

YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

A Guide to Self-knowledge

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वितर्कबाधनेप्रतिपक्षभावनम् ॥ ३३ ॥

33. vitarka-bādhanepratipakṣa-bhāvanam

vitarka – doubt, hostile thoughts

bādhana – to chase away, to resist

pratipakṣa – opposite

bhāva – attitude

To overcome harmful thoughts, adopt the opposite attitude.

To dispel unpleasant and malicious thoughts, we should consciously think the opposite of them – that is, something good, benevolent, understanding, kind and loving. By counteracting a negative mindset in this way, its harmful effect is also largely cancelled out. The small amount of *karma* that remains can be released through prayer and *mantra*.

The best purification of thoughts is brought about by the repetition of the *guru-mantra* (*mantra japa*). (See also the explanation in Part 1 – *Samādhi-Pāda, sūtra*9.) In the pure light of the *mantra*, gloom disappears from thoughts and feelings.

वितर्काहिभसादयः क घतकारितानुमोदिता लोभक्रोधमोहपूर्वका

मृदुमध्याधिमात्रा दुःखाज्ञानानन्तफला इति प्रतिपक्षभावनम् ॥ ३४ ॥

34. vitarkāhiṃsādayaḥkṛta-kārita-anumoditālobhakrodha-moha-pūrvakāmṛdu-madhya-adhimātrāduḥkha-agyāna-anantaphalāitipratipakṣa-bhāvanam

vitarka – bad thought
hiṃsādaya – hurtful, harmful
kṛta – done
kārita – brought about, caused
anumodita – approved of
lobha – greed
krodha – anger
moha – attachment
pūrvaka – former
mṛdu – light, fine
madhya – medium
adhimātrā – extraordinary
duḥkha – suffering
agyāna – ignorance
ananta – endless, eternal
phala – remedy, medicinal plant
iti – verily, so
pratipakṣa-bhāvana – opposite attitude

Bad and hurtful thoughts, whether caused by anger, attachment, or greed, whether self-executed, caused, or approved, whether light, medium, or heavy, lead to endless suffering; the remedy is to cultivate opposite thoughts.

mana binakaram ne hoi – without mind there is no *karma*. Here Patanjali deals again with the subject of *karma*: even what we "merely" think is *karma* and has just as much effect as what we do. All our thoughts and deeds are stored in the subconscious and unconscious mind and form the basis of destiny in this and subsequent lives. If we harbour anger, resentment, jealousy or enmity towards others in our thoughts, this creates negative *karma* and keeps us in the darkness of ignorance.

The most powerful force in man is the power of thought. The worst pollution is mental pollution. Therefore, the first and most important purification is that of our thoughts. Those who do not purify their thoughts and remove the stones of resentment, pride, lust and envy from their inner path will one day fall.

As light makes darkness disappear, so we can dissolve hatred by love, jealousy by frankness, passion by serenity, selfishness by helpfulness, anger by forgiveness, doubt by trust, pride by humility, greed by contentment, attachment by devotion, and stinginess by generosity.

अहिंसाप्रतिष्ठायांतत्सन्निधौवैरत्यागः ॥ ३५ ॥

35. ahimsā-pratiṣṭhāyām tat-saṇnidhauvaira-tyāga

ahimsā – non-injury
pratiṣṭhāyā – firmness, standpoint
tat – from then on
saṇnidha – proximity, environment
vaira – hostility
tyāga – renunciation, withdrawal

Firmness in the attitude of non-injury causes the disappearance of all hostility.

One who has realised *ahimsā* is trusted by all living beings. St. Francis, the patron saint of animals, nature and the environment, SrīDevpurijī, SrīMahāprabhujī, Mahārishi Patanjali, MahārishiValmīki and numerous other saints, yogis and masters testify that in their presence even wild animals became tame and trusting. The peaceful radiance of these saints was so strong and far-reaching that in their vicinity predators and their prey camped peacefully side by side and there was no fear or aggression between them.

सत्यप्रतिष्ठायां क्रियाफलाश्रयत्वम् ॥ ३६ ॥

36. satya-pratiṣṭhāyāṃkriyā-phala-āśrayatvam

satya – truthfulness
pratiṣṭhāyā – firmness, standpoint
kriyā – doing, action
phala – fruit
āśraya – connected, following

Through firmness in truthfulness, the fruits of action follow immediately.

Through truthfulness the aspirant attains the power to realise their wishes directly (*sankalpa shakti*). There is a very nice legend about this:

In the garden of a royal palace there were many splendid fruit trees. Among them was a young mango tree that was bearing fruit for the first time. One day, when the queen was walking with the king in the garden, she noticed the mango tree and asked the king for the first fruit. The king promised her this. As the fruit was not yet ripe, the king ordered the gardener to guard the tree day and night to prevent any unauthorised person from messing with the fruit, and to put a net over the top of the tree to keep away the birds as well.

After about a month the first mango fruit ripened and hung golden in the young tree crown. Then a couple, a young man and his wife, passed by the walls of the palace. The wife caught sight of the golden fruit and turned to her husband in flattery.

"Isn't it true that a husband should grant his wife's every wish?"

"Yes, my darling. Do you wish for something special?" the man asked eagerly.

"Look at this magnificent golden mango! I want to enjoy it!" the woman demanded.

The man possessed *sankalpa shakti*, the ability to get anything he desired. So, he simply stretched out his hand and the golden mango appeared in his palm. He gave it to his beloved wife and she ate it with great relish.

The next morning the queen called the gardener and asked how her mango was coming along and if she could have it in the near future.

"Your Majesty, the fruit is ripe," replied the gardener.

"Bring it to me at once!" commanded the queen. The gardener ran into the garden, reached the tree he had so carefully guarded, and recoiled when he noticed that the fruit had disappeared.

He hurried back to the queen.

"Your Majesty, the fruit has mysteriously disappeared," he stammered.

Since neither a bird nor any other animal could reach the fruit, it was clear that a human being must be responsible. The queen was very angry! Who had dared to steal what the king himself had promised her? In her rage she ordered her son to find the insolent thief and have him hanged.

When it was announced throughout the kingdom that the thief of the mango fruit from the king's garden was wanted, the man who had taken the mango and given it to his wife without any evil intention voluntarily presented himself to the prince. He told the story of how it had all come about, how his wife had asked that her wish be granted, and how, without considering that what he was doing would hurt or offend anyone, he had used his *sankalpa shakti*.

The prince felt great respect for this young man and wanted to save his life somehow. And so he went to his father, the king.

"Father," he said, "the culprit has been found!"

"He shall hang!" replied the latter.

"He will accept any punishment you inflict upon him," said the prince. "But first hear his truly amazing story."

The prince told his father that the man possessed the miraculous power of obtaining instantly whatever he wanted, irrespective of the distance between him and the object of his desire.

"I would like to have this *sankalpa shakti* too," cried the king excitedly.

"Nothing would be easier," said the prince. "The master is here. Before he is executed, let him teach you his art."

This proposal pleased the king, and he ordered the man to be brought, that he might instruct him in the art of *sankalpa shakti*. The man agreed to do so and they immediately set to work.

Though they both did their best, it did not work. The prince said again, "Father, it cannot work like this. You are sitting on the throne and the Guru is standing below at your feet. As water cannot flow uphill, so knowledge cannot go from the foot to the head. It is against the laws of nature. You must exchange places so that the master is above the disciple. Without humility there can be no success."

The king heeded the advice, got down from his throne and made the man who was now his master sit up in his place. The man blessed the king, and what happened? His ability immediately transferred to the king! The king made a test and wished for an orange from the garden. He stretched out his hand and the fruit appeared in his hand. Then he wished for a lemon, and sure enough, he immediately held it in his hands. He made some more experiments, and all of them were successful.

After fully testing his new ability, the king said a little uncertainly, "Now I suppose we should proceed to execution? Where is the executioner?"

"But my lord," his son interrupted him again. "He who kills his guru commits a grave sin and must atone for that *karma* in many lifetimes." The king understood and bowed deeply to the young man, whom he now recognised as his guru, and paid him due respect. He gave him a generous gift and set him free.

