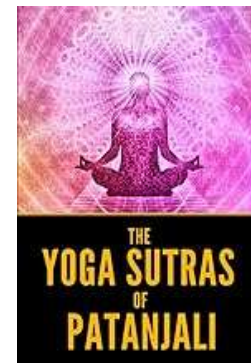


The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

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Yoga Sutras Background



- The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali is a collection of Sanskrit sutras (aphorisms) on the theory and practice of yoga – 195 sutras (according to Vyāsa and Krishnamacharya) and 196 sutras (according to others, including BKS Iyengar); each sutra is three to five words in Sanskrit, so the Yoga Sutras were memorized and were part of an oral tradition for millenia undoubtedly.
- The Yoga Sutras are comprised of four books; what the West calls yoga is the first book, postures and stretches and breathing exercises, so what is in the other three books?
- The Yoga Sutras was compiled in the early centuries CE, by the sage Patanjali in India who synthesized and organized knowledge about yoga from much older traditions.

Yoga Sutras Practice



- The Yoga Sutras is best known for its reference to ashtanga, eight elements of practice culminating in samadhi.
- The eight elements are
 - yama (abstinences),
 - niyama (observances),
 - asana (yoga posture),
 - pranayama (breath control),
 - pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses),
 - dharana (concentration of the mind),
 - dhyana (meditation) and
 - samadhi (absorption).
- The main aim of practice is kaivalya, discernment of purusha, the witness-consciousness, as distinct from prakriti, the cognitive apparatus, and disentanglement of purusha from prakriti's muddled defilements.

Yoga Sutras History



- The contemporary Yoga tradition holds the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali to be one of the foundational texts of classical Yoga philosophy.
- However, the appropriation – and misappropriation – of the Yoga Sutras and its influence on later systematizations of yoga has been questioned by David Gordon White, who argues that the text fell into relative obscurity for nearly 700 years from the 12th to 19th century, and made a comeback in the late 19th century due to the efforts of Swami Vivekananda, the Theosophical Society and others.
- It gained prominence as a classic in the 20th century

Yoga Sutras



- The Yoga Sutras are a composite of various traditions.
- The levels of samādhi taught in the text resemble the Buddhist jhanas.
- According to Feuerstein, the Yoga Sutras are a condensation of two different traditions, namely "eight limb yoga" (aṣṭāṅga yoga) and action yoga (Kriya yoga).
- The kriya yoga part is contained in chapter 1, chapter 2 sutras 1–27, chapter 3 except sutra 54, and chapter 4. The "eight limb yoga" is described in chapter 2 sutras 28–55, and chapter 3 sutras 3 and 54

Commentators on the Yoga Sutras



- The Yogabhashya is a commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali, traditionally attributed to the legendary Vedic sage Vyasa who is said to have composed the Mahabharata. This commentary is indispensable for the understanding of the aphoristic and terse Yoga sutras, and the study of the sutras has always referred to the Yogabhashya. Some scholars see Vyasa as a later 4th or 5th century AD commentator (as opposed to the ancient mythic figure).
- Vyasa is, however, not the only commentator on the text. Another well-known commentator on the Yoga Sutras is Vachaspati Mishra, who had also written commentaries on other schools of Indian philosophy such as Vedanta, Samkhya, Nyaya, and Mimamsa. After Vyasa, it is believed that Vachaspati Mishra's commentary is the "next most authoritative." Other commentators include Bhoja Rāja, Vijñānabhikṣu, and Rāmānanda Sarasvatī. Vijñānabhikṣu, according to Bryant, wrote the "most insightful and useful commentary after that of Vyasa's." Bhoja Rāja and Rāmānanda Sarasvatī's commentaries follow the previous commentaries, without expanding much on what their predecessors have said. Hariharānanda Aranya, in contrast to the above figures, is a modern commentator on the text. Bryant explains that, even though "his is a standpoint exposed to Western thought", it is still "thoroughly grounded in tradition".

Samadhi Pada (51 Sutras)



- Samadhi is a state of direct and reliable perception (pramāṇa) where "the seer" (Purusha, pure consciousness, the Self) abides in itself. Samadhi is the main technique the yogi learns by which to calm the workings of the mind, whereafter Kaivalya, the isolation of 'the seer' from the impurities of the mind, is attained. The author describes yoga and then the nature and the means of attaining samādhi.
- This chapter contains the famous definitional verse (YS 1.2): "Yogaś cittavritti-nirodhaḥ" ("Yoga is the restriction of the fluctuations of mindstuff"). When the mind is stilled, the seer or real Self is revealed:
- 1.3. Then the Seer is established in his own essential and fundamental nature.
- 1.4. In other states there is assimilation (of the Seer) with the modifications (of the mind).
- YS 1.33–39 mentions seven practices to still the mind, the seventh being meditative absorption (YS 1.39), which is further explained in YS 1.40–51 and YS 3.1–12.

Sadhana Pada (55 Sutras)



- Sadhana is the Sanskrit for "practice" or "discipline," aiming at discriminative discernment, to discern the Seer (consciousness) from its objects and the hindrances.
- Here the author outlines two systems of Yoga:
 - Kriyā Yoga and
 - Aṣṭāṅga Yoga ('Eightlimbed Yoga').
- Kriyā Yoga in the Yoga Sūtras is a preparation for Aṣṭāṅga Yoga (with three special elements of the Niyamas (2nd limb)):
 - 2.3 tapas – austerity[38]
 - 2.4 svādhyāya – self-study of the scriptures
 - 2.5 īśvara praṇidhāna – devotion to god or pure consciousness

Sadhana Pada



- Aṣṭāṅga Yoga is the yoga of eight limbs. In chapter 2, five "indirect aids" for purification and aiding insight are outlined:
 - 1. Yama – restraints or ethics of behaviour; Yama consists of:
 - 1.1 Ahimsa (Non violence)
 - 1.2 Satya (Truthfulness)
 - 1.3 Asteya (Non stealing)
 - 1.4 Brahmacharya (Chastity)
 - 1.5 Aparigraha (Non possession)
 - 2. Niyama – observances; Niyama consists of:
 - 2.1 Saucha (Cleanliness)
 - 2.2 Santosha (Contentment)
 - 2.3 Tapas (Austerity)
 - 2.4 Svadhyaya (Selfstudy)
 - 2.5 Isvara Pranidhana (Devotion to the lord)

Sadhana Pada (Astanga Yoga)



- 3. Āsana – A physical posture in which one can be steady and comfortable.
- 4. Prāṇāyāma – control of the prana(breath)
- 5. Pratyahara – withdrawal of the senses
- 6. Dhāraṇā – concentration
- 7. Dhyāna – meditation
- 8. Samādhi – absorption

Vibhuti Pada (56 Sutras)



- Vibhuti is the Sanskrit word for "power" or "manifestation". In chapter 3, the last three limbs of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga, known as samyama, are outlined:
- 6. Dhāraṇā - concentration
- 7. Dhyāna – meditation
- 8. Samādhi – absorption
- Besides insight into pure awareness (purusha), samyama gives 'supra-normal powers' (Sanskrit: siddhi), as the yogi gains access to and unites with the tattvas, the constituents of prakriti.
- The text warns (III.38) that these powers can become an obstacle to the yogi who seeks liberation.

Kaivalya Pada (34 Sutras)



- Kaivalya, "isolation", of the Seer from the contents of the mind so it is no longer disturbed by the movements of the mind.
- It stands for emancipation or liberation, and is used where other texts often employ the term moksha (liberation).
- The Kaivalya Pada describes the process of liberation and the reality of the Seer.

Yoga Sutras Metaphysics



- The metaphysics of Patanjali is built on the same dualist foundation as the Samkhya school.
- The universe is conceptualized as of two realities in Samkhya-Yoga schools:
 - Puruṣa (consciousness) and
 - prakṛiti (mind, cognition, emotions, and matter).
- It considers consciousness and matter, self/soul and body as two different realities. Jiva (a living being) is considered as a state in which puruṣa is bonded to prakṛiti in some form, in various permutations and combinations of various elements, senses, feelings, activity and mind.
- During the state of imbalance or ignorance, one of more constituents overwhelm the others, creating a form of bondage. The end of this bondage is called Kaivalya, liberation, or moksha by both Yoga and Samkhya school.
- The ethical theory of Yoga school is based on Yamas and Niyama, as well as elements of the Guṇa theory of Samkhya.

Yoga Sutras Metaphysics



- Patanjali adopts the theory of Guṇa from Samkhya. Guṇas theory states that three gunas (innate tendency, attributes) are present in different proportions in all beings, and these three are
 - sattva guna (goodness, constructive, harmonious),
 - rajas guna (passion, active, confused), and
 - tamas guna (darkness, destructive, chaotic).
- These three are present in every being but in different proportions, and the fundamental nature and psychological dispositions of beings is a consequence of the relative proportion of these three gunas.
- When sattva guna predominates an individual, the qualities of lucidity, wisdom, constructiveness, harmony, and peacefulness manifest themselves; when rajas is predominant, attachment, craving, passion-driven activity and restlessness manifest; and when tamas predominates in an individual, ignorance, delusion, destructive behavior, lethargy, and suffering manifests. The guṇas theory underpins the philosophy of mind in Yoga school of Hinduism.

The Purpose of Yoga



- According to Bryant, the purpose of yoga is liberation from suffering, by means of discriminative discernment.
- The eight limbs are "the means of achieving discriminative discernment," the "uncoupling of puruṣa from all connection with prakṛti and all involvement with the citta."
- Bryant states that, to Patanjali, Yoga-practice "essentially consists of meditative practices culminating in attaining a state of consciousness free from all modes of active or discursive thought, and of eventually attaining a state where consciousness is unaware of any object external to itself, that is, is only aware of its own nature as consciousness unmixed with any other object."

The Purpose of Yoga



- While the Samkhya school suggests that jnana (knowledge) is a sufficient means to moksha, Patanjali suggests that systematic techniques/practice (personal experimentation) combined with Samkhya's approach to knowledge is the path to moksha.
- Patanjali holds that avidya, ignorance is the cause of all five kleshas, which are the cause of suffering and saṃsāra. Liberation, like many other schools, is removal of ignorance, which is achieved through discriminating discernment, knowledge and self-awareness.
- The Yoga Sūtras is the Yoga school's treatise on how to accomplish this. Samādhi is the state where ecstatic awareness develops, state Yoga scholars, and this is how one starts the process of becoming aware of Purusa and true Self. It further claims that this awareness is eternal, and once this awareness is achieved, a person cannot ever cease being aware; this is moksha, the soteriological goal in Hinduism

The Purpose of Yoga



- Book 3 of Patanjali's Yogasutra is dedicated to soteriological aspects of yoga philosophy. Patanjali begins by stating that all limbs of yoga are a necessary foundation to reaching the state of self-awareness, freedom and liberation.
- He refers to the three last limbs of yoga as samyama, in verses III.4 to III.5, and calls it the technology for "discerning principle" and mastery of citta and self-knowledge.
- In verse III.12, the Yogasutras state that this discerning principle then empowers one to perfect sant (tranquility) and udita (reason) in one's mind and spirit, through intentness. This leads to one's ability to discern the difference between sabda (word), artha (meaning) and pratyaya (understanding), and this ability empowers one to compassionately comprehend the cry/speech of all living beings.
- Once a yogi reaches this state of samyama, it leads to unusual powers, intuition, self-knowledge, freedoms and kaivalya, the redemptive goal of the yogi.

Yoga Epistemology



- The epistemology in Patanjali's system of Yoga, like the Sāṃkhya school of Indian philosophy, relies on three of six Pramanas, as the means of gaining reliable knowledge. These included Pratyakṣa (perception), Anumāṇa (inference) and Sabda (Āgama or Āptavacana, word/testimony of reliable sources).
- Patanjali's system, like the Samkhya school, considers Pratyakṣa or Dṛṣṭam (direct sense perception), Anumāṇa (inference), and Sabda or Āptavacana (verbal testimony of the sages or shāstras) to be the only valid means of knowledge or Pramana.
- Unlike few other schools of Hinduism such as Advaita Vedanta, Yoga did not adopt the following three Pramanas: Upamāṇa (comparison and analogy), Arthāpatti (postulation, deriving from circumstances) or Anupalabdi (non-perception, negative/cognitive proof).



Yoga Epistemology

- Of the three pramanas that it accepts as valid, pratyakṣa (perception) is the most important according to Yoga Sutras. It is superior to the other two sources because testimony (śabda) and inference (anumāna) are ultimately dependent on a prior perception.
- Bryant distinguishes Yoga school from the Vedānta, Nyaya and Mīmāṃsā in their prioritizing of different pramanas.
- The Mīmāṃsā school prioritizes testimony and the Nyaya school prioritizes inference.
- The Vedānta school has as its main source testimony from the Upaniṣads, whereas the Yoga school ascribes supreme authoritativeness to "direct, personal experience".
- Bryant argues that because of its favoring of direct experience the Yoga Sutras will "remain a perennial source of interest to the empirical dispositions of the modern world".

Ishvara in Yoga



- Patanjali differs from the closely related non-theistic/atheistic Samkhya school by incorporating what some scholars have called a "personal, yet essentially inactive, deity" or "personal god" (Ishvara). Hindu scholars such as the 8th century Adi Sankara, as well as many modern academic scholars describe Yoga school as "Samkhya school with God."
- The Yogasutras of Patanjali use the term Isvara in 11 verses: I.23 through I.29, II.1, II.2, II.32 and II.45. Ever since the Sutra's release, Hindu scholars have debated and commented on who or what is Isvara? These commentaries range from defining Isvara from a "personal god" to "special self" to "anything that has spiritual significance to the individual".
- Whicher states that while Patanjali's terse verses can be interpreted both as theistic or non-theistic, Patanjali's concept of Isvara in Yoga philosophy functions as a "transformative catalyst or guide for aiding the yogin on the path to spiritual emancipation".
- Whereas the purusa (spirit, or true self) of the yogin is bound to the prakriti – the material body subject to karmas and kleshas, the special purusa called Isvara is immaterial and ultimately free.

Ishvara in Yoga



- Patanjali defines Isvara (Sanskrit: ईश्वर) in verse 24 of Book 1, as "a special Self/Spirit (पुरुषविशेष, puruṣa-viśeṣa).“
- This sutra adds the characteristics of Isvara as that special Self/Spirit which is
 - unaffected (अपरामृष्ट, aparamṛsta) by one's obstacles/hardships (क्लेश, klesha),
 - one's circumstances created by past or one's current actions (कर्म, karma),
 - one's life fruits (विपाक, vipâka), and
 - one's psychological dispositions/intentions (आशय, ashaya)

Samkhya and Yoga



- The Yoga Sutras are built on a foundation of Samkhya philosophy, and are generally seen as the practice while Samkhya is the theory. The influence of Samkhya is so pervasive in the Sutras that the historian Surendranath Dasgupta went so far as to deny independent categorization to Patañjali's system, preferring to refer to it as Patanjala Samkhya, similar to the position taken by the Jain writer Haribhadra in his commentary on Yoga.
- Patañjali's Yoga Sutras accept the Samkhya's division of the world and phenomena into twenty-five tattvas or principles, of which one is Purusha meaning Self or consciousness, the others being Prakriti (primal nature), Buddhi (intellect or will), Ahamkara (ego), Manas (mind), five buddhindriyas (sensory capabilities), five karmendriyas (action-capabilities) and ten elements. The second part of the Sutras, the Sadhana, also summarizes the Samkhya perspectives about all seen activity lying within the realm of the three Gunas of Sattva (illumination), Rajas (passion) and Tamas (lethargy).]

Samkhya and Yoga



- The Yoga Sutras diverge from early Samkhya by the addition of the principle of Isvara or God, as exemplified by Sutra 1.23 – "Ísvara pranidhānāt vā", which is interpreted to mean that surrender to God is one way to liberation.[75][78] Isvara is defined here as "a distinct Consciousness, untouched by afflictions, actions, fruitions or their residue". In the sutras, it is suggested that devotion to Isvara, represented by the mystical syllable Om may be the most efficient method of achieving the goal of Yoga.[80] This syllable Om is a central element of Hinduism, appearing in all the Upanishads, including the earliest Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads, and expounded upon in the Mandukya Upanishad.
- Another divergence from Samkhya is that while the Samkhya holds that knowledge is the means to liberation, Patañjali's Yoga insists on the methods of concentration and active striving. The aim of Yoga is to free the individual from the clutches of the matter, and considers intellectual knowledge alone to be inadequate for the purpose – which is different from the position taken by Samkhya.

Buddhism and Yoga



- Karel Werner writes, "Patanjali's system is unthinkable without Buddhism. As far as its terminology goes there is much in the Yoga Sutras that reminds us of Buddhist formulations from the Pāli Canon and even more so from the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma and from Sautrāntika."
- He adds, "upon the whole it [Patanjali's Yoga sutras] is more elaborate and summarizes the actual technique of Yoga procedures more exactly than the Buddhist exposition".
- However, states Werner, "The Buddha was the founder of his system, even though, admittedly, he made use of some of the experiences he had previously gained under various Yoga teachers of his time. Patanjali is neither a founder nor a leader of a new movement. (...) The ingenuity of his [Patanjali's] achievement lies in the thoroughness and completeness with which all the important stages of Yoga practice and mental experiences are included in his scheme, and in their systematic presentation in a succinct treatise."
- Werner adds that the ideas of existence and the focus on "Self, Soul" in Patanjali's Yogasutra are different from the "no Self" precepts of Buddhism.

Buddhism and Yoga



- According to David Gordon White, the language of the Yoga Sutras is often closer to "Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, the Sanskrit of the early Mahayana Buddhist scriptures, than to the classical Sanskrit of other Hindu scriptures".
- He adds, historical evidence suggests that yoga philosophical systems influenced, and were influenced by, other philosophical systems in India such as early Buddhism and Jainism.
- White mentions controversies about the Yoga Sutras. A significant minority of scholars, notes White for example, believes that Vyasa lived a few centuries after Patanjali and his "Hindu-izing" commentary subverted Yoga Sutras' original "Buddhist" teachings; while the majority scholarly view disagrees with this view.

Buddhism and Yoga



- Other scholars state there are differences between the teachings in the Yoga Sutras and those in Buddhist texts. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras for example, states Michele Desmarias, accept the concept of a Self or soul behind the operational mind, while Buddhists do not accept such a Self exists. The role of Self is central to the idea of Samyoga, Citta, Self-awareness and other concepts in Chapters 2 through 4 of the Yoga sutras, according to Desmarias.
- According to Barbara Miller, the difference between Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and teachings in Buddhist texts is, "In Samkhya and Yoga, as in Buddhism and Jainism, the most salient characteristic of existence is dukkha or suffering. According to Buddhism, the origin of suffering is desire; according to Yoga, it is the connection between the observer (Purusha) with the observed (Prakrti). In both systems, the origin of dukkha is ignorance.
- There are also similarities in the means of deliverance recommended by the two systems. In Buddhism, the aspirant is asked to follow the eightfold path, which culminates in right meditation or samadhi. In Yoga, the aspirant is asked to follow a somewhat different eight fold path, which also culminates in samadhi. But the aim of yoga meditation is conceived in terms that a Buddhist would not accept: as the separation of an eternal conscious self from unconscious matter. The purpose of Patanjali's Yoga is to bring about this separation by means of understanding, devotion and practice."
- Robert Thurman writes that Patañjali was influenced by the success of the Buddhist monastic system to formulate his own matrix for the version of thought he considered orthodox.[95] The Yoga Sutra, especially the fourth segment of Kaivalya Pada, contains several polemical verses critical of Buddhism, particularly the Vijñānavāda school of Vasuban

Jainism and Yoga



- The five yamas or the constraints of the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali bear an uncanny resemblance to the five major vows of Jainism, indicating influence of Jainism.
- Three other teachings closely associated with Jainism also make an appearance in Yoga: the doctrine of "colours" in karma (lesya); the Telos of isolation (kevala in Jainism and Kaivalyam in Yoga); and the practice of nonviolence (ahimsa), though nonviolence (ahimsa) made its first appearance in Indian philosophy-cum-religion in the Hindu texts known as the Upanishads [the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, dated to the 8th or 7th century BCE, one of the oldest Upanishads, has the earliest evidence for the use of the word Ahimsa in the sense familiar in Hinduism (a code of conduct). It bars violence against "all creatures" (sarvabhuta) and the practitioner of Ahimsa is said to escape from the cycle of metempsychosis/reincarnation (CU 8.15.1).
- It also names Ahimsa as one of five essential virtues.