UNIT 5: TYPES AND NATURE OF SAMADHI

UNIT STRUCTURE

5.1 Learning Objectives
5.2 Introduction
5.3 Concept of Samadhi
5.4 Types of Samadhi: Samprajnata Samadhi and Asamprajnata Samadhi
5.4.1 Samprajnata Samadhi and Asamprajnata Samadhi: A Sneak Peek
5.5 Let‘s Us Sum Up
5.6 Further Readings
5.7 Answers to Check Your Progress
5.8 Model Questions

5.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Understand the concept of Samadhi,
- Get knowledge about Samprajnata Samadhi and Asamprajnata Samadhi,

5.2 INTRODUCTION

In Patanjali‘s *Yoga Sutras*, Samadhi stands as the ultimate state of being, representing the culmination of the yogic path. The *Samadhi Pada*, the first chapter of this timeless text, serves as a profound exploration of the nature of yoga and its transformative potential. Samadhi is the state of deep meditative absorption in which the practitioner transcends the fluctuations of the mind, known as *vrittis*, and reaches a place of inner stillness, pure awareness, and profound connection with the divine. It is a state of unity, where the practitioner dissolves the separation between the self and the object of meditation, experiencing oneness with all existence. This state is not just a mental or emotional experience, but a profound spiritual awakening that leads to the liberation of the soul. The path to Samadhi is one of progressive refinement and discipline, where each stage of practice serves as a stepping stone toward deeper levels of realisation and insight. The *Yoga Sutras* describe the process

in an incremental manner, laying out the steps of the *eight limbs of yoga*, or *Ashtanga Yoga*, which includes practices like ethical discipline (*Yamas* and *Niyamas*), physical postures (*Asanas*), breath control (*Pranayama*), sensory withdrawal (*Pratyahara*), concentration (*Dharana*), meditation (*Dhyana*), and ultimately, Samadhi itself. Each of these limbs purifies the mind and body, leading the practitioner closer to the realisation of their true nature.

5.3 CONCEPT OF SAMADHI

In its literal sense, the word "Samadhi" in Yoga translates to "bliss" or "enlightenment," signifying a union with the divine and the universe. It is the ultimate destination in the yogic journey, where the seeker transcends the physical, mental, and emotional limitations of the self.

Within the framework of Patanjali‘s Yoga Sutras, Samadhi is described as the final limb—the eighth stage of the eightfold path of Yoga. It marks the culmination of steady practice and inner transformation. It is not merely a state of deep meditation, but the highest form of *dhyana*, where the individual‘s consciousness merges with the universal consciousness. At this point, the practitioner experiences a profound stillness, an unshakeable sense of peace and bliss, and an understanding that surpasses intellectual grasp.

The beauty of Samadhi lies in its ineffable nature; it is often said to be a state that words cannot fully encapsulate. Yogis who reach this level speak of it as an experience that cannot be described through language alone. It is the feeling of being deeply connected with everything and everyone, a state of pure awareness and oneness. In Samadhi, the duality between the self and the universe dissolves, and the practitioner realises that there is no separation between them and the cosmos. It is as if they become the entire universe, perceiving the interconnectedness of all things.

When one attains Samadhi, the individual has mastered the ability to detach from the distractions and attachments of the world while simultaneously being able to immerse fully in the present moment. There is no clinging to material desires or thoughts; instead, the yogi finds a deep sense of inner freedom. At this stage, detachment does not imply withdrawal from the world but a profound

understanding of the transient nature of all things, enabling the individual to live with full awareness and equanimity.

In essence, Samadhi is the ultimate experience of being fully present and at peace with oneself and the universe. It is not an intellectual attainment but an experiential one, a journey that, once embarked upon, leads the practitioner to the highest level of self-realisation and unitywith all that is.

Samadhi, as described by Patanjali, is not a singular, monolithic experience but is divided into different stages, each reflecting a deeper level of integration and awareness. The first stage, *Savikalpa Samadhi*, is marked by the presence of mental distinctions, where the practitioner still experiences a sense of duality but with greater clarity. The second stage, *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*, is the ultimate state of undifferentiated consciousness, where the mind is completely absorbed in the object of meditation, and the distinction between subject and object vanishes. This is the purest form of Samadhi, where the ego and all sense of individuality dissolve, and the practitioner merges with the infinite, experiencing the blissful state of liberation known as *Kaivalya*. The significance of Samadhi extends beyond individual enlightenment. It represents the union of the finite with the infinite, the individual soul with the universal consciousness, embodying the ultimate truth that all is interconnected. In the broader philosophy of yoga, Samadhi is not just a personal achievement but a doorway to the realisation of the oneness of existence. It signifies the end of suffering, the dissolution of the ego, and the experience of eternal peace. It is the pinnacle of spiritual growth, a state where the practitioner finds their deepest potential and experiences the fullness of existence in its purest form. Samadhi, thus, is not merely a mystical concept but the essence of the yogic journey, the heart of Patanjali‘s teachings, and the goal of all spiritual practice.

5.4 TYPES OF SAMADHI

Patanjali categorises Samadhi into distinct stages, each progressively leading the practitioner closer to complete absorption and spiritual realisation.

1. Samprajnata Samadhi (Savikalpa Samadhi)

वितर्क-विचार-आनन्द-अस्मिता-रूपानुगमात्संप्रज्ञातः॥ (YS. 1.17)

Samprajnata Samadhi is a state of deep meditative absorption in which the mind remains aware of an object of meditation. It is characterised by cognitive processes such as reasoning, reflection, bliss, and the sense of individuality. This form of samadhi is considered a conditioned or temporary state because mental activity still exists, even though it is highly refined and focused.This is the first stage of Samadhi, where awareness and cognition remain. The mind is still active, though highly focused. Patanjali further divides it into four levels:

- **Vitarka (Deliberation)** – The mind engages with gross objects and concepts, such as physical forms.At this stage, the mind is deeply absorbed in contemplation, yet it still engages with tangible, physical objects or intellectual concepts. The meditator may focus on a deity, a sacred symbol, a mantra, or even philosophical ideas. The awareness remains outwardly directed but becomes intensely concentrated, refining thoughts with clarity. This stage serves as the bridge between external reality and deeper meditation, where thoughts are no longer scattered but channeled into a single point of focus.
- **Vicāra (Reflection)** – The focus shifts to subtle objects, such as energy or abstract ideas.As meditation deepens, the mind moves beyond the gross objects of perception and begins to contemplate subtler aspects of existence. Here, the focus shifts to the unseen forces that govern life—energy, vibrations, or abstract principles like love, truth, or the nature of consciousness itself. It is a state of profound inner reflection, where the intellect surrenders its rigid structure and allows intuition to take over, unveiling layers of subtle wisdom that cannot be grasped through ordinary thinking.
- **Ānanda (Bliss)** – The practitioner experiences deep inner joy and contentment beyond sensory pleasures.Beyond the realm of thoughts and reflections lies a state of pure joy—a blissful contentment that arises from within, independent of external circumstances. This is not a fleeting happiness derived from sensory pleasure but a deep, abiding peace that envelops the meditator. It is the first direct taste of the boundless joy that lies at the core of existence. In this stage, the heart is open, the mind is still, and the soul revels in the natural ecstasy of being.
- **Asmitā (I-ness)** – The meditator reaches an awareness of pure being, a subtle sense of self beyond ego.In this final level of Savitarka Samadhi, the

meditator transcends even the experience of bliss and arrives at a subtle awareness of the pure self. This is not the ego self that identifies with the body, emotions, or personality but the true essence—the observer behind all experience. Here, one exists simply as awareness itself, untouched by thought, emotion, or identity. It is a serene and luminous state where the meditator glimpses the unchanging reality beyond the fluctuations of the mind.

These four levels mark the progression from external focus to the recognition of the self as pure consciousness. They are stepping stones toward deeper states of meditation, ultimately leading to complete absorption in the infinite.

2. Asamprajnata Samadhi (Nirvikalpa Samadhi)

विरामप्रत्ययाभ्यासपूर्वःसंस्कारशेषोऽन्यः॥ 1.18

Asamprajnata Samadhi, also known as Nirvikalpa Samadhi, is the highest state of meditative absorption in yoga, where the mind transcends all thoughts, dualities, and sensory perceptions. It is a state of pure awareness beyond intellect, ego, and mental modifications, where only the unmanifest consciousness remains. *Asamprajnata*: *asam,* ”without,” and *prajna,* ”knowledge,” giving ”without knowledge,” or *a,* ”not,” and *samprajnata,* giving ”not samprajnata” samadhi (the ”other” samadhi). Asamprajnata samadhi is non cognitive because there are no objects in the conscious mind to discern; even the ego is temporarily transcended. Though the conscious mind becomes completely still, the subconscious impressions (samskaras) remain. Asamprajnata samadhi is the experience of the reflection of the Purusha on a perfectly still, clear mind.

Unlike Savikalpa Samadhi, which involves an object of concentration, Asamprajnata Samadhi is completely devoid of mental constructs, leading to self-realisation and liberation (moksha). In this state, the yogi merges with the absolute reality (Brahman), experiencing infinite bliss and oneness. It is considered the ultimate goal of spiritual practice in the path of yoga.This is a deeper state of Samadhi, where even subtle mental activity ceases. There are no thoughts, no objects of meditation—only pure awareness remains. This is a state of transcendence beyond dualities, leading to liberation (*Kaivalya*).

5.4.1 Samprajnata Samadhi and Asamprajnata Samadhi: A Sneak Peek

As discussed, Samprajnata Samadhi is conscious meditation with an object, where the meditator is still aware of the process and Asamprajnata Samadhi is objectless absorption, where even the subtlest mental activity ceases, leading towards Kaivalya (liberation).A brief overview of the two can be presented as:

Aspect	Samprajnata Samadhi	Asamprajnata Samadhi
Definition	Samadhi with full awareness and object of meditation.	Samadhi beyond thoughts, devoid of mental modifications.
Nature	Conscious absorption (with cognitive process).	Supra-conscious absorption (beyond cognition).
Process	Involves the mind concentrating on a single object.	Mind transcends all objects and thoughts.
Types	Vitarka (gross objects), Vichara (subtle objects), Ananda (bliss), Asmita (pure "I" awareness).	No differentiation; all thought waves cease.
Effort	Requires effort in meditation and contemplation.	Spontaneous; occurs when even the subtlest efforts stop.
Outcome	Leads to higher knowledge and wisdom.	Leads to absolute liberation (Kaivalya).
Mention in Sutras	Yoga Sutra 1.17: Describes its different stages.	Yoga Sutra 1.18: Describes as beyond mental modifications.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS:

Fill up the blanks:

A. The path to Samadhi is one of ……. refinement and discipline.

B. The first stage, ……. Samadhi, is marked by the presence of mental distinctions.

C. The second stage,

D. …….. Samadhi, is the ultimate state of undifferentiated consciousness.

E. In ……the focus shifts to subtle objects, such as energy or abstract ideas.

…….Samadhi, also known as Nirvikalpa Samad

5.5 LET US SUM UP

- The path to Samadhi is a sacred journey of refinement and discipline, where each step is a delicate unfolding of the soul‘s highest potential. Like a river carving its way through stone, the practice polishes the mind, dissolving distractions and unveiling clarity.
- The word *Samadhi* in Yoga embodies the profound state of absolute bliss and enlightenment—a sacred union between the self and the infinite cosmos.
- This is the most sublime state of Samadhi, where the ego dissolves completely, and all sense of individuality fades into the infinite. In this sacred union, the practitioner transcends the boundaries of self, merging with the boundless expanse of pure consciousness. It is the ultimate liberation—Kaivalya—a state of unparalleled bliss, where existence is untouched by duality, and the soul rests in its eternal, unshaken essence.
- Samprajnata Samadhi is a state of deep meditative focus where the mind remains aware of its object of meditation. While experiencing clarity, bliss, and reflection, the sense of individuality still persists. It is a refined yet temporary state, marking the first stage of samadhi, where mental activity continues, though highly concentrated.
- Asamprajnata Samadhi, or Nirvikalpa Samadhi, is the ultimate state of meditative stillness, where the mind dissolves beyond thought, duality, and

sensory perception. In this profound state, only pure, unmanifest consciousness remains, transcending ego, intellect, and mental fluctuations.

- Samprajnata Samadhi is a state of conscious meditation where the mind retains a clear awareness of its object, leading to deep concentration. Asamprajnata Samadhi, on the other hand, involves a higher state of meditation where the mind becomes completely still, beyond conscious thought, and merges with pure consciousness.

5.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

A. progressive

B. Savikalpa

C. Nirvikalpa

D. Vicāra

E. Asamprajnata

5.7 FURTHER READINGS

- Patanjala Yoga Sutras by Kaivalyadhama.
- Commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali – Swami Satyananda Saraswati.
- Patanjali‘s Yoga Sutras – commentaries by various authors.
- MEA Official Guidebook .

5.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

1) Explain the concept of Samadhi as a limb of Ashtanga Yoga.
2) Discuss the levels of Samprajnata Samadhi.
3) Discuss the concept of Asamprajnata Samadhi.
4) Explain the two types of Samadhi mentioned in Samadhi Pada of Patanjali Yoga Sutra.

*** ***** ***