

CHAPTER-4

PATANJALI YOGA SUTRA -AN ANALYSIS OF DHĀRAṆĀ, DHYĀNA, AND SAMĀDHI

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali is a collection of Sanskrit sutras (aphorisms) focused on the theory and practice of yoga. Comprising 196 sutras, this ancient text was compiled in the early centuries CE by the sage Patanjali in India. Patanjali synthesized and organized knowledge about yoga from much older traditions.

The Yoga Sutras are renowned for their exploration of ashtanga, the eight elements of practice that culminate in Samādhi—concentration of the mind on an object of meditation. These elements include yama (abstinences), niyama (observances), asana (yoga postures), pranayama (breath control), pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), Dhāraṇā (concentration of the mind), Dhyāna (meditation), and Samādhi (absorption). However, the primary goal of the Yoga Sutras is kaivalya, the discernment of purusha, the witness-consciousness, as distinct from prakriti, the cognitive apparatus. It aims to disentangle purusha from the muddled defilements of prakriti.

Patañjali divided his *Yoga Sutras* into four chapters or (Sanskrit *Pada*), containing in all 196 aphorisms, divided in four Pada.

Samādhi Pada: There are 51 sutras in Samādhi Pada. Samādhi is a state of direct and reliable perception (*pramāṇa*) where "the seer" (*Purusha*, pure consciousness, the Self) abides in itself. Samādhi is the main technique the yogi learns by which to calm the

workings of the mind, whereafter **Kaivalya**, the isolation of 'the seer' from the impurities of the mind, is attained. The author describes yoga and then the nature and the means of attaining samādhi.

Sadhana Pada: There are 55 sutras in Sadhana Pada. Sadhana is the Sanskrit for "practice" or "discipline," aiming at discriminative discernment, to discern the Seer (consciousness) from its objects and the hindrances. Here the author outlines two systems of Yoga: Kriyā Yoga and Aṣṭāṅga Yoga ('Eightlimbed Yoga').

Vibhuti Pada: There are 56 sutras in Vibhuti Pada. Vibhuti is the Sanskrit word for "power" or "manifestation". In chapter 3, samyama is outlined:

“*Dhāraṇā* – concentration, *Dhyāna* – meditation, *Samādhi* – absorption”.

Kaivalya Pada: The Kaivalya Pada has thirty-four sutras. The process of Kaivalya "isolation" involves removing the Seer from the mind's contents so that its movements no longer perturb it. It is utilised in places where other literature frequently use the term moksha (liberation), and it stands for emancipation or liberation. The liberation process and the Seer's reality are explained in the Kaivalya Pada..

4.1 CONCEPT OF YOGA

“The Sanskrit term योग (yoga) is derived from the root yuj (युज)”, meaning "to attach, join, harness, yoke." References to yoga can be found in ancient Indian texts, including the Rigveda and several Upanishads. The word "yoga" with its modern meaning is first found in the Katha Upanishad. The ancient Sanskrit grammarian Pāṇini (4th century BCE) stated that the word "yoga" could come from two roots: yuj samādhau (to concentrate) or yujir yoga (to yoke). The root yuj samādhau, which means "to concentrate," is regarded by traditional commentators on the Yoga Sutras as the accurate derivation.

4.2 CONCEPT OF DHĀRAṆĀ, DHYĀNA, AND SAMĀDHI IN PATANJALI YOGA SUTRA

Dhāraṇā (Sanskrit: धारणा) translates to "collection or concentration of the mind (joined with the retention of breath)", "the act of holding, bearing, wearing, supporting, maintaining, retaining, keeping back (in remembrance), a good memory", "firmness, steadfastness, certainty."

The word, which refers to behaviours associated with keeping, carrying, preserving, and resolving, comes from the Sanskrit verbs dha and ana. "Dhāraṇā represents the initial step in deep concentration meditation", wherein the practitioner focuses on an object, maintaining unwavering consciousness upon it.

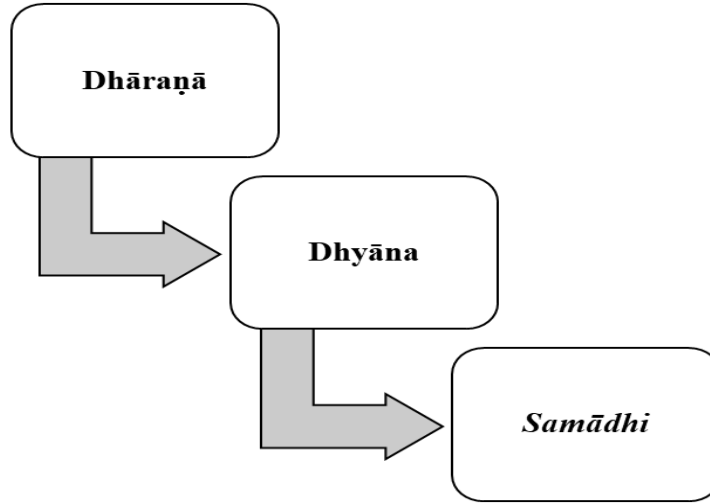


Figure 2: Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi

देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा ॥ ३.१॥(योग दर्शन)

desa-bandhaṁ cittasya dhāraṇā. “ (Yog Darshan-3/1)”

“Concentration locks consciousness on a single area”.

Dhyāna (Sanskrit: ध्यान, Pali: ज्ञान) means "contemplation, reflection" and "profound, abstract meditation". The origin of the word can be traced back to the root "Dhi," which, in the earliest texts of the Vedas, signifies "imaginative vision."

तत्र प्रत्ययैकतानता ध्यानम् ॥ ३.२ ॥(योग दर्शन)

tatra pratyayaika-tānatā dhyānam. (Yog Darshan-3/2)

When one is in a state of meditative absorption, all of their senses are directed towards the selected object of focus. Although its exact meaning is still unknown, the term Dhyāna appears in the Aranyaka and Brahmana layers of the Vedas. It is employed in the early Upanishads to denote "contemplation" or "meditation," and it is important for the development of self-awareness.

Samādhi (Sanskrit: समाधि): “Samādhi is a state of meditative consciousness characterized by oneness with the object of meditation”. The act of meditation and the object of meditation are one and the same in this state. Two varieties of samādhi can be distinguished: those that rely on an object of meditation for support and those that do not.

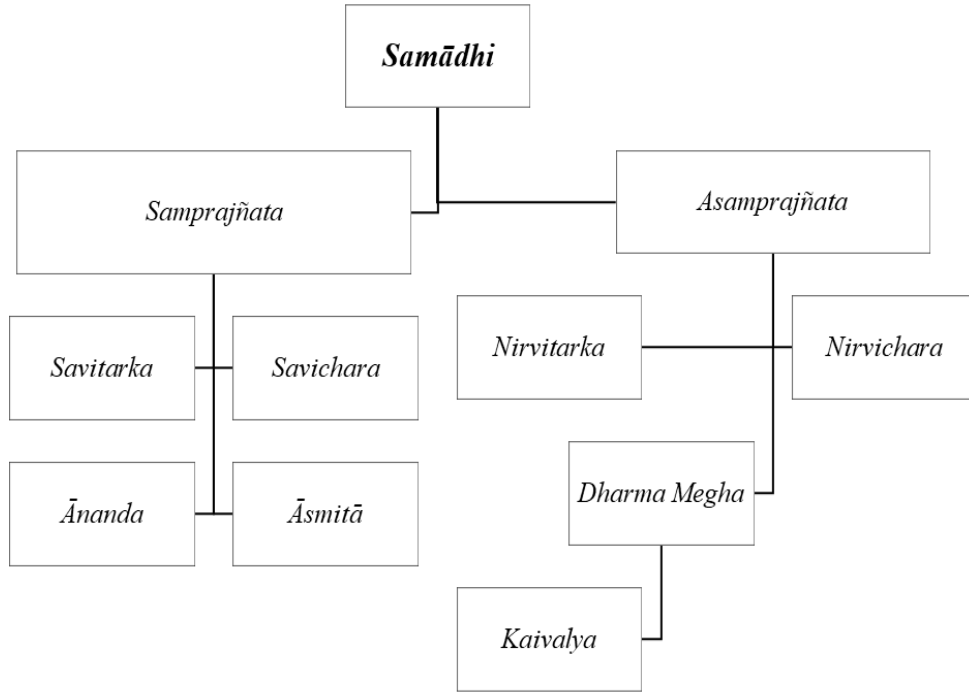


Figure 3: Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi

4.3 SAMĀDHI STATE

“Samādhi, the eighth limb of the Yoga Sūtras, is described by Patanjali as a state of meditative absorption”. It is achieved through the practice of Dhāraṇā (focused attention) and Dhyāna (effortless meditation), wherein one comprehends the True Essential Nature without mental distortion. Samādhi represents the culmination of the meditation process.

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः ॥ ३.३॥(योग दर्शन)

“*tad evārtha-mâtra-nirbhâsâ svarûpa-âûnyam iva samâdhî. (Yog Darshan-3/3)*”

“When only the essential nature of the object shines forth, as if formless, integration has arisen”.

Samprajñata samādhi, also known as sabija samādhi, refers to the state of samādhi supported by an object of meditation. Patanjali outlines in Sutra 1:17 that samprajñata samādhi consists of four stages: "complete high consciousness (samprajñata samādhi) is that which is accompanied by vitarka (deliberation), vicara (reflection), ānanda (ecstasy), and asmitā (a sense of 'I'-ness)". Deliberation and reflection, the first two stages, serve as the foundation for various types of samāpatti.

वितर्कविचारानन्दास्मितारूपानुगमात्संप्रज्ञातः ॥ 1.17 ॥ (योग दर्शन)

“vitarka-vicāra-ānanda-asmitā-rupa-anugamāt-samprajñātaḥ” ||1.17|| (*Yog Darshan*)

Savitarka, or "deliberative" samādhi, involves concentrating the mind (citta) on a tangible object of meditation, like a lamp's flame, the tip of the nose or the likeness of a god. Conceptualization (vikalpa) continues, encompassing perception, words, and knowledge related to the object. When this deliberation ceases, it transitions into nirvitarka samāpatti.

Savichara, or "reflective" samādhi, centers the mind on a subtle object not discernible to the senses but inferred, such as the chakras, inner breath (prana), nadis, senses, mind, cognition, self-awareness (I-am-ness), and intellect (buddhi). When this reflection is stilled, nirvichara samāpatti follows. The latter two states, sānanda samādhi and sāsmitā, stand for a state of meditation and a savichara samādhi object, respectively:

Sānanda, or "with bliss," signifies a state of profound bliss or ecstasy in meditation, devoid of vicara and vitarka.

Sāsmitā, "with egoity": “the citta is concentrated upon the sense or feeling of” "I-am-ness".

Asamprajñata samādhi (“*nirvikalpa samādhi* and *nirbija samādhi*”)

Refers to *samādhi* without the support of an object of meditation, which leads to knowledge of *purusha* or consciousness, the subtlest element.

विरामप्रत्ययाभ्यासपूर्वः संस्कारशेषोऽन्यः ॥1.18॥(योग दर्शन)

virāma-pratyaya-abhyāsa-pūrvah saṁskāra-śeṣo-'nyah ॥1-18॥(*Yog Darshan*)

The other type of focus is one in which there are no objects in the consciousness, just feelings from the subconscious that are similar to burnt seeds. It is achieved by practicing non-attachment and continuously monitoring one's cognitive patterns.

तस्यापि निरोधे सर्वनिरोधान्निर्बीजः समाधिः ॥1.51॥(योग दर्शन)

“tasyāpi nirodhe sarva-nirodhān-nirbījah samādhiḥ” ॥1.51॥

One enters the "seedless" samadhi when the impression caused by that samādhi is totally eliminated, eradicating all thought-waves in the mind.

Dharma Megha Samādhi:

प्रसङ्ख्यानेऽप्यकुसीदस्य सर्वथा विवेकख्यातेर्धर्ममेघः समाधिः ॥4.29॥(योग दर्शन)

Prasaṅkhyāne'pyakusīdasya sarvathā vivekakhyāterdharmameghah samādhiḥ ॥4.29॥

One who maintains unwavering focus even while possessing all psychic powers achieves, through perfect discrimination, the state of samadhi known as the "cloud of virtue."

Kaivalya:

पुरुषार्थशून्यानां गुणानां प्रतिप्रसवः कैवल्यं स्वरूपप्रतिष्ठा वा चितिशक्तिरिति ॥4.34॥

(योग दर्शन)

“Puruṣārthaśūnyānāṃ guṇānāṃ pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyaṃ svarūpapraṭiṣṭhā vā citiśaktiriti”||4.34||

The gunas melt into Prakriti because they are no longer useful to the Atman. This is the condition of freedom, where the pure consciousness of the Atman is revealed as its intrinsic purity.

4.4 SAṂYAMAḤ

Samyama is the application of these three practices—concentration, meditation, and absorption—to a single subject.

त्रयमेकत्र संयमः ||“3-4”||

trayam-ekatra saṁyamaḥ ||3-4||

Samyama is just an easy-to-understand technical name for the three steps involved in understanding an object's fundamental nature.

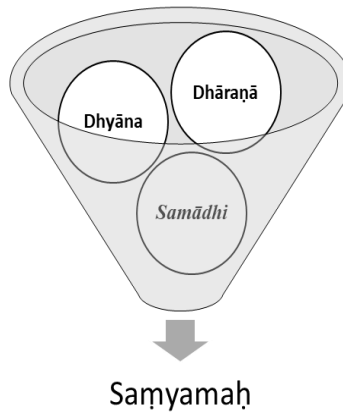


Figure 4: Saṁyamaḥ

4.5 SUMMARY

“Maharishi Patanjali has given us an amazing and crystal-clear road map towards Kaivalya though 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” (Bhavanani, 2014).