

PLAY OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS: ON THE SAṂSKĀRAS AND VĀSANĀS IN CLASSICAL YOGA PSYCHOLOGY

Audrius Beinorius

Centre of Oriental Studies, Vilnius University

The present study attempts to deepen the existing scholarly understanding of the various conceptual issues related to the problem of unconscious in Indian philosophy. An attempt is made to determine and classify the semantic content of a selected number of psychological concepts, notably saṁskāras and vāsanās, as it is found in the philosophical and religious texts of Patañjali's Yoga sūtra and the basic commentarial literature thereon. Seven main features, or functions, of these concepts in Yoga tradition are distinguished. Finally, some significant differences between Yoga psychology and Western psychoanalysis regarding the understanding of the nature of the subconscious are mentioned. The most important point of similarity is that according to both Yoga and psychoanalysis the subconscious is regarded as the determining factor in conscious life. Belonging to the core of the Indian psychological system, the conception of saṁskāras and vāsanās in a way foreshadows the modern notion of the subconscious / unconscious / preconscious.

The problems related to the nature of consciousness are still a puzzle to modern philosophy and psychology. The Western psychoanalytical tradition since Freud has emphasized the role of unconscious desires and impulses in human behaviour. However, Indian psychology has been discussing the nature of the subconscious (unconscious/nonconscious/ preconscious) from very ancient times. Starting around 500 B. C., various speculations regarding the nature of consciousness were systemized into coherent theoretical formulations which justify the term 'psychology'.¹ In response to its soteriological purposes, the classical Yoga school (*darśana*) has developed a peculiar psychology whose primary objective was to assist the yogin in reconstituting his consciousness. As a matter of fact, there is not even a synonym in India for what is called 'psychology' in the West. This fact has been fully appreciated by Mircea Eliade, who placed the word in quotation marks.² Of the same opinion was Ananda Coomaraswamy, who said,

¹ Regarding the origins and early crystallization of the main theoretical psychological Indian concepts from the Vedic age, see N. Ross Reat, *The Origins of Indian Psychology*, Berkely: Asian Humanities Press, 1990.

² Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, Bollingen Series LVI, N.Y.: Princeton University Press, 1958, 38. A well known term *manovidyā* is quite a late terminological Sanskrit adaptation of the Western term 'psychology'.

Indian philosophers are not interested in the facts, or rather statistical probabilities, for their own sake, but primarily in a liberating truth. The traditional and sacred psychology takes for granted that life (*bhava*, γένεσις) is a means to an end beyond itself, not to be lived at all costs. The traditional psychology is not, in fact based on observation; it is a science of subjective experience. Its truth is not of the kind that is susceptible of statistical demonstration; it is one that can only be verified by the expert contemplative. [...] So whereas the empirical science is only concerned with the man himself 'in search of a soul', the metaphysical science is concerned with this self's immortal Self, the Soul of the soul. [...] Hence, we call the traditional psychology a pneumatology rather than a science of the 'soul'.³

Evidently, any compartmentalisation of the homogenous structure of Indian *darśanas*, and especially Yoga's school theory into such divisions as 'psychology', 'philosophy' or 'ethics' is no more than an artificial means of promoting the analysis and understanding a rather differently organized body of knowledge. There exist a few tentative studies of various aspects of Indian psychology, mostly by Indian authors, but these do not amount to a great deal and conceptually often leave much to be desired.⁴ In his study on the classical Yoga system, George Feuerstein has once remarked that "the psychological dimension of Yoga is still a fairly untravelled territory awaiting a far-sighted explorer".⁵

Not pretending to be such a 'far-sighted explorer', in this paper I examine and classify various conceptual issues related to the problem of the unconscious in Indian philosophy. An attempt is made to determine the semantic content of a selected number of psychological concepts as found in the philosophical and religious texts of the Yoga tradition. There are concepts, notably *samskāras* and *vāsanās*, which can be taken to refer to unconscious mental states and dispositions. Only a scrupulous analysis of the contextual meaning of a concept creates an adequate base for a study of the Indian understanding of unconscious forces. First I give a general characterisation of some relevant concepts and then go into some problems regarding the functions of these concepts in a more detailed way, concentrating mainly on Patañjali's *Yoga sūtra* and the basic commentarial literature thereon. Finally, I shall mention some significant differences between Yoga psychology and Western psychoanalysis regarding the understanding of the nature of the subconscious.

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Almost all schools of philosophers in India had, each in their own way, some definite ideas of the unconscious or subconscious, holding them to be properties of mind. Behind the overt mental processes lies a vast, inexhaustible pool of the stimuli that power the machinery

³ Ananda Coomaraswamy, "On the Indian and Traditional Psychology or Rather Pneumatology", in *Selected Papers*, ed. R. Lipsey, vol. I-II, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977, 2: 334-335.

⁴ U. Mishra, *Dream Theory in Indian Thought*, Allahabad University Studies 4, 1942; R. Safaya, *Indian Psychology*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1976; J. Singha, *Indian Psychology*, vols. I-III, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986; D. C. Bhattacharya, *Aspects of Indian Psychology*, Narendrapur, W. B., 1988.

⁵ G. Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980, 57.

of consciousness. This large storehouse of dispositional factors is the dynamic aspect of the deep structure of human personality.

In general, those dispositional factors are termed *adr̥ṣṭa* and *saṃskāra*, or *karmāśaya* and *jñānāśaya*, which mean action residue and knowledge residue respectively. The term *saṃskāra* in yogic context is translated as 'impression' (J. H. Wood, G. Jha), 'root impressions' (S. Dasgupta), 'subconscious latencies' (M. Eliade), 'latencies' (Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya), 'subliminal impressions' (T. S. Rukmini), 'habituation', 'residual potencies' (R. Prasad), 'subliminal activators' (G. Feuerstein), 'dispositional tendencies' (Karl H. Potter). Derived from the root *kr-* 'to do' with the prefix *sam-*, the term stresses the dynamic processes. The active, dynamic aspect of *saṃskāras* is apparent from the aphorism III.9 of *Yoga sūtra*, where two varieties of *saṃskāra* are distinguished: those leading to the actualisation of consciousness (*vyutthāna*) and those inducing restriction of consciousness (*nirodha*).

In order to denote the total stock of *saṃskāras* that have been called into existence by the volitional activity in either the past incarnations or present existences and that are the determinative factors of future embodiments, Patañjali introduces the concept of *āśaya*, which literary means 'deposit' or 'repository'.⁶ As he says, *adr̥ṣṭa* or *karmāśaya* is produced by previous actions and produces results in the form of events producing experiences of pleasure and pain.⁷ The karmic residue can be acute or deferred.⁸ Driven by *kleśas*, many *karmāśayas* unite to produce one life-state and bear fruit in the form of birth, life-time and world experience.⁹ Some of them have their fruition in this very life, while others are reserved for the next life after death.¹⁰

When *karmāśayas* have their particular results, *saṃskāras* that are favourable to the enjoyment or suffering of such results are also manifested or excited, because without these cognition residues (*jñānāśaya*) coming as accessory, this particular experience would not be possible. This means that enjoyment of a *deva* (divine being), for instance, is not possible without the excitement or manifestation of *saṃskāras* necessary for the enjoyment of a *deva*.

Hence it follows that these subliminal impressions are flowing as a stream without any beginning from life to life, and are formed continuously as a result of the individual's world experience (*bhoga*). The pond of subliminal activators is conceived as pre-individual, because world experience somehow reinforces the grids, it does not originate them. A newly born individual is by no means a *tabula rasa*, rather his very birth is the product of the irresistible pull of the subliminal, unwatched (*alakṣita*), i. e. unconscious traces. It means that every

⁶ G. M. Koelman translates the compound *karmāśaya* as 'moral-value-deposit' and explains it as 'the sum-total of merits and demerits'. G. M. Koelman, *Pātañjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*. Poona: Papal Anthenaeum, 1970, 50.

⁷ *te hlādaparitāpaphalāḥ* – YS II.14.

⁸ *sopakramaṃ nirupakramaṃ ca* – YS III.21.

⁹ *tadvipākāḥ jātyāyurbhogāḥ* – YS II.13 A long discussion regarding how many lives a single *karmāśaya* may produce is given in the commentaries of Vyāsa to this sūtra.

¹⁰ *dr̥ṣṭādr̥ṣṭajanma vedanīyaḥ* – YS II.12.

thought, feeling and impulse to action must be regarded as an actualization of the tremendous tension inherent in the subliminal pond. It is not only the individual perceptual differences that modify the resultant knowledge, but also *saṃskāras* colour every cognition. On the other hand, up-front mental activity in turn augments the subliminal deposit. *Saṃskāras* become stronger as they go on manifesting themselves in actions, and each repetition makes the potency stronger than before – in this manner perpetuating the vicious circle of phenomenal existence (*saṃsāra*).

Although often used by the exegetes and modern interpreters as a synonym of *saṃskāras*, *vāsanās* really stand for a different concept.¹¹ Commenting YS III.18 Vyāsa says that *saṃskāras* are of two kinds, viz. those appearing as habits (*vāsanās*), causing memory (*smṛti*) and indirectly afflictions (*kleśa*), and those responsible for fruition of right or wrong deeds in previous births.¹² According to S. Dasgupta, *vāsanā* is a later word than *saṃskāra*, ‘*Vāsanā* generally refers to the tendencies of past lives, most of which lie dormant in the mind. Only those appear which can find scope in this life. But *saṃskāras* are the subconscious states which are being constantly generated by experience. *Vāsanās* are innate *saṃskāras* not acquired in this life’.¹³

Derived from the root *vas-* ‘to dwell’, ‘to abide’, ‘remain’, *vāsanās* are mentioned only twice in *Yoga sūtra*, but are discussed extensively in commentaries, starting with Vyāsa.¹⁴ According to YS aphorism IV.8, the origination of *vāsanās* is to be linked up with the fruition (*vipāka*) of man’s activity, and is explained by the doctrine of moral retribution; “then the *vāsanās* which are favourable to such fruition are manifested”.¹⁵ By *karmavipāka* or fructification of actions is meant not the ‘outcome’ of an act on the empirical plane, but its moral

¹¹ An edition of YS by T. Sh. Bodas published in 1892 contains an additional sentence to IV.9 of Vyāsa Bhāṣya, in which *vāsanās*, *saṃskāras* and *karmāśaya* are identified (*vāsanāḥ saṃskāra āśayā ityarthā*). I should mention that the very detailed commentary attributed by some to Śāṅkara, the great exponent of Advaita Vedānta, still is under question regarding the genuine authorship of this work. Some scholars have argued that there are several reasons to question Śāṅkara’s authorship of this text, thus it was not incorporated into the present study. See T. S. Rukmani, “The Problem of the Authorship of the *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa*,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 20 (1992): 419–423. Sanskrit text was edited by Rama Sastri, Krishnamurthi Sastri, *Pātañjala Yoga Sūtra Bhāṣya Vivaraṇam* of Śāṅkara *Bhagavatpāda*, Madras: Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, 1952; English translation of *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa* made by Leggett Trevor, *Śāṅkara on the Yoga Sūtras: A Full Translation of the Newly Discovered Text*, London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1990; and by T. S. Rukmani, *Yogasūtrabhāṣyavivaraṇa of Śāṅkara: Text with English trans. and critical notes along with text and translation of Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali and Vyāsaḥāṣya*, 2 vols., Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2001.

¹² *dvaye khalvamī saṃskāraḥ smṛtikleśahetavo vāsanārūpaḥ vipākahetavo dharmādharma-rūpāste pūrvabhāvābhisamkṛtaḥ* – YS III.18.

¹³ S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vols. I–V, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988, (first edition Cambridge, 1922), 1: 263.

¹⁴ YS IV.8; 24. M. Eliade translates this term as ‘psychomental latencies’ or ‘specific subconscious sensations’ (p. 42–44).

¹⁵ *tatas tad vipāka anugaṇānām eva abhiviyaktir vāsanānām* – YS IV.8.

consequence, which is expressed in terms of the production of corresponding *vāsanā* configurations.

The *vāsanās* result from a memory of the experiences of a life generated by the fructification of the *karmāśaya* and kept in the *citta* in the form of potency or impressions (*saṃskāras*). [...] These *vāsanās* are the causes of the instinctive tendencies, habits of deriving pleasures and pains peculiar to different animal lives. Thus the habits of a dog-life and its peculiar mode of taking its experiences and of deriving pleasure and pain are very different in nature from those a man-life, and must therefore be explained on the basis of an incipient memory in the form of potency impressions or *saṃskāras* of the experiences that an individual must have undergone in a previous dog-life of its own¹⁶.

In his commentary on the *Yogabhāṣya* IV.9, Vācaspati Mīśra says that when a person in consequence of his karma is born, e.g., as a cat, a *vāsanā* corresponding to the person's karma arises in his consciousness. It means that *vāsanās* of the immediately preceding life are not necessarily activated in the next incarnation, it may happen after thousands of lives,¹⁷ i.e. *vāsanās* are the cause of the instinctive tendencies or habits deriving pleasures and pains peculiar to different animal lives.

Thus, *saṃskāras* are organized into configurations known as *vāsanās* or subliminal 'traces', or 'inclinations', which partly manifest in the idiosyncracies of the individual as particular habit patterns. Not by chance Vyāsa in YB II.13 likens the mind and its *vāsanās* to a fishing net with its knots (*matsyajālaṃ granthibhiriva*) having 'different shapes in all places and having beginninglessly pervaded by the *vāsanās* caused by experience (*anubhava*) of the maturation of karma from the *kleśas*'. These *vāsanās*, in turn, 'act as the propelling force for the creation of a new individual organism after the death of the present subject. They must be considered as aspatial/atemporal constellations 'located' in the deep structure of the microcosm.'¹⁸

It is interesting to note that the *karmāśaya* is regarded as *ekabhāvika* or unigenital and means the product of one life being accumulated in one life (*ekajanmāvacchinnasya*). From this point of view it may be contrasted with the *vāsanās*, which remain accumulated from thousands of previous lives from eternity and kept in the *citta* which remains constant in all the births and rebirths. It, therefore, keeps the memory of those various experiences in the form of *saṃskāras*. And, as told in the sūtra IV.10, *vāsanās* are beginningless (*anāditva*), because the primal will or desire to live (*āśis*) is permanent. From the Yoga point of view, what we know as desire for existence, clinging to life or fear of death (*abhiniveśa*, *ātmaśis*) are also transmitted from previous life as *vāsanās*. Our *citta* endowed with these beginningless

¹⁶ S. Dasgupta, *Yoga Philosophy in relation to other systems of Indian thought*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1930, 324.

¹⁷ See, J. H. Woods, *The Yoga System of Patuñjali*, Harvard Oriental Series 17, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927, 308–309.

¹⁸ G. Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980, 69.

stream of impressions, getting some impressions manifested due to some cause (*nimitta*), functions for the superimposed enjoyment or suffering of the *puruṣa* (YS 4.10).

It should be known that all *vāsanās* are sustained as pervaded by their cause, support, and object. Ignorance (*avidyā*), or attachment and hatred leading to virtuous and vicious actions, are the cause (*hetu*) of *vāsanā*; recollections, or the purpose of enjoyment of the results of actions, are called the end or fruit (*phala*) of *vāsanā*. Ignorance is defined by Patañjali as seeing the non-eternal as eternal, the impure as pure, dissatisfaction as happiness, and the non-self as self.¹⁹ Mind or *citta* in bondage is the support (*āśraya*) of *vāsanā*, while the sense objects whose cognition excites the particular impressions are the objects (*ālambana*) of those impressions. Now, if we can control and sublimate these pervaders (*vyāpaka*) of *vāsanā*, we can sublimate the *vāsanā* as well (4.11), though they may be beginningless. *Vijñāna Bhikṣu* remarks in this connection that *avidyā* is the *hetu* of *vāsanā* and the *phala* ('fruit') of *vāsanā* is the same purpose or end for which actions producing *dharma* and *adharma* are accomplished.²⁰

Again, *saṃskāra*, or *jñānāśaya*, is produced by various kinds of cognitions with some interest – *upekṣānātmakajñānāt*. *Saṃskāras* are produced as subtle impressions of cognitions, producing again different tendencies, proneness, and especially all recollections and recognitions. That's why, according to Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya, *adrṣṭa* constitutes more of the unconscious, and *saṃskāras* more of the preconscious, however, in fact both function in such a mingled way that it is difficult to demarcate the different jurisdictions of the two.

Adrṣṭa as the unconscious selective force selects and excites some particular *saṃskāra* to take definite form or image in the illusion. Though some external similar object is also regarded as excitant of *saṃskāra* from innumerable *saṃskāras* abiding in our mind.²¹

And it seems that this general approach to the relation between *saṃskāra* and *adrṣṭa* is accepted by the Sāṃkhya, Pātañjala and Advaita Vedānta systems of philosophy with some differences.

According to the Sāṃkhya and Pātañjala schools, the fundamental nature of the unconscious is more fine or subtle and is called *aviveka* – non-discrimination or *avidyā* – ignorance. It is *avidyā* that veils from our vision the true nature of the Self (*puruṣa*) and, producing a sense of ego in us, manifests as *asmitā* or egotism. Thus, all sorts of drives and activities, attachment to (*rāga*) and hatred for things (*dveṣa*) are caused by the fundamental unconscious *avidyā* through *asmitā*. Our mind, being a modification of *prakṛti*, is endowed with three qualities, entities, or forces, *guṇas*: *sattva* (intelligence stuff), *rajas* (energy), and *tamas* (inertia). The consciousness stuff (*mahat*) is the pure *sattva* where *rajas* and *tamas* exist as subordinated elements. And it is the *tamas guṇa* in the depths of our mind (*manas*) that accounts for all false notions, for all inertia and idleness, and other vices such as narrowness,

¹⁹ *anityāśuciduḥkḥnātmasu nityaśucisukhātma khyātiravidyā* –YS II.5.

²⁰ *Yoga Vārttika*, IV.11.

²¹ D. C. Bhattacharya, *Aspects of Indian Psychology*, Narendrapur, W. B., 1988, 101.

jealousy, etc. All those drives and inclinations proceed from *avidyā* and are regulated according to *saṃskāras* accumulated in our mind through previous activities and cognitions (*pravṛtti*).

Prakṛti, the primal material cause of the universe, is also to be regarded as subconscious in the general cosmic sense and, being the primal state of collective *guṇas*, is the radical storehouse of all drives and cognitions. And *avidyā*, in this case, is a more specific 'individual' aspect of the unconscious, directing our psychic life and abiding in our mind in the form of the impressions of false cognitions and notions (*bhrama saṃskāra rūpa*). Thus, ignorance or nescience as the ontological cause of all psychomental states (*cittavṛttis*) refers to a peculiar cognitive condition of man who due to fluctuations (*vṛtti*) of the mental machinery (*citta*) fails to recognize his transcendental true Self-Awareness (*Puruṣa*). That is why Bhoja, commenting on YS IV.22, declares that any knowledge whose object is not liberation from this metaphysical ignorance is valueless.

Interestingly, for Yoga the principal unconscious motivations, equally as springs of actions, are not only *saṃskāras* but *kleśas* as well. The word *kleśa*, or 'cause of affliction' (derived from the root *kliś-* 'to torment', 'to pain') in its conventional usage is a synonym of *duḥkha*, suffering, being not merely an antonym of *sukha* (pleasure), but coextensive with that opposing salvational pursuit and leading to *saṃsāra*. In YS II.3. Patañjali distinguishes five types of *kleśas* that provide the dynamic framework of the phenomenal consciousness. His next aphorism states that the *karmāśaya* is *kleśamūlaḥ* and *avidyā* (ignorance) begets mainly four other kinds of *kleśas* – *asmitā* (egoism), *rāga* (attachment), *dveṣa* (aversion) and *abhiniveśa* (will-to-live), of these *avidyā* being the source of all.²² As the basic emotional and motivational forces, *kleśas* lie at the root of all misery and urge man to burst into activity, to feel, to think, to want. A more precise explanation of *kleśas* is offered by G. M. Koelman:

Man is born with certain psychological habits, congenital psychical passions that bind him to cosmic conditions. They blind him, prevent him from discovering what his genuine Self is, make him attached to cosmic life and its allurements, afflict his existence with an endless chain of woes, enmesh him more and more in the net of conditioned existence, and hinder his liberation.²³

²² *avidyā kṣetramuttareṣām* –YS II.4. In his *Psychological Commentary on Kundalini Yoga*, C.G. Jung describes *kleśas* as 'urges, the natural instinctive forms in which libido first appears out of the unconscious; they represent psychological energy or libido in its simplest form of manifestation'. ('Psychological Commentary on Kuṇḍalinī Yoga', *Spring: Journal of Archetypal Psychology and Jungian Thought*, 1975–1976, 8. Later the commentary was published in a separate edition, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga: Notes of the Seminar given in 1932 by C. G. Jung*, ed. S. Shamdasani, London: Routledge, 1992.) In the same article Jung points out a clear parallel of the *saṃskāras* to the seed-forms or archetypes which he saw as composing the collective unconscious (p. 8). Jung was aware of technical usage of Yoga as early as 1921 and even based his 1939 Lectures given at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zurich, on Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtra*. In his lectures he clearly declares that *saṃskāras* are archetypes. Jung observes also that in India the practice of Yoga involves both psychology and philosophy.

²³ Koelman, *Pātañjala Yoga*, 127. The cognitive, affective, and conative features of *kleśas* in the light of the traditional Yoga soteriology are discussed by Anindita N. Balslev, 'The Notions of *kleśa* and Its Bearing on the Yoga Analysis of Mind', *Philosophy East and West* 41, 1 (1991): 77–89.

Each *akliṣṭā* state produces its own potency or *saṃskāra*, and with the frequency of the states their *saṃskāras* are strengthened, which in due course by habitation (*abhyāsa*) suppress the *kliṣṭā* ones. However, this replacement of *kliṣṭāvṛttis* by *akliṣṭāvṛttis* should not be understood as a process of repression where the ‘higher’ modes of thought are made to suppress the ‘lower’ ones. In the Yoga system, the practice starts with the realization that there are these subliminal impressions which are always acting as a source of danger, especially when repressed. This realization helps in counteracting *saṃskāras* while replacing all such tendencies by less harmful (in soteriological sense) ideas and finally burning them out. Actually, Yoga is nothing else but a progressive restraint of the forming of *saṃskāras*.

Vyāsa, in his commentary to YS II.4, states that *avidyā* does not mean something negative like ‘absence of knowledge, but it is something positive, some fundamental notions antagonistic to true knowledge – *vidyāparītam jñānāntaram*’²⁴. Therefore, the so-called normal human situation is described in Yoga tradition as a specific state of consciousness: a cognitive misconstruction of reality (*mithyajñāna*) and misidentification with material existence as one’s true identity. This is the source of all human difficulties and dissatisfaction (*duḥkha*). And in fact, we may say that *avidyā* is a subtle stream of *bhrama saṃskāra*, or impressions of false cognitions and notions acquired either in this life or in the previous incarnations. Thus, the practical goal of Yoga is to strengthen those *akliṣṭāvṛttis* and *prajñāsaṃskāras* that are destructive tonescience, the matrix of all *kleśas*.

Again, *saṃskāras* exist even if they are not manifesting their effects during the waking state of consciousness. They function predominantly in the images of dreams (*svapna*), illusions (*bhrānti*) and hallucinations (*vibhrānti*). Dream is regarded as *smṛtivibhrama*, or as ‘confused recollections’, and illusion is called *smṛtirūpa*, or ‘resembling recollection’, being produced by *saṃskāras* in the absence of actual objects of perception. The dream-images are modifications of *buddhi* through *saṃskāras* and defects (*doṣas*) of senses. Therefore, experience in dream is erroneous recollection. *Vyāsa* also states in his *Yoga Sūtra Bhāṣya* that in dream, recollections are imaginary objects²⁵. *Vācaspati Mīśra* remarks in his commentary on the *Vyāsa Bhāṣya* that “it is not actual recollection but erroneous recollection, [...] it is called recollection because of appearing as recollection (*smṛtyābhāsatayā*)”, because he defines true recollection as cognition produced by impressions only (*saṃskāramātrajam hi vijñānam smṛtiḥ*).²⁶

The sūtra IV.9 explains the role of *vāsanās* in bridging the gap between two existences: “By reason of the correspondence between memory and *saṃskāras*, there is uninterrupted, causal relation [of *vāsanās*], even when they are separated by birth, space and time.”²⁷ The difference between *saṃskāras* and memory (*smṛti*) is that while the former is the

²⁴ *Vyāsa Bhāṣya*, II.5.

²⁵ *svapne bhāvītas martavyā* – *Vyāsa Bhāṣya* I.11.

²⁶ *Tattva Vaiśāradi* I.11.

²⁷ *jātideśukālavayavahitānāmapyānantaryam smṛtisaṃskārayor ekarūpatvāt* – YS IV.9.

unrecognized subconscious content and lies hidden in the latent state, the latter is the manifested memory, the former being inferred from the latter. The *Vyāśabhāṣya* explains:

The *vāsanā* is like the memory (*smṛti*) and so there can be memory from the *saṃskāras* of past lives even though separated by birth, by space and by time. From these memories there are again the *saṃskāras*, and the memories are revived by manifestation of the *karmāśayas*. Thus even though separated by birth, by space and by time, it is proved that there is an uninterrupted sequential relation between [many lives], because the relationship of cause and effect is not broken.²⁸

As Vācaspati Mīśra has put it briefly, 'the power which generates mental potencies is inferred by memory' (YV III.15). Consciousness is energized by the network of *vāsanās* which set up a certain tension, thereby causing the mind to incline towards sensory experience leading to the formation of *saṃskāras*. It means that the *saṃskāras* are revived and under suitable associations and conditions reproduced as memory (*smṛti*).

Bhoja remarks that in dreams, experiences of the waking state appear again like perceptual cognitions (RM I.11). Thus, they are but recollections through *saṃskāras*. In the similar manner, the Vedāntin Śāṅkara regards dreams as recollections: in the mind of a sleeping person only impressions persist, which produce dreams.²⁹ Being produced by *saṃskāras*, some dreams are held to be indicative of the past or present mental character or predisposition. There are various kinds of dreams produced by different kinds of stimuli, though in every case subconscious *saṃskāras* produce images, and the unconscious *adr̥ṣṭa* is at the root as a determining factor causing a particular dream yielding pleasure or pain.³⁰ That in the state of dreams the mind remains with the *saṃskāras* acquired in the waking state is also described in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.9). The same is said by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī: dream is the experience of objects through impressions in the mind while the sense organs are inactive.³¹

In *Caraka saṃhitā*, the most authoritative Indian medical treatise, we find a description of the seven different sorts of dreams, namely: *dr̥ṣṭa*, *śrūta*, *anubhūta*, *prār̥thita*, *kalpita*, *bhāvika*, and *doṣaja*.³² *Prār̥thita* dreams are those which come as fulfilment of unfulfilled desires; *kalpita* dreams are produced by the impressions of intense thinking or imagining in the waking state; *bhāvika* dreams indicate future events, and *doṣaja* dreams come due to some disorder in the functioning of the three bioorganical humours (*vāyu*, *pitta*, *kapha*). While the

²⁸ *yathā ca vāsanāstathā smṛtiriti, jātideśakālavayahitebhyah saṃskārebhyah smṛtiḥ smṛteśca punaḥ saṃskāra ityevameti smṛtisaṃskārah karmāśayavṛtilabhyavaśudvayajyante ataśca vyavahitānāmapi nimittanaimittika bhāvanucchedadanantaryameva siddhamiti*, – VB IV.9.

²⁹ *smṛtir eṣā yat svapnadarśanam – Śāṅkara Bhāṣya on Brahma Sūtra II.2, 29.*

³⁰ Regarding the different theories of dreams existing in Indian culture, see Singha, *Indian Psychology* I: 307–325; Bhattacharya, *Aspects of Indian Psychology*; A. Beinorius, 'Sapņų kilmės teorijos indų kultūroje', *Liaudies kultūra*, Nr. 3 (1999): 34–40.

³¹ *antaḥkaraṇagatavāsanānimitta indriyavṛtyabhāvūkalino 'rthopalumbhaḥ svapnaḥ – Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, Siddhāntabindu*, Poona edition, 107.

³² *Caraka saṃhitā*, 5.5.42–46.

first three (*dr̥ṣṭa*, *śruta*, *anubhūta*) are the dreams produced by the impressions acquired through different sense organs.

Besides, according to the view of grammarian philosopher Bhartṛhari, the main spring of all our behaviour (*sarvavyavahārayoniḥ*) is *pratibhā* (supersensuous apperception, 'flash of light') which is at the root of our activities and which spontaneously determines the instincts and behaviour of all creatures. But, being another name for *prārabdha*, which is nothing but a bundle of *adr̥ṣṭa* and *saṃskāra* determining and guiding the present birth and life, it accords with the conception of *avidyā* in the Sāṃkhya and Pātañjala schools.³³

The conception of *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās* has been evolved in response to different kinds of questions having the purpose of explaining certain occurrences during the process of radical introversion and especially during the terminal states of enstasy (*samādhi*). The ultimate stage of *citta* is *nirudha* in which all functions and modifications of mind are completely suspended, and the mind remains in complete repose only as impressions have finally left (*saṃskāramātraśeṣa*). The mind of the aspirant of *kaivalya* state becomes disgusted with the supreme realisation of the distinction of Self from non-self (*viveka khyāti*) and discards it. Then *citta* remains only in the form of some *saṃskāras*, and that is called *nirbīja samādhi*, because of having no object. It is called *asamprajñāta samādhi* as well, for nothing is cognized in this state. Though there is no cognition in this state, there must be *saṃskāras* which may be inferred from the fact of rising or waking again from such *samādhi*. But in the state of final emancipation or spiritual freedom (*kaivalya*), the mind (*citta*) dissolves with all impressions in its substratum, *pradhāna*. This is the highest state called *saṃskāra-nirodha*, when the very propensity of mind to form fluctuations is brought under complete control.

However, as Ian Whicher has rightly remarked, then a yogin does not become a 'mindless' being (as it is still often regarded in the West), rather he is left with a transformed, fully satisfied mind which due to its transparent nature can function in the form of *akliṣṭāvṛttis*.³⁴ Vijñāna Bhikṣu argues that while the cognitive, *samprajñāta samādhi* abolishes all the karma except the *prārabdha karma* (the karma that is already ripening in the present), the enstatic, *asamprajñāta samādhi* has the potency to destroy even the *prārabdha karma* including all the previous *saṃskāras*.³⁵ The karma of such a yogin is said to be neither white (*aśuklam*) nor black (*akṛṣṇam*) nor mixed (YS IV.7). There is a complete exhaustion or burning up of

³³ More on *pratibhā* see Gopinath Kaviraj, *Aspects of Indian Thought*, University of Burdwan, 1984, 19–21.

³⁴ Ian Whicher, 'Yoga and freedom: A Reconsideration of Patañjali's Classical Yoga', *Philosophy East and West* 48, 2 (1998): 272. See also his other articles "Cessation and Integration in Classical Yoga", *Asian Philosophy* 5, 1, (1995): 47–58; "Nirodha, Yoga Praxis and the Transformation of the Mind", *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 25, 1 (1997): 1–67; "The Mind (Citta): Its Nature, Structure and Functioning in Classical Yoga", *Sambhava*, Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism, 1998, 18: 35–62.

³⁵ *asamprajñātayogasyaca 'kḥilavṛttisaṃskāradāhadvāra prārabdhasyā 'pyatikrameṇetī* –YSS, 2.

karmic residue, i. e. afflictions (*kleśas*) in the form of latent impressions (*saṃskāras*). The process of making the *kleśas* barren is explained by Vācaspati Mīśra in the following way:

Meditation (*prasamkhyāna*) makes the attenuated *kleśas* barren (*vandhya*), which are like burned seeds (*dagdabīja*) of rice (*kalāma*). If the *kleśas* are not attenuated discrimination between *sattva* and *puruṣa* cannot even arise, and much less make the *kleśas* barren. But when the *kleśas* are thinned out they can be made barren. (TV II.2)

According to both Vyāsa (YB IV.30) and Vijñāna Bhikṣu (YV IV.30), the one in whom this high state of purification takes place is designated a *jīvanmukta* – one who is liberated while still being embodied. The modern commentator Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya also argues that liberated yogins who embark on their role as a teacher ‘for the benefit of all’ do so through their ability to create or construct a new individualized mind (*nirmāṇa citta*) which can be ‘dissolved at will’ and does not collect more *saṃskāras* of ignorance.³⁶

The exceptional ability of spiritually advanced yogins to have recollections from past lives also depends, according to Patañjali, on the subconscious mental properties. Vyāsa gives a list of imperceptible attributes or modifications of mind (*aparidrṣṭacittadharmā*) which may be considered as the preconscious attributes and propellers of mind: mutation (*pariṇāma*), effort (*cheṣṭā*), suppression (*nirodha*), power (*śakti*), vitality (*jīvana*), characterization (*dharma*). If a yogin who has developed his mental power beyond the reach of ordinary person concentrates (*sākṣātkaraṇāt*) on his *karmāśaya* and *jñānāśaya*, he can recollect his previous birth. Though being unconscious or subconscious attributes of mind, they can be perceived through *saṃyama*, which produces the memory of previous embodiments of a yogin.³⁷ Similarly, by the direct perception of the subliminal impressions of others there comes knowledge of the previous births of others.

In the schools of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, *saṃskāras* are regarded not only as mental tendencies, but also as dispositions of material substances. Kaṇāda in his *Vaiśeṣika sūtra* defines: ‘*Avidyā* is produced from the defect of pervious knowledge impressions (*saṃskāra*); it is wrong cognition (*viparyaya*)’.³⁸

All Indian schools, being believers in immortality of the soul and rebirth, regard previous actions and cognitions as the maker of the storehouse of *adrṣṭa* and *saṃskāras*. When a person dies, his unactivated *karmāśayas*, including his *vāsanās*, gather together within that individual’s *citta* and immediately pass on to a new body (a foetus) and ‘fill in’ (*āpūra*) it with *citta* appropriate to the kind of the body. Though this storehouse of *citta* may seem to come by heredity, this heredity again is determined to a great extent by previous actions

³⁶ Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, trans. into English by P. N. Mukerji, Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1963, 384.

³⁷ *saṃskārasākṣātkaraṇātpūrvajātijñānam* –YS III.18.

³⁸ *Vaiśeṣika sūtra*, 9.2.10–11.

(*karmanī*), knowledge (*vidyā*) and the past cognitions (*pūrvaprajñā*).³⁹ The retributive consequences of karmic actions are transmitted through a person's inner dispositions. It means that *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās* form an important part of the karmic retribution and guarantee that every person gets a just reward or punishment for his/her morally qualified deeds.⁴⁰ All present drives come from these subconscious imprints and dispositions formed in previous lives and activated in a new birth. These dispositions are used as explanations of the gifts and extraordinary abilities of young children as well.

Besides, in Pātañjala school *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās* have an important role in bringing about the continuity in rebirth and forming the continuity between lives. However, according to Hindu philosophy the rebirth relationship and the personal identity are not to be reduced to a mere *saṃskāric* continuity or dharmic continuity as in Buddhism. The personal identity in Hindu traditions is ultimately guaranteed by the existence of the permanent, spiritual Self (*puruṣa*, *ātman*). Even what we call primal animal instincts, like self-preservation, procreation, etc., and our involuntary activities like respiration, blood circulation, etc., have also their source in the same storehouse. We have, then, in the Yoga account a rather carefully worked out theory concerning the mechanics of karma and rebirth, 'which is made available to the non-philosopher through appeal to the model of rice-farming'.⁴¹

Some scholars are inclined to see in the concept of *saṃskāra* a mirror image of the ancient Buddhist notion of *saṅkhāra* signifying the conative factors in the series of conditioned origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), namely, its second link (*nidāna*). The earlier Upaniṣads do not mention it; neither *Pāli piṭakas* seem to mention it.⁴² There may be involved some direct borrowings from Early Buddhism, where the interpretation of *saṃskāras* as dispositions is rather obvious. In the context of Theravada Buddhism, P. D. Premasiri writes: '*Saṅkhāras* are the dispositional tendencies that have become relatively stable features of an individual's

³⁹ For instance, see *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.4.2. Representing the point of view of Advaita Vedānta, in his commentary Śaṅkara says, "As a matter of fact, everybody has at that moment [of death] a consciousness which consists of *vāsanās* in the form of particular modifications of his mind (regarding the next life) that are induced by his past work." *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, translated by Swami Madhavananda, Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1988, 491.

⁴⁰ However, according to Leo Nāraeho, it is interesting to view the retributive system of karma as an absolutely unconscious system, but this leads to a philosophically problematic interpretation of the Indian conception of karma. See Leo Nāraeho, "Unconscious forces: A survey of some concepts in Indian philosophy", *Asian Philosophy* 14, 2 (July 2004): 117–129.

⁴¹ K. H. Potter, 'The karma theory and its Interpretation in some Indian philosophical systems', in *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Tradition*, ed. W. D. O'Flaherty, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983, 248.

⁴² According to S. Dasgupta, *Abhidhānappadīpikā* of Moggallāna mentions it, and the term also occurs in the *Muktika Upaniṣad* (S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, vols. I–V, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988, (first edition Cambridge, 1922), 1: 263. J. Filliozat is also of the opinion that the theory of *saṃskāras* first appears in Buddhism and only subsequently in the texts of Yoga. See Jean Filliozat, *Religions, Philosophy, Yoga: A Selection of Articles*, transl. Maurice Shukla, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991, 309.

personality. They can also be described as character traits of an individual that have become established as a result of repeated types of bodily, verbal and mental functions'.⁴³

* * *

A brief examination of the principal concepts in the main texts of Patañjali's Yoga school related to the subconscious brings us to certain conclusions. With some generalizations we may say that various concepts used to describe the broad field of unconscious mental activity, and notably *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās*, are substantial for the psychological and philosophical explanation of the nature of human consciousness and individual existence in Indian tradition. It is possible to distinguish seven main features, or functions, of these concepts in Yoga tradition. First, it describes a vast, inexhaustible storehouse or pool of unconscious stimuli, which power the machinery of consciousness; the storehouse where the primal animal instincts such as self-preservation, procreation, etc., and our involuntary activities like respiration, blood circulation, etc., have their source. Second, *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās* are used to explain the origin of the memories (*smṛti*), dreams (*svapna*), illusions (*bhrānti*) and hallucinations (*vibhrānti*). Third, these dispositions are used as explanations of the gifts and extraordinary abilities of young children due to the revival of past experience. Fourth, both concepts form an essential part of the karmic retribution and explain the appropriate and unappropriate karmic experience of a new birth. Fifth, *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās*, according to Patañjali, play an important role in bringing about the continuity in rebirth and forming continuity between lives. Sixth, the exceptional ability of spiritually advanced yogins to have recollections from their past lives also depends on the unconscious mental properties. Eventually, it seems that the conception of *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās* has been developed for the purpose of explaining certain occurrences during the process of the final emancipation or spiritual freedom (*kaivalya*), and especially during the terminal soteriological state of *samādhi*.

Speaking in psychological terms, human existence from the Yoga point of view is a continuous actualization of the subconscious content through everyday experiences and conditioning of the specific character of each individual in accordance with his/her heredity and his/her karmic situation. Long before psychoanalysis, Yoga showed the importance of the role played by the subconscious. Because of the prominent practical orientation of the psychological aspects of Yoga, it has occasionally been compared to Western psychoanalytical theories and procedures, but the comparison is only conditionally valid.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, similar concepts exist in Indian classical psychology and have a great psychological significance. There is nothing in Indian psychology which might be equated

⁴³ P. D. Premasiri, 'The Theravada Buddhist doctrine of survival after death', in *Concepts of Transmigration: Perspectives on Reincarnation*, ed. S. J. Kaplan, Studies in Comparative Religion 6, Lewiston: The Edwin Meller Press, 1996, 151.

⁴⁴ See A. Beinorius, 'Analitinė C. G. Jungo psichologija ir religinė Indijos tradicija', *Logos* 22 (2000): 31–47.

with the Freudian or Jungian concept of unconscious and preconscious with all their specific characteristics.⁴⁵ C. G. Jung describes the so-called collective unconscious as follows:

This psychic life is the mind of our ancient ancestors, the way in which they thought and felt, the way in which they conceived of life and the world, of gods and human beings. The existence of these historical layers is presumably the source of the belief in reincarnation and in memories of past lives. As the body is a sort of museum of its phylogenetic history, so is the mind. [...] It is only the individual ego-consciousness that has for ever a new beginning and an early end. But the unconscious psyche is not only immensely old, it is also able to grow unceasingly into an equally remote future⁴⁶.

To Jung, what influences man's conscious and unconscious mind is not so much his own past as the collective history of the whole human race, whereas according to Yoga, the subconscious is primarily made up of one's own past lives and the resultant of individual karma. A second difference is that unlike psychoanalysis, Yoga psychology does not see in the unconscious merely a manifestation of libido and believes that *saṃskāras* can be brought to the level of awareness, mastered or even conquered through employing intense psycho-mental techniques and Yoga disciplines. For Jung, however, such state is both a psychological and philosophical impossibility. 'Whereas for yoga the *saṃskāras* are obstructions of reality which must be removed for the achievement of knowledge, for Jung it is through the shaping of the materials of consciousness by the archetypal 'memories' that knowledge of reality results'⁴⁷. The most important point of similarity is that, according to both Yoga and psychoanalysis, this subconscious is taken to be the determining factor in conscious life. Thus, we see that belonging to the core of the Indian psychological system, the conception of *saṃskāras* and *vāsanās* in a way foreshadows the modern notion of the subconscious / unconscious / preconscious.

ABBREVIATIONS:

YS – *Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali* (2–3 CE)

YB – *Yoga Bhāṣya* of Vyāsa (5–6th CE)

YV – *Yoga Vārtika* of Vijñāna Bhikṣu (16th CE)

⁴⁵ For instance, S. Chennakesavan is inclined to relate *saṃskāras* to the preconscious and *vāsanās* to the unconscious. 'The nature of the contents of the preconscious and the unconscious vary with different schools of psychology, but they agree that the preconscious can be recalled to memory easily, since it belongs to the immediate past like the *saṃskāras*, whereas the unconscious cannot be recalled so easily and is comparable to the *vāsanās*'. S. Chennakesavan, *Concept of Mind in Indian Philosophy*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991, 85.

⁴⁶ C. G. Jung, *Integration of the Personality*, trans. Stanley Dell, London: Kegan and Paul, 1939, 25.

⁴⁷ H. Coward, *Jung and Eastern Thought*, Delhi: Sri Sat Guru Publications, 1991, 68. See also his article 'Jung's Encounter with Yoga', *The Journal of Analytical Psychology* 23, 4 (1978): 339–57.

- TV – *Tattva Vaiśāradi* of Vācaspati Miśra (9th CE)
 RM – *Rāja Mārtaṇḍa* of Bhoja Rāja (11th CE)
 YSS – *Yoga Sāra Saṃgraha* of Vijñāna Bhikṣu (16th CE)
 YSBV – *Yoga Sūtra Bhāṣya Vivaraṇa* of Śaṅkara (8th CE)

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PASAŖMONĖS ŽAISMĖ:

apie *saṃskāras* ir *vāsanās* klasikinėje jogos psichologijoje

Audrius Beinorius

S a n t r a u k a

Autorius atkreipia dėmesį į tai, jog nors Vakarų psichoanalitinė mokykla nuo Freudo laikų sureiškė pasaulinių impulsų ir troškimų svarbą žmogaus elgsenai, Indijos psichologija nuo pačių seniausių laikų pasaŖmonės turiniui skyrė ypatingą dėmesį. Straipsnyje ir siekiama giliau pažvelgti į įvairias konceptualias problemas, susijusias su pasaŖmonės tematika Indijos jogos mokykloje, pirmiausia pamatinių psichologinių sąvokų *saṃskāras* ir *vāsanās*, nusakančių nesąmoningų tendencijų ir impulsų turinį, reikšmę. Tekstinis analizės pa-

grindas yra Patañjaliao *Yoga sūtra* ir pagrindiniai tradiciniai šio teksto komentarai: Vyāso, Vijñāna Bhikṣaus, Vācaspati Miśros ir Bhoja Rājos. Aptariama pasąmoninių tendencijų (*saṃskāras*), instinktyvių polinkių (*vāsanās*), karminių pėdsakų (*karmāśayas*), atminties (*smṛti*) ir sąmonės teršalų (*kleśas*) sąveika tiek būdravimo, tiek sapno patyrimuose. Išvadose ir apibendrinimuose išskiriamos septynios pagrindinės psichologinės šių sąvokų funkcijos, būtent kaip atminties, sapnų, iliuzijų atspirties šaltinis; ankstesnių gyvenimų egzistencinės patirties saugykla; išskirtinių prigimtinių vaikų sugebėjimų šaltinis; karminio atlygio ir blogio kilmės mechanizmo paaiškinimas; ypatingų joginių galių šaltinis; reinkarnacinio mechanizmo pagrindimas; individualios tapatybės pojūčių generuojantis veiksnys. Galiausiai, glaustai palyginus jogą su psichoanalitinės C. G. Jungo mokyklos požiūriu, išskiriami keli esminiai pasąmonės sampratų skirtumai. Kaip indų psichologinės sistemos komponentai, šios sąvokos rodo kur kas ankstesnę pastangą atskleisti žmogaus priklausomybę nuo nesąmoningo turinio, tačiau yra neatsiejamos ir nuo bendro indiškos pasaulėžiūros ir mąstymo kultūros konteksto.

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