

YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

A Guide to Self-knowledge

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19. bhava-pratyayovideha-prakṛti-layānām

bhava – condition, existence

pratyaya – awareness, knowledge

videha – without body

prakṛti-layānām – merged with nature

This consciousness is attained by those who (already) have reached (in the past) bodiless consciousness (videha) or merging with nature (prakriti).

VIDEHA means to have freed oneself from bondage to the body. It is the ability to detach your astral body from the physical body willingly and consciously.

This can be achieved through certain yoga techniques.

Mahāvidehi is the name for those great yogis and saints who, through their saintly lives, have freed themselves from all bad karma and attained a very high level of consciousness and great abilities (siddhis), however, they have not yet achieved the highest goal - liberation (moksha). These yogis will be reborn on earth, regardless of their great spiritual achievements, like all the others who did not complete their yoga

path in their lives - that is, had to leave their body without having attained complete liberation.

Thus, having certain experiences in samādhi does not mean being liberated from rebirth. Even those who are able to leave their body in samādhi and master the technique of astral travel, they must continue to meditate, and to practice vairāgya and viveka in order to climb the final stage. Those who could not complete the path of yoga in this life will be reborn in the next life in a pious and spiritual family and often begin to continue the spiritual path already in childhood. Thus, these advanced souls quickly regain the level they reached in their previous existence and can continue to progress.

In this regard, it is written in the Bhagavad Gītā (6th chapter, verse 43):

"In them, the divine consciousness of their previous life immediately reawakens, and they continue their spiritual striving to finally reach their goal."

But what can we "ordinary mortals" do, who are neither Saints nor possess the ability of astral travel?

To this Patanjali goes on saying:

20. śraddhā-vīrya-smṛti-samādhi-prajñā-pūrvakaitareṣām

śraddhā – faith, trust

vīrya – strength, discipline

smṛti – memory

prajñā-pūrvaka – previous knowledge, experience

samādhi – highest consciousness

itara – other

Others attain samādhi through faith, discipline and memory of previous knowledge.

SHRADDHĀ is unconditional confidence and unswerving trust in God, the Master, and the practices, without a hint of doubt. When our efforts seem not to work and to not have any progress on our path, the cause is certainly a lack of confidence in the exercises (see sūtra 14). This is one of the greatest obstacles on the way. The faith is actually more important than the exercise itself! An exercise, performed with dedication and trust, can be successful even if it cannot be performed perfectly and correctly. For example, if someone cannot sit in the lotus position, but can only meditate sitting on an armchair.

Who should we trust? Have confidence and trust in ourselves, in our path and in the exercises. These are important prerequisites for success. In any case we can trust the spiritual master and rely on him to lead us to the Supreme Self.

The second principle, VĪRYA, has several meanings, all of which are associated with "power" and "strength." Just as it is important to keep the mind, senses and body under control, we should also use our energy in a controlled and meaningful way.

For example, it is not very appropriate to pay an assistant to do the housework and then go to the fitness center, which incurs additional costs, to get rid of the accumulated energy.

Vīrya also means abstinence and - in general - "discipline". Without discipline, we cannot achieve anything. As long as we are not able to keep the vrittis under control through discipline in thought, we lose inner energy and strength. This makes us physically and mentally weak and prone to illness, depression, and nervous disorders. Torn by doubts, we feel unenergetic, dissatisfied, perplexed, and restless. All these symptoms express a lack of mental discipline.

Many go to a psychiatrist, pay for expensive therapies and take pills rather than

exercising and controlling their minds. Medications and cures do not help permanently. The only solution is to switch mentally, to change the thoughts and learn the right discipline of the mind.

The capacity of the brain is limited. If too many vrittis buzz around in it, and in an unorganized way, it can "overflow" one day.

Headaches, migraines, abdominal pain, diarrhea, bad dreams, nervous restlessness, restlessness, stress indicate the onset of such a condition, which not infrequently leads to psychosomatic diseases or burnout.

Through the interaction of shraddhā and vīrya the memory and learning ability are strengthened, new abilities and good qualities are awakened.

Controlling the vrittis means not allowing depressive and destructive thoughts, unnecessary worries, and musings to arise in the first place. One day we will have to leave everything, so why worry too much about worldly things?

The best technique for this is to constantly repeat the guru mantra in our mind, and to take a spiritual approach to all that we plan and start, especially in our dharma towards our fellow humans.

In order to progress on the spiritual path, it is important to be healthy and powerful. We need pure and strong mental and physical energies. These depend to a great extent on the society in which we live and the food we eat. Consumption of meat and alcohol is detrimental to health and weakens rather than strengthens. The sattvic vegetarian diet, on the other hand, gives physical health, clarity of thought, and harmonizes our consciousness. Sleep becomes deep and refreshing, concentration and meditation become easier, and thinking becomes positive and clear.

The third exercise mentioned here is SMRITI, memory. Memories can be joyful or sad, but they are always associated with emotions and allow us to relive past feelings once again.

For what reason does Patanjali mention smriti in connection with shraddhā and vīrya? We have already passed through many forms of existence and experienced both, happy and sad, feelings in countless lives. Often we have been close to God, but again and again we fell back into the wheel of death and rebirth, due to mistakes and ignorance. In short, we have lost the memory of our true self. Neither do we know about our past, nor do we know our future. By trusting in the teachings of the sacred scriptures and in the words of the Master, through the development of inner strength, through spiritual community (satsang), healthy diet, yoga, breathing and physical exercises, and meditation, the memory of our true essence is reawakened. This ultimately leads to the highest consciousness and liberation.

I remember a man named MāstānaBābā (māstāna = happy, bābā = yogi, saint) who lived about eight kilometers from where I was born. No one knew how old he really was; even my grandfather had known him only as an old man. He did not own a house nor did he live in a cave. He simply lived and slept on the street.

One day worms attacked him. They laid their eggs in his skull, and the hatching worms literally ate him alive. His head was a mass of worms that spilled outward and fell to the ground. It was horrible to watch! But what did MāstānaBābā do? He picked up the worms and put them back on his head. He said, "Where should they go? They belong there, otherwise they must go hungry."

The news of MāstānaBābā soon spread throughout the country. Once a doctor came to the village and stand with folded hands before him. MāstānaBābā sat there as usual,

patiently picking up the worms that had fallen to the earth and put them back in his skull. (I assure you that this story is not made up. I myself was an eye witness to it!) After some time, the Bābā finally looked up and asked the doctor what he wanted. "If you will allow me, I would like to give you some medicine." "You want to cure me, then?" asked MāstānaBābā. "Yes," affirmed the doctor. MāstānaBābā then simply lifted his head from the trunk with both hands and held it out to the doctor. "Here you have my head, cure it." "Stunned, the doctor stared at the Bābā and then ran away in horror.

Numerous people witnessed this event. Some time later, MāstānaBābā left his body in full consciousness and united with the Supreme Self. This is called "mahā-samādhi" ("great-samādhi") and is possible only for a realized soul.

The knowledge of who we really are, not the body but the immortal, inviolable ātma, liberates us from worldly problems and sufferings. Who suffers from sickness and pain? It is the body, not the self. This is easy to say, but difficult to realize.

Through observation and critical analysis of thoughts, we gradually learn to direct them according to our will. Think less about others and more about yourself. Practice introspection and self-analysis: "What am I thinking? What should I think? Who am I? What am I here for? What is my dharma? What is my purpose?"

Decide to be like a sandalwood tree that gives its fragrance without discrimination to everyone who comes into contact with it. Your existence should be a blessing for all people. Then you will fulfill your life's purpose and you will surely reach your destination.

In the next two sūtras, Patanjali distinguishes between three levels of speed with which we can reach the goal, depending on the intensity of our practice.