



Yoga Sutras of *Patanjali*



*A Guidebook for
Yoga Students*



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Yoga Students*



This book represents a great labor of love, time and collaboration.

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The Yoga Sutras are the essential manual
for those who ask these questions...

Who am I ?

Why am I here?

Am I truly healthy?

Where can I find happiness?

What is Meditation?

Why is it important to be still, or silent?

Why?

After the question is asked, a pause occurs. If you penetrate this pause with all of your being, you will begin to remember, thereby illuminating all the answers you have been seeking. This is the essence to the process of Yoga—to dive into the moments—to get to know who is asking the question first.

After you ask the question

Who am I?

The pause that follows is often full of a feeling.
A feeling that can overwhelm or create a sense of awe.
Either way the space contains a pulsation, a vibration.
The space contains all sound and manifests as a

HHHHHHUUUUUMMMMMM

This pause is a moment, an *anu* (Sanskrit word for atom and moment). This fleeting hum captures a moment. Due to the nature of a moment, though, it is forever changing.

In our opinion, Yoga offers you great insight through the use of specific tools. This work can lead to fully living in a moment in order to optimize your awareness, thus glimpsing your consciousness, and acknowledging the potential for peace and freedom.

Is the moment fueled by desire or feeling?

One perspective is that it's a feeling that comes from a need to feel centered and balanced, which in Sanskrit can be called *sukha*—a good space, happiness, peace, etc. Would you not long for a good space—*sukha*?

There are different types of desire in the *darshan* (philosophy) of Yoga. The longing that keeps us attached is a type of desire that is differentiated in *Pada* (Book) 2 as afflictions (*kleshas*). However, there is a distinctive desire that comes from the liberated self (*jivanmukta*). Vijnanabhiksu, a 15th century commentator, states that the pure desire of the liberated soul is not to satisfy their individual *Prakriti* but to be in service of other embodied beings by sharing the *darshan* of Yoga and living as an embodied conscious being.

It is from this place that this book has been created.

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Traveling from the Darshan of Sankhya to Yoga

A *darshan* is a philosophical construct in which a certain perspective or lens is used to examine the nature of life and all it entails. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras launches from the *darshan* of Sankhya into the heart of Yoga. It offers a glance of the Vedanta System. It's a traveler's guide to freedom based on practicality and, most importantly, personal experience. It is much more than intellectual inquiry though. When understood, it becomes a map of experience. A perfect philosophy to awaken the modern being—you!

The essence of Sankhya is wrapped around the concept of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. *Purusha* is the eternal and unchanging constant; whereas, *Prakriti* represents all that changes. The primary focus of Sankhya is to find one's way back to *Purusha* through the process of conscious detachment from *Prakriti*. It is a perspective that seeks to sit in the eternal, and to do that one must be willing to systematically let go of the world and experience of change. Sankhya is a path of dualism, or separating the one into two. Many times this path is seen to be one of enumeration, or mathematics, in which reasoning is seen through calculation rather than experience. An important thing to understand here is the influence of Sankhya on the practice of Yoga. It is said to be one of the oldest *darshans* of India, and therefore has left its mark on many theories. Both Sankhya and Yoga have similar focuses on liberating *Purusha* from its container of *Prakriti*. The path of Yoga takes a detour at this moment and allows for that experience within the lives we already lead. Even though Yoga shares a few concepts with the *darshan* of Sankhya, there are places in which they differ enough to be considered separate philosophies. One such difference is that Sankhya follows the path of intellect and rationalization, and Yoga aligns itself more with disciplined action and meditative experience.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras sought to share the wisdom of this practice with the householder. There are three main tools outlined in the *sutras* that are important to note: Kriya Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, and Samyama Yoga. These three tools give the practitioner a road map through experience. They allow for insight into specific areas of our lives and how we choose to partake in them. They direct our awareness so that we may acknowledge and act upon the wisdom found in these moments, what to do with that information, and how it assists in the process of consciously evolving. All three of these tools are driven by our discipline of practice and willingness to stay present and focused.

We may begin this practice by contemplating those things we are aware of in life that either change or do not. This process will assist us as we learn to move through this map of experience called the Yoga Sutras.

Purusha- UNCHANGING...List what doesn't change:

Prakriti- THE CHANGING...List what changes:

Purusha

*How do you hold me through this pilgrimage?
Do you stand far and watch me with a loving gaze from the eternal heart?
Do you pulsate in the core of my being...offering yourself as the heart beat?
Do you hold me with a sweet embrace to allow density to dissolve?
Sweet Purusha, do you armor me,
knowing I am stepping in the field where I will have no rest.
How will you be...I ask you Sweet Purusha?
Do you even know?
The only desire as I walk this path is to be held by the Beloved.
Yet, I am in a true bind...who is (my) Beloved? Am I to hold myself?
Is there another capable of holding all the layers of this convoluted self?
I laugh at this inquiry knowing there is no answer
Understanding that the question should have never been asked.
But in asking it allowed it to be.
The dull ache tinged with contemplative awe offers me the desire for space.
A space to expand and allow
With effulgent illuminated inspired sattva.
I can feel in the tamasic heart beats and rajasic breaths
longing to be free of the confines of this body.
I sit a little taller and open up the field all around me
And then I feel it –
A surge of electricity expanding my field even more.
I know this is all for service
Service
Refuge
One glimmer brought me to the portal
One hum stirred the vibration of sound
And forevermore
Potential was made visible.
Sweet Purusha
You awoke to the splendor and awe of your being
Enjoy the journey*

Our Approach

Let us state very clearly right off the bat that we are not Sanskrit scholars, yet we are devoted students and teachers of Yoga through the philosophy shared in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras.

Sanskrit is a very precise language. There are often 6 definitions for one word, and meaning is expanded or contracted based on the relationship of the word to other words in the *sutra* as well as the order of the words.

Usually what is first in the *sutra* indicates what is the main focus of the *sutra*. With reverence we share our understanding and invite inquiry and discourse. These beautiful Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the various important commentaries on the *sutras* have been our companion in this life, and we find the answers to many of our inner questions nestled inside the 196 *sutras* of Patanjali. We share with you our insight and offer you questions to explore and unveil your own wisdom and understanding. Enjoy the journey through the Yoga Sutras, fellow traveler! May they become your companion on your own journey.

The Yoga Sutras is a book of succinct teachings presented in poetic verse. The commentary we are providing is based on the study of texts referenced at the end. Maryam offers her poetic explorations of key yogic concepts throughout this guidebook.

Before I embark

I bow.

I bow to the teacher who sits before me

To the teacher behind me

To the teacher who sits to the right and the left side

I bow to the teacher above and below me.

Most importantly, I humbly bow to the greatest teacher

Who sits within me.

Namo Namaha

Enjoy your journey back home fellow traveler...

May you light up the darkness.

Fellow travelers

*Let us pursue the desire to be liberated from the bonds that have
Kept us all from seeing ourselves as whole and perfect.*

*We have been identifying with the changing;
How do we embody that unchanging pure self?*

*Let's begin with a desire for the journey,
Pade pade...step by step.*

Desire springs us into action;

Contemplate, study,

Stay humble.

Taste the nectar of wisdom,

Allow it to flow for all.

Grasp not the gems of droplets,

Allow them to be accessible for all beings.

We are free when we live as embodied Yogis

Conscious...awake

Peaceful...loving

Able to fearlessly hold the darkness.

Courageously allowing the light of understanding to burst forth

Which is often blinding for sentient beings.

Therefore, drop by drop we journey;

Tasting slowly

Feeling deeply

Listening quietly

Moving towards stillness

Let us walk.

Introduction

*P*atanjali is a great enigma in the history of Yoga Philosophy. Was he a person? Was he a title? Was he a type of demigod? Was he a combination of all of these? There have been a few Patanjali's in Indian Philosophy. Were they the same person? Equally as important are commentaries on the Yoga Sutras, especially the first one by the sage and teacher Vyasa. Vyasa's commentary has had the greatest influence on our interpretation of the Yoga Sutras. Patanjali has divided the Yoga Sutras into four chapters called *pada*. The first chapter is Samadhi Pada. Often in philosophical texts the ultimate path is offered at the beginning and the subsequent chapters offer more adaptable and accessible paths on this journey. The first 16 *sutras* give purpose to all the remaining 180 *sutras* that follow.

The word *sutra* has two meanings: 1) to bind, to bring together for understanding and knowledge, like a suture binds the skin together so that it may return to its original state. 2) The prefix "su" means good and "tra" means tool. Therefore, *sutra* can mean a good tool.

Every *sutra* is comprised of just a few words. They were taught as a chant with a poetic quality inherent to the teaching. The intent was that this journey would be embarked upon with a teacher, and the *sutras* would offer guidance for the teacher to advise the student. With this in mind, as you read the *sutras*, don't jump too quickly to interpret and give meaning. Sit with it and take time to understand. We have presented this *sutra* study in a manner that gives room for you to contemplate. We provide brief insights into the meaning and then offer you questions to consider the meaning of the words and how they are relevant to your journey with Yoga.

Advice to the Traveler:

*Sip the sutras on this journey
Savour the flavors of the teachings
Know Yoga as a living vibrant path*

Chapter 1

Samadhi Pada



Namo Patanjali

*As much as we strive to understand you
Your nature is now elusive to us.
We call you editor and codifier
We call you diety and guru
You are nameless and undefinable.
We simple bow humbly to you
With gratitude for the Yoga Sutras
Which guide us consciously on the path
of awakening
of empowering
of understanding
– of Yoga.*

Om Namaha

Samadhi is the last limb in the Ashtanga Yoga method, defined in the second *Pada*. We are aware of its existence from the beginning. Yet as travelers, we never grasp for it. So perfectly Patanjali titled the first *Samadhi Pada*—the ultimate state of absorption. It naturally arrives, as we embody the teachings. *Samadhi* has layers, some more accessible than others, yet all attainable. *Samadhi* refers to the state of ultimate absorption in our absolute nature of joy.

Sutra 1.1

atha yoga anushasanam

NOW that one is ready the teachings of Yoga will be shared.

Atha is not unique to only the Yoga Sutras. It is a common beginning to many philosophical texts.

When we arrive at this point, there is an implied understanding between the teacher and student. The student has a level of maturity that reflects readiness for commitment and ownership of their individual process.

It is an INTENTION to bring your ATTENTION to this moment. Leave everything else aside. Empty your cups of knowledge and leave space to be completely present to this very precious moment where the teachings will be revealed.

How do you step into the NOW? Write down a few tools that you utilize to help you become present:

Sutra 1.2

yoga citta vritti nirodhaha

Yoga is the process of developing clear perception by setting aside the activities of the mind.

Patanjali invites the traveler to clearly understand what one is stepping into by revealing the essence of this journey. By setting aside the transient nature of the mind (thoughts) that we get stuck in, we allow space to step into clarity. But first, we must step out of the whirlpool of *vritti* (activities of the mind) so that we gain insight of what lies within.

In the pursuit of freedom, we are guided to understand the nature of our mind and the practice (Yoga) that is needed to not be in bondage of the *vruttis*. The next *sutra* reveals why the *vruttis* keep us from our freedom. Before we continue, pause and ask yourself...

Do you want this? Do you find this valuable? Why?

Is having a clear perception of yourself important?

Sutra 1.3

tada drashtuh svarupe 'vasthanam

Then the Seer abides in its true and unchanging essence, peacefully...

Drashtuh is another word for *Atman* (Seer/Witness). Unlike *citta*, which is evolving and changing, the Seer does not change. It is the eternal witness. The intention of this path as shared by Patanjali is to find calmness in the field of *citta* in order to clearly embody the essence of the *Atman*.

Atman is akin to *Purusha*. It is an absolute constant and therefore unchanging. Yoga is one of the few paths that allows space for the individual consciousness and the collective. Even though they are interrelated, it is necessary to explore them independently, thereby creating an understanding of the bond that is shared between the individual and the collective. The Path of Yoga, especially Raja Yoga of Patanjali, states we must first seek the internal (unchanging) in order to understand the external (changing) by using meditation as our primary tool.

Sutra 1.4

vritti sarupyam itaratra

...otherwise the thoughts (vrittis) will become our distorted view of our self and we will remain unpeaceful.

If the intention of Sutra 1.3 is not sought after, then what is? This *sutra* states that if you choose to not seek to know the Seer, you will inevitably identify with the waves of thoughts (*vrittis*) which are often distortions of who you are.

The distortions are based on the changing nature of *Prakriti* and its innate instinct for survival. This confusion works its way into the mind because it's a misrepresentation of the true nature of self. Therefore, Yoga is the journey of opening up the mind field, creating new patterns to let go of our habits and thoughts that keep us stuck in this distortion.

As one of our teachers, A.G. Mohan-ji says this *sutra* is basically saying, "If you do not pursue the practice of minding your mind, you will be a mess."

What is creating the greatest unrest in your mind?

Where do your thoughts take you when you are contemplating your Self?

Are these thoughts reflective of the unchanging or changing aspects of your Self?

Sutra 1.5

vrittayah panchatayyah klishtaklishtah

There are five types of activities of the mind (*vrittis*), some of which are more in line with the Self (Atman) than others...

Sutra 1.6

pramana viparyaya vikalpa nidra smritayah

...direct perception, misperception, illusion, sleep, memory.

Often when we begin to study the Yoga Sutras, it may remind us of Psychology 101 classes from college. We will highlight two important points to take into consideration when reading these *sutras*.

Our mind is active; this is the nature of the mind and cannot be disputed. To spend time attempting to stop all our thoughts will actually prove to be a very frustrating experience in which one is going against the nature of the mind. There are various types of activities (*vrittis*) that go on in our mind. All the activities will create impressions in some way. Knowing where these impressions begin will enable us to differentiate between the activities that lead to our habitual impressions (*samskaras*). This is a vital step in realizing the self.

It is our relationship to the *samskaras* that can bring forth the state of Yoga or not. It is how we cultivate our awareness of the nature of our mind that can either bring us to a place of ignorance or consciousness.

Now, ignorance and consciousness are vast, multi-dimensional concepts. The Yoga Sutras addresses them both through numerous *sutras* we will study in the future.

Right now, Patanjali is inviting you to recognize the true nature of your mind. If you choose to only address the symptoms, *samskaras*, of the mindfield (*citta*) then you will perpetuate a state of constant reactivity. The purpose of this path is to cultivate consciousness in order to create more and more ease and return to the desire stated in *Sutra 1.2*.

Understanding the nature of the *vrittis* will help us gain insight into whether they are true reflections or distortions of the Self. This insight will then provide an appropriate direction in which to place our awareness.

Awareness of the *vrittis*: Set a timer for 2 minutes. Take a few long deep breaths, close your eyes, breath in a calm, relaxed manner and begin to observe your thoughts. Sutra 1.6 offers us insight that there are different types of *vrittis*: direct perception, mis-perception, illusion, sleep and memory. Observe

the thoughts. Remember, images that come up can be *vruttis* too because images are ways that memories are stored.

After two minutes, write down the thoughts that came through and reflect on the categories they are in based on *Sutra 1.6*. This is a powerful way to begin to cultivate awareness of the *vruttis*.

Sutra 1.12

abhyasa vairagya abhyam tan nirodhah

The state of yoga is attained via a balance between effort for practice (*abhyasa*) and freedom (*vairagya*).

Sutra 1.13

tatra sthitau yatno 'bhyasah

Practice requires the effort towards steadiness.

Sutra 1.14

sa tu dirghakala nairantarya satkara adara asevito dridhabhumih

Practice becomes grounded through consistent, earnest, uninterrupted effort for a long period of time.

Sutra 1.15

drishta anushravika vishaya vitrishnasya vashikara sanjna vairagyam

Freedom is attained through the self-mastery of releasing bondage to sensory pleasures that leave longing and clinging for the seer.

These four *sutras* will be addressed collectively as they comprise the essence of the journey of Yoga. The order in which information is presented in the Yoga Sutras is not to be overlooked. Practice precedes freedom/nonattachment (*vairagyam*) because it is what grounds us. It is our devotion, dedication, work and effort that reflect our willingness to first show up for our selves even when it is easier not to.

There is a very important distinction in understanding the philosophy of *vairagyam*; it does not mean that you are not present to the moments of life, rather you are fully immersed in the experience of the now (*atha*). This teaching is offered to lessen the influence of the activities of the mind (*vruttis*) that cloud the Seer from true self-mastery. The freedom we are speaking to is the freedom from the attachments to the fruits of the action. When you soften this attachment, one is able to give fully to the present moment, practicing *vairagyam*.

We often teach our students to “fall in love with all the moments of life”. The philosophy of *vairagyam* in tandem with *abhyasa* is the path of becoming fully conscious and awake in this human experience. It allows us to stay committed to our practice without reaching for the fruits of our labor. Only then can we truly be present and receive the lessons that each moment provides. This path embodies the essence of Tantra, Zen Buddhism, Sufism and the path of the Mystic...to fall in love with all the *atha* moments of life. By cultivating an attitude of not grasping the goal while at the same time having the tenacity and willingness to show up every day for the pursuit of the goal, we are provided the answer on how to achieve the state of Yoga. Here we are presented with one of many paradoxes found in the Yoga Sutras: to stay committed without promise of a guaranteed outcome. Any student of philosophy will tell you the secret is found in between the seemingly opposite tools.

What do you show up for every day? Why?

What expectations do you have about your practice? Why?

Look in
Can you see the space between your cells?
Can you hear the sound of silence between your heartbeats?
Can you feel the flow of life in your blood?
Can you taste the nectar that runs through your nadis?
Can you smell the fragrance of your essence?
What embodies all of it and at the same time is beyond it?
You...beautiful...powerful...expansive...you.
Here is the invitation...Yoga.

Sutra 1.16

tatparam purusha khyateh guna vaitrishnyam

Considered greater than renunciation of worldly pleasure is the ability to be free from any disturbances of the gunas (in essence Prakriti). This is how Purusha can be pursued.

This is the first place in the Yoga Sutras that the *gunas* (rope) are introduced. There is an assumption that the student already has some knowledge of the *gunas* (*tamas*, *rajas*, *sattva*). If we recognize that this path of Raja Yoga is asking the practitioner to quiet the mind so that one can abide in one's true essence, there is also an understanding that the mind's (not *Purusha's*) true nature is *sattva*. Here lies the paradox of this journey. If we are to transcend the *gunas*, then surely even *sattva* must be renounced or set aside. However, the mind needs the *sattvic* energy to enter its deepest state of consciousness, which in actuality transcends the mind (*citta*), ego (*ahamkara*), and wisdom (*buddhi*).

Gunas are intertwining forces that guide and create this life experience. We need all three of them. The relationship between *rajas* and *tamas* is what births *sattva*. *Sattva* is a force of energy that is not independent of *rajas* and *tamas*, yet it has its own unique qualities. Very much like the Yin/Yang/Dao principle there is always Yin in Yang and Yang in Yin. There is always *tamas* in *rajas* and *rajas* in *tamas*. The Dao is *sattva*.

We prefer to not label anything good or bad. These are neutral forces with unique energetic qualities.

Tamas – Qualities: Dense • Slow • Still • Silent

If there is too much *tamasic* energy it can manifest as laziness, depression, or lethargy.

Sattva – Qualities: Balanced • Harmonious • Peaceful

Its nature is balance, and there actually is no imbalanced state for *sattva*. If one becomes imbalanced it is because this harmonious state has been overcome by *tamas* or *rajas*.

Rajas – Qualities: Active • Energetic • Movement

If there is too much *rajas*, this energy can manifest as hyperactivity, anxiety, inability to find ease, restlessness, and disturbed sleep.

This *sutra* is where we pause in order to truly understand that even when you have achieved “self-realization,” there is still more inner work and to stay humble in that endeavor. This *sutra* is also the first place that the term *purusha* is introduced. Both the concept of the *gunas* and *purusha* are introduced for the first time in such a way that they are not defined but refined. Once again, the assumption is that the practitioner has an understanding of the essence of Sankhya. Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras is the main text of the philosophical school of Yoga. Throughout the Yoga Sutras, we understand that this system of Yoga is building upon the philosophy of Sankhya, yet offering a slightly different journey towards freedom (*kaivalya*) for the practitioner.

As you embark on your journey with the *gunas*, recognize all three are always present. However, there will always be one that is most dominant. A nice way to think about them is that they are portals; each portal tunes life in a specific way. Tune the station to more *rajasic* frequencies, and you will most likely listen to music that makes your feet tap and your body move. Tune the station to more *tamasic* frequencies, and you will most likely be lulled to sleep and encouraged to rest in your sloth-like tendencies. Tune the station to *sattvic* frequencies, and regardless of the genre of music, you will be present to the balance of sound and harmony.

There are so many layers to the *gunas*. Try to understand them in simple terms and enjoy the elusive poetic interpretation of life they offer us.

You will find throughout the Yoga Sutras this reverence for the *sattvic* state. Can you describe a recent *sattvic* moment you have experienced?

The Source of Prakriti

*I closed my eyes
And felt them...
Pulsating energies;
The energies the alchemist tried to harness
The energies the physicists tried to name
The energies the mystics tried to embody.*

*In my seat, I observed...
One of them was so fast
In instances of moments I saw births and rebirths
I stood before creation in awe
The awe was for both destruction and transformation
I decided to call this force Rajas*

*I became deeply quiet, sinking into myself
Till I dissolved into a very still concentrated force
This force moved slowly, almost sluggishly, yet honoring its need for rest
As I sat with this force, I hesitated as to what to call it.
At the same time in its laziness it was sustainable
I called this force by the name Tamas*

*I was exhausted by the awe of Rajas
I was confused by the convoluted nature of Tamas
So I decided to rest and truly enjoy the
Space of being*

*In this space held by the inner seat
Embraced on either side by Rajas and Tamas
There it emerged
The final force;
A beautiful conscious song
A force that took no force to be
An energy that was the portal to the subtlest experience of thy Self.
The Self softened enough to feel completely safe and whole
recognizing it Self in the atom of this moment.*

Sutra 1.20

shraddha virya smriti samadhi prajna purvaka itaresham

These steps/qualities will support the practitioner's journey towards the unbound/freedom (kaivalya):

1. ***Shraddha*** – Personal conviction/deep trust that comes from experience leads one towards truth, specifically the clarity of truth
2. ***Virya*** – Vitality/vigor/perseverance/indomitable will
3. ***Smriti*** – A remembrance/memory that provides wisdom that supports a deep understanding (*dhyanam*)
4. ***Samadhi*** – Complete absorption
5. ***Prajna*** – Understanding the true nature of the object and ability to embody the essence of the object without attachment to the object (*vairagya*)

This *sutra* is considered one of the most important as it summarizes, like much of the *sutras* in the first *pada*, the essential teachings of the evolutionary stages of consciousness. We can share here that the freedom (*kaivalya*) that is being pursued by the seeker is really the journey towards being fully conscious. Sometimes we minimize what being conscious is truly about and this *sutra* brings us back into the realization of the awesome undertaking it is and how fulfilling it can truly be.

Contemplate an experience or idea that you would consider a “personal conviction”. Write about how it helped you gain clarity of yourself, others, or in a situation.

Based on the experience or idea contemplated in the question above, how did you gain vitality (*virya*) from it?

Sutra 1.24

klesha karma vipaka ashayaih aparamrishtah purusha vishesha ishvarah

The timeless teacher is a special kind of Purusha that is untouched by kleshas, karma or samskaras.

It is interesting to note that this *sutra* has the longest commentaries of any of them! Just this fact in and of itself inspires one to study this further. This place to pause offers us an interesting insight into *Ishvara* (defined in Sutra 1.26) that the next few *sutras* will attempt to help define and even offer practices to get in touch with qualities of *Ishvara*.

The idea that *Ishvara* is a type of *Purusha* invites the practitioner to understand that this journey to identify with *Purusha* versus *Prakriti* in this life is complex. Like many *sutras*, there is an element of humility into which the practitioner is invited.

Remember, Pada 1 is offering us the ultimate, and in these teachings we are to remain humble at the same time have faith that this path is pursuable, even if mastery may be seemingly unattainable. In the words of A.G. Mohan, "Attain the possible, know the ultimate!"

Sutra 1.26

sa esha purvesham api guruh kalena anavachchedat

Ishvara is the teacher of the ancients because it is untouched by time or condition.

Essays could be written about the concept of time in the Darshan of Yoga. Time can only be defined to the process and movement of matter (*Prakriti*) with specificity regarding the *gunas*. *Ishvara* transcends these influences. This *sutra* also differentiates the Yoga Darshan from others. Edwin Bryant states, "The Yoga School rejects this view and subscribes to the position that the soul retains individuality even in a liberated state." The duality of the individual and the collective dissolves into one complete experience of the now. This statement harks back to the Upanishads...thou are that.

Ishvara is also a concept that distinguishes the philosophical systems, as some *darshans* define *Ishvara* as God or the Divine, and some refer to *Ishvara* as *Atman*. The Darshan of Yoga notes the individuality of each being as well as the community of like-minded beings (*sangha*) united together. *Ishvara* is not an absolute concept. It is malleable and dependent on the interpretation. The most important idea of *Ishvara* is found in the concept of the Timeless Teacher. Every moment is an opportunity to learn, if you are willing to explore *Ishvara*.

What do you think? Understanding that your ideas will evolve and expand with time, what is your belief around the soul? What does this word mean to you? Is it important in your journey of life?

What is your personal spiritual philosophy?

Is *Ishvara* that is spoken about in this sutra resonating with you?

Have you had any experiences recently where you have discovered the teachings of the moment? If so, describe.

Sutra 1.27

tasya vachakah pranavah

Eternal teacher is represented by pranava (synonymous with OM).

Notice how this sutra does not state that *Ishvara* is OM. It only states that a quality of *Ishvara* is embodied in *pranava*. Also recognize how the mantra OM is not mentioned in this *sutra*. Instead, another very expansive word is offered, *pranava*.

Pranava is almost undefinable simply because the root of this word is one of the most misused words in Yoga...*prana*. Let's pause for a moment to take a look at *prana* and then we will come back to *pranava*.

Prana is the life force that flows through all things that are alive. All living things, from a person to a plant, carry *prana*. We strive to keep our *prana* flow healthy and in balance. We achieve this balance not by trying to control this intangible life force, but by using various tools to access and manage it indirectly. It's an energy that responds best to indirect manipulation. Because it is so elusive and intangible, it can be dangerous to try to control it directly. One of the 8 limbs of the Ashtanga Yoga of Patanjali is called *pranayama* – the tool is the breath. Our breath is the most powerful tool to keep our life force flow healthy and balanced. It is important to state that breath is not *prana*. Breath is a vehicle that carries *prana* throughout the physical body.

Etymology is a powerful tool used to study words by looking at the parts of the words and the subsequent meaning. This is very challenging to do with Sanskrit because the meaning changes depending on how you divide the word. *Pranava* has been translated in two ways: Perfectly praised sound – Pervading vibration of life.

Ishvara is similar to *prana* because both speak to the intangible. The simplest translation of *Ishvara* is a personal yet unnamed/undefined teacher. How can it be defined? Wars have been fought in pursuit of this. What is beautiful to examine about this sutra is that the invitation for the practitioner to experience *Ishvara* is through *pranava*/OM. The first doorway to understand this *sutra* is to dive into the experience of *pranava* through the mantra OM.

In the depth of the silence of meditation, often practitioners, teachers, rishis and sages have spoken to a hum that is heard pervading the space of silence. To define this sound through words can be very elusive. Prior to defining it as OM...it was *pranava* – an all-pervading vibration that can be best captured in the mantra OM. There is no question to ask here, only experience to embark upon.

Take 7 days and have a daily practice that encompasses OM, either you

chanting or listening to a CD of rolling OMs as part of your meditation. You can also chant along with an audio recording of OM, which is a great way to begin cultivating your relationship and understanding of *pranava* and OM.

Set aside a few minutes each day to keep a daily log below.

*OM sweet home
I arrive at the front door
I step in
In wonder I look around
Seeing space open and limitless
Feeling the earth below my feet giving me steadiness
Sensing the flow of water sustaining this life
Hearing the crackling of the fire bringing warmth
Smelling the air full of comfort welcoming ease.*

*I understand I am here
In a space of contentment
That some call home
I settle into the most comfortable seat
And I start to hum a lullaby
The lullaby of my soul.*

*The lullaby begins to lose its harmony and melody and soon
It turns into an eternal hum that I no longer need to do
I only merge with the sound that has always existed all around
I had forgotten
Now in the comfort of myself I remember
OM sweet home.*

Sutra 1.30

**vyadhi styana samshaya pramada alasya avirati bhranti-darshana
alabdha-bhumikatva anavasthitatva chitta vikshepa te antarayah**

From the nine disturbances (Disease, Idleness, Doubt, Carelessness, Laziness, Lack of detachment, Misapprehension, Failure to attain a base for concentration, and Instability) come four categories of disruption:

Sutra 1.31

**duhkha daurmanasya angam-ejayatva shvasa prashvasah vikshepa
sahabhava**

Suffering (mentally), Dejection (emotionally), Trembling (physically) and Disturbed Inhale and Exhale.

The symptoms of the nine disturbances are summarized in three categories a.k.a. stress syndromes (*Dukha, Daurmanasya* and *Angam-Ejayatva*) and found specifically in the imbalances of the breath. These teachings are derived directly from Ayurvedic knowledge.

Sutra 1.32

tat pratisedha artham eka tattva abhyasah

To prevent (these nine obstacles and their four consequences) the recommendation is to make the mind one-pointed, inviting it to learn how to focus on a single principle or object.

These *sutras* offer the problem, the symptoms and a solution. In the midst of the Samadhi Pada, the first book of the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali is laying out the ultimate teachings of Yoga. He also keeps it real by sharing that these obstacles and consequences may happen and offers a solution: Practice being present in the moment by cultivating a one-pointed mind.

In Book 2 of the Yoga Sutras, the main framework of Yoga is laid out in the Ashtanga system, the 8-fold path. In Ashtanga, one of the limbs is *Dharana*, single-pointed focus. We are getting a prelude to *Dharana* here and also learning about how essential this tool is from the beginning.

Now how do we practice and cultivate this single-pointed focus? It happens by activating awareness in many aspects of our life. The following seven *sutras* list a few ways to live the practice of awareness alongside of focus.

Sutra 1.33

maitri karuna mudita upekshanam sukha duhka punya apunya vishayanam bhavanatah chitta prasadanam

In relationships, the mind becomes purified by cultivating feelings of friendliness towards those who are happy, compassion for those who are suffering, goodwill towards those who are pious, and the skill to not lose your calm center towards the impious.

The four attitudes (*bhavanas*) of mental steadiness are achieved by cultivating the following: Attitude of friendliness for the happy, attitude of compassion for the suffering, attitude of joy for the virtuous, and attitude of non-judgement for the impious.

Bhavana is a central concept in the philosophy of Yoga, a central teaching of Yoga taught by Sri Krishnamacharya. This is why yoga is not a stretch class because the attitude of the practitioner is called to be cultivated. Bhavana is a term whose origins are found in Ayurveda and refers to process of creating medicine.

Sutra 1.33 is a foundational *sutra* that influenced Buddhism and reflects the four virtues: *Maitri*, Friendship; *Karuna*, Compassion; *Mudita*, Joy; *Upekka*, Unwavering.

Sutra 1.34

pracchardana vidharanabhyam va pranayama

The mind is also calmed by regulating the breath, particularly attending to exhalation and the natural stilling of breath that comes from such practice.

Sutra 1.35

vishayavati va pravritti utpanna manasah sthiti nibandhani

The inner concentration on the process of sensory experiences, done in a way that leads towards higher, subtle sense perception also leads to stability and tranquility of the mind.

Sutra 1.36

vishoka va jyotishmati

Or concentration on a painless inner state of lucidity and luminosity also brings stability and tranquility.

Sutra I.37

vita raga vishayam va chittam

Or contemplating on having a mind that is free from desires, the mind gets stabilized and tranquil.

Sutra I.38

svapna nidra jnana alambanam va

Or by focusing on the nature of the stream in the dream state or the nature of the state of dreamless sleep, the mind becomes stabilized and tranquil.

Sutra I.39

yatha abhimata dhyanat va

Or by contemplating or concentrating on whatever object or principle one may like, or has a predisposition to, the mind becomes stable and tranquil.

The last sutra listed is a remembrance that Yoga is a personal practice. Both the individual and the collective consciousness are acknowledged and interrelated. When the individual consciousness is part of anything, it must leave room for the individual's cultural influence, background, and desire to be acknowledged. Therefore, it is important to contemplate something that truly resonates with the individual.

How do you relate to these teachings? Are there any obstacles you are dealing with right now or any symptoms you are exploring in your life? What practice can you engage in to invite the single pointed focus that will support your journey towards peace?

Chapter 2

Sadhana Pada



Self Mastery

*The daily effort of kneading the longing into a
beautiful experience of the moment.*

This has been the most challenging work of my life

The curse of longing pulls the matrix threads of my heart

Keeping me from being fully here.

I am pulled into the past and then thrust forward into the future

My breath changes and my body aches

The curse of longing has become my greatest teacher

The teacher of Self Mastery.

The ultimate bondage is to the past and future.

The most freedom I feel is to stand in this moment

with pure love and joy in the Self

Knowing and understanding that all of it is able to be tasted and

experienced only in the essence of now...

everything else is a substitute.

Sadhana in its simplest translation means practice. Its full translation is a “spiritual personal practice”. This chapter provides intelligent pathways with specific tools in order for you to show up consciously every day. *Sadhana* gives *abhyasa* and *vairagya* purpose. *Sadhana* is differentiated from *abhyasa* because *sadhana* is the canvas on which *abhyasa* and *vairagya* paint the picture of your experience.

*The external embrace
Lasts a lifetime internally
Having experienced it
I am deeply satisfied.*

*Knots release
I swim among the threads internally
That once trapped me externally.*

*The external songs that pierced my ears
Now are love songs to my soul
All I hear is the internal hum.*

*The eyes that looked to the outside
Now without effort
Look here to understand there.*

Sutra 2.1

tapah svadhyay ishvarapranidhanani kriya yogah

The Path of Action (Kriya Yoga) is comprised of self-discipline, study, and the ability to learn from the experience in order to surrender to a decision that serves the Atman.

There are several Sanskrit words for action. *Kriya* refers specifically to action that is for intentional transformation.

Sutra 2.2

Samadhi-bhavanarthah klesa-tanu-karanarthas ca

The purpose (of Kriya Yoga) is to invite samadhi by weakening the obstacles in the way.

As you continue your studies, you will soon find out that the three ingredients in this *sutra* are the last three *Niyamas* of the 8-limb system presented later in this chapter. These three ideas work synergistically to create the first formal practice (*sadhana*) of Yoga: Kriya Yoga. Patanjali offers us this tool at the beginning of the journey of Pada 2 giving us insight that obstacles will be coming up. You'll need a tool as a traveler, and the tool offered is Kriya Yoga.

The first ingredient is *tapas*. This Sanskrit term has gone through an evolution of definition. Erroneously, *tapas* has been simplified into meaning to heat or burn. We offer this more comprehensive definition: The willingness to make effort without attachment to the outcome. Think about when you make a fire: it takes consistent effort and method to build a healthy fire. It takes effort, concentration, and will that inspires versus diminishes. The path of austerities (i.e. fasting, standing on one foot for 7 years) is released in the *darshan* of Yoga. Now the discipline is about being focused with determination that doesn't destroy or disrupt the Witness/*Atman*. Now the discipline is held up to the mirror of compassion (*ahimsa*).

The second ingredient is *svadhyaya*. This Sanskrit term is clear and simple; do your study. Be willing to look at all the perspectives: Look into it, look around it, look at it with a teacher, look at it with a *mantra*. *Svadhyaya* is also translated to mean the use of *mantra* to create understanding. The term *mantra* means tool "*tra*" for the mind "*man*". The idea here is that a *mantra* will create space in the mind. This space will cultivate clear vision and understanding across all perspectives so that you are able to make a wise decision. This tool offers us space, as there is no way to rush the process of study. Study embodies the qualities of patience and thoughtfulness. When we study we don't jump to conclusions or react. We observe.

The third ingredient is *Ishvara Pranidhana*. This final ingredient is not about devotion to the Timeless Teacher. Rather, it is about the ability to learn from the experience in order to surrender to a decision that serves the *Atman*. This process is what helps to sharpen our tool of discernment that leads away from reactionary judgment into compassionate responses.

*The Path of the Yogi begins at the moment
When one declares I AM.*

*I AM HERE
Standing boldly
With a willingness to eradicate ignorance
And choose clarity.
Asato Ma Sad Gamaya
Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya.*

*The Yogi
Seeing clearly steps in
And begins the inquiry.
Self-understanding begins to simmer
All guided by the elusive question that has
Driven all inventions and answers to be born
WHY?*

*Asking Why with greater devotion, the Yogi
Creates a sea of churning ripples
Why are you asking why...Who are you to ask Why...Who are you?
Once again the Yogi returns to the entrance of the path
And declares
I AM HERE.
And so goes this journey day after day.*

*Then one day, a few days later or perhaps 10,000 years later
The inquiry stops about the Who and Why of Why
And something incredible begins to unfold.*

*A deep sense of faith based on trust
A recognition that there is a choice
The Why's slow down and turn into one singular inquiry
Which transforms into a request.*

*Mrtyorma Amritam Gamaya
For the Nectar of Freedom
Ecstasy.*

Sutra 2.3

Avidya-asmita-raga-dvesabhinivesah Klesah

The obstacles are non-clarity/ignorance, ego, attachment to pleasure, aversion to pain and fear of loss as a by-product of change.

The order of the *kleshas* are important, as ignorance is the breeding ground for the remaining four. Ego leads to attachments and aversions, likes and dislikes. The fear of loss as a by-product of change is when we fail to see the part of ourselves that is eternal. This fear is part of all beings. Our first instinct is to live. Our journey is to move wisely through life and release the gripping of the fear of death and embrace the nature of life.

Sutra 2.5

Anityasuci dukhanatmasu nitya suci sukhatma khyatir avidya

Ignorance creates a perception that the Atman (naturally pure and non-changing) is to be impure and changing.

The English translation of *avidya* into ignorance does not really offer a clear understanding. *Avidya* is the absence of having self-awareness, or to put it more concisely, the inability to see clearly. *Avidya* is also the cause of why people go against their true, wise nature.

When we are unable to be centered in our wisdom (*vidya*), we are seated in our *avidya*. From this place we tend to return to our “survival instincts,” the great gift the ego gives us in protection. However, if we are chronically in this state, we become very passionate about what we like and what we do not like. Therefore we grip our beliefs more and more and find that we cannot tolerate loss, so we hold on a little tighter each day. This cycle can be stopped, which is the Raja Path (the Great Path) with the tool of Kriya Yoga.

What doesn't change? Describe a belief of yours that has evolved. What tools helped you evolve your belief?

Sutra 2.6

drg-darsana saktyor ekatmatevasmita

Seeing the “i” and “I” as the same. Seeing consciousness through the instrument that is only reflecting it...*asmita* (ego).

Our ego is a very important part of our mind: It is one of the four functions of the mind: *manas*, *citta*, *asmita* and *buddhi*.

The ego has an important role that gives us our personality and also offers us a mirror in which to see ourselves. Utilize your ego to understand yourself. Don't ignore it or deny it. Keep understanding it and you will find ways to have healthy relationships with your likes, your dislikes, and your fear of loss and change. In this way, you close the gap between the “i” and “I”.

Sutra 2.7

sukhanusayi ragah

Pleasant feelings create attachments to longing/desire.

This *sutra* offers us profound insight into desire. The desire that stems from the memories (one of the *vrittis*) of the happy moments keeps us away from being present to what is right in front of us. Therefore, we will not be able to see clearly and inevitably return to the *samsara* (the cyclical nature of life and rebirth) of cultivating ignorance.

It is very important to note that this *sutra* is not stating that desire is wrong. When desire becomes an obstacle is when we become attached to the catalyst bringing about the feeling, rather than understanding the feeling is possible without the catalyst of that event. As with everything in Yoga, it can be medicine or poison. Our longings can turn into addictions that keep us from seeing clearly, bringing us back to the root of the matter — *avidya*.

**Speak to a specific longing/desire and how you can see it as your medicine.
How can you see it becoming your poison?**

Sutra 2.8

dukhanusayi dvesah

Suffering creates aversion.

Suffering is a by-product of pain. Pain cannot be avoided. Sufferings manifest when we get stuck in the memory of a painful moment. It is through the process of releasing the attachments to the painful moment and only keeping the lessons learned that we transcend this obstacle.

There is avoidance that is very wise, like touching fire. Then there is avoidance that actually keeps us from creating clarity. Is there anything you are avoiding facing in your life right now? How can you see facing it as helpful?

Sutra 2.9

svarasa vahi viduso pi tatharudho bhinivesah

Our nature (svarasa) is to cling to life, for both the ignorant and the wise...

The moment we are born, we have the natural reflex to survive! None of the *kleshas* are asking us to avoid this clinging but to understand it is inherent to the being. Often there are *sutras* that ask us to stay humble on this path. All the *kleshas* stated help us to create compassion and understanding for our nature and to choose what we want to identify with.

What are you gripping, or what is gripping to you?

What part of this life do you fear losing the most?

Sutra 2.10

te pratiprasava heyah suksmah

...as the being returns to one's original state (true nature) the subtle (suksma) kleshas are dissolved.

How do you return to your true nature? The next *sutra* answers it...

Sutra 2.11

dhyana heyas tad vrttayah

The fluctuations of the mind that the kleshas create are eliminated by meditation.

Now we connect 1.2 to the *kleshas*. If Yoga is defined as the quieting of the fluctuations of the mind, then here we are given further insight that the *vrttis* are actual products of the *kleshas*.

We understand in Indian Philosophy the introduction of ideas is presented from gross to subtle. The gross layer, comprised of the mind/body/breath, is where we find the greatest influence of the *vrttis*. Ultimately, in working with our *kleshas*, we will either strengthen or weaken our *vrttis*.

Now in retrospect, Kriya Yoga is given as the first tool in dealing with the source of our *vrttis*. However, to master the subtle energy of what actually creates the *kleshas* is the state of meditation. The next tool that is offered will be the 8-limb path. It offers us a framework to find our way to meditation.

Sutra 2.25

tat abhavat samyogah abhavah hanam tat drishi kaivalyam

The Seer becomes free, when the clarity of the understanding between Purusha and Prakriti are embodied.

This *sutra* introduces the concept of *kaivalyam*, a term used in Yoga to speak to the state of freedom, a freedom that is specific to being free from suffering. The fourth book of the Yoga Sutras is titled *Kaivalyam*. Exemplifying the importance of the pursuit of this central teaching, this term is often translated as aloneness. If you are clear between what is *Purusha* and what is *Prakriti* then each aspect is alone. One can also flip this coin and understand *Kaivalyam* as wholeness.

Purusha and *Prakriti* are central ideas in the path of Yoga. Studying and understanding them can impact our ability to make decisions in our lives where we are not reactive. Finding appropriate responses to situations can keep us free from suffering.

*Exhausted
I look at the blades of grass
Wondering how they do it
In the full sun...
Walked all over...
Some days dew sits on them heavy
Other days little bugs call them home
But today I see them all
Some bow, some rise, some die, some live
I am but a blade of grass
I feel Divine's sweet feet brush against me
Here and there
I keep rising to the sweet eternal Light*

Sutra 2.26

viveka khyatir aviplava hanopayah

The means of freedom is discernment, not judgment.

Viveka is a powerful term to understand in Yoga Philosophy, even more than *samadhi*. The various layers of *samadhi* are indescribable; in that realm words and thoughts fall away. If so, then how can we possibly describe it? *Viveka*, on the other hand, is more tangible. We can describe the difference between discernment and judgment.

Discernment is the first stepping-stone on the path to freedom. The 8-limb path is the technology offered to sharpen the tool of discernment. Discernment is the ability to differentiate between two similar things. It does not lead towards demonization of any thing.

How would you describe the difference between judgment and discernment in your own words?

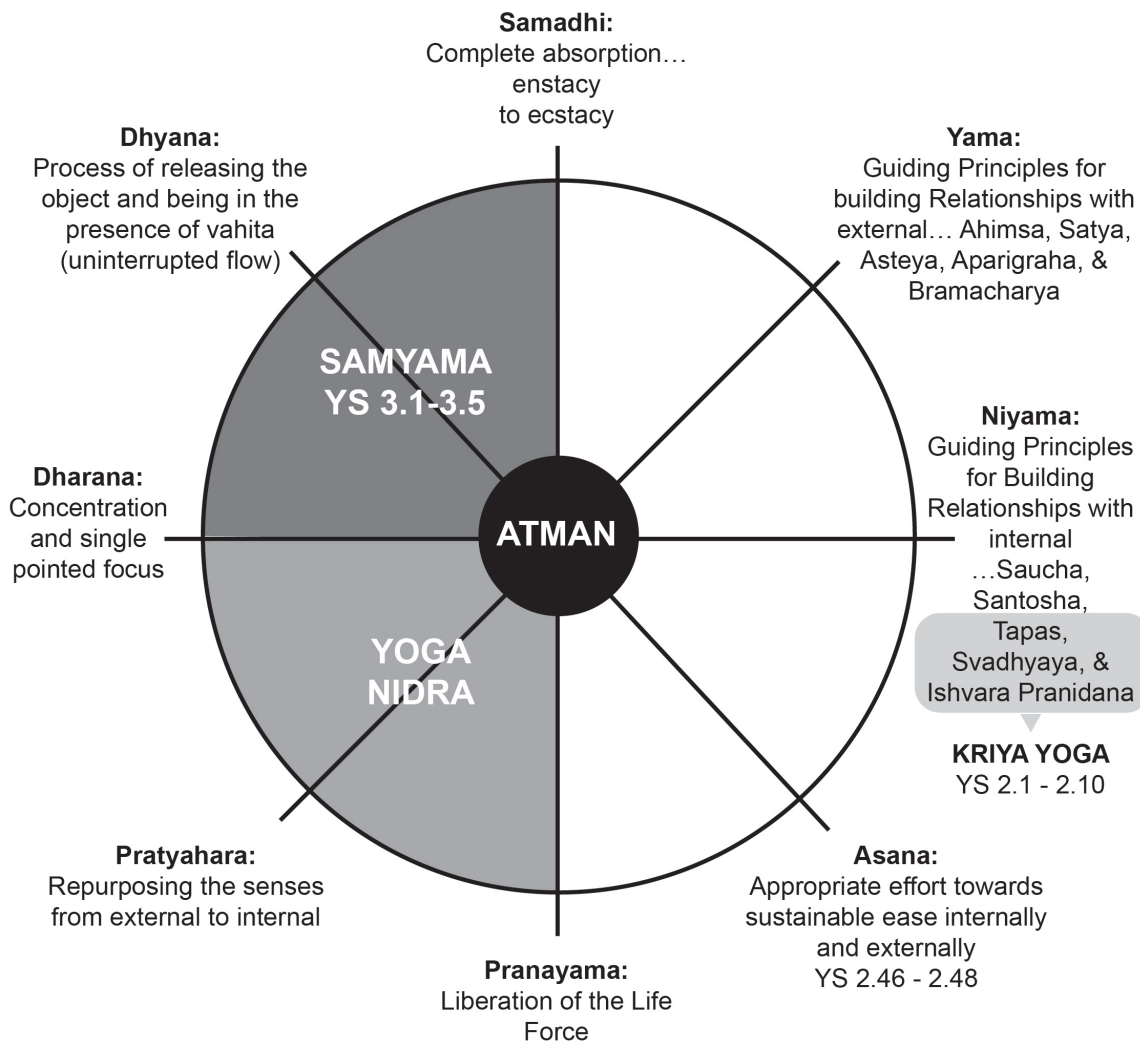
Sutra 2.29

*yama niyama asana pranayama pratyahara dharana dhyana samadhayo
'shtavangani*

The limbs of the eight-fold path are as follows: guiding principles external (yama) and guiding principles internal (niyama); harmony with your body (asana), your energy (pranayama), your senses (pratyahara), and your thoughts (dharana); contemplation (dhyana); complete absorption (samadhi).

Patanjali offers the student a process of cultivating a healthy relationship with oneself and others. The 8-limb path is a process that has no end. It invites us to continue to remain in awe and wonder of the dimensions of our being.

Raja Yoga Patanjali Ashtanga Yoga - 8 Limb Path



Sutra 2.30

ahimsa satya asteya brahmacharya aparigraha yama

The guiding principles for interacting with the external world (yama) least harm/compassion (ahimsa); truthfulness/transparency (satya); not stealing/generosity (asteya); non grasping/satisfied (aparigraha); and reverence to the usage of energy (brahmacharya).

The five guiding principles for minding the external realm:

1. **Ahimsa:** Least harm – Being compassionate towards the self, others and nature.
2. **Satya:** Truthfulness – Transparency, understanding truth is fluid and allowing truth to be explored.
3. **Asteya:** Generosity – Recognizing that you are and have enough.

The first three are what we consider the trinity of all ethics...all three are important...and notice how truth is in the middle. It finds its fluid balance in reflection of *ahimsa* and *asteya*. This relates to freedom. We often think that freedom is simply being who we are and living in our own truth. Truth is not absolute; if it were we would not need wars. Truth is fluid and needs to allow room for others. The hardest part of living in our own individual truth is that there also is a collective truth to be aware of and that cannot be denied.

One of the distinctions between Yoga Philosophy and Vedanta, for example, is that Yoga believes in both the individual and the collective at the same time – Freedom for the *Atman* and for the collective *Purusha/Para-Atman*.

4. **Aparigraha:** Non-grasping – Being satisfied with what we already have.
5. **Brahmacharya:** Reverence to the usage of energy (all energies including sensuality).

Sutra 2.31

jati desha kala samaya anavachchinnah sarvabhauma mahavratam

Showing respect for others without regard for social station, or for place, time, or circumstance in all spheres is universal.

As we embark, the student is invited to have a few guiding principles, a code of ethics on how to interact with ourselves and other fellow travelers. Isn't it outstanding that at the onset we are offered some guidelines so that we create safety for ourselves and others?

Yoga respects the individual religious beliefs. It is what separates Yoga from religion. These *sutras* offer a unifying guidance for all beings to come together. As Yoga teachers, the *Yamas* and *Niyamas* are powerful themes to bring classes together around and will help you keep the Yoga in the *asana*!

Consider starting your day by stating a guiding principle, a *yama* that you would like to understand and embody. See if you can make it your teacher for one day.

Here are some simple practices to consider for this week:

Day 1 - *Ahimsa*: Least harm

Study how you showed compassion towards others and towards yourself. At the end of the day, just note below a few moments where you were conscious in your practice of *ahimsa*.

Day 2 - *Satya*: Truthfulness

Explore if there were moments when you got in the way of others exploring their own truth? Did you try to give them your own truth? Were you transparent with yourself today?

Day 3 - *Asteya*: Generosity

How did you “steal” from others and yourself? Consider looking at how you practiced being generous, perhaps by being on time, being prepared, making space to slow down so as to not to feel rushed.

Day 4 - *Aparigraha*: Non-grasping

Reflecting on the day, did you feel yourself grasping or gripping at anything. How did you grip your breath, your body, mind, emotions, or anything else?

Day 5 - *Brahmacharya*: Reverence to the usage of energy

Take a moment to reflect on your day and what actions, words, or thoughts reflected the reverence you have for yourself and others?

*I related to the forks all jammed into
one contained space in my kitchen drawer.
What happens if the forks mingled with the spoons
Would they lose their use?
Would there not be enough room for both?
Would they look at the other and judge themselves
As useful or useless?
Or could they lay by each other
In their own perfection
Completely trusting that their purpose is already known
Cultivating a patient steadiness
And experiencing a peaceful ease in their unique
Individual expression
Externally
Internally
Simultaneously.*

Sutra 2.32

saucha santosha tapah svadhyay eshvarapranidhanani niyamah

Cleanliness (saucha), contentment (santosha), self-discipline (tapas), self-study (svadhyaya) and choosing to surrender to wisdom (Ishvara Pranidhana) comprise the internal guiding principles (niyama).

The 5 guiding principles for minding the inner realm:

1. **Saucha:** Cleanliness – Exploring what you bring into your space.
2. **Santosha:** Contentment – Finding peace with what is right now, understanding it will change.
3. **Tapas:** Self Discipline – The drive of being disciplined.
4. **Svadhyaya:** Self-study – The study of internal and external information.
5. **Ishvara Pranidhana:** Process of interacting with the timeless teacher – The choice to surrender to wisdom.

In some commentaries it is said that the most important of all of them is *Ishvara Pranidhana*. In the first book, the practitioner is offered the option to use *Ishvara* as tool. Here it is no longer an option, but a principle. The use of *Pranidhana* is VERY important as it reflects the process of how to interact with *Ishvara* (wisdom). It is through our alchemical relationship with *Ishvara* that *viveka* and *prajna* spill forth and we find that we are limitless.

Just as we did with the *Yamas*, let's explore the *Niyamas*.

Day 1: *Saucha* – Cleanliness

Starting with the external and moving to the internal, where do you see clutter? Look around your home and work, and see if you feel the energy is balanced or chaotic. Start to become conscious of what you are bringing in. **Describe each part below and offer a way of creating more *saucha* in the space.**

Home:

Work:

Body:

Mind:

Breath:

Day 2: *Santosha* – Contentment

In the Sutra 2.42 a specific frequency of ease (*sukha*) is described. *Anuttamah sukha*...the greatest happiness, ease that creates no attachment. **From the awareness of one good thing in each area, describe how that one thing in that one moment can grow and cultivate overall contentment.**

Home:

Work:

Body:

Mind:

Breath:

Day 3: *Tapas* – Self Discipline.

A Yogi is one who effortlessly displays self-discipline. When it is cultivated with a sense of commitment, it transforms into effortless effort. In each area below, choose to focus on one thing that you feel takes a tremendous amount of energy.

How can you transform the level of effort so that the act doesn't feel like "work" but more like a natural extension of your will? (i.e., Sitting with yourself to focus on your breath may initially feel like work, but through self-discipline over time, the act of sitting with yourself transforms out of effort and into ease. This process will naturally bring up obstacles. The key is to stay committed to the practice without creating harm.)

Home:

Work:

Body:

Mind:

Breath:

Day 4: *Svadyaya* – Self-study

There are many gateways into the tool of introspection, such as self-questioning, study with a teacher, and study with valid text. What is initially needed is space. Therefore, we first begin to clear the mind through self-practice (*sadhana*) that may involve the use of *mantra*, *pranayama*, *asana*, contemplation, or application of the *Yamas* and *Niyamas*. **Now look at each area below and choose an aspect you would like to develop a better relationship with. Through this inquiry, are you led to new insights?**

Home:

Work:

Body:

Mind:

Breath:

Day 5: *Ishvara Pranidhana* – Surrender to wisdom

This most intimate *niyama* offers us a space in which we consciously cultivate awareness of our process of trusting and allowing. To many, this journey is the recognition of the spiritual nature of our life. **In each area below, choose one aspect where you have chosen to surrender to the wisdom trusting the teaching for the “I” more than the desire of the “i”.**

Home:

Work:

Body:

Mind:

Breath:

Sutra 2.33

vitarka badhane pratipraksha bhavanam

If negative thoughts find their way in on this journey, cultivate the opposite.

Understanding that the application and embodiment of the *Yamas* and *Niyamas* will be challenging, Patanjali offers a beautiful tool: *Pratipaksha bhavana* (cultivation of an opposite attitude).

This is modern positive psychology, yet it has been around for thousands of years! The term *bhavana* is not only referring to an attitude, it is the action of cultivating the attitude. The simplicity of the *sutra* is recognizing the process of cultivation that is needed to not let the negativity take root.

Is there a constant negative thought that keeps creeping in? What is a positive thought you can work with when this negative thought appears? Practice this for 3 days and share your experience below:

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Sutra 2.46

sthira sukham asanam

Appropriate amount of effort to sustain a good space of experience.

In our opinion, this is the essence of the entire journey. *Asana* embodies both the external (physical seat) and the internal (contemplative seat). It is when these two work harmonically that we move from “posture” to *asana*, from exercise to Yoga. This *sutra* is speaking to the qualitative experience of the moment rather than the mechanical. Ultimate alignment is achieved with the balance of effort and ease resulting in a sustainable container through which the moment (*atha*) is experienced.

On the Mat Practice:

Here we are given the qualities, almost the feeling of the experience of *asana*. Is this the experience we have in every posture (*asana*) we practice in our classes? Is it possible to find this experience in every part of the practice?

Off the Mat practice:

Where in your life do you find the qualities of *asana* as described in this *sutra*?

Sutra 2.47

prayatna shaithilya ananta samapatti bhyam

Release all strain so that the body no longer trembles and distracts from the experience of the infinite.

Sutra 2.48

tato dvandva an abhighatah

This results in a victory over the duality of life.

(Through the experience of ease in the body) sensations/senses cease to disturb and a state of *sattva* and pure balance is achieved where one experiences *Atman*.

These two *sutras* share a desire that all beings have: to find an inner peace so that we are not so controlled by the external. The more we are in command of the inner and have a strong and stable relationship with ourselves, the less the external world can disturb us. All the external world will do is offer us mirrors to look at ourselves and cultivate *viveka*.

So on a practical level, why do we practice *asana*? The transition from doing the actions to being the experience is where the mastery of an *asana* is revealed.

Describe a recent moment you have had where you were not disturbed by the external because you were peacefully connected to the internal:

Sutra 2.49

tasmin sati shvasa prashvsayoh gati vichchedah pranayamah

(From asana) the softening of the force which sustains life and is carried in the breath begins, control and expansion of prana is experienced (pranayama).

Sutra 2.50

bahya abhyantara stambha vrittih desha kala sankhyabhih paridrishtah dirgha sukshmah

The experience of the breath is in the external flow (exhale), the internal flow (inhale) and the space in between. These are regulated by place, time, and number, with breath becoming long, smooth, slow and fine.

These two *sutras* provide us with insight that the intention of breath-work is to bring about certain qualities, which are long, smooth, slow, and fine. These qualities are reflected in the word *dirga*. Here we also are introduced to the three parts of the breath: inhale, exhale and suspension/retention.

Asana and *pranayama* are interconnected. The relationship of the limbs to each other is important because it's not linear, but interconnected. We begin to cultivate the breath and its qualities in the *asana* practice. May the practice bring us to the experience of long, smooth, slow, and fine movements and postures. In this way, the *asana* practice is really a dynamic *pranayama* practice.

The practices of *pranayama* that are more active: *Bhastrika*, *kappalabthi*, *agni sara*...etc., are all considered *kriyas* (cleansing action) and are used for clearing and cleansing but not intended for long term use. They are utilized with purpose for a specific time period.

We enter this life with a certain number of breaths. Do we not want to lengthen them and allow them the greatest ease? Do we seek longevity and balance in this life? May our practice reflect what is important to us.

Sit for a few minutes and breathe with a specific focus on the qualities of long, smooth and fine. Write below your experience. Which qualities were easier to cultivate...long...smooth...fine?

Sutra 2.51

bahya abhyantara vishaya akshepi chaturthah

The fourth pranayama is the experience of the prana that transcends the parts of the breath.

Sutra 2.52

tatah kshiyate prakasha avaranam

The veil covering the light of the true self then vanishes.

Yoga students often ask what is the fourth breath. A.G. Mohan shares that this fourth *pranayam* is very much like the fourth layer of consciousness, *turiya*. It is an experience based on the transcendence of the first three. This same idea is carried into *pranayam*. The fourth *pranayam* is the totality of the inhale, exhale, and suspension as it builds the perfect container to be in the presence of *pranayam*. The inhale, exhale, and spaces between the breaths are like the waves of the ocean. Now we are asked to dive into the ocean, underneath the waves, and sit in the stillness and silence of the waters. Best to not seek the

fourth *pranayama*; it naturally emerges. This is the awareness that the activity of breath is a distraction and will need to eventually be released in order to sit in the experience. *Sutra 2.52* gives you insight to what happens in this experience... the inner veil covering the light vanishes and you merge with yourself. The less forceful you are with yourself (mind, body and breath) the more space you provide for this experience. There are no limitations set here; you are simply given insight into the potential.

Sutra 2.54

svavisayasamprayoge cittasya svarupanukara ivendriyanam pratyaharah

When the mind is under control, the senses are automatically under control and do not need to be restrained. It is a natural occurrence...one reflecting the other. The mind and senses are therefore interconnected.

Sultry Breath

*You enter me and bring forth life
You leave me and clear out death
As I soften to embrace you
You become more elusive.*

*You divulge your sensitive edges
Transfiguring into a subtle force
It is best to engage with you from the seat
Of non duality
From the seat where I release this world.*

Sultry Breath

*As you move through
I allow the fourth dimension to enter which
Opens up all convoluted layers
Offering the experience of the
Progression of the totality
As silence and stillness settle
With more ease and comfort
I experience
The deepest part of you
And therefore
The deepest part of myself.*

Sutra 2.55

tatah parama vasyata indriyanam

From this comes the highest control of the senses (and therefore the mind).

We experience this life through our senses. We create life through our sensory interactions with the external world. The senses in Yoga are called *indriyas*, and there are 10 of them. Five of them are internal—*Jnana*. Five of them are external—*Karma*. *Jnanendriyas* are the senses of knowing: Seeing, touching, hearing, smelling, and tasting. *Karmendriyas* are the senses of actions: Moving, eliminating, reproducing, grasping, and speaking.

You may feel that the *sutras* lack emotion — *Pratyahara* is where and how we develop our emotions. We develop our likes and dislikes based on the information our senses draw in or put out. This limb is also an invitation to practitioners to manage their emotional plane. The quieting of the mind is absolutely dependent on the quieting of the senses that will inevitably quiet the emotions. Emotions are not spoken of directly. They are manifestations of likes and dislikes. The Yoga Sutras choose to focus on the tools that gather information more than the by-product of the information gathered.

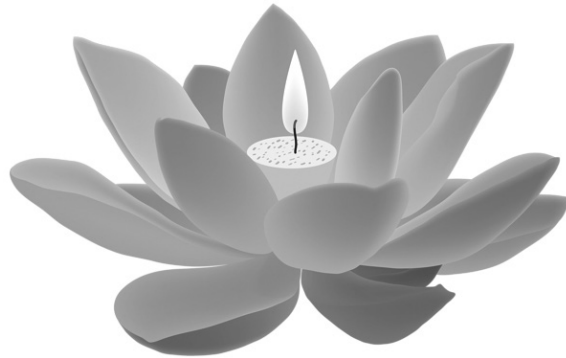
Pratyahara is a process that involves going to the source of our emotional landscape. The senses inspire peace to this terrain through the quieting process, and give space to move from the external into the internal. This is very challenging and often where the practitioner gets stuck the most. We live in a world that thrives on the over-stimulation of our senses. We feel deprived when our senses are not entertained.

As the limbs become more subtle, the process becomes all that more challenging as it demands more discipline and earnestness. These limbs are a lifetime of work, so enjoy the mastery of understanding them. Try not to rush the process because the learning is found in the experience.

Spend the day listening to what you hear around you. Notice how much stimuli is coming from sounds outside of yourself compared to the sounds coming inside of yourself, i.e., breath, heart beat?

Chapter 3

Vibhuti Pada



*We came, we all came
As a mere reflection of the other.
We came to find a way of remembrance
To find a way to share and not abuse
To find a way to inspire without threat
To find the way.
We all hang from a precarious jagged edge
We can fall
Or we can transcend.*

*The wood through ceremony transcends itself
And evolves into ash.
This ash carries the potential of transformation.
The great majestic gifts of the Raja path become clear
And we stop longing for the gifts
Instead, embody them with great ease.*

V*ibhuti* is another word for *siddhis*. *Siddhis* are the powers we gain through the course of our practice. Interestingly this chapter begins by wrapping up the last three rungs of the 8-limb path and offering a final type of practice – *samyama*. It is through the technology of the most subtle, internal limbs together that the greatest gifts (*siddhis*) are born. Rightfully so, in the presentation of power, the Yoga Sutras asks us to respect these powers.

Sutra 3.1

desha bandhah chittasya dharana

The ability to bind your focus and concentration onto a single object begins the process of cultivating consciousness through awareness.

The ability to concentrate is a necessity for anyone choosing to embark on the knowledge and practice of Yoga. Mohan-ji shares that this may be the most important of all the limbs because we must first choose to focus before we approach the *Yamas*...etc. It is the entry point where every other limb is dependent upon this limb. If we cannot concentrate, then there is no beginning.

Understanding that this is a skill, we are given tools from our teachers to hone this art. The tools are the mind, body, and breath. They work in synchronicity with each other so that all layers of the being are immersed into the experience simultaneously.

Reflect on your own practice. What are the tools that have been most effective for you to focus and concentrate? How do you utilize them in your practice and daily life?

Sutra 3.2

tatra pratyaya ekatanata dhyanam

Allowing your thoughts to flow in an uninterrupted stream results in contemplation (dhyana).

Vahita is the Sanskrit term used to describe the uninterrupted flow. *Dharana* is the process of sitting on the banks and seeing the river, perhaps even feeling the

waters of the river. *Dhyana* is the process of merging with the river and becoming the flow. There is no longer you and the river. You are one.

We cannot teach meditation. It is a personal, internal journey that will be revealed when the experience is given space. As teachers, we only have tools that cultivate *dharana*, and that is where we stop. Our responsibility lies in encouraging each person's experience of merging and flowing with the river as their own. We simply create the space for the experience to happen. Let us never tell them what it "should" be like.

There is a universal experience that does manifest, and this we can speak to. It is called peace.

In Yoga, freedom is attained through the practice of cultivating wisdom – it is a daily practice. The journey towards meditation is where we find our inner teacher. This is the greatest teacher with whom we will ever study.

Technically this is *samadhi* as well. There was a time where the teachings shared only a 7-limb path. Later on *samadhi* was added as the experience of the object and subject as one. This is akin to the ideas of the fourth *pranayama*, fourth layer of consciousness. *Samadhi* is the culmination of the totality of it all, and leads us to the complete understanding of *Svarupa* (*Atman*).

As teachers, we uphold these teachings as we share the path, and offer experiences for students to gain insight in order to cultivate discernment. May our offerings cease to create harm, may they be clear, and not steal from the students' own inner wisdom. Everything you need is already there if you are willing to get still and recognize it.

As Sutra 2.52 shares, soften and remove the inner veil and all will be revealed. Think of the most recent experience you've had where you were in the presence of uninterrupted flow and describe.

*I was left alone
In my blissful effortless solitude
I found the ultimate relationship...
To love freely in the space of Presence with the great Matrix of life
To make love with my breath in the Presence of Atman
All senses turned inwards and explored the corners of my human experience
Awakening the awe and wonder of my vessel*

*I transcended this matter
And began to laugh at the audacity to think we can love unlimited
In this limited container
Ha!*

*So every night
I transform
I transfigure
I transport
Leaving my vehicle
Entering the etheric space
Where form doesn't need to exist
And Formless Love is free to be*

*So in this human incarnation, I will have relations
Clear bounded relationships
Created for safety
Infused with Reverence
And grounded in Integrity*

Sutra 3.3

tadeva artha matra nirbhasam svarupa shunyam iva samadhih

Samadhi is the pure reflection of the Self (Atman) without the need for any object. Pure experience of the totality of the sum where there is nothing and everything (shunyam).

There is only one *sutra* for this limb...so we enter with profound reverence. This *sutra* reveals that *Samadhi* is the continuation of *Dhyana*. It is the evolution of *Dhyana*...Yoga is Meditation — Yoga is *Samadhi*. This, like many things in Yoga, is not an intellectual understanding, but an experiential happening.

Sutra 3.4

trayam ekatra sanyamah

(The three processes of dharana, dhyana, and samadhi) when taken together, are the components of the subtlest experience called samyama.

Ironically, we gain mastery by softening and exerting less and less effort, which in turn allows access to what was once seemingly unattainable but now is completely within reach...this experience is called *samyama*. This Sanskrit word is comprised of “*sam*” total and “*yama*” reins/control. Complete control of the self leads to complete freedom of the Witness/*Atman*.

Sutra 3.5

tajjayat prajnalokah

Allowance of this experience (samyama) gives rise to wise discernment.

Discernment is a layer that keeps appearing in the Yoga Sutras. There are a few words that are utilized to reflect this knowledge: one is *prajna* and the other is *viveka*.

Prajna speaks to the process of moving from judgment to discernment, a monumental concept that requires small moments to digest, assimilate, and transform. The moments require patience, fortitude and the ability to remember.

Give an example of how you can shift a judgment into wise discernment. (i.e. “I really don’t like backbends” shifting to... “At this point in time, with the state of my back, backbends do not serve me.”)

Granthi

*The knots that bind us
Often effortlessly untie
With a soft touch
With soft words
With a soft gaze
The knots loosen
And the center is experienced
As a deep well of peace
That has always eternally been.
Humanity has the capacity to remind each other
Of this space, or*

*We can easily remind each other
To tighten the knots
So that no one can untie them
For if they come unbound then you will
Become vulnerable
And float free in the immense ocean of humanity.
Stay tethered to this ground, drop your anchors
Tie yourself strongly to the weight
So that you feel the shackles.*

*I bow to those who choose to walk softly
Talk softly and touch softly.
Safety illuminates
And we walk boldly into
The immense ocean
And serve lovingly
All the creatures that swim in the waters
With no need for an anchor or shackles.
What tethers them...?
Knowledge of themselves that only comes through practice.
They no longer need shackles
But in the wisdom that all is in perfect harmony with clarity
They are freed through the experience of their Atman
With the process of Yoga.*

Sutra 3.10

tasya ṡrashanta vahita samskarat

The mind's undisturbed peaceful flow occurs due to minimal disturbance from the [external] samskaras — or — The mediative state (prasanta vahita) remains as long as the [outgoing] samskaras are managed.

The undisturbed flow in Sanskrit is *prasanta vahita*. It provides a description of the flow found in the state of meditation, in the state of Yoga.

Here there is an understanding of the type of *samskara* being discussed. There are internal and external *samskaras*.

We work with internal *samskaras* the most because they can create the most havoc and affect our “lenses” of perception of the internal and external worlds. The external *samskaras* are the ones that we let play out so that they don't get entrapped in the continuous loop of habit. *Karma* and *samskaras* are complex aspects of Indian Philosophy. It is important to take time to study. Knowledge gained from patient study and reflection can help you attain inner peace and freedom.

Sutra 3.34

hrdaye chitta samvit

(By samyama) on the spiritual heart (hridaya) insight into the mind (chitta) is provided.

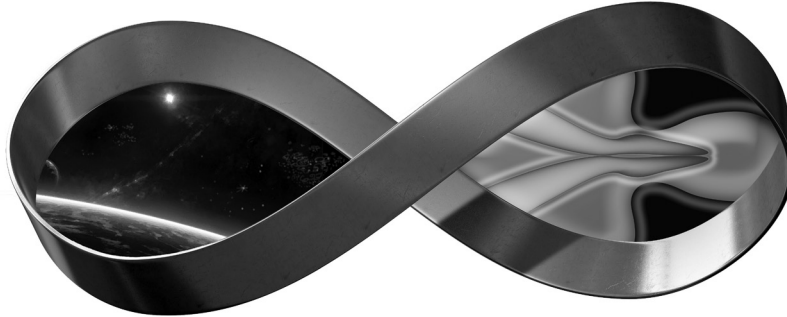
This is the first time the spiritual heart, called the heart lotus in the Upanishads (philosophical Vedic text), is mentioned in the *sutras*. In Hatha Yoga, Sri Krishnamacharya would first focus on the breath originating from the center of the chest in order to create space around the *hrdaya*. The *hrdaya* is known as the origin of *prana*, *chitta*, and *Atman*.

Hridaya (spiritual heart) is one of the hardest words to translate. As we traveled in this journey through the Yoga Sutras, I am certain you have found that the harder a concept is to translate, the more contemplation and intimacy is required to extract its wisdom. Although a *sutra* may only contain three Sanskrit words, be wise to not overlook it. Take time to contemplate through the tools of *samyama* of the origin of your mind.

This remembrance is to guide the practitioner to the wisdom that the expansion of love is the natural by-product of this pilgrimage.

Chapter 4

Kaivalya Pada



*I humble myself to what is
In awe
I stand in this solitude
A song of the sweetest love I have ever known
And the deepest desire I have ever felt.*

*I cannot hold it only for myself alone
I offer myself and
Invite this life to offer ways for me to share it
In my walk
In my words
In my actions
In my touch
All sinuous circuitous extensions of my love*

Pada 4 is called the chapter on freedom. In Sanskrit it is called *kaivalya*. It is not the same as *moksha*, another Sanskrit word for freedom. This distinction is important to understand. In English, we have one word for big ideas such as Freedom, Love and Desire. In older languages there are often multiple words for each of these ideas.

Moksha (also known as *nirvana*) speaks of an absolute freedom that is free of everything, even consciousness.

Kaivalya speaks of an absolute freedom that is free of everything, yet it is the freedom to experience consciousness through the state of Yoga. Consciousness is not awareness. Our awareness expands, but consciousness is, has been, and will be. It is unchanging.

Sutra 4.5

pravritti bhede prayojakam chittam ekam anekesam

Among the many minds created by the Yogi is one that is created from the ego.

Sutra 4.6

tatra dhyana jam anasayam

From the multiple minds created, the one born of meditation is free of Karma

These two *sutras* are speaking to the *siddhis*. *Siddhis* are our ability to manifest different gifts; however, none of them will lead to liberation according to the *Yoga Sutras* because they are borne forth from the ego. That remembrance and relationship to our unchanging self (*Drasta/Atman/Ishvara/Purusha*) borne forth of meditation is the clearest path towards freedom.

The gifts we have are important, yet we can easily "lose our minds" with our gifts. Take a moment to acknowledge one of your gifts and imagine how that might happen.

Sutra 4.18

sada jnatah chitta vrittayah tat prabhu purusasya aparinamitvat

Due to the unchanging nature of Purusha, the fluctuations for the mind are always known.

This is a *sutra* that is emphasizing a core principle of the philosophy of Yoga. *Purusha* is not the mind. It is beyond the mind, and can observe the mind.

Sutra 4.25

vishesa darshinah atma bhava bhavana vinivrittih, tada viveka nimnam kaivalya pragbharam chittam

For one who sees the distinction between the mind and soul (prakriti and purusha), reflecting on the nature of the self ceases

Sutra 4.26

tada vivekanimnam kaivalya prag bharam cittam

Then, we move towards ultimate liberation (kaivalya)

Kaivalya also means aloneness. It is the understanding that this experience is deeply internal and personal, though it doesn't mean we become lonely on this path.

Sri Krishnamacharya, one of the great teachers of Modern Yoga, always emphasized this remembrance to his students. Those students are now our teachers, and they continue to spread his teachings today. We sometimes forget because we have a "tribe mentality" and want a sense of belonging, however, the cultivation of wisdom and inner freedom does not take away from human connection. It allows us the capacity to participate more lovingly and joyfully in life and in our relationships.

Sutra 4.34

purusha artha sunyanam gunanam pratiprasavah kaivalyam svarupa pratistha va chiti shaktih iti

Ultimate liberation is when the gunas (released from any purpose for Purusha) return to their original state, when the power of consciousness is situated in its own essential nature

This beautiful and powerful *sutra* is the exclamation point at the end of the collection of 196 Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. It needs no commentary. It demands contemplation.

Yoga offers the hope that this is possible. Many have journeyed on this path called Raja Yoga, the path of power – the hero's journey, and a glimpse of all the teachings will have been experienced. The ultimate journey is your own. Dive in. Find support through wise Yoga Teachers, Yoga Therapists, and fellow travelers.

This is the ending point of this essential collection of sutras for yoga travelers, practitioners, and teachers. We often begin and end our practice by placing our hands together in front of our chest, keeping the space in between the palms open. This is *anjali mudra*, a symbolic gesture that embodies humility and is an offering to the quest for wisdom and freedom that begins in the heart. We offer it in order to illuminate that this journey is not just about the mastery of the mind field, but also about the feeling of how we approach this inner work.

“Action without knowledge is futile, and knowledge without action is empty.”
~ Krishnamacharya

*“Yoga is not an object. It is a knowledge that is
preserved through practice.”*
~ A.G. Mohan

May we preserve it together fellow travelers and share it generously!

Namo Namō Namō Namō Namaha



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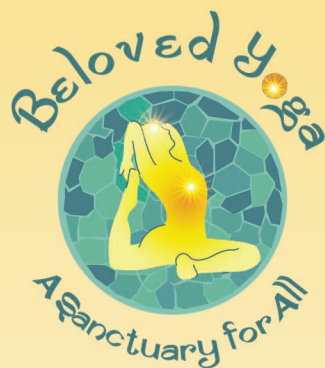
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