

to beg Lord Kṛṣṇa to grace him with divine perception in order to face the divine light which his ordinary eyes would not be able to bear. Patañjali warns us here of the pitfalls in spiritual growth, and advises us to stabilize the body and mind so that we may not be shattered when spiritual light dawns.

द्रष्टृदृश्ययोः संयोगो हेयहेतुः १७।

II.17 draṣṭṛdṛśyayoḥ saṁyogaḥ heyahetuḥ

<i>draṣṭṛa</i>	seer, self, <i>puruṣa</i>
<i>dṛśyayoḥ</i>	the seen, the known, nature
<i>saṁyogaḥ</i>	union, association, conjunction, connection, junction, mingling
<i>heyah</i>	to be relinquished, to be avoided
<i>hetuḥ</i>	cause, ground, reason, purpose

The cause of pain is the association or identification of the seer (ātma) with the seen (prakṛti) and the remedy lies in their dissociation.

A wise person notices that inner harmony is disturbed when the mind lets itself be lured into indiscriminately sampling the world of phenomena. He tries to remain free by avoiding material attachment, in which objects draw the intelligence like a magnet and the self is enticed into an illusory relationship with the external, seen world, provoking pleasures and pains. The intelligence is the vehicle closest to the soul, which must be wary of its influence if the seer is to remain free. Otherwise intelligence enmeshes the seer in a painful relationship with external objects. As long as intelligence is indiscriminating, there is suffering. The moment it develops discriminative power, it realizes its source, and mingles with the seer. Then there is transparency between the seer and seen, allowing free, uncontaminated passage between them.

The seat of the ego or small self is the seat of the brain, and the seat of the great Self is in the spiritual heart. Though intelligence connects the head and the heart, it oscillates between the two. This oscillation ceases through right knowledge and understanding. Intelligence is then transformed: free from polarity, pure and unbiased. This is true meditation, in which ego dissolves, allowing the great Self (*puruṣa*) to shine in its own glory (IV.4).

द्रष्टा दृशिमात्रः शुद्धोऽपि प्रत्ययानुपश्यः ।२०।

II.20 draṣṭā dṛśimātraḥ śuddhaḥ api
pratyayānupaśyaḥ

<i>draṣṭā</i>	seer, <i>puruṣa</i> , one who sees
<i>dṛśimātraḥ</i>	awareness only, consciousness only
<i>śuddhaḥ</i>	pure
<i>api</i>	even though
<i>pratyayaḥ</i>	conviction, trust, reliance, faith, cognition, confidence
<i>anupaśyaḥ</i>	one who sees, seeing along with, cognizing ideas

The seer is pure consciousness. He witnesses nature without being reliant on it.

This sūtra moves on from nature to soul, the Supreme Seer, the absolute knower. It is the pure essence of consciousness beyond words. Though the soul is pure, it tends to see through its agent, the intelligence (*buddhi*) and being carried away by the influence of nature, it loses its identity.

The previous sūtra dealt with nature (*prakṛti*) and discernible objects. Here, the nature of the seer, the soul (*puruṣa*) is described. *Ātmā*, *draṣṭa* and *dṛśimātraḥ* are terms which show the innate nature of the seer.

Intelligence clouds consciousness in such a way that it comes to identify itself as the true seer and forgets the soul. But if intelligence can keep its power of discernment, consciousness too will remain uncoloured. If consciousness is clear, the seer is unobscured.

Intelligence, belonging as it does to manifest nature, is constantly changing, sometimes conscious and often unconscious. It is subject to *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, whereas the seer, *puruṣa*, is beyond all these, immutable and ever-conscious (see I.3, IV.22).

तदर्थ एव दृश्यस्यात्मा ॥२१॥

II.21 tadarthah eva dṛśyasya ātmā

<i>tadarthah</i>	for that purpose, for that sake
<i>eva</i>	alone
<i>dṛśyasya</i>	of the seen, of the knowable, nature (<i>prakṛti</i>)
<i>ātmā</i>	seer (<i>puruṣa</i>), soul, principle of life, awareness, witnesser

Nature and intelligence exist solely to serve the seer's true purpose, emancipation.

Intelligence exists to serve as the seer's agent, to free the consciousness from *avidyā*. The natural tendency of all the soul's agents – mind, senses of perception and organs of action – to be drawn to and identify with the sensory and phenomenal world is to be avoided by discrimination, a faculty of intelligence. Uninterrupted yogic *sādhana* will help us overcome these obstacles and allow the soul to reveal itself.

If the *sādhaka* slackens in his *sādhana* and becomes inattentive, the senses disturb the seer and he is caught again in the pleasures of the senses. This study of mind and investigation through intelligence is the innermost quest: *antarātma sādhana*.

This sūtra conveys that consciousness, the essence of nature, which is cognizable, exists for the sake of the seer who sees to see.

कृतार्थं प्रति नष्टमप्यनष्टं तदन्यसाधारणत्वात् ॥२२॥

II.22 kṛtārtham prati naṣṭam api anaṣṭam
tadanya sādharmaṇatvāt

<i>kṛtārtham</i>	whose purpose has been fulfilled, who has attained an end, successful, satisfied
<i>prati</i>	against, in opposition to
<i>naṣṭam</i>	destroyed, disappeared, lost sight of
<i>api</i>	although
<i>anaṣṭam</i>	not disappeared, not destroyed, not lost

तदभावात् संयोगाभावो हानं तद्दृशेः कैवल्यम् ।२५।

II.25 tad abhāvāt saṁyogābhāvaḥ hānaṁ
taddr̥śeḥ kaivalyam

<i>tad</i>	its
<i>abhāvāt</i>	from non-existence, from non-occurrence, from absence, from non-entity
<i>saṁyogaḥ</i>	union, association, conjunction
<i>abhāvaḥ</i>	absence, disappearance
<i>hānaṁ</i>	act of leaving, stopping, removing, remedying
<i>tad</i>	that
<i>d̥r̥śeḥ</i>	of the knower, seer
<i>kaivalyam</i>	absolute freedom, emancipation, absorption in the supreme soul

The destruction of ignorance through right knowledge breaks the link binding the seer to the seen. This is kaivalya, emancipation.

Sūtra II.16 deals with the avoidance of pain; sūtras II.17–24 with how to control pleasure and pain, and attain freedom by dissociating the seer and the seen. This sūtra explains the effect of snapping the link that binds the knower to the known.

At this point, the seen loses its hold and influence on the seer, miseries terminate and the soul is elevated to experience perfect freedom (see I.3 and IV.34).

Without doubt, sūtras II.17–25 are terse and many have groped for a precise and clear explanation of them. We must read and re-read them in order to grasp their meaning.

The kernel of Patañjali's message in these difficult sūtras is this: yoga is specifically designed to help us avoid the sort of slips and errors in our conduct which store up future sorrows, and it builds up our strength, vigour and courage to deal with the inevitable problems of life (see I.5).

We know that our mind turns more readily to the world's pleasures than to the vision of the soul. It is a bridge between the senses and the spirit; it is a secret enemy, and a treacherous friend, which can change our conduct without giving us time to consider. Patañjali advises the *sādhaka* to train the mind and cultivate discrimination, so that objects and events are seen only for what they are: then they cannot gain power over us. This is extremely difficult but an understanding of nature will help. We are matter (temporarily) and we live surrounded by matter. Interaction with matter or nature

is the condition of our life. Without discrimination we cannot break free, but with understanding and practice we can use this interaction to reach the highest peace and bliss.

If we want to experience heaven on earth, we have to grasp the qualities of nature, the *guṇas*, that is to say the polarity of *rajas* and *tamas*, the eternal pulse of nature between movement and stillness, and the higher balancing state of *sattva*. Nature has degrees of subtlety. Sometimes it is more densely or clearly manifest than at others, and Patañjali analyses as follows. The four parts are: distinguishable (*viśeṣa*), unspecified or universal (*aviśeṣa*), phenomenal (*liṅga*) and, beyond this, noumenal (*aliṅga*). The five energetic qualities of nature, the elements, are, with the senses of perception and organs of action, distinguishable; while the five counterparts of the elements, sound, touch, taste, sight and smell are without specific signs (*aliṅga*); so also is the ego (*asmitā*).

All these are subject to the *guṇas*, which blend the behavioural patterns of an individual. If we understand the flow of these forces, we can reach balance, and from balance go on to true freedom. If not, we are swayed from one extreme to another, between pleasure and another pain. Yoga, says Patañjali, is the way to harmonize ourselves at every level with the natural order of the universe, from the physical to the most subtle, to reach the total state of health which brings stability, to cultivate the mind with real understanding, and to reach out ultimately to undifferentiated infinity.

The seer is an absolute knower – awareness personified. Though pure, it becomes entangled in the tricks of the mind, which are part of nature. Yet the vehicles of nature are all there to help the seer to experience serene, pristine, divine purity. Then, the elements of nature and their counterparts recede and merge in the root of nature, *mūla-prakṛti*.

(See I.45.)

विवेकख्यातिरविप्लवा हानोपायः ॥२६॥

II.26 vivekakhyātiḥ aviṣlavā hānopāyaḥ

vivekakhyātiḥ (*viveka* = discrimination, judgement, true knowledge, discretion; *khyāti* = the faculty of discriminating objects by an appropriate designation) awareness of knowledge, fame, celebrity

aviṣlavā undisturbed, unbroken, unfluctuating, unailing