Pandit Rajmani Tigunait's Commentaries on Sutras 1-30, 1-31, 1-32, & 1-33
from *The Secret of the Yoga Sutra*

SUTRA 1:30

व्याधिस्त्यानसंशयप्रमादालस्याविरतिभ्रान्तिदर्शनालब्धभूमिकत्वानवस्थितत्वानि चित्तविक्षेपास्तेऽन्तरायाः ।।३०।।

vyādhistyānasaṁśayapramādālasyāvirati-bhrāntidarśanaalabdhabhūmikatvānavasthitatvāni cittavikṣepāste'ntarāyḥ ।। 30।।

Disease, mental inertia, doubt, carelessness, sloth, inability to withdraw from sense cravings, clinging to misunderstanding, inability to reach the goal [samadhi], and inability to retain it throw our mind outward; they are obstacles.

Life is a long chain of pleasure and pain, success and failure, gain and loss. Transcending these pairs of opposites and reaching a state of inner equanimity is the essence of the spiritual quest. Along the way, a variety of obstacles emerge.

These obstacles are unimaginably numerous. For example, many of us neither know nor care to know that our life has a spiritual dimension. That is an obstacle. Some of us want to know our spiritual aspect but lack the will. That is an obstacle. Some of us search for our spiritual core but fail to set our priorities properly. That is an obstacle. We undertake practices leading to enlightenment but fail to drop habits that hamper our progress. That is an obstacle. We learn techniques for moving inward but begin doubting their validity as soon as we apply them. That is an obstacle. We find numberless reasons for not beginning the practice, or for starting and then stopping it, or for taking a detour and never returning to the path. These are all obstacles.

Patanjali divides all obstacles into nine broad categories: disease, mental inertia, doubt, carelessness, sloth, inability to withdraw from sense cravings, clinging to misunderstanding, inability to reach the goal of samadhi, and inability to retain samadhi. Although obstacles in these nine categories impede our growth in every sphere of life, Patanjali is focusing on them in the context of Yoga sadhana.

Disease is the foremost obstacle. In the final analysis, disease is caused by seemingly beginningless ignorance. We are ignorant about the innate wisdom of our body, so instead of discovering the cause and cure of a disease within the body, we search for it in the external world. We fail to realize there are more than ten times as many microbes—bacteria, archaea, and fungi—in a healthy human body as there are human cells. We insist alien agents—germs, bacteria, and viruses—are the cause of our sickness and seek to cure ourselves by eliminating them. But the truth is, outside forces can affect us adversely only when the host within us gives them an opportunity.

Disturbance in the natural balance of our inner ecology creates a hospitable environment for illness. According to Ayurveda, Yoga's sister science, there are three bodily humors: *vata, pitta,* and *kapha,* the principles of catabolic, metabolic, and anabolic

activities, respectively. Once their natural balance is disturbed, our entire system is thrown out of balance. One organ no longer cares for the well-being of other organs. Communication between the heart, the brain, the nervous system, and the endocrine system is impaired. The evolution of disease is an intricate, systematic process, but because we are cut off from our body's innate wisdom, we are barely aware of it. This lack of knowledge about ourselves forces us to rely instead on the tools and means available in the external world.

According to Yoga, the cure for disease lies in awakening the innate wisdom of the body and letting it heal us from inside. This deep healing occurs when we derive sustenance from deep within. Cultivating the ability to restore the harmonious balance of our bodily humors and thus maintain an internal atmosphere conducive to good health is an important aspect of Yoga sadhana.

The second obstacle is mental inertia. Some of us are more alert by nature than others, but all of us have the innate ability to overcome our mental sluggishness. Failure to acknowledge this innate ability and to then throw off the dense, dark blanket covering our mind is one of the biggest obstacles in our spiritual quest. Under the sway of inertia, we accept things the way they are and call this acceptance "destiny." We are stuck and our quest ends.

As disease and inertia tighten their grip, we begin to doubt ourselves and the very nature and process of the spiritual quest. Disease and mental sluggishness shake our conviction in our ability to help ourselves and to ensure a bright future. Doubt, which begins with lack of conviction and self-confidence, is a swiftly growing destructive force. It destroys the foundation of our inner peace. We become suspicious of everyone and everything, which generates an endless chain of negativity. This third obstacle is the stage where our inner turmoil becomes clearly visible. We are constantly on the lookout for anything that might harm us. Doubt fuels our mind's roaming tendencies—once in its snare, we find it difficult to focus our mind and turn it inward.

Exhausted by the onslaught of disease, mental inertia, and doubt, we succumb to carelessness, the fourth obstacle. To avoid facing reality, we indulge in activities that distract us from the pain arising from illness, inertia, and doubt. In other words, we bury our spirit in carelessness, tell ourselves we are carefree, and fail to notice that we are going nowhere.

Sloth is the child of carelessness. This fifth obstacle is fully developed and comes with its own justification. We make ourselves comfortable with our laziness by telling ourselves we aren't feeling well. We allow inertia to feed our laziness. Mental stupor gives sloth a pleasant flavor—a lazy person finds sloth enjoyable. Knowing how deep and strong the roots of sloth are, the sages call it a "grave sin." Sloth is incompatible with self-effort, the force that carries us along the spiritual path.

Now the sixth obstacle arises, the inability to withdraw our mind from sense cravings. Once we are firmly in the grip of carelessness and sloth, we employ our mind and senses indiscriminately. We fail to notice that our slow, foggy mind has fallen under the sway of the senses. We indulge without knowing why. The idea of refraining from indulgence

makes no sense—we have neither the motive nor the ability to withdraw from the aimless, self-destructive activities of our senses. This unrestrained, uncontrolled, and virtually unconscious involvement of our senses with endless objects drains our vitality. We clearly see the damaging effects yet are unable to withdraw our mind from sense cravings.

Clinging to misunderstanding is the seventh obstacle and is a direct outgrowth of the indiscriminate, inexorable, self-destructive cravings of our senses. The actions we perform under the spell of sense cravings create powerful mental grooves. Because they were created by actions performed in an uncontrolled, unrestrained, unconscious manner, these samskaras emit a disorienting, aimless energy.

Under the influence of this disorienting energy arising from deep within, we become fully convinced that the sensory world and the experiences pertaining to it are the only reality. Not only do we no longer question the validity of the sensory world, we dismiss outright the possibility of a reality beyond it. At this stage, our senses are fully in charge of defining the truth: the world of the senses and sensory experiences is real and everything else is unreal. It no longer occurs to us that the senses are tools for knowing the truth, and further, that they are designed to know only that portion of the truth that pertains to the objective world. Complete dependence on the senses, which are the victims of their own cravings, poses a tremendous obstacle in our spiritual quest. To move forward, we must overcome this dependency and reverse the habit of replacing truth with our own mental fabrications.

The eighth obstacle is frustration caused by inability to reach our goal. Setting a worldly goal is much easier than setting a spiritual goal. Worldly affairs belong to the mental and sensory domain, so we have yardsticks for measuring our progress. But because spiritual matters lie only partially within the mental and sensory domain, we often set goals in the spiritual arena without understanding them clearly.

For most of us, descriptions of the spiritual quest are akin to fairy tales. We read books, hear about the experiences of mystics, observe others walking on the spiritual path, and get excited. Some of us decide God is our goal without having an understanding of God. Some of us seek love without a clear idea of what we mean by love. Others decide tasting divine ambrosia flowing from a thousand-petaled lotus blossoming in our brain center is our spiritual goal, even though we do not understand what this divine ambrosia is. Similarly, we crave enlightenment without having the slightest idea what it actually means. Such notions are not authentic spiritual goals and they become the ground for perpetual disappointment.

According to Patanjali, samadhi is the true spiritual goal. In the state of samadhi, our mind is as pure and luminous as unalloyed Consciousness itself. Once in samadhi, we see ourselves clearly—our mind, our habits, and the cause of the roaming tendencies of the mind. In the light of samadhi, we come to realize that the mind is the center of all mysteries. When the mind flows peacefully inward, we are connected to the inner reality. That is the goal we are striving for. Therefore, nothing is more important than training our mind to become still and turning it inward. How long it takes us to reach samadhi is

not as important as attending our meditation practice. This realization enables us to overcome our frustration and instills us with courage and enthusiasm to do our practice.

The last obstacle, failure to retain samadhi, is even subtler. Through the practice of abhyasa, we cultivate a clear, calm, and tranquil mind, train it to flow inward, and reach samadhi. But due to deeply rooted habits, the mind runs back to its long-cherished sense objects. As soon as we realize the mind has slid from samadhi, we summon it back. Using the power of abhyasa and vairagya, we yoke it to samadhi. A little later, it slides back again. The desire to stay in samadhi, coupled with the inability to stay there for long, becomes the ground for frustration. This is the ninth obstacle.

The technical term for these nine obstacles is chitta vikshepa, which means "distractors of the mind." No matter how wise we are or how committed to our practice, if we are ill, drowning in inertia, or struggling with doubt, carelessness, and sloth, we have no way of preventing our mind from being victimized by its roaming tendencies. In the same way, sense cravings, a distorted understanding of reality, the inability to reach samadhi, and the inability to stay in samadhi make our mind spin. These potent obstacles have a strong negative effect on our body, breath, and mind. Vyasa calls them *yoga mala*, toxins in Yoga sadhana. If they are not removed, they lead to five conditions that are detrimental to yogic achievement. These five conditions, all of which arise from the nine obstacles, are the subject of the next sutra.

SUTRA 1:31

दुःखदौर्मनस्याङ्गमेजयत्वश्वासप्रश्वासा विक्षेपसहभुवः।।३१।।

duḥkhadaurmanasyāṅgamejayatvaśvāsapraśvāsā vikṣepasahabhuvaḥ ।। 31।।

Pain, mental agitation, unsteadiness or trembling of limbs, [abnormal or disturbed] trembling of limbs, [abnormal or disturbed] inhalation and exhalation all arise with the obstacles.

The nine obstacles described in the previous sutra rob the body of vitality, strength, stamina, and agility, and the mind of clarity and peace. The absence of these obstacles is the ground for joy. Their presence is the ground for pain, which leads to four other debilitating conditions: mental agitation, unsteadiness in the limbs, disturbed inhalation, and disturbed exhalation.

Vyasa describes the anatomy of pain in his commentary on this sutra. According to him, the nine obstacles bruise our body and mind. Our natural response is to attempt to stop these obstacles from hurting us, so a war begins between the obstacles and the defensive forces of our body and mind. The resulting strain is experienced as pain. In the attempt to defend themselves, our body and mind waste resources that could otherwise be invested to accomplish a higher purpose. We become short-tempered and agitated—quick to react and quick to take the offensive. Our positive attitude toward life vanishes and we latch on to negative thoughts.

Pain gives rise to mental agitation, which has a deeper source than we normally realize. Agitation arises from unfilled desires. We have the inherent desire to be happy.

Driven by this desire, we do everything in our power to drive away pain. When obstacles such as illness, inertia, and doubt thwart our desire for happiness, we are swept into a whirlpool of anger, dejection, fear, and grief. Caught in this whirlpool, the mind attempts to ride the two opposing currents of despondency and hope. Eventually, it becomes exhausted and collapses into its long chain of negativities, led by anger and fear. Anger and fear lead to unsteadiness.

Unsteadiness is a sure sign we no longer have confidence in our ability to help ourselves. Lack of self-confidence spreads in concentric circles. Trust in our friends and relatives, and in our teachers, doctors, colleagues, and counselors declines. Our faith in ourselves and in everyone and everything else becomes shaky. This unsteadiness is extremely subtle. It nests in the very core of our being and blankets our understanding of the innate wisdom and healing power of our body and mind. It gradually matures into full-fledged doubt about our mental and physical capacities. Uncertainty clouds our consciousness. Our heart, brain, nervous system, circulatory system, and immune system are unnerved and no longer communicate clearly with each other.

At this stage, unsteadiness emerges at the physical level as vatic forces begin to dominate the kaphic and pittic forces. The stability of our limbs and organs is compromised. The efficiency of our bodily functions and communication among the various organs are obstructed. A person specializing in pulse diagnosis can see the trembling of the organs reflected in the nervous system. Aspirants with a significant degree of mental discipline can observe the subtle shakiness of their limbs and organs during relaxation practices. During deep relaxation, an experienced yogi can not only feel the fluttering of his heart and the uneven, jarring movement of blood in his veins and arteries, but also can detect the trembling of his stressed cells and tissues. The longer this unsteadiness continues, the more vital energy (*prana shakti*) is wasted. This waste of vitality is reflected in disturbances in our inhalation and exhalation.

As discussed in sutra 1:13, prana is a direct manifestation of Divine Will. It awakens us from our beginningless slumber of death and brings us back to life. We are alive because we breathe. The more harmonious the breath, the more peaceful and organized the mind. Unsteadiness in the limbs and organs caused by a vast range of mental negativity—particularly anger and fear—has a direct effect on the breath: Our inhalation and exhalation become erratic and noisy. We hold our breath. The pause between the inhalation and the exhalation lengthens, and the movement of the diaphragm becomes restricted. According to the yogis, fear and anger are the major causes of chest breathing. Chest breathing limits the intake of oxygen and the output of used-up gases. Our lung capacity declines, the level of vital nutrients in our blood drops, and the level of toxins in the body rises. Our physical vitality and strength decline, as does our mental clarity and ability to think linearly.

The negative effects of unhealthy breathing go far beyond the injurious effects noticeable to a layman. Disturbed inhalation and exhalation disrupts fluid pressure in the body, throwing the lymphatic and circulatory systems out of balance. Dysfunctional breathing not only dulls and disorients our brain, but also clouds the intelligence of the

mitochondria, our cellular power plants. In other words, disturbed breathing puts a veil over the innate wisdom of our body and weakens our mental capacity.

Pain, mental agitation, shakiness of limbs and organs, and disturbances in our inhalation and exhalation solidify the connections among all nine impediments, magnifying their grip on body and mind. None of us are completely free from these obstacles—even the most advanced aspirants face at least one at some point. And each obstacle is, to some degree, accompanied by all these secondary conditions. Removing these obstacles and their accompanying conditions is as important as the methodical practice of abhyasa and vairagya. In sutra 1:29, Patanjali clearly states that obstacles are removed by the grace of Ishvara, which we attract through *japa*. To stress the importance of this point, in the next sutra Patanjali describes in greater detail how to embrace God's grace and attain freedom from obstacles blocking our quest.

SUTRA 1:32

तत्प्रतिषेधार्थमेकतत्त्वाभ्यासः ।।३२।।

tatpratiṣedhārthamekatattvābhyāsaḥ ।। 32।।

Meditation on one single reality is the way to overcome these obstacles.

God's grace is unconditional. It has no beginning and no end. Grace is an integral part of the Seeing Power of the Seer and is as perfect as Ishvara herself. Grace is the intrinsic power of Ishvara. Time, space, and the law of causation have no power to stop its flow—its healing, transforming, and illuminating effect on us is unfailing. Grace precedes our birth, accompanies us when we are born, and has been with us every moment since. Accompanied as we are by omnipresent divine grace, it makes no sense that we suffer from illness, inertia, doubt, the other six obstacles and their five companions. And yet we are all suffering. Why?

We are victims of our karmic possessions. We are attached to our habits and find pleasure in clinging to them. Our idea of fulfillment is molded by our likes and dislikes. These, in turn, are shaped by our internal makeup—the subtle impressions of our thoughts, speech, and actions stored deep in our mind. In other words, we are defined by our samskaras and vasanas.

Samskaras and vasanas, the building blocks of our personality, color our mind. They shape our perception of ourselves and the purpose of life. They mold our ideas of bondage and freedom. Our samskaras dictate what we like or dislike, what we embrace or discard. Our beliefs have no independent status— they are simply products of our samskaras. And our samskaras stand between us and divine grace.

Because divine grace sheds the light of true understanding regarding our samskaras and their effect on us, we work hard to block its flow. Losing our most valued possessions—our samskaras—is so frightening that we prefer to reject divine grace. This rejection is too subtle for most of us to notice, but the tendency to seek fulfillment in achieving objects compatible with our samskaras is obvious. This tendency causes us to

embrace familiar objects, regardless of how painful they are, rather than make an effort to renounce them.

Knowing that we love our samskaras more than we value God's grace, Patanjali again presents the infallible recipe for eliminating the conditions that block our quest for samadhi: abhyasa and vairagya (YS 1:12–1:16). As we have seen, abhyasa is an ardent effort to retain the peaceful flow of mind, free of roaming tendencies; vairagya is cultivating a clear mind, free of the coloring of vasanas. In sutras 1:12 through 1:14, Patanjali explains the general nature of the practice of abhyasa, making it clear that the first prerequisite is cultivating a clear, tranquil mind. In other words, abhyasa entails cultivating a state where the mind is peaceful and flowing toward the center of Consciousness. We become proficient in our practice when we do it with energy, enthusiasm, self-discipline, sense control, right understanding, and faith. Abhyasa becomes firm when done without interruption for an extended time, and with reverence.

But in these earlier sutras Patanjali does not describe the precise object of mental focus. Here, in sutra 1:32, which he has introduced in the context of removing obstacles to our attainment of samadhi, Patanjali prescribes a single reality—Ishvara—as the focal point. According to Vyasa, in this sutra, Patanjali is making a clear statement: the practice of abhyasa entails making an ardent effort to retain the mind's peaceful flow toward a single truth, Ishvara. Ishvara-oriented abhyasa is the ultimate remedy for removing all obstacles now and forever. He tells us that in order to nullify the nine obstacles and the five conditions they produce, we must direct our peacefully flowing mind toward Ishvara. That is what is meant here by abhyasa.

The purpose of this Ishvara-focused practice is to attenuate the obstacles, not to reach samadhi immediately. It is understood that we have surrounded ourselves with obstacles and are undertaking our practice with a distracted and stupefied mind. It is also understood that all our actions, including our practice, are powerfully affected by samskaras. Furthermore, our faith in the Inner Divinity is superficial and experimental, because the quality of our meditation on God is predictably poor. And yet we start our meditation with the hope of reaping a desirable fruit: the elimination of the nine obstacles and their five companions.

The success of Ishvara-focused meditation depends on our understanding. The more clearly we understand the nature of God and his unconditional intention to help and guide the souls who have fallen into the whirlpool of samsara, the easier and more straightforward our meditation becomes. God-focused meditation requires making contemplation on Ishvara, as described in sutras 1:23 through 1:29, part of our daily sadhana. Sutra 1:27 tells us, "*Pranava [om]* is the denoter of Ishvara." We must constantly remind ourselves that *om* is representative of the entire *mantra shakti*, and mantra shakti and Ishvara are one and the same. In other words, mantra embodies the essence of Ishvara.

Here, in sutra 1:32, Patanjali introduces mantra as an object for meditation. Mantra sadhana, according to Patanjali, is the shortcut that attenuates obstacles and eventually eliminates them altogether. It is one of the most dependable ways of freeing the mind

from its roaming tendencies and strengthening our conviction in the Inner Divinity, which is our soul's eternal companion.

The first and most important prerequisite in mantra sadhana is to meditate on a revealed mantra. A bogus mantra leads nowhere. A revealed mantra is neither a set of randomly selected sounds and phonemes nor a poetic composition. A revealed mantra is a living entity, just as we are. The only difference is that our body is composed of physical elements, whereas the body of a mantra is composed of the most subtle of the subtle elements, the purest form of sound. We are conceived by biological parents, while a mantra is conceived—revealed —to a sage in the deepest state of samadhi. We confine our soul; mantra is "soul" itself. Our body, senses, and mind obstruct the light of the soul; the mantric manifestation of the Inner Divinity spontaneously and incessantly emits inner light.

The second prerequisite in mantra sadhana is to meditate on an awakened mantra. With the passage of time, even a revealed mantra may become dormant. Sages in the tradition tend a mantra like parents tend their babies. Through their meditation, they keep the mantra vibrant and potent. When a mantra is transmitted by a living tradition, it exerts its power on the mind and heart of the meditator. There are many, many mantras, but a qualified teacher specializing in *mantra shastra* knows which mantra is most appropriate for which aspirant. Spiritual traditions differ on the ground of their specialization in a particular mantra or set of mantras, and no single tradition can claim to be the custodian of them all.

The third prerequisite in mantra sadhana is to practice in the proper sequence (*krama*). It is a mistake to assume that the first mantra we get from a guru is a "guru mantra" or "personal mantra," and further, that this mantra is sufficient to destroy all our obstacles, burn our samskaras, lift us into samadhi, and connect us to Ishvara evermore. Neither a single guru nor a single mantra holds the solution to all our problems. If it does, we have found the primordial master, Ishvara, and have been initiated into the most sublime mantra, which embodies the complete essence of his being. In a normal course of mantra sadhana, however, a skilled, informed teacher leads a student step-by-step through a series of mantric practices. The exact sequence of mantras and their corresponding disciplines is the core of mantra science. As Patanjali tells us in sutra 3:15, a change in sequence leads to a drastic change in result.

The fourth prerequisite is to start the practice with whatever faith and self-discipline we can muster, and then do the practice regularly. To see a noticeable effect, we must engage in a relatively intense practice for a short time (*purashcharana*). This allows us to have a firsthand experience of the intended result. Nothing is more convincing than our own direct experience. Even a small experience gives us faith in our practice and in the Divinity whose grace we are seeking. Commenting on this sutra, Vyasa says that the value of a practice verified by direct experience can never be challenged. Meditation on a single reality—Ishvara—through mantra sadhana is the means of gaining this direct experience. As Krishna proclaims in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Even a small experience protects us from the biggest fear."

The biggest fear is losing ourselves—death. Mantra meditation shows us beyond the shadow of a doubt that when the mind is absorbed in the mantra, we are more alive and peacefully vibrant than at all other times. This removes our doubt regarding whether or not there is a dimension of reality much deeper and more profound than our material existence. It fills us with confidence that we are not alone. When we are not tossed by the charms and temptations of the world, and the mind is not churned by its roaming tendencies, we are close to our eternal friend—Ishvara—who makes himself available to us at the sensory level in mantric form. This experience leads us to a previously unknown dimension of life. It becomes our personal experience—private wealth that cannot be taken away.

As we continue our practice of mantra meditation, this experience is repeated. It becomes more concentrated each time, strengthening our confidence in Ishvara's guiding and nurturing grace. Fear arising from the mundane level of reality loses its grip. We know who we are and what our relationship is both with the world and with our core being. We do not need an external source to confirm whether or not the soul exists; whether the mind is a continuous flow of separate cognitions or truly an indivisible entity; and whether our current life is a continuation of our past, or we just happened to pop out of nothingness.

It is deeply reassuring to realize that we have a vibrant mind that can be trained to serve the higher purpose of our soul. The mind is our best friend. It is the direct extension of Prakriti, who, in compliance with the benevolent will of Ishvara, bestowed it on us. Once the mantra and the mind join hands, accomplishing life's purpose is no longer a distant goal.

The biggest questions now become: How to protect our mind and the mantra? How to nurture their relationship? How to shield the mind from the hidden foes deep within that gnaw at the foundation of our spiritual aspirations? In response to these pressing questions, Patanjali introduces the next sutra.

SUTRA 1:33

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षाणां सुखदुःखपुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां भावनातश्चित्तप्रसादनम् ।।३३।।
maitrīkaruṇāmuditopekṣāṇāṁ sukhaduḥkhapuṇyāpuṇya-viṣayāṇāṁ
bhāvanātaścittaprasādanam ।। 33।।

Transparency of mind comes by embracing an attitude of friendliness, compassion, happiness, and non-judgment toward those who are happy, miserable, virtuous, and non-virtuous.

Animosity, cruelty, jealousy, and self-righteousness are the greatest mental contaminants. The antidotes are friendliness, compassion, happiness, and non-judgment. The importance of making these antidotes part of our daily practice, and thus keeping our mind clear and transparent, is the subject of this sutra.

Animosity originates from attachment. Attachment to our inner belongings— our habits, samskaras, and vasanas—is far stronger than attachment to any material object or

achievement. The most precious of all our inner belongings is the desire to be bigger, richer, more powerful, more respected, and more influential than other people. We want the world to comply with our whims—we want to see it revolving around us. The more we see this desire being fulfilled, the happier we are. We measure our success in the light of this desire, and we cannot easily tolerate the prospect of someone being more successful than we are.

In yogic literature, this desire is called *kama*. Anger arises when a desire is not fulfilled. Anger disorients our mind. Our thinking becomes lopsided. We no longer see ourselves in the context of the larger world; rather, we see the world in the context of our own little self and its desire for dominance. We become confused. Confusion leads to loss of memory. Our linear thinking becomes impaired and our comprehension of cause and effect is dulled. Our power of discrimination is compromised. Lack of discrimination—even partially damaged discrimination—leads to despair. Yet our desire for success remains as fresh as ever. In desperation, we look outside ourselves for the cause of our failure. When people who are more successful come into view, our impaired power of discrimination and confused mind see them as the cause of our failure. This is painful, and the pain is intensified by our inability to do anything about it. As described in sutra 1:31, pain causes mental agitation (*daurmanasya*), which manifests in the form of animosity.

A mind contaminated by animosity perceives successful people as enemies. Now actively seeking fulfillment of our desire is no longer a priority— eliminating our enemy becomes the priority. We are on the offensive in our thoughts, speech, and actions. The peaceful condition of our mind is destroyed, replaced by inner turmoil. If we do not find a timely cure for this condition, our anger intensifies. Animosity throws our mind into such turmoil that it cannot think properly. An agitated mind is more interested in capturing the enemy than in meditating on a mantra—it has no inclination to reflect on Ishvara and her mantric manifestation. The mind's *sattvic* nature—its transparency, clarity, and illumination—is being consumed by anger and animosity. It becomes progressively darker, duller, and less competent to meditate and reflect on truth.

To help us free our mind to reclaim its transparent and illuminating power, Patanjali offers an antidote to the principle of animosity: cultivate an internal environment of friendship. This does not mean that we should run after successful people and ingratiate ourselves, but that we cultivate a positive attitude toward them—an attitude grounded in right understanding.

There are three levels of cultivating an internal atmosphere of friendship: nurturing a friendly attitude toward those who are successful and happy; transforming the element of animosity into friendship; and practicing the yogic technique of combining concentration, meditation, and samadhi (samyama) on the principle of friendship. In this sutra, Patanjali is introducing the practice of friendship at the first level. The two other levels are described in sutras 2:33 and 3:23.

Nurturing a friendly attitude toward those who are successful and happy cleanses the mind of the fundamental toxin of animosity. This practice also frees the mind from its

dark, heavy properties, and makes it clear and transparent so it can attend its chosen focal point without distraction.

Cultivating a general attitude of friendship is a contemplative process. We remind ourselves that success depends on hard work and the act of divine providence. It is no accident that particular individuals are healthy, happy, peaceful, and prosperous. A long chain of good deeds led them to a positive result—we have no idea what positive karmas have intersected to lead specific individuals to a point where they seem to be successful. It is good if we can learn something from their success, but there is no need to examine their follies. For example, if we have joined an anti-corruption movement, there is no need to cultivate animosity toward politicians who have built their fortune through corrupt means. Our knowledge of their corruption must not be allowed to contaminate our mind with hatred, for by hating them we damage our own mind. Hatred, anger, and animosity fill our mind with negativity. We cannot create a positive result with a negative mind. We are the first and foremost recipients of our own negativity. And negativity takes our mind away from the single reality —Ishvara—on which we are trying to meditate.

As part of this contemplative practice, when we find ourselves intensely critical of a particular successful person, it is important to ask ourselves if this is because the part of us that craves power, prestige, and glamour is trying to demolish the competitor that we see in that successful person. Dismantling our justification for hating others and seeing our competitors in a positive light of friendship protects our mind from an inner enemy—the deeply rooted principle of animosity.

The second potent mental contaminant is cruelty. Cruelty originates from the desire to dominate those who are poor, miserable, and helpless. Cruelty and fear are part of our primitive nature. Cruelty makes us find violence thrilling, and fear channels our cruelty toward those who pose no threat to us. Exploiting the poor and helpless is the deeply rooted habit of the rich and powerful. Even when we are not particularly rich or powerful, the subhuman in us searches for those who are poorer and more helpless than we are and prompts us to exploit their helpless condition. Oppressive social practices are rooted in this ego-driven, self-centered desire. For example, this desire gave rise to the caste system in India.

Failure to fulfill our desire to dominate those weaker than we are breeds cruelty. Cruelty breeds violence. Violence-driven thoughts damage more than our concentration—they injure the loving, kind, and considerate part of our nature. If not checked, these thoughts not only kill the meditator in us, they also kill our spirit of humanity. That is an enormous loss. To prevent this loss, Patanjali advises that we practice compassion toward those who are suffering.

Practicing compassion is more subtle and potent than practicing friendship and it requires greater understanding and skill. For example, practicing compassion involves more than serving the poor and the sick, more than opposing war or campaigning against human trafficking. The practice of compassion begins with discovering and acknowledging the injured person in us.

The first step is to recognize where our own thoughts and feelings have been hurt. We must explore the scars in our own minds and hearts and heal our own emotional injuries—a process Patanjali describes in greater detail in sutra 1:36. The pain caused by emotional injuries has a powerful effect on our personality. It distorts our worldview and forces us to be hypervigilant. Suspicion becomes imbedded in our character. We are constantly on the offensive, quick to hurt others, slow to forgive, and insensitive to the injuries and pain of others. We are drawn to painful thoughts and memories.

Our inability to bear our painful thoughts and memories makes us angry with ourselves. As a coping strategy, we pour out our anger on those who are weak and helpless. This behavior is completely unconscious. We are unaware that the irritable and insensitive part of our personality has taken over. If left unchecked, this behavior becomes a breeding ground for violence and cruelty. That is why the practice of compassion begins with healing our own internal injuries. Self-destructive behavior and compassion do not go together. To practice compassion, we must first heal ourselves and rise above the turbulence caused by our own internal pain.

A mind free of painful tendencies is naturally drawn to a peaceful state. Happiness is the property of a peaceful mind. A peaceful, happy mind sees things clearly. It has the ability to discern good from bad, right from wrong, real from unreal. It has the ability to see and relate to others' pain while remaining unaffected. This is when the practice of compassion in its truest sense begins. Compassion is always accompanied by wisdom. It is not a random response to our own emotional turmoil, stirred up by seeing the suffering of others. Compassion has no room for pity or lamentation. We know our compassion is accompanied by wisdom when we neither grieve for those who are miserable nor are angry with those who caused their misery.

The loftiest and most effective way to practice compassion is to help, serve, and love others the way Ishvara helps, serves, and loves us. Ishvara's intention is pure. It is triggered by her essential compassion. She is not affected by the misery of the souls who have fallen in the cycle of birth and death nor is she touched by aversion to the conditions that led them into such misery. Ishvara always stands on the neutral ground of wisdom, yet her compassion is fully active. Thus, according to Patanjali, an active engagement in loving, caring, and serving those who are suffering, without judging anyone, is practicing compassion.

The third mental contaminant is jealousy. Jealousy, like cruelty, springs from desire. Here, jealousy is discussed in the context of our spiritual quest, and in this context, the source of jealousy is the desire for spiritual recognition. Therefore, Patanjali recommends that we cultivate an attitude of happiness in relation to those known for their spiritual virtues.

Finding joy in learning about someone's spiritual achievements is both subtle and tricky. Love for God, dispassion toward worldly objects, selfless service, and non-possessiveness are universally accepted indicators of spiritual virtue. We are told people blessed with these virtues are great souls. They are close to God. There is a sense of elation in being associated with them. We want to be like them. They are our guides and

we should respect them. But in an attempt to respect them and benefit from their spiritual power and wisdom, we put them on a pedestal and build high hopes around them. And because we want to be recognized for our own spiritual virtues, it is only natural to be jealous of them and to feel happy when the recognition they have achieved is tarnished for some reason. This potent subtle contamination destroys the mind's ability to flow peacefully inward.

The world will always have both genuine and fake spiritual adepts and seekers, and both will gain recognition. Truth and the appearance of truth will be continually tested, challenged, condemned, and welcomed. Our job is to look into our own mind, examine its powerful tendencies, and work hard to make it crystal clear. We must remember it is self-examination, not examination of others, which lays the foundation for our spiritual quest. Cultivating a general attitude of respectful happiness toward virtuous souls, without ferreting out the details of their personal lives, is one of the surest ways to benefit from what is good in them while remaining unaffected by what may not be so good.

The fourth contaminant that clouds the mind is self-righteousness. The antidote is practicing an attitude of non-judgment toward those classified as "sinners." The concept of vice is more deeply ingrained in us than the concept of virtue. The concepts of sin and hell occupy more room in religious texts than the theories and practices that bring a positive change here and hereafter. Every religion has its own definition of sin, and even though these definitions are often childish, people take them seriously. Further, the scope of sin and sinful acts is so broad that few people escape being stamped as a sinner by someone. We tend to associate with those whose beliefs and values are similar to ours. The desire to be recognized as a "good" person within our own group causes us to discover and highlight "bad" attributes in others. The search for sin and sinners becomes our primary focus, and the quest to know the truth is forgotten. If this tendency is not checked, our inner world grows steadily darker, and we eventually lose our capacity to comprehend true spiritual values.

As a society we have become addicted to condemning others on the ground of piety-driven differences. It is obvious that this has caused an enormous amount of pain, but what is not so obvious is the powerful negative effect this attitude has on our personal growth. As part of nature's design, we are more adept at seeing things outside us than inside us. This makes it much easier to see a sinner outside us than to see the very element of sin within ourselves. We waste our time criticizing others. Our priority becomes correcting those we deem to be on the wrong path rather than discovering our own source of peace and happiness. As a result, we begin walking backward. Patanjali tells us that to overcome this problem we must stop judging those who, in the light of our personal beliefs, are sinful.

The term for cultivating a non-judging attitude is *upeksha*. Although it is frequently translated as "indifference," this is not what Patanjali means. *Upeksha* is a composite of *upa* (near, closely) and *iksha* (to see), and means "to see closely" or "to see in the proper context." For example, theft and violence are generally regarded as sinful. The more poverty and illiteracy in a community, the more theft and violence there is likely to be. This does not mean the poor and illiterate are sinful. Practicing upeksha in relation to

poor, illiterate people caught in the painful cycle of theft and violence means understanding them in their context. This enables us to see them as downtrodden fellow beings and to develop love and genuine compassion for them.

The purpose of cultivating the four positive attitudes highlighted in this sutra is to instill higher virtues in our mind, which Vyasa calls shukla dharma. These virtues allow our mind to reclaim its natural, pristine, joyful state. A joyous mind has all the ingredients to become one-pointed and flow peacefully toward the center of Consciousness.

Knowing how mysterious the mind is, how powerful our habits are, and how difficult it is to change our attitudes, in the next sutra Patanjali offers another option for making the mind one-pointed and peacefully flowing toward a state of samadhi: a special practice of pranayama.