

Meditation Teachings

Sutra Teachings

The Definition of Yoga

Sutra I.1

Atha yoganushasanam

Now is the beginning of the instruction in Yoga.

Swami Sivananda: Yoga means union or yoke. Yoga is a method by which the individual soul becomes united with the Supreme Soul, the Reality that underlies this universe. Yoga also is defined as an effort to separate the Reality from the apparent. It brings about that state of mind which is unruffled and calm in all situations.

Sutra I.2

Yogaschittavrittinirodha

Yoga is inhibition of the mental processes

Yoga is the Adhyatmic science that teaches the method of joining the human spirit with God. Yoga is the Divine science which disentangles the Jiva from the phenomenal world of sense-objects and links him with the Absolute, whose inherent attributes are Ananta Ananda, Parama Santi, infinite knowledge, unbroken joy and eternal life.

'Vritti' means literally a 'Whirlpool'. It is a thought wave in the lake of Chitta. Why do Vrittis arise from the Chitta? Because of the Samskaras or Vasanas. If you annihilate all Vasanas or desires, all Vrittis will subside by themselves. If all the Vrittis subside,

the Mind becomes calm, serene and silent. Then alone you will enjoy peace and bliss. Therefore all happiness lies within. You will have to get it through control of mind and not through money, sense pleasure, children, name and fame, or rank and power.

When the Vrittis subside, it leaves a definite impression in the subconscious mind. It is known as Samskara or latent impression. The sum total of all Samskaras is known as Karmasaya (receptacle of works), or Sanchita Karma (accumulated works). When the soul leaves the physical body it carries with it the astral body of seventeen Tattvas and Karmasaya as well to the mental plane. This Karmasaya is burned in toto by the highest knowledge obtained through Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Now comes the word Nirodha. It means restraint or suppression. By suppressing the modification of the mind-stuff or restraining of the thought-waves, a man obtains Yoga

Sutra I.3

Tada drastuh svarupe vasthanam

Then the seer is established in its own nature

That state of pure consciousness is achieved when the mind is no longer modified by the activities of thoughts waves. When the waves of a lake are stilled, one can see the bottom clearly. Likewise, when the vrittis of the mind subside, one's essential nature becomes evident. When the mind's agitation stops, the world no longer exists for the meditator, for he is in union with the Self.

Sutra I.4

Vritti sarupyam itaratra

When the mind is not concentrated, the perceiver identifies with its modifications.

When the seer does not abide in his own native state, he connects himself with the various Vrittis. He becomes assimilated with transformations. If your son is seriously ailing, you identify yourself with the Vritti and get grief. You have forgotten your essential divine nature. The Vrittis that arise from the mind obscure your native state. They are like clouds that screen the sun. During the time of concentration, the seer identifies himself with his own native state. At other times, the seer identifies with his Vrittis. Have a comprehensive understanding of these modifications of mind. The painful Vrittis have to be controlled by the non-painful Vrittis, and this in turn have to

be mastered by Para Vairagya. The painful Vrittis are those which bring the afflictions and become the field for the growth of the afflictions and become the field for the growth of the vehicle of actions (Karmasaya). Vrittis that emanate from Rajas and Tamas are painful ones. Vrittis that arise from Sattva Guna are not painful ones. Through Vairagya and Abhyasa the painful Vrittis are to be controlled. Then concentration will become habitual. For practicing Dharana (concentration) different kinds of exercises are given.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's commentary:

When thought waves arise, there is the immediate tendency to identify with them. One thought wave spawns a host of others. If one's neighbor has a swimming pool that is two inches larger, a vritti rises that "I must have a larger pool." If not caught in its formation, this thought repeats itself followed by others of a related nature. One follows in the wake of the previous, each giving more and more power to the overall attitude. If, out of covetousness, one buys his neighbors pool and house, there will be more taxes to pay in addition to two swimming pools and two houses to be cleaned. This may entail hiring help, which further entails supervision. If the second house is rented out, perhaps the tenant will damage either it or the pool. To get away from the headache of it all, one goes for a vacation. The swimming pool is exchanged for one in Hawaii, and the bed and television, for those in the hotel room. One sits in the hotel lobby instead of his own living room, worrying about whether or not the neighbor is remembering to let the dog out each day, and how things at the office are going. What is the real difference between the hotel lobby in one's own living room? There is none, for the mind is a slave to its preoccupations, identifying with the same problems wherever it is. One vritti gives rise to countless others, all in search of Happiness. But in fact, it is only foolishness, for the very rising of the thoughts themselves destroy the piece that the mind craves. It is only when these thoughts are stilled in concentration that identification with agitation and desire are eliminated.

The Chitta Vrittis - Thought Waves

Sutra I.5

Vrittayah pancatayyah klista aklistas ca

The mental modifications are of five kinds, some painful and others not painful.

Sutra I.6

Pramana viparyaya vikalpa nidra smrtayah

They (the modifications) are right knowledge, wrong knowledge, imagination, sleep, memory.

Sutra I.7

Pratyaksanumanagamah pramanani

Right knowledge is either: direct perception, inference or testimony.

Right knowledge is that which is unquestionably reliable and true. Right knowledge is right cognition. These Pramanas are helps or steps to attain knowledge of the Self. An ordinary man depends on Pratyaksha only for his knowledge. A little advanced man depends on Pratyaksha and Anumana. A little more advanced man depends on these three proofs.

Pratyaksha or direct experience is caused by direct contact of any of the five senses of knowledge (ear, eye, tongue, nose, skin) with the objects of their knowledge.

Anumana is logical inference. Like the sight of a smoke indicated fire, based on past experience.

Agamah is testimony of a competent person like a sage who has direct knowledge of the Self. The highest testimony is the Veda or Veda Pramana. The testimony of a sage comes from direct realization of reality. The scriptures are called "the breath of the eternal".

Sutra I.8

Viparyayo mithya jnanam atad rupa pratistham

Erroneous understanding is a false conception of an idea or object whose real nature does not conform to that concept.

The second type of vritti, erroneous understanding, may also be based on a perception of an external object, but in this case the mental image does not correspond to the reality of that object. This may be caused by faulty perceptions, incorrect analysis of perceptions, or distortions of perceptions by the ego. It is like the mirage in the desert but is very common in daily life. Very often judgment is passed on a person or situation when there is no relationship between reality and the mental impression.

Sutra I.9

Sabda jnananupati vastu sunyo vikalpah

Imagination follows from mere words which have nothing in reality.

I shall explain to you the nature of 'mental dramatization.' Mark the ways of the mind. During conversation with your friend the mind sometimes imagines in vain that it has hurt the feelings of your friend. It spends much of its energy in unnecessary feelings. You think: 'How can I see him tomorrow morning? He may be displeased with me.' Next morning when you meet him, nothing happens. Your friend starts a pleasant conversation and smiles. You are surprised. To your great astonishment the subject of talk takes quite a different turn altogether. A family man imagines when a severe epidemic of plague ravages: 'What shall I do if my wife develops plague and dies now? I have got six children.' This is vain imagination. Nothing happens. Sometimes when the train moves slowly on the Pamban bridge over the sea, near Ramesvaram, the mind imagines: 'If the bridge gives way now, what will become of me? I will be smashed to pieces.' A touch of fear creeps in. There are thousand and one ways of mental dramatization like these. The power of imagination plays a vital part in mental dramatization. To destroy Vikalpa, you must have right knowledge described in Sutra I-7.

Mind havocs through the power of imagination. Imaginary fears of various sorts, exaggeration, concoction, mental dramatization, building castles in the air, are all due to the power of imagination. Even a perfect man full of health has some

imaginary disease or other due to the power of imagination of the mind. A man may have a little weakness or Dosha (fault). When he becomes your enemy, you at once exaggerate and magnify his weaknesses and Doshas. This is due to the power of imagination. Much energy is wasted on account of imaginary fears.

Whenever the minds of two friends are strained by ill-feelings, these minds begin to exaggerate and concoct things. Fault-finding nature increases. It is very difficult to get at the truth of the statements of these two broken friends with broken friendship. Their utterances are always coloured by their inner feelings. The power of imagination havoocs now. Maya havoocs through mind and its power of imagination. May peace be unto them. May there be sympathy and better understanding amongst them.

Sutra I.10

Abhava pratyayalambana vrittir nidra

The mental process which rests on the notion of non-existence is sleep.

From Swami Sivananda's commentary:

Sleep manifests when there is preponderance of Tamas, when Sattva and Rajas subside and when there is no knowledge of the external world. Ordinary people think that there is Vritti-sunya in sleep. It is not so. As there is memory in you when you wake up and as you say when you wake up, 'I slept soundly; I knew nothing,' there ought to have been a particular kind of subtle wave in the mind during sleep (Abhavarupa Vritti). It should not be understood that sleep is no transformation or Vritti of the mind. If it were so, the remembrance: 'I slept soundly,' would not follow on waking, for you never remember what you have not experienced. Sleep is a particular kind of Vritti. This must be controlled like other Vrittis if you want to enter into Samadhi.

Sutra I.11

Anubhuta visayasampramosah smritih

Memory is 'not slipping away' of the objects perceived.

From Swami Sivananda's commentary:

Remembrance is a function brought entirely by the residuum or impression due to former experience. The objects cognised do not slip away from the mind. They come back to the surface of the conscious mind through the influence of Samskaras that are embedded in the subconscious mind. Knowledge produced by recollecting impressions of past experiences is memory.

Abhyasa & Vairagya

Sutra I.12

Abhyasa vairagyabhyam tan nirodhah

Their (of chitta vrittis) control is brought about by practice and non-attachment.

Through Vairagya you will have to check the out-going Vishaya Vrittis and through Abhyasa you will have to cut the new spiritual path for the mind to move on. Vairagya serves the part of an anicut on the river of Vishaya Vrittis. It forms a strong embankment. It does not allow the Vishaya Vrittis to pass outside. Vairagya removes Pratibandhas or obstacles. Abhyasa gives Kaivalya Moksha. Without Vrittis one cannot enjoy sensual objects. If the Vrittis along with Samskaras are destroyed, Manonasa or annihilation of the mind follows.

Here is the gloss of Vyasa: The stream of mind flows both ways; flows towards good and it flows towards evil. That which flows on to perfect independence, Kaivalya, down the plane of discriminative knowledge is named the stream of happiness. That which leads to rebirth and the flow down the plane of indiscrimination or ignorance, is the stream of sin. Among those, the flow towards objects is thinned by Vairagya or desirelessness; the flow of discrimination is rendered visible by habituating the mind to the experience of knowledge. Hence the suppression of the mental modification is dependent upon both.

The different forms of mental modifications which bring about pain can be controlled in two ways. The first is abhyasa which is practice or repetition. A change of character occurs only through formation of new habits. Abhyasa cuts the new spiritual path for the mind to move on. The second way is through vairagya or non-attachment, or elimination of emotional reactions to situations and individuals. Non attachment does not mean there should not be love or compassion, but rather

that emotional thought waves are ignored. The vrittis may arise, but they are observed in a disinterested fashion, then put aside.

Kriya Yoga

Sutra 2.1

tapah-svādhyāyeśvara-praṇidhānāni kriyā-yogaḥ

Austerity, self-study, and surrender to God constitute Kriya Yoga.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

Tapas - austerity

Without tapas one cannot achieve yoga or samadhi, because tapas is that which purifies the mind from rajasic and tamasic vrittis that originate in the ripening of the fruits of karma and kleshas - roots of suffering, from which the karmas emerge. Ignorance generates desires which generates actions to possess the objects of desires.

Impure vrittis (klisha vrittis) originate in the kleshas. If vrittis are clothes, kleshas are the dye coloring the cloth.

Tapas weakens the bonds of the impurities to the subconscious mind, like a person beating on a cloth, or impurities of the body are released in a cleanse.

Austerity does not mean physical abuse or severe rigors. It refers to strict control of the senses in order to conserve energy for higher pursuits. Austerity in this sense means fasting occasionally, rising early to meditate instead of sleeping late, and reducing certain physical comforts for the sake of greater control of mind. It also means titiksha, or withstanding the pain caused by the pairs of opposites with patient fortitude.

Swadhyaya - self study

Study of the scriptures and other spiritual works keeps the mind flowing in the desired direction.

Here it primarily means study of the upanishads, referring to Jnana Yoga.

Iswara Pranidhana - self-surrender to God

In surrendering to God one also surrenders the fruit of work performed. This leads to Karma Yoga, the path of selfless service, in which one regards oneself as the instrument of God, and serves humanity with no thoughts of either credit or blame.

This is identical to the method of karma yoga taught by Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita:

2.47. Thy right is to work only, but never with its fruits; let not the fruits of actions be thy motive, nor let thy attachment be to inaction.

Iswara is karma phala datta - the ordainer of the fruits of actions. What one will experience is determined by Iswara. Iswara ordains what one experiences in conformity with the fruits of karma.

One has the free will to do, not to do or to do otherwise, but the result is determined by Iswara and over that one has no say at all. It is purely due to one's punya and papa karmas (dharmic and adharmic activities).

Whatever one experiences, desirable and undesirable, is determined by Iswara, thus it is truly the grace or prasad of the Lord. Understanding this, one becomes surrendered and accepts all experiences as Iswara's prasad or God's grace. This is prasada buddhi, the attitude of seeing all things equally as God's grace.

With this attitude the vrittis or experiences stop becoming afflicting and limiting, and are seen as forms or manifestations of the one reality or Iswara. The mind attains to peace.

Adi Shankaracharya explains why this practice is called kriya yoga, or the yoga of action.

It is a sample of the ashtanga yoga - eight limbs of yoga (these are three practices in niyama).

These are practices that are action oriented meant to purify the mind and make it steady for the attainment of knowledge - Jnanam. These practices by themselves cannot lead to Kaivalya or Moksha - liberation.

The first chapter discusses knowledge and devotion, for the vivekin, that is not concerned with action. The second chapter is for the avivekin, a person of vikshipta, who is concerned with action.

From Swami Sivananda's Commentary:

In the previous Sutra, Saucha, Santosha, Tapas, Svadhyaya and Ishvarapranidhana are described under Niyama. Here in this Sutra, three observances of the five are taken under the heading "Kriya Yoga." Every one of the item will be considered separately in the subsequent Sutras.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's Commentary:

Austerity does not mean physical abuse or severe rigors. It refers to strict control of the senses in order to conserve energy for higher pursuits. Austerity in this sense means fasting occasionally, rising early to meditate instead of sleeping late, and reducing certain physical comforts for the sake of greater control of mind. Study of the scriptures and other spiritual works keeps the mind flowing in the desired direction. In surrendering to Gods' will one also surrenders the fruit of work performed. This leads to Karma Yoga, the path of selfless service, in which one regards oneself as the instrument of God, and serves humanity with no thought of either credit or blame.

Sutra 2.2

samādhī-bhāvanārthāḥ kleśa-tanu-karaṇārthāś ca

It alleviates afflictions and brings about samadhi.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

The purpose of Kriya Yoga is to attain samprajnatah samadhi - ekagra, by purifying rajas and tamas in the mind, to weaken the grip of the kleshas in the vrittis.

If the kleshas, which are five forms of avidya, are destroyed, the mind is destroyed - manonasa. The kleshas must be weakened first.

From Swami Sivananda's Commentary:

The practice of Tapas, Svadhyaya and Ishvarapranidhana are intended to attenuate the afflictions and for preparing the mind for entering into Samadhi. They are for the purpose of purifying the mind of its impurities and for destroying distractions.

Purification is of two kinds. They are internal (mental) and external (physical). Mental purity is more important. Physical purity is also needed. Cleanliness is next to godliness. Physical, external purity alone is of no value. Much time must not be wasted in attending to external washing. By so doing, you forget the eternally pure

Atman. The afflictions of the mind mentioned in this Sutra are described under Sutra II-3.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's Commentary:

By following the three practices of Kriya Yoga mentioned above, the student eliminates the source of his woes and eventually reaches the superconscious state.

Kleshas or Mental Afflictions

Sutra 2.3

avidyā 'smitā-rāga-dveṣābhīniveśāḥ kleśāḥ

Ignorance, egoism, attraction and aversion, and fear of death are the afflictions which cause suffering.

The kleshas are five forms of avidya. They impel the gunas to revolve in predominance over the mind, because the three gunas revolve through past karmas, that are caused by the kleshas.

They support one another for mutual benefit. They impel one to act and enjoy the fruits of actions.

All these disorders ruffle the mind like physical malady. Therefore they are great impediments to meditation. They hang upon man and make the qualities firm. They raise Vrittis and bring about fructification of Karmas by coming to depend upon one another for mutual support.

If ignorance is destroyed by getting knowledge of Purusha through Samadhi, the other four Klesas will die by themselves. The Karmas are supported by afflictions and the afflictions are supported by Karmas. This is mutual support.

Sutra 2.5

anityāśuci-duḥ ḥkhānātmasu

nitya-śuci-sukhātmakhyātir-avidyā

Ignorance mistakes the perishable, impure, painful and non-Self for the eternal, pure, good, and Self.

Avidya is always active. It is the idea of the qualities of the Self in the non-Self (mind, body, senses). Ignorance causes Vipareetha Bhavana (perverted understanding), and the man is rendered blind by passion and various sorts of Raga. He is under intoxication.

To take a thing for what is not, is ignorance. It is not a privation of knowledge. It is a Bhava Vastu. It does not mean absence of knowledge. You mistake this perishable body of five elements and various impurities as the pure Self. You think that you are the body only and you have forgotten the real nature of Purusha. This is delusion. This is ignorance.

Sutra 2.6

dṛg-darśana-śaktyor-ekātmatevāsmitā

Egoism is the identification of the Seer with the instrument of seeing.

Egoism is the identification of the Seer with the power of seeing. Drik, the Seer, is the Purusha. Darsana is the instrument of seeing. The instrument of seeing is Antahkarana (inner instrument or the mind). Purusha joins with the Antahkarana and appears as if he is one or blended with the Antahkarana. Purusha has the Abhimana of 'I' in the Anatma - Antahkarana. The Antahkarana is mistaken for the sentient Purusha or Atman. This is Asmita. When you get anger, pain, misery, contentment, etc., you associate yourself with the Vrittis and say: I am angry. I am miserable. I am happy. When the Atman is associated with the Antahkarana, the experiences of objects take place. Separate yourself from the Vrittis and the Antahkarana and stand aloof as the witness in your original all-blissful nature. This is Kaivalya.

Sutra 2.7

sukhānuśayī rāgaḥ

Attraction is that which dwells on pleasure.

Through the memory of pleasure enjoyed previously, the attachment or desire that arises towards pleasure or the means of pleasure (Sukha Sadhana, i.e., objects) is Raga. The desire for 'thinking on pleasure' (Sukha Chintana), is included under Raga. Egoism is the root cause for Raga. This is the reason why Raga is described after egoism. When pleasure is remembered, attachment is proceeded by the remembrance of the pleasure in consequence of the enjoyment thereof. Wherever there is pleasure, there is Raga side by side.

Everyone of us is in search of happiness. But attempting to get happiness is made in the wrong direction, in external objects, in the lap of the mother, toys, books, in University degrees, in wife, in money, in son, in honor and power. There is something dearer than a son, there is something dearer than a wife, there is something dearer than wealth, there is something dearer than this Prana or life itself. That 'dearer something' is Atman or Purusha, who is hidden in our heart. The search should be made within by withdrawing the mind from the objects, by controlling the Indriyas, by practicing Yama, Niyama, concentration, meditation and Samadhi.

Sutra 2.8

duḥkhānuśayī dveṣaḥ

Aversion is that which attempts to avoid pain.

Through memory of pain from experiences, aversion comes towards pain and objects that give pain. This is Dvesha. You try to get rid of objects that give pain. Man shuns pain and runs after pleasure in this world. No one teaches him to seek pleasure. The mind is born of Ananda. So, it runs after pleasure.

Dvesha is the root cause for human sufferings. Wars, splits, dissensions, sectarian quarrels, murders are due to Dvesha. Wherever there is Dvesha, there is jealousy side by side. Jealousy is the intimate companion of Dvesha. Jealousy is petty-mindedness. It is a great pity to find that the minds of even highly educated persons who preach on the platform are filled with jealousy and hatred, and petty-mindedness. What a

shame! As they are intelligent, they devise cunning methods and plans to destroy others, to get the whole fame and respect for themselves.

Sutra 2.9

svaraṣa-vāhī viduso 'pi tathā rūḍho 'bhiniveśaḥ

Fear of death is the continuous desire to live which is rooted even in the mind of the wise.

Death is the idea that the self will be destroyed due to the identification with the body and the mind. Abhinivesha is very powerful and manifests through prarabdha as an instinct in the body, the instinct of survival. Enlightened people also experience the fear of death, but are not affected by it. The only real solution to death is to attain samadhi through the application of the means of Yoga.

One can meditate on the experience of death, how it happens etc, and then meditate on the immortality of the Self.

In all living beings exists the self-benediction: May I continue to exist. May I live on. This self-benediction cannot exist in him who has not experienced the nature of death. By this the experience of former life is inferred. The experience of death in the previous birth remains as a subtle Vasana in the next birth that this should be separated from this body. This Vritti is Abhinivesa.

Bondage and Freedom

Sutra 2.17

draṣṭṛ-dṛśyayoḥ saṃyogo heya-hetuḥ

The cause of future Karma is the identification of the experiencer with the object that is being experienced.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

The cause of that which is to be avoided is the apparent union between Purusha and Prakriti, the seer and the seen, due to avidya or ignorance.

In the buddhi, Purusha reflects as the subject and the objects reflect as vrittis of objects and thus the process of knowing, cognitions, experiences, subject - objects awareness, takes place.

Objects have the power and purpose of being seen by the one who has the power of seeing, the Purusha. The power of awareness of the buddhi, which is an element of Prakriti, is a reflected power, which inheres only in Purusha.

The seer and the seen associate from beginningless time for a common purpose of experience and transcendence. This association is the cause of samsara, which is full of pain.

The remedy is therefore stated - removing the apparent union of the seer and the seen through the removal of avidya, through the intellect, the discriminating agent, and thus pain will be destroyed.

The three things to be understood are: the seer, the seen, their contact.

From Swami Sivananda's Commentary:

The cause for misery is the connection between the Seer and the seen. As the Chaitanya Sakti of the Purusha enters the Buddhi, the Purusha, who is only a witness and an Udaseenta (untouched) appears as Drashta. Drishya constitute all objects that are seen and also the instrument Buddhi through which it is seen, Indriyas, elements, etc. Buddhi is very near to Purusha. It is very subtle. Purusha is ever free and full of bliss. When conjunction takes place between the Purusha and mind (Buddhi), it appears to feel pleasure and pain through Adhyasa or reflection. By this conjunction through ignorance, the body, mind, Indriyas and Buddhi are mistaken for the real Purusha. Buddhi by its close contact with the Purusha and as it is very subtle and as the Sakti of Purusha has magnetized the Buddhi, appears like Purusha, just as the reflection of sun in water appears similar to the real sun. This is called Chit-Jada Granthi in Vedanta. This Abheda-Bhranti is Avidya, the root cause for all miseries. Kaivalya comes when this delusion is removed. If the conjunction between Buddhi and Purusha is removed, all miseries will terminate.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's Commentary:

When a person is identifying with this illusory world, the ego predominates, and he acts without wisdom, incurring new Karma for himself.

Sutra 2.20

draṣṭā dṛśimātraḥ Śuddho 'pi pratyayānupaśyaḥ

The seer is pure consciousness only, and though pure, he appears to see through the mind.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

The seer is pure consciousness. It is the witness of the mind and its vrittis.

The buddhi or intellect is changeful. It sometimes knows objects and sometimes doesn't know. The Purusha always knows the buddhi. It is changeless.

The buddhi does not exist for its own sake, but for the fulfillment of the purposes of the Purusha. The Purusha exists for its own sake, it is Sat or self-existent, whereas the buddhi is mithya or having no independent existence.

The buddhi is not totally dissimilar to Purusha, as it perceives the vrittis (the apparent subject), with the awareness of the Purusha, which witnesses the vrittis.

From Swami Sivananda's Commentary:

The Purusha is an embodiment of intelligence. He is ever pure and eternally free. He is always the silent witness of the play of Prakriti. Through intellect, the Purusha appears as if seeing, although really he never sees or does anything.

The qualities of intellect are superimposed on the Purusha. Just as the real color of the flower appears on the transparent crystal, so also the qualities of Buddhi appear on the Purusha. Hence, the Purusha appears to be happy or miserable.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's Commentary:

The Seer is the Self, or Purusha. It is untainted, pure, and without qualifications, but is reflected through the intellect of individual consciousnesses and is colored by sattwa, rajas, and tamas. It is veiled, appearing to have attributes, but in fact, it is Absolute Consciousness itself.

Sutra 2.24

tasya hetur-avidyā

The cause (of this union) is avidya.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

The cause of the apparent union is Avidya. Avidya means vasanas of avidya, which are responsible for the misapprehension of reality. Therefore it manifests again and again. When one develops viveka khyati, vasanas of viveka khyati are formed and therefore it ultimately manifests perpetually. The samskaras of viveka replace those of avidya. Avidya comes back again because there are vasanas of avidya that will be there as long as the union needs to be there, as long as the two purposes were not fulfilled.

From Swami Sivananda's Commentary:

'Its' means, the cause of the junction of the seer and sight, nature and sight, nature and Purusha. In the previous Sutra, the Svarupa of Samyoga and its effects are described. Here the cause of Samyoga is given. To blend or unite the Drashta and the Drishya as one, and to think of this 'I' is Avidya or Bhranti. The Jiva increases the Bhavana of 'I' and 'mine' by mistaking the Anatma body and mind as Atman. The mind, which is saturated with the Bhranti-Vasana, gets Laya in Pradhana during the deluge or cosmic Pralaya and comes back again during projection of this world. Destroy this ignorance. Give up identification with this body and mind. Rise above body and mind and realise the Purusha who is beyond cause and effect, and who is, therefore, Anaadi (beginningless), Ananta (endless) and Nirvikara (changeless). Apply yourself to Sadhana and realise the Purusha. Do not make any delay. The monkey-mind will upset you.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's Commentary:

The Soul, by its very nature, is eternal, omniscient and free. But it forgets its divinity through avidya, ignorance, and desires objects of the senses. So it must enter Prakriti, incarnating on earth to relearn that all in the material world is temporary and wrought with pain. This lesson is learned in time, depending on the desire for liberation, and the Soul returns to its Source.

Sutra 2.26

viveka-khyātir-aviplavā hānopāyah

The means of destroying avidya is unbroken discrimination.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

Means for removal is continuous viveka khyati. Yoga (means or sadhana) -> Yoga (attainment or siddhi - Samprajnata)

From Swami Sivananda's Commentary:

Discrimination must be undisturbed. It must become habitual. There must not be any break even for a twinkling of an eye. When discrimination operates, you will have complete inner life in Purusha. All the outgoing tendencies of the mind will stop. The Indriyas will be calm. This practice of discrimination is the cause for destroying ignorance, the cause of the junction of Prakriti and Purusha, leading to various experiences. Discrimination remains shaky as long as false knowledge has not been completely removed.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's Commentary:

The word viveka is translated as discriminative cognition, awareness of the distinction between the Self and the non-Self, and awareness of Reality. So the remedy for ignorance is the constant unwavering awareness that the individual is but Brahman itself. This can only be achieved through many years of conditioning the mind to turn to divine thoughts each time worldly thoughts enter. This is the purpose of meditation and other forms of sadhana.

Who is Ishvara (God)

Sutra I.23

Ishwara pranidhanad va

Or by devotion and self-surrender to God.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

The path of bhakti yoga is the other way that is primarily done through the grace of Ishwara. Ishwara is giving the yogi samadhi, through his grace, where as the first way was of self effort primarily. Bhakti is love of God. God bends down to him and rewards him and gives him samadhi. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that the best of the meditators is my Bhakta.

From Swami Sivananda's commentary:

In Sutra 20 of Chapter I, it is stated that Asamprajnata Samadhi is obtained by faith, energy, memory, meditation and discernment. Success in Samadhi is speedier for those who have intense Vairagya. This is given in Sutra 21. And now in this Sutra it is given: Or by devotion and self-surrender to Isvara. That is, success is rapid in attaining Asamprajnata Samadhi by devotion to Isvara. The devotee should have total, ungrudging, unreserved self-surrender to Isvara. He should entirely depend upon Isvara. He should not keep any secret desire or egoism for his self-gratification. He should not expect any kind of reward, even admiration, gratitude, thanks, for his services. He should completely dedicate himself and all his actions to the will of the Supreme Being. This is Ishvarapranidhana. It is true devotion.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's commentary:

While Purusha (Brahman or the Self) is the abstract view of the Lord in his purest absolute form, Ishwara is God as seen with attributes such as love, kindness, mercy, omniscience and so forth. Because the human mind is too limited to focus on abstractions, most people focus on his manifested form, Ishwara. In Western tradition, He is usually referred to as God, or Jehovah. In the Indian tradition, He is related to in various forms, such as Vishnu, the Preserver; Rama, the Righteous; and Durga, the Divine Mother. These various deities are not different gods, but Ishwara, the one God, who is so omnipotent that he is able to manifest in as many forms as are needed by individuals of different temperament to help each focus on the Supreme. Thus samadhi comes most quickly to those who place themselves in consciousness of God, however they may see him. That is, they have devotion, dedication and self-surrender to his will.

Sutra I.24

**Klesha karma vipakasayair aparamrstah purusha vishesa
Ishwarah**

Ishwara is that particular center of Divine Consciousness that is untouched by misery, Karma, or desires.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

The Supreme Lord Ishwara has never been touched by kleshas, karmas and their fruits vasanas. The results of karmas, kleshas Etc are attributed to Purusha for he is

their experiencer, though they take place only in Prakriti. It is like the king that experiences the result of Victory or defeat of his armies.

From Swami Sivananda's commentary:

Yoga of Patanjali Maharshi is a complement of Sankhya philosophy of Kapila. Kapila denies the existence of an Isvara. He says that Prakriti can do everything. Patanjali Maharshi admits the existence an Isvara. This philosophy hence derives its significant name Sa-Isvara Sankhya. Isvara of Patanjali is neither the personal God of the Bhaktas nor the impersonal Brahman of the Vedantins. His God is a peculiar Purusha, completely free from all afflictions, works, fruition and vehicles.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's commentary:

Ishwara is the immortal Self, or Purusha, with form. He is perceived as a being, and yet He is totally untouched by the ignorance of unhappiness, the law of cause and effect, and cravings. For Him, the opposites of the phenomenal world, such as pleasure and pain, do not exist.

Sutra I.25

tatra niratiśayaṃ sarvajña-bījam

In Him lies the seed of omniscience.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

There is only one omniscient being - Ishwara and He is the source of all knowledge, in all beings. Ishwara knows all beings, their karmas, their fruits, and he constructs the universe to suit the experiences of all beings, and he created the earth so all living beings can experience the fruits of their actions.

Ishwara is the master of creation.

In the mind of the creator was the highest Good - the emancipation of all the purushas.

The Lord knows all beings, but not through sense organs. He is the knower of field in all fields, i.e., the Antaryamin, or inner controller.

From Swami Sivananda's commentary:

The nature of Isvara is described in Sutras 24, 25 and 26. The way to develop devotion for Isvara is described in the Sutras 27 and 28. The fruits of devotion are described in Sutra 29. Infinite knowledge is God. Vayu Purana says: Omniscience, eternal satisfaction, eternal knowledge, independence, non-decreasing power, infinite power - these six are said to be the Angas of the Great Lord. Knowledge, non-attachment, Aisvarya, Tapas, truth, forgiveness, Dhairya or endurance, power of endurance, Atma Svarupajnana or knowledge of the Self and being the Adhishthana or substratum for everything and of all activities - these are the ten unchangeable (Avyayas) qualities that always exist in God.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's commentary:

God, or Ishwara, is not just all-knowing, but is knowledge itself. In uniting with Him, the highest knowledge is obtained. This does not refer to intellectual knowledge only, but also knowledge of the entire universe through the eye of wisdom and intuition.

Sutra I.26

Sa purvesam api guruh kalenana vacchedat

Unlimited by time, He is the Teacher of all other teachers, from the most ancient of times.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

Because He is so compassionate, and vows to save all beings from samsara, He appears as all the Gurus in all eternity.

He is the teacher of all teachers of worldly as well as spiritual knowledge. Ishwara created the knowledge and the instructions given by the teachers too.

Just like the Guru gives his grace to the whole hearted devoted disciple, the Lord gives His grace to those who contemplate Him in their hearts.

From Swami Sivananda's commentary:

The ancient teachers were conditioned by time. But this Isvara is Adi-Guru, who is not conditioned by time. The magazine of knowledge and power is within. The help of a Guru is very necessary to awaken this knowledge. No spiritual progress is possible without the aid of a Guru. That Guru who removes the veil of aspirants and obstacles

and throws light on their path, who is omniscient, who exists in the past, present and future, who is independent is God or Isvara.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's commentary:

The highest teacher is the Self, Purusha. All ancient sages, such as Jesus and Buddha, realized the Self. While they may have had earthly teachers, the Source of their vast knowledge was not of this plane. Living in a superconscious state, they had direct access of the Truth, that knowledge which is absolute.

Being the seed of all knowledge and its manifestation, all teachers, of whatever knowledge are receiving their knowledge from Isvara

Sutra I.27

Tasya vachakah pranavah

He manifests in the word OM.

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

His real name is OM or Pranava.

Pra - perfectly, nu - He is praised, i.e., OM is the praise of Ishwara done perfectly. It is the mantra of complete self-surrender. Ishwara releases His devotees from samsara, grants them samadhi and leads them to kaivalya (liberation) through intense bhakti.

From Swami Sivananda's commentary:

Study Mandukya Upanishad. You will have a detailed, elaborate explanation of this sacred syllable Om. Om is everything. In the Bible you will find: In the beginning there was the word; the word was with God. The word itself is God. This word is Om. This world and the Vedas take their origin from Om. In the Gita you will find: Om, the one-syllabled Brahman, reciting, thinking upon Me, he who goeth forth, abandoning the body, he goeth on the highest path. Lord Krishna says: I am Omkara. I am Pranava in all Vedas. Of speech, I am Ekakshara, the one-syllable. In the Upanishads you will find: Om is the bow; the mind is the arrow. Brahman is the target; know this Brahman with concentration; hit the target with Ekagrata; just as the arrow becomes one with the target, the individual soul will become identical with Brahman. Om has got four feet: Akara, Ukara, Makara and Ardhamatra; representing Visva, Taijasa, Prajna and Turiya.

A Sankalpa arose in Brahman. He wished: May I become many. The physical vibration of Om in the physical plane corresponds to the original vibration in God when Srishti began. All the trinities, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas; Brahma, Vishnu and Siva; preservation, creation and destruction; Jagrat, Svapna and Sushupti; A, U and M; etc., are contained in Om. The glory of Om cannot be adequately described.

The syllable Om is the most appropriate name of the Supreme Self. Just as a man is pleased when addressed by a name dear to him, so also God is pleased when this name Om is used. The greatness of this monosyllable is further proved by the fact of its being frequently used in the beginning and end of Japa, sacrifice and study of the Vedas. A Mantra has no life without Om. The first Mantra of the first chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad is: One ought to meditate upon the syllable Om.

Lord Yama says to Nachiketas: The goal which all the Vedas uniformly extol, which all acts of Tapas speak of, and wishing for which men lead the life of celibacy, the life of a Brahmacharin, that goal I tell you briefly. It is this Om.

'Pranava' means that which is always new. Pranava is unchanging and eternal. The relation between Sabdha and its meaning is Parinama Nitya and not Kutastha Nitya. Purusha only is Kutastha Nitya. Parinama Nitya is changing eternal. Kutastha Nitya is unchanging eternal. There are three factors in the comprehension of a word, e.g., milk. (1) the word 'milk.' (2) the object 'milk' and (3) the idea of 'milk' in the mind. Languages are different in different countries, but the ideas are the same. Sound-symbols vary. The idea of water is the same in all persons, but the sound-symbols are different viz., water in English; Pani in Hindi; Jal in Bengali and so on. Om is the basis for all sounds. All languages emanate from Om. The sound 'Om' starts from Nabhi (navel) and ends by closing the lips. Amen is only a modification of Om. You analyze and dissect any word. You will find Om there. All sound-symbols are centered in Om. That is the reason why Om is recognised as a common name for God by all religionists. The vibrations of Om can blow up a big mountain. Such is the power of Om. Every word has a corresponding object in the world. All words emanate from Om. Therefore in Om the world exists; in Om it is dissolved in cosmic Pralaya; and in Om it subsists. Om is the highest flower or offering for God.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's commentary:

OM (AUM), the sacred word of the Hindus, is one of the oldest known words. Over 5000 years ago, and probably much earlier in ancient Sumer, OM was known and used as a secret word by Sumerian mystics and priests. When the Indo-Aryan tribes wandered east from Sumer to northern India, they carried the precious and sacred

word OM with them. In the oldest known Indian scriptures, OM has always had a place of prominence. Nearly all Mantras and hymns begin and end with OM. OM is also used alone as a Mantra and is considered to be the most powerful one. There are countless stories still circulating in India telling that if a person can pronounce the word OM with the right vibration and proper concentration, he can attain all siddhis, that is power to perform all kinds of miracles, such as healing people, producing rain, or walking over water. Some contemporary Indian authorities on the subject have also a rational explanation for the miraculous power of OM. For instance Swami Sivananda, who was a practicing medical doctor before he became a yogi, explains that the vibrations produced in nasal cavities by the continuous chanting of OM stimulate the activity of the hypophysis and glandula pinealis by a direct massage-like action. Since those organs have great importance in the psychological and physiological functions of man, it may explain part of the mystery behind OM. It is impossible to describe the absolute meaning of OM, as it is said that only the enlightened can understand it completely. Its vibration is synonymous with union with the Divine. Its meaning is Supreme Reality itself. It is the same as Sat-Chit-Ananda, or Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. All vibration, and hence all language, falls within the range of OM. Word and thought, name and form, cannot be separated, for word is thought manifested through the vocal cords. Every thought has its corresponding word of some kind, as well as weight, power, form and energy. OM contains within itself all language, all thought. It is the Primal Vibration and Divine Power.

Sutra I.28

Taj-japas tad artha bhavanam

Constant repetition of OM and meditation on its meaning (leads to samadhi).

From Adi Shankaracharya's commentary:

Once the devotee understands the significance of OM he does japa of OM and meditation on its meaning (Ishwara) and attains samprajnatah samadhi.

The practice is: japa -> samadhi -> japa -> samadhi -> ... -> kaivalya.

When one meditates, one contemplates Ishwara by setting his heart on the Lord. This is mental worship of Ishwara, not mere mechanical repetition.

From Swami Sivananda's commentary:

The aspirant gets one-pointed mind by the repetition of Om. Avarana and Vikshepa slowly vanish. Japa is of three kinds, viz., Vaikhari (verbal), when the Japa is done loudly; Upamsu (semi-verbal), when the Japa is done in a whisper or humming mild tone; and Manasic (mental), when the Japa is done through the mind without moving the lips. The fruits of Upamsu Japa are a thousand times more powerful than the Vaikhari Japa, and the fruits of Manasic Japa are a lakh of times more powerful than the Vaikhari Japa. Mental Japa can be kept up even during work. It continues automatically during sleep also through force of habit. Beginners should do Vaikhari and Upamsu Japa. The significance of Om must be remembered during Japa. This is very, very important. The relation of the word and its meaning is eternal.

The mind of the Yogi who constantly repeats the Pranava and habituates the mind to the constant remembrance of the idea it carries, becomes one-pointed. The mind feels bliss in the one Lord alone. God showers His blessings on the Yogi. He gets the fruit of Samadhi and Kaivalya. You must make the Bhavana or the understanding of the significance of Om enter the mind over and over again by constant practice until it becomes part and parcel or the very substance of the mental existence. The Japa of Om should always be accompanied by meditation on Isvara. Mere parrot-like repetition or gramophonic repetition will not produce the maximum benefits. It has its own effects. Om serves as a boat to cross this ocean of Samsara. Om is a good companion for the mind. Just as soap washes cloth, so also Om washes the impurities of the mind. If you eat oranges twelve times, the force of Samskara and Vasana is increased in the mind. The greater the force of the Samskara, the greater the force of the Vasana for orange. Repetition strengthens the force of habit. By constant repetition of Om or any other Mantra, the force of spiritual Samskaras is increased. This is a great asset for you in the spiritual path. It will not allow the mind to run into the old grooves of Vishaya Vasanas or old ruts for sensual things.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's commentary:

Focussing on the abstract is more difficult than focussing on concrete images of the Lord. However, because repetition of OM produces thought waves which correspond to those of the Supreme, it is a direct path to samadhi. Swami Sivananda would always emphasize the power and glory of OM. In Bliss Divine, his greatest compilation of spiritual essays, he writes, 'Live in OM. Meditate on OM. Inhale and exhale OM. Rest peacefully in OM. Take shelter in OM.'

Sutra I.29

Tatah pratyak chetanadhigamo 'pyantarayabhas ca

From (the repetition of OM) is gained enlightening introspection and elimination of all obstacles.

From Swami Sivananda's commentary:

Through the grace of Isvara, the Yogi will not get any disease. The divine grace will descend when one repeats Om and meditates on its meaning with concentration. Japa makes the mind inward (Antarmukha Vritti), and removes all physical and mental obstacles. As Om and Isvara are inseparable, fixing the mind on Om means fixing the mind on Isvara. Doing Japa on Om is the remembrance of Isvara.

From Swami Vishnudevananda's commentary:

Through meditation on OM, the highest of Mantras, Self-Realization is possible. This is because the vibration of OM removes hindrances on the path and leads to realization of the Self which exists within every individual.