

Let's go back to the very beginning of the yoga sutras, the second sutra where Patanjali says: yogacittavrttinirodah. This is maybe the most famous sutra: citta, vrtti and nirodah. These three words are fundamental to Patanjali's perspective. A perspective that is very, very helpful, truthful and applicable. It's not the truth, it's representation. It's symbolic: it's using words and the concepts to which they point. But it's very clear that Patanjali's experience was deep and his presentation is pretty lucid and simple. If it were not simple and lucid, one would have to doubt his credentials. It's made complicated by people who have not been where he has been. How could they possibly interpret what he's saying about it?

So let's take the first, perhaps the simplest word first: citta. The root word cit means to know, to be conscious, to be aware. And cit normally in regular use would mean 'consciousness.' Citta is consciousness confined, consciousness operating, consciousness localising in a human organism. So the fundamental conventional implication of the word citta is mind. However, anybody who has the interest and the time to meditate will soon discover there's actually no such thing as 'mind' as object. 'Mind' is just a functioning of consciousness within the organism. So 'mind' is more a verb than a noun. Citta means the functioning of consciousness within the specific localisation of the body. Sometimes I say 'bodimind' and really what that should be is 'bodiminding'. The bodiminds. Perception arises in the body as a result of the cortex expressing consciousness, or bearing, carrying, channelling consciousness.

So the significant thing here is that mind is not a thing that you can catch. Mind is not a thing that you can define in terms of dimensions or location. Scientists have been looking for it for a long time and they're going to have to carry on looking if they're looking for an object. If they're looking for a function they can stop looking because their thinking is the function of the mind. So they don't need to look for it.

The fundamental significance of vrtti is to 'whirl' as in Rumi. So let's just take it from there. Whirling, turning. This is a qualifier of citta. The mind turns; the mind moves; the mind is movement; the mind is interpretation; the mind is commentary. Awareness of that commentary is not mind. Awareness of that commentary is awareness. Of course in the Zen tradition the word 'mind' includes

awareness. So we're not referring to the Zen tradition here. We're referring to the yoga tradition.

But it's important to recognise that even great spiritual luminaries, such as Patanjali and Bodhidharma, use different words for the same experience. So we don't need to get hung up on words so long as they point in the right direction. The qualification of citta with vrtti does have its significance when you see closely the etymology and implications of the word citta. What this points to is the fact that there's not an object in the body that you can call the mind. But consciousness is localising in the body. Consciousness can function without mental activity. So when mental activity ceases, awareness, or consciousness, remains uncoloured. Or consciousness is coloured only by its own nature: by delight, by light, by luminosity, by radiance. And that's sabijasamadhi. Whereas nirbijasamadhi is no colour at all.

Nirodha is made up of two words. Ni and rodha. Rodha means to churn. Not unlike vrtti then. The origin of the word roda is from a Goddess Rudra, the Goddess of storms. And yet it's come to mean 'to restrain, to restrict, to repress'. Quite how that works I don't know because a storm is a manifestation of the absence of restraint and the absence of restriction. Either way, I can explain in two different ways how nirodha does not mean control, restrain or restrict, depending upon which etymological avenue you want to take to the word niroda. It's not possible in either case to make it mean 'control,' unless you happen to be a control freak. So unaware of your nature as a control freak that you can't even see what you're doing; you can't even see how you're projecting onto Patanjali your own perspective: which is almost impossible not to do.

How can you not project your own perspective onto anything? Only by being acutely intimate, deeply intimate with your perspective and its limitations so that you see those limitations as you project them, even if you can't see through them. So that you don't take your projections to be the truth, so that you don't take your projections personally. So that when you see an enlightened being you don't take that projection seriously. You still make sure he does the washing up properly.

This takes us right into the heart of the significance of this sutra, yogacittavriniroda. It's all about what the mind does and what happens when it

doesn't do it anymore. What the mind does is interpret. It interprets through its activity and it interprets through its movement. It interprets by commenting, by labelling, by signifying, by analysing, by categorising and by compartmentalising. Basically you could say mental activity is interpretation. Interpretation of input coming through the senses into the brain.

The point is, interpretation is always interpretation. And interpretation is a symbolic rendering, is a reference to, but it's not the thing itself. And this is quite difficult for us to really come to grips to. Because we live in a world of interpretation. We live in our minds, we live through our minds and we live from our minds. Most of us live almost exclusively as our minds. So we're not aware that this interpretative faculty of the mind is keeping us from reality, keeping us from actuality. It's turning us away, which is how I like to see the words *vrtti*, from what actually is, from what you could call reality. Although, technically speaking, so-called reality is the fundamental layer of interpretation.

So let me see if I can give you an example. I'm not going to ask you to say anything, but I'm going to ask you to look at that statue of Shiva and then tell yourself what you saw, what you're seeing. And then I'd like you to take a look at Zoe and tell yourself what you're seeing. And then I'd like you to consider this. That what you were seeing, the seeing that you experienced was an event in your own mind based on an event in your own brain. Based on your brain receiving information through the senses. My looking at Zoe is from a totally different angle than Michelle. I'm going to see something completely different but I'm going to call it: 'Zoe lying snug as a rug in a bug.' Whereas Michelle's going to call it: 'Zoe lying lazy bitch on the floor.' Or whatever. All of this is interpretation. 'Lazy bitch on the floor', 'snug as a bug in a rug' is no less interpretation than: 'Zoe, a person, is sleeping wilfully on the floor in a position that she has deliberately chosen to enter in complete and utter disrespect of the person on her left who is exposing his profound spiritual understanding.'

This is all interpretation and yet we take it to be reality. That somebody did it, that somebody said it, that somebody's enlightened, that somebody is not. So the layers of interpretation go very, very deep. In fact the layers of interpretation go all the way through the mind, *citta*, to *cit*, to consciousness itself. *Citishakti* is what you are looking at whenever you look. *Citishakti* is what you are hearing

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whenever you listen. Citishakti is what you are feeling whenever you touch. You interpret according to your cognitive and perceptual mechanisms, according to your experience and your DNA. You interpret that particular moment of cittashakti, according to your conditioning. This is vritti. It doesn't matter how applicable, how accurate, how usable, how widely shared your interpretation of reality, of cittashakti is, it remains vritti. It remains an interpretation. The only non interpretative state of mind is that of pure awareness. That where interpretation has ceased, that where consciousness itself shines forth in its own form as if radiant delight.

So this sutra, yogacittavrttiniroda, is pointing to the possibility of mind becoming quiet enough for consciousness to shine upon everything with a singular luminosity within its localisation. With what follows, Patanjali explains how that comes about. To put it very simply, by not identifying with the movement of the mind, by not identifying with vritti, with your projections. Which means by not identifying anything by them, with them but by seeing through the apparent form into the radiant and singular luminosity of emptiness, or consciousness itself. So this second sutra, this definition of yoga links straight into the definition of samadhi.

So then we can take yoga to mean: 'to surrender the projections of the mind.' Surrender doesn't mean to stop the projections of the mind. Surrendering them doesn't even mean that they stop. You need them in order to function. I need the interpretative capacity of my mind to tell me that those sensations down in the lower parts of my body indicate that I should get up and walk in a particular direction, fiddle with my clothes in a particular way, release a particular body part, relax a certain set of muscles and enjoy the flow. These things are required, these mental projections, these interpretations.

Surrendering projections is to see them for what they are: the interpretation by the mind of the coalescence of circumstance into the location of the body-mind. The depth of what surrender is means to no longer take them to point to a perceiver, to a thinker. It allows them to point through their instrument, the bodimind, to the totality of the indivisible wholeness of the manifestation of consciousness as the world.

If surrender is surrender, it cannot be an action. It is no longer identifying with mental activity. It is no longer an action but a genuine surrender. How on earth can we come to benefit from it if it's not something we can do? This is what meditation is for: an enquiry into the possibility of surrender. This takes the form of an enquiry into the nature of the mind, the nature of projections. In other words, meditation is not an attempt to control or suppress projections; it is not about eradicating the activity of the mind. Yoga is enquiry, not fabrication. It is looking, not controlling. It is seeing, not imposing. So meditation is enquiring into the nature of mental activity.

If we are honestly (satya), openly (asteya), generously (aparigraha) and sensitively (ahimsa) present (bhramacharya) to mental activity sooner or later we're going to notice that something is happening in our mind all the time. You could poetically call it 'rhythm.' You could more usefully call it 'oscillation.' You could more vaguely and unhelpfully call it 'change.' The way that mental activity is constantly changing, involves some very clear oscillations. Such as between thinking about what is actually happening and thinking about what is not actually happening. You're sitting, you're meditating, you're thinking: 'oh, I'm having quite a nice meditation today.' Or, 'this meditation sucks today.' So this is thinking about what is actually happening. Or you could suddenly find yourself thinking about banana pyjamas, which is not actually happening. So this kind of oscillation between thinking about that which is actually happening and thinking about that which is not actually happening is very quickly recognizable in meditation.

But other more subtle oscillations can be found such as the oscillation between thinking about that which is actually happening and feeling that which is actually happening. For example, thinking about a pain in the ankle bone and feeling the pain in the ankle bone. Being present to that which is actually happening oscillating with thinking about that which is actually happening. Thinking involves distancing yourself from it very slightly, not feeling it quite so clearly: as you name it, label it, interpret it and evaluate it. And very often perhaps discovering that that is exactly why you do it; that the very reason that you are interpreting, evaluating, analyzing, categorizing, recognizing, labeling and naming is so that you will not have to feel it.

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So then you see that mental activity is the primary means of escape from that which is actually happening. Projection or vritti is the primary means of escape from that which is actually happening, the primary form of delusion, of misrepresentation.

'It's not hurting anymore. I know it's not hurting anymore because I can't feel it hurting anymore because I've saturated my mind with this commentary.' But it is actually still hurting. Those sensations are actually there, they're just no longer being felt.

When you're sitting in silent stillness, you begin to see these oscillations between the different aspects of your mental activity. If you are relaxed, if relaxation is happening, if effort seems less and less appealing, if interpreting, fantasizing, or trying to figure things out becomes less and less appealing and feels more and more to be a burden, a waste of energy and time, then this oscillation can move more inwardly. It can move from feeling that which is actually happening, in terms of sensations in the body, to feeling that which is underlying what is happening in your body.

In the depths of a relaxed, meditative mind there is very often a swing into something. This swing very rarely happens out of thinking about bananas pyjamas. It very rarely happens out of thinking about that which is actually happening in your body: but it can very easily happen out of feeling what is actually happening in your body. This swing, this oscillation is a movement beyond the most subtle layer of interpretation: because even feeling involves a certain degree of interpretation.

This is the swing into that which actually is, that which actually is present: that which actually is happening in its most essential aspect. This is consciousness moving or citishakti. its recognition is yogacittavrittiniroda or samadhi. Dwelling in consciousness moving without interpretation is Sabijasamadhi. This swing that happens by itself when relaxation is deep is an oscillation into samadhi.

Feeling what's happening in your body involves interpretation. It involves mental activity; it involves vritti. We say that it's what's actually happening. But it isn't really. It's what's apparently happening: ankle hurting or just feeling it, or

whatever. This is a very subtle oscillation. When there's any element of recognition that ankle is hurting or that sensations are taking place or that there's any localization or recognition of any sort: this is still vritti; this is still interpretation. But there is always oscillation: this fluctuation can be rapid and then not noticed, and when not noticed not enjoyed. Nevertheless its happening all the time. Falling into the presence of pure consciousness in movement, or cittishakti, is the oscillation into Sabijasamadhi.

A further oscillation is also possible. An oscillation that goes deeper than Sabijasamadhi. Let's just define sabijasamadhi in Patanjali's terms: "apparent form radiating the singular significance of emptiness." You could equally say that sabijasamadhi is the manifestation of the luminous delight of consciousness. Sabijasamadhi is the luminous delight of awareness itself, without being obscured by any object. This aspect of awareness, of consciousness can disappear as you oscillate back out into interpretation. But it can also disappear on an oscillation in the opposite direction. This luminosity, this delight can dissolve into nirbijasamadhi.

Nirbijasamadhi cannot be known. Nirbijasamadhi cannot be recognised. Nirbijasamadhi has no quality whereby to recognise it, nor characteristic whereby to define it. We only know that it exists because the nature of the return from it is so different from the swing anywhere else. The swing out of nirbijasamadhi, is very particular. Even though this swing can be subtle and bring you to sabijasamadhi, or it can be stronger and bring you to the flow of specific perceptions. Of course this stronger swing passes through sabijasamadhi: it may not be noticed but it must be passed through. The swing back out of nirbijasamadhi inherently stamps sabijasamadhi, or the flow of perception, with the inherent delight of consciousness itself. The flavour of peaceful, contented delight comes out with you into the interpretative functioning of the mind. By this we learn to recognise that we have not fallen asleep. We have just fallen finally and totally in. That final fall, that unresisted falling, was into nirbijasamadhi. Where there is no luminosity either.

But consciousness is still there. You're not dead. You weren't dead, you weren't asleep. You could say consciousness at rest is nirbijasamadhi, and the finest most subtle movement of consciousness, cittishakti, is in sabijasamadhi. As the

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movement of consciousness becomes more intense, then interpretation happens, vrtti happens. Identification of objects, actions and their component characteristics takes place.

So within this presentation of the spectrum of consciousness, or the spectrum of awareness, you have at one end nirbijasamadhi and you have at the other end objects. Objects being taken to have independent existence. In the middle is objects being known to not actually exist independently or to have any autonomy at all. Objects being known as locations of the total fabric of space-time into a particular space-time location. Objects being known as interpretive projections of the mind. The spectrum of consciousness is broad and the oscillations within that spectrum can be subtle. But oscillation is constantly taking place throughout and within the spectrum of awareness. There is no possibility of bringing this oscillation to an end. But this oscillation can slow down, does slow down, apparently. That's how it feels to us to the extent that we relax.

To stop this oscillation would be to attempt to cut duality in half, to take half of it away and to claim that the remaining half was the real half. This is not possible. Behind duality is not unity actually. Behind duality is non-duality or emptiness. Non-duality that can never be one because as soon as you say 'one' there is immediately another. There's either none or infinity; infinity operating through duality. This oscillation, this continuous oscillation within the spectrum of awareness is referred to by Kabir in the following poem:

'Between the conscious and the unconscious the mind has put up a swing. All earth creatures, even the supernovas, sway between these two trees and it never winds down. Angels, animals, humans, insects by the million, also the wheeling sun and moon, ages go by and it goes on. Everything is swinging, heaven, earth, water, fire and the secret one slowly growing a body. Kabir saw this for 15 seconds and it made him a slave to God for life.'

You could say this is Kabir's quintessential statement of the way God invited him to his freedom: to see that everything is swinging. Heaven, earth, angels, animals, humans, insects, sun and moon. For ever. It never winds down, the mind creating this swinging. The mind interpreting dualistically what actually is: seeing nonduality as duality. The mind putting up a swing between the conscious and

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the unconscious. This swing at its most subtle is between nirbijasamadhi, the unconscious, and sabijasamadhi, the superconscious. This spectrum of awareness needs to be something that you become familiar with if you really are to become free of seeking to control your life and your mind. You're going to have to see that there is no control over these oscillations. There is no overcoming sound with silence. There is no overcoming bad with good, wrong with right, immorality with morality, delusion with enlightenment. Everything is oscillating and this oscillation never winds down.

I have a question about nirbijasamadhi.

The answer is no. There are no qualities and characteristics to nirbijasamadhi. But ask again.

Sometimes, not sitting, but sometimes when you're talking and stuff, I just feel cool to lie down because I can't sit up anymore. But it's not to go to sleep, there's no feeling but when you come out you just think: 'where have I been?' Because I haven't been sleeping.

That's nirbijasamadhi. It can happen anywhere. If you're feeling safe and relaxed enough. Coming out of nirbijasamadhi has much more alertness to it than coming out of sleep. Coming out of sleep has a kind of grogginess. Whereas coming out of nirbijasamadhi doesn't have a grogginess. Although it can have confusion at first, especially if you're not used to it like: 'have I just been asleep and woken up?' But there's a clarity to it that isn't there when you come out of sleep.

It's just interesting because I've been wondering where I've been sometimes.

Well you haven't been anywhere! In nirbijasamadhi there is no you to be anywhere.

And can we in our waking lives, our normal lives, go into nirbijasamadhi?

Yes that can also happen, especially when we're really relaxed. I told you that story about the woman who came to my tepee at night and I spent 3 or 4 hours

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listening to her. For most of it I was going into nirbijasamadhi because I was totally and utterly bored and uninterested in what she was saying and doing. But I was quite curious to see where it was going to go. So whenever she made her next move I came back to consciousness. So it can happen, yes.

The seeing, the clear seeing that takes place in cittavrittinirodah or sabijasamadhi in which things are still happening, awareness is still functioning, leads to a familiarity with that peaceful and delightful state of sabijasamadhi. To an acceptance that you're not in control of your mind; that you can't actually go there just because you want to. Wanting to go there is actually a barrier to going there because you go there only when you are relaxed. You begin to realize that when you're really relaxed you go into this state that is so delightful, delicious, satisfying and nourishing. You can't get there by your efforts. So you begin to relax on an even more fundamental level. You just accept enough that you're not in control of these important things; you're not in control of even the tiniest details.

You're not in control of anything. What's actually happening is just happening. And into that acceptance there is a self perpetuating cycle of creativity, nourishment, freedom, and initially at least, exhilaration. When you stop trying to control, you stop trying to interpret, name, label and identify, except when you have to in order to function. But when you do interpret, you're so used to not identifying, that you don't take it personally.

Perhaps you nonchalantly moved your head to miss that ball that came flying off the bat, and you happened to move right into its path and it happens to strike you right on the nose. You feel the pain, you recognize that that was a wrong move and the ball happens to trickle into your left hand. You just lob it back to the person who struck it, without saying: 'would you mind not being a wanker!' You could even ask them to move further away without taking it personally. You can say: 'do you really need to impose your process of relaxation on the rest of us who have more subtle and private forms of relaxation such as orgasms, joints and pina coladas in a hammock.'

So the point that I'm making here is that being really relaxed and accepting the flow of life doesn't mean you don't enquire into the possibility of modifying it in

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your favour. It means you do so without any enmity or pressure. It's an honest and open enquiry. It doesn't have to be polite in the conventional sense. You can use the words that you want to use.

'Can you fuck off now?'

It might even go that far. You can say that impersonally, if that's the nature of your conditioning functioning freely. You have to be able to see these subtleties. The impersonal functioning of the universe is not nice! The universe doesn't have a code of etiquette. Life is not sacred, it's a death orgy.

People just don't get that!

No, people are such wimps, especially yoga people, and not least yoga teachers. The impersonal functioning of the universe is not polite, it's ruthless. There are probably more insects that die every minute than there are humans being born every day. Death you could say, is the fundamental rhythm of life. It is ruthless; it is merciless. Kindness, politeness, etiquette: this is all human shit. But i don't mean by this that life is just a Darwinian competitive struggle for survival. The fundamental nature of life, and of awareness is love. The human heart is a compassion deposit. The point is that true kindness, genuine compassion is not a cultural artefact, it is not a moral imperative. It is a natural functioning of the harmony of life. Oxygen and hydrogen; proton and electron; sodium and potassium; man and woman. It doesn't come from talking about it. Its already present and talking about it usually happens when its become obscured. It surfaces again when we relax. When we truly relax. Which we only do when we see clearly that we're not in control of our life: that Life is. When you see that Life don't fuck up, and that you cant either, then you relax. Then the love that you are starts to walk around with a little smile and a deep twinkle.