

**व्युत्थाननिरोधसंस्कारयोरभिभवप्रादुर्भावी निरोधक्षयचित्तान्वयो
निरोधपरिणामः ।९।**

III.9 vyutthāna nirodha saṁskārayoḥ abhibhava
prādurbhāvau nirodhakṣaṇa cittānvayaḥ
nirodhapariṇāmaḥ

<i>vyutthāna</i>	emergence of thoughts, rising thoughts
<i>nirodha</i>	suppression, obstruction, restraint
<i>saṁskārayoḥ</i>	of the subliminal impressions
<i>abhibhava</i>	disappearing, subjugating
<i>prādurbhāvau</i>	reappearing
<i>nirodha</i>	restraint, suppression
<i>kṣaṇa</i>	moment
<i>citta</i>	consciousness
<i>anvayaḥ</i>	association, permeation, pervasion
<i>nirodha</i>	restraint, suppression
<i>pariṇāmaḥ</i>	transformation, effect

Study of the silent moments between rising and restraining subliminal impressions is the transformation of consciousness towards restraint (nirodhapariṇāmaḥ).

Transformation by restraint of consciousness is achieved by study of the silent moments that occur between the rising of impressions and our impulse to restrain them, and between the restraining impulse and the resurgence of thought.

The central thread of Patañjali's philosophy is the relationship between the Self, *puruṣa*, and nature, *prakṛti*. We are born into nature, and without it nothing would move, nothing would change, nothing could happen. We seek to free ourselves from nature in order to transcend it, to achieve lasting freedom.

Sensory involvement leads to attachment, desire, frustration and anger. These bring disorientation, and the eventual decay of our true intelligence. Through the combined techniques and resources of *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* and *pratyāhāra* we learn control. These are all external means of restraining consciousness, whether we focus on God, or the breath, or in an *āsana* by learning to direct and diffuse consciousness. All this learning develops in the relationship between subject and object. It is comparatively simple because it is a relative, dual process. But how can subject work on

Light on the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali

subject, consciousness on consciousness? How, in other words, can one's eyes see one's own eyes? In III.9–15 Patañjali shows the way.

One may well ask why one ought to do this. III.13–14 answer this question and enable one to identify, within one's consciousness, the subtle properties of nature, to discriminate between them, and to distinguish between that which undergoes the stresses and changes of time and that which is immutable and permanent. In so doing we gain from the inner quest the same freedom from nature that we have struggled to achieve in the external. The freedom we gain from the tyranny of time, from the illusion that is absolute, is especially significant. Cutting our ties to sense objects within our consciousness carries immensely more weight than any severance from outside objects; if this were not so, a prisoner in solitary confinement would be halfway to being a yogi. Through the inner quest, the inner aspects of desire, attraction and aversion are brought to an end.

In III.4, Patañjali shows *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* as three threads woven into a single, integrated, unfolding strand. Then he introduces three transformations of consciousness related directly to them, and successively ascending to the highest level, at which consciousness reflects the light of the soul. These transformations are *nirodha pariṇāma*, *samādhi pariṇāma* and *ekāgratā pariṇāma*. They are related to the three transformations in nature: *dharma*, *lakṣaṇa* and *avasthā pariṇāma* (III.13), resulting from our heightened perception, our penetration of nature's reality on a higher level. The word transformation suggests to our imagination a series of steps in a static structure, but it is more helpful to conceive of a harmonious flux, such as that offered by modern particle physics.

Nirodha pariṇāma relates to the method used in meditation, when *dhāraṇā* loses its sharpness of attention on the object, and intelligence itself is brought into focus. In *dhāraṇā* and *nirodha pariṇāma*, observation is a dynamic initiative.

Through *nirodha pariṇāma*, transformation by restraint or suppression, the consciousness learns to calm its own fluctuations and distractions, deliberate and non-deliberate. The method consists of noticing then seizing and finally enlarging those subliminal pauses of silence that occur between rising and restraining thoughts and vice versa.

As long as one impression is replaced by a counter-impression, consciousness rises up against it. This state is called *vyutthāna citta*, or *vyutthāna saṃskāra* (rising impressions). Restraining the rising waves of consciousness and overcoming these impressions is *nirodha citta* or *nirodha saṃskāra*. The precious psychological moments of intermission (*nirodhakṣaṇa*) where there is stillness and silence are to be prolonged into extra-chronological moments of consciousness, without beginning or end.

The key to understanding this wheel of mutations in consciousness is to

be found in the breath. Between each inbreath and outbreath, we experience the cessation of breath for a split second. Without this gap, we cannot inhale or exhale. This interval between each breath has another advantage: it allows the heart and lungs to rest. I call this rest period ‘*śavāsana*’ of the heart and lungs.

The yogis who discovered *prāṇāyāma* called this natural space *kumbhaka*, and advised us to prolong its duration. So, there are four movements in each breath: inhalation, pause, exhalation and pause. Consciousness, too, has four movements: rising consciousness, a quiet state of consciousness, restraining consciousness and a quiet state of consciousness.

Inhalation actually generates thought-waves, whereas exhalation helps to restrain them (see I.34). The pauses between breaths, which take place after inhalation and exhalation are akin to the intervals between each rising and restraining thought. The mutation of breath and mutation of consciousness are therefore identical, as both are silent periods for the physiological and intellectual body. They are moments of void in which a sense of emptiness is felt. We are advised by Patañjali to transform this sense of emptiness into a dynamic whole, as single-pointed attention to no-pointed attentiveness. This will become the second mode – *samādhi pariṇāma*.

The mind wavers like the waves of the sea, and we must make efforts to direct its attention to a chosen thought or object. In this process we often lose awareness on account of suppression and distraction. Having understood these silent intervals, we have to prolong them, as we prolong breath retention, so that there is no room for generation or restraint of thoughts.

(Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* that ‘What is night for other beings, is day for an awakened yogi and what is night for a yogi is day for others’ (II.69). This sūtra conveys the same idea. When generating thoughts and their restraint keep the seeker awake, it is day for him, but night for the seer. When the seer is awake in the prolonged spaces between rising and restraining thought, it is day for him, but night for the seeker. To understand this more clearly, think of the body as a lake. The mind floats on its surface, but the seer is hidden at the bottom. This is darkness for the seer. Yoga practice causes the mind to sink and the seer to float. This is day for the seer.)

Just as one feels refreshed after a sound sleep, the seer’s consciousness is refreshed as he utilizes this prolonged pause for rejuvenation and recuperation. But at first, it is difficult to educate the consciousness to restrain each rising thought. It is against the thought current (*pratīpakṣa*) and hence creates restlessness, whereas the movement from restraint towards rising thought is with the current (*pakṣa*) and brings restfulness. The first method requires force of will and so is tinged with *rajas*. The second is slightly *sāttvic*, but tinged with *tamas*. To transform the consciousness into a pure *sāttvic* state

Light on the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali

of dynamic silence, we must learn by repeated effort to prolong the intermissions (see I.14). If no impressions are allowed to intervene, the consciousness will remain fresh, and rest in its own abode. This is *ekāgratā pariṇāma*.

Some commentators equate *nirodha pariṇāma* with *asamprajñāta samādhi* (or *manolaya*) on the grounds that it implies the suppression of the 'I' consciousness. They maintain that it should come last and that the order of the sūtras should therefore be reversed giving the sequence III.12, III.11 and finally, III.9. They thus place *ekāgratā pariṇāma* first, relating it to the one-pointed focusing of the mind in *dhāraṇā*. There is a similarity since the surface meaning of *ekāgratā* does refer to one-pointed focusing on an object, but its deeper meaning is 'one without a second'. There is the soul and nothing but the soul. When we recognize this profound meaning then the reason for Patañjali's order is clear. Patañjali's discussion of *dharma*, *lakṣaṇa* and *avasthā pariṇāmas* (III.13) further clarifies this point.

Consciousness has three *dhārmic* characteristics; to wander, to be restrained and to remain silent. The silent state must be transformed into a dynamic but single state of awareness. Patañjali warns that in restraint old impressions may re-emerge: the *sādhaka* must train to react instantly to such appearances and cut them off at their source. Each act of restraint re-establishes a state of restfulness. This is *dharma pariṇāma*. When a serene flow of tranquillity is maintained without interruption then *samādhi pariṇāma* and *lakṣaṇa pariṇāma* begin. During this phase the *sādhaka* may become trapped in a spiritual desert (see I.18). At this point he must persevere to reach oneness with the soul and abide in that state (*avasthā pariṇāma*) everlastingly. This final goal is reached through *ekāgratā pariṇāma*. (See I.20.)

Table 12: The order of transformations of citta and prakṛti

Citta Transformations	Prakṛti Transformations
1 <i>Nirodha Pariṇāma</i> (Restraining transformation)	1 <i>Dharma Pariṇāma</i> (Transformation to exalted state)
2 <i>Samādhi Pariṇāma</i> (Transformation to <i>samādhi</i>)	2 <i>Lakṣaṇa Pariṇāma</i> (Transformation to awareness of perfection)
3 <i>Ekāgratā Pariṇāma</i> (Transformation from one-pointed to no-pointed attention)	3 <i>Avasthā Pariṇāma</i> (Maintenance of perfected state)