

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali
Translation by Swami Satchidananda.

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Book One
Samadhi Pada
Portion on Contemplation.

Now the exposition of Yoga is being made.

The restraint of the modifications of the mind-stuff is Yoga.

(mental modifications = the thought forms, workings of the mind)

Then the Seer (Self) abides in His own nature.

At other times (the Self appears to) assume the forms of the mental modifications.

Their are five kinds of mental modifications which are either painful or painless.

They are:

Right Knowledge.

Misconception.

Verbal delusion.

Sleep.

Memory.

The sources of right knowledge are:

Direct perception.

Inference.

Scriptural testimony.

Misconception occurs when knowledge of something is not based upon its true form.

An image that arises on hearing mere words without any reality (as its basis) is verbal delusion.

That mental modification supported by cognition of nothingness is sleep.

When a mental modification of an object previously experienced and not forgotten comes back to consciousness, that is memory.

These mental modifications are restrained by practice and non-attachment.

Of these two, effort toward steadiness of mind is practice.

Practice becomes firmly grounded when well attended to for a long time, without break and in all earnestness.

The consciousness of self-mastery in one who is free from craving for objects seen or heard about is non-attachment.

When there is non-thirst for even the gunas (constituents of Nature) due to realization of the Purusha (true self), that is supreme non-attachment.

Samprajnata samadhi (distinguished contemplation) is accompanied by reasoning, reflecting, rejoicing and pure I-am-ness.

By the firmly convinced practice of the complete cessation of mental modifications, the impressions only remain. This is the other samadhi (asamprajnata or non-distinguished).

Those who merely leave their physical bodies and attain the state of celestial deities, or those who get merges in Nature, have rebirth.

To the others, this asamprajnata samadhi could come through faith, strength, memory, contemplation or by discernment.

To the keen and intent practitioner this (samadhi) comes very quickly.

The time necessary for success further depends on whether the practice is mild, medium, or intense.

Or (samadhi is attained) by devotion with total dedication to God (Isvara).

Isvara is the supreme Purusha, unaffected by any afflictions, actions, fruits of actions or by any inner impressions of desires.

In Him is the complete manifestation of the seed of omniscience.

Unconditioned by time, He is the teacher of even the most ancient teachers.

The word expressive of Isvara is the mystic sound OM. (Note: OM is God's name as well as form.)

To repeat it with reflection upon its meaning is an aid.

From this practice all the obstacles disappear and simultaneously dawns knowledge of the inner Self.

These distractions of the mind-stuff are the obstacles.

Disease

Dullness

Doubt

Carelessness

Laziness

Sensuality

False perception

Failure to reach firm ground

Slipping from the ground

Accompaniments to the mental distractions include:

Distress.

Despair.

Trembling of the body.

Disturbed breathing.

The practice of concentration on a single subject (or the use of one technique) is the best way to prevent the obstacles and their accompaniments.

By cultivating attitudes of:

Friendliness toward the happy

Compassion for the unhappy

Delight in the virtuous

And disregard toward the wicked

the mind-stuff retains its undisturbed calmness.

Or that calm is retained by the controlled exhalation or retention of the breath.

Or the concentration on subtle sense perception can cause steadiness of mind.

Or by concentrating on the supreme, everblissful Light within.

Or by concentrating on a great soul's mind which is totally freed from attachment to sense objects.

Or by concentrating on an experience had during dream or deep sleep.

Or by meditating on anything one chooses that is elevating.

Gradually, one's mastery in concentration extends from the primal atom to the greatest magnitude.

Just as the naturally pure crystal assumes shapes and colors of objects placed near it, so the Yogi's mind, with its totally weakened modifications, becomes clear and balanced and attains the state devoid of differentiation between knower, knowable and knowledge. This culmination of meditation is samadhi.

The samadhi in which name, form and knowledge of them is mixed is called savitarka samadhi, or samadhi with deliberation.

When the memory is well purified, the knowledge of the object of concentration shines alone, devoid of the distinction of name and quality. This is nirvitarka samadhi, or samadhi without deliberation.

In the same way, savichara (reflective) and nirvichara (super or non reflective) samadhis, are explained.

The subtlety of possible objects of concentration ends only at the undefinable.

All these samadhis are sabija (with seed), which could bring one back into bondage or mental disturbance.

In the purity of nirvichara samadhi, the supreme Self shines.

This is ritambhara prajna, or the absolute true consciousness.

This special truth is totally different from knowledge gained by hearing, study of scripture or inference.

The impression produced by this samadhi wipes out all other impressions.

When even this impression is wiped out, every impression is totally wiped out and there is nirbija (seedless) samadhi.

So concludes the Sutras of Book One.

Book Two

Sadhana Pada

Portion on Practice

In the Samadhi Pada, Patanjali gives us the aim of Yoga in a theoretical way, explaining it as the control of the chitta vrittis, or thought forms. Then the rest of the Sutas in the Book 1 could be classified into several groups: the different kinds of thought forms, the practices to control them, and the different kinds of superconscious experience culminating in the highest experience of nirbija samadhi, the seedless contemplation. But it is not that easy to get into samadhi, so in this chapter he tells the student not to get frightened but to prepare himself or herself by laying the proper foundation, then gradually build until that level is reached. For this Patanjali gives a number of simple directions.

Accepting pain as help for purification, study of spiritual books, and surrender to the Supreme Being constitute Yoga in practice.

They help us minimize obstacles and attain samadhi.

Ignorance, egoism, attachment, hatred, and clinging to bodily life are the five obstacles.

Ignorance is the field for the others mentioned after it, whether they be dormant, feeble, intercepted, or sustained.

Ignorance is regarding the impermanent as permanent, the impure as pure, the painful as pleasant, and the non-Self as the Self.

Egoism is the identification, as it were, of the power of the Seer (Purusha) with that of the instrument of seeing (body-mind).

Attachment is that which follows identification with pleasurable experience.

Aversion is that which follows identification with painful experiences.

Clinging to life, flowing by its own potency (due to past experience), exists even in the wise.

In subtle form, these obstacles can be destroyed by resolving them into their primal cause (the ego).

In the active state, they can be destroyed by meditation.

The womb of karmas (actions and reactions) has its root in these obstacles, and the karmas bring experiences in the seen (present) or in the unseen (future) births.

With the existence of the root, there will be fruits also; namely, the births of different species of life, their spans and experiences.

The karmas bear fruits of pleasure and pain caused by merit and demerit.

To one of discrimination, everything is painful indeed, due to its consequences: the anxiety and fear over losing what is gained; the resulting impressions left in the mind to create renewed cravings; and the constant conflict among the three gunas, which control the mind.

Pain that has not yet come is avoidable.

The cause of that avoidable pain is the union of the seer (Purusha) and the seen (Prakriti, or Nature).

The seen is of the nature of the gunas: illumination, activity and inertia; and consists of the elements and sense organs, whose purpose is to provide both experiences and liberation to the Purusha.

The stages of the gunas are specific, non-specific, defined and undefinable.

The Seer is nothing but the power of seeing which, although pure, appears to see through the mind.

The seen exists only for the sake of the seer.

Although destroyed for him who has attained liberation, it (the seen) still exists for others, being common to them.

The union of Owner (Purusha) and owned (Prakriti) causes the recognition of the nature and powers of them both.

The cause of this union is ignorance.

Without this ignorance, no such union occurs. This is the independence of the Seer.

Uninterrupted discriminative discernment is the method for its removal.

One's wisdom in the final stage is sevenfold. One experiences the end of:

Desire to know anything more.

Desire to stay away from any thing.

Desire to gain anything new.

Desire to do anything.

Sorrow.

Fear.

Delusion.

By the practice of the limbs of Yoga, the impurities dwindle away and there dawns the light of wisdom, leading to discriminative discernment.

The eight limbs of Yoga are:

Yama (abstinence).

Niyama (observance).

Asana (posture).

Pranayama (breath control).

Pratyahara (sense withdrawal).

Dharana (concentration).

Dhyana (meditation).

Samadhi (contemplation, absorption or superconscious state).

Yama consists of:

Non-violence.

Truthfulness.

Non-stealing.

Continence.

Non-greed.

These Great Vows are universal, not limited by class, place, time or circumstance.

Niyama consists of

purity,

contentment,
accepting but not causing pain,
study of spiritual books; and
worship of God (self-surrender).

When disturbed by negative thoughts, opposite (positive) ones should be thought of. This is pratipaksha bhavana.

When negative thoughts or acts such as violence, etc. are caused to be done or even approved of, whether incited by greed, anger or infatuation, whether indulged in with mild, medium or extreme intensity, they are based on ignorance and bring certain pain.

In the presence of one firmly established in non-violence, all hostilities cease.

To one established in truthfulness, actions and their results become subservient.

To one established in non-stealing, all wealth comes.

By one established in continence, vigor is gained.

When non-greed is confirmed, a thorough illumination of the how and why of one's birth comes.

By purification arises disgust for one's own body and for contact with other bodies.

Moreover, one gains purity of sattva, cheerfulness of mind, one-pointedness, mastery over the senses, and fitness for Self-realization.

By contentment, supreme joy is gained.

By austerity, impurities of body and senses are destroyed and occult powers gained.

By study of spiritual books comes communion with one's chosen deity.

By total surrender to God, samadhi is attained.

Asana is a steady, comfortable posture.

By lessening the natural tendency for restlessness and by meditating on the infinite, posture is mastered.

Thereafter, one is undisturbed by the dualities.

That (firm posture) being acquired, the movements of inhalation and exhalation should be controlled.

This is pranayama.

The modifications of the life-breath are either external, internal, or stationary. They are to be regulated by space, time, and number and are either long or short.

There is a fourth kind of pranayama that occurs during concentration on an internal or external object.

As its result, the veil over the inner Light is destroyed.

And the mind becomes fit for concentration.

When the senses withdraw themselves from the objects and imitate, as it were, the nature of the mind-stuff, this is pratyahara.

Then follows supreme mastery over the senses.

So concludes the Sutras of Book Two

Book Three

Vibhuti Pada

Portion on Accomplishments.

The third book is called the Vibhuti Pada. The vibhuti are all the accomplishments which come as by-products of your Yoga practice. They are also sometimes called the siddhis, or supernatural powers. These powers begin to come with the practice of the final three limbs of Raja Yoga: dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation), and samadhi (contemplation).

Dharana is the binding of the mind to one place, object or idea.

Dhyana is the continuous flow of cognition toward that object.

Samadhi is the same meditation when there is the shining of the object alone, as if devoid of form.

The practice of these three (dharana, dhyana, and samadhi) upon one object is called samyama.

By the mastery of samyama comes the light of knowledge.

Its practice is to be accomplished in stages.

These three (dharana, dhyana, and samadhi) are more internal than the preceding five limbs.

Even these three are external to the seedless samadhi.

The impressions which normally arise are made to disappear by the appearance of suppressive efforts, which in turn create new mental modifications. The moment of conjunction of mind and new modifications is nirodha parinama.

The flow of nirodha parinama becomes steady through habit.

When there is a decline in distractedness and appearance of one-pointedness, then comes samadhi parinama (development in samadhi).

Then again, when the subsiding past and rising present images are identical, there is ekagrata parinama (one-pointedness).

By this (what has been said in the preceding three Sutras), the transformations of the visible characteristics, time factors and conditions of elements and senses are also described.

It is the substratum (Prakriti) that by nature goes through latent, uprising and unmanifested phases.

The succession of these different phases is the cause of the differences in stages of evolution.

By practicing samyama on the three stages of evolution comes knowledge of past and future.

A word, its meaning, and the idea behind it are normally confused because of superimposition upon one another. By samyama on the word (or sound) produced by any being, knowledge of its meaning is obtained.

By direct perception, through samyama, of one's mental impressions, knowledge of past births is obtained.

By samyama on the distinguishing signs of others' bodies, knowledge of their mental images is obtained.

But this does not include the support in the person's mind (such as the motive behind the thought, etc.), as that is not the object of the samyama.

By samyama on the form on one's body, (and by) checking the power of perception by intercepting light from the eyes of the observer, the body becomes invisible.

In the same way, the disappearance of sound (touch, taste, smell, etc.) is explained.

Karmas are two kinds: quickly manifesting and slowly manifesting. By samyama on them, or on the portents of death, the knowledge of the time of death is obtained.

By samyama on friendliness and other such qualities, the power to transmit them is obtained.

By samyama on the strength of elephants and other such animals, their strength is obtained.

By samyama on the Light within, the knowledge of the subtle, hidden, and remote is obtained. (Note: subtle as atoms, hidden as treasure, remote as far distant lands.)

By samyama on the sun, knowledge of the entire solar system is obtained.

By samyama on the moon comes knowledge of the star's arrangement.

By samyama on the pole star comes knowledge of the star's movements.

By samyama on the navel plexus, knowledge of the body's constitution is obtained.

By samyama on the pit of the throat, cessation of hunger and thirst is achieved.

By samyama on the kurma nadi (a subtle tortoise-shaped tube located below the throat), motionlessness in the meditative posture is achieved.

By samyama on the light at the crown of the head (sahasrara chakra), visions of masters and adepts are obtained.

Or, in the knowledge that dawns by spontaneous enlightenment (through a life of purity), all the powers come by themselves.

By samyama on the heart, the knowledge of the mind-stuff is obtained.

The intellect and the Purusha (or Atman) are totally different, the intellect existing for the sake of the Purusha, while the Purusha exists for its own sake. Not distinguishing this is the cause of all experiences; and by smayama on the distinction, knowledge of the Purusha is gained.

From this knowledge arises superphysical hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling through spontaneous intuition.

These (superphysical senses) are obstacles to (nirbija) samadhi but are siddhis (powers or accomplishments) in the worldly pursuits.

By the loosening of the cause (of the bondage of mind to body) and by knowledge of the procedure of the mind-stuff's functioning, entering another's body is accomplished.

By mastery over the udana nerve current (the upward vital air), one accomplishes levitation over water, swamps, thorns, etc. and can leave the body at will.

By mastery over the samana nerve current (the equalizing vital air) comes radiance to surround the body.

By samyama on the relationship between ear and ether, supernormal hearing becomes possible.

By samyama on the relationship between the body and ether, lightness of cotton fiber is attained, and thus traveling through the ether becomes possible.

By samyama on thought waves unidentified by and external to the body (maha-vidya, or the great bodilessness), the veil over the light of the Self is destroyed.

By samyama on the gross and subtle elements and on their essential nature, correlations and purpose, mastery over them is gained.

From that comes attainment of anima and other siddhis, bodily perfection and the non-obstruction of bodily functions by the influence of the elements.

(Note: The eight major siddhis alluded to here are:

Anima - to become very small.

Mahima - to become very big.

Laghima - very light.

Garima - heavy.

Prapti - to reach anywhere.

Prakamyā - to achieve all one's desires.

Isatva - ability to create anything.

Vasitva - ability to command and control everything.

Beauty, grace, strength, and adamant hardness constitute bodily perfection.

By samyama on the power of perception and on the essential nature, correlation with the ego sense and purpose of the sense organs, mastery over them is gained.

From that, the body gains the power to move as fast as the mind, ability to function without the aid of the sense organs, and complete mastery over the primary cause (Prakriti).

By recognition of the distinction between sattva (the pure reflective nature) and the Self, supremacy over all states and forms of existence (omnipotence) is gained as is omniscience.

By non-attachment even to that (all these siddhis), the seed of bondage is destroyed and thus follows Kaivalya.

The Yogi should neither accept nor smile with pride at the admiration of even the celestial beings, as there is the possibility of his getting caught again in the undesirable.

By samyama on single moments in sequence comes discriminative knowledge.

Thus, the indistinguishable differences between objects that are alike in species, characteristic marks and positions become distinguishable.

The discriminative knowledge that simultaneously comprehends all objects in all conditions is the intuitive knowledge which brings liberation.

When the tranquil mind attains purity equal to that of the Self, there is Absoluteness.

So concludes the Sutras of Book Three

Book Four

Kaivalya Pada

Portion on Absoluteness.

Book Four has the heading Kaivalya Pada , or the portion that talks about absoluteness. The root of kaivalyam is kevala, which means without qualities or conditions, that which is Cosmic. The one who has the quality of kevala is called kaivalyam. It's an experience of absoluteness, unlimitedness.

Siddhis are born of practices performed in previous births, or by herbs, mantra repetition, asceticism, or by samadhi.

The transformation of one species into another is brought about by the inflow of Nature.

Incidental events do not directly cause natural evolution; they just remove the obstacles as a farmer (removes the obstacles in a water course running in his field).

A Yogi's egoity alone is the cause of (other artificially) created minds.

Although the functions in the many created minds may differ, the original mind-stuff of the Yogi is the director of them all.

Only the minds born of meditation (the artificially created ones) are free from karmic impressions.

The actions of the Yogi are neither white (good) nor black (bad), but the actions of others are of three kinds; good, bad, and mixed.

Of these (actions), only those vasanas (subconscious impressions) for which there are favorable conditions for producing their fruits will manifest in a particular birth.

Although desires are separated from their fulfillments by class, space and time, they have uninterrupted relationship because the impressions (of desires) and memories of them are identical.

Since the desire to live is eternal, impressions are also beginningless.

The impressions being held together by cause, effect, basis and support, they disappear with the disappearance of these four.

The past and future exist in the real form of objects which manifest due to differences in the conditions of their characteristics.

Whether manifested or subtle, these characteristics belong to the nature of the gunas.

The reality of things is due to the uniformity of the gunas' transformations.

Due to differences in various minds, perception of even the same object may vary.

Nor does an object's existence depend upon a single mind, for if it did, what would become of that object when that mind did not perceive it?

An object is known or unknown dependent on whether or not the mind gets colored by it.

Due to His changelessness, changes in the mind-stuff are always known to the Purusha, who is its Lord.

The mind-stuff is not self-luminous because it is an object of perception by the Purusha.

The mind-stuff cannot perceive both subject and object simultaneously (which proves it is not self-luminous).

If the perception of one mind by another mind be postulated, we would have to assume an endless number of them and the result would be confusion of memory.

The consciousness of the Purusha is unchangeable; by getting the reflection of it, the mind-stuff becomes conscious of the Self.

The mind-stuff, when colored by both Seer and seen, understands everything.

Though having countless desires, the mind-stuff exists for the sake of another (the Purusha) because it can act only in association with It.

To one who sees the distinction between the mind and the Atman, thoughts of mind as the Atman cease forever.

Then the mind-stuff is inclined toward discrimination and gravitates toward Absoluteness.

In between, distracting thoughts may arise due to past impressions.

They can be removed, as in the case of the obstacles explained before. (see Book 2, Sutra 1,2,10,11, and 26.)

He who, due to his perfect discrimination, is totally disinterested even in the highest rewards remains in the constant discriminative discernment, which is called dharmamegha (cloud of dharma) samadhi. (Note: The meaning of dharma includes virtue, justice, law, duty, morality, religion, religious merit, and steadfast decree.)

From that samadhi all afflictions and karmas cease.

Then all the coverings and impurities of knowledge are totally removed. Because of the infinity of this knowledge, what remains to be known is almost nothing.

Then the gunas terminate their sequence of transformations because they have fulfilled their purpose.

The sequence (referred to above) means an uninterrupted succession of moments which can be recognized at the end of their transformations.

Thus, the supreme state of Independence manifests while the gunas reabsorb themselves into Prakriti, having no more purpose to serve the Purusha. Or, to look from another angle, the power of pure consciousness settles in its own pure nature.

So concludes the Sutras of Book Four

In Conclusion,

A few words from Sri Swami Satchidananda.

'It is my sincere wish and prayer that each one of you experience the peace and joy of Yoga through the help and grace of the great Yoga adept Patanjali Maharishi and that you all attain the supreme achievement to which his Yoga Sutras point. May you go beyond mere book knowledge and attain realization through purity of heart in your very lives. '

OM Shanti, Shanti, Shanti. OM Tat Sat.

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