

CHAPTER 9

MENTAL PURIFICATION AND CONSTRAINT THROUGH *DHYANA*

1. Super-Consciousness through the Constraint of the Mind

Dharana is the seed; *dhyana* is the tree, and *samadhi* is the fruit. These three are inseparable, constituting an integral whole. Sage Patanjali has termed this trio *samyama* (constraint). *Samyama* is the direct means; in the practice of yoga, while the preceding five steps, including *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, and *pratyahara* are the indirect means. However, in comparison with the highest state of *nirbija samadhi*, even *samyama* is considered to be an indirect means for mastering yoga.

Having withdrawn the mind from the sense organs, the seeker, through *samyama*, has to focus his attention on an object of contemplation and concentrate his mind on a presented idea so that nothing but that exists in his consciousness. During the practice of *samyama*, the seeker's mind passes through various states before reaching the state of *dhyana* or perfect concentration, and finally attaining perfect knowledge through *samadhi* or super-consciousness.

2. Knowledge Is Dependent on Mind

It is not possible to accomplish real knowledge about the secrets of various lower and higher stages of yoga without regular practice. Knowledge obtained through books is indirect, while knowledge attained through *rtambhara prajna*, which is the outcome of *samadhi* is direct. The former is born of scripture, the latter of yoga. Real knowledge is that which is born of the actual experiences of yoga, while that which is obtained by studying the scriptures is just superfluous knowledge.

Lord Krsna says: "There is nothing so sacred in this world as true knowledge; a perfected *yogi* finds it from within his 'Self' at the proper time".¹ The perfected *yogi* referred to in this stanza is the accomplished *yogi* of *Karma Yoga* or *savikalpa samadhi* because true knowledge dawns only after mastering these. In fact, *Karma Yoga* is the basis for *Jnana Yoga*. One does not attain fitness for practicing *Jnana Yoga* without first mastering *Karma Yoga*. Thus *karma* or action precedes *jnana* or knowledge.

Both knowledge and ignorance are dependent on the mind; as a result, where there is knowledge, there is existence of mind. *Samadhi* with the existence of mind is *savikalpa samadhi*. Again, with the existence of mind, there is one who sees or perceives. Where there is a 'seer', duality exists. Oneness or cosmic consciousness can exist only in the absence of the 'seer'. But this oneness should not even be 'felt'; if it is felt, duality exists. Duality vanishes only when the mind is dissolved or merges into nature.

¹ *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter IV, stanza 38

3. Mind and Nature

Nature is the cause of mind as well as of all existence. It has two major aspects: gross and subtle. All elemental forms or concrete existence constitute the gross aspect of nature, while all subtle manifestations constitute the subtle aspect.

Prthvi (earth), *jala* (water), *agni* (fire), *vayu* (air), and *akasa* (ether) are called *panca mahabhuta* (five basic or major elements) which constitute all gross forms of nature.

Manas (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *citta* (contemplative mind-stuff), and *ahamkara* (ego)--this four-fold combination is called *antahkarana* (inner self).

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krsna says, “Earth, fire, water, air, ether, mind, intellect and ego constitute the eight-fold nature of Mind.”² Here Lord *Krsna* has incorporated *citta* into *buddhi*. The function of *citta* is to contemplate, and that of *buddhi* is to make decisions. As a decision is not arrived at without contemplation, the Lord has not differentiated *citta* from *buddhi*, and He called nature only eight-fold.

But Lord *Krsna* says this eight-fold nature is His inferior nature, and calls the *atman*, the life element or the soul, His superior nature. It is through this superior nature that matter is brought to life, consciousness is awakened, and the whole creation of inferior nature is upheld. Superior nature works as an equilibrium for the manifestation of eight-fold nature. Lord *Krsna* says, “But, Oh mighty-armed (*Arjuna*), this is My inferior nature. Now know My supreme nature, which is the life element or soul and by which the whole universe is upheld (or manifested).”³

The concrete or gross aspect of nature among human beings is the body, and the subtle aspect of nature is the *antahkarana*. Through the dynamic power of *atman*, both these aspects of nature become active. The activity or dynamism of these two aspects of nature creates, protects, multiplies and changes this universe, and their inactivity results in the destruction of the universe.

4. Dhyana Is the Process of Physical and Mental Purification

Our being is made up of the gross and the subtle elements of nature. When the gross elements predominate in a person, his mind is dull, but when the subtle elements predominate, his mind is sharp. Dull mind is *tamasic*; sharp mind is *sattvic*; and one that is a mixture of dullness and sharpness is *rajasic*.

The mind of every person depicts all three qualities of nature, which are *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, to some extent. Any one of them becomes predominant at one time, rendering the other two subsidiary. Directed by these qualities of nature, every person performs

² *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter VII, stanza 4

³ *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter VII, stanza 5

countless physical and mental acts. When actions are performed under the direction of *rajas* and *tamas* impurities are generated in the body as well as in the mind. But when one acts under the influence of *sattva*, the body and the mind are purified

Dhyana or meditation is the best means for purifying the mind and body. There exists a veil between the mind and the body on one hand and the *atman* (soul) on the other. This veil becomes thick when many impurities are caused by the predominance of *tamoguna*. It becomes somewhat thinner when there are more impurities caused by the predominance of *rajoguna*. But when there is a predominance of *sattvaguna*, the veil becomes very thin. Through the regular practice of *dhyana*, *sattva* goes on increasing and *rajas* and *tamas* decrease. Ultimately, when *sattva* develops to a great degree, the veil disappears totally and the *atman* is realized.

5. The Mind Is the Cause of Bondage and Liberation

“Mind is of two types: pure and impure. A mind having desires is impure and a mind without desire is a pure mind. The sole cause of the bondage as well as of the liberation of human beings is the mind. A mind full of desire binds, whereas a desireless mind liberates. When an aspirant’s mind gives up the desires of worldly enjoyments, they attain liberation. Hence an aspirant must make their mind desireless.”⁴

In *Maitrayani Upanisad* it is said, “Through penance (practice of yoga) *sattvaguna* (purity) is accomplished, as a result of which knowledge is unveiled and true discrimination is gained through *sattvaguna*, the detachment of the mind is accomplished, and through that state of mind the *atman* (self) is realized. Ultimately, through self-realization, one is freed from the bondage of life.”⁵ Further it is said: “*Citta* (mind) itself is worldly existence; hence, with effort, the mind should be purified. One’s behavior is in accordance with the nature of one’s mind--this is eternal truth. As the mind is made quiet, good and evil deeds vanish. The yogi who has a quiet and steadfast mind merges into the *atman* and attains eternal happiness.”⁶

The mind is full of manifold impurities gathered over many lifetimes. An aspirant must remove them through meditation. A pure mind is found in a pure body and an impure mind is found in an impure body. So, first of all, it is necessity to purify the physical body.

6. Techniques of Body Purification

a) **Pranopasana:** *Pranopasana* can be practiced through various means, such as *pranayama*, *dhyana*, *mantra japa*, *nadanusandhana*, *nama-samkirtana*, etc.

b) **Hamsa Yoga:** The practice of only *pranayama* is called *Hamsa Yoga* or *Hatha Yoga*. *Pranayama*, *asana*, *mudra*, and *pratyahara* are also known as the means of *Hatha Yoga*.

⁴ *Brahmabindupanisad* 1, 2, 3.

⁵ *Maitrayani Upanisad*, Chapter IV, 3

⁶ *Maitrayani Upanisad*, Chapter IV, 3:3 & 4

c) **Niskama Karma Yoga:** In *Niskama Karma Yoga*, the seeker tries to awaken the *kundalini* and make it move upward. After mastering such practice, *tamoguna* (inertia) and *rajoguna* (passion) vanish from the yogi's body and mind. As a result, the yogi becomes an *urdhvareta*, after which he attains *rtambhara prajna* (the highest wisdom). *Savikalpa samadhi* can be mastered by means of *Niskama Karma Yoga*.

d) **Sahaja Yoga:** *Sahaja Yoga*, *Kriya Yoga*, and *Kundalini Yoga* also can be mastered through various means. Among them the best means is the grace of guru or *saktipata*. Through that the yoga *kriyas* (yogic activities) automatically occur in the body of the seeker.

e) **Saranagati Yoga:** The above-mentioned *Sahaja Yoga*, *Kriya Yoga*, and *Kundalini Yoga* are other names for *Saranagati Yoga*. This yoga is also called *Isvara-Pranidhana*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Prema Yoga*, *Prapatti Yoga*, or *Nididhyasana*. By the grace of God, yoga *kriyas* are automatically manifested in the seeker's body. As a blade of grass is carried away in the flow of a river, a seeker is carried away in the flow of natural activities with faith. Only such a devotee is said to be doing activity for the sake of God or is called 'asang' or God-minded. Only he can attain God.⁷ That devotee believes, "I am doing only what God has me do. Only God is the 'doer' and I am the 'non-doer'."

7. The Riddle of Action and Inaction

Through the practice of *dhyana* generated by the grace of God or guru, one can experience inactivity in activity. Because the aspirant clearly realizes that physical activities done without the control of the mind are the activities of **prana**, he remains inactive and devoid of desire. Activity is activity and inaction is inaction; yet one can experience inaction in action and action in inaction. What a wonderful experience!

Activity devoid of ego is true inactivity. When the body acts under the control of the mind, ego is projected into the mind, and unnecessarily accepts the responsibility of being the 'doer'.

A traveler sitting in a train does not himself walk; the movement of the train becomes his journey. In the same way, a seeker, taking recourse in the movement of *prana* during meditation, does not try to meditate; the movement of *prana* naturally becomes his meditation. Even great scholars are puzzled by this problematic issue of 'action' and 'inaction'. This is not a topic for argument; it is the subject of yogic experience. That is why it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* that "even the wise are baffled in knowing what 'action' is and what 'inaction' is."⁸ When the mind is directing the body, the whole nervous system remains active, which results in mental tension and unrest. In this meditation, the mind remains neutral and observes the activities of the body and *prana* as a mere witness. As a result, it does not have to carry the burden of directing the body. In

⁷ *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter XI, stanza 55

⁸ *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter IV, stanza 16

the absence of any burden, the mind becomes increasingly quiet. If a house catches fire after it has been sold, the person who sold it does not feel sorrow or misery.

In short, it can be said that if a person's mind has the sense of being the 'doer', there is activity; if his mind is devoid of such sense, there is inactivity in spite of activity. The *jnani* (knowledge oriented seeker) considers *atman* (soul) to be the 'non-doer' or witness and *prakrti* (nature) to be the 'doer'. The *bhakta* (devotee) considers God to be the 'doer' and himself the 'non-doer'.

8. One Knowing Action and Inaction Knows Yoga

A seeker who experiences action in inaction and inaction in action while in meditation has found the path of liberation; there is no doubt about it. Lord *Krsna* calls such a seeker a *purvakarmakrt yogi* (doing all actions) and *manisi* (wise among men). Lord *Krsna* states in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction is the wise among human beings and remains unconcerned even while performing all actions."⁹ This yoga is known as *Prana Yoga*, *Prakrti Yoga*, or *Sahaja Yoga*. This practice is that of *naiskarmya* (inaction) and *karma sanyasa* (renunciation of action). As Lord *Krsna* says, "Oh *Dhananjaya* (*Arjuna*)! Actions do not bind that self-possessed person who has renounced actions through yoga and has destroyed doubts through (true) knowledge."¹⁰

Let us examine the meaning of this stanza in detail.

(a) What is renunciation of action in yoga?

Renunciation of action through yoga means making the senses introvert and rejecting the idea of 'doer-ship'. Where there is a 'doer', there are actions, and where there are actions; there is bondage. A 'non-doer' does not have the bondage of actions. Introversion of the senses is the result of lifting away the control of the mind over the body and allowing full freedom for movement to *prana*. This is why a follower of the path of knowledge, while in meditation, believes that he is a 'non-doer' and nature is the 'doer' (see the *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter V, stanzas 8 and 9). A devotee feels that he is a 'non-doer' and God is the 'doer'. (See the *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter XVIII, stanza 61). Thus they renounce actions, Sankaracarya also writes in his comments on this stanza, "Since a yogi has removed the impurities from his inner-self through *Karma Yoga*, and as a result has attained self-realization, through which all his doubts vanish, he is not bound by actions because his actions are burnt by the fire of knowledge."¹¹ As long as the senses remain extrovert, the renunciation of actions or 'non-doing' is not possible. That is why Lord *Krsna* says, "Oh best of *Bharatas* (*Arjuna*)! You should, therefore, control the senses in the beginning so as to overcome sensuality, which is the destroyer of knowledge."¹²

(b) The Destruction of Doubts by Wisdom

⁹ *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter IV, stanza 18

¹⁰ *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter IV, stanza 41

¹¹ *Sankarabhasya*, IV, 18

¹² *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter III, stanza 41

Doubts are destroyed through knowledge and self-realization. A yogi becomes an *urdhvareta* after conquering sensuality; at that point, his senses become introvert and *rtambhara prajna* dawns in him. It is never possible to attain knowledge without conquering sensuality. As true knowledge dawns, all doubts vanish. This is the achievement of *Samprajnata Yoga*. *Samprajnata* means ‘the state in which the clear and doubtless form of the goal is attained’.

(c) Who is the self-possessed person?

In the stanza under discussion, it is said that ‘actions do not bind the self-possessed.’ The question arises, who can be called a self-possessed person? In general it may be said that every human being is ‘self-possessed’, except the one who does not know the answer to the question ‘who am I?’ In this stanza, Lord *Krsna* has called a self-realized yogi ‘self-possessed’. In fact, the real practice of yoga begins only after self-realization. Maharsi Patanjali says, “As a result of self-realization, all obstacles are removed, faith is enhanced, and worldly enjoyments no longer remain an attraction.”¹³

The *bhakta yogis* as well as the *jnana yogi* attain self-realization. It is only after crossing this stage that they are not defeated at the hands of various obstacles and their inner journey is not cut short. There are various means for attaining self-realization, but the stage in which entry to the path of self-realization is secured is one and the same for all; that is the stage of *pranotthana* or the release of *prana*.

9. Actions Do Not Bind One Who Has Mastered the “Self”

As long as a person’s mind dwells on the objects of the senses, actions bind him, causing attachments and aversions. Therefore, the mind of the person who remains attracted to worldly enjoyments or the objects of the senses becomes full of impurities. But, if one refrains from indulging in sense objects, his mind becomes free from attachments and aversions, and actions do not bind him.

Lord *Krsna* points out that indulgence in sense objects does not bind or cause any harm to a self-controlled person having a pure and disciplined mind: “The self-controlled one, who while indulging in sense objects through the senses is free from attachments and aversions, is master of the self and attains thru wisdom.”¹⁴

Let us understand the meaning of this stanza in detail.

(a) Who is the master of self?

A seeker who meditates by lifting the mind’s control over the body is the master of the ‘self’. But such a seeker, when he is in the primary stage of practice, cannot be called ‘master of the self’. Only the seeker who has reached the stage in which he attains concentration of mind can be called ‘master of self’. He, being the best knower of action and inaction can be called ‘master of knowledge.’

¹³ *Yoga Darsana*, Chapter on *Samadhipad* & Aphorism --29

¹⁴ *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter II, stanza 64

(b) Freedom from attachments aversion:

The master of self is free from attachments and aversions because during meditation, he allows *prana* to rule over the senses and does not control *prana* through the mind. Attachments and aversions are the creation of the mind. In *Karma Yoga*, since the mind remains neutral and only *prana* directs the senses, attachments and aversions are not to be found.

(c) Self-controlled indulgence in the senses.

A non-doer 'master of the self' without the mind's control, hands over the senses to the independent *prana*. This yogic process of lifting the control of the mind and handing over the senses to *prana* gradually leads the seeker to gain mastery over the senses. This is what is meant by controlling the senses. In such circumstances, the master of the self is found to indulge in the senses; yet, in reality, he is not enjoying them. The reason is that all activities which manifest during meditation are generated by *prana* and not the mind. The mind is, in fact, detached from the body at that time. This sort of yoga practice goes on for many years. In the end, due to the undaunted efforts of *prana*, *tamoguna* and *rajoguna* become feeble and *sattvaguna* becomes stronger.

As a result of the stability of *sattvaguna*, a seeker's mind becomes filled with joy. As the mind is created out of *sattvaguna*, joy is its very nature. But when it is drawn into the strong currents of *tamoguna* and *rajoguna*, it becomes restless. A mind having fallen through sense indulgence becomes elevated through the practice of yoga.