

# YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

## A Guide to Self-knowledge

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दृग्दर्शनशक्त्योरेकात्मतेवास्मिता ॥ ६ ॥

### 6. d g-dar ana- aktyor-ek tmateva-asmit

*d g – consciousness, observer, seer*

*dar ana – sight, seeing, perception*

*akti – power*

*ek tman – of one being, the same thing*

*iva – as if, as it were*

*asmit – ego, ego conception*

**The notion of an "I" arises from the identification of the observer with the object of perception.**

Two principles exist within us: the self (= the observer, the perceiver) and the object of perception (= the person, the "I"). People mistakenly identify themselves with the ego. But intellect, knowledge, thoughts, feelings, qualities and experiences are only attributes and not the true self.

*Asmit* is a direct result of ignorance (*avidya*). We identify ourselves with the ego, act selfishly, and look with pride at what we think is our sole achievement. We have forgotten our true self, the *tma*, and confuse the instruments with the bearer of the same. The senses and the mind dominate us instead of being under our control. That is why we suffer and have lost the state of bliss of the *tma*. This false identification can be overcome only by dissolving the ego in the Self. In the state of supreme consciousness (*sam dhi*), knowledge, knower and object unite – this means only One exists: the knower, *tma*. They are the pure witness (*s ksh bh va*) of past, present and future and are themselves not subject to change.

From *asmit* arise the following three *vrittis*:

सुखानुशयी रागः ॥ ७ ॥

## 7. sukha-anu ay r ga

*sukha* – joy, happiness

*anu aya* – connected, following, resulting

*r ga* – clinging, attachment, desire, craving

**Attachment results from the desire for joyful things.**

Attachment and dependence are the result of craving for joyful experiences. The root of our suffering and sadness lies in the finite nature of worldly pleasures. We do not want to accept the impermanence inherent in nature. We want to possess and hold on – and therefore we suffer. The main motives of *r ga* are: "This is mine. It is mine. I want to enjoy this."

The whole world suffers from this small but powerful word: "my". My country, my nation, my religion, my right, my property...the list goes on. Many negative qualities and *vrittis* such as jealousy, greed, hatred and anger are the result of *r ga*. Overcoming these qualities is difficult, as we are taught from our youth to take advantage over others. This way of thinking is passed on from one generation to the next.

दुःखानुशयीद्वेषः ॥ ८ ॥

## 8. du kha-anu ay dve a

*du kha* – sadness, suffering

*anu aya* – connected, following, resulting

*dve a* – aversion, dualism

**Aversion arises from the defence of the suffering.**

*Dvesha* is the opposite of *r ga*. Just as we try with all our might to hold on to what we find pleasant, so we try equally as hard to reject and avoid everything that seems unpleasant. However, from the categorical rejection of a situation or a person, suffering results all the more because quarrels, ill-will, anger, hatred, etc. arise as a consequence. When we do not

get what we want or lose something we love, our disappointed desire turns into enmity and anger. Desire and greed (*r ga*) express themselves to others as jealousy, avarice or strife (*dvesha*).

*Dvesha* is that *vritti*, which creates enmity, aggression and war. Everyone wants to have "more" – more money, more power, more influence – and does not hesitate to get it through the violence and oppression of others. We can read the results of this in the newspaper every day. Some people are so filled with envy and resentment that they even suffer when others are doing well. As long as a grain of these qualities still exists in us, we are bound and unfree. In doing so, we cause ourselves and others a great deal of suffering, which one day will in turn affect us as negative *karma*. Peace and harmony begin in each individual by overcoming these destructive *vritti* "*dvesha*".

The dualism of "I like this – I don't like that" is one of the biggest obstacles we have to overcome on the yoga path. Through *r ga* and *dvesha* we not only harm others but also destroy ourselves. We should therefore strive to discard these changing tendencies. Let us, after all, let things come and go as destiny intends, without wanting to push them away or hold on to them, without attachment or resentment in us,

Greed or jealousy arise. We are dependent on so many things – money, reputation, people, and especially feelings. The only solution is to detach ourselves from them internally.

Patanjali exhorts us, as do all the saints and spiritual masters to accept what God has given you, reject nothing and ask for nothing more. Envy no one. Be content with what you have. Trust that God will help you to master your life situation.

This humble attitude helps to overcome *r ga* and *dvesha* and attain the mindset of a sage and saint (*santabh va*).

स्वरसवाहीविदुषोऽपितथारूढोऽभिनिवेशः ॥ ९ ॥

## 9. sva-rasa-v h vidu o'pitath -r ho'bhinive a

*svarasav h* – native, deeply rooted

*vidu o* – understanding, intelligent person

*api – also*

*tath – so*

*r ha – present*

*abhivive a – fear of death*

**The fear of death is deeply rooted in the consciousness and is still present even in the wise.**

The life instinct is the strongest instinct in every living being and the fear of non-existence is the greatest fear. This fear is rooted in the subconscious and expresses itself spontaneously and powerfully, beyond the control of mind and will. Every living thing, from plants to humans, strives to preserve its life and will do anything to ensure its survival.

Where does the fear of death come from? This points to rebirth. Because we have died countless times, the knowledge of this process and the fear of it lies hidden in the subconscious. We fear the pain of separation associated with death. This *vritti* exists in every living being, even in the smallest mosquito. The idea of *ahims* (non-violence) with the intention and effort not to hurt and kill, not to cause pain and suffering to anyone is based on this realisation. This follows from the understanding that all living beings feel fear and pain in the same way.

However, if we strive for expansion of consciousness, it is necessary to overcome the fear of death as well. We should not consider our own "little" person and the transient earthly life as the most important thing. For a yogi, striving for worldly pleasures, for the satisfaction of personal desires and the acting out of urges is only considered a sign of earthly attachment and thus of a low state of consciousness, which must be overcome. Only by losing also the fear of death can we attain the goal of yoga.

True, we are chanting in the famous *bhajan of diShankar ch rya: CID NANDA R PA IVOHAM IVOHAM*—"I am eternal and immortal, I am *Shiva* ..." –but in the face of danger to our lives, our reaction is usually not so detached. Because we have not yet realised this level of consciousness at all.

The fear of death is taken away by reciting the *MAH MRITYUNJAYA-MANTRA*:

*Om tryambakamyaj mahe*

*sugandhimpu tivardhanam*

*urv rukamivabandhan n  
m ityormuk yam mrt t*

We worship the three-eyed God  
who is everywhere and sustains all living beings.  
May he deliver us from death to immortality.

"Three-eyedness" is an attribute of God Shiva, a symbol of omniscience and omnipotence, He is Lord of all three times: Past, Present and Future.

All our striving, prayers and sacrifices basically serve only one purpose, to rid ourselves of the problems we have been confronted with over and over again for countless existences. There is only one way to free ourselves forever from the fear of death: if we are no longer born, we no longer have to die. *Karma* forms the cause of our birth; but the cause of *karmas* is our *vrittis*. As long as the *vrittiabhinivesha* exists within us, not all *vrittis* are overcome and we continue to face problems and obstacles.

With the overcoming of the *vrittis*, the *karmas* also dissolve. Without *karma* we are not reborn, and without rebirth we do not suffer death. Then finally we are free forever.