

the good of all. Finally, in perfect rest and peace, meditate upon It ; concentrate your mind upon It ; make yourself one with It. Then no speech is needed ; silence will carry the truth. Do not spend your energy in talking, but meditate in silence ; and do not let the rush of the outside world disturb you. When your mind is in the highest state, you are unconscious of it. Accumulate power in silence, and become a dynamo of spirituality' (C. W., pp. 60-61)

Be the witness ! That is the trumpet-call of Swamiji, when he says : ' Say, when the tyrant hand is on your neck, " I am the Witness ! I am the Witness ! " Say, " I am the Spirit ! Nothing external can touch me." When evil thoughts arise, repeat that, give that sledge-hammer blow on their heads, " I am the Spirit ! I am the Witness, the Ever-blessed ! " I have no reason to do ; no reason to suffer ; I have finished with everything ;

I am the Witness ' (C. W., V. p. 254).

Further : ' It is all play.Play ! God Almighty plays. That is all.You are the almighty God playing.It is all fun. Know it and play. That is all there is to it. Then practise it. The whole universe is a vast play. All is good because all is fun.Do not be miserable ! Do not repent : What is done is done. If you burn yourself take the consequences. Be sensible. We make mistakes ; what of that ? That is all in fun. They go so crazy over their past sins, moaning and weeping and all that. Do not repent ! After having done work, do not think of it. Go on ! Stop not ! Don't look back ! What will you gain by looking back ? ' (C. W., II. pp. 470-71).

Let us close this exposition with Swamiji's own immortal and inspiring exhortation ! ' Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the goal is reached. '

MEDITATION ACCORDING TO PATANAJALI

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[The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali offer the most systematized techniques for the attainment of life's fulfilment through the control of the mind. Swami Harshananda of the Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education, Mysore, is a Sanskritist and has written a number of books in a very lucid style.]

The diffused rays of the sun, when gathered to a point by a convex lens, can start a devastating fire. A powerful searchlight can reveal any object, towards which it is turned on. In the same way, when the forces of the mind, normally diffused or even confused, are gathered together and concentrated, can give us knowledge and power.

However, this concentration of mind involves a very arduous process. As in the case of any other science, art or craft, this also

has to be learnt from competent teachers and practised assiduously. One of the all-time great teachers of this science and art, is the sage Patañjali. His " Yoga Sūtras " is a basic text embodying a systematic treatment of this subject.

As in the case of other Indian philosophical systems, here also *kaivalya* or liberation is set forth as the goal of life. But, unlike in those systems, Patañjali cares little for philosophical disquisitions and goes straight to

the practical means of achieving it. Mind being the chief means in this process, he has dealt with the subject of its composition, function and control. According to him, the mind is as much a product of the three *gunas* (*sattoa*, *rajas* and *tamas*) as the body or the external physical objects, though it has much finer vibrations. It normally functions in the form of *vṛttis* (waves or modifications).

Swami Vivekananda compares the mind to a lake. When the water of the lake is absolutely calm and steady, one can see the reflection of one's face in it, or a piece of stone lying at its bottom. When the water is disturbed by waves, this will not be possible. In the same way when our mind is rising in the form of *vṛttis* it is not possible to get a true picture of our real self. If and when, as a result of practising yoga, we successfully eliminate all the *vṛttis*, we will certainly have a vision of our true self, the spirit behind our mind, our personality.

Patanjali defines yoga as *citta-vṛtti-nirodha*, suppression of the modifications of the mind. Since these *vṛttis* are innumerable, will it ever be possible to control them and suppress them? Patañjali being endowed with a practical and scientific attitude, assures us that it is possible to do so. How? Though, individually, there appear to be any number of these *vṛttis*, categorywise there are only five! He classifies them as: *pramāṇa* (true cognition), *viparyaya* (false cognition), *vikalpa* (verbal cognitions), *nidrā* (deep sleep) and *smṛti* (memory).

Pratyakṣa (direct perception), *anumāna* (inference) and *āgama* (verbal testimony or scriptural testimony) constitute true cognition. False cognition is wrong knowledge of things, and includes doubts as also uncertain cognitions. Verbal cognition arises by hearing a word which has no corresponding reality. Sleep stands for dreamless sleep and is due to the preponderance of *tamas* in the

citta, which *tamas* is the cause of absence of ordinary perception at that time. Memory is the reproduction of past experiences without any alteration or innovation. All other cognitive mental states can be included under these heads.

After conceding the possibility of controlling and suppressing these mental modifications, Patañjali reveals the age-old (open?) secret of achieving this: *abhyāsa* (repeated practice) and *vairāgya* (dispassion).

The tremendous energy of the waters of a river is wasted when it flows wildly, often bringing untold sufferings to the people living on its banks. When a dam is constructed across it, this energy is conserved. It is then guided through channels and canals or pipes for irrigation or generation of power. In exactly the same way the mad rush of the mental energies which are being wasted through the senseless enjoyment of sensual pleasures must be halted by cultivating dispassion towards these sense-objects and the energies thus saved should be directed towards the self or God within. *Vairāgya* and *abhyāsa* mean just this and nothing more! However Patañjali advises us to practise yoga constantly, continuously and with feeling, and warns us not to expect quick results!

Man by nature is averse to hard and sustained effort. He always seeks for shortcuts. Hence Patañjali provides for that too! He declares out of infinite compassion for mankind, that by devotion and self-surrender to God (*Īśvarapraṇidhāna*) one can get complete control over the mind resulting ultimately even in *samādhi* (super-conscious experience).

Any person who wishes to have a strong and healthy body, must have a basic knowledge of diseases which destroy this health. After all, prevention is better than cure! So, anyone desirous of practising yoga, must be

aware of the obstacles to yoga so that they can be avoided or remedied. Patañjali lists obstacles to yoga : (1) *vyādhi* (physical sickness) ; (2) *styāna* (languor) ; (3) *saṁśaya* (doubts and misgivings) ; (4) *pramāda* (heedlessness) ; (5) *ālasya* (sloth) ; (6) *avirati* (absence of dispassion) ; (7) *bhrānti-darśana* (hallucinations) ; (8) *alabdha-bhūmikatva* (non-attainment of the stage of communion in spite of effort) ; (9) *anavasthitatva* (instability).

Vyādhi should be overcome by proper medicines, treatment and diet, *styāna* by discrimination and will-power, *saṁśaya* by faith in the scripture, the guru and oneself, *pramāda* by eternal vigilance, *ālasya* by healthy physical activity, *avirati* by reflecting on the transient and evil nature of sense-pleasures and *bhrānti-darśana* by right perception. The last two, viz., *alabdha-bhūmikatva* and *anavasthitatva* are more serious obstacles encountered in the higher stages of *sadhana*. Just as rat-holes in an agricultural field drain away all water, in the same way, deep-rooted evil *saṁskāras* (impressions left over by past-life experiences) nullify all efforts at spiritual progress. Guidance from the guru or advanced souls as also prayer and self-analysis will help to locate and eradicate these *saṁskāras*.

This preliminary knowledge should suffice the beginning of yogic practice which itself consists of eight graded steps : 1. *yama* (restraint) : 2. *niyama* (culture) : 3. *āsana* (posture) : 4. *prāṇāyāma* (control of psychic *prāna*) : 5. *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of senses) : 6. *dhāraṇa* (fixed attention) ; 7. *dhyāna* (meditation) : 8. *samādhi* (perfect concentration resulting in super-conscious experience).

Yama is a moral discipline and consists of : *ahimsa* abstention from all kinds of injury to life ; *satya* (truthfulness in thought, word and deed) ; *asteya* (non-stealing) ; *brahma-*

carya (control of carnal passions) and *aparigraha* (non-acceptance of gifts, more than necessary for sustenance).

Niyama consists in cultivating *śauca* (cleanliness), *santoṣa* (contentment), *tapas* (austerity of body, speech and mind), *svādhyāya* (study of scriptures) and *iśvara-praṇidhāna* (surrendering the fruits of actions to God).

It is to be noted here that *yama* and *niyama*, the basic ethical disciplines, have been placed at the very foot of the ladder of yogic ascension. This implies that those who have not given up evil ways of life, cannot aspire to become yogis ! Misdeeds and meditation cannot co-exist !

Āsana is a discipline of the body, and consists in the adoption of steady and comfortable postures for the sake of meditation. This is achieved through releasing the physical and mental tensions and through the contemplation on the *ananta*, the infinite sky. The steadiness of the body thus achieved is conducive to the steady flow of mind towards the ideal.

An excited mind throws the breathing out of rhythm. A calm and quiet mind, on the other hand, is invariably accompanied by rhythmic breathing. This fact from our experience gives us a very useful and practical hint to control the mind. Practice of rhythmic breathing, and even stopping the breath for some time in a systematic way, will help bring the mind under control. This is exactly the principle behind *prāṇāyāma*. *Prāṇa* is actually the life-force permeating the whole world and manifests itself in our bodies as the bio-chemical and nervous energy. This energy is connected with the breath on the one side and with the mind on the other. Hence, control and regulation of breath gradually leads to the control and regulation of the mind itself. The process itself consists of *recaka* (exhala-

tion), *pūraka* (inhalation) and *kuṁbhaka* (retention), in certain fixed proportions.

It is interesting to note that the great sage Patañjali has finished all about *āsana* and *prānāyama*, about which so much fuss is often made, in only eight *sūtras*. It must be remembered that the object of practising these two disciplines as also the others, is to obtain *samādhi* and that one gets a right to practise them only after scrupulously following moral discipline and culture as enjoined by *yama* and *niyama*.

The next step is *Pratyāhāra*, the withdrawal of senses from their respective external objects, keeping them under the control of the mind. When the senses are effectively controlled, they follow not their objects, but the mind itself. So, in this state, the mind is not disturbed by sights and sounds coming through the eyes and the ears, but makes these senses follow itself, and see and hear its own object.

These five disciplines are regarded as *bahiraṅga-sādhana* (external sides) of yoga, whereas the next three, (*dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*), are classified as *antaranga-sādhana* (internal means).

Dhāraṇa is the fixing of attention on a definite locus, such as the lotus of the heart, the light in the brain, the tip of the nose or the tongue, or on an external object like the moon or the image of gods and so on.

When *dhāraṇa* ripens so that the flow of the thought-current becomes unbroken, it be-

comes *dhyāna*. Here the mind hovers round the object of meditation. There is still the consciousness of the triad—the ego-sense, the object of meditation and the process of meditation.

When again *dhyāna* becomes perfect and the mind is so deeply absorbed in the object that it loses itself and has no awareness of itself, the state attained is called *samādhi*. In this state, only the object of meditation will be shining in the mind and the yogi is not even aware of the thought process involved in it. Even the ego-sense is completely subjugated.

In the state of *samādhi*, which is an intuitive and superconscious experience, the object of meditation will reveal all its secrets to the yogi. If the yogi can make his own self or *Iṣvara* the object of meditation after learning about them from the *Sāṅkhya* (an allied philosophical system declaring the knowledge of the self as the means of liberation), he will get *kaivalya* (liberation). Patañjali calls these two *samādhis* respectively, as *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta*. In the former, the object of meditation is known in its entirety. In the latter nothing outside the self is known (*samprajñāta* = well known, *asamprajñāta* = not known).

This process of yoga and meditation as prescribed by Patañjali can be easily adopted to the path of bhakti also. In the latter case, the *iṣṭadevatā* (the chosen deity) becomes the object of meditation.



It is therefore evident that to go away from the Universe we must go away from the mind and the senses ; and when you do that, you find that eternal life. It was in this way that your forefathers realised their eternal nature. And if you can do this, at once you will realise your eternal life. Then absolute bliss will be yours. This is salvation.

—Swami Ramakrishnananda