THE YOGA SŪTRAS OF PATAṆJALI

EDWIN F. BRYANT
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A New Edition, Translation, and Commentary

WITH INSIGHTS FROM THE
TRADITIONAL COMMENTATORS

EDWIN F. BRYANT

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To my daughter, Mohini

And to all teachers of yoga, that Patañjali’s Sūtras may inform and inspire their teachings
CONTENTS

Title Page
Copyright Notice
Dedication
Foreword by B.K.S. Iyengar
Sanskrit Pronunciation Guide
The History of Yoga
  Yoga Prior to Patañjali
    The Vedic Period
    Yoga in the Upaniṣads
    Yoga in the Mahābhārata
    Yoga and Sāṅkhya
  Patañjali’s Yoga
    Patañjali and the Six Schools of Indian Philosophy
    The Yoga Sūtras as a Text
    The Commentaries on the Yoga Sūtras
The Subject Matter of the Yoga Sūtras
  The Dualism of Yoga
  The Sāṅkhya Metaphysics of the Text
  The Goals of Yoga
  The Eight Limbs of Yoga
The Present Translation and Commentary

CHAPTER I: MEDITATIVE ABSORPTION
CHAPTER II: PRACTICE
CHAPTER III: MYSTIC POWERS
CHAPTER IV: ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE

Concluding Reflections
I congratulate you on your lucid commentary on the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali. I have appreciated your commentary quoting the traditional commentators Vyāsa, Vācaspati Miśra, Śaṅkara, Bhoja Rāja, Vījñānabhibhūṣaṇa, and Hariharānanda, and it reads well. You have presented it in simple and fluent language, which I am sure will be easily understandable to readers. As you are dedicating it to the teachers of yoga, I am sure your book will provide the readers with plenty of knowledge so that they may grasp the philosophy behind the subject and move toward the higher aspects of life in their sādhana (practice).

Patañjala Yoga is a practical subject and not a discursive one. As each individual is electrically alive and dynamic, so yoga is a living, dynamic force in life. In order to savor its essence, one needs a religiously attentive dynamic practice done with awareness and absorption. The life of man is not only the conjunction of prakṛti (the sheaths of the body) and puruṣa (the soul), but also a combination of these two. Yoga is a means to utilizing the conjunction of prakṛti and puruṣa for freedom and beatitude (mokṣa), as the two are interwoven and interrelated.

Patañjali explains the practice of kriyā-yoga in sūtra I of the sādhana pāda, repeating the same ingredients as are found in the niyama disciplines, namely, tapas, svādhyāya, and Īśvara-praṇidhāna (discipline, self-study and devotion to God). This three-tiered definition clearly indicates the paths of karma, jñāna, and bhakti. Though Patañjali advises bhakti in the beginning of the text in I.23, I consider the disciplines of yama and niyama (II.30–45) as corresponding to karmamarga (the path of action); āsana, prāṇāyāma, and pratyāhāra (II.46–55) as corresponding to jñāna-marga (the path of knowledge); and dhāranā, dhyāna, and samādhi (saṁyama, III.1–4) as corresponding to bhakti marga (the path of devotion).
Prakṛti and puruṣa being interwoven and interrelated, the practitioners of yoga have to understand this relationship clearly and perform svādhyāya in the form of āsana, prāṇāyāma, and pratyāhāra. Svā means “self” and adhyāya means “study.” These three aspects of Patañjala Yoga lead the sādhaka (practitioner) to understand himself or herself from the skin to the self. Hence, this guides one on the path of jñāna. Dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi being the effect of jñāna earned through the practices of āsana, prāṇāyāma, and pratyāhāra along with yama and niyama, then lead the sādhaka toward the path of bhakti. Bhakti is the summun bonum of Pātañjala Yoga. But if the sādhaka abuses the sādhana with selfish motives, he or she ends up with only the joys of sensual pleasure (bhoga).

As yoga is a lively subject, interpretations of the sūtras may vary according to dharma, lakṣana, and avastha parināma (character, qualities, and conditions) in sādhana (III.13). Therefore, I differ from the traditional commentators on two things. The first pertains to the effects of āsana: tato dvandvānabhīghātāḥ (II.48). The entire text speaks of the intelligence of nature and the intelligence of the self. I understand that the perfection of āsana brings unity between the various sheaths of the body and the self (puruṣa), which Lord Kṛṣṇa calls kṣetra-kṣetrajña yoga in the Bhagavad Gītā (XIII.1ff). Hence, perfection in āsana means a divine union of prakṛti with puruṣa.

The practice of āsanas develops sattva guṇa, sublimating the guṇas of rajas and tamas. The aim of āsanas is to make the prāṇa (cosmic universal force) move concurrently with the prajñā (insight) of the self on its frontier. This means to make the awareness of the self (sāsmitā) move and cover the entire body (II.19) so that the mechanisms of nature are sublimated and the intelligence (prajñā) of the self engulfs the body with its śakti.

The second point pertains to the virāma pratyaya of verse I.18 (virāma-pratyayābhyāsa-pūrvaḥ saṃskāra-śeṣo ‘nyāḥ—the other samādhi is preceded by cultivating the determination to terminate [all thoughts]. [In this state] only latent impressions remain). Patañjali himself does not call this other state asamprajñāta-samādhi (I.46). He has said that it is part of sabīja-samādhi (I.46). The various commentators infer this state to be asamprajñāta, and this may be because Patañjali mentions
samprajñāta-samādhi in the preceding sūtra. For me, this sūtra is referring to a consolidating state of samprajñāta-samādhi, after attaining which the yogī can move toward asamprajñāta (nirbija) samādhi. Hence, this state acts as the intermediary state for nirbija-samādhi. Just as pratyāhāra in aṣṭāṅga-yoga (II.54) is a consolidating stage, where one needs to integrate the external sheath (bahiraṅga) with the innermost sheath (antaraṅga), so is the case with the stage of virāma pratyaya, for which Patañjali has not coined any term. It is a consolidating stage of sabīja-samādhi, after which the yogī naturally moves toward nirbija-samādhi.

For me, the state of pratyāhāra in aṣṭāṅga-yoga and virāma-pratyaya in samādhi are the touchstones in understanding the purity, clarity, and maturity of prajñā, intelligence. When this illuminative and luminous intelligence takes place, the union of prakṛti with puruṣa happens (sattva-puruṣayoh śuddhi-samye kaivalyam iti III.56*). Even in this pratyāhāra state of aṣṭāṅga-yoga and virāma-pratyaya state in samādhi, if one neglects śraddhā, virya, smṛti, samādhi-prajñā (faith, vigor, memory, and the insight of samādhi, the four legs of yoga in I.20), then, even if one has reached the zenith, one is bound to become a yoga-bhraṣṭa, a fallen yogī. Therefore, the practice of pratyāhāra in aṣṭāṅga yoga or virāma-pratyaya in samādhi is to be performed with these four legs of yoga so as to maintain and retain that state of seasoned wisdom (ṛtambharā prajñā, I.48) that consecrates citi-śakti (the power of puruṣa). It is this combination only that leads the yogī toward the highest state in bhaktimarga—the saranāgati-mārga—total dependence on Īśvara, God. This is how I understand and practice the aṣṭāṅga-yoga of sage Patañjali.

Having expressed my feelings, I am sure your good work and expressions, using the attributes of all the earlier commentators on the Yoga Sūtras, will turn out as a study book for hundreds and hundreds of students who have embraced the subject in the West in knowing the light of that hidden illuminative intelligence on the inner self, the ātman, and making that light surface and active in their sādhana, which will help their fellow beings experience this unalloyed and untainted bliss with its stream of virtuous (śīlatā) wisdom.

With all my best wishes, I am sure this volume will benefit yoga sādhakas and spiritual seekers throughout the world.

Pune, December 5, 2007
*Editor's note: B.K.S. Iyengar accepts fifty-six verses in the third pada where other commentators accept fifty-five.
SANSKRIT PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

DIACRITICS USED IN THIS TRANSLATION:

\(ā \ i \ ū \ ṛ \ ſ \ h \ ŭ \ ň \ ň \ ŏ \ ŝ \ ŧ \ š \)

The following pronunciation guide attempts to give approximate equivalents in English to the Sanskrit sounds used in this text.

VOWELS

Sanskrit vowels have both short forms and lengthened forms (the latter are transliterated by a line over the vowel—\(ā, \ ũ, \ ū\)), as well as a retroflex \(ṛ\) sound articulated by curling the tongue farther back onto the roof of the mouth than for the English \(r\). Other Sanskrit vowels alien to English are noted below. Vowels are listed in Sanskrit in the following traditional order (according to their locus of articulation, beginning from the back of the throat to the front of the mouth):

\(a\) as in “but”
\(ā\) as in “tar”; held twice as long as short \(a\)
\(i\) as in “bit”
\(i\) as in “week”; held twice as long as short \(i\)
\(u\) as in “bush”
\(ū\) as in “fool”; held twice as long as short \(u\)
\(ṛ\) as in “rim”
\(ś\) no English equivalent; approximated by \(l\) followed by \(ṛ\), above
\(e\) as in “they”
\(ai\) as in “aisle”
\(o\) as in “go”
au as in “vow”

ḫ (visarga) a final “h” sound that echoes the preceding vowel slightly; as in “aha” for aḥ

ṁ (anusvāra) a nasal sound pronounced like mm, but influenced according to whatever consonant follows, as in “bingo,” “punch”

**CONSONANTS**

Sanskrit consonants have both aspirated forms (kh, gh, ch, jh, and so on) and unaspirated forms (k, g, c, j, and so on); the former involve articulating the consonant accompanied by a slight expulsion of air. There is also a set of retroflexes (transliterated with a dot beneath them –ṭ, ḍ, ṭh, ḍh, ṇ, s), which have no precise English equivalents, and these involve curling the tongue farther back onto the roof of the mouth than for the English dentals. Sanskrit dentals (t, d, th, dh) are articulated with the tongue touching the teeth, slightly farther forward than for their English equivalents. The consonants are listed in Sanskrit in the following traditional order (according to their locus of articulation, beginning from the back of the throat to the front of the mouth):

\[
\begin{align*}
    k & \quad \text{as in “pick”} \\
    kh & \quad \text{as in “Eckhart”} \\
    g & \quad \text{as in “gate”} \\
    gh & \quad \text{as in “dig-hard”} \\
    ṇ & \quad \text{as in “sing”} \\
    c & \quad \text{as in “charm”} \\
    ch & \quad \text{as in “staunch-heart”} \\
    j & \quad \text{as in “jog”} \\
    jh & \quad \text{as in “hedgehog”} \\
    ŋ & \quad \text{as in “canyon”} \\
    ṭ & \quad \text{as in “tub,” but with the tongue curled farther back}
\end{align*}
\]
th as in “light-heart,” but with the tongue curled farther back
d as in “dove,” but with the tongue curled farther back
dh as in “red-hot,” but with the tongue curled farther back
n as in “tint,” but with the tongue touching the teeth
t as in “tub,” but with the tongue touching the teeth
th as in “light-heart,” but with the tongue touching the teeth
d as in “dove,” but with the tongue touching the teeth
dh as in “red-hot,” but with the tongue touching the teeth
n as in “no,” but with the tongue touching the teeth
p as in “pin”
ph as in “uphill”
b as in “bin”
bh as in “rub-hard”
m as in “mum”
y as in “yellow”
r as in “run”
l as in “love”
v as in “vine”
ṣ as in “shove”
ṣ as in “crashed,” but with the tongue curled farther back
s as in “such”
h as in “hope”
THE HISTORY OF YOGA

Everyone by now has heard of yoga, and, indeed, with millions of Americans in some form or fashion practicing āsana, the physical aspect of yoga, the teaching and practice of yoga, at least in the aspect of techniques of body poses and stretches, are now thoroughly mainstream activities on the Western cultural landscape. Yoga has popularly been translated as “union with the divine”\(^1\) and may refer to a number of different spiritual systems. The Bhagavad Gītā, for example, discusses a number of practices that have been termed yoga in popular literature: karma-yoga (buddhi-yoga), the path of action; jñāna-yoga (sāṅkhya-yoga), the path of knowledge; bhakti-yoga, the path of devotion; and dhyāna-yoga, the path of silent meditation (which is the subject of Patañjali’s text),\(^2\) and terms such as tantra-yoga, siddha-yoga, nāḍa-yoga, and so forth are now common in alternative spiritualities in the West. Typically, however, when the word yoga is used by itself without any qualification, it refers to the path of meditation, particularly as outlined in the Yoga Sūtras—the Aphorisms on Yoga—and the term yogī, a practitioner of this type of meditational yoga.

Patañjali was the compiler of the Yoga Sūtras, one of the ancient treatises on Indic philosophy that eventually came to be regarded as one of the six classical schools of Indian philosophy. He presented a teaching that focuses on realization of the puruṣa—the term favored by the Yoga school\(^3\) to refer to the innermost conscious self, loosely equivalent to the soul in Western Greco-Abrahamic traditions. The practice of yoga emerged from post-Vedic India as perhaps its most important development and has exerted immense influence over the philosophical discussions and religious practices of what has come to be known as mainstream Hinduism, both in its dominant forms in India and in its most common exported and repackaged forms visible in the West. Accordingly, Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras is one of the most important classical texts in Hinduism and thus a classic of Eastern, and therefore world, thought. Along with the Bhagavad Gītā, it is the text that has
received the most attention and interest outside of India. I might add here that Patañjali’s *Yoga Sūtras* is not an overtly sectarian text in the sense of prioritizing a specific deity or promoting a particular type of worship as is the case with many Hindu scriptures, including the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Therefore, as a template, it can be and has been appropriated and reconfigured by followers of different schools and traditions throughout Indian religious history and certainly continues to lend itself to such appropriations, most recently in nonreligious contexts of the West.

In its exported manifestation, *yoga* has tended to focus on the physical aspect of the system of *yoga*, the āsanas, or stretching poses and postures, which most Western adherents of *yoga* practice in order to stay trim, supple, and healthy. Patañjali himself, however, pays minimal attention to the āsanas, which are the third stage of the eight stages, or limbs, of *yoga*, and focuses primarily on meditation and various stages of concentration of the mind.

There are references to awareness of yogīs on the Western landscape as early as Greek classical sources, Alexander being perhaps the most notorious early Westener to be fascinated with Indian ascetics. Its initial introduction to the West in modern times was by Vivekānanda at the end of the nineteenth century. More recently, generic *yoga*—particularly as āsanas, postures, but also as a meditative technique leading to samādhi, enlightenment—was popularized in the West by a number of influential Hindu teachers of *yoga* in the 1960s, most of whom came from two lineages: Sivananda (1887–1963) and Krishnamāchārya (1888–1989). Sivananda was a renunciant and his ashram tradition was transplanted by his disciples Vishnudevananda (1927–1993), Satchidananda (1914–2002), and Chinmayananda (1916–1993), each of whom founded his own independent mission in the West (the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres, the Integral Yoga Institute, and the Chinmaya Mission, respectively). Krishnamāchārya’s three principal disciples took his emphasis on the practice of āsana in their own direction: K. Pattabhi Jois (1915– ) continued to promote his version of astāṅga-vinyāsa-yoga; Krishnamāchārya’s son, T.K.V. Desikachar (1938– ), developed viniyoga; and—perhaps most influential of all—Krishnamāchārya’s brother-in-law, B.K.S. Iyengar (1918– ) established the Iyengar method. Almost all yoga
teachers trace their lineage to such masters, and the more serious among such teachers or practitioners of yoga will have a valued copy of the Yoga Sūtras.

YOGA PRIOR TO PATAÑJALI

The Vedic Period

In terms of Yoga’s earliest origins, the Vedic period is the earliest era in South Asia for which we have written records, and it provides the matrix from which (or, more typically, against which) later religious, philosophical, and spiritual expressions such as Yoga evolved in India, at least in the north of the subcontinent. We do not wish to invest any further energy into the ongoing debate over whether the Vedic-speaking peoples (Indo-Aryans) were originally indigenous to the Indian subcontinent or Indo-European intruders from an external point of origin (for which, see Bryant 2001 and 2005), except to note the corollaries of these two positions on the protohistory of Yoga. Those accepting an external point of origin for the Vedic-speaking peoples tend to hold that Yoga, both as practice and philosophy, was originally pre-Vedic (and therefore non-Vedic) and indigenous to the subcontinent. From this perspective, since there is no explicit reference to yogic practices and beliefs in the earliest Vedic texts, their emergence in subsequent Vedic literature such as the Upaniṣads points to a later period when the Vedic people had long settled and absorbed themselves into the preexisting populations of the Indian subcontinent. In this process, they established their own Vedic rituals as the mainstream “high” religious activity of the day, and also eventually absorbed many non-Vedic religious elements from the indigenous peoples, such as Yoga philosophy and practice.

Those challenging the thesis of external origins for the original Vedic-speaking peoples tend to prefer to see both Vedic ritualism and yogic practices as parallel internal developments evolving within Vedic- (Indo-Aryan-) speaking communities indigenous to the subcontinent. It can certainly be argued that the germs of yogic thought can be found in embryonic form in the (middle period) Vedic literatures themselves, the Āraṇyakas and Brāhmaṇa texts. Alternatively, there is little that can
discount the possibility that Yoga emerged outside Vedic orthodoxy but nonetheless within Indo-Aryan-speaking communities. (And, of course, one can combine components of these two positions and argue for the Vedic or Indo-Aryan origins of Yoga but still hold that the Indo-Aryans were nonetheless originally immigrants into the subcontinent.) What all these positions have in common, and where our own discussion of the early history of Yoga will commence, is that Yoga evolves on the periphery of Vedic religiosity and beyond the parameters of mainstream Vedic orthopraxy. Yoga is clearly in tension with Vedic ritualism, discussed below, and its goals are in stark and explicit opposition to it (for example, Yoga Sūtras I.15–16).

Before considering the early literary history of Yoga, however, we must note that the arguments above are all primarily deduced from the fields of linguistics and philology. Archaeology has revealed the remains of an enormous and sophisticated ancient civilization, the Indus Valley civilization, covering modern-day northwest India and Pakistan, dating from circa 3000 to 1900 B.C.E. Mention must be made, when considering the earliest origins of Yoga, to seals found in Indus Valley sites with representations of figures seated in a clear yogic posture. The most famous figure is seated with arms extended and resting on the knees in a classical meditative posture. This evidence suggests that, irrespective of its literary origins, Yoga has been practiced on the Indian subcontinent for well over four thousand years.

Like other Old World cultures, the dominant religious expression in the early Vedic period within which Yoga emerges is that of the sacrificial cult wherein animals and other items are offered to various gods through the medium of fire for the purposes of obtaining worldly boons—offspring, cattle, victory over enemies, etc. A genre of texts, the Brāhmaṇas, describe the ritualistic minutiae of a wide variety of sacrifices, both domestic and public, each one specific to the attainment of particular goals. While the intricacies of the Vedic sacrificial rite may seem alien to our modern worldviews and practices, the mentality that supported it—that of attempting to manipulate the external physical environment for the purpose of enjoying the pleasures of the material world through the medium of the sensual body—has remained constant throughout human history. It is for this reason that the post-Vedic
reactions to this type of mentality, in the form of developments such as the various systems of yoga, remain perennially relevant to the human condition.

**Yoga in the Upaniṣads**

There is evidence as early as the oldest Vedic text, the Ṛg Veda, that there were yogī-like ascetics on the margins of the Vedic landscape. However, it is in the late Vedic age, marked by the fertile speculations expressed in a genre of texts called the Upaniṣads, that practices that can be clearly related to classical yoga are first articulated in literary sources. The Upaniṣads reveal a clear shift in focus away from the sacrificial rite, which is relegated to an inferior type of religiosity, replacing it with an interest in philosophical and mystical discourse, particularly the quest for the ultimate, underlying reality underpinning the external world, Brahman, localized in living beings as ātman. The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (I.2. 7–11) calls the performers of sacrifice “deluded” and “ignorant,” however learned and competent they may posture to be, because the boons and fruits gained from the sacrifice—from the manipulation of one’s external environment, to use a more modern frame of reference—are temporary. When they expire, one finds oneself frustrated once more. The Gītā, too, calls the Vedic ritualists “less intelligent,” since any boons accruing from such materialism do not solve the ultimate problems of life—human suffering inherent in the cycle of birth and death (II.42–45). A move toward understanding higher and more ultimate truths of reality is the prime feature of the Upaniṣads.

Although the Upaniṣads are especially concerned with jñāna, or understanding Brahman, the Absolute Truth, through the cultivation of knowledge, there are also several unmistakable references to a technique for realizing Brahman (in its localized aspect of ātman) called yoga, which are clearly drawn from the same general body of related practices as those articulated by Patañjali. As with the Upaniṣads in general, we do not find a systematic philosophy here, but mystico-poetic utterances, albeit profound in content. The Kaṭha Upaniṣad states:

> When the control of the senses is fixed, that is Yoga, so people say. For then, a person is free from distraction. Yoga is the “becoming,”
and the “ceasing.” Not by words, not by the mind, not by sight, can he [the self] be grasped; how else can he be perceived except by saying: “he is!” ... For one who perceives him as he really is, his real nature becomes manifest. When all desires lurking in the heart are removed, then a mortal person becomes immortal, and attains Brahman in this world. When the knots in the heart that bind one to this world are all cut, then a mortal becomes an immortal, such is the teachings ... A puruṣa [ātman or soul] the size of a thumb dwells always in the hearts of men. One should extricate him with determination like a reed from muñja grass. One should know him as resplendent and immortal. Thus, when Naciketas had received this knowledge and the complete rules of yoga from Death, he attained Brahman; he became free of disease and death. So, too, will others who know these teachings about the self. (VI.11–18)

The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad gets a little more specific about the actual technique of yoga practice:

When he holds the body steady, with the three sections erect, and withdraws the senses into his heart with the mind, a wise person will cross over all the frightening rivers [of embodied existence] by means of the boat of Brahman. His breathing restrained here [within the body], and his energy under control, he should breathe through one nostril when his breath is depleted. A wise person should control the mind, just as one would a wagon yoked to unruly horses ... and engage in the practice of yoga ... When, by means of the true nature of the ātman, which is like a lamp, a person perceives the truth of Brahman in this world, he is freed from all bondage, because he has known the Divine, which is unborn, unchanging, and untainted by all things. (II.8–15)

By the later Maitri Upaniṣad, we have a much more extensive discussion of Yoga, including more specific references to the six aṅgas, or limbs, of yoga: prāṇāyāma, breath control; pratyāhāra, sense withdrawal; dhyāna, meditation; dhāraṇā, concentration; tarka, inquiry; and samādhi, final absorption in the self (VI.18). Five of these limbs correspond to the last five limbs of Patañjali’s system (the Yoga Sūtras lists eight limbs in
Chapter II\textsuperscript{14}). Although, like the two older Upaniṣads quoted above, the Maitrī is still embedded in the Upaniṣadic context of unity of Brahman as the ultimate goal of yoga practice (Brahman is not mentioned in the Yoga Sūtras), the specifics of yoga technique (and Sāṅkhya metaphysics, discussed below) receive far more elaborate and technical attention here than in the older Upaniṣads.\textsuperscript{15} In this development, the Maitrī represents, as does the Mahābhārata, a transition between the old Upaniṣadic worldview and the later emergence of the systematic metaphysical traditions such as the one represented in the Yoga Sūtras.

\textbf{Yoga in the Mahābhārata}

The Mahābhārata, which culminates in 100,000 verses,\textsuperscript{16} is the longest epic in the world and, like the Maitrī Upaniṣad, preserves significant material representing the evolution of Yoga. Usually dated somewhere between the ninth and fourth centuries B.C.E., the epic exhibits the transition between the origins of Yoga in the Upaniṣadic period and its expression in the systematized traditions of Yoga as represented in the classical period by Patañjali. Nestled in the middle of the epic, the well-known Bhagavad Gītā (circa fourth century B.C.E.) devotes a good portion of its text to the practices of yoga, which it already considers to be “ancient” (IV.3); indeed, Kṛṣṇa presents himself as reestablishing yoga teachings that had existed since primordial times. While the Gītā tends to use the term yoga interchangeably with karma-yoga, and the text focuses primarily on karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and especially bhakti-yoga, the techniques of Patañjalian-type yoga are outlined throughout the entire sixth chapter, albeit subsumed under devotion to Kṛṣṇa. The Gītā refers to this type of practice as dhyāna-yoga,\textsuperscript{17} as did most early Indic texts.

After establishing a firm seat in a clean place, not too high and not too low ... there, sitting on that seat and fixing the mind on one object, with mind and senses under control, one should practice yoga to purify the ātman, self, by holding the body, neck and head straight, steady and keeping oneself motionless, focusing on the tip of the nose, and not looking about in any direction. With a peaceful self, free of fear, firm in the brahmācarya vow of celibacy, with mind controlled and thoughts fixed on Me [Kṛṣṇa], one should sit in yoga,
holding Me as the supreme. (VI.11–15)

As can be seen from this verse, the Yoga Sūtra’s Īśvara-praṇidhāna, dedication to God, which will be encountered in I.23, becomes the essential teaching of the entire Gītā and of all the yoga systems prescribed in it, rather than the more discreet ingredient promoted by Patañjali. Nonetheless, the Yoga Sūtras is an inherently theistic text.

The Mahābhārata contains a number of references to practices that are clearly relatable to the system of yoga as taught by Patañjali, most of them in the Mokṣa-dharma section of Book 12 of the epic. For example, the sage Vasiṣṭha defines yoga as ekāgratā, concentration, and prāṇāyāma, breath control (XII.294.8), both terms and practices essential to Patañjali’s system. The terms yoga and yogi occur about nine hundred times throughout the epic, expressed as noted above in terms midway between the unformulated expressions of the Upaniṣads and the systematized practice as outlined by Patañjali. This, of course, indicates that practices associated with yoga had gained wide currency in the centuries prior to the Common Era, with a clearly identifiable set of basic techniques and generic practices, and it is from these that Patañjali drew for his systemization. One passage from the epic (XII.188.1–22) particularly illustrates this, namely Bhīṣma’s deliverance to Yudhiṣṭhira of the “four stages of dhyāna-yoga,” meditation. Dhyāna is the term most often used to refer to meditation in the epic, not just, as with Patañjali, the seventh, penultimate, limb of yoga but often as synonymous with Patañjali’s eighth limb and ultimate goal, samādhi. What is of particular interest in this passage (quoted in the commentary for I.17 below) is that even though the final limb in Patañjali’s system also contains four basic stages (two of which go by the same name as two of the states mentioned by Bhīṣma), the terminology and correlations of Bhīṣma’s four stages of dhyāna-yoga seem to have more in common with the four stages of Buddhist samādhi. Scholars have long pointed out a commonality of vocabulary and concepts between the Yoga Sūtras and Buddhist texts. All this underscores the basic point that there was a cluster of interconnected and cross-fertilizing variants of meditational yoga—Buddhist and Jain as well as Hindu—prior to Patañjali, all drawn from a common but variegated pool of terminologies, practices, and concepts (and many strains continue to the
Indeed, one might profitably begin a discussion of the relationship between Yoga and what was much later to be considered its sister school, Sāṅkhya, and for that matter Buddhism, by noting that in this formative late Vedic period, perhaps for even the best part of a millennium prior to the rise of the clearly defined classical philosophical traditions, there were no schools as such to speak of at all; Sāṅkhya and Yoga (and, for that matter, Buddhism) had yet to become systematic schools, such as what was to become known as the Pātañjala Yoga, or even distinct philosophical systems. Moreover, there were a number of variants going under the name of Yoga (and of Sāṅkhya). One might envision a plethora of centers of learning and practice, many ascetic and spearheaded by charismatic renunciants, where parallel and overlapping philosophical doctrines and meditative practices, many going by the name of yoga, were evolving out of a common Upaniṣadic-flavored core. These would become distinct schools only at a much later period of time.

**Yoga and Sāṅkhya**

The history of Yoga is inextricable from that of the Sāṅkhya tradition. Sāṅkhya provides the metaphysical infrastructure for Yoga and thus is indispensable to an understanding of Yoga. Usually translated as enumeration or counting due to its focus on the evolution and constituents of the twenty-four ingredients of prakṛti, material reality, Sāṅkhya might best be understood as dealing with calculation in the sense of reasoning, speculation, philosophy, as it is defined in the *Mahābhārata*—in other words, the path striving to understand the ultimate truths of reality through knowledge, typically known as *jñāna-yoga*. While the specifics of Sāṅkhya metaphysics and Yoga practice will be discussed more elaborately below, we can briefly note here that this metaphysics is dualistic, insofar as ultimate reality is conceived as containing two distinct ultimate principles: puruṣa, the innermost conscious self broadly synonymous with the notion of soul, and prakṛti, the material world with all its variegatedness within which the puruṣa is embedded. While Yoga and Sāṅkhya share the same metaphysics and the common goal of liberating puruṣa from its encapsulation, their methods differ. Sāṅkhya occupies itself with the path of reasoning to attain
liberation, specifically concerning the analysis of the manifold ingredients of prakṛti from which the puruṣa is to be extricated, and Yoga more with the path of meditation, focusing on the nature of mind and consciousness, and on the techniques of concentration in order to provide a practical method through which the puruṣa can be isolated and extricated. (We must note here that while on occasion we use the language, as do the commentators, more appropriate to Vedānta—of puruṣa being extricated or liberated—we do so rhetorically; in fact, as will be discussed, puruṣa is and has always been eternally free, liberated, and autonomous, according to Sāṅkhya. It is the mind, not puruṣa, that must become enlightened).

Sāṅkhya seems to have been the earliest philosophical system to have taken shape in the late Vedic period, and, indeed, it has permeated almost all subsequent Hindu traditions: Vedānta, Purānic, Vaiṣṇava, Śaivite, Śāivite, Tāntric, and even the medicinal traditions such as āyurveda. Larson goes so far as to say, “Buddhist philosophy and terminology, Yoga philosophy, early Vedānta speculation, and the great regional theologies of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism are all, in an important sense, footnotes and/or reactions to a living ‘tradition text’ of Sāṅkhya” (1999, 732). Indeed, Larson has long seen the classical Yoga of Patañjali as a type of “neo-Sāṅkhya,” an updating by those within the old Sāṅkhya tradition in an attempt to bring it into conversation with the more technical philosophical traditions that had emerged by the third to fifth centuries C.E., particularly the challenges represented by Buddhist thought (1999, 2008).

While this may have been true for the systematized Yoga articulated by Patañjali in the second century C.E., it has also been argued that Sāṅkhya itself evolved out of much earlier primordial Yoga origins. We can refer here again to the Indus Valley seal from the third millennium B.C.E. of a horned figure sitting in a distinctly yoga-like pose, which points to some kind of yoga practice as a primordial element on the Indian subcontinent. Schreiner’s statistical analysis of the context and content of the references to Yoga and Sāṅkhya in the Mahābhārata—the richest literary source for considering the origins of Yoga—finds Yoga to be more original and Sāṅkhya a later appendage formulated to provide the practices with some philosophical rationale. Schreiner provides an
intriguing image of the proto-Sāṅkhya philosopher:

Those [Sāṅkhya] redactors ... were ... probably not practicing Yogins, but rather (perhaps) meticulous scholars, scribes with archival ambitions, thinkers with a liking for numbers and classification (but afraid of the existential commitment to a path of Yoga which would lead to death and through dying, literally and spiritually). They may well have been yogabraṣṭa [the “fallen” or “unsuccessful” yogīs of the Gītā 6.37–45], Yogins who did not make it but were close enough to the practices and experiences of Yoga to be able to speak about it and intellectualize it. The yogabraṣṭa, one who did not reach the goal of no return, is probably the best candidate for becoming a Sāṅkhya philosopher. But he would have been a Yigin first. (1999, 776)

This provocative view might be kept in mind if we choose to wonder if Patañjali himself, and certainly his commentators, had experienced the truths of which they spoke in the sūtras and their commentaries, or whether some of them were even practitioners. In any event, for our present purposes, the metaphysics of Yoga is that of Sāṅkhya, and hence the history of the two traditions requires a few words.

As noted, the first important point to be stressed is that Sāṅkhya and Yoga should not be considered different schools until a very late date. In fact, the first reference to Yoga itself as a distinct school seems to be in the writings of Śaṅkara in the ninth century C.E. (Bronkhurst 1981). There are (to be precise) 884 references to Yoga in the Mahābhārata, “and the common denominator of all the epic definitions of Yoga is disciplined activity, earnest striving—by active (not rationalistic or intellectual) means” rather than the more popular translation and cognate “union” (Edgerton 1924, 38). There are 120 references to Sāṅkhya,30 defined, as noted, as reasoning, and none of these 1,000-odd combined references to the two approaches indicates any difference between them other than one of method in attaining the same goal: Yoga seeks the vision of ātman, the Upaniṣadic term for the puruṣa, through practice and mind control, and Sāṅkhya through knowledge and the intellect. Otherwise, “The knowers of Truth see that Sāṅkhya and Yoga are one” (XII.304.431).
This is amply expressed by Bhīṣma when specifically asked by Yudhisṭhira to explain the difference between Sāṅkhya and Yoga: “Both the followers of Sāṅkhya and those of Yoga praise their own way as the best ... The followers of Yoga rely on experiential methods (pratyākṣahetavah), and those of Sāṅkhya on scriptural interpretation (śāstraviniścayāḥ). I consider both these views true: Followed according to their instructions, both lead to the ultimate goal” (XII.289.7). And, again:

There is no knowledge equal to Sāṅkhya, there is no power (balaṃ) equal to Yoga; both of them are the same path, both, according to oral tradition (smṛtau), lead to deathlessness. People of little intelligence consider them to be different. We however, O king, see clearly that they are the same. What the followers of Yoga perceive, the same is experienced by the followers of Sāṅkhya. One who sees Yoga and Sāṅkhya as one, is a knower of Truth. (XII.304.1–4)

While presenting Yoga as a more action-based practice, Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gītā reiterates the same point: “A twofold division was established by Me of old ... jñāna-yoga, the yoga of knowledge, followed by Sāṅkhya, and karma-yoga, the yoga of action followed by the yogīs” (III.3). Both lead to the same goal (V.2), and anyone who considers them to be different is “childish” (V.4–5—even as Kṛṣṇa clearly favors the action-based approach, III.4ff; V.6ff). Even where the Gītā articulates a more Patañjalian type of Yoga, which it calls dhyāna, it is still contrasted with Sāṅkhya merely in terms of method leading to the same goal: “Some behold the ātman, self, by dhyāna, meditation, others by Sāṅkhya” (XIII.25). Nowhere in the Gītā or the entire Mahābhārata is there any indication that these two approaches constitute different schools or metaphysical systems. Sāṅkhya and Yoga are merely different approaches to salvation until well into the Common Era. This continuity and confluence between Sāṅkhya and Yoga is reflected in early sources for well over a millennium, including Patañjali’s time of writing as well as that of Vyāsa, the first and primary commentator on the Yoga Sūtras in the fifth century C.E. Vyāsa explicitly concludes the chapters of his bhāṣya commentary with the colophon śrī-patañjale sāṅkhya-pravacane yoga-śāstre, “Patañjali’s Yoga treatise, an exposition
on Sāṅkhya.”

Another important point to consider when tracing the origins of Yoga is that in the epic, the ultimate liberation accruing from the practice of yoga (as with the practice of Sāṅkhya) is conceived in a number of passages (for example, XII.228.38; 231.17; 246.8) in terms of the monistic goal of unity of the individual soul, puruṣa/ātman with the one ultimate Absolute called Brahman in the Upaniṣads (expressed variously in different Upaniṣads in both personal or impersonal terms). The later classical Sāṅkhya tradition is distinctly dualistic—ultimate reality consists of two ingredients, puruṣa and prākṛti, consciousness and matter—rather than monistic—subscribing to the one absolute principle called Brahman in the Upaniṣads. The Mahābhārata evidences a transitional period between the Upaniṣads and the later tradition as expressed in the Yoga Sūtras; the dualistic puruṣa and prākṛti principles associated with Sāṅkhya/Yoga are retained, but they are subsumed under the higher Upaniṣadic union with Brahman. This monistic source in the epic is expressed either in terms commonly used for the impersonal Brahman, or as personal Īśvara, God, Nārāyaṇa.33 Brahman is not mentioned either in the Yoga Sūtras or Sāṅkhya Kārikās (the text that became to later Sāṅkhya what the Yoga Sūtras became to Yoga, that is, the primary text of the system).34 Both these texts deal with the liberation of the individual ātman rather than the relationship of this ātman with the supreme ātman, or Brahman, which was the concern of the Vedānta tradition (however, Brahman is mentioned by the commentators, and thus the Upaniṣadic matrix always remains as a backdrop). And, although Patañjali also accepts a personal Īśvara, which he equates with the sonic form of Brahman in the Upaniṣads, om (I.23ff), he introduces him in the context of meditation rather than cosmology or metaphysics.

In short, Yoga and Sāṅkhya in the Upaniṣads and epic simply refer to the two distinct paths of salvation by meditation and salvation by knowledge, respectively. Followers of both schools upheld belief in the puruṣa’s ultimate union with a developed form of the Upaniṣadic Brāhman, expressed in both personal and impersonal terms, which simply points to the fact that all orthodox Hindus of the day tended to accept those beliefs. The chief difference in the trajectory that Patañjali’s Yoga took was its exclusive focus on the psychological mechanisms and
techniques involved in *puruṣa’s* liberation. Similarly, later Sāṅkhya concerned itself with the specificities of *prakṛti’s* ingredients from which *puruṣa* was to be extricated, “which in the earlier Upaniṣads had been rather ignored, not because its existence was denied, but because it did not interest the earliest thinkers, who were absorbed in the contemplation of the One Ultimate Reality” (Edgerton 1924, 32).

Before concluding this section on the pre-Patañjali background of Yoga, one might add, as an aside, that from the nine hundred–odd references to *yoga* in the *Mahābhārata*, there are only two mentions of āsana, posture, the third limb of Patañjali’s system.35 Neither the Upaniṣads nor the Gītā mentions posture in the sense of stretching exercises and bodily poses (the term is used in the Gītā verse above in its sense as physical seat rather than bodily postures), āsana is not mentioned as one of the six limbs of the *Maitrī Upaniṣad*, and Patañjali himself dedicates only three brief *sūtras* from his text to this aspect of the practice. The reconfiguring, presentation, and perception of *yoga* as primarily or even exclusively āsana in the sense of bodily poses, then, is essentially a modern Western phenomenon and finds no precedent in the premodern *yoga* tradition, although the fourteenth-century *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā* does dedicate one of its four chapters to āsana.

**PATAÑJALI’S YOGA**

*Patañjali and the Six Schools of Indian Philosophy*

In addition to various heterodox schools such as Jainism and Buddhism, what came to be identified (in much later times) as six schools of orthodox thought also evolved out of the Upaniṣadic period (of course, there were various other streams of thought that did not gain this status but nonetheless emerged as significant presences on the religious landscape of Hinduism). As we have seen with Sāṅkhya and Yoga, the streams of thought that later became associated with these six schools were not necessarily conceived of in that way until the end of the first millennium C.E. In fact, it might be more accurate to consider these traditions distinctive religiophilosophical expressions that emerged from the Vedic period with different focuses rather than actual schools in the
earlier period. They shared much of their overall worldview but dedicated themselves to different areas of human knowledge and praxis, and while differing quite considerably on metaphysical and epistemological issues, they nonetheless did not necessarily reject the authority of the other traditions in other specific areas where these did not conflict with their own positions. Thus, for example, the Nyāya logician school accepts Yoga as the method to be used to realize the ātman as understood within that tradition, and Vedānta objects to it only to the extent that it does not refer to Brahman as the ultimate source of puruṣa and prakṛti, not to its authenticity in meditative technique and practice. Even a dharmaśāstra text like the Yājñavalkya Smṛti, which occupies itself exclusively with dharma, codes of ritual, personal, familial, civic, and social duties, states in its opening section that from the abundance of religious scriptures dealing with the plethora of human affairs: “this alone is the highest dharma, that one should see the ātman by yoga” (I.8). Thus, in early Sanskrit texts Yoga referred to a form of rigorous discipline and concentration for attaining the direct perception of the ātman and gaining liberation that was appropriated and tailored by different traditions according to their metaphysical understanding of the self, rather than a distinct school.

In any event, eventually an orthodox school of Yoga came to be identified with Patañjali, the compiler of these sūtras, and took its place alongside other traditions that also had distinct sūtra traditions, as one of the “six schools of Indian philosophy.” These are Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṁsā, and Vedānta. These schools were deemed orthodox because they retained at least a nominal allegiance to the sacred Vedic texts—unlike the so-called heterodox schools such as Buddhism and Jainism, which rejected them. Since various ingredients of these schools are referred to in our commentaries, we can briefly refer to some of their salient features.

As mentioned, probably the oldest Indian speculative tradition is Sāṅkhya, later to be referred to as the sister school of Yoga insofar as they shared the same metaphysics. This featured an analysis of reality in which all categories of the created world were perceived as evolving out of a primordial matter, prakṛti, from which the puruṣa, which is the term used by Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools for the ātman, must be extricated.
Vaiśeṣika was another metaphysical system, one that perceived the created world as ultimately consisting of various eternal categories such as atoms rather than as evolutes from a singular category of prakṛti. This came to be “sistered” with Nyāya, a school that accepted the basics of Vaiśeṣika metaphysics but became distinguished by the aspect of epistemology dealing with the formulation of categories and conditions of valid reasoning and the refinement of rules of logic, such that the debates between the various schools emerging from this period could be conducted according to agreed-upon conventions of what constituted valid or invalid argumentation. Vedānta was a school dedicated to another aspect of epistemology: attempting to systematize the heterogeneous teachings of the Upaniṣads through a consistent hermeneutics. Its concerns were the relationship between the manifest world; Brahma, the Absolute Truth and ground of all being; and ātman, the localized aspect of this Truth. This was associated with Mīmāṁsā, since both of these schools occupied themselves with hermeneutics, the interpretation of the ancient Vedic texts. The Mīmāṁsā was the main orthodox school that attempted to perpetuate the old Vedic sacrificial rites by composing a philosophical justification for their continued performance.

Indic schools, both orthodox and heterodox, interacted intellectually and sometimes polemically, debating and mutually enriching each other, and their emergence pushed the old Vedic cult further into the background. From this rich and fertile post-Vedic context, then, emerged an individual called Patañjali whose systematization of the heterogeneous practices of yoga came to be authoritative for all subsequent practitioners and eventually reified into one of the six schools of classical Indian philosophy. It is important to stress here again that Patañjali is not the founder, or inventor, of yoga, the origins of which, as should be clear, had long preceded him in primordial and mythic times. Patañjali systematized the preexisting traditions and authored what came to be the seminal text for yoga discipline. There was never one uniform school of ur-Yoga (or of any Indic school of thought, for that matter); there was a plurality of variants and certainly different conceptualizations of meditative practices that were termed yoga. For example, whereas Patañjali organizes his system into eight limbs, and
the *Mahābhārata*, too, speaks of yoga as having eight “qualities” (*aṣṭaguṇita*, XII.304.7), as early as the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* of the second century B.C.E. there is reference to a six-limbed Yoga (VI.18), as there is in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (VI.7.91), and this numerical schema was retained in the later *Gorakṣa-saṁhitā* and the *Dhyānabindu* and *Amṛtabindu Upaniṣads*. Along similar lines, there are various references to the twelve yogas and seven *dhāraṇās* (*dhāraṇā* is considered the sixth of Patañjali’s limbs) in the *Mahābhārata*. Yoga is thus best understood as a cluster of techniques, some more and some less systematized, that pervaded the landscape of ancient India. These overlapped with and were incorporated into the various traditions of the day such as the *jñāna*, knowledge-based traditions, providing these systems with a practical method and technique for attaining an experienced-based transformation of consciousness. Patañjali’s particular systematization of these techniques in time emerged as the most dominant, but by no means exclusive, version.

Indeed, internal to his own text, in his very first *sūtra*, *atha yogānuśāsanam*, Patañjali indicates that he is continuing the teachings of yoga (the prefix *anu-* indicates the continuation of the action denoted by the verb), and the traditional commentators certainly perceive him in this light. In point of fact, the tradition itself ascribes the actual origins of Yoga to the legendary figure Hiranyakartra (see commentary to I.1). Moreover, evidence that Patañjali was addressing an audience already familiar with the tenets of Yoga can be deduced from the *Yoga Sūtras* themselves. For example, on occasion, Patañjali mentions one member of a list of items followed by “etc.,” thereby assuming his audience to be familiar with the remainder of the list. Thus, he refers to *aṇimādi*, “the mystic power of *aṇima*, etc.,” indicating that the other seven mystic powers were a standard, well-known group. He likewise speaks of a “sevenfold” wisdom without further explanation (II.27). But, in short, because he produced the first systematized treatise on the subject, Patañjali was to become the prime or seminal figure for the Yoga tradition after his times and accepted as such by other schools. To all intents and purposes, his *Yoga Sūtras* was to become the canon for the mechanics of generic yoga, so to speak, that other systems tinkered with and flavored with their own theological trappings.
As with the reputed founders of the other schools of thought, very little is known about Patañjali himself. Tradition, first explicitly evidenced in the commentary of Bhoja Rāja in the eleventh century C.E. (and continuing to this day in a verse often recited at the beginning of yoga classes in the Iyengar community), considers him to be the same Patañjali who wrote the primary commentary on the famous grammar by Pāṇini and also ascribes to him authorship of a treatise on medicine. There is an ongoing discussion among scholars as to whether this was likely or not; my own view is that there is not much to be gained by challenging the evidence of traditional accounts in the absence of evidence to the contrary that is uncontroversial or at least adequately compelling.

Patañjali’s date can only be inferred from the content of the text itself. Unfortunately, most classical Sanskrit texts from the ancient period tend to be impossible to date with accuracy, and there are always dissenters against whatever dates become standard in academic circles. Most scholars date the text shortly after the turn of the Common Era (circa first to second century), but it has been placed as early as several centuries before that. Other than the fact that the Yoga Sūtras were written no later than the fifth century, the date cannot be determined with exactitude.

The Yoga Sūtras as a Text

The sūtra writing style is that used by the philosophical schools of ancient India (thus we have Vedānta Sūtras, Nyāya Sūtras, etc.). The term sūtra (from the Sanskrit root sū, cognate with sew) literally means a thread and essentially refers to a terse and pithy philosophical statement in which the maximum amount of information is packed into the minimum number of words. Knowledge systems were handed down orally in ancient India, and thus source material was kept minimal partly with a view to facilitating memorization. Being composed for oral transmission and memorization, the Yoga Sūtras, and sūtra traditions in general, allowed the student to “thread together” in memory the key ingredients of the more extensive body of material with which he or she would become thoroughly acquainted. Thus sūtras often begin with connecting words linking them with the previous sūtras, typically,
pronouns or conjunctions beginning with \( t \) (such as \( tataḥ \) and \( tatra \)). Each \( sūtra \) served as a mnemonic device to structure the teachings and assist memorization. I sometimes compare them to a series of bullet points that a lecturer might jot down prior to giving a presentation, to structure the talk and provide reminders of the main points intended to be covered; thus, from a dozen shorthand phrases incomprehensible to anyone else, a lecturer might discourse for a couple of hours.\(^{45}\)

The succinctness of the \( \text{Yoga Sūtras} \)—it contains about 1,200 words in 195 \( sūtras \)—indicates that they were construed to be a manual requiring unpacking. That the \( sūtras \), or aphorisms, are in places cryptic, esoteric, and incomprehensible in their own terms points to the fact that they were intended to be used in conjunction with a teacher: Feuerstein calls them “maps” (1980, 117). Thus, while some of the \( sūtras \) are somewhat straightforward, the fact is that we cannot construe meaning from many \( sūtras \) of Patañjali’s primary text. Indeed, some are so obtuse that they are undecipherable in their own terms. Therefore, it is, in my view, an unrealistic (if not impossible) task to attempt to bypass commentary in the hope of retrieving some original pure, precommentarial set of interpretations (and those attempting to do so without extensive training in the philosophical universe of India at the beginning of the Common Era frequently have some sectarian or other agenda underpinning their enterprise).

Before considering the commentaries on the \( \text{Yoga Sūtras} \), some mention must be made of the view of a number of earlier critical scholars that the text is a composite, composed of a number of layers. Starting with the famous Indologist Max Müller (1899), a number of scholars, including Paul Deussen (1920), Richard Garbe (1897), J. W. Hauer (1958), and Erich Frauwallner (1953), have argued that the text is a patchwork. Deussen, for example, maintains that I.1–16 forms one unit devoted to ordinary awareness; I.17–51, another unit, devoted to \( \text{samādhi} \), meditative awareness; II.1–27, a third, to \( \text{kriyā-yoga} \), preparatory practice; and II.29–III.55, along with \text{Chapter IV}, a fourth unit devoted to the eight-limbed process and other assorted topics.\(^{46}\) Hauer, Garbe, Frauwallner, Dasgupta, and others added various nuances to the matter.\(^{47}\) These efforts, while meritorious, have all been subject to critique.\(^{48}\) The reason for such lack of consensus is clearly that there is
insufficient evidence, hence “the task of finding various layers will always be arbitrary” (Larson 2008, 91). The oral traditions of India and their embodiment in the shape of written primary texts have proved to be remarkably resilient, stemming from the Indian reverence and respect for sacred tradition. While this certainly does not grant them immunity from text-critical scholarship, in a work such as the Yoga Sūtras, one is best advised to look very carefully for internal structural, semantic, or logical coherency and rationale before assuming that an apparent sudden break in (modern linear notions of) the sequencing of subject matter indicates a later insertion. More recent scholarship has tended to find internal consistency in most of the text.

In any event, the only disjunction in the text that presents itself to my reading occurs in Chapter II and is best explained by postulating two distinct Yoga traditions that were patched together by Patañjali. The chapter begins with the introduction of a practice called kriyā-yoga, which is defined as consisting of tapas, austerity; svādhyāya, study; and Īśvara-prāṇidhāna, devotion to God. This practice eliminates the kleśas, obstacles to yoga, which the text proceeds to discuss in a coherent sequential manner, and the section culminates in II.26–27 by stating that viveka-khyāti, discrimination, results from the destruction of avidyā, ignorance, the cornerstone of these kleśas. Sūtras II.28–29 then suddenly announce a new practice, the yoga of aṣṭāṅga, eight limbs, which culminates in this same state of viveka-khyāti. There is no indication of the relationship between this practice and the kriyā-yoga outlined in the beginning of the chapter. But that they might represent different traditions is a valid consideration given that the second limb of the eight-limbed practice consists of observing five niyamas, ethical observances, three of which are identical to the three ingredients of kriyā-yoga. Why these three items comprising the entirety of a yoga practice called kriyā are then placed alongside two other items (śauca, cleanliness; and santoṣa, contentment) as the five ingredients comprising the second limb (niyama) of a differently arranged type of yoga practice called aṣṭāṅga is puzzling. But Feuerstein’s opinion (1979) that they most likely indicate that Patañjali had drawn upon and merged two different traditions with overlapping but differently organized schemas is certainly very plausible.
We therefore find ourselves sympathetic to an alternative and, in our opinion, fruitful way of looking at the issue that respects the historical integrity of the text without denying the likelihood of its containing various disparate strands. R. S. Bhattacharya is willing to concede that “a large part of the sūtras are taken by Patañjali from his predecessors either verbatim or with slight changes” (1985, 52). From this perspective, whatever different strands are contained in the sūtras (and we are able to feel any confidence only about the one noted above), it is Patañjali who has pieced them together; the text is not a hodgepodge of successive layers interpolated into some ur-text over the years. This point of view respects the traditional understanding of the text’s integrity of authorship (needless to say, in the perspective of the commentators, the work is a harmonious and logical whole), while not ignoring some of the more persuasive observations of modern critical scholars, and one that fits well with the previous discussion of Patañjali as a systematizer of preexisting traditions.

The Commentaries on the Yoga Sūtras

Knowledge systems in ancient India were transmitted orally, from master to disciple, with an enormous emphasis on fidelity toward the original set of sūtras upon which the system is founded, the master unpacking the dense and truncated aphorisms to the students, and this system continues in traditional contexts today. Periodically, teachers of particular prominence wrote commentaries on the primary texts of many of these knowledge systems. Some of these gained such wide currency that the primary text was always studied in conjunction with a commentary, particularly since, as noted, texts such as the Yoga Sūtras (and, even more so, the Vedānta Sūtras) were designed to be “unpacked” and hence contain numerous sūtras that are incomprehensible without elaboration. One must stress, therefore, that our understanding of Patañjali’s text is completely dependent on the interpretations of later commentators; it is incomprehensible, in places, in its own terms.

This, of course, leaves open the possibility that later commentators might have misinterpreted, or, perhaps more likely, reinterpreted aspects of the text by filtering ancient notions through the theological or sectarian perspectives of their times. Part of the academic approach to a
text involves identifying and separating diachronic and synchronic developments and philosophical context. This is of course important, as ideas are never static but develop across time and context, constantly cross-fertilizing with other currents of thought. Thus scholars have always been wary of the extent to which the commentaries are imposing later concerns and perspectives on the text that are alien to Patañjali’s intentions. Modern methods of text criticism sometimes bypass the commentaries and, by comparing the context, style, terminology, content, and structure of individual sūtras or sequences of sūtras themselves, attempt to determine what an author’s original intentions might have been prior to exegetical overlay. This includes comparing Patañjali’s sūtras with other earlier texts, particularly Buddhist ones. Critical observations of this nature can often be very insightful, and I include throughout the text some of the analyses and correlations I hold to be more cogent.\textsuperscript{52}

In any event, in terms of the overall accuracy of the commentaries, the present commentary represents the view that there is an a priori likelihood that the interpretations of the sūtras were faithfully preserved and transmitted orally through the few generations from Patañjali until the first commentary by Vyāsa in the fifth century (and we will see that some commentators, both traditional and modern, even hold Vyāsa’s commentary to be that of Patañjali himself). In other words, unless compelling arguments are presented to the contrary, one must be cautious about questioning the overall accuracy of this transmission. Certainly, the commentators from Vyāsa onward are remarkably consistent in their interpretations of the essential metaphysics of the system for over fifteen hundred years, which is in marked contrast with the radical differences in essential metaphysical understanding distinguishing commentators of the Vedānta school (a Rāmānuja or a Madhva from a Śaṅkara, for example). While the fifteenth-century commentator Vijñānabhikṣu, for example, may quibble with the ninth-century commentator Vācaspati Miśra, the differences generally are in detail, not essential metaphysical elements. And while Vijñānabhikṣu may inject a good deal of Vedāntic concepts into the basic dualism of the Yoga system, this is generally an addition (conspicuous and identifiable) to the system rather than a reinterpretation of it. There is thus a
remarkably consistent body of knowledge associated with the Yoga school for the best part of a millennium and a half, and consequently one can speak of the traditional understanding of the sūtras in the premodern period without overly generalizing or essentializing. One therefore has grounds to expect compelling reasons as to why this uniformity should not have been the case in the couple of centuries that may have separated Patañjali and Vyāsa.

Be all this as it may, the task we have set for ourselves in the present work is not to engage extensively in textual criticism but to attempt to represent something of the premodern history of interpretations associated with the school of Yoga as it has been transmitted for, at the very least, fifteen hundred years, and as it has been accepted by both scholastics and practitioners over this period. This, surely, constitutes a formidable realm of legitimacy and authority in its own right. One thus has grounds to speak of a tradition, and it is this Yoga tradition that the present commentary sets out to represent through some of its primary expressions prior to the modern explosion of interest in yoga in the West.

The first extant commentary by Vyāsa, typically dated to around the fourth or fifth century, attained a status almost as canonical as the primary text by Patañjali himself. Consequently, the study of the Yoga Sūtras has always been embedded in the commentary that tradition attributes to this greatest of literary figures. So when we speak of the philosophy of Patañjali, what we really mean (or should mean) is the understanding of Patañjali according to Vyāsa: It is Vyāsa who determined what Patañjali’s abstruse sūtras meant, and all subsequent commentators elaborated on Vyāsa. While, on occasion, modern scholarship has insightfully questioned whether Vyāsa has accurately represented Patañjali in all instances,53 for the Yoga tradition itself, his commentary becomes as canonical as Patañjali’s (in fact, a number of traditional sources identify Vyāsa as none other than Patañjali himself54). Indeed, the Vyāsa bhāṣya (commentary) becomes inseparable from the sūtras, an extension of it (such that on occasion commentators differ as to whether a line belongs to the commentary or the primary text55). From one sūtra of a few words, Vyāsa might write several lines of comment without which the sūtra remains incomprehensible. It cannot be overstated that Yoga philosophy is Patañjali’s philosophy as
understood and articulated by Vyāsa.

In traditional narrative, Vyāsa, also known as Vedavyāsa or Vyāsadēva, is the legendary “divider” of the four Vedas. The Vedas are the oldest preserved literature in India and, indeed, in the Indo-European language family. Tradition considers that there was originally only one Veda, and at the beginning of the present world age this was subdivided into four by Vyāsa. Vyāsa is also considered to be the recorder of the immense Mahābhārata, as well as the compiler of the Purāṇas, the largest body of Sanskrit writing, containing most of the stories and ritual details that underpin what has come to be known as Hinduism. Irrespective of the historical accuracy of such literary prolifigacy, Vyāsa’s status in traditional Sanskrit sources is that of the primary literary figure of ancient India. Modern scholars, even accepting the actual existence of a sage Vyāsa, consider our Vyāsa, the primary commentator of Patañjali’s text, to be a later figure who penned his commentary under the name of the legendary sage in order to invest it with indisputable authority. Be that as it may, it is essential to recognize that Patañjali’s Yoga system has essentially been handed down through the centuries as Patañjali’s system as understood by the commentary attributed to Vyāsa. Vyāsa’s commentary, the Bhāṣya, thus attains the status of canon and is almost never questioned by any subsequent commentator. Later commentators base their commentaries on unpacking Vyāsa’s Bhāṣya—rarely critiquing it but rather expanding or elaborating on it. This point of reference results in a marked uniformity in the interpretation of the sūtras in the premodern period as noted above.

The next commentary considered in the present work is the Vivaraṇa. Although its authorship is debated, it is attributed to the great Vedāntin Śaṅkara in the eighth to ninth centuries C.E. Śaṅkara was to become the most influential commentator of the Vedānta school, and all subsequent commentators on the Vedānta, whether in agreement or disagreement with his advaita, nondual interpretations, were constrained to define their own theologies in relation to his. It has remained unresolved since it was first questioned in 1927 whether the commentary on the Yoga Sūtras assigned to Śaṅkara is authentically penned by him. The advaita, nondual, aspect of Śaṅkara’s thought, which is otherwise in stark
opposition to the dualism and realism of Yoga metaphysics, is certainly not prominent in the Viṣvaraṇa to my eye—although one must note Hacker’s intriguing theory that Śaṅkara was originally an adherent of Patañjali’s yoga prior to becoming the famous Vedāntin. There is only one surviving manuscript of this text, and all that can be determined with certainty is that it existed in the fifteenth century.

The next best known commentator after Vyāsa, Vācaspati Miśra, was a Maithila Brāhmaṇa from the Bihar region of India, whose commentary, the Tattva-vaiśāradī, can be dated with more confidence to the ninth century. Vācaspati Miśra was a prolific intellectual, penning important commentaries on the Vedānta, Sāṅkhya, Nyāya, and Mimāṁsā schools in addition to his commentary on the Yoga Sūtras. Despite the differences among these schools, Vācaspati Miśra is noteworthy for his ability to present each tradition in its own terms, without displaying any overt personal predilection. Erudite scholastics of the Yoga tradition would have been familiar with other commentaries in addition to that of Vyāsa, and Vācaspati Miśra’s Tattva-vaiśāradī is the next most authoritative for the overall tradition after the Bhāṣya of Vyāsa. As an aside, this eclectic scholasticism contrasts with the experiential focus of yoga and makes one wonder whether Vācaspati Miśra was a practicing yogī.

A fascinating Arabic translation of Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras was undertaken by the famous Arab traveler and historian al-Bīrūnī (973–1050), the manuscript of which was discovered in Istanbul in 1922. Al-Bīrūnī translates the sūtras in the form of a dialogue and interweaves it with “that over-lengthy commentary.” However, the translators hold that this commentary to which he refers and had at his disposal does not appear to have been that of Vyāsa and “had probably been written at a time when the Bhāṣya of Veda-vyāsa had not attained any great sanctity or authority ... [and] may represent a hitherto unknown line of interpretation” (Pines and Gelblum 1966, 304). This is a fascinating consideration, if true, since al-Bīrūnī’s commentary, which seems to be in complete accordance with Vyāsa’s, adds weight to our own opinion that there is little evidence to deny the accuracy of Vyāsa’s Bhāṣya. (In other words, if al-Bīrūnī is following another commentary almost contemporaneous with the Bhāṣya and it reads Patañjali with the same interpretation as Vyāsa, the notion of an intact oral lineage from
Patañjali informing both commentaries is enhanced.

Roughly contemporaneous with al-Bīrūnī is the eleventh-century king Bhoja Rāja, poet, scholar, and patron of the arts, sciences, and esoteric traditions, whose clan asserted independent rule in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh, central India, in the mid-tenth century. While Bhoja Rāja is certainly a welcome exemplar of an important political figure who engaged deeply with the Yoga tradition, his commentary, called the Rāja-mārtanda, essentially reiterates the work of Vyāsa without adding much elaboration, although there are occasionally very valuable insights. In contrast, in the fifteenth century, Vijñānabhikṣu wrote to my mind the most insightful and useful commentary after that of Vyāsa’s, the Yoga-vārttika. Vijñānabhikṣu was another prolific scholar, to whom eighteen philosophical treatises on Sāṅkhya, Vedānta, and the Upaniṣads are attributed. He is noteworthy for his attempt to harmonize Vedānta and Sāṅkhya concepts, subscribing to a metaphysical view of bhedabheda, difference in nondifference, with regard to the relationship between the individual soul and the Absolute Truth. (He thus periodically critiques the nondualism of the Vedāntin Śaṅkara. As a Vaiṣṇava (a follower of an ancient sect holding Viṣṇu to be the supreme Īśvara), his commentary also enhances the devotional element and tenor of the text, as indeed do most of the commentaries. His translator, Rukmani, finds him to be “an uncompromising ascetic, steadfast in the principles of Yoga” (1997, 623). With regard to the question whether he was a practicing yogī himself, despite his scholasticism, he claims in another of his publications on Yoga, the Yoga-sāra, that he is expounding the secrets of Sāṅkhya and Yoga as he himself directly experienced them.

In the sixteenth century, another Vedāntin, Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, wrote his commentary, called Yogamaṇi-prabhā, which also adds little to the previous commentaries. But there are valuable insights contained in the final commentary considered for the present study, the Bhāsvatī by Hariharānanda Āranya. While it is not always clear to what extent some of the commentators were practicing yogīs and to what extent they were scholastics, we can affirm that Hariharānanda certainly was a fully dedicated yogī. From his early life, Hariharānanda lived a renounced, ascetic life as a sannyāsī, including several years in solitude meditating in the caves of west India and the last twenty-one years of his life in a
hermitage where he could be contacted by his disciples only through a window looking into a hall. Although he is technically a “modern” commentator (1869–1947), and this present commentary concerns itself with the premodern, that is, the commentaries of the precolonial period, it is included here because, as a Sāṅkhya ācārya, master, Hariharānanda inhabited a traditional universe in terms of his own personal perspectives of reality as well as in his lifestyle. His commentary adds useful insight to the Yoga tradition from a context nearer our own times; his is a standpoint exposed to Western thought but still thoroughly grounded in tradition.
THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE YOGA SŪTRAS

The Dualism of Yoga

Although situated as one of what later came to be known as the six schools of classical Hindu philosophy, Patañjali’s text is not so much a philosophical treatise as a psychosomatic technique of meditative practice. As a dualistic system that presupposes an ultimate and absolute distinction between matter and consciousness, it is concerned with presenting a psychology of mind and an understanding of human consciousness rather than a metaphysics of all manifest reality. In actuality, Patañjali’s text reads more like a manual for the practitioner interested in plumbing the depths of human consciousness than a philosophical exposition.

While the distinction between the material body and a conscious soul has a well-known history in Western Greco-Abrahamic religion and thought, Yoga differs from most comparable Western schools of dualism by regarding not just the physical body but also the mind, ego, and all cognitive functions as belonging to the realm of inert matter. This metaphysical presupposition of Yogic (and, for that matter, much Indic) thought is essential to an understanding of the basics of Yoga. The dualism fundamental to Platonic or Aristotelian thought, or to Paul or Augustine, is not at all the dualism of Yoga. Perhaps Descartes most famously represents the generic Western notions of the dualism between self and body in his Meditations: The self thinks and lacks extension, the body is unthinking and extended. In other words, there are two types of realities in classical Western dualism: physical reality, which is extended in space and empirically perceivable, and mental reality, which does not have spatial extension and is not empirically perceivable but private. For Descartes, following early Greek notions of the soul (tellingly called psychē), it is the soul that is res cogitans, the thinking being engaging in the cognitive functions of dubitans, intelligens, affirmans, negans, volens, nolens, imaginans quoque, et sentiens.
In the Yoga tradition, the dualism is not between the material body and physical reality on one hand, and mental reality characterized by thought on the other, but between pure awareness and all objects of awareness—whether these objects are physical and extended, or internal and nonextended. In other words, in Sāṅkhya and Yoga, thought, feeling, emotion, memory, etc., are as material or physical as the visible ingredients of the empirical world. As an aside, in this regard, Yoga has a curious overlap with modern reductive materialism, which holds that the internal world of thought and feeling is ultimately reducible to neurological brain functioning and other purely material phenomena, as well as with the computational procedures of “artificial intelligence.” It thereby offers an unexpected overlap with modern functionalist accounts of mind that merits further exploration (avoiding some of the pitfalls in the Cartesian view in this regard, while, simultaneously, unlike Artificial Intelligence, retaining consciousness itself as independent of cognition).

Pure consciousness, called puruṣa in this system, animates and pervades the incessant fluctuations of thought—the inner turmoil of fears, emotions, cravings, etc.—but the two are completely distinct entities.

There is thus a radical distinction between the mind, which is considered to be very subtle but nonetheless inanimate matter, and pure consciousness, which is the actual animate life force. Animated by consciousness, it is the mind that imagines itself to be the real self rather than a material entity external to consciousness. The mind is therefore the seat of ignorance and bondage; puruṣa is “witness, free, indifferent, a spectator and inactive” (Sāṅkhya Kārikā XIX). Therefore, while the goal of the entire yoga system, and of Indic soteriological (liberation-seeking) thought in general, is to extricate pure consciousness from its entanglement with the internal workings of the mind as well as the external senses of the body, in fact, according to Sāṅkhya, “no one is actually either bound or liberated, nor does anyone transmigrate; it is only prakṛti in her various manifestations who is bound, transmigrates and released” (Sāṅkhya Kārikā LXII). Puruṣa is eternal and therefore not subject to changes such as bondage and liberation; in the Yoga tradition, the quest for liberation, in other words human agency, is a function of the prākṛtic mind, not of puruṣa. (We will revisit the implications of this fundamental principle and—since it is perceived by
its detractors as the Achilles’ heel of an otherwise meritorious system—the reactions to it from other Indic schools of thought in our concluding reflections.) Thus, although the traditional commentators (and the present commentary) sometimes say “puruṣa misidentifies itself with prakṛti” or “puruṣa seeks freedom,” these are rhetorical or pedagogical statements. Puruṣa has never been bound; all notions of identity whether bound or liberated are taking place in the prākṛtic mind. In conclusion, then, Yoga claims to provide a system by which the practitioner can directly realize his or her puruṣa, the soul or innermost conscious self, through mental practices.

The Sāṅkhya Metaphysics of the Text

We have discussed how Yoga and Sāṅkhya are not to be considered distinct schools until well after Patañjali’s time, but instead as different approaches or methods toward enlightenment. While there are minor differences between the two traditions, Sāṅkhya provides the metaphysical or theoretical basis for the realization of puruṣa, and Yoga offers the technique or practice itself. While the Yoga tradition does not agree with the Sāṅkhya view that metaphysical analysis, that is, jñāna, knowledge, constitutes a sufficient path toward enlightenment in and of itself, the metaphysical presuppositions of the Yoga system assume those of Sāṅkhya. Therefore, an understanding of the infrastructure of Sāṅkhya metaphysics is a prerequisite to comprehending the dynamics underpinning both the essential constituents of Yoga psychology and practice, as well as the supplementary aspects of the system such as the siddhi mystic powers of Chapter III.

As with the cluster of Yoga traditions, there were numerous variants of Sāṅkhya, amply attested in the Mahābhārata (the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Hsüen Tsang’s disciple in the seventh century reports eighteen schools, and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa also refers to several). Only fragments quoted by other authors have survived from the works of the original teachers of the system—Kapila, the divine sage whom tradition assigns as the original expounder of Sāṅkhya, is mentioned as early as the Rg Veda (X.27.16), the earliest Indo-European text, as well as in a number of other ancient treatises. Additionally, there are quotes from Pañcasikha, who is sometimes quoted by our commentators, and Āsuri,
the latter’s disciple. There are various references to the original Sāṅkhya tradition as *Śaṣṭi-tantra*, containing sixty topics (for example, *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* LXXII), but the original text appears to be lost. The later *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa, which scholars assign to the fourth or fifth century, has by default become the seminal text of the tradition, just as Patañjali’s *Yoga Sūtras* has become for the Yoga tradition, and represents its developed, systematic form. It is quoted throughout the present commentary (as it is in the traditional commentaries).

In the Sāṅkhya (literally, numeration) system, the universe of animate and inanimate entities is perceived as ultimately the product of two ontologically distinct categories; hence this system is quintessentially *dvaita*, or dualistic in presupposition. These two categories are *prakṛti*, or the primordial material matrix of the physical universe, “the undifferentiated plenitude of being,” and *puruṣa*, the innumerable conscious souls or selves embedded within it. As a result of the interaction between these two entities, the material universe evolves in stages. The actual catalysts in this evolutionary process are the three *guṇas*, literally, strands or qualities, that are inherent in *prakṛti*. These are *sattva*, lucidity; *rajas*, action; and *tamas*, inertia. These *guṇas* are sometimes compared to the threads of a rope; just as a rope is a combination of threads, so all manifest reality consists of a combination of the *guṇas*. These *guṇas* are mentioned incessantly throughout the commentaries on the text, as are the various evolutes from *prakṛti*, and thus require some attention.

Given the meditative focus of the text, the *guṇas* are especially significant to *yoga* in terms of their psychological manifestation; in Yoga, the mind and therefore all psychological dispositions are *prakṛti* and thus also composed of the *guṇas*—the only difference between mind and matter being that the former has a larger preponderance of *sattva*, and the latter of *tamas*. Therefore, according to the specific intermixture and proportionality of the *guṇas*, living beings exhibit different types of mind-sets and psychological dispositions. Thus, when *sattva* (from the root *as*, “to be”) is predominant in an individual, the qualities of lucidity, tranquillity, wisdom, discrimination, detachment, happiness, and peacefulness manifest; when *rajas* (from the root *rañj*, to color, to redden) is predominant, hankering, attachment, energetic endeavor,
passion, power, restlessness, and creative activity manifest; and when tamas, the guṇa least favorable for yoga, is predominant, stillness, ignorance, delusion, disinterest, lethargy, sleep, and disinclination toward constructive activity manifest.

The guṇas are continually interacting and competing with each other, one guṇa becoming prominent for a while and overpowering the others, only to be eventually dominated by the increase of one of the other guṇas (Gītā XIV.10). The Sāṅkhyan text the Yuktī-dīpikā (13) compares them to the wick, fire, and oil of the lamp which, while opposed to each other in their nature, come together to produce light. Just as there are an unlimited variety of colors stemming from the mixture of the three primary colors, different hues being simply expressions of the specific proportionality of red, yellow, and blue, so the unlimited psychological dispositions of living creatures (and of physical forms) stem from the mixture of the guṇas, specific states of mind being the reflections of the particular proportionality of the three guṇas.

The guṇas underpin not only the philosophy of mind in Yoga but the activation and interaction of these guṇa qualities result in the production of the entirety of physical forms that also evolve from the primordial material matrix, prakṛti, under the same principle. Thus the physical composition of objects like air, water, stone, fire, etc., differs because of the constitutional makeup of specific guṇas: air contains more of the buoyancy of sattva; stones, more of the sluggishness of the tamas element; and fire, more rajas (although its buoyancy betrays its partial nature of sattva as well). The guṇas allow for the infinite plasticity of prakṛti and the objects of the world.

The process by which the universe evolves from prakṛti is usefully compared to the churning of milk: When milk receives a citric catalyst, yogurt, curds, or butter emerges. These immediate products can be manipulated to produce a further series of products—toffee, milk desserts, cheese, etc. Similarly, according to classical Sāṅkhya, the first evolute emerging from prakṛti when it is churned by the guṇas (sattva specifically) is buddhi, intelligence. Intelligence is characterized by the functions of judgment, discrimination, knowledge, ascertainment, will, virtue, and detachment, and sattva is predominant in it. This means that in its purest state, when the potential of rajas and tamas is
minimized, *buddhi* is primarily lucid, peaceful, happy, tranquil, and discriminatory, all qualities of *sattva*. It is the interface between *purusa* and all other *prakrti* evolutes. From this vantage point, it can direct awareness out into the objects and embroilments of the world, or, in its highest potential, it can become aware of the presence of *purusa* and consequently redirect itself toward complete realization of the true source of consciousness that pervades it.

**DIAGRAM OF THE TWENTY-FIVE TATTVAS OF CLASSICAL SĀŃKHYA**

Illustrating the evolution of *prakrti* according to the *Sāṃkhya-Kārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa
From buddhi, ahaṅkāra, or ego, is produced (aham, I + kāra, doing; referred to as asmitā in this text). This is characterized by the function of self-awareness and self-identity. It is the cognitive aspect that processes and appropriates external reality from the perspective of an individualized sense of self or ego—the notion of I and mine in human awareness. The Sāṅkhya Kārikās refers to it as conceit, abhimāna. It is essential in conceptualizing and distinguishing subject and object, the knower and the known. It creates the notion of an individual self, but additionally, it is from ahaṅkāra that both the objective external world, and the instruments through which one can interact with the world (the sense organs, etc.) evolve; in order for there to be a subject, there needs to be a world of objects and instruments through which to access this
world. *Ahaṅkāra* also limits the range of awareness to fit within and identify with the contours of the particular psychophysical organism within which it finds itself in any one embodiment, as opposed to another. In other words, the *ahaṅkāra* of a bug acts almost like a concave screen that refracts consciousness to pervade and appropriate the contours of the bug. If the bug dies and becomes, say, a dog and then a human in subsequent lives, the *ahaṅkāra* aspect of the *citta* adjusts to accommodate and absorb consciousness into these new environments. Thus the bug thinks it is a bug, the dog thinks it is a dog, and the human thinks he or she is a human.

*Ahaṅkāra* is thus not only pivotal in all experience but also is the critical midpoint in the choice between material identification or spiritual pursuit, the external material world or the pure *puruṣa*. Turned inward, *ahaṅkāra* (*asmitā*) can reflect awareness toward its source, *puruṣa*; turned outward, it can misidentify the self with its *prākṛtic* entrapment.  

It is the *ahaṅkāra* that determines whether one’s notion of self is spiritual or phenomenal.

When ego in turn is churned by the *guna* of *sattva* inherent in it, *manas*, the mind, is produced. The mind is the seat of the emotions, of like and dislike, and filters and processes the potentially enormous amount of data accessible to the senses. It primarily receives, sorts, categorizes and then transmits. It serves as the liaison between the activities of the senses transmitting data from the external world, and *buddhi*, intelligence; indeed, the only two times the term occurs in the *sūtras* is in connection with its relationship with the external senses. It therefore partakes both of internal and external functioning: internally, it is characterized by reflective synthesis (*saṅkalpa*) as noted above, while simultaneously being “a sense because it acts similar to the senses” (*Sāṅkhya Kārikā* XXVII).

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (3.9) compares the body to a chariot, the senses to the horses, the mind to the reins that control the horses, the *buddhi* to the driver who controls the reins and charts the course, and the *puruṣa* to the inactive passenger. *Buddhi*, intelligence; *ahaṅkāra*, ego; and *manas*, mind, together comprise the internal body (*antaḥkaraṇa*), the inner noetic world of thoughts, emotions, feelings, determination, will, cognitions, memories, etc. The *puruṣa* soul is cloaked in these psychic
layers prior to receiving a gross body and senses. As noted, the Yoga school, while using the terminology of (especially) buddhi, but also ahaṅkāra and manas, differs somewhat from that of Sāṅkhya in conceiving these three as interacting functions of the one citta, mind, rather than as three distinct metaphysical layers. Citta, then, is the term used by Patañjali and the commentators to refer to all three of these cognitive functions combined (thus it is not a separate evolute from prakṛti).

Moving onto more physical levels of reality, from the ego stirred by tamas emerge the tanmātras, or subtle elements—the energies or powers underpinning sound, sight, smell, taste, and touch. These are the generic energies behind the sensory powers, not specific sounds or varieties of tastes, etc., hence their name, tanmātra, only that (namely, the essences of these energies, not their particular individualized expressions). Since knowledge and illumination are qualities of sattva, the tanmātras are still very sāttvic in nature. These, in turn, sequentially produce the five mahābhūtas, or gross elements—ether, air, fire, water, and earth—the world of form, the actual physical, tangible stuff of the universe. This evolutionary sequence must be kept in mind in order to understand the metaphysics behind a number of sūtras in the Yoga Sūtras, particularly those that deal with the mystic powers.

The Sāṅkhya system is classified in Indian thought as satkārya, namely, that the effects of the world are present in their cause. This is one of the important points to keep in mind: Gross matter is actually an evolute or derivative of something subtler, the subtle elements, and these of something subtler still, the ego, which is an evolute of buddhi, intelligence. This means buddhi underpins all reality, even as buddhi itself is a manifestation of prakṛti and the guṇas, or, put differently, any expression of reality, subjective or objective, is nothing other than a manifestation of the guṇas. These evolutes are all called tattvas, thatnesses; they are the real constituents of “that” world out there perceived by the self.

The Goals of Yoga

According to Patañjali’s definition in the second sūtra, yoga is the cessation (nirodha) of the activities or permutations (vṛttis) of the citta.
The *vṛttis* refer to any sequence of thought, ideas, mental imaging, or cognitive act performed by the mind, intellect, or ego as defined above—in short, any state of mind whatsoever. It cannot be over-stressed that the mind is merely a physical substance that selects, organizes, analyzes, and molds itself into the physical forms of the sense data presented to it; in and of itself it is not aware of them. Sense impressions or thoughts are imprints in that mental substance, just as a clay pot is a product made from the substance clay, or waves are permutations of the sea. The essential point for understanding *yoga* is that all forms or activities of the mind are products of *prakṛti*, matter, and completely distinct from the soul or true self, *puruṣa*, pure awareness or consciousness.

The *citta* can profitably be compared to the software, and the body to the hardware. Neither is conscious; they are rather forms of gross matter, even as the former can do very intelligent activities. Both software and hardware are useless without the presence of a conscious observer. Only *puruṣa* is truly alive, that is, aware or conscious. When uncoupled from the mind, the soul, *puruṣa*, in its pure state, that is, in its own constitutional, autonomous condition—untainted by being misidentified with the physical coverings of the body and mind—is free of content and changeless; it does not constantly ramble and flit from one thing to another the way the mind does. To realize pure awareness as an entity distinct and autonomous from the mind (and, of course, body), thought must be stilled and consciousness extracted from its embroilment with the mind and its incessant thinking nature. Only then can the soul be realized as an entity completely distinct from the mind (a distinction such clichés as “self-realization” attempt to express), and the process to achieve this realization is *yoga*.

In conventional existence, *puruṣa*’s awareness of objects is mediated by means of *buddhi*, the intellect. As the discriminatory aspect of the mind, the intelligence is the first interface between the soul and the external world. More specifically, the soul becomes aware of the outside world when images of sense objects are channeled through the senses, sorted by the *manas*, the thinking and organizing aspect of *citta*, and presented to the intellect. Although inanimate, the intellect, in addition to its functions of discrimination noted earlier, molds itself into the form and shape of these objects of experience, thoughts, and ideas, and, due to the
reflection of the consciousness of puruṣa, appears animated. Since the soul is adjacent to the intellect (and the citta in general), the intellect is the immediate covering of puruṣa; hence it is through the intellect that puruṣa becomes aware of these forms and therefore of the objects of the world. The pure consciousness of the soul pervades the citta, animating it, just as a torch, although distinct in its own right, pervades an inanimate object with light and makes it appear luminous.

Pervaded by this consciousness, the citta mind appears as if it itself were conscious, as metal placed into intense fire becomes molten and appears as if fire. But the mind animated by consciousness is in reality unconscious—just as an object appears illuminated in its own right but is in actuality dependent on an outside light source for its illumination and visibility. Most important, the soul, the pure and eternal power of consciousness, never changes; as a spectator or witness, it does not itself transform when in contact with the ever-changing states of mind. It simply becomes aware of them. Just as light passively reveals gross and subtle objects in a dark room and yet is not itself affected or changed by them, consciousness passively reveals objects, whether in the form of gross external physical objects or subtle internal thoughts, vṛttis, including the higher stage of discrimination, but is not itself actually affected or touched by them. But the awareness of the pure soul does permeate or shine on the citta, like a projector light permeating inanimate pictorial forms of a movie reel, thereby animating these pictures as if they had a life of their own. In so doing the animated mind misidentifies consciousness with itself, equating consciousness with the churnings of thought, vṛttis, as if consciousness were inherent within itself rather than the effulgence of an entity outside and separate from itself. This misidentification is ignorance, avidyā, and the cause of bondage in saṁsāra. It is the mysterious glue that binds the self to the world of matter in all Indic soteriological traditions. (Ignorance is mysterious, since the question of how it comes to arise in the first place is bypassed by all Indic metaphysicians by stating that it is beginningless.)

According to some commentators, such as Vijñānabhikṣu, the intellect functions like a mirror. Just as light bounces off an illuminated reflective object back to its source, the consciousness of the soul bounces off this
animated intellect that presents a reflection to the soul (Vijñānabhikṣu’s double-reflection theory is sometimes referred to in this commentary, being in my view more cogent than Vācaspati Miśra’s single-reflection theory). Because sattva is predominant in the intellect, it is able to reflect pure consciousness back to itself. Just as we become conscious of our appearance in a mirror due to its reflectivity, the soul becomes conscious of its reflection in the animated intellect. But since the intellect is constantly being molded into the images presented to it by the mind and senses, this reflection presented back to the puruṣa soul is distorted or transformed by changing forms, vṛttis, just as our reflection in a mirror is distorted if the mirror is warped. The soul, that is, the actual source of consciousness, is mistaken to be this distorted reflection by the mind, which considers awareness to be inherent within itself rather than a feature of the puruṣa, an entity completely outside of and separate from itself. The soul is thus identified with the world of change through these changing states of mind, the vṛttis, just as we may look at our reflection in a dirty mirror and mistakenly think that it is we who are dirty.

Whether the vṛttis of the citta are reflected back to the puruṣa soul, or whether consciousness simply becomes aware of them by proximity and pervasion, the soul nonetheless is identified with the experiences of the body and mind—birth, death, disease, old age, happiness, distress, peacefulness, anxiety, etc., even though these are merely transformations occurring in the inanimate and external body and mind, and therefore unconnected with the puruṣa. They are nothing other than the permutations of gross and subtle matter external to the soul that are pervaded by the soul’s awareness. But awareness is misidentified with these permutations, as a result of which the self (that is, the mind animated by consciousness) considers itself to be subject to birth and death, happiness and distress, etc., and it is this misidentification, or ignorance, that is the root of bondage to the world. Yoga involves preventing the mind from being molded into these permutations, the vṛttis, the impressions and thoughts of the objects of the world, such that puruṣa can regain its autonomous nature.

To accomplish this, one of the goals of Yoga meditation, as discussed repeatedly by our commentators, is to maximize the proportion of the
guna of sattva in the mind and correspondingly decrease that of rajas and tamas. When all trace of tamas and rajas is stilled, the mind attains the highest potential of its prakṛtic nature—illumination, peacefulness, discernment, etc., all qualities inherent in sattva. When the citta mind has cultivated a state of almost pure sattva, the discriminative aspect of buddhi, intelligence, can reveal the distinction between the ultimate conscious principle, the puruṣa soul, and even the purest and most subtle (but nonetheless unconscious) states of prakṛti. When manifesting its highest potential of sattva and suppressing its inherent potential of rajas and tamas, which divert consciousness from its source, puruṣa, and into the external world of objects and internal world of thought, the pure sattva nature of the mind can recognize the distinction between puruṣa and prakṛti, and redirect consciousness back inward toward this inner self (one of the ultimate goals of yoga), just as a dusty mirror can reflect things clearly when cleaned. In short, yoga can also be viewed as the process of stilling the potential of rajas and tamas, and allowing the maximum potential sattva nature of the mind to manifest, and the commentators often promote it this way.

The means prescribed by Patañjali to still the vṛtti states of mind or fluctuations of thought is meditation, defined as keeping the mind fixed on any particular object of choice without distraction. God, Īśvara, comes highly recommended in this regard; Yoga is clearly, but nondogmatically, a theistic system. By concentration and meditation (or by the power of God’s grace), the distracting influences of rajas and tamas can be curtailed, and the sattva constitution of the mind can exhibit its full potential.

Through grace or the sheer power of concentration, the mind can attain an inactive state where all thoughts remain only in potential but not active form. In other words, through meditation one can cultivate an inactive state of mind where one is not cognizant of anything. This does not mean to say that consciousness becomes extinguished, Patañjali hastens to inform us (as does the entire Upaniṣadic/Vedāntic tradition); consciousness is eternal and absolute. Therefore, once there are no more thoughts or objects on its horizons or sphere of awareness, consciousness has no alternative but to become conscious of itself. In other words, consciousness can either be object-aware or subject-aware (loosely
The point is that it has no option in terms of being aware on some level, since awareness is eternal and inextinguishable. By stilling all thought, meditation removes all objects of awareness. Awareness can therefore now be aware only of itself. It can now bypass or transcend all objects of thought, disassociate from even the pure sāttvic citta, and become aware of its own source, the actual soul itself, puruṣa. This is self-realization (to use a neo-Vedāntic term), the ultimate state of awareness, the state of consciousness in which nothing can be discerned except the pure self, asamprajñātasamādhi. This is the final goal of yoga and thus of human existence.

The Eight Limbs of Yoga

Asamprajñāta-samādhi is the highest stage of the eighth and final limb of yoga presented by Patañjali to attain this lofty goal. These eight limbs are yama, abstentions, moral restraints; niyama, ethical observances; āsana, posture; prāṇāyāma, breath control; prayāhāra, withdrawal of the senses; dhāraṇā, concentration; dhyāna, meditation; and samādhi, full meditative absorption. The first limb, the yamas, are nonviolence, truthfulness, refraining from stealing, celibacy, and refraining from coveting. They deal with how the aspiring yogī relates to others. Obviously, if one’s goals are to remove consciousness from identification with the body and the mind, one must curb activities that pander to the grosser urges of the body—violence, stealing, deceit, sexual exploitation, and coveting are generally performed with a view to improving one’s bodily or material situation and must be resisted by one striving for transcendent goals. The second limb, the niyamas, are cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study [of scripture], and devotion to God. These deal with how the yogī cultivates his or her own lifestyle. Once the cruder and more destructive potentials of the body are curtailed by following the yamas of the first limb, consciousness can be turned more inward toward personal refinement. Each limb furthers and deepens this internal progression. The third limb, āsana, focuses on stretches and postures with a view to preparing the yogī’s body to sit for prolonged periods in meditation. It is this aspect of yoga that has been most visibly exported to the West but too often stripped from its context as one ingredient in a more ambitious and far-reaching sequence.
While successful performance of the third limb begins the focusing of attention and stilling of the mind, the fourth limb, prāṇāyāma, furthers this process through fixing the mind on breath control. By regulating and slowing the movement of breath, the mind too becomes regulated and quiescent. The fifth limb, pratyāhāra, withdrawal of the senses, deepens the process by removing consciousness from all engagement with the sense objects (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch). This is followed by the three final limbs: dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi (which Patañjali divides into seven rather esoteric stages). The last three limbs are essentially different degrees of concentrative intensity and culminate in the realization by awareness of its own nature, asamprajñāta-samādhi. The Yoga Sūtras, in fact, is primarily a manual for the practitioner rather than an exposition of Yoga philosophy.
THE PRESENT TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

There are dozens of modern translations of the sūtras, which have been marketed to the yoga community or nonspecialized reading public interested in esoteric Eastern practices. There are also a number of outstanding scholarly editions marketed to an academic audience, which typically include elaborate and highly specialized translations of one of the traditional Sanskrit commentaries on the text. Much of the traditional intellectual background is understandably often bypassed or watered down, in an effort to make the material accessible to a modern, primarily Western, nonspecialized audience. On the other hand, much of the scholarly translations are not very accessible to the nonspecialized reader with little or no background in ancient Indian philosophical thought. The present translation attempts to bridge these two worlds of discourse. It attempts to ground the text in its traditional intellectual context but to articulate the subject matter in a way that is accessible to the educated nonspecialist as well as to scholars and students of Indic philosophy. This is a daunting challenge and perhaps by its very nature destined to draw some criticism from all sides, but it is the result of teaching this text over the years to students in the university setting as well as to yoga practitioners in numerous workshops in yoga communities around the world.

This commentary draws material from all (rather than just one) of the principal historical traditional Sanskrit commentaries, from which I have selected relevant explanatory comments. However, since a good deal of the commentarial tradition deals with abstruse philosophical minutiae of interest only to the specialist, my extracts primarily consist only of material that is essential to understanding the sūtras in their own right. I have trimmed superfluous or peripheral philosophical specificity from this commentary, as a thorough representation of these would require extensive background or presentation of Hindu philosophical concepts and issues.

This is not to say that I have watered down this commentary. I have
tried to make it user-friendly but still academically rigorous: Readers unfamiliar with Hindu philosophical discourse will unavoidably encounter novel philosophical issues here. The Yoga Sūtras is classified as a darśana, classical school of philosophical thought, after all, written and handed down over the centuries by scholastics, and so a commentary that claims to represent the Yoga tradition cannot be presented outside this context. Western practitioners of yoga have excelled in mastering the rigors of āsana, and I would like to think that the more serious and committed among them will be eager to engage intellectually with the traditional interpretations of the Yoga Sūtras.

I have included the commentarial sections critiquing Buddhist views of mind and consciousness, since—apart from the fact that they occupy a large portion of Chapter IV (and surface elsewhere)—it seems useful to establish the main points of divergence on these topics between these traditions and classical Yoga, given the popularity of Buddhist traditions in the West. I do, additionally, include frequent snippets of information and other material from the commentaries that are of genuine historical, cultural, and spiritual interest to those for whom this edition is intended: scholars and students of ancient Indian thought, both within academia and without, seeking a synopsis of the text and its commentaries; the educated but nonspecialized lay readership; and aspiring yogīs approaching the text as an historical source of authority for meditative practice and willing to marshal some intellectual rigor in this quest. With this latter community in mind, I have attempted to eschew hyperacademic jargon and vocabulary when a topic can be articulated in less technical terms. I might add that the commentaries can be repetitive in parts—after all, the core of the teachings are very simple: to remove consciousness from its absorption in prakṛti. Any type of pedagogy involves repetition, and this is especially true of the Indic traditions and their history of oral transmission. This commentary has preserved some of this character.

In many ways, this commentary shares features of traditional exegesis insofar as it primarily seeks to unpack and represent Patañjali as well as the traditional commentaries, although there is plenty of my own elaboration, critical analysis, and, I hope, contributive insight. In classical India, proponents of knowledge systems have a tendency to
perceive themselves as members of disciplic successions, paramparās (for example, Gitā IV.2). Knowledge is perceived as divine revelation and is divided into two categories. Revelation is either śruti (that which is heard, namely, the Vedic corpus), transhuman revelation emanating from Īśvara, God, for the theist schools, or smṛti (that which is remembered, the Purāṇas and epics and other later texts including the sūtra traditions), intrahuman revelation emanating from enlightened ṛṣi sages. But both genres are descending bodies of knowledge. Consequently, the exegete plays the role of transmitter of information perceived as a priori universally and inherently valid. His or her role, then, is to take the existing traditions and expand upon them according to time and context as existing Truths, rather than formulate new Truths. While I consider the content of the Yoga Sūtras text to stem from a core of meditational and enstatic experiences attained in yogic practice that has been subsequently systematized and scholastized by Patañjali (who may very likely have been a practicing yogi), I have attempted to ground my commentary in the traditional commentaries to provide a chronological variety of premodern traditional perspectives and insights on the sūtras. Of course, while attempting to represent these traditional perspectives, I offer plenty of elaboration, interpretation, illustration, cross-referencing, and further clarification, and, as noted above, inform the commentary with the more persuasive observations of modern critical scholars.

With regard to representing tradition, as with all Sanskrit literature, philosophical or other, Hindu cosmology flavors the worldview underpinning the text—there are references to various divinities, celestial realms, mystic powers, and so forth. While such beliefs obviously conflict with the parameters of modern post-Enlightenment rational thought, I have not attempted to sterilize the text from these elements, as some modern translations tend to do, but have retained these teachings within their greater traditional context and presented them with all the trappings accepted by the commentators. Indeed, I probe the metaphysical rationale of the mystic powers (siddhis) from the perspective of Sāṅkhya metaphysics and argue that they are an inherent part of the presuppositions of the system. Readers are left to extract whatever aspects of the text are meaningful to them or do not conflict
fatally with their own worldviews (and, in any event, such conflict, or cognitive dissonance, affords an opportunity to probe and perhaps reevaluate one’s own intellectual and cultural preconceptions and predispositions).

In short, I have adopted something of the phenomenological approach in the study of religion in presenting this material. One of the approaches of phenomenology involves presenting—in its own terms and frame of reference—material that conflicts with or is inexplicable from within the parameters of our modern world knowledge systems. The material is presented without imposing reductionist interpretational models from our very different modern time and context upon it, without value judgment, and in as neutral a fashion as possible. Phenomenology concerns itself with representing the claims and beliefs of a religious tradition as accurately and objectively as possible as phenomena in their own right and within their own context—suspending judgment on issues of “truth” from the perspective of scientific validity. The goal of this commentary is to present the traditional Yogic worldview not as an imagined monolith but through some of the permutations and configurations it has taken in the hands of the commentators over the centuries.

Additionally, the commentaries are replete with references to other texts such as the Bhagavad Gītā and Upaniṣads and, with Vijñānabhikṣu, frequently the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. I include some of them in the present commentary and add numerous cross-references of my own. Again, since, in traditional Hindu perspectives, these texts are all divine revelation, traditional exegetes draw freely from other (usually) classical sources where these might serve to bolster a particular point. Sometimes the demarcation of ancient Indian thought into Hindu and Buddhist and the former into six schools of philosophy (a much later development in any case) can take on contours that are far more rigid than was likely the case in Patañjali’s time. Thinkers drew broadly from a common pool of ideas, and even when they aligned themselves with specific sects, these were demarcated not so much along lines of outright rejection of other sects but to a great extent on the specific areas of interest that a particular sect chose to focus on and develop—from the orthodox side: Mīmāṁsā on epistemology, hermeneutics, and dharma;
Nyāya on logic; Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya on metaphysics; Vedānta on interpretation of the Upaniṣads from the perspective of knowledge of Brahman; Yoga on praxis, etc. All (with the exception of early Mīmāṁsā) are dedicated to a common goal of freeing the ātman from the world of suffering. Even where other doctrines are refuted, through the ubiquitous category of the pūrvapakṣa, only very specific areas or items of dogma are rejected, not the entirety of a school’s metaphysics. Thus, Yoga is partially rejected by the Vedānta tradition only insofar as strains of it subscribe to the (later) Sāṅkhya view of causation from prakṛti rather than Brahman, which, while all-important to Vedānta, is a peripheral topic of no great concern to Patañjali in the Yoga Sūtras. There is no rejection of the central enterprise of the Yoga tradition, namely, presenting a psychology of the mind and a technique of extracting the ātman from the mind’s machinations. Likewise, the Nyāya Sūtras, while differing in their metaphysics, nonetheless accept Yoga as the means to realize the ātman (IV.2.46).

In parallel fashion, the Yoga commentators from Vyāsa onward draw freely from sources and concepts associated with the Upaniṣadic/Vedānta tradition, most conspicuously in the case of Vijñānabhikṣu. I am not as uncomfortable with this as some scholars seem to be: To my reading, these types of references do not always impose material on the text that necessarily conflicts with Patañjali’s teachings. Patañjali was an orthodox Hindu, which means he accepted the Truths of Divine Revelation, āgama—even if he holds that the experience of these Truths is higher than simply belief in them. Moreover, he requires the study of scripture, svādhyāya, as a mandatory ingredient of his system, both in the practice of kriyā-yoga and in that of aṣṭāṅga. As an ascetic, Patañjali would certainly have been interested in the Upaniṣadic strata of āgama (rather than the earlier ritualistic corpuses, which he indirectly dismisses). He therefore does not present his teachings as separate from this tradition, even as his own sūtras are focused on one ingredient within the Upaniṣadic corpus, meditational yoga. Thus, even though he makes no mention of the central Upaniṣadic concern, Brahman as source of all reality (unlike the commentators, beginning with Vyāsa, who do correlate puruṣa with Brahman), we cannot say he rejected this notion simply because his particular treatise
concerned itself with a related but specific subject matter, the individual *puruṣa*. He does adopt Upaniṣadic language on occasion and incorporate Upaniṣadic concepts into the *sūtras* even if only in passing.

Therefore, we do not know where Patañjali stood in terms of the relationship between the *puruṣa* and *Brahman* or *Īśvara* (*Brahman* can refer to the Absolute Truth as either impersonal or personal, whereas *Īśvara* is exclusively a term for the personal aspect), but we certainly cannot presume that he rejected at least whatever conventional views on these concepts were standard (even as there were a plethora of interpretative differences, some fundamental, among Vedāntins). What we do know is that there are both Sāṅkhya and Yoga traditions preceding Patañjali expressed in the Upaniṣads and in the *Mahābhārata* that accommodated their *puruṣa*-prakṛti metaphysics within a *Brahman* or *Īśvara* framework. We also know that by the time of Bādarāyaṇa, who wrote the *Vedānta Sūtras*, Sāṅkhya is extensively critiqued for jettisoning *Brahman* as the original source of reality (that is, as the source of both *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*), and a passing comment is made that on the same grounds Yoga is rejected (*etena yogaḥ pratyuktaḥ*). But since there were numerous strains of Yoga, many of them represented in the Purāṇas (and most readily visible in the *Gitā*), which undoubtedly did preserve the *Brahman/Īśvara*-based theism of the *Mahābhārata* and Upaniṣads, Bādarāyaṇa can be referring only to particular strains of Sāṅkhya and Yoga. In any event, apart from anything else, Bādarāyaṇa wrote his *sūtras* centuries before Patañjali’s, so we really have no grounds to deduce that Patañjali departed from the shared presuppositions of the Vedāntic tradition on these matters (although later Vedānta commentators likely are referring to Patañjali’s text when they deem Yoga as culpable in this regard). I argue strongly that Patañjali’s *Īśvara* cannot be excised or sterilized from the theistic context and *Īśvara*-related options of the second and third centuries. Similarly, it seems probable that he would have seen his teachings as elaborating on one aspect of the greater orthodox corpus stemming from the Upaniṣads, rather than as departing from other essential aspects of it. One must be wary of assuming he rejected standard Vedāntic teachings simply because he does not explicitly direct attention to topics not connected to the specific project he is focusing on in his succinct 195 *sūtras*, namely,
the uncoupling of puruṣa from prakṛti. And the commentators certainly correlate puruṣa with Brahman as if this were a perfectly standard thing to do.

In any event, I have chosen to represent some of these quotations from the commentators even when, as with Vijñānabhikṣu, sectarian Vedāntic specificities are introduced that may not have been subscribed to by Patañjali. I indicate the source of these quotes, since my goal is to give an overall sense of the methods, exegetical practices, and perspectives of the principal traditional commentators of the Yoga tradition, and to suggest how traditions cross-fertilize. This is especially visible with Vijñānabhikṣu’s blending of Yoga with Vedāntic concerns. I also introduce plenty of quotes from the Upaniṣads, Gitā, and other texts, as well as the occasional illustration from my ongoing translations of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. There is nothing like a colorful story from the Purāṇas to lighten up and exemplify elements in what is otherwise a dense and demanding text (and these Purāṇa texts have yet to receive the scholarly attention they deserve, as they are a vast repository of not just mythological narrative, but sometimes quite ancient philosophical material transmitted through epic-type narrative which is very relevant to the early history of the Indic intellectual traditions). Nonetheless, while one would be hard put to consider that Patañjali was not well read in texts such as the Gitā, Upaniṣads, epics, and the developing Purānic corpus of his day, the reader should always keep a healthy awareness of the distinction between the theological concerns underpinning a commentary and what is explicitly stated in the primary text.

For this commentary, I read Vyāsa’s commentary in the Sanskrit and used this as the springboard for my own commentary. For the other later commentaries, due to the sheer bulk of the material involved, I availed myself of various English translations in determining which material to extract for this commentary, for which I then consulted the original Sanskrit. I am therefore indebted to the following translators: of Vācaspati Miśra’s Tattva-vaiśāradī, Rāma Prasāda (1912), and Woods (1914); of Śaṅkara’s Vivaraṇa, Leggett (1992); of Bhoja Rāja’s Vṛttī, Ballantyne (1852); of Vijñānabhikṣu’s Yoga-vārttika, Rukmani (1981); and of his Yoga-sāra-saṅgraha, Jhā (1923); of Rāmānanda Sarasvatī’s Yogamaṇi-prabhā, Krishnan (1996); of Hariharānanda (1963), Mukerji
and of al-Bīrunī, Pines and Gelblum (1966–89). All translations from the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, and other texts are my own unless otherwise stated. I do not provide the Sanskrit for translations from these classical sources, since these are easily available to specialists. Also, I provide the Sanskrit in footnotes only for the material I have selected from the Yoga commentaries for direct quotations, not for my own paraphrases.

In addition to the debt I owe these translators or primary sources, and, of course, the insight of the commentators themselves, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to the insights I have gained from the work of critical scholars whose secondary sources are mentioned in the bibliography (some of which are represented throughout this commentary in the relevant places). Although the present work concerns itself primarily with presenting how the traditional commentators have understood the text over the centuries, how it has been handed down for over a millennium and a half, I have gained great insight from the work of modern text critical scholars into ways of making sense of certain obscure sūtras in particular, and in thinking about the overall text itself. I hesitate to pull out any names for fear of neglecting others, but I would be remiss not to mention at least the various contributions of Koelman, Larson, Feuerstein, Chapple, and Whicher, who have dedicated such rigorous yet sympathetic scholarly analysis to the text for so many years.

In conclusion, while the old Vedic sacrificial cult from which yoga emerged no longer defines our modern religious or cultural horizons, a number of the traditions that it spawned, such as Yoga, remain. Modern societies no longer sacrifice animals to the gods, recite Vedic hymns, or pour ghee into the fire in order to attain material goals. But we share many of the same attitudes as the Vedic ritualists—that the goal of life is the pursuit of ever-increasing levels of material abundance and sensual gratification—and we manipulate our environment to attain this goal in other, more damaging ways. From a certain perspective, one might say that the only difference between our modern goals of life and those of the ancient Vedics is the technologies we use in attempting to attain them. They tried to achieve the good life through technologies of mantra and ritual, and we use machine-based industrial technologies. Our modern world has universalized, idolized, and mass-produced
consumerism—the indulgence of the senses and the mind—as the highest and most desirable goal of life. From the perspective of the Yoga tradition, our vṛttis, the restlessness of the mind caused by ignorance and desire, are out of control.

And so, proportionately to our material attachments, according to Yoga, a sense of malaise and dissatisfaction is engendered since, as the Gītā informs us, desire is never satisfied and burns like fire (III.39). It is thus our “eternal enemy.” According to almost all schools of Indic thought, including Buddhism and Jainism, the more we desire, the more we are frustrated. The more we are frustrated, the more we strive to remove our frustration with more sensory stimuli. And the more we strive, the more we damage ourselves and our environment, and perpetuate our saṁsāric existence. It is in the critique of this mind-set of consumption that Patañjali claims to offer an alternative that remains perennially relevant to human existence. But it is a solution that requires an abandonment of the consumer mentality by the practice of the full eight limbs of yoga, beginning with the yamas and niyamas. Without these, attempts to perfect the third limb of yoga, āsanas, postures, are simply physical gymnastics. To equate the practice and purpose of yoga with this limb alone is to miss the whole point of Patañjali’s system (particularly and ironically if this is done with a view of improving the sensual prowess of the body and mind in order to maximize physical and mental pleasure). Without recognizing the actual goal of yoga, the realization of the true self as other than the body, mind, and sensual apparatus, modernity may not have progressed in attitude and presupposition concerning life’s goals from those lusty performers of Vedic sacrifice. It is this attitude that the ancient spiritual teachers of India such as Patañjali were so concerned to redress, and it is in this regard that the teachings of yoga will remain perennially relevant to the human condition.
prathamaḥ samādhi-pādaḥ
CHAPTER I

MEDITATIVE ABSORPTION

The chapter begins by introducing the subject of the work and providing a definition of yoga—the cessation of citta-vṛtti, the fluctuating states of the mind [1–2]. This is followed by a discussion of the two possible functions of awareness [3–4]; a description of the vṛttis [5–11]; and how to control them by practice [13–14] and dispassion [15–16]. Then comes the division of samādhi into samprajñāta [17] and asamprajñāta [18] samādhis and how to attain it [20–22], after pointing to other states that might resemble it [19]. Īśvara is then introduced as the easy method of attaining samādhi [23], along with his nature [24–26], name [27], worship [28], and the fruits accruing therefrom [29]. The chapter describes the distractions of the mind [30] and their accompanying effects such as grief, etc. [31]; outlines the means to combat these by dwelling on one truth [32], practicing benevolence, etc., [33], breath control [34], and other means [35–39] that are conducive to samādhi. Additionally, the variety of samāpatti meditative states [42] with definitions [42–44] and their fruits [46–48] and object [49] are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of samprajñāta-samādhi preceding the final stage of asamprajñata [50–51].

Oṁ namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya; I offer obeisances to Lord Vāsudeva (Kṛṣṇa).1

Commentators and authors of traditional texts typically begin their commentaries with an invocation, nāndi-śloka, to their personal deity, the particular form of Īśvara, God, that they revere, soliciting blessings and inspiration for the enterprise they are about to undertake. This, notes Vījñānabhikṣu, is in order to remove any obstacles that might arise either in the completion of the work by the author, or in the students’ ability to grasp its meaning. By so doing, one also strives to remove
personal ego so that one can become a conduit, accurately transmitting the essence of the text. Most commentators on the *Yoga Sūtras*, in addition to an invocation to God, offer homage to Patañjali himself, the author of the text, usually invoking him in his traditional form as an incarnation of Śeṣa, the bearer of Viṣṇu.²

अथ योगानुशासनम् ।१।

I.1 atha yogānusāsanam

atha, now; yoga, yoga; anusāsanam, teachings

Now, the teachings of yoga [are presented].

It is common for authors of philosophical works to commence their treatises by announcing the specific nature of their subject matter, thereby indicating how their undertakings are to be distinguished from other strains of philosophical thought or knowledge systems. Thus, while from the six classical schools of Hindu philosophy³ the followers of the Vedānta school see their tradition as explaining the nature of the absolute Truth (*Brahman*), and the followers of the Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṁsā schools as explaining the nature of *dharma*, duty, and these respective points of focus are announced in the first *sūtras* of the primary texts associated with those schools,⁴ the Yoga school is interested in the subject of *yoga*.⁵ Patañjali accordingly uses the first *sūtra* of his text to announce the topic of his teachings: The primary subject matter of his text differs from that of other systems insofar as his work will be about *yoga*.

It is also standard in the commentarial literature, as will become apparent throughout this work, for the later commentators to analyze each word in every *sūtra* (as discussed in the introduction, *sūtra* means aphorism or extremely succinct verse), and words are analyzed in various ways—etymologically, semantically, contextually, philosophically, etc. Commentaries thus unpack the meaning of words, both individually and collectively, in the *sūtras* of primary texts. Vyāsa, Vācaspati Miśra, Vijnānabhikṣu, Saṅkara, Bhoja Rāja, Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, and Hariharānanda Arāṇya are, in chronological order, the
main commentators recognized as the most important of the premodern period and their interpretations form the basis of the present commentary.

Accordingly, the first word in this sūtra, and thus of the entire Yoga Sūtras, is atha, now, that is, in the present work Patañjali is about to deliver, demarking these teachings from those in other texts (the word also initiates the opening sūtras of other philosophical works\(^6\)). As will be seen below with Vijñānabhikṣu’s comments, the word atha is also sometimes read as differentiating the text in question from other texts in a hierarchical or sectarian fashion, as indicating that when one has exhausted dabbling with other philosophical or religious systems as represented in other texts, one has now finally come to the summum bonum of Truth, namely, that represented by the text in question.\(^7\) The commentators add, as an aside, that the word atha is deemed somewhat sacred\(^8\) and thus also functions as an auspicious opening to the text.

Vyāsa, the primary and most important commentator (whose commentary is almost as canonical as Patañjali’s primary text), then proceeds to discuss yoga, the second word in this sūtra. In accordance with the famous Sanskrit grammarian Pāṇini, he glosses yoga with samādhi, the ultimate subject matter of the Yoga Sūtras. Samādhi consists of various contemplative stages of mental concentration that will be described in detail throughout the text. Indeed, the commentator Vācaspati Miśra traces the etymology of yoga to one of the meanings of the root yuj, to contemplate, which, he points out, is the correct etymology here. The more established etymology from the perspective of modern historical linguistics is, of course, derived from the same Indo-European root as the English word “yoke.”\(^9\) Yoga can thus mean that which joins, that is, unites one with the Absolute Truth, and while this translation of the term is popularly found (and may be apt in other contexts, such as the Gītā, IX.34\(^10\)), it is best avoided in the context of the Yoga Sūtras, since, as was pointed out over a hundred years ago by the famous Indologist Max Müller (1899, 309ff) (and long before that, by the sixteenth-century Indian doxographer Mādhava\(^11\)) the goal of yoga is not to join, but the opposite: to unjoin, that is, to disconnect puruṣa from prakṛti.\(^12\) If the term is to mean “yoke,” it entails yoking the mind on an object of concentration without deviation.
Elaborating on this, Vyāsa notes that when the mind is directed toward an object, it can manifest five different degrees of focus (bhūmis): wondering, confused, distracted, concentrated, and restrained. It is the last two that are of interest to Yoga: when the mind, citta, is restrained and concentrated, or fixed on one point, a type of samādhi known as samprajñāta can be attained.\textsuperscript{13} Samprajñāta-samādhi entails concentrating the mind in various degrees upon an object of concentration\textsuperscript{14} (all of which will be discussed at length below). Vyāsa also introduces the notion of asamprajñāta-samādhi in these opening comments. This is the seventh and ultimate level of samādhi, when all activities of the mind have been fully restrained—including those involved in samprajñāta-samādhi of one-pointed concentration on an object. Since asamprajñāta-samādhi will also be discussed at length in the text, we will simply note here that in this state, pure objectless consciousness alone remains, that is, self-contained consciousness conscious only of its own internal nature of pure consciousness rather than of any external object. Vyāsa thus provides a minipreview of the subject matter of the \textit{Yoga Sūtras} in his opening comments.

Vyāsa makes a point of noting that a distracted mind, the third on his list of states, is not to be confounded with \textit{yoga}. Vācaspati Miśra elaborates that while it is obvious that the other two states of mind, wondering and forgetfulness,\textsuperscript{15} are not \textit{yoga}, a distracted state of mind may appear to be so because it is periodically fixed. However, since such steadiness soon relapses into wondering and forgetfulness, it cannot be considered real \textit{yoga}. Only the fully concentrated or one-pointed state of mind is \textit{yoga}.

Vācaspati Miśra notes that the third and final term from this \textit{sūtra}, \textit{anu-śāsanam}, strictly speaking means further teaching.\textsuperscript{16} He points out that the \textit{Yājñavalkya Śmṛti} states that a sage known as Hiraṇyagarbha was the original teacher of \textit{yoga}. Hence Patañjali is using the prefix \textit{anu-}, which indicates the continuation of the activity denoted by the noun to which it is prefixed, in this case, śāsanam, teachings. The \textit{Mahābhārata} also identifies Hiraṇyagarbha as the founder of Yoga (XII.326.65; 337.60). In the Purānic tradition (e.g., \textit{Bhāgavata Purāṇa}, X.71.8), Hiraṇyagarbha is considered to be an epithet of Brahmā, the celestial being responsible for engineering the forms in the universe. In Purānic
lore—for example, Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which is quoted frequently herein (III.8)—Hiranyagarbha is born on a lotus emanating from the navel of Viṣṇu, the supreme Godhead, who is reclining on the divine serpent Śeṣa on the cosmic waters pervading the entire universe prior to creation. (As an aside, Patañjali himself is considered an incarnation of Śeṣa; see commentary in II.47.) Awakening to consciousness atop the lotus, Hiranyagarbha has no means of knowing who he is, or what is the source of the lotus or the all-expansive waters, indeed, no means of discerning or knowing anything at all. Confused and disoriented, he stills his mind (in accordance with the next verse), and enters into the ultimate state of yoga (samādhi), as a result of which he is granted a divine vision of Lord Viṣṇu. Hiranyagarbha is thus the first yogī in primordial times, and deemed to have written the original treatise on the subject.

Although mentioned in various texts, the Hiranyagarbha treatise is no longer extant, but information about its twelvelfold content, all overlapping with the material found in Patañjali’s sūtras, is preserved in the Vaishnava text the Ahirbudhnya Samhita. Indeed, the information provided in this text suggests that Patañjali has, indeed, preserved the ancient formulation of the original philosophy ascribed to Hiranyagarbha, rather than patching together some innovative Yogic collage. Elsewhere, Vyāsa also refers to the teachings of one Jaigisavaya as a forerunner of Yoga (II.55). Mādhava in his sixteenth-century doxography (compendium of philosophical schools) states that Patañjali, out of kindness, seeing how difficult it was to make sense of all the different types of yoga scattered throughout the Purāṇas, collected their “essences” (111). Patañjali is not the founder of the practice of yoga, which, Vācaspati Miśra stresses, is an ancient practice that preceded even Patañjali. Thus, by using the prefix anu, Patañjali himself implies that he has articulated and systematized a method from preexisting sets of teachings. His opening sūtra, atha yogānuśāsanam, thus informs the reader about the subject matter of the text.

Although Yoga becomes one of six schools of orthodox Hindu thought, its adherents naturally consider it to supersede the other schools. Vijñānabhikṣu, the most philosophical of the commentators, quotes a number of scriptural passages that point to the supremacy of yoga. For
example, Kṛṣṇa, in the Bhagavad Gitā (which Vijñānabhikṣu quotes frequently) states, “The yogī is higher than the ascetic, and also considered higher than the jñānī, one who pursues knowledge. The yogī is higher still than the karmī, one who performs action; therefore, Arjuna, become a yogī” (VI.46). Just as all rivers such as the Ganga are present as parts of the ocean, says Vijñānabhikṣu, so all other schools of thought are fully represented as parts of Yoga. While he allows that one can certainly obtain genuine knowledge from these other schools, all knowledge is, by its very nature, a faculty of the intellect, buddhi; it is not a faculty of the soul proper. Sectarianism apart, it is perhaps useful to consider the argument so as to establish a preliminary understanding of the mind and intellect from Yoga perspectives. All aspects of mind, intellect, and cognition in Yoga psychology are external to or distinct from the true self, or soul. As will become clearer, the soul, which is pure consciousness, is autonomous and separable from the mind, and lies behind and beyond all forms of thought.

It is essential to fully grasp this fundamental point in order to understand the Yoga system. Just as in most religious systems the body is commonly accepted to be extraneous to and separable from some notion of a soul or life force, and discarded at death, so (in contrast to certain major strains of Western thought), according to the Yoga system (and Hindu thought in general), the mind is also held to be extraneous to and separable from the soul (although it is discarded not at death but only upon attaining liberation). The soul is enveloped in two external and separable bodies in Yoga metaphysics: the gross material body consisting of the senses, and the subtle body consisting of the mind, intellect, ego, and other subtle aspects of the persona. At death, the soul discards the gross body (which returns to the material elements, to “dust”) but remains encapsulated in the subtle body, which is retained from life to life, and eventually attains a new gross body, in accordance with natural laws (karma, etc.). In order to be liberated from this cycle of repeated birth and death (termed saṁsāra in ancient Indian thought), the soul has to be uncoupled from not just the gross body but the subtle body of the citta as well. The process of yoga is directed toward this end. For our present purposes, then, in contrast to the Cartesian model, knowledge, as a feature of the intellect, or the discriminatory aspect of
the mind, is extraneous to the pure self and thus not the ultimate aspect of being.

The point here is that while knowledge is initially essential in leading the yogī practitioner through the various levels of samādhi, concentrative states, it is only through yoga, for Vijñānabhikṣu, that one can transcend the very intellect itself and thus the base of knowledge, to arrive at puruṣa, the ultimate state of pure, unconditioned awareness. From this perspective, Yoga is therefore superior to other schools of thought that occupy themselves with knowledge and thus remain connected to the material intellect. Just as a person with a torch in hand gives up the torch upon finding treasure, says Vijñānabhikṣu, so, eventually, the intellect, and the knowledge that it presents, also become redundant upon attaining the ultimate source of truth, puruṣa, the soul and innermost self. The self is pure subjectivity and transcends all knowledge, which is of the nature of objectivity: One knows, that is, one is aware or conscious of, something, hence some other object distinct from the knower or power of consciousness itself, whether this is an external object of the physical world, or an internal object of thought.

Thus, Vijñānabhikṣu says (paraphrasing Sāṅkhya Kārikā XXXV), knowledge and the intellect are the door and doorkeeper, and both lead the practitioner of yoga from the domain of material cognition to the highest goal of existence, realization of puruṣa, consciousness itself, but this ultimately lies beyond even the intellect. This state of pure consciousness, which is not conscious of anything other than consciousness itself, is termed asamprajñāta-samādhi. The attainment of this state is the ultimate goal for the school of Yoga, not any type of knowledge however profound or mystical. Hence, from this perspective, Yoga is superior to knowledge-centered paths.

The origins of Yoga are rooted in direct perception of its subject matter, says the commentator Hariharānanda Āraṇya. He too notes that Yoga is based not on the mere logical reasoning of the intellect but on direct experience, and in this regard differs from some of the other schools of orthodox thought, which are highly philosophical. Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras is more a psychosomatic technique than a treatise on metaphysics; the truths of Yoga cannot be experienced by inferential reasoning but only by direct perception. As will be seen in I.49, the Yoga
school prioritizes experience over other forms of attaining knowledge. These personal realizations, says Hariharānanda, are handed down from teacher to disciple, generation after generation. The teachings of Yoga are an attempt to encapsulate those truths as best as possible through the medium of words and concepts. Since the ultimate truth of the soul, attained in *asamprajñāta-samādhi*, is by definition beyond the intellect, and thus beyond words and concepts, the primary purpose of this text is, as far as possible, to point the reader toward the actual practice of *yoga*. While the *Yoga Sūtras* provides much interesting information on the nature of Hindu psychology and soteriology, it is useful to keep in mind that its intended function is as a manual for the practitioner (hence its cryptic nature from the perspective of the intellect).

There are various definitions of *yoga* expressed in different traditions which, while all overlapping, reflect the fact that *yoga* referred to a cluster of practices featuring various forms of discipline and mind control practiced by many differing ascetics and communities on the landscape of ancient India with a view to liberation from the sufferings of embodied life; it was not associated with a distinct school until well into the Common Era. In the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, for example, “*yoga* is believed to be when the senses are firmly under control” (VI.11), while in the *karma-yoga* (path of action) section of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *yoga* is defined as *samatvam*, evenness of mind (II.48) and as *karmasu kauśalam*, skill in action (II.50). Elsewhere, the text defines *yoga* as *duḥkha-saṁyoga-viyogam*, separation from union with pain (VI.23), which is essentially the definition given in the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras*: *duḥkha-bhāvah*, the absence of pain (V.2.16), a definition that finds its roots in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II.12). The *Nyāya Sūtras* associate the practice of *yoga* with
the attainment of liberation (IV.2.46). While his teachings will incorporate all the above definitions, Patañjali here gives his formal definition of yoga for the classical school of Yoga itself: “Yoga is the stilling of all thought.”

The commentators have packed a considerable amount of rather dense information into their commentaries in this sūtra, since Patañjali has basically defined and summarized the entire system of Yoga here, and the commentaries use this sūtra to lay out the infrastructure of the psychology and metaphysics of the yoga process. Although an attempt will be made here to present the information in stages, the unfamiliar reader might well feel alarmed or overwhelmed by the sudden immersion in yogic concepts and Sanskrit terms presented in the commentary to this sūtra. The task is complicated somewhat since the commentators presuppose that their readers are aware of the system of Sāṅkhya, one of the other six schools of orthodox Indian thought with which the Yoga school is typically coupled.

Having said this, there are advantages to the “sudden-immersion” technique into Yoga psychology that follows, since once the basics are grasped, the teachings of Yoga become progressively clearer as one advances through the text. The reader unfamiliar with Hindu metaphysics is reassured that if a clear and coherent picture of Yoga psychology is not gained at this early stage, the material presented in the commentary for this sūtra will be unpacked, explained, reiterated, and elaborated upon repeatedly and in great detail throughout the remainder of the text such that one soon becomes familiar with the system. Additionally, there are a dozen or more technical Sanskrit words that are retained throughout this translation, which do not translate succinctly into English, and a number of them will be introduced here in rapid succession, but, again, readers will become familiar with them by dint of sheer repetition. That said, the commentary for this sūtra remains unavoidably challenging since it presents something of a synopsis of Yoga psychology and practice, and an understanding of these requires a prior discussion of Sāṅkhya and Yoga metaphysics.

The first of the Yoga Sūtras introduced the subject matter of the text, a discussion of yoga, and this second sūtra proceeds to define what this yoga is. According to Patañjali’s definition in this sūtra, yoga is the
cessation (nīrodha) of the permutations or activities (vṛttis) of the citta. In order to define citta, perhaps the most important entity in yoga practice, one must become familiar with ultimate reality as elaborated upon in the Sāṅkhya (literally, numeration) system. As we know, in Sāṅkhya, ultimate reality is perceived as the product of two distinct ontological categories: prakṛti, or the primordial material matrix of the physical universe, and puruṣa, pure awareness, the innermost conscious self or soul (the terms “consciousness” and “awareness,” although problematic, 28 will be used interchangeably in this commentary to refer to the nature of the puruṣa). As a result of the contact between these two distinct entities, prakṛti and puruṣa, the material universe evolves in a sequential fashion.

To reiterate, the first and subtlest evolutes from the material matrix, according to Sāṅkhya, are, in order: buddhi, intelligence; ahaṅkāra, ego; and manas, mind. These layers, which are grouped together under the rubric of the “internal body,” 29 constitute the inner life of an individual, and the puruṣa soul is cloaked in these psychic layers prior to receiving a gross physical body equipped with senses. The term citta (from cit, to think, consider, fix the mind on) is used in this sūtra and throughout the text by Patañjali and the commentators to refer to all three of these cognitive functions combined (the Yoga school differs somewhat from that of Sāṅkhya in conceiving these three as interacting functions of the one citta, mind, rather than as three distinct metaphysical layers 30), but the main point, as stressed in the last sūtra, is that they are distinct from the soul proper.

Buddhi, intelligence, is the aspect of citta that produces, among other things, the functions of thought connected to judgment, discrimination, knowledge, ascertainment, and will 31 (from budh, to wake up, be aware of). It is the most important aspect of the citta as it is from its function of discrimination that liberation is achieved. Additionally, it is buddhi that molds itself into the forms of the data funneled to it by manas, below, and presents these images to the puruṣa soul, to which it is immediately adjacent. Buddha is thus the liaison between puruṣa as pure awareness, and the objects, whether physical or psychic, of which puruṣa can be aware.

Ahaṅkāra, or ego, 32 produces the function of thought related to self-
awareness, self-identity, and self-conceit (the personal pronoun *aham* means I, and *kāra*, the doer). This is the aspect of *citta* that causes notions of I-ness and my-ness: “I know,” “I am a man,” “I am happy,” “This is mine.” It also delimits awareness, which is potentially omnipresent, and refracts it to fit into the contours of the particular body and mind within which it finds itself. It is because of ego that the awareness of an ant is limited to the range of the ant’s senses and the conceptual structure of its mind, while the awareness of an elephant has a larger range, and that of a human an even larger range. This restructuring of the lens of *ahaṅkāra*, so to speak, is the result of specific sets of *saṁskāras* (imprints from present and past lives, which will be discussed in I.5), relevant to any particular form—bug, dog, or human—activating at the appropriate time.

*Manas*, the mind, is the aspect of *citta* that engages in the functions of thought especially related to organizing sensory input and directing the senses; it imposes a conceptual structure on the chaotic field of raw sensations, recognizing and identifying sensual impetuses and categorizing them (from *man*, to think, believe). It exhibits attraction to some sensory possibilities and aversion to others—in other words, the functions of feeling, emotion, and desiring. It is the bridge connecting the world of the sense objects as accessed through the sense organs; the ego, which appropriates this under the notion of I; and the intelligence, which judges, evaluates, and strategizes over the input to determine what its duty (*dharma*) is in relation to the data it is receiving from the mind and senses (that is, what to do about it, how to respond or act). In his commentary to the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* (36), Vācaspati Miśra says:

As the village chief collects rent from the heads of the families and presents it to the district chief, who delivers it to the chief superintendent, who delivers it to the king, so the sense organs, having perceived an external object, deliver it to the mind, who considers it and delivers it to the ego, who appropriates it and delivers it to the intelligence, the chief superintendent of all. Thus it is said “they present it to intelligence, [thereby] illuminating the purpose of the puruṣa.”

I will gloss the Sanskrit word *citta* throughout this discussion with the
term mind for ease of reference, since this is how it is usually translated, but it should be noted that the term encapsulates all of the functions of thought outlined above,\(^37\) and not just that of *manas*, which is also usually translated as mind (when I use mind in the latter sense, I will qualify it by the Sanskrit term *manas*). Vijñānabhikṣu states that the *citta* is the one unified internal organ, and this becomes manifest in the various functions of intelligence, ego, and mind because of *vṛttis*.

The *vṛttis* indicated by Patañjali in this *sūtra* will be categorized into five basic types in I.5 and discussed thereafter, and so we will simply note at this point that they ultimately refer to any permutation or activity of the mind, in other words, any sequence of thought, ideas, mental imaging, or cognitive act performed by either the mind, intellect, or ego as defined above, or any state of the mind at all including deep sleep. The verbal root *vṛt* means to revolve, turn, proceed, move, and underscores the always active, sequential, rambling aspect of the mind. The mind is a physical substance in Hindu thought in general and assumes the forms of the sense data presented to it. The ensuing sense impressions, thoughts, or states are products made of that mental substance, just as a gold statue is a form made from the substance gold, or a clay pot is a form from the substance clay. These constantly moving mental images, states, or formations in the *citta* are *vṛttis*. If *citta* is the sea, the *vṛttis* are its waves, the specific forms it takes. (They will be defined in I.5 below.) I will gloss the term *vṛtti* with states or activities of mind or fluctuations of thought, and I will refer to *purusa* as pure consciousness or pure awareness. The essential point Patañjali is making here is that since all forms or activities of the mind are products of *prakṛti*, matter, and completely distinct from the soul or true self, *purusa*, they must all be restrained in order for the soul to be realized by the *yogi* as an autonomous entity distinct from the mind.

Since, as Vyāsa notes, the soul in its pure state is considered to be free of content and changeless—it does not transform and undergo permutations in the way the mind constantly does—Vijñānabhikṣu raises the issue of how it can be aware of objects at all in the first place. Awareness of objects is brought about by means of *buddhi*, the intellect. The intelligence is the first interface between the soul and the external world. The sense objects provide images that are received through the
senses, sorted by the manas, the thinking and organizing aspect of citta, and presented to the intellect. Although inanimate, the intellect molds itself into the form and shape of these objects of experience, thoughts, and ideas. Vijñānabhikṣu compares this process to liquid copper being poured into a mold and taking the exact shape of the mold, although the forms into which buddhi is molded are extremely subtle and psychic in nature. This molding of the citta into these thoughts and ideas is the vṛttis referred to by Patañjali in this sūtra.

This process can be compared to dull, opaque external objects being captured as photographic images on film, which is both translucent and representational, or to geometric patterns on a stained-glass window (Schweitzer 1993, 853), which are again both translucent and representational. That is to say, images on film or in stained glass are translucent enough to allow the light to filter through them, which, on account of the opaqueness of matter, is not the case with the original external gross objects they represent (due to the greater tāmasic component). But they are also representational, insofar as these external objects are still indirectly represented as images on the film or forms in the stained-glass windows, becoming visible when pervaded by light. Due to adjacency, the pure consciousness of the soul shines onto the intellect and animates it with consciousness, like a lamp illuminates the film or stained glass with light and makes it appear luminous. Because the pure highly translucent sattva element is maximized in buddhi, it is able to absorb and reflect the soul’s power of consciousness. Enveloped in the soul’s consciousness, the workings of the citta mind appear to be themselves conscious, but they are in reality unconscious, just as the film or stained glass appears illuminated in their own right but are in actuality dependent on light external to themselves for their illumination and visibility. The awareness of the pure soul permeates the citta, animating the churnings of thought, citta-vṛttis, but due to ignorance, this animated citta considers consciousness to be inherent within itself, rather than an entity outside and separate from itself. It is this ignorance that is the ultimate cause of bondage and saṁsāra.

According to some commentators (most notably, Vijñānabhikṣu), just as light bounces off an object back to its source, the consciousness of the soul is reflected off this animated intellect and back to the soul. From
this perspective, the intellect also functions like a mirror, the soul becoming conscious of its reflection in the animated intellect, just as one becomes conscious of one’s appearance in a mirror. However, since the intellect is constantly being transformed into the images presented to it by the mind and senses, this reflection presented back to the puruṣa soul is constantly obscured and distorted by vṛttis, just as one’s reflection in a mirror is distorted if the mirror is dirty or warped. When this distorted reflection is considered to be inherent within the actual puruṣa, rather than the product of the citta, an entity outside of and separate from it, the soul becomes misidentified with the world of change, through the changing states of mind, the vṛttis noted in this sūtra, just as one may look at one’s reflection in a dirty mirror and mistakenly think that it is oneself who is dirty. Consider a young child looking at herself in one of those “crazy mirrors” that make one appear grotesquely fat or thin (or, in the premodern analogy used by Śaṅkara, a face reflected in a long sword, making the face appear elongated, III.35). If the child does not realize that her deformed appearance in the mirror is merely a distorted reflection and not her actual self, she may experience fear or panic.

The soul, in short, is neither the physical body in which it is encased nor the mind that exhibits psychic functions. It is pure autonomous consciousness. The Sāṅkhya Sūtras refer to a quaint traditional story to illustrate this point:

A certain king’s son, due to being born under an afflicted astrological constellation, is expelled from the city and raised by a member of the forest dwelling Śabara tribe. He thus thinks: “I am a Śabara!” Upon finding him to be still alive, one of the king’s ministers informs him: “You are not a Śabara, you are a king’s son.” Thereupon, the son gives up the idea that he is a Śabara, accepts his true royal identity, and thinks: “I am a king’s son.” In the same way, the soul, by means of the instruction of a kind soul [the guru], is informed: “You are manifest from the first Soul [Brahman], who is made of pure consciousness.” Thereupon, giving up the idea of being made of prakṛti, the soul thinks: “Because I am the son of Brahman, I am Brahman, not a product of saṁsāra.” (IV.1)

Thus, the soul appears to undergo the experiences of the body and
mind—birth, death, disease, old age, happiness, distress, peacefulness, anxiety, etc., but these are mere transformations of the body and mind. In other words, they are the permutations of gross and subtle matter external to the soul that are pervaded by the soul’s awareness. The mind misidentifies the pure self with these permutations and considers the pure self to be subject to birth and death, happiness and distress, etc. This misidentification, or ignorance, is therefore the root of bondage to the world, as will be discussed in the beginning of Chapter II. As stated in this sūtra by Patañjali, yoga involves preventing the mind from being molded into these permutations, the vṛttis, the impressions and thoughts of the objects of the world.

An understanding of the process underpinning the workings of the mind—the citta-vṛttis noted here—requires the introduction of a further set of categories: the three guṇas, strands or qualities. They are sattva, lucidity; rajas, action; and tamas, inertia. Vyāsa and the commentators waste no time discussing these guṇas here and continue to do so continuously in their commentaries throughout the text. Since they are pivotal to an understanding of yoga meditation and practice, they require some attention.

The guṇas are inherent in prakṛti, matter, and are the catalysts in the evolution of the mind and all manifest reality from primordial prakṛti. Just as threads are inherent in the production of a rope, says Vijñānabhikṣu, so the guṇas underpin and permeate the material matrix of prakṛti. Prakṛti is constituted by the three guṇas. Therefore, since everything evolves from this material matrix, the guṇas are present in varying proportions in all manifest reality, just as the three primary colors are present in all other colors produced from them. As one can create an unlimited variety of hues by simply manipulating the relative proportions of red, yellow, and blue, so the unlimited forms of this world, as well as psychological dispositions of all beings, are the product of the interaction and intermixture of the guṇas. The Mahābhārata states that as one can light thousands of lamps from one lamp, so prakṛti can produce hundreds of thousands of transformations of the guṇas (XII, 301, 15–16). For our present purposes, the citta, as a product of matter, also consists of the three guṇas: sattva, rajas, and tamas.

Although all of prakṛti, including the cosmological and physical aspect
of the universe, is also a product of the three guṇas, the Yoga tradition is interested in their psychic aspect. The guṇas are usually portrayed, and perhaps best understood in the context of Yoga, by their psychological manifestations (indeed Dasgupta translates them as “feelings”\(^\text{42}\)). Sattva, the purest of the guṇas when manifested in the citta, is typically characterized, among a number of things, by lucidity, tranquillity, wisdom, discrimination, detachment, happiness, and peacefulness; rajas, by hankering, energetic endeavor, power, restlessness, and all forms of movement and creative activity; and tāmas, the guṇa least favorable for yoga, by ignorance, delusion, disinterest, lethargy, sleep, and disinclination toward constructive activity. The Bhagavad Gītā (XIV, XVII, and XVIII) presents a wide range of symptoms connected with each of the guṇas.\(^\text{43}\) Kṛṣṇa makes the useful observation that the guṇas are in continual tension with each other, one guṇa becoming prominent in an individual for a while and suppressing the others, only to be dominated in turn by the emergence of one of the other guṇas (Bhagavad Gītā XIV.10).

One of the goals of yoga meditation, as discussed repeatedly in the traditional literature, is to maximize the presence of the guṇa of sattva in the mind and minimize those of rajas and tāmas. According to Sāṅkhya metaphysics, all three guṇas are inherently present in all the material by-products of prakṛti including the citta, so rajas and tāmas can never be eliminated, merely minimized or, at best, reduced to a latent and unmanifest potential. Clearly, sattva is the guṇa most conducive—indeed, indispensable—to the yogic enterprise, but while rajas and tāmas are universally depicted as obstacles to yoga, a certain amount of each guṇa is indispensable to embodied existence. Without tāmas, for example, there would be no sleep; without rajas, no digestion or even the energy to blink an eye. Nonetheless, yoga is overwhelmingly about cultivating or maximizing sattva. Another way of putting this is that sattva should control whatever degree of rajas and tāmas are indispensable to healthy survival—sleeping for six or seven hours, for example, rather than ten, eating a modest amount of food, rather than gorging, etc.

The etymological meaning of sattva is the nature of being. This indicates material reality in its purest state, and is characterized by the desirable qualities of discrimination, lucidity, and illumination, since it
is sattva that can reveal matter for what it is before rajas and tamas cause it to transform. On the other hand, rajas and tamas are the active influences in the production of the changing states of the mind and fluctuations of thought, the vṛttis mentioned in this sūtra, by disrupting the citta’s placid and lucid aspect of sattva. Vyāsa states that when rajas and tamas become activated, the mind is attracted to thoughts of the sense objects.\textsuperscript{44} But both direct the consciousness of the soul, the pure puruṣa self, outward, drawing it into the external world and thus into awareness of action and reaction, the cycle of birth and death, in short, saṁsāra.\textsuperscript{45} When all trace of tamas and rajas is stilled, however, the mind attains the highest potential of its nature, which is sattva, illumination, peacefulness, and discernment.

When the citta mind attains the state of sattva, the distinction between the ultimate conscious principle, the puruṣa soul, and even the purest and most subtle (but nonetheless unconscious) states of prakṛti, matter, become revealed. Buddhi, intelligence (the subtest product of prakṛti), is the aspect of the mind that produces such discrimination when manifesting its highest potential of sattva and suppressing its inherent potential of rajas and tamas. When freed from the obscuration of these other two debilitating guṇas, which divert consciousness from its source, puruṣa, and into the external world of objects and internal world of thought, the pure sattva nature of the mind redirects consciousness inward toward this inner self. It is like a mirror that, freed from the coverings of dirt, can now reflect things clearly, say the commentators, and can ultimately reflect the true nature of the soul back to itself as it is without distortion. The ensuing state of contemplation is known as samprajñāta-samādhi, which, while not the ultimate level of samādhi, is the highest level of discriminative thought. In short, the goal of yoga is to eliminate, that is, still, the potential of rajas and tamas, and allow the full potential sattva nature of the mind to manifest. This is another way of conceptualizing the citta-vṛtti-nirodha of this verse.

The means prescribed by Patañjali to still the states of mind or fluctuations of thought is meditative concentration, defined as keeping the mind fixed on any particular object of choice without distraction. By concentration, the distracting influences of rajas and tamas are suppressed, and the sattva aspect of the mind can manifest to its full
potential. Since sattva is by nature discriminating, it recognizes the distinction between puruṣa and prakṛti, the soul and matter, when not distracted by the other two guṇas. But, since sattva is also by nature luminous and lucid, it is able to reflect the soul in an undistorted way, once the disruptive presences of rajas and tamas have been stilled, and thus the soul becomes aware of itself in the mirror of the mind, so to speak. Once the dust has been removed, a person can see his or her true face in the mirror. One of the goals of yoga is for the mind to develop such discrimination and to reflect the true image of the soul to itself.

The commentators point out, however, that the very faculty of discrimination—even its ability to distinguish between matter and spirit—is nonetheless a feature of the guṇa of sattva, and sattva itself is still an aspect of prakṛti matter. The point is that discrimination is not a function of the soul, the innermost conscious self. The soul, notes Vyāsa, the pure and eternal power of consciousness, never changes—a fundamental axiom of Indic thought in general; it does not transform when in contact with states of mind. Rather, consciousness passively pervades and illuminates objects, whether in the form of gross external sense objects or subtle internal thoughts including the higher stage of discrimination, just as light passively reveals gross and subtle objects in a dark room and yet is not affected by them. Hariharānanda points out that the consciousness of the soul, citi-śakti, is pure, infinite, immutable, detached, and illuminating. Therefore, as Vijnānabhinīkṣu outlined in the last sūtra, discriminative intelligence, even the ultimate pure sāttvic act of discrimination, which is recognition of the distinction between the soul and the subtlest aspect of matter, although indispensable in the yogī’s progress, still connects the soul to matter albeit in its subtlest aspect. It, too, must eventually be transcended for full liberation to manifest. As Śaṅkara puts it, the mind sees the limitation in its own nature and deconstructs itself. When lead is burned with gold, says Bhoja Rāja, it not only burns away the impurities in gold, but burns itself away too; discrimination discerns that it itself is not the final aspect of being and pushes the citta to dissolve itself and transcend discerning thought altogether so as to reveal the ultimate consciousness beyond. There is thus a still higher goal in yoga beyond discrimination.

When the mind restrains even the ability to discriminate, continues
Vyāsa, and exists in an inactive state where all thoughts remain only in potential but not active form, in other words, when all thoughts have been stilled (nirodha), one has reached a state of mind where nothing is cognized—all cognition, after all, is connected to some external reality (since cognition requires a subject, the cognizer, and an object of cognition distinct from or external to this subject). With no further distractions including discrimination and even the reflection of itself in the mirror of the sāttvic buddhi intelligence, consciousness can now abide in its own autonomous nature, the actual soul itself, puruṣa. This is the samādhi called asamprajñāta, the state of awareness in which nothing can be discerned except the pure self. In this stage, the mind, which is ultimately an interface between the puruṣa and the external world, becomes redundant and can be discarded by the yogī upon attaining full liberation.46 This is the ultimate goal of yoga and thus of human existence. This stage, however, must be preceded by samprajñāta-samādhi, uninterrupted meditation, that is, concentration on an external object (which, by definition is a product of matter) so that the states of mind and fluctuations of thought mentioned in this sūtra can first be fully stilled.

Bhoja Rāja raises a possible objection to the existence of puruṣa, the soul, which is most likely an implicit reference to Buddhism (although it could in principle apply to the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools). If the soul, or pure consciousness, has no object of consciousness, then would it not cease to exist altogether, like fire ceases to exist when the wood upholding it is destroyed? In other words, if the vṛttis, fluctuations of thought, are eliminated, then what would consciousness be conscious of? Buddhists hold that the human persona consists of five sheaths, skandhas,47 one of which is consciousness itself, but none of these are eternal or autonomous as almost all Hindu philosophical thought considers the puruṣa, or conscious self, to be. There is thus a fundamental and intractable difference between Buddhism and Hindu and Jain philosophies on this point.

For Buddhists, when the objects of consciousness are removed, so is consciousness. There is thus no ultimate, eternal, essential entity such as a puruṣa, soul, that is separable from an object of consciousness; indeed, clinging to such notions of an autonomous self is the very cause of
saṁsāra. Buddhist theologians used the analogy of the wood and fire mentioned by Bhoja Rāja to argue that consciousness is generated by an object. It is not an entity sui generis with an independent existence—one cannot have consciousness that is not conscious of some object, any more than one can have fire without a substratum such as wood. Even the orthodox Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools, which do accept the existence of an autonomous puruṣa, hold that when the puruṣa becomes liberated and uncoupled from the mind and the objects of the senses, it ceases to be conscious. They, too, hold that consciousness requires contact with the mind as an external object in order to manifest in the ātman; it does not manifest independently. To answer such objections, says Bhoja Rāja, Patañjali offers the next sūtra.


tadā draṣṭuh svarūpe ‘vasthānam

| 1.3 |

When that is accomplished, the seer abides in its own true nature.

There are various terms in Hindu philosophical thought to refer to the soul according to context or the partiality of different texts and schools, ātman being perhaps the most commonly encountered. The Yoga tradition in general favors puruṣa, but Patañjali here uses (the genitive case of) draṣṭṛ, the seer (from the root drś, to see), a term he uses on several occasions throughout the text, and, indeed, along with other cognates of the root drś, is used almost as often as puruṣa. By seeing, he does not intend the gross power of sight as manifest through the physical organ of sight but as a metaphor for consciousness itself, which “sees” in the sense of exhibiting awareness.

Having stated in the last sūtra that yoga means the cessation of all thought, Patañjali now immediately reassures his audience. Some might worry that cessation of thought—the elimination of all objects of
consciousness—entails the cessation of the subject of consciousness, *puruṣa*, itself. After all, our only experience of reality is one mediated by the thinking process. Does the elimination of thought entail the elimination of experience and of existence itself? Is it existential suicide? What happens to the *puruṣa* self, asks Vyāsa, when the mind is void of content, as prescribed in the last *sūtra*?

Vijñānabhikṣu rhetorically considers three possibilities that might transpire once all the *vṛttis*, states of mind, have been removed: (1) Does the *puruṣa* soul remain as pure consciousness that is conscious only of itself? (2) Does it remain unconscious, like a log of wood (becoming conscious only when confronted by a state of mind, as held by the followers of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools)? or (3) Does it cease to exist like a lamp on the destruction of the wick (as held by followers of the materialistic Cārvāka school)? The Yoga school subscribes to the first view. Once freed from its association with the states of the mind, the soul can abide in its own nature, the highest state of pure consciousness, *asamprajñāta-samādhi*. It is devoid even of knowledge, says Vijñānabhikṣu, since knowledge implies an object of knowledge and thus requires a connection with the states of mind and the external world.

In fact, Vyāsa and the commentators make the point that the soul has always abided in its own nature, even though, when it is absorbed in the outgoing mind and the world of thoughts and sense objects, it appears not to be. The nature of the soul is pure consciousness, just as, says Śaṅkara, the nature of the sun is and has always been to shine. It needs no external instrument to shine, nor does it exert any effort to do so; indeed, it has no alternative but to shine. Similarly, it is the inherent and inescapable nature of *puruṣa* to be conscious.

To illustrate the nature of the soul as pure consciousness alone, devoid of content, the commentators often refer to the example of a pure transparent crystal used frequently (and variously) in philosophical discourse to illustrate the relationship between consciousness and the mind (or between the mind and its object). When a red flower is placed next to a crystal, the flower’s color is reflected in the crystal, and so the crystal itself appears to be red. The true nature of the crystal, however, is never actually red, nor is it affected or changed by the flower in any
way—even while it reflects the flower—nor does it disappear when the flower is removed.54 Similarly, consciousness reflects or illuminates external objects and internal thoughts, vṛttis, but is not itself affected by them. Puruṣa, although an autonomous entity separable from the citta with its vṛttis placed in its vicinity, is as if colored by them. Since its awareness animates the citta, which is “colored,” it is consequently (and understandably) misidentified with the vṛttis by the citta. But in actuality it is not tainted by them, nor does it disappear upon the disappearance of the objects of consciousness. As a crystal is essentially an autonomous entity separable from the red flower placed in its vicinity and retains its pure transparent nature when separated from the flower, so consciousness is an autonomous entity separable from the citta with its vṛttis placed in its vicinity, and thus retains its pure nature of awareness when detached from the citta through the practice of yoga. The commentaries frequently utilize another example favored by the Vedānta school to illustrate a related point: Mother-of-pearl does not give up its own essential nature simply because someone mistakes it for the actual pearl itself. Likewise, consciousness does not change its nature simply because it may be confounded with the physical body or the changing states of the mind and intelligence.

The Śānti-parvan section of the Mahābhārata abounds in similes illustrating the continued existence of puruṣa when apart from its prākṛtic encapsulation.55 It is like a silkworm that continues to exist after the destruction of the cell made by its threads, a deer that abandons its horn or a snake its slough after shedding it, a bird that goes elsewhere when the tree on which it is perched falls (XII 212.47–49), or a fish and the water that surrounds it (XII 303.17). Elsewhere, the epic compares the direct vision of the soul within the body indicated by this sūtra to the perception of a lamp blazing forth from a pot (XII 187.44), the effulgent sun, a smokeless flame, a streak of lightning in the sky (XII 232.18), or the streak of gold in a stone (XII 198.4).

I.4 vṛtti-sārūpyam itaratra
Otherwise, at other times, [the seer] is absorbed in the changing states [of the mind].

Patañjali states here that at other times—that is, when not abiding in its own nature as pure consciousness devoid of content—the seer is absorbed, sārūpyam, in the vṛttis, the mind’s changing states. Vyāsa calls the soul the master and the mind its property: He compares the mind to a magnet that attracts iron within its proximity—the consciousness of puruṣa. The mind serves its master, the soul, by presenting objects of experience in the form of vṛttis. When these ever-changing states of mind are presented to the soul, the soul becomes conscious of them, but is mistakenly identified with them by the citta, and thereby appears affected by them. This misidentification, or ignorance, avidyā, is the cause of the soul’s apparent bondage in the physical world of matter. Vācaspati Miśra repeats the analogy of someone looking in a dirty mirror, identifying with the dirty reflection, and then becoming anxious thinking he or she is dirty. Likewise, when one is not aware of the distinction between consciousness and the mind, one wrongly attributes the states of the mind to the self. The cause of the person’s anxiety, frustrations, and experiences is misidentification with something that he or she is not.

The notion of misidentifying the true self with a false reflection goes back to the Upaniṣads. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (VIII.8–12), there is a charming narrative about Indra, lord of the celestials, and Virocanā, lord of the demons. Upon hearing that by attaining the ātman, one conquers the universe,56 the two rivals approached the sage Prajāpati for instruction as to where to find this ātman. Perceiving their misguided intent for this enterprise (their interest was in gaining control over the universe, for which the gods and demons are perennially battling), Prajāpati decides to test them. He tells them that they can find the ātman by looking into a pan of water. Peering into the waters, the two see their bodies reflected back. They take their leave, thinking that their bodies are this ātman, and, while Virocanā remains content with this surface realization, Indra sees the inadequacy of this view of the ātman and so
returns to Prajāpati. “I see no worth in this,” he complains, “for this self will die when the body dies.” Prajāpati then takes him through progressively more subtle understandings of the self until he teaches him the true nature of ātman.

Although the mind is actually inert and unconscious, say the commentators, as a result of being permeated by the consciousness of the soul, its states and fluctuations appear to be states of the true self and are as if experienced by the self. (Recall the analogy of a dark object appearing to be luminous due to contact with an illuminating lamp.) And so, says Vācaspati Miśra, the soul, which has no misconceptions, appears to have misconceptions and, although completely pure and transcendent, appears to be affected by mundane states of mind such as pleasure, pain, or delusion. This is like the phenomenon of a lake appearing to have trees on it due to the reflection of the trees on its bank, says Vijñānabhiṣku. Bhoja Rāja gives the well-known illustration of the moon appearing to be altered and rippled when reflected on rippling water, but it is the water, not the moon, that constantly fluctuates due to the wind. Similarly, the mind is constantly experiencing and processing the forms of sense objects through the senses. It is thus constantly changing, like the flame of a candle, says Vijñānabhiṣku, and, depending on the experiences of the moment, producing temporary states such as happiness, distress, etc. The self, although pure, is then misidentified with these changing states of the mind, due to proximity, and appears also to be affected. It seems to experience the emotions of the mind triggered by the senses and their objects, and thus to be the enjoyer or sufferer of the things of this world. In reality it is not affected, any more than the moon is affected by the ripples on its reflection in water. Vijñānabhiṣku quotes the Gītā: “One who sees that all activities are being performed by prakṛti, and that the self is not the doer, truly sees” (XIII.29).

Śaṅkara here alludes to the image of a dancing girl in the Sāṅkhya Kārikās, the primary text for the Sāṅkhya school: “As a dancer ceases from the dance after having been seen by the audience, so also prakṛti ceases after having manifested herself to the puruṣa” (LIX). In the same vein, a more modern analogy comes to mind for the process by which prakṛti is conjoined with puruṣa. Consider a group of people watching a
film. The film itself consists of just a sequence of inert flickering images and sounds, which are nothing more than light particles and frequency waves—material energy. The people watching the film, however, can become so absorbed in this spectacle of light and sound that they forget their own existence. If the film is a good one, two or three hours can pass during which the viewers forget about their real lives and personal issues they are undergoing, such as mental anxieties or fears, or bodily needs or aches and pains. Moreover, the viewers can become so wrapped up in the illusory world of the film that they experience, let us suppose, sadness when the hero or heroine is killed, or happiness when hero and heroine live happily ever after. In other words, the viewers forget their own separate existences and experience emotions produced by intense identification with the illusory and separate world of the film. Indeed, a good performance (and this is also the case in classical Hindu dramaturgy) aims to stir precisely such absorption and identification. When the film is over, the viewers are thrust back into their own realities—they are suddenly returned to the world of their own problems, perhaps they become aware of being hungry or thirsty.

In the same way, due to the mind’s ignorance and illusion, the soul appears absorbed in the lights and sounds and emotions of the external objective world and forgetful of its own real nature as pure consciousness, even though it is merely the witness of all these, which are actually taking place in the mind’s vṛttis. Yoga is about stilling the vṛttis, stopping the film midway so that the mind can realize that the emotions, fears, happiness, pains, births and deaths, etc., it has been experiencing do not exist in the soul but are the inert flickerings and permutations of the material spectacle. Thus yoga is ultimately about liberation from the external material world, or, in traditional Hindu terms, from saṁsāra, the cycle of birth and death.

Vācaspati Miśra raises the question of the cause of the soul’s association with the mind in the first place, in other words, the cause of ignorance. It is eternal, he answers, like the relationship between seed and sprout. Almost all schools of Indic philosophy conceive of ignorance as eternal and do not speculate over any first impetus that caused the individual to be associated with ignorance and saṁsāra. As the Buddha is reputed to have said, if a man is shot by an arrow, it is useless to inquire
as to the nature of the arrow, its point of origin, etc. One should more profitably first remove the arrow.\textsuperscript{58} Likewise, for one drowning in the ocean of birth and death, \textit{saṁsāra}, it is fruitless to speculate as to how one originally fell in; it would be more productive to find first a means to get out. Such a means, of course, is \textit{yoga}.

\begin{quote}
\begin{footnotesize}
\textit{वृत्तय: पञ्चतय्य: किलषःकिष्ठः ॥ ५ ॥}
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\textit{I.5 \textit{vṛttayāḥ pañcatayyāḥ kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ}}

\textit{vṛttayāḥ}, the changing states of mind; \textit{pañcatayyāḥ}, fivefold; \textit{kliṣṭa}, detrimental, harmful, damaging, afflicted; \textit{akliṣṭāḥ}, nondetrimental, unafflicted

There are five kinds of changing states of the mind, and they are either detrimental or nondetrimental [to the practice of \textit{yoga}].

Patañjali defined \textit{yoga} in I.2 as \textit{citta-\textit{vṛtti-}nirodha} and now dedicates \textit{sūtras} I.5–12 to discussing the \textit{vṛttis} and I.13–16 to discussing \textit{nirodha}. We here get a sense of the systematic nature of the \textit{sūtra} traditions, in contrast to the more spontaneous but unsystematic nature of the earlier Upaniṣadic corpus from which a number of knowledge systems stemmed. As has been noted, \textit{vṛtti} is used frequently throughout the \textit{Yoga Sūtras} essentially to refer to any sensual impression, thought, idea, cognition, psychic activity, or mental state whatsoever. Since the mind is never static but always active and changing, \textit{vṛttis} are constantly being produced and thus constantly absorb the consciousness of \textit{puruṣa} away from its own pure nature, channeling it out into the realm of subtle or gross \textit{prakṛti}. Vijñānabhikṣu compares \textit{vṛttis} to flames of a fire or waves of the sea. In other words, if the \textit{citta} is the sea, the \textit{vṛttis} are its waves, the never-ending but ever-changing temporary forms and permutations produced by the constant flux of the tides, undercurrents, and eddies of the \textit{citta}. In I.2, Patañjali defined \textit{yoga} as the complete cessation of all \textit{vṛttis}. Here, he addresses the consequent question: What are these \textit{vṛttis} that must be eliminated? There are five categories, \textit{pañcatayyāḥ}, of \textit{vṛttis} (which will be discussed in the following \textit{sūtras}); Patañjali indicates that
these can be either *akliṣṭa*, conducive (at least initially) to the ultimate goal of *yoga*, or *kliṣṭa*, detrimental.

Vyāsa states that the detrimental *vṛttis* are caused by the five *kleśas*, the impediments to the practice of *yoga*, ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life, that will be discussed in II.3. The term for detrimental, *kliṣṭa*, comes from the same root as *kleśa* (*kliś*, to trouble or torment). These types of mental states are detrimental to the goals of *yoga* because they are the fertile soil from which the seeds of *karma* sprout; the *kliṣṭa-vṛttis* culminate in bondage. They are essentially the products of *rajas* and *tamas*. *Akliṣṭa-vṛttis* are *sāttvic* and have the opposite effect; they are born of insight and culminate in liberation. When under the influence of the detrimental *vṛttis*, the mind becomes attracted or repelled by sense objects drawing its attention. In its attempt to attain that which attracts it, and avoid that which repels it, the mind provokes action, *karma*, which initiates a vicious reactive cycle.

*Karma*, from the root *kṛ*, to do or make, literally means work, but inherent in the Indic concept of work, or any type of activity, is the notion that every action breeds a reaction.\(^59\) Thus *karma* refers not only to an initial act, whether benevolent or malicious, but also to the reaction it produces (pleasant or unpleasant in accordance with the original act), which ripens for the actor either in this life or a future one. Hence (as will be seen in II.13–14), people are born into different socioeconomic situations, and pleasant or unpleasant things happen to them throughout life in accordance with their own previous actions.

This cycle of action and reaction, or *saṁsāra*, is potentially eternal and unlimited since not only does any one single act breed a reaction, but the actor must then react to this reaction, causing a rereaction, which in term fructifies and provokes rerereactions, and so on ad infinitum. Thus, since the vicious cycle of action and reaction for just one solitary momentary act is potentially unlimited, and since one has to act at every moment of one’s life (even blinking or breathing is an act), the storehouse of *karma* is literally unlimited. Since these reactions and rereactions cannot possibly be fitted into one life, they spill over from one lifetime to the next. It is in an attempt to portray the sheer unlimited and eternal productive power of *karma* that Indic thinkers, both Hindu
and Buddhist, use such metaphors as the ocean of birth and death. Thus, *karma*, which keeps consciousness bound to the external world and forgetful of its own nature, is generated by the *vṛttis*, and the *vṛttis*, in turn, are produced by the *kleśas*.

The akliṣṭa nondetrimental mental *vṛttis*, on the other hand, are produced by the sāttvic faculty of discrimination that seeks to control the influence of *rajas* and *tamas* and thereby the detrimental *vṛttis* that they produce. Vyāsa notes that this type of *vṛtti* is beneficial even if situated in a stream of detrimental *vṛttis*. In other words, for the novice struggling to control his or her mind, even if the emergence of *sattva* occurs only periodically, it is always a beneficial occurrence, and it can be gradually increased and strengthened by a *yogic* lifestyle. The reverse also holds true, adds Vyāsa: Detrimental *vṛttis* also can surface periodically in a predominantly sāttvic *citta* (hence the *Gītā*’s statement in II.60 that the senses can carry away the mind even of a man of discrimination).

Vācaspati Miśra mentions activities such as the practice of *yoga* and the cultivation of desirelessness born from the study of scripture as nondetrimental, that is, mental activities beneficial to the goal of *yoga*. These actions, like any actions, produce seeds of reactions and create *saṁskāras* (discussed further below), but these seeds are sāttvic and beneficial to the path of *yoga* and the ultimate goal of *samādhi*. In time, and with practice, these seeds accumulate such that they eventually transform the nature of the mind. The mind then becomes more and more sāttvic, or illuminated and contemplative, such that the beneficial *vṛttis* eventually automatically suppress any stirrings of *rajas* and *tamas*—the detrimental *vṛttis*—until the latter remain only as inactive potencies. When the *citta* manifests its pure *sattva* potential, it becomes “like” the ātman, says Vyāsa. He means that, becoming aware of the true nature of reality, it no longer distracts the *puruṣa* with permutations of *prakṛti*, the world of *saṁsāra*, but provides it insight into its true nature and reflects *puruṣa* undistorted, allowing it to contemplate its true nature as per the mirror analogy.

Rāmānanda Sarasvatī notes here that, essentially, the *citta* mind is nothing but *saṁskāras*, mental imprints or impressions (not to be confused with *saṁsāra*, the cycle of birth and death). *Saṁskāras* are a
very important feature of Yoga psychology: Every sensual experience or mental thought that has ever been experienced forms a *saṃskāra*, an imprint, in the *citta* mind. Essentially, any *vṛtti* leaves its copy on the *citta* before fading away, like a sound is imprinted on a tape recorder or an image on film. The mind is thus a storehouse of these recorded *saṃskāras*, deposited and accumulated in the *citta* over countless lifetimes. However, it is important to note that these *saṃskāras* are not just passive imprints but vibrant latent impulses that can activate under conducive circumstances and exert influence on a person’s thoughts and behaviors. Vyāsa notes that there is thus a cycle of *vṛttis* and *saṃskāras*. *Vṛttis*, that is, sense experiences and thoughts, etc. (and their consequent actions), are recorded in the *citta* as *saṃskāras*, and these *saṃskāras* eventually activate consciously or subliminally, producing further *vṛttis*. These *vṛttis* then provoke action with its corresponding reaction, which in turn are recorded as *saṃskāras*, and the cycle continues.

Memories in Hindu psychology, as we will see in I.11, are considered to be vivid *saṃskāras* from this lifetime, which are retrievable, while the notion of the subconscious in Western psychology corresponds to other less retrievable *saṃskāras* (accumulated, in Hinduism, primarily in previous lives), which remain latent as subliminal impressions. *Saṃskāras* also account for such things as personality traits, habits, compulsive and addictive behaviors, etc. For example, a particular type of experience, say smoking a cigarette, is imprinted in the *citta* as a *saṃskāra*, which then activates as a desirable memory or impulse, provoking a repetition of this activity, which is likewise recorded, and so on until a cluster or grove of *saṃskāras* of an identical or similar sort is produced in the *citta*, gaining strength with each repetition. The stronger or more dominant such a cluster of *saṃskāras* becomes, the more it activates and imposes itself upon the consciousness of the individual, demanding indulgence and perpetuating a vicious cycle that can be very hard to break. The reverse, of course, also holds true with benevolent *akliṣṭa-vṛttis*: One can become addicted, so to speak, to benevolent yogic activities and lifestyle by constant repetition. *Kleśas*, *vṛttis*, *saṃskāras*, and *karma* are thus all interconnected links in the chain of *saṃsāra*.

Through the practice of *yoga*, the *yogī* attempts to supplant all the *rājasic* and *tāmasic* *saṃskāras* with *sāttvic* ones until these, too, are
restricted in the higher states of meditative concentration. This is because while sāttvic saṁskāras, the nondetrimental vṛttis, mentioned by Patañjali in this sūtra, are conducive to liberation, they nonetheless are still vṛttis and thus an external distraction to the pure consciousness of the ātman. Of course, as Vījñānabhikṣu points out, all vṛttis, including sāttvic ones, are ultimately detrimental from the absolute perspective of the puruṣa, as they bind consciousness to the world of matter, so the notions of detrimental and nondetrimental are from the relative perspective of saṁsāra; the detrimental (rājasic and tāmasic) vṛttis cause pain, and the nondetrimental (sāttvic) ones at least lead in the direction of liberation, even though they too must eventually be given up. Vījñānabhikṣu quotes the Bhāgavata Purāṇa here to make the point: “Other things [the obstacles to yoga] must be eliminated by sattva, and [then] sattva is eliminated by sattva” (XI.25.20). Also, vṛttis that are truly and literally aκliṣṭa, not subject to any ignorance at all, can point only to the state of jīvanmukta, liberated while still embodied. This verse thus gives a clear indication that it is possible to act in the world in one’s prākṛtic body and mind from an enlightened perspective free from ignorance.

I.6 pramāṇa-viparyaya-vikalpa-nidrā-smṛtayah

pramāṇa, epistemology, source of right knowledge; viparyaya, error; vikalpa, imagination, fancy; nidrā, sleep; smṛtayah, memory

[These five vṛttis are] right knowledge, error, imagination, sleep, and memory.

The vṛttis, which bind puruṣa to the world of saṁsāra, are enumerated here. Patañjali lists five distinct types of vṛttis. The implication, in essence, is that the human mind finds itself in one of these five states at any given moment. According to the Yoga tradition, all possible mental states that can be experienced can be categorized as manifestations of one of these five types of vṛttis. Any other states of mind that one might
conceive of would be considered by the Yoga tradition as a subset of one of these five essential categories. The commentators reserve their comments for the ensuing sūtras, which explain each of these items in turn.

I.7 pratyakṣānumānāgamāḥ pramāṇāni

pratyakṣa, sense perception; anumāna, inference, logic; āgamāḥ, testimony, verbal communication; pramāṇāni, epistemology

Right knowledge consists of sense perception, logic, and verbal testimony.

The first of the five vṛttis to be discussed is pramāṇa, the central concern of epistemology, that is, what sources constitute valid knowledge of an object, the methods of attaining accurate information about reality. Philosophy and, of course, science—Sāṅkhya, after all, sees itself as dealing with physical verifiable truths—have as their goals the attainment of knowledge about reality, so it is standard in Indic philosophical discourse for scholastics to state which methods of attaining such knowledge of reality they accept as valid. The Yoga school accepts three sources of receiving knowledge, as does the Sāṅkhya tradition (Sāṅkhya Kārikā IV), but other philosophical schools accept differing numbers from one to six.

The first method of attaining valid knowledge listed by Patañjali is sense perception: We can know something to be true or valid if we experience it through one or more of our senses—if we see, smell, touch, hear, or taste it. So, for example, you “know” this book is real because you see it and feel it. Śaṅkara notes that sense perception, empiricism, is placed first on the list of pramāṇas because the other pramāṇas are dependent on it.

Vyāsa defines sense perception as the state or condition of the mind, vṛtti, that apprehends both the specific (viśeṣa) and generic (sāmānya) nature of an external object through the channels of the five senses. The generic and specific nature of objects are categories especially associated
with the Vaiśeṣika school of Hindu philosophy and are technical ways of attempting to analyze physical reality. The generic nature of a dog that one might happen to come upon, for example, is that it belongs to the canine species, the specific nature is that which demarcates it from other members of this generic category, that it is, let us say, a ginger Irish terrier. (Technically speaking, viṣeṣa is what differentiates ultimate irreducible entities such as the smallest subatomic particles of matter from each other, but Vyāsa is using the term in a more general sense, since dogs, as all material objects, are made up of conglomerates of atoms.) When one sees a particular dog, the mind typically apprehends both its generic and specific natures. This is accomplished by the citta encountering a sense object through the senses and forming an impression of this object, a vyrtti. More specifically, the tāmasic natures of sense objects imprint themselves upon the mind and are then illuminated in the mind by the mind’s sāttvic nature. Due to pervading the mind, the puruṣa’s awareness then becomes conscious of this mental impression, as if it were taking place within itself, indistinguishable from itself. In actual fact, the impression is imprinted on the citta, mind, which is pervaded by consciousness.

Vācaspati Miśra raises a question here. If the impression is imprinted on the mind, which, according to the metaphysics of Yoga, is a totally separate entity from the puruṣa soul, then how is it that the latter is aware of it? Or, as he puts it, if an axe cuts a khadira tree, it is not a plakṣa tree that is thereby cut. In other words, if an impression is something that is made on the mind, then how does it end up being made on the puruṣa? Here, again, Vācaspati Miśra introduces the analogy of the mirror. It is the mind and intelligence, not the soul, that take the form of the object as a result of sense perception. According to the reflection model of awareness, consciousness is reflected in the intelligence due to their proximity and then is misidentified with the reflection by the mind. This reflection, in turn, is altered according to the form assumed by the intelligence—just as a reflection appears dirty if the mirror is dirty. Thus, since the mind and intelligence have taken the form of the object in question, consciousness sees its own reflection as containing that form. This corresponds to the analogy of the moon appearing rippled when reflected in rippling water. According to the
nonreflection model, awareness simply pervades the *citta* just as it pervades the body and is misidentified as being nondifferent from the forms of *citta* in the same way as it is misidentified with the form of the body. According to either manner of conceptualization, this misidentification of the awareness of *puruṣa* with the forms of the intellect is the essence of ignorance.

Moving on to the second *pramāṇa*, source of receiving valid knowledge, mentioned by Patañjali in this sūtra, Vyāsa defines *anumāṇa*, inference, as the assumption that an object of a particular category shares the same qualities as other objects in the same category, qualities that are not shared by objects in different categories. He gives the rather clumsy example of the moon and stars, which belong to the category of moving objects because they are seen to move, but mountains belong to a category of immobile objects, because they have never been seen to move. Thus, if one sees an unfamiliar mountain or hill, one can infer that it will not move, because other known objects in this category, all mountains and hills with which one is familiar, do not move.

The more classical example of inference among Hindu logicians is that fire can be inferred from the presence of smoke. Since wherever there is smoke, there is invariably fire causing it, the presence of fire can be inferred upon the perception of smoke even if the actual fire itself is not perceived. So if one sees clouds of smoke billowing forth from a distant mountain, one can say with certainty that there must be fire on it, even if one cannot actually see the blaze itself. It is in this regard that inference, *anumāṇa*, differs from the first source of knowledge, *pratyakṣa*, sense perception. *Pratyakṣa* requires that one actually see the fire. In *anumāṇa*, the fire itself is not actually seen, but its presence is inferred from something else that is perceived, smoke.\(^{67}\) The principle here is that there must always be an absolute and invariable relationship (*vyāpti*, concomitance) between the thing inferred, say, the fire, and the reason on which the inference is made, the presence of smoke—in other words, wherever there is or has ever been smoke there must at all places and at all times always be or have been fire present as its cause with no exceptions. If these conditions are met, the inference is accepted as a valid source of knowledge. If exceptions to the rule can be found, even one instance of smoke ever that does or did not have fire as its cause,
then the inference is invalid.

Finally, āgama, verbal testimony, the third source of valid knowledge accepted by Patañjali, is the relaying of accurate information through the medium of words by a trustworthy person who has perceived or inferred the existence of an object, to someone who has not. Vyāsa describes a trustworthy person as someone whose statements cannot be contradicted. Vācaspati Miśra adds that such a person should have keen sense organs and be trustworthy and compassionate, and Vijñānabhikṣu, that a reliable or trustworthy person is one who is free from defects such as illusion, laziness, deceit, dull-wittedness, and so forth. The words of such a reliable authority enter the ear and produce an image, vṛtti, in the mind of the hearer that corresponds to the vṛtti experienced by the trustworthy person. The person receiving the information in this manner has neither personally experienced nor inferred the existence of the object of knowledge, but valid knowledge of the object is nonetheless achieved, which distinguishes this source of knowledge from the two discussed previously.

The most important category of valid knowledge in the form of āgama, verbal testimony, is divine scripture, which is also referred to as śruti,68 that which is heard, or śabda, the word. Since scriptures are considered to have been uttered by trustworthy persons in the form of enlightened sages and divine beings, their status as trustworthy sources of knowledge is especially valuable. In order to elaborate on this, Vācaspati Miśra raises the issue of how sacred scriptures can be considered valid given that all accurate verbal knowledge must itself originally come either from perception or inference (hence the Cārvāka and Vaiśeṣika schools do not even consider them separate sources of knowledge69), but scriptures deal with certain subjects that no human being has either seen or inferred (such as the existence of heavenly realms). Vācaspati Miśra responds that the truths of scripture have been perceived by God, Īśvara; thus divine scripture, too, is based on perception—and God, quips Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, is surely a trustworthy person! However, Vācaspati Miśra, in his commentary to the Sanākhya Kārikā (V), precludes the blind acceptance of scripture by qualifying that revelation may be a useful means of attaining knowledge only if it has a solid foundation, contains no internal contradictions, is supported by reason, and is
accepted by people in general.

Vyāsa makes a telling comment in I.32 relevant to the hierarchy of Yoga epistemology. Perception is superior to any other sources of knowledge—indeed, the other sources of knowledge are based on it. If we consider the syllogism there is fire on the mountain because there is smoke, even though the fire is not seen by direct perception and therefore an inference is required to establish its existence, this inference is dependent on perception insofar as the sign (liṅga) of the fire, namely, smoke, is perceived. So valid inferences are also dependent on perception. And, as indicated, verbal authority is predicated on the original perception of the object of information by the relayer of the information. Additionally, it can be argued that accepting knowledge from a verbal authority is nothing other than making an inference—one makes an inference that a verbal authority is reliable and does not counter perceivable data. Verbal authority too, then, is indirectly derived from direct perception. Therefore some schools of thought, like that associated with the materialist Cārvāka, accept the need for only one pramāṇa, that of sense perception. The Yoga school accepts three sources but is very clear that it considers pratyakṣa the highest, not just because the other pramāṇas depend on it, but (as will become clearer in I.49) because it is the only way of truly knowing the essential nature of an object.

Different schools of thought prioritized different pramāṇas. The Nyāya school features anumāna, dedicating itself for centuries to refining categories of logic, and Sāṅkhya, too, was associated with this epistemology. The Vedānta school occupied itself with āgama (Vedānta Sūtras I.1.3), dedicating itself to the interpretation and systematization of the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta Sūtras derived from them; the Mīmāṁsā school, too, prioritized āgama and became especially associated with developing hermeneutics, the methods of scriptural interpretation. While Patañjali accepts āgama as a valid source of knowledge, he does not quote or even indirectly refer to a single verse from scripture in his treatise (in contrast with the Vedānta Sūtras, which are almost entirely composed of references from the Upaniṣads). The very fact that he categorizes āgama as a vṛtti and thus comparable in one sense with other vṛttis such as viparyaya, error, the subject of the next
sūtra, points to correspondences with aspects of post-Enlightenment thought, namely, that verifiable (in this case yogic) experience trumps scripture. This has been termed a “radical mystico-yogic orientation,” since, certainly, as with the Enlightenment, such claims would have challenged the mainstream Vedic authority of the day. As for anumāna, while Patañjali uses this source of knowledge on occasion, such as in his arguments against certain Buddhist views, (IV.14–24), clearly almost his entire thrust throughout the sūtras is on pratyakṣa as the ultimate form of knowledge. Anumāna and āgama are forms of knowledge, but mediate forms, the truths of which are indirect, where the Yoga tradition bases its claims to authoritativeness on direct, personal experience.

It is because of this orientation that yoga is, in my view, destined to remain a perennial source of interest to the empirical dispositions of the modern world. One must also note that there are different types of pratyakṣa: the commentary on the Sāṅkhya Kārikā, the Yukti-dīpikā, speaks of yogic perception as well as sensual perception (38.2). Indeed, several schools make a distinction between aparā-pratyakṣa, conventional perception, and para-pratyakṣa, supernormal perception, or, as the Sāṅkhya Sūtras put it, external perception, bāhya-pratyakṣa, and internal perception abāhya-pratyakṣa (I.90). As will become clearer later in the text, the perception of interest to Yoga is the latter, that of a supernormal nature. But even the startling claims of omniscience that occur later in the text are relevant only as signposts of experiences that the yogī will encounter on the path of Yoga, not as articles of faith.

I.8 viparyayo mithyā-jñānam atad-rūpa-pratiṣṭham

viparyayah, error; mithyā, false; jñānam, knowledge; atat, not that, incorrect; rūpa, form; pratiṣṭham, established in

Error is false knowledge stemming from the incorrect apprehension [of something].

Patañjali now proceeds to the second of the five different types of vṛttis, error. Vyāsa defines error as considering something to be what it is not,
atad-rūpa, a state that can be subsequently removed by true knowledge of the actual nature of the thing in question. As an example he gives the perception of two moons. After consuming alcohol, a person may see double. This error of perception nonetheless produces a vṛttti in the mind of this person, but this vṛttti differs from vṛttis produced by valid sources of knowledge insofar as the seeing of two moons is an apparent perception that can be contradicted and dismissed by a later accurate perception that there is only one moon in reality, whereas valid knowledge cannot be contradicted. Vijñānabhikṣu notes that error is the result of the superimposition of wrong knowledge, mithyā-jñānam, onto an object (in our example, an extra moon is superimposed onto the actual solitary one).

The classical example of error, especially among the followers of Vedānta, is mistaking a rope for a snake: If one happens upon a rope on the path as one is walking home at dusk, and imagines it to be a snake, one is superimposing the form of a snake upon something that is not a snake. This is error according to the Yoga school (different schools of philosophy hold differing views on what constitutes error⁷⁴). The Nyāya school, which especially concerns itself with epistemology, the methods of accurate knowledge, has a similar definition, giving as an example of error considering mother-of-pearl as containing silver. (Specifically, Nyāya defines knowledge, pramā, as apprehending an object as it is, correctly identifying the attribute of that object, and error as the opposite, considering an object to have an attribute that in fact it does not have—the mother-of-pearl does not contain silver.⁷⁵) Vyāsa considers error to be essentially the five kleśas, the impediments to the practice of yoga: ignorance (avidyā), ego, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life. However, avidyā is the root of the other kleśas (II.4), and we will argue in II.5 that it is a fundamentally deeper and more subconscious type of ignorance than the surface-level error represented in this sūtra by viparyaya.

आच्छानानपाती वस्तुशून्यो विकलप: ॥ ९ ॥

I.9 śabda-jñānānupāti vastu-śūnyo vikalpaḥ
śabda, words; jñāna, knowledge; anupāti, resulting from, followed in sequence; vastu, actual object; śūnyaḥ, devoid of; vikalpaḥ, conceptualization, fancy, imagination; here, figurative language

Imagination consists of the usage of words that are devoid of an actual object.

The commentators take the third type of vṛtti, imagination, to be metaphor, words or expressions that do not correspond to any actual physical reality, vastu-śūnya, but are understood in common parlance, śabda-jñāna-anupatī. When we say “consciousness is the essence of puruṣa” (caitanyāṁ puruṣasya svarūpam iti), says Vyāsa, we are, strictly speaking, making an incorrect statement. Using the genitive case, as in the “essence of puruṣa,” implies a distinction between the possessor and the thing possessed, as in the phrase “the cow of Citra.” But consciousness is not a separate entity owned by another separate entity puruṣa as this phrase suggests. Consciousness is puruṣa, not something owned by puruṣa. Likewise with negative predictions such as “the puruṣa has the characteristic of not being born”: there is not a factual positive state of “not being born”; something that does not exist has no sensible existence, yet such phrases do bear meaning. Using language in this way is vikalpa.

Vyāsa gives other examples of this nature, but if we, along with the commentators, can extend the technical denotative range of vikalpa somewhat, perhaps a more straightforward example from English usage might be “the sun rises and sets” or “time flies.” The sun doesn’t actually either rise or set, nor is there a tangible entity called time flapping about with wings, but common usage has assigned meaning to these imaginary states of affairs, and no one bats an eye when such expressions are uttered. In other words, metaphors and similes might be considered types of vikalpas. Indeed, Vācaspati Miśra notes that these expressions, which, if dissected to their literal meanings, do not correspond to actual objective reality, are normal everyday expressions and ubiquitous in human language, since language is largely figurative.

In this way, although other schools, such as Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, consider vikalpa to be a category of error rather than a vṛtti in its own
right, the Yoga school considers the \textit{vṛtti of vikalpa}, imagination, to differ essentially from the previous two \textit{vṛttis}. This is because the first \textit{vṛtti}, right knowledge, corresponds to accurate knowledge of an actual objective reality, recognized as such by others, and error corresponds to a misperception or misunderstanding of something, and therefore it is perceived as an error by other people who can see the actual nature of the misunderstood object. \textit{Vikalpa}, on the other hand, while, like error, referring to an object that lacks actual objective physical reality, yet, unlike the \textit{vṛtti} of error but like the \textit{vṛtti} of right knowledge, is not based on an error of judgment and is intelligible to other people in practice, producing a \textit{vṛtti} impression in the mind of the listener without being perceived as an error or attracting any attention. It thus paradoxically represents a meaningful expression that yet has no actual reality in the real world. It is therefore held to be a different category of \textit{vṛtti} from \textit{pramāṇa} or \textit{viparyaya}.

We thus see what a meticulous thinker Patañjali is. Let us keep our eye on the ball: In order to understand what \textit{puruṣa} is, one has to understand what it is not (I.4). It is not the mind. Therefore, Patañjali is directing very careful attention to what the mind is such that the \textit{yogi} can be clear about what the \textit{puruṣa} should not be identified with. The mind can be recognized by what it does. Patañjali is thus identifying the things that the mind does, that is, its functions. Since \textit{vikalpa}, conceptual thought, does not fit into the other types of \textit{vṛttis} such as \textit{pramāṇa} and \textit{viparyaya} even as it shares features of both of these, he has concluded that it must belong to a category of its own.

\textit{Vijñānabhikṣu} accepts the more common understanding of this \textit{vṛtti} of \textit{vikalpa}—the usage of nonsensical expressions such as skyflower, ġhare’s horn, or son of a barren woman, which are the typical motifs in Hindu philosophical discourse that correspond to expressions in English such as pie in the sky. These are all nonexistent objects, but they nonetheless produce some sort of an intelligible \textit{vṛtti} in the mind of the listener. It is curious that the commentators do not direct specific attention to more common aspects of imaginative thought, such as daydreaming, fantasy, make believe, and wishful thinking, which actually occupy major portions of most people’s waking attention. Such things might also be considered types of \textit{vikalpas} but, since they depend on the activation of
saṃskāras, which are imprints of real things, they overlap with other vṛttis, particularly the function of memory, the fifth type of vṛttī discussed below, and/or error, since they have no reality.

अभावप्रत्ययालम्बना वृत्तिनिद्रा ||२० ||

I.10 abhāva-pratyayālambanā vṛttīr nidrā

abhāva, absence; pratyaya, cause; ālambanā, support, basis; vṛttiḥ, state of mind; nidrā, sleep

Deep sleep is that state of mind which is based on an absence [of any content].

The commentators acknowledge here that there is some difference of opinion regarding whether or not sleep is an actual vṛttī. Based on the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (VI.8.1), the Vedāntins do not consider any vṛttī to be present in the citta during deep sleep, but that the ātman, or puruṣa, undisturbed by any citta vṛttī in the state of deep sleep, experiences Brahman (Vedānta Sūtra I.4.18; II.3.31). Vyāsa and the Yoga commentators, in contrast, view deep sleep as a type of vṛttī on the grounds that when one awakes, one remembers that one has either slept well or restlessly or in a stupor. One would not be able to do so, in their view, if these impressions did not relate back to a state of mind that existed during deep sleep. In Yoga psychology, memory is the product of saṃskāra, and saṃskāra is caused by experience. Therefore, the memory of having slept well must relate to a state of mind experienced during deep sleep, which is recorded in the citta as memory (the topic of the next sūtra) and remembered upon awakening. This state of mind according to this line of reasoning must therefore pertain to a category of vṛttī distinct from others.

It might be useful to note along with Vācaspati Miśra that the fourth vṛttī being discussed by Patañjali in this sūtra does not refer to the state of mind represented in the dream state—dream sleep corresponds to the vṛttis of memory (since it involves the activation of saṃskāras). Nidrā, sleep, then, refers to deep dreamless sleep. It takes place when the tāmasic element of the mind densely covers the sāttvic nature of buddhi,
the intellect; in dream, more rajas is active, and this churns up past saṃskāras, which produce dream experiences. In deep sleep, rajas is inactive, and so the mind is not stimulated to assume the form of the objects of knowledge, as it does during the waking and dream states; thus puruṣa is conscious of darkness alone. Another way to put this is that due to the preponderance of tamas, there is a suppression of the other vṛttis. However, needless to say, while deep sleep can be considered a type of citta-ṛṣṭi-nirodha, cessation of thought (at least of the four vṛttis other than sleep), since the sattva or knowledge aspect of the citta is smothered by tamas, as is any rājasic stirring of citta, this is not the citta-ṛṣṭi-nirodha defined by Patañjali as the goal of yoga in I.2. In the samādhi state, sattva is at its maximum, and the yogi’s citta-ṛṣṭi-nirodha occurs in full vibrant wakefulness and in complete lucidity as to the nature of reality; in deep sleep, awareness is simply aware of the dense motionless darkness of tamas in which it is enveloped. Additionally (and importantly), this verse informs us that consciousness is eternal; it is never “switched off,” not even in deep sleep. In deep sleep, it remains fully aware, since it is eternally and inherently fully aware, but its object of awareness is (almost) pure tamas; hence there is nothing to recollect when one awakens (other than whether one has slept well or not).

If the tāmasic element that covers the intellect during deep sleep is accompanied by a measure of sattva, the commentators inform us, a person feels refreshed and lucid upon awakening; if accompanied by rajas, one feels that one has slept restlessly and one is confused and distracted; if tamas has almost completely dominated sattva and rajas during sleep, one feels sluggish and tired upon awakening. Pointing back to I.3 where Patañjali states that yoga is the cessation of all vṛttis, which therefore includes deep sleep as well, Vācaspati Miśra notes that sleep, too, can be controlled in samādhi, meditative absorption. And certainly the hagiographies of saints the world over are replete with claims that many indulged in a very minimal amount of sleep.

There are two important technical terms introduced in this sūtra: pratyaya and ālambanā. Pratyaya has a number of meanings, two of which are relevant to the sūtras. It can mean cause, as it is used in Buddhist sources, which is how Vācaspati Miśra takes it here (as also in
Elsewhere (II.20; III.2, 12, 17, 19, 35)—and it can also be read here in this sense—it refers to the image of an object imprinted on the mind, that is, a cognition, which is how it is understood in the Vedānta tradition. In Yoga cognition, the powers behind the five senses, jñānendriyas, flow out through the senses with the mind (as the antaḥkaraṇa), to grasp their objects (pratyaya, from prati + i, to go forth), and then imprint images of these objects on the mind (which then presents them to puruṣa as outlined previously via its faculty of buddhi). These imprints or cognitions are pratyayas. Although sometimes used synonymously with vṛtti by the commentators, it differs in my understanding insofar as it represents a singular momentary imprint, while a vṛtti is more a flow of thoughts or images and may contain a series of pratyayas. The second term, ālambana, is the support for the mind and refers to any object upon which the yogi has chosen to focus or concentrate the mind. A list of possible ālambanas for meditation is presented by Patañjali in I.23–39.

I.11 anubhūta-viṣayāsampramoṣaḥ smṛtiḥ

anubhūta, experienced; viṣaya, sense objects; asampramoṣaḥ, not slipping away, retention; smṛtiḥ, memory

Memory is the retention of [images of] sense objects that have been experienced.

Vyāsa notes that memories are generated from and thus dependent on the other types of vṛttis described in the preceding sūtras: right knowledge, error, imagination, and sleep (one has memories of objects of knowledge, error, etc.). Therefore, says Vācaspati Miśra, memory is mentioned last on the list of vṛttis. Nonetheless, the Yoga school considers memory a vṛtti in its own right. Patañjali here describes memory as the retention or, more literally, the not slipping away, asampramoṣa, of an object of experience, anubhūta viṣaya. As noted, every object that has ever been experienced forms a saṅskāra, an imprint, in the citta mind. The mind forms an impression of an object,
called a pratyaya, through the sense organs. As noted in the previous sūtra, a pratyaya is the specific content of a vṛtti, a unitary image like the individual still of a movie, where a vṛtti is more a sequence and thus a series of pratyayas, comparable to the reel itself containing the series of stills. Once this pratyaya or active image of this object is no longer of interest to the mind, it becomes an inactive, or latent, saṁskāra. Thus vṛttis, and their pratyaya content, are retained as saṁskāras when they fade.

A person approaching a red rose, for example, receives an impression through the senses of the sight and smell of a red object of a particular shape with a certain odor. This input is recognized by and imprinted on the mind as a rose, a fragrant member of the flower family. However, even after the mind has moved on to other things, this cognition or impression remains embedded in the citta mind in the form of a saṁskāra, imprint. Since the mind is exposed to numerous sense objects all the time, and has been for numerous lifetimes, there are unlimited saṁskāras continually being embedded in the citta, which are all potentially retrievable. Memory, then, the fifth and final type of vṛtti listed by Patañjali, consists of the retrieval of these saṁskāras; memories are the reactivation of the imprints of sense objects that one has experienced and recognized in the past.79 (Vijñānabhikṣu makes a distinction here between memory and recognition.80) When these saṁskāras do not slip away (fall into the unconscious), or, in Sāṅkhyan categories, when they do not become overly covered by tamas, they constitute memory. The citta can perhaps be compared to a lake, and saṁskāra memories to the pebbles at the bottom of the lake. If the lake is peaceful and crystal clear (sāttvic), the pebbles are easily visible; if it is choppy (rājasic), less so; and if murky (tāmasic), the pebbles become very hard or impossible to perceive.

Vyāsa states that memory is of two types—real, namely, recollection of things that actually happened; and imagined, such as in dreams, which involve the spontaneous and more random activation of saṁskāras but are still memories of sorts. Bhoja Rāja says that the saṁskāras that activate during dreams do so because of the force of the impression that created them. In other words, they were vivid events. On this topic, Rāmānanda Sarasvatī raises the question that if all saṁskāras consist of,
and only of, events or objects that have been actually experienced, then how can we account for those dreams where one might imagine oneself, for example, as having the body of an elephant? What saṁskāras produced these? Surely one has not had such an experience in real life. Such memories, he answers, are the result of error, which affects the dream state just as it does the waking state.

One might add that one cannot dream of, or for that matter even imagine, something that does not exist as a saṁskāra or set of saṁskāras in one’s citta, and saṁskāras, in turn, correspond to something one has actually experienced. However, saṁskāras can be clustered together in a way that corresponds to something that has never been experienced in reality, such as a flying elephant or the horns of a hare. What is taking place in such imaginative instances is the merging together of two sets of actual saṁskāras; in other words, one set of memory experiences, recollections of the act of flying or of horns, are superimposed on and blended with other memory imprints, those of an elephant or a hare. (As a point of interest, in addition to the fantasy nature of most dreams, Vedānta Sūtra III.2.4 allows that some dreams can also serve as omens of real events.)

The Jains accept memory, smṛti, as a pramāṇa (I.6) in its own right, but this is rejected by the Hindu schools since memory does not present immediate or new knowledge, which pramāṇa for these philosophical schools must do, but re-presents something that has already happened in the past. However, smṛti is used by Hindus to refer to a category of āgama, sacred text, which is a pramāṇa. This category of smṛti includes in practice more or less everything other than the śruti, or the Vedic corpus—the epics, Purāṇas, and sūtra traditions including Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras. However, since smṛti sacred texts present themselves, at least nominally, as dependent on or derivative from the śruti for their authoritativeness, smṛti texts are not considered pramāṇa on the same level as śruti in orthodox discourse, at least not officially (although in practice, it has been the smṛti that has determined the beliefs and practices of Hindus throughout the ages). Or, put differently, as in the Vedānta tradition, smṛti can be accepted as āgama-pramāṇa to the extent it does not conflict with the śruti.

This concludes the discussion on what constitutes a vṛtti. According to
Vyāsa, the five types of *vṛttis* identified by Patañjali are either experienced as pleasurable in nature, resulting in attachment (*sattva*); unpleasurable, resulting in aversion (*rajas*); or deluded, resulting in ignorance (*tamas*). Of course, as Vijñānabhikṣu notes, from the absolute perspective pleasure also results in pain, because pleasure generates attachment to the object of pleasure, and this attachment ultimately results in pain upon the loss of this object; attachment also perpetuates *saṁsāra*, as we will discover in II.2ff.

One might add here that Patañjali indicated in I.5 that these five *vṛttis* are either *kliṣṭa*, detrimental, or *akliṣṭa*, beneficial, conducive to the goal of *yoga*. Thus, for example, the *vṛtti* of sleep might be considered nondetrimental when it is not excessive but simply adequate for the well-being of the body, but detrimental when in excess of this; the *vṛtti* of memory may be nondetrimental when one keeps the goals of *yoga* in mind, but detrimental when one harps back on past sensual indulgences. Perhaps the hardest *vṛtti* to envision in this regard is how error could be *sāttvic* and *akliṣṭa*, conducive to the goal of *yoga*, but irrespective of the state of one’s *citta*, if the instruments of the senses are defective error may nonetheless occur. For example, if he has poor eyesight, even the accomplished *yogī* will still perceive things erroneously and thus be subject to error. One can play around creatively with other possible scenarios of error being *akliṣṭa*: One might walk into a *yoga* studio taught by dedicated teachers grounded in Patañjali’s teachings, mistaking it for a health spa, but, once there, become inspired to undertake the practices and philosophy of the system, and thus one’s initial error becomes conducive to the goals of the *yoga*. There are certainly plenty of examples in the Purāṇas that might illustrate error from a *bhakti*, devotional, perspective. In the Bhāgavata tradition, the residents of Vraj, where Krṣṇa spent his childhood, unaware of Krṣṇa’s divinity, mistook him to be their son, or friend, or lover, etc., but such error is highly favorable to the goal in this Yoga tradition and fundamental to its theology of *līlā*, the pastimes of the incarnation of God in the world (as well as indicative of the extraordinary past-life *yogic* attainments of those residents, which allowed them this opportunity of such intimate association with God in this form).\(^{85}\) Whatever their nature, says Vyāsa, *vṛttis* must be restrained for any type of concentrative state—either
samprajñāta or asamprajñāta—to take place, as Patañjali announced at the beginning of his sūtras.

I.12 abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyāṁ tan-nirodhaḥ

abhyāsa, practice; vairāgyābhyām, dispassion, renunciation, nonattachment; tat, their [the vṛtti states of mind]; nirodhaḥ, controlled, restrained

[The vṛtti states of mind] are stilled by practice and dispassion.

At the beginning of the text (I.2), Patañjali defined yoga as citta-vṛtti-nirodha, the restraint of the vṛttis, the changing states of the mind. Having explained what constitutes a vṛtti, he now turns his attention to nirodha, restraint. How, exactly, are the vṛttis to be restrained? In this sūtra he identifies two ingredients necessary for such restraint: practice and dispassion (renunciation). Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the Gītā here: “The mind is undoubtedly fickle and difficult to control, O Arjuna, but it can be controlled by abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyām, practice and dispassion” (VI.35). The same two ingredients are indicated by Patañjali in this sūtra. As was seen in I.6, Patañjali’s typical method is to introduce a list in one sūtra and then explain the items on this list in the subsequent sūtras, so his definitions of practice and dispassion follow in the next sūtras.

Before proceeding to an analysis on practice and dispassion, Vyāsa notes that the stream of the citta, mind, can flow two ways: toward its upliftment or toward its downfall. He analogizes the mind to a river, which normally flows down the channels of the senses toward their objects and into the sea of saṁsāra, the cycle of birth and death. However, by dispassion toward the sense objects, the flow of this river of the mind toward the sea of saṁsāra is checked, and by discrimination, the current of the river is reversed and the mind flows back, away from saṁsāra, and toward realization of the self. By flowing along the course of discrimination, the mind leads to upliftment and ultimate liberation; contrarily, if it flows along the course of nondiscrimination in the form
of sensuality, it produces *karma*, which may be good or bad depending on whether the actions the mind provokes are pious or impious, and perpetuates the vicious cycle of repeated birth and death. By practice and dispassion, the flow of the mind toward sensual attractions, which might entice the mind toward vice, becomes drastically diminished. Rather, by practice, which of course refers to the practice of *yoga*, the flow of the mind toward higher knowledge becomes unobstructed, and the mind becomes immersed in discrimination.

Another way of putting this from the perspective of the *guṇas* is that *sattva* becomes enhanced and *rajas* and *tamas* minimized. Discrimination, dispassion, and the impetus to seek a practice in order to realize Truth are inherent in the mind when its *sāttvic* potential is not overwhelmed by *rajas* and *tamas*, which are the influences provoking the flow of the mind toward sensuality. Bhoja Rāja adds that by practice and renunciation, eventually all fluctuating states of the mind, whether *sāttvic*, *rājasic*, or *tāmasic*, can be controlled. He understands dispassion as the realization by the wise of the negative repercussions of sensuality, which results in avoidance of it—the pursuit of sensual pleasure always bears a hidden price.

I.13 *tatra sthitau yatno ‘bhyaśaḥ*

*tatra,* of these [*abhyaśa* and *vairāgya*]; *sthitau,* in the matter of steadfastness; *yatnaḥ,* effort; *abhyaśaḥ,* practice

From these, practice is the effort to be fixed in concentrating the mind.

Patañjali now describes the first ingredient required to restrain the mind, *abhyaśa*, practice, and defines practice as the effort to concentrate the mind. Vyāsa, in turn, defines concentration (one-pointedness) as the peaceful flow of the mind when it has become freed from its fluctuating states or *vṛttis*. The effort to secure this state is practice. It is important to recognize that a controlled mind is not going to manifest by itself: Effort, *yatna*, is required. One is reminded here of the comment of Arjuna (who,
as a warrior, had no history of serious yoga practice), that the mind is “harder to control than the wind” since it is “fickle, powerful, and obstinate.” As noted by Vijñānabhikṣu in the last sūtra, Krṣṇa assures him that without doubt the fickle mind is hard to control, but it can be subdued with “practice and dispassion” (VI.34–35). In this sūtra, Patañjali indicates that this practice requires effort, and Vyāsa associates this effort with enthusiasm and vigor.

Vyāsa also uses the term sādhana, which typically refers to one’s specific daily spiritual practices. In the context of classical yoga, Vācaspati Miśra understands this sādhana to be the eight limbs of yoga that will be discussed in Chapters II and III. So the vṛttis of the mind can be restrained when one is enthusiastic, vigorous, and steadfast in the practice of these eight steps.

The commentators reiterate that one can only hope to be concentrated or one-pointed—the mind can only flow peacefully—when its rājasic and tāmasic potential have been stilled. Practice is the effort involved in attaining this end. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī introduces the next sūtra by wondering how practice can ever achieve steadfastness, since it is constantly disturbed by rājasic and tāmasic saṁskāras, distracting memories and tendencies inherited from time immemorial, a question with which aspiring yogīs can surely relate.

\[I.14 \text{ sa } tū \text{ dīrgha-kāla-nairantarya-satkārāsevito } dṛḍha-bhūmiḥ\]

saḥ, it [practice]; tu, but; dīrgha, prolonged; kāla, period of time; nairantarya, uninterruptedly; satkāra, reverence; āsevitaḥ, attended to, cultivated, practiced; dṛḍha, firm; bhūmiḥ, ground

Practice becomes firmly established when it has been cultivated uninterruptedly and with devotion over a prolonged period of time.

Patañjali here gives further specifics pertaining to what the effort underpinning practice consists of. First, in order to become unshakable, practice must be performed nairantarya, without interruption. One
cannot take breaks from one’s practice whenever one feels like it or the mind dictates and expect to attain the goal of yoga, which is precisely to quell such whimsical vṛttis. Second, one’s practice must continue dirgha-kāla, for a long time. One cannot attain success in a few months or even after many years of practice unless one is exceptionally dedicated. Indeed, the Gītā speaks of the yogī maintaining the yatna, effort, of the last sūtra, for many births: “Through effort and restraint, cleansed of all impurities, the yogī who has cultivated perfection over several lives, eventually attains the supreme destination” (VI.45). Practice is at the very least a lifelong commitment, to be undertaken, Patañjali goes on to say, satkāra-āsevitaḥ, with respect and devotion. One is, after all, pursuing the ultimate goal of life—realization of the innermost self—and cannot expect to attain this in a halfhearted or frivolous fashion, or in a random manner.

Vyāsa states that the practice of yoga becomes successful, that is, firmly established, when accompanied by austerity, celibacy, knowledge, and faith. Under these conditions, it is not immediately overwhelmed by the ingrained habits of the mind. Vācaspati Miśra calls these habits, which are saṁskāras that impel the mind outward into the sensual realm, “highway robbers.” He acknowledges that the sāttvic nature of the mind—tranquillity and calmness—is often overcome by rajas and tamas, but if one maintains one’s practice, then eventually the mind becomes steadfast and concentrated. If one gives up one’s practice, however, one’s mind immediately becomes overwhelmed again. Hence this verse indicates that the practice of yoga has to be cultivated uninterruptedly and with devotion for a long period of time.

If we correlate citta with a garden, sattva with a beautiful bed of fragrant and attractive flowers, and rajas and tamas with weeds and pests, then we have a useful metaphor for the practice of yoga. As any gardener knows, maintaining a garden takes devotion and uninterrupted weeding and pest control for a prolonged period of time. In fact, these processes can never be interrupted, since within a remarkably short period of time, even the most devotedly cultivated garden becomes overwhelmed by weeds and pests; if left unattended, all one’s hard work is easily undone.

Likewise with yoga: The cultivation of sattva takes constant attention
and cultivation—the minute the yogī relaxes his or her practices and vigilance, Vācaspati Miśra’s highway robbers of rājasic and tāmasic saṁskāras overwhelm the sāttvic qualities so arduously developed. This is because, like weeds, saṁskāras are never actually eliminated or destroyed; they remain in a latent subconscious state and thus can become activated at any moment, unless constantly curtailed (although, as will be discussed below, they can be “burnt” by certain practices, rendering them inoperable); hence Patañjali’s notion of devoted uninterruptedness over a prolonged period.

As an aside, many Hindu gurus and yogīs have been embroiled in scandals that have brought disrepute to the transplantation of yoga and other Indic spiritual systems to the West. This sūtra provides a mechanism of interpreting such occurrences. If one reads the early hagiographies of many Hindu gurus whose integrity was later found compromised, one is struck by the intensity, devotedness, and accomplishments of their initial practices. Nonetheless, however accomplished a yogī may become, if he or she abandons the practices of yoga under the notion of being enlightened or of having arrived at a point beyond the need of practice, it may be only a matter of time before past saṁskāras, including those of past sensual indulgences, now unimpeded by practice, begin to surface. The result is scandal and traumatized disciples. There is no flower bed, however perfected, that can counteract the relentless emergence of weeds if left unattended. As Patañjali will discuss later in the text, as long as one is embodied, saṁskāras remain latent, and therefore potential, in the citta. Hence one can read this sūtra as indicating that since the practices of yoga must be uninterrupted, one would be wise to politely avoid yogīs or gurus who claim to have attained a state of enlightenment such that they have transcended the need for the practice and renunciation prescribed by Patañjali here.

I.15 dṛṣṭānuśravika-viṣaya-vitrṣṇasya vašikāra-saṁjñā vairāgyam
dṛṣṭa, visible, perceptible; anuśravika, heard about [from Vedic
Dispassion is the controlled consciousness of one who is without craving for sense objects, whether these are actually perceived, or described [in scripture].

After defining practice, Patañjali turns to the second element in the restraint of the mind, vairāgyam, dispassion, renunciation. He defines dispassion as the absence of craving for sense objects, viṣaya. As examples of sense objects, Vyāsa mentions members of the opposite sex, food, drink, and power. He notes that such dispassion or detachment precludes the inclination either to accept or reject such objects, even when they are available. That renunciation involves disinterest toward indulging in sense objects is straightforward, but Vyāsa’s observation that it also involves disinterest to overly rejecting them merits attention. Too much energy and fanfare dedicated to overly rejecting sense objects can often indicate a hidden attachment to those very objects that is being overcompensated for. Real detachment is indifference to sense objects whether in their absence or presence. As Vācaspati Miśra points out, one might be free from desires for objects because one knows nothing about them, but this does not qualify as dispassion; dispassion is indifference to objects even when these are available. Vaśīkāra means to have control over; thus Bhoja Rāja states, with regard to desires, “I am not in their control—they are in my control.”

With II.33–34 in mind, Vyāsa states that one who is renounced understands the defects of sensuality from reflection on its consequences, or, as Vijnānahabhiṣṭu puts it, renunciation arises specifically from perceiving the defects of indulging in the objects of the senses, in other words, from discrimination. This is significant: The tradition does not take the position that sensual desires somehow disappear; desires are imprints of past pleasurable experiences that are recorded in the citta as saṁskāras. Saṁskāras never disappear; they always remain latent (except in the exceptional cases when they are burnt by yogic practice). When they reactivate, they create desires, the impulse to re-create the pleasurable experience (the desire to avoid unpleasant experiences
works along parallel lines). As Vācaspati Miśra notes, the power of renunciation comes not from being free from desires but from being indifferent to them.

The discriminating yogī cultivates this indifference by recognizing that any sensual gratification, irrespective of how pleasurable, is temporary. Sooner or later, one is separated from the object of gratification and consequently experiences frustration. Through discrimination, one recognizes this inherent defect of sensual indulgence. One is also astute enough to realize realistically that there is always a karmic price to pay for the pursuit of pleasure (all actions, good or bad, when based on seeking gratification, generate correspondingly good or bad reactions and thus perpetuate saṁsāra). Simply put, renunciation “consists in the idea of ‘enough’” of this sense gratification, says Vijñānabhikṣu.86 One becomes exhausted with the unending pursuit of seeking fulfillment in this way but attaining only temporary and unfulfilling (from an ultimate perspective) pleasures. Therefore, the wise strive for detachment and the eternal experience of the soul rather than the never-ending pursuit of ephemeral pleasure. This is a recurring theme in the Gītā:

Detached from the external contact [of the senses with their objects] a person finds happiness in the ātman. Such a person, engaged in practicing the yoga of Brahman [the Absolute Truth], experiences eternal happiness. Material pleasures are born from the contact [of the senses with the sense objects]; they have a beginning and an end, and so they are the source of unhappiness. The wise do not delight in them. (V.21–22)

However, Vijñānabhikṣu also cautions that renunciation in and of itself does not guarantee success in yoga, and mentions the case of the sage Saubhari. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa (IX.6.40ff) tells the story of a sage whose desire for renunciation was so intense that he resolved to meditate under water so as to eliminate all the distractions of the sensual temptations of the world. However, he happened to open his eyes one day and notice two fish mating. This activated latent erotic saṁskāras in his own mind (perhaps from experiences recorded from previous births), and he again became overwhelmed with fantasies of sexual enjoyment, abandoned his meditation, and returned to worldly life. As noted, in
normal circumstances, *saṁskāras* are not destroyed; they remain latent until suitable conditions arise for reactivation. Therefore, excessive renunciation in and of itself does not necessarily guarantee that one is freed from the potential reemergence of undesirable *saṁskāras*.

Vijñānabhikṣu outlines various stages of detachment: One begins by making an effort to break attachment; next one determines that detachment has been accomplished toward certain objects, while others still need some work; and then, when detachment from all the external objects of the senses has been achieved, one begins to target internal attachments. These include such things as the attachment to honor and respect, and the opposite, the dislike of dishonor and disrespect. One may be externally very renounced and austere but internally be very attached to the prestige renunciation can bring (for example, the reputation of being a great *yogi*, or of having many followers). In this way, one slowly starves the *karmāśaya*, the storehouse of *karma* discussed in II.12, by giving up all desires for the fruits of actions, thereby preventing the further planting of karmic seeds.

The commentators elaborate on Patañjali’s comment here that there are two types of sense objects: There are the *drṣṭa*, those seen in this world, the everyday sensual pleasures of life; and those that are not seen here but are *anuśravīka*, heard about (*anu* + *śru* = to hear from authorities). This is a reference to Vedic texts, more commonly referred to as *śruti* (from the same root), texts that are transmitted and recited orally, and thus heard, and therefore is an indirect reference to the pleasures of the celestial realms referred to in these texts. Vyāsa states that detachment requires that one be indifferent also to the heavenly enticements described in the Vedas and such texts (as well as attainments from *yoga* practice such as those outlined in the next verse, and the mystic powers outlined in Chapter III).

The celestial realms mentioned in various Sanskrit literature as early as the Vedic hymns, but more elaborately in the Purāṇas, point to other worlds or dimensions within the material universe where the level of enjoyment, duration of life span, and quality of experience far exceed anything available in this world. These worlds are the destination of the pious—that is, the good *karma* accrued by the performance of *dharma*, socioreligious duty, can translate into sojourns in these celestial realms.
By the later Upaniṣadic period, however, these realms were perceived to have a defect in that they, too, involve embodied existence within the confines of saṁsāra—they are not the ultimate or permanent destination of the soul. When the good karma, or righteous deeds, of the pious that earned them a place in these realms has expired, such souls return again to this world. Good karma is accumulated like money in the bank. When one starts to draw on one's credit, however much one has accumulated, sooner or later the account will be depleted. Likewise, upon attaining the celestial realms as a result of the accumulation of merit while on earth, souls are able to remain there until their karmic bank account is inevitably depleted, at which point they again return to this world where suffering is much more pronounced.

In this sītra, Patañjali is implicitly criticizing aspects of Vedic ritualism, which, while on the decline due to the rise of the ascetic traditions including Buddhism and the great theistic devotional traditions of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, would still have been a mainstream religious presence in his day. One of the expressed goals of Vedic ritualism is the obtainment of the good things in life in this world, followed by the pleasures of the celestial realms in the next. The Vedic hymns often express a lusty desire for very earthly boons such as cows, offspring, victory over enemies, etc., which the sacrificer in the earlier Vedic period attempted to obtain by cajoling the gods who controlled such things and, in the middle Vedic period, by mastering the technology of ritual such that the gods were constrained to bestow these boons.

One can read the entire religious and philosophical history of post-Vedic India as a rejection of Vedic ritualism by communities that were eventually to become heterodox to the Vedic matrix—the Buddhists and Jains—and as a demotion or radical reinterpretation of it by those, such as Patañjali and the Yoga school, who remained in the orthodox Vedic fold. Among this latter category, a sometimes quite scathing critique of the ritualistic mind-set can be found in texts as early as the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, a late Vedic text:

The fools, who proclaim [the Vedic sacrifices] as the ultimate, return again to old age and death. Wallowing in ignorance, but
imagining themselves wise and thinking themselves learned, the fools go about harming themselves, like blind men led by a man who is himself blind. Wallowing in ignorance again and again, these foolish people imagine, “We have attained our goals!” Because of their desires, these ritualists do not have foresight, therefore they fall back down, wretched and despondent, when their time in the celestial realms expires. Deeming sacrifices and gifts [to the ritual priests] as the highest, these idiots know nothing better. When they have enjoyed their pious work [i.e., the fruits of their *karma*] in the celestial realms, they return again to this miserable world.

But those [seekers of the self] in the forest, peaceful and wise, who practice austerity and faith, as they wander around as mendicants, pass through the doorway of the sun, spotless, to where that immortal *puruṣa* is, the eternal *ātman*. (I.7–11)

The Upaniṣadic/Yogic view, expressed in this early context, is that pleasures in this world or the next are temporary and simply entwine one in the cycle of birth and death. The *Gītā*, too, is forceful in its rejection of Vedic ritualism in language that parallels that of the Yoga commentarial tradition.

Those who are ignorant subscribe to the flowery words [of the Veda], Arjuna. Reveling in the Vedic rites, they proclaim “there is nothing else but this.” Their hearts filled with desires, intent on the celestial realms, they take to the path of performing numerous variegated rites, which are dedicated to the attainment of opulence and sensual enjoyment, but which bestow rebirth as the fruit of action. To such people, attached to sensual enjoyment and opulence, whose minds have been stolen by these flowery words, a mind fixed in *samādhi* is not granted. (II.42–44)

Patañjali’s reference to disinterest in *ānuśravika-viṣaya*, the sense objects available from Vedic ritualism, falls in this same vein: Clearly the goals of *yoga* are in complete contrast to the lusty goals of the normative Vedic sacrificial cult that was still a mainstream presence in his day. Therefore, disinterest in this type of ritualism, whether Vedic or other, is a prerequisite to *yoga*. 
Essentially, the critique here is one of materialistic religiosity—
religiosity performed with the motive of enjoying the good things of the
world. This criticism is thus perennially relevant to the attitudes
underpinning religious traditions other than Hindu ones, which likewise
promote worldly boons as the goal of religious practice. In other words
(connecting this verse to modes of religiosity on our own horizons),
engaging in religious activities with material motives for mundane goals
conflicts with the transcendent goals of yoga. In sum, renunciation
means not only disinterest in the visible things of this world but also
disinterest in some of the worldly or celestial boons that might be
promoted in sacred scripture itself.

One more comment is in order here. A general principle of Sanskrit
hermeneutics is that a first item mentioned on a list carries more
importance than any subsequent items. Thus, of the five vṛttis, pramāṇa,
right knowledge, is listed first—it is the most important state of mind.
And even within the three subdivisions of pramāṇa, the Yoga school
prioritizes pratyakṣa, direct experience; hence this is situated as the first
item of the pramāṇa sublist. Of the two ingredients of nirodha, then, by
this principle, abhyāsa is situated before vairāgya, since, by practice, the
by-products of dispassion, detachment, and renunciation arise
spontaneously. It is therefore generally a precondition of the latter.

\[
\text{I.16 tat-param̄ puruṣa-khyāter guṇa-vairṛṣṇyam}
\]

\[
tat, \text{ that [renunciation]; param̄, higher; puruṣa, the soul, self, innermost consciousness; khyāṭehṣ, knowledge, perception; guṇa, qualities of sattva, rajas, and tamas; vairṛṣṇyam, indifference.}
\]

Higher than renunciation is indifference to the guṇas [themselves]. This stems from perception of the puruṣa, soul.

There are two levels of renunciation or detachment: indifference toward
the sensual objects of the world or of the celestial realms, as outlined in
the last sūtra, and a higher level of detachment stemming from
indifference to the very guṇas themselves, guṇa vaitṛṣṇyam. We should bear in mind that the guṇas of prakṛti are the subtle stuff from which all objects are made, whether physical or mental, since matter, mind, and everything else in existence—except for the puruṣa, pure consciousness itself—are evolutes from prakṛti when it is stirred by the guṇas inherent in her. So indifference toward the guṇas automatically includes indifference to all prākṛtic objects external to pure consciousness. Vyāsa states that this higher and ultimate level of dispassion or renunciation referred to here stems from puruṣa-khyāti, awareness of puruṣa itself. Complete loss of interest in all things material can realistically take place only when the yogī has attained something far superior.

Vācaspati Miśra reiterates the metaphysics underpinning this notion. First, when the influences of raajas and tamas have been eliminated, the mind’s natural quality of sattva can manifest without disturbance. Sattva, in addition to producing a sustainable experience of happiness (unlike the fleeting pleasures of the senses), is by nature pure, transparent, luminous, and insightful. With no disturbing influences, sattva is maximized, and the inherent lucidity of the mind can manifest. Tamas and raajas taint the mind, which is filtering consciousness, distracting it from its source, the puruṣa soul, and out into the realm of sense objects. When these two guṇas are stilled, the mind’s natural lucidity of sattva allows it to peacefully and blissfully contemplate the distinction between the guṇas (and their products, which include the mind itself) and the pure puruṣa soul. Thus, this natural discriminative knowledge of the difference between puruṣa and the guṇas (that is, puruṣa and prakṛti), referred to in this sūtra by Patañjali is the highest and ultimate function that the sāttvic citta can perform and manifests when other types of knowledge have faded away.

Vācaspati Miśra adds, though, that ultimately the yogī must transcend even attachment to this sāttvic recognition of the distinction between the guṇas and puruṣa. Vijñānabhikṣu elaborates that the yogī must attain the state where the realization occurs that even discriminative knowledge of the distinction between the guṇas and puruṣa is a function of the prākṛtic citta; it is not a function of puruṣa. Besides, even elevated and ultimate knowledge can be transitory and therefore defective; after all, pure sattva is nonetheless a guṇa and therefore unstable by nature since the three
guṇas are always in flux. Therefore, upon attaining the highest awareness of puruṣa’s own nature, the pure mind checks and restraints itself, and hence puruṣa’s awareness becomes disassociated from all types of knowledge whatsoever. This, says Vijñānabhikṣu, is called the highest dispassion by Patañjali because it is dispassion toward the most subtle aspects of matter, the very guṇas themselves, whereas the renunciation in the previous sūtra primarily refers to the grosser aspects of matter, the guṇas as manifest in their most physical and solid products, the gross sense objects (or subtler internal thoughts).

Vijñānabhikṣu mentions Jaḍa Bhārata from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as an exemplar of vairāgya. Jaḍa Bhārata had been an advanced yogī in a previous life but, due to attachment to a deer, had failed to attain the ultimate goals of yoga (see III.7 for the details). Consequently, upon being reborn, although internally his mind was completely immersed in thought of Lord Viṣṇu, he presented himself to the world as being insane, stupid, blind, and deaf so as never again to become attached to anything material. Although his pious and well-meaning father tried to teach him the duties of a Brāhmaṇa (the scholarly and priestly caste of Vedic India), Jaḍa Bhārata refused to engage with the world in any way at all, such was his disregard for anything made of the guṇas, to use Patañjali’s terminology in this sūtra. He simply wandered around barefoot and clad in filthy rags “like a precious jewel covered by dirt,” slept on the ground, neglected his personal cleanliness, and subsisted on broken rice, husks, worm-eaten grains, and the discarded rice left sticking on the bottom of pots. Since he was nonetheless stout in limb, some worshippers of Kālī eventually seized him and brought him unresisting to the Goddess to be offered as a human sacrifice. But the Goddess burst forth from the deity and decapitated her own devotees so as to save this enlightened yogī. In short, Jaḍa Bhārata is an exemplar in popular narrative of the complete renunciation indicated by Patañjali in this sūtra.

Vyāsa states that the yogī who has attained the state of vairāgya can now think, “Whatever was to be achieved has been achieved; the obstacles to the path that were to be destroyed have been destroyed; and the cycle of repeated existence—one who is born, dies, and one who dies is reborn—has been broken.” Vācaspati Miśra reiterates that the links
holding this cycle together are the myriad individual acts of virtue and vice, *karma*. As discussed, *karma* means action, the performance of any type of act, and since every action performed generates a reaction, and one acts at every moment, the cycle of action and reaction is potentially eternal. Vācaspati Miśra draws attention to II.12–13, which states that this reservoir of *karma* has its roots in nescience—mistaking the pure eternal self to be a product of the impure noneternal products of the *guṇas*. It fructifies only if this root exists. Thus, through the discrimination and knowledge ensuing from the dispassion, renunciation, and desirelessness discussed in these two *sūtras*, nescience, the root of *karma* and thus of *saṁsāra*, the cycle of birth and death, is destroyed. Vācaspati Miśra states that the *yogī* whose intellect is saturated with this recognition of the distinction between the *guṇas* and *puruṣa* is said to be situated in the *samādhi* state of IV.29 known as *dharmamegha*, the cloud of virtue.

This *sūtra* concludes Patañjali’s definition of *yoga* given in I.2, *citta-vṛtti-nirodahāḥ*; *sūtras* I.5–12 discussed the *vṛttis*; and I.13–16, *nirodha*. The only analysis Patañjali has not undertaken is a definition of *citta*. One might suppose that he did not feel the need to do so because the word was so well-known at the time. This is regrettable because the term is actually used somewhat differently in different philosophical contexts. In Vedānta, for example, it is perceived as a fourth aspect of the internal organ, in addition to *buddhi*, *ahaṅkāra*, and *manas*, and corresponds to memory (see Śaṅkara’s commentary to *Vedānta Sūtras* II.4.6, and *Yoga-vāsiṣṭha* III.96.55), as it does in a reference in the *Mahābhārata* (XII.27493), and in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (III.26.14). Considering his overall remarkably systematic treatment of his subject matter, it is puzzling that Patañjali did not provide a definition of *citta*, the most important term in the entire system. However, given that other than for its latent function as reservoir of *saṁskāras*, the *karmāśaya* of II.12, the *citta* is essentially known only through its *vṛttis*, that is, anything the *citta* does or can do manifests as one of the *vṛttis*, then one might surmise that by carefully analyzing the *vṛttis*, Patañjali has, in effect, analyzed and described the *citta* itself (some comments to this effect or otherwise would have been welcome, nonetheless!).
I.17 *vitarka-vicārānandāsamitā-rūpānugamāt samprajñātāṁ*

*vitarka*, absorption with physical awareness; *vicāra*, absorption with subtle awareness; *ānanda*, absorption with bliss; *asmitā*, absorption with the sense of I-ness; *rūpa*, form; *anugamāt*, accompanied by; *samprajñātāṁ*, a type of *samādhi* state [which still uses the mind and an object of meditation]

*Samprajñātā [samādhi] consists of [the consecutive] mental stages of absorption with physical awareness, absorption with subtle awareness, absorption with bliss, and absorption with the sense of I-ness.

Having discussed *yoga* in general as the cessation of all thought, Patañjali here and in the next verse turns his attention to two basic categories of *samādhi*, the state of consciousness ensuing when all thought has, in fact, been stilled, and therefore the final goal of *yoga*: *samprajñātā* and *asamprajñātā samādhis*. This *sūtra* addresses the former category.

In instances such as this, English translations such as “absorption with physical awareness” for *vitarka* and “absorption with subtle awareness” for *vicāra* do not convey the sense or meaning or difference between these two levels of *samādhi*. The technical way that these Sanskrit terms are being used here cannot be captured by a suitable English equivalent, so the reader is advised not to try to understand these terms through the clumsy English words a translator choses to convey them. In fact, even the Sanskrit terms are an artificiality, as Vijñānabhikṣu points out, and not to be correlated with how they are used in other contexts, that is, their conventional Sanskrit dictionary meanings (see, e.g., II.34 for a different usage of the term *vitarka*, and II.3 for *asmitā*). So, since these English terms are little better than heuristic indicators, the Sanskrit terms will be retained in the ensuing discussion. This *sūtra* initiates the esoteric teachings of Yoga. That this *sūtra* is so succinct—yet understood as encapsulating a universe of esoteric significance—points to the nature of the *sūtras*, aptly expressed by Feuerstein, as
originally and primarily maps for meditative introspection, intended to guide the yogin in his exploration of the terra incognita of the mind. Thus these models served a very practical psychological purpose. This hypothesis helps to explain why so many of these models ... in early texts, are without apparent logical coherence. 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. (1980, 117)

As the symbols of a map denote far greater entities than might be evident from the simple signs themselves (circles, squares, triangles, etc.), and alert the traveler to what to expect on the road ahead, so the technical terms in this sūtra represent altered states of consciousness far beyond those of conventional awareness, and thus beyond the ability of conventional words or labels to describe. They are guides for the yogī, alerting him or her to some of the meditative experiences that will be encountered on the path.

Vyāsa is curiously not very detailed in his explanation of this complex sūtra at this point, but these stages of samādhi are discussed in more depth in I.40–45. He notes that these are four stages of samprajñāta-samādhi, all of which have an ālambana, a support (see discussion in I.10). He means by this that the consciousness of the puruṣa is still flowing through the prākṛtic citta to connect with or be supported by an object of meditational focus (albeit in progressively more subtle ways). In this state, the mind is fixed on one pratyaya (discussed in I.10), or undeviating vṛtti, that of the object of concentration, and resists all change into other states. The object of concentration, whatever it might be, is the ālambana, the unwavering image the object produces on the concentrated mind (the pratyaya).

It is Vācaspati Miśra who unpacks this sūtra in detail. He considers the first state on Patañjali’s list, vitarka-samādhi, to be contemplation on a gross physical object, that is to say, meditating on an object that one experiences as a manifestation or construct of the gross physical or material elements. It is thus the first level of experiencing an object in samādhi. Keeping the metaphysics of Sāṅkhya in mind, we know that the
five gross elements that constitute gross physical objects evolve from elements that are more subtle, that is, they are actually evolutes from the tanmātras, the five subtle elements. Vācaspati Miśra states that vicāra samādhi, the second level of samādhi concentration mentioned by Patañjali in this sūtra, involves absorption on this more subtle aspect of the object of meditation, perceiving the object as actually consisting of these more subtle ingredients. In fact, I.44 informs us that the subtle substructure of external reality can refer to any of the evolutes from prakṛti, as even the tanmātras evolve from ahaṅkāra which, in turn, evolves from buddhi. Thus, the latter can also be considered sūkṣma, subtle. As a new archer first aims at large objects, Vācaspati Miśra says, and then progressively smaller ones, so the neophyte yogī first experiences the gross nature of the object in meditation and then its progressively more subtle nature. Instead of experiencing the object as composed of compact quantum masses, the bhūtādi gross elements, as in the first state of vitarka, in vicāra, the yogī experiences the object as composed of vibratory, radiant potential, subtle energy (a sublevel of reality normally imperceptible to the senses).

Vijñānabhikṣu gives us a theistic example of these two states of samādhi. If one wishes to fix the mind on God, Īśvara, as Patañjali will encourage in I.23–29, how does one do so? Īśvara is also a type of puruṣa (I.23) and thus beyond prakṛti—and we know that the prākṛtic mind cannot fix itself on something more subtle than and metaphysically distinct from itself. Vijñānabhikṣu speaks of fixing the mind on a divine form of Īśvara such as that of Viṣṇu. Essentially, this can only entail fixing the mind on some saṁskāra connected with God, some image, perhaps from one’s temple or favorite artistic rendition. When this entails concentrating on Īśvara in the form of a saṁskāra of some gross prākṛtic form (such as a deity), it is vitarka, and when in a more subtle prākṛtic form, such as God’s characteristics, it is vicāra. We will see that, for Vijñānabhikṣu, as for most of the bhakti traditions, this theistic meditation will eventually culminate in direct, non-prākṛtic perception of Īśvara as puruṣa, that is, a non-prākṛtic supreme being of pure consciousness. Patañjali has not discussed this particular type of practice (he will recommend fixing the mind on Īśvara in the form of om in I.27–28), but Vijñānabhikṣu’s approach is certainly acceptable within the
framework of this system, and most of the commentators do refer to such conventional bhakti modes of Īśvara-centered meditation. Whatever the object of meditation, the sine qua non at this point is undeviated concentration on it. In the state of samādhi, the mind is fixed so intensely on its ālambana that it essentially merges with it, like, says Vijñānabhinīkṣu, fire in a red-hot iron ball.

There is no consensus among the commentators as to the exact nature of the last two stages of samādhi, ānanda and asmitā, underscoring the fact that such states do not lend themselves to scholastic categorization and analysis. Vācaspati Miśra’s version perhaps surfaces most commonly and seems predicated on the information we will encounter later in the chapter. Specifically, with an eye on I.41, he utilizes the three components of knowledge identified in Hindu philosophical discourse to demarcate the differences among these four stages of samādhi. In any act of knowledge, there is the knower or subject of knowledge, the instruments of knowledge (mind and senses, etc.), and the object of knowledge; these are termed grhītṛ, grahaṇa, and grāhya, respectively (literally, the grasper, the instrument of grasping, and that which is grasped). For Vācaspati Miśra, in the first two stages of samādhi outlined above, vitarka and vicāra, the object on which the mind is fixed, whether perceived as its grosser outer form or subtler inner constituents, is nonetheless an external object and therefore considered grāhya (that which is grasped). Now, in the third stage, ānanda-samādhi, the yogi transfers awareness from the objects of the senses, grāhya, to the organs of the senses themselves, grahaṇa (the instruments of grasping). He specifies that these are the powers (śakti) behind the sensual abilities of seeing, touching, smelling, tasting, and hearing, rather than the gross physical organs of eye, ear, nose, etc. The citta now becomes aware of the mechanisms of cognition, the instruments of the senses. In other words, it becomes aware of the internal organ through which external objects are grasped, rather than the external objects themselves, whether experienced in their gross or subtle constitutions.

Since, in Sāṅkhya, the grahaṇa includes the internal organs, manas, buddhi, and ahaṅkāra, which comprise the citta in Yoga, Bhoja Rāja understands the support of the mind in ānanda-samādhi to be the citta itself, specifically in its aspect as ahaṅkāra, thus differing somewhat with
Vācaspati Miśra (who correlates ahaṅkāra with the next stage). Thus in this perspective, in this third stage, awareness becomes aware of the citta itself in its capacity of acquiring knowledge, as an instrument that grasps the objects of the senses. In other words, the mind focuses on its own cognizing nature. Since the guṇa of sattva predominates in ahaṅkāra and buddhi (although, as Bhoja Rāja notes, traces of rajas and tāmas are still present at this stage, which for him demarcates this level of samādhi from the fourth), and sattva is the source of bliss, Patañjali calls this stage ānanda-samādhi, blissful absorption. This is because it involves experiencing a much more rarefied, purer, and more sustainable (and thus supernormal) form of sāttvic bliss. Gītā XIV.6 warns, however, of becoming attached to this sāttvic happiness, and so there is a danger at this stage that the yogī may mistake this sense of bliss and unprecedented insight with the ultimate goal of yoga. In other words, there is a danger that the yogī or mystic will mistake this rapturous state of supernormal perception for the ultimate experience of puruṣa (or for Vedāntins, of ātmānanda, the bliss of the self).

Vijñānabhikṣu is uncharacteristically vague about this third stage of ānanda-samādhi, although he explicitly disagrees with Vācaspati Miśra that it is supported by the sense organs. He states that in ānanda-samādhi, the mind transcends the previous stage and experiences bliss due to an increase of sattva, but he does not specify the location of this bliss. He merely notes that at this point the object of meditation is no longer perceived as consisting of even the subtle elements, as was the case in the previous stage, but is experienced as pure sāttvic bliss (about which all the commentators agree, understandably, given the name Patañjali assigns this third type of samādhi). Again, this is not the bliss inherent in puruṣa (inherent therein at least according to the Vedānta tradition, but also, as we will suggest in II.5, arguably, to Yoga as well); awareness is still flowing through the mind and focused on an external object, but by contacting the sāttvic dimension of the object of meditation, the mind is simply aware of all-pervading happiness and is immersed in an ocean of bliss. Vijñānabhikṣu quotes Kṛṣṇa’s description of this state in the Gītā (a state which the text actually defines as yoga):

When the yogī experiences that endless happiness (sukha) which is grasped by the discriminative faculty (buddhi), but beyond the grasp
of the senses, he remains fixed in this state and never strays from the truth ... This state, free from any trace of suffering, is called yoga. (VI.21–23)

Vijñānabhikṣu notwithstanding, the prevalent view seems to be that in the third state of samādhi, the mind becomes absorbed on some aspect of the instruments of cognition themselves, rather than supported by or concentrated on the gross or subtle constituents of an external object of the senses. All commentators at least agree that at this stage of ānanda-samādhi, the mind becomes immersed in the sattva prevalent in this state of awareness.

Finally, by involuting awareness further and penetrating the internal organ of meditation to its still more essential nature, one transcends even the instruments of knowledge and arrives at ahaṅkāra, if one follows Vācaspati Miśra, or buddhi, if one follows Bhoja Rāja—either way, to the closest prākṛtic coverings to the puruṣa itself. Relentless in the pursuit of true and ultimate knowledge, at this point the yogī attains the fourth and final stage of samprajñāta-samādhi listed by Patañjali in this sūtra, asmitā-samādhi. Now, following Bhoja Rāja’s schema, having penetrated the constituents of the external object of meditation through its gross and subtle elements consecutively in the first two stages of samādhi, and having withdrawn itself from external cognition and into a state of contemplating the powers behind the very organs of cognition in the third, awareness penetrates the citta further, absorbing itself in the citta’s feature of buddhi, the grahitṛ, the grasper, the closest prākṛtic covering to the puruṣa itself. Hariharānanda states that awareness bypasses the feeling of bliss in the previous stage to contact the experiencer of bliss. Buddhi, in this highly sāttvic state, is so pure and luminous it can reflect the consciousness of puruṣa back to itself. At this point, since it has already transcended all objects outside of itself, including the internal organs of cognition, buddhi focuses inward, reflecting puruṣa itself as its object of meditation.

Another way of putting this is that the yogī now finally becomes aware of puruṣa itself as pure consciousness by means of its reflection in buddhi; in other words, the citta of the yogī becomes indirectly aware of puruṣa (since this awareness is still mediated by buddhi). Nonetheless, the yogī
becomes aware of I-am-ness (the etymological meaning of asmitā) rather than any external material prākṛtic object, or even internal organ of cognition. Asmi, “I am,” is the first-person singular of the root as, “to be,” and tā is a suffix added to adjectives to denote “ness,” but Śaṅkara notes that this I-am-ness, asmitā, is not the same as the asmitā listed as an obstacle to yoga in II.3. Asmitā in the context of the kleśas in II.2 and 7 involves a misidentification of puruṣa with what it is not and thus corresponds to ahaṅkāra.96 Asmitā as kleśa involves an object of I am—“I am fat,” “I am sad,” “I am a male.” The asmitā in the context of samādhi occurs when the citta contemplates the awareness of puruṣa by means of puruṣa’s reflection in the pure mirror of the sāttvic citta. The mind now experiences an I-am-ness in the sense of the true subject of awareness: “the source of my awareness is puruṣa.” Asmitā is consciousness reflecting on the mirror of the mind, as a result of which the citta gains a genuine absolute knowledge of the real source and identity of the consciousness pervading it. Whereas in the previous level the mind was aware that “I am blissful,” in this fourth level it is now simply experiencing a state of I am. This is pure I-am-ness with no external object or specific content of self-identification, so it is very close to the goal of direct realization of puruṣa. This fourth stage is still within the realm of prakṛti, however, still at a stage of samprajñāta-samādhi. In other words, it is “supported” by some connection with prakṛti, because the citta is still being used as an instrument to channel awareness (even though the object of awareness is now puruṣa itself rather than any external manifestation of prakṛti). The puruṣa at this point is still not fully autonomous and extricated from its appropriation by the mind.

Before proceeding, we must note that, as with his explanation of ānanda, Vijñānabhikṣu also parts company with Bhoja Rāja and Vācaspati Miśra in his understanding of asmitā. For him, as a Vaiṣṇava theist, this stage involves a direct vision of God, Īśvara,97 whom we will encounter in I.23, below. Vijñānabhikṣu claims that in the second stage of savicāra-samādhi noted in this sūtra, the yogī fixes the mind on the characteristics (sopādhi) of God. Essentially, this can only entail fixing the mind on some saṁskāra connected with God. But this fourth stage of asmitā-samādhi for him entails transcending this gross (prākṛtic) level of meditation of the previous stages and having a direct experience of
Īśvara as a conscious being. This notion that the puruṣa can have a transcendent personal vision of a divine form of God is standard in the Hindu theistic traditions. As the Yoga tradition has always been adamant that the puruṣa is an entity that can be directly perceived, so have the bhakti devotional traditions always held that Īśvara as supreme puruṣa (Gitā XIV.16–18) can likewise be personally perceived (for example, Gitā XI.54). Patañjali, however, gives no information pertaining to the experiential relationship between the liberated yogī and Īśvara, but this does not discount Vijñānabhikṣu’s interpretation.

However one takes the various levels of samprajñāta-samādhi, one final step remains where this ultimate uncoupling of puruṣa from all connection with prakṛti and involvement whatsoever with the citta occurs. This is asamprajñāta-samādhi, samādhi without support (an a-prefixied to any noun in Sanskrit negates that noun98), which will be outlined in the next sūtra. Also, the first two stages of samādhi noted in this sūtra, vitarka and vicāra, will later, in I.42, be further subdivided and refined into savitarka and nirvitarka, and savicāra and nirvicāra, respectively (the prefix sa- means with, and nir means without). This will therefore result in a total of six stages of samprajñāta-samādhi, before the final stage of asamprajñāta-samādhi.99 Therefore, including the latter, there will be a total of seven stages of samādhi explicitly expressed by Patañjali in his system.

Vyāsa notes that each progressively grosser level of samādhi includes the others (just as the grosser aspects of matter include the subtler ones): Vitarka includes vicāra, ānanda, and asmitā (although obviously the latter have yet to be fully experienced by the yogī in their own right); vicāra includes ānanda and asmitā; and ānanda includes asmitā. Also, it is important to reiterate, along with Bhoja Rāja, that any type of samādhi involves meditation on the chosen object to the exclusion of all other objects, irrespective of the level of meditation outlined in this sūtra. In other words, the mind has attained citta-vṛtti-nirodha; it is completely undeviating in focus, which is the prerequisite of all stages of samādhi. Additionally, even as there are differences pertaining to the states of mind corresponding to these stages, the object that the mind uses as its support, that is, on which to fix itself, can, as Bhoja Rāja notes, be either any material object or evolute of prakṛti, or Īśvara, God, with Patañjali
clearly prioritizing the latter. But, as Vijñānabhikṣu in turn notes, the object must remain the same, “whether it be the four-armed form of Viṣṇu, or an ordinary object, such as an earthen pot.” Otherwise, if objects are whimsically changed, the yogī will be displaying fickleness of mind and thus be disqualified from this stage of samādhi.

In conclusion, we have noted that there are minor differences among the commentators’ understanding of the metaphysical nature of the two final types of samprajñāta-samādhi—ānanda and asmitā—but all commentators agree that in principle this sūtra describes refining one’s awareness during consecutive stages of meditation through progressively more subtle states of cognition in quest of the source of awareness itself, puruṣa. Also, we can note that in the last two stages of samādhi, one cannot technically speaking know the grahaṇa or grahitṛ, because acts of knowing can take place only via these instruments of knowledge and the knowers themselves. Knowing cannot know the very instruments of knowledge any more than cooking can cook itself. Rather, awareness becomes aware of them. This consideration can help us better appreciate this relentless progression toward the source of awareness: from gross objects of knowledge to their subtle substrates, to the instruments of knowledge themselves, and, beyond again, to the ultimate prākṛtic knower, until finally one arrives at puruṣa itself.

The relationship between the four stages of samādhi outlined here and the four jhānas (dhyānas in Sanskrit) outlined in Buddhist meditation has long been noted. Dhyāna occurs as the seventh of the eight limbs of Patañjali’s system (III.2), but it is used in Buddhism and also in older Hindu texts such as the Gītā and Mahābhārata as a synonym for samādhi, the final stage. The Buddha speaks of attaining the first dhyāna, which consisted of vitarka, vicāra, and viveka, and then proceeding to attain the other three stages of dhyāna (Majjhima Nikāya I.246–47). There are several different lists of the four dhyāna (samādhi) states in the Buddhist abhidhamma schools, and the most important of these include vitarka and vicāra, the first two items mentioned in this sūtra under the first dhyāna. Moreover, ānanda, the third item mentioned by Patañjali (or its correlate, sukhā), is experienced in the first three of the four stages of dhyāna. Only the final item from this sūtra, asmitā, I-am-ness, does not have a clear parallel in Buddhism—hardly surprising given the Buddhist
rejection of an autonomous puruṣa.

It is worth noting again in this regard Bhīṣma’s mention of the four dhyānas in the Hindu Mahābhārata (Bhīṣma too is clearly using the term as a synonym of samādhi). Bhīṣma includes in his first stage of dhyāna three features (vitarka, vicāra, and viveka), thereby paralleling the Buddhist system.103

O son of Pṛthu, I will now explain to you the fourfold yoga of dhyāna (meditation), knowing which the great seers [of old] attained eternal perfection. The yogīs, great seers, blissful in knowledge, their minds set on nirvāṇa, perform dhyāna that has been well-practiced. A sage should fix his mind so that it becomes one-pointed ... [He should withdraw all the senses from the sense objects] ... Then, being wise, he should merge his five senses into the mind and concentrate104 his wandering mind and senses ... When such a sage concentrates his mind on the first dhyāna from the beginning, the meditative states of vicāra, vitarka and viveka manifest ... Immersed in that bliss, yogīs delight in the performance of dhyāna and thereby attain nirvāṇa, which is free from distress. (XII.188.1–22)

Although the understanding of these terms differs—the Yoga tradition’s understanding tends to situate the psychological basis of these states within the more cosmological framework of Sāṅkhyan metaphysics105—it is impossible not to recognize a common substratum of practice and terminology. Thus, it is important to be aware of the shared context of meditational practices in ancient India; Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain expressions in their formative periods were not as distinctly demarcated as they later became in scholastic literature. Whatever may have been the direction of influence,106 the shared or interfertilizing context of meditation in ancient India is undeniable.

virāma, termination, cessation; pratyaya, idea, notion, thought;
abhyāsa, practice; pūrvah, previous; saṁskāra, mental imprints, memories, subconscious impressions; śeṣah, remainder; anyah, the other [samādhi, asamprajñāta-samādhi]
The other samādhi [asamprajñāta-samādhi] is preceded by cultivating the determination to terminate [all thoughts]. [In this state] only latent impressions remain.

In the last sūtra, Patañjali discussed samprajñāta-samādhi, which was subdivided into four. Here he uses anya, the other, to refer to another state beyond this, which the commentators take to be asamprajñāta (a term that actually never occurs in the sūtras themselves). As we have seen, the four states of samprajñāta all involved the citta in various ways. Asamprajñāta is beyond the mind. It is therefore beyond thought and word. Perhaps to underscore this, Patañjali has used the simple pronoun anya rather than a descriptive term, thereby pointing to asamprajñāta as a state that transcends all conceptualization, descriptive categories, and nomenclatures (which are all products of citta). In the same vein, the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad calls it “the fourth” (beyond the other three states of consciousness: waking, dream, and deep sleep).

The commentators present asamprajñāta-samādhi, samādhi without support, as being the state where the awareness of puruṣa is no longer aware of any external entity at all, including the citta, since the latter has dissolved itself. This state corresponds with nirbīja, without seed (I.51). In this final and ultimate state, the supreme goal of yoga, the mind is not supported by any active thought, including even the object of meditation; latent seeds, or saṁskāras, will not sprout into active thoughts. The vṛttis of the mind exist simply as potential, and the saṁskāras, the subconscious imprints that trigger thoughts, memories, and karma, are also latent. Since the mind is now empty of all thoughts, or, as Vyāsa puts it, appears as if nonexistent, the awareness of puruṣa now no longer has any object whatsoever to be aware of, and thus, for the first time, can become only self-aware.107 The final goal of yoga has been attained.

Another way of considering this is that awareness is eternal, it cannot ever cease being aware. Following the Upaniṣads, the first spiritual teaching of the Gītā in Chapter II articulates this repeatedly—the soul is
indestructible, it cannot be slain, it does not die when the body is slain, nor is it ever born, it is birthless, eternal, perpetual, original, it cannot be burnt, pierced by weapons, wetted, blown by the wind, it is unmanifest, beyond thought, unchanging, etc. (II.17ff). Awareness cannot be switched off like a light. That being the case, the soul’s only options are what it is aware of: It can be object-aware, or (again, loosely speaking) subject-aware—that is, aware of entities or objects other than itself, or exclusively aware of itself as awareness with no reference to any other entity. After myriads births being aware of the unlimited varieties of prākṛtic objects, puruṣa has now come to the point of self-realization—realizing itself as distinct from not just objects of thought but the very faculty and process of thought itself, the citta and its vṛttis. When there are no objects to detain its awareness, puruṣa has no alternative but to be self-aware. This is asamprajñāta-samādhi.

Now, there must be, in principle, some kind of final thought or mental activity before the mind enters the state of complete inactivity in the asamprajñāta-samādhi. Patañjali states in this sūtra that the last thought or cognitive act immediately before asamprajñāta-samādhi is the thought of terminating thoughts (any thoughts, even the highest kinds, such as thoughts discriminating between puruṣa and prakṛti). This last thought is termed the virāma-pratyaya in this sūtra.

Although this very notion of terminating all thoughts is itself a thought, Vyāsa considers it a notion devoid of any objective phenomenon. One might say that it is the last mental state prior to final liberation (the terminator thought, so to speak!). Vyāsa states that this virāma-pratyaya is born of the dispassion discussed in I.16. By the constant mental cultivation of the notion of ceasing all thought, says Vyāsa, the mind is deprived of any other object of thought and becomes without support, that is, with nothing to sustain it. It becomes completely empty—all its saṁskāras remain latent, saṁskāra śeṣa, as Patañjali points out here. Bhoja Rāja states that at this stage the mind constantly dwells on this sole notion of terminating thought and rejects all other vṛttis. This type of mental cultivation is the penultimate stage of yoga and immediately precedes asamprajñāta-samādhi. Śaṅkara compares this virāma-pratyaya, terminator thought, to an ebbing flame, which is still nonetheless a flame until all its fuel expires and it is turned to dust
—a latent samskāra. Thus, when even this notion of terminating all thoughts ceases, asamprajñāta-samādhi ensues. Al-Bīrūnī compares the embodied soul to a grain of rice with its husk. As long as the grain retains the husk (the active citta with its samskāras), it has the potential for sprouting and ripening. When the husk is removed, this potential ceases.108
I.19 bhava-pratyayayo videha-prakṛti-layānām

bhava, becoming, material existence, birth; pratyayah, idea, cause;¹⁰⁹ videha, unembodied, without a gross body; prakṛti-layānām, of those [entities] merged in matter

For [some], those who are unembodied and those who are merged in matter, [the state of samprajñāta is characterized] by absorption in [subtle] states of prakṛti.

Although Vyāsa and most of the other commentators understand this abstruse sūtra as following the topic of sūtra I.18 and thus pointing to a type of asamprajñāta-samādhi where only latent saṁskāras remain in the mind, this seems impossible, given the nature of the states described in this sūtra. We thus agree with Bhoja Rāja that this sūtra continues from I.17, elaborating on certain yogīs whose minds are still absorbed in some state of prakṛti paralleling the prākṛtic attainments outlined there. The asamprajñāta-samādhi of I.18 involves uncouplement from prakṛti and thus cannot refer to the prākṛtic states attained by the kind of practitioners referred to in this sūtra. The type of quasi samādhi indicated here is still connected with bhava, literally, becoming (which I have translated as states of prakṛti), and points to a state that can also be attained by those other than practitioners of “real” yoga. The beings in this category remain absorbed in various subtle dimensions of prakṛti and thus stranded, as it were, at various heights of supernormal attainments accrued from the yoga path; thus Bhoja Rāja considers the states indicated in this sūtra to point to “semblances of yoga.”

Patañjali here refers to two categories of such beings: the videhas, those who are unembodied, and the prakṛti-layas, those who are merged in matter; their common denominator is that these entities still maintain notions of self-identity that are connected with material (prākṛtic) existence. The commentators hold that these categories refer to two types of quasi-perfected yogīs who do not have gross physical bodies but exist on some other level within prakṛti. Prakṛti, as has been discussed,
evolves into a number of evolutes: buddhi, intelligence; ahaṅkāra, ego; manas, the mind; and the tanmātra subtle elements, mahābhūta gross elements, and organs of action. None of these levels represents the real self, puruṣa; they are all subtler or grosser evolutes from inanimate matter that cover the puruṣa in various layers. But just as normal people misidentify the self with the gross physical body, there are higher beings who, through some type of practice, have managed to transcend the grosser levels of self-misidentification but who nonetheless remain stranded at more subtle levels of misidentification. They remain in these states of pseudoliberation until their latent saṁskāras activate once more, at which time they return again to grosser levels of saṁsāra.

More specifically, Vyāsa and Vācaspati Miśra identify the first category of beings mentioned by Patañjali, the videhas, as the celestial beings. Śaṅkara specifies that the celestial beings referred to here are only those engaged in the path of yoga, and Vijñānabhikṣu says that these are the higher-level celestials that do not have gross physical bodies but bodies made out of buddhi, pure intelligence. Some categories of celestials are nourished by subtle forms of prakṛti instead of gross food, some even subsisting on the insight of buddhi, the subtest form of prakṛti. The Purāṇas indicate that there are different categories of gods, who become progressively superior in terms of life span, powers, sensual facilities, and insight; in the celestial realm called satyaloka, for example, the celestials have surpassed all the realizations that are encompassed in samprajñāta-samādhi (S. Bhattacharya, 1968).

The commentators hold the second category mentioned by Patañjali in this sūtra, those merged in prakṛti, matter, to refer to entities who consider themselves to be either unmanifest, primordial prakṛti herself, or buddhi, the first evolute from prakṛti, or the second evolute ahaṅkāra, or even the tanmātras, five subtle elements. In other words, more or less anyone who does not identify himself or herself as being the gross material body made of the five gross elements, but still identifies the self as being some other, more subtle, aspect of prakṛti, could be considered prakṛti-laya, merged in matter. In this they follow the Sāṅkhya Kārikā (XLV), where the state of prakṛti-laya in question is held to come from vairāgya, nonattachment (I.15). In his commentary to this verse in the Sāṅkhya Kārikā, Gauḍapāda states: “One might have vairāgya but
without knowing the 24 evolutes of prakṛti. This state, which is founded on ignorance, is ... prakṛti-layānām. At death, such a person is not liberated, but is merged into the eight evolutes of prakṛti—pradhāna, intelligence, ego and the five subtle elements. From there, he returns again to saṁsāra.” However, “one merged in this state thinks ‘I am liberated.’ This is a type of ignorance.”

Vācaspati Miśra takes bhava in this sūtra as a reference to avidyā, ignorance; thus these two categories of yogīs are still immersed in ignorance, mistaking the self with the nonself. Vijñānabhidrī, on the other hand, takes bhava to mean birth, perhaps in resonance with Patañjali’s comment in IV.1 of birth as being a cause of yogic attainment, and holds that the two types of yogīs mentioned here have attained their respective states due to their births, or practices performed in a past life. The celestials certainly fall into this category. Bhoja Rāja takes bhava to refer to saṁsāra. He considers the videhas of this sūtra to be those who have attained the state ānanda-samādhi, and prakṛti-layas to be those who have attained asmitā-samādhi mentioned in I.17. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī considers these individuals to be those who, after the dissolution of their gross bodies, remain in a state of existence devoid of the traditional bodily sheaths.

Whether we take bhava to be ignorance, saṁsāra, or birth, it should be clear by now that the overall significance remains the same: Bhava points to the world of being or becoming, namely, prakṛti. Thus, the videha-layas and prakṛti-layas, whether gods or yogīs stranded on one of the levels of samprajñāta-samādhi outlined in the previous sūtra, are beings who remain absorbed in one of the above evolutes of prakṛti until the activation of their saṁskāras eventually thrusts them back into lower forms of saṁsāra to experience the fruits of their previous activities. Thus, despite difference in detail, the commentators agree that while such yogīs may have transcended grosser notions of self-identity, they have not yet realized their true essential nature as puruṣa but still identify themselves with some other, finer aspect of matter. Therefore, says Bhoja Rāja, their attainments are to be considered semblances of real yoga. They are “as if” liberated, says Vyāsa or, as Vācaspati Miśra puts it, they still have their work cut out for them, namely, realization of the actual true self. The point holds, but since the puruṣa is in fact
covered by *buddhi* and *ahaṅkāra*, etc., the *prakṛti-laya* yogīs have nonetheless attained legitimate and insightful realizations of the embodied self that can be attained only by discipline and meditation. Even if they are nonultimate, their realizations certainly surpass the notions of those who identify themselves with the gross physical body.

These two categories of entities, which we can perhaps refer to as imperfect yogīs, exist in a state that approximates absolute freedom because they are free from the *citta-vṛttis*, fluctuating states of mind, and their minds consist only of *saṁskāras*, subconscious impressions or latent propensities. They are thus, from normal perspectives, highly evolved beings, but they are still immersed in some aspect of *prakṛti*, and, say Vyāsa and Vācaspati Miśra, they have to return to the cycle of birth and death when their latent *saṁskāras* start to fructify. One might infer from all this that imperfect yogīs have at some point, through introspection, attained the realization over time that they are not the gross body but one of the other layers of *prakṛti*. As with any type of devoted and consistent meditation, such prolonged cultivation results in their minds being saturated with *saṁskāras* pertaining to this particular insight. These are highly refined *saṁskāras* and not productive of *citta-vṛttis*. Such yogīs remain in their respective states for as long as these accumulated *saṁskāras* dominate the *citta* and other more active *saṁskāras* do not surface.

Perhaps we can conclude that the videhas and *prakṛti-layas* have attained some sort of *samprajñāta-samādhi* insofar as they have attained a state of complete cessation of thought, with all their *saṁskāras* inactive, but their awareness, rather than being absorbed in the source of awareness, *puruṣa* itself, is still absorbed in some subtle dimension of *prakṛti*. In time, then, unlike with ideal yogīs absorbed in *puruṣa*, or self-awareness, these other two types of yogīs are eventually pulled back down into the more mundane states of mind when their latent *saṁskāras* reactivate. They are once more prone to *bhava*, becoming, that is, embodied existence.

Several commentators quote a verse from the *Vāyu Purāṇa* that states that those who identify themselves as beings constituted by the sense organs remain in their particular state for a period corresponding to ten Manus;¹¹⁸ those identifying themselves with the subtle elements, one
hundred periods of the same; those with *ahaṅkāra*, ego, one thousand periods; those with *buddhi*, ten thousand; and those with unmanifest, primordial, preevolutionary *prakṛti*, a full hundred thousand. Whatever the details, the point seems to be that one can remain identified with and absorbed in extremely subtle dimensions of *prakṛti* for prolonged periods of time, but not eternally. Only realization of the *puruṣa* by means of the *asamprajñāta-samādhi* is eternal.

Otherwise, sooner or later, other *saṁskāras*, perhaps connected with grosser objects of thought cultivated in prior lifetimes, begin to activate—like frogs, says Vācaspati Miśra, during the rainy season. Such reactivated memories and impressions awaken and impel these *yogīs* back into the cycle of action and reaction, and hence of birth and death, *saṁsāra*—unless, says Vācaspati Miśra, while in their disembodied state, they develop true discrimination of the difference between any aspect of *prakṛti* whatsoever and the real self, *puruṣa*. Vijñānabхikṣu also points out that these *yogīs* need not necessarily return to *saṁsāra* when their *saṁskāras* reactivate; from their ethereal states they can gradually strive further for ultimate liberation. In this case, as the *Vāyu Purāṇa* quoted above acknowledges, they are eligible to remain eternally immersed in awareness of *puruṣa*.

**I.20 śraddhā-vīrya-smṛti-samādhi-prajñā-pūrvakaḥ itareṣām**

*śraddhā*, faith; *vīrya*, vigor; *smṛti*, memory; *samādhi*, absorption; *prajñā*, discernment; *pūrvakaḥ*, preceded by; *itareṣām*, for others

[But] for others, [the state where only subconscious impressions remain] is preceded by faith, vigor, memory, *samādhi* absorption, and discernment.

Vyāsa contrasts this *sūtra* with the previous one by introducing the term *upāya-pratyaya*; the state where only subconscious impressions remain can be attained by the *bhava-pratyaya* of the previous *sūtra*, that is, can have *prakṛti* as its cause, or by *upāya-pratyaya*, can have *upāya*, practice, as its cause. The implication is that the means adopted by real *yogīs* to
attain this state are the proper means indicated in this sūtra: faith, vigor, memory, samādhi absorption, and discernment. If these means are adopted, the practitioner will not return to prakṛti like the bhava-pratyaya beings of the last sūtra.

The commentators take this sūtra as promoting a progression of events that must be undertaken by the aspiring yogī. Vyāsa takes śraddhā, faith, to be clarity of mind, which perhaps indicates that since any type of enterprise requires faith that it will lead to the attainment of a goal, when one sees things clearly, one can understand which kind of endeavor best merits one’s trust. Vācaspati Miśra states that faith is belief in the goal of the enterprise, which in this case is asamprajñāta-samādhi. Vyāsa states that faith sustains like a benevolent mother; it supports the yogī until the very end. Deep faith gives rise to the second item on Patañjali’s list, vīrya, vigor or energetic endeavor, which the commentators take to be the pursuit of the eight limbs of yoga that will be described in some detail in Chapter II. Faith, then, inspires energetic action in pursuing the practices of yoga. We can note that according to II.38, the attainment of vīrya, vigor, is specifically achieved by the practice of celibacy, an indispensable ingredient in the eight limbs of yoga. This vīrya, in turn, produces the next item, smṛti, memory, which is taken by Vyāsa to mean an undisturbed mind; by Vācaspati Miśra to indicate always keeping the goal in mind; and by Śaṅkara to refer to scriptural knowledge.

This focused state of mind passes into the penultimate stage mentioned in this sūtra, samprajñāta-samādhi, or undeviated concentration on an object, which Patañjali addressed in I.17. As a result of the complete absence of distraction in samādhi, the final item on the list, prajñā, discernment, the ability to see things as they really are, manifests. The ultimate act of discrimination is the ability to distinguish puruṣa from any aspect of prakṛti. The mind, says Vyāsa, has now accomplished its goal and fulfilled the purpose of its existence and thus need no longer continue to operate. Consequently, preceded by the five stages indicated in this sūtra, asamprajñāta-samādhi—the complete uncoupling of the puruṣa from the mind—now ensues.

As scholars have long noted, these five stages find a parallel in the Buddha’s preenlightenment training under his two yogī teachers, Āḷāra
Kālāma and Uddaka son of Rāma, which, while understood differently between the traditions, underscores once again the shared context of meditational practices in ancient India.

I.21 tīvra-saṁvegānām āsannaḥ

tīvra, keen; saṁvegānām, for those with intensity; āsannaḥ, near, proximate

[This state of samprajñāta] is near for those who apply themselves intensely.

Patañjali indicates here that the speed at which the goal of yoga is attained depends on one’s degree of commitment. Although Patañjali mentions only intensity, the commentators, following Vyāsa, infer that there are three degrees of application implied in this sūtra: gentle and moderate as well as intense [tīvra]. Categorizations and subcategorizations are ubiquitous in Indic knowledge systems. Indeed, the next sūtra indicates that each of the three levels mentioned here is subdivided into three more levels of intensity, resulting in nine different levels of commitment, or degrees of application to the process of yoga. These lead to the ultimate goal of yoga with different degrees of rapidity.

Otherwise, says Vācaspati Miśra, success would accrue to all without distinction, which is not the case: Success is noticed in some yogīs but not in others. Vācaspati Miśra considers these differences to be due to the strength (or weakness) of ingrained habits from previous lives—in other words, disruptive saṁskāras from past births—exerting their influence on the various yogīs in this life, and these may interfere with their practices. In short, this sūtra states that the attainment of samādhi and its fruit are near, āsannaḥ, for those most intensely committed.

I.22 mrdot;du-madhyādhimātratvāt tato’ pi višeṣaḥ
mrdot;du, mild; madhya, middling; adhimātratvāt, because of intensity; tataḥ, from this, consequently; api, also; višeṣah, distinction

Even among these, there is further differentiation [of this intensity into degrees of] mild, mediocre, and extreme.

As noted above, each of the three levels identified by the commentators is subdivided; thus there is mild, mrdot;du, intensity of application to the requirements of yoga, mediocre, madhya, intensity to these requirements, and extreme, adhimātra, intensity. Likewise, there are the same three degrees of mediocre application (intense or above-average mediocrity, middling or average mediocrity, and mild or below-average mediocrity) and the same triad of possibility for mild application. In other words, there is a spectrum of application in yoga practice, and, expectedly, the speed of success depends on the degree of commitment.

Śaṅkara says the purpose of this sūtra is to fortify the enthusiasm of the practitioner. By learning that all yogīs, whether slow or swift in their application, eventually attain the goal, practitioners are encouraged and those who have become despondent due to fatigue from excessive effort regain confidence. But that there are gradations in the attainment of the goal of yoga, he says, is just as in the world, where, in a race, the prize goes to the person who runs the fastest!

Chapple (1994), who considers Patañjali’s text to be a concatenation of summaries of yoga texts extant in his day, suggests that Vyāsa tends to comment on sūtras individually, in isolation, and sometimes misses or neglects groupings or units. Chapple argues that such is the case here: Vyāsa has overlooked the possibility that Patañjali intended this sūtra to qualify the three previous sūtras. The word tataḥ, consequently, in this sūtra suggests its connection with these preceding sūtras. Given that there are three qualitative degrees mentioned in this sūtra, and the three previous sūtras can be read as three progressively advancing states of attainment, he connects the three degrees of application mentioned here with sūtras I.19–22. Thus, the mild of this sūtra should be taken as describing those merged in prakṛti in I.19; the mediocre, as referring to those practicing faith, etc., described in sūtra I.20; and the ardent, as those mentioned in the previous sūtra who are near to the goal.
I.23 Īśvara-praṇidhānād vā

Īśvara, the Lord; praṇidhānāt, from devotion, dedication; vā, or Or, [this previously mentioned state is attainable] from devotion to the Lord.

Patañjali here states that the goal of yoga can be attained by the grace of God, Īśvara. In this sūtra, the theistic element of the sūtras is encountered for the first time. The theistic, or Īśvaravāda, element in Indic thought stretches back at least to the late Vedic period; Īśvara, from the root iś, to have extraordinary power and sovereignty, is already used six times by the Atharvaveda in circa 1000 B.C.E. and refers in the oldest texts to a personal but unnamed god. It is the term preferred in philosophical discourse concerning the existence of a personal god. In partial contrast to the term bhagavān, Īśvara is often concerned more with a philosophical category in these contexts than with specific divine personal supreme beings such as Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Kṛṣṇa, who all lay claim to the title Īśvara in Purāṇic and epic texts. Of the six schools of traditional thought that stem from this period, five—Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Vedānta, Yoga, and Sāṅkhya—were or became theistic. Sāṅkhya, although often represented as nontheistic, was in fact widely theistic in its early expressions and continued to retain widespread theistic variants outside of the classical philosophical school thereafter, as evidenced in the Purāṇas (for example, Bhāgavata third canto). Yoga has always been theistic: As Feuerstein and others have enjoined emphatically, “The popular academic notion that the conception of God was interpolated into classical Yoga is completely unfounded” (1974, 90).

In his commentary, Vyāsa asks rhetorically whether there is any other effective way to attain sampraṇāṇāt-samādhi without delay. As Patañjali indicates in this sūtra, devotion to God is such an option. This notion of attaining a vision of the self by the grace of God goes back to the Upaniṣads (Katha II.20; Śvetāśvatara III.20). Reflecting Patañjali’s undogmatic and nonsectarian sophistication, Īśvara-praṇidhāna, devotion to God, may not be the exclusive or mandatory way to attain realization.
of the self (given the particle vā, or, in this sūtra), it is clearly favored by him. One of the earliest references to being granted, by a supreme being, the boon (prasāda) of perceiving the puruṣa (ātman) occurs in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad: “Greater than the great, smaller than the small, is the ātman situated in the heart of beings. One without desires and free of sorrows sees the majesty of the self by the grace of the Creator” (II.20). Etymologically praṇidhāna means to place oneself down, prostrate, submit, etc., and while not a common term, means devotional submission (for example, Gītā XI.44). Devotion to God, according to Vyāsa, involves a particular type of devotion, bhakti-viśeṣa; simply by the yogi’s longing, God bestows his grace upon the yogi. When this happens, the fruits of samādhi become quickly available. As Rāmānanda Sarasvatī puts it, God turns toward the yogi as a result of such devotion and says, “Let this that he desires be his!” Vācaspati Miśra considers such special devotion to consist of submission to the Lord with body, mind, and word. Bhoja Rāja, with an eye on the Gītā’s “desireless action,” adds that it entails devoting all one’s actions to the Lord, desiring no fruit for oneself. Hariharānanda describes this state as feeling the existence of God in the innermost core of the heart and considering everything to be done by the Lord. As one meditates on the Lord in this way, and loses interest in everything else, one becomes free from ego, and the mind becomes concentrated and calm.

Śaṅkara states that this sūtra describes bhakti, the yoga of devotion, where the Lord reaches out to the yogi who is fully devoted to him, indeed, comes face-to-face with him, and bestows his grace upon him in accordance with how the yogi has meditated upon him. Thus, in line with the Yoga tradition’s prioritization of experience, one can attain a direct vision of God, by his grace. This grace, through which samādhi and the goals of yoga are attained, is effortless and imparted by the Lord’s omnipotence. Along the same lines, Vijñānabhikṣu states that by meditating on the Lord with love, the yogi earns the Lord’s favor. He quotes a number of scriptures stating that knowledge of God is the cause of liberation and, indeed (and here Vijñānabhikṣu is reflecting the position of the bhakti traditions), knowledge of Īśvara is more important even than knowledge of the puruṣa self. Consequently, the path of devotion for Vijñānabhikṣu (and for the overall Yoga tradition) is the
best means of attaining *samprajñāta-samādhi*, since it does not require one to be solely dependent on one’s own steam and resources in the intense application noted in the previous *sūtras*.

It seems useful to present a synopsis of the theistic element in the *sūtras* at this point. *Īśvara* occurs in three distinct contexts in the *Yoga Sūtras*. The first, beginning with this *sūtra*, is in the context of how to attain the ultimate goal of *yoga*—the cessation of all thought, *samprajñāta-samādhi*, and realization of *puruṣa*. Patañjali presents dedication to *Īśvara* as one such option, and his discussion of *Īśvara* begins with this *sūtra* and continues to I.28 (or perhaps, indirectly, up to I.33). It is important to note *vā*, or, in this *sūtra*, indicating that Patañjali presents devotion to *Īśvara*, the Lord, as an optional rather than an obligatory means of attaining *samādhi* (although some commentators state that *puruṣa* cannot detach itself from *prakṛti* without the grace of *Īśvara*).

The only information Patañjali gives concerning the nature of God is provided in the next few *sūtras*. In I.24, he states, “The Lord is a special soul.” He is untouched by the deposits of *saĩñskāras*,126 fructification of *karma*,127 *karma*, or the obstacles to the practice of *yoga*, the *kleśas* of II.3: nescience, ego, attachment, aversion, and the will to live. *Sūtra* I.25 informs the reader that “in him, the seed of omniscience is unsurpassed,” and, in *sūtra* I.26, that “He was also the teacher of the ancients, because he is not limited by Time.” Given the primary context of the *sūtras*, fixing the mind on an object without deviation, *sūtras* I.27–28 specify how *Īśvara* is to be meditated upon: “The name designating him is the mystical syllable *oṁ*,” and “its repetition and the contemplation of its meaning [should be performed].” As a result of this devotional type of meditation comes the realization of the inner consciousness and freedom from all obstacles.

The second context in which Patañjali refers to *Īśvara* is in the first *sūtra* in *Chapter II*: “*Kriyā-yoga*, the path of action, consists of self-discipline, study, and dedication to the Lord.” The following two *sūtras* inform us that by performing such *kriyā-yoga*, *samādhi* is attained and the obstacles to this (the *kleśas*) are weakened. Finally, *Īśvara* surfaces again in a third context in II.32, where the *niyamas* are listed. The *niyamas*, which are the second limb of the eight-limbed path of *yoga*,
consist of cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study and, as in the other two contexts, Īśvara-praṇidhāna, devotion to Īśvara (thus, the three ingredients of kriyā-yoga are all niyamas). The various benefits associated with following the yamas and niyamas, ethics and morals, are noted in the ensuing sūtras of the chapter, and II.45 states that the benefit from the niyama of devotion to God is the attainment of samādhi. This is the final reference to Īśvara in the text.

These, then, are the gleanings that can be extracted from Patañjali’s characteristically frugal sūtras. From the first context, we learn that the highest samādhi can be attained by dedication to Īśvara, a claim Patañjali will repeat in the third section. This suggests that Īśvara has the absolute power to manipulate the laws of nature; to circumvent the normal procedures required for practitioners to fix their mind, by removing the obstacles to yoga; and somehow to pluck the devoted yogī from his or her material embeddedness simply by an act of grace. We learn that Īśvara is a special puruṣa insofar as he has never been touched by karma and saṁskāras and the kleṣas, in short, by the normative influences and conditions to which all puruṣas in the world of saṁsāra are subject. In other words, Īśvara has never been subject to saṁsāra. He is an eternal being, since he is untouched by time, and thus he taught the ancients. This indicates that Īśvara is concerned with the well-being of the souls in this world and actively involved in their upliftment by promoting knowledge. He makes himself available in the form of the repetition of the sound oṁ, which should be recited, Patañjali seems to imply, in a devotional mood (since its meaning, which should be contemplated, is Īśvara the subject of devotional surrender).

In the second context in which the term is used, Patañjali briefly alludes to the three ingredients of a practice he terms kriyā-yoga, which is a more action-based aspect of yoga than the intense meditational regimen outlined in Chapter I. Here, devotion to Īśvara is mandatory, in contrast to the meditational path, where it is optional, as a means of attaining samādhi. Finally, in the third context in II.32, Patañjali again lists Īśvara-praṇidhāna as a niyama, a mandatory prerequisite for the higher stages of yoga. Moreover, he notes that from this practice, samādhi is attained. Again this is significant, because all the boons mentioned as accruing from the other yamas and niyamas (there are ten
in all) represent prākṛtic, or material, attainments—vitality, knowledge of past lives, detachment, etc. It is only from Īśvara-praṇidhāna, the last item on the list of yamas and niyamas, that the ultimate goal of yoga is achieved, samādhi.

Thus we can conclude that Patañjali is definitely promoting a degree of theistic practice in the Yoga Sūtras. Although in the first context commencing with the present sūtra, Īśvara-praṇidhāna, devotional surrender to God, is optional as a means of attaining samādhi, Patañjali does direct six sūtras to Īśvara, which is not insignificant given the frugality of his sūtras. This devotional surrender is not optional in the second context, kriyā-yoga. Since it is likewise not optional in the third context as a niyama, which is a prerequisite to meditational yoga, Patañjali seems to be requiring that all aspiring yogīs be devotionally oriented in the preparatory stages to the higher goals of yoga, and although in the higher, more meditational stages of practice they may shift their focus of concentration to other objects (I.34–38)—even, ultimately, to any object of their pleasing (I.39)—they would be best advised to retain Īśvara as object thereafter, since this special puruṣa can bestow perfection of samādhi, which other objects cannot (II.45).

Another way of putting this is that any object can serve as the focus of meditation, but only one object can, in addition to this function, accelerate the attainment of samādhi. Therefore, one would be hard-pressed to find a rationale to pick some other object that does not have this ability. Who would not opt for two for the price of one? To my reading, then, Patañjali, while not blatantly demanding that yogīs maintain their devotion to Īśvara in the higher stages of their meditations, does seem to be discreetly, or perhaps not even so discreetly, promoting it. I envision Patañjali as being too sophisticated a thinker and practitioner to be insistent about this dimension of the tradition, and too delicate about the sensitivities of the nontheistic orientations of other yogī practitioners on the horizons of his day to be dogmatically exclusivistic. But he is clearly recommending submission to God as the best and most expedient path.

When Kṛṣṇa was asked by Arjuna who is superior, those worshipping him with devotion or those trying to fix their minds on their own self (by their own prowess), Kṛṣṇa replied that the devotee is the best of
those engaged in yoga (yuktatama), even though those whose minds are fixed on the individual self also attain him (XII.1–4):

The difficulty of those whose minds are attached to the ātman is greater [than those who fix their minds on Kṛṣṇa in devotion]. The path of the impersonal ātman is attained with difficulty by embodied beings. But those who, meditating on Me [Kṛṣṇa], worship Me, considering Me to be the Supreme, and renouncing all actions in Me, with undeviating Yoga, for those whose thoughts are immersed in Me, it is I who quickly become the deliverer from the ocean of death and transmigration. (XII.5–7)

Patañjali, like the Gitā, is not denying that the ātman can be attained by self-effort, but he is clearly favoring a theistic approach.

The optionality noted above is expressed in the Sanskrit particle vā, or, in this sūtra. There has been some discussion among modern scholars as to what the “or” relates to, that is, Īśvara-praṇidhāna devotion to God, is being presented here as an alternative to what? Some have argued that the “or” of the Īśvara-praṇidhāna of this sūtra is being presented as an alternative to the abhyāsa, practice, and vairāgya, dispassion, of I.12. While this is not the view of the traditional commentators considered here, it does seem to reflect at least one traditional source. The Muslim traveler al-Bīrunī, who relied on an unknown commentary (that may not be much later than Vyāsa’s), takes it in the former sense. He structures his representation of the Yoga Sūtras in a question-and-answer format, which, although it takes on a mildly Islamic flavoring in the segments dealing with Īśvara, is nonetheless remarkably faithful to his sources:

**QUESTION 11:** Is there a way to liberation other than the two ways, namely habituation and asceticism [abhyāsa, practice, and vairāgya, dispassion]?

**ANSWER:** [Liberation] may be attained by devotion. This is constituted by withdrawal from the body and [directing oneself] towards knowledge, certainty, and sincerity in the heart, and towards praise, exaltation, and laudation with the tongue, and action with the limbs. God alone and nothing else is aimed at in all these, so that succour should come from Him with a view to
achieving eternal bliss.\textsuperscript{130}

In my view, it is unfeasible that devotion can be construed as an alternative to the practice and dispassion of I.12, as no Indic (Hindu, Buddhist, or Jain) soteriological tradition promotes practice or dispassion as optional, not even the much misrepresented \textit{tantric} traditions. The \textit{vā} of this \textit{sūtra} is best read as an option to the self-reliance of the immediately preceding \textit{sūtras} I.20–22. Thus, one can apply faith, vigor, memory, \textit{samādhi} absorption, and discernment under one’s own steam, or apply these in devotion to God, which, can expedite the process.

The succeeding section on \textit{Īśvara} will be followed by additional options for supports that can be used for stilling the mind, all using the particle \textit{vā}.

\begin{quote}

\textit{I.24} kleśa-karma-vipākāśayair aparāmṛṣṭaḥ puruṣa-viśeṣa Īśvaraḥ

\textit{kleśa}, obstacle to the practice of \textit{yoga}; \textit{karma}, action; \textit{vipāka}, fruition, maturing; \textit{āśayair}, by the receptacle, storage, or deposit of \textit{saṁskāras}; \textit{aparāmṛṣṭaḥ}, untouched; \textit{puruṣa}, soul; \textit{viśeṣaḥ}, special; \textit{Īśvaraḥ}, the Lord

\textbf{The Lord is a special soul. He is untouched by the obstacles [to the practice of \textit{yoga}], \textit{karma}, the fructification [of \textit{karma}], and subconscious predispositions.}

\end{quote}

Vyāsa, Vācaspati Miśra, and other commentators dedicate their longest commentaries to this \textit{sūtra}. Patañjali notes here that \textit{Īśvara}, too, is a \textit{puruṣa}, but he is \textit{viśeṣa}, special, that is, different and distinct from other \textit{puruṣas}. He briefly lists four conditions of \textit{saṁsāra} from which \textit{Īśvara} is free, and these are elaborated upon by Vyāsa and the commentators. The cause of \textit{saṁsāra} is the \textit{kleśas}, obstacles—ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, and the will to live—which are discussed in II.3. Under the influence of these, the individual engages in the second item on the list,
karma, which consists of one’s actions, whether good or bad. As discussed, actions produce a corollary, their fructification, listed here as vipāka, which is the effect they produce—every action has a corresponding reaction. Chapter II will discuss in detail how these reactions manifest as the situation into which one is born, one’s life expectancy, and one’s life experience (II.13–14). Vyāsa glosses the final term in the list, āśaya (that which lies stored), with vāsanās, habits, or clusters of samskāras. While the terms are often used interchangeably, vāsanās tend to refer to latent saṃskāras of past lives, which lie dormant, albeit subconsciously molding personality, habit, and choice, and saṃskāras to the more active imprints of this life generated at every moment. Saṃskāras have to be contained somewhere, and the āśaya is their bed or container in the citta. Vācaspati Miśra adds that these vāsanās and saṃ-skāras, subliminal imprints or subconscious impressions that eventually fructify, lie stored as potencies in the field of the mind. Īśvara is free from all of these conditions of samsāra; hence he is a special type of puruṣa.

Since yogīs who have broken the three bonds and attained liberation are free from these influences, Vyāsa makes a point of noting that Īśvara is distinct from liberated puruṣas, since he never had nor ever will have any relation to these bonds. Unlike all other yogīs, then, he never was bound and never will be. He is eternally the transcendent God, not some sort of a liberated yogī. As Śaṅkara points out, akliṣṭa, untouched, means never touched by the four conditions for samsāra noted above, whether in time past, present, or future. A liberated yogī was once touched by all these in the past but is no longer in the present. Īśvara was never touched to begin with. He is therefore in a different category from liberated yogīs.

The notion in some modern commentaries that Īśvara is some sort of “archetypal” yogī (Eliade 1969) is nowhere to be found in the traditional commentarial tradition of the Yoga school, nor, for that matter, in the usage of the term Īśvara in the history of Indic philosophical discourse. In later classical Indic philosophical circles there were Īśvara-vādins, those believing in Īśvara, and nir-īśvara-vādins, those who rejected the notion of an Īśvara, a supreme God, but whether Īśvara-vādin or nir-īśvara-vādin, there was no debate at least as to the basic and general
referent of the term, Īśvara. The arguments were philosophical, revolving around whether the existence of a personal god was philosophically defensible, not semantic, in terms of what Īśvara meant. While the term can, on occasion, refer by extension to a being with extraordinary power, texts such as the Mahābhārata, the Gītā, and later Upaniṣads indicate that Īśvara was associated with a personal God, a supreme being, by Patañjali’s time, and one would need compelling grounds to renegotiate the meaning of the term as it is used and understood by the entire later Indic philosophical tradition in general in the premodern period. The term cannot be extricated from its traditional context.

On a related note, it is generally held, including in traditional philosophical discourse, that Patañjali’s Īśvara is not a creator sort of God. Sāṅkhya is criticized in Vedānta for considering creation to evolve from inanimate prakṛti (pradhāna) rather than the conscious Brahman of the Upaniṣads, and the only criticism levied against Yoga by this school is that it is viewed to hold the same position (etena yogah prayuktah), so Patañjali’s Īśvara seems to have been seen in this light, and this is, of course, significant. Now, there are two types of creatorship: God as material cause (the material stuff of the world emanates from God) and God as efficient cause (God does not create the actual material substance of the world, which is eternal as is He, but it is He who manipulates this stuff to create the world). But Patañjali nowhere indicates how he envisioned the relationship of Īśvara with the creation of the world. Argumentum ex silentio is not the strongest type of evidence, especially since Patañjali is not talking about creation in the sections of the text where he mentions Īśvara. He introduces Īśvara in the context of meditation, since that is his project in this text. While he does briefly mention a few attributes of Īśvara, they are relevant to the ongoing discussion on meditation and liberation from saṁsāra. Creation is an entirely different topic not connected with the subject matter of the sūtras and thus one has no explicit grounds from the text itself to determine how Patañjali envisioned the relationship of Īśvara with creation. He does correlate Īśvara with oṁ, in I.27, and would have been well aware that oṁ is the designation for Brahman in the Upaniṣads, and that Brahman is depicted there and consequently in the Vedānta tradition as the source of creation. And certainly all the commentators
do accept the creatorship of Īśvara, that is, Īśvara as efficient cause.\textsuperscript{137}

This seems a fairly important point. Patañjali’s compact sūtras provide succinct information germane to his specific and immediate project, citta-vṛtti-nirodha (samādhi). He thus provides whatever information related to Īśvara is immediately relevant: that samādhi can be attained by Īśvara; that this is possible because Īśvara is omniscient and beyond the kleśas and other sources of ignorance dealt with in the text that impede samādhi; that this can be attained by reciting om, etc. There was no need to extrapolate further since, apart from this commitment to a very delimited focus, there was anyway no paucity of other theistic texts dealing with all manner of additional theological specificities in circulation at the time. (Certainly Vijñānabhikṣu, although much later and clearly a Vedāntin, explicitly states this: “Now what is Īśvara? What is devotion to Him? … He has been very thoroughly analyzed in the Vedānta Sūtras … Consequently, it is only touched upon in passing here.”)\textsuperscript{138}

To make this point, one could wonder why Patañjali has nothing to say about, for instance, disease, which he mentions in I.30. Again, this solitary reference is in the context of disease being an obstacle to samādhi, and in this regard only is it relevant to and therefore introduced in Patañjali’s project. There was an extensive body of knowledge in āyurveda on other aspects of disease available at the time. That greater body of knowledge is not relevant to Patañjali’s project, but this does not mean Patañjali did not consider texts that do focus on āyurveda essential to human existence, or did not accept their jurisdiction. Likewise, Patañjali’s text focuses on puruṣa, not Īśvara. But this does not mean he minimizes or rejects the jurisdiction and contours of those texts that focus on other aspects of Īśvara such as creation, or, for that matter, the varieties of pranidhāna.

To my knowledge, all unambiguous theistic traditions taking root in Patañjali’s day—epic, Purānic, Vedānta, Nyāya—accepted Brahman/Īśvara at least as efficient creator (if not, with the Vedāntins, material creator)—understandably because the Upaniṣadic and epic usages of the term cast Īśvara (or the more common Upaniṣadic term, Īśa) in this role.\textsuperscript{139} What grounds do we have from this period to insist that Patañjali’s notion of Īśvara was an exception other than the Vedānta
Sūtras reference? And even here the evidence simply points to some form of Yoga being associated with some form of Sāṅkhya as denying material creatorship to Brahman. But, even prior to the Vedānta Sūtras, the Mahābhārata states that he whom both Sāṅkhya and Yoga call the Supreme Soul, Nārāyaṇa, is the source of prakṛti, so both prior to the Vedānta Sūtras and also after their composition, there were mainstream strains of Sāṅkhya and Yoga that did accept the creatorship of Īśvara. We have no grounds to consider the author of the Vedānta Sūtras to be referring to Patañjali’s version of Yoga in the quote noted above, since the Yoga Sūtras postdated him. Rather, the very fact that Patañjali makes no reference to the creatorship aspect of Īśvara suggests he accepted the status quo. We must, I suggest, accept that Patañjali considered Īśvara at least as efficient cause of creation.

Moreover, the fact that this sūtra indicates that Īśvara is not touched by the kleśas and karma does not indicate that Īśvara could not be a personal God for Patañjali. If he is the teacher of the ancients (I.26), the bestower of liberation (II.45), and omniscient (I.25), then he must have some sort of personality (even to accept a form of pure sattva as held by the commentators), and clearly Patañjali does not consider his involvement with prakṛti in this capacity to compromise him or subject him to the laws of prakṛti—the kleśas and karma, etc. Our commentators differ on how to make sense of this important point, but practically any theistic tradition of the world envisions God as a personal being involved in some way with the world and yet simultaneously absolute and temporally untouched, and the notions of Īśvara prevalent in Patañjali’s time are no exception. One need only consider the Gītā, where Kṛṣṇa as Īśvara unambiguously claims to be the creator and source of everything (VII.4ff; IX.8; X.8; and throughout), the Īśvara who enters into the world of prakṛti and supports it (XV.16–18) and yet remains untouched and unchanged by all such things (IV.13–14; IX.8–9). The point here is not to project the theology of the Gītā onto Patañjali but to stress that Patañjali’s Īśvara cannot be extracted from the context of Īśvara-related theologies of the time. The entire Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, too, presents Śiva as Īśvara, who actively creates, rules, and engages with the world and yet remains distinct and transcendent to it. Moreover, the largest body of Sanskrit written material, the Purānic genre, while yet to attain
its final form, was absorbing oral traditions that predated Patañjali’s time, and these are pervaded with Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa and Śiva theologies of this sort. We have no grounds to insist that Patañjali’s Īśvara be distinct from such theistic expressions, and thus stress that in our view Patañjali’s reference to Īśvara cannot be excised from this context of his time.

Fewer than twenty-five words have been utilized in the sūtras descriptive of Īśvara. Far too much has been made, in our view, by extracting from the greater theistic landscape of Patañjali’s day his terse statements toward a description of Īśvara and focusing on them as if they exist in some sort of isolated bubble specific to Patañjali and immune from the mainstream Īśvara theologies that were enveloping the Indian landscape. We have noted how earlier scholars opted to consider the entire Īśvara element as a later interpolation, in the hope, we suspect, of preserving a rational core to Patañjali, possibly stemming from discomfort with this vivid background of Hindu Īśvara theologies. Even with the more careful attention of later scholars who recognize that the Īśvara element is inherent to the text, one senses an aversion to pursuing the implications of this. In Patañjali’s day and age (and subsequently, for that matter), what options would there have been for any type of Īśvara theism other than the Nārāyaṇa/Viṣṇu- and Śiva-derived traditions? Viṣṇu and Śiva had risen to prominence centuries before Patañjali, and their worship was widespread across the subcontinent by the beginning of the Common Era. The Īśvara theological options of the time are amply preserved in the epic and much neglected Purānic traditions, and thus we have gone so far as to speculate whether, given the theistic options of the second and third centuries, one can legitimately reject the probability that Patañjali would have envisioned Īśvara as either Viṣṇu or Śiva, as I have considered (only somewhat gratuitously) elsewhere.

Many centuries prior to Patañjali, there were Sāṅkhya/Yoga traditions preserved in the Mahābhārata that were theistic, all with Vaiṣṇava flavorings. Ramakrishna Rao (1966) has extensively sieved through the Sāṅkhya and Yoga (Mokṣadharma) sections of the great epic and determined that there were several variant schools subscribing to Sāṅkhyan metaphysics, all of them theistic in some form or fashion. These theistic expressions were Vaiṣṇava in orientation, that is, they
used the language of Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa when referring to Īśvara (even in those variants that conceived of the Supreme Truth in less personal terms). And, of course, the epic’s Bhagavad Gītā (generally dated between the fourth and second centuries B.C.E.) has Viṣṇu in his form as Kṛṣṇa emphatically stating throughout that he is Īśvara and that prakṛti and her Sāṅkhyan evolutes are his “lower nature” (VII.4). The only extant description of the supposed original source Sāṅkhyan text, the Saṣṭi-tantra-śāstra in the (admittedly later and sectarian) Vaiṣṇava Ahirbudhnya Saṁhitā, also accepts a Sāṅkhyan Īśvara and considers him to be Viṣṇu, and these Vaiṣṇava Sāṅkhyan traditions were preserved in the Purāṇas, as in the later Vedānta traditions (including that of Śaṅkara who clearly conceived of Īśvara as Viṣṇu). There was thus a widespread variety of Vaiṣṇava-flavored Īśvara traditions preserved in a variety of genres long preceding Patañjali.

Indeed, every characteristic Patañjali will make about Īśvara being transcendent to karma, of unsurpassed omniscience, teacher of the ancients, untouched by Time, represented by oṁ, and awarding enlightenment seem extracted from the Gītā. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa claims to be a distinct (but supreme) sort of puruṣa, the uttamaḥ puruṣas anyah, specifying that this puruṣa is distinct from not only nonliberated puruṣas but also liberated ones (XV.16–18); beyond karma and the kleśas (IV.14; IX.9); of unsurpassed omniscience (VII.26; X.20, 32; XI.43); the teacher of the ancients (IV.1, specified as Vivasvān the sun god, who in turn imparted knowledge to Manu, the progenitor of mankind); transcendent to Time (X.30); the sound oṁ (IX.17); the remover of obstacles impeding the progress of his devotees, and the bestower of liberation (VII.14; IX.30–32; X.10–11; XII.7; XVIII.58). There is thus perfect compatibility in quality between Patañjali’s unnamed Īśvara and Kṛṣṇa as depicted in the Gītā. Similarly with the attributes assigned to Nārāyaṇa/Viṣṇu throughout the Nārāyaṇiya portion of the Mokṣa-dharma section in the twelfth book of the Mahābhārata epic, which unambiguously presents Viṣṇu as the supreme deity possessing all these characteristics throughout.

Of course, the Mahābhārata with its Gītā was not the only well-known philosophical text on the religious landscape at the beginning of the Common Era promoting theism to an identified Īśvara. A definite theism
had also long emerged in the late Upaniṣads, particularly the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (generally dated from the fourth to second century B.C.E.), which vigorously identifies Śiva (named Rudra and Hara in this text) as Īśvara. Indeed, the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad assigns to Śiva several of the same generic characteristics associated with Īśvara that Patañjali uses: He is distinct from other souls; he is the awarer of liberation (or, more precisely, by meditating on him all illusion disappears, I.10); he is omniscient and the maker of Time (VI.2, 16); and he supported (taught) the ancient sage Kapila, the founder of the Sāṅkhya system. This text is very relevant to our line of argument as it promotes yogic practice; Chapter II gives the most extensive (and almost sole) description of yoga in the earlier Upaniṣads (along with the later Maitrī). Moreover, the sūtra is situated in the context of Sāṅkhya metaphysics, which is the infrastructure within which Patañjali situates his yoga system. The Gītā (by most dating estimates) and the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad had preceded Patañjali by centuries, as had many of the Purāṇic stories, even if they were still being organized into their final literary forms, and there is no evidence that Patañjali’s rendition of Īśvara is a departure from such specific theistic orientations. Indeed, the question must be raised as to what alternatives to Viṣṇu or Śiva would there be anyway in that period. We thus suggest that the evidence points to the conclusion that the theism in Patañjali’s system can stem only from these preexisting Vaiṣṇava or Śaivite strains.

One might add a final note here, that Patañjali not only stipulates the practice of svādhyāya, literally self-study, understood in all the commentaries as referring to the study of scripture (which teaches of the self) and recitation of japa (II.1, 44), but also states that from such study and recitation one connects with an iṣṭa-devatā, one’s divinity of preference (a term used in the Upaniṣads and earlier Vedic texts to refer to the Vedic gods). That Patañjali was well versed in the śāstras, sacred texts—and thus hardly immune to the theistic currents of the day—is already obvious; this sūtra suggests he was himself oriented toward a specific divinity of preference. It is hard to conceive that this divinity would have been one of the (by this time) minor Vedic deities for reasons outlined in the commentary to II.44 (where I again take up the matter of Patañjali’s own personal theistic orientations), but which can
be summarized by pointing out that the minor deities are approached for worldly boons. Obviously the yogī has no interest in worldly boons, as Patañjali has already specified. The yogī is interested only in *samādhi*, and the only divine being who can bestow this is *Īśvara*. Thus, *iṣṭa-devatā* might better be read, as it is taken in the theistic traditions, as a reference to a form of *Īśvara* to which the yogī is partial.\(^{156}\) This is underscored by the fact that all the commentators understand *svādhyāya* as also referring to the recitation of *mantra, japa*, which Vyāsa, following Patañjali (I.27–28) takes as reciting *om. Om*, we will see, specifically refers to *Īśvara*. So whether *svādhyāya* is taken to be study or *mantra*, *iṣṭa-devatā* can conceivably refer only to a preferred form of *Īśvara*. The preferred forms of *Īśvara* in the second century had long been associated with Śiva or Viṣṇu or one of his incarnations such as Kṛṣṇa. There were no other candidates.

If one felt inclined to push the matter, the scantly inferential evidence that can be brought to bear on the case for Viṣṇu as Patañjali’s *iṣṭa-devatā* might include the facts that, apart from the evidence of the earlier Vaiṣṇava-flavored Yoga streams preserved in the *Mahābhārata* noted above, the later tradition considered Patañjali to be an incarnation of Śeṣa, Viṣṇu’s serpent carrier in the Ocean of Milk (rather than, say, Nandi, Śiva’s bull carrier) and assigns the primary commentary on Patañjali to the famous Vyāsa, who is embedded in Vaiṣṇava narrative traditions. Indeed, the *Mahābhārata* (XII.337.4–5) considers Vyāsa a manifestation (*āṁśa*) of Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa and the son of the latter. This might suggest the preservation of a tradition that was partial to *Īśvara* as Viṣṇu. For this and other reasons,\(^{157}\) a case can thus be made that Patañjali personally subscribed to the Vaiṣṇava/Viṣṇu-flavored theism of the older epic and Purānic Sāṅkhya and Yoga traditions. But one can also make a case for Śiva. Perhaps any such reading of the sparse evidence reflects preexisting dispositions, but one can certainly argue that *Īśvara* in Patañjali’s time had long been associated with Viṣṇu and Śiva, and thus Patañjali would in all likelihood have been either a Vaiṣṇavite or a Śaivite.

Having said all this, one cannot ignore the fact that Patañjali chose not to disclose his understanding of *Īśvara* other than in the most general categories of relevance to the specific focus of the *sūtras, citta-vṛtti-
nirdhā. I like to imagine that Patañjali is too sophisticated and broad-minded a thinker to risk sectarianizing the otherwise universalistic tenor of the sūtras and thereby alienating the sensitivities of aspiring yogīs with theistic (or nontheistic) orientations different from his own. That millions of people worldwide continue to find his text personally relevant today speaks to his foresight in this regard.

On a related note, the Yoga tradition in America today primarily stems from the Vaiṣṇava (Viṣṇu-centered) traditions. Krishnamacharya, his son Desikachar, and his son-in-law Iyengar are all devoted members of the Śrī lineage of Vaiṣṇavism, best associated with the twelfth-century Vedāntin Rāmānuja. This is a devotional lineage, prioritizing bhakti, which accepts Viṣṇu as the Supreme Īśvara.158 This aspect of their heritage is unknown to most of their followers, since it was not stressed by these ācāryas upon coming to Western shores (although it can be perceived more readily in the viniyoga writings of Desikachar than in those of Iyengar).159 The transplantation of Vaiṣṇava bhakti to the West in modern times as a yogic path unto itself is to be credited to the efforts of A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami, founder of ISKCON (the Hare Krishna movement), whose devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa inspired him to spread Kṛṣṇa-centered bhakti-yoga (Kṛṣṇa Consciousness) around the world. Noteworthy, too, in the same time period, is the transplantation of the Kashmiri form of Śaivism featuring bhakti to Lord Śiva popularized by Swami Muktānanda, founder of Siddha Yoga.160

Returning to our commentators, Īśvara is unsurpassed by any other power, continues Vyāsa; he has no competitor. Nor does he have an equal. As Vyāsa puts it rhetorically, if, among two equals, one says of a desired object: “Let it be old,” and the other says: “Let it be new,” the wishes of one of the two will be thwarted since they cannot both have their way. And if, on the other hand, their wishes never contradict, adds Vācaspati Miśra, then what is the point of having more than one Īśvara in the first place? Thus, Īśvara has no equal but is the one sole being who is unexcelled and unequaled. Therefore, Patañjali states that he is a special puruṣa. His existence is substantiated by the scriptures, add the commentators (Vijñānabhikṣu lists a variety of passages in this regard, such as the occurrence of the term Īśvara in the Gītā [for example, XV.17]). The scriptures are themselves the product of Īśvara when he
associates with pure sattva. Thus there is circularity among Īśvara, pure sattva, and scripture: Īśvara produces scripture from his adoption of pure sattva, and scripture directs one to Īśvara.\textsuperscript{161} Obviously this means that, since Īśvara is omniscient, and it goes without saying that he is beyond any cheating propensity due to his nature of pure sattva, the scriptures emanating from him are absolute and free from error.

Vācaspati Miśra raises an issue here concerning Īśvara’s “personality.” If Īśvara has knowledge and the power to act, as the previous sūtras indicate that he does (since he has the power to bestow liberation on the devoted yogī and thus must be aware of his devotion, and I.27 informs us that he taught the ancients), does this not mean he has a citta mind? Pure consciousness, Vācaspati Miśra reminds us, is unchanging and without object according to the Yoga school (and an axiom of Hindu thought in general), and therefore removed from all knowledge and the desire to act. Knowledge and desire are thus functions of citta, in other words, citta-vṛttis. Did not the opening sūtras of the text inform us that these very citta-vṛttis are responsible for bondage in saṁsāra? The citta itself is the product of prakṛti and thus has its origin in ignorance, avidyā. How can Īśvara, who is forever free, be bound by prakṛti and its products and subject to ignorance in the form of citta-vṛttis?

Vācaspati Miśra resolves this dichotomy by supposing that the Lord, even though untouched by nescience, appears to assume the nature of ignorance out of his freedom, just as an actor imitating Rāma freely assumes the character of Rāma. But the actor does not forget his real self. In the same way, Īśvara associates with pure sattva, free from the influence of rajas and tamas, out of his own free will, says Vācaspati Miśra.\textsuperscript{162} A parallel notion of Īśvara is expressed in the Gītā:

\begin{quote}
Although I am unborn and my nature is imperishable
And although I am the Īśvara of all beings
Yet I come into being by my own power
By controlling prakṛti, which is mine. (IV.6)
\end{quote}

Nonetheless, even if Īśvara associates with prakṛti out of freedom rather than bondage, his inclination to do so still indicates desire on his part, and desire, for Vācaspati Miśra, is also a symptom of ignorance. To
address this philosophical objection, Vācaspati Miśra patches together a rather complicated argument (that will not meet the approval of Vijñānabhikṣu). He argues that Īśvara is transcendent to Time. Before the dissolution of the universe, Īśvara determines, or wills, that he will again associate with sattva when the next universal manifestation occurs. This wish or saṁskāra is deposited into sattva along with the collective saṁskāras of all embodied beings. When dissolution occurs, all saṁsāric puruṣas remain in a latent state until the next manifestation. The saṁskāras each puruṣa had accumulated in past lives also remain latent but are again regrouped around the appropriate puruṣa when the next cosmic manifestation takes place. This, for Vācaspati Miśra, applies to Īśvara: After dissolution, Īśvara disconnects from sattva and all acts of volition (i.e., from the citta), as do all other puruṣas. But when the universe manifests again, Īśvara’s determination from the previous cycle is activated, like a cosmic alarm clock, and Īśvara again associates with prakṛti (just as, says Vācaspati Miśra, Caitra who contemplates “tomorrow I must get up at daybreak” and then, after sleeping, gets up at that very time because of the saṁskāra he had deposited into the citta the previous day to this effect). This cumbersome explanation is construed to explain how desire, knowledge, and the will to act, which in conventional Yoga understanding are citta-vṛttis indicative of unliberated puruṣas in saṁsāra, can exist in Īśvara, whom Patañjali says in this sūtra has always been pure and liberated and free from ignorance.

Vācaspati Miśra does not explain how, in the new cycle of creation, the pure and independent Īśvara can become influenced by the reactivated sattva containing his deposited wish from the previous cosmic cycle. Vijñānabhikṣu draws attention to this problem, pointing out that it is ignorance that causes puruṣa to associate (or, after cosmic dissolution, reassociate) with prakṛti—but how can ignorance be applicable to Īśvara? Rather, for Vijñānabhikṣu, desire, knowledge, and the power to act exist in Īśvara eternally. Here, he again reflects the position held by certain Vedānta schools, which also hold that Īśvara’s mind and, for that matter, body are not prākrtic productions, even in its pure sāttvic potential, but made of pure Brahm and thus part of the essential nature of Īśvara rather than an external prākrtic covering as is the case with the mind and bodies covering the puruṣas in saṁsāra.164
Vijñānabhikṣu uses this sūtra as an opportunity to argue on behalf of the view of the Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools that there is an eternal plurality of puruṣas, in opposition to the position of the advaita, non-dualistic, school of Vedānta, which posits one ultimate, single all-pervading puruṣa (ātman). The Yoga view holds that, both in the liberated state as well as in the world of saṁsāra, there is a plurality of individual souls, while the advaita school holds that the apparent plurality of puruṣas, including the puruṣa known as Īśvara, is a product of ignorance occurring only in the world of saṁsāra. In advaita Vedānta, from a liberated perspective, there is only one undivided ātman. Other Vedānta schools, such as Rāmānuja’s viśiṣṭādvaita, oppose this view, and Vijñānabhikṣu presents various arguments against the advaita position that can be found in the writing of Rāmānuja and other post-Śaṅkara Vedāntins. For example, if there were only one ultimate undivided ātman, then if any one jīva (the ātman in saṁsāric bondage) becomes liberated, it attains to this undivided state. How, then, can other jīvas continue to exist in saṁsāra? In other words, if there is only one undivided ātman in reality, how can it exist in both liberated as well as saṁsāric states? This contradicts the supposed undividedness of ātman. For this reason alone, there must therefore be a plurality of puruṣas, some liberated and some in saṁsāra, as held by the Sāṅkhya Kārikās (XVIII).165 The argument has a history in the polemics of Vedāntins opposed to Śaṅkara’s extreme advaita form of monism. Thus, Īśvara is distinct from the puruṣas, and the individual puruṣas from each other.

And, importantly, clearly in response to the Vedānta criticism of Sāṅkhya (and, by extension Yoga166), Bhoja Rāja notes that it is by the will (icchā) of Īśvara that the union between puruṣa and prakṛti takes place. The Vedāntins point out that since prakṛti is inert and unconscious, and puruṣa in its pure form is free of all desire or any content of consciousness, how could the union between the two ever occur? For Bhoja Rāja, as for the Vedānta and all other theistic traditions, it is the desire of Īśvara (in conjunction with the previous activities of each puruṣa) that brings about the union between the two in each cycle of creation (the issue of first time primordial beginnings is avoided in Indian philosophy in general by positing that this cycle is beginningless). Thus, with Bhoja Rāja, Vijñānabhikṣu, and, of course,
Śaṅkara and other commentators, Vedāntic concerns are blended into the commentaries on the Yoga Sūtras (which is an organic and quintessentially orthodox exegetical thing to do).

I.25 tatra niratiśāyam sarvajña-bījam

In him, the seed of omniscience is unsurpassed.

Although, by definition, omniscience, sarvajña, means to know everything, and thus degrees of omniscience would seem to be something of an oxymoron, Patañjali here indicates that there is a difference between the omniscience of Īśvara and any comparable state obtainable by any other entity: Īśvara’s omniscience is unsurpassed, niratiśāyam.

Vyāsa states that the metaphor of a seed is used because there are in fact degrees in omniscience, as there are in the germination of a seed. He defines the seed of omniscience as the ability to understand anything, large or small, individual or collective, either in the past, present, or future—in other words, the ability to understand all things from all time. An omniscient person is one in whom this seed of understanding keeps growing. As in any form of measurement, there is a maximum attainable dimension of all individual things or subjects; the smallest subatomic particle, for example, says Bhoja Rāja has a certain dimension, as does the vastest entity in manifest reality, space itself. These dimensions of things reach their limit somewhere and so, therefore, does knowledge of them. Omniscience is knowing the totality of the dimensions of all individual things, whether past, present, or future. Īśvara must be omniscient in this sort of sense, adds Śaṅkara, to be able to supervise the vast totality of all things in the planned and regulated universe.

Where Bhoja Rāja focuses on the dimension of individual things to define omniscience, Hariharānanda focuses on the knowledge of individual beings. All created beings, whether a worm or a human, have
some degree of knowledge, whether greater or lesser. This knowledge of all individual beings, continually grows (new saṃskāras are being implanted in the citta every second). Since there are unlimited beings whose knowledges are continually growing, the collective knowledge is limitless. The being who has attained the maximum attainable level of this expanding collective of knowledge is omniscient. He is the special puruṣa known as Īśvara.

Although, by this process of inference, one can reach the conclusion that there must be a highest attainable state of knowledge, omniscience, one does not know the specifics of such an omniscient being by this process, says Vyāsa. The followers of all kinds of sects consider their masters to be omniscient—even in the Yoga Sūtras there are several sūtras that indicate that the accomplished yogi becomes omniscient (for example, I.40; III.49). Are all these on a par with Īśvara? The difference is that prior to becoming accomplished, such yogis were not omniscient. Śaṅkara points out here that the Buddhists and Jains themselves state that the Buddha and Mahāvīra167 attained enlightenment, and this indicates that there was a time when they were not enlightened; in other words, there was a time when they were once subject to ignorance. Their enlightenment and hence omniscience is therefore limited by time—it is not eternal, without beginning.

Vācaspati Miśra makes the same point about Kapila, the founder of the Sāṅkhya system. Vyāsa notes in his commentary that Kapila, the original sage (ādi-vidvān), adopted a manufactured citta (nirmāṇacittam adhiṣṭhāya) out of compassion and presented the Sāṅkhya teachings to Āsuri, whom tradition considers to be the first disciple. Kapila was the first teacher of the lineage and attained liberation, says Vācaspati Miśra, but this is not the same as Īśvara, the Supreme Teacher, who was always liberated. Even as Kapila is accepted as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in some sources,168 he still had to attain absolute knowledge, according to Vācaspati Miśra, which, as indicated in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad V.2, he received from Śiva Maheśvara. Again, this means there was a time when he—unlike Īśvara—was not in possession of absolute knowledge. As an aside, Vyāsa’s comment about Kapila points to the Hindu belief that enlightened beings may chose to return to the world out of compassion for those still enmeshed in saṃsāra, a notion more fully developed in the
Mahāyāna Buddhist notion of the Bodhisattva.

Therefore Patañjali’s Īśvara, who is not limited by Time, is of a different category from that of all other enlightened beings. We will engage in some additional speculations as to how Īśvara’s “extra” omniscience might be read through certain Vedāntic lenses in III.49, which is not irrelevant to the commentarial tradition since, as Vācaspati Miśra states, specific knowledge about Īśvara, such as his various names such as Śiva and Viṣṇu, and his activities and other details, can be gained from other scriptures.

Although Īśvara has no personal benefit to gain, Vyāsa notes that the purpose of his activities is for the benefit of living beings. Īśvara thinks as follows: “During the various creations and dissolutions of the universe, I will uplift beings caught in saṁsāra by disseminating knowledge and dharma, social duty.” Vyāsa is paraphrasing the famous verse from the Gītā here, where Krṣṇa states: “I appear in every yuga, cyclical age, to protect the pious and establish dharma” (IV.8). This notion of Īśvara periodically bestowing instruction to humanity is relevant to the next sūtra.

Śaṅkara makes some useful comments here. Īśvara’s body is pure sattva and thus free of the limitations of the senses of conventional bodies; therefore, Īśvara’s awareness can be in simultaneous contact with everything, that is, omniscient. The awareness of embodied beings is limited by the tāmasic element in the senses of their particular bodies. Thus humans can see only a certain distance, hear only a certain range of sounds, etc. Other animals have senses with different ranges, and thus the limitations imposed on consciousness vary—vultures can see farther than humans, for example, and dogs hear and smell more acutely. Śaṅkara analogizes this with a light inside a clay jar with holes in it—the light of the jar is visible and can illumine only through the holes. The body with its senses is like a jar with holes; awareness can penetrate outside reality only through the holes of the senses (often called “gates” in texts like the Gītā V.13 and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad III.18), and even then its range is limited depending on the type of sense (the sight of a vulture vs. that of a human, which can be compared with different-sized holes in the jar). But when the jar with its holes has been removed, the light that had been contained within can now pervade everything
without being dependent on the holes for its path. Similarly, since Īśvara is free from karma, his awareness is not limited by sensual limitations and thus can perceive everything at the same time. Hence he is omniscient.

Vācaspati Miśra considers the atheistic position that God could not have created the world because it is full of pain. If there were a compassionate God, he would have created a world of undisturbed enjoyment (such arguments surface periodically in the writings of atheistic schools such as the Jain and Mīmāṁsā\textsuperscript{172}). His response to this is that God informs mankind of the means of liberation and thus is not cruel. Vijñānabhikṣu considers a further charge that since Īśvara is partial to his devotees, showering his blessings on them and not on others, he is a flawed individual, since partiality is not a sign of transcendence. Not so, he says. Just as fire has the nature of heat, so God’s nature is such that he is controlled by his devotees, but anyone can avail himself or herself of this nature by cultivating pure sattva. Thus, all have access to his blessings. He quotes Gītā IX.29: “I am equal to all beings—there is no one dear to me nor disliked by me. But those who worship me with devotion are in me and I in them.” Pleasure and pain, asserts Vijñānabhikṣu, are the result of one’s own past actions and have nothing to do with Īśvara’s partiality.

पूर्वेषां अपि गुरु: कालनावचछदात् । २६ ॥

1.26 pūrveṣām api guruḥ kālenānavacchedāt

pūrveṣām, of the ancients; api, also; guruḥ, guru, teacher; kālena, by time; anavacchedāt, because of not being limited or conditioned by

Īśvara was also the teacher of the ancients, because he is not limited by Time.

Vyāsa states that the ancients, purvāḥ (those who went before), were subject to Time, kāla; that is, they were mortal beings with finite life spans. The one who is not so subject to Time—Īśvara, who transcends Time—is the guru of even the ancients. Moreover, just as Īśvara existed
as the perfect being at the beginning of this creation, so was he the same in previous creations. The commentators hold that this sūtra differentiates Īśvara from beings like the secondary deity Brahmā¹⁷³ (not to be confused with Brahmān), whose immense life span encompasses the duration of one universal cycle but who ultimately and eventually dies like all created beings and is reborn in the next cycle of creation. Īśvara is not such a created being subject to birth, death, cyclical creation, or any other manifestation of Time.

Time for the Yoga school simply means the movement of the guṇas of prakṛti, that is, the movement of matter. A day is simply the apparent movement of the sun in the heavens; a season, the movements of nature; a year, the earth’s movement around the sun; a lifetime, the movement of one’s body over the years; a civilization or world epoch, the movement of people and events and the rise of edifices or monuments that eventually crumble and return to their prākṛtic source. Everything in Sāṅkhya and Yoga is nothing other than the product of the interaction and movement of the guṇas underpinning prakṛti. Being subject to Time, embodied beings of the present day are not free to receive teachings directly from, say, Patañjali, Kṛṣṇa, Christ, Buddha, Abraham, or Muhammed, etc., because our situation in Time is different from theirs—they were present in a different configuration of the guṇas, which we call a previous age, than the present configuration. But since Īśvara is transcendent to Time and to the laws of saṁsāra (such as karma, which limits ordinary embodied beings’ capacity to control their destiny in terms of when and where they are injected into prakṛti), Īśvara can break into human history at will, so to speak, and impart teachings to sages throughout the ages. In the Muslim traveler/scholar/historian al-Bīrunī’s (somewhat Abrahamically flavored) understanding of this sūtra:

It is He who addressed in various ways Brahmā and other primal [sages]. To some of them God sent down a book, to others He opened a gate for intermediation [with respect to Him]. Again, to others He made a prophetic revelation so that they grasped in thought that which He bestowed upon them.¹⁷⁴

Śaṅkara gives the following purport to this sūtra: Just as gurus, who are teachers of knowledge and dharma, are offered homage by their
pupils who have taken shelter of them, so Īśvara, who is the teacher of all other teachers, should be meditated upon in the heart by his devotees who know him by such names as Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu). And just as human teachers bestow their grace upon their disciples wholly devoted to them, so the Supreme Teacher bestows his grace upon his devotees who purely contemplate him.

Vijñānabhikṣu uses this opportunity to again promote the Vedāntic philosophy of bhedābheda, difference and nondifference, which, while not a topic Patañjali chooses to engage with in the sūtras, is of general philosophic interest as it touches upon one of the chief concerns of Vedānta thought: the relationship of the puruṣa with Īśvara. According to bhedābheda (and related Vedāntic views), Īśvara (the personified Brahman) is one with the living entities, but also different. Their relationship is that between the whole and the part, the fire and its sparks. Although there is oneness between the whole and the part on one level, the relationship is not one of absolute unity, as the advaita, nondualist, schools of Vedānta hold; it is rather one of nondifference. The point is not one of mere semantics; it is subtle and significant. The spark is nondifferent from the fire in substance, yet not absolutely identical to the fire; it has its own individuality. Thus a measure of duality or difference is maintained even in unity. In this way, the puruṣa is one with Brahman in quality but also eternally distinct in that it has inherent individuality. Thus, although through categories alien to the sūtras themselves, Vijñānabhikṣu is actually defending at least one central tenet of the Yoga tradition—the eternal individuality of the puruṣa (whether Īśvara or other).

The issue of whether the soul retains its individuality in the liberated state is one of the main metaphysical questions differentiating advaita Vedānta from most other Hindu theologies. From the six schools of orthodox philosophy, five—Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Mīmāṁsā—and significant branches of the sixth, Vedānta, posit that the ātman is eternally individual both in saṁsāric and liberated states. The advaita, nondual, school of Vedānta (as well as other non-dual, monistic, traditions such as the cluster of Śakta schools) holds that individuality is a feature of saṁsāra only, but that upon attaining liberation, the soul loses its individuality and realizes its oneness with the Absolute (hence
The term *advaita*, literally, nondual, one). The Yoga school rejects this view and subscribes to the position that the soul retains individuality even in the liberated state.\(^{176}\)

**I.27 tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ**

tasya, his; vācakaḥ, designation; praṇavaḥ, the mystical syllable *om*.

The name designating him is the mystical syllable *om*.

Patañjali states here that Īśvara is represented by the mystical syllable *om* referred to here by its synonym, *pranavaḥ*. *Om* has been understood as a sonal incarnation of Brahman (which is the most common term used for the Absolute Truth in the Upaniṣads) since the late Vedic period.\(^{177}\) The *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, for example, states: “Brahman is *om*, this whole world is *om*” (I.8.1), as does the *Katha Upaniṣad* (II.16), the *Praśna Upaniṣad* (V.2–5), and the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, which concerns itself entirely with the relation of manifest reality with this syllable. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* describes *om* as the bow, the self as the arrow, and Brahman as the target that must be struck, paralleling Patañjali’s statement in the next sūtra. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* states that through the practice (*abhyāsa*) of meditating on *om*, one “can see God” (I.14).\(^{178}\) A scholastic such as Patañjali would most certainly have been well schooled in the Upaniṣads (especially given his own mandate of the prerequisite of study for success in *yoga*, II.1 and 44), which, as an orthodox thinker, he would have accepted as śruti, divine revelation. Even though he never refers to Brahman in the sūtras, here again we must allow for the possibility that, along with texts such as the *Gītā*,\(^{179}\) the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*,\(^{180}\) the epic, and the theologies of the Purāṇas—indeed, along with all the Īśvara theologies of his time, to my knowledge—he is consciously equating the Upaniṣadic Brahman with this personal Īśvara, by means of this common denominator of *om*.

Vyāsa raises the question, which touches upon various Indian theories of language, of whether the relationship between the person Īśvara and the designation (vācaka) *om* is conventional—a socially agreed upon
usage—or inherent and eternal. The relationship of word and meaning (signifier and object signified) has an extensive history in Indian intellectual thought. Briefly, from conventional perspectives, “elephant” refers to a particular type of creature, but “camel” (or any other term, such as “abracadabra”) would do just as well provided it becomes a designation for this creature agreed upon by the speakers of the language. Different languages use different terms for the same object. The term “elephant” is thus conventional; it does not have an eternal or absolutely binding relationship with its referent. The same obviously holds true for personal names given to people, as Vijñānabhikṣu notes: The name Devadatta is given adventitiously to a son by his father—he could just as well have called him Viṣṇupriya.

An inherent relationship, on the other hand, is eternal and not dependent on social usage. Vyāsa gives the example of the relationship between a lamp and light; wherever there is a lamp there must always and necessarily be light. Such is the relationship between Īśvara and oṁ; it is not a culturally agreed upon designation. Īśvara was known by the syllable oṁ in previous creations, and will be for all eternity; it is an eternal designation not assigned by human convention or socially agreed upon usage (we will further explore the yoga understanding of language in general in III.17).

How can this be? wonders Vācaspati Miśra. After all, oṁ is just a sound and merges back into prakṛti along with all other sounds and all material objects at the dissolution of the universe, and its powers must thereby disappear. At a new creation, how can this particular phoneme regain its power from the previous creation? It remanifests with all its previous power, he continues, just like life-forms that disappear into the earth during the dry season burst back into the same life-forms after the rains. This particular and specific phoneme is eternally invested by Īśvara with his power. One can conclude, then, that not being subject to Time, Īśvara is not subject to cyclical creation and therefore can invest his potency eternally into the sacred syllable oṁ.

This process of Īśvara investing his potency in the sound of oṁ has been compared to fire permeating an iron ball. When an iron ball is placed into the fire, it becomes permeated by the fire such that the iron exhibits all the qualities of fire. In other words, it becomes fireized, so to
speak, manifesting the powers of fire, such as heat and light, by dint of being pervaded by fire. In this regard, on one level, it becomes non-different from fire even as on another level, it remains an iron substance and fire remains a distinct physical substance. In the same way, om becomes permeated by Īśvara such that it manifests the qualities of Īśvara. It becomes Īśvara-ized, so to speak, manifesting the powers of Īśvara, such as the powers of illumination and purification, by dint of being pervaded by Īśvara. On one level, then, it becomes non-different from Īśvara even as on another level, it remains a prakṛtic sound vibration and Īśvara remains a distinct transcendent entity. In this way the mind, which, as a prakṛtic entity cannot “grasp” that which is finer than itself, namely, puruṣa (Īśvara, as we know, is a “special” puruṣa), can grasp or focus on the prakṛtic sound om. But since Īśvara has invested his presence in this sound (as an act of grace), the mind is, for all intents and purposes, coming into direct contact with Īśvara. In this way, the prakṛtic mind can absorb itself in an unmediated fashion on the non-prakṛtic Īśvara.

Hariharānanda believes that this empowered syllable om along with its designation, Īśvara, is reintroduced to humanity in each new cycle of creation by omniscient beings, or sages with recollection of their past lives. He feels that no other word can bring about comparable calmness of mind. Moreover, it is easy to pronounce since, unlike consonants, vowels can be pronounced in prolonged continuity. The sound, he holds, moves from the throat to the brain, where it aids contemplation. Certainly, the repetition of om has been performed by mystics and meditators in India for many centuries and is one of the most common forms of Hindu meditation.

Śaṅkara gives a popular etymology for pranava, the term used here by Patañjali to refer to om. Popular etymologies are common in exegetical literature and usually break a word down into its components, assigning extended theological meaning to each segment. While they are not always accepted by modern-day historical linguists as etymologically accurate, such derivations are a good example of how many of the important Vedic terms are reconfigured to conform to specific theological principles of later times. The prefix pra-, of pranava, he says, stands for prakarṣena, perfectly; and nava is a derivative of the root nu,
in its third-person passive form of nūyate, he is praised. Thus, through the recitation (japa) of oṁ, Īśvara is praised perfectly. Alternatively, he continues, substituting the va of praṇava with dhā, one can construe praṇidhā, surrender to the Lord; praṇava is thus a sound representation of the Lord through which one can meditate on him in a devotional mode, as the next sūtra will indicate.

One more general comment seems useful here. Īśvara is the generic name for God in the Hindu theistic traditions. That is, when used alone it tends to refer to a philosophical category in these contexts—that of a supreme personal Creator—rather than specific divine manifestations of this Supreme Being in the forms of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Kṛṣṇa, who all lay claim to the title Īśvara in Purāṇic and epic texts. Factually, however, most yogīs over the last two millennia have been associated with these devotional sects and hence tend to add the specific name of their iṣṭadevatā, their preferred personal form of divinity (the object of their personal devotion, a notion discussed in II.44) onto the oṁ mantra. Thus, for the Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa traditions, that is, those that conceive of Īśvara as Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa, the favored mantra is oṁ namo Nārāyaṇāya; for the Śiva traditions, oṁ namah Śivāya; and for the classical Kṛṣṇa traditions, oṁ namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya. Even in the by now far more popular and universalized Kṛṣṇa mantra—Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare—introduced to the Western world by the great Vaiṣṇava teacher A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi, the medieval Kṛṣṇa theologians from which his lineage stems proposed that this mantra both inherently contains and also supersedes oṁ. The point is that even in the more developed bhakti traditions, oṁ retains its primordial status as encapsulating the Absolute Truth but is incorporated into more sophisticated understandings of Īśvara and, consequently, more personalized and elaborate variants of the oṁ mantra. These, too, can be (and have long been) used as mantras upon which to fix the mind, by those more steeped in bhakti.

I.28 taj-japas tad-artha-bhāvanam
Continuing this discussion of oṁ, Patañjali here gives a specific indication as to how to fix the mind on Īśvara. After all, since Īśvara, as a type of puruṣa, is beyond prakṛti, and therefore beyond conceptualization or any type of vṛtti, how is one to fix one’s mind upon him since the prakṛtic mind cannot perceive that which is more subtle than itself? Patañjali provides the means: through the recitation of the syllable in which Īśvara manifests. As early as the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, oṁ, which is considered there to be, “non-different from brahman” is described as “the best ālambana,” support (I.10, 38) for the mind in meditation: “when one knows this support one delights in brahman.” The recitation of oṁ is called japa. Japa is an old Vedic term common in the old Brāhmaṇa texts, where it referred to the soft recitation of Vedic mantras by the priest.185

Vyāsa states that by constantly repeating oṁ and contemplating its meaning, artha, namely Īśvara, the mind of the yogī becomes one-pointed—the goal of all yoga practice. Vyāsa quotes a verse from the Viṣṇu Purāṇa: “From svādhyāya [reciting mantras], let yoga be practiced, and from yoga let reciting mantras be performed; by perfection in both, the supreme ātman shines forth”186 Elaborating on this, Vācaspati Miśra takes this sūtra as specifying how to engage in meditation on Īśvara, that is, the devotion to Īśvara referred to in sūtra I.23. He understands the bhāvana, dwelling upon, of this sūtra as permeating the mind again and again,187 and Bhoja Rāja considers it the entrance into the mind of an object again and again to the exclusion of all other objects”188 (bhāvana occurs also in II.2, 33, 34). Repeating oṁ and contemplating its meaning, that it is the sound representation of Īśvara, the object of the yogī’s surrender, when coupled with Patañjali’s usage of praṇidhāna, devotion, in I.23, points to chanting the mantra in a devotional mood. According to the bhakti traditions—recall that Vyāsa considers Īśvara-praṇidhāna a special sort of bhakti—by doing this, thoughts of the Lord become the very substance of the citta, a sort of “Īśvarizing” parallel to the
“sāttvicizing” activities of the yogic lifestyle.\textsuperscript{189} Just as an image and associations of, say, a cow, arise upon hearing the word “cow,” so thoughts of the Lord arise in the citta upon reciting and hearing his name, japa. Śaṅkara notes that such japa can be mental or softly audible. By such recitation, japa, the citta becomes saturated with saṁskāras connected to God (of course, in meditation proper, the mind remains fixed on one such saṁskāra, specifically, the mantra encapsulating Īśvara). This results in a feeling of bliss. More important, continues Vācaspati Miśra, the Lord then becomes gracious to such a devotee and awards him or her samādhi.

Śaṅkara’s analysis of this sūtra reflects the widely held view in Hindu traditions touched upon previously that in addition to perception of puruṣa, the yogī whose practice is imbued with devotion can also directly perceive God as a distinct but supreme puruṣa. Since oṁ has an inherent relationship with Īśvara, says Śaṅkara, by reciting oṁ the yogī can meet Īśvara face-to-face, that is, the recitation of oṁ with intense concentration not only brings Īśvara to mind but also takes one to a supersensory face-to-face encounter with Īśvara: “By perfecting the repetition of oṁ and meditation on the supreme Īśvara, the supreme ātman (paramātman) situated in the highest place (parameṣṭhin) shines forth for the yogī.”\textsuperscript{190} Vijñānabhikṣu articulates the same view:

His name is the praṇava (oṁ). And pranidhāna, devotion, consists in contemplating Him, preceded by chanting oṁ and culminating in direct perception of Him. This absorption [saṁyama] with regard to the supreme Īśvara is the primary practice in asamprajñāta-samādhi and [the attainment of] liberation ... Absorption on the personal ātman, on the other hand, is secondary.\textsuperscript{191}

Here we find the Vaiṣṇava view articulated that the realization and perception of puruṣa is a secondary, less important goal of yoga. The higher goal is the realization and perception of Īśvara, the Supreme form of whom both Śaṅkara and Vijñānabhikṣu consider to be Viṣṇu. Be that as it may, as Coward (1985, 356) recognizes, “According to the Yoga tradition, it was this route to Īśvara that was chosen by the majority of yogīs as their path to release.”

Coward gives a fascinating correlation of Śaṅkara’s comments here
with the various stages of \textit{samādhi}. He attempts a hermeneutic of the mechanics underpinning this perception of \textit{Īśvara} through chanting \textit{om}. Coward’s representation of the stages involved in this process involves the subdivision of the \textit{vitarka} and \textit{vicāra} states of \textit{samādhi} into \textit{sa} and \textit{nir} forms (the prefix \textit{sa}- means with, and \textit{nir} without). This will be explained fully in I.42–44.

In the \textit{savitarka} stage of chanting, \textit{om} is mixed up with the conventional meanings and ideas associated with it. For example, one may have a mental image of \textit{Īśvara} derived from some picture or a description in a Purāṇic scripture, or one’s ideas on \textit{Īśvara} will be molded by some sectarian theological notions, or even from pure imagination. In other words, one’s mind will be conditioned by convention in some form or fashion. Therefore, at this stage, even though one is fully absorbed in chanting the \textit{mantra} without external distraction, which is the prerequisite of any of the levels of \textit{samādhi}, nonetheless this stage of \textit{samādhi} is obscured by these habitual ways of conceiving \textit{Īśvara}. At the \textit{nirvitarka} stage, these conventional ways of thinking are weakened, and the object of meditation, in this case \textit{Īśvara}, appears in its own pure nature, unobstructed by mental clutter and imposition. Coward states:

From the reports of \textit{yogīs} like Patañjali and Vyāsa, in this experience, one comes to know \textit{Īśvara} as the original speaker of the Vedas to the \textit{Rśis}, although, of course, to put this into conventional words, as we have just done, already reduces us back to the level of \textit{savitarka}. To know it in its \textit{nirvitarka}\textsuperscript{192} purity, one must experience it for oneself. (1985, 354)

At the third stage of \textit{savicāra}, as the mental concentration on the recitation of the \textit{mantra} deepens, one penetrates into the essence of the sound and begins to perceive \textit{Īśvara}’s body as consisting of pure \textit{sattva}. The \textit{yogi}’s mind is now so completely identified with \textit{Īśvara} that it is no longer aware of its own separate existence; one is so absorbed in this vision that one has lost all self-awareness. One has merged into \textit{Īśvara}, although one must always bear in mind that this is not the merging of \textit{advaita-vedānta} where the soul is held to actually ontologically lose its separate identity. \textit{Puruṣa} never loses its separate identity in Yoga. The
merging here is psychological—one forgets one’s own self in the rapture of the divine vision of Īśvara, but one nonetheless remains a distinct individual. In the final stage, one’s absorption in this vision of Īśvara is purged of all notions of Time and Space: “Īśvara’s relationship with the praṇava and all the Vedas (of which it is the seed) is seen to have existed in all previous cycles [world ages] (beginninglessly), to be manifest in the preset cycle, and to be potential in all future cycles” (ibid., 355). Since the late Vedic period, as Coward points out: “Īśvara-pranidhāna and svādhyāya (in the form of chanting AUM) has been the core practice of most yogīs” (357).

It is unfortunate that adequate attention has not yet been directed to the Purānic traditions, which were being compiled and organized into the Purānic corpus in Patañjali’s time, where the “bare bones” directives of the Yoga Sūtras are brought to life. It is in the colorful narratives and stories of the great and manifold manifestations of Īśvara in the form of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and the Goddess, and in the stories of the great devoted paradigmatic yogīs who undertook tapas, Īśvara-pranidhāna, and svādhyāya in unique and incredible ways, that one finds the inspirational exemplars of Hindu yoga. Notwithstanding that these stories have been dismissed by most Western scholars as too mythological to merit serious philosophical attention, it is from these stories and renditions that the living Yoga traditions of Hinduism have found their inspiration and the spiritual practices of hundreds of millions of Hindus over the centuries have taken shape.

The Purānic Dhruva story is one such well-known story. Dhruva was a young boy of five who was offended by his father the king (see II.12, 51 for this part of the narrative). Desiring revenge due to his kṣatriya, warrior, spirit, the boy took to the forest, where he performed japa on the mantra given to him by his guru Nārada—oṁ namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya—with undeviating concentration. (The devotional traditions typically retain the ancient syllable oṁ, given its correlation with Īśvara and with Brahma, but adjoin to it the specific name of Īśvara they revere, in this case Kṛṣṇa.) As a result of his constant focus, and incredible austerities (see II.51), Viṣṇu appeared to the boy despite his tāmasic motive in undertaking this meditation. Connecting this story with the vitarka stage of samādhi described in I.17, Vijñānabhikṣu
remains that (in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and Vaiṣṇava tradition in general), there are two ways of gaining a vision of God through meditative practice, that is, two types of Divine epiphany. God can appear either in an external physical form and be perceived externally by the physical eyes of the dedicated devotee, as in the Dhruva story, or internally to the meditating devotee. Put more precisely in this latter case, the yogī's awareness can be transported to another non-prakṛtic plane of consciousness (saguna Brahman193), even as the devoted yogī still retains his physical body, an experience that Vijnānabhipktu correlates with vitarka meditation:

The direct perception of vitarka-samādhi is different in character from the perception of the form of four-armed Viṣṇu by Dhruva and others attained by the practice of japa and penance, etc. The Supreme Īśvara, being satisfied with the penance and meditation of such [devotees,] ... created a body for Himself and manifested before them and interacted with them by talking to them and so forth. Yogīs, on the other hand, by the power of their yoga practice, directly perceive the four-armed body of the Lord situated in the eternal Divine realm, even though they themselves are somewhere else.194

Thus Dhruva here experiences both an internal and an external vision of Viṣṇu. It was (and remains) primarily scholastics or dedicated practitioners who would have seriously studied or engaged intellectually with Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras (which remains true for most yoga practitioners in the West today). For everyday Hindus, the teachings of the classical knowledge systems are translated into and transmitted through popular stories. We include here a translation of the episode from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (IV.8.43–9.2) referred to here by Vijnānabhipktu, which describes part of Dhruva’s mantra meditation and the resulting manifestation of Īśvara (Viṣṇu) before him, as an example of how the technical and esoteric stages of classical yoga are made accessible and come to life in the popular and colorful narratives that form the core of real-life Hindu religious identity. (In III.3 we provide another description of yoga practice from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa using the same form of Īśvara as the ālambana). We take up the narrative where
Dhruva’s guru, the great sage Nārada, instructs the child:

... Seated on a prepared seat (āsana).

One should cast off the impurities of the senses, breath and mind by the three practices of prāṇāyāma, one should contemplate (dhyāna) with a steady mind the [Supreme] Teacher (guru, i.e., Īśvara). He has pleasing face and eyes and is always inclined to bestow his grace. He has beautiful nose and eyebrows, charming cheeks, and is the most attractive of the divine forms.

Youthful, with charming limbs, and reddish eyes and lips, he is the refuge of his devotees, the shelter of humankind and an ocean of compassion.

He is a puruṣa, his color is that of a dark cloud, and he bears on his chest the mark of śrīvatsa. He wears a forest garland, and his four arms bear the conch, discus, club, and lotus flower.

He wears a helmet and earrings, and is bedecked with bracelets and armlets. His neck is adorned with the kaustubha gem, and his garment is of yellow silk.

He sports a belt with dangling bells, and shining golden anklets. He is the most attractive person in existence, serene, and delightful for the mind and eyes to behold.

He is endowed with two feet shining with a row of gemlike nails. He is to be found within, having taken up his seat in the lotus of the heart of his worshippers.

He is the supreme boon-giver, and one should meditate (dhyāna) on his smiling countenance and loving glances with a steady and concentrated mind.

The mind of one meditating on the most auspicious form of God, Bhagavān, becomes perfected due to this highest form of mental control, and never refrains from meditating.

Now hear the supreme secret mantra which should be chanted (japa). A person reciting this mantra for seven days and nights attains a vision of the siddhas.

It is: om namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya.

With this mantra, a wise person should perform the Lord’s
worship with devotional offerings, understanding the appropriate articles to use in worship according to place and time.

The Lord manifests in the form of the mantra. One should perform worship in the same manner as he has been worshipped by the ancients, while reciting this intimate mantra ...

Dhruva withdrew his mind, which is the support of the senses and their objects, from all other objects. Meditating on the form of God in his heart, he ceased to be aware of anything else ...

Then, he observed that form, which was as brilliant as a flash of lightning, [that he had been perceiving internally] in the lotus of his heart on account of his insight honed by dedicated yoga practice, suddenly disappear, and [opening his eyes] he beheld that same form standing externally.

As elsewhere, Vījñānabhikṣu introduces a Vedāntic element to the discussion. As we know, his philosophy is one of bhedābheda, oneness in difference, and he quotes a variety of scriptural passages emphasizing the oneness of the puruṣa with Brahman, or Īśvara—that is, between the soul and God—and a selection of passages focusing on the difference between the two (Vījñānabhikṣu is correlating Brahman with Īśvara here since, in theistic Vedānta, where Brahman is conceived of as a personal being, they are essentially one and the same). In Vījñānabhikṣu’s view, such apparently conflicting statements can be reconciled by holding that puruṣa and Brahman are simultaneously both one and different. As he has attempted to illustrate in previous passages, the oneness of the equation holds good insofar as both are pure consciousness and thus belong to the same class, or category, of existence. However, both Īśvara and puruṣa retain their identities eternally, hence the difference, as Vyāsa will specify in the next verse. While this is a Vedāntic concern, it holds for the Yoga tradition (at least with regard to puruṣa and Īśvara).

Vījñānabhikṣu adds that the oneness of puruṣa with Brahman results from the absorption of the consciousness of the former into the latter; in other words, it is a psychological, not an ontological or a metaphysical, oneness. Put differently, the pure puruṣa forgets its own separate existence by being absorbed in thoughts of Īśvara, but this does not mean such a puruṣa actually loses its distinct individuality as certain
nondualist schools hold (hence the difference indicated in bhedābheda philosophy). Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the well-known verse from the *Mahābhārata* (XII.306.76) stating that those who are wise worship the twenty-sixth category of existence, Īśvara, not puruṣa, the twenty-fifth. Thus, Īśvara, like puruṣa, is an eternally separate category of reality, and, although the two are alike in nature insofar as both are conscious beings, they are nonetheless eternally separate and distinct individuals. Through repetition of oṁ, and meditation on Īśvara, one can realize the latter as paramātman, the Supreme Soul.

Additionally, in Vijñānabhikṣu’s view, one cannot chant oṁ and meditate on Īśvara at the same time. Therefore, he suggests that oṁ be repeated as a prelude and postlude to devotional meditation. Harihārānanda, on the other hand, holds that the oṁ mantra be recited while thoughts of Īśvara are simultaneously cultivated, because if oṁ is chanted correctly, its designation, Īśvara, automatically comes to mind anyway. In his perspective (which is representative of most bhakti theologies), eventually both the mantra and its referent, Īśvara, come naturally to mind, at which time the devotee is established in Īśvara-praṇidhāna, submission to God.

From this comes the realization of the inner consciousness and freedom from all disturbances.

According to Patañjali, as a result of submission to the Lord, the various disturbances, antarāya (disease, idleness, etc., listed in the next sūtra), do not manifest; rather, the yogi’s inner consciousness or real self manifests, pratyak-cetanādhigamāḥ. The yogi is granted a vision of his own puruṣa by Īśvara’s grace, a benediction repeated in II.45. Not only this, but the dedicated yogi is also bestowed physical health and freedom from all the
bodily and psychological disturbances of embodied life. In other words, if we follow Śaṅkara and Vijñānabihikṣu’s thrust from the last śūtra, by the dedicated absorption in Īśvara as manifest in the sound oṁ, the yogī attains direct experience of his or her own puruṣa, physical and psychological well-being in the prākṛtic state, and a vision of Īśvara in his form of pure sattva (that is, a vision of the supreme Lord).

Vyāsa states that just as Īśvara is a puruṣa who is “pure, peaceful, independent, and free from change,” so also is the ordinary puruṣa. Elaborating on this, Vācaspati Miśra defines “purity” as free from birth and death; “peaceful” as undisturbed by the obstacles (the kleśas of ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life discussed in II.3); “independent” as beyond virtue and vice; and “freedom from change” as freedom from consequences of karma, namely, type of birth and duration and quality of life (II.13–14).

Bhoja Rāja raises the question as to how realization of the self can be attained from devotion to Īśvara who is different from the self. The answer, he says, is that Īśvara is similar in constitution to the self. Drawing once again on this Vedāntic philosophy of bhedābheda, Vijñānabihikṣu elaborates that by understanding the whole, the part is automatically understood; in other words, by absorption in Īśvara, God, one realizes one’s own self as part of Īśvara. Regarding devotion to Īśvara, whom he notes the ancients speak of as Vāsudeva and Bhāgavata (Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa), he quotes a verse from the Br̥han-nāradīya Purāṇa: “For one who desires liberation, the path that is blissfully performed is devotion to Viṣṇu. Meditate constantly on him with the mind, otherwise one will be cheated. If one is looking for protection, he is your protector in the greatest difficulty.”201 Regarding the removal of obstacles and the revelation of the self by his grace noted by Patañjali, Vijñānabihikṣu quotes another verse from the same Purāṇa: “For people who have staunch faith in Viṣṇu, the remover of māyā, Viṣṇu reveals the self, which is different from prakṛti, just like a lamp.”202 The Purāṇa texts are pervaded by statements of this nature.
vyādhi, disease; styāna, idleness, apathy; saṃśaya, indecision, doubt; pramāda, carelessness, negligence; ālasya, sloth; avirati, lack of detachment; bhrānti, confusion, error; darśana, perception; alabdha, not obtaining; bhūmikatva, place, ground, not attaining a base [for concentration]; anavasthitatvāni, instability; citta, mind; vikṣepāḥ, distractions; te, these; antarāyāḥ, the disturbances

These disturbances are disease, idleness, doubt, carelessness, sloth, lack of detachment, misapprehension, failure to attain a base for concentration, and instability. They are distractions for the mind.

Patañjali lists the disturbances he indicated in the previous sūtra are removed by devotion to Īśvara. We use “disturbances” here for antarāya (literally, that which intervenes) rather than “obstacles,” since the latter term is often used for the kleśas, which are far more permanent and deep-rooted than the antarāyas listed in this sūtra. Vyāsa notes that these nine disturbances occur along with the vṛttis, the changing states of the mind, and if these disturbances were removed, there would be no vṛttis, and thus the goal of yoga, the cessation of all vṛttis, would be accomplished. He proceeds to define these interruptions. In accordance with the traditional theoretical understanding underpinning āyurvedic medicine, he considers disease, vyādhi, the first item on the list, to be an imbalance of the bodily fluids, or an imbalance of the doṣas, the three humors of Āyurveda (kapha, vāta, and pitta). In other words, disease occurs when one of these is in excess of its requirements. Idleness, styāna, is the disinclination of the mind toward work; a sort of mental paralysis, says Śaṅkara. Following the Nyāya school, doubt, saṃśaya, is taken as the consideration of two sides of an issue and thinking, “It might be this way, if not, it might be that way” (or, as Bhoja Rāja quips, “Is the practice of yoga doable or not?!”).
Carelessness, *pramāda*, is lacking the foundations to practice *samādhi*, presumably a reference to neglecting the eight limbs of *yoga*, which will be discussed in Chapters II and III (a lack of persistence, says Śaṅkara). Sloth, *ālasya*, is lack of effort in mind and body due to heaviness (which is caused by *kapha*, excess phlegm, says Vācaspati Miśra). Lack of detachment, *avirati*, is mental greed due to the mind contemplating the sense objects (due to past addictions, says Śaṅkara), a theme discussed at length in texts such as the *Gītā* (II.44). Misapprehension, *bhrānti-darśana*, is mistaken knowledge, like mistaking mother-of-pearl for silver, says Bhoja Rāja (Śaṅkara considers this to be misconceptions about the yoga path itself). Failure to attain a base for concentration, *alabdhabhūmikatva*, is failure to attain a state of *samādhi*. Finally, instability, *an-avasthitatva*, is the inability to maintain any such state that one might attain; only when *samādhi* is maintained will the mind be stable. Vijñānabhikṣu quotes a verse in this latter regard: “Even an elevated yogī can fall down due to worldly attachments; what to speak, then of a neophyte yogī?” One is reminded of the *Gītā*’s comment that “the senses are so strong, that they forcefully carry away the mind even of a discriminating person who is striving to control them” (II.60).

These disturbances, concludes Vyāsa, are the impurities of *yoga*, its enemies and obstacles produced by *rajas* and *tamas*. They are called disturbances, *antarāya*, says Śaṅkara, because they move, *aya*, and make a gap, *antara*, in one’s practice.

I.31 *duḥkha-daurmanasyaṅgam-ejayatva-śvāsa-praśvāsā vikṣepa-saha-bhuvaḥ*

*duḥkha*, pain, suffering; *daurmanasya*, dejection; *aṅgam-ejayatva*, trembling of the limbs; *śvāsa*, inhalation; *praśvāsāḥ*, exhalation; *vikṣepa*, distraction; *saha-bhuvaḥ*, occur with, accompany

**Suffering, dejection, trembling, inhalation, and exhalation accompany the distractions.**
Accompanying the disturbances noted in the previous sūtra is a further set of secondary disturbances of the mind which, as always, the commentators explain individually. Vyāsa refers to the three standard sources of suffering or pain, duḥkha, the first item on Patañjali’s list, recognized in Hindu knowledge systems (e.g., Sāṅkhya Kārikā I.1), which will be discussed in II.15: suffering from one’s own body and mind, suffering from other entities, and suffering from the gods, that is, from nature. Vācaspati Miśra gives disease as an example of suffering from one’s own body, and desire as suffering of the mind (or, for Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, romantic love!); a tiger’s mauling as an example of pain from other living entities, and planetary influences as an example of suffering from nature (which includes natural effects such as excessive heat and cold). Vijñānabhikṣu notes that these three categories are not comprehensive since they do not include pain arising from items such as pots and cloth, by which he seems to be referring to pain caused by inanimate objects. Pain, says Vyāsa, is essentially that which living beings attempt to avoid, as Patañjali will state in II.16. (The ability to perceive the pervasiveness of suffering is discussed in some detail in II.15, since it is an essential prerequisite for undertaking the spiritual path.)

Dejection, daurmanasya, the second item on the list, is the disturbance of the mind that arises when one’s desires are obstructed. Trembling, aṅgam-ejayatva, is self-explanatory, that which causes the limbs to shake, and which, according to Bhoja Rāja, interferes with one’s āsana, yogic sitting posture. Inhalation, śvāsa, is the excessive intake of external air, which Vācaspati Miśra specifies is a defect when it occurs involuntarily and interferes with the prāṇāyāma breathing technique known as recaka. Vyāsa glosses exhalation, praśvāsa, with expelling gas, which, again, Vācaspati Miśra specifies is a defect when it occurs involuntarily and interferes with the prāṇāyāma breathing technique known as pūraka.

Thus, the nine disturbances mentioned in I.30 are not only disruptions to the practice of yoga in their own right, but they produce a further set of disruptions. Vyāsa states that although these symptoms accompany the nine disturbances, they do not manifest for the yogī whose mind is fixed. Such obstacles disappear when the mind is not distracted, and consequently a person who has control over the mind does not
experience pain and dejection, etc. Ultimately, according to Patañjali in I.29, they all disappear by devotion to Īśvara.
Practice [of fixing the mind] on one object [should be performed] in order to eliminate these disturbances.

Vyāsa states that the disturbances mentioned in śūtra I.30 are to be counteracted by the practice and dispassion mentioned in śūtra I.12—in fact, he considers this śūtra to conclude Patañjali’s discussion on practice. Although in consonance with I.39, the one object, eka-tattva, mentioned in this śūtra as the support for the mind can be any object, the commentators take it to be Īśvara, thereby also concluding this section of the text relating to Īśvara. This seems the correct reading, given that this śūtra is a continuation of the theme stemming from I.29, which states that from the repetition of Īśvara’s sound designation om comes freedom from these very obstacles. In other words, by fixing the mind on om in a devotional mood, the obstacles to yoga are removed and the goal of the entire system is attained.

Vyāsa then launches into a lengthy engagement with Buddhist notions of the mind, which is summarized here for those interested in the history of Indic philosophical dialectic and debate on this subject. (Those primarily interested in yogic practice might choose to skim the following section and proceed to the next śūtra.) Unlike other schools of thought, such as the Vedānta tradition, which dedicates one of its four chapters to refuting other philosophical views, the Pātañjalian Yoga commentarial tradition, with a few exceptions such as Śaṅkara and Vijñānabhikṣu (themselves Vedāntins), does not concern itself excessively with this type of disputation, since its main claim to truth is based on experiences rather than logical debate (I.6). However, as we find here, the commentators on occasion (and Patañjali himself later in the fourth chapter) do make a point of discussing certain Buddhist notions of mind,
since these directly oppose the essential fundamentals of Yogic metaphysics on which the practice of the entire system is based. Indeed, the two systems hold diametrically opposing understandings on certain basic premises pertaining to mind and consciousness. In the early centuries of the Common Era, Buddhism was a significant presence on the Indian subcontinent, so it would be expected, in accordance with normative commentarial conventions, for the metaphysicians of the Sāṅkhya Yoga tradition to establish their perspectives with reference to the primary philosophical alternatives of the day, especially where these encroached on or undermined their own views.

The standard technique for refuting rival views is for a commentator to introduce the view of the opposing school, called the pūrvapakṣa, critique it, and then establish the perspective of his own school, the siddhānta. Naturally, the representation of the pūrvapakṣa, the opponent’s view, was sometimes selective or partial, but the ensuing discussion will provide a flavor of the rich debate and keen dialectical interaction between schools that forced theologians to fine-tune their perspectives and kept the Indic intellectual traditions alive and fertile throughout the centuries. While the present work concerns itself with the commentaries of the Yoga tradition on the sūtras, and thus will be considering their side of the dialectic and debate with Buddhism here and in several later sūtras, it seems fair to point out that Buddhist scholastics participated vigorously in debates with the orthodox schools, particularly the Nyāya school, over the centuries.209

The feature of Buddhism targeted here by Vyāsa is fairly generic and normative, not sect-specific, although the later commentators identify the Vaibhāṣika school of Buddhism as the pūrvapakṣa. Vyāsa himself does not refer to Buddhism by name but uses one of several terms for Buddhist doctrine common in orthodox Hindu philosophical discourse: kṣaṇikavāda,210 the view that all reality is momentary. What is intended by this, according to all mainstream Buddhist positions, is that nothing in reality has inherent, eternal, independent, and essential existence, that is, nothing has its own durable essence that can be separated from its connection and interdependence with other entities.

Naturally, such a metaphysics is diametrically opposed to the Sāṅkhya Yoga position that both puruṣa and prakṛti are precisely inherent, eternal,
independent, and essential durable entities that, at least in the case of puruṣa, do not need to be interconnected or interdependent. Indeed, the extraction and isolation of the eternal and independent puruṣa from its codependence on all other reality is precisely the goal of the entire system. Another term for the Buddhists in orthodox commentaries is thus anātmavāda, the position that does not accept an eternal, separable, conscious entity called ātman (puruṣa). As noted above, while the Yoga commentaries do not occupy themselves as much as some of their contemporary schools with disputation on these issues (since, after all, this would counter the experiential focus of Yoga), the Nyāya school debated the Buddhists on the issue of ātman for centuries, as did the Mīmāṁsā and Vedānta schools.

The need for raising the Buddhist position at this point arises for Vyāsa because Patañjali's entire system focuses on concentrating the mind on one object, as the present sūtra specifically indicates, eliminating all distractions to this end. The implication of the Buddhist view, says Vyāsa, is that the mind can never be distracted in the first place—it can only ever be focused on one object. This is because Buddhists do not accept a constant substratum of mind—a fixed, durable entity with its own distinct essential nature. Cognition, for them, consists of a collection or flow of momentary perceptions or ideas strung together, each one unique and distinct from its predecessor and successor cognitions and ideas. This mental flow rests on a point, or object, for a moment, then exhausts itself, followed in the next moment by another distinct mental idea that fixes fleetingly on the object, and so on. Since these point moments succeed each other sequentially, they give a semblance of stability, a flow of ideas, like a movie that appears to be a flow of events but is in actuality a rapid sequence of completely distinct individual images. With the partial exception of the Idealist school of Vijñānavāda Buddhism, in most schools of Buddhist psychology there is a series of point moments, each of which exists as both the momentary effect of the previous instant and simultaneously the momentary cause of the succeeding instant, in a flow of cognitive instances, but there is no durable underlying entity called mind underpinning this process as the Yoga school holds. Since the Buddhist view threatens to undermine Patañjali’s entire system, Vyāsa feels bound
to challenge it by offering a number of arguments.

If each point moment of this process is fully fixed on its object for the instant of its existence, says Vyāsa, Patañjali’s reference to a distracted mind, or the practice of concentration by fixing the mind on one object, should be meaningless for Buddhists. If there is no enduring underlying substratum of mind in the first place that can concentrate on an object one minute but be distracted the next, there can be no such thing as a distracted mind: Distraction requires a permanent entity that can waver from one thing to another. In Buddhism there is no permanent mind, simply individual cognitions that arise and fade away instantaneously but are fully fixed for their momentary life span on their objects. These cognitions do not take place within a fixed substratum called citta as yogīs hold (except, as noted, in the partial case of Vijñānavāda). Thought is just a flow of distinct moments in the Buddhist system, and the individual point moments of this flow, the series of thoughts, are each fully and intrinsically concentrated by nature; they do not survive long enough to be distracted. In the absence of a substratum, an individual thought does not last long enough to think of one thing and then get distracted and think of another, so what does it mean to speak of a distracted mind that needs to be concentrated? In short, if each point moment of the mental flow is fully concentrated on its object during the brief instant it occurs, then why do the Buddhists promote concentration? posit the commentators. The very notion of concentration, from the perspective of the Yoga school, presupposes an enduring entity that can either concentrate or be distracted, not a flow of cognitive moments that exhaust themselves as soon as they arise as Buddhism holds.

The Buddhist, Vyāsa supposes, will respond that there is a flow of identical cognitions, each one succeeding the other, and thus the Buddhist concept of concentration should be understood as keeping this mental flow of point moments sequencing on the same thought, that is, prolonging the flow of momentary cognitions centered on one object. Distraction therefore entails the interrupting of this flow. Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhikṣu step in here. If the Buddhist notion of concentration entails keeping the flow of mental moments fixed on the same object, then what is it that connects this flow of momentary
cognitive moments together? Since each thought lasts only an instant, it has no past and future.\footnote{215} This means that there can be no overlap between thoughts. What, then, connects each moment of thought to the previous and succeeding moments such that a flow of concentrated thought can occur? Vyāsa’s thrust is to establish that there must be something that endures, underpins, and connects the individual cognitions and images—something like the \textit{citta} animated by the consciousness of the \textit{puruṣa} as posited by the Yoga school, that is, a nonmomentary but permanent mind that can think of one thing or focus on one image one minute and then get distracted and think of another thing the next. The momentary slides or stills of a movie require the reel to connect them. Only if the mind is a permanent entity that endures from one moment to the next does the notion of a distracted mind, and hence the viability of a practice of concentration to focus it, become meaningful.

A Buddhist response to this, as Śaṅkara notes, is that before extinguishing itself, a thought leaves a trace or imprint of itself on its succeeding thought, which does the same for the thought succeeding it, and so on, in a sequence of cause and effect, and thus a flow of thought manifests (like a line of red ants, he says). The problem here, says Śaṅkara, is that these thoughts are arising and perishing at different times: When one thought arises in the present as effect, its predecessor, causal thought, has already expired in the past—they are not overlapping. A thought would need to overlap with the previous thought in order to receive such an imprint or influence, and then overlap with the following thought to leave its trace on that, which, in turn, would have to undergo the same process ... and this overlapping of the individual thoughts might then provide the continuity of thought that we all experience. But such a process would involve at least two moments or instances for each thought: a moment of overlap with the previous thought and a moment of overlap with the subsequent thought (with perhaps an intervening moment in its own right), which conflicts with the Buddhist premise of single momentariness. How does a momentary object as cause connect or come into contact with another momentary object as effect occurring in the next moment? Since it itself endures only one moment, there is no room for overlap. In the absence
of a substratum such as mind, as the Yoga school posits, what is it that binds them together into a continuum?

A continuation of this argument, alluded to by Śaṅkara, in his commentary here and elsewhere, is that without a binding receptacle or agent like the citra, and if thoughts cannot last long enough to overlap with and leave their imprint on each other, why shouldn’t the thought of one moment be completely different from the thought of another? Why shouldn’t the thought of an apple, say, arise one instant, followed by the random thought of an orange in the next instant, and then perhaps a cow, followed in turn by the thought of a clay pot for an instant, or anything else in existence, in an eternal whirlpool of incoherent, unconnected momentary images? If all thoughts cannot overlap as cause and effect for the reasons noted above, and last only an atemporal instant, what serves as the cohesive mental factor such that a person can retain sanity and functionality by thinking of the same object for a prolonged period of time, focusing on the same apple from one moment to the next such that one can eat it and a coherent picture of reality can be perpetuated?

The next two objections raised by Vyāsa against the Buddhist position have a well-known history in the orthodox Hindu schools and concern memory and the transferral of karma. If each thought comes into being on its own, unconnected with the substratum of a mind, then how would the thought of one instant remember the experience of a previous thought in an earlier instant? In other words, how is memory accounted for? In the Hindu view, an experience is recorded on the mind, citra, as a saṁskāra, and when this saṁskāra is activated, memory occurs. The point is, this all takes place within the receptacle of the mind—the saṁskāra needs to be lodged somewhere, in a permanent substratum, such as the citra posited by the Yoga school, in order to be retrievable and remembered and, one might add, the saṁskāra itself needs to have permanency and not be momentary. But if such an enduring receptacle is done away with, and each thought arises and extinguishes in an instant to be followed by a distinct subsequent thought in the next instant, how can the first thought be retrieved and remembered if it is not deposited somewhere (leaving aside the problem that it does not even exist for long enough to be deposited anywhere in the first place)?
Moreover, in the Buddhist system, one thought would be the experiencer of the *karmic* reactions of a completely different thought. In other words, if there were no eternal ātman and no enduring mind, as the Buddhists hold, then how is *karma* preserved and transferred from one life to the next, or even from one moment to the next? And even if one allows that it were transferred, somehow, the entity experiencing it would be a completely different entity from the one who earned it, since everything is momentary and there are no enduring entities. In other words, since, in Buddhism, individuals are just conglomerates of momentary phenomena that exist for only one instant and are then succeeded by a new set of momentary phenomena and so on in every instant of existence, activities performed by an individual in one moment of this flux would bear fruit that would be experienced by a completely different individual at a later moment. Where would be the moral justice in such a view? As Vācaspati Miśra puts it: The thought experienced by the person Maitra is not remembered by some different person such as Chaitra, nor is the *karma* accrued by the former experienced by the latter (an unborn son does not receive the *karma* of the father, says Śaṅkara). However the problem might be explained away, says Vyāsa, it rests on faulty logic, like deciding that since milk comes from a cow, and milk is a palatable substance, cow dung, which also comes from the cow, must also be a palatable substance.

Vyāsa’s final argument is that the Buddhist view denies one’s very own experience of existence. How can one think “I touch what I saw, and I see what I touched,” where the enduring idea of “I” survives without changing, if each idea is distinct from every other? In other words, why is the thought or idea of “I” not momentary, if all ideas are momentary? Why does it endure in everyone’s experience such that the “I” that does one act, like seeing something one day, is the same as the “I” that touches the same thing another day? The same and continued notion of “I” endures. How could it do so if all notions were momentary?

Thus, the very notion of a distracted mind and, as a consequence, the concept of concentration, is incompatible with Buddhist teachings for Vyāsa and the Yoga school and, for that matter, all schools of Hindu philosophy, who all oppose the Buddhist notion of momentariness when it comes to consciousness. For the Yoga commentators, the mind as a
product of the eternal guṇas is not momentary. It is one and constant. The same mind grasps and then relinquishes objects of thought; there may be a continual flow or sequencing of vṛttis, but these take place within the stable receptacle of a durable mind (durable in the sense of being composed of the eternal guṇas, even as these are always in motion when manifest, as will be discussed later). Therefore, the mind can indeed become concentrated when distractions are eliminated. In Patañjali’s teachings there must be one durable mind that either settles on different objects when distracted, or, during concentration, that serves as a substratum that binds together the flow of thought allowing focus on one and the same object. Hence the need to address the Buddhist challenge on this score.

I.33 maitri-karuṇā-muditopekṣāṇāṁ sukha-duḥkha-puṇyāpuṇya-viṣayāṇāṁ bhāvanātaś citta-prasādanam

maitri, friendship; karuṇā, compassion; muditā, joy; upekṣāṇām, equanimity, indifference; sukhā, happiness; duḥkha, suffering; puṇya, virtue; apuṇya, vice; viṣayāṇāṁ, toward objects; bhāvanātaḥ, from the mind-set or attitude; citta, mind; prasādanam, lucidity

By cultivating an attitude of friendship toward those who are happy, compassion toward those in distress, joy toward those who are virtuous, and equanimity toward those who are nonvirtuous, lucidity arises in the mind.

Since the commentators have pointed out some fundamental differences between Buddhism and Yoga when it comes to consciousness, we can note with this sūtra a similarity. The four practices noted in this sūtra—friendship, maitri; compassion, karuṇā; joy, muditā; and equanimity, upekṣā—are exactly to the four brahma-vihāras outlined in various Buddhist suttas (rendered, in Pali, as mettā, karuṇā, muditā,
upākkā). Once more, the common context of these practices is underscored—indeed, the Buddhist Saṁyutta Nikāya and the Saṁyukta Āgama texts contain explicit reference to the fact that these practices were also cultivated by those who did not follow the teachings of the Buddha.\textsuperscript{218}

In this sūtra, Patañjali outlines a practice essential for enhancing lucidity, the prerequisite for attaining steadiness in the mind. Vyāsa pairs the set of attitudes specified by Patañjali in the first part of this sūtra sequentially with the conditions listed in the second part. As a result of cultivating an attitude of friendship with those who find themselves in a situation of happiness, one of compassion toward those in distress, one of joy toward pious souls, and one of equanimity or indifference toward the impious, sattva is generated. Consequently, the mind becomes lucid, clarity being the nature of sattva. Once the mind is clear, one-pointed concentration or steadiness can be achieved.

Vācaspati Miśra elaborates on this. By being a well-wisher toward those who are happy, as well as those who are virtuous, the contamination of envy is removed. By compassion toward those who are miserable, that is, by wishing to remove someone’s miseries as if they were one’s own, the contamination of the desire to inflict harm on others is removed. By equanimity toward the impious, the contamination of intolerance is removed. By thus removing these traits of envy, desire to inflict harm, and intolerance, which are characteristics of rajas and tamas, the sattva natural to the mind can manifest. In the ensuing state of lucidity, the inclination toward controlling the vṛttis, in other words toward cultivating a focused state of mind by the practice of yoga, spontaneously arises, because the inclination for enlightenment is natural to the pure sāttvic mind.

Hariharānanda suggests that envy generally arises when we encounter people whom we do not care about experiencing happiness. Even a pious person can invoke our jealousy, and we take cruel delight when we find an enemy in misery. One should rather try to practice projecting the happiness we feel when our friend is happy or virtuous onto an enemy who is happy, he continues, and the compassion we feel for our friends when they are unhappy should be cultivated for our enemies. By these practices of equanimity, the mind can become lucid and fixed in the goal
of yoga. Vijñānabhikṣu and Śaṅkara quote the Gītā in this regard: “A self-controlled person attains peace by engaging with sense objects with the senses freed from attachment and aversion and under his control. With clear mind, his intelligence becomes fixed” (II.64–65). As arithmetic is important, says Bhoja Rāja, not so much in its own right as in order to arrive at the total sum of something, so the attitudes mentioned in this sūtra are important in order to prepare the mind for meditation.

This sūtra prescribes a kind of mindfulness or mental cultivation off the mat, so to speak, that is, in day-to-day affairs outside of the context of citta-vṛtti-nirodha–type meditation. Cultivating the higher qualities of sattva is a continuous and constant requirement of the yogic path and spills over into all aspects of life’s affairs and social interactions. It speaks to the fact that yoga need not be perceived as a world-renouncing tradition but is perfectly compatible with engaged and benevolent social action in the world.
might be more suitable to a particular person, time, and place, says Śaṅkara, hence the options. Here, Patañjali lists another method of fixing the mind: through the control of breath, prāna. Although breath control can also bring stability of mind, the “or” introducing this sūtra does not indicate that the previous sūtra is optional, Vācaspati Miśra hastens to add. The “or” is in relation to the following sūtras, not the previous one—friendliness, compassion, etc., from I.33 must be cultivated in all instances.

Exhalation, pracchārāṇa, says Vyāsa, is the expulsion of the stomach air through the nostrils by means of special techniques, and retention, vidhārāṇā, is the restraint of the breath. These special techniques, elaborates Vācaspati Miśra, involve slowing the exhalation and lengthening the retention of the breath within the body according to the texts delineating such matters (discussed here in II.50). Obviously, point out the commentators, inhalation is not specified in this sūtra because it occurs naturally—retention can only follow inhalation; thus, all three aspects of breath control involved in prāṇāyāma are intended: recaka, exhalation; pūraka, inhalation; and kumbhaka, retention. Vijñānabhikṣu holds that since sūtra II.29 situates prāṇāyāma, breath control, as the fourth in a series of the eight limbs of yoga, its separate mention in this sūtra as a prop for gaining control of the mind, a feature of the higher limbs of yoga, is for the advanced practitioner.

As a result of such breathing techniques, the body becomes light and the mind steady, says Hariharānanda. If the breath is subdued, the mind also becomes so because the two are intimately connected. Thus these techniques produce steadiness of the mind and one-pointed concentration. Hariharānanda notes that during the exhalation and retention of breath, the nerves of the body relax. He specifies that the chest and body should be kept still so that the process of breath control is undertaken by the abdominal muscles. At a certain stage, retention and exhalation occur in a unified fashion; no separate effort need be taken for each. After prolonged practice, a happy feeling of lightness spreads over the whole body. But the most important point for Hariharānanda is to practice meditation along with breath control. Otherwise, he warns, the mind can get more disturbed rather than less so. Only when one-pointed concentration of the mind is cultivated along
with the *prānāyāma* does the mind become free from *vṛttis* and approach *samādhi* states.

I.35 *viṣayavatī vā pravṛttir utpannā manasaḥ sthiti-nibandhanī*

*viṣayavatī*, containing a sense object; *vā*, or; *pravṛttih*, activity, inclination; *utpannā*, arises; *manasaḥ*, of the mind; *sthiti-nibandhanī*, causing steadiness

Or else, focus on a sense object arises, and this causes steadiness of the mind.

While *viṣaya* can refer to any sense object (in this section it is also used in I.33 and I.37), Vyāsa and the commentators understand this *sūtra* to refer to supersensuous experiences. Vyāsa states that if one concentrates on the tip of the nose, one can experience a divine or supernormal sense of smell; on the palate, one can experience supernormal color; on the tip of the tongue, supernormal taste; on the middle of the tongue, supernormal touch; and on the root of the tongue, supernormal sound. These experiences fix the mind, eliminate doubt, and are the doorway to *samādhi*. The term *manas* for mind is likely used here and in II.53 & III.48 by Patañjali rather than *citta* because in traditional Sāṅkhya it is the specific aspect of *citta* directly interfacing with the senses.

This *sūtra* clearly states that a sense object can be used as *ālambana*, support, for the mind. It is sometimes stated that the recitation (*japa*) of *om* must be performed mentally, rather than audibly. This finds no support in the *sūtras*. Although silent meditation can certainly be used as an *ālambana* (since, after all, anything can be used provided the mind is fixed on it), this *sūtra* informs us that sound as a sense object—which would include audible *japa*, as Śaṅkara has noted previously—is perfectly legitimate.

Vyāsa makes the important observation that even though the true nature of reality may be revealed by the scripture, or by the process of inference, or by the teachings of the masters (I.7), if one does not experience these higher realities personally through one’s own senses,
then one’s knowledge remains secondhand. Moreover, one will always be afflicted by doubt of the sometimes grandiose or incredible claims of the sacred texts. If even one out-of-the-ordinary scriptural claim can be experienced, then other more esoteric claims, such as the nature of liberation, can be more readily believed. It is for this reason, he says, that if a practitioner can experience one of the claims pertaining to, say, supernormal smell as outlined in this sūtra, then faith in the scriptures becomes strengthened. More specifically, one’s faith in Īśvara becomes strengthened, as does one’s ability to concentrate on him, say the commentators. This is like seeing smoke appear upon the rubbing of two sticks, says Śaṅkara, giving one confidence that fire is on the way.

Hariharānanda claims to have experienced these effects and to have also subsequently experienced an accompanying increase of faith in the validity of other Yoga truth claims. He describes a novel aroma pervading the air when the mind is fixed on the tip of the nose. He states that in order to achieve results, such concentration needs to be practiced continuously for a couple of days in a state of fasting or meager diet in a place where there are no disturbances.

I.36 viśokā vā jyotiṣmati.

viśokā, painless; vā, or; jyotiṣmati, effulgent, luminous
Or [steadiness of mind is gained when] the mind is pain free and luminous.

Patañjali here presents another cryptic sūtra, part of which the commentators interpret from the perspective of the esoteric anatomy of the subtle body most typically associated with the siddha/sākta/tantra cluster of traditions. Vyāsa says that this sūtra continues from the last, that is, the phrase “causes steadiness of the mind,” sthitī-nibandhanī, is to be carried over from the previous sūtra to this one. So steadiness of the mind can be attained through the viṣayavatī, object-focused, prescription of the last sūtra, and/or the painless and luminous one mentioned in this sūtra, which Vyāsa understands as having both objective and subjective
variants. Actually, in their pure form, all of these experiences are free from pain and luminous, and the commentators point out that these are called painless, viśokā, and luminous, jyotisvatī, by Patañjali because they are free from rajas and tamas, the sources of pain and obscurations. Sattva, we recall, is luminous and blissful by nature.

One means of attaining stability of mind, says Vyāsa, is to concentrate intelligence on the lotus cakra in the heart. When one becomes skilled in doing this, one's sense activities attain luminosity like that of the sun, moon, planets, and gems. (Luminosity here is not merely optical light but also the illumination of knowledge inherent in sattva that reveals things as they really are.) This is because intelligence, when manifesting its pure sāttvic nature, is luminous and all-pervading, like the ether. It is a preponderance of tamas that limits this all-pervading potential. (It is essential to note this principle of the citta's all-pervading potential in order to understand the mechanics behind the siddhis, mystic powers, of the third pāda.) Since intelligence pervades all forms, it can perceive the true nature of all things when its highest sāttvic potential is manifest. Hence, when such sāttvic intelligence flows through the senses, the senses also become luminous, like the sun, etc. And, of course, another characteristic of sattva is happiness, hence the painless reference in this sūtra. This is object-focused meditation.

According to Vyāsa, Patañjali in this sūtra also implies subject-focused meditation, when the mind is fixed on the sense of I-am-ness (asmitā). Free from rajas and tamas, it becomes calm and unlimited in this state, like a waveless ocean, and is aware only of a sense of I am. Vyāsa states that the yogī in this state can ponder the ātman within the heart, which is the size of an atom, and realize the self in the form of I am. Vijñānabhikṣu explains that this type of I-am-ness is not the function of the ego refracting out into the objects of the world, as is the case with the asmitā of II.6, but is the highest function of the ego reflecting the soul itself. This type of cognition, says Vijñānabhikṣu, is different from cognitions having an external object, such as smell, since the object is the ātman itself. In other words, in this highly sāttvic state, by reflecting the light and consciousness of puruṣa, asmitā, the luminous reflective sāttvic covering of puruṣa, redirects puruṣa’s awareness onto puruṣa itself. Contemplating the ātman in this state, ego loses awareness of any other
object and is aware only of pure I-am-ness. This all seems to correspond to the state of asmitā-samādhi of I.17.

This state is not the ultimate goal of yoga, which is nirbīja-samādhi when puruṣa ceases to be aware of anything other than itself, but it is nonetheless indirect awareness of puruṣa by the faculty of ego. This perception of the ātman, adds Vijñānabhikṣu, taking the opportunity to present his theistic perspectives, is the base for perception of Īśvara, the former preceding the latter.

I.37 vita-rāga-viṣayaṁ vā cittam

vīta, without; rāga, desire; viṣayaṁ, object; vā, or; cittam, mind
Or [the mind becomes steady when it has] one who is free from desire as its object.

In this sūtra, Patañjali indicates that the goal of yoga can be attained by meditation on a pure-minded yogī. Vyāsa says that when contemplating the minds of those who are free from desire, vīta-rāga, one’s own mind becomes tinged by the purity of their minds. Vācaspati Miśra says that Vyāsa himself is such a personage. Many of us have at some point in our lives had the experience of being in the presence of someone who, if not “free from desire,” at least has a noteworthy level of selflessness and compassion, and have felt our own potential higher qualities emerge by this association.

The commentators do not elaborate much on this sūtra, but, naturally, one is affected by the company one keeps. The guru-disciple relationship that this sūtra hints at is sacrosanct in most Hindu spiritual lineages. The Gītā states, “A knower of truth can impart knowledge to you. Know that truth by surrendering to such a person, serving him and asking questions” (IV.34).223 By intense dedication and service to a yogī with a pure sāttvic mind, one’s own mind can become fixed and free from personal desires. Many Hindu spiritual traditions promote surrender and service to the guru as the highest form of meditation,224 and this type of focus seems reflected in this sūtra.
Having noted this, it would be irresponsible not to make some mention here of the recurrence of sometimes very serious scandals and abuses of power associated with numerous charismatic and high-profile gurus who have traveled to the West, initiated large numbers of western disciples, and taught their followers absolute dedication and surrender to the guru. Since many of these individuals have, explicitly or implicitly, presented themselves as enlightened beings and allowed cultures of absolute allegiance to develop among their followers, the lives of their disciples, many of whom had dedicated their prime years to serving and following such teachers, are thrown into turmoil when confronted with such scandals (very similar patterns of response can be traced across differing yoga communities who have had to deal with such problems). The cognitive dissonance resulting from the conflict between the idealized notions of the guru and the sordid facts of some of these scandals almost invariably causes trauma, denial, defensiveness, and demonization of the victims and exposers, etc., within the group, and cynicism from observers outside the group. Therefore, it seems prudent to stress that, according to Patañjali, the type of meditation proposed here should be directed only toward a yogī who is free from desire. Aspiring yogīs seeking a guru might benefit by considering Kṛṣṇa’s responses in the Gītā when asked by Arjuna how, in the real world, one can practically and realistically recognize a yogī who has “realized the true self.” After all, if one has not realized one’s own puruṣa, how can one identify someone else who has? Arjuna phrases the question in very basic categories:

Arjuna asked:

How does one describe one whose insight is steady and who is situated in samādhi, O Kṛṣṇa? How does one whose intelligence is fixed speak? How does he sit? How does he move about?

Lord Kṛṣṇa replied:

A person is said to be of steady insight when he is contented in the ātman by means of the ātman, and when he has renounced all desires, which are produced by the mind. A person is said to be a sage of steady intelligence whose mind is not agitated in misfortune, whose desire for material pleasures is gone, and whose passion, fear
and anger have disappeared. A person is of steady insight who is renounced on all sides, who does not rejoice or bemoan upon attaining anything, whether pleasant or unpleasant ... and who completely withdraws the senses from the sense objects, like a tortoise withdraws its limbs [into its shell]. (II.54ff)

Arjuna’s question here is in the Vedānta context of the ātman. He asks the identical question later in the Sāṅkhya context of the three guṇas:

Arjuna asked:

Oh master, by what signs is a person who has transcended these three guṇas [recognized]? What is his conduct? And how does he transcend these three guṇas?

Lord Kṛṣṇa replied:

... A person is said to have transcended the guṇas who is situated in detachment and not disturbed by the guṇas; who stands firm and is not affected, thinking: “it is only the guṇas that are operating” [i.e., not the soul]; who is situated in the self; equipoised in pain and pleasure; to whom gold, a stone and a lump of earth are one and the same; who is equal to those who are dear, as well as to those who are not dear; who reacts neutrally to criticism and praise of himself; who is equal in honor and dishonor, equal to friends and enemies, and who renounces all [self-centered] enterprises. He who serves me with the yoga of undeviating devotion (bhakti), he transcends these guṇas and is qualified for absorption into Brahman; for I am the support of Brahman. (XIV.21–27)

Thus, freedom from desire and tranquillity in all circumstances are the minimum qualities of one who has realized his or her puruṣa self. By rephrasing this information at some length in two different contexts, as well as sprinkling the entire text repeatedly with parallel descriptions of the true sage226 the Gītā makes a point of stressing the qualities of a genuinely accomplished yogī such that charlatans or (initially) sincere but fallen yogīs can better be recognized. Being free of desire (and its correlate, anger) is nonnegotiable.

While on this topic, one might also note that Patañjali later stresses
that observance of the *yamas*—nonviolence, truthfulness, celibacy, nonstealing, and noncovetousness—are absolute and universal for all *yogīs* (II.31). There are no exceptions. Any *guru* claiming to have transcended the need to follow these basic rules, or of being qualified to compromise them in the name of some sort of higher esoteric spirituality or *yogic* technique, is thus not in line with Patañjali’s teachings.

I.38 *svapna-nīdrā-jñānālambanam vā*

svapna, dream; nīdrā, sleep; jñāna, knowledge; ālambanam, support; vā, or

Or [the mind can become steady when it has] the knowledge attained from dreams and sleep as its support.

Vyāsa has little to say about this curious sūtra except to state, without clarification, that the *yogī*’s mind can take the form of objects of sleep, nīdrā, and dream, svapna. Vācaspati Miśra and Rāmānanda Sarasvatī are a bit more specific: When the *yogī* reaches the point that he dreams of Īśvara, he awakes full of joy. Vācaspati Miśra identifies Īśvara here with Śiva as described in the Purāṇas—appearing like the moon in a secluded spot in a lonely forest, enrapturing the mind with his beauty, with limbs as soft as the lotus stem and a form like shining moonstone, draped with sweet-smelling garlands of mālatī and mallikā flowers. Then, awake, the *yogī* remembers this form and, absorbed in that vision, the mind becomes steady in meditation on Īśvara. One might add that, in order to be able to have such dreams of Īśvara at night, one has to think consistently of Īśvara during the day such that one’s *citta* is full of *saṁskāra* imprints of these meditations, which can then activate during the dream state. Dreaming occurs when the external senses are inactive and the *saṁskāric* imprints on the mind are active (in contrast to the deep sleep of I.9, when both the sense objects in the external realm and their *saṁskāric* imprints in the internal realm are quiescent). But the *saṁskāras* that activate in dream tend to be those experiences that were the most vivid when awake.
Śaṅkara has a different take on this sūtra, which again reflects a Vedāntic perspective. During deep sleep, he says, the citta is free from all thought, which is a type of citta-vṛtta-nirodha (cessation of all thoughts) and thus approximates the goal of yoga. By meditating on this when awake, one tries to attain this state. (Of course, in normal deep sleep, this objectless state is due to tamas and is beyond the sleeper’s control; in meditation, one strives to attain this state as a result of cultivating sattva while fully awake.) The Vedānta tradition holds that the ātman achieves a state of union with Brahman during deep sleep, albeit still mediated by ignorance (Vedānta Sūtras III.2.7–8).

Vijñānabhikṣu puts a different Vedāntic spin on this sūtra and reads it as indicating that the waking state is actually like a dream from the perspective of the self-realized state because the objects of life are as perishable as those in a dream. Accordingly, contemplating dreams from this perspective produces realization of the ephemeral reality of life. Through the detachment from the world that results from such contemplation, the mind attains its desired steadiness and stability, which is the theme of this series of sūtras. Thus this somewhat curious sūtra allows a number of cogent interpretations, all in line with Yogic metaphysics.

I.39 yathābhimata-dhyānād vā

yathā, according to; abhīmata, that which is agreeable; dhyānāt, from meditation; vā, or

Or [steadiness of the mind is attained] from meditation upon anything of one’s inclination.

Patañjali wraps up this series of sūtras, which have described various meditational options for producing a steady mind, by acknowledging that ultimately the yogi may meditate on any desired object whatsoever, yathābhimata, according to his or her inclination. This is about as undogmatic a position as one can take! As Vācaspatī Miśra puts it, “What more can one say?”! The commentators note that whether the object of
meditation is external or internal, the point is to fix the mind. Janáček articulates this well: “Patañjali [does not] concern himself with a particular method, but the realization of a methodical principle, no matter by what methodical approach this principle may become manifest ... to reach the Yoga goals” (1951, 555–56).

One should note here the remarkable accomplishments of B.K.S. Iyengar, who—along with fellow Krishnamacharya disciples Pattabhi Jois and T.K.V. Desikachar—has arguably done more over the last half century to popularize the spread of āsana practice (bodily postures, the third limb of yoga) than anyone in the recorded history of Yoga. (One must also mention here Swami Śivānanda’s disciples, Swami Vishnu-Devānanda, Swami Satchidānanda, and Swami Chinmayānanda, who have also contributed much to the spread of yoga in the West.) In his Tree of Yoga, Iyengar presents āsana, yogic posture, as not just the third of the eight limbs of yoga but also as a self-contained object of meditation that can itself bring about samādhi, the ultimate goal of yoga, if approached and undertaken correctly.

While this is something of an innovation in the history of Yoga, at least in terms of how the commentarial tradition has viewed the practice of āsana, Patañjali himself specified in I.34 that practices associated with the fourth limb of yoga, prāṇāyāma, can bring about steadiness of mind, the prerequisite of samādhi, and here in this sūtra allows that any object of one’s inclination can be used as a meditational prop (ālambana) to achieve this goal. Approaching āsana in this way—as a bona fide support for fixing the mind (and one for which many people in the West might be best suited)—is thus fully defensible within Patañjali’s system, provided it is performed with this intent rather than some other superficial motive. Indeed, this approach constitutes a unique contribution not just to the history of Yoga as it has been transmitted over the centuries but, more important, also to the participational possibilities of the practice of yoga as it is being transmitted in a present-day mainstream context. People who might otherwise be disinterested in some of the other truth claims of Yoga are very attracted to āsana, albeit often for physical rather than spiritual reasons. Even if this is the case, if the mind is fully fixed and absorbed without distraction on the practice of āsana, for whatever motive, it can still attain fixity and stillness. Thus an essential
goal of yoga is nonetheless attained. Moreover, as Śaṅkara notes, once the mind has attained steadiness in one area, this steadiness can be readily transferred to other areas. Perhaps more important, once the mind becomes stilled, its sāttvic nature can manifest, as a result of which the qualities of sattva, insight and lucidity, also gradually manifest. These qualities, in turn, start to pervade all aspects of a practitioner’s life and can thus transform one’s understanding and relationship with one’s own practice over time, such that he or she opens to other aspects of the tradition. Ultimately, when sattva gains prominence, the inclination to cultivate wisdom and enlightenment manifests automatically.

I.40 paramāṇu-parama-mahättvānto ‘syā vaśikāraḥ

parama, most distinguished, finest, greatest; anu, atom; paraṇa, greatest, ultimate; mahattva, totality of matter; antaḥ, up to; asya, his (the yogī’s); vaśikāraḥ, mastery

The yogī’s mastery extends from the smallest particle of matter to the ultimate totality of matter.

Vyāsa explains that the mind can become steady by entering into anything at all in manifest reality, from the minutest object—the paramāṇu, the smallest subatomic particle in existence—to the largest—the totality of all prākṛtic matter, mahattva. As will be discussed later in the text, since the mind is potentially all-pervading and underpins all physical forms, it can pervade any form of any dimension and assume that form’s shape and qualities. Later verses elaborate on the states of omniscience that ensue according to the Yoga traditions. By such mastery, says Vyāsa, the yogī bypasses the need for the processes outlined in the previous sūtras, since nothing can obstruct the yogī who has mastery over his or her mind. The other commentators have little to add.

The previous sūtras presented suggestions as to how the mind can be fixed, says Śaṅkara. When this has been accomplished by one or more of the methods proposed, what happens next? What kind of samādhi
ensues? To answer this, Patañjali offers the next sūtra.

I.41 kṣiṇa-vṛtteḥ abhijātasya maṇer grahītṛ-grahaṇa-grāhyeṣu tat-sthatad-añjanatā samāpattiḥ

kṣiṇa, weakened; vṛtteḥ, the fluctuating states of the mind; abhijātasya, of high quality (here, transparent); iva, like; maṇeḥ, of a jewel; grahītṛ, the knower; grahaṇa, the instrument of knowledge; grāhyeṣu, in the object of knowledge; tat, that; stha, situated; tat, that; añjanatā, colored, influenced (here, taking the form of); samāpattiḥ, engrossment, complete absorption on an object

Samāpatti, complete absorption of the mind when it is free from its vṛttis, occurs when the mind becomes just like a transparent jewel, taking the form of whatever object is placed before it, whether the object be the knower, the instrument of knowledge, or the object of knowledge.

Patañjali has considered various objects that can be used to support the mind in meditation. Now he returns to the analysis (begun in I.17) dealing with stages within the meditative state itself, irrespective of its object. When the mind is freed from all distractions in the form of the vṛttis, it becomes like a pure crystal, maṇi, says Vyāsa. Just as a crystal exactly reflects the color of whatever object is placed adjacent to it, so the peaceful and fixed mind is colored, añjanatā, by any object presented to it, and, in advanced meditation, actually inherently assumes the form of that object. The comparison expressed in this sūtra by Patañjali is encountered numerous times throughout the commentaries and has attained wide usage in Hindu philosophical circles: Just as a pure crystal shines with a red color when placed next to a red hibiscus flower, so the calm, pure, and luminous sāttvic mind, when freed from the effects of rajas and tamas, shines with the form of any object presented to it. This
occurs when the mind is focused one-pointedly on the object in question. Patañjali states here that the mind can reflect and assume the form of any object: an external object made of gross or subtle elements, grāhya; the very instruments of knowledge themselves such as the sense organs, grahāna; or the intelligence, grahitṛ, the knower, even in its purest and most subtle function of indirectly being aware of puruṣa itself. This sūtra, as we noted, has influenced the commentators interpretation of I.17.

The gross and subtle elements evolve out of citta (intelligence and ego) in Sāṅkhya, and thus the mind, being more subtle than its evolutes and, indeed, their very essence, can pervade them. This includes not only the grāhya, objects of knowledge, that is, sense objects, but also, as Patañjali indicates here, the grahāna, instruments of knowledge, that is, the sense organs themselves, and the grahitṛ, faculty of buddhi, the knower. The mind can not only internally mold its own guṇas into the prākytic form of an object or sense organ, but can actually externally penetrate into the object’s very essence. In a sense it becomes the object by merging with it and thereby gains ultimate insight into its deepest nature. This is the samāpatti introduced in this sūtra. Additionally, when completely pure and steady, the mind can ultimately reflect puruṣa to itself, the penultimate stage of yoga practice.

Obviously, the mind cannot know puruṣa in its own true nature, as Śaṅkara points out, since it is inanimate and puruṣa is more subtle than the mind. Things can grasp or perceive only things grosser than themselves: The senses can grasp only the sense objects, but not vice versa; the mind can perceive the senses, but not vice versa; and the puruṣa can perceive the mind, but not vice versa. This is a favorite trope of the Upaniṣads: “That which one cannot grasp with one’s mind [ātman/Brahman], by which, they say, the mind is grasped” (Kena I.5). “By what means can one know the knower?” (Brhadāraṇyaka II.4.13). “You can’t see the seer who does the seeing; you can’t hear the hearer who does the hearing; you can’t think the thinker who does the thinking; you can’t perceive the perceiver who does the perceiving” (Brhadāraṇyaka III.4.2). “Sight does not go there, nor does thinking or speech. We don’t know it, we can’t perceive it, so how would one express it?” (Kena I.3). “Not by speech, not by the mind, not by sight can he be grasped. How else can that be experienced, other than by saying
‘He is?’ (Kaṭha VI.12). “The self cannot be grasped by multiple teachings or by the intellect” (Munḍaka III.2.3). Only puruṣa can know itself. But mind can, however, redirect awareness back to its own original source and thus indirectly reflect puruṣa, just as a mirror can reflect a face. In other words, puruṣa can become aware of itself by means of the reflective nature of the pure sāttvic mind.

Although samāpatti, introduced in this sūtra for the first time, and samādhi can be correlated in a general way, and the states of mind they represent overlap, they are not technically synonymous: Vijñānabhiṣṣu points out that the various types of samāpatti occur as results of samprajñāta-samādhi. Samādhi in general might best be understood in terms of the goal of yoga: the state when all vṛttis of the mind have been stilled. Samāpatti is, more specifically, the complete identification of the mind with the object of meditation. Put simply, the former is the more general or overall state of the stillled mind, the latter the more specific content or object upon which the mind has settled itself in order to become still. Complete mental identification with and absorption in an object, by definition, can obviously occur only when all other vṛttis have been stilled and the mind is without distraction; hence samāpatti occurs only in the context of samādhi as indicated in this sūtra.

I.42 tatra śabdārtha-jñāna-vikalpaiḥ saṅkīrṇā savitarkā-samāpattiḥ
tatra, there; śabda, word; artha, meaning; jñāna, knowledge, idea; vikalpaiḥ, with conceptualization, notions; saṅkīrṇā, mixed with; savitarkā, with physical awareness, conceptualization; samāpattiḥ, absorption

In this stage, savitarkā-samāpattiḥ, “samādhi absorption with physical awareness,” is intermixed with the notions of word, meaning, and idea.

Recall that vitarka-samādhi is listed as the first of four stages of samādhi in I.17, the other three being vicāra, ānanda, and asmitā. Here and in the next sūtra this first stage is refined by Patañjali and separated into two
subdivisions: sa-, with vitarka, and nir-, without vitarka (as will be the case with vicāra in I.44).

Vyāsa takes a cow as his example of an object of meditation to illustrate the nature of the samādhi indicated by savitarka. The actual physical object, artha, cow; the one-syllable word śabda, cow, used in speech to refer to that object; and the idea, jñāna, of a cow produced in the mind of a person who hears that word—all are different categories of things, says Vyāsa. They have different characteristics, even though they are conflated in normal cognition: The first is a real-life object made of flesh and blood eating grass in the field, the second is an uttered sound, a linguistic indicator consisting of a spoken phoneme, and the third is a mental image or idea, a pratyaya (discussed in I.10) or saṁskāra.

When the yogī uses an object such as a cow as the meditational support, or object of concentration (ālambana, discussed in I.10), but the yogī’s awareness of this object is conflated with the word for and the concept of a cow, this absorption is known as savitarka-samāpatti, absorption with physical awareness. In other words, the yogī’s experience of the object is still subtly tinged with awareness of what the object is called and with the memory or idea corresponding to that object—śabda-artha-jñāna-vikalpa. So in conventional experience as well as in the nonconventional experience of the savitarka-samāpatti of this sūtra, the experience of an object is mixed up, saṅkīrṇa, with vikalpa, here, mental images, in the form of words and ideas. In this sense, direct experience of the object in its own right and on its own ground of being is tainted by the imposition of conceptual thought on it.

Vācaspati Miśra calls this type of samādhi apara-pratyakṣa, lower perception (with an eye to the para-pratyakṣa, higher perception, that Vyāsa will call the next type of samādhi outlined in I.43). This awareness of the object’s word, meaning, and idea is not to be confused with the vṛttis discussed in the opening sūtras of the text (or with the vitarkas of II.33–34). The yogī is not deliberating or reasoning about the object in any kind of an analytical or intellectually rambling fashion at the level of discursive thought, nor is he or she consciously activating a saṁskāra to recognize the object, since that would involve the activation and presence of vṛttis. We are at the level of samādhi here, when all vṛttis have been stilled. Nonetheless, the yogī’s complete absorption on the
object still includes some kind of an intuitive level of awareness or spontaneous (nondiscursive) insight as to the object’s name and its meaning. In other words, the subconscious saṁskāras of recognition are still not fully latent or inactive.

Savitarka might be better understood in comparison with the next stage of samādhi, nirvitarka, described in the next sūtra as when, in contrast, the object stands out in its own right without being conflated with the conventional terminologies of language that might refer to it, or with any idea or meaning it might generate. Indeed, the commentators begin their discussion of the subject here. Nirvitarka means non-conceptual or, perhaps more accurately, superconceptual. This occurs when the yogi’s citta has been purged of any memory awareness of what the object is and what it is called. In other words, no saṁskāric imprints pertaining to cow activate on any subconscious or intuitive level whatsoever. Vācaspati Miśra states that this type of object-awareness is real yogic perception, because conceptual or artificial notions and names are not superimposed upon the object. After all, any word could denote the object cow, if socially agreed upon, and of course the object is referred to by many different terms in various languages. And the idea of cow is a mental construction, a saṁskāric imprint on the citta; neither word, meaning, nor idea is the real cow.

Actually, as the commentators point out, conflating word, meaning, and object can be considered a type of vikalpa, imagination (I.8), because three distinct things—a conventionally agreed-upon sound for an object, a saṁskāric memory imprint of the object in the citta, and the actual physical object itself—are being conflated as if they were one thing. Word and idea are different from the ultimate prākṛtic metaphysical ingredients that make up a cow in reality, so in a sense they share features of the vastu-śūnyam of I.8. In nirvitarka-samāpatti, the object itself stands forth in its own right, free of designation or mental image.

Vyāsa notes that the type of insightful perception into the true nature of an object gained through samāpatti supersedes the other two means of gaining right knowledge of reality recognized by the schools of Yoga: inference (logic) and sacred word (I.7). Both inference and scripture depend on words and ideas to impart knowledge. Nirvitarka-samāpatti is
based on direct perception that transcends words and ideas, and penetrates the essential nature of an object itself at a far more profound level than that of word and meaning or idea. Vyāsa calls it para-pratyakṣa, supreme perception, and therefore it is distinct from what he will call loka-pratyakṣa, mundane perception. However, says Vyāsa, nirvitarka-samāpatti can and does become the seed from which logic and scripture may sprout. In other words, says Vācaspati Miśra, yogīs who have experienced the lofty levels of samādhi discussed in these sūtras might use words and logic in order to share their experiences with ordinary people—as, indeed, Patañjali is doing—and their words thus become the basis of scripture, as is the case with the present text. In other words, scripture is the product of a nirvitarka level of awareness of reality expressed by God or by the sages through words and concepts.

Once these truths become filtered and expressed through words, ideas, and logical thought, however, they become subject to the faults and imperfections inherent in the adoption of words and ideas (one need only consider, for example, how different commentators sometimes understand cryptic sūtras differently, especially in the Vedānta tradition\textsuperscript{229}). Therefore, in Yoga, direct perception is the highest means of gaining knowledge. One must practice and experience the truths of Yoga, not merely read about, discuss, or try to understand them theoretically.

\textbf{I.43} smṛti-pariśuddhaṁ svarūpa-śūnyavārtha-mātra-nirbhāsā nirvitarkā

\textit{smṛti}, memory; \textit{pariśuddhaṁ}, upon the purification (here, termination); \textit{svarūpa}, own nature; \textit{śūnyā}, empty of; \textit{iva}, as if; \textit{artha}, object; \textit{mātra}, only, alone; \textit{nirbhāsā}, shining; \textit{nirvitarkā}, without physical awareness

\textit{Nirvitarka} [\textit{samāpatti}], “absorption without conceptualization,” occurs when memory has been purged and the mind is empty, as it were, of its own [reflective]
nature. Now only the object [of meditation] shines forth [in its own right].

Vyāsa explains that when the mind has been purged of all saṃskāric memory in terms of any recognition of what the object of meditation is, or what its name or function are, smṛti-pariśuddhau, that is, when it allows itself to be colored exclusively by the object of focus itself without any cognitive analysis of the object’s place in the greater scheme of things and without the normal instinctive impulse to identify it and recall its name, then the yogī has attained the stage of nirvitarka-samāpatti, or nirvitarka-samādhi. In this state, the mind has also given up its own nature of being an organ of knowledge, svarūpa-śūnya, in other words, awareness is not even aware of the mind as being an instrument channeling awareness onto an object. In a sense, all knowledge of the object as conventionally understood has been suspended, and the mind has completely transformed itself into the object, free from any cognitive identification or self-awareness.230 The object can now shine forth in its own right as an object with its own inherent existence, artha-mātra-nirbhāsa, free from labels, categorizations, or situatedness in the grand scheme of things. Additionally, we can note that the object has in effect become the yogī’s entire universe, since awareness is focused exclusively on it and is thus unaware of anything else, even the cognitive process itself.

A brief discussion of the two stages of conventional perception as understood by a number of Indic philosophical traditions,231 including (with differences in vocabulary) Sāṅkhya,232 is useful here. In essence, when for instance, one ambles along the road and encounters an unexpected object, one first becomes aware of it in a vague sort of way, as raw sense data, without assigning a name or identification to it, like the preconceptual awareness of an infant. After this moment, the mind processes the data, and memory saṃskāras identify the object in terms of its specific name, the category of thing that it is, and its function in the grand scheme of things, for example, “This is a red clay pot for carrying water.”233 The first stage of indeterminate awareness is called nirvikalpa, and the second, savikalpa. Thus, in conventional perception, nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa, preverbal, preconceptual awareness, is followed by savikalpa-
pratyākṣa, the recognition of name, category, and function of an object, the latter being considered a more exact form of cognition. In samādhi the reverse holds true—savīrta, when there is still awareness of an object’s name and function, is superseded by nirvīrta, where the object stands out freed from the mental clutter of naming, identification, and recognition. Thus, in contrast to mundane perception, in samādhi, nirvīrta is considered to be a higher level of awareness.

By definition, then, nirvīrta-samādhi is a state beyond the ability of words and concepts to describe (so a commentary on sūtras such as this is a priori somewhat oxymoronic). Vijnānabhikṣu adds that words and ideas are subject to error, and thus so are inference and scripture, since they are composed of words. Therefore, one must turn to a guru who has experienced such states. Even then, says Vijnānabhikṣu, despite the fact that the guru may have realized the true nature of things, it is not possible to give experiential insight into such things through words, any more than one can convey the actual taste of sugarcane and milk through words to one who has not experienced them. Therefore, ultimately, one returns to the yogic truism that one must experience these states for oneself. Analyses such as this are useful only insofar as they might inspire individuals to take up the actual practice of yoga.

When one has attained this stage, says Hariharānanda, one loses any attachment to wealth and family, etc., as one sees all such things as essentially combinations of elements and subtle energies.

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I.44 etayaiva savicārā nirvicārā ca sūkṣma-viṣayā vyākhyātā

etaya, by this; eva, also; savicārā, with subtle awareness; nirvicārā, beyond reflection; ca, and; sūkṣma, subtle; viṣayā, objects; vyākhyātā, are described

The states of samādhi with “subtle awareness” and without “subtle awareness,” whose objects of focus are the subtle nature [of things], are explained in the same manner.

I should note again that terms such as “subtle awareness” are somewhat
artificial attempts at finding English equivalents to technical Sanskrit terms. In point of fact, the Sanskrit terms themselves may also be something of an artificiality, since they are standard terms in Indic philosophical treatises that carry different meanings in other contexts but are appropriated by Patañjali as labels to point to supernormal states of consciousness (just as, say, we appropriate existing Latin terms to denote new and previously unknown species of flora we might discover). As the purport of terms such as nirvitarkā indicates, how can a term denote something that is by its very definition beyond word and meaning? Be that as it may, it is best, in my view, to retain the Sanskrit terms, rather than perpetuate clumsy English translations, which sometimes can be just as abstruse and incomprehensible and thus are of no greater usefulness to the reader than the Sanskrit terms they replace.

Vicāra-samādhi is the second of the four stages of samādhi in I.17, and, like vitarka, is here also separated into two subdivisions of sa-, with, and nir-, without. The overall difference between savitarka- and nirvitarka-samāpatti, and savicāra- and nirvicāra-samāpatti, as noted in I.17, Vyāsa reminds us, is that the former focus is on the gross physical elements that comprise an object, and the latter is on the subtle elements, sūkṣma-viṣayatvam, that underpin these gross elements in objects. Vijñānabhikṣu defines “subtle” as that which is the source or cause of something that evolves from it (recall that the gross elements are evolutes from the subtle elements, which are thereby their causes). Additionally, the subtle aspects of prakṛti cannot be perceived by the gross senses; as noted, subtler things can be perceived only by things even subtler than themselves.

The implication of this from the Śaṅkhyan perspective on this sūtra is that one can experience an object as consisting of the gross elements—earth, air, water, fire, and ether—as is the case in conventional perception, or one can penetrate this immediate and more physical nature of the object and perceive it as consisting of the essences underpinning these elements—the subtle essences of sound, touch, taste, sight, smell, which are the sources from which the gross elements evolve. This is the perception arising in savicāra-samādhi. Vijñānabhikṣu gives an outline here of the Yoga understanding of how anus, the smallest subatomic particles of gross matter, which form the basis of
vitarka perception, are produced from their causes, the subtle elements.\textsuperscript{234} Vicāra, then, is when meditative focus becomes absorbed in the tanmātras, the subtle elements underpinning any object of meditation.

This process of penetrating into the subtle or essential nature of an object might be analogous to seeing a piece of ice as a hard chunk of solid substance, or perceiving its deeper nature as essentially the fluid element of water, or, deeper still, as solidified vapor. And one can go further in the analogy and see all of these as a combination of yet finer entities—hydrogen and oxygen molecules—and these can in turn be dissolved into their still finer subatomic physical constituents. As this principle that a gross object is in fact constituted of finer and then still finer energies and elements holds good in modern physics, so it does for Śāṅkhyan physics. One difference is that in modern science, the atomic or subatomic structures of matter can be perceived only by advanced mechanical instrumentation, or inferred as existing, whereas Patañjali and the Yoga tradition claim that the yogī can actually and personally perceive or, more accurately, experience with the mind the subtle essences of an object without any such props. They are directly experiential, since the subtle (and gross) elements are evolutes of a substratum of mind stuff, and the Śāṅkhyan principle is that subtler dimensions of prakṛti can experience grosser ones. In other words, since one’s mind is composed of the same substance as the buddhi substratum of any object, gross or subtle, it can blend with this substratum and thus percolate the object intimately from within, so to speak.

When the intensity of focus on the object of meditation deepens such that the yogī penetrates its gross externalization and experiences the object as consisting of subtle elements, the tanmātras, but subtle elements circumscribed as existing in time and space, then the ensuing concentrative state of awareness is known as savicāra. In other words, in savicāra meditation, an object is perceived as consisting of subtle elements, but the object is still experienced as existing in the present time, rather than in the past or future, and is still bounded by space, that is, it is taking up some distinct physical space in the presence of the meditator rather than being situated anywhere else. Briefly put, at this stage, the yogī still has some level of awareness of space and time. All
this will become clearer when contrasted with nirvicāra below.

When, on the other hand, the yogī can focus on the object unconditioned by such dimensionality, when he or she can focus not just on the subtle nature of an object but can transcend space and time and perceive that these subtle essences pervade and underpin all things at all times, then the yogī has attained the state of nirvicāra. In this state, the yogī is no longer aware of dimensionality and temporality—the here and now. The object is no longer a distinct object taking up extension in a portion of space different from other spatial objects and existing in the present, rather than any other time, because the yogī experiences the subtle elements of the object as underpinning all objects at all times. In other words, the form of the object dissolves, as it were, under the power of the yogī’s focus, and the yogī now is simply experiencing vibrant subtle energies pervading all reality everywhere and eternally.

Hariharānanda uses the sun as a rough but useful example for the four types of samāpatti. Savitarka-samādhi is analogous to focusing without distraction on the sun, cognizing it as an object of a certain shape composed of fire atoms and situated at a certain distance, with some intuitive awareness of its name and function in the natural scheme of things. Nirvitarka-samādhi can be compared to the deepening of one’s focus until one sees the sun only as a luminous object in the heavens but without awareness of its name, size, distance, function, shape, composition, etc. Savicāra corresponds to perceiving that the fire element of the sun is actually the tanmātra, subtle element, of light, but one’s awareness is still circumscribed by the specific location of the sun in the universe and by the fact that it is perceived in the present, rather than the past or future. When, however, all awareness of Space and Time dissolves, and one sees the pure light, devoid of color, pervading not just the sun but all things at all times, in other words, one is aware only of omnipresent eternal light, then one’s meditative state is known as nirvicāra.

We can now return to Śaṅkara’s claim that the recitation of oṁ along the lines indicated in these sūtras culminates in a supersensory face-to-face encounter with Īśvara: “By the perfection of repetition [of oṁ] and meditation on the supreme ātman (paramātman) situated in the highest place (parameśthin) shines forth for the yogī.”
Given the centrality of the chanting (japa) of oṁ, it is important to bring the greater insight from the technical information of these sūtras to bear on the discussion of the recitation of oṁ initiated in I.28, following Coward (1985).

In the savitarka stage of chanting, oṁ is mixed up with the conventional meanings and ideas that we now know define vitarka meditation—perhaps a mental image of Īśvara derived from the deity in one’s local temple, or from some painting, or the sectarian tradition in which one has been raised or to which one has dedicated oneself. One’s mental notions of Īśvara will be molded by one’s saṁsāric background and saṁskāric makeup. Therefore, at the savitarka stage of samādhi, one’s chanting is obscured by these conventional notions of conceiving Īśvara. At the nirvitarka stage, these are eliminated, and Īśvara begins to manifest from the sound oṁ in his own pure nature, unobstructed by the concocted images and associations that the yogī has fostered. At the third stage of savicāra, as the citta’s focus on the recitation of the mantra deepens, one penetrates into the inner essence of the sound and actually begins to experience, that is, directly perceive, Īśvara in his pure sāttvic body. The yogī’s mind is now so completely absorbed in this vision of Īśvara that he or she has lost all self-awareness. One forgets one’s own self in the rapture of this divine vision (but, it is imperative to note, contra advaita Vedānta, one nonetheless always remains a distinct individual). In the final stage, one’s absorption in this vision of Īśvara is extracted from any notion of Time and Space, and Īśvara (and the sound of oṁ of which Īśvara is the seed) is experienced as the infinite and eternal Supreme Being.

There is some difference among commentators, both traditional and modern, regarding whether there are six or eight levels of samprajñāta-samādhi. Vācaspati Miśra suggests that just as there are sa- and nir- forms of vitarka and vicāra, by a parallel logic there should be sa- and nir- forms of ānanda and asmitā. In other words, Vācaspati Miśra envisions sānanda and nirānanda as well as sāsmitā and nirāsmitā, resulting in eight stages of samprajñāta-samādhi. Vijnānabhikṣu specifically disagrees with Vācaspati Miśra on this point, rightly in my view. First, he says, there is no authority for such a claim; in other words, neither Patañjali nor Vyāsa mentions any such subdivision of ānanda and asmitā. But in any
event, ānanda means bliss and asmitā means awareness of consciousness, he says, and there simply are no states corresponding to nirānanda, without bliss, or nirasmitā, without awareness of consciousness, at this lofty stage of enlightenment.

Recent analyses, both scholarly and from the yogic tradition itself, have accommodated themselves around both sides of the issue. My own view is that it is a priori in Vījñānabhikṣu’s favor that neither Patañjali nor Vyāsa mentions such a taxonomy. Most obviously and simply, this sūtra specifically states that savicāra and nirvicāra are to be vyākhyāta, explained, in the same way; if Patañjali had intended sānanda and nirānanda and sāsmitā and nirasmitā to be explained in the same fashion, he would have specified this here. And if one argues that, out of sūtraic briefness, he chose not to do so, Vyāsa would have certainly been expected to fill in the gap. The difference of views, however, remains valid, and I acknowledge that I found Koelman’s speculative foray into what might possibly be the experiential constituents of hypothetical sānanda, nirānanda, sāsmitā, and nirasmitā states to be cogent as well as accommodatable within the metaphysical parameters of Yoga psychology.

In the higher stages of samādhi (which will be discussed next), Hariharānanda notes that the tanmātras are not the only subtle elements underpinning the metaphysics of an object—they themselves are evolutes from still subtler entities such as aharikāra and buddhi. These subtler elements too can be the object of samādhi, as the next sūtra indicates.

I.45 sūkṣma-viṣayatvam cāliṅga-paryavasānam

sūkṣma, subtle; viṣayatvam, things having the nature of; ca, and; aliṅga, prakṛti, that which has no sign; paryavasānam, concluding, terminating

The subtle nature of things extends all the way up to prakṛti.
In the context of this sūtra, recall that an entity with a subtle nature, sūkṣma-viṣayatva, can be defined as something that can generate a product grosser than itself. The five gross elements do not produce any products or evolutes—they are the last link in the chain, so to speak—so they are not considered subtle. The tanmātras are considered subtle elements because they can produce grosser by-products. But the tanmātra subtle elements are themselves the product of something subtler still, ahaṅkāra. As the subtle cause of the tanmātras, ahaṅkāra is by extension also the indirect subtle cause of the gross elements, but twice removed, so to speak. And ahaṅkāra itself, also has a still subtler cause, buddhi. The term liṅga, literally, that which is a sign, is used in II.19 for buddhi, which is in turn an evolute of prakṛti, referred to here as aliṅga (that which has no sign).  

Prakṛti is the ultimate subtlest cause of everything because it cannot dissolve into anything subtler.

With all this in mind, Patañjali indicates in this sūtra that the samāpatti or meditative focus of the yogī can penetrate the nature of the object and experience it on progressively even more subtle levels than those indicated in the previous sūtra: that of ahaṅkāra and buddhi (according to the Sāṅkhya schema of things). As one approaches the more subtle levels of prakṛti, the sattva element becomes more dominant. One of the inherent qualities of sattva is joy, ānanda. Thus, when the yogī’s focused mind becomes absorbed in the ahaṅkāra essence of all reality (space, dimensionality, time, etc., having already been surpassed in the previous stage of nirvicāra), it comes in contact with the sāttvic and blissful quality not only inherent in the object of meditation but also underpinning all reality, hence the yogī experiences all-pervading bliss. It is important to note that this is not the bliss of Brahman indicated in Upaniṣads such as the Taittirīya (II.8ff); the bliss indicated here is prākrtic. The citta of the yogī is immersed in the sāttvic aspect of prakṛti, which results in an experience of sattva that produces a very refined but nonetheless still prākrtic type of blissfulness. One must be wary of confounding this with the bliss of Brahman (see II.18).

Finally, penetrating the essence of reality further still, the yogī encounters pure buddhi, from which all the other evolutes have evolved. Having nothing further external or outside of itself on which to meditate, at least in the realm of prakṛti, since it itself is the source of all
prākṛtic evolutes, only puruṣa now remains as an object of contemplation for the yogī's buddhi (citta, as discussed, is composed of buddhi, ahaṅkāra, and manas in Yoga). Contemplating puruṣa, that is, reflecting consciousness back to its source, the pure citta of the yogī at this point experiences an awareness simply of I-am-ness, which is the etymological meaning of asmitā, rather than of any material prākṛtic object however subtle (but this is a particular, puruṣa-based type of I-am-ness, not to be confused with the kleśa of asmitā, as will be discussed below). There now remains one final step, which will be discussed in sūtra I.51.

The puruṣa, acknowledges Vyāsa, is subtle too—it cannot be perceived by prakṛti or its evolutes. But it is not subtle in the sense of being the cause of prakṛti or of anything else, and therefore does not come under the definition of subtleness outlined at the beginning of this sūtra, namely, that it produces evolutes grosser than itself. Puruṣa is changeless, according to the Yoga school, and therefore does not transform to produce evolutes. (Puruṣa is, however, the instrumental cause of prakṛti insofar as the latter exists for fulfilling the objectives of the former, notes Vācaspati Miśra, with II.18 in mind.)

While on the topic of ultimate causes, Patañjali does not refer to Īśvara, who we recall is a special puruṣa (I.24), as the material or, for that matter, the efficient cause of the world, that is, the creator of prakṛti. However, Vijñānabhikṣu and other commentators connect the Īśvara of the sūtras with the Īśvara of the Gitā, where Krṣṇa unambiguously states that, as Īśvara, he is indeed the efficient cause of prakṛti: “Prakṛti produces animate and inanimate things with me as overseer. It is from this cause, that the universe revolves” (IX.10). Krṣṇa is also the material as well as efficient cause of the universe: “Everything emanates from me” (X.9).
These above-mentioned \textit{samāpatti} states are [known as] \textit{samādhi} meditative absorption “with seed.”

Vyāsa explains that the four \textit{samāpatti} states outlined in the previous \textit{sūtras} are known as \textit{samādhi} with seed, \textit{sa-bīja}, because they have something external as their object of focus, whether the gross form of an object, as in the case of the \textit{savītarka} and \textit{nirvītarka} states, or the subtle form of an object, as in the case of \textit{sa-vicāra} and \textit{nirvicāra}. Therefore, \textit{sabīja-samādhi} is fourfold, he says. (We should note that these stages of \textit{samādhi} are referred to here as \textit{sabīja-samādhi} but as \textit{samprajñāta-samādhi} in I.17.) While some modern commentators\textsuperscript{238} have argued that there are nuances of differences between these terms (and their counterparts of \textit{nirbīja-samādhi} and \textit{asamprajñāta-samādhi}), they are essentially used synonymously by our commentators. According to Vyāsa, here \textit{bija} technically refers to a seed in the sense of \textit{saṁskāra}. Any object perceived in the mind leaves a \textit{saṁskāra} imprint, even if the mind is fixed on it in the intense stages of \textit{samprajñāta}, hence the latter’s synonym, \textit{sa-bīja}. The object of meditation, \textit{ālambana}, even if the mind is fixed on it exclusively and with the penetrative insight discussed in these verses, still leaves its imprint as a seed, \textit{saṁskāra}, on the mind just as any other object does. Since the object of concentration as well as the concentrating mind itself become redundant in \textit{nirbīja}, no seeds of \textit{saṁskāras} are deposited.

To sum up, in \textit{samprajñāta}, or \textit{sabīja-amādhi}, there are four levels, listed in I.17, two of which, \textit{vitarka} and \textit{vicāra}, are further subdivided into four \textit{samāpattis} in II.42–44. One can thus speak of six levels of \textit{samprajñāta-samādhi}, followed by a final stage of \textit{asamprajñāta-samādhi}. This makes seven types of \textit{samādhis} in toto (or nine types, if one subscribes to Vācaspati Miśra’s \textit{sānandā/nirānandā, sāsmitā/nirasmitā} schema).

\vspace{1em}

\textbf{निविधारेवशायुः भृत्यत्मप्रसादः} || ४७ ||

\textit{I.47 nirvicāra-vaiśāradye’ dhyātma-prasādaḥ}

\textit{nirvicāra}, superreflective; \textit{vaiśāradye}, in the clarity; \textit{adhyātma},
of the inner self; prasādaḥ, lucidity

Upon attaining the clarity of nirvicāra-samādhi, there is lucidity of the inner self.

Vyāsa defines vaiśāradya, clarity, as the constant pure flow in the yogi’s citta of the sattva inherent in it. Sattva is by nature luminous when all impure coverings have been removed (when it is not overpowered by rajas and tamas). When such clarity arises at the stage of nirvicāra-samādhi, the yogi gains lucidity of the inner self, adhyātma-prasāda. This insight occurs as a flash of illuminating wisdom, which instantly sees things for what they really are. It does not follow the normal processes of experience. It is more or less synonymous with the prajñā (wisdom) of the next sūtra. Vijñānabhikṣu adds that when nirvicāra-samādhi arises, the truth not only of prakṛti and puruṣa but of Īśvara as well is perceived. Of course, even the purest sāttvic citta cannot directly perceive that which is subtler than itself, but it is able to understand that the source of its awareness is behind and beyond it. In this sense it indirectly perceives that there is a puruṣa higher than itself, that it is not the ultimate conscious entity.

Vyāsa quotes an adage: “Just as one who is situated on a mountain sees everything that is situated on the plains, so one who has climbed to the heights of the lucidity of wisdom becomes free from suffering, but sees all people suffering.” Vijñānabhikṣu adds the insightful comment that normally a person who is suffering perceives others as happy relative to himself or herself. But an enlightened person sees all beings as suffering. We are reminded here of the first Noble Truth of Buddhism: “All is suffering,” a topic that will be taken up in the next chapter.

\[ I.48 \text{ṛtam-bharā tatra prajñā} \]

\text{ṛtam}, truth; \text{bharā}, bearing; \text{tatra}, there; \text{prajñā}, wisdom

In that state, there is truth-bearing wisdom.

Vyāsa states that the word \text{ṛta}, truth, says all that there is to say. Rṭa is
an old Vedic term denoting the order underlying and controlling the harmony of the cosmos.\textsuperscript{240} In post-Vedic texts it comes, by extension, to denote the underlying truth of reality.\textsuperscript{241} In the state of praṇā, wisdom, that now manifests, there is absolutely no trace of false knowledge. With an eye on the next sūtra, he quotes another adage: “One gains the highest yoga by means of cultivating discernment through the threefold practice of scripture, inference, and meditation.”\textsuperscript{242} Hariharānanda qualifies this by noting that although from the scripture one may learn that life is suffering and that the soul is different from the body, and although one may also arrive at these truths by the process of inference and logic, such theoretical knowledge does not actually prevent one from experiencing this suffering, nor, for that matter, does it give one direct perception of the soul. Therefore, in an immediate sort of way, one is hardly better off than an ignorant person who does not know these things. But when scripture and inference are coupled with meditation and insight, or wisdom, then one can come to the point of actual realized insight rather than theoretical knowledge. It is from such actual lucidity that the cessation of suffering and perception of the self as noted in the last sūtra arise. The path of yoga, as always, stresses direct experience over other forms of knowledge, as Patañjali clearly expresses in the next sūtra. Such direct experience, in this sūtra, takes the form of perceiving the ultimate truth of reality.

\begin{quote}
śrutānumāna-prajñābhyām anya-viṣayā viśeṣārthatvāt
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
śruti, that which has been heard, sacred scripture; anumāna, inference; praṇābhyaṁ, from the wisdom, knowledge; anya, other, different; viṣayā, object; viśeṣa, the particular, specific; arthatvāt, as its object
\end{quote}

It [seedless samādhi] has a different focus from that of inference and sacred scripture, because it has the particularity of things as its object.

The term viśeṣa, particularity or specificity, as discussed in I.7,
typically associated with the schools of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. In the metaphysical system of these schools, all of manifest reality can be ultimately broken down to seven basic categories, two of which are viśeṣa, particularity, and sāmānya, generality. Viśeṣa is best understood in contrast to sāmānya, which refers to the general category of an object. Let us consider a cow, or the standard item used to exemplify a generic object in philosophical commentarial discourse, a pot. The word “cow” refers to a generic category of bovine creature with udders and horns, who gives milk and goes “moo”; and “pot” to a roundish container usually made of clay (in India) that holds liquids or other substances. Although there are millions of cows in the world, and each and every one is distinct, individual, and unique in some way, the term “cow” does not particularize or distinguish one cow from another. It is a general term that refers to an entire category of creatures. Likewise with “pot.” The term sāmānya, then, refers to the genus, species, or general category of something; terms like “cow” and “pot,” indeed all words, refer to objects only in terms of their generic characteristics. Viśeṣa, by contrast, is what particularizes ultimate entities from each other—one atom from another (the character an atom has that makes it a unique specific individual, distinct from any other atom). These categories are discussed further in III.44.

Vyāsa says that the three forms of knowledge accepted by Yoga in I.7—āgama, scripture, referred to here as śruta; anumāna, logic (inference); and conventional pratyakṣa, sense perception—are all limited because they cannot provide information about particulars or specifics. Scripture and other types of verbal authority are dependent on words, and words, like “cow,” can only point to the cow as a member of a general class of things. There is an infinite number of cows in the world, as Śaṅkara points out, and, even though they are all unique and distinct from each other in some way, one cannot come up with a different name for each individual one, hence we use the generic term “cow.” So when we say something like, “There is a cow in the field,” we are really giving information only about the cow as a member of a species and not about particulars: We are not conveying precise information about the specific individual cow in that field.

Inference, also, deals only with generalities (and is, in fact, dependent
on perception in the first place). The standard Indic example of inference is whenever there is smoke there is fire, yet the statement gives us no information about any specific fire. As for empirical sense perception, *pratyakṣa*, it is true, say the commentators, that when we look at a particular cow or pot, we might be able to pick up on some characteristic that distinguishes the cow or pot in front of us from other cows and pots—perhaps this cow has an unusual skin color or the pot an odd shape. But conventional sense perception, says Vyāsa, cannot provide us information about the very specific or subtle nature of an object—its atomic composition, for example—or about distant or hidden objects beyond the range of the senses.

Only through the clear, unobstructed insight of *samādhi* can one fully grasp the *viśeṣa*, particularity, of an object, its subtle substructure of distinct atoms and essences. Patañjali will later claim that the *yogi* can tell the difference between two “identical” items, since although they appear identical to normal perception, the atoms comprising them are different, and it is these that the *yogi* can perceive. We must keep in mind that the Yogic tradition claims one can actually perceive these essences, not merely theorize their existence, through the undeviatingly concentrated focus of mind in the higher stages of *samādhi*. This perception, then, is actually a form of *pratyakṣa*, but not that of conventional sense perception. As noted, the *Yukti-dīpikā* commentary on Saṅkhya points out that *yogic pratyakṣa* transcends normal sense-based perception. It is *para-pratyakṣa*, higher, supreme, supernormal, perception.

Following on the previous verse, Śaṅkara states that scripture provides us with information about the path that is to be followed, and inference or logic helps remove doubts about that path, but ultimately these must be followed by eagerness for meditation on what has been established by these other two sources of knowledge, that is, for direct *experience* of their truths. Patañjali is here clearly asserting that *samādhi* surpasses the ability of scripture and inference in their ability to fully experience an object at its subtlest level rather than understanding it in an indirect, generic, and mediated sort of way. And, ultimately, says Vyāsa, it is only through *samādhi* that one can grasp the distinct particularity of the soul itself.
The ingredients of the mind itself are the same as those underpinning the object in external reality; remember that the gross and subtle elements are nothing other than tamas-dominant evolutes from sattva-dominant buddhi and ahaṅkāra. Thus, when fully sāttvic, the mind can transcend its own kleśa limitations and merge into the common substratum of all things. This corresponds to such states as savicāra described above, when the yogī's awareness perceives that the subtle nature of the object of meditation as well as the meditating mind itself actually pervade all objects and thus all reality. As Vācaspati Miśra puts it, once the obstructing qualities of rajas and tamas have been removed, then the pure luminosity of consciousness is able to pass beyond the limitations of all boundaries and finite objects. What, then, is there in existence that does not fall within its purview? In other words, the commentators claim that in the higher stages of samādhi, the yogī becomes essentially omniscient since awareness is no longer limited to the body or dimensionality but can radiate out infinitely and permeate the subtle substratum, in the form of buddhi, ahaṅkāra, the tanmātra, etc. (as well as the specific conglomeration of atoms that emerge from these tanmātras), underpinning all objects. It can thus perceive the višeṣa, particularity, that is, the specific atomic composition, of any object, as Patañjali states in this sūtra.

I.50 taj-jaḥ, saṁskāro ‘nya-saṁskāra-pratibandhī
tat, that (prajnā-bearing); jaḥ, born; saṁskāraḥ, subconscious imprint; anya, other; saṁskāra, subconscious imprints; pratibandhī, obstructs

The saṁskāras born out of that [truth-bearing wisdom] obstruct other saṁskāras [from emerging].

Patañjali here states that the truth-bearing wisdom, r̥tambharā-jñana of I.48, produces a certain type of saṁskāra of its own. Evidently, these pratibandhī or blocking saṁskāras are effectively the virāma-pratyaya, the thought of terminating all thoughts, of I.18. Such truth-bearing wisdom
saṁskāras, Vyāsa hastens to add, do not provoke the mind into vṛtti activity or activate as thought or in any way agitate the citta, which would be counterproductive to the goal of yoga. Their function is solely to block the activation and emergence of other conventional saṁskāras that lie dormant in the saṁskāric deposit of the citta. When these conventional saṁskāras, which produce mundane thoughts and ideas—the citta-vṛtti—are blocked, samādhi is enhanced, says Vyāsa. Samādhi, in turn, produces beneficial saṁskāras of wisdom, or discrimination, which further block the conventional saṁskāras and are in turn deposited in the citta. These then are activated and further enhance samādhi, triggering more saṁskāras of wisdom, and the cycle goes on, although the more wisdom saṁskāras that are deposited, the more the citta is transformed, and the more readily the yogi can enter into and maintain samādhi states. These beneficial saṁskāras (nirodha-saṁskāras) have been compared to a thorn used to extract another thorn, which are then both discarded.

This is because wisdom, or discrimination, is still a function of citta, says Vyāsa, and therefore produces its saṁskāras just as all activities of citta are bound to do. So although it, too, must ultimately be bypassed when its function is served, the conventional activities of the mind must first come to a halt by the rise of discrimination. But the wisdom saṁskāras born of samādhi do not impel the mind to activity; rather they destroy the conventional saṁskāras and make them impotent. When this happens, the ability of the mind to produce its citta-vṛtti effects is curtailed, and the goal of yoga achieved. The wisdom or discriminatory saṁskāras reveal the distinction between the puruṣa and prakṛti, while the conventional saṁskāras operate under ignorance, defined in II.5 as the failure to distinguish between the self and the nonself, that is, between the puruṣa and its coverings of body and mind. When discrimination arises, this illusion is destroyed; therefore, the wisdom saṁskāras are indispensable. Vijñānabhikṣu describes these truth-bearing saṁskāras, these saṁskāras of discernment, as being of different strengths, perhaps, in resonance with I.22, in accordance with the intensity of samādhi, hence the need to reinforce them by the cycle outlined by Vyāsa.

Vācaspati Miśra states that there are only two possibilities for the mind: Either it pursues the objects of the senses, or it cultivates
discrimination; put differently, it can be used either for enjoyment or for liberation, as Patañjali notes in II.18. This difference in how the mind is put to use reflects the difference between the kliṣṭa, detrimental, and akliṣṭa, nondetrimental, vṛttis of I.5. The inclination of the mind to aspire after worldly objects of enjoyment occurs only as long as it does not experience lucidity and discriminative awareness of reality, which ultimately means perceiving the distinction between puruṣa and prakṛti. As will be discussed, when such discrimination arises, ignorance is destroyed and thus the deposit of karma and the afflictions of the mind are also destroyed, and the tendency of the mind to seek external enjoyment comes to an end. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī states that upon the rise of discrimination, the mind becomes disgusted with sensual experience and turns toward the self. In this vein, Hariharānanda redirects attention to sūtra I.16, where Patañjali indicates that disinterest in the entire productivity of the guṇas, which means everything in prakṛti, results from realization of the puruṣa soul.

Vijñānabhikṣu states the Sāṅkhya and Vedāntic view here: the wisdom-bearing saṁskāras destroy only the dormant and unmanifest store of karma, and not the prārabdha-karma, the karma that has already activated. Karma exists in various stages, the exact specifications of which differ from school to school, but essentially it lies dormant awaiting later fructification, saṅcita-karma, or is being accumulated by ongoing activity under ignorance in the present, saṅciyamāna; or it has already been activated and is now manifest, prārabdha. Samādhi, then, destroys all the dormant karma. However, the already activated karma of the yogī's present experience—life span, type of body, ongoing happenings, etc. (II.13)—is terminated only upon the manifestation of the nirbija-samādhi, the subject of the next sūtra.

I.51 tasyāpi nirodhe sarva-nirodhān nirbijaḥ samādhiḥ

tasya, of that [truth-bearing saṁskāras]; api, also, even; nirodhe, upon cessation of; sarva, of everything; nirodhāt, from the cessation; nirbijaḥ, seedless; samādhiḥ, meditative absorption
Upon the cessation of even those [truth-bearing samākāras], nirbīja-samādhi, seedless meditative absorption, ensues.

We now come to the end of the road of the yogic process outlined by Patañjali. In nirbīja, seedless, samādhi, explains Vyāsa, both the illumined insight and discernment born in sabīja-samādhi and the truth-bearing wisdom samākāras that accompany it, are themselves rendered inactive. Vyāsa notes that the nirodha-saṁskāras of I.50, the restraining or suppressing saṁskāras, block or eliminate even these beneficial truth-bearing saṁskāras of discrimination. In the ensuing state of nirbīja-samādhi, the yogī’s awareness has no contact whatsoever with prakṛti, external reality, either in its gross or subtle aspects. In other words, the citta is not focused on any aspect of an object, gross or subtle; completely uncoupled from citta, all mental and cognitive processes, puruṣa is now aware simply of itself. There is a saṁskāra that facilitates this by suppressing all saṁskāras whatsoever, including those of insight and wisdom. This is the nirodha-saṁskāra (as its name suggests, the ultimate saṁskāra that produces absolute citta-vṛtti-nirodha). All thought is now latent, sarva-nirodhan.

Nirbīja-samādhi is different from the asmitā stage of sabīja-samādhi discussed in I.17. In the latter, the consciousness of the puruṣa is still emanating out and being channeled through citta. Because citta is so pure in this state, the commentators compare it to a luminous mirror in which puruṣa can see its own reflection. But puruṣa is not seeing itself directly; it becomes aware of itself indirectly by seeing a reflection of itself through the medium of citta. In nirbīja-samādhi, the consciousness of puruṣa is not radiating out and aware of itself as a reflection in citta, because the citta has uncoupled itself completely from puruṣa, who can now remain purely self-absorbed, that is, no longer aware of prakṛti at all.

The term nirbīja, seedless, indicates that this state is not related to any object that can plant a saṁsāric seed in the citta, not even the nirodha-saṁskāra of the last sūtra. It therefore does not leave any record of itself in the citta. The existence of the nirodha-saṁskāras can therefore be inferred, says Vyāsa, only by the “lapse of time in the nirodha state.”

245
What he means is that when one enters into *nirbiṣa-samādhi*, one is not aware of Time, since one has no external awareness of anything *prākṛtic* at all, and thus, since there is absolutely no frame of reference leaving its imprint on the mind by which one can gauge the passage of Time; one can only infer that one has been in such a state after emerging from it and noticing the amount of Time that has passed since one first sat down to meditate. In other words, if a *yogī* were to fall into such a meditative state in the morning, he or she would be made aware of it only if, upon coming out of such a state, it were now evening. The *yogī*, says Vācaspati Miśra, can have no perception or cognition in this state, since all *vṛttis*, mental functionings, have ceased—the mind is completely inactive. Therefore, there are no cognitive imprints relating to the passage of Time being deposited into the mind as memories of this state as is the case with all other normal or even paranormal activities. This is obviously relevant when considering why there are differences in attempts to describe these states in the various mystic traditions of the world. With no imprints in the mind to recollect, of what categories does the *yogī* avail in attempting to describe them? Hence the repeated assertions in mystical texts such as the *Upaniṣads* that this experience of ātman is beyond words, thoughts, and therefore descriptive categories.

Vijñānabhikṣu sees the eradication of all discriminatory or truth-bearing *saṁskāras* during *nirbiṣa* or *asamprajñāta-samādhi* to be a gradual process, which explains how a *yogī* can enter into the *nirbiṣa-samādhi* state and then return to discriminatory consciousness—the total elimination of all such wisdom *saṁskāras* is not instantaneous. When they reactivate, one is thrust back into external *prākṛtic* consciousness. According to Vijñānabhikṣu, only when the very last *saṁskāras* born of *sabīja* (*samprajñāta-samādhi*) are eradicated by the series of *nirodha-saṁskāras* born of *nirbiṣa* (*asamprajñāta-samādhi*), does one enter fully into the *nirbiṣa* state permanently. This points to the death of the physical frame. There thus appears to be a progression even within *nirbiṣa*.

To summarize, Vyāsa is suggesting here that for such a total state of internal absorption to occur, there must be a certain type of *saṁskāra*, the *nirodha-saṁskāra*, that blocks all cognitive functioning of the *citta*, even the hitherto beneficial faculty of pure insight and discrimination.
Discrimination, after all, is a function of the mind, which produces a saṃskāra that discriminates between prakṛti and puruṣa. So, by definition, the mind at this point is still engaged and functioning within the contours of prakṛti and therefore actively engaging awareness to this extent.

On another note, Bhoja Rāja understands discriminatory saṃskāras to take the form of the famous aphorism in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (IV.5.15): “neti neti,” not this, not this. In other words, pure Brahman, pure consciousness, is not anything prākṛtic—not the body, not the mind, not a table, not a chair, not a mountain, not a universe, not anything external whatsoever. But the act of discriminating in this way is nonetheless still a function of citta, which is itself prākṛtic. The nirodha-saṃskāras block all and every type of such mental functioning. They stand guard, so to speak, over citta and ensure that no thought, not even an insightful discriminatory one of pure wisdom, arises. I have sometimes half jokingly referred to these as the “terminator” saṃskāras.

Hariharānanda understands nirodha as a break in mental activity rather than an actual saṃskāra in its own right, like the spaces in a dotted line, which can be conceived of either as the break in a line or as no line. This interval between the functions of thought, the spaces in the line, can be prolonged by practice and supreme detachment manifesting as absolute disinterest toward anything knowable. This is the kaivalya, absolute liberation of III.50. There is now no possibility of rebirth, which under normal circumstances is triggered by the deposit of latent saṃskāras awaiting fruition.

Despite this, Hariharānanda states that some yogīs, wishing to do good to humanity, can enter nirbija for a specified time and then later reactivate their mind so as to be able to function in the world for the benefit of others. This is something akin to the Bodhisattva of Mahāyāna Buddhism who postpones irrevocably entering nirvāṇa out of compassion for all other embodied beings left suffering in saṃsara. To do this, it would seem that, prior to entering the state of nirbija-samādhi, such a yogī would have to intentionally deposit a saṃskāra in his or her citta to activate later as a thought that will pull the awareness of the yogī away from total absorption in the self and back into external consciousness mediated by the citta—a type of saṃskāric alarm clock arousing the yogī
from samādhi.

Vyāsa continues that when one fully enters into nirbija-samādhi, the mind, along with all the beneficial saṁskāras that were produced during sabīja-samādhi, dissolves into its primary matrix, the undifferentiated prakṛti. The nirodha-saṁskāras that allow this, Vācaspati Miśra notes, do not provide the mind with a raison d’être—they do not perpetuate the mind’s very reason to exist, as even the sabīja-saṁskāras do by providing discriminating wisdom—and so the mind no longer has any purpose to accomplish whatsoever. Vācaspati Miśra points to II.18, which informs us that the mind exists solely to accomplish either of two functions: to provide material experience of saṁsāra, or to lead the soul to liberation. Now that the latter has been achieved in nirbija-samādhi, the mind, along with the beneficial truth-bearing wisdom saṁskāras that have brought it to this point, ceases all action. The mind therefore, now unemployed, dissolves back into its matrix, prakṛti, as a clay pot, once its function has been accomplished, is discarded and dissolves back into the earth. Then, as Rāmānanda Sarasvatī puts it, “Where there is no cause, there is no effect.” Saṁsāra ceases.

Now, says Vyāsa, the puruṣa can exist in its own right—free, pure, and completely detached. Actually, says Vijñānabhikṣu, it has always been free: Notions of freedom and bondage in relation to the puruṣa are figurative conventions of scripture. Saṁsāra and all it entails exists in the mind, not in the puruṣa itself. The puruṣa becomes apparently ensnared in saṁsāra by dint of the mind erroneously misidentifying with it, and, because of this identification, puruṣa apparently becomes ensnared with the universe of experiences that the mind presents to it. But now, in nirbija-samādhi, all vestiges of association with the citta have been discontinued, and the final and ultimate goal of yoga has been attained—puruṣa’s unmediated absorption in its own conscious eternal essential nature. Therefore, says Vyāsa, in this state one refers to the free puruṣa as “the pure (śuddha), the self-contained (kevala), and the liberated (mukta).” Actually, it has been that way all along.
Thus ends the first chapter on samādhi in the Yoga Sūtras composed by Patañjali.
CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by introducing and defining yoga [1–2]. This is followed by a discussion of the two possible options for awareness [3–4], a description of the vṛttis [5–11], and how to control the vṛttis by practice and dispassion [12–16]. Then comes the division of samādhi into samprajñāta and asamprajñāta [17–18] and how to attain these [20–22], after the discussion of other states that might resemble it [19]. Īśvara is then introduced as the easy method of attaining samādhi [23], along with his nature [24–26] and the chanting of his name [27–29]. The chapter describes the distractions of the mind and their accompanying effects [30–31], and prescribes meditation on any object to combat them, with various examples presented [32–40]. Samāpatti is introduced with its varieties [41–45] and their fruits [46–48] and object [49]. The chapter concludes with a discussion of samprajñāta-samādhi preceding the final stage of asamprajñāta [50–51].
द्वितीयः साधनपादः ।
dvitiyah sahna-padaḥ
CHAPTER II

PRACTICE

II.1 tapaḥ-svādhyāyeśvara-praṇidhānāni kriyā-yogah

_tapaḥ_, austerity, self-discipline; _svādhyāya_, study/recitation; _Īśvara_, the Lord; _praṇidhānāni_, submission to; _kriyā_, action; _yogah_, yoga

_Kriyā-yoga_, the path of action, consists of self-discipline, study, and dedication to the Lord.

_Yoga_ for one with a controlled mind was described in the first chapter. Vyāsa asks, what about for one whose mind is not so fixed? He reads this _sūtra_ as indicating how one whose mind is not fixed may practice a more action-oriented type of _yoga_ referred to here by Patañjali as _kriyā-yoga_ and consisting of discipline, _tapas_; study, _svādhyāya_; and dedication to God, _Īśvara-praṇidhāna_. Vācaspati Miśra points out that _abhyāsa_ and _vairāgya_, practice and dispassion, were mentioned in the first chapter (I.15) as the means of _yoga_, whereas here in _kriyā-yoga_, _tapas_, _svādhyāya_, and _Īśvara-praṇidhāna_ are being presented as the means. Practice and dispassion, however, require a predominance of _sattva_ and so are difficult for the active and outgoing mind that is still under the influence of _rajas_ and _tamas_. For such a temperament, the means outlined in this _sūtra_ produce the required purity of mind. This is not to say that practice and dispassion are not to be cultivated by the beginner, but that _sattva_ is especially easily cultivated through the practice of _kriyā-yoga_. Once the mind is more _sāttvic_, it is more capable of remaining fixed in practice and dispassion. Vijñānabhikṣu (and Mādhava⁰) quote the _Gītā_ here:

“Action is said to be the means for the sage desirous of _yoga_, but for one who has already attained _yoga_, tranquility is said to be the means”
(VI.3). For the commentators, then, Patañjali is now presenting a more accessible and action-oriented method for approaching the goals outlined in the previous chapter.

Patañjali will be delving into a deeper level of psychological analysis, here, at least as pertaining to the conventional functioning of the mind. *Yoga* was defined as *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*, but in the following section he analyzes the mechanisms underpinning the production of the *vṛttis*. One cannot hope to still *vṛttis* until one confronts their underlying cause, hence this chapter is an organic continuation of the previous one (and not reflective of a hodge-podge textual collage as held by earlier scholars of the text as noted in the introduction).

*Tapas* means the control of the senses—controlling the quantity, quality, and regularity of one’s food intake, for example; the quality of what one listens to or reads or talks about—in other words, the “*sāttvicizing*” of one’s sensual engagements. There is no question of *yoga* for one who does not practice *tapas*, self-discipline, that is, austerity, the first item on Patañjali’s list, says Vyāsa, making no bones about the matter. Impurities, by which he means the influences of *rajas* and *tamas*, which take various forms due to endless *karma*, the *kleśas* (obstacles to *yoga* such as ignorance, ego, and attachment), and the *vāsanās* (clusters of subliminal imprints), have propelled the mind toward the snares of sense objects since beginningless time, *anādi*. These deeply ingrained habits cannot be removed without self-discipline.

Vijñānabhikṣu agrees that the tendency of the mind to pursue sense gratification can be broken only with self-discipline, but he adds that this should be of a gentle kind that will not disrupt the clarity of mind or weaken the body (otherwise, says Śaṅkara, if austerity and self-discipline are practiced in a way that disturbs the mind, they defeat the entire purpose of *yoga*—to still the mind). One does not have to look far to encounter the severity of the practices of certain extreme ascetics in Hindu texts, as even the hagiographical records of the practices of the Buddha indicate. Even the ancient Greeks were struck with the extreme practices they encountered among some Indian ascetics more than two millennia ago—standing on one leg, or with one arm raised aloft (Strabo XV.61), practices still encountered abundantly in India if one attends, for example, a Kumbha Melā festival.
The Yoga commentators take a gentler approach. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī considers self-discipline to consist of celibacy, service to the guru, speaking truthfully, gravity, silence, the performance of appropriate duty, tolerance of extremes, and controlled intake of food. Hariharānanda states that it entails renouncing all sensual actions that bring only momentary pleasure. Śaṅkara stresses that yoga does not bear fruit for one who does not practice austerity, that is, for one who is too fond of the body, considering it to be one’s very self, and overly inclined to avoid discomfort. The mind has been addicted to sense objects since time immemorial, he continues, and is caught up by them like a fish in a net. This primordial propensity cannot be destroyed without tapas, austerity. Patañjali will have more to say about tapas later.

Vyāsa defines svādhyāya, the second item mentioned in this sūtra, as japa, the repetitive chanting of mantras such as om, and the study of scripture, which is a jñāna practice most especially associated with the Vedānta tradition (it will be further discussed in II.32, 44). From studying scripture, the aspiring yogi gains knowledge and inspiration. Vyāsa defines the third ingredient of kriyā-yoga, Īśvara-praṇidhāna, as the dedication of all action to God, Īśvara, and the renunciation of the desire of all fruits that might accrue from one’s action. Vijñānabhikṣu notes that the submission to Īśvara mentioned in this sūtra is different from the interaction with Īśvara noted in the last chapter. In I.28, devotion to Īśvara was in the context of God as the object of meditation and took the form of concentration on his name and its meaning, whereas here, kriyā-yoga being more action oriented, devotion to Īśvara takes the form of renunciation of self-centered deeds and the offering of action to God. The implication is that total inward concentration on Īśvara is for the more advanced yogīs, and the more outward or action-centered practices associated with this chapter are for those whose minds are still outwardly inclined. However, it is important to note that surrender to God is not an option in kriyā-yoga as it was when it was presented as an object of meditation; it is a mandatory part of this practice. Patañjali’s theistic orientations are thus more forcefully evident in this sūtra.

The commentators take this dedication of one’s fruits of action to Īśvara as an implicit reference to the bhakti-centered karma-yoga of the Gītā, where, of course, Kṛṣṇa identifies himself as Īśvara. Indeed, the
term *kriyā* overlaps considerably with the term *karma*—action, deed, etc.—both being nominal derivatives of the root *kṛ*, to do. Vācaspati Miśra quotes the quintessential *karma-yoga* verse from the *Gītā* in this regard: “You have a right to perform your duties, but not to their fruits; do not consider yourself to be the doer of your activities, and do not become attached to inaction” (II.47). According to the laws of *karma*, all action, good or bad, when performed out of self-interest, or, more precisely, when performed under the influence of ignorance—mistaking the self to be the body and mind (II.5)—plants a seed of reaction, which in this or a future life must eventually bear fruit, good or bad, in accordance with the original deed (II.12). *Karma-yoga*, as outlined in the *Gītā*, is an action-oriented path through which one can avoid the vicious cycle of *karmic* reaction by acting purely out of *dharma*, duty, rather than self-interest. It is subsequently surpassed and culminates, in the *Gītā*, in action performed not just for duty but in devotion for Īśvara. It is in this *bhakti* sense that the *Yoga Sūtras* commentators take this aspect of *kriyā-yoga*.

Thus, Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the verses from the *Gītā* where Kṛṣṇa says: “Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you give away, whatever austerity you perform, do it as an offering to me” (IX.27). “I am the enjoyer of sacrifice and self-discipline, and the great Īśvara, Lord, of all the worlds” (V.29). “Those who worship other gods, endowed with faith, are really worshipping me, but they do so in ignorance” (IX.23). In these verses, as elsewhere in the *Gītā*, an alternative but overlapping path to *karma-yoga*, namely, *bhakti-yoga*, is expressed: Even as both paths require the abandonment of self-interest, action is better performed as an offering to Kṛṣṇa, that is, Īśvara. Thus, devotion rather than duty for duty’s sake (as is the case with *karma-yoga*) becomes the primary motivating principle for activity. In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa most conspicuously establishes the primacy of *bhakti* when he advises Arjuna to abandon all *dharma*, duties, and devote himself exclusively to him, thereby underscoring the primacy of *bhakti* over *dharma* (XVIII.66). (The text ends, however, with Arjuna performing his duty nonetheless, but doing so out of devotion because Kṛṣṇa tells him to, rather than out of the call of duty per se.)

Vijñānabhikṣu notes, therefore, that the *kriyā-yoga* of this *sūtra* denotes
more than the *karma-yoga* of the *Gītā*, as it includes *bhakti* in the form of Īśvara-praṇidhāna, and *jñāna* in the form of svādhyāya, study. Therefore, Patañjali’s *kriyā-yoga* actually incorporates three of the yogic paths outlined in the *Gītā*: *karma-yoga*, *jñāna-yoga*, and *bhakti-yoga*. The term *kriyā-yoga* is found infrequently in older texts. Gelblum (1992, 80), states that the term is to be understood more accurately as ritual or worshipful act rather than the too broad meaning, action. This would tie the term more specifically with the practices of *bhakti-yoga*, which eventually take the form of *pūjā* in theistic Hinduism (for example, the *upāsanā* in *Gītā* IX.14).

Vijñānabhikṣu draws attention to the fact that, as the outer or preparatory aspects of *yoga*, the three ingredients of *kriyā-yoga* specified in this *sūtra* are also three of the five *niyamas*, the second of the eight *aṅgas*, limbs, of *yoga*. He considers the first five limbs, which Patañjali calls outer, also a preparatory aspect of *yoga*, as is *kriyā-yoga*. *Tapah*-svādhyāya and Īśvara-praṇidhāna are the most important preparatory ingredients, says Vijñānabhikṣu; hence they have been selected here by Patañjali under the rubric of *kriyā*, in addition to their treatment later as *niyamas*.

Of interest here is the observation that *tapah* and *svādhyāya* are ancient *brāhmaṇa* practices, the former central to Vedic purificatory rites and the latter to the recitation and study of the Vedic texts. Accordingly, one can suggest that Patañjali is providing something of a continuum with mainstream tradition here, incorporating ancient and familiar Vedic activities into the more marginal practices of meditation that he was systematizing.

**II.2** *samādhi-bhāvanārthaḥ kleśa-tanū-karaṇārthaḥ ca*

*Samādhi*, meditative absorption; *bhāvana*, bringing about; *arthaḥ*, for the purpose of; *kleśa*, afflictions; *tanū*, weak; *karaṇa*, making; *arthaḥ*, for the purpose of; *ca*, and

*The yoga of action* is for bringing about *samādhi* and for weakening the afflictions [to yoga].
Patañjali states here that by the performance of kriyā-yoga, the kleśas, afflictions—nescience, ego, attachment, aversion, and the clinging to life—which are the subject of the next sūtra, are weakened. Etymologically, kleśa, from the root kliś, means to torment, trouble, cause pain, afflict. The word is often translated as obstacles, since in addition to tormenting the living entities, the kleśas obstruct the mind from realizing the nature of the true self. As yoga was defined in I.2 in terms of the suppression of vṛttis, so here kriyā-yoga is defined in terms of the weakening, tanū-karana, of what we will discover are the underlying cause of the vṛttis, the kleśas. We are thus moving into a deeper psychological level of the citta.

In fact the kleśas become like burnt seeds, scorched by the fire of discrimination, and thus they become unproductive, and one is no longer subject to these afflictions and the kliṣṭa (detrimental) vṛttis they produce. (We noted earlier that kliṣṭa is from the same root as kleśa.) In Vācaspati Miśra’s understanding, kriyā-yoga weakens the afflictions, at which point discrimination, no longer overcome by these powerful enemies, can manifest and burn them further. Otherwise, the kleśas are present at all times. Without performing kriyā-yoga, says Śaṅkara, one may know theoretically from the scriptures and the teachings of the gurus that prakṛti and puruṣa are different, but this type of knowledge in and of itself will not remove the kleśas, and thus there will be no experiential realization of these theoretical ideas. Consequently, one will remain victimized by these kleśas—ignorance, ego, desire, etc. Hence Patañjali is prescribing that one must actively perform kriyā-yoga.

Recall that under normal circumstances, every seed of karma must at some point bear its fruit. Since there are unlimited seeds of karma, which cannot all fructify during a single lifetime, one must be reborn in order to experience all one’s just karmic fruits lying in storage. Upon being reborn and experiencing the fruits of these previously stored seeds of karma, however, more actions are performed in response, each one planting more seeds of karma, and the vicious cycle of birth and death is perpetuated. As has been discussed, any single action triggers a potentially unending series of reactions, since one solitary action produces a reaction, which, when it eventually bears fruit, prompts a response or rereaction, prompting a rerereaction, provoking a
rererereaction and so on unlimitedly. By kriyā-yoga, these seeds are burnt and so no longer ripen and bear the fruit of repeated experiences in the world of saṁsāra. Simultaneously, as the kleśas are weakened, sattva is enhanced, and, as this happens, the discrimination of the difference between the purusa soul and prakṛti matter can arise.

Some scholars feel that the jump in subject matter from the previous chapter on samādhi to the kriyā-yoga orientation of this chapter points to the patchwork nature of the text. After all, the path to samādhi was defined earlier as stilling the mind, and here as actively engaging in devotion, austerity, and study. As Feuerstein (1979) has long argued, however, there is an organic transition and fundamental structural coherence between the two. Sūtra I.2 defines the primary goal, citta-vṛtti-nirodha, the pacification of the mind, and II.1ff concern themselves with those subconscious mechanisms triggering these vṛttis, the kleśas. The distinction in terminologies and practices in this chapter merely reflects the requirements of a deeper level of psychological analysis and subsequent remedial activity. This chapter is thus an indispensable continuation of the first, providing more specific technical information as to the psychological mechanisms underpinning the citta-vṛttis that sūtra I.2 requires the yogī to still. Without eliminating the kleśas, there is no question of bringing about this ultimate state, samādhi-bhāvana.

II.3 avidyāsmitā-rāga-dveśabhiniveśāḥ kleśāḥ

avidyā, ignorance; asmitā, ego; rāga, attachment; dveśa, aversion; abhiniveśāḥ, clinging to life, will to live; kleśāḥ, impediments

The impediments [to samādhi] are nescience, ego, desire, aversion, and clinging to life.

The kleśas have been referred to throughout the commentaries thus far, and implicitly referred to at the beginning of the text itself in I.5 where the vṛttis are stated as being kliṣṭa or akliṣṭa. Patañjali now formally introduces them here. As we have encountered elsewhere, Patañjali’s
method when he presents a sūtra containing a list is to discuss each item subsequently in separate sūtras, so the five kleśas will be examined individually in the next sūtras. Kleśa is often used as a synonym for duḥkha, suffering, and, indeed, saṁsāric existence, which Patañjali will describe below as duḥkha, is perpetuated as a result of the kleśas.

When these kleśa impediments to samādhi are in full force, says Vyāsa, they strengthen the influence of the guṇas, produce karma, the law of cause and effect, and, by mutual interaction, bring forth the fruits of karma. Patañjali will later define these fruits as the type of birth, life duration, and life experience a person generates in accordance with the quality of actions he or she performs. By “mutual interaction,” elaborates Vijñānabhiṣkṣu, anticipating the next sūtra, Vyāsa intends that the kleśa of ignorance breeds the remainder—attachment, ego, aversion, and clinging to life—and these produce further ignorance in a vicious cycle. Thus, when ignorance is destroyed, so are the other kleśas. In short, these five impediments, which are all located in the mind, trigger and perpetuate saṁsāra, the world of change, that is, of birth and death.

Recall that Patañjali stated in I.5 that the vṛttis can be kliṣṭa, that is, produced by these kleśas, or aklīṣṭa. If we take the latter term literally, this seems to indicate that there can be vṛttis that are not produced by the kleśas, that is, not subject to ignorance, attachment, etc. This can point only to the notion of the jīvanmukta: someone who is still embodied and thus functioning with a citta, but a citta that generates vṛttis that are not subject to ignorance, ego, attachment, etc. Recent scholarship (Whicher, 1998, Chapple 2008) has consistently and persuasively argued that it is a misconception to consider Yoga to be a radical withdrawal from the world; rather, it entails enlightened engagement with the world, that is, action stemming from aklīṣṭa-vṛttis. There are certainly solid grounds to support this position.

II.4 avidyā kṣetram uttareśām prasupta-tanu-vicchinnodārāṇām

avidyā, ignorance; kṣetram, field; uttareśām, of the others; prasupta, dormant; tanu, weak; vicchinn, interrupted.
Ignorance is the breeding ground of the other kleśas, whether they are in a dormant, weak, intermittent, or fully activated state.

Patañjali gives the important information here, in resonance with all Indic soteriological thought, that ignorance, avidyā, is the foundation of all the other kleśas, the field, kṣetra, within which they grow, and hence the ultimate cause of saṁsāra. Like a piece of land is the substratum for bushes, creepers, grass, plants, etc., says Śaṅkara, so ignorance supports the other kleśas; when ignorance is dispelled, the other kleśas disappear.

Adopting what one might nowadays consider a psychoanalytical tone, Patañjali also differentiates among four different states in which the five kleśas manifest. Vyāsa defines these as the dormant state, prasupta, when the kleśas reside in the mind in potential form as seeds. Śaṅkara qualifies this by noting that only the kleśas other than ignorance can be found in a dormant state. Ignorance is never dormant, since it is the cause and support of the others and thus is always manifest. Otherwise, according to Vijñānabhikṣu, a kleśa may be dormant for a long time, even two or three births, before reactivating. These dormant seeds eventually germinate when a person encounters particular situations or contexts that serve as triggers. They then develop into the fully activated, udāra, kleśas mentioned in this sūtra—kleśas that are actually exerting their influence on the mind at a given time.

When the kleśas are continually interrupted—appearing and then fading away—they are described as intermittent, vicchinnā, the third state listed in this sūtra. For example, says Vyāsa, when the kleśa of attachment for something is present, aversion for it is absent. Aversion may succeed attachment, but the two do not occur simultaneously. In other words, clarifies Vijñānabhikṣu, aversion is not totally absent from a person when some other emotion like attachment is present; it is just in abeyance or latent (and, of course, vice versa). Therefore, it can be considered intermittent. Or, continues Vyāsa with a rare touch of humor, just because Caitra is attracted to one particular woman at one point in time does not mean he is disinterested in other women. He happens to be interested in one particular woman in the present, but he may
become interested in some other woman in the future. These future attachment kleśas featuring other women remain either in dormant, weak, or interrupted states while the present kleśa is running its course. Intermittent kleśas differ from dormant kleśas, the first item on the list, insofar as they remain inactive for shorter periods of latency, according to Vijñānabhinīkuśa.

When, according to Vyāsa, one consciously cultivates a state of mind that is the opposite of the kleśas, they become weak, tanu, the second state noted by Patañjali. Indeed, Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhinīkuśa note that one desiring liberation should actively counteract these kleśas. One can accomplish this by the practice of kriyā-yoga, which Patañjali has indicated weakens the kleśas, tanū-karaṇa (I.2). The practice of cultivating their opposites and pondering their consequences, which we will encounter in II.34, also weakens the kleśas: Thus, right knowledge dispels its opposite, the kleśa of ignorance; discrimination of the difference between puruṣa, the real self, and prakṛti dispels its opposite, the kleśa of ego, the false self; detachment dispels its opposites of both the kleśas of attachment and aversion, since they are two sides of the same coin; and the realization of the eternality of the soul dispels the kleśa of clinging to life. More than being weakened, Vyāsa continues, ultimately these kleśas can be burnt by yogīs who have cultivated deep meditation, and they then completely lose their power to activate even when the yogī encounters situations that would under normal circumstances trigger their activation. Such yogīs are said to have had their last birth.

The kleśas therefore can actually be found in five states, according to Vyāsa. Since they continue to exist when they have been burnt, but have lost their power to produce effects, the burnt or impotent state can be added to the list of four mentioned in the sūtra, making a total of five. Śaṅkara says this burnt state was not included by Patañjali in this sūtra because burnt seeds are not common to all living beings as is the case with the other four states, and this sūtra concerns itself with the kleśas as generally found present among embodied beings. Only in the yogī is a burnt category to be found.
II.5 anityāśuci-duḥkhānātmasu nitya-śuci-sukhātma-khyātir avidyā

anitya, noneternal, temporal; aśuci, impure; duḥkha, painful; anātmasu, the nonself, that which is not ātman; nitya, eternal; śuci, pure; sukha, joyful; ātma, self; khyātiḥ, notion, perception; avidyā, ignorance

Ignorance is the notion that takes the self, which is joyful, pure, and eternal, to be the nonself, which is painful, unclean, and temporary.

Patañjali here gives a very important definition of ignorance, the primary cause of all bondage: Avidyā, ignorance, entails confounding the nature of the soul with that of the body. The body is here described as painful, duḥkha; unclean, aśuci; and temporary, anitya, unlike the puruṣa who is joyful, sukha; pure, śuci; and eternal, nitya. We notice from the prefixes to these two sets of phrases that these two entities are exact opposites. Thus, by adding the negating prefix a- or duḥ- to the adjectives in the first part of this sūtra to the same adjectives in the second part, Patañjali is efficiently underscoring the fact that conventional awareness is the exact opposite of true knowledge. To confuse the two, or misidentify the latter with the former, is avidyā.

While anyone can understand that the body is temporary, what does Patañjali intend by saying it is “unclean”? Vyāsa quotes a verse: “The learned consider this body to be unclean, on account of its location, origin, sustenance, excretions, death, and the continual need to keep it clean.” As always, the commentators elaborate on why the body might be considered unclean due to these things. The location of the body can be seen as unclean because in its embryonic form it is situated near the mother’s excrement and urine; its origin is sperm and blood; its sustenance is fluids produced from food and drink; and its excretions are the discharges from the various outlets of the body—urine, feces, sweat, and mucus.

There are various views of the body in Hindu knowledge systems. Āyurveda depicts the body as a complex combination of substances, dhātuḥ, that need to be kept in appropriate balance; the kāma-śāstras,
desire texts, see the body as a means through which one can experience intense sensual enjoyment in skillfully manipulated circumstances; tantra considers the body to be a manifestation of citi-śakti, divine energy; bhakti construes the body as a temple that can be used in the service of God. These views are not mutually exclusive, but the ascetic tradition tends to view the body as a rather unpleasant bag of obnoxious substances.

In reality, as the cliché goes, beauty is skin deep, and a beautiful body is just a bag of bodily fluids and organs, which can be unpleasant and repulsive when taken out of their natural biological context. Thus, part of Patañjali’s definition of ignorance in this sūtra is that in the unclean or impure there is an illusion of purity or beauty, which, as Vyāsa puts it, means considering this “very distasteful” body to be pure, like the man enamored of a “woman, beautiful like the rising new moon, with limbs made of honey and nectar and eyes as large as the blue lotus, who enthuses the world of men with flirtatious glances.”\textsuperscript{10} But despite such surface-level attractions, all in all, any body is in reality a sack of potentially rather embarrassing substances. Its real nature is evidenced by the need to constantly clean it (and Patañjali will later refer to the practice of cleanliness, essentially an act of removing the discharges and excretions of the body, as a catalyst that, if performed with the goals of yoga in mind, can lead to dispelling any erotic fantasies about the reality of the body). Realization of the nature of the body becomes most vivid during old age and at death: Nobody wants to linger around a decomposing body.

In this same vein, the Buddha advised his followers to actually contemplate the reality of the impurities of the body, that is, the bodily substances which, taken out of context, would be considered obnoxious, specifically that the body is simply a collection of “hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidney, heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs, stomach, bowels, intestines, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, serum, saliva, mucus, synovial fluid, urine.”\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, he actually prescribes a series of visual meditations on these realities:

And moreover bhikkus [monks], a brother, just as if he had seen a
body abandoned in the charnel field, dead for one, two, or three days, swollen, turning black and blue, and decomposed, applies that perception to this very body (of his own), reflecting: “this body, too, is even so constituted, is of even such a nature, has not gone beyond that (fate).” ... And moreover bhikkus [monks], a brother, just as if he had seen a body abandoned in the charnel field [reduced to] a chain of bones hanging together by tendons, with flesh and blood yet about it, or stripped of flesh but yet spotted with blood; or cleaned of both flesh and blood; or reduced to bare bones, loosed from tendons, scattered here and there, so that the bones of a hand lie in one direction, in another the bones of a foot, in another, those of a leg, in another a thigh bone, in another the pelvis, in another the pineal vertebrae, in another the skull, applies that perception to this very body (of his own) thinking: “this body, too, is even so constituted, is of such a nature, has not gone beyond that (fate).”  

In short, the Yoga tradition does not consider the body a suitable place to seek happiness for those interested in enlightenment. Patañjali will make the same point in II.15 by pointing to the notion of finding pleasure in what is really pain, says Vyāsa. Patañjali and the commentators have a good deal more to say about the nature of the body below.

The nonself, an-ātman, referred to by Patañjali here, says Vyāsa, actually consists not only of the body, which is the locus for enjoyment, and the mind, which is an instrument through which the awareness of puruṣa can contact the world, but also the accessories or paraphernalia of the body, whether animate (such as spouse, animals, and offspring) or inanimate (such as furniture or food). Although one may think that one’s body, one’s mind, and even one’s possessions are one’s real self, they are not, and to confound them as such is ignorance. Vyāsa quotes a verse that the commentators ascribe to Pañcaśikha, an ancient authority in the Śaṅkhya tradition: “One who regards objects, whether animate or inanimate, as part of one’s self, rejoicing when these things prosper, and lamenting upon their demise, is deluded.” As the Gītā puts it: “The wise (paṇḍitāḥ) lament neither for the living nor the dead” (II.11).

I must acknowledge a Vedāntic slant in my translation of this sūtra,
where joy, purity, and eternity are imputed to the soul. Most translators, traditional and modern, translate the sūtra perfectly appropriately along the following lines: Ignorance is the apprehension of the joyful, the pure, the eternal, and the self in that which is painful, unclean, temporary, and the nonself. Unlike the Vedānta tradition, the Sāṅkhya Yoga tradition (along with the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika traditions), at least in their classical expressions, generally do not speak of the experience of the liberated puruṣa as blissful but rather as an absence of suffering.14 Even Vijñānabhikṣu, who otherwise does not hesitate to blend Vedāntic notions into his commentary, states in his Yoga-saṅgraha that “we do not subscribe to the Neo-Vedāntics who imagine that ultimate liberation consists of the attainment of supreme bliss.”15 However, an argument can be made that, in contrast to the qualities of the nonself, Patañjali is alluding to the Upaniṣadic view that the real self —and he uses the Upaniṣadic term ātman for the soul here—is sukha, blissful. Both scholars and some traditional commentators have disregarded the possibility that Patañjali might be explicitly introducing an Upaniṣadic concept, the blissfulness of the self, underscored by his specific usage of the Upaniṣadic term ātman. In Vedānta, the highest self consists of bliss, ānandamayo ‘bhyāsāt (Vedānta Sūtras I.1.13), but there is an assumption in some expressions of the Yoga tradition that the nature of the self is pure consciousness without any content whatsoever, including bliss. Vyāsa himself speaks of the bliss of liberation, compared to which even the highest bliss of worldly pleasure including the states of sattva are considered suffering. (Vyāsa in general is quite comfortable correlating puruṣa with the Brahman of the Upaniṣads [for example, III.34], as has always been standard for any orthodox Hindu thinker.) Whatever direction the later tradition took in this matter, this sūtra can be read as indicating that Patañjali, too, subscribed to this view.

Overall, Patañjali has very little to say about the nature of the actual experience of puruṣa attained in nirbīja- or asamprajñāta-samādhi, since, naturally, this state is beyond words and conceptualization, and thus beyond description. But this sūtra can be read as suggesting that it is a state of sukha, happiness, compared to all experiences other than that of the self, which are ultimately various shades of duḥkha, suffering, frustration. (Clearly, the prospect of a positive experience of ultimate
bliss in the liberated state is far more enticing for one considering the arduous path of yoga than merely the prospect of the cessation of pain!)

The term *sukha* or *ānanda* is used in the Vedānta tradition as an inherent characteristic of the ultimate self\textsuperscript{16}—the *Gītā* uses the term a number of times to describe the experience of the self (V.21; VI.21, 27–28; XIV.27), making it clear, however, that this type of *sukha*, unlike the ephemeral and fleeting *sukha* of sensual indulgence, is *akṣayam*, imperishable (V.21); *ātyantikam*, infinite (VI.21, 28); *uttamam*, the highest (VI.27); and *ekāntika*, absolute (XIV.27). The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* goes a step further and, in a rhetorical or figurative mode, attempts to quantify the unquantifiable experience of bliss inherent in the self according to the Upaniṣadic tradition:

Let us take a young man—a first class young man who is the most learned, cultured and strong person. And let us suppose that he owns this whole world with all its resources. This situation would constitute one measure of human bliss. A single measure of the bliss of earthly *gandharva* celestials ... equals one hundred measures of human bliss; a single measure of the bliss of celestial *gandharvas* ... equals one hundred measures of the bliss of earthly *gandharvas*; a single measure of bliss of the forefathers, who live long in their realm ... equals one hundred measures of the bliss of celestial *gandharvas*; a single measure of the bliss enjoyed by the gods who attained their status by birth ... equals one hundred measures of bliss of the forefathers; a single measure of bliss of the gods who attained their status by good deeds ... equals one hundred measures of the bliss of those gods who attained their status by birth; a single measure of the bliss of Indra, king of the gods ... equals one hundred measures of the bliss of the [other] gods; a single measure of the bliss of the sage of the gods, Brāhaspati, ... equals one hundred measures of the bliss of Indra; a single measure of the bliss of Prajāpati, the progenitor of species, ... equals one hundred measures of the bliss of Brhaspati; a single measure of the bliss of *Brahman* equals one hundred measures of the bliss of Prajāpati. (II.8)

In other words, the bliss of *Brahman* is countless times greater than whatever might constitute the highest level of human bliss. With such
figurative language, these texts try to point to the experience of Brahman/ātman/puruṣa as not only a state of bliss, but one that is far more blissful than any pleasurable experience connected with prakṛti, the world of matter.

A further somewhat technical point is that in Sanskrit, the word for ignorance is avidyā. As in English words like “a-theist” or “a-temporal,” an a-preixed to a noun in Sanskrit indicates an absence of the thing in question, so avidyā literally means a lack of vidyā, knowledge. However, ignorance, says Vyāsa, is not just the absence of right knowledge but is an actual type of perception in its own right, a perception of reality that is the opposite of true knowledge. Just as amitra, enemy (literally, a + mitra, not + friend), does not merely mean the absence of a friend but an actual real inimical person in his or her own right, so avidyā is a real mental state, not just an absence of knowledge. Thus the kleśas are actual in the citta. There are differences among the Hindu philosophical schools as to what constitutes ignorance, and Vijñānabhikṣu points out in this regard that Yoga philosophy differs from its sister school of Sāṅkhya, which takes ignorance to be lack of discrimination rather than an actual state of mind in its own right.

Also, although Vyāsa seems to equate avidyā with the vṛtti of viparyaya, error, in I.8, avidyā appears to be a more fundamental element in the subconscious. It underpins all the vṛttis, including pramāṇa, right knowledge, by which the viparyaya-vṛtti is dispelled. Error simply means to perceive reality incorrectly on occasion and thus may come and go. Ignorance here, avidyā, means much more fundamentally to confuse puruṣa with prakṛti and remains permanent until enlightenment is attained (even though the other kleśas, as noted above, can be intermittent, etc.). In other words, even if surface-level error, viparyaya, has been dispelled by surface-level pramāṇa, right knowledge, both these vṛttis are still underpinned by a deep-structure level of ultimate ignorance. Viparyaya is a conscious state but not necessarily a permanent or fundamental one; avidyā, in contrast, operates constantly at the very deepest level of the subconscious (until it is dispelled by true knowledge prior to liberation).

The topic of ignorance is discussed extensively by all philosophical schools—since it is, after all, the cause of bondage for almost all
soteriological traditions of Indic thought—and the commentators introduce Vedāntic analogies here. Vijñānabhikṣu gives the familiar example of silver and mother-of-pearl to illustrate ignorance: Taking the body and the things of the manifest world to be real and eternal is like mistaking mother-of-pearl to be silver. Hariharānanda gives the other classic Vedāntic example of the snake and the rope: A person walking along at dusk happens upon a rope lying on the path but mistakes it for a snake and is alarmed. Similarly, ignorance is taking one thing for another (in this case, perceiving the nonself as the real self), a false cognition but a cognition nonetheless. Therefore, although ignorance can be dispelled by vidyā, its opposite or (to use the more specific Yogic term) viveka, discrimination, ignorance in Yoga philosophy is an actual state of mind (rather than just an absence of vidyā or discrimination as some other schools hold).

One might note, given the Yoga school’s engagement with aspects of Buddhist teachings, that Patañjali defines ignorance in exactly the same terms as used by the Buddha, with one essential and dramatic reversal. Instead of ignorance being defined as the notion that takes the self, which is joyful, pure, and eternal, to be the nonself, which is painful, impure, and temporary, as Patañjali has done here, Buddhist teachings consider ignorance to be the notion that takes the an-ātman, the absence of self, which is a joyful, pure, and eternal state, to be an autonomous independent ātman, a notion that results in a painful, impure, and temporary state (Paṭisambhidā Sutta I.8.2.3). This essential difference will be addressed at various places below, but we can note here that in Buddhism there is no autonomous ātman (puruṣa) self that can be separated from its interdependence with prakṛti. Not only is there no puruṣa, but clinging to notions of such an entity is a primary cause of ignorance rather than enlightenment. The two views are thus diametrically opposed—the very goal of yoga and of human existence in the Yoga school is the very cause of bondage and ignorance in Buddhism.

II.6 ḍṛg-dārsana-śaktyor ekātmatevāsmitā
dṛk, the subjective power of seeing, the seer; darśana, instrumental power of seeing, sight; śaktyoh, of the powers; eka, one; ātmatā, nature; iva, as if; asmitā, ego

Ego is [to consider] the nature of the seer and the nature of the instrumental power of seeing to be the same thing.

Moving on to asmitā, the second of Patañjali’s kleśas, dṛk, the seer, is a reference to the awareness of puruṣa (referred to in I.3 as draṣṭṛ, another derivation of the same verbal root drṣ, to see\(^\text{17}\)). The instrumental power of sight, darśana, on the other hand, refers to the intelligence aspect of the citta, that is, to buddhi as the instrument of awareness. Buddhi is the first prākṛtic layer enveloping puruṣa and presents images of the sense objects in the world, and indeed all vṛttis, to the puruṣa. It is therefore the primary instrument in the power of sight; the senses proper, such as the actual physical sense of sight, although also instruments, can make their impressions known to puruṣa only through buddhi, when it molds itself into their forms (the metaphor for this process, we recall, is that of liquid copper poured into a mold). In other words, without buddhi as primary instrument, puruṣa would have no awareness of prakṛti. Patañjali thus defines ego, asmitā, as the attribute of misidentifying buddhi, the instrumental power of sight, with the puruṣa soul, the actual seer. I like to give the example of a person wearing spectacles to see clearly, but due to mental disorder refusing to remove them, imagining that the spectacles are his very self rather than an instrument perched on his nose facilitating perception. In a sense, the ego entails doing just this, imagining that the mind and body, which are simply instruments allowing awareness to perceive the world, are the actual self.

Another way of putting this is that the act of experience, says Vyāsa, becomes possible when the experiencer and that which is experienced—two completely distinct categories and metaphysical entities—are considered to be one and the same, ekātmatā. It is ego that promotes this confusion. Ego is the specific aspect of ignorance that identifies the nonself, specifically the intelligence, with the true self, puruṣa (ātman). It is the knot in the heart, says Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, that ties these two entities together. Indeed, says Vijñānabhikṣu, the very act of experience itself means the identification of puruṣa with buddhi: Experience means
experiencing an object other than the subject of experience. However, when one understands the true natures of these two distinct entities, continues Vyāsa, one no longer attempts to enjoy this world, and complete uncoupling of puruṣa from prakṛti, liberation, becomes possible.

Vyāsa quotes a verse: “Not perceiving the puruṣa self to be distinct from the buddhi intelligence in form, nature, and awareness, one makes the mistake of considering the intelligence to be the true ātman self as a result of illusion.” The difference between the two, notes Vācaspati Miśra, is that the self is unchanging, and the intelligence ever changing. As a result of this misidentification, says Vijñānabhikṣu, one identifies with the states of the intelligence, and so one thinks oneself to be peaceful, or awake, or learned, or whatever state is present in the intelligence. But in reality, it is the intelligence that is experiencing these states.

Vijñānabhikṣu points out that the two kleśas of ego and ignorance are to some extent the same thing, but there is a difference in degree. Ignorance initially involves a not yet specific notion of I-ness, a sense of self as being something as yet undefined other than puruṣa, a partial identification of the real self with buddhi, the intelligence, while ego involves a more developed or complete identity between the puruṣa self and buddhi. For example, he says, identifying oneself with one’s spouse and children is analogous to ignorance, but actually feeling their happiness and distress is analogous to ego. Thus the difference is one of degree; ego evolves out of ignorance and makes the misidentification of nonself with self more concrete and specific.

It should be reiterated here that the asmitā, ego, as the effect of buddhi under the influence of ignorance, is different from that produced in the higher stages of samādhi by the pure sāttvic buddhi, as has been discussed. The asmitā in the context of samādhi in sūtra I.17 is true discrimination manifest in the citta, that is, correct identification of the puruṣa as the real source of I-am-ness. Asmitā in the present context of the kleśas is false identification, considering the I am to be the prākṛtic mind and body, due to the absence of such true discrimination (“I am female,” “I am fat,” “I am hungry,” “I am a dog”). Therefore, asmitā, referred to as ahaṅkāra in Sāṅkhya, is pivotal in terms of determining the choice the mind will take, in terms of whether it wishes to direct its
attention to puruṣa or to prakṛti:

That choice will be either the observable world or a quest for liberating wisdom (jñāna). Ahaṅkāra then is that critical moment during which one of these goals must be chosen; the choice is either spiritual puruṣa or prakṛti, this is to choose between infinity and finitude … wisdom or unwisdom, knowledge or ignorance … This is the Sāṅkhya either … or, the human plight which points to the need for the healing medicine of Yoga spirituality and discipline … Although this definitive choice certainly exists, phenomenal individuality and material identity unfolded by ahaṅkāra also threaten to become a prison of bondage; humans may chose to lock themselves into such a phenomenal world and fail to search further for liberating wisdom. (Podgorski 1984, 164)

One might mention here that asmitā and the ahaṅkāra of the Sāṅkhya system are roughly synonymous but etymologically can be taken to refer, perhaps, to slightly different functions of the ego. Ahaṅkāra is not used by Patañjali (but occurs in Vyāsa’s Bhāṣya in I.45 and III.47, where it is treated synonymously with asmitā). The etymological meaning of ahaṅkāra is I am the doer and is defined in the Gītā as the channeling of consciousness outward through the mind and senses into the world of objects, with the individual imagining himself or herself, due to illusion, to be the doer of actions in the world—actions that are actually being carried out by the mechanical forces of nature, prakṛti. In Kṛṣṇa’s words, “The soul, bewildered by ahaṅkāra, thinks ‘I am the doer’ of deeds that are actually being done by the guṇas of prakṛti.” (III.27). Asmitā is an unusual grammatical construction: Asmi means I am, the first-person singular of the present tense of the verb as, to be, and hence asmitā; literally means I-am-ness.19 Both ahaṅkāra and asmitā therefore involve consciousness refracting outward away from its source and being falsely identified with its prākṛtic embeddedness. But if there is a difference between ahaṅkāra as defined in the Gītā and asmitā as defined in this sūtra as a kleśa, it is that the emphasis of the former is on the false I as a doer of action, while the emphasis of the latter is on the false I as a prākṛtic entity (I am a man, a woman, sad, etc.). In other words, the Gītā emphasizes the mistaken notion of I-am-the-doer-ness, whereas Patañjali
emphasizes the false sense of I-am-ness, a difference that resonates with the different concerns of the two texts (the former with action in the world and action in devotion, and the latter with realization of the true self).

II.7 sukha-anuśayī rāgaḥ

sukha, happiness; anuśayī, the consequence; rāgaḥ, attachment

Attachment stems from [experiences] of happiness.

Moving on to the third kleśa, Vyāsa simply says that the hankering, desire, or craving for pleasure, sukha, or the means to attain pleasure by one who remembers past experiences of pleasure is attachment, rāga. The key ingredient in this process is memory. One who has experienced pleasure in the past recollects it and hankers to repeat the experience in the present or future, or to attain the means of repeating the experience; it is this dwelling on past experiences that constitutes attachment. Vācaspati Miśra adds that ego is the root of attachment, just as ignorance is the root of ego; consequently, ego precedes attachment in the list of kleśas as ignorance precedes ego.

The commentators outline the psychology of attachment in the following manner: When a new means of pleasure is perceived, it is memory that infers that this new means of pleasure is the same as or similar to something that produced pleasure in the past, and hence it promises to provide the same or similar pleasure in the present or future. Therefore, memory precedes attachment, that is, attachment is predicated on memory. Hariharānanda adds that previous impressions, saṁskāras, of pleasure can remain latent in the mind, and thus even when memory is not consciously activated, these latent saṁskāras cause the mind and senses to be unconsciously drawn toward objects that have produced pleasure in the past. Hence one might find oneself partial to something for no particular conscious reason, which, from the perspective of Yoga psychology, could correspond to latent imprints from previous lives (the phenomenon of déjà vu is explainable in similar
manner). Ignorance and ego cause the deluded mind to associate the self with these latent saṁskāras as well, identifying the self with the senses through which these latent impulses toward pleasure can be expressed. These kleśas thus cause the mind to identify the self with the nonself, namely, the body and the mind.

Hariharānanda also makes the important observation that when desire deepens into greed, the sense of right and wrong, morality, becomes neglected. The stronger the greed, the more a person is liable to pursue immoral means of obtaining the objects of desire. The Gītā outlines the sequence of events:

From contemplating the objects of the senses, an attachment to them is born, from attachment, desire arises, and from desire is produced anger. From anger comes illusion, and from illusion, confusion of memory. From confusion of memory, intelligence is destroyed, and from the loss of intelligence, one is lost. (II.62–63)

Vijñānabhikṣu adds as an aside that the desire of the jīvanmukta, or liberated but still embodied soul (most probably a reference to the desire to help other embodied beings), is not an attachment at all and thus not a kleśa perpetuating saṁsāra. This is because the desire of a liberated soul is not for personal pleasure or gratification, or, ultimately, stemming from ignorance at all.

II.8 duḥkhānuśayī dveṣāḥ

duḥkha, pain; anuśayī, the consequence; dveṣāḥ, aversion

Aversion stems from [experiences] of pain.

Vyāsa explains aversion, dveṣāḥ, the fourth kleśa, in a parallel manner to the previous kleśa of attachment: The feeling of resistance, anger, frustration, and resentment toward pain and its causes, by one who remembers past experiences of similar pain, is aversion. The commentators state that this sūtra is to be understood along the same lines as the last one: Aversion, dves&;a&;h, after all, is the flip side of the
same coin as attachment. When we resist or resent something, or are angry or frustrated over something, it is because of a remembrance that this thing caused us pain in the past.

II.9 svarasa-vāhī viduṣo ‘pi tathārūḍho ‘bhiniveśaḥ

sva, own; rasa, potency, juice; vāhī, carrying, bearing; viduṣaḥ, the possessor of wisdom, the wise; api, even; tathā, also; rūḍhaḥ, pervaded, grown, established; abhiniveśaḥ, clinging to life

[The tendency of] clinging to life affects even the wise; it is an inherent tendency.

The commentators consider this clinging to life kleśa, abhiniveśaḥ, to be a synonym for the fear of death. All living beings, says Vyāsa, wish that they would never die and could live forever. The inherent nature of such a wish, he says, suggests that the nature of death has been experienced in the past. From this one can conclude that one has undergone previous births. In other words, just as the previous sūtras indicated that attachment or aversion to something is caused by positive or negative memories of that thing, aversion to death likewise indicates that one’s memory retains unpleasant recollections of past deaths, although these are latent or subconscious in the present life. It is perhaps because fear of death pertains to past-life rather than present-life saṁskāras, suggests Balslev (1991), that clinging to life is characterized as an independent kleśa rather than relegated under the category of the previous kleśa of dveṣa, aversion.

Even a newly born worm is afraid of death, Vācaspati Miśra argues to make this case. This fear cannot be explained by the standard means of attaining knowledge established by Patañjali in I.7: direct perception, inference, or verbal testimony. In other words, Vijñānabhikṣu elaborates, one might argue that a person’s fear of death need not be based on previous death experiences in past lives but can easily be accounted for by the fact that one directly perceives death around one and can thus
infer that one, too, is going to die. Or, one might attain this knowledge of the imminence of death from the testimony of reliable people such as parents or teachers, or from scriptures or books of knowledge. But a newly born worm has not had these perceptions or inferences or testimonies yet nonetheless displays a fear of death.

The same innate fear of death is visible in the human infant, says Vācaspati Miśra. A newborn infant cannot have inferred the reality of death or heard about it any more than the worm. Given the Yoga position indicated in the last verse that dveṣa, aversion, like rāga, attachment, is the product of memory, how can this innate fear of death be accounted for unless all creatures have latent recollections of previous deaths? Such experiences are embedded in the citta in the form of saṁskāras, or mental imprints, that subconsciously cause creatures to avoid death. These saṁskāras underlie the clinging to life of all creatures noted in this sūtra. This seems to be a form of a long-standing argument offered by most Hindu sects in defense of the existence of the soul: The instinctive memories in the newborn and, indeed, any type of memories whatsoever, require a preexisting substratum, or soul, on which to initially inhere, or find their support.

As Patañjali indicates in this sūtra, the kleśa of clinging to life is found even in the learned, not just the ignorant. The vidvān (here in the genitive form viduṣo) is one who has vidyā, knowledge, that is, one who is learned in the scriptures. Even the wise pursuing liberation, who are aware of the temporality of all things, are subject to this kleśa, say the commentators. This is because it is a stronger saṁskāra than other saṁskāras, says Vijñānabhikṣu (although Vācaspati Miśra adds that this is the case only for those whose wisdom is based on perception, inference, and testimony, not for those who have actually attained samādhi).

II.10 te pratiprasava-heyāḥ sūkṣmāḥ

te, these [five kleśas]; pratiprasava, return to original state; heyāḥ, are eliminated; sūkṣmāḥ, subtle
These *kleśas* are subtle; they are destroyed when [the mind] dissolves back into its original matrix.

Vyāsa’s only comment here is that when the mind of the *yogī* has fulfilled its purpose, that is, when the *yogī* has attained a permanent state of *nirbīja-samādhi*, it dissolves back into *prakṛti*. As Śaṅkara puts it, no fire is needed for something that has already been burnt, nor grinding mortar for what has already been ground. The mind, having fulfilled its objectives, becomes redundant. The five *kleśas* are lodged in the mind. Consequently, becoming like burnt seeds as discussed above, they too dissolve along with it. Patañjali in *sūtra* II.4 referred to only four possible states for the *kleśas* (dormant, weak, intermittent, or fully activated), but we recall that Vyāsa in his commentary for that *sūtra* mentioned that the burnt state constituted a fifth state. Vācaspati Miśra suggests that in this *sūtra* Patañjali is indirectly confirming that fifth state. This is a good example of how Vyāsa’s commentary has become almost as canonical as Patañjali’s original text: It is almost never questioned by all subsequent commentators, but reinforced. The task of the traditional exegete is not to probe if an authoritative text is true, but how it is true.

Like burnt seeds, *kleśas* do not disappear as long as the mind of the *yogī* is still active; they remain embedded there but in their burnt state, like an empty shell, with their potency to sprout or produce effects (unwanted *vṛttis*) terminated. Their total dissolution occurs only when the mind of the liberated *yogī* dissolves back into its original *prākṛtic* source upon the *yogī*’s death, *pratiprasava*. One might mention here that in the Yoga metaphysics of *satkāryavāda*, matter cannot be totally destroyed, it can only transform.²²

Hariharānanda states that the difference between the burnt seed state of the *kleśas* and their total dissolution along with the mind into *prakṛti* corresponds to the difference between *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta-samādhis*. In the former state, the mind is still active. Even the enlightened wisdom *saṅskāra* that “I am not this body” is nonetheless a thought of the mind. In this sense, it is a *vṛtti* and therefore has a form similar to any *vṛtti*, including its opposite, the unenlightened thought, “I am this body.” The difference between them is that the former is *akliṣṭa*, beneficial to the goal of *yoga*, and the latter *kliṣṭa*, detrimental (I.5). In
the same way, a burnt or parched seed still has a form that is similar to a normal seed; the difference is that one produces fruit and the other does not. However, there is always the possibility of even a burnt or parched seed unexpectedly sprouting, says Vijñānabhikṣu, so it is not until after the death of the yogī who has attained *asamprajñāta-samādhi* that the mind completely dissolves along with the *kleśas* and thus completely ceases to function as a mind with no possibility of capturing the awareness of *puruṣa* and of again producing misidentification, rebirth, and *saṁsāric* existence. In *samprajñāta-samādhi*, says Hariharānanda, there is still the sense of I, a faint trace of personal ego, *asmitā*, and thus the mind, along with its *kleśas*, is still not ready to dissolve away completely.

**II.11**

*dhyāna*-heyāḥ *tad-vṛttayah*

*dhyāna*, meditation; *heyāḥ*, eliminated; *tat*, their [the *kleśas*];

*vṛttayah*, changing states of mind
The states of mind produced by these *kleśas* are eliminated by meditation.

We had suggested at the beginning of the chapter that the relationship of *yoga* defined in I.2 as *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*, with *kriyā-yoga* as defined in II.1, is that by the former the *vṛttis* are weakened, and by the latter the *kleśas* or mechanisms underpinning the production of the *vṛttis* are eliminated. By the phrase *tad-vṛttayah*, Patañjali here confirms that the *kleśas* produce the *vṛttis*. They are thus a deeper element of the psyche and unavoidably need to be confronted if one wishes to *nirodha* the *vṛttis* produced by them, as I.2 requires the yogī to do.

Patañjali indicated in II.2 that the *kleśas* are destroyed by *kriyā-yoga*, yet here he states that the *vṛttis* produced by them are destroyed by meditation, *dhyāna*. Vyāsa clarifies that the seed power, or fructifying ability, of the *kleśas* is weakened by the practice of *kriyā-yoga* and then eradicated by the practice of meditation, until they become like burnt seeds. He gives the useful example of washing garments: gross dirt is
first removed from soiled clothes, and then efforts are directed at the finer dirt. In the same way, the gross manifestations of the kleśas can be easily removed by kriyā-yoga, but the more subtle ones require greater efforts.

The commentators understand the process of eradicating the kleśas as a threefold sequence: First the cloth is cleaned by shaking it in the air or washing it in water, and this removes the larger chunks of dirt. It is then washed more carefully by adding a cleaning agent or beating it against a stone (as is still the custom in India), and this removes the finer, more ingrained dirt. But to completely and absolutely remove all subtle impressions of the soiled spots, says Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, you ultimately have to destroy the cloth itself. Likewise, the grosser aspects of the kleśas are eliminated by kriyā-yoga, the more subtle aspects by meditation, but, as indicated by the last sūtra, the actual burnt seeds, or residual impressions of the now impotent saṁskāras, are not completely dissolved until the mind, along with all its latent saṁskāras, merges back into its matrix at the death of the yogī who has attained the highest state of samadhi.

II.12 kleśa-mūlaḥ karmāśayo dṛṣṭādṛṣt’a-janma-vedanīyah

kleśa, impediments; mūlaḥ, root; karma, actions; āśayaḥ, deposit, stock; dṛṣṭa, seen; adṛṣṭa, unseen; janma, birth; vedanīyah, is experienced

The stock of karma has the kleśas as its root. It is experienced in present or future lives.

Vyāsa states that the deposit, or stock of karma mentioned by Patañjali here, the karma-āśaya, is produced from kāma, lobha, moha, and krodha: desire, greed, delusion, and anger. Vyāsa appears to be using a variant set of terms overlapping the kleśas, perhaps taken from the Gitā (for example, XVI.21). Desire and its uncontrolled form of greed are ultimately the kleśas of attachment, and its flip side, aversion (which stem from the kleśas of ego and ignorance); anger is the frustration of
this desire or attachment (Gitā II.62–63); and delusion is a manifestation of the kleśa of ignorance.

Vyāsa then discusses varieties of karma, good and bad, and its fructification. The examples Vyāsa gives of good karma include performing austerities, chanting mantras, cultivating samādhi, and worshippingĪśvara or the great sages, with enthusiasm and determination. Such activities bear fruit in this lifetime. He illustrates bad karma as harmful activities directed against the fearful, infirm, or helpless; those who have placed faith in oneself; the noble minded; or those performing austerities. If these activities are performed intensely, they can bear their fruits during the present life. Vyāsa illustrates the instant fructification of good karma by referring to the youth Nandīśvara, whose human form was transformed into a celestial one in that very life due to his intense performance of pious activities. He illustrates the immediate fructification of bad karma by the story of Nahuṣa, who was cursed by a sage to immediately abandon his celestial form as Indra and assume the form of a snake in the earthly realms due to his arrogance. Neither of these individuals had to undergo the normal process of old age and death but experienced their just fruits instantly. Similarly, the Bhāgavata (X.10) tells the story of two celestials who were cursed to become trees in the courtyard of Kṛṣṇa’s family home due to offending sage Nārada with their shameless licentious behavior. Baby Kṛṣṇa pulls down the two trees by dragging a mortar behind him that becomes wedged between them, and the two celestials are immediately released from their curse and regain their celestial forms.

Whether good or bad, all karma is stored or imprinted as saṁskāra in the citta and, in general, may manifest its fruits in either this life or the next. Activities are virtuous or nonvirtuous and produce corresponding fruits. In the next sūtra, Patañjali states that the particulars of one’s life—the type of birth, quality of life experience, and life span—are all the fruits or results of one’s karma. But the fruits of karma ultimately have the kleśas as their root, mūla; it is these kleśas that influence one to act in good or bad ways. Therefore, there is a vicious cycle: kleśas provokes karma, and karma fuels the kleśas.

Vācaspati Miśra gives a few examples of how the desire, greed, delusion, and anger noted by Vyāsa might produce either bad or good
karma. Desire can obviously produce bad karma when one performs impious acts out of avarice, such as stealing another person’s property, but desire can also produce good karma, as when one performs pious acts motivated by a desire to enjoy the rewards of piety. Bad karma caused by anger, says Vācaspati Miśra, hardly needs exemplification—murder of the righteous, etc.—but there are also instances when anger produces good karma. Here he refers to the famous Purānic story of prince Dhruva, a child devotee of Viṣṇu (Bhāgavata Purāṇa IV.9–12ff). Once, Dhruva attempted to climb onto his father’s lap but was rebuked by his co-mother, who wanted her own son, Dhruva’s half brother, to be the king’s favorite and eventual successor to the throne. Offended that his father did not step in when he was humiliated in this way, Dhruva determined in anger to gain a kingdom greater than his father’s. Upon asking his own mother to advise him as to who might help him achieve his ends, she told him that he should worship Viṣṇu, since Viṣṇu can bestow any boon. Even though the boy was only five years old, and even though the great sage Nārada tried to dissuade him on account of the perils and hardships of the forest where he was heading, the boy persisted and performed intense austerities with his mind fixed on Viṣṇu. Eventually, as a result of concentrating his mind so exclusively on the supreme Lord in this way, Viṣṇu appeared to him and Dhruva was purified and received immeasurable boons, both material and spiritual. The point is that even though Dhruva worshipped Viṣṇu out of anger at the offense he had suffered, his mind was completely fixed without deviation on Īśvara and from this perspective created good karma (although a vision of Viṣṇu is, of course, an act of grace and beyond the jurisdiction of any mundane laws of karma).

A verse in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa states that “those who always dedicate their desire, anger, fear, affection, sense of identity, and friendship to Hari [Kṛṣṇa], enter for certain into his state of being” (X.29.15). According to the Bhāgavata, the highest meditation and goal of life is total absorption in God, even if this is generated out of animosity, as was the case with Kaṁsa, who, along with other demoniac adversaries of Kṛṣṇa, attained liberation simply by virtue of their minds being fixed undeviatingly on God, albeit in animosity. The text states: “The king of the Cedis, Śiśupāla, attained perfection despite hating
Kṛṣṇa; what then of those dear to him?!” (X.29.13). The bottom line for the Bhāgavata is a samādhi with the mind fixed exclusively on Kṛṣṇa as Īśvara, whether in anger and hatred, or in a mood of intense desire and love, as with the gopī cowherd-women—all qualities which, under any other circumstances, would be considered kleśas.

Returning to Vyāsa’s list, delusion can generate bad karma, as in the case of taking the life of another under the belief that doing so is a virtuous act, but delusion, according to Vācaspati Miśra does not beget good karma. However, even here, one might think of instances where delusion provokes a positive outcome in Purānic narratives. Bali, the king of the demons, for example, was deluded by Viṣṇu who appeared before him in the form of a brāhmaṇa boy Vāmana, and tricked him out of his lordship of the three worlds. Yet the episode ends in Bali’s upliftment (see IV.2 for story) since he attained pure devotion to Viṣṇu (Īśvara).

Vijñānabhikṣu notes that the laws of karma apply only when they are performed out of ego, which, we recall, Patañjali defines as confounding the true puruṣa self with the mind and body. He quotes the Gītā, where Kṛṣṇa is encouraging the despondent warrior Arjuna to fight a righteous war out of a sense of duty rather than out of concern for the outcome that might result for him personally: “One whose intelligence is not tainted by ego, though he kills people in this world, does not kill, nor is he bound by his actions” (XVIII.17).

Hariharānanda provides the following useful synopsis of the workings of karma: Any state of mind leaves an imprint of itself on the citta, and, as we know, this imprint is called a saṁskāra. Imprints of good and bad karma produce an accumulation of saṁskāras called the karmāśaya, or stock of karma (II.12). These saṁskāras are either born from the kleśas, or are not: Those produced out of ignorance are born from the kleśas, but those resulting from true understanding are not (such as the “terminator” saṁskāra of I.50). It is the former category of saṁskāras born from the kleśas, whether pious, impious, or mixed in nature, that produces the store of karma, the karmāśaya. This store of karma then fructifies and brings about the threefold conditions of one’s life that are the subject of the next sūtra. The time it takes for the seeds of karma to fructify—whether in this life or a future one—depends on the intensity
of the original *saṃskāra*.

II.13 *sati mūle tad-viṇāko jāty-āyur-bhogāḥ*

*sati*, when in existence; *mūle*, the root; *tat*, its; *viṇāko*, fruition; *jāti*, birth; *āyur*, age, span of life; *bhogāḥ*, experience

As long as the root [of the *kleśas*] exists, it fructifies as type of birth, span of life, and life experience [of an individual].

Vyāsa dedicates a long commentary to this *sūtra*. He begins by reiterating that *karma* can bear fruit only when the *kleśas* exist. Just as grains of rice can germinate only when they are not burnt and when they are connected with the husk, and not when the seeds are burnt or removed from their husks, so *karma* cannot fructify when burnt or removed from its husk or its root, *mula*, of the *kleśas*. As long as the *kleśas* remain active, all the pious and impious actions born of them during one’s lifetime, *karma*, whether dominant or subordinate, combine at the time of death and determine one’s next life. In other words, at the moment of death, the accumulated *karmāśaya*, or storehouse of *karma*, determines and establishes the “three fruits”: type of birth, *jāti* (human, animal, etc.); life span, *āyus*; and life experience, *bhoga* (the aggregate of pleasure and pain that one will experience).

This store of *karma*, Vyāsa adds, containing the impressions of deeds, *saṃskāras*, performed throughout countless previous lives, is like a fishing net covered with knots, and the entire collective determines one’s future birth. At death, says Vijñānabhikṣu, the subtle body, or *citta*, which is where the *karmāśaya* and all the *saṃskāras* are stored, transfers into the new body. The subtle body is not destroyed at death as the gross body is, and thus *saṃskāras* are preserved from life to life. Now, whereas some *karma* contained in the *karmāśaya* fructifies in the very next life, not all *karma* is destined to do so. Some *karma* might be mutually exclusive with other *karma* and not be able to coexist in the same life, says Śaṅkara; for example, one might have some *karma* that merits a
celestial birth and other *karma* that requires an animal birth for fruition. Clearly those two sets of *saṁskāras* require distinct births in which to fructify. In general, the cluster of *karma* that does not fructify in the next life, says Vyāsa, may undergo three possible outcomes: It can be destroyed, it can merge with more dominant *karma*, or it can remain dormant for a long time, overshadowed by more powerful *karma*.

The destruction of such dormant *karma*, if it is bad, occurs by the performance of good *karma*, such as yoga-related activities, and this can be accomplished even in this lifetime, adds Vyāsa. He substantiates this with a verse: “Of the two types of known *karma*, one is bad, but it can be destroyed by deeds that are good. Therefore desire to perform good deeds in this world.”25 On the other hand, although good *karma* can destroy bad *karma*, the reverse does not hold true: Bad *karma* cannot destroy good *karma*. But bad *karma* can merge with good as per the second outcome noted by Vyāsa above and cause some slight diminution or interference in enjoying the fruits of good *karma*—such as indigestion after the pleasure of a good meal, says Vijñānabhikṣu.

As for the third option, lying dormant, not all *karma* is destined to activate in the next life, and so the balance lies dormant until the appropriate conditions manifest for it to fructify (unless, as outlined above, it is destroyed by good *karma*, or merges with more powerful good *karma* in the interim). Hariharānanda gives the example of a man who performed pious deeds as a boy, but due to greed he acted like a beast as he grew older. The beastly acts he performed as an adult developed into the dominant *karma* for that particular lifetime, determining that his next life would be that of a beast. His earlier pious *karma* performed as a boy, which required a human form in which to fructify, would meanwhile lie dormant during his life as a beast until the appropriate conditions manifest for it to activate in a future birth as a human. This means that at the moment of death, the particular cluster of *saṁskāras* destined to fructify in the next life arise like a wave, according to Vācaspati Miśra, and not only propel the *citta* into the next body but also determine the specific mind-set of that body. Thus, the portion of beastly *saṁskāras* of a person during the period when he or she was thinking and acting in a beastly manner, which require an animal birth as *karmic* consequence, reactivate in the mind and solidify into a beastly
mind-set for the corresponding period as an animal. Meanwhile, the portion of human saṃskāras remains dormant until it is its turn to fructify in a life requiring a human mind-set and birth. Since the time and place of the conditions surrounding the fruition of karma are so complex that they cannot be fathomed, the unfolding of karma, says Vyāsa, is mysterious. As Kṛṣṇa states: “Difficult to understand are the ways of karma” (Gītā IV.17).

Vācaspati Miśra notes that, ultimately, the store of karma results in pleasure and pain. After all, the type of birth, life experience, and life span mentioned by Patañjali in this sūtra basically correspond to experiences of pleasure and pain. And pleasure and pain inevitably produce a mutually dependent relationship with the kleśas of attachment and aversion: The latter are dependent on the former. Nor can attachment and aversion exist without producing pleasure and pain. Acting out of attachment, for example, will produce pleasure if the object of attachment is available, or, if it is unobtainable or fails to live up to expectations, pain; likewise with aversion. Therefore, says Vācaspati Miśra, the mind can become a fertile field for the karmāśaya only when it is watered by the kleśas. Conversely, the karmāśaya becomes impotent when the kleśas are destroyed. Hence Patañjali calls the kleśas the root of worldly existence.

Vijñānabhikṣu quotes various verses pointing to attachment as the cause of karma and hence of rebirth: “Being attached, a person, along with his karma, attains the result of that to which his mind is attached” (Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad IV.4.6). “The puruṣa soul, situated in prakṛti matter, experiences the guṇas born of prakṛti. It is attachment to these guṇas that is the cause of a person’s birth in pious or impious wombs” (Gītā XIII.21). “Birth is not seen for one who has no attachment” (Nyaya Sūtras III.1.24). Of course, attachment itself comes from ego, which in turn comes from ignorance, hence the ordering of the kleśas in Patañjali’s list in II.3.

When knowledge arises, Vijñānabhikṣu says, two results accrue. We know that ignorance is destroyed and so the kleśas are deprived of their base, and thus further karma is no longer generated. But additionally, already existing karma generated previously that is not due to manifest in this life, the sañcita-karma, collection or store of karma lying latent, is
burnt (since \textit{karma} can exist only where the \textit{kleśas} exist). He quotes the \textit{Gītā} again: “The learned call that person wise whose \textit{karma} is burnt by the fire of knowledge” (IV.19). \textit{Vijñānabhikṣu} points out that the texts all speak of \textit{karma} being burnt, not destroyed, since nothing can be destroyed—\textit{karma} is fully dissolved only when the mind, where \textit{karma} is lodged, is itself dissolved back into its \textit{prākṛti}ic matrix after the death of the enlightened \textit{yogī}.

While the enlightened \textit{yogī} is still alive, says \textit{Vijñānabhikṣu}, he experiences only the \textit{karma} that has already begun to fructify, called \textit{prārabdha-karma}. When the \textit{citta} is transferred from one body to another, it brings its residual \textit{karma} with it, only some of which is destined to bear its fruit in that birth. Once this next life begins, this portion of \textit{karma} relevant to this birth is called the \textit{prārabdha-karma}. If a person becomes enlightened in that life, all the other residual dormant \textit{karma} that had not been activated for that life, the \textit{sañcita-karma}, is destroyed, and, of course, no ongoing \textit{karma}, \textit{sañciyamānakarma}, is being generated since the \textit{kleśas} of an already liberated but still embodied \textit{yogī} are destroyed when ignorance, the first \textit{kleśa} and support of the other \textit{kleśas}, is destroyed upon enlightenment. Therefore, an enlightened \textit{yogī} experiences only the \textit{prārabdha-karma} already activated and set in motion for this lifetime, and thus may still be subject to, for example, illness or injury. Such a \textit{yogī} is called a \textit{jīvanmukta}, embodied but liberated, and does not return to \textit{saṁsāra} after death.

The \textit{Sāṅkhya Kārikā} dedicates a specific verse to this phenomenon: “Upon attaining complete enlightenment ... the embodied self remains [subject to embodiment for the balance of that life] because of the force of past \textit{saṁskāras}, like a potter’s wheel” (LXVII). The potter’s wheel does not immediately come to a stop when the potter stops turning it; it slows gradually due to the force already invested in it. Or, as per the illustration used in the Vedānta tradition, the archer has no control over the arrow that has already been discharged; it will rest only when its momentum is exhausted (IV.1.15). Or, in more modern terms, if we pull the plug of a fan out of its socket such that no further electric current is entering the appliance, it does not immediately come to a standstill; it needs to use up the energy already transmitted to it. Likewise, even as no further \textit{karma} is being produced by the \textit{yogī} and all latent \textit{karma} is
destroyed, the *karma* already activated for this life nonetheless has to run its course.

II.14 te hlāda-paritāpa-phalāḥ puṇyāpuṇya-hetutvāt

*te*, these [type of birth, span of life, and life experience]; *hlāda*, pleasure; *paritāpa*, pain; *phalāḥ*, fruits; *puṇya*, virtue; *apuṇya*, vice; *hetutvāt*, as a result of

These [the type of birth, span of life, and life experience] bear the fruits of pleasure and pain, as a result of [the performance of] virtue and vice.

This *sūtra* states that vice, *apuṇya*, bad *karma*, produces a short life span and distressful, *paritāpa*, type of birth and life experience; virtue, *puṇya*, good *karma*, produces pleasurable, *hlāda*, experiences. So the *kleśas* provoke *karma*, and *karma*, depending on its nature, produces different qualities of births, life spans, and life experiences, and these in turn produce corresponding pleasure and pain. Vijñānabhikṣu reminds us that pleasure and pain exist in experience, and any experience is ultimately the result of the false identification of oneself with the body and its senses. Therefore, the *kleśas* of ego and ignorance always remain the ultimate root cause of all suffering. And even so-called pleasure can be seen as suffering from an ultimate perspective, since it is temporary and there is always some type of pain or undesirable element mixed in with every pleasurable situation. Vyāsa, anticipating the next *sūtra*, notes that a *yogi* sees suffering even in what others would consider pleasurable situations.

As for the *jīvanmuktas*, says Vijñānabhikṣu, since they are free from ignorance and ego, they experience only the pleasure and pain of the *karma* that has already started to fructify. They have extinguished attachments and desires and so do not produce fresh *karma*. He quotes the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*: “If one knows oneself as ‘this’ [i.e., the pure ātman self], then desiring what, and for the sake of whom, will one identify with this body?” (IV.4.12).
II.15 pariṇāma-tāpa-saṁskāra-duḥkhair guṇa-vṛtti-virodhāc ca duḥkham eva sarvam vivekinaḥ

pariṇāma, result, consequence, change; tāpa, distress; saṁskāra, mental impression; duḥkhaiḥ, as a result of the pains; guṇa, qualities, influences; vṛtti, fluctuating states of mind; virodhāt, conflict; ca, and; duḥkham, suffering; eva, indeed; sarvam, everything; vivekinaḥ, one who has discrimination

For one who has discrimination, everything is suffering on account of the suffering produced by the consequences [of action], by pain [itself], and by the saṁskāras, as well as on account of the suffering ensuing from the turmoil of the vṛttis due to the guṇas.

Patañjali here makes a seemingly radical statement that everything is seen as duḥkha, suffering, by the wise. In the previous sūtra, he noted that pious activities produced hlāda, pleasure, but lest anyone take this to indicate that the pursuit of pleasure through piety be a fitting goal of life, he here informs us that even the so-called pleasure of prakṛti is only deemed pleasure relative to more obvious forms of paritāpa, pain. To the vivekin—one who has viveka, discrimination—all is suffering, even the so-called hlāda of good birth, experiences, and life span mentioned in the last sūtra. Indeed, hlāda is particularly insidious and especially perpetuates saṁsāra, since it is the memories of pleasure that propel people to try to re-create and reexperience that pleasure, and thus get caught in the vicious cycle of karma that perpetuates saṁsāra.

The term viveka, discrimination, comes from the root vic, to separate. Vivekin is the possessor of viveka.26 Thus, those possessing discrimination, the wise, can separate puruṣa from prakṛti (to discriminate entails distinguishing between different entities). Hence they can discriminate that even the hlāda described in the previous sūtra belongs to the world of prakṛti and is therefore, from an ultimate perspective, actually duḥkha.
A better translation of *duḥkha* than suffering might be, in my view, frustration, since suffering often has physical connotations, and, in addition to referring to physical pain, *duḥkha*, perhaps even primarily, is the frustration that follows from the attempt to find permanent satisfaction in objects of the senses and mind that are by their very nature temporary. This perception of the world as a place of frustration is fairly ubiquitous in the Yogic traditions. The first Noble Truth of Buddhism, *sarvam duḥkham*, all is suffering, consists of the exact same terms adopted by Patañjali. Indeed, the other three Noble Truths are predicated upon the first (that there is a cause of this suffering, that there is a possibility of putting an end to suffering, and that there is a path to accomplish the removal of suffering). Thus the Buddhist path is based on a perception that the world—that is, the world as experienced under the influence of ignorance—is a place of suffering. Patañjali makes the same claim.

In fact, most of the soteriological systems of ancient India shared this perception. As early as the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* we find that, other than the ātman, “everything else is grief” (III.4.2), and the *Gītā* calls the world *duḥkhālayam aś ā śvatam*, a “place of suffering which is temporary” (VIII.15). The *Sāṅkhya Kārikās* state in the very first verse: “Because of the torment of the threefold *duḥkha* [discussed below], the desire to know the means of counteracting them arises” (I.1). In the *Nyāya Sūtras*, *duḥkha* is one of the nine objects of “right knowledge,” and liberation is defined as the removal of suffering (I.1.9, 22). Similarly, the very definition of *yoga* in the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras* is the elimination of *duḥkha* (V.16).

This *sūtra* is actually the pivot of this chapter, which, in turn, is the heart of the entire text. Verses II.1–14 discuss the causes, the *kleśas*, that produce *duḥkha*, and verses 16 onward focus on the path to remove *duḥkha* as well as the state beyond. The chapter thus echoes the Four Noble Truths.

One might ask, without an experience of the world as frustrating on some level, what would motivate one to seek fulfillment elsewhere and take up the rigors and challenges of the *yoga* path? If one perceives the world of experience as a jolly fine place in which to be, why would one wish to seek a higher truth? From this perspective, a recognition of the
world as a place of suffering is actually a preliminary realization for the path of yoga or, it might be argued, for any serious spiritual practice, as indicated in the Sāṅkhya Kārikās quote above.

Vyāsa sets out to examine the nature of suffering and its apparent opposite, pleasure. Pleasure, says Vyāsa, means attachment to the objects that give pleasure, whether inanimate objects or living beings. It is this attachment to pleasure that motivates action, and, as we know, action produces the karmāśaya, the store of action, that is, the cycle of reaction inherent in karma. Aversion to suffering is the flip side of this—the attempt to avoid the objects that cause suffering. Therefore, it is attachment and aversion that produce the karmāśaya. More specifically, pleasure is the appeasement that occurs when the senses are gratified with the objects of enjoyment, and suffering the lack of such appeasement, in other words, the agitation that results from unfulfilled desire.

However, Vyāsa points out that the senses are never really freed from hankering by repeated indulgence, because such indulgence simply increases the attachment to pleasure as well as the demands of the senses. One remains even more dissatisfied than before. The Gītā considers lust “the eternal enemy … insatiable as fire” (III.39). The more fuel one pours on a fire, the stronger it burns. Therefore, indulgence is not the means to gain ultimate pleasure, and one who gets addicted to sense pleasure ends up immersed in dissatisfaction and in this sense enmeshed in frustration. This is the frustration born of consequences, parināma, the first type of suffering on Patañjali’s list. Parināma also means change, transformation, as well as consequences, and can be read as pointing to the ever-changing nature of everything. From this perspective, the experience of any happiness, even our “Kodak moments,” which appear so satisfying at the moment of experience, are changing or temporary by nature. Hence, when the pleasurable moment inevitably passes, the sense of frustration is enhanced. Therefore the yogī, says Vyāsa, sees suffering inherent even in the moment of pleasure.

Vācaspati Miśra continues this theme by pointing out that attachment to pleasure is itself a source of pain because one is never satisfied with what one has but constantly craves additional objects of pleasure. And on the occasions when one gains possession of such perceived sources of
pleasure, one finds that they do not provide the anticipated satisfaction, and thus one craves more or different objects. The *Mānava-dharma-śastra* makes the observation that “desire is never extinguished by the enjoyment of what is desired; it just grows stronger, like a fire that flares up with the oblation of butter” (II.94). This constant hankering for more enjoyment is itself suffering. Vācaspati Miśra cites a similar verse in the *Gitā*: “Happiness derived from the contact of the senses appears like nectar in the beginning, but in the end becomes like poison. Such happiness is born from *rajas*.” Like honey mixed with poison, he says, there is always suffering inherent as a consequence of pleasure; indeed, there is always suffering mixed in with the actual experience of pleasure itself.

The suffering of pain, *tāpa*, the second type of suffering listed in this *sūtra*, is identified by Vyāsa as the three standard sources of suffering identified in traditional texts. (*Tāpa* here refers to involuntary pain experienced by the mind and senses, in contrast to the spiritual practice of *tāpa* as an ingredient of *kriyā-yoga* or the *niyamas*, where it refers to the voluntary control of the senses.) These three are *ādhyātmika*, *ādhibhautika*, and *ādhidaivika*: suffering produced by one’s own body and mind (such as illness, injury, insecurity, or anxiety); suffering produced by other beings (such as mosquitoes, enemies, obnoxious neighbors, even one’s own sometimes troublesome family members and loved ones); and suffering produced by nature and the environment (such as storms or earthquakes). Through body, speech, and mind, a person tries to avoid distressful situations and instead attain the means of pleasure. A small amount of suffering is felt more than an abundance of pleasure, says Vijñānabhikṣu, and so aversion to pain is stronger than desire for pleasure. Therefore, people pray to God that their happiness be perpetuated and suffering be avoided.

A further result of the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain, says Vyāsa, is that it inevitably causes one to harm others in this endeavor, even if some benefit, and thus binds one to accumulate merit and demerit, *karma*. He states that pleasure can be attained only at some direct or indirect cost of harm to others, and thus the seeds of aggression are added to one’s store of *karma*. Even in such seemingly innocuous activities as preparing food and cleaning, violence is performed against
other living creatures. Tiny creatures are harmed unknowingly in the performance of household chores, as Vācaspati Miśra illustrates with another well-known verse from Manu (III.69) that the householder must atone for the five slaughterhouses of the household: the fireplace, the grindstone, the broom, the mortar, and the pestle.29

Saṁskāras, subliminal impressions, the next item mentioned by Patañjali as a source of suffering, are, as we know, the latent imprints deposited in the mind of every past experience of pleasure and suffering. When these ripen as karma and fructify, one again experiences pleasure and suffering. The desire for pleasure and aversion to pain trigger these latent saṁskāras, which fructify and become memories of past pleasures or pains. These memories generate fresh craving or aversion, the desire to re-create past pleasurable experiences (or avoid known miseries). This is a form of mental torment or suffering: One is constantly lamenting the loss of past pleasures and hankering for the attainment of pleasures one does not at present have. Additionally, of course, inspired by such memories, a person acts, producing further experiences, and these produce a new set of saṁskāras that add to the accumulation of karma. Thus the river of karma, which, as Vyāsa will argue next, is all ultimately suffering, swells continuously. Since one cannot experience the fruition of all this karma in one life, one is bound to experience it in future lives, and so the cycle of embodied existence, saṁsāra, is perpetuated across lifetimes.

This vicious cycle causes concern only to the yogī, however, who can recognize it as being a highly undesirable state of affairs. As the Buddha notes, what others call pleasure, sukha, the Noble Ones call duḥkha.30 A wise person cannot enjoy something sweet if he or she knows it will eventually cause sickness, says Śaṅkara. A yogī is as sensitive as an eyeball: If a strand of thread falls on the eyeball, says Vyāsa, it causes distress, but if it falls on any other part of the body, it is hardly felt at all. Similarly, the pain of existence even in so-called situations of happiness troubles only the yogī; it does not trouble other people. Others, say the commentators, cannot see the long-term repercussions of activities that produce limited so-called happiness in the present. Consequently, they repeatedly experience the suffering accrued due to their karma, try to avoid this suffering and pursue happiness but,
planting more seeds of *karma*, continue to reexperience it. This is rather like a person running away from a scorpion who gets bitten by a poisonous snake, says Vyāsa.

Everything is painful to the ignorant as well, says Vijñānabhikṣu, but they do not realize it, whereas the yogī does. Vijñānabhikṣu illustrates this with a verse from the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*: “There is more pain created for a person through spouse, friends, children, income, home, property and wealth, etc., than there is pleasure” (VI.5.56). Thus, Patañjali notes that for a wise person, everything is called pain, rather than happiness mixed with pain. Also, fools realize their mistake upon attaining the consequences of the pursuit of pleasure after the event, Vyāsa continues, whereas for the yogī, pain is evident at the very time of the experience of pleasure. Moreover, most people relate only to present pain, whereas the yogī is aware of past pain, which influences the present, and future pain, which is inherent in and a consequence of the present.

One might give the example of a person who wakes up with a terrible hangover after a night of alcohol excess, swears he or she will never drink again, but, come the next weekend, is back at the bar, destined to awake with another hangover the next morning. The *saṁskāras* of so-called pleasure produced from a night on the town are imprinted in one’s *citta* mind. When these reactivate, if one’s desire to enjoy in this way is sufficiently strong, it overrides discernment, or the memory of the negative consequences, and one again feels the urge. Thus the cycle of attempting to find happiness but, instead, ultimately being subject to suffering, is perpetuated. The compulsion to experience happiness is so strong that one typically resigns oneself to the inevitable inconveniences that accompany it, under the rationalization, “That’s just life.” For Cārvāka, an ancient materialist philosopher, all the pleasures of life have some inconveniences, and one must simply tolerate them. In one of his well-known quotes, the enjoyment of fish inevitably requires that one first remove the fish bones. For yogīs, of course, such an attitude perpetuates *saṁsāra*, but there are other possibilities, namely, the freedom from all suffering, which is the nature of *puruṣa* itself.

The fourth item on Patañjali’s list of the causes of suffering, being constantly subject to the *citta-vṛttis*, the agitations of the mind, refers to the fact that the mind is always changing, never peaceful or satisfied.
This is because the guṇas, which constitute the citta, are always in flux, as Kṛṣṇa states in the Gītā (XIV.10). Depending on whether sattva, rajas, or tamas is dominant at any particular time, the mind temporarily experiences mundane (prākṛtic) happiness, distress, or illusion, respectively. But this very turmoil is ultimately a condition of suffering, since the mind craves continuous happiness. Vijñānabhikṣu also quotes the Gītā: “For those whose intelligence is not fixed in yoga ... there is no peace, and how can there be real happiness without peace?” (II.66). As he points out, since any one of the guṇas is never exclusively present, when sattva is temporarily dominant and one experiences the prākṛtic happiness that is a characteristic of sattva, even then, rajas and tamas are also present to a subordinate degree. Therefore, this prākṛtic happiness is always mixed with some degree of pain (rajas) and dejection or illusion (tamas)—just like the fruit of the haritaki tree contains at the same time all six tastes known to Hindu gastronomy (sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent). And, besides, since the guṇas are always in flux, even one’s mixed happy state eventually evaporates and one is plunged into a predominantly rājasic or tāmasic state that is primarily distressful or dejected. Therefore, every state contains some degree of suffering, hence Patañjali’s claim that all is suffering to the wise.

These sources of pain and suffering all stem from ignorance, which is lack of discrimination, that is, being attached to mistaken notions of I and mine—considering the I to be the temporary body, senses, and fluctuating mind rather than pure awareness, and the mine to be one’s spouse, children, and possessions, says Vācaspati Miśra. In this way, by attempting to find happiness through one’s body, mind, relationships, and possessions, one perpetuates the cycle of birth and death. Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the Bhāgavata Purāṇa: “Real happiness is to transcend mundane pleasure and distress” (XI.19.45), and the means to do this is to remove all desire of the senses for the sense objects by ceasing to misidentify the real self with the sensual body.

Seeing himself and all other beings caught up in this tide of suffering, says Vyāsa, the yogī takes shelter of true knowledge—that he is not the body or mind. Just as the science of medicine has four parts, he says—disease to be removed, cause of disease, freedom from disease, and the means of removal (medicine)—so the science of yoga has four parts:
saṁsāra, the cause of saṁsāra, freedom from saṁsāra, and the means of liberation. Saṁsāra is the disease that is to be removed, its cause is the contact between puruṣa and prakṛti, freedom from saṁsāra is the cessation of this contact (liberation), and the means of removing this contact is pure knowledge.

Śaṅkara quotes this fourfold division of Vyāsa in the opening words of his Vivaraṇa commentary on the first sūtra of the Yoga Sūtras. The notion of life as suffering is clearly a pivotal tenet of the Yoga Sūtras and certainly dominates the present section of the text. This fourfold schema can be correlated with the following sūtras: Sūtra II.16 states that future suffering is to be avoided; II.17 considers the cause of suffering (with II.18–24 an extended discussion of its characteristics); II.25, freedom from suffering; and II.26, the means of attaining this freedom.

This four-part schema obviously echoes the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, but Vijñānabhikṣu reads Vyāsa’s understanding of these four truths as a rejection of the Buddhist view that considers liberation to be not the cessation of contact between puruṣa and prakṛti but the giving up of the very notion of puruṣa/ātman itself. In Buddhism, consciousness is the fifth and most subtle of five skandhas, aggregates or ever-fluctuating interdependent coverings that constitute personhood. In this system, consciousness is not an immutable and eternal entity that can be uncoupled from objects of consciousness, as in the orthodox Hindu view, but an ever-changing noneternal layer that exists only in interdependent relation to objects of consciousness and not separately or autonomously from them.

As has been discussed at length, the Yoga school holds that not only is consciousness, ātman/puruṣa, separate from the objects of consciousness, but the goal of the entire system is precisely for consciousness to be aware of itself as a separable, unchanging entity and thereby be extricated from its enmeshment in the world of objects. It is autonomous and independent. In contrast, liberation in Buddhism, nirvāṇa, is attained precisely when one ceases to identify with consciousness as an eternal, unchanging self and realizes that consciousness depends on objects of consciousness and does not exist without them. Consciousness is not autonomous or independent; it is dependent or interdependent on its objects—the very opposite of the Yoga position. In other words, whereas
in Yoga, one must identify with and strive to realize the ātman, in Buddhism, one must cease identifying with or clinging to the notion of and striving for the liberation of an ātman; hence, in philosophical discourse, Buddhism is sometimes referred to as an-ātmavāda the system that does not believe in an ātman.

But, argues Vijñānabhikṣu, in order to reject something, there must be two entities: the rejecter and the thing to be rejected. If the notion of ātman becomes the thing to be rejected, who is the rejecter of the notion? Or, as Hariharānanda puts it, if one aspires to liberation by thinking, “Let me be free from misery by suspending the activities of the mind,” there will remain a pure me free from the pangs of misery. The self behind or beyond the mind is the real experiencer of this process. If one denies the ultimate existence of such an agent, then one is faced with the often-marshaled question: For whose sake is liberation sought? In any event, Vyāsa puts forth the position of Yoga in distinction to the Buddhist view: Consciousness, puruṣa, is eternal and immutable, the subject of experience, and liberation involves detaching it from the objects of experience in the form of the evolutes of prakṛti.

As an interesting aside, the term for suffering, duḥkha, seems to have been coined by analogy to its opposite, sukha, happiness. Kha refers to the axle of a wagon, and su- is a prefix denoting good (and duḥ-, bad). Thus in its old Indo-Aryan, Vedic usage, sukha denoted a wagon with good axles (that is, a comfortable ride). The Indo-Aryans were tribal cowherders, and one can imagine that comfortable wagons for their travels on the rough, unpaved trails of their day would have been a major factor in their notions of happiness and comfort.

II.16 heyam duḥkham anāgatam

heyam, to be avoided; duḥkham, pain, suffering; anāgatam, yet to come

Suffering that has yet to manifest is to be avoided.

Past suffering has already been experienced, says Vyāsa, and presently
experienced suffering has already activated and is bearing its fruits. Therefore, only suffering accruing in the future, anāgatam, can be avoided, heyam, and it is this suffering that is of concern to the yogī who Vyāsa, in the last verse, considered as sensitive as an eyeball. How can one give up suffering that has yet to come, in other words, suffering that does not yet exist? asks Vijñānabhikṣu rhetorically. By removing its cause, the subject of the next sūtra. Just as the present is the result of previous causes, and was once that which had yet to come, so future suffering has its seeds in the present and past. There are examples of this everywhere, says Vijñānabhikṣu: The earth has the potential to give rise to many effects that are as yet unmanifest, but their seeds lie stored in the present.

However, the absolute removal of future suffering can be attained only by liberation, say the commentators—removing the identification between puruṣa and prakṛti. Again, this is the standard view: Gautama, the author of the Nyāya Sūtras, states that relief from suffering comes only from liberation (I.1.22). Likewise, Kaṇāda, the author of a series of sūtras foundational to the Vaiśeṣika school of philosophy, states that only when the mind is removed from its objects is one free from pain (V.2.16).

II.17 draṣṭṛ-dṛśyayoh saṁyogo hey-a-hetuh

draṣṭṛ, of the seer; dṛśyayoh, of the seen; saṁyogah, conjunction; heyā, to be avoided; hetuḥ, the cause

The conjunction between the seer and that which is seen is the cause [of suffering] to be avoided.

The seer, draṣṭṛ, of this sūtra, says Vyāsa, is the puruṣa soul who cognizes through buddhi, intelligence. The discussion of the mind so far has generally focused on citta, which, we recall, consists of manas, the sorting and processing aspect of cognition; ahaṅkāra, the aspect of cognition underpinning self-identity and ego; and buddhi, intelligence, the discriminating aspect of the mind. The ensuing discussion will focus
more specifically on buddhi. This is the aspect of citta immediately adjacent to the puruṣa (in the sense of being the first interface between the awareness of the puruṣa and the world of prakṛti and her effects), the first and most subtle covering, so to speak.

Patañjali’s reference to that which is seen, dṛśya, consists of all objects that present themselves to the intelligence. These objects act like magnets attracting the awareness of puruṣa because of proximity. On account of seeing these objects, the puruṣa becomes like their master, says Vyāsa, and, on account of being seen, the objects of experience become, as it were, the property of puruṣa, the seer, though they do not exist within puruṣa. Though different from and external to puruṣa, these objects as if take on the nature of puruṣa, becoming animated due to reflecting the consciousness of puruṣa. This beginningless association, sāmyoga, between these two is the cause of suffering that is to be avoided. Therefore, the absolute remedy for suffering is ceasing the association between puruṣa and intelligence.

We see, continues Vyāsa, that there are remedies for suffering in this world. For example, the sole of the foot is capable of being pierced, and the thorn of piercing it. The remedy is to remove the thorn from the foot (or, better still, not to put the foot on the thorn). Likewise, the remedy for the suffering of embodied existence is to remove puruṣa from its association with prakṛti. One who knows these three features—the locus of pain, the cause of pain, and the remedy for pain—need not undergo suffering.

Vyāsa further notes that on a metaphysical level, suffering is the result of rajas disturbing sattva. When undisturbed, sattva produces a type of happiness; it is rajas that causes suffering. Everyone has experience that well-being, peace, and happiness are the result of moderation, says Hariharānanda. When rajas activates and one becomes overactive—overindulgent or hyperenergetic—one’s peace of mind is destroyed and is replaced by suffering, either mental (in the form, say, of incessant anxiety or craving) or physical (in the form, say, of ulcers, indigestion, or sexual disease). Likewise, if tamas activates and inertia sets in, one cannot feel satisfied or self-content at all. Since the natural state of the mind is sattva, it is rajas and tamas that are the disrupters. When sattva is disrupted, suffering is the result.
When the *puruṣa*’s awareness pervades this *sattva* disrupted by *rajas* and *tamas*, continues Vyāsa, it becomes aware of this suffering. However, the suffering is not actually located in the *puruṣa*, which is changeless and actionless; it is located in the *buddhi*, intelligence, whose pure *sattva* nature is being disturbed by *rajas*. Vācaspati Miśra elaborates on this: The intelligence is molded by the objects of the senses—sound, etc.—and takes on their characteristics, like liquid copper takes on the form of the mold into which it is poured. The intelligence is thus transformed by input transmitted through the senses. The awareness of *puruṣa* pervades the intelligence and is misidentified with it by the mind, or more precisely, by the *kleśas* in the mind. Thus *puruṣa* becomes aware of intelligence in whatever forms it is molded into by the objects of the senses. Since intelligence is inert and animated only by the consciousness of *puruṣa*, if this connection between *puruṣa* and *buddhi* is not made, the knowable cannot be known—objects cannot be experienced. It is due to the conjunction between the two that the consciousness of *puruṣa* can become aware of this transformed *buddhi*, and through it all the objects of experience.

Due to being pervaded by *puruṣa*, the states of *buddhi* are assigned to *puruṣa* by the mind. If the state of *buddhi* is of undisturbed *sattva*, it appears as if the *puruṣa* is happy, and if of *sattva* disturbed by *rajas* and *tamas*, it appears as if *puruṣa* is suffering. Either way, neither state is ultimately an actual state of *puruṣa*, but of the intelligence and mind with which *puruṣa* is misidentified. Pleasure and pain, in and of themselves, are unconscious characteristics of *buddhi*; it is only when they are pervaded by the conscious self that “I am happy” or “I am sad” becomes a conscious state of awareness. Experience of pain is just experience of *buddhi*, the intelligence, says Viññānabhinīkṣu, not of anything actually transpiring in *puruṣa* itself; but due to ignorance, one thinks that *puruṣa* is in pain.

*Puruṣa*, says Vyāsa, is changeless and actionless; it is the subject, and pain can reside only as an object (pain is an *object* of experience). Viññānabhinīkṣu gives the example of water on a leaf: The water does not change the leaf—even though there is contact between them, their properties are different. Likewise, the ever-changing states of the *buddhi* do not change consciousness—even though there is conjunction between
them, the properties of puruṣa and prakṛti are different. But, Vyāsa adds, even the wise must work to rid themselves of this identification with pain caused by conjunction between the two.

Vācaspati Miśra raises the issue of whether the relationship between puruṣa and the intelligence is innate or coincidental. It cannot be innate, he says, since then it would never cease to exist and thus there would be no hope of liberation; so it must be coincidental. However, this conjunction between these two entities must have existed eternally. This is because the mind is the product of karma and the kleśas, etc., but karma and the kleśas can exist only if the mind is there as their substratum. Like the chicken and the egg, one cannot come into being without the other. Therefore, as with all other Indic soteriological schools, Yoga avoids this dilemma by positing that they must be beginningless. Since the mind, with its inherent karmas and kleśas, exists only for fulfilling the purpose of puruṣa, the conjunction between mind and puruṣa must also be beginningless by a similar logic. At the end of each creation cycle, the mind with its karmas and kleśas dissolves into prakṛti to be reactivated at the beginning of the next cycle in the same state in which it was found at the end of the previous cycle, just as the earth becomes parched after the summer season but springs back into life after the rainy season, before eventually becoming parched again.

While one might question Vācaspati Miśra’s logic, as a point of information, no Indic school of thought considers speculation into how the soul originally became enmeshed in saṁsāra to be fruitful—embodied existence is considered to have been eternal in terms of its origins. But, as Hariharānanda notes, just because this conjunction is beginningless does not mean that it has to be endless. How it began is a question that cannot be answered and thus is fruitless to pose, but inquiring how it can be ended is the goal of human life. It can be terminated by yoga. Actually, this conjunction between puruṣa and prakṛti is brought about by Īśvara, says Vijñānabhikṣu, presenting the theistic perspective; it cannot be understood by even the best of yogīs, nor by the process of logic. He quotes the Bhāgavata Purāṇa: “The bondage and pitiful circumstance of the independent and free soul goes against all logic; such is the māyā potency of the Lord” (III.7.9).
That which is knowable has the nature of illumination, activity, and inertia [sattva, rajas, and tamas]. It consists of the senses and the elements, and exists for the purpose of [providing] either liberation or experience [to puruṣa].

Patañjali here describes the ultimate metaphysical ingredients of the seen, drṣyam, the manifest world, and states its ultimate purpose for existing. The commentators correlate the illumination, prakāsa, noted here with sattva (the light inherent in buddhi); activity, kriyā, with rajas (all movement and effort); and inertia, sthiti, with tamas. These three guṇas are always in flux, as long as the world is manifest, and their nature is to assert themselves in various proportions and then ebb away, thus giving rise to the ever-changing world of manifest forms. Although one or the other of the three guṇas appears dominant and the others secondary at any given moment, the presence of the secondary guṇas can always be detected. This never-ending flux is what is called the known, says Vyāsa, and it transforms itself into both the elements and the senses, bhūtendriyātmakam. As the former, it manifests subtly as the elements of sound, etc., and grossly as the elements of earth, etc.; as the latter, it manifests subtly as hearing, and also as intelligence and ego, etc.

Hariharānanda correlates sattva with the knowledge or awareness aspect of any entity, such as a tree’s impulse toward the source of light; rajas as the factors that cause any activity or motion, such as a tree’s growth toward the source of light; and tamas as when any potentiality is retained or stored, such as the winter season for trees, when sap descends to the roots and is stored (or hibernation for animals). As
noted, these guṇas pervade all manifest reality, whether of the nature of grahaṇa, the instruments or organs of cognition such as the ear, or grāhya, the objects of cognition such as sound; everything other than the puruṣa itself is composed of these three guṇas. The sāttvic aspect of the ear, for example, says Hariharananda, manifests when it makes sound known; its rañjasic aspect is represented by the ear’s nervous impulse excited by vibration; and the tāmasic aspect, by the energy stored in its nerves and muscles. And sound itself has a knowledge-bestowing aspect, which is sattva; a vibrational aspect, which is rajas; and a stored energy aspect, which is the tamas element.

Patañjali makes the important statement here that the purpose of these guṇas, and thus of their prākṛtic productions, is to provide either experience, bhoga, or liberation, apavarga, for the puruṣa, as indicated also in the Sāṅkhya Kārikā (XVII, XXI, XXXI). Experience, says Vyāsa, consists of occupying oneself with the desirable and undesirable nature of the guṇas as discussed in II.14—in other words, with pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain—while liberation entails the realization by puruṣa of its own true nature. There is no other reason for the existence of prakṛti.

Vyāsa then raises a very important question: How can either the experience or liberation noted in this sūtra be imposed on puruṣa when they are the constructs and products of buddhi and exist only in buddhi and not in puruṣa itself? Or, as Śaṅkara puts it, how can the deeds of one person be the work of another? The laundryman is not the dyer of clothes. Although experience and liberation are concepts of intelligence, says Vyāsa, they are attributed to the puruṣa because the puruṣa experiences their fruit, just as the victory and defeat of soldiers are attributed to their chief, even though he may only be witnessing the battle, because he experiences the fruits of victory or defeat.

Perception, memory, deliberation, critical reasoning, knowledge of the truth, determination, and, indeed, any cognitive functioning, all of which in actual fact are existing in buddhi, are superimposed on puruṣa, continues Vyāsa. As long as the awareness of puruṣa remains focused on and is erroneously identified with buddhi and its manifestations, puruṣa remains as if bound by that connection. But bondage is a state of mind, a product of buddhi, not an actual condition of puruṣa, and it exists only
for as long as the real goal of puruṣa is not realized. Liberation is when that goal is attained, namely, the uncoupling of puruṣa and buddhi by the mind. It, too, is a state of mind, or, put differently, the state of puruṣa after the mind has eliminated its own kleśas and ceased to superimpose itself onto consciousness. Vācaspati Miśra etymologizes the term for liberation, āpavarga, as apa- + vṛj (prefix + verbal root), that which is separated from something else.

Expanding on the notions that bondage and freedom are in buddhi, and that the puruṣa is merely a witness, Hariharānanda adds that when buddhi is impure due to the dust of rajas and darkness of tamas, it does not discriminate between seer and seen. He notes that rajas can mean dust, and as such, it tarnishes the pure lucidity of sattva; tamas, in turn, means darkness, and this obscures sattva even more densely than does rajas. When purified and the natural illumination of sattva is able to manifest, the knowledge of the distinction between these two entities becomes clear. This is what vidyā, knowledge, is. However, ultimately, even this knowledge is taking place in buddhi and, as will be discussed below, is transcended in the higher stages of samādhi. Buddhi has to deconstruct itself. Therefore the Sāṅkhya Kārikā states: “No one is actually bound, nor is anyone liberated from saṁsāra. Only prakṛti in its myriad forms transmigrates, is bound and then freed” (LXII).

II.19 višeṣāvišeṣa-liṅga-mātrāliṅgāni guṇa-parvāṇi

višeṣa, particularized; avišeṣa, unparticularized; liṅga, distinctive; mātra, only, just; alingāni, indistinctive; guṇa, the modes, influences; parvāṇi, stages

The different stages of the guṇa qualities consist of the particularized, the unparticularized, the distinctive, and the indistinctive.

This sūtra follows on the previous one by outlining the basic categories of evolutes that emerge from the primordial interaction of the guṇas in prakṛti. The first category noted by Patañjali, the particularized, višeṣa,
refers to all final evolutes of prakṛti, that is, to end products that do not produce further products or evolutes out of themselves. The second category, the unparticularized, aviśeṣa, refers to the evolutes that do produce further products or evolutes out of themselves. Thus, if we glance at the Saṅkhya chart in the introduction, the gross elements (ether, air, fire, water, earth) are the particularized aspects of the unparticularized subtle elements (sound, touch, sight, taste, smell). Along similar lines, the powers behind the five organs of knowledge (ears, eyes, skin, tongue, and nose), as well as those behind the five organs of action (speech, hands, feet, anus, and genitals), along with the internal organ of mind are the particularized aspects of the unparticularized ego, ahaṅkāra. (Since the mind works through these ten organs, it also is considered an organ.) Thus, there are sixteen particularized items including mind, none of which produces further evolutes, and six unparticularized ones including ego, which do produce evolutes. (This schema is found in the Sāṅkhya Kārikā III.)

Beyond these there is mahat, which is another name for the cosmological buddhi, referred to in this sūtra as liṅga by Patañjali and translated here rather loosely as distinctive. The commentators have different views on why liṅga is used in this regard. Vijñānabхиķṣu, for example, states that liṅga, literally mark or sign, is so called because it marks all the other effects of the world, that is, everything emanates from buddhi. (Ego, which is the immediate source from which all the particularized and unparticularized elements mentioned above have evolved, is itself a manifestation of buddhi.) Liṅga in Hindu logic is something that is the sign of something else—smoke is the sign of fire. So whereas prakṛti herself is unperceivable, buddhi is perceivable—it has signs or characteristics that distinguish it. Buddh is like the root of a tree, says Śaṅkara: It is the closest to the seed that produced it, and it is also the cause of the trunk, branches, leaves, etc., which stem from it.

But buddhi, too, is ultimately a transformation of the guṇas, specifically that of sattva. It is pure beingness, says Vyāsa, neither existence nor nonexistence, neither real nor unreal. The world of manifest reality has yet to emerge from it. It is like the mind just awakened from sleep but prior to the activity that occurs in the ego stage, says Vijñānabхиķṣu. He quotes the Bhāgavata Purāṇa: “Then, impelled by the Time factor, the
entity *mahat* came into existence from the unmanifest. Its nature is knowledge, which dispels ignorance, and it manifests the universe which is situated within itself” (III.5.27).

Finally, the unmanifest mentioned in this *sūtra* is a yet more subtle manifestation of these *guna*s, the primordial matrix from which even *buddhi* itself, along with all its evolutes, originates. At this level, we have arrived at *prakṛti* herself, and it is this that Patañjali refers to here as *aliṅga*, that without signs, the undistinctive (see also I.45). There are no signs by which one can discern *prakṛti* prior to the movement of the *guna*s (thus the Sāṅkhya school holds that *prakṛti* cannot be perceived, its existence can only be inferred [*anumānita*], and thus it is called the inferred one). This stage is eternal; the other three stages—*buddhi*, *ahāṅkāra*, and all subsequent evolutes—are temporary manifestations, or permutations of *prakṛti*.

Therefore, says Vyāsa, the world created by the *guna*s may appear to have the nature of birth and death, but all that is really occurring is that the evolutes of the *guna*s are manifesting and unmanifesting the various bodies and things of this world due to the constant flux of the *guna*s themselves. If Devadatta’s cows die, he analogizes, we may think Devadatta has become poor, but his poverty is due to the death of his cows, not his own death. Similarly, there is no birth and death of *puruṣa*, simply the constant mutation and transformation of the *guna*s of *prakṛti* within which *puruṣa* appears to be embedded, which temporarily produce bodies and forms in certain configurations, and then dissolve them back into their matrix. Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the *Gītā*: “All beings are unmanifest in their beginning, manifest in their interim stage, and unmanifest in their end. What is there to lament in this?” (II.28). The evolutes, such as bodies and states of mind, are temporary configurations; only the cause is eternal: *prakṛti* herself.

Vācaspati Miśra reiterates that everything one experiences in manifest reality, whether on the grossest level of sensual indulgence or the most subtle level of discrimination between *buddhi* and *puruṣa*, is ultimately taking place in *buddhi* or its evolutes. He notes that *liṅga* and *aliṅga* are called nonexistent by Vyāsa because the *guna*s are quiescent in this stage, devoid of effects (the senses and sense objects of the world), and therefore cannot fulfill the objectives of *puruṣa*, which, we recall, is for
the purpose of providing either experience or liberation to the puruṣa. At the same time, Vyāsa also states that they are not totally nonexistent (like the lotus in the sky), because they produce effects. In other words, they exist as cause.

Quoting various passages from the Vedānta Sūtras, Vijñānabhikṣu again takes this opportunity to distinguish the philosophy of the Yoga school from that of the advaita, nondualist Vedāntic school founded by Śaṅkara. The advaita school posits that prakṛti, the guṇas, and the entirety of the manifest world are all ultimately not real but are mental constructions produced by ignorance, superimpositions on the only real existent, Brahman. Outlining the position of the Yoga school, Vijñānabhikṣu stresses that the world in its essence—prakṛti—is real and eternal, and therefore the evolutes from this matrix, the world, are also in this sense real, albeit temporary and constantly changing, mutating, and eventually dissolving back into their source. He quotes the well-known verse from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad in reference to objects made out of clay, which we call pots or plates, etc., out of convenience, but which remain, essentially, clay: “By means of just one lump of clay, one can perceive everything made out of clay—the transformation is just a verbal handle, a name—while the reality is just this: ‘It is clay’” (VI.1.4). The manifestations of Brahman are not false, Vijñānabhikṣu argues, contra Śaṅkara, any more than the modifications of clay are false. But they are temporary.

Vācaspati Miśra further states that manifest reality has to follow the sequence of evolution noted by Patañjali in this sūtra. It is not that the seed of a nyagrodha tree will spontaneously and immediately produce a fully grown, stocky tree with its leaves and branches, he says. The tree comes about gradually, the seed becoming a shoot and slowly evolving in contact with light and water. At the same time, says Vijñānabhikṣu, seed, sprout, and tree are nondifferent from each other, and so, in the same way, are buddhi and its effects nondifferent. Puruṣa, on the other hand, is a totally different entity. When puruṣa and prakṛti combine, living beings come into existence, just as when air and water combine, bubbles are formed.
II.20 draṣṭā dṛśi-mātraḥ śuddho ‘pi pratyayānupaśyaḥ

draṣṭā, the seer; dṛśi, the power of seeing; mātraḥ, only; śuddhaḥ, pure; api, although; pratyaya, ideas or images of the mind; anupaśyaḥ, witnesses

The seer is merely the power of seeing; [however,] although pure, he witnesses the images of the mind.

The seen—the guṇas of prakṛti and their effects—has been discussed in the above sūtras, and now Patañjali turns his attention to the seer, draṣṭṛ. The seer is the puruṣa, the soul or innermost conscious self. He is the pure undiluted power of consciousness—pure because untouched by any attribute, qualification, object, or predicate. He is neither the same as, nor, at least when embodied, totally different from buddhi, intelligence, insofar as his knowledge of prakṛti arises from his awareness of buddhi.

He is not the same as buddhi, because buddhi has external things (cows, pots, etc.) as its object of attention and is therefore always changing, while puruṣa is unchanging and has only buddhi as the object of its attention. Moreover, buddhi exists solely for the sake of puruṣa, while puruṣa exists for its own sake only. Finally, buddhi is inert, unconscious, and composed of the three guṇas, whereas puruṣa is the active spectator, the source of consciousness, and beyond the three guṇas. On the other hand, puruṣa is not totally distinct from buddhi in practice because, even though puruṣa is pure and self-contained in essence, by witnessing the transformations of buddhi in the form of thoughts and cognitions, pratyayas, etc., it appears as if those thoughts pertain to puruṣa itself, that they are puruṣa rather than the flickerings of an external and inert but subtle substance. Puruṣa sees its reflection in the mirror of buddhi, say the commentators, and the mind mistakes this reflection in the mirror, which is distorted due to the transformations of the guṇas, to be the real self. Puruṣa does not change or transform; buddhi does.

Therefore, it is said, says Vyāsa, that although puruṣa is the expericker and does not change or pursue the objects of the senses, it appears to do so by its identification with the transformations of buddhi, which does change and does pursue the objects of the senses. Indeed, it
is only when *buddhi* takes the form of the objects of the senses, the *pratyayās*, noted here (see I.10), that these objects become known to *puruṣa* via the medium of *buddhi*. And it is only *puruṣa* who can inherently know, says Vijñānabhikṣu; *buddhi* does not know, that is to say, is not conscious of the objects of the senses that it is processing and that it exhibits to *puruṣa*. One might analogize that the software of a computer is not conscious of the material that it is processing and that it exhibits on its screen. As the computer needs a witness to know the data, so does *buddhi*.

Thus, as a result of being identified with *buddhi*, *puruṣa* appears to assume the qualities of *buddhi*. The consciousness of *puruṣa*, although not in reality changing, witnesses or follows as a spectator the transformations of *buddhi* and therefore rests on (is aware of) each object that comes into the sphere of the ever-changing *buddhi*. Whatever *buddhi* is transformed into is colored by consciousness, says Vācaspati Miśra, as a result of their contact. Although the moon is not transformed into water, he continues, it appears to be so due to its reflection in water. This Vedāntic analogy works well: Water in a lake or an ocean is transformed or agitated by waves, ripples, foam, etc. When the moon shines upon this disturbed surface, its reflection also becomes rippled and agitated due to the disturbed surface of the water. Ignorance is mistaking the disrupted reflection to be the true moon. Due to ignorance, *puruṣa* is misidentified with the disturbed reflection of *buddhi*, which is taken to be the real self. Like an echo, says Vijñānabhikṣu, a sound that emanates from a source and then bounces off an object to return back to that source in somewhat distorted fashion, the consciousness of *puruṣa* bounces back from *buddhi* in the form of a distorted reflection, and thus *puruṣa* becomes aware of the disturbed *buddhi* along with its *bhāva*, or quality, of ignorance. The *Sāṅkhya Kārikās* speaks of *buddhi* as having eight *bhāvas* (virtue, knowledge, nonattachment, potency, and their opposites, including ignorance) (XXIII). *Buddhi* thus becomes aware of ignorance even though the ignorance is not in *puruṣa*—which, by definition, is pure awareness—but rather in *buddhi*.

Not only does *puruṣa* appear changed due to this symbiosis, but inert *buddhi* appears to be conscious due to being energized by consciousness,
continues Vijñānabhikṣu, just as sunlight falling on the sea makes the sea appear to be luminous like the sun. (Verse XX of the Saṅkhya Kārikās states that that which is unconscious appears as if conscious.) Therefore, puruṣa is witnessing not only its own reflection but one that appears to be energized, or animate, and this further enhances the tendency of misidentification.

This misidentification of puruṣa with buddhi transformed or agitated by the three guṇas, the objects of this world, is the cause of bondage. Its freedom, says Vijñānabhikṣu, cannot come about through the conventional means of knowledge—the senses, mind, intelligence, etc.—since its nature is essentially different from these. It can come about only through its own nature. Its own nature is pure knowledge, that is, exclusive awareness of its own self, rather than of the objects of prakṛti.

Hariharānanda adds to this that the existence of puruṣa is evidenced by the fact that the sense of I is constant at all times. One may say, “I know something,” where the thing one knows pertains to whatever is being presented at any point in time by buddhi and is always changing, but the I who knows remains constant. Likewise even with the notion “I know myself”: The myself that is known also pertains to ever-changing buddhi—one may think of oneself in many different ways throughout the various stages of one’s life—but the I is always constant. As soon as this I begins to know something—anything—then the misidentification of buddhi with puruṣa, the erroneous notion that puruṣa is buddhi, has occurred, since all knowable things are the products of prakṛti. All knowledge thus requires the presence of the overseer, puruṣa, and of something seen, an object in prakṛti.

This misidentification of the seer and the seen, continues Hariharānanda, is the product of ahaṅkāra, the ego. As a result of this misidentification, the distinction between puruṣa and buddhi is not perceived in ordinary consciousness. Buddhi resembles puruṣa to some extent, and vice versa. Inanimate buddhi appears to be animate because it is energized by the consciousness of the animate puruṣa, and the unchanging puruṣa appears to be ever-changing and mutable because its consciousness pervades the ever-changing and mutable buddhi; hence Vyāsa’s statement that they are neither the same nor different.
II.21 tad-artha eva dṛśyasyātmā
tat, his [the seer, puruṣa’s]; arthaḥ, purpose; eva, only; dṛśyasya, of the knowable, of that which is seen; ātmā, essential nature, existence
The essential nature of that which is seen is exclusively for the sake of the seer.

The seen, that is, the knowable—buddhi (and ultimately prakṛti herself)—exists only for the sake of puruṣa, who is the seer, reiterates Vyāsa, and is thus dependent on another, not on itself. As II.18 informed us, the purpose or function of the seen, prakṛti, is to provide either experience or liberation to puruṣa, and this purpose is fulfilled when experience or liberation has been attained. The nature of experience consists of pleasure and pain, and pleasure and pain are not conscious of themselves; they are experienced by an other. This other is puruṣa. Therefore, the purpose of the seen is not for itself but for the seer, just as the purpose of a bed, continues Vijñānabhikṣu, is for the sleeper, not for itself. Or, as Vācaspati Miśra puts it, the relationship of puruṣa and prakṛti is like that of the king and his possessions.

Since prakṛti has nothing more to do once its purposes are fulfilled, asks Rāmānanda Sarasvatī rhetorically with an eye to the next sūtra, does this mean that, deprived of its function, prakṛti would no longer be perceived? Might it even cease to exist?

II.22 kṛtārtham prati naṣṭam apy anāṣṭam tad-anya-sādhāraṇatvāt
kṛta, accomplished, fulfilled; artham, purpose; prati, toward, with regard to; naṣṭam, destroyed; api, although; anāṣṭam, not destroyed; tat, that; anya, other [puruṣas]; sādhāraṇatvāt, because of being common
Although the seen ceases to exist for one whose purpose is
accomplished [the liberated puruṣa], it has not ceased to exist altogether, since it is common to other [not-liberated] puruṣas.

This sūtra situates the Yoga tradition as realist (the view that the world is objectively and externally real irrespective of whether we perceive it) as opposed to idealist (the world is not objectively or externally real but a product of the mind); indeed, Dasgupta uses the term “reals” for the gunas. Patañjali and the commentarial tradition will take some pains to refute the idealist viewpoint in Chapter IV. The “seen” may have accomplished its purpose, kṛta-artha, for the fortunate successful yogi who has attained liberation, and thus may cease to exist, naṣṭam, for such a soul, but only in the sense that the liberated soul ceases to be aware of it; it has not accomplished its purpose for all other puruṣas, says Vyāsa. It needs to provide objects of experience for everyone else. Therefore, it still has a purpose and does not cease to exist, anaṣṭam. Color may not be seen by a blind man, says Vācaspati Miśra, but it does not cease to be, since it is seen by those who are not blind. In this sense, the conjunction between the seers (in the sense of the totality of puruṣas) and the seen is said to be eternal, because the puruṣas are innumerable, so one need not posit the hypothetical possibility that eventually all puruṣas will become liberated, causing prakṛti to become redundant due to an absence of puruṣas needing experience.

This sūtra is important to the Yoga school, Vijñānabhidhikṣu points out, since otherwise its opponents might question its tenets such as that prakṛti is eternal, creation is ongoing, and Īśvara is eternally sovereign. Moreover, the commentators are motivated by this sūtra to argue the position of the Yoga and Sāṅkhya schools, which posit an eternal plurality of puruṣas, whether in the liberated or nonliberated state, in distinction to the advaita, or nondualist, school of Vedānta, which holds that the plurality and individuality of the puruṣas exist only in the nonliberated state of ignorance. This particular school of Vedānta posits that upon attaining enlightenment, the puruṣa (more typically referred to as ātman by followers of Vedānta) realizes that all plurality and individuality is the product of illusion, and merges into the all-encompassing, nondual, absolute truth, Brahman.
To buttress their view of an eternal plurality of puruṣas scripturally, several commentators point to the verse in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (IV.5) that speaks metaphorically of a nanny goat (prakṛti), whose nature is that of the guṇas and who produces evolutes of the same nature, being enjoyed by one passionate billy goat (puruṣa) but abandoned by another billy goat who has finished enjoying her. This resonates with Patañjali’s sūtra here. Just because one billy goat may leave the nanny goat, she nonetheless remains to be enjoyed by another billy goat: One puruṣa may become liberated, but all the other unliberated puruṣas remain experiencing prakṛti. Therefore, whether in the liberated or nonliberated states, there must be a plurality of puruṣas, and each one must be individual. This is the view of all six schools of classical Hindu thought except the subbranch of the Vedānta school, advaita Vedānta.

But what about the numerous verses in the Upaniṣads that seem to imply the oneness of all ātmans? the commentators ask. Vījñānābhikṣu quotes the Mārkand.eya Purāṇa (XXXVII.42) to exemplify this notion of oneness as plainly as possible: “Just as the ether, although one, may exist as divided into many in pots, jars, and water-containers, so I, and the mighty armed king of Kāśi and others [are divided] into different bodies with physical distinctions [but are one ātman].” One could point to numerous similar verses in the Upaniṣads. Perhaps the most famous are a series of verses from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (VI.9–13) such as:

These rivers, son, the easterly ones flow to the East, and the westerly ones to the West. Coming from the ocean, they merge back into the ocean. They become that very ocean. When they are in that state, they are not aware that “I am this river,” “I am that river.” In the same way, son, all creatures, upon attaining “the existent” [Brahman], do not think: “We are attaining Brahman.” Whatever they were in this world—a tiger, a lion, a wolf, a boar, an insect, a moth, a gnat or mosquito—they all become Brahman. The finest essence in this world, that is the self of all this. That is Truth. That is the ātman. That is who you are ...

Do not such verses point to one ultimate ātman that is perceived as being divided only as a result of ignorance?

The enlightened yogī sees that all differences are the product of
ahaṅkāra and buddhi, says Vijñānabhikṣu, and that therefore all puruṣas are one, in the sense that they have the same essence, but this does not mean that there is factually only one puruṣa metaphysically. The myriad puruṣas are identical in the sense that their true nature transcends all distinctions, which are the product of prakṛti and her guṇas, but this does not mean that they become identical in the sense of loosing their individuality upon attaining liberation, nor that they merge into one ultimate ātman/Brahman. (One must keep in mind here, and indeed, Vijñānabhikṣu reminds us, that he is also a Vedāntin who has written a commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras, in which he has already critically discussed the one ātman theory of the advaita nondual school of Vedānta.)

If there were only one ātman, continues Vijñānabhikṣu, how could some ātmans be liberated and others still in saṁsāra? A number of the commentators draw attention to this argument, which also surfaces in the Vedānta schools opposing the advaita viewpoint: If there were ultimately only one ātman as the advaita school posits, then when any one puruṣa attains liberation, so would all other puruṣas (since according to the advaita school, they are all in reality one puruṣa/ ātman). In other words, if one puruṣa became liberated by realizing that all distinctions among puruṣas were illusory and that all puruṣas were in actuality one undivided ātman, then, with the ignorance of duality removed, there would no longer be any more divided ātmans or independent puruṣas. If one responds that the realization of the oneness of ātman applies only to the liberated puruṣa, but not to the other nonliberated puruṣas, then one has implicitly accepted a duality in the supposed oneness of ātman, a duality between liberated and nonliberated puruṣas. Such a conclusion would be awkward for the defenders of this position, say the commentators, contradicting the nondualistic position of the advaita school but approaching the position of the Yoga school.

Vijñānabhikṣu continues to argue that not only are individual puruṣas different from each other, but the supreme puruṣa, God, is different again from all the individual souls. He points to the Vedānta Sūtras: “Brahman is greater [than embodied beings] because of the statement of difference [between them]” (II.1.22) and “[The embodied souls] are parts of God because of the statement that they are different” (II.3.43). Patañjali has
anyway already established that Īśvara is a distinct puruṣa and superior to other puruṣas.

II.23 sva-svāmi-śaktyoh svarūpopalabdhi-hetuḥ saṁyogah

sva, the possessed; svāmi, the possessor; sāktyoh, of the powers; svarūpa, nature, true form; upalabdhi, understanding; hetuḥ, the cause; saṁyogah, conjunction, contact, association

[The notion of] conjunction is the means of understanding the real nature of the powers of the possessed and of the possessor.

Tying the verses in this chapter together, as touched upon in II.15, and echoing the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, the theme of this second pāda (chapter) is suffering, the cause of suffering, the state beyond suffering, and the means to attain this state. Specifically, II.1–14 were dedicated to the immediate causes of suffering on a psychological level (the kleśas and their consequences); II.15 to the reality of suffering itself; II.16, to future suffering that can be avoided; II.17, to the cause of suffering on a metaphysical level as the union, saṁyoga, between the seer, draṣṭṛ, and the seen drśya; II.18–19, to the seen; II.20, to the seer and the state beyond suffering; and II.21–22, to the seen again. This sūtra through II.27 will deal with saṁyoga, union, the metaphysical cause of suffering, and saṁyoga’s removal, and the remainder of the chapter will be devoted to the means to accomplish this.

This sūtra was composed with the intention of explaining the nature of the conjunction, or association, saṁyoga, between prakṛti and puruṣa, says Vyāsa. Puruṣa is the possessor, svāmi, and he is conjoined with that which he possesses, sva, namely prakṛti and her objects (the seen of the previous sūtra), for the sake of experience. Worldly experience means perceiving the seen, and liberation means perceiving the real nature of the seer. Ignorance is the cause of the conjunction between the seer and the seen, and true knowledge dispels ignorance and is therefore the cause of liberation.
Strictly speaking, continues Vyāsa, true knowledge is not the real cause of liberation because when ignorance does not exist, bondage does not exist, and so technically it is this absence of ignorance that corresponds to liberation. It is because knowledge removes ignorance that it is said to be the cause of liberation, but it is actually the indirect cause of liberation. Vijñānabhikṣu points out that true knowledge, or discrimination, operates right up until the immediate moment prior to liberation. He reminds his readers that discrimination is still a product of the material intelligence, but full liberation involves complete separation between puruṣa and buddhi. This is the difference between sabiṣa and nirbiṣa samādhis.

With an eye on the next sūtra, Vyāsa turns his attention to different views on what constitutes ignorance—the synonym he uses for ignorance here is adarśana, the lack of perception (of the real nature of the puruṣa). He lists the following possibilities, which are further discussed by the commentators.

1. Is ignorance the result of the play of the guṇas? This, says Hariharānanda, is correct insofar as ignorance continues for as long as the guṇas are active, but it doesn’t explain the cause of ignorance any more than heat in the body explains the cause of fever.

2. Is ignorance due to the mind, which fails to modify itself into the true object of knowledge, that is, the knowledge of the distinction between puruṣa and prakṛti, even though this object is present before it? This possibility is of limited value, says Hariharānanda, like saying, “Illness means to be unwell.”

3. Does ignorance spring from the guṇas, which fail to produce the true object of knowledge, namely, discrimination, even though this is latent within them? The same limitations from the previous option apply to this possibility. Another problem with this type of view, says Śaṅkara, is that since the guṇas are eternally in flux, if ignorance were a product of the guṇas, it too would be eternal and so there would be no liberation.

4. Does ignorance remain dissolved as latent saṁskāras in the
The guṇas of prakṛti at the end of each creative cycle, becoming reactivated in the next creative cycle, at which time it produces an appropriate mind to serve as its substratum or container? This position, say the commentators, is acceptable to the Yoga school and is discussed further in the next sūtra, but it does not explain ignorance.

(5) Is ignorance the latent impetus that impels movement in prakṛti itself? The same objections apply here.

(6) Is it the very power and capability of prakṛti to reveal herself to puruṣa that is the ultimate cause of ignorance? This option, says Vijñānabhikṣu, is a variant of item 3. Vijñānabhikṣu quotes a charming verse from the Sāṅkhya Kārikās (LXI) personifying prakṛti when her game is up and she has been seen by the enlightened puruṣa for what she is: “The other one [prakṛti] thinks ‘I have been seen!’”

(7) Is ignorance the characteristic of both prakṛti and puruṣa? Prakṛti is inert, lifeless matter, but its evolute buddhi appears to be ignorant due to being animated by the presence of puruṣa; likewise, puruṣa appears to be ignorant due to its awareness of buddhi, even though, in its pure state, it does not contain either ignorance or knowledge. It is only when the power behind knowledge contacts the objects of knowledge—when the consciousness of puruṣa shines on prakṛti and her manifestations—and is reflected back to puruṣa that ignorance is produced, so is ignorance the product of both? The problem with this, says Hariharānanda, is that it may be correct, but it doesn’t explain ignorance: It is like saying sight is dependent on the sun, which doesn’t explain sight.

(8) A final opinion is that ignorance is ultimately and paradoxically knowledge itself. To know, after all, is to know something. All things are prākṛtic. Therefore, knowledge of things occurs only when puruṣa is joined with prakṛti.

There are thus many views on ignorance, says Vyāsa. They all contain some element of truth. The common denominator of all them is the
conjunction of puruṣa with the guṇas of prakṛti. Ultimately, the origin of ignorance remains mysterious in all Indic philosophical schools; indeed, it is considered beginningless, and thus the question of its origin is bypassed altogether. In the theistic schools, it is a power of Īśvara, God.
II.24 tasya hetur avidyā

tasya, of it [conjunction]; hetuḥ, the cause; avidyā, ignorance

The cause of conjunction is ignorance.

Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhiṣkṣu elaborate somewhat on the fourth possible cause of ignorance outlined in the previous sūtra. Creation in Hindu cosmology is cyclical. At the end of each cosmic cycle, all manifest reality, the world and the evolutes of prakṛti, dissolve back into their original source matrix along with the souls in saṁsāra—the puruṣas who have not attained liberation—and remain there latent and inactive until the next cosmic cycle begins anew. This primordial soup, called pradhāna, thus contains all the saṁskāras from all the cittas of all the individual puruṣas that had not had a chance to fructify during the last cycle. At the beginning of the new cycle, these saṁskāras reactivate and cause pradhāna to produce an individual citta for each puruṣa appropriate to the specific saṁskāras possessed by that same puruṣa at the end of the last cycle. The puruṣa is thus like a fish trapped in a net of its previous saṁskāras and karma, says Rāmānanda Sarasvatī. As a result of the puruṣa being reconnected with a citta, its previous saṁskāras, most notably the saṁskāra of ignorance (i.e., the misidentification between the puruṣa and prakṛti), reexert their influence. In other words, the puruṣa picks up where it left off. The point is, from this perspective, that it is the saṁskāras that cause ignorance. This cycle of creation and dissolution is eternal for the Yoga school until liberation occurs (saṁsāra has no beginning, but it has an ending). Since the eternality of this cycle is axiomatic, the Yoga school avoids having to account for any primordial saṁskāra of ignorance that may have activated the whole cycle in the first place.

When intelligence contains the saṁskāras of ignorance, says Vyāsa, it remains active in the realm of prakṛti and thus does not produce discrimination about the true nature of puruṣa. Saṁskāras impel the intelligence to perform the first of its two functions, as expressed in
II.18, namely, to provide experience of prakṛti, and it is this that is the cause of bondage. Intelligence ceases its activity only when it has attained its alternative and ultimate function, which is to provide discrimination about the distinction between puruṣa and prakṛti. As was discussed in some detail in I.50, the saṁskāra of discrimination overpowers all other saṁskāras. When this happens, ignorance, avidyā, the cause, hetu, of bondage, is removed, and ignorance, we recall, is the support of the other kleśas, obstacles (II.3–4), so they, too, dissolve.

In other words, complete liberation occurs only when intelligence first provides discrimination and then ceases to act altogether. Although discrimination, a function of buddhi, is initially indispensable in attaining the goal of yoga, as long as it remains active, puruṣa is still connected with buddhi, and thus complete liberation is not realized. But discrimination eventually completely destroys ignorance and thus its own base, like fire destroys its own fuel, says Hariharānanda. This results in asamprajñāta-samādhi, the final goal of yoga.

One might argue, says Vyāsa, that this claim that full liberation occurs only after discrimination has dissolved itself is rather like an impotent man who, when asked by his wife why she does not have children as her sister has children, replies that he will beget children in her after he is dead. If intelligence cannot provide liberation while it is alive and active, why should one believe that it will do so after it becomes lifeless and inactive? Vyāsa affirms, again, that full and final liberation occurs precisely when the intelligence ceases to act. Intelligence ceases to act when ignorance is removed. And ignorance is removed by knowledge. In other words, bondage is caused by ignorance, ignorance is removed by knowledge, the discriminatory aspect of intelligence, and then intelligence, having performed its grand finale, ceases to operate, and the full freedom of puruṣa occurs. Thus, intelligence and knowledge are not the direct cause of liberation, but by removing ignorance, they are the indirect cause.

II.25 tad-abhāvāt saṁyogābhāvo hānam tad-drśeḥ kaivalyam
tat, of it [ignorance]; abhāvāt, from absence, removal; saṁyoga, conjunction; abhāvaḥ, absence, removal; hānam, freedom, escape, liberation; tat, that; dṛśeh, of the seer; kaivalyam, absolute freedom, liberation

By the removal of ignorance, conjunction is removed. This is the absolute freedom of the seer.

Keeping our eye on the ball thematically, in II.15 Vyāsa identified four aspects covered by the science of yoga: saṁsāra, the cause of saṁsāra, liberation from saṁsāra, and the means of liberation from saṁsāra. This sūtra discusses the third aspect of yoga: liberation, or freedom from suffering and its cause.

Freedom, hānam, is the eternal cessation of bondage, says Vyāsa. This occurs when ignorance is fully removed, as a result of which the conjunction, saṁyoga, between puruṣa and buddhi, the cause of suffering, is removed—in other words, says Vyāsa, puruṣa never gets mixed up with the guṇas again. When the cause of suffering has been removed, suffering disappears, and puruṣa is established in its own true nature. This is liberation, referred to in this sūtra and elsewhere as kaivalyam. Kaivalyam is usually translated as aloneness (in the sense that the puruṣa has severed itself from prakṛti and her effects and is now situated in its own autonomous nature), but is perhaps better understood as wholeness. The term kevalin, one who has attained the state of kaivalya, is most commonly used in the Jain tradition to refer to an enlightened being.

II.26 viveka-khyātir aviplavā hānopāyah

viveka, discrimination; khyātiḥ, discernment; aviplavā, undeviating, undisturbed; hāna, freedom, liberation; upāyāḥ, the means

The means to liberation is uninterrupted discriminative discernment.
If suffering is eliminated by the removal of its cause, ignorance, and this results in puruṣa being established in its own true nature, then what is the means, upāya, to accomplish this? asks Vyāsa rhetorically, as he prepares to discuss the fourth aspect of the science of yoga, the means of liberation. The means indicated here by Patañjali is viveka-khyāti, discriminative discernment. Viveka, Vyāsa reiterates, is defined as the cognition of the distinction between buddhi and puruṣa, but as long as false knowledge has not been removed, discrimination remains shaky (false knowledge, Vijñānabhikṣu reminds us, consists of saṁskāras of ignorance, avidyā, which keep arising in the mind). Śaṅkara quotes a verse here: “As unrefined gold does not shine forth, so the knowledge of an immature person attached to the world does not shine forth.”

When false knowledge becomes like a burnt seed that is incapable of sprouting, says Vyāsa, or, put differently, when the sattva of the intelligence has been cleansed of the dirt of rajas, then cognition attains a state of utmost clarity. At this point, the pure flow of discriminative discernment can proceed unchecked. Therefore, concludes Vyāsa, the path to liberation, namely, the disassociation of puruṣa from buddhi, occurs when false knowledge is destroyed like burnt seeds. Vijñānabhikṣu adds to this that it is viveka-khyāti, discriminative discernment itself, that burns the seeds of false knowledge, at which time all latent saṁskāras of ignorance become like a barren woman incapable of giving birth.

Vyāsa notes that discriminative discernment is initially shaky, as it begins to take up the task of destroying the seeds of ignorance, the distracting saṁskāras imprinted in the citta that surface continually as a result of rajas and tamas. Only once this task is fully accomplished by practice, and these saṁskāras become impotent and can no longer arise, can discriminative awareness reign supreme, and the sattva of the mind and intelligence remain undisturbed, aviplava. Then, says Śaṅkara, “As seeds burnt by fire no longer sprout, so is the case with kleśas burnt by the fire of knowledge; the ātman no longer encounters them.” Vyāsa calls this stage vaśīkāra-saṁjñā, which literally means knowledge that exerts control. In other words, discriminating discernment controls and eventually burns up the emergence of unwanted saṁskāras.

The commentators state that discriminating discernment is initially
awakened by listening to the śāstras, the sacred texts, and becomes strengthened by contemplation on their content, pursued with reverence, for a long time. It then develops further by the practice of yoga that will be outlined in the following sūtras. This discrimination exposes and undermines one’s attachments in the form of desires for worldly or heavenly enjoyment, continues Hariharānanda. In time, discrimination becomes so powerful that the possibility of falling into illusion again becomes completely eradicated, all wrong notions remaining like parched seeds deprived of their potency. Discrimination has now reached a state where it can flow undisturbed. With discrimination in absolute control, the citta is no longer disturbed, and, free from distraction, can now reflect on the puruṣa. The yogī thus approaches liberation.

II.27 tasya saptadhā prānta-bhūmiḥ prajñā.

tasya, his [the yogī’s]; saptadhā, sevenfold; prānta-bhūmiḥ, final place; prajñā, true insight, wisdom

The yogī’s true insight has seven ultimate stages.

This sūtra introduces a sevenfold, saptadhā, division of prajñā, insight. We see here that Patañjali did not specify what these seven stages were, which indicates that he assumed his audience would be familiar with this seven-stepped insight (and that, therefore, as noted in the introduction, Patañjali was not the founder of yoga; this type of knowledge was already in circulation). It also reinforces the point that these sūtras served as manuals that required unpacking by a teacher.

Upon examination of how this sevenfold division is understood by the commentators, it seems that several of these stages are essentially different ways of looking at the same state rather than actual sequential stages. With regard to prajñā, it seems useful here to note Rukmanī’s (reassuring) observation that “of the six schools of philosophy, Yoga is perhaps the one school which has a profusion of technical words used interchangeably. Thus we have dharma-megha, prasaṅkhyāna, anyathā-
khyāti, sattvapurūsānyatā-khyāti, viveka, viveka-khyāti, prajña, rūtambharā, prātibha-jñāna, ekāgra-citta, sa-bījaḥ and more being used more or less in the same sense” (1997, 619). While commentators try to tease out different semantic nuances, at the very least these terms overlap considerably. Rukmanī concludes that it might not always be fruitful to attempt to extract logical consistency in the usage of terms and concepts in the system:

The conviction grows that this [Yoga] is not something that can be logically described. It is a system that has brought in a number of ideas from so many sources and tried to make sense of them. Yoga was a practical school in which the various steps of prajñā and asamprajñāta were clearly intelligible to the adept in Yoga … This is one school which has believed all along in … following some well laid down yogic practices. So it is best to accept it as a discipline to be followed rather than to be understood intellectually. (623)

The yogī referred to by Patañjali in this sūtra refers to the one in whom discrimination has arisen, says Vyāsa. When the impure rājasic and tāmasic coverings of the citta have been removed, and no further pratyayas, notions, arise in the mind of the discriminating yogī, true insight manifests in seven aspects, which Vyāsa lists as follows:

(1) That which is to be avoided (suffering) is known, and there is nothing further to be known in this regard. The very desire to know ceases, says Hariharānanda, and thus knowledge itself can cease.

(2) The causes of this suffering have been completely eradicated. These causes are the kleśas, ignorance, desire, etc., and the ensuing karma, as we know.

(3) By nirodha-samādhi, the samādhi of restraint, which, we recall is how Patañjali defines the entire enterprise of yoga (citta-vṛtti-nirodha), the removal of the misidentification of puruṣa with buddhi becomes directly realized. Once this misidentification is removed, asamprajñāta-samādhi can manifest.
(4) The means to accomplish this removal of misidentification in the form of discriminative knowledge has been attained.

These first four aspects, says Vyāsa, pertain to liberation from action, or external events. One should note their obvious parallel to the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism. The next three pertain to liberation of the citta. Moreover, the first four are the result of the personal effort of the yogī, say the commentators, unlike the following three, which arise spontaneously. In other words, one need no longer strive to practice yoga at this point. These final three stages represent the complete cessation of the activities of buddhi.

(5) Intelligence has fulfilled its purpose: to provide either worldly experience or liberation. It has now become redundant.

(6) The yogī’s guṇas dissolve back into their causal matrix, prakṛti, and emerge no more, since they no longer have a function. Vyāsa compares this to boulders falling from the tops of mountains when deprived of their support. Hariharānanda hastens to point out that the guṇas to which Vyāsa is referring are the effects of the guṇas, not the primordial guṇas themselves, which are constituent ontological categories inherent in prakṛti and thus as eternal as is prakṛti. Specifically, it is the subtle body of the citta, says Vijñānabhikṣu, that dissolves.

(7) Puruṣa, removed from the bonds of the guṇas, is now eligible to shine forth in its own pure luminous nature. This is called kevala, absolute freedom. The puruṣa who has surpassed the guṇas and attained these seven stages of realization is known as an adept, says Vyāsa. In this state, one doesn’t actually realize anything, because now, by definition, one is fully detached and separated from the organ of realization or discrimination, buddhi. But just as one realizes upon awakening one has slept well, even if one cannot recall the actual experience of sleep, so does the yogī coming out of the state of asamprajñāta back into external awareness realize that this has been a state free from all suffering.
There are differing views among Hindu schools as to whether this ability to remain embodied despite having attained asamprajñātasamādhi (called jīvanmukti, liberation, while still in the body) is possible, or whether ultimate and absolute liberation can take place only after death.\(^{51}\) One can attain this stage even while living, say the Yoga commentators, although this will be such a person’s last birth. According to Vijñānabhikṣu, the jīvanmukta, the liberated yogī who is still embodied, may, if he or she wishes, merely witness the stages of insight, prajñā, produced by buddhi. There is no sense of ahaṅkāra, of wishing to appropriate prajñā or misidentify with it, as in normal consciousness.

One must remember that in the Yoga system, prajñā is still a function of buddhi and thus of prakṛti connection with puruṣa. Therefore, according to Hariharānanda, these seven steps do not yet represent the puruṣa being in itself, asamprajñāta-samādhi, but the highest or final level of insight prior to this ultimate samādhi. As has been discussed, in asamprajñāta-samādhi, the mental function, citta, ceases completely and the yogī consequently ceases to function in the world. In the jīvanmukta stage, the yogī still retains the prākṛtic citta, since, of course, by definition, embodiment entails association with the mind and intelligence, etc. (although the jīvanmukta is fully capable of discarding all prākṛtic coverings and entering the state of asamprajñāta, notes Hariharānanda). The jīvanmukta, who has, by definition, no personal desire or reason to do so, might choose to remain embodied so as to help other beings who are still suffering. Obviously, says Hariharānanda, the jīvanmukta can rise above any suffering that might come his or her way due to any saṁskāras that might still be left, by use of the buddhi in the form of discrimination and detachment.

Thus the yogī is completely free from the control of the guṇas. Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the Gītā here: “One who renounces all endeavour is known to have transcended the guṇas” (XIV.25). In this section of the Gītā, Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa to describe the symptoms by which one might recognize someone who has transcended the guṇas, in other words, what are the characteristics of the jīvanmukta? It might be useful for the reader to refer to the translation of this section in I.37, since this material overlaps with what the commentators have to say in their
II.28 yogāṅgānuṣṭhānād aśuddhi-kṣaye jñāna-dīptir-āviveka-khyāteḥ

Upon the destruction of impurities as a result of the practice of yoga, the lamp of knowledge arises. This culminates in discriminative discernment.

Patañjali here introduces the long-awaited āṇgas, limbs of yoga. It has by now been well established, says Vyāsa, that discriminative discernment, viveka, when achieved, is the cause of removing the conjunction between puruṣa and prakṛti, in other words, of removing ignorance such that liberation manifests. But what is the cause of achieving discriminative discernment? A means is required to achieve this. Milk may exist in the udders of the cow, says Vācaspati Miśra, but one needs a means or process to extract it. The means presented in this sūtra of attaining discriminative discernment is the practice of the eight limbs of yoga, yogāṅgānuṣṭhāna, which will occupy the rest of the chapter.

By the practice of yoga, Patañjali states, impurity, aśuddhi, is destroyed, which, Vyāsa, reminds us, consists of the five kleśas, obstacles to yoga (ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life). The notion of yoga destroying impurities goes back as far as the Āpastamba-dharma-sūtra of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E., which lists fifteen došas, faults, that are eliminated by its practice.52 When impurity is removed, the light of full knowledge, jñāna-dīpti, noted in this sūtra can shine forth, like the sun after the cold season, says Śaṅkara. Another way of putting this is that as the impurities of tamas and rajas dwindle, the luminosity and clarity inherent in sattva can manifest unimpeded. An
impurity is something that intrudes on or contaminates another entity, in this case, *rajas* and *tamas* covering *sattva* (of course, *sattva* itself is ultimately a covering of *puruṣa*). The more the eightfold path is practiced, the more these impurities dwindle, and the more they dwindle, the more this light can correspondingly increase. This increase culminates in the desired discriminative discernment, a feature of pure *sattva*. Just as the axe slices wood from a tree, so the practice of these eight limbs slices the impurities away from the *citta*, says Vyāsa.

There is the widespread view that the continuity of the text comes to something of an abrupt end after II.27, with this *sūtra* typically deemed as initiating a new self-contained unit on the eight limbs. It is true that Patañjali does not make reference to the eight limbs prior to this point. Nor is there any explanation of the relationship among *tapas*, *svādhyāya*, and *Īśvara-pranidhāna* as the three ingredients of *kriyā-yoga*, and their occurrence as three of the five *niyamas*, the second limb, discussed below. And our modern notions of discursive continuity might have put the eight-limbed section in a separate *pāda* of its own, beginning with this *sūtra*.

But, again, one must be wary of submitting the cryptic *sūtra* style to modern notions of structural coherence. Just as the *kriyā-yoga* section introduced a new set of terms and conceptual analyses indispensable to explaining the mechanics (*kleśas*) underpinning the *vṛttis* such that the attainment of the goal of yoga might be better understood, so does this ensuing section dedicate itself to a necessarily more specific elaboration of the *abhyāsa*, practice, touched upon in I.12. As with the *kriyā-yoga* section, this increase of detail requires new terms and categories, but now pertaining to practice, articulated accordingly with less philosophical tone and content.

It is likely that Patañjali drew upon an existing tradition of eight-limbed yoga when composing his text (or modified the older tradition of six limbs), as well as a distinct tradition featuring *kriyā-yoga*. In other words, as a systematizer of existing traditions, Patañjali might well have merged two distinct but overlapping systems. This possibility is enhanced by the fact that the relationship between the three ingredients of *kriyā-yoga* and the identical three ingredients reappearing in the second limb of yoga, the *niyamas*, but now alongside two other
ingredients, is not addressed by Patañjali.

II.29 yama-niyamāsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇā-dhyāna-
samādhayaṅ ‘ṣṭāv aṅgāni

yama, abstentions, moral restraints; niyama, observances;
āsana, posture; prāṇāyāma, breath control; pratyāhāra,
withdrawal of the senses; dhāraṇā, concentration; dhyāna,
meditation; samādhayaṅ, absorption; aṣṭāu, eight; aṅgāni, limbs

The eight limbs are abstentions, observances, posture,
breath control, disengagement of the senses,
concentration, meditation, and absorption.

In I.12, practice and dispassion were presented as the means to control
the वृत्तिस and thus attain samādhi; in II.1, self-discipline, study, and
submission to the Lord were identified as practices conducive to
eliminating the क्लेश obstacles to yoga and attaining samādhi. The
following sūtras offer further prescriptions for attaining the goal of yoga.
Actually, both sets of injunctions in I.12 and in II.1 can be located within
the first two limbs, the yamas, abstentions, and niyamas, observances;
practice and dispassion find correlates in the yamas; and the three
ingredients of kriyā-yoga are repeated verbatim under the niyamas.
Śaṅkara also adds that there are other requirements of the path, such as
practicing dharma, righteous conduct, and accepting a guru. The
commentators save their analyses of the eight items listed in this sūtra
for the following sūtras, which take up each limb individually.

One might add, here, that the notion of yoga having अंगas, limbs, is
derived in all likelihood from the older Veda-āṅgas. The successful
performance of Vedic ritual in the later Vedic period was seen as
dependent on the mastery of the six limbs of the Vedic ritual: phonetics,
meter, grammar, etymology, astronomy, and ritual (mentioned in, e.g.,
Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad I.1.5). Likewise, the goal of yoga expressed in I.2 is
dependent on the successful performance of the eight auxiliary limbs of
yoga indicated in this verse. Just as none of the Vedic limbs individually represented the goal of Vedic sacrifice, but each was an essential contributing part of it, so is the case with the limbs of yoga.

II.30 ahiṁsā-satyāsteya-brahmacaryāparigrahā yamāḥ

ahiṁsā, nonviolence; satya, truthfulness; asteya, refraining from stealing; brahmacarya, celibacy; aparigrahāḥ, refraining from acquisition or coveting; yamāḥ, the abstentions

The yamas are nonviolence, truthfulness, refraining from stealing, celibacy, and renunciation of [unnecessary] possessions.

From the five yamas listed here, ahiṁsā, nonviolence, the principal motto of Gandhi’s noncooperation approach, is the yama singled out by the commentators and Patañjali for special attention. In traditional methods of scriptural interpretation, introductory (and concluding) statements carry more weight than other statements.\(^{53}\) Ahiṁsā is the most important yama, say the commentators, and therefore leads the list. (It seems important to note that the yamas themselves lead the list of the eight limbs, suggesting that one’s yogic accomplishment remains limited until the yamas are internalized and put into practice.)

Vyāsa accordingly takes ahiṁsā as the root of the other yamas. He defines it as not injuring any living creature anywhere at any time. Just as the footprints of an elephant cover the footprints of all other creatures, says Vijñānabhikṣu, so does ahiṁsā cover all the other yamas. According to Vyāsa, the goal of the other yamas is to achieve ahiṁsā and enhance it, and he quotes an unidentified verse stating that one continues to undertake more and more vows and austerities for the sole purpose of purifying ahiṁsā.

Although ahiṁsā has been defined by Vyāsa as not harming any creature anywhere at any time, one must continue to perform one’s dharma, duty, cautions Vijñānabhikṣu, even though it is impossible to
avoid harming tiny living entities such as bacteria or insects when one engages in activities such as bathing or cleaning. Nonetheless, one must strive as far as possible to avoid harming even an insect. Certainly, one can be very clear about the fact that eating meat, nourishing one’s body at the expense of the flesh of other living beings, is completely taboo for aspiring yogīs. One should avoid harming even trees, says Hariharananda. Manu, who composed the primary dharmaśāstra, law book, in classical India, states, “To protect living creatures one should inspect the ground constantly as one walks, by night or day, because of the risk of grievous bodily harm” (VI.69).

As an aside, but in this vein, certain communities of observant Jains, who have taken the principle of nonviolence further than any other tradition recorded in human history, are required to follow strict principles to minimize any possible violence to other creatures. For example, they are admonished not to eat root vegetables, since creatures in the soil may be harmed when uprooting these and not to engage in any farming activities, for the same reason. Needless to say, they must reject any type of military career. Observant members of this community do not cook after sunset, since insects would be attracted to the flame of the fire and perish; strain their water to remove any hapless microscopic creatures that might have fallen in; wear gauze over their mouths so as not to inhale any tiny airborne creatures; and sweep the road before them as they walk, again so as not to step on any creature, etc. Since embodied existence inevitably entails that one will sooner or later inadvertently harm some creature or other, no matter how hard one attempts to avoid this, the ultimate act of nonviolence performed in rare instances by exemplar Jains is to fast to death, sacrificing their own life to save those of other creatures. Sacrificing one’s life to save others is the definition of heroism (and, indeed, the perfected Jain yogī is called mahāvīra, great hero).

This practice may seem extreme (it is of course not mainstream but performed on very rare occasions by exemplar ascetic Jain monks), but it needs to be considered within the parameters of the Jain (and Hindu) belief that all living beings contain an ātman (puruṣa), and all ātmans are spiritually equal. Even as our modern world respects the heroism involved in sacrificing one’s life for the protection of fellow humans in
recognition of a common humanity or humanness, and certain moral commentators are presently taking a hesitant step beyond the concept of human equality by grappling with the extent of our commonality with the great apes, and the moral issues this might present in our responsibilities to them, so Jains (there are similar instances among Hindu ascetics\textsuperscript{55}) extend this principle and, from their perspective, deepen it, by recognizing the common ātman-ness among all beings.

The sūtras and the commentators do not advocate this degree of commitment to nonviolence, but at the very least, eating meat is to be shunned by anyone with even the minimum pretensions of aspiring to be a practicing yogī as understood by Patañjali.

A sāttvic person is empathetic and compassionate toward other embodied beings and would never countenance inflicting violence upon them, what to speak of eating their flesh. Moreover, being insightful, such a person understands the kārmic consequence of violent actions, as will be indicated in II.34: Any involvement in violent acts of any kind requires that the perpetrator be subjected to the same violence at some future time as kārmic consequence. Moreover, inflicting violence is a quality of tamas, and thus eating meat increases the tāmasic potential of the citta, further enhancing ignorance. A vegetarian diet is nonnegotiable for yogīs.

Nonviolence, Hariharānanda continues, also encompasses giving up the spirit of malice and hatred, since these produce the tendencies to injure others. This includes avoiding violence in the form of harsh words, or causing fear in others. Ahimsā must be followed in thought, deed, and word, says Śaṅkara. The degree of violence is determined by intent—acts of violence performed without malice and hatred by a normal person, he notes, such as self-defense or cutting the grass, are not the same as murdering one’s parents in cold blood. But yogīs avoid even retaliating in self-defense against an attacker, he says, and will shoo off a snake rather than kill it, and thus attempt to inflict as little aggression as possible on their environments.

Vyāsa defines truth, the second yama, as one’s words and thoughts being in exact correspondence to fact, that is, to whatever is known through the three processes of knowledge accepted by the Yoga school (sense perception, inference, and verbal testimony). Speech, he
continues, is for the transferral of one’s knowledge to others and should not be deceitful, misleading, or devoid of value. It should be for the benefit of all creatures, and not for their harm, otherwise it is sinful. Posing deceptively as a truthful or virtuous person causes one’s downfall, he warns; therefore, one should consider these things carefully and speak only the truth for the welfare of all creatures. Śaṅkara quotes Manu here: “Let him not speak what is true but unkind; let him speak what is kind and not untrue. This is eternal righteousness” (IV.138).

The commentators give a well-known episode from the Mahābhārata involving Yudhiṣṭhīra as an example of deception. During the Mahābhārata war, Droṇa, on the opposing side to Yudhiṣṭhīra and his brothers, the five Pāṇḍavas, was unstoppably decimating their army. With a view to breaking his fighting spirit, Droṇa was misinformed that his son Asvatthāmā had been killed in the battle. In Vācaspati Miśra’s rendition of the event, Droṇa asked the righteous son of dharma himself, Yudhiṣṭhīra, who was renowned for never having told a lie, whether it was true that Asvatthāmā had been killed. Yudhiṣṭhīra answered in the affirmative, but since he was incapable of lying, he forced himself, as he responded, to think of an elephant named Asvatthāmā who had also been killed in the field that day. Although this resulted in a technically truthful reply to the question, since the thought in Yudhiṣṭhīra’s mind was of an elephant, the knowledge transferred to Droṇa’s mind was in relation to his son. Thus Yudhiṣṭhīra’s words were purposely deceitful and misleading, as per Vyāsa’s definitions above, since their intention was to mislead. This led to Droṇa’s downfall, but the deceit also caused Yudhiṣṭhīra’s chariot wheels, which had up to that point floated above the ground due to the power of his dharma, to touch the ground.

On the other hand, continue the commentators, given that the other yamas are subservient to ahiṁsā, truth must not cause harm to others. Here an example is introduced of a man of truth who is asked by robbers if merchants they are pursuing had passed that way, and, since he had seen them do so, replies truthfully. Although speaking the truth, his compliance with the robbers resulted in harm, hiṁsā, being caused to the merchants. Therefore, this also does not qualify as real truth. This underscores Vyāsa’s view of the centrality of ahiṁsā: Truth must never result in violence. In other words, if there is ever a conflict between the
yamas—if observing one yama results in the compromise of another—then ahimsa must always be respected first. Hariharananda applies this principle on a psychological level: Ahimsa includes not always speaking bluntly and truthfully to people about their shortcomings. Here he follows Manu’s injunction that “one should not tell the truth unkindly” (IV.138). Also, avoiding untruth extends to the point of abstaining from reading fiction, for Hariharananda. The yogi is always contemplating spiritual truths and does not occupy his or her mind with fictional or worldly trivia, silly fantasy, daydreaming, or imagination.

Refrainment from stealing, the third yama, is described as not taking things belonging to others and not even harboring the desire to do so. This latter aspect is important, explains Vacaspati Miśra, since action is initiated in the mind—the more one desires something, the more inclined one becomes to acquire it. Thoughts of stealing obviously cannot exist in those free of desire, says Śaṅkara. Even if one finds a treasure trove or jewel by chance, it should not be taken since it belongs to someone else, says Hariharananda.

Vyāsa defines celibacy as the control of the sexual organs, and this is refined by Vacaspati Miśra as not seeing, speaking with, embracing, or otherwise interacting with members of the opposite sex as objects of desire. He quotes the Dakṣa-samhitā: “The eight kinds of sexual indulgences are thinking, talking, and joking about sex; looking [at the opposite sex with passion], talking secretly about sex, determining to engage in it, attempting to do so, and actually performing the act” (7.31–32). Hariharananda, ever ready with practical suggestions, says that a frugal diet and moderate sleep are important for celibacy. Plenty of milk and butter may be sāttvic for an ordinary person, he says, but not for a yogi. In short, ultimate self-realization cannot be attained if one is sexually active because this indicates that one is still seeking fulfillment on the sensual level and thus misidentifying with the nonself.

Vyāsa defines renunciation of possessions as the ability to see the problems caused by the acquisition, preservation, and destruction of things, since these only provoke attachment and injury. There is trouble involved in acquiring things in the first place, says Hariharananda, trouble again in trying to preserve and upkeep them, and trouble and distress when we inevitably lose them. For such reasons, possession
produces *sañskāras*, and these activate in the future to cause distress in the form of hankering for objects, or lamentation for having lost them. Hoarding wealth without sharing it is sheer selfishness and points to a complete lack of sympathy for the plight of others, says Hariharānanda. Therefore, yogīs attempt to give up all objects of enjoyment and take only what is required for their maintenance. No enjoyment can be gained without some level of direct or indirect injury to others, says Vācaspati Miśra, reaffirmingVyāsa’s comments about the centrality of *ahiṁsā* among the *yamas*. The more something is enjoyable, the more one becomes attached to it and strives to repeat the experience often without consideration of the consequences for others, and thus, correspondingly, more harm is generated to others.

Rāmānanda Sarasvatī notes that the *yamas* are situated as the first limb of *yoga* because they produce their effects without being aided by any other factors. The *niyamas*, observances, of the next *sūtra* are dependent on the successful cultivation of the *yamas* for their full fruition. In his view, each subsequent limb of *yoga* thus requires the completion of the previous limbs in order to be pursued fruitfully (but Hariharānanda disagrees with this in his comments to *sūtra* II.34, below).

_[These yamas] are considered the great vow. They are not exempted by one’s class, place, time, or circumstance. They are universal._

In this very important *sūtra*, Patañjali states that the *yamas* are absolute and universal for aspiring yogīs—they cannot be transgressed or
exempted under any circumstance such as class, jāti; place, deśa; time, kāla; or circumstance, samaya. They are nonnegotiable for yogīs. Patañjali is being conspicuously (and uncharacteristically) emphatic here. Not only are the yamas a vrata, vow, but a mahāvrata, great vow. This great vow is further qualified as being sārva-bhauma, universal. The term “universal” by definition should make any further qualification redundant, but Patañjali makes a point of additionally naming and eliminating any possible grounds or pleas for exception: These yamas are anavicchinnāḥ, not exempted because of one’s class, jāti; place, deśa; time, kāla; or circumstance, samaya. This is as absolute a statement as can be made. As noted, items placed first on a list carry greater importance than subsequent items, underscoring the importance of the yamas (and, by the same token, ahiṁsā as first of the yamas).

At the time of writing this section, there is a discussion in certain quarters of the Yoga community in America about the jurisdiction of the yamas in the twenty-first-century West. Whatever direction such discussions may take, and whatever hybrid practices evolve in the West under the rubric of yoga, this sūtra makes it very clear that as far as Patañjali is concerned, there are no exceptions to these rules at any time in any place for anyone aspiring to be a yogī as defined by his system. One might imagine that in Patañjali’s own circle, there would have been followers or disciples angling for exceptions to one or other of the yamas—perhaps arguing that the sacred Vedic law books, Dharma-śāstras, themselves allowed the brāhmaṇa caste, for example, to offer animals in Vedic sacrifices, or the kṣatriya caste to eat meat, or engage in sexuality. He is therefore being as emphatic here as the straightforward and plain use of human language allows.

One might add that these yamas are more or less universal among all the liberation-based spiritual traditions of ancient India, and even in the more worldly Dharma-śāstra traditions, the Vedic law books that concern themselves with more conventional sociocivic duties (for example, Manu X.63). This is so not only in orthodox Vedic traditions, but in heterodox ones too. The eightfold noble path of Buddhism, requires the observance of five silas, four of which—ahiṁsā, satya, brahmacarya, and asteya—are identical to the first four yamas, and one, abstinence from intoxication, replaces aparigraha, noncoveting. The Jains, too, have five great vows,
for which they use the same term we find in this sūtra, mahāvrata, and these are identical to Patañjali’s yamas.\textsuperscript{58} The Nyāya Sūtras acknowledge yoga as the means to realize the ātman but specify that it entails the following of yama and niyama (IV.2.46). With certain nonmainstream exceptions such as the tāntric left-handed practices,\textsuperscript{59} these yamas are more or less standard across sectarian traditions, even if not listed in the specific format chosen by Patañjali. The Gītā, for example, lists some of the yamas in its description of the divine attributes (ahīṁsā and satya in XVI.2); in its description of the qualities of sattva (brahmacarya and satya in XVII.14–15); in its prescriptions for the yogī (aparigraha in VI.10); and under qualities emanating from Kṛṣṇa himself (brahmacarya and satya in X.4–5).

The commentators elaborate on this sūtra through a discussion of nonviolence, since it is the most important yama and, as first member of the list, represents the others; however, the following discussion applies to all the yamas. The yama of nonviolence conditioned by caste, jāti, says Vyāsa, can be seen in the case of, say, a fisherman who, because of his caste occupation inflicts violence only on fish but nowhere else. Kṣatriyas, the warrior class, too, are allowed to engage in violence in certain contexts—hunting, for example, and, of course, on the battlefield. While this may hold in other circumstances such as these, nonviolence has no conditions for Patañjali. Jāti literally means family of birth; therefore, being born into a family or caste that eats meat does not constitute an exception to the practice of nonviolence. If, say, a kṣatriya wishes to become a yogī as understood by Patañjali, he must abandon violence even if such violence is legitimate for persons of this caste and, indeed, condoned or even required by dharmic prescriptions in the Dharma-śāstra texts, and even if such texts are also considered sacred scripture and authoritative. Manu, for example, who wrote one such law book, states, “Kings who try to kill one another in battle and fight to their utmost ability, never averting their faces, go to the celestial realms” (VII.89ff). One can envision that there would have been spiritual seekers in Patañjali’s entourage who would have been coming from kṣatriya or other jātis, castes, who might have pointed to such passages in sacred scripture.

Here we see a distinction between the requirements of yoga covered
in, for example, the *karma-yoga* section of the *Gītā*, where Kṛṣṇa exhorts Arjuna to do his civic duty as a *kṣatriya* warrior and fight, to specifically engage in violent warfare, and the ascetic tradition represented by Patañjali. What may be acceptable—or even required—in a sociocivic context must be renounced in an ascetic yogic one. Indeed, it is with this ascetic alternative in mind that Arjuna initially precisely wishes to renounce violence and take up the ascetic life of mendicancy (II.5). The *Gītā*, of course, while accepting the Patañjalian-type path as an acceptable means to attain liberation (e.g., chapter VI) has, for the most part, a different objective, one directed to sociocivic concerns, and thus construes a different means to attain perfection from within the parameters of the idealized social system, namely *karma-yoga*, the path of action. While it has long been argued persuasively that the Yoga Sūtras are not incompatible with social and civic engagement in the world (e.g., Whicher 1998, 1999, 2005)—that is, once *avidyā*, ignorance, is eliminated, one can act in the world from a position of enlightenment—Patañjali’s position on the role of the *yamas* could not be made much clearer.

As an example of nonviolence conditioned by place, *deśa*, Vyāsa points to a person who abstains from injury only when in a sacred place but kills animals elsewhere (or, one might add, vice versa for the Vedic ritualist). For Patañjali, nonviolence must be upheld everywhere, irrespective of the ritualistic, gastronomic, or culinary practices of a particular country or place. He defines nonviolence conditioned by time, *kāla*, as when one abstains from violence on certain calendar occasions (for example, during religious observances, such as, in a Catholic context, abstaining from meat at Lent), but not at other times. *Yogīs* must be nonviolent at all times. Nonviolence conditioned by circumstance, *samaya*, is exemplified by a person who avoids violence on all occasions except in the context of religious rites. The ancient Vedic *yajña* sacrificial rites, which were still the mainstream religious practices of Patañjali’s time, involved offering animals into the sacred fire; thus violence in the sacrificial context is prescribed in the ancient Vedic texts. Vyāsa also gives the example of soldiers who engage in violence on the battlefield but nowhere else. Although legitimate in other contexts, none of these circumstances applies to *yogīs*. 
In short, even if one’s very *dharma*, righteous duty, allows for exceptions of this sort, if one wishes to be a *yogi*, such exceptions no longer apply. One can also mention allowances made in *āyurveda*, the traditional Hindu system of medicinal knowledge, for temporarily imbibing certain meat substances to cure very specific medical conditions, which would also come under the category of *samaya*. All these exceptions may hold good elsewhere in other contexts but, for the *yogi* wishing to attain the goals of *yoga* outlined in this text, say the commentators, this *sūtra* emphatically specifies that any such mitigating factors or conditions no longer apply. Nonviolence and the other *yamas* must be practiced at all times, in all conditions, everywhere, irrespective of any considerations whatsoever.

One can take this or leave it, but Patañjali’s intent cannot be expressed much more clearly. The *yamas* are universal prescriptions—there are no exceptions, says Vyāsa. Aspiring *yogis* in the modern context are thus informed in this *sūtra* that renegotiations of the *yamas* due to the exigencies of modern times and the Western landscape are emphatically not recognized by the classical Yoga tradition. Hence Patañjali states that the *yamas* are the great vow. So too, say the commentators, are the *niyamas* of the next *sūtra*.

On a separate note, Gokhula (1995) considers the charge that Yoga cannot strictly speaking be considered a moral system, since its goals are not altruistic or focused on the welfare of others, but focused on the liberation of the individual self; it is thus self-centered or egoistic. He concludes, however, that even though Yoga’s ultimate goal of self-liberation is individualistic, it cannot be attained except through moral means of interacting with others, as indicated by the five *yamas*, and never obtained through immoral means. It can thus be categorized as a moral system.

**II.32**  śauca-santoṣa-tapaḥ-svādhyāyesvara-praṇidhānāni niyamāḥ

śauca, cleanliness; santoṣa, contentment; tapah, austerity; svādhyāya, study [of the scriptures]; īśvara, God, the Lord;
The observances are cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study [of scripture], and devotion to God.

In contrast with the *yamas*, which are concerned with how the *yogi* interacts with others, the *niyamas* are centered on one’s own personal discipline and practice. Vijñānabhikṣu rationalizes the categorization of these two sets by pointing out that the former deal with *desisting* from certain activities, which, being universal, are not qualified by time and place, and the latter with *engaging* in certain activities, which are qualified by time and place.\(^{63}\)

Vyāsa divides the first item on Patañjali’s list, cleanliness, *śauca*, into external and internal types. External cleanliness pertains to the body and consists (in the premodern world of our commentators and rural India today) of cleaning with water and clay, as well as cow dung and cow urine, which are considered pure substances, and of ingesting pure foodstuff (which, Vācaspati Miśra notes, should be limited in quantity). In terms of ingestion, Hariharānanda reiterates that meat and intoxication cause the mind to be agitated and stimulated—they incite *rajas* and *tamas*—and yoga requires a steady and peaceful mind. Therefore, a yogi never imbibes such substances. He quotes Caraka, a traditional authority on *āyurveda*: “Whatever is good or most desired in this life or the next is attained by intense concentration of the mind. Alcohol creates a disturbance in the mind. Those blinded by addiction to alcohol lose sight of their best self-interest.” Internal cleanliness consists of purifying the mind of all contamination. The commentators speak of jealousy, pride, vanity, hatred, and attachment as examples of mental contamination. Bhoja Rāja states that internal cleanliness is to be accomplished by benevolence—exuding a friendly attitude toward all.

Contentment, *santoṣa*, the second *niyama*, manifests as disinterest in accumulating more than one’s immediate needs of life (Vācaspati Miśra points out that the desire to appropriate the possessions of others has in actuality already been given up in the *yama* stage). As the *Gītā* informs us, desire is the real enemy of the embodied soul, since it is never satisfied and burns like fire (III.37–39). True happiness comes from contentment with whatever one has, not with thinking that one will be
happy when one gets all that one desires. Even if there is some lack, says Śaṅkara, one thinks, “It is enough.” Or, as Hariharānanda puts it, to avoid injury from thorns, one only has to wear one pair of shoes—one doesn’t need to cover the entire earth with leather!

The next niyama, austerity, tapas, is the ability to tolerate hunger and thirst as well as all the dualities of life (hot and cold, etc.), to avoid useless talk, and to perform fasts. Hariharānanda says that yoga requires one to tolerate sufferings of the body, endure hardships, and remain undisturbed by the lack of physical comfort. He cautions, however, that inflicting hardship on the body in the form of voluntary austerity and penance should be undertaken only for the expiation of sins and not otherwise.

Study, svādhyāya, refers to reading sacred scriptures whose subject matter is liberation, and the commentators also include the repetition of om here. Hariharānanda expands this to include devotional mantras. He notes that by practicing this niyama, one’s desire for worldly objects diminishes, and one’s taste for spiritual objects increases.

Vyāsa here defines the last item on Patañjali’s list, devotion to God, īśvara-praṇidhāna, which has already received a good deal of attention (I.23ff), as offering all one’s activities to īśvara, the original teacher (I.26). In resonance with the Gītā II.47, where this is one of the primary teachings, such offerings must be done without desire for the fruit. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī quotes two devotional verses to illustrate this: “Whatever I do, whether with or without desire, whether auspicious or inauspicious, I do it to offer it all to you as directed by you” and “Let all my daily activities, in this life or future lives, whether in deed, thought or word, be dedicated in devotion to Kṛṣṇa.” One might draw attention here to numerous verses in the Gītā where Kṛṣṇa makes statements such as, “Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you sacrifice, whatever you give away, whatever austerities you perform, O Arjuna, do it as an offering to me” (IX.27). Vijñānabhikṣu, despite his own personal Vaiṣṇavite orientations, which are usually evident in his references when discussing the īśvara element, displays the admirable Hindu penchant for conceptualizing īśvara as manifest in a myriad of forms by quoting in his Yogasāra commentary on this sūtra a verse to Śiva: “The worship (pūjā) of īśvara consists of firm devotion to Śiva by means of praise,
remembrance, and worship, through one’s words, thoughts, body and actions.”

Vyāsa sees fit to quote another verse in his commentary here: “While lying down, sitting, or wandering on the road, one who is focused within and whose net of doubts are weakened, sees the seeds of saṁsāra weakening. Such a person, always firm in yoga, becomes eternally free and partakes in immortality.” He adds that it is from devotion to īśvara that this takes place—obstacles are removed and one is able to realize the innermost consciousness.

Vācaspati Miśra considers devotion to īśvara to be the most important of all the yamas and niyamas. As we will see below, cultivating the yamas and niyamas produces beneficial results, but it is only from īśvara-praṇidhāna that the ultimate result of yoga, namely, samādhi, is gained (II.45). Also, it is important to note again here, that although īśvara-praṇidhāna was optional as a method of meditation in the first chapter, it is not optional here in the context of the niyamas. As with the requirements of kriyā-yoga at the beginning of this chapter, Patañjali is requiring a theistic practice at least at this point in his system.

II.33 vitarka-bādhane pratipakṣa-bhāvanam

Vitarka, negative thoughts; bādhane, on the harassing of; pratipakṣa, the opposite; bhāvanam, cultivation

Upon being harassed by negative thoughts, one should cultivate counteracting thoughts.

In the next verse, Patañjali defines “negative thoughts,” vitarkas, as thoughts countering the yamas and niyamas. Thus they are thoughts directed toward violence, untruthfulness, stealing, sexual indulgence, accumulation, uncleanness, discontentment, luxury, disinterest in scripture, and lack of devotion to īśvara (or, contrarily, devotion to ungodly persons). What is reassuring about this sūtra is that Patañjali is essentially stating that “when one is harassed by negative thoughts ...” In other words, negative thoughts will arise in the citta. How can they
not? Negative thoughts are simply the cropping up of saṁskāras that are eternally recorded in the citta of past indulgences or immoral behaviors that all embodied beings have performed at some point just by being subject to the ever-changing guṇas. In even the best-tended gardens, weeds inevitably pop up from time to time. As indicated in the Gītā, “One in whom all desires flow by [but who remains undisturbed by them] like the ocean into which the rivers flow but which remains undisturbed, attains peace” (II.70) and “One who neither begrudges or hankers for the presence or absence of lucidity, activity or delusion [sattva, rajas, and tamas], but who remains as if indifferent, and is not disturbed by the guṇas thinking ‘the guṇas alone are operating’ ... is said to have transcended the guṇas” (XIV.22–25). Desires will crop up; rajas and tamas will manifest in the citta. Hence, Patañjali implies in this sūtra that the task is not to berate oneself upon finding oneself contemplating a negative thought but to deal insightfully with such occurrences. This, according to Patañjali, means considering their consequences, pratipakṣa-bhāvana.

When one is tormented by perverse thoughts, says Vyāsa, such as, “I will kill this evildoer,” “I will lie,” “I will appropriate this person’s wealth,” “I will commit adultery with that person’s wife,” “I will take control over this other person’s possessions,” one should cultivate counterthoughts. One should rather think, “Burning in the fire of this world, I have taken shelter of yoga by committing myself to the welfare of all creatures; after having renounced such perverse thoughts, by again resorting to them, I am behaving like a dog who licks its vomit.” This practice of cultivating counterthoughts should be applied to negative thoughts that arise and obstruct the practice of the other limbs of yoga as well, says Vyāsa.

Actually, this sūtra is profound in its implications and provides a means of performing a type of mindfulness meditation for yogīs, whereby one consciously adjusts the types of saṁskāras one allows in one’s citta. If we consider the citta to be essentially a warehouse of saṁskāras, negative thoughts are merely the activation of some of these previous saṁskāras lying in storage; saṁskāras are never destroyed, we recall (although they can be burnt by yogic practice). In other words, thoughts of violence, dishonesty, etc., arise because of the past practices of such things
imprinted on one’s citta. If, when the yogī becomes aware of a perverse thought arising in the citta, he or she makes a conscious effort to counter it by invoking a benevolent thought, then a new more sāttvic type of saṃskāra is planted in the citta warehouse. For example, if an aspiring yogī experiences feelings of dislike for a person, which is a type of hiṃsā, violence, resulting from ignorance (ignoring the true self of the person), then, upon becoming aware of this feeling, the yogī can make the effort to think of the person in a nonviolent fashion, perhaps viewing him or her as simply an embodied being victimized by the guṇas and karma, etc., and ultimately as a pure puruṣa soul. One might additionally consider how the world might be a better place to live if people could go beyond the superficial impressions and view others as fellow spiritual beings and so forth (a practice that has been referred to as a sort of autosuggestion). The yogī might also ponder the negative consequences of perverse thinking, as outlined in the next sūtra. These newly cultivated sāttvic thoughts are then recorded in the citta.

The more one practices this type of sāttvic thinking in opposition to the rājasic and tāmasic thoughts that underpin inclinations toward violence, untruthfulness, and the other qualities opposite to the yamas and niyamas, the more the texture of the citta is transformed from rājasic and tāmasic to sāttvic. The more the citta becomes “sāttvicized” in this way, the less frequently rājasic and tāmasic thoughts will surface, and the less effort one will have to make to actually cultivate sattva (artificially, so to speak)—sāttvic thoughts will start to arise more naturally and spontaneously. As in a garden, the more one makes an effort to uproot weeds, the more the bed will eventually become a receptacle for fragrant flowers, which will then grow and reseed of their own accord until there is hardly any room for the weeds to surface. In other words, as sattva is cultivated in this way, the personality of the yogī becomes altered. Weeding, of course, can never be abandoned completely, and even the most saintly and accomplished yogī must be ever vigilant for old rājasic and tāmasic saṃskāras lying latent in the subconscious depths of the citta, like the latent seeds of dormant weeds.
Negative thoughts are violence, etc. They may be [personally] performed, performed on one’s behalf by another, or authorized by oneself; they may be triggered by greed, anger, or delusion; and they may be slight, moderate, or extreme in intensity. One should cultivate counteracting thoughts, namely, that the end results [of negative thoughts] are ongoing suffering and ignorance.

The vitarkas are the thoughts of violence, etc., contrary to the yamas and niyamas outlined in the previous commentary. Patañjali divides them into three categories: those one performs oneself, kṛta; those that one has others perform on one’s behalf, kārita; and those that one approves of or authorizes in some way, anumodita. So, taking, along with the commentators, violence, hiṁsā, to exemplify the yamas and niyamas (but bearing in mind that this verse applies to all the other yamas and niyamas), killing an animal oneself would come under the first category, purchasing meat that has been killed by someone else is in the second category, and allowing meat consumption to occur in one’s sphere of influence, even if one does not consume the meat oneself, would come under the third category. This seems to resonate with Manu, the primary composer of the regulations of dharma for Hindus in the ancient period: “The one who gives permission [to eat meat], the one who butchers, the one who slaughters, the one who buys and sells, the one who prepares it, the one who serves it, and the eater—they are all killers” (V.51).
Buddha, too, made a similar statement: “Monks, one possessed of three qualities is put into Hell according to his deserts. What three? One who is himself a taker of life, one who encourages another to do the same, and one who approves thereof.”

Patañjali is being fairly specific here, says Bhoja Rāja, otherwise some dull wit (to use his term) may think that since the violence involved in killing is performed by someone else, then the consumer of meat avoids karmic responsibilities. Vijñānabhikṣu includes here even violence condoned in the scriptures (that animals can be killed and eaten under certain conditions, such as in the context of Vedic sacrifice), as does Hariharānanda, who rejects the idea that God has allowed certain types of animal consumption. The emergence of a vegetarian ethic such as that expressed here and in most post-Vedic Hinduism from the matriarchal culture of ritual slaughter inherent in the ancient Vedic sacrificial texts is an interesting phenomenon that I have examined elsewhere (Bryant 2006).

Each of these categories, continues Vyāsa, has been subdivided into three degrees of intensity by Patañjali: \textit{mṛdu-madhya-adhimātrāḥ}, slight, moderate, or extreme. Additionally, they may be provoked in three ways: by greed, \textit{lobha}, such as a person inflicting violence on animals out of lust for their meat or with an eye to profit from their skins; anger, \textit{krodha}, such as a person lashing out violently upon being insulted by someone else; or illusion, \textit{moha}, such as a person engaging in violence under the impression that it is his or her duty, or that it is religiously condoned (as in killing animals in a religious context, says Vijñānabhikṣu).

Since greed, anger, and delusion can underpin acts done oneself, on one’s behalf, or authorized by oneself, and can be experienced in three degrees of intensity, there are twenty-seven divisions of violence noted by Patañjali in this \textit{sūtra}. Characteristic with the penchant for categorization found in traditional Indic commentaries, Vyāsa trebles this number, by proposing that the intensity of greed, anger, and delusion can be mildly mild, moderately mild, and extremely mild; mildly moderate, moderately moderate, and extremely moderate; and mildly extreme, moderately extreme, and extremely extreme (probably with the set of subdivisions from I.21–22 in mind). This brings the
possibilities up to eighty-one! Actually, continues Vyāsa, the possibilities are innumerable since there are other factors qualifying violence such as customary rules (which Vijñānabhikṣu exemplifies as the view that violence can be inflicted on fish but not animals) and other types of options (particular animals can be killed and eaten only on certain days), etc. All these multiple divisions pertain to each of the yamas and niyamas.

To oppose thoughts of this kind, one should cultivate counterthoughts—thoughts on the consequences of such activities, such as Patañjali’s suggestion that violence leads to unlimited suffering and ignorance. The perpetrator of violence, says Vyāsa, first overpowers the strength of the victim (by binding it, says Vācaspati Miśra), then inflicts violence on it by weapons, and then takes its life. As a result of this, the perpetrator’s own life forces are weakened in this life, and in the next life, he or she takes birth in hell, or in a lower species of life, where, says Vijñānabhikṣu, the very same violence previously inflicted on other creatures is experienced by the perpetrator. Hence, Patañjali’s statement that inflicting violence eventually brings suffering to the agent.

Ultimately, all creatures are parts of īśvara, God, explains Vijñānabhikṣu, like sons to the father and sparks to the fire. Therefore, violence against others is violence against God. He quotes the Gītā: “Envious people act hatefully towards me [Kṛṣṇa] in their own and in others’ bodies. I continually hurl such cruel hateful people, the lowest of mankind, into sansāric existence, into only the impure wombs of demons” (XVI.19).

Violent people live every moment as though dead, Vyāsa continues. Indeed, they may even crave death but are forced to live on because, by the law of karma, some of the fixed fruits of their activities have to be experienced in this life (for example, says Vijñānabhikṣu, a person may be tormented by a horrible prolonged disease as a karmic consequence). Even if a violent person experiences happiness in this life, notes Vyāsa, this is due to good karmic reaction accrued from simultaneously performing pious activities along with the impious ones in a past life. These good reactions balance out some of the bad karmic reaction from the violence being committed in the present (just as seeds of grain are sown along with seeds of grass, says Vijñānabhikṣu), but the negative
karma will manifest in some other fashion—a person may experience a short life span, for example, or the seeds of violence being sown in this life may lie dormant until the next life. By the law of action and reaction, violence always eventually breeds suffering for the perpetrator, who has to personally experience the same violence he or she inflicted on other beings. It also breeds ignorance, the second consequence of perverse thoughts mentioned here by Patañjali. Vācaspati Miśra states in this regard that violence is the result of tamas, and perpetuating violence increases the tamas, ignorance, of the citta. Real knowledge is thus further covered over. One becomes less likely to ponder the reactions of one’s violence or other harmful activities, and thus is less aware of the karmic consequences one is creating for oneself.

Reflecting on the undesirable consequences of negative thoughts in some of these ways, one should not allow the mind to contemplate them. Cultivating the opposite types of thoughts is the means to remove such perverse notions. Although the commentators have focused on violence for this discussion, since it has been presented as the basis of all the yamas and niyamas, Vyāsa makes it clear that the discussion here can be applied to thoughts that are contrary to all the other yamas and niyamas in turn. Also it seems important enough to reiterate, and aspiring yogis might be relieved to do so, that Patañjali specified in the previous sūtra “when” one is afflicted by negative thoughts, not “if.” Negative thoughts are nothing other than old saṁskāras, present in great abundance in the cittas of all embodied beings. They will surface until the yogī is very advanced and has burnt up the productive power of all latent seeds by practice. The task, then, is not to become despondent upon their periodic and inevitable emergence but to counter them as outlined here.

When negative thoughts are eliminated, powers accrue to the yogī. These are indicative of the yogī’s success in this regard and are the subject of the next sūtras.

abhिःप्रप्रिबिधायां तत्स्तित्रिधी वैरात्यागः || ३५ ||

II.35 ahimsā-pratiṣṭhāyām tat-sannidhau vaira-tyāgah

ahimsā, nonviolence; pratiṣṭhāyām, upon the establishment; tat,
his; *sannidhau*, in the presence; *vaira*, enmity; *tyāgaḥ*, giving up of

**In the presence of one who is established in nonviolence, enmity is abandoned.**

In the following section (II.35–45), Patañjali selects some of the boons that accrue to the *yogī* by following, *pratiṣṭhāyām*,73 each of the ten *yamas* and *niyamas*. Vyāsa states that all living beings give up their enmity in the presence of one who is established in nonviolence. In other words, a saint exudes qualities that rub off on his or her associates. That is to say, the *yogī*’s *sāttvic* mind can pervade out, and *sāttvicize* the minds of other beings in the vicinity, countering their *rajas* and *tamas*, and stimulating their own *sāttvic* potentials. The commentators state that even natural enemies such as cat and mouse or mongoose and snake give up their enmity in the presence of the *yogī* who has fully renounced all thoughts of violence, due to being influenced by the *yogī*’s state of mind. One is reminded here of an episode in the hagiography of the fifteenth-century mystic Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, who caused the deer and tigers in the forest to dance and embrace each other upon hearing him recite the holy names of Kṛṣṇa.74 Such accounts surface in numerous traditions: one might mention Saint Francis of Assisi, and his taming of the wild wolf; and the Moroccan Sufi woman saint, Rabi’ā, who lived on a hill surrounded by wild animals75; and the furious elephant Nālāgiri who became quiet in the presence of the Buddha.76

According to Hariharānanda, perverse thoughts such as violence can take many subtle forms in the mind that are not always readily visible; these have to be exposed and rooted out through the force of meditation. Specifically, the fifth limb of *yoga*, fixing the mind, *dhāraṇā*, is essential for perfecting the *yamas* and *niyamas* such as nonviolence. In this, Hariharānanda adds nuance to the view of some commentators who say that each limb of *yoga* has to be practiced first, before the next one can be undertaken. Of course, all the limbs must eventually be perfected, but *dhāraṇā* deepens the ability to practice the earlier limbs, in his view, and, indeed, it is through *dhāraṇā* and its successive limbs of *dhyāna*, pure concentration, and *samādhi*, meditative absorption, that the *yamas* and *niyamas* become faultless, and the āsanas, postures, perfected.
II.36 satya-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ kriyā-phalāśrayatvam

satya, truth; pratiṣṭhāyāṁ, upon the establishment of; kriyā, activity, work; phala, fruits; āśrayatvam, the nature of being a support or basis.

When one is established in truthfulness, one ensures the fruitional actions.

The commentators understand this sūtra as indicating that the words of a truthful person invariably bear fruit, phala. Their utterances are infallible. If the yogī who has perfected this yama says to someone, “Be virtuous,” says Vyāsa, then the person will be virtuous. Vijñānabhikṣu qualifies this somewhat by stating that the yogī will utter the words “Be virtuous” only to one who is fit to be so. He adds that the yogī need merely think something pertaining to someone and it will come about. Hariharānanda also qualifies Vyāsa’s comment by noting that yogīs do not make whimsical or fruitless pronouncements beyond the reach of their power, that is, their will. He understands the ability mentioned in this sūtra, like the one discussed in the previous sūtra, to be brought about by willpower. Truthfulness, satya, is cultivated by willpower—the determination never to tell a lie. This power of simple truth can sway the mind of the listener to act in accordance with the yogī’s words. When one meets a saintly person who is situated in truthfulness, one senses that, unlike all other people with whom one comes into contact, this person has no desire or inclination to exploit or manipulate others for personal interest. Such a person is qualified to act as a guru, and one can accordingly entrust oneself to his or her guidance.

Vācaspati Miśra has a slightly different take on this sūtra. For him, the actions, kriyā, referred to by Patañjali here refer to pious and impious activities, and their respective fruitional means future births that are correspondingly desirable or undesirable. By ensuring the fruitional actions, kriyā-phalāśrayatva, he understands Patañjali as saying that the yogī who has perfected the yama of truthfulness has control over actions and, consequently, the fruits they bear in future births.
II.37 asteya-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ sarva-ratnopasthānam

asteya, refrainment from stealing; pratiṣṭhāyāṁ, upon the establishment of; sarva, all; ratna, jewels; upasthānam, approach, come into the presence of

When one is established in refrainment from stealing, all jewels manifest.

Vyāsa simply says, in regard to one following the yama of nonstealing, asteya, that jewels, ratna, approach the yogī from all directions. Vācaspati Miśra’s only comment is, “This verse is easy!” and Vijñānabhikṣu and the other commentators offer nothing to explain this sūtra. Hariharānanda, however, offers some useful interpretations that save us from having to imagine jewels suddenly flying through the air toward the accomplished yogī. Established in nonstealing, a glow of detachment and indifference radiates from the face of the yogī. People are inspired by this to feel that this person is trustworthy and has absolute integrity; they thus feel honored to bestow their most valued things on such a yogī, confident that they will be put to the best possible selfless use. Hariharānanda takes ratna, jewel, to mean the best of every class of things. Thus, the pure-hearted yogī attracts the best of human beings and is offered the best of material things by those he or she inspires. R. S. Bhattacharya (1985, 153) takes the jewels to refer to noble-hearted people as well as useful things. Thus, noble-hearted people approach the yogī who is firmly fixed in honesty with a view of acquiring divine wisdom; likewise, useful things are offered to the yogī in service.

II.38 brahmacarya-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ virya-lābhaḥ

brahmacarya, celibacy; pratiṣṭhāyāṁ, on the establishment of; virya, potency, power; lābhaḥ, the gain

Upon the establishment of celibacy, power is attained.
Vyāsa states that when celibacy, *brahmacarya*, is established, a yogī perfects his or her qualifications without obstruction. Established in celibacy, the yogī becomes capable of imparting knowledge to disciples. Otherwise, the words of wisdom of an incontinent person, says Hariharānanda, do not go deep into the mind of a disciple.

Vijñānabhikṣu understands the power, *vīrya*, Patañjali is referring to as the power of knowledge and action. Bhoja Rāja speaks of it as vigor in one’s bodily organs and mind. Other commentators connect the power mentioned in this *sūtra* with the eight mystic powers that will be discussed in the next chapter. Hariharānanda, for example, says that celibacy prevents the loss of vitality, and thus *vīrya*, potency, is retained. This accumulates until it culminates in physical and spiritual power, including the mystic powers described below.

In *ayurvedic* physiology, *ojas* is a subtle vital energy or substance that forms the essence of all the seven bodily tissues (*dhātus*?), and, along with *prāṇa*, controls the life functions. It is the essential ingredient in vigor and potency, both physical and spiritual. When semen is dissipated by excessive orgasmic activity, the body and immune system are deprived of this vital resource and the individual becomes susceptible to psychosomatic ailments. *Brahmacarya*, celibacy, then, enhances potency. Hariharānanda adds that celibacy involves abstaining even from thoughts of objects of desire through a firm control of one’s mind, as well as through a controlled diet and sleep; it cannot be attained if one indulges in too much sleep or food intake.

There are many stories of yogīs attaining tremendous powers by the practice of celibacy, some of which will be touched upon on the next chapter. Indeed, one does not even have to be a yogī to accrue the benefits of celibacy: In the ādi-parva section of the *Mahābhārata*, the great Bhīṣma, grandfather to the opposing Pāṇḍava and Kaurava cousins, became the most powerful and invincible warrior of his time partly due to his unbreakable vow of celibacy. Once, his father, the great king Śantanu, fell in love with the beautiful daughter of the chief of the fishermen. Upon approaching the girl’s father for her hand in marriage, the chief of the fisher community indicated that he would grant the king his daughter’s hand only if the son born of their union would succeed Śantanu on the royal throne. The king declined, since Bhīṣma was his
eldest son from a prior union with the goddess of the river Gaṅgā and thus the rightful heir, but he languished with his unfulfilled desire.

Upon learning of the reason for his father’s moroseness, the noble Bhīṣma approached the fisher chief to ask him for his daughter’s hand for his father, assuring him that he would allow the offspring of this union to supersede him to the throne. Still the chief of the fishing community demurred, stating that while he had no doubts about the inviolability of Bhīṣma’s words, he did entertain doubts as to whether Bhīṣma’s own progeny might one day agitate for the throne. Bhīṣma then uttered a vow in the presence of all that he would, from that day on, adopt a life of brahmacarya. Since his vow was unbreakable once made (even though it resulted in all kinds of intrigues when the two sons born of Śantanu’s marriage to this second wife both died without leaving an heir to the throne), Bhīṣma was awarded the boon of dying at will. This boon was perhaps more technically the result of his following the yama of satya, truthfulness, since his word was inviolable, but his adoption of a life of brahmacarya enhanced his already semi-divine powers.

II.39 aparigraha-sthairye janma-kathantā-sambodhah

aparigraha, refrainment from covetousness; sthairye, on the steadfastness, constancy; janma, birth; kathantā, the howness; sambodhaḥ, knowledge

When refrainment from covetousness becomes firmly established, knowledge of the whys and wherefores of births manifests.

On perfecting the yama of refrainment from covetousness, aparigraha, the knowledge of the circumstances of the yogī’s present birth as well as of previous and future births, janma-kathantā, is automatically revealed if the yogī desires it, according to Vyāsa and the commentators. The yogī knows exactly who he or she was in a previous birth, specifies Bhoja Rāja, what sort of a person in what sort of circumstance. The connection between cause and effect is hereby revealed, says Rāmānanda Sarasvatī
—every type of birth, after all, whether human, animal, or celestial, is the fruit of previous activities, \textit{karma}. The \textit{yogi} is able to perceive precisely how the present birth is the consequence of previous activities, and how present activities will fructify in the form of a specific future birth. Again, the ability to access previous births surfaces frequently in Indic texts: The Buddha, for example, by marshaling “all the techniques of \textit{dhyāna}, meditation” on the night of his ultimate enlightenment, was able to bring to mind all his previous births, according to his hagiography. “He remembered thousands of past lives, as if reliving them again, that ‘I had been such and such a person at that time, and then, passing out of that life I had come to this other life’” (\textit{Buddha-carita} XIV.2–3).

Bhoja Rāja elaborates here that refrainment from covetousness involves not coveting the means of enjoyment, and this includes the body, which is the mechanism of enjoyment. In normal life, due to desiring enjoyment, one’s consciousness is directed outward and thus the type of knowledge mentioned in this \textit{sūtra} does not reveal itself. In other words, when awareness is not dissipated externally, it can be channeled internally into one’s \textit{citta} where all the imprints of past life experiences are recorded. By accessing these \textit{saṃskāras}, the \textit{yogi} can gain awareness of the past lives in which they were recorded. Along the same lines, Hariharānanda states that delusion stemming from attachment to one’s body obstructs knowledge of the past and future. When this is given up and one becomes conscious of the body as separate from the self, the body becomes a superfluous burden, and the power of clairvoyance, which means awareness that is not limited to the bodily organs of sight, etc., is developed.

One might imagine the \textit{citta} as a lake, and \textit{saṃskāras} as pebbles within it. When a lake is crystal clear, one can see the pebbles clearly and easily retrieve them. When the lake is choppy or murky, one cannot. Similarly, when the \textit{sattva} potential of the \textit{citta} is maximized, it is clear, and therefore its \textit{saṃskāras}, including those of previous lives, can be more easily extracted. When \textit{rajas} and \textit{tamas} are prevalent, in contrast, it becomes choppy and murky, and even recent memories are difficult to bring to recollection.

R. S. Bhattacharya (1985, 149–51) takes the \textit{janma-kathantā-}
sambodhaḥ of this sūtra to refer not to knowledge of previous births arising in the mind of the yogī free of coveting, but to thoughts arising in the minds of people associated with the yogī. The janma-kathantā in his reading refers to people’s curiosity about the circumstances of the yogī’s personal life. Specifically, impressed by the yogī’s attitude of aparigraha, refrainment, people wonder about the birth of the yogī. In other words, they wonder in awe how an embodied being can be free from attachment, etc.

The next few sūtras are directed toward the side effects generated by the perfection of the niyamas.

II.40 śaucāt svāṅga-jugupsā parair asaṁsargaḥ

śaucāt, from cleanliness; svāṅga, one’s body; jugupsā, distaste; paraiḥ, with others; asaṁsargaḥ, cessation of union, intercourse, or contact

By cleanliness, one [develops] distaste for one’s body and the cessation of contact with others.

Perceiving the defects of the body, says Vyāsa, one develops a distaste for it, jugupsā, keeps it clean, and becomes self-controlled. The yogī reflects on the nature of his or her own body svāṅga, seeing that it is never clean no matter how much it is washed with water and cleansing agents; indeed, the yogī desires to free puruṣa from the body. So how, questions Vyāsa, could a yogī engage in intimate contact with the bodies of others, which might be all the more unclean?

By the practice of cleanliness, śauca, say the commentators, attraction to the opposite sex evaporates, as it does by the contemplation of the realities of the body. Cleansing the body essentially consists of wiping away sweat, urine, feces, mucus, and other discharges and substances which, in and of themselves, are not erotic but obnoxious. By meditating on the realities of the act of cleanliness, the yogī ceases to see the body as an erotic object. One is thus freed from the oppressive and ultimately disappointing pressures of erotic illusion and fantasy.
There is the story of a king who, becoming thirsty after hunting in the forest, approaches a secluded hermitage in quest of water. He is greeted by a beautiful but spiritually enlightened young maiden who had been raised as a fully enlightened yogini by the resident sage of the hermitage. Overcome by desire for this beautiful maiden, the king propositions her. Deciding to enlighten the lusty king as to the realities of bodily lust, the maiden requests him to return within a month, at which time she will allow him to taste the nectar of her beauty. During this period, however, the maiden takes laxatives and purges, and collects all the resulting vomit, urine, feces, and other physical discharges in earthen pots. When the king returns after the stipulated period, he is greeted by the maiden, now haggard and wasted and a shadow of her previous self. Upon asking her what had become of her beauty, she presents the king with the earthen pots with their rancid contents and indicates that therein lay the juices of her beauty. She thus acts as the guru of the king, enlightening him as to the reality of the body, the foolishness of bodily identification, and the superficiality of bodily attraction.

Along these lines, in this sūtra, Patañjali indicates that when one meditates on the act of cleanliness, and the reality of the body and its temporary and skin-deep beauty, one develops a distaste for it, jugupsā, and consequently for sensual contact with other bodies, parair asaṁsargaḥ. After all, one has to work rather hard to present the body as an erotic and enticing object—cleaning it carefully; decorating it with makeup, cosmetics, and fashionable clothing; pruning its out of hair; and overpowering its natural odors with artificial scents. Even then, the body can at any moment emit embarrassing odors or noises beyond one’s control if one is not attentive, and a romantic moment can be quickly dispelled if one unexpectedly is impelled to vomit or is suddenly overcome by an irrepressible onset of diarrhea or gas. The yogī sees through the hype and illusoriness of bodily embellishment and uses the act of cleanliness to meditate on the reality of the physical body, which, from this perspective, can be seen as a bag of obnoxious substances. Seeing bodily reality in this way, the yogī ceases to see other bodies as erotic objects and thus ceases fantasizing about sexually enjoying or exploiting others.

This, of course, does not preclude appreciating the body in nonerotic
ways—as a vehicle of enlightenment or a temple of God, for example. Hariharānanda notes that animals express their love for other animals by licking their bodies. Indeed, just as animals are aroused by sniffing each other’s excrement, which most humans would consider to be unclean or distasteful, humans, in turn, engage in other types of expressions of sensual bodily intimacy, which, in parallel fashion, are seen by the yogī as unclean and distasteful. The yogī conveys love for other beings through compassion, friendliness, spiritual exchanges, and other expressions that rise above physical sensuality.

As an aside, there are nonmainstream radical ascetics who use bodily discharges as part of their practice. Some extreme Śaivite groups, for example, smear themselves with taboo substances and meditate in cremation grounds as catalysts in transcending bodily identification. While this is by no means a normative or common Hindu practice, it can nonetheless constitute a serious yogic practice if performed with the right intent. After all, ash from human corpses and bodily fluids are ultimately simply transformation of prakṛti. The Gītā (VI.8) informs us that the enlightened sage sees everything—“whether it be a stone, pebble or gold”—as the same. From an ultimate, metaphysical perspective, what is the difference between feces and fragrant or precious substances if they are all ultimately merely transformations of the guṇas of prakṛti? By means of such extreme practices, the practitioner strives to rise above the dualities of tastefulness and distastefulness on the sensual level. Additionally, upon being subject to the scorn and abuse that such practices might engender from society, the practitioner is called upon to transcend the dualities of honor and dishonor on a psychological level.

In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (V.9.1–11), afraid of getting attached to anyone or anything—his attachment to a deer in a past life having caused him to undergo two further births (see the commentary to III.6 for the story)—the erstwhile king Bharata behaved like a dullard, dressed in a filthy rag, and never washed his body, such that people abused him. Yet, immersed internally in full awareness of his real self as puruṣa despite his ragged appearance without, he was “like a jewel covered by dust.” His father too, the great king Rśabha, an incarnation of Viṣṇu himself, when the time came to renounce his kingdom, wandered around naked with disheveled hair like a madman, such that
ignorant people passed urine on him, spat at him, and threw stones and feces at him (*Bhāgavata* V.5.1ff).

Again, such practices are by no means mainstream in Yoga traditions, but they are certainly theologically defensible and, by virtue of their practitioners’ willingness to abandon the most basic civilized notions of personal behavior in their intense quest for truth, deserve respect when undertaken with the true goals of yoga in mind. Patañjali is not recommending such practices here—on the contrary, he is promoting cleanliness as an indispensable limb of yoga—but a similar type of meditation on the realities of the constituents of the body underpins the intent of this sūtra.

II.41 sattva-śuddhi-saumanasyaikāgryendriya-jayātma-darśana-yogyatvāni ca

*sattva*, the *guna* of *sattva*; *śuddhi*, purification; *saumanasya*, cheerfulness; *ekāgrya*, one-pointedness; *indriya*, senses; *jaya*, control; *ātma*, self; *darśana*, direct seeing; *yogyatvāni*, qualification, fitness; *ca*, and

Upon the purification of the mind, [one attains]
cheerfulness, one-pointedness, sense control, and fitness
to perceive the self.

*Sattva*, as used in the context of this sūtra, is another term for *buddhi*, intelligence, since the constitution of *buddhi* is primarily sattva. The previous sūtra dealt with the boons accruing from cleanliness of the body; Patañjali here deals with the results ensuing from purification, or cleanliness of the mind. Vyāsa reads a chronological sequence to the qualities listed by Patañjali: From cleanliness, *śuddhi*, the mind is purified, that is, becomes *sattvic*; from purification of the mind, cheerfulness, *saumanasya*, a by-product of *sattva*, arises; from this, one-pointedness, *ekāgrya*, ensues; and this, in turn, leads to sense control, *indriya-jaya* (when the mind is pure and focused, the senses are
automatically under control). Sense control causes rajas and tamas to be subjugated and enhances the sattva of the mind, and a sāttvic mind qualifies the yogī to become eligible to perceive the ātman. All this is attained by cleanliness of the mind, says Vyāsa.

Hariharānanda says that cheerfulness or mental bliss arises when the mind has given up the obstacles of arrogance, pride, and attachment, and becomes aloof toward the body and material possessions. This feeling of happiness, which is inherent in the sāttvic potential of the mind, is necessary for mental one-pointedness, he adds, which in turn is a prerequisite for realizing the ātman.

**II.42** santoṣād anuttamaḥ sukha-lābhaḥ

santoṣāt, from contentment; anuttamaḥ, the highest; sukha, happiness; lābhaḥ, the attainment

From contentment, the highest happiness is attained.

Vyāsa limits his comments here to quoting a verse: “Whatever happiness there may be in enjoyment in this world, and whatever greater happiness there may be in the celestial world, they do not amount to one sixteenth of the happiness attained from the cessation of desire.”⁸⁰ Vijñānabhikṣu reminds us of a similar verse from the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (II.8), quoted fully in II.5 of this commentary, that the bliss of Brahman is countless times greater than that experienced by the most fortunate of embodied beings. He explains that when hankering is removed, the citta becomes content, santoṣa, as indicated in this sūtra. Sattva thus becomes undisturbed, and the highest happiness, anuttama-sukha, which is inherent in the nature of sattva, manifests spontaneously. At other times, the innate happiness of sattva is covered by tamas. This sāttvic happiness does not depend on external objects, which are vulnerable and fleeting, but is inherent in the mind when it is tranquil and contented.
II.43 kāyendriya-siddhir aśuddhi-kṣayāt tapasaḥ

kāya, the body; indriya, senses; siddhiḥ, perfection; aśuddhi, impurities; kṣayāt, from the removal; tapasaḥ, from austerity

From austerity, on account of the removal of impurities, the perfection of the senses and body manifests.

As early as the Vedic Brāhmaṇa texts, tapas has been recognized as a vital form of preparatory ascetic purification to be undertaken by the sponsor of the Vedic sacrifice, the yajamāna, and has remained a fundamental ingredient of Indic soteriological traditions. As austerity is practiced, says Vyāsa, the impure covering of dirt, aśuddhi (tamas and rajas), is destroyed, and as this happens, the siddhis, or mystical powers of the body such as clairvoyance and clairaudience, manifest. The commentators thus take Patañjali’s perfection of the body, kāyendriya-siddhi, as a reference to the various mystical powers, siddhis, that are the by-product of yoga, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Bhoja Rāja and Rāmānanda Sarasvatī take Patañjali’s impurities here to refer to the kleśas. Hariharānanda understands them to be subjection to the limitations of the body, such as hunger, thirst, and other cravings. According to him, by the performance of austerities in the form of sleep control, abstention from food, retention of the vital energies of the body (celibacy), etc., and by the practice of prāṇāyāma and āsana, one can overcome these limitations by sheer willpower (which is how he approaches all the yamas and niyamas), and this leads to the manifestation of the siddhis.

Hariharānanda notes that jñānis, those following the path of jñāna-yoga, the yoga of knowledge, generally do not develop these siddhis because they cultivate renunciation and discrimination rather than austerity. Siddhis, then, are specifically the by-product of tapas, in this view. Jñānis are unlikely to be interested in such attainments anyway, continues Hariharānanda, and neither are the yogīs, who use them, if at all, only to further their spiritual goals.
II.44 svādhyāyād iṣṭa-devatā-samprayogah

svādhyāyāt, study of scripture; iṣṭa, desired, preferred; devatā, with the deity; samprayogah, connection

From study [of scripture], a connection with one’s deity of choice is established.

Svādhyāya literally means self-study, but it more commonly refers to the study of sacred texts (in a sense the two meanings overlap, since sacred texts typically teach about the self). In the earlier Vedic period it involved recitation of the sacred Vedic texts by the student until they were memorized, thus providing the basis for the later tradition to construe the term as referring to both study of sacred texts and the recitation of sacred syllables. From study, according to Vyāsa and the other commentators, the ṛṣi sages, celestial beings, and perfected siddhas become visible, and they assist in the yogī’s work. The commentators take this at face value: Whatever deity the yogī wishes to see, says Vijnānabhaṅkṣu, will appear.

Vyāsa has indicated that svādhyāya includes the recitation of oṁ, in II.32, and the commentators reiterate here that the recitation of mantras is one of the ingredients of svādhyāya. Hariharānanda makes the interesting observation that ordinarily, during japa, the repetition of mantras, thought does not remain fixed on the meaning of the mantra, and the practitioner typically repeats the mantra aimlessly while the mind is roaming here and there. When svādhyāya is established, however, the mantra and the deity it represents remain uninterruptedly present in the mind. He states that deities invoked with such ardor and faith are sure to appear before their devotees. This does not occur when the mind is sometimes fixed on the mantra and sometimes distracted.

Scriptures typically present themselves as encapsulating the life and teachings of divine or saintly beings. Patañjali can be read as saying here that by reading scriptures, one becomes spontaneously attracted to a particular iṣṭa-devatā, a manifestation of divinity. Iṣṭa means desired or preferred, and devatā means deity, so iṣṭa-devatā refers to one’s deity of choice. By reading the various scriptures of the world, the aspiring yogī at some point starts to become partial to or especially attracted to a
particular spiritual persona—whether Kṛṣṇa, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Devī, Jesus Christ, Buddha, or any other divine figure, or empowered sage. Such a personage becomes one’s iṣṭa-devatā, and one worships God in the form of or through this devatā. This involves the japa recitation of the mantra associated with this form of divinity.

In my view, it is most unlikely that Patañjali is using the term devatā in its older sense of the minor Vedic deities who are propitiated in Vedic rituals and later derivative Hindu pājās for worldly boons. The notion of vairāgya has already been thoroughly established as a prerequisite for yoga (I.12–16), and the yogī has long been disinterested in the enticements of Vedic ritualism, ānuśravika, in I.15. Indeed, we will see in Vyāsa’s commentary in III.51 that the minor gods try to distract the yogī from the path and lure him or her back to worldly sensory stimulation. In the hymns of the Vedic period, the gods, devatā, are solicited most especially for victory over enemies, for cows, and for offspring. In the Purānic period they are propitiated for siddhi powers and other material boons. Their jurisdiction is exclusively over the workings of prakṛti and, consequently, to be avoided by yogīs as bad association, so to speak. Given Patañjali’s goals, iṣṭa-devatā here must therefore refer to the forms of īśvara, as it is used in theistic texts, rather than some minor deity.

This correlation of forms of īśvara with iṣṭa-devatā is further supported by Vyāsa and the commentators considering svādhyāya to include the recitation of oṁ. Patañjali has indicated that oṁ is īśvara manifest as sound, and that meditation on īśvara is to be performed by japa of oṁ. Moreover, one must recite this tad-artha-bhāvanam, bearing its meaning in mind. Therefore, if by svādhyāya one encounters one’s iṣṭa-devatā as indicated in this sūtra, and svādhyāya entails reciting oṁ while meditating on īśvara, then the iṣṭa-devatā one encounters from this process must be none other than a form of īśvara and not some minor Vedic deity. Therefore, Patañjali must be using devatā to refer to the established forms of īśvara evidenced on the mainstream theistic landscape of his time and not the secondary gods (with a lowercase g) whose jurisdiction is the bestowing of temporary material boons in which the yogī has long lost interest. Therefore, by reciting oṁ and studying the īśvara scriptures, one becomes attracted to a particular form of īśvara. One might suppose that this process of study in some cases
involves the reactivation of saṁskāras from past lives, when one might have already developed a devotional relationship with a particular form of divinity, which becomes spontaneously reactivated in a subsequent life upon encountering this form in some scriptural source.\textsuperscript{84}

One might also note here that typically in Hinduism, theistic meditation on īśvara is performed by reciting the name of one’s īṣṭa-devatā in the form of japa, usually appending this name onto the generic and long-revered syllable oṁ. As noted, the mantras most likely to be encountered in Hindu meditative practices are oṁ namo Nārāyaṇāya, the most commonly recited Viṣṇu-based mantra; oṁ namaḥ Śivāya, the Śaivite equivalent; oṁ namaḥ bhagavate Vāsudevāya, the more classical Kṛṣṇa mantra; and the by now ubiquitous Kṛṣṇa mantra popularized by A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmi: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare, Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

An interesting question, broached earlier, can again be raised at this point as to whether anything can be inferred about the identification of Patañjali’s own īṣṭa-devatā. My own view is that he must necessarily have been either a Vaiṣṇava—follower of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa—or a Śaivite—follower of Śiva. Of the six schools of traditional thought that stem from this period, four—Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Yoga, and Vedānta—were theistic and Sāṇkhya had both theistic and nontheistic variants.\textsuperscript{85} While the sectarian affiliations of the reputed founders of these theistic schools cannot be determined with certainty, the overall later Nyāya Vaiśeṣika tradition seems to have been Śaivite,\textsuperscript{86} and the Vedānta, including Śaṅkara, Vaiṣṇava. Patañjali, like the authors of the root texts of other theistic schools, is not specific about the persona of īśvara, God. Certainly, if we accept the consensus dating Patañjali in the second and third centuries, Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva theisms had long emerged as prominent, if not dominant, religious expressions around the subcontinent. It is thus probable that Patañjali was associated with one of these traditions. The Vaiṣṇavite Gītā, according to most dating estimates, and the theistic Upaniṣads such as the Śaivite Śvetāśvatara certainly had been around for several centuries, and the massive Purāṇic corpus, which focused primarily on these two streams of devotional religiosity stemming from Viṣṇu and Śiva, was well on its way to its final state of compilation sometime during the Gupta period within which Patañjali penned his
treatise.

From a close study of the sūtras, it is clear that Patañjali is not just a yogī but also an astute intellectual, and thus it seems impossible that he was unfamiliar with such sources. As we see from this sūtra, he not only stipulates the practice of svādhyāya but also states that from such study one connects with one’s iṣṭa-devatā, deity of preference. This suggests that Patañjali was not only well versed scripturally, but was himself oriented toward a specific deity of preference. As has been seen throughout the text, Patañjali accepts and promotes the notion of Īśvara, God, a category which, given the context of the time, had long been associated with Viṣṇu and Śiva by their respective devotees (and, later, with Īśvarī, by the goddess tradition too). A Patañjali with Vaiṣṇava or Śaivite orientations is thus not a frivolous consideration. It is curious that none of the seminal texts of the four theistic philosophical schools identifies Īśvara, but it is unlikely that this indicates a time before sectarian quibbling became more pronounced, a time when theological dogma was less important, given the fairly pronounced sectarian tone of the Gītā and, indeed, but to a lesser extent, of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (and of course of the Purāṇic corpus that was under compilation by Patañjali’s time).

Of course, nothing prevents Patañjali from favoring an inclusivism, which has long been noted as a characteristic of Hindu theism, and identifying Īśvara with both Viṣṇu and Śiva in different contexts. Vācaspati Miśra, for example, who identified Viṣṇu as Īśvara above, nonetheless speaks of Śiva as Īśvara elsewhere in the sūtras, with his trademark catholicism. Hindu devotion is typically not exclusivistic; it tends toward inclusivism of a hierarchical nature, an inclusivistic sectarianism: Vaiṣṇava texts, while accepting the multiplicity of other divine manifestations, subordinate them under Viṣṇu, as do the Śaiva texts under Śiva (for example, Gītā IX.23). Despite what sometimes appears to be the partisan nature of the texts associated with one or the other of these two Supreme Beings, both accept and indeed extol the transcendent and absolute nature of the other, and of the Goddess, Devī, too, merely affirming that the other deity is to be considered a derivative or secondary manifestation of their respective deity, or, in the case of Devī, the śakti, or power of the male divinity. Monotheism, if the term is
to be applied to the Purānic tradition, needs to be understood in the context of a Supreme Being, whether understood as Viṣṇu, Śiva, or Devī, who can manifest himself or herself into other Supreme Beings (albeit all of them secondary to the original godhead).90

Thus, in the Bhāgavata, Viṣṇu, in addition to being able to manifest unlimited other identical Viṣṇu forms (e.g., X.13), manifests himself in the form of Śiva for a specific function—to perform the task of destruction at the end of the universe (X.71.8); and into the goddess Devī or Śakti for another function—to manifest the actual stuff of the universe, prakṛti, and perform other tasks such as cover the souls with illusion, in her capacity of māyā.

In any event, such hierarchical inclusivism aside, we find in this sūtra the notion of iṣṭa-devatā. Since, as we have seen, svādhyāya is mandatory as an ingredient of kriyā-yoga and as a niyama, we can conclude that all yogis are expected to have an iṣṭa-devatā for the practice of yoga. By his own prescription, therefore, Patañjali would have been oriented toward one specific deity. Given his focus on Īśvara (rather than some lesser deva91) throughout the sūtras, and the fact that the category of Īśvara on the religious landscape of his time was associated with Śiva and Viṣṇu, it seems reasonable to conclude that Patañjali would in all likelihood have been either a Śaivite or Vaiṣṇavite.

I have considered this issue in whatever depth is allowed by the available data elsewhere, comparing Patañjali’s scanty theology of Īśvara with those of the Vaiṣṇava Gītā and Śaivite Śvetāśvatara (Bryant 2005). I will merely note here that, despite the paucity of explicit data, the strongest evidence for a Vaiṣṇava orientation is the fact that Patañjali himself is considered an incarnation of Viṣṇu’s carrier, Śeṣa. Had he been a Śaivite, it is a priori likely that the traditions stemming from him would have preserved a mythology of him being an incarnation of, say, Nandi, Śiva’s bull, or some other associate. Moreover, as I have already noted, the Yoga tradition has associated the primary commentator, Vyāsa (circa fourth to fifth century), with the renowned sage Vyāsa of Mahābhārata and Purānic lore, grandfather of the Pāṇḍavas—who is embedded in Vaiṣṇava contexts and considered a manifestation of Nārāyana/Viṣṇu,92 which is relevant here for the same reasons (all the more so if those who posit the Vyāsa-bhāṣya to have been written by
Patañjali himself are correct), and Vyāsa implicitly refers to Kṛṣṇa as Īśvara in, for example, his commentary on I.25.

In terms of the sūtras themselves, if we accept the commentarial correlation of Patañjali’s kriyā-yoga with the Gītā’s devotionalized karma-yoga, a practice most associated with the latter text—which seems reasonable given the common etymology of the two terms from the root kṛ, as well as the action-based context of kriyā-yoga—then one might have further grounds to suggest a closer connection with the Gītā. Other than this, Patañjali’s notion of Īśvara teaching the ancients raises obvious associations with Kṛṣṇa’s assertion in the Gītā that he comes every age to reestablish dharma, etc., and is read this way by the commentarial tradition. Finally, one might also note that the Gītā’s usages of the three types of puruṣas (XV.16–18) match those of Patañjali’s reference to Īśvara as a special puruṣa in I.23. In short, while any and all of these assertions can be easily problematized, we can at least say that Patañjali’s iṣṭa-deva must have been either Viṣṇu or Śiva, with the scanty evidence perhaps favoring the former.

One cannot make too much of this, since, while the Viṣṇu-related evidence might have a few snippets more with which to recommend itself, the question is theoretical and one cannot ignore the fact that Patañjali chose not to proclaim who his iṣṭa-devatā is. I prefer to imagine a Patañjali who, while himself a devotee, was too sophisticated a thinker to overly sectarianize the theistic element in the sūtras and thereby risk alienating the sensitivities of those dedicated to other conceptualizations of Īśvara, or, for that matter, of those devoid of any devotional inclinations. Indeed, while clearly guiding his readers toward a theistic orientation, and while he must have been either a Vaiṣṇava or a Śaivite given the Īśvara-vāda options of the second and third centuries, Patañjali is not actually even insistent in his promotion of the theistic element itself in the higher practices of yoga. He has thus articulated a more universal, or at least universally adaptable practice pertaining to plumbing the most profound depths of human consciousness that can be appropriated by any number of sacred as well as secular belief systems. That his teachings continue to be so appropriated even in the twenty-first-century West might point to his foresight in this regard.
II.45 samādhi-siddhir īśvara-praṇidhānāt

samādhi, ultimate meditative state; siddhiḥ, perfection; īśvara, the Lord, God; praṇidhānāt, from submission, surrender

From submission to God comes the perfection of samādhi.

Of all the boons noted in the sūtras as accruing from the observance of the yamas and niyamas, it is only from Īśvara-praṇidhāna that samādhi, the actual and absolute goal of yoga, is attained. The other boons are all attainments still bound by the realm of prakṛti: mystic powers, knowledge of past births, jewels, etc. These other boons are thus temporary blessings; only the boon accruing from the niyama of Īśvara-praṇidhāna is ultimate. This fact in and of itself is significant.

In the first sūtra of this chapter, Patañjali includes Īśvara-praṇidhāna as a mandatory ingredient of kriyā-yoga, and we have seen (II.32) that Īśvara-praṇidhāna is a mandatory part of aṣṭāṅga-yoga as well. Although Patañjali does not mandate that the yogī meditate on Īśvara in the samādhi section of the first chapter, he certainly dedicates far more attention to Īśvara than any other meditative alternative. Those six sūtras when coupled with this sūtra suggest that Patañjali is promoting Īśvara as the best object of meditation. Granted, he allows that one can meditate on any object and attain the goal of yoga (I.39), but only one object out of the universe of possible objects can, in addition to serving as a meditational prop for the mind, intervene and bypass or at least accelerate the normal process of practice by bestowing samādhi on the practitioner as an act of grace. That object is Īśvara. One thus gets two for the price of one, so to speak. What advantage, from this perspective, could there be in opting for some other object of meditation that cannot speed up or even bypass the process? It is hard to avoid the fact that Patañjali is promoting a theistic system, albeit in a discreet and nondogmatic fashion, and the commentarial tradition certainly reads it in this way. This notion of receiving a vision of the self as an act of grace is an ancient one. The Kaṭha Upaniṣad states: “By the grace of the creator one perceives the glory of the ātman” (II.20); as does the Śvetāśvatara (III.20).
Patañjali here indicates that samādhi is perfected in the yogī who has dedicated everything to God. By such dedication, the yogī knows all he or she desires to know, says Vyāsa, whether it pertains to other places, other times, or other bodies. Here, Vyāsa refers to the siddhi of omniscience (discussed in sūtra III.50ff).

This sūtra does not mean that the other seven limbs of yoga are redundant, say the commentators. Whether one’s object of concentration is Īśvara or some other object, one still needs to practice the limbs of yoga; samādhi, as full and undistracted meditation, presupposes all the other limbs. According to Vācaspati Miśra and Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, the other seven limbs of yoga help the yogī to develop the requisite mental state that allows complete devotion to Īśvara. Vijñānabhikṣu puts it differently: One can say either that by mastering the other limbs of yoga by the grace of Īśvara, samādhi is born, or that the other limbs bring about samādhi by the grace of Īśvara but do not have this power themselves. Either way, surrender to Īśvara is indispensable for the perfection of yoga, and the yogī cultivates all the limbs of yoga but directs them toward God. Bhoja Rāja states that success is attained in this way because Īśvara, being pleased, removes the kleśa obstacles and awakens samādhi, and other commentators also speak of grace in this connection.

Rāmānanda Sarasvatī states that devotion to Īśvara has a different object from yoga, the goal of which is realization of puruṣa, and thus can be considered to be an additional limb of yoga. In this he resonates with certain theistic traditions of the Purāṇas, as exemplified in the most important of the Purāṇas, the Bhāgavata: Realization of one’s personal puruṣa is a secondary or even irrelevant by-product of devotion to God, Īśvara. The bhakta, or devotee, wishes to bathe in the bliss of God’s, the supreme puruṣa’s, presence rather than in that of his or her own personal puruṣa, and is often disinterested in self-realization: The attainment of God realization is the goal. (The gopīs of the Bhāgavata, for example, had no interest in self-knowledge; they were simply crazed in their love for Kṛṣṇa.94) Patañjali’s focus in his text, of course, is the individual puruṣa, but the Īśvara element remains a tantalizing presence throughout, and he does not inform us what he considers to be the relationship between the liberated puruṣas and the special puruṣa that is Īśvara in the liberated
state. While one cannot randomly project sectarian Purānic theologies onto the sūtras, one also cannot extricate and immunize Patañjali’s Īśvara from the theological landscape of his time. We have stressed that, in our view, this greater theistic landscape cannot be avoided in considering how Patañjali envisioned Īśvara.

Rāmānanda Sarasvatī reiterates that, although one has an option, devotion to Īśvara hastens the attainment of samādhi: If one lacks faith in Īśvara, samādhi remains remote, but if one’s yoga is permeated with the nectar of devotion, it is very near. One is reminded of Arjuna’s question to Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā (XII.1), as to which yogīs are the best—those who are devotees and continually worship Kṛṣṇa as a personal object of devotion, or those who follow the aksara-avyakta path, literally, the imperishable unmanifest path, which most commentators take to be a reference to the quest for the individual soul. Kṛṣṇa states that although the followers of the latter path also attain him, such a path is difficult and troublesome (XII.3–5), but one who is always absorbed in him personally with faith and devotion is considered the best yogī (XII.2). As in the Gītā, then, in the sūtras, Patañjali subtly indicates that devotion to Īśvara is the best and safest path for the aspiring yogī dedicated to self-realization.

One might note here that although Patañjali is promoting a theistic practice, he does not develop a psychology or methodology of bhakti, devotion, other than the recitation of oṁ with awareness of its meaning (I.28). This is not his project in this text. The task he has set before him in these sūtras is a discussion of yoga in the context of the psychology of mind and the attainment of puruṣa. Different traditions in the Hindu intellectual tradition focus on specific areas of knowledge but often presuppose awareness of traditions that are dedicated to other systems of knowledge. While there may be disagreement on specific points and different traditions may focus on different aspects of human existence, these systems generally accept the overall validity of other bodies of orthodox knowledge where they do not contradict their own. Thus, in Patañjali’s time, a variety of traditions specifically occupying themselves with theologies and methods of Īśvara-praṇidhāna, more commonly known as bhakti, would have long gained wide currency. Such traditions were already developing sophisticated and extensive theologies, so one might infer that Patañjali, albeit a theist himself, given the growing
availability of Īśvara-centered theologies saw rather a need to articulate and contribute a more specific and focused psychology and theology of puruṣa in its relationship with citta. In other words, one might speculate that he did not focus extensively on Īśvara because this dimension of metaphysical enquiry had already been amply covered elsewhere and thus Patañjali could direct his disciples to already existing systems in that particular area of spirituality.

The streams of devotion most dominantly associated with Īśvara on the widest scale across the Indian subcontinent over the last two and a half millennia have been the Viṣṇu- and Śiva-centered traditions. The Viṣṇu traditions have been the most dominant in literary circles, expressed on a popular level in the two great epics of India, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa; on a more theological but still popular level, in the Purāṇas, especially the Bhāgavata (and Viṣṇu) Purāṇas; and on a more philosophical level in the Bhagavad Gitā and in the most influential stream of Indian philosophy, the Vedānta commentarial tradition. But bhakti to other aspects of divinity, especially the great Lord Śiva, as well as various forms of Goddess worship, pervades all the Purāṇas. The Śiva traditions, although not producing epics of the stature of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata (in which Śiva is an important presence), or influencing philosophical discourse to the extent that the Vaiṣṇava Vedānta tradition did (although the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika tradition was to become primarily Śaivite), nonetheless developed sophisticated Śiva-centered theologies and primary Purāṇas such as the Śiva and Skandha. The Goddess, too, has a Purāṇa, the Devi Bhāgavata (although this is likely a later compilation), and Goddess-based śākta traditions, while less mainstream in terms of the high or classical literary traditions, have also contributed much to the intellectual and theological history of the Indic traditions, especially on a more grassroots level. In any event, to all intents and purposes, popular Hinduism all across India today is essentially an expression of the various forms and traditions of Īśvara-pranidhāna as expressed in these bhakti traditions. And it is from this vast array of Īśvara-pranidhāna practices that samādhi, as variously conceived in the myriad and multifaceted sectarian traditions of India, is most commonly attained.

We must note before considering the next limb of yoga that Patañjali
dedicated sixteen sūtras to the yamas and niyamas (II.30–45), almost a tenth of the entire text, far more than he dedicates to any limb other than samādhi. They are a crucial and indispensable prerequisite of yoga.

II.46 sthira-sukham āsanam

sthira, steady; sukham, comfortable; āsanam, posture

Posture should be steady and comfortable.

Patañjali now moves on to the third limb of yoga. The term āsana is rarely found in the ancient mystical Upaniṣadic texts, except on occasion in the sense of a seat (Bṛhadāraṇyaka IV.2.1, VI.2.4; Taïtirīya I.11.3), although it is used in the Gītā (VI.11) in the same sense—sthira, steady—in which it is found here. Although the entirety of yoga is typically understood and presented as āsana, physical posture, in the popular representations of the term in the West, it is actually only the third limb of yoga, not an end or goal unto itself (although see the comments on Guruji Iyengar in I.39). Indeed, given that he has just dedicated sixteen sūtras to the yamas and niyamas, Patañjali has relatively little to say about āsana, leaving us with only three sūtras on the topic consisting of a total of eight words; or, put differently, considerably less than one percent of the text occupies itself with āsana.

However, we should not conclude that this limb is irrelevant. That Patañjali does not give more detail about specific āsanas does not mean he considers them unimportant practices for yogīs. One could also suppose that other extant texts concerned themselves with the specifics of āsanas. While āsana-specific texts may not have survived from that time, we cannot conclude they did not exist. Vyāsa, below, knew of twelve āsanas in the fifth century (more, in fact, since he adds “etc.” after his list). The fourteenth-century Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā (I.17ff) speaks of 84 āsanas taught by Śiva, from which it outlines 15 (the Gorakṣa-śataka states that there are as many āsanas as species—8,400,000—and that Śiva chose 84 of these, from which siddhāsana and padmāsana are the best⁹⁷), as do the seventeenth-century Gheraṇḍa Saṁhitā (II.2) and
the Śiva-saṁhitā (III.100). Mādhava in the sixteenth century mentions 10 (465ff). Although these texts are much later, we can assume they drew to some extent on much older sources, as the Mahābhārata already makes passing reference to more than one kind of āsana (XII.142; XIII.304). Thus, one has grounds to suppose that Patañjali saw no need to elaborate on the details of āsana since information was available in texts or traditions specifically dedicated to that purpose. Vijñānabhikṣu takes this position: “An elaboration of āsana is not undertaken here, because our subject matter is rāja-yoga, and a full and detailed treatment of this subject is to be found in works on haṭha-yoga.”

Essentially, posture is a limb of the actual goal of yoga to the extent that it allows the meditator to sit firmly, sthira, and comfortably, sukhā, for meditation. Indeed, as noted, āsana literally means seat (Gītā VI.11). Obviously one cannot fix one’s attention onto something if one is sleeping or running about; one must sit, and sit without fidgeting or discomfort. In other words, āsana’s relevance and function for the classical Yoga tradition are to train the body so that it does not disturb or distract the mind of the yogī in any way when sitting in meditation. Śaṅkara quotes a verse stating that mastery of postures does not produce the goals of yoga; only getting rid of the kleśa obstacles to yoga, and samādhi, undeviated absorption on the object of meditation, can produce the goals of yoga. The point is that yogic postures are useful only to the extent to which they facilitate fixing the mind completely.

Along similar lines, Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the Garuḍa Purāṇa, which states that āsanas, or yogic postures, are not the goal of yoga; meditative practice is: “The prescriptions pertaining to postures and āsanas are not the producers of yoga; all such rules so elaborately described generate delay: Śiśupāla attained perfection by dint of the force of memory and abhyāsa, ‘practice.’” The Śiśupāla story is recounted in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (X.74). Śiśupāla, Kṛṣṇa’s enemy, attained perfection simply by fixing his mind without deviation on Kṛṣṇa—his enmity against Kṛṣṇa was so strong that he could think of nothing but Kṛṣṇa. The story illustrates the benefits of undeviated meditation on Īśvara, even, as in this case, if performed with hatred (that is, with the kleśa of dveṣa, indeed, all kleśas, in full force). This motif adds a new dimension by indicating that although the kleśas must under any other circumstances
be eliminated for *samādhi* to become possible (II.2, 13, etc.), by the
grace and power of intense *Īśvara-praṇidhāna*, however performed (and
in this context and this context only), one can attain perfection even
despite the *kleśas*. This is not in disharmony with what we can glean
from Patañjali’s own frugal statements (I.24; II.2, 42).

Posture, says Vācaspati Miśra, is the way one sits. Vyāsa names eleven
āsanas as examples, and these are elaborated upon somewhat by the
commentators. Viśṇunabhikṣu quotes Vasiṣṭha as Vyāsa’s source for the
first four āsanas,\(^{102}\) and the *Yoga-pradīpa* for the remainder. Yoga
teachers might be interested in considering which āsanas were thought
to be the most noteworthy for inclusion by Vyāsa in his commentary
more than a millennium and a half ago. The names of the poses along
with their descriptions as given by the commentators are as follows
(Śaṅkara notes that only the highlights of these poses have been
described):

(1) **Padmāsana**, the lotus pose. As Vācaspati Miśra notes, this
pose is well-known to all and needs no description (the lotus
āsana is worshipped by all, according to sage Vasiṣṭha, says
Vyāsa). It involves placing the two feet on the two opposite
thighs and holding the two toes with the opposite two hands.
Śaṅkara adds that the hips, chest, and neck should be
straight, the eyes fixed on the tip of the nose (as indicated in
*Gītā* VI.13), lips closed like a casket, teeth not grinding
gainst each other, chin a fist’s distance away from the chest,
the tip of the tongue resting inside the front teeth, and hands
joined and resting on the two heels (see *Gītā* VI.11ff for
similar prescriptions). These basic principles apply to all the
poses listed below, he adds. Once there is no effort involved
in holding this posture, he says, it can be called the lotus
posture.

(2) **Virāsana**, the hero pose. One foot is placed on the opposite
thigh, and the other is placed on the ground below the other
thigh.

(3) **Bhadrāsana**, the gracious pose. The ankles are placed below
the scrotum, on the sides of the frenum of the prepuce, and
the soles are held tight by both hands interlocked.

4. **Svastikāsana**, the auspicious pose. One sits with the left foot placed between the right thigh and knee, inclined slightly downward, and the right foot placed in the same fashion between the left thigh and knee. The toes should not be seen, says Śaṅkara, and the testicles should rest comfortably between the feet.

5. **Daṇḍāśana**, the staff pose. This involves sitting down and stretching the thighs and legs along the ground, like a staff, with the soles and toes touching each other closely.

6. **Sopāśraya**, the support pose. This āsana involves sitting down with a *yoga-paṭṭaka*. There is difference of opinion as to what a *yoga-paṭṭaka* is, but, as the name indicates, it was some sort of a prop: Śaṅkara takes it to be a table or chair, but *paṭṭaka* can also refer to a piece of cloth or a board. Whatever is involved, followers of the Iyengar method may care to note that this *sūtra* indicates that props for āsanas have been used for centuries and are, in this sense, authentic.

7. **Paryaṅka**, the bed pose. This āsana involves lying down with the arms stretched by one’s knees. This is also known as the corpse pose (śavāsana), says Hariharānanda.

8. **Krauñca-niṣadana**, the curlew pose. This āsana and the next two are to be performed by watching the seating postures of curlews and the other animals referred to.

9. **Hasti-niṣadana**, the elephant pose.

10. **Uṣṭra-niṣadana**, the camel pose.

11. **Sama-saṁsthāna**, the level pose. Vācaspati Miśra says that the heels and the tips of the feet are pressed together with the knees bent somewhat. Vijñānabhikṣu says that one places the hands over the thighs and remains with body, head, and neck straight up.

Vācaspati Miśra states that the steadiness Patañjali refers to in this *sūtra* means that these postures must be held without motion. “No fidgeting!” says Vijñānabhikṣu. Comfortable means that the poses must
not cause trouble to the yogī. Also, all of them require that the chest, neck, and head—in other words, the spine—be kept straight, says Hariharānanda. Śaṅkara notes that Vyāsa had written “etc.” after listing these poses, indicating that there can be variations prescribed by the guru. On this note, Śaṅkara states that yoga should be performed in a quiet and pure place, after performing obeisances to the supreme Īśvara, the sages, and one’s own guru.

One might include in this discussion the reference to āsana in the Vedānta Sūtra tradition (IV.1.7–10), where sitting firmly is a prerequisite for fixing the mind. Moving around requires effort and is distracting, says the great theistic Vedānta commentator Rāmānuja, and lying down provokes sleep; therefore, one should sit on some support without any bodily effort.

II.47 prayatna-śaithilyānanta-samāpattibhyām

prayatna, effort; śaithilya, relaxation; ananta, the infinite, the cosmic serpent Śeṣa who holds the worlds upon his heads; samāpattibhyām, the power of thought transformation, engrossment, absorption of the mind

[Such posture should be attained] by the relaxation of effort and by absorption in the infinite.

Āsana becomes perfect when all effort or strain, prayatna, ceases and the body no longer trembles, says Vyāsa, and when the citta is absorbed in the infinite, ananta. Hariharānanda elaborates that the practice of āsana involves a level of pain at first. After a time, this disappears by complete relaxation, śaithilya, into the pose, and by meditating on infinite space so that eventually the body feels nonexistent, like infinite space. The essential idea is that by the practice of āsana, the body should be so relaxed that the yogī ceases to be conscious of it at all, and the mind can thus be directed toward meditation without any bodily distraction or disturbance.

Since one of the names of Śeṣa, the thousand-headed cosmic serpent
upon whom Viṣṇu reclines, and who holds the universe on his hoods, is Ananta, some commentators also consider the ananta from Patañjali’s sūtra here to be a possible reference to him, since, as Rāmānanda Sarasvatī notes, he holds the worlds very firmly. In other words, āsana should be held as firmly and comfortably as Śeṣa holds the worlds on his hoods. As is well-known, Patañjali himself is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa. According to tradition, Śeṣa, desiring to teach yoga on earth, fell (pat) from the celestial realms into the palm (aṅjali) of a virtuous woman named Goṇikā. The eleventh-century commentary of Bhoja Rāja contains the following invocation to Patañjali in the form of Śeṣa, which is still recited at the beginning of āsana classes in the Iyengar tradition:

I bow with folded hands to Patañjali, best of sages, who removed the impurities of the mind through yoga; the impurities of speech, through grammar; and the impurities of the body, through medicine. To he whose upper body has a human form, who holds a conch and cakra (disc weapon), who is white and has a thousand heads, to that Patañjali, I offer obeisances.106

II.48 tato dvandvānabhīgātaḥ

tataḥ, consequently, from this; dvandva, by the opposites; anabhīgātaḥ, not afflicted
From this, one is not afflicted by the dualities of the opposites.

By mastering posture, says Vyāsa, one is not overcome, anabhīgāta, by dualities, dvandva, such as hot and cold. This language of transcending such dualities is very common in the Vedānta tradition (for example, Gītā VI.7; XII.18). Hot and cold (and all shades in between) represent the spectrum of sensations of the body, so this sūtra indicates that once āsana is mastered, one loses all awareness of the sensations of the body. The mind can now be focused elsewhere in meditation without being
distracted by the body. Hariharānanda notes that upon mastering āsana, a state of calmness is experienced in the body, which allows for a detachment from the body’s sensations such as hunger and thirst. In other words, the purpose and perfection of āsana indicated by Patañjali are when one loses all awareness of the body and, consequently, its sensations. It is a preliminary ingredient in a far larger undertaking.

II.49 tasmin sati śvāsa-praśvāsayor gati-vicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ

tasmin, that; sati, is attained; śvāsa, inhalation; praśvāsayoḥ, exhalation; gati, movement; vicchedaḥ, regulation; prāṇāyāmaḥ, breath control

When that [āsana] is accomplished, prāṇāyāmaḥ, breath control, [follows]. This consists of the regulation of the incoming and outgoing breaths.

Patañjali now moves on to the next limb of yoga, prāṇāyāma, but we can note that the first phrase of the sūtra, tasmin sati (known in Sanskrit grammar as a sati saptamī, a locative absolute construction), indicates that this is to be undertaken while āsana is being perfected. Similar phrases introduce several of the other limbs as well (II.53; III.2). One can thus argue for a consecutive interdependence among the limbs, each one presupposing that the yogī is cultivating and mastering the previous ones. Most important for aspiring yogīs, one cannot bypass the yamas and niyamas and expect to be able to fix the mind in the serious and prolonged meditation of the subsequent limbs of yoga. Without cultivating the yamas and niyamas, the mind will not manifest the requisite state of sattva, without which there can be no meditation and thus no serious practice of yoga as defined by Patañjali. It is rajas and tamas that provoke the vitarkas, the thoughts, tendencies, or urges contrary to the yamas and niyamas (II.33–34), and it should be very clear by now that the higher goals of yoga cannot be attained while rajas and tamas are prominent in the citta.

Prāṇāyāma as breath control is an ancient practice that can be found
in the old Brāhmaṇa texts. Vyāsa explains that the śvāsa from this sūtra is the intake of air from the outside, and praśvāsa, the exhalation of air from the stomach. He defines prāṇāyāma to be the suspension, or absence, of both—in other words, the suspension of breath. Since Patañjali speaks of a type of suspension of breath as the fourth type of prāṇāyāma in II.51, the commentators clarify that here Patañjali is implicitly referring to three other types of breath suspension, gati-vicchedaḥ: recaka, where breath is suspended after praśvāsa, exhalation; pūraka, where breath is suspended after śvāsa, inhalation; and kumbhaka, the simultaneous suspension of both.

Hariharānanda, however (while accepting the definition given by the other commentators), states importantly that there is more to the prāṇāyāma referred to here than just these techniques, some of which receive attention in the fourteenth-century yoga manual Hathayoga Pradīpikā. He stresses that concentration on one’s object of meditation has to accompany the practice of prāṇāyāma. One must clear the mind of vṛttis in conjunction with suspending the breath, not just devote oneself to suspending the breath alone. In his commentary to the next sūtra, he notes that yogic prāṇāyāma in turn, done properly, reciprocally helps to arrest the vṛttis of the mind and make it one-pointed. Thus this practice can lead the mind toward samādhi. In any case, without such arresting of the mind, prāṇāyāma is not yoga but merely a physical feat. He further notes that in samādhi, the breath becomes imperceptible, or even wholly suspended.

II.50 bāhyābhyantara-stambha-vṛttih deśa-kāla-saṅkhya-abhiḥ
paridṛṣṭo dirgha-sūkṣmaḥ

bāhya, external; ābhyantara, internal; stambha, restrained, suppressed; vṛttih, movements; deśa, place; kāla, time; saṅkhya-abhiḥ, and number; paridṛṣṭah, is manifest; dirgha, long; sūkṣmaḥ, subtle

[Prāṇāyāmaḥ] manifests as external, internal, and restrained movements [of breath]. These are drawn out
and subtle in accordance to place, time, and number.

Vyāsa defines the external, bāhya, of this sūtra as when there is no flow of breath after exhalation; internal, abhyantara, when there is no flow of breath after inhalation; and restrained, stambha, as the simultaneous cessation of both (the commentators specify that these refer to the recaka, pūraka, and kumbhaka suppressions mentioned in the last sūtra108). Vṛtti means anything that turns or revolves and thus can apply to breathing, as in this verse, or anything else, in addition to the churnings of thought. The movement, vṛtti, of breath ceases, he notes, just as water shrinks and contracts from all sides and evaporates when it is sprinkled on a heated stone. The breath remains within the body when it ceases to move in and out, adds Vācaspatī Miśra (like motionless water filling a jar, says Rāmānanda Sarasvati).

Moving on to the second part of the sūtra, all these different types of breath restraint are regulated by place, deśa, that is, the surface area that is reached by the breath, says Vyāsa. He understands time as the seconds of duration of these cessations of the flow of breath, and number as how many sequences of inhalations and exhalations are restrained, and whether they are mild, middling, or intense in nature. The commentators elaborate on this schema. In terms of place, the surface area covered by breath is either external or internal. The external range of breath here is measured by a piece of cotton or blade of grass placed at a certain distance—a hand span or twelve fingers—from the nose to see at what point it is moved by the breath. The internal range of breath is measured from the soles of the feet to the head and can be sensed like “the touch of an ant.” In kumbhaka, breath ceases in both these spheres. This external and internal range or surface area of breath constitutes Patañjali’s place.

Time, kāla, refers to the differing durations of each individual exhalation, inhalation, and retention, and is calculated by kṣaṇa, a unit that is taken here to correspond to a quarter of the time it takes to blink the eye (but see III.52 for a more metaphysical definition). Prāṇāyāma is regulated by the number of kṣaṇas involved in the restraint, etc., of the breath. Number, saṅkhya, is the number of repetitions, or rounds of each cycle of inhalations, exhalations, and retentions at one sitting. Time
differs from number, says Vijñānabhinīkṣu, in terms of the method used in calculation. Number is determined by mātrā. Vijñānabhinīkṣu quotes a verse\textsuperscript{109} that states that a mātrā corresponds to a single clap of the hands, the opening and closing of the eyes once, or the utterance of a phoneme (for example, the ga sound in yoga), Vācaspati Miśra takes a mātrā to correspond to the time it takes to rub one’s kneecap three times and then snap one’s fingers. According to Vijñānabhinīkṣu, twelve mātrās are the unit used for prāṇāyāma. He prescribes drawing in the breath through the right nostril for the duration of sixteen mātrās and, once the lungs are full, holding the breath for sixty-four mātrās, after which one exhales for the duration of thirty-two mātrās. This is to be accompanied by meditation on the om mantra.

Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhinīkṣu also differ in their understanding of Vyāsa’s mild, middling, and intense demarcations. Vācaspati Miśra takes mild to be thirty-six mātrās, middling twice that, and intense thrice that amount, whereas Vijñānabhinīkṣu quotes the Kūrma Purāṇa (IX.32) in which mild is understood as twelve mātrās, middling as twenty-four, and intense as thirty-six.\textsuperscript{110} Hariharānanda recommends the internal chanting of mantras as an alternative to the various mātrā techniques, using the repetition of a certain number of mantras to demarcate the duration of the periods separating inhalation, exhalation, and suppression.

The common denominator of all this is simply that some consistent system of time demarcation is used in prāṇāyāma. By practice, says Vyāsa, these restrictions of breath become drawn out, dirgha, and subtle, sūkṣma. In other words, say the commentators, one can increase the duration of these intervals of breath restraint so that they become more and more prolonged and imperceptible in terms of the movement of air (such that with practice cotton wool does not move even when placed at the tip of the nose, specifies Hariharānanda).

\textit{वाघाभ्यन्तरविषयाक्षेपी चतुर्थेः ॥ ५१ ॥}

\textit{II.51 bāhyābhyantara-viṣayākṣepī caturthaḥ}

bāhya, external; ābhyantara, internal; viṣaya, the sphere, range;
ākṣepī, surpassing; caturthaḥ, the fourth

The fourth [type of prāṇāyāma] surpasses the limits of the external and the internal.

The fourth, caturthaḥ, type of prāṇāyāma, says Vyāsa, refers to the total suppression of breath and so, like the kumbhaka mentioned previously, also involves the cessation of inhalation and exhalation. Vijñānabhikṣu calls it kevala-kumbhaka, pure kumbhaka. In his Yogasāra commentary, he quotes the Brihan-nāradiya Purāṇa as referring to it as śūnyaka. The commentators are not overly helpful in clarifying the precise difference between the third type of prāṇāyāma, kumbhaka, and the fourth type, caturthaḥ. As is the case with so much in the sūtras, it is clear that these are techniques to be experienced by practice rather than understood intellectually. Vyāsa states that the third type of suppression is brought about by a single effort, whereas the fourth takes place gradually with prolonged effort. Apparently, kumbhaka is performed independently of the suppression of breath in recaka and pūraka that utilizes the system of measurements; it is thus limited in duration. Caturthaḥ, in contrast, says Vijñānabhikṣu, involves an extension of the cessation of breath that occurs after exhalation and inhalation in recaka and pūraka that is not determined by time and number, and the adept of this stage of prāṇāyāma can maintain the suppression of breath at will, even for a month or a year. It thus surpasses the other three stages of prāṇāyāma. One might also suppose that in this state the body is being maintained by the internal circulation of prāṇa rather than any external flow of breath.

Accounts of suspending the functions of conventional breathing are fairly standard throughout the ascetic Yoga traditions of ancient India. In the Pāli Buddhist tradition (Majjhima Nikāya I.121ff), the Buddha describes his own experiences with stopping breathing, and similar accounts are found in Jain literature (Uttarajjhayaṇa 29). The Gītā also speaks of prāṇāpānau samau, the equalizing of the incoming and outgoing breath (V.27), and the practice plays a central role in the Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā (II.74ff; IV.112). Hariharānanda mentions that he knew of someone who could remain buried alive for ten or twelve days as a result of his ability to restrain the breath, and even the great
philosopher of modern times, Dasgupta, claimed to have witnessed a yogī remaining in a state of suspended animation for nine days, without intake of food or drink, and devoid even of heartbeat. Accounts were also documented during the colonial period, such as the case of one Haridas, buried alive in 1837 in the Lahore court of Rāja Runjeet Singh, with extensive precautions taken against fraud, all of which was documented by Sir Claude Martin Wade. The Yoga tradition has long been full of accounts of yogīs who have suspended their breath and been buried alive for prolonged periods and then exhumed alive, at which time they reactivated the normal breathing processes. (Indeed, related phenomena have recently attracted some degree of scientific attention.)

In its beginning stages, Vijñānabhikṣu continues, this fourth type of prāṇāyāma is accompanied by sweating; in higher stages, by shivering; and in advanced stages, by a feeling of “flooding.” When mastered, one attains mystic powers such as the ability to fly and go anywhere at will. He cites Dhruva from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (IV.8ff) as an example of someone who had mastered this type of prāṇāyāma. The Dhruva story is well-known in the Purānic tradition: Offended by his co-mother, who would not allow him to climb on the lap of his father the king, Dhruva is advised by his own mother, the neglected co-wife of the king, to practice austerities and worship the supreme Lord Viṣṇu if he wished to sit on the lap of his father. Dhruva is given further directions by the sage Nārada for specifically how to meditate and worship Lord Viṣṇu, and these include the practice of recaka, pūraka, and kumbhaka, and meditation on the mantra “oṁ namo bhagavate Vāsudevāya."

Although he was only five years old, the boy betook himself to the forest and practiced severe austerities with a view to attaining an audience with the supreme Lord Viṣṇu. Worshipping the Lord as he had been directed, the lad ate some simple fruits only every third day for the entire first month of his austerities; for the second month, he abstained from all food except for withered grass and leaves consumed every sixth day; for the third, he renounced all food and subsisted only on water drunk every ten days; for the fourth, his only form of sustenance was air inhaled every fourteen days, and then every fifteen days. It is here that Dhruva’s story becomes relevant to this sūtra: Suppressing the breath for
fourteen or fifteen days at a time indicates a mastery of the “fourth” type of prāṇāyāma noted by Patañjali in this sūtra. For the fifth month Dhruva refrained from all activities whatsoever, including breathing (thereby extending this particular process of prāṇāyāma to its maximum extent), stood on one leg in some variant of the ekapāda-vṛkṣāsana [tree] pose, and focused exclusively on Lord Viṣṇu.

Because of his complete absorption on the Lord of the universe, Dhruva’s personal condition emanated out and pervaded the whole universe, such that all other beings also became deprived of breath. We can note here, given that the topic is the subject of much of the next chapter, that this process by which the yogī absorbs the qualities of the object of meditation by absolute unflinching absorption on that object is called saṁyama. In this case, since Viṣṇu is the supreme soul pervading the entire universe, Dhruva became as if one with Viṣṇu due to his complete mental absorption on Viṣṇu, and thus his own personal condition of kevala-kumbhaka pervaded the entire universe.

Although the boy’s worship and meditation were tinged with personal motive, Viṣṇu was nonetheless moved by the incredible determination of the lad, appeared before him, purified his heart of all desires (kleśas), and bestowed various boons upon him. A further example from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa of a yogī who had mastered the techniques of prāṇāyāma is described in II.54 below.

II.52 tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaraṇam

tataḥ, then; kṣīyate, is weakened; prakāśa, illumination; āvaraṇam, covering
Then, the covering of the illumination [of knowledge] is weakened.

Prakāśa, illumination, as we know from II.18, is a synoynm for sattva. The covering of illumination, prakāśa-āvaraṇa, says Vyāsa, is ultimately karma, and this is destroyed by the practice of prāṇāyāma. He quotes a verse that speaks of karma as the “net of great illusion” that covers sattva
and impels one to commit immoral deeds. *Karma*, we recall, consists of actions that are all recorded in the *citta* as *saṁskāras* and that fructify at the appropriate time, conditioning one to act in certain ways. *Karma* is in this sense synonymous with the storehouse of *saṁskāras*, which trigger the behavioral patterns and preconditioned attitudes, perspectives, or responses to the world, such as the immoral deeds mentioned by Vyāsa. It is a net of illusion because, like a net with many knots, when the myriad *saṁskāras* fructify, they channel awareness away from its source and absorb it in conditioned patterns of behavior (the *sattva* of the mind forgets the true nature of the *puruṣa* and becomes enamored by the objects of the senses, says Vijñānabhirṣa). Pursuing these sense objects, additional *karma* is produced, and thus the mind remains further trapped and entangled in this net of action and reaction. In this sense it is *karma* that sustains ignorance, the covering of knowledge, the misconception that the body and senses are the true self.

Although, technically, only knowledge can ultimately destroy ignorance, says Hariharananda, it is only when the covering of *karma* is weakened that knowledge can shine forth unobstructed. This covering of *karma* is weakened, says Vyāsa, by the practice of *prāṇāyāma*. He quotes a verse that “there is no greater ascetic practice than *prāṇāyāma*, from which defects are purified and the light of knowledge shines forth.”

Manu, too, states that from the performance of *prāṇāyāma* accompanied by the repetition of the oṁ *mantra*, “the impurities of the sensory powers are burnt away, just as the defiling impurities of metal ore are burnt away in the heat of the furnace” (VI.72).

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**II.53 dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ**

*dhāraṇāsu*, for concentration; *ca*, and; *yogyatā*, fitness, competency; *manasaḥ*, mind

*Additionally, the mind becomes fit for concentration.*

*Manasaḥ* is used here rather than *citta*, as it is the specific aspect of *citta* that interacts with the senses, and awareness must now make a
transition from the sensory involvements of prāṇāyāma and the next limb, pratyāhāra, to the transsensory stage of dhāraṇā, concentration. Dhāraṇā is the sixth limb of yoga, which will be discussed shortly. The commentators assume this sūtra to be self-explanatory and have little to add. For the mind to be able to fix on an object of concentration, it must be sattvic, that is, rajas and tamas must be minimized. Bhoja Rāja says that once freed from its defects by these breathing techniques, the mind can remain fixed wherever it is directed; in other words, the correct performance of prāṇāyāma prepares the mind for concentration, the preliminary stage of meditation and ultimate samādhi. Again, the sequential nature of the limbs is indicated in this sūtra. But one more step is required before the mind can successfully undertake the practice of dhāraṇā, concentration; this is the fifth limb of the next verse.

II.54 svaviṣayāsamprayoge cittasya svarūpānukāra ivendriyāṇāṁ pratyāhāraḥ

sva, their own; viṣaya, sense objects; asamprayoge, not coming into contact with; cittasya, of the mind; svarūpa, nature; anukāraḥ, imitation, resemblance; iva, as if; indriyāṇāṁ, of the senses; pratyāhāraḥ, withdrawal

Pratyāhāra, withdrawal from sense objects, occurs when the senses do not come into contact with their respective sense objects. It corresponds, as it were, to the nature of the mind [when it is withdrawn from the sense objects].

Patañjali now introduces the fifth limb of yoga, pratyāhāra, which is when the senses do not come into contact with the sense objects, svaviṣaya-asamprayoga, a practice referred to as early as the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (VIII.15). This is accomplished through the mind: When the mind is under control, says Vyāsa, the senses are automatically under control; they do not need to be restrained separately. He illustrates this with a metaphor that is drawn from the Praśna Upaniṣad (II.4): Just as
when the queen bee flies up, all the other bees fly up along with her, and when the queen bee settles down, all the other bees automatically settle down, so the mind and senses are directly interconnected. When the mind is fixed on the object of meditation, says Vijñānabhikṣu, the senses cease their functioning without any separate endeavor, but when the mind is not controlled, it becomes inclined to follow the senses and is dragged out into the sensual world. He quotes Manu here: “If even one of the senses slips away, a person’s knowledge slips away through that sense, like water from a water-bag” (II.99). The Gītā, too, states: “The senses are so impetuous, O Arjuna, that they forcibly carry away the mind even of a learned person who is endeavoring to control them” (II.60).

II.55 *tataḥ paramā vaśyatendriyāṇām*

*tataḥ*, from this; *paramā*, highest; *vaśyatā*, control; *indriyāṇām*, of the senses

*From this comes the highest control of the senses.*

In order to illustrate Patañjali’s qualification here of highest, *paramā*, in relation to sense control, *vaśyatā indriyāṇām*, Vyāsa contrasts it with various other lesser forms of sense control. Some hold, he says, that sense control means enjoying sense objects as long as they are not prohibited; others, that sense control means contact with sense objects according to one’s desire rather than according to the dictates of the senses; and still others, that sense control involves engaging with sense objects but without attachment or aversion, happiness or distress. Real sense control, however, says Vyāsa, reiterating the previous *sūtra*, is when the mind is restrained and focused because then the senses are automatically brought under control.

The problem with the other opinions noted by Vyāsa, says Vācaspati Miśra, is that they all still involve contact with the sense objects, and sense objects are like poison: There is always the danger of being overcome by them. Even the greatest expert in the science of poisons, he
says, does not sleep with snakes without fear—there is always the danger of being bitten. Therefore, the highest sense control is that in which there is no engagement whatsoever with sense objects, and this occurs when the mind is withdrawn from the senses.

Vijñānabhikṣu refers to the story of sage Saubhārī related in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (IX.6.40ff). In an attempt to avoid the lure of the senses and the distractions and temptations of the world, the sage was practicing austerities under the waters of the river Yamunā (which provides, as an aside, an example of the fourth stage of prāṇāyāma outlined above, allowing him to suppress his breathing for as long as he willed and thus survive peacefully in environments normally inhospitable to human survival). However, even in this most removed of environments, the sage’s mind was not fully under control, and so he became distracted by a pair of fish mating.

Witnessing this act, the sage became overwhelmed with sensual desires, abandoned his asceticism, and turned his attention to conjugal indulgence. From the perspective of Yoga psychology, although the sage had mastered great lofty attainments in terms of prāṇāyāma, his citta nonetheless contained unlimited saṁskāras from previous lives, including saṁskāras of previous sexual experiences. By meditating underwater, the sage had tried to remove himself from any possible temptation that might awaken these, but these dormant sexual saṁskāras were nonetheless activated by the slightest external sexual stimulus, in this case, mating fish. Vijñānabhikṣu introduces a theistic element here by quoting the Gītā: “The senses are so agitating, O Arjuna, that they forcibly carry away the mind even of a person who is struggling to control them. But a person who restrains all of them and remains [with mind] fixed on me [Kṛṣṇa] as the Supreme with senses under control, has steady knowledge” (II.60).

Rāmānanda Sarasvatī gives the example of Sītā from the Rāmāyaṇa as one who had mastered the highest sense control. Sītā’s mind was so fixed on her husband Rāma, that, even though abducted and in captivity, she was immune to all the lures of the powerful demon Rāvaṇa, who was trying to seduce her. Here we see that, in the more Īśvara-focused theologies of the theistic traditions, rather than trying to suppress all one’s past saṁskāras exclusively by one’s own will and meditative
prowess, and thus run the risk of past saṁskāras reactivating as was the case with the sage Saubhari, the yogī instead saturates the mind with devotional saṁskāras related to thoughts directed to the divine form and activities of God, Īśvara. This is a more theologically elaborate expansion of Patañjali’s Īśvara-praṇidhāna, based on the idea that rather than exclusively suppressing negative mundane saṁskāras, one strives to replace them with transcendent ones, a theistic variant of the pratipakṣa-bhāvana from II.33.

इति पतञ्‌जनिविरचिते योगसूत्रे द्वितीयः साधनपादः ।

iti Patañjali-viracite yogasūtre dvitiyāḥ sādhanapādāḥ
Thus ends the second chapter on sādhana in the Yoga Sūtras composed by Patañjali.
CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins with an introduction of kriyā-yoga [1], its effects [2], and a discussion of the kleśas, which it removes [3–11]. Karma and its consequences are outlined [12–14] and the principle of suffering established [15–16]. This is followed by the characteristics of the seer and the seen [17–22], the conjunction between them [23–24], and the definition of liberation [25–27]. Next, the eight limbs of yoga are introduced as the means to attain liberation [28–29], and the remainder of the chapter is dedicated to these: the yamas and their universality [30–31], the niyamas [32], the means to counter tendencies contrary to the yamas and niyamas [33–34] and the side benefits accruing from observing them [35–45]. Next, āsana, the third limb, is presented [46–48], followed by prāṇāyāma, the fourth limb [49–53], and pratyāhāra, the fifth [54–55].
तृतीयः विभूतिपादः ।
त्र्तियाः विभूति-पदाः
CHAPTER III

MYSTIC POWERS

III.1 deśa-bandhaś cittasya dhāraṇā
desa, place; bandhaḥ, bound, fixed; cittasya, of the mind; dhāraṇā, concentration

Concentration is the fixing of the mind in one place.

Patañjali discussed the first five of the eight limbs of yoga in the previous chapter and now concludes his discussion of the remaining three. Since the eight limbs of yoga would seem to constitute one discrete, self-contained unit in terms of subject matter, the question can be raised as to why Patañjali chose to divide the limbs over two distinct chapters. The classical commentators do not draw attention to this, but an answer, I suggest, lies in III.4 below. The primary subject matter of this chapter is the vibhūtis (siddhis), the mystic powers, and these are attained by performing saṁyama on various objects. III.4 defines saṁyama as a progressive application of the last three limbs of yoga. Hence, these three limbs are situated prior to the presentation of saṁyama, which in turn is pivotal to an understanding of the mystic powers, and thus is the central theme of the rest of the chapter. Moreover, Patañjali considers the five previous limbs of yoga to be the external limbs and the final three limbs of yoga discussed here to be internal (III.6), a division that further contributes to a logic of separation into different pādas, chapters.

In fact we have seen a gradual progression from the external to the internal throughout the limbs. The yamas are the most external, proscribing relations with other beings—one doesn’t inflict violence, lie, steal, sexually exploit, or covet the possessions of others. The niyamas deal more internally with one’s own practices, but practices still related
to external elements—hygiene, contentment with one’s situation, curbing sensual involvement, study, and devotional activity. Āsanas focus exclusively on one’s personal body, and prāṇāyāma, more internal still, on the breath within the body. Pratyāhāra continues this progression of internalization by going still deeper within by withdrawing consciousness itself from the senses. This process of consecutive stages of internalization continues throughout the remaining three limbs.

Dhāraṇā, concentration, Patañjali states, involves fixing the mind on one place, deśa-bandha. In the Mahābhārata, two passages outline seven or ten different types of dhāraṇās, respectively (as does the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa XXXVI.44–45), which can be directed toward parts of the anatomy or external objects and result in wonderful powers similar to those that will be described later in this chapter. Vyāsa seems have these passages in mind when he mentions the circle of the navel, the lotus in the heart, the light in the brain, the tip of the nose, the tip of the tongue, or any external object as a place upon which the mind can be fixed. Although Patañjali does not specify the nature of the object upon which dhāraṇā is to be performed, Vācaspati Miśra and Rāmānanda Sarasvatī quote a series of verses from the Viṣṇu Purāṇa (VI.7.77–85) that recommend theistic meditation on the form of Viṣṇu on the grounds that since concentration requires an object, when one concentrates on the beautiful personal form of the Lord, one has no desire to think of anything else, since nothing else can compete in attractiveness. The mind is thus spontaneously fixed. This type of meditation is often referred to as sa-guṇa, wherein the personal form of God is the object of meditation, and is typical of the Indian theistic traditions. The passage chosen by the commentators gives a good illustration of the particulars of this type of meditation:

One should thus meditate on Hari’s [Viṣṇu’s] pleasing face, his beautiful lotus eyes, his gorgeous cheeks, his broad and shining forehead, and his ear lobes, which wear charming earrings. His neck is like a conch shell, his broad chest is marked with the tuft of hair called śrīvatsa, and his belly has a deep navel and three folds. He has four arms, his thighs and legs are symmetrical, and he has beautiful lotus feet. He wears a spotless yellow garment, is adorned with a
crown, attractive armlets and bracelets, and holds his śāraṅga bow, discus, club, sword, conch and rosary. He is Brahman, the absolute truth, and the yogī should try to concentrate the mind until it is fixed on him alone.

As we have seen, Vācaspati Miśra provides a parallel illustration of saguna meditation on Lord Śiva in his commentary on I.38 dealing with the yogic dream state.

III.2 tatra pratyayaika-tānatā dhyānam

tatra, there, in that; pratyaya, conception, idea, thought; eka-tānatā, fixed on one point only; dhyānam, meditation

Meditation is the one-pointedness of the mind on one image.

Patanjali now defines the seventh limb of yoga, dhyāna, meditation, which Vyāsa describes as the continuous flow of the same thought or image of the object of meditation, without being distracted by any other thought. As has been discussed, pratyaya used by Patanjali here refers to the image or impression that an object—in this context, the object of meditation—makes on the mind. When the image of the object of meditation flows uninterruptedly, eka-tānatā, in the mind, that is to say when the mind can focus exclusively on that object without any other distraction, dhyāna, has been achieved.

The sixth and seventh limbs of yoga and, as will be seen below, the eighth as well, are not different practices as is the case with the previous five limbs, but a continuation and deepening of the same practice. As al-Bīrūnī puts it, they are like the progression between infancy and maturity. Hariharānanda points out that the difference between these limbs of yoga is only one of degree: In concentration, the attention on the object is intermittent or distracted; in meditation, it is unbroken and undistracted. Meditation, he states, is when the mind flows on the object of thought without any interruption, like the smooth and even flow of oil
or honey, which pours forth in one thick, uninterrupted stream. Concentration, the previous stage, is more like the uneven trickle of water that flows in a series of distinct droplets, each one similar but interrupted by gaps. Hence, this sūtra is distinguished from the previous one by the use of the term eka-tānata, the state of retaining one image in the mind, that is, fixing the mind on one place. Vijñānabhikṣu states that dhāranā, concentration, can be disrupted if the senses come in contact with objects that are extremely dear to the practitioner, but this does not occur in dhyāna when one is fully absorbed: “just like the arrow-maker, his whole being engrossed in the arrow, who was not aware of the king passing by his side” (Sāṅkhya Sūtras).

We can note here that dhyāna was used in older Indic texts as a synonym for samādhi, the culmination of the meditative process, rather than the penultimate limb, as we find here (in fact, samādhi does not occur in the older Upaniṣads prior to the Maitrāyaṇī). In the Mahābhārata and early Buddhism, dhyāna denoted the goal of yogic practice, as touched upon in I.17, and the same understanding seems to have been the case with the Upaniṣads (Śvetāśvatara I.3) and the Gītā (XIII.24). As a point of interest, we include here the section of the Mahābhārata that describes the eight-limbed practice of yoga—which it calls the yoga with eight characteristics (aṣṭa-guṇa)—as an example of how an important pre-Patañjali source renders this system:

SAGE YĀJÑAVALKYA TO KING JANAKA

I have spoken to you about the knowledge of Sāṅkhya; now hear from me about the knowledge of yoga as I have heard and seen it, O best of kings.

There is no knowledge equal to Sāṅkhya; there is no power like that of yoga. Both of these are the same path; both are said to lead to immortality.

Only people lacking wisdom say that these are different. But we, O king, see them as one without any doubt.

That which the yogīs perceive, the followers of Sāṅkhya experience. One who sees that Sāṅkhya and yoga are one, is a seer of Truth.

Know that [the control of] the vital airs to be the highest [practice] in
yoga, O chastiser of the enemy. In fact, in their very same body, yogīs can wander around the ten directions.9

When death occurs, my dear king, having abandoned [the physical body], such yogīs wander happily around the worlds in the subtle body, endowed with the eight yogic powers (guṇas),10 O sinless one.

In the Vedic scriptures, the wise speak of yoga as having eight qualities,11 and bestowing eight subtle powers.12 It is this and nothing else, O best of rulers.

They say that the topmost practice of yoga is of two kinds, according to what is revealed in the scriptures: yoga with “qualities” and yoga without “qualities.”13

There is concentration of the mind [dhāranā, see III.214], and there is prāṇāyama [II.49ff]. Prāṇāyama is saguṇa, and dhāranā is nirguṇa.

It is seen that exhaling air in the practice of nirguṇa, O Lord of Maithila, causes an excess of wind. Because of this, it should not be practiced.

Twelve ways of restraining [the breath] in the first watch of the night are recorded in the scriptures. After sleeping in the middle watch, the twelve ways of restraining [are prescribed again] for the final watch. Living in solitude, tranquil, and controlled, one should without doubt engage one’s ātman in yoga with the intelligence, delighting in the ātman and living in solitude.

One should cast off the fivefold faults of the five senses: sound, form, touch, taste, and smell [pratyāhāra II.54].

One should restrain the state of pratibhām-apavargam,15 and fix the senses on the mind (manas).

The manas should then be fixed on the ego, ahaṅkāra, O Lord of men; the ahaṅkāra on the intelligence, buddhi; and the buddhi, in turn, on prakṛti.

After undertaking this progression, one should meditate on the purusa, which is autonomous (kevalam; II.25), a spotless lotus, eternal, infinite, pure, unblemished, immovable, existent, indivisible, beyond decay and death, everlasting, immutable, the lord and imperishable Brahman.

Consider now, O king, the characteristics of the yogī. The character of the yogī displays a tranquillity like that of the contented person sleeping
blissfully.

The wise speak of the yogī as like the upward motionless flame of a lamp full of oil burning in a windless place.

The character of the yogī is like a rock, which is incapable of being moved even when pummeled by torrents of rain pouring down from clouds.

The demeanor of the yogī is not moved by the noise of assorted conches and drums being played together, nor by outbursts of song.

Just as a person of composed nature might ascend a staircase while holding a container full of oil, and yet, despite being alarmed upon being attacked by assailants armed with swords, does not spill a drop out of fear of them, so, in the same way, the mind of one who is absorbed in the supreme, is fully concentrated.

These are the characteristics of the sage yogī, which are displayed due to resolve and to controlling the activities of the senses.

Absorbed in the self, the yogī beholds the supreme and imperishable Brahman, resembling a lamp situated in dense darkness blazing forth.

It is in this way that, after the passage of much time [in practice], the yogī enters the state of transcendent liberation (kevala) upon leaving the body, O king. This [is revealed in] the eternal scriptures.

This, indeed, is the yoga of the yogīs. What else is the character of yoga? Knowing this, the wise consider that they have accomplished the goal of life.

III.3 tad evārtha-mātra-nirbhāsam svarūpa-śūnyam iva samādhiḥ

tat, that [the practice of dhyāna from the previous sūtra]; eva, the same, the very one; artha, object; mātra, alone; nirbhāsam, shining forth; svarūpa, own form, own self; śūnyam, devoid of; iva, as if; samādhiḥ, meditative absorption

Samādhi is when that same dhyāna shines forth as the object alone and [the mind] is devoid of its own
Patañjali here reaches the final limb of yoga, samādhi. We can note that only one sūtra has been dedicated to this ultimate stage, despite its status as the goal of the entire system, because Patañjali presented the various stages of samādhi in the first chapter, and the commentators have already discussed these in some detail there. He therefore here merely needs to connect that discussion with the eight limbs of yoga by situating samādhi in its place here as the eighth and final limb. We can also note that, out of the seven different types of samādhi discussed in that chapter, Patañjali seems to have defined samādhi here in terms similar to his description of nirvitarka-samādhi in I.43.

Vyāsa states that when the mind is so fully absorbed in the object of meditation that it loses all notions of itself as a self-conscious, reflective mind, svarūpa-śunyam, one has reached the state of samādhi. In this state, the mind is no longer aware of itself as meditating on something external to itself; all distinctions—between the yogī as the subjective meditator, the act of meditation, and the object of meditation—have disappeared. In other words, any subconscious awareness, however subtle, that “I am meditating on this object” ceases. Also, as Bhoja Rāja reminds us, from the threefold aspect of knowledge—the object itself, the name of the object, and the idea of the object in a person’s mind—the latter two are eliminated in the samādhi referred to here, and only the object itself occupies the yogī’s awareness exclusively. There is no mental recognition of what the object is; the object as raw uninterpreted presence now constitutes the yogī’s entire universe of experience, shining forth in its own right, artha-mātra-nirbhāsam.

The commentators reintroduce the example of a pure crystal which, when placed next to a red flower, appears to completely lose its own character by reflecting the form and color of the flower exclusively. Meditation has reached a height such that the yogī is no longer self-aware and is conscious only of the object of meditation rather than of its function or relevance in the scheme of things, and it is in this level of intensity that samādhi differs from dhyāna. There is thus a progression of concentrative absorption on the object of meditation in the last three limbs of yoga: from āhāraṇa, through dhyāna, to samādhi.
In the previous verse, we included the *Mahābhārata*’s (pre-Patañjali) rendition of the practice of Yoga with eight characteristics as a point of contrast with Patañjali’s systematized version. We noted in II.28 that the technical and esoteric eightfold stages of classical *yoga* are brought colorfully to life in the popular narratives that form the core of real-life Hindu religious identity in texts such as the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (arguably, along with the *Rāmāyāṇa*, the most popular source of religious narrative in the Indian subcontinent). Before moving into the entirely new direction that the *sūtras* are about to take for the remainder of this chapter, we conclude this section on the eight limbs of *yoga* with another version of the eight-limbed practice of *yoga*, this time from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (III.28.1ff), to illustrate how this practice with Īśvara as the ālambana, meditational support (I.10), for the mind is construed in the bhakti traditions. The discussion is relevant to the Yoga tradition as it transpires between Kapila, the reputed founder of the Sāṅkhya tradition (considered an incarnation of Viṣṇu in ancient sources), and his mother:

The Lord, *bhagavān*, said:

O daughter of the king, I will outline the characteristics of sabīja-*yoga*; by this method, the mind becomes joyful, and undoubtedly attains the path of Truth. One should follow one’s *dharma*, duty, to the best of one’s ability, and refrain from activities opposed to *dharma*. Content with what one has attained by Providence, one should worship the feet of a spiritual teacher, one who has perceived the ātman.

Ceasing mundane religious activities, but rather being attracted to the *dharma* which leads to liberation, one should always eat a limited amount of pure food, and reside in a peaceful, secluded place.

One should practice nonviolence (*ahiṁsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), and adopt only as many possessions as required (*yāvad-artha-parigraha*). One should practice celibacy (*brahmacarya*), austerity (*tapas*), cleanliness (*śaucya*), study (*svādhyāya*) and worship the supreme being (*puruṣārcana*).

Observing silence, one should become fixed [in a sitting posture]
by mastering the appropriate āsanas, gradually mastering breath control (prāṇa), and practicing withdrawal of the senses from sense objects (pratyāhāra) with the mind fixed on the heart.

One should fix the breath on one of the cakras\(^{24}\) of the body with one’s mind.

One should contemplate the activities of Lord Viṣṇu and become absorbed (samādhāna) in that way.

By these and other processes, alert, and with controlled breath, one should gradually fix one’s mind, which is prone to corrupt and unspiritual ways, with one’s intelligence.

Once one has mastered āsana one should establish a seat (āsana) in a clean place, and, sitting comfortably, with the body erect, one should perform practice.

One should cleanse the passageway of the air by performing pūrakumbhaka-recaka breath restraints\(^{25}\) or by the reverse processes, such that the citta can become fixed and undistracted.

The mind of the yogī whose breath is controlled should soon become purified, just as iron, [melted by] fire and fanned by wind, releases its impurities.

By prāṇāyāma one can burn imperfections;\(^{26}\) by dhāraṇā, one’s sins; by pratyāhāra, contact with sense objects; and by dhyāna, ungodly tendencies. When one’s mind is perfectly controlled by the practice of yoga, with one’s gaze fixed on the tip of the nose, one should meditate on the form of God (Bhagavān).

He has pleasing lotus-like features, with reddish eyes like the interior of a lotus, and is dark like the petals of a blue lotus. He bears a conch, discus and club. His shiny silken garments are yellow like the filament of a lotus, the kaustubha jewel adorns his neck, and the mark of śrīvatsa his chest.\(^{27}\)

His neck is encircled by a forest garland with intoxicated humming bees swarming about it, and he is adorned by a magnificent necklace, bracelets, helmet, armlets and anklets.

His hips are adorned with a brilliantly shining girdle, and he is seated in the lotus of the heart. His countenance is serene and he has the most beautiful appearance, gladdening the eyes and the
mind.

He is eternally gorgeous to behold, and is worshipped by the entire universe. He has the youthful vigor of the prime of youth, and is anxious to bestow his blessings upon his devotees.

The glories of this exalted person are worthy of recitation in hymns, and bring renown to pious people [who glorify him]. One should perform meditation (dhyāna) upon the entire form of the Lord, until the mind no longer deviates ...

A person, at this point, with heart flowing with love for the Lord, Hari, bhagavān; with hair standing on end from ecstasy; and constantly overwhelmed with streams of tears from intense love, gradually withdraws the hook of the citta.28

At this stage, the mind suddenly attains liberation (nirvāṇa), and enters the state of freedom, detached and without objects, like the flame of a lamp [when it is extinguished]. Freed from the flow of the guṇas, one now perceives the ātman, fully manifest and autonomous.

The yogī, as a result of this supreme dissolution of the mind, becomes situated in the wonders of the ātman, and, attaining the nature of the higher self, realizes that the cause of the experiences of pleasure and pain (duḥkha) that he had previously attributed to his own self, were actually occurring in the ahaṅkāra, which has no ultimate and enduring reality.

III.4 trayam ekatra saṃyamaḥ

trayam, three; ekatra, together; saṃyamaḥ, saṃyama
When these three are performed together, it is called saṃyama.

Returning to Patañjali’s more frugal sūtras, this verse informs us that when dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi are performed together, ekatra, on an object, the act of concentration is called saṃyama. Vyāsa uses the term tāntrika to describe this, and, certainly, the tantras are a body of
texts that, among other things, deal with the types of mystic powers that occupy the bulk of this chapter. The commentators simply state that rather than laboriously list all three each time dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi are to be performed together, Patañjalai has introduced a technical term, saṁyama, to refer to the application of the three of them in sequence.

Hariharānanda raises the obvious question: Why are dhāraṇā and dhyāna relevant at all at this point, since they are already superseded by the time one attains samādhi? His reply seems to be that all three types of contemplation are required in order to know an object thoroughly in all its aspects.29 Another explanation might be that one would assume that the yogī (at least most yogīs) cannot just snap instantly into a state of samādhi. The mind first has to be gradually eased away from external awareness and progressively stilled through the stages of dhāraṇā and dhyāna. Thus the yogī sits down to meditate and, applying dhāraṇā in the transition period from conventional awareness to the concentrated state, progressively focuses the mind until samādhi is attained.

### III.5 taj-jayāt praśālokaḥ

*tat, that; jayāt, from mastery; praśā, wisdom; ālokaḥ, vision, light*

*From saṁyama comes insight.*

The commentators have little to say here except that as one becomes fixed in saṁyama, so one becomes immersed in the wisdom of samādhi, praśāloka. Various levels of insight involving praśā have been discussed previously (I.20, 48–49; II.27), as have the various stages of samādhi in the first chapter.

### III.6 tasya bhūmiṣu viniyoyah
Samyama is applied on the [different] stages [of samādhi].

One must proceed along each plane of samādhi consecutively, says Vyāsa; one cannot skip a step with one’s eye on a higher stage and expect to attain the insight mentioned in the previous sūtra. No one who sets off for the river Gaṅgā from Śilāhrada, says Vācaspati Miśra, reaches there without passing across the Meghavana. An archer can pierce more subtle targets only when he has mastered larger ones, says Vijñānabhikṣu, and one can climb stairs only step by step. In short, yogic insight is attained in stages. The only exception to this progression recognized by the commentators is for one who has attained the higher stages by the grace of God, Īśvara. For such a person, the accomplishments of the lower stages are automatically achieved. Otherwise, it is only by the practice of yoga itself that one knows what the next stage is, according to Vyāsa. Or, inversely, sometimes, by trying to fix one’s mind on a higher stage, one realizes that one is actually qualified only for a lower stage, says Vijñānabhikṣu.

III.7 trayam antar-āṅgaṁ pūrvebhyaḥ

trayam, three; antar, internal; aṅgam, limbs; pūrvebhyaḥ, than the previous ones
These three [dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi] are internal limbs compared to the previous limbs [of yoga].

It is the three limbs involved in the process of saṁyama, here called internal, antar, that primarily occupy the attention of Patañjali in the Yoga Sūtras, not the five external limbs, says Vācaspati Miśra, even though all eight limbs of yoga are essential ingredients. Al-Bīrunī states that internal means more removed from the senses;30 Vijñānabhikṣu says that internal refers to the purification of the mind, and external to the
purification of the body. Certainly the higher states cannot be attained without practicing the yamas and niyamas. Nonetheless, although indispensable, the former limbs are only indirectly relevant to meditation, says Vījñānabhikṣu; the latter are directly relevant. However, as always in the Indic traditions, there is room for rare exceptions, and Vījñānabhikṣu notes that certain elevated souls like Jaḍabharata directly attain the stage of saṁyama simply by virtue of their yogic practices in former lives, without the need to practice the other limbs of yoga in this life.

In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (V.7–14), Jaḍabharata had been a king named Bharata in a previous life. When the time was appropriate, he gave responsibility for his kingdom to his sons and betook himself to the forest to fix his mind on Lord Viṣṇu without distraction, as per the Purāṇic ideal. One day, as he was sitting in his hermitage, he witnessed a pregnant deer, startled by a nearby lion, leap over the stream where she had been drinking and prematurely deliver her offspring as she leapt, which fell into the river. When the poor deer died from the sheer trauma and exhaustion of the incident, the kindhearted Bharata felt impelled to save the helpless newborn deer drowning in the current. Adopting the orphaned fawn, the saintly king nourished it, protected it, and ended up so completely attached to it that he became diverted from his worship and yogic practice, to the point that he was found absorbed in thought of the deer when death came to claim him at his given time.

In resonance with the Gitā (VIII.6), where Kṛṣṇa states that “one will attain [after death] whatever state of being one remembers when one leaves one’s body,” Bharata was reborn as a deer. However, because he had, after all, performed years of yoga practice and devotional worship in his previous life, he retained full awareness and past remembrance of the events that had caused his present situation despite being bound in the body of a deer. He thus waited until the karma responsible for this condition was exhausted and death came once more to remove him from this deer birth.

Again in resonance with the Gitā (VI.42–43), which states that unsuccessful yogīs take rebirth in a pious family where they again take up their practices from wherever they had left off in their past life, Bharata was next reborn in the family of a pious brāhmaṇa, endowed
once more with recollection, this time of his past two births. Determined never again to fall prey to attachment, he postured to the world as an insane mute, so that people would ignore and shun him. Although a fully self-realized yogī, Bharata wandered around naked and unkempt, completely disassociated from his bodily functions and social norms. Vijñānabhikṣu thus refers to him to illustrate someone who had attained the highest level of samādhi without the need for cultivating the previous limbs of yoga in his present life, but, obviously, Bharata had already performed these in his previous life.

The point is that the goal of yoga is samādhi, and Vijñānabhikṣu goes on to quote the Garuḍa Purāṇa, which states that āsanas and such external practices, in and of themselves, do not lead to the goal of yoga; indeed, these can be impediments to the real goal of yoga. Śaṅkara quotes a similar verse in this regard, that āsanas alone do not produce the goals of yoga; samādhi meditation does, and nothing else.

Vijñānabhikṣu draws from another story from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (X.74.46), where the proud and envious Śiśupāla, who had never performed any type of yoga practice, attained the supreme goal of meditation simply because his mind was fixed undeviatingly on Kṛṣṇa. Even though his absorption was out of obsessive hatred for Kṛṣṇa, it nonetheless fulfilled the ultimate requirement of samādhi, namely, undeviated concentration. Again, the point is that real yoga means meditative absorption on one object.

Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the series of verses from the Bhagavad Gītā where Kṛṣṇa lays out something of a hierarchy of yoga practice:

Fix your mind on me alone; absorb your intellect in me. You will thus dwell in me without a doubt. If you are not able to fix the mind on me in samādhi, then, O Arjuna, desire to reach me by engaging in abhyāsa-yoga, the yoga of “practice” [see Patañjali I.12ff]. If you are incapable of practicing abhyāsa-yoga, then be intent on performing dutiful activity for my sake. (XII.8–10)

The goal here is clearly expressed as absorption, in this case on Kṛṣṇa. Abhyāsa, or practice, is relevant only to achieve this state. The abhyāsa referred to by Kṛṣṇa here, says Vijñānabhikṣu, is the same abhyāsa
mentioned earlier in the *Yoga Sūtras* (I.13), “the effort [to be situated] in steadfastness.”

III.8 *tad api bahir-āṅgāṁ nirbijasya*

tat, these; *api*, even; *bahirḥ*, external; *āṅgām*, limbs; *nirbijasya*, to “seedless” [*samādhi*]

Yet even these are external limbs in relation to “seedless” *samādhi*.

This *sūtra* indicates that *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and conventional *samādhi*, although internal when compared to the first five limbs of *yoga*, are themselves considered external, *bahir*, in relation to the highest type of *samādhi* known as *nirbīja*. Even the last three limbs involve focusing the mind on an object and, of course, both the mind itself and all its objects are *prākṛtic*, and therefore external, from the perspective of *puruṣa*. *Nirbīja-samādhi* comes about only when all eight limbs of *yoga* have reached their conclusion, says Vyāsa. There are thus three subdivisions in the path of *yoga* outlined by Patañjali in these *sūtras*: The first five limbs are indirect or preparatory causes of *samprajñāta-samādhi*, the three remaining limbs are direct causes of *samprajñāta-samādhi*, and, finally, the ultimate goal is *asamprajñāta-samādhi*.

III.9 *vyutthāna-nirodha-saṁskārayor abhībha-prādurbhāvau nirodhakṣaṇa-cittānvayo nirodha-parināmaḥ*

*vyutthāna*, outgoing, emerging; *nirodha*, suppression, restraint, control; *saṁskārayoh*, of the subliminal imprints; *abhībha*, overpowering, suppression, disappearance; *prādurbhāvau*, manifestation, appearance; *kṣaṇa*, instant, moment; *citta*, mind;
anvayaḥ, connected, proceeding; nirodha, suppression; pariṇāmaḥ, development

The state of restraint, nirodha, is when there is disappearance of outgoing [i.e., worldly] saṁskāras and the appearance of restraining saṁskāras. These emerge in the mind at the moment of restraint.

In this sūtra, as well as III.11 and 12 below, Patañjali speaks of three types of pariṇāma, transformations or developments of the mind. Since change and movement at every moment are the very nature of the guṇas, says Vyāsa, the question arises as to what type of change takes place during the moments when the mind is restrained, which by definition should entail no change or movement at all. In other words, the guṇas are always in flux, and since the guṇas underpin the entirety of prakṛti and consequently everything emanating from her, everything in manifest reality is therefore constantly in motion. This includes the mind, which, as we know, is also prākṛtic. If the mind, like all prākṛtic products, is by its very metaphysical nature constantly in motion and changing because of the ever-shifting guṇas that constitute it, how is it possible to still the mind? This would seem to be inherently impossible.

The mind is made of saṁskāras, and Vyāsa, following Patañjali in this sūtra, divides these into two basic types: vyutthāna, outgoing saṁskāras that propel the mind into any kind of activity, and nirodha, restraining saṁskāras, which are activated in meditation and restrain the outgoing saṁskāras. Patañjali is now providing more detailed and subtle information as to the mechanics underpinning the state of citta-vṛtti-nirodha that he established as the goal of yoga. Specifically, nirodha is attained by nirodha-saṁskāras. According to the psychology of samādhi, when the yogi sets about meditating, what is actually occurring is that a restraining nirodha set of saṁskāras is being cultivated to suppress the normal flow of mundane outgoing, vyutthāna, saṁskāras active in the turmoil of everyday thought. Thus, when the mind is active and roaming about as in normal consciousness, the restraining saṁskāras are latent and therefore absent, and when the restraining saṁskāras are active and dominant, the outgoing ones are being suppressed. The idea is that there is always an ongoing dynamic between these two, and therefore, even
when the mind is restrained in meditation, there is a tussle between the restraining saṁskāras and the others, and consequently ongoing movement, albeit imperceptible to the meditator. In other words, on a metaphysical level, there is always movement in prakṛti, however subtle, even when the mind appears to be completely restrained and fixed in the higher stages of sabīja-samādhi.

Saṁskāras are not destroyed; they are either active or latent (although, as we know, they can be weakened or burnt and thereby rendered impotent). Even when sense cognition, which produces saṁskāras, is checked, the store of saṁskāras from previous sense cognition does not just disappear; saṁskāras remain latent and can activate at any time—the cloth is not destroyed when the weaver is absent, says Vācaspati Miśra. By practicing meditation, the force or potency of the outgoing saṁskāras from the store of saṁskāras is gradually lessened, and the emergence and strengthening of nirodha ones increased—although, as Vijñānabhikṣu points out, this is a gradual process that increases through practice. This dynamic between these two sets of saṁskāras is the movement that takes place during meditation. Therefore, at every moment of meditation, there is suppression of the latent outgoing saṁskāras and strengthening of the restraining saṁskāras that are performing this task of suppression. Hariharānanda compares it to the struggle of a spring under the stress of weight—the springing potential of the spring does not disappear, it remains latent, but this occurs only when a constant restraining pressure is applied. The relationship between the two sets of saṁskāras is thus never static. The reader can refer back to I.18 for further discussion on this aspect of yoga.

III.10 tasya praśānta-vāhitā saṁskārāt

tasya, its [the mind’s]; praśānta, peaceful; vāhitā, flow;
saṁskārāt, from subconscious impressions

The mind’s undisturbed flow occurs due to saṁskāras.

When one becomes proficient in cultivating the restraining saṁskāras,
say the commentators, the mind can then flow peacefully in meditation without disturbance, *praśānta-vāhitā*, that is, without being distracted by outgoing *saṁskāras*. Contrarily, when these restraining *saṁskāras* become weakened, they are overpoweried by the outgoing *saṁskāras*. Or, as Śaṅkara puts it, meditative absorption lasts for as long as the remaining *saṁskāras* are not overcome by outgoing *saṁskāras*.

It is important to note that the restraining *saṁskāras* are in actuality a continuous series of *saṁskāras*. As will be discussed further below, the restraining (or any type of) *saṁskāras* are actually an ongoing sequence of similar *saṁskāras*, like a movie reel of identical stills. Nothing is static. Even in deep meditation, a continuous sequence of restraining *saṁskāras* is in motion in the controlled mind. Hence Patañjali uses the term flow, *vāhitā*, in this *sūtra*.

One might note here, given the periodic statements in the texts to establishing the Yoga position on mind and consciousness in distinction to the Buddhist one, as well as the dedication of a good portion of Chapter IV by Patañjali and the commentators to this end, that, at least on a surface level, both traditions do accept that external reality consists of a never-ending flow of interdependent, interconnected phenomena. For Yoga, too, the *saṁskāras* that comprise the *citta*, as well as the *aṇus*, the smallest physical subatomic particles of which the more physical aspects of *prakṛti* (the *mahābhūtas*) are composed, are constantly in motion in a successive flow, each individual *saṁskāra* or *aṇu* arising and instantly being followed by a subsequent *saṁskāra* or *aṇu* before disappearing. The difference is that in Śaṅkhya, the *saṁskāras* or *aṇus* do not actually disappear but revolve back into their substratum, which is ultimately *prakṛti*. *Prakṛti*, like *puruṣā*, is an eternal substance with a permanent essence (an autonomous selfhood, to use typical Buddhist phraseology). That is to say, whereas its evolutions and permutations may be in constant flux and temporary, it has an independent essence, an eternal and constant self that is not metaphysically dependent on or interdependent with anything else.33 As we know, in Buddhism, in contrast, there are no essential, autonomous, independent entities either spiritual or physical. Thus, while both traditions might agree on the basic flux of the surface level of reality—the “flow” of this *sūtra*—their differences lie in whether there is a permanent substratum that
underpins it. For Yoga, the two permanent and eternal substrata of reality are puruṣa on the one hand and prakṛti on the other.

III.11 sarvārthaikāgratayoh kṣayodayau cittasya samādhi-pariṇāmaḥ

sarva-arthatā, [focused on] all objects; eka-agratayoh, focused on one object; kṣaya, destruction; udayau, rise; cittasya, of the mind; samādhi, meditative absorption; pariṇāmaḥ, transformation

The attainment of the samādhi state involves the elimination of all-pointedness [i.e., wandering] of the mind and the rise of one-pointedness [i.e., concentration].

Vyāsa notes that the nature of the mind is to be all-pointed, sarvaartha, that is, scattered and roaming about anywhere and everywhere and thinking of all manner of random things. In normal consciousness the propensity of the mind is ever restless and always thinking about sense objects, the past and future, worrying about this and that, etc. However, the mind also has an inherent potential of being one-pointed, eka-agratā, or fixed on one object. When the latter propensity is developed to its highest potential, the state of samādhi is attained. Vācaspati Miśra reminds us that nothing is ever destroyed—when one of these propensities of the mind arises, that is, when one set of saṁskāras discussed in the last verse activates, the other propensity always remains latent. Vijñānabhikṣu adds that changing the nature of the mind is a gradual process; it does not occur instantly, as anyone who has experimented with fixing the mind on one object for a prolonged period will know.
pariṇāmaḥ

tataḥ, then; punah, again; śānta, that which has been subdued, the past; uditau, that which has arisen, the present; tulya, equal; pratyayau, idea, image; cittasya, of the mind; ekāgratā, one-pointedness; pariṇāmaḥ, transformation

In that regard, the attainment of one-pointedness occurs when the image in the mind that has just passed is the same as the image in the mind that is present.

When one says that the mind is one-pointed or fixed, eka-agratā, state the commentators, what is actually meant is that the previous cognition or image, pratyaya, in the mind that has subsided is identical to the cognition or image that succeeds it. This underscores the fact that the mind is never static but always flowing. Concentration involves replacing a previous mental image with the same image and so on in an ongoing series. This is like the roll of the same identical image on the consecutive slides of a movie reel, thereby producing what appears to be a static picture but is in actuality a flow of identical but separate momentary images—as one momentary image subsides, it is followed by another seemingly identical momentary image.

One might object that this constant change of one image by another, albeit identical, image during meditation nonetheless means that the mind is in reality not actually fixed and unmoving at all, says Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, since these momentary images are constantly succeeding each other and thus coming and going in constant movement. This is technically correct: When we say that the mind is fixed in samādhi, we are being rhetorical. What this actually means is that, in meditation, the constant movement of the mind is focused on the same image—it is one-pointed—while during normal consciousness, the constant movement of the mind can randomly flit about and temporarily focus on anything at any given moment. As noted above, everything in prakṛti including the mind is constantly in motion because prakṛti is constituted by the guṇas, and the guṇas are in constant flux by their very nature. Technically, it is rajas that impels movement; both sattva and tamas are quiescent by nature. Without rajas there would be no motion
in anything prākṛtic—indeed, there would be no things emerging from prakṛti in the first place, since there would be no impetus to stir prakṛti into emergence. Since rajas is inherent in the very nature of prakṛti, everything is in constant motion once creation has been set in motion. Hence meditation is about keeping a flow of saṅskāras fixed on an object, rather than a state of actual ontological stillness. Additionally, Vijnānabhikṣu does well to point out that while yoga is defined as citta-vṛtti-nirodha, technically speaking this entails all vṛttis other than the one solitary stable vṛtti containing the object of concentration.34

III.13 etena bhūtendriyeṣu dharma-lakṣaṇāvasthā-pariṇāmā vyākhyātāḥ

etena, by this; bhūta, an object; indriyeṣu, the senses; dharma, nature, characteristics; lakṣaṇa, qualities, temporal state; avasthā, condition, state; pariṇāmāḥ, development, change; vyākhyātāḥ, is explained

In this way, the change in the characteristics, state, and condition of objects and of the senses is explained.

The above discussion on the changing states of the mind is also applicable to the senses and the sense objects, says Vyāsa, in one of his longest commentaries on the sūtras. Patañjali here essentially indicates that the constant change underpinning all manifest reality can be categorized according to dharma, lakṣaṇa, and avasthā, characteristics, state, and condition. The commentators understand dharma, the characteristics of an object mentioned by Patañjali in this sūtra, to be that which is specific and distinctive about that object. (It can also refer to the function an object performs.) Dharma has a variety of different but overlapping meanings in Hindu and Buddhist knowledge systems35—perhaps the best-known usage being that in the Bhagavad Gītā where it refers to an individual’s social duties or function in society as determined by the person’s natural propensities, activities, and psychological inclinations or characteristics (IV.13). This usage overlaps somewhat
with the more metaphysical usage of the term here, insofar as it points to the specific inherent characteristics evidenced in an individual.

For example, if clay, at a particular point in time, is made into a pot, it assumes the characteristics of being a pot rather than of being a cup or saucer and its function in the grand scheme of things is that it is a container for substances. The pot is thus a specific dharma that is potential in the clay, and the same clay can assume different dharmas by being transformed into other things such as saucers and cups. As will be discussed in the next verse, the clay is the dharmin, literally, possessor of the dharmas, that is, the substratum or underlying substance. Along similar lines, gold bracelets, rings, bangles, or necklaces are dharmas of gold (which is the dharmin).

In parallel fashion, the lakṣaṇa, or state, of an object is understood as its situation in time—a pot can exist in the present, it could have existed in the past or, if yet to be made, exist at some point in the future. The avasthā, the third item on Patañjali’s list, is taken to refer to the condition of the pot—whether in the past, present, or future, it could be a new pot in good condition, or an old pot, etc. All objects in manifest reality can thus be conceived of as undergoing constant change according to characteristics, state, and condition.

The commentators connect these categories to the mind and the discussion in the previous sūtras: The dharma of the mind at any given moment is all-pointed—roaming about uncontrolled—or one-pointed. This dharma, in turn, is qualified by lakṣaṇa, temporal state—the mind could have been one-pointed in the past, or be so in the future, for example, but not in the present. This, too, is qualified by condition—understood in this context to refer to the fact that when the mind is one-pointed, its roaming potential is suppressed, and vice versa.

The point in all this is that the guṇas, which underpin all reality whether of the nature of mind or pots, engage in ceaseless activity—things are always changing from future to present to past, from old to new, from pots back into clay and then from clay anew into cups and saucers. But the underlying material substance does not change; only its characteristics, condition, and states change. The clay remains the underlying substance, even when transformed into items with specific characteristics such as pots and then again cups, and irrespective of the
time and state in which these items are to be found at any given point. Similarly, the mind remains the same basic substratum whether one-pointed or not. If a gold vessel, says Vyāsa, is melted and made into something else, it does not cease to be gold. Moreover, the gold in any particular object contains the potential of being molded into any other golden object that has been made in the past and might be made in the future. Therefore, in a sense, the past and the future are latent in the present. As the commentators put it, just because a man is interested in one woman at any point in time does not mean he is disinterested in other women; the potential for a change in interest is there, and this may have manifested in the past and may manifest again in the future. And again, along similar lines, a woman might be seen as a mother or daughter or sister or wife depending on context and relationship, just as an object might be perceived differently from different perspectives. But the essential woman herself remains the same, as does the underlying substance constituting all manifest objects.

Patañjali has introduced this somewhat protracted philosophical discussion at this point in the sūtras because there is an indispensable metaphysical dimension that needs to be established here. It is essential to grasp the underlying operative principles inherent in material reality according to the Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools in order to understand the mechanics underpinning the siddhis, mystic powers, which will occupy most of the rest of the chapter. The Yoga school, along with the Sāṅkhya school, subscribes to a metaphysical view called satkārya, that any effect is present in its cause. For these schools, all manifest material reality is simply a transformation of the underlying cause, the guṇas of prakṛti. All change, then, is simply a change of prakṛti’s characteristics, condition, and states. Dasgupta, using the language of loosening of prakṛti’s barriers that will be encountered in IV.3, puts this as follows:

Production of effect only means an internal change of the arrangement of atoms [aṇus] in the cause, and this exists in it in a potential form, and just a little loosening of the barrier which was standing in the way of the happening of such a change or arrangement will produce the desired new collocation—the effect. This doctrine is called satkārya-vāda, i.e., that the kārya or effect is sat or existent even before the causal operation to produce the effect
was launched. (1922, 257)

The difference between a banyan tree and a bed of roses or anything else is simply its configuration of anus. When the tree dies, its constituent anus dissolve back into prakṛti, to reappear in new forms and configurations.

One is reminded here of the famous verses in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (VI.1.4ff):

It is just as from one lump of clay, one can understand everything made of clay, dear boy. The transformation [of a clay object from clay] is just a name, a verbal handle—the reality is actually that “it is just clay.”

It is just as from one copper object, one can understand everything made of copper, dear boy. The transformation [of a copper object from copper] is just a name, a verbal handle—the reality is actually that “it is just copper.”

It is just as from one nail cutter, one can understand everything made of iron, dear boy. The transformation [of an iron object from iron] is just a name, a verbal handle—the reality is actually that “it is just iron.”

In other words, we may call a clay object a pot or plate but essentially it is nothing but a transformation of clay. The names we apply to these transformations of clay are merely verbal handles. As a handle allows us to use the object to which it is attached, names allow us to refer to objects such that useful communication between individuals can take place. The same holds true for any object in prakṛti. The Yoga school thus demarcates itself from other schools such as Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, which, as subscribers to the asatkārya-vāda view, hold that the effect is not in one single underlying substratum such as prakṛti, as per the satkārya-vāda position, but rather in multiple distinct and separate causes, or Buddhism, which holds that there are no ultimate, eternal, autonomous underlying substrata at all. Indeed, Yamashita (1994) considers the specifics of Vyāsa’s comments here to be a direct refutation of the view of the fifth-century Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu in his Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya. It is important to keep the Buddhist challenge in
mind given the counterarguments that occupy a fairly significant portion of Patañjali’s and our commentators’ attention (especially, as we shall see, in Chapter IV). 37

III.14 śāntoditāvyapadeśya-dharmānupātī dharmī

śānta, ceased, the past; udita arisen, the present; avyapadeśya, that which has not been named, the future; dharma, characteristics; anupātī, follows, is a consequence of; dharmī, that which possesses characteristics, the substratum

The substratum is that which underpins past, present, and future.

Everything is essentially everything, says Vyāsa, at least potentially, since ultimately prakṛti and her guṇas are inherent and underpin all reality. Here, the same point is underscored: Beneath all permutations of matter, whether past, śānta; present, udita; or future, avyapadeśya, lies a constant substratum, dharmin. In the last sūtra, dharmas were discussed—clay can be molded into objects displaying specific characteristics, dharmas, such as pots and plates. These dharmas are potential in the clay. The dharmī (dharmin 38) of this sūtra is that which produces (literally, possesses) the dharmas; it is the substratum from which specific things with their own character evolve. The dharmin underpins and remains common to all past, present, or future manifestations of its dharmas. So, in the example given above, the clay itself is the dharmin, and the pots and plates produced from it in the past, present, or future, the dharmas. However, clay itself is a product of something subtler and more primordial, prakṛti, and thus clay and all objects in manifest reality are, in turn, themselves dharmas of a more subtle substratum, prakṛti herself, the ultimate dharmin.

Due to the conditions of time, space, and various other causal factors, this substratum, prakṛti, does not manifest everything at one and the same time—saffron grows in Kashmir and not Pañcāla, the monsoon rains come in the summer and not the winter, and a deer gives birth to a
deer and not a man, says Vācaspati Miśra—but this is due to different external factors and conditions, the same substratum remains. Therefore, everything is ultimately made of the same stuff and thus is essentially identical to everything else. The past is that which has performed its function and merged back into its substratum, the present is manifest at any given moment, and the future is that which exists in potential (śakti). Thus, says Bhoja Rāja, since everything is essentially a temporary manifestation (dharma) of prakṛti, a cloth is essentially not different from a pot when considered from the perspective of its deepest metaphysical makeup. Or, as Śaṅkara puts it, “The three worlds exist on a finger tip.”

This principle is essential in understanding, from the contours of Sāṅkhya metaphysics, the mechanics of the mystic powers that are to be discussed shortly in this chapter. Īśvara, God, as well as advanced yogīs who have mastered the techniques that will be encountered in the ensuing sūtras, are believed to be able to remove what the commentators call the conditions—what we might call the laws of nature—that cause things to act according to what is considered to be their expected natures. Thus, since everything exists in potential form in prakṛti, by manipulating or rearranging the subtle substructure of physical reality and the normal conditions that historically or naturally operate on it in conventional reality, a yogī can cause matter to behave in what appears to be supernatural or miraculous ways.

From the perspective of Yoga metaphysics, however, there is nothing magical about such phenomena, once the Sāṅkhya physics underpinning reality is understood and the techniques for manipulating this reality outlined below are mastered. Specifically, as can be seen from the Sāṅkhya chart in the introduction, all gross physical objects in manifest reality according to this system are manifestations of prakṛti’s primary evolutes of mind—buddhi and ahaṅkāra. These are universalized evolutes—they underpin the universe of all manifest things—but they also exist in individualized form—each individual living being has its own buddhi and ahaṅkāra. An individual’s buddhi, according to the Yoga school, is potentially universal (see the commentary on IV.10), which can only mean that it can transcend its limitations and, in principle at least, merge with the cosmic or universal buddhi underpinning all objects. Thus, once the delimiting influence of the kleśas are removed, by
the power of sheer concentration, the yogi’s mind can spill out beyond its individualized containment, reconnect with its universal potential, and consequently influence or rearrange the evolutes emerging from its macronature as the universal mind. All this needs to be kept in mind when considering the mystic claims of the succeeding śūtras, if we are to consider how siddhis might appear rational and logical to a Yoga philosopher.

Before proceeding, Vyāsa takes this opportunity to contrast the metaphysics of the Yoga school with the Buddhist notion of kṣaṇika-vāda, momentariness. According to almost all Buddhist sects, there is no underlying substance, dharmin, that pervades the temporary forms and states of manifest reality. There is merely the momentary appearance of the characteristics, states, and conditions of III.13 themselves. These are interdependent on each other; they cannot exist in isolation or independence. No autonomous permanent essence or substratum underpins them, either in the form of prakṛti and, by extension, its evolute of mind, or puruṣa; reality is just a flow of ephemeral, connected moments of existence, all of them interdependent. Thus, while the Buddhists would accept the notion of the “change in the characteristics, state, and condition of objects and of the senses” from the previous śūtra, they would consider these to be the ultimate nature of reality and not qualities of a dharmin, substratum (prakṛti), as indicated in this śūtra. There are no dharmins in Buddhism, only dharma-lakṣaṇāvasthā-parināmāḥ, as per III.13.39

Vyāsa presents one of the familiar orthodox Hindu arguments against this view (see, for example, Vedānta Sūtras II.2.25): How, from this perspective, does one account for memory? If objects previously seen are subsequently recognized, they must have been previously experienced. If previously experienced, there must be a constant substratum to the mind preserving the memory. Otherwise, if the mind changes at every instant and thereby becomes a different entity from one instant to the next, how would it recognize something recorded by the previous, and entirely different, mind? As Vācaspati Miśra puts it: Yajñadatta does not recall something seen by Devadatta! The argument is taken up again in more detail in the next chapter.

Vyāsa also presents the common Hindu argument of karma against the
Buddhist *kṣaṇika-vāda* view. If everything is constantly changing, then an actor who acts and thus plants a seed of *karmic* reaction one minute would not be the same person who would receive the fruit later. If personhood, along with everything else, is momentary, a different person emerges every moment. Thus, the person receiving the *karmic* fruit of action at the moment of its fruition would not be the same person as the original actor who merited such fruit. It would be like saying Devadutta receives the fruit of actions performed by Caitra. Where would be the moral justice in this? Further arguments differentiating Yoga perspectives from mainstream Buddhist ones are presented in Chapter IV.

\[\text{III.15} \text{ kramānyatvam pariṇāmānyatve hetuḥ}\]

*krama*, succession, sequence; *anyatvam*, change; *pariṇāma*, transformation; *anyatve*, in change; *hetuḥ*, the cause

The change in the sequence [of characteristics] is the cause of the change in transformations [of objects].

This sutra, immediately preceding the primary topic of this chapter, *siddhis*, mystic powers, reiterates the same basic point: Patañjali and the commentators are ensuring that the metaphysical infrastructure is in place for a correct understanding of the topic that occupies much of this chapter. The transformations, *pariṇāma*, visible in an object are simply the result of the change in the sequence, *krama*, in that object’s characteristics, state, and condition: Clay powder, when water is added, becomes clay dough, which becomes a clay pot, which, when broken, becomes clay pot shards, which eventually become clay powder. All change is thus a sequence of characteristics, not a change of substance, in this case, clay (of course, as noted previously, clay itself in this example is in turn a characteristic of an even more subtle substratum, *prakṛti* and her finer evolutes; thus something can simultaneously be a substratum for further transformations and itself a transformation of a substratum even more subtle than itself).
The same applies to temporal changes of state noted in III.13: The clay pot existing in the past has changed into the pot perceivable in the present, which will change into the pot that will exist in the future, but the substratum of clay remains constant. Changes of condition follow the same principle: A new pot gradually starts to become old in successive stages from the moment it comes into existence. Changes of condition, which occur every instant at the atomic level, are not perceivable moment by moment, but they are after the lapse of time—one becomes gradually aware that something is becoming old and no longer new; if grain is left in a grain pit for a great number of years, says Vācaspati Miśra, the structure of its particles becomes reduced to such a state that it will crumble into atoms upon being touched. Although it takes many years to approach such a state that is perceivable in this way, in actuality it is undergoing change in this direction every instant. Vijñānabhikṣu quotes Kṛṣṇa from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa: “Actually, the bodies of all creatures are coming into existence and perishing at every moment by the force of Time, but this is not perceived due to the subtle nature of Time” (XI.22.42). In other words, since the guṇas underpinning prakṛti are in constant motion, change is the inherent nature of all reality, whether physical or psychic.

With regard to the mind, when considered as a substratum it can manifest two dharmas, or characteristics, which sūtra III.11 termed one-pointed or all-pointed, fixed or distracted. As discussed in III.9, another way of saying this is that the mind consists of either perceived or active cognitions, when the mind is outgoing or roaming about actively, or unperceived or latent impressions when all saṁskāras or thoughts are suppressed and the mind is fixed (Vyāsa here refers to seven characteristics of the mind\textsuperscript{41}).

With this detailed metaphysical infrastructure in place, the subsequent sūtras return to the topic of samyama introduced in III.4 and its role in the development of mystic powers.

III.16 pariṇāma-traya-samīyamād atītānāgata-jñānam

परिणामत्रयसंयमाद् अतीतानागतज्ञानम् । १६ ॥
When *saṃyama* is performed on the three transformations [of characteristics, state, and condition], knowledge of the past and the future ensues.

This *sūtra* introduces the first of the mystic powers that are achievable by advanced concentration and meditation (although mystic powers connected with the *yamas* and *niyamas* have already been touched upon in the previous chapters). Given the grandiose claims that are made in this chapter, it seems useful to begin with a statement of method. There are various methodologies and disciplines used in the academic study of religion that are especially pertinent when attempting to present or represent such things as mystical truth claims that at face value fall outside of the realm of empirical science as currently construed, or beyond the boundaries of human reason as understood in the context of post-Enlightenment, rational thought. For example, the social-scientific approach favored by some scholars might attempt to explain paranormal claims not on their own terms but as the product of psychological or social forces at play on the psyche of the individual. It seems self-evident that individuals are inescapably influenced both by their greater personal, social, cultural, and historical context, and their individual psyches containing the total of formative life experiences, and that individual experience is mediated by or filtered through such constraints. Mystical truth claims that lie outside the boundaries of verifiable observation or reason are therefore explicitly or implicitly dismissed as inaccurate interpretations of experience stemming from such personal filters, and rational “scientific” explanations are sought by the scholar whose more “objective” vantage point is not impinged upon by the same historic-social-psychological influences.

Other scholars find such reductionistic modes of interpretation problematic, not the least because they impose terms and categories on phenomena that are alien to the frame of reference of the system or body of knowledge in question. Moreover, they inevitably assume elitist perspectives, since they suppose that such sociopsychological forces
were unknown to the hapless mystic who reported them (who consequently is implicitly construed as a victim of greater forces he or she does not understand or, indeed, is even aware of). More problematic is the assumption that these forces require the specialized and “rational” vantage point of the objective modern scholar to make sense of. And, of course, the limitations of the scholars own “rational” or empirical worldview is also typically left unchallenged.

Accordingly, a method or cluster of methods or approaches in interpretation loosely known as phenomenology developed which, despite meaning rather different things to different scholars, essentially refrain from forcing modern socioscientific hermeneutical methods on religious truth claims. Some phenomenological approaches attempt to present such claims in their own terms and within their own context, without imposing on them interpretational models from a very different time and context, without judgment, and in as neutral a fashion as possible. One should note that phenomenology does not require the acceptance of the truth claims as necessarily true but attempts to suspend or avoid judgment on issues of validity or historicity or scientific accuracy. Some approaches in phenomenology stress empathy, and even participation, bracketing out one’s own personal preconceptions as to what is real or true. Obviously, no one can be fully objective, but the attempt is made to situate oneself in the life-world of the other. Phenomenology concerns sympathetic representation and understanding of truth claims as accurately and objectively as possible within their own context—as phenomena in their own right, so to speak—and avoids making sense of them from the perspective of bodies of knowledge such as socioscientific models alien to the system in question. This section, then, will be descriptive and attempt to represent the subject matter through traditional categories (although obviously any attempt at descriptive representation is a priori an interpretation).

The remaining sūtras of this chapter contain claims that will seem astonishingly grandiose and fanciful from our modern perspectives. I will adopt some of the basics of the phenomenological method of interpretation here, as I have done throughout, but I will also attempt to make sense of these claims from within the parameters of the Sāṅkhya school of metaphysics; in other words, as they might be conceptualized
through traditional Yogic perspectives. I thus take a different approach from much recent scholarship, even that penned by scholars otherwise highly appreciative of Yoga’s potential contribution to modern theoretical discussions of mind and consciousness but who clearly find the *siddhi* section awkward, typically brushing it off as imagined, or attempting to rationalize it in some way.

Expectedly, earlier, less sympathetic representations of Yoga during the colonial period pointed to the *siddhis* as grounds for a scathing dismissal of the entire system of Yoga:

> The emaciated, bewildered ascetic, reduced to the dimmest spark of life, equally incapable for lack of energy of committing good or evil is ... but a shrunken caricature of what man ought to be ... The Yogin ... is much deceived in the magical powers he ascribes himself. His self-deception, the corresponding self-deception of the user of drugs ... constitutes one of the most pathetic chapters of human history. To aim so high, and to fall so low, is in truth both deep tragedy and high comedy. Yet the stupefied Yogin is one of the blundering heroes and martyrs who mark the slow progress of humanity. (Leuba 1919, 205)

Even genuinely sympathetic treatments of the *siddhis* from this period attempted to rationalize them from within the contours of the knowledge systems of the day, as Lanman tried to do by separating “these powers which have some basis in scientifically established fact from those which have none” (1918, 134). One finds Lanman struggling sincerely to accommodate as much from these claims as his post-Enlightenment sensibilities allowed, referring to “reliable” accounts of yogīs being buried alive “from the pen of Sir Claude Martin Wade, who was an actual eye-witness” and accepting the yogic claims of being able to enter another’s body (III.38) as “indubitably a case of hypnosis” (149).

There has been outstanding recent work on the *śūtras*, in contrast, which realizes the legitimate and inalienable place of the *siddhis* in the system (e.g., Whicher 1998, Feuerstein 1980). Feuerstein is right to adamantly point out that
In the consensus of scholarly opinion ... the supernatural attainments are discordant with Patañjali’s rational approach and his philosophical objectives. However, the fact is that one sixth of the aphorisms concerns precisely this recondite aspect of Yoga, and one chapter ... is actually entitled vibhūti-pāda. How can we account for this obvious pre-eminence given to the “magical” side of the yogic path? Was Patañjali, after all, not such a staunch rationalist as contemporary interpreters have made him out to be? Has he perhaps unwittingly succumbed to the magical trend in Yoga, betraying its putative shamanistic origins? These questions can all be instantly disposed of by the simple observation that the powers form an integral part of all yogic endeavour. (101–102)

However, whether dismissive or accepting, very little effort has been directed toward attempting to provide a coherent explanation of how these siddhis are not only a logical corollary of the parameters of Śaṅkhyan metaphysics but actually inevitable and indispensable to them. These powers were not seen as irrational or prephilosophical by scholastics whose intellectual and rational accomplishments continue to impress us today but were inevitable by-products of the presuppositions of these systems; there are no grounds to suppose that any premodern commentators considered them anything other than factual and literal. Narratives of mystical phenomena pervade the entire Indic textual tradition—not only epic and Purāṇic, it might be noted, but philosophical as well (Vedānta Sūtras IV.4.17; Vaiśeṣika Sūtras IX.1.11ff and commentaries)—and are commonplace also in Jain and Buddhist traditions (e.g., Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga XII and XIII, and the Buddha’s hagiography itself).

Pensa is correct that “the question of ‘powers’ in Yoga and Buddhism in particular has not infrequently been taken into consideration in a biased, oversimple or at any rate excessively summary fashion ... the prejudice was thus such as to silence the texts, so to speak” (1969, 197). He finds precedent and continuity for this pervasive acceptance of siddhis in the dhīḥ of the Vedic ṛṣi seers in the earliest Vedic texts. Following Gonda (1984, 68), he translates dhīḥ as “exceptional and supranormal faculty, proper to ‘seers,’ of ‘seeing’ in the mind things, causes, connections, as they really are, the faculty of acquiring a sudden
knowledge of the truth, of the functions and influence of diving powers” (196). Like it or not, *siddhis* are integral to the entirety of Hindu beliefs from their earliest Vedic beginnings right up until the ongoing hagiographies of modern Hindu mystics.43

Indeed, tracing imagery from the earliest *Upaniṣads* through the *Mahābhārata*, the *Yoga Sūtras*, and into the tantric traditions, White has argued that the most applicable definition of *yoga* is precisely that of attainment of mystical powers, a definition that “respects both the spirit and the letter of Hindu sources on the uses of the term yoga, in ways that have remained remarkably unchanged from the time of the *Upaniṣads* down through the *Tantras*” (2004, 627; see also White, forthcoming).

Now, one might concede this and (again, one suspects, in the hope of salvaging a “rational” Yoga tradition from a more prerational mythological backdrop) suggest that Patañjali has included this section simply out of deference to the popular cultural expectations of the day concerning *yoga*. In support of this position, one can note that the commentators do not really try to explain the mechanics behind the *siddhis*, unlike their extensive technical analysis of the mechanisms underpinning *citta* and the meditative states. Their commentaries on the *siddhis* are some of the shortest in the text. This certainly suggests that they are writing from a position of scholasticism, āgama, rather than claiming to represent any sort of experiential authority, *pratyakṣa-pramāṇa*, in the matter of *siddhis*.

This may very well be the case, but I am not fully convinced by this position. First of all, Patañjali is an intellectual and I find it hard to consider that he has dedicated a fifth of this text just to cater to the silly beliefs of uneducated simpletons.44 Additionally, there is no indication that the commentators take these *siddhis* as anything other than literal—nor, to my knowledge, has any traditional text or commentary in the entire premodern history of the Indic philosophical and literary traditions, whether folk or scholastic, Buddhist, Hindu, or Jain, taken them as anything other than factual. But more fundamental than this, all the preceding *sūtras* in this chapter, particularly III.13–15, precisely do provide the preparatory infrastructure for a metaphysical explanation of the mechanics underpinning the *siddhis*. I will argue, therefore, that
siddhis are not only fundamental to the Śāṅkhya Yoga tradition but are also an inherent and inevitable corollary of its metaphysical presuppositions. I can certainly appreciate the motives behind attempts to rationalize and minimize the centrality of the siddhis since so much else in the Yoga Sūtras has much to offer modern discussions on the psychology and philosophy of mind, but, however uncomfortable to our modern sensibilities, we have no grounds to suppose that Patañjali or the commentators considered the siddhis to be anything other than literally factual (any more than to suppose that they take the Hindu cosmography of III.26 to be anything other than literal or factual). Even in III.37, where Patañjali speaks disparagingly about the siddhis, this is not because they are fanciful or imaginary but, on the contrary, precisely because they are considered actually to arise, they are therefore real dangers to the yogī, not imaginary ones. Certainly the commentaries to this sūtra take them in this way.

Accordingly, this study will attempt to consider not whether these claims are true or fanciful, but rather how they might be construed as fundamental to the knowledge systems in which they are accommodated, in this case, Śāṅkhyan metaphysics. In other words, to adopt the method outlined above, one must suspend notions of true and false in a modern scientific sense. I present the ensuing sūtras on siddhis as they are best conceptualized (in my reading) from the perspective of the presuppositions of Śāṅkhya metaphysics. Obviously, the reader will ultimately decide how to make sense of these claims from within the presuppositions of our modern knowledge systems and worldviews, but for the duration of this discussion, the reader is invited to step out of his or her own metaphysical/scientific universe and enter into the world of the accomplished yogī as I have understood Patañjali and our commentators to conceive of it. We thus embark on a phenomenological engagement with the siddhis.

The ingredients from Patañjali’s own sūtras relevant to a discussion on the metaphysical analysis of the siddhis are as follows:

(1) The gross physical elemental makeup and qualities of any object in reality are essentially a transformation of the tanmātras, which, in turn, are a transformation of the
guṇas (III.44). The first evolutes from the guṇas are buddhi and ahaṅkāra in the Sāṅkhya schema (Sāṅkhya Kārikā XXIV–XXV), a schema accepted by Yoga in I.17 and throughout. Thus buddhi and ahaṅkara, that is to say citta, are the immediate substratum of the tanmātras.

(2) By sheer concentration, the yogī can penetrate the subtle substructure of any material object of meditation, experiencing it, in the savicāra state, as raw tanmātra energy that transcends the limitations of Time and Space, in other words, attain an experience of external reality that is cosmic in scope (I.44). This is an experience of the object, not merely a perception, as all distinctions of subject, object, and process of knowing dissolve, and the object alone stands forth (I.43; III.3).

(3) The yogī can penetrate even this tanmātra substratum and experience subtler constitutional dimensions of the object, that is, experience its subtler (more sāttvic) nature of ahaṅkāra, then of buddhi, and finally of its ultimate nature as prakṛti (I.45).

(4) The yogī can experience the subtlest level of not just an object of meditation but also the entirety of prakṛti (I.40, 44).

(5) These types of meditative practices culminate in omniscience (III.49). Metaphysically, omniscience means that, since the mind is potentially omnipresent in Yoga, when it regains the ability to manifest this nature in the higher states of samādhi, it can pervade the entirety of prakṛti and as a consequence be aware of every atomic detail within prakṛti (I.40).

(6) The previous sūtras have laid the groundwork for this section on siddhis by indicating that the change in an object’s visible characteristics—the dharma, lakṣaṇa, and avasthā of III.13ff—are nothing other than surface-level transformations of the substratum of prakṛti, the dharmin, which, as noted, the yogī can permeate entirely with his or her own citta (I.40).
From these points I deduce a hermeneutical principle that I hold as fundamental to understanding how these siddhis might be accepted as physically possible by minds as rational as Patañjali (as also the Buddha and almost all premodern Indic thinkers). Specifically, external gross perceivable matter in essence consists of subtler matter, and this of subtler matter still, etc., all of which in Sāṅkhya is ultimately nothing other than a combination of three guṇas.45 This preparatory metaphysical information is the rationale behind the previous verses being situated prior to the section on siddhis: the “characteristics, state, and condition” of objects in external reality of III.13ff are nothing other than permutations of the dharmin, the substratum. Since buddhi is the most subtle dharmin substructure after the raw guṇas of prakṛti themselves, it is in a position to manipulate or determine the nature of all effects emanating from it. If, in Sāṅkhya metaphysics, the yogi’s buddhi is potentially all-pervading in the higher samādhi states and can thus permeate all prakṛti (I.40), this can only mean that it merges with the buddhi substructure underpinning all reality.46 In other words, the yogī is held to be able to transcend the limitations of the kleśas and the ahaṅkāra, which have restricted or localized or, better, individualized a portion of the universal buddhi into the personal buddhi of the adept, and thereby merge into the cosmic buddhi. This means it is now in a position to manipulate the external effects emanating from buddhi. Thus, by manipulating the substructure one can change the nature of the physical products made of that substructure. Koelman has sensed this principle:

It is more puzzling to understand how concentration leads, not only to the psychological perfection of exhaustive intuition, but even to the acquisition of supernormal powers ... [but] if then a yogī has realized a high degree of concentration, could not the psychological aspect of the three guṇas metamorphose itself into its physical aspect? ... Since prākritic Nature is, in its entirety, one single substance working for the liberation of the Selves, it does not seem strange that, in proportion that the yogī approaches the final goal, prakṛti Nature looses its hold on him and he gains control over it. (1970, 242–43)

Again, our challenge here is not whether any of this is factually true
from the perspective of modern scientific principles, but to acknowledge the centrality of siddhis to the Yoga tradition and consequently to consider how these siddhis might be construed within the contours of Sāṅkhya metaphysics.

To illustrate this metaphysics in a manner relevant to the discussion on siddhis, let us imagine an alien being on some other planet, who, due to the planet’s climate, has never seen water but only ice. We take a chunk of ice with which the alien is familiar and rearrange its atomic substructure by applying heat to it (pervading it with this subtle energy of heat) such that it (to the alien) mysteriously completely changes its form and becomes water—a flowing nonsolid entity completely different to perception from the hard, dense physical ice entity known to the alien. We then apply more heat, and the water vanishes into a completely different form, appearing as cloudy, vaporous, nontangible steam. All we have done is to rearrange the imperceptible but consistent substructure of the ice, its hydrogen and oxygen atoms, such that the external forms produced from them appear magically transformed. It is a parallel manipulation of psychic substructure principle that is to be kept in mind when considering the siddhis from the framework of Sāṅkhya cosmology.

With this metaphysical preamble in place, we can now turn our attention to these siddhis. In the present sūtra, Patañjali states that when saṁyama, which we recall involves practicing dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi simultaneously, is performed on the “characteristics,” “conditions,” and “states” of manifest reality (III.13), the yogī develops the ability to understand the past, atīta, and the future, anāgata. The previous discussions have made it clear that the past and the future are inherent in the present—the present is the effect of the past as well as the cause of the future. Thus, by perfectly understanding objects in the present, in terms of their characteristics, conditions, and states, the yogī is believed automatically to understand the past that produced them and the future that they, in turn, will produce. Such clarity, Bhoja Rāja states, is inherent in the pure nature of the sāttvic mind when freed from the obstructive interference of tamas.

Hariharānanda points out that everyone has some ability to predict effects from causes and causes from effects. Whatever jokes we make
about weather forecasting, in principle at least, the weather of the next few days is forecast daily based on present meteorological causes, and the present weather is understandable from past conditions. Forecasters would likely hold that any mistakes stem from insufficient knowledge of all the variable causes, not from the essential principle of cause and effect itself. Likewise, economists predict cycles based on present economic indicators and explain present conditions by past financial activity. Even on the most basic level, mothers can predict that their children will be hyper if they consume too much sugar before bedtime and can understand their change of mood by past causes. The common denominator in these and numerous other spheres is that the more one studies and concentrates on a phenomenon, the more insight one develops as to its causes and effects. The power of prediction here is essentially an extension of these principles; by saṁiyama on the characteristics, conditions, and states of the present, the yogī can perceive its causes as well as the effects it will produce. This is another way of saying that such a yogī is able to determine the past and predict the future.

Vijñānabhikṣu and other commentators make it clear right from the start of the following section on siddhis that the practices discussed in the remainder of this chapter, and the supernormal powers that ensue from them, are not to be performed by those desirous of liberation but only by those desiring power (III.37). Those desirous of liberation should perform saṁiyama only on the distinction between puruṣa and prakṛti, the real goal of liberation. Indic traditions in general are very clear that powers can distract the yogī from the ultimate goal and embroil the practitioner again in saṁsāra since, after all, powers are simply extensions of sensual or physical capabilities. Desiring powers, then, is a more ambitious reenactment of the material predicament, namely, desiring to enjoy prakṛti and her possibilities (bhoga II.18), and desiring to enjoy prakṛti on any level, even through supernormal powers, is the cause of the material bondage of puruṣa. Consequently, real yogīs neither aspire for such powers nor, if they possess them as unsought by-products of their practices, display them for cheap adulation.
III.17 śabdārtha-pratyayānām itaretarādhyāsāt saṅkaras tat-pravibhāga-saṁyamāt sarva-bhūta-ruta-jñānam

śabda, word; artha, meaning, object; pratyayānām, of the idea; itaretara, one with the other; adhyāsāt, superimposition, imposing; saṁkarah, mixing together, confusion; tat, their; pravibhāga, distinctions, separation; saṁyamāt, from saṁyama; sarva, all; bhūta, creatures; ruta, cries, sounds; jñānam, knowledge

Due to the correlation between word, meaning, and idea, confusion ensues. By performing saṁyama on the distinction between them, knowledge of the speech of all creatures arises.

Here, too, the commentators take the opportunity afforded by this sūtra to write profuse commentaries outlining the understanding of language according to the Yoga school. There were various competing streams of thought on the topic of language in ancient India, one of which is the sphoṭa-vāda, subscribed to by Patañjali here, and outlined by his commentators. As an aside, although Patañjali himself does not use the term, the Yoga school is the only school that accepts the sphoṭa theory of the Grammarian school of philosophy, which lends some credibility to the view that Patañjali the author of the sūtras, and Patañjali the grammarian could have been one and the same.

First of all, Patañjali notes in this sūtra that there is a distinction between a “word,” śabda; its “meaning” or the object that it denotes, artha; and the “idea” or knowledge of the object that it creates in the mind, pratyaya. A pratyaya is the specific content of the mind at any given moment—an image of the book one is holding, for example—a term that overlaps in meaning with vṛtti (although vṛtti is more the state of mind within which the pratyaya might occur—the state of right knowledge, or error, or whatever, as discussed in I.10). Śabda, when manifest as the audible aspect of a word, is, in and of itself, simply an
arrangement of sounds or phonemes, which contains meaning of some object, artha, that produces an impression on the mind of the listener (and an utterance a string of such words). Therefore, the word is one thing, the meaning or object itself something else, and the idea or knowledge of the object something else again.

The Patañjali who authored the great commentary, the Mahābhāṣya, on Pāṇini’s grammar raises the question as to what constitutes speech by using the example of the word gauḥ, which, when uttered, gives rise to the idea or knowledge of an animal possessing (in India) dewlap, tail, hump, hooves, and horns. His concern was to establish that meaning or knowledge is the primary ingredient in what constitutes a word—that is, a word is more than just the series of letters or sounds (contra the Mimāmsā view, critiqued by our commentators here, which holds that a word is simply the series of letters irrespective of whether meaning is construed from them or not). This inherent meaning-bearing aspect of a word is its sphoṭa, which will be discussed further below.

Now, while the word for cow, gauḥ, consists of the string of sounds g-au-ḥ, the actual animal grazing in the pasture is quite another thing—an actual living being with physical shape and form. And the idea or knowledge of a cow that forms in the mind of a listener who hears the word gauḥ is still something else again—it is merely a mental impression or image, a pratyaya or vṛtti made of citta, quite different from the real-life, flesh-and-blood creature out there in the pasture made of gross elements, and different again from a string of sounds in words such as gauḥ, which may differ depending on pronunciation and other viarables. Thus “word,” “meaning,” and “idea” are not identical and may cause confusion, says Patañjali in this sūtra; that is, in common usage, these three entities are merged or identified together as if they were one.

To explain the next part of the sūtra dealing with saṁyama and the ability to understand the speech of all creatures, the commentators embark on a discussion of sphoṭa theory. By the manipulation of air in the speaker’s mouth, the organ of speech articulates the sound or set of sounds, such as those in the word g-au-ḥ, which then vibrate in the air and move toward the hearer’s organ of ear, the ear drum, which receives the sounds of the word uttered. Sounds have the potential of expressing all objects (as red, yellow, and blue have of manifesting all colors); it is
only their particular sequence that determines which specific object the speaker intends to convey. As each sound of a word is uttered, an impression or trace is left on the mind even though the sound fades away. As the last sound is uttered, the memory connects the sanānakaras or imprints of the syllables, and the mind construes meaning from the entirety of the impressions of the phonemes.

Up to this point, the enterprise has been sonic—sound vibration, dhvani—but once received by the ear, the word manifests its meaning in the mind of the hearer, which is a function of the mind, and not of sound. Thus, the image or idea of a “cow” arises in the citta of the listener. The various schools of Indian philosophy theorized over what causes this jump or transformation from word as sound—the vibration of air—to word as meaning or mental image, a pratyaya (or vṛtti) in the citta. How is meaning construed from this jumble of sounds? Is meaning inherent in the sounds themselves, or is it something separate?

According to the sphota view, a meaning-bearing word, śabda, is an autonomous and permanent entity, which is made manifest through physical sounds, dhvani, but independent from them. The dhvani sounds are transitory and they succeed each other. For example, the word g-au-h, cow, is not a single physical entity whose sounds coexist and form a single unit: at the instant that au is pronounced, the g has already disappeared and the final h is yet to be uttered. Therefore, meaning cannot be considered to be signified by any individual sound, such as g, since otherwise uttering the other letters would be redundant (and g occurs in numerous different words such as gaura). Nor can meaning be associated with the entire group of sounds, since each one has already disappeared before the next one is uttered—they are not pronounced at the same time and thus they cannot coexist in an entirety. Consequently, there must be something else that underpins and unites these letters such that a meaning can be produced from them. This is considered to be the sphota, the permanent meaning-bearing aspect of the word. A word or meaning signifier, śabda, is called sphota, because a meaning, artha, bursts forth (sphuṭati) from it.

The important point is that the meaning-bearing sphota is a whole undivided entity, and thus different from the sounds of words, which consist of parts (g-au-h contains three parts). The sphota is thus a
connected but different entity from the sounds that “reveal” it. It preexists and is autonomous. (The competing school of varṇavāda would say that meaning comes out of the total of the phonemes, varṇas, and although these varṇas are eternal, meaning is not contained in a separate internal entity, as in sphoṭa, but the sum of the individual external phonemic parts, the varṇas, when pieced together in the mind.)

Let us consider the word “letter-box,” for example. The mind cannot construe meaning from the first phoneme only, since “le-” could refer to “leg,” “left,” “length,” and so many other things. The same holds true for the syllable “let.” “Letter” could refer to a letter of the alphabet or a piece of mail, and even “letter-bo” is still not clear as it could refer to “letter boy,” “letter bomb,” etc. It is only when the final “x” is added that the sequence of sounds is united by the mind and meaning instantly emerges in a sudden burst or flash, producing a mental image—a pratyaya in the citta—of what the word represents. Sphoṭa can thus be considered as the internal innate expressiveness of the word as a meaning-bearer. This meaning is manifest externally through the uttered sounds, which are perceived by the organ of hearing, but both of these serve only to manifest the inner sphoṭa. The letters (varṇas) or sounds (dhvanis), are only the outer garment covering the meaning-bearing word, which is distinct from the phonemic clothing in which it is garbed, and the ear is simply the instrument that receives it. By saṁyama on the distinction between the word, its meaning and the idea it produces, Patañjali informs us here, one gains knowledge of the speech of all creatures.

We can recall, from I.18, that the Yoga school subscribes to the view that words are eternally connected with their referents (signifiers to their signs). We need not let the transcendent aspect of sphoṭa detain us here except in order to understand the siddhi outlined in this sūtra. One thing that helps us try to uncover the metaphysical suppositions underpinning this siddhi is that, as we know, the letters or phonemes of a word serve as the vehicles through which the preexisting meaning or idea of the object in question, inherent within as the sphoṭa, can be made manifest. Thus, in principle at least, although in conventional communication an understanding of a speaker’s meaning is dependent on the listener’s knowledge of the language used, from the Yoga perspective, the
advanced yogī is able to perform saṃyama on any sequence of sounds and gain access to the meaning and idea present as the sphaṭa embedded within even if the language is not known. This, according to the commentators, would appear to include the sounds of any creature, which, one might suppose, are simply different types of sound combinations animals use to convey meaning, that is, represent some eternal sphaṭa being expressed. Since these sounds are the external phonemic expressions of a particular object or image in the speaker’s or creature’s mind, and this object or image is actually present as the internal meaning of the sounds in the form of the autonomous sphaṭa, the yogī can perform saṃyama upon sounds and uncover the original sphaṭa underpinning them. Put differently, he or she can retrieve the inner meaning of the word from its outer encasement in the audible sounds of a word, and thus one can understand the meaning and idea behind the speech of any person or creature, even if sounds represent an unknown language. Performing saṃyama on sound allows the yogī’s mind, which is so intensely and exclusively absorbed in the sound, to penetrate the outer physicality of sound and encounter its inner metatphysical reality of sphaṭa. Alternatively, Hariharānanda understands the mechanics of this siddhi as the yogī being able to trace sounds back to the vocal cords of the speaker, and from there proceed on to the speaker’s mind. As an aside, the yogī is believed to also be able to pervade the mind of any being directly, not just through the medium of an uttered sound, but this will be discussed in a later sūtra.49

III.18 saṃskāra-sākṣāt-karaṇāt pūrva-jāti-jñānam

saṃskāra, mental impression; sākṣāt, before one’s eyes, making evident; karaṇāt, by making; pūrva, previous; jāti, births; jñānam, knowledge

By bringing [previous] saṃskāras into direct perception comes the knowledge of previous births.

The yogī’s ability to perceive previous births, pūrva-jāti-jñānam, has
already been touched upon in II.39, and this siddhi is taken up again in this sūtra, which states that accomplished yogīs can access the stock of karma accumulated from previous lives, that is to say, the stock of saṃskāras stored in their cittas, by performing saṃiyama on them. According to the commentators, saṃskāras act in various ways: They are the cause of memories, they are the cause of afflictions (ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life), and they are responsible for the fruits that accrue from any and all activities of vice and virtue (karma). In other words, activity, karma, is performed and is recorded as saṃskāra, just as sound can be recorded on a tape recorder or an image on a film. When the conditions are appropriate, these saṃskāras bear fruit and produce the results of karma: type of birth, longevity, and life experience (II.13). Since, according to yoga psychology, saṃskāras are recorded in their original context, that is, embedded with all the clusters of saṃskāra imprints of the time and place of origin in which they were performed, the yogī can reactivate them as memories and attain knowledge of the details of all previous births. Yogīs are held to be able to obtain knowledge of the previous births of others by the same process.

This siddhi, like the others in this section, is pan-Indic. According to Aśvaghoṣa’s Buddha-carita hagiography, on the evening of his enlightenment:

The Buddha, having attained supreme mastery in all the techniques of dhyāna, meditation, during the first watch of the night, remembered the succession of his previous births. He recalled that “Indeed, I had been such and such a person in such and such a place, and falling [at death] from that situation, came into this [other] situation.” (XIV.2–3)

Furthermore, in the second watch of the night, “he saw the births and deaths of all creatures, in accordance with their deeds” (9). This is a standard motif in ancient India: Mahāvīra, the contemporary of the Buddha in the Jain tradition, “knew and saw all conditions of the world, of gods, men and demons: whence they come, whither they go, whether they are born as men or animals or become gods or hell-beings” ( Kalpa-sūtra 120.1).

Vyāsa uses this siddhi to make a greater point in the story of the yogī
Jaigīṣavya, who could directly perceive all his saṁskāras from the previous ten cosmic cycles. Once, another sage, Āvatya, who generally roamed about in his subtle body, assumed a gross physical form so as to put some questions to him. He asked Jaigīṣavya whether he had experienced more pain or more pleasure in his numerous births among gods and humans. Even though Jaigīṣavya had been able to preserve a pure sāttvic mind and avoid the influence of rajas and tamas during his myriad births, he replied without hesitation that (in resonance with II.15) he considered all his experiences, whether among humans or gods, to be nothing but suffering, even though he had also experienced the suffering of life as an animal as well as of life in hell with which to make comparisons.

Āvatya then queried whether Jaigīṣavya’s yogic control over prakṛti and the happiness he experienced from the contentment resulting from his sāttvic disposition should also be included under the category of suffering. The happiness of contentment, he replied, is so called only in comparison to what passes as the pleasure of the senses, but when compared to the bliss of ultimate liberation, even the relative happiness of sattva is ultimately also nothing but suffering, since it, too, belongs to the realm of prakṛti and the three guṇas. Vijñānabhikṣu compares this to rice pudding mixed with both honey and poison. The honey of contentment resulting from the avoidance of rajas and tamas is mixed with the poison ensuing from puruṣa’s involvement with prakṛti, even if this involvement is with pure sattva. As Patañjali informed us in II.15, for the wise, all is suffering.

III.19 pratyayasya para-citta-jñānam

pratyayasya, from the ideas; para, of others; citta, of the minds; jñānam, knowledge

From [their] ideas, one can attain knowledge of others’ minds.

This sūtra is understood differently by different commentators. Vācaspati
Miśra and Bhoja Rāja read it as indicating that by performing saṁyama on other people’s prayayas—ideas, notions, and mental images—one can attain an understanding of their minds, citta-jñānam. Bhoja Rāja states more specifically that by performing saṁyama on a person’s facial countenance and expression, a yogī can understand the person’s state of mind. Obviously, anyone can do this to some extent—one can detect fear, or desire, or anger from a person’s facial expressions, so this siddhi would seem to be an extension of this ability. Viśnunabhikṣu and Hariharānanda, however, read this sūtra as indicating that by saṁyama on one’s own mind, one can then understand other people’s minds. One is reminded of the Buddha’s reference to the siddha described here. In Pāli Buddhist sources, the state of ceto pariyā ṇānaṁ allows the adept to “know the minds of other beings by penetrating them with his own mind. He knows the greedy mind as greedy, and so on.”

Continuing the topic of the previous verse, Patañjali here adds that while the yogī may be able to perceive the emotional state of mind of others, he or she may not necessarily be aware of the object, ālambana, causing that state of mind. The yogī may be able to read someone’s amorous state of mind, for example, says Vyāsa, but not necessarily know who the beloved is, or perceive fear in someone’s mind but not the tiger who caused it. This, says Vyāsa, is because the object of the other person’s mind has not been the object of the yogī’s saṁyama; only the other person’s emotion or state of mind has been subject to this. Other commentators, however, are aware that this seems to conflict with the discussion in the previous sūtra, where it is stated that saṁskāras can be
accessed only in their context; this should suggest that the yogī should have access to the context of the other person’s state of mind—the object of emotion or fear, as well as the emotion itself, since this would be imprinted as an image on the citta. One might infer that if the yogī wishes to access the actual object causing the other person’s state of mind, saṁyama would have to be directed to that object specifically.

III.21 kāya-rūpa-saṁyamāt tad-grāhya-śakti-stambhe
cakṣuḥ-prakāśāsāmprayoge ‘ntardhānam

kāya, of the body; rūpa, form; saṁyamāt, by performing saṁyama; tat, that; grāhya, to be grasped or known; śakti, power; stambhe, on the obstruction; cakṣuḥ, eye; prakāśa, light; asamprayoge, on the absence of contact; antardhānam, invisibility

By performing saṁyama on the outer form of the body, invisibility [is attained]. This occurs when perceptibility is obstructed by blocking contact between light and the eyes.

The commentators are not very detailed in their explanations of the Sāṅkhyan metaphysics underlying this sūtra. Vācaspati Miśra states that a body can be seen because it has color. Rays of light strike this and the body becomes visible to the eyes of others. Apparently, by saṁyama, the yogī can obstruct this process such that he or she is no longer visible to others, even in broad daylight. (The same process of obstruction can be applied to sound, touch, taste, and smell.) The exact mechanics underpinning this ability to stop light refracting off one’s body are left unexplained by our traditional commentators, but Taimni, a yogī scholar who wrote an engaging commentary of the sūtras, suggests the modus operandi of this siddhi is that the body is visible due to the tanmātra or subtle element of form, rūpa.⁵³ (As we know, the gross visible elements are transformations of the tanmātra subtle elements.) By manipulating
the tanmātra of form, the yogī can prevent light bouncing back off it to the eye of the receiver. The Buddha is reputed to have used this siddhi to vanish after giving discourses in various assemblies of nobles.\textsuperscript{54}

If we look at the evolution of the tattvas on the Sāṅkhya chart in the introduction, we see that form, visibility, and sight emanate from the tanmātra of touch, when the tāmasic component is increased. One might suppose, then, that the yogī is believed to be able to reverse this, that is, minimize the tāmasic element that allows sight (or, put differently, maximize the translucent sāttvic element), such that light rays do not have a sufficiently dense (tāmasic) surface to bounce back to an observing eye (in the same way that air and ether cannot be perceived due to their relatively higher proportion of sattva). As always, mind is the substratum of grosser energy that evolves from it, so just as the interaction of hydrogen and oxygen molecules can cause ice to revert to water and then to steam, mind can manipulate the density of the elements that emerge from it, an explanation in accordance with Yoga metaphysics. In support of this explanation, we can note that Vyāsa, in III.45, speaks of invisibility being attained by the yogī “covering himself in the element of ether.”\textsuperscript{55}

\textit{III.22 sopakramaṁ nirupakramaṁ ca karma tat-saṁyamād aparānta-jñānam ariṣṭebhyo vā}

\textit{sa, with; upakramam, approaching, beginning, fruition; nir, without; upakramam, fruition; ca, and; karma, action; tat, these; samyamāt, by performing saṁyama; aparānta, death; jñānam, knowledge; ariṣṭebhyah, by omens, portents; vā, or}

\textit{Karma is either quick to fructify or slow. By saṁyama on karma, or on portents, knowledge of [one’s] death arises.}

This sūtra divides karma according to whether or not it is quick to fructify, upakramam. Vyāsa compares karma that is quick to fructify to a
wet cloth spread out nicely, which dries quickly, and *karma* that is not quick to fructify to a wet cloth twisted and bunched up, which dries slowly; or to fire that when fueled by the wind burns dry hay stacked in one place quickly, as opposed to fire that, when the hay is spread out in different places, burns more slowly. In either event, whenever it is due to fructify, the *yogī* can access this stock of personal *karma* and, through the process of *saṁyama*, understand when its fruition will take place. 

*Karma*, we recall (II.13), in addition to type of birth and life experience, determines longevity, so through knowledge of one’s *karma* and its fructification—the *saṁskāras*, once again—one can determine one’s moment and circumstance of death, *aparānta-jñānam*. This is basically the same process mentioned in III.18 involved in the understanding of one’s previous births. Here, too, Buddhist sources assign this *siddhi* to the Buddha, who predicted his own death three months in advance, a motif that is not uncommon in hagiographical literature. 

An alternative process for understanding one’s impending death is noted by Patañjali here—through portents, *ariṣṭebhyah*. The commentaries speak of three types of portents: personal, those associated with other beings, and those associated with divine beings. Examples of personal portents are not hearing any sound when one blocks one’s ears—which should otherwise normally produce the sound of fire burning within, says Vijñānabhikṣu (a sound made by one’s *prāṇa*, adds Bhoja Rāja)—or not seeing any light when one blocks one’s eyes. According to these criteria, one not experiencing these effects is nearing death. Examples of portents heralded by other beings are seeing the messengers of Yama, the lord of death, or unexpectedly seeing one’s departed ancestors. Examples of portents involving divine beings are unexpectedly seeing the celestial realms or its denizens, or seeing things contrary to what the *yogī* has been seeing throughout life. 

By means of any of these portents one is informed of impending death. Bhoja Rāja states that anyone can be made aware of impending death through such portents, although such information will be vague and not precise with regard to exact specifics such as timing. *Yogīs* adept in the practices indicated in this *sūtra*, in contrast, can see the time and place of their own death precisely, like something visible before their very eyes. The purpose of gaining knowledge of one’s death from a *yogic*
perspective, says Śaṅkara, is to provoke urgency in fulfilling one’s human obligations in not frittering away one’s life—in other words, to take up yoga seriously and seek liberation.
By [saṁyama] on friendliness and such things, strengths are acquired.

The commentators understand “friendliness and such things” in this sūtra to refer to I.33, where maitrī, friendship; karuṇā, compassion; muditā, joy; and upekṣā, equanimity were listed by Patañjali. By cultivating friendship toward those who are happy, as prescribed in that sūtra, and performing saṁyama on this feeling, the yogī attains what Vyāsa terms the “power of friendliness.” He becomes the well-wisher of all, say the commentators, can make the whole world happy, and his effort to win the friendship of others will not be in vain. He destroys all envy and hatred from his heart, says Hariharānanda, becomes completely free from malice and harshness, and no thoughts of harming others ever darken his heart, such that all people, whether malicious or not, find him to be a source of comfort and friendship. Likewise, by performing saṁyama on the feeling of compassion that the yogī is prescribed to cultivate toward those in distress (I.33), the power of compassion arises. He can lift the suffering out of their pain, says Vācaspati Miśra. By saṁyama on joy toward the pious, one attains the power of joyfulness. The commentators note, however, that saṁyama is not directed toward the fourth prescription listed in I.33—equanimity toward the sinful—because equanimity is not a specific feeling but an absence of other feelings; saṁyama would thus seem to require a distinct state of mind as an object of focus, otherwise the meditator has nothing on which to focus.

Essentially, the mechanics of this type of saṁyama seem to be that through the sheer intensity of total absorption on a feeling such as those listed above, the citta of the yogī becomes so completely pervaded and charged with that feeling that it emanates out and affects other people. This is just an extension of commonly experienced principles: Laughter,
for example, can be contagious, as can sadness, anger, or other emotions. As we have seen, the principle of samyama simply enhances and expands on these occurrences. All feelings, after all, are essentially inherent in citta—the mind is the seat of emotion. So through samyama the mind simply manifests what is latent within it.

III.24 baleṣu hasti-balādīni

baleṣu, on the power, strength; hasti, elephant; bala, strength; ādīni, etc.

[By practicing samyama] on strengths, [the yogī] attains the strength of an elephant, etc.

Here, too, the commentators are curt. By samyama on the strength of an elephant, baleṣu hasti, the yogī acquires such strength; by samyama on Garuda, Viṣṇu’s eagle carrier, one gets the power of Garuḍa; by samyama on the power of the wind, one gets such powers, and so on. The principle seems to be that by the yogī’s intense concentration on any power, such as the strength of an elephant, his mind can manifest that same power in his body. Once again, everything is potential in the mind, and mind, citta, is the substratum of all evolutes, including strength. It can therefore potentially manifest anything at all, since everything inherently exists in latent form within its own nature. Koelman expresses this in his usual profoundly precise way: “Man’s individual body and mind are only superficially and relatively individual substances, fundamentally they are only energizations and self-differentiations of and within prakṛtic Nature itself, which is the sole genuine substance. Man, therefore, through his prakṛtic organism, is in communication, is one with prakṛtic Nature in its universality” (1970, 241).

III.25 pravrtyāloka-nyāsāt sūkṣma-vyavahita-viprakṛṣṭa-jñānam
By directing the light of cognition, one obtains knowledge of subtle, concealed, and remote things.

Vijñānabhikṣu suggests that the yogī becomes so powerful that, even without performing saṁyama, just by directing his or her mind toward an object, even if it is subtle, sūkṣma; concealed, vyavahita; or far away, viprakṛṣṭa, it becomes revealed—just as one has immediate perception of a nearby pot merely by directing one’s eyes to it. This, say the commentators, is because when all traces of rajas and tamas have been eradicated, the natural luminosity inherent in the sattva of the citta becomes manifest without hindrance. This light can then be directed toward revealing things beyond normal cognition—the subtle, concealed, and remote things of this sūtra. The senses, too, become keener in their operation; as the Gītā puts it, “Luminosity manifests in all the gates of the body” (XIV.11). One might add that citta in Yoga metaphysics is potentially all-pervading when its rājasic and tāmasic potentials are suppressed. Thus, when fully sāttvic and focused, it can bypass or transcend the senses and contact objects beyond the normal reaches of the senses.

Let us consider this from the perspective of Sāṅkhyan metaphysics. Let us say a puruṣa, enveloped in its citta as all saṁsāric puruṣas are, takes birth as an ant. The awareness of the puruṣa or, more precisely, the vṛttis of the puruṣa’s citta, is limited to the contours of the ant’s body and sensual range, due to its kleśas as per the definitions of avidyā and asmitā outlined in II.5–6. Now, suppose the ant dies and, due to its particular karmic destiny, next takes birth as an elephant. Its asmitā now identifies with a new instrument, such that the vṛttis produced by it pervade a much larger surface—the body and sensual range of an elephant. This indicates that the range of citta can expand and contract. What, then, is to prevent it expanding farther still? Like the light of a small bulb, which could, in principle, continue to emanate out throughout the entire universe were there no obstacles to obstruct it, citta is potentially all-
pervading (as is the source awareness of puruṣa, citi-śakti), were there no kleśas to obstruct it. Once the kleśas are eliminated, then, one can see how the internal logic of Sāṅkhyan metaphysics requires the citta to be all-pervading—and thus, from the perspective of this sūtra, able to be aware of anything within prakṛti (which is another way of conceptualizing omniscience). This basic theme will be repeated throughout this chapter.

The Jains have an interesting counterpart to these ideas. In Jain metaphysics, the soul’s inherent omniscience (which is another way of saying omnipresence) is covered by the obstructing limitations of karma. When these karmic obstacles are partly destroyed, the yogī develops supernormal sensory abilities (avadhi-jñānam); when psychological obstacles such as hatred and envy have been overcome, the yogī can know the minds of others (manah-paryāya-jñānam); and when all karmic obstructions have been completely removed, omniscience ensues (kevala-jñānam).

III.26 bhuvana-jñānam sūrye saṁyamāt

bhuvana, regions, worlds; jñānam, knowledge; sūrye, on the sun; saṁyamāt, by saṁyama

By performing saṁyama on the sun arises knowledge of the different realms in the universe.

A lengthy description of the Purāṇic concept of the universe is given in the commentaries for this sūtra. There are seven lokas, worlds or realms, in Hindu cosmography. This world with all its creatures is one, and above it is space with the stars, followed by a series of celestial realms. The first realm is the abode of Indra, king of the gods, and above this the abode of the prajāpatis, the progenitors. The threefold realm of Brahmā, the secondary creator—Janaloka, Tapoloka, and Satyaloka—is above these. There are also seven nether regions or lower realms below the earth, as well as seven hells where beings live long and painful lives experiencing the negative karma accrued by their impious deeds.
Hariharānanda states that entities here have active minds but do not have gross bodies, and thus suffer the torment of not being able to fulfill their desires, like ensnared beasts. Sojourns in hell, however, are never eternal but last only until the specifics of an individual’s negative karma have been accounted for and borne their due fruits.

The earth realm or region consists of seven islands in the center of which is the golden Sumeru (also known as Meru) mountain. Its peaks are made of silver, emerald, crystal, gold, and jewels. As a result of the reflection from these peaks, the sky in the South is deep blue; in the East, white; in the West, clear; and in the North, golden. The sun revolves around Sumeru, causing day and night, and on the right of this mountain is the Jambū tree, which is why the earth is known as Jambūdvīpa. Jambūdvīpa consists of nine continents. There are three mountains to the north of Meru, surrounding three continents (varṣa) consecutively, and three mountains to the south, surrounding three more continents, in addition to which, there is a continent to the east of Meru, one to the west, and one more, the ninth, below Meru. Jambūdvīpa stretches out a distance of fifty yojanas in all directions from Meru and is thus one hundred yojanas in circumference in its entirety. It is surrounded by a salt ocean twice its size. After this there are six islands (dvīpas) in succession, each one surrounded by oceans of different liquids—sugarcane juice, liquor, ghee, curd, milk, and sweet rice. These are encircled by the Lokāloka mountain range. This entire universe is situated within an egglike case. Despite its enormity, it is merely a spark of prakṛti, like a firefly in the sky. In these worlds, oceans, and mountains live a variety of gods and celestial beings. The mortals and gods who reside in the islands are pious beings—they gain residency in these realms as a result of good karma performed in the past. Various parks are found on Mount Meru, which are the pleasure grounds for the gods. The assembly hall of the gods is also there, along with the city of the gods and their palace. In Indra’s realm, the first of the five realms, there are six types of resident gods who have all the mystic powers, such as living for immense life spans (an entire kalpa); the ability to fulfill their desires merely by thought; enjoying the pleasures of sex; and they are begotten without parents (in other words, sex is not inconvenienced by pregnancy). The five classes of gods who inhabit the Prajāpati realm
have mastery over the material elements (which, says Vācaspati Miśra, means that they can manipulate them at will), subsist on meditation alone (do not require gross prākṛtic foodstuffs as their bodies are made of tanmātra, the subtle evolutes of prakṛti), and live a thousand times longer than the residents of Indra’s realm. The four types of gods in Brahmā's realm of Janaloka live even longer than this (the life span of each of the four types doubling consecutively), have full control over the elements and sense organs, and also subsist on meditation, as do the celibate residents of Tapoloka. In Satyaloka, the highest celestial realm, one of the four classes of resident gods is absorbed in savitarka meditation, another in savicāra, another in ānanda meditation, and the fourth in asmitā (see I.17 on these). These various realms and their inhabitants are described in greater detail in the various Purāṇas, particularly in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (V.16–26).

This entire cosmography can be directly perceived by the yogī performing saṁyama on the “doorway of the sun,” says Vyāsa. Some commentators seem to accept this literally, as meditation on the actual sun disk, sūrye, but others, such as Vācaspati Miśra and Hariharānanda, take this to be the doorway of the susumnā channel in the subtle physiology usually associated with tantric yoga.61 Hariharānanda notes that this physiology cannot be directly perceived by the eyes, but by meditation, since it is made of subtle elements, and the eyes can perceive only gross elements. When the entrance to the susumnā is opened, he states, the various regions noted above are revealed. There is thus a correspondence between the microcosm of the body and the macrocosm of the universe.

The specific mechanics of how the entire universe can be perceived by the sedentary meditator are not explained by the commentators, but one might suppose that since the entire universe is held to evolve from the first evolute of prakṛti, buddhi, and since one’s personal buddhi is simply an individualization of this original cosmic buddhi, the yogī is able to transcend the limitations of the individual buddhi and directly perceive the cosmic buddhi and all its derivates, such as the various realms of the universe, even when situated motionless in meditation. This perception will thereby appear internal to the yogī. As Hariharānanda puts it, from the perspective of the universal buddhi, there is no such thing as far or
near since buddhi underpins all its evolutes; it is thus all-pervading and everything is within it. Therefore, the buddhi of each individual creature, as well as the solar systems, which are evolutes from buddhi, are indirectly but essentially on the same plane since everything in the universe is a manifestation of the same substratum. The buddhi of the yogī is supposed to be able simply to pass beyond personal bodily limitations. In any event, this belief is still very much a living tradition. A modern siddha-yogi, Swami Muktānanda, who was primarily responsible for establishing the siddha tradition in the West in the 1960s, in his remarkable autobiography, *Play of Consciousness*, claimed to have personally experienced internally within himself the various regions of the universe during his own meditations.

The purpose of all this cosmological information, says Hariharānanda, is that by visiting all the realms in creation, the yogī is better able to appreciate the greatness of kaivalya liberation. There are frequent warnings in the Purāṇas about yogīs being sidetracked from their pursuit of liberation by the wonderful realms of the universes; as early as the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* strong language is used to decry the “fools who know nothing better; when they have enjoyed their good karma in the higher realms, they return again to this miserable world” (I.2.7ff). The Gītā too describes those intent on the celestial realms as “full of desires” and “ignorant” (II.42–43), since the celestial realms “up to the realm of Brahma are all places of rebirth” (VIII.16).

III.27 candre tārā-vyūha-jñānam

*candre*, on the moon; *tārā*, stars; *vyūha*, arrangement; *jñānam*, knowledge

[By *saṁyama*] on the moon, knowledge of the solar systems.

The commentators make no comments here, considering this sūtra a sequel to the previous one to be understood in parallel fashion. Whereas *saṁyama* on the sun resulted in knowledge of different realms, worlds,
mountains, and oceans, *saṁyama* on the moon, *candra*, results in knowledge of the arrangement of the stars, *tārā-vyūha*. Bhoja Rāja notes that this *sūtra* is included separately from the previous one since when the sun is shining, the luster of the stars is not visible (and one can obviously perform *saṁyama* on the moon only when the sun has set). Hariharānanda relates this *sūtra*, too, to *tāntric* physiology.

III.28 *dhruve tad-gati-jñānam*

*dhruve*, on the polestar; *tat*, their [the stars’]; *gati*, movement; *jñānam*, knowledge

[By *saṁyama*] on the polestar comes knowledge of the movement of the stars.

Here, too, the commentators take the *sūtra* to be self-explanatory, but all take the polestar, *Dhruva*, to refer to the celestial body and not some aspect of the subtle physiology. By *saṁyama* on the polestar, says Bhoja Rāja, the yogī can distinguish stars from planets and determine when a given heavenly body will be situated in any particular sign of the zodiac. Śaṅkara takes this *sūtra* to refer to astrological science: By understanding the movement of the stars, and how their influences neutralize, enhance, and affect each other, one can determine the good and bad fortunes of living beings.

III.29 *nābhi-cakre kāya-vyūha-jñānam*

*nābhi*, navel; *cakre*, on the wheel; *kāya*, body; *vyūha*, arrangement; *jñānam*, knowledge

[By *saṁyama*] on the navel plexus of the body comes knowledge of the arrangement of the body.

Just as one can attain knowledge of different realms by performing
samyama on the sun, and knowledge of the arrangement of the stars by performing samyama on the moon, Patañjali here states that, on a micro level, one can likewise develop intimate knowledge of the physical body, kāya-vyūha, by performing samyama on the navel, nābhi-cakra—that is, one can understand everything about the constituents and inner workings of the body by this means. Vijñānabhikṣu compares the navel wheel to the root of the banana plant from which the entire plant grows. Bhoja Rāja states more specifically that the navel is the root of the nāḍis, subtle veins, that pervade the body.

Vyāsa briefly outlines the understanding of the body according to the traditional medical system of āyurveda, by now well-known in the West. There are the three doṣas, usually translated as humors—kapha, gas; vāta, bile; and pitta, phlegm—and seven substances—skin, blood, muscle, tendon, bone, fat, and semen—each one layered over the previous one. Disease in āyurveda is due to an imbalance in these three doṣas. The yogī can gain knowledge of any imbalance or malfunctioning in the body by performing the samyama noted in this sūtra. And, from a yogic perspective, Vijñānabhikṣu points out that by performing samyama on the navel the yogī can perceive the body to be what it really is, a heap of doṣas and substances.

Cakra here is not necessarily a reference to the cakra physiology most commonly associated with the cluster of siddha/tantra/śākta traditions. Tellingly, Patañjali makes no direct reference to this overall physiology in the sūtras other than the mention of nāḍi in III.31 below. In fact, classical Yoga does not concern itself with this physiology. Some of the commentators do read some of these sūtras from the perspective of the cakras (as we have seen in III.26–27), but none of the primary commentators makes any mention of, for example, the primary ingredient of śākta physiology, the kuṇḍalinī. One might go on to note that the understanding of the goal in classical Yoga clearly differs from the siddha notion that the supreme goal of yoga is attained, and liberation occurs, when this kuṇḍalinī reaches the thousand-petal sahasrāra-cakra in the crown of the head. Whatever other references to cakras are found throughout the commentaries are peripheral to the classical Yoga tradition (and, indeed, a peripheral topic in mainstream Hinduism).
The cluster of śākta traditions is distinct from classical Yoga in a number of ways. First, they are monistic and Yoga is dualistic. The śākta traditions see prakṛti as ultimately pure consciousness, citi-śakti (IV.34); thus they are monist in the sense that they hold that all reality—both the seer and the seen (puruṣa and prakṛti) of II.17ff—is made up of one substance: consciousness. Accordingly, it is not prakṛti that is to be transcended, as is the case with Yoga, but notions of individual separateness from the supreme deity. Once the delimiting ego separating the individual ātman from realizing its higher nature as one with the supreme ātman has been transcended, ultimate samādhi in the śākta traditions entails enjoying the spectacle of prakṛti as citi-śakti in its myriad variegations from the liberated vantage point of oneness with the supreme deity (most usually associated with Śiva or a form of the Goddess). For the dualistic Yoga tradition, on the other hand, prakṛti is not citi-śakti at all but inert matter obstructing puruṣa from realizing its own separate and completely distinct nature as citi-śakti; in Yoga, in other words, citi-śakti pertains to puruṣa, not to prakṛti. In line with these monistic presuppositions, in the śākta traditions liberation entails the merging of the individual ātman into a higher, ultimately transpersonal reality, whereas in Yoga there is a plurality of souls who never lose their individuality whether in the liberated state or not. They do not completely merge into one ultimate Supreme Soul within which personal individuality is ultimately erased, but remain individual puruṣas.

Having noted this metaphysical difference, one wonders how different the higher states of the two systems are from an experiential point of view. We have noted how sattva is “as if” conscious due to becoming animated by consciousness, citi-śakti, reflecting puruṣa back to itself when all traces of rajas and tamas have been made latent. In the higher stages of samādhi, the yogī’s citta, animated by citi-śakti, becomes omnipresent and omnipotent due to pervading prakṛti—in other words, the animated all-pervading sāttvic citta of the yogī can become coextensive with prakṛti. All this would appear to be a very similar experience to that reported by the siddha tradition of enjoying prakṛti as citi-śakti (put differently, the siddha tradition takes prakṛti as citi-śakti, and Yoga understands it “as if” citi-śakti). Moreover, even with regard to the pluralistic versus monistic understanding of liberation in terms of
whether there exists a plurality of ātmans at the highest level of truth, or only one, one wonders how much difference there might be between experiencing oneself as the one supreme absolute soul in a monistic system or to be one of a plurality of liberated ātmans who are aware only of their own omnipresent nature and nothing else in a pluralistic system. The Yoga tradition after all gives us no indication that the omnipresent puruṣa in nirbijā/asamprajñāta-samādhi is aware of other omnipresent puruṣas, which, to all intents and purposes, points to a monistic experience, even if a plurality of souls are accepted on a metaphysical or scholastic level in principle.

Be this as it may, in terms of method, one can reiterate that samādhi, in tantra, is attained when kuṇḍalinī is first awakened by various techniques and then rises up the central suṣumnā channel, piercing the various cakras along the way and triggering various supernormal sensual experiences until it finally unites with the sahasrāra-cakra. The siddhi experiences of kuṇḍalinī awakening associated with the śākta traditions are indications of yogic success and can be enjoyed provided one has realized one’s oneness with the supreme deity. As should be obvious by now, liberation is attained entirely differently in classical Yoga, and the cakra/nāḍī/kuṇḍalinī physiology is completely peripheral to it—although there is overlap in some (but not all) techniques, such as the use of mantra and prāṇāyāma. Moreover, and partly as a consequence of this difference in presuppositions, the siddhis are considered accomplishments only for one whose “mind is outgoing,” that is, who has not attained the vairāgya, dispassion, required of yogic practice in I.15–16; they are obstacles to the samādhi state taught by Patañjali (III.37) and ultimately to be discarded as worthless.

Thus, while siddhi/śākta/tantra metaphysics is a wonderful and vibrant spiritual universe in its own right, with deep roots in the ancient Indic past, and with its own internal coherence, logic, and appeal, it is not by any means the same as the system being taught by Patañjali. The integrity and distinctiveness of these traditions have a tendency to be erased into a hodgepodge in their Western exportations—into a kind of kitchoire Yoga. In India, a typical meal consists of a subji, vegetable dish; dal, lentil soup; rice; chappati, unleavened bread; and perhaps some other items, each with its own distinct flavorings and spices. After the
meal is enjoyed, the leftovers are often combined and served the next day as kitchorie, at which point all the flavorings are merged together into a homogenous whole. Similarly, the multiple yogic traditions of India such as tantra and classical yoga, despite their very distinctive features and practices in their traditional settings, tend to be merged into a kitchorie sort of yoga in many of its Western forms.

Thus one often finds a generic sort of yoga typically appropriating bits and pieces of Patañjali-type practices as presented here in the sūtras but articulated with neo-advaita-vedānta/Brahman terminologies and flavored with elements from tantric subtle physiology, all blended together as if representing a single coherent homogenous tradition. This is understandable—and with plenty of antecedents in premodern Indic traditions themselves one might add64 (indeed, it can be argued that such blending is the very nature of religious traditions)—and perhaps inevitable in the modern West.

While on this topic, there are a variety of traditions that are clearly influenced by Patañjali, which Larson (2008) calls “satellite traditions,” that appropriate important aspects from Patañjali while diverging considerably from him in focus, such as the classical haṭha yoga tradition. This, of course, points to the centrality and authoritativeness of Patañjali in yogic practice insofar as his system is incorporated into other systems as a source of legitimacy, but then flavored by the sectarian specifics of these other systems.

कष्टकृष्ण क्षतिपासानिवृत्तिः || 30 ||

III.30 kaṇṭha-kūpe kṣut-pipāsā-nivṛttīḥ

kaṇṭha, throat; kūpe, pit, hollow; kṣut, hunger; pipāsā, thirst; nivṛttīḥ, cessation, subdual

[By saṁyama] on the pit of the throat comes the cessation of hunger and thirst.

Vijñānabhiṣkṣu takes the pit of the throat, kaṇṭha-kūpa, to extend from the base of the tongue to the stomach. By saṁyama on this spot, yogīs can overcome hunger and thirst, kṣut-pipāsā, according to Patañjali. No
further explanation of how this transpires is provided in our sources, except for Bhoja Rāja’s comment that the sensation of hunger is caused by the contact of prāṇa, vital air, with this place. One might infer that since the sense of touch or sensation is dependent on the quality of air in Sāṃkhya metaphysics, by manipulating the prāṇa life air by means of the power of mind that underpins it along the lines outlined for some of the other siddhis, the yogī can control its effects, in this case, the sensation of hunger.

III.31 kūrma-nādyām sthairyam

kūrma, tortoise; nādyām, subtle channel; sthairyam, steadiness [By saṃyama] on the subtle tortoise channel, steadiness is attained.

Below the pit of the throat, or trachea, says Vyāsa, is a particular nāḍī, or subtle channel, shaped like a tortoise, kūrma. As noted, in tantra physiology, just as the gross body is pervaded by innumerable blood vessels, there is a subtle network of thousands of subtle channels called nāḍīs. As early as the Praśna Upaniṣad the prāṇa life airs are held to circulate through the body by means of these nāḍīs. The yogī can become as steady, sthairya, as a snake or an alligator, says Vyāsa, by saṃyama on the trachea. Again, although the mechanics behind this siddhi are not explained, the same principles can be inferred: Balance is associated with air, so by mentally manipulating the appropriate prāṇa associated with balance in the particular nāḍī mentioned here by Patañjali, the yogī can remain as immobile as snakes and iguanas.65 From the overall perspective of yoga, perhaps more to the point is Hariharānanda’s observation that if the body becomes immobile, so does the mind. In his commentary to this sūtra, Bhoja Rāja, too, emphasizes firmness of mind as ensuing from this practice.
III.32 mūrdha-jyotiṣi siddha-darśanam

mūrdha, head; jyotiṣi, on the light; siddha, perfected souls; darśanam, vision

[By saṁyama] on the light in the skull, a vision of the siddhas, perfected beings, is attained.

There is an opening in the skull, says Vyāsa, that contains radiant light. As the radiance of light inside a house is concentrated in the keyhole, says Bhoja Rāja (from the perspective of someone standing outside the house), so the luminosity of sattva is concentrated in this opening called the brahma-randhra. By performing saṁyama on this spot, one has a vision, darśana, of the siddhas. Siddhas are perfected beings who possess mystic powers and inhabit the higher realms of the universe. They often move around in the space between the earth and the sky, and can sometimes be contacted by advanced yogīs. Again, this too remains a living tradition: In his autobiography, Muktānanda claimed to have encountered such beings while in states of samādhi, as did Yogānanda in his Autobiography of a Yogi.

III.33 prātibhād vā sarvam

prātibhāt, by intuition; vā, or; sarvam, everything
Or, by intuition, comes [knowledge of] everything.

Intuition, prātibha, says Vyāsa, precedes discrimination, the viveka of II.26–7, as the light of dawn precedes the light of the sun. The yogī is able to attain knowledge of everything, sarvam, due to the spontaneous rise of intuition, prātibha. Vijñānabhikṣu defines intuition, prātibha, as knowledge that is obtained without a teacher. Śanṅkara states that by intuition the yogī can automatically attain all of the various powers outlined in the previous sūtras that are gained by the practice of saṁyama on individual objects. According to the Yoga tradition, intuition is associated with the preliminary phase of omniscience.
It is an inherent attribute of pure sattva.

ह्रदये चित्तसंवित् । ३४ ।।

III.34 ḫṛdaye citta-saṁvit

hrdaye, on the heart; citta, the mind; saṁvit, knowledge
[By saṁyama] on the heart, knowledge of the mind ensues.

Vyāsa calls the heart the “city of Brahman, a lotus-like abode,” and the place where the intelligence resides. As noted in the introduction, even though Patañjali himself does not refer to Brahman, the Absolute Truth of the Upaniṣads, the commentators here and elsewhere do correlate Brahman and puruṣa as if this is a perfectly natural thing to do, as indeed it is for any classical Hindu thinker. The heart, hṛdaya, is taken to be the abode of the ātman as early as the Praśna Upaniṣad (III.6).

Vācaspati Miśra and Bhoja Rāja describe the lotus as facing down, and in so doing again introduce notions of subtle physiology usually associated with the haṭha-yoga and tantra traditions in which they play a far more central role than in classical Pātañjalian yoga, where they are peripheral. There are seven cakras (literally, wheels) or energy centers in the body, and these are usually described as shaped like lotuses. The heart cakra is the middle one and considered to be the seat of intelligence. Thus, both the ātman and the citta are centered in the heart. Consequently, by performing saṁyama in this region, one comes to know the citta mind and its modifications.

Vijñānabhiśku notes that the previous powers are minor, insofar as they are peripheral to the real goal of yoga, which, as Patañjali wasted no time in informing us at the beginning of the entire text, is to still the vṛttis of the citta. The knowledge referred to in this sūtra facilitates that goal by giving the yogi direct perception of the workings of citta.
Worldly experience consists of the notion that there is no distinction between the puruṣa self and pure intelligence, although these two are completely distinct. Worldly experience exists for another [i.e., for puruṣa]. [By saṁyama] on that which exists for itself [i.e., on puruṣa], comes knowledge of puruṣa.

Patañjali here essentially rearticulates the definition of avidyā given in II.5: Worldly experience consists of confounding the pure self with the intelligence, which molds itself into the forms and thoughts of this world. As has been discussed repeatedly, puruṣa, due to ignorance, considers buddhi and all its permutations to be its real self. In addition to the familiar example of the crystal and red flower, Vijñānabhikṣu has us imagine having soot on one’s face. As one can be blissfully unaware that one has soot on one’s face (a substance that is completely distinct from one’s actual face), so, due to avidyā, ignorance, the citta is unaware that the source of its awareness, puruṣa, is completely distinct, atyantāsaṅkīrṇa, from the permutations of buddhi, which cover it, so to speak.

When the intelligence is completely free from the effects of rajas and tamas, in other words, when buddhi is pure and undisturbed, it becomes luminous and clear. As we know, rajas and tamas are the influences that pull buddhi out into the external world and cause it to mold itself into the external thoughts and forms that have actually nothing to do with pure puruṣa. As has been discussed, buddhi, when pure, also acts like a spotless mirror, which reflects the face gazing at it without distortion, so
to speak. In this luminous state, according to Viśnunābhikṣu, buddhi can reflect puruṣa’s real image back to puruṣa—a pure notion or vision of its true nature, rather than the distorted images of the world of sarīśāra. This sūtra is taken to indicate that by saṁyama on this notion or image of puruṣa in the sāttvic buddhi, awareness of the existence of the real puruṣa emerges.66 We might infer that the reason Patañjali uses the term sattva rather than citta or buddhi to refer to the mind, is to underscore the fact that, at this point, the mind’s sāttvic potential is at its maximum, with the other two guṇas in a state of as total latency as the constitutional metaphysical makeup of prakṛti will allow.

Vyāsa hastens to add that this notion of puruṣa in itself is not ultimate self-realization, since it is still a notion or image in buddhi which, however pure, is nonetheless a product of prakṛti and thus completely distinct from the real puruṣa. There is a difference between the reflection in a mirror and the actual face gazing into it. Puruṣa, as we know, can know itself only by itself and not through any outside agency, which would involve connection with the world of matter. Vyāsa quotes the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (IV.5.15) here: “By who is the knower to be known?” In other words, prakṛti and its products can be known by puruṣa, but by what is puruṣa to be known? The Upaniṣads are full of verses indicating that the self is higher than the mind or intelligence: “Sight does not reach there, nor thought nor speech; we don’t know [it] or perceive [it] so how would one show it?” (Kena I.3). Therefore, as the Gītā puts it, “ātmanyeṇa ātmanā,” “one revels in the self through its own self” (II.55).67 Hence the coinage of neo-Vedāntic terms such as “self-realization,” introduced to the West at the end of the nineteenth century by Vivekānanda and popularized by the Vedānta Society and Paramahansa Yogānanda in the 1930s.68

To summarize, then, while buddhi cannot reveal the actual puruṣa, it can reveal a pure image or reflection of puruṣa (Hariharānanda calls this reflection the pure ahaṅkāra or ego, since it reveals the “real” aham, I, the puruṣa self, in contrast to the normal function of ahaṅkāra asmitā, which is to cause misidentification with the false self of body and mind). So while this is not the ultimate goal of yoga, by saṁyama on this pure image or reflection the yogī is one step away from kaivalya, complete liberation. When this final and ultimate state manifests, buddhi, and all
its images and ideas, including the pure one described here of the actual puruṣa itself, fade away, leaving puruṣa with nothing to be aware of except itself.

III.36 tataḥ prātibha-śrāvaṇa-vedanādarśāsvāda-vārtājāyante

tataḥ, from this; prātibha, intuition; śrāvaṇa, hearing; vedanā, touch; ādarśa, vision; āsvāda, taste; vārtāḥ, smell; jāyante, are born

From this, intuition as well as higher hearing, touch, vision, taste, and smell are born.

From the type of samyama noted in the last sūtra, the yogī attains the two abilities noted by Patañjali here: intuition, prātibha, and higher sense perception. By intuition, says Vyāsa, comes knowledge of “the subtle, the separated, the remote, the past and the future,” as expressed in III.25, in other words, of things normally inaccessible to conventional means of knowledge. By higher sense perception one can continually experience divine sounds, sensations, sights, tastes, and smells. Strengthened by the practice of yoga, the yogī’s senses can experience subtler levels of sense objects. Sattva, as we know, becomes much more sensitive, that is, can experience the higher potentials of the senses, when its coverings of rajas and tamas are removed. Bhoja Rāja takes Vyāsa’s reference here to divine sensations to refer to the sense objects of the celestial realms.

According to Vācaspati Miśra, self-realization is impossible until prakṛti has revealed herself in her fullness to puruṣa, and this entails experiencing the subtler dimensions of prakṛti. However, the Indic Yogic tradition in general, as specified by Patañjali in the next sūtra, considers all mystic powers, which arise of their own accord even without the yogī desiring them, to be impediments to the goal of yoga, since they pose the risk of distracting the yogī back into sensual (prākṛtic) experiences.
III.37 te samādhāv upasargā vyutthāne siddhayah

*te*, they [the powers]; *samādhu*, in *samādhi*; *upasargāḥ*, obstacles; *vyutthāne*, rising up, outgoing; *siddhayah*, accomplishments, perfections, powers

These powers are accomplishments for the mind that is outgoing but obstacles to *samādhi*.

The term *siddhi*, perfection or power, which occurs only four times in the *sūtras*, is used here to mean the supernormal powers. For a *yogī*, the powers noted in the previous *sūtra* hinder the cultivation of *samādhi*, since they entice the mind back out into the realm of *prakṛti* (they cause wonder and pleasure, says Bhoja Rāja) and thus are obstacles, *upasargāḥ*, to the attainment of *samādhi*. But for one whose mind is outgoing, *vyutthāna*, that is, interested in the enticements of the world, they appear to be desirable accomplishments. A beggar, says Vācaspati Miśra, may consider even a meager smattering of wealth to be the fullness of riches, but a *yogī* should not think that these powers, which appear spontaneously, are the goal, and must reject them. For how, he asks, can a genuine *yogī* take pleasure in things that are obstructions to the real goal of *yoga*? That the *siddhis* are potential impediments to the goal of *yoga* is a widespread position in Indic traditions: “The wise speak of the *siddhis* as obstacles; they are the cause of delay to one who is practicing the highest *yoga*” (*Bhāgavata Purāṇa* XI.15.33).

Pensa (1969) suggests that Patañjali’s warning here does not apply to all *siddhis* but only to those in the preceding *sūtra*. Meditative states would be disrupted and consciousness would run the risk of again being caught up in sensory experience upon the unexpected eruptions of the quasi-psychedelic, supernormal sensual experiences indicated in the previous *sūtra*. But not all *siddhis* are detriments to *samādhi*; after all, Patañjali (I.35) included supernormal sense experiences as suitable objects for the mind to concentrate on in order to achieve *samādhi*. “Patañjali is thus concerned [in this *sūtra*] with emphasizing something that is an important technical problem and no more” (ibid., 200). Patañjali is informing the practitioner of experiences that might accrue upon the path so that the *yogī* will not be confused, distracted, or
sidetracked by them. Additionally, Vyāsa and Vācaspati Miśra noted in I.35 that upon experiencing some of the preliminary truths of yoga, the faith of the genuine yogī will thereby be reaffirmed and the commitment to proceed strengthened. A yogī sidetracked by them has clearly not mastered the vairāgya, detachment, required as a preliminary to yoga (I.12).

By loosening the cause of bondage, and by knowledge of the passageways of the mind, the mind can enter into the bodies of others.

The mind is restless by nature—like a bouncing ball, says Śaṅkara, or the constant play of flame in glowing coals—but due to the stock of karma-saṁskāras, it becomes limited and trapped in one body and cannot experience existence in other bodies until the present body dies. However, by the cultivation of samādhi, the strength of this karma becomes weakened, śaithilya, and knowledge of the workings of the mind arises, pracāra-saṁvedana. As a result of these two developments, the yogī can remove his mind from its moorings in his own body and settle it into someone else’s body, according to this sūtra. The powers of the senses follow the mind in this transference, says Vyāsa, just as the swarm of bees follows the queen bee, and so the powers of the senses also settle in the new body when the mind settles into it. Just as the entire subtle body, sūksma-śarīra, transfers into a new body at death, so the yogī can enact this transferal while still alive—but, in this case, after
entering into a new body, with the ability to return into the original body. The ability is so widespread in yogic narrative that White (forthcoming) calls it “the sine qua non of a yogi’s practice.”

Bhoja Rāja reminds us that the citta is all-pervading. Due to its stock of karma (which, we recall, is the result of dharma and adharma), and of course the kleśas underpinning them, it remains confined within the contours of a specific body. To be technically precise, its vṛttis are defined in any particular life by the set of saṁskāras activated for that specific life (that is, its karma) such that it is confined to those contours, and the kleśas cement the misidentification with that form. The yogī who has transcended these kleśas through discernment can perform samyāma on this stock of karma, causing it to loose its grip on confining or limiting the citta. The citta can now transcend its confinement to that particular body and move outside of it, into other bodies if so desired, says Patañjali.

Vācaspati Miśra refers to nāḍīs in the body as the passageways through which the mind travels to perform its functions. The relevant nādi is identified by Bhoja Rāja as the cittavahā nādi, the citta-carrying nādi, whose function is evident in the name assigned to it. As discussed, the nāḍīs carry the prāṇa life airs, and thus it appears they carry the mind as well. Vācaspati Miśra also mentions yogīs who may have learned how to loosen the bondage of karma and thus are no longer bound to the body but who do not necessarily know the passageways that the mind must take to exit from the body to enter the body of others without harming the yogi. This is why the loosening of karma is mentioned by Patañjali here in combination with knowledge of the passageways of the mind in order to perform the feat mentioned in this sūtra. In his Yoga-śāstra, the Jain scholar Hemacandra (1088–1172) describes this process:

After exiting through the aperture at the crown of the head, one should enter [praviśya] [another body] through the downward moving breath … Then one should spread oneself from the lotus at the navel … to the lotus at the heart via the susumnā or central subtle channel. At that point, one should obstruct the movement of the other’s prāṇa with one’s own breath [vāyu]. From that body, he should continue in this fashion until that embodied being falls flat,
his movement faded away. When that other body has been completely liberated [of its previous occupant], the yogin whose actions and senses have come alive in all the activities [of the other] should commence movement as if in his own body. The intelligent [yogin] may play about fully in that other body for half a day or even a day. Again, through that same process one should enter one’s own body.73

A well-known story featuring this power is found in the traditional hagiographies of our commentator Śaṅkara.74 One day, Śaṅkara sought out Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, the foremost proponent of the rival Purva Mīmāṁsā school in his age, in order to debate with him. However, the great scholar was on his deathbed and directed Śaṅkara to his disciple, Viśvarūpa, more commonly known as (or identified with) the great intellectual, Maṇḍana Miśra. Curiously, the referee at the debate was Maṇḍana’s own wife, the learned Bhārati, regarded as an incarnation of the Goddess Sarasvatī. Bhārati had much to lose in the affair, since the agreement was that if Śaṅkara won, Maṇḍana would renounce his wife and possessions and become a sannyāsī75 disciple of Śaṅkara. On the other hand, if Maṇḍana won, Śaṅkara would renounce sannyāsa and consent to marriage and the life of a householder, a fallen and thus very socially undesirable outcome for a sannyāsi.

The debate is said to have lasted for weeks, until Maṇḍana eventually conceded defeat. Bhārati was a fair judge, but before declaring Śaṅkara the winner, she challenged him with questions pertaining to the Kāma-śāstra, the Sanskrit treatises concerned with eroticism, conjugal love, and desire, about which the ascetic and renunciant Śaṅkara had had no experience. Śaṅkara accordingly requested a delay in proceedings during which time he entered the body of a dying king by the śarīra-āveśa technique indicated in this sūtra by Patañjali. During this time, he experienced various aspects of conjugal love with the king’s queens such that he was able to return equipped with the appropriate answers to Bhārati’s questions (but not before he became so immersed in incessant lovemaking with the king’s queen that he forgot all about his mission and was saved in the nick of time by the quick thinking of his disciples from having his original sannyāsa body burnt by the king’s suspicious ministers!). The honorable Maṇḍana was to become Sureśvara, the most
celebrated disciple of Śaṅkara, writing subcommentaries on some of Śaṅkara’s Upaniṣad commentaries as well as independent treatises of his own.

A parallel, but slightly different, story occurs in the Mahābhārata (XV.33.24ff). Before leaving his mortal frame, the councilor and well-wisher of the Pāṇḍava brothers entered the body of king Yudhiṣṭhira due to his “yoga power.” He united his life airs and powers of the senses with the king’s, such that the latter felt empowered and endowed with more virtues than before. In a similar narrative (XII.31.29ff), the sage Bharadvāja entered the body of Prince Pratardhana from the age of thirteen and empowered him such that he could master at such a young age Vedic as well as military knowledge systems. Elsewhere in the epic (XIII.40–41), the sage Vipula entered into the body of his guru’s wife, Ruci, unequaled in beauty, to protect her from the seductive malintentions of the infamous Indra, lord of the celestials, while his guru was absent. Unbeknownst to her, “Vipula penetrated her body and joined his eyes with her eyes, and his eyelashes with her eyelashes, like the wind pervades space” (XIII.40.56). Indra, endowed with siddhis such that he could assume any form at will—even that of the wind—adopted a seductive form and entered into the hermitage of the sage who had departed to perform a sacrifice, intending to seduce Ruci. Even though the innocent Ruci was attracted to this beautiful intruder and made to offer him some words of welcome, her senses were restrained due to her being possessed by Vipula, who had decided that this was the only way of protecting her from the powerful celestial. Instead of articulating the words she had in mind, Ruci found herself uttering against her will a blunter accusation, prompted by Vipula within her.

III.39 udāna-jayāj jala-paṅka-kaṇṭaka-diśva asaṅga utkrāntiś ca

udāna, one of the prāṇas, vital airs; jayāt, from mastery over; jala, water; paṅka, mud; kaṇṭaka, thorns; ādiśu, etc.; asaṅgaḥ, noncontact with; utkrāntih, ascension, levitation; ca, and

By mastery over the udāna vital air, one attains [the power
of] levitation and does not come into contact with water, mud, and thorns, etc.

The commentaries briefly discuss the five prāṇas, or vital airs, that circulate around the body in connection with this sūtra. Vācaspati Miśra quotes a verse stating that the five prāṇas are all manifestations of the air element, but Vijñānabhimśu, following the Sāṅkhya Kārikās and the Vedānta Sūtras, insists that there is a difference between prāṇa and mundane air, which is one of the five gross elements.

The five prāṇas are mentioned as early as the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (V.19–24). The most important is itself called prāṇa, and when it leaves the body, the other vital airs follow. In the Praśna Upaniṣad it is stated, “Just as a king appoints administrators stating: ‘you oversee these villages, and you these,’ so prāṇa directs the other life airs to their respective places” (III.4). Vyāsa’s understanding of these airs is that prāṇa corresponds to the air that moves through the mouth and nose and circulates as far as the heart; samāna-prāṇa is present in the navel and distributes (food) equally (around the body); apāna-prāṇa is present down to the soles of the feet, and carries away (the waste products of the body); vyāna-prāṇa is so called because it is spread all over (the body); and udāna-prāṇa manifests up to the head and is so called because it carries up, ud. Levitation, utkṛāntiḥ, is attained by the manipulation of the udāna-prāṇa.

More or less the entirety of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Yoga traditions across the centuries have always claimed that the body can be made to levitate by manipulating internal air currents, prāṇa. Perhaps the earliest literary reference to such feats is expressed in the oldest Indo-European text, the Rāg Veda, where the long-haired ascetic (keśin) flies through the atmosphere (antarikṣeṇa patati) (X.136), and stories of this siddhi abound in the hagiographical literatures of Hindu yogīs throughout the centuries (and indeed, still surface on the yogic landscape of the West, most conspicuously in the “Transcendental Meditation” Organization).

Not only is levitation attained by mastery over the udāna-prāṇa, says Vyāsa, but by the manipulation of this prāṇa, the yogī takes the auspicious upward path out of the body at death. This is a reference to
the two pathways that can be taken by the departed soul after death, an upward one toward liberation and a downward one toward rebirth. These are mentioned in the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (VI.15), the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (V.10), the *Gītā* (VIII.26), and discussed in the *Vedānta Sūtras* (III.1). And the yogī can leave the body at will, adds Rāmānanda Sarasvatī.

III.40 samāna-jayāt jvalanam

*samāna*, over the *samāna* vital air; *jayāt*, by mastery; *jvalanam*, effulgence

By mastery over the *samāna* vital air, radiance is attained.

By stimulating the fire in the body, one becomes radiant and effulgent, *jvalana*, say the commentators. Hariharānanda notes that the *samāna-prāṇa* is responsible for nourishing all parts of the body, and so, by mastering this *prāṇa*, the yogī gets an aura around the body. As with the halo in Christian iconography, auras are commonly associated with saints and yogīs in the Indic traditions, explainable in Yogic vocabulary by the prominence of the radiant and effulgent characteristics of *sattva* pervading the yogī’s *citta*, and emanating out due to transcending the limitations of the *kleśas*.

Vijñānabhikṣu additionally understands the *jvalanam* of this *sūtra* as referring to the ability to self-combust. He mentions the story of Satī, the wife of Lord Śiva, as an example of someone manipulating the *udāna-prāṇa* in order to cast off her body by self-combustion. Offended by her own father, the proud ritualist Dakṣa, who had disregarded and insulted her husband, Śiva, Satī determined to sever all relations with him to the point of casting off the body that had been begotten by him. Satī, who had mastered *āsana*, first neutralized the up-flowing and down-flowing *prāṇa* and *apāṇa* airs (as touched on in II.49–50), then raised the *udāna-prāṇa* up from the navel *cakra*, held it in the heart area with concentration, and then drew it up through her throat and to between her eyebrows, from which point her body self-ignited by the power of
her samādhi concentration (Bhāgavata Purāṇa IV.4.25).

King Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the uncle of the five Pāṇḍavas and father of their hundred cousins from the Mahābhārata, also self-ignited his body as a result of his yogic practice, according to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa rendition of his final days (which differs from the account in the epic). After the great Mahābhārata war, in which all his sons and kinsmen had been killed, the old king received persuasive instructions from his half brother and counselor Vidura not to die in a wretched fashion while clinging to his attachments and false sense of security in the royal household—especially since, in addition to being blind from birth, he was now becoming deaf, dull, feeble, and infirm from old age. Enlightened by the words of his well-wisher, Dhṛtarāṣṭra headed for the Himālayas, the destination of those desirous of liberation. We include here the verses spoken by the sage Nārada describing his subsequent practice, since it gives another Bhāgavata-flavored version of classical yoga featuring meditation onĪśvara and culminating in self-combustion, the topic of this sūtra:

With a peaceful mind and free from desire, he [Dhṛtarāṣṭra] subsists on water. He has mastered āsana along with prāṇāyāma, and has withdrawn the six senses (pratyāhāra). His impurities of sattva, rajas and tamas have been destroyed, through meditation on Hari [Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa] … He will cast off his body on the fifth day from today, O king, and it will be reduced to ashes. (I.13.53ff)

III.41 śrotrākāśayoḥ sambandha-saṁyamād divyam śrotram

śrotra, ear, organ of hearing; ākāśayoḥ, ether; sambandha, relationship; saṁyamāt, by saṁyama; divyam, divine; śrotram, hearing

By saṁyama on the relationship between the organ of hearing and the ether, divine hearing is attained.

Ether, ākāśa, in Sāṅkhya thought, is the substratum of sound—sound
vibrations require a medium in which to vibrate, and, by a process of elimination, the commentators argue that this substratum must be ether. In fact, ether is itself generated from the tanmātra, or subtle element, of sound, so sound is both inherent in ether and conveyed through it. Ether is therefore considered to be present in the ear, such that it can pick up the vibrations of sound. Patañjali here states that by saṁyama on the relationship between ether and the ear, the yogī is able to surpass the limitations of the physical ear and access divine sounds, divyam śrotam. In conventional hearing, says Bhoja Rāja, hearing catches only the sounds that vibrate within the pocket of ether enclosed by the ear; however, since ether is all-pervading, and so potentially is the sāttvic citta, the accomplished yogī’s citta is believed to be able to transcend identification with the body and expand out to access sound beyond the realm of normal hearing vibrating anywhere in the ether (citta, being subtler than ether, can pervade it). Parallel abilities can be attained by saṁyama on the other four senses and the respective subtle elements with which they are associated: air and the skin, light and the eye, water and the tongue, earth and the nose. In other words, the yogī develops supernormal sensual abilities, another long-standing claim of the Yoga tradition.

III.42 kāyākāśayoḥ sambandha-saṁyamāl laghu-tūla-samāpatteś cākāśa-gamanam

kāya, the body; ākāśayoh, ether; sambandha, the relationship; saṁyamāt, by saṁyama; laghu, light; tūla, cotton; samāpatteḥ, a type of intense concentration; ca, and; ākāśa, sky; gamanam, movement, passage

By performing saṁyama on the relationship between the body and ether, and by performing samāpatti on the lightness of cotton, one acquires the ability to travel through the sky.
Recall that *samāpatti* involves concentrating intensely on an object such that the meditator becomes as if one with the object of meditation. Exactly how this differs from *sarīyama* in this *sūtra* is not discussed by our commentators (although see discussion in I.41), but the two processes appear very similar if not the same. In the commentaries of the Vedānta tradition (IV.2.16), *samāpatti* denotes merging, which in the context of Yoga points to the *citta*’s merger with the *citta* substructure of any object of meditation as a result of its intense focus.

The body moves in ether, or space, and by performing *saṁyama* on this relationship, as well as by total absorption on light entities such as cotton or atoms, one can become so light that one can walk on water, spiderwebs, or rays of light, according to the commentaries. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī takes these abilities as a progression reflecting the density of the medium of travel: First the *yogī* is able to walk on water, then spiderwebs, then light rays, then course through the air at will.

The metaphysical principle operating here seems to be the same one that pervades many of the *siddhis*: By manipulating the substratum, one can transform the nature of its effects. The gross elements are all transformations of ether, which means they are in essence ether. By *saṁyama* on this relationship, it seems that the *yogī* can potentially increase the *sattva* component of the body, thereby minimizing the *tamas* component, and thus manifest the inherent ethereal nature or quality constituting the body such that it takes on the qualities of ether. Ether takes on the form of the body, says Vijñānabhikṣu—the body is pervaded by ether (after all, it is essentially ether, from the perspective of the evolution of the material elements). This effect can also be attained by *saṁyama* on light things such as cotton, *tūla*, as well, following a similar principle.

This results in unimpeded freedom of movement, since ether is all-pervading. The *yogī* can thus move freely through the air, and some of the earliest records of Vedic literature preserve references to ascetics who had various powers, such as the ability to fly through the air and appear at will (*āpastamba-sūtra* II.9.23.6–8; *Sāma-vidhāna* III.9.1). Perhaps the best-known sage in the Purāṇic genre is Nārada Muni, who is always traveling around the universe carrying his *vīṇā*, stringed instrument, visiting his disciples to impart instructions to them and
constantly singing the glories of Lord Viṣṇu.

III.43 bahir-akalpitā vṛttir mahā-videhā tataḥ prakāśāvaraṇa-kṣayaḥ

*bahiḥ*, outside; *akalpitā*, not imagined; *vṛttih*, state of mind; *mahā*, great; *videhā*, out of the body; *tataḥ*, by that; *prakāśa*, light; *āvaraṇa*, covering; *kṣayaḥ*, destruction

The state of mind [projected] outside [of the body], which is not an imagined state, is called the great out-of-body [experience]. By this, the covering of the light [of buddhi] is destroyed.

From what can be understood from the commentaries, it seems that this verse is taken to indicate that one can project the mind out of the body in two ways, imagined and nonimagined. The mind, although situated within the body, can focus on something outside the body, which is called *kalpita* or an imagined out-of-body experience. Everyone engages in this all the time: When you focus your mind on the book you are reading, the mind, in a sense, is being projected out of the body. But advanced yogīs are believed to be able to actually physically project the mind completely outside of the body at will such that it can function independently from the body. This is called an *akalpita* or nonimagined out-of-body experience. Everyone is familiar with imaging or thinking about things outside of ourselves, and projecting our minds here and there, but Patañjali here states that the yogī is able actually to disconnect the mind completely from the body and roam around at will independent of the body and, if he or she so desires, enter the bodies of others by this method (III.38). As Bhoja Rāja notes, it is because the false ego is removed that the yogī develops the ability to exit the body at will (in other words, the *kleśas* have been transcended). False ego, *ahaṅkāra*, means misidentifying with the body, as a consequence of which one is confined to the body until its destruction. So when false ego is destroyed, the bonds that bind the soul to the body are released, and the
yogī is no longer subject to confinement in the body even while the body is still alive.

Along these lines, Patañjali notes that by this practice, the yogī diminishes the coverings, āvaraṇa, that envelop the pure light, prakāśa, which is to say the sattva potential of buddhi. These coverings are the kleśas and karma with its fruits, which are caused by the guṇas, says Vyāsa. According to Hariharānanda, this takes place because by such out-of-body experiences it becomes clear that the self is not the body, and so the base of ignorance, namely, any residual thinking that “I am this body,” is further eliminated. And as we know, ignorance is the substratum of the other kleśas and consequently of the karma produced by them.

III.44 sthūla-svarūpa-sūkṣmānvayārthavattva-saṁyamād bhūta-jayaḥ

sthūla, gross; svarūpa, essential nature or character; sūkṣma, subtle; anvaya, constitution; arthavattva, purpose, significance; saṁyamāt, from the performance of saṁyama; bhūta, elements; jayaḥ, mastery

By saṁyama on the gross nature, essential nature, subtle nature, constitution, and purpose [of objects, one attains] mastery over the elements.

As has been stressed throughout this chapter, to understand the mechanics of the siddhi powers from the perspective of Yoga presuppositions, one needs to understand the metaphysics of Sāṅkhya and Yoga. The feats outlined in this chapter have sometimes been called magic, which can carry connotations of harnessing the power of sinister spirits and other notions inappropriate in the context of the Yoga Sūtras. The term also has connotations of supernaturalism, of mysteriously transcending the known laws of nature, which is more appropriate to the present context, although, considered from within the parameters of Sāṅkhya philosophy, the principles underpinning the
siddhis are not actually mysterious but are internally consistent with the metaphysics of the system. This sūtra provides further insight into their workings.

As we have seen, the yogī performs saṁyama on some material object, whatever it might be (sun, moon, sense organ, etc.) and consequently is able to manipulate, rearrange, and tamper with the natural order of things. How does this transpire? In this sūtra, Patañjali considers what exactly constitutes physical objects such that they are amenable to such transformations by considering their metaphysical makeup on five progressively more subtle levels of prakṛti.

The first two levels, the gross, sthūla, and essential, svarūpa, natures of an object require a further discussion of two categories in Indic thought initiated in I.49: viśeṣa and sāmānya. Viśeṣa, in the thought of the school of Vaiśeṣika, means particularity, that which makes an entity particular and distinct from other entities. The school of Vaiśeṣika takes its name from viśeṣa, which ultimately refers to a metaphysical category or ingredient of reality that distinguishes or individualizes one fundamental entity or subatomic particle from another. Vyāsa uses the term more in the sense of viśeṣa-guṇa, or distinguishing quality of an entity. For example, in the present context, each of the five elements has a viśeṣa-guṇa: The distinguishing property or particular quality of the water element, for example, is taste. Other substances have taste only to the extent to which they contain some portion of water. Each element’s viśeṣa-guṇa will be discussed below.

Sāmānya, on the contrary, according to the Vaiśeṣika school, means an essential feature that produces commonality among entities rather than distinguishing between them, as is the case with viśeṣa. Here, too, Vyāsa uses the term in a narrower sense to refer to the dharma, also a type of property in Hindu philosophical discourse but that Vyāsa correlates with properties different from those indicated by guṇa. This will be clarified below.

In any event, terms such as viśeṣa and sāmānya and their analyses are especially associated with the Vaiśeṣika school, where they are construed somewhat differently from their utilization here. According to the Yoga tradition, by the first aspect mentioned in this sūtra, the sthūla, gross nature or aspect of an object, Patañjali is referring to the object’s
elemental makeup of ether, air, fire, water, and earth—the mahābhūtas. As noted, these elements have višeṣa-guṇas, specific qualities, associated with each of them. So the specific quality of ether is sound; the specific quality of air is touch (since air evolves from ether, it also has sound, the quality present in ether); the specific quality of fire is sight (since fire evolves from air, which in turn evolves from ether, it also has the qualities of both, sound and touch); the specific quality of water is taste (since water, in turn, evolves from fire, it also has the qualities of the previous elements, sound, touch, sight); and the specific quality of earth is smell (since earth is the last of the evolutes, it also has the qualities of all four previous evolutes). Thus, as a result of the presence of the wind element, we can feel something; as a result of the presence of the water element, we can taste something; as a result of the earth substance, we can smell something, and so on (therefore pure water has no smell; only muddy water, which contains earth, does).

We notice that each element includes the qualities of the previous elements in addition to its own special quality. Thus earth, which evolves from water which itself evolves from fire which itself evolves from air which evolves from ether, has all the qualities, and each other member of this list progressively has one less. So ether pervades all the elements; air pervades fire, water, and earth; fire pervades water and earth; and so on. Also, it is important to note that at this gross level, sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell are not the generic and nondifferentiated subtle energies corresponding to these sense abilities, the tanmātras (which will be encountered at the third level, below), but are sound, touch, etc., as manifest in gross form. This means demarcated by differentiation into the full range of different sounds, smells, tastes, etc., that exist in the perceivable world. For example, sound at this level is manifest in a range of sound in musical notes such as do, ma, etc., of the Hindu music scale; touch is subdivided into the range of sensations such as hot or cold; sight is determined by the range of colors such as blue or yellow; taste becomes distinctive in the range of flavors such as stringent or astringent; and smell manifests in a variety of odors such as sweet-smelling or otherwise. All this—the elements and their special characteristics—constitutes the gross aspect of an object. The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools in particular have taken it upon themselves to produce
lists of all these various qualities, characteristics, and subcharacteristics of gross objects, although there are some significant differences between these schools and those of the Yoga and Sāṅkhya lineages on certain issues. The second item listed by Patañjali, *svarūpa*, essential nature, is understood as relating to an object’s *sāmānya*, its universal or general properties, more abstract or subtle aspects or properties of an object, which Vyāsa discusses in terms of the *dharma* or inherent nature of an object. Universal properties are listed in some detail in the commentaries. For example, in terms of the elements themselves, among the properties of ether noted by Vyāsa and the commentaries is its all-pervadingness and interpenetration (it pervades all objects); of air, its constant motion and the ability to move; of fire, its heat and light; of water, its liquidity and cohesion; and of earth, its shape and weight. These properties are universal insofar as they underpin all objects in their categories. So, for example, everything with the earth element has form (that is, has the universal property of being limited in its extension); everything with water has cohesion in accordance with the proportion of water contained in it.

In sum, Vyāsa notes that form, liquidity, heat, movement, and all-pervadingness are the general properties, *sāmānya*, of earth, water, fire, air, and ether, respectively; and the qualities of smell, taste, visibility, touch, and sound are their corresponding specific or particular qualities, *viśeṣa-guṇas*. A substance, *dravya*, is a combination of these generic and specific qualities, and more specifically, one in which these qualities or properties are inherent, rather than distinct, entities (contra Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika). So when one encounters a physical object, the most immediate aspect of it that one experiences is its gross nature or elemental makeup, and its specific qualities, which are pervaded by the object’s essential nature, all of which comprise the first two items listed in this *sūtra*.

Moving on to the third feature, the *sūkṣma*, subtle aspect of an object, consists of the *tanmātras*, subtle elements, from which the gross aspects such as earth, etc., evolve (and it is here that the Sāṅkhya school parts company with the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools). The *tanmātras* are sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell, but these are not specific sounds
and touch, etc. (sensations)—the do or mā of the Hindu music scale, hot or cold, etc.—mentioned above, but generic undifferentiated sound and touch, etc., within which the variations of specific sounds and touch sensations are latent; they have not yet burst forth to manifest their full range of differentiated sounds, tastes, etc., as is the case with level one. Although translated simplistically as sound, touch, taste, etc., the tanmātras are a set of vibrational energies that underpin these sense capabilities. The element of ether is produced, according to Sāṇkhya metaphysics, from generic sound; air from generic touch and sound; fire from generic sight, touch, and sound; water from generic taste, sight, touch, and sound; and earth from generic smell, taste, sight, touch, and sound.

Another way of putting this is that the atoms, which correspond to the elements of ether, air, fire, water, and earth, are themselves composed of the tanmātras. If one dissects or dissolves any object, penetrates more subtly into its metaphysical makeup, one will realize that the ultimate subatomic particles constituting the physical elements with their qualities are actually individualized densifications, or gross externalizations of a still more subtle energy or set of energies—the tanmātras.

The fourth item, constitution, anvaya, is taken by the commentators to refer to the three guṇas. Penetrating even more deeply into an object’s constituents, one comes to its fundamental makeup and realizes that everything in manifest reality, including the tanmātras, is ultimately composed of sattva, rajas, and tamas. Finally, on a less metaphysical and more abstract level, one arrives at the fifth item mentioned in this sūtra, arthavattva, purpose, which pertains more to functionality than metaphysics. The purpose of all objects in manifest reality is twofold: to provide to the puruṣa either enjoyment (and its consequence, bondage) or liberation, as noted in II.18.

By saṁyama on these progressively more subtle ways of perceiving objects in the external world, the yogī attains mastery over them. By manipulating the subtle substructure of anything in physical reality with one’s will—a function of citta—one can rearrange the gross externalization of that object. As Vyāsa puts it, when saṁyama is perfected, the elements follow the will of the yogī, as calves follow the
cow. Since everything is ultimately a product of the three primary guṇas, by manipulating the proportion of the guṇas in an object one can completely transform its makeup, just as one can completely change the color of something by adjusting the proportions of the primary colors red, yellow, and blue. Or, in Dasgupta’s terms, “The difference between one thing and another is simply this, that its collocation of atoms, or the arrangement or grouping of atoms is different from another. The formation of a collocation has an inherent barrier against any change ... Providing the suitable barriers can be removed, anything could be changed to any other thing” (255–56). Since buddhi (and ahaṅkāra) ultimately underpin the tanmātras which, in turn, underpin the subatomic particles that comprise matter, the Yoga traditions holds that buddhi can be manipulated to rearrange the groupings of such atoms, which are nothing but a densification of itself to create new effects. This is not magic from the perspective of Yoga. It is subtle physics.

Vijñānabhikṣu correlates the vitarka-samādhi with meditation on the gross nature of an object, which implies other stages of samādhi mentioned in the first chapter; specifically, vicāra could be correlated with the other, more subtle and rarefied natures of an object, as outlined in this sūtra and discussed more specifically in I.42.

III.45 tato ‘ṇimādi-prādurbhāvaḥ kāya-sampat-tad-dharmānabhighātaś ca

tataḥ, from that; aṇimā, the mystic power of aṇimā [lightness]; ādi, etc.; prādurbhāvaḥ, the appearance of; kāya, body; sampat, accomplishment, perfection; tat, their [the elements’]; dharma, essential nature; anabhighātaḥ, nonresistance, absence of limitations; ca, and

As a result of this, there are no limitations on account of the body’s natural abilities; mystic powers such as aṇimā, etc., manifest; and the body attains perfection.
Here Patañjali lists three consequences of the type of saṁyama discussed in the previous sūtra. For the removal of “limitations on account of the body’s natural abilities,” dharma-anabhighāta, Vyāsa lists the following:

(1) The earth does not obstruct the yogī by its quality of solidness, such that the yogī can enter even a stone.
(2) Water, though moist, does not wet the yogī.
(3) Fire, though hot, does not burn the yogī.
(4) Wind, though moving, does not budge the yogī.
(5) Ether, which normally does not cover anything, covers the yogī such that he or she remains invisible even to the siddhas, or those who have attained these very powers.

The eight mystic powers mentioned in this sūtra refer to the standardized list of powers that are ubiquitous in classical Hindu texts. That Patañjali sees fit to note only the first one (aṇimadi) followed by etc. indicates that these were already well-known to his audience. The first four powers pertain to saṁyama on various gross aspects of prakṛti, the remainder on various subtle aspects. These eight powers are:

(1) Aṇima, minuteness: the ability to make one’s body atomic in size. This allows one to become small enough to enter into anything (even the dense substructure of a diamond, says Śankara), and by so doing to become invisible to anyone.
(2) Laghīmā, lightness: the ability to make the body as light as one desires in terms of weight (as light as cotton, say the commentators).
(3) Mahimā, largeness: the ability to make the body as heavy in weight as one desires.
(4) Prāpti, attainment: the ability to attain anything one desires—one can touch the moon with one’s fingertips, says Vyāsa.
(5) Prākāmya, freedom of will: the ability to be unobstructed in one’s desires—one can dive into the earth just as one plunges into water, says Vyāsa.
(6) Vaśītva, mastery: the ability to control the elements and their qualities, and to control other beings.

(7) Íśītṛtva, lordship: the ability to control the outward appearance, disappearance, and rearrangement of the elements.

(8) Yatra-kāmāvasāyitva: the ability to manipulate the elements at will according to one’s fancy.

In short, once one attains perfection in the siddhis that accrue from meditation, one becomes practically omniscient and omnipotent. The Hindu and Buddhist traditions are replete with stories pertaining to the magical powers of the accomplished yogī.

However, the commentators hasten to add, this does not mean that a yogī whimsically disrupts the natural order of things. The yogī respects the will of Íśvara, the Lord, who is eternally perfect and by whose will the natural order of things was arranged in the first place. Free from personal ego and desire, what reason could the yogī have to interfere with Íśvara’s plan? To do so, says Śaṅkara, would, quite apart from desire and ego, indicate animosity toward Íśvara, and the yogī, at this point, has been purified of such base qualities. One might mention here, along with Vijñānabhikṣu, that, according to the Vedānta Sūtras (IV.4.17), the yogī’s quasi-omnipotent powers do not extend to the ability to create a universe. They are limited in this one regard, and this limitation distinguishes the ordinary puruṣa from Íśvara, according to the Vedānta school.

The perfection of the body, the third accomplishment mentioned in this sūtra, is the topic of the next sūtra.

रुपलावण्यबलब्रजसंहननत्वानि कायसंपत् । । ४६ ।।

III.46 rūpa-lāvaṇya-bala-vajra-saṁhananatvāni kāya-sampat

rūpa, beauty of form; lāvaṇya, charm, grace; bala, strength; vajra, thunderbolt; saṁhananatvāni, being of a solid nature; kāya, the body; sampat, perfection

The perfection of the body consists of [possessing] beauty,
charm, strength, and the power of a thunderbolt.

The commentators consider this sūtra, which expounds on the perfection of the body, the last item listed in the previous sūtra, as self-explanatory and offer no further comments. The vajra mentioned here, usually associated in Hinduism with Indra, king of the demigods, is a thunderbolt weapon. Indra is the Indic equivalent to culturally cognate Indo-European figures such as Thor and Zeus, and his vajra is fashioned, according to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (VI.10.13), from the bones of the sage Dadhici and said to be almost unbreakably hard. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī gives Hanumān, the devoted monkey servant of Lord Rāma, as an example of someone who has attained the siddhi mentioned in this sūtra, and, indeed, one of Hanumān’s names is Vajrāṅga—one who has the limbs of a thunderbolt.

ग्रहणस्वरूपसमितिन्यायप्रत्यक्षप्रत्ययसंयमाय इतिनिर्देशयः || ४७ इ

III.47 grahaṇa-svarūpasmitānvyārthatvamāda indriyajayaḥ

grahaṇa, the process of obtaining knowledge; svarūpa, the essence; asmitā, the ego; anvaya, inherent quality, constitution; arthavattva, purposefulness; samyamāt, by samyama (concentration) on; indriya, the senses; jayaḥ, victory, control

By the performance of samyama on the process of knowing, on the essence [the sense organs], on ego, on the constitution [of the guṇas], and on the purpose [of the guṇas] comes control over the senses.

This sūtra analyzes another set of five progressively more rarefied ways of perceiving reality, in this case the metaphysical makeup of the senses with a view to attaining supreme control over them and thus overlaps with III.44, which in parallel fashion analyzes the objects of the senses in five progressively more rarefied ways. Grahana, the process of knowledge, refers to the operation of the senses on the sense objects (the
objects of sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell). As we know from I.41, *grahaṇa* literally means grasping and refers here to the process by which the sense objects are grasped or experienced by means of the channels of the senses. It is the act of acquiring knowledge.

Vyāsa and the commentators take the second item on this list, *svarūpa*, the essence, to refer to the *sāttvic* modification of *buddhi* (the intellect), which underpins the illumination, or knowledge-acquiring abilities of the senses. In other words, the *tanmātras*—sound, sight, touch, taste, smell, etc.—which are the powers behind the functions of the senses, are *sāttvic* in essence. As indicated in III.44, these are the general functions of sound, taste, etc., rather than their particulars in specific notes or tastes (which manifest at the level of sense objects). Next, *asmitā*, is specifically correlated with the *ahaṅkāra* by Vyāsa, so these are more or less synonymous terms used in the Yoga and Śāṅkhya schools, respectively, for the ego. Etymologically *asmitā* means I-am-ness, whereas *ahaṅkāra* means I am the doer, so there is a slight distinction in emphasis, as discussed previously. Regardless, these terms refer to the misidentification of the nonself with the self. It is from *ahaṅkāra* that the senses emerge, as indicated on the Śāṅkhya chart in the introduction. So *asmitā* is a still finer cause of sense activity.

As in III.44, *anvaya*, the fourth item, is taken by the commentators to refer to the three *guṇas*, which underpin even ego and, therefore, ultimately also the senses, which are derivatives of ego (see Śāṅkhya chart in the introduction). Since Vyāsa speaks of determination here, and since determination is a feature of *buddhi*, intelligence, Vijñānabhikṣu understands this fourth dimension of the makeup of the senses to refer more specifically to *buddhi* than the *guṇas*. This also works from a metaphysical perspective, as *ahaṅkāra* (*asmitā*), and thus its evolutes such as the senses are themselves derivates from *buddhi*, which is the first evolute from *prakṛti*. Finally, again as in III.44, at the ultimate rarefied level, underpinning the activities of the *guṇas*, is their *arthavattva*, ultimate purpose vis-à-vis *puruṣa*. This purpose is to provide experience or liberation to *puruṣa*.

Thus, paralleling his analysis of the sense objects in III.44, Vyāsa has deconstructed the actual senses themselves into their progressively more subtle constituents: their grossest aspect as their function of acquiring
knowledge of the sense objects; their sāttvic constitution; their essential nature as evolutes of ahaṅkāra; their even more subtle nature as expressions of buddhi, which is itself a product of the guṇas; and finally their subtlest nature, which is their epistemological purpose for existing in the first place. By performing saṁyama on the senses in these progressively more rarefied ways, the yogī masters them sequentially, says Vyāsa. Once this is accomplished, the senses can be said to be fully mastered, indriya-jaya.

III.48 tato mano-javitvam vikaraṇa-bhāvaḥ pradhāna-jayaś ca
tataḥ, from that; manoḥ, of the mind; javitvam, quickness; vikaraṇa, without instruments; bhāvaḥ, existence; pradhāna, primordial matter; jayaḥ, victory; ca, and As a result of this comes speed like the speed of mind, activity independent of the bodily senses, and mastery over primordial matter.

Patañjali here refers to three more sets of powers that accrue to the yogī who has conquered the senses in the manner outlined in the previous sūtra. Once one has mastered the senses, one’s body can move at the speed of mind, mano-javitvam; one can act and attain knowledge at any time or place even without one’s body and its sense organs of perception, vikaraṇa-bhāva; and one attains mastery over the primordial prākṛtic matrix—and therefore, specify the commentators, over all its evolutes and thus all manifest reality, pradhāna-jaya. Here we again see another articulation of the yogic claim to omnipotence and omniscience. Vyāsa groups together the attainment of these three types of abilities under the term madhu-pratīka. In his Yoga-vārttika commentary, Vijñānabhikṣu connects the latter two powers referred to in this sūtra by Patañjali with the attainments of the two types of yogīs referred to in I.19: the videha, bodiless ones, and the prakṛti-laya, those merged in prakṛti.

In his Yoga-sāra commentary, Vijñānabhikṣu states that it is on
account of the first power, mano-javitvam, moving at the speed of mind, that great siddhas are able to appear in a moment before their disciples merely on the latter’s thinking of them.\textsuperscript{92} Thus when the traditional Vyāsa—divider of the Vedas, compiler of the Purāṇas, and author of the Mahābhārata (whom the Yoga tradition correlates with our commentator Vyāsa), became despondent, his heart unfulfilled despite his immense labors (since he had yet to write the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and thus to fully expound the truths of the supreme Lord Viṣṇu), his guru, Nārada, appeared before him to council him (I.4.26ff). This belief in the guru manifesting before the disciple at a moment of crisis is still evidenced in, for example, Yogānanda’s Autobiography of a Yogi.

\textit{III.49 sattva-puruṣa-nyatā-khyāti-mātrasya sarva-bhāvādhiṣṭhātrtvam sarva-jñātrtvam ca}

\textit{sattva, intellect; puruṣa, the self, soul; anyatā, difference; khyāti, discernment; mātrasya, of one, only; sarva, all; bhāva, state of existence; adhiṣṭhātrtvam, state of supremacy over; sarva, all; jñātrtvam, state of knowledge; ca, and}

Only for one who discerns the difference between the \textit{puruṣa} and the intellect do omniscience and omnipotence accrue.

When \textit{buddhi} has been cleansed of its rājasic and tāmasic ingredients such that only pure \textit{sattva} remains, it attains a state of perfect clarity that Vyāsa calls \textit{vaśīkāra}. In this state, the yogī has full realization of the difference between the highest aspect of the cognitive faculty, pure \textit{buddhi},\textsuperscript{93} and the \textit{puruṣa} itself, \textit{sattva-puruṣa-nyatā}. Needless to say, we are still within the realms of \textit{sabīja-samādhi} at this point. The consciousness of \textit{puruṣa} is directed outward insofar as it is still conscious of \textit{buddhi}, albeit \textit{buddhi} in its ultimate purified state, rather than directed inward toward pure self-awareness. But the yogī now has complete control, \textit{vaśīkāra}, over manifest reality: The \textit{guṇas}, which are the essence of everything in manifest reality, submit themselves before their owner,
the kṣetrajña, or master of the field (of prakṛti), says Vyāsa, using terms that are likely drawn from the thirteenth chapter of the Gītā. They are manipulated by the will of the yogi, like iron filings are manipulated by the presence of a magnet, says Vijñānabhikṣu.

Omniscience, sarva-jñātṛtva, continues Vyāsa, simply means discriminate awareness of the three guṇas. If one perceives the true nature of the guṇas, one automatically understands any past, present, or future product emanating from them, just as one can understand the true and ultimate nature of any color, past, present, or future, once one understands how the essential components of the three colors red, yellow, and blue combine to produce the variegated universe of color. Vijñānabhikṣu notes that, in principle at least, all puruṣas are masters over the guṇas, but, due to the kleśas and their ensuing obstacles such as vice, etc.—in other words, due to the prevalence of rajas and tamas—the guṇas do not submit themselves to all puruṣas at all times. But the yogi who has reached the stage indicated in this sūtra has full mastery over them, sarva-bhāva-adhiṣṭhātṛtva.

The Jains have an interesting counterpart to this. In the Jain traditions, karma is conceived of in a much more physical fashion than in the Hindu/Buddhist schools. It literally sticks onto the ātman, depending on the degree of the soul’s passions and cravings, which act as a sort of glue, like dirt covering a lamp. When this karma is partly destroyed it frees up the yogi’s awareness such that it can perceive forms that are normally beyond the purview of the senses, like the light of a lamp can pervade farther when some of the dirt covering it is removed. In other words, the yogi develops supernormal powers of the senses (avadhi-jñāna). When the soul has overcome hatred and jealousy, etc., the light of the ātman can penetrate farther and access subtler dimensions: Its awareness can have direct perception of the thoughts of others, past and present (manaḥ-paryāya). Finally, when all karma is totally removed, with awareness now unimpeded, like a simple light that can pervade the entire universe if there are no obstructions to impede it, absolute omniscience and omnipotence arise in the soul (kevala-jñāna).

Vyāsa uses the term viśokā, sorrowlessness, here to describe this state of omniscience. What is sorrow, after all, but the reaction to the loss of something pertaining to prakṛti, or the feeling of deprivation when one
cannot attain some such thing? Needless to say, the point is theoretical, since to have arrived at this stage the yogī has perforce transcended attachment to objects and desire for them. But, if only in principle, if the yogī at this point has full control over prakṛti and her effects, and thus is obliged neither to lose any object of desire nor submit to powerlessness in attempts to obtain any such object, where is the question of sorrow?

Obviously, grandiose claims of omniscience and omnipotence are hardly likely to appeal to the rational spirit of post-Enlightenment thought. However, recalling our commitment to a phenomenological approach, such claims follow logically from within the parameters of Sāṅkhya or Yoga metaphysics. This metaphysics holds that all material and psychic phenomena are evolutes of buddhi. Only the kleśas keep one's buddhi localized and separate from the universal buddhi, the first evolute from prakṛti, so once these are transcended, these individualizing limitations are surpassed. Consequently, if one can access and exert mastery over the universality of buddhi, one has full knowledge of and control over all its evolutes, namely, the entirety of material and psychic phenomena—the phenomenal world. The claim to omniscience is thus internally consistent with the metaphysics of the Sāṅkhyan system.

Similar claims are fairly standard across Indic traditions: Tantric, Jain, Buddhist, etc., including the Vedānta tradition. In the Jain Kalpa-sūtra (120.1), Mahāvīra, the contemporary of the Buddha who is the primary figurehead in the Jain tradition, attains liberation (called kaivalya, the same term used in IV.34 below), at which point he becomes omniscient: “Comprehending all objects; he knew and saw all conditions of the world, of gods, men and demons: whence they come, whither they go, whether they are born as men or animals or become gods or hell-beings, the ideas, the thoughts of their minds, the food, doings, desires, the open and secret deeds of all living beings in the whole world.” Indeed, the Jains maintain that all souls must necessarily attain omniscience upon liberation. The Buddha, too, makes similar claims about himself: “Whatever … in this world with its devas and Māras and Brahmans [celestial beings] is by the fold thereof, gods or men, recluses or Brahmans, seen, heard, felt, discerned, accomplished, striven for, or devised in mind—all is understood by the Tathāgata [Buddha].”

Having said this, we might also revisit the fact that Patañjali in I.25
made a point of noting—and perhaps his comment there can now be considered in a different light—that *tatra niratiśayaṁ sarvajña-bijam*, Īśvara’s “omniscience is unsurpassed.” Even if the yogī’s awareness can pervade all of *prakṛti*, understand its past and future permutations, and access all things knowable as indicated in this *sūtra*, nonetheless Īśvara’s omniscience is of a higher order. One might wonder what else there is to know, if the yogī already knows everything past and present, but clearly and perhaps expectedly, whatever else there might be must be beyond the range of *citta* and *buddhi*, since the yogī already knows all there is to be known within the ranges of these. In other words, if the yogī knows everything *prākṛtic*, as indicated in these *sūtras*, yet Īśvara knows something that surpasses this (*atiśayam*), then might one have some grounds to infer that Īśvara’s additional omniscience, so to speak, might be associated with some level of experience beyond *prakṛti*?

Certainly the theologies of post-Śaṅkara Vedāntins such as Rāmānuja, Madhva, Caitanya, and Vallabha take this view and hold that there are numerous *Brahman* realms and dimensions beyond *prakṛti* made not of *prākṛtic* matter but of pure conscious *Brahman*, and these are inhabited by the unlimited Supreme divine forms of Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa/Kṛṣṇa in the company of quasi-omniscient and omnipotent liberated *puruṣas*, also in forms of pure conscious *Brahman*, whose powers are nonetheless inferior to Īśvara’s⁹⁹ As elsewhere, one cannot project theologies from different times and contexts onto Patañjali’s *sūtras*, which—unlike the earlier Sāṅkhya/Yoga traditions as well as the later commentators including Vyāsa—don’t even mention *Brahman*. But if one chooses to step beyond Patañjali’s characteristically *Brahman* tantalizing references of Īśvara’s superomniscience, so to speak, one can find interesting examples of how this notion of graded omniscience and omnipotence gets developed in other later Vedāntic traditions.

In any event, where Patañjali differentiates between the omniscience of liberated *puruṣas* and that of Īśvara, the *Vedānta Sūtras* make a parallel statement pertaining to the difference between the omnipotence of liberated *puruṣas* and that of Īśvara (IV.4.17). The former has all the divine powers except the creatorship of the universe (*jagadvyāpārar-vairjitaṁ*). Thus, in the Vedānta tradition, Īśvara’s omnipotence is unsurpassed, as his omniscience is for Patañjali.
III.50 tad-vairāgyād api doṣa-bīja-kṣaye kaivalyam

tat, that [i.e., omniscience and omnipotence]; vairāgyāt, from detachment, disinterest; api, even; doṣa, faults; bīja, seeds; kṣaye, on the destruction of; kaivalyam, supreme independence, ultimate liberation

By detachment even from this attainment [i.e., omniscience and omnipotence], and upon the destruction of the seeds of all faults, kaivalya, the supreme liberation ensues.

This sūtra announces the ultimate goal of yoga or, more specifically, of the practice of saṁyama. All other practices of saṁyamas are but semblances of this ultimate saṁyama, says Vācaspati Miśra. This, as we know, is nirbija-samādhi, which Patañjali here refers to as kaivalya. Kaivalya carries a range of meanings, including independence, aloneness, not being mixed with anything else. In other words, puruṣa has finally reached the state of complete detachment or uncoupling from prakṛti. In this state, there is no interest in even the possibility of omnipotence and omniscience, which are obviously states of awareness related to prakṛti, albeit prakṛti in totality.

When the kleśas and subsequent seeds of karma have dwindled, says Vyāsa, the yogi understands that even the most rarefied stage of discrimination noted in the previous sūtra is still a product of sattva, and sattva, as a guṇa, is still a product of prakṛti and so also ultimately comes under the category of things to be avoided (as outlined in II.15–16). Puruṣa, in contrast, is unchanging and pure and distinct from even sattva. Thus, the yogi begins to cultivate detachment from pure sattva. Since the insight into the need to do this is itself a product of sattva, in a sense sattva is channeling its own discrimination toward deconstructing itself—toward terminating its own functions.

Consequently, the seeds of the kleśas become burnt and incapable of sprouting, doṣa-bīja-kṣaya, and, along with the mind that has harbored them, eventually dissolve back into the primordial prākṛtic matrix. Once
this happens, puruṣa does not again experience the threefold miseries, which we know are caused by these kleśas. The guṇas have now fulfilled their purpose, says Vyāsa, and no longer incite action. Now that they are quiescent, they do not distract the consciousness of puruṣa. Now that puruṣa is no longer externally conscious of an other, it can be only internally conscious of itself. This is kaivalya, absolute independence, in the sense that puruṣa is independent of the guṇas and their products, and thus of everything in manifest reality. This means it can now be conscious only of itself—there is nothing else for it to be aware of once it ceases to be aware of prakṛti. Puruṣa is eternally aware; as the Gītā stresses throughout the second chapter, the nature of ātman can never be destroyed or negated in any way. Puruṣa can only and must be aware by its very constitution, so when it ceases to be aware of prakṛti it has no other choice by dint of its very nature than to be aware of itself. Awareness can be self-aware or other-aware; there are no other options. Situated exclusively in its own ultimate and autonomous nature, the puruṣa is now pure and unadulterated consciousness—citi-śakti—that is, consciousness conscious only of itself. This is kaivalya or asamprajñāta-samādhi.

III.51 sthānyupanimantraṇe saṅga-smayākaraṇam punar-anīṣṭa-prasaṅgāt

sthāni, celestial beings; upanimantraṇe, upon the invitation; saṅga, attachment; smaya, smile, conceit; akaraṇam, not performing; punah, again; anīṣṭa, undesirable; prasaṅgāt, inclination toward, attachment

If solicited by celestial beings, [the yogī] should not become smug, because the tendency toward undesirable consequences can once again manifest.

As was discussed earlier, according to Hindu cosmology, this material universe contains numerous variegated realms, including celestial realms, attained by the pious performance of good karma in the earthly
realm (the puṇya of II.14). Karma, we recall, manifests in type of birth, quality of life experience, and life span, and so the denizens of these celestial realms enjoy the highest births in sarīsāra, superb sensual capabilities and quality of experience, and extraordinarily long life spans by human comparison. Such attainments are therefore enticing, and, indeed, were a major goal of the old Vedic ritualism as well as of the Mīmāṁsā school current in Patañjali’s time. Patañjali suggests that these celestial beings can attempt to lure the yogī, who, having attained omnipotence and omniscience, has powers that have now surpassed even those of the celestials, away from his or her practices.

Vyāsa begins his commentary by noting that there are four classes of yogī. First is the prathama-kalpika, whom he describes as one who is practicing and in whom the “light” is dawning. Vijñānabhinīṣṭa suggests that such a yogī may have attained stages of samādhi such as savitarka, in which case he or she is an advanced albeit still not fully accomplished practitioner. Next is the madhu-bhūmika, one who has attained the rtambharā insight (referred to in I.48). Vijñānabhinīṣṭa connects this (by the process of elimination) with nirvitarka-samādhi. A third type of yogī is the prajñā-jyotih, who has control over the elements and the sense organs, and who knows all that has been known and all that has to be known. Vijñānabhinīṣṭa says that such a yogī has attained the state of viśokā noted in III.49, and, indeed, all attainments accruing prior to the state of asamprajñāta-samādhi. Finally, there is the atikrānta-bhāvanīya, whose sole aim is to dissolve the mind back into prakṛti, such that puruṣa can now shine forth unfettered. Vyāsa associates the sevenfold insight (referred to in II.27) with this fourth type of yogī.

According to Vijñānabhinīṣṭa and Vācaspati Miśra, the specific type of individual referred to by Patañjali in this sūtra corresponds to the second category of yogī mentioned by Vyāsa, the madhu-bhūmika. In other words, when the yogī reaches the madhu-bhūmika stage, the celestial demigods endeavor to tempt him or her away from proceeding on the path, sthāni-upanimantraṇa. This type of yogī is the target of the demigods’ attention, since the first category of yogī is too neophyte to concern the demigods, the third has surpassed temptation, and the fourth has surpassed even the sphere of cognitive thought. The madhu-bhūmika then is a prime target for celestial temptations.
In Vyāsa’s version of events, the demigods in their various celestial realms, seeing the yogī progressing on the path, attempt to divert him:

Hey there, sit here! Enjoy here! This experience is enjoyable! This maiden is pleasurable! This elixir counteracts disease and old age! This vehicle flies through the air! These are the wish-fulfilling trees! Here is the pure Mandakini river! These are the perfected yogīs and the sages! Here are the most beautiful and sweetly disposed apsara nymphs! Here is clairvoyance and supernormal hearing powers! Here is a body as strong as a thunderbolt! You have earned all these by your good qualities! Come and partake of all this! This place, dear to the gods, knows no death, decay, or old age.

The stalwart yogī, however, must be guarded against such allurements, and being addressed in this way, should contemplate the dangers of attachment:

Burnt by the fearsome flames of worldly existence, and tossed around in the darkness of birth and death, I have somehow or other obtained the light of yoga, which destroys dense darkness. These winds of sensual enjoyment, which are born of desire, are obstacles [to the goal of yoga]. Having obtained that light, how on earth can I be deceived by the illusion of sensual pleasure and again make myself fuel for the burning fire of worldly existence?! Good riddance to you sensual pleasures, which are like a dream, and aspired for only by wretched people!

The yogī should become firm of resolve, continues Vyāsa, and turn his back on such temptations. But there is a further danger even here: “He should not even give a smile of satisfaction, thinking that he is being entreated even by the demigods! If he becomes smug, thinking himself securely situated, he will fail to realize that he is grasped by the hair by Death.” In this way, continues Vyāsa, “forgetfulness [of the true self], which is so hard to overcome, ever on the lookout for a weak spot, will find a point of entry, reactivate the kleśas, and undesirable consequences ensue.” But the diligent yogī becomes neither attached nor, perhaps as
important, proud of his nonattachment. Such a yogī will eventually attain success.

As early as the Munḍaka Upanisad there is fairly scorching criticism, in this case directed against the Vedic ritualists, of those striving to attain the attractions of the celestial realms by sacrificial rites:

Because of desire, those who are given to rites, do not understand. [When] their time in the [celestial] realms has expired, they fall down, tormented.

Believing sacrifices and gifts to be the highest, fools think there is nothing better than this.

When they have enjoyed [the fruits] of their good deeds in the higher realms, they return back down to this inferior world. (I.2.9–10)

The Gītā takes the same view of celestial attainments:

Ignorant people proclaim the flowery words of the Veda, O Arjuna! Delighting in Vedic doctrine, they say “there is nothing else.” Their hearts full of desires and aspiring for the celestial realms, they perform many varied and intricate rituals with the goal of [attaining] enjoyment and power. For those attached to power and opulence, whose minds are stolen by such things, an undeviating buddhi fixed in samādhi is not attained (II.42–44) ... After having enjoyed the spacious celestial realm, they then enter the world of mortals when their pious karma has expired. (IX.21)

III.52 kṣaṇa-tat-kramayoḥ saṁyamād viveka-jam jñānam

kṣaṇa, moment, instant; tat, its [the moment’s]; kramayoḥ, sequence, succession; saṁyamāt, from performing saṁyama on; viveka, discrimination; jam, born of; jñānam, knowledge

By performing saṁyama on the moment, and its sequence, one attains knowledge born of discrimination.
The smallest “moment,” kṣaṇa, in time, referred to here by Patañjali, requires, for its definition, an understanding of the anu. Anu, literally minute (in the quantitative sense of tiny), a term typically translated by Indologists of the nineteenth century and subsequently retained as atom, is the smallest individualized particle of matter in existence. An anu is an irreducible entity in the sense that it cannot be broken down into smaller parts, whereas atoms are reducible into smaller entities (such as electrons and protons, etc.), so atom is not an accurate translation. We will retain the term anu for this discussion with this in mind (I have, for this reason, sometimes referred to it previously, somewhat unsatisfactorily, as subatomic particle). Of course, as Vijñānabhikṣu rightly points out, anus themselves are ultimately composed of the guṇas; they are simply the smallest entities into which the guṇas can exist in the distinct forms of the mahābhūtas, gross elements of earth, water, etc., without reverting to subtler energies such as the tanmātras or ahaṅkāra, etc.110

Just as the anu is the smallest point of matter, the kṣaṇa, moment, mentioned in this sūtra is the smallest point in time. A kṣaṇa is defined as the time it takes for an anu to move from one point in space to the next point. Vyāsa does not specify how close together these points are, but one can infer that he is referring to the smallest possible distance, which corresponds to a distance equal to the anu’s own minute size; thus, a moment is the time it takes for the anu to move to the space immediately adjacent to its previous location. The sequence, krama, mentioned by Patañjali refers to a succession of such moments.

Having said this, Vyāsa points out that notions of time such as hour, day, night, year, and so forth have no tangible metaphysical reality—they are simply concoctions of the mind, that is, socially agreed upon constructions that have proved useful in organizing human existence. But in actuality all Time (as a metaphysical category) really consists of in Sāṅkhya is motion—specifically, it is ultimately the motion of the anus that comprise matter. Human societies assign labels to significant motions of visible matter such as the apparent movement of the sun, which is in essence a large conglomeration of primarily fire atoms. To the apparent motion of this conglomeration through the sky, we assign the term day, to the motion of the earth around the sun, we apply the
label year, etc. Such terms, however, have no ultimate metaphysical reality; for the yogi, the only metaphysical reality corresponding to the notion of Time is that of the motion of anus.\textsuperscript{111}

With this in mind, continues Vyāsa, there is no reality to the past or to the future. Two moments of the same anus cannot exist simultaneously—an atom can move only from one moment to the next, which is a sequence. The anus cannot be perceived in its previous location and its subsequent one simultaneously—this sequence can be viewed only progressively. Therefore, from the perspective of this metaphysics, or perhaps, more accurately, traditional Hindu physics, there is only one moment in all reality—the present. The earlier moment has ceased to be by becoming, or moving into, the present (at which time it no longer exists in its previous location), and the future has yet to be, or be moved into.

Now, since the moments of a succession cannot be perceived simultaneously, from a certain perspective, and as Vācaspati Miśra puts it, they are not real. Hariharānanda elaborates that reality is that which exists, and existence refers to that which is present (that is, has presence). Terms such as past and future actually refer to that which we cannot perceive because they are not present. In this sense, they do not actually exist. Thus, collectivities or successions of moments, such as notions of day or year, have no objective or actual metaphysical reality; they are merely conceptually real. One can, however, notes Vyāsa, say that the past and future are inherent in the present, and that therefore the entirety of reality is compressed or encapsulated in each moment.

With all this in mind, Patañjali is stating here that if one performs samiyama on moments and their succession, which the commentators have presented as being the minute movement of anus, true knowledge of reality born of discrimination arises. And this reality embodies the past and future, which is nothing other than this very movement of atoms, or, as Patañjali calls it, the “succession of moments.” The accomplished yogi at this stage can grasp the entirety of reality with its atomic motions, at all times.

Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhikṣu have different views of the relevance of this sūtra at this stage of the text. Vācaspati Miśra understands the omniscience previously mentioned throughout the sūtras
to be rhetorical; for example, when a person states, “We have tasted all vegetables,” he or she actually means that a large variety of vegetables has been tasted but not literally that there is not a single vegetable in existence that has not been tasted. In this *sūtra*, however, he understands Patañjali’s intent to indicate literal and absolute omniscience. Vijñānabhikṣu, on the other hand, understands the practice of samyama mentioned here to be an alternate means or technique to obtain the omniscience mentioned previously. The next *sūtra* elaborates on this discussion.

As a result of this, there is discernment of two comparable things that are not distinguishable by species, characteristics, or location.

The previous *sūtra* discussed the role of the moment, that is, the relationship between moment as a construct and the actual movement of anus, in order to explain how the yogi can fully and absolutely understand any material phenomenon. This discussion was prompted by Patañjali attempting to clarify and define the claims of omniscience made in III.49. The present *sūtra* continues that discussion, by presenting yet another schema for analyzing reality.

According to this *sūtra*, any two objects in reality can generally be distinguished according to their species, jāti; characteristics, lakṣaṇa; and location, deśa. Thus, says Vyāsa, if two things have the same characteristics and are in the same place, they can be distinguished if their species or type is different. A cow and a horse are distinguishable
because their species are different, even if they have similar characteristics, for example, they are both black with four legs and are herbivores, and even if they are in the same place, they live in the same field. Similarly, two entities can be distinguished if their characteristics are different, even if their species and location are the same. Two cows, despite being of the same species and in the same field, might be distinguishable if one is black and is temperamental and the other is brown and is sweet natured. And, again, two entities can be distinguished even if they are of the same species and have the same characteristics if their location is different. Two identical āmalaka fruits can be distinguished if one is situated in front and one at the back of the other despite being of the same species and having identical characteristics.

But what would happen, asks Vyāsa, if someone switched the placement of the two fruits when the yogī wasn’t looking (to test his yogic discernment, suggests Vācaspati Miśra), such that the fruit that had been in the front was now in the back and vice versa? How could the difference between the two be determined? After all, the claims to higher knowledge and omniscience that have been bandied about throughout the text would require that there be no area of information, however trivial, beyond the purview of the yogī adept at saṁyama. The two fruits are different, obviously, because, although all other variables such as species, characteristics, and, when switched around, location might be equal, with regard to the latter, they occupy this same location at different times (one fruit was placed in front first and then removed, and the other was placed there a few moments later when the yogī wasn’t looking).

The qualified yogī, says Vyāsa, and of course Īśvara, can perceive this difference physically (not just theoretically), even though it is indistinguishable to the common person, because of understanding the moment and its sequences (the atomic movements of anus), as analyzed in the previous sūtra, occupying any particular space. Moving the discussion back to the subatomic level, since anus are always in motion, and two anus cannot occupy the exact same space at the exact same time, a yogī who has mastery over saṁyama can perceive whether the anus and their sequences occupying a particular space are the same as
those that were there previously, even though the cluster of anus will be identical in all other ways (in species, characteristic, and location). In other words, the yogī can perceive that the individual anus and their sequencing in the second āmalaka fruit (the “moments” connected to this fruit) are not the same as those of the anus occupying the same space in the first fruit and could thus understand that they have been switched around.

Hariharānanda usefully compares this type of knowledge to a scientist who, with a microscope, could (in principle, at least) tell the subtle difference in the atomic makeup of two identical freshly minted coins if their relative positions were switched around, but a normal person could not. In short, whereas a common person can distinguish between things based on differences in their species, characteristics, and location, only a yogī can distinguish between things based on their subatomic moments in time.

Vyāsa notes that in the unmanifest stage of prakṛti—before the creation of the manifest world, when the guṇas are all latent and inactive—there are no distinct material entities, and thus nothing can be discerned. It is from the motion and interaction of the guṇas (which we call Time) that matter manifests, as a result of which anus emerge and things become perceivable. The yogī’s perception in saṁyama extends to the difference between the specific permutations of the guṇas manifesting in the form of one anu and those manifesting in another. Omnicience thus extends to the minutest levels of physical reality, as Patañjali indicated in I.40.

III.54 tārakaṁ sarva-viṣayaṁ sarvathā-viṣayam akramaṁ ceti
viveka-jam jñānam

tārakam, one who liberates; sarva, everything; viṣayam, object;
sarvathā, everywhere; viṣayam, object; akrama, without sequence; ca, and; iti, thus; viveka-jam, born of discrimination;
jñānam, knowledge

Knowledge born of discrimination is a liberator; it has
everything as its object at all times simultaneously.

Tāraka, liberator, says Vyāsa, suggests that the knowledge referred to here comes as a spontaneous flash of insight and not from teachings or books. Books consists of words, and words refer only to generalities, states Vijñānabhikṣu (see discussion in sūtra I.49), while the type of perception described in these sūtras is so specific it can tell the difference between two identical anus. It has everything as its object, sarva-viṣaya, because nothing is beyond its purview. Past, present, and future are perceived, and perceived without sequence, akrama, meaning that the past and the future are seen as inherent in the moment, that is, in the present. This perception is liberating, say the commentators, because it carries one over the ocean of birth and death.

The yoga-pradīpa, light of yoga, says Vyāsa, begins with the madhumatī stage and ends here with knowledge born of discrimination. (Vijñānabhikṣu says that this madhumatī is the same stage of samādhi as the madhu-bhūmika mentioned by Vyāsa in his commentary in III.51.) Madhu means sweet, and Vācaspati Miśra states that this is because this state of samādhi causes sweet bliss. Yoga starts at the madhumatī stage and goes through the seven states mentioned in II.27, say the commentators; it encompasses all stages of samprajñāta-samādhi, and all of these stages are parts of and lead to the knowledge born of discrimination, viveka-jāṁ jñānam.

III.55 sattva-puruṣayoh śuddhi-sāmye kaivalyam iti

sattva, the pure intellect; puruṣayoh, of the puruṣa, pure consciousness; śuddhi, purity; sāmye, upon becoming equal; kaivalyam, absolute independence, iti, thus it is said

When the purity of the intellect is equal to that of the puruṣa, kaivalya liberation ensues.

When the sattva element in the buddhi, intellect, becomes completely purged of rajas and tamas, states Vyāsa, and all the kleśas have been
eliminated, sattva becomes almost as pure as puruṣa, śuddhi-sāmya. Obviously it remains inert prakṛti, but, devoid of all obscuring factors, it almost starts to resemble puruṣa, as it were, and can now reflect puruṣa perfectly—it is in this sense that it becomes “equal to” puruṣa insofar as it becomes a perfect reflection of puruṣa. When a mirror is completely free of defects or dirt, it can reflect a face back to itself without any distortion and, in this sense, becomes (indirectly) equal to that which it reflects. Now, due to buddhi’s transparency, there is no more false state or experience attributed to the self, since the puruṣa can now see itself clearly in its original pure state. At this stage, whether or not one has developed the siddhi mystic powers, the state of kaivalya (described in III.50) is immanent. The ultimate discrimination of the difference between the buddhi itself and puruṣa is the last cognitive act of buddhi. Then buddhi ceases to function, says Hariharānanda. After gaining this discrimination, puruṣa can rest in its own awareness, as independent of the intellect—as the real face behind the mirror rather than the reflected face peering back, so to speak—hence the term kaivalya, aloneness or independence. It is now uncoupled from the intellect and the world of forms that it presents to puruṣa.

Vyāsa notes that it is not the mystic powers that bring about kaivalya but the discriminative knowledge of the previous sūtra. Once discriminative knowledge arises, ignorance is dispelled. Vyāsa uses the term adarśana here for ignorance, which literally means nonseeing. Not seeing the real self is what ignorance actually is: The mind is ignoring the self that animates it. Vyāsa reminds us that ignorance is the root of all the kleśas; thus, once ignorance is removed, the kleśas cease to exist. In the absence of the kleśas, there are no more seeds of karma, no consequent future births, and therefore no more saṁsāra. In this stage, says Vyāsa, the guṇas no longer present themselves as objects to be experienced by puruṣa. With no more external objects of experience, puruṣa is now in the state of kaivalya mentioned in this sūtra. Since awareness is eternal, and therefore must always be aware of something, now with nothing other than itself of which to be aware—no other—puruṣa can be aware only of self. This is kaivalya, only aware of selfness. The self now shines freely and purely in its own right. For Vijñānabhidhikṣu, as a theist, this state additionally entails becoming
inseparable (but as distinct individuals) from God, Īśvara.

The other commentators ponder Vyāsa’s suggestion that the siddhis, mystic powers, are unnecessary for ultimate self-awareness. Why would Patañjali spend so much time discussing them? they ask. After all, as Vijñānabhidheśu points out, one has to have some element of desire in order to attain siddhis. In any event, all commentators agree that the siddhis outlined in this chapter are by-products of the path, not fundamental to it. Indeed, the siddhis are still within the realm of suffering, as Hariharananda notes, since their scope is still prakṛti. One might surmise that the siddhis are believed to manifest spontaneously and hence Patañjali sees fit to inform the aspiring yogī of symptoms that will be encountered on the path so the yogī can be alerted not to be distracted and sidetracked by them. In any event, say the commentators, they are certainly not the direct cause of kaivalya; only discriminative knowledge is.

इति पतञ्जलि-विरचिते योगसूत्रे तृतीयो विभूतिपादः

iti Patañjali-viracite yoga-sūtre tṛtīyo vibhūti-pādaḥ
Thus ends the third chapter on samādhi in the Yoga Sūtras composed by Patañjali.
CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by concluding the definitions of the last three limbs of yoga [1–3], which are distinguished from the others by constituting samyama [4–6] and being internal limbs [7–8]. A discussion of the state of nirodha ensues [9–12], followed by the metaphysics of the relationship between substratum and characteristic [13–15]. The remainder of the chapter is then dedicated to an extensive discussion of various mystic powers accrued from the performance of samyama on a variety of things [16–48], culminating in omniscience followed by ultimate kaivalya liberation [49–55].
चतुर्थं: कैवल्यपादं:

caturthaḥ kaivalya-pādaḥ
CHAPTER IV

ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE

janma laughter-mantra-tapah-samadhi-jah siddhayah

janma, birth; oṣadhi, medicine, herbs; mantra, sacred chants; tapah, austerity; samādhi, meditative absorption; jah, born, arise; siddhayah, the mystic powers

The mystic powers arise due to birth, herbs, mantras, the performance of austerity, and samādhi.

Patañjali states that the mystic powers described in the previous section can be produced by a number of means. Powers attained as a by-product of samādhi, the last on his list, have already been discussed in detail in the previous chapter, but powers can be attained in four other ways, according to this sūtra. Firstly, they can be the result of activities done in a previous birth, janma, which have reached their fruition in this birth. For example, celestial beings have mystic powers, and one can be born as a celestial being endowed with various siddhis due to the good karma one accrued in a previous birth as a human. Fallen yogis too, who may not have attained the ultimate goal of yoga (but nonetheless perhaps attained some of the siddhis), pick up in a next birth from where they left off in their past life, as indicated in the Gītā (VI.37ff) and expressed in the story of Jaḍabhārata outlined in III.7. For that matter, quips Bhoja Rāja, even taking birth as a bird affords one the power of traveling through the air, which is supernormal from human perspectives!

Secondly, Patañjali states that these powers can also be produced from certain herbs, oṣadhi, and the commentators mention elixirs used by the asuras, supernatural beings, but note that such herbal concoctions are available in this world as well. Śaṅkara refers here to soma, a plant
described in the early Vedic texts, a favorite beverage of Indra, chief of the celestials, which bestowed supernormal powers when imbibed. Hariharānanda even mentions modern chloroform as sometimes triggering out-of-body experiences.

Thirdly, powers can also be produced by reciting certain mantras, say Patañjali and the commentators. The entire ancient Vedic sacrificial cult was predicated on the power of mantra—which in the earlier period referred to the Vedic hymns—to manipulate cosmic forces to produce effects, and the power of mantra to produce supernormal effects has remained consistent in the Indic traditions ever since.

Finally, one can fulfill one’s wishes, whatever they may be, through austerities, tapas. There are numerous stories in the Purāṇas describing how, by the performance of austerities, even demoniac personalities attained superhuman powers. Desiring immortality, Hiranyakaśipu, for example, performed intense austerities. He stood on his toes with arms outstretched in a type of a vṛkṣāsana pose for so long that ants covered his body in an anthill and consumed everything except his bones and life airs. As a result of the powers he accrued, the entire universe was disturbed, and so Brahmā appeared before the demon asking him what he sought. Hiranyakaśipu asked for immortality, but Brahmā informed him that even he himself, the engineer of the universe, was mortal and thus he could not bestow what he himself did not possess. The demon consequently requested that he not be killed by any created being, inside or outside, during the day or night, on the earth or in the air, or by any weapon. The wily demon thought he had thus circumvented all possible causes of death. However, Viṣṇu incarnated as Narasiṅha, half man half lion (thus neither man nor beast), and killed him on the threshold (neither inside nor outside), at dawn (neither day nor night), on his lap (neither on the ground nor in the air), and with his nails (not with any weapons) (Bhāgavata Purāṇa VII.3).

The various legends of practically every culture of the ancient world are replete with stories of magical powers ensuing from birth, incantations, herbal concoctions, etc. In this vein, Patañjali is here stating that these are not exclusively the prerogative of samādhi states.
IV.2 jāty-antara-pariṇāmaḥ prakṛty-āpūrāt

jāti, birth; antara, other; pariṇāmaḥ, change; prakṛti, material nature; āpūrāt, because of the filling in

The changes [in bodily forms that take place] in other births is due to the filling in by prakṛti.

When one is reborn, one receives a new body. The process by which this new body evolves, its pariṇāma, is described in this sūtra as due to the filling in of prakṛti. We have discussed how, due to the subtle causes of karma performed in life, seeds are planted that fructify in future births. These seeds cause an individual to change one body for a completely different body—that of a human, celestial, elephant, ant, or any other being. The process by which the prākṛtic configuration of the new body takes place is described here as prakṛti filling in, āpūra, the new form. The verb āpr can also mean to pour into so one can perhaps envision the evolutes of prakṛti being poured into or filling in the new form as an elephant, human, or whatever being, in accordance with the kleśas and saṁskāras embedded in the citta of the old form (citta, of course, is not created anew each birth as the gross body is, but is transferred from birth to birth). So the particular blueprint of the next body embedded in the subtle matter of citta in accordance with the saṁskāras of that specific citta is filled in, or materialized, by the gross elements. There is constant recycling in prakṛti. In cosmic terms, too, as any of the evolutes of prakṛti propagate further evolutes—as buddhi manifests ahaṅkāra from itself, or, in turn, ahaṅkāra manifests the tanmātras—any depletion that is incurred is filled in by prakṛti which, being infinite, is never depleted.

To illustrate this principle, Vijñānabhikṣu refers to the story of Vāmana from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (VIII.21ff). Vāmana was an incarnation of Viṣṇu who appeared as a small brāhmaṇa boy in the court of Bali, the king of the demons. Bali was harassing the celestial gods, although in fact he was a great devotee of Viṣṇu but had been born to a family of demons due to some quirk of fate in his karma. As a result of this birth he was acting inimically toward the celestial demigods, according to the dharma of his kind. However, as a devotee Bali also respected the Vedic dharma of being dutiful toward brāhmaṇas, and so,
upon being approached by Vāmana, offered him a boon of his choice. Vāmana simply asked for whatever land could be encompassed by three steps. Bali, as conqueror of the universe, although eager to give much more, was happy to provide this.

With his first step, Vāmana covered the entire earth, and with his second, the universe. With nowhere left to place his third step, Vāmana accused Bali, in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek fashion, of failing to fulfill his promise of granting him his three steps of land. Failing to fulfill a promise is an intolerable notion for a proud and principled monarch of the epic genre. Bali bowed before Vāmana and asked him to place the third step on his head, thereby illustrating his devotion to Viṣṇu. The point of the story in the context of the Bhāgavata is that no one is disqualified by birth or status from devotion to God, not even demons, but Vijñānabhikṣu refers to the story to illustrate the principle of prakṛti filling in or perhaps rather filling out a body. Vāmana’s tiny form was transformed into a form so enormous it could encompass the universe with one step. Prakṛti filled in the new, larger form from the old. In short, gross matter emanates out of subtler matter and fills in the various forms of the universe.

The instrumental cause of creation is not its creative cause, but it pierces the covering from creation like a farmer [pierces the barriers between his fields].

The guṇas of prakṛti, as we know, are the creative cause of manifest reality, since all creation emanates from the interaction among them.
The issue at stake here is what causes the guṇas of prakṛti to activate and produce the effects of the world. Is it what Patañjali terms the instrumental causes, nimitta [kāraṇa], which the commentators take to refer to dharma and adharma, the meritorious or nonmeritorious activities of human beings? In other words, following up on the previous sūtra of prakṛti filling in the ever-changing forms of the world, the question is raised indirectly whether it is because of the soul’s dharmic and adharmic activities that prakṛti activates the effects of the world, such as the new bodies obtained during reincarnation, as karmic reactions to these meritorious or nonmeritorious activities. The Mīmāṁsā school, for example, which denies the existence of Īśvara, posits the existence of an unseen power called adṛṣṭa (which essentially corresponds to the law of karma) as the force responsible for generating the results of dharma and adharma. Patañjali here rejects dharma and adharma as ultimate causal agents. Dharma and adharma, note the commentators, are themselves the effects of prakṛti, so they cannot be its causes. But they do remove the obstacles to prakṛti taking a certain course. They are thus the instrumental causes that can channel or direct specific effects emerging from within the preexisting substratum creative cause of the guṇas of prakṛti.

Patañjali analogizes creativity to the acts of a farmer, kṣetrika-vat. When a farmer wants to irrigate a field at a lower or equal level to an adjacent field that is already inundated with water, elaborates Vyāsa, he does not personally carry the water from one field to the other with his hands but merely removes the barrier or dam between the two fields, varaṇa-bheda, so that the water can spontaneously drain out of the irrigated field and into the adjacent one. Similarly, the farmer does not personally insert water into the roots of the grain; he removes the weeds from the environs that impede the natural tendency of water to flow downward, and the water then penetrates the roots by itself. Likewise, continues Vyāsa, dharma and adharma counteract each other, and pursuing dharmic or adharmic activities in life causes the removal of the blockages that obstruct prakṛti from creating or filling in a particular dharmic or adharmic body appropriate to these activities. So dharma and adharma act as guides or channels through which prakṛti can flow, like the barriers and dams in the farmer’s field, but they do not instigate the
initial motion of *prakṛti* herself in the first place. Hence this *sūtra* says the instrumental cause is not the creative cause, *aprayojaka*, but it does remove barriers within it.

The commentators discuss other instrumental causes that control the movements of *prakṛti*, such as Īśvara. Rearticulating the standard theistic argument in (Nyāya) Hindu thought, they note that Īśvara is the essential instrumental cause in activating *prakṛti*. In the production of a pot, the other instrumental and material causes—the initial idea or blueprint of the pot, and the clay, water, and potter’s wheel—are useless without the instrumental cause of the potter. Like the potter, Īśvara, in conjunction with other instrumental causes such as *kāla*, Time, and *dharma* and *adharma*—that is, *karma* and its consequences—is the instrumental cause that awakens the inherent power of *prakṛti* to produce its effects, says Vijñānabhikṣu. And, most important, it is ultimately Īśvara who removes the obstacles in *prakṛti* such that *dharma* and *adharma* may generate their respective fruits, says Vācaspati Miśra. Īśvara is the ultimate overseer who ensures that deeds are connected to their appropriate fruits. And, of course, on another level, and ironically, one can note that *puruṣa* itself is an indirect cause, since *prakṛti* exists simply for its sake (II.18).

Creation, the initial activation of *prakṛti* from its latent state, as accepted almost universally in classical Hindu thought (with the exception of the early Mīmāṁsā school), is a cyclical process: The universes emanate from their source and then dissolve back into it at the end of each cycle before a new cycle is activated. This is a never-ending process that is considered to be *anādi*, beginningless. Thus, Indic thought in general does not occupy itself with notions of a primordial, precyclical initial impetus—a *prākṛtic* big bang, if you will. This is not seen as a useful topic of speculation (or, rather, any initial impetus is denied by conceiving of cyclical creationality as beginningless). In any event, the point here is that once activated by the instrumental causes, *prakṛti’s* inherent qualities impel it to flow in accordance with the channels of human activity, *dharma* and *adharma*, just as water’s own qualities impel it to flow to a lower place once the obstacles damming it have been removed.
One of the *siddhis* commonly held to be attainable by accomplished *yogīs* is the ability of an individual *yogī* to create numerous personal bodies (a feat also noted in *Vedānta Sūtras* IV.4.15). The commentators understand this *sūtra* to be addressing the question of whether these multiple bodies each have individual *cittas*, or whether they all have the same *citta*, namely, the *citta* of the *yogī* creating the bodies. The consensus is that each of the bodies created by the *yogī* has its own individual mind, and these minds are all manifested from and are subordinate to the *yogī*’s ego. We recall that *citta*, in the restricted sense of *manas* (as opposed to *buddhi*, *ahaṅkāra*, and *manas*)⁴ is a manifestation of ego, *ahaṅkāra*, in Sāṅkhyan metaphysics. Thus, it would appear that an accomplished *yogī* can manifest multiple minds, rather than just one, from the ego.⁵

If there were just a single mind for multiple bodies, says Śaṅkara, there would be no scope for the different bodies to exhibit different activities, so these bodies would end up as if lifeless. In other words, if all the bodies performed exactly the same thing by virtue of having a single, unitary directing mind, they would effectively have no life of their own, but would all act like synchronized puppets. Or else there would also need to be individual *ātmans* to experience these different bodies and minds, continues Vijñānabhikṣu, not just the one *ātman* of the *yogī* creating the bodies.⁶ Even incarnations of Īśvara exhibit different minds, he points out: When Rama, an incarnation of Viṣṇu, exhibited unawareness of his divine nature,⁷ he was obviously experiencing a different mental state from that of the omniscient Viṣṇu.

Be this as it may, all commentators accept that a *yogī* can manifest multiple bodies and undertake different experiences—in one body practicing austerities, in another experiencing the objects of the senses, etc., says Vijñānabhikṣu. There is a similar discussion in the *Vedānta Sūtras* (IV.4.15), where the metaphor of a lamp is provided: As one lamp can light numerous individual and separate wicks, which then exhibit
their own light, so the yogi’s consciousness can animate several bodies. Again, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (III.21–23) provides an illustration of this siddhi in the story of the sage Kardama. Kardama, a hermit living on the banks of the Sarasvatī river, accepted the hand of the princess Devahūti on the condition that he depart for the forest once she had conceived a son by him. Despite being accustomed to royal comforts, Devahūti served her husband in his simple hermitage with absolute love and dedication, and consequently became weak and emaciated as a result of her austerities and spiritual practices. Eventually, won over by her devotion, the renounced and reclusive ascetic determined to fulfill her desire for a son. Marshaling some of the mystic powers outlined in the previous chapter, the sage manifested a palace filled with precious gems and all manner of opulence, and arranged for Devahūti to regain her former beauty. In order to fulfill the desires of his beautiful wife, who longed for sexual pleasure, the sage then exhibited the mystic power referred to by Patañjali in this sūtra by dividing himself into nine personal forms, so as to better satisfy her completely.

As an aside, the son whom Devahūti eventually bore was named Kapila, the sage who taught the Sāṅkhya doctrine. Tradition thus bears record of perhaps two Kapilas. The Kapila mentioned in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, who received instruction from Hara (Śiva) (V.2) is taken by Śaṅkara in his commentary to that verse to be different from the Kapila accepted as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in the Bhāgavata (as well as the Mahābhārata, the Gitā, and the Ahirbudhnya, noted earlier8), but both appear in theistic contexts. As noted earlier, the theistic Sāṅkhya, also amply evidenced in the Mokṣa-dharma section of the Mahābhārata and remaining current in the Purānic tradition, is in all probability older than the nontheistic variants that surface in Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s Sāṅkhya-kārikā, despite the fact that the latter text becomes, by default, the seminal text for the Sāṅkhya school (all earlier traditions being lost except in the scattered references noted earlier).

प्रवृतिभेद प्रयोजकं चित्तम् एकम् अनेकेशाम् ।२५।।

IV.5 pravṛtti-bhede prayojakam cittam ekam anekeśām
There is one mind, among the many [created by the yogī], which is the director in the different activities [of the different bodies].

What prevents the multiple minds in the various bodies created by the yogī from competing with each other in terms of their desires and degenerating into disharmony or conflict? asks Vācaspati Miśra. This sūtra is taken to indicate that although the yogī is able to create an individual mind for each body he or she chooses to generate, these bodies are all under the guidance or control of a principal mind, prayojakam cittam. Just as the one mind can control the multiple limbs of a person’s body and its sense functions, say the commentators, so the master mind of the yogī controls the subordinate minds inserted into the created bodies. Here the Yoga tradition follows the position of the Vedānta tradition, which, as noted, also raises this topic (IV.4.15). Mind is potentially omnipresent, after all, Hariharānanda reminds us, thus there is no far or near for it, nor any impediment to it manifesting in multiple, distinct bodies. The controlling mind is the perfected mind of the yogī, says Vijñānabhikṣu, and the intention or will of this mind governs the activities of the other minds. Thus, through these multiple bodies, the yogī can engage in multiple experiences simultaneously. He can then withdraw these bodies into his original form as the sun withdraws its rays, says Vācaspati Miśra.

IV.6 tatra dhyāna-jam anāśayam

tatra, from these [the minds who have attained siddhis indicated in IV.1]; dhyāna-jam, born from meditation; anāśayam, is without the storehouse or stock [of karma]

From these [five types of minds that possess siddhis], the one born of meditation is without the storehouse of karma.
The first sūtra of this chapter stated that siddhis could be attained by five different means, only one of which is through meditation (the others being through birth, herbs, mantras, and the performance of austerity). However, says Vyāsa, only the mind that has attained the siddhis through meditation is free from the vice and virtue accruing from the performance of dharma or adharma, and thus from the karma that is accrued thereby, which is stored in the citta in what is termed the āśaya, a type of receptacle, stock, or store of all the accumulated karma (I.24; II.12). As discussed, this karma eventually fructifies, perpetuating the cycle of birth and death.

Therefore, although a person may possess and exhibit siddhis gained as a result of birth, herbs, mantras, or austerities, such a person is not freed from the kleśas, which underpin all saṁsāric actions and in turn provoke karma and its ensuing results (see II.12–13). Such people may have astonishing powers, but they are nonetheless as helplessly bound by the laws of saṁsāra as anybody else, as was illustrated in the story of Hiraṇyakaśipu. This is not the case, however, with the yogī who has attained the siddhis by meditation, dhyāna-ja, in other words, as a by-product of samādhi. According to Patañjali, only through the practice of yoga is one free from the kleśas and their consequences.

Therefore, one should not assume that someone with mystical powers is automatically a yogī or, indeed, even a benevolent person as is underscored in Hindu folklore. The Purāṇas are full of stories of asuras, demons, who attain powers by tapas, austerities. Hiraṇyakaśipu utilized the powers that were bestowed on him to harass the entire universe. This included his own saintly son Prahlāda, since the demon could not tolerate his son’s devotion to Viṣṇu. Rāvaṇa from the Ramāyāṇa, who was also eventually destroyed by Viṣṇu in the form of Rāma, likewise received his awesome supernormal powers by performing austerities, as, indeed, did almost all the great demons in Hindu lore.

In short, the Yoga tradition, along with most other soteriological traditions of ancient India, takes the position that real yogīs do not display their powers; therefore, anyone doing so may very well have attained any semblance of siddhi power from birth, herbs, mantras, or austerity and is likely exhibiting them to manipulate gullible people. Except in very rare circumstances (and then for pedagogical purposes),
the cheap display of siddhis is not viewed as the sign of an enlightened being in popular yogic narrative.

**IV.7** karmāśuklākṛṣṇam yoginas tri-vidham itareṣām

karma, action and its reaction; aśukla, not white; akṛṣṇam, not black; yoginah, of the yogī; tri, three; vidham, types; itareṣām, of the others

The *karma* of a yogī is neither white nor black; of everyone else, it is of three types.

Vyāsa elaborates on the four types of *karma* alluded to by Patañjali here and divides them into four categories (a widespread schema that surfaces in Buddhist teachings). Black, kṛṣṇa, *karma* predictably consists of evil acts performed by the wicked. Black and white *karma* is the performance of both evil and pious acts. It is everyday action in the external world determined by how one acts toward others. The actions of ordinary people are mixed: People certainly often perform good deeds, but the drive toward self-preservation and gratification invariably sooner or later involves causing harm to others on some level. Thus most people perform both black and white *karma*. Hariharānanda points out, by way of example, that in tilling the soil, many creatures are killed, and in saving wealth for oneself, others are denied.

Purely white, śukla, *karma* is internal; it is not determined by actions toward others in the external world and thus generative of *karma*, but is the product of the mind alone. Vyāsa specifies that it consists of the performance of austerity, study, and meditation, which are more or less the ingredients of *kriyā yoga*. Finally, that which is neither white nor black pertains to the yogī or sannyāsı, total renunciant, whose kleśas are destroyed and who is finishing up his last birth. Having renounced all the fruits of activity, such a person does not receive either black or white *karma*. Vijñānabhikṣu hastens to add that this does not apply to someone who has simply donned the garb of a mendicant without giving up personal desire. Rather, he quotes the *Munḍaka Upaniṣad*: “The wise
man, knowing [the truth], does not speak excessively. Sporting in the ātman and delighting in the ātman, such a person performs work [in the world] and is the best of the knowers of Brahman” (3.1.4). He also quotes the Gītā: “Having given up attachment [to the fruits of work,] the yogīs perform action [in the world] through their body, mind, intelligence and purified senses for the purpose of purifying the ātman” (V.11).

All others, including those who have attained siddhi powers through the four means other than samādhi, accrue karma of the other three types, tri-vidha: black, white, or mixed. This is because all other actions ensue from the ahaṅkāra, ego (the kleśa of asmitā). As long as the kleśas underpin actions, more specifically, as long as there is a false sense of self (considering oneself to be the body and mind) underpinning any action, good or bad, or, put differently, as long as one thinks that it is one’s prākṛtic self who is acting (etymologically, ahaṅkāra means “I am the doer”), then the results of action, whether good or bad, accrue to this self. Vijñānabhikṣu again quotes the Gītā: “Always satisfied, without any dependency, having given up attachment to the fruits of activity, [the yogī], although engaged in activity, does not actually do anything” (IV.20); and “When action (karma) is performed because it is prescribed, Arjuna, having renounced attachment [to its fruits], then that renunciation is considered to be sāttvic” (XVIII.9). Also of relevance here is the Gītā’s description of the yogī as “one who remains fixed and does not waver, being undisturbed by the guṇas and seated as a detached witness, thinking ‘it is only the guṇas that are active’” (XIV.23; the Gītā is pervaded by verses of this nature). As the Gītā informs us, desire is situated in the senses, mind, and intelligence (III.40). The soul does not desire, since it is complete, and fully self-fulfilled; desires pertain to the stimulation of the body or mind. The point is that, since Patañjali has informed us that desires are the product of misidentification with the body and mind, one who realizes the true nature of ātman gives up all desires pertaining to the body and mind and hence accrues no karma. As outlined in the second chapter, karmic reactions accrue only to those actions performed with desire for their fruits.
IV.8 tatas tad-vipākānugunānām evābhivyaktir vāsanānām

tataḥ, from this [the three types of karma]; tat, those; vipāka, fruition; anugunānām, in accordance with; eva, only; abhivyaktiḥ, manifestation; vāsanānām, of the subliminal impressions

From [these three types of karma] the activation of only those subliminal impressions that are ready for fruition [in the next life] occurs.

The purport of this sūtra according to the commentaries is that at the time of death, most people will contain in their karmāśaya, or storehouse of karma located in the citta, all kinds of mixed karma good and bad that has yet to bear its fruit. This karma will not all fructify in only one future life. Therefore, if one’s next birth happens to be that of a celestial being, to use the example from the commentaries, then only the karma and saṁskāras from one’s storehouse pertinent to that specific birth will activate, abhivyakti, that is, only those saṁskāras relevant to the celestial realm will surface in one’s citta. One may have other saṁskāras pertaining to a hellish, a human, or an animal existence, which remain dormant until some other future birth, when they will manifest.

The contrary is true: One may be undergoing a hellish, or human, or animal existence, and thus experiencing the fruits of one’s impious or mixed activities of a past life, while nonetheless preserving the saṁskāras of one’s more pious previous activities dormant in one’s citta until they eventually manifest in some future birth as, say, a celestial. This, of course, addresses the age-old question of why good things happen to bad people, or bad things to good people. From a yogic perspective, if a person appears wicked but is experiencing good fortune, in essence that person is reaping the good effects stemming from a segment of pious activities performed in a previous life. However, that person is simultaneously sowing impious seeds in the present, the effects of which will be reaped in some future birth when suffering will be experienced as a consequence. The reverse is the case with the apparently good person who appears to be suffering bad fortune.
The term used for subliminal impression here is vāsanā. Patañjali and the commentators do not always seem to distinguish between vāsanā and saṁskāra; indeed, saṁskāra in the next sūtra seems to have a very similar denotative range as the sense of vāsanā here. Vāsanā might best be taken to refer to those innate saṁskāras that remain dormant in this life (that are due to fructify in some future life), although they exert subconscious influence on personality in this life, and saṁskāra to impressions and thoughts that are constantly being generated in this lifetime. In other words, vāsanās are latent and subconscious personality traits, and saṁskāras are imprints being actively generated.

The discussion is pertinent to this chapter since it is only when the fructifying power of the karma-āśaya has been destroyed that pure liberation can ensue. As long as any type of saṁskāras are activating in the citta, they will divert the attention and awareness of puruṣa from its pure nature.

IV.9 jāti-deśa-kāla-vyavahitānām apy ānantaryam smṛti-saṁskārayor eka-rūpatvāt

jāti, type of birth; deśa, place; kāla, time; vyavahitānām, being separated; api, although; ānantaryam, noninterval, successive; smṛti, memory; saṁskārayoh, of the subliminal impression; eka-rūpatvāt, because of the oneness of form or identity

Because they are identical, there is an uninterrupted connection between memory and saṁskāra, even though they might be separated by birth, time, and place.

Vyāsa unpacks this sūtra by using the example of a cat. If the circumstances of one’s specific karma at a given point in time require that one take the birth of a cat, one is injected into the womb of a cat and one’s citta manifests the mind-set of a cat. This particular mind-set manifests partly as a result of the activation of saṁskāras lodged in the
citta from some previous birth as a cat. (There is, of course, a correlation between one's activities as a human and the segment of latent saṁskāras these end up activating in the next life. Thus, cat saṁskāras are triggered by catlike or cat-appropriate activities performed in the human form.) Now, posits Vyāsa hypothetically, what if this previous birth were a hundred lifetimes ago, or even a hundred aeons, or in some completely different place, deśa-kāla-vyavahita? Patañjali in this sūtra states that wherever or whenever those saṁskāras were lodged in the citta, when the appropriate conditions accrue for them to bear their fruit at a particular time, those saṁskāras are triggered, reactivating and manifesting the cat-related memories and consequently producing a cat mentality. Karma in effect is the storage and eventual fruition of saṁskāras, and saṁskāras are memories of lived experiences. When the karmic conditions for a particular type of birth ripen as a result of their own spontaneous mechanisms, the saṁskāras pertinent to that birth activate automatically while other saṁskāras remain latent.

One may argue, says Vācaspati Miśra, that the experiences of yesterday should be more fresh than the experiences of a hundred days ago, and that therefore if one had been a human in the most recent past birth and a cat one hundred births earlier, the experiences in the human birth should be fresher and more vigorous in the citta and thus more potent in determining one's next birth. But the laws of karma do not work this way. Saṁskāras remain equally stored in the citta like seeds irrespective of whether they are of one's last birth or of a birth aeons ago. When the conditions appropriate for the activation of a particular set of saṁskāras, such as those corresponding to a cat experience, are triggered, the relevant saṁskāras are automatically activated, just as at the sight of a meal containing something tasty like tamarind, the tongue automatically waters, says Śaṅkara.

One is reminded here of the cicadas, locustlike creatures, which, in the year of first writing this chapter emerged from the earth in countless billions in various parts of the United States. These cicadas remain in hibernation buried underground for seventeen years but, like clockwork, due to whatever internal driving forces or external conditions awaken them after seventeen years, they emerge from the ground when the time is right even though they go on to live for only a few weeks. They then
lay eggs before dying, and these eggs drop into the ground where they lie in hibernation for another seventeen years. Likewise, due to the mysteriously complex factors surrounding the activation of a particular subset of karma, saṁskāras previously deposited in the citta lay dormant until the factors are ripe for their manifestation. When they manifest, they trigger further action, which produces a new set of saṁskāras to be recorded in the citta in turn.

Although one’s next life as a cat draws from the saṁskāras of a previous cat life that one underwent one hundred births before, this does not mean that the two cat lives will be identical. Externally, the environment and landscape inhabited by the second cat life will be different, and thus this cat life will respond to different external stimuli and events producing different saṁskāras in the citta. Internally also, even as the character of one’s actions as a human followed by the corollaries of karma cause the original set of cat saṁskāras to be activated at some point and to dominate the individual’s citta for a particular period such that it requires the body of a cat to express itself, the previous cat citta and the later one are not identical. The later one will have been molded and influenced by all the saṁskāras accrued during the intervening hundred lives. While all these intervening saṁskāras may not be activated during the second cat life, they have nonetheless affected and changed the citta and they do exert subtle influence. So the second cat life, while experiencing the activation of the saṁskāras from the first cat life, will not be reliving identical experiences.

**IV.10** tāsāṁ anāditvam cāśiso nityatvāt

_tāsāṁ_, of them [the saṁskāras]; _anāditvam_, being without beginning; _ca_, and; _āśisaḥ_, desire; _nityatvāt_, because of being eternal

The saṁskāras are beginningless, because the desire [for life] is eternal.
The desire for life is eternal, says Vyāsa. Everyone wishes, “May I not die, may I live!” He cites the example of a very young child who shows an instinctive fear of death. If the child starts to slip from his mother’s lap, elaborates Vācaspati Miśra, he will exhibit symptoms of fear and grasp his mother’s necklace. From where does such a fear arise? Not from the three means of attaining valid knowledge accepted by the Yoga school in I.7 (sense perception, inference, and verbal authority); the child has not perceived or experienced death in this life, is too young to infer its existence, and has obviously not heard about it from verbal authorities. So the fear must spring from previous saṁskāras—previous death experiences recorded on the citta that are not graphically remembered by the child but that nonetheless exert a latent influence that is sufficient to give the child a sense of fear in a precarious situation.

One cannot argue that such fear or awareness is inherent in the child, say the commentators, since that which is inherent is not in need of an external cause to manifest. Inherent means it is continually present, like heat that is always inherent and manifest in fire, but fear is experienced only in certain situations where there is an external cause, such as when one is attacked by someone wielding a sword. The argument of the commentators is that if fear of death is not inherent, it must be due to memory of past events activated in particular contexts. And the memory of death can be only from a previous life. In this way, the desire for self-preservation is observed in every creature, and this is because the unwelcome experiences of death in previous lives is recorded on every citta, manifesting as fear when triggered by a threatening external cause. The arguments found here are essentially those in II.9 in the discussion of the kleśa abhinīveśa, clinging to life (fear of death being essentially the same as clinging to life).

The commentaries then launch into a discussion of whether the mind is atomic in size, or omnipresent. The Nyāya school holds that the mind is atomic in size and can attend to only one sensation, or sensory input, at a time. This notion is rejected by the Yoga school on the grounds that one can be eating a piece of corn and simultaneously experiencing the senses of taste, touch, sight, and smell of the corn. The Nyāya school would hold that the mind would be racing backward and forward among
the senses of taste, touch, sight, and smell so quickly that these sensory impressions appear to be simultaneous, whereas in fact they are not. The Sāṅkhya view is that the mind is of intermediate size (between atomic and omnipresent) and adjusts according to the size of the body, expanding or contracting, for example, to fit into the body of an ant or elephant. Vyāsa analogizes this view to the light of a lamp, which can illuminate either a pot or a palace depending on the size of the contained space into which it is placed.

Here then is another example of a minor technical difference between the Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools, which otherwise share most of their metaphysics. The Sāṅkhya (and Jain) schools hold that the citta expands and contracts depending on the size of the body, expanding to fill the elephant’s form and contracting to fit into an ant’s form, while the Yoga authorities claim that it is only the vṛttis of the mind that expand or contract, not the mind itself. This takes place in accordance with the specifics of the body due to the limitations of ahaṅkāra, ego; the mind itself is omnipresent. Vyāsa states that the expansion of the mind occurs, in the case of the yogī, as a result of the practice of dharma, whether performed externally or internally (by expansion, he intends, I suggest, the expansion of the sāttvic component of the mind). External dharma involves the use of the body, and internal dharma, which is superior, of the mind. The examples given by the commentators of external dharma are such things as acts of worship and charity; the internal ones are those listed in I.20—faith, vigor, memory, samādhī, and discernment.

One further implication of the Yoga view that the mind is essentially omnipresent but that its vṛttis contract and expand in accordance with the size of the body is noted by Vācaspati Miśra. He points out that at the moment of death there is no transmigration of a subtle body into a new body, in the sense of something exiting one mortal frame and somehow moving into another (Latin: trāns, across, migrāre, to move from place to place). If something is omnipresent, it cannot move from place to place—it is already everywhere. Therefore, at death, the all-pervading (and therefore motionless) mind encapsulating the puruṣa simply adjusts its vṛttis to fit the contours of a new body. Vācaspati Miśra clearly differentiates this view to that of the other Hindu and Jain schools including Sāṅkhya, namely, that the subtle body actually
somehow relocates in space and time to a new body.

\[ \text{हेतु-फलश्रयालम्बने: संग्रहितत्वाद एषाम अभावे तदभाव:} \]

\text{IV.11 hetu-phalāśrayālambanaiḥ saṃgrhitatvād eṣām abhāve tad-abhāvaḥ}

hetu, cause; phala, fruit, effect, motive; āśraya, substratum; ālambanaiḥ, support; saṃgrhītatvāt, because of being held together; eṣām, of them; abhāve, in the absence; tat, those [the saṃskāras]; abhāvaḥ, there is absence of

\text{Since [saṃskāras] are held together by immediate cause, motive, the mind, and the object of awareness, the saṃskāras cease when the latter cease.}

Patañjali here identifies four ingredients that underpin and sustain saṃskāras. First, the immediate cause, hetu, of the saṃskāras, says Vyāsa, is action, more specifically, dharma and adharma, pious or impious activity, and their consequences. As we know, from dharma comes pleasure, and from adharma comes suffering. Subsequently, from pleasure comes attachment—everyone wants to perpetuate pleasure—and from suffering comes aversion—everyone wants to avoid suffering. These, in turn, provoke further actions—the effort to gain or preserve pleasure, and the effort to avoid or remove suffering. Such actions, whether in body, mind, or word, have effects in their turn—one’s actions either benefit or harm others and are thus dharmic or adharmic. These perpetuate the chain of reactions noted above and thus the six-spoked wheel of saṃsāra (dharma, adharma, pleasure, suffering, attachment, and aversion) is perpetuated. The underlying cause of all this (including the more immediate cause of action)—the driver of the wheel—is nescience, the root of the kleśas, as discussed in II.4. Ignorance corresponds to the spokes of the wheel, says Śaṅkara, since upon removing the spokes, the wheel collapses, and the saṃskāras lose their effectiveness.

Vyāsa defines the second item listed in this sūtra, motive, phala, as that which underpins the production of dharma and adharma, etc.,
indicated above. One’s motives prompt action, whether dharmic or adharmic, and these produce saṅskāras and perpetuate the cycle. The term for motive here is phala, literally, fruit: one is motivated by the desire for an outcome or fruit. Additionally, in a sense, one’s motives are the result of past experiences and thus are the fruits of past saṅskāras. Saṅskāras tend to perpetuate similar saṅskāras, so it is easy to get caught in patterns of behavior—a certain type of saṅskāra activates and prompts a corresponding type of action, which plants saṅskāras similar to the original saṅskāras that prompted the action, and a vicious cycle is perpetuated.

To illustrate this, consider addictive behavior. Due to habitual past indulgence, a person craves, say, a cigarette, intoxicant, certain type of food, or sexual experience, which the person remembers as being the source of pleasure. When memory of this pleasure is activated in the form of saṅskāras awakening in the citta, the person is impelled, or at least pressured, by the force of the saṅskāric memory to repeat this indulgence, thereby planting a new but similar saṅskāra that simply reinforces the original saṅskāra such that it awakens with even more force next time, only to be indulged and strengthened yet again. Every time one feels like smoking a cigarette, due to the pressure of past memories of smoking, and then smokes, one is adding another set of saṅskāras to the original cigarette saṅskāras. Thus, clusters of certain types of saṅskāras are continually reinforced and perpetuated, and develop into personality traits that can become very hard to break. By changing motive, one can break this cycle.

Ultimately, one has to change one’s base motive from desire to enjoy any kind of pleasure whatsoever to the desire for liberation (the desire to destroy the kleśa of ignorance), to break the wheel entirely, but initially one can at least aspire for dharmic pleasure if one is caught in a cycle of adharmic behavior. Adharmic behavior produces unhappiness; the indulgence of craving does not bring genuine lasting pleasure but simply perpetuates frustration, hankering, and discontent.

The substratum, āśraya, of saṅskāras noted as the third item on the list is, of course, the mind, or, more specifically, the karmāśaya of II.12, where saṅskāras are lodged. And the commentators understand support, ālambana, the last item on the list, to refer to an object one encounters
that causes any particular saṁskāra to activate, in other words, a catalyst. So, for example, the sight of a provocative picture of the opposite sex will likely incite sexually surcharged saṁskāras to overpower the mind; thus this picture is the support for the appearance of those saṁskāras. In short, as long as cause, motive, substratum, and support exist, saṁskāras exist, and when these conditions are eliminated, saṁskāras have no infrastructure within which to exist. Saṁskāras are like a stream, says Rāmānanda Sarasvatī, so if their source is cut off, they will be brought to an end. And when saṁskāras are eliminated, saṁsāra comes to an end.

The following four sūtras overlap the discussion initiated in III.9–15. There, an understanding of the transformation of matter was relevant to the context of mystic powers, whereas the discussion of the transformation of matter in these sūtras is in the context of the metaphysics of objects in external reality.

That which does not exist cannot come into being, says Vyāsa, and that which does exist can never be destroyed. As the Gītā notes: “Of the non-existent there is no being, and of the existent there is no cessation of being; this conclusion is seen by the seers of truth from studying the nature of them both” (II.16). The three phases of time—the past as that which has already manifested, atīta; the future as that which has yet to manifest, anāgata; and the present as that which is manifesting—all actually exist in a sense, says Patañjali in this sūtra (and are therefore objects of knowledge for the yogi). In III.52, in apparent contradiction,
the commentators stated that the past and future do not exist, but actually the same point is being made by both sets of truth claims. To understand the mechanics of this, it is important to keep in mind the principle of satkāryavāda—effects are latent in their causes. The past and the future may be unmanifest, but they are latent in the present, and thus their existence is very real in this sense. The future does not come from nothing, nor does the past fade into nothing. Past and future are thus perceivable by those able to recognize the finer causal levels of present reality. The point being made in the earlier discussion was that past and future do not exist as entities separate from the present. But they do exist in terms of their latent presence in the present, and Patañjali here is stressing this latter perspective.

Śaṅkara refers to the standard satkāryavāda illustrations from Śaṅkhya: Yogurt as an effect must be potentially present in milk as its cause; otherwise, if an effect were totally nonexistent in its cause, how could yogurt arise from churning milk? If something could arise that was nonexistent in its cause, then why should not anything arise from churning milk, like gold or elephants? The only product that can arise from milk is one whose characteristics are already inherent within milk. If the oilman could make oil from sand, continues Śaṅkara, why would he go to all the trouble of grinding sesame seeds?

So, with reference to the concluding sentence of the commentary on the previous sūtra, how can saṁskāras, which exist, ever be destroyed, given that things that exist can never be destroyed? As Śaṅkara points out, they are never actually destroyed in a metaphysical sense, but they can become nonproductive, and this is the meaning intended when the texts speak of destroying saṁskāras. Saṁskāras cannot be existentially destroyed, but they can be rendered obsolete (frequently referred to as “burnt” by the commentators). In terms of the goals of yoga, it is their ability to disturb the citta that is destroyed.

IV.13 te vyakta-sūkṣmā guṇātmānah

te, they [past, present, and future]; vyakta, are manifest;
sūkṣmāḥ, subtle, latent; guṇa, the three guṇas; ātmānaḥ, having the nature of
The past, present, and future have the guṇas as their essence and are either manifest or latent.

Moving this discussion to its deepest metaphysical essence, Patañjali here states that everything is essentially simply a combination of the three guṇas, and when these guṇas combine in specific ways and manifest the characteristics of any particular object, we consider that object to be present. When the object deteriorates and its ingredients dissolve into their essences, we consider that process to constitute the past. (Actually, the object still exists but not in a manifest form, that is, the essential energy from which the object was a temporary configuration remains eternally existent.) The future is that which remains potentially stored and locked up within the guṇas waiting for the right configuration of circumstances to cause the guṇas to produce it. The present is simply the configuration of the guṇas that happens to be manifest, and the past and future are those which are latent. They are therefore all real in some sort of quasi-concrete way, as Patañjali indicated in the last sūtra. However, in essence, all three are just the permutations of the guṇas.

Vyāsa quotes an unidentified verse from the śāstra: “One does not become absorbed in a direct perception of the ultimate form of the guṇas; that which is perceived directly, is the trifles of māya.” Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the Gītā here: “This divine māyā (illusion) of mine [Krṣṇa], which is hard to overcome, is made up of the guṇas” (VII.14).

No doubt in reference to the advaita school of Vedānta thought, which holds the world of illusion to be ultimately essentially unreal, Vijñānabhikṣu hastens to add that in the Yoga position, the effects of the guṇas may be temporary, but they are not unreal. The Yoga school holds that prakṛti and her effects are essentially and physically real, but due to the constant motion of the guṇas that comprise prakṛti, her effects are ever-changing. Illusion, then, for Yoga, is to hold these effects to be permanent, not to consider them to be essentially unreal.
The things [of the world] are objectively real, due to the uniformity of [the guṇas that underpin] all change.

Patañjali here addresses the relationship between unity and diversity among the objects of the world. If everything in manifest reality is ultimately one, in the sense of having a unified source, ekatvā, in the form of the guṇas, then, posits Vyāsa, how is it that we find all the differences among things in our perception? The commentators take this opportunity to expand on the metaphysics of Sāṅkhya and Yoga. Note again that there were nuances of differences circulating among followers of Sāṅkhya—the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, for example, speaks of several different schools in existence (XI.22.2–3). According to Vijñānabhikṣu, from primarily the tāmasic element in ahaṅkāra (itself an evolute from the highly sāttvic buddhi) emanates the tanmātra, subtle element, of sound. Ahaṅkāra interacting with sound then produces ākāśa, the gross element of ether (which has sound as its quality). When ether, in turn, interacts with the tāmasic element in ahaṅkāra, the subtle element of touch is produced. The tāmasic element in ahaṅkāra then interacts with the subtle element of touch to produce the gross element air. Air is then affected by the same ahaṅkāra and produces the subtle element of sight, and the same process involving interaction with the tāmasic element in ahaṅkāra progressively transforms sight into the gross element of fire, fire to the fourth subtle element of taste, taste to the gross element of water, water to the subtle element of smell, and smell to the fifth and final gross element of earth. The proportion of the tāmasic element in ahaṅkāra in the above series is progressively increased vis-à-vis the other two guṇas as each element becomes progressively denser; thus, as Bhoja Rāja points out, earth, relative to air, contains more tamas and air more rajas.

Anus, atoms (more precisely, subatomic particles), of physical matter, the mahābhūtas, are the smallest particles of elemental matter that can exist without matter dissolving back into its subtler substructure of
Thus, in Vijñānabhikṣu’s schema, the atoms of each of the gross elements are formed from a combination of the *tanmātras*, subtle elements, in the following way: Earth atoms are formed from all five subtle elements of sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell; water atoms are formed from the subtle elements of sound, touch, sight, and taste; fire atoms are formed of sound, touch, and sight; air atoms are formed of sound and touch; ether has no atoms as it does not consist of parts. As a point of contrast, the Vedānta tradition has a slightly different schema whereby the atom of any gross element is made up of half its corresponding subtle element, and the other half by equal portions of the remaining four subtle elements. Thus the earth atom is half the smell *tanmātra* and half of equal portions (one-eighth each) of sound, touch, sight, and taste, and similarly with the other gross elements. We should keep in mind here that *tanmātra* refers to the powers, or subtle vibrational energies, manifesting as sound, touch, taste, etc. They are more *tāmasic* in their constitution than their source, the even subtler vibrational energy *ahaṅkāra*, but more *sāttvic* than their products, the *aṇu* subatomic particles. It is these *aṇus* that are the basic building blocks of the physical universe.

The point of all this metaphysical specificity is that although there may be a unified material energy behind all reality in the form of the three *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, individual items of reality emerge when these *guṇas* and their products interact with each other in various ways, that is, when the *sāttvic*, *tāmasic*, and *rājasic* proportions of *prakṛti* are realigned. So we can see that earth mixing with water produces clay, a product different from both, says Vijñānabhikṣu, and this product itself transforms again when it interacts with fire and is baked in the form of a pot. Individual objects perceivable in external reality are simply individual mutations of the *guṇas*. Just as the lamp, says Śaṅkara, is a combination of wick, oil, and fire, so material products are specific combinations of the *guṇas*.

Changing track,Vyāsa considers the view of those who deny the reality of the external world, the “idealists.” Some, he says, argue that there is no physical object external to or independent of thought, that is, an object demonstrably exists only if it is cognized by thought. Proponents of this position note that there are objects that appear to be
independent of thoughts but in reality are demonstrably internal to it, such as the objects imagined in dreams. Since there is nothing that can be known independent of thought, and since some so-called external objects, such as those perceived in dreams, are in fact not external at all, this school concludes that there are no demonstrable objects in reality at all that can be proved to be external to thought; they are all just constructions of the mind. Idealism obviously counters the Yoga view that objects are real (II.22), at least in terms of their essential nature of the guṇas as Patañjali has specified, a position loosely categorized as “realism.” Vijnānavāda Buddhists.

Vijñānavāda Buddhists. But objective physical reality is self-evident, says Vyāsa. There are no means to substantiate the claim that objective reality is a construction of the mind; unlike the imagined reality of objects in a dream that is countered upon waking, nothing counters the reality of objects experienced in the waking state. Hariharānanda points out that, as a matter of fact, even the dream analogy supports the position of realism rather than idealism since the objects constructed by imagination in a dream are actually mental imprints or memories (saṁskāras) of real physical objects previously experienced in the waking state that then surface in the mind in a confused fashion when asleep. Śaṅkara makes the additional argument that supposing the objects of perceptions to be not real, but merely consciousness, entails consciousness being divided into subject and object. If the perception of a worm is actually merely a construction of consciousness rather than an external physical thing, then consciousness must be divided into consciousness as thing perceived, the worm, and consciousness as the perceiver, in other words, into subject and object. But this is not defensible, he states, and is akin to arguing that one can divide a light into two lights—light as illuminator and light as illuminated.

Vijñānavāda Buddhists, meanwhile, takes a swipe at the Advaita school of Vedānta stemming from Śaṅkara, who is considered by his opponents to be quasi Buddhist in his philosophy that the world is ultimately unreal.
Because there is a multiplicity of minds [perceiving an object] but yet the object remains consistent, there is a difference in nature between the object and the mind [of the observer].

Patañjali continues his discussion from the previous sūtra, distinguishing the realist Yoga philosophy from the philosophy of idealism. Clearly, various forms of idealism, which all the commentators identify primarily with schools of Buddhism, must have been prevalent on Patañjali’s landscape, since he dedicates a number of sūtras to the subject (IV.14–22); indeed, this is the only section of the text that engages so explicitly with another philosophical school. Consequently, some scholars see Yoga as an internal updating of the old Sāṅkhya tradition partly with a view of bringing it into conversation with the more technical philosophical traditions that had emerged by the second to fifth centuries, particularly the challenges represented by Buddhist thought.¹⁹

The reader is alerted that the following section is unavoidably philosophical. One reason for this is that, from the sources of knowledge accepted by the Yoga school (pratyakṣa, anumāṇa, and āgama, perception, inference, and verbal authority), verbal authority cannot be used in discussions with Buddhists: The sacred texts and human authorities accepted by the Hindus are not the same as those accepted by the Buddhists. In other words, there is no use quoting the Upaniṣads to resolve a philosophical issue, such as whether or not there is an ātman, if the opponent does not accept the Upaniṣads as authoritative sacred text. So, in discussions with those outside the Vedic fold such as Buddhists, verbal authority cannot serve as a common framework. Nor can perception. After all, where Hindu yogīs might claim that they or their spiritual masters have perceived the existence of the ātman in the state of samādhi, Buddhist meditators might equally claim that they have perceived precisely the nonexistence of any such ātman in the state
ultimate to Buddhists, \textit{nirvāṇa}, each laying claim to direct perception. Where does the conversation go from there? Neither perception nor verbal authority, therefore, can serve usefully as a source of knowledge when debating with nonorthodox schools; only inference can. Therefore, the debates between the Hindus and Buddhists, both textual and actual,\textsuperscript{20} adopted logic in critiquing the viewpoints of opponents (called \textit{pūrvapakṣa}). This makes for difficult reading for those not schooled in Indic thought, even as an effort has been made here to reduce the technicalities of the following \textit{sūtras} as far as possible.

An object of the world, despite the fact that it remains a unitary object that remains constant in terms of its metaphysical makeup, \textit{vastu-sāmya}, can be experienced very differently by different minds. If the perceiver’s mind is pervaded by \textit{sattva}, says Vyāsa, the object might engender \textit{sāttvic} qualities such as happiness in the mind; if pervaded by \textit{rajas}, it might engender pain; if pervaded by \textit{tamas}, forgetfulness; if perceived with the eye of wisdom, detachment. As Vācaspati Miśra, ever ready with more colorful examples, puts it, the same women may be beloved, hated, ignored, or approached with indifference by the individuals Caitra, Viṣṇumitra, Devadatta, and Maitra, even though the woman remains the same object of perception throughout. If the same object produces different feelings in different minds, then the actual object itself, being common to all, must be different from the mind.

But these differences notwithstanding, how is it that different people all perceive essentially the same basic source object in the first place, if the object is a construction of the mind as idealists hold rather than an object with external reality in its own right? If it is a mental construct, says Bhoja Rāja, then surely there would be a complete difference in the original object constructed by one person’s mind as compared to the object constructed by another person’s mind—not just a difference in the responses the same object invokes due to the differences of the observers’ \textit{guṇas}, but a difference in the very nature of the object itself. Why would Caitra and his friends all perceive the same woman in the first place (irrespective of whether she provokes love, hate, or indifference)? Why should an object construed as external in one person’s mind be constructed simultaneously in another’s mind? And even if we accept this for argument’s sake, continues Vācaspati Miśra, if
external objects that appear common to all are actually internal mental constructs that are somehow shared, why are not all individual mental thought constructs shared? If one person randomly thinks of the color blue, why is it that other people do not suddenly think of blue at the same time? Why are only supposedly external objects simultaneously perceived by all?

And even if one goes further and accepts that such a common experience of an external object can spontaneously occur simultaneously, as internal mental constructs of numerous people, what is the original cause of the object’s appearance? Can an object that has been constructed or imagined in one person’s mind be transmitted to another’s such that both individuals share the same supposed external perception of it? If so, whose mind, according to the philosophy of idealism, originally imagined all the varied perceptions in (apparent) external reality common to all? Vijñānabhikṣu points out that one person does not share the dream of another, so how can people all share the perception of the same supposed object in the waking state? If this is not due to transmission from one person’s mind to another’s, then how is it that the same shared object is being imagined by everyone simultaneously? And even if one allows that this can take place somehow or other, then why doesn’t everyone have identical impressions all the time, asks Śaṅkara?

For such reasons, says, Vyāsa, there must be a distinction between the object of perception and the instrument of perception, the mind. The minds may be different in terms of the qualities of their perceptions, but the object remains the same. This is Patañjali’s thrust in this sūtra. The object must be external to and independent of perception, or consciousness. Objects are not constructions of the mind, but svapramāṇikam, grounded in their own right independent of perception, as Patañjali will clearly state in the next sūtra, where the discussion continues.
na, not; ca, and; eka, one; citta, mind; tantram, dependent; cet, if; vastu, thing; tat, that [mind]; apramāṇakam, not evidenced [by cognition]; tadā, then; kim, what; syāt, happens [to it]

An object is not dependent on a single mind [for its existence]; if it were, then what happens to it when it is not perceived [by that particular mind]?

If an object, say a pot, were indeed merely a construction of the mind, what would happen to it, asks Vyāsa rhetorically, if the mind were in a state of samādhi, or even if it were just plain distracted, that is, not focused on that particular object? Since it is supposed to be the construction of a single mind, would the pot then simply cease to exist when that person’s mind is no longer aware of it? If so, then why can other people still see it? Moreover, the parts of an object not perceived by the mind would not actually exist, says Vyāsa, according to idealism. If one perceives a person only from the front, does this mean the person’s back does not exist because it is not within the sphere of perception? If so, how can a person’s stomach exist without a back? he asks in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek manner. And, in a world where objective reality is simply the mental construction of the individual, conventional social interactions would completely break down since there is no reason people’s mental constructions of social norms should overlap in any coherent manner, adds Śaṅkara. If everything is a construction of consciousness, then why would the student and teacher both construct the same understanding of their respective social roles such that they might cooperate? How could any sane and standardized social system evolve from independently created mental imaginings?

The objects of the world can therefore be only independent entities, as minds, too, are independent entities. They unite to fulfill their purpose, concludes Vyāsa, which is to provide the puruṣa with bhoga, experience. The objects of the senses provide distractions for the soul absorbed in saṁsāra, and the mind and other faculties process these sense objects and present them to puruṣa.

नृपरागपेक्षितवाच् चित्रन्य वस्तु जाताज्ञातम् । ११७।।
A thing is either known or not known by the mind depending on whether it is noticed by the mind.

Here Patañjali presents the Yoga position as to why, if objects are objectively real, they are sometimes known, jñāta, and sometimes not known, ājñāta, to an individual. The process of cognition, according to Yoga, occurs when the citta comes in contact with the sense objects. The objects of the senses are like magnets, says Vyāsa, and the mind is like iron—sense objects in the vicinity of the mind exert their pull on the mind. Patañjali uses the term uparāga, colored, here: When an object colors the mind due to proximity (is pervaded or noticed by the mind), that object becomes known. Things that are not so pervaded remain unknown. In this way the mind is always changing, noticing one thing and then another.

The citta assumes the form of a particular object, or is colored by it, like a cloth is colored when it comes into contact with dye, says Viśnunābhikṣu. More specifically, the intelligence aspect of the citta internally replicates the external or physical features of the object, that is, it assumes the shape and contours of the object psychically, and then presents this image to puruṣa, which becomes aware of it by its consciousness reflecting on or pervading the citta. It is important to keep in mind that citta remains inert and unconscious throughout this process. It is still a product of prākṛtic matter, however subtle; the ultimate experience of being aware of the object is the prerogative of puruṣa’s awareness only. In this way, the citta itself becomes the object in terms of puruṣa’s awareness.

As a parting comment against the idealists, Śaṅkara notes that if physical objects are simply creations of the mind, the mind would either be omniscient—it should theoretically be able to create and thus gain knowledge of anything at all—or it would not create any objects of awareness, and thus nothing would be known.
sadā, always; jñātāḥ, are known; citta, mind; vṛttyayḥ, changing state, permutations; tat, that [the mind]; prabhoḥ, of the master; puruṣasya, of the puruṣa, soul; aparināmitvāt, because of it not changing

The permutations of the mind are always known to its master, the puruṣa soul, because of the soul’s unchanging nature.

Here Patañjali presents an axiomatic truth in Hindu philosophy—the unchanging nature, aparināmitva, of puruṣa. Anything that changes cannot be eternal, since, obviously, if a thing changes into something else, the original thing ceases to be. Therefore, since the soul is eternal, it cannot change. The soul must in any event be unchanging, infers Vyāsa, because if it were constantly changing by nature, as is the case of the mind, then its object of awareness, the mind’s vṛttis, would be sometimes known to it and sometimes not known. This is not the case: Puruṣa is always aware of the mind’s vṛttis, even in deep sleep (which we recall is a vṛtti in its own right). The mind itself, on the other hand, is sometimes aware of its objects of awareness, the sense objects, and sometimes not. Since the mind is always changing and roaming about, its objects—the sense objects of sound, etc.—are sometimes in its sphere of perception and sometimes not, but the puruṣa’s awareness, in contrast, is constant and unchanging. The object of the puruṣa’s awareness is the mind, irrespective of the vṛtti of the mind. Again, if the awareness of the puruṣa were also changing and roaming about, it, too, would sometimes be aware of its object, the mind, and sometimes not, but the fact is that the puruṣa is always aware of the mind, that is, it is always absorbed in one or other of the vṛttis. Therefore, says Vyāsa, its core awareness is unchanging. It is accordingly distinct from the ever-changing mind.
na, not; tat, it, the mind; svābhāsam, self-illuminating; drṣyatvāt, because of its nature as that which is to be perceived
Nor is the mind self-illuminating, because of its nature as the object of perception.

In this sūtra, Patañjali rejects the position, identified by the commentators as being that of the Vaināśika Buddhists, that the mind is itself self-aware or self-illuminating, svābhāsa, like fire, which does not need any outside agent to illuminate itself. In this view, accordingly, there is no need to posit the existence of an outside source of awareness in the form of puruṣa—the mind itself is held to be self-aware, the source of awareness.

But in Yoga epistemology, mind is clearly the object of awareness. When one says, “I am afraid,” “I am angry,” etc., the mind in the form of anger or fear is the object of awareness, requiring a distinct subject of awareness, an “I.” Otherwise it would be like saying the “cooking is cooked” or the “cutting is cut” or the “going is gone,” says Vācaspati Miśra. The act and the object of activity cannot be the same thing. Any object of awareness, like a pot, cannot also be the subject of awareness; that which is perceivable requires a perceiver, says Bhoja Rāja. If the pot perceived were identical with the perceiving subject, one should rather say “I am the pot,” not “I see the pot.” Moreover, points out Hariharānanda, if the mind itself were the subject of awareness or I, in the example “I am afraid” there would have to be one part of the mind that would be the I, or knower, and another part that would be the known or object of knowledge, the “afraid.” This is tantamount to accepting that there is a part of the mind that is the knower and a part that is the known, which admits a knower distinct from objects of knowledge and therefore approaches the position of the Yoga school.

And even if, in the fire example, one allows that fire illuminates itself without the need of any other agent, nonetheless fire itself is an object that is known by something outside of itself, namely, the perceiver of the fire seeing through the instrument of the eye. Another outside entity is still required to experience and establish the luminosity of fire in the first place. Therefore, the counterargument of fire is inadequate. In short, the mind, being an object of perception, cannot be subjectively
aware or self-illuminating. Whatever illumination it seems to exude is the result of it being permeated by the illumination of the awareness of puruṣa, like the cloud appearing illumined due to the sun shining through it, or the iron bar becoming fiery due to being placed in and permeated by the fire. In short, subject and object must be distinct entities. Discussion of this issue continues in the next sūtra.

एकसमयं चोभयानवधारणम् ॥ २० ॥

IV.20 eka-samaye cobbhayānavadhāraṇam

eka, one; samaye, time; ca, and; ubhaya, both; anavadhāraṇam, nondiscernment

There cannot be discernment of both [the mind and the object it perceives] at the same time.

Once more, Vyāsa specifically directs his comments toward the kṣaṇika-vādins, those who believe in momentariness, another generic name for the Buddhists. Continuing from the previous sūtra his refutation of the notion that the mind is self-aware, he reads Patañjali here as presenting another argument that it would not be possible for the mind to be aware of itself as well as an object of awareness in the same instance in kṣaṇika-vāda metaphysics. The argument is slightly technical. Buddhists hold that all aspects of reality, whether cognitive or material, do not have any essential nature but exist only for a kṣaṇa, moment, during which they produce effects before fading, and thus flavor immediately succeeding moments of existence. Since all phenomena are momentary, that is, all ingredients of reality last for only a moment, any object in reality, such as a pot, although appearing to remain the same for a long period of time, is actually undergoing change at every moment in all its parts. Apparent continuity is merely the production of similar but successive effects each moment, like the different stills of a movie reel, which give the impression of a continuous object but are actually distinct images following each other in rapid succession. This includes the mind; it, too, consists of a series of momentary minds (see discussion in II.32).
Obviously, this kṣanika-vāda position is in opposition to the Yoga school, which holds that the mind (and all objects of reality) does have an essential nature that endures (in the sense that it is an evolute of the eternal guṇas of prakṛti), and that the subject of awareness, puruṣa, also endures eternally. Thus, the main difference between the Buddhist and the Yoga positions in the matter of the momentary perceivable nature of external reality is that Yoga metaphysics holds that, while reality is indeed a flow of ever-changing moments, all such change is caused by the flux of the underlying substructure, guṇas, which are eternal essences, where the Buddhists deny any eternal essences at all in reality. But we can note that both schools agree that surface-level reality is always in flux.

Now, in the cognition “I know the pot,” there is an element of self-awareness represented in the I and an element of object awareness represented in the pot. The cognition “I know the pot,” while appearing to the conscious mind to be a solitary and uniform thought, actually involves two separate cognitions, one for the I, an act of self-awareness, and another for the pot as object of awareness. However, if, as per the kṣanika-vāda position, everything arises for only one single instant, this would mean that the mind could be aware of itself for only one instant and then aware of any other object such as a pot for another, separate instant. In other words, if one were to posit that there is no puruṣa, soul, as subject of awareness, and if everything in objective reality arises and exists for only one instant, as the Buddhists suppose, then during that instant the mind would not be capable of being self-aware—the I inherent in any act of cognition—as well as simultaneously being object-aware of something else such as a pot. If the mind were momentary and self-illuminating, it would use up its momentary existence being self-aware, because self-awareness is an act, and all acts are momentary in Buddhism. Since one cannot be self-aware and object-aware at the exact same time, then the act of self-awareness uses up the existential life span of the kṣaṇa, moment, so to speak. The mind would then find itself in the same situation in the next kṣaṇa, which would also be spent being self-aware, and so on with the next, ad infinitum. Where, then, would there ever be a moment free in which to be object-aware? There would never be any room for object-awareness if the mind were momentary and self-
illuminating as per the *kṣaṇika-vāda* position. One would never be aware of anything in external reality. The argument is a reductio ad absurdum, called *tarka* in Hindu logic, whereby the opponent’s position is shown to lead to impossible consequences.

The Yoga position, of course, is that it is the *puruṣa* that is self-aware or self-illuminating, and the mind, which is object-aware, and these two separate entities coexist and are enduring rather than momentary. Thus the functions of illumination or self-awareness on the one hand, and of object-awareness on the other, are divided between two permanent, separate, and distinct entities, thereby bypassing the problems of a *kṣaṇika-vāda* metaphysics in positing a self-illuminating mind that is simultaneously object-aware. Naturally, the entire Yoga premise is that there is an eternal autonomous *puruṣa* that can be realized, hence the need to engage with Buddhist views denying the existence of such an entity.

In the last *sūtra*, the Buddhist notion of mind was considered from the perspective of the subject of awareness. Patañjali and the commentators now engage in technical, psychological analysis from the perspective of the objects of awareness. Let us say the momentary mind, as understood in certain schools of Buddhism, becomes aware of a pot and generates

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\text{IV.21 cittāntara-ḍṛśye buddhi-buddher atiprasaṅgaḥ smṛti-saṅkaraś ca}
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*citta*, mind; *antara*, other; *ḍṛśye*, if it is seen; *buddhi*, intelligence; *buddheḥ*, of the intelligence; *atiprasaṅgaḥ*, excessive contact, unwarranted stretch; *smṛti*, memory; *sankaraḥ*, confusion, mixing up of; *ca*, and

If [the mind] were cognized by another mind, then there would be an infinite regress of one intelligence [being known] by another intelligence. Moreover, there would also be confusion of memory.
the idea of a pot that exhausts the mind’s existential moment of existence. By whom would that idea of a pot be known, if there is no *puruṣa*? Vyāsa argued in the previous *sūtra* that the subject of awareness and object of awareness cannot coexist in the same *citta* at the same moment, so, by a logic parallel to that outlined in the previous *sūtra*, the mind’s awareness of the pot can be only the object of awareness, but without a subject. The opponent, at this point, could introduce the idea that there is another subsequent momentary idea, and it is this second idea that is the knower of the first idea. First of all, as Hariharāṇanda notes, this essentially entails postulating a future (that is, subsequent mind) as knower of a present mind. The problem with this is that the two would not overlap since their nature is momentary in Buddhism. In other words, if everything is momentary, how can a future entity know a present entity when the latter would have become past and thus expired when the future entity became present? Furthermore, even if this were not the case, if this second idea is the knower or subject of the first idea, then the first idea becomes the object of the second idea, but one is still left without a subject for the second idea. And if one introduces a third idea as knower of the second idea, then a fourth, and so on, one ends up with the infinite regress, *atipraṣaṅga*, noted by Patañjali in this *sūtra*.

Patañjali’s second comment in this *sūtra* pertaining to the confusion of memory, *smṛti-saṅkara*, is also somewhat technical and understood by the commentators as pointing to the fact that all the ideas noted above would produce *saṃskāras* of the same form. The pot becomes the object of awareness for the mind during its moment of existence, and is placed as a pot *saṃskāra* in the *citta*, as all objects of awareness are. But then this mind with its image of a pot itself becomes the object of awareness for a subsequent momentary mind, transferring its pot *saṃskāra* to the second momentary mind, and this, in turn, to a third momentary mind, and so forth. There would be knowledge of the pot, knowledge of the knowledge of the pot, knowledge of the knowledge of the knowledge of the pot … Now, each of these minds in this momentary series would manifest, imprinted with its own inherited set of *saṃskāras* of this original pot. Patañjali seems to be saying that such multiple sets of consecutive *saṃskāras* of the pot would throw memory into confusion, since, in the absence of an unchanging, unifying agent and of the same
enduring saṃskāra, there would be no way of knowing which memory of
the pot in this series pertained to the original pot or object of knowledge
or idea; there would just be a confused multiplicity of duplicated
saṃskāras. Moreover, the agent perceiving the original pot, being
momentary, would not be the same agent recollecting it at a later
moment. Thus memory would not be clear in the sense of identifying
and connecting one saṃskāric memory to its original corresponding
object, since there would be no constant witness to connect them.

Memory has always featured in the arguments of the orthodox Hindu
schools against Buddhism. To say, “This is the pot that I saw yesterday,”
requires that the saṃskāra of that pot be retained from one day to the
next such that one can remember it. This suggests continuity of
saṃskāra, which goes against the notion of kṣaṇa, momentariness. If one
argues that there is a stream of momentary saṃskāras within which the
saṃskāra of a previous moment subtly transmits its impression or stamp
on the next, and this second on the third, and so forth, such that there
appears to be one constant saṃskāra but is in reality a stream of
successive moments, then other difficulties arise. Such a process of
transmission would require that the saṃskāra exist for at least two or
three distinct kṣaṇas, or moments: There must be a moment when the
saṃskāra receives the impression, perhaps a moment when it exists in its
own right, then at the very least a moment when it overlaps with the
subsequent saṃskāra such that it can transmit its impression upon it (and
then, perhaps, another moment in which it dissolves). According to the
followers of other systems of Indian thought, most entities endure for at
least three moments: origination, duration, and cessation. Without
such overlap, there could not be a stream of continuity. This entails
more than one moment, which is not admitted by adherents of the
momentariness view, kṣaṇika-vāda. Such arguments are expressed in
the Vedānta tradition and adopted by most Hindu philosophical
schools.

Moreover, if the mind continues to exhaust its momentary existence in
object-awareness rather than subject-awareness, there would be no
awareness of a subjective self, says Śaṅkara. How could we function in
the world without any notion of a subjective self? We would all meet
each other in bewilderment, he quips! There is thus the need of a
subject, in the Yoga view—the puruṣa manifesting its awareness through the citta—to be the witness of ideas and provide a basis for continuity.

Vyāsa considers another Buddhist view, which Vijñānabhikṣu again identifies as that of the Vijñānavādins, or Yogācāra Buddhists. In Buddhism in general, the human persona consists of five skandhas, layers of personhood: form, sensation, perceptions, saṃskāras, and consciousness. None of these is permanent—including consciousness. All five layers consist of constantly changing streams of interdependent point moments, each one codependent on and interconnected with others. Some Buddhists, Vyāsa states, hold that there actually is a mind, called sattva (literally, beingness\(^{25}\)), which appropriates these layers, then discards them constantly for new layers every moment (the more common term for this mental substratum in Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda Buddhism is ālaya-vijñāna). Since the postulation of such a sattva starts to approach the notion of a puruṣa, he continues, they become fearful of the implications of this move and hasten to deny its existence as anything other than momentary.

All in all, from the perspective of the Yoga school, confusion arises by attempting to deny the existence of a puruṣa as the witness of the mind. Having said this, one can reiterate that, at least in terms of prakṛti, Buddhism and Yoga both agree that surface-level reality is momentary and flows in a stream of ever-changing flux. As will be discussed in IV.33, where they differ is that in Yoga this all takes place in a constant, eternal, and enduring substratum, prakṛti. In Buddhism, in addition to there being no puruṣa as the witness of prakṛti, there is no such entity as prakṛti underlying the momentary flux of surface reality.

\[\text{chit\text{-}prakṛtisandhānāstātārāpattī śvābduḥkṣamān}
\]

4.22 citē apratisaṅkramāyās tad-ākārāpattau svabhuddhi-
saṁvedanam

citeh, of consciousness; apratisaṅkramāyāḥ, unmoving; tat, that; ākāra, form; āpattau, pervading, entering into a state; sva, its own; buddhi, intelligence; saṁvedanam, knowing

Although it is unchanging, consciousness becomes aware
of its own intelligence by means of pervading the forms assumed by the intelligence.

Having argued that the mind is not self-illuminating but rather an object of knowledge, the question now arises as to how the mind is known at all by puruṣa, given the Yoga axiom that puruṣa is changeless, apratisaṅkrama, and does not act in any way. If puruṣa were directly aware of external objects (if there were no citta), it would itself be an actor, by virtue of interacting directly with the world, as well as ever-changing, by virtue of being aware of, processing, and thinking about one object after another, as is entailed in everyday consciousness. If puruṣa were subject to change in this way, it would not be eternal—eternal means unchanging. Therefore, puruṣa is passive and unchanging, according to Yoga metaphysics. Consequently it is the citta that changes and modifies itself according to the objects of perception—pots or any other objects of the world—molding itself into a replication of these objects, āpatti. One recalls the example of copper being poured into a mold and thereby taking the form of that mold. This transformed citta, that is, citta molded into the particular form of the external object, the pot, is presented to the changeless and eternal puruṣa. The consciousness of puruṣa, which eternally radiates forth, thereby becomes aware of the citta in this particular mold of a pot. Puruṣa has not changed or transformed by being aware of citta and its machinations, nor has it acted; its awareness has merely encountered the citta in its modified forms of pots and so forth. The light of a movie projector does not change or act when it pervades the ever-changing reel flowing in front of it. Its unchanging nature is simply to shine. Pervaded by puruṣa’s awareness, the citta in its turn becomes animated as the movie reel becomes illuminated when pervaded by light. Thus the citta can act and continually change into the forms of the world, meanwhile allowing the puruṣa, as witness, to remain inactive and unchangingly aware.

The citta is also conceptualized as acting as a mirror and reflecting the puruṣa—Vācaspati Miśra presents again the classic illustration of the moon reflected in rippling water. When puruṣa becomes aware of its reflection in the modified citta, it becomes aware of an apparently transformed puruṣa (that is, of its reflection in whatever is going on in
the *citta*, which appears animated due to being pervaded by the *puruṣa*’s awareness). This is compared to the moon’s reflection in water agitated by the wind, which makes the moon’s reflection—and, by extension, the moon itself—appear to be moving with ripples. Of course, it is only the reflection of the moon that moves with the ripples; the moon itself remains unchanged in the sky, but an ignorant person might mistake the rippled reflection of the moon to be the actual moon. Similarly, the *puruṣa* becomes identified with its distorted reflection by the *citta* and thus becomes aware of and identified with *saṁsāric* life despite the fact that, in reality, it itself is autonomous, aloof, and unchanging. Vyāsa quotes the following verse:

The sages teach that the hidden place in which the eternal *Brahman* is to be found is not the netherworlds, nor the mountain caves, nor deep darkness, nor the caverns of the oceans; it is the *vṛttis* of the intelligence which appears identical to him [by which it is hidden].

We can note here, as an aside, that although the Upaniṣadic term *Brahman* is not used by Patañjali (*ātman*, of course, is), Vyāsa is here clearly equating it with *puruṣa*.

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**IV.23 draṣṭṛ-dṛśyoparaktam cittaṁ sarvārtham**

*draṣṭṛ*, the seer; *dṛśya*, the object seen; *uparaktam*, colored; *cittam*, the mind; *sarvārtham*, knows all objects

The mind, colored by the seer as well as by that which is seen, knows all objects.

The *citta* is the pivot of *saṁsāric* existence. On the one hand, it assumes the forms of the objects of the world. On the other hand, it itself is the object of *puruṣa*’s awareness. Thus, says Vyāsa, it is colored by both object and subject, by the inanimate sense objects and by *puruṣa*, the ultimate source of awareness. By reflecting *puruṣa*’s consciousness, as well as the inert objects of the world, it assumes the forms of both
consciousness and unconsciousness, and hence, in Patañjali’s terms, is colored, uparaka, by them. Like a crystal, it can reflect disparate things in its various facets. Here again we see the mind compared to the crystal. Depending on the point to be made, sometimes the puruṣa is compared to a crystal (e.g., Vācaspati Miśra in I.3) and other times, as we find here, the citta is compared to the crystal. In the former instance, the point is to illustrate that just as the crystal remains clear even though it might appear to be colored by an adjacent object, so does the puruṣa remain pure, even though its awareness appears to be colored by the adjacent citta with its vṛttis. But here the same example is used to illustrate that it is the mind that is infused with both consciousness distinct from itself on one side, and with the objects of the senses, also distinct from itself, on the other, as the crystal can be infused with both red and other colors distinct from itself in its various facets.

This is why, says Vyāsa, it is easy to subscribe to the idealist views discussed in the previous sūtras. Since objects of consciousness are revealed by the mind, it is understandable that some might think they are products of the mind. Likewise, since the mind reflects the consciousness of puruṣa, it is understandable that some might suppose that the mind itself is the source of consciousness. These views deserve sympathy, says Vyāsa. However, if one is truly to realize the source of all consciousness, one must develop a clear understanding of the nature of puruṣa, of the citta, and of the objects of perception; hence the previous sūtras were directed by Patañjali at challenging certain views that might bear resemblances to the Yogic position. The correct view according to the Yoga school is that there are three entities in the process of knowledge: the knower, the instrument of knowledge, and the object of knowledge (puruṣa, citta, and the sense objects). And true discriminative knowledge, viveka, is the understanding of the difference among them.

तदसंख्ये वासनाचित्रम् अपि परार्थं संहत्यकारित्वात् ॥२४॥

IV.24 tad-asaṅkhya-yena-vāsanā-citram api parārtham samḥatya-kāरītvāt

tat, that; asaṅkhya, uncountable; vāsanā, subconscious
impressions; *citram*, variegated; *api*, also; *para*, other; *artham*, purpose; *saṁhatya*, combination, union; *kāritvāt*, because of acting

That mind, with its countless variegated subliminal impressions, exists for another entity [other than itself], because it operates in conjunction [with other instruments].

Patañjali concludes the discussion concerning the nature of the mind and consciousness. The mind consists of unlimited *saṁskāras*—of pleasure, pain, knowledge, etc. It is therefore a construction made of many parts. It also works in conjunction, *saṁhatya*, with other entities such as the senses, sense objects, and so forth. Things that are combinations of parts and work in conjunction with other entities, state the commentators, have been conjoined for the purpose of something else, not for themselves. In fact, when the parts of a constructed entity are pulled apart, the entity ceases to exist as a coherent entity. Therefore, it has been put together originally for an entity other than itself. A house is a construction of different parts that exist with other entities. It does not exist for itself but for another entity—a resident.

As we know, the mind exists to provide either experience or liberation. The experience of pleasure that it activates is not for itself, nor is its manifestation of the experience of pain, knowledge, etc., for itself. These are to be experienced by some other entity. That other entity cannot itself be a construct consisting of parts, for the reason outlined above; it must be something of a different nature: That other is the changeless, partless *puruṣa*.
Just as the existence of seeds is inferred from blades of grass shooting forth in the rainy season, says Vyāsa, so the existence of saṁskāras from the practice of yoga in a past life is inferred in the case of one whose hair stands on end and whose tears flow when hearing about the path of liberation.\textsuperscript{28} The commentators discuss how, due to the performance of yoga in a past life, a person is spontaneously attracted to the practices of yoga in the present life. In such a person, they say, curiosity about the nature of the self—“Who am I?” “Who was I in the past?” “What is this life about?” “Where will I go when I die?”—arises spontaneously. Just as the lush verdancy of the rainy season points to the existence of seeds that had remained dormant until the onset of the rains, so the saṁskāras accumulated from the practice of yoga in a past life lie dormant until conditions in a present life reactivate them, at which time they sprout spontaneously. One is then drawn automatically to the practices of yoga and the association of fellow yogīs, and loses interest in the more superficial aspects of mundane existence. Kṛṣṇa states in the Gītā that the unsuccessful yogī, that is, the one who does not quite complete his or her journey in life, is reborn into a pious or prosperous family, or a family of yogīs. Then “such a person gains a revival of his insight from the previous birth, and strives again for perfection from that point [where he or she had left off in the past life]” (VI.41–43).

However, continues Vyāsa, Patañjali is indicating in this sūtra that when one has actually realized the self, questions such as “Who am I” cease; hence, the prioritization of pratyakṣa, experience, by Patañjali (I.49) from the three sources of knowledge accepted by the Yoga school in I.6. The other two, anumāna and āgama, inference and verbal authority, can help remove doubt, says Hariharānanda, but only actual experience completely dissolves all questions. Existential questions are, after all, the products of citta—albeit of the akliṣṭa variety noted in sūtra I.5 which are advantageous to the ultimate goal of yoga. But once one actually experiences the distinction between the real self and everything else, all existential questions evaporate. As the Munḍaka Upaniṣad states, “All doubts are dispelled, for one who has seen [the truth]” (II.2.9).
**IV.26** tadā viveka-nimnam kaivalya-prāgbhāram cittam

tadā, then; viveka, discrimination; nimnam, inclined toward; kaivalya, aloneness, ultimate liberation; prāgbhāram, inclined toward; cittam, the mind

**At that point, the mind, inclined toward discrimination, gravitates toward ultimate liberation.**

When, says Vyāsa, citta recognizes this distinction between itself and the puruṣa, the mind of the yogī, which had previously been interested in sensual gratification, undergoes a transformation. As Patañjali indicates, it becomes inclined toward the knowledge born of discrimination (of this distinction) and gravitates toward liberation, kaivalya. As discussed in II.26, it is viveka that destroys ignorance and this brings about kaivalya (II.25).

**IV.27** tac-chidreṣu pratyayāntarāṇi saṁskārebhyaḥ

tat, that; chidreṣu, break, interval; pratyaya, ideas; antarāṇi, other; saṁskārebhyaḥ, subliminal impressions

**During the intervals [in this state of discriminate awareness] other ideas [arise] because of previous saṁskāras.**

Patañjali states that even in the mind that is inclined toward liberation, there are breaks in the flow of viveka, discrimination (of the difference between puruṣa and citta). Conventional thoughts such as, “I am,” “This is mine,” “I know,” “I don’t know,” etc., pop into the mind of the meditator, says Vyāsa. From where do they come? These are merely the effects of previous saṁskāras, which are gradually dwindling away. The sense of I remains even in samprajñāta-samādhi, Vijñānabhikṣu reminds us. And even a very renounced yogī who begs for his food as an ascetic, says Vācaspati Miśra, must be conscious of his body and of hunger, etc.,
to do so. Thus, even as they dwindle, thoughts pertaining to the prākṛtic body and mind continue to arise even in the minds of advanced yogīs.

> hānam, removal; eṣām, of them; kleśavad, like the afflictions; uktam, is said

The removal [of these previous saṁskāras] is said to be like [the removal] of the kleśa afflictions.

Just as the kleśas become burnt seeds incapable of sprouting, says Vyāsa (II.10–11) the seeds of latent saṁskāras noted in the previous sūtra that might arise and interrupt the yogī’s meditation are likewise singed by the fire of knowledge, jñāna. The kleśas, we recall, are the cause of sāṁsāric existence; once they are burnt up, they do not provoke action and thus no further saṁskāras are generated. But one is still left with the latent saṁskāras accrued prior to the elimination of the kleśas, which may activate and pop into the yogī’s mind. This sūtra states that any such residual saṁskāras are also burnt up in the same way as were the kleśas. Thus, they can no longer sprout and give birth to any further thoughts.

As for the knowledge, jñāna, saṁskāras, which burn up the other saṁskāras, says Vyāsa, these continue to exist until the ultimate goal of the mind is achieved—we recall that saṁskāras are never actually destroyed; they can, however, become burnt such that they will not produce seeds. They then dissolve back into the prākṛtic matrix when the mind itself is dissolved after final liberation.

prasāṅkhyaśāne, in meditative wisdom; api, even; akusūdasya, of one who has no interest; sarvathā, entirely; viveka,
For one who has no interest even in [the fruits] of meditative wisdom on account of the highest degree of discriminative insight, the samādhi called dharma-megha, cloud of virtue, ensues.

The commentators sometimes seem to take technical terms such as prasaṅkhyana and dharma-megha here, and terms such as prajñā (I.20, 48; II.27; III.5), viveka or viveka-khyāti (II.26, 28; III.52, 54; IV.26, 28), or khyāti alone (here and I.16; III.49), as more or less synonyms, or with minor nuances of differences.30 Vācaspati Miśra here takes prasaṅkhyana to refer to the means of restraining all outgoing mental activities, and dharma-megha as the state ensuing when even prasaṅkhyana in its turn is restrained. Both these terms occur here for the first time. The commentators take dharma-megha to essentially mean the highest state of viveka, discrimination (Hariharānanda says it is the omniscience ensuing from discrimination), but understand this sūtra as saying that when the yogī has no interest in the benefits accruing from discernment, his discernment has reached its perfection. Specifically, say the commentators, when the yogī has absolutely no interest even in the powers by which he gains control over all things, but, contrarily, actually begins to perceive even these attainments as duḥkha, suffering, then his unflinching discrimination is secure and total. We recall that in I.16 Vācaspati Miśra considered the paraṁ vairāgyam, higher dispassion toward everything made of the guṇas, to be dharma-megha. For Vijñānabhikṣu, dharma-megha is a state of jīvan-mukti, liberated while still embodied.31

Why this level of samādhi is called dharma-megha, dharma cloud, is an interesting question, as is the question of which level of samādhi in I.17 and I.42–44 it might correspond to. The commentators don’t remark on the latter, but in terms of the former question, Vijñānabhikṣu says that, like a cloud, this state rains dharma, which totally uproots the kleśas and all karma. Śaṅkara states that the supreme dharma it rains is kaivalya, the final and ultimate state of liberation (II.25; III.50, 55; IV.26). In this state, the yogī’s body is like an empty house, he says, all desires to enjoy
it have evaporated, no further ideas are created in the *citta*, and the *puruṣa* is left alone in the serenity of pure self-knowledge. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī takes *dharma* in another of its semantic meanings, as knowable things, along the lines of its usage in IV.12, and understands this state of *samādhi* to be one in which the *yogī* knows all knowable things. Taking *dharma* in yet another of its etymological meanings, virtue, Hariharānanda says that as a cloud pours rain, so this state of *samādhi* pours the highest virtue effortlessly. This includes knowledge of the self, which the *yogī*, he says, can see as plainly as a piece of fruit in the palm of his hand.

Given that he finds *dharma-megha* used only once in other Hindu sources, Klostermaier examines the meaning of the term in Buddhist sources and, in conjunction with the next *sūtra*, concludes that it is a state reached after many trials, where there is no longer any danger of the *yogī* sliding backward due to the elimination of the *kleśas* and *karma*: “The metaphor of ‘rain’ appears to be most appropriate since it extinguishes fire, washes away impurities, and provides a necessary condition for growth” (1986, 262). Feuerstein equates *dharma* with the primal *guṇas*, since *dharma*, like *guṇa*, can also mean quality, and the state of *dharma-megha* as when the *yogī* has conquered all other conditionings and nothing but the primary raw undifferentiated *guṇas* still obscure his all-pervasive vision (1974, 46).

All of these interpretations of *dharma-megha* fit within the contours of Yoga philosophy.

> IV.30 tataḥ kleśa-karma-nivṛttiḥ

*tataḥ*, from there; *kleśa*, the obstacles, affliction; *karma*, of *karma*; *nivṛttiḥ*, the cessation

**From this comes the cessation of the *kleśas* [impediments to *yoga*] and *karma*.**

Once this state of *dharma-megha* has been attained, says Vyāsa, the five *kleśas* and all dormant *karma* are destroyed (more precisely, burnt) to
their very roots. With the roots burnt, the seeds can no longer sprout and the yogī at this point is liberated even while still alive. How so? poses Vyāsa. Because lack of discrimination, avidyā, is the cause of saṁsāra (II.4, 24–25), so one situated in unwavering discrimination is no longer in saṁsāra (II.26), though still alive. This is the jīvanmukta. The term jīva is used for the ātman or puruṣa in the context of saṁsāra, that is to say, in the sense of the embodied soul, and mukta means liberated. So jīvanmukta is a soul still embodied in the world but self-realized and liberated. Such a state is accepted by most Hindu schools. As was discussed, such persons do not create new karma; their dormant karma is rendered ineffective and thus they are subject only to the karma already activated for the present life—that is, they live out the remainder of their natural life. According to the Vedānta tradition (IV.1.5), this notion goes back to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad: “There is a delay here only until I am liberated; but then I will attain the goal (VI.14.2). The Śāṅkhya Kārikā compares this to a potter’s wheel: When the potter stops pumping the pedal, the wheel does not suddenly stop but slows down until all the energy already activated or pumped into it has been expended. Similarly, the karma already activated at birth for a yogī’s life needs to be exhausted. Such a person absolutely never returns to saṁsāra after death, adds Vyāsa, as indicated in numerous Hindu texts (e.g., Gītā VIII.21; XV.6).

IV.31 tadā sarvāvarana-malāpetasya jñānasyānantyāj jñeyam alpam

tadā, from this; sarva, all; āvaraṇa, covering; mala, impurities; apetasya, been removed; jñānasya, of knowledge; ānantyāt, because of being endless; jñeyam, that which is to be known; alpam, little

At this point, because of the unlimited nature of knowledge when all impurities have been removed from it, that which remains to be known is little.
The nature of the pure mind is sattva, and the nature of sattva is knowledge and illumination. When covered by tamas, the mind is obscured; when affected by rajas, it is stimulated. When all traces of rajas and tamas have been removed, there is nothing impeding the unlimited knowledge inherent in sattva from knowing everything. The citta, we recall, is all-pervading in the Yoga school, and thus its inherent ability to know, when not obstructed, is likewise all-pervading. It is ahaṅkāra, ego, Hariharānanda reminds us (the asmitā of II.6) that causes the potential all-pervading nature of the mind to restrict itself to the limited body and its organs. When ego is removed, the mind regains its all-expansive potential. Limited things, like pots, are known when they are pervaded by the mind channeled through the instruments (limitations) of the senses. By extension, when the mind bypasses its identification with the senses and recovers its all-pervasive nature, it can pervade and thereby know everything unlimitedly. Just as after the rainy season, says Vācaspati Miśra, the sun, no longer obscured by monsoon clouds, shines everywhere with intense light, so does knowledge pervade all things after the influences of rajas and tamas have been eradicated from the mind. That which remains to be known is as irrelevant as a firefly in the sky, says Śaṅkara.34

IV.32 tataḥ kṛtārthānāṁ pariṇāma-krama-parisamāptir guṇānām

tataḥ, from that; kṛta, accomplished; arthaṁ, goal; pariṇāma, mutation, transformation; krama, sequence; parisamāptih, cessation; guṇānām, of the guṇas

As a result, there is a cessation of the ongoing permutations of the guṇas, their purpose now fulfilled.

The guṇas have now fulfilled their purpose, says Vyāsa, which, as we know, is to provide either material experience or liberation (II.18). They have become redundant and do not care to stay even for a moment. The ongoing permutations, pariṇāma-krama, of the guṇas refer to the change inherent in prakṛtic existence, which is caused by the constant
maneuverings and interactions of the guṇas with each other. Change is for the purpose of experience. With the yogi’s complete detachment from any sort of experience, even those of the siddhis, the guṇas no longer have any impetus to provide a never-ending variety of stimulation: “As the dancer ceases from the dance after she has been seen by the audience, so prakṛti ceases after having revealed her nature to the puruṣa; prakṛti says I have been seen and never again comes before the sight of puruṣa” (Sāṅkhya Kārikā LIX–LXI).

The guṇas are always in flux, and thus material reality is a flow that can be considered a series of moments, kṣaṇa. These moments are related together in a krama, progression or sequence, which is what Patañjali intends by a progression corresponding to a series of moments, kṣaṇa-pratiyogī. The ongoing existence of an object through Time, then, is actually the continuum of a series of imperceptible moments in the life span of the object, as noted in III.52. Time, in Yoga, is nothing other than a series of moments, which is nothing other than the movement of atoms (and subatomic particles). More precisely, the subatomic (aṇu) composition of all objects is constantly in motion at every moment, and a moment, kṣaṇa, is the period of time it takes an aṇu to move to the space immediately adjacent to it. Hence, saying that an object is moving through Time is to say its subatomic composition is in constant motion.35 On this point, to be sure, the Yoga school agrees with the kṣanika-vāda Buddhists: Nothing is static but changes every kṣaṇa,
minute.

Therefore, when we say a cloth has become old, in reality we are referring to a certain cutoff point in this sequential flux, which Patañjali here refers to as the final moment of change, \textit{parināma-aparānta}, which occurs at the very end of a series of changes. At the moment the cloth is just about to disintegrate, the ongoing sequence of ever-changing moments becomes unavoidably visible such that it becomes clear to all that the cloth is old. But we can infer that preceding stages of change in the object’s progression from new to old existed, says Vācaspati Miśra: the stage of slightest change, very slight change, noticeable change, more noticeable change, and unavoidably noticeable change. The cloth does not suddenly become old all at once at the end, says Vyāsa. It constantly undergoes change from its very inception. Thus material reality is never static but always in motion.

Does this mean there is nothing permanent? asks the rhetorical objector,\textsuperscript{36} again alluding to the Buddhist view. Specific transformations of \textit{prakṛti} such as the particular sequence of the \textit{gunas} underpinning the cloth may be impermanent, but the overall and ongoing movement and sequencing of the \textit{gunas} in general is permanent.\textsuperscript{37} Thus \textit{prakṛti} manifest as a pot is impermanent, but \textit{prakṛti} herself, the ultimate ingredient underpinning the pot, is permanent. It is here that Yoga metaphysics departs from Buddhism, which does not recognize any ultimate substratum to reality. There are actually two types of permanence, says Vyāsa, the permanence of change in general, that is, the permanence underpinning the constantly changing \textit{gunas}, and the permanence of the unchangeable, \textit{puruṣa}. These are both permanent because their essential nature is never destroyed. This essential permanent nature is obvious in terms of all that has been said throughout the text about \textit{puruṣa}, but the same applies to \textit{prakṛti}. \textit{Prakṛti} is constantly in flux because of the agitation and nonstop interactive dynamic of the \textit{gunas}, and this causes the effects of \textit{prakṛti}, such as pots, to be temporary, but the essential underlying nature of \textit{prakṛti} herself is eternal and constant. Or in other words, says Vijñānabhidhikṣu, \textit{prakṛti}'s essential causal nature does not become past as does the nature of all \textit{prakṛtic} effects such as pots. Therefore, Vyāsa noted that there are two types of permanency: one in which mutations in the form of effects such as pots keep changing but
the underlying essence remains permanent, which is prakṛti, and one in which there are no mutations to begin with, simply pure unchanging essence, which is puruṣa. The latter is devoid of the six kinds of changes associated with all living beings: birth, endurance, change, growth, decline, and destruction.

The commentators then consider an opponent who might question whether or not there is an end to these constant permutations of the guṇas. If one states that there is not, then this would seem to contradict the previous sūtra, which indicates that there is an end to these permutations. If one takes the alternative and states that there is an end, one would seem to be contradicting Vyāsa’s commentary to this sūtra, which states that there is no end to them. Vyāsa accordingly points out that there are some questions that depend on context and cannot be answered categorically. Some questions, such as whether all that is born will die, have categorical replies irrespective of context. But some questions require contextualization. “Is humankind the superior species?” requires a nuanced response: Humankind may be superior to animals but inferior to the gods and sages. Likewise, “Is the sequence of births and deaths eternal?” has no universal answers but requires nuance: It has an end for those in whom discriminate awareness has dawned but not for others. Along the same lines, the permutations of the guṇas have an end for the liberated yogī but no end for those bound in saṁsāra. This answer, says Vācaspati Miśra, addresses the hypothetical notion (that invariably pops up) that if everyone were to get liberated, wouldn’t prakṛti and her guṇas then cease to mutate and transform, having no further role to play? Living beings are endless, he states, because they are countless. And posing certain questions, adds Vijñānabhikṣu, is to engage in fruitless inferential logic and, ultimately, a waste of time.

पूर्वार्थशून्याना गुणाना प्रतिप्रसव: केवल्यं
स्वरूपप्रतिश्ठा वा चितिशक्तिरिति । ३४ ।।

IV.34 puruṣārtha-sūnyānāṁ gunānāṁ pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyaṁ
svarūpa-pratīṣṭhā vā citi-śaktir iti
Puruṣa, of the soul; artha, goal; śūnyānām, devoid of; guṇānām, of the guṇas; pratiprasavaḥ, return to the original state; kaivalyam, aloneness, liberation; svarūpa, essential nature; pratiṣṭhā, situated; vā, or; citi-śaktiḥ, the power of consciousness; iti, thus

Ultimate liberation is when the guṇas, devoid of any purpose for the puruṣa, return to their original [latent] state; in other words, when the power of consciousness is situated in its own essential nature.

Kaivalya literally means the state of kevala, or aloneness, onlyness, one’s-own-ness, not-connected-with-anything-else-ness. In other words, puruṣa’s awareness is now absorbed exclusively in its own nature as puruṣa and completely uncoupled from even the highest and finest states of pure citta or buddhi. In Vyāsa’s terms, the guṇas have accomplished their function of providing experience or liberation—at this stage, the latter—and are now devoid of any function. Puruṣa now lives in total isolation, its power of consciousness no longer aware of anything else except itself, unconnected with the citta and the world of prakṛti it had mediated. The red rose has been removed from the environs of the crystal, says Vijñānabhikṣu, which regains its original pure hue, devoid of the red reflection of the rose. Actually, puruṣa had never been bound; Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the Sāṅkhya Kārikā: “Certainly, therefore, no [puruṣa] is bound, or liberated, nor does it migrate; it is prakṛti abiding in manifold forms that is bound, migrates, and is liberated” (LXII).

The yogī’s physical body and cognitive apparatus can now return to the elements through reverse involution, the pratiprasava mentioned in this sūtra (and in I.10). The saṃskāras, etc., dissolve into the mind, the mind into the ego, the ego into the mahat (buddhi), and the latter into prakṛti. The yogī’s sojourn in saṁsāra is now officially and totally over. What exactly the eternal experience of final liberation consists of is not a topic that Patañjali has chosen to attempt to discuss. Nor does he address the relationship between the liberated puruṣa and Īśvara. The task he set for himself was to lay out the path by which the bound puruṣa can free itself from bondage. Obviously the actual experience of
liberation is by definition a state beyond thought and words as repeated so eloquently in the Upaniṣads.

There are, of course, very elaborate and expansive theologies offering an analytic systematization of the experience in liberation, especially among the Īśvara-centered theistic schools of thought evidenced in the Purāṇas such as the Vaiṣṇava or Bhāgavata traditions. Such theologies describe in some detail the possible eternal interactions between Īśvara and the liberated puruṣas in various Brahman realms beyond the domain of prakṛti. For such theologies, liberation as outlined by Patañjali is just the first step: Once liberated from prakṛti and its effects and having gained awareness of its true identity, the puruṣa is eligible to enter into a divine relationship with God, Īśvara. The Śaivite and Śakta traditions, too, have produced sophisticated elaborations on the experience of liberation from within the contours of their particular clusters of theologies. Such bhakti, devotional, movements see themselves as picking up where Patañjali left off. As we have repeatedly stressed, while one must be careful not to project alien theologies onto the author of the Yoga Sūtras, a wide variety of these devotional currents had certainly swept across the Indian subcontinent by Patañjali’s time, and it is most probable that he would have been affiliated with a devotional sect.39

But Patañjali himself chose to be tantalizingly elusive about Īśvara and completely silent about the actual experience of liberation. He focused his enterprise on the area of knowledge concerned with the methods for bringing the yogī to the point of liberation, rather than on elaborating on this state, or on the nature of Īśvara and the relationship between this being and the liberated puruṣa, as some of his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors set out to do. One wonders whether this was because Īśvara theologies were already adequately accounted for, or at the very least, developing firm roots on the religious landscape of his day, and he felt the need for a more specific and circumscribed treatise on a less ambitious topic. As such, with puruṣa embarking in this sūtra on an eternal experience of pure self-awareness in a dimension completely uncoupled from prakṛti and her permutations, Patañjali’s task is now complete.
iti Patañjali-viracite yoga-sūtre caturthaḥ kaivalya-pādaḥ
Thus ends the fourth chapter on samādhi in the Yoga Sūtras composed by Patañjali.
CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter begins by listing other means of attaining the siddhis [1]. This is followed by some comments on prakṛti’s relationship with her effects [2–3] and by the phenomenon of the creation of multiple minds by the yogi [4–5]. A more advanced discussion of karma [6–7], saṁskāras [8–11], and Time and the guṇas [12–14] then ensues. The next section critiques Buddhist idealist notions of the mind [15–21], followed by a discussion on the yoga view of the relationship between mind and consciousness [22–26], and of distractions to meditation [27–28]. The chapter ends with dharma-megha and its effects [29–33], and then ultimate liberation [34].
CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

It has been a wonderful, inspiring, and privileged journey engaging so intensely with the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali. It is clear to me that the text is destined to remain the primary manual for meditative practice for the ātman-based traditions, but now not just in India, as it has been for almost two millennia, but the world over. Moreover, in addition to its primary function as a spiritual manual containing clear and precise information about how to actually and factually directly experience the human soul in this life, the citta/puruṣa dualism of the text has much to offer modern discussions on the philosophy of mind and consciousness, and the saṃskāra/kleśa model has enormous contributions to make to contemporary approaches to therapy and psychoanalysis.

A number of issues nonetheless repeatedly presented themselves in the course of this engagement with the Yoga Sūtras. I, as others, found myself lamenting the lack of more extensive access to Patañjali’s views on topics of great importance that are only touched upon in a peripheral fashion in the text. That these questions present themselves stem from a number of causes: the extreme brevity of the sūtras, which sometimes merely refer to or touch upon aspects that remain undeveloped in their specifics; Patañjali’s undeviating focus on one very specific goal—the attainment of citta-vṛtti-nirodha—with little attention directed to unpacking anything not directly related to this end; and the likely imposition of certain Sāṅkhya elements on Patañjali by the commentators that are not explicit in the sūtras themselves. I here briefly touch upon four such areas: kartṛtvā, agency or free will; the nature of the Sāṅkhya evolutes as both cosmic and individual components of prakṛti; the nature of kaivalya, liberation; and the role of Īśvara.

PURUṢA AND FREE WILL

Although Patañjali himself does not explicitly deny agency (free will) to
the puruṣa, the Yoga system tends to be associated with the Sāṅkhya view that agency is a function of buddhi, not of puruṣa. Thus, the Sāṅkhya Kārikās specifically locates agency, kartṛtva, in the guṇas and not in puruṣa (XX); relegates adhyavasāya, judgment, as the prime characteristic of buddhi, not puruṣa; and ascribes the choice of performing dharma or adharma, right or wrong, as states (bhavas) of buddhi (XXIII). Despite centuries of criticism by other schools on this point, the later Sāṅkhya Sūtras still promote this position: “It is the ego (ahaṅkāra) which is the agent, not the puruṣa” (VI.54). It is this Sāṅkhya view that Vācaspati Miśra, for example, approvingly imports into his commentary: “Although the self is certainly self-illuminating, it does not perform any act, and so in the absence of acts, it is not an agent.”

However, it must be noted that Patañjali neither explicitly endorses this view nor denies free will to puruṣa. The question must then be raised whether the denial of agency to puruṣa is a Sāṅkhya feature unwarrantedly foisted upon the Yoga Sūtras. We must, I suggest, consider that Patañjali may not have subscribed to the Sāṅkhya view, given the prescriptive and effort-centered nature of the system he has outlined in his sūtras. But first, let us consider why ascribing free will to buddhi rather than to puruṣa is problematic.

If agency does not reside in consciousness, but in the intellect, then, in essence, it is the buddhi that is attaining liberation, not the ātman, as the Sāṅkhya Kārikās are quite happy to pronounce: “Actually, no one is bound, no one liberated, no one transmigrates in saṁsāra; it is actually prakṛti in her various forms who is bound, transmigrates and is liberated” (LXII). It is ultimately buddhi that is subject to ignorance, buddhi that gains discrimination and insight, and buddhi that exerts the will to attain liberation. The entire yoga process is undertaken by buddhi—the various degrees of slight, mediocre, and ardent practice of I.22 are the product of buddhi’s application and enterprise, not puruṣa’s. Puruṣa eternally remains the detached witness. One must thus accept a puruṣa who has no agency or responsibility for its (apparent) condition. The problem with this perspective, of course, is explaining how there can be any impetus from the part of unconscious matter toward liberation (or toward any type of action, for that matter). Even if this could take place, why should the puruṣa be connected with decisions made not by itself
but by some completely extraneous entity? And why would the puruṣa be implicated in the first place?

From the Sāṅkhya perspective, that one puruṣa even apparently attains liberation and another does not is an occurrence taking place because of saṃskāras manifesting in the buddhi: sāttvic saṃskāras of discrimination are activated in a citta because of previous conducive saṃskāras, which are caused by previous saṃskāras in turn, in a beginningless series. Why this particular concatenation of saṃskāras should follow this trajectory for one puruṣa rather than another is a question that is avoided by the tradition by positing that embodiment—albeit with a potential end—is without beginning. Granted, that the cause of initial embodiment is sidestepped in this way by all Indic soteriological systems; the problem of why one puruṣa endeavors (or appears to endeavor) for liberation and another does not is particularly acute when free will and agency are denied to the puruṣa in the first place.

This stark feature of the system has attracted the criticism of not just modern scholars of the text but traditional scholars from other schools in ancient India. Overall, other than certain strains of Sāṅkhya, the galaxy of Hindu and Jain traditions have recognized agency as a quality of the puruṣa. And strains of Sāṅkhya itself, from the period prior to the emergence of the philosophical traditions, such as those represented in the Maitrī Upaniṣad (III.3), as well as the Mahabhārata (XII.303.8), explicitly accept the self as the agent (kartṛ). But by the time the Vedānta Sūtras had been compiled, the need was felt to demarcate the Vedānta position in contradistinction to at least certain other strains of Sāṅkhya that had become mainstream.

The Vedānta Sūtras, which are explicit about the agency of puruṣa, dedicate nine verses to the topic (II.3.33–39; also IV.4.8). The first of the verses points out that the injunctions of scripture would be pointless if puruṣa were not a moral agent capable of either following them or rejecting them, and the latter commentators have much to say here. Scripture is not directed at something insentient, says Madhva, but at a conscious being. And anyway, if prakṛti were the moral agent, says the Vedānta commentator Rāmānuja, then, there being one prakṛti common to all, all puruṣas should have the same experience—so how would one account for the diversity of experience? The Sūtrakṛtāṅga, an early text
of the Jain tradition raises the same objection: “They [the adherents of the Sāṅkhya philosophy] boldly proclaim: ‘When a man acts or causes another to act, it is not his soul (ātman) which acts or causes to act’: how can those who hold such opinions explain (the variety of existence) in the world?” (I.1.1.13–14).

The Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṁsā traditions all accept will as a quality of the ātman, and later scholastics, especially the Nyāya school, take Sāṅkhya to task here. The eleventh-century logician Udayana, in his Nyāyakusumāñjali (part I), argues that if will resided in buddhi, then either there would always be saṁsāra or there would always be mokṣa. He builds up his argument by noting that either buddhi is eternal or it is not eternal. If it is eternal, there would never be any liberation; puruṣa would be eternally bonded with buddhi. If, on the other hand, as an evolute of prakṛti, buddhi is not-eternal, then, prior to coming into being, what would cause it to attach itself to the ever-free, autonomous puruṣa? How can buddhi come to be associated with the pure puruṣa, if the latter is simply a pure witness? Without some impulse or act of will from its side, puruṣa could never be bound by buddhi but would remain ever free. Hence, it would be in either a state of perpetual saṁsāra or one of perpetual mokṣa. It is thus philosophically indefensible from within the contours of Sāṅkhya metaphysics to speak of a soul in saṁsāra striving for release.

Almost all modern scholars of the text have grappled with this issue, either alighting on this anomaly to critique the system by, for example, arguing for some unavoidable corollary consequence to which the denial of agency leads its proponents, or suggesting, as I have done, that Patañjali himself cannot be assumed to have denied some form of agency in puruṣa. Thus Phillips (1985) argues that if free will is situated not in puruṣa but in buddhi, then no one who had ever attained kaivalya by disconnecting from buddhi would find any will in the pure puruṣa to return and inform others about it. No one could report back about the experience, there being no will to do so in the state of pure consciousness. Therefore, the Yoga Sūtras are the product of scholastics, not enlightened yogīs. On the other hand, Koelman (1970), in his superb and highly appreciative analysis of Yoga philosophy, strives to resolve the dilemma by separating will as essential freedom, which he assigns to
the pure *puruṣa*, and the actual function of choice, which he relegates to the *prākṛtic* organism: “The willing, however, is not necessarily bound up with choosing. Consequently, the characteristic attribute of will, that is freedom, is not the capacity to choose, but rather self-dependence (*svatantratā*). Liberty of choice arises from the conditioning factor of the Self’s *prākṛtic* organism, while perfect freedom is, together with pure Awareness, the very essence of the Self” (257–75). Taking this a step further, one might posit that ultimate free will to seek either pure awareness or *prākṛtic* awareness is a quality of *puruṣa*, but how that will manifests in the specifics of choice is a function of *prakṛti*.

Perhaps the most sophisticated argument that provides positive inferential support to a position open to Patañjali accepting agency in *puruṣa* is to be found in the work of Ranganathan (2007, 2008, forthcoming). The basis of Ranganathan’s argument is that terms such as *dharma* must be understood as “key philosophical terms” throughout Indian philosophy. Despite an apparent diversity in its semantic range, he argues that *dharma* does in fact have a shared meaning in all schools and one that touches upon morality in one way or another.7 In his translation of the *Yoga Sūtras*, Ranganathan argues that scholars have failed to recognize the very different position the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* and the *Yoga Sūtras* have taken on the role of *dharma*, despite the term’s consistent meaning for both schools and despite the different emphasis given to morality in general in both texts.

In *Sāṅkhya*, *dharma* is a function of *buddhi*, with *puruṣa* a mere passive witness. In Yoga, *dharma* takes on a more active and prescriptive role. The failure to recognize the distinction between the passive orientation of *Sāṅkhya* and the far more active and prescriptive flavor of Yoga has resulted in some of the traditional commentators foisting the *Sāṅkhya* position of *puruṣa*’s lack of agency onto the *Yoga Sūtras* without warrant. His overall thesis is that once we recognize that the *Yoga Sūtras* and texts such as the *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* have very different things to say about *dharma*, then we can no longer accept that the *Yoga Sūtras* hold that *puruṣas* are not agents. Thus, given the fact that there is no explicit rejection of agency anywhere in the text, we need to interpret Patañjali as advancing the position that *puruṣa* is an active agent in its situation:
In step with this practical and ethical emphasis is [Patanjali’s] correlative affirmation that persons (puruṣa-s) are not only transcendent beings of consciousness and knowledge, but volitional beings. Indeed, he characterizes puruṣa-s as having the characteristic of cetana (Yoga Sūtra I.29), which in Sanskrit not only denotes consciousness and knowledge, but also the will. Patañjali emphasizes that persons are in control (they are the “Master of the character of the mind” (Yoga Sūtra IV.18), that the will is what accounts for the troubled, bound state of the individual (Yoga Sūtra IV.9–10), and that this state provides persons with the opportunity to be the cause of their own liberation (Yoga Sūtra II.23). Yet popular and scholarly accounts of the Yoga Sūtra, blurred with the value theory of Sāṅkhya and Advaita Vedānta, marginalize both the ethical and empowering aspects of Yoga theory (2008, 22).

We concur with this overall position. For there to be any coherence to the law of karma, the condition of the living beings in saṁsāra, and the decision to take up the path of yoga and follow the yamas and niyamas of II.30–45; or the friendship, compassion, joy, and equanimity prescribed in I.33; or essentially any of the prescriptions of the Yoga Sūtras; one must assign free will to the puruṣa as the ultimate agent of its condition.

THE TATTVAS: COSMOLOGICAL OR INDIVIDUAL?

Another problem that remains unclarified in the Sāṅkhya and Yoga traditions, and has long vexed scholars, is whether the tattvas, or evolutes from prakṛti, are to be considered cosmological or psychological. In other words, there is only one source (mūla)—prakṛti—but how many buddhis and ahaṅkāras are there? Does each individual have its own buddhi and ahaṅkāra, or is there one cosmological buddhi and ahaṅkāra common to all? It seems clear to me from the various normative sources on Sāṅkhya touched upon in the introduction that buddhi and ahaṅkāra as well as the tanmātras and mahabhūtas are clearly both cosmic and individual. We have argued in III.16 that the ability to merge the individual buddhi into the cosmic buddhi is essential to an understanding of the mechanics of the siddhis in Sāṅkhya metaphysics—in other words, to understanding how the yogi can effect gross matter by
the power of buddhi. And the ten karmendriyas and jñānendriyas of Sāṅkhya would appear to be individual rather than cosmic, even as these do not appear in other Sāṅkhya lists.⁹

But with all the evolutes, the question nonetheless remains: How does the cosmic buddhi and ahaṅkāra, and so on, become fragmented into the plurality of individual ones? How does prakṛti “fill in” the forms of nature with its evolutes (IV.2)? I find myself envisioning this process like that of someone poking his fingers into a blown-up balloon without popping it. The fingers are individually tightly covered with the balloon rubber, yet this rubber remains connected with the greater totality of rubber of the rest of the balloon. Similarly, when the puruṣas are injected into prakṛti, they are enveloped in individualized layers of prakṛti such as buddhi, and so on, yet these layers remain somehow potentially connected to the cosmic buddhi.

While the specifics of such questions remain puzzling, for the purposes of Yoga, it seems safe to assume that these types of cosmological issues were of no concern to Patañjali, hence they remain undeveloped.¹⁰ Just as his incomplete treatment of Īśvara shows interest primarily only in Īśvara’s relationship with the goal of citta-vṛtti-nirodha, so Patañjali’s interest in the tattvas is individual and psychological rather than cosmological in any sort of a systematic manner. As Larson notes: “Since the classical Sāṅkhya is concerned only with the isolation of pure consciousness or puruṣa, the world is irrelevant apart from its function as a means to salvation. In other words, the classical Sāṅkhya is not concerned with the world in itself except in so far as it is instrumental in the discrimination of the isolated or pure puruṣa” (1979, 203).

ENLIGHTENED ACTION AND THE NATURE OF KAIVALYA

While texts such as the Gītā clearly promote action as better than renunciation and inaction (III.4–8; XII.12), scholarship on the Yoga Sūtras—primarily modern rather than traditional—has tended to view full kaivalya as incompatible with action in the world and occurring only after the demise of the physical body. Most scholars have read the text as suggesting that the complete eradication of primordial avidyā ignorance can only result in the total breakdown of biological and psychological embodied existence. Any type of action, after all, can
occur only by means of the utilization of the false self, that is, the non-self of mind and body, and thus puruṣa’s complete immersion of awareness in its own true self requires the complete withdrawal of its awareness from the external coverings of the body and mind. The yogī in the kaivalya state thus becomes dysfunctional. The instant awareness externalizes and becomes aware of “other,” it loses awareness of the “self,” that is, puruṣa (I.3–4). Verses such as II.22, II.25, and IV.34 are fairly explicit that prakṛti disappears from the purview of puruṣa when it attains kaivalya, the very meaning of which is precisely “aloneness.” Feuerstein ably represents this perspective:

As we have seen, Vyāsa promoted the view that deliverance is possible even when still alive. But this standpoint is not sanctioned by the Yoga-Sūtra … As long as the self has not cut all connections with prakṛti, it cannot be said to stand in its true form (sva-rūpa). What philosopher yogins like … Śaṅkara taught as jīvan-mukti can, to the follower of classical Yoga, only mean close proximity to final emancipation. For him, as for Rāmānuja, release follows upon death, when the body has fallen off (vi-deha), and whenever a liberated person takes on a body again, either composed of gross or subtle matter, he is no longer residing in freedom, but is again subject to the laws governing the machinery of the universe. Even when residing in the highest and purest realms of nature, he remains subject to a thin veil of illusion (māyā), since prakṛti is avidyā or nescience. (Feuerstein 1974, 47)

In this perspective, as long as the puruṣa remains embodied, it can necessarily do so only by associating with illusion. Consequently, Yoga has generally been perceived as a world-renouncing tradition that does not reconcile itself with work in the world, or “enlightened action.”

The most vociferous opponent of this understanding of kaivalya, has been Whicher:

Yoga allows for an enlightened, participatory perspective that can embody a rich sense of dharma suggesting a responsiveness to life that no longer snares the yogin morally or epistemologically … At this high level realization in Yoga, action does not end but becomes
purified of afflicted impulses [kleśas] ... Nonafflicted [akliṣṭa] action remains for the liberated yogin ... Yoga extends the meaning of purification and illumination of human identity to incorporate an enlightened mode of activity as well as knowledge ... We need not conclude that liberative knowledge and virtuous activity are incompatible with one another, nor need we see detachment as an abandonment of the world and the human relational sphere. (Whicher 1999, 794–95)

While Whicher has been criticized for suggesting that Yoga as presented by Patañjali specifically means enlightened engagement in the world, there is merit in his insistence that the two are not incompatible. Although the emphasis on enlightened action in the world is clearly much more prominent in the Gītā than in Patañjali, it is not incompatible with the Yoga Sūtras. Patañjali’s teachings seem clearly geared toward promoting a compassionate (I.33), moral, and ethical (II.29ff), that is, a highly sāttvic social, lifestyle. Indeed, this is reflected right at the beginning of the text by the category of akliṣṭa-vṛttis, that is, vṛttis not subject to ignorance and the other kleśas. This can only point to an enlightened mode of acting in the world.

Now, one cannot deny that in the actual state of nirbīja-samādhi, the yogī is completely dysfunctional; he or she has, after all, withdrawn consciousness from all sensual activities, pratyāhāra (II.54–55), and completely stilled all vṛttis whatsoever, such that the entire psychophysical organism is absolutely closed down. And the Purāṇas and epics are full of stories of yogīs who simply check out, so to speak, discarding their bodies and cittas by their yogic prowess and entering permanently into the liberated state at will. But it seems to me that both these perspectives can be harmonized into the life of the jīvanmukta. If we accept agency in puruṣa, as we have done, there is nothing preventing the yogī from depositing a saṃskāra into the citta prior to entering the state of nirbīja-samādhi to activate and pull consciousness back into the prākṛtic state at a certain point—a sort of saṃskāric alarm clock. Of course, the only motive to do this would be out of compassion for those still stranded in the cycle of birth and death who have sought (or might seek) shelter and guidance from the yogī as guru—a notion akin to that richly developed in the Bodhisattva tradition
of Mahāyāna Buddhism. But there is nothing in Patañjali that speaks against the possibility that certain puruṣas can will to remain embodied in prakṛti, utilizing the akliṣṭa-vṛttis of I.5, for the purpose of aiding other living beings. This state of jīvanmukta is certainly accepted by the commentators.

Again, the Gītā gives more specific instruction as to precisely what action in the world might look like (e.g., II.47ff and throughout), but I see the Yoga Sūtras as an indispensable manual for constructing a profound understanding of mind and of the meditational process that can be incorporated very harmoniously with the Gītā’s more developed notion of social duty (as its theism can be incorporated into the Gītā’s far more developed theology of the role devotion to Īśvara plays in all this as will be discussed below).

This leads to a larger discussion on the nature of kaivalya. If we are to use human reason to engage with the sūtras (which, needless to say, runs counter to the entire thrust of the text, which is to transcend reason!), numerous questions pertaining to the liberated state present themselves. First of all, if puruṣa’s pure awareness is all-pervading, as Yoga holds it to be, and prakṛti, too, is all-pervading, then how can puruṣa ever be unaware of prakṛti? How can puruṣa be unaware of another entity if puruṣa’s all-pervasive awareness is infinitely and eternally coextensive with this other all-pervading entity? How can a light not illuminate objects in a room if it pervades the room? Can puruṣa somehow “ignore” this all-pervading fellow entity, prakṛti, with which it shares infinity and eternity, and yet be all-pervasively aware? Is enlightenment puruṣa somehow ignoring infinite and all-pervading prakṛti and being simply aware in a content-less fashion—an exact opposite of embodied existence where puruṣa is “ignoring” its own infinite and all-pervading nature and focusing awareness on prakṛti? (Some have gone so far as to attempt to resolve this dilemma by imposing an advaita Vedānta position on the text, which, as discussed previously, involves holding that prakṛti herself is an illusion, superimposed by ignorance, and thus, when avidyā is dispelled, so is the very existence of the manifest world and all prakṛti.)

Clearly, rational thinking on this matter is bound by spatial and temporal categories, hence Patañjali does not attempt to lead us into an
understanding of *kaivalya*. Such questions require us to either problematize the claims of Yoga or accept the repeated claim of the Yoga/Vedānta/Upaniṣadic traditions that since liberation is, by definition, a state beyond the intellect, then human reason, *ex hypothesi*, cannot fathom its experience. This position is, of course, so frustrating to the philosopher and critical thinker who limits his or her epistemology to rational thought, but so obvious to the mystic, who seeks to transcend it.

**ĪŚVARA**

Perhaps the most intriguing question raised by the *sūtras* is the relationship of Patañjali’s mysterious Īśvara, the transcendent “special” *puruṣa*, with other liberated *puruṣas*. According to Koelman, Patañjali’s low-key approach to Īśvara was diplomatic, the consequence of maneuvering within the contours of certain later Sāṅkhya traditions that had become dominant in his day:

We believe that *Pātañjala Yoga* is essentially theistic. But as G.R.F. Oberhammer has proved, the *Pātañjala doctrine of the Supreme Lord had to express itself in terms of a philosophical School, the Sāṅkhya School, which has no room for God. The *Pātañjala* doctrine of the Supreme Lord is the outcome of two different milieus: that of the existential experience of God of the yogis and that of the atheistic conceptualizations of *Sāṅkhya* doctrine. Patañjali made use of the existing *Sāṅkhya* doctrine, and was therefore compelled to make use of tenets foreign to *Sāṅkhyan* thinking in a vocabulary proper to that system (1970, 64).

In I.24, we presented our position that Īśvara’s identity and role when interacting with the *puruṣas* within the realm of *prakṛti* cannot be extracted from the greater theistic landscape of Patañjali’s day; but what of Īśvara’s interaction with the liberated *puruṣas* beyond this realm? Obviously such a consideration can only be purely speculative, invoking theologies external to the text, since Patañjali has chosen to focus only on the characteristics of Īśvara exclusively relevant to his circumscribed goal of *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*. 
Vijñānabhikṣu, situated in a later more theistically saturated milieu, operates under no such constraints. Quoting the Matsya and Kūrma Purāṇas, he states:

A yogī is said to be of three kinds: the bhautika; the Śaṅkhya; and, thirdly, the one who has attained the highest level of yoga, the antyāśrami. In the first category, there is contemplation [of the elements14]; in the Śaṅkhya [the second] there is contemplation of the imperishable puruṣa; and in the third is said to exist the final contemplation of the Supreme Īśvara.15 ... When you perceive that I [Īśvara] am the one pure, eternal, blissful supreme ātman, that is called the great theistic yoga. All other forms of yoga practiced by yogīs that are elaborated on in sacred texts are not equal even to the sixteenth part of this Brahman yoga. That yoga, in which the liberated yogīs directly perceive the universal Īśvara, is considered to be the highest yoga of all yogas.“16

Here we have the Purāṇic notion that the direct realization and experience of Īśvara by fully liberated yogīs who have already realized the individual puruṣa by the classical techniques of Patañjali-type meditation is higher than merely remaining absorbed in the individual self. According to these Vaiṣṇava theistic traditions (there are Śaivite parallels), there is a progressive nature to types of practice. Thus, for example, in the Gītā, after asserting that meditation on him is superior to meditation on the ātman (XII.1–2), Kṛṣṇa outlines a very definite hierarchy of spiritual practice: The highest possible form of yoga is spontaneous and complete absorption on his personal form at all times (XII.8); second to this is regulated meditative practice (abhyāsa) to fix the mind on him undeviatingly (XII.9); next best is performing actions directly for his worship and service (XII.10); after which comes performing other types of actions but giving up their fruits to him in worship (XII.11). These devotional practices are followed in the Gītā’s hierarchy by three lower forms of yoga, which are devoid of devotion: renunciation of the fruit of action, followed by conventional meditation for realizing the individual ātman (by fixing the mind on something other that Īśvara), followed by knowledge of the ātman. There are thus seven levels of spiritual practice in this hierarchy: meditative absorption
on Īśvara is ranked highest, and conventional meditative absorption on the individual ātman is ranked sixth.

What this means, as can be seen from the quote to which Vijñānabhikṣu draws our attention, is that the theistic traditions hold that there are progressive stages even after enlightenment has been attained: kaivalya, absorption in puruṣa, is preliminary to devotion to the Supreme puruṣa, Īśvara, as the Gitā clearly indicates (XVIII.54). In the words of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa: “Even sages who are freed of the bondage of saṁsāra and delight in the ātman, practice pure devotion to Viṣṇu; such are the qualities of Hari” (I.7.10). Thus, meditation on Īśvara surpasses realization of the ātman. The liberated state, consequently, is multidimensional; it is not a universalized or monolithic experience for all yogīs. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa (along with other Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata) even speaks of realms called Vaikuṇṭha, situated in Brahmān beyond the range of prakṛti for the yogī who has attained absolute meditative devotion for Viṣṇu, realms wherein the liberated ātman eternally interacts with Īśvara in love and devotion:

Vaikuṇṭha [is] the highest realm, where Viṣṇu resides (XII.24.14). This ... is the highest region (V.12.26); beyond the world of darkness and saṁsāra ... (IV.24.29; X.88.25); the destination of those who have transcended the three guṇas ... even while they are still alive (XI.25.22); and beyond which there is no higher place (II.2.18; II.9.9). The peaceful ascetics who reach that place never return (IV.9.29; X.88.25–6). The residents of Vaikuṇṭha do not have material bodies, but have pure forms (VII.1.34). These forms are like that of Viṣṇu (III.15.14ff), also known as Nārāyaṇa. Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa resides in Vaikuṇṭha with Śrī, the goddess of fortune, in palaces with crystal walls. (Bryant 2007, xxxvii–viii)17

In other words, realizing the individual puruṣa is only the first step on the spiritual journey: The higher goal is to then devote oneself to Īśvara and, ultimately, attain to his eternal Brahmān abode, the kingdom of God.

But, even as such theologies had pervaded the theistic landscape of Patañjali’s time, all this is taking us far beyond where Patañjali himself has chosen to leave us in the Yoga Sūtras. We can only resort to injecting
the much more developed theistic theologies developing in his day, such as those that came to be expressed in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (translated by the author), into the text if we wish to speculate on how Patañjali himself might have envisioned the liberated state, and what any connection therein might be between the individual puruṣa and Īśvara, or where any such relationship might take place. Patañjali has not attempted to use rational conceptual thought to express states beyond reason and conceptualization. He has chosen not to take us into the other side—he has directed his efforts to guiding us how to get there. The task he set for himself was clearly defined in verse I.2 right at the outset of his project, citta-vṛtti-nirodha, and he has kept his eye on that ball with remarkably singular focus. On this score, at the very least, his contribution to understanding the nature of mind and of consciousness, and his presentation of a very clear and experience-based path of liberating the individual puruṣa self from the cycle of saṁsāra, transcends cultural or religious boundaries, and seems destined to remain a living and perennially relevant classic in the spiritual archives of humanity.
CHAPTER I: MEDITATIVE ABSORPTION

The chapter begins by introducing and defining yoga [1–2]. This is followed by a discussion of the two possible options for awareness [3–4], a description of the vṛttis [5–11], and how to control the vṛttis by practice and dispassion [12–16]. Then comes the division of samādhi into samprajñāta and asamprajñāta [17–18] and how to attain these [20–22], after the discussion of other states that might resemble it [19]. Īśvara is then introduced as the easy method of attaining samādhi [23], along with his nature [24–26] and the chanting of his name [27–29]. The chapter describes the distractions of the mind and their accompanying effects [30–31] and prescribes meditation on any object to combat them, with various examples presented [32–40]. Samāpatti is introduced with its varieties [41–45] and their fruits [46–48] and object [49]. The chapter concludes with a discussion of samprajñāta-samādhi preceding the final stage of asamprajñāta [50–51].
CHAPTER II: PRACTICE

The chapter begins with an introduction of kriyā-yoga [1], its effects [2], and a discussion of the kleśas, which it removes [3–11]. Karma and its consequences are outlined [12–14] and the principle of suffering established [15–16]. This is followed by the characteristics of the seer and the seen [17–22], the conjunction between them [23–24], and the definition of liberation [25–27]. Next, the eight limbs of yoga are introduced as the means to attain liberation [28–29], and the remainder of the chapter is dedicated to these: the yamas and their universality [30–31], the niyamas [32], the means to counter tendencies contrary to the yamas and niyamas [33–34] and the side benefits accruing from observing them [35–45]. Next, āsana, the third limb, is presented [46–48], followed by prāṇāyāma, the fourth limb [49–53], and pratyāhāra, the fifth [54–55].
CHAPTER III: MYSTIC POWERS

The chapter begins by concluding the definitions of the last three limbs of yoga [1–3], which are distinguished from the others by constituting saṁyama [4–6] and being internal limbs [7–8]. A discussion of the state of nirodha ensues [9–12], followed by the metaphysics of the relationship between substratum and characteristic [13–15]. The remainder of the chapter is then dedicated to an extensive discussion of various mystic powers accrued from the performance of saṁyama on a variety of things [16–48], culminating in omniscience followed by ultimate kaivalya liberation [49–55].
CHAPTER IV: ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE

The chapter begins by listing other means of attaining the *siddhis* [1]. This is followed by some comments on *prakṛti*’s relationship with her effects [2–3] and by the phenomenon of the creation of multiple minds by the *yogī* [4–5]. A more advanced discussion of *karma* [6–7], *saṁskāras* [8–11], and Time and the *guṇas* [12–14] then ensues. The next section critiques Buddhist idealist notions of the mind [15–21], followed by a discussion on the *yoga* view of the relationship between mind and consciousness [22–26], and of distractions to meditation [27–28]. The chapter ends with *dharma-megha* and its effects [29–33], and then ultimate liberation [34].
APPENDIX

Devanāgarī, Transliteration, and Translation of Sūtras
CHAPTER I: MEDITATIVE ABSORPTION

prathamaḥ samādhi-pādaḥ

अथ योगानुशासनम्  ||१||
I.1 atha yogānuśāsanam
Now, the teachings of yoga [are presented].

योगस्वल्लितिनिरोधः  ||२||
I.2 yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodha
Yoga is the stilling of the changing states of the mind.

tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe  ‘vasthānam  ||३||
I.3 tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe  ‘vasthānam
When that is accomplished, the seer abides in its own true nature.

vṛttisārūpyam itaratra  ||४||
I.4 vṛtti-sārūpyam itaratra
Otherwise, at other times, [the seer] is absorbed in the changing states [of the mind].

vṛttayaḥ pañcatayyah kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ  ||५||
I.5 vṛttayaḥ pañcatayyah kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ
There are five kinds of changing states of the mind, and they are either detrimental or nondetrimental [to the practice of yoga].

प्रमाणविषयमिकल्पनिद्रास्मृतयः  ||६||
I.6 pramāṇa-viparyaya-vikalpa-nidrā-smṛtayaḥ
[These five vr̥ttis are] right knowledge, error, imagination, sleep, and memory.

I.7 pratyakṣānumānāgamāḥ pramāṇāni
Right knowledge consists of sense perception, logic, and verbal testimony.

I.8 viparyayo mithyā-jñānam atad-rūpa-pratiṣṭham
Error is false knowledge stemming from the incorrect apprehension [of something].

I.9 śabda-jñānānupāti vastu-śūnyo vikalpaḥ
Metaphor consists of the usage of words that are devoid of an actual object.

I.10 abhāva-pratyayālambanā vr̥ttir nidrā
Deep sleep is that state of mind which is based on an absence [of any content].

I.11 anubhūta-viṣayāsampramoṣah smṛtih
Memory is the retention of [images of] sense objects that have been experienced.
I.12 abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyāṁ tan-nirodhaḥ
[The vṛtti states of mind] are stilled by practice and dispassion.

I.13 tatra sthitau yatno 'bhyaṁ
From these, practice is the effort to be fixed in concentrating the mind.

I.14 sa tu dirgha-kāla-nairantaryya-satkārāsevito dṛḍha-bhūmiḥ
Practice becomes firmly established when it has been cultivated uninterruptedly and with devotion over a prolonged period of time.

I.15 dṛṣṭānuśravika-viṣaya-vitṛṣṇasya vaśīkāra-saṁjñā vairāgyam
Dispassion is the controlled consciousness of one who is without craving for sense objects, whether these are actually perceived, or described [in scripture].

I.16 tat paraṁ puruṣa-khyāTER guṇa-vaitṛṣṇyam
Higher than renunciation is indifference to the guṇas [themselves]. This stems from perception of the puruṣa, soul.

I.17 vitarka-vicārānandāsmitā-rūpaṁganamāt samprajñātaḥ
Samprajñāta [samādhi] consists of [the consecutive] mental stages of absorption with physical awareness, absorption with subtle awareness, absorption with bliss, and absorption with the sense of I-ness.
I.18 virāma-pratyayābhīṣya-pūrvaḥ saṁskāra-śeṣo ‘nyāh
The other samādhi [asamprajñāta-samādhi] is preceded by cultivating the
determination to terminate [all thoughts]. [In this state] only latent
impressions remain.

I.19 bhava-pratyayo videha-prakṛti-layānām
For [some], those who are unembodied and those who are merged in
matter, [the state of samprajñāta is characterized] by absorption in
[subtle] states of prakṛti.

I.20 śraddhā-vīrya-smṛti-samādhi-prajñā-pūrvaka itaresām
[But] for others, [the state where only subconscious impressions remain]
is preceded by faith, vigor, memory, samādhi absorption, and
discernment.

I.21 tīvra-saṁvegānām āsannaḥ
[This state of samprajñāta] is near for those who apply themselves
intensely.

I.22 mṛdu-madhyāadhimātratvāt tato ‘pi viśeṣah
Even among these, there is further differentiation [of this intensity into
degrees of] mild, mediocre, and ardent.

I.23 Īśvara-pranidhānād vā
Or, [this previously mentioned state is attainable] from devotion to the
Lord.
The Lord is a special soul. He is untouched by the obstacles [to the practice of yoga], karma, the fructification [of karma], and subconscious predispositions.

In him, the seed of omniscience is unsurpassed.

Īśvara was also the teacher of the ancients, because he is not limited by Time.

The name designating him is the mystical syllable om.

Its repetition and the contemplation of its meaning [should be performed].

From this comes the realization of the inner consciousness and freedom from all disturbances.
I.30 vyādhi-styāna-samśaya-pramādālayāvirati-bhrānti-darśanālabdha-bhūmintvānavasthitatvāni citta-vikṣepās te ‘ntarāyāḥ

These disturbances are disease, idleness, doubt, carelessness, sloth, lack of detachment, misapprehension, failure to attain a base for concentration, and instability. They are distractions for the mind.

I.31 duḥkha-daurmanasyāṅgam-ejayatva-śvāsa-praśvāsā vikṣepa-sahabhuvāḥ

Suffering, dejection, trembling, inhalation, and exhalation accompany the distractions.

I.32 tat-pratiṣedhārtham eka-tattvābhyaśah

Practice [of fixing the mind] on one object [should be performed] in order to eliminate these disturbances.

I.33 maitri-karuṇā-muditopekṣanāṁ sukha-duḥkha-puṇyāpunya-viṣayāṇāṁ bhāvanātās citta-prasādanam

By cultivating an attitude of friendship toward those who are happy, compassion toward those in distress; joy toward those who are virtuous, and equanimity toward those who are non-virtuous, lucidity arises in the mind.

I.34 pracchardana-vidhāraṇābhyāṁ vā prāṇasya

Or [stability of mind is gained] by exhaling and retaining the breath.
I.35 viṣayavatī vā pravṛttir utpannā manasāḥ sthiti-nibandhanī
Or else, focus on a sense object arises, and this causes steadiness of the mind.

I.36 viśokā vā jyotismatī
Or [steadiness of mind is gained when] the mind is pain free and luminous.

I.37 vīta-rāga-visayam vā cittam
Or [the mind becomes steady when it has] one who is free from desire as its object.

I.38 svapna-nidrā-jñānalambanam vā
Or [the mind can become steady when it has] the knowledge attained from sleep and dreams as its support.

I.39 yathābhimata-dhyānād vā
Or [steadiness of the mind is attained] from meditation upon anything of one’s inclination.

I.40 paramāṇu-parama-mahattvānto ‘syā vaśikaraḥ
The yogi’s mastery extends from the smallest particle of matter to the totality of matter.
I.41 kṣīna-vṛtter abhijātasyeva maner grahītra-grahaṇa-grāhyeṣu tat-stha-tad-añjanatā samāpattiḥ

Samāpatti, complete absorption of the mind when it is free from its vṛttis, occurs when the mind becomes just like a transparent jewel, taking the form of whatever object is placed before it, whether the object be the knower, the instrument of knowledge, or the object of knowledge.

I.42 tatra śabdārtha-jñāna-vikalpaiḥ saṅkīrṇā savitarkā samāpattiḥ

In this stage, savitarka-samāpatti, “samādhi absorption with physical awareness” is intermixed with the notions of word, meaning, and idea.

I.43 smṛti-pariśuddhau svarūpa-śūnyevārtha-mātra-nirbhāsā nirvitarkā samāpattiḥ

Nirvitarka [samāpatti], “absorption without conceptualization,” occurs when memory has been purged and the mind is empty, as it were, of its own [reflective] nature. Now only the object [of meditation] shines forth [in its own right].

I.44 etayaiva savicārā nirvicārā ca sūkṣma-viṣayā vyākhyātā

The states of samādhis with “subtle awareness” and without “subtle awareness,” whose objects of focus are the subtle nature [of things], are explained in the same manner.

I.45 sūkṣma-viṣayatvaṁ cāliṅga-paryavasānam

The subtle nature of things extends all the way up to prakṛti.

I.46 tā eva sabījaḥ samādhiḥ

These above mentioned samāpatti states are [known as] samādhi.
meditative absorption “with seed.”

I.47 nirvicāra-vaiśāradye ‘dhyātma-prasādaḥ
Upon attaining the clarity of nirvicāra-samādhi, there is lucidity of the inner self.

I.48 ṛtam-bharā tatra prajñā
In that state, there is truth-bearing wisdom.

I.49 śrutānumāna-prajñābhyām anya-viṣayā višeṣ ārthatvāt
It [seedless samādhi] has a different focus from that of inference and sacred scripture, because it has the particularity of things as its object.

I.50 taj-jaḥ saṁskāro ‘nya-saṁskāra-pratibandhī
The saṁskāras born out of that [truth-bearing wisdom] obstruct other saṁskāras [from emerging].

I.51 tasyāpi nirodhe sarva-nirodhān nirbijaḥ samādhiḥ
Upon the cessation of even those [truth-bearing saṁskāras], nirbija-samādhi, seedless meditative absorption, ensues.

iti Patañjali-viracite yogasūtre prathamaḥ samādhi-pādaḥ
Thus ends of the first chapter on samādhi in the Yoga Sūtras composed by Patañjali.
CHAPTER II: PRACTICE

II.1 tapah-svādhyāyesvāra-praṇidhānāni kriyā-yogāḥ

*Kriyā-yoga*, the path of action, consists of self-discipline, study, and dedication to the Lord.

II.2 samādhi-bhāvanārthaḥ kleśa-tanū-karaṇārthaś ca

[The yoga of action] is for bringing about samādhi and for weakening the impediments [to yoga].

II.3 avidyāsmitā-rağaga-dveśābhinivesāḥ klesāḥ.

The impediments [to samādhi] are nescience, ego, desire, aversion, and clinging to life.

II.4 avidyā kṣetram uttaresāṁ prasupta-tanu-vicchinnodārāṇām

Ignorance is the breeding ground of the other kleśas, whether they are in a dormant, weak, intermittent, or fully activated state.

II.5 anityāśuci-duḥkhānatmasu nitya-śuci-sukhātma-khyātir avidyā

Ignorance is the notion that takes the self, which is joyful, pure, and eternal, to be the nonself, which is painful, unclean, and temporary.
II.6 dṛg-darśana-śaktyor ekātmatevāsmitā
Ego is [to consider] the nature of the seer and the nature of the instrumental power of seeing to be the same thing.

II.7 sukhānuśayī rāgaḥ
Attachment stems from [experiences] of happiness.

II.8 duḥkhānuśayī dveṣaḥ
Aversion stems from [experiences] of pain.

II.9 svarasa-vāhi viduṣo 'pi tathāruḍho 'bhiniveśaḥ
[The tendency of] clinging to life affects even the wise; it is an inherent tendency.

II.10 te pratiprasava-heyāḥ sūkṣmāḥ
These kleśas are subtle; they are destroyed when [the mind] dissolves back into its original matrix.

II.11 dhyāna-heyās tad-vṛttayah
The states of mind produced by these kleśas are eliminated by meditation.

II.12 kleśa-mūlaḥ karmāsya drṣṭādṛṣṭa-janma-vedaniyāḥ
The stock of *karma* has the *kleśas* as its root. It is experienced in present or future lives.

II.13 *sati mūe tad-vipāko jātyāyur-bhogāḥ*
As long as the root [of *kleśas*] exists, it fructifies as type of birth, span of life, and life experience [of an individual].

II.14 *te hlāda-paritāpa-phalāḥ puṇyāpuṇyā-hetutvāt*
These [the type of birth, span of life, and life experience] bear the fruits of pleasure and pain, as a result of [the performance of] virtue and vice.

II.15 *parināma-tāpa-saṁskāra-duḥkhair guṇa-vṛtti-virodhāc ca duḥkham eva sarvam vivekināḥ*
For one who has discrimination, everything is suffering on account of the suffering produced by the consequences [of action], by pain [itself], and by the *saṁskāras*, as well as on account of the suffering ensuing from the turmoil of the *vṛttis* due to the *guṇas*.

II.16 *heyam duḥkham anāgatam*
Suffering that has yet to manifest is to be avoided.

II.17 *draṣṭṛ-drśyayoḥ saṁyogo heya-hetuḥ*
The conjunction between the seer and that which is seen is the cause [of suffering] to be avoided.
II.18 prakāśa-kriyā-sthiti-sīlam bhūtendriyātmakam bhogāpavargārtham drśyam
That which is knowable has the nature of illumination, activity, and inertia [sattva, rajas, and tamas]. It consists of the senses and the elements, and exists for the purpose of [providing] either liberation or experience [to puruṣa].

II.19 viśeṣāviśeṣa-liṅga-mātrālingāni guṇa-parvāṇi
The different stages of the guṇa qualities consist of the particularized, the unpaticularized, the distinctive, and the indistinctive.

II.20 draṣṭā dṛśi-mātraḥ śuddho ‘pi pratyayānupaśyaḥ
The seer is merely the power of seeing; [however,] although pure, he witnesses the images of mind.

II.21 tad-artha eva drśyasyātmā
The essential nature of that which is seen is exclusively for the sake of the seer.

II.22 kṛtārthaṁ prati naṣṭam apy anaṣṭam tad-anya-sādhāraṇatvāt
Although the seen ceases to exist for one whose purpose is accomplished [the liberated puruṣa], it has not ceased to exist altogether, since it is common to other [not-liberated] puruṣas.
[The notion of] conjunction is the means of understanding the real nature of the powers of the possessed and of the possessor.

II.24 tasya hetur avidyā
The cause of conjunction is ignorance.

II.25 tad-abhāvāt saṁyogabhāvo hānaṁ tad-drśeḥkaivalyam
By the removal of ignorance, conjunction is removed. This is the absolute freedom of the seer.

II.26 viveka-khyātir aviplavā hānopāyaḥ
The means to liberation is uninterrupted discriminative discernment.

II.27 tasya saptadhā prānta-bhūmiḥ prajñā
The yogi's true insight has seven ultimate stages.

II.28 yogāṅgānuṣṭhānād aśuddhi-kṣaye jñāna-diértir-āviveka-khyāteḥ
Upon the destruction of impurities as a result of the practice of yoga, the lamp of knowledge arises. This culminates in discriminative discernment.

II.29 yama-niyamāsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇā-dhyāna-samādhayo ’śtāv aṅgāni
The eight limbs are abstentions, observances, posture, breath control,
disengagement of the senses, concentration, meditation, and absorption.

II.30 ahimsā-satyāsteya-brahmacaryāparigrahā yamāḥ
The yamas are nonviolence, truthfulness, refrainment from stealing, celibacy, and renunciation of [unnecessary] possessions.

II.31 jāti-deśa-kāla-samayānāvacchinnāḥ sārva-bhaumā mahā-vratam
[These yamas] are considered the great vow. They are not exempted by one’s class, place, time, or circumstance. They are universal.

II.32 śauca-santoṣa-tapaḥ-svādhyāyeśvara-praṇidhānāni niyamāḥ
The observances are cleanliness, contentment, austerity, study [of scripture], and devotion to God.

II.33 vitarka-bādhane pratipakṣa-bhāvanam
Upon being harassed by negative thoughts, one should cultivate counteracting thoughts.

II.34 vitarkā hiṁsādayāḥ kṛta-kāritānumoditā lobha-krodha-moha-pūrvakā mṛdu-madhya-dhīmātrā duḥkhājñānānta-phalā iti pratipakṣa-bhāvanam
Negative thoughts are violence, etc. They may be [personally] performed, performed on one’s behalf by another, or authorized by oneself; they may be triggered by greed, anger, or delusion; and they may be slight, moderate, or extreme in intensity. One should cultivate counteracting thoughts, namely, that the end results [of negative thoughts] are ongoing suffering and ignorance.
II.35 ahimsā-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ tat-sannidhau vaira-tyāgah
In the presence of one who is established in nonviolence, enmity is abandoned.

II.36 satya-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ kriyā-phalāśrayatvam
When one is established in truthfulness, one ensures the fruition of actions.

II.37 asteya-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ sarva-ratnopasthānam
When one is established in refraining from stealing, all jewels manifest.

II.38 brahmacarya-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ virya-lābhaḥ
Upon the establishment of celibacy, power it attained.

II.39 aparigraha-sthairye janma-kathantā-sambodhaḥ
When refrainment from covetousness becomes firmly established, knowledge of the whys and wherefores of births manifests.

II.40 śaucāt svāṅga-jugupsā parair asaṁsargaḥ
By cleanliness, one [develops] distaste for one’s body and the cessation of contact with others.

II.41 sattva-śuddhi-saumanasyaikāgryendriya-jayātma-darśana-yogyatvāni
Upon the purification of the mind, [one attains] cheerfulness, one-pointedness, sense control, and fitness to perceive the self.

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II.42 santoṣād anuttamaḥ sukha-lābhaḥ
From contentment, the highest happiness is attained.

II.43 kāyendriya-siddhir aśuddhi-kṣayāt tapasaḥ
From austerity, on account of the removal of impurities, the perfection of the senses and body manifests.

II.44 svādhyāyād iṣṭa-devatā-samprayogaḥ
From study [of scripture], a connection with one’s deity of choice is established.

II.45 samādhi-siddhir īśvara-praṇidhānāt
From submission to God comes the perfection of samādhi.

II.46 sthira-sukham āsanam
Posture should be steady and comfortable.

II.47 prayatna-śaithilyānanta-samāpattibhyām
[Such posture should be attained] by the relaxation of effort and by absorption in the infinite.
II.48 tato dvandvānabhīghātaḥ
From this, one is not afflicted by the dualities of the opposites.

II.49 tasmin sati śvāsa-praśvāsayor gati-vicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ
When that [āsana] is accomplished, prāṇāyāma, breath control, [follows]. This consists of the regulation of the incoming and outgoing breaths.

II.50 bā hyābhyantara-stambha-vṛttiḥ deśa-kāla-saṅkhyābhīḥ paridṛṣṭo dirgha-sūkṣmaḥ
[Prāṇāyāma] manifests as external, internal, and restrained movements [of breath]. These are drawn out and subtle in accordance to place, time, and number.

II.51 bā hyābhyantara-viṣayākṣepī caturthāḥ
The fourth [type of prāṇāyāma] surpasses the limits of the external and the internal.

II.52 tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaraṇam
Then, the covering of the illumination [of knowledge] is weakened.

II.53 dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ
Additionally, the mind becomes fit for concentration.
Pratyāhāra, withdrawal from sense objects, occurs when the senses do not come into contact with their respective sense objects. It corresponds, as it were, to the nature of the mind [when it is withdrawn from the sense objects].

From this comes the highest control of the senses.

Thus ends the second chapter on sādhanā in the Yoga Sūtras composed by Patañjali.
CHAPTER III: MYSTIC POWERS

tresmin: viśāltapad: ।
tritiyaḥ vibhūti-pādah

III.1 deśa-bandhaḥ cittasya dhāraṇā
Concentration is the fixing of the mind in one place.

III.2 tatra pratyayaika-tānatā dhyānam
Meditation is the one-pointedness of the mind on one image.

III.3 tad evārtha-mātra-nirbhāsaṁ svarūpa-śūnyam iva samādhiḥ
Samādhi is when that same dhyāna shines forth as the object alone and [the mind] is devoid of its own [reflective] nature.

III.4 trayam ekatra samāyamaḥ
When these three are performed together, it is called samāyama.

III.5 taj-jayāt praṇālokaḥ
From samāyama comes insight.

III.6 tasya bhūmiṣu viniyogah
Saṁyama is applied on the [different] stages [of samādhi].

III.7 trayam antaraṅgam pūrvebhyaḥ
These three [dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi] are internal limbs compared to the previous limbs [of yoga].

III.8 tad api bahir-aṅgaṁ nirbijasya
Yet even these are external limbs in relation to “seedless” samādhi.

III.9 vyutthāna-nirodha-saṁskārayor abhibhava-prādurbhāvau nirodha-kṣaṇa-cittānvayo nirodha-parināmaḥ
The state of restraint, nirodha, is when there is disappearance of outgoing [i.e., worldly] saṁskāras and the appearance of restraining saṁskāras. These emerge in the mind at the moment of restraint.

III.10 tasya praśānta-vā hitā saṁskārāt
The mind’s undisturbed flow occurs due to saṁskāras.

III.11 sarvārthataikāgratayoh kṣayodayau cittasya samādhi-parināmaḥ
The attainment of the samādhi state involves the elimination of all-pointedness [i.e., wandering] of the mind and the rise of one-pointedness [i.e., concentration].

III.12 tataḥ punaḥ śāntoditau tulya-pratyayau cittasyaikāgratā-parināmaḥ
In that regard, the attainment of one-pointedness occurs when the image in the mind that has just passed is the same as the image in the mind that is present.

III.13 etena bhūtendriyeṣu dharma-lakṣanāvasthā-pariṇāma vyākhyātāḥ
In this way, the change in the characteristics, state, and condition of objects and of the senses is explained.

III.14 śāntoditāvyapadeśya-dharmānupāti dharmi
The substratum is that which underpins past, present, and future.

III.15 kramānyatvaṁ pariṇāmānyatve hetuḥ
The change in the sequence [of characteristics] is the cause of the change in transformations [of objects].

III.16 pariṇāma-traya-saṁyamād atitāṅgata-jñānam
When saṁyama is performed on the three transformations [of characteristics, state, and condition], knowledge of the past and the future ensues.

III.17 śabdārtha-pratyayānām itaretarādhyāsāt saṅkaras tat-pravibhāga-saṁyamāt sarva-bhūta-ruta-jñānam
Due to the correlation among word, meaning, and idea, confusion ensues. By performing saṁyama on them separately, knowledge of the speech of all creatures arises.
III.18 *sāṃskāra-sākṣātkaraṇāt pūrva-jāti-jñānam*

By bringing [previous] *sāṃskāras* into direct perception comes the knowledge of previous births.

III.19 *pratyayasya para-citta-jñānam*

From [their] ideas, one can attain knowledge of others’ minds.

III.20 *na ca tat-sālambanam tasyāviṣayībhūtavāt*

That knowledge is not accompanied by its object, since this object is not the object [of the yogī’s mind].

III.21 *kāya-rūpa-saṁyamāt tad-grāhya-śakti-stambhe cakṣuḥ-prakāśāsamprayoge ‘ntardhānam*

By performing *saṁyama* on the outer form of the body, invisibility [is attained]. This occurs when perceptibility is obstructed by blocking contact between light and the eyes.

III.22 *sopakramaṁ nirupakramaṁ ca karma tat-saṁyamād aparānta-jñānam ariṣṭebhyo vā*

*Karma* is either quick to fructify or slow. By *saṁyama* on *karma*, or on portents, knowledge of [one’s] death arises.

III.23 *maitryādiṣu balāni*
By [saṁyama] on friendliness and such things, strengths are acquired.

III.24 baleṣu hasti-balādīnī
[By practicing saṁyama] on strengths, [the yogī] attains the strength of an elephant, etc.

III.25 pravṛttyālōka-nyāsāt śūkṣma-vyavahita-viprakṛṣṭa-jñānam
By directing the light of cognition, one obtains knowledge of subtle, concealed, and remote things.

III.26 bhuvana-jñānam sūrye saṁyamāt
By performing saṁyama on the sun arises knowledge of the different realms in the universe.

III.27 candre tārā-vyūha-jñānam
[By saṁyama] on the moon, knowledge of the solar systems.

III.28 dhruve tad-gati-jñānam
[By saṁyama] on the polestar comes knowledge of the movement of the stars.

III.29 nābhi-cakre kāya-vyūha-jñānam
[By saṁyama] on the navel plexus of the body comes knowledge of the arrangement of the body.
III.30 kaṇṭha-kūpe kṣut-pipāsā-nivṛttiḥ
[By samyama] on the pit of the throat comes the cessation of hunger and thirst.

III.31 kūrma-nāḍyāṁ sthairyam
[By samyama] on the subtle tortoise channel, steadiness is attained.

III.32 mūrdha-jyotiṣi siddha-darśanam
[By samyama] on the light in the skull, a vision of the siddhas, perfected beings, is attained.

III.33 prātibhād vā sarvam
Or, by intuition, comes [knowledge of] everything.

III.34 hṛdaye citta-saṁvit
[By samyama] on the heart, knowledge of the mind ensues.

III.35 sattva-puruṣayor atyantāsaṅkīrṇayoḥ pratyayāviśeṣo bhogāḥ parārthatvāt svārtha-saṁyamāt puruṣa-jñānam
Worldly experience consists of the notion that there is no distinction between the puruṣa self and pure intelligence, although these two are completely distinct. Worldly experience exists for another [i.e., for puruṣa]. [By samyama] on that which exists for itself [i.e., on puruṣa], comes knowledge of puruṣa.
III.36 tataḥ prātibha-śrāvaṇa-vedanādarśāsvada-vārtā jāyante
From this, intuition as well as higher hearing, touch, vision, taste, and smell are born.

III.37 te samādhāv upasargāḥ vyutthāne siddhayaḥ
These powers are accomplishments for the mind that is outgoing but obstacles to samādhi.

III.38 bandha-kāraṇa-śaithilyāt pracāra-samvedanāc ca cittasya para-
 By loosening the cause of bondage, and by knowledge of the passageways of the mind, the mind can enter into the bodies of others.

III.39 udāna-jayāj jala-paṅka-kaṇṭakādiṣv asaṅga utkrāntiś ca
By mastery over the udāna vital air, one attains [the power of] levitation and does not come into contact with water, mud, and thorns, etc.

III.40 samāna-jayāt jvalanam
By mastery over the samāna vital air, radiance is attained.

III.41 śrotākāśayoḥ sambandha-saṁyamād divyaṁ śrotam
By saṁyama on the relationship between the organ of hearing and the ether, divine hearing is attained.
By performing *saṁyama* on the relationship between the body and ether, and by performing *samāpatti* on the lightness of cotton, one acquires the ability to travel through the sky.

The state of mind [projected] outside [of the body], which is not an imagined state, is called the great out-of-body [experience]. By this, the covering of the light [of *buddhi*] is destroyed.

By *saṁyama* on the gross nature, essential nature, subtle nature, constitution, and purpose [of objects, one attains] mastery over the elements.

As a result of this, there are no limitations on account of the body’s natural abilities; mystic powers such as *aṇimā*, etc., manifest; and the body attains perfection.

The perfection of the body consists of [possessing] beauty, charm, strength, and the power of a thunderbolt.
III.47 grahaṇa-svarūpāsmitānvayārthavattva-saṁyamād indriya-jayaḥ
By the performance of saṁyama on the process of knowing, on the essence [of the sense organs], on ego, on inherence [the guṇas], and on the purpose [of the guṇas] comes control over the senses.

III.48 tato mano-javitvaṁ vikaraṇa-bhāvaḥ pradhāna-jayaś ca
As a result of this comes speed like the speed of mind, activity independent of the bodily senses, and mastery over primordial matter.

III.49 sattva-puruṣ ānyatā-khyāti-mātrasya sarva-bhāvādhiśṭhātṛtvam sarva-jñātṛtvam ca
Only for one who discerns the difference between the puruṣa and the intellect do omniscience and omnipotence accrue.

III.50 tad-vairāgyād api doṣa-bīja-kṣaye kaivalyam
By detachment even from this attainment [i.e., omniscience and omnipotence], and upon the destruction of the seeds of all faults, kaivalya, the supreme liberation ensues.

III.51 sthānyupanimantraṇe saṅgasmayākaraṇanāḥ punar-aniṣṭa-prasārīgāt
If solicited by celestial beings, [the yogī] should not become smug, because the tendency toward undesirable consequences can once again manifest.

III.52 kṣaṇa-tat-kramayoḥ saṁyamād-viveka-jam jñānaṁ
By performing saṁyama on the moment, and its sequence, one attains knowledge born of discrimination.
As a result of this, there is discernment of two comparable things that are not distinguishable by species, characteristics, or location.

Knowledge born of discrimination is a liberator; it has everything as its object at all times simultaneously.

When the purity of the intellect is equal to that of the puruṣa, kaivalya liberation ensues.

Thus ends the third chapter on vibhūti in the Yoga Sūtras composed by Patañjali.
CHAPTER IV: ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE

चतुर्थम् कैवल्यपादः
caturthaḥ kaivalya-pādaḥ

जन्मोषधिमन्त्रतपामहस्माधिजा सिद्धः ।
IV.1 janmauṣadhi-mantra-tapah-samādhi-jāḥ siddhayah
The mystic powers arise due to birth, herbs, mantras, the performance of austerity, and samādhi.

जात्यन्तरपरिशम प्रकृतापूरत ।
IV.2 jāty-antara-parināmaḥ prakṛtyāpūrāt
The changes [in bodily forms that take place] in other births is due to the filling in by prakṛti.

निमित्तम् अप्रयोजकं प्रकृतिनां वरण्भेदतः ततः क्षेत्रिकवत ।
IV.3 nimittam aprayojakam prakṛtināṁ varaṇa-bhedas tu tataḥ kṣetrikavat
The instrumental cause of creation is not its creative cause, but it pierces the covering from creation like a farmer [pierces the barriers between his fields].

निर्माणचितान्यस्मिन्तामात्रात ।
IV. 4 nirmāṇa-cittān asmitā-mātrāt
Created minds are made from ego only.

प्रवृत्तिभद्र प्रयोजकं चित्म एकम् अनेकेषाम् ।
IV.5 pravṛtti-bhede prayojakaṁ cittam ekam anekeśāṁ
There is one mind, among the many [created by the yogī], which is the director in the different activities [of the different bodies].
IV.6 tatra dhyāna-jam anāśayam
From these [five types of minds that possess siddhis], the one born of meditation is without the storehouse of karma.

IV.7 karmāśuklākṛṣṇaṁ yoginas tri-vidham itareśām
The karma of a yogi is neither white nor black; of everyone else, it is of three types.

IV.8 tatas tad-vipākānuśaṅgūnānām evābhivyaktir vāsanānām
From [these three types of karma] the activation of only those subliminal impressions that are ready for fruition [in the next life] occurs.

IV.9 jāti-deśa-kāla-vyavahitānām apy ānantaryam smṛti-saṁskārayor eka-rūpatvāt
Because they are identical, there is an uninterrupted connection between memory and saṁskāra, even though they might be separated by birth, time, and place.

IV.10 tāsām anāditvam cāśiso nityatvāt
The saṁskāras are eternal, because the desire [for life] is eternal.

IV.11 hetu-phalāśrayālambaniḥ saṅgrhitatvād eśāṁ abhāve tad-abhāvah
Since [saṁskāras] are held together by immediate cause, motive, the mind, and the object of awareness, the saṁskāras cease when the latter
IV.12 atītānāgataṁ svarūpato ‘sty adhva-bhedād dharmāṇām
The past and the future exist in reality, since they differ [from the present only] in terms of the time of [manifestation] of their characteristics.

te vyaśtsūṣkṣma guṇāntmanā: || 13 ||

IV.13 te vyakta-sūkṣmā guṇātmānaḥ
The past, present, and future have the guṇas as their essence and are either manifest or latent.

परिणामेकतवाद् वस्तुतत्त्वम् || 14 ||

IV.14 parināmaikatvād vastu-tattvam
The things [of the world] are objectively real, due to the uniformity [of the guṇas that underpin] all change.

वस्तुमाये चित्तेवदात् तयोविभक्त: पत्थ: || 15 ||

IV.15 vastu-sāmye citta-bhedāt tayor vibhaktah panthāḥ
Because there is a multiplicity of minds [perceiving an object] but yet the object remains consistent, there is a difference in nature between the object and the mind [of the observer].

न चैकचित्ततन्त्रं चेद वस्तु तद् अप्रमाणकं तदा किं स्वात् || 16 ||

IV.16 na caika-citta-tantram vastu tad apramāṇakam tadā kim syāt
An object is not dependent on a single mind [for its existence]; if it were, then what happens to it when it is not perceived [by that particular mind]?

तदुपरगापेयत्वाच चित्तस्य वस्तु ज्ञाताज्ञातम् || 17 ||
IV.17 \textit{tad-upārāgāpēkṣītvāc cittasya vastu jñātājñātam}

A thing is either known or not known by the mind depending on whether it is noticed by the mind.

Sadā \textit{jañātiṣṭhitvāvastusūtṛbhāvāḥ puruṣasya pārāśāṃcita\textit{mārtvāt}} \textit{ 18}

IV.18 \textit{sadā jñātāś citta-vṛttayās tat-prabhoh pūruṣasyāparināṃmitvāt}

The permutations of the mind are always known to its Lord, the \textit{puruṣa} soul, because of the soul’s unchanging nature.

Na \textit{tat svabhāsaṃ dṛṣyatvāt} \textit{ 19}

IV.19 \textit{na tat svabhāsaṃ dṛṣyatvāt}

Nor is the mind self-illuminating, because of its nature as the object of perception.

Eka-samaye \textit{cōbhayānadamāraṇaṃ} \textit{ 20}

IV.20 \textit{eka-samaye cōbhayānadamāraṇaṃ}

There cannot be discernment of both [the mind and the object it perceives] at the same time.

Chītāntra\textit{dṛṣye būdhi-buddher atiprasaṅgaḥ smṛti sąṅkaraś ca} \textit{ 21}

IV.21 \textit{chītāntra-dṛṣye buddhi-buddher atiprasaṅgaḥ smṛti sąṅkaraś ca}

If [the mind] were cognized by another mind, then there would be an infinite regress of one intelligence [being known] by another intelligence. Moreover, there would also be confusion of memory.

Chitetra\textit{saṃkāṣṭaśāntadārpaṇatī svabuddhisāmvedanam} \textit{ 22}

IV.22 \textit{chītētra\textit{saṃkāṣṭaśāntadārpaṇatī svabuddhisāmvedanam}

Although it is unchanging, consciousness becomes aware of its own intelligence by means of pervading the forms assumed by the intelligence.
IV.23  draṣṭṛ-dṛṣyoparaktam cittaṁ sarvārtham
The mind, colored by the seer as well as by that which is seen, knows all objects.

IV.24  tad-asāṅkhya-vāsanā-citram api parārtham sanīhatya-kāritvāt
That mind, with its countless variegated subliminal impressions, exists for another entity [other than itself], because it operates in conjunction [with other instruments].

IV.25  viśeṣa-darśina ātma-bhāva-bhāvanā-vinivṛttiḥ
For one who sees the distinction [between the mind and the soul], reflecting on the nature of the self ceases.

IV.26  tadā viveka-nimnaṁ kaivalya-prāgbhāraṁ cittām
At that point, the mind, inclined toward discrimination, gravitates toward ultimate liberation.

IV.27  tac-chidreṣu pratyayāntarāni saṁskārebhyaḥ
During the intervals [in this state of discriminate awareness] other ideas [arise] because of previous saṁskāras.

IV.28  hānam eseṁ kleśavad uktam
The removal [of these previous saṁskāras] is said to be like [the removal] of the kleśa afflictions.
IV.29 prasaṅkhyāne ‘py akusidasya sarvathā viveka-khyāter dharma-meghaḥ samādhiḥ
For one who has no interest even in [the fruits] of meditative wisdom on account of the highest degree of discriminative insight, the samādhi called dharma-megha, cloud of virtue, ensues.

IV.30 tataḥ kleśa-karma-nivṛttih
From this comes the cessation of the kleśas [impediments to yoga] and karma.

IV.31 tadā sarvāvaraṇa-malāpetasya jñānasyānantyāj jñeyam alpam
At this point, because of the unlimited nature of knowledge when all impurities have been removed from it, that which remains to be known is little.

IV.32 tataḥ kṛtārthānāṁ pariṇāma-krama-parisamāptir guṇānām
As a result, there is a cessation of the ongoing permutations of the guṇas, their purpose now fulfilled.

IV.33 kṣaṇa-pratiyogī pariṇāma-parānta-nirgrāḥ hyāḥ kramaḥ
The progression [of any object through Time] corresponds to a [series of] moments. It is perceivable at the final [moment] of change.
Ultimate liberation is when the *gunaḥs*, devoid of any purpose for the *puruṣa*, return to their original [latent] state; in other words, when the power of consciousness is situated in its own essential nature.

Thus ends the fourth chapter on *samādhi* in the *Yoga Sūtras* composed by Patañjali.
NOTES

Please note that some of the links referenced in this work are no longer active.

THE HISTORY OF YOGA

1. But see discussion in I.1 for the accuracy of the translation “union” in the context of the Yoga Sūtras.

2. The identification of these four yoga systems in the Bhagavad Gītā was first popularized in Raja Yoga by Vivekānanda, who made his initial impact in the West after his address to the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893. See De Michelis (2004) for a genealogy of neo-Vedānta.

3. Throughout the present work, Yoga refers to the philosophical school, or Yoga tradition, while yoga indicates various practices or systems of yoga.

4. For a good example, see the Jain scholar Haribhadra’s Yoga-drṣṭi-samuccaya (Chapple 2003).

5. Vedic is an older form of Sanskrit; both are members of the Indo-European language family. The earliest Sanskrit-speaking peoples, which are the easternmost branch of this family, are referred to as Indo-Aryans.

6. The earliest Vedic texts are the four Vedas, followed by the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas, and the Upaniṣads.

7. Due to the figure’s horned headpiece, and the presence of animal motifs on this seal, it received the most attention and was unfortunately hastily identified as the “proto-Śiva” seal. There is no consensus among archaeologists as to the cultural identity of the Indus Valley, but obviously one’s position on the origins of the Indo-Aryan people is relevant to this discussion. Those holding the Indo-Aryans to be immigrants perceive the Indus Valley civilization as a non-Vedic culture whose decline more or less coincided with the arrival of the Indo-Aryans. Those considering the Indo-Aryans to be indigenous argue for a Vedic presence in the Indus Valley. See Bryant (2001) for full discussion.

8. For a discussion of scholarship on the keśīn, long-haired mystic of Ṛg Veda X.136, see Werner (1989).

9. Interestingly, all the Upaniṣads wherein Yoga is expressed belong to the same Vedic branch, that of the black Yajur Veda.

10. While the term Brahman is used primarily for the absolute truth in its all-encompassing
aspect, and ātman for the more localized aspect of that same truth in the individual, the two terms are interchangeable in the Upaniṣads.

11. The earliest reference to yoga is actually in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (II.5.4), after a discussion of the five kośas, or layers, that make up an individual, but whether this refers to a meditative technique is unclear. Werner (1986) argues that this reference points to the merger of an older Vedic spiritual tradition with meditative techniques from non-Vedic traditions.

12. The sense here is that the yogī discovers the real self and thus becomes, and by removing awareness from the illusory self, thereby also ceases.

13. The text adds: “One should practice yoga in a place that is flat, clean, free of grit, fire and sand, near quiet running water, etc., favorable to the mind, not an eyesore, and protected from the wind in a cave or sheltered place ... Lightness, health, absence of desire, effulgent complexion, pleasant voice, nice fragrance, and little faeces and urine, these are the first expressions of yogic practice.”

14. This Upaniṣad adds tarka, inquiry, to the last five limbs found in Patañjali and reverses the order of dhāraṇā and dhyāna from that found in Patañjali’s system.

15. This demarcation of Sāṅkhya/Yoga metaphysics in the Maitri Upaniṣad extends to ridiculing the later Vedāntic advaita, nondualistic, school of Upaniṣadic interpretation as “not worthy of discussion” (kiṁ tad avācyam, VI.7). Advaita Vedānta holds a radically monistic view of the world by rejecting the reality of prakṛti, matter, as illusory and considers only Brahmaṇ/ātman as real. The Sāṅkhya/Yoga traditions are dualist and accept the reality of both the world of prakṛti as well as ātman (which it calls puruṣa).

16. While both traditional narrative and critical scholarship consider the epic to have developed over the centuries, it had reached its present size of 100,000 verses prior the fifth century C.E. (when a land grant refers to it as consisting of this number of verses).

17. E.g., XIII.24; XVIII.52.

18. For further discussion, see Brockington (2005 and 2003).

19. See Hopkins (1901, 336) for discussion.

20. Vicāra and vitarka; see I.17 for discussion.

21. For extended analysis on this issue, see Bronkhorst (1993).


25. Sāṅkhya is first mentioned in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (VI.13.1), where even the name of its reputed founder, Kapila, is found (V.2).
26. See, for example, Bryant (2004).
27. See, for example, Hara (1999).
28. See, for example, Torella (1999).
29. Specifically, this view sees Yoga as a merger of three complexes: “1) one or more Sāṅkhya traditions; 2) one or more Buddhist traditions; and 3) an emerging philosophical Yoga tradition that is compiling various older ascetic and religious strands of speculation” (58ff). More specifically, Larson finds two systematic philosophizing strains in ancient India, that of the Śaṣṭi-tantra tradition of Sāṅkhya, and the Abhidharma tradition of Sarvāstivāda and Sautrāntika Buddhism, with systematic Yoga emerging as a hybrid of that interaction (1989, 134).
31. See also XII.293.30, and 296.42.
32. This has been amply stressed by Edgerton. Indeed, “any formula of metaphysical truth provided that knowledge thereof was conceived to tend towards salvation, might be called ‘Sāṅkhya’” (1924, 15). However, see Ramakrisha Rao (1966, 270ff) for an opposing perspective that does find grounds to identify distinctions between Sāṅkhya and Yoga in the Mahābhārata.
33. The ultimate Absolute, Brahman, is understood as either a supreme personal being or a supreme impersonal consciousness, depending on the sects of Vedānta stemming from the Upaniṣads.
34. Although Patañjali arguably makes implicit reference to Brahman in I.26–27, where he correlates Īśvara with oṁ.
35. Vīrāsana is mentioned in XII.292.8 and XIII.130.8–10 (Brockington 2003, 20).
36. Nyāya Sūtras IV.2.42.
37. Vedānta Sūtras I.2.1.3 and commentaries.
38. See Kane (1977, 1419) for discussion.
39. For further discussion and references, see Brockington (2003).
41. Bhattacharyya (ibid., 101–102) considers the first instance of this identification of the three Patañjalis to be in the commentary by Puṇyarāja on the fifth-century grammatical text the Vākyapadiya.
42. See Kane (1977, 1396) and Larson (2008) for discussion and references. Larson does not close the door to the possibility that the Patañjalis could be one and the same, in contrast, for example, to Woods (1914) and R. S. Bhattacharyya (1985). Others, such as Dasgupta (1922), are open to accepting the identity of Patañjali the grammarian and Patañjali of the Yoga
Sūtras, but not that of the commentator on āyurveda. Larson, following Bhattacharyya but drawing different conclusions, raises the relevant observation that connections among the three systems of knowledge were already being made by the philosopher and grammarian Bhartṛhari in his Vākyapadiya.

43. A number of scholars have dated the Yoga Sūtras as late as the fourth or fifth century C.E., but these arguments have all been challenged. The main rationales for this date were laid by scholars such as Jacobi (1911). These include the claims that the Patañjali of the Yoga Sūtras is different from the Patañjali who is the commentator of the grammarian Pāṇini; the Yoga Sūtras address, implicitly, the Vijñānavāda Buddhism of the fifth century (IV.15ff) and so must postdate this school; and certain doctrines in the sūtras are not evidenced in early Sāṅkhya and Yoga texts, and so must belong to a later period. All such arguments are problematic. Prasad (1930) was one of the first to point out that although the (later) commentaries beginning with Vyāsa identify Patañjali’s anti-idealism arguments as directed against Vijñānavāda Buddhism, there are serious reasons to question whether this was the specific school of idealism prevalent at Patañjali’s time. Second, whether or not the two Patañjalis noted above are the same is, to all intents and purposes, irrelevant to the date of the sūtras. Finally, the doctrines specified as absent in early Sāṅkhya and Yoga texts may nonetheless have been ancient doctrines and thus do not necessarily point to a late date. See also Dasgupta (1974, 226–38) for further discussion.

44. R. S. Bhattacharyya (1985, 109ff).

45. Not irrelevant here is the maxim of the Grammarian tradition that if even as much as half a phoneme can be saved in the formulation of a rule, the Grammarian rejoices as he would the birth of a son!

46. See Larson (2008, 86ff) for recent discussion and references.

47. Hauer (1958) considered the five strata of the texts to consist of: the nirodha section, I.1–22; the Īśvara-praṇidhāna section, I.23–51; the kriyā-yoga section, II.1–27; the aṣṭāṅga section, II.28–III.55; and the fourth chapter on the nirmāṇa-citta, constructed mind. Frauwallner (1953) divided the text into three sections: the nirodha section, pāda I; kriyā-yoga leading into aṣṭāṅga-yoga, pādas II–III; and pāda IV, a later appendage. Dasgupta (1922) argued that the fourth chapter, with its change in style and subject matter, was added later, especially since the particle iti concluding the third chapter, indicated that the original text had ended at that point.


49. As Feuerstein notes, “Our need for ‘order’ in the sense of logical neatness, linear consecutiveness, is not necessarily shared by non-western cultures” (1979, 41).

51. From their perspectives, Chapter I deals with the mind and the different levels of consciousness relevant to the goals of yoga; Chapter II, with the mechanisms underpinning the relationship between the mind and consciousness, and the practical techniques required to attain higher levels of consciousness; Chapter III, with the results that accrue from such practices; and Chapter IV, with establishing the Yoga position on mind and consciousness in the context of rival views, and with the goal of realization of the true self.

52. Caution is required in attempting to bypass the commentaries and excavate an original set of “pure” Pātañjalian teachings distinct from those of the later Yoga school, since such enterprises, of course, require the projection of very much later philological assumptions and methods onto Patañjali with no means of verification. Even when rigorous attention is directed onto the chronology of philosophical terms and concepts in contemporaneous philosophical literature in an attempt to identify borrowings or influences from other traditions, terms were often drawn from a common pool but sometimes used to denote different things, both diachronically and synchronically in different philosophical contexts and knowledge systems. When seeking extraneous influence on a text, it is rarely certain who has influenced whom or whether commonalities between traditions indicate linear influence or two traditions dipping into this common pool. A fallacy is all too often made, in my view, of assuming that the first instance a concept or term surfaces in a text indicates that this text or tradition has consequently influenced all subsequent traditions wherein this concept or term is used. All that can be said, in fact, is that this concept can first be identified in an (extant) literary source at this time; one must be careful of hastily assuming that the concept itself did not exist prior to it being recorded in this way.

53. See, for example, Chapple (1994).

54. For discussion and references, see Bronkhurst (1985).

55. For examples, see R. S. Bhattacharyya (1985, 43–47).

56. The etymology of Vyāsa is derived from the root vi + as = divide.

57. There are four world ages in Hindu cosmography, of which the fourth, the kali yuga, is considered to have begun in 3108 B.C.E.

58. For Śaṅkara, the entire world of change is an illusory superimposition on an unchanging, formless, qualitiless, and impersonal Brahman, Absolute Truth. Thus, everything in the realm of matter, prakṛti, is illusory, māyā. The changing world of forms simply does not exist from the perspective of absolute reality, or, perhaps more accurately, everything that appears to exist in the external world is, in reality, the changeless Brahman. Similarly, the apparent individuality of the multiple and multifarious living beings in the world, the ātmans, is also illusory. There is not an infinite number of living entities; there is only the undivided, all-pervading Brahman, hence the name of his school of philosophy, advaita, nonduality. For
Śaṅkara there is only one underlying truth, and all apparent dualities perceived in existence—the world of forms and individuals—are the product of illusion, avidyā.


60. Hacker (1968) and other Śaṅkara specialists, as well as scholars who have worked more closely with this commentary, are inclined to accept its authenticity. Rukmani, however, in her translation of the Yogasūtra-bhāṣya-vivaraṇa of Śaṅkara (2001, xiff), rejects the authorship of the Vedāntin Śaṅkara. She offers as the most convincing evidence the fact that the Vivaraṇa contains some explicit references to statements made by Vācaspati Miśra, who lived after Śaṅkara. In contrast to this, Wezler (1983) sees these influences as going the other way—Vācaspati Miśra’s work shows clear vestiges of the influence of the Vivaraṇa. For this and other reasons, the matter remains unresolved.

61. For discussion of the dates of Vācaspati Miśra (as well as Patañjali and Vyāsa), see Woods (1914, xxiff).

62. In Feuerstein’s view, Vācaspati Miśra “approached his subject matter with great candour and sympathy but not from within the yogic tradition. This is corroborated by his whole style, and his preoccupation with philological and epistemological matters as well as his anxious dependence on Vyāsa” (1979, 30).

63. It had, however, been known since the publication of al-Bīrunī’s more famous work, India, published in 1887, that he had translated the sūtras, since it was quoted copiously in that work.

64. There were a number of Vaiṣṇava commentators on the Vedānta who vigorously critiqued Śaṅkara’s views, including Rāmānuja in the twelfth century. Rāmānuja presented a position of visiṣṭādvaita, differentiated nonduality, that modified the basic metaphysical infrastructure of advaita nonduality by proposing that there were differentiations within ultimate reality. Rāmānuja posited a basic and eternal tripartite subdivision within Brahman: Brahman as supreme personal Being, or Īśvara, whom he correlated with Viṣṇu/Nārāyāna; prakṛti, matter; and the puruṣa souls. For Rāmānuja, these are eternal and real ontological categories, not illusory superimpositions on an undifferentiated Brahman, as Śaṅkara had posited, but they do not compromise the essential nonduality of the absolute since everything emanates from, and remains dependent on, Viṣṇu. In one of Rāmānuja’s analogies, the relationship of the personal Brahman (Viṣṇu) with prakṛti and puruṣa is like that of the body and possessor of the body: Although in one sense they are one, the latter is dependent on, and supported by, the former. Madhva, in the thirteenth century, further emphasized the divisions between these categories. Other Vaiṣṇava commentators on the Vedānta added their particular sectarian nuances to the issue, of which Vallabha and the Caitanya school in the fifteenth century are noteworthy, and all of them drew upon the Upaniṣads, the Vedānta, and the Bhagavad Gītā as
sources of authority. In any event, Vījñānabhikṣu’s philosophy of bhedābheda, difference in nondifference, overlaps with the main metaphysical tenets of these predecessor Vedāntins, both in asserting the reality of the world and the eternal individuality of the souls, and in his critique of Śaṅkara’s advaita. For Vījñānabhikṣu, Brahman is different from the world and the souls, insofar as the latter are the inherent manifestations of Brahman, which is the material and efficient cause of the universe. But Brahman is also nondifferent from the souls insofar as they have the same characteristics as Brahman.

65. Rāmānanda Sarasvati wrote a commentary called Ratna-prabhā on Śaṅkara’s commentary on the Vedānta Sūtra, the Brahmasūtra-bhāṣya.

66. See comments by his disciple, P. N. Mukerji in Hariharānanda (1963, preface).

THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE YOGA SŪTRAS

1. As Dasgupta notes, if the mind itself were conscious, then why would its states be sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious? In other words, if the very nature of the mind were conscious, then all its states should always be conscious—there should be no unconscious or subconscious states in that which is, by definition, conscious. The fact that this is not the case suggests that consciousness lies in another entity behind the mind, which is conscious of some states external to it but not others.

2. See Larson (1983) for discussion.

3. Schweizer states as follows: “If mind and environment are held to belong to the same metaphysical realm, then mental content can both cause and be caused by other physical events. This at least opens the door to explaining mental representation and the evolution of cognitive structure through appeal to the interaction between an organism and its environment, while it is not at all clear that this door is open on a Cartesian account (1993, 853). Along similar lines, he elaborates that AI adopts a computational paradigm, which assumes that all phenomena, whether artificial or natural, are founded on computational procedures evidenced in physical systems. Since the citta in Yoga is an unconscious mechanism which manipulates the representational structures involved in perception, it can be characterized as computational (ibid., 854). He further notes that, as in Yoga, “subjective experience is an element which is theoretically extraneous to the research programs of cognitive science and AI.”

4. I use Indic throughout to refer to Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain commonalities.

5. It is an axiom in Indic thought that anything eternal cannot be subject to change. If the soul is eternal, it therefore cannot undergo changes.

6. The difference between the two schools is primarily one of focus. Both accept the liberation
of puruṣa from prakṛti as their goal, but Sāṅkhya mostly concerns itself with metaphysics, analyzing what puruṣa must extricate itself from, namely, the manifestations of prakṛti. In other words, liberation is attained by inference and intellectual reasoning, that is, with the path of knowledge, jñāna. Yoga concerns itself more with the nature of the mind and the results accrued from its control, in other words, with active meditative strategies for attaining liberation. But there are also differences of nuance, perhaps the most important of which for our purposes, is that Sāṅkhya conceives of the mind as consisting of three aspects, buddhi, intelligence; ahaṅkāra, ego; and manas, mind, whereas the Yoga school conceives of these as interacting functions of the one citta, internal organ, rather than as three distinct metaphysical layers. Sāṅkhya posits fifty components of psychic experience, which are simplified in Yoga to five vṛttis, and while some later Sāṅkhya traditions are nontheistic insofar as there is no mention of God (although there were important theistic variants), Yoga is theistic. In addition, since citta is all-pervasive, in Yoga there is an immediate transferal to a new body, in contrast to the Sāṅkhyan notion of a subtle body that transmigrates (Sāṅkhya Kārikā XL–XLI).

7.  Tellingly, Sāṅkhya does not have very much to say as far as the means to liberation is concerned. Sāṅkhya Kārika LXIV is the only verse giving any indication as to how to attain release, but even this says little about an actual methodology.

8.  The Mahābhārata contains various strands. For example, compare Yudhiṣṭhira’s dialogue with Bhiṣma and Śuka’s dialogue with Vyāsa in XII.187, 239–41, respectively.


10.  Kapila was clearly a renowned sage in ancient lore and is mentioned widely, e.g., Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad V.2; Mahābhārata XII.290.3 and 337.59; Gītā X.26; Sāṅkhya Kārika LXIX; and as the fifth avatāra of Viṣṇu in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (I.3.10).

11.  See Motegi (1999) for a compilation of quotes attributed to Pañcaśikha by later authors. This sage is also mentioned several times in the Mahābhārata (e.g., Śānti-parvan XII.307.211–12).

12.  A number of commentators ascribe this original work to Kapila, the primordial disseminator of Sāṅkhya. The sixty topics are specified in the Vaiṣṇava text Ahirbudhnya Sanñhita.


14.  Patañjali himself, however, explicitly mentions only sattva (II.41; III.35, 49, 55), and then in its sense of buddhi, intelligence. He does, however, refer to synonyms of all the guṇas in II.18.

15.  Sattva literally means “beingness.”

16.  When the guṇas maintain what we might call an equitension, prakṛti remains in a precreative state of dynamic potential called avyakta. Once the equilibrium is disrupted, however, creation takes place. See Ramakrishna Rao (1963) for a discussion.

17.  The analogy of milk holds only in terms of the evolution of by-products. Where prakṛti
differs from milk is that it and its evolutes maintain their own separate identity while simultaneously producing further evolutes, unlike milk, which is itself fully transformed when producing yogurt.

18. There were a number of schematic variations of the Śāṅkhya system in circulation, which enumerate the categories differently.

19. Specifically, Śāṅkhya Kārikā XXIII uses the term adhyavasāya, ascertainment. It notes that the sāttvic form of buddhi contains detachment; virtue, knowledge, and power, and its tāmasic form the opposite of these.


21. Technically manas is the function that ascribes the categories of sāmānya, genus, and višeṣa, particularly (mostly associated with Nyāya) to cognition. It is savikalpa-pratyakṣa where brute sensory input is nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa (see I.43 for discussion of these terms).

22. In technical Sanskritic philosophical terminology, the tanmātras can be considered the universals, sāmānya, of sound, taste, etc., rather than individuators, višeṣa, of particular notes of the scale, range of tastes, etc.

23. Since puruṣa is omnipresent, its adjacency with buddhi is not spatial; conceptualizing their relationship is one of the main philosophical problems of Hindu thought.

24. The genesis of ignorance is not a topic deemed resolvable by the human intellect in any Indic knowledge system and therefore not considered a fruitful topic of speculation.

25. Vyāsa uses the term “reflected image,” pratibimba, only once in his commentary (IV.23), to indicate that it is the objects that are reflected in the mind—not the puruṣa in the mind and/or vice versa as per Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhikṣu. Vācaspati Miśra sees the consciousness of puruṣa reflected in buddhi, which then becomes as if conscious. In actuality, in his view, there is no contact between puruṣa and buddhi. Buddhi is animated by the reflection of the puruṣa pervading it and becomes a quasi person, as it were. While this position seems determined to ensure that no change is ascribed to puruṣa itself, the problem with it, from the perspective of the detractors of the Yoga school, is that since buddhi is essentially inert prakṛti, it does not account for experience itself, which is the nature of puruṣa. Vijñānabhikṣu, therefore, holds that while buddhi may indeed become animated by the reflection of the puruṣa reflected in it, buddhi and its permutations are then reflected back to puruṣa, which then actually experiences its states of mind. In this double-reflection model, there is thus some form of real contact between puruṣa and buddhi, even as the former remains unchanged and autonomous, insofar as it is the witness of buddhi. It is due to ignorance that the states of buddhi are imagined to be in puruṣa. The problem with this position is that it suggests puruṣa is subject to change, which counters an axiom of much Hindu, and certainly Yoga, philosophy. Such differences underscore the recondite nature of
any dualistic system of thought (Eastern or Western) in accounting for the mechanics underpinning the interaction between consciousness and matter, two ontologically distinct entities.

26. *Rajas* and *tamas* can never be completely eliminated due to the inherent constitution of *prakṛti*.

27. I use the notion of the soul as pure subjectivity or as subject-aware loosely throughout this commentary. The notion of subject is meaningful only in contrast to some interaction with an object. In ultimate *asampraṇātā-samādhi*, by definition, there are no interactions with objects; therefore, the notion of subjectivity becomes inapplicable. However, I find it useful to retain the usage with this caveat so as to underscore the difference in the focus of awareness in *yoga* from other to pure self.

**THE PRESENT TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY**

1. Or, for the nontheistic Mīmāṁsā, consisting of authorless eternal words.

2. Reductionism seeks to interpret a religious body of knowledge by reducing it to modern categories of explanation external to the knowledge in question, such as seeking known scientific, sociological, or psychological explanations for religious phenomena.

3. The Vedānta tradition accepts *Smṛti* texts where they are not perceived as contradicting the *Śruti* (II.1.1 and commentaries).

4. Literally, the opposing point of view. Commentaries frequently discuss opposing philosophical positions in order to identify their defects.

5. See reference in I.1 to the *Brāhmaṇa* texts, which concern Vedic ritual.
CHAPTER I: MEDITATIVE ABSORPTION

1. This invocation is found preceding the commentary of Vyāsa in some recensions (although it is likely a later insertion). The term used for God here is Bhagavān (the same term used in the Bhagavad Gītā, spoken by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna, and in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the story of Kṛṣṇa’s incarnation). The term used for Kṛṣṇa is Vāsudeva, a patronymic for Kṛṣṇa as son of Vasudeva.

2. Viṣṇu is considered God in the Vaiṣṇava traditions, and either the source of the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa noted above, or derivative from him, depending on the sect. Śeṣa is a multiheaded serpent upon which he reclines. See II.47 for the traditional verse offered to Patañjali in the form of Śeṣa.

3. Traditional sources enumerate six schools of thought that emerged from the Upaniṣadic period of the late Vedic age (although, as noted in the introduction, the first textual reference to such six schools can be attested only very late). Among these, the Mīmāṁsā school, noteworthy for its treatment of epistemology, formulated a rationale for perpetuating the old Vedic sacrificial rites. The Nyāya school was best known for developing rules of logic so that the debates between the various schools could be conducted according to conventions about what constituted valid argument. The Vaiśeṣika school provided a metaphysics that perceived the created world as ultimately consisting of the combination of various eternal categories such as subatomic particles. The Sāṅkhya school posited a contrasting metaphysical system in which the created world evolved out of primordial matter, prakṛti, from which the puruṣa, soul, must extricate itself. The Vedānta school was concerned less with the physical constituents of the material world and more with the relationship among Brahman, the Supreme Truth of the Upaniṣads; ātman, the individualized feature of Brahman; and the perceived world as an emanation of Brahman. Finally, the Yoga school as represented by Patañjali is less a philosophical school than a practical psychosomatic technique through which the puruṣa—the ātman of the Upaniṣads—can be realized as distinct from prakṛti. As noted in the introduction, Yoga referred to a cluster of meditative techniques, some form of which was common to numerous different schools and sects, rather than a distinct philosophical school.

4. The first sūtra of the primary text for the Vedānta school, the Vedānta Sūtras, is athāto brahma-jijnāsā, now there is inquiry about Brahman; that of the primary sūtra of the Mīmāṁsā school is athāto dharma-jijnāsā, now there is inquiry into duty; and similarly that of the Vaiśeṣika school, athāto dharmaṁ vyākhyāsyāmah, now we will explain duty.

5. As noted, throughout the text, Yoga refers to the philosophy, psychology, and metaphysics of the tradition as a school, while yoga denotes the techniques, systems, and paths of the
tradition as a body of practices.

6. For the *Vedānta*, Mīmāṁsā, and Vaiśeṣika Sūtras, see note 3 above. *Athāto* is a compound of *atha* + *ataḥ*.

7. For example, the Vedānta school, as its name denotes, presented itself as the *anta* or conclusion of the Veda. Rāmānuja, the famous twelfth-century theistic commentator of the text, explains that *atha*, now, in the first *sūtra* of the *Vedānta Sūtras* (*athāto brahma-jijñāsā*) refers to one who has exhausted the study of Vedic ritualism and understood that the fruits that are gained from performing the sacrifices and works prescribed in the Vedas are temporary and limited. Such a person, who begins to conceive of the desire for release from the *samsāric* cycle of action and reaction, is “now” ready to begin a study of *Brahman*, as expressed in the Vedānta.

8. Vijnānabhikṣu states that Brahmā, the secondary creator god of Hinduism, is said to have uttered *atha* along with *oṁ* in the beginning of creation (quoted by Mādhava from the *Amara Kośa*, traditional dictionary, 87). Mādhava, in his doxography, notes that, among its many meanings, *atha* is also an auspicious particle (*Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha* 43ff).

9. Sanskrit and English are members of the Indo-European language family and thus share many cognate terms.

10. *Mām evaśyasi yuktvaim*, engaged in *yoga*, you will come to me. This sense of union is common in the Upaniṣads (e.g., *Kena* 1.1).


12. First of all, the notion of uniting or joining requires the existence of two entities that come into contact. While this might work somewhat in certain Vedānta traditions where the *ātman* might be conceived as uniting with *Brahman*, in the Yoga tradition, *ātman* (*puruṣa*) does not come into contact with anything other than itself, and hence union is problematic, unless used very loosely. Second, *yoga* is more accurately a process of disunion, that is, of *puruṣa* breaking its union with *prakṛti* rather than uniting with anything.

13. In one sense, Vyāsa notes, one can argue that *samādhi* underpins all of these five states, since it is inherent in the pure nature of the actual mind itself, and some degree of concentration is evident in any mental state, but it is the last two that are relevant in this preliminary definition of *yoga*.

14. Vyāsa states that all obstacles to *yoga* become loosened by such one-pointed concentration.

15. Vācaspati Miśra defines wondering, *kṣipta*, as a state of mind constantly afflicted by *rajas* toward various external objects; and confused, *mūḍha*, when the mind is possessed by deep sleep on account of lethargy, *tamas*. One-pointed, *ekāgra*, is obtained only when *sattva* is maximized.

16. *Śāsanam*, from the root *śās*, means teaching (*śāstra*, another common derivative, means the
implement for teaching, namely, sacred texts), and the prefix anu means the continuation of an action.

17. While some of the twelve topics are obscure in connotation, R. S. Bhattacharyya (1985) translates them as follows: (i) the eight limbs of yoga; (ii) the impurities of the mind; (iii) the obstacles to yoga; (iv) the body; (v) the bodily regions upon which concentration is directed; (vi) the last three meditative limbs of yoga; (vii) incomplete samādhi; (viii) the highest form of samādhi; (ix–xi) mystic powers (or the three means for attaining samādhi); and (xii) liberation.

18. This is a work of the Pāñcarātra (Vaiṣṇava or Bhāgavata) school.


20. The Purāṇas are a huge compendium of texts that essentially contain most of the ingredients of modern Hinduism—the stories of the great divinities and their devotees, royal dynasties, social duties, yogic practices, etc. The most important of these is the Bhāgavata.

21. Or, more correctly, in Sāṅkhya, the metaphysical matrix accepted by Yoga. The introduction describes the difference between these two schools on the matter of the internal body.

22. These two bodies are also referred to as sthūla-śarīra and sūkṣma-śarīra, respectively.

23. Recall the caveat in the introduction on applying “pure subjectivity” or “subject-aware” to the soul in the context of Yoga metaphysics.

24. The first reference to Yoga itself as a distinct school seems to be the writings of Śaṅkara in the ninth century (Bronkhorst 1981).

25. Yoga is also mentioned in IX.1.11 and 13; 2.13 of this text.


27. The difference between the two schools is primarily one of focus. Both accept as their goal the liberation of puruṣa, the inner self, from prakṛti, matter, but Sāṅkhya mostly concerns itself with a knowledge-based method—analyzing what puruṣa must be extricated from, namely, the manifestations of prakṛti—and Yoga, with an action-based method—the means by which puruṣa can attain such liberation, namely, the psychosomatic process of yoga.

28. Although “awareness” and “consciousness” tend to imply an object, when speaking about puruṣa I am using them to refer to objectless awareness, for want of a better user-friendly term.

29. These are known in Sāṅkhya as the antaḥkaraṇa, or, as noted in the previous sūtra, sūkṣma-śarīra.

30. The Yoga tradition also differs from the Vedānta tradition in this regard.

31. The term adhyavasāya is used in the Śaṅkhya Kārikā (XXIII) for the function of buddhi, which denotes determination, resolution, decision, opinion, mental effort.
32. *Ahaṅkāra* is referred to as *asmitā* in this text.

33. See *Sāṅkhya Sūtras* I.50.

34. There are two stages involved in sense perception, discussed more fully in other Indic traditions such as Jainism and Nyāya. The first is preconceptual, when a sense object is not recognized or identified but is perceived as raw impression, like a baby's impression of the world, called *nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa*. This is followed by the mind's recognition of the object that it categorizes as a certain type of thing (technically considered to be the recognition of it as a member, *viśeṣa*, of a class, *sāmānya*, in several Indic knowledge systems). This is called *savikalpa-pratyakṣa*. See I.43 for the two types of *pratyakṣa*, and III.44 for further discussion on *viśeṣa* and *sāmānya*.

35. The *Sāṅkhya Kārikās* define *buddhi* as containing eight *bhāvas*, dispositions: knowledge, detachment, *dharma* (duty, righteousness), and power when its *sāttvic* nature is manifest, and their opposites when its *tāmasic* nature is manifest.

36. *Yathā hi grāmādhyakṣah kauṭṭumbhikebhyaḥ karamādāya viṣayādhyakṣāya prayacchati viṣayādhyakṣaś ca sarvādhyakṣāya sa ca bhūpataye tathā bāhyendriyānyālocya manase samarpayanti manaś ca saṅkalpyāhankārāya ahaṅkāraś cābhūtāyāṁ tad idam uktan puṣṣasyārthāṁ prakāśya buddhau prayacchanti iti.*

37. As Vācaspati Miśra notes in his commentary to I.1.

38. The question might arise that if mind is made of the same *prakṛti* as matter, then why cannot the *puruṣa* become directly aware of gross objects? Why does it require the medium of the mind? The Jains, for example, hold that the awareness of the soul can pervade external objects when all its covering of matter has been removed. According to Yoga, the preponderance of *sattva* in *buddhi*, which resembles the consciousness of *puruṣa*, is able by its translucence to absorb the light of the latter and reflect it back to *puruṣa*. The objects of the world are predominantly made of *tamas* and thus too dull and opaque to directly absorb the light of consciousness.


40. *Brahman* is the term for the Absolute Truth in the Vedānta tradition.

41. See *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* XIII, and the *Gītā* XIV, XVII, and XVIII.

42. Dasgupta (1922, I:242ff).

43. These cover such things as prescribed duty and its mode of performance, worship, diet, charity, sacrifice, austerity, knowledge, activity, understanding, determination, attainment of happiness, and future birth. See also Manu XII.24–52; and *Mahābhārata* XII.301–302.

44. When the mind is overcome primarily by *tamas*, it becomes inclined to vice, ignorance,
attachment, and impotence, and when it is overcome primarily by rajas, it becomes inclined to the opposite types of qualities.

45. Saṁsāra in Indic thought is a cycle of birth and death because every action breeds a reaction, which then eventually bears fruit, provoking rereactions, which cause rerereactions, and so on ad infinitum. Living beings have to return life after life to experience the accumulated store of karmic reactions, but in doing so simply breed more reactions and thus perpetuate a vicious cycle of birth and death. This is discussed in detail in Chapter II.

46. There is a difference of opinion among Hindu thinkers as to whether full asamprajñāta-samādhi can be experienced while alive, or whether it entails the complete abandonment of the physical and cognitive apparatus of the body and mind. For the views of the various schools, see Fort and Mumme (1996).

47. The five skandhas, sheaths or aggregates (khandha in Pali), are (1) aggregate of matter, rūpa-skandha, the elements—fluidity, solidity, motion, and heat—as well as the sense organs and their objects—sound, smell, etc.—in short, the physical body; (2) aggregate of sensations, vedanā-skandha, all pleasant and unpleasant sensations experienced sensually or mentally; (3) aggregate of perceptions, saṁjñā-skandha, perceptions or recognition of objects through the six faculties; (4) aggregate of mental formations, saṁskāra-skandha, all volitional activities good or bad; (5) aggregate of consciousness, vijñāna-skandha. This skandha of consciousness is of interest here since, for Buddhists, it requires one of the four faculties (eye, etc., including mind) as its basis and an object (i.e., form, etc., including thought) as its support. So consciousness is named according to the means by which it arises—visual consciousness, mental consciousness, etc. The essential point is that consciousness depends on other faculties and objects; it cannot exist separately and therefore is not considered eternal and extractable from its faculties and objects for Buddhists, as it is for the followers of Yoga and almost all Hindu sects. This is perhaps the most essential metaphysical difference between Hindu (and Jain) traditions and Buddhist ones.

48. See, for example, Nāgārjuna’s Mūla-madhyamaka-kārikā, Chapter X.

49. Liberation, for such schools, entails a state of nonconsciousness, a prospect that was ridiculed by their opponents.

50. The oldest philosophical texts of India, the Upaniṣads, typically favor the term ātman for the localized aspect of the self and Brahman for the universal aspect of the supreme self (although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably). The Gītā uses both these terms, as well as puruṣa favored by the Yoga school, and other terms usually used in the context of the soul in saṁsāra, such as jīva; dehī, the embodied one; and kṣetrajña, the knower of the field [of prakṛti]. There are significant differences among schools in the understanding of the nature of the soul, such as those noted previously.
51. *Draṣṭṛ* occurs in various cases in this *sūtra* and in II.17, II.20, and IV.23. Two other derivatives of the same verb with very similar meaning also occur: *dṛś*, to see, in II.6; and *dṛśi*, seeing, in II.20, 25. *Puruṣa* occurs eight times (I.16, 24; III.35 [twice], 49, 55; and IV.18, 34). *Ātman* in the sense of self occurs three times (II.5, 41; IV.25).

52. The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools hold that consciousness itself is adventitious to the soul and is generated only when the soul comes in contact with the mind. When separated from the mind, the soul remains in a state devoid of consciousness, a view of liberation that was derided as rather unenticing by other schools of Hindu thought (as can be sensed from the way Vijñānabhiṣṇu frames this perspective). While the Yoga school shares the view that the mind and all mental activities are distinct from the soul, it holds that consciousness itself is at all times inherent and manifest in the soul, and not a property that manifests only when in contact with the mind; it thus differs from Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika in this regard.

53. The followers of Cārvāka and other related philosophers were materialists and held consciousness to be a by-product of matter (the body), which is manifest under certain circumstances, and not something distinct from the body in any way, just as alcohol is a by-product generated under certain circumstances from fermented fruit or grain and not something separable from fruit or grain.

54. Depending on the point to be made, sometimes the *puruṣa* is compared to the red flower and the *citta* to the crystal (e.g., IV.23), and sometimes the *puruṣa* to a crystal and the *citta* to a red flower (e.g., Vācaspati Miśra in I.4, 41). In the former, the comparison illustrates that the mind is infused both with sense objects distinct from itself as well as with consciousness distinct from itself, just as the crystal is infused in its various facets with different colors distinct from itself. In the latter, the comparison illustrates that the crystal remains clear even though it might appear to be colored by an adjacent object, as does the *puruṣa*, even though its awareness appears to be colored by the adjacent *citta* with its *vṛttis* (see Murakami 1999 for further references). This metaphor is widely used, for example in Śaṅkara’s commentary to *Vedānta Sūtra* III.2.11, where *Brahman* is correlated with the crystal, which is not transformed due to the reflections of sense objects within it.


56. The idea of this metaphor, of course, is the Upaniṣadic notion that the self is in some way one with *Brahman* (understood variously by different Vedāntic exegetes). Since *Brahman* is the source of all reality, by realizing the self one realizes one’s unity with all reality, and in this sense gains the universe.

57. Hariharānanda Āranya outlines his version of the process by which the yogi can remove the misidentification of the *citta* with *puruṣa* in his commentary. Any act of cognition involves the subject of knowledge, the instrument or means of knowledge, and the object of
knowledge. The *manas* aspect of the *citta* is an instrument of knowledge when it has the senses and external things as its objects of knowledge. But the *manas* can itself become an object of knowledge—one can scrutinize one’s mind by introspection. Thus, although an instrument of knowledge, the mind is simultaneously an object of knowledge in its own right. More subtle than the mind is *ahaṅkāra*, ego. This is the aspect of *citta* that produces a sense of personal identity with the *vṛttis* of the mind. It lays claim to the mind. According to Hariharānanda, through the practice of meditation the mind can be stilled, and one can gain a sense or intuition of this *ahaṅkāra*. One can then realize that the mind itself is actually an object of knowledge, and the *ahaṅkāra* the instrument of knowledge that processes the information of the mind through the “I sense.” In other words, through meditation, one can determine that the ego, or sense of I, is a different faculty from the knowledge that is presented to it by the *manas* mind. From this perspective, the *ahaṅkāra* ego, as instrument of knowledge, appropriates the knowledge of the *manas* as object of knowledge.

But one can go deeper into the workings of one’s *citta* to the *buddhi*. By further meditation on the *ahaṅkāra*, the *buddhi* aspect of the *citta* can determine that this sense of I is different from the real self and therefore to be discarded. Now *buddhi* becomes the instrument of knowledge and *ahaṅkāra* the object of knowledge. By further concentration still, one realizes that even *buddhi*, the source of all discrimination, is also not the ultimate source of awareness, and one becomes aware of a *puruṣa* by which even the discriminatory functions of *buddhi* are illuminated. Such ability to discern this existence of *puruṣa* is the final act of *buddhi* (this is the *viveka-khyāti* that will be discussed in *sūtra* II.26). In other words, *buddhi* realizes that it itself is not the ultimate self—it deconstructs itself, so to speak. When even this final act of discrimination ceases due to supreme detachment, there is no further object of knowledge and therefore no further function for *buddhi* to perform. *Puruṣa* then becomes completely uncoupled from *buddhi* and, hence, *prakṛti*, and exists in isolation (the *kaivalya* of III.55). Thus separated, *buddhi* itself can become an object of knowledge, says Hariharānanda (in principle, at least, although once *puruṣa* is disassociated from *buddhi*, there is no further subject of knowledge to focus on the *buddhi* as an object of knowledge).

59. However, the various Lokāyata materialist schools do not accept the notion of *karmic* reactions to action.
60. Just as a *brāhmaṇa* living in the village of Śala, which is full of Kirāṭas (a tribe living in the east of India), says Vācaspati Miśra, does not become a Kirāṭa, so *sāttvic vṛttis* retain their nature even if surrounded by *rājasic* and *tāmasic* ones.
61. *Pramaṇa* comes from the root *pra* + *mā*, to measure or estimate, in this case, the sources of knowledge or instruments through which it is gained. Relevant and related roots include
pramātr, the knower; prameya, that which is known; pramā, that actual state of correct knowledge, cognition; pramāṇya, the validity of knowledge.

62. The extra pramāṇas posited by other schools are considered by the Yoga school to be variants of the pramāṇas mentioned here.

63. Indeed, some philosophical schools such as that associated with the materialist Cārvāka accept sense perception as the only pramāṇa, arguing that the other means of knowledge are derived from it.

64. In Vaiśeṣika, all manifest reality can be broken down into seven basic categories, one of which is dravya, substance. There are nine different types of substances, the minutest particles of earth, water, fire, air, and ether (matter, liquids, energy, gas, space), the mind, the soul, time, and space. The specific aspect of a substance, višeṣa (from which the school gets its name), is that which distinguishes it from another substance, which keeps particles, for example, separate and individual so that one can differentiate between one molecule of earth and another, or between one soul and another. Since one dog, or any object in reality, is different from another by dint of its distinct conglomeration of atoms, višeṣa can be applied in a more general manner to refer to the distinctiveness of any object from another.

65. There are two stages of perception as understood by a number of Indic philosophical traditions (see I.43 for discussion). Briefly, when a person encounters an unfamiliar object, one first becomes aware of it in a vague sort of way, as raw sense data, without assigning a name or identification to it, like an infant’s preconceptual awareness. After this moment, the mind processes the data in terms of its specific name, and the category of thing that it belongs to, and its function, that is, recognizing the object’s sāmānya and its višeṣa. The first stage of indeterminate awareness is called nirvikalpa, and the second, savikalpa.

66. Technically, the impression of an object is called pratyaya. These are single momentary impressions, while vṛttis are more a prolonged sequence of different impressions; thus, a number of pratyayas may make up a vṛtti.

67. Some schools of thought, such as that associated with Cārvāka, hold that anumāṇa is not a separate source of knowledge because it is predicated on sense perception—the smoke is seen, even if the fire is not—and thus it is a variant of pratyakṣa rather than an independent source of knowledge.

68. The variant śruta is used in I.49.

69. These schools hold that scripture is simply an extension or subcategory of pratyakṣa, sense perception.

70. The Vedānta Sūtras refer to the prakṛti of Sāṅkhya as established by inference (I.3.3, 4.1; II.2.1), which they consider inferior to Truth that can be verified by recourse to āgama, scripture. The Vedānta Sūtras dedicate a section to refuting Sāṅkhya on the grounds of
scripture, and another using anumāna. As an aside, that these sūtras devote so much attention to refuting Sāṅkhya points to the importance and prevalence of the Sāṅkhya metaphysics.

71. The focus of the Mīmāṁsā, however, was on the scriptures pertaining to ritual, the Brāhmana texts, as opposed to the mysticophilosophical Upaniṣad texts, which were of interest to the Vedānta tradition.


73. The Yukti-dīpikā actually speaks of three types of sense perceptions in this verse: sensual, mental, and yogic.

74. Vijñānabhiṣkṣu, for example, points out that error is considered an action that entails a positive act of misidentification in the Yoga school, a position technically known asviparitākhyāti or anyathākhyāti, rather than a negative lack of discrimination, a position subscribed to by the Sāṅkhya and Mīmāṁsā schools, called ākhyāti.

75. E.g., Tarka-saṅgraha 37–38.

76. Vyāsa gives some slightly complicated examples, including “the arrow stands still, stood still, will stand still.” What this actually means in the mind of the listener is that the arrow has ceased (or will cease) to move. Vācaspati Miśra elaborates that in order to understand the meaning of the root “to stand still,” the listener has to imagine a state of not moving. In actual fact, standing still, absence of motion, is really an imagined state of affairs dependent on the idea of motion, but it is then projected as an actual characteristic of the arrow. Vikalpa is thus verbalization, or the connotative use of words, rather than the denotative.

77. Pratyaya is often translated as presented idea.

78. But see Janácek (1957), who takes pratyaya in all instances to mean “impulses” that emanate out from objects, which are then grasped by the mind, rather than the images of these objects in the mind.

79. Since a saṁskāra consists of both an imprint of a sense object and recognition or conceptualization of that object, Vyāsa notes that if the former aspect of the saṁskāra is dominant when it activates, then it is memory; if the latter, then it is an act of intelligence.

80. Recognition of, say, a rose, depends on the senses contacting a red rose and then seeing a rose again at a later time, at which point the saṁskāra of the first experience is activated and one recognizes that the rose of the second occasion is similar to the first; in other words, recognition is dependent on the contact of the senses with a sense object. This is not the case with pure memory per se, which is when a rose can be recalled to mind even when one is not physically seeing a rose.

81. The Vedic corpus consists of the four Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas, and the Upaniṣads.
82. Or, at least, are perceived this way by the Vedānta tradition (*Vedānta Sūtras* II.1.1).

83. See Larson (1983) for a discussion on the tripartite interconnectedness of *smṛti* as memory, sacred text and myth, or legendary history.

84. See *Vedānta Sūtras* X.1.1 and commentaries.

85. See, for discussion, Bryant (2003, xxiif).

86. *Vairāgyaṁ ca alam-buddhi*. (*Yoga-sāra*)

87. The term occurs also in the *Sāṅkhya Kārikās* (II), where the commentaries (e.g., Vācaspati Miśra’s *Tattva-kaumudī*) also take it to refer to the Vedic texts.

88. See, e.g., Śloka-vārttika XXIV–XXVI.247ff.

89. In still later Vedic ritualism, as expressed by the Mīmāṁsā school, the gods became essentially irrelevant (demoted to grammatical categories rather than personified), and the ritual itself construed as paramount in the obtainment of wealth and well-being, rather than being attained due to the pleasure or displeasure of the gods.

90. *Yoga-sāra* commentary.


92. *Prāptam prāpaṇīyaṁ kṣiṇāḥ kṣetavyāḥ kleśāḥ chinṇāḥ śliṣṭapurvā bhavasaṅkramaḥ yasya avicchedāj-janitvā mṛiyate mṛtvā ca jāyate*. Vyāsa is being rhetorical here, since, obviously, the yogī at this point has ceased conventional “thinking” altogether.

93. In the discourse of Asita Devala, *citta* is presented as higher than the sense organs, *manas* as higher than *citta*, higher than which is *buddhi*. See, for discussion, Chakravarti (1975, 45). Also see Bedekar (1959) for the variety of ways terms such as *citta*, *manas*, and *buddhi* are used in the *Mahābhārata*. In the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* of Asaṅga (founder of the Yogācāra school of Mahāyāna Buddhism), *citta* forms part of the *vijñāna-skandha* along with *manas*.

94. Dasgupta expresses this usefully: “The difference of *tanmātras* or infra-atomic units and atoms (*paramāṇu*) is this, that the *tanmātras* have only the potential power of affecting our senses, [they] must be grouped and regrouped in a particular form to constitute a new existence as atoms before they can have the power of affecting our senses” (1922, 252).


96. *Asmitā* as *kleśa* and *ahaṅkāra* of the Sāṅkhya system are roughly synonymous and correlated by the commentators (e.g., Vyāsa in II.19) but refer to slightly different functions of the ego as will be discussed in II.7.

97. *Īśvara-cetanatva-sākṣātkāras*.

98. The same phenomenon is preserved in English: *theist/atheist, sexual/sexual*, etc.

99. Some scholars, traditional and modern, infer the existence of eight stages of *samprajñāta samādhi* as will be discussed in II.42.
00. *Catur-bhujādikāṃ vā śārīraṃ ghaṭādikāṃ vā.* (Yoga-sāra)

01. For recent examples, see Bronkhorst (1993) and Sarbacker (2005).

02. *Vitarka/vitakka* in Buddhism has the sense of placing the mind on an object and comprehending its name and form as well as its diverse relations, and *vicāra* of keeping it there in absorption, although the term has a history of usage in Buddhist scholastic texts; see Cousins (1992) for discussion. The former is compared to the bee following a scent to a lotus and then dropping down upon it, the latter like the bee wandering over the lotus once it has reached there. Or the former like the hand that firmly grips a dirty vessel, and the latter like the other hand that rubs it with a cloth, or again, the former is like the potter’s hand that firmly holds down the clay, and the latter like the hand that moves it here and there to shape it.

03. Curiously, while mentioning the four *dhyānas* several times, the discussion in this section of the epic ends at the first *dhyāna*.

04. The term *samādadhyaṇā* is used here (and another form of this verb is used in the next line), from the same stem *samādhi*, from which the noun *samādhi*, the final limb of Patañjali’s system, is derived.

05. For a comparative discussion of *vitarka* and *vicāra* in Buddhism and Yoga, see Cousins (1992).

06. While early Buddhism borrowed much from mainstream Indic meditative practices, the reverse can also be argued: Bhīṣma’s reference to these states in the Śānti-parvan section of the epic—as well as the structure of Patañjali’s fourfold schema outlined in this *sūtra*—might point to borrowings from Buddhist meditative practices into mainstream Sāṅkhya, as Bronkhorst (1993, chap. IV) has argued. However, in my view it is best to speak of a common substratum of meditative practices rather than hazard estimates at the dates of texts containing similar features and then assume the older text to be the source of any shared notion present in an (even slightly) later text. Apart from anything else, dating the various strata of the epic is a highly speculative and tentative undertaking and can never be conclusive; for a survey of dating attempts, see Brockington (1998, 130–58).

07. I use “self-aware” loosely and heuristically, since “self” implies “other,” and the ultimate stage of *asamprajñāta-samādhi, kaivalya* (literally, “aloneness,” IV.34), by definition, involves the absence of any “other.”

08. Pines and Gelblum (1977, 524).

09. *Pratyayah* here means cause rather than image or idea as it means elsewhere. See I.10 for discussion.

10. See also Vijñānabhikṣu on III.48 in this regard.

11. See, for related comparison, the reference in the *Mahābhārata* to the residents of the White
Island where a form of Nārāyaṇa resides, whose bodies do not have gross senses (*pañcendriya-varjitāḥ* XII.331.41). Even certain accomplished *yogīs* are held to have transcended mundane foodstuffs, as is the belief in one of the two primary strains of the Jain tradition in regard to Mahāvīra.

12. *Pradhāna* is *prakṛti* prior to creation, full of potential but as yet unmanifest.


14. *Tatra līnaṁ ātmanāṁ manyate mukto ‘ham-iti tamo-bheda eṣaḥ.* (Gauḍapāda to *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* XLVIII.)

15. *Bhava* is not found in the Upaniṣads. It is first used as a philosophical term in Pali texts. See Dasgupta (1922), I:87.

16. The sheaths are identified in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* as food, breath, mind, discrimination, and bliss (II.2ff).

17. See Rukmani (1978) for further discussion.

18. There are fourteen Manus in the life of Brahmā, the secondary creator of the universe. According to the *Gītā* (VIII.17), Brahmā’s one day consists of a thousand cycles of the four *yugas* (which, added together, correspond to 4.32 billion human years), as does his night. Brahmā lives a hundred years, so one can thus calculate the life span of Manu.


20. Even in the *Kāma Sūtras*, the treatises on eroticism, there are various categories of permissible aphrodisiacs, flirtatious gestures, arousal techniques, and sexual postures.

21. For a history of early theism, see Gonda (1975).

22. *Bhagavān* is a term most popularly associated with Kṛṣṇa (as in the two texts best associated with him, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*), although it can be used for other deities and even noteworthy humans as well.

23. God is not mentioned in the *Vaiśeṣika Sūtras*; the first mention of God in this tradition is in the *Padārtha-dharma-saṅgraha* by the commentator Praśastapāda. See Bronkhorst (1996).

24. While later doxographies tend to contrast nontheistic Śāṅkhya with theistic Yoga (e.g., the eighth-century Jain text *Ṣaddarśana-samuccaya* by Haribhadra; Rāmānuja’s twelfth-century Vedānta commentary I.4.23 and elsewhere; and Mādhava’s fourteenth-century *Sarvadarśana-saṅgraha*), this perception seems based on Īśvarakṛṣṇa’s *Sāṅkhya Kārikā* (fourth–sixth century). To be sure, there is no mention of any Īśvara here (though that is not quite the same thing as an explicit denial of Īśvara). But one must bear in mind that the *Sāṅkhya Kārikās* were to become regarded by later philosophers as the seminal or primary source of Śāṅkhya purely by default: The earlier (arguably theistic) original sources had become lost.
It is not until the Sāṅkhya Sūtras of the fourteenth century that there is an explicit statement that the existence of God “cannot be proven” (I.92; V.10; VI.64—Īśvarāsiddheḥ, pramāṇābhāvān na tat-siddhiḥ; Kārya-siddhir neśvara-karṇṭadhīnā pramāṇābhāvāt).

In any event, the facts seem to indicate that the early Sāṅkhya tradition, or at least strains of it, did accept the existence of an Īśvara, God. Although some scholars find evidence in the Mahābhārata (Śānti-parvan XII.289.3) for a nontheistic Sāṅkhya—the most conspicuous of which is the term anīśvara, which can be rendered as “without īśvara,” used in reference to Sāṅkhya in contradistinction to Yoga, Edgerton (1924, 11) reads the term as a reference to the individual soul. Indeed, in his reading, there is not a single nontheistic passage associated with Sāṅkhya in the entire epic, a position supported by Ramakrishna Rao (1966). There are undoubtedly many passages in the epic that explicitly associate Sāṅkhya with the impersonal monistic absolute Brahman, or with a personal god, adding a twenty-sixth ingredient of reality to the more standard twenty-five ingredients typical of Sāṅkhya (for example, XII.295–96 and of course the entire Nārāyaṇiya section; see Ramakrishna Rao for a full discussion). In the Mahābhārata’s Bhagavad Gītā, Kṛṣṇa emphatically states that he is Īśvara and that prakṛti and her Sāṅkhyan evolutes are his “lower nature” (VII.5). Thus, at the very least, there were theistic strains of Sāṅkhya intermingling with nontheistic ones in the epic.

Additionally, one of the oldest Sāṅkhya texts recognized by the later tradition is the Śaṣṭi-tantra-śāstra. This is described in the Vaiṣṇava Ahirbudhnya Saṁ hitā, and in this, Kapila, the undisputed founder of Sāṅkhya in all traditional sources, is stated to be theistic and an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The Mahābhārata, too, considers Kapila an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and he is certainly accepted as such and associated with theism in the Purāṇas (e.g., Bhāgavata III.24), where his narrative as an incarnation of Viṣṇu is described and his theistic form of Sāṅkhya outlined.

This tradition of a theistic Sāṅkhya is thus ancient and widespread, since it pervades a number of Purāṇas as well as the Pāñcarātra tradition. See Dasgupta (1922, IV:24ff) for discussion. For the history of God in Sāṅkhya texts, see Bronkhorst (1983).

25. The prefix pra- gives the sense of forward, ni the sense of down, and the root dha, to place or put. Thus to put oneself forward and down before Īśvara, or prostrate.

26. Saṁskāras are the imprints on the mind of every deed, thought, and sense impression one has experienced; they essentially correspond to memories and behavioral patterns.

27. Karma means action, which in the Indic context involves not just an action per se but also the inherent reaction every action generates.

28. The term avyakta in the Gītā is used to describe the ātman (e.g., II.25).


31. Vijñānabhikṣu states that these three bonds are attachment to the sense of I, ego; attachment to the objects of the senses; and attachment of householders to sacrifice, sacrificial fee, gifts, and Vedic study, etc. (in other words, ritualism for the sake of its fruits).

32. Of course, different theistic schools had different notions as to the specific role played by Īśvara. For example, was Īśvara the material and efficient cause of the universe or simply the efficient cause? (e.g., commentaries to Vedānta Sūtras II.2.37, contra Nyāya; II.2.3 contra Yoga).

33. See the description of the mystical powers of the yogīs that cause them to be referred to as Īśvara in Mahābhārata XII.289.24ff (my thanks to David White for this reference), or as deluded demoniacal character types who consider themselves Īśvara in the Gīta XVI.14. In the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, the term is used to refer to ātman/Brahman as Lord (IV.4.22). But such usages are figurative and derivative, and their connotative force implies the normative referent of the term to a supreme being.

34. Vedānta Sūtras I.1.1ff; II.2.1ff.
35. Ibid., I.1.3; see also Śaṅkara’s commentary to II.2.37.
36. Vedānta Sūtras I.1.2 and throughout.

37. See, e.g., Vyāsa I.25 for implicit acceptance of Īśvara’s creator role, which seems to be taken for granted in this context. See also Vācaspati Miśra IV.3, however, in his characteristically eclectic and nonpartisan manner, when writing his commentary on the Sāṅkhya Kārikās (LVI–II) Vācaspati Miśra is quite comfortable representing the Sāṅkhya view that prakṛti is the source of creation and presenting all the standard atheistic arguments against accepting Īśvara as cause of creation without refuting them. Interestingly, the commentator Gauḍapāda considers prakṛti and Brahman to be synonyms (Bhāṣya to XXII), another interesting twist in blending Vedāntic and Sāṅkhyan categories.

38. Atha ka Īśvaraḥ kimvā tat-praṇidhānam ucyate ... sa ca ... vedānta-sūtrair aśeṣa-višeṣato mīmāṁsitaḥ. Ato ‘tra diṁ-mātreṇocya. (Yoga-sāra)

39. See, for example, Śvetāśvatara VI.6ff; Gītā IX.4 and throughout; Mahābhārata XII.290.110, 333.16, 335.11 (Īśaro hi jagat-sraṣṭā), 336.55, and elsewhere. See also, Nyāya Sūtras IV.1.19. The Nyāya Sūtras were composed by Gautama, the reputed founder of the Nyāya school, which specialized in analyzing categories of logic.

40. Śaṅkara recognizes Yoga as accepting Īśvara as efficient cause in II.2.37 (although in II.1.3, Śaṅkara seems to state that prakṛti is the sole cause of creation in Yoga). See Rukmani (1993) for discussion.

41. The term Īśvara is first used in the Gītā IV.6, which is also the first instance where the text unambiguously announces Kṛṣṇa’s supreme and divine nature. The opportunity is ostensibly framed by Arjuna’s question after Kṛṣṇa had informed him that he had come to reestablish
the eternal science of yoga, which he had originally imparted to the sun god Vivasvān in primordial time. Given that Kṛṣṇa, his cousin and contemporary, is standing in front of him, how, wonders Arjuna, could he possibly have instructed Vivasvān many aeons ago? Kṛṣṇa replies that he is the Īśvara of all living entities, birthless, imperishable, and the controller of prakṛti, and that his appearances in the world are through his own power (ātmamāyā). This is followed by the well-known verses in which Kṛṣṇa states that he comes whenever there is a decline in dharma and an increase in adharma in order to protect the pious and destroy the impious.

In V.29, Kṛṣṇa claims that he is maheśvara (the great Lord) of all the worlds, enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities, and friend of all creatures, and that one knowing him attains peace. Similar language is used in X.3, where Kṛṣṇa repeats that he is the maheśvara, great Īśvara, of the world, birthless and beginningless, and that the undeluded among men who know him as such are freed from all evils. A few verses further, Arjuna calls Kṛṣṇa the supreme Brahman; supreme abode, dhāma; supreme purifier; birthless, all-pervading primal God; and, of relevance here, the eternal divine puruṣa (Īśvara, for Patañjali, is a special puruṣa). In XVIII.61, Kṛṣṇa as Īśvara is said to reside in the hearts of all beings, causing them to revolve by the power of illusion, as if fixed on a machine. Although Īśvara is used elsewhere in the text with different nuances, the Gītā unQuestioningly (and, indeed, quite assertively) identifies this supreme being with Kṛṣṇa.

42. Of the three occurrences of Īśvara in the Upaniṣads—other derivatives of the root iś such as iśa and iśana are used more frequently—two (supplemented by the adjective mahā, great, that is, maheśvara, great Īśvara) occur in the SU (IV.10; VI.7), in reference to Śiva (that is, under the names of Hara and Rudra).

43. For a discussion of the Īśvara theology of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, see Bryant (2003, xixff).

44. Bryant (2005).

45. Specifically, Ramakrishna Rao determines that there were four traditions accepting the basic Sāṅkhya categories: proto-Sāṅkhya, Vedānta, Yoga, and Pāñcarātra. These differed primarily in their understanding of whether there were twenty-five or twenty-six categories, and whether the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth category was Īśvara or a more impersonal notion of an Absolute. Yoga and Pāñcarātra accepted the twenty-sixth category of Īśvara, which they referred to as Viṣṇu/ Nārāyaṇa. Even proto-Sāṅkhya, interestingly, which accepted twenty-five categories, albeit associating this with a universal rather than an individual self, nonetheless referred to this category as Viṣṇu (1966, Chapter V). Thus the theism of the proto-Sāṅkhya Yoga section of the epic is Vaiṣṇava in orientation. (Incidentally, Ramakrishna Rao finds evidence of Sāṅkhya and Yoga being independent but overlapping strains in this early period, rather than the one system argued by the other
scholars.)

46. Vaiṣṇava refers to a devotee of Viṣṇu; Śaivite, to a follower of Śiva.

47. See, e.g., XII.289.62, 290.109–110, 291.37, 306.76 and, of course, the entire Nārāyaṇīya section where, for example, 334.17 specifically states that the followers of Sāṅkhya and Yoga meditate on Nārāyaṇa (tat-sāṅkhya-yogibhir-udāra-dhṛtam buddhyā yatātmabhīr viditaṁ satatam).

48. For Śaṅkara’s understanding of Īśvara, see Nelson (2007).

49. In XV.16–8, Kṛṣṇa states that there are two types of puruṣas, kṣara-puruṣas, perishable beings, and aksara-puruṣas, imperishable ones. The kṣara-puruṣas are all living entities, sarvāṇi bhūtāni, and the aksara-puruṣas are kuṭastha, literally, situated on the top. This latter term is used twice elsewhere in the Gītā (VI.8 and XII.3), the former in reference to the enlightened sage and the latter as a quality of the highest truth realized by the enlightened sage. On both scores, we can take the kṣara-puruṣa to refer to the unenlightened being (or, with Minor 1982, the being phenomenally considered), and the aksara-puruṣa as the enlightened being (or, with Minor, the true realized self). XV.17 goes on to describe another, highest puruṣa, the paramātmā, the supreme self who pervades the three worlds and supports them, and the term Īśvara is used for this highest puruṣa. XV.18 emphasizes again that this supreme self is higher than both kṣara and aksara puruṣas, and XV.19 that one who knows this supreme self to be Kṛṣṇa knows all that there is to know. X.20 goes further and asserts that knowledge of this is the most confidential scriptural teaching. Thus, while more assertive and elaborate than Patañjali, the Gītā also articulates a theology of Īśvara as a special puruṣa of a different order from other puruṣas, except that the Gītā puts a name to the position—Kṛṣṇa.

50. E.g., Book XII, chapters 199, 200, 202, 271, 321, 323, 326, 336.

51. Moreover, VI.8 specifies that the ātman is not īśa and remains bound (because of having an enjoying disposition) until he comes to know God. In short, we have the soul in bondage, the liberated soul, and Siva, an almost exact Śaivite equivalent of the Gītā XIV.16–18, with parallels to Patañjali’s theistic rhetoric.

52. III.8–11 speak of the yogī sitting in a cave or sheltered place in an appropriate setting, where he should keep the body straight and erect, draw the senses and mind into the heart, and compress the breath and exhale through one nostril. The benefits of this practice are described in III.11–15.

53. Proto-Sāṅkhyan metaphysics are clearly referred to in I.9 and IV.5.

54. The text also refers to Rudra as puruṣa (III.9–17). However, the reference is more archaic, making a clear association between Rudra and the famous thousand-limbed puruṣa of the Rg Vedic puruṣa hymn.
Even if, for argument’s sake, one accepts Minor’s (2005) very late dating of 150 C.E. for the composition of the Gītā (in contrast to his earlier 1982 assignment of 150 B.C.E.), which is more or less coterminus with the common date assigned to Patañjali, it nonetheless at the very least reflects a major theistic expression current at the time that had long been developing its roots, all the more so given that it was deemed worthy of insertion into the great epic. See Minor (1982, introduction) for the range of dates assigned to this text.

See, e.g., Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad IV.11 and 17 for the use of deva for Rudra (Śiva), which the text presents as the supreme Īśvara and, likewise, the Gītā XI.38 for Kṛṣṇa. The term is used extensively in the Mahābhārata as a reference to Nārāyaṇa/Viṣṇu (e.g., three times in XII.331.47–51) and throughout the Purānic corpus (e.g., Bhāgavata III.28.18).

See Bryant (2005).

Older photos of Krishnamacharya as well as Iyengar show them with the tilak, sacred clay, of the Śrī lineage—two broad white vertical lines on the forehead, with a red vertical streak in between.


See Bryant (2004) for a range of the postcharismatic problems and challenges faced by the Hare Krishna movement. These are authentic classical Indian spiritual traditions and rich in centuries of philosophical and literary developments.

Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhikṣu offer the argument that the scriptures must be absolute, because the mantras and knowledge of herbs, etc., contained in them are seen to work, and no one person, even in a thousand lives, could have figured out such things independently.

Hariharānanda discusses a “fixed” and “unfixed” mind in relation to Īśvara. He states that any yogī can potentially arrest the fluctuations of the mind and extinguish the latent saṁskāras, or subconscious impressions. Consequently, such a yogī can close down the working mind for a specified period and enter into a state of meditative absorption, after which he or she can reactivate the mind if desired. This mind will not be the uncontrolled one of ordinary beings but endowed with knowledge appropriate for the benefit of such a yogī. Thus, voluntarily adopting such a mind, liberated yogīs can work in the world for the benefit of other beings. Hariharānanda understands Īśvara’s adoption of a mind at the time of creation and dissolution to be along the same lines: to address a need such as the upliftment of creatures from the world of saṁsāra.

Creation in all Hindu systems except the Mīmāṁsa school is cyclical. For the Sāṅkhya school tradition, the universe periodically dissolves into its Sāṅkhya tattva constituents and ultimately into primordial prakṛti, and remains in a state of dissolution until the next cosmic manifestation, when it evolves forth again.

This is the view of the theistic Vedāntins (e.g., Rāmānuja’s commentary to Vedānta Sūtras...
I.1.21; Baladeva’s commentary to Vedānta Śūtras III.2.14ff).

165. Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the Sāṅkhya Sūtras (I.154) as stating that the supposed advaita passages of the Upaniṣads (upon which the advaita school is predicated) do not in actuality contradict the existence of a plurality of eternal puruṣas, because, properly understood, they do not point to one ultimate monistic ātman, but refer to the oneness of the category of ātman. In other words, all ātman are the same insofar as they belong to the same category of existence, ātman-ness; they are not ontologically one.

166. Vedānta Śūtras II.1.3.

167. Mahāvīra, while not the founder of Jainism according to its own sources, is the primary teacher (tīrthaṅkara) for this age.

168. E.g., Bhāgavata Purāṇa III.24.


170. Hindu time is cyclical. There are four yugas, or world ages: the satya (aka kṛta)-yuga, or golden age; tretā-yuga; dvāpara-yuga; and the present world age of kali-yuga, the most degenerate age. Once the cycle is completed, it starts anew.

171. Dharma in the context of the Gītā most commonly refers to the various duties incumbent on every human being—social, religious, political, professional, familial, etc. The term has a wide variety of usages in philosophical discourses (see, for example, its usage in III.13–14).

172. E.g., Śloka-vārttika 16.43ff.

173. Brahmā is the secondary creator of the universe insofar as he creates the forms in the world but does not create the primordial stuff from which these forms are created. He is thus more of an engineer than a creator. The point being made here is that he himself is also a mortal being within saṁsāra with a finite, albeit immense, life span (see Gītā VIII.17).


175. There are numerous variants or permutations of this basic view of oneness in diversity in post-Śaṅkara Vedāntic tradition: dvaitadvaita, viśiṣṭadvaita, śuddhadvaita, etc. See note 63.

176. For Vijñānabhikṣu, the famous statements of the Upaniṣads, such as the tat tvam asi, you are that (ātman = Brahman), verses of the Chāndogya, are to be understood in this light. A series of verses in the Chāndogya VI.8ff, perhaps the most quoted verses from the Upaniṣads, point to the oneness of the soul, ātman, with Brahman, a oneness that Vijñānabhikṣu and other Vedāntins hold is not absolute but some type of oneness-in-difference as exemplified by Vijñānabhikṣu above.

177. See Bedekar (1964) for a discussion of oṁ in the Mahābhārata.

178. Devaṁ paśyet.

179. E.g., XV.17–18; XIII.13; XIV.27.
180. E.g., III.7; V.6; VI.18.
181. This relationship between designator and designatum, vācaka and vācya, is called abhidhā.
182. Devadatta is used ubiquitously in the Hindu commentarial tradition to refer to an everyday individual, a John Doe.
183. The denotative power of all words is eternal, according to Yoga (and certain other schools, such as Mimāmsā).
184. For the Chaitanya Gauḍīya tradition, since Kṛṣṇa is the fullest possible manifestation of Godhead who contains and supersedes all other divine manifestations (Bhāgavata Purāṇa I.3.28), the name of Kṛṣṇa, as his sonic manifestation, includes and supersedes all other mantras.
185. See, in the Upaniṣads, Brhad I.3.28; VI.3.6; Chāndogya V.2.6; Kauśitaki II.2.8, 11.
186. Svādhyāyād yogam āsīta yogāt svādhyāyam āsate; svādhyāya-yoga-sampattyā paramātmā prakāśate.
188. Bhāvanā tavad bhāvyasya viṣayāntara-parihāreṇa cetasi punaḥ-punar-niveśanam (I.17).
189. This is to say that, in addition to manifesting the sāttvic potential of the citta, the bhakti traditions aspire to fill the citta with saṁskāras centered exclusively on Īśvara (e.g., Gītā IX.27, 34; XII.8).
190. Tathā ca praṇava-japa-parameśvara-dhyāna-sampattyā para ātmā parameṣṭhi prakāśate yogina iti.
191. Saguṇa-brahman in the Vedānta traditions points to realms within Brahma that are made of pure consciousness, Brahma, but that nonetheless contain forms, individuals, and personalities. These are non-prākṛtic forms and personalities, not to be confused with the evolutes of prakṛti.
193. See commentaries to II.50 for recaka, where breath is suspended after praśvāsa, exhalation; pūraka, where breath is suspended after śvāsa, inhalation; and kumbhaka, the simultaneous
suspension of both.

96. **Dhyāna** is the seventh limb of *yoga* in Patañjali’s system (the verbal form *abhi-dhyāyet* is used here).

97. **Śrivatsa** is a curl of hair on Viṣṇu’s chest. All the details here are standardized descriptions of Viṣṇu’s form.

98. The *Bhāgavata* school holds that a manifestation of Īśvara, the antaryāmī or paramātman, resides in the heart along with the individual ātman.

99. **Siddhas** are perfected beings who have developed mystic powers, such as flying through the air (which is the term used here, *khecara*).

00. This paradoxical relationship of individuality in oneness, bhedābheda, is called by such terms as *viśiṣṭādvaita*, differentiated nonduality; *dvaitādvaita*, duality in non-duality; *suddhādvaita*, pure nonduality; and *acintyabhedābheda*, inconceivable difference and nondifference by different post-Śaṅkara schools of Vedānta, all with nuances of difference as to how this relationship is conceived of metaphysically.

01. **Tasmān mumuksōḥ susukho mārgaḥ śṛi-viṣṇu-saṁśrayaḥ. Cittena cintayanneva vańcyate dhruvam anyathā. Dhatte padaṁ tvam avitā yadi vighna-mūrdhni.**

02. **Māyā pravartake viṣṇau drśhā bhaktiḥ kṛtā nṛṇāṁ sukhena prakṛter bhinnāṁ svāṁ darśayati dipavit.**

03. **Kapha** roughly corresponds to the biological fluid system of the body and provides the material for its physical structure and lubrication; *vāta*, to the bodily air principle and is primarily associated with movement; and *pitta*, to the body’s energy and is especially associated with metabolism.

04. In Nyāya, doubt arises when no distinguishing characteristics are available to differentiate between things. For example, if one sees an object in the distance that is the same size as both a post and a man, one might not be able to make out which of the two it is in the absence of a distinguishing characteristic (such as movement, which would indicate the object is a man). *Nyāya Sūtras* I.1.23–25.

05. R. S. Bhattacharyya (1985, 157) takes it to be weakness of discrimination.

06. This is the classic Vedāntic metaphor for ignorance: mistaking the apparent world, which is illusory and temporary, to be what it is not, real and ultimate. The nature of error is discussed extensively by all Hindu schools since, as with the *Yoga Sūtras* (II.4), it is the fundamental cause of embodied existence.

07. **Viṣṇu Purāṇa** IV.2.124.

08. See Rukmani (1981, I:181–82n8), for discussion.

09. Prominent are the Buddhist scholastics Vasubandhu, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Śantarākṣita,
The word vāda is added to a philosophical or ideological concept or category to indicate the school or point of view associated with that concept (and vādin the follower of such a school). Thus kṣaṇika-vāda denotes the school that believes all reality is momentary, kṣaṇika (and kṣaṇika-vādin, an adherent to this view, a Buddhist).

For example, Udayanācārya’s Ātma-tattva-viveka.

For example, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa’s Śloka-vārttika XVIII.

For example, Bādarāyaṇa’s Vedānta Sūtras Chapter II.2.18ff and commentaries.

While Vijñānavāda (Yogācāra) Buddhism did posit a substratum to thought, the ālaya-vijñāna, it nonetheless held, in accordance with normative Buddhist doctrine, that this ālaya-vijñāna itself was not an inherently durable entity, but it too consisted of a flow or series of moments. Hence that school is only a partial exception to the generic Buddhist position outlined by Vyāsa, since the same objections that can be raised against the standard Buddhist notions of mind can be raised against the ālaya-vijñāna.

Vijñānabhikṣu also argues here that without a past and future, how can one thought be similar to another? Similarity means that something in the present resembles something in the past, but there is no past thing surviving into the present in a theory of momentariness.

Śaṅkara on Vedānta Sūtras II.2.26.

Vedānta Sūtras II.2.25; Nyāya Sūtras III.1.18 and commentaries; Śloka-vārttika XVIII.115ff.

See Bronkhorst (1993, 93).

Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñānabhikṣu describe how this lotus cakra is situated between the chest and the abdomen. It has eight petals and faces downward. It must be reversed by controlling one’s exhalation, and one must use it as a support upon which to focus the mind. Different sections of this lotus are connected with different luminous objects, with different aspects of the syllable om(a-u-m), and with different stages of consciousness in accordance with the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad (I.9–12). Thus, the middle of the lotus is the sphere of the sun and of waking consciousness, and is connected to the a of aum. Above this is the sphere of the moon and of dreaming consciousness, which is connected with the u. Higher still is the sphere of fire and of dreamless sleep, connected with the m. Beyond these three spheres lies the highest state of consciousness, connected with the sound of Brahman itself. Within the stalk of the lotus is a channel called the brahma-nāḍī with its mouth facing upward, and above that the suṣumnā channel (these two channels are the same thing according to Vijñānabhikṣu, and they are one branch of a mano-vaha-nāḍī, mind-bearing channel, that has a thousand branches). This channel runs through the various spheres of the sun, etc., noted above. Vācaspati Miśra says this suṣumnā channel is the seat of the mind, so if one concentrates here, one attains direct awareness of the mind. Since the mind is also all-
pervading like buddhi, the intelligence, and ahaṅkāra, the ego, from which it is derived, one attains full awareness of all objects.

20. The all-pervading quality of the buddhi, ahaṅkāra, and manas (i.e., the citta), in the school of Yoga is in contradistinction to the Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṁsā schools, which hold the mind to be minute.

21. It is due to the dense or weighty nature of tamas that the creation of any type of distinct form or delimitation in prakṛti is possible, even on the level of gross objects. Without tamas, prakṛti would be buoyant and ethereal (sattva) and/or constantly moving (rajas); no physical forms would take shape. It is tamas that weighs down prakṛti such that it can take material shapes and manifest as gross objects. The same holds true of the mind.

22. Asmitā is usually correlated with the ahaṅkāra of Sāṅkhya.

23. See also Chāndogya Upaniṣad IV.9.3; VI.14; Śvetāśvatara VI.23 for verses stressing the importance of a teacher.

24. An extraordinary example of intense absorption on the guru as the object of meditation in the Siddha tradition is the case of Muktānanda, as described in his autobiography Play of Consciousness (South Fallsburg, NY: SYDA Foundation, 2000). See also, from other traditions, Sridhar Deva Goswami, Sri Guru and His Grace (San Jose: Guardian of Devotion Press, 1983).

25. The puruṣa can be aware only of itself, since it is beyond the intelligence and mind and other instruments of cognition, hence the common aphorism of the self knowing itself by itself.

26. See, for example, V.18–29 for another extended list of qualifications.

27. In the introduction I stated that Śaṅkara’s advaita philosophy is not prominent in his Yoga commentary, to my eye. However, this view of sleep is an example of classical advaita.

28. While it has been argued that this state of samādhi is still afflicted by the vitarkas as defined in II.33–34 (e.g., Kenghe 1970), this seems unlikely, as the yogī should have suppressed all outgoing samskāras at this point. If a connection is to be made, it would seem to be that the yogī is still afflicted by awareness of the names and concepts of things (unlike in the nirvitarka of the next verse) but not by the vitarkas of II.33, where the term is used in a different sense. There it refers to thoughts of violence, etc. Technical terms can be multivalent.

29. See, for example, the completely different interpretation given to the Vedānta Sūtras I.1.5–9 by Madhva compared to Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja.

30. As an aside, Vyāsa goes on to make the point that although objects of nirvitarka, like cows and pots, are ultimately assemblages of atoms that are themselves composed of subtle elements, nonetheless objects are coherent wholes. He rejects the notion that such conglomerations are unreal because everything consists of parts, which are ultimately
imperceptible, and thus there is only the illusion of a whole coherent object. The commentators take Vyāsa to be referring to certain Buddhist positions, which believe in neither whole entities nor partless atoms. For the Buddhists, there are no whole irreducible entities of any sort, because everything consists of parts, and these parts themselves consist of parts, and so on ad infinitum.

Of what, asks Vyāsa, would perfect knowledge of reality consist of if there were no real objects of perception? If the whole does not exist because it is made up of parts, and yet the parts are imperceptible and therefore unprovable because they themselves are made up of parts and therefore not wholes in their own right, and so on, then there would be no basis to establish true knowledge, and so all knowledge would be false. Rather, the whole is both different from and the same as its parts. The Sāṅkhya Yoga philosophy is that of satkārya: All objects, even though they may consist of parts, are essentially transformations of an ultimate all-encompassing reality, prakṛti. The objects of reality are thus parts of a whole.


32. See Vācaspati Miśra’s commentary on Sāṅkhya Kārikā XXVII. The language used in the Kārikās and the Yukti-dīpikā for the two types of perception differs from the more standard usage in Nyāya and elsewhere.

33. Technically this process of recognition involves identifying the object’s sāmānya, generality, and viśeṣa (see I.7).

34. The earth atom is produced from all five tanmātras, subtle elements, with a preponderance of smell; liquid, from the tanmātras excluding smell, with a preponderance of taste; fire, from the tanmātras excluding smell and taste, with a preponderance of sight; air, from the tanmātras excluding smell, taste, and sight, with a preponderance of touch; and ether, from the tanmātra of sound alone. Anus are the smallest particles in which matter can exist without reverting back to their essential nature of tanmātra. There were variant schemas pertaining to the constituents of the various atoms circulating in different Sāṅkhya or Sāṅkhya-related traditions. The Vedānta tradition, for example, held that each atom was constituted of half its own element and an eighth of the other four; thus the fire atom, for example, was made up of half the fire element and an eighth portion of ether, air, water and earth.


36. Recall from I.17 that ānanda refers to being aware of the grahaṇa, the instruments of cognition (the senses themselves and/or the mind), and asmitā to the grahitṛ, the grasper of cognition (the buddhi aspect of the citta). Very briefly, in Koelman’s analytical schema (1970,
197–224), sānanda occurs when one’s awareness of these instruments of cognition includes the registering of a feeling of bliss, a quality of sattva that is the primary guṇa manifest in the instruments of cognition. When one goes beyond this emotional veil, one has attained nirānanda. Subsequently, sāsmītā is awareness of buddhi when still stained by ahankāra and nirasmitā when one transcends the I-am-ness of ego and is aware simply of buddhi’s reflecting nature of is-ness.

37. Liṅga, common in Nyāya, literally means a sign and indicates that buddhi’s existence is inferred by its signs, that is to say, its characteristics. In Hindu logic, an inference (I.7) is made on the basis of a sign or characteristic, e.g., the presence of an unperceived fire is inferred based on the perception of smoke, which is the sign, liṅga, of fire. Primordial, precreation prakṛti is aliṅga, since, being a state in which the guṇas are completely latent, it has no signs or characteristics (any characteristics in the form of its evolutes come later, once the guṇas have been activated).


40. See Śrī Veda X.190.1.

41. See Taittirīya Upaniṣad I.1.1; I.9.1; II.4.1; III.10.6; Kaṭha III.1.

42. Āgamenānumānena dhyānābhāya-saṃsva-tva-rasena ca / Tridhā prakalpayan prajñā labhate yogam uttamam.

43. The other five are dravya, substance; guṇa, quality; karma, motion; samavāya, inherence; and abhāva, absence.

44. Whicher (2005, 626).

45. Nirodha-sthiti-kala-kramānubhavena.

46. The length of time one remains in samādhi, says Vācaspati Miśra, depends on the yogī’s complete desirelessness and practice.
CHAPTER II: PRACTICE


2. Indic philosophical traditions in general consider the soul’s sojourn in saṁsāra to be anādi, without beginning. There is no point at which it fell into saṁsāra—it has always been there, and early Indian philosophers considered it a fruitless intellectual endeavor to speculate as to how this state of affairs came about. Better, rather, to reflect on how to bring it to an end.

3. See, for example, the austerities of Hiranyakaśipu from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (VII.3) in IV.1. See also the account of the ascetic in the Buddhist Kassapa Sihanāda Sutta.

4. The term occurs in the Mahābhārata III.2.23 and XIII.14.22.


6. This is not Śaṅkara’s overall position in the Vedānta Sūtras (e.g., III.4.12ff), where knowledge is clearly prioritized over any type of activity. See also his Gītā-bhāṣya II.10; III.0; V.16; XII.12; XVIII.11, 60.

7. According to the Bhagavad Gīta II.62, from contemplating the objects of the senses, one becomes attached to them, and from attachment, anger [aversion] arises, which in turn produces further undesirable consequences. Vyāsa is indicating a similar sequence of events: When attachment is present, aversion has not yet manifested.

8. As discussed previously, the prefix a- negates the noun to which it is added. Along very similar lines, the prefix duḥ- denotes an unpleasant state of a noun in opposition to su-, which denotes the pleasant state.

9. Considering the temporary mentioned in this verse to be eternal, says Vyāsa, is to think that entities like the earth or the sky, along with the moon and stars, are permanent.


12. Ibid., verses 7 and 9.

13. Vyaktam avyaktaṁ vā sattvam atmatvenābhipratitya tasya sampadam anunandati ātma-sampadaṁ manvānas tasya vyāpadam anuśocati ātma-vyāpadaṁ manyamānaḥ sa sarvo’pratibuddhaḥ

14. E.g., see Śaṅkhyā Sūtras V.74.

15. Yat tu navīṇā vedānti-bruvā nityānandāvāptīṁ parama-mokṣaṁ kalpayanti, tad eva ca vayaṁ na mṛṣyāmahe
16. See Fort (1988) for discussion of and references to Śaṅkara’s equating of *sukha* and *ānanda* in his commentary to various Upaniṣads.

17. The genitive case *draṣṭuḥ* is used in I.3.

18. *Buddhitaḥ paraṁ puruṣam ākāra-sūla-vidyādibhir vibhaktam apaśyan kuryāt tatrātma-buddhimaḥ moheneti*. This verse is attributed to Paṇcaśikhācārya by the commentators.

19. Generally the -tā (-ness) suffix is used only with nouns. It is very unusual in Sanskrit for it to be affixed to a conjugated verb form.

20. Desire produces anger because either the object of desire is not obtained and one is frustrated, or it is obtained but fails to satisfy for very long and one is again frustrated.


22. In *satkāryavāda*, all physical reality is a transformation of one reality, in Sāṅkhya, *prakṛti*. Thus manifestations or evolutes of *prakṛti* are never destroyed but simply dissolve back into their more subtle matrix.

23. This particular meditation is called *prasaṅkhyāna* by the commentators. This is considered to be the highest type of meditation and will be discussed in IV.29.


26. The -in suffix appended onto a noun indicates the possessor of the noun in question. Thus *vivekin* is the possessor of *viveka*.

27. Pre-Socratic Greek sources contain resonances on this perspective of life: “Count no mortal happy until he has reached the very end of his life free from misfortune and pain” (Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*).

28. These are the ancient law books for the followers of the Vedic civilization, outlining various specificities pertaining to *dharma*, sociocivic and religious codes of conduct.

29. In other words, insects are killed involuntarily even when engaging in innocuous household chores such as cooking, sweeping, or grinding spices.


31. Čārvāka, who was evidently not a vegetarian, argued vigorously that the goal of life is the pursuit of sensual pleasure and minimization of discomfort.

32. See Wezler (1984) for an excellent discussion.

33. Time, in Hindu cosmography, is cyclical. At the end of every great cycle, the manifest universe devolves into its subtlest ingredients and ultimately back into its matrix, undifferentiated *prakṛti*, from which it again evolves when the new cycle begins. See *Gītā* VIII.17–19 for an expression of this.
Although it seems acceptable to suppose that the mind can exist only if the puruṣa exists, the reverse need not hold true. After all, puruṣa can exist without the mind upon attaining liberation.

Hariharānanda argues at length that the union between puruṣa and prakṛti cannot be a temporal or spatial relationship; it is beyond Time and Space.

Māyā, in Hindu thought, is the power of illusion that is the cause of ignorance, the root of the kleśas. In the more developed theistic traditions, it is a power of God, Īśvara.

Although Patañjali uses the term sattva (III.35, 49, 55) as a synonym for buddhi (and specifically when he refers to the immediate relationship between buddhi and puruṣa), he never uses the terms tamas and rajas.

When the guṇas are in equilibrium, a state called pradhāna, there is no creation. This occurs at the end of one new cycle and prior to the evolution of a new one.

According to the Sāṅkhya view of the unparticularized subtle elements, upheld by Vyāsa here, sound has one property, touch two, sight three, taste four, and smell five. This is because each progressively grosser evolute of these subtle elements contains the properties of all the previous evolutes. Thus taste contains sound, sight, touch; and smell contains all five properties. As noted in the Yukti-dīpikā, however, there are two schools or views on the matter, that of Vārṣaganyā, articulated by Vyāsa, and the other holding that each tanmātra has only one property—the principal one associated with it.

The ahaṅkāra ego, which produces these eleven items, was defined in II.6 (where it was termed asmitā) as the misidentification of puruṣa with buddhi.

Vijñānabhikṣu points out that only through the mind can one absorb sounds, etc., and thus if one is distracted, one doesn’t hear or see things.

In his commentary to the Sāṅkhya Kārikās (XX), Vācaspati Miśra takes liṅga to refer to any evolutes from prakṛti, not merely buddhi.

E.g., Vedānta Sūtras I.4.1; II.2.1.

1922, 246.

Knowledge of anything requires change, Vācaspati Miśra reminds us—knowledge is directed from one object to another, from one thought to another, etc., and is thus constantly changing—and puruṣa, in the Yoga school, is considered to be constant and changeless. Therefore, puruṣa does not actually know anything in its pure state except its own unchanging, eternal self.

Each saṃskāra in this primordial pradhāna would appear to still be connected in some way with its specific owner, the individual puruṣa, since saṃskāras are reconnected with their previous owners at the time of the next creation. Therefore, they do not dissolve entirely into
the primordial soup of pradhāna.

47. III.50, 55; IV.26, 34. See also Sāṅkhya Śūtra V.20, which states that liberation is the removal of obstacles.


49. Bījanyagny-upadagdhāni na rohanti yathā punaḥ jñāna-dagdhais tathā kleśair nātmā sampadyate punah.

50. The Mahābhārata refers to seven dhāraṇās, but these are explained differently from the descriptions given by Vyāsa here (see Hopkins 1901, 351ff). Also, it is worth noting that Chapple (1994), compares verses II.15–27 here, the content of which deals with Sāṅkhya metaphysics, with the Sāṅkhya Kārikā, and finds reason to suggest that the seven prānta-bhūmis mentioned here are the seven bhāvas inherent in buddhi according to Sāṅkhya. In this latter tradition, buddhi has eight total modes, four sāttvic and four tāmasic. The sāttvic modes are jñāna, vairāgya, dharma, and aśavaryā, knowledge, dispassion, duty, and power, and their opposites are tāmasic. Only the first, jñāna, is conducive to liberation; the remaining seven have to be transcended by the yogi. These seven stages manifesting prior to liberation might be what Patañjali is referring to here, according to Chapple.

51. For differing views, see Fort and Mumme (1996).

52. See Kane (1977, 1390) for discussion.

53. See, for example, Śaṅkara’s commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras I.1.4.

54. Such heroism may not be exclusively altruistic, but it is connected with the Jain notion of karma, conceived as an actual physical substance that covers the soul. Violence breeds karma, which keeps the soul covered, in Jainism, and thus embodied, and so extensive measures to avoid such karma have self-centered implications.

55. See Bryant (2006) for examples.

56. Vācaspati Miśra takes the term for control, saṁyama, further and considers it to apply to control over all the senses, not only the procreative one.

57. See, in this regard, Gītā XVII.8, which describes sāttvic food as snigdha, fatty.

58. See, e.g., Uttarādhyayana XXIII.12.

59. Certain left-handed tāntric rites prescribe (highly) ritually circumscribed imbibing of meat or other prohibited substances, including intoxicating substances, along with indulgence in sexual practices with a view to transcending dualistic notions of purity and pollution, and facilitating an experience of the divine interplay underpinning material reality as conceived of in the śākta traditions. But even here, these practices are not performed in a licentious manner but within the context of ritual and meditational conditions. Right-handed tantra, however, tends to observe and promote yama-type principles.
More technically, one can act through the \textit{akliṣṭa-vṛttis} of I.5, namely, \textit{vṛttis} not produced from \textit{kleśas} such as \textit{avidyā}.

See Bryant (2006) for discussion.

However Manu, in his \textit{Dharma-śāstra} (IV.34) states that the \textit{yamas} are obligatory but the \textit{niyamas} are not.

\textit{Anayor yama-niyamayor madhye yamānāṁ nivṛtti-mātratayā deśa-kālādy-apericchinnatvasambhavena ... niyamānāṁ tu pravṛtti-rūpatayā deśa-kālādi-yantritatvena. (Yoga-sāra)}

\textit{Svādhyāya, study,} appears alongside another of the \textit{niyamas, tapas,} in the list of divine qualities in the \textit{Gītā} XVI.1. Two of the \textit{yamas}—\textit{ahimsā} and \textit{satya}—are listed subsequently (XVI.2).

\textit{Stuti-smaraṇa-pūjābhir vān-mānaḥ-kāya-marmabhiḥ suniścalā Śive bhaktir etad īśvara-pūjanam. (Yoga-sāra).}

\textit{Śayyāsana-stho ‘tha pathi vrajan vā svasthāḥ parikṣīna vitarka-jālaḥ saṁsāra-bija-kṣayam īkṣamānāḥ syāṁ nitya-yukto ‘mrta-bhoga bhāgi. (Yoga-sāra)}

\textit{Hāniṣyāmy aham apakāriṇam, anṛtam api vakṣyāmi, dravyam apy asya svikarisyāmi, dāreṣu cāsyā vyavāyi bhaviṣyāmi, parigraheṣu cāsyā svāmi bhaviṣyāmiti.}

\textit{Ghoreṣu saṁsārāṅgāreṣu pacyamānena mayā śaraṇam upāgataḥ sarva-bhūtābhaya-pradānena yoga-dharmaḥ, sa khalv ahām tyaktvā vitarkān punas tān ādadānas tulyah śva-vṛtteneti.}


Doniger and Smith (1991, 104).

\textit{Aṅguttara Nikāya} III.17.1.

Hell, in Indic thought, is not a situation of eternal damnation but a location to which one goes to suffer the fruits of negative \textit{karma}, until such \textit{karma} expires, at which time one may be reborn as a human. One must remain in such locations until one has finished experiencing all the suffering one inflicted upon others when in the human form. (Madhva and Vallabha, commenting on the \textit{Gītā}, interpret the verse from the \textit{Gītā} quoted by Vijñānabhikṣu later in this commentary as pointing to a class of entity that is eternally condemned; this, however, is an exceptional view in Hinduism.)

The term \textit{pratiṣṭhā} (here in the feminine locative case), or, from the same verbal root (\textit{sthā}), \textit{sthairya} (II.39, also in the locative) is repeated throughout the five \textit{yamas} and means to be situated in, to follow fully.

\textit{Caitanya Caritāmṛta,} Madhya Līlā, 17.37.


\textit{Vinaya Piṭaka Cullavagga} VII.8.13.

These are plasma, blood tissue, muscle tissue, adipose tissue, bone tissue, bone marrow
(nerve tissue), and semen. See the works of Vasant Lad for excellent summaries of āyurvedic principles accessible to the layperson.

78. I have encountered this story in secondary sources on yoga but never with a reference to a primary text. The narrative has the flavor of a Purāṇic tale.

79. The closer to the prākṛtic matrix an evolute is, the more sattva it contains. Thus, buddhi, as first evolute, is highly sattvic, whereas earth, the last, is highly tāmasic.

80. Yac ca kāma-sukhaṁ loke yac ca divyaṁ mahat-sukhaṁ trṣṇā-kṣaya-sukhasyaite nārhatāḥ ṣoḍaśīṁ kalāṁ iti. Sadāśivendra Sarasvatī, in his commentary, identifies this as a verse from the Mahābhārata but does not provide an exact citation.

81. See Carpenter (2003) for discussion and further references.

82. E.g., Hiranyakaśipu, in the Bhāgavata, and Rāvaṇa in the Rāmāyaṇa.

83. See Chapter I, note 157 for the frequent usage of the term deva to refer to Iśvara in early epic and Upaniṣadic sources.

84. This possibility is in accordance with Kṛṣṇa’s statement in the Gītā that yogīs who do not attain liberation in one life pick up in the next from where they left off in the last life (VI.41).

85. See discussion in I.23.


87. See, for example, his arguments against Buddhist idealism in IV.19ff.

88. See, for example, the Devī Gītā.

89. In I.38, Vācaspati Miśra speaks fondly of the sattvic yogī’s ability to dream of Śiva.

90. Viṣṇu also manifests the jīvas or atmans, souls who populate the world, and he can empower certain jīvas to perform extraordinary tasks; such jīvas are considered empowered incarnations.

91. The lesser devas in the late Vedic theistic Hindu pantheon are considered cosmological agents of Iśvara (e.g., Gītā X.2; IX.23) that oversee the day-to-day maintenance of the universe.

92. Mahābhārata XII.337.4–5.

93. The Gītā uses puruṣa to refer to the individual soul and then states that Kṛṣṇa is another, higher type of puruṣa. The Śvetāśvatara does not do this; while it uses the term to refer to Hara (but not to the individual soul), its agenda is quite different as it does so with a view to appropriating the cachet of the famous Rg Vedic puruṣa, where the term is used quite differently.

94. See, for discussion, Bryant (2003, xxxv, xlvii).
95. In VIII.3, akṣara is correlated with Brahman, and in XIV.26–27, Brahman is subordinated to Kṛṣṇa.
96. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa also speaks of sthiraṇsukham āsanam, II.2.15.
98. Dhyāṇa-yoga, the term used in the Gītā for Pātañjalian yoga, is often referred to as rāja-yoga.
99. Āsanasya prapañcas tv atra rājyogapratyākhyatām na kriyāt e ... ṛṭhayogādi-grantheṣvaśeṣata višeṣato draṣṭavyāḥ (Yoga-sāra-saṅgraha)
100. Quoted in Leggett (1992, 287).
101. Āsana-sthāna-vidhayo na yogasya prasādhakāh. vilamba-jananāḥ sarve vistarāḥ parikirtitāḥ. Śiśupālaḥ siddhan-āpa smanāṇābhyaśa-gauravat. (Yoga-sāra, and referred to in Vījñānabhikṣu’s Yoga Sūtras commentary to this verse.) Rukmani identifies this verse as Garuḍa Purāṇa 227.44–45 but notes that Vījñānabhikṣu’s rendition is quite different (1981, III:12).
102. Rukmani (1981) suggests this is probably the Yogavāsiṣṭha.
103. A svastika in India is a symbol of auspiciousness and good luck. Unlike the Nazi symbol that appropriated it, it faces counterclockwise.
104. Woods (1914) quotes the commentator Balarāma, who takes it to be some sort of table used for supporting the arms of the meditator. Hariharānanda and Rāmānanda Sarasvatī take it as a cloth used to tie the back and two legs while sitting. Rāma Prasāda, however, translates it as a tiger or deer skin, or a piece of cloth, upon which one sits.
105. Vījñānabhikṣu also refers to a peacock pose.
107. See Pandit (1985) for references.
108. Hariharānanda, however, considers there to be a difference between the vṛttis, used here as movements of the breath, and recaka, pūraka, and kumbhaka. He notes, for example, that Vyāsa has defined external as when there is no flow of breath after exhalation, which is not quite the same as recaka, which he takes as meaning the active expulsion of air.
109. Identified by Rukmani as the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa III.X.15 (see Ram Mishra, 1967, for references to yoga in this particular Purāṇa).
110. For other systems of demarcation in the Purāṇas, see Kane (1977, 1436).
111. Bronkhorst (1993) argues that the Buddhist inclusion of these practices in their canon represents a tacit disapproval of such forms of extreme asceticism.
112. Dasgupta (1927, 75).
113. Lanman (1917, 148–49). The account was published in Observations on Trance or Human
Hybernation (Edinburgh, 1850). For an early nineteenth-century account of a yogī being buried alive, see the Calcutta Medical Journal, 1835.

15. Tapo na param prāṇāyāmāt tato viśuddhir malānām diptīś ca jñānasya.
16. I thank Jonathon Freilich for this observation.
CHAPTER III: MYSTIC POWERS

1. XII.228.13ff, 289.30ff. See Bedekar (1962) for discussion.

2. There are a number of cakras, also known as lotuses, situated in various parts of the body in tantric (esoteric) Hindu physiology, one of which is in the heart.

3. Śaṅkara says this is the door of a nāḍī, a subtle radiant energy channel in Hindu esoteric physiology.

4. See Gitā VI.13 for focusing on the tip of the nose, nāsikāgram, which Śaṅkara in his commentary to the Gitā here takes as fixing the sight within.

5. Most Hindu rosaries (mala) consist of 108 beads. The beads are used to count mantras performed during japa (I.28).


8. The term samādhi occurs in the Gitā (II.53–54) but rarely elsewhere in the Mahābhārata. See Kane (1977, 1459) for references.

9. Hindus hold there to be ten directions. In other words, accomplished yogīs can wander around the universe at will.

10. See III.45 for the eight siddhis.

11. The term used here is aṣṭa-guṇita rather than Patañjali’s aṣṭa-aṅga (II.2).

12. The term used here is guṇa rather than siddhi.

13. Guṇa is used again here; there is a play on guṇa given that it has been used in three different ways in these two verses.

14. For the occurrence of these terms in Patañjali, I provide the appropriate verse numbers.

15. It is not clear what exactly the state of pratibhām-apavargam denotes (but see II.18 for apavarga).

16. Both these texts are especially popular in the northern, western, eastern, and central parts of the subcontinent, essentially the areas where the Indo-Aryan languages are spoken. While Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are, of course, popular in the south as well, the worship of Viṣṇu/Nārāyaṇa has been more dominant there. (Śiva, as a point of information, is worshipped all over the subcontinent, but his worship is not embedded in a text comparable to the wide-ranging appeal of either the Rāmāyāṇa or Bhāgavata Purāṇa.)

17. See Chapter I, notes 96 and 97.

18. Students familiar with the Bhagavad Gitā will be familiar with the term Bhagavān (see
introduction footnote 1).

19. See I.46 for discussion of sabīja-samādhi, also known as samprajñāta-samādhi.

20. Dharma here refers to the cluster of a person’s civic, social, familial, gender, etc., duties.

21. Respect is shown to deities and saints in Indic traditions by worshipping their feet (since the feet are the lowest part of a person’s anatomy).

22. Activities that are pursued with the aim of attaining material benefits in this world.

23. Notice that the Bhāgavata essentially presents the identical yamas and niyamas as Patañjali in II.30ff, with yāvad-artha-parigraha as a rewording of aparigraha; and puruṣārcana, of Īśvara-praṇidhāna.

24. See III.29 for discussion on the cakras.

25. See II.49.

26. The term doṣa here is used as a synonym for kleśa (although it could refer to imperfections in the balance of the bodily constitution as understood in Āyurveda).

27. Śrīvatsa is a curl of hair. These adornments, garments, and other bodily details are all standardized descriptions of the form of Viṣṇu.

28. The idea here is that the mind is used as a hook to catch (contemplate) this vision of Īśvara.

29. It is still not clear why dhāraṇā and dhyāna are relevant at this point, from this perspective, since the knowledge of samādhi would seem to make that of the previous stages redundant.


31. Rukmani (1981) identifies this verse as 227.44–45 but notes that Vijñānabhinavīsa’s rendition is quite different.

32. One must also note here that Kṛṣṇa’s presence is considered so purifying in the Bhāgavata that all the demons who were killed by him were purified and liberated from their bondage simply as a result of his divine presence.

33. However, prakṛti’s function, or raison d’être, is dependent on something else, that is, puruṣa, in the soteriological sense expressed in II.18 and III.35.

34. Dhyeyātirikta-vṛtti-nirodha-viśeṣaḥ.

35. In Buddhism, dharma most popularly refers to the Buddha’s teachings but can refer to a number of more technical things (such as quality, similar to its usage here; cause; and the momentary essenceless nature of a physical object). In Jainism it refers to the metaphysical category that allows motion to take place.

36. The Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika schools (paralleling with various differences other ancient Indic schools subscribing to the asatkārya-vāda view such as the Mimāṁsakas and Jains) hold that all objects in manifest reality are formed by the combination of seven (or other finite number depending on the school) interdependent but distinct underlying causal entities such as
atoms and qualities; they are not formed by one ultimate underlying causal substratum substance such as the Yoga school envisions prakṛti to be.

37. Since Vasubandhu had presented criticisms of a rival sect of Buddhism, the Sarvāstivāda, that can be applied to the Sāṅkhya view, Vyāsa, in his commentary to the next sūtra and elsewhere, according to Yamashita, uses the Sarvāstivāda view as a springboard to elaborate on the Sāṅkhya view of dharma and its transformations as expressed in this sūtra. More specifically, Vasubandhu is directing arguments against the view of four teachers of this rival Buddhist Sarvāstivāda school, but he regards this as the same as the Sāṅkhya view.

38. In Sanskrit, an -in suffix appended to a noun indicates possession of that noun. For example, hasta means hand, and hastin means possessor of a hand, which is one of the terms for elephant in Sanskrit (that which possesses a hand, that is, trunk). Or, better, yogin as possessor of yoga. In the nominative masculine, the -in becomes -i (e.g., dharmi, yogi, etc.)

39. See Stcherbatsky (1934) for discussion.

40. See, e.g., Kumārila’s Śloka-vārtika, ātmavāda 23–25.

41. These seven characteristics are those conducive to nirodha, the stilling of all vr̥ttis (II.2); dharma, the performance of meritorious or nonmeritorious activities; samskāra, memory; parināma, constant transformation; jīvana, the mind’s perpetuation of the life air (prāṇa), ceṣṭā, will and volition; and śakti, the mind’s power to accomplish all of the above.

42. The siddhis are referred to as abhiñās in Buddhism; Pensa (1969, 219) notes that they take first place in all the lists of qualities, states, and means favorable to attaining the enlightened state of either a Bodhisattva or a Buddha in Mahāyāna literature.


44. As a point of comparison, he has nothing to say about the Vedic “magic” (apart from the dismissive comment in I.15), that is, the sacrificial culture outlined in the introduction where items are offered in the fire to celestial beings in return for worldly boons, and this was the mainstream state-sponsored tradition of the day. If he has nothing to say about the magic of the high culture, why, then, if his intention was to cater to popular belief, would he dedicate so much time to yogic siddhis that would have been marginal to this normative type of Vedic ritual magic?

45. In Saṅkhya, subtle energy pervades or underpins gross energy (but not vice versa). Thus prākṛtic evolutes pervade evolutes grosser than themselves. Therefore, senses can pervade or perceive the sense objects (but not vice versa), and the mind can pervade the senses, etc.
46. I will say more about the scholarly debate pertaining to the relationship between the Sāṅkhya tattvas as cosmological vs. psychological entities in the Concluding Reflections section (my own view being presaged here).

47. The varṇa-vāda position of the Mimāṁsā school, which held that meaning is contained in the phonemes, varṇas, and their accumulation into words and sentences, rather than in a separate metaphysical entity like the sphoṭa, was the main opponent of the sphoṭa theory. See Coward, Harold (1980), and Beck (1993).

48. See Rukmani (1981, III, 79n), Dasgupta (238n). Sāṅkhya rejected the sphoṭa view of Yoga (e.g., Sāṅkhya Sūtras V.57).

49. Another possible way of interpreting the mechanics underpinning this siddhi, mystic power, is to keep in mind that intelligence and ego, that is, functions of citta, are subtle aspects of prakṛti from which grosser evolutes such as sound, etc., emanate. Sound from this perspective is nothing but citta externalized or manifest in a somewhat more tangible and concrete audible form, just as yogurt is essentially a more solid and acidic form of milk, from which it emanates as an evolute. A person utters sounds in the form of words, or a creature utters sounds in the form of barks, moos, quacks, or whatever, to convey an image or impression. That impression is essentially a saṁskāra imprinted in and emanating from the mind of the person or creature attempting to communicate through sound. The yogic premise is that sound itself is nothing other than an evolute of mind, citta. Therefore, in principle, it is not internally inconsistent with this metaphysic to propose that a yogi can penetrate the external dimension of sound and access its inner substratum of mind stuff, that is, to retrieve from this citta the meaning, or idea, embedded within it (as saṁskāra) that caused the sound to be uttered in the first place.

50. Vyāsa here refers to this category as vāsanās.

51. See also Aṅguttara IV.19.9 for reference to this siddhi.


54. Dīgha Mahāvaggo III.12.42.

55. anāvaraṇātmake 'py ākāše bhavaty āvṛta-kāyah.

56. Dīgha Mahāvaggo III.17.56.

57. The Jains conceive of karma as a more physical and solid substance, compared to the Hindu and Buddhist schools.

58. Brahmā is the creator of the forms of this world in the sense of being an engineer, but not of the prākṛtic matrix itself, which emanates from Viṣṇu in most Purāṇic narratives (or Śiva, in others).
59. A yojana is a unit of measure corresponding, according to some calculations, to four to five miles or, according to others, nine miles.

60. According to the Gītā (VIII.17), a thousand mahāyugas, which correspond to one day of Brahmā, or 4,320,000,000 human years, equal one kalpa.

61. In tāntric physiology, just as the gross body is pervaded by innumerable blood vessels, there is a network of thousands of subtle channels that transport and distribute prāṇa, life air, around the body. Three of these, which are situated within the spine, are primary, from which one, the central channel, is the most important. This central channel is the suṣumnā, and it is within this that the kuṇḍalinī energy, which is of primary interest to practitioners of tantra (but not of Pātañ-jalian yoga), is situated.

62. Hariharānanda states here that according to the ancient medical authority Suśruta, gas is especially associated with sattva and knowledge-acquiring functions, bile with rajas and mutation, and phlegm with tamas and retention.

63. Although personal forms of Īśvara, particularly Śiva and the Goddess (there are also Vaiṣṇava strains of tantra), are prominent features of these traditions.

64. For example, the fourteenth-century Hāṭhayoga Pradīpikā is one example of a mélange of different streams.

65. As I edit this section, I have before me, perched on the side of a pond, a frog that has remained completely immobile for two hours now, such that I walked over to it to see if it were not perhaps a garden statue.

66. On this notion, see Rukmani (1988).

67. See Gītā IV.5, 20 for similar phraseology.

68. For an excellent genealogy of the term “self-realization” from its neo-Vedāntic origins in colonial Bengal, see De Michelis (2005).

69. R. S. Bhattacharyya (1985) takes vārtā to be a typo for vartā, smell.

70. II.43, 45, and IV.1 in addition to this verse.

71. See also Sahay (1988).

72. Knowledge of the mind, for Śaṅkara, entails knowing what excites it, deludes it, or disturbs it.

73. Quoted in Smith (2006, 289). Smith’s work is an encyclopedic compilation of possession accounts throughout the history of Indic traditions.

74. The Śaṅkara-digvijāya of Mādhava Vidyāranya and the Śriśaṅkara-vijāya by Anantānandagiri.

75. Sannyāsa, the renounced ascetic order of life, is the fourth and final stage of the Hindu social system, āśrama. One who enters this order is a sannyasi.

76. See also Vācaspati Miśra’s commentary on the Sāṅkhya Kārikās XXIX.
77. See Vedānta Sūtras II.4.9ff and Sāṅkhya Kārikās XXIX. The five prāṇas are first mentioned in the Chāṇḍogya Upaniṣad III.13.1–6.

78. Prāṇa is understood variously in different Indic systems. (In the Upaniṣads, prāṇa is associated with Brahman, e.g., Kauśitaki II.1, or with prajñā wisdom, e.g., III.3.) In his commentary to the Sāṅkhya Sūtras II.31, where he again disagrees with this commonly accepted notion, Vijñānabhikṣu states that the prāṇa is a transformation of the internal organ (antahkaraṇa-parināma), that is, the subtle body noted previously. According to him the reason it is sometimes called air is that it moves like air and is presided over by the deity Vāyu (I thank Andrew J. Nicholson for this reference). This is a good example of Vijñānabhikṣu’s overall concern with interweaving Sāṅkhya Yoga and Vedānta, which we have seen in a number of instances. See Bakker (1982) for a discussion of prāṇa in the Upaniṣads.

79. Āyurveda tells us prāṇa is active in breathing and swallowing of food.

80. Vyāna-prāṇa is situated in the heart and helps in the circulation of blood.

81. The members of Transcendental Meditation, a yoga group that was especially prominent in popularizing meditation in the sixties, promote levitation as a skill that can be learned through the practice of their techniques (see, for example, www.alltm.org/VFlying.html).


83. When we think of cows or pots or any category of reality, we think of a group of entities or objects that have some universal or essential properties in common, cowness or potness, such that they can be lumped together. But what exactly is this commonality that allows them to be grouped together in such coherent ways? Several schools of thought hold that they possess a universal, sāmānya, such as cowness. It is because of these universal or essential properties that categories of objects are grouped together and distinguished from other categories of objects in the gross realm, such that we can recognize that something is a pot and that a pot is a pot and not a cloth or anything else.

84. The Vaiśeṣika school is especially criticized in the commentaries for its view that these categories combine to produce effects that are new and distinct entities not present in their causes, asatkāryavāda, rather than, as per the Sāṅkhya and Yoga satkāryavāda view, inherent and nonseparable permutations of prakṛti, and thus potential and present in prakṛti.

85. Guṇas and dharmas can both be considered universals, or sāmānyas, insofar as qualities are shared by numerous entities common to a class (although strictly speaking, for Vaiśeṣika, guṇas are not universals; they are tropes: The red of a red shirt is unique to the shirt, and likewise for the red of a hat. But the redness of each guṇa of red is universal and repeatable; my thanks to Matthew Dasti for this specification).
86. Some properties, such as weight, are held by more than one element, in this case earth and water; others, such as cohesion, by water alone.

87. Vyāsa elaborates here that an entity that consists of a combination or collection of qualities or parts can be further subdivided in various ways. First, any collection of parts can be divided into whether its parts are distinct or not—in a forest, the trees (the parts) are not distinct from the forest itself, but in a collection such as men and gods, the two parts are distinct. Second, a collection can be categorized as to whether these parts can be separated, as in a forest, or cannot be separated, as in a body or an atom. A forest continues to be a forest if some of its trees are removed, but a body is no longer a body if its limbs are removed, nor an atom an atom if its (subtle) parts are separated. A substance is something in which the qualities or parts are nondistinct and inseparable.

88. For Vaiśeṣika, guṇas are not separable because they can exist only as inhering in a substance, dravya. There are no uninstantiated guṇas. Universals may be instantiated in karma actions, guṇas or dravyas, but ultimately there must be a dravya to support them. Karma and guṇas are thus not separable in the sense of existing separate from dravyas.

89. See Malinar (1999) for an insightful discussion of how all the various evolutionary stages of prakṛti (that is, all stages other than prakṛti herself at one end, and the mahābhūtas as final products on the other) can be construed as simultaneously the viśeṣa of the prior stage and sāmānya of the subsequent one. For example, the tanmātras are the viśeṣas of ahaṅkāra from which they evolve, and the sāmānya of the mahābhūtas that evolve from them. This is another way of articulating the principles underpinning II.19.

90. Specifically, Vyāsa defines svarūpa, the essence, to be the senses as substances consisting of a collection of parts involving the generic and particular aspects, discussed in III.44, which cannot be separated from each other, emanating from the sattvic, illuminating nature of buddhi.

91. Prakṛti is referred to here as pradhāna.

92. Mano-jayitvaṁ yenopāsakādibhiḥ smṛti-mātrāh kṣanād eva siddhāḥ puro drśyante. (Yoga-sāra)

93. Buddhi is referred to here, as elsewhere, as sattva (as in III.35, 49, 55).

94. The thirteenth chapter of the Gītā occupies itself with a discussion of kṣetra, the field, and kṣetrajña, the knower of the field.

95. Desire, will, pleasure, and pain are paryāyas, temporary characters, of the ātman that come and go, but in Jainism they inhere in the ātman itself, rather than in the citta as per the Sāṅkhyan view.

96. See Praśna Upaniṣad IV.10–11; Vedānta Sūtras IV.4.17; Vaiśeṣika Sūtras IX.1.11ff.

98. Pāsādika Suttanta 29. (Dīgha Nikāya iii.136; Rhys Davids 1927, part III, 126.)

99. See Rāmānuja on Vedānta Sūtra I.1.21 and elsewhere; Baladeva on III.2.14ff and elsewhere; and Bryant (2004, xxxviff) for general discussion in the Bhāgavata tradition.

100. The term Patañjali uses for kleśa here is doṣa, a term used in the Mahābhārata for the kleśas (XII.232.4, 289.11, 290.53–54).

101. The ādhibhautika, ādhipatiṇika, and ādhyātmika miseries, discussed in II.15.

102. As noted earlier, “internal” and “external” are used loosely and rhetorically.

103. “Self-aware” and “other-aware” also are used rhetorically.

104. The kalpadruma trees that can fulfill any desire.

105. The Mandākinī is situated by Citrakūṭa, a well-known mountain in Purāṇic lore. By bathing in this river one is awarded the wealth and majesty of a king.

106. Bhor ihāsyatāṁ iha ramyatāṁ kamaniyo ‘yam bhogaḥ kamaniyeyaiṁ kanyā rasāyanam idam jārā-mṛtyunā bādhate vaihāyasam idam yānam ami kalpa-drumāḥ puṇyā mandākinī siddhā maharṣaya uttamā anukālā apsaraso divye śrotra-cakṣuṣi vajropamāḥ kāyaḥ sva-guṇais sarvam idam upārjitaṁ āyuṣmatā pratipadyatām idam akṣayaṁ ajaram amara-sthānaṁ devānāṁ priyam iti.


108. Smayam api na kuryād evam aham devānām api prārthanīya iti smayād ayam sushitaṁ manyatatayā mṛtyunā keśeṣu grhitam iva ātmānam na bāvayisyati.


110. In this regard, the Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools differ from the Nyāya and Vaiṣeṣika ones, since the latter hold that anus are irreducible and not composed of subtler ingredients such as the tanmātras and ultimately the guṇas.

111. See Sen (1968) for a discussion of Time in the Hindu philosophical systems.
CHAPTER IV: ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE

1. The identity of this plant remains unknown despite various, sometimes ingenious, attempts to identify it.

2. See Nyāya Sūtras IV.1.19 and commentaries.

3. The Vedānta tradition (Vedānta Sūtras II.2.37) argues that God is not just the instrumental cause of the universe but the material cause as well. In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, it is Īśvara as Kṛṣṇa that stirs prakṛti through his power of Time (III.6.1ff; see also II.5.17; III.5.26, 32–33).

4. Citta is occasionally used in the sūtras in the restricted sense of manas, as is the case here, but most often in the more widespread sense of manas, buddhi, and ahaṅkāra.

5. However, since Patañjali uses citta here, a term that includes ahaṅkāra, buddhi, and manas, one might have to assume that the central asmitā or ahaṅkāra of the yogī is manufacturing dependent ahaṅkāras in the secondary bodies.

6. Vijñānabhikṣu introduces the concept of aṁ śa in this regard, a term used in the Gitā, Bhāgavata, and other Purāṇas. In the Bhāgavata, it is primarily used in connection with Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa and means a portion or partial incarnation. The sense is that the supreme deity can maintain his own presence while simultaneously manifesting some aspect of himself elsewhere in a separate and distinct presence (or any number of presences). That secondary or derivative manifestation, which exhibits a part but not the full characteristics or potency of the source being, is known as an aṁ śa. Vijñānabhikṣu holds that the yogī has similar abilities to manifest aṁśas.

7. At various places in the Rāmāyāṇa, Rāma, despite being an incarnation of God, appears to be unaware of his divinity.

8. See Dasgupta (1922, IV, 37ff) for discussion and references.

9. See Smith (2006) for comprehensive discussion on the commentaries to this verse.

10. Aṅguttara IV.24.2.1.

11. See Dasgupta (1922, Vol. 263) for discussion.


13. See Sāṅkhya Kārikā IX and commentaries.

14. Guṇanāṁ paramaṁ rūpaṁ na drṣṭi-patham rcchati yat tu drṣṭi-patham prāptaṁ tan māyeva sutucchakam iti. Māyā is a common Vedāntin term for illusion, sometimes used interchangeably with avidyā, that causes one to misidentify with the unreal or temporary.

15. Yamashita (1994), scanning Vijñānāvāda literature, finds specific Vijñānāvāda terms represented by the Yoga commentators, such as kalpita and parikalpita (imagined), thus concurring with Vijñānabhikṣu’s identification here.
16. The liberated state, for the Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools, entails seeing reality for what it is, a temporary configuration of the guṇas, which are real and external, and thus does not contradict the reality of external objects.

17. Vācaspati Miśra makes the argument here that the qualities of grossness and externality, which characterize physical objects of perception, cannot be created by thought alone.

18. In the advaita view, all objective reality is ultimately illusory, a superimposition on the only reality, Brahman, the Absolute Truth, like a mirage superimposed upon the desert sand. If the products of the physical world are all illusory, then so are the Vedānta texts themselves, says Vijñānabhikṣu. If these texts, which are accepted by the advaita school itself as āgama, the main source of knowledge and authority for the validity of its philosophy, are illusory, then on what other authority can the illusoriness of the world be established? This argument in more developed form can be found in Rāmānuja’s commentary on Vedānta Sūtras I.1.1, where Rāmānuja argues at length that none of the sources of knowledge (pramāṇas, listed in Patañjali I.7) can establish the illusoriness of the world (since perception is obviously invalid if all objects of perception are illusory, and inference and verbal authority are extensions of, or predicated on, perception). Hence such a position cannot be defended by any valid source of knowledge and therefore cannot be supported on any grounds.


20. There were public debates sponsored in ancient India, the loser and his disciples often being expected to submit and become disciples of the winner.

21. Here, Vijñānabhikṣu is referring to the analogy common in Indic idealistic thought that objects perceived in the waking state are just mental constructions created by consciousness in the same way that imagined objects are created by consciousness during the dream state.

22. The same argument holds good, obviously, for the continuity of any ingredient of reality, such as atoms, etc.


24. See, for example, from the Vedānta school, Vedānta Sūtra II.2.24; from the Mīmāṁsā school, Kumārila's Śloka-vārttika V.187ff; from the Nyāya school, Udayana’s Ātma-tattva-viveka IV (probably the most extensive critique of Buddhist views in orthodox Hindu polemics); from Sāṅkhya, Sāṅkhya Sūtra I.35.

25. Sattva is a term used for intelligence in Sāṅkhya and Yoga (e.g., III.35, 49, 55), because in Yoga metaphysics the guṇa of sattva is maximized in the citta.


27. Vyāsa further argues that if one takes this idealist position, then one will have to argue that the insight into the nature of an object gained during samādhi is also all a mental
construction. In samādhi, one gains insight into the nature of an object (i.e., that gross objects are in reality transformations of subtler energies). One then gets another insight, according to the idealist school of thought, that all external objects, whether gross or subtle, are in reality mental constructions. This is tantamount to saying that insight reveals the true nature of insight (i.e., that a second insight gains insight into the first insight). How can insight gain insight into insight? asks Vyāsa. This would be like saying burning can burn itself or cutting cut itself. Insight can be directed only against an object different from itself.

28. The hair standing on end and the outpouring of tears are symptoms of spiritual ecstasy usually associated with the devotional paths of bhakti, especially those of the Kṛṣṇa sects.

29. R. S. Bhattacharyya (1985) takes akusīdasya in a figurative sense to indicate one who sees the harmfulness, from a yogic point of view, of the mystic powers.


31. Evaṁ jīvan-muktāvasthā. (Yoga-sāra)

32. See Fort and Mumme (1996) for the concept of jivanmukta in different Hindu traditions.

33. See commentaries on Vedānta Sūtras IV.1.15.

34. It is not clear whether Patañjali is being rhetorical in saying that that which is left to be known is “little.” The commentators don’t specify what that little bit might be, if anything. Given the seemingly grandiose claims of omnicience presented throughout the text, one would expect that there should be nothing outside of the yogi’s sphere of comprehension.


36. This, of course, is the pūrva-pakṣa, opposing point of view outlined in the previous sūtras.

37. Of course, during pralaya, universal dissolution, the guṇas remain in a latent and hence unmoving state.

38. See also Sāṅkhya Sūtra I.58 for bondage being a state of mind rather than a state of the soul.

39. For some speculations on Patañjali’s sectarian affiliation, see II.44.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

1. Na khalv ātmanāḥ svayam-prakāśasya ‘py asti kācit kriyā na ca tām antareṇa kartā (VM IV.22).

2. Although the Gītā seems to espouse the Sāṅkhya line, XIII.20 and 29 at a surface reading, the commentators to these verses such as Rāmānuja and Madhva do assign kartṛtva to puruṣa in their commentaries, as does Śaṅkara (however, see next note). Also, as an aside, as Bronkhorst notes, surely this issue would have drawn the attention of rival schools in earlier times, as they had by Rāmānuja’s day, so perhaps such objections were discussed in the numerous ancient Sāṅkhya texts that have not survived (1999). The issue remained an ongoing acute bone of contention; in the sixteenth to seventeenth century, the Yatindramata-
dīpikā by Rāmānuja’s Śrī Vaiṣṇava follower Śrīnivāsacarya, characterizes the notion that agency is a function of buddhi as erroneous knowledge held by sophists (VIII).

3. For Śaṅkara, of course, agency is a feature of the soul, but in conventional reality, it is an upādhi, or illusory superimposition. In its ultimate pure state, the ātman is not an agent. One must bear in mind that, in Śaṅkara’s radical advaita monism, there is only Brahman—everything else is superimposition, like the mirage in a desert; thus there is nothing upon which an agent might act. Nonetheless, within the discourse of conventional reality, he sides with the Vedāntins against the Śaṅkhya view on this point: Agency lies in the ātman (as conventionally understood) rather than the buddhi (as conventionally understood).

4. The theistic commentators accept that it is by the grace of Īśvara that the puruṣa can exert its will. Madhva quotes scriptural verses that speak of the activities of the ātman in the liberated state, which points to free will in the ātman rather than in the buddhi.


6. Since qualities (guna) including consciousness itself arise in the ātman only when it is in contact with the mind (which, as in Yoga, is external to the ātman), these traditions find themselves having to defend a position in which there is no consciousness in the state of liberation (which, as in Patañjali, involves separating the ātman from the mind). Their position is ridiculed in turn by their opponents: who would aspire for such a liberated state that does not even consist of a state of consciousness? (See, for example, the ninth-to-tenth-century Naiyāyika Jayanta Bhaṭṭa’s Nyāya-mañjari for an articulation of this position.)

7. Ranganthan consistently translates the term dharma as “moral character” or “ethical life,” even where the commentators take it in the more metaphysical sense of, for example, III.12–13; 45; IV.12. His argument that the ultimate justification for reading “dharma” as meaning ethical or moral is based on a text-type theoretic approach to semantics (2008, pp. 11–23). Texts exist in “types” or genres—poetic, philosophical, epic, and so on—and terms such as dharma in a “text-type” or genre have a consistent meaning throughout that genre, even as different schools assign these terms different roles or nuances in accordance with their distinctive philosophies.

8. Vācaspati Miśra in II.22 seems to subscribe to the view of individual buddhis. Apart from anything else, if buddhi were not individualized but cosmic, then upon one puruṣa becoming liberated due to discrimination manifesting in his buddhi, all others would share the same effect, buddhi being common to all. Verse II.22 suggests that the individual citta remains individual until liberation when it merges back into its source. Thus the evolutes are both individual and cosmic.

9. These do not appear, for example, in the Gītā’s listing of evolutes in VII.4 (but then neither
do the *tanmātras*, which I do hold as being cosmic as well as individual).

10. Regarding this dilemma, Hulin suggests that “oppositions, like the one between general and particular … were not final to them. They were looking at them, at least implicitly, as belonging to that impure, only half-real sphere of experience that owes its existence to the transcendental confusion between *purusa* and *prakṛti* … Once it vanishes, in the wake of discrimination, there is no ground anymore to contrast the personal with the universal perspective” (1999, 722).


12. See Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the *Bhāgavata* (1.14).

13. Thus, rejecting the various standard interpretations that “skirt the issue,” such problems cause Burley (2005) to conclude that “the realist-cosmogonic interpretation of Sāṅkhya and Yoga stands no chance of presenting a coherent account of *kaivalya* … The central problem for the realist interpretation of *kaivalya* is how to account for the fact that, according to Sāṅkhya and Yoga, the cessation of mental activities coincides (or precipitates) a dissolution of manifest entities when those entities are supposed by the realist to exist independently of any experience of them” (231). Burley finds reason and argument can accommodate only one explanation: *prakṛti* and the world she manifests is not externally or independently real. It is experientially real only relative to the *puruṣa* under the influence of ignorance, and therefore ceases to exist when true knowledge dawns. Thus, logical thinking leads Burley to conclude that “the whole metaphysical schema is concerned with factors that are *internal* to experience … The empirical world is, precisely, not assumed to exist independently of experience” (234). In other words, *prakṛti* is the product of the *puruṣa*’s ignorance, not real in itself. Thus, it can persist for other *puruṣas*, not because it is real in itself but because others have not yet dispelled their own illusion. This is fairly classical *advaita vedānta*, and in many ways follows Śaṅkara’s own utilization of logic, *anumāna*, specifically *tarka*, reducing the opponents view to absurdum, to deconstruct a realist ontology. As with Śaṅkara, of course, Burley finds himself postulating a position that is nowhere explicitly stated in the texts that he strives to exegete or in the entirety of the primary commentarial tradition, as he himself acknowledges (233).

14. We follow Vijñānabhikṣu’s exegesis here and throughout these passages.


16. *Yatra paśyasi cātmānaṁ nityānandaṁ nirañjanam / Mām ekaṁ sa mahāyogo bhāṣitaḥ pārameśvaraḥ / Ye cānye yogināṁ yogāḥ śruyante grantha-vistare / Sarve te brahmayogasya kalāṁ nārhanti śoḍasim / Yatra sākṣat-prapaśyanti vimuktā viśvam iśvaraṁ / sarveśām eva*
17. The text continues: “The parks there shine like final liberation itself, and contain wishfulfilling trees, which blossom all the year round. There are fragrant winds, and creepers dripping with honey near bodies of water. Cries of exotic birds mingle with the humming of bees, and magnificent flowers bloom everywhere. Devotees of Viṣṇu along with their beautiful wives travel in aerial vehicles made of jewels, emeralds and gold, but the beautiful smiling residents of this realm cannot distract the minds of the opposite sex, since everyone is absorbed in Kṛṣṇa (III.15.14–25).

18. See Bryant (2003) for Book X of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (the most important) and anticipated future volumes of the remainder. See also the edition of the entire text (twelve books) translated by the great Vaishnava teacher Bhaktivedanta Swami, published in the West by the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust.
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GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS AND NAMES*

Abhāva Absence, removal.
Abhyāsa Practice; here defined as the effort to concentrate the mind.
A. C. Bhaktivedānta Swami who founded ISKCON (the Hare Krishna movement) to spread Kṛṣṇa bhakti (Kṛṣṇa Consciousness) around the world.
Ādhibhautika Suffering produced by other beings (mosquitoes, enemies, neighbors, family members, etc.).
Ādhidaivika Suffering produced by nature and the environment (storms, earthquakes, etc.).
Ādhyātmika Suffering produced by one’s own body and mind (illness, injury, insecurity, anxiety, etc.).
Advaita Monism or nonduality; a philosophical tenet opposed to the dualism and realism of Yoga metaphysics. The Advaita Vedānta school posits that the entire manifest world is ultimately not real, but a mental construction produced by ignorance and superimposed on the only real existent, Brahma. Thus, on attaining liberation the ātman (puruṣa) realizes that all plurality and individuality is the product of illusion, and merges into the all-encompassing, nondual, absolute truth, Brahma.
Āgama Testimony, verbal communication; this includes divine scripture (śruti or śabda).
Ahaṅkara “I am the doer”; sāṅkhya term for ego. The Gītā describes the false “I” as thinking of oneself as the doer of action.
Ahiṁsā Nonviolence in thought, word and deed.
Akliṣṭa Nondetrimental (to the ultimate goal of yoga).
Ālambana Support, object, basis; refers to the object upon which the yogī has chosen to concentrate the mind.
Al-Bīrunī Arab traveler and historian (973–1050 C.E.); translated Patañjali’s Sūtras into Arabic.

Aliṅga That which has no sign; primordial, pre-creation prakṛti is a state in which the guṇas are completely latent, therefore prakṛti has no “signs” or characteristics.

Anādi Without beginning, beginningless time.

Ānanda-samādhi Absorption with bliss; the third level of samprajñāta-samādhi. The guṇa of sattva predominates in ahaṅkāra and buddhi and sattva is the source of bliss.

Ananta Never-ending, infinite; one of the names of the cosmic serpent Śeṣa, who holds the universes on his hood.

Anātma-vāda Belief that there is no eternal, separable conscious entity called ātman (puruṣa). Another term for Buddhist doctrine in Hindu commentaries.

Antaḥkaraṇa Internal body composed of buddhi (intelligence), ahaṅkāra (ego), and manas (mind).

Aṇu An irreducible entity in the sense that it cannot be further broken down into smaller parts. Variously translated as minute, tiny, atom, smallest physical subatomic particles. The gross elements (mahābhūtas) are comprised of aṇus.

Anya Other; refers to a state beyond samprajñāta-samādhi, which the commentators take to be asamprajñāta-samādhi.

Apāna One of the five prāṇas; responsible for eliminating waste products from the body.

Apara-pratyakṣa Conventional perception.

Aparigraha Refraining from acquiring or coveting objects; taking only what is required for maintaining the body.

Apavarga Liberation; realization by puruṣa of its own true nature.

Api Also, even, although.

Āraṇyakas Texts which are part of the Vedic corpus and are concerned with cosmological and metaphysical topics.

Artha Goal, purpose, for the sake of, object, meaning.

Asamprajñāta-samādhi The highest stage of the eighth and final limb of Yoga; ultimate state of awareness in which nothing
can be discerned except the pure self.

Āsana Seat, posture, or stretching pose for the purpose of preparing the yogī’s body to sit firmly (sthira) and comfortably (sukha) for prolonged periods in meditation.

Asatkārya-vāda Metaphysical view that the effect is not in one single underlying substratum such as prakṛti, but that all objects in manifest reality are formed by the combination of interdependent but distinct underlying causal entities. The Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṁsā and Jaina schools subscribe to asatkārya-vāda.

Āśaya Type of receptacle, stock or store of all the accumulated karma. This karma eventually fructifies, perpetuating the cycle of birth and death (saṁsāra).

Asmitā “I-am-ness” or Ego; misidentifying buddhi (intelligence or the instrumental power of sight) with puruṣa (soul, the actual seer).

Asmitā-samādhi Absorption with the sense of I-ness; the fourth and final stage of samprajñāta-samādhi. The yogī becomes indirectly aware of puruṣa or “I-amness,” rather than any external material prakṛtic object or internal organ of cognition. Asmitā in the context of samādhi is not the same as asmitā in the context of the kleśas.

Aṣṭāṅga Yoga Eightfold path of Patañjali Yoga consisting of: yamas (moral restraints),
niyamas (ethical observances), āsana (posture), prāṇāyāma (breath control), pratyāhāra (sense withdrawal), dhāranā (concentration), dhyāna (meditation), and samādhi (meditative absorption).

Asteya Refraining from stealing.

Atad Not that, incorrect.

Ātmā/Ātman The innermost self or soul.

Avidyā Ignorance. Considered by the Yoga school as a mental state or perception of reality which confuses or misidentifies the nature of the soul (Puruṣa) with that of the body.

Āyurveda Knowledge tradition dealing with health.
Bādarāyaṇa Wrote the Vedānta Sūtras (also known as the Brahma Sūtras), the most significant systemization of the various doctrines expressed in the Upaniṣads.

Bhagavad Gitā “Song of God”; a dialogue between the warrior Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa (his teacher).

Bhāgavata Purāṇa Most important puraṇa, and primary scripture for the Kṛṣṇa traditions.

Bhakti Devotion to a personal form of divinity.

Bhaktivedānta Swami Important Vaisnava teacher who spread Kṛṣṇa devotion around the world.

Bhakti Yoga The path of devotion.

Bhāva Dispositions of buddhi.

Bhāvanā Mind-set or attitude, meditation.

Bhāvana Dwelling upon, cultivation.

Bhedābheda Difference-and-nondifference. This Vedānta doctrine posits that Brahman is one with the living entities, but also different. The relationship is similar to the fire and its sparks. This paradoxical relationship of difference in oneness is known by various terms by different post-Śaṅkara schools of Vedānta.

Bhoga Experience; refers to experience of the guṇas—pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain.

Bhoja Rāja King, poet, scholar, and patron of the arts, sciences, and esoteric traditions; ruled Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh in the mid–tenth century and wrote a commentary titled Rāja-mārtanda on the Yoga Sūtras.

Bhūmi Stages (e.g., of samādhi).

Bhūta Element; object; creature.

B.K.S. Iyengar Established the Iyengar School, the most influential school of modern postural Yoga.

Brahmacarya Celibacy.

Brahman Refers to the ultimate absolute reality or principle expressed in the Upaniṣads. Brahman is either understood as a supreme personal being (Īśvara, God), or as a supreme
impersonal consciousness, depending on the sects of *Vedānta* stemming from the Upaniṣads.

*Brāhmaṇa* Texts that are part of the Vedic corpus describing the ritualistic minutiae of sacrifices for the attainment of specific goals. Also name of one of the four castes, that of the teacher and ritualist specialist.

*Buddha* Founder of Buddhism.

*Buddhi* Intelligence, discriminatory aspect of the mind (*citta*). *Buddhi* has the functions of judgment, discrimination, knowledge, ascertainment, will, virtue, and detachment.

*Ca* Also, and, as well.

*Cakra* Wheel, centers of subtle energy located at various points along the spine. The *cakra/nādi/kuṇḍalinī* physiologies are associated with the *siddha/tantra/śākta* traditions.

*Cārvāka* Indian philosopher associated with the Materialistic school of philosophy, which believes that the goal of life is the pursuit of sensual pleasure and minimization of discomfort.

*Caturtha* Fourth; refers here to the fourth type of *prāṇāyāma* where the yogī can suppress his breath at will for indefinite time periods.

*Chaitanya Mahāprabhu* Post–Śaṅkara *Vedāntin* theologian and mystic (15th c.e.); founder of the Gauḍīya (Bengal) school of Vaiṣṇavism.

*Charaka* Authority on Āyurveda.

*Chinmayananda, Swami* A disciple of *Swami Sivananda* who established the Chinmaya Mission (1916–1993).

*Citi-śakti* Divine energy, power of Consciousness.

*Citta* In the *Yoga* school *citta* refers to the combined functioning of the three cognitive aspects of the internal organ—*buddhi* (intelligence), *ahaṅkāra* (ego), and *manas* (mind).

*Devi* Goddess.

*Dhāraṇā* Concentration; fixing the mind on an object of meditation.

*Dharmar Dharma* has various meanings. In the *Yoga Sūtras, dharma* (nature, characteristics) is understood to be that which is
specific and distinctive about an object.

*Dharma-megha* Cloud of virtue; a state of *samādhi* corresponding to the highest state of discrimination (*viveka*) when the yogī has no interest even in the benefits accruing from discernment.

*Dharma-śāstra* Vedic law books concerning worldly socio-civic duties.

*Dhātu* Refers to the seven bodily tissues in Āyurvedic physiology (plasma, blood, muscle, adipose, bone, bone marrow, semen).

*Dhyāna* Meditation; the continuous flow of the mind on the object of meditation, without being distracted by any other thought.

*Dhyāna Yoga* The path of fully concentrated meditation (subject of *Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras*).

*Draṣṭṛ/Draṣṭā* Seer, *puruṣa*, the soul, or innermost conscious self.

*Dṛk* Derived from *dṛś* “to see”; subjective power of seeing; the Seer. Refers to the awareness of *puruṣa* (*drastṛ* in I.3).

*Dṛṣya* The seen; all objects which present themselves to the intelligence (*buddhi*).

*Dualism* A philosophical belief that ultimate reality consists of two metaphysical categories; in *Yoga* philosophy these categories are labeled *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*.

*Duḥkha* Pain, frustration, aversion, suffering.

*Dveṣa* Aversion; resentment toward pain by one who remembers past experiences of pain.

*Ekāgratā* One-pointedness; when the previous thought (*pratyaya*) in the mind is identical to the thought that succeeds it in meditation.

*Epistemology* The study of knowledge, specifically the methods of attaining accurate information about reality.

*Eva* Also, indeed, very, only, the same, the very one.

*Grahaṇa* The instrument of grasping or the instruments of knowledge (mind, senses, etc.); process of obtaining
knowledge.

_Grahitṛ/Grahitā_ The grasper; the knower, or subject of knowledge.

_Grāhya_ That which is grasped or the object of knowledge.

_Guṇas_ Strands or qualities; the three _guṇas_ inherent in _prakṛti_— _sattva_ (lucidity), _rajas_ (action), and _tamas_ (inertia). These _guṇas_ are like the threads which make up a rope, and all manifest reality consists of a combination of the _guṇas_.

_Hāna_ Freedom, escape, removal, liberation from _saṁsāra_.

_Hariharānanda Āraṇya_ A yogi (1869–1947) who wrote a commentary on the _Yoga Sutras_ titled _Bhāsvatī_.

_Haṭha Yoga_ The path of Yoga using physical disciplines to direct the vital energies in the body to awaken _kuṇḍalinī-śakti_ (serpent power), which is dormant and coiled at the base of the spine.

_Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā_ Manual on _Haṭha Yoga_ written by Swami Swatmaramam (15th C.E.). The _Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā_ includes information about _āsanas_, _prāṇāyāma_, _cakras_, _kuṇḍalini_, _bandhas_, _kriyās_, _śakti_, _nāḍīs_, and _mudrās_.

_Hermeneutics_ Methods of textual interpretation, here the interpretation of ancient _Vedic_ texts.

_Heterodox Schools_ Philosophical schools which rejected the _Vedic_ corpus, such as _Buddhism_ and _Jainism_.

_Hiranyagarbha_ A divine sage; identified by the _Yājñavalkya Smṛti_ and _Mahābhārata_ as the founder of Yoga.

_Idéalism_ The philosophical view that the world is not objectively or externally real, but a product of the mind.

_Iṣṭa-devatā_ One’s divinity of preference, a form of _Īśvara_ to which a yogi is partial.

_Īśvara_ The supreme being; generic name for God.

_Īśvara-praṇīdhāna_ Dedication to God (_Īśvara_).

_Īśvara-vādin_ One believing in _Īśvara_; theist.

_Iva_ Like; as if.

_Jaḍa Bhārata_ An advanced yogi who, in a prior life as King Bhārata, failed to attain the ultimate goals of _yoga_ due to attachment.
In a subsequent birth he became an example of the complete renunciation indicated by Patañjali.

**Jainism** A spiritual tradition handed down by a line of twenty-four teachers (*tīrthaṅkaras*), the last of whom was *Mahāvīra*, a contemporary of Buddha.

**Japa** Repetitive chanting of *mantras*; for *Patañjali*, *mantra* means the recitation of *om*.

**Jāti** Birth, class, species, caste, occupation.

**Jaya** Mastery, victory, control.

**Jīva** The embodied self, the soul in *saṁsāra*.

**Jīvan-mukta** Soul still embodied in the world, but self-realized and liberated.

**Jñāna** Knowledge, speech.

**Jñāna Yoga** The path of knowledge, understanding the ultimate truths of reality through discrimination (*viveka*) between the Self (*puruṣa/ātman*) and the not-self (*prakṛti*).

**Jñānendriyas** Powers behind the five senses of hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch.

**Jñāni** One following the path of *jñāna yoga*.

**Kaivalya** Absolute freedom, supreme independence, liberation, state of wholeness; *puruṣa* shines forth in its own pure luminous nature.

**Kāli** A manifestation or form of *Devi*, the Goddess.

**Kali Yuga** Last and most degenerate of the four world ages in Hindu cosmography; the present world age.

**Kāma** Desire.

**Kāma Śāstras** “Desire texts”; outlining the aesthetics of sensual enjoyment.

**Kapila** Sage whom tradition assigns as the original expounder of *Sāṅkhya Yoga*.

**Karma** From the root *kṛ* to “do” or “make,” literally means “work”; refers not only to an initial act but also to the reaction it produces (pleasant or unpleasant in accordance with the original act) either in this life or a future one.
Karmāśaya Stock of *karma*, accumulation of *saṁskāras*. At the moment of death, the *karmāśaya* determines the three aspects of rebirth that one will experience *jāti* (type of birth—human, animal, etc.), *āyuḥ* (lifespan), *bhoga* (quality of life).

*Karma Yoga* The path of action; the performance of one’s duty without desire for the outcome.

*Kevalin* One who has attained the state of *kaivalya*.

*Khyāti* Insight, knowledge, perception.

*Kleśas* Afflictions, impediments, obstacles. *Patañjali* lists five primary *kleśas* to the practice of *yoga*—ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, and clinging-to-life.

*Kliṣṭa* Detrimental, harmful, damaging, afflicted (to the ultimate goal of *yoga*).

*Kośas* Layers or sheaths that make up an individual. There are five *kośas*.


*Kriyā-yoga* Defined by *Patañjali* as a practice consisting of *tapas* (austerity), *svādhyāya* (study), and *Īśvara-praṇidhāna* (devotion to God).

*Kṛṣṇa* The supreme God descended on earth who instructed *Arjuna* in the *Bhagavad Gītā*; *Kṛṣṇa* is presented in the *Bhagavad Gītā* as the supreme *Īśvara*.

*Kṣaṇa* Instant, moment, smallest point in time. A *kṣaṇa* is defined as the time it takes an *aṇu* to move from one point in space to the space immediately adjacent to it.

*Kṣanika-vāda* The view that all reality is momentary—nothing in reality has inherent, eternal, independent, and essential existence; one of several terms for Buddhist doctrine.

*Kṣatriya* Member of the warrior caste.
Kṣetra-jña The knower of the field (prakṛti); another term for the ātman.

Kuṇḍalini Coiled feminine power central to the siddha and tantra traditions.

Kuṇḍalini-sakti Serpent power or the creative power (śakti) which is dormant and coiled at the base of the spine.

Laghu Light (in terms of density).

Lakṣaṇa Distinguishing characteristic, qualities, temporal state.

Liṅga Sign, that which has a sign, distinctive; used here for buddhi.

Lokas Worlds or realms.

Madhva Famous Vaiṣṇava theologian (13th C.E.) who interpreted the teachings of the Upaniṣads on the basis of Dvaita Vedānta (dualism).

Mahābhārata One of India’s two great epics (9th–4th B.C.E.); describes the saga of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas and is the largest epic in the world consisting of 100,000 verses. The Bhagavad Gītā is included in the sixth book of the Mahābhārata.

Mahā-bhūtas Five gross or material elements—ether, air, fire, water, and earth; the actual physical tangible stuff of the universe.

Mahāvīra A perfected Jain yogī; great hero or warrior. Mahāvīra is not the founder of Jainism but is considered to be the primary teacher (tīrthaṅkara) for this age.

Maheśvara Great Lord; usually used for Śiva.

Manas Mind, the thinking and organizing aspect of citta.

Mantra Sacred chant; mantras encapsulate divine presence in the form of sound.

Manu Dharma Śāstra Ancient law books outlining dharma, socio-civic and religious codes of conduct.

Māyā The power of illusion that is the cause of ignorance; Vedāntin term for illusion that causes one to misidentify with the unreal. (Sometimes used interchangeably with avidyā.)

Mīmāṁsā One of the six schools of orthodox philosophy;
noteworthy for its treatment of epistemology, hermeneutics, and *dharma*. Formulated a rationale to perpetuate the old Vedic sacrificial rites.

*Moha* Delusion, illusion.

*Monism* A philosophical belief that ultimate reality consists of one absolute principle called *Brahman*.

*Mukta* Liberated.

*Muktānanda* Teacher of *Siddha Yoga*, a Kashmiri form of *Śaivism* featuring *bhakti* to Lord *Śiva*; came to the West in the sixties.

*Nāḍīs* Network of thousands of subtle energy channels (*nāḍīs*) which transport and distribute life force (*prāṇa*) around the body in *tanric* physiology.

*Narasimha Viṣṇu* incarnation as half man, half lion.

*Nārāyaṇa* Another name for *Viṣṇu*; used often in the Mahābhārata.

*Nirbija-samādhi* Synonymous with *asamprajñāta-samādhi*; a state where the yogi’s awareness has no contact whatsoever with *prakṛti*. *Puruṣa* is now simply aware of itself.

*Nirśvara-vādins* Those who reject the notion of an *Īśvara*; atheists.

*Nirodha* Restraint, control, cessation. When all thoughts have been stilled.

*Nirodha-saṁskāras* *Samskāras* activated in meditation that restrain the outgoing or *vyutthāna-saṁskāras*.

*Nirvicāra-samādhi* *Samādhi*; beyond reflection; the second of four stages of *samprajñāta-samādhi*. *Vicāra-samādhi* is subdivided by Patañjali into *sa* (with) *vicāra* and *nir* (without) *vicāra*; a state where the yogi can focus on the subtle substructure of the object of meditation and transcend space and time.

*Nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa* Pre-conceptual perception; when a sense object is not recognized or identified but perceived as raw impression. In contrast to *Savikalpa-pratyakṣa* where the mind recognizes the object which it categorizes as a certain type of thing.

*Nirvitarka-samādhi* *Samādhi*; without physical awareness, without conceptualization; the first of four stages of *samprajñāta-
samādhi. Vitarka-samādhi is subdivided by Patañjali into sa (with) vitarka and nir (without) vitarka. A state when the mind has been purged of all saṁskāric memory in terms of any recognition of what the object of meditation is.

Niyamas Ethical observances—the yogi’s own personal discipline and practice. There are five niyamas: śauca (cleanliness), santoṣa (contentment), tapa (austerity), svādhyāya (study of the scriptures), Īśvara-praṇidhāna (devotion to God).

Nyāya One of the six schools of orthodox philosophy, focused on developing rules of logic so that debates between various schools could be conducted according to conventions about what constituted valid argument.

Ojas Subtle vital energy which forms the essence of all the seven bodily tissues (dhātus) in Āyurvedic physiology.

Om Sonal incarnation of Īśvara. The relation between Īśvara and om is an eternal designation not assigned by human convention.

Orthodox Schools The six schools of Indian Philosophy—Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṁsā, and Vedānta are considered “orthodox” because they retain at least a nominal allegiance to the sacred Vedic texts.

Pāda Chapter, quarter, part. There are for pādas in the Yoga Sūtras.

Paramātman The supreme ātman.

Paramparā Succession, lineage, tradition of teacher/disciple relationship.

Para-pratyakṣa Supernormal perception.

Pariṇāma Result, consequence, change, transformation, development, mutation.

Patañjali Compiler of the Yoga Sūtras, one of the ancient treatises on Indic philosophy. Tradition considers him to be the same Patañjali who wrote the primary commentary on the famous grammar by Pāṇini, and who wrote a treatise on medicine.

Pattabhi Jois (1915–) Developed Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, which emphasizes continuity and fluidity between one movement and the next. Disciple of T. Krishnamāchārya (1888–1989).
Phala Fruits, end results, effect, motive.

Phenomenology Representing the beliefs of a religious tradition as accurately and objectively as possible as phenomena in their own right and within their own context.

Pracchardana Exhalation.

Pradhāna Primordial matter with its creative potential latent; a state when the guṇas are in equilibrium and there is no creation; used almost synonymously with prakṛti.

Prajñā True insight, wisdom, discernment, to see things as they really are. The ultimate discrimination is the ability to distinguish purusa from any aspect of prakṛti.

Prakṛti Also known as pradhāna; the material world with all its varieties within which the purusa is embedded; the raw stuff from which the world is formed.

Prakṛti-laya Merged in matter; refers to quasi-perfected yogīs who do not have gross physical bodies but exist on some other level within prakṛti.

Pramāṇa Epistemology; the methods of attaining accurate information about reality. For the Yoga school, these methods consist of sense perception, inference, logic, and testimony.

Prāṇa Principle life air responsible for directing the other prāṇas and for respiration in the body.

Prāṇas Vital airs. There are five prāṇas in the body: prāṇa (directing the other prāṇas and respiration in the body), samāna (digesting nutrients and nourishing all parts of the body), apāna (eliminating waste products from the body), vyāna (circulating all over the body), and udāna (upward movements in the body).

Prāṇāyāma Breath control, by regulating and slowing the movement of breath, so that the mind also becomes regulated and quiescent.

Pranidhāna To place oneself down, prostrate, submit, devotional submission.

Prārabdha-karma Karma that has already been activated and is
manifest in the present life.

**Prasaṅkhyāna** Highest type of meditation; means of restraining all outgoing mental activities.

**Prātibhā** Intuition; knowledge of things normally inaccessible to conventional means of knowledge.

**Pratipakṣa** Opposite; consequence; practice of generating thoughts that are opposite to any negative thoughts that arise, so that a new more sāttvic type of saṁskāra is planted in the *citta*.

**Pratiprasava** Return to the original state; when the yogī’s mind has fulfilled its purpose (*nirbīja-samādhi*), it dissolves back into *prakṛti*.

**Pratyāhāra** Withdrawal of the senses from objects.

**Pratyakṣa** Sense perception; the state of mind (*vṛtti*) which apprehends both the specific (*viśeṣa*) and generic (*sāmānya*) nature of an external object through the five senses.

**Pratyaya** Conception, idea, thought, cause, presented idea, the imprint or impression of an object in the *citta*.

**Purāṇas** “That which took place previously”; a compendium of texts which contain the ingredients of modern Hinduism and the stories of the great Divinities and their devotees, royal dynasties, social duties, yogic practices, etc. There are eighteen *Purāṇas*, one of which is the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (the story of Kṛṣṇa’s incarnation).

**Puruṣa** Term favored by the *Yoga* school to refer to the innermost conscious self, loosely equivalent to the soul in Western Graeco-Abrahamic traditions.

**Pūrva-pakṣa** The opposing point of view; commentaries frequently discuss opposing philosophical positions with a view to identifying their defects.

**Rāga** Attachment. Desire or craving for pleasure by one who remembers past experiences of pleasure.

**Rajas** One of the three guṇas; when *rajas* is predominant in an individual, hankering, attachment, energetic endeavor, passion, power, restlessness, and creative activity manifest.
Rāja-yoga Equivalent to Dhyāna-yoga, the term used in the Bhagavad Gitā for Patañjali-Yoga.

Rāmānanda Sarasvatī Vedāntin who wrote a commentary on the Yoga Sūtras, titled Yogamaṇi-rabhā (16th C.E.).

Rāmānuja Post-Śaṅkara Vedānta philosopher (12th C.E.) who is identified with the doctrine of viśiṣṭādvaita (differentiated non-duality)—that Īśvara (the personified Brahman) is one with the living entites, but also different. Rāmānuja prioritized bhakti and acknowledged Viṣṇu as the Supreme Īśvara.

Rāmāyaṇa Epic narrating the story of Rāma, the incarnation of Viṣṇu; one of two great Epics of India along with the Mahābhārata.

Realism The view that the world is objectively and externally real irrespective of whether we perceive it. The Yoga tradition is “realist.”

Ṛg Veda The oldest Vedic text; consists of hymns to the Gods that are chanted during the performance of sacrifice.

Ṛṣi Vedic Sage; seer of Vedic truths.

Sabīja-samādhi Samādhi with seed; synonymous with samprajñāta-samādhi. The four levels of samprajñāta-samādhi are known as sabīja-samādhi, because these mental states have something external as their object of focus.

Sādhana One’s specific daily spiritual practices.

Śākta Follower of Devī, the Goddess.

Śakti Power; associated with the Goddess or the feminine power of a male divinity.

Samādhi Full meditative absorption or final absorption in the self, Patañjali subdivides samādhi into seven levels: the six levels of Samprajñāta-samādhi (savitarka, nirvitarka, savicāra, nirvicāra, ānanda, asmitā) and the seventh level of asamprajñāta-samādhi.

Samāna One of the five prāṇas responsible for digesting nutrients and nourishing all parts of the body.
Sāmānya Universals; refers to the genus, species, or general category of an object. (For example, the term “cow” does not particularize or distinguish one cow from another, but refers to the species.)

Samāpatti Intense concentration such that the yogi becomes one with the object of meditation.

Sāṅkhya Kārikā Oldest surviving and thus (by default) primary text of the Sāṅkhya School.

Samprajñāta-samādhi Concentration on an object so that the mind can be fully stilled. There are four stages of samprajñāta-samādhi: vitarka, vicāra, ānanda, asmitā.

Saṁsāra Cycle of repeated birth and death. Saṁsāra has no beginning, but will end when liberation occurs.

Saṁskāras Mental imprints, memories, subconscious impressions. Every experience or thought forms an imprint—a saṁskāra, in the citta. Memory is the product of saṁskāras.

Saṁyama The application of dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi in sequence on an object of meditation.

Saṁyoga Conjunction, contact, association; refers to conjunction between puruṣa and buddhi.

Sañcita-karma Karma that is dormant awaiting later fructification.

Sañcīyamāna Karma that is being accumulated by ongoing activity under ignorance in the present life.

Śaṅkara The most influential commentator of Advaita Vedānta in the 8th–9th C.E.

Sāṅkhya “Enumeration” or “counting”; a philosophical school focusing on the twenty-four ingredients of material reality (prakṛti). Sāṅkhya is the earliest philosophical system of the six classical Schools and provides the metaphysical framework for the Yoga School.

Sāṅkhya-kārikās Primary text of the Sāṅkhya school of philosophy by Īśvarakṛṣṇa (4th–5th C.E.).

Santoṣa Contentment; happiness that does not depend on external objects, but is inherent in the mind when the mind is
tranquil.

Śāstras Sacred Sanskrit texts.

Satchidananda Disciple of Swami Sivananda who established the Integral Yoga Institute in the United States (1914–2002).

Satkārya Metaphysical view that any effect is present in its cause. All manifest reality is simply a transformation of the underlying cause prakṛti. The Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools subscribe to this view.

Sattva One of the three guṇas; literally means “being-ness.” When sattva is predominant in an individual, the qualities of lucidity, tranquillity, wisdom, discrimination, detachment, happiness, and peacefulness manifest. Also used as a synonym of buddhi.

Satya Truthfulness; one of the yamas.

Satya-loka Celestial realm (still within saṁsāra).

Śauca Cleanliness—refers to both external and internal cleanliness.

Savicāra-samādhi The second of four stages of samprajñāta-samādhi. Vicārā-samādhi is subdivided by Patañjali into sa (with) vicāra and nir (without) vicāra. When the yogī experiences the object of meditation as consisting of subtle elements (tanmātras), circumscribed as existing in time and space.

Savikalpa-pratyakṣa Sense perception involving the mind’s recognition of the object, which it categorizes as a certain type of thing. (In contrast to Nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa, preconceptual perception.)

Savitarka-samādhi Samādhi with physical awareness, conceptualization; the first of four stages of samprajñāta-samādhi. Vitarka-samādhi is subdivided by Patañjali into sa (with) vitarka and nir (without) vitarka. When the yogī’s awareness of the object of concentration is conflated with the word for and the concept of the object.

Śeṣa Thousand-headed cosmic serpent upon which Viṣṇu reclines and who holds the universes on his hood. Also known as Ananta.

Siddhānta A defining tenet of a philosophical school.
**Siddha Yoga** Spiritual path founded by Swami Muktananda (1908–1982).

Śīva Supreme Being considered by Śaivites (followers of Śīva) to be the supreme Īśvara or God; also known as Rudra and Hara.

**Sivananda** Renunciant (1887–1963) whose teachings were brought to the West by his disciples Swami Vishnu-devananda, Swami Satchidananda, Swami Satyananda, and Swami Chinmayananda.

**Skandhas** Sheaths or aggregates. Buddhists’ belief that the human persona consists of five sheaths: matter, sensations, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness.

**Smṛti** That which is remembered, memory. Intra-human revelation emanating from enlightened ṛṣi sages (as recorded in the Purāṇas, Epics and other texts including the Sūtra traditions). Also refers to memory as the retrieval of sarīṅkāras.

**Soma** Plant described in the Vedic texts that bestowed supernormal powers when imbibed.

**Soteriology** The branch of theology dealing with notions of liberation or salvation.

**Sphoṭa** That which illuminates; preexisting eternal meaning inherent in a sound that bursts forth in a flash.

**Sphoṭa-vāda** Metaphysical view that meaning (sphoṭa) is an autonomous and eternal entity embedded in words. Phonemes serve as the vehicles through which the preexisting meaning (sphoṭa) of the object bursts forth. The Yoga school subscribes to the sphoṭa theory.

**Śruti** Revelation of “that which is heard”; refers to the texts of the Vedic corpus. Trans-human revelation emanating from God (Īśvara) for the theist schools.

**Sthūla-śarīra** Gross body.

**Sūkṣma-śarīra** Subtle body. Consists of buddhi (intelligence), ahaṅkāra (ego), and manas (mind), collectively known as the antaḥkarana.

**Suṣumnā** Subtle energy channel situated within the center of the
Sūtra Terse and pithy philosophical statement in which the maximum amount of information is packed into the minimum amount of words.

Svādhyāya Study—refers to the study of sacred scriptures. Also, the repetition of oṁ or other devotional mantras (japa).

Tadā Then, at that point, from this.

Tamas One of the three guṇas. When tamas is predominant in an individual, ignorance, delusion, disinterest, lethargy, sleep, and disinclination toward constructive activity manifest.

Tanmātras “Only that”; refers to the generic energies underlying sound, sight, smell, taste, and touch. Tanmātras sequentially produce the five mahābhūtas (gross elements).

Tāntric Yoga Esoteric practices usually associated with the Śiva or Devī sects.

Tapah Means either distress, involuntary pain experienced by the senses, or the spiritual practice of tapah, which concerns the voluntary control of the senses (part of kriyā-yoga and the niyāmas). In the context of spiritual practice, tapah requires austerity and self-discipline.

Tasya His, of that, of it, its.

Tat That, his, it.

Tataḥ From that, then, consequently.

Tatra There, in that, from these.

Tattva Thatnesses (a general term referring to the evolutes of prakṛtī); an object in reality.

Te These, they.

T.K.V. Desikachar Developed Viniyoga and introduced it to the West, continuing the approach that was originally developed by his guru and father, T. Krishnamāchārya (1888–1989).

Udāna One of the five prāṇas responsible for upward movements in the body.

Upaniṣads Philosophical texts of the late Vedic period concerned with understanding the ultimate truths of reality.
Vācaspati Miśra Wrote a commentary on the Yoga Sūtras titled Tattva-vaiṣāradī; also wrote commentaries on the Vedānta, Sāṅkhya, Nyāya, and Mīmāṁsā schools in the 9th C.E.

Vāda Suffix added to a philosophical category to indicate the school or point of view associated with that concept.

Vairāgya Dispassion, renunciation, non-attachment; absence of craving for sense objects.

Vaiśeṣika One of the six schools of orthodox philosophy, focused on metaphysics; perceived the created world as ultimately consisting of the combination of various eternal categories such as subatomic particles.

Vaiṣṇava Followers of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa. Believer that Viṣṇu is the supreme Īśvara.

Vaiṭṛṣṇya Indifference; highest dispassion.

Vajra Thunderbolt.

Vallabha Post–Śaṅkara Vedāntin (16th C.E.) and Vaiṣṇava theologian.

Varṇas Phonemes.

Vāsanās Subliminal imprints (saṁskāras) that remain dormant in this life; latent and subconscious personality traits that will manifest in future lives.

Vedānta One of the six schools of orthodox philosophy that is focused on the interpretation and systematization of the Upaniṣads, specifically with determining the relationship between Brahman (the supreme Truth of the Upaniṣads), ātman (the individualized feature of Brahman) and the perceived world.

Vedānta Sūtras The primary text for the Vedānta school; also known as the Brahma Sūtras.

Vedas Oldest preserved literature in India. Tradition believes there was originally only one Veda, subdivided into four Vedas by Vyāsa: Rgveda, Sāmaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda.

Vedic Corpus Consists of: the 4 Vedas (Rgveda, Sāmaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda), the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas, and the Upaniṣads.
Vibhūtis Mystic powers.

Vicāra-samādhi Absorption with subtle awareness. Contemplation on the more subtle aspect of the object of meditation, the subtle energies (tanmātras) that underpin the gross elements. Vicāra is the second level of experiencing an object in Samprajñāta-samādhi, and is subdivided into savicāra and nirvicāra stages.

Videha Unembodied, without a gross body. Refers to quasi-perfected yogīs who do not have gross physical bodies but exist on some other level within prakṛti.

Vidyā Knowledge of the scriptures.

Vijñānabhikṣu Prolific scholar to whom eighteen philosophical treatises on Sāṅkhya, Vedānta, and the Upaniṣads are attributed; also wrote a commentary titled Yoga-vārttika on the Yoga Sūtras in 15th C.E.

Virāma-pratyaya The thought of terminating all thoughts.

Vīrya Vigour, potency, power.

Viṣaya Sense objects; sphere, range of senses.

Viśeṣa Particularized, difference; the specific aspect of an object that distinguishes it from another.

Vishnu-Devananda Disciple of Swami Sivananda who established Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres throughout the world (1927–1993).

Viṣṇu Considered by Vaiṣṇavas to be the supremeĪśvara, or God; incarnates age after age.

Vitarka Negative or perverse thoughts and actions in contradiction to the yamas and niyamas.

Vitarka-samādhi Absorption with physical awareness; the first level of experiencing an object in Samprajñāta-samādhi, consisting of contemplation on a gross physical object. Vitarka is subdivided into savitarka and nirvitarka stages.

Vivaraṇa Commentary on the Yoga Sutras by the Vedāntin Śaṅkara in the 8th–9th C.E.

Viveka Discrimination; knowing the distinction between prakṛti and
puruṣa.

Vivekānanda Vedanta philosopher who became popular in the West after his address to the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893.

Vṛttis Any sequence of thought, ideas, mental imaging, or cognitive act performed by either the mind, intellect, or ego (collectively citta).

Vyāna One of the five prāṇas responsible for circulating all over the body.

Vyāsa Also known as Vedavyāsa or Vyāsadeva; primary literary figure of ancient India held to be compiler of the Vedas, Purāṇas, and the Mahābhārata Epic. Vyāsa, the first and primary commentator of Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtras, is considered to be a later figure, who penned his commentary Bhāṣya in 5th c.e. under the name of the legendary sage.

Vyutthāna Outgoing, emerging; refers here to saṅskāras that propel the mind into activity).

Yājñavalkya Smṛti Text discussing dharma, codes of ritual, personal, familial, civic, and social duties.

Yamas Abstentions or moral restraints. There are five yamas: ahimsā (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), asteya (refraining from stealing), brahmacarya (celibacy), aparigraha (refraining from acquisition or coveting).

yoga The techniques, systems, and paths of various practices aimed at realization of the ātman.

Yoga One of the six classical Schools of Indian philosophies; the Yoga school as represented by Patañjali presents techniques through which puruṣa (soul) can be realized as distinct from prakṛti (matter). Patañjali defines yoga as the cessation (niruddha) of the activities (vṛttis) of the citta. Historically Yoga just referred to a cluster of meditative techniques, some form of which was common to numerous different schools and sects, rather than a distinct philosophical school.

Yoga Sūtras The primary text for Yoga, one of the six classical
Schools of Indian philosophy; most scholars place the text circa 1st–2nd c.e.

_Yogi_ A practitioner of Yoga.

_Yugas_ Cyclical world ages; in every cycle there are four world ages known as _satya-yuga_ (golden age), _tretā-yuga, dvāpara-yuga_, and the present world age of _kali-yuga_ (most degenerate age).

_Yuj_ Contemplate, yoke, union; verbal root of the noun _yoga_.

*A Sanskrit word can have multiple meanings depending on the context in which the word is used.*
WORD INDEX

The index that appeared in the print version of this title does not match the pages in your eBook. Please use the search function on your eReading device to search for terms of interest.

For your reference, the terms that appear in the print index are listed below.

This index lists in Roman alphabetical order most of the key words in the Yoga Sūtras, together with a guide to the sūtra(s) in which each appears. The text of the cited sūtras is excerpted to indicate the context of the entry word; however, note that the Sanskrit case endings and rules of sandhi dictate that the entry word is often spelled differently, elided, or embedded in a compound word. Brackets around text within the citations provide implied context or indicate a pronoun or adjective reference. Brackets around sūtra numbers indicate that the sūtra implies only the entry word or refers to it using only an impersonal pronoun.

For the benefit of readers who are not specialized in Sanskrit, participles, pronominal forms, and negatives are listed separately, not under their verbal roots.

The index is not exhaustive, but focuses on key concepts and themes so the reader may easily trace where these are addressed in each pāda. Only words from the Yoga Sūtras are included; vocabulary of the commentators is not. To highlight prominent topics in the Sūtras, words that recur five times or more appear in bold in this index.

The English words in parentheses are those used in the context of the present translation; they are not necessarily literal translations. They are provided not as complete definitions (see the Glossary or the word translations following each sūtra), but as a memory aid for those newer to the Sanskrit terms.
äbhāsa (luminosity) svābhāsam [citta] IV.19
abhāva (absence; removal) vṛttir niḍrā I.10; antarāyābhāvaś I.29; [avidyā] abhāvāt-samyogābhāva II.25 [used twice]; eṣām-abhāve tad-abhāvah [saniskāras] IV.11 [used twice]
abhībhava (subjugation) abhībhava-prādurabhāvau III.9
abhijāta (transparent) abhijātasyeva maṇer I.41
abhīniveśa (will to live) [kleṣa] II.3; tathārūḍho ’bhīniveśaḥ II.9
abhīvyakti (manifestation) evabhīvyaktir vāsanānām IV.8
abhīyantara (internal, i.e., prāṇāyāma) bāhyābhīyantara-stamba-vṛttih II.50; bāhyābhīyantara-viṣayākṣepi II.51
abhīyāsa (practice) abhīyāsa-vairāgyābhāyām I.12; sthitau yatno ’bhīyāsaḥ I.13; [I.14] virāma-pratyayābhīyāsa I.18; eka-tattvābhīyāsaḥ I.32
ādārśa (vision) prātiṣṭhā-śrāvaṇa-vedanaḥādārśāsvāda-vāratā III.36
adhimātra (extreme) vitarka … mṛdu-madhyaḥdhamātra II.34
adhimātratva (ardent) madhyādhamātratvā [saṁvegānām] I.22
adhīṣṭhārtvā (supremacy) sarva-bhāvādhiṣṭhārtvam III.49, [III.50]
adhyāsa (superimposition) śabdārtha-pratyayānām itaretarādhyāsāt III.17
adhyātman (inner self) nirvicāra-vaiśāradye ’dhyātma-prasādāḥ I.47
adrśta (unseen) drṣṭadrśta-janma-vedanīyaḥ II.12
āgama (testimony) [pramāṇa] I.7
ahiṁsā (nonviolence) [yama] II.30; ahiṁsā-pratiṣṭhāyām II.35
ajñāna (ignorance) duḥkhajñānānanta-phalā II.34
ajñāta (not known) cittasya vastu jñātajñātam IV.17
akalpita (nonimaginary) vṛttir mahā-videha III.43
ākāra (form) ākārāpattau svabhūmi-saṁvedanam IV.22
akaraṇa (nonperforming) saṅgasmaya-karaṇam III.51
ākāśa (ether/sky) śrotākāśayoh sambandha III.41; kāyākāśayoh sambandha … cākāṣa-gamanam III.42 [used twice]
akliṣṭa (nondetrimental) vṛttayaḥ … kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ I.5
akrama (nonsequential) sarvathā-viṣayam akramam III.54
ākṣepin (surpassing) viṣayākṣepī caturthāḥ [prāṇāyāma] II.51
akusida (without interest) prasaṅkhyāne 'py akusīdasya IV.29
ālambana (support) abhāva-pratrayālambanā I.10; jñānālambanam I.38; hetu-phalāśrayālambanaiḥ IV.11
ālasya (sloth) [antarāya] I.30
aliṅga (undifferentiated, i.e., prakṛti) cāliṅga-paryavasānām I.45; liṅga-mātraliṅgāni guṇa II.19
āloka (vision, light) prajñālokaḥ III.5; pravṛttyālokanyāsāt III.25
anabhīghāta (nonaffliction, limitless) dvandvānabhighātāḥ II.48; taddharmānabhighātaḥ ca III.45
anāditva (without beginning) tāsām anāditvam [saṁskāras] IV.10
anāgata (future) duḥkham anāgatam II.16; atitānāgata-jñānam III.16; atītānāgataṁ svarūpato IV.12; [IV.13]
ānanda (bliss) [samprajñāta] I.17
ananta (never-ending) duḥkhājñānānanta-phalā II.34; śaithilyānanta [āsana] II.47
ānantarya (link) apyānantaryaṁ smṛti-saṁskārayor IV.9
ānantya (limitless) jñānasyānantyāt IV.31
anāśaya (without stock—of karma) dhyāna-jam anāśayam IV.6
anaśta (not ceased) naśtam apy anaśtam II.22
anātman (nonself) anityāśuci-duḥkhānātmasu II.5
anavacchāda (indeterminate, unseparate) kālenānavacchedāt I.26; laksṇa-desair anyatānavacchedāt III.53
anavacchinna (nonlimited, irrespective) jāti-desa-kāla-samayānāvacchinnaḥ II.31
anavadhāraṇa (nondiscernment) cobbhayānavadhāraṇam IV.20
anavasthitatva (instability) anavasthitatvāni [antarāya] I.30
aṅga (limb) aṅga-meyatva ... vikṣepa-saha-bhuvah I.31; yogāṅgānuṣṭhānād II.28; stāv aṅgāni II.29; śaucāt svāṅga-jugupsā II.40
anima (mystic power—lightness) [vibhūti] III.45
aniṣṭa (undesired) aniṣṭa-prasaṅgā III.51
anitya (ephemeral) anityāśuci-duḥkhānātmasu II.5
añjanatā (colored, influenced) añjanatā samāpattiḥ I.41
antar (other) jātyantara-parināmaḥ IV.2; cittāntara-dṛṣye IV.21; pratyayāntarāṇi IV.27
antar-arīga (internal limbs) trayam antarāṅgam [dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi] III.7
antarāya (disturbance) antarāyābhāvaś I.29; citta-vikṣepās te 'ntarāyāḥ I.30
antardhāna (invisibility) [vibhūti] III.21
aṇu (atom) paramāṇ-parama-mahattvāntah I.40
anubhūta (experienced) anubhūta viṣayāsampramoṣah I.11
anumāna (inference) [pramāṇa] I.7; śrutānumāna-prajñābhyaṁ I.49
anupaśya (perceive internally) pratyayānupaśyāḥ II.20
anupātin (follows as a consequence) sābda-jñānānupātī I.9; dharmānupātī dharmi III.14
anuśayin (stem from) sukhānuśayiḥ II.7; duḥkhānuśayi dveśaḥ II.8
ānuśravika (revealed in scripture) dṛṣṭānuśravika-viṣaya I.15
anuṣṭhāna (practice) yogāṅgānuṣṭhānād asuddhi-kṣaye II.28
anuttama (unexcelled) santoṣād anuttamaḥ sukha-lābhaḥ II.42
anvaya (connection, constitution) nirodha-kṣaṇa-cittānvayaḥ III.9; anvaya ... saṁyamād III.44; [guṇas] anvaya ... saṁyamād III.47
anya (other, distinct) saṁskāra-śeṣo 'nyaḥ I.18; anya-viṣayā I.49; anya-saṁskāra-pratibandhī I.50; tad-anyasādhāraṇatvāt II.22
anyatā (distinction) sattva-purusāntatā-khyāti III.49; anyatānavacchedāt tulyayoḥ III.53
anyatva (change) kramānyatvam pariṇāmāṇyaṁve hetuḥ III.15 [used twice]
aparāmrṣṭa (untouched) aparāmrṣṭaḥ ... Īśvaraḥ I.24
aparānta (death; final moment) aparānta-jñānam arisṭebhyaḥ III.22; pariṇāmāparānta-nirgrāhyah IV.33
aparigrāha (noncovetousness) [yama] II.30; aparigrāha-sthairye II.39
aparīṇāmitva (immutability) puruṣasyāpariṇāmitvāt IV.18
āpatti (pervade) [citta] ... āpattau svabuddhi-sarīvedanam IV.22
apavarga (liberation) bhogāpavargārtham drśyam II.18
apramāṇaka (unverifiable) [citer] apramāṇakam IV.16
apratisaṅkrama (unchanging) citr apratisaṅkramāyas IV.22
aprayojaka (noncausing) nimittam aprayojakam IV.3
apuṇya (nonmerit) puṇyāpuṇya-visoṣāyaṇām I.33; phalāḥ puṇyāpuṇya II.14
āpūra (filling in) prakṛtyāpūrāt IV.2

artha (meaning; object; purpose) [om] artha-bhāvanam I.28; [antarāya] pratiṣedhārtham I.32; śabdārtha-jñāna-vikalpāḥ I.42; artha-mātra-nirbhāsaḥ I.43; samādhi-bhāvanārthāḥ klesa-tanū-karaṇārthāḥ ca II.2 [used twice]; bhogāpavargārtham II.18; [puruṣa] tad-artha II.21; kṛtārthām II.22; [dhyāna] tad-evārthā-mātra III.3; śabdārtha-pratyayānām III.17; parārthāt śvārtha ... puruṣa III.35; cittaṁ sarvārtham IV.23; citram api parārthaṁ IV.24; kṛtārthaṁ ... guṇānām IV.32; puruṣārthā IV.34

arthatva (functionality; purpose) višeṣārthatvāt I.49; bhogaḥ parārthatvāt III.35

arthavattva (significance, purpose) [visoṣāya] III.44; [guṇas] III.47

asamprayoga (noncontact) svaiṣayāsamprayoge II.54

asamsarga (nonassociation) parair asaṁsargaḥ II.40

āsana (posture) [aṣṭāvāṅgāni] II.29; sthira-sukham āsanam II.46; [II.47]; [II.49]

asankīrṇa (distinct) sattva-puruṣayor atyantarāsankīrṇayoḥ III.35

āsaya (deposit) vipākāśayair I.24; karmāśayo II.12

āśeṣita (cultivated) [abhyāsa] satkārāsevito I.14

āśis (will, desire) caśiso nityatvāt IV.10

asmitā (ego) asmitā ... samprajñātāḥ I.17; asmitā ... klesāḥ. II.3; ekātmatevāsmitā II.6; nirmāṇa-cittān-asmīta IV.4

āśraya (substratum) hetu-phalāśrayālambanaiḥ [saṁskāras] IV.11

āśrayatva (support, basis) satya ... āśrayatvam II.36

aṣṭa (eight) [aṣṭāvāṅgāni] II.29

asteya (nonstealing) [yama] II.30; asteya-pratiṣṭhāyām II.37
aśuci (impure) anityāśuci-duḥkhānātmasu II.5
aśuddhi (impurity) aśuddhi-kṣayāt tapasaḥ II.43
āsvāda (taste) [vibhūti] III.36
atiprasaṅga (infinite regress) buddher atiprasaṅgaḥ IV.21
atīta (the past) atitānāgata-jñānam III.16; atitānāgam ati svarūpato IV.12; [IV.13]
ātman (self; essence) nitya-śuci-sukhātma II.5; guṇātmānaḥ IV.13; drśyasyātmā II.21; ātma-darśana-yogyatvāṇi II.41; ātma-bhāva-bhāvanā IV.25
ātmata (self-ness; nature) ekātmatevāsmitā II.6
āvaraṇa (covering) prakāśāvaraṇaṃ II.52; prakāśāvaraṇa-kṣayaḥ III.43; sarvāvaraṇa-malāpetasya IV.31
avasthā (condition) dharma-lakṣaṇāvastha-parināmā III.13; [III.16] avasthāna (abiding) svarūpe 'vasthānam I.3
avidyā (ignorance) [kleśa] II.3; avidyā-kṣetram uttareśāṁ II.4; nitya-śuci-sukhātma-khyātir avidyā II.5; [saṁyoga] hetur avidyā II.24; [II.25]
aviplava (undeceiving) viveka-khyātir aviplavā II.26
avirati (lack of detachment) [antarāya] I.30
aviśeṣa (unparticularized; nondistinction) viśeṣāviśeṣa ... guṇa-parvāṇi II.19; prayāviśeṣo bhogāḥ III.35
avyapadesya (future) sāntotidivyapadesya-dharma III.14
āyus (lifespan) jātyāyur-bhogāḥ II.13; [II.14]
bahir-aṇga (external limbs) bahir-arigaṁ nīrbījasya III.8
bāhya (external) bāhyābhyaṇtara-stambha-vṛttīḥ II.50; bāhyābhyaṇtara-viśayākṣepī caturthāḥ II.51
bala (strength) maitry ādiṣu balāṇi III.23; baleṣu hasti-balādini III.24; bala ... kāya-sampat III.46
bandha (bound) deṣa-bandhaś cittasya dhāraṇā III.1; bandha-kāraṇa-śaithilyāt III.38
bhauma (places) sarva-bhaumā mahā-vratam II.31
bhava (becoming) bhava-pratyayo I.19
bhāva (state of existence) vikaraṇa-bhāvaḥ III.48; sarva-bhāvādhiṣṭhāṭtvam III.49; ātma-bhāva-bhāvanā IV.25
bhāvana (contemplation, cultivation) tad-artha-bhāvanam I.28; bhāvanārthaḥ II.2; pratipakṣa-bhāvanam II.33, II.34
bhāvanā (meditation) ātma-bhāva-bhāvanā IV.25
bhāvanātas (from the attitude) bhāvanātaś citta-prasādanam I.33
bheda (piercing, difference) prakṛtīnāṁ varaṇa-bhedas tu IV.3; pravṛtti-bhede IV.5; adhva-bhedād IV.12; citta-bhedāt IV.15
bhoga (experience) jātyāyur-bhogāḥ II.13; bhogāpavargārtham II.18; pratayāvīśesō bhogāḥ III.35
bhrānti (misapprehension) bhrānti-darśana ... antarāyāḥ I.30
bhūmi (stage, ground) drḍha-bhūmiḥ I.14; prānta-bhūmiḥ II.27; tasya bhūmiṣu viniyogaḥ III.6
bhūmikatva (ground, base) ālabdha-bhūmikatva [antarāya] I.30
bhūta (element, being) bhūtendriyātmakam I.18; bhūtendriyeṣu III.13; sarva-bhūta-ruta III.17; bhūta-jayaḥ III.44
bhūtatva (object, being) tasyāviṣayabhūtatvāt III.20
bija (seed) sarvajña-bījam I.25; doṣa-bīja-kṣaye III.50
brahmacarya (celibacy) [yama] II.30; brahmacarya-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ virya-lābhaḥ II.38
buddhi (intelligence) buddhi-buddher atiprasaṅgaḥ IV.21; svabuddhi-sarvedanam IV.22
cakra (wheel) nābhi-cakre III.29
caturtha (fourth) viṣayākṣepī caturthaḥ II.51
cetanā (consciousness) tataḥ pratyak-cetanādhitamo ’py antarāyābhavaś ca I.29
chidra (interval) tac-chidreṣu pratyayāntarāṇi IV.27
citi (awareness) citer apratisaṅkramāyās IV.22; svarūpa-pratiṣṭhā vā citi-śaktir IV.34
citta (mind) citta-vṛtti I.2; citta vikṣepāḥ I.30; citta-prasādanam I.33; cittam I.37; cittasya II.54; deśa-bandhaś cittasya III.1; nirodha-kṣaṇa-cittānvayaḥ III.9; cittasya III.11; cittasyaikāgratā-pariṇāmaḥ III.12; para-citta-jñānam III.19
citta-saṁvit III.34; cittasya III.38; nirmāṇa-cittāny asmitā-mātrāt IV.4; cittam ekam-anēkeśām IV.5; citta-bhedāt tayor vibhaktan IV.15; caika-citta-tantram IV.16; cittasya vastu jñātājñātām IV.17; jñātāś citta-vṛttayas IV.18; [IV.19]; [IV.20]; cittāntara-ḍrśye IV.21; cittam IV.23; [IV.24]; cittām IV.26

darśana (perception, vision) bhrānti-darśanālabdhā I.30; drg-darśana II.6; jayātma-darśana-yogyatvāni II.41; siddhi-darśanam III.32
darśin (the seer) viśeṣa-darśinaḥ IV.25; [II.21]
daurmanasya (dejection) daurmanasya ... vikṣepa-saha-bhuvaḥ I.31
desā (place) jāti-desa-kāla-saṁayānāvachchinnāḥ II.31; vṛttih-desa-kāla-saṅkhyaḥbhīḥ II.50; desa-bandhaś cittasya dhāraṇāa III.1; jāti-lakṣaṇa-desair anyatānāvachchedāt III.53; jāti-desa-kāla-vyavahītānām IV.9
devatā (deity) svādhīnayād iṣṭa-devatā-samprayogah II.44
dhāraṇā (concentration) [aṣṭāv anīgāni] II.29; dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ II.53; desa-bandhaś cittasya dhāraṇāa III.1; [III.4]; [III.7]; [III.8]
dharma (nature, characteristics) dharma-lakṣ anāvastha-parināmā III.13; dharmānapaṭi dharmī III.14; [III.15]; [III.16]; tad-dharmānabhīghataḥ ca III.45; asty adhya-bhedād dharmānapaṭa IV.12; dharma-meghaḥ samādhīḥ IV.29
dharmin (possessor of characteristic) dharmānapaṭi dharmī III.14
dhyāna (meditation) yathābhimata-dhyānād vā I.39; dhyāna-heyaś tad-vṛttaṇāh II.11; [aṣṭāv anīgāni] II.29; tatra pratyayaka-tānataḥ dhyānaṁ III.2; [III.3]; [III.4]; [III.7]; [III.8]; dhyāna-jam anāśayam IV.6
dipti (lamp, radiance) jñāna-diptir āviveka-khyāteḥ II.28
dirgha (prolonged) dirgha-kāla-nairantarya I.14; paridṛṣṭo dirgha-sūkṣmaḥ II.50
doṣa (fault) doṣa-bīja-kṣaye III.50
draṣṭr (seer) draṣṭṛḥ svarūpe 'vasthānam I.3; draṣṭṛ-ḍṛṣyayoh II.17; draṣṭā drśi-mātraḥ II.20; draṣṭṛ-ṛṣyoparaktam IV.23
dṛḍha (firmly) dṛḍha-bhūmiḥ I.14
dṛś (the seer) dṛg-darśana II.6; [vṛtti-sārūpyam itaratra I.4]
dṛśi (seeing) draṣṭā dṛśi-mātraḥ II.20; tad-dṛśeḥ kaivalyam II.25
dṛṣṭa (seen) dṛṣṭānuśravika-viṣaya I.15; dṛṣṭādṛṣṭa-janma-vedaniyāḥ II.12
dṛśya (the seen, knowable) draṣṭr-dṛśyayoḥ II.17; dṛśyam II.18; tad-
artha eva dṛśyasyātma II.21; cittāntara-dṛṣye IV.21; draṣṭr-
dṛśyoparaktam IV.23
dṛśyatva (nature of being seen) svābhāsaṁ dṛśyatvāt IV.19
duḥkha (suffering, painful) duḥkha ... vikṣepa-saha-bhuvah I.31;
sukha-duḥkha-puṇyāpuṇya-viṣayānāṁ I.33; anityāśuci-
duḥkhānātmasu II.5; duḥkhānuśayi dveṣaḥ II.8; duḥkhājñān-
vṛtti-virodhāc ca duḥkham eva sarvam II.15 [used twice];
heyaṁ duḥkham anāgatam II.16; [II.17]; duḥkhājñānānanta-
phalā II.34
dvandva (duality/opposites) tato dvandvānabhīghātāḥ II.48
dveṣa (aversion) [kleśa] II.3; duḥkhānuśayi dveṣaḥ II.8
eka (one, single) eka-tattvābhīṣayāḥ I.32; ekātmatevāsmitā II.6; cittam
ekam anekeṣām IV.5; eka-rūpatvāt IV.9; na caika-citta-tantram
IV.16; eka-samaye IV.20
ekāgratā (one-pointedness) sarvārthataikāgratayoḥ III.11;
cittasyaikāgratā- pariṇāmaḥ III.12
ekāgyra (one-pointedness) saumanasyaikāgryendriya-jayātma II.41
eka-tānata (fixed on one point) pratyayaika-tānata III.2
gati (flow, movement) śvāsa-prāśvāsayor gati-vicchedaḥ II.49; dhruve
tad-gati-jñānam III.28
grahaṇa (instrument/process of grasping knowledge) grahitr-
grahaṇa-grāhyeṣu tat-stha-tad-aṅjanatā I.41; grahaṇa ... 
saṁyamād indriya-jayaḥ III.47
grahitr (the knower) grahitr-grahaṇa-grāhyeṣu I.41
grahya (the known) grahitr-grahaṇa-grāhyeṣu I.41; tad-grāhyā-śakti-
stambhе III.21
guṇa (quality of primordial nature, i.e., sattva, rajas and tamas)
guṇa-vaitṛṣṇyam I.16; guṇa-vṛtti II.15; guṇa-parvāṇi II.19;
guṇātmānaḥ IV.13; samāptir guṇānām IV.32; guṇānāṁ pratiprasavaḥ IV.34

guru (teacher/mentor) pūrveṣām api guruḥ I.26

hāna (freedom, removal) sānyogābhāvo hānam II.25; viveka-khyātir aviplavā hānopāyaḥ II.26; hānam-eśāṁ kleśavad IV.28

hetu (cause) sānyogō heyā-hetuḥ II.17; svarūpopalabdhi-hetuḥ sānyogō II.23; tasya hetur avidyā II.24; kramānyatvāṁ pariṇāmānyatve hetuḥ III.15; hetu-phalāśrayālambanaiḥ IV.11

hetutva (result) punyāpuṇya-hetutvāt II.14

heya (to be avoided, eliminated) pratiprasava-heyāḥ II.10; dhyāna-heyās tad-vṛttayaḥ II.11; heyāṁ duḥkham II.16; sānyogō heya-hetuḥ II.17

hiṁsā (violence) vitarkā himsādayaḥ II.34

hlāda (pleasure) hlāda-paritāpa-phaḷāḥ II.14

hṛdaya (heart) hṛdaye citta-saṁvit III.34

indriya (sense-organ) bhūtendriyātmakam II.18; saumanasyaikāgryendraiyā-jayātma II.41; kāyendriya-siddhir II.43; ivendriyāṁ pratyāhāraḥ II.54; paramā-vāṣyatendriyāṇāṁ II.55; bhūtendriyeṣu III.13; indriya-jayaḥ III.47

Īśvara (the Lord) Īśvara-praṇidhānād I.23; puruṣa-viśeṣa Īśvaraḥ I.24; [I.25]; [I.26]; [I.27]; svādhyāyeśvara … kriyā-yogāḥ II.1; Īśvara-praṇidhānāṁ niyamāḥ II.32; īśvara-praṇidhānāt II.45

ja (born) taj-jaḥ saṁskāro I.50; sāmyamād viveka-jaṁ jñānam III.52; vivekajāṁ jñānam III.54; samādhi-jaḥ siddhayāḥ IV.1; dhyāna-jam anāśayam IV.6

janman (birth) ṅṛṣṭādṛṣṭa-jamna-vedanīyaḥ II.12; janma-kathantā-sambodhaḥ II.39; janmauṣadhi-mañtra-tapaḥ IV.1

japa (repetition) taj-japas tad-artha-bhāvanam I.28

jāti (birth, category) jātyāyur-bhogāḥ II.13; [II.14]; jāti … anavacchinnāḥ II.31; pūrva-jāti-jñānam III.18; jāti-lakṣaṇadeśair anyatānavacchedāt III.53; jāty-antara-pariṇāmaḥ IV.2;
jāti-deśa-kāla-vyavahitānām IV.9
javitva (quickness) mano-javitvam III.48
jaya (mastery) jayāma II.41; jayāt praṇālokaḥ III.5; udāna-jayāj valanam III.39; samāna-jayāt III.40; bhūta-jayāḥ III.44; indriya-jayāḥ III.47; pradhāna-jayaḥ ca III.48
jāyante (are born) prātibha-śrāvaṇa ... jāyante III.36
jña (knowing) niratiśāyaṁ sarvajña bijam I.25 [see sarvajña]

jñāna (knowledge, insight) viparyayo mithyā-jñānam I.8; śabda-jñānānupāti I.9; śabdārtha-jñāna I.42; svapna-nidrā-jñānalambanam I.38; atītānāgata-jñānam III.16; sarva-bhūta-ruta-jñānam III.17; pūrva-jāti-jñānam III.18; para-cittā-jñānam III.19; [III.20]; aparānta-jñānam III.22; sūkṣma-vyavahita-viprakṛṣṭa-jñānam III.25; bhuvana-jñānam III.26; tārā-vyūha-jñānam III.27; jñāna-diptir āviveka-khyāteḥ II.28; tad-gati-jñānam III.28; puruṣa-jñānam III.35; [III.36]; viveka-jam jñānam III.52, III.54; malāpetasya jñānasayānantyāj jñeyam-aplam IV.31

jñāta (known) vastu jñātājñātam IV.17; sadā jñātāś citta-vṛttayah IV.18

jñātṛtva (knowingness) III.49 [see sarva-jñātṛtvam]; [III.50]

jñeya (to be known) jñeyam alpam IV.31
jugupsā (distaste) svāṅga-jugupsā II.40
jvalana (radiance) samāna-jayāj jvalanam III.40

jyotis (light) mūrdha-jyotiṣi III.32
jyotismany (illuminating) viśokā vā jyotismatī I.36

kaivalya (absolute independence) tad-drśeḥ kaivalyam II.25; doṣa-bīja-kṣaye kaivalyam III.50; sattva-puruṣayoḥ śuddhi-sāmye kaivalyam III.55; kaivalya-prāgbhāram cittām IV.26; guṇānāṁ pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyam IV.34

kāla (time) kāla-nairantarya I.14; kālenāvacchedāt I.26; jāti-deśa-kāla-samayānacchedānāḥ II.31; deśa-kāla-sankhyābhiḥ II.50; jāti-deśa-kāla-vyavahitānāṁ IV.9

karaṇa (doing, making) saṁskāra-sākṣāt-karaṇat III.18
kāraṇa (cause) bandha-kāraṇa-śaithilyāt III.38

karman (action) kleśa-karma-vipākāsayaīr I.24; kleśa-mūlaḥ karmāsayaḥ II.12; sopakramaṁ nirupakramaṁ ca karma III.22; karmāsuklākṛṣṇam IV.7; [IV.8]; kleśa-karma-nivṛttiḥ IV.30

karuṇā (compassion) maitri-karuṇā-muditokeśāṇām I.33

kāya (body) kāyendriya-siddhir II.43; kāya-rūpa-saṁyamāt III.21; kāya-vyūha-jñānam III.29; kāyākāsayoḥ sambandha III.42; kāya-sampat III.45, 46

khyāti (discernment, insight) puruṣa-khyāte guṇa vaitṛṣṇyām I.16; viveka-khyātir apiplavā II.26; sattva-puruṣānyatā-khyāti III.49; viveka-khyāte dharma-meghaḥ IV.29

kleśa (obstacle, affliction) kleśa-karma-vipākāsayaīr I.24; kleśa-tanū-karaṇārthaḥ ca II.2; avidyāsmita-rāga-dvesābhinivesāḥ kleśāḥ II.3; [II.10]; [II.11]; kleśa-mūlaḥ karmāsayaḥ II.12; [II.13]; kleśavat [sam-skāras] IV.28; kleśa-karma-nivṛttiḥ IV.30

kliṣṭa (detrimental) vṛttayaḥ pañcatayaḥ kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ I.5

krama (sequence, succession) kramānyatvam III.15; kṣaṇa-tat-kramaḥ II.52; pariṇāma-krama-samāptir guṇānām IV.32; kṣaṇa-pratiyogī pariṇāmāparānta-nirgrāhyah kramaḥ IV.33

kriyā (action, activity) kriyā-yogah II.1; prakāśa-kriyā-sthiti-śīlam II.18; kriyā-phaḷāśrayatvam II.36

krodha (anger) vitarka ... krodha ... pūrvakā II.34

kṛta (done, fulfilled) kṛtārtham II.22; kṛtārthanāṁ pariṇāma-krama-samāp tir guṇānām IV.32

kṣaṇa (moment) nirodha-kṣaṇa-cittānvayaḥ III.9; kṣaṇa-tat-kramaḥ II.52; pariṇāma-krama-samāptir guṇānām IV.32; kṣaṇa-pratiyogī pariṇāmāparānta-nirgrāhyah kramaḥ IV.33

kṣaya (removal, destruction) yogāṅgānuṣṭhānād aśuddhi-kṣaye II.28; aśuddhi-kṣayāt tapasaḥ II.43; kṣayodayau cittāya III.11; prakāśāvaraṇa-kṣayah III.43; doṣa-bīja-kṣaye III.50

kṣetra (field) avidyā-kṣetram II.4

kṣetrika (farmer) varaṇa-bhedas tu tataḥ kṣetrikavat IV.3

kṣīṇa (weakens) kṣīṇa-vṛtter I.41

kṣiyate (weakened) kṣiyate prakāśāvaraṇam II.52
kṣudh (hunger) kṣut-pipāsā-nivṛttīh III.30

lābha (attained) vírya-lābhaḥ II.38; suṣka-lābhaḥ II.42

lakṣaṇa (distinctive characteristic) dharma-lakṣaṇāvasthā III.13; [III.16]; jāti-lakṣaṇa-deśair III.53

lāvanya (gracefulness) lāvanya ... kāya-sampat III.46

laya (merged) prakṛti-layānām I.19

liṅga-mātra (particularized) viśeṣāviśeṣa-liṅga-mātri-līṅgāni guṇa-parvāṇī II.19

lobha (greed) vitarka ... lobha ... pūrvakā II.34

madhyā (medium, middling) mṛdu-madhyādhimātratvāt [saṁvegānām] I.22; vitarka ... mṛdu-madhyādhimātrā II.34

mahant (great) mahā-vratam II.31; vṛttir mahā-videhā III.43

maitrī (friendliness) maitrī-karuṇā-muditopekṣāṇām I.33; maitryadiṣu balāṇī III.23

mala (impurity) sarvāvaraṇa-malāpetasya IV.31

manas (mind) manasaḥ sthiti-nibandhanī I.35; yogyatā manasaḥ II.53; mano-javitvam III.48

maṇi (jewel) abhijātasyevā maṇer I.41

mantra (sacred chant) janmauṣadhi-mantra-tapaḥ IV.1

mātra (only, alone) śuṇyevārtha-mātra-nirbhāsā I.43; liṅga-mātra-līṅgāni guṇa-parvāṇī II.19; draṣṭā dṛśi-mātraḥ II.20; tad evārtha-mātra-nirbhāsam III.3; sattva-puruṣānyatā-khyāti-

mātrasya III.49; asmitā-mātrāt IV.4

megha (cloud) dharma-meghaḥ samāḍhiḥ IV.2

mithyā (false) mithyā-jñānam I.8

mohā (delusion) vitarka ... mohā-pūrvakā II.34

mṛdu (mild) mṛdu-madhyādhimātratvāt [saṁvegānām] I.22; vitarka ... mṛdu-madhyādhimātrā II.34

muditā (joy) maitrī-karuṇā-muditopekṣāṇām I.33

mūla (root) kleśa-mūlaḥ karmāśayaḥ II.12; sati mūle tad-vipākaḥ II.13

nāḍī (subtle channel) kūrma-nāḍyām III.31
nairantarya (uninterruptedly) dīrgha-kāla-nairantarya I.14
naṣṭa (ceased) naṣṭam apy anaṣṭam II.22
nibandhanin (steadiness) sthiti-nibandhani I.35
nidrā (sleep) nidrā-smṛtayaḥ I.6; abhāva-pratyayālambanā vṛttir nidrā I.10; svapna-nidrā-jñāna I.38
nimitta (instrumental cause) nimittam aprayojakam IV.3
nimna (inclined toward) viveka-nimnam IV.26
niratiśaya (unsurpassed) niratiśāyaṁ sarvajña-bijam I.25
nirbhāsa (shining forth) svarūpa-śūnyevārtha-mātra-nirbhāsā I.43; evārtha-mātra-nirbhāsam III.3
nirbijā (seedless) [I.49]; sarva-nirodhaṁ nirbijāḥ samādhiḥ I.51; tad api bahir-aṅgam nirbijāsya III.8
nirgrāhya (perceivable) pariṇāmāparānta-nirgrāhyaḥ kramaḥ IV.33
nirmāṇa (created) nirmāṇa-cittāni IV.4
niruddha (restraint, cessation) citta- vrūtthi-niruddhaḥ I.2; abhyāsa- vairāgyābhyaṁ tan-niruddhaḥ I.12; tasyāpi nirodhe sarva- nirodhaṁ I.51 [used twice]; vyuṭhāna-nirodha-saṁskārayor … nirodha-kṣaṇa-cittānvayo nirodha-pariṇāmaḥ III.9 [used thrice]
nirupakrama (without fruition) sopakramaṁ nirupakramaṁ ca karma III.22
nirvicāra (samādhi state without subtle awareness) savicārā nirvicārā ca süksma I.44; nirvicāra-vaiśāradye I.47; [I.48]
nirvitarka (samādhi state without physical awareness) smṛti- pariśuddhau … nirvitarkā I.43
nitya (eternal) nitya-śuci-sukhātmā-khyātir II.5
nityatva (eternity) cāśiso nityatvāt IV.10
nivṛtti (cessation) pipāsā-nivṛttih III.30; ātma-bhāva-bhāvanā-vinivṛttih IV.25; kleśa-karma-nivṛttih IV.30
niyama (observances) [aṣṭāv aṅgāni] II.29; śauca-santoṣa- … niyamāḥ II.32
nyāsa (focusing) pravṛttyā lokanyāsāt III.25
pañcatayya (fivefold) vrūṭtayaḥ pañcatayyaḥ klīṣṭākliṣṭāḥ I.5
**para** (superior, other) tat param [vairāgyam] I.16; parair asaṁsargah II.40; para-citta-jñānam III.19; bhogaḥ parārthatvāt III.35; citram api parārtham IV.24; para-śārirāvesah III.38

**parama** (greatest) paramānu-parama-mahattva I.40 [used twice]; paramā-vaśyatendriyaṁ II.55

**paramānu** (most minute) paramānu-parama-mahattvānto 'śya vaśikāraḥ I.40

**pariṇāma** (consequence, transformation) pariṇāma-tāpa-saṁskāra II.15; nirodha-pariṇāmaḥ III.9; samādhi-pariṇāmaḥ III.11; cittasyaikāgratā-pariṇāmaḥ III.12; dharma-lakṣaṇāvasthā-pariṇāmā III.13; kramāntvān pariṇāṁyate hetuḥ III.15; pariṇāma-traya III.16; jāty-antara-pariṇāmaḥ IV.2; pariṇāmaikatvād vastu-tattvam IV.14; pariṇāma-krama-samāptir guṇānām IV.32; pariṇāmāparānta IV.33

**pariśuddhi** (purification) smṛti-pariśuddhau I.43

**paritāpa** (pain) hlāda-paritāpa-phaḷāḥ II.14

**parvan** (stage) guṇa-parvāṇi II.19

**paryavasāna** (termination) cālinga-paryavasānam I.45

**phala** (fruit, result) hlāda-paritāpa-phaḷāḥ II.14; duḥkhājñānānanta-phaḷā II.34; kriya-phaḷāśrayatvam II.36; hetu-phaḷāśrayālambanaṁ IV.11

**prabhu** (the lord, puruṣa) jñātāś citta-vṛttayas tat-prabhoḥ IV.18

**pracchardana** (exhalation) pracchardana ... praṇasya I.34

**pradhāna** (primordial matter) pradhāna-jayaś ca III.48

**prādurbhāva** (manifestation) saṁskārayor abhīhava-prādurbhāvau III.9; tato 'ṇimādi-prādurbhāvah III.45

**prāgbhāra** (inclined toward) kaivalya-prāgbhāraṁ cittām IV.26

**prajñā** (wisdom, discernment) samādhi-prajñā I.20; ētam-bharā tatra prajñā I.48; śrutānumāna-prajñābhyām I.49; [I.50]; prāntabhūmiḥ prajñā II.27; prajñālokaḥ III.5

**prakāśa** (light) prakāśa-kriyā-sthiti II.18; prakāśāvaraṇam II.52; cakṣuh-prakāśāsaṁ III.21; prakāśāvaraṇa-kṣayaḥ III.43

**prakṛti** (primordial matter) [I.45]; prakṛtyāpūrāḥ IV.2; prakṛtināṁ varaṇa-bhedas IV.3
prakṛti-laya (merged in matter) bhava-pratyayo videha-prakṛti-layānām I.19
pramāda (carelessness) [antarāya] I.30
pramāṇa (right knowledge) pramāṇa-viparyaya ... I.6; pratyakṣ ānumānāgamāḥ I.7
prāṇa (breath) pracchardana-vidhāraṇābhhyāṁ vā prāṇasya I.34
praṇava (sacred syllable: oṁ) vācakah praṇavaḥ I.27; [I.28]; [I.29]
praṇāyāma (breath control) [aṣṭāv angāni] II.29; śvāsa-praśvāsayor ... prāṇāyāmaḥ II.49; [II.50]; [II.51]
praṇidhāna (devotion, surrender) Īśvara-praṇidhānād I.23; praṇidhānāni kriyā-yogah II.1; Īśvara-praṇidhānāni niyamāḥ II.32; saṁādiḥ-siddhir Īśvara-praṇidhānāt II.45
prasāda (lucidity) adhyātma-prasādaḥ I.47
prasādana (lucid) citta-prasādanam I.33
prasānikaḥ (meditative wisdom) prasaṅkhyāne 'py akusīdasya IV.29
praśānta (peaceful) praśānta-vāhitā III.10
prasānta (dormant) [kleśas] prasupta-tanu ... II.4
praśvāsa (exhalation) praśvāsa vikṣepa-saha-bhuvaḥ I.31; śvāsa-praśvāsayor gati-vicchedaḥ II.49
praṭibandhin (obstructs) taj-jaḥ saṁskārā 'nya-saṁskāra-praṭibandhi I.50
praṭibha (intuition) prātiṣṭhāyām vā sarvaṁ III.33; prātiṣṭhā-śrāvaṇa III.36
praṭipakṣa (opposite) praṭipakṣa-bhāvanam II.33, II.34
praṭipatti (ascertainment) tulyayos tataḥ praṭipattiḥ III.53
praṭiprasava (return to original state) pratiṣṭhāyām II.10;
guṇānāṁ praṭiprasavaḥ IV.34
praṭiṣedha (repel) [vikṣepa] pratiṣedhārtham I.32
praṭiṣṭhā (situate) svarūpa-praṭiṣṭhā vā citi-śaktir IV.34
praṭiṣṭhāya (being established in) ahiṁsa-praṭiṣṭhāyāṁ II.35; satya-praṭiṣṭhāyāṁ II.36; asteya-praṭiṣṭhāyāṁ II.37; brahmacarya-praṭiṣṭhāyāṁ II.38
pratiyogin (correlative) kṣaṇa-pratiyogi IV.33
pratyāhāra (sense withdrawal) [aṣṭā vāṅgāni] II.29; ivendriyāṇāṁ pratyāhāraḥ II.54; [II.55]
pratyak-cetanā (inner-consciousness) pratyak-cetanādhiγamoḥ I.29
pratyakṣa (sense perception) [pramāṇa] I.7
pratyaya (idea, cause) pratyayālambanā vṛttir nidrā I.10; virāma-pratyayābhyaśa I.18; bhava-pratyayaḥ I.19; dṛṣṭi ... pratyayānupasyaḥ II.20; pratyayaika-tānatā III.2; tulya-pratyayau cittasya III.12; śabdārtha-pratyayānāṁ itaretarābhyaśāt III.17; pratyayasya para III.19; pratyayāviśeṣāḥ III.35; pratyayāntarāṇī saṁskārebhyāḥ IV.27
pravṛtti (activity) pravṛttir utpannā manasaḥ I.35; pravṛttyā lokanyāsāt III.25; pravṛtti-bhede prayojakaṁ IV.5
prayatna (effort) prayatna-śaithilyānanta II.47
prayojaka (instigator) prayojakaṁ cīttam ekam IV.5
punya (virtue) punyāpunya I.33, II.14
puruṣa (Self, soul) puruṣa-khyāter I.16; puruṣa-viśeṣa Īśvaraḥ I.24; [II.21]; sattva-puruṣayor atyantāsaṅkīrmayaḥ ... bhogāḥ ... samyamāt puruṣa-jñānam III.35 [used twice]; sattva-puruṣānyatā III.49; sattvā-puruṣayoh śuddhi-sāmye III.55; puruṣasyāpariṇāmitvāt IV.18; puruṣārtha-sūnyānām IV.34
pūrva (previous) pratyayābhyaśa-pūrvaḥ I.18; pūrveśām api guruḥ I.26; trayam antarāṅgam pūrvebhyaḥ III.7; pūrva-jāti-jñānam III.18
pūrvaka (preceded by) prajñā-pūrvaka I.20; moha-pūrvakā II.34
rāga (desire, attachment) vīta-rāga-viṣayam I.37; [kleśa] II.3; sukhānuśayī rāgaḥ II.7
rasa (will, tendency) svarasa-vāhi viduṣaḥ II.9
ratna (jewel) sarva-ratnopasthānam II.37
ṛtambhara (truth-bearing) ṛtam-bharā tatra prajñā I.48
rūpa (form, nature) atad-rūpa-pratiṣṭham I.8; rūpānugamāt samprajñātaḥ I.17; sva-svāmi-śaktyoh svarūpa II.23; cīttasya svarūpa II.54; svarūpa-sūnyam iva III.3; kāya-rūpa-saṁyamāt
III.21; rūpa … kāya-sampat III.46; svarūpa-pratiṣṭhā IV.34
rūpatva (uniformity) ekarūpatvāt IV.9

śabda (word, verbal) śabda-jñānānapūti I.9; śabdārtha-jñāna I.42; śabdārtha-pratyayānām III.17

sabīja (with seed) sabījaḥ samādhiḥ I.46

sādhāraṇatva (common experience) anaṣṭam tadbhāva-sādhāraṇatvāt II.22

śaithilya (relaxation) prayatna-śaithilya II.47; bandha-kāraṇa-śaithilyāt III.38

sākṣat (direct [visual] perception) saṁskāra-sākṣat III.18

śakti (power, capacity) dṛg-darśana-śaktyor II.6; tadbhāva-śakti III.21; sva-svāmi-śaktyoh II.23; citi-śaktir IV.34

śālambana (with support) tat-sālambanam III.20 [here “object”]

samādhi (meditative absorption) śraddhā-vīrya-smṛti-samādhi-prajñā I.20; sa-bijāḥ samādhiḥ I.46; nirbijāḥ samādhiḥ I.51; samādhi-bhāvanārthaḥ II.2; [aṣṭāv aṅgāni] II.29; samādhi-siddhir II.45; tad evārtha-mātra-nirbhāsam svarūpa-ś ūnyam iva samādhiḥ III.3; [III.4]; [III.7]; [III.8]; samādhi-parināmaḥ III.11; te samādhi hāv upasargāḥ III.37; samādhi-jāḥ siddhayāḥ IV.1; dharma-meghaḥ samādhiḥ IV.29

samāna (middle breath) samāna-jayāt III.40

samāpatti (absorption, engrossment) tat-stha-tad-añjanatā samāpattiḥ I.41; savitarkāḥ samāpattiḥ I.42; [I.43]; [I.46]; prayatna-śaithilyānanta-samāpattibhyām II.47; laghu-tūla-sam āpatteś-ca III.42; [II.48]

samāpti (cessation) pariṇāma-krama-samāptir-guṇānām IV.32

samaya (circumstance) jāti-deśa-kāla-samayānacchinnāḥ II.31; eka-samaye cobhayānavadhāraṇam IV.20 [here, “simultaneously”]

sambandha (relationship) śrotrākāśayoḥ sambandha-samyamād III.41; kāyākāśayoḥ sambandha-sānyamāt III.42

sambodha (knowledge) janma-kathantā-sambodhaḥ II.39

saṁhananatva (solid) vajra-saṁhananatvāni kāya-sampat III.46
saṁjñā (consciousness) vaśikāra-saṁjñā vairāgyam I.15
sampad (accomplishment, perfection) kāya-sampat III.45, III.46
samprajñāta (samādhi state still using mind and object) vitarka-vicārānandāsmitā-rūpānugamāt samprajñātaḥ I.17; [I.18]; [I.19]; [I.20]; [I.21]
samprayoga (connection) īṣṭa-devatā-samprayogah II.44
saṁśaya (doubt) [antarāya] I.30
saṁskāra (subliminal imprint) pūrvaḥ saṁskāra-śeṣo 'nyaḥ I.18; anya-saṁskāra-pratibandhi I.50; parināma-tāpa-saṁskāra-duḥkhhair II.15; nirodha-saṁskārayor abhibhava-prādurbhāvau III.9; praśānta-vāhitā saṁskārāt III.10; [IV.10]; [IV.11]; [IV.28]
saṁvedana (knowing) -pracāra-saṁvedanāc ca III.38; svabuddhi-saṁvedanam IV.22
saṁvega (intense) tīvra-saṁvegānām I.21; [I.22]
saṁvid (knowledge) citta-saṁvit III.34
sāmya (equality, commonness) sattva-puruṣayoh śuddhi-sāmye kaivalyam III.55; vastu-sāmye citta-bhedāt tayor vibhaktah panthāḥ IV.15
saṁyama (performing dhāraṇā, dhyāna and samādhi simultaneously on the same object) trayam ekatra saṁyamah III.4; [III.5]; [III.6]; pariṇāma-traya-saṁyamād III.16; tat-pravibhāga-saṁyamāt III.17; kāya-rūpa-saṁyamāt III.21; karma tat-saṁyamād III.22; sūrye saṁyamāt III.26; svārtha-saṁyamāt III.35; śrotrākāśayoh sambandha-saṁyamād III.41; kāyākāśayoh sambandha-saṁyamāl-laghu-tūla-samāpatteḥ III.42; sthūla-svarūpa-sūkṣmānvayārthavattva-saṁyamād III.44; grahaṇa-svarūpāsmitānvayārthavattva-saṁyamād III.47; kṣaṇa-tat-kramayoh saṁyamād III.52; [III.23, 24, 27–32, 34, 35, 48, 53 also list siddhis attained through saṁyama; the word is merely implied]
saṁyoga (conjunction) draṣṭṛ-drśyayoh saṁyogo heya-hetuh II.17; svarūpopalabdhi-hetuh saṁyogah II.23; tad-abhāvāt saṁyogābhāvah II.25; [II.24]
saṅga (attachment, contact) saṅgasmayākaraṇam III.51; jala-parīka-
śānta (past, quiescent) śāntoditau III.12; śāntoditāvyapadesya III.14
santoṣa (contentment) [niyama] II.32; santoṣād anuttamaḥ sukha-lābhah II.42
saptadha (sevenfold) tasya saptadhā prānta-bhūmiḥ prajñā II.27
śarīra (body) cittasya para-śarīrāvesaḥ III.38
sārūpya (identification) vṛtti-sārūpyam I.4
sarva (all, everything) sarva-bhājna-bijam I.25; sarva-nirodhān nibbijaḥ samādhiḥ I.51; duḥkham eva sarvam vivekinaḥ II.15; sarva-bhaumā II.31; sarva-ratnopasthānam II.37; sarvārthataikāgratayoh III.11; sarva-bhūta-ruta-jñānam III.17; prātibhād vā sarvam III.33; sarva-bhāvadhīṣṭhāṭātvam sarva-jñātātvam ca III.49 [used twice]; tārakaṁ sarva-viṣayam sarvathā-viṣayam akramam III.54 [used twice]; cittam sarvārtham IV.23
sarvathā (everywhere, always) tārakaṁ sarva-viṣayam sarvathā-viṣayam akramam III.54; sarvathā viveka-khyāter IV.29
satkāra (devotion) nairantaryā-satkārā-sevitaḥ I.14
sattva (sattva-guṇa, the intellect) sattva-śuddhi II.41; sattva-puruṣayor atyantāsaṅkīrṇayoḥ III.35; sattva-puruṣānīyata-khyāti-mātrasya III.49; sattva-puruṣayaḥ śuddhi-sāmye kaivalyaḥ III.55
satya (truthfulness) [yama] II.30; satya-pratiṣṭhāyām II.36
śauca (cleanliness) [niyama] II.32; śaucāt svāṅga II.40
saumanasya (cheerfulness) saumanasyaikāgryendriya II.41
savīcāra (samādhi state with subtle awareness) etayaiva savīcārā nirvicārā ca sūkṣma-viṣayā I.44
savītarka (samādhi state with physical awareness) savītarkā
samāpattiḥ I.42
śeṣa (remainder) saṁskāra-śeṣo ‘nyaḥ I.18
siddha (perfected being) siddhi-darśanam III.32
siddhi (perfection, mystic power) kāyendriya-siddhir II.43; samādhi-siddhir II.45; vyuṭṭhane siddhayah III.37; samādhi-jāḥ siddhayah IV.1; [III.37]
śīla (having the nature of) prakāśa-kriyā-sthiti-śīlam II.18
smṛti (memory) Vikalpa-nidra-smṛtayah I.6; viṣayāsampramoṣah smṛtiḥ I.11; [asamprajñāta-samādhi] smṛti ... pūrvaka I.20; smṛti-paraśuddhau I.43; smṛti-saṁskārayor eka-rūpatvāt IV.9; smṛti-sañkaraś ca IV.21
śraddhā (faith) śraddhā-vīrya-smṛti-samādhiprajñā I.20
śrāvaṇa (hearing) prātiḥbha-śrāvaṇa-vedanādarśāsvāda-vārtā III.36
śrotra (ear) śrotrākāśayoḥ sambandha-saṁyamād divyaṁ śrotam III.41 [used twice]
śrūtā (heard, tradition) [I.15]; śrutānumāna I.49
stambha (restrain, obstruct) bāhyābhyaṇtara-stambha-vṛttiḥ II.50; stambhe cacṣūḥ-prakāśāsamprayoge III.21
sthairya (steadiness) aparigraha-sthairye II.39; kūrma-nādyāṁ sthairyam III.31
sthānin (celestial) sthānyupanimantrane III.51
sthira (steady) sthira-sukham āsanam II.46
sthiti (steadiness, inertia) tatra sthitau yatno 'bhyāsah I.13; manasaḥ sthiti-nibandhāni I.35; prakāśa-kriyā-sthiti II.18; other causes of steadiness: [I.34]; [I.36]; [I.37]; [I.38]; [I.39]
sthūla (gross) sthūla-svarūpasūkṣmaṇvayārthavattva III.44
styaṇa (idleness) [antarāya] I.30
śuci (pure) nitya-śuci-sukhātma-khyātir II.5
śuddha (pure) draṣṭā dṛśi-mātraḥ suddho 'pi II.20
śuddhi (purity) sattva-śuddhi II.41; sattva-puruṣayoh śuddhi-sāmye kaivalyam iti III.55
sukha (happiness, joy, comfort) sukha-duḥkha-puṇyāpuṇya-viṣayāṇām I.33; nitya-śuci-sukhātma-khyātir II.5; sukhānuśayī
rāgaḥ II.7; santoṣād anuttamaḥ sukha II.42; sthira-sukham āsanam II.46

sūkṣma (subtle) sūkṣma-viṣayā I.44; sūkṣma-visayatvam I.45; pratiprasava-heyaḥ sūkṣmāḥ II.10; dirgha-sūkṣmāḥ II.50; sūkṣma-vyavahita-viprakṛṣṭa III.25; sūkṣmānvyārthavattva III.44; vyakta-sūkṣmā guṇātmānaḥ IV.13

śūnya (empty, devoid) vastu-śūnyo I.9; svarūpa-śūnyevārtha I.43; svarūpa-śūnyam iva III.3; puruṣārtha-śūnyānāṁ guṇānāṁ IV.34

sūrya (sun) bhuvana-jīnānāṁ sūrye saṁyamāt III.26

svādhyaśa (study of scripture) tapāḥ-svādhyaśevara-praṇidhānāni kriyā-yogaḥ II.1; [niyama] II.32; svādhyaśād iṣṭa-devatā-śamprayogāḥ II.44

svāmin (possessor) sva-svāmi-śaktyoḥ II.23

svapna (dream) svapna-nidrāḥ śūnyaḥ II.43; svapna-parśāyaḥ I.41; svapna-nidrā-jñānālambanaṁ I.38

svāsā (inhalation) śvāsa ... vikṣepa-saha-bhuvah I.31; śvāsa-praśvāsayor gati-vicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ II.49

tantra (dependent) na caika-citta-tantram IV.16

tanu (weak) [kleśas] prasupta-tanu ... II.4

tāpa (distress) pariṇāma-tāpa-saṁskāra II.15

tapas (austerity) tapāḥ-svādhyāyeśvara-praṇidhānāṁ I.1; [niyama] II.32; aśuddhi-kṣayāt tapasaḥ II.43; janmāusadhi-mantra-tapāḥ-saṁādhi IV.1

tāraka (liberator) tārakaṁ sarva-viṣayam III.54

tattva (principle, that-ness) eka-tattvābhavaḥ I.32; pariṇāmaikatvād vastu-tattvam IV.14

tīvra (intensely) tīvra-saṁvegānāṁ āsannaḥ I.21

traya (the three) trayam ekatra samyamaḥ III.4 [here dhārana, dhyāna, and samādhi]; trayam antarāṅgaṁ pūrvebhyaḥ III.7
dhāranā, dhyāna, and samādhi; pariñāma-traya III.16
[here dharma-lakṣaṇāvasthā]
trividha (threelfold) -tri-vidham itareśām IV.7
tūla (cotton) laghu-tūla III.42
udāna (up-breath) udāna-jayā III.39
udāra (activated) [kleśas] … prasupta-tanu-vicchinnodārāṇām II.4
udita (present, uprisen) śāntoditau tulya-pratyayau III.12;
śāntodītāvyapadesya III.14; [IV.13]
upalabdhi (understanding) svarūpopalabdhi-hetuḥ II.23
uparāga (colored by) tad-uparāgāpekṣitvāc cittasya IV.17
uparakta (colored) draṣṭr-drṣyoparaktaṁ cittam IV.23
upasarga (obstacle) samādhāv upasargāḥ III.37
upāya (means) hānopāyaḥ II.26
upekṣā (equanimity) maitrī-karunā-muditopekṣāṇām I.33
utkṛṇti (levitation) asaṅga utkṛṇtiṣ ca III.39
vācaka (designation) tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ I.27
vāhin (sustainer, borne on) svarasa-vāhi II.9
vāhitā (flow) praśānta-vāhitā III.10
vaira (enmity) vaira-tyāgaḥ II.35
vairāgya (detachment, renunciation) abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyāṃ I.12;
[I.13]; drṣṭr-uṣravika-viṣaya-viṭrṣṇasya vaśikāra-samjñā
vairāgyam I.15; [I.16]; tad-vairāgyād api doṣa-bīja-kṣaye
kaivalyam III.50
vaiśāradya (clarity) nirvicāra-vaiśāradye 'dhyātma-prasādaḥ I.47
vaiṭṛṣṇya (indifference) guṇa-vaiṭṛṣṇyam I.16
vajra (thunderbolt) vajra-saṁhananatvāni III.46
vāsanā (subliminal impression) evābhivyaktir vāsanānām IV.8; tad-
asaṅkhhyeya-vāsanābhīṣ cittam IV.24
vaśikāra (mastery, control) vaśikāra-samjñā I.15; paramāṇu-parama-
mahattvānto 'syā vaśikāḥ I.40
vastu (thing, object) vastu-śūnyo vikalpāḥ I.9; pariñāmaikatvād
vastu-tattvam IV.14; vastu-sāmye citta-bhedāt IV.15; na caika-citta-tantraṁ ... vastu IV.16; vastu jñātājñātam IV.17; [IV.20]
vaṣyatā (control) paramā-vaṣyatendriyāṇām II.55
vedanīya (to be experienced) janma-vedanīyaḥ II.12
vicāra (samādhi state of absorption with subtle awareness) vitarka-vicārānandāsmitā I.17
viccheda (regulation) gati-vicchedah prāṇāyāmaḥ II.49
vicchinna (intermittent) [kleśas] ... prasupta-tanu-vicchinnodārāṇām II.4
videha (unembodied) videha-prakṛti-layānām I.19; bahir-akalpitā vṛttir mahā-videhā III.43
vidhārana (retention) pracchardana-vidhāraṇābhyaḥ I.34
viduṣo/(vidvān) (possessor of wisdom) viduṣo 'pi II.9
vikalpa (conceptualization, figure of speech) pramāṇa-viparyaya-vikalpa-nidrā-smṛtayah I.6; śabda-jñānānupāti vastu-śunyo vikalpaḥ I.9; śabdārtha-jñāna-vikalpaiḥ saṅkīrṇā savitarkā samāpattiḥ I.42
vikaraṇa (without senses) vikaraṇa-bhāvaḥ III.48
vikṣepa (distraction) citta-vikṣepās te 'ntarāyāḥ I.30; vikṣepa-saha-bhuvaḥ I.31; [I.32]
viniyoga (application) bhūmiṣu viniyogah III.6
vipāka (fruition) kleśa-karma-vipākāsayaḥ I.24; sati mūle tad-vipāko jāty-āyur-bhogāḥ II.13; vipākānugunānām ... vāsanānām IV.8
viparyaya (error) pramāṇa-viparyaya-vikalpa I.6; viparyayo mithyā-jñānam I.8
vitrṣṇa (remote) -vitrṣṇa-jñānam III.25
virāma (termination) virāma-pratīṣṭhyābhyaśa-pūrvaḥ I.18
vīrya (vigor, potency) [asamprajñāta-samādhi] vīrya ... pūrvaka I.20; brahmacarya-pratīṣṭhāyām vīrya-lābhaḥ II.38
viṣaya (sense object, scope) viṣayāsampramoṣaḥ smṛtih I.11; viṣaya-vitrṣṇasya I.15; punyāpūrṇa-viṣayāṇām I.33; viṭa-rāga-viṣayam I.37;avicārā nirvicārā ca śūkṣma-viṣayā I.44; viṣayā
viśeṣārthatvāt I.49; bāhyābhyantara-viṣayākṣepī II.51; svaviṣayāsamprayoge cittasya II.54; sarva-viṣayaṁ sarvathā-viṣayam akramam III.54 [used twice]

viṣayatva (having the nature of) sūkṣma-viṣayatvam cāliṅga-paryavasānām I.45

viṣayavant (with sense object) viṣayavatī vā pravṛttir I.35

viśeṣa (distinction, particularized) tato 'pi visēṣah I.22; puruṣa-viśeṣa Īśvaraḥ I.24; višeṣārthatvāt I.49; višeṣāvišeṣa-liṅga-mātrāliṅgāni II.19; višeṣa-darśinaḥ IV.25

viśoka (pain-free) viśokā vā jyotiṣmati I.36

vīta (without) vīta-rāga-viṣayam I.37

vitarka (samādhi state of absorption with physical awareness; negative thought) vitarka ... samprajñātah I.17; vitarka ... pratipakṣa-bhāvanam II.33; vitarkā hiṁsādayaḥ II.34

vīṛṣṇa (without craving) visaya-vīṛṣṇasya I.15

viveka (discrimination) viveka-khyātir aviplavā II.26; diptir āviveka-khyāteḥ II.28; viveka-jāṁ jñānam III.52; vivekajaṁ jñānam III.54; viveka-nimnaṁ ... cittām IV.26; viveka-khyāter dharma-meghaḥ IV.29

vivekin (one with discrimination) duḥkham eva sarvam vivekinaḥ II.15

vrata (vow) mahā-vratam II.31

vṛtti (fluctuation, movement) citta-vṛtti I.2; vṛtti-sārūpyam I.4; vṛttayaḥ pañcatayyāḥ kliṣṭākliṣṭāḥ I.5; [I.6]; vṛttir nidrā I.10; kṣīṇa-vṛttir I.41; dhyāna ... vṛttayaḥ II.11; [I.12]; guṇa-vṛtti-virodhāc ca II.15; bāhyābhyantara-stambha-vṛttīḥ II.50; bahir-akalpitā vṛttir III.43; sadā jñātaś citta-vṛttayas IV.18

vyādhi (disease) [antarāya] I.30

vyakta (manifest) te vyakta-sūkṣmā guṇātmānaḥ IV.13

vyavahita (concealed, separated) sūkṣma-vyavahita III.25; jāti-deśa-kāla-vyavahitānām IV.9

vyūha (arrangement) tārā-vyūha-jñānam III.27; kāya-vyūha-jñānam III.29

vyutthāna (going forth, wakened) vyutthāna-nirodha III.9; samādhāv
upasargāḥ vyutthāne siddhayāḥ III.37

yama (abstention) yama … 'ṣṭāv aṅgāni II.29; ahīṁsā-satyāsteya … yamāḥ II.30; [II.31]
yatna (effort) tatra sthitau yatno 'bhyāsaḥ I.13
yoga [left untranslated] atha yogānuśāsanam I.1; yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ I.2; kriyā-yogah II.1; yogāṅgānuṣṭhānād II.28
yogin/yogi [left untranslated] [II.27]; karmāśuklā-kṛṣṇam yoginas IV.7
yogyatā (fitness) yogyatā manasaḥ II.53
yogyatva (capability) jayātma-darśana-yogyatvāni II.41
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Praise for THE YOGA SŪTRAS OF PATAṆJALI

“A superb contribution to the secondary literature on yoga. Critically grounded in the scholarship on yoga and the rich textual history of the tradition, Bryant nevertheless succeeds in transcending both the excessively technical approaches to yoga scholarship as well as much of the popular nonsense about yoga in the proliferating ‘schools’ in the New Age marketplace. Bryant impressively communicates the essentials of yoga philosophy and practice to the thoughtful but non-specialist general reader. His translations from the Sanskrit are precise and well-grounded, and his interpretations are provocative and persuasive. His book will surely be welcomed by both serious scholars and responsible practitioners.”

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Edwin F. Bryant received his Ph.D. in Indology from Columbia University. He has taught at Columbia University and Harvard University and since 2001 has been professor of Hindu religion and philosophy at Rutgers University. Bryant has written numerous scholarly articles and published five previous books, including a translation of the four thousand verses of the tenth book of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa called Krishna: The Beautiful Legend of God. In addition to his work in the academy, Bryant teaches workshops on the Yoga Sūtras and other Hindu texts in yoga communities around the world. His website is www.edwinbryant.org.
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