

Themes of Yoga Philosophy

5. Yoga (control of mind) and its basic types

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Definition of Yoga

Yoga is defined as the control of the states of mind (YS I.2). The five states of mind, as stated earlier, are valid cognition, erroneous cognition, verbal cognition, sleep and memory (I.5). The control of the mind implies the suspension of all these aspects. In other words, the mind as an instrument of all worldly cognition is suspended during meditation; what is valid cognition for worldly dealings is also not relevant to the cognition of the highest realities through Yoga. When the mind is thus suspended, the soul is left to its real nature which is pure consciousness (I.3). During the active states of the mind, the soul gets erroneously identified with it and ascribes experiences of the mind to itself (I.4).

States of the mind identified

According to Yoga, there are three means of valid cognition: perception, inference and authority. Perception is the means by which cognition is obtained, broadly, of the *specific* characteristics of external objects which possess both general and specific characteristics. Inference is the means by which cognition is obtained, broadly, of the *general* characteristics of objects; this is on the basis of such characteristics which are present in similar objects and absent in dissimilar ones. Authority is the knowledge obtained through the words of a trustworthy person who obtains it by perception or inference. Erroneous cognition, deep sleep and memory are self-evident. Cognition through language defies all norms and is in a class by itself. 'Consciousness is the nature of the soul,' is an instance on the point. The fact is, the soul itself is consciousness; and yet the statement implies a distinction between them. The memory of experience in sleep proves that sleep is not the absence of experience. Dream is included in memory. The remaining states relate to the waking condition (I.6-11). These states can be suspended by means of persistence (*abhyasa*) and detachment (*vairagya*). Detachment starts from indifference to worldly pleasures and matures in total indifference to the entire domain of the *guna*-s which includes even discriminative knowledge (I.16).

Yoga is concerned with the control of mind (*samaadhi*), which is its defined sense, through efforts (*upaaya-pratyaya*). This distinguishes Yoga from the born ability (*bhava-pratyaya*) of divine beings (*videha*) or the developed ability of practitioners to get their mind almost dissolved in its cause (*prakriti-laya*), with the exception of subconscious residues (*vaasana*-s). In this way this state is distinguished from total liberation in which the mind is completely dissolved (I.19). Deep sleep also gives us an experience similar to that in

samaadhi or liberation; it is natural, impermanent and uncontrolled. This may be summarised as follows:

Liberation: Self-experience is total and permanent.

Samaadhi: Self-experience is total in its advanced stage, controlled and impermanent.

Sleep: Self-experience is total but uncontrolled and impermanent.

Basic types of *samaadhi*

Two basic types of *samaadhi* are identified: *sam-prajnaata* (object-supported) and *a-sam-prajnaata* (objectless, I.17-18), also termed *sa-bijja* (seeded, I.46) and *nir-bijja* (unseeded, I.51). In the latter terms, 'seed' means external object (Vyaasa, I.46). The first type is said to progress along the line of the external object, from (a) gross (*vitarka*, influence of verbal aspects – word, sense, knowledge, I.42) to

(b) subtle (*vichara*), from there to (c) the internal one, viz. delightful state of the mind (*aananda*), and finally to (d) the sheer awareness of the ego (*asmitaa*), a union of the soul and the intellect. This analysis is based on the three constituents of the process of cognition: (i) the object, (ii) the instrument (mind) and

(iii) the observer (Vaachaspati, I.17). The perception obtained in the second stage (b) is super-perception which is the source of authority and inference (I.42). It is cleared of the limitations of verbal cognition and inference (I.43). It is called *yogi-pratyaksha*, perception of a yogin. The objectless type is attained when *all* states of the mind except their dormant / latent impressions (*samskara-s*) are suspended. Having no object, the mind is virtually reduced to nil during this type of *samaadhi* (Vyaasa, I.18). There being no trace of erroneous knowledge, this *samaadhi* is characterised by the cognition of pure reality, termed *ritam-bharaa*, the seat of reality (I.48)

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