

# YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

## A Guide to Self-knowledge

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### 16. tat-parampuruṣa-khyāter-guṇa-vairiṣṇyam

*tat param – this highest (stage)*

*puruṣa – Self*

*khyāti – Knowledge, realization*

*guṇa – Property, quality*

*vairiṣṇyam – free from desire*

The highest level of detachment (vairāgya) is reached in the realization of the self, through which the desire for any element of nature is extinguished.

As already explained, consciousness is purified and kept under control by renunciation (vairāgya) and vrittis are being detached from worldly desires and directed toward the spiritual goal. Through viveka we distinguish the true self from the aspects or attributes of nature, and this insight frees us from the influence of sense impressions and the desires that arise from them.

This explains how the vrittis have come under our control. Now comes the next stage: the destruction of the "seeds" of desires.

### 17. vitarka-vicāra-ānanda-asmitā-rūpa-anugamātsamprajñātaḥ

*vitarka – Thinking, reflecting*

*vicāra – Consideration, inquiry, investigation*

*ānanda – Bliss*

*asmitārūpa – I-form, "I consciousness"*

*anugama – follow, accompany*

*samprajñāta – With perception*

Reflection, discernment, bliss and awareness of pure Self lead to samādhi "with discrimination".

Sampragyāta means "with perception" and denotes the same level of samādhi as savikalpa - "with discrimination", or sabīja - "with seed". At this stage, the aspirant has purified himself of the "gross" karmas, but the subtle seeds of the karmas are still present. Thus, the consciousness is not yet completely pure and free, and therefore cannot yet rise to the highest level of samādhi. The yogi already recognizes the ātma as his true self, but ego-consciousness and duality still exist in his consciousness. The union of knower, knowledge and object of knowledge has not yet reached the final completion.

To attain asampragyāta or nirbījasamādhi (a more detailed explanation follows in sūtra 41-49), consciousness must first be detached from the following four states:

1. SAVITARKA - conceptions and perceptions (without conceptions = nirvitarka)
2. SAVICHĀRA - thoughts and discernment (without thoughts = nirvichāra)
3. ĀNANDA - bliss.
4. ASMITĀ - identification with the "I".

In the sampragyāta samādhi, the feeling of bliss is associated with I-consciousness - "It is I who feel this." When ego-consciousness disappears and only pure bliss exists, this is sānanda samādhi.

In asmitā samādhi, only the awareness of "I-ness" remains. Finally, when both the sensation of separate existence and the feelings of rapture fade away, the absolute nirbīja samādhi is attained.

Nirbījasamādhi (asampragyātasamādhiorkaivalya samādhi) is the highest stage of samādhi. In this final and highest stage that a human being can attain, the attachment to the earthly nature has completely disappeared. Whoever reaches this state of highest consciousness is from that moment onwards united with the Divine Origin. The individual consciousness is absorbed into the Supreme Consciousness. Thus, there is no longer any difference between the person and the ātma.

Alsosampragyāta samādhi (sabīja or savikalpasamādhi) is a very high state of consciousness. However, impressions, inclinations and imprints (samskāras) still exist in the mind. They can begin to germinate and grow again and thus can also produce fruits (karmas) again.

This does not happen immediately, but at some point when circumstances are favorable. Even from the sands of the Sahara, flowers and grasses grow in abundance when rain falls after years of drought, because their seeds have rested in hiding. This is

also what happens when the consciousness is superficially cleansed of all desires and longings, but the seeds in the depths are not yet dissolved. For a while, the closeness to God and the feeling of oneness can be attained - but one day the seeds of desires begin to germinate again, however, directing the consciousness back into the worldly realms.

Through yoga exercises, especially Kriyā yoga, it is possible to destroy the seeds of karmas. Only when all seeds have been "roasted" and their germ destroyed, the highest samādhi and final liberation from rebirth can be attained.

### 18. virāma-pratyaya-abhyāsa-pūrvahaṣamskāra-śeṣo-`nyaḥ

*virāma – Highest level*

*pratyaya – Awareness*

*abhyāsa – Exercise, practice*

*pūrvā – previous*

*samskāra-śeṣo – symbolic impressions*

*anya – different*

A further stage of samādhi is attained through practice, until only unmanifest impressions remain (in the mind).

Through the power of practice, consciousness becomes more and more detached from worldly desires and cravings. Through constant practice of this attitude of mind, all chitta-vrittis are eventually neutralized, and the mind is permanently anchored in the highest consciousness.

All that remains in consciousness are the attributes of the samskāras, which eventually also dissolve.

As long as we feel, think and decide according to our vrittis, memories and experiences, we can't reach our goal. Patanjali clearly explains that we must overcome this way of thinking to reach the highest consciousness. In this last and highest level that a human being can reach, his attachment to the world is loosened, and his "nature" is henceforth "divine."

In the Bhagavad Gītā (chapter 6, verse 37-45) God Krishna says to Arjuna: "Follow the yoga principles, meditate, practice yoga and niyama, and try to realize what (or who) you really are. You will certainly succeed in this one day, and you will attain perfection and unite with Me - the cosmic Self."

Arjuna asks, "What happens if I practice yoga for many years, but I have to leave this world before reaching the goal?" God Krishna explains to him, "Then you will be reborn in a rich family and will soon be able to continue your path."

What does Krishna mean here by "rich"? Certainly not material goods. Truly rich are not those who possess treasures, but those who have no desires or cravings within them. Those who have accumulated much property are basically pitiful because they live in constant worry and fear for the preservation of their possessions. True wealth is based on contentment and trust in God!

