

S a m a a d h i

Samaadhi is synthesis. It is the synthesized state that represents the pinnacle of the various yoga practices properly applied by anyone adept at yoga. The numerous levels of this state transport us before, and, finally, through the doorway to kaivalya, the continuous ability to see the illusion masking reality.

We can see evidence of our misunderstanding of reality when we take a few days off from our routine, finally enjoy our life for sometime, and, at the end, everyone looks at one another and agrees, “Okay, back to reality.” Actually “reality” is what we were getting closer to when we “took some time off,” and what we are getting ready to re-enter is the “grand illusion.” The movie “The Matrix” is a fun way for us to reflect on this possibility. However, within that “grand illusion” lays the reality of duty or responsibility. If we abandon our duties, our efforts will not transport us across the sea of illusion. We may be able to induce trance, but this trance is not yoga samaadhi.

Samaadhi is the cessation of the mind. It is the state known as turiya, the fourth state. Waking, dreaming, and deep sleep comprise the other three. Deep sleep is also cessation of the mind, but it is tamasic cessation. Samaadhi is satvik cessation. The mind is still alert, but it has stopped its habitual projection. We see through the mind with clarity. No reaction.

Patanjali’s sutras speak about samaadhi so often that we could nearly call them the samaadhi sutras. In fact, yoga is synonymous with samaadhi. In YS I-2, cittavrttinirodhah is not only “defining” yoga, it “is” samaadhi. That condition in which the mind can remain in its concentrated, resourceful nature, without being pulled around by whim, is samaadhi.

In YS II-1, Patanjali indicates that proper balance of the will (tapas), intellect (svaadhyaya), and emotion (iishvarapranidhaana) constitute kriyaa yoga. In the very next sutra, he states that the purpose of this kriyaa yoga is for the cultivation of samaadhi and the reduction of klesha. Klesha has five aspects, and it is essential to understand this because klesha is in direct opposition to samaadhi. Where there is samaadhi, there is not klesha; where there is klesha, there is not samaadhi. Samaadhi is the absence of klesha but in degrees. Because of the nature of the process of life, it is nearly impossible to eradicate klesha altogether, so Patanjali uses the word “tanu,” meaning “to make thin” rather than “eliminate.”

The various degrees of samaadhi are, in effect, various degrees of klesha in direct opposition to each other. Therefore, to understand samaadhi we need to understand klesha. Klesha has five aspects, which manifest themselves in progressive degrees of affliction. The inability for us to truly know who (or what) we are is the first klesha; it is the ground on which the other aspects of klesha rely. Without this fertile field, the other aspects of klesha would not have any substance on which to grasp with their roots. This inability to see ourselves for what we are creates ego, which is a projection of what we consider to be our self; however, it is absolutely not. We then become attached to this projection and everything that supports it. Aversion grows for anything that does not support this projection and for any situation that denies us our attachment to the way we think life ought to be. Out of this aversion grows fear. We see that our projection is not being supported in the real world, and we, therefore, see its impermanence and inevitable destruction. This creates fear, because we feel that we will no longer exist once this projection is destroyed. This plays out on subtle levels that

we are unaware of at the time; therefore, we do not tie the kleshas to the uneasiness we feel at any given moment.

This describes the evolutionary process. (Purusha moves out into manifestation.) The involutory process is the reverse order and occurs through samaadhi. (Purusha moves inward to self-realization.) In YS II-10, this involution is recommended when the effects of kleshas are very subtle. It is by no means an intellectual process but rather requires the sincere and long-term commitment of the practitioner.

In YS I-17, this commitment is described as having four levels. The gross level on which we commit our thoughts to an object is called vitarka samaadhi.

As we continue with this practice, and we see more and more subtle aspects of the given object, we have arrived at vicaara samaadhi. We are now in a more reflective state of awareness. If we continue on, we arrive at aananda samaadhi, the well of joy we feel when we become free from our projections. Being freed from projection we begin to see our self, our true unaltered self—asmitaa samaadhi.

This asmitaa samprajnaata samaadhi creates an impression on the mind called samskaara. YS I-18 states that if we stop the thought process that brought us to this condition, yet rest in the samskaara that remains from it, we will be in asamprajnaata samaadhi.

Let’s say you learn to play a musical instrument. At first, you begin to familiarize yourself with the gross aspects. You learn the scale and put your mind into the physical instrument. You see where all the notes are and you begin to “master” its physicality. You can play the scale and combination of notes without mistake. When you are completely engrossed in its physicality, with all of your attention, we could call this vitarka samaadhi.

Now your teacher sees your advancement and encourages you to relate to very accomplished musicians. You begin to place your attention on the more subtle aspects that are potentials in this instrument's physicality. That potential is in your mind, but so is the relative physicality of the instrument. You begin to play . . . music. What was once mechanical is now expressive. Your relationship to that instrument has entered another level. That level is vicaara samaadhi.

After some more time you begin to feel great joy. You forget who you thought you were, that false projection so engrained in the consciousness, and you experience bliss. That bliss is ananda (samprajnaata) samaadhi.

This bliss will allow you to "see" who you really are, which is the final level of samprajnaata samaadhi, called asmitaa. You begin to have what is referred to as realization of your self.

So, if you remain often and long enough in this realization through the method of playing the musical instrument, you will succeed at creating a very substantial samskaara. This is good; you want this samskaara. The practice of yoga revolves around creating this kind of samskaara.

If the samskaara is ample enough, you can now drop the physical musical instrument. In fact, the entire thought content that got you to this point is dropped. The mind holds onto nothing except the samskaara of self-realization that was created in the previous four levels of samprajnaata samaadhi. Therefore, you still feel the same, the mind is in the same condition as when you were playing the musical instrument, but the instrument is not needed to maintain the awareness. The samskaara alone pulled you through to this new level. This is called asamprajnaata samaadhi. In summary, this whole process, including the "seeing," creates an impression in the mind field so that the process can be dropped, while the condition of the mind remains. That condition is asamprajnaata samaadhi.

One of the most interesting and most controversial means of obtaining samaad-

hi that Patanjali mentions is through iishvarapranidhaana. This is where yoga separates itself from Hinduism. The Hindus would say that God is absolutely necessary, but Patanjali seems to indicate that devotion to God is an option—at the same time hinting at its inevitable necessity. I believe that it was Patanjali's openness that allowed him to encompass all practitioners at various levels of adeptness. If we do not believe in God, he allows us to pass over this, trusting that we will not need such a condition for our advancement. Simply have faith in practice and let go (abhyaasa and vairaagya). Then, this condition of iishvarapranidhaana will come to you anyway, even if you are an atheist. It really doesn't matter; if your

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abhyaasa and vairaagya are working you will naturally come to a condition of mind called iishvarapranidhaana.

It's important to understand that this condition of mind is not some sentiment for a being that you doubt exists. It is an emotional manner of dealing with the world. You find you're able to accept everything. Nothing disturbs you anymore, and you are grateful for your situation in this life. You now have devotion to God at the highest level, even if you are an atheist. No simple sentiment could be more defined as "devotion to God." Of course, your atheism would simply be an attachment that you would have had to let go of to arrive at this level. It has nothing to do with intellectual concepts of God, but it has all to do with your emotional

experience in living. When we hold fast to our atheistic beliefs, it becomes a dogmatic religion. The yogi/yoginii appreciates all religions but is of none. This does not mean that the yogi/yoginii excommunicates or rejects religious worship; he/she may continue this worship, yet is unbound by limitations of any religious practice or belief. The atheist cum yogi/yoginii finally realizes that the God he/she does not believe in is a concept in the mind. Samaadhi is beyond concept. He who understands samaadhi as a concept understands nothing about samaadhi, except its conceptual form, so he can write an article about it. But that's all!

Patanjali drives this point home in chapter II-45, where he states with no uncertain resolve that "from iishvarapranidhaana samaadhi is perfected." This statement must not be taken lightly. He could just as well have said that iishvarapranidhaana = samaadhi. If from iishvarapranidhaana we perfect samaadhi, then it's only fair to surmise that by perfecting samaadhi we would have iishvarapranidhaana.

We are offered quite powerful analogies to different samaadhi states, starting with I-41. A flawless crystal refracts the color of whatever is in front of it, yet it retains its structure. Such is the way the mind reflects an image to you, the self, in the state of

samaapatti samaadhi. The mind has its own form, but it is so clear and without flaw that it reflects any image without adding color to it.

In the savitarka stage of this samaapatti samaadhi, the actual reality of the object, its word and its meaning, are all still "confused" within what is seen. The reality is seen, but still confused with words and meaning. In the nirvitarka stage, through deep memory purification, the true object finally shines forth alone, with all its brilliance, in the mind (like the crystal).

Savicaara and nirvicaara samaadhi are a more subtle development and are accomplished in much the same way as above, for savitarka and nirvitarka.

Continued on Page 68



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Samaadhi

Continued from Page 28

Remember, vitarka has to do with the physical musical instrument and the ability to master gross physical musical scales and patterns. Vicaara has to do with further development to the actual creation of music. The process is the same, even though the realm is subtle instead of gross.

Once these sabiiija practices have been perfected and have, therefore, created a powerful samskaara (impression) then, and only then, are we ready to do nirodha samaadhi on the sabiiija samaadhis. And if nirodha samaadhi has been accomplished on the samskaara remaining from the sabiiija samaadhis, and nirodha samaadhi is accomplished on everything contained in the mind, then we have nirbiiija samaadhi.

Anyone who assumes that they are experiencing nirbiiija samaadhi is probably wrong—only a beginner would cry out that they are able. That's why it is said that those who say they have this knowledge have not. Krishnamacharya stated that nirbiiija samaadhi couldn't be experienced until death, or in maha samaadhi. It's at least important for us, as practitioners, to reflect on why he said this. And even more important for us to reflect on is why then did Patanjali bring it up as a possibility?

In chapter III, samaadhi is used in a special process called sanyama. This process is used to gain knowledge about the universe and our relationship to it. Patanjali informs us that we can remain in the accomplishments he calls siddhi or use them to realize kaivalya, sometimes translated as liberation. He seems to warn us of potential bondage to these newfound abilities, while emphasizing that their use can be to ensure our freedom.

He opens up chapter IV by stating a handful of ways in which siddhi could be accomplished, samaadhi being the preferred means. Finally, toward the end of the entire text there is mention of dharma megha samaadhi. This is described as being the condition in which we desire absolutely nothing different than our present situation in life, and every change that happens at every moment is so fulfilling that we have absolutely no desire to alter anything.

This dharma megha samaadhi breaks down the final traces of klesha, making it impossible for us to have any desire to return. It is a nirbiiija samaadhi that is an asamprajnaata samaadhi and touted as the highest of all the samaadhis. It is the doorway through which kaivalya awaits on the other side—the culmination and complete purpose of the practice of yoga.

Sanskrit Glossary	<i>Kaivalya</i> - absolute freedom; realization of the self.	acceptance; full emotional trust.
	<i>Tamasik</i> - of the 3 primary constituents of the universe; inertness; immobility; darkness; heaviness.	<i>Samaapatti</i> - falling (all the way) together; fusion; falling into a state.
	<i>Satvik</i> - of the 3 primary constituents of the universe; balance; clarity; brilliance.	<i>Savitarka</i> - with thought, accompanied by thought.
	<i>Klesha</i> - affliction; primary cause of pain.	<i>Savicaara</i> - with reflection, accompanied by reflection.
	<i>Purusha</i> - the (original) spirit, person, and being. That which dwells inside; soul; that which lives in the body.	<i>Nirvitarka</i> - without reflection; not accompanied by reflection, because it's beyond reflection. (a progressive development of Savicaara)
	<i>Vitarka</i> - thought, reasoning	<i>Sabiiija</i> - with seed or germ having an object. with object.
	<i>Vicarra</i> - the inquirer, one who practices Atma-Vicara, or Self-inquiry; reflection, deliberation.	<i>Nirodha</i> - restraint; to dissolve; undo.
	<i>Asmitaa</i> - pure being; I-am-ness; sense of existence.	<i>T Krishnamacharya</i> - teacher and father of TKV Desikachar; teacher and uncle of BKS Iyengar; teacher of Patabi Jois.
	<i>Samskaara</i> - latent impressions, habits.	<i>Nirbiiija</i> - having no object; without object. (a progressive development of <i>sabiiija</i> .)
	<i>Asamprajnaata</i> - samaadhi without conscious effort. (a progressive development of samprajnaata)	<i>Sanyama</i> - the nearly simultaneous development of Dhaaranaa, <i>Dhyaana</i> & <i>Samaadhi</i> (concentration, meditation & absorption) graced only to long time practitioners of the three; one is allowed to see the underlying reality of anything under the lens of sanyama.
	<i>Samprajnaata</i> - samaadhi with conscious effort.	<i>Siddhi</i> - accomplishment; perfection of something.
	<i>Iishvara pranidhaana</i> - with devotion to the source of the universe.	

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