

YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

A Guide to Self-knowledge

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विभूति पादः
VIBHŪTI-PĀDAḤ

त्रयमेकत्र सभयमः ॥४॥

4. trayam-ekatrasaṃyamaḥ

trayam – triple, threefold

ekatra – united, together

saṃyama – holding together, "holding everything together, reigning in

These three together (*dhāranā, dhyāna, samādhi*) are *saṃyama*, perfect absorption.

Samyama means "collection" and, in a broader sense, also discipline. Without discipline there is no success. Right at the beginning of the *Yoga Sūtras* Patanjali said: *yogaś-citta-vṛitti-nirodhaḥ*. Loosely translated, this means "Yoga consists of mastering the emotions of the mind".

What does discipline mean? We are very weak creatures. We lack discipline in eating, drinking, sleeping, talking, feelings and thoughts. To be disciplined does not mean that we are no longer allowed to eat, drink or sleep. Rather, it means to be moderate in everything and to care for our physical and mental well-being in the right way. There is a difference between eating junk food in excess, ruled by gusto and appetite, and choosing our food wisely to strengthen the body and keep it healthy.

For the regulation of all activities, *mantras* are of great help. There are *mantras* before

eating and before drinking, before going to sleep and after waking up, *mantras* before speaking, learning and teaching.

Reciting a *mantra* purifies the environment and harmonises the elements. A *mantra*, sung, spoken or thought before a meal, has a purifying effect on the food, and this is not only meant symbolically. A word or sound has a powerful force. The energy vibration of the human mind is stronger than atomic power. A word can awaken love or hate. It is said that a poem can melt a stone. What is a poem? Nothing but a melodic vibration, harmonising energy, and a *mantra*.

In this *sūtra*, inner discipline is meant, but we can only realise it through simultaneous outer discipline. As long as we are dominated by the senses, thoughts and feelings, we cannot achieve *samādhi*. However, if we practice and repeat the appropriate *mantras* daily, in time we will master the senses, feelings and thoughts.

Patanjali explains that all three techniques – *dhāranā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* – should be "held together". These three exercises or practice steps are to be practiced together and continuously. Concentration is followed by meditation, and meditation is followed by *samādhi*.

When we put flour, butter and milk in a vessel and stir them together, this is also a "*samyama*". All three ingredients are mixed and united. In the same way, the senses, mind and consciousness are to be united in *dhāranā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* in one goal.

At this point I would like to say a few explanatory words about meditation. Many people have problems meditating. How can this be solved? The best meditation is to close your eyes and sink deeply into yourself. As a spiritual aspirant, repeat your *Guru-mantra* and feel your personal deity within you. Imagine very clearly that you are with Him. When a baby cries and the mother takes it in her arms, the child immediately calms down because it knows that it is now safe. Such should be your feelings when you are united with your *IshtaDevatā* in meditation.

Meditate daily, even if it is only for a few minutes. Meditate with *bhakti*, love, and devotion. Do not think of anything in particular, do not force anything. Immerse yourself in your inner bliss. Nothing can touch you inside, nothing can hurt you inside or make you sad. Sink deep into yourself and feel your true divine self through and through. You don't need to imagine anything, no images, no thoughts, no prayer. Do not feel like a sinner. You need not fear anything. In your essence you are pure and divine. Your true self is love, truth, beauty and divine radiance. Repeat your *mantra* and feel inner peace, harmony and bliss fill you.

This is the true goal in life. Our goal in life is not to make a career, to accumulate possessions, power and money. Meditate on your inner reality. Immerse yourself in true love. This is how *samādhi* begins.

If you meditate in this way for a while, you will gain much. Enjoy the inner peace and harmony within you. Even if it is only for a short time, these minutes will accompany you throughout the day as a pleasant vibration and uplifting feeling. The important thing is to relax. Your *sādhanā* should be done freely and naturally. You are practicing because you have realised that this is the path to the goal you want to achieve.

What insights does meditation give? Self-knowledge, a positive and pure communication with yourself and the environment, understanding and clarity about yourself, nature and fellow human beings.

Cognition is internalising acquired knowledge. Realisation is putting knowledge into practice. If this succeeds, a variety of "fruits" can be harvested, as the following *sūtra* says. 3

तज्जयात्प्रज्ञालोकः ॥५॥

5. taj-jayātprajñā-ālokaḥ

tat – this

jaya – mastered

prajñā – knowledge, understanding, discrimination

āloka – light, radiance

In mastery (of *samyama*) the light of knowledge appears.

Now you may be asking yourself, "What benefit do I get from having my consciousness immersed in 'emptiness' (*shūnya*)?" (See *sūtra* 3.)

The answer lies in the difference between sleep and *samādhi*. In deep sleep, consciousness is also in "empty space" without ego-consciousness; the whole world seems to have disappeared. When you wake up, however, you know you have been asleep. You feel rested and relaxed, maybe even happy. But you are still the same as you were the night before you fell asleep. It is

different, however, when you return from *samādhi*. From *samādhi* and deep meditation you come back with wisdom, with spiritual knowledge (*aparāvidyā*) and insight that transcends natural, worldly knowledge.

When *dhāranā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* are mastered and realised, *pragyāloka* – the light of knowledge – follows. The mind attains clarity, knowledge and wisdom.

तस्य भूमिषुविनियोगः ॥६॥

6. tasyabhūmiṣuviniyogaḥ

tasya – his, whose

bhūmiṣu (*bhūmi*) – stage, degree

viniyoga – occupation, exercise

This is done in the exercise of the above stages.

Here Patanjali emphasises once again that concentration, meditation and *samādhi* are to be practiced in the order mentioned. This does not mean that these techniques of *Rāja Yoga* are to be performed only individually and separately. Withdrawal of the senses, concentration and meditation flow into each other in a certain way. But only when one stage is mastered can the next stage be perfected.

Proceed step by step. Impatience and exaggeration – forcing oneself into immersion for hours, for example – does not accelerate success at all, but overwhelms and confuses the mind.

Mahaprabhuji says in his *bhajan* "*Manvādhīrecāl....*":

O mind, go slowly, go slowly.

The path to the divine home (the *Sahasrāra Chakra*) is steep.

Thou hast to cross seventy thousand rivers (the *nādis*) and to cross deep ditches.

For the house of God is thousands of miles above the heavens.

Narrow and slippery is the path, and dark is the night.

If you slip, you fall into the depths.

25 Temptations (the senses) beguile you with beautiful melodies.

If you listen to them, they catch you and you forget to go on.

If one tries to climb the peak without knowing the right technique, he will fall.
Without Sadguru, you cannot walk the path. Only he can give you the knowledge.
SrīDevpurijī gave me that knowledge.
Mahāprabhujī says: Only by the grace of the sadguru can you reach the goal.

त्रयमन्तरङ्गभ पूर्वैः ॥७॥

7. trayamantar-aṅgapūrvebhyaḥ

traya – three(fold)
antar – inside
aṅga – limb
pūrva – previous

These three stages, compared to the previous ones (five), are the inner limbs (of yoga).

The three stages of consciousness described (*dhāranā, dhyāna, samādhi*) denote the inner yoga path to be mastered alongside the practice of the five outer limbs (*yama, niyama, āsana, prānāyāma, pratyāhārā*). (See *Sādhana-Pāda, sūtra*29.)

All the exercises in the daily routine are important. First, it is necessary to exercise the body (*āsana*) in order to be able to sit motionless and comfortably for a long time. Next comes *prānāyāma* to calm the mind, and so on. There is no "shortcut." No stage can be skipped. Only by moving from one stage to the next can *samyam* be realised, and thus the opening to a higher level of consciousness.

तदपि बहिरङ्गनिर्बीजस्य ॥ ८ ॥

8. tad-apibahir-aṅganirbījasya

tat – this(e)
api – but, yet
bahiḥ – outside, external
aṅga – limb
nirbīja – seedless

But even these are mere outer limbs of the seedless *samādhi*.

Now the students rejoice because they think they have reached the desired goal in the first, gripping *samādhi* experiences. But Patanjali brings them back down to earth. In this *sūtra* he explains that compared to the transcendent state of consciousness of the highest, "seedless" *samādhi*, all the preceding stages of concentration and meditation still belong to the "outer yoga." (See the explanation of *bahiranga* and *antaranga yoga* in the introduction to the *Vibhūti-Pāda*.)

This is not meant to be a devaluation of these principles and techniques, for they are all necessary for the attainment of the highest and ultimate goal.

To reiterate *sūtras* 42-47, there are two kinds of *samādhi*:

SABĪJA SAMĀDHI and NIRBĪJA SAMĀDHI.

Sabījasamādhi is that kind of *samādhi* which still contains "seeds". That is to say, the germs of the *karmas* which are the cause of rebirth still exist, while *nirbījasamādhi* means that there are no more such "seeds."

In the *sabījasamādhi* the *vrittis* have come to a standstill, but they still exist in secret – just as dust in a glass of water settles to the bottom when it stands still for a long time. However, it would be wrong to say that the water is now completely pure, because deep at the bottom lies the sediment. This inner "dust" can only be cleansed by further, continuous practice!

In the *sabījasamādhi*, four degrees are distinguished: SAVITARKA and NIRVITARKASAMĀDHI, and SAVICHĀRA and NIRVICHĀRA SAMĀDHI.

Tarka means reasoning, or philosophising. *Savitarkasamādhi* is characterised by "one-point concentration" (*ekāgratā* – see the next *sūtras* 11-12), e.g., on the image of the personal deity or a flame, a tree, the sun ... Here the meditator is aware of space and time, of their existence and state. A subtle I-consciousness is still present. The meditator knows that "he" has united.

Nirvitarka means without reasoning. When conception and awareness of one's own existence and one's own identification fall away, this is called *nirvitarkasamādhi*. In this stage the meditator transcends space and time. The object of meditation is no longer outside but within.

But this too is only a beginning. The realisation of higher levels of consciousness has just begun. It is as if we were trying to exhaust the ocean with a bucket – the ocean remains what it has always been: infinite.

In the next stage of *savichārasamādhi* ("with discrimination"), the meditator enters the plane of subtle objects and subtle energies – the *chakras*, *nādis*, *prānas*, etc.

In the *nirvichārasamādhi* ("without discrimination") the yogi experiences the universal cosmic energy.

Even this is not the final and highest realisation.

Only in the "seedless" NIRBĪJA SAMĀDHI, when all the *vrittis* and all the seeds of the *vrittis* are purified and dissolved, is the goal finally attained. The yogi continues to live in the body, but they no longer identify with it. To be here or there, or not to be, is all the same to them – for they are *satchit-ānanda*, absolute being and consciousness, one with All.

व्युत्थाननिरोधसम्स्कारयोरभिभवप्रादुर्भावौनिरोधक्षणचित्तान्वयोनिरोधपरिणामः ॥९॥

9. vyutthāna-nirodha-saṁskārayor-abhibhava-prādurbhāvau

nirodha-kṣaṇa-cittānvayonirodha-pariṇāmaḥ

vyutthāna – to awaken, to rise up

nirodha – control, suppression, to bring to a halt

saṁskāra – impression

abhibhava – to come to, to overwhelm

prādurbhāva – appearance

kṣaṇa – moment

citta – consciousness

anvaya – connection

pariṇāma – change

When the changing impressions arising in the mind are under control, the change to inner stillness (*nirodha-pariṇāma*) begins in consciousness.

Patanjali speaks here of *vyutthāna* – to awaken, for something dormant to come into motion – and of the opposite, *nirodha* – to control, to bring to a standstill, to rest.

SAMSKĀRAS are all kinds of impressions – thoughts, feelings, and experiences – stored in the consciousness from this and previous lives. These impressions rise into consciousness on certain occasions and, if they are unpleasant or inappropriate, are pushed back down into the subconscious. But even if we put a "lid" on them, they are still there and can come out again at some unexpected time and become active.

Let us take the following picture of an aquarium: the glass vessel is the body. The water is the consciousness (*chitta*), and the fish in it are the *vrittis*. When they are awake, fish are always moving and looking for food. However, when the fish are asleep, the water is still and there is no demand for food. Thus, *chitta-nirodha* is attained. The calm, however, is deceptive and does not last. The fish – the *vrittis* – are asleep, but they still exist and will soon awaken again and create unrest.

In this *sūtra*, consciousness is as if on a scale – the question is, which is stronger, tranquillity (*nirodha*) or awakening (*vyutthāna*)? Will the *vrittis*, caused by various stirrings and impressions, remain under control and at rest, or awaken and rise? To which side will the scales tilt?

This depends firstly on which *samskāras* are present, and secondly on how the practitioner is able to deal with them. This is largely dependent on their faith and devotion to God (*Īshvara-pranidhāna*). It is important to have a clue in meditation, as well as in daily life. That is why in meditation the *guru-mantra*, which the aspirant has received from their spiritual master, is so essential. It is the "flashlight" that illuminates the path to the unknown planes and gives security, confidence and protection.

