

YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI: AN OVERVIEW

By

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INTRODUCTION:

One of the greatest minds of human history is the sage Maharishi Patanjali, the codifier of the *Yoga Darshana* (a reverential view of the highest reality through the art and science of Yoga). He must have been indeed an amazing man, for he is credited with giving us:

- Yoga for the purification of the mind (as Patanjali)
- Grammar for the purification of our language and speech (as Panini) and
- *Ayurveda* (ancient Indian medicine) for purification of the gross physical body (as Charaka).

These three-pronged aspects of his personality are well brought out in the classical *Shloka* found in Bhoja's commentary on the Sutras that is addressed to him as follows:

*"Yogena chittasya padena vaachammalam sharirasya cha vaidyakena
yoapakarottam pravarammuninaam patanjalin pranjalir anatoasmi"*

It boggles our mind to even contemplate this great humane being who lived only for the welfare and spiritual growth of his fellow brethren. Patanjali was surely an enlightened soul who had experienced the highest state and yet stayed back because he wanted others to also have that Darshan of the Divine and attain the ultimate goal of "Kaivalya".

The eternal concepts of the Yoga Darshana have been codified in a nutshell through his Yoga Sutras. These Sutras must have been composed and then transmitted by the oral tradition since at least 1000 - 1500 BC but came into the written form much later in around 500 BC - 300 AD that is the commonly quoted date for them.

The Patanjala Yoga Sutra consists of short succinct Sutras that run together as if they were making up a garland of pearls on a string. This unique method common to the oral tradition of Yoga helps us grasp the intricacies of Yoga, this greatest science of inner experience that has been defined by Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri as the 'mother of all sciences'. The Sutras were always kept short as they were intended to be learnt, memorized

and chanted with reverence and understanding in order to facilitate the development of a deep sense of quiet, inner contemplation. The Yoga Sutras are an efficient tool to help the sincere Sadhaka remember and understand the subtleties of the great art and science of Yoga and were NEVER meant to be a mere instruction manual.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE SUTRAS:

The 195/196 Sutras (this depends on the two different versions that are available today that defer on the addition of one sutra that is actually an expansion of the idea presented in the previous Sutra) are arranged in a logical form and placed into four Padas.

The Padas may be said to be the main chapter-wise division of the Yoga Sutras, but we must also consider that the term Pada refers to feet and this may indicate the step-by-step approach advocated by Maharishi Patanjali.

The four Padas are:

1. **SAMADHI PADA:** This chapter is an exploration of the different aspects of Samadhi and gives us a clue about the process of introspective contemplation.
2. **SADHANA PADA:** This chapter lays out the path of Yoga Sadhana in the form of a Bahiranga Sadhana though the first five limbs of Ashtanga Yoga.
3. **VIBHUTI PADA:** This chapter deals with the Antaranga Yoga and details the Siddhis or psychic accomplishments that may be attained through the practice of Samyama on various aspects of the Universe.
4. **KAIVALYA PADA:** This chapter deals with the attainment of the highest state of Kaivalya (liberation) that ensues when we finally go beyond the Kleshas (afflictions) and Karmas (action-reaction entwinement) to ultimately become 'ONE WITH THE DIVINE'.

Patanjali has arranged all the Sutras in a deductive and logical manner with numerous cross references to various important concepts such as the Kleshas, Karma, Antaraaya, Siddhis and Gunas etc.

CHAPTER I: SAMADHI PADA

What is Yoga? The answer to this question is given by Patanjali at the very beginning of his unparalleled teachings. Sutras 1.1 - 1.4 deal with the definition of Yoga as a process of mental purification. The classical definition of Yoga as a discipline to control the whirlpools of the subconscious /

unconscious mind (*yogah chitavritti nirodah* - 1.2) is given along with the understanding of the process of oneness with the Vrittis that occurs in the absence of the "control".

Sutras 1.5 - 1.11 deal with the five Vrittis that are namely

- Pramana - cognitive process
- Viparyaya - process of misconception
- Vikalpa - illusionary and fantasy prone states
- Nidra - the state of inert, sleepy dullness
- Smriti - the inner process of memory

He stresses the importance of Abhyasa and Vairagya in Sutra-1.12 when he says that the Vrittis will cease on their own accord once one has perfected the twin keys of Abhyasa and Vairagya. He goes on to define Abhyasa as the uninterrupted, disciplined and dedicated practice done with Divine aspiration (1.14). The nature of Vairagya as a cultivated nature of dispassionate objectivity, so essential for every scientist be they either the experimental modern ones or the experiential ancient sages is dealt with in Sutras 1.15 and 1.16. He gives a cross reference to the highest state of Kaivalya (described in the final Sutras of Kaivalya Pada) when he states that one must develop dispassionate objectivity towards even the highest state (Para Vairagya) if one is to attain it (1.16). As it is often said, if you really love something let it go. If it comes back to you it is rightfully yours and if not, it was never yours in the first place!

Patanjali deals with the concept of Samadhi classifying it into numerous levels and sublevels. The lower state of Samprajnata (that which is obtained through cognitive thought) is sub-classified into four levels in 1.17 as:

- Vitarka - obtained with deep contemplation on gross thought
- Vichara - obtained with deep contemplation on subtle thought
- Ananda - obtained with deep contemplation on inner eternal bliss
- Asmita - obtained with deep contemplation on 'that' which defines one's individuality from the universality.

He also states in 1.18 that the other (Asamprajnata Samadhi) deals with the residual impressions (Samskaras) that surface once the thought process has been dealt with through the previous stages.

Sutras 1.19 - 1.22 deal with the importance of qualities such as Shraddha (faithful devotion), Veeraya (strength of body and mind), Smriti (ability to remember and learn from previous experiences) and Samadhi Prajna (mental competence for the higher states) that are essential for spiritual success. He

also classifies the seekers as Mridu (dull and incompetent ones), Madhya (the average ones) and Adimatra (the excellent ones) but then tells us that for the extremely motivated and energetic one who gives up not -the attainment is much easier (*teevra samveganam asannah-1.21*).

The concept of the Divine is dealt with by Patanjali in verses 1.24-1.26 where he also stresses the importance of the Pranava and its Japa. The Pranava AUM (also known by the term Omkara) is rightly given pride of place in all Indian thought as it is the sound vibration that is the closest to the vibration of the Universe itself. Patanjali says "*tasya vachahah pranava*" - the vibrational sound of the Divine is the Pranava (1.27).

The Pranava consists of the three sacred sounds (Nada) that may be expressed as:

- The Akara Nada- the AAA sound representing creation
- The Ukara Nada - the OOO / UUU sound representing sustenance and
- The Makara Nada - the MMM sound representing dissolution.

The potent combination of these three sounds results in the production of the ultimate sacred sound of AUM (Pranava or Omkara Nada). There is no mantra higher than the Pranava and there is no healing tool higher than the Divine power of the Universe! Patanjali further states that the Pranava Japa (repeated utterance of the sound with deep feeling for the meaning-1.28) can radiate all the obstacles in the Yogic path towards attaining the realized oneness with the Divine (1.29).

In Sutras 1.24-26 Patanjali defines the Divine Self (Ishwara) as a special soul (Vishesh Purusha) who is beyond the Kleshas (inherent psychological afflictions) and Karma (repercussions of the action-reaction continuum). He also describes Ishwara as the eternal teacher (*purveshamapi guruh-1.26*) who is beyond time itself and is the seed of all wisdom (*sarvajna beejam-1.25*).

Patanjali is blessed with foresight and cautions the Sadhakas that there are many obstacles on the Yogic path to Kaivalya and offer the solutions to them too. In 1.30 - 1.32 he describes the nine obstacles faced by a Sadhaka in their Sadhana and enumerates these Antaraaya or Chitta Vikshepa (1.30) as:

1. Vyadhi - disease
2. Styani - dullness
3. Samshya - indecision
4. Pramada - procrastination
5. Alasya - sloth
6. Avirati - sensual craving

7. Brantidarshana - fantasy / illusion
8. Alabda boomikatva - inability to attain any higher state
9. Anavasthitatva - inability to maintain that state that has been attained earlier

He also details the four-fold external manifestations of these internal obstacles (1.31) as:

- Duhkha: pain/suffering
- Daurmansya: despair/ depression
- Angamejayatva: tremors
- Svasa-Prasvasa: irregular respiration

Patanjali then goes on to suggest different methods to stabilize and clear the mind in Sutras 1.32 - 1.39. Focused practice of one principle (*ekatatva abhyasa*-1.32) is stated to be the best method to prevent and deal with the obstacles and their manifestations. The modern tendency of running from teacher to teacher and the following of method to method without any depth can never bring any result as it is the very opposite of this vital advice.

He advocates the adoption of positive attitudes (1.33) such as Maitri (friendliness towards those who are at ease with themselves), Karuna (compassion towards the suffering), Mudita (cheerfulness towards the virtuous) and Upekshanam (avoidance and indifference towards the non-virtuous). Single minded concentration on the Prana (1.34), the sensory experiences (1.35), the inner light (1.36) is also mentioned while he recommends a detached attitude (1.37) with deepening of one's knowledge through an understanding of the Dream (1.38) and meditative states (1.39).

Once we stabilize our restless mind, it attains the highest clarity and becomes crystal-like (*abhijatasyeva maneh*) in its ability to truthfully transmit the highest experiences (1.41). This clarity is attained through different stages that he describes in 1.40 - 1.51

- Savitarka Samadhi / Samapattih - (mixture of name, meaning and knowledge associated with the object exists-1.42)
- Nirvitarka Samadhi / Samapattih -(only the object shines forth -1.43)
- Savichara Samadhi / Samapattih-(confusion of subtle aspects -1.44)
- Nirvichara Samadhi / Samapattih-(clarity of subtle aspects-1.44)
- Nirbija Samadhi-(objectless mergence of inner contemplation-1.51)

Thus, through the Samadhi Pada, Maharishi Patanjali helps us contemplate and understand the working of our mind. We learn about the processes of the

inner journey and begin to comprehend the various inner stages on the path of Yoga, the science of ultimate union.

CHAPTER II: SADHANA PADA

This Pada deals with the importance of Sadhana, the process of working towards the ultimate goal in a step-by-step approach. Different aspects of Sadhana are dealt with precision and a detailed exploration of the concepts of Kriya Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga is presented for the sincere Sadhaka. In this chapter Patanjali deals extensively with the first five limbs of Ashtanga Yoga that are known as the Bahiranga Yoga.

The Sadhana Pada starts off with an exploration of the Kleshas (inborn psychological afflictions) and the methods of their removal. Kriya Yoga, the potent combination of Tapa, Swadhyaya and Ishwara Pranidhana (2.1) is prescribed as the method to facilitate attainment of Samadhi through the elimination of the Kleshas (2.2).

The five types of psychological afflictions (Pancha Kleshas) are enumerated in Sutra 2.3 and then detailed in Sutras 2.5 to 2.9 as:

1. Avidya - ignorance of the ultimate reality that manifest as the mistaking of the non eternal to be eternal, the impure to be pure, the suffering to be pleasure and the non-self to be the self (this is stated clearly in 2.5).
2. Asmita - egoism that results from misidentifying the mere instrument of experience (Buddhi) as the ultimate Self (2.6)
3. Raga - attractive attachment to that which gives us pleasure (2.7)
4. Dvesha - repulsive aversion to that which gives us pain (2.8)
5. Abhinivesha - the deep rooted survival instinct resulting from fear of death that is present in all living beings irrespective of any amount of knowledge (2.9).

Based on the breeding ground of the mother Klesha (Avidya), four different stages of the Kleshas are described (2.4) as follows:

1. Prasupta - the dormant state
2. Tanu - the attenuated state
3. Vicchinna - the manifest state
4. Udaranam - the overpowering state

Patanjali describes the important methods to sever the link with Karma that binds us by action-reaction to countless birth-death-birth cycles for eternity.

In Sutras 2.12 - 2.25 he describes the process of this gradual disengagement from the Karmic bondage (Karma Bandha). According to Sage Vasishtha in the Yoga Vaasishtha, Atma Jnana (knowledge of the self) is the only way we can escape from the clutches of the never-ending cycle of births. Patanjali echoes this when he says that it is only the wise one endowed with Viveka (discerning intellect), who can see clearly that all worldly experiences are ultimately nothing but suffering and pain (*dukhameva sarvam vivekinah-2.15*). It is only the highest state of Kaivalya that is the real bliss (Anandam) and anything less than that is pain according to Patanjali. This is similar in many ways to the core of the Buddhist philosophy that views all life as suffering.

Patanjali advises us to make efforts to prevent those miseries that are yet to occur (*heyam dukham anagatam-2.16*) thus giving us a vital clue about the importance of preventive action in avoiding future sorrow. In Sutra 2.17 he further states that the cause of pain is the union between the seer and the seen. This unyielding bondage that causes all suffering is in fact ultimately due to Avidya, ignorance of the reality (*tasya hetur avidya -2.24*).

Patanjali describes the three Gunas that are the constituents of the manifest Universe in Sutra 2.18 where he mentions them by their qualities of Stithi or stable inertness (Tamsica Guna), Kriya or dynamic action (Rajasica Guna) and Prakasha or illumination (Sattwica Guna). The Gunas are the core of the entire manifest Universe and play a vital role in our understanding of both the inner and outer nature.

The real purpose of Yoga Sadhana is expressed by Patanjali in Sutra 2.28 when he states that the sustained practice of the various limbs of Yoga is meant for the destruction of the impurities, thus enabling the Sadhaka to cultivate the highest wisdom of enlightenment (*yoganga anusthand ashuddi kshaye jnana deeptir aviveka kyatih-2.28*).

To this end he enumerates the eight-fold royal path of Ashtanga Yoga as "yama niyama asana pranayama pratyahara dharana dhyana Samadhi" in 2.29. He then goes on to describe the Pancha Yama and Pancha Niyama with precision in verses 2.30 - 2.34. Patanjali describes the Yama-Niyama as great vows (Mahavratam) and says that they are not restricted by class, place, time nor circumstance (2.31).

Pujya Swamiji, Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri often said that Patanjali's Yoga was "No-option Yoga" with a firm insistence on a strong

foundation based on Yama-Niyama being of paramount importance in one's Yoga Sadhana.

Pancha Yama- the five moral restraints that help us obtain control over our lower, animal centric nature thus becoming human. These are:

1. Ahimsa - control of one's violent tendencies
2. Satya - control of one's lying tendencies
3. Asteya- control of one's thieving tendencies
4. Brahmacharya- control of one's creative energies
5. Aparigraha - control of one's possessive tendencies

Pancha Niyama - the five ethical observances that help us to enhance our humane qualities preparing us for the higher, conscious life of Yoga. These are:

1. Saucha - cleanliness at all levels
2. Santhosha - self contented happiness
3. Tapa - disciplined efforts
4. Swadhyaya - introspectional self analysis
5. Ishwara Pranidhana - the ability to surrender one's will to the higher divine will after making one's best efforts. "Do your best and leave the rest" is another good way to express this concept of Bhakti Yoga that is extolled by Yogeshwar Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita as well. Yogamaharishi Dr. Swami Gitananda Giri often expressed this beautifully as Atman Prasadnam, meaning thereby that one accepts with gratitude the results of one's action coming back in the form of Divine expression.

He further advises us to cultivate Pratipaksha Bhavanam, the contrary view when one is faced with negative thoughts of the devolutionary nature that cause suffering (2.33). In verse 2.34 Patanjali warns us about the negativities that may be either done directly by us (Krita), or committed by others by our causation (Karita), or be condoned by us (Anumodita) and digs deeper to find that these negative actions result due to greed (Lobha), anger (Krodha) or delusion (Moha).

The concept of Pratipaksha Bhavanam is an amazing teaching and must be inculcated in our Sadhana of day-to-day living as we face it so many times each day. Even if we cannot replace negative thoughts with emotion-laden positive reinforcements, we must at least make an attempt to stop them in their troublesome track! I have personally found that a strong "STOP" statement works wonders in helping block out the negative thoughts that

otherwise lead us into the quicksand-like cesspool of deeper and greater trouble.

In Sutras 2.35 - 2.45 of the Sadhana Pada, Maharishi Patanjali details the Siddhis or psychic accomplishments that manifest when we attain a state of perfection in the respective Yamas and Niyamas. These are detailed as follows:

- Ahimsa - cessation of hostility in the Sadhaka's presence (2.35)
- Satya - whatever the Sadhaka utters will come true (2.36)
- Asteya - all riches will flow towards the Sadhaka (2.37)
- Brahmacharya - great valour is gained and fear of death is lost(2.38)
- Aparigraha - knowledge of previous and future births (2.39)
- Saucha - indifference towards the physical body and non-attachment as well as mental fitness for cheerfulness, one-pointedness, sense control and vision of the inner self (2.40 and 2.41)
- Santhosha - attainment of a state of unexcelled happiness (2.42)
- Tapa - destruction of impurities and perfection of body and senses (2.43)
- Swadhyaya- union with the desired deity (2.44)
- Ishwara Pranidhana- attainment of Samadhi (2.45)

I find this last statement in 2.45 very interesting indeed for it seems to suggest that Patanjali is giving us a shortcut to Samadhi! It seems to be a "One Step" approach to Samadhi that is normally an "Eight Step" approach of Ashtanga Yoga. It is also fascinating that it is even shorter than the "Three Step" approach to Samadhi proposed by Patanjali when he mentions the benefits of Kriya Yoga (consisting of Tapa-Swadhyaya-Ishwara Pranidhana) in Sutra 2.2 of the Sadhana Pada.

If we understand the concept of Ishwara Pranidhana as the embodiment of Bhakti Yoga, we can easily understand how the great saints of the past such as Mirabhai and Andal have attained to that Ultimate Unitive Oneness with the Universe through pure devotion. Both of these magnificent lady saints of India merged with the Divine through the fructification of their pure love.

Having given us a clear view of Yama-Niyama as the firm foundation (Adikara Yoga) of a systematic Yoga Sadhana, Patanjali goes on to describe the third limb of Ashtanga Yoga, namely Asana as "*sthira sukham asanam*" in 2.46. This is the best definition of Asana as a state that radiates stability and ease. Such a state may be attained only through regular, disciplined and determined practice.

The key to attaining this state is given in 2.47 where he advises us to practice Asana with a relaxation of effort (*prayatna shaitihya*) and contemplation on the infinite (*ananta samapathibyam*).

Through the practice of Asana, one attains the state of balanced equanimity (described in the Bhagavad Gita as Samatvam) that enables one to overcome the dualities (*dwandwa anabighata*) that normally torment us into imbalance (2.48).

At the next level Patanjali details the concept of Pranayama and its benefits in 2.49 - 2.53. In 2.49 he defines Pranayama as the "cessation of the processes of inhalation and exhalation". This is similar to the Hatha Yoga concept of Kevala Kumbhaka, which is a spontaneous cessation of respiration itself.

Such a state of going "beyond the breath" is another example of Patanjali's genius in explaining the higher concepts with simplicity. When faced with something that amazes us, we say, "It took my breath away!" Imagine then, the state of our breath, when we are face-to-face with the Divine experience itself!

In 2.50 he describes the different varieties of Pranayama such as the external (Bahya), internal (Antara) and the stupefied (Stambavritti). He also explains that Pranayama practice is regulated by the location (Desha), season (Kala) and rhythm (Samkya) making it either to be deep (Dirgha) or subtle (Sukshma).

He further tells us that Pranayama enables our mind to attain fitness for the higher aspects of Yoga that begin with Dharana (*dharanasucha योग्यातमानसाह-2.53*). It also facilitates a reverential vision of the Divine light by destroying the veil of ignorance that is preventing us from having such a vision (*tatash kshiyate prakashavaranam-2.52*).

Having described Pranayama that is a bridge between the external and internal worlds, he goes on to define Pratyahara in 2.54 and 2.55 as the "withdrawing of the mind from the sensory engagements". Just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs into its shell, the senses cease to function as soon as the mind (the main energy source for sensory function) starts the journey inwards. No wonder the mind is called the super-sense or the Ekendriya (the one sense).

At this stage of their Sadhana, the sincere Sadhaka is finally ready for the onward, inner journey and so Patanjali ends the Sadhana Pada keeping us in suspense about the fore-coming Vibhuti Pada that will deal with attainment of powers through practice of the inner, Antaranga Yoga.

III. VIBHUTI PADA

Patanjali starts off the third Pada giving definitions of the three internal aspects (Antaranga) of Yoga, namely Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

He defines Dharana as the process of binding consciousness to a point, place, region or object (*desha bandhah chittasya dharana-3.1*). He further defines Dhyana as the state when there is a steady and continuous flow of attention and concentration on a point, place, region or object (*tatra pratyaya ekatanata dhyanam-3.2*).

The state of absorptive super-consciousness (Samadhi) is expressed by Patanjali as an omnipresent state when the mind loses itself and the object alone shines without differentiation (*tadeva arthamatra nirbhasyam swarupa shunyamiva samadhi-3.3*).

These three internal limbs comprise the practice of Antaranga Yoga and are known together as Samyama (flowing together seamlessly) in 3.4 when he says "*trayam ekatva samyam*". He then goes on to describe in 3.17 - 3.37 and then again in 3.39 to 3.49 the special experiences and powers (Siddhis) that result from performing Samyama on various gross and subtle objects. Some examples of these Siddhis are given below.

In Sutra 3.17 he gives a logical explanation about how the Samyama on distinction between name, object and existence gives us the ability to understand sounds (speech) of all beings (*sarvabhuta rutajnanam*). Once we begin to understand this distinction, any language becomes understandable as all languages are based on this combination of name, form and experience.

He further tells us in 3.18 that the practice of Samyama on Samskaras (inherent tendencies that manifest as habit patterns) helps us to understand the results of previous incarnations. This again is very logical for these patterns that flow from lifetime to lifetime have a clear association. Once such an association is understood, the cause-effect relationship can be understood by an analytical process.

In a similar manner he describes many other such Siddhis that include:

- Mind reading (3.19)
- Invisibility (3.21)
- Going beyond the senses (3.22)
- Fore knowledge of time of death (3.23)
- Great strength (3.24)
- Elephantine strength (3.25)
- Clairvoyance (3.26)

- Subtle knowledge (3.27)
- Knowledge of the inner stars (3.28)
- Knowledge of the movement of stars (3.29)
- Knowledge of the arrangement of body systems (3.30)
- Power to go beyond hunger and thirst (3.31)
- Power of great steadiness (3.32)
- Vision of Siddhas (3.33)
- Knowledge of everything (3.34)
- Knowledge of mind (3.35)
- Knowledge of pure consciousness (3.36)
- Divine sensations (3.37)
- Transmigration (3.39)
- Levitation (3.40)
- Great effulgence (3.41)
- Divine hearing (3.42)
- Extreme lightness of body (3.43)
- Removal of the veil of ignorance (3.44)
- Mastery over the five manifest elements (3.45)
- Attainment of Anima and the other seven Siddhis (3.46)
- Perfection of body (3.47)
- Perfection of sensory apparatus (3.48) and
- Mastery over the primal cause itself (3.49)

It is very pertinent to note the existence of Sutra 3.38 where he warns us that the **Siddhis** we get by the practice of Samyama on different objects are both an **attainment** as well as an **obstacle** to spiritual progress! We find so many Sadhakas who have lost their way after getting caught up in the magic of the Siddhis, thus ensuing the absolute loss of their spiritual progress for many a lifetime to come.

It is with regards to Sutra 3.22 that the different versions end up having either 195 or 196 Sutras. Sutra 3.21 deals with the concept of developing the Siddhi of invisibility by blocking the rays of light that cause vision of objects to occur. In fact this also shows us that Patanjali was an excellent physicist who understood the laws of light too!

Sutra 3.22 expands this concept to include the other senses as well, thus indicating that we develop Siddhis of not being heard, smelt, etc. In the versions of the Yoga Sutras that do not include this verse, Sutra 3.22 is the one in which Patanjali talks of attaining foreknowledge of one's time of death. For this overview, I am using the version with 196 sutras so that we can understand this discrepancy between the difference versions a bit better.

The detached attitude towards the manifest world is very important in Yoga Sadhana, but we are taught by Patanjali that it's only through the process of renunciation that the ultimate state of Kaivalya (liberation) may be attained (3.50). He strongly tells us that we must give up even the desire for that highest state, if that state is to occur. This idea has a cross reference in the very beginning of the Samadhi Pada where he says that one must develop dispassionate objectivity towards even the highest state (Para Vairagya) if one is to attain it (1.16). The importance of this Para Vairagya that destroys the very seed of the impurities, thus blessing us with liberation, is described in 3.51 as "*tad vairagyaapi dosabijakshye kaivalyam*".

He concludes the Vibhuti Pada by telling us that it is only the equality between Buddhi and Purusha that brings about liberation (*sattvapurusayoh suddhisamyeh kaivalyam*-3.56). Such a state can only happen if we ourselves become a **pure medium** for the crystal-clear transmission of the Divine universal impulses. Purity of thought, word and deed is of paramount importance if we are to become the purest vehicles of the Divine Grace.

CHAPTER IV: KAIVALYA PADA

In the final chapter that is the shortest of the four (having a mere 34 verses), Patanjali gives us an insight into that highest state of liberation known as Kaivalya.

At the very beginning he explains how Siddhis (that are mere milestones of progress on the spiritual path) may be obtained by different methods (4.1) such as

- Janma- blessed with the Siddhis as a result of birth
- Aushadi- attaining them through the use of herbs
- Mantra- attaining them through the use of incantations
- Tapah- attainment of them through disciplined and austere efforts
- Samadhi-attainment of them through deep contemplation

In Sutra 4.4 he says, "*nirmana chitta asmita matrd*" meaning thereby that the mind emerges from the sense of "I-ness" (Asmita). He goes on to advise us

that it is only the mind born of meditation that can help us become free of Karma (4.6). That is due to the three-fold actions that result in latent impressions known as Vasanas (4.8) that then later fructify into Karma.

He deals with the concept of Karma and describes the relationship between action - reaction in Sutras 4.7 and 4.8. He says that for the common person, Karma may be either white (pure) or black (impure) or of the third nature but for the Yogis it is neither white nor black (*ashukla akrishnam yoginah-4.7*).

He discusses the concept of reincarnation in Sutra 4.9 when he states that the deep habit patterns (Samskaras) have an unbroken continuity and play out from lifetime to lifetime by giving rise to the different types of incarnations (Jati), locations (Desha), and time frames (Kala). He also says that they exist because of the eternal nature of the will to live (*ashisah nityatvat-4.10*).

He gives us an excellent concept of the three fold nature of time (Trikala) when he says that the past and future both exist in the present reality but appear different only because of their different characteristics and forms. This implies that by knowing the present reality one can also gain the knowledge of the past and future thus becoming a Trikala Jnani (one who knows all three aspects of time)-4.12.

He helps us understand the Gunas by explaining that they are the backbone of all that manifests (Vyakta) as well as that which is at subtle planes (Sukshma) of existence (4.13). He tells us how the same object may be perceived differently by the different minds because the minds themselves manifest differently (4.15 - 4.17). No wonder everyone seems to have their own view of the world! Each person's mind is different and so naturally each person's perception of the manifest Universe ought to be different whether we like it or not. Once we realize this truth, we are able to understand others better and make the world a better place for we realize there cannot be "just one view".

A beautiful statement by Patanjali is found in the Kaivalya Pada when he says, "No object depends upon **only one mind** (*nacha ekachitta tantram-4.16*)". so many people think that the whole Universe would collapse if they were not there to keep it going! This is a clear-cut message from the great sage that the Universe can do quite well even if we are not there!

He goes into a discussion about the illumination of the mind and says that the activities of the mind are always known by the pure-consciousness as it is the support and source of the mind itself (4.18). The mind is not self-illuminating (4.19) and so it can't experience the process of illumination as well as cognize itself simultaneously (4.20). This is thankfully so, for otherwise there would be great confusion due to an absurd progression of cognitions dealing with

what is seeing what, who is perceiving what, what is perceiving whom, etc (4.21).

This is why he also states that the mind field that is affected by perceptions of both seer and seen (subject and object), has the potential to perceive all (4.23). He further gives us the guarantee that once we “witness” the absolute reality, the distinction between seer and the subtlest mind, the false identities and even the curiosity about our own nature disappears on its own accord (4.25).

As we gradually grow into the higher states, there occurs the dawning of higher discrimination (Vivekanimnam). When this occurs, the mind begins to gravitate towards absolute liberation from all experiences that otherwise result because of the interaction between the seer and the seen (*tada vivekanimnam kaivalya pragbharam chittam*-4.26). It is as if we are pulled into that highest state once we get close to it though our self-efforts!

Just when we seem to develop a sense of complacency, Patanjali warns us that even at this highest level we must be very careful for, if not, Samskaras of the deep unconscious nature will come into the equation and stall our spiritual progress once more (4.27). These deep residual impressions need to be dealt with again by Om Japa, Prana Dharana and other practices used earlier to remove the Kleshas (4.28).

With the final frontier being conquered, **Dharma Megha Samadhi** can finally manifest thus removing the Kleshas and Karma once and for all (*tatah kleshakarma nivrittih*-4.30). Dharma Megha refers to the potent rain cloud of virtue that has the potential to bless us with eternal freedom. The torrential rainfall from this rain cloud of the highest nature washes away all the arrogant, ignorant impurities that were keeping us away from our attaining to the highest state of ultimate realization.

It is at this point (4.30) that Maharishi Patanjali implies that we become the Divine itself in the state of Kaivalya as he had earlier defined Purusha as a special soul who is beyond Kleshas and Karmas (1.24). We become the Divine by losing our sense of individuality in order to gain the sense of absolute universality.

Once this state occurs, the Gunas automatically recede back into their essence having fulfilled their purpose (2.18) of giving us both the enjoyment (Bhoga) as well as having stimulated us towards the attainment of emancipation (Apavarga). In fact, we actually even go beyond time itself (Akala) at this point. There is no more any ramifications of the past or the future for they disappear completely. At this point we finally exist totally only in the enlightened **Now!** (4.33).

Patanjali concludes the Kaivalya Pada by saying that once we reach this point in our spiritual journey, the **Pure Consciousness** becomes established in its own **True Nature** (*purusartha sunyanam gunanam parti prasavati kaivalyam svarupa pratishtava chiti shaktih iti -4.34*).

With the attainment of this absolute and most dynamic state of being, our evolutionary journey ends, as we have reached the pinnacle by attaining to our true essence where division of any kind ceases to exist anymore. Indian philosophical thought tells us over and over, again and again that our essential, true nature is Sat-Chit-Anandam (Absolute reality-consciousness and bliss).

CONCLUSION:

Maharishi Patanjali has given us an amazing and crystal-clear road map towards Kaivalya through his Sutras. Yet the onus lies entirely upon us to follow it with the twin keys of Abhyasa and Vairagya for that is the only way that we can finally attain our goal of absolute liberation - once and for all.

It is important that we never forget to remember his warning that we must **Not Stop** when the Siddhis appear for they are mere milestones on the path and must continue onward on our evolutionary journey from that of a mere human to the ultimate Divine.

*"abahu purusakaram sankha cakrasi dharinam
sahasra sirasam svetam pranamami patanjalinim"*

I offer my deepest heartfelt salutation to the great Maharishi Patanjali, the incarnation of the thousand headed Adishesha, armed with the conch, discus and mace. May he bless us all in our spiritual search for that highest state of Kaivalya!

HARI OM TAT SAT - MAY THAT BE THE REALITY!

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