

YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

A Guide to Self-knowledge

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31. *duḥkha-daurmanasya-aṅgam-ejayatva-śvāsapraśvāsā vikṣepa-sahabhavaḥ*

duḥkha – unhappiness, sorrow, grief, worry

daurmanasya – sadness, disappointment, depression

aṅgam – of the limbs, of the body

ejayatva – trembling, weakness.

śvāsa – inhale

praśvāsa – exhale

vikṣepa – disturbance

sahabhava – company

Suffering, despair, and states of weakness as well as irregular breathing are concomitants or consequences of these disorders.

The "diseases" described in the previous *sūtra* arise from doubt, lack of experience, bad company, or poor diet. However, there are other types of afflictions (*duḥkha*) that can cause us distress.

There are three types or groups of *duḥkha*: *ādhi-bhautika*, *ādhi-daivika* and *ādhi-ātmika*.

ĀDHI-BHAUTIKA DUHKHA are physical sufferings caused by humans and animals or wars.

ĀDHI-DAIVIKA DUHKHA are fateful events from the realm of nature (*prakriti*) and the astral planes, for example, natural disasters, sudden illnesses or accidents.

ĀDHI-ĀTMIKA DUHKHA originate from the plane of *tattvas* (elemental forces). These forces may manifest in fears, mental disorders, misfortunes, congenital or inherited infirmities and other fateful events.

However, *duhkha* do not attack us for no reason. The cause lies – how could it be otherwise – in our *karmas*.

DAURMANASYA – sadness – is a consequence of the attacks by these *duhkhas*. It is that sadness and distress when expectations are disappointed, and desires are not fulfilled. We suffer when things do not go according to our expectations. Often enough, our emotions get completely out of control. Outbursts of anger, hysterical fits or depression are the result. Through this inner imbalance, the spiritual development is severely disturbed. No one is spared disappointments in life. All too often we do not find understanding and compassion anywhere. Often, we are hurt. All can disappoint us, but not God. He never leaves us. The only lifeline in this world of illusions is God.

However, we must not confuse God with nature. Some blame God and lose their faith when something happens to them, their friends, or their family, when an accident occurs, or when someone they love and have prayed fervently to save dies. Such a reaction is unwarranted. Those who want to circumvent the laws of nature with God's help will not succeed. The course of nature must be acknowledged by everyone. Pain and sorrow are also natural phenomena that are transient like all others. God is quite different from what we think: He permeates nature, but is not "of nature." He is not an "object" or "product" of nature.

Do not pray for material things, and if you do, do not be disappointed if your prayer does not have the success you hoped for. Free yourselves from the desire that springs from your selfishness and ignorance.

Just as a child returns to its mother when it is tired to seek safety and protection from her, so the devotee returns from all the joyful and sorrowful entanglements of the *māyā* to God at last to find rest and eternal peace in Him.

See the world as a mere shadow. Look at emerging problems and disturbances like a movie – be aware that they are unreal and temporary. If you hit your shadow with a hammer, it doesn't hurt you in the least – because you don't identify with your shadow. So, a Realised One does not lose equanimity, no matter what may happen to them in this world. They always remain in the position of the observer and maintains their peace of mind and inner balance.

ANGAMEJAYATVA are physical phenomena, such as pain or nervous trembling of the limbs, which may suddenly attack the practitioner during meditation. They are often mistaken for the onset of a disease. These conditions, which are only temporary, are signs of lack of practice and lack of inner balance. Do not be alarmed by them and continue your practice unperturbed.

The last disorder mentioned here – SHVĀSA-PRASHVĀSA – concerns breathing. The occurrence of irregularities in breathing, a temporary uncontrolled failure of breath, has its cause in nervous and mental imbalance and should not upset us.

The yoga techniques help against disturbing influences of all kinds. Through the breath we can bring the *prānas* in the body under control. *Āsanas* and *prānāyāmas*, *bandhas* and *mudrās* have a harmonising and strengthening effect on the body, organs, glands, nerve centres and *chakras*. (Detailed explanations of these exercises can be found in the book "Yoga in Daily Life – The System"). The influence of these exercises also has a positive effect on consciousness. Through *bandhas* and *mudrās* we absorb energy from outside and hold it inside. By pressing and concentrating on certain *chakras* and *nādis*, the flow of energy there is focused and increased. In this way we increase willpower and discipline, gain physical strength and inner fortitude to overcome any disturbances and continue on our path of practice.

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32. tat-pratiṣedha-artham-eka-tattva-abhyāsaḥ

tat – this, this

pratiṣedha – to hold off, restrain, prevent.

artha – object, subject, goal

eka tattva – a principle, a reality

abhyāsa – to exercise, practice, train

To eliminate these disturbances, focus on the one principle of reality.

The highest principle or object of meditation is *Īshvara pranidhāna* (devotion to God). If it were in our power, we would like to remove all disturbances immediately, even before they trouble us – unfortunately, this is beyond our capacity. We are not able to change overnight. It takes time for feelings, ideas and inner attitudes to change. But we can turn to the personal deity for help. That is why Patanjali says, "To overcome such disturbances, the best remedy is *Īshvara pranidhāna*."

When you encounter an inner or outer difficulty (*dukkha*), analyse it and find a way to overcome or resolve it. Practice the Self-Inquiry Meditation technique from Yoga in Daily Life and ask yourself, "Who am I?"

The answer to this question here is not: "I am divine. I am free. I am the Self." These are mere words, not experiences, for us at present. The technique of "Self-Inquiry Meditation" is an honest and patient sifting through and analysis of one's own qualities, feelings and thoughts.

There are people who have surrounded their inner being as if with a tank. These people reject meditation and *Yoga-Nidrā* (a Yoga technique of deep relaxation) because they are unconsciously afraid to look inside themselves. Sooner or later, however, all excuses are of no use. In order to free yourself from the suffering you have experienced in the past, you have to get to know yourself and become aware of your inner problems to finally solve them forever.

In meditation, however, we not only encounter problems, but also repeatedly

experience beautiful and divine experiences: the appearance of light or the vision of a divine form – the *Ishtha-Devatā* – the personally worshipped deity. Keep meditating on this sacred form until the thoughts and feelings are at rest. Then you will certainly make rapid progress in meditation.

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33. maitrī-karuṇā-muditopekṣāṇāṃ sukha-duḥkha-puṇyaapuṇya-viṣayāṇāṃ bhāvanātaś-citta-prasādanam

maitrī – kindness, goodness

karuṇā – compassion, mercy

mudita – cheerfulness, cheerfulness

upekṣāṇā – equanimity, calmness

sukha – happiness, harmony, joy

duḥkha – sorrow, unhappiness, worry

puṇya – virtue, merit

apuṇya – fault, sin

viṣāyā – object, appearance

bhāvanāta – attitude, understanding

citta – consciousness

prasādana – pure, clear, calm, peaceful

Love, compassion, a serene mind, equanimity towards happiness and unhappiness, good and evil, success and failure, make the consciousness pure, clear and peaceful.

Feel friendship and kindness towards all people, show compassion and mercy to the unfortunate, rejoice with the fortunate, and act with equanimity toward people with bad qualities or evil intentions. Treat your own thoughts and emotions in the same way: happy

and constructive feelings with friendship, sad feelings with equanimity, and malicious feelings with forgiveness. By cultivating this attitude towards external and internal phenomena, your mind becomes calm, and your consciousness becomes pure and clear.

The low qualities in us: anger, hatred, jealousy, envy, greed, intemperance, etc., defile the mind. They harm us and others. An Indian saying goes, "The devil drinks only the blood of his victims – but anger and hatred drink the blood of others and their own as well."

To overcome these destructive qualities, cultivate and nurture good qualities in yourself: forgiveness, mercy, equanimity, and steadfast kindness, no matter what you experience or what is done to you. Very significant for the development of good qualities is good company. But do not judge anyone. If someone has made mistakes, show understanding, and help that person to rise again. The more love, patience, and mercy you develop in yourself, the sooner your bad qualities will be removed along with their roots.

The best means to purify the mind of all opacities, impurities and disturbances is the repetition of the *guru-mantra*.

My master, Paramhans Swāmī Mādhavānanda, said in a *bhajan* (spiritual song): ISI MANTRA SE HOVE MANA MAñJANA. Repeat the *mantra* to purify the mind. Just as a dirty window glass shines and shines again by repeated polishing with a cloth, so the mind and consciousness are purified by the continuous practice of the *mantra*.

The second very effective technique to tame the mind is *prānāyāma*.

