

An insight on Parinamas mentioned in the Patanjala Yoga Sutras

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Abstract:

Objective: Yoga Sutras compiled around 200 B.C. by Patanjali give the discipline of Yoga for a series of internal voluntary pariñāmas or transformations towards ‘Chitta Vritti Nirodha’ or Kaivalya. Pariñāma is the soul, the sum and substance of the sutras. However, an understanding of pariñāma is overshadowed by the attention given to individual components of yoga practices like Asana, Pranayama and Dhyana. The article explains both the internally disciplined and controlled pariñāmas and the external uncontrolled Pariñāmas.

The 195 Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali follow a logical sequence with its preceding and succeeding sūtra. 11 sūtras which explicitly mention the word - pariñāma were studied for an insight on their meaning and importance although many sūtras cover pariñāma but only implicitly / indirectly.

Method: The article is based on qualitative research method which is theoretical in nature. All the relevant data on the research subject is textual and procured by Secondary Data Collection Method with a survey of literature on texts of Indian Philosophies of Samkhya, Yoga and the Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali.

Conclusions: An in-depth understanding affecting on Pariñāmas affecting bhutas and indriyas and the personal experience of internal Pariñāmas affecting chitta is liberating. It helps interpret as well as deal and transform one’s own internal reactions to give an effective response to the observable external phenomena. It shows the way to face the dukha, the vicissitudes, turmoil of the manifested world with viveka, internal courage, conviction and above all happiness.

Key words : Pariñāma, Yoga Sūtras, Patanjali,

Introduction

The Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali is a classic treatise on the science and discipline of Yoga. Its ultimate objective is Kaivalya (liberation) to be attained by ‘Chitta Vritti Nirodha’. The Yoga Sūtras divided into four Chapters as follows mention various practices towards this purpose:

(i) Samadhi Pada (on super-consciousness) - Explanation on the Goal of Yoga (51)

(ii) Sadhana Pada (on practice) - Means to achieve the Goal (55)

(iii) Vibhuti Pada (on super-normal powers) - Powers gained in the path to the Goal (55)

(iv) Kaivalya Pada (on liberation) - Reaching the Goal of Kaivalya (34)

परिणाम (Pariñāma – transformation) is explicitly mentioned by Patanjali in eleven of the 195 Yoga Sūtras. Yoga is a discipline for a series of voluntary

pariṇāmas towards Kaivalya as vrittis can be considered as involuntary pariṇāma rising in the Chitta due to inherent afflictions. Pariṇāma is the soul, the sum and substance of the Yoga Sūtras. However, an understanding of pariṇāma is overshadowed by the attention given to individual components of yoga practices like Asana, Pranayama and Dhyana.

Objective of the study

The 195 Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali follow a logical sequence with its preceding and succeeding sūtra. The Yoga Sūtras are meant for a total transformation at the physical, mental, behavioural and intellectual level which only can lead to a final spiritual based transformation of the personality. 11 sūtras which explicitly mentioned the word - pariṇāma were studied. An in-depth understanding of the pariṇāma sutras can help interpret and give a response to the observable external phenomena of change as well as deal and transform one's own internal mental reactions to effectively live and interact with the world.

Method

The article is based on qualitative research method which is theoretical in nature. All the relevant data on the research subject is textual and procured by Secondary Data Collection Method with a survey of literature on texts of Indian Philosophies of Samkhya, Yoga and the Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali and commentaries thereon by eminent Yoga Gurus and Scholars.

Yoga Sūtras mention the Yoga practices such as Abhyasa, Vairagya, Yama, etc. and the benefits or transformations that can happen if one is proficient and established in that practice. e.g. the transformation due to following the Yama of Satya. The pariṇāmas arising due to such various individual practices as part of bahiranga yoga and other cases where sūtras hint at pariṇāma but only implicitly / indirectly are not covered in this study.

Etymology of the word - Pariṇāma

The word परिणाम can be split into two - परि which means from all sides and णाम whose derived meaning is turn away.

Pariṇāma means change from all sides. This change however has to be understood as the cessation of previous attributes, qualities, category and the emergence of new attributes, qualities, category in the substance. For e.g. ghee is a pariṇāma of curd which in turn is a pariṇāma of milk. In this pariṇāma milk which is originally in a liquid state, changes into semi solid and then into a sticky state.

Pariṇāma hence is a condition of changes in the attributes, qualities, category but retaining the sameness of the one who possesses the attributes. In the context of Yoga the one who possess the attributes in the external material world is Prakṛti and internally these attributes are possessed by Chitta. Both are also referred to as Dharmin of their respective areas of operations.

Pariṇāma in English can be equated with transformation. The Dictionary defines transformation as a change into someone or something completely different or a process by which this happens or a change in form, appearance, nature, or character.

Significance of Pariṇāma

All pariṇāmas are modifications of Prakṛti and exist in the eternal bosom of Prakṛti. Prakṛti is Pariṇāmi and makes arrangement for the Bhog (experiences) and Apvarga (realisation, emancipation) of the Puruṣa. The world is a cycle of pariṇāma of the primal matter of Prakṛti. It comprises the evolution pariṇāmas (“Vairupya”) and involution pariṇāmas (“Sarupya”). Similarly, the Chitta also suffers from the evolution and involution of thoughts and experiences but these are mis-identified as modifications of Puruṣa.

The unmanifested or unevolved form is also known as 'Avyakta' and the manifested form is known as 'Vyakta'. The cycle also means that the effect pre-exists in the cause and the cause represents the unmanifested state of the effects. Nothing is created and nothing is destroyed it is only pariṇāma.

Pariṇāma or transformation thus denotes a sense of progression, a uni-directional continuous movement of surrendering the old and accepting the new. Transformation is different from change. Change could be multi directional, temporary and also it may not require a surrender of the old.

Pariṇāma is mentioned for the first time in Yoga Sūtras in the Chapter 2 - Samadhi Pada in Sutra 15.

१५. परिणामतापसंस्कारदुःखैर्गुणवृत्तिविरोधाच्च दुःख-
मेव सर्वं विवेकिनः ।

Pariṇāma-tāpa-saṃskāra-duḥkhaḥ guṇa-
vṛtti-virodhāc ca duḥkham eva sarvaṃ
vivekinaḥ.

The triumvirate of Pariṇāma with tapa - acute anguish or anxiety ; saṃskaras – the impressions left on the chitta and the conflicts between the Guṇa (dominating the individual) and the vṛtti (dominating the chitta of the individual) are mentioned. The sutra says that only an enlightened person who has developed discrimination (viveka) can see the dukha that is everywhere in the world.

The sutra brings forth the subtlety of the pariṇāma that happens in the manifested world. Everyday we look at the mirror and see ourselves but when we look at our own photographs taken years ago during our childhood / school / college days we realise how our looks have changed and the impact of the transformation. As long as the change is not perceptible, we are not aware of it. The ordinary person is so immersed and completely identified with their life that he / she cannot mentally

separate themselves from this fast moving current. Although human beings are composed of Prakṛti they do not recognize the law of change that applies to Prakṛti and to all its manifestations including themselves, their body and mind.

Pariṇāma and its associates Tapas and Saṃskaras are more connected to the external manifested world. Opposition of the Guṇas and vṛttis, the other cause of dukha is more connected to the internal world. But the internal world is also Prakṛti and is also subjected to the law of change, of pariṇāma.

Saṃskara is also another facet of the working of Pariṇāma. Saṃskara is a residue in the chitta karmashaya which is caused by our actions or experiences in a given situation. The chitta is transformed by every saṃskara and the repetition of the actions or experiences for a situation leads to formations of habits in thoughts and actions. This conditioning could be effective as a response mechanism to everyday routine problems. However, if faced with a new situation this very conditioning becomes a hindrance in thinking and acting and a cause for our pain and misery.

This sutra is a point of inflexion because of its emphasis on dukha. The dukha of pariṇāma is caused not, per se, by pariṇāma but the klesha of Raga or attachment which sticks to the objects and experiences associated with the object and causes tapas or anxiety when the object undergoes Pariṇāma as per its nature. It sets in motion the case for the development of Viveka-khyati (the uninterrupted discriminatory knowledge).

In the Sūtras following this sutra it is said that dukha that is yet to come can be avoided and that the cause of the dukha is the Saṃyoga of the Draṣṭā (the Seer Principle – the Puruṣa) and the Dṛśya (the seen – Prakṛti). Avidya is in turn the cause of the Saṃyoga. The destruction of this

Avidya by Viveka is the solution for the destruction of the dukha and suffering.

Pariṇāmas affecting the Indriyas and Bhutas

The relevant Sūtras in Chapter 3 – Vibhuti pada are :

१३. एतेन भूतेन्द्रियेषु धर्मलक्षणवस्थापरिणामा
व्याख्याताः ।

**Etena bhūteन्द्रियेषु dharmā-lakṣaṇā-
vasthā-pariṇāmā vyākhyātāḥ.**

By this the property, character, and condition-transformations in the elements and the sense-organs are also explained.

१५. क्रमान्यत्वं परिणामान्यत्वे हेतुः ।

Kramānyatvaṃ pariṇāmānyatve hetuḥ ।

The cause of the difference in transformation is the difference in the underlying process.

and in the Chapter 4 - Kaivalya pada the relevant Sutras are :

२. जात्यन्तरपरिणामः प्रकृत्यापूरात् ।

Jāty-antara-pariṇāmaḥ prakṛty-āpūrāt.

The transformation from one species or kind into another is by the overflow of natural tendencies or potentialities.

१४. परिणामैकत्वाद्वस्तुतत्त्वम् ।

Pariṇāmaikatvād vastu-tattvam.

The essence of the object consists in the uniqueness of transformation (of the Guṇas).

Prakṛti is Pariṇāmi, every material object or thing / experience which arises from an object of mental perception is composed of the three Guṇas and is subject to the law of constant change. Pariṇāmas that take place in the Indriyas (the five Jnana indriyas and the five Karma indriyas) – the five Tanmatras (subtle elements of Prakṛti)

and the five mahabhutas (the grosser elements of Prakṛti) fall within the three categories of Dharma, Lakṣaṇa and Avasthā Pariṇāma.

Dharma Pariṇāma

Dharma means a fundamental property or an essential nature of a thing which characterizes the thing of a particular type or species. If a dharma is changed the thing will probably be changed so markedly that it may be looked upon as a completely new thing. The transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly is an example of dharma Pariṇāma. Dharma Pariṇāma takes place in Prakṛti when it transforms from an Avyakt – Unmanifested state to the Vyakt – manifested state.

Lakṣaṇa Pariṇāma

Lakṣaṇa usually means signs or symbols. At times Lakṣaṇa Pariṇāma is interpreted as the time sequence of the appearance of the new dharmas. Lakṣaṇa Pariṇāma is a consequence of the change in the dharma since when dharma is altered the secondary signs and symptoms are usually altered. As the lakṣaṇas are of secondary nature they do not change the thing to such an extent to make its species or type unrecognisable. In our example of the caterpillar, it change into a butterfly also causes a change in its colour and form.

The evolution of Prakṛti changes the way by which it is known. Avyakt Prakṛti is undifferentiated but the moment is Vyakt it brings the concept of time as buddhi is activated and considers itself as the seat of consciousness and the knower of all experiences. It seeks to differentiate with others by Ahamkara – the 'I' principle, which further is evolved into vishesh indriyas and bhutas. However, whatever the lakṣaṇa it still remains composed of the three Guṇas.

Avasthā Pariṇāma

Avasthā means a state and it implies a state which is stable over a sufficient length of

time. Avasthā Pariṇāma is an essential consequence of the Dharma and Lakṣaṇa Pariṇāma. Changes in the lakṣaṇa and / or the dharma mean a change in the avasthā, i.e. in the changes in the proportion amongst the Guṇas. In the example of the butterfly, the changes within the period from its birth to death is a change in its Avasthā.

Pariṇāma creates a diversity within members of the species because of the change in composition of the Guṇas within each member but at the same time there is unity of the Pariṇāma within the species which can be called as the Pariṇāma tattva. Tattva means 'thatness' which indicates that quality or specialty which makes a particular object or thing distinct from other objects or things.

The uniqueness of an object or a thing is due to the unique transformation of the guṇas which is the essential principle the true reality. This 'bundle of properties' which in their totality constitute the thing must therefore be a unique combination of the three guṇas since each property taken by itself is nothing more than a peculiar combination of the guṇas. This gross vastu tattvam means that the guṇas transformation and the proportions in which they keep on transforming at all times give a diversity to the material world

The transformation from one species or kind called Jaty-Antara-Parinama means a transformation involving a fundamental change of nature. All such fundamental changes can take place only when there is present in the substance the potentiality for the change under the specified conditions. The phrase Prakṛty-apurat expresses a very comprehensive law of Prakṛti to which everyone has to submit. As long as Chitta functions in the realms of Prakṛti, it is subject to the laws of Prakṛti. Liberation from the realm of Prakṛti can only be attained by obeying and utilising her laws.

The Sūtras read together explain the nature of the Pariṇāma and also affirms that in spite of all kinds of changes which material things may undergo, there is a subtle principle of element present in it which gives it its uniqueness or specific individuality. The three guṇas give Prakṛti its fullness and completeness. The intrinsic character of Prakṛti does not change but guṇas by their nature cannot remain without the evolutionary changes of dharma, lakṣaṇa and avasthā even for a moment. Movement is the characteristic of the guṇas. The nature of the guṇas is the cause of the movement and the pariṇāmas.

Matter falls under the realm of Prakṛti which is neither creatable nor destroyable. Matter has to be obtained from the over abundant stock of matter present in Prakṛti which can supply any amount and type of matter needed without being affected at all. This aspect is made clear in Sutra 3.14 where Prakṛti is referred to as Dharmi (the carrier or supporter of dharma) which inheres in itself the dharma (basic properties) which have subsided, which are presently manifested and which are yet to manifest themselves.

Pariṇāmas affecting the Chitta

The relevant Sūtras in Chapter 3 – Vibhuti pada are :

६. व्युत्थाननिरोधसंस्कारयोरभिभवप्रादुर्भावौ निरोध-
क्षणचित्तान्वयो निरोधपरिणामः ।

Vyutthāna-nirodha-saṃskārayor abhiva-
va-prādurbhāvau nirodha-kṣaṇa-cittān-
vayo nirodha-pariṇāmaḥ.

Nirodha Parinama is that transformation of the mind in which it becomes progressively permeated by that condition of Nirodha (restraint / cessation of impression) which intervenes momentarily between an impression which is disappearing and the impression which is taking its place.

११. सर्वार्थतैकाग्रतयोः क्षयोदयो चित्तस्य समाधि-
परिणामः ।

Sarvārthataikāgratayoḥ kṣayodayau cit-
tasya samādhi-pariṇāmaḥ.

Samadhi transformation is the (gradual) setting of the distractions and simultaneous rising of one-pointedness.

१२. ततः पुनः शान्तोदितौ तुल्यप्रत्ययौ चित्तस्यैकाग्रता-
परिणामः ।

Tataḥ punaḥ śāntoditau tulya-pratyayau
cittasyaikāgratā-pariṇāmaḥ.

Then, again, the condition of the mind in which the ‘object’ (in the mind) which subsides is always exactly similar to the ‘object’ which rises (in the next moment) is called Ekagrata Pariṇāmaa.

१६. परिणामत्रयसंयमादतीतानागतज्ञानम् ।

Pariṇāma-traya-samyamād atitānāgata-
jñānam.

By performing Samyama on the three kinds of transformations knowledge of the past and future is obtained.

The three parinamas of Nirodha, Samadhi and Ekagra have to be achieved in the inner world of the Chitta. The purification of Chitta by the regular efforts and continuous practices of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi is collectively called as Samyama as mentioned in Sutra 13 of Chapter 3 – Vibhuti Pada.

The condition of the Chitta bhoomi or the mind state is the key for the effectiveness of the Pariṇāma. Chitta bhoomi could be of the following five types.

Kshipta - restless, trapped and uncontrolled ; pre-dominance of rajas which overpowers tamas and sattva gunas.

Mudha – dull, depressed ; pre-dominance of tamas which overpowers rajas and sattva

Vikshipta – oscillating, distracted, unable to concentrate for long periods; pre-dominance of rajas but with the arising of sattva

Ekagra - one-pointedness; pre-dominance of sattva which exercises control over rajas and tamas

Nirodha – restrained ; complete dominance of all three sattva, rajas and tamas

In a normal Chitta, experiences change from instant to instant. In the Samadhi Pariṇāma the experiences change from instant to instant but the new arising experience and the old subsiding experience is of the same object and many experiences give rise to similar or same experiences of the object. The Ekagrata Pariṇāma is a refinement of the Samadhi Pariṇāma wherein the multi experiences of the mind diminish and ultimately disappear. This gives a feeling of one pointedness. It is a state of real one pointedness of the mind and is characterised by the sameness of the arising experience and subsiding experience. The peak and ultimate is the Nirodha Pariṇāma the condition of no experience in the mind. Nirodha naturally occurs for a very short duration between two experiences but the mind is not aware of it. Nirodha Pariṇāma is when the chitta is aware and grasps the Ksana (moment) of the state of no experience. The essence of the Nirodha Pariṇāma is to increase the duration of nirodha for longer and longer periods such that it becomes smoothly and permanently established.

Each of the three internal pariṇāmas in Chitta are analogous and mirror the three Pariṇāmas of the Bhutas and Indriyas. A combination of the inner and outer Pariṇāmas transforms into a state of complete fullness or shunyata or silence.

Nirodha Pariṇāma is counter comparable to Dharma Pariṇāma

Chitta is restrained and emptied. It is equivalent to the stillness of the

unmanifested state of Prakṛti or Dharmi that prevailed before the Dharma Pariṇāma.

Ekagrata Pariṇāma is counter comparable to Lakṣaṇa Pariṇāma

Chitta is made one pointed. It is equivalent to the state of Ling Matra – Buddhi the first evolute of Prakṛti before the evolution process and the Avasthā Pariṇāmas are triggered.

Samadhi Pariṇāma is counter comparable to Avasthā Pariṇāma

Chitta is reigned in. It is equivalent to the disabling the Prakṛti Vikrutis and Vikrutis to evolve as Avasthā Pariṇāma.

Two triads of three Pariṇāmas each exist. One triad is of the inner world of the chitta and the other triad is of the outer world of objects and things. Due to the application of samyama on the triad of Pariṇāmas the knowledge on the whole sequence of past transformations and the future transformations in a subjective (inner, mental) world or in the objective (external, material) world thing can be obtained from the present state. This is an extraordinary power acquired through the practice of Yoga and is termed as Siddhi, an accomplishment of Yoga.

Pariṇāmas and understanding of time

The relevant Sūtras in Chapter 4 – Kaivalya pada are :

३२. ततः कृतार्थानां परिणामक्रमसमाप्तिर्गुणानाम् ।

Tataḥ kṛtārthānāṃ pariṇāma-krama-samāptir guṇānām.

The three Guṇas having fulfilled their object, the process of change (in the Guṇas) comes to an end.

३३. क्षणप्रतियोगी परिणामापरान्तनिर्ग्राह्यः क्रमः ।

Kṣaṇa-pratīyogī pariṇāmāparānta-nirgrāhyaḥ kramah.

The process, corresponding to moments which become apprehensible at the final end of transformation (of the Guṇas), is Kramah.

The first sutra can be understood in the context of the Samyog which brings Purusa and Prakṛti together. When this happens the quiescent condition of Prakṛti which is known as Samavasthā is disturbed. The homogeneous transformations of the three guṇas change into heterogeneous transformations and Prakṛti manifest itself. The inherent quality of the guṇas of incessant transformations, the evolution of the indriyas and the bhutas sets the scene – the Drshya - for providing experience and liberation to the Draṣṭā–the Puruṣa. These transformations continue as long as experiences are enjoyed by the Drashta.

The practice of Samyama leads to a state of "Viveka khyati". When Viveka is completely established there is limitless knowledge in PraSāṃkhyana and the intellect to discriminate between what is APariṇāmi and what is Pariṇāmi. There is a realisation that the Draṣṭā and the Drṣya are two separate entities. The association, the Samyog of Purusa and Prakṛti dissolves naturally. The disturbance in Prakṛti subsides and it reverts to its quiescent condition of Samavasthā of the Guṇas. It is a state of Kaivalya.

The end point of this Guṇa transformations from heterogeneous to homogeneous is when the Krama (sequentiality producing a feeling of continuity) and its counter point the Kshana (the instant) is comprehended in its totality. The only reality is this present moment, this Kshana which is discrete, whereas Krama and Kala have the notion of continuousness. Kala and Krama are made up and exist because of Kshana. As soon as the concept of kshana is grasped the illusion of continuousness of krama and kala is broken.

As soon as Pariṇāma krama ceases, Kshana alone remains as the real entity and the unreal nature of the Krama and Kala is known. The knowledge is then complete. It is now accompanied by total freedom as the barrier of notion of the inevitableness and coerciveness of time i.e. Krama and kala is transcended. This state of freedom establishes the two metaphysical principles of Puruṣa and Prakṛiti in their true eternal Svarupa state.

Prakṛiti however retains its capacity to respond instantaneously to the consciousness of the Puruṣa. But henceforth, the different planes of manifestation and their experiences are used by the Puruṣa as mere vehicles for his consciousness without any self-identification and binding. After attainment of Kaivalya or freedom once, Puruṣa retains the freedom to dissociate himself from Prakṛiti and retire into his real form whenever he so wills and for eternity.

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Conclusions

The Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali on the science and discipline of Yoga seek to effect a total transformation in the body, mind and spirit. It is this ultimate total transformation brought about by Yoga practice that imparts a rock solid foundation and steadiness to face and experience external transformations without being affected by them.

An in-depth understanding, insight on Pariṇāmas affecting bhutas and indriyas and personal experience of internal Pariṇāmas affecting chitta is liberating. It helps interpret as well as deal and transform one's own internal reactions to give an effective response to the observable external phenomena. It shows the way to face the dukha, the vicissitudes, turmoil of the manifested world with viveka, internal courage, conviction and above all happiness.