000).

⁶⁷ C H Becker, “A Conceptualisation of Concept”, *Nursing Papers: Perspectives in Nursing*, 15(2), (1983):51-58.

people⁶⁸. Indigenous psychology studied in the natural local context advocates the examination of knowledge, practices and beliefs people have about themselves. From the analysis of psychological phenomena as a lived experience of the indigenous people, theories concepts and methods are developed by the researchers that correspond to these phenomena. This focus on local phenomena makes phenomenological methods a natural ally of indigenous psychology or indeed any social science. For example, interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an appropriate method for obtaining thick description of local phenomena to gain insight into the lived experience of indigenous communities.

As we have noted earlier, if we assume that some religious texts themselves express the lived experience of indigenous practitioners, then the text itself becomes a way in which the phenomena can be analysed to yield concepts and systems of psychological beliefs of the people. Although there is a considerable emphasis on quantitative and empirical methods in research, the use of qualitative research methodologies has been growing. According to Osborne⁶⁹ the limits of logical empirical methodologies were recognised in the 1980's when exploration of alternative methods of discovery, description and meaning rather than prediction, control and measurement, came more and more into focus. Laverly says that 'out of this milieu, a variety of research methodologies have grown in popularity including phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and hermeneutic phenomenology'⁷⁰.

What we are therefore proposing to achieve, through a close reading of the text with an Indigenous Psychology approach, is the explication of the psychological dimension of the

⁶⁸ Uichol Kim and John Widdup Berry, eds. *Indigenous Psychologies: Research and Experience in Cultural Context (Cross Cultural Research and Methodology)*, (Newbury Park CA: SAGE Publications, 1993).

⁶⁹ John W Osborne, "Some Similarities and Differences among Phenomenological and Other Methods of Psychological Qualitative Research". *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne* 35, no. 2, (1994): 167–18.

⁷⁰ Susan Laverly, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2 (3), (2003): 21-34.

Yogasūtra through a methodology based on phenomenology and hermeneutics (Ijsseling⁷¹, Lavery⁷², Connolly⁷³) for addressing our first research question. We now discuss this approach and the place of phenomenology and hermeneutics in the interpretation and understanding of the Yogasūtra.

Phenomenology and understanding: One of the approaches to the study of religion is the phenomenological, an approach which has been propounded by Smart over many decades in his various works⁷⁴. Within the broad range of his arguments, the principles of phenomenology are of significant value in application in the area of textual exegesis⁷⁵. The two principles of ‘structured empathy’ and ‘typological phenomenology’, which are good guiding principles for our own approach to a psychological understanding of the text, may be applied in the exegesis of religious texts.

‘Structured empathy’ is the attempt to describe religious phenomena as they are without imposing our own assumptions upon them. The worldview of the writer of the text has to be the principal framework within which the text is interpreted and, in a sense, an attempt made to enter the individual’s ‘reality’ construction with imagination and empathy. This, we propose, is also the indigenous approach to reading the text. The typological phenomenology consisting of a ‘systematic typology of forms of religious practice and belief’⁷⁶, is aimed for. This is a useful device when the specific textual terms are taken to a higher level of abstraction to create

⁷¹ S Ijsseling, “Hermeneutics and Textuality: Questions Concerning Phenomenology”.

⁷² Susan Lavery, “Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology”, 21-34.

⁷³ Peter Connolly, “Phenomenological Exegesis and Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras”. In *Aspects of Religion: Essays in Honour of Ninian Smart*. edited by P Masefield and D Wiebe, 21-32, (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 2005).

⁷⁴ Ninian Smart, *The Phenomena of Religion*, (UK: Seabury Press, 1973); *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: Some Methodological Questions*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); *Dimensions of the Sacred: An Anatomy of World's Beliefs*, (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996); *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy*. 2nd ed., (UK: Brill Publishers, 1992).

⁷⁵ Peter Connolly, “Phenomenological Exegesis and Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras”, 1.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

typologies which can then be used as a basis for modelling religious beliefs and experience. Reading Patañjali's text with a structured empathy, we will identify and analyse the terms that can then be abstracted in a typological framework of psychological concepts leading towards a greater understanding of the processes and mechanisms of the mind and construction of a model of the mind within this framework.

According to Connolly⁷⁷ with the construction of a typology, 'the phenomenologist takes the investigation to a higher level of abstraction than that which operates at the empathetic stage' and 'In the context of textual analysis, the attempt to discern formal patterns and structures can be regarded as one aspect of typological procedure.' The two principles of structured empathy and typological phenomenology being complementary, there is an oscillating process which brings to light 'patterns and relationships that might otherwise go unnoticed'. Since we are dealing with the original text of Yogasūtra as well as the commentaries that were written several centuries later, this methodology will be particularly helpful in terms of understanding how the commentaries have made sense of the text. One way in which we hope to achieve a critical and trustworthy abstraction of typology is to look at commentaries by other scholars, both ancient and modern and point out the convergences in analysis as well as the differences where appropriate.

Connolly says that ideally, the two perspectives should be mutually illuminating. Thus, when interpreting a text the phenomenologically-guided exegete will seek to 'step into the shoes of the author(s) /compiler(s) and consider their aims in creating it (empathy), and to supplement this with an analysis of the more formal aspects of the work such as recurring constructions and patterns in the organization of information (typology)'⁷⁸. Although Connolly's interest was mainly in analysing the formal structure of the text regarding the unity of its component parts,

⁷⁷ Peter Connolly, "Phenomenological Exegesis and Patañjali's Yoga Sutras", 1.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

our focus will be mainly on the use of this methodology to identify the psychological structures of the Yogasūtra and to abstract these to a higher level of synthesis within a coherent psychological model. Phenomenology is also our chosen approach when we embark on a comparative analysis of the phenomena of *Samādhi* and Flow.

Hermeneutics, understanding and meaning: Hermeneutics was understood by Gadamer⁷⁹ as a ‘process of co-creation between the researcher and the participant in which the very production of meaning occurs through a circle of readings, reflective writing and interpretations.’⁸⁰ Understanding the experience from a particular perspective is the search aimed for in this process. Through self-reflexivity and an ongoing conversation about experience, hermeneutic research actively constructs interpretations of the experiences and how these come about. Caputo⁸¹ notes that coming to a place of understanding and meaning is provisional and always changing in hermeneutic research. Therefore, not only one’s position but also the movement throughout the research process using the hermeneutic circle, is to be accounted for. Lavery emphasises that ‘in phenomenological research, bracketing, which is incorporated into intentional focusing on the experience, is one factor that is central to the rigor of the study....and the multiple stages of interpretation that allow patterns to emerge, the discussion of how interpretations arise from the data, and the interpretive process itself are seen as critical.’⁸²

Having taken into account the methodological principles of phenomenology and hermeneutics we now consider how these can be applied to a ‘psychological understanding’ of the Yogasūtra. The term ‘understanding’ is proposed to contain the key elements of translation, interpretation

⁷⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. 2nd ed., (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004).

⁸⁰ Susan Lavery, “Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology”, 22.

⁸¹ John D Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project*. 5th ed., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

⁸² Susan Lavery, “Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology”, 23.

and abstraction. The primary text Yogasūtra and the commentary on the *sūtra* by Vyāsa are written in Sanskrit, which requires translation of the material to equivalent terms in English. We have noted that translation requires a cautious approach requiring a familiarity with the languages, the original as well as the translated. Besides just a word to word translation, a thorough conceptual analysis is required to ensure that it is clear what we mean by the translated term.

Interpretation requires a careful consideration of the translated terms so that they become meaningful within the framework of the text. Phenomenology through a structured empathy and typological abstraction allows us to make the terms and their relationships meaningful in terms of the psychological dimension of the text. Hermeneutics adds depth to our understanding through a repeated circle of reading and interpretation. In this relation, Varto⁸³ gives the following instructions for hermeneutic interpretation:

- Trying to understand another worldview or perspective without imposing a meaning from outside.
- There has to be coherence in the meaning so that fragments of the object are not picked up and made into a whole.
- The understanding is within the limits of the researcher able to attribute meanings to the object. The same object may have been understood in various ways in the course of time.
- The researcher should consciously reflect on his own way of interpretation

The principles of conceptual analysis, phenomenology and hermeneutics have been taken as the methodological basis of what we call ‘understanding’ the Yogasūtra from a particular point of view.

⁸³ F J.Varto, *Methods in Qualitative Research*, (Helsinki: Kirjayhtyma, 1992).

Although we have described the interpretive methodologies based on Western traditions, it must be noted that there has been such an indigenous tradition in existence in India for many centuries which we intend to apply particularly in relation to the commentaries. We introduce this briefly and outline the methods of this local tradition and locate the importance of its commentarial tradition and in particular the commentaries on the Yogasūtra, to our studies.

e. The tradition of texts and commentaries in India and the *sūtra* style

One of the distinctive features of Indian philosophy and theology is that most of the writing is in the form of commentaries and sub-commentaries on the sacred texts. Kapoor comments that there has existed in India a community of linguistic scholars over thousands of years, ‘linguistic communities are interpretive – they have shared frameworks and strategies to fix the meaning of what is experienced through the senses or communicated through language...’⁸⁴.

He further identifies the three tasks of the learned tradition: 1). determining the meaning; 2). establishing the relevance to an overarching framework; 3). articulating the rationality and coherence of the beliefs and thought structures. There are two types of commentaries: one that ‘analyses the rules and explains their operations and their domain, the other is the comment on the rule – that brings out the unexpressed or implicit content of the rule. These are, in effect, two kinds of explanation, one descriptive and the other analytic. The two together constitute *vyākhyā* or ‘interpretation and explanation’⁸⁵. The commentary or *bhāṣya* of Vyāsa on the Yogasūtra is an example of an expanded *vyākhyā*⁸⁶. Kapoor further points out two stages of the interpretive process: 1. the distinction between the verbal sequences for which the interpretation is required where there is recognition of new phenomena to which one adapts

⁸⁴ Kapil Kapoor, *Text and Interpretation: The Indian Tradition*, (Delhi, D K Printworld, 2005), vii.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁸⁶ Rajaśekhara, an eminent Sanskrit poet wrote the *Kāvya Mīmāṃsā* in 9th century in which he says that *bhāṣya* on a *sūtra* is a detailed analysis that takes into account the possible objections and counter-arguments.

(accommodation); 2. the absorption of this novelty and non-integrability until the verbal sequence comes into conformity with the constructed framework (assimilation).

The interpretive commentarial tradition in India has thus a well-developed methodology and it is both continuous and cumulative, giving it a historical dimension. Over the centuries these commentaries would make a substantial body of literature related to a particular text very often originally written in the *sūtra* style. The Yogasūtra of Patañjali, as noted above, is a case in point. Written in the *sūtra* (literally ‘thread’) style these texts contain highly condensed aphorisms that summarise the essentials of the school of thought. This is perhaps one way in which the oral tradition was maintained with the memorisation of the *sūtra* literature for passing from the teacher to the disciple. The nature of the *sūtra* and how they can be considered as mapping the inner experiences is indicated by Feuerstein: ‘These “maps” are records of internal experiences rather than purely theoretical constructions. They are descriptive rather than explanatory. The “map” character of the ontogenetic model of Classical Yoga is beyond question’⁸⁷.

The commentary (*bhāṣya*), or an interpretation and explanation of the *sūtra*, would then bring out the meaning of the aphorisms in line with the particular school of thought. There exist also further explanations of the commentaries called the *vārttika*, for example, Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu on the Yogasūtra written in the sixteenth century.

The *sūtra* style of the text raises certain difficulties in terms of translation and interpretation because of their terse nature. In this case considerable effort needs to be made by the commentator (*bhāṣyakāra*) in ensuring that there is consistency and coherence in the translation of the technical terms of the text. Feuerstein expresses this difficulty: the translator is ‘not only faced with a frequently highly enigmatic original text but also an extensive trail of

⁸⁷ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 117.

commentaries upon commentaries which in their endeavour to plumb the depth of the *sūtra*-s, offer a wealth of differing, often even hostile and mutually exclusive interpretations.’⁸⁸ There is no doubt, however, that considerable help may be available from the work of scholars, past and present, although the psychological focus will demand a critical eye on these translations and interpretations.

Use of secondary literature: In conjunction with the close reading of the primary text, a broad ranging consideration of secondary literature, both Sanskrit traditional and modern interpretive, by Indian and Western scholars will also be undertaken. These secondary texts range from philosophical and metaphysical interpretations of the Yogasūtra, various translations and commentaries, to articles on specific aspects of the Yogasūtra. From the point of view of our studies, we also propose to use this secondary literature firstly, to critically consider the range of interpretations of the aphorisms, and secondly, to ensure the integrity of our own interpretation of the text and the abstracted typology of psychological concepts. The several commentaries and studies done by scholars on the Yogasūtra will be helpful in these aims.

Having considered how we propose to abstract the psychological dimension of the Yogasūtra, we now describe the proposed methodology of using these abstracted psychological concepts/typologies to construct models of the psychological systems from the text.

f. Analysis of the text and extraction of psychological models

We have pointed out that Indigenous Psychology uses the method of a ‘bottom-up’ building of models and theories and Bhawuk⁸⁹ has stated such a methodology for the construction of psychological models from the scriptures in the context of Indian Psychology. He describes four approaches to building such models. Firstly, there are ready constructed models in the scriptures

⁸⁸ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yogasūtra, An Exercise in the Methodology of Textual Analysis*, 21.

⁸⁹ D P S Bhawuk, “Methodology for Building Psychological Models from Scriptures: Contributions of Indian Psychology to Indigenous and Universal Psychologies”.

which Bhawuk says needs to be identified with a close reading of the text and ‘mined and polished to fit with the relevant literature’⁹⁰. The second approach described by Bhawuk is one of content analysis of the text(s) by using key words to develop models. Here the method consists of analysing the content in terms of key words or phrases, and through these key terms, chosen according to the perspective which one wants to examine, one can identify elements for the construction of the model. Examining the context in which these elements are and the relationships and processes of the elements, one can build a model through an iterative process refining it at every stage. In the third approach, he proposes that identifying existing modes and understandings of functioning of individuals within a specific culture can also lead to identification of models. He writes: ‘By recognising what works in the indigenous cultures, and tracing the idea to traditional wisdom and scriptures, practical and useful theories and models can be developed’⁹¹. This would involve observing individuals in their own cultural setting and seeing how they experience and respond to life, tracing the beliefs and attitudes which formulate such an approach to life, to the traditional wisdom and scriptures and then formulating models based on such data. Finally, Bhawuk states that ‘by questioning Western concepts and models in the light of indigenous wisdom, knowledge, insights and facts, one can develop indigenous models.’⁹². Bhawuk also mentions that although this methodology of textual analysis appears ‘programmatic’, the actual process of course is not as straight forward as it might appear to be. These four approaches, however, give us a good methodology which we intend to apply appropriately for extracting and/or constructing psychological systems and in particular, a model of the mind based on the Yogasūtra aphorisms and their commentaries.

Concerning the second strand of our methodology we will define a method for comparative analysis of the phenomena of the Yogic Samādhi and Flow in Section Three of the thesis.

⁹⁰ D P S Bhawuk, “Methodology for Building Psychological Models from Scriptures: Contributions of Indian Psychology to Indigenous and Universal Psychologies”, 62.

⁹¹ Ibid., 79.

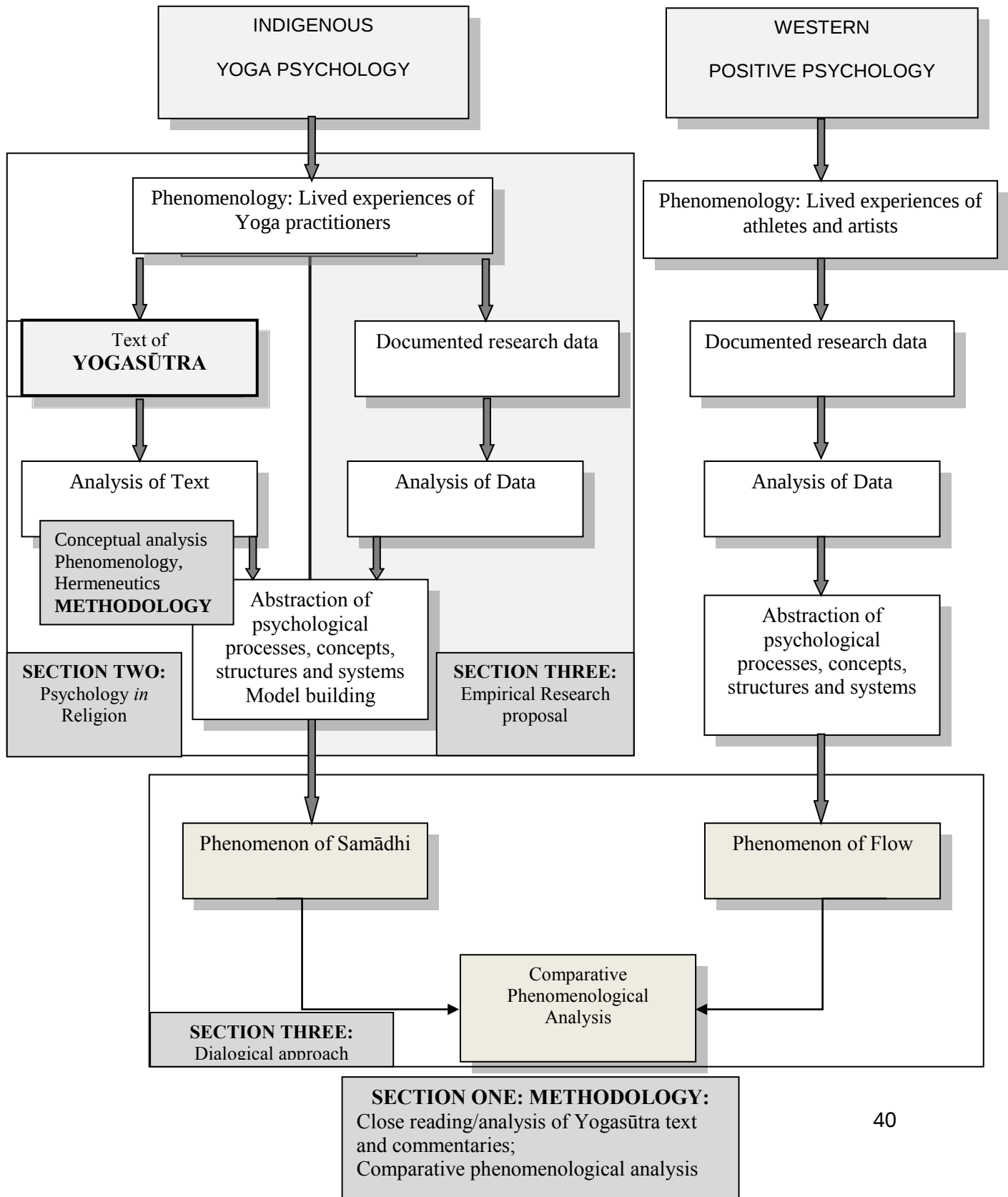
⁹² Ibid., 83.

g. Summary of Section One

In this Section we have introduced the thesis with a consideration of the context and focus of our studies. We have located the thesis at the intersection of psychology and religion, specified the research questions, set out the rationale for the studies and delineated its structure and scope. We have given a brief introduction to the text itself, the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, and stated the use of psychology in our studies and narrowed down the approach we intend to take in the psychological understanding of the *Yogasūtra*. In Chapter Three we discussed in detail the two strands of methodology which we intend to employ in our studies: a close reading of the text taking support of hermeneutic and phenomenological principles and the method of extracting the psychological models from the text. Diagram 1 gives a schematic of the thesis.

**‘A Psychological Understanding of the Yogasūtra with a Comparative Phenomenology of
Samādhi and Flow’**

Diagram 1: The scheme of the thesis



SECTION TWO:

YOGA PSYCHOLOGY

CHAPTER FOUR: *CITTA* AND *CITTA ŚĀSTRA* (SCIENCE OF MIND)

a. Introduction

In the context of Yoga ontology, *citta*, or mind, is set apart from the Self, the transcendental principle of *Puruṣa*, what can be categorised as pure Consciousness. *Prakṛti*, of which the *citta* is constituted, is the other transcendental principle of materiality. These two fundamental modalities of Self and non-Self are the basis of the totality of existence and it is the conjunction of these principles that gives rise to the sentient material individual. Although Patañjali does not give a full definition of *Puruṣa*, its nature can be understood from the eight *sūtra* which refer to it, directly or indirectly⁹³.

Puruṣa is beyond time and space and stands apart from the world of phenomena, and from the psychological point of view, it is the Seer, or *draṣṭṛ*, of the flux of modifications (*vr̥tti*) of the *citta*, ‘the ongoing psycho-mental process’⁹⁴. *Puruṣa* is pure Consciousness as opposed to ‘awareness-of’ which is the property of the mental apparatus as part of *Prakṛti*. This latter ground of material creation is characterised by the *guṇa* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, which give *Prakṛti* its energetic and dynamic quality.

The meaning given to this ontological category by Patañjali in the *Yogasūtra*, together with the synonyms/metaphors employed for this term, give the various senses of *Puruṣa* in which the compiler of the text: *draṣṭṛ* (seer); *dṛg-śakti* (power of seeing); *citi* (cognisor); *citi-śakti* (power of cognition); *svāmin* (lord). This terminology expresses the way in which the transcendental principle of *Puruṣa* stands in relation to the experiencing sentient individual. It is the real Self of man rather than the gross elements of material nature consisting of the body and inner instruments of the *citta*, with which the individual has become wrongly identified.

⁹³ YS I. 16 and 24; YS III.35, (twice); YS III. 49 and 55; YS IV. 18 and 34.

⁹⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 19-20.

These suggest the various ways of looking at the *Puruṣa* although it must be noted that Patañjali refers to them in their individual context to emphasise a particular relationship or practice. For example, YS I.3 refers to *Puruṣa* as the ‘Seer’ when the modifications of the *citta* have been ceased. In this case the relationship between pure Consciousness and ‘consciousness-of’, arising in the *citta* as modifications, is being pointed out.

Prakṛti is the other Sāṃkhya-Yoga ontological category and consists of the two ‘cardinal dimensions...on the one hand there is noumenal matrix of creation, also called *ālīṅga*...and on the other there is the realm of the multitudinous phenomena of contingent existence’⁹⁵. This latter aspect of *Prakṛti* includes the individual composed of the gross outer and visible and what can be called the ‘inner’ or subtle aspect including the stratified elements of the *citta* which provide an “ontological map”, as it serves the *yogin* as a guide-beam to his programme of conscious involution’⁹⁶.

We stated in Section One of the thesis that Patañjali’s Yoga deals primarily with the functioning of the human mind and it is in the second *sūtra* of the text that he immediately defines the nature and purpose of Yoga as the cessation of the modifications of the *citta* or mind. The *citta* can be seen as an instrument which manifests the dynamic interplay between the *Puruṣa* (*draṣṭṛ* - the ‘Seer’) and *Prakṛti* (*dṛśya* or the ‘seen’). The mind, therefore, is of great significance in two ways: firstly, in determining how the world and self are cognised and experienced, the *citta* being the mechanism through which experience and knowledge of oneself and the world is obtained, and secondly, as an instrument for attaining liberation through the practice of Yoga. We now consider in detail this central concept in the psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra with a close reading of the aphorisms referring to this term.

⁹⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 29.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 30.

b. *Citta* , its nature and function

i. The nature of *citta*

The second *sūtra* of Patañjali's Yogasūtra gives a clear definition of Yoga:

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः ॥२॥

Yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ||2||

yogaḥ = Yoga; *citta* = mind; *vṛtti* = modifications; *nirodha* = cessation;

‘Yoga is the cessation of the modifications of the mind’ YS I.2

The central role and importance of the concept of *citta* in the Classical Yoga of Patañjali is seen in this *sūtra*. It embeds the idea of *citta* into a definition of Yoga and at the same time indicates what needs to be done operationally and in practice with the *citta* within this context. The subsequent *sūtra* expand on what these modifications (*vṛtti*) are, where they arise from, what is their nature, how cessation of these modifications can be attained and what happens when the *vṛtti* are ceased.

We will translate the word ‘*citta*’ as ‘mind’ for the following reasons:

1. Although *citta* is used with differing emphasis in the Yogasūtra, it can be taken to be the entire conscious experience as well as the unconscious mental activity in the individual. This approaches definitions of the mind such as ‘the element of a person that enables them to be aware of the world and their experiences, to think, and to feel; the faculty of consciousness and thought’⁹⁷. Although there are different genealogies of these two terms and different

⁹⁷ Oxford English Dictionary; also Merriam –Webster Dictionary: Psychology: ‘a. the element or complex of elements in an individual that feels, perceives, thinks, wills, and especially reasons. b. the conscious mental events and capabilities in an organism; c. the organized conscious and unconscious adaptive mental activity of an organism; The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: Psychology: ‘The collective conscious and unconscious processes in a sentient organism that direct and influence mental and physical behaviour’.

perspectives in terms of their origins and structural dimensions, the operations which can be ascribed to them are similar.

2. The *sūtra* which contain the word *citta* give an understanding of its nature and characteristics and these broadly correspond to what we can call the mind, for example the ability of the mind to focus attention on a specific object. A more detailed discussion of these *sūtra* follows later in this Chapter.

3. The term is not equivalent to *manas*, which is interpreted as mind by some early commentators on the Yogasūtra (see for example, Frauwallner⁹⁸). *Manas* is a separate category included in *citta*, together with *buddhi* (intellect) and *asmitā* ('I-am-ness'). These terms, *manas*, *buddhi* and *asmitā*, are used in specific *sūtra* to describe their individual nature and functions. The activities of each of these elements are described in greater detail further on in this Chapter, but it is evident that Patañjali did not consider them to be synonyms of *citta*.

4. The term 'mind stuff' (J Woods⁹⁹, H Zimmer¹⁰⁰) cannot be correct as 'stuff' implies just materiality or substance. According to *sūtra* IV.23, *citta* arises as a result of the *saṃyoga* or *conjunction* of the *Puruṣa* (Consciousness) and *Prakṛti* (Matter). Although it is neither of these individually, the mind is considered as a functioning entity arising out of the conjunction of the two.

The framework of Yoga gives a detailed analysis of the *citta* and its role in cognition and action. Yoga takes the concept of *citta* beyond what can be seen as Western epistemologies and

⁹⁸ Erich Frauwallner and V. M. Bedekar (trans)., *History of Indian Philosophy*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997).

⁹⁹ James Houghton Woods. *The Yoga System of Patañjali*, (NY: Dover. reprint 2003).

¹⁰⁰ Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*. Edited by Joseph Campbell. 4th ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

ontologies into a wider and subtler framework where the ‘truth of the world is realised within and through the human mind’¹⁰¹.

It is to be noted that Patañjali does not give a definition of the concept of *citta* although it can be understood clearly from its twenty-two *sūtra* references and from the commentaries of Vyāsa and others. *Citta* is the past participle of the verbal root ‘*cit*’ which is translated as: ‘to observe’, ‘perceive’, ‘to appear’, ‘to shine’, ‘to be conscious of’, ‘to understand’ and ‘to know’¹⁰². The term *cit* itself is employed in Vedānta and Yoga to mean the transcendental consciousness or absolute pure Consciousness or the Self (*ātman* or *Puruṣa*). In contrast to this, *citta* represents the *phenomenal* consciousness which includes the ordinary level of awareness, the conscious mental processes and subliminal factors at a deeper level. The relationship between the two is stated by Whicher:

The *citta* itself is not sentient. Only *puruṣa* or pure consciousness is Self-luminous and “shines forth” unalloyed and unabated. Its “light” can be understood being “reflected” or “mirrored” in insentient *prakṛti* (i.e. the human mind), creating various self-reflective stages of the mind.¹⁰³

The experience of the contents of one’s own mind becomes possible when the transcendent Consciousness (*cit*) reflects in and ‘assumes’ the form of the mind (YS IV.22¹⁰⁴). In the presence of the *Puruṣa*, mind becomes ‘conscious of’ the external objects as well as the internal states. Thus the mind can be considered as a function of both the *Puruṣa* (Consciousness) and *Prakṛti* (Matter) coming into a relationship (*saṁyoga*) in which arise various modifications (*vṛtti*) or ‘whirls’ of consciousness which are ‘constantly undergoing transformations and

¹⁰¹ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 90.

¹⁰² Monier Williams online dictionary at <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

¹⁰³ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 92.

¹⁰⁴ *citer-apratisaṁskramāyās-tad-ākāra-āpattau-sva-buddhi-saṁvedanam*: ‘when the unchanging transcendental-awareness assumes the shape of that (mind), experience of one’s own cognitions (becomes possible)’. YS IV.22 (trans) by Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 138.

development (*pariṇāma*)¹⁰⁵. These *vṛtti* or modifications are described in detail in the Chapter Five of this Section.

The term *citta* occurs in both the Rg Veda and Atharva Veda¹⁰⁶ and according to Feuerstein the word is used wherever there is ‘expression of mental phenomena associated with conscious activity’¹⁰⁷. The focus and frequency of usage of *citta* in Yoga takes on a technical meaning which is peculiar to this tradition and consists of the total phenomenal consciousness including both conscious and the subliminal activity. Whicher proposes that the *citta* is a ‘heuristic device for understanding the dynamic interplay between pure consciousness (*puruṣa*) – the seer (*draṣṭṛ*) – and the *prakṛti* – the seeable (*dṛśya*) – in the form of a reflected state of consciousness’¹⁰⁸. This conception is based on YS IV.23 which says that ‘the mind coloured by the Knower (i.e., the *Puruṣa*) and the Known is all-apprehending’¹⁰⁹. In his commentary, Vyāsa points out that the mind being coloured by the thing thought of and also itself being an object of knowledge, comes into a relationship with the *Puruṣa*, the subject, through its own modifications. The mind is thus both a subject (of the perceptions of the objective world) and an object of the Seer, clearly showing here the Sāṃkhya-Yoga dualism between spirit and matter. In ignorance of the *Puruṣa*, the individual takes the mind to be the subject. Yoga provides the means of overcoming this ignorance by controlling the modifications of the mind in such a way that it becomes the *object* of the Seer, the latter becoming established in its place (*avasthānam*) through these means (YS I.4). Under the influence of this ignorance, the reflected consciousness

¹⁰⁵ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 92.

¹⁰⁶ R P Arya and K Joshi H Wilson (trans), *The Four Vedas: Rgveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda (Set of 9 Volumes) - Sanskrit Text with English Translation*, (Varanasi: Indica Books, 2002). see for example Rg Veda 10.128.06 or 10.166.04 etc. The term *citta* is used in different senses of ‘thought’, ‘senses’, ‘mind’ but all in relation to mental activity and phenomena; similarly, Atharva Veda 1.34.2 *citta* is used in the sense of ‘wish’ or ‘intent’.

¹⁰⁷ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 19.

¹⁰⁸ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 95.

¹⁰⁹ I K Taimni, *The Science of Yoga: The Yoga-Sūtras of Patañjali*, (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1968), 372.

in *Prakṛti* is taken to be the *Puruṣa*, subsequently experienced as the affliction (*kleśa*) of *asmitā* (I-am-ness).

As we have noted earlier there are various translations of *citta* in the literature such as ‘mind’, ‘mind-stuff’, ‘mind-complex’, ‘psyche’, ‘consciousness’ and ‘awareness’¹¹⁰. One of the reasons for this variety is that Patañjali himself does not provide an explicit definition of the term although the meaning can be ascertained from its 22 occurrences in the aphorisms of the *Yogasūtra*¹¹¹. Feuerstein states that it is impossible to ‘find a single label for it (*citta*), in English’¹¹². Koelman states that *citta* is ‘the whole individual psychical, psychological and moral prakritic individual’¹¹³. All these attempts at definition of *citta* fail to grasp its comprehensive and complex nature. It is true that *citta* is a ‘heuristic device’ to understand the interplay of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* as Whicher suggests but it also expresses the immediate and comprehensive experience of the individual in all its complexity. Koelman’s idea is also problematic in its suggestion of the *citta* as the ‘moral prakritic individual’. If the experiencing individual is to be considered as arising out of the association of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, then the individual is more than just a ‘prakritic’ entity and the *citta* cannot be considered just the ‘determinations of a cognitive organism’¹¹⁴. It is true that according to Patañjali’s conception of *citta* the subliminal impressions can be considered as the carriers of ethical values but it requires the holistic functioning of the *citta* to determine and act according to those values. According to Dasgupta it stands for ‘all that is psychical in man’ which again is a comprehensive term and in the same manner Feuerstein calls *citta* an ‘umbrella term’ which

¹¹⁰ Monier Williams online dictionary at <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

¹¹¹ Chapter I: *sūtra* 2,30,33,37; Chapter II: *sūtra* 54; Chapter III: *sūtra* 1,9,11,12,19,34,38; Chapter IV: *sūtra* 4,5,15,16,17,18,21, 22, 23, 26.

¹¹² Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 58.

¹¹³ Gaspar Koelman, *Pātāñjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*, (Poona, Papal Antheneum, 1970), 101.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

denotes all functioning of the mind, the ‘entire mental machinery’¹¹⁵. Although these convey what we understand as the holistic and comprehensive nature of the *citta*, nevertheless the complexity needs to be conveyed by looking at its dimensions and their relations through all references in the Yogasūtra and its commentaries. This we attempt to do in Chapter Eight where we bring the elements and processes of the *citta* in the construction of a comprehensive model. Here, however, we present the main aspects of *citta*:

1. *Citta* arises as a consequence of the conjunction (*saṃyoga*) of the principles *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* being ‘coloured’ by both the objects of perception and pure Consciousness (YS IV.23). There is no mechanism given in the text as to how this happens although *citta* is not considered to be a product of either principle¹¹⁶.
2. The *vr̥tti* are the characteristic of the *citta* (YS I.2, I.4) and these arise due to the *saṃskāra* or subliminal activators, which organise into certain patterns of thinking, or traits, called *vāsanā* (YS IV.24).
3. The *citta* is sometimes considered as equivalent to the ‘*antaḥkaraṇa*’ (inner instrument as used in Sāṃkhya), consisting of three components: the *manas* (sense mind), *buddhi* (intellect), and *ahaṃkāra* (ego maker or ‘I-ness’). This view is advocated by Vijñānabhikṣu¹¹⁷ who wrote a sub-commentary on the Yogasūtra in the 16th century. He considers that the *citta* comprises all these three elements of *Prakṛti* and their internal functioning consisting of volition, ‘grasping’ etc. This equivalency of *citta* and *antaḥkaraṇa* is problematic as it tends to conflate *ahaṃkāra* with *asmitā* and at the same time exclude subliminal elements of the *citta* – the *saṃskāra* and the *vāsanā*.

¹¹⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 58.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 59.

¹¹⁷ N Misra (ed.), *Patañjali, Pātañjalayogadarśana with Vyāsa’s Bhāṣya, Vācaspati Miśra’s Tattvavaiśāradi, and Vijñānabhikṣu’s Yoga Vārttika*, (Varanasi: Chowkhamba, 1971).

4. *Citta* in its totality is also the instrument for attainment of liberation when it is brought to single pointed attention through the practice of Yoga.

Let us now look at the elements of *citta* in Yoga to clarify the concept and its boundaries further.

ii. The elements of *citta*

As far as the *citta* is concerned, we need to consider three terms: *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahaṃkāra* which occur in the Sāṃkhya texts and similar Yoga terms *manas*, *buddhi* and *asmitā* in the Yogasūtra. We have pointed out that there are conceptual links between the two traditions of Sāṃkhya and Yoga and we will take these into account when we consider the elements of *citta*. The terms, *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaṃkāra* can be traced in the Classical Sāṃkhya text of Īśvarakṛṣṇa called the Sāṃkhya Kārikā (sometimes referred to simply as ‘Kārikā’). Larson considers the text to have existed for some time before it was translated into Chinese by Paramāratha between 557-569 CE¹¹⁸. For many centuries the Sāṃkhya Kārikā was considered as the authoritative text for classical Sāṃkhya school of thought. The elements of the Sāṃkhya *antaḥkaraṇa* (the inner instrument), i.e. *buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra* and *manas* are described as evolutes of the primordial nature (*Prakṛti*) which itself is uncreated. The equivalent term used in Yogasūtra in the place of *mūla Prakṛti* (or *avyakta*) is *pradhāna* (the ‘chief’ one), found in the commentary of Vyāsa (VB I.45)¹¹⁹. We will now consider each of these from both the Sāṃkhya and Yoga points of view so that we can gain clarity in the concept of *citta*.

1. *Buddhi*

The intellect or *buddhi* is the first evolute of *Prakṛti* and the first one to manifest (*vyakta*). Because of being manifest, it is ‘caused, finite, non-pervasive, active, plural, supported,

¹¹⁸ Gerald James Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya: An Interpretation of Its History and Meaning*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1979), 4.

¹¹⁹ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, Vyāsa’s commentary on YS I.45, 102.

mergent, composite, and dependent'¹²⁰. The Kārikā also gives the character of the *buddhi* in verse XXIII¹²¹:

Buddhi is (characterised by) ascertainment or determination (*adhyavasāya*). Virtue (*dharma*), knowledge (*jñāna*), non-attachment (*virāga*) and possession of power (*aiśvarya*) are its *sāttvika* form. Its *tamasa* form is the opposite (of these four).

There are three main characteristics which Larson¹²² describes in relation to the *buddhi* as described in the Kārikā. The *buddhi* is said to be *adhyavasāya* which has these meanings: 'attempt', 'effort', 'exertion', 'perseverance' etc. The indication here is that the *buddhi* 'controls' the direction of the inner processes of cognition and volition. Secondly, the *buddhi* is said to include the eight *bhāva* or 'dispositions' or 'conditions' which define the human life. Out of these eight, four (*dharma*, *jñāna*, *virāga*, *aiśvarya*) are related to the *sāttvic* (pure) form of the *buddhi* and the other four are the opposite of these related to the *tamasic* (inertial/ignorant) form. Thirdly, the *buddhi* is involved in the process of perception in conjunction with the other members of the inner instrument (*antaḥkaraṇa*) and 'decides' and 'ascertains' things on the basis of sensations which are brought to it by the *manas* through the senses. Burley¹²³ points out that *buddhi* can be regarded as 'encompassing a range of mental states, dispositions and capacities, although it is most particularly associated with discerning awareness, which might otherwise be termed intentional (object-directed) consciousness'.

The important point to note is that the term *buddhi* is a complex concept and although it has the above connotations which have implications for ideas of cognition, perception and consciousness to the overall conception of the mind in the Yogasūtra, the term *buddhi*, however, is mentioned only twice (YS IV.21 and 22) and used more in the sense of 'cognition'. It is nonetheless used many times by the commentators especially in relation to the *viveka* or

¹²⁰ Gerald James Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 258.

¹²¹ Ibid., 181.

¹²² Ibid., 182.

¹²³ Mikel Burley, *Classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga, An Indian Metaphysics of Experience*, (London: Routledge Press, 2005), 115.

discernment. For example, Vyāsa in his commentary on YS I.2 puts *buddhi* in the context of the three modes of nature – *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. When the lower two of these modes – *rajas* and *tamas* – are removed, the *citta* realises the distinction between pure Consciousness and *buddhi* (as a component of the mind). The cognitions which are presented by the *buddhi* are illuminated by the consciousness and there arises the awareness of these cognitions in the subject¹²⁴. Vyāsa points out that it is only when there is indifference even to this discernment between pure Consciousness and *buddhi* that there arises complete non-cognitive absorption (*Asaṃprajñāta Samādhi*). Rukmani suggests that there is a less clear cut distinction between the three components of *antaḥkaraṇa* in Sāṃkhya-Yoga than in Vedānta¹²⁵, although we consider that the references to *buddhi*, *manas* and *ahaṃkāra* in the Kārikā and Yogasūtra give a definite idea about them. Hariharananda in his commentary, often inappropriately conflates *buddhi*, *manas* and *citta*, for example, he says that ‘*citta* and *buddhi* have been used in the same sense in many places...and similarly *citta-vṛtti* has been designated ‘*buddhi-vṛtti*’. The words *citta* and *manas* have been used in the same sense in many places’¹²⁶. We discuss more about the *buddhi* in Chapter Eight although clearly here, Sāṃkhya provides some more details of the functioning of this aspect of the mind.

2. *Ahaṃkāra*, *asmitā* and *asmitā-mātra*

Ahaṃkāra is the second evolute of *Prakṛti* and refers to the ‘I-ness’ also called the ‘I-maker’, the locus of self-identity ‘owning’ the knowledge gained through the *manas* and the *buddhi*. It arises out of the *buddhi* and is described as:

‘Self awareness (*ahaṃkāra*) is self conceit (*abhimāna*). From it a twofold creation emerges, the group of eleven and the five subtle senses (*tanmātra*)’. *Sāṃkhya Kārikā XXIV*¹²⁷.

¹²⁴ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, Vyāsa’s commentary on YS I.2, 7.

¹²⁵ T Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu, Vol I Samādhipāda*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass Publishers, 1981), 32.

¹²⁶ Ibid., Vyāsa’s commentary on YS I.6, 20.

¹²⁷ Gerald James Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 263.

The term *ahaṃkāra* is usually translated as ‘ego’, ‘individuation’, ‘conception of one’s individuality’ and is taken to mean the sense of ‘I-ness’. It is also said to give rise to the ‘eleven’ which include the *manas*, the five senses and the five organs of action and these are characterised by the *sāttvic guṇa*. The group of five which also emerges out of the *ahaṃkāra* are the five subtle elements (*tanmātra*: sound, touch, form, taste and smell) out of which are said to emerge the five gross elements (space, wind, fire, water and earth which correspond to the subtle elements).

The concept of *ahaṃkāra* corresponds to that of *asmitā-mātra* in the Yoga system. Feuerstein remarks that the Yoga term is the ‘universal principle of individualisation’ and the other term related to this – *asmitā* – is ‘the particularised “I-am-ness”’. Thus a distinction is made between the ontological (structural) and the psychological (functional) use of this important term¹²⁸. We carry out a detailed analysis of these terms in Chapter Eight, section c of this Section but note here that the Sāṃkhya and Yoga terms related to the sense of ‘I’ are not exactly equivalent.

3. *Manas*

The term *manas* which, according to Sāṃkhya, is one of the eleven evolutes of *ahaṃkāra*, occurs in the Yogasūtra three times in YS I.35, II.53 and III.48¹²⁹. In the first two of these *sūtra* it is used in the sense of being connected to the senses and its control leading towards withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*) from their respective sense objects. With the ‘conquest of the senses’ (*indriya jaya*) there arises the speediness (*javitva*) of the *manas* (YS III.48). This association of the senses with the *manas* is consistent with the pre-classical usage of the term

¹²⁸ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 46.

¹²⁹ YS I.35: *viśayavatī vā pravṛttirutpannā manasaḥ sthitinibandhinī*, The Development Of Higher Objective Perceptions Called *Viśayavati* Also Brings About The Tranquillity Of Mind; YS II.53 *dhāraṇāsu ca योगyatā manasaḥ*, (The Mind Acquires Fitness For *Dhāraṇā* (following the practice of *Prāṇāyāma*); YS III.48 *tato manojavitvaṃ vikaraṇabhāvaḥ pradhānajayaśca*, Thence Come The Powers Of Rapid Movement As Of The Mind, Action Of Organs Independent Of The Body And Mastery Over *Pradhāna* The Primordial Cause, (translations from Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*).

*manas*¹³⁰. Another difference between the Sāṃkhya and Yoga is that the former asserts the extent of the *manas* to be the body whereas in Yoga it is all-pervasive¹³¹. The function of *manas* or the ‘mind organ’ or ‘sense mind’ is, then, to attend to the stimuli of the senses and their report by the senses, to act as a conveyor of this sense information, and create a contact between the inner instrument and the external objects. We clarify further these relationships between *citta*, *manas*, *buddhi* and *asmitā* in Chapter Eight of this Section.

iii. The *citta*, *Puruṣa* and misidentification

The overall framework within which *citta* and the other elements of the individual *Prakṛti* work is in conjunction with the *Puruṣa*. Although *Puruṣa* does not participate in the activities of these evolutes and stands in a transcendental relationship to them, it is nevertheless within the conjunction between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* that the evolutes arise and function. The modifications of *citta* which arise in the normal functioning of the individual identity, give rise to a reality in which this individual is separated from an ‘objective’ world and transacting with it. This, according to Yoga, is misidentification – ignorance or *avidyā* – in which the perception of oneself and the world is seen as the true reality. This aspect of identification is expressed by Patañjali in YS I.4 where he says that if the modifications of the mind do not cease, then there is a conflation of the *Puruṣa* and the *vṛtti* or modifications of the mind. The instrument of the mind, *citta*, is the primary means of knowing and experiencing the world and the control and cessation of its modifications (Yoga) are the basis for untangling the *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, leading to the state of liberation, or *Kaivalya*.

According to Whicher¹³², the entanglement of *Puruṣa* with *Prakṛti* is primarily ‘an epistemological pivot’ and, therefore, Patañjali sets out the methodology of correcting the fundamental misunderstanding arising in the normal functioning of the *citta* with all its

¹³⁰ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 59.

¹³¹ Gaspar Koelman, *Pātāñjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*, 104.

¹³² Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 91.

modifications. But in a sense the epistemological solution is only a partial solution. What Patañjali deals with in terms of the system of Yoga, are methods which lead eventually towards the more fundamental ontological problem of a mistaken sense of ‘being’. The Yogasūtra thus posits two fundamentally different modes of consciousness: the pure Consciousness which is one’s true identity as *Puruṣa*; and the empirical, phenomenal consciousness, or *citta*, consisting of the experience of all its modifications around which is also built a sense of self-identity. This sense of identity, or personhood, is a ‘mistaken’ one because of the ignorance or ‘*avidyā*’ of the *Puruṣa*. The result of this misidentification is a life of constant suffering in the transactional world of the individual. The removal of the fundamental error of identity, however, requires more than just the disentanglement of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. This is indicated in the way in which the practice of *Samprajñāta* and *Asamprajñāta Samādhi* is set out by Patañjali. The disentanglement begins to take place in the final stage of the former *Samādhi* where there is exclusive absorption in *asmitā*, whereas the completion of this process can only take place through a total identification with *Puruṣa* beyond even pure *asmitā*.

Patañjali’s concept of *citta* emphasises the ‘homogeneity or integral psychological constitution of the human personality as well as the processes (e.g., cognitive, affective, etc.) of empirical consciousness’¹³³. It is a ‘nonstructural, ahierarchical concept and cannot be reduced to any one or more of the above evolutes in themselves’¹³⁴. Here we believe that Whicher has captured the essence of the *citta* in its holistic and integrated sense.

The *manas* (sense mind) receives, synthesises and assimilates the sense impressions, bringing the external world of objects in contact with the sense of individual self (*asmitā*). It is the *buddhi* (intellect) or the higher mental function that transforms and acts upon these sensations. The *buddhi* either reifies the sense interpretations of the *manas* or becomes ‘free-functioning as

¹³³ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 93.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

a vehicle of liberation by attaining knowledge'¹³⁵. It is through the discrimination and will power of the *buddhi* that the *vr̥tti* of the *citta* can be ceased. The *vr̥tti* exist not only in the waking state but also in the dream and deep sleep state. Man is aware only of these modifications and unaware of the pure Consciousness or *Puruṣa* and 'the essential task of man according to Patañjali is to cease the modifications so that he can become aware of his real Self'¹³⁶. According to Chennakesavan, from the empirical standpoint, the *Puruṣa* is 'known only through the limiting adjuncts of the mind...[and *Puruṣa*] becomes identified with the mind and this condition exists as long as the individual is in the state of ignorance (*avidyā*)'¹³⁷. He does not, however, elaborate on what he means by 'knowing' of the *Puruṣa* by the mind. If it is meant that *Puruṣa* is known as its reflected light appearing as awareness, then this would be appropriate. In the same manner it would be appropriate to consider that the awareness becomes conflated with the pure Consciousness of the *Puruṣa* in *avidyā*.

An analysis by Feuerstein of the concept of *citta*, correctly includes the idea that it is 'suffused with and in a certain way structured by countless 'subliminal activators' (*saṃskāra*) which form 'traits' (*vāsanā*) ellipses and it is they that feed the fluctuations (*vr̥tti*)'¹³⁸. Here we see an important connection between the deeper subliminal layers of *citta*, which shape its contents. The whole process of development of these activators and consequent effects in the conscious mind are discussed in detail in Chapter Six c and d.

Patañjali thus develops a sophisticated concept of mind which gives a remarkable psychological account of the individual. The mind represents a system of dynamic relations which have their mainstay in the complex *prakṛtic* organism. The functioning elements of the *citta* as indicated

¹³⁵ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 94.

¹³⁶ Bangalore Kuppaswamy, *Elements of Ancient Indian Psychology*, (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1990), 51.

¹³⁷ Sarasvati Chennakesvan, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, (Madras: Asia Publishing House, 1959), 34.

¹³⁸ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 60.

above include the *manas*, which translates the sensory data into concepts through the *buddhi*. The deeper layer, formed by the *saṃskāra*, is the storage centre for the past mental activity belonging to this life and all other past lives. The *citta* is activated and energised by this deeper layer of traits or *vāsanā* (formed from the *saṃskāra*), which make it turn towards sensory experience. The transactional processes thus set up in externalisation of the *citta* in turn lead to the creation of more subliminal-activators (*saṃskāra*) which then continue to create modifications in the *citta*. We will be looking at this cyclical process of generation of the *vyrtti* through the deeper layers of *citta* by means of *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā* in Chapters Five and Six and with the model of the mind in more detail in Chapter Eight.

iv. The states of the *citta*

Vyāsa in his commentary on the first *sūtra* of the Yogasūtra points out that Yoga is meditative absorption (*Samādhi*) and it is the characteristic of the mind in *all* its habitual states¹³⁹. Not much attention has been paid to this aspect of the mind by most of the commentators on the Yogasūtra. For our understanding of the mind we examine these now and in more detail later in Chapter Eight. In the overall approach of the thesis, this analysis of Vyāsa is also relevant in the context of the phenomena of Flow (related to states of order and disorder in the mind as conceptualised by Csikszentmihalyi) and its relation to the various stages and phenomena of *Samādhi*. These states of mind are five in number and are given in reference to the overall goal of Yoga which Patañjali defines in *sūtra* I.2: ‘Yoga is the cessation of the modifications of the mind’. These five states are given as *kṣipta* (restless), *mūḍha* (stupefied), *vikṣipta* (distracted), *ekāgra* (one-pointed) and *niruddha* (mastered/arrested). What Vyāsa is implying is that in all these states, there is still the occurrence of absorption but its depth and time vary considerably. Veda Bhārati says that: ‘The presence of this state of *Samādhi*, even in the lower, disturbed

¹³⁹ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, p 1: *sa ca sārva-bhaumaścittasya dharmah*: It (*saṃādhi*) is the *dharma* (essential characteristic) of all grounds/states of the mind.

states, is demonstrated by the fact that no matter how agitated the mind may be at any given time it still concentrates on only one thing or another... even a fleeting micro-moment, it is still a level of concentration'¹⁴⁰.

The five states appear to be placed in a sequence which indicates that there is increasing ability to attain absorption on the one hand and an increase in the *order* of the processes and contents of the mind, on the other. The *citta* can be said to go from a state of disorder, to coherent order, then to cessation of any modification. Vyāsa goes on to say that the first three states of the mind (restless, stupefied and distracted) are 'non-yogic' since the moments of absorption attained are 'subordinated to moments of unrest'. The other two are 'yogic' states of mind where there is single-pointedness or cessation of thought and which have three effects: they 'bring enlightenment of a real entity, weaken the *kleśa*, and loosen the bonds of *karma*, which paves the way for the arrested state of mind'¹⁴¹. The mind can fluctuate between these different states and is subject to the *guṇa* or 'modes of nature'¹⁴². Let us examine these states of mind in some detail now.

The first state is *kṣipta*¹⁴³, a restless state in which the attention is constantly moving from one object or an idea to another. There is also shifting of emotions and 'not the patience or intelligence necessary'¹⁴⁴ for dealing with complex and subtle subjects. In terms of the modes of nature, the predominant *guṇa* here is the '*rajasic*' which makes the attention to be restlessly moving about.

¹⁴⁰ Swami Veda Bharati, *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali (with the Exposition of Vyāsa)*, (Vol. II: *Sadhana-Pada*), (Hornesdale IL: Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy of the U.S.A., 1986), 81.

¹⁴¹ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 2; we will see the meaning of *kleśa* and *karma* and their psychological implications in later sections.

¹⁴² These modes are *Sāttvic*, *Rajasik* and *Tamasik* and are integral to understanding the Yoga mind. More discussion about these modes is given in Section II, Chapter V.

¹⁴³ Monier-Williams translates this as: 'thrown , cast , sent , despatched , dismissed and scattered'

¹⁴⁴ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 3: see notes section paragraph 5.

The second is the *mūḍha*¹⁴⁵ state of mind which is a stupefied, confused state. Hariharananda calls this the ‘infatuated’ state of mind which is gross and concrete and cannot think of subtle principles. Yet the mind can be brought to a focus on the physical and entertains thoughts related to this level of existence. The predominant *guṇa* here is the ‘*tamasic*’ which operates in dullness, inertia and lack of understanding.

The third state of mind is the *vikṣipta* state which is different from the restless mind. Whereas in the latter state there is constant movement of attention, in the distracted state the mind remains ‘calm sometimes and disturbed at other times’¹⁴⁶. In the state of calmness, it is able to keep its attention on the object or idea and understand its complex and subtle aspects. It gets distracted, however, and becomes restless thus alternating between distractedness and an attentive state.

These three states are designated by Vyāsa as ‘non-yogic’ in the sense that they cannot lead towards the three attainments mentioned above. The implication is that there needs to be a much higher capacity for sustained attention which leads to a change in the very basis of the operations of the mind.

The fourth state, *ekāgra* is the first of the ‘yogic’ states which proceeds towards the goal of Yoga and is the state of mind which is ‘pointed in one direction’¹⁴⁷ that is, ‘it holds on to one thing only’ to the exclusion of other things. This state of mind is under the mode of *sāttvic guṇa* characterised by calmness and equanimity. Although Patañjali does not directly refer to the first three states of mind, he does speak about the two yogic states in detail. In *sūtra* YS III.12, he defines the *ekāgra* as a state where ‘the quiescent and the uprisen modifications are similar’¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴⁵ Monier-Williams gives the meanings of this term: ‘stupefied , bewildered , perplexed , confused , uncertain or at a loss about’.

¹⁴⁶ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Monier-Williams translates this term: ‘one-pointed , having one point , fixing one's attention upon one point or object , closely attentive , intent , absorbed’.

¹⁴⁸ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 262, YS III.12: *tataḥ punaḥ śāntoditau tulyapratyayau cittasyaikāgratāpariṇāmaḥ*: There again (i.e. ‘during Samādhi’), the past modification

Here there is a definite indication of the way in which the mind works. The state of mind prior to this state of single-pointedness has modifications which are different as they go from one modification to the next. In other words, attention, as well as the type of modification, changes from one thing to another in rapid succession and because there is no similarity (*tulya* in this *sūtra* literally means ‘equal to, of the same kind or class or number or value’¹⁴⁹), between the ‘uprising and the subsiding modifications, they are restless, stupefied or distracted states of mind. In the *ekāgra* state, Vyāsa says, that a ‘sequence of the same modifications’¹⁵⁰ arise and subside leading to concentrating on an object or an idea. Holding attention, therefore, implies the ability to control the modifications so that the same modification replaces the preceding one.

In *sūtra* YS III.9, Patañjali gives the meaning of the fifth state of mind or the second ‘yogic’ state, *niruddha*, where there is a cessation of the modifications of the mind. This is the ultimate Yogic condition of the mind when the modifications are no longer controlled to give the same modification replacing the subsiding modification as in ‘*ekāgra*’; the modifications cease altogether. With intense practice, the process becomes subliminal where the activators of the stilled state of mind ‘subjugate’ the ‘emergent’ activators and the result of this is the *niruddha* state of mind. Again these explanations in Vyāsa’s commentary and Patañjali’s own *sūtra* give further insight into the workings of the mind from the Yoga perspective.

With regard to Vyāsa’s commentary on the five states of the mind, we agree with Vijñānabhikṣu’s comment that the definition of *Samādhi* in relation to these states is ‘over-pervasive’¹⁵¹, although this is countered by placing only the last two states into the ‘yogic’ category, thus focussing on a narrower definition of this state.

being the same as the present one the transformation of the one-pointed state (*ekāgratā*) of the mind (*cittasya*).

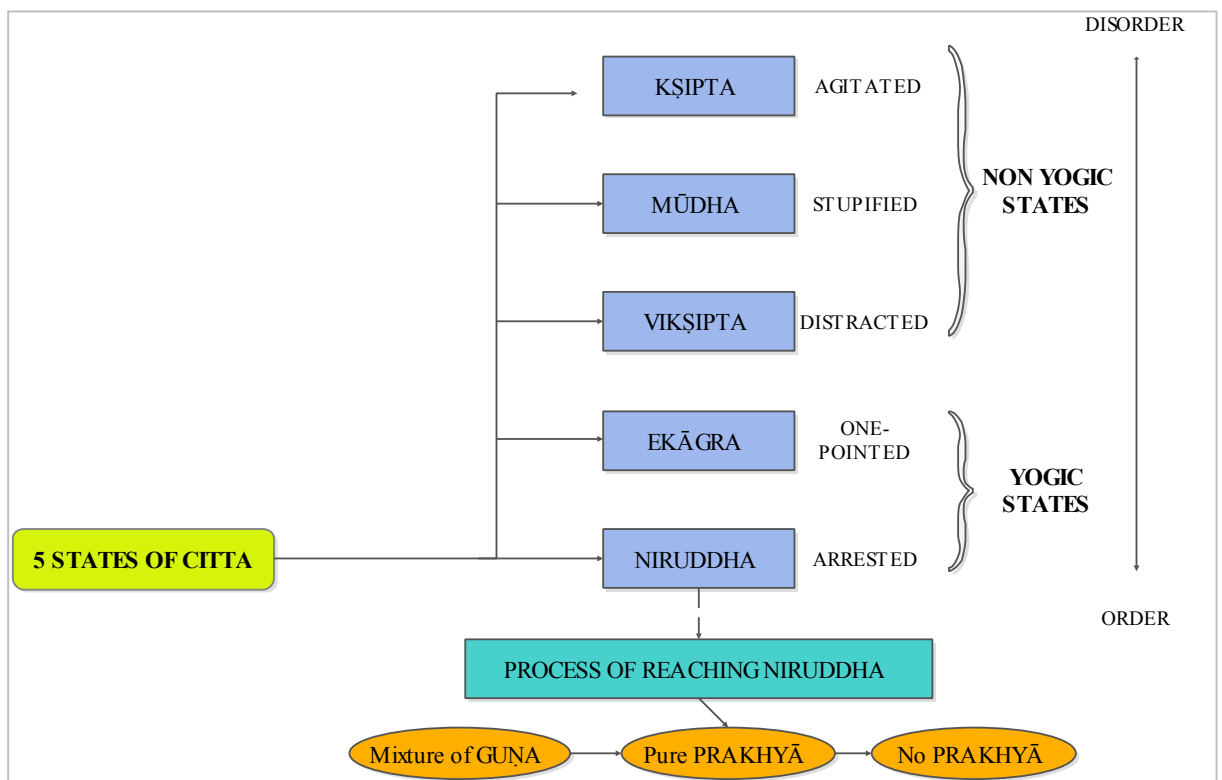
¹⁴⁹ Monier Williams: online dictionary at <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

¹⁵⁰ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 262.

¹⁵¹ T Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu, Vol I Samādhipāda*, 34.

In YS I.28/29 Patañjali says that when one recites ‘Om’, the ‘sacred syllable’ there is an attainment of ‘inward-mindedness’ (*pratyak cetanā*) and also the disappearance of the obstacles. In YS 1.30 these obstacles are listed as: sickness, languor, doubt, heedlessness, sloth, dissipation, false vision, non-attainment of (yogic) stages, and instability of these stages. With the attainment of the single pointed attention, these obstacles, which take the mind towards the non-yogic states i.e. *kṣipta*, *mūḍha* and *vikṣipta*, are removed. For example, the obstacle of sloth is related to the state of *mūḍha* and as the single-pointedness makes the mind to be alert and focussed, sloth is overcome. The diagram below illustrates the states of the *citta*:

Diagram 2: The five states of *citta*.



CHAPTER FIVE: MODIFICATIONS OF THE *CITTA*: THE *VR̥TTI*

a. Introduction

From one point of view, the *citta* can be described as the interrelated network of the elements of the inner organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*) i.e. *manas*, *buddhi* and *asmitā*, which is the ‘vehicle of perception and experience’¹⁵². We saw that Patañjali’s concept of *citta* points to the ‘homogeneity or integral psychological constitution of the human personality as well as the processes (e.g., cognitive, affective, etc.) of empirical consciousness’¹⁵³. These processes, mental operations or activities that take place are named as *vr̥tti* by Patañjali which we translate as ‘modifications’, taking into account the connotations of the Sanskrit word and the *prakṛtic* nature of the mind. The term *vr̥tti* is another key term in understanding the psychological dimension of the Yogasūtra, in particular YS I.5 which enumerates the five types of modifications¹⁵⁴.

This term ‘*vr̥tti*’ introduced by Patañjali in the second *sūtra* (I.2), is derived from the Sanskrit root ‘*vr̥t*’ which has these meanings: ‘to turn, turn round, revolve, roll’. It is also translated as ‘mode of life or conduct, course of action, behaviour’, ‘occupation with’¹⁵⁵. Various other translations have been given to this term: ‘fluctuations’, ‘acts’, ‘functions’, ‘processes’, and ‘transformations’¹⁵⁶. Just as the primordial matter principle, the insentient *Prakṛti* is subject to continuous change, the mind also undergoes changes, or modifications, and these constitute the moment to moment experience of the individual. The term is used ten times (YS I.2, 4, 5, 10, 41; YS II.11, 15, 50; YS III.43 and YS IV.18) in the Yogasūtra. Feuerstein contends that this is

¹⁵² Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 129.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 93.

¹⁵⁴ YS I.5 *vr̥ttayah pañcāyāḥ kliṣṭakliṣṭāḥ*: Modifications of *citta* are of five types (and are designated as) ‘afflicted’ or ‘non-afflicted’.

¹⁵⁵ Monier-Williams online dictionary at <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

¹⁵⁶ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 98-101.

a technical term, and referring to the definition given by Bhoja in his commentary¹⁵⁷, further states that in ‘its technical sense the term refers to specific mental events and not, as it is often assumed, to any odd mental content’¹⁵⁸. It is important to remember that the *vr̥tti* themselves are described by Patañjali in YS I.6 to I.11 and, therefore, whatever we understand by this term must be understood within the context of these descriptions. Therefore, it cannot be said that *vr̥tti* refer to some specific mental event. The suggestion by Patañjali appears to be that all mental events can be described as modifications of the *citta*. In agreement, Bryant says that if ‘*citta* is the sea, the *vr̥ttis* are its waves, the specific forms it takes’¹⁵⁹.

b. Varieties of *Vr̥tti*

The word *vr̥tti* itself implies continual change and Patañjali states that these *vr̥tti* can be categorised according to the *nature* of the modifications. Not only can they be thus classified, they also function according to principles governing the elements of the *citta* together with the senses, the subliminal impressions (*saṃskāra*), and tendencies or traits (*vāsanā*). All these elements and processes, when interacting in a dynamic way, give rise to continuous experience.

The fifth *sūtra* of *Samādhi Pāda* tells us that there are five categories of modifications of mind and they can be classified as *kliṣṭa* and *akliṣṭa*. These two terms have been translated variously as painful/not painful, distressing/not distressing etc. We will look at them in detail in section c below but it is to be emphasised here that these are to be viewed in reference to the overall goal of Yoga which is liberation, and to the idea of *kleśa* – the five causes of afflictions in the human condition. These are also key ideas in our explication of the Yogasūtra and point towards the

¹⁵⁷ Tookaram Tatya, *The Yoga Philosophy: being the text of Patañjali, with Bhoja Raja's Commentary*, (Theosophical Society, India, 1885) Bhoja wrote a commentary, *Rāja-Mārtanḍa*, on the Yogasūtra. He defines *vr̥tti* as ‘forms of modifications with a reciprocal relationship between them’, quoted in Georg Feuerstein., *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 63.

¹⁵⁸ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 63.

¹⁵⁹ Edwin F Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali: A New Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, (New York: North Point Press, 2009), 14.

roots of human suffering, Patañjali giving the solution to this condition in terms of the results of Yoga praxis. Here again we will see the relationship of the *vr̥tti* with the varieties of human experience and how eventually all modifications which comprise experience is seen by Patañjali as causing suffering. (See the section e in Chapter Six below for a detailed discussion on this).

The sixth *sūtra* lists the five categories of modifications which occur in the *citta*: *pramāṇa* (valid cognition), *viparyaya* (misconception/erroneous cognition), *vikalpa* (conceptualisation), *nidrā* (sleep) and *smṛti* (memory). In his commentary on YS I.1 Vyāsa refers to the five states of the mind and in YS I.2, he points out the three ‘functions’ of the mind - *prakhyā*, *pravṛtti* and *sthiti*. The relationship between these functions, which are related to the three attributes (*guṇa*) of the material principle, and the modifications, is elaborated upon in section (e) of this Chapter.

i. *Pramāṇa*

The first type of *vr̥tti* referred to by Patañjali (I.7) is *pramāṇa*, the means of knowing or valid cognition. The term *pramāṇa* occurs only in the aphorisms I.6 and I.7. Patañjali himself does not define this term nor does the commentator Vyāsa. The term has a Sanskrit derivation from the word *pramā* which is given as ‘uncontradicted knowledge about and perception of a real object’¹⁶⁰ and the ‘apprehension of a state, condition, fact, object or entity heretofore not obtained’¹⁶¹. If *pramā* is the product, then its means or instrument is *pramāṇya*. It allows for the understanding of something which is fully manifested and verified through one of the three avenues, *pratyakṣa* (direct perception), *anumāna* (inference) and *āgama* (valid testimony)¹⁶². These refer to *sources* of correct knowledge and give the traditional analysis of the cognitive process as: *pramātr̥* (the cognising subject); *prameya* (the cognised object); *pramāṇa* (valid

¹⁶⁰ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 21.

¹⁶¹ Usharbudh Arya, *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali with Exposition of Vyāsa*, 151.

¹⁶² Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, This is indicated in *sūtra* I.7, *pratyakṣānumānāgamāḥ pramāṇāni*.

cognition); *pramā* (cognition) and *pramāṇya* (the means of cognition)¹⁶³. The experience of objects of the world such as people, animals, trees, earth etc., through any of the three means, belong to the category of *pramāṇa* modifications. ‘A modern scientist can very well accept this conception of *pramāṇa*’¹⁶⁴. Let us look at these three means of knowledge now.

Pramāṇa - Pratyakṣa

This literally means ‘presented to the eye’ – ‘*prati*’ which means ‘before’ and ‘*akṣa*’ meaning ‘eye’. The eye being recognised as the ‘dominant of the five senses, is often used to indicate senses in general’¹⁶⁵. Hence all the senses are implied in *pratyakṣa* and thus the word can be translated as ‘direct perception’ through the senses. Vyāsa states in his commentary on YS 1.7 that the external object ‘colours’ the mind through the sense channels and thus a *vytti* is created in the mind, namely *pramāṇa* or valid cognition. Thus this modification is ‘a sense activity, oriented towards objects, moulded by them...a psycho-mental activity oriented towards objects, the latter existing as such...’¹⁶⁶

The process described as *avadhāraṇa* – determinative process – is central to this means of obtaining knowledge about the object where the mind ‘eliminates the general shared properties (*sāmānya*) so that it focuses on the specific (*viśeṣa*)’¹⁶⁷. These are categories used in other schools of Hindu thought for identifying, analysing, organising and understanding the object through the senses.

¹⁶³ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 31.

¹⁶⁴ T R Anantharaman, *Ancient Yoga and Modern Science (Phispc Monograph Series on History of Philosophy, Science and Culture in India, 7)* 3rd ed., (Delhi: Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy, and Culture, 1996), 27.

¹⁶⁵ P Karambelkar, *Pātañjala Yogasūtra*, (Lonavala, India: Kaivalyadham, 1986).

¹⁶⁶ Mircea Eliade, (trans. by W Trask), *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 375-376.

¹⁶⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 144.

Here the question arises as to the difference between what is termed as ordinary perception and ‘yogic perception’¹⁶⁸ which according to the major schools of Hinduism, is superior to the former. We discuss Yogic perception in Chapter Eight of this Section.

Pramāṇa - Anumāna

The second means of valid knowledge is inference or reasoning – *anumāna* (‘*anu*’ – following and ‘*māna*’ – something measured). Vyāsa defines this as ‘the modification of the mind, which mainly comprehends the general characteristic of the inferred object and which refers to the relation that is present in things belonging to the same class as the subject (in which the object is to be inferred) and absent from things belonging to a different class from the subject (in which the object is to be inferred)’.¹⁶⁹ An example used by Hindu logicians is that of smoke and fire where the presence of the latter is inferred from the direct perception of the former. Herein lies the difference between *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*: the first requires the fire to be channelled through the eyes – to be seen, whereas in *anumāna*, what is seen directly is something else, other than that which is inferred. This requires an invariable relationship (*vyāpti*) between what is inferred and that on which the inference is made. In other words, where there is smoke there has to be a fire invariably and this inference is another valid source of knowledge.

Pramāṇa - Āgama

Āgama is the third *pramāṇa* or means of valid knowledge. Vyāsa in his commentary elaborates on this means of knowledge: In order to transfer knowledge of a thing either from one’s own knowledge or that inferred by a trustworthy person (*āpta*), words are used. The modification of the mind thus resulting when this word is heard is called *āgama*. The trustworthy person is described as one whose statements, or testimony, cannot be contradicted.

¹⁶⁸ Many examples of these are given in Chapter III of the *Yogasūtra* – see *sūtra*, 17-19, 25-29 as examples.

¹⁶⁹ T Rukmani (trans), *Yogasūtra of Patañjali, with the Commentary of Vyāsa*, (Montreal: Concordia University, 2001).

We can see that the three means of knowledge progressively move away from a direct contact of the sense towards secondary and tertiary sources. The inference of the fire is based on the perception of the senses and, therefore, makes perception prior to inference. Verbal authority of *āgama* also requires one to make an inference about the reliability of the verbal authority and is indirectly derived from direct perception. The superiority of perception over inference and valid testimony is stated by Patañjali and Vyāsa particularly in *sūtra* I.32. Since inference and valid testimony can deal only with general qualities and not the specific, perception is considered by both as carrying greater conviction than the two other types of knowledge. What is important to note about the Yoga *darśana* is that its starting point is an emphasis on the direct experience whereas it considers *yogic pratyakṣa* far superior than any of the valid means of knowledge. We will explore these implications in greater detail in Chapter Eight of this Section.

ii. *Viparyaya*

This type of *vṛtti* is termed the ‘error’ and occurs when the understanding, or the thought, does not correspond with reality, thus apprehending something other than the reality. It is about ‘knowing of the unreal, possessing a form “not of its own”’¹⁷⁰. Chennakesvan mentions that the ‘characteristic of valid knowledge is that it is unsublatable... [but] knowledge derived through *viparyaya* is sublated by a later cognition’¹⁷¹. These are the erroneous perceptions which can be sublated there and then but there are others which are deeply rooted in *avidyā* which require yogic means for their removal¹⁷².

Vijñānabhikṣu calls this as an error which arises because *anyathākhyāti* – ‘a positive mistaking of one thing for another’¹⁷³. The most fundamental ‘error’ is the misconception about existence itself. Thus Vyāsa in his commentary on this term (YS II.4) equates it to another basic notion in

¹⁷⁰ Sarasvati Chennakesavan, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, 63.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 63.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ T Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu, Vol I, Samādhipāda.*, 72.

the Yogasūtra – ignorance or ‘*avidyā*’ one of the five *kleśa*. This ignorance is not to be understood as a mere lack of knowledge but a fundamental absence of awareness of the Self (*Puruṣa*) as one’s true identity and, therefore, deemed as false knowledge.

Vyāsa defines *avidyā* as a positive entity, the category of knowledge which is opposed to *vidyā* or true knowledge. Feuerstein says of *avidyā* that it is the cause of ‘the fatal epistemic dichotomisation into subject and object which Yoga seeks to remove’¹⁷⁴. However, in this strong sense of *viparyaya*, it is not just the subject-object dichotomy that is the fatal error but rather the identification of oneself as the subject undergoing the variety of experiences. *Avidyā* as it were, conceals ‘*cit*’ or pure Consciousness of the *Puruṣa* by establishing this false identity. But it must be understood that *avidyā* refers to an error which is much more fundamental than just a cognitive error.

Whicher puts this in the context of suffering and dissatisfaction (*duḥkha*) when he says that *avidyā* ‘gives rise to the incorrect understanding that one’s identity...defined within the limits of the individuated psychophysical being or personality complex and not according to the unbounded nature of the *puruṣa* or spiritual Self’¹⁷⁵. Thus it is the conjunction of the ‘Seer’ (*Puruṣa*) and ‘seen’ (*Prakṛti*) which is the cause of all suffering. *Avidyā* is the primary affliction which is the origin of all other afflictions, including the mistaken identity of the limited ego-self or ‘I-am-ness’ (*asmitā*). In this sense, *avidyā* is the basic misconception and the other four afflictions of *asmitā* (I-am-ness), *rāga* (attraction), *dveṣa* (aversion) and *abhiniveśa* (fear of death) are its different aspects. Thus *avidyā* is described as the *kṣetram*, or field, from which the rest of the afflictions arise. Feuerstein says that YS II.24 indicates the ‘practical consideration of

¹⁷⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 62.

¹⁷⁵ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 110.

the psychological reasons for man's spiritual degeneracy and his concomitant exposure to anxiety, distress, sorrow and pain'¹⁷⁶.

iii. *Vikalpa*

In YS I.9, Patañjali characterises *vikalpa* as having two properties: *śabdajñānānupātin* meaning 'it follows the knowledge of words' and *vastuśūnya* meaning 'lacking a material correlate'. The third type of *vr̥tti*, *vikalpa*, can be termed as 'conceptualisation', the apprehension arising out of verbal knowledge only, whose referents are not things but words and ideas. This is, in other words, conceptual knowledge and the meaning arises as a modification of the mind which depends on words. *Vikalpa* does not necessarily have to be an error but can be an 'imaginary' cognition. Thus translations of *vikalpa* as hallucinations or fancy do not acknowledge the importance of 'ideation' in meditative concentration – focussing on an idea to the exclusion of all others. Such translations also do not take into account Patañjali's contention that each *vr̥tti* can be afflicted or un-afflicted. Whicher defines *vikalpa* as that *vr̥tti* which follows 'language, knowing of words, and the knowledge provided by words, and is productive of the same where no actual thing is its referent'¹⁷⁷. *Vikalpa* then is different from the previous *vr̥tti* as there is no actual 'object' either directly perceived (*pratyakṣa*) or indirectly (*āgama*). In the case of the latter, a distinction needs to be made between verbal communication (*āgama*) and verbal knowledge implied in *vikalpa*. It is not error as in *viparyaya* because this requires an object again. In the examples given by Vyāsa in his commentary, there is an implication that the constant conceptualisation of reality through language is the 'most powerful obstacle preventing us from experiencing reality as it really is'¹⁷⁸. This, according to Raveh, is 'Patañjali's philosophical preoccupation with language as the anchor of phenomenal existence and hence an

¹⁷⁶ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 75.

¹⁷⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 115.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 119.

acute obstacle to samādhi¹⁷⁹. The relationship between language and the soteriological goal of Yoga is clearly implied here and the cessation of *vr̥tti* belonging to this category¹⁸⁰, experienced as an inner dialogue, is perhaps the most important in terms of achieving the goal of *Kaivalya*.

Another interesting connection with this *vr̥tti* is indicated in the commentary of Vyāsa on *sūtra* III. 53, a reference to sequential meditation (*saṁyama*) on moment and sequence where the knowledge born of discernment is brought about. He speaks of time in the same terms as Patañjali speaks of *vikalpa* in I.9: *sa khalvayam kālo vastu-śūnyo buddhi nirmāṇa śabda jñāna anupātī*, meaning: ‘time is without substance and is a mental construction based merely on verbal proficiency’. What the commentator is implying is that time belongs to the category of *vr̥tti* called *vikalpa*, and as such ‘unreal’ but given a ‘reality’ through the use of words and language. This view that ‘time is indeed a peculiar mental construct’, and as such the relationship between language and ‘reality’, has implications in the psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra, which is taken up in Chapter Eight.

iv. Nidrā

The fourth type of modification is sleep or *nidrā*. This is translated as ‘the modification based upon the apprehension of non-becoming/absence’¹⁸¹ and ‘a fluctuation founded on the presented-idea of the non-occurrence (of other contents of consciousness)’¹⁸². Here Vyāsa considers that sleep is not simply the absence of mental activities such as cognition¹⁸³. This is demonstrated by the fact that one is able to recollect whether one has slept well or badly. Bryant uses this as the basis of his argument that this recollection is an indication that the mind had the experience during sleep and, therefore, is a *vr̥tti* of a different category than the others¹⁸⁴. By

¹⁷⁹ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 27.

¹⁸⁰ Harold G Coward, *Yoga and Psychology, Language, Memory and Mysticism*.

¹⁸¹ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 116, (YS I.10 *abhāvapratyayāmbanā vr̥ttirnidrā*).

¹⁸² Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 33.

¹⁸³ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 30.

¹⁸⁴ Edwin F Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 41-42.

sleep in this context Vyāsa means the state of dreamless sleep rather than dream sleep. Patañjali makes this distinction in *sūtra* I.38: ‘*svapna nidrā jñāna ālambanam vā*’ meaning: ‘By taking the support of knowledge gained in dream sleep and dreamless sleep’ (in relation to gaining the stillness of the mind). Sleep with dreams corresponds to an experience of *memory* and thus is not included by Patañjali in this category of *nidrā*¹⁸⁵, which refers to a dreamless modification. A question may arise that if *citta vṛtti nirodha* is cessation of modifications of the mind then surely in deep sleep there are no modifications and, therefore, it can be equated to the yogic state of *niruddha* (ceased). One way to respond to this is in terms of the *guṇa* or the modes of *Prakṛti* (nature). In deep sleep it is *tamas* (stupefied) *guṇa* which is prevalent as opposed to *sattva* (brightness, alertness, awareness) in the higher states of *Samādhi* and, therefore, deep sleep has a different quality than a yogic state of mind. The principle of yoga is to establish oneself in the *Puruṣa* or *draṣṭṛ* (Seer) by cessation of the modifications. In the case of deep sleep, neither is there any awareness of oneself or the world, nor is there an establishment in the Seer. This means that *nidrā* is to be taken as yet another *vṛtti* which makes the Seer become identified with it which, in this case, is the *tamasic vṛtti* of deep sleep¹⁸⁶. Sleep, like any other *vṛtti*, says Vyāsa in his commentary, is to be ceased.

In YS I.10 which defines the *nidrā vṛtti*, Patañjali introduces two new terms: *pratyaya* and *ālambana*. The first has been translated in various ways: cause, cognition or imprints on the mind. Some exegetes conflate *vṛtti* and *pratyaya* using them interchangeably. This is contrary to understanding of *sūtra* literature which has specific meaning for the terms used. We will look at *pratyaya* in more detail later in the Chapter as it appears to be another key psychological term in the text. The second term, *ālambana*, is translated as ‘support’ and indicates a process by

¹⁸⁵ Vācaspati Miśra in his commentary on this verse comments that the dream involves activation of *samskāra* resulting in the experience of a dream.

¹⁸⁶ YS I.3 says that cessation of the *vṛtti*, the seer gets established in itself and in YS I.4 that at other times (when there is no cessation of *vṛtti*), the seer gets identified with the current *vṛtti*.

which the mind functions. Patañjali gives a list of a number of *ālambana* which the mind can use to achieve the specific purpose of concentration and absorption, which we discuss later.

v. *Smṛti*

The last modification classified by Patañjali is *smṛti* or memory. It is defined as ‘recollection of contents (conditions/objects) experienced’¹⁸⁷, as ‘remembering’ and as ‘the non-deprivation of the experienced object’¹⁸⁸. Vyāsa asks in his commentary: ‘Is it the *process* of apprehension which is remembered or the *form* of the object experienced?’ The reply which he gives suggests the way in which memory functions according to his interpretation of this term. When something is recalled, the object shines forth, coloured with the experience of the object, in both the forms and the cognition itself, generating a latent impression conforming to this process. To put it in another way, there are two processes going on in perception, the process of knowing (*grahaṇa*) and the process of apprehending (*upādāna*). If perception is about new objects, it is not based on things already known. In this case it is the *form* (*rūpa*) of the object which is the main element that defines it. In memory, it is the form as well as the associations with this form (*ākāra*) which are predominant. This object from memory is already known through the other *vṛtti*. Here the memory is said to be either derived from objects imagined or objects experienced but in both cases the resultant total experience is of the same nature. We discuss memory in greater detail in Chapter Eight, section (b).ix

Patañjali’s pragmatic approach to the content and processes of the mind leads him to frame these in the context of the soteriological goal of yoga practice. In *sūtra* I.5 he classifies all modifications in terms of *kliṣṭa* (afflicted) and *akliṣṭa* (non-afflicted). The former type of modifications keeps the practitioner misidentified with the subjective individuality and, therefore, bound, whereas the latter lead towards liberation (*Kaivalya*). The practices of yoga

¹⁸⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 117; In Yogasūtra 1.11 Patañjali says:

anubhūtaviśayāsampramoṣaḥ smṛtiḥ meaning ‘memory is the non-deprivation of the experienced object’.

¹⁸⁸ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 33.

are those that transform the *kliṣṭa* into *akliṣṭa vṛtti* in the initial stage. The perspective of *kliṣṭa/akliṣṭa* classification of the modifications and the process of their transformation, will give us more insight into a psychological understanding of Patañjali's text and we will take a brief look at these. See Diagram 4: (p 74), for a visual representation of the relationships of *vṛtti*.

c. *Kleśa, Kliṣṭa, Akliṣṭa*

The word *kliṣṭa* is the past participle adjective of the verb root '*klis*' meaning 'to irritate', 'to tease', 'to give pain'¹⁸⁹. From the same root is derived the noun *kleśa*, which is the 'primordial and ultimate cause of pain and misery'¹⁹⁰. *Kliṣṭa*, the passive participle of this root has the sense of something painful or causing misery ('tormented', 'afflicted', 'distressed'¹⁹¹) in relation to the causes of suffering, the *kleśa*. *Akliṣṭa* (the negation of *kliṣṭa* with the prefix 'a-') means absence of *kliṣṭa* or no-*kliṣṭa*. Zimmer defines *kliṣṭa* as 'anything which, adhering to man's nature, restricts or impairs its manifestation of its true essence'¹⁹². Koelman offers another understanding of *kleśa* in terms of bondage arising from inborn 'psychological habits [and] congenital psychical passions' that blind him, prevent him from discovering what his genuine Self¹⁹³. These are broad conceptions of *kliṣṭa* and *kleśa* although it must be remembered that suffering and affliction of the individual are the expression of the non-apprehension of one's true Self.

***Kleśa*:** These three related concepts, *kleśa*, *kliṣṭa* and *akliṣṭa* are also another important element of our psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra. The experience of suffering is seen as the condition of the individual and the cause of this suffering is *kleśa*. Patañjali distinguishes five

¹⁸⁹ Monier-Williams online dictionary at <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

¹⁹⁰ P Karambelkar, *Pātañjala Yogasūtra*, 14.

¹⁹¹ Monier-Williams online dictionary, translation of *kliṣṭa*.

¹⁹² Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, 294.

¹⁹³ Gaspar Koelman, *Pātañjali Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*.

types of *kleśa*: *avidyā* (nescience), *asmitā* ('I-am-ness'), *rāga* (attachment), *dveṣa* (aversion), and the *abhiniveśa* (will-to-live/fear of death)¹⁹⁴. The *kleśa* principle in Patañjali's text is described by Feuerstein as that which is said to 'circumscribe the fact that every organism, on attaining self-consciousness, finds itself in the existential situation where it has become aware of its own self-awareness but has become confused as to the true nature of this awareness, and the organism is, as it were, compelled to act out a false identity'¹⁹⁵. This idea is imaginative and attractive although it is not clear how Feuerstein believes this confusion comes about nor the role of 'others' in one's experience that contribute to the construction of one's identity. Although the assertion by Yoga and indeed other Indian schools of thought is that there is another 'true' identity which one is not aware of, this realisation is not necessarily gained by attainment of self-awareness. Yoga says that the base of this false identity is *asmitā*, what we call as the affliction of individuation, which leads to the ongoing misidentifications of selfhood and the modifications of the mind.

The attachment (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*), the 'emotive core' of the *kleśa*, signify the affective dimension of the *vṛtti*¹⁹⁶. The impressions created by pleasurable experiences give rise to a state of attachment which leads to efforts towards attainment of the object of pleasure or desire. The aversion, or *dveṣa*, is produced with a recollection of painful experiences, as a result of such past impressions. In general, there is a movement towards attainment of *sukha* (pleasure) and turning away from *duḥkha* (suffering/pain). Here the relationship between past impressions, in the form of memory, and the present experience arising with the modifications of the mind, is apparent.

¹⁹⁴ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, YS II.3, *avidyāsmītārāga dveṣābhiniveśāḥ pañca kleśāḥ*: 'Ignorance, egoity, attraction, aversion and fear of death are the five afflictions'.

¹⁹⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Yoga*, 64.

¹⁹⁶ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 110.

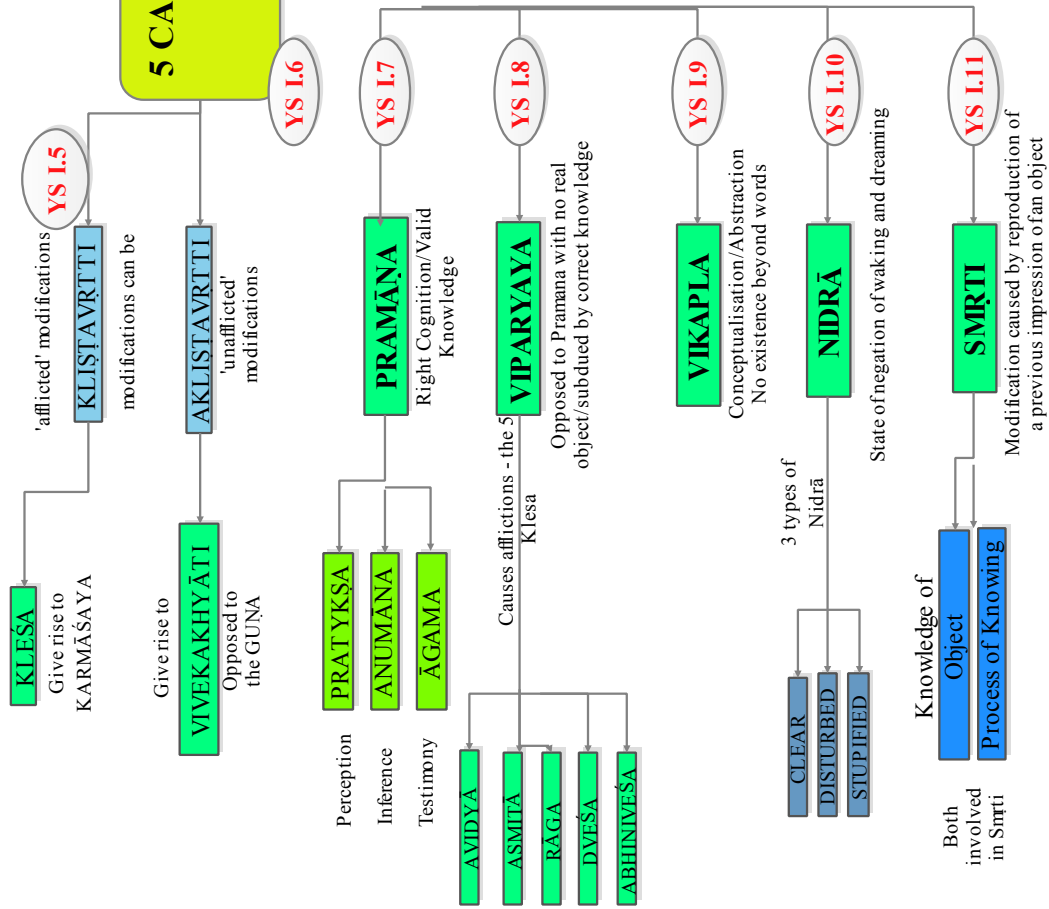


Diagram 3: The five *vṛtti* and their relationships

The four *kleśa* which follow from *avidyā*, are not always present in a fully manifest form. These can be in a *prasupta* (dormant), *tanu* (attenuated), *vicchinna* (intercepted), and fully *udāra* (manifest) form. This is an indication of the dynamic nature of the *kleśa* as they function in the mind in these ways from dormancy to full manifestation. This sets a ‘distinctly psychological tone of description of the *kleśa*, found in Y.S. II.4’¹⁹⁷. Balslev continues to discuss ‘an interesting feature of Yoga understanding of mind...where the emotive core of the concept of *kleśa* is obvious’, i.e. the ideas concerning the four *kleśa* of *asmitā*, *rāga dveṣa* and *abhiniveśa*. The impressions (*saṃskāra*) of pleasurable experiences operate in and support *rāga* or attraction. This can be interpreted in the sense of an arising desire for an object which has been experienced as pleasurable. The modifications of the mind related to this *kleśa* take the form of *gardha*, *tṛṣṇā*, and *lobha*, translated as longing, thirst, and greed, respectively¹⁹⁸. ‘Metaphorically, the seeds of *sukha-saṃskāra* or traces of pleasurable experiences are now germinating, actively pushing, and this will give rise to a state of desire, leading to effort directed toward the attainment of the objects of pleasure’¹⁹⁹. Iyengar considers the *kleśa* at three levels – intellectual (*avidyā* and *asmitā*), emotional (*rāga* and *dveṣa*) and instinctive (*abhiniveśa*).²⁰⁰

The emotive core of *kleśa* of *dveṣa* or aversion is provoked by the seed of recollection of pain. The states that arise are those of *pratigha*, *manyu*, *jighāṃsā*, and *krodha*, translated as retaliation, malice, revenge, and anger. On the one hand this *kleśa* can result in the modifications that lead to movement away from the objects of pain and on the other there can be *vyrtti* which have emotions of anger etc. With the *rāga-dveṣa kleśa*, the mind is caught in a constant push and pull between these two movements.

¹⁹⁷ Anindita N Balslev, “The Notion of Klesha and Its Bearing on the Yoga Analysis of Mind”. *Philosophy East and West* 41, no. 1, (January 1991): 77-88.

¹⁹⁸ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, see commentary of Vyāsa on *sūtra* II.7, 125.

¹⁹⁹ Anindita Balslev, “The Notion of Kleśa”, 80.

²⁰⁰ B K S Iyengar, *Light on the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, (London: Thorsons Publishers, 2002), 105.

Y.S. II.9 deals with the *kleśa* called *abhiniveśa*, the meaning of which is stated in Vyāsa's commentary as 'fear of death' or 'fear of annihilation' (*maraṇatrāsa*). It is to be noted that the fear of death, *abhiniveśa* is not simply listed under *dveṣa* or aversion, marking death as the most undesirable afflictive dread which affects the learned and is shared with the ignorant. Since there cannot be any such experiences in this life, the idea of 'previous death' is then used by Vyāsa to explain this persistent fear of death arising naturally and spontaneously from the accumulated traces of death experiences from previous lives and thus contributing to the suffering in this life. The logic which Vyāsa uses to support this is that this dread exists in spite of not having established by direct perception or the statement of an authoritative person. This, it seems, is a weak argument compared to other arguments such as dread arising as an existential experience of annihilation of an established, experiencing identity.

The *kleśa* of *asmitā* or the sense of 'I-am-ness' is placed next to *avidyā* by Patañjali. Balslev gives an analysis of this *kleśa* in terms of the three associations in the text: (a) *asmitā* as a *tattva* or category; (b) *asmitā* as a *kleśa* or affliction; and (c) *asmitā* as in *sasmitā-Samādhi* or the one-pointed concentration on 'I-sense'. Vyāsa and other commentators have equated the term *ahaṃkāra* of Sāṃkhya as *asmitā* in Yoga. Burley, for example, states the similarity in this way: 'in both cases there is a conception of a certain ability – namely the ability to formulate oneself as a subject of experience – as being a necessary condition of experience's possibility'²⁰¹. Although there are similarities between these concepts, we discuss these in more detail in Chapter Eight, section b. Patañjali defines it in *sūtra* II.6: *dṛg darśana saktyaur eka ātmatev asmitā*: 'Asmitā Is Tantamount To The Identification Of The Puruṣa Or Pure Consciousness With Buddhi ['seen']'²⁰². Here Vyāsa says in his commentary that 'Puruṣa is the absolute awareness and the Buddhi or the cognitive principle is the instrument of Knowing. Looking

²⁰¹ Mikel Burley, *Classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga*, 70.

²⁰² Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 123.

upon these two as the same is the affliction known as *Asmitā*²⁰³. The ‘I-am-ness’ which appears to be homogeneous, is a composite of the two ontological principles of consciousness and matter. These senses of ‘I-ness’ and ‘my-ness’ (*aḥamkāra* and *mamakāra*) in their intimate relationship are fundamental to the three *kleśa* which means that they are the necessary conditions for the other *kleśa* and it is not possible to have desire, aversion and fear of death without *asmitā*.

Balslev²⁰⁴ surmises that ‘to say that *avidyā* or nescience is the “soil” for all four’ is nothing but to say that the root cause of the phenomenal existence and consequent suffering is nothing but this ignorance. This perspective brings forth ‘an integral view of the mind’, where worldly existence (*samsāra*) is not possible without I-sense, desire, hatred, and fear. These govern the mind of the individual and perpetuate the rotation of the wheel of *samsāra*, and as long as the *kleśa* are present and functioning, suffering in the individual continues. To end all suffering is to end the root cause of suffering which is *avidyā* or ignorance and this requires the Seer to be established in its own nature (YS 1.3) by means of the cessation of the modifications of the mind (YS 1.2). The egoistic expression of desire, hatred, and fear cannot be controlled unless *asmitā kleśa* is subdued, or weakened. In order to do justice to this complex set of ideas that constitute the individual subjectivity, one has to see how Yoga practice gradually uncovers the two transcendental principles of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* through cessation of modifications of the mind. The solution which Patañjali gives for the ending of suffering is this cessation attained through practice (*abhyāsa*) and dispassion (*vairāgya*) which we look at in detail in Chapter Seven.

Patañjali lays down the causes of afflictions, *kleśa*, which govern the mind of the individual and these compulsive forces of attachment and aversion cannot be removed unless *asmitā* is

²⁰³ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 123.

²⁰⁴ Anindita Balslev, “The Notion of *Kleśa*”, 81.

subdued. For the *yogin*, bringing into awareness these *kleśa* and their effects in terms of the self-identity and modifications and their attenuation through Yoga practice, is the objective. The principle of *kleśa* is an important key in the psychological understanding of the system of thought in Patañjali's Yoga as it points to the frame within which the mistaken phenomenal identity arises with accompanying attachments, aversions and the desire for perpetuation of life. Patañjali gives the prescription to overcome these *kleśa* in YS II.10, 'These (causes of affliction), in their subtle form are to be overcome by the process-of-involution (*pratiprasava*)'. This process is described by Feuerstein as dissolving the consciousness through the prolonged practice of the various stages of meditation²⁰⁵.

Kliṣṭa and Akliṣṭa: Patañjali's classification into these categories points to the soteriological function of the *vṛtti* as well as a prescriptive formulation for dealing with the *vṛtti*. Those modifications which result in entrenching the mistaken identity further and continuation of *kleśa* are the afflicted modifications. The law of *karma* (discussed in more detail in the next Chapter) applies to the individual 'if and only if the modifications of the mind are rooted in afflictions'²⁰⁶. According to Whicher, '*kliṣṭa-vṛtti* refers to mental activity that helps maintain the power and influence of the *kleśa*'; and the *akliṣṭa-vṛtti* refers to mental activity that facilitates the dissolution of the *kleśa*'²⁰⁷. An example of the non-afflicted type of *vṛtti* is a valid cognition of the *anumāna* type which leads to the higher perception of the true nature of both *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*.

²⁰⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 65.

²⁰⁶ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 121 (YS II.12); The law of *karma* basically states that each action has a reaction and if the actions are carried out with an ego sense, these will create further impressions leading to strengthening of ego identity and continuation of the cycle of birth and death.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 123.

There is a striking metaphor of the mind, found in the commentary of Vyāsa on the 12th *sūtra* of *Samādhi Pāda* which gives us a sense of these two kinds of modifications:

‘The river called mind flows in two directions....’ (VB I.12)²⁰⁸

An understanding of this metaphor, which is descriptive as well as normative, helps one to see how closely the psychological, the moral, and the soteriological aspects are interrelated and incorporated into the Yoga view of the incessant modifications of the mind. This image of the ‘two directions’ of the flow of mental life, not only has a cognitive component but also the sense of agency of the subject which can affect the direction of the flow. The idea of ‘two directions’ is firstly, characterized by Vyāsa as flowing toward good and toward evil (*punya* and *pāpa*) which expresses primarily an ethical dimension related to the individual. Secondly, however, he states that that which flows toward discrimination (*viveka*) and isolation/salvation (*Kaivalya*) is good, whereas that which leads to worldly existence (*saṃsāra*) is evil, clearly indicating the soteriological perspective. This metaphor of the mind as a river flowing in two directions, however, acquires a specific technical significance as we have seen when the Yogasūtra introduces a broad division of all the modifications of the mind, classifying them into *kliṣṭa* and *akliṣṭa-vṛtti*. This, as we also discussed, involves the notion of *kleśa*, which we have noted above. *Kliṣṭa-vṛtti* are those modifications of mind, as stated in the Vyāsaśāstra, which are caused by *kleśa* (*kleśa-hetukah*)²⁰⁹, whereas the Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu describes these afflicted modifications as those which lead to suffering²¹⁰. The mind becomes the primary instrument of *Prakṛti* which needs to be subject to *Sādhana* or spiritual practice in order to take it towards liberation. In the practice of Yoga, the afflicted *vṛtti*, which take the individual towards identification and bondage through *aviveka* (or non-discrimination), are replaced by the

²⁰⁸ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, See commentary of Vyāsa on YS 1.12, 35.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. see commentary of Vyāsa on YS 1.5, 15.

²¹⁰ T Rukmani. *Yogavartikkā of Vijñānabhikṣu, Vol I Samādhipāda*, (India: Motilal Banarasidas Publishers, 1981), 57.

non-afflicted *vr̥tti*, taking one towards purification and liberation through *viveka* or discrimination.

Vyāsa in his commentary on *sūtra* I.12 also points out that the two types of modifications of afflicted and non-afflicted may arise in the same ‘stream’, one in the intervals of the other. Thus there can be reversals of direction of the flow of mental activity in quick succession where the *akliṣṭa* modifications arise in the interval of *kliṣṭa* ones and vice versa. What is important is that both these modifications lead to creation of latent impressions (*saṃskāra*) and these in turn give rise to further modifications in the mind. In this way, Vyāsa says, ‘the wheel of fluctuations and impressions goes on revolving’²¹¹, until the time when, with full absorption, the mind ceases its modifications (*nirodha*). It is also important to understand the notion of *saṃskāra*, which is translated by almost all commentators as a latent impression. As Vyāsa observes, any *vr̥tti* or modification that arises in the mind leaves behind it a trace – a *saṃskāra* – which, in turn can provoke and reinforce a similar state. Whereas the *karmāśaya*, the pool of impressions created through *action* in the world, are regarded as *ekabhāvika* or related to one life, *saṃskāra* accumulate over many lives and result in *vāsanā* which are inclinations and tendencies carried forward in future lives. It is important to remember that *saṃskāra* are described as *subliminal* impressions and tendencies which remain unobserved, that is, unconscious, whereas the *vr̥tti* are primarily in conscious experience although they include deep sleep as well. We shall see in greater detail the relationship between these important psychological concepts of *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā* in Chapter Six.

²¹¹ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*. See commentary of Vyāsa on 1.5, where Vyāsa speaks of this perpetual wheel of modifications and impressions (‘*vr̥tti-saṃskāra anisam cakram*’), 15.

d. *Pratyaya*

This is another key concept in terms of the psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra. Its definition is again not given by the author or by the commentators Vyāsa and Vācaspati directly and is translated in various senses by the exegetes. The term itself occurs in the text ten times²¹² and again following the general rule of *sūtra* form, we have to assume that there is a common sense in which it is used and its denotation is the same or very similar in all its expressions. The commentator who does attempt to define is Bhoja who defines *pratyaya* as ‘knowledge’ or *jñāna*²¹³ and also as ‘knowledge coloured by an object’ (YS II.20), which can be understood as ‘awareness of something’²¹⁴. Other commentaries seem to conflate *ṛtti* and *pratyaya* but the *sūtra* do seem to indicate a fundamental difference between the two concepts. Feuerstein speaks of this term as ‘belonging to the core technical vocabulary of Classical Yoga together with such *termini* as *ṛtti*, *citta* or *nirodha*, etc.’ and it is ‘specifically applied to the phenomenon of awareness as it presents itself in a consciousness that rests on an object of some kind’²¹⁵.

He further proposes that the ‘taxonomy’ of the term *pratyaya* appears in two ways. In the ordinary non-yogic states, they appear as *ṛtti* of the five kinds and in the states of absorption (*Samādhi*) as *prajñā* or what he calls ‘gnostic knowing’. *Prajñā* in the lower form of absorption is of two kinds based on *vitarka* (cogitation) and *vicāra* (reflection). Feuerstein speaks of *pratyaya* as a *relational* concept unlike *ṛtti* and *prajñā* which are classified by their *functional* characteristics. It is defined ‘in its relation to the transcendental Self as the permanent apperceiver of all ideation’²¹⁶. The term ‘presented idea’ is proposed by J H Woods as a

²¹² See *sūtra* I.10, 18, 19; II.20; III.2,12,17,19,35; IV 27.

²¹³ See commentary on YS III.17, (page 108) and YS II.20, Tookaram Tatya. *The Yoga Philosophy: Being the text of Patañjali, with Bhoja Raja's Commentary*, 66.

²¹⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 74.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 74.

²¹⁶ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 75; ‘Kant uses this in a similar way in speaking about transcendental apperception in relation to the pure self which...is the pure, original, unchangeable

translation of *pratyaya* that is cognate with apperception and which Feuerstein considers to be the most ‘congenial translation’²¹⁷. Another way of looking at this term is presented by Tola and Dragonetti²¹⁸. If *pratyaya* is a ‘presented idea’ in relation to the unchanging Self, then in relation to the phenomenal self it is ‘experience’. There are three reasons why it may be an error, in this context, to translate terms of the text in two or more ways. Firstly, it is difficult to accept that in a single treatise the same expression be translated by two terms, so different in their meaning as ‘cause’, ‘representation’ and ‘idea’. Secondly, Patañjali uses the terms in ‘rigorous manner’ giving the same ‘well-determined meaning’. Thirdly, the term *pratyaya* has a ‘specific and fundamental, well defined meaning, which recurs in all the *sūtra* in which it appears’²¹⁹. The etymology of the word comes from the root ‘*P*’ meaning ‘to go’ and *prati* meaning ‘towards’. The expression of this terms is ‘to go towards’ and it is in this sense that the term is translated as ‘presented idea’ (to the *Puruṣa*, or Self). In terms of what is presented to the Self, we get a sense of it from one occurrence of *pratyaya* in *sūtra* III.17. Here it is indicated that there is confusion caused in the mind by the superimposition of the word (language), object and ‘presented idea’ (*pratyaya*). The *sūtra* says that by separating and making a distinction between each of these, through concentration and absorption, one acquires the knowledge of the language of all beings. The commentary of Vyāsa²²⁰ gives a detailed analysis of the word and its association with the object, and the term *pratyaya* is translated as ‘concept’ or ‘meaning’ by Aranya²²¹. To our understanding if we translate *pratyaya* as the *experience* (total content of consciousness) of the yogi of the word and object of ‘*gau*’ or ‘cow’, there is no loss of meaning or incoherence of the *sūtra*. In relation to the 9 other *sūtra* if we replace the term *pratyaya* as

consciousness that is the necessary condition of experience and the ultimate foundation of the unity of experience’.

²¹⁷ John Houghton Woods, *The Yoga System of Patañjali*, 29.

²¹⁸ Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali on Concentration of Mind*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, India, 1987).

²¹⁹ Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali on Concentration of Mind*, 31.

²²⁰ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 283-285.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 286-288.

experience, we still retain a consistency of meaning of the *sūtra*. Dasgupta gives a similar meaning to the term as ‘conscious phenomenal states’ and ‘phenomenal experience’²²². The concept of *pratyaya* then, contributes to our psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra as the term relating to the idea of phenomenal experience of the individual.

e. Some psychological aspects of the modifications

Although we discuss the psychological aspects of the *citta* and *vṛtti* in greater detail in the Chapter Eight we touch on them briefly here. From our reading of the Yogasūtra we can give an overall concept of the mind and its modifications. The human personality can be considered as having three aspects: a) the gross physical, consisting of the organs of perception and organs of action; b) the subtle inner *citta* consisting of the changing states of inner experience with cognitive, affective and volitional components and c) the unchanging pure Consciousness or the *Puruṣa* which ‘illuminates’ the changing states of the *citta* and imparts awareness of these to the individual. The second aspect of the individual consists of the *citta* which we have translated as the mind and can be said to consist of the three components of *manas* (sense mind), the *buddhi* (intellect) and *asmitā* (‘I-am-ness’). The *manas* is the aspect of the *citta* which is the link to the external world through the senses bringing the sensory impressions to the inner world, organising them and presenting them to the *buddhi* for analysis and judgement. The *asmitā* aspect of the *citta* gives a locus around which the sense of individuality forms when the impressions are taken as belonging to this sense of ‘I-am-ness’.

From the description of the modifications given by Patañjali, it becomes clear that the modifications which arise in the mind cannot be considered as random fluctuations but depend on underlying mechanisms and principles which govern the elements of the *citta* which we will bring together in Chapter Eight on the model of the mind. These consist of the sensory

²²² Surendranath Dasgupta, *The Study of Patañjali*, (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1920) (archived ebook version retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/studyofpatanjali00dasgiala>), 120.

operations, *manas* (mind organ), *buddhi* (intellect), *asmitā* (I-am-ness), *saṃskāra* (latent impressions), *vāsanā* (inclinations and tendencies) and *smṛti* (memory). These interact in such a way that they give rise to various types of modifications in the mind that result in subjective phenomenal experience which is continuous and dynamic. These include ‘the cognitive conditions, mental, emotive and affective content, processes and activities, in fact any act or content of consciousness, self-identity, or mode of consciousness operating in the mind itself’²²³. Patañjali classifies these modifications into five categories and the question arises whether these comprehensively cover all the mental states. Our agreement is with Whicher²²⁴ and Rukmani²²⁵ who both consider, based on the commentaries of Vyāsa and Vijñānabhikṣu, that these are the main categories of the modifications and the others are derivatives of these. Further both commentaries imply that modifications which need to be dealt with by the Yogi are these five types and in dealing with these the others are also dealt with.

If as we consider, these modifications represent the ‘normal range of human functioning’, we have perception of objects, mental activity which includes conceptualisation, erroneous cognition, remembering and the absence of these, in the modification of sleep. The subject is the one who lays claim to these experiences and becomes their ‘grasper’ or owner. The explanation of how *asmitā* or ‘I-am-ness’ becomes incorporated in the experience is given later but it is the subject who having had the experience, comes to think of it as his/her own.

Pramāṇa, as an example of these modifications, consists of the direct perception through the senses, inference and testimony. Sensory experience (*pratyakṣa*) is said to arise as a modification in the mind, according to the description given by Vijñānabhikṣu as follows²²⁶: ‘the modifications of the mind are substances like the flame of a lamp, impermanent, changing

²²³ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 120.

²²⁴ Ibid., 119.

²²⁵ T Rukmani (trans), *Yogasūtras of Patañjali, with the Commentary of Vyāsa*, 36.

²²⁶ Ibid., 44.

their states, like liquid copper placed in a crucible, they take on the shape of the objects which are in contact with it'. Inference (*anumāna*) can be considered to be a set of processes by which one goes beyond the data presented (by the senses or memory). These can consist of interpretations and explanations, generalisations and assertions based on formal rules of reasoning and these mental activities are fundamental to human cognition.

These modifications, as we have seen in this Chapter, are of an afflicted (*kliṣṭa*) nature. However, there are modifications which are of the non-afflicted kind (*akliṣṭa*) which take the *yogin* towards liberation²²⁷. The normal range of psychological functioning is comprised in these *vr̥tti* consisting of 'three modes of everyday transactions', including perception of things (*pramāṇa*), mental content and objects which are remembered, conceptualised, erroneous or absent as in sleep²²⁸. All these are related to the sense of self identity which becomes the possessor of the modifications. When this happens, the *Puruṣa* or the pure Consciousness or the knower of the modification, is forgotten, veiled or concealed and there arises the afflicted condition of the individual resulting in suffering.

In summary, we have looked at the details of the mind and its modifications together with their psychological significance in this Chapter. We now take a look at the underlying mechanisms and subliminal factors which give rise to these modifications.

²²⁷ Liberation in Classical Yoga refers to the freedom from the false notion of oneself as the ego-identity

²²⁸ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 119.

CHAPTER SIX: CAUSES, CONDITIONS and CONSEQUENCES: The Roots of Experience

a. Introduction

The nature of the mind, *citta*, its functioning and modifications, the different types of modifications and their causes were examined in the previous Chapters. We now consider another layer of the mind, where the triad of *karma*, *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā* are at the centre of a subliminal mechanism that determines and influences what arises in the mind and results in phenomenal experience. Indeed, the focus of yogic practices is the accumulation of subliminal impressions, or *saṃskāra*, which oppose the ‘externalising mind’ (*vyutthāna citta*) in which there is a tendency towards interaction with the objects of the world. These are the *Samādhi prajñā prabhāva saṃskāra* or those impressions which are gained by practice of *Samādhi* or absorption²²⁹ which disinclines the *vyutthāna citta* and thus result in states of *Samādhi*.

Desmaris says that ‘the mind is not a tabula rasa, nor a straightforward storage and retrieval system, and a concept of memory alone cannot account for the temporal relations between mental phenomena such as cognition, dreams, actions and emotions... (and) in the Yoga system, the functioning of *saṃskāra*...*vāsanā*...*karmāśaya* give the mind, both conscious and unconscious, its cyclical, dynamic nature’²³⁰. Vyāsa points out the relationship of *saṃskāra*, *vāsanā* and memory in his commentary on YS IV.9 where he says that the manifestation of the *vāsanā* is caused by the *karma* and from this arises the memory which then causes impressions. Thus the cycle of *saṃskāra* to *vāsanā* to memory to *saṃskāra* goes on caused by *karma* and the individual is caught experiencing this cyclical process of *saṃsāra* unless recourse is taken to

²²⁹ See the commentary by Vyāsa on YS I.50: *tajjah saṃskāro'nyasaṃskārapratibandhī ...* in Swami Hariharananda Aranya. *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 108: ‘The latent impressions of samādhi gained by concentration inhibit latent impressions of empirical life’.

²³⁰ Michele Marie Desmarais, *Changing Minds: Mind, Consciousness, and Identity in Patañjali's Yoga-Sūtra and Cognitive Neuroscience*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2008).

Yoga²³¹. We will now look at these three subliminal elements of the *citta* that give rise to its repeated patterns and dynamic modifications, giving us an insight into the roots of experience according to Yoga.

b. *Karma* and *Karmāśaya*

The word *karman* (or *karma*) means action in general and corresponds to the ‘deterministic forces or fate as determined by the quality of one’s being, including past lives and one’s present embodiment’²³². The accumulated *karma* is often spoken of as ‘storehouse’ consisting of both good and bad *karma* which combine and mature in one’s life²³³. *Karma* is thought of as a mechanism that maintains the worldly existence (*saṃsāra*) arising from ignorance of the immortal, true Self (*Puruṣa*) and which leads to a mistaken ego-identity resulting in repeated births of suffering and dissatisfaction (*duḥkha*).

The term *karman* has three connotations which are different but related²³⁴. Firstly, it is an action of the subject or ‘volitional activity’. Any activity undertaken through the instruments of action (*karmendriya*) refers to this sense of *karman*. It means a ‘ritual act’ but more specifically ‘refers to the moral dynamic behind one’s intentions, volitions, thoughts and behaviour’²³⁵. Secondly, it refers to the accumulation of *karman* which is like an ‘*āśaya*’, (derived from *ā* and the root ‘*sī*’ ‘to lie or rest’), a ‘seat’, ‘reservoir’, ‘sleeping-place’²³⁶ i.e. *karmāśaya* or ‘action-deposit’²³⁷ and thirdly, *karman* also refer to the results or fruition of actions (*karmavipāka*).

²³¹ Vyāsa speaks of the ‘*vṛtti-saṃskāra anisam cakram*’, the cycle of modifications and impressions (VB I.5).

²³² Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 97.

²³³ In the Hindu traditions, *karma* consists of three types: *sancita karma* or already accumulated karmic residue or deposit (*āśya*) awaiting fruition; *prārabdha karma* or those which have begun to mature in this life; and *āgāmin karma* or those that are acquired in this life which will bear fruit in the future.

²³⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 108.

²³⁵ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 97.

²³⁶ Vasudeo Apte, *The Concise Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasisdass, 1933, reprinted 2011).

²³⁷ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 108.

The aspect of *karman* where the mind is the reservoir for the effects of *karma*, *karmāśaya*, and the dynamics of *karma* and its fruits, are set out in *sūtra* II.12-14. The principle is that as long as *karma* is under the influence of ignorance (*avidyā*), it is associated with affliction (*kleśa*), including a mistaken identity of oneself as the individual personality. The five afflictions outlined in the section above provide the ‘motivational framework’ for the person in the ordinary conditional existence (*saṃsāra*) living with a mistaken identity. These *kleśa* are at the root of the reservoir or deposit of *karma*, the *karmāśaya* in the subliminal²³⁸ mind. The effects of this deposit are not only felt in this life but also in future lives. As long as the actions are rooted in the ignorance of one’s true nature, they are considered as afflicted actions which cause repeated consequences in situations or births. When the actions carried out are meritorious (*puṇya*), they produce joyful results, otherwise unmeritorious (*apuṇya*) actions result in painful or distressing experiences. Every action leaves an impression or *saṃskāra* in the deeper layer of the mind where it awaits expression in more volitional activity. Koelman²³⁹ translated the term *karmāśaya* as ‘moral value deposit’ this being the sum total of all merits and demerits accumulated. In other words, every action in the ordinary course of human life is laden with value in terms of ‘an objective frame of reference...[and] the cosmic order is a moral one and the physical law of causality is extended...to the realm of [individual] ethical behaviour’²⁴⁰.

‘*Karma* is all that we do in thought word and deed’²⁴¹. The *karma* carried out with thought is the inner *karma* or ‘*manasa karma*’ whereas the other is the ‘*bāhya*’ or external *karma*. Patañjali says that the *karma* of the *yogin* are neither white nor black and Vyāsa categorises these *karma* as *kṛṣṇa* (black), *śukla* (white), *śuklakṛṣṇa* (both black and white) and *aśuklakṛṣṇa* (neither

²³⁸ Oxford English Dictionary: ‘(Of a stimulus or mental process) below the threshold of sensation or consciousness; perceived by or affecting someone’s mind without their being aware of it’.

²³⁹ Gaspar Koelman, *Pātañjali Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*, 50 (footnote 101).

²⁴⁰ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 71.

²⁴¹ Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy in Relation to other Systems of Indian Thought*, 320.

black nor white)²⁴². When the speech or deed is used either to benefit or harm others, these *karma* are said to be white and black respectively and the *karmic* residue is further strengthened by such actions. The white only *karma* are the ones practised by the ascetic through the three means of intense effort (*tapas*), study (*svādhyāya*) and meditation (*dhyāna*). These *karma* are said to be internal as they are performed by the inner instruments of the *manas* (sense mind) and the *buddhi* (the reasoning faculty). With this inner focus they neither act in the external world nor do they harm anyone. The renunciate is said to have neither white nor black *karma* as the afflictions have diminished away and the false identification with the body is no longer there. However, in the ordinary condition, every action will have a consequence and this can either be meritorious or de-meritorious or mixed. There are two aspects of the consequence: external where the result of the action is seen in the world; internal where the impression is created and ‘recorded’ as an impression (*saṃskāra*) in the subliminal mind.

Here the implication is clear according to Patañjali and Vyāsa, that the *karmic* residue is not neutral. It has an ethical dimension which is expressed both internally and externally. According to this thinking, one commits an ethical action if one either thinks, speaks or acts in the world. This can either be neutral in the case of the renunciate or will have an ethical consequence. The impression which is subsequently created by such an act will then be part of the *karma* deposit or *karmāśaya*, and will express itself in this life or another one subsequently.

In summary since each action carried out will have a consequence in the normal functioning of the individual, this will lead to creation of impressions through action – *karma* – which are then deposited in the *karmāśaya*. This forms the basis of future actions and, therefore, future lives giving continuity to the cycles of birth and death. In the case of the *yogin* who has purified himself of all karmic influences through the practice of yoga, there are no further karmic

²⁴² Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 355: YS IV.7 and commentary of Vyāsa on the same *sūtra*.

impressions created. This purification process is where the *yogin* ‘has transcended the relative field of action insofar as it no longer wholly defines the yogin’s self-identity and thus the yogin is freed from any tendency to misidentify with the prakṛtic [material] existence’²⁴³.

The root of all *karma* is located in the five afflictions (*kleśa*) discussed in the section above, these being *avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa* and *abhiniveśa*. With these afflictions, ‘the impressions...of a person then form a “subset” of *saṃskāras* known as the karmic deposit or residue (*karmāśaya*)’²⁴⁴. Accordingly, all ‘mental states, rooted in afflictions become the field of growth of the latent deposit of actions’²⁴⁵. The way in which this works is as follows: an experience of pleasure gives rise to attachment to that experience and results in a latent deposit of action due to such an attachment. In the same way, there arise deposits out of aversion. Acting out of a sense of individuality and ignorance impressions are left in the mind which are stored up in the *karmic* deposit. These afflicted actions cause repeated consequence of situations of births (*jāti*), life span (*āyus*) and creating more experience of life (*bhoga*)²⁴⁶ and depending on the quality of the acts whether meritorious or demeritorious, the *karma* produces joyful (*hlāda*) or painful results²⁴⁷. This is a clear indication that experience has a basis in the past actions which have been carried out and the quality of those acts determines the quality of future experiences.

We have seen that every action, whether done with the mind, speech or body, creates an impression in the deeper layers of the mind. This becomes the seed which ‘ripens’ in the future in the form of further activity and experience. Let us now look at another subliminal factor – *saṃskāra*.

²⁴³ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 104.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 99.

²⁴⁵ M Yardi, *The Yoga of Patañjali*, (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1979).

²⁴⁶ YS II.13: *sati mūle tadvipāko jātyāyurbhogāḥ*: As long as that (*kleśa* or afflictions) remains at the root, the consequence or result of it is birth, span of life and experience.

²⁴⁷ YS II.14: *te hlādaparītāpaphalāḥ puṇyāpuṇyahetutvāt*: On account of virtue and vice, those (birth, span of life and experience) (appear as) the fruits of pleasure or pain, (respectively).

c. *Samskāra*

The term *samskāra* is derived from the Sanskrit prefix ‘*sams*’ (in a perfect way) and the root *kṛ* ‘to do’ which has the meaning ‘to cleanse and perfect, ritual action, training, embellishment’²⁴⁸ but has other connotations such as ‘purificatory ceremony’. The latter refers to traditions of rites of passage such as birth and marriage rites and rites carried out at death, all for the purpose of purifying and transforming the participant at various stages in life or death. The term *samskāra* has been translated by commentators and scholars as ‘subliminal impression’²⁴⁹, ‘latent impression’²⁵⁰, ‘habitual potency’²⁵¹ and ‘subliminal activator’²⁵². We will generally use the term impression for *samskāra* although the other terms may be employed in the context of the authorship of these terms. In the Yoga literature and elsewhere it is generally translated as ‘impression’ although Feuerstein appropriately translates it as ‘subliminal-activator’ thus ‘stressing its dynamic nature’²⁵³.

The *samskāra* are continuously formed as a result of the mental activities and transactions of the individual with the external world. Every mental activity including thought, feeling and intention could be considered as an expression of the subliminal pool of *samskāra*. This conception of a pool of subliminal impressions, which are dynamically involved in the phenomenal experiences of the individual, is another key idea in Patañjali’s ‘Science of Mind’ as it not only explains the underlying causes of the modifications in the mind, but asserts the

²⁴⁸ Monier-Williams dictionary gives the following meanings of *samskāra*: ‘putting together , forming well , making perfect , accomplishment , embellishment adornment , purification , cleansing , making ready , preparation , dressing (of food) , refining (of metals) , polishing (of gems) , rearing (of animals or plants); a sacred or sanctifying ceremony; the faculty of memory , mental impression or recollection , impression on the mind of acts done in a former state of existence’.

²⁴⁹ Gaspar Koelman, *Pātañjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*, 105.

²⁵⁰ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *The Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 467.

²⁵¹ Bangali Baba, *The Yogasūtra of Patañjali: With the Commentary of Vyāsa*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996), 9.

²⁵² Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 68.

²⁵³ Ibid., 68.

continuity of this pool of impressions from one life to the next in the wheel of *saṃsāra* (birth and death).

In YS III.9, Patañjali states that ‘[Regarding] the impressions of emergence and cessation, when that of emergence [i.e. extrinsic self-identity] is overpowered, there follows a moment of [the condition of] cessation of mind. This is the transformation [termed] cessation’²⁵⁴. Also in the next *sūtra*, Patañjali says: ‘From the impression (*saṃskāra*) of this [moment of cessation] there is a calm flow [in the mind]’²⁵⁵. Thus *saṃskāra* are not only of great psychological significance, being the basis of experience in the present moment, but also play a significant role in liberation from the limited phenomenal ego and the cycle of birth and death.

When there is a repeated practice of certain actions with the creation of many like-impressions, *saṃskāra* create propensities and inclinations in a certain direction. In other words, the accumulations of related similar impressions create a flow of volitional and intentional activity in a certain pathway and there is propensity towards a particular type of action and experience. The *saṃskāra* thus become organised into various configurations which are known as *vāsanā*, (discussed in detail in section d below), which we can label as ‘traits’.

The word *saṃskāra* occurs in the Yogasūtra eight times²⁵⁶ giving us the general import of the word and also how it relates to the other concepts we have been looking at. In *Asaṃprajñāta Samādhi*, *saṃskāra* are retained even when there is a cessation of the modifications of the mind (YS I.18). In *sahaja Samādhi*, the *saṃskāra* which are created, oppose all other *saṃskāra* (YS I.50). Everything is painful for those who have developed discrimination (such a person is a ‘*vivekin*’) whether caused by anguish, or *saṃskāra* or the contrary nature of the *guṇa* (YS II.15). When the *saṃskāra* (of cessation) are established, there is a calm (peaceful) flow of mind

²⁵⁴ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, translation of YS I.2, 100.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., YS III.10, 101.

²⁵⁶ See YS I.18, I.50; II.15; III.9, III.10, III.18; IV. 9, IV.27.

(*praśāntavāhitā*) (YS III.10). In *sūtra* III.18, we get the definite idea that the *saṃskāra* are a result of previous mental activity. Here Patañjali states that the *yogin* can acquire knowledge of previous births by a direct perception of the *saṃskāra*. In other words, *saṃskāra* is ‘an active residuum of experience’²⁵⁷ and Feuerstein says that these ‘power the machinery of consciousness’²⁵⁸. A further reference to the active nature of *saṃskāra* is indicated in YS III.9 in which Patañjali describes two general categories of *saṃskāra*: one leading towards *vyutthāna* or externalisation of *citta* and the other leading towards *nirodha* or cessation. This aspect is described in the context of Vyāsa’s commentary on YS I.14, which suggests that *abhyāsa* or intense effort has the effect of not being interrupted by *vyutthāna-saṃskāra*. Vyāsa in his commentary on YS I.14 makes a reference to YS III.9 mentioned above. The translation of this is given by Raveh:

When *vyutthāna-saṃskāra*-s (activating the consciousness in external, object-centred mode) are overpowered, and *nirodha-saṃskāra*-s (enabling consciousness to turn inwards) emerge, this is *nirodha-pariṇāma* (*nirodha* transformation), characterized by (increasing) moments of cessation (or “no-mind”).

Raveh also notes that Patañjali ‘relocates’ the idea of cessation of the modifications of the mind to the ‘sub-*vṛtti* *saṃskāra* level, that is to the psychological substratum underlying the mental terrain’²⁵⁹. He speaks of this as ‘the narrative of a “struggle” between externality and internality at the consciousness level, depicted here from the *saṃskāra* angle’²⁶⁰. This is a clear pointer of the psychological aspects of *saṃskāra* which we elaborate on in a later section. However, although there is a tension between the externalising and internalising tendencies, there are two aspects of *saṃskāra* which we must note. Firstly, the various *saṃskāra* or latent impressions have an activity level which is determined by the strength of the impressions which have been created in the processes of the mind. The greater the strength of these impressions, the more

²⁵⁷ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 68.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁵⁹ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 30-31.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

likely they are to express themselves in the mind as modifications. Secondly, implied in the idea that there is a strength level of each type of *saṃskāra*, there is also a competing hierarchy or dominance of *saṃskāra*. The greater the strength of one type of *saṃskāra*, the greater the likelihood of its expression over other *saṃskāra* hence the notion in YS III.9²⁶¹. Here the strength of the *saṃskāra* of cessation created through intense practice (*abhyāsa*) result in the domination over *saṃskāra* which are externalising and activating. Similarly, in YS I.18, the constant practice of supreme detachment (*para-vairāgya*) strengthens these *saṃskāra* resulting in the cessation of the modifications of the mind²⁶². It must be also noted that the tension arises only in the case of the practice of Yoga, otherwise in the state of ignorance (*avidyā*), life experience is predominantly one of externalisation.

That there is a tension between various types of *saṃskāra* is also expressed in YS I.50: ‘The latent impressions born of such knowledge (through discrimination) is opposed to the formation of other latent impressions’. According to Patañjali, there will be a propensity of certain strengthened *saṃskāra* to express themselves over others and we can surmise that the activity of the *citta* is based upon sense impressions caused by the senses coming in contact with the object of the senses on the one hand, and the predominant *saṃskāra* associated with these sense impressions which are stored in the *citta*, on the other. The psychological principle indicated here is that the knowledge that is derived about the object is not only the result of the perceptual differences but also the ‘colouring’ of this knowledge by the *saṃskāra*. To illustrate this, suppose the object before one is a cat; that is the knowledge derived through the specific attributes of that object which belong to the category ‘cat’. Previous impressions associated with the cat in the form of *saṃskāra* at the same time ‘colour’ this knowledge in the form of ‘I like

²⁶¹ YS III.9: The subjugation of the latent impressions of the manifest state – (*vyutthāna*) and the appearance of the arrested state of mind (is) the mutation of (that very) arrested state of mind. (This mutation) is linked to the mind at (every) moment of that arrested state of mind.

²⁶² YS I.18: (*Asaṃprajñāta* is) the other kind of *samādhi* which arises through constant practice of *para-vairāgya* which brings about the disappearance of all modifications of the mind wherein only latent impressions remain.

this cat’ etc. Thus the senses providing the bare sense experience, the *saṃskāra* also have a dimension of the *meaning* of these sensations through the processing of raw experience. In other words, the sense-perception is given an interpretation according to the disposition of the perceiver and these cognitive dispositions are responsible for the moment to moment ‘coloured’ (*uparāga*) experiences of the individual. Chennakesavan suggests that ‘taking these epistemological and psychological facts into consideration, the Yoga thinker is trying to control the resultant knowledge by controlling the senses and the residual potencies [*saṃskāra*]’.²⁶³

Here we see the connection between the *vr̥tti* mentioned in the previous Chapter referring to the two categories of *vr̥tti*: *kliṣṭa* and *akliṣṭa*. Yoga practice leads to the *saṃskāra* of the *akliṣṭa* type being created and strengthened over the *kliṣṭa* or afflicted type. The important point to note from the psychological perspective is that the opposing *saṃskāra* co-exist but their expression depends on whichever happens to be strongest at that moment and to what extent it is being controlled through Yoga practice. Progressive stages of Yoga lead to the development of *akliṣṭa saṃskāra*, based on the right knowledge acquired by *vivekakhyāti* – discrimination – and in the final stages these are completely eliminated, resulting in a *citta* that is without any modifications.

There is a cyclical relationship between *saṃskāra* and *saṃsāra* (phenomenal existence)²⁶⁴ which Feuerstein describes in terms of one’s individual experience continuously giving rise to *saṃskāra*. The ‘tension inherent in the subliminal pool’ expresses itself in every thought and feeling. Every activity on the other hand ‘replenishes the subliminal deposit – in this manner perpetuating the vicious circle of phenomenal existence (*saṃsāra*)’.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ Sarasvati Chennakesavan, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, 98.

²⁶⁴ See the Diagram 6 on page 151.

²⁶⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 67.

In YS IV.9 Patañjali gives us the relationship between *smṛti* (memory), and *saṃskāra*: ‘There is uninterrupted, sequential relation (of subliminal impressions) even when separated by birth, by space and by time, by reason of the correspondence between memory and subliminal impressions’²⁶⁶. In his commentary, Vyāsa explains this relationship by referring to *vāsanā* (inclinations and tendencies – see below) which arise because of the causal connection between *vāsanā* and the *karmāśaya*. He gives the example of the cat life which even if it comes again after many intervening births, the dispositions of the cat nature will arise in that life even when separated by birth, space and time.

There appears to us some confusion about this *sūtra* as it probably refers to a comparison of *process* rather than a *relationship* between the elements mentioned in the *sūtra*: *saṃskāra*, *smṛti* and *karma* by implication from the previous *sūtra*. The process by which specific memory arises out of impressions created at a particular point in time: *saṃskāra* → memory → activating cause → recollection; similarly for *karma* and *vāsanā*: *vāsanā* and related *karma* → *karma* of this life as cause → future experience and action. The *ekarūpatva* (sameness) of *smṛti* and *saṃskāra* refers not to the content of these but to the *form* and the *process* by which they function. Chennakesavan says that the ‘difference between *saṃskāra* and *smṛti* is that ‘while the former is the unmanifested subliminal, the latter is manifested memory’²⁶⁷. At an advanced stage however, the practitioner of Yoga is able to convert the *saṃskāra* into *smṛti*.²⁶⁸

Chennakesavan suggests that as in Freud’s conception of mental processes, where the ‘unconscious is the determining factor of life’s activities, the conscious forming only a very thin crust of the mental make-up’ so in the Yoga the unconscious potencies – *saṃskāra* – generate the life experiences and activities. This comparison of Yogasūtra idea of *saṃskāra* with Freud’s

²⁶⁶ T Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu, Vol IV, Kaivalyapāda*, (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1989), 22-23.

²⁶⁷ Sarasvati Chennakesavan, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, 79.

²⁶⁸ YS III.18: *saṃskāra saksat karnat purva jati jnanam*: Through the direct perception of the *saṃskāra*, the knowledge of previous births (is acquired).

concept of the unconscious is misleading as the similarity is limited to a superficial resemblance. The latter is conceived as that which is *actively repressed*, whereas the former is seen as the result of continuous feeding and storing of impressions through moment to moment experience.

The persistence and continuity of *saṃskāra* in the non-yogic life is alluded to by Ganganath Jha who illustrates this by the plant metaphor: ‘The *saṃskāra* are like the roots stuck deep in the soil which grow with the growth of the plant above, but even when the plant above is destroyed, the roots remain undisturbed and may again shoot forth as plants whenever they may get a favourable season’²⁶⁹. Yoga praxis is the means by which these ‘roots’ can be eliminated finally, before the attainment of the state of *Kaivalya*.

Patañjali gives us a conception of the mind which has different levels of existence and process in which the subliminal part is a powerful determinant of conscious life. There is also a ‘preconscious’ level where the immediate past can be recollected with the processing of memory. In the subliminal, there are also the habitual patterns, or ‘traits’, formed as a result of previous impressions – the *vāsanā* – which we now discuss.

d. *Vāsanā*

Vāsanā is a derivative of the root ‘*vas*’, ‘to dwell, abide, remain’ and occurs only twice in the Yogasūtra (YS IV.8 and 24). As mentioned above, *vāsanā* are related impressions which organise into inclinations and tendencies observed as personality ‘traits’. These *vāsanā* incline the thoughts, feelings, attitudes and mental tendencies and give momentum towards certain choices and these in turn ‘expose one to situations that are then credited with, or blamed for, one’s fortune or misfortune’²⁷⁰. In other words, past actions stored in the residue of *karma* continue to have an effect on the present actions even if not remembered. Whicher states that

²⁶⁹ Ganganath Jha, *The Study of Patañjali*. 2nd ed., (Bombay: Asian Humanities Press, 2002), 99.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 102.

‘Within the *vāsanās* inhere the qualities of past action and of the fruits that are to ripen in due time, that is, in the present or a future life’²⁷¹.

Vyāsa in the *Yogabhāṣya* emphasises the relationship between *saṃskāra*, *vāsanā* and memory: ‘Just as the experiences, so also the *saṃskāra*. And these (*saṃskāra*) correspond to the *vāsanā*. Just as the *vāsanā* (so also) the memories, as memories are from *saṃskāra* which are separated (from them) by birth, place and time, And from memories again there are *saṃskāra*’²⁷².

The direct references to the term *vāsanā* occur twice in the *Yogasūtra*, both occurring in the final chapter or *Kaivalya Pāda*:

IV.8 *tatastadvipākānuguṇānāmevābhivyaktirvāsanānām*||8||: ‘Thence (follows) the manifestation (of those) subliminal traits only which correspond to the fruition of their (particular *karman*).

IV.24 *tadasaṅkhyeyavāsanābhiścitraṃ parārthaṃ saṃhatyakāritvāt*: ‘That (*citta*) though speckled with countless subliminal traits, is ‘other-purposed’ due to (it’s being limited to) collaborate activity.

Indirect references are made to *vāsanā* by Patañjali in other *sūtra*: IV.9, and IV.11. *Vyāsa* makes several reference to *vāsanā* in his commentary, for example, on YS II.1 he says: ‘The impurities or the dross in the mind arising out of the snares of worldly objects which are harmful to Yoga, are coloured by the *Vāsanās* of actions and afflictions from beginningless time, and they cannot be got rid of or dissipated without the practice of austerities’²⁷³. In other words, contrary to the conflation of the two terms *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā* by some of the scholars²⁷⁴, we suggest that these are certainly two different concepts used by Patañjali to refer to different mechanisms in the mind.

²⁷¹ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 102.

²⁷² Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, YS IV.9, 358.

²⁷³ Ibid., 113.

²⁷⁴ For example: ‘subconscious impression’ (J H Woods); ‘impression’ (G Jha); ‘residual potency’ (R Prasada).

For the ordinary person there are three ways in which *vāsanā* and *karma* express themselves: as a particular birth (*jāti*), as lifespan (*āyus*) and as experiences (*bhoga*). Dasgupta says of this mechanism: ‘These *vāsanās* are the causes of instinctive tendencies, habits of deriving pleasures and pains peculiar to different animal lives...[so] when by this fructification of the *karmāśaya* of a dog-life is settled on a person, at once his corresponding *vāsanās* of a previous dog life are revived and he begins to take interest in his dog-life in the manner of a dog’²⁷⁵. Further, if this mechanism was not there then any *vāsanā* could arise in any life and there would be no difference between one species and another in terms of their behaviour. In this manner the non-yogic person goes through an unending cycle of afflicted action carried out in ignorance and craving, creating *vāsanā* and together with the fruits of actions, gets caught in the *saṃsāra* of repeated birth and death as long as he makes no attempt to address the afflictions.

An interesting metaphor used by Vyāsa to explain the formation of *vāsanā* in his commentary on YS II.13 is that of a ‘fishnet’ (*matsyajāla*). The *citta* is compared to a fishnet which has ‘different shapes in all places and having beginninglessly a rigid form (*sammurchita*) fixed by the *vāsanās* caused by experience (*anubhava*) of the maturation of *karman* from the *kleśas*’²⁷⁶. We presume Vyāsa is graphically illustrating the way in which *karmāśaya*, *vāsanā* and the past and future experiences are related. The *karmāśaya*, *vāsanā* and the *saṃskāra* create a *matrix* for the *citta* which then determines the modifications created in the *citta* in relation to the external world brought to it by the senses. This is the experience (*bhoga*) of the subject within one’s lifespan (*āyus*). Although we need not go into the details of the theory of *karma*, it is important to understand the psychological aspects of *karma* given above and how they determine the content of this experience.

²⁷⁵ Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy in Relation to other Systems of Indian Thought*, 324.

²⁷⁶ Yogabhāṣya quoted by Karl Potter, “Karma Theory and Its Interpretation in Some Indian Philosophical Systems”, in *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* edited by W Doniger O’Flaherty, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 2007), 248.

Potter considers the way in which the *karmāśaya*, as it matures, co-operates with the *vāsanā* to determine how these karmic potentials will be worked out. He says that ‘these *vāsanās* appear to be decisions arrived at by the internal organ to seek certain kinds of outcomes’ although he does not elaborate on how this may be exactly worked out but indicating that *vāsanā* develop into desires and these are the springboard of actions which in turn have to relate to the *karma* as they fructify. In this sense there must be some way in which *karma* and *vāsanā* have to be co-ordinated to produce the ‘right’ experiences in that life. Hariharananda puts this relationship in another metaphor: ‘*Vāsanā* does not of itself produce any consequence or result, but for any *karmāśaya* to produce results the appropriate *Vāsanā* is necessary. *Karmāśaya* is like a seed, *vāsanā* is like a field, the birth or embodiment is like a tree and experience (of pleasure or pain) is like its fruits’²⁷⁷. This agricultural analogy explains to some extent the connection between the *karmāśaya*, *vāsanā* and experience. *Karmāśaya* or *vāsanā* on their own have no power to bring birth and experience but have to ‘co-operate’ to fructify into the experience of pleasure and pain. It however, falls short of explaining exactly how each seed is associated with its field and how and when the seed is nourished to bring about its growth and the subsequent fructification process. There is also the possibility that there may not be a correspondence between the *karmāśaya* and *vāsanā* in a life so that there develops a tension between the *karma* as they express in outer circumstances and the inclinations towards certain types of experiences. This point appears not to have been noted by scholars and commentators.

In *sūtra* IV.11 Patañjali gives the dimensions of *vāsanā* or those four things that hold it together and in the absence of which, the *vāsanā* is no longer sustained. These are: *hetu* (purpose or cause); *phala* (fruit, result or effect); means of support (*ālambana*) and *āśrya* (place of refuge, reservoir). How do these come together to construct the *vāsanā* in relation to other factors? We have seen that the *karma* (an action) produces a *saṃskāra* because the act is performed with an

²⁷⁷ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, YS II.12, 133.

expectation of a result (*phala*). This propensity for acquiring the result again requires *āśih* (the will to live)²⁷⁸ or the impelling force of the *kleśa* or afflictions. In the latter case it may be said that *abhiniveśa* (the will to live, but in an afflicted sense) and the attraction (*rāga*) or aversion (*dveṣa*) with identity (*asmitā*) and ignorance of one's true nature (*avidyā*) all create a momentum to attain the fruit of the action. In other words, here we find a mechanism suggested for volition and motivation which we discuss further in the following chapter. *Vāsanā* in this sense has the component of *hetu* (cause) arising from past action deposited in the *karmāśaya*, as well as the fruit of the action (*phala*) anticipated in carrying out the action. After due time with the conducive conditions, the result of the *karma* is produced but until then the *karma saṃskāra* remains in the *karmāśaya* which is its refuge. The *ālambana* or the support of the *vāsanā* is the object which may be physical or not, towards which there is an inclination and which sustains the *vāsanā*.

All these elements of the *vāsanā* are required to 'hold' it together and the *vāsanā* ceases to exist if any of these is absent. In the context of Yoga praxis Patañjali offers a solution to each of these elements so that the *vāsanā* may be eliminated as this is the basis of the modifications that occur in the *citta*. The *hetu* (cause) in this case, either *āśis* (primal-will) or *kleśa*, can be removed by *para-vairāgya* in the case of *āśis* and *Kriyā* yoga in the case of the *kleśa*. Karambelkar points out that Patañjali uses two different terms in the sense of 'will to live' – *āśis* and *abhiniveśa*. 'The former is a benign (impartial) force essential for maintenance of the life activities and so also for yoga. The *abhiniveśa* is a *kleśa*, which causes troubles, as it is associated with the egotism, i.e., *asmitā*, another *kleśa*'²⁷⁹ and is thus the basis of fear for loss of one's individuality. The desire for the fruit (*phala*) can be removed with *vairāgya* and its related practices which also remove the support (*ālambana*) as there is no interest in the object of the *vāsanā*. In the

²⁷⁸ See YS IV.10: *tāsāmanāditvaṃ cāśiṣo nityatvāt*. And these (*saṃskāra*) are without beginning because of the perpetuity of the primordial will.

²⁷⁹ P Karambelkar, *Pātañjala Yogasūtra*, 492.

final stages of yoga practice the latent impressions (*saṃskāra*) are removed and with this, there is no ‘refuge’ for the *vāsanā*. The mechanism of action which in the ordinary person leads towards the ‘*vyutthāna citta*’, the externalising mind which relates to the world through desires, then is what the practice of Yoga deals with. Here we can see how Patañjali aligns the practical techniques of Yoga to the psychological dimensions of the human subject.

We have seen above that when an action is done or an experience is undergone, there is a resultant *saṃskāra* or impression created in the *citta*. This impression is preserved in the reservoir of *karma* for giving a result (*phala*) at some point in time. This reservoir, or *karmāśaya*, then maintains the *karma* until the time of their fructification, although there is no reference in the Yogasūtra as to the mechanisms by which this is maintained nor the manner in which the *karma saṃskāra* are acquired by the reservoir. The basis of postulating the existence of such a reservoir is that, on the one hand, the result of the actions are visible at a point in time and on the other, the phenomenon of memory itself. If we say that the *saṃskāra* is an impression of the original experience, it will be a recording of all aspects of that experience including the sensation, perceptions, feelings and thoughts at the time of the experience. These are preserved in the subliminal as *saṃskāra* but are accessible to the *citta* in the form of memory and recollection of the experience, sometimes in every detail. Also if we say that *saṃskāra*, accumulated over one life or many, become habitual patterns of behaviour (*vāsanā*) and these are visible in terms of the person’s behaviour, then this supports the existence of the reservoir of *karma* or *karmāśaya*.

The memory of the experience is brought into awareness when the circumstances are conducive or a demand is made on a particular memory. Under ordinary circumstance, the memory of the person is related to experiences of this life and it may be recalled to various degrees even when there is a separation in place (*deśa*), and time (*kāla*) from the present ones. In the case of the

yogin who has, through practice, transcended the limitations of time, place and even birth, the individual can recollect the experiences of previous lives²⁸⁰.

In the case of a *vāsanā*, which is an inclination to carry out a particular action, there is an activation of some *saṃskāra* which gives rise to this impulse and this process has a parallel in the case of revival memory. The recollection of an experience is bringing to awareness impressions related to that experience. The *sūtra* IV.9 can thus be translated as: ‘On account of the oneness of form (*ekarūpatva*) of *saṃskāra* (impression, and by extension as per Vyāsa, the *vāsanā*), and *smṛti* (memory), there is closeness (*antarāya* i.e. immediate conversion of *saṃskāra* and *smṛti*) even when the two are separated by birth, locality and time’.

In summary, the concepts of *karma*, *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā* and related ideas give a clear picture of the underlying subliminal mechanisms of the modifications of the mind in Patañjali’s ‘Science of the Mind’. We can summarise these processes in this way: an act (*karma* of mind, speech or body) carried out in the normal manner with an intention for the result, creates an impression (*karma saṃskāra*) locating itself in the reservoir of such impressions (*karmāśaya*). The act could be either *puṇya* (meritorious) or *pāpa* (unmeritorious) depending on the quality of the act²⁸¹. The *saṃskāra* create dispositional tendencies (*vāsanā*) which, when activated, result in afflictions (*kleśa*) which perpetuate further actions and impressions and are responsible for keeping the subject in *saṃsāra* (cycle of birth and death). The *citta* undergoes modifications of various kinds in the process of the expression of the *vāsanā* resulting in the phenomenal experience and the cessation of these modifications is the aim and purpose of the *yogin*. Without any attempt to cease these modifications, the *kleśa*, or causes of afflictions, result in continued suffering for the individual and the continuation of *saṃsāra*. The concepts of *karma*, *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā* make up the psychological system of the underlying subliminal mechanisms giving

²⁸⁰ See YS III.52 Through *saṃyama* on moment (*kṣaṇa*) (and) its sequence or succession (*krama*), knowledge arises from (that) discernment or discrimination and YS IV.12: Past (and) future exist in their essential forms, (The difference is only) in the characteristics (of the forms) at different times or phases (i.e. past, present and future).

²⁸¹ Karl Potter, “Karma Theory and Its Interpretation in Some Indian Philosophical Systems”, 244.

rise to modifications of the mind in Patañjali's 'Science of the Mind'. We will now consider the experience of suffering in the individual when all these conscious and subliminal factors are in operation in the mind.

e. Roots of experience and human suffering

In *sūtra* II.15 Patañjali says that to a person of discrimination, *vivekinaḥ*, everything is suffering. He analyses this situation as arising from 'the continual transformation (of the world ground), (in) the anguish (and in) the subliminal-activators and on account of the conflict between the movements of the primary-constituents'²⁸². Patañjali argues here that the experiences of pleasure, happiness and joy are deceptive in that not only are they fleeting as a result of constant changes in *Prakṛti*, but also because of the inherent conflict of the modes of nature²⁸³. While others under the influence of past impressions and actions and their mistaken identity, continue to experience sorrow and repeated births, the *yogin* through right knowledge and *viveka* (discrimination), perceives the impermanence of pleasure and joy, and escapes the 'eternal flow of misery'²⁸⁴ which is life.

In his 'Science of Mind' Patañjali gives us the psychological understanding of the roots of human suffering and prescribes in detail the means of removing the fundamental causes of suffering to gain release from the limited mistaken identity and to establish oneself in one's true Self. Feuerstein points out in relation to *sūtra* II.15 that '[n]ature is continually transforming itself and offers man no foothold. Change is the very essence of conditioned existence...[a] basic anxiety and anguish which are common to all men – an insight which contemporary existentialism and psychotherapeutic schools have rediscovered for the twentieth century'²⁸⁵. Vyāsa speaks of the *yogin* who has become 'as sensitive as an eye-ball' which causes pain even

²⁸² Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 68.

²⁸³ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 146.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 69.

with a speck of dust. This is because the *yogin* has seen through the transiency of experiences of pleasure and pain and knows now that the ‘the Self (*Puruṣa*) is the ultimate security. Standing beyond the perpetual change of the infinite cosmos, the Self alone is unaffected by any sorrow, anguish and pain’²⁸⁶.

But where does all this sorrow and suffering arise from? What are the roots of experience? How does the experiencing subject take this phenomenal existence to be the reality? These are the questions which Patañjali answers through the pointers given in the *sūtra* although his main task is to give a ‘prescription’ for the elimination of suffering by means of Yoga praxis. Yoga practices are designed to strengthen the *akliṣṭa-saṃskāra*, which eventually subdue and eradicate the *kleśa* or afflictions of ‘I-sense’, desire, hatred, and fear, the four faces of *avidyā* or nescience, gradually assuring an undisturbed flow of the ‘river called mind’ (*praśāntavāhitā stithiḥ*; Y.B.1.13). This results in the steady weakening of the *kleśa* and the decreasing of suffering. *Nirodha*, or cessation of all *vṛtti* and the elimination of all *karma* and *vāsanā*, comes at the last stage of this spiritual endeavour when the *Puruṣa* has been completely disentangled from *Prakṛti*, reaching the state of *Kaivalya*. In this final stage only, is the end to all suffering for all time.

In this Chapter we have examined the triad of *karma*, *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā* which form the subliminal layer of the mind. Each interrelated element of this layer creates the basis for the continuous modifications of the mind and determine the individual’s moment to moment experience. We will now look at the practice of Yoga in the next Chapter, referring to the third key term in *sūtra* I.2 i.e. *nirodha*, or cessation, in our psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra.

²⁸⁶ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 70.

CHAPTER SEVEN: YOGA PRACTICE

a. The Goal and Practice of Yoga

Patañjali sets out the ‘Science of Mind’ in a systematic way in the Yogasūtra and we have examined the key concepts and their relationships in this elaborate psychological system. The modifications occurring in the *citta* are determined by the complex interaction of the senses, memory and the subliminal factors of *saṃskāra*, *vāsanā* and the pool of *karma* (*karmāśaya*) which have their roots in the *kleśa* (afflictions). Central to these activities of the mind is also the ‘I-am-sense’ or *asmitā*, which is the basis of the subject, the individual self. All of these interact to bring about five types of modifications in the mind which are the moment to moment experiential basis of the individual. We have noted that the individual is a phenomenal entity which results from the *saṃyoga* (conjunction) of the fundamental principles of two realities – the pure Materiality (*Prakṛti*) and pure Consciousness (*Puruṣa*) – and is rooted in ignorance (*avidyā*) of its true nature. This *avidyā*, which is the root cause of afflictions (*kleśa*), gives rise to phenomenal experience of existential suffering. The goal and method of Yoga is to overcome the modifications of the mind and “achieve” emancipation from the afflictions that permeate our everyday modes of perception, experience (*bhoga*), and livelihood²⁸⁷. The core of the Yogasūtra text is its practice and ‘the yogin is not a philosopher, theologian or psychologist in the common sense’²⁸⁸, rather this individual is primarily a *practitioner*. The practice is itself focussed on the inner experience and we can compare the *yogin* to a laboratory scientist rather than a theoretical one. It is the verification of the outcomes, explicit or implied by Patañjali in the text. For example, when he speaks of the practice of *saṃyama* leading to an *ekāgratā pariṇāma*, or the transformation of the mind into a one-pointed concentrated state²⁸⁹, this is

²⁸⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana*, 151.

²⁸⁸ Georg Feuerstein and J Miller, *The Essence of Yoga*, 1.

²⁸⁹ See YS III.12: *tataḥ punaḥ śāntoditau tulyapratyayau cittasyaikāgratāpariṇāmaḥ*: Then again when the quiescent and uprisen experiences are similar, (this is) the one-pointedness of the mind.

what the *yogin* observes, experiences and verifies following the prescribed practice. The goal of the practising *yogin* is the realisation of the *Puruṣa* in-itself, ‘behind and beyond the world of appearances, which for the *yogin* is naturally neither fictitious nor alien to experience’²⁹⁰. This goal is achieved by the practical application (*abhyāsa*) of the techniques of Yoga and this intense, dedicated practice leads to *nirodha* or cessation of the modifications (*vyrtti*) of the mind (*citta*), (YS I.2) which then results in the ‘seer getting established in its nature’²⁹¹.

Let us examine this idea of *nirodha*, the result of Yoga practice, in the context of the psychological dimension considering its relation to the nature of the *citta* and Yoga praxis.

b. *Nirodha*: the cessation of the modifications of mind

Since *nirodha* is central to Yoga praxis, it is a key term to be explained for a psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra. Yoga practice makes use of many techniques to ‘disrupt the continuum of phenomenal existence, to break the incessant revolution of *prakṛti*’²⁹² and bring the mind into the state cessation of the modifications. The term *nirodha* is derived from the root ‘*rudh*’ meaning to ‘restrain, control’²⁹³ and according to Feuerstein it is both a state and a process: ‘a process of restriction and a state of restrictedness’ and has led to confusion about this key term in the Yogasūtra. His argument is based on the definition of Yoga given in YS I.2 indicating that *nirodha* is a *process* rather than a state. The restriction of the modifications of the mind is not the ultimate goal of the *yogin* but rather the state of *Kaivalya* and, therefore, it cannot be a *state* which is being described in this *sūtra*. He further contends that Vyāsa has ‘blatantly ignored’ this distinction²⁹⁴. We believe that this is indeed a process which is being indicated. However, Vyāsa in his commentary in relation to the five ‘*bhūmi*’ or grounds/states

²⁹⁰ Georg Feuerstein and J Miller, *The Essence of Yoga*, 1.

²⁹¹ See YS 1.3: *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe’vasthānam*: Then the Seer abides in own essential nature.

²⁹² Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 71.

²⁹³ Monier-Williams translates *nirodha* as ‘restraint, check, control, suppression, destruction’.

²⁹⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 72.

of mind writes of *niruddha-bhūmi* which distinguishes it from the *process* of restriction, and this distinction does not give support to Feuerstein's argument. This latter term, *niruddha*, is an adjective translated by Monier-Williams as 'stopped, shut, closed, confined, restrained, or checked'. It can be considered as the state indicative of the attainment of *Kaivalya*.

However, for our purpose it is the *psychological significance* of this term, in either the process or the state of cessation, that is important to elucidate. Although Feuerstein points out that there are three levels of application of this Yoga technique: the restriction of modifications (*vr̥tti*), the restriction of 'presented-ideas' (*pratyaya*) and restriction of latent impressions (*saṃskāra*), we consider that the direct practice of cessation relates to only the *vr̥tti* and the other two are indirectly restricted by the restriction of the *vr̥tti*. This view is supported by interpretation of the *sūtra* on *pratyaya* and *saṃskāra* (YS I.18, 50; YS III.9, 10 for *saṃskāra* and YS I.10, 18; YS III.2, 12 for *pratyaya*)²⁹⁵.

Nirodha, as we have seen, is used by Patañjali in relation to the modifications of the mind, which he enumerates as *pramāṇa*, *viparyaya*, *vikalpa*, *nidrā* and *smṛti*. How are these modifications of the mind going to be restricted or ceased and what are the mental mechanisms operating in this practice? The first type of modification is based on either the contact of the senses with external objects (*pratyakṣa*), inferences related to sensory input (*anumāna*) or that which is read or heard as testimony (*āgama*). All these are restricted when the mind withdraws its attention from these direct or derived contacts with the external objects. We believe it is a *dual process* of removing attention from the sensory input on the one hand and directing it towards an 'internal' object on the other. The restriction goes further when the modifications related to conceptualisations in the mind are restricted by attention becoming fixed on '*ānanda*' (happiness, representing the affective dimension of the mind) and on *asmitā* (the 'I-am-sense').

²⁹⁵ In this regard for example, YS II.9 says that the *saṃskāra* of cessation (*nirodha*) inhibit the *saṃskāra* of externalisation (*vyutthāna*) which points to the indirect restriction of the *saṃskāra*.

Thus there is a progressive restriction of the modifications through the attention being directed to more and more ‘internal’ objects ending with the ‘I-am-sense’ in the stages of the first type of *Samādhi*, the *Samprajñāta* varieties of absorption.

There appears to be a logical hierarchy in the five modifications and their restriction. Considering *vikalpa* (conceptualisation) modifications, the restriction applies to holding the attention on one idea to the exclusion of the other, another deliberate and conscious process of the mind. The fourth modification of *nidrā*, or sleep, may not be so easy to restrict, as the mind in its initial stages of practice of Yoga, tends towards a sleepy state rather than a state of alertness and focus (see Vyāsa’s classification of the states of mind. Here the sleepy state is the ‘*mūḍha*’ state where the level of alertness can be said to be much lower). Perhaps the most difficult to restrict is the modifications related to memory (*smṛti*) which ‘constantly populates the consciousness space with thoughts, images and moods’²⁹⁶.

Whicher takes a different line of thinking in relation to *nirodha* which he describes as ‘one of the most difficult terms employed in Yoga’²⁹⁷. The usual meanings ascribed to *nirodha* such as ‘inhibition’, ‘restriction’ and ‘control’, are problematic, according to him, as they emphasise ‘an ontological negation or dissolution of the mind and its functioning’. *Nirodha*, he says, is not a ‘deadening of the mental faculties wherein the operations of consciousness, including our perceptual and ethical natures, are abandoned or switched off’. Taking the view of the commentator Vyāsa that the conjunction between the ‘Seer’ (*Puruṣa*) and ‘seeable’ (*dṛśya* or *Prakṛti*) is a superimposition (*adhyāropa*), this is said to create a confusion of identity between the *Puruṣa* and mental processes, resulting in a ‘mental self of delusion’²⁹⁸. Here Whicher suggests a radically different interpretation of the term *nirodha* that ‘it refers to the cessation of

²⁹⁶ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 73.

²⁹⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 154.

²⁹⁸ Vyāsa talks about this superimposition in *bhāṣya* of YS II.18 ‘Thus....(processes) present in the *Buddhi* are superimposed on the *Puruṣa* and he is regarded as experiencing them’.

the worldly, empirical effects of the *vr̥tti*s on the yogin's consciousness and not the complete cessation of the *vr̥tti*s themselves'²⁹⁹.

We, however, do not see this as consistent with the overall structure of Yoga praxis for two reasons. Firstly, it is only in the final stage of *Asaṃprajñāta Samādhi* that the cessation of the modifications is established and this on the basis of an opposition between the suppression of the latencies of *vr̥tti* and the appearance of latencies of cessation of the *vr̥tti*. Thus in every moment of cessation an equilibrium is established which then results in a continuous tranquil flow – *praśāntavāhitā*³⁰⁰. Even at this stage it is not what Whicher describes as a removal of the 'epistemological power of the *vr̥tti*' but rather the control of the modifications which result in an equilibrium of the opposing latencies. In the other stages of *dhāraṇā* (concentration) and *dhyaṇa* (contemplative absorption) there is still not a cessation of the *vr̥tti* but rather their control to create unidirectional order in the modifications. If we further follow the causal chain of the generation of the *vr̥tti*, we see that the roots lie in the *saṃskāra*, *vāsanā*, *karma* triad and complete cessation of the *vr̥tti* only occurs when these causative factors have been eliminated³⁰¹. As long as these underlying causes are present the modifications will naturally arise. The task of the *yogin* is to keep on ordering them through *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* until such time as the *citta* is ready to move 'beyond' the modifications and thus to the complete cessation at the end of the practice.

The second reason for objection to Whicher's view of cessation of the *power* of the *vr̥tti* rather than the *vr̥tti* themselves, is the concept of *vairāgya* to be discussed in this Chapter. This term occurs in conjunction with *abhyāsa* in the *Samādhi Pāda* in *sūtra* I. 12 and defined in *sūtra* I.15 which speaks of *vairāgya* as dispassion, 'the controlled consciousness of one who is without

²⁹⁹ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 155.

³⁰⁰ See the YS III.9 to YS III.12 which give the three levels of cessations in terms of the cognised modifications and the latent ones.

³⁰¹ See YS IV.27 and 28 which suggest that with true knowledge the latencies are 'burnt out' resulting in removal of all modifications.

craving for sense objects, whether actually perceived, or described (in the scriptures)³⁰². The cessation of the epistemological power of the *vr̥tti* is in fact another process very much central to the idea of *vairāgya* rather than *nirodha*. Here what is required of the *yogin* is the removal of thirst (*tṛṣṇā*) towards an object, whether seen or revealed (*dṛṣṭa-anuśravika*), through the process of discrimination and mastery of knowledge of the object (*vaśīkāra-saṃjñā*). In fact one can argue that this is the method of reduction of the modifications through indifference to the objects by means of removal of attention from such an object. This technique of *vairāgya* addresses the normal tendency of the mind to continuously turn towards the world of pleasures and gratification by disinclination towards these. ‘The stronger the *vairāgya*, the greater will be his inclination towards turning the mind away from dissipating and corroding vices’³⁰³. The bi-directional river of the mind described by Vyāsa in this relation suggests that ‘by dispassion towards the sense objects, the flow of the river of the mind towards the sea of *saṃsāra* is checked’³⁰⁴. Thus Whicher’s interpretation of *nirodha* is inconsistent with the overall approach of the yoga practice and the indifference is a function of *vairāgya* rather than implied in the idea of *nirodha*.

We consider that within these lines of thinking and considering the process and goal of Yoga, it is appropriate and feasible to consider *nirodha* as both cessation and restriction. This is supported by the idea that the modifications can either be afflicted or not afflicted which in turn implies that the practice of Yoga would lead to the modifications becoming non-afflicted. This requires the *yogin* to change the patterns of thinking in the first place so that certain modifications cease and others take their place. This is further supported by YS III.9 where Patañjali states that the outcome of *nirodha* is the result of equilibrium between the latencies of externalisation and the latencies of cessation. In this case, then, it is not that one is consciously

³⁰² Edwin F Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 51.

³⁰³ Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy in Relation to other Systems of Indian Thought*, 128.

³⁰⁴ Edwin F Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 47.

ceasing the modifications but creating latencies of cessation by restriction of the modifications which then oppose the externalising latencies resulting in moments of cessation. What this implies is that *nirodha* works in different ways in different stages of Yoga practice and depending on which modification is restricted or which is allowed, different states of mind are created. The two yogic states are the *ekāgra* (one-pointed) and the *niruddha* (ceased) where, in the former, the past and the present modifications are the same and in the latter, the moments of cessation are a result of the expression of the impressions of restriction and latencies of emergence. At the subliminal level of the *citta*, the two opposing *saṃskāra* compete and it is the overall balance which determines the net *pariṇāma* or transformation of the mind. Thus, it will be clear that there is a psychological mechanism which is inherent in the description of the *nirodha* principle, involving conscious restriction of modifications, creating latent impressions which oppose other impressions of emergence. This dynamic interaction between the latent impressions and the conscious control of modifications, determines the nature and type of modification present in the mind at any moment.

The cessation of *vṛtti* commences in the stage of *pratyāhāra* of Yoga practice when the practitioner starts withdrawing the attention from the external world to the inner and begins to focus on internal objects, in the form of images or ideas. The cessation can be partial or total depending on the stage of the practice and in YS I.51 Patañjali speaks of *sarva-nirodha*, total cessation of the modifications in the final stage of *nirbīja Samādhi* or ‘seedless absorption’. The mechanism for this is described as *saṃskāra nirodha*³⁰⁵ whereby the very roots of the modifications are restricted through ‘lucidity’ of the ‘inner self’ born out of the absorption states which go beyond the cognitive. With the complete cessation of all modifications, that

³⁰⁵ See YS I.50 and I.51.

state is reached which is ‘commensurate with the final breakthrough to the Seer’s aloneness (YS.I.3)’³⁰⁶, the goal of Yoga.

What are the broad pathways by which this is going to be achieved? It is through practice and detachment, the pathways of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* to which we turn now.

c. *Abhyāsa and Vairāgya*

According to Vyāsa in his commentary on the Yogasūtra, there is a close interdependence between the *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*, the former representing the positive pole of practice and the latter the negative pole of dispassion³⁰⁷. The river of the mind, according to Vyāsa, flows in both directions, one ending in *Kaivalya* or liberation through *viveka* or discrimination and the other ending in repeated births in the wheel of *saṃsāra*. This ‘bi-polar process’ is a ‘gradual process of internalisation’ formulated by Patañjali. ‘The former (*abhyāsa*) may be circumscribed as the actualisation of the One and the latter (*vairāgya*), the elimination of the Many.’³⁰⁸ Singh, from the learning theory perspective considers these broad principles: ‘In modern terminology, *abhyāsa* may be conceived as the process of canalisation and re-conditioning; while *vairāgya* may be seen as a process of de-conditioning’³⁰⁹. The rise into higher levels of ‘affect-motivational development’ from the lower is by means of reforming new associations between higher goals and motives, according to Singh.

We have mentioned the metaphor of the bi-directional mind used by Vyāsa in his commentary on YS I.12. ‘...the flow towards sense objects is reduced by renunciation, and the development of the habit of discrimination, through *abhyāsa*, opens the floodgate of discriminative

³⁰⁶ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 74.

³⁰⁷ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 35.

³⁰⁸ L Singh, *Yoga Psychology, Methods and Approaches*, (Varanasi: Bharata Vidya Prakasana, 1970), 78.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

knowledge and, thus, the cessation of the mental modifications is dependent on both³¹⁰. In the commentary by Aranya on the same *sūtra*, he says that all other methods are included in these two approaches, one leading towards active engagement with techniques of Yoga and the other with disengagement with the world of objects.

What then is *abhyāsa*? In *sūtra* 1.13 and 1.14, Patañjali gives us the idea of what it involves: the exertion or effort (*yatna*) which is aimed at attaining stability in the state of cessation (*nirodha*) of the modifications. The conscious effort of the techniques described by Patañjali in terms of *Kriyā* Yoga and *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga is *abhyāsa*, whether it is the postural aspect or the internal disciplines of *pratyāhāra* or *dhyāna*. It requires the practitioner as an active agent exerting the will in the practice of the various techniques of yoga to control the modifications and bringing them to one-pointedness and then complete cessation. *Sūtra* I.14 further qualifies the operations of *abhyāsa*: *satudīrghakāla nairantarya satkāraśevitodṛḍhabhūmi*: ‘But this (practice) is firmly grounded when practised over a long period of time, without a break and carried out with care’. The continuity of practise with care and attention assumes Patañjali’s conceptualisation of the underlying principles of creation of impressions in the mind. The impressions have to be repeatedly created in the mind so that they develop a significant influence on the functioning of the conscious mind. As we mentioned above, the equilibrium of the emerging and ceasing tendencies of the modifications is acquired through the creation of the impressions of cessation and these can only become effective and established through long and continuous practice. One of the methods of this practice is the intense concentration on any one principle or object (*ekatattva*)³¹¹ which provides a ‘support’ to the mind in keeping its attention on one thing. And here Patañjali and the commentators offer many different kinds of support,

³¹⁰ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, YS 1.12, 35.

³¹¹ See YS 1.32: *tatpratiṣedhārthamekatattvābhyāsaḥ*: ‘Countering (the distractions is by means of) the practice (of concentration) on a single principle’.

focusing on the breathing etc. The *sthiti* (state) of absence of modifications is brought about by intense practice and leads to *praśāntavāhitā* – ‘the flow of quiescence’ of the mind (YS I.13).

Vairāgya is ‘an abstract noun formed from ‘vi’ (becoming ‘vai’), ‘without’ or ‘devoid of etc. + *rāga* (from *raj* = to like, to attract) fondness or attachment, love + ‘ya’ which is a suffix indicative of state or condition’³¹². The import of the word is non-attachment, detachment, or dispassion. According to Karmabelkar also, Patañjali is describing an advanced stage of *vairāgya* and not the initial stages of weaker forms of dispassion arising in the ordinary course of life. Feuerstein also makes a similar point that this ‘dispassion means more than occasional dislike or intermittent withdrawal; it represents a genuine achievement securely anchored in the depths of one’s being’³¹³. Patañjali speaks of the *vaśīkāra samjñā*, the perfect mastery of knowledge, implying a thorough understanding of the objects seen and unseen. In this relation Vijñānabhikṣu points out in his commentary that renunciation for objects arises specifically from perceiving the defects of indulging in the objects within the attainment of the greater goal of yoga, i.e. through a process of discrimination. It is neither an unexamined suppression nor repression, but discriminative dispassion. Here Patañjali points to another principle of the operation of the mind regarding the objects of desire: the firm dispassion arises from a deep discrimination, a cognitive process of the *buddhi* or intellect, in regard to the usefulness of the object in the achievement of the end of Yoga

The four stages of the development of dispassion are given in the Vyāsa’s commentary on YS 1.15 as 1). *yatamāna*; 2). *vyatireka*; 3). *ekendriya* and 4). *vaśīkāra*. Veda Bharati³¹⁴ depicts these stages as: the initial effort, ascertainment, pertaining to the single sense (mind) only, complete control and mastery. The first stage is the *yatamāna* meaning the ‘one who is making an effort to control’. This is an initial conscious turning away from the object every time it

³¹² P Karmabelkar, *Pātañjala Yogasūtra*, 31.

³¹³ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 36.

³¹⁴ Swami Ved Bharati, *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali (with the Exposition of Vyāsa)*, 209

comes to mind, practising dispassion for the purpose of achieving the goal of detachment. Again Veda Bharati considers that this stage includes aspects such as: resolving to discover from the *guru* and the scriptures as to what is of essence and meaning and what is not so in this world, uprooting the mind from attractions (*rāga*), understanding the nature of the freedom from craving and reducing desire, even though one is unable to give up the objects of desire³¹⁵. In the next stage of *vyatireka*, there is a turning away from the objects of some senses and not others, a partial detachment. The turning away is about the ascertainment regarding the blemishes of the mind and its objects and which of the senses have been conquered and which are yet to be conquered.

The *ekendriya* stage is ‘based on one organ’ implying that the process is now internalised in the single organ in this case presumably the sense-mind which faces the senses and this level of detachment is ‘preceded by knowledge of attachment and aversion’³¹⁶. Here the knowledge about the seen and unseen objects being the source of suffering are determined by the mind and the attractions for these objects weaken as a result of this process. Even mental conditions such as honour and dishonour are to be detached from and this leads towards dispassion at a subtler level of the mind.

Once this process is mastered, the result is mastery of the knowledge of the object, where with ‘the direct perception of defects, (there is) the absence of engagement of the mind even when in contact with the object’³¹⁷. This mastery reduces the time and effort one has to expend in moving away from the objects of desire and results in *prasankhyān* – the realisation of the difference between matter and the *Puruṣa*; there is complete mastery of all the senses and ‘*anabhoga*’, freedom from the influences of the objects. In the next *sūtra* Patañjali says that there is a higher form of *vairāgya* which is not based on the mastery of knowledge but rather

³¹⁵ Swami Ved Bharati, *Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali (with the Exposition of Vyāsa)*, 209.

³¹⁶ T Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu, Vol I Samādhipāda*, See the commentary on YS 1.15, 96

³¹⁷ Ibid.

through discernment between the *Prakṛtic* qualities (*guṇa*) and the *Puruṣa*. Thus, the basis of dispassion shifts from the discriminative knowledge of the object to that of nature of the *Puruṣa*, this *para-vairagya* being considered of a much higher order. The *nirodha* of mental modifications requires both means for the mind to flow towards the high ground of liberation. The pull of the objects of the phenomenal world is completely diminished by means of dispassion and the pull towards the *Puruṣa* becomes greater through *abhyāsa*.

In summary the methodologies of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* are to be applied together as each fulfils its function in Yoga praxis. Practice needs to be carried out with proper attention, over a long period of time without interruption to be firmly grounded – *sthiti, dṛḍhabhūmi*.³¹⁸ Vyāsa states that this firm grounding in practice is required so that the *yogin* is ‘not easily overcome by any latent impressions (*saṃskāra*) of the fluctuating kind’³¹⁹. The *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā* create desires for the things, beings and happenings of the world with a tendency to repeat the experiences which are pleasurable and stop those which are painful. There is a constant *rāga* (attraction) and *dveṣa* (aversion) towards external and even internal objects according to the texture of the *vāsanā*. The mastery is in consciously disengaging from everything which takes away the *yogin* from steadiness of practice. The normal momentum of the externalisation of the mind is broken through dispassion and effort.

The Diagram 4 on page 118 shows the elements of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* and their relationships.

³¹⁸ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, YS I.14, 36

³¹⁹ Ibid., 37.

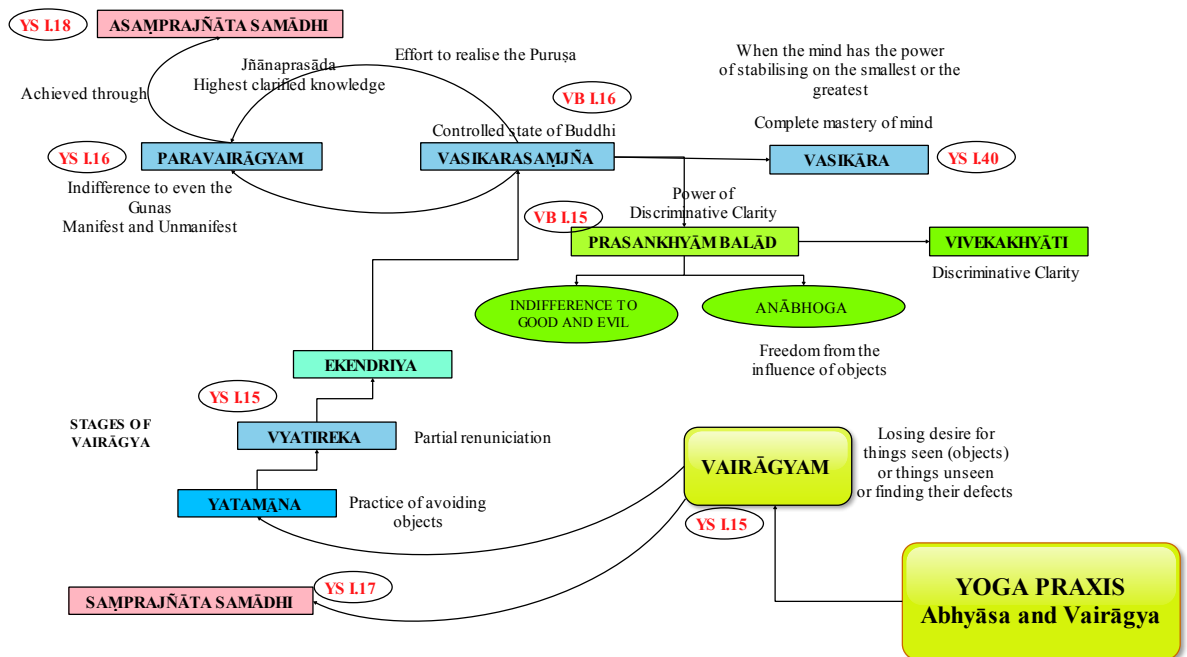
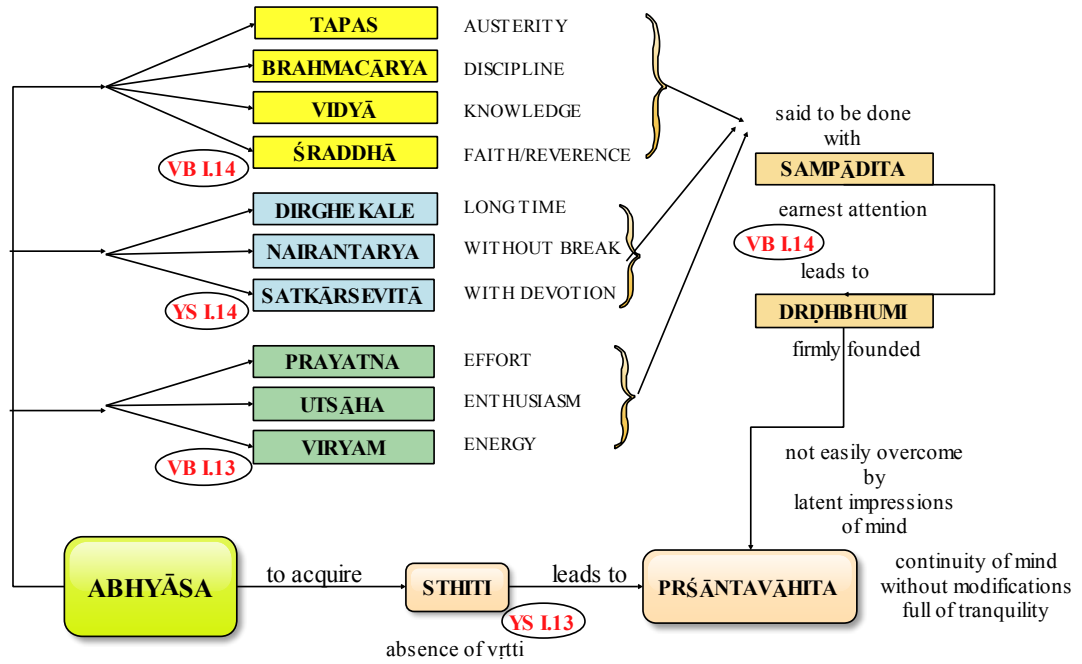


DIAGRAM 4: *Abhyāsa and Vairāgya*

With a comprehensive programme of practice based on a systematic ‘Science of Mind’, the *yogin* reduces the modifications of the mind to a high degree. With this comes the one-pointedness (*ekāgratā*) of the mind which, like a powerful searchlight, is able to illumine the subtlest aspects of one’s consciousness and, with the higher practices of *Samādhi*, the *yogin* is able to attain the final absorption in the pure Consciousness of *Puruṣa*. We shall describe the methods of *Kriyā* and *Aṣṭāṅga*, the specific systems of Yoga practice in detail now.

d. *Kriyā* Yoga and *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga

In terms of the results of Yoga practice, the mind is the key as it stands at the centre of all the practices whether it is being employed in ordering the external transactional world or the inner world of modifications, intentions, thoughts and feelings. This is also another good reason for calling the *Yogasūtra*, the ‘Science of Mind’. The two systematic practice approaches set out by Patañjali deal with all levels of the individual practitioner, who employs the various elements of the individuality in the attainment of the ultimate goal of Yoga. These two sets of practices are *Kriyā* Yoga and *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga, described by Patañjali in the second chapter of the text, *Sādhana Pāda* where the term *Sāadhanā* itself means that which ‘leads straight to the goal’ and ‘guides well’. *Sāadhanā* is practice of techniques that lead one towards the goal with appropriate instructions which are effective and efficient in their outcome³²⁰. The goal of Yoga is the attainment of *Kaivalya*, reaching total identification with *Puruṣa*, and all elements of the phenomenal person are employed and oriented towards this goal through appropriate *Sāadhanā*.

***Kriyā* Yoga:** In the first *sūtra* of the second chapter, the three cardinal techniques of practice are given by Patañjali as: *tapas* (asceticism, austerities), *svādhyāya* (self-study) and *Īśvara praṇidhāna* (devotion to the lord, *Īśvara*). The twin purposes of *Kriyā* are given in YS II.2 as the cultivation of the states of absorption and attenuating the causes of afflictions – the five *kleśa*. Vyāsa in his

³²⁰ Monier-Williams online dictionary translates this term as: ‘leading straight to a goal, guiding well, furthering; effective, efficient, productive of’.

commentary on YS II.1 says that these purposes are for someone who has still an externalised mind. This condition arises because of the eternal indwelling of the *vāsanā* accumulated over many lives, together with the afflictions which give rise to repeated action in relation to the pleasurable objects of the world. As long as a person is preoccupied with a life geared towards the gaining of pleasure and happiness in relation to the world, the individual can be considered to have the ‘impurities’ of afflictions which constantly externalise the mind. The impurities ‘cannot be removed without purificatory actions of *tapas*’ which provides a discipline that counteracts them. In YS II.43, Patañjali says that with the dwindling of the impurities the perfection of the body and the senses is gained³²¹. This attainment arises because of the disunion of the *vāsanā* and their tendency of preoccupation with the external objects of the world through the practice of *tapas*, which consists of ‘diverse exercises as fasting, standing still...observing complete silence...’³²². It must be noted that *tapas* is also included as one of the restraints of the eight-limb path together with the two other components of *Kriyā* Yoga, so in a sense *Kriyā* Yoga can be considered as a subset of *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga. This cross-reference between the two yoga practice systems has made some scholars to believe that *Kriyā* Yoga *sūtra* are an insertion by another author³²³.

The next component of *Kriyā* Yoga is *svādhyāya*, literally translated as ‘self-study’ or ‘reciting, or repeating or rehearsing to one's self, repetition or recitation of...any sacred text’³²⁴. This study is related, in particular, to the sacred texts involving reading, reflection and practice, gaining insight into the methods and knowledge given in these texts. Vyāsa further qualifies *svādhyāya* as the chanting of the mantra OM. This is the *Kriyā* or action which is taken through the medium of the *citta* and with this ‘ordering’ of the modifications of the *citta*, according to

³²¹ YS II.43: *kāyendriyasiddhiraśuddhikṣayāttapasah*: Through austerity, because of the dwindling influence of the impurities, perfection of the body and the sense organs (is gained).

³²² Georg Feuerstein. *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 88.

³²³ See Feuerstein, who states such an opinion in *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 58 and 78; Also Erich Frauwallner in V M Bedekar (trans), *History of Indian Philosophy Vol I*.

³²⁴ Monier-Williams online dictionary at <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

the precepts of the texts, there is ‘removal of false knowledge’³²⁵ about oneself and the objects of the world. The third aspect of *Kriyā Yoga*, *Īśvara praṇidhāna*, is the contemplation of and devotion to *Īśvara*, that brings about the removal of the nine obstacles to attainment of the goal of Yoga. YS I.30 states that such obstacles as sickness, doubt and delusion, sloth and erroneous conception are removed when there is devotion to *Īśvara*. This happens, according to Hariharananda because ‘whatever the antidotes to such obstacles, these are obtained through special devotion to God’³²⁶.

Aṣṭāṅga Yoga: Just as *Kriyā Yoga* asserts the triple principles of practice of yoga, the *Aṣṭāṅga* (eight-limbed) scheme of practice sets out a method by which the ‘empirical world is dealt with aspect by aspect in a similar manner to the reversal of the Sāṃkhyan process of world manifestation and actualization’³²⁷. All the activities of the mind, thoughts, intentions, actions are subject to the ‘heat’ of *tapas* and a purification of the attachments and aversions lead towards interiorisation of focus and the turning away from the external world of objects of pleasure and pain. Having thus purified and ‘integrated one’s physical, moral, psychological and spiritual components, the yogin can live in the world not being enslaved by worldly perspectives and involvements’³²⁸. Let us look at the elements of *Aṣṭāṅga Yoga* briefly before going on to suggest the significance of yoga practice for a psychological understanding.

The eight elements are set out in YS II.28 to II.55 and YS III.1 to III.8 and cover the descriptions of these limbs in some detail. The first five limbs are related to restraints (*yama*) and observances (*niyama*), postures of the body (*āsana*), breathing practices (*prāṇāyāma*) and sense withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*). The last three limbs are the ‘inner’ practices given at the beginning of the third chapter of the Yogasūtra and consist of concentration (*dhāraṇā*), ‘even

³²⁵ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 72.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 190.

³²⁸ Ibid., 198.

temporal flow’ regarding the object (*dhyāna*) and complete absorption (*Samādhi*). Larson says that the first five limbs are ‘largely practical, preparatory exercises which have little to do with cultivating concentration’³²⁹. This we believe is a mistaken conclusion perhaps based on the idea that they are external practices and therefore not related to the condition of the mind. Clearly stated by Patañjali in YS II.28, the practice of the eight limbs reduces or removes the impurities (*aśuddhi kṣaya*) which are really the reason for not being able to achieve the levels of concentration required at advanced levels of practice. It may not be obvious what connection there is between, say, the practice of the breathing exercises and achievement of concentration, but as Vyāsa points out, these practices are like ‘an axe (which) is the means of severing wood’³³⁰. More details of the first four limbs are given in Chapter Nine. Here we look at the last four limbs: *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *Samādhi*.

***Pratyāhāra*:** Vyāsa says that ‘just as the bees follow the course of the king of bees [or the queen bee] and rest when the latter rests, so also as the mind stops, the senses stop their activities. This is *pratyāhāra*’³³¹. In *sūtra* II.54 Patañjali says that with the disunion (*asamprayoga*) between the sense organs and the sense objects, the mind follows its own form, leading to sense-withdrawal. The mind, when it is in the mode of following the senses and their objects, is also in a constant state of activity. One hears or sees or touches something and the mind follows the sound, sight and object and various modifications relating to cognitions, conceptualisation and memory arise. When the mind withdraws from the senses and their objects, it reverts to *internal* reference points. There are two ways in which this can happen, either by sensory withdrawal or, holding attention on an internal object representation or thought. These are the ‘obverse and

³²⁹ Gerald Larson, “Chapter 4, Patañjala Yoga in Practice”, in *Yoga in Practice*, edited by Gordon White, 73-97, (USA: Princeton University Press, 2012), 78.

³³⁰ Vyāsa’s commentary on YS II.28 indicates that ‘the practice of the yoga limbs is the means of eradicating impurities as an axe is the means of severing wood’.

³³¹ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 245.

reverse of the same basic process'³³², so that when attention is focussed on such an internal object, the sensory effects on the mind are first decreased and then eliminated. As this practice is mastered so also is the ability of the *yogin* to block out individual sensory inputs at will, or even inhibit all sense activity at once, a capacity to control attention to a high degree.

Dhāraṇā: The three practices of *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* and *pratyāhāra* as they become established, the mind becomes fit for the limb known as *dhāraṇā*, defined in YS III.1 as the binding or fixing of attention to a spot or place: '*deśa bandha cittasya dhāraṇā*'. Feuerstein remarks that it should not be 'reduced to mean attention in general' as it is a particular technique of the Yoga system³³³. *Ekāgratā*, or one-pointedness, is the process underlying the technique of concentration and *samāpatti* is the process that underlies the technique of *Samādhi* or absorption. We then have a process, elements of the process and the outcomes which arise out of this dynamic, a framework for constructing the functions of the mind. The definition of *dhāraṇā* or concentration is given by Patañjali as holding the *citta* within a predetermined 'location'. This latter term '*deśa*', has been interpreted by commentators as fixing attention on either an internal, or an external object. In the latter case the eyes may be open or closed, depending on the object and sense chosen. On the other hand the limb previous to *dhāraṇā* is *pratyāhāra* which, in itself, is the precursor to the latter. In this case the attention is already removed from the objects brought to the senses and is internalised. This implies that the object of attention will be an internal representation of an object.

Karambelkar³³⁴ interprets *sūtra* YS III.1 differently, stating that binding or fixing is to a *region* of the *citta*. He then argues that based on this interpretation, the idea of *deśa* being a part of the body or an object is ruled out, contrary to the opinion of some commentators. However, if there is to be conformity in the last three stages of the *Aṣṭāṅga* yoga, based on the view that Patañjali

³³² Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 94.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ P Karambelkar, *Pātañjala Yogasūtra*, 318-319.

himself speaks of these three as a coherent process of *saṁyama*, then one cannot speak about changing the object from one stage to another. His logic leads him to the difficulty that it refutes the stages of the *Samprajñāta Samādhi* in which there certainly are different objects of concentration. Our view is that it is *not* a region of the mind that Patañjali is referring to, but rather holding of the *citta* within a location.

If we assume that at this stage, the modifications of the mind are still proceeding then it would mean that *deśa bandha* refers to containing the modifications within a certain *location*. In other words, holding the mind in a location means to have a set of very similar modifications arising in the mind and this, in effect, means holding attention on one object. This *sūtra* has not been given much consideration by commentators in terms of the function of the mind itself but it is a key to understanding the mind as it implies several interdependent systems of the mind coming together in the process. The whole thrust of the yogic practice is to develop this ability for *ekāgratā* with the expertise in the underlying process of holding attention in very specific ways, before one reaches the final stage of cessation of the modifications of the mind.

Dhyāna: In YS III.2, the nature of *dhyāna*, which follows from *dhāraṇā*, is described as: ‘Therein (referring to the previous stage), the extension of the *pratyaya* (presented idea) is *dhyāna* (contemplative absorption)’. The term *ekatānata* used to describe the process taking place in *dhyāna* is translated in various ways: ‘one-directionality’, ‘unbroken singular extension’, ‘one-subjectedness’, ‘continuous flow’; ‘uninterrupted flow’³³⁵. Vyāsa in his commentary considers this as the ‘flow of the mental modifications, relating to the same object’. Vācaspati Miśra states that the ‘one-pointedness is with reference to the effort of *understanding* directed to any object, there being the absence of desire to understand anything

³³⁵ See Feuerstein; Whicher; Karambelkar; Hariharānanada; Taimni.

else at the time'³³⁶. The *sūtra*, however, does not state any specific activity such as thinking or understanding, in relation to an object. We consider that this implies that the practice is not related to specifically contemplating on the object but rather that the *pratyaya* is of a single type and extended or held over a period of time.

***Samādhi*:** This is further corroborated by the scheme of the *Samprajñāta Samādhi* which would follow the practice of *dhyāna*, as being related to four categories of *vitarka*, *vicāra*, *ānanda* and *asmitā*. In other words, the *pratyaya* being held in the stage of *dhyāna* is specified by the type of *Samādhi* which is being practised. Further support for this interpretation is given by the definition of *Samādhi* in YS I.18 where Patañjali speaks of '*virāma-pratyaya*' the 'resting of the presented-idea' where there is a coming to rest of the *pratyaya* of *Samprajñāta Samādhi*. This is then consistent with *Samādhi* as described in YS III.3 where the 'presented-idea' having come to a rest there is only the 'object that shines forth'. Whicher explains that *Samādhi* 'involves a complete transformation of the usual mode of knowing or perceiving (*pratyakṣa*)'³³⁷. Before the attainment of *Samādhi*, the mind receives impressions from the world and imposes its own mental patterns on the object. In *Samādhi*, there is no subjective centre 'that can introduce any distortion of the object; there is only pure grasping, knowing'³³⁸. In this relation then *prajñā*, or insight, is not self-referred through its distortions, nor is it subjective but 'it is clear insight into the object...for at the moment of the *samādhi* experience of knowing, the observer as a subject separate from the object does not come into play'³³⁹.

These last three limbs of Yoga: *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *Samādhi*, when combined together as a practice, become '*saṁyama*' (YS III.6), that can be applied to any object leading to the direct perception and 'insight' (*prajñā*). With the mastery of *saṁyama*, Patañjali describes vividly

³³⁶ Rama Prasada (trans), *Patañjali's Yogasūtra, with commentary of Vyāsa and gloss of Vachaspati Miśra*, (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1998).

³³⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 194.

³³⁸ Ibid.

³³⁹ Ibid., 195.

how the mind becomes like a clear jewel that takes on the true colour of the object and becomes one with it. We will take up a detailed discussion of *Samādhi* in the next Section.

e. Yoga practice and the modifications of the mind

In the above section, we saw how gradual control of the mind through practice (*abhyāsa*) and detachment (*vairāgya*) is attained by the *yogin* leading to progressive interiority of attention, and absorption. The manipulation and control of the modifications of the mind is the basis on which this is achieved and involves its various elements and dynamic processes, being changed or transformed to attain high states of concentration and absorption. The *citta* is the central inner structure which can be in five states described by the level of activity and order in the state, the latter arising out of Yoga practice. The conscious agent, the *yogin* is able to control the activities of the mind to bring about increasing order of the fluctuations first, in one-direction and then, restraining them altogether.

In the first verses of the Yogasūtra, we can distinguish two ontological categories of *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*. The ‘ordinary’ individual with a mind which is in a constant state of flux with various types of mental activities and experiences taking place, is a manifestation of *Prakṛti*. This is the subject who is in a state of ignorance (*avidyā*) and with the four other causes of afflictions (attractions, aversions, I-am-ness and fear of annihilation) being present in this state of being, suffering is experienced. The second ontological state is that of *Puruṣa* (the Self, pure Consciousness) where this ‘Seer’ (*draṣṭṛ*) is established in the primary nature, separated from the material nature (*Prakṛti*) and, thus, in a state of aloneness (*Kaivalya*). Here the causes of afflictions and the effects of the material nature are absent and the sense of individual identity is transcended.

The bridge between these two ways of being is Yoga praxis. The practice within the framework of (*abhyāsa*) and dispassion (*vairāgya*), takes the elements of the material nature, in particular

the *citta*, towards the inwardness of attention and its absorption in various degrees leads finally, to the state of *Kaivalya*

In summary, we have considered the scheme of Yoga practice set out in the Yogasūtra to throw more light on a psychological understanding of the text. Taking the nature and character of the mind into account, Patañjali has set out the practices which steadily take it towards the goal of Yoga – the cessation of the modifications of the mind and the attainment of *Kaivalya*. In the next Chapter we take all the strands of our investigation so far, and bring them together in constructing a coherent model of the mind.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE YOGASŪTRA MODEL OF THE MIND

a. Introduction

The key questions regarding the psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra have been addressed through the methodology of a close reading of the text: What is the nature of the mind, as presented in the text? What are the elements of the mind, how do they interrelate and what are the processes said to give rise to the various states of the mind? How does it relate to the underlying metaphysic of Yoga? How is the conceptualisation of the mind in the Yogasūtra related to the practice of Yoga and what further insights about the text can be gained from this viewpoint?

Our main thesis is that there exists within the aphorisms of the Yogasūtra, and within the wider framework of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga system of thought, a coherent understanding of the nature of consciousness, the experiencing individual, the nature and contents of experience. The common interpretations of these aspects in the literature thus far have been fragmented and not detailed enough to give a comprehensive psychological view. There are also conflations and confusions of the key Yogasūtra terms, giving the impression that there is limited cogency and coherence in the psychological dimension of the text. What we have attempted to do so far is to overcome these problems arising from superficial or inconclusive readings of the Yogasūtra and an unclear frame of reference, for a clear psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra. Dealing with the latter, we have narrowed the focus to a ‘psychology *in* religion’ indigenous approach thereby circumventing some of the problems arising out of importing conceptual impositions from mainly Western psychological perspectives. The methodological issues with this approach have been pointed out and although it cannot be claimed that these issues have been completely resolved, there will inevitably remain tensions in any such study in terms of conceptual and methodological difficulties. However, having clarified these difficulties gives us a better awareness of where the ground of our argument is firm and where it may not be. We may not

have the experiential insights and the practical knowledge of Yogasūtra of the originator himself, but with the hermeneutically derived empathic understanding of the text, we can proceed to develop a model of the mind, based on the methodology given by Bhawuk³⁴⁰.

b. Aspects of the Mind

At the centre of our psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra is the nature of the *citta*, and taking the singular perspective of the Yoga notions of *grāhya*, *grahana* and *grahītṛ*, we can begin to place the analysis of the concept of *citta* within the wider context of the functioning individual. We have a clear indication of these triple aspects of experience in *sūtra* I.41³⁴¹ in relation to *samāpatti*, translated as ‘falling towards’ ‘identification’, ‘coincidence’, and ‘engrossment’:

When the modification of the mind are weakened, the mind, like a transparent jewel, takes on the features of the ‘grasper’, ‘grasping’ and the ‘grasped’ and this is called *samāpatti* (YS I.41).

Grāhya is that which is ‘grasped’ or that which is ‘perceived’, *grahana* is the act of ‘grasping’ or ‘perceiving’ and *grahītṛ* is ‘grasper’ or ‘perceiver’. *Samāpatti* has been indiscriminately conflated with *Samādhi* by many writers although it has the literal meaning of ‘falling well towards’, indicating the process of ‘falling towards something’ or a process of merger. Karambelkar also makes this point about the conflation of the two terms³⁴². Thus, in this *sūtra* it is indicated that the *process* where the mind gets completely identified or merged with the object, whether it is perception, perceiver or that which is perceived, is called *samāpatti*. The mind, in its *niruddha* state, is said to be like a clear jewel, a perfect reflector of that which is present as the perceiver, perceived or the perceiving. Taking this as our starting point, we can

³⁴⁰ See Section One, Chapter Two.

³⁴¹ YS I.41: *kṣīṇavṛtterabhijātasyeva maṇergrahītṛgrahanaḥgrāhyeṣu tatsthatadañjanatā samāpattiḥ* When a weakened modification of mind arises consequently --that is, when the mental fluctuation is lastly weakened and the mind attains stability (which is) like a (transparent) gem in respect of the knower, the instrument of knowledge and the knowables, act of assuming the colour of any near reality (is known as) *Samāpatti* or Engrossment.

³⁴² P Karambelkar, *Pātañjala Yogasūtra*, 118.

come to several conclusions. Firstly, the mind has the fundamental property of awareness which is revealed when it becomes free of modifications. What this awareness is and how it is said to arise in the material *citta*, we shall discuss in detail later in this Section. Secondly, ‘grasping’ refers to the process of perceiving something, i.e. perception. And thirdly, there is the conscious subject, the ‘grasper’ who is the perceiver of the objects of perception, which are ‘grasped’. Taking this general framework of ‘grasper’, ‘grasping’ and ‘grasped’, we first look at cognition in general for initiating the construction of the model of the mind.

i. Cognition

Reading Yogasūtra through a psychological lens, we find that it is focussed on cognition in its various dimensions: knowledge, the process of acquiring knowledge, and the cognisor who is the subject. We have seen that in the second *sūtra* Patañjali defines Yoga as the cessation of the modifications of the mind and goes on to describe these modifications as valid cognition, invalid cognition etc. This intriguing idea that the cognitive apparatus – the *citta* – is to be made ‘silent’ with the cessation of what can be understood as its function of acquiring knowledge about the world through the senses (*pratyakṣa*), for example, is central to the Yogasūtra. Yoga praxis hinges on using the *citta* and its resources to bring it to a state of cessation, a state which then ‘reveals’ the *Puruṣa*, pure Consciousness. This of course is grounded in the Sāṃkhya-Yoga narrative of the dualistic primordial principles of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, which in their conjunction, leads to the phenomenal identity of the suffering individual. The idea that the *yogin* proceeds from phenomenal knowledge (*avidyā*) to ‘truth bearing yogic knowledge’ – *ṛtaṃ -bharā prajñā* means that at the centre of the yogic practice is the notion of *prajñā*, the connecting link between the practices of meditative absorption and the means of knowledge, and between the experience of the cognisor and the metaphysics of reality. Rukmani suggests that Yoga actually ‘hinges on the concept of *prajñā*’ in her analysis of the term in its five

appearances³⁴³. She goes on to say that *prajñā* can mean: 1. the truth of the immediate object of attention; 2. the ultimate truth (*Kaivalya*); 3. the cosmic order of truth or *r̥ta*. *Prajñā* is a ‘vision which comes into being in the last stage of *nirvicāra* (*Asamprajñāta Samādhi*); it is a clear flash of insight which does not follow the usual experience...’³⁴⁴.

We will take cognition to mean broadly the mental events or processes that lead to knowledge and understanding, through thought and feelings, and sense experience. The central concern of Yoga theory and practice is the discipline of the faculties dealing with the acquisition of knowledge and attainment of *viveka khyāti*, ‘discriminative enlightenment’ and *viveka jñāna*, ‘discriminative knowledge’ that lead the practitioner to the state of *Kaivalya* or the singular state of pure Consciousness. The two layers of the mind - the conscious and subliminal - are intimately and dynamically related to each other to produce the modifications of the mind and experience of the world of objects as well as the sense of individuality. The ‘whirls’ of activity occurring in the mind through the processes are to be controlled so that they can be brought to single pointedness in the first place and cessation in the final stages of meditative absorption. Rao says that ‘cognition arises from the relation of the mind to the object. The object manifests in the mind as a modification of the *buddhi*’³⁴⁵. The whole of the cognitive apparatus in its normal non-yogic functioning consists of modifications which give rise to a ‘cognitive “miscalculation”, projecting prakṛti as permanence, purity, joy, selfhood, all of which are supposed to be the attributes of the puruṣa’³⁴⁶. The ordinary cognition, according to Patañjali is this ‘miscalculation’ and results in a false identification and consequent suffering. The

³⁴³ T Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu, Vol IV, Kaivalyapāda*, Appendix 7, 183.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 184-185.

³⁴⁵ Ramakrishna K Rao, “Perception, Cognition and Consciousness in Classical Hindu Psychology”, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 12, no.3, (2005), 3-30, 13; note Rao talks of the modification of the *buddhi* rather than the *citta*.

³⁴⁶ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 47; it should be noted that Raveh suggests that these ‘positive’ attributes given to *Puruṣa*, sound Vedāntic in YS 2.5 compared to the one given in the Sāṃkhya Kārikā (SK19: a witness, spectator, indifferent and inactive) which define *Puruṣa* more in terms of ‘noninvolvement in the worldly realm’ (Raveh, notes, 57).

epistemological solution to this cognitive error is the *viveka khyāti*, the gaze of discernment that makes a clear distinction between the ‘external and internal externality’ consisting of the objects of identification and the contents of the mind and the psychological patterns which continuously create the worldly experiences. True cognition is then not concerned with the processes that lead to knowledge about oneself and the world but ‘true knowledge’ according to Yoga is the discernment between *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*. This *prajñā* or insight, is gained by the methods of Yoga which bring the *citta* to a state of cessation of modifications so that the ‘distortions’ which are caused by the ‘normal’ activities of the cognitive apparatus are brought to an end. The *citta* shines like a clear jewel which reflects, in all its purity, the objects that are brought to it.

We have noted that the five causes of affliction are, in this analysis, the distorters of the true knowledge and as long as they are present the cognition, the *citta* cannot function effectively to bring about the *prajñā*. Patañjali in YS II.24 describes the primary cause of affliction, *avidyā*, as the one responsible for the *saṃyoga* or conjunction of the *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* which is experienced as ‘*adarśana*’³⁴⁷ in the individual, a non-apprehension of the *Puruṣa*, followed by misapprehension about the nature of oneself. In other words, the cognitive error is at the core of *duḥkha* – suffering – and the removal of this is through the means of Yoga. The *avidyā* is to be understood Vijñānabhikṣu says, in the sense in which it is *viśiṣṭa-jñāna* or a specific type of knowledge rather than lack of knowledge, a misapprehension which gives a certain type of knowledge – the phenomenal knowledge about one’s self and the world. ‘It is this positive content of *avidyā* which conceals or blocks the trans-phenomenal, discriminative (*viveka-jñā*), subtle (*sūkṣma*) knowledge which the vertical process of Yoga is prescribed to de-conceal’³⁴⁸. When *avidyā* is ‘dissolved’ through correct cognition, the erroneous conjunction comes to an end and *Puruṣa* is revealed in his ‘aloneness’.

³⁴⁷ See Vyāsa’s commentary on YS II.23.

³⁴⁸ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 48.

If we are to understand cognition from the Yoga point of view, then we need to look at both the epistemological and psychological dimensions of the key term *avidyā*. We believe that this is a key concept on which both Sāṃkhya and Yoga, theory and practice hinge. It is the primary cause of affliction and it is the primal condition of the conjunction of the dual principles which gives rise to their non-apprehension leading to the false identification with the individuality. The indication of this is given in YS II.5 where Patañjali says that *avidyā* is the ‘false identification of the impermanent with the permanent, the impure with the pure, sorrowful with the joyous and non-self with the self’³⁴⁹. The significant term in this *sūtra* is *khyāti* – vision, seeing, ‘knowing’ pointing to the error in knowing, giving rise to the mistaken knowledge. This extends to the second cause of affliction, *asmitā*, which is described by Feuerstein as ‘fundamental category error which regards the Self as other than what it really is, and this leads to the active mal-identification of the root-consciousness (Self) with consciousness (*citta*)’³⁵⁰. This is the ‘cognitive miscalculation’ which takes the powers of *Puruṣa* and assigns them to *Prakṛti*.

The psychological aspect of *avidyā* is suggested by Patañjali in YS II.15: for the person who has corrected the ‘cognitive miscalculation’, all is suffering. The *vivekin* or discerner identifies the roots of suffering as arising from its inherence in change, pain, ripening of the subliminal impressions and the strife of the fluctuating *guṇa* and sees materiality as it is. ‘To see prakṛti “as she is”, is to become aware of the “forces” which “bubble” under the surface, awareness which according to Patañjali cannot but result in the conclusion that duḥkha or suffering, is the essence of one’s phenomenal existence...that is to say *avidyā* signifies a pattern of involvement in and attachment to, the world through what one thinks in terms of enjoyment and pleasure’³⁵¹.

³⁴⁹ YS II.5: *anityāśuciduḥkhānātmasu nityaśucisukhātmakhyātiravidyā*: Ignorance is to consider as everlasting what is not everlasting, as pure what is not pure, as pleasure what is pain and as the Self what is the not-Self.

³⁵⁰ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 63.

³⁵¹ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 49.

The Yogic Insight (*Prajñā*): Whicher in his analysis of perception says that the mind as described in the Yogasūtra in terms of an outward and an inward facing capacity, the former being directed to the objects of the world operating ‘in a rational and conceptual mode and issues in a reflective cognition and discerning power of the intellect’; the latter, on the other hand, ‘facing towards the Puruṣa, functions as a vehicle for liberating knowledge of discriminating discernment (*vivekakhyāti*)’³⁵².

In the first facility, the mind functions in the ordinary way of perception through the senses (*pratyakṣa*) and in the second facility, the intellect becomes a receiver of insight (*prajñā*) as it is cleared of the modifications, including direct perception (*pratyakṣa*). Yogic perception (*prajñā*), says Whicher, is the liberating insight, ‘soteriologically the most efficacious means in Yoga’³⁵³. This ‘cognition’, which appears to be transcending the normal function of the *citta*, and pointed out by Patañjali in YS I.48, is said to be inherently ‘truth-bearing’ – *ṛtaṃ-bharā*. It ‘reveals the object in its true essence (*tattva*) and...is genuinely infallible. The object is known as it is, once and for all, by way of unmediated pure apperception in which there is no room for error’³⁵⁴. Whicher emphasises the point that perceptual knowledge obtained in *Samprajñāta Samādhi* leads to revelation of one’s identity or being and at the stage of *nirvicāra-samādhi*, the ‘knowledge that arises is said to be “truth-bearing” (*ṛtaṃ-bharā*)’³⁵⁵.

In the following sections, we will look at the elements of cognition in detail as can be understood from the text, giving us the psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra in terms the mind, and of the disciplines and practices of Yoga that lead to the correction of the cognitive error. We begin by looking at the individual phenomenal self or subject and the relationship of this individual to the absolute *Puruṣa*, the Self or pure Consciousness.

³⁵² Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 147.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 56.

³⁵⁵ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 261.

ii. The Self and the self; true identity and embodiment

According to Larson, ‘the proximity of unconscious being and pure consciousness issues in the process of emergence and leads to the emergence of self-awareness (*ahaṃkāra*)’³⁵⁶. The *ahaṃkāra* evolves as an element of *Prakṛti* directly from *buddhi* (intellect) as described in Sāṃkhya Kārikā XXIV: ‘Self-awareness (*ahaṃkāra*) is self-conceit (*abhimāna*). From it emerges the group of eleven and the five subtle elements (*tanmātra*)’³⁵⁷. The translation by Larson of the *ahaṃkāra* as ‘self-awareness’ is restrictive because of the wider meaning of the term as ‘individuality’ and ‘I-sense’. Kuppuswamy comments that *ahaṃkāra* has *abhimāna* which he translates as ‘self-love’ and also the sense of agency. This is implied in the further evolutes of *ahaṃkāra* consisting of the sensory and action organs together with the sense-mind (*manas*). It is the centralising factor for the impressions arising in the *citta* and individualises them through *asmitā*, the ‘I-am-sense’. This sense of agency implied in *ahaṃkāra* has led commentators to designate the term as ‘ego’. We must be clear that the term ‘ego’ has a specific genealogy and ontology in Western psychology and it must be taken as another label for *ahaṃkāra* without importing the connotations of this perspective. Ego in the Freudian sense is the mediator between the unconscious Id and the reality principle. It is the principle which mediates the information between the unconscious impulses of the Id and the reality principle as experienced in relation to the world. Clearly this is different from *ahaṃkāra* or *asmitā*, which have the sense of a centralising principle of individuality and as a ‘seed’ around which the identity develops.

The sense of agency can be related to the functioning of the organs of perception (*jñānendriya*) and action (*karmendriya*). Jakubczak identifies several aspects of subjectivity and says that one such aspect of subjectivity recognised in both Sāṃkhya and Yoga, is that of perception, ‘to be a

³⁵⁶ Gerald Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, 184-185.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 184.

subject means to be able to perceive'³⁵⁸. Using the term 'ego-maker', she defines the problem which Sāṃkhya -Yoga are trying to address as the 'Embodied Ego-Self' Problem'³⁵⁹. In other words the concern of these systems is the relationship between the two ontologies within the context of the soteriological goal of its practices. Yoga considers the arising of the self-aware subject from the conjunction of the principles of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, this sense of self being created through the centralising propensity of the *ahaṃkāra*, hence the term 'ego-maker'. We have discussed the idea of *Puruṣa* which Feuerstein calls 'not purely a hypothetico-deductive postulate [but]...a particular yogic experience of the numinous', in the previous chapters. But owing to the 'radical dualism between Self and non-self (or *prakṛti*)...there can strictly speaking be no experience of the Self at all'³⁶⁰.

Patañjali makes several references to *darśin* (IV.25 'he who sees') and *draṣṭṛ* (I.3; II.17, II.20; IV.23 'seer') which imply subjectivity and which are not associated with an individual perceiver. The other term he uses are general ones: '*drś*' (II.6 'vision-er'). In reference to the *draṣṭṛ* (seer) a close reading of the YS II. 20 and YS I.3-4, gives us the key distinction between the two senses of self: the absolute subject (Self) and the empirical subject (self). In the first sense of the seer, it is the *Puruṣa*, the *draṣṭṛ* 'which is the sheer [power of seeing], although pure, apperceives the presented ideas [present in consciousness]'³⁶¹. This is the fundamental 'subject' which 'apperceives' the experiences of the other subject – the empirical subject which perceives the outer world of objects and the inner world of thoughts and feelings. The Self as subject is, thus, distinguished from the self which is an *object* for the former. Feuerstein says that 'whilst the perceptions or cognitions of the self are multiple in the form of modifications of

³⁵⁸ Marzenna Jakubczak, "The Sense of Ego-maker in Sāṃkhya and Yoga", *Cracow Indological Studies*, vol X, (2008), 235- 253.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 239.

³⁶⁰ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy Classical of Yoga*, 15.

³⁶¹ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, (YS II.20).

the *citta*, the apperception of the Self is perfectly continuous³⁶². When the modifications of the *citta* come to cease (YS I.3) then the Self abides in its own essence (YS I.4). The Self in its aloneness (*Kaivalya*) is revealed when the self ceases its operations. This Self has no content or structure and is homogenous, changeless and unaffected by change. It is neither intentional nor does it refer to anything. The self is the empirical subject undergoing continuous modification and ever changing and consists of various identifiable elements – intellect, sense-mind, organs of perception and action. There is, however, just one subject who knows feels and performs actions³⁶³ and these experiences and actions of the subject are made possible by the Self, itself not affected by either of these.

Another aspect of subjectivity mentioned by Jakubczak is cognition related to the different capacities of the empirical self, in particular the intellect working in close conjunction with *manas* or sense-mind. Cognition is made possible, as pointed out earlier, by the conjunction of the Seer and the ‘seen’ and can be said to consist of the effort or exertion, implied in the term *adhyavasāya* according to Sāṃkhya Kārikā XXIII. Further the intellect is involved in the process of perception along with the other members of the *antaḥkaraṇa* (inner organ). It ascertains and decides on the basis of the perceptions given to it by other organs. For example, *anumāna* is the process of inference carried out in conjunction with the sensations provided by the sense organs and made coherent by the sense-mind. We need to also remember that *ahaṃkāra* according to Sāṃkhya is an evolute of *buddhi* and, thus, closely related to it in terms of subjectivity.

The ‘grasping’ (*grahaṇa*, YS I.41 and III.47) of the grasper (*grahītṛ*, YS I.41) and that which is grasped (*grāhya*, YS I.41 and III.21) are terms which are related to subjectivity. In these terms

³⁶² Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 73.

³⁶³ S Bhattacharya, “Some Indian Theories of the Body”, in *Freedom, Transcendence and Identity: Essays in Memory of Kalidas* edited by Pradip Kumar Sengupta, 176-212, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988).

the grasper is the subject who, with the process of grasping (perception) of the grasped (object), has the conscious experience of the object. In the particular state where the modifications of the *citta* have dwindled away, the distinction between these three elements, become abolished and the object shines in the ‘transparent jewel’ (YS I.41), the still mind. The idea of grasping suggests also a sense of possession or ownership of the experience and this is another aspect of the ego-maker and combined with the sense of agency, there arises the potential for control that is central to Yoga praxis where the *abhyāsa* (effort) is owned and exerted by the practitioner. Whicher says that YS I.41 ‘constitutes a phenomenological analysis of experiences...wherein the ‘seeable’ (*dṛśya*) is described experientially’³⁶⁴.

The term *Asmitā*, or ‘I-am-ness’, often equated with *ahaṃkāra*, is typical of Yoga rather than Sāṃkhya. It is discussed by Patañjali in the context of the five *kleśa* (YS II.3, 6) and also as a stage of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* (YS I.17; III.47). *Asmitā* says Patañjali comes into being when the power of the ‘seer’ (*dṛk śakti*) and the power of ‘seeing’ (*darśana śakti*) appear as one and the same. *Asmitā* is an instance of the false sense of ‘I-am-ness’ which arises with the conjunction of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*³⁶⁵. We consider that there is a basic conceptual difference between *asmitā* and *ahaṃkāra*. In the latter, there is the aspect of a centralising of all experiences and, thus, arising of an empirical subject in totality. Perception and cognition are closely related aspects of *ahaṃkāra* through the hierarchy of the evolutes, perception being further down the ‘stream’ and cognition ‘upstream’. In the case of *asmitā*, it is simply the sense of ‘I-am-ness’ and this state is classified as a cause of affliction because it is a *false* sense of being, mistaking the reflection of the *Puruṣa* in the *citta* as the self luminosity of the *Puruṣa*. Vyāsa in his commentary also makes this distinction by referring to *asmitā* as a *lakṣaṇa* or ‘mark’ of *ahaṃkāra* (YS III.47). Jakubczak designates this difference as phenomenal (*asmitā*) and ontological (*ahaṃkāra*). She refers to *ahaṃkāra* as the pure ‘I-sense’ and *asmitā* as arising

³⁶⁴ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 218.

³⁶⁵ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 57.

out apprehensions of perceptions and cognitions. Chennakesavan similarly points out that *ahaṃkāra* may be said to be the universal aspect and *asmitā* the individualised sense of self as ‘I-am-ness’³⁶⁶. Further he notes that this individualised aspect of *ahaṃkāra* is the beginning of all troubles through the development of the identity as one of the five afflictions named by Patañjali. On the other hand *ahaṃkāra* is ‘the knower, the subject from which emerges the feeling, willing and knowing aspects of experience’³⁶⁷.

Asmitā, says Whicher is that ‘process in which *mahat* or *buddhi*...becomes a recipient of a “reflection” of pure consciousness...[and] assumes itself to be the Self/*puruṣa*...[where] consciousness and life flow through this *asmitā*, which lends to the ego-principle (*asmitā-mātra*, *ahaṃkāra*) a semblance of awareness’³⁶⁸. It is to be noted that Patañjali uses the term *asmitā-mātra* (YS IV.4) where it is ‘that principle by which the multiple individualised or fabricated minds (*nirmāṇa citta*) are projected’. Further Whicher says that ‘*asmitā mātra* is an ontological concept and ontologically real. In contrast, *asmitā* is an afflicted state of self-identity’³⁶⁹. In this we see a parallel to the idea of *ahaṃkāra* in Sāṃkhya and the same is asserted by Aranya in his notes on Vyāsa’s commentary on YS II.19. He states that *asmitā mātra* means *ahaṃkāra* and *asmitā* is the particularised form of this³⁷⁰.

In regard to the second reference to *asmitā* in the context of *Samādhi*, Whicher says that because ‘*puruṣa* is an undisturbed, infinite existence – like a “still” ocean – the inward face of the mind (*buddhi*) receiving *puruṣa*’s “reflection” and as experienced in *asmitā-samādhi*, appears like an infinite calm ocean’³⁷¹. He further comments that in the *asmitā samādhi*, ‘the *yogin* is liberated from the idea of being a bound or limited identity dependent on being in

³⁶⁶ Sarasvati Chennakesavan, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, 64.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 23-24.

³⁶⁸ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 68.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 69.

³⁷⁰ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *The Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 174-175.

³⁷¹ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 246.

association with joy or happiness (*sukha*) and attached to the pleasure of *sattva*³⁷². This sense of individual identity abstracted to the *asmitā* is the object of the absorption in this practice and the reference to the *sattva* aspect is to the purified intellect which is capable of reflecting *asmitā*.

As the operations of the empirical self continue, there is an obscuration of the transcendental identity and ‘the loss of authenticity [of the *Puruṣa*] is due to the shifting identifications within the discontinuous states of experience’ and the ‘perpetual process of constructing false identities is known as *asmitā*, or “I-am-ness”...this power ...responsible for the erection of man’s inner world’³⁷³ of the self. As for the *Puruṣa*, the Self, it is of ‘the nature of pure unmitigated Awareness, or, as Patañjali (YS IV.34) has it, *citi-śakti*, or “power of Awareness”’³⁷⁴. The relationship between these two is indicated in the Yogasūtra: ‘the Self as pure underived Awareness...man’s true identity [that] lies outside the personality complex of the false empirical self’³⁷⁵. The *Puruṣa* according to Whicher, ‘can be said to express itself in the space time continuum in a particular body and with a particular personality and mind’³⁷⁶, the empirical self which has to be transcended through Yoga practices. Further, ‘identity thus is not a mental, subjective state that can indulge and enjoy according to its own whims, but refers to an ontological category’³⁷⁷.

The *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga method is a course of practical discipline which results in the ‘final unification of the empirical self with its spiritual self in the state of enstasis’³⁷⁸. Eliade translates *ahamkāra* as ‘self knowledge’ and ‘consciousness of self’, and states that ‘through this process

³⁷² Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 246.

³⁷³ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 19.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 52.

³⁷⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 54.

³⁷⁶ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 290.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 292-293.

³⁷⁸ Arbind Jha, “Chapter 18: Personality in Indian Psychology”, in *Handbook of Indian Psychology*, edited by K Rao, A Paranjpe and A Dalal, (Delhi: Foundation Books, 2008), 358-360.

[it] reflects itself (sarva, “emanation”) in the series of eleven psychic principles...and in the series of physical powers³⁷⁹. Sāṃkhya and Yoga, he says further, accord importance to the principle of individuation through *ahaṃkāra* or consciousness of the self. He does not, however, give details of this process of individuation.

The concept of **personality** implies that the entire life history of the person is related to the experiences and actions of that person. There are diverse ways of looking at personality but one approach refers to it as consistent patterns of thinking and behaving which can be termed ‘traits’. The organising principle that structures the personality is referred to as ‘ego’ or ‘self’. It has a specific meaning within the various approaches to the person in Western psychology such as psychoanalysis where the ego is ‘an agency of the psyche that balances the frequently conflicting inner forces’³⁸⁰. Paranjpe’s approach is different in that he considers normative epistemology as a key element in understanding the nature of self from a yogic point of view. Knowledge is possible ‘due to the mediation of the *citta* (mind) between the Knower (*draṣṭṛ*) on the one hand and the object of knowledge on the other. The *citta* with its adjuncts such as the senses has the capacity to be influenced or ‘coloured’ in such a way as to reflect the characteristics of the object of knowledge’³⁸¹. ‘The Yogic theory, thus, makes a distinction among three different elements which make knowledge possible’. These consist of the ‘real’ Knower or *Puruṣa*, the object of the knowledge and the ‘cognitive apparatus of the psyche’ which reflects the object on the one hand and the ‘illuminating character of the *Puruṣa*’ on the other, thus resulting in the ‘knowledge of the object’³⁸². Although he does not clarify the relationship of the development of the sense of self or *asmitā* with this approach, he takes a more general and interesting comparative analysis of the notion of self in Eastern and Western

³⁷⁹ Mircea Eliade, (trans. by W Trask), *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 23.

³⁸⁰ A Paranjpe, “Indian Psychology and the International Context”. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 2011, 23:1, 233.

³⁸¹ Ibid., 269.

³⁸² Ibid., 270.

traditions under the headings of ‘the self as a fact versus construct’; ‘the self as structure versus process’; ‘the self as subject versus object’; ‘self as a single versus multiple’³⁸³. We have noted some of these aspects in our discussions above.

iii. Consciousness and awareness

The key ideas for the understanding of consciousness in Yogasūtra are *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* and the whole task of Yoga is to overcome the failure of the non-distinction between the two. Here the *Puruṣa* is said to be Seer (*draṣṭṛ*), or pure Consciousness and *Prakṛti* is the ‘seeable’, or that which is manifest in the form of the universe. Patañjali describes in YS I.3 the outcome of Yoga praxis in terms of cessation of the modifications of the mind as the state in which the Seer resides in its own nature. Since the Seer is by definition that which cannot be an object of experience, ‘*puruṣa*’s power as pure experiencer remains constant’³⁸⁴. What is changing is the materiality, the evolutes of *Prakṛti* including the *citta* which is in a state of constant modification. Vyāsa states in his commentary on YS IV.22, that the supreme entity to which experiences are due is not mutable, nor transmissible. ‘Unmoving it has as it were passed into the changing object, conforming to its function. The assumption of its form of borrowed consciousness by mere resemblance to the mental process and not distinguished from it, is what is called the [normal] mental process of knowing’³⁸⁵. This is an explanation given by the commentator as to how the unchanging *Puruṣa* appears to have ‘assumed the form of an object...and experiences that object or content of consciousness through a self-reflexive activity’³⁸⁶. In the process the qualities of the mind become attributed to the *Puruṣa* because of the ‘conjunction’ or *saṃyoga* which takes place between these two primordial principles.

³⁸³ A Paranjpe, “Indian Psychology and the International Context”, 299-308.

³⁸⁴ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 135.

³⁸⁵ Ibid. (translation of the commentary on IV.22).

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

Yoga philosophy proposes the theory of ‘reflected consciousness’ which is the basis for an explanation of how cognition and perception can take place in the mind. The *bimba-pratibimba* theory is interpreted in the commentary by Vācaspati Miśra to explain how awareness can arise in the inert matter of *Prakṛti*. Many of the commentaries on the Yogasūtra use the terms consciousness and awareness without any distinction. It must be noted that although Patañjali does not define either *Puruṣa* or consciousness, the way in which we employ these terms is consistent with the overall understanding of Yoga and the particular references in the commentaries. In order to make these ideas clearer, we will refer to the consciousness of *Puruṣa* as ‘Consciousness’, with a capital letter to indicate its primacy and the reflected Consciousness as simply ‘awareness’ which takes into account the idea that the mind is coloured by the object and this colouring is the ‘awareness-of’ the object. It must be also noted that Patañjali speaks of the ‘non-self-luminosity’ (YS IV.19) of the mind which implies that the ‘luminosity’ (to be read as awareness) is ‘borrowed’ from elsewhere. Hariharananda in his notes on this *sūtra* says that the mind is not self-luminous because it is knowable and the Knower is the Seer or *Puruṣa* and ‘that is why the Seer is self-luminous’³⁸⁷.

We can begin to examine the *general idea* of consciousness in Yogasūtra with this theory of ‘reflected awareness’. It must be noted that although Patañjali himself makes no direct reference to this theory in the Yogasūtra, Vyāsa and Vācaspati Miśra both attempt to explain the working of the conjunction (*saṃyoga*) by this theory. The ‘reflection’ refers to the reflection of the *Puruṣa* (*caitanya*) in the purest aspect of *citta*, i.e. the *buddhi* or intellect. Miśra in *Tattva Vaiśārādī* (I.7)³⁸⁸ states that the mind can be considered as a ‘*darpaṇa*’ (mirror) which reflects the Consciousness of the *Puruṣa* and the purest aspect of the mind, the *buddhi*, is able to reflect this to the greatest degree. Here we can clarify what we mean by ‘reflection’: it is not a reflection like the reflection of an image in the mirror. The proximity of the *Puruṣa* somehow

³⁸⁷ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 381.

³⁸⁸ N Miśra (ed), *Patañjali: Patañjalayogadarśana, Vācaspati Miśra Tattva Vaiśārādī*, TV I.7.

transforms the *citta* which ‘enables’ the awareness of an object. Change or modification (*ṛtti*) together with the awareness, results in cognition of the object by the cognising subject.

Vyāsa refers to the term *pratibimba* (reflection) in YS IV.23 but refers to this as a reflection of the object in the mind. Miśra uses this term in a different way, referring to the reflection of the content of consciousness back to the *Puruṣa*³⁸⁹. In other words, *Puruṣa* is the ‘Seer’ of the content of consciousness. The term ‘*citi-cāyā*’ or the ‘Consciousness shadow’ is the term used by Miśra to explain how the insentient mind is able to ‘know’. The verbal root of both *citta* (mind) and *citi* is ‘*cit*’ which has the connotation of ‘Consciousness’ and according to this view the knowledge in the mind is made possible because of the ‘shadow’ of Consciousness. The ‘*Puruṣa* seemingly becomes “possessed” of knowledge...taking the form of an object through the...*buddhi*’³⁹⁰. The result is the misidentification of the *Puruṣa* with the *buddhi* and the empirical agent that then claims the ownership of the experience. In this sense the awareness in the mind is a borrowed state of Consciousness, this being acquired from the *Puruṣa*. This awareness in the mind becomes the ‘locus of selfhood as an empirical identity’ and is both unreal because the awareness is borrowed and real because it is experienced by the human subject³⁹¹.

In order to explain empirical experience of the individual subject, Vācaspati Miśra takes the support of the theory of reflection and expresses this in the metaphors of the moon and the crystal. Just as the moon is reflected in the pool of water and appears as a shiny object, the *buddhi* becomes the agent of cognition with the light of the Consciousness reflected on it. The reflected image of the moon is affected by the movement of the water and the image appears to be moving about. In the same way the *Puruṣa* appears to be moving about due to the changing *ṛtti* although unchanging in itself. A clear crystal reflects an object due to proximity to it and in

³⁸⁹ N Miśra (ed), *Patañjali: Patañjalayogadarśana*, Vācaspati Miśra *Tattva Vaisāradi*, (TV II.17).

³⁹⁰ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 137.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

the same way, on account of the proximity of the Seer and the mind we ascribe the mental states to the *Puruṣa*. In the Sāṃkhya Kārikā, Īśvarakṛṣṇa states that this conjunction makes the insentient intellect to appear as if aware and the *Puruṣa* as if the agent of action³⁹².

According to Larson, from the point of view of analysis of experience, the materialism of Sāṃkhya leads to a 'definite distinction between "consciousness" (*puruṣa*) and "awareness" (*antaḥkaraṇa-vṛtti*, *citta-vṛtti*). Whereas "awareness" is active, intentional, engaged and at every moment a reflection of the subtle materiality, "consciousness" (*puruṣa*) cannot think, act, be ontologically involved or intentionally related in any sense whatever with *prakṛti*'. "Consciousness" (*puruṣa*)... is content-less presence (*sākṣitva*)' and because of this it appears as what it is. Also "awareness" appears as if it were "consciousness" and it is this double negation occurring in the *buddhi* that generates the epistemological confusion of bondage³⁹³. Yoga praxis is the means of removing this epistemic error.

Cornelissen states that the 'great strength [of the spiritual view of consciousness] is the absolute beauty of the experience of "pure consciousness" and the detailed and penetrating psychological insights this approach to reality has led to³⁹⁴. Further he states that this idea of pure Consciousness is 'almost certainly experiential rather than speculative' and there are many methods, including the one pointed out in the Yogasūtra, by which one can arrive at pure Consciousness. A common feature of these methodologies is the systematic withdrawal of attention from sensations of the external world and those arising from the mind. The models of mind in the Indian systems of thought are significantly different³⁹⁵ because the nature of the

³⁹² Gerald Larson, *Classical Sāṃkhya*, p 262, SK XX, *tasmād tatsaṃyogād acetanam, cetanāvad īva lingam...* 'Because of the proximity of the two the inert one appears as if with consciousness...'.
³⁹³ Gerald Larson, "Karma as Sociology of Knowledge", in *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, edited by W Doniger O'Flaherty, 308-316. (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1983).

³⁹⁴ M.Cornelissen, "Chapter 22, Consciousness". In *Handbook of Indian Psychology*, edited by Ramakrishna K Rao, and A Paranjpe, and A Dalal, A. (Delhi: Foundation Books, 2008), 414-428.
³⁹⁵ Cornelissen here means different from some modern Western models, as indicated later in the reference, although the pre-modern Western models may be very similar.

mind is understood experientially and almost all the systems admit the potential for experiencing a dimension of Consciousness which is beyond all mental processes.

Rao and Paranjpe describe *Puruṣa* as ‘the pure Consciousness, consciousness-as-such...the principle behind consciousness manifesting in the person...it has no qualities or characteristics of its own...the transcendental principle that makes awareness subjectively possible’³⁹⁶. Further they state that *Puruṣa* is the ‘light that illumines the contents of the mind’ and thereby giving phenomenal content to the mind but at the same time, remaining without content itself and, therefore, not an object of cognition. The illumination is awareness in the mind of its contents. ‘Consciousness is both self-manifesting and other-manifesting. In being self-manifesting it is a primary and irreducible principle...[and] is other-manifesting in that it is foundational to all awareness’³⁹⁷. This awareness is related to the three levels of *citta* or mind namely *buddhi* (intellect), *ahaṁkāra* (individual empirical self) and *manas* (sense-mind). These function in a dynamic way to give the experience of the world, cognition and the sense of subjectivity which are the functional aspects of the *citta*.

Rao and Paranjpe state further that the relation between the material *citta* and Consciousness of *Puruṣa* is one of reflection. They, however, do not offer any satisfactory explanation of the nature of this reflection describing it as an ‘image’. According to them, the ‘perceptual awareness...is different in kind from *puruṣa* consciousness...[and] is imperfect because of the blemishes inherent in the very processing...[and] it is contingent on sensory contact, which limits the range, scope and form of awareness’³⁹⁸. The authors term *conscious experience* as ‘phenomenal awareness’ mediated by the mind via the *vṛtti* or modifications which involves three distinguishable aspects: ‘the subject, the one who is aware (*grahītr*), a product of

³⁹⁶ Ramakrishna K Rao and A Paranjpe, “Chapter 11, Yoga Psychology: Theory and Practice”, in *Handbook of Indian Psychology* edited by Ramakrishna K Rao, and A Paranjpe, and A Dalal, (Delhi: Foundation Books, 2008), 193-221.

³⁹⁷ Ramakrishna K Rao and A Paranjpe, “Chapter 11, Yoga Psychology: Theory and Practice”, 189.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 200.

ahamkāra; the process of awareness (*grahana*), the activity of *manas* (sense-mind); and the object of awareness (*grāhya*). All three determine the nature and context of awareness'. Further they state that 'experience of pure Consciousness unmediated by any mental modes is transcendental Awareness'. The *phenomenal states* are considered as 'conscious states' in contrast to 'unconscious states' which are not accessible to ordinary awareness and 'relegated to the region of the mind', these being referred to as *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā*³⁹⁹.

iv. States of consciousness

According to the Sāṃkhya view, the waking state is the one in which the intellect is modified into the forms of its objects through the external sense organs. It also recognises two degrees of sleep: 'half' sleep and deep sleep. In the former, the modifications are not in the form of objects but rather forms of pleasure, pain and delusion subsisting in the mind. These forms, either as cognitions of objects or feelings, also disappear in the deep sleep. Patañjali defines this mode of consciousness in the same way as absence of *pratyaya* (presented-idea or phenomenal experience) (YS I.10)⁴⁰⁰. This has been interpreted by most authors as the absence of experience but as Feuerstein points out following Vyāsa's commentary, there must be some kind of experience in order for it to be recollected later in the waking state⁴⁰¹ and, thus, it is more appropriate to call it the experience of 'non-becoming'. Both Vyāsa and Vijñānabhikṣu regard that this *vr̥tti* is of three kinds: *sāttvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*, each one having a different 'quality' of deep sleep, these being joyful, restless and stupefied, respectively.

v. The conscious and the subliminal

We have discussed in detail the subliminal generators of the *vr̥tti* in the *citta* in Chapter Five and considered the psychological aspects of these in more detail in this section. The mental

³⁹⁹ Ramakrishna K Rao and A Paranjpe, "Chapter 11, Yoga Psychology: Theory and Practice", 202.

⁴⁰⁰ YS I.10: *abhāvapratyayāmbanā vr̥ttirnidrā*: 'Sleep is a modification without the support of any 'presented-idea'.

⁴⁰¹ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 33.

processes of the *citta* are the basis of conscious experience and we have seen that Patañjali classifies these processes as five different types of *vr̥tti*. Behind these mental processes there is ‘a vast, inexhaustible pool of stimuli, the so-called “activators” or *saṃskāras*, which power the machinery of consciousness’⁴⁰². We have seen that there are three major components of this vast reservoir of elements that feed into the *citta* and are organised according to the impressions or *saṃskāra*, the traits or *vāsanā* and the deposit of *karma*, the *karmāśaya*. These are dynamically related to each other and to the mental processes which are going on in the *citta* and this ‘large storehouse of dispositional factors is the dynamic aspect of the deep structure of the human personality’⁴⁰³. What is also to be recognised is besides the continuous and constant effect on the *citta* leading to conscious experience, these factors also determine directly or indirectly, the next birth as well as the current lifespan (YS.II.13)⁴⁰⁴. In other words, the current birth, lifespan and experience are determined by what one has brought to this life from the past lives and will determine, according to what has been experienced and deposited as *saṃskāra* and *karma* in this life, in future lives as well. Vyāsa gives an analogy of this idea in his commentary: ‘Germination is possible for grains of rice encased in the chaff but not those which are winnowed or burnt. In the same manner the deposit of *karma*, when encased in causes of affliction are capable of fruition, not the causes which have been winnowed’⁴⁰⁵. There is continuity between past, present and future lives through the determinants of the birth and experience, in particular the deposit of *karma*. These together with the *vāsanā* derived over many births, form the deep structure which runs the machinery of consciousness in the present moment. This determinacy, however, is not all comprehensive as there is the potential for exertion of the will power through Yoga praxis in order to influence the subliminal reservoir.

⁴⁰² Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 67.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 77

⁴⁰⁴ YS II.13: *sati mūle tadvipāko jātyāyurbhogāḥ*: (So long as) the root exists (meaning the deposits of karma), (there is also) fruition from it, birth life and enjoyment (experience).

⁴⁰⁵ YS II.13 commentary by Vyāsa.

We can understand this subliminal ‘machinery’ by considering its basic element which is the *saṃskāra*. There are two components of each *saṃskāra* which can be analysed in terms of the phenomenological and the psychological components. This allows us to map the links between this basic element and the other two components, *karma* and *vāsanā*. It also assumes that there are parallel analysable components in experience itself. The *vr̥tti* described by Patañjali are the ‘how’ and experience (which we can relate to *pratyaya*) is the ‘what’ of the mind. Experience can be available in which case it can be sense experience (*pratyakṣa*), bodily experience, conscious thought whether inferential (*anumāna*) or conceptual (*viparyaya*) which can include mental imagination, emotion and recollection. There is also the experience of the self (*asmitā*) which appears to be constant and fundamental to awareness. This aspect is one of the key elements of Yoga theory and practice and is the basis of the various types of *Samādhi* described by Patañjali. The phenomenal component of *saṃskāra* is what can be described as the ‘feel’ of the experience, the state of the mind with a certain feel to it. For example, the sensation of heat can be described as the phenomenal aspect of the experience of heat which is the aspect contained in the *saṃskāra*, as well as an impression of what it is like to feel heat. The psychological aspect can be described as related to cause and effect in terms of life and experience. It is the dynamic process which brings about the mental states and these in turn are the basis of choice and action. For example, when Vyāsa refers to the bi-directional nature of the ‘river of the mind’, he implies a causal process which is controlled through conscious choices in terms of both thought and action and which can change the direction of the flow of this mind-river either towards liberation or towards *saṃsāra*.

This analysis of experience and the impressions (*saṃskāra*) created by experience helps also to explain the difference between *karmāśaya* and *vāsanā*. Looked at from the point of view of the *saṃskāra* as a causal element, the deposit of *karma* or *karmāśaya* is the causal origin of both the past and future experience (YS II.13) and the *vāsanā* would then refer to the dispositions which are created over many lives towards certain ways of experiencing. These *vāsanā* are part

of the subliminal reservoir which form the basis of the quality of experience and together with the *karmāśaya* result in the subject tending to carry out choices and actions which cohere with the totality of the subliminal influence.

Within this framework, there is another dimension of the *saṃskāra* which has the soteriological value described by Patañjali as *kleśa*, the five causes of affliction. Thus the *saṃskāra* can either have the potentiality for further experience and action (*sabija*) or it is impotent (*nirbīja*). In the case of the former the ‘seed’ is either afflicted, in which case it leads to an impression which is likely to lead towards afflicted experience and consequent suffering, or it is non-afflicted. This latter *saṃskāra* leads towards meritorious acts which result in the experience of happiness (*sukha*). The experiences arising from the expression of these *saṃskāra* through the *karmāśaya* and *vāsanā* will create further impressions and form a *cyclical dynamic* which is of key importance in Yoga theory and practice. It is through the intervention of the operation of this cycle that the types and proportions of *saṃskāra* are altered. The practice of Yoga changes the composition of the *saṃskāra* from a preponderance of *vyutthāna* or externalising *saṃskāra* to a greater number of *nirodha* or cessation *saṃskāra* and the balance between the two results in the ‘calm flow of the mind’ (*praśāntavāhitā*).

This is the primary stage where the conscious effort (*abhyāsa*) and dispassion (*vairāgya*) lead towards the development of the *nirodha saṃskāra* which alters the dynamic relations between subliminal structures and conscious experience. The analogy given by Vyāsa in YS II.13 has already been referred to above where the *saṃskāra* become like roasted seeds which become barren and, therefore, unable to cause further *saṃskāra*, *karma* or *vāsanā*. Thus we have seen that conscious experience and subliminal elements that drive conscious experience, are central to Yoga theory and explain how these psychological elements are points of intervention for the development of the *ekāgratā* (one-pointedness) and the *nirodha* (stilled) Yogic states of mind. See Diagram 5 (p 151) for relations between the subliminal factors.

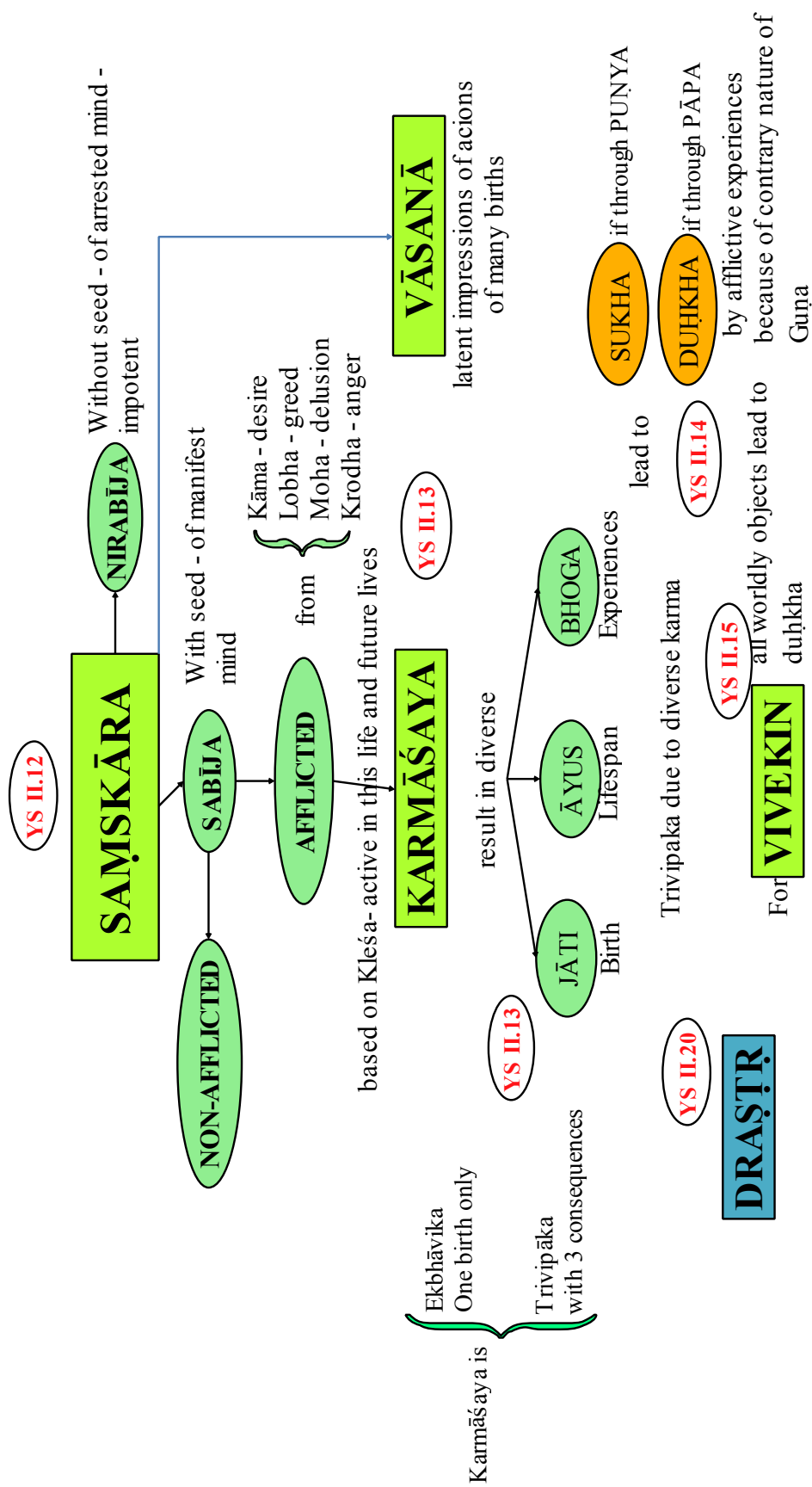


Diagram 5: Saṃskāra, Vāsanā and Karma

vi. Perception

The ancient Indian thinkers employed methods in their investigation of problems relating to consciousness, mind, senses, the human condition of suffering and the ultimate solution for the relief from this suffering. Although these methods may not have been recorded, there is evidence from the texts themselves. These methods have been pointed out by Kuppuswamy⁴⁰⁶. First there is the study of behaviour through observation and experimentation; secondly, the method of introspection – ‘turning the eyes inward’⁴⁰⁷ – allows one to become aware of the content of one’s consciousness; thirdly, the method of introspection not being completely reliable, the Mīmāṃsā⁴⁰⁸ thinkers proposed that it had to be supplemented by reasoning (*yukti*); fourthly, perhaps the most important, was the analysis of experience (*anubhava*) and seeking to validate the assumptions about one’s own experience through the methods of, for example, meditation; finally, Kuppuswamy points out the importance of the guru-disciple relationship which provides the basis for further exploration of one’s methods and findings. Although one must be cautious in comparing these to the methods of Western science as we know them now, they provide a broad indication of indigenous methodologies in the investigation and analysis of human experience.

In the Yoga view of perception, minds ‘apprehend their object remaining in their seats...go out to their appropriate objects and apprehend them’⁴⁰⁹. The text by Kapila who is considered to be the founder of Sāṃkhya, defines perception as ‘a cognition which takes the form of an object,

⁴⁰⁶ Bangalore Kuppuswamy, *Elements of Ancient Indian Psychology*, 2-6.

⁴⁰⁷ This reference is to Kaṭhopanishad II.4.1: the self-existent (Brahman) created the senses with the outgoing tendencies. Therefore, man beholds the external universe and not the *antarātman*, the inner self. Some men turn their eyes inwards and behold the *pratyagātman*, the self within.

⁴⁰⁸ The Indian school of thought centred on theories and nature of *dharma*.

⁴⁰⁹ Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol. I, Cognition*, 2nd ed., (Delhi: Motilal Banarasadass Publishers, 1961).

being related to it'⁴¹⁰. The commentator on this text, Vijñānabhikṣu, adds that perception is a *vyrtti*, and is a modification related to the outgoing sense taking the form of the object. The role of the *buddhi* is clarified by Vācaspati Miśra in Sāṃkhya '*Tattva Kaumudī*', as that of producing a definite and determinate cognition of the object and that the object itself must be real.

The *manas*, which we have called the sense-mind as distinguished from *citta*, is treated in Yoga as the sixth sense organ and has the function of going to the objects through the senses and 'perceiving' the object. It is this total perception to which the *buddhi* (intellect) relates and assumes the form of the object. This is the basis of the formation of the *vyrtti* or the modification of the mind and depending on the form and the process, the modification is classified as one of the five types (YS I.5-6). The *citta* as a whole is the mediator between the external world of objects, brought to it by the outgoing mind through the senses, and the *Puruṣa*, for whose sake the *citta* functions (YS II.21 – the essence of the 'seen' is for the sake of the 'Seer').

The perception of space and time is considered by Sāṃkhya -Yoga as categories of the intellect, that is, of understanding. They do not arise directly as a result of any of the processes of perception. We will discuss the relationship of *citta* and time in a later section although it can be said here that the relationship between the *citta* and time involves both the cognition of duration (*kṣaṇa*) and succession (*krama*). The external organs according to Īśvarakṛṣṇa can apprehend only the present whilst the *citta* as a whole, is capable of apprehending the past, present and the future (Sāṃkhya Kārikā XXXIII).

The explanation of illusory perception, *viparyaya* as one of the five categories of modifications, according to Yoga arises out of *akhyāti*, the 'non-grasping' of the object. Dasgupta explains this as the failure to apprehend the difference between two things, such as the conch-shell and

⁴¹⁰ Kapila, *Sāṃkhya Pravacana Bhāṣya*, (trans. and ed.) Fitz-Edward Hall, (Calcutta: Baptist Mission, 1856), 68.

silver, giving rise to the judgement that the conch-shell is silver⁴¹¹. Either, through a subsequent perception, or through the process of the *buddhi*, this error is realised and the earlier judgement rejected. Here memory also plays a part by not recollecting anything in relation to what is being perceived, in this case either of the conch-shell or silver.

The Yoga view of perception raises an interesting issue. If the mind through the senses reaches out to the object and takes the form of the object, then how is the *absence* of an object cognised? It is apparent that the absence is not the result of perception but will have to refer to memory, *smṛti*, which is also considered as a modification of the mind. If we are to assume that a previous perception of the object is deposited in the memory, then this will be the basis on which the cognition of absence or *abhāva* is arrived at. We shall discuss more of this in the section on memory, but it is to be noted that the modification of *nidrā*, or sleep, is described as the *abhāva*, or absence of, *pratyaya* or experience.

vii. Perception, knowledge and subjective experience

The relationship between perception and arising of knowledge needs to take into account the inner organ of the composite of the *buddhi*, *asmitā* and *manas*. The element of *manas* or sense-mind is the one which has the characteristic of *saṃkalpa* and *vikalpa* – resolution and doubt. According to Vijñānabhikṣu, the *manas* provides the indeterminate perceptual aspect of cognition and it is the *buddhi* or intellect which, having the characteristic of *niscaya* (determination), co-ordinates ‘the indeterminate perceptions into determinate perceptual or conceptual forms with particular characteristics’⁴¹². According to Dasgupta, Vācaspati Miśra has a different opinion regarding this process of perception to knowledge, where he proposes

⁴¹¹ Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy Volume I*, 487.

⁴¹² Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy in Relation to other Systems of Indian Thought*, 128.

that the *manas* has the ‘power of arranging the sense-data in a definite order and of making the indeterminate sense-materials determinate’⁴¹³.

Asmitā, at this level appropriates the experience to itself, giving rise to the subjective experience of the individual ‘knowing’ the object. It is here that the impersonal and objective cognition of the *manas* becomes a subjective experience. Chennakesavan points to a further process: ‘even after the *ahaṃkāra* refers the perceived object to the self, the process of acquiring knowledge is not complete. Every experience of the individual involves the act of will or determination...taken charge of by the *buddhi*...resolving how to act towards the cognitive element’⁴¹⁴.

According to the Sāṃkhya understanding of perception, the ‘sense-organs move out to their respective objects, assume their forms and apprehend them...without leaving connection with the body’⁴¹⁵. It is the existence of the *ṛtti* that makes this possible and the *ṛtti* is ‘neither part of, nor quality of the senses’⁴¹⁶. The *ṛtti* can be compared to the flame of a lamp...which by means of its transparency, is capable of receiving images of the forms of objects’⁴¹⁷. Three out of the five external sense organs, of taste, smell and touch, remain in their ‘seat’ and apprehend their object whereas the visual and auditory organs go out to their objects to apprehend them. The external sense organs according to Vācaspati Miśra, communicate the immediate impressions to the *manas* (sense-mind), which in turn orders them and gives them to the *ahaṃkāra* (egoity) which ‘appropriates them by its unity of apperception and gives these self-appropriated apperceived impressions of the objects for the experience of the self (*puruṣa*)’⁴¹⁸. Thus perception involves the external as well as the internal sense organs. It must be noted that

⁴¹³ Surendranath Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy in Relation to other Systems of Indian Thought*, 264.

⁴¹⁴ Sarasvati Chennakesavan, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, 59.

⁴¹⁵ Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol. III, Epistemology of Perception*, 8.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 119.

although the internal organ is a composite of the three elements, it acts as one. These gateways of knowledge apprehend a ‘congeries of discrete impressions... and the mind...operates on this “manifold of intuitions”...and synthesizes...[them] into distinct aggregates or groups. Until [this is done]...there can be no perception of them as things’⁴¹⁹. The mind has the function of forming these aggregates and transforming the sensations into one distinct percept. Referring these to the egoity, the cognition of ‘I perceive’ is created. The *buddhi* which defines and ascertains the objects by recognition of their type, ‘imports the empirical relations of space and time, which are nothing but the constructions or categories of understanding into spaceless and timeless continuum of discrete impressions created by the mind’⁴²⁰.

We have noted that the internal and external organs involved in perception are evolutes of *Prakṛti* and by their nature are insentient. How do they give rise to conscious apprehension of an object? According to Yoga, perception depends on existence of both principles of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, and although the latter is insentient and the former without any content, the conjunction of the two principles gives rise to conscious awareness in the insentient elements by means of reflection of the self-luminous *Puruṣa* ⁴²¹.

We can summarise the idea of perception according to Yoga as follows:

- There must exist a real as opposed to an illusory object of perception.
- This object is apprehended by the externalising mind through the sense organs as distinct aggregates.
- The *manas* (sense-mind) organises these into one distinct percept.
- The egoity itself appropriates this determinate percept of the *manas* and refers it to the ‘empirical unity of apperception’.
- The *buddhi* decides what it will do with the perceived object, being the will to react to this object.

⁴¹⁹ Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol. III, Epistemology of Perception*, 123.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 125.

- The *Puruṣa* ‘enjoys’ the perception of the object when it is ‘presented’ to it as a *pratyaya*.

The Objects of Knowledge (*grāhya*)

The view of Yoga is that there is an object external to the process of cognition and the idea of the reality of the object is based on *vastusāmya* the ‘sameness of the object’⁴²². This is based on the logic that although there is a diversity of cognitions about the object, there is an ‘agreement about the identity of the object among the percipients’⁴²³. Therefore, there is a real object which is the subject of deliberative thought and is referred to as the ‘*dharmin*’ (substrate) which has generic as well as specific qualities (*sāmānyaviśeṣātmā*). Vyāsa comments on the external object as a ‘particular organisation of the subtle elements, consisting of a generic quality which becomes manifest under certain conditions and is a real integral whole’⁴²⁴ and is impermanent and tangible.

The Process of Knowing (*grahana*)

The process by which the real object is known is called *grahana* (lit., grasping) and is the ascertainment of the generic and specific qualities of the object through the modifications of the *citta* involving the five sense-organs and the *manas* which is the ‘sense-mind’⁴²⁵. According to Patañjali an object is known or not known by the *citta*, depending on whether the latter is coloured (*uparāga*) by it or not⁴²⁶. The commentator Vyāsa in relation to this *sūtra* (IV.16) says that the mind is like iron and the objects are like loadstones. Just as the iron filings arrange themselves according to the loadstone, so also the mind gets modified according to the object

⁴²² YS IV.15: *vastusāmye cittabhedāttayorvibhaktaḥ panthāḥ*: Despite sameness of objects, there is a different way or path to them both (object and its inherent knowledge) since there are different minds.

⁴²³ G Yardi, *The Yoga of Patañjali*, 21.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 22.

⁴²⁵ YS I.7, commentary by Vyāsa.

⁴²⁶ YS IV.16, commentary by Vyāsa.

which it contacts through the sense-organs. An object is known because it colours or affects the mind in this way.

viii. Attention

In his commentary on YS I.1, Vyāsa says that Yoga is the absorption of the mind (*Samādhi*) and it is a feature of the mind in all its habitual states. The importance of absorption and its relation to attention is pointed out here in terms of the goal and method of Yoga. Vācaspati Miśra in *Tattvavaiśārādī* defines attention as the single pointedness of the mind (TV I, 1), a focusing of the mind on one object to the exclusion of other objects. We saw in the previous section that Patañjali defines *dhāraṇā* as concentration – *deśa bandha citta* – enclosing of the mind in one location. Sinha says that it ‘involves selection and rejection...it is a mind fixed on the one proper object and withdrawn from other improper objects’⁴²⁷. Here the implication is that the ‘proper’ object is the one which will lead towards meritorious thoughts and, thus, towards liberation. It may be an object which is external or internal and if the latter, it will be recalled from memory either as an image or a sound. When the attention is kept on the object for a period of time to the exclusion of other objects, it is said to be concentration or *dhāraṇā*. Eliade says that ‘the point of departure of Yoga meditation is concentration on a single object; whether this is a physical object...or a thought...or God (*Īśvara*) makes no difference. This determined and continuous concentration, called *ekāgratā*... is obtained by integrating the psychomental flux (*sarvārtha* – variously directed, discontinuous, diffused attention). It is precisely the definition of Yoga technique: *citta vṛtti nirodha*⁴²⁸. The sense and the subliminal mind are continuously feeding into the flux that creates modifications according to their form and intensity. The practice of *ekāgratā*, says Eliade, ‘tends to control the two generators of mental fluidity: sense activity (*indriya*) and the activity of the subliminal mind (*samskāra*).

⁴²⁷ Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol II, Emotion and Will*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1961), 476.

⁴²⁸ Mircea Eliade, (trans. by W Trask), *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 47.

Control is the ability to intervene, at will and directly, in the functioning of these two sources of mental ‘whirlwinds’ (*cittavṛtti*)⁴²⁹.

We have seen that Vyāsa in his commentary on the first *sūtra* lists the five *bhūmi* or states of the mind and in each state, he says, concentration is possible. However, the quality of concentration is markedly different in each one of these states, governed by the modes of nature, the *guṇa*. It is only *ekāgra* and *niruddha* states which are described as conducive to meditative absorption, as we have noted. The practices which Patañjali refers to are ways in which the *sattva guṇa* becomes proportionately more than the two other *guṇa*. Sinha mentions that attention ‘involves the adjustment of the whole organism to the object attended to – its attentive attitude’⁴³⁰ which requires the peace and equanimity of the *sattva guṇa*.

In his exposition on *Kriyā* Yoga as we mentioned in a previous section, Patañjali lists *tapas* (austerity), together with *svādhyāya* (self study) and *Īśvara praṇidhāna* as a means of attaining *Samādhi*, a high state of focused attention. Indirectly, the three aspects of *Kriyā* Yoga increase the capacity for attention by attenuating the *kleśa* or the causes of affliction. These *kleśa* tend to increase the disorder in the mind by the externalising tendencies of the mind and because of the preponderance of the *rajas* and *tamas guṇa*. As these tendencies are minimized the attentive capacity is increased with the greater amount of *sattva guṇa* by means of Yoga practice.

Sinha points out the determinants of attention as the number and intensity of the distractions; the intensity of the sensation; the interest in the object on which attention is directed; and the presence of another competing object. Besides these the formation of a habit is also a determinant of attention in that, through practice one develops the habit of holding attention on an object. ‘Habit is the repetition of the similar cognitions of an object in a certain stage of the

⁴²⁹ Mircea Eliade, (trans. by W Trask), *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 48.

⁴³⁰ Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol II, Emotion and Will*, 478.

mind and the arrest of the emergence of dissimilar cognitions'⁴³¹. The habits developed through *tapas* and self study then become the determinants of attention and the devotion to *Īśvara* facilitates concentration. Attending or paying attention is an activity concept, something which one does or is engaged in. Being an activity, it is characterised by being time bound, interrupted or not and this activity can be continuous or intermittent.

The element of control of the mind, the conscious and deliberate effort to hold the attention on the object, is central to the *antarāṅga* Yoga (inner limbs of Yoga practice). The whole thrust of Yoga practice is to develop this tremendous capacity for concentrating over long periods of time. In this connection Patañjali lists the distractions of the mind which lessen this capacity in YS I.30 as disease, mental lethargy, doubt, inadvertence, inertia, non-withdrawal of the mind, illusion, instability of the mind and restlessness⁴³². 'Anything that prevents the *yogin* from cultivating the attitude of inward-mindedness is considered as an obstacle, be it physical illness or psychic disorders'⁴³³. Each one of the obstacles has the ability to either take away the ability to concentrate or lead towards the distraction of the mind to other sensations or an object. However, the solution for each one of these distractions is given by Vyāsa in his commentary on the *sūtra* YS.I.32 to I.40 in which he lists those factors which will assist the *yogin* to develop this high capacity for concentration. Feelings of amity, compassion, goodwill, and indifference respectively towards happy, miserable, virtuous and sinful creatures, results in *citta prasādam* – the purity of the mind which then leads to *ekāgram*⁴³⁴ – establishment in one-pointedness (YS I.33). The mind can also achieve concentration through immediate means such as focusing on the exhalation and inhalation and the retention of breath (YS I.34). Based on Vyāsa's

⁴³¹ Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol II, Emotion and Will*, 478.

⁴³² YS I.30 describes the distractions of the mind as the obstacles to the inwardness of the mind developed by devotion to *Īśvara* and the repetition of OM and contemplation on its meaning. Here the focus of attention is the form and name of *Īśvara*. The obstacles prevent the mind from this attentiveness.

⁴³³ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 46.

⁴³⁴ Vyāsa in his commentary on this sutra YS I.33 says: these kinds of thought and the practice thereof...brings purity to the mind and such a mind becomes one-pointed and eventually attains serenity.

commentary Sinha further clarifies the means of overcoming the hindrances. The mind can overcome the distractions by repeatedly fixing the attention on any agreeable object which may be gross or subtle, on a subtle idea or concept, or the idea of God, *Īśvara*. With the cultivation of the positive emotions of love, compassion and joy and indifference towards unvirtuous people, the *sattva* quality of the mind predominates and the mind becomes single pointed. All these methods which counteract the hindrances, lead towards a tranquil mind (*citta prasādam*) and thus are easily able to fix the attention on an object. The implication here is that development of the capacity for concentration is dependent on both long and short term strategies of controlling the mind and influencing the subliminal factors by habitual practice. These habits are formed according to Sinha, by an effort of the will to repeatedly concentrate the mind on one object. This effort consists of restraining the mind from turning elsewhere, quickness of action and developing patience and perseverance with ‘conviction in its success’⁴³⁵.

Further he explains that if there are too many distractions during the practice, the habit cannot be formed, neither can it be formed when faith and devotion is lacking and there are long periods of discontinuity. Only with long and continuous practice can the subliminal impressions of fixation be strengthened and impressions of diversion weakened, in other words *abhyāsa* is critical for this process. The control of the mind can be further enhanced by the practice of *vairāgya* or dispassion. Patañjali names two approaches to Yoga practice – *abhyāsa* (effort) and *vairāgya* in YS I.12 where he says that the modifications of the mind can be stopped by these. Vyāsa focuses on discrimination and discriminative knowledge as the core of effort. The relationship between the capacity to concentrate and these two approaches can be explained as follows. The mind in its ordinary states of *kṣipta*, *vikṣipta* and *mūḍha* is preoccupied with the external world for the fulfilment of desires and the practice of *vairāgya* disengages the mind

⁴³⁵ Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol II, Emotion and Will*, 484.

from this preoccupation. The attention is thus freed from its objects and is free now to engage with alternative objects; in this case Patañjali mentions three categories of objects with which concentration becomes imminent: 1). *Īśvara* or God; 2). one principle – *ekatattva* or 3). any object which is of intense interest to oneself. The *abhyāsa* is then about making the effort to engage with any one of the three categories of the object and with the mind disengaged from its normal preoccupations, concentration becomes imminent. Each category of the object of one's concentration leads towards one type of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* or cognitive absorption which Patañjali describes in YS I.17⁴³⁶.

What is clear from this analysis is that Patañjali considers that concentration, which can be termed as 'yogic concentration', can only be possible with the preparation of the mind by means of developing the habits of regular and intense *yogic* effort and dispassion toward normal preoccupations of the world. Thus there are two levels of influence on the capacity to concentrate: that which is in the immediate moment and that which relates to long term exertion of effort and dispassion. Both these are important and each makes a contribution to the attainment of virtuosity in yogic concentration.

Perception and attention: In his commentary on YS I.7, Vyāsa comments on the idea of *pratyakṣa* or direct perception as being caused by the contact with the external object by the mind through the sense channels and is concerned with the special features (*viśeṣa*) of the object which is characterised by both special and general features (*sāmānya*). Thus there are three stages which involve attention in regard to perception. Firstly, there is awareness of the general features of the object, which appears to the senses as it comes into contact with them. Of course awareness is assumed in the perceiving subject. Secondly, there is an interest in the object as determined by the inclinations of the subject and this interest then attends to the object

⁴³⁶ YS I.17: *vitarka vicārānandāsmītā rūpānugamātsamprajñātaḥ*: when concentration is reached with the help of gross objects, subtle objects, joy and I-ness there arises cognitive absorption.

in question. Thirdly, the attention is drawn to the special features of the object on which it is held until the interest remains or is transferred to another object of interest. Reception of the sensation is followed by perception and conception which requires attention to be directed where required. Vijñānabhikṣu says in his commentary that the result of this process of perception is the cognition ‘I know the pot’ or ‘The pot exists’. Desmarais notes that ‘attention is a central factor for visual awareness and binding. Attention allows us to perceive features of an object and to distinguish one object among many. Without attention, we might look at an object and not see it. Attention is also necessary for perception of change. Once attention is removed, perception of visual change vanishes’⁴³⁷. The attention shifts rapidly and is drawn to those objects which are of concern or importance to the subject and determines the subject’s experience. Desmarais observes further that if there is a shift in the subject’s understanding of what is important, there is a concomitant shift in where the attention is directed⁴³⁸. Patañjali thus advises that the study of scriptures and devotion to *Īśvara* are essential for attaining single pointedness⁴³⁹ as they direct the subject towards that which is important.

Attention and Memory: Inherent in this process of perceptual attention, is the co-operation of the *smṛti* (memory) which we have discussed in some detail in the earlier sections. The fixing of attention on an object can be related to memory in two ways. Firstly, as the object is perceived, the memory associated with the object, comes to the mind, or is not allowed to be ‘stolen’ away as Patañjali puts it in YS I. 11. The recognition of the object requires the memory to function when attention is on the object of interest. Secondly, where there is no previous experience of the object, the attention is fixed on the special features of the object with a desire to remember so that it can be recalled after a period of time. Sinha comments in this regard that ‘sometimes an object is recalled quickly and sometimes after a delay. When it is recalled after some delay,

⁴³⁷ Michelle M Desmarais, *Changing Minds, Mind, Consciousness and Identity in Patañjali's Yoga-sūtra*, 107.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 108.

⁴³⁹ YS I. 23 and YS II.1.

attention is fixed on the series of relevant thoughts which are associated with it'⁴⁴⁰. In other words, voluntary attention is required where active recollection is taking place. When Patañjali prescribes that attention is to be paid to *Īśvara*⁴⁴¹ for bringing about single pointedness, it requires the *yogin* to actively recollect the special features of *Īśvara* and hold attention on these.

Attention and awareness: In the subject's awareness, there may be many different objects of the senses brought to it by the sense-mind and the attention directed to one of these objects brings it into sharp focus. The mode of the *manas* is 'modified into the form of the object attended to, and becomes one with it'⁴⁴². In various stages of meditative absorption, the object fully occupies the awareness and is said to become one with it. In the *Samprajñāta Samādhi* mentioned above, whether it is a gross or subtle object, whether it is the emotion of joy or just a sense of self, the mind becomes one with it by having similar cognitions arising in succession to the exclusion of dissimilar cognitions. The effort which is required by the practitioner is to keep attention focussed on similar thoughts continuously for concentration to be effective. In the higher states of meditative absorption, the distinction between *grahīṭr*, *grāhya* and *grahaṇa*, the knower, the object and the process of knowing, all coalesce in a singular subjective experience. The attainment of this singularity is highly dependent on the capacity for attention at all stages leading to it.

It is also to be noted that according to the text, awareness in the subject is the reflection of pure Consciousness of the *Puruṣa* as awareness in the pure *buddhi*. If this is the case then awareness is a prior condition to all the activities of the mind. Even before any cognition can arise, awareness is required and in a sense is independent of the cognitions which are said to occur in the insentient matter (*Prakṛti*). The *buddhi* or intellect also being the inner instrument with the capacity of the will, acts as the agency for selective attention and the holding of attention on the

⁴⁴⁰ Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol II, Emotion and Will*, 489.

⁴⁴¹ YS I.23: Or [*Samādhi* is] gained through devotion to *Īśvara*.

⁴⁴² Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol II, Emotion and Will*, 490.

object. As the number of distractions get less, there is a greater ability of the mind for concentration; and the greater the purity of the intellect, the greater the stillness in the mind and thus an enhanced attention mechanism. In other words the *yogin* with a purified intellect is able to direct attention effectively with greater awareness and voluntarily reach the state of single pointedness of mind quickly. In the case of the non-*yogin*, the ability to direct attention is available in the lower order states of mind but to a limited degree.

Attention and desire: Patañjali says that concentration becomes imminent when one attends to the object which one has an interest in or desires. As noted above, the awareness is filled with a multitude of objects both internal and external and the mind is not able to attend to all of them. Sinha states that ‘if there are many interests in the mind, the most predominant one pushes the others in the background, renders them unconscious, dominates the field of consciousness and determines attention to a proper object’⁴⁴³. The ‘proper’ object in this case is the one which leads the river of the mind to flow in the direction of liberation.

Patañjali does not give us any details about the vital mechanism of attention for Yoga praxis, except what is implied in the method of Yoga offered in the text. The point at which the control of the attention mechanism is applied is not given and the individual components of the attention system and their operations are not explained. Nor has there been much said in the secondary literature about this important aspect of Yoga although some studies have pointed out that regular practitioners have developed an enhanced attention mechanism⁴⁴⁴. Indeed, this area of Yoga psychology is fertile territory for exploration both theoretically and experimentally as it also leads to understanding other phenomena associated with Yoga such as the different types and levels of attention in meditative absorption. It is assumed that there is a mechanism for willed and voluntary attention which is the key element for the aspiring practitioner to train.

⁴⁴³ Jadunath Sinha, *Indian Psychology, Vol II, Emotion and Will*, 491.

⁴⁴⁴ See for example, S Hongasandra, K Rama Rao, N Tikhe Sham, G Tikhe Sham, “Efficacy of Yoga for Sustained Attention in University Students”, *Ayu*, Vol.34(3), (2013): 270-282.

There are direct methods of training the attention as mentioned above and there are longer terms enhancers of this mechanism: those, on the one hand, that increase the impressions of restriction of the modifications of the mind and those that increase the quality of the thoughts making the river of the mind to flow towards *kalyāṇa* or blessedness and liberation. Both the long term and short term strategies for training attention are vital for the progress of the practitioner to achieve high states of absorption as without an effective application of effort, the *yogin* can make little progress.

ix. Memory

Memory, according to Vijñānabhikṣu in his ‘Sāṃkhya Pravacanabhāṣya’, is a cognition produced by an impression. An experience creates or leaves a trace in the *citta* which persists and endures and which may be recalled later on. As we noted in an earlier chapter, Patañjali himself defines memory as ‘*anubhūta viṣaya asaṃpramoṣaḥ smṛtiḥ*’ – ‘remembrance is the non-deprivation of the object’⁴⁴⁵. Here the word ‘*asaṃpramoṣaḥ*’ literally means ‘non-stealing’ implying that there is some mechanism which tends to ‘steal’ the memory from one’s awareness. The experience which is said to have created the impression – *saṃskāra* – becomes subliminal until there is an event in the mind which will bring it into awareness. The subliminal ‘store’ of these impressions is implied to have a tendency to keep them in storage. The memory is the ‘process which does not allow an object experienced in the past to escape’⁴⁴⁶. Although the past impression is retained as a *saṃskāra*, this impression, when brought into awareness in the mind, becomes *smṛti*. The term *smṛti* (from the root *smṛ* ‘to recall’) itself refers to that which is ‘calling to the mind’ and also to the ‘the whole body of sacred tradition or what is remembered by human teachers’⁴⁴⁷. A process is implied in the definition which refers to an impression created with the experience that becomes subliminal although the details of what

⁴⁴⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 33.

⁴⁴⁶ Bangalore Kuppaswamy, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, 118.

⁴⁴⁷ Monier Williams: online dictionary at <http://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/monier/>

this process is, are not stated in the aphorisms. When this latent impression, in potential form is brought into the awareness, it recreates a form of the past experience in the *citta*, this being referred by Patañjali as a *citta-vṛtti* – a modification of the mind. Thus we can identify the creation, retention, recollection and re-experience as modifications of the mind, as the stages in the operation of *smṛti*. If creation of the impression arises from experience, the retention is due to the persistence of this *saṃskāra*. All retention, however, appears not to be converted into recollection as not all experience is recollected. The retained latent impressions, however, certainly influence mental activity as indicated in the *sūtra* IV.24 which mentions that the ‘mind is speckled by countless *vāsanā*’⁴⁴⁸, the collection of the *saṃskāra* which create particular tendencies which strongly bear upon moment to moment experience.

The existence of recognition of an object raises the question as to how it is that the two processes of direct perception by the senses and the revival of the past impression as memory come together to give the recognition in the present moment. It must be noted that the senses and the impressions ‘co-operate with each other to create the recognition’⁴⁴⁹. The mechanism of the circularity between the experience, creation of impressions and their recollection and creation of further impressions is important in the Yoga praxis. The creation of *nirodha saṃskāra* which oppose the *vyutthāna saṃskāra* and which lead towards the cessation of the modifications of the mind is a key feature in the achievement of this goal. The creation of the impressions from any experience whether perceptual or illusory, cognitive or affective, underpins the experiences of the subject and the types of impressions which are created, lead to the type of experience. The bringing of past experience back into the mind, recollection, requires the existence of latent impressions in the mind.

⁴⁴⁸ YS IV.24: *tadasaṅkhyeyavāsanābhiścitraṃ parārthaṃ saṃhatyakāritvāt*: That (mind), although variegated by innumerable *vāsanā*, (exists) for another (*Puruṣa*) inasmuch as (its constituents) act conjointly.

⁴⁴⁹ Bangalore Kuppuswamy, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, 125.

Vyāsa also speaks of two kinds of memory: of things only imagined (unreal), and those things not imagined (real). The former is seen in dreams when imagined things may appear and the other is in the waking state in which memory of real things appear⁴⁵⁰. The question can arise: if all the memories are related to *saṃskāra* or impressions created, then where do the imagined things appear from? An explanation given by Bryant is that there appears to be a merger of two or more sets of *saṃskāra* which then result in an instance of ‘blended’ or ‘superimposed’ memory. Raveh, however, comments that Patañjali’s definition of memory seems not to include imagination. He asks: ‘Is memory just object dependent....or does one add colours and tastes to past experiences and “fill the gaps” of memory with and through one’s imagination?’⁴⁵¹ An answer to this is that although the memories are in concordance with the impressions, the activity of the *citta* can result in operations which can take several memories and blend them into new formations which then become new impressions. We know that the *citta* is capable of various cognitive functions expressed as *vṛtti* and in the waking state it can function to bring memories consciously together. In the dream state also this operation can be said to take place but presumably not with apparent conscious intervention. Hariharananda points to a similar idea when he speaks of the two aspects of *smṛti*: the knowledge of the object and also the process of knowing⁴⁵². The former is something that was experienced before and the latter is something new. This process can, therefore, potentially bring several impressions together to create a new one – an imaginary object.

There are six *sūtra* which use the term *smṛti* relating to the general concept of memory:

- YS I.6 which refers to the five types of modifications of the mind, including memory.
- YS I.11 which defines memory.

⁴⁵⁰ Bangalore Kuppaswamy, *The Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, 125, (but see commentary of Vyāsa on YS I.11, 33).

⁴⁵¹ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 27.

⁴⁵² Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 33.

- YS I.20 memory as one of the prescribed practices for attaining non-cognitive absorption.
- YS I.43: when memory is ‘purified’, only the object shines in the mind in practice of *nirvitarka samāpatti*.
- YS IV.9: On account of the correspondence between memory and latent impression there is a causal connection between the two even when separated by time, place and birth.
- YS IV.21: If one mind is perceived by another there will be infinite regress and the confusion of memory.

Feuerstein proposes a ‘deep structure’ formed by what he calls ‘depth memory...the storage centre of past mental activity...which extends backwards *ad infinitum*’⁴⁵³. The mind according to him is ‘energised by this network of *vāsanā* which set up a certain tension, thereby causing the mind to incline towards sensory experience’. It is assumed that the ‘depth memory’ is the continuing storehouse of everchanging *vāsanā* extending from the present birth to infinite past. What he refers to as an ‘aspatial/atemporal’ memory which is ‘located in the depth structure of the microcosm’⁴⁵⁴ is related to the persistence of *vāsanā* after death which then forms the core for the next life.

Thus in terms of memory, we have several interconnected concepts according to the text: *smṛti* (memory), *vāsanā* (subliminal inclinations) and *saṃskāra* (subliminal impressions). Besides these we have the *karmāśaya* – the deposit of *karma* – which arise from the consequences of past actions. Inherent in each concept is some idea of retention, either of past experiences or consequences of past actions. What is retained can be either from this life or previous ones and it can either be accessible in present awareness as in *smṛti*, or not as in the case of impressions from previous lives. According to YS IV.9, Patañjali posits the correspondence between memory and subliminal impressions as a reason for the uninterrupted relation between one life

⁴⁵³ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 60-61.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 69.

and another. This homogeneity, according to Feuerstein's reading of the verse, between cause and effect is guaranteed by the uniformity between the two factors of depth memory and subliminal impressions⁴⁵⁵. He further proposes that *smṛti* does not refer to 'ordinary' memory but to depth memory which comprises the *vāsanā* configurations of a particular individual and identical with *asmitā-mātra* as the root of the mind-complex or *citta*. He considers the reference to *smṛti* in YS I.49 to be to the depth memory as it is this depth memory which can be 'purified' to give rise to a mind reflecting the pure object. We believe that these are related concepts there is differentiation amongst them, although they may refer to various levels at which the memory functions. On the one hand what Feuerstein refers to as depth memory is the complex of *samskāra*, *vāsanā* and *karma*, whilst *smṛti* concerns those aspects of the depth memory which are accessible to awareness and can be recollected and remembered. Tola and Dragonetti have a more standard interpretation, although not very clear, of the aspect of mechanism of memory or *smṛti*. According to them, a perceived object produces the modifications in the mind as well creating a latent subliminal impression. 'When the *samskāra* is revived, it is reactivated and passes from the realm of unconsciousness to that of consciousness: memory is remembered then produced'⁴⁵⁶.

Whicher brings in the role of the *buddhi* in the mechanism of memory, stating that memory 'operates exclusively on the level of the inner organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*), wherein the contents of a previous experience are returned to consciousness'⁴⁵⁷ although there is no corresponding object in perception. Memory he says plays an important role in determining the range of cognition. Calling *pratyaya* a cognition he says that this is coloured by the object being experienced and, therefore, the cognition carries 'the form (*rūpa*) or representation of the object as well as the

⁴⁵⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 70.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁵⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 117.

representations of the process or the fact of apprehension'⁴⁵⁸. Memory consists both the representation of the object grasped and the process of cognition. In summary the causation chain can be described as: experience → *samskāra* (impression) → memory of both the cognition of the object and the process of cognition. In this process of bringing the past experience into awareness again, the *buddhi* (intellect) plays the part of bringing awareness to the cognition, which, however, is secondary to the memory itself. In relation to YS I. 43 Whicher considers this to be a process in *Samādhi* (meditative absorption), where the object becomes 'free of the attachment to names and verbal contemplation...disassociated from any dependency on speech and language'⁴⁵⁹.

Desmarais, notes that the memory system is tied up with perception as the recognition of an object and requires the past experience of such an object to be brought to the mind. Although she links this to the idea of a 'buffer memory', it is not clear which aspect of the Yogasūtra can be referred to for this connection. There does not appear to be any specific reference to such a process and appears as a concept borrowed from Western psychology. She goes on to say further that the restriction of perception necessarily implies a restriction on memory and this when seen in relation to the function of attention, leads to the conclusion that 'shifts in attentional focus would affect all forms of memory storage, consolidation and retrieval'⁴⁶⁰. Further, she notes that 'if Yoga seeks to shift our identity with this self, then restriction of most types of memory is necessary' as the sense of identity is connected with memory. We think that the idea of identity is more complex than just memory in the Yogasūtra, and we have noted this in section (c) above on 'Self and self' and this has to do with the central role which is played by '*asmitā*' in Yoga. The key question, as Paranjape points out, is: do memories by themselves

⁴⁵⁸ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 118.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 226.

⁴⁶⁰ Michelle M Desmarais, *Changing Minds: Mind, Consciousness and Identity*, 121.

account for ‘the unity and selfsameness of personality’?⁴⁶¹ In terms of the Yogasūtra, the unity and the unchanging sense of self are not only related to memory but with ‘*asmitā*’ and in turn its relation to the Consciousness of *Puruṣa*. Yoga makes a distinction between the knower and the known and also both of these from the unchanging Self, the Knower.

x. Psychological dimensions of the self: State of ignorance, motivation, emotions and time

The scheme of Yoga provides a certain methodology where various aspects of the individual get transformed when going through different states and stages and processes. These can be identified in the text through the various aphorisms and their commentaries and form a coherent way in which they lead the practitioner towards the state of *Kaivalya*. Starting with the process of individuation, the creation of a conscious subject by means of *saṃyoga* or conjunction of the two primordial elements of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* or the *draṣṭṛ* (Seer) and the *dṛśya* (seen), Yoga praxis leads to the *vīryoga* or disjunction of the two principles which then results in the aloneness of the *Puruṣa*, the pure Consciousness, this being realised as one’s true nature.

Patañjali does not deal at all with the developmental aspects of growth and maturation of the individual. His starting point is the experiences of the mature individual who is characterised by these states and processes which need to be transformed through Yoga practice. There is no indication in the Yogasūtra of the developmental processes involved in the *citta*, how cognition develops or how the sense of identity develops, for example. This absence is not surprising however, considering that the Yogasūtra concern is with the practicalities of attaining liberation, expressed in the highly condensed *sūtra* form.

The individual is afflicted by the five *kleśa* which have been discussed in the previous sections. These are at the core of the unenlightened individual and the psychodynamics of the *kleśa* has

⁴⁶¹ A Paranjpe, *Theoretical Psychology, the Meeting of East and West*, (New York: Plenum Publishers, 1984), 257.

been analysed by Raveh. The *kleśa* according to Patañjali in YS II.4 can be *prasupta* (dormant), *tanu* (weak), *vicchinna* (interrupted) or *udāra* (stimulated). Raveh says that he ‘cannot think of a more psychological or psychodynamic formulation. It means that the *kleśa*-s are always there, latent underneath the “external” *vyrtti* or mental stratum’⁴⁶². In his commentary, Vyāsa says that the *kleśa* is in a potential form and Vācaspati Miśra terms this as the potentiality of curd in the milk. The *kleśa* are ‘awakened’ when the awareness meets the object and this can result in various experiences of the subject. For example, the *kleśa* of *rāga* (attraction) and *dveṣa* (aversion) are dormant until the moment of contact with the object, whether external and physical or internal and representational. Depending on the past experience and the impressions associated with the object, there arises an expression of attraction or aversion. Let us examine psychological aspects of two key *kleśa*: *avidyā* and *abhiniveśa* which relate to the state of ignorance and motivation (will to live) respectively, both central to the understanding of how the mind functions.

The state of ignorance: The *kleśa* of *Avidyā* is defined by Patañjali in YS II.5: ‘Nescience is the seeing of [that which is] eternal, pure, joyful and the Self in [that which is] ephemeral, impure, sorrowful and non-self’⁴⁶³. Raveh calls this the ‘façade of phenomenal reality’, what constitutes the afflicted experiences and the continuous movement caused by the *guṇa* in both the subliminal and conscious aspects of the person. The mind gets caught up in a certain way of functioning due to this fundamental error in cognition. Not having a gaze ‘penetrating enough to see prakṛti as “she” really is...under the allegedly the “solid” façade of phenomenal reality’⁴⁶⁴, what constitutes *avidyā*, is something that no longer applies to the ‘*vivekin*’. Such a person who has become aware of the operation of the forces which govern *Prakṛti* can only

⁴⁶² Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 46.

⁴⁶³ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 63.

⁴⁶⁴ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 49.

come to the conclusion that suffering is but ‘the essence of one’s phenomenal reality’⁴⁶⁵. The commentary of Vyāsa on YS II.15, explains the logic of suffering in terms of the externalising tendencies of the *citta*, a movement towards the experience of pleasure from the world of objects. This is the paradox that the very nature of *Prakṛti* functioning in the individual, born out of creation of the deposits of *karma*, pushes one to the external world for ‘*bhoga*’ (enjoyment) and in the process one reaches displeasure because of the ‘restlessness for the thirst for enjoyment’⁴⁶⁶ and thus the enjoyment of objects has been called nescience (*avidyā*). Vyāsa employs another image of the experience of the ‘ignorant’ as someone who runs away from the sting of the scorpion only to be bitten by a snake⁴⁶⁷. The ‘discerner’ of ‘sweet poison’ in every phenomenal occurrence, is no longer deluded by the externalising forces of nature and sees through its working to change the very basis of his existential reality. The *yogin* is able to see through this entanglement and develops the capacity to perceive the inner psychological tendencies through direct yogic perception and, therefore, is able to gain freedom from them.

A process which Coward describes as ‘behaviour therapy, a most important psychological insight’⁴⁶⁸ and which has often been overlooked or underestimated in its significance is *pratipakṣa bhāvanā*, the ‘cultivation of the opposite’. This could apply to psychological attitudes as well as intentions and by means of a counterflow in thought and emotion to the prevailing one, there is a weakening of *kleśa*. As an example, Patañjali says that when one encounters experiences of endless suffering and ignorance, the cultivation of the opposites by means of the restraints (*yama*) weakens these negative experiences (YS II.34). Vācaspati Miśra says that the whole scheme of *Kriyā* Yoga is *pratipakṣa* – the opposite – of the *kleśa* in general and in particular the *samyag-jñāna* (well understood knowledge – wisdom) is the ‘antidote’ to the *avidyā* or ignorance. This method of cultivating the opposite is indicated by Patañjali at

⁴⁶⁵ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 49.

⁴⁶⁶ YS II.15 commentary of Vyāsa.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Harold Coward, *Yoga and Psychology, Language, Memory and Mysticism*, 47.

various levels: to *vṛtti* (YS II.33-34); to *kleśa* (YS II.24); to *saṃskāra* (YS III.9-10). But the antidote to *avidyā* (ignorance) is not so easily overcome as Daya Krishna points out: ‘The very cessation of the dependence both within and without is the object of yoga of Patañjali...but the internal world of desires is so rooted in the body and the mind and the *saṃskāra* augmented and elaborated by the imagination in a hundred ways, cannot be shut easily’⁴⁶⁹. Patañjali, however, describing the nature of *abhyāsa*, points to it as the means of countering this very difficulty.

The root motivation: The *kleśa* of *Abhiniveśa* is described in YS II.9 as that which makes even a wise man to cling on to life, the will to live on, and on the other hand, the fear of death or dying. This is attraction of life and its experiences and the aversion to one’s annihilation. One may ask why this could be an affliction as after all it is the will to survive that is the primary motivation for life. It is that will which, in its expression, protects the individual. This we believe, is the core of the motivational structure, according to Patañjali, and in the way it expresses itself in seeking pleasure in the external world and find the basis of its existence there; it is the affirmation of one’s identity. The deep seated nature of this *kleśa* is indicated in the idea that even a wise person, who has knowledge of the mistaken identity, is afflicted by it and cannot gain release from this fear. Vijñānabhikṣu says in his commentary that indeed this *kleśa* is the most difficult to overcome. One has to traverse the psychological layers of the conscious and subliminal to reach the very root of *abhiniveśa* through meditative absorption, in order to remove it.

Another perspective on the ‘will to live’ is given by Patañjali in YS IV.10 in the notion of ‘*āśis*’: ‘And the subliminal impressions are without beginning because of the perpetuity of the primordial will’. This principle pervades the whole of *Prakṛti*, the urge ‘to transform itself, to

⁴⁶⁹ Daya Krishna, *Indian Philosophy: A New Approach*, (Delhi, India: Sri Satguru Publications, 1997). 54.

actualise the inexhaustible potential to in myriad of forms, both visible and invisible'⁴⁷⁰. The deep psychological will to live is an expression of *Prakṛti* in the individual and as long as the identification with the individuality is there, this will continue as an urge to experience the unfolding and transforming life. But this is not just an aversion to be listed with the *dveṣa*, rather it is central to one's sense of self and, therefore, more pervasive in its effect than a mere aversion for an external object. Yoga provides the method by which even this deep rooted nature of *Prakṛti* can be overcome through the *draṣṭṛ* being established in its Self, when the modifications of the mind are ceased. The motivational aspect of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* is given in YS I.21 and 22 together with the commentary of Vyāsa which defines three conditions for *saṃvega*, the 'ardour to hasten forward', discussed in more detail in the next Chapter.

Emotions and their relations: According to Raveh, emotion is a missing element in the *vṛtti* scheme of the Yogasūtra and he speculates that this is so perhaps because Patañjali 'belongs to a cultural climate in which it is uncustomary to discuss emotions. Or since he evaluates emotions as subordinated to and determined by the knowledge centred *vṛtti* enumerated by him?' Further he says that it appears that 'prima facie...emotions seem to be a constitutive factor of the constant change which Patañjali seek to resolve'⁴⁷¹. We believe that the Yoga psychology of emotion is framed in a different way and relates to two aspects of the underlying psychological principles. On the one hand the theory of the *kleśa*, the causes of afflictions, points to the five sources of the experience of suffering, or as we have described in Chapter Five, section c, the 'emotive core', in the individual and on the other hand the theory of the *guṇa* suggests that every *vṛtti* will have an emotional content related to the three qualities of dullness, passion and equanimity. Thus the *vṛtti*, which have been described as *kliṣṭa* or *akliṣṭa*, refer to whether the modification are leading towards the phenomenal existence or liberation and will be experienced as pleasant or unpleasant. Thoughts and feeling arise together in the

⁴⁷⁰ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 132.

⁴⁷¹ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 27.

mind as modifications and the ‘colouring’ of the *vyrtti* is dependent on the presence or absence of the causes of affliction (*kleśa*) together with the proportion of the *guṇa*. It is only the discerner who knows all worldly objects as sorrowful, causing anguish because of the subliminal tendencies and the contrary nature of the *guṇa* (qualities)⁴⁷². Patañjali considers greed (*lobha*), anger (*krodha*) and delusion (*moha*) as the springboards to action and these are to be considered as the causes of infinite misery and unending ignorance⁴⁷³, thus linking thought, feeling and motivation. ‘In truth, life is sorrowful...the experiences of pleasure, joy, happiness, are all deceptive. This is not a simple pleasure/displeasure model of common sense. Nature is continually transforming itself and offers no foothold...(and) below the surface of pleasant and unpleasant experiences lie a basic anxiety and anguish common to all men’⁴⁷⁴. Thus the emotional life of the individual is determined by the *kleśa*, *karma* and *guṇa* and as long as these are present, there will be an underlying continuous existential anxiety. It is this condition which Patañjali seeks to resolve, and the ‘medicine prescribed by him for mental activity as a disease is twofold consisting of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*, repetitive practice and dispassion’⁴⁷⁵.

Time: The dialectic of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* resonates with another pair in the Yogasūtra according to Raveh, namely *krama* and *kṣaṇa*. He notes that *abhyāsa* can be argued as *kramic* or sequential in nature while *vairāgya* is *kṣaṇic* as ‘it transcends the *kramic* structure of *abhyāsa*’⁴⁷⁶. The terms *krama* (sequence) and *kṣaṇa* (moment) are mentioned in chapters III and IV of the Yogasūtra. The term *krama* is mentioned five times in YS III.15, 52 and 54, and YS IV. 32 and 33 and implies that the change in sequence is the cause of the *pariṇāma* or transformation; that discernment (*viveka-jam jñānam*) arises from the meditative absorption (*saṁyama*) on sequence and moment and this discernment is non-sequential, eternal, all-

⁴⁷² YS II.15.

⁴⁷³ YS II.34.

⁴⁷⁴ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*, 69.

⁴⁷⁵ Daniel Raveh, *Exploring the Yogasūtra, Philosophy and Translation*, 27.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 35.

encompassing and liberating; the sequence of transformations ceases when the qualities of nature have performed their function and the ‘virtue bearing cloud’ emerges; the moments as indicated by the completion of the transformation, is sequence. In his commentary on YS III.52, Vyāsa states that ‘the time taken by an atom in motion in leaving one point in space and reaching the adjacent point, is a moment. The continuous flow of these moments is *krama* or sequence. The (various) measures of day, night etc, are all aggregates formed by mental conception. Time is not a substantive reality but only a mental concept, which comes into the mind as verbal knowledge (*vikalpa*), but to an ordinary person it might appear as something real’⁴⁷⁷. Therefore, time exists in or is made real through language and this idea is cognate with Patañjali’s assertion in YS IV.12 that past and the future exist in the present in their special forms (*karmic* memory).

The manner in which time is perceived by the *yogin* is stated by Vyāsa in YS III.52 as the knowledge that there is no difference between a single moment and a thousand *yuga* (cosmic ages). The sense of time based on the idea that every measurement of time is based on the present moment which alone is real. In YS III.9 and 10, the *yogin* is said to collect the moments of silence (*nirodha kṣaṇa*) and when these occur without a gap, there is uninterrupted flow of awareness (*praśāntavāhitā*) in the mind. Prasad states that one cannot discuss the idea and perception of time in Yogasūtra unless one takes into account ‘the theories of causality, conservation of energy, change, succession and other allied topics...’⁴⁷⁸. Change is defined in Yoga as the emergence of an external aspect (*dharma*) of a substance, which is permanent, on the disappearance of previous aspects. Vācaspati Miśra in his commentary⁴⁷⁹ remarks that here change of external aspect refers to all the three kinds of changes: change of external aspect

⁴⁷⁷ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 336.

⁴⁷⁸ Hari Shankar Prasad, “Time and Change in Sāṃkhya Yoga”, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 12 (1984): 35-49.

⁴⁷⁹ N Misra (ed), *Patañjali, Pātañjalayogadarśana with Vyāsa’s Bhāṣya*.

(*dharma-pariṇāma*), change of time-variation (*lakṣaṇa-pariṇāma*), and change of state (*avasthā pariṇāma*). All these changes are experienced as the procession of time in the mind. Klostermaier states that ‘the absolutely unique point-instant of reality, as it cannot be represented, can also not be named. Consequently, it is no name at all; reality is unutterable. What is utterable is always a thought construction’. Thus it is that ‘the mathematical point-instant is a fiction for the Realist...Just as the mathematician constructs his velocities out of differentials, so does the human mind, a natural mathematician, construct duration out of momentary sensations’⁴⁸⁰.

In summary, the dimensions of the model of mind according to the Yogasūtra have been articulated in this Chapter. In what we consider a unique contribution to the study of the psychological dimension of the Yogasūtra, we have constructed the model of the mind, *citta*, as explicated from the *sūtra* as well as the commentaries and secondary literature on the text. We have given an analysis of the various aspects of the mind, bringing them into a coherent functional model, consisting of cognition, consciousness and their states, subjectivity, conscious and subliminal aspects of the mind, and the principles of perception, attention and memory according to Patañjali. As noted in Section One, although the scholars and commentators have made an enormous contribution in terms of the translation and interpretation of the Yogasūtra, we believe this thesis has systematically created a model of the mind which gives an enhanced depth of understanding of the psychological dimension of the text.

We now change direction in our thesis by taking this psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra towards a comparative analysis of the Western Positive Psychology concept of Flow and the Yoga concept of *Samādhi*.

⁴⁸⁰ Klaus Klostermaier, “Time in Patañjali's Yogasūtra”, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 34, No. 2, (April 1984): 205-210.

CHAPTER NINE: OUTCOMES OF YOGA PRACTICE, OPTIMAL EXPERIENCE AND FLOW

a. Introduction

In this Chapter we consider the outcomes of Yoga, focusing on the various practices prescribed by Patañjali for the attainment of *Kaivalya*. The purpose of this analysis is twofold: firstly, to identify the outcomes of each stage of the *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga practices and secondly, to consider the possible convergence between these and the phenomenon of Flow. Our proposal is that Yoga practices are preparation for and attainment of, states of absorption and certain of these states bear a close resemblance to Flow. As we noted in Chapter One, although Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi interestingly pointed out the close resemblance between Yoga and Flow, he did not specify the particulars of this similarity nor gave a detailed analysis of which aspect of Yoga bears this resemblance. An examination of the experiential outcomes of Yoga practice as given in the text, will lead towards identification of the experiences at each stage of the practice. With these details, we can begin to identify the specific states of Yoga which appear to have the close resemblance stated by Csikszentmihalyi and this can enable a comparative analysis of the two phenomena.

b. Outcomes of Yoga Practice

In Chapter Seven, we looked at Yoga Practice in detail and for the purposes for the current section we will take up some of these elements in brief to give an overall perspective with a particular emphasis on the connections between these elements and their results. Tables 2 and 3 below summarise these outcomes.

Abhyāsa and *Vairāgya*: Patañjali states in the second *sūtra* that Yoga is the cessation of the five modifications of the mind and this is the initial part of the extended process ending in the *Samādhi*. This is accomplished by creating the conditions for the inward turning through the last four limbs of *Aṣṭāṅga* yoga consisting of the ‘inner members’, *antaraṅga* which lead the

practitioner to the ultimate goal of Yoga – *Kaivalya* – through a process of self-transformation. In Chapter Seven of this Section, we looked at the two interrelated modes of practice which Patañjali says are the means to achieve the cessation of the modifications (YS 1.12). *Abhyāsa* can be seen as the process of ‘canalisation and re-conditioning’; while the *vairāgya* is a process of ‘de-conditioning’⁴⁸¹ and both these modes of practice overarch the practice of Yoga according to Patañjali. *Abhyāsa* consisting of austerity, discipline, knowledge and reverence, is to be done over a long period of time, without a break and with devotion. In this manner it is to be done with earnest attention (*sampādit*) and is firmly founded (*dr̥ḍhabhūmi*) when not easily overcome by subliminal impressions⁴⁸². The result of such practice is *praśāntavāhitā*: tranquil flow of mind.

Samvega: The motivational aspect of *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* is given in YS I.21 and 22 together with the commentary of Vyāsa which defines three conditions for *samvega*, the ‘ardour to hasten forward’. The *yogin* clearly sees the goal of yoga and is keen to move forward to meet the challenge with the practice with the three conditions of detachment, aptitude and reverence in practice. The three categories of *samvega* mentioned in YS I.21 are gentle, medium and intense, and reflect the intensity with which the *yogin* proceeds with his practice. This intensity may be slow, moderate or speedy (YS I.22) and thus we have nine different types of yogic motivation. The other aspects of motivation are the attitudes mentioned in YS I.20, with which there is a zeal to move towards the clear goal: faith (*śraddhā*), energy (*virya*), recollection (*smṛti*) of reality of *Īśvara* (God), absorption (*Samādhi*) and real knowledge of the principle of *Puruṣa* (*prajñā*). These are adopted by the *yogins*, says Vyāsa, resulting in the experience of tranquillity (*samprasāda*) which takes them towards the final stages of meditative absorption.

⁴⁸¹ L Singh, *Yoga Psychology, Methods and Approaches*.

⁴⁸² See YS I.14 with commentary of Vyāsa on YS I.13 and YS I.14.

Practice of the elements of Yoga (*Yogāṅga*): As a prelude to the description of the *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga in YS I. 29, Patañjali and Vyāsa in his commentary on these *sūtra*, indicate that the practice of this system of yoga is a means of realisation '*jñānadipti*' or the 'light of knowledge'. This occurs in proportion to the diminution of the causes of afflictions (*kleśa*) and with this light comes the knowledge of the true nature of the object and the nature of the 'owner' and the 'knower' of the object. The practice done with discriminative perception, brings about the mastery of knowledge (*vaśīkāra samjñā*), and thereafter a clear 'flow of discrimination' (*viveka pravāha*).

Practice of each of the eight limbs of *Aṣṭāṅga* yoga: Keeping in mind that the text talks about the overall result of liberation which is obtained when the *yogin* takes up the set of eight practices, it is to be recognised that Patañjali also gives the outcomes for each of the individual practices. The *Yogasūtra* gives the details of the restraints and observances – *Yama* and *Niyama*, and their gains, as shown in the Table 2 below:

	Practice	Outcome of Practice
YAMA:	Non violence	Non hostility from others
	Truth	Power to make words fruitful
	Non stealing	Jewels present themselves
	Continence, discipline	Potency
	Non covetousness	Knowledge of past and future lives
NIYAMA:	Cleanliness, purity	Pleasantness of feeling
	Contentment	Unsurpassed happiness
	Austerity	Perfection of body, senses, action
	Self study and chanting	Communication with deity
	Devotion to <i>Īśvara</i>	Attainment of <i>Samādhi</i>

Table 2: *Yama* and *Niyama* and their outcomes.

Next in the eight limbs come the Yoga postures, *āsana* and the practice of these brings about the immunity against the effects of the pair of opposites (*dvandva*) such as heat and cold, aridity and humidity etc (YS II.48). *Prāṇāyāma* (breath control) comes next and results in the removal of the covering that conceals the inner light (YS. II.52) and makes the mind fit for concentration (YS II.53). When the up-breath is mastered, there arises the ability to arise from mud and to rise from water (YS III.39). When the mid-breath (*samāna*) is mastered, there is effulgence in the

body, interpreted by Vyāsa as ‘kindling of the body heat’ (YS III.39). Mastery of the senses is gained when the *yogin* practices *pratyāhāra*, withdrawal of senses from their objects.

The fifth limb is *Dhāraṇā* which is defined in YS III.1 as the binding or fixing of attention to a spot or place: ‘*deśa bandha cittasya dhāraṇā. Ekāgratā*, or one-pointedness is the process underlying the technique of concentration and *samāpatti* is the process that underlies the technique of *Samādhi* or absorption. ‘The technique consists in a focussing of attention, a mental zeroing-in on one topic to the exclusion of all others’⁴⁸³. We have noted that although this is a key feature of the mind in the scheme of Yoga, there is a lack of clear and detailed analysis in the literature of this aspect, something which we have attempted to redress. The analysis of attention is given in section f of Chapter Seven and we note here the significant outcomes of this practice: a ‘truest perception’ of the object (YS I.42 VB), memory is ‘purified’ (YS I. 43), *pratyak cetanā* or ‘Seer consciousness’ is attained (YS I.29), there is ‘flow of quiescence’ – *sthitapravāha* (YS I.47), a ‘purified mind’ is attained – *cittaprasādam* (YS I.33), there arises a ‘purified intellect’ (YS I.45 VB), one has ‘the power of knowing things as they are’ – *prajñā* (YS I.47 VB) and is ‘filled with the Truth’ – *ṛtaṃ bharā* (YS I.48). It is clear that this practice brings about substantial results for the practitioner and prepares the mind to take it to the next level of Yoga praxis.

In YS III.2, the nature of *dhyāna* which follows from *dhāraṇā* is described as: ‘Therein (referring to the previous stage), the extension of the *pratyaya* (presented idea) is *dhyāna* (contemplative absorption)’. We discussed aspects of *dhyāna* in Chapter Seven, section c and here we point out what the text and the commentaries consider as the outcomes of the practice of contemplative absorption. In *dhyāna* Hauer says that ‘the strict concentration on one object of consciousness is now supplemented with a searching-pensive contemplation of its actual nature...Its various characteristics are examined till its very essence is understood and becomes

⁴⁸³ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 82.

transparent...the contemplator must penetrate his object with all his heart...'⁴⁸⁴. But '*dhyāna* is not prolonged *dhāraṇā*. It must be carefully demarcated from concentration by virtue of it utmost and continuous clarity of consciousness, the relative void of the inner space in meditative absorption...the slowing down of all cognitive and emotive processes and, not least, because of its underpinning of overwhelming peacefulness...*dhyāna* in other words adds depth to *dhāraṇā*'⁴⁸⁵. Thus what is being established at this stage of the Yogic practice is not only the peacefulness but also the deepening of the outcomes of *dhāraṇā* which have been noted above.

Samādhi and the 'meditative disciplines that accompany it are the sine qua non in Yoga for the realisation of the truth of existence'⁴⁸⁶, and the importance of this final limb of Yoga is emphasised by Vyāsa in his commentary on YS I.1: 'Yoga is *Samādhi*' – *yogaḥ Samādhiḥ*. In other words, the two terms Yoga and *Samādhi* are equivalent. We have examined the terms of *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, and *dhyāna* in the earlier sections where each is a stage which leads to the next one starting with the withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*), which 'forms the bridge and is the cumulative result of previous practices, and opens the door to one-pointed concentration'⁴⁸⁷.

In YS III.3, *Samādhi* is said to be: *tadeva arthamātra nirbhāsaṃ svarūpa śūnyam*: 'That (contemplation), when the object alone shines forth, empty of its own form is indeed *Samādhi*'. It is implied here that the true nature of anything can only be known when 'oneness of identity' is obtained with the object. It involves 'a complete transformation of the usual mode of knowing or perceiving (*pratyakṣa*). It is the transforming (*pariṇāma*) of the mind and consciousness from 'all objectivity' or dispersion to one-pointedness (*ekāgratā*)'⁴⁸⁸.

⁴⁸⁴ J W Hauer quoted in Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 84-85.

⁴⁸⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 85.

⁴⁸⁶ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 181.

⁴⁸⁷ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 82.

⁴⁸⁸ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 194.

The three practices of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *Samādhi* combined together, constitute the practice of constraint (*saṁyama*), ‘whose primary target is the flashing forth of transcendental-insight (*prajñā-āloka*)’⁴⁸⁹ (YS III.5). It is the practice which pertains to one object and results in various supernormal powers which takes up a substantial number of *sūtra* in the third chapter of the Yogasūtra (YS III.16 to YS III.36 and YS III.39 to YS III.52). These phenomena, however, are powers which belong to the waking, external state but are obstacles to *Samādhi* and focus on them should be avoided (YS III.38). The kinds of supernormal powers mentioned by Patañjali are: *saṁyama* on word and meaning comes knowledge of sounds produced by other beings (YS III.17); *saṁyama* on the body and form leads to becoming invisible (YS III. 21); *saṁyama* on amity and other virtues leads to moral strength (YS III.23); *saṁyama* on intuition leads to knowledge of everything (YS III.33). In YS III.47 and 48, Patañjali states that *saṁyama* on process of perception (*grahaṇa*), essential nature (*svarūpa*), I-am-ness (*asmitā*), connectedness (*anavaya*) and purposiveness (*arthavattva*), mastery over the sense organs is attained and thence comes the swiftness of the mind, beyond the limitations of the senses and mastery over nature (*pradhāna*).

The results of our analysis on the outcomes of Yoga practice, based on the reading of the text are summarised in Table 3. As can be seen from the summary of the results, there are many outcomes, experiences and insights which result from Yoga practice. These can be analysed usefully in terms of epistemological and phenomenal/psychological categories, an approach that leads us to an examination and comparison of the optimal experience of Flow and the outcomes of Yoga practice.

⁴⁸⁹ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 104.

c. Results of Yoga practice, optimal experience and Flow

The question we are addressing here is: which aspect of Yoga bears the close resemblance to Flow which Csikszentmihalyi has spoken of? From the outcomes of Yoga Practice which we have analysed, it is possible to state the following:

1. The initial limbs of *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga are preparatory stages for developing a capacity for high states of absorption of the mind.
2. These high states of absorption – *Samādhi* – have several identified stages as described in the text.
3. The states of absorption could possibly be compared to the phenomena of Flow, where there also appears to be a state of absorption in the task at hand.
4. Further comparative analysis needs to be carried out to determine which particular stage of *Samādhi* bears the closest resemblance to Flow.
5. We need to identify and develop a comparative methodology for this purpose.

Ghose states that the *yogin* does not believe in the intellectual analysis leading to the solution of the riddle of the universe nor in the human intellect being able to grasp the depth in the meaning of personal experience. ‘Psychology is, therefore, not a digression of his system, nor even a parenthesis, but a way of approach which opens an important vista and determines the perspective’⁴⁹⁰. Our contention is that yogic practice is firmly based on the psychological principles and its various methods use the elements and processes of the mind to attain meditative absorption that go beyond the ordinary. It has been argued by many Western scholars that these states of meditative absorption are indeed ‘optimal experiences’ or the contrary view that optimal experiences are states of meditation⁴⁹¹. If there is such a co-incidence between experience in yogic states and absorption as experienced in optimal states, we have several questions which need to be considered: what is the description of the states of meditative absorption as described in the *Yogasūtra*? What is optimal experience as

⁴⁹⁰ J Ghose, *A Study of Yoga*, (Calcutta: S Ghose Publications, 1933), 147-148.

⁴⁹¹ Antonella Delle Fave, F Massimini, M Bassi, *Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience across Cultures*, (New York: Springer, 2011).

conceptualised in Western Psychology and what are its features? What are the commonalities of these two experiential states which invite the comparison between the two and lead to the view that there may be some identity between them? Beyond the common features of the two, how are the two experiences explained by each framework and its underlying principles?

Csikszentmihalyi states that subjective experience is composed of the cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects and represents the conscious processing of information coming from the external environment and the inner world of the person⁴⁹². Carrying out an investigation into the phenomenology of subjective experience, Csikszentmihalyi, analysing the subject's self-reported descriptions of the quality of their experiences while performing complex tasks, identified Flow or optimal experience in these subjects. The experience of Flow was described by him as 'a complex and highly structured state of deep involvement, absorption and enjoyment'⁴⁹³. Delle Fave et al have stated that the close resemblance between Flow and Eastern meditation can be recognised although 'meditation is a practice...developed in India as a substantial component of the human development pathway and...grounded in a well defined philosophical and spiritual perspective. Thus there is a general recognition that Yoga and Flow meet on some common ground, although a full investigation of this view has not been carried out so far. There have been some attempts, like the one by Delle Fave et al for example, to find the convergences and divergences between Yoga and Flow but these are not satisfactory simply because of lack of clarity in the psychological understanding of Yogasūtra.

⁴⁹² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Towards a Psychology of Optimal Experience", *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol 3, (1982): 13-36.

⁴⁹³ Antonella, Delle Fave, F Massimini, and M Bassi, *Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience across Cultures*, 44.

d. Summary of Section Two

In this major Section Yoga Psychology, we have given a psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra. Starting from considering the aphorisms in the text relating to the *citta* or mind, we identified the key psychological concepts and analysed these in detail to construct a model of the mind. We brought the strands of this analysis together into psychological categories of cognition, perception, attention, memory, subjective identity and ideas of consciousness in the construction of the model. An analysis of Yoga practice gave us further insight into the psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra and the outcomes of these practices were considered to begin answering the intriguing question of the resemblance between Yoga and Flow.

PRIMARY PRACTICE	SECONDARY	WHICH PRACTICE	OUTCOME – RESULT OF PRACTICE
<i>ABHYĀSA</i>		Effort	<i>Praśāntavāhitā</i> : Tranquillity flow of mind
<i>VAIRĀGYA</i>		Dispassion	Mastery of intellect; discriminative clarity
<i>SAMVEGA</i>		Motivation	Different intensities and speeds and attitudes
PRACTICE OF <i>YOGĀṄGA</i> : <i>AṢṬĀṄGA</i> YOGA		Practice of the Eight limbs of Yoga	Mastery of knowledge; clear flow of discrimination; attainment of the seven insights; complete proficiency
<i>Yama</i>		Restraints	Each <i>yama</i> has an outcome – see text
<i>Niyama</i>		Observances	Each <i>niyama</i> has an outcome – see text
<i>Āsana</i>		Posture	Immunity to the dualities like heat and cold
<i>Prāṇāyāma</i>		Breathing	Veil over manifestation of knowledge is thinned
<i>Pratyāhāra</i>		Withdrawal of senses	Complete inner awareness and focus
<i>DHĀRAṆA</i>		Concentration	Highly focussed attention
	Means of cultivating	<i>Īśvara praṇidhāna</i> ; <i>ekatattva</i> ; object of interest	Truest perception of object; <i>pratyak cetanā</i> – Seer consciousness Filled with Truth – <i>ṛtaṃ-bharā</i>
	Resolution of obstacles	<i>Ekatattva</i>	Purified memory – <i>suddhasmṛti</i> ; Purified intellect – <i>suddhabuddhi</i>
	Cultivating of attributes	Amity; Compassion; Goodwill; Indifference	Purified mind – <i>cittaprasādam</i> ; <i>sthitapravāha</i> – flow of quiescence Power of knowing things as they are – <i>prajñā</i>
	<i>Ekatattva Samāpatti</i>	Gross or Subtle objects	Mind clear like a jewel; unity of subject, object and experience
<i>DHYĀNA</i>		Contemplative absorption	Absorption in gross, subtle objects
<i>SAMĀDHI</i>		Meditative absorption	Attainment of <i>Kaivalya</i> : establishment in <i>Puruṣa</i>
<i>Samprajñāta Samādhi</i>	Cognitive	<i>Vitarka</i>	Absorption in ‘gross’ outer object
		<i>Vicāra</i>	Absorption in ‘subtle’ inner object
		<i>Ānanda</i>	Absorption in joy
		<i>asmitā</i>	Absorption in sense of ‘I-ness’
<i>Asamprajñāta Samādhi</i>	Non-cognitive		Transcendental absorption
<i>SAMYAMA</i> : <i>Dhāraṇā</i> + <i>Dhyāna</i> + <i>Samādhi</i>		Triple practice	
	<i>Pariṇāma</i>		Single pointedness; tranquil flow of mind; equality of experience
	<i>Samāpatti</i>		Object/senses/cognisor absorption
	<i>Siddhi</i>		Various powers
	<i>Prajñā</i>		Discriminative insight
	Perception of time		Loss of perception of time

Table 3: Yoga Practices and Their Outcomes: (shaded area shows the stages where Flow and Yoga may converge)

SECTION THREE:

A COMPARATIVE PHENOMENOLOGY OF *SAMĀDHI* AND

FLOW:

A Case Study in the relations between Eastern and Western

Psychologies

CHAPTER TEN: POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND FLOW

a. Introduction

In this concluding Section of the thesis we aim to: 1). Critically discuss the concept of Flow in Western Psychology and outline the broad relationship of this phenomenon to the *Yogasūtra Samādhi*; 2). Give a rationale for using a phenomenological method for the analysis of Flow and *Samādhi*; 3). give a detailed comparative analysis of these phenomena as a case study in Eastern and Western Psychologies; 4). In brief, propose an empirical methodology, based on phenomenological psychology principles, for further investigation of the two phenomena; 5). Reflect on the significance and value, implications of and applications for the work done in our studies in the concluding Chapter Twelve.

We mentioned in our introductory Chapter One that there are many interrelationships in the Eastern/Western and Science/Religion matrix. For example, there can be a dialogical relationship between Eastern and Western faith traditions on theological or philosophical basis; or between the conceptions of science from Eastern and Western perspectives. Alternatively, there can be a conversation between science and religion in Eastern and Western traditions and indeed across them. Even within each dialogue there can be diversity in the range of issues or perspectives being examined. This dialogue can get more complex as we add various elements within this matrix. What we have in our studies are several of these conversations which we have broadly indicated in terms of the intersections between psychology and religion. In this Section we focus on a conversation between Eastern and Western psychologies in terms of a comparison between the phenomena of *Samādhi* and Flow.

Several issues confront us when we attempt such an exercise. Firstly, there are issues in defining the concept of an 'Eastern' psychology, what we mean by this and what kind of psychology this may be. We have argued that it is valid to consider Indian psychology as firstly, a science and a philosophy and secondly, as a subset of Indigenous Psychologies. These aspects

are highlighted by Bhawuk when he says that ‘(Unlike Western psychology), the Indian psychological movement has made a conscious decision to keep the two disciplines of psychology and philosophy connected to be able to tap into the rich Indian philosophical tradition that is full of psychological insights’⁴⁹⁴. Secondly, the comparisons between the Eastern and Western traditions become problematic when we try to identify the framework within which such a dialogue can take place. Besides the issues of language, translation and interpretation, the underlying philosophical/metaphysical bases of the two perspectives need to be clarified to set the ‘ground rules’ as it were, of the conversation.

There are positive aspects of a dialogue between Eastern and Western psychologies, specifically the mutual benefit between Indian Psychology and Positive Psychology as pointed out by Paranjpe: ‘As continuing globalization brings psychological insights from varied backgrounds closer, the prospect for developing a richer psychology based on complementary insights and techniques opens up’⁴⁹⁵. The common goal of Indian Psychology and Positive Psychology is the pursuance of the highest level of happiness, and the ‘deeper philosophical foundations of Indian psychology (IP), and the expanding empirical studies of Positive Psychology (PP), are the strongest instances of their complementarity’⁴⁹⁶. However, the mutual exchange requires a close examination of the underlying ontological and epistemological premises, both convergent and divergent, for successful collaboration and benefit. Rao⁴⁹⁷ asserts in his article on IP and PP that there is potential complementarity between these traditions because IP has a strong theoretical

⁴⁹⁴ D. P. S Bhawuk, "Methodology for Building Psychological Models from Scriptures: Contributions of Indian Psychology to Indigenous and Universal Psychologies".

⁴⁹⁵ Ananad Paranjpe, "On Getting Best of Both the Worlds", *Psychological Studies*, (April–June 2014) 59(2):107–109, 107.

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Ramakrishna K Rao, "Positive Psychology and Indian Psychology in Need of Mutual Reinforcement", *Psychological Studies*, (April–June 2014) 59(2):94-102, 101.

but a more limited empirical base⁴⁹⁸ whereas PP has commenced by establishing an empirical base but is relatively weaker in theory and may thus benefit from the insights of IP.

The concept of Flow in Positive Psychology: In the last decade or so there has been, in the field of Western psychology, ‘a movement toward understanding and promoting a preventive and positive approach to health and an acceptance of the importance of psychological factors in health outcomes’⁴⁹⁹. The study of Csikszentmihalyi’s Flow state model is one strand of such a movement. Flow is considered to be ‘an optimal psychological state in which there is complete absorption in the task at hand which leads to a number of positive experiential qualities’⁵⁰⁰. The Flow experience is an experiential cognitive and affective state that is ‘more positive than the humdrum existence of everyday life’⁵⁰¹, and is thought to promote enjoyment and, ultimately, overall happiness and well-being.

Flow has been studied in a variety of contexts including sport and physical activity. It is an optimal psychological state that occurs when there is a balance between perceived challenges and skills in an activity and where both challenge and skills are somewhat higher than the person’s subjective average experience. It is characterized by total absorption in the task and a number of other positive experiential qualities⁵⁰².

⁴⁹⁸ We have noted that the Indigenous psychologies have their own methods of investigation and evidence which may not be equivalent to the Western ideas about empirical evidence; see page 152.

⁴⁹⁹ Susan Jackson, “Joy, Fun and Flow in State Sport”, in *Emotions in Sport* edited by Y L Hanin. 135-156 (Champaign, IL., Human Kinetics, 2000), 136; see also: Susan Jackson, “Athletes in Flow: A Qualitative Investigation of Flow States in Elite Figure Skaters”, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 4(2), (1992): 161-180; Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and Judith LeFevre, “Optimal Experience in Work and Leisure”. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 56(5), (1989): 815-822; Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, “The Flow Experience and Its Significance for Human Psychology”, in *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness* edited by M Csikszentmihalyi and I Csikszentmihalyi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁰⁰ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*.

⁵⁰¹ J Kimiecik and Gary L. Stein, “Examining Flow Experiences in Sport Contexts: Conceptual Issues and Methodological Concerns”. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 4, no. 2 (September 1992): 144-160.

⁵⁰² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1990).

The model of Flow developed by Csikszentmihalyi has several dimensions, including merging of awareness and action, focused concentration and loss of self consciousness. Motivation is also a significant factor in this model. Flow is an intrinsically motivated activity and is strictly done for ‘its own sake’⁵⁰³. In theory, therefore, a Flow state experienced within such an activity and the presence of intrinsic motivation would set off a positive motivation cycle for the repetition of the activity. The nine experiential dimensions of Flow that have been identified in this model, supported by qualitative and quantitative research⁵⁰⁴, are as follows:

1. Challenge-skill balance – the perceived challenges for an activity stretch one’s existing skills but there is the sense that one is engaging at a level appropriate to one’s capabilities.
2. Merging of action and awareness – one is no longer aware that one is separate from one’s actions; things are happening automatically.
3. Clear goals – one understands the goals of the activity ahead of time or the goals are developed while engaged in the activity.
4. Unambiguous feedback – one clearly understands how one is performing.
5. Concentration on the task at hand – all psychic energy is focused on the task.
6. Sense of control – one perceives this control especially over the challenging task.
7. Loss of self-consciousness – one is not worried about how one is perceived by others.
8. Time transformation – Time is distorted in some way; it either speeds up or slows down.
9. Autotelic (intrinsically rewarding) experience – This is the end product of a Flow experience; the experience is such a positive state that one desires to perform the activity for its own sake.

The nine-dimensional model is referred to as the ‘Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi model’⁵⁰⁵ and verified in research by Jackson and Eklund⁵⁰⁶, and Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi by means of qualitative and quantitative research methods⁵⁰⁷.

⁵⁰³ Edward Deci and Robert Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation*, (New York: Plenum Publishers, 1975).

⁵⁰⁴ See for example, Susan Jackson, “Athletes in Flow: A Qualitative Investigation of Flow States in Elite Figure Skaters”.

⁵⁰⁵ Susan Jackson and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow in Sports: The Keys to Optimal Experiences and Performances*, (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1999).

⁵⁰⁶ Susan Jackson and Robert C Eklund, *The Flow Scales Manual*, (Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology, Inc. 2004).

Flow and states of consciousness: The concept of Flow refers to a subjective experience and according to Kimiecik and Stein⁵⁰⁸, this experience can be thought of as a combination of three mental operations, namely, cognition, affect and behaviour. They conceive of subjective experience as the underlying core concept that connects these three areas together to create meaning in one's life. According to them, subjective experience can be said to refer to states of consciousness in relation to one's identity. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi describe consciousness as 'the complex system that has evolved in humans for selecting from an overwhelming amount of information, processing it, and storing it'⁵⁰⁹. According to Csikszentmihalyi, states of consciousness can range from disordered to ordered and harmonious⁵¹⁰. He further explains that when one experiences order in one's consciousness (e.g. Flow) one experiences 'psychic negentropy' meaning that one creates or perpetuates energy within oneself that contributes to one's overall positive functioning. Conversely, when one experiences disorder in consciousness one experiences 'psychic entropy', a state that has a tendency to deplete one's psychic energy resulting in distress of one form or another. Aside from Flow being a state of ordered consciousness, Csikszentmihalyi argues that it can be described as a higher than normal state of consciousness as well, when there is a merging of action and awareness and loss of self-consciousness. In this state one experiences self-transcendence, i.e. one goes beyond being aware of the 'self' since all available attention is on the action⁵¹¹.

⁵⁰⁷ Susan Jackson and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow in Sports: The Keys to Optimal Experiences and Performance*, 16.

⁵⁰⁸ J Kimiecik and Susan Jackson, "Optimal Experience in Sport: A Flow Perspective". In *Advances in sport psychology*, edited by T S Horn, J Kimiecik and S Jackson, 501-527. 2nd ed., (Champaign, IL, US: Human Kinetics, 2002).

⁵⁰⁹ Jeanne Nakamura, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "The Concept of Flow", in *Handbook of Positive Psychology* edited by C Snyder and S Lopez. 89-105, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). 91.

⁵¹⁰ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*.

⁵¹¹ Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "The Concept of Flow".

Positive outcomes of Flow: The Flow experience itself is considered to be neutral according to Csikszentmihalyi⁵¹² but it is *after* the experience of Flow that people consider it to be optimal, enjoyable and highly valuable. Csikszentmihalyi further explains that this positive relationship between positive affect and Flow is important because ‘emotions focus attention by mobilizing the entire organism in an approach or avoidance mode’⁵¹³. Therefore, having Flow experiences in a specific activity would likely draw a person to repeat the activity again and again in an effort to duplicate the positive Flow experience.

Beyond the positive inner experience of Flow, Csikszentmihalyi⁵¹⁴ has proposed that Flow is associated with several positive consequences including: creativity, peak performances, talent development, productivity, increased self-esteem, and stress reduction. Furthermore, Csikszentmihalyi has postulated that Flow leads to individual growth through the psychological processes of ‘differentiation’ and ‘integration’. Differentiation occurs as a result of Flow when one overcomes challenges and obtains new skills and, therefore, becomes more unique through ‘stretching one’s limits’. Simultaneously one also becomes more integrated as a result of Flow. Csikszentmihalyi also explains that while in Flow, consciousness is very ordered and there is a feeling of harmony, not only with oneself but also with respect to other people and the world in general. Kimiecik and Harris have proposed that Flow experiences set off a positive motivation cycle whereby Flow leads to positive affect (enjoyment), which leads to intrinsic motivation (i.e., the desire to do an activity for its own sake)⁵¹⁵.

⁵¹² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).

⁵¹³ Ibid., 25.

⁵¹⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Evolving Self*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1993).

⁵¹⁵ J Kimiecik J and A Harris, “What is Enjoyment? A Conceptual/Definitional Analysis with Implications for Sport and Exercise Psychology”, *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology* 18 (1996) 247-263.

Flow theory – a critique: The Flow model has its share of conceptual and methodological difficulties, and in general, it has been argued by some critics that the Flow model has a strong Western and a male gender bias and is too ‘active and goal directed to represent a pan-human trait’⁵¹⁶. Carl points out some of the assumptions of the Flow model which he says are not universally applicable: it assumes that the world is essentially in a state of chaos and that humans are intrinsically motivated to seek out those experiences that add order to consciousness to account for this chaos. Therefore, humans will tend to seek out those experiences with the most opportunity to achieve a Flow experience. Also, it assumes that it is within the ability of the subjective consciousness to control, or provide order to, external stimuli. It claims that a Flow state occurs when the challenges of a situation match the skills of the participant. If the challenges of a certain situation are above the participant’s skills, then anxiety will be perceived by the participant⁵¹⁷.

Elkington, in his reassessment of the Flow model, challenges its assumption of being ‘a separate entity in and of itself, and hence, amenable to being identifiable and defined as such’⁵¹⁸ and points out that an experience-process perspective is more appropriate seeing Flow as a ‘dynamic, emergent and embedded in personal journeys’⁵¹⁹. In the same paper he considers that the key element of the Flow model, the challenge-skills balance is ‘an overly simplistic notion that reaching flow is representative of matching individual ability with the challenges presented by an activity or environment’⁵²⁰.

⁵¹⁶Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience, Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 9.

⁵¹⁷ W J Carl, Walter, *Flow - A Theory of Optimal Experience: History and Critical Evaluation*, (Maine: New England University, 1994) Retrieved from <http://www.waltercarl.neu.edu/PDFs/flowpaper.pdf>.

⁵¹⁸ Sam Elkington, “Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective”, 357.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

The operational definition of Flow in terms of the challenge-skills balance has also been contested by Engeser and Rheinberg⁵²¹. Firstly, there is a variation in the extent to which one's skills and the perceived challenge is related, whereas the model requires stability in this relationship. Secondly, there is a variation in the frequency of the Flow experience, some people experiencing it more frequently than others.

Schiepe-Tiska points out in her thesis⁵²², further difficulties with the challenge-skills balance and questions the causal link between this balance and the experience of Flow on the basis of her own studies. Not only is there evidence that this balance does not necessarily result in Flow but it is often conflated with Flow rather than being a pre-condition to it. She points out that the equation of Flow with challenge-skills balance has resulted in inadequate assessment of complex nature of the experiential states in Flow.

Løvoll and Vittersø in fact suggest that 'empirical literature based on self-reports of challenges and skills fails to reveal a reliable correlation between a balance of challenges and skills and flow experiences. In fact, much of the literature argues that a slight imbalance between the two produces the highest level of experiential well-being'⁵²³. They add that the challenge-skills balance is not a 'proper operationalisation of the flow experience'⁵²⁴. Løvoll and Vittersø further suggest that there is lack of clarity about the nature of the relationship between the challenge-skills balance and subjective experience. Firstly, they state that 'a complex psychological state such as flow is hard to operationalize, and the concept does not lend itself easily to scientific

⁵²¹ Stefan Engeser and Falko Rheinberg, "Flow, Performance and Moderators of Challenge-Skill Balance." *Motivation and Emotion* 32, no. 3 (September 2008): 158–172.

⁵²² A Schiepe-Tiska, *In the Power of Flow: The Impact of Implicit and Explicit Motives on Flow Experience with a Special Focus on the Power Domain*, DPhil thesis, (Munich: TUM School of Management, March 2013).

⁵²³ Helga S Løvoll and Joar Vittersø, "Can Balance be Boring? A Critique of the 'Challenges Should Match Skills' Hypotheses in Flow Theory", *Social Indicators Research* 115, no. 1, (January 1, 2014): 117–136, 121.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

investigations'⁵²⁵. Secondly, they question the 'wide' hypothesis forwarded by Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi⁵²⁶ that the quality of all subjective experience is a function of the challenge-skills balance. It is important to note that this is also an assumption underlying the conceptualisation of Flow in this thesis. They suggest the narrow hypothesis that the challenge-skills balance 'makes up the primary condition of the flow experience but [is] not synonymous with the experience per se'⁵²⁷.

Besides conceptual difficulties there are some methodological concerns with the Flow model. An example of these difficulties is given by Ellis et al., who acknowledge concerns regarding the validity of the Flow measurement by means of the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), as well as the definition of Flow as operationlised in the ESM studies. They point out the 'need for theoretical development [of the Flow model], since procedures currently used to measure the challenge-skill context and Flow may impose constraints on the ability of researchers to account for variance in experience using different models. Constraints may also be imposed by the methods in which the data are processed'⁵²⁸. They critically review four methodological issues: 'measurement of challenge and skill; measurement of indicators of flow; the practice of standardizing scores within subjects prior to analysis; and the need for inclusion of additional, theoretically relevant variables in the prediction equations'⁵²⁹.

Some of the difficulties with the Flow model arise out of a confusion based on vague terminology, a view expressed by Weber et al: '[there are] even greater difficulties associated

⁵²⁵ Helga S Løvoll and Joar Vittersø, "Can Balance be Boring? A Critique of the 'Challenges Should Match Skills' Hypotheses in Flow Theory", *Social Indicators Research* 115, no. 1, (January 1, 2014): 117–136, 121.

⁵²⁶ Giovanni B Moneta and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Models of Concentration in Natural Environments: A Comparative Approach Based on Streams of Experiential Data". *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal* 27, no. 6, (January 1, 1999): 603–637.

⁵²⁷ Helga S Løvoll and Joar Vittersø, "Can Balance be Boring? A Critique of the 'Challenges Should Match Skills' Hypotheses in Flow Theory", 120.

⁵²⁸ G Ellis, J Voelkl, and C Morris, "Measurement and Analysis Issues with Explanation of Variance In Daily Experience Using the Flow Model", *Journal of Leisure Research*, 26(4), (1994): 337-356.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 338.

with operationally defining dimensions of flow. Because flow is conceptually defined with vague terminology, it is not surprising that efforts to operationally define flow have taken various approaches and produced a set of findings that are incongruous and sometimes contrasting⁵³⁰. Researchers in this field are confronted with several issues: 1). agreement on which dimensions to include as part of the measure of Flow; 2). what weight to assign to each of these dimensions and 3). each of these dimensions appears to be multifaceted itself. ‘The commonly found use of single-item and unidimensional scales has created great concern with regard to measurement validity’⁵³¹.

It is also not clear on what basis Csikszentmihalyi came to frame the three subsystems of consciousness (discussed later in this Chapter), and what exactly is the correspondence between these and the Flow theory. One of the general criticisms of Csikszentmihalyi’s work is that it tends to be unclear as regards to both theory and method as illustrated by examples above. Elkington notes that despite ‘its mass appeal, wider reading in and around Csikszentmihalyi’s flow reveals there to be a lack of empirical contemporary analysis post-2003 of the dimensions of a flow experience...’.⁵³² He further comments that although contemporary discussions of Flow are within the realm and rubric of Positive Psychology, this itself is problematic. The charge against Positive Psychology is that in not equally equating itself with the negative side of life, it represents a one-sided account of human existence.

There are thus two areas of criticisms against the Flow model which can be discerned: firstly, the aspect of operationalisation and measurement of Flow, and secondly, about the demand-skills conditions for its emergence. Acknowledging these criticisms, the approach taken in this thesis to Flow is primarily a robust phenomenologically based one which addresses these

⁵³⁰ René Weber et al, “Theorizing Flow and Media Enjoyment as Cognitive Synchronization of Attentional and Reward Networks”. *Communication Theory* 19, no. 4, (November 2009): 397–422.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Sam Elkington, “Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective”, 330.

concerns by focusing on the lived experience and at the same time the approach provides the basis for a comparative phenomenology between Flow and *Samādhi*.

It is also useful to briefly understand how the Flow model is situated within current thinking related to cognition, emotion and motivation.

Flow and Cognition: There are several examples that demonstrate attempts to explain the Flow phenomena in terms of current cognitive theory. The Flow experience is characterized by a response to a perceived challenge by means of an ‘efficient and constant processing of information’⁵³³. Concentration flows steadily and effortlessly and attention is focused on the task at hand and there is a continuous adjustment of action, to the ‘changing requirements of the task through the active control of the situation and the mobilization of the person’s mental and physical skills and abilities’⁵³⁴.

Dietrich has presented a cognitive neuroscience explanation of Flow based on contemporary brain research which ‘conceptualises cognitive function...hierarchically’⁵³⁵, with the prefrontal cortex at the top of this hierarchy responsible for the higher cognitive functions. Current theory suggests that the brain has developed two neural mechanisms each related to extraction of a different type of information from the environment. One neural system, related to the emotional brain, is involved in evaluation of the biological significance of a given event whereas the other performs a ‘detailed feature analysis...used to construct sophisticated representations that function as the basis for cognitive processing’⁵³⁶. In relation to Flow, the experience of spontaneity and merging of action and awareness in complex tasks suggests a high-order brain

⁵³³ Antonella Delle Fave, F Massimini M Bassi, *Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience across Cultures*, 123.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ A Dietrich, “Neurocognitive Mechanisms Underlying the Flow Experience”. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 13 (2004): 746-761.

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 747.

function but on the other hand Flow, where actions are carried out without conscious thinking, suggests that the prefrontal cortex is not required.

Although there is an attempt to describe the Flow phenomenon in neurocognitive terms, one of the criticisms of Dietrich's explanation is that it 'oversimplifies operationalization of flow experiences'⁵³⁷. Evidence from multiple functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) studies also identifies attentional networks in the prefrontal cortex activated in contrast to Dietrich's idea of hypofunctionality of this cortical area and the understanding of Flow as a state of focused attention.

Weber et al state that it is a 'well established in the cognitive sciences that attention is multidimensional... a network-based conception of attention, meaning that the areas of the brain that engage in attentional processes are distributed over the brain, working together simultaneously'⁵³⁸. The tripartite theory of attention proposed by Posner et al⁵³⁹ is based on strong empirical evidence for a three-network view of attention involving alerting, orienting, and executive processes. Similarly, Weber et al point out that pleasure and reward, like most cognitive phenomena are 'mediated by a complex network of interconnected structures'⁵⁴⁰, rather than being located within a single area of the brain. They further argue that Flow can be understood as synchronization of a complex, natural system and it is 'is a discrete, energetically optimized, and gratifying experience resulting from the synchronization of attentional and reward networks under condition of balance between challenge and skill'⁵⁴¹.

⁵³⁷ R Weber, R Tamborini, A Westcott-Baker and B Kantor, "Theorizing Flow and Media Enjoyment as Cognitive Synchronization of Attentional and Reward Networks". *Communication Theory*, 19 (2009): 397–422.

⁵³⁸ Ibid., 406.

⁵³⁹ M Posner, A Inhoff, F Friedrich, and A Cohen, "Isolating Attentional Systems: A Cognitive-anatomical Analysis". *Psychobiology*, 15, (1987). 107–121.

⁵⁴⁰ R Weber et al, "Theorizing Flow and Media Enjoyment as Cognitive Synchronization of Attentional and Reward Networks", 410.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 412.

Flow and emotions: Although feelings of enjoyment, pleasure and excitement may arise during the Flow experience, they apparently ‘do not necessarily play a prominent role in flow...’⁵⁴² and do not characterise it. It is, however, the features of the ongoing task that are related to the experience of positive emotions. For example, recreational and relational activities are associated with strong positive emotions whereas participation in highly intellectual tasks, such as playing chess, subjects ‘report average levels of emotional variables’⁵⁴³. Csikszentmihalyi has equated optimal experience with enjoyment and describes the ‘phenomenology of enjoyment’ having components identified with the Flow experience⁵⁴⁴. Although there were not many studies identified in the literature survey on a systematic study of the relationship between the emotional dimension and Flow, one such study, in a multidimensional investigation, is given by Linzmayer et al and relates to the optimal experience of children with nature. A multidimensional model of experience is given along four dimensions which ‘provided helpful conceptual guidance needed for this research...: sensory (information perceived through the senses), affective (emotional evaluation), cognitive (thoughts) and behavioural (actions)’⁵⁴⁵. It is suggested that affective dimension may play a primary role in children’s optimal experience with nature and they propose a circumplex model of affect as a useful frame for understanding these experiences. Based on earlier work by Russell⁵⁴⁶ and his colleagues, core affect is described as the ‘most basic building block of anything emotional’⁵⁴⁷. This core affect, and its expression emotion, is the result of two interacting two neurophysiological systems, one which

⁵⁴² Antonella Delle Fave, F Massimini M Bassi, *Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience across Cultures*, 119.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 49.

⁵⁴⁵ Cara Linzmayer, D Elizabeth A Halpenny, and Gordon J Walker, "A Multidimensional Investigation into Children’s Optimal Experiences with Nature." *Landscape Research* 39, no. 5, (January 29, 2013): 481–501.

⁵⁴⁶ James A Russell, “Core Affect and the Psychological Construction of Emotion”. *Psychological Review* 110, no. 1, (2003): 145–172.

⁵⁴⁷ Cara Linzmayera, Elizabeth Halpennya and Gordon Walker, “A Multidimensional Investigation into Children’s Optimal Experiences with Nature”, 486.

regulates arousal and another valence⁵⁴⁸. Based on this model, Linzmayer et al claim that any emotion can be reduced to a ‘point plotted on a bipolar, dual axis, circular map where one axis represents arousal [high/low] and the other represents valence [pleasure/displeasure]’⁵⁴⁹. Whereas the Flow model is depicted as an eight channel model along the dimensions of skills and challenge representing the mental states at various levels of these dimensions, the model given by Linzmayer depicts the emotional states associated with arousal and valence. The study showed that seeking optimal levels of challenge and having a perceived level of competence, led to the maintenance of arousal at optimum level resulting in emotional states of excitement and happiness in an optimal experience.

Flow and motivation: One of the key characteristics of Flow is intrinsic motivation where an activity is pursued for its own sake rather than an expectation of external rewards such as money or prestige⁵⁵⁰. Although different types of intrinsic motivation have been suggested and several factors have been identified and various constructs and mechanisms have been used in the conceptualisation of intrinsic motivation, there is ‘no consensus about what constitutes [its]... defining aspects’⁵⁵¹. The research by Keller and Bless suggests that the perceived fit of skills and task demands is an important factor in the emergence of intrinsic motivation although they point out that it ‘remains an open question whether perceived fit is actually an underlying mechanism of perceived enjoyment or whether enjoyment and perceived fit merely represent two distinct although related elements of flow experiences’⁵⁵². They suggest that Flow can be viewed as a model of intrinsic motivation. They also claim that their work provides evidence for

⁵⁴⁸ Lisa Feldman Barrett, and Eliza Bliss-Moreau, “Chapter 4: Affect as a Psychological Primitive”, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 4, (2009): 167–218.

⁵⁴⁹ Cara Linzmayera, Elizabeth Halpenny and Gordon Walker, “A Multidimensional Investigation into Children’s Optimal Experiences with Nature”, 486.

⁵⁵⁰ F Rheinberg, “Intrinsic Motivation and Flow”, in *Motivation and Action* edited by J. Heckhausen & H. Heckhausen, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 323–348.

⁵⁵¹ J Keller and H Bless, “Flow and Regulatory Compatibility: An Experimental Approach to the Flow Model of Intrinsic Motivation”. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 2008 34: 196-209, 196.

⁵⁵² Ibid., 207.

likelihood of Flow experience when individual's personality matches with the characteristics of the situation and individuals who experience the skills-challenge balance are more likely to engage again in activities through free choice. The relation between the facets of personality and Flow have only recently been examined empirically, although the concept of an autotelic personality was acknowledged early in Flow theory. Another aspect of this is the finding of a link between a strong internal locus of control, which refers to the belief that outcomes depend on the level of effort one puts into a task, and Flow⁵⁵³. Those with a strong internal locus of control rather than a weak one are more likely to enter the Flow experience given a skills-challenge balance in comparison to the non-balance condition.

Self-determination theory (SDT) ('...a macro theory of motivation comprised of five interrelated mini theories—basic needs, organismic integration, goal contents, cognitive evaluation, and causality orientations theories.'⁵⁵⁴) has been conceived as a prominent perspective of intrinsic motivation and linked with the phenomenon of Flow. SDT proposes that there are three determinants at the base of intrinsic motivation: feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness. There is evidence to support this link between these three determinants and Flow⁵⁵⁵. Bassi and Della Fave have proposed that optimal challenge supports the SDT perspective given the competence need as a basis for intrinsic motivation⁵⁵⁶. Although there is evidence for a moderate to strong link between intrinsic motivation and performance, there is lack of understanding of the causal link between them. The work done by Cerasoli and Ford suggests that it is the adoption of mastery goals that predicate task enjoyment, not through

⁵⁵³ J Keller and H. Bless, "Flow and Regulatory Compatibility: An Experimental Approach to the Flow Model of Intrinsic Motivation".

⁵⁵⁴ Johnmarshall Reeve, "A Self-determination Theory Perspective on Student Engagement". *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement*, edited by S Christenson, A Reschly and C Wylie, 149-172. New York: Springer US, 2012.

⁵⁵⁵ John Kowal and Michelle Fortier, "Motivational Determinants of Flow: Contributions from Self-determination Theory", *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 139, 1999: 355–368.

⁵⁵⁶ Marta Bassi, and Antonlla Delle Fave, "Optimal Experience and Self-determination at School: Joining Perspectives", *Motivation and Emotion*, 36, 2012: 425–438.

mere participation but through self-referential task improvement, that intrinsic motivation predicts performance⁵⁵⁷. Although these aspects point to links between SDT and intrinsic motivation, Vallerand⁵⁵⁸ gives a three tiered hierarchical model alternative to the SDT which presents the relationships between the various aspects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These levels are: 1. the global (or personality), a broad disposition to engage in activities with an intrinsic or extrinsic orientation; 2. contextual (or life domain), motivational orientations that are specific to various contexts such as education, leisure, and interpersonal relationships; 3. situational (or state) levels, the here and now of motivation (or state motivation).

In contrast the SDT proposes that motivational orientations exist at least at two levels of generality, namely the causality-orientation and the domain-specific levels. However, they don't indicate how these motivational representations are formerly integrated into a broader scheme that involves situational (or state) motivation as the hierarchical model does. What these current motivational perspectives indicate that although the Flow model has intrinsic motivation as a key characteristic, there are different conceptualisations in terms of the how it fits into an overall motivation theory.

What is apparent from a brief examination of Flow in relation to current thinking on cognition, emotion and motivation is that there are differences in how the Flow phenomenon can be explained within current theories of these dimensions, suggesting difficulties in placing the Flow theory within contemporary research in these areas.

There are certainly some positive aspects of the Flow theory and model. Firstly, Csikszentmihalyi refocused attention on the phenomenology rather than social or psychological functions of intrinsically rewarding activities. His intention was 'to develop a systematic

⁵⁵⁷ C Cerasoli and M Ford, "Intrinsic Motivation, Performance, and the Mediating Role of Mastery Goal Orientation: A Test of Self-Determination Theory". *The Journal of Psychology*, 2014, 148(3): 267–286.

⁵⁵⁸ R Vallerand, "Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory: A View from the Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation". *Psychological Inquiry*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (2000): 312-318.

phenomenology of intrinsically, rewarding experience, a way of describing precisely what goes on in the stream of consciousness'⁵⁵⁹. The Flow model illuminates the lived experience and contributes to some central concepts of Positive Psychology such as well being and happiness. This was an important contribution in the development of an alternative perspective in examining enjoyable experiences in individuals taking part in leisure activities. In other words, the Flow concept has phenomenological persuasiveness, something people can recognise in themselves and others. Although it was simply conceptualised originally, it has been developed and differentiated over the years into a complex model which brings together phenomenology and several psychological dimensions to explain what has come to be called optimal experience.

Secondly, the Flow phenomenon describes a distinctive state rather than an undefined positive feeling and the clarification of the dimensions of this phenomenon has given a sharper, although not a complete, picture of the experience itself. This also adds to its persuasiveness of a lived experience.

Thirdly, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi⁵⁶⁰ indicate that the Flow model contributes to Positive Psychology in three ways: 1). It sheds light on the phenomenology of optimal experience. Flow as an optimal experience is 'the holistic experience that people feel when they act with total involvement'⁵⁶¹; 2). It adds to the understanding of long-term consequences of optimal experience and its relationship to overall happiness and well-being; and 3). It leads to a better understanding of possible facilitators and/or obstacles to optimal experiences.

Fourthly, the Flow model has been extensively developed and used in many areas of human activity and provided 'perhaps the leading explanation for positive subjective experience in the

⁵⁵⁹ R Vallerand, "Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory: A View from the Hierarchical Model of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation", 329.

⁵⁶⁰ Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "The Concept of Flow", 89-105.

⁵⁶¹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, 36.

study of leisure'⁵⁶², Not only has it been used in the study of leisure but also in various sports (e.g. Swann et al⁵⁶³), in the arts (e.g. Nordin-Bates⁵⁶⁴ and Panebianco-Warrens⁵⁶⁵) and in education (e.g. Carli, Delle Fave and Massimini⁵⁶⁶). In other words, despite its difficulties, the Flow model and its experimental tools have been usefully employed in various fields of human activity and widely discussed and studied for intrinsic motivation and reward in psychology. The model has an internal coherence and resonates with some other existing concepts such as authenticity and self determination theory which gives it added persuasiveness.

Fifthly, it has given rise to various cross cultural research and literature on Flow, contributing to the field of cultural psychology in general (Delle Fave, Massimini and Bassi⁵⁶⁷). Evidence is presented by these authors to indicate the presence of Flow across cultures. Bearing in mind these perspectives on the Flow model, we turn our attention to look at the apparent resemblance between the two phenomena of Flow and Samādhi.

b. The concept of *Samādhi* in Yogasūtra and its resemblance to Flow

In his 1990 book '*Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*'⁵⁶⁸ Csikszentmihalyi states that 'it is not unreasonable to regard Yoga as one of the oldest and most systematic methods of producing the Flow experience'. Our study here is the first in terms of investigating in detail

⁵⁶² Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective", 329.

⁵⁶³ Christian Swann, Richard J. Keegan, David Piggott, and Lee Crust, "A Systematic Review of the Experience, Occurrence, and Controllability of Flow States in Elite Sport".

⁵⁶⁴ S M Nordin-Bates, "Performance Psychology in the Performing Arts", in *The Oxford Handbook of Sport and Performance Psychology* edited by S. Murphy. 81-116, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁵⁶⁵ Clorinda Panebianco-Warrens, "Exploring The Dimensions of Flow and the Role of Music in Professional Ballet Dancers".

⁵⁶⁶ M Carli, A Delle Fave, A, and M Massimini, "The Quality of Experience in the Flow Channels: Comparison of Italian and US Students", in *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness* edited by M. Csikszentmihalyi and I. Csikszentmihalyi. 288–306. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

⁵⁶⁷ Antonella Delle Fave, F Massimini, and M Bassi, "Education, Learning, and Cultural Transmission".

⁵⁶⁸ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 106.

this statement, given the insight we have derived from the psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra. The stated strong similarity between Yoga and Flow on the one hand and the idea that Yoga is a systematic method of producing Flow on the other, are assertions which are of interest in carrying out this research.

It is logical to assume that the practice of Yoga would be an activity ideally set up to produce the Flow experience as at the core of its practice is the training of attention and development of states of absorption. While no scientific studies to date were found in the literature that examined the Flow experiences of Yoga practitioners, Csikszentmihalyi has briefly discussed the similarities between Yoga and Flow⁵⁶⁹. On the one hand ‘both try to achieve a joyous, self-forgetful involvement through concentration, which in turn is made possible by a discipline of the body’ and on the other, just like the intensity and continuity of effort in Flow, ‘even till the final stage of liberation, the *yogin* must maintain control over consciousness. He could not surrender his self unless he was, even at the very moment of surrender, in complete control of it. Giving up the self with its instincts, habits, and desires is so unnatural an act that only someone supremely in control can accomplish it’⁵⁷⁰. Csikszentmihalyi, however, points out that the ‘main divergence is that, whereas Flow attempts to fortify the self, the goal of Yoga and many other Eastern techniques is to abolish it. *Samādhi* the last stage of Yoga, is only the threshold for entering Nirvana, where the individual self merges with the universal force like a river blending into the ocean’.

Our argument in this thesis is that this superficial comparison and conception of convergence/divergence between *Samādhi* and Flow is based on a lack of detailed understanding of the stages of *Samādhi* and their related experiences. It is also to be noted that Csikszentmihalyi describes Flow as both an experience as well as a practice which we discuss

⁵⁶⁹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 105.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

in the introduction to Chapter Eleven. We propose, from our analysis of various stages of Yoga carried out in Section Two, that although the first two stages of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* in particular bear a strong resemblance to the experience of Flow itself, there is, however, a divergence in some aspects of the two phenomena. We must note that the ontological positions of Flow and *Samādhi* are based on completely different metaphysical assumptions about the self as pointed out by Csikszentmihalyi and this has a bearing on the comparison as we see later. . Beyond considering the interpretive and assumptive base of the two experiences we intend to show that taking phenomenology as the common ground we can arrive at a clearer understanding of the convergence and divergence between the two phenomena.

Csikszentmihalyi has pointed out that the structure of some activities provides a fertile ground for the Flow experience to occur and has termed these ‘Flow activities’. Such activities, in this model ‘provide opportunities for action which match a person’s skill, limit the perceptual field, exclude irrelevant stimuli, contain clear goals and an adequate means for reaching them and give clear and consistent feedback to the actor’⁵⁷¹.

In Patañjali’s system of Yoga there are also identifiable sets of activities and techniques that take the practitioner’s focus inward and enable high levels of absorption in the states of *Samādhi*. As we pointed out in Section Two, there are two sets of Yoga practice:

- The set of eight practices ‘*Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga’ which prescribe different forms of practice from moral imperatives, techniques of postural and breathing exercises to subtle forms of concentration, meditation and absorption.
- The set of *Kriyā* Yoga techniques including *tapas* (self discipline), and *svādhyāya* (self study) and *Īśvara praṇidhāna* (devotion to *Īśvara*)

These practices fall within an overall scheme ‘deep study’ and ‘detachment’ (*abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*), which we have discussed in detail in Section Two. All these practices eventually lead

⁵⁷¹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety*, 182.

towards high levels of concentration and absorption of the mind and when combined with disciplines of cognition, emotion and increased levels of self awareness, lead towards experiencing a ‘tranquil flow’ – *praśāntavāhitā* – of the mind. These techniques can be considered as a logical and coherent means of producing Flow as they are aimed at creating states of high absorption, a central feature of Flow. They result in high states of order in consciousness and high levels of integration between the elements of human subjectivity and experience.

In the following Chapter, we investigate the two phenomena in several steps. Firstly, we give a rationale for a phenomenological approach to this investigation. Secondly, we give a detailed ‘thick’ description of the phenomena of Flow and *Samādhi* as they are explicated and described in the Yogasūtra text and Flow literature. Thirdly, we compare the two sets of experiences within a framework of phenomenology of experience. Fourthly, we propose briefly a method of empirical investigation for obtaining description of the phenomena from the practitioners of Yoga as well as the experiencers of Flow through phenomenological analysis, in a single study.

It is to be noted that an investigation in terms of the individual phenomenology of both *Samādhi* and Flow has not been seen in the literature surveyed and further, there are no empirical studies which compare these phenomena to test the assertions of Csikszentmihalyi about Yoga and Flow, using the methodology which we are proposing. What would be the value of such investigations?

The importance and value of a phenomenological comparison between Flow and Samādhi:

There are several reasons why a comparative study of this nature is important. Firstly, the assertions by Csikszentmihalyi can be explored through a detailed analysis of textual material and empirical studies. This will bring clarification to the phenomenology of specific aspects of Yoga which can be posited in relation to Flow and its dimensions to reveal the nature of resemblances and differences between these phenomena. Besides contributing to the research in

this area, the analysis will also identify areas of further research, which could lead to a mutually beneficial conceptual development in both Flow and Yoga. The understanding of both phenomena is enhanced as it uncovers the fine grained differences between them provides a useful contrast that mutually sharpens the concepts and experiences of both *Samādhi* and Flow, This is amply demonstrated in the analysis that follows in the next Chapter. Secondly, both these phenomena have gained popularity and importance in recent times and possible practical applications in wellbeing and happiness may be identified through this kind of research. The Flow concept is located within the framework of Positive Psychology that focuses on happiness and well-being. It has been pointed out by Csikszentmihalyi that Yoga may be considered as the most systematic way of developing Flow. If this is the case then, the comparative study can lead towards developing methods based on Yoga practice that can enhance the occurrence of Flow.

Thirdly, new approaches to methodology may be suggested in comparative phenomenology through this research. We believe that this thesis also suggests a novel triangulation approach in studying ancient texts for phenomenological content, making text based comparisons with other phenomena and then designing empirical methods for testing the conclusions derived from first two methods. Fourthly, the possibility of mutual benefit derived from a constructive dialogue between Indian Psychology and Positive Psychology is opened up with an attempt at such comparative studies.

c. Summary

With our research on the psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra, we are in a unique position to consider these assertions in detail. We have considered a critique of Flow and pointed out the conceptual and methodological issues with Flow theory. We have also looked at the position and relation of Flow theory to cognitive, emotional and motivational theories in psychological research. The value of a comparative analysis between Flow and *Samādhi* has been pointed out.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: FLOW AND *SAMĀDHI*: A Comparative Phenomenology

a. Introduction

Delle Fave *et al* state that ‘various scholars have argued that optimal experience is a state of meditation or...that the experience of meditation is a form of optimal experience’⁵⁷². The authors examine and analyse in some detail, the differences in the epistemological, neurophysiological and phenomenological dimensions of experience of meditation and Flow. The comparative analysis is, according to the authors, rendered difficult due to an ambiguity in terms of what is being discussed: ‘In order to appropriately draw a comparison between Flow and meditation, a substantial ambiguity in terminology has first to be removed. Flow is an experience, which can be associated with a vast range of activities, while the term “meditation” is used to identify both an action and an experience’⁵⁷³. In other words, the *practice* of meditation needs to be distinguished from the *experience* of meditation. Bearing in mind this useful distinction, we will examine the experience of meditation or *Samādhi* as described in the Yogasūtra and also point out the relationship to the practices of Yoga which lead to the experience of *Samādhi*.

Delle Fave *et al* also point out a further difficulty: even when one wishes to compare experiences and their psychological dimensions, the critical aspect of multidimensionality referring to ‘variations in its emotional and motivational features...systematically observed across activities in optimal experience and different kinds of mental functions come into play during different meditation strategies’⁵⁷⁴. Crucially, Delle Fave *et al* also point out that there is a ‘complete lack of investigations on this topic’ and that in their opinion ‘a comparison between Flow and the experience reported during the practice of meditation is possible, and it can be

⁵⁷² Anotnella Delle Fave, F Massimini M Bassi, *Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience across Cultures*, 111.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., 115.

useful to disentangle the two conditions'⁵⁷⁵. The comparison between *Samādhi* as described in the Yogasūtra and Flow is of interest because they appear to share a key aspect 'which deeply contributes to shape them: concentration and pin-pointed attention'⁵⁷⁶. If the Yoga practitioners are going through a rigorous method of training which leads towards high states of absorption and these states can be compared to the states of Flow, there is the possibility that these two states have a common core. Let us consider the question of the basis on which it is possible to compare these experiences of Flow and *Samādhi* and the method of investigation and comparison which can be feasibly employed.

b. Rationale for a common ground: Phenomenology and its method

We pointed out in the introduction that the relationship between science and philosophy is rather more complex and porous/fluid as far as Eastern philosophical and religious systems of thought are concerned. The sharper demarcation between these disciplines in the West has given rise to debates about the relationship between them and, therefore, we need to consider approaches which take into account the apparent 'irresolvable tensions...in both Eastern and Western analyses of the relations among body, mind and consciousness'⁵⁷⁷. We believe that standing at the interface of Yoga, science and philosophy is phenomenology, an appropriate and suitable approach for our purpose where such tensions are minimised by focusing on lived experience.

What can be considered as the study of human experience and the perception of things as they appear in consciousness, can be described as the core of phenomenology. The philosophical movement given the name of phenomenology began with Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and

⁵⁷⁵ Antonella Delle Fave, F Massimini and M Bassi, *Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience across Cultures*, 115.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁷ Max Velmans, "How to Arrive at an Eastern Place from a Western Direction". In *Consciousness, Gandhi and Yoga: Interdisciplinary, East-West Odyssey of K.Ramakrishna Rao* edited by B. S. Prasad, (New Delhi: D.K.Printworld, 2013), 107.

developed further by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and his followers. This movement is considered to have ‘played a central part in philosophical thinking in the twentieth century and has led to many of the current strands of philosophy active today. This philosophical movement also has had an influence on many disciplines, psychology included.’⁵⁷⁸ Our interest is at the intersection of phenomenological philosophy and psychology which gives the theoretical underpinnings and the method by which we can investigate the phenomena of *Samādhi* and Flow. As Langdridge points out ‘phenomenological investigation must begin with that which first appears in straightforward experience [description of the immediate experience]: hence, the call to the ‘things themselves’⁵⁷⁹. It is this immediate experience of *Samādhi* and Flow that forms the basis of a comparative phenomenological analysis.

The rationale for choosing the approach of phenomenological research in psychology is that it gives primarily a first person account of experience. The phenomenological investigation then aims to take a detailed description of accounts of experiences in various states and situations and identify the common experiential components across these. The method of phenomenology is, identifying the essences through the employment of *epoché*, the phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation, a method that gives the phenomenological psychologist a way to understand human experience. This method of descriptive phenomenological psychology is considered to be widely used and distinguished from other methods of interpretive phenomenological analysis, hermeneutic phenomenology and template analysis. We have also pointed out in Chapter Three the two principles of ‘structured empathy’ and ‘typological phenomenology’, which are good guiding principles for our approach to a phenomenological psychological understanding of the Yogasūtra text.

⁵⁷⁸ Darren Langdridge, *Phenomenological Psychology, Theory, Research and Method*, (UK: Pearson Education Ltd, 2007), 11.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

In this wider sense the Yogasūtra of Patañjali has a phenomenological character which Ghose describes as ‘the world of experience as it [Sāṃkhya – Yoga] knows nothing of any world or system of objects and events existing in independence of consciousness’⁵⁸⁰. He states that the approach taken by Sāṃkhya – Yoga is one of ‘analytic reflection’ bearing on the contents of consciousness. It is also to be noted that Elkington states that: ‘although the Flow framework has since been developed and differentiated within the realm of psychology, it owes much of its intellectual heritage to phenomenology and the writings of Husserl and Heidegger’⁵⁸¹ and it is clear that Csikszentmihalyi takes an essentially phenomenological approach.

The importance of phenomenology in terms of analysis of experience and consciousness, according to Zahavi is that it has the capacity to give detailed analysis of aspects of one’s conscious experience, including memory, perception and experience of the body and self among others. And ‘phenomenology addresses issues that are crucial for an understanding of the true complexity of consciousness and might even offer a conceptual framework for understanding the mind that is of considerably more value than some of the models currently in vogue in cognitive science’⁵⁸².

It must be recognised, Zahavi says, that phenomenology deals with many topics which it shares with other disciplines and we need to take into account the empirical findings of those very topics in those disciplines. In other words, phenomenology is a bridge between the empirical findings of those areas of research and the first person phenomenological accounts ‘in order to ascertain whether we got it right the first time’⁵⁸³. This is the basis on which we consider phenomenology as the common ground from which we can on the one hand, examine the

⁵⁸⁰ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, “Introduction”. In *The Sāṃkhya-sūtras of Pañcaśikha and the Sāṃkhyatattvāloka* edited by J Ghosh, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), 1–16.

⁵⁸¹ Sam Elkington, “Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience Process Perspective”, 327.

⁵⁸² Dan Zahavi, “Naturalized Phenomenology”. In *Handbook of phenomenology and cognitive science* edited by S. Gallagher and D. Schmicking, (New York: Springer, 2010), 8.

⁵⁸³ Ibid..

empirical evidence and, on the other, consider the text and the theoretical framework within which we can make sense of the phenomena of *Samādhi* and Flow.

Armezzani⁵⁸⁴ states that in line with Husserl's thinking, 'the drive toward a radical reconsideration of knowledge arises from being disappointed by traditional sciences, because they exclude on principle what we are most interested in'. And what is of most interest is consciousness, subjectivity and experience and phenomenology provides a basis for gaining knowledge, 'the primacy of experience over the concept of world, the evidence that each reality cannot exist if not as a presence in consciousness. Once you gain this evidence, it makes no more sense to distinguish between mental and physical phenomena'⁵⁸⁵.

The investigation and comparison of the experiences of Flow and *Samādhi* require us to identify the common ground and method which can be employed for this purpose. Phenomenology from the above discussion is an appropriate approach for this investigation as it focuses on a detailed description of the experiences for comparison. Let us now examine the phenomenology of *Samādhi*.

c. Phenomenology of *Samādhi*

i. Introduction

The Yogasūtra of Patañjali is our primary source of these details for explicating the phenomena of *Samādhi* although we make extensive use of the secondary commentarial literature old and new. For the description and analysis of Flow, we will refer to relevant literature available currently. In Chapter Nine we said that the practices of *Samādhi* and the 'meditative discipline that accompanies it, are *the sine qua non* in Yoga for the realization of the truth of existence'⁵⁸⁶,

⁵⁸⁴ Maria Armezzani, "How to Understand Consciousness: The Strength of the Phenomenological Method", 104.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 105.

⁵⁸⁶ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 181.

and that importance of this final limb of Yoga is emphasised by Vyāsa in his commentary on YS I.1: ‘Yoga is *Samādhi*’ – *yogaḥ samādhiḥ*. In this Chapter we will examine in detail the phenomenological aspects of *Samādhi* to lay down the basis of for a comparative analysis with the phenomena of Flow. Our aim here is to compare the two phenomena based on the descriptions and concepts in the literature of Flow and the Yogasūtra text and its commentaries. We need to identify the various stages of *Samādhi* as they are described in the Yogasūtra and attempt to characterise ‘what it is/may be like’ to be in each of these stages of *Samādhi*.

There have been several studies done on the phenomenology of meditation in general, especially during the late 70’s and 80’s with the ‘emergence of cognitive psychology in the 1960’s and 70’s and a simultaneous renewed interest in consciousness [which] brought about a return of introspection as a quasi-acceptable methodology’⁵⁸⁷. This introspection involved, as with the Husserlian descriptive phenomenology stated earlier in this Chapter, ‘a detailed description of (the phenomena of) consciousness as they appear in consciousness’⁵⁸⁸. Velmans writing in 2000, stated that there were two reasons why this was a time of transition in the study of consciousness. Firstly, ‘culturally, there is increasing dissatisfaction with a worldview in which consciousness in its many forms has no natural place. For the science of psychology, this ‘loss of consciousness’ is acute – a psychology that investigates brain states and behaviour but not how humans experience the world, cannot be complete.’ Secondly, consciousness poses many problems not just one. ‘Some of the problems lend themselves to investigation by existing scientific means; some require the development of new methodologies, and some require

⁵⁸⁷ Ronald Pekala, “The Phenomenology of Meditation”, in *The Psychology of Meditation*, edited by M West, 79-104. (Oxford:Oxford Science Publications, Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵⁸⁸ Peter Ashworth, “Some Notes on the Phenomenological Approaches to Psychology”, *Bulletin of British Psychological Society*, 29, (1976): 363-9.

theoretical advance. But these problems are increasingly being thought of as problems for science (rather than for philosophy)⁵⁸⁹.

Apart from the conceptual difficulties about consciousness studies and in particular about meditation, the different varieties and origins of practices of meditation, we have the additional difficulty of the absence of any empirical work done on the specific states of consciousness described in Patañjali's Yogasūtra and in particular meditative states of absorption – *Samādhi*. Not only is there a lack of 'cartography' of *Samādhi* which could form the basis of empirical investigation, but also a lack of phenomenological studies of this particular tradition. This indeed is the reason for a serious consideration of a study related to the experiences of *Samādhi* by practitioners of such Yoga whereby one can begin to develop a framework of analysis for such studies which would in turn, form the basis of comparative studies in states of consciousness. 'The challenge lies in incorporating and combining meditation with existing methodologies in psychological research to penetrate more deeply the mysteries of human experiences of awareness, consciousness and being'⁵⁹⁰ says West in his conclusion to the book, with contributions by various authors. To a certain extent that challenge still remains although there have been recent significant developments not only in cognitive psychology but also the methodology of investigation of psychological phenomena. We intend to incorporate some of these in a proposal for the empirical study of Flow and *Samādhi*.

Yet another issue is that very nature of the text itself which is in *sūtra* form. This gives rise to various interpretations of the text and, further, makes the task of discerning the phenomena of *Samādhi* problematic. On the one hand there are limitations to what one can read into the short aphorisms and on the other hand, the commentators differ in their interpretations of the concept

⁵⁸⁹ Max Velmans, *Investigating Phenomenal Consciousness, New Methodologies and Maps*, (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2000), 14.

⁵⁹⁰ Michael West (ed), *The Psychology of Meditation*, (Oxford: Oxford Science Publications, Oxford University Press, 1990), 210.

of *Samādhi*. For example, there is a difference in the commentaries of Vyāsa and Vijñānabhikṣu on the nature and means of *Samādhi* in sūtra I.18. On this point one can consider using the ‘imaginative variation’ of the phenomenological method which can give additional insight into the mental processes and phenomena during *Samādhi*. Keeping these perspectives, context and issues in mind, we now examine the stages, states, mental processes and the contents of consciousness as far as we can discern, from the Yogasūtra text itself, its related commentaries and relevant literature.

ii. The forms and phenomena of *Samādhi*

The consummation of the *yogic* path, as it were, is *Samādhi* and the key position of this practice in Yoga is given by Vyāsa in his commentary when he equates Yoga and *Samādhi*⁵⁹¹. ‘Just as concentration (*dhāraṇā*), by appropriate depth and intensity, passes to meditation (*dhyāna*), so meditation gives place to *enstatic* consciousness (*Samādhi*) when the inner world (*citta*) has reached absolute calm (*nirodha*)’⁵⁹². In *Samādhi* there is a complete absorption of the mind to such an extent that it becomes ‘one’ with the object, and in the process reflecting the object as it truly is. YS III.3 says: ‘That (*dhyāna*), when it shines forth as an object only, apparently empty of its own nature/form (as knowledge) (it) is indeed *Samādhi*’⁵⁹³. It is the state which one must attain in order to know the true nature of any object with the ‘oneness of identity’ with the object. We have noted that it is ‘a complete transformation of the usual mode of knowing or perceiving (*pratyakṣa*). It is the transforming (*pariṇāma*) of the mind and consciousness from ‘all objectivity’ or dispersion to one-pointedness (*ekāgratā*)’⁵⁹⁴. In the non-yogic state, the object is experienced in a certain way dependent on the impressions received through the senses

⁵⁹¹ YB I.1: *yogaḥ samādhiḥ*: ‘Yoga is *Samādhi*’.

⁵⁹² Georg Feuerstein and Jeanne Miller, *The Essence of Yoga*, 34.

⁵⁹³ YS III.3 *tadevārthamātranirbhāsaṃ svarūpaśūnyamiva samādhiḥ*: *Samādhi* is just that (condition) in which only the object (of concentration) shines forth, and the self is absent, as it were.

⁵⁹⁴ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 194.

and with the influence of all the other mechanisms of the subliminal factors, memory, and intellect etc. In *Samādhi*, these mechanisms apparently are inoperative and there is only ‘pure grasping, knowing without any other distortion and no other agency or organ interferes between the object and the knowing. Thus, the insight (*prajñā*) obtained in cognitive *Samādhi* is not a mental projection...it refers wholly and exclusively to the object’⁵⁹⁵. Kesarcodi-Watson says the question ‘one must take up is why we need this oneness (*Samādhi*) to know the true nature of things. The answer Patañjali gives...is that, otherwise, hindering things are bound to get in our way, to come between us, as knowers, and what we are trying to know’⁵⁹⁶.

We are interested in the phenomenon of *Samādhi* and what it may be like to be in that state. We are confronted, however, with a difficulty as the ‘higher’ stage of *Samādhi* called *Asamprajñāta Samādhi* being by its nature ‘transpersonal’, such an experience cannot be described. Feuerstein says that perhaps this is the main reason why there is criticism of this subject by Western critics and the reason why C G Jung considered *Samādhi* as a ‘meaningless dream state’⁵⁹⁷. He says further, ‘to fully understand the nature of *Samādhi*, one must resort to personal experience. Yoga can (only) be known by Yoga says Vyāsa...the enstatic experience evades definition’⁵⁹⁸.

However, for the purpose of our work, we intend to look at the ‘lower’ form of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* with its various stages each having a unique object for its attention, in detail. Whereas the former is ‘non-cognitive’ in the sense it transcends ‘ordinary’ experience, the latter is ‘cognitive’ so that it is still within the realm of description and subject to phenomenological analysis. Vijñānabhikṣu makes a distinction between *Samādhi* as a means and *Samādhi* as an end. If the *Samādhi* has not yet achieved this ‘oneness’ with its object of concentration by

⁵⁹⁵ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 195.

⁵⁹⁶ I Kesarcodi-Watson, “Samādhi in Patañjali Yogasūtra”, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol 32, No 1 (Jan 1982): 77-90.

⁵⁹⁷ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, 34.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

progressive means of *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna* then it is said to be having the quality of cognition and it is still a means. When, however, ‘the object of concentration takes complete possession of the object of the mind then it is the end’⁵⁹⁹. The road to *Asaṃprajñāta Samādhi* is through the *Samprajñāta*, ‘in the Patañjali Yogasūtra, *Samprajñāta Samādhi* is of paramount importance’⁶⁰⁰. The first time *Samādhi* of various types is mentioned in the Yogasūtra is in YS I.17, where the four kinds of *Samādhi* are distinguished as follows: 1). that which is accompanied by deliberation (*vitarka*); 2). that accompanied by reflection (*vicāra*); 3). that accompanied by bliss or joy (*ānanda*) and 4). that which focuses on the sense of ‘I’ (*asmitā*). Later on in the same chapter, Patañjali gives detailed analysis of each of the four types of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* (YS I.41-44). Vyāsa notes in this commentary on YS I.17 that the experience of the mind of a gross object is cogitation and, reflection when it is a subtle object. Joy and ‘I-am-ness’ are experiences of the essential unified nature of the self. Each type of *Samādhi* progressively leaves the previous behind so that the final one is without gross or subtle object and without the experience of *ānanda* – only ‘I-am-ness’ remains⁶⁰¹.

Thus the view proposed by some commentators is that the four types of *Samādhi* form a series of concentric circles, starting with the outermost (*vitarka Samādhi*) and containing the other three, and so on. Whicher points out further that the experiences to be realised in each of the four types of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* exist in a potential form in everyone. And as the mind is not prepared in the beginning to enter into the subtler states, it is not likely that such a beginner can immediately experience a higher state of *Samādhi*. Let us now look at the phenomenology of each of these four types of *Samādhi*.

⁵⁹⁹ T Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu, Vol IV, Kaivalyapāda*, 159.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 160.

⁶⁰¹ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 202-203.

Vitarka Samādhi: The first of the four states of cognitive (*Samprajñāta*) *Samādhi* is related to concentration on grosser and tangible objects and starting with this form of *Samādhi*, one proceeds to subtler and intangible stages. *Vitarka* has been translated in various ways: supposition⁶⁰², deliberation⁶⁰³, analysis of gross objects⁶⁰⁴, cogitation⁶⁰⁵. Translations, we have seen, are problematic in the sense that they are approximations of sometimes technical terms. Bryant notes that ‘these Sanskrit terms...cannot be captured by a suitable English equivalent...through clumsy English words used by the translator...these words being little better than heuristic indicators’⁶⁰⁶. We have also noted how the *sūtra* themselves are in a sense ‘maps’ of inner experience and sometimes the translated terms may not be able to capture the nuances of the Sanskrit terms. We shall, however, employ the term *vitarka* itself understanding that this term implies a mental process and activity in which the object is examined in detail, in terms of the sixteen *viśeṣa* of material nature and, as some commentators have stated, includes images of deities⁶⁰⁷. *Vitarka* requires an ‘*ālambana*’, a support, according to Vyāsa in his commentary on this *sūtra*. The attention is focussed on the object which is considered as the support for *vitarka*, where the *citta* retains an undeviating modification or *vr̥tti* to the exclusion of others. The *yogin* experiences a continuous *vr̥tti* in relation to the object as either an image or ‘the spontaneous thought processes that occur in relation to a “gross” (*sthūla*) object/form’⁶⁰⁸. This mental activity is special as, according to Vijñānabhikṣu, all the details of the grosser forms of the object are considered, including the past, present and future manifestations, near and distant features so that the total nature of the object, the perfection or direct perception, is

⁶⁰² Bangali Baba, *Yogasūtra of Patañjali: With Commentary of Vyāsa*.

⁶⁰³ John Houghton Woods., *The Yoga System of Patañjali*.

⁶⁰⁴ Fernando Tola and Carmen Dragonetti, *The Yogasūtras of Patañjali on Concentration of Mind*.

⁶⁰⁵ Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali*.

⁶⁰⁶ Edwin F Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 61.

⁶⁰⁷ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 223.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

realised⁶⁰⁹. Whicher⁶¹⁰ further comments on *vitarka Samādhi*: ‘[it] should remain constant, continuously maintained, ascertained (*avadhāraṇa*)...[when] the perceived or object, the faculty of perception, and the perceiver or agent become “one” – epistemologically’. In this final stage, the knowledge of object occurs un-fragmented and ‘such a total, whole realisation maintained without interruption is termed “the *samādhi* associated with *vitarka*”’⁶¹¹.

Patañjali makes a distinction between two types of *vitarka samāpatti*: *savitarka* and *nirvitarka*. We have mentioned previously that *samāpatti* refers to a process, a falling towards, of unification with an object. They are the ‘basic processes and mechanism of any form of cognitive *samādhi*...signifying that the mind “breaks into” and coincides with the sphere of the “object” grasped’⁶¹². *Savitarka samāpatti* is when *vitarka* or cogitation is accompanied by conceptualisation of word, the object signified and the ideational knowledge which represents the relationship between the word and the object. In the ordinary functioning of the mind, an object is ‘confused’ or superimposed with the *sabda* (word), *artha* (object signified) and the *jñāna* (ideational knowledge) so that the experience of the object consists of the conflation of all three aspects described. In *savitarka samāpatti*, each aspect is separated and focused upon and the *citta* gets absorbed in it. In this case the mind is engaged in a refined and focussed mental process beyond the normal bounds.

In YS I.43, Patañjali tells us that ‘supra-*vitarka* or *nirvitarka samāpatti* (unification) is when the memory gets completely purified, as if emptied of its own form, and with the object alone shining forth’. We must remember that memory is considered as a *vyrtti* and in this case, purification of memory implies that all thoughts and ‘conceptualisations of ideas heard or inferred’ come to an end and ‘the object stands out in its real nature alone’⁶¹³. The verbalisation

⁶⁰⁹ T Rukmani, *Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu, Vol I Samādhipāda*, Commentary on YS I.17, p 106.

⁶¹⁰ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 223.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² Ibid., 216.

⁶¹³ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, Vyāsa’s commentary on YS I.43.

which comes with the observation of the object comes to an end and there is a ‘fusion’ with the object reminding us of the analogy of the flawless gem which assumes the colour of the cloth it stands on referred to by Vyāsa on his commentary on YS I.41. Whicher writes that ‘In *nirvitarka* the *yogin*’s identity and perception are transcendent of and no longer dependent on the former functioning of *vṛtti* and the processes of apprehension in *savitarka*’⁶¹⁴. Further Koelman refers to the *nirvitarka Samādhi* as ‘sense-intuition shorn of its super-structures’⁶¹⁵.

Vicāra Samādhi: In YS I.44 Patañjali states that there are two divisions in the next category of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* expressed as *savicāra* (with reflection) and *nirvicāra* (without reflection) *samāpatti* (unifications) as in the case of *vitarka Samādhi*. *Vicāra* is derived from ‘*vi*’ and ‘*car*’ a movement of progressive thought which moves away from ‘external’ gross objects to subtler ‘inner’ objects. These subtle objects according to the scheme of *prakṛtic* elements are the five subtle elements (*tanmātra*) and the ‘I-am-ness’ (*asmitā*). ‘The *yogin* contemplates these subtler essences of the elements and the senses and brings before consciousness all the “subtle” particularities and constitutive parts of a “subtle” object’⁶¹⁶. Vyāsa commenting on *vicāra* states that it is an enlarged experience and perception (*ābhoga*) of the mind towards the support (*ālambana*), the subtle object, leading towards *prajñā*, or deeper insight, of the subtle object⁶¹⁷, in the same manner as with the gross objects. In terms of the two types of the *samāpatti* – *savicāra* and *nirvicāra* – Vyāsa explains that the subtle elements in the *savicāra* unification are in relation to subtle objects which have manifest qualities (as mental imagery) and experienced in time, space and cause. The qualities of the object as mentioned in YS III.14 may be dormant,

⁶¹⁴ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 228.

⁶¹⁵ Gaspar Koelman, *Pātañjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*, 134.

⁶¹⁶ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 230.

⁶¹⁷ YB I.17, *vitarkavicārānandāsmītā rūpānugamāt samprajñātaḥ*: *Samprajñāta samādhi* (is achieved) by means of *vitarka*, *vicāra*, *ānanda* and *asmitā*.

manifest or undetermined and in the case of *savicāra Samādhi*, the manifest qualities in the present moment are experienced, grasped as one single idea, with *ekāgratā*.

In the case of *nirvicāra samāpatti*, the unification is according to Vyāsa, without imagery, of the total subtle object, neither limited by space, time or causality nor by the attributes apparent only in the present moment. It is a total grasping of the subtle object in all its potential qualities in whichever possible mode⁶¹⁸. Whicher states that ‘in *nirvicāra samāpatti*, the yogin is completely “at one” (epistemologically) with the object, that is, the yogin knows its past states as well as its present moment and is fully aware of the various possibilities of the future. The last limitations of space and time attributed to the object are transcended’⁶¹⁹. The experience of this *Samādhi* is described by Patañjali (YS I.47) as ‘*nirvicāra-vaiśāradya*’ – supra-reflective lucidity – where the ‘knower’ and the ‘knowing’ become unified accompanied by a state of inner clarity of the inner being (*ādhyātma-prasāda*). The insight (*prajñā*) which is obtained in this state is ‘*ṛtaṃ-bharā*’ or ‘truth-bearing’ disclosing the subtle object as it is without any distortions of the intellect which has now become purified. Bryant describes it as ‘a flash of illuminating wisdom, which instantly sees things as they are’⁶²⁰. In this *Samādhi* there is also ‘*sthitapravāha*’ – ‘flow of quiescence’, ‘free from the taints of the *rajas* and *tamas* and this is called attainment of proficiency’⁶²¹. In the *nirvicāra samāpatti*, the subtle objects grasped are ‘themselves the seeds of ignorance (*avidyā*) in the form of *saṃskāras* – the deep rooted impressions or *karmic* residue of affliction in the mind’⁶²². These *saṃskāra* according to Vyāsa,

⁶¹⁸ YB I.43 and I.44 refer to the purification of the memory so that only the object shines forth in *nirvitarka/nirvicāra samāpatti*.

⁶¹⁹ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 233.

⁶²⁰ Edwin F Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 157.

⁶²¹ YB I.47: *nirvicāravaiśāradye’dhyātmaprasādaḥ*: On getting skill or proficiency in *nirvicāra samādhī*, clearness or purity in the inner instruments of knowledge (is developed as a result).

⁶²² Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 233.

like seeds of rice, once roasted in the fire of knowledge⁶²³, no longer sprout when the insight (*prajñā*) is gained in *nirvicāra Samādhi*. This in turn leads to increasing dispassion towards the subtle objects, with an intense one-pointed state of the mind that fully illumines the mind, attenuates the *kleśa* and loosens the bonds of *karma*⁶²⁴.

What is it like to be in this state of *nirvicāra Samādhi*? It is ‘far from being “misty”, “vague”, or “mysterious”. It is vivid and immediate as is possible for one who lives at the levels of ordinary awareness to imagine’⁶²⁵. There is complete absorption in the subtle object of contemplation, the *citta* becoming one with it, where the subject/object, perceiver/perceived distinctions disappear, with the loss of sense of self and time. ‘When meditation is full of the object meditated on, i.e. when meditation becomes so intense that nothing but the object meditated on is present therein...it is called *Samādhi*’⁶²⁶. The third and fourth forms of *Samādhi* spoken of by Patañjali in YS I.17 are *ānanda* and *asmitā Samādhi* which we now briefly consider.

Ānanda Samādhi: ‘There is no consensus among commentators as to the exact nature of the last two stages of (*Samprajñāta*) *Samādhi*, *ānanda* and *asmitā*, underscoring the fact that such states are experiential and do not lend themselves to scholastic categorisation and analysis’ Bryant says⁶²⁷. We will not go into a detailed consideration of the various viewpoints on these states of *Samādhi*, but focus on the experience of these states which are relevant to our investigation. In the *ānanda Samādhi*, the name itself implies a state of extreme joy. ‘In *ānanda Samādhi*, the *yogin* grasps or captures the delight of *sattva* and identifies/unites with this exalted sense of happiness’⁶²⁸. The *yogin* has moved beyond the gross and subtle cognitions of

⁶²³ YS IV.28: see commentary by Vyāsa on this *sūtra*.

⁶²⁴ YS I.1: see commentary by Vyāsa on this *sūtra*.

⁶²⁵ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 236.

⁶²⁶ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, Aranya’s sub-commentary on YS III.3, 252.

⁶²⁷ Edwin F Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 64.

⁶²⁸ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 239.

the two earlier states of *Samādhi* – *vitarka* and *vicāra* – and becomes absorbed in the sense of happiness where the only *vṛtti* is ‘There is only joy’. Although Aranya points out that this sense of happiness arises from a feeling of relaxation in the organs of perception and action and also the inner organs of the *manas* and *buddhi*, we consider that this does not appear consistent with the scheme of *Samādhi* as given by Patañjali. If we were to take this scheme as gradually moving from the external to the internal and from the gross to the subtle, the *ānanda Samādhi* can be located beyond any aspects of the body and is absorption in a sense of pure joy which transcends any object, internal or external. The *citta* is presumed to be devoid of awareness of any aspect of the body, or any object, and completely immersed in a sense of ‘happiness-in-itself’.

We noted that the simple scheme of classification of *Samādhi* in YS I.17 can be put in the context of the ‘grasped’ (object or *grāhya*), ‘grasping’ (*grahaṇa* or the instrument of grasping) and the ‘grasper’ (*grahītṛ*, the one who grasps). The *grāhya* are the *ālambana* or supporting factors in the *vitarka* and *vicāra Samādhi*. The instrument *grahaṇa* is the support in *ānanda Samādhi* and the *grahītṛ* is the *ālambana* in *asmitā Samādhi*. The mind becomes absorbed in the instruments of cognition which are now free of cognitions themselves – *nirvitarka* and *nirvicāra*. In this ‘purified’ form of the instrument devoid of the elements of *tamas* and *rajas*, the mind is immersed in the *sattva guṇa*. Bryant notes that the ‘*Buddhi*, in this highly *sāttvic* state, is so pure and luminous it can reflect the consciousness of *puruṣa* back to itself....the *yogi* now becomes aware of ‘I-am-ness’...rather than any external material *prākṛtic* object, or even internal organ of cognition’⁶²⁹. This is the final stage of *asmitā Samādhi* which we now consider.

Asmitā Samādhi: *Asmi* derived from the root ‘*as*’, is its first person singular derivative and ‘*tā*’ added as a suffix denotes ‘ness’; *asmitā* is thus ‘I-am-ness’ and in this *Samādhi* the mind ‘now

⁶²⁹ Edwin F Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 66.

experiences the sense of the true subject of awareness...consciousness reflecting on the mirror of the mind, as a result of which the *citta* gains a genuine absolute knowledge of the real source of identity of consciousness pervading it'⁶³⁰. This *asmitā* cannot be the same as identified as a *kleśa* in YS II.2 which is a misidentification of the *Puruṣa* with the elements of the body and mind, generating the sense of individual identity, through the impure mirror of the *citta* full of *ṛtti* of *rajas* and *tamas*. 'In this experience the *sāttvic* inner face of the *buddhi* is turned away from its outward facing evolute, *ahaṁkāra*, or ego...the nature of which is to appropriate objects and experiences as being "mine" and not "yours" etc.'⁶³¹. Vyāsa points out in his commentary on YS I.36 that '*buddhi* is perceived as resembling the effulgent sun, moon, planet or a luminous jewel. Similarly, the mind engrossed in the thought of the pure 'I-am-ness' appears like a waveless ocean, placid and limitless'⁶³². It is the '*eka-ātmikā saṁvit*' as Vyāsa describes *asmitā* in his commentary on YS I.17 – the perception of the unified nature of the self. The awareness is now only the sense of 'I am' devoid of any other awareness and misidentification with the body or mind. This is the pure and expanded sense of self identity and is experienced as 'undivided, non-fractured, unified self nature or being...perception is not flattened out or destroyed...it is transformed'⁶³³. This is the state which corresponds to the *saṁāpatti* (unification) with the *grahīṭṛ* as mentioned above. At this level the grasping and grasper become one as it were and Koelman points out that 'by concentration on the knower, we reach the awareness-light projected by the Self. We do not actually grasp the very essence of the Self, we gain the access only to its liminal result, that is its illuminating participation in the *sattva* of the (*buddhi*)'⁶³⁴.

⁶³⁰ Edwin F Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*, 67.

⁶³¹ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 245.

⁶³² Swami Hariharananda, Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 82.

⁶³³ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 246.

⁶³⁴ Gaspar Koelman, *Pātañjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*, 89.

For our analysis the states and stages of *Samādhi* described are sufficient for positing them with the phenomenon of Flow which we take up later in this section. We have not considered the case for the number of stages which can be ascertained from the Yogasūtra nor have we considered the purely philosophical viewpoints of the various commentators and scholars on the nature of *Samādhi*. Our interest has been to try and understand the experiential content of these states of *Samādhi* as much as possible from the text and the commentaries.

In summary we have seen that the experience of the *yogin*, through the practice of *Samādhi*, is described as undergoing transformations as identified in the text and the commentaries. In each stage of *Samādhi*, one can look at the experience in terms of its triple nature of the grasped, grasping and grasper. Each one of these parameters changes as one progresses from *vitarka Samādhi* to *asmitā Samādhi* and we have noted the change in relationships between these as well as the changes in the experience of each. The common factor in all these states is absorption, a complete and focussed attention; whether it is on an external object or just the sense of ‘I am ness’. This absorption is the necessary condition for all the states and requires *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya* as mentioned in the text (YS I.12). There are changes in the perception of not only the object but the sense of self, time and space. There is also an affective dimension, particularly heightened in the *ānanda Samādhi*. Before we take these up and compare them with the phenomenon of Flow, we will look at the latter in more detail now.

d. Phenomenology of Flow

The starting point of research into the phenomena of Flow was during the 1960s when Csikszentmihalyi studying the experiences of artists found that they disregarded many of the physical discomforts including hunger and fatigue, when the work was going well and they were absorbed in it⁶³⁵. This experience was labelled by the term Flow and was first articulated

⁶³⁵ JacobW Getzels, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *The Creative Vision*, (New York: Wiley, 1976).

by Csikszentmihalyi, as ‘an optimal psychological state in which complete absorption in an intrinsically motivated activity leads to a deeply involving and enjoyable experiential state’⁶³⁶. Further he describes it as ‘a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it’⁶³⁷. It is described as a state which is balanced between anxiety and relaxation which depends on the perceived challenge and the matching skills, both of them being above average for the person. It is an autotelic experience, one which is carried out purely for its own sake. Stranger⁶³⁸ considers that the pleasure arising in Flow comes from dissociation from and transcendence of the self and in this state of non-awareness of the self, the function of the body and mind appear to be one in experience. These dynamics may result in exceptional levels of performance⁶³⁹ and Flow has been associated with peak levels of experience and performance⁶⁴⁰.

The research by Csikszentmihalyi and others concluded that this type of experience can occur anytime in any kind of activity upon meeting certain conditions⁶⁴¹. The characteristic of this state of subjective experience when the person is totally absorbed in the activity and the attention is fully on the task at hand. Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi⁶⁴² state the conditions of Flow as: perceived challenges stretching existing skills; a sense of engaging at an appropriate level with the challenge and an immediate feedback about progress in the task.

⁶³⁶ Sam Elkington, “Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience Process Perspective”, 327.

⁶³⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow the Psychology of Optimal Experience: Steps towards Enhancing the Quality of Life*, 8.

⁶³⁸ M Stranger, “The Aesthetics of Risk: A Study of Surfing”. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 34(3), (1999): 265-276.

⁶³⁹ S Jackson, “Athletes in Flow: A Qualitative Investigation of Flow States in Elite Figure Skaters”.

⁶⁴⁰ G Privette, “Dynamics of Peak Performance”. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 21, no. 1 (January 1, 1981): 57–67.

⁶⁴¹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, “The Flow Experience and Its Significance for Human Psychology”.

Under these conditions, the description of the subjective experience was given as ‘being in Flow’ and this ‘experience seamlessly unfolds from moment to moment’⁶⁴³. We have previously stated the common phenomenological components across various subjects of this experience given by Csikszentmihalyi and summarised by Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi⁶⁴⁴, consisting of: 1). Intense and focused concentration on what one is doing in the present moment; 2). Merging of action and awareness which appears to result when ‘attention (is) totally invested in the activity at hand...’⁶⁴⁵; 3). Loss of reflective self-consciousness which results when the ‘me disappears and the ‘I’ takes over...the self is not aware of itself in what it is doing; 4). A sense that one can control one’s actions; that is, a sense that one can in principle deal with the situation because one knows how to respond to whatever happens next; 5). There is a distortion of the experience of time and typically, the passage of time is experienced as faster than normal; 6). The activity itself is seen as intrinsically rewarding and the goal of the activity may be seen as secondary to the activity itself. This is described as the ‘autotelic’ – rewarding in itself⁶⁴⁶.

There is a strong functional aspect related to skill in the Flow experience as can be seen from these components in that the ‘individuals experiencing Flow are highly concentrated and optimally challenged while being in control of the action’⁶⁴⁷. In terms of the experience of Flow itself, we can consider it from the perspectives of its onset, its cognitive and affective aspects and motivation.

⁶⁴² Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “The Concept of Flow”, 89.

⁶⁴³ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience, Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 32.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., 33.

⁶⁴⁷ Stefan Engeser and Falko Rheinberg, "Flow, Performance and Moderators of Challenge-Skill Balance".

The conditions for **the onset of Flow** appear to be non-specific as far as the environmental setting is concerned. The same activity in different settings and any activity can lead to the onset of Flow. On the other hand, the task itself which is engaged in has certain characteristics which have been identified. Firstly, the task should be complex, this complexity requiring the engagement of almost all the resources of the person. It may be a physical or mental task which has this characteristic. Secondly, it is highly structured in terms of well-defined steps and processes which are engaged in. Thirdly, the task has to be ‘challenging enough to promote active engagement and the mobilization of individual skills toward a well-defined objective’⁶⁴⁸. In the presence of these prerequisites of the task in hand, ‘Flow arises spontaneously though unpredictably, without effort and intentionality...people find themselves in Flow, they do not consciously pursue it, although they recognize its positive features and implications’⁶⁴⁹.

The essence of **the cognitive aspect of Flow** is described as an ‘efficient and constant processing of information in response to a perceived challenge arising from the environment or from the internal content of consciousness’⁶⁵⁰. The cognitive resources are employed on the task at hand and the attention being focussed on the task, concentration becomes steady and effortless. Actions and behaviour follow from this coherently and there is continuous adjustment to the requirements of the task which can be rapidly changing. An example of this would be playing a computer game where the task can involve this constant and complex change. This adjustment is achieved by high mobilisation of the physical and mental capacities and an active control of the situation at hand. The predominant capacity varies according to the nature of the task where, for example, in sports, the mental function is likely to be in the

⁶⁴⁸ Antonella Delle Fave et al, *Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well-Being*, 118.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., 119.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

background⁶⁵¹. The physical and the mental function together in response to the demands of the moment and the coherence between the two gives rise to the merging of action and awareness as mentioned above.

According to Delle Fave et al, as for **the affective dimension of Flow**, emotions do not necessarily characterise the optimal experience and although feelings of pleasure, excitement and enjoyment may arise, they may not have a prominent role to play in the experience. They further point out that ‘positive emotions are rather related to the features of the ongoing task: relational and recreational activities are associated with intense positive feelings, while in intellectual and highly complex psychophysical tasks, participants report average levels of emotional variables’⁶⁵². We will look at various aspects of this dimension in the comparative analysis of the two phenomena of Flow and *Samādhi*, although we have noted some of the aspects of the relation between Flow and emotions (page 202).

In terms of **motivation in Flow**, three level are observed in the phenomenology of Flow: the first refers to the desire to carry out the activity in the here and now; the second to the short term goal of getting the outcomes of the activity being pursued and the long term goal to the sense of life accomplishment through the activity. The third level of motivation relates to the capacity of the experience itself to promote the development of the further associated activities.

The experience is shaped by both the desire to carry out the immediate activity and the goals although they may not demonstrate an alignment in their values in specific activities. This fluctuation of value arises from the meaning which is attributed to the activity⁶⁵³. Here Delle Fave and Massimini make the distinction between mandatory and freely chosen tasks, where the

⁶⁵¹ Jeremy Hunter and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “The Phenomenology of Body-mind: The Contrasting Cases of Flow in Sports and Contemplation”. *Anthropology of Consciousness*, 11, (2000): 5–24.

⁶⁵² Antonella Delle Fave et al, *Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well-Being*, 120.

⁶⁵³ Ibid., 121.

former have a low valence of desire even when there is Flow associated with it and the latter, the desirability in such activities as sports is measured to be significantly higher⁶⁵⁴.

In terms of motivation also, it is the meaning and relevance to one's life that are the context for the perception of the long term goals related to Flow. The task itself may have low desirability such as in study and work, but may be associated with the much higher perception of life goals. In contrast the short term goals are related to the immediate outcome of the activity and the pursuit of specific clear goals is considered to be an essential component of the Flow experience and has been confirmed in most of the studies⁶⁵⁵. There is a potential for positive spiralling of skills and challenges, a progressive increase of skills and competencies to meet higher levels of challenges, this process being promoted by investing time and effort in the practice and effort of the activities associated with the optimal experience.

The third level of motivation is the capacity of the experience itself to promote further exercise of the task and this is related to the positive feature of the intrinsic reward in the Flow experience. Having considered the phenomenological features of Flow, we now look at the conceptual framework within which it has been explained.

The Framework for the Phenomenology of Flow: The framework, within which Csikszentmihalyi advocated the phenomenological nature of experience, has three components as the basis on which he explains the phenomena of Flow⁶⁵⁶. It is the interplay of these elements in consciousness that determines the quality and meaning of the experience. Flow as a phenomenon has certain definable characteristics of these three elements of **awareness**,

⁶⁵⁴ Antonella Delle Fave and F Massimini, "The Investigation of Optimal Experience and Apathy: Developmental and Psychosocial implications". *European Psychologist*, 10, (2005): 264–274.

⁶⁵⁵ Antonella Delle Fave, "Optimal Experience and Meaning: Which Relationship?" *Psychological Topics, Special Issue on Positive Psychology*, 18, (2009): 285–302.

⁶⁵⁶ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience, Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 16.

attention and memory. Csikszentmihalyi gives an evolutionary explanation for the existence of the self and consciousness. The human organism, he postulates, ‘in order to perform within the infinitely complex ecosystem to which it became adapted, needed to establish autonomy from the genetically determined instructions that had shaped its behaviour through the long eons of its evolution...the system that evolved to provide this autonomy was the self’⁶⁵⁷. Further, this self has to prioritise between various instructions derived from genetic instinctual drives and cultural norms/rules and ‘in order to mediate between the often conflicting instructions, the human organism developed another feature...based on the biological evolution of the central nervous system we call consciousness’⁶⁵⁸. This feature called consciousness, has three functional subsystems: attention, awareness and memory⁶⁵⁹.

Attention: Attention is the ‘medium which makes information appear in consciousness’; awareness is considered to ‘designate all those processes that take place in consciousness after a bit of information is attended to’ and memory is the ‘subsystem (which) stores information that has passed through the consciousness and that can be again recalled’. Attention is described by Csikszentmihalyi as a general and unconditional power that can be applied to any of the contents of consciousness⁶⁶⁰. Attention being described as a medium and determinant of the content of consciousness, Csikszentmihalyi equated the idea of ‘psychic energy’ with attention stating that ‘any non-reflex action takes up a certain fraction of this energy’⁶⁶¹ and it is the investment of this psychic energy which determines how we ‘create ourselves’⁶⁶² in terms of identity and the goal and content of life. There is an immense diversity of life paths and goals

⁶⁵⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience, Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 17.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁶⁶¹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 19.

⁶⁶² Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness*, 33.

according to how the psychic energy is invested in individuals and their lives. This self, which comes into existence, is ‘an epiphenomenon of conscious processes’⁶⁶³ and is the sum total of all the actions, thoughts, memories, pleasures, and pains experienced in the course of daily life⁶⁶⁴. In the phenomenology of Flow, the deployment of attention plays a primary role where, as we have pointed out above, the intense and focused concentration on what one is doing in the present moment is considered to be a universal phenomenon reported in the experience of Flow.

Awareness: This element of consciousness, according to Csikszentmihalyi, refers to ‘all the processes that take place in consciousness after a bit of information is attended to. It includes such steps as recognising the stimulus, categorising it in terms of previous information, and disposing of it in memory or by forgetting it. Some of the most important processes of awareness are thought or cognition, feeling or emotion and conation or volition’⁶⁶⁵. The process of recognition and relation of the bits of information to each other and to memory in general is cognition whereas, the ‘attitude that consciousness takes towards information it is processing’ is emotion. Volition is defined as ‘the process by which attention remains focussed in a certain range of stimuli instead of moving on to other targets’. All these aspects of awareness are important in the phenomenology of Flow, including the merging of action and awareness which we referred to above. It will be noted that this idea of awareness is radically different from that in the Yogasūtra as we have described it earlier. We discuss this in more detail in the next section.

Memory: This is the subsystem that is responsible for the storage and retrieval of information which has passed through consciousness. Csikszentmihalyi does not elaborate on this aspect,

⁶⁶³ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 20.

⁶⁶⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness*, 33.

⁶⁶⁵ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 19.

especially in relation to the phenomenon of Flow, although he points out that it is the main reservoir of cultural instructions which the individual navigates through in order to determine the behaviour in relation to the world. Consciousness he says, acts as ‘a buffer between genetic and cultural instructions on the one hand, and behaviour on the other’⁶⁶⁶.

The self: As pointed out earlier, the system that allows the autonomy from the genetic instructions is the self which once established, has the main goal of its own survival. ‘To this effect, attention, awareness and memory are directed to replicate those states of consciousness that are congenial to the self, and to eliminate those that threaten its existence’⁶⁶⁷. A hierarchy of goals is developed which represent its own interests in terms of its past experience and these goals, according to Csikszentmihalyi, become the structure of that self. These goals are mostly derived from genetic inheritance and cultural instructions expressed as social values.

When there is an apparent discordance between the individual goals and the perceived inability for their attainment, there arises, what Csikszentmihalyi calls, psychic entropy or states that produce disorder. This psychic entropy is a condition in which there is ‘noise’ in the information processing system and expresses itself as anxiety, boredom, apathy, confusion and other experiences depending on the nature of the conflict between the goals and the information. In psychic entropy there is not only a disorder in the consciousness, but also impairment of efficiency. The attention is withdrawn from the task at hand and diverted to the conflicting information, for example, in case of severe pain attention gets fixed on the pain rather than the task.

In contrast to this state of disorder, Csikszentmihalyi proposes that there is a state of order created when there is a concordance between the information coming into consciousness and

⁶⁶⁶ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 20.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 22.

the structure of the goals of the individual. This he refers to as the state of 'psychic negentropy' which refers to the condition of harmony in the contents of consciousness and the goals of the self. With this congruence, the 'psychic energy seemingly flows effortlessly'⁶⁶⁸ and such a state of high order is what Csikszentmihalyi has come to describe as an 'optimal experience or Flow...(which) are the subjective conditions we call pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment'⁶⁶⁹. This goal directed activity of the self is central to the idea of optimal experience and what Csikszentmihalyi calls the 'teleonomy of the self' is the third alternative that affects the course of human action besides the genetic and cultural teleonomies. Putting it another way, the self is built on the basic models of pleasure, power and participation, where the genetic teleonomy refers to the pleasure as it is derived from eating well, being comfortable and happy and sexually satisfied; power in relationships among people in different classes becomes the central feature of social organisation which is the basis of the cultural teleonomy. Csikszentmihalyi introduces another key concept in his model of Flow: Autotelic motivation where the experience itself becomes the goal of the activity 'rather than any future reward advantage it might bring. The evolution of consciousness...hinges on the capacity to invest psychic energy in goals that are not modelled exclusively on the teleonomy of genes or culture. When we step beyond motivations which are based on pleasure, power and participation, we open up the consciousness to experience new opportunities for being, that lead to emergent structures of self. This is autotelic motivation...' ⁶⁷⁰. According to Csikszentmihalyi autotelic motivation is a characteristic of autotelic personalities and such persons tend to 'position themselves in situations which enable frequent experiences of Flow states. They have a greater

⁶⁶⁸ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness*, 33.

⁶⁶⁹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 24.

⁶⁷⁰ Ibid., 29.

capacity to initiate, sustain and enjoy such optimal experiences'⁶⁷¹. Baumann points out 'that frequent and intense Flow experiences may be driven by stable personality dispositions. Individuals do not necessarily experience Flow if they encounter optimal task conditions because they differ in the need to actively seek and in the ability to create their own flow experiences. As such, personality traits are boundary conditions for flow experience'⁶⁷².

In summary: What 'it feels like' to be in Flow is the phenomenology of Flow and we have described and evaluated the various aspects of this phenomenon, as well as the underlying conceptual framework through which Csikszentmihalyi explains it. We will now consider the method by which we can bring this phenomenon and that of *Samādhi* into a comparative framework.

e. A framework of comparison of Flow and *Samādhi*: Issues and potential

Having examined the phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow in some detail, the next step is to carry out a comparative analysis of the two experiences.

Current limitations in comparisons of Flow and *Samādhi*: Although Csikszentmihalyi pointed out the resemblance between *Samādhi* and Flow, a survey of the literature shows that there has been little attempt to explore this assertion by researchers in either of these fields. A search was carried out on the Bodleian Solo search engine with the terms 'comparative', 'phenomenology', 'Flow', 'Samādhi', 'Yoga', 'Positive Psychology', and other key terms in various combinations and using other equivalent words but not a single journal article was

⁶⁷¹ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 30.

⁶⁷² Nicola Baumann, "Chapter 9: The Autotelic Personality", in *Advances in Flow Research* edited by Stefan Engeser, 165-182, (NY: Springer Wiley, 2012).

found in any of the searches which focused primarily of a comparison of the two, although the Chapter by Delle Fave⁶⁷³, which we have discussed in this thesis, turned up.

Although there is literature on the phenomenology of meditation in general, empirical research on the phenomenology of Yogasūtra *Samādhi* in particular, is almost non-existent. One of the reasons for this may be that there are few practitioners who strictly follow the techniques of the Yogasūtra, although meditation techniques from diverse traditions are currently being practiced globally, including Buddhist mindfulness⁶⁷⁴. Much of the research has focussed on the effects of meditation on health and well being, for example, its efficacy for anxiety⁶⁷⁵. Besides lack of specific research on Yogasūtra *Samādhi*, there is a consequent lack of research on the comparative phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow. The literature searched for this type of research did not yield any direct empirical comparisons between Flow and *Samādhi*.

Besides lack of this kind of research, there are also methodological difficulties in comparisons between the two phenomena. Firstly, the issue of the method for collection of data needs to be addressed and although there are various methods available, choices about these need to be made in order to obtain valid and reliable data. Secondly, both practitioners of *Samādhi* and experiencers of Flow need to be investigated in the same research study and with a common methodology for a valid and reliable comparison. Thirdly, we should also note the contrast in the metaphysical and conceptual basis for explaining the two phenomena of Flow and *Samādhi*. We have pointed out that a dialogue between science and religion takes into account these underlying assumptions about reality besides the methodology by which they are formulated. In

⁶⁷³ Antonella Delle Fave, “Chapter Six: Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well-Being”, in *Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience Across Cultures* edited by Antonella Delle Fave, F Massimini, M Bassi. 111-128. (New York: Springer, 2011).

⁶⁷⁴ M Goyal, S Singh, E Sibinga et al, “Meditation Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis”. *JAMA Internal Medicine*, (2014), 174(3):357–368.

⁶⁷⁵ Kevin W Chen, Christine C. Berger, Eric Manheimer, and et al, “Meditative Therapies for Reducing Anxiety: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials”. *Depression and Anxiety* 29, no. 7 (June 14, 2012): 545–562.

other words, the ontological and epistemological basis of any concept should be recognised and the framework within which the dialogue between science and religion can take place, acknowledged. Table 4 below gives a summary of these differences in the underlying assumptions in Flow and *Samādhi*.

Table 4: Different underlying assumptions of Flow and *Samādhi*.

CONSCIOUSNESS
Flow: Consciousness is a feature of human biological evolution of the central nervous system in order to mediate between the often conflicting instructions.
Yoga: <i>Puruṣa</i> is unchanging and eternal pure Consciousness as opposed to ‘awareness-of’ which is the property of the mental apparatus, <i>citta</i> , as part of <i>Prakṛti</i> , the principle of materiality. The latter is ‘reflected awareness’. The ‘reflection’ refers to the reflection of the <i>Puruṣa</i> (<i>caitanya</i>) in the purest aspect of <i>citta</i> , i.e. the <i>buddhi</i> or intellect.
ATTENTION
Flow: Attention is the medium which makes information appear in consciousness, a general and unconditional power that can be applied to any of the contents of consciousness.
Yoga: Absorption of the mind (<i>Samādhi</i>) is a feature of the mind in all its habitual states. <i>Dhāraṇā</i> is concentration – <i>deśa bandha citta</i> – fixing attention in one location. This determined and continuous concentration, called <i>ekāgratā</i> or single pointed attention is obtained by integrating the psychomental flux (<i>sarvārtha</i> – variously directed, discontinuous, diffused attention).
AWARENESS
Flow: Awareness designates all those processes that take place in consciousness after a bit of information is attended to and includes such steps as recognising the stimulus, categorising it in terms of previous information, and disposing of it in memory or by forgetting it. Some of the most important processes of awareness are thought or cognition, feeling or emotion and conation or volition.
Yoga: Awareness in Yoga is ‘reflected awareness’ and this ‘reflection’ refers to the reflection of the <i>Puruṣa</i> (<i>caitanya</i>) in the purest aspect of <i>citta</i> , i.e. the <i>buddhi</i> or intellect. The contents of the <i>citta</i> , i.e. all modifications including perception and cognition, are ‘illuminated’ by this reflected ‘light’ of the pure Consciousness of the <i>Puruṣa</i> .
MEMORY
Flow: Memory is the subsystem which stores information that has passed through the consciousness and that can be again recalled.
Yoga: Memory, <i>smṛti</i> , is based on the production of an impression or <i>saṃskāra</i> arising from experience which is ‘stored’ in the subliminal mind. An experience creates or leaves a trace in the <i>citta</i> which persists and endures and which may be recalled later on. Remembrance is the non-deprivation of the object and it recreates a form of the past experience in the <i>citta</i> . It is a modification of the mind.
SELF
Flow: The self is the system that evolved to provide autonomy to the human being and comes into existence in order to perform within the infinitely complex ecosystem to which it became adapted. It is needed to establish autonomy from the genetically determined instructions that had shaped its behaviour through the long eons of its evolution. It is ‘an epiphenomenon of conscious processes’ and is the sum total of all the actions, thoughts, memories, pleasures, and pains experienced in the course of daily life.
Yoga: Yoga makes a key distinction between the two senses of self: the absolute subject (Self) and the empirical subject (self); In the first sense of the ‘seer’, it is the <i>Puruṣa</i> , which, although pure, apperceives the presented ideas. It apperceives the experiences of the other subject – the empirical subject which perceives the outer world of objects and the inner world of thoughts and feelings. The Self as subject is thus distinguished from the self which is an <i>object</i> for the former; <i>Asmitā</i> is an instance of the false sense of ‘I-am-ness’ which arises with the conjunction of <i>Puruṣa</i> and <i>Prakṛti</i> and is the basis of the self.

Meditation and Optimal experience: In their recent work on optimal experience across cultures, Delle Fave, Massimini and Bassi considered a comparison between optimal experience and meditation, exploring the question whether ‘optimal experience is a state of meditation, or—on the opposite—that the experience of meditation is a form of optimal experience’⁶⁷⁶. They also acknowledge the current limitations in the comparative phenomenology of Flow and meditation, that ‘due to the complete lack of investigations on this topic, we will engage in a first comparative endeavour. In our opinion, a comparison between Flow and the experience reported during the practice of meditation is possible, and it can be useful to disentangle the two conditions’⁶⁷⁷.

Delle Fave et al point out that the ‘complex structure of Indian philosophical and religious system is based on precise assumptions about the components and mechanisms of human mind’⁶⁷⁸. Bearing these perspectives in mind, the authors point out that the ‘hypothesized universality and relevance of optimal experience to individual and cultural functioning needs to be supported by cross-cultural findings’⁶⁷⁹ and which they present to support the universality of the optimal experience.

Even if we accept that there is support for the universality of the optimal experience, we have several issues in attempting a comparison of such experience with meditation in general and *Samādhi* of Yogasūtra in particular. Firstly, there are a substantial number of meditation techniques in the Eastern traditions, Buddhist, Jain and Hindu. Even within one particular tradition there will be several different techniques which will be available, with different practices or stages of meditation. Therefore, it becomes important to specify the tradition and the technique which is being investigated and although this may seem like an obvious point, it

⁶⁷⁶ Antonella Delle Fave, F Massimini M Bassi, *Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well-Being*, 111.

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., 116.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., 131.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 132.

is often missed when meditation is taken to be a homogenous technique across traditions. Secondly, there is evidence to suggest that the meditative experiences, for example the Buddhist states of concentration, the *jhāna*, are reported to be phenomenologically different than the states of concentration in the Buddhist Vipassanā meditation⁶⁸⁰. In other words, even within one tradition there are differences in the meditative experiences of the practitioners according to which technique is being practised. Thirdly, there are stages within a single technique of meditation so that we need to specify the particular stage we are investigating. Considering these issues, sweeping comparisons of states of consciousness are difficult to justify and a much more differentiated approach to a comparative study of psychological states needs to be adopted for a reliable and valid comparison.

In a recent article on a methodological review of meditation research, Thomas and Cohen (July 2014) argue that ‘the lack of clear research outcomes from such meditation research is attributable to methodological shortcomings in research design, a consequence of an emphasis on technological considerations and a neglect of critical subjective factors impacting on the meditation experience’⁶⁸¹. In their analysis they considered the following domains within which the variables in the studies were assigned:

- Person – characteristics of the meditator
- Practice – nature of the specific meditation practice
- Place – variables of the experimental situation
- Phenomenology – subjective experiences of the meditator
- Physiology – EEG measures of the meditation state

They found in this analysis that there were very few studies which focused on the phenomenology of meditation and even these looked at a limited number of dimensions through

⁶⁸⁰ Roger Walsh, “Phenomenological Mapping: A Method For Describing And Comparing States Of Consciousness”. *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. 27, No.1, (1995): 40-42, 40.

⁶⁸¹ John W Thomas and Eric Cohen, “A Methodological Review of Meditation Research”, *Frontiers in Psychiatry, Affective Disorders and Psychosomatic Research*, Volume 5, Article 74, (July 2014): 1-24.

post session questionnaires or rating scales. They further propose that the investigation of the phenomenal state of consciousness produced by the practice of a particular technique of meditation, needs to be developed for ‘mapping phenomenal space’. Our work here is an attempt to address this issue in relation to the Yogasūtra *Samādhi* and prepare the ground for further research in the area of comparative phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow. We now look at a specific framework for analysis of such phenomena proposed by Walsh⁶⁸², and although it is subject to the general limitations that were discussed above and specific ones which we discuss below, it is nevertheless a good starting point for exploration of this area.

f. Comparative phenomenology of Flow and *Samādhi*

Walsh is instrumental in developing a method for phenomenological mapping of states of consciousness, in particular for looking at these states in shamanism, Buddhist and Patañjali Yoga *Samādhi* and interestingly schizophrenia. Having examined the literature on the subject and the frequency with which the states were described and the importance given to these descriptions, he arrived at the dimensions for mapping these states; he outlines primarily a qualitative and descriptive method based on several dimensions of phenomenal experience:

1. Degree of control in entering an altered state and in the content of experience.
2. Awareness of the environment.
3. Ability to communicate.
4. Concentration on an object (internal or external).
5. Degree of arousal.
6. Experience of calm.
7. Experience of affect.
8. Experience of self-sense.
9. Out of body experience and,
10. Content (of experience).

⁶⁸² Roger Walsh, “Phenomenological Mapping: A Method for Describing and Comparing States of Consciousness”, 40-42.

For each of the dimensions, he gives a description of the experience based on the material available in the literature which falls within these defined parameters. Not only does he compare the different states but also attempts to compare techniques within a tradition; for example, he carries out a comparison of the different stages of the Buddhist *jhāna* from the second to the sixth, which show distinct differences in some of the dimensions.

This work by Walsh is an early attempt to map the phenomenology of experience based on descriptions extracted from the literature, there are, however, some methodological issues, in particular the definition and creation of the dimensions of phenomenology of experience. The author does admit that the ‘maps and comparisons presented here are obviously initial steps’ and require further refinement and suggest that ‘an obvious next step would be to use one of the psychometric tests now⁶⁸³ being developed, such as The Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory (by Pekala and Kumar), to obtain quantitative assessments and comparisons of the phenomenology of these states’⁶⁸⁴. The work of Walsh gives us a basis for a rather simple comparison of the phenomena of Flow and *Samādhi* on the one hand and also a means of comparing the various stages of *Samādhi* itself on the other. Based on our analysis of the phenomenology of Flow and *Samādhi* in the preceding sections, we can summarise the dimensions as shown in Table 5:

⁶⁸³ This article was written in 1995.

⁶⁸⁴ Roger Walsh, “Phenomenological Mapping: A Method for Describing and Comparing States of Consciousness”, 40-42.

Dimension	<i>Samādhi</i> *	Flow
1. Control: in entering an altered state	Yes	No (qualified)
in the content of experience	Yes (extreme control in some <i>Samādhi</i> -s)	Yes
2. Awareness of the environment	Reduced sensory awareness*	Heightened awareness of object or task
3. Ability to communicate	None	Yes
4. Concentration	Very high and fixed	Very high and fluid
5. Arousal	Very low	High/Variable
6. Calm	Very calm	Variable
7. Affect	Ineffable bliss*	Happiness post Flow
8. Self-sense	Unchanging sense of self*	Loss of self-sense
9. Out of body experience	No but loss of body awareness*	Unknown but loss of body awareness in some Flow activities
10. Content (of experience)	Extreme absorption in single object*	Extreme absorption in task

Table 5: Comparison of *Samādhi* and Flow.

*Based on the descriptions of *Samādhi* given by Walsh, but see the discussion below for discussion on these dimensions in the different stages of *Samādhi*.

As we have pointed out in the section on Phenomenology of *Samādhi*, there is a differentiated experience in all the stages of *Samādhi* and we have to specify which stage it is in order to give an appropriate description. What is obvious from the comparison done by Walsh is that there is no clarity regarding the stage of *Samādhi* being indicated which leads him to give an undifferentiated description of the phenomena. The *Yogasūtra* is clear about the stages of *Samādhi* and the commentary together with the aphorisms give descriptions about the content of experience for each of these stages. Taking these into account, we can give the following summary comparison of the different stages of the *Samprajñāta Samādhi* with that of Flow, based on the dimensions given by Walsh (Table 6).

Dimension	<i>Samprajñāta Samādhi</i>				Flow
	<i>Savitarka</i>	<i>Savicāra</i>	<i>Ānanda</i>	<i>Asmitā</i>	
1. Control: in entering an altered state in the content of experience	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (qualified)
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Awareness of the environment	One pointed awareness of object	Very low	Very low	Very low	Heightened awareness of task/object
3. Ability to communicate	None	None	None	None	Yes
4. Concentration	Very high and fixed	Very high and fixed	Very high and fixed	Very high and fixed	Very high and fluid
5. Arousal	Very low	Very low	Very low	Very low	High/Variable
6. Calm	Very calm	Very calm	Very calm	Very calm	Variable
7. Affect	None	None	Ineffable bliss	None	Happiness post Flow
8. Self-sense	Loss of sense of self	Loss of sense of self	Loss of sense of self	Extreme awareness of self	Loss of sense of self
9. Out of body experience	No but loss of body awareness	No but loss of body awareness	No but loss of body awareness	No but loss of body awareness	Unknown but loss of body awareness in some Flow activities
10. Content (of experience)	Extreme absorption	Extreme absorption	Extreme absorption	Extreme absorption	Extreme absorption
	in single object	in one thought	in single feeling	in sense of self	in task

Table 6: Comparison of Different Stages of *Samādhi* with Flow.

■ Shading indicates where the differences are between the different stages of *Samādhi* and Flow

We can see immediately that Walsh's analysis was inadequate simply because of the conflation of all the stages of *Samādhi*, a critical issue we pointed out earlier. Here we see that although there are several dimensions which appear to remain constant, there are differences between the stages of *Samādhi* in some specific ones. From the Table above, we can also see that none of the four stages of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* bear a clear one to one relationship in all dimensions within this framework of comparison to Flow. However, the first two stages of *vitarka* and *vicāra Samādhi* bear a significant resemblance to Flow and come closest in terms of the dimensions considered, although all stages of *Samādhi* and Flow have the commonality of extreme absorption.

We will now consider each of these dimensions in detail.

1. Degree of control in entering the state and in the content of experience:

In our previous discussion on *Samādhi*, we pointed out the importance given by Patañjali to practice, *abhyāsa*, and this is indicated in YS I.13 and I.14. *Abhyāsa* is the exertion of effort (*yatna*) for stabilising the state of cessation (*niruddha*) of the modifications of the mind (*citta*). Inherent in the idea of *abhyāsa* is that of control, a disciplined *yatna* to bring about specific outcomes of practice, whether they are at the level of the physical or mental, whether it is the postural aspect or the internal disciplines of *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of the senses from their objects) or *dhyāna* (absorption in the object of concentration). The yogin becomes an active agent in the exertion of the will to control the modifications. *Sūtra* I.14 further qualifies how *abhyāsa* is to be done: *satudīrghakāla nairantarya satkāraśevitodṛḍhabhūmi*: ‘But this (practice) is firmly grounded when practised over a long period of time, without a break and carried out with care’. Thus the entry into the state of *Samādhi* requires a great deal of control over the physical as well as the mental. We have stated in Chapter Seven that there are seven steps which lead to *Samādhi* and each one requires proficiency in control to make the transition to the next stage. For example, the control of the senses and their withdrawal from their object (*pratyāhāra*) is essential before the entry into *dhāraṇā*, defined in YS III.1 as the binding or fixing of attention to a spot or place: ‘*deśa bandha cittasya dhāraṇā*’.

Walsh refers to two aspects of control⁶⁸⁵ which are really in relation to his comparison between shamanism and schizophrenia: 1. ability to enter and leave the altered state of consciousness at will and 2. the ability to control the content of experience whilst in the state. As far as *Samādhi* is concerned, there is an ability to enter and leave at will, implied in the stages preceding it and also within the four stages of *Samādhi* itself. The text does not refer to a spontaneous entry into

⁶⁸⁵ Roger Walsh, “Phenomenological Mapping: A Method for Describing and Comparing States of Consciousness”, 33.

and/or exit from *Samādhi*, although the idea of *abhyāsa* implies a great deal of control both of entry and exit and also in terms of the experience itself. *Samādhi* follows from *dhyāna* which itself is referred to in YS III.2: ‘... the extension of the *pratyaya* (presented idea) is *dhyāna* (contemplative absorption)’. The term *ekatānata* used to describe this process taking place in *dhyāna* is translated in various ways: ‘one-directionality’, ‘unbroken singular extension’, ‘one-subjectedness’, ‘continuous flow’; ‘uninterrupted flow’⁶⁸⁶. Similarly, in *Samādhi*, there is extension of the *pratyaya* which may take different forms and thus there is complete control of the experience itself.

We have noted the common phenomenological components, given by Csikszentmihalyi and summarised by Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi⁶⁸⁷, across various subjects’ experience of Flow. One of the components refers to the subjects’ sense that one’s actions can be controlled and that one can deal with the situation because one knows how to respond to the unfolding experience. In other words, the skills balance with the challenge as the Flow begins and the exertion of the skill by means of conscious control is what is said to perpetuate the Flow experience. There is, however, a difference between *Samādhi* and Flow in respect to the entry into the experience. Whereas there is a high degree of control required in entering *Samādhi*, it has been asserted that the Flow experience ‘arises spontaneously though unpredictably, without effort and intentionality...people find themselves in Flow, they do not consciously pursue it, although they recognize its positive features and implications’⁶⁸⁸. We have noted previously in section d of this Chapter that the conditions for the onset of Flow appear to be non-specific and there is a diversity of settings and activities which can lead to this onset. There are also three characteristics of the task associated with Flow: complexity, highly defined structure and a level of challenge ‘to promote active engagement and the mobilization of individual skills toward a

⁶⁸⁶ See Feuerstein; Whicher; Karambelkar; Hariharānanada; Taimni.

⁶⁸⁷ Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “The Concept of Flow”, 89.

⁶⁸⁸ Antonella Delle Fave et al, *Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well-Being*, 119.

well-defined objective'⁶⁸⁹. Although the onset of Flow appears to be spontaneous, it is possible to exercise choice and control in the *type* of task engaged in. This indeed is the basis for the balancing one's skills with the challenge.

Elkington⁶⁹⁰ suggests a more complex picture of the entry into Flow based on evidence that it requires 'a degree of preparation'. He cites the work of Delle Fave and Massimini⁶⁹¹ in which a variety of respondents report preparing themselves physically and mentally for the forthcoming optimal experience. This preparation is particularly evident in the realm of competitive sport and even the term 'optimal preparation' is used by Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi in their research with elite athletes⁶⁹². Csikszentmihalyi himself refers to 'a priori investment of attention' before the Flow experience can become enjoyable and he terms this as 'activation energy' or an initial investment and that such disposable activation energy is required to enjoy complex activities⁶⁹³.

Elkington⁶⁹⁴ presents evidence to suggest that there are four pre-Flow elements or phenomenological structures which lead up to the entry into the Flow experience itself: 1). initial investment of attention; 2). activation and energisation; 3). pre-Flow moment and 4). the trust-Flow imperative. The optimal preparation for entry into the Flow experience is here presented in these four structures each requiring a controlled effort. For example, the initial

⁶⁸⁹ Antonella Delle Fave et al, *Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well-Being*, 118.

⁶⁹⁰ Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective".

⁶⁹¹ Antonella Delle Fave and F Massimini, "Modernization and the Changing Contexts of Flow in Work and Leisure". In *Optimal Experience: Psychological studies of Flow in Consciousness* edited by M. Csikszentmihalyi and I. Csikszentmihalyi, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 192–213.

⁶⁹² Susan Jackson and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow in Sports: The Keys to Optimal Experiences and Performances*.

⁶⁹³ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1997).

⁶⁹⁴ Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective", 343.

investment of attention, ‘which demands significant conscious effort on the part of the individual’⁶⁹⁵ is described by the subject:

It’s not a matter of waiting for things to be right, you need to be prepared. Before I start, I take some time to clear my mind, that period of calmness focuses me, allowing me to get my concentration to a level I know is right, where I am focused on what needs to be done . . .

Another aspect of control in relation to Flow has been investigated by Keller and Blomann⁶⁹⁶ who postulated that people with a strong internal locus of control (LOC)⁶⁹⁷ are predisposed to enter Flow. Internal LOC ‘reflects the belief that outcomes are generally contingent upon the work and effort put into them’. Their research suggests that a strong internal LOC is a ‘crucial moderating factor with respect to the impact of variations in the skills-demands compatibility’. The implications of these findings are that they define a personal boundary condition which may affect the emergence of intrinsic motivation and that persons with strong internal LOC are more likely to enter Flow with skills-challenge compatibility.

Csikszentmihalyi makes a distinction between possibility and actuality of control in the Flow experience⁶⁹⁸ which is illustrated by the following description of the experience from an actor⁶⁹⁹:

What the statements don’t describe is the sense of vulnerability when this feeling leaves you. But when it returns it is the best feeling in the world . . . like you’re untouchable . . . when I’m in this place I move effortlessly, there’s no conscious thought involved . . . I’m lost in the moment and anything is possible.

⁶⁹⁵ Sam Elkington, “Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective”, 344.

⁶⁹⁶ Johannes Keller and Frederik Blomann, “Locus of Control and the Flow Experience: An Experimental Analysis”. *European Journal of Personality* 22, no. 7, (November 2008): 589–607.

⁶⁹⁷ The concept of LOC was first introduced by J Rotter. “Generalized Expectancies for Internal versus External Control of Reinforcement”, *Psychological Monographs: General & Applied*, 80(1) 1966: 1-28.

⁶⁹⁸ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness*.

⁶⁹⁹ Sam Elkington, “Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective”, 266.

In summary, control in entering the state of *Samādhi* and Flow appears to have different characteristics, the former requiring a high level of control in directing the attention resources towards single-pointedness and the latter requiring ‘optimal preparation’ through exercising control on the conditions for entry into Flow. A strong internal LOC appears to be an important personal boundary condition for a predisposition for entering Flow. Once the experience has commenced, both Flow and *Samādhi* require an exertion of control as the experience unfolds. In all types of *Samādhi* there is a strong element of control in relation to directing attention towards the object of concentration and extending the experience (*pratyaya*) and in the case of Flow, the exertion of control over the skills-challenge balance perpetuates the experience, although in the case of Flow, there is the sense of *potentiality* of control – the sense that one has the power to meet any challenge. The potential for experiencing Flow can perhaps enhanced by training to increase one’s capacity for attention through Yoga and this is certainly a credible area for empirical investigation.

2. Awareness of the environment:

This is considered as the perceptual sensitivity to environmental stimuli and is different for the two phenomena. In *Samādhi*, we have noted that the fifth limb of *Aṣṭāṅga* Yoga is *pratyāhāra* where the senses disconnect from their respective objects and follow the nature of the mind⁷⁰⁰ and being free of the objects of their connection, they settle back into the mind. The mind withdrawing from the external world through the withdrawal of the senses from their objects has the effect of an intensification of the inward awareness. This has the consequence of reducing the perceptual sensitivity to the external stimuli. It is to be noted that there are differences in terms of which *Samādhi* is being experienced. In the case of *Vitarka Samādhi*, where the object of concentration is external, there is a complete focus of attention on such an

⁷⁰⁰ YS II.54: When separated from their corresponding objects, the organs follow, as it were, the nature of the mind, that is called *pratyāhāra*.

object to the exclusion of all other objects. Although there may not be a general awareness of the environment, there is a heightened awareness of a particular aspect or object of the external environment. In the case of the three other types of *Samādhi*, the awareness of the environment can be considered to be highly limited or non-existent. In the case of *Vicāra Samādhi*, the focus of attention is an internal idea or image and with a great intensity of concentration on this, the sensitivity to external stimuli is greatly reduced. Similarly, in *Ānanda* and *Asmitā Samādhi*, there is complete turning of attention inwards and a consequent elimination of awareness of the environment. Consider the experience of a practitioner⁷⁰¹:

In...*Samadhi*, there is both the bliss and the consciousness. One is fully engaged in *Samadhi*; there is no awareness of outside surroundings. However, one remains aware that there is someone having an experience.

In the Flow experience, we can also make a distinction in terms of what kind of activity is related to the experience. Consider the following description of Flow involved in playing sport⁷⁰²:

My mind isn't wandering. I am not thinking of something else. I am totally involved in what I am doing. My body feels good. I don't seem to hear anything. The world seems to be cut off from me. I am less aware of myself and my problems.

Here the awareness of the external stimuli also appears to be greatly reduced – experiencing the world as cut off from oneself. The absorption in the task at hand results in 'not hearing anything'.

Another dimension of Flow is the clear and unambiguous feedback and depending on the activity, there is an awareness of what is going on in relation to one's actions. What constitutes as feedback also varies depending on the nature of the activity but in some cases, for example, stage performers and sports coaches, the element of audience response gives important

⁷⁰¹ see Dr. Bruce R. Arnold's description at <http://www.jnanayoga.org/Samadhi/htm>

⁷⁰² Sam Elkington, "What it is to Take Flow of Leisure Seriously", *Leisure/Loisir* Vol. 35, No. 3, August 2011, 253–282, 261.

feedback in terms of their performance. This awareness of the audience or the client implies a heightened sense of connection with the subject.

Consider for example the experience of an actor⁷⁰³:

It is when you hear the applause and response from the audience you know...that's why I'm doing this...that's what makes it all worthwhile for me, knowing that I have reached a particular audience through my performance.

The dependence of this type of activity on environmental feedback implies that there is sensitivity to external stimuli, an essential dimension of Flow. The clear and immediate feedback from the environment allows for the continued absorption in and engagement with the activity, although individuals need not completely rely on these external cues. For example, in sports a great deal of feedback is derived from the body itself⁷⁰⁴.

In this comparison of the two phenomena we can discern differences depending on the type of *Samādhi* or the kind of activity associated with Flow. The aspect of a clear and unambiguous feedback in the Flow experience may or may not be from the environment and, therefore, external awareness will depend on the source of feedback, and similarly, in *Samādhi*, the object of attention determines the awareness of specific aspects of the environment.

3. Ability to communicate:

We have noted the diversity of activities which can be associated with the experience of Flow, whether it is rock climbing, painting or elite sports. One of these activities is the actor in the performance of a play whose ability to communicate is enhanced in Flow⁷⁰⁵:

Occasionally during rehearsals but mainly at the time of the performances I reach a place where I am completely content with myself and the task before me...my focus is clear and my intentions true.

⁷⁰³ Sam Elkington, "What it is to Take Flow of Leisure Seriously", 265.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid., 332.

The actor is absorbed in the performance to such an extent that the awareness and the act of communicating with other actors, or even the audience, merge in the experience of Flow. On the other hand the ability to converse with a client in a coaching conversation is described by a coach⁷⁰⁶:

The conversation was all engaging and I had almost a feeling of disembodiment. I was unaware of time and base needs, for example, feeling hunger or tiredness.

In the exchange between the coach and client, there appears to be several factors identified by Wesson, which were associated with the experience of Flow. One of these is relatedness where one person could relate to the other and to what was being discussed⁷⁰⁷:

I felt confident in what the coach was saying, because what he said made sense. Not just understanding the words, but understanding the method and reason for doing something. (*client*).

There was a sense of being 'at one' with the client, in terms of thought processes. (*coach*).

In Flow, therefore, depending on the type of activity being engaged in, there will be the ability to communicate, sometimes even heightened, or not. In cases where there is total absorption in the task at hand and the world seems to fade out, there is an inability to communicate⁷⁰⁸:

My concentration is like breathing. I never think of it. I am really oblivious to my surroundings after I really get going. I think that the phone could ring, and the doorbell could ring, or the house could burn down or something like that. When I start, I really do shut out the whole world.

Samādhi experienced by Ramakrishna Paramahansa is described by the author⁷⁰⁹:

⁷⁰⁶ Karen Wesson, "Flow in a Coaching Conversation", *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, Special Issue No.4, October 2010, 53-66, 56.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid., 57.

⁷⁰⁸ Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective", 339.

⁷⁰⁹ Dushyanata Pandya, *Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa*, (Delhi: Readworthy Publications, 2008), 64.

Losing all bodily consciousness, the only goal that Ramakrishna pursued was...*Samādhi*. No amount of shouting, pulling or pinching...would succeed in bringing his...mind to normal consciousness.

Ramakrishna was a Bengali mystic who had intense devotion for the Mother Goddess and often went into trance like states described as ecstasy filled states of *Samādhi*. When he was in such a state, awareness of the world together with the ability to communicate, would be non-existent. Vyāsa in his commentary on the Yogasūtra says that ‘Yoga is *Samādhi*’ and in the *bhūmi* or state of *niruddha* (cessation), there are no modifications of the mind taking place. If these modifications include the ordinary cognitive processes of thinking and memory then, in *Samādhi*, there is no communication that can take place. The example of Ramakrishna above demonstrates the idea of an extreme inability to communicate in the state of *Samādhi*. This seems likely with all four types of *Samādhi* as the absorption in the object is intense to the extent that the *grāhya*, that which is ‘grasped’ or that which is ‘perceived’, *grahaṇa*, the act of ‘grasping’ or ‘perceiving’ and *grahītṛ* the ‘grasper’ or ‘perceiver’ merge into one experience. If this is the case then the ability to communicate would not be present in this state. An interesting account is given by a meditator⁷¹⁰:

My communication with others was not through my mind and vocal cords but through our collective connection with the infinite, which is experienced as chords of vibrating light.

It is not clear from the article whether this communication was actually taking place and whether it was verified or not but appears to be a statement of her experience in regard to communication with others.

Thus there are again differences in the phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow in dimension of the ability to communicate. In the case of Flow, depending on the type of activity, there is a variation in this ability and in some cases Flow is experienced in the act of communication itself

⁷¹⁰ Jennifer Barnes, “The Lived Experience of Meditation”, *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 2001, 1:2, 1-15, 7.

as we have seen in the examples quoted above. In *Samādhi* on the other hand, there appears to be a complete lack of this ability to communicate.

4. Concentration: focused attention:

The Yogasūtra charts the journey of the withdrawal of attention of the senses from their objects of the external world and turning it inwards to the state of *Samādhi* in which there is complete absorption with the cessation of the *vṛtti* or modifications of the mind. *Pratyāhāra* is the stage when there is an inward turning of attention with the senses disconnecting from their respective objects and following the nature of the mind⁷¹¹. Being free of the objects of their connection, the senses settle back into the mind. The *yogin* attains concentration, or the holding of attention on a single object for a long period of time to the exclusion of other objects, with the next stage – *dhāraṇā*. Deepening of concentration comes in *dhyāna* and with complete absorption in the object comes *Samādhi*. The hallmark of *Samādhi* is this deep absorption and where the distinction between the perceiver, the perception and the object of perception disappears. YS III.3 says: ‘That [*dhyāna*], when it shines forth as an object only, apparently empty of its own nature/form [as knowledge, it] is indeed *Samādhi*’⁷¹². This is the state where it becomes possible to know the true nature of any object through a ‘oneness of identity’ with the object attained with complete absorption.

The concentration and its intensity is maintained in all different types of *Samādhi* and the details of the phenomenology of each type is given previously (Chapter Eleven section c), namely, *vitarka*, *vicāra*, *ānanda* and *asmitā* *Samādhi*. It should also be noted that Vyāsa enumerates five *bhūmi* or states of mind, each with a different characteristic of concentration: agitated, distracted, stupefied, one-pointed and still. It is only with the practice of Yoga that the

⁷¹¹ YS II.54: When separated from their corresponding objects, the organs follow, as it were, the nature of the mind, that is called *pratyāhāra*.

⁷¹² YS III.3 *tadevārthamātranirbhāsaṁ svarūpaśūnyamiva samādhiḥ*: *Samādhi* is just that (condition) in which only the object (of concentration) shines forth, and the self is absent, as it were.

control over attention is attained by the practitioner, leading to a more and more focussed state of mind with concentration on a single object. The element of control of the mind, the conscious and deliberate effort to hold the attention on the object, is central to the *antaraṅga* Yoga (inner limbs of Yoga practice). The whole thrust of this practice is to develop a tremendous capacity for concentrating over long periods of time. In this connection Patañjali lists the distractions of the mind which lessen this capacity in YS I.30 such as disease, mental lethargy, doubt, inadvertence, inertia, non-withdrawal of the mind, illusion, instability of the mind and restlessness⁷¹³. When these have been overcome, the Yoga practitioner is able to achieve intense levels of concentration.

This ability to selectively focus attention is also the central feature of Flow, the absorption in the task resulting in the loss of self-consciousness and the sense of time. Although there are a diversity of activities associated with Flow, the ‘action characteristic of each core activity was [a] narrow, simplified and internally coherent and, as such, facilitated complete focus of attention on the task at hand’⁷¹⁴. We have noted previously that this key characteristic of focus of attention – concentration and in its deepened form, absorption – is also the core of *Samādhi*, and perhaps this prompted Csikszentmihalyi to suggest the close resemblance between the two phenomena. Our task is to compare this characteristic and identify their similarities and differences in Flow and *Samādhi* and to identify the intensities of concentration as they change during the phenomena.

The ‘optimal preparation’ for the Flow experience identified by Elkington consists of four phenomenological structures and there is an initial investment in attention which requires a conscious effort by the individual. This is a process of ‘maintaining a clear and present

⁷¹³ YS I.30 describes the distractions of the mind as the obstacles to the inwardness of the mind developed by devotion to *Īśvara* and the repetition of OM and contemplation on its meaning. Here the focus of attention is the form and name of *Īśvara*. The obstacles prevent the mind from this attentiveness.

⁷¹⁴ Sam Elkington, “What it is to take Flow of Leisure Seriously”, 263.

focus...attending to what is happening in the here-and-now'⁷¹⁵ described by a table-tennis player⁷¹⁶:

Beforehand, I always grapple with my concentration [...] for me, it's definitely sort of a process. I always try and begin by turning all of my attention to the up-coming match, to the point where all I am thinking about is my game and nothing else.

Even in the pre-Flow preparation, the role of concentration is clearly important, the narrowing of the focus of attention to concentrate in the here-and-now and the immediate task at hand. The attention is withdrawn from everything else so that the player is thinking about the game and nothing else. Elkington also found that this initial stage is not simply the switching of attention from one activity to another but also 'the need for a clear mind and a "period of calmness" wherein attention is focused onto a positive goal-state characteristic of how an individual wants to feel' described by a player as⁷¹⁷:

It is important to find that personal positive frame of mind, one where you know you will play well no matter what happens during the match. But it's not as simple as wishing to find that mindset [...] I know when I start my prep whether I'm close or not.

Once this initial attention is focussed, i.e. concentration on the task about to begin and with a clear mind and calmness, there is a phase of building up confidence and momentum with activation and energisation of oneself to 'increase the intensity of experience and sharpen their attentional focus'⁷¹⁸. This very often involved some routine which would bring about this state, described for example by a table tennis player⁷¹⁹:

Having a set routine allows me to concentrate on what's important for me to play well. It allows me to get myself right mentally and physically.

⁷¹⁵ Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective", 344.

⁷¹⁶ Ibid.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

Such routines assist in concentrating not only the mind on the task but through physical routines, there is also a concentration of movement relevant to the performance or sporting event about to commence. When this preparation has been done, the individual's 'attention is captured and, through this absorption the individual moves into a sphere of meaning that has its own structure' indicated by an actor:⁷²⁰

If my preparation goes well I am more likely to find that balance [...] for the briefest period I feel totally relaxed knowing that I have prepared well and am ready both mentally and physically to perform. I suppose it's a sort of a marker, a sign that I'm ready.

At each of these stages preceding the actual entry into the Flow, the intensity of concentration increases and there is turning of attention to the here-and-now, the experience of one's own physical and mental self as well as the external conditions and object to which the task is related⁷²¹:

Your focus turns inwards at that crucial moment. Your mind and body seem to come together and you lose yourself letting the energy of the situation take you.

And in the words of another actor⁷²²:

You have to let go or you lose the moment [...] the joy of acting lives in the moment. You forget yourself [...] your focus turns inwards at that crucial moment and the energy of the situation takes you.

The intense absorption in the activity begins when this state of high concentration is reached where the skills-challenge balance is achieved, there is clear feedback and a sense of personal control is present. This psychological state which is separate from what is termed as 'normal' is the Flow experience. All the diverse activities in Flow have the element of high degree of concentration, whether it is painting, rock climbing or acting.

⁷²⁰ Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective", 347.

⁷²¹ Ibid., 348

⁷²² Ibid.

This state of high concentration is described by a coach⁷²³:

It's all about the moment, you know, that moment with that individual or that group . . . your concentration is just so focused. It's like you're cut off from the world. . . you're in your own little reality if you like and nothing else matters other than there and then.

Or the player experiencing Flow in the game⁷²⁴:

When the game goes well for me it's like that . . . you don't really know that you're concentrating so much you just sort of come out of it and then afterwards you sort of realise. . . it's all just so natural. When the game isn't going so well it's because your attention is on other things . . . like your drifting.

Walsh identifies two factors in concentration⁷²⁵: 1). the degree and 2). the fluidity of concentration. However, we can discern that before concentration begins, there is a turning towards the object of attention from all other internal and external objects, where there is a transition from noticing something and becoming consciously aware of it. In the practice of *Samādhi*, we see that there is systematic, conscious process of turning attention away from all external sensory objects – *pratyāhāra* a disassociation between the senses and their object so that there is a freeing of attention. This is followed by fixing the attention on a chosen object, i.e. concentration, to the exclusion of all other objects. There is a deepening of this concentration until the distinction between the object, subject and the experience is eliminated. Thus in the case of *Samādhi*, there is not only a fixity of attention but also a maximum intensification of concentration leading to complete absorption.

The Flow phenomenon is similar to *Samādhi* in the initial stage where there is a conscious turning towards the object of attention, illustrated by the examples given above. Depending on what activity is being undertaken, the attention is initially directed towards the task in hand and the intensity of concentration increases to the extent that there is a complete absorption in the

⁷²³ Sam Elkington, “What it is to take the Flow of Leisure Seriously”, 264.

⁷²⁴ Ibid., 267.

⁷²⁵ Roger Walsh, “Phenomenological Mapping: A Method for Describing and Comparing States of Consciousness”, 33.

task. The significant difference between Flow and *Samādhi* is that in the case of the former, concentration can be fluid rather than fixed depending on the task. In a game, the player's concentration may shift from object to object in very quick succession but with the same intensity. Delle Fave et al state this dynamic nature in that 'concentration flows steadily and effortlessly, and attention is focused of the task at hand; behavior coherently follows this processing, continuously adjusting to the changing requirements of the task through the active control of the situation and the mobilization of the person's mental and physical skills and abilities'⁷²⁶.

We have noted previously that Patañjali lists the distractions of the mind which lessen the capacity for concentration in YS I.30. These distractions can potentially limit any aspect of *Samādhi* or the stages leading to it, for example, mental lethargy can diminish the effort which may be put in turning towards the practice of withdrawal of the senses or indeed any practice of Yoga. Restlessness is a reflection of the mind's inability to achieve concentration as the attention can shift rapidly between one object or thought and another, preventing the single pointed attention leading to *Samādhi*. The inwardness of the mind is to be developed by devotion to *Īśvara* and the repetition of OM and contemplation on its meaning. Here the focus of attention is on the form and name of *Īśvara* and the devotion facilitates the mind's turning toward *Īśvara* and holding it there. This suggests that concentration is facilitated by an affective aspect, a positive emotion that increases the capacity to hold attention on the object. The turning towards the task in the Flow activity, as noted above, requires the initial investment of attention, energisation and activation. There is a focus on what needs to be done, one's skills and ability and the challenge ahead described by a sports person⁷²⁷:

⁷²⁶ Antonella Delle Fave, F Massimini M Bassi, *Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well-Being*, 118.

⁷²⁷ Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective", 343.

From here it's all about building up confidence and momentum, you concentrate on the smallest thing, the smallest detail to carry you through – through to that positive state of mind where there is a strong belief in your ability and a respect for that situation, where I am relaxed and completely focused on what's in front of me.

The context of the skills-challenge and the commitment to the task at hand suggests this affective aspect of Flow as a 'positive momentum energy' where 'what enters into consciousness are the capacities for action and the attentional cues that are engaged by the presently encountered environment. This activation serves as a catalyst to "positive momentum energy" ...'⁷²⁸.

In summary, although concentration or focused attention and its deeper form absorption are key features of both the *Samādhi* and Flow experience, there are significant differences in terms of entry, intensity, fixity, fluidity and affectivity of the dimension of concentration in the two phenomena.

5. Arousal:

Arousal can be considered as the readiness to respond to the environmental cues⁷²⁹ and there is a difference in the degree of this phenomenon in Flow and *Samādhi*. Csikszentmihalyi points out that the complete involvement in Flow is possible because on the one hand there is a clear goal and focus for action and on the other, clear and unambiguous feedback about the actions⁷³⁰. In other words one of the factors for Flow to occur is feedback which needs to be unambiguous for action to continue in meeting the perceived challenge.

⁷²⁸ Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective", 346.

⁷²⁹ Aidan Moran, "Concentration, Attention and Performance". In *The Oxford Book of Sport and Performance Psychology* edited by S Murphy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

⁷³⁰ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness*.

If arousal is about responding to environmental cues, then the involvement in Flow requires a high degree of arousal as there is a necessity of clear and immediate feedback from the environment. In the words of an actor⁷³¹:

It is when you hear the applause and response from the audience you know . . . that's why I'm doing this . . . that's what makes it all worthwhile for me, knowing that I have reached a particular audience through my performance.

The actor's comment demonstrates how 'clear and immediate feedback, requiring neither analysis nor reflection, allows for the continuous involvement and action characteristic of Flow'⁷³². This feedback may not necessarily come from the environment as some athletes rely on the state or movement of the body for a continuous involvement.

Another sense in which Walsh uses the term arousal is the level of activity and agitation as in the case of the Shaman who, at some points of the Shamanic journey, is highly aroused and 'may even dance or become highly agitated'⁷³³. In this sense of the word, the level of activity in serious sports could be very high and, therefore, Flow could be considered as a state of high arousal. Russell describes an 'optimal pre-competitive arousal level'⁷³⁴ in college athletes. He found that almost 30% of the sample indicated that this arousal was essential for Flow to occur.

Meditation generally is associated with a high level of physical and mental relaxation⁷³⁵ and this implies the inability to respond to the environment. We noted above that in *Samādhi*, the awareness of the environment is diminished even to the extent that one becomes oblivious of it

⁷³¹ Sam Elkington, "What it is to take the Flow of Leisure Seriously", 265.

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Roger Walsh, "Phenomenological Mapping: A Method for Describing and Comparing States of Consciousness", 43.

⁷³⁴ William Russell, "An Examination of Flow State Occurrence in College Athletes". *Journal of Sport Behavior*, March, 2001, Volume: 24 Source Issue: 1: 1-24.

⁷³⁵ Derek Gifford-May and Norman Thompson, "'Deep States' of Meditation: Phenomenological Reports of Experience", *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 1994, Vol. 26, No.2, 117-138, 132.

as in the case of Ramakrishna. *Samādhi*, with a complete inward absorption together with the immobility in the posture, suggests a very low level of arousal.

6. Calm:

‘The prominent feelings [in meditative states] are calmness, stillness, and evenness of mind. Excitement or elation is not compatible with this condition, in which steadiness and stability predominate on any kind of peak perception’⁷³⁶. The Yogasūtra states that the exertion to acquire a tranquil state of mind devoid of modifications is called practice (YS I.13). This practice or *abhyāsa* leads to the state of *Samādhi* where there are no modifications of mind and it is a state of tranquillity. When this state continues, according to the commentator Vyāsa (VB I.13), this is *praśāntavāhita* a flow of calmness. Whicher explains this in terms of the attributes of nature or *guṇa*- ‘[this] implies freedom from the *rajasic* turbulences or *tamasic* delusions, the mind’s one-pointedness on a single *sāttvic* *vṛtti* remaining uninterrupted so that it flows in a calm, smooth stream “towards” liberation’⁷³⁷. The attainment of this flow is dependent on the energy and enthusiasm of the practice, increasing as the effort intensifies. Calmness experienced in this state after practice, is not easily overcome by latent impressions of the fluctuating state (VB I.14). The calmness can begin even in the preparation for *Samādhi* with the control of the breathing (*prāṇāyāma*) for holding the mind on something brings about the calmness (VB I.34). This state of calmness is described by one of the subjects in the study by Gifford-May and Thompson⁷³⁸:

...a much deeper state [is experienced with] ... a calming of the mind ...very calm ... the sense that you're coming down from the surface of the ocean.

⁷³⁶ Antonella Delle Fave et al, *Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well-Being*, 122.

⁷³⁷ Ian Whicher, “Nirodha, Yoga Praxis and the Transformation of the Mind”, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* (1997), 25: 1–67.

⁷³⁸ Derek Gifford-May and Norman Thompson, “‘Deep States’ of Meditation: Phenomenological Reports of Experience”, 128.

Elkington's research on the pre-Flow phenomenology indicates that the initial investment of attention, which we have noted above, requires maintaining a clear and present focus on the activity about to commence⁷³⁹. This is also associated with a 'period of calmness' reported by the subjects:

I tend to take myself away from everyone and just close my eyes and breathe. I think it's to clear my mind ready for what lies ahead. That period of calmness focuses me...

and,

Before I start I take some time to clear my mind, that period of calmness focuses me, allowing me to get my concentration to a level I know is right, where I am focused on what needs to be done...

Csikszentmihalyi describes what he calls the paradox of control where the Flow experience typically involves a sense of control over the task which is being performed, where there is a perceived balance between skills and the challenge. There is, however, a lack of worry 'about losing control that is typical in many situations of normal life'⁷⁴⁰. This is expressed by a dancer⁷⁴¹:

A strong relaxation and calmness comes over me. I have no worries of failure. What a powerful and warm feeling it is! I want to expand, to hug the world. I feel enormous power to effect something of grace and beauty.

Thus in this dimension of calmness, in the phenomenology of Flow, it is associated at specific points – in the preparation Flow and in the experience itself – where a calmness and lack of worry may arise in the paradox of control. On the other hand it is a characteristic feature of all

⁷³⁹ Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective", 344.

⁷⁴⁰ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow the Psychology of Optimal Experience: Steps Towards Enhancing the Quality of Life*, 59.

⁷⁴¹ Ibid.

stages of *Samādhi* as described in the Yogasūtra. ‘Calm may become profound in yogic *samadhi* when much of the normal cognitive processing ceases’⁷⁴² says Walsh.

7. Affect:

Affect is the experience of feeling or emotion and affective states can be either negative or positive⁷⁴³. Affect is associated with both Flow and *Samādhi*, at various stages in different ways. By definition, Flow is an optimal experience and, therefore, one of its central features is positive affect. In relation to the Flow experience, positive affect and activation refer to the state of being happy and enjoying oneself whilst being in a state of arousal. The two dimensions of arousal and affect which Walsh has identified in his analysis of experience are related in Flow with high levels of arousal and positive affect. An example of this is when kayakers are ‘happy and simultaneously aroused after rolling out of a deep recirculating “hole”’⁷⁴⁴. The positive affect dimension of Flow has been shown to be associated with the adjectives good, happy, pleased and content and these studies demonstrate that the Flow model predicts these together with arousal in adventure seeking activities⁷⁴⁵.

There is also evidence that high affective preferences, high cognitive preferences and high perceived abilities interacted to foster high levels of Flow⁷⁴⁶. In other words, if there is a positive affect with regard to the task and there are no competing cognitive factors, the likelihood of Flow is increased. Elkington suggests that there is an affective dimension in his

⁷⁴² Roger Walsh, “Phenomenological Mapping: A Method for Describing and Comparing States of Consciousness”, 43.

⁷⁴³ M Hogg, D Abrams, G Martin, “Social Cognition and Attitudes”, in *Psychology* edited by G Martin, N Carlson, W Buskist. 646-677, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2010).

⁷⁴⁴ C Jones, “Examining Interactions between Adventure Seeking and States of the Four Channel Flow Model”, *Leisure/Loisir*, Vol 32:1, 2008, 139-162, 145.

⁷⁴⁵ G Ellis, J Voelkl, and C Morris, “Measurement and Analysis Issues with Explanation of Variance in Daily Experience Using the Flow Model”.

⁷⁴⁶ A Schiepe-Tiska, “In the Power of Flow: The Impact of Implicit and Explicit Motives on Flow Experience with a Special Focus on the Power Domain”.

experience-process model which includes the pre- and post-Flow stages besides Flow itself. In the pre-Flow stage, an athlete describes this state of mind⁷⁴⁷:

...that positive state of mind where there is a strong belief in your ability and a respect for that situation, where I am relaxed and completely focused on what's in front of me...

and the table tennis player⁷⁴⁸:

It is important to find that personal positive frame of mind, one where you know you will play well no matter what happens during the match.

It is really after the Flow experience that the positive affect is intensely experienced⁷⁴⁹:

Because I'm too focused and involved during such an intensely positive experience there's no room for anything else, it's only afterward when my focus is less intense when I find the most enjoyment, that's the real high.

This positive affect is also felt with a clear and unambiguous feedback as in the case of the performer⁷⁵⁰:

That feeling, when the audience are responding to your dialogue, reacting to your character, that, I think is the best feeling in the world.

Examining evidence from various sources, Collins et al suggest that there is a positive correlation between Flow and positive affect although the causality of this relationship remains unclear. It is likely that that 'the relationship runs in both directions: flow experiences make one feel happier and people are better able to experience flow when they feel happy'⁷⁵¹.

⁷⁴⁷ Sam Elkington, "Articulating a Systematic Phenomenology of Flow: An Experience-Process Perspective", 343.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁰ Sam Elkington, "What it is to take the Flow of Leisure Seriously", 273.

⁷⁵¹ Amy Collins, N Sarkisian, E Winner, "Flow and Happiness in Later Life: An Investigation into the Role of Daily and Weekly Flow Experiences", *Journal of Happiness Studies*, December 2009, Volume 10, Issue 6, 703-719, 705.

Looking at the deep states of meditation, Gifford-May and Thompson found that there were two kinds of positive affect described by the subjects, a state of profound calmness and a more ‘energetic joy’:

[the state] is utterly serene ... like an absolutely calm ocean.

I am expansive and laughing in a really very deep way ... it's sort of just bubbling ... there is the sense that it is coming out of the universe.

a state of intense pleasure which doesn't come from the usual, recognizable sources of pleasure we can have like music.

Patañjali in the Yogasūtra says: ‘From contentment unsurpassed happiness is gained’ (YS II.42). The happiness, he says, which arises out of the world is not even one-sixteenth of the happiness gained from the cessation of desires and this is derived from cultivating the one of the observances, *niyama*, namely contentment. However, it is *Samprajñāta Samādhi*, Patañjali says, that the state of *Ānanda*, connoting “bliss” or “joy”, is experienced (YS I.17). Vyāsa says in his commentary on this *sūtra* that this is a state free of *vicāra* (cogitation) and when there is a blissful state. The extremely positive affect, where there is nothing other than bliss in the awareness described here is a state of enstasy, a translation for *Samādhi* used by scholars like Feuerstein and Eliade.

There are different frameworks within which the experience of affect is explained in *Samādhi* and Flow. In the former, the inherent happiness in *Ānanda Samādhi* is experienced. The positive affect associated with Flow arises through the matching of perceived skills and challenge of the task with an intrinsic motivation and with clarity of goals and a clear feedback of the results of one’s action. It can be intensely felt after the Flow has ceased.

8. Self-sense:

We have noted that in Flow as in *Samādhi* there is a high degree of absorption in the task or the object of contemplation. In this state of deep concentration, the individual in Flow, experiences

a temporary loss of awareness of self. This state is beyond the normal day to day consciousness of self. A subject investigated by Elkington, describes this as follows:⁷⁵²

You can forget yourself and just play. . . play with your character, play with the audience, play at being someone else other than yourself.

In the example of the actor, ‘the temporary loss of self allows for a permissiveness that is not found outside of this experience’⁷⁵³. Often an intense feeling surrounds the self- transcendence and this is created by the ability to temporarily forget the self, as in the case of the actor on stage⁷⁵⁴.

There is a huge buzz from being on stage . . . the kind of buzz I expect you get when you bungee jump or sky dive . . . that feeling comes when you are completely involved in something you love doing, when nothing matters more than that instant, that moment...

In serious leisure or sport, the activities not only have clear goals and challenges but also the participant has a clear idea of his or her matching skills. In this condition it is unlikely that the sense of self comes under any threat although the intense positive affect appears to be ‘fragile and prone to disruption’⁷⁵⁵ and one is susceptible to falling out of Flow:

I see it as having two very different states of mind . . . I am oblivious of everything going on around me, I feel so focused it’s just me the bat and the ball . . . I feel I have a very positive state of mind and feel good inside but this can change in an instant . . . but if I start hitting bad shots sometimes I feel myself become very negative about my performance and conscious of everything around me.

The experience of loss of sense of self has been termed by Csikszentmihalyi as self-transcendence and according to Bloch, this does not imply that the person has lost the power of critical evaluation but rather it is a revelation of, or an encounter with, a greater reality⁷⁵⁶.

⁷⁵² Sam Elkington, “What it is to take the Flow of Leisure Seriously”, 268.

⁷⁵³ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid., 267.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁶ Charlotte Bloch, “Flow: Beyond Fluidity and Rigidity, a Phenomenological Investigation”. *Human Studies*, 23, (2000): 43–61.

Csikszentmihalyi also notes that this state is attained when the attention is totally invested in the activity or task undertaken and that ‘the absence of the self from consciousness does not mean that a person in flow has given up the control of his psychic energy, or that she is unaware of what happens in her body or in her mind. In fact the opposite is usually true⁷⁵⁷. This engagement with the task is so intense that there is loss of awareness of anxieties of life beyond Flow. In their article on Flow, Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi describe the self-transcendence as ‘loss of reflective self-consciousness (i.e. loss of awareness of oneself as a social actor)’⁷⁵⁸. Another way of putting this is that ‘what slips below the threshold of awareness is the *concept* of self, the information we use to represent to ourselves who we are...When not preoccupied with our selves, we actually have a chance to expand the concept of who we are’⁷⁵⁹.

In *Samprajñāta Samādhi*, we have noted that the absorption in the object of *Samādhi* leads to a similar loss of self-awareness in the first three types of *Samādhi*. This is indicated by Patañjali in YS I.41 and 43⁷⁶⁰:

When the fluctuations of the mind are weakened, the mind appears to take on the features of the object of meditation whether it be the cognisor (Grahita), the instrument of cognition (Grahana) or the object cognised (Grāhya) as does a transparent jewel, and this identification is called Samāpatti or engrossment. (YS I.41)

When the memory is purified, the mind appears to be devoid of its own nature (*i.e.* of reflective consciousness) and only the object (on which it is contemplating) remains illuminated. This kind of engrossment is called Nirvitarka Samāpatti. (YS I.43)

In the four types of *Samprajñāta Samādhi* which we have noted, there is absorption in the gross object (*vitarka*), subtle object or thought (*vicāra*), feeling of bliss (*ānanda*) and the sense of ‘I-am-ness’ (*asmitā*). With absorption in an outer or inner object, there is absorption

⁷⁵⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness*.

⁷⁵⁸ Jeanne Nakamura and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “The Concept of Flow”, 89.

⁷⁵⁹ Antonella Delle Fave, “Chapter Three: Psychological Selection and Optimal Experience, in Being”, 45.

⁷⁶⁰ Swami Hariharananda Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, (with diacritical marks added).

(identification, like the transparent jewel which takes on the colour of the cloth on which it is placed) to the extent that all else goes out of awareness. In this case there is a presumed loss of self-awareness as there is only awareness of the object in which the mind is fully absorbed. This is similar to the phenomenon of Flow where there is complete absorption in the task at hand. In the case of *asmitā Samādhi*, we find a major difference with Flow, where there is awareness only of the ‘I-am-sense’, *asmitā*.

We noted in Chapter Eight that the conjunction of the principles of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* gives rise to the self-aware subject from the conjunction of the principles of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* and it is the *ahaṁkāra* through its centralising propensity that the sense of self is created and thus the term ‘ego-maker’⁷⁶¹. We have discussed the idea of *Puruṣa* which Feuerstein says is ‘a particular yogic experience of the numinous’, but owing to the ‘radical dualism between Self and non-Self (or *prakṛti*)...there can strictly speaking be no experience of the Self at all’⁷⁶². *Asmitā* according to Whicher is that ‘process in which *mahat* or *buddhi*...becomes a recipient of a “reflection” of pure consciousness...[and] assumes itself to be the Self/*puruṣa*...[where] consciousness and life flow through this *asmitā*...’⁷⁶³. Vyāsa points out in his commentary on YS I.36 that ‘the mind engrossed in the thought of the pure ‘I-am-ness’ appears like a waveless ocean, placid and limitless’⁷⁶⁴. We have also noted Whicher’s comment that in *asmitā Samādhi*, ‘the *yogin* is liberated from the idea of being a bound or limited identity dependent on being in association with joy or happiness (*sukha*) and attached to the pleasure of *sattva*’⁷⁶⁵. Here are some accounts of practitioners in deep states of meditation⁷⁶⁶:

⁷⁶¹ M Jakubczak, “The Sense of Ego-maker in Sāṃkhya and Yoga”.

⁷⁶² Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy Classical of Yoga*, 15.

⁷⁶³ Ian Whicher, *The Integrity of Yoga Darśana*, 68.

⁷⁶⁴ Swami Hariharananda, Aranya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, 82.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., 246.

⁷⁶⁶ D Gifford-May and N Thompson, “‘Deep States’ of Meditation: Phenomenological Reports of Experience”.

...there was no sense of myself at all ... there was no sense of my physical body...no thought...there is nothing *there*.

Another meditator in the same study expressed this self-transcendence as a complete mergence:

so ... me ... as a sort of entity ... doesn't exist ... because I'm it.

The loss of awareness of the self as a social actor comes with the complete absorption in the task during Flow. There is also a merger of action and awareness which suggests that awareness is one with the action and, therefore, the sense of self recedes away. In *asmitā Samādhi*, we can consider the absorption of awareness into the pure 'I-am-ness' so that the sense of a *particular* identity recedes away. Although there is similarity between the other types of *Samādhi* and Flow, there is a complete divergence of phenomena between Flow and *asmitā Samādhi*. By the very definition of the dimensions of Flow such a state as *asmitā Samādhi* is not possible in Flow as one of the dimensions is loss of self-consciousness. We also noted in the previous section that in the framework for Flow given by Csikszentmihalyi, he proposes an evolutionary explanation for the existence of consciousness. The human organism, he postulates, 'in order to perform within the infinitely complex ecosystem to which it became adapted, needed to establish autonomy from the genetically determined instructions that had shaped its behaviour through the long eons of its evolution...the system that evolved to provide this autonomy was the self'⁷⁶⁷. We have discussed this idea in some detail in the previous section where we point out the three elements of consciousness – attention, awareness and memory.

On the other hand Sāṃkhya-Yoga proposes that a theory of 'reflected awareness' and although Patañjali does not refer to this theory directly, Vyāsa and Miśra both attempt to explain it in their commentaries. According to this view, this 'reflection' is the reflection of the *Puruṣa* in the purest aspect of *citta*, i.e. the *buddhi* and Miśra in *Tattvavaiśāradi* (I.7) refers to the mind as a '*darpaṇa*' (mirror) which reflects the Consciousness of the *Puruṣa*. These differences in

⁷⁶⁷ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, 17.

conceptualisation of consciousness in Flow and Yoga result in different explanations of each phenomenon and in the potential for achieving certain states or not (see Table 4, p 241). The state of *kaivalya* in Yoga refers to a complete self-transcendence where even the sense of ‘I-am-ness’ is no longer present whereas there is no potential for this within the Flow framework. This dimension presents a sharp contrast in the understanding of the two phenomena as the ‘self-sense’ has different epistemologies and ontologies in the two traditions. Flow postulates this arising as phenomena of biological evolution whereas Sāṃkhya-Yoga proposes a transcendental source for the self-sense. We have noted, however, that the *vitarka* and *vicāra* types of *Samādhi* bear a resemblance with Flow in this dimension, with a loss of sense of self.

9. Out of body experience:

Walsh’s construction of the framework for analysis was based on the phenomena of shamanism, schizophrenia, Buddhist meditation and Yoga *Samādhi*. He examined the literature on these and, based on the frequency with which these dimensions were described and the importance they were given, he formulated the framework for investigation of these phenomena. In the two phenomena he examined in detail – shamanism and schizophrenia – the out of body experience appears to be significant, particularly in shamanism where the ‘shaman experiences separating from the body, largely losing awareness of the body and environment, and travelling as a free soul or free spirit, to one of the three worlds of the shamanic cosmology’⁷⁶⁸. This dimension, however, does not appear to be of significance in either Flow or *Samādhi* as examination of the literature on this has not yielded any descriptions of this phenomena. There are descriptions of expansion of awareness but this is not the same as an out of body experience. Walsh describes it

⁷⁶⁸ Roger Walsh, “Phenomenological Mapping: A Method for Describing and Comparing States of Consciousness”, 35.

as an experience where the subject experiences perceiving the body from a point outside the body⁷⁶⁹. For example, a meditator describes this experience:

...literally as though my arms were extended and they extended to the reaches of the universe ... whatever that was...as if it were capable of being the size that a galaxy could fit into and so that sense of being enormous and yet not out of my body but expanding out from there in all directions, infinitely⁷⁷⁰.

In the Flow experience there is a heightened sense of the body in some activities, especially serious leisure and sports, as we have noted before and although there is a loss of sense of self, it is not an out of body experience.

10. Content of experience:

It was perhaps a general description of the content of experience of Flow and Yoga that prompted Csikszentmihalyi to comment that there is a strong similarity between Yoga and Flow and the that Yoga is a systematic method of producing Flow. We have examined the phenomenology of both Flow and *Samādhi* in detail in the previous section and considered the divergence and convergence of the two phenomena in the framework developed by Walsh in this section. Although there clearly are strong similarities between certain practices of Yoga and Flow, a closer look at each type of *Samādhi* shows divergence in the various dimensions.

The content of the Flow experience has key characteristics centred on the core activity and the agent of action. The activity has a clear goal experienced as ‘narrow, simplified and internally coherent’⁷⁷¹ task to be performed. This brings the mind to a narrow and complete focus of attention on the moment to moment action taking place. This is reminiscent of *deśa bandha citta* of the stage of *dhāraṇā* leading to *Samādhi*, the narrowing of the focus and locus of

⁷⁶⁹ Roger Walsh, “Phenomenological Mapping: A Method for Describing and Comparing States of Consciousness”, 33.

⁷⁷⁰ D Gifford-May and N Thompson, “‘Deep States’ of Meditation: Phenomenological Reports of Experience”, 125.

⁷⁷¹ Sam Elkington, “What it is to take Flow of Leisure Seriously”, 263.

attention, excluding any other object. The simplification in the Flow experience refers to the complexity which demands attention along many directions, simplified to sharpen the focus of attention. At the same time there is an experience of coherence – consistency and harmony of the action and the goal. With this demand for concentration on the task, there is no room for any distractions, similar to the experience of *Samādhi* where there is total absorption in the object of attention. At the same time, the total engagement with the task, an awareness of the activity moment to moment, brings clear and immediate feedback allowing continuation of involvement and action. With the skills-challenge balance, there is experienced a sense of competence and control, a feeling that one is able to manage all demands for action and in control of the outcomes of these actions. This is described by a sports coach in the following way⁷⁷²:

I have had experiences, when things are going well...it's like a breath of fresh air...everything you try works, I get a feeling that I'm kind of floating along, totally in control...like nothing else matters.

Discipline (*tapas*), one component of *Kriyā* Yoga underlies the practices of the yogin and very much at the core of *Samādhi*. The cultivation of discipline in relation to a certain practice implies the development of competence and control over the practice. The challenge in Yoga can be seen as the perfection of practice and through discipline, the skills are developed to meet this challenge. The central challenge of Yoga is control of the modifications of the mind, experienced to a high degree in *Samādhi*.

In the present moment in Flow, there is a merging of action and awareness described as⁷⁷³:

I'm concentrating on the session and nothing else, I'm not separate from the activity, I'm very much part of it.

Elkington says that 'individuals are so involved in what they are doing they stop being aware of themselves as separate from actions they perform, creating a unified state wherein actions are

⁷⁷² Sam Elkington, "What it is to take Flow of Leisure Seriously", 266.

⁷⁷³ Ibid., 267.

both effortless and spontaneous⁷⁷⁴. The experience in Yoga of the merging of mind with the object of its attention is attained when the mind becomes one-pointed, and like a transparent jewel takes on the features of the object (YS I.41).

The loss of sense of self in both *Samādhi* and Flow has been described above although within Walsh's framework, the altered sense of time is not considered which applies to both Flow and *Samādhi*. The absorption in the task at hand, the merging of action and awareness and the loss of the sense of self all contribute towards altering the sense of time as time is experienced in a highly subjective manner. The sense of time appears to adapt itself to the action in hand and is most often experienced as speeding up of time⁷⁷⁵:

There have been times when I've been coaching that I have been so engrossed in the session that people have had to tap me on the shoulder and say "time to finish"...time has just flown by and I've not realised it.

Time is experienced by the meditator in the following way⁷⁷⁶:

As I focused my attention on these sensations, they increased in intensity. I entered a spiritual place where time, space and materiality were irrelevant.

I experienced myself as being in a thoughtless and timeless place, which was understood on a felt level.

The *yogin*, just as the experiencer of Flow, intensely absorbed in the object of attention, experiences loss of sense of time as the cognisor, cognition and object of cognition merge into one.

Taking this framework as a simple basis of comparison of course does not do justice to the complexity of the two phenomena and when Csikszentmihalyi wrote about the strong resemblance between Yoga and Flow, he was perhaps referring to the limited dimensions of experience of absorption and the loss of sense of self which we have seen are the common

⁷⁷⁴ Sam Elkington, "What it is to take Flow of Leisure Seriously", 267.

⁷⁷⁵ Ibid., 269.

⁷⁷⁶ Jennifer Barnes, "The Lived Experience of Meditation", 1.

elements in the two phenomena. We have seen that the internal processes and experiences attributed to *Samādhi* are highly complex and even a simple comparison shows that there are key differences as well as commonalities between these and Flow. Taking into account the methodological difficulties in a comparative phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow, nevertheless, what we have accomplished is a thick description of these experiences and a detailed comparative analysis of the two phenomena as a starting point for further investigation.

However, although this work opens up the possibility of a multidimensional comparison, albeit a complex one of phenomenological states of consciousness in Flow and *Samādhi*, the approach we want to suggest for further investigation of these phenomena is based on empirical methodologies. This approach, in a sense, fills the gap between descriptions of phenomena in ancient texts and a theoretical comparative analysis which we have carried out as a case study in the interrelationships between Eastern and Western psychologies. In order to arrive at conclusions about the appropriate methodology for the proposed investigations, we need to turn to the field of empirical phenomenological research which we believe can be a fruitful approach for a comparison of the two phenomena within a common framework as also indicated by Thomas and Cohen mentioned earlier.⁷⁷⁷

Qualitative research and thick description: Denzin describes thick description as ‘deep, dense, detailed accounts of...experiences...It presents detail, context, emotion...’⁷⁷⁸. The phenomenological descriptions of *Samādhi* and Flow which have been given in this section are such detailed accounts of the experiences, depictions of practitioners and participants experiences going beyond just superficial descriptions to details about the states of mind, thoughts, feelings and motivations. To a large extent it can be claimed that thick descriptions of the experiences have been presented, with exegetical material from the Yogasūtra and its

⁷⁷⁷ John W Thomas and Marc Cohen, “A Methodological Review of Meditation Research”.

⁷⁷⁸ Norman K Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*. 3rd ed, (United Kingdom: Prentice Hall College Div, 1988).

primary and secondary literature yielding these accounts and, similarly, the accounts of the Flow experience from its relevant literature.

The lack of empirical research specific to the experience of Yogasūtra *Samādhi* has been noted as well as the non-existence of empirical phenomenological comparisons with Flow. There is no doubt about the rich qualitative data collected by researchers in the area of Flow and the phenomenological roots of this concept have been noted. The primacy of data in qualitative research is one of its key characteristics, reflecting the collection of rich and in-depth descriptions of experience which become the basis of interpretation and theorisation. The first hand experiences of the participants in the studies along the various dimensions of the Flow experience are available and many examples of these have been given in this section. The descriptions of experience of *Samādhi*, on the other hand, are primarily derived from textual sources, based on the first hand experiences of the practitioners themselves.

Proceeding from the comparison derived from this methodology, there is a possibility of further investigation by another approach. Many researchers subscribe to combining different methodologies to study phenomena a process known as triangulation which is described as ‘the process by which several methods (data sources, theories or researchers) are used in the study of one phenomenon’⁷⁷⁹. Bringing the lived experience of *Samādhi* and Flow in one study has the advantage of a common methodological framework within which a direct comparison of the phenomena can be made. The data obtained from such a study would complement the study carried out above and provide detailed descriptions for the two phenomena. In order to investigate further the comparisons between the *Samādhi* and Flow phenomena, a brief proposal for such a study is now given.

⁷⁷⁹ Immy Holloway and Stephanie Wheeler, *Qualitative Research in Nursing and Healthcare*. 3rd ed, (United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 275.

g. A proposal for an empirical phenomenological study of *Samādhi* and Flow

i. The need and importance of an empirical study

There are several reasons why we need an empirical study for the phenomena of *Samādhi* and Flow. Firstly, we have noted that the studies on Yogasūtra *Samādhi* appear to be almost non-existent. A search on the online SOLO facility of the Bodleian library at Oxford using the terms ‘Yogasūtra’, *Samādhi*, phenomenology, study, investigation in various combinations, yielded less than ten articles, none of which had specific phenomenological studies on Yogasūtra *Samādhi*. For example, using the first three terms noted above, there were seven articles and sorted in terms of relevance, the first article was ‘Embodied Consciousness in Tantric Yoga and the Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty’, discussing the ‘remarkable congruence’⁷⁸⁰ between Yoga and modern phenomenology. A search on Google Scholar with the same terms yielded 181 articles of which the first one was a dissertation titled ‘Telescoping awareness: a phenomenological investigation informed by the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali and Nancy Stark Smith's *The Underscore*’, slightly closer to our area of interest. It is a study, however, on the phenomena of awareness in dance improvisational practice and how this awareness can be studied to suggest ways to ‘nourish’ development of such awareness through the practice of cessation of the modifications of the mind as described in the Yogasūtra.

In section e above, we noted the study by Cohen and Thompson looking at the current (2014) state of meditation research in general and a review of methodologies used in such research. One of the conclusions from the study is that a lack of clear research outcomes from meditation research is due to ‘the neglect of critical subjective factors impacting on the meditation experience’⁷⁸¹, a reference to phenomenological research. This supports the assertion about the

⁷⁸⁰ J Morley, “Embodied Consciousness in Tantric Yoga and the Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty”, *Religion and the Arts*, (2008), Vol 12, Issue 1, 144-163, 1.

⁷⁸¹ John W Thomas and Marc Cohen, “A Methodological Review of Meditation Research”, 2.

almost complete lack of such studies on Yogasūtra *Samādhi* and, therefore, the need to carry one out.

The second reason why a phenomenological investigation of *Samādhi* and Flow is needed is that the two phenomena have not been investigated together in a single study. Various literature searches done in a similar manner above did not yield any result which looked at *Samādhi* and Flow in a single study and hence the need for one. There are, however, many studies on the phenomenology of Flow some of which we have cited in this work. We have also pointed out the roots of Flow studies in phenomenology itself.

Thirdly, according to Thomas and Cohen, there is a lack of theoretical and conceptual clarity in meditation research and, therefore, a study of this kind will give more definition to the concepts of *Samādhi* and Flow. Our attempt above, based on textual analysis, has already shown that there are issues in terms of concepts and their clarity. For example, a theoretical question which needs to be answered is: are the states of consciousness experienced in *Samādhi* distinguishable from such states in Flow?

Fourthly, there is a practical reason for a study of this kind which was implied in what Csikszentmihalyi asserted about Flow and Yoga that the latter is the most systematic way of increasing the potential for experiencing Flow. A study which investigated these two phenomena in terms of their methods and effects would suggest how each can benefit from the practices of the other, whether one wants to enhance the occurrence of the Flow experience or reach higher states of consciousness for happiness and well being.

ii. The methodology

Giorgi⁷⁸² has developed a descriptive phenomenological psychological method which has been further elaborated upon by one of his students, Broome, who used this method in investigating the subjective experience of police officers in using deadly force. Broome outlined a five step process for this method: ‘(1) assume the phenomenological attitude, (2) read entire written account for a sense of the whole, (3) delineate meaning units, (4) transform the meaning units into psychologically sensitive statements of their lived-meanings, and (5) synthesize a general psychological structure of the experience based on the constituents of the experience’⁷⁸³. We propose to use such a descriptive method for investigating *Samādhi* and Flow.

Pekala and Levine⁷⁸⁴ developed a phenomenological methodology which was based on the conclusion that a ‘critical evaluation on the phenomenology of meditation suggests that definitive knowledge is sparse’⁷⁸⁵ in this field. With a ‘psychophenomenological approach’, they argued, it will be possible to ‘distinguish...[the] type of phenomenology that is needed to help define the subjective states associated not only with meditation but also hypnosis and other altered states of consciousness...[such an approach] would utilise phenomenological observation but combine that observation with traditional psychological theorising, empirical research and quantification and statistical analysis to yield a comprehensive quantifiable database on the phenomenology of meditation’⁷⁸⁶.

⁷⁸² Amedeo Giorgi, “The Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method”, *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 43, (2012): 3–12.

⁷⁸³ R Broome, “Descriptive Psychological Method”, *Methodology section of thesis, Saybrook University, 2011*.

⁷⁸⁴ Ronald Pekala and R Levine, “Mapping Consciousness: Development of an Empirical-Phenomenological Approach”, *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, Vol. (1), (1981-82): 29-38.

⁷⁸⁵ Ronald Pekala, “The Phenomenology of Meditation”, 78.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 79.

Pekala and Cardena⁷⁸⁷ describe two report methods for phenomenological research:

1). *Concurrent* report methods which describe the events as they unfold and consist of methods such as thinking out aloud, event recording, thought sampling, and depth ratings;

2). *Retrospective* report methods which attempt to capture the description of the experience after the event. The main advantage according to the authors is that this method does not interfere with an ongoing experience⁷⁸⁸. The methods mentioned are diary writing, interviews, content analysis, and psychological tests, surveys and questionnaires, case studies and life histories. There is an agreement as to what the central core of phenomenological research should be i.e. embodied subjective experience and its meaning to the subject. The aim is to provide ‘fresh, complex, rich descriptions of a phenomenon as it is concretely lived’⁷⁸⁹.

The PCQ (Phenomenology of Consciousness Questionnaire) was developed by Pekala in 1982 into the PCI (Phenomenology of Consciousness Inventory) as a ‘retrospective psychophenomenological instrument’ which could be used in mapping phenomenological effects of meditation and other subjective states. The PCQ which was modified and developed over a period of ten years into the PCI which is one of the two self-report questionnaires available in the current literature, the other being Dimensions of Attention Questionnaire (DAQ). Whereas the former maps the subjective experience in general, the latter maps attentional experience in particular.

The construction of the questionnaire itself was based on several existing measures or constructs and the following dimensions of consciousness were identified: ‘self-awareness, body integrity, (altered) state of awareness, alertness, attention, volition, space/time, perception,

⁷⁸⁷ R Pekala and E Cardena, “Chapter 2: Methodological Issues in the Study of Altered States of Consciousness and Anomalous Experience”.

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid., 61.

⁷⁸⁹ Linda Finlay, “Debating Phenomenological Research Methods” *Phenomenology & Practice*, Volume 3 No. 1 (2009): 6-25.

affect, imagery, internal dialogue, memory, rationality, meaning, and a miscellaneous category⁷⁹⁰. For each of these dimensions, items were then constructed to assess phenomenological experience where each item was responded to on a seven-point Likert scale. With these measures the authors indicated reliability high enough for the data to be evaluated adequately. The PCI and DAQ questionnaires have been used in many studies over the last twenty years and have been found reliable and valid for mapping phenomenological experiences in various conditions and practices.

Considering that there will be limitations which apply to particular methods, it is possible that such limitations of specific techniques can be minimised by combining and integrating two or more methods which would give more in-depth and finer phenomenological descriptions. We, therefore, propose that such a study can be undertaken by combining the questionnaires developed by Pekala et al, the PCI and the DAQ, with the descriptive and interpretive phenomenological methods. This approach would be suitable, appropriate and feasible as a framework and method for empirically investigating and comparing the phenomenology of defined stages of Yogasūtra *Samādhi* and Flow. The PCI will give a map of consciousness in general based on the responses to the questions and the DAQ will map the dimension of attention in detail. The responses can be subjected to statistical analysis from which conclusions may be drawn for comparison of the phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow, in a single study.

We believe that the data collected with this approach will begin to shed more light on these phenomena which Csikszentmihalyi first stated as having many attributes in common. With the descriptions and the analysis the data, we will be able to determine the structures and processes of the experiences of Flow and *Samādhi* and identify the elements of Yoga which are potential contributors towards producing the Flow experience.

⁷⁹⁰ Ronald Pekala, *Quantifying Consciousness, An Empirical Approach*, (New York: Plenum Press, 1991), 92.

h. Summary

In this Chapter we have proposed and given a rationale for a phenomenological approach to a comparative study of the phenomena of Flow and *Samādhi*. We examined the phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow in detail as a starting point for a comparative analysis of the two phenomena. The four stages of *Samādhi* were examined in depth within the overall framework of the Yogasūtra. We also looked at the conceptual framework for Flow within which the phenomenon is explained. Taking Walsh's analysis of meditation of various Eastern traditions including Yoga, we employed this to compare *Samādhi* as depicted by him and Flow according to our analysis. We noted that this first analysis was inadequate and refined it further by including all four stages of *Samādhi* for a fine grained analysis of the phenomena for comparison with Flow. The detailed comparative analysis provided us with a greater insight into the convergence and divergence between these phenomena along the ten dimensions as given by Walsh. Finally we briefly proposed a method for further comparative empirical investigation of these phenomena based on methods of descriptive and interpretive phenomenological analysis and a retrospective questionnaire method, the latter based on the work by Pekala. We now conclude the thesis with some reflections on this study, its value and significance, and some future directions for research in this area.

CHAPTER TWELVE: CONCLUSION

a. Overview: ‘Science of Mind’, Yogasūtra *Samādhi* and Flow

The Yogasūtra of Patañjali is the primary text for our thesis and the broad purpose of the study of this text has been twofold. Firstly, it has been exegetical, translating, understanding and explaining the text and its commentary on the aphorisms primarily by Vyāsa, based on a broad framework of psychology and arriving at a detailed and fine grained psychological understanding of the text. There are conceptual and methodological issues inherent in such an approach and bearing these in mind we have addressed key questions regarding such a psychological understanding of the text: What is the Yogasūtra psychological system and what is nature of the mind, as can be understood from the close reading of the text? What are the elements of the mind, how do they interrelate and what are the processes which give rise to the various states of the mind? How does it relate to the underlying metaphysic of Yoga which has a close relation to the Sāṃkhya philosophy? How is the conceptualisation of the mind in the Yogasūtra related to the practice of Yoga and what further insights about the mind can be gained from this viewpoint to and finally how can all these aspects be constructed into a coherent model of the mind.?

These research questions have not been adequately addressed in the literature to date and whatever has been said has not been detailed enough to create a comprehensive psychological understanding of the textual material. There are, however, excellent analyses of the Yogasūtra which take a critical look at some of the key psychological concepts of the text. For example, Whicher’s analysis of the *citta* is detailed and considers the various aspects of the mind in relation to the soteriological goal of Yoga. Feuerstein’s work on the Yogasūtra also has psychological insights into the working of the mind both in its overt expression and its subliminal machinery driving the modifications of the mind. The thesis builds on this work of

Whicher and Feuerstein and other scholars in this field, through critical analysis, synthesis and expansion of key psychological concepts.

We have also noted that in some of modern commentaries of the text, there are conflations and confusions of the Yogasūtra key terms and inadequate explanations of the relations and mechanisms of the mind. Our contention has been that there exists, within the aphorisms of the Yogasūtra and within the wider framework of the Sāṃkhya-Yoga metaphysic, a coherent understanding of the nature of consciousness, the experiencing individual, the nature of experience and the contents of experience. Taking the approach of ‘psychology *in* religion’, we have on the one hand let the text ‘speak for itself’ and on the other, avoided the difficulty of inappropriately importing conceptual loading of Western psychological perspectives and concepts.

To address these primary questions, we identified, through a close reading of the text, the principles of the structure and functions of the mind in the Yogasūtra, and the coherent and complex picture which emerges from this study, points to a sophisticated ‘Science of the Mind’ – *citta śāstra*. The continuous modifications – *vṛtti* – of the *citta*, their fivefold variety, their afflicted and non-afflicted states and the psychological aspects of the modifications are some of the key elements of this science. The subliminal factors which are the drivers of this ‘psychic machinery’ of the *citta* – *karma*, *saṃskāra* and *vāsanā* – have also been explicated from the text and their relationships to the elements of the mind have been given in detail. The influence of the *guṇa* or the attributes of *Prakṛti*, on the state of the mind have been looked at and we have shown the relationship of the five states in the mind described in Vyāsa’s commentary with the Yogic and non-Yogic states and the ultimate state of cessation of the modifications of the mind (*vṛtti nirodha*). The striking metaphor of the ‘river of the mind flowing in two directions’ referred to in the commentary, has provided us a means of understanding the agency of the subject as a means of conscious determination of the direction which the mind takes. And here we find the ‘Science of Mind’ as the basis for understanding its role in the soteriology of the

Yogasūtra – through the conscious control of the *vyrtti* one is able to take oneself towards either bondage with the continuation of the cycles of birth and death, or towards establishing oneself in the state of *Kaivalya*, attaining liberation.

The second purpose of the study has been dialogical in terms of comparing the phenomena of *Samādhi* in the Yogasūtra and the Western psychological construct of Flow. Yoga and Flow have been ascribed a close resemblance by Csikszentmihalyi in general terms and we have explored these assertions by looking at the two phenomena within a common framework. Again there are issues with such a comparative analysis, which we have acknowledged and pointed out in addressing the questions about the similarities of these phenomena as described in textual material. What is the precise nature of these resemblances which can be elucidated within an acceptable methodology? How can these convergences and divergences be explained and what is their significance? Why such a study in comparative phenomenology has merit and how does it contribute to the dialogue between Indian and Western Psychologies? We have also pointed out that comparative analyses of *Samādhi* and Flow are almost non-existent in the literature and the thesis attempts to address this lack by a systematic study of the phenomena. This study, even though a preliminary one, gives a solid phenomenological analysis of *Samādhi* and Flow and clarifies, on the one hand, the vague assertion by Csikszentmihalyi about the Yoga and Flow and, on the other, sets out a methodology consisting examining textual descriptions and a proposal to test the analysis with empirical studies.

It is to be noted that although we consider this work to be of significance, its limitations need to be recognised. It may be argued that much of the work in this thesis has been covered by past scholars. The two major contributors to conceptualisation of the Yogasūtra are Ian Whicher and Georg Feuerstein, who have done critical work on the text. The contribution of this thesis is in terms of firstly engaging critically with their work and those of others and secondly to focusing specifically on the *psychological* concepts of the Yogasūtra and this we have attempted to do throughout the work. It will be noted that Feuerstein to a limited extent discusses the

psychological concepts in a chapter in his book⁷⁹¹. This in a way validates the thesis and also clearly indicates that there is a psychological dimension in the Yogasūtra. Even if it is argued that the thesis is an extension of the work of these scholars, there is a significant contribution of our work, a discussion we now take up.

b. The contributions of this work: Psychological understanding and Dialogue

In Chapter One, we gave three reasons for taking up this research: 1). to contribute to Eastern or Indian Psychology by the study of the psychological dimension of the Yogasūtra; 2). to enable a fruitful dialogue between Eastern and Western Psychologies; 3). to develop this dialogue in relation to non-Western traditions, in particular Hinduism. We believe that this thesis has succeeded in these aims and made a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge to the *psychological* understanding of the Yogasūtra in several ways. Firstly, with the close reading of the text, the commentaries on the *sūtra*, and the secondary literature on the subject, we have identified the key psychological concepts and critically examined them particularly from a phenomenological perspective. The focus on the ‘lived experience’ of Yoga practice and experience, especially the stages leading to and the phenomenon of *Samādhi* itself, stands apart from previous work. This emphasis has enabled us to gain more insight, in particular, into the experience of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and the four stages of *Samprajñāta Samādhi*. There were two advantages to be derived from taking this perspective: 1). there was an added richness to the description of the experience itself along its various dimensions; 2). these descriptions provided us with the basis on which a comparative study of *Samādhi* with Flow could then be carried out.

Secondly, the cartography of the *citta*, both in terms of structure and process, constructed from the text and secondary sources makes a unique contribution in understanding the mind and the relations between its elements. In Chapter Eight, having looked at the various aspects of the mind as described in the Yogasūtra, we examined the psychological dimensions to construct a

⁷⁹¹ Georg Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, Chapter V, Psychological Concepts, 57-77.

model of the mind, thus giving a sharp focus to its structure and functions. We examined ten aspects of the *citta*: cognition, identity, consciousness, states of consciousness, the conscious and subliminal aspects of the mind, perception and its relation to subjective experience, memory, attention and the emotional dimension of experience. The modelling of the mind along these dimensions is also a singular contribution of the thesis, and although we again acknowledge the work done in this field by other scholars, the bringing together of the aspects of the mind in a detailed model is unique to this work. The advantage of constructing such a model of *citta* is that it gives us not only an overview, but also an insight into the relations of the elements and the processes of the mind, revealing its complex nature. Another benefit of using the modelling method with the text is that it gives us a basis for exploring the ideas about the *citta* both theoretically and empirically. For example, we have explained the role of attention in the discipline of Yoga and in particular the mind (Chapter Eight b.vii). This could provide a basis for empirical studies in attention during the various stages of practice of *Samādhi*.

Thirdly, we consider that the thesis makes a significant contribution to the dialogue between Eastern and Western Psychologies. The importance of such a dialogue given by McGrath was noted in Chapter One⁷⁹². We took up the case study of *Samādhi* and Flow as an example of such a conversation between Indian Psychology and Positive Psychology, locating it within the context and methodology of phenomenology. Insights about different states of the mind, the descriptions of the stages of concentration and absorption gained from a phenomenological investigation of *Samādhi* can be of assistance in the understanding of Flow in these and other dimensions. On the other hand the methods used in Flow experience research can be of value in looking at *Samādhi* through empirical investigation.

⁷⁹² Alister E McGrath, *The Foundation of Dialogue in Science and Religion*, 34.

Fourthly, the thesis contributes considerably to the comparative phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow in conceptual understanding of these phenomena. The comparison was by done primarily looking at the research literature on Flow and the Yogasūtra, from the text itself, the commentaries on the text, both old and new, and secondary literature on the text. The exegetical material from the Yogasūtra on *Samādhi* and its related concepts and the accounts of the experience of Flow were subject to a comparative analysis within a framework consisting of ten dimensions. Apart from the general statements made by Csikszentmihalyi⁷⁹³ on Yoga and Flow and one article by Delle Fave⁷⁹⁴ looking at the convergence and divergence of Flow and meditation in the Eastern traditions, there has been no work available in this field. The analysis presented in the thesis makes a significant contribution in several ways: 1). the general statement about the strong resemblance between Yoga and Flow has been clarified, pinpointing where the similarities are as well pointing out the differences between *Samādhi* and Flow, in the various dimensions; 2). The dimension of phenomenology explored briefly by Delle Fave and Bassi⁷⁹⁵ in their chapter on optimal experience and meditation, has been expanded and deepened in relation to *Samādhi* as a specific meditative technique and the Flow experience within a comparative framework; 3). Insights were gained from the detailed examination of both phenomena through such a comparison. For example, the different states of fixed absorption in *Samādhi* and the dynamic absorption in task performance in Flow demonstrate the how absorption differs in the lived experience of these phenomena. Thomas and Cohen⁷⁹⁶ identified the need to develop a method and concept for ‘mapping phenomenal space’. Our work here has addressed this need in relation to the Yogasūtra *Samādhi* and prepared the ground for further research in the area of comparative phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow.

⁷⁹³ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 105.

⁷⁹⁴ Antonella Delle Fave, “Chapter 6: Optimal Experience and Meditation: Western and Asian Approaches to Well-Being”.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁶ John W Thomas and Eric Cohen, “A Methodological Review of Meditation Research”.

Fifthly, the comparative phenomenological methodology used in the investigation of *Samādhi* and Flow is also unique in several ways. We have noted this in Chapter Ten section b that such an approach suggests a new triangulation method in studying ancient texts for phenomenological content, making text based comparisons with other phenomena and then designing empirical methods for testing the conclusions derived from first two methods.

c. Conclusion

The present research has made a significant contribution to the psychological understanding of Patañjali's Yogasūtra as well as to the dialogue between Eastern and Western Psychologies in the form of a comparative analysis of the phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow. There are further areas of research suggested by this work: a). developing empirical methods for testing the model of mind constructed in the thesis; various empirical studies can be designed to investigate the dimensions of this model. For example, the relationship of the depth of attention and its effect on perception can be looked at; b). furthering the research on the phenomenology of *Samādhi* as well as a comparative phenomenology of *Samādhi* and Flow, with empirical phenomenological methods; we have given a proposal for such a study and this can be extended further to included comparisons with other phenomena, for example, Christian contemplative practices; c). developing more applications of Yoga meditative techniques in various fields of human endeavour, for example, increasing the capacity for attention in children through teaching them the basic practices of *dhāraṇā* and *dhyāna*.

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