



## **The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali - Commentary by Helen Hamilton**

### **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali are legendary in the world of yoga, and in my opinion should be revered as much as the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and similar scriptures. Patanjali has taken this beautiful journey of Yoga himself and then built a bridge for us all to cross to join him by laying down the complete journey of Yoga, enlightenment or Self-realisation into four books (or padas) which we can follow step by step. Each sutra is a short sentence or few sentences which various teachers have used and expanded upon in their own unique way over the ages. Sri Patanjali's work makes the art, science or path of Yoga available to us all. He is a visionary and legend beyond comparison. His work to document these sutras is a labour of love, offered from heart to heart with direct transmission, and to study each sutra carefully and then simply do our best to apply it is enough.

Yoga can be translated as "union", and this is of the imaginary separate self back into the Infinite Self. We may know there never was a "someone" here to merge back into the Self, but Sri Patanjali shows us step by step how we may still be investing energy, time and focus in this imaginary self and can therefore withdraw focus from it. This is all that is needed for total awakening in this lifetime. The great Self emerges on its own when no longer clouded (seemingly) by the egoic sense of self. There is nothing to eliminate or lose here, and we can move forward freely and with security. You cannot lose what was never here, but you can see clearer what you already are.

This scripture is so important that I have used 3 different translations/commentaries of the original text in writing this commentary. If the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali enthrals your heart like it did mine, you may also want to study these other versions, too.

This version has been used for translation and all the sutras are quoted from this. Sri Swami Satchidananda comments and expands upon most sutras in books (pada) one and two -

[Yoga Sutras of Patanjali](#)

Recommended in the above translation (in further reading) is the following book that has commentary on each sutra in all four books, cross-referencing and summaries of pivotal sutra sequences. Translation of the sutras in this copy does vary slightly to Sri Swami Satchidananda's translation occasionally - [Inside the Yoga Sutras: A Complete Sourcebook for the Study and Practice of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras](#)

Finally, this work by Swami Vivekananda also covers his interpretations of the four books of the Yoga Sutras, sutra by sutra and is well worth reading if you feel so pulled - [Raja Yoga](#)

I have attempted to combine and condense these three great works, whilst preserving their originality and individuality in this commentary. I have also added my own unique perspectives and insights from my own application of the sutras and journey of Yoga. These Sutras have the power to allow the total unfolding of your own Divinity, and I have deep gratitude for Sri Patanjali and all those great beings who have helped me to write this. It is my most fervent wish that I can make this visionary work on the Divine Science of Yoga even more accessible than ever before

to students who could benefit. Sri Patanjali is the innovator, scientist and genius who organised these sutras into four sections, books or “padas” to help us learn and evolve sequentially, each sutra taking us deeper into an ever-unfolding liberation into a life devoid of any limitation and finite perspectives and full of wonder, insight, peace and absolute clarity.

The four books are “Samadhi Pada” (portion on contemplation), “Sadhana Pada” (portion on practice), “Vibhuti Pada” (portion on accomplishments) and finally “Kaivalya Pada” (portion on Absoluteness). First, Sri Patanjali shows us what is possible with and from our yoga practice, then in book two he shows us how to begin working towards it. In book three, he shows us some of the powers and other skills that may begin to come to the advanced yogi, with a warning that these should not be clung to or claimed as a separate being. Finally, in book four, we are given the final few pieces of information to make our understanding of reality complete and to live as that Reality. To fully assimilate these teachings, we will need to have an open mind, now more than ever.

These translations are not the only ones, and many great teachers had added their wisdom to these great sutras. These are simply the ones that have had the biggest impact upon myself as I have studied and worked towards freedom. “The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali” sat on my bookshelf for years when I first got it, unread and resisted after a quick glimpse at a few random pages of the book. The power and wisdom of these sutras confused my closed mind and brought all my resistance to the surface. I like to think that the power of the Sutras and Sri Patanjali (along with Sri Swami Satchidananda whose commentary I had bought as above) slowly melted that resistance and allowed the sleeping giant of the Self that was my real identity to begin to shine through. After years had passed, I finally picked up the book again, and it was as if it had been magically transformed, scarcely knowable as the same book! Instead of resistance this time, I met the book with tears of relief and gratitude that this powerful scripture had opened my heart and mind enough to make me eager to understand. With goosebumps I realised if it had this power even whilst I was resisting it, what would happen when I actively engaged with it?

What unfolded from there is nothing short of miraculous to my mind and yet completely normal to the Infinite Self. I desire for you the same transformation and beautiful journey.

We will study Raja Yoga or royal yoga through these sutras. Raja yoga is sometimes also called “Eight limbed yoga” and each of the eight limbs will be discussed in the sutras. “Sutra” means “thread” or to stitch together. As we progress through these books, one by one, we will come to see how all of these sutras are joining together in one great thread that anyone can follow back to total freedom and peace. There are 196 sutras that should be studied in the right order for fullest liberation.

Each sutra will give you an initial piece of information which may or may not have an impact upon you. Whether you are changed by simply reading a sutra or not does not matter, for these sutras are like seeds that are being planted in your consciousness that will grow and eventually permeate your whole thought process, changing it from the usual endless chatter of the mind to intelligent, discerning thought that is able to muse about Reality. Assimilate the Yoga Sutras deeply and you will allow the inner Guru to emerge and blossom completely. Infinite Peace is the promise of Raja Yoga, and the payment demanded for this is only open-minded study of these teachings and an attempt to apply what you are learning. You are not even responsible for the success of your endeavours, as that is assured upon beginning.

As you begin your study through each section, try to understand each sutra the best you can and discuss with the whole class the meaning and implication of that sutra. Try to apply it and note down any insights, resistance and openings.

**I would like the whole cohort of Acharya students to contribute to a joint report on each section, submitted to me on the appropriate dates. There will be one report per section (pada) from the whole class. I'd like to hear about your experiences of applying or understanding each sutra. There must be at least one comment on each sutra with no**

**maximum number of comments. Please place the name of the student who contributes each comment. Each and every student must contribute one (or more) comments to the joint report.**

## **Book One – Samadhi Pada - Portion on Contemplation**

The first book is “Samadhi pada” which gives us an overall view of yoga, introduces us to meditation, examines the basic reasons for our mind’s incessant chatter and paints a picture of the various levels of Samadhi that is possible to achieve.

“Samadhi” is translated literally as “a state of intense concentration, achieved through meditation, that eventually allows one to become completely absorbed into the Divine”. This definition may seem very grandiose but it is only our natural state as human beings. We are not separate entities, removed from the Divine energy and separate from God. We are God expressing Itself as a human being and as all this creation throughout all time. Raja Yoga takes one down the path to the ultimate union into Samadhi, bringing with it an infinite peace, profound joy and sense of our unlimited, infinite nature.

Let us begin our journey!

### **Sutra 1:1 Now the exposition of Yoga is being made.**

This sutra begins our journey with an understanding that we will not only be learning these sutras at a deeper level, but that to achieve Yoga (union with the Divine) the exposition of them is necessary. Exposition means to allow these sutras to move from theory to experiential understanding. In short, we will become the sutras.

Exposition can only happen now - it can only happen with the power of this present moment. This means that to come to live as and from these sutras is living AS the present moment. You cannot still live as a “someone” limited in time and space and be living experientially as the sutras. Patanjali is calling our attention to this fact and reminding us that the only time we have to do this work is Now. In fact, concentration is the important skill we will learn, and this will evolve into deep meditation and then eventually constant, effortless Samadhi. Concentration can only be an intense focus in the present moment.

Perhaps we are reminded of this because as the life force/kundalini begins to rise and settles ever higher in the chakra system, we will seem to be evolving faster than ever before. It will really seem like we are letting go of blockages, gaining clarity and deepening our realisation. When this happens we will be ever tempted to identify again with a sense of being a someone who is making progress, getting there, evolving and “almost fully Self-Realised.” Our crowning achievement may seem to be the ability to leave the body at will through the crown chakra (pun intended), but we must not identify even here. We are as we always were, and the light of our Real Self is simply diffusing Itself through the body, mind, chakras, meridians and nadis. We have not made any progress at all - as tempting as it is to think we have; it will keep us bound in illusion and centre our energy in the solar plexus chakra. We will be lost in being the “doer of spiritual actions.” All we have is what is happening right now, and we can notice and detach from the mind’s incessant capacity to compare what is happening in one artificial moment compared to another artificial separate moment.

Patanjali reminds us that we are beginning this now, in this fresh new moment and can approach the sutras as if we have not met them before (and perhaps we have not). Exposition happens when we come to our study with an open mind and heart and a sincere urge to realise our True Self. Patanjali warns us to pay attention, be present now and the rest will unfold.

Concentration is the ability to focus on one thing to the exclusion of all others. We do this often without realising it, when we are engrossed in a good book or watching a movie, for example. We may not hear other things going on in the room or outside. It is natural for us to exclude things from our perception because we would be overwhelmed if we had to focus on all the stimuli coming in through our senses right now. Notice that as you read these words in your head, you are mostly ignoring the senses of touch, taste and hearing (external hearing as you may be hearing your voice in your head as these written words). If you are listening to someone read these words, you will be ignoring the mind's thoughts and all the other senses. Even as your eyes read these words, you will be ignoring what you are perceiving in your peripheral vision.

What is it that determines what we pay attention to, then? Usually, it is our ego which says, "This is important and aids survival! Please pay attention!" In effect, our attention is dragged around by what our ego feels is relevant, important and useable to further our goals. We could say that ego is the lowest form of mind, centred on physical survival. In Yoga practice, we are engaging a higher aspect of mind called the "buddhi" which can discriminate and make determinations on a higher level. Concentration is learning to focus attention consistently (and eventually unbroken) on what is important for our spiritual awakening and not that which is furthering our illusionary self, and we can use our intellect to discern this. Is the spiritual practice you are currently undertaking being used to further a sense of a "doer", or is it helping to see more clearly what you already are?

Concentration is not effort but intense focus. If I asked you to pay attention to me because I was about to tell you something of vital importance or the secret to our whole awakening, would you be very intensely alert, awake and listening? All attention would be placed on me, and everything else would automatically be ignored. Your stomach may remind you it is time to eat, your bladder may begin to complain and a siren may be going off outside, but you would not notice it because all attention was on me. Let us also consider if you were sitting quietly at home and there was a feeling of loneliness rising and sadness. At that moment the phone rings and your friend tells you that you all have won the lottery (five of you shared a ticket and won hundreds of thousands together). Your friend wants to meet to celebrate. Do you tell them you are too sad to meet? No, of course not! Instantly all previous states are ignored and excitement blooms. You are putting your shoes on faster than you can think where you need to go.

If you create anything like music, art or love to cook, you will already know this as you may forget to eat or even sleep when "in the zone."

All this is to say that concentration is not a new skill, we are only learning to do it at will and for prolonged periods of time. To concentrate consciously is like building a spiritual muscle which we must exercise daily, and it is this that we call meditation. Meditation is concentration that has become effortless.

### **Sutra 1:2 The restraint of the modifications of mind-stuff is Yoga.**

This sutra gives us the whole process of Yoga which is simply to stop all mental modifications. Before we have much of a developed mind as an infant, we are at peace. Later still, when we transcend the mind through Yoga, we are also at peace. Each thought that we have (and believe) is a distortion of reality. A thought is a mental modification of reality, subtly changing our perspective of what is real and true. Over time, we have so many of these modifications going on that we may believe the exact opposite of what is actually happening to be real. We come to believe we are born, will die and are separate and alone. We believe we need to ensure our survival and so much more.

The world, others and ourselves are just fine in Reality, but our perception is clouded and distorted by these mental modifications. Yoga brings us to a place where we can consciously and effortlessly (and eventually continuously) cease thinking and modifying our perception. This is Samadhi.

When this happens then all becomes clear, and we can let everything be as it is. Yoga then is not so much a physical discipline but a spiritual one whereby we set out to understand why the mind moves, how it changes our perception of reality, and to restrain it from doing so. Understanding leads to restraint naturally and effortlessly, and that is why we study and meditate upon these sutras.

In essence, this sutra simply tells us that all mind activity is based on ignorance of our true nature and that when the mind stops, so does the distortion of reality, and all is revealed. In practical terms, we cannot make the mind stop but only bring the understanding of Truth into it so that it lets go of thoughts that no longer serve us. In our actual practice, mind will stop periodically and often but only for brief moments and then begin talking again. These moments will happen more often over time and for longer periods during our meditation. Meditation is the application of what we are learning here and its assimilation. It is both where we apply the sutras AND the result of their application, and this will become clearer over time. We will also notice that outside of our meditation, (during the rest of our day) the mind is gradually thinking less and less. This may not be noticed at first but will eventually become clearer.

Mental modifications have various categories, and Patanjali will dive deeper into those in further sutras, but for now it is enough to see that each thought is a distortion of reality and that when mind stops moving, it clearly reflects the Infinite Self, just like when a lake of water has no ripples or movement, it will reflect the landscape or sky perfectly. When there are ripples, the landscape is not seen. Each distortion is added to by further distortion. Each thought deepens our identity with the body, based upon the original distortion or modification that "I am this mind and body." After we believe the label "body" for what really is just a shape in the shapelessness, we believe in further labels which distort our perception even further. We believe in the labels "male" or "female," "mine" or "yours" and much more. Consider how differently we feel about the labels that are applied to the two human bodies, one we would call "dad" and the other "stranger." On and on go the modifications on the empty shape in the shapelessness until we are so completely lost in identification and not able to remember we have built this thought-constructed self around our body and called it "me." We have a whole set of conditioned thoughts, words and actions for the label "dad" and another for "boss" and still another set for "stranger." It is as if each modification adds another covering to our perception, veiling it ever more until we may be totally unable to see what is true. Our thoughts become all important to us and are worshipped as the absolute truth.

Yoga will help us forget all these modifications by showing us what is true, stage by stage and sutra by sutra. It is like removing the veils over the eyes bit by bit until reality shines clearly and obviously. Yoga will help us achieve total mastery over the mind so that it is our choice whether it moves or not, thinks or not. It will also allow us to use the mind to think something through with our intellect but never be caught in it again. Yoga will give us absolute control over mind and even make it come to serve us (or perhaps more clearly see that it has always been our servant). Mind will become a clear vessel to reflect the Truth. This progress will seem to happen gradually and will unfold as the ability to not believe or pay attention to certain thoughts that used to pull at our attention incessantly.

### **Sutra 1:3 Then the Seer (Self) abides in its own nature.**

Note: Patanjali uses the terms "Seer" and "the seen" often to describe the unmanifested Self and the manifestation. Any phenomenon at all, whether subtle (like energy or a thought) or gross (like a human body or a planet) is the seen because the Seer sees it, knows it or is aware of it. This is not some far away Seer or advanced stage or Self-Realisation; right now you see your thoughts or the absence of them, and you are aware of sounds in your environment or aware of your body. The Seer is what you are and you are always free and yet that freedom is not always able to express itself fully though and as our mind and body. This freedom becomes distorted due to all the modifications of the mind stuff mentioned in the previous sutra. This sutra simply says that when these modifications stop, your real nature will shine clearly through the mind and body, and

the distortion will have stopped. It is important to note that this freedom will be able to express itself incrementally at first as the modifications are stopped bit by bit.

When the mind is quiet, the Truth is obvious, and as the Truth becomes more and more obvious, the mind becomes even quieter. As evolving Yogi's, we are simply getting on this upward spiral into peace. The Seer is always unmodified and free and is never lost or confused; that only seems to happen when it flows through a human mind lost in the idea of separation. The mind has mis-identified itself as the Seer and is coming to realise that has never been true. The Seer watches the mind but is not at all involved with it.

Patanjali uses the word "abide" because it suggests that this is effortless once the mind is quiet. Our real nature is this effortless Seer that watches all that unfolds in time and space and yet is beyond all manifestation. This becomes obviously clear once the distortions of mind have stopped, just as a still lake of water reflects the sky above it and landscape. Whilst the surface of the lake is not still, nothing can allow us to see the sky through it and yet the sky always remains as it is. The Seer rests in its unmodified state.

Perhaps Patanjali is removing our doubt in these first few sutras by telling us firstly that exposition of the Truth IS happening now (not an if) in sutra 1 and now telling us in sutra 3 that we WILL abide effortlessly in our own peaceful nature once the modifications of the mind stop. There is no room for uncertainty here, and every person that has brought the modifications of the mind stuff to a halt has always experienced the effortless abidance of the Seer/Self. There is no other option. Once mind stops moving, we see we were always free. Our mind will stop for short moments at first and then later for longer periods, and eventually it will stop permanently. This does not mean we cannot ever think again because all that stops is the incessant and repetitive thoughts that cycle around and reach no conclusions and are based on our misperception of who we are.

#### **Sutra 1:4 At other times (the Self appears to) assume the forms of the mental modifications.**

The fourth sutra gives us a deeper explanation of why thoughts arise at all and an ultimate shortcut to freedom. Thoughts are arising because of identification with the body, mind, roles we play, etc. We think that "I am a mother" is an actual true statement, when in reality, one body gave birth to another body and is playing the roles of "parent" and "child". We identify with our profession, with our bodily gender (I am a man/woman) and even our country of birth (I am English, Canadian, etc). We even identify with our emotions and say "I am angry" instead of "there is anger arising in this body". On and on the identification goes. We believe we are tired, hungry, lost and seeking the Truth, when in fact, we are just here watching it all as the Seer. All identification thoughts are the "seen." If you want to realise this on a deep level, try to describe yourself and you will find that everything you say is a description of a thought process, of the body, of the mind, about a level of consciousness or a role you are playing in that body. What can you actually say about you? Nothing at all except that you exist.

This sutra also gives us another very helpful fact here when Patanjali uses the words "At other times." When the mental modifications (thoughts) have stopped, that is because there is concentration going on, and all attention is on the Self. When attention wavers, it is because concentration has stopped (or at least wavered in its intensity). When attention moves away from the Self, the separate being and all of its karmic patterns suddenly seem to exist again and have to be dealt with. In perfect concentration on the Self, no mental modifications exist to even have to bring to a stop. This means no identification has happened and no time, space or karma really exists. As soon as our attention wanders away from the Self (seemingly because it actually cannot!) there seems to be mental modifications, distortions of the mind to fix, but if all this can vanish the moment we listen to the Silence, how real is it? If all the karmic patterns and separate beings seem to reappear just from a shift of our attention away from the unity of the Self, how real are they anyway? What if we are experiencing this journey out of illusion ONLY because we

feel it's possible that illusion can exist outside/separate to/of the Self? The implications of this sentence when understood are immense.

Even if something called "illusion" were possible and existed, the Self would still remain unchanged as the witness of whatever is seen (or created) as the unmodified Self. It is only our ability to think that all this is happening to us, as the Self, that is the root of all misery.

The shortcut that Patanjali offers here is subtle and yet worth deeper investigation. We are told in Sutra 3 that when the mental modifications stop (thoughts) then the Self abides in its own nature. If we can recognise that the Self always abides in its own nature, we are free immediately. Do we have to wait for all mental modifications to stop before we feel that freedom? Not if we get this shortcut! The Self only appears to manifest as thoughts or mental modifications. It only ever appears to be a thought but never actually is. At all times there is only the Self appearing to be a multitude of things. The Self remains always the same, whether mental modifications have stopped or not! IF we shine a bright light through a window into a room, that room will be illuminated unless the window is dirty. As the window gets cleaned (through our Yoga practices), it seems that more and more of the light can shine through to the room and eventually the room is as bright as the light itself. If we can realise that the light is appearing to take the shape of a window, the room, the illumination, the darkness AND the dirt on the window, then we see only light everywhere and nothing is really happening.

### **Sutra 1:5 There are five kinds of mental modifications which are either painful or painless.**

In this sutra we learn that there are five basic types of mental modification of Reality (called "vrittis") and they can be categorised by their effect. There are two basic groups of modifications and whilst Patanjali will list them all in the next sutra, he gives us a head start by recognising that all thoughts (mental modifications) fit into two categories; those that bring pain and those that are painless. We could also use the terms "selfish" and "selfless" for these modifications. They will either be thoughts that serve only us as the imaginary separate being or thoughts about being the infinite being (thoughts that serve everyone). Thoughts that are from a separate self may appear to be painful or painless, but as we go deeper into the nature of these thoughts, we will see that all thoughts from the separate self will lead to pain.

Let's look at an example to help illustrate this. If I think I am separate to everyone else, and I decide I want to have some fun, I may feel drawn to do something like drinking alcohol, staying up too late or other things that initially make me feel good. As I drink the alcohol I feel good, but later on I will feel bad, and there will be pain. If I stay up too late having fun it feels good until the next day when I feel bad because I am tired. We can see even on the physical level, this thought that seems to be painless will bring pain. On a deeper level, any thought that is coming from an imaginary separate self is always going to bring pain because it reminds us of the idea we are separate to others. Any thought that I assert will remind me of my loneliness in some way. I may have many thoughts after the initial thought about how I have nobody to drink with or stay up late with. One thought based in separation gives birth to potentially hundreds more.

In contrast, thoughts about the infinite being will not bring such pain because they are closer to the actual Reality (no thought is actually true but thoughts from the infinite Self are closer). This is because the pain of some types of modifications/thoughts comes not from the thought itself but from the sense of division inside that the thought emphasises. We can make a huge leap forward when we understand this because we will see that all of the thoughts that come from a place of separation are only going to cause more pain through emphasising the imaginary divide between "me and other". The pain comes from the division and then the resulting thoughts are all aimed at helping us feel better, but they never can. There can be no lasting happiness or joy when we are sure we are a separate being. All our attempts to feel better will only end in more pain. This gives us a vital clue to how to come out of suffering.

Sri Patanjali advises that we begin to favour thoughts that are from or about the infinite Being, if the mind is going to think, let us at least get it thinking about helpful and relevant thoughts. The mass of thoughts that arise from the place of separation merely drain our energy and cloud Reality from our view. We can cultivate thoughts from the infinite Self by reading scripture such as this, discussing Reality with others on the pathway and by simply wanting to think about the only thing that exists - the Self. All other thought is delusion. Eventually, we will have to let go of even the painless thoughts about Reality, but that will not be a chore then because we will be tasting actual Reality, and we will be more able to see how any thought at all distorts Reality. No thought about Reality can ever compare with actual Reality. Patanjali gives a way to wean ourselves off the dependence on thoughts as a way to navigate our world; let go of the painful ones first and enjoy the painless. Eventually even the painless ones will be painful, and we will be happy to be free of them.

### **Sutra 1:6 They are right knowledge, misconception, verbal delusion, sleep and memory.**

This sutra describes the five types of vrittis or mental modifications. These vrittis or mental modifications are right knowledge, misconception, verbal delusion, sleep and memory. In this sutra and the next few, Patanjali describes the type of modifications, the type of thoughts that we will have in order to help us begin to familiarise ourselves with them. When we become aware of the types of thoughts that we have, we may feel less overwhelmed by the mind and be able to sort thoughts into categories. When we have categories, we can begin to let go of the ones that are not useful, as a first step, as we discussed in the previous sutra, holding on to the ones that are useful for now, and painless. In this way, we begin to feel in control of our own path and begin to be more aware of the mind. To recognise Awareness is always here is a huge step, and as we begin to examine the nature of thoughts and what category they fit into, we can begin to gain Awareness back from being totally invested in the mind.

### **Sutra 1:7 The sources of right knowledge are direct perception, inference and scriptural testimony.**

Patanjali begins to describe the different types of mental modifications, the first of which being right knowledge. Patanjali goes into more detail to describe what right knowledge really is and where it comes from. He uses three terms: direct perception, inference and scriptural testimony as sources of right knowledge. So these are thoughts about truth that we can begin to rely upon for the time being. So let's examine these three categories in more detail to allow us to understand these types of modifications.

The first type of right knowledge is direct perception, and this is something that we have experienced for ourselves. So we will have a direct seeing in our self inquiry, for example, that there is no separate being. A thought may arise from this which says, I am the Infinite Self. This thought is coming from direct perception. It's coming from the direct experiential knowingness of what Reality is. This thought then becomes treasured and valued as being very important. So direct perception is something that we have experienced ourselves. We're not relying on anyone else, or anything else for this understanding. Direct perception comes with a certainty that cannot be misinterpreted or confused. We have seen it for ourselves, and any thoughts arising from that will be given special preference. We can see this in our own journey that if we have some insight, some seeing or deeper understanding of our true nature, later when the mind tries to think about this insight or epiphany, it will begin to think in thoughts that are feeling good, feeling excited.

The second type of right knowledge is inference. This could be described as a reasonable logical conclusion based on what we think we are perceiving. The classic analogy in the scriptures is that if we see fire, we can infer that there must be smoke. And the opposite is true that if we've perceived smoke, there must have been fire or still is fire. Inference is not as reliable as direct perception, but is thought that's based on some experiential understanding. It is less reliable than



direct perception, but it's still valuable nonetheless because it keeps the mind thinking about painless things that infer truth. A good example of inference might be the thoughts that say, if I'm not a separate being, then nobody is either. We can know that we are not a separate being and form a logical conclusion that nobody else is, but it won't be direct perception, direct seeing as yet until we see that our own self is infinite and formless.

The third type of right knowledge is scriptural testimony. This refers to scriptures such as this one that we're studying and any authority figure when it comes to spirituality and awakening. This goes right back to the Upanishads and the Vedas and to all authentic spiritual teachings and teachers throughout all of the ages. Any scriptural testimony is still a concept. The concepts are used to describe the truth, but they come from someone who has also realised the truth so they can be relied upon to help us form our mental modifications, our thoughts, into ever more useful ways and forms. The danger of using scriptural testimony is that we first need to make sure that the authority is absolute, and that that teacher or teaching is speaking from direct perception of truth, experiential realisation of truth. Once we have ascertained that scripture is authoritative and validated, its origin, we can absolutely rely upon that. We can even measure our own direct perception and inferences against that scriptural authority. Although of course, direct perception needs no measuring or evaluating as it's obviously true. When we see our own infinite spaciousness, the thought that I am not an object has obvious power and authority to it.

**Sutra 1:8 Misconception occurs when knowledge of something is not based upon its true form.**

Misconception is really when we have the wrong idea about something. We look at something and think it's different to what it really is. In a way, we could say that all our thoughts about ourselves as a separate being, all of our karmic patterns and everyone else's karmic patterns, and in fact, the whole nature of illusion is a misconception. When we see misconception this way, it makes our thoughts much simpler. In fact, these two first categories of misconception and right knowledge encompass most of our thought process. We could even stop at these two and divide all of our thoughts into two categories. Patanjali divides them into five just to help us observe and become more clear on which are useful and unuseful thoughts. So the classic analogy that's used in the scriptures is that at twilight we might see a rope coiled on the floor and mistake it for a snake. When we think it's a snake, we might become afraid, but there really is no reason for fear because it's a misconception. Still, the body feels the fear anyway and the thoughts of potential danger.

**Sutra 1:9 An image that arises on hearing mere words without any reality (as its basis) is verbal delusion.**

Verbal delusion is also sometimes called conceptualization. When we look at the first modification, misconception, and compare it to this one, we can more clearly understand verbal delusion. Misconception is incorrect thought about something that is actually there, but thinking it is something that it's not. Verbal delusion is thinking about something that does not exist at all. How many times has our mind begun to think about things that never happened or never existed? We can see this in this tendency to think, what if? To rewrite conversations in our mind and to feel aligned with those conversations, trying to get something out of those conversations, to rewrite events and perceptions of people. Those perceptions of people are different to verbal delusion because those people are actually there. Verbal delusion is about something that never existed in the first place. It is similar to imagination, but not so useful.

When we hear someone speak, we listen to a conversation, we hear something, we might have a mental reaction. We might have thoughts about what we're hearing. Somebody could say something to us that isn't even really true, or suggest anything, and our mind starts spinning stories about it. So we're creating our experience from these mental modifications, and yet we haven't even checked to see if the thing is actually true. There might be no basis behind it. We

might hear someone say this particular medicine is dangerous, or we might hear someone say, "You shouldn't eat that food," or any number of examples and yet, our mind will then go spinning into stories about what we should and shouldn't eat and what we should and shouldn't do, and how we should be and behave. All based on this verbal delusion that might not actually be true. We take someone else's word or something that we hear or experience in the physical realm as absolute proof and truth. In Reality, we can realise it's just something that someone has said. It may or may not be true, and it will be coloured by their own beliefs about Reality.

**Sutra 1:10 That mental modification supported by cognition of nothingness is sleep.**

Sleep is the next mental modification discussed of the five types. Sleep is the absence of thought, or one thought, which is the experience of nothingness or voidness. This is as close as we can get as separate selves to the actual Reality, but the experience of nothingness is still only an experience. It's not the full realisation of it. In sleep, we experience the memory of nothingness happening, nothing in the mind, nothing happening in the senses. It's a temporary experience because it comes to an end when the waking state resumes, and we start to experience somethingness. But right now in our sleep, we might be experiencing no experience at all. It is still a very, very subtle type of thought. It is the absence of phenomena, but not necessarily the presence or the recognised presence of the Noumenon itself.

**Sutra 1:11 When a mental modification of an object previously experienced and not forgotten comes back to consciousness, that is memory.**

Some memories are impressions that have happened in the mind from experiences that we've experienced previously. In the waking state, we experience daydreams with memories coming to the surface when they're agitated or triggered. We experience dreams at nighttime that are also memories. These are based on actual experience and can even be useful to some degree, and we want to learn from past experiences. Unlike verbal delusion, memory is based on events that have actually occurred in our lives, or that we remember.

**Sutra 1:12 These mental modifications are restrained by practice and non-attachment.**

This sutra moves on from the description of the five types and talks about how to move beyond them. Sri Patanjali has just outlined these five main types of mental modifications, and now he moves to tell us that they are restrained by practice and nonattachment. To practice is our meditation, and is our awareness of these five types of mental modifications. Beginning to see how our mind works in the habitual ways it thinks, nonattachment means that we're able to just witness thoughts more and more from and as the Infinite Self. As our practice of the eight limbs of yoga deepens, naturally we will be restraining the mind. Mind and the mental modifications are simply ways of thinking that have become so habitual, like a garden that is allowed to grow in whichever way it wants to. Some of those are beautiful flowers, some of those are weeds, and eventually the weeds might threaten to choke the beautiful flowers. Our practice and nonattachment is like the gardening process that brings out the weeds. At first we leave the beautiful flowers, the things that we do want in there, the thoughts that are helpful. Eventually we'll have to remove them all, though, to leave the empty garden. In the next sutras, Patanjali will begin to describe in greater detail how we do this.

**Sutra 1:13 Of these two, effort toward steadiness of mind is practice.**

Patanjali uses the phrase, steadiness of mind or effort towards something. How do we steady our mind? How do we restrain the mental modifications simply by our practice? In meditation, we're bringing our attention away from the mind, the thoughts, and back towards the Infinite Self, Reality. This restrains the mind and gives us greater power and clarity over what thoughts are

arising and the type of thoughts and whether they're even useful or not. Most thoughts are based on hypothetical situations that could never really happen and therefore a waste of energy. In our meditation, when our attention lingers on thoughts or the mind and is allowed to go there and stay there, we are energising the mind, and it will continue to think more and more. When we bring attention back to what is real, we find that the mind is progressively being more and more restrained. We're not feeding it so much energy. The mind thinks because we give it attention and energy, and we believe that we need to think to continue existing.

This sutra also talks about effort, meaning we have to keep bringing ourselves back to this discipline. We have to keep developing our consistency of meditation. The more consistently we meditate, the more exponentially our life force energy is beginning to increase in the body and mind. This does not mean more hours in one day; it is how consistent we can be with it each day. Also, outside of our meditation, we can begin to notice that mind has the same types of thoughts, same types of mental modifications, and usually based on situations that we don't even know might happen. Effort and steadiness of practice mean consistency. Who knew that meditating for 20 minutes a day could change our whole life in this way? Simply said, our attention is either on thoughts or on the source of thoughts. When attention is on the thoughts, we will get more thoughts. When attention is on the source of thoughts, your real nature, mind is beginning to fall away and diminish.

The superpower that we all have is our ability to build our consistency on meditation. On day one, we will have very little life force to actually observe the mind. On day 10, we will have 10 times as much, on day 100, we'll have 1,000 times as much. On day 300, we will have an infinitely greater amount, capacity to focus, to stay with the meditation, to not forget.

### **Sutra 1:14 Practice becomes firmly grounded when well attended to for a long time, without break and in all earnestness.**

The three key terms in this sutra are: a long time, without break and in all earnestness. For a long time means to be willing to do this meditation forever. At first our ego will balk at this because it wants immediate results now. But as we begin to enjoy our meditation because we're not trying to stop the mind, we're just observing it. The realisation that we are observing the mind from the Infinite Self has the capacity to restrain the mind, anyway. What we're interested in is going to become pleasurable and enjoyable, and our meditation deepens into something we actually look forward to and then eventually something that we do not want to be without. But for now, before we reach that point, we have to be willing to do it for a long time. So that means we must understand we might not get the results we want straight away, such as peace etc. This is why we practise commitment to consistency in our 30 day challenges.

So, "a long time" means long enough for it to become an automatic and effortless habit. Our ways of thinking and being are just habitual. Our spiritual practices create new habits and ways of thinking, speaking and being and our life becomes an outpouring of those habits. Our life is currently the outpouring of our habits that we've cultivated unknowingly, such as resistance or procrastination. Now we're simply bringing the willingness to practise for a long time, if needed.

Our willingness to practise without break is the next phrase that we need to look at here. Without break emphasises the need for consistency. If we meditate for 10 days in a row, we'll have 100 times the power, and then if we meditate for 100 days in a row, we'll have 1000 times the life force energy. But if we miss a day, day 11 and then we meditate day 12 and we miss day 13 and 14, and then we meditate on day 15, we won't have 1,000 times. We might have 200 times, so we've lost something when we lose the consistency. But any advancement towards consistent practice is always beneficial. Even if we set out to do 30 days of practice consistently, and we don't manage to achieve that, we are infinitely more likely to achieve it next time.

No effort is ever wasted. Effort here doesn't refer to physical effort, or even hard work. It means determination, and that leads us nicely into earnestness which is the third phrase. Earnestness

means with all of your heart, all of your being. So are you bringing attention back to the Infinite Self in your meditation because you want to avoid suffering, and the body feels nicer when attention is on what's real? Or are you bringing attention back because it is what's real? Of course, we'll all have those motivations initially. But if we can realise that ultimately, the only reason to bring attention back to what is real is because it's the only thing that's real! It makes no sense to pay attention to something that does not exist (the separate sense of self). Our earnestness or devotion builds as we practise consistency, and our willingness to practise for a long time is also a form of devotion. If you really, really wanted to achieve something, I could say to you, "Climb this mountain, and at the top there will be infinite riches and infinite liberation available for you." You would eventually do whatever it takes to climb the mountain, knowing what's at the top. Here we can transfer that devotion to our spiritual practice. What if it just simply came down to doing the right things long enough, consistently?

**Sutra 1:15 The consciousness of self-mastery in one who is free from craving for objects seen or heard about is non-attachment.**

Self-mastery is freedom from all cravings and even freedom from the craving of wanting to experience. Wanting to continue experiencing as a separate being is the ultimate craving. It's what fuels the mind and the modifications happening in the mind. Non-attachment is the outcome of self-mastery which comes from our discipline and consistent habits. What does self-mastery actually mean? It means that we're not swayed by anything that our mind thinks. We don't crave anything, and we also don't have any aversion to anything. Most of our troubles are based on ideas that we need something, or we want something from our world, from other beings or other things.

That being who has non-attachment, wellness and self-mastery can move about in the world and experience anything, and it doesn't produce any mental modifications. There are no thoughts about what's happening, and there's just what's being experienced. We're not drawn towards certain things and we're not having aversions to certain things. The aversions and the attachments are forms of thoughts and mental modifications. I want and I need or I don't like and I want to get rid of - these thoughts epitomise those who are attached or have aversions. Aversions can be very subtle such as aversion to living in the world because we think we should be transcending it. Attachment can happen as we progress more deeply too as we may find ourselves being attached to a certain routine, teaching, or way of practising.

The being with self-mastery can move about the world completely free with non-attachment to anything, whatever is experienced. If they experience something pleasurable, it's enjoyed, then it finishes, and there's no thought about it afterwards. If they experience something unpleasant, it's experienced and released afterwards, and there's no thought about how to avoid it next time. The mind is at rest in those with non-attachment. Non-attachment can also be called dispassion or renunciation and contrary to what we may think, it doesn't make us cold or distant from our experience. In fact it is quite the opposite and we are fully able to be there and experience whatever's happening and engage in life deeply because we're not lost in our heads thinking about how to avoid or how to get something all the time. Our meditation and self inquiry help to provide non-attachment as we begin to realise that the objects we're craving or trying to avoid are really our own Self anyway and nondifferent than us.

**Sutra 1:16 When there is non-thirst for even the gunas (constituents of Nature) due to realisation of the Purusha (true Self), that is supreme non-attachment.**

This sutra describes our state when we have even lost the craving for the manipulation of the gunas. Let's look closer at the three gunas. The first guna is Sattva or peace and harmony and balance. The second guna is Rajas, and this is movement, doingness and agitation. The third guna is Tamas, and this is inertia, resistance and darkness. We are attached until we're not to the gunas, whether we realise it or not. We may have an aversion to Tamas and an attraction and

attachment to Sattva. We may even have the idea that the goal of our awakening is to turn the Tamas and the Rajas into Sattva only so that our body, mind and soul consists only of Sattva, and this is a way of looking at the three energies, the three gunas that will keep us attached.

The Reality of the Infinite Self is that which is beyond even the gunas, beyond all manifestation, subtle and gross and is the unmanifest Self which is showing up as manifestation or the three gunas. Eventually, we will begin to let go of even the attachment to all manifestation, all creation and the aversion to it, too. Quite often spiritual seekers, when they realise that manifestation is only another way that the unmanifest self is expressing itself, begin to develop an aversion to manifestation, and this replaces the attachment to manifestation. To complete our yoga though, we must move beyond aversion and attachment to manifestation or to unmanifest, realising that it's all one. This subject is discussed more in the fourth section of the Yoga Sutras as we look at how to realise the difference between the gunas and the real Self.

**Sutra 1:17 Samprajnata samadhi (distinguished contemplation) is accompanied by reasoning, reflecting, rejoicing and pure I-am-ness.**

A discussion begins on what happens when we begin to restrain these mental modifications. We are introduced to this term "samadhi" in this sutra. Samadhi is simply a state of concentration or absorption in meditation where it has become effortless, and it is the final limb of yoga. But before we reach this effortless, continuous samadhi on the formless nature of our existence, we experience many minor samadhis along the way, and this samadhi is described as Samprajnata samadhi, or distinguished, meaning that it has characteristics.

So, the first type of samadhi that we might begin to experience as our meditation deepens is temporary, and it's accompanied by reasoning, reflecting, rejoicing and pure I-am-ness. What this means is we might begin to experience moments of Reality, Beingness or Consciousness, and still there will be some mental modifications going on reflecting, rejoicing, thinking about the Real Self thinking about things.

**Sutra 1:18 By the firmly convinced practice of the complete cessation of the mental modifications, the impressions only remain. This is the other samadhi (asamprajnata or non-distinguished).**

This sutra describes the next stage of our evolution when thoughts begin to cease, and there is only the Consciousness, the Awareness, the Presence. These are moments where we experience silence of the mind, and these moments will become more and more continuous and effortless. The difference between this samadhi and the previous one is that the mind is not talking about the things it thinks are there, but the seeds remain latent in the mind. We may find as this samadhi develops, that the mind becomes quieter and quieter, and it's only triggered into speaking when some old latent impression or samskara or karmic pattern is triggered. We can compare this samadhi to the previous one, and we think back about how our mind used to constantly talk, just for the sake of talking and to sustain a sense of separateness. In this samadhi, the mind has really no need to keep talking and only does so when some trigger or some old latent tendency is triggered inside.

**Sutra 1:19 Those who merely leave their physical bodies and attain the state of celestial deities, or those who get merged in Nature, have rebirth.**

As asamprajnata samadhi deepens, the latent tendencies have begun to disappear. This sutra describes the various things that happen to us after leaving the body. Those who have begun to remove these latent tendencies or karmic seeds, the seeds of suffering, but not yet completed that process, will be reborn eventually in the physical realm to complete that journey. The latent seeds of karma will bind us to the physical or material plane through attachment to them. We must also transcend our attachments to the subtle realms and if we haven't completed this

process upon leaving the body, we will go to one of the celestial (heavenly) realms for a time. Anyone who leaves their physical body before completely transcending the subtle realms and attachments to them (those of the soul and astral levels) will live in these higher realms but still are not completely free of all tendencies. Eventually these beings will be drawn back to a physical incarnation to complete the process.

This verse uses the term “Prakriti” in the original Sanskrit. This simply means nature or physical manifestation. It's helpful to realise that human beings, after moving beyond all attachments to nature, manifestation, Prakriti, will begin to transcend attachments in the astral realms. Both the physical manifestation and the subtle realm attachments must be transcended for complete liberation and for rebirth to become completely optional. Most of these subtle attachments are being transcended even while we have a physical body, so all of the work can be done in this physical incarnation. Of course, there is nothing wrong with having another physical incarnation, but we can let it be so from joy and from that desire to help other beings, rather than having to have another incarnation in order to continue to release our karmic patterns, our attachments.

### **Sutra 1:20 To the others, this asamprajnata samadhi could come through faith, strength, memory, contemplation or by discernment.**

Patanjali goes on to describe what happens to those beings who transcend all attachments to both physical and subtle realms in this lifetime. First of all, we begin with a description of the qualities necessary to completely let go of all of these attachments. Patanjali is describing the qualities necessary for complete transcendence. These are listed as faith, vigour or strength, memory, contemplation and discernment. We will describe each one of these in turn. There is also an excellent description of each of these from Inside the Yoga Sutras that we are working with.

Faith is essential for transcendence, to realise that someone else has done what we're trying to do and has succeeded. The fact that many beings have succeeded over the ages gives us faith to continue to practise consistently even before we begin to see results ourselves. This faith can be obtained from reading the scriptures, from following the lives of great teachers and beings who achieved complete transcendence and from reviewing our own victories.

Next is vigour, or strength, which is an essential component of any spiritual practice or journey. We must begin to develop strength to continue when we do not feel we are succeeding. We must have strength of conviction to continue even when we may have doubts about ourselves, or our ability to continue. Strength can be cultivated by borrowing it from the great beings and teachers in our lives. By seeing their success, we feel more likely to succeed.

Memory, or mindfulness, is next and this is a quality that is essential for success. If we have a seeing, or insight that some way that we are thinking is in separation and not really true, that insight will only benefit us if we can remember it, and we don't go right back to the old way of thinking. We can help ourselves by starting to journal and keep a record of the things we've realised because they will seem to be forgotten otherwise. It is most important to keep a journal or some way to record what we have realised in areas that we have a lot of difficulty in our life or where there is a lot of negative emotion and life isn't flowing freely. The amount of negative emotion will show us just how rigid our thought process still is in that area and how full of separation it is.

Contemplation, or samadhi in this term of use, means the capacity to keep focus on truth, to keep focus on what we are trying to achieve. As that focus grows in intensity, samadhi becomes more and more obvious with periods where the mind is quieter, which lasts for longer and longer, and then eventually mind stops.

The last one is discernment, which is the capacity to understand the difference between truth and illusion in any particular moment. The capacity to recognise what is real and unreal may seem obvious and easy in our self inquiry when we see there is no separate self. But then later in our

thought process, can we recognise where we are still thinking as a separate self compared to how it would be perceived from the Infinite Self or Reality? When we can remember what we have realised, we are more likely to be able to apply it when needed.

**Sutra 1:21 To the keen and intent practitioner, this (samadhi) comes very quickly.**

This sutra shows us that our transcendence of the mind completely into effortless samadhi is not a function of time. It is also not a function of mastering some practice. The keen and intent practitioner describes an energetic state of devotion and intensity of devotion. When we begin to talk about devotion, it's important to recognise that we may feel that we don't have enough devotion, and that it is a mystical quality that we are either born with or not. This is simply not true. Every time we suffer or experience lack or limitation, we can use that to fuel our devotion to truth. Devotion is always increasing for the astute practitioner because when we experience something deep and beautiful in a meditation, naturally a desire arises for more of that and to feel that same way again, more continuously and consistently. When we experience something unpleasant in our life or some extreme negative emotion, our devotion is also increasing because the desire naturally arises not to feel that way again and not to experience that thing again. If we can recognise that the devotion is always increasing, we can begin to work with that consciously. Let us release this idea that saints and sages were born with utter devotion and didn't have to do anything to cultivate it, because it is simply not true. Also, let's let go of this idea that we weren't born with enough devotion to truth, and that because of that we can't change it. If you allow the things you like and you don't like in your spiritual and worldly experiences to feel your devotion, then you are using your whole life for the highest purpose and samadhi comes very, very quickly.

**Sutra 1:22 The time necessary for success further depends on whether the practice is mild, medium or intense.**

This sutra goes further into the subject of the previous one. This sutra suggests that the time necessary for success is directly related or proportional to devotion. Mild, medium or intense practice does not relate to the time spent practising, but to the intensity of the desire to realise and live as that truth that we already are. This is good news for us all because it means that it doesn't matter if we've been on the path for fifty years or five minutes. We all stand the same chance of completing this journey in a very small amount of time. The only thing we need to recognise is how to cultivate the devotion needed for this journey. We can see this is true because we all know people who have practised for a very long time, but devotion has been mixed to truth and untruth, even though we might not have realised it at the time. We all have seen other beings who come into the spiritual pathway and make great progress in a very short amount of time.

What are the two key requisites for freedom then? The first must be a willingness to question every thought as it pops up, and the second must be devotion, which is ever increasing. Devotion nullifies the experience of linear time, and we can make more progress in one minute than we have in a whole day before. We can achieve in one day what will take other beings a whole lifetime without this intense devotion.

**Sutra 1:23 Samadhi is attained by devotion with total dedication to God (Ishvara).**

This sutra shows a different way to achieve samadhi by total devotion to Ishvara. Ishvara simply means God, Formlessness, Consciousness, Presence, Awareness, etc. Usually our devotion is to phenomena, as we still have a love affair with thoughts and thinkingness but by making our focus and devotion completely aligned with God, Formlessness, or Infinite Silence, we can surrender all thoughts as they arise, realising that they are not true. It's important to realise that this has been described as a different way to self realisation, but in actuality, it really is devotion as experienced and expressed in the previous sutra. Devotion to Formlessness results in a preference for a direct experience of that Formless God that we are, and the disinterest in

thinking about Reality or thinking our way through something. Dedication to Ishvara, or God then becomes a surrender of thoughts and thinking which is really the surrender of our separate self.

Surrender is not an act done by someone because that would only sustain the sense of separateness, and there would have to be a separate self that surrenders itself. Surrender then is increasingly experienced as recognition or discernment that the current way we're thinking comes from an old idea of who we are and not from the actual Reality. Surrender and discernment then become synonyms here. And we could even include devotion in that definition, too.

**Sutra 1:24 Ishvara is the supreme Purusha, unaffected by any afflictions, actions, fruits of actions or by any inner impressions of desires.**

This sutra explains what Ishvara, or God, is. We see this term "Purusha" which simply means that which is unaffected by anything at all and has no desires or intentions. Purusha is simply another word for the Formlessness or God, or Consciousness, etc. Ishvara is that which is not a phenomenon and is indivisible and omnipresent. Ishvara also is that which has no journey to make and is already free and could never be bound.

**Sutra 1:25 In Him is the complete manifestation of the seed of omniscience.**

This sutra explains the meaning of Ishvara more completely and begins to describe its infinite nature. Ishvara can simply be renamed as God or the Infinite Self or Consciousness, Presence, Awareness, etc. The very fact that it is infinite means it is worthy of our devotion and is the only thing that being devoted to will bring complete liberation. The more we are devoted to Ishvara, the more we begin to recognise that we can never know what infinite really is. This has the effect of nullifying all of our thought processes as we immerse in samadhi again and again, sampling our infinite Formless nature. We become familiar with the term omniscience here in this sutra as Patanjali points to the fact that the Infinite Self, or Ishvara, is the All-knowing and All-seeing. Wherever we think our knowledge comes from, it always comes from Ishvara.

**Sutra 1:26 Unconditioned by time, He is the teacher of even the most ancient teachers.**

This sutra goes deeper into what Ishvara is. Many of us need a teacher along the path to help us learn how to look inside, to find out who we really are and how to let go of all the thoughts about who we are not. Many of us personify the teacher into a human form when we attend a class or Satsang and it is easily done so, but Ishvara is always the teacher of all teachers and all students. Ishvara appears to be a human being and we call them a teacher but let's remember we can only see the visible aspect of the teacher and we often forget the invisible aspect is the real teacher. Even the great scriptures like the Upanishads, the Vedas and the Puranas have come directly from Ishvara. All great teachings come from Ishvara directly because this is the teacher.

The reason for this verse is to help us build devotion to the formless Ishvara. Some beings may find it more challenging initially to feel devoted to something they cannot see or hear. Yet as we begin to realise the value of being devoted to something intangible and ineffable, like Ishvara, we are definitely maturing in our pathway. Ishvara is the only thing that exists, and it has been called many names. It is knowledge itself, but it's not something we know in the mind. We cannot really say "I know this about Ishvara". We can only come to realise "I am this", and this sutra encourages us to do so. This sutra encourages the path of surrender, which may be easier for some. To give up all thoughts about ourself as a separate entity and all thoughts about others as being separate to us, replacing them with thoughts about Ishvara, is a common path. In practice, we find ourselves following many paths at the same time, and they all eventually merge into one.



**Sutra 1:27 The word expressive of Ishvara is the mystic sound OM. (Note: OM is God's name as well as form.)**

This sutra describes the word or sound Om as being the name of Ishvara, or God. God is named Om and shaped as Om, too. It's important to recognise that Om is not a sound that we make, but rather that from which all sound emerges. If we listen very carefully you will hear the sound of Om, which is no sound at all. We could also say Ishvara's name is Silence or Presence or Awareness, and all of these are utterly silent.

Om has also been called the mystic sound of "pranavah" (or cosmic sound) because it is before creation and is utterly silent. We may find ourselves chanting the word Om in a mantra or just by itself, but this is only a verbal or internal mental reminder of that from which all sound arises. All languages use this sound Om, and all language derives from this place of complete and utter silence. If we utter the word Om out loud, when the sound stops there is a silence and a vibration that continues forever. Different religions have called this word Om different things, but still it points back to that which has no name, Ishvara itself.

**Sutra 1:28 To repeat it with reflection upon its meaning is an aid.**

Patanjali tells us that to repeat the mystic sound of Om, whilst reflecting on its meaning, is an aid to liberation. Any mantra that we repeat has the capacity to keep the mind steady, but the repetition of Om has the capacity to open up inside us our internal dimension of infinity. Repeating the sound Om, which is really made of three different sounds A, U and M, and the vibration that comes after, is going to help us connect with what it points to. Om represents that wordless, silent space of pure Consciousness, and in its repetition, we find ourselves to be that silent, wordless place that's listening to the repetition. Mantra repetition is an act of devotion. Any meditative practice that brings focus back to what is real is pure devotion.

In mantra meditation, we hear this term "japa", which really means repetition, and that which keeps the mind steady. So in keeping the mind steady, we find ourselves more able to recognise the source of all sounds, words and thoughts which is really our very own Self, Ishvara. The ultimate purpose of any mantra or a meditative practice is to keep focus on that which is beyond form long enough so that we become it or begin to live as it. Ishvara is what we are, but we may be living as something else, as an imagined self caught in limitation and lack. Bringing focus back over and over again through mantra or meditation or contemplation on what the name of God means will allow us to live as this Ishvara.

Whatever we focus upon, we will become, and this is our superpower as yogis. We have been focusing on what we think we are, and we have very much become that. Now we are focusing on what we really are, and it is time to live as that.

**Sutra 1:29 From this practice all the obstacles disappear and simultaneously dawns knowledge of the inner Self.**

Patanjali informs us in this sutra that by practising as described, all obstacles to clear seeing disappear. Without those obstacles, recognition of what is real and true about us is easy and obvious. Truth reveals itself when allowed to do so, immediately. We are only clearing away the obstacles with our mantra repetition or our meditation practice.

**Sutra 1:30 Disease, dullness, doubt, carelessness, laziness, sensuality, false perception, failure to reach firm ground and slipping from the ground gained - these distractions of the mind-stuff are the obstacles.**

In this sutra, Patanjali describes all the things that we commonly experience that distract our focus and clarity. If we can come to understand that the way to consistent, effortless freedom

from suffering is by steady practice and moving towards consistent, joyful practice, we will begin to see that anything that distracts us from that or makes it more challenging to practise consistently and joyfully is going to impede our freedom. The list of impediments here is disease, dullness, doubt, carelessness, laziness, sensuality, false perception, failure to reach firm ground and slipping from the ground gained - these are the distractions. While some of these may be obvious in their meaning, it's worthwhile looking into a few of them to explain further.

The first one that we can look at is disease. Usually this term is applied to the physical body, but here we can also apply it to our mind and our emotions. Where do we have a dis-ease in our thought process and our emotional process? Where is there a lack of flow? Any disease will lead to dullness and doubt, carelessness and general attitude of lethargy especially towards consistent spiritual practice.

Sensuality is another term that may be challenging to understand at first. In this context, sensuality implies a love of sense perception and enjoying our senses and what they can help us experience. Whilst there is nothing wrong with this at all, we may find that we are overly indulging in one of the senses as a way to avoid spiritual practice in a consistent way. The sense of taste is sometimes the hardest to overcome because, although it emerges as a physical taste and tongue, it also is a desire for tasting life and tasting experiences, and this can pull our focus away from our spirituality.

This corresponds to pratyahara (the fifth of the 8 limbs of yoga), which is a withdrawal of energy from both sense perception and interest in experiencing through the senses. It's not that we reject the senses or the body, but simply that we come to a balance where we use our senses and sense perception and experiences to help further our own growth as a soul, rather than simply indulging in experiences for their own sake.

Failure to reach firm ground and slipping from the ground gained are the last two distractions. These can come from a lack of devotion to the practice of truth. A lack of devotion might not manifest in the way that we think and may simply be that we are doing the practice, but our heart really isn't in it. Perhaps we're doing our spiritual practice but with a belief in place that we do not deserve the good things in life, or awakening, to feel joy or abundance. So the practices may be done just because they should be done rather than as an enjoyment of Reality. When this is the reason that we're practising, even when we have a big insight or seeing of who we really are, we'll find it very challenging to consistently live from that seeing or to apply it to our daily life because the life force is scattered in thoughts about unworthiness and in sense pleasures and perceptions. We can even experience slipping back from where we have applied what we have seen and begin to act in ways that reflect a sense of unworthiness or fear.

Patanjali gives us this list in the sutra simply to help us become aware where these are affecting our lives. Physical illness and disease may make it slightly more challenging to practise, but these begin to turn around if we can see the real illness or disease is in our thought structure first, and that the body is just reflecting that back to us.

**Sutra 1:31 Accompaniments to the mental distractions include distress, despair, trembling of the body and disturbed breathing.**

In this sutra, we find out how the distractions appear in our daily life and potentially give us clues of how to recognise when we're dealing with one of these distractions. They may manifest in our lives when there's emotional distress, the sense of despair or apathy, trembling of the body and disturbed breathing. While sometimes our breathing may be more agitated than others, it's common knowledge that human beings as a species do not breathe properly at all or regularly. Even if we are not in actual physical danger, we may find ourselves trembling or feeling a lot of fear. Even if we're not in physical danger, anything that we experience, including mental distress, is a sign to help us recognise that perhaps we are noticing some imbalance and some distraction. If the purpose of all eight limbs of yoga and all the sutras here is to bring one to a place where we

can focus and concentrate on one goal long enough to achieve it without interruption and joyfully, then it really helps us to know what the distractions are. Only then can we begin to uproot them from our life.

**Sutra 1:32 The practice of concentration on a single subject (or the use of one technique) is the best way to prevent the obstacles and their accompaniments.**

This sutra stresses that concentration or one-pointedness of mind or focus is not only one of the eight limbs of yoga (the 6th limb of 8), but is the purpose of our whole life. Even our awakening is achieved by consistently fixing attention upon what is real and letting go of paying attention to the unreal. When we do that long enough and consistently enough, we become that truth. We begin to live from the Truth that we already are. *So concentration is not only the goal, but the way to the goal.* This is why we try to practise consistently as much as possible, and we work on building consistency in our practice.

At first, because of all the distractions mentioned in the previous sutras, we may find consistency is hard to achieve. But as we keep trying with devotion, we will come to exercise this most powerful skill of all the yogis, which is the ability to fix attention on one goal and achieve it. Not only is this the purpose of all yoga, but it is the way also to mastery of the eight limbs of yoga.

Let's give an example where we start to learn a new spiritual practice. At first, we'll be very inconsistent with it, and we may feel like we're doing it right or wrong and have lots of thoughts about it. It may be very frustrating or we may have a lot of resistance to it. But over time, with consistency, if we just keep doing it, we'll find that resistance falls away and it moves even to become something enjoyable, something that we look forward to. As this habit begins to emerge as a sustained and consistent habit, we'll find that we can effortlessly apply it to anything that we set our sights on. The amount of consistency and the joy that we feel in doing that practice will determine the amount of time it takes to completely master it.

**Sutra 1:33 By cultivating attitudes of friendliness toward the happy, compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous, and disregard toward the wicked, the mind-stuff retains its undisturbed calmness.**

Sri Patanjali begins to tell us another way to achieve equanimity and a mind that is no longer disturbed in the next few sutras. In Sutra 33, we find four locks or keys to a balanced, peaceful mind and we will look at these four locks in turn.

The first lock is cultivating friendliness towards happy people. All of us would like to think that we are happy when we encounter someone who is happy, that we can be supportive of them and celebrate their happiness. And yet, often we find that we are jealous of their happiness or of their spiritual progress. If we cultivate an attitude of friendliness in celebrating what others have achieved, and with a deepening realisation that those other beings are our own self, we'll find jealousy or envy diminishing. What we celebrate in others, we will celebrate within our own selves. If instead, we are rejecting that person because of their success, we are really rejecting our own success and joy, also.

The second lock is to develop compassion for those that are unhappy or are in pain. Sometimes it's easier to feel that someone in our lives should be able to move beyond whatever they're struggling with at the moment. This can be especially true if we have transcended that thing ourselves. We can find ourselves impatient or frustrated with them. Again, this is a rejection of those others, which is really a rejection of ourselves. If we look at why we are frustrated with them, it's from some idea that they should be able to be different than they are in this moment, or that they should be able to let go of this and move on by now.

This can be especially true if we are watching our friends and family live out their karmic patterns over and over again. It becomes clearer to us that we have an expectation of them, that they

should be able to move beyond this like we have. This lock tells us to develop compassion and understanding here. It is not that these beings will not move beyond or let go, but they cannot let go of these karmic patterns right now. The compassionate yogi will come to understand that nobody can be different than they are in this moment, and expecting them to be so is our rejection of Truth and Reality. Compassion aims to meet someone where they're at and not where we think they should be or even could be. Where we think they could be living from is only available to them when we're no longer judging them, and compassion is the antidote to judging.

The third lock is to delight in the virtuous. This may be challenging to understand at first. When we see virtues in those around us, we may feel envious again or jealous, and yet we're being asked here to celebrate that virtue appearing in one body and mind, realising that we're not separate to them. We can have that virtue appear in us, also. Envy and jealousy come from the idea that the virtue that we're seeing in that other being has happened to someone else and not to us. Really, it's only happened to a different body and mind. Can we feel delighted when we see, 'Ah, yes! That person has developed real compassion or forgiveness or capacity to meditate consistently or to always tell the truth!?' Can we delight in and celebrate the existence of virtuous tendencies and not to claim particular body minds' ownership of them or lack thereof?

This also helps when it comes to our enemies or people that we really do not like or want to be around. We tend to only focus on their non-virtuous qualities. Perhaps you know someone that constantly lies, or treats you badly or disrespects you or spreads rumours about you? What virtues can we see there, though? Can we recognise that they're very consistent and very devoted to untruth in their own way? What virtues and qualities do they have that we would like to develop? Perhaps they're not expressing those virtues in the way that we would like to, but they are still there: dedication, persistence, devotion, a consistency and a single mindedness of purpose.

The fourth lock is disregard towards the wicked. This isn't a coldness or a noncaring about what people do to others but a disregard of all our personal attitudes to those wicked actions and behaviours. We can also call them nonvirtuous. It really speaks to the deeper aspect of how it is to live as the Infinite Self, which is from a place of equanimity towards all forms. Most of us are troubled only by human beings and never by plants, animals, and seemingly insentient objects like rocks. What do we do when we experience someone doing something that we would rather them not do? Is our personal attitude of condemnation towards them or rejection going to help the situation?

Of course, here we're not speaking about leaving our body unguarded, or accepting verbal or physical harm from another being. Really, we're talking about maintaining our equanimity during those times. Our own fearful or angry thoughts or judgments about how they should be only serve to disempower us and we can recognise that they cannot be different than they are in this moment. We can act from a place of compassion towards them. Compassion isn't passivity and in this area can be largely misunderstood. When someone is acting in ways that are not in our best interest, compassion would perhaps move our body away from theirs or cause our body to speak words that stand up for what we want or need as a way to disengage the pattern that is playing out between our body and theirs. Compassion may be very active or quite silent, but it will always do what is best for both bodyminds in any circumstance.

This lock also tells us that perhaps it is pointless to try to change the behaviour of others until they're ready to change themselves. Equanimity means we can enjoy the virtuous qualities and have dispassion for the nonvirtuous qualities, and in this way, our mind will remain calm even when situations around us call for immediate action. We can develop dispassion, indifference or equanimity, treating all the same. Some people will be simply further ahead in their spiritual unfolding and development than others. We can protect our own bodymind and equanimity when we understand these four locks or keys.

**Sutra 1:34 Calm is retained by the controlled exhalation or retention of the breath.**

Patanjali gives us another way to achieve the calmness of mind, knowing that not everyone is going to be drawn to the same way. Ideally as yogis, we would develop an understanding of all of these ways and practise the ones that are most appealing to us. The way mentioned in this sutra is pranayama, or restraint of prana through the breath. Pranayama is the cultivation of prana, or life force energy, and it is directly linked to the breath and the mind. In actuality, prana, breath and mind are all the same thing, and when we have control over one of them, we have control over all of them. We can see this is true even from our initial preliminary understandings. When we are scared or disturbed, we hold our breath, or we may breathe faster. When we find ourselves having a panic attack, we will have irregular breathing. It's not hard to see the link between the mind, the breath and prana. Of course, in pranayama we are interested in directly restraining and controlling the life force and allowing it to move up the chakra system through the Kundalini channel in the spine towards the crown chakra. Pranayama is also one of the eight limbs of yoga and will be looked at in more detail deeper into the sutras.

### **Sutra 1:35 The concentration on subtle sense perceptions can cause steadiness of mind.**

Another way that we can achieve a steadiness of mind is by concentration on our subtle sense perception. As we are progressing with our practice of the eight limbs of yoga, you will begin to notice an ability to perceive much more subtle objects. Our senses do not only work on the physical level but also the astral level, and our physical senses are a reflection of our astral senses. We may begin to perceive subtle sights, smells, sounds, etc. Perhaps even the experience of bliss is a subtle, tactile sense. If we begin to focus on these and our concentration, or fix our mind upon them, we will develop one pointedness of mind, steadiness of mind, as described.

### **Sutra 1:36 By concentrating on the supreme, ever-blissful Light within.**

Here we are advised of another way to develop steadiness of mind and concentration by focusing on a subtle visual image. We can imagine a great light inside us and focus upon that, or we could picture a deity or a religious figure that we feel aligned to. We could imagine an image of the Buddha or Christ or Krishna and fix our attention upon that. All that we are really aiming to do with any of these practices is to develop the ability to focus on one thing consistently. It does not matter so much how we do that, and Patanjali has given us various different ways in the sutras.

### **Sutra 1:37 By concentrating on a great soul's mind which is totally freed from attachment to sense objects.**

Here we have yet another way to develop concentration. This is by focusing on someone who has already achieved liberation or freedom and is no longer attached to anything in the physical world at all. We could also call this technique devotion, and there is very little difference between concentration and devotion. Simply making sure we pick someone who embodies what we are already trying to achieve and fixing our attention upon them is enough.

### **Sutra 1:38 By concentrating on an experience had during dream or deep sleep.**

In this sutra, we are given yet another way to achieve concentration or one-pointedness of mind. As we read through all of these, we can simply choose the one that is advised by our spiritual teacher or that we feel most aligned with, or we can try a few of them. In this sutra, we are asked to concentrate on a dream that we've had, and this may be an uplifting dream. Perhaps we dreamt about being with a particular awakened being or with a saint or sage from previous ages. As we focus on that, we will be uplifted. It's important to note that in this sutra, Patanjali is advising us to focus on the experience during deep sleep which is simply of equanimity and peace.

### **Sutra 1:39 By meditating on anything one chooses that is elevating.**

Here we find another general method advising us how to concentrate. We are advised to meditate on anything at all that we find elevating or uplifting. This could be a particular teacher teaching, a saint, a sage, an experience we had, an epiphany, a state of consciousness or anything at all that we find uplifting. As long as it's something that we find useful and uplifting, we can meditate upon it.

Eventually, what we will find most uplifting is our own infinite nature or Formless Infinite Self. But it may be that Sri Patanjali has given these other ways to make the skill of concentration more accessible at first, as when we begin our path, we may find it challenging to focus on something that we cannot see, feel or hear. Eventually though, this is where our path of concentration will lead us to, concentration on the Formless divinity within. This is indeed meditation, concentration and devotion.

### **Sutra 1:40 Gradually, one's mastery in concentration extends from the primal atom to the greatest magnitude.**

In this sutra, we discuss the benefits of achievement or mastery in concentration, which could also be called samadhi, the final limb of yoga. The sutras to follow discuss samadhi in greater detail, but here in this sutra we discuss the benefits of the capacity to concentrate. Whatever we can concentrate upon, we will become, and we will master. Here we learn that from the smallest subatomic particle to the vast, unlimited universe itself, we will achieve mastery over it as we focus upon it. Eventually when we learn concentration on the infinite formlessness of Reality, we will master that, too. We will live as that in our everyday lives. This is happening in stages by degrees for us all. The whole universe, or manifestation, is simply a reflection in our own consciousness which is infinite, and therefore mastery over all of the elements is a natural outcome of learning this power of focus of concentration. We can then choose where to place that focus or concentration for the maximum benefit.

What would you like to achieve or learn or do? What would it feel like to realise that the only thing stopping us is our distracted mind and our diminished capacity to focus on it long enough to become it? Patanjali is giving us all the reasons here why it's worth putting the time in and the consistency and the devotion into developing concentration, samadhi or one-pointedness of focus or purpose. We become the masters of our own experience, and whatever we turn our attention to, we achieve easily.

### **Sutra 1:41 Just as the naturally pure crystal assumes shapes and colours of objects placed near it, so the Yogi's mind, with its totally weakened modifications, becomes clear and balanced and attains the state devoid of differentiation between knower, knowable and knowledge. This culmination of meditation is samadhi.**

This sutra begins a sequence of sutras that begins to sum up the whole of this pada. This pada is called "samadhi" pada because it gives instructions on how to achieve samadhi and the various minor samadhis that happen on the way. In essence, Patanjali is giving us the goal of all yoga and then showing us how to get there. In this sutra, we begin to see how the absence of any mental modifications, as we saw mentioned in the second sutra, reflects a clear mind which is able to express the formless truth of Reality.

Patanjali compares the mind to a pure crystal which reflects anything put near it. When the Infinite Self is brought near to the mind by weakening the mental modifications or the thoughts that we have, the truth is obvious and clear and easily expressed by that mind. The mind then is no longer trying to talk about objects it thinks are there and is free to preserve the lifeforce and to

rest when it is no longer needed. The mental modifications or thoughts are all distortions of Reality. As they begin to diminish and disappear, naturally, the truth shines through.

The culmination of meditation is samadhi, says Patanjali. This is where the knower, the knowable and the knowledge are all the same. Effortless, consistent peace and deep meditation is how an awakened being lives, even with our eyes open and the senses functioning. This is really where there is no knower separate to knowable and knowledge. There is no "I" that knows something else "out there". There is no separate knower and no thing to know and no capacity of knowing outside of it. Simply said, there is Awareness, and we realise ourselves to be Awareness. Anything we can be aware of, is made of Awareness. There is only the one substance.

**Sutra 1:42 The samadhi in which name, form and knowledge of them is mixed is called savitarka samadhi, or samadhi with deliberation.**

In this sutra, Patanjali begins to remind us of the development of samadhi and the four minor samadhis that were described in sutra 1:17 are revisited. The first samadhi here is savitarka samadhi. This is where you can understand the sound, the meaning and the resulting knowledge of an object. Normally in human experience, the sound, the object and the knowledge are all taken together. So if we take an example of fear, the word fear, the actual experience of fear and all of our previous memories and knowledge about fear are all contained within this one word, fear. But as this samadhi develops and deepens, we are able to focus on the object itself, the phenomenon of fear. We have less and less capacity to label it as fear and think about it in terms of our previous experiences and memories of it. Simply said, we can just be scared without talking about it. We can just experience fear without remembering and thinking about it and hoping it will go away, which is in fact resistance to it and prolongs it.

This is a very important skill for the yogi to begin to develop because what one person means by a word, such as fear or awakening or suffering may be different to what someone else means. To actually begin to experience the thing itself is to begin to experience the essence of all things and is a very important step.

As this samadhi deepens, we can stop the mind at will even just for a short time, and we can arrest the mind from thinking about the object and experience it in its essence. In this way, we're subduing further mental modifications because we're not adding experiences to the pile of experiences we've had of fear. We're not increasing the amount of memory in our data bank about what it means to be scared, how bad it is and how long it will last, what we do to get rid of it and what was successful and unsuccessful. Here we're no longer generating karma and confusion, and believing in diversity. We're actually just experiencing whatever phenomenon is arising.

**Sutra 1:43 When the memory is well purified, the knowledge of the object of concentration shines alone, devoid of the distinction of name and quality. This is nirvitarka samadhi, or samadhi without deliberation.**

This sutra goes deeper into the previous sutra and describes what it is like when the memory is purified. and the object that we are focusing upon in the samadhi just shines clearly. There is no name or quality given to the object. It's just experienced in its Isness, or its purity. Patanjali says there's no deliberation, no thought process about it. In this samadhi, we begin to be able to contact that Real Self, or Noumenon that is simply experiencing. There is just the experiencing and an object being experienced and there's no commentary about the object by the mind. This sutra describes the second of the minor samadhis, or "nirvitarka samadhi", and this is where the object is fully known.. The truest way to know something is to directly experience it rather than thinking about it and in this samadhi we begin to know things directly. Anytime we think about something, we are in effect resisting or avoiding actually experiencing it.

**Sutra 1:44 In the same way, savichara (reflective) and nirvichara (super or non-reflective) samadhis, which are practised upon subtle objects, are explained.**

This sutra describes the final two samadhis that are minor and explains that the samadhi is the focus upon the subtler or finer elements. So in the previous two samadhis, we were focusing upon an object that was perceivable by the senses. In these samadhis, we're focusing on the subtle elements of any particular object, and these will not be perceivable to the human senses. We may focus upon the energies that brought these physical objects into being, or the subtle elements that combined to make this tangible object or even on the gunas. As such, this is an advancement in samadhi because we're able to focus on much more subtle things.

The example may be that in the first two samadhis, we may meditate or focus upon a physical candle and its flame. As the flame dances, our attention will be caught in it, and we'll begin to come to know the candle in an intimate way. In the samadhis described in this sutra, we may be more interested in the heat, or the light or even the subtle energies that formed to bring the candle into existence. This shows a maturity in our ability to focus, which is growing in its ability to focus on subtle things. Mostly in human experience, we are focused only on physical, tangible objects that we can perceive through our senses, so this is a huge leap forward for us.

**Sutra 1:45 The subtlety of possible objects of concentration ends only at the undefinable.**

This sutra speaks of the power of focus or concentration or meditation, also called samadhi, in its ability to recognise and know every single object, whether subtle or gross, and that each object is simply a manifestation of Prakriti, or life force or the basic substance in its unmanifested condition. The focus of samadhi will become increasingly formless, and we'll have the capacity to arrive at the highest samadhi, which is the ability to focus and maintain our attention, our interest, our love of that which has no substance at all.

The "undefinable" is the formless and unmanifest Self and is contrasted here to the ever finer and more subtle nature of manifestation. In reality there is no duality of form and formlessness or unmanifest and manifest. It is more like a sliding scale of manifestation with the rocks and planets (gross tangible objects apparent to our senses) at one end, prana, energy and subtle elements somewhere near the other end and the unmanifest at the end. It is a sliding scale and the ever increasing subtlety stops only when we reach total formlessness.

This is explained in more detail at the end of pada four where we learn the most important thing is to be able to distinguish Reality from illusion and that the capacity to always be able to do this is freedom.

**Sutra 1:46 All these samadhis are sabija (with seed), which could bring one back into bondage or mental disturbance.**

Patanjali has described the various aspects of the subtler samadhis as they deepen so that we can gain a sense of progress in our application of the Yoga Sutras. But he gives us a warning here, not to rest here, because all of these previous minor samadhis are with seed or sabija, with seed. This means that the seed for disturbance of the mind is still within the mind itself. The possibility to imagine objects existing is still there in the mind itself. And when triggered, the mind will begin to think about objects that do not really exist. So although this sutra is telling us we're making progress, we are urged not to stop here, and to continue until we can maintain focus on the essence, the formlessness itself, that which has no seed, where the seeds have been destroyed, and there can be no more mental modification at all. Any thought about any object is seen to be as empty of substance as the object itself.



### **Sutra 1:47 In the purity of nirvichara samadhi, the supreme Self shines.**

Nirvichara samadhi is described in this sutra, and this is the capacity to focus on the Formless essence of Reality or the Noumenon as it develops. This is not liberation in itself, but will bring liberation if continued and allowed to deepen into the final samadhi. This is where the mind is less and less inclined, or able to think about anything, and attention becomes more and more obsessed with the essence of all form. Here the Supreme Self shines forth, says Patanjali, but that may be interrupted still, or temporary.

### **Sutra 1:48 This is ritambhara prajna, or the absolute true consciousness.**

This sutra describes a state of consciousness which is described as the wisdom filled with truth. It's also called a nonreflective samadhi because there is no duality, nothing to reflect here. Patanjali explains this sutra and this form of samadhi in the next sutra.

### **Sutra 1:49 This special truth is totally different from knowledge gained by hearing, study of scripture or inference.**

This sutra describes the truth-bringing samadhi by understanding the difference between direct experience and learning something from a book, a teacher or a scripture. As the capacity deepens and develops to be able to focus on the pure formlessness long enough, we begin to experience its essence directly and begin to experience our own infinite, unmanifested nature or formlessness. This is a direct experience of truth rather than something we have learned from someone else or read about in a scripture.

This samadhi helps us develop the ability to distinguish Purusha, the unmanifest essence of all, from Prakriti, the movement of the gunas and manifestation of life force. It is discernment between that which is temporary and that which is real and permanent. This is the only skill we are ever developing in our yoga practice. This sutra corresponds directly to the final few sutras in pada four. It describes the ultimate state of the yogi being continuously and effortlessly aware of the real and totally able to discard the unreal and imagined.

All mental modifications cease when we can always and effortlessly discern what is real and what is unreal. There is very literally no point in thinking about what does not (and never has) existed. This is why and how the mind stops. The mind stops temporarily in this samadhi and gradually it becomes more permanent. At some point we simply forget how to imagine objects exist or that they could even exist.

### **Sutra 1:50 The impression produced by this samadhi wipes out all other impressions.**

This sutra describes the importance of this type of samadhi. As samadhi deepens, we begin to experience directly our own formless nature. This experience of Reality begins to override our previous mental impressions and counteract the capacity to think about things. This samadhi forms impressions on the mind that are related to truth itself, and we may begin to have thoughts that are more in line with what is real rather than unreal. These thoughts might be such as: there is only one being, only formlessness is real or there are no other beings. We may also think that duality is only an appearance in that which is non-dual. All these thoughts are about the oneness of Reality, and yet here there is still someone who has realised this. There is an I that is looking at Reality and not yet (seemingly) from it. The separate sense of self here is very fine and subtle, but still the realisation must deepen that we are what we are experiencing. This is described in the next sutra.

**Sutra 1:51 When even this impression is wiped out, every impression is totally wiped out and there is nirbija (seedless) samadhi.**

The final sutra of this pada describes the highest samadhi which is permanent, stable and effortless concentration upon and total identification with the Supreme Self, the Formless Reality or the Noumenon. This is the goal of all yoga and meditation in its culmination and climax. Here, even the mental impressions left by the previous samadhi have been wiped out. There is no I separate to the Noumenon to think about the Noumenon; there is only the Supreme Self, or Noumenon. In this, we must let go of all sense of achievement, all sense of progress and even the idea of union or merging with the Self must be released.

The understanding becomes clear that there never was an entity to merge into the Self, and only the Formless Infinite Self remains. This is called nirbija samadhi, or seedless samadhi, that with no seeds, because there is no capacity for any further mental modifications to arise. There is no thought process by a separate self remaining here, only the Infinite Self. Our samadhi has burnt all seeds of suffering and illusion.

This sutra wraps up the first portion, Samadhi Pada, by showing us the goal and the way, and then reminding us of the benefits of the eight limbs of yoga.