

## **The culmination of sadhana: Samadhi**

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Abstract: Samadhi is the last step in the eightfold path of Yoga. The paper is divided into three parts. The first part is a brief description of the first seven steps that lead to Samadhi. As one progresses in Samadhi various powers are obtained. The second half deals with the various powers and the sadhaks approach towards it. The last and the important part of the paper describes the various stages of Samadhi, the liberation of the soul and the merging of the individual consciousness into universal consciousness.

Key Words:

Dharana: focussing attention on a small space

Dhyan: concentration

Samadhi: meditation

Sadhak: spiritual aspirant

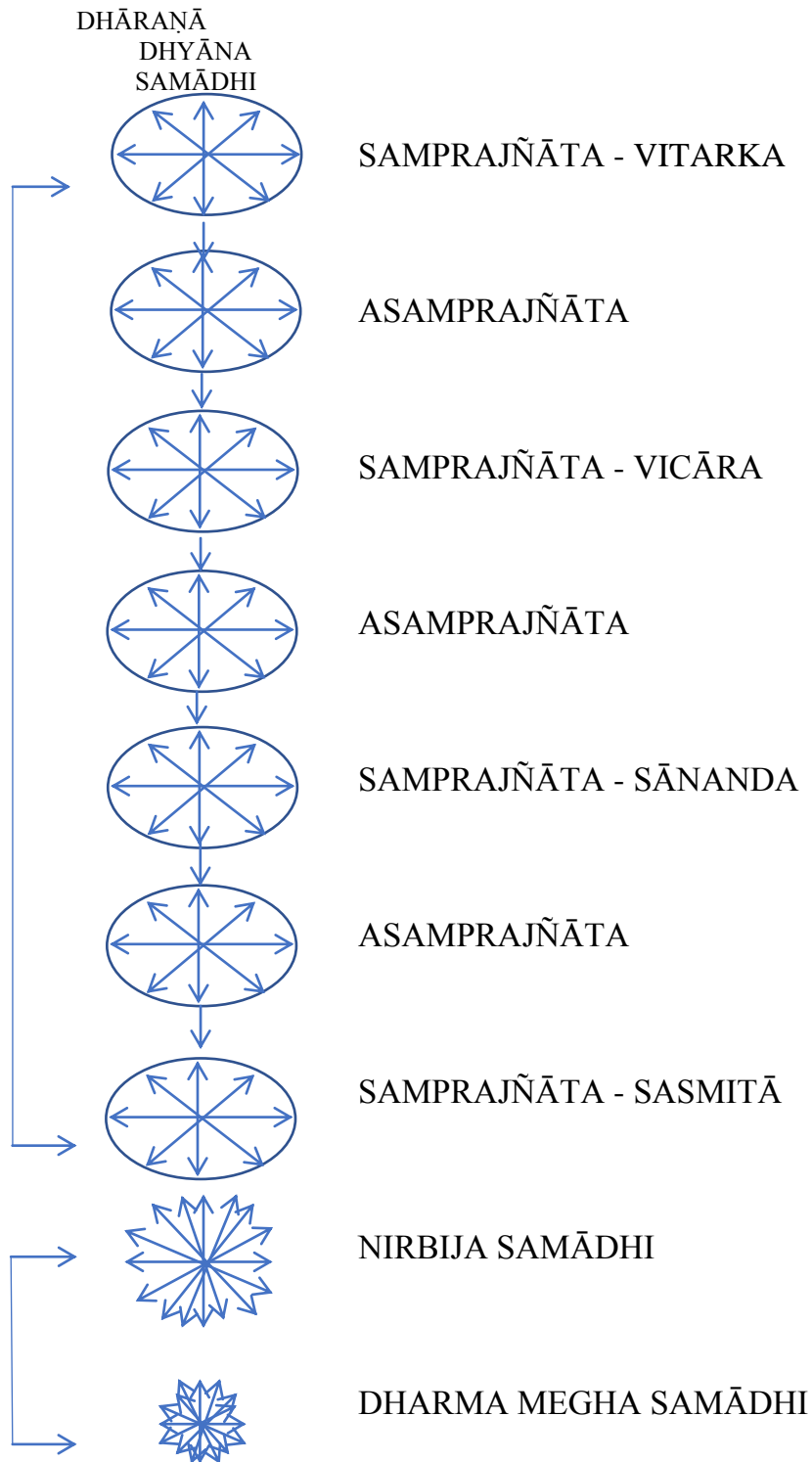
Prakriti: primordial nature

Purusha: individual consciousness

One aspect that stands out in reading the texts of yoga is that Dharana-Dhyana and Samadhi are but higher levels of one single process: Focus. It starts with dharana where the purpose is to bring the mind at one place or at one point. The entire attention and

energy of the mind is brought to a minimal space. The mind is kept on one object progressively moving from gross to subtle ones. For example one begins with the visualization of the tree and proceeds to the flower. The process continues by focussing on the small parts of the flower with great vividness and detail. The next step is dhyana. The entire focus is on retention. The attention span is slowly but surely increased from a few moments to a few minutes. Dhyana is commonly referred as concentration. Lord Mahavira says that if one can keep concentrate on a given object for 48 minutes then one achieves enlightenment. The final stage is that of Samadhi. The object that is being concentrated upon vanishes so does the concentrator. From here begins the final ascent which are referred as various stages of Samadhi which we shall discuss in this paper. Swami Vivekananda compares the mind-stuff or the citta as a lake which constantly produces multiple ripples both from within and without. The effort in yoga is to produce one huge wave at the expense of the rest. As this one huge wave begins to form the others slowly recede and are created with lesser frequency and strength. This increase of one wave and the complete cessation of all other waves is the journey from dharana to dhyana and Samadhi technically called Samyama. The entire topic of Samadhi deals with the type of this one wave and how to bring about a cessation of this single wave so that the entire citta (lake) is still and the light of the Purusha shines forth in it's true glory. It can also mean the annihilation of the citta or its return to prakriti so that the Purusha (individual consciousness) merges with the Isvara (Universal consciousness).

A very brief overview of Astanga marg will facilitate our entry into the topic of Samadhi with ease. Yama and Niyama lay down the ethical foundations and discipline for the aspirant. Asana prepares the body and Pranayama brings about the restraint to the senses, and prepares the mind for concentration. Pratyahara shuts out the outer world. Dharana helps focus the mind in a restricted area in space which is gradually narrowed down in Dhyana. When the mind is completely absorbed in one gross object with its name and form the mind thus reaches the savitarka state of Samadhi. The various stages of Samadhi are represented in diagram form below.



*Tatra śabdārtha-jñāna-vikalpaiḥ saṅ-kīrṇā savitarkā<sup>1</sup>.*

*Sutra I - 42* explains it in more detail. First there is a sound either external or internal. It is absolutely essential without which the process will not begin. This sound will produce a vibration of the sense organs and nerve currents will carry the meaning. After that there comes a wave in the Citta which is knowledge. But for us the mixture of all these three is called knowledge. Also the duality of subject and object of knowledge is maintained. Such knowledge of gross objects (bhutas) is called savitarka Samadhi. Vitarka means question savitarka is questioning the elements as it were that they may give their truths and their powers to the one who meditates upon them. Swami Vivekananda says that Patanjali immediately warns us against these powers. There is no liberation in getting powers. It is a worldly search for enjoyments and there is no enjoyment. In Swami Vivekananda words "This is the old, old lesson which man finds so hard to learn when he does learn it, he gets out of it and becomes free."<sup>2</sup> Savitarka is the first and the lowest state of Samadhi. The mind has become steady yet it is still in the range of ordinary consciousness and has not yet become one with the heart of the object that it meditates on.

Then comes the Nirvitarka stage. It means without question. Here the object of meditation is taken out of time and space and one thinks of them as they are. This means the mind by its steadiness and intensity has divested the object of all association such as name, concept etc. and has become one with the object. The object in this state does not appear as an object of consciousness. There is no such notion here as 'I know this' because the mind has become one with the object, the notions of subjects and object drop off and the result is one steady transformation of the mind as the object of its contemplation. When Nirvitarka samadhi is practiced the memory the receptacle of all impressions becomes purified and we are clearly able to distinguish the word, the vibration and the knowledge separately. Nirvitarka state brings to us the real knowledge of the gross objects as it is without the word or the vibration.

When this stage has been mastered one directs one attention to finer and subtler objects those from which atoms have been derived.<sup>3</sup> Things now appear before the mind as tanmatras of rupa, rasa etc within space and time. This is called the Savicara state. Savicara means with discrimination and when in the same meditation one eliminates time and space and thinks of the fine elements (i.e the tanmatras) as they are, it is called Nirvicara without discrimination. Again sound, vibration and knowledge all come together for finer objects it is Savicara and knowledge alone of finer objects is called Nirvicara. The difference between the Savitarka and Savicara is that of objects being gross and fine (i.e bhutas and tanmatras). Nirvitarka and Nirvicara are similar in the sense

they both eliminate space and time and the bhutas and tanmatras are revealed as they are respectively. These four stages are however counted as two Vitarkanugata including Savitarka and Nirvitarka and Vicaranugata including Savicara and Nirvicara. Both Vitarkanugata and Vicāranugata are similar in the sense that they have objects for meditation. Hence they are collectively called Grāhyavishaya<sup>4</sup>

The next step is when the elements both gross and fine are given up and the object of meditation is the interior or the thinking organ (i.e the buddhi ). When this thinking organ is thought of as bereft of the qualities of activity and dullness it is then called Sananda, the blissful Samadhi. It is also called Anandanugata when the Self elevates itself from objective meditation and is one with the blissful aspect. It is also called as Grahanavishaya. Finally when the meditation becomes ripe and concentrated, when all ideas of gross and fine are given up, when the sattva state only of the Ego remains, but differentiated from all other objects, it is called Sasmita Samadhi. All the four samadhis are collectively called Samprajnata Samadhi. The one who has attained to this stage the Vedas calls him “bereft of body”. He can think of himself without his gross body but he will have to think of himself with his fine body. Those that in this state get merged in nature without attaining the goal are called Prakritilayas but those who do not even stop here move towards the next stage of Asamprjñta Samadhi.

From savitarka to sasmita the mind has succeeded in creating one powerful wave from gross objects to the ego by suppressing all other waves. This means the other

tendencies do remain in the potential seed form. Hence collectively they are all titled Sabija Samadhi. Since the tendencies remain the seeker may fall yet again. There is no safeguard until the soul goes beyond nature. The method is to meditate on the mind itself and wherever thought comes, to strike it down, allowing no thought to come into the mind thus making it an entire vacuum. To be able to really do that is to manifest the greatest strength, the highest control. This is the perfect conscious Asamprajnata Samadhi the state which gives us freedom. The soul is liberated. All the seeds or tendencies have been destroyed, the mind has almost been destroyed there are no more seeds in the mind out of which the plant of life can be manufactured again and again so it is also called as Nirbija Samadhi. The ceaseless round of birth and death is finally over. . When a yogi attains this stage all powers come to him but a yogi rejects them all. Unto him comes a particular light a peculiar knowledge called the Dharma Megha, the cloud of virtue. His prajna is called as Rutambhara. *Prasamkhyāne 'py akusīdasya sarvathā viveka khyater dharma meghaḥ samādhīḥ Sutra IV-29<sup>5</sup> and Rtambharā tatra prajñā I-48<sup>6</sup>*

“Then one will know that he had neither birth nor death nor need for heaven or earth. He will know that he neither came nor went, it was nature the citta which was moving taking various forms and that movement was reflected upon the soul and one identified oneself



with those forms. All these delusions will vanish and the individual consciousness shall merge into universal consciousness .”<sup>7</sup>

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