

YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

A Guide to Self-knowledge

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विभूति पादः
VIBHŪTI-PĀDAḤ

सत्त्वपुरुषयोरत्यन्तासंकीर्णयोःप्रत्ययाविशेषो भोगःपरार्थात् स्वार्थसंयमात्पुरुषज्ञानम् ॥ ३६ ॥

३६. **sattva-puruṣayoratyantāsaṁkīrṇayoḥpratyayāviśeṣobhogaḥparārthāt-
svārtha-saṁyamātpuruṣa-jñānam**

sattva – purity

puruṣa – consciousness, the true self

atyanta – perfect, very significant

asaṁkīrṇa – not connected, different

pratyaya – perception, thought

aviśeṣaḥ – non-distinction

bhogaḥ – pleasure

para – external, external

artha – goal

sva – own

jñāna – knowledge

External enjoyment is based on the inability to distinguish between the mind and the true self, which are fundamentally different from each other. Knowledge of the true self arises through *samyama* on its goals.

Here "mind" means the identification with the content of consciousness. Everyone has a certain idea of themselves and says of themselves, "I am a doctor, a civil servant, a policeman, a director, an Austrian, an American, a Catholic, a Protestant, a man, a woman, etc." This kind of self-image is not the true self. Those who identify themselves with their "illusory self," which is a transient conception, are subject to a great error.

A drunk who has lost control of himself and his consciousness may even temporarily forget his name or claim to be someone he really is not. After some time, when the effects of the alcohol wear off and he becomes "normal" again, he remembers who he is and what his name is.

Similarly, in our ignorance we think we are the body and identify ourselves with thoughts, feelings, nationality, position, and so on. But the *ātma* has no attributes. The *ātma* is indescribable and cannot be compared to anything we can imagine in the present state of consciousness.

Here are some explanations of terms:

The mind (*manas*) transports all kinds of undifferentiated and unformulated impulses and desires from the subconscious into consciousness. The activity of the mind is *sankalpa* and *vikalpa* (binding and loosening). As bubbles in water rise to the surface and burst, so the mind raises *vrittis* from the subconscious and then lets them submerge again. *Manas* incessantly shuttles back and forth between the subconscious and the conscious.

The intellect (*buddhi*) catches the still unformed and unclear sensations and impulses from the subconscious and decides on the basis of previous experiences what they could be about. On this basis it transmits the contents to the day-consciousness.

A function of the intellect and its "best" part is *viveka*—discernment between right and wrong, good and bad, real and unreal. *Viveka* judges desires according to reason and rightness and tips the scales for fulfilment— or should, anyway.

For example, if you like to eat ice cream, *viveka* will tell you that this is harmful to the teeth and the pain of going to the dentist is greater than the pleasure from eating the ice cream. *Viveka* points out the outcome of the desires and warns of dangers. Then again, the intellect decides whether to follow reason or not.

There are different types of intellect: negative intellect, dry intellect, selfish intellect, positive intellect... The pure intellect is called *sattva-buddhi*. One who has pure thoughts within them has no fear.

Some people are at times assailed by feelings of panic, so that they feel they are losing the ground under their feet. Such anxiety is a symptom of stress that occurs especially in modern civilisation. You want to get twenty things done at once and, of course, you can't. Stress causes certain physical and psychological reactions: sweating, palpitations, depression, nervousness, anxiety, etc. The best remedies for stress are *Yoga-Nīdrā*, meditation and prayer.

Today, many do not believe in the power of prayer. They only pretend to pray outwardly and for social reasons, not out of an inner need.

Once there was a man who believed in nothing outside the realm of science – not God or anything else. One day he set out to climb a mountain. As he climbed a steep mountain side, he lost his footing, slipped, and fortunately was able to grab a saving branch on a jutting ledge with his fingers.

So, he hung there, swaying over that ledge, and could find no sure footing. Below him was a deep chasm, and no one was there to help him. The climber understandably panicked and began something far beyond his own understanding: he began to pray.

"If you're out there somewhere, God, and I don't believe you exist, but, if maybe you do, come and help me! Then I will know that you exist, and for the rest of my life I will serve you! Oh Lord, I will proclaim everywhere that you do exist and praise you. If you exist, please come and save me! Don't let me die here!"

And truly, on a rock opposite him, God appeared out of nowhere and said to the man,

"You called me?"

"Oh, what luck!" cried the mountaineer in delight. "I am so glad you are real. I have been lost in disbelief for many years. Please, help me!"

"That's why I came. Tell me what you want, and I'll do it."

"I'm hanging here on a thin branch over the precipice, and you ask me what I want? Save my life!"

"You want me to save you. Fine, I'll do it. But tell me first, do you believe in me and trust me with your life?"

"I was incredulous, but now I believe and trust you completely. You have convinced me."

"You believe and trust me one hundred percent?"

"Yes!" gasped the mountaineer, who really had no more nerve for such discussions.

"You will do anything I say?"

"Yes!" The man shouted almost desperately.

The divine apparition replied: "Then let go of the branch now!"

"I'm not that crazy!" the atheist shouted back.

"So, you don't really believe in me after all," God said regretfully and disappeared.

Examine yourself to see if your faith is strong enough that you let go of the branch in this situation? Often "religiosity" is limited to three occasions in life: birth, marriage, and funeral. At the other times, God is in some "drawer".

PURUSHA has two meanings in Sanskrit, depending on the context in which the term is used. In ordinary usage, "*purush*" means man or male and is used for both humans and animals. In religious and philosophical texts, "*purusha*" refers to the supreme self, *ātma*. In the Bhagavad Gītā, the term "*purushottama*" is used more often. This means "pure self." *Purushottama* is the saint, the self-realised one, who comes into the world to help people, and

not, like the other beings, because of attachment to *karma*.

There is a great difference between intellect and *ātma*. *Buddhi* is changeable, because points of view and opinions change with experiences in life. That is why *buddhi* is attributed to matter (*jada*) and not *chetana* (conscious, intelligent, living). The pursuit of intellect always follows pleasure. In India we say one is *chanchal*—restless like a monkey. *Purusha*, on the other hand, is *chetana* (conscious, alive). They are the observer and the true doer. Though there is a fundamental difference between *buddhi* and *ātma*, the ignorant thinks they are the same. This is the illusion of the ego (*asmitā*). Through this "ego delusion" we cannot distinguish between the contents of the intellect and reality. One who overcomes the intellect through *viveka* and realises the *ātma* attains *ātma-gyāna*, or Self-realisation. "Self" means the living and conscious divine light that gives life and consciousness to the living entities. As long as the Self resides in the body, the body lives. It is not the body that is beautiful, but the radiance of the *ātma* that shines from it. If the *ātma* leaves the physical body, the body is dead, and a corpse is soon no longer "beautiful".

Jada-buddhi (the ignorant, darkened intellect), which is misguided, mistaken for the Self, is the cause of pain and sadness in life. It is the obstacle to enlightenment.

Enlightenment can only happen when consciousness is purified. All kinds of negative *vrittis* – selfishness, worry, resentment, greed, resentment, etc. – are blockages that keep us from experiencing reality. The soul, the "swan" that lives in the inner space of our heart, wants to fly high into the sky, but is locked in a cage. This barrier thwarts its attempts at liberation. What is this "cage", in which the soul is imprisoned, made of? It is formed of ignorance and confusion (*moha*). Emotions are mere *vrittis* – "waves" in the mind. The feelings of joy and sadness are temporary and passing stirrings in the consciousness, which falsely identifies itself with these states. So, when you say, "I am sad" or "I am happy," you are identifying with your current state of consciousness.

When you receive a birthday present, you are happy. But if someone forgets your birthday, you are sad. Who is sad or happy? The inner self is never sad, nor is it happy in the sense that we feel. The inner self is always in *ānanda* – pure bliss without any external cause. Splendour and bliss are emanations of the *ātma* reflected in consciousness. Sometimes it is

not clear whether a sensation comes from the *ātma* or from one's own mind. Learn to discriminate, and do not identify yourself with the state of consciousness, but only with the *ātma*.

In the "Self-Inquiry Meditation" of the "Yoga in Daily Life" system, first examine how you are, what good and bad qualities, strengths and weaknesses you have, and what obstacles lie within yourself. Make it your task to remove these obstacles in this lifetime. Through this meditation practice, the best part of the intellect gradually crystallises: *viveka*, discrimination. Through *viveka* you gain clarity about the causes of your difficulties and also find a solution to them. Then spiritual experiences arise that are not only temporary, but shape your consciousness forever.

You are the knower, the self is the object, and between you and the self there is the relation or reflection of knowledge. In other words, the object of meditation is the *ātma*. The *ātma* wants to know "who he is." When the layers and sheaths are removed that prevent the *ātma* from knowing that they are immortal and part of the divine Self, the "knower" and the "object" unite through the "knowledge" and the separation is removed. This is called "pure consciousness" (*sattva buddhi*), which leads to *samādhi* and final union with the true Self. But as long as this realisation is not achieved, there is no end to the problems of life.

The practice of meditation calms and purifies the mind, relieves stress, makes the mind calm, pure and clear and awakens the higher consciousness. The following review during the evening meditation practice is helpful:

What have I accomplished this day?

What thoughts have I cherished?

Did I treat my fellow man with goodwill and understanding?

Ask God (or your inner self) for forgiveness for the mistakes you have knowingly or unknowingly committed.

pavitravichārampavitravachanampavitravastrampavitrasharīrampavitrabhojanam

Pure thought – pure words – pure clothing – pure body – pure food.

These are the fundamentals of spirituality.