

Pandit Rajmani Tigunait's Commentaries on Sutras 1-17, 1-18, 1-23, & 1-26 from *The Secret of the Yoga Sutra*

SUTRA 1:17

वितर्कविचारानन्दास्मितारूपानुगमात् सम्प्रज्ञातः ॥१७॥

vitarkavicārānandāsmītārūpānugamāt samprajñātaḥ ॥ 17॥

Samprajnata samadhi is accompanied either by a gross object, a subtle object, joy, or the feeling of I-am-ness.

These next two sutras briefly describe the full range of samadhi. Samadhi is a state as well as a process leading to that state. An analogy will be helpful in explaining these two aspects. Let's say we are driving from New York City to Los Angeles. Every evening we check into a motel for the night; perhaps we do a little sightseeing before continuing our journey. Eventually, we reach Los Angeles. Once there, we enjoy the city. Depending on our goal, we stay for a week or two, a month, or perhaps permanently.

Los Angeles represents samadhi as a final state. The journey represents samadhi as a process. How long it takes us to reach Los Angeles depends on our starting point, the vehicle we use, the condition of the vehicle, how often we stop and for how long. Patanjali calls the process portion of samadhi *samprajnata*, and the final state, *asamprajnata*. In layman's terms, the process portion can be called lower samadhi, and samadhi as a final state, higher samadhi. This sutra describes lower samadhi.

In any journey we pass landmarks that tell us if we are headed in the right direction. Signs along the road help us decide whether we should continue our journey or stop for a while. In the course of most long journeys, we take breaks either to avoid exhaustion or to enjoy the sights. From the perspective of each discrete portion of the journey, the places we stop are destinations. Thus, the process leading to our main destination is comprised of a series of interim destinations.

Lower samadhi is the journey leading to higher samadhi. It consists of a series of interim destinations, which are largely determined by the quality of the objects employed in meditation and by the quality of the mind using those objects. If we walk from New York City to Los Angeles, our final destination is the same as if we drive, but there will be many more interim destinations—and the distance between them will be much shorter. The number of interim destinations and the distance between them change drastically if we travel by bicycle or plane. In the same way, in Yoga sadhana each of us has our own starting point, a uniquely trained mind, and a particular object we use to remain one-pointed. In an external journey, how fast we travel and how often we stop and where depend on the nature and quality of the vehicle. In terms of our inward journey, the vehicles are the objects we use to make our mind flow peacefully. Therefore, the nature and quality of the objects determine where and how often we stop on our way to higher samadhi. Based on the quality of the objects and the mind's relationship with them,

Patanjali divides lower samadhi into four categories: *vitarka*, *vichara*, *ananda*, and *asmita*.

Vitarka means “perceptible object.” When the process of samadhi occurs by focusing on a perceptible object, it is called *vitarka anugata samadhi*. *Anugata* means “accompanied by; followed by.” A mind not established in the state of samadhi always seeks the company of an object and must therefore be accompanied or supported by a thought construct (*vrutti*). Some thought constructs make the mind fluctuate aimlessly, robbing it of the experience of its natural state of samadhi. Others help the mind rediscover and restore its natural state. When a thought construct enabling the mind to restore its natural state corresponds to concrete, perceptible sensory objects, that state is called *vitarka anugata samadhi*. It is accompanied (*anugata*) by a perceptible object (*vitarka*) that helped the mind become peaceful and inward. Using the sun, the moon, the polar star, the face of an anthropomorphic god or goddess, a lotus, a yantra, or a mandala as an object of concentration to bring the mind to a perfectly still, well-controlled state is an example of *vitarka anugata samadhi*.

The brain demands a name for each object it perceives. A word is assigned to each experience. Sensory experiences are discretely embodied in words and stored in the brain in that form. The meaning of the word contains the entire range of all the qualities, properties, and attributes of the object it denotes. When we provide the mind with a perceptible object to make it become one-pointed and flow peacefully, the entire meaning comes forward and infuses the mind with all the qualities, properties, and attributes contained in that object. That is why some objects and the words denoting them lead the mind toward samadhi faster and with fewer interim destinations than others. And that is why we must select a concrete, perceptible object for concentration wisely. As we use that object for a focus of concentration, it progressively drops its grosser qualities and subtler ones emerge. Eventually, only the sheer essence of the object and its subtle meaning remain. The essence accompanies the mind without disturbing its peaceful flow. Even so, the inward flow of awareness is split into three parts: the mind is aware of the object; it is aware of the process of flowing inward; and it is aware of itself as an observer.

The next category in the process of samadhi is *vichara anugata samadhi*. *Vichara* means “subtle object; pure thought.” This category of samadhi is characterized by meditation on a subtle object, such as sound, fragrance, touch, or taste. The clearest example is meditation on a mantra. As we will see in sutra 1:44, as we meditate on a mantra, our mind becomes absorbed in the mantra and its subtle meaning occupies our mind. As meditation on the mantra deepens, the essence of the mantra alone remains. The mind and the essence of the mantra merge. The state where the essence of the mantra and the mind merge is *vichara anugata samadhi*.

When the joy (*ananda*) buried deep in our body and senses is used as an object to arrest the roaming tendencies of our mind, the quietude engendered is *ananda anugata samadhi*. However, this practice requires that we first awaken the joy lying dormant within us. Vyasa describes practices for awakening this joy in his commentary on sutras 1:35 and 1:36.

The fourth category, *asmita anumata samadhi*, occurs when we use the sense of I-am-ness, the feeling of our own self-existence, as an object of concentration. This is possible only when we have access to the cave of our heart, where the sense of I-am-ness resides in its most concentrated form. Sutras 1:36, 3:34, and 3:49 describe the techniques for gaining access to our own heart, thereby acquiring the ability to meditate on our own I-am-ness (*asmita*).

In each of these four categories of samadhi, we are fully aware (*samprajnata*) of the object of meditation, the process of meditation, and ourselves as a meditator; hence the name *samprajnata samadhi*. Furthermore, because these four process-driven samadhis have an object of some sort as their focal point (*alambana*), they are also known as *salambana samadhi*. *Sa* means “with”; *alambana* means “resting ground; supporting element; focal point.” The process of using an *alambana* as a support in samadhi is like using a thorn to extract another thorn from our foot. We use one thought to eliminate other thoughts. Ultimately, we must eliminate even the potential for our foot to be pierced by a thorn, and we do that by disposing of all thorns. Similarly, any object we use during this process-driven samadhi eventually must be discarded because any object, regardless of its illuminating properties, is a source of *vrittis* and thus has the potential to create *samskaras*.

As long as there are *samskaras*, the mind will be the victim of its fluctuating tendencies. How to reach the state in which there is no longer a possibility for the mind to associate itself with its own *vrittis* is the subject of the next sutra.

SUTRA 1:18

विरामप्रत्ययाभ्यासपूर्वः संस्कारशेषोऽन्यः ॥१८॥

virāmapratyayābhyāsapūrvah saṃskāraśeṣo’nyaḥ ॥ 18॥

The other [higher samadhi] is preceded by *abhyasa*, which brought all cognitions to a complete halt. What remains is the *samskara* [of *abhyasa* itself].

As we have seen, samadhi is both a process and a state. Samadhi as a process is often called lower samadhi, and as a state, higher samadhi. Lower samadhi is what we know as meditation today. Higher samadhi is a state of being—a state of awareness where the distinction between subject and object no longer exists. Lower samadhi occurs only when we make an effort, but in higher samadhi all effort ceases.

The most distinctive attribute of lower samadhi is that we are creating and accumulating subtle impressions through our practice. These meditative *samskaras* nullify non-meditative *samskaras*, which disturb, stupefy, and distract the mind. Meditative *samskaras* engender *vrittis*, just as other *samskaras* do. The only difference is that thought constructs engendered by meditative *samskaras* carry meditative qualities, whereas other thoughts carry distracting qualities. Even though meditative *samskaras* are transformative, they nonetheless have the potential to prevent us from reaching higher samadhi and so

must ultimately be eliminated. Higher samadhi dawns only when all samskaras have been eliminated.

Lower samadhi is an object-driven process. From beginning to end, the peaceful flow of the mind is accompanied and supported by an object in one of four categories: gross and perceptible; subtle and thus imperceptible in a physical sense; reflective of an extraordinary joy springing from the depths of our senses and mind; or pure I-am-ness, the well-defined feeling of self-existence. As explained in the previous sutra, the fourfold nature of lower samadhi arises from these four different classes of objects. Regardless of the focal point, however, we are aware of a trinity: the object of meditation, the process of meditation, and ourselves as the meditator. In this state of samadhi, therefore, we are not perfectly one-pointed. In higher samadhi, this trinity is left behind. All mental operations cease, and the mind stands so still that even subtle impressions of the past, including the impressions created by our meditative practice, no longer have any influence.

In higher samadhi, time and space are left behind, and the law of cause and effect no longer applies. In this state of realization, we are free from all karmas and all the fruits of karmas. We see the truth in all its purity and perfection. We are master of our destiny and live with the confidence that after death we will have the ability to decide whether or not to return. We live in the world while remaining above it.

This highly sought level of samadhi emerges when abhyasa comes to an end. Technically, abhyasa is not the immediate cause of the highest samadhi. Rather, the immediate cause is the highest level of vairagya, including non-attachment to the samskaras created by abhyasa.

However, it is a mistake to expect to attain higher samadhi without committing ourselves to a methodical and sincere practice. Some commentaries give the impression that lower samadhi is inferior to higher samadhi, but in truth, higher samadhi is the fruit of the hard work we put into our earlier practice. Higher samadhi brings the process of lower samadhi to completion. Practice-driven samadhi is so important that later, in sutras 3:51 and 4:26–4:30, Patanjali reminds us that we must always continue our practice lest we fall backward, for there is always a possibility that undetectable samskaras remain.

Practically speaking, the four stages of lower samadhi are abhyasa. Refinement in abhyasa comes through vairagya. Together, abhyasa and vairagya lead to higher samadhi. Lower samadhi is a process; higher samadhi is the experiential state we attain when our practice is completed. One describes the journey; the other, the place where the journey ends. Reaching our destination without making the journey is an enticing idea, but it is only a fantasy. The reality is that most of us have a mind that has not been thoroughly trained. We need a system of discipline to gain mastery over our thought patterns and then to turn the mind inward. Once it turns inward we have to provide the mind with a suitable object for meditation. We also have to make an effort to rest our attention in that object. This is easier when the object is spiritually illuminating and uplifting by its own intrinsic virtue. When the consistent practice of concentrating on the meditative object has led to absorption in the object, its intrinsic virtue induces a qualitative change in our mind.

The mind sees what it could not have seen before: reality without attributes—reality that transcends name, form, shape, size, and color. Meditation on nameless, formless reality begins only when the mind has become clear and sharp enough to comprehend it. This comprehension comes through the process of lower samadhi.

The Yoga tradition tells us that the subtlest dimension of sadhana lies in understanding the dynamics of the transition from lower to higher samadhi. Comprehending the mystery of this transitional state requires attention to the precise terms Patanjali uses for lower and higher samadhi: *samprajnata* and *asamprajnata*. A little later in the text, he uses two parallel terms: *sabija* and *nirbija* (YS 1:46, 1:49, and 1:51). These two sets of terms illumine the mystery of the transitional state—of how to walk through it and enter the higher state of samadhi, leaving the lower one behind. In lower samadhi, we are fully aware of the object we are meditating on, the process of meditation, and ourselves as a meditator. This condition gives lower samadhi its name, *samprajnata*. *Samprajnata* means “to be fully aware of everything going on in the mind: what the mind is thinking; how it is thinking; and how we observe the object, the process, and the mind itself.” Transcending this awareness or dissolving it enables us to enter higher samadhi (*asamprajnata*). *A* means “not; absence of”; *samprajnata* means “conscious awareness.” Thus, *asamprajnata* means “renouncing the conscious awareness of lower samadhi and entering a state of consciousness devoid of subject-object divisions.” Patanjali’s use of these two terms gives us a clue about how to enter and retain the higher state of samadhi.

Again, an analogy is helpful. When we are learning to drive, we are taught to be aware of details: engage the clutch before shifting gears, look both ways before turning, check the rearview mirror before changing lanes, slow down when approaching an intersection. Being aware of details requires us to be vigilant and conscious of everything going on around us. We are aware of the car, we are aware that we are driving the car, we are aware of the road conditions, and we are careful to keep the car centered in our lane. We make a conscious effort to monitor our speed, and we become even more alert when approaching our exit on the freeway.

The less experienced we are, the more conscious we are of our driving. As time passes, the car begins to seem like an extension of our body, and coordinating the different elements of driving no longer requires a conscious effort. Our feet move between the clutch, gas pedal, and brake almost automatically. We confidently change lanes, overtaking and passing an 18-wheeler at 75 mph with ease. It doesn’t seem like much is going on in our mind, but everything that was going on when we were learning to drive is still happening now that we have become expert drivers. The only difference is that, earlier, the various elements of driving appeared to be complete tasks in themselves. Those different tasks were somewhat disjointed and we were somewhat anxious about doing them correctly. Linking and coordinating those disparate tasks required considerable effort. Many things were going on at once. The mind was attending each task separately, and this was causing the mind to fluctuate. As we continue practicing, these discrete tasks begin to blend. Eventually, the mind begins to perceive driving as a single process, with little awareness that dozens of actions together constitute this process.

As experienced drivers we are not inattentive to the myriad processes involved in driving but have become expert at stringing them together smoothly and coordinating our mind to attend to them without anxiety. If we keep all the details driving entails in the forefront of our mind and continue remembering each of them separately, we will never be able to drive skillfully. Similarly, keeping all the details of our meditation in the forefront of our mind—remembering the object, anticipating a disturbing thought, planning not to be disturbed, vigorously trying to capture the perfectly still state of mind, and working hard to dis-identify from the role of being a meditator—prevents us from embracing the peaceful flow of mind free from thought constructs (*vrittis*).

The other two terms Patanjali uses to refer to lower and higher samadhi are *sabija* and *nirbija*. *Sabija* means “with seed,” and *nirbija* means “without seed.” Here, “seed” refers to subtle karmic impressions. Samskaras are seeds—our *vrittis* germinate from them. With the help of meditation, we attenuate and eventually eliminate our negative samskaras. But the process of meditation creates its own impressions in the mind. These meditative impressions are a necessary step in eliminating negative mental impressions, yet from a higher perspective, they pose an obstacle to reaching the highest state of samadhi. As long as the seeds of meditative samskaras accompany our meditation, we remain in lower samadhi. Sooner or later we must wash away even these positive meditative impressions. This is accomplished by embracing the highest level of *vairagya*.

In other words, reaching higher samadhi requires eliminating the exertion involved in maintaining conscious awareness of all the details of meditation, and further, resolving to detach ourselves from the samskaras created by our meditation. These two factors help us avoid becoming entangled in the transitional state between lower and higher samadhi. The first factor requires us to refine our practice, pay attention to its subtle components, and make sure that we are free of anxiety regarding when and how we will reap the fruits.

During this transitional phase, refining practice means identifying the exact nature of the meditative experience that dawns when the mind is not discretely aware of what it is experiencing. In other words, refining our practice means cultivating sensitivity to what the mind is experiencing and skillfully staying with that experience for a prolonged period, without interruption, and with reverence. This refinement sharpens our intelligence and we begin to comprehend the subtle component of the practice—the observer observing itself. At this stage, both the object of observation and the process of observation have dissolved. The mind and Pure Consciousness (*Purusha*) have become indistinguishable. Paying attention to this indistinguishability pulls us out of the transitional state and places us in higher samadhi, where there is no objective awareness and no meditative seeds. Refinement at this level of practice is the second factor and comes by infusing our practice with the light of higher non-attachment (*para vairagya*).

The journey from lower to higher samadhi comes easily to some and not so easily to others. The reason for this difference in the result of our sadhana is the subject of the next sutra.

SUTRA 1:23

ईश्वरप्रणिधानाच्चा ॥२३॥

īśvarapraṇidhānādvā ॥ 23॥

From trustful surrender to Ishvara [God], samadhi also comes.

The subtle impressions created by our repeated actions are the source of the mind's roaming tendencies. The preceding sutras advise us to nullify and attain mastery over them by adopting the twofold method of abhyasa and vairagya. This method aims at actively creating desirable impressions and actively eliminating undesirable ones. In other words, Patanjali has advised us to undertake a course of sadhana to undo what we have done in the past and to rewrite our destiny in the light of the highest truth. In this sutra, he says that when we surrender to God we will automatically be freed of our past deeds and the subtle impressions created by them. Although this may appear to be a marked departure from his teaching up to this point, it is not. Here Patanjali is introducing a new course of sadhana—surrender to God (Ishvara pranidhana) as the surest way to attain samadhi. In most cultures, the word surrender is associated with giving up—it conveys a sense of weakness, defeat, and hopelessness. But as we'll see in sutras 1:23–1:33, the path of surrender in Yoga is highly structured and complete in itself. For those who understand the essence of surrender, this path is easy and direct. But for those who are lazy and seeking an easy path, it is complicated and full of pitfalls.

Surrender to God is not an option but an inescapable reality. It rises on the horizon of our consciousness as the result of our sadhana, impelling us to embrace it joyfully. This is the path of *bhava pratyaya yogis*—yogis who in their past life were led to a higher level of realization by the grace of the Divine and are born with intuitive wisdom. Because they remember how grace has guided, protected, and nourished them, theirs is a life of surrender from the outset. They pray for divine grace to take its course once again and with greater force. They rely on God's grace, while doing their practice wholeheartedly, and they retain the purity of their knowledge with the help of vairagya.

The idea of surrender comes to the rest of us—the ordinary yogis (*upaya pratyaya yogis*)—only when we are faced with persistent obstacles or when our practice does not seem to be bearing fruit quickly. Just as many people turn to alternative medicine only after exhausting the options offered by conventional medicine, most of us consider surrendering to God only as a last resort, and even then only on a trial basis. Turning to surrender as a last resort prevents us from embracing it unreservedly. At the same time that we are hoping surrender will free us from our problems, we are regarding it with a skeptical eye. We are seeking a magical solution, and when it does not materialize quickly, we try something else.

Surrender to God is a central theme in all religions in spite of the fact that God is shrouded in mystery in most cultures and traditions. He cannot be seen or touched. He is all-pervading, yet is said to live in heaven or in a temple. He is the embodiment of forgiveness, yet is said to assign punishment for our smallest transgression. He is the father of all, yet is said to prefer certain castes, creeds, genders, and ethnic groups.

According to the Yoga tradition, these concepts are simply different notions of God—products of the human mind, which is often disturbed, stupefied, distracted, and thoroughly confused.

Yoga tells us that God is as real as we ourselves. God is among us, is in us, is us, and yet is beyond us. It has no beginning, no middle, and no end. God is eternal, all-pervading, and beyond death, decay, and destruction. It is the total sum of all that is. It is everything—knower, known, and the means of knowing. It is endowed with limitless unrestricted power of will, power of knowledge, and power of action. God is Pure Being with the ability to become anything imaginable. It is one, with the ability to become many. It is transcendental, with the ability to become immanent. It is abstract, with the ability to become perceptible. It is beyond time, space, and the law of causality, with the ability to become part of the world existing within the domain of time and space. We attain samadhi by surrendering to this God.

What is surrender? How do we do it? We usually turn to God under one of four circumstances: desperation, curiosity, the desire for health and wealth, and out of correct understanding. The first three circumstances may make us God-oriented and God-fearing, but they do not lead us to embrace the reality of God or seek his unconditional love. We are simply seeking what we love the most—the fulfillment of our desires. Genuine love for God and surrender to God walks into our life only under the fourth circumstance—correct understanding.

When we have truly acquired knowledge, there is no need to make either an effort to love God or a plan to surrender. At the moment of inner awakening, we see the higher reality surrounding us and know it as our perennial source of guidance and nourishment. This luminous reality pervades every cell of our body and all the spaces between. It guides the expression of our genes and chromosomes so we don't grow toenails in our brains. It ensures that after conception, progesterone levels rise, preventing menses, so we are not flushed from our mother's womb. At birth, it ensures that our lungs begin to function. It trains our brain to comprehend the meaning of words. It infuses our mind with the power to solve problems. It gives us the courage and motivation to explore the vastness of life. It guides us to find our livelihood and to create a world of our dreams. And it does all this and much, much more without seeking anything in return. Its love and concern for us is unconditional. This realization fills our heart with deep gratitude. That gratitude finds its natural expression in love for God (*Ishvara*).

Faith in *Ishvara* means fully embracing our realization of his unconditional love. Living in the light of this faith is surrender. Making an effort to live in the light of this faith is the path of love and devotion (*bhakti*). Even though God is everywhere, *bhakti* enables us to experience God concretely. Cultivating constant awareness of God's presence and unconditional divine grace intensifies our conviction that we are not alone—that we are loved and nurtured. This conviction becomes a source of inner strength, enabling us to remain unperturbed in the midst of life's many storms. Even when powerful subtle impressions of the past begin to churn our mind, we remain fully aware of the guiding and protecting grace of the Divine. We witness the tendencies of our mind with trustful

surrender, while remaining fully focused on one reality—the Divine within. Patanjali calls this *Ishvara pranidhana*, surrender to God.

According to Vyasa, the most powerful strand of realization leading us to spontaneously surrender to God is the realization that she is constantly meditating on us. She has joyfully taken us into her fold. Her concern for our well-being is infinitely more refined and focused than our concern for ourselves. By meditating on us, she has endowed our mind with the ability to meditate on her. The joy of her meditation on us makes our mind turn inward. Her intrinsic beauty, which she has transmitted to us, frees us from the charms and temptations of the world. Fullness is her essential nature, yet she seeks her ever-growing fullness in us. She is satisfied only upon seeing that we have acquired her grandeur. Our aspiration to be like her arises from her desire to see us in her image. This realization is the ground for true surrender. Surrender rising from this firm foundation pulls God toward us, and us toward God. Samadhi is the ground where the two meet.

From time out of mind, the notion of God has been shrouded in mystery. Is God one or many? Is God in heaven or everywhere? Is God with form or formless? Is God attainable or not attainable? Is our life on earth a reward or a punishment? Is God the creator or is nature the creator? Is God omniscient? Omnipotent? If so, why doesn't she free us from sorrow? Does God help only those who know her as almighty? Patanjali dedicates the next eight sutras to answering these questions and to explaining the concept of God in Yoga and the role of meditation on God in attaining freedom from our karmic bondage.

SUTRA 1:26

स एष पूर्वेषामपि गुरुः कालेनानवच्छेदात् ॥२६॥

sa eṣa pūrveṣāmapī guruḥ kālenānavacchedāt ॥ 26॥

He is the one who has been the preceptor of all previous teachers for He is not limited by time.

Our core is Consciousness. Consciousness is eternal but we are mortal. Consciousness is never born and never dies yet we are subject to birth and death. Consciousness is the Seer and the Power of Seeing, and yet in our conscious awareness we cannot comprehend it as anything other than an object of our experience. In daily life, the awareness of our self-existence is broken by sleep. When we sleep, we have no idea of who we are. We wake up with no knowledge of the process and phenomenon of sleep. How short-lived is the experience of our continuity!

Philosophers may boast of their doctrines regarding the eternity of consciousness and its continuous flow, but we all share a common experience: death brings our consciousness to a full stop. The idea that we are eternal—that we were there before we were born, that we will continue even after we die—is unconvincing, yet we force ourselves to believe this unconvincing truth.

We know we are mortal. We know we have little knowledge of our past and no ability to foresee the future. We know our knowledge of the dynamics of life is extremely limited, and we also know that expanding this knowledge is not among our priorities. And yet the desire to experience our eternity is inherent to our psyche. Lacking faith in ourselves, we hope to find someone who is immortal or, failing that, someone who has the knowledge of immortality.

The desire for a connection with someone who is holy and lack of faith in our own holiness are basic human characteristics that lead to personality worship. We search for a leader. If one is not readily available, we create one. We put the holy man on a pedestal. His words become authority and a cult begins. When our conscience questions his authority, we feel guilty because we believe our holy man—swami, lama, imam, priest, or guru—is enlightened, or is at least a conduit for enlightenment. The more religiously oriented our society, the less we trust our own conscience and the more inclined we are to rely on a holy man's pronouncements regarding eternity. According to Patanjali, this is a dangerous trap. Instead, he advises us to turn to the One who is eternal and immortal—Ishvara.

As explained in the commentary on sutra 1:24, when death renders us unconscious we lose our most valued possession—self-identity. From that perspective, we become a non-being. We have no means to even feel that we are dead. With death our sense of time also dies. Past, present, and future are absorbed into nothingness. Buried in the deep tomb of non-being, we are virtually non-existent. Then the imperishable Divine casts his glance on us and we emerge from the depths of darkness. We recognize our helplessness. We become aware that we have been absorbed into a state of non-being. We long for our most valued possession—our self-identity—but we have no tools to reclaim it.

Seeing our helplessness, Ishvara is moved. Out of compassion, he glances at all-pervading Primordial Nature, Prakriti, who instantly manifests everything we need to reclaim our sense of I-am-ness (*asmita*) and the private world we had before we died. The intelligence (*buddhi*) we once possessed awakens. The mind (*manas*), ego (*ahamkara*), and the senses (*indriya*) spring forth, but they need a locus. The urge for a locus spins the karmic wheel. Honoring the intention of the Primordial Seer (*Purusha*), his intrinsic Prakriti brings out from herself the world of endless diversity. The light of the Omniscient Being guides us to the right place and the right time to begin our life. We are born again. Non-being comes back into being. Death is transformed into birth. Once again we ride the current of time.

In his compassion, the Seeing Power of the Seer has assumed responsibility for much more than simply bringing us back to life. His guiding grace takes birth with each of us; thus, the sages call him *Sadyojata*, the one born instantly. For our sake, the ever-unborn is now born. In the wake of inner realization, the sages pray to him as *Bhavodbhava*, origin of the origin, father of the beginning. He is *Vamadeva*, the lord of everyone and everything ever created. He is the eldest (*Jyestha*) and the most respected (*Shrestha*). He is the breath of life (*Rudra*) and the very principle of time itself (*Kala*). He slices time into numberless divisions (*Kala-vikarana*). He is the principle of might (*Bala*). He slices his might into numberless parts (*Bala-vikarana*) and distributes them among us as strength

and vitality. He churns our vitality (*Bala-pramathana*), so we can obtain the essence of his might. He rules over our little self (*Sarva-bhuta-damana*), yet is beyond our comprehension (*Manonmana*). He is peacefully active (*Aghora*), aggressively active (*Ghora*), and active to the point of fierceness and violence (*Ghora-ghorata*). He is the essence of everything tangible, comprehensible, and defined by name, form, and number (*Sharva*). He is the master of the very principle of knowledge, the knowing power of the knower (*Ishana*). He is the lord of all living beings (*Ishvara*). He presides over all creation (*Brahma-adhipati*). He presides over the Creator herself (*Brahmano-adhipati*). The sages tell us to seek the guidance of this Creator of the Creator (*Brahma*). In this sutra, Patanjali tells us that this Special Being has been the master of all previous masters (*purvesham api guruh*), for he alone is unconfined by time.

Ishvara is our teacher. This fact is not dependent on our choosing. Due to her loving grace, we rose from the dead and came into being. This fact is not affected by our lack of belief in God or by our rejection of her. Her loving grace is unconditional. It came to us well before the birth of our mind and the power of speech.

As a dead person, we had no mind to think of her grace and no tongue to pray for it. As a living person, we can proclaim our rejection of Ishvara's grace, but the truth remains unaffected—we are alive only because her loving and guiding grace is keeping us alive. In compliance with her will, for example, oxygen is infused with the life-sustaining energy that fuels our cellular respiration. And it is in compliance with her will that oxygen no longer supports our life. We die. Nothing is more predictable than death, yet throughout our lives we go about our activities without much concern about dying because everywhere, within and without, we are surrounded and accompanied by the all-pervading divine being, Ishvara.

This Omnipresent Being is our guru and our guide. In him lies ultimate safety and security. By realizing the essence of this Omnipresent Being and embracing him consciously, we are freed from doubt and fear. This freedom gives us confidence in ourselves, respect for life, and gratitude toward the Divine Being who, for our sake, endures the pain of being born with us. This Divine Being is born again and again until we are completely free from our karmic bonds and the ignorance that sustains them. In one spontaneous intention (*sankalpa*) he has yoked himself to us. No force in the universe can obstruct his intention. The infallibility of his intention lies at the heart of our spiritual quest, and in its own mysterious way, this same infallibility guides us to our spiritual core. This guiding force is our guru.

The clearer our understanding of this guiding force, the more balanced we become in our understanding of external sources of guidance: physical gurus, guides, temples, churches, and holy texts. How we gain a clear understanding of this guiding force is the subject of the next sutra.