

CHAPTER III – THE TOWERS OF SILENCE



This article looks at chapter three. Titled Vibhūti Pādaḥ, its 55 verses explore the possibilities of a mind with more refined qualities of mindfulness and clarity. Here it is not the experiences which control the mind. The mind is able to focus in a particular direction and be freer from the effects of external and internal disturbances.

In this is the image of the mind being a support or structure which can maintain its containment and flow within the vagaries of inner and outer experience. A tower gives the impression of strength and consistency, it also indicates the possibility of being able to see beyond the normal view.

The student in the third chapter has experienced the nature of the meditative mind and has a strength and view which is beyond the range of normal perception. The mind can be a likened tower of silence.

The questions in this chapter are firstly, what are the possibilities for a mind with this potential and secondly:

How does this relate to Yoga?

C3 v3

'In a state of integration the meditators self image is absent and the meditation alone shines forth.'



What develops from this practice?

C3 v5

'Gnostic insights arise out of the mastery of this practice.'

Furthermore,

C3 v10

'The impressions within such a mind can be likened to a undisturbed flow.'

Although undisturbed, this flow is also so powerful as to inhibit past mental impressions of distraction.

C3 v12

'The mind is so one pointed that past and present thoughts remain constant and always linked with meditation.'

With the mind in this powerful state much is possible. It even appears that Patañjali tempts us with indications of what such a mind can achieve.

C3 v16

'Through fusion of the mind into the process of change, knowledge of past and future arises.'



This power can be used to explore areas such as universal phenomena.

C3 v28

'Through fusion of the mind onto the pole star, movement of the other stars is known.'

Or, to explore the nature of energetic phenomena.

C3 c29

'Through fusion of the mind into the plexus of the navel, knowledge of the body arises.'

Or, to explore the nature of psychic phenomena.

C3 v32

'Through fusion of the mind into the light within the head, visions of divine beings arises.'

However, these powers are ultimate obstacles.

C3 v37

'These powers become obstacles within everyday life.'



In fact these hard wrought acquisitions have to be surrendered in order to move towards a more important goal.

C3 v50

‘Through dispassion towards powers, the seeds of impurities dwindle and freedom arises.’

For Patañjali freedom remains the goal in spite of attainments and status arising from them.

This is further emphasised with a definition of Freedom (Kaivalya) in the last Sūtra.

C3 v55

‘When the Psyche (Citta) is so clear, as if to merge with Awareness (Cit), freedom ensues.’

To summarise, in this chapter Patañjali has indicated what a mind with this clarity and strength is capable of. With the mind as a sharp tool we can achieve the super-natural, the extra-ordinary. However, this does not solve our fundamental problem, that of Duḥkha (constriction in the heart) and Avidyā (confused values).

Therefore these powers do not ultimately mean much to Patañjali.

Furthermore these can become a distraction, within everyday life, and draw a person away from the ultimate purpose of Yoga practice and study.



This article is a brief introduction to the profound wisdom and insight within the third chapter of the yoga sêtra of Patañjali. The final article introduces Chapter Four Kaivalya Pādaḥ or the book on the Goal of Yoga where the practitioner is free from the debilitating effects of the past.

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