

The Integrity of the Yoga Darśana

A Reconsideration of Classical Yoga



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Why is this not valid cognition? Because it is sublated by valid cognition. The object of valid cognition is a thing as it is, and the fact of not being valid cognition is shown by the fact that valid cognition cancels it. For example, seeing the moon as double is refuted by seeing that it is in fact a single moon.

This ignorance is fivefold, namely, the afflictions (*klesa*): ignorance, I-am-ness, attachment, aversion, desire for continuity. These very five bear their technical names: darkness (*tamas*), delusion (*moha*), extreme delusion (*mahamoha*), gloom (*tamisra*) and utter darkness (*andhatamisra*).¹⁴⁴

For Patañjali the conjunction (*samyoga*) of the seer and the seeable, *purusa* and *prakṛti*, is the cause of all suffering and dissatisfaction (*duḥkha*)¹⁴⁵ because it gives rise to the incorrect understanding that one's identity is defined within the limits of the individuated psychophysical being or personality complex and not according to the unbounded nature of the *purusa* or spiritual Self. The conjunction is caused by spiritual ignorance (*avidya*),¹⁴⁶ the primary affliction that is the origin¹⁴⁷ of all other afflictions including our mistaken identity as a finite, egoic self or "I-am-ness" (*asmita*). *Asmita* constitutes the major affliction that permeates the principle of individuation, thus leading to the ongoing misidentification of selfhood with the modifications of the mind. Ignorance is also at the root of three other afflictions: attachment (*raga*), aversion (*dvesa*), and the desire for continuity or the instinctive fear of death (*abhinivesa*).¹⁴⁸ In attachment and aversion the emotive core of the concept of affliction (*klesa*) comes into play, thereby signifying an obvious affective dimension to *vṛtti*. The impressions (*samskaras*) centered around the experiences of pleasure are operative in and supportive of *raga* or attachment/attraction. The modifications are said to take the form of *gārdha*, *trṣṇa*, and *lobha*, which may be translated as longing, thirst, and greed respectively.¹⁴⁹ Metaphorically speaking, the seeds (*bija*) of *sukha-samskaras* or impressions of pleasurable experiences germinate and will give rise to a state of attachment leading to effort directed toward the attainment of the object of pleasure

or desire. In a seeming opposition to attachment, the emotive core of the phenomenon of aversion (*dvesa*) or revulsion is provoked by the seed recollection of pain. The states that arise are said to be those of retaliation (*pratigha*), malice (*manya*), revenge (*jighamsa*), and anger (*krodha*).¹⁵⁰ Thus, attachment and aversion dwell upon the *samskaras* of pleasure and pain. In general terms the mind is not repelled by that which is pleasurable, nor does it desire that which is painful.

The description by Vyasa that the *klesas* are prime examples of erroneous cognitions is especially noteworthy as it cuts through the stereotyped opposition between the emotive/affective and the rational/cognitive. This brings forth an integral view of the mind (*citta*). It is in this frame in which a picture emerges that samsaric identity (and its reified notions of self and world, i.e., worldly existence) is not possible without I-am-ness, attachment, aversion, and the desire for continuity or fear of extinction, and that these afflictions govern the mind of the individual and perpetuate the wheel of *samsara*. The compulsive forces of attachment, aversion, and desire or fear cannot be uprooted and discarded unless *asmita* is

subdued, weakened. Thus the attenuation and ultimate transcendence of all the afflictions is the objective of Yoga praxis. The importance of the theory of the five afflictions has been emphasized by I. K. Taimni, who correctly notes that this theory is the foundation of the system of Yoga outlined by Patañjali.¹⁵¹

The function of Yoga is to oblige the yogin to "awaken" to the true status of *purusa* through progressive stages of removing any misidentification with the forms of *prakṛti*, of uprooting and eradicating ignorance (*avidya*), the primary affliction defined in *Yoga-Sutra* II.5. Here, Patañjali states: "Ignorance is seeing the noneternal as eternal, the impure as pure, dissatisfaction as happiness, and the nonself as self."¹⁵² Interestingly, Patañjali seems to be admitting in the above that there is a special kind of happiness (*sukha*) that is intrinsic to freedom ("aloneness") in Yoga and that, far from resulting in a lonely or aloof nature or association with the world, implies that one of the fruits of Yoga can be experienced as an exalted sense of well-being that embraces our emotional/affective as well as our cognitive dimension.

Vyasa correlates the five afflictions outlined by Patañjali (see n. 144 above) with the five categories of fundamental misconception or error (*viparyaya*) of classical Samkhya.¹⁵³ The correlation of the five *viparyayas* with the five *klesas* of Yoga is also made by Vacaspati Misra¹⁵⁴ and Vijnana Bhiksu.¹⁵⁵ Ignorance is said to fall within the category of *viparyaya* and is a factor common to all the afflictions. Therefore, the other four afflictions are considered its segments.¹⁵⁶ Vijnana Bhiksu calls the *vṛtti* normally termed "error" (the fivefold *avidya*) the seed of the calamity called *samsara*; it is a

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special kind of misapprehension in which there is a superimposition of cognition in the object. Doubt (*samsaya*) is also included under this *vṛtti*.¹⁵⁷ It is, thus, the *klesas* manifesting in the form of the *vṛtti* of error or misconception (*viparyaya*) that control the network or web of samsaric existence. Vyasa describes the domination of the *klesas* over empirical identity: "The word 'afflictions' means the five errors (*viparyaya*). When active they confirm the involvement with the *gunas*, impose change, bring about the flow or current in the body and senses by mutually reinforcing each other, and bring on fruition of *karma*."¹⁵⁸ The divisions of ignorance (*avidya*) which Vyasa equates with the *vṛtti* of error (*viparyaya*) can be explained¹⁵⁹ as follows:

1. *Avidya* (YS II.5) means spiritual ignorance itself, sometimes called *tamas* ("darkness"), and is described as being eightfold: the error of mistaking as Self or *purusa* (*atman*) the eight *tattvas* that are: (i) *avyakta*: unmanifest *prakṛti*, (ii) *mahat* or *buddhi* (intellect), (iii) *ahamkara*: sense of self, (iv-viii) the *tanmatras*: the five subtle senses. Spiritual ignorance (*avidya*) is sometimes defined as "darkness" in that it veils liberating knowledge (*jñana*). It includes the error of misidentifying the physical body and psyche with *purusa* because body, and so on, are the products of the eight *tattvas* listed above. *Viparyaya* such as mistaking a seashell for silver are not included in this category. *Samkhya-Karika* 44 says that bondage (*bandha*) is caused by *viparyaya*. Hence *avidya*, the major cause of bondage, is included here and not the other four "delusions."¹⁶⁰

2. *Asmita* means I-am-ness/egoity (YS II.6) or "delusion" (*moha*) and is eightfold: the error of

considering the eight powers or accomplishments (*siddhis*, *YS* III.45) as though they were something benevolent and belonging to, or an essential property of, the Self (*atmiya*).¹⁶¹ This preoccupation with one's prakrtic identity occurs when finite beings seek to overcome their limitations by pursuing the eight well-known omnipotent or supernatural powers. According to Vyasa these powers include: *anima*, the power of becoming minute; *laghima*, the power to become light; *mahima*, the power to become enlarged or greatly expanded; *prapti*, the power to reach or touch the most distant things (e.g., the moon); *prakamyā*, the power of an irresistible will to accomplish its tasks; *vasitva*, mastery over all elements and elementals (their nature) not impeded by any; *isitrva*, sovereignty, the ability to will the production, absorption, and disposition of the elements and the elementals; *kamavasayitva*, implying that whatever one's purposive idea is becomes true for that person.¹⁶² I-am-ness/

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egoity and self-possession are synonomous¹⁶³ and therefore the above divisions apply; the *siddhis*, misunderstood as an end in themselves, are a form of possessive or obsessive power in that the attachment to their pursuit only furthers egoic states (i.e., pride, greed, fear, etc.).

3. *Raga* means attachment (*YS* II.7) or "extreme delusion" (*mahamoha*) and is classified as being tenfold: one becomes attached to the five subtle elements (e.g., sound, sight) and the five gross elements. The attraction is for the attainment of the eightfold *siddhis* through Yoga, thereby becoming a powerful or "perfected" being (*siddha*) and gaining sovereignty over nature. Thus it is thought that the yogin will enjoy the objects of the senses.¹⁶⁴

4. *Dvesa* means aversion (*YS* II.8) or "gloom" (*tamisra*) and is said to be eighteenfold: when one is fixed upon the above pursuits [i.e., in (2) and (3)] and some impediment prevents the attainment of *asmīta* (the eight *siddhis*) and *raga* (the ten enjoyments of the senses), then the anger arising with regard to that failure and toward its cause is gloom (*tamisra*) or aversion (*dvesa*).¹⁶⁵

5. *Abhinivesa* means desire for continuity (*YS* II.9), a mode of clinging-to-life or instinctive fear of death. This state is referred to as "utter darkness" (*andhatamisra*) and is eighteenfold: *asmīta* and *raga* have been attained, yet there comes the realization that this attainment will one day perish as, for example, at the end of a cycle of creation (*kalpa*). This fear is said to be the fear of death or "utter darkness" and the "darkness" or "night" refers to the period of dissolution in a single cycle of creation.¹⁶⁶

In the above order of five, each succeeding affliction (*klesa*) is considered from the perspective of Yoga pedagogy to be more undesirable and of an inferior "grade" than its predecessor, indicating progressively deluded or impure levels of attainment. It is interesting to note that the above definitions seem to be of concern only to the so-called advancing yogin whose attainment of powers, ironically, can equally result in an inflated sense of ego rather than liberation from the ego. The general definitions of the afflictions as provided under *Yoga-Sutra* II.5-9 are wider and are applicable to the worldly-minded who are living more conventional states of awareness. U. Arya¹⁶⁷ has conceived the following scheme (see below), which shows *viparyaya* from (a) the "common view" or ordinary (worldly) person's viewpoint as compared with (b) the novice and

"imperfect" yogin's viewpoint. While the yogin's consciousness is said to be more refined and subtle, it is clear from the scheme outlined below that the yogin, not yet

having reached the fully liberated state of "aloneness" (*kaivalya*), can still be prone to a selfish mentality where attachment to the attainment of power diverts the yogin away from the true spiritual "goal" of Yoga:

<i>Klesa</i>	Common View	Imperfect Yogin's View
<i>avidya</i>	I am the body, male or female, with resultant pleasures and attachments.	I am <i>prakrti</i> and its evolutes.
<i>asmita</i>	I have an identity dependent on possessing the objects of experience. I desire worldly success, power and wealth.	I desire powers (<i>siddhis</i>).
<i>raga</i> 168	I desire the objects of my immediate pleasure.	I will appropriate my power to obtain refined pleasures.
<i>dvesa</i> 169	I have an aversion to specific objects, persons or situations that have caused me pain.	I am angry at causes, persons or situations that have prevented my fulfillment of <i>siddhis</i> and resulting enjoyment.
<i>abhinivesa</i> 170	I fear my death, that is the death of this body that I am.	I fear that all my powers and resulting pleasures and enjoyments of <i>prakrti</i> will cease.

The above scale may be understood as constituting the range of misidentifications in the context of phenomenal selfhood. Under the dominating and delusive power of *viparyaya*, the yogin is in need of the guidance of a spiritual preceptor or *guru*: one who has transcended the compulsive need to identify with prakrtic existence. In the *guru*, or "accomplished one," has awakened the "knowledge born of discernment" (*vivekajam jñana*) that, endowed with the power of liberating (*taraka*),¹⁷¹ enables one to "cross over" the limitations of samsaric identity. As the yogin progresses on the journey toward authentic identity, the influence of the afflictions progressively lessens. Vyasa makes it clear that it is the *vrtti* of misconception or error (*viparyaya*) that underlies our mistaken notions of selfhood and their attendant dissatisfactions and sorrows (*duhkha*). According to Vyasa (*YB* I.8), *viparyaya* encompasses the source-affliction of ignorance (*avidya*) in which the karmic residue (*karmasaya*) of *samskaras* and *vasanas*, and the resultant fruition (*vipaka*) of afflicted action, are generated and sustained. In short, our afflicted identity rooted in spiritual ignorance functions through *viparyaya*. Curiously, this important insight, which can be attributed to Vyasa, has not been clearly noted by scholars.¹⁷²

The Samkhya and Yoga systems hold divergent views on the nature of *avidya*. The Samkhya system proper uses the term *a-viveka*, "an absence

of discerning knowledge" of the nature of *purusa*, which the teachers of formal logic place under the category of "nonapprehension" (*a-khyati*). It appears that the Yoga system differs in this regard. Yoga considers ignorance to be a misapprehension (*anyatha-khyati*),¹⁷³ the definition of ignorance being: mistaking the noneternal and the "nonself" for the eternal and the Self, and so forth, as in *Yoga-Sutra* II.5.¹⁷⁴ Vyasa states that although *avidya* is a negative compound, it should be known as a positive existent, like the compound *amitra*, which signifies not the absence of a friend (*mitra*) but the contrary of friend, namely an enemy. Likewise, *avidya* is neither valid cognition nor the absence of valid cognition, but is a cognition of a different kind, contrary to both of them.¹⁷⁵ In Yoga, therefore, *avidya* is not *akhyati*, that is, the nonapprehension of the nature of *purusa* as in Samkhya, but *anyathakhyati*, that is, a particular kind of cognition that mistakes *purusa* for prakrtic existence. As the Samkhyans (*SK* 44) hold that bondage is due to "the opposite of *jñāna*" (*viparyaya*), liberation occurs through the central expedient of discriminating knowledge (referred to in *SK* 2 as *vijñāna*). In the philosophy of classical Yoga, *avidya* is a type of cognition, however invalid, that can be remedied by various methods such as the cultivation of faith (*sraddha*), energy (*virya*), mindfulness (*smṛti*), cognitive *samadhi*, and clear insight (*prajñā*) all outlined in *Yoga-Sutra* I.20 or devotion to the Lord (*isvara-pranidhana*, *YS* I.23). *Avidya* can be completely overcome only through the realization of *purusaan* "attainment" that takes place in the high-level state of *samadhi* termed *asamprajñata* (*YB* I.18).

The third type of *vṛtti*, conceptualization (*vikalpa*), is defined by Patañjali (*YS* I.9) as the apprehensions arising out of verbal knowledge only but whose referents are words and ideas but not things.¹⁷⁶ *Vikalpa* involves a notion, not necessarily an error, that does not correspond to an object or thing, but that may in fact serve as a useful function as in a metaphor or simile. A *vikalpa* can be an imaginary cognition. The term *vikalpa* has been understood in the sense of "fancy"¹⁷⁷ or "hallucination,"¹⁷⁸ but these are insufficient meanings. In states of meditation, the engagement of *vikalpa* is considered important in strengthening and focusing the mind.

Vikalpa is that modification (*vṛtti*) of the mind that follows language, knowledge of words, and the knowledge provided by words, and is productive of the same where no actual thing is its referent. Yet, being verbal knowledge, why could it not be included under valid testimony (*agama pramana*, *YS* I.7)? According to Vyasa (*YB* I.7), there has to be an actual object (*artha*) that is corroborated by an accomplished teacher (*apta*) in order to qualify under *agama*.¹⁷⁹ *Vikalpa* relates to no "objects" as such.

Nor is the *vṛtti* of conceptualization formally included under error (*viparyaya*) because in the latter (*YS* I.8) there is an "object" that is at first wrongly cognized, but when the error is corrected, the true form of the "object" such as the moon, to use Vyasa's example is seen clearly. There is no succession of error and refutation, and one word does not replace another (e.g., the word "seashell" replacing "silver" in the case of an oyster). In *vikalpa* there is no real external object at all, the referent being language itself rather than things.

Paraphrasing Vyasa, conceptualization does not amount to valid cognition or to error. As there can exist a certain satisfaction or sense of exaltation about the use of language and knowledge of