

# YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

## A Guide to Self-knowledge

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तत्रशब्दार्थज्ञानविकल्पैः संकीर्णासवितर्कासमापत्तिः ॥ ४२ ॥

### 42. tatraśabdārtha-jñāna-vikalpaiḥsaṃkīrṇāsavitarkāsamāpattiḥ

*tatra – therein*

*śabdārtha – word and meaning*

*jñāna – knowledge*

*vikalpa – variety, distinction*

*saṃkīrṇa – to put together*

*savitarka – with deliberation, subtle thought*

*samāpatti – to come together, to unite*

**If in this union there is still awareness of word, meaning, consideration, and inference, this union is called "with conceptions" (*savitarkasamādhi*).**

At this stage the *vrittis* are not yet completely dissolved. Although the consciousness has risen above the material plane and reached the astral realm of the subtle elements (*tattvas*), the path still leads further, and even from this very high sphere the meditator must detach themselves again.

In this process, too, various experiences occur that are associated with this level of consciousness. A particular problem here is the sensation of fear – fear of death or, more

generally, fear of letting go. When entering the astral space as well as when trying to get beyond it, the already mentioned *asmitāvritti* – "ego attachment" and fear for one's own existence – appears, which is so deeply rooted in us that it haunts us through all layers and levels of consciousness.

स्मृतिपरिशुद्धौस्वरूपशून्येवार्थमात्रनिर्भासानिर्वितर्का ॥ ४३ ॥

#### 43. *smṛti-pariśuddhausvarūpa-śūnye-vārthamātranirbhāsānirvitarkā*

*smṛti* – memory

*pariśuddha* – pure, clear

*svarūpa* – true form

*śūnya* – empty

*iva* – so

*arthamātra* – pure object, without attributes

*nirbhāsa* – appearance

*nirvitarka* – without rational considerations

**When all impressions finally dissolve in consciousness and the purified mind dives into emptiness, this union is called "without conception" (*nirvitarkasamādhi*).**

Here Patanjali speaks of a special level of consciousness in which all memories dissolve and the meditator is immersed in absolute emptiness (*shūnya*). When the yogi approaches the state of supreme union, they first reach *shūnyākāsha*, the "empty space," in which all *vrittis* (thoughts) and *smritis* (memories) dissolve. Even the consciousness of one's own existence begins to disappear. Here they experience sound and light without form, pure being-there, the One without a Second. SrīMahāprabhujī described the extraordinary experience of *shūnya*, the "emptiness" that is at once supreme "fullness" and completion, in some *bhajans* that are very difficult to translate and even more difficult to understand.

In that world there is neither birth nor death,

no *karmas* and effects.

There one attains liberation and supreme bliss.

There is neither moon nor sun,  
no colours and no form.  
In that world there is no darkness and no light,  
and yet it shines with the inextinguishable radiance of a thousand suns.

In another *bhajan* SrīMahāprabhujī writes:

At that moment the *idā* and *pingalā* united,  
and I heard the inner sound of the *ātma*.  
I meditated on the tenth gate (*Sahāsrara chakra*),  
as my master SrīDevapurijī taught me.  
I entered the world of *shūnya* (emptiness)  
and beheld the immovable divine flame.  
I experienced divine love  
and my mind was filled with God.

Mahāprabhujī's disciple, SwāmiBrahmānanda, also described this experience in a *bhajan*:

In the *shūnyākāsha* you behold the Supreme –  
there where the three rivers (*nādis*) unite.  
You reach the unattainable and  
become the master of yourself.

If the meditator is struck by fear in this space or state of consciousness, they are immediately drawn back into "normal consciousness". However, one whose mind is firmly fixed on the goal will consciously strive to attain *shūnyākāsha*, even at the cost of having to surrender everything. For it is certain that this is the only way to become one with God or Cosmic Consciousness. We do not seek a personal God or a divine incarnation, we do not seek a river or lake, but the infinite ocean of Being!

एतयैव सविचारानिर्विचारा च सूक्ष्मविषयाव्याख्याता ॥ ४४ ॥

#### 44. *etayaivasavicārānirvicārā ca sūkṣma-viṣayāvyākhyātā*

*etayaiva – so, truly, exactly*

*savicārā – with discrimination, with subtle thoughts*

*nirvicārā – without discrimination, with subtle thoughts*

*sūkṣma – fine, subtle*

*viṣaya – level*

*vyākhyātā – explained, set forth*

**This is the explanation of the two kinds of *samādhi*: *samādhi* with discrimination and *samādhi* without discrimination.**

सूक्ष्मविषयत्वं चालिङ्गपर्यवसानम् ॥ ४५ ॥

#### 45. *sūkṣma-viṣayatvaṃ ca-alinga-paryavasānam*

*sūkṣma-viṣaya – subtle elements.*

*alinga – without characteristic*

*paryavasāna – end*

**(Meditation) on the subtle elements lead in the end to the level without characteristics.**

The one who has gained knowledge and experience of the gross (material) planes and also of the subtle (astral and causal) planes, will have their *vrittis* become finer and subtler in the course of the exercises. They reach those subtle planes in which the object or symbol of meditation no longer exists in a form but as an essence or principle (e.g. the form is "fire", the subtle principle is heat or light).

The gross elements (*tattvas*) have their counterparts (*tanmātras*) in the subtle realm:

– Earth (*prithvī*) → *gandha* – smell

–Water (*āpas*) → *rasa* – taste

–Fire (*tejas*) → *rūpa* – sight

–Air (*vāyu*) → *sparsha* – touch

–Space (*ākāsha*) → *shabda* – sound

The material and astral planes (*sthūla* and *sūkshma*, respectively) are both still within nature (*prakriti*), so in this *samādhi* the meditator is still within their individual phenomenon, so even here sensations like joy (*ānanda*) and fear (*abhinivesha*) are still present.

*Purusha*, the Self, is still far more subtle than *prakriti* and stands outside objects as an observer. The Self recognises and observes the reflection of this *samādhi* state in the individual. Therefore, this *samādhi* can also be called *nirvichāra*.

ता एव सबीजःसमाधिः ॥ ४६ ॥

#### 46. **tāevasabījaḥsamādhiḥ**

*tāeva* – this

*sabīja* – with seed

**These types of *samādhi* are still seed-bearing (*sabīja*).**

What is meant is *nirvitarkasamādhi* and *nirvichārasamādhi*. *Nirvitarka* means without conceptions, *nirvichāra* without discrimination. These two kinds of *samādhi* are not *nirbīja*, without seeds. Subtle seeds still exist, and very subtle perceptions are still present in the *chitta-vrittis* (though not evident or visible). However, until all *vrittis* are dissolved, perfect union with the Supreme Self cannot take place.

Now the fruits of the *nirvichārasamādhi* are explained.

निर्विचारवैशारद्येऽध्यात्मप्रसादः ॥ ४७ ॥

#### 47. **nirvicāra-vaiśāsradye`dhyātma-prasādaḥ**

*nirvicāra – without discrimination*

*vaiśāradya – experience, clarity*

*adhyātma – highest self*

*prasāda – blessing, consecrated gift, present*

**In the experience of the "distinctionless" *nirvichārasamādhi*, the yogi experiences the blessing of the supreme Self.**

Because *nirvichārasamādhi* is a very pure and high state, the practitioner experiences the highest spiritual blessings in it. In this *samādhi*, consciousness, mind and intellect attain the highest clarity, purity and harmony.

ऋतंभरा तत्र प्रज्ञा ॥ ४८ ॥

#### 48. **ṛtambharātatraprajñā**

*ṛtambharā – inner knowledge, insight*

*tatra – therein*

*prajñā – truth, wisdom*

**The knowledge attained in this *samādhi* is absolute truth.**

By reading the Vedas and scriptures, by hearing the words of sages and saints, only limited knowledge can be absorbed. However, direct realisation and perfect knowledge open up through *ṛtambharāpragyā*. At this stage, full enlightenment of consciousness gradually begins. "Enlightenment" means that no corner of consciousness is any longer "in darkness," that is, unconscious. The light of knowledge illuminates and transilluminates all *koshas* and planes of existence.

