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

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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 saṃskāras 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 saṃskāras 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 (darsana) 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 (bhaé, ज्ञेयम्) 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'.

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. 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".

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 saṃskāras 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

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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 *adrṣṭa* 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 Āranya), ‘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 *sārūṇāśira* is apparent from the aphorism 3.9 of *Yoga sūtra*, where two varieties of *saṃskāra* are distinguished: those leading to the actualisation of consciousness (vyutthāna) and those inducing restriction of consciousness (*niruddha*).

In order to denote the total stock of *saṃskāra* 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, *adrṣṭa* 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 *klesa*, 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

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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, *Pāñājula Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*, Poona: Papal Anthenaeum, 1970, 50.

7 *te hiṃgāparitapūphulāḥ – YS II.14.*

8 *sopakramaḥ nirupakramaḥ ca – YS III.21.*

9 *tadvipākāḥ jñānāyurbhogāḥ – 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 *drṣṭādṛṣṭajamnu vedāṇyaḥ – 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 samskāras colour every cognition. On the other hand, up-front mental activity in turn augments the subliminal deposit. Samskāras 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 (sāṁsāra).

Although often used by the exegetes and modern interpreters as a synonym of samskāras, vāsanās really stand for a different concept. Commenting YS III.18 Vyāsa says that samskāras 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. According to S. Dasgupta, vāsanā is a later word than samskāra, ‘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 samskāras are the subconscious states which are being constantly generated by experience. Vāsanās are innate samskāras not acquired in this life.

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. According to YS aphorism IV.8, the origination of vāsanās is to be linked up with the fruition (vipiika) of man’s activity, and is explained by the doctrine of moral retribution; “then the vāsanās which are favourable to such fruition are manifested”. By karmavipāka or fructification of actions is meant not the ‘outcome’ of an act on the empirical place, 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, samskāras and karmāśaya are identified (vāsanāḥ samskāraḥ āśayā ityarthāḥ). I should mention that the very detailed commentary attributed by some to Śaṅkara’s authorship of this work, the great exponent of Advaita Vedanta, still is under question regarding the genuine authorship of this work. Some scholars have argued that there are several reasons to question Śaṅkara’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 Yogasūtradhāya-vivaraṇa,” Journal of Indian Philosophy 20 (1992): 419–423. Sanskrit text was edited by Leggett Trevor, Śaṅkara 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, Yogasūtradhāya-vivaraṇa of Śaṅkara: Text with English trans. and critical notes along with text and translation of Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali and Vyāsabhāṣya, 2 vols., Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2001.

12 dvaye khalvam samskāraḥ smṛtikleśahetavo vāsanārūpāḥ vipākahe tavo dharmāharmṛupāśte pūrvabhavāhhisamskṛtah – YSB III.18.

13 S. Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, vols. I–V, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988, (first edition Cambridge, 1922), I: 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 anuṣguṇānām eva abhivyaktir 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 karmāsaya and kept in the citta in the form of potency or impressions (samskāras). [...] 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 samskāras of the experiences that an individual must have undergone in a previous dog-life of its own.¹⁶

In his commentary on the Yogabhāṣya IV.9, Vācaspati Miśra 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, samskāras 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 Vāya in YB II.13 likens the mind and its vāsanās to a fishing net with its knots (matsyajālam 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 klesās’. 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 karmāsaya 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 samskāras. And, as told in the sūtra IV.10, vāsanās are beginningless (anāditva), because the primal will or desire to live (aśīs) is permanent. From the Yoga point of view, what we know as desire for existence, clinging to life or fear of death (abhinvēṣa, ātmaśīs) 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 Patañjali, 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 sublate these pervaders (vyāpaka) of vāsanā, we can sublate 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 jñānāsaya, is produced by various kinds of cognitions with some interest – up ekṣāntamakajñānāt. 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, adṛṣṭa 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.

Adṛṣṭa 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 saṃskāras from innumerable saṃskāras abiding in our mind.21

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

According to the Sāṃkhya and Patañjala 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 anityaśuciduḥkhānāmasu nityaśucisukhitam khyātravidyā –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 klesas al well. The word klesiša, or ‘cause of affliction’ (derived from the root klesi- ‘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 klesišas that provide the dynamic framework of the phenomenal consciousness. His next aphorism states that the karmasaya is klesišamūla and avidyā (ignorance) begets mainly four other kinds of klesišas – asmitā (egoism), rāga (attachment), dveśa (aversion) and abhiniveśa (will-to-live), of these avidyā being the source of all.22 As the basic emotional and motivational forces, klesišas 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 klesišas 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 kṣetramuttareśām – YS II.4. In his Psychological Commentary on Kundalini Yoga, C.G. Jung describes klesišas 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 Kundalini 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 klesišas in the light of the traditional Yoga soteriology are discussed by Anindita N. Balslev, ‘The Notions of klesiša and Its Bearing on the Yoga Analysis of Mind’, Philosophy East and West 41, 1 (1991): 77–89.
Each *akliśṭā* state produces its own potency or *samskāra*, and with the frequency of the states their *samskāras* are strengthened, which in due course by habituation (*abhyaśa*) suppress the *kliśṭā* ones. However, this replacement of *kliśṭāvṛttis* by *akliśṭāvṛttis* 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 *samskāras* 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 *samskāras*.

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 — *vidyāpartam jñānāntaram*’\(^\text{24}\). Therefore, the so-called normal human situation is described in Yoga tradition as a specific state of consciousness: a cognitive misconstruction of reality (*mithyājñāna*) 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 samskāra*, 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 *akliśṭāvṛttis* and *prajñāsamskāras* that are destructive to nescience, the matrix of all *kleśas*.

Again, *samskāras* 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 (*bhṛṇṭi*) and hallucinations (*vibhṛṇṭi*). Dream is regarded as *smṛtiḥbhṛṃtra*, or as ‘confused recollections’, and illusion is called *smṛtiḥṛpa*, or ‘resembling recollection’, being produced by *samskāras* in the absence of actual objects of perception. The dream-images are modifications of *buddhi* through *samskāras* and defects (*doṣas*) of senses. Therefore, experience in dream is erroneous recollection. *Vyāsa* also states in his *Yoga Sūtra Bhāṣya* that *svapna*, or ‘confused recollections’, and illusion is called *smṛtiḥṛpa*, or ‘resembling recollection’, being produced by *samskāras* in the absence of actual objects of perception. The dream-images are modifications of *buddhi* through *samskāras* and defects (*doṣas*) of senses. 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\(^{24}\) *Vyāsa Bhāṣya*, II.5.

\(^{25}\) *svapne bhāvituśmartavyāḥ* – *Vyāsa Bhāṣya* I.11.

\(^{26}\) *Tattva Vaiśāradī* I.11.

\(^{27}\) *Jayadevaśākaprayāhyādhyāyānām smṛtiḥsamskārayor ekarūpottvāt* – 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 Vyāsabhāṣya explains:

The vāsanā is like the memory (smṛti) and so there can be memory from the samskāras of past lives even though separated by birth, by space and by time. From these memories there are again the samskāras, and the memories are revived by manifestation of the karmaśayas. 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 Miśra 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 samskāras. It means that the samskāras 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 samskāras. In the similar manner, the Vedāntin Śaṅkara regards dreams as recollections: in the mind of a sleeping person only impressions persist, which produce dreams.29 Being produced by samskāras, 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 samskāras produce images, and the unconscious adṛśta 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 samskāras acquired in the waking state is also described in Brhadāraṇyaka Upāniṣad (4.3.9). The same is said by Madhusūdana Sarasvati: dream is the experience of objects through impressions in the mind while the sense organs are inactive.31

In Caraka samhitā, the most authoritative Indian medical treatise, we find a description of the seven different sorts of dreams, namely: drṣṭa, śruta, anubhūta, prārthita, kalpita, bhāvika, and dosāja.32 Prārthita 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 dosāja dreams come due to some disorder in the functioning of the three bioorganical humours (vāyu, pitta, kapha). While the

28 yathā ca vāsanāstathā smṛtirīti, jātidesākālavyavahitebhyaḥ samskārebhyoḥ smṛtiḥ smṛteṣca punah samskāra ityvavetvā smṛtisamskārāh karmāśayāvrittilabhyyavāśadhvyajyante atāṣcā vyavahitānāmaṇi nimittaṁāṁvītika bhāvanucchchedadamanantaryām eva siddhamīti, – VB IV.9.
29 smṛtar āṣā yat svapnadarśanam – Śaṅkara Bhāṣya on Brahma Śūtra II.2, 29.
30 Regarding the different theories of dreams existing in Indian culture, see Singha, Indian Psychology 1: 307–325; Bhattacharya, Aspects of Indian Psychology; A. Beinorius, 'Sapnų kilmės teorijos indų kultūroje'. Liaudies kultūra, Nr. 3 (1999): 34–40.
31 antakurunañgatāvāsanānāinta indraivārttyabhāvāṅkalinī 'rthropalambhaḥ svapnaḥ – Madhusūdana Sarasvati, Siddhāntabindu, Poona edition, 107.
32 Caraka samhitā, 5.5.42–46.
first three (drṣṭa, śruta, anubhūta) are the dreams produced by the impressions acquired through different sense organs.

Besides, according to the view of grammarian philosopher Bhartrhari, 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 adṛṣṭa and saṃskāra determining and guiding the present birth and life, it accords with the conception of avidyā in the Śaṅkhya 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 niruddha in which all functions and modifications of mind are completely suspended, and the mind remains in complete repose only as impressions have finally left (saṃskāramātrāśeṣa). 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 nirbija samādhi, because of having no object. It is called asamprajñātā 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, pradhiina. 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 aklīśāvṛttis.34 Vijnāna Bhikṣu argues that while the cognitive, samprajñātā samādhi abolishes all the karma except the prārabdha karma (the karma that is already ripening in the present), the enstatic, asamprajñātā 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 (asuklam) nor black (akṣīram) 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”, Sambhasa, Nagoya Studies in Indian Culture and Buddhism, 1998, 18: 35–62.
35 asamprajñātayogasyac ‘khilavṛttisamaskāramātrāśeṣa prārabdhasyā’pyayitkrameṇeti –YSS, 2.
karmic residue, i.e. afflictions (kleśas) in the form of latent impressions (sāṃskāras). The process of making the kleśas barren is explained by Vācaspati Miśra in the following way:

Meditation (prāsaṃkhya) makes the attenuated kleśas barren (vandhya), which are like burned seeds (dagdablja) of rice (kalāma). If the kleśas are not attenuated discrimination between suitva 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 Vījñāna Bhikṣu (YV IV.30), the one in whom this high state of purification takes place is designated a jīvātmak – one who is liberated while still being embodied. The modern commentator Swāmi Harinārānanda Āranya 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 sālskiiras 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 (aparidṛṣṭadharma) which may be considered as the preconscious attributes and propellers of mind: mutation (paritṛjma), effort (cheṣṭā), suppression (nirōdha), power (śakti), vitality (jīvāna), characterization (dharma). If a yogin who has developed his mental power beyond the reach of ordinary person concentrates (sālskiiras) on his karmāśaya and jñānāśaya, he can recollect his previous birth. Though being unconscious or subconscious attributes of mind, they can be perceived through samyama, 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, sāṃskāras 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 (sāṃskāra); it is wrong cognition (vipāryaya)’. 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 adṛṣṭa and sāṃskāras. 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 Harinārānanda Āranya. Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali, trans. into English by P. N. Mukerji. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1963, 384.
37 Sāṃskārasāṃskārayāpyavajjānūnum –YS III.18.
38 Vaiśeṣika sūtra, 9.2.10–11.
Play of the Subconscious

(karmanit), knowledge (vidya) and the past cognitions (paurvaprajna). The retributive consequences of karmic actions are transmitted through a person's inner dispositions. It means that samskāras 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. 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 Pātāñjala school samskāras 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 samskāric continuity or dharmic continuity as in Buddhism. The personal identity in Hindu traditions is ultimately guaranteed by the existence of the permanent, spiritual Self (purusa, 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'.

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

39 For instance, see Brhadāraṇyaka 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 vāsanā in the form of particular modifications of his mind (regarding the next life) that are induced by his past work." The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Śaṅkara, 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, Abhidhānappadikā of Moggalāna 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 samskāras 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. 

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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 (svāpna), illusions (bhṛānti) and hallucinations (vibhṛānti). 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 inappropriate 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. Nevertheless, similar concepts exist in Indian classical psychology and have a great psychological significance. There is nothing in Indian psychology which might be equated

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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, ‘Analitine C. G. Jungs psychologija ir religinė Indijos tradicija’, Logos 22 (2000): 31–47.
with the Freudian or Jungian concept of unconscious and preconscious with all their specific characteristics. 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 future.

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.'

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 Vijnāna Bhikṣu (16th CE)

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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 Vācaspāti Miśra (9th CE)
RM – Rāja Mārtanda of Bhoja Rāja (11th CE)
YSS – Yoga Sūra Samgraha of Vijñāna Bhikṣu (16th CE)
YSBV – Yoga Sūtra Bhāṣya Vivaraṇa of Śaṅkara (8th CE)

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**PASĄMONĖS ŽAISMĖ:**

apie *sāmskāras* ir *vāsanās* klasikinėje jogos psichologijoje

Audrius Beinorius

*Sāntrauka*

Autorius atkreipia dėmesį į tai, jog nors Vakarų psychoanalitinė mokykla nuo Freudo laikų sureikšmino pasąmoninių impulsų ir troškimų svarbą žmogaus elgsenai, Indijos psichologija nuo pačių seniausių laikų pasąmonės turinio skyrė ypatingą dėmesį. Straipsnyje ir siekiami giliau pažvelgti į įvairias konceptualias problemas, susijusias su pasąmonės tematika Indijos jogos mokykloje, pirmaisiaus pamatiniių psichologinių sąvokų *sāmskāras* ir *vāsanās*, nusakančių nesąmoningų tendencijų ir impulsų turinį, reikšmę. Tekstinis analizės pa-

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grindas yra Pataľalio Yoga sūtra ir pagrindiniai tradiciniai šio teksto komentarai: Vyäsos, Vijñāna Bhikšaus, Vācaspati Misros ir Bhoja Rājos. Aptariama pasamoninių tendencijų (samskāras), instinktyvių polinkų (vāsanās), karminių pėdsakų (karmāśayas), atminties (smrți) ir sąmonės teršalų (kleśas) sąveika tiek būdavimo, tiek sapno patyrimuose. Išvadose ir apibendrinimuose išskiriamos septynios pagrindinės psichologinės šių sąvokų funkcijos, būtent kaip atminties, sapnų, ilužijų atspirties šaltinis; ankstesnių gyvenimų egzistencinės patirties saugykla; išskirtinių prigimtinių vaikų sugebėjimų šaltinis; karmino atlygio ir blogio kilmės mechanizmo paaiškinimas; ypatingųjų galių šaltinis; reinkarnacine mechanizmo pagrindimas; individualios tapatybės požiūris generuojantis veiksny. Galiausiai, glaudai palyginus jogą su psychoanalitinės C. G. Jungo mokyklos požiūriu, išskiriami keli esminiai pasamonės sampratų skirtumai. Kaip indų psichologinės sistemos komponentai, šios sąvokos rodė kur kas ankstesnę pastangą atskleisti žmogaus priklausomybę nuo nesąmoningo turinio, tačiau yra neatsiejamos ir nuo bendro indiškos pasaulėžiūros ir mašyino kultūros konteksto.

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