

The Balance of the Mind: Sutras 1.12 – 1.16

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Please read my first post in this series, before continuing.

Covered in this article: Sutras 1.12 – 1.16. These Sutras pertain to the balance of the mind between doing and allowing.

Sutra 1.12

अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोध

abhyāsa-vairāgyābhyām tannirodhaḥ

Practice and dispassion (non-attachment) together control the mind.

or,

When we train our mind to focus, without being influenced on what the expected outcome will be, our mind can be still.

This Sutra is commonly misunderstood. *Vairāgyābhyām* means detachment, but this does not mean to the extent of losing any desire or enjoyment whatsoever. It does not mean permanent detachment from all desires; in the context of this group of Sutras (in my previous articles) it means the ability to currently or temporarily set aside any distracting mental fluctuations if they are not in your best interests at this moment.

Focus on your goals, but don't get caught up in what the outcome will be. Do your work to the best of your ability, and what comes will come. Don't work on something only for the results; instead, do the work of your Soul to the best of your best ability without overly-focusing on what the outcome might be.

If you work on something and daydream too much about what the results will be, that will cause you to lose sight of your work. You will be more likely to overlook something, or to do a task incorrectly, or do something that is not in harmony with your soul or the Gods.

Don't let your work or your practice be dependent on an expected outcome. Working for an expected outcome is normal, but if you spend more time dwelling on the expected outcome rather than on your work, your mind is not under your control and therefore functioning sub-optimally.

This Sutra also gives advice for void meditation and trance. You practice meditation, and enjoy the meditation. You should not be trying to feel a certain way as that can lead to frustration if you feel you aren't performing meditation "correctly"; instead, just meditate and see how you feel from it. This also brings peace of mind. It is shown that simply trying to meditate brings benefits to the mind.

Abhyāsa means repeated practice, almost mechanical, the choice of this specific word indicates having the self-discipline to be consistent with your practice because you understand it is good for you.

Sutra 1.13
तत्र स्थितौ यत्नोऽभ्यास
tatra sthitau yatno'bhyāsaḥ

In regards to this [the previous Sutra], steadiness is maintained by continuous effort and practice.

To achieve anything, to become steady in anything, you need to put in continuous effort and practice. It has been shown in research that doing something every day for a prolonged period of time (40 day cycles, or 90 days, for example), it becomes a cemented habit that you no longer need to struggle to be consistent with.

You will first struggle with making the effort to practice daily, and then it becomes habit, and then it is effortless. It is now steady. This applies to anything you want to master.

Sutra 1.14
स तु दीर्घकाल नैरन्तर्यं सत्कारा असेवितो दृढभूमि
sa tu dīrgha kāla nairantarya satkāra āsevito dr̥ḍhabhūmiḥ

This, maintained for a long period of time constantly and permanently, with devotion, reverence, and adherence, becomes firmly rooted.

or,

Practice becomes firmly rooted when maintained for a long period of time, consistently, with devotion.

When you consistently practice over a long period of time, with unwavering devotion and dedication, you become firmly rooted in your practice. He adds the words *satkāra* and *āsevito* meaning dedication, devotion, adhering, to emphasize that we should not mindlessly go through the motions of a practice. When we desire to do something, with devotion or enthusiasm, we are far more likely to continue with it.

Mental control does not happen instantly as a result of practice for one day. Daily practice with mindful intention and wanting to do it, is what helps train and master the mind.

When you decide on a meditation that you would like to do daily, spend some time feeling the desire to do it. Feel the reverence and devotion to it, let it build into enthusiasm, and then begin. This will make it more likely for you to do it daily and successfully complete it.

This Sutra also shows the importance of meditations done daily for long periods of time, such as 40 day cycles, 100 days, etc. The meditation or working will become firmly rooted.

Sutra 1.15
दृष्टानुश्रविकविषयवितृष्णस्य वशीकारसंज्ञा वैराग्यम्
dr̥ṣṭa anuśravika viṣaya vitṛṣṇasya vaśīkāra sañjñā vairāgyam

Dispassion (non-attachment) is a state of consciousness acquired by the mastery of controlling the desires of objects that are seen or heard.

or,

Non-attachment is the mastery of the desires for what are seen and heard.

This is another Sutra that is often misunderstood, and wrongly believed to promote permanent renunciation from all desires.

Vairāgya means without attachment, still engaged in life but not influenced or controlled by external outcomes, circumstances, or fleeting pleasures. Again, still engaged in life. This is not about renunciation from life or becoming apathetic and empty.

If you let your desires rule you, then you do not have control over yourself. Desires are normal and an expression of who we are, and can be very beneficial when in our best interests. But when you are focused on a goal and distracted by a desire, if you can understand your desire and set it aside until a more appropriate time, you will be in control of your mind and your life.

An example of this is if you are working towards a goal in life with a deadline by tomorrow, and your friends call you and tell you about a party to attend tonight. The party might be fun, you might desire to go, but if you understand that it will ruin your chance to complete your goal on time, then perhaps you should instead attend a different party at a better time for you, and focus on completing your goal for now.

Non-attachment doesn't mean to be apathetic to whatever it is (the party, in the above example). It means to have a healthy control over yourself enough to set it aside, and choose to engage in it at a better time for you.

“Objects that are seen and heard”, refers to something you can actually see and perceive (*dr̥ṣṭa*), or a testimony or story you have heard from someone else (*anuśravika*). Patanjali used the word meaning “object”, *visaya*, when speaking of a thing, a matter, or something to be enjoyed.

Sutra 1.16

तत्परं पुरुषख्याते गुणवैतृष्यम्
tatparam puruṣakhyāteḥ guṇavair̥ṣyam

The supreme highest realization of the soul is indifferent to even the gunas.
or,
The purest perception/knowledge of the soul is one who has transcended the gunas.

Gunas: the qualities of nature, modes of existence which govern everything in the universe; polarities, energy, states of being, tendencies, growth and decay. These also relate to the fluctuations of the mind.

The gunas are:

-*Rajas* (centrifugal, outward, dynamic, push, excess, agitation, stress, greed, activity, enthusiasm, motivation, movement, drive)

-*Tamas* (centripetal, inwards, contractive, pull, ignorance, inertia, dormancy, avoidance, passivity, rest, laziness, stability)

There is a polarized movement between these 2, and fluctuation. The balance of these is:

-*Sattva* (balance, illumination, serenity, harmony, wisdom)

As the gunas are within everything in the universe, influencing everything and all energy and the fluctuations of the mind, then to become indifferent, not influenced by the gunas or energy, shows that the mind and soul remain steady and pure in its true essence.

If one has transcended even the influence of the gunas, then one has mastered all else.

Covered in the next article: Sutras 1.17-1.22. These Sutras pertain to the path to Samadhi.