

## Week 3: Contemplation & Study Guide

*Please listen to this week's class audio one more time.*

### What's Up for This Week

This week, we're exploring Sutras 2:18, 2:19, 2:20, and 2:23, as well as some related practices.

A handout with all these sutras is available on the Student Page under Resources, which includes Pandit Rajmani's translation and transliteration, with full definitions of the Sanskrit, in case you didn't or couldn't purchase the book *The Practice of the Yoga Sutra*. We have also included his full commentary on Sutras 18 and 19 on the course page under this week. (My own commentaries are in the Class recording itself and are also included below as part of the study guide.)

My study guide (the present document!) contains questions and exercises for studying the sutras, including those we looked at during our first class, along with a word by word translation of the first two sutras. For each of these, I give a series of questions and exercises for contemplating them.

My suggestion is that you read through the whole document, then pick a sutra and focus your contemplation on it. I also invite you to create your own commentaries, based on your contemplation and discussion (if you're working with a partner).

In working with sutras, start by re-listening to the class lecture's audio.

### Meta-Process for Studying a Sutra

Here is a five-part process for working with a question, which is particularly useful for sutra study:

1. As you begin your study of each sutra, say it in Sanskrit three or four times. Then say it in English. This allows the energy within the sutra (and there is a lot of energy in each one!) to penetrate your mind, and helps you experience it from a deeper, energetically transformative level.
2. Now, consider the meaning of each term or concept, and/or of the sutra as a whole. How do you understand it? Read the commentaries you have on it, including the ones I offer in this document, or in the books we've recommended. Some of you might also want to consult other commentaries, such as Georg Feuerstein's in *The Yoga Tradition*, I.K. Taimni's in *The Science of Yoga*, or some of the commentaries by contemporary teachers.

3. Then, consider how you apply the sutra to your own experience. These are very experience-oriented teachings. How is the sutra true for you (or not true!) How have you understood this idea and how does your experience reflect that? Write down your thoughts in your journal if so inclined or discuss them with your partner if you're working with a partner.
4. Finally, close your eyes and spend a couple of minutes following the breath. Ask for grace to give you any deeper understanding.
5. Then open your eyes and write without censoring whatever phrases, insights, images or experience come up. This should be considered an insight from the deeper mind, the intuitive faculty (*Prajna*) that we discussed in class.

## Sutras 2:18, 2:19, 2:20, and 2:23

### SUTRA 2:18

प्रकाशक्रियास्थितिशीलं भूतेन्द्रियात्मकं भोगापवर्गार्थं दृश्यम्

**prakāśakriyāsthitiśīlaṁ bhūtendriyātmakam bhogāpavargārtham dr̥śyam**

**The objective world, composed of elements and senses and having the inherent properties of illumination, action, and stability, has a twofold purpose: fulfillment and freedom.**

The objective world (*dr̥śyam*): your inner instruments, mental states, bodies (physical, subtle and causal), as well as the manifest universe in all its aspects

Elements (*bhutas*): the subtle building blocks of nature as understood in the ancient world—solidity (earth), fluidity (water), formativity (fire), touchability (air) and etherality (space). Each of the elements manifests subtly and physically. Subtly, the elements are the basis of our inner senses, which perceive in dreams and meditation, and of the outer senses, which mediate the physical world. Each of the elements is associated with a sense. Solidity with smell, fluidity with taste, formativity with sight, touchability with touch, and etherality with hearing and sound.

Senses (*indriyas*): the senses of perception—sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, and senses of action—grasping, locomotion, excretion, procreation

Gunās: see handout.

**Commentary:** This universe, including our inner world, arises within Prakriti, which is the primordial Shakti herself. Prakriti has two aspects: higher prakriti (Shakti) which is one with Ishwara (Shiva) and lower prakriti, which is the force within which manifestation occurs. Both are fully divine. Prakriti is composed of three powers, illumination (sattva), activity (rajas) and stability (tamas). These are the equivalents of the three great powers of Iccha Shakti, Jnana Shakti, and Kriya Shakti. These three powers combine and recombine to form every aspect of the universe, inner and outer.

Primordial Prakriti manifests the universe as it is, including the physical world, in which we all live. Our personal prakriti is the inner filtration system, composed of samskaras, Kleshas, etc. this is the screen through which we experience the objective world.

**Pandit Rajmani:** “The more confined our consciousness is to our self-created world, the more miserable we are. Birth in a human body gives us the opportunity to gather tools and means from the phenomenal world created by prakriti, which is untainted by our karmic impressions. By using these tools we can purify our self-created world and correct our distorted understanding of ourselves, the phenomenal world, its creator, and our relationship with the creator. This equips us to see that every object and experience in the phenomenal world is meant for us. if used properly, everything in the world has the capacity to grant us fulfillment (bhoga) and apavarga, ultimate freedom.”

Because Shakti is in everything and is inherently divine, the creative power of shakti operates throughout existence. She causes growth, stability and decay, and constantly transforms and alchemizes the world and us through the intrinsic powers of nature. In the natural world, whether in biology, physics, chemistry, and the other aspects of the physical world, we can observe her transformative powers, which also operate through the invisible world. Everything—whether its meditation, ritual, cooking, medicine, art, architecture, state craft, culture—all activities occur and come to fruition through her innate power of transformation.

As humans, we hold all her powers, but their fullness is hidden by our karmic detritus. Through sadhana, we purify the karmas and ultimately realize that we have access to the full powers of prakriti, which become instruments for our growth and mastery.

On one level, the world helps us work out our karmas, change and learn from them, so that our lives can be happier and freer. On another level, our interactions with the phenomenal world help us grow our skills and understanding in worldly activities, as well as revealing and supporting the path to freedom from our karmas and samskaras, and ultimate realization.

In this sense, the phenomenal world is there for us, as the arena for consciousness to both express its full abilities to love, do and know, and as the arena which teaches us how to live well and become free.

### **Contemplations:**

*To do with your journal and/or discuss with your partner.*

1. Look at your life, including the aspects of it that are challenging and uncomfortable. How does the structure of your life serve your growth? Consider how your life has been a school for your transformation? How have you learned from joyful experience? How have you learned from sorrowful experience? How do you see your life's ups and downs differently when you look at the world as the arena especially designed for your growth?

Spend some time contemplating the above questions.

2. **Question:** How has your life experience taught you to let go of painful samskaras?

### **SUTRA 2:19**

विशेषाविशेषलिङ्गमात्रालिङ्गानि गुणपर्वाणि

viśeṣāviśeṣaliṅgamātrāliṅgāni guṇaparvāṇi

**The total range of the gunas is divided into four categories: specific, unspecific, barely describable, and absolutely indescribable.**

This sutra describes the cosmology of Sankhya, including the process of manifestation. One of the most important points it makes is that the universe arises within Mahat, the divine mind. Mahat is, in sankhya philosophy, the first stage of manifestation out of Ishwara's prakriti. It is the essence of divine intelligence, and is the equivalent of the great deities—Shiva, Vishnu, Devi. Mahat manifests in the human psyche as buddhi, the discerning faculty, which is our own pure awareness, the purest form of human consciousness. However, in the human soul, buddhi is limited in power, and occluded by Kleshas and samskaras. This has enormous significance for our practice, because by purifying buddhi, we naturally align with the Great Mind. Those of you who are interested can read the full commentary from Pandit Rajmani, which is available on the student page. (I recommend it!)

## SUTRA 2:20

द्रष्टा दृशिमात्रः शुद्धोऽपि प्रत्ययानुपश्यः

draṣṭā dr̥śimātraḥ śuddho'pi pratyayānupaśyaḥ

**The sheer power of seeing is the seer. It is pure, and yet it sees only what the mind shows it.**

**Commentary:** The seer is buddhi, the clear ability to discern, which we know as awareness or consciousness. Awareness makes all experience possible, so buddhi is the knower and experiencer of our life. The entire purpose of yoga in this tradition is to clear Buddhi, so that she can unite with the full power of Mahat and allow you both self-realization (realization of your own beauty, goodness and power) and also liberate you from suffering.

Buddhi is filled with Kleshas and samskaras, which accumulate over lifetimes. Therefore, when we experience the world, we experience it only through the distorted lens of buddhi. We identify ourselves with the samskara-filled buddhi, which gives rise to ahamkara, the faculty that constructs a 'self' out of the experiences of our samskara-driven life.

We identify ourselves with buddhi and can only view ourselves with its help. This means identifying ourselves with the field of cognitions that are contained in buddhi.

**Pandit Rajmani:** “Even when we become aware of our self-existence, this awareness is experienced as a mental cognition. Thus, the subject is itself experienced as a mental cognition. The subject is itself experienced as an object.”

The discerning power of buddhi can look at itself as well as everything else, and trace suffering back to its cause, the samskaras. Thus it becomes the instrument for 'taking the backwards step'—becoming aware of the samskaras that block clear seeing, and giving itself glimpses of pure awareness, which can then be followed back to the source.

**Exercise:** Use buddhi to look at buddhi: Turn your awareness back on your own mind. Notice what appears—usually, a series of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, etc. Spend some time noticing the mentalogue. This is your moment to moment filtration system.

Now ask: “What knows I am noticing my inner world?”

**Exercise:** Become aware of awareness.

As you read, ask yourself “What knows I am reading?” Pay attention to the subtle experience that arises in the wake of the question. Ignore mental answers. Once you’ve sensed awareness, see if you can keep centering yourself within it, yet without making it an object.

Buddhi has eight intrinsic powers (Shaktis), four of which are Ishwara’s, and four of which are the result of contraction, and thus are human powers.

Ishwara’s powers are:

- Dharma Shakti—the power of experiencing the world as pure love/awareness/divinity, and as within oneself.
- Jnana Shakti—The power of knowing truth
- Vairagya Shakti—the power of engaging with all aspects of reality without clinging or aversion
- Aishwarya Shakti—the power of total sovereignty, being omniscient, omnipotent, etc

The human buddhi’s powers are:

- Adharma: limited ability to see, which leads to experiencing the world as separate
- Ajnana: ignorance of our true self, and thus living by limited understanding of ourselves and the world
- Avairagya: the tendency to get identified and entangled with whatever presents itself to the buddhi
- Anaishwara—lack of full power and autonomy

**Question:** Have you ever sensed buddhi as a pure force of discernment? Under what circumstances?

**Exercise:** Using buddhi observe your own samskaras.

The next time you have a setback, a challenge, an argument that upsets you, see if you can observe your thoughts and emotions, the ones that come up reactively. If you can do this in the moment, great. If not, take some time as soon as you can to replay the incident, and notice the reactive thoughts, feelings, and responses that arose.

This is your ego's response to challenge—the response mediated by the Kleshas and samskaras. Notice how repetitive they are. Write them down if possible. Or just observe. Notice that you will tend to identify with them, critique yourself for having them, feel ashamed or embarrassed or try to justify your responses by projecting blame. Remember, these too are samskaras. Observe, and keep returning to the felt sense of being the pure buddhi, the discerning knower who is the witness of your mind.

This is an exercise you can do at any time, but I suggest that you set aside some time this week to pure self-observation.

At some point, you might want to practice reversing the thoughts, and notice what is effective. For instance, you could try taking the perspective of the person you are arguing with. How does that defuse your reactive feelings? You could remind yourself that all samskaras are divine, or practice directing love or blessing into the situation. Find the ways of holding the negative or clinging samskaras that help free your buddhi from being overwhelmed by them!

## SUTRA 2:23

स्वस्वामिशक्त्योः स्वरूपोपलब्धिहेतुः संयोगः

svasvāmiśaktyoḥ svarūpopalabdhīhetuḥ saṁyogaḥ || 23 ||

**The union of our shakti and the shakti of Ishvara is the means of experiencing our essential nature.**

Swashakti means 'your own power'.

Swamishakti means 'the power of the one who is within everything' (Ishvara).

Your shakti is the power of your own mind, which although limited still retains the intrinsic qualities of the divine. The mind is a limited version of Mahat,

Rajmani says: "The mind is the palace of our core being. It is made of wish-fulfilling gems for it has the capacity to help us find life's purpose—lasting fulfillment and freedom. The space inside our mind pulsates with life-force. The inner most chamber of our mind is the home of the divinity we are seeking. Chit, consciousness, and Ananda, joy, are intrinsic to this divinity. Dispersing pure consciousness and joy is the defining characteristic of our mind. In yogic literature this is known as buddhi sattva—illuminated buddhi (in the *Pratyabhijñā Hridayam—The Heart of the Doctrine of Recognition*), Sutra 5 describes the mind like this: "*Chiti Shakti (the power of supreme consciousness), descending into manifestation become the human mind by contracting in accordance with objects of perception.*"



So the mind in its purest form (buddhi sattva) is naturally illuminated and connected to Ishwara. To purify the mind we do sadhana, and learn to recognize the divine nature of the powers that make life possible.

This starts by learning how to use buddhi as the self-observing witness (as we did earlier). Through her innate power of discernment, we can examine our samskaras, see through them, discern which thoughts and emotions are helpful and which are not. This capacity for discrimination is what we use in sadhana.

We can also use buddhi to choose uplifting and non-dual thoughts, including being able to recognize that even our most painful samskaras are also made of divine energy.

We can use buddhi to separate our sense of self from the objects we identify with—thoughts, emotions, body sensations etc. This is what we do in the process of self-inquiry.

Eventually, as buddhi learns to rest in herself (resting in awareness) she becomes the instrument by which we can identify with Consciousness itself.

**Exercise:** Set an alarm to ring every hours or every two hours. When it rings, turn your awareness back on itself. Ask “What knows I’m typing? What knows I’m walking? What knows I’m thinking?” and turn towards the felt experience of the knowing intelligence.

**Question:** Right now, how can you bring your own energy into alignment with Ishwara’s energy? What methods do you normally use to do this? (these could include mantra, prayer, visualization, self-inquiry like the one above). How willing are you at this point to commit yourself to aligning your shakti with Ishwara’s? (Yes, this is a practice of Ishwara Pranidhan!)

**Question:** How do you resist aligning with or taking refuge in the higher power? Can you identify the felt sense of resistance?

**Exercise:** Try talking to your resistance. Ask it why it doesn’t want to align with the higher power. You might try doing this with paper and pen (better than on the computer).

Begin by feeling into your resistance.

**Write the question** “What makes you resist aligning with the higher power?” (or the words that make sense to you) with your dominant hand, and the answer with your non-dominant hand. This is a method for allowing the hidden samskaras to safely come to the surface.