

CHAPTER 10

SAMADHI AND THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MIND

1. *Samadhi* Defined

Samadhi is the eighth step of yoga. The great Sage Gheranda says, “There is no yoga without *samadhi*. None is so fortunate as the person who attains *samadhi*. *Samadhi* can be attained by devotedly serving the guru and securing his grace.”¹ In this statement an important doctrine, full of truth, is laid down. Since in *samadhi* one has to achieve the constraint of the mind by stopping its fluctuations, the sage has said that there cannot be yoga without *samadhi*. The end product of any yoga can only be this. It matters little by what name we call it. Another doctrine laid out in the above statement is that the state of *samadhi* is not attainable without the grace of a realized guru. Only a lighted candle can light an unlighted one. The truth of this cannot be negated simply because some inexperienced people do not agree with it.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* it is said, “As salt dissolves in water, so the mind dissolves into the soul and becomes one with it. The unity of soul and mind is called *samadhi*.”² Yogi Yajnavalkya says, “The union of *jivatman* (soul) with *paramatman* (God) is known as *samadhi*. The state in which the *jivatman* establishes itself in the *paramatman* is the state of *samadhi*.”³

Raja Yoga, unmani, manomani, amaratva, laya, tattva, sunyasunya, paramapada, amanaska, advaita, niralamba, niranjana, jivanamukti, sahajavastha, turyavastha – all these are other words for *samadhi*.

Sage Patanjali says, “That stage of meditation in which one realizes the goal, and forms dissolve from the mind, is the state of *samadhi*.”⁴

After intense practice, when meditation is no longer meditation, but becomes identified with or merged into the goal, this is called *samadhi*.

Samadhi means union with God. The union of the one who has mastered *samadhi* is never disturbed. The states of waking, dreaming, or sleeping are, therefore, not hindrances. The seeker remains continuously conscious that he is *atman* and not the body. As a big hall is seen after breaking down the walls standing between four rooms, the yogi experiences only *samadhi* after the differences between the aforesaid states vanish. This is called *sahajavastha* (the natural state).

¹ *Gheranda Samhita*, VII, 1

² *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, IV, 5

³ *Yoga Yajnavalkya*, I, 2.

⁴ *Yogadarsana*, Chapter on *Vibhutipada*, Aphorism 3.

2. The Two Stages of *Samadhi*

As such, *samadhi* is only one, but it has two stages: the first is called *samprajnata*, *savikalpa*, *sabija*, or *cetana samadhi*; the other is *asamprajnata*, *nirvikalpa*, *nirbija*, or *acetana samadhi*. The difference between these two stages is very clear. The mind exists in the first *samadhi*, but not in the second. The second stage can also be called *atimanasa* (super-mind).

Bija (the seed) of all desires is the mind. Since the mind exists in the first or the lower *samadhi*, it is called *sabija* (with seed) *samadhi*. This state is also known as *samprajnata samadhi* since in it, one attains doubtless and true knowledge about the object of concentration. It is also called *prasantavahita* since the *prana* and *apana vayus*, moving upward through the passage of *susumna*, stabilize the external organs and generate concentration of mind. Moreover, this state is also known as *savikalpa samadhi* or *cetana samadhi*, because *sankalpa* (volition) and *smrti* (memory) do not exist in it.

Since the *susumna* passage of the seeker who has reached *savikalpa samadhi* is purified, the feeble and upward-flowing *prana* and *apana* produce physical and mental stability, further resulting in deep concentration. In common concentration, one has to make a decision, and therefore, many favorable as well as contradicting thoughts occur. But in the state of perfect concentration or *samadhi* a decision is reached naturally, and there are no contradicting thoughts. Meditation devoid of conflicting thoughts is called *savikalpa samadhi*, and meditation without either favorable or contradicting thoughts is called *nirvikalpa samadhi*.

Since the mind exists in *savikalpa samadhi*, 'I' exists until the end. Because of the existence of 'I', 'you' and 'they' remain also. Thus duality prevails until the end of *savikalpa samadhi*. This means that as long as the seeker is in the stage of *savikalpa samadhi* there is still the duality *jiva* (soul) and *Isvara* (God). In *nirvikalpa samadhi*, mind becomes non-mind and *jiva* merges into *Siva* (God). As a result, duality disappears. The cause of duality is the *drsta* (the one who sees). In the state of *advaita* (non-dual state) there is no *drsta* (seer) at all. Without mastering *savikalpa samadhi*, one cannot practice *nirvikalpa samadhi*. *Savikalpa samadhi* is the base of *nirvikalpa samadhi*.

3. The First Stage of *Samadhi*: Separation of Body and Mind

In *savikalpa samadhi*, the body is separated from the mind and in *nirvikalpa samadhi* the mind is separated from the soul.

Savikalpa samadhi, which is active, is attained when deep concentration is generated through the practice of meditation in which the mind's control over the body is lifted and the senses are made introvert by means of free *prana*. *Nirvikalpa samadhi* is the natural 'state of non-mind (or state of nothingness) which is generated thereafter. In that state, the mind merges into nature and the *atman* (soul) emerges as the self.

The separation of the mind from the body occurs in the first state of *samadhi*. As a result, *prana* becomes independent and free from the control of the mind. The independent *prana* takes over control of the body, directs it, and tries to make the senses introvert. In this state, the seeker watches the activities of *prana* and the senses as a witness. Such practice is called *Samkhya Yoga*, *Raja Yoga*, or *Purna Yoga*.

In *Samkhya Yoga*, it is believed that all actions are performed through the qualities of nature; hence only nature is the 'doer'. "I" is only a pure, wise and free soul. "I" has nothing to do with the actions of nature. In the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said, "Oh mighty armed (*Arjuna*)! He who knows in essence the divisions and relations of the qualities of nature and their activities and thinks that the qualities (as sense organs) react to the qualities (as sense-propensities), is not attached."⁵

Raja Yoga is the best form of yoga. It is also called *Purna Yoga* or *Asamprajnata Yoga*. *Karma Yoga* or *Kriya Yoga* is its integral part. Control of the physical senses is achieved by *Karma Yoga* and control of the subtle senses is achieved by *Raja Yoga*. *Savikalpa samadhi* is the base of *Raja Yoga*. Since there is only concentration in that state, the mind exists. Because of this, it is also called *cetana samadhi*. In *Raja Yoga samadhi*, there is no existence of mind; hence it is called *acetana samadhi*. After mastering this *samadhi*, a yogi's spiritual practice comes to an end. He remains at all times in *samadhi* whether he is sitting, standing, walking, eating, drinking, speaking, or doing anything else. Yet, if he desires, he can at will enter into *acetana samadhi*.

4. The Four *Samapattis* (States of Meditation)

There are four stages of meditation through which a seeker has to pass before reaching *sabija* or *samprajnata samadhi*. These stages are called *savitarka* (deliberative), *savicara* (reflective), *sananda* (joyful), and *sasmita* (self-realized) *samapattis* (states of meditation).

The subject or object of meditation, the means or the instrument of meditation, and the doer or the meditator—these three form a trio. Because of this trio, the *samapattis* are also divided into three categories. In the first category, the subject or object supporting the mind in meditation is considered important. In the second, the means or instrument of meditation is considered important, while in the third the doer or the meditator is given importance. In meditation, the subject-object is called *grahya* (that which is comprehended), the means-instrument is *grahana* (comprehension), and the doer-meditator is *grahitr* (one who comprehends). In other words, they form a trio of known, knowledge, and knower.

In *savitarka* and *savicara samapattis*, *grahya* or the subject or object of meditation is important, so both these *samapattis* fall under the first category. This is based on *grahya*, that is, on what is known or comprehended in meditation. In *sananda samapatti*, *grahana*, or the means or instrument of meditation is important, hence it falls under the

⁵ *Bhagavad Gita*, III, 28.

second category. *Sasmita samapatti* falls under the third category in which *grahitr* or the doer is important.

a) Savitarka Samapatti

After the release of *prana*, the *kundalini* power of the seeker is awakened. Thereafter begins *savitarka samapatti*, or the deliberative state of meditation. In this state, the mind is directed towards its supporting object, yielding gross direct experience. Here the mental concentration assumes the form of deliberation.

Because of the sense organs, the mind constantly remains extroverted. Therefore, first of all it should be applied or focused on gross objects. Such gross objects, which may support the mind for the deliberation during meditation, can be five major gross elements (*viz.* earth, water, fire, air, and ether) or the gross forms of God (*Brahma, Visnu, Siva, etc.*). Thus a sort of *dharana* (focusing of mind) begins during *savitarka samapatti*.

This *samapatti* is further divided into two types: *savitarkanugata* and *nirvitarkanugata*. During *savitarkanugata samapatti* there is gross direct experience of the supporting object along with the deliberation of the mind. On the other hand, in *nirvitarkanugata samapatti* there is gross direct experience of the supporting object without deliberation.

During *savitarka samapatti*, the mind of the seeker remains, perturbed. After the release of *prana*, as the seeker advances in the practice of meditation, he confronts certain yogic experiences which frighten him. He is unable to make the right decision at this stage about the validity of such disturbing or troublesome experiences. Therefore, this stage corresponds with the *ksiptavastha* (the mental state of distraction) in meditation.

b) Savicara Samapatti

After transcending the state of *savitarka samapatti*, the seeker gives up the gross form of meditation and adopts the subtle form. With that change he enters into the next stage of *savicara samapatti*: In this state of meditation, the mind is directed towards its supporting subject, yielding subtle direct experience. Here, the mind reflects upon the subtle subjects of meditation.

In the initial stage of meditation, there is a need for gross subjects to support the mind in its contemplative efforts, but later on it can easily reflect upon even subtle supporting subjects. Among such subtle subjects to support the reflection of the mind during meditation can be included the five basic subtle elements: *sabda* (hearing), *sparsa* (touch), *rupa* (sight), *rasa* (taste), and *gandha* (smell).

Savicara samapatti is also further divided into two types: *savicaranugata* and *nirvicaranugata*. In the first type, experience is supported by the reflection of the mind, while in the second type there is subtle experience without the support of reflection.

During *savicara samapatti*, the seeker is still not able to find the right explanation or solution for the troublesome experiences which he undergoes right from the stage of *savitarka samapatti*. So he is still in a state of uncertainty and still finds total darkness spread over his path. He is quite stupefied, due to his inability to solve the problem. However, he tries to compromise by believing that in spite of all the disturbing experiences, it is continuous practice that will lead him to the goal. This stage corresponds with the *mudhavastha* (the mental state of stupefaction) in meditation.

c) *Sananda Samapatti*

When the seeker progresses further and transcends the first two *samapattis*, his support of the subject or the object of meditation is automatically done away with. Subsequently, he enters *sananda samapatti* in which meditation is supported by means of the sense organs. Since *grahana* (comprehension) is accomplished through the sense organs, during *sananda samapatti*, meditation is automatically focused on them, giving joyful feelings to the seeker.

The mental states of distraction and stupefaction vanish during this *samapatti* and the seeker feels inner happiness. This stage corresponds with the *viksiptavastha* (the mental state of serenity) in meditation. Concentration of mind, which has eluded the seeker so far, occurs to them sporadically. Such stray glimpses of concentration of mind generate rays of hope in the seeker of the possibility of reaching their goal. Thus they experience happiness and joy and their mind remains calm.

(d) *Sasmiti Samapatti*

After transcending the stage of *sananda samapatti*, when the seeker enters the fourth or *sasmita samapatti*, their meditation is not supported by the sense organs but by the sense of personality. In this stage, the seeker meditates on the 'self', and *grahitr* (the meditator) is important, leaving aside all subjects, objects, or means of supporting the mind. This is the stage of self-realization or *sabija*, *savikalpa*, *samprajnata* or *cetana samadhi*, in which the mind attains real concentration.

In the first three *samapattis*, the mind remains either perturbed or joyful but lacks perfect concentration. Therefore, these are not included in the state of *samadhi*. Since they are lower states as compared to *samadhi*, they are called *samapattis*. They can be considered immature states of *samadhi*. But the last, or *sasmita samapatti*, yields perfect concentration of mind, true knowledge and bliss. Hence it is a state mature enough to be identified as *samadhi*.

5. *Samapattis*, Qualities of Nature, and the Sense of Non-Attachment

Like *samapattis*, the sense of non-attachment is also attained stage by stage. Broadly speaking, there are two levels of non-attachment: *apara vairagya* (lower category of non-attachment) and *para vairagya* (higher category). *Apara vairagya* is further divided into four stages: 1) *yatamana vairagya*, 2) *vyatireka vairagya*, 3) *ekendriya vairagya*, and 4) *vasikara vairagya*. All these four types of non-attachment are related to the four stages of *samapatti*.

During *savitarka samapatti*, the seeker has many physical and mental impurities. As a result, *rajas* and *tamas* become predominant and *sattva* remains subsidiary or dormant in the seeker. However, the seeker decides to get rid of the impurities through spiritual practice and strives for this. These sincere efforts to overcome the impurities and the lower qualities of nature give them a sense of non-attachment called *yatamana vairagya*.

In the next stage of *savicara samapatti*, the fleeting nature of the mind is somewhat reduced due to partial removal of the physical and mental impurities. The physical activity is also reduced. Therefore, the seeker finds some solace and develops the patience to persevere in spiritual practice. Such a state gives the seeker a sense of non-attachment called *vyatireka vairagya*.

During the stage of *sananda samapatti*, *rajas* and *tamas* are somewhat reduced in the seeker, allowing *sattva* to develop. As a result, the restless mind becomes serene and the body becomes purified and healthy. Sense objects do not attract the attention, as compared to the earlier stages. In this stage, one attains the sense of non-attachment called *ekendriya vairagya*.

Finally, in *sasmita samapatti*, both *rajas* and *tamas* fade away and *sattva* becomes dominant. This *sattva* lends stability to the mind and the body, removing the impurities. Mental bliss and true knowledge attained during this *samapatti* give the seeker a sense of non-attachment called *vasikara vairagya*. This *vasikara* itself is the real *apara vairagya*. However, *para vairagya* (highest non-attachment) can only be attained through *nirbija*, *nirvikalpa*, *asamprajnata* or *acetana samadhi*.

6. Ups and Downs in the Mental State during *Samapatti*

In the state of *savitarka samapatti*, the seeker is in a very distracted state. In *savicara samapatti*, distraction is replaced by a stupefied state of mind. In *sananda samapatti*, one mistakenly considers himself to be a great or *mahayogi*, and as a result, tries to falsify the yoga teachings of preceding teachers. He plans many big schemes and pretends that *siddhis* have become his slave. In this state, he continuously dreams of *siddhis*. In *sasmita samapatti*, as *tamoguna* and *rajoguna* are annihilated, *sattvaguna* develops and he begins to see his mistakes. Then he likes being alone, dislikes public contact, and feels more interested in the deep study of the scriptures.

A seeker has to swim a stormy ocean from *savitarka* to *sasmita samadhi*. During that period, he experiences joy and depression over and over again. When a seeker has divine experiences, he becomes overjoyed and feels very enthusiastic, but these excessive feelings often invite contradictory thoughts. As a result, he considers untruth to be truth. When he has such divine experiences in the state of excessive perturbation, he takes truth to be untruth. Thus he is often led astray. *Savitarka*, *savicara*, *sananda* and *sasmita*--these four *samapattis* are linked one to the other. Because of this, even when a seeker suddenly climbs to a higher *samapatti* from a lower one, he is led astray and thinks 'now *samadhi* is within my grasp.' When this experience does not last, he becomes

disheartened. The more he has such experiences, the less impact joy as well as depression has on his mind. Finally, he reaches the safe bank of *sasmita samapatti* and becomes completely free from the impact of joy and depression. This is because he begins to attain the higher wisdom in this state. In spite of this, the detachment generated in his mind at this stage is called *apara vairagya* (incomplete detachment, also known as *vasikara vairagya*). *Asamprajnata samadhi* can be mastered only after attaining *para vairagya* (complete detachment), which considers even the power of omniscience to be a trifle, and enables the seeker to go forward.

7. Pratyahara through the Samapattis

In *savikaipa samadhi*, there is mere concentration. In that state, since *prana* and *apana* have become subtle and strong, the seeker can enter *samadhi* whenever and wherever he chooses. Even a seeker receiving *saktipata diksa*, in spite of being a beginner, can begin meditation whenever and wherever he chooses. But that meditation is just the beginning of *samapatti* and is of a much lower order compared to *savikalpa samadhi*.

The beginning of *samapatti* can be called the beginning of *pratyahara*. If *asana* and *pranayama* are considered the first two stages of *yoga*, *pratyahara* becomes the third stage, while *samadhi* will be the sixth. In the second stage, (*pranayama*), *pratyahara* is very weak, but when the seeker is well established in the third stage (*pratyahara*), *pranayama* is at its best. As a result, *kumbhaka* (withholding of the breath) lasts longer and the *nadis*, (bodily passages) *cakras* and *granthis* are speedily purified. As they are relieved of impurities, the body becomes more and more stable, in other words, the senses become introvert. At that time, distraction decreases, *mudhavastha* (the state of stupefaction) vanishes, and *viksiptavastha* (the state of serenity) begins to appear.

In *sananda samapatti*, the yogi conquers *bindu* (sexual fluid) and gets the invaluable opportunity of sipping the nectar. When this state is created, it can be said that *pratyahara* has become stronger. Yet, there is not complete concentration (*ekagrata*) in this stage. When a yogi begins to climb the stage of *sasmitasamapatti*, he attains it and feels that his hard penance for long years has yielded results.

In this stage, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*, which altogether are called *samyama* in Patanjali's *Yogadarsana*, is slowly being mastered. As a result, the stage of *pratyahara* vanishes forever. *Khecari mudra* becomes stronger and *yonis mudra* begins to occur. In this stage, one also comes to know what is called *sambhavi mudra*.

When the seeker reaches the end of the fourth, or *sasmita samapatti*, his mind, devoid of doubts and alternatives, becomes so steadfast that no fresh thoughts are generated. From this point begins *asamprajnata* or *nirvikalpa samadhi*. The thoughtless state begins where concentration or single-mindedness ends.

8. The Second State of Samadhi: Dissolution of Mind

Only after mastering the first (*savikalpa*) *samadhi* can the second one, *nirvikalpa samadhi*, be practiced. Even though *savikalpa samadhi* is considered very important, it is insignificant compared to *nirvikalpa samadhi*. Sage Pantanjali says, “Even the best *samyama* (self-control), i.e. *savikalpa samadhi*, is considered an external dimension of *nirbija* or *nirvikalpa samadhi*. The reason for this is that in *savikalpa samadhi*, the mind does not dissolve itself into the *atman* or the self.”⁶

It is true that *rtambhara prajna* (the highest wisdom) is attained through *sabija*, *samprajnata* or *savikalpa samadhi* or *samyama*, but in this *samadhi* there is only deep concentration and total dissolution of the mind does not occur. Therefore, a seeker must not stop after attaining *rtambhara prajna*. Sage Patanjali says, “After the dissolution of the mind, everything gets dissolved, and thereafter dawns *nirbija* or *nirvikalpa samadhi*.”⁷

In that case what is the nature of *nirvikalpa samadhi*? The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* says, “A yogi seated in *samadhi* does not know (or is not conscious of) sound, touch, form, taste, and smell. He also does not differentiate between himself and others.”⁸

“As the wood supply is exhausted, the fire is extinguished in its place of origin. Similarly, as thoughts vanish, the mind also gets automatically dissolved into its source (nature).”⁹

Since this path of yogic meditation is very difficult and full of so many obstacles, rarely does a bold and genuine aspirant reach the highest peak of *savikalpa samadhi*. Accomplishment of *nirvikalpa samadhi* is ten million times more difficult than chewing an iron gram. In *Mahopanisad*, it is said, ‘O *Brahmin*! To conquer the mind is more difficult than even drinking an ocean, uprooting a great mountain, or swallowing fire.’¹⁰ The fort of the physical body is to be conquered by *savikalpa samadhi*, while the fort of the mind is to be reduced by *nirvikalpa samadhi*. In *Dhyanabindu Upanisad* it is said, “So long as the mind is not finally dissolved, it should be controlled by the heart. Only this much is real knowledge; all else is the elaboration of books.”¹¹

⁶ *Yogadarsana*, Chapter on *Vibhutipada*, Aphorism 8.

⁷ *Yogadarsana*, Chapter on *Samadhipada*, Aphorism 51.

⁸ *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, IV, 109.

⁹ *Maitrayani Upanisad* Fourth Lesson, 1.

¹⁰ *Mahopanisad*, III, 20.

¹¹ *Brahmabindu Upanisad*, 5.