

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR BASED ON INDIGENOUS SOURCES

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In recent years there has been a great increase in industrial activity in India leading to the emergence of large organisations. The demand for skills in organising and managing large groups of men has resulted in a need for scientific management. One of the areas of management that has gained a lot of prominence of late has been organisation behaviour. The lab method of working with small groups of people has been introduced in India as a basic tool in understanding group behaviour and individual – group interaction. Some of the pioneers in this field have been Dr. Nitesh De, Prof. Pulin K. Garg, Prof. Gauranga Chattopadhyay and Dr. Thiagarajan among others. The group methods, that originated in the Tavistock institute, National Training Labs, encounter groups, Gestalt therapy....., found their way into India through their work.

The need to work with culture specific ideas and contextually relevant modes promoted much experimentation in India. Prof. Pulin Garg and Prof. Gauranga Chattopadhyay in particular have done a great deal of work in delving into the Indian tradition and drawing insights and understanding from these sources. They founded the Indian Society of Individual and Social Development (ISISD) to institutionalise this learning and carry it further. This institution has in the last few years trained several professionals and equipped them with behavioural and group process skills. My understanding of this mode of working is based on a long and sustained relationship and working together with Prof. Pulin Garg and my colleague at ISISD.

I came to know of ISISD when I was involved in a study of Yoga with Shri. T.K.V. Desikachar and his father Prof. T. Krishnamacharya. The insights into human processes that were contained in the Yoga Sutras, the Sankya Karika, the Upanishadas and the Gita fascinated me. The unique way in which my teachers interpreted and used this understanding in treating people through Asana and Pranayama was a great learning for me. It has been my experience that individual processes and dynamics of group interaction can be understood based on these insights from the Indian tradition. It has also been my conviction that one has to re-evaluate the cultural positives and re-define the traditions in a modern context in order to find integrated ways of behaviour modification.

In this paper I have tried to articulate the similarities that I see in the processes of Identity formation and role taking of individuals and the Indian texts as I understand them. The interpretation of the Yoga Sutras and Sankya Karika that I have used in this paper are drawn from the oral tradition of T. Krishnamacharya. They are English re-edition of his expressions in Tamil. The teaching was carried on over a period of about 8 years mostly through individual classes.

The database for this paper also includes my experience of working with about 50 small groups of 8 to 12 persons. The methodology of work in these groups is based on the “Identity Groups” work developed in ISISD. This paper focuses on the processes that emerged in a particular group I worked with as part of Training Teachers for the Blind at White field (Divine Light School) for the blind in August

1984. The group consisted of 10 women trainees, one blind (male) instructor and the co-ordinator of programme (also a male).

With the decline of study into indigenous traditions many ideas that are found there have either lost currency or been relegated to the realms of the esoteric and spiritual. I would, therefore, like to define some of the terminology I am using from the Yoga Sutras. These ideas are better understood through discussions but, I will risk the written mode.

1. Drk shakti – The life in a person is called the ‘seer’, ‘experiencer’, ‘doer’ etc. in Yoga. Without this force one is just a dead body. The word here is ‘seer’ (1)
2. Darshana Shakti – All Matter is encompassed in this word. External objects, the body, the senses and the mind are all included in this word. (2)
3. Avidya – Mistaken conclusions taken as right knowledge : they become the basis of action. This base of incorrect conclusions and assumptions is avidya (3)
4. Asmita – This is an outcome of Avidya. The experience of being / living (drk shakti) when superimposed with the experience of the environment (darshana shakti) creates the feeling “I am this”, Asmita is very similar to ‘Identity’ (4).
5. Raga and Dvesha – In ones interaction with the world one experiences pain and pleasures. Retaining these experiences in the mind and having either a craving (for pleasure) or an antagonism (to pain) is called Raga and Dvesha respectively (5).
6. Abhiniveshah – Fear of death is called abhiniveshah. Man’s actions that spring from this fear can be looked at as an expression of this force (6).
7. Vasana – The residue of an experience left with the person causes a colouring of one’s psyche and soma. This essence of the aggregate of a person’s experiences is Vasana (7).
8. Samskara – The actions a person does has a conditioning effect on him. This potential for repeating old action modes is called samskara (8).

None of these are either negative or positive in of themselves. These are potentials or forms of action in man (9). They bear negative or positive results depending upon the complex interactions that characterise man in a context.

In the First Chapter the Yoga Sutra describes symptoms that obtain in a person who is caught in the web of negative patterns. The symptoms enumerated include lack of physical well being, disease lack of psychological well being in various manifestations and lack of strength both inwardly in being able to sustain ones efforts and bring them to fruition (10). The question of whether the processes of one’s life and actions are positive or negative can best be answered by each person for himself after deliberate consideration.

Let us now look at the experience of a blind person interacting with in the group from this structure of the ideas from yoga sutras. The primary experience of himself that this disabled person spoke about was based on his experience of deprivation. His linking up with the environment of other people creates this inner experience of "I am deprived". This difference is made the cause of both special attention on the one hand and non inclusion on the other. His identity as a person different from the normal and deficient in comparison is repeatedly brought out.

This distilled conclusion of one's experience I would like to compare with the idea of Vasana. The essence of the individual that pervades the psyche and the some. This vasana would affect the perceptions of the person, the matrix of meaning he gives to his experience, his body, his behaviour and response, i.e., the Vasana provides the ground on which the entire patterns of life and experience are based. This ground is the Avidya Kshetram (11). The person's individual conclusions and assumptions about the nature of the world and himself. The conclusion "blindness means deprivation" is a product of this ground.

Vyasa's commentary on the sutra II.12 (12) discusses the form in which the vasana builds up in a person. The process described is very similar to the process by which a crystal is grown in a solution. A few crystals of the required chemical are hung in a solution of that chemical and it slowly collects and grows. In man, the seed of a deeply felt experience continues to reside within the mind and creates different patterns in different environments / different stages in a person's growth.

The Sutra IV.9 (13) talks about the persistence of the action patterns and deep memories. It states that even across changes in environment and time these residues of memory and potential / conditioned patterns of behaviour remain.

The experience of being, of living when superimposed with the experience of the environment creates what is called the Asmita or identity of the person. One, therefore, says 'I am blind' or 'I am handicapped' as an essential description of himself. The face of 'I am' – called the drk shakti is experienced through the physical fact the darshana shakti i.e., one's psychosomatic system and its interaction with the environment.

This conclusion is then extended to explain the hurt and pain of living. 'I am hurt / pained because I am deprived'. This conclusion or assumption born out of the stigmatised identity leads to intense feelings of desperation. "No action can remove my deprivation, my source of pain". The means of an experience has been viewed mistakenly as the source, the cause of the pain / hurt.

In the case of this blind person it led to an intense self hate. Two types of action alternatives arise from this. One a violence directed at others / the environment. Two a self destructive / suicidal tendency. These being the potential / pressures behind emergent actions are the first forms of samskara. Preferred action patterns, deeply conditioned action patterns.

The next levels of conclusions that seem to emerge is the statement : "I will overcome this hurt / pain". (This is called Abhinivesha in the sutras – the force to

live. The force that fights death). The action alternatives of this seem to be persistent hard work to overcome the deprivation / stigma, or a "dependency". One says "I will work and gain my own strength". The other says "I am so unable – please help me". One the stance of a warrior the other the stance of a beggar. This resolve leads to the setting of objectives and goals. "I am blind – I will develop my memory" – "I am dependant – I will develop skills, learning and excel".

External measure and means of overcoming the disability are postulated and set up. The person often sets up ideals, giants to emulate or conquer. It can also lead to a search for protection, patrons, social work agencies, exclusive environments etc.

Several role stances seem to emerge from this. "The warrior looking for a kingdom", "The giant killer", "Faithful dog", "The willing servant", "The lamenting beggar", "The count of Monte Cristo", "The snail / tortoise", "The untouchable" etc.

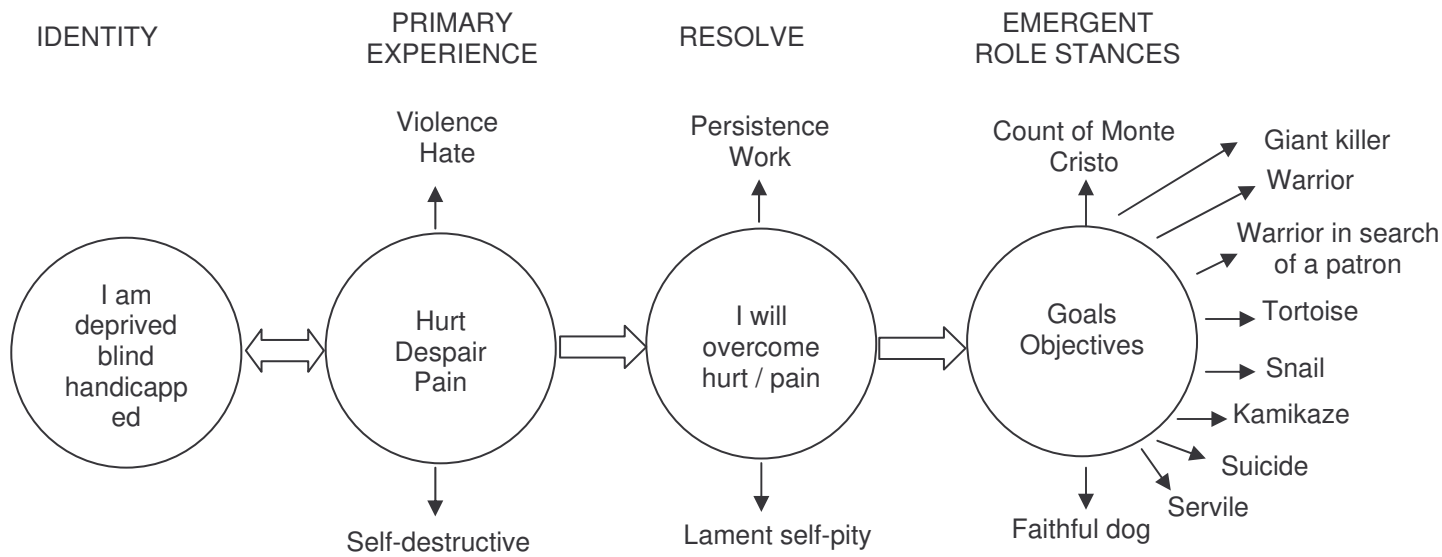
Individuals who hold this stigmatised identity end up creating many secondary goals and aims. "The snail" type of behaviour would lead to setting up enemies of any one who hurts through referring to the disability. "The untouchable" does not risk any involvement, relatedness with others. "The count of Monte Cristo" seeks power and uses cunning to wreak vengeance. "The faithful dog", "The willing servant" is the gullible favourite of the patrons, saviours and God peddlers. "The Giant Killer" is the exceptionally talented person looking for worthy opponents. "Warrior looking for his Lord" is the talented person unable to deeply accept himself his positives and his hurt. He works to be independent and capable but nevertheless craves for protection. These role stances are the forms that the samskara takes.

When these action stances emerge and the person starts operating from them the mind set starts to gel.

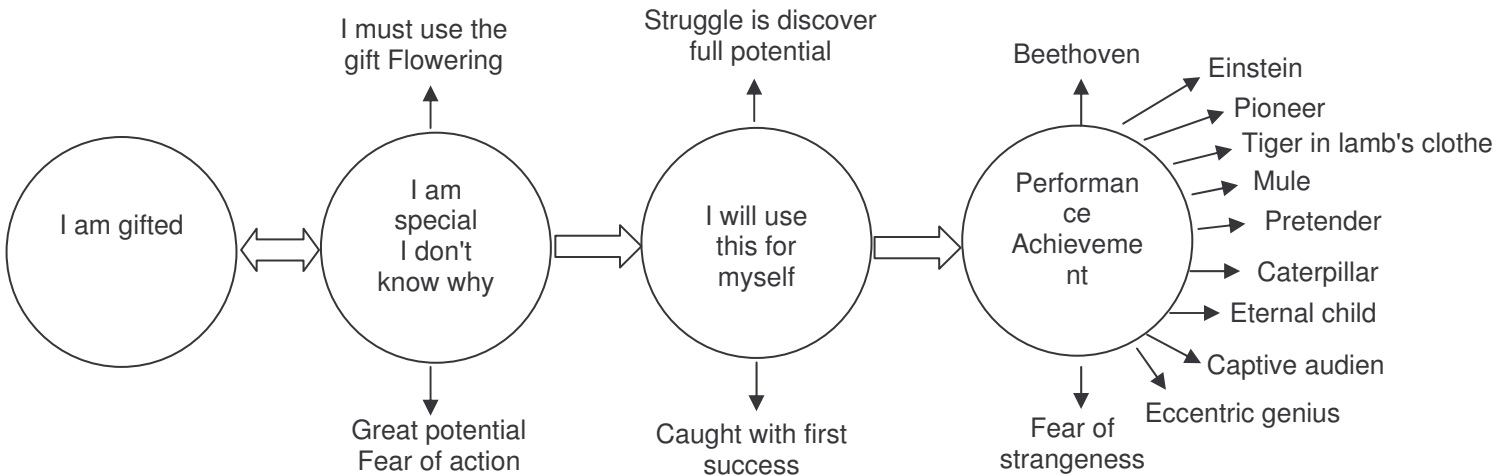
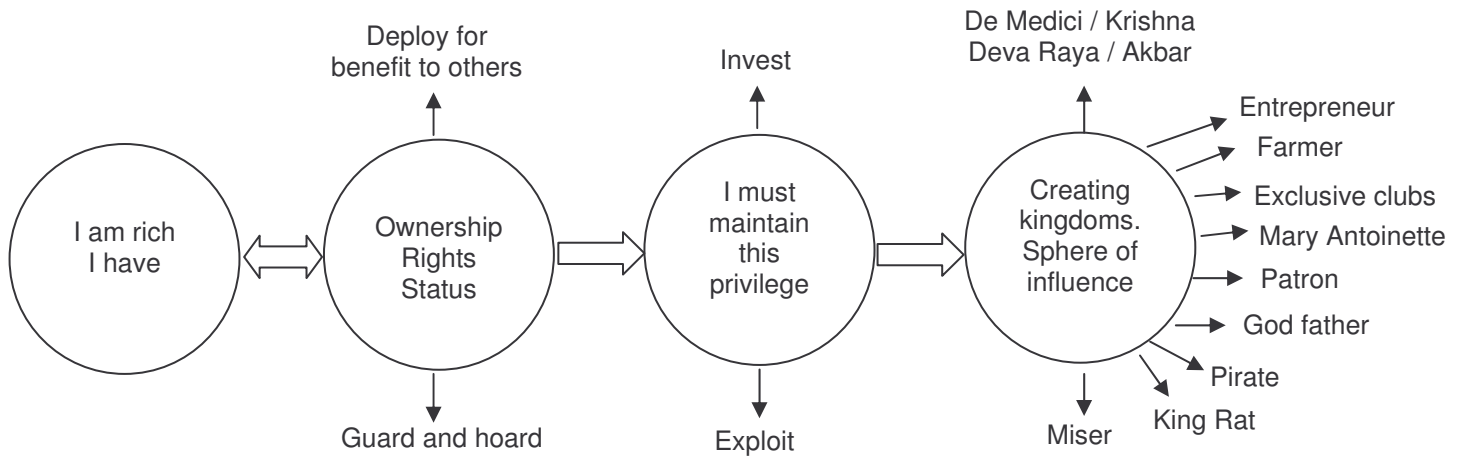
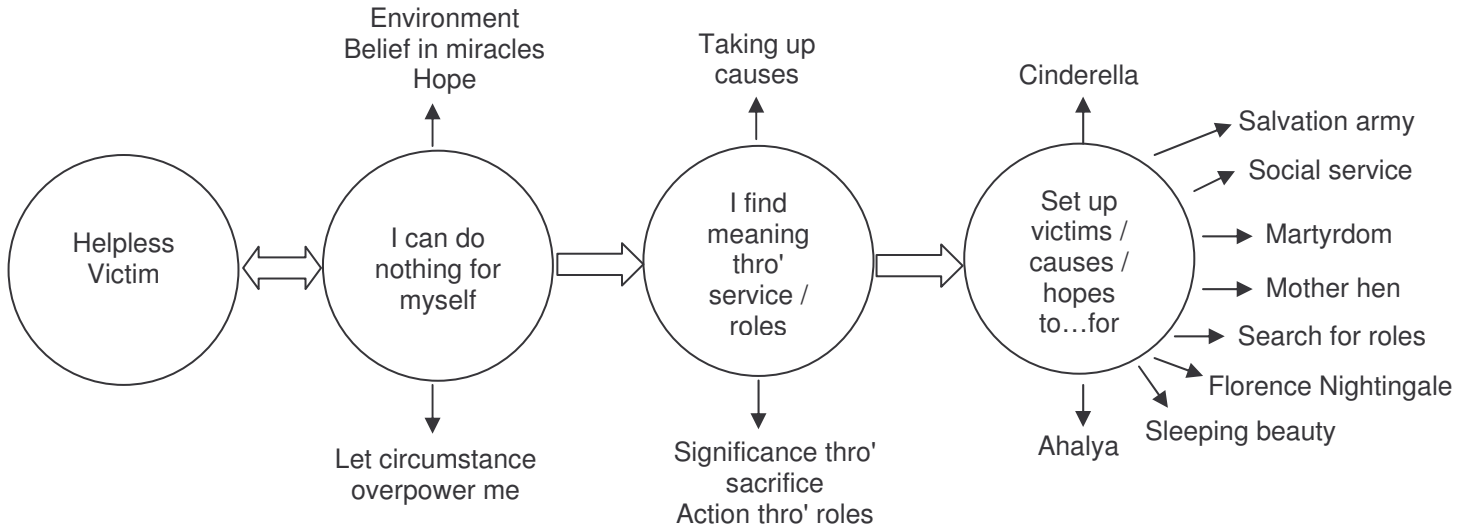
The physical stigma is experienced as the cause of the hurt. The chosen goals and role stances are the means to overcome them. A one to one relationship is established in the mind and the processes by which this set is held together remain invisible.

The identity of the person or 'Asmita' can thus be experienced at two levels. One at the manifest action level, and the other as a quintessential 'code' that is held deep within. The code is like the seed and the action patterns are the various possible branches that the unfolding action can choose to manifest through. Abhinivesha is the energy or Prana that is trapped within these patterns (14). It acts to preserve these patterns and codes. These patterns and codes are thus a pre-conditioned form that the Abhnivesh energises. Any danger / threat to these forms is experienced as a threat to the I the drk shakti. Abhinivesh keeps the asmita alive and active. Thus the darshana shakti which is the formed matter seems to have life and action.

A graphic representation of four typical stances that emerged during the group explorations are given below :

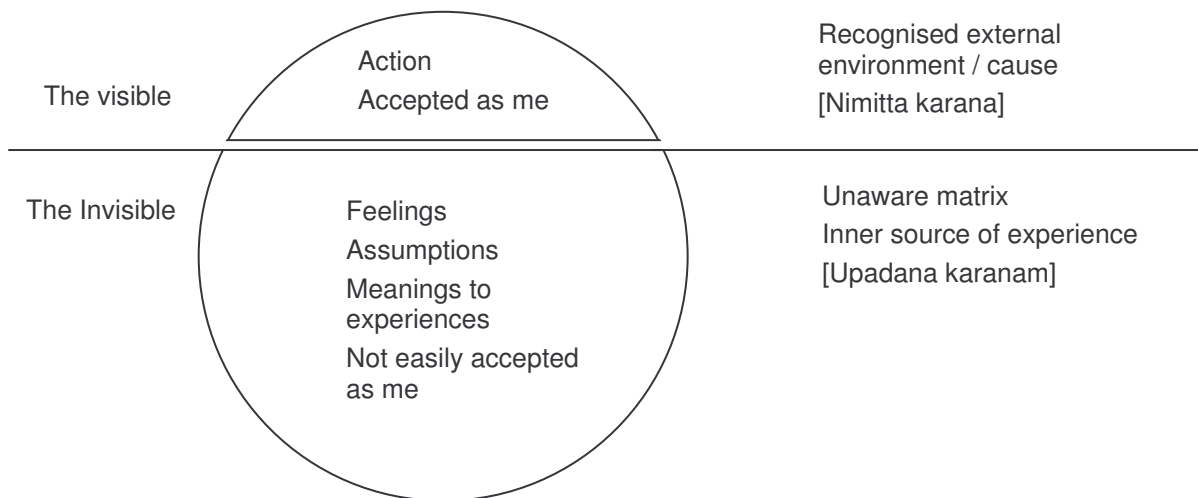


Identities and role stances held by other participants in the group were of "The helpless victim", "The privileged" and "The gifted". The processes by which the identities and role stances are formed and gel into a pattern can be viewed in the same way as the one detailed above.



Sutras IV 3/4/6 (15) of the Yoga Sutra says that a new movement, one that is not locked into these patterns can be obtained. The process is neither an external imposition – nor is it through more external inputs. These can only cause temporary change. The analogy given is that of a tree. The farmer gets sweet fruit not by pouring sugar and honey in the roots but through proper nourishment. The seed contains the quality of the tree and its fruit. This can be helped to grow to its fullest potential at best. Barriers to its realising its greater potential can be removed. A mind that is caught up in an identity and in set patterns of action alternatives and stances is not free to develop to its fullest potential. This then becomes a barrier. The sutras therefore state that change at the levels of these deeply held identities leads to lasting change in the mind and behaviour of the person. When tendencies and patterns of the mind are carefully observed, the mind can be freed from the tyranny of the patterns. The identity is unlocked. The person does not see himself in terms such as "I am blind" or "I am handicapped". He experiences his personhood, the somatic components of the mind set also loosen their hold on the person. Psychosomatic stress is relieved. With this balance between the enquiry into the pressures of the psyche and a sensitivity and ability to work with the soma, the individual's development will have a flow.

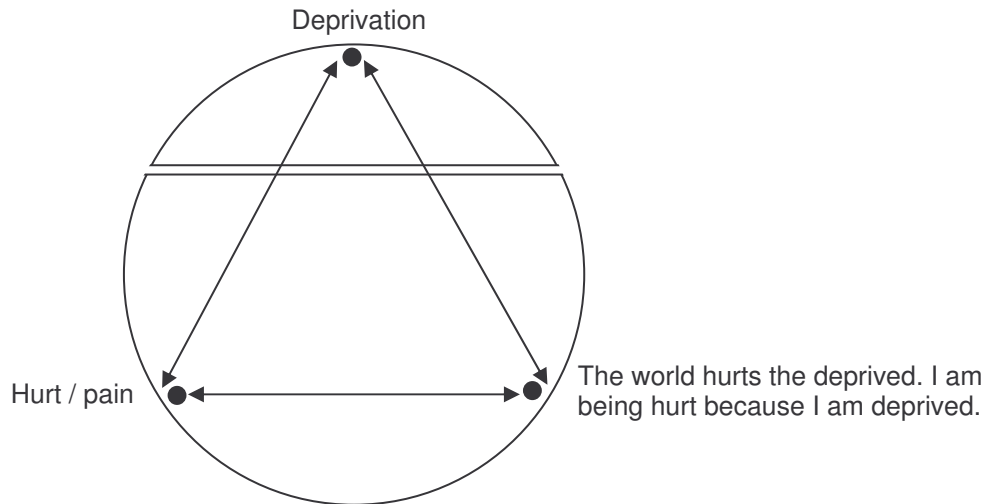
The Sankya Karika provides a model that describes this phenomenon with great clarity (16). It states that man is a composite of the visible, the invisible and the 'seer' or the 'experiencer'. The ability to understand deeply the influence of each of these on ones actions, perceptions or modes of living helps one to end the imprisonment in these patterns of Samskara.



Man is like an ice berg. A very small part of him is viable, graspable tangible. His feelings, the particular meanings he gives to an experience, the assumptions he holds about himself and the world are all invisible, unarticulated, disowned. He associates himself with the visible tangible part. He is therefore able to easily see that he is blind or deaf or deprived in some way. Sankya says that there are two important causes to an event. The external – or Nimitta Karana and the unmanifest withheld matrix – the Upadana Karana. Relating an experience to the Nimitta Karana is

obvious and immediate. Thus it is easy to form the link. I am deprived – therefore the environment hurts me. The means has now become the cause.

A unitary meaning is given to the experience of hurt and pain. Though the environment changes the meaning given is held unchanged.



The Upadana Karana or the unmanifest matrix is the source of the experience and the tangible only a means. This matrix is the unchanging part of the experience. Gradually a whole lot of assumptions grow around this conclusion. Unless the person can look into this matrix, re examine the assumptions and meanings he holds the patterns will not change. There is no release from sorrow – this is the fundamental thesis of Sankya (17). The environment cannot be predicted or controlled. The ability of the person to experience his wholeness i.e., the manifest tangible differences, the commonness and universality of feelings and the meanings he has chosen to give to the experience (some of which he shares with others, some his own) is the key to be free of an endless repetition of the patterns. The source of this mind set can be looked at and changed. The external causes are beyond one's control.

Many methods have been suggested in the Yoga Sutras to attempt such enquiry. The conditions necessary for such an enquiry were created in the ancient times through the Gurukula system and the sagacity of the teacher. The Sutras describe the ambience in which such enquiry can take place as non-judgemental and motiveless. This is reminiscent of the mirror Brahma offered to Indira and Virochana in answer to their question "Who am I?"

Let us proceed to look at some of the suggestions described in the Yoga Sutra. A mind that is permeated with Avidhya is called a Vishipta Chitta. A mind that is unsteady, incapable of deep sustained enquiry. A person who acts from such a vishipta chitta (18) manifests some of the following conditions :

1. Vyaadhi – illness, disease, lack of physical well being.
2. Satyaanam – lack of motivation, stagnation, apathy, laziness
3. Samsayam – doubt, uncertainty, inability to take decision
4. Pramaada – carelessness, lack of foresight
5. Aalasya – fatigue, listlessness, enervation
6. Avirathi – high excitability, craving for sensuous stimulation
7. Bhranti Darshana – lack of reality orientation, misunderstanding, distorted understanding
8. Alabdha Bhumikatva – inability to lay a foundation.
9. Anavastitvatva – regression, inability to consolidate

These conditions also result in clearly recognisable symptoms (19)

1. Dukha – psychological discomfort, feelings of misery
2. Daurmanasya – helplessness, inability to start from oneself
3. Angamejayatva – weakness of the body
4. Svasaprasvasa – unhealthy breathing patterns

The most clearly illustrated example of person in this state of mind is Arjuna at Kurukshetra (20). The Yoga Sutras go on to suggest several strategies to arrest these negative tendencies from snow balling and overcoming the person. The common idea that runs through the many alternative courses of action suggested is that they aim to help one find from within himself an energy to start a new and positive movement. This positive action and the samskara created by this help to weaken and eventually remove the factors that sustain and nourish the negative. Thus the seeds of Avidya are rendered inactive and are replaced by a new flowering. There is no dogma in the methods suggested. They must be used selectively and appropriately. Each suggestion is an alternative choice.

The first suggestion given is to take up an enquiry that will lead to an understanding of what is (21). The important consideration is that one takes up and sustains one line of thinking and explore it. Engaging repeatedly in this questioning would help the person quieten the mind and thus be able to understand himself from a greater depth.

The sutras then suggest that the person takes up a practice of Asana and Pranayama (22). The effect of negative samskaras pervade the body as much as they do the psyche. It is, therefore, necessary to work with ones body and release from it the tensions and negative patterns. The person is thus capable of dealing

with his situation in a more energetic manner. Bodily and sensory distortions don't worsen the situation. The reduction of irritability achieved through these practices would also enable the person to be a little more considered in his responses.

Reflecting upon the quality of ones relatedness with others helps one to bring order in the mind (23). One is often caught in patterns of interaction with other people that reinforce the distortions in oneself. Being able to link and establish friendship with people who create positive feelings in oneself; responding with the compassion that is evoked when one sees another in distress; experiencing and sharing joy in other people's happiness; being able to draw boundaries and de-link from associations that evoke negative patterns in oneself are the various suggestion made. Thus feelings of antagonism with other people, self centred behaviour, competitiveness and other such patterns that kindle the *Asmita*, *Raga*, *Dvesha* and *Abhinivesha* in the person must be examined and ended. In the cases presented here the person with the identity of deprivation is helped to recognise that this attitude of servility to one who patronise him reinforces his negative identity. This recognition and a consequent ending of such a pattern also de-links him from an attitude and set of hopes and actions that sustain his lack of self-worth.

Gaining insight and understanding into the relationship between ones senses and the processes by which it links with objects leads to tranquillity (24). The experiencing of the world that goes on continually from the point of birth is mediated by the senses. This experiencing leads to an understanding of the world but also conditions and limits the senses. By getting in touch with ones inner processes one can gradually end conditioned patterns of response, craving, aversions and the like. The senses thus become finely tuned and sensitive instruments that can now perceive the true nature of the world. Let us look into the action of hearing to illustrate this. The sound, the meanings, ideas, associations and the reality of the object all impinge together in the mind when one hears a word (25). The understanding of the process of listening would imply that one can have an insight into each of the following :

1. The nature of sound,
2. The processes of the mind and how memory and past residue, associations inferences, conclusions etc. that held in the *Upadana* arise as a response to the word,
3. The nature and quality of the object as is.

This understanding then releases one from a limited recognition of the word. One is not mortgaged to ones particular meanings. One has reduced the force of possession of ones ideas and their defence. One can now look at ones own experiences from many new perspectives, listen to and give space for other meanings. Without this inner release one gets locked into an unitary experience of the world and becomes prisoner to crystallised response patterns.

One experiences the force and movement of life within oneself only indirectly – through the action of the senses and body. It is, therefore, only natural that ones *Asmita* is formed through these experiences. Through a process of questioning this idea of ones being one can experience the flow of life without limiting it to the objects both gross and subtle that evoke responses from within the person (26). This experience knocks holes into the bottom of the "*Asmita*". The life force having been touched or experienced without the mediating form or image ends the source of

threat. Death and survival are not linked to the survival of the image nor is living seen as strengthening and projecting of the Asmita. When the blind person experiences intensely other peoples interactions with him or his interactions with the world in their directness and simplicity shorn of all motives (both from himself and others) he experiences this flow and vibrancy of life. The hold that his deprivation and its consequences have on him gets diminished.

A very simple alternative suggested by the sutras is to seek contact with person or objects or environments that evoke quietness and tranquillity in oneself (27); Music, nature, great saints, the writings of great teachers, their life experiences. The teaching stories of the Sufi and Zen masters are some examples. One often hears of great scientists having made startling discoveries not when they were pre-occupied with finding solutions but when they were playing music or taking a quiet morning walk in the woods.

The quality of ones sleep, the images of a dream, symbols and association that holds special significance to a person can be the windows to deep introspection (28). They often point a deeply held samskaras, raga or dvesha that one experiences without consciously acting them out in wakefulness. Being able to deeply explore the underlying web of feelings and impressions leads to great insights and understanding. The next sutra takes this as a step further and recommends deep contemplation on any issue or process that appeals to the person (29). The word dhyana as used in the yoga sutra can be translated into the words contemplation or meditation if one is careful to understand the English words in their original sense. Meditation, comes from the root which means a space in which to observe. Dhyana is defined in the sutras as the deepening of the process of Dharana. It is staying with or sustaining an enquiry for a long period of time without distractions. Such an intense enquiry into the seeds of Avidya is said to "burn the seeds" of Avidya (30). Thus the memories and impressions held in the mind loose the potential to distort perception or create pressures of raga, dvesha or abhinivesha.

These methods listed are not exhaustive but give a fair indication of the range and depth of the strategies used to change a vishipta chitta into a mind capable of ekagrata or distortion free enquiry.

Today it is clearly impossible to go back to the Gurukula or retire into seclusion and pursue such enquiry with the help of a teacher. Nor is it necessary. The reflection and enquiry are initiated through the identity groups. The understanding of the patterns of the mind and identities held within comes about through a deep sustained exploration. The models presented here emerged through a 12 day group (8 to 10 hours per day) with 13 participants. The hidden contents of the mind are uncovered slowly and layer by layer. An atmosphere of trust, acceptance and working together is created in the group. The emphasis is on the understanding and exploration of the participant into his own processes.

Looking into some of the deeply held patterns, assumptions and conclusions is often painful and threatening. The resistance to re-examine and re-experience the hurt or fear is the force that keeps one locked in old patterns. The person first discovers the patterns that he is locked into. His ability to examine other possible perceptions and

perspectives, very much like turning a kaleidoscope around, helps him take the first step towards becoming free of old patterns. Understanding the resistance and finding within oneself the ability to break free of them is the next major step. Trying out alternative action stances and perspectives can be considered a fair indication of the persons discovery of freedom.

In my experience, this enquiry into oneself when linked with the practice of Asana and Pranayama helps a great deal in managing the somatic components of the mind set. With this balance between the enquiry into the pressures of the psyche and a sensitive ability to work with the soma, the individuals development will have a flow and an integration.

Appendix : A Glossary of terms used

I would like to clarify some of the role models I have indicated in the form of symbols. The notes given below are some of the ways in which I have understood these symbols. They are open to many interpretations.

Count of Monte Cristo :

A person retaining hurt and hate using power to act out this hate.

Giant Killer :

A person recognising other people's abilities but pitting himself against them to vanquish and thus feel validated.

Warrior :

One who ceaselessly works to refine and develop himself.

Warrior in search of a patron :

One with great abilities and persistence but looking for a place / person to belong and act for and on behalf of.

Tortoise / Snail :

Carries a shell on his back and shrinks into it on the first indication of danger.

Kamikaze :

A person given to acts of great significance but having potential to destroy him.

Cinderella :

Uncomplainingly accepts her circumstances of near slavery and waits for the "fairy god mother" to save her.

Salvation army :

People taking up 'causes' and mobilising resources for others.

Mother Hen :

Mothering and protective of the "innocent ones".

Florence Nightingale :

A person totally mobilising an ability to confront great hardships but for the sake of others.

Sleeping Beauty / Ahalya :

A person totally oblivious to the environment and waiting to be woken up into a miraculous world.

DeMedici / Krishnadevaraya / Akbar :

Patrons genuinely moved by a love for art and generous with their resources to support and aid the art.

Exclusive clubs :

Memberships and belonging that keeps out hard realities – creating its own brand of "untouchability".

Mary Antoinette :

The French Queen who on seeing the starving poor said, "If they don't have bread why don't they eat cakes?"

King Rat :

A ruthlessly exploitative and manipulative person capable of using any situation as a means for his profiteering.

Tiger in Lamb's clothes :

A person with great potential afraid to show his true colours.

Caterpillar :

Potentially a butterfly but unwilling to grow out of dependency.

Bibliography :

The meanings of the Yoga Sutras and the Sankhya Karika are from the oral tradition of Shri T Krishnamacharya. They are from a direct teaching of these texts of the Acharya that the author underwent between 1978 and 1984. The Sutras and the Karikas quoted in the paper are listed below :

1. Sutra No. 20	Chapter II
2. Sutra No. 18	Chapter II
3. Sutra No. 5	Chapter II
4. Sutra No. 6	Chapter II
5. Sutras No. 7 & 8	Chapter II
6. Sutra No. 9	Chapter II
7. Sutra No. 8	Chapter IV
8. Sutra No. 9	Chapter IV
9. Sutra No. 14	Chapter II
10. Sutra No. 1	Chapter I
11. Sutra No. 4	Chapter II
12. Sutra No. 12	Chapter II
13. Sutra No. 9	Chapter IV
14. Sutra No. 9	Chapter II
15. Sutras No. 3 / 4 & 6	Chapter IV
16. Karika No. 9	Sankhya Karika
17. Karikas No.1 & 2	Sankhya Karika
18. Sutra No. 30	Chapter I
19. Sutra No. 31	Chapter I
20. Bhagavad Gita	Chapter I
21. Sutra No. 32	Chapter I
22. Sutra No. 33	Chapter I

23. Sutra No. 34	Chapter I
24. Sutra No. 35	Chapter I
25. Sutra No. 17	Chapter III
26. Sutra No. 36	Chapter I
27. Sutra No. 37	Chapter I
28. Sutra No. 38	Chapter I
29. Sutra No. 39	Chapter I
30. Sutra No. 39	Chapter II