

**Sūtra 9**

शब्दज्ञानानुपाती वस्तुशून्यो विकल्पः ॥९॥

Śhabda-jñānānupātī vastu-śhūnyo vikalpaḥ

**Knowledge based on verbal cognition only, without an external object, is called imaginary cognition.**

शब्द	<i>śhabda</i>	word
ज्ञान	<i>jñāna</i>	knowledge, cognizance
अनुपाती	<i>anupātī</i>	following upon, dependent upon
वस्तु	<i>vastu</i>	object
शून्यः	<i>śhūnyaḥ</i>	devoid of, without
विकल्पः	<i>vikalpaḥ</i>	fancy or imaginary cognition

Sūtras 7 & 8 explained the *vr̥ttis* called *pramāṇa* (valid proof) and *viparyaya* (false cognition) in which there is some kind of contact with an object outside the mind. Sūtra 9 discusses *vikalpa vr̥tti* (imaginary cognition) and Sūtra 11 will discuss *smṛiti vr̥tti* (memory). These two *vr̥ttis* are subjective thought processes in which there is no contact with external objects. In these *vr̥ttis*, the mental image is a pure creation of the mind. Therefore they are considered subjective. *Pramāṇa* and *viparyaya*, on the other hand, may be called objective in their nature because they relate to the correct and incorrect perception of external objects.

*Vikalpa* (imaginary cognition) is based neither on *pramāṇa* (valid proof) nor on *viparyaya* (false cognition). Although both *vikalpa* (imaginary cognition) and *viparyaya* (false cognition) are examples of wrong knowledge, *vikalpa* cannot be included in the category of *viparyaya* because in *viparyaya* there has to be an object whose form or nature can be experienced.

In the case of *vikalpa* the direct cognition of an object never occurs. There is no reality behind the imaginary cognition. It is merely a conception based on words without any basis in objective reality. For example, upon hearing the mention of the word “monster” a child conjures up a mental image. There is no actual demon entity and the child has never experienced a demon. The monster character imagined by the child is a composite of previous cognitions. It may have the head of a lion and the body of a man, or the antlers of an elk and the talons of a bird.

In the *sūtra* the phrase *śhabda-jñānānupātī* means a word that has no substance behind it but which generates an imaginary idea that produces a *vr̥tti* (thought wave). For example, the word “time” does not indicate an object but rather it creates an imaginary idea of past and future. Time is not in itself an empirical reality, it is a concept created by the mind and, as such, it is a mental modification of *vikalpa vr̥tti*. Likewise, the words “infinite” and “innumerable” generate an imaginary idea of “vastness” that is not an object. The idea of vastness is also an example of *vikalpa vr̥tti*.

The expression, “consciousness is the form and nature of *puruṣha*,” is another example of *vikalpa vṛitti* because *puruṣha* actually has no form or nature. Consciousness itself is *puruṣha*, and God is infinite.

If *vikalpa*, as in the examples above, has a spiritual use through the power of verbal cognition, why is it not included in *āgama pramāṇa* (scriptural testimony)? It cannot be included because in *āgama pramāṇa* knowledge is transferred by means of an *āpta* (accomplished person) from his or her direct experience of truth. In *vikalpa* the verbal cognition does not come by such testimony.

The next *sūtra* will discuss *nidrā vṛitti* (sleep).