

YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

A Guide to Self-knowledge

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श्रुतानुमानप्रज्ञाभ्यामन्यविषया विशेषार्थत्वात् ॥ ४९ ॥

49. śruta-anumāna-prajñābhyam-anya-viṣayā viśeṣārthatvāt

śruta – tradition

anumāna – conclusion

prajñābhyam – truth

anya-viṣayā – something else

viśeṣa – special, particular

ārthatvāt – object

This knowledge is of a different kind than knowledge gained from what is heard, read, or inferred.

The experience of *ritambharā pragyā* is something completely different from knowledge acquired in the usual way. Certainly, through reading, learning, and research, one arrives at certain views and results. However, the knowledge gained from this is limited in nature.

In this superconscious state, however, the intellect is enabled to directly receive the knowledge of reality and truth without any doubt and free from any ambiguity. In this *samādhi* the consciousness is immediately filled with divine knowledge (*para-vidya*) and wisdom.

तज्जः संस्कारोऽन्यसंस्कारप्रतिबन्धी ॥ ५० ॥

50. taj-jaḥ saṃskāro`nya-saṃskāra-pratibandhī

taj-ja – originated, caused
saṃskāra – impression
anya – others
pratibandhī – inhibit, repress

The impression created thus displaces all other imprints (*samskāras*).

At this stage of *samādhi*, all the qualities, impressions and imprints of the past life stored in the unconscious and subconscious gradually dissolve.

All experiences and impressions of the past are present in us as *samskāras*. These are also called "remnants of *karma*" (*karmāshaya*) in yoga. Their complete dissolution means liberation from rebirth and death.

When the practitioner has experienced and realised the knowledge (*ritambharā pragyā*) described in the previous *sūtra*, they can fully understand the primordial nature and cosmic laws. This awakens perfect *vairāgya* in them, which from then on determines their inner attitude and actions. If this *vairāgya* is consolidated, they finally free themselves from all attachment and dualistic views and will soon attain liberation.

The following is an explanation of the state of absolute and supreme consciousness, *nirbīja samādhi*.

तस्यापि निरोधे सर्वनिरोधान्निर्बीजः समाधिः ॥ ५१ ॥

51. tasyāpi nirodhe sarva-nirodhān-nirbījaḥ samādhiḥ

tasyāpi – also this
nirodha – controlled
sarva – all
nirbīja – without seed
samādhi – highest consciousness

When this too is brought to a halt, then the "seedless" *nirbīja samādhi* is attained.

As Patanjali explained in the previous *sūtras* (see *sūtra* 48 and 50), all remaining *samskāras* are extinguished by *ritambharā pragyā*. However, this realisation is also a *vritti*, a "wave" in consciousness that must be resolved. Finally, if the *vritti* of the *ritambharā pragyā* is also brought to a halt, everything is thus purified, and all the germs and causes of the *karmas* are destroyed. This state is called *nirbīja samādhi* or *kaivalya avasthā* (literally "just being there", absolute consciousness, pure existence).

MOKSHA means "liberation" from the *Chorasi Kā Chakra*, the "wheel of rebirth", and thus freedom from suffering and death.

In the cycle of rebirths, which encompasses all forms of existence, the *ātma* may be reborn in the body of an animal or as a human being, or, if they have particularly good *karma*, they may dwell for a long time in the planes of the gods (*devas*). However, even the astral existence in "heaven" is not eternal, but temporary. Even God Indra (supreme god in Hindu "Olympus") can be reborn as an ant in a next life due to past *karmas*, as the scriptures say. Liberation is achieved only when all *karmas* – good and bad – and also the seeds of *karmas* are completely dissolved and extinguished. Then the *ātma* is no longer bound to birth and death in a physical body.

When the yogi reaches *nirbīja samādhi* after the various *samādhi stages* and experiences, the end of earthly life is usually also near. The *ātma* is now like a bird whose wings have become strong and vigorous and which is preparing to leave the nest for good. Those who have realised the highest stage of *samādhi* no longer cling to earthly existence. To them, life appears as if someone were fabricating shadow plays on the wall with their fingers. Just as we feel no pain or pleasure in the shadows, the liberated person feels earthly life as a shadow play and distances themselves from it.

Samādhi is the goal of those who have chosen *Rāja-Yoga*, the path of meditation. Of course, yoga can also be seen only as a method of maintaining health through physical exercises, breathing exercises and the *Hatha-Yoga* purification techniques. Through these exercises, a long and healthy life, reduction of stress, ability to concentrate and much more can be achieved. However, those who think more deeply about the essential questions of life – "Where do I come from? Who am I? What was I born for? Where am I going after this life?"

– will strive for the realisation of the meaning and purpose of life.

Holy Gurujī said in his *bhajan* BHĀI TUMA JĀGO RE TERA AVASARA BĪTA JĀYA.

Brother, wake up, your time is almost up!
 You have fallen into the sleep of ignorance,
 which will bring you great suffering.
 Again and again, you will fall into the wheel of life,
 and only your Guru can free you from it.
 Why do you die in the web of *moha* and *māyā*,
 like a spider caught in its own web?
 Brother, recognise this life as a precious gem that you rarely get.
 The recognise of human life is to realise the *ātma*.
 Then you will experience God in your heart.
 Mahāprabhujī, my divine master,
 this sleeping swan, within me.
 Śrī Mādhavānanda says, "Listen, everyone!
 Do not waste this precious human life!

People possess two precious treasures that help them realise their goal: *viveka* and *vairāgya*. Through *viveka*, the power of discrimination and decision between unreality and reality, the inner longing for knowledge of reality and truth grows. This forms the basis for *vairāgya*, viewing worldly desires and cravings merely as disturbances and hindrances on the path. God becomes the most important part of life – not merely to worship and adore Him, but to become one with Him. To experience this union with the supreme god-consciousness is possible through yoga.

In *samādhi* all dualism finally dissolves. You are then no longer conscious of yourself as an individual, but identify yourself with the All-Consciousness. When knowledge, knower and object have united, from this point of view suffering no longer exists. You realise that suffering is illusion and error. It is just one *vritti* among many other *vrittis*. Where does the pain go when you are under anaesthesia? You don't feel it because your consciousness has been separated from the sense perceptions and therefore you are not connected to the *vrittis* related to it. A Realised One considers sickness and pain as processes in the physical body with which they no longer identify. They observe these conditions as a witness and can, if they wish, withdraw their consciousness from them.

Yoga is not just doing various exercises – physical or mental – but encompasses the whole of life and thought, day after day, throughout life. Always live and think according to *santa bhāva* (*sant* = pure, holy, *bhāva* = attitude, state, attitude). Strive to be holy in your daily duties and tasks, at least in thought. You may be materially poor, but never let your mind become poor. One day your thoughts will be realised. Now this does not mean that you should think of money and wealth. Keep your mind always on truth and reality – love everyone, pray for God's blessing and help for everyone, and help everyone yourself as much as you can. Do for others what you would like to do for yourself. Say to those around you what you would like to hear, and treat them as you would like them to treat you. Then lead your life in *santa bhāva*, as a saintly person.

As far as your daily duties allow, practice and meditate whenever you can. In the beginning, concentrate on a symbol, and then go beyond its form and shape to the formless (*nirguna*). The symbol helps you to overcome the disturbances and distractions in the mind while you are not yet able to detach in *nirguna*. There are many symbols you can direct your meditation to: a flower, a mountain, a tree, or some other symbol from nature – or, better yet, a saint, Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Mahāprabhuji, or your spiritual master. The best symbol for your meditation is a holy incarnation or realised personality with whom you feel a close connection.

When I was a child, I always felt deep longing inside me, but I didn't know exactly what I was longing for. I often withdrew from the other children and appeared to people as serious and thoughtful. I was looking for something and couldn't express what it was. When I was eleven years old, my father, who had been a role model and teacher to me until then, died. That same year Holy Gurujī came to our village to visit my mother, his sister. I saw Gurujī for the first time in my life. I knew only from stories that my uncle was Swāmī and was supposed to be a very well-known and important personage. When Gurujī came to our village with his attendants and I saw his charisma, dignity and beauty, I instantly realised that this was what I had always been looking for. I did not even have the opportunity to speak a word with him at that time. But his image remained deep in me, and my only thought was how I could become like him.

After two years it became possible that I could live with him. Now my longing was fulfilled, and my search was over. However, it was not an easy time to live with him, and several times I was close to giving up hope of ever reaching my goal. But again and again he led me onward.

So too, one day, a vision or an image will come to you that will fulfil your quest. Accept this symbol and meditate upon it. One day all these aids will disappear and pure light and emptiness will appear. When this happens, it is a sign that your *chitta-vrittis* are now at rest. If you notice restlessness in your mind again, gently direct it back to your inner symbol.

Holy Gurujī, my master, often said to his disciples, "You know a lot – but unfortunately not what you should know. You have seen much – but unfortunately not what you should have seen. You have heard much – but alas, not the voice you should have heard. When your life is over, you will realise this and your pain and disappointment will be immeasurable. You will long to return to Earth to do better in the next life."

Only one thing helps: trust in the master, the way and the practice.

My teaching is the teaching of Mahāprabhuji, the teaching of the Vedas and Upanishads. My aim is not only that through yoga you may remain healthy, beautiful and vital, or that you may acquire medical and psychological knowledge. You can study that better in the university. The disease from which I want to cure you is the disease of birth and death. The operation I want to perform on you is the removal of all *karmas*. I want to be your advocate before the supreme law. The āshram is also a university, but *para-vidyā* is transmitted there, by which one passes from unreality to reality. The way to that is through practice.

One day you will realise and decide that you have wandered enough. Then you will finally listen to the voice of your inner self, find your path and walk to your destination. My wish for you all is that at the end of life you will not be empty-handed, but will carry within you the knowledge and light of reality. The *Yoga Sūtras* of Patanjali show you the way.

The next part of Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* is entitled SĀDHANA- PĀDA. In it, the exercises that can lead us to the desired goal of *samādhi* are explained.

