

PATANJALI'S YOGASUTRAS

Sutra 1.2

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः
yogaś-citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ

VED VYASA

In Maharshi Veda Vyasa's commentary, as interpreted by Prof Ganganath Jha, the second sutra is translated as: "**Yoga is the inhibition of the functions of the mind.**"

The commentary points out the sutra does not mention 'all the functions of the mind' are to be inhibited. Why so? For this, Maharshi Vyasa explains the components of the mind – Truth, Energy, Inertia. And this is the simplest way to understand these three: **Sattva**, the **Rajas** and the **Tamas**. We remain either in knowledge, or we get mixed up in the sense objects or we crave power.

When we are under the influence of Rajas and Tamas, we have the distracted state of mind. When we are under the influence of Tamas alone, we have attachment, illusion, helplessness.

Basically, the Tamas state of mind is mired in lust and wanting and acquires the Dull and Fickle states of mind.

In the distracted state, whatever communion or yoga you attain is not yoga, because the yoga is subjugated to the distraction. When the mind shakes off Tamas, it has the drive towards virtue but it is still tainted by the ego-invested in being virtuous which confers power. When even the slightest rajas is thrown off, the sattva mind consisting of pure knowledge and turns towards true yoga.

Consciousness by itself is unchanging, Veda Vyasa points out that this is different from discriminative knowledge, which may also be sattvic but is still focussed on the discerning faculty of the mind. This is still in the state of **samprajnata**, concrete knowledge. A mind that uses the mind to know the mind is still in the concrete state. Only when it shuts this also out, and hence *all* its functions, inhibiting discerning also, it is in a state of seedless communion, i.e. without potential for rebirth, and thus reaches the **asamprajnata** or the abstract communion. Both together, samprajnata and asamprajnata, concrete and abstract, form the state of inhibited mind.

To summarise,

- Rajas and Tamas in equal measure is distracted mind or viksipita.
- Tamas alone is fickle and dull mind, ksipita and mudha.

- Sattva with a tinge of Rajas is Ekagra mind
- Sattva mind that is inhibited is nirudha.
- Nirudha mind is still samprajnata. Mind is still concrete.
- Only when *all* functions of the mind are inhibited it reaches asamprajnata or abstract mind.

SWAMI SATYANANDA

Swami Satyananda explains this sutra as a play on four words: **Yogah**: union; **citta**: consciousness; **vritti**: patterns; **nirodhah**: blocking.

“To block the patterns of consciousness is yoga”.

Citta comes from *cit*, to see, be conscious of, be aware. Citta becomes the individual consciousness, which includes subconscious and unconscious. All three together, are Citta.

He deconstructs these in another way: objective consciousness, which we gain through senses; subjective consciousness, or astral plane, unconsciousness or the dormant personality.

He recommends you read the Mandukya Upanishad for details on the four dimensions of consciousness, that is these three and atman as the fourth. i.e. Jivatman minus citta is atman, he offers a simple formula.

If you think of citta as only mind, blocking or inhibition seems like suppression. But if you understand that citta is whole consciousness, awareness, all three stages, then nirodha cannot be suppressing because that would mean lacking awareness of. Hence, it is important to understand what it is we block.

We block the habitual patterns of the citta, and not awareness itself.

In a state of meditation, you will notice that the patterns of consciousness fall away. How etc you study later, but what this sutra is telling you is that it is fundamentally possible to achieve a different state of mind. How? By inhibiting the habitual state of mind. When the flow of vrittis change, say when you are asleep, you enter a different state. So it is in manipulating these vrittis that altered states occur. There is a definite process to do this. And if you follow that process, you can achieve it. What is this process? It is separate from body, mind, senses, prana, and it is in awareness which alters from state to state, and our conscious transition of awareness is what confers us control. Consciousness exists in the body, it cannot exist without the body, and yet, it has to be blocked. Not ordinary thought, which is negligible. It is not feelings, emotions, passions, desires, all that we keep grappling with at the mundane level. It doesn't matter. There is a whole area of consciousness that is fascinating, beyond the body, within the body, outside the body and it is infinite. Consciousness is what travels from life to life. Thoughts, feelings are very mundane in comparison. They don't affect the larger flow of consciousness. So we also in yoga have to raise our grappling.

What we are blocking is the pattern of citta which is its pattern of remanifesting.

Vritta is a circle. Vritti is circular. The citta's patterns are circular. They recur, they ripple, they turn like a wheel. Hence, the modes of the mind are citta vritti. So when we block, we block consciousness from falling into the pattern of recurring and transcending the individual experiences in the different planes. This is the order of the evolution of your consciousness.

Swami Satyananda then explains the five stages of evolution of consciousness.

The mudha state belongs to the mooladhara chakra. That is dullness of mind is where the individual consciousness is sleeping. When it awakens and comes up to Manipura, it reaches ksipita, fickle mind. Between Manipura and Muladhara, a yoga practitioner can be pulled back and forth. But if you have successfully stayed in Manipura, the navel, then consciousness has the capacity to become relatively steady in its ascent as viksipita up to the ajna chakra. Then, you start to see real progress in concentration. Sahasrara at the crown is beyond the three gunas.

All the world is an interplay of the three gunas. Sattva Tamas and Rajas permeate all creation as interplay through action, thought, event. When sattva predominates, the mind is quiet. Tamas, nothing can make you active or blissful. One guna alone does not predominate but interacts with others in proportion. Tamas dominance is suppressing the other two to reach inertia. Thinking becomes slow. It creates a deep neurosis that becomes mudha, dullness state of citta.

When rajas predominates, suppressing sattva and tamas, the mind is scattered, can be suicidal, murderous, ksipita.

Viksipita is an oscillating mind, sometimes steady, sometimes distracted, like when we attempt to meditate and cant get our minds to focus. When the flow of concentration, born of sattva, is interrupted by unsteadiness, born of rajas, one is in viksipita. So you may start a meditation program or yoga and be very steady for a few days and then leave everything for a few days. This is an important stage because the gunas are expressing themselves freely. This is where yoga begins, he says.

In this free expressive state when sattva expresses itself, one pointedness dawns. When you understand the guna in play at the moment, you understand how to eliminate the negative qualities such that all three regain balance. You do not eliminate the other two. You bring them into balance with countermeasures. Monotony, chanting, reduces rajas. So if you can't sleep, with racing thoughts, rajas is predominant, and you apply some repetitive tamas element to invoke sleep.

Yoga begins at viksipita. In Ekagra, rajas and tamas are absent. Only sattva remains. When you arrive at nirudha, neither tamas, rajas nor sattva remain, you achieve trigunatitha, or beyond the three gunas.

This is equivalent to the awakening of the kundalini energy.

What is citta and what is vritti. Interestingly, he explains it using the same terms the buddha used - eye and eye consciousness. Except, he says there is the instrument and there is the organ and the mind attachment. The mind takes it further to the buddhi, which reacts, activating the ego centre. This action-reaction is presented to the real soul, the **Purusa**. The organs, **Indriyas**, together with the mind, **Manas**, determination, **Buddhi**, and ego, **ahankara**, become a group called the **antahkarana**. These are the processes of the Citta.

The whirlpool of the mind, is the Vritti.

He says think of thought as a gravitational force or repulsion of this pool. When the force is propelled by citta its output is thought. Where does this force come from? From food. From here, it gets the power of motion and the subtler forces become thought. Hence, the mind is not intelligent but only appears so because of the Purusa behind it.

You are the sentient being, the mind is the instrument channelling you towards the external world. The universe thus becomes a reaction of the mind just as the pearl comes into being out of the irritation of the oyster if you consider the universe is a grain of sand and the mind as throwing the enamel over it. So as ordinary men, we don't get this because every time we try to we throw out more enamel and cover up the sand. This patterning is the vrittis. The real man is behind the mind. The mind is his instrument. His intelligence percolates through it.

When the mind is calm we see behind it as when the lake is calm and free of ripples we see the bottom. The ripples being vrittis, the lake being citta and the bottom being the true self. He describes the three states of mind as *tamas*, darkness, brutes and idiots, who harm others. *Rajas*, whose chief motives are to enjoy power and rule others.

The clear lake attains *sattva*, serenity, which is not inactive but intensely active. It is the greatest manifestation of the power to be calm. It is harder to be calm. So do not mistake *sattva* for dullness. It is restraint, not dullness. Activity is the manifestation of lower strength, calmness of superior strength.

Citta keeps trying to return to its primal state but the organs keep drawing it out. And this first step of yoga is to get it on the journey. Only in human form can we find the intellect in the citta, though citta is in all animals. Citta manifesting in all these forms, scattering, darkening, awakening, concentrating. Scattering is activity and manifests as pleasure and pain, this form is natural to devas. Dullness is darkness, which injures others., the demoniacal form. *Ekagra* is what brings us to *samadhi*.

B.K.S. IYENGAR

Union is from the outermost, muscle and bone, to the innermost self;

Consciousness has three stages of the mind – *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahamkara*, *citta* being the vehicle of observation, attention, aims and reason. It has three functions – cognition, volition, motion.

Vritti being the state of mind, fluctuations, behaviour, state of being.

Nirodhahah is obstruction.

Yoga is defined as the restraint of fluctuations in the consciousness.

When we study the behaviour of consciousness we see it has three functions – cognition, volition, motion. Yoga helps us quieten their movements to a state of silence in which is the seat of consciousness. Yoga is the discipline by which we culture and mature the mind.

Citta is the vehicle which takes the mind, manas, to the atman, soul. Yoga ceases the vibrations in its seat. He describes citta as the subtlest form of cosmic intelligence, mahat, the source of prakriti, the physical world itself, as opposed to the soul which is its offshoot. Listen to what he says, the citta is the progenitor of the world of nature itself. The soul is only an offshoot of it. In Sankhya system, purusa and prakriti mingling creates the world, the source of all action, volition, silence.

Every phenomenon that has reached its complete evolution will have a subtle side. Thus buddhi, or discrimination, is the gross counterpart of the subtle mahat. Thus citta is the gross form of cit. For liberation, the highest form of consciousness must work with the highest intellect. They are linked by the antahkarana, the mind stuff, ego, intelligence, mind mano buddhi ahankara. This antahkarana is cloudy due to sensory, or worldly engagement. The sadhakas aim is to purify it. Consciousness is what links manifest to unmanifest, evolved to unevolved, and is closest to the soul. The buddhi presents perfect action and experience, the manas must use the jnanendriyas, the five senses of perception, the karmendriyas, which are the product of the elements of nature with their five senses. The five sheaths, or kosas are within the five elements of nature.

Yoga thus integrates the person between the states of external to internal. From intelligence of skin to intelligence of self, and thus prakriti and purusha become merged.

Yoga leads to a sattvic state but to restrain, force of will, a subtle element of rajas is necessary. When you flow from dharana to dhyana, concentration to meditation, the sadhaka is uniting individual to universal. The object of meditation goes from individual self to the universal self. When the mind is focussed on the objects, it fluctuates. So when the discrimination faculty clearly distinguishes individual self from objects, the source of fluctuation ceases. Yoga becomes the means of restraining the fluctuations by detaching the mind from the sense objects and locating it back to the self, the object of dharana. Yoga is thus both a means and an end.

OSHO

Yoga is the cessation of the mind.

Osho uses a translation that is more akin to the buddha's wordage – cessation. This is the best definition you have, he says, because it is the most scientific. The mind covers everything, ego, desires, hopes, philosophies, religion, scriptures, all that you can think of, all that lends itself to be knowable, is mind. Hence, cessation of the mind is the cessation of the known. It is jumping into the unknown and the unknowable.

What is the mind? We think of it as something substantial. Patanjali, Osho says, doesn't agree. Science also doesn't agree. Mind is a function, an entity. The example he gives is

simple: you walk, I say you are walking, but when you sit down where has the walking gone? So also, mind is 'minding' i.e. thinking.

The great sage Bodhidharma went to China. The emperor was waiting for him. "Tell me how to put my mind at ease" he asked. Bodhidharma said, "do nothing, first bring your mind to me. Come at four o'clock, tell no one, bring your mind with you, don't forget". The emperor couldn't sleep. He thought, perhaps this Bodhidharma is mad. What does he mean, bring your mind with you? But he goes to him at 4am. Bodhidharma asks, "where is your mind, have you brought it with you or not?" The emperor says, "don't talk nonsense. When I am here, my mind is here. It's not something I can forget somewhere." Bodhidharma says, "ok, so we have determined the mind is within you?" The emperor says, "ok the mind is within me." So Bodhidharma says, "Ok quickly locate it and let me know where it is so I can set it at peace." The emperor closes his eyes but soon realises the absurdity of the quest. If it is not *something*, nothing can be done about it. If it's an activity, don't do the activity. If it is like walking, then don't walk. He opens his eyes and tells Bodhidharma: "there is no mind to be found". Bodhidharma says, then I have put it at peace.

Looking for mind, Osho says, is anti-mind. Because a look is not thinking. To look intensely makes your whole energy a look. And that same energy is movement and thinking. Yoga being the cessation of the mind, requires this looking. If your mind is thinking when you are doing asanas you are not in yoga. So you can do yoga for many lives. When the mind is there, you are there. When the activity of the mind has ceased, like clouds disappearing from the sky, there is cessation. The word Zen, he explains comes from the word dhyana, which became jhan (as in jhanas), in China it became ch'an, and in Japan Zen. The root is dhyana. Which means no mind. So the whole training is how to stop 'mind'ing'- simply be, without thinking.

When Patanjali says cessation, your mind cannot be chanting Ram Ram Ram, because it is still using its faculty of thought. How do we stop? Patanjali says, simply look, let the mind do what it has to do. It flows because of past momentum. Don't go along with it.

Yoga is the cessation of the mind, then the witness is established in itself. This is explained in sutra 3.

BARBARA STOLER MILLER

Barbara Stoller Miller makes a comparison between the Eightfold Path of the Buddha, the Bhagavad Gita, of which she is an excellent scholar, and the Yoga sutras for their common store of knowledge. Two striking examples of this commonality, she says, are the use of two terms: *nirodha*, and *citta vritti nirodhah*, which she translates as 'cessations of the turnings of thought' as the Buddha explained it. Further, she adds the idea of *dukkha*, all is suffering for the wise man (sutra 2.15, which we will look into later). At the time Buddhism was developing, a concern with yoga was making itself apparent in texts such as the Mahabharata, in which the powerful practitioner is Arjuna, the exemplary warrior and the disciple of Krishna. In more than one episode, she points out, Arjuna performs feats of yogic austerity, including in the dialogue on the battlefield where Krishna teaches Arjuna the varied forms of discipline. The battlefield

setting, she says, is not just a physical place but a state of mind. As Arjuna loses his nerve at the thought of killing family, Krishna is teaching him to discipline thought and emotion to perform necessary action, free from bloodlust and pain. The path to this is through psychological and physical discipline, concentration, meditation and contemplative awareness. She points out one crucial distinction between Lord Krishna teaching yoga and Patanjali teaching yoga: in the Gita, Krishna teaches liberation as the aim of yoga to enable one to wage the war in life. Patanjali teaches it as a complete isolation from worldly concerns. Yoga in the Gita has friendship, devotion, action as transformational forces, in Patanjali, suspension of mental and physical action is referenced. Isvara is not a creator god in Patanjali's vision, rather an archetypal yogi, an object of concentration. In Patanjali, there is no manifestation like Krishna of life and death.

The Sankhya text Sankhya Karika is the complement and parallel structure to the Yoga sutras. Yoga as a code of practical discipline is amplified by the Sankhya ideal of cosmic evolution, psychological mirroring in the microcosm, Purusa in prakriti. The basis of spiritual liberation in Yoga is a profound experience of the evolutionary process. Like a point in Euclidean geometry, she says. Spirit has no material identity except in relation to the phenomenal world. It is through ignorance, according to Patanjali, that spirit is connected to the world. Alone, it is pure consciousness. All material nature consists of the gunas, aspects of energy in potential form and actualised in innumerable combinations in the material world. Sattva is lucidity, Passion is rajas, Tamas is Inertia, which weighs down the other two. Among the 24 evolutes of Sankhya theory, Patanjali focuses on those that must be broken down to open the gross and subtle fetters of thought. Since what binds the spirit to the material world is itself made of the same material, it is harder to understand and separate from. We are bound by what we are escaping, essentially. Citta is a combination of three psychomental evolutes. Together with the five sense organs, citta functions through individual cognition and emotion. Unlike manas, the organ of thought which it is often misidentified as, citta is the entirety of mental capacity. As part of the material realm, thought is plastic and subject to various modifications, which Patanjali characterises as the turnings of thought. Citta vritti, which comprise all states of consciousness. Thought in the material world is ceaselessly in motion, existing in modifications. The goal of yoga is to still this motion and so liberate the subject from the tyranny of uncontrollable thought. However, since mind is also material in nature, tranquillity itself is not enough to ensure ultimate freedom, it cannot discriminate between what is essential and what is adventitious. The body and mind, according to Patanjali, are the physical and mental dimensions of the same material nature, prakriti. Interior nature is much more difficult to control than external. When you control the inner, gross external aspects are easier to control. Thus the yogi acquires extraordinary powers.

Purusa becomes bound to prakriti, spirit to material nature, through citta and the accumulation of subliminal memory, samskara, vasana, asaya. The relation between citta vritti and memory, she says is essential to Patanjali's epistemology. When thought passes from one state to another is preserved in the memory and becomes a storehouse of thoughts, (if you study Buddhism you will recognise this as the aalaya, or storehouse function of the mind consciousness), and she goes into a beautiful exposition on the connection between thought and memory in Sanskrit literature, but for our purpose, Patanjali aggregates the expression of citta through karma accounts for subconscious

predispositions that condition an individual through many lives. Thought and action thus become a cyclical causality. Actions create memory traces, which fuel mental processes. Stored in memory, endures through many births. The storehouse is obliterated only when the chain of causal relations is broken. Even so memory, reason, intuition have no relevance to attainment of spiritual liberation. Liberation is possible only when subconscious subliminal impressions are consumed and all turnings cease. Hence, liberation is not the cessation of the world of sensory input, provocations, actions, thoughts, memory, but detachment from them.