

## Pandit Rajmani Tigunait's Commentary on Sutra 1-51 from *The Secret of the Yoga Sutra*

### SUTRA 1:51

तस्यापि निरोधे सर्वनिरोधान्निर्बीजः समाधिः ॥५१॥

tasyāpi nirodhe sarvanirodhānnirbījaḥ samādhiḥ ॥ 51॥

**Upon cancellation of even that, everything else is cancelled. This is *nirbija samadhi*.**

As we have seen in the preceding sutra, the light of intuitive wisdom lifts the veil of ignorance. Our identification with worldly objects and accomplishments disappears. We do not grieve over the past or worry about the future, but live fearlessly and confidently in the present. The mind is luminous and joyful. We meditate seated in the midst of joy and luminosity. The mind spontaneously radiates joyful and luminous energy, which destroys all dark and painful tendencies. We see that the world is beautiful and life is a gift. We are filled with a sense of gratitude for what we have and enthusiasm to achieve what we need for true fulfillment and ultimate freedom.

This transformation creates an internal environment that has no room for obstacles to our spiritual quest. Eventually our dark and painful tendencies (*klišta vritti*) are destroyed, along with their subtle causes. The mind regains its pristine nature. Metaphorically, it stands still next to Pure Consciousness (Purusha). In this state, the mind is naturally motivated to flow inward toward the center of Consciousness; it flows outward only when propelled by Divine Will. When it interacts with the objective world, it is untouched by what it touches. Actions performed by this kind of mind do not engender *samskaras*. What is more, the mind is now free from even meditative *samskaras*. *Samskaras* are like seeds germinating in the mind. They cause the mind to think, imagine, desire, and crave. Spiritually oriented *samskaras* neutralize our worldly *samskaras* and thereby induce a significant degree of freedom. From a higher perspective, however, they are a source of a subtle but potent form of spiritual bondage. Freedom from the spiritually oriented *samskaras* engendered by meditation itself comes from *vairagya*—cultivating a mind free from the coloring of potent *samskaras* (*vasanas*). As Vyasa explains in his commentary on sutra 1:40, the practice of process-driven meditation (*dhyana-abhyasa*) can purify the mind and lead it all the way to the outer frontier of lower *samadhi*. Thereafter, the journey is dependent on the highest level of *vairagya* (*para vairagya*) (YS 1:16). This level of *vairagya* prepares the ground for the grace of the Supreme Being (*Ishvara*) to lift our consciousness to a realm unreachable through self-effort. Self-effort by definition means we are cognizant of our action (in this case, meditation). Meditation accompanied by self-effort creates *samskaras*, and *samskaras* bind us to lower *samadhi*. When we trustfully surrender to the guiding light of *prajna*, which is the light of higher Divinity itself, we are spontaneously transported to seedless (*nirbija*) *samadhi*. This is the highest goal of Yoga.

The difference between seedless samadhi and prajna is extremely subtle. The field of prajna lies between the furthest frontier of lower samadhi and seedless samadhi. This field is not static but vibrant, continually assuming an ever-more-radiant form (*nava-navonmeshashalini*). As our meditation deepens, our memory becomes more refined, pure, and transparent. This purity and transparency reveal the inner joy buried deep within us. As we have seen, joy (*vishoka*) and inner luminosity (*vyotishmati*) go hand in hand. With practice, *vishoka* and *vyotishmati* expand all the way to the realm beyond time, space, and the law of cause and effect. Scriptures call this expanded field of *vishoka* and *vyotishmati* the field of intuition. At the dawn of this lofty level of prajna, the veil of *samskaras* no longer hides the *sattvic* qualities of the mind. The *samskaras* that once agitated it from inside are gone, and the mind is as transparent as a flawless crystal.

In this state of wisdom, both the dark and heavy qualities (*tamas*) and the qualities that agitate the mind (*rajas*) are nullified. The entire mind is dominated by illuminating qualities (*sattva*). In this state of *buddhi sattva*, the mind is so pure and well illumined that it sees itself as well as the light illuminating it. At this stage, a twofold realization dawns: the mind has been falsely identifying itself with its *samskaras*, and it has been denying its primordial association with Purusha. This realization empowers the mind to simultaneously disassociate itself from its *samskaras* and close the gap between itself and Pure Consciousness. The mind is infused with the highest degree of the power of discernment (*prakhyashilam*). It is laden with true knowledge.

The absolute disassociation from all *samskaras* enables the mind to see Pure Consciousness without distortion. In the truest sense, however, this is not a direct realization. Rather it consists of the cognition of the light of Pure Consciousness reflecting on the mind—the mind is cognizant of itself as an agent of cognition. And yet, the mind is so pure and transparent that it experiences itself as if it is the light of Pure Consciousness.

In this experience, the mind and Pure Consciousness are so well blended that there is no awareness of a differentiation between them. The mind appears to be Pure Consciousness and Pure Consciousness appears to be the mind (*chetana-achetana-svarupa-apannam*). Even though the mind is an object of cognition, it no longer appears to be an object (*vishayatmakam api avishayatmakam iva*). In this state of prajna, the wall between duality and non-duality and between subject and object has disappeared. But the mind has not yet dissolved into its primordial causal domain—Prakriti. It still exists as a cognizant entity. The experience of joy arising from this realization is still mediated by the mind—it is still the mind's personal, private experience. As soon as we rise above this level of experience, we land in the domain of seedless (*nirbija*) samadhi.

Nirbija samadhi is neither a part nor a function of mental cognition. It is a realization of Consciousness by Consciousness itself. Nirbija samadhi is not an experience of a process but the experience of Pure Being. It is the Seeing Power of Consciousness experiencing itself as the Seer. Just before reaching nirbija samadhi, the mind was able to experience Consciousness reflecting in it. It was able to see Purusha as neither completely similar to itself nor completely dissimilar from itself (Vyasa on sutra 2:20). Vyasa calls this experience *jnana vritti*, mental cognition with knowledge of Purusha as an object. It is a

supremely refined mental cognition, but it is still cognition. We enter nirbija samadhi only when we go beyond this level of cognition.

Understanding how to go beyond this supremely refined state of prajna and enter nirbija samadhi requires an experiential analysis of this field. We have to discover how mental absorption in the supremely refined cognition (*jnana vritti samapatti*) evolves into absorption in Pure Consciousness (*purusha samapatti*).

Elaborating on the concept of prajna, Patanjali and Vyasa introduce two terms: *madhumati bhumi* and *dharma megha samadhi*. From the standpoint of Yoga sadhana, these terms are highly significant. Both describe the experiential nature of the intuitive field that lies between the outer frontier of lower samadhi and nirbija samadhi.

*Madhumati* means “consisting of (*mati*) honey (*madhu*)” and *bhumi* means “ground or state.” Thus, *madhumati bhumi* is the state of samadhi filled with a unique sweetness. The theory and practice describing how to reach this state is known as *madhu vidya*, the science of honey. According to the Sri Vidya tradition of the sages, sutra 1:36 embodies this science, which is elaborated on in a wealth of Tantric, Vedic, and Puranic texts. The masters in our tradition consider *madhu vidya* the essence of the *Yoga Sutra*, in general, and of “Samadhi Pada,” in particular. The *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali, the *Kalpa Sutra* of Parashurama, and the *Saundaryalahari* of Shankaracharya are considered the primary texts on this subject.

Until we taste the sweetness of sorrowless joy and receive guidance and protection from our innate luminosity, the mind chases one object after another. The practices described in sutras 1:33 through 1:36 enable us to taste our intrinsic vishoka. The longer we stay with this experience, the more refined our meditation becomes. Eventually, the vast field of prajna rises on the horizon of our consciousness. At the peak of this experience, we become absorbed in its intrinsic sweetness, *madhumati bhumi* (YS 3:51). In his commentary, Vyasa describes the range of this experience in four stages: *prathama-kalpika*, *madhubhumika*, *prajna-jyoti*, and *atikranta-bhavaniya*.

In the first stage of *madhumati bhumi*, we glimpse our inner luminosity, which is invariably accompanied by sorrowless joy. As it attempts to follow the stream of vishoka and *vyotishmati*, the mind begins to flow peacefully inward. The desire to taste this newborn joy and bask in inner luminosity is so strong that the mind no longer has any interest in paying attention to its disturbing and distracting thoughts and other habitual tendencies, and so this peaceful inward journey is effortless.

With practice, the mingled stream of *vyotishmati* and vishoka intensifies, enabling us to experience the next level of sweetness. At this second stage, luminous awareness expands and joy deepens. The mind becomes infused with the true nature of the objects in view. We comprehend our strengths and weaknesses. We know the subtle causes of the roaming tendencies of our mind and are happy we know them. We know the power of *vyotishmati* and are confident that under its guidance and protection we will eventually eliminate the *samskaras* that cause our mind to be disturbed, dense, dull, and distracted.

As we continue our practice, we reach the third stage. Here the experience of joy and inner luminosity is so intense that we can identify it vividly in the space surrounding our

forehead. We can also transport this vivid experience to any part of our body. We can feel its presence in the deeper niches of our physical and energetic body—a feeling previously beyond the domain of our conscious awareness. Accompanied by vishoka and jyotishmati, we can move from our frontal lobe to the region of the hypothalamus and the limbic system, for example, and attain greater mastery over the parasympathetic nervous system. We can transport the experience of joy and luminosity from the ajna chakra to our heart center and discover the loving, kind, selfless, forgiving, and compassionate aspect of ourselves. This level of vishoka and jyotishmati enables us to conquer and crush all our inner enemies (*bhutendriyajayi*). Here, in this third stage of madhumati bhumi, we find ourselves fully protected from our past, present, and future karmas. We are confident that we have all the tools and means to find true fulfillment and ultimate freedom.

In the fourth and final stage, the mind is utterly absorbed in the sorrowless joy and inner light of the intuitive field. It is no longer seeing Pure Consciousness through a flawless lens; rather, Consciousness has pulled the mind into its fold. Experience as a process has come to an end. The Seeing Power of Consciousness alone is in the view of Consciousness. As scriptures belonging to the tantric tradition put it, the mind is transformed into Pure Consciousness. At this stage, nirbija samadhi dawns spontaneously.

Another term Patanjali and Vyasa use for the field of prajna is *dharma megha samadhi*, samadhi made of the cloud of virtues. As is clear from the previous discussion, in the transitional state between lower and higher samadhi, the mind is no longer smeared by subtle karmic impressions but is like a flawless crystal. It functions under the guidance, nurturance, and protection of Inner Divinity. At this stage in our spiritual evolution, Divine Will alone motivates our thought, speech, and action. We are grounded in, and surrounded by, inner peace. Meditation has become as effortless as breathing.

When we are not meditating, our thoughts, speech, and actions are still propelled by Divine Will, for it has taken charge of our destiny. Fear of failure and doubt about success have vanished. We perform our actions in compliance with Divine Will, not under compulsion from outside forces. Action and inaction bear equal weight, for we know they are shaped and implemented by Divine Will. We no longer identify ourselves as a doer. We know intuitively what we must acquire and what we must renounce, and act in the light of that insight.

Neither our involvement in the world nor our renunciation of it creates the slightest karmic impression. All our worldly and spiritual endeavors are directed toward serving Divinity and the creation conceived by her.

Both our worldly activities and our spiritual practices create spiritually illuminating samskaras, which by their intrinsic virtue arrest and eventually eliminate all negative karmic impressions. These illuminating samskaras are described as the cloud of virtues (*dharma megha*). The joy and luminosity raining from it manifests in an experience known as *dharma megha samadhi*. In this state, only sattvic samskaras remain—the mind is flawlessly transparent.

The advent of dharma megha samadhi brings freedom from the fivefold affliction—ignorance, distorted self-identity, attachment, aversion, and fear of death—as well as from

karmas and the impressions created by them (YS 4:30). With the dissolution of the samskaras, the mind operating under their sway also dissolves, replaced by a mind filled with the cloud of virtues. This newborn mind is not veiled in any way—its power of comprehension is unlimited. It is as expansive as Pure Consciousness (*Purusha*) itself. Its power of cognition is larger than any objects of its cognition (YS 4:31). This newborn mind no longer contacts the objects of its cognition, for they are already within its fold—it knows the objective world without making an effort to know it. Vyasa uses an analogy to describe the power and function of this extraordinary mind: “A blind man pierced the pearl, he without fingers threaded it, the neckless wore it, and the tongueless praised it.”

The use of *dharma megha* to designate this transitional state is highly significant. This state is called *dharma megha* for, in layman’s terms, it is filled with the cloud (*megha*) of virtue (*dharma*). This term conveys the idea that only the samskaras of our good karmas now remain. But *dharma megha* has another more compelling dimension. In this state, Prakriti unveils her limitless potentials (*dharma*) and her intrinsic divinity (*aishvarya*), and with this comes the realization that we are not—and have never been—alone. In this state, the thinnest of all the veils of ignorance is lifted. We begin to partake of the infinite knowledge (*jnana*) and vairagya of the Absolute Divine Being. Prakriti unveils her limitless secrets, including the complex structure of the human body and the intricacies of the mind. It was in this state, for example, that yogis learned the subtle anatomy of the human body without dissecting cadavers and discovered the subtle properties of herbs without analyzing their chemical components. They intuited subtle planes of existence far beyond the universe of matter and energy. Simply put, in *dharma megha samadhi*, the limitation imposed by darkness (*tamas*) is removed, allowing the light of knowledge (*jnana sattva*) to shine all the way to infinity. In this state, even the slightest movement of the force behind the process of manifestation (*rajas*) is enough to bring forward the vast wealth of nature incomprehensible to our senses and ordinary mind. This is how the sages received mantric revelation—they “saw” the extraordinary power of sounds and words.

We find our life’s purpose in *dharma megha samadhi*. We are fulfilled. We are filled with deep gratitude for we have come to realize that the door to Mother Nature’s infinite treasury has always been open. She gave us a pristine and perfectly illuminating mind to recognize this immense treasure. Now we no longer see our mind and its functions as a source of bondage, but recognize them as the greatest gift. And we no longer see the world as a source of bondage, either. The concept of attaining liberation from the cycle of birth and death becomes meaningless. At the peak of the experience of *dharma megha samadhi*, we spontaneously slip into seedless *samadhi*, for even the subtlest cause—the desire to live as an isolated being—has dissolved. At this stage, we perceive Prakriti as intelligent, vibrant, beautiful, and perennially engaged in providing everything we need for our true fulfillment (*bhoga*) and ultimate freedom (*apavarga*). She is the Divine Mother, Chiti Shakti, the Power of Pure Consciousness (YS 4:34). In *nirbija samadhi*, we are immersed in the experience of being held in her immutable essential being (*svarupa-pratishtha*).

Monasticism has been a dominant force in many religions for millennia. It is particularly esteemed by those with roots in the East, the homeland of Yoga and the Yoga



*Sutra*. In these religions, piety has become associated with refraining from pleasure derived from the senses, and the spiritual quest with renouncing worldly possessions. Worldly life is regarded as a source of sorrow. The soul is said to have an urgent need to extricate itself from this world, never to be born again. This religious conditioning has led some commentators and scholars writing on the *Yoga Sutra* to adopt the view that nirbija samadhi is the highest objective of Yoga because this state of samadhi pushes us out of this world once and for all. According to the sages of our tradition, however, this view is incorrect and highly misleading. In the state of seedless samadhi, we are as luminous, free, and fulfilled as the Divinity in which we are fully immersed.

In nirbija samadhi, we attain complete freedom from the binding forces of our ordinary mind. With the dissolution of our samskaras, when our ordinary mind is also dissolved, we acquire a pristine, extraordinary mind, unsmudged by even the slightest trace of I-am-ness. It is not a mind in the ordinary sense, but the creative light of Purusha—Pure Consciousness. This creative light becomes our locus. After reaching this state, there is no possibility of helplessly falling back into the worldly cycle. We become “unfalling” (*achyuta*), a term used for such high-caliber masters as Krishna and Parashurama. They have no desire to return to this world, but they have no aversion to it, either. The will of the Divine manifests in their pristine, extraordinary mind as desire (*kama*) and they see the world through the eyes of this desire. Because this level of desire is self-luminous and ever-revealing (*deva*), it is known as Kamadeva. It is the Seeing Power of the Seer, our pure, pristine core being, our guru and guide. For this reason, Kamadeva is Vidyeshvara, the Lord of the wisdom of Sri Vidya, which is the core of sadhana in our tradition.

In sutra 3:26, Vyasa describes the extraordinary existence of these pure beings. He says that, having attained the highest yogic accomplishment, some continue to enjoy lower levels of samadhi. Their true abode is an extraordinary level of consciousness (*loka*). For example, *satya-loka* and *tushita-loka* are the abodes of Krishna and Buddha, respectively. These lofty planes of awareness are untouched by even the subtlest trace of want or need. Masters like Krishna and Buddha descend from these planes without losing sight of their pure essence, walk among us in the flesh, then return to their true abode. These masters are immortal; they live neither inside nor outside, neither below nor above, but rather at the center of the universe (*trailokya-madhye*) (Vyasa on sutra 3:26). Attaining this level of immortality and experiencing everlasting fulfillment and freedom is the ultimate goal of Yoga—a goal we are all equipped to achieve.