

### **Sūtra 32** तत्प्रतिषेधार्थमेकतत्त्वाभ्यासः ॥३२॥

Tat-pratiṣhedhārtham-eka-tattvābhyāsaḥ

**To prevent those [distractions and symptoms], practice on one principle is to be done.**

तत्	<i>tat</i>	those
प्रतिषेध	<i>pratiṣhedha</i>	prevention, negation, removal
अर्थम्	<i>artham</i>	for the purpose of
एक	<i>eka</i>	one
तत्त्व	<i>tattva</i>	principle
अभ्यासः	<i>abhyāsaḥ</i>	practice

In the previous two *sūtras*, Patañjali described the nine obstacles to *sādhana* (spiritual practice) and the five physical symptoms that accompany the obstacles. In *Sūtras* 32–39, he gives methods for overcoming them. In this *sūtra*, a general method is given: one should practice fixing the mind on one principle to overcome the obstacles.

The mind has five states: *mūḍha* (dull and preoccupied), *kṣhipta* (restless), *vikṣhipta* (distracted), *ekāgra* (one-pointed), and *niruddha* (restrained). The first two states are not conducive to yoga. Spiritual discipline begins in the *vikṣhipta* (distracted) state. The *ekāgra* (one-pointed) state is stabilized in *samprajñāta samādhi* (super-consciousness with knowledge). *Niruddha* (restrained mind) is achieved in *asamprajñāta samādhi* (super-consciousness beyond all knowledge).

The distracted state of the mind persists as long as the one-pointed state is not developed. That one-pointed state of mind develops when the mind is concentrated on *eka tattva* (one principle).

The term *eka tattva* is interpreted in various ways. It could mean Īśhvara, the ultimate *tattva*, or it can mean any one of the elements, or even any one desired object. It does not matter what the object is. The essence is the one-pointed concentration through which the mind is brought under control and freed from all distractions and their accompaniments.

In *Sūtra* I:29, it was already stated that through the practice of Īśhvara *pra-ṇidhāna* (surrender to God or repetition of Om), consciousness turns inward and obstacles are overcome. In this *sūtra*, if *eka tattva* (one principle) were understood to be Īśhvara, then it would simply be a repetition of *Sūtra* 29. Therefore, *eka tattva* refers to the object of meditation, which can be God, the Self, or any other spiritual object that suits the mind of the meditator.

In *Sūtra* I:12, it was stated that the five kinds of *vr̥ttis* (*Sūtra* I:6) are controlled by *abhyāsa* (persistent practice) and *vairāgya* (dispassion). Persistent practice and dispassion are very important to achieve the one-pointed concentration that blocks the nine obstacles and their symptoms.

In his commentary on this *sūtra*, Vyāsa refutes the Buddhist *Vijñāna Vāda* (the theory of “ideation only”), which holds that no external object exists. They say that existence is an idea that erroneously arises from within. This is the theory of momentariness, which is also called *Kṣhaṇika Vāda*. According to this theory, the mind comes into existence with each thought and then subsides with it. Empirical existence, they say, is only a mental state or modification without any external substratum and thus is wholly transitory.

Vyāsa’s argument is that if mind is transitory and it arises with a thought and subsides with a thought, then the question of distraction of mind does not arise. If during the period of one thought, the mind is fixed in that one thought, and when that thought subsides, the new thought arises with mind fixed on it, then in the sequence of thoughts, the mind would always remain fixed. But this is not the case. The mind is disturbed by thought waves. Vyāsa refutes the theory of succession of momentary minds by this argument.

Other arguments supporting the view of Vyāsa are based on the continuity of experience. If the arising thoughts are separate and not linked with the previous ones, how it is possible that we remember anything at all? Memory must be held in a single continuous mind. If each mind is separate (i.e. arises and dissolves with each thought), then which mind keeps the memory?

The Sāṃkhya view, which appears to be the correct one, is that knowledge is but the different states of the same basic entity (the mind). There is indeed a substratum of experience.

We know things through our experiences. For example, the same “I” who saw an object previously is now touching the object that “I” previously saw. This sort of identifying perception reveals the identity of the knower, “I,” in all the experiences. How could one experience this continuity if there were only distinct, momentary minds?

On the basis of our experience, we know that the *chitta* (mind field) is a single and continuous entity that brings knowledge of various objects. This mind, so long as it is in a distracted state, needs to be controlled through the practice of concentration on a single principle (*eka tattva*). This one-pointed concentration prevents all the distractions and their accompanying physical symptoms from arising, and *samādhi* is attained.