

Light on the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali

वितर्कविचारानन्दास्मितारूपानुगमात् संप्रज्ञातः १७७

I.17 vitarka vicāra ānanda asmitārūpa anugamāt sāmprajñātaḥ

<i>vitarka</i>	analytical thinking or analytical study, argument, inference, conjecture
<i>vicāra</i>	reason, meditation, insight, perfect intelligence where all logic comes to an end
<i>ānanda</i>	elation, bliss, felicity
<i>asmitārūpa</i>	consciousness of being one with oneself
<i>anugamāt</i>	by accompanying, by following, comprehending, grasping
<i>sāmprajñātaḥ</i>	distinguish, know actually, know accurately

Practice and detachment develop four types of samādhi: self-analysis, synthesis, bliss, and the experience of pure being.

Through practice and detachment, four types of awareness develop. Absorption of the consciousness, achieved through engrossment in conjecture, inference and analytical study; synthesis, consideration and discrimination; bliss or elation; and a state of pure being, constitute *sāmprajñāta samādhi*.

Here a distinction is recognized between the seer and the seen. *Sāmprajñāta samādhi* consists of *vitarka*, engrossment in analysis, *vicāra*, engrossment in reasoning, *ānanda*, experiencing a state of bliss, and *asmitā*, experiencing the state of 'I'.

Vitarka is an act of involvement by deliberate thinking and study, which leads to the final point or root cause. It is an attempt to distinguish the cause from the effect, a process of judicious experimental research from the gross to the subtle. Intellectual analysis, *vitarka sāmprajñāta*, being a function of the brain, produces relative and conditioned knowledge. It is gross and lacks refinement. It is further divided into deliberation, *savitarka* and non-deliberation, *nirvitarka*.

Vicāra means differentiating knowledge. It is a process of investigation, reflection and consideration through which the wandering conjectural brain is stilled and the *sādhaka* develops mental depth, acuteness, refinement and subtlety. *Vicāra* too is divided into reasoning, *savicāra* and non-reasoning, *nirvicāra*.

As the growing body of experience brings maturity, fulfilment is reached and a state of bliss, *ānanda*, ensues, freeing the *sādhaka* from the mechanism of study, investigation and fulfilment and leading him to dwell in the self

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alone. This state is called *asmitā rūpa saṁprajñāta samādhi*. Thus, all six gradations of *sabīja samādhi* (*samādhi* with support or seed) – *śavitarka*, *nirvitarka*, *śavicāra*, *nirvicāra*, *ānanda* and *asmitā* – are explained.

There is a seventh stage of *samādhi*, *virāma pratyaya*, so called *asaṁprajñāta samādhi*, and an eighth, called *dharma megha* or *nirbīja samādhi*.

As external objects are susceptible to change, deliberation may not be pure. One must go from the periphery to the source. *Vicāra* is beyond *vitarka*, *ānanda* is beyond *vitarka* and *vicāra*, and *asmitā* is beyond *vitarka*, *vicāra* and *ānanda*. This is the gradual progress from the gross body towards the subtle mind, and from the subtle mind towards the source, the core of being.

Śavitarka and *nirvitarka samādhi* belong to the function of the brain, and are attained by contemplation on gross elements and objects knowable through the senses. *Śavicāra* and *nirvicāra samādhi* belong to the realm of the mind and are attained by contemplation of subtle elements, and *ānanda* belongs to the realm of mature intelligence. *Ānanda* must be attributed not to the senses but to pure wisdom. Contemplation by the self of the self brings one close to *puruṣa*. Here, the self is devoid of ego.

It is said that the front of the brain is the analytical part (*śavitarka*), while the back of the brain is the old, reasoning area (*śavicāra*). The base of the brain is the seat of *ānanda*, and the crown of the head of the individual self, *asmitā*. *Sabīja samādhi* is achieved by drawing these four facets of the brain towards its stem.

When this synchronization has been achieved, a transitory state of quietness, *manolaya*, is experienced. Then, from the stem of the brain, consciousness is made to descend towards the source mind, the seat of the heart. Here it merges into a mindless, beginningless, endless state of being: *amanaskatva*, or *nirbīja samādhi* (*samādhi* without seed or support). It is the conquest of the spirit.

In between *sabīja* and *nirbīja samādhis*, Patañjali describes an intervening state, *virāma pratyaya*, which others call *asaṁprajñāta samādhi*. It is a spiritual plateau (*manolaya*), a transitory state or a resting place before one plunges into *nirbīja samādhi*.

(See II.18, 19, 21; III.45 and 48.)

Through practice and renunciation each and every part of man – the skin, the cells, the breath, the movements of thought, intelligence and reason become acquainted with the self. This is *saṁprajñāta samādhi*. The *sādhaka*'s intelligence spreads evenly within and around his body, like the surface of a lake without ripples. Then he sees things clearly. In this *saṁprajñāta samādhi* or contemplation, the disparity between the seer and the seen remains.

Take, for example, the performance of an *āsana*, or movements of breath

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in *prāṇāyāma*. In the beginning, these are done at a physical level. As understanding deepens, the body is penetrated internally, its movements are connected with the intelligence, and the *āsana* is grasped as a single unit in all directions: front to back, top to bottom, side to side. It is absorbed and held by the body's intelligence for the soul to perceive. One learns that one's body is the bow, the *āsana* is the arrow, and the target is the soul. When the *āsana* is perfected, the target is struck: the field and the knower of the field are united. The logic and reasoning of the *āsana* are fulfilled. The *sādhaka*, having lost the consciousness of the *āsana* and of his body, is one with himself. His *āsana*, his breath, his effort and his very being are one with the millions of cells in his body. He has reached *sāsmitā*, the auspicious state of *asmitā*.

Patañjali generally addresses us at several levels at once, so it is not unreasonable to explain *vitarka*, *vicāra*, *ānanda* and *asmitā* in relation to *āsana*.

When we begin to practise *āsana*, our method is largely hit or miss, 'let me try this; let me try that'. It is a process of trial and error based on conjecture. That is the nature of *vitarka*. It is adventurous rather than calculating but it does not forget its errors; we then evolve to the stage we may call *vicāra*, in which a body of experience has been built up from investigation, mature consideration and dawning discrimination. As our *āsanas* ripen, we reach a stage when skin-consciousness moves towards the centre of being, and the centre radiates towards the periphery. Movement is at once centripetal and centrifugal. This integrity brings bliss: *ānanda*. Finally, when the conscious mechanism by which we consider and perform *āsana* comes to an end, the process reaches a resting point. The *āsana* then rests only on the inner self which is in poise: the only support is *asmitā*.

विरामप्रत्ययाभ्यासपूर्वः संस्कारशेषोऽन्यः १९८।

I.18 virāmapratyaya abhyāsapūrvah
saṁskāraśeṣaḥ anyaḥ

<i>virāma</i>	rest, repose, pause
<i>pratyaya</i>	going towards, firm conviction, reliance, confidence, usage, practice, a cause, instrument, means, device
<i>abhyāsa</i>	practice
<i>pūrvah</i>	before, old, previous, foregoing