

# YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

## A Guide to Self-knowledge

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अस्तेयप्रतिष्ठायांसर्वरत्नोपस्थानम् ॥ ३७ ॥

### 37. **asteya-pratiṣṭhāyāmsarva-ratnopasthānam**

*asteya – non-stealing*

*pratiṣṭhāyā – firmness, point of view*

*sarva – all*

*ratna – jewel, treasure*

*upasthāna – to approach*

#### **Firmness in not stealing brings about the gain of all treasures.**

*Lakshmī*, the goddess of prosperity, settles only where the virtues of sincerity and respectability are cultivated. Prosperity does not consist solely of material possessions, but also – and especially – of harmony, joy, contentment and well-being.

Stolen wealth and wealth acquired through injustice do not bring happiness to the owner. Stolen is also that wealth which we obtain through the exploitation of nature. Likewise, it is theft when we increase our own possessions through power and influence at the expense of other, weaker people.

ब्रह्मचर्यप्रतिष्ठायांवीर्यलाभः ॥ ३८ ॥

### 38. brahmacarya-pratiṣṭhāyāmvīrya-lābhaḥ

*brahmacarya – abstinence, pure way of life*

*vīrya – strength*

*lābha – to receive, to keep*

**Through firmness in pure living, strong vitality is attained.**

In any ashram or monastery, sexual abstinence is required. This is for three reasons.

1. There is a tremendous amount of energy bound up in the seed. Just think of a tiny seed growing into a huge tree. This power, if tamed, can be transformed into spiritual energy. This is true not only for men, but in the same way for women.
2. Through abstinence, the stored sexual energy can also serve as a "nutrient" for the brain and increase mental capacity.
3. One who is seized by bodily passion easily falls into attachment and dependence (*rāga* and *moha*). As the feelings and thoughts are directed more towards the desired person and less towards God, spiritual aspiration is diminished.

However, abstinence requires the correct guidance and instruction. Those who have not learned to properly redirect and transform the accumulating energy, but suppress and block it, can get into serious psychological problems.

Sexual energy is an extremely powerful force that finds an outlet in other ways when it remains unsatisfied – in emotional imbalance, in hysterical or allergic reactions, in binge eating or anorexia, and other psychological and psychosomatic symptoms.

The resolve to abstain from spiritual pursuit is beneficial only when one knows how to store and utilise the energy. The right diversion of this energy is upward to the *Āgyā Chakra* and *Sahasrāra Chakra*, through positive thinking, prayer, mantra practice, meditation and *sattvic* food.

Yoga teaches the importance of a *sattvic* diet, that is, a lactovegetarian diet without the consumption of meat, fish, and eggs, because *rājasic* or *tamasic* foods arouse the sexual

energy at inopportune times and easily get out of control.

The principle of *brahmacharya* is also fulfilled in living harmoniously with a life partner. The scriptures say, "One who lives in harmony with a partner is always a *brahmachari*. Two partners who live together like the two halves of a whole, directing their aspirations and actions towards God, will derive blessings, strength and inspiration from sexual energy.

अपरिग्रहस्थैर्येजन्मकथंतासम्बोधः ॥ ३९ ॥

### 39. aparigraha-sthairyejanma-kathantā-sambodhaḥ

*aparigraha – non-collection*

*sthairya– consolidated*

*janma– birth, life*

*kathantā – the how and why"*

*sambodha – embodiment*

Firmness in desirelessness leads to insight into the cause and meaning of the present birth.

Many would like to know about their past lives. But the cosmic law has arranged it in such a way that man has no knowledge about the past lives. Therefore, we should not act against this order out of curiosity and try a "regression" through any techniques.

In our many births we had countless relationships: parents, partners, children, friends ... Perhaps our mother or our child from a previous life is suffering in the present existence. The knowledge of this would only cause us new worry and distress.

As soon as the corresponding level of consciousness is reached, knowledge also follows. When we are so detached inwardly that we no longer suffer from it, the door to the knowledge of previous existences also opens in us.

शौचात् स्वाङ्गजुगुप्सा परैरसंसर्गः ॥ ४० ॥

#### 40. śaucāt-sva-aṅga-jugupsāparairasaṃsargaḥ

*śauca – purity*

*sva – self*

*aṅga – limb, here: body*

*jugupsā– dislike, aversion*

*parair– to go away, to avoid*

*asaṃsarga – not to touch, not to mix*

Purity arises in the renunciation of the physical and avoidance of derogatory contact.

The physical, material is no longer so important to the yogi. Relationships based on emotion and passion have lost their importance. They pay attention to the way they interact, seeking good company (*satsang*) and avoiding bad company (*kusang*).

सत्त्वशुद्धिसौमनस्यैकाग्रचेन्द्रियजयात्मदर्शनयोग्यत्वानि च ॥ ४१ ॥

#### 41. sattvaśuddhi-saumanasya-ekāgrya-indriyajaya-ātmadarśana-yogyatvāni ca

*sattvaśuddhi – pure being*

*saumanasya – serenity*

*ekāgrya – focused on one point*

*indriyajaya – control over the senses*

*ātmadarśana – vision of the self*

*yogyatvāni – ability, power*

From this comes a pure being, a serene mind, a concentrated spirit, control over the senses, and ability to know the true self.

*Saucha* means not only physical purity, but also purity of mind. Purifying our character is like cutting and polishing a gemstone. In the beginning, a crystal may not even be recognisable as such. It is only when the dirt is removed that it acquires, through polishing, that brilliance and fire which we admire and by which it receives its value. The

mind is "dirt-encrusted" by such qualities as jealousy, greed, anger, pride, hypocrisy, which stick to us like tar and obscure the glow of the *ātma*. Gloom, complexes and inner blockages also wall us in and act like closed doors that do not let the light through.

We can overcome these obstacles through yoga practice and living according to the principles of *yama* and *niyama*. Every spiritual practice aims at purifying the mind and opening the gate to the inner self. Then the radiance of God begins to shine from us.

सन्तोषादनुत्तमसुखलाभः ॥ ४२ ॥

#### 42. **saṁtoṣād-anuttama-sukha-lābhaḥ**

*saṁtoṣā – satisfaction*

*anuttama – incomparable*

*sukha – happiness*

*lābha – to obtain, to attain*

In contentment, an incomparable feeling of happiness arises.

SANTOSHĪ SADĀ SUKHĪ has an Indian proverb: a contented person is always happy. Material possessions are perishable and carry within them the fear of loss. Youth, beauty, position, influence and power – nothing in the world is permanent.

The best guarantee for a happy life is desirelessness and contentment in all circumstances. Be satisfied when you receive something and accept it with gratitude. Keep equanimity when you lose something, knowing that nothing in the world is permanent. Even if you are materially poor, you can still be rich in spirit by being filled with love, kindness, compassion, understanding, helpfulness and forgiveness.

