

# YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

## A Guide to Self-knowledge

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### 3. tadādraṣṭuḥsvarūpe`vasthānam

tadā – at that time

draṣṭu – observer, knower

svarūpe – In the form of the self, in the true form

avasthānam – resting, living

Then the observer (ātma) rests in its true form.

The mind is not the Self. The thoughts are not the Self. We can only know the Self by transcending the boundaries of the mind. When the vrittis have become still, we become one with our Self. Only when liberated from restless and disturbing thoughts, we come to know who we really are. If the vrittis are not under control, we cannot be one with our Self. Rather, we are one with the vrittis and identify ourselves with them.

Why don't we know anything about the ātma? Our consciousness is agitated by so many waves of thought, and clouded by thick fogs and veils, and for that reason we are not able to recognize our true nature. Only when the chitta-vrittis are purified and under control can we realize our true self, just as we can only see our face clearly in a pure mirror or instill water.

Reading sacred scriptures and hearing about experiences of Yogis, masters, and saints cannot provide final certainty. There is always a doubt as to whether what we have heard or read is really true. Only own knowledge and experience convey doubtless knowledge and enable the conversion of insight into wisdom.

My master, Paramhans Swāmī Mādhavānandajī, told the following parable: Practice and theory are as different as a living horse and a photograph of a horse. Both are

recognizable as horses, of the same shape, colour, and appearance. However, we can ride only the real horse. Likewise intellectual knowledge is only a "painted horse" that cannot be used in practice.

In this context, I also remember an experience of my own, when I was once riding on a train and felt very hungry. While browsing through a magazine I saw a picture of an appetizing cheese and salad platter. My hunger, however, was not satisfied in the slightest, but only grew greater. It is the same with reading books about spiritual experiences. May the representation be good and realistic, still our desires are not satisfied. Only through reality and our own experience will our desire be satisfied.

I am not saying that books are unimportant. On the contrary, through them we receive valuable teachings and inspirations. They only become obstacles when we continue reading beyond the reasonable limits, at the same time without undertaking any action or making any change. Or if we get confused by too many different views and opinions, resulting in disturbing rather than clarifying vrittis.

Use books for guidance and inspiration, but then set out to gain your own experience. Both are important, theory and experience. The Realized One is BRAHMANISHHASHROTRIYA. Brahmanishtha is the one who is "anchored in Brahman" and possesses knowledge based on their own experience. Shrotriya means that one can pass on this knowledge and thereby inspire others.

#### 4. vṛtti-sārūpyamitaratra

vṛtti – Modification of consciousness, sensation, thought

sārūpyam – similar, identical

itaratra – at another time

Otherwise, an identification with the movements in the mind (vrittis) takes place.

In the previous sūtra we learned: At the time when the vrittis are under control, we are one with the Self. At other times we identify with the vrittis and are therefore in the same state as them.

You feel the way you think. One thought can split into countless other thoughts. You feel sad, alone, abandoned, unhappy. That means your vrittis are of the same kind. But if you think, "I am happy, free, satisfied...", you will feel the same way. You experience the world according to the state of your mind, coloured by the glasses through which you look at the world. If someone wears glasses with yellow lenses, then he sees everything in yellow and is convinced that the world actually looks like that.

The "colouring" of our thoughts by upbringing, culture, experience, etc. determines the whole life: "I am a man, a woman ..." "I am Austrian, German, American, Indian ..." "I am a Christian, an atheist, a Mohammedan, a Buddhist ..." "I am poor - rich, powerful - powerless ..." "I like to do this and not that ..." All these are vrittis that have nothing to do with the reality of the ātma. The reality is not the affiliation to a nationality, religion, gender, or family, but the realization that we are pure, divine beings. This is what we can, and we should realize.

However, to achieve this, we must overcome many kinds of vrittis. One help for this is the guru mantra. The mantra is the essence of prayer. It is a sacred prayer transmitted by the master to the disciple, filled with spiritual energy, which purifies the consciousness and mind and guides the disciple on the spiritual path. The mantra is also a vritti, but it is a pure and divine vibration that aims at the true Self. The mantra leads to union with the Supreme Self, until the consciousness is immersed in the infinite Divine Light and dissolves in it like a drop in the ocean.

The essence (dharma) of the mind is to think constantly. The mind is like a river that you can stop for a while, but not forever. Like the water in the river, the stream of thought flows ceaselessly and makes its way. The mind cannot be stopped, but it can be directed. Once the vrittis are purified and under control, they are directed to the inner Self. Then we find the inner peace and are one with ourselves.

When identified or when thinking "I am my thoughts, my feelings..." we do not have the knowledge of our true Self. The truth is: SO HAM = I am THAT (ātma). "My essence, my Self is immortal. I do not suffer, I am never sick, or I never experience any pain - all this concerns only my body, not my true Self." However, as long as we do not identify with the ātma, but with the personality and the body, we say: "I am sick, I am in pain."

Therefore, the first and most important step is to control the chitta-vrittis.

So many unnecessary thoughts flow through the mind! Every thought cost energy. Stress, restlessness, sadness, and worries make us age early and make us sick. With beautiful, harmonious thoughts we stay young and healthy.

Try to find out which thoughts disturb you repeatedly and find a way to free yourself from inner stress and fears - with the help of wisdom, self-analysis, and devotion to your practice and to God. Be the master of your mind and not the of it!

In the biography of my grandmaster, SrīMahāprabhujī, it is written how, at the request of his disciples, SrīMahāprabhujī, went for an eye surgery to restore the eyesight. Mahāprabhujī did not allow himself to be subjected to either anaesthetic or local anaesthetic, but only asked the doctor how long the operation would take. Then he put himself in the state of samādhi and remained in it throughout the operation. Although the doctor needed much more time than expected, Mahāprabhujī did not show any sign of pain or restlessness. When the surgery was over, Mahāprabhujī straightened up and kindly said: "You have made a very poor estimate of how long it would take you."

This is an example of the perfect realization of the Self, as a pure observer, that observes the whole existence - body, feelings, thoughts, etc. - like an instrument.

An ordinary person already gets palpitations when seeing a dentist preparing an injection. If we are connected to our feelings in such a way, that clearly shows that we are still identified with the body, and not with the ātma. Our goal is reaching the consciousness of the ātma and staying in that state.

Patanjali foresaw what problems would arise in modern time of the Kali-yuga, the "Dark Age," and he gave us the Yoga Sūtras as a guideline, a recipe, on how to overcome the problems of our time and free ourselves from them.