

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

Ashtanga Yoga
(8 Limbs of Yoga)

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Invocation to Sage Patanjali

योगेन चित्तस्य पदेन वाचां । मलं शरीरस्य च वैद्यकेन ॥
योऽपाकरोत्तं प्रवरं मुनीनां । पतञ्जलिं प्राञ्जलिरानतोऽस्मि ॥

yogena chittasya padena vAchAM | malaM sharIrasya cha
vaidyakena ॥

yo.apAkarottaM pravaraM munInAM | pata~njaliM
prA~njaliRAnato.asmi ॥

"I respectfully bow down with folded hands and offer my salutations to Sage Patanjali, the highest among the Munis (sages), who has presented the remedies for removing the impurities of the body through his treatise on Ayurveda, of language through his treatise on grammar (Patanjala Mahabhashya) and the impurities of the Chitta (mind field) through his treatise on Yoga (Yoga Sutras of Patanjali)."

Why Ashtanga Yoga?

- Practice is means to eradicate impurities
- Lustre of knowledge increases
- Discriminative enlightenment attained
- Distinction between Purusha ang Gunas known

-- Sutra 2.28

Eight Limbs

- Yama (restraint)
- Niyama (observance)
- Asana (physical posture)
- Pranayama (regulation of breath)
- Pratyahara (Sense withdrawal)
- Dharana (focus/concentration)
- Dhyana (meditation)
- Samadhi (total absorption)

-- Sutra 2.29

Yamas

- Ahimsa (non-injury)
- Satya (truthfulness)
- Asteya (non-stealing)
- Brahmacharya (continence)
- Aparigraha (non-hoarding)

-- Sutra 2.30

Yamas - Great Vows

- Must be followed in totality, universally
- With no regard to birth, place, time or circumstance
- Ex: class/birth – fisherman can only kill fish
- Sutra 2.31

Niyamas

- Saucha (cleanliness)
- Santosha (contentment)
- Tapas (austerity)
- Svadhyaya (self-study)
- Ishvara-pranidhana (surrender to God)

- Sutra 2.32

Ways to Remove Disturbances

- Bring thoughts opposite to disturbing thoughts
- Ex: love for hatred; compassion for injury
- Evil actions: by oneself, by another or approved
- Performed through anger, greed or delusion
- Can be mild, moderate or intense
- Opposing thought: these are the cause of infinite misery and unending ignorance

- Sutra 2.33 and 2.34

Ahimsa (non-injury)

- Ahimsa toward all living creatures – plants, animals, humans
- Evil tendencies like selfishness, hatred, jealousy, anger etc cause tendency to inflict injury to others
- To nourish one's own body with the flesh of another is 'himsa'
- Inflicting pain for one's own comfort is 'himsa'
- Ahimsa through action, thought and speech; as the thoughts so the actions – so purify thoughts

Ahimsa (cont.)

- Apply ahimsa not only to others but to yourself as well
- Ex: hurting yourself by over-eating, performing asana beyond your capability etc
- Self-destructive behavior caused by fear, guilt
- Food wastage is a form of violence against those who sleep hungry
- Love involving demands and expectations entails violence, both to self and others
- Emotional violence in relationships: harsh, abusive language; angry outbursts, emotional judgments, sarcasm, skillful manipulations
- As the yogi becomes established in ahimsa, all beings coming near him cease to be hostile (sutra 2.35)

Satya (Truthfulness)

- Speech and mind conforming to reality as seen, inferred or heard
- Action that conveys the reality as is
- Speech should not be deceptive, confused, equivocal, barren of a meaning, or hurtful – avoid unpleasant truth or pleasant untruth
- Give up luxury of imagination in favor of pure objectivity
- False ego hides the true voice of intuition
- Everyone has their own perception of truth
- When established in truth, fruit of action depend upon the action of the yogi (sutra 2.36)

Asteya (non-stealing)

- Taking something not belonging to you is stealing; to forsake any such desire is asteya
- Greed (lobha) and desire (raaga) cause stealing
- Developing non-desirousness helps resist temptation for objects of the senses
- Making demands in a relationship is stealing
- Through practice of Asteya, all treasures will be at your disposal (sutra 2.37)

Brahmacharya (Celibacy)

- Celibacy is controlling the sense organs
- Refrain from the 8 forms of sexual indulgence
- A brahmachari should have frugal diet and moderate sleep
- Avoid craving for sensual enjoyments
- Sublimate and redirect sexual energy – to achieve inner strength
- One established in celibacy attains “virya” – indomitable courage, vigor (sutra 2.38)
- Can effectively transmit true knowledge of self to disciples

Aparigraha (Non-hoarding)

- Strictly speaking, no possessions besides what is needed for bare sustenance
- Time and energy spent in accumulation and guarding possessions
- Constant fear of loosing causing mental anguish and pain
- Aparigraha removes fear, hate, disappointment, attachment, anxiety and pain
- When stabilized in aparigraha, one obtains full knowledge of past and future lives (sutra 2.39)

Saucha (cleanliness)

- External cleanliness through soap/water etc and taking pure foods (includes fasting)
- Hatha yoga has six cleansing techniques – neti, basti, dhauti, kapalabhati, trataka, nauli
- Internal cleanliness through making the mind-field sattvic (pure) by removing anger, pride, arrogance, jealousy, greed, delusion etc. (sutra 1.33 – friendliness etc. to purify the mind)
- Cleanliness of environment (non-pollution)
- From Saucha comes disgust for one's own body and disinclination for contact with others (sutra 2.40)
- From inner purity arise purity of sattva, cheerfulness, one-pointedness, control of senses, and fitness for vision of the Self (sutra 2.41)

Santosha (Contentment)

- Being contented with what we have, not desiring more than what we need
- Being contented in all situations, under all circumstances (not constantly complaining)
- No need to strive to ‘be something’ or ‘achieve something’ – we are perfect the way we are
- One established in santosha attains supreme happiness (2.42)

Tapas (Austerity)

- Defined as resisting pairs of experiences like heat/cold, pain/pleasure, hunger/thirst etc
- Ability to sit and stand motionless
- Ability to hold silence
- Practice of asana, pranayama help develop tapas
- Tapas is needed to remove impurities caused by karma, afflictions (klesha) and propensities (vasanas)
- When established in tapas, mastery over body and senses is achieved (sutra 2.43)

Svadhyaaya (self-study)

- Study of scriptures – Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, YSP, Bible, Qurana etc.
- Japa of OM with ‘bhava’ (awareness of its meaning) leads to understanding of self
- Through Svadhyaaya one can achieve one’s ‘ishta devata’ (chosen deity) (sutra 2.44)

Ishvara Pranidhana (Surrender to Lord)

- Ishvara is a special Purusha who is untouched by the afflictions of life, actions and the results and impressions produced by these actions (sutra 1.24)
- Afflictions are ignorance, I-am-ness (egoism), likes, dislikes, and fear of death (sutra 2.3)
- Dedicating all acts to the supreme Lord and renouncing the fruits thereof
- Emphasis on 'bhakti yoga' – yoga of devotion
- Samadhi can be attained quickly through Ishvara Pranidhana (sutra 2.45)