

YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

A Guide to Self-knowledge

Mahamandleshwar Paramhans
Swami Maheshwaranandapuri

13. tatrasthitaayatno`bhyāsaḥ

tatra – those (of both)

sthitau – standstill

yatna – Attempt, effort

abhyāsa – Practice

Exercise is the constant effort, to bring the vrittis to a standstill.

Abhyāsa means constant and continuous practice. The mind is restless by nature. Focusing the mind on one point and repeating this again and again is "practice" or abhyāsa.

The cause of our earthly life and suffering lies in our deeds or KARMAS. There are two types of karmas: first, our actions, and second, our vrittis, thoughts and feelings, which are expressed in desires, wishes, affection or aversion.

Vrittis are the cause of our actions and they force or tempt us into ever new actions and reactions, and these in turn create new karma. As long as we are not freed from vrittis and thus from karmas, we will be reborn again and get involved in more difficulties.

Various systems are described in the scriptures, on how to control the mind and free ourselves from the ever-changing vrittis. These techniques guide us to God, and therefore we

should also respect them as sacred. Each can choose the method that suits them best and that is for them easy accessible. Mantra, kriyās and meditation are practices that we should hold in high esteem.

We can attain perfect liberation (moksha) only through samādhi. Whether we achieve samādhi, however, depends not on our will, but on our deeds. Karmas have a very strong binding power. There is not only the physical body (annamaya kosha), but four other bodies or shells that enclose and cover our true self.

These bodies are: the astral or energy body (prānamaya kosha), the body of the mind (manomaya kosha), the body of the intellect (vigyanamaya kosha), and the causal body (ānandamaya kosha), the final shell or barrier to overcome in order to attain liberation.

The best and most effective technique for attaining moksha is mantra-japa, continuous repetition of the guru-mantra. Due to the high vibrational energy of the mantra, the consciousness is guided through all levels and sheaths (koshas) upto the goal, whether the practitioner is aware of this process or not.

Through mantra-japa, vairāgya and abhyāsa we can purify the thoughts and nurture and strengthen those thoughts within us, that liberate us. This purification of the inner mirror should be our daily practice, so that our mind and consciousness remain clear and the dust of the māyā does not settle on it again.

How can we intensify abhyāsa?

14. **satudīrgha-kāla-nairantarya-satkārā-sevitodṛḍhabhūmiḥ**

sa – these

tu – however, but

dīrgha-kāla – a long time

nairantarya – continuously, without interruption

satkāra – Respect, reverence

sevita – practiced, used

ṛḍha-bhūmi – achieved state, solid base

Doing this exercise continuously for a long time and with dedication leads to the goal.

Abhyāsa will only be successful if we do oursādhana daily and do not become sloppy. Make a firm resolution and do not let any doubt arise in your mind about success. It is important not to interrupt the practice, but to continue it continuously and systematically. Do not slacken your efforts, never give up and practice lifelong!

Another important point is to have respect and reverence for the exercises and not to do them thoughtlessly and routinely. Abhyāsa should become our livelihood. We should never disregard it, criticize it, or doubt it.

Regular practice, performed with love, reverence and devotion, according to the instructions of the master, leads the practitioner to the goal.

In the Bhagavad Gītā (chapter 6, verse 35), God Krishna says to Arjuna, "O son of Kuntī, no doubt it is difficult, to restrain the restless mind, but by abhyāsa and vairagya it is possible to tame it."

Our inner firmness should be so strong that, no matter what happens, we do not allow ourselves to be pulled away from our practices and be distracted. Often aspirants lose their way because they slacken in their determination and aspiration.

If a hungry person discovers a sweet fruit at the top of the highest tree the highest treetop, he will climb the tree in spite of his hardships and not give up until he reaches the fruit. In the same way the aspirant who is determined to experience God, will not be diverted from his path.

To build a house, you need a strong, stable foundation is necessary. The foundation for our spiritual path is strong faith and firm trust to reach the goal with the help of the master.

My Grandmaster SrīMahāprabhujī said in his "Golden Teachings," "Do your work with firm determination, and success is sure."

About SrīMahāprabhujī, see in chap. "Sri Alakhpurijī Siddha Peeth Parampara" as well

as in his biography "Lila Amrit -The Divine Life of SrīMahaprabhuji"

Now follow the characteristics of vairāgya:

15. *dr̥ṣṭa-anuśravika-viṣaya-vitr̥ṣṇasyavaśīkāra-sañjñāvairāgyam*

dr̥ṣṭa – seen

anuśravika – heareed

viṣaya – Sensoryobject

vitr̥ṣṇasya – free fromdesires, withoutcraving

vaśīkāra-sañjñā –master perfectly, controlconsciously

vairāgya – Nonattachment, renunciation

To completely master the desire for the sense objects and to be free from desires for them, is non-attachment.

Vrittis arise from two sources: on the one hand from external impressions transmitted by the sense organs, on the other hand from internal stirrings that the mind transports to consciousness.

If the consciousness frees itself from both causes, then it is released from the influence of the vrittis. The resulting desireless and contented state of consciousness is a characteristic of genuine vairāgya and is called vashikarana.

Vashikarana arises from fixation of the mind on a single object. Just as a cobra, attracted by the flute of thesnake charmer, hears and sees nothing but the snake charmer, so the undivided attention and concentration of a spiritual aspirant should be on the divine Self. The disciple should be so irresistibly drawn to the supreme Self that nothing can distract his mind. Whatever he experiences, readsor hears intensifies his spiritual aspiration.

There are two types of vairāgya: APARA – imperfect, and PARA - perfect - VAIRĀGYA.

APARA VAIRĀGYA is that kind of world weariness that everyone felt who once participated in a funeral. This kind of renunciation is therefore also called "graveyard"-vairāgya. In the graveyard, we all become aware of the transience of worldly values, and for a while, we awaken to the reality of the soul and the existence of God.

But this state usually ends again at the cemetery gate, and we continue our lives unchanged.

Thus, many aspirants have a temporary feeling of renunciation, which however, is soon replaced by new worldly desires and goals.

PARA VAIRĀGYA (perfect vairāgya), on the other hand, changes our existence permanently and accompanies us throughout our lives. With the attention directed undeterred on the spiritual goal, the yogi lives in the world like a lotus blossom in the water—his inner self is in constant, uninterrupted connection with the highest Self, and thus, even in the midst of daily pursuits, he remains wholly unaffected by the seductions of the world (māyā). We possess true vairāgya when we are attracted to God so strongly that nothing can distract our mind. Whatever we experience, see, read or hear only intensifies our vairāgya and spiritual aspiration.

In today's world, it may be difficult to follow this instruction of Patanjali. However, it is possible to organize your life in such a way as to make room for your spiritual goals. Try a simple experiment: write down the activities you perform during the day. You will quickly find out how much time you waste on unnecessary things and thoughts. We especially waste a lot of time on gossip, idle talk, and unnecessary brooding. It is also worthwhile to think which things we really need and which we could do without. By separating the important from the unimportant, we can save a lot of time and money and use them for spiritual practices.

