

Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

Translation by Chester Messenger

Sadhana Pada II: The Steps To Union

In this pada, Patanjali details the essentials of yogic discipline. When a Yogi applies his mind and intelligence with devoted practice the path to spiritual liberation is found. This pada is for the beginner as well as the experienced Yogi. Repeated contemplations on this pada will reveal layers of knowledge appropriate to the level of progress of the aspirant.

1] The action of Yoga are these: A burning desire to reach perfection. A reflection upon the true inner self with the understanding that the self is not the outer sheath. Directing profound meditation upon God, the Lord of all, and surrendering completely oneself to God. These three are the heart of Yoga.

2] The aim of these three is to bring about pure soul awareness and to reduce afflictions by way of profound meditation.

-= Afflictions =-

3] The five afflictions that hinder one from achieving pure soul awareness are; spiritual ignorance, ego, attachment to desires and passions, hatred, and a fear of death.

4] Spiritual ignorance is fertile soil for all hindrances to soul awareness whether they be dormant or active. Thus lack of spiritual knowledge is the birthplace of sorrows.

5] Spiritual ignorance manifests as mistaking the impermanent for the permanent, the impure for the pure, sorrow for joy, and mistaking the corporeal body as the self.

6] The ego is involved in identifying the self with the instruments of perception and cognition.

7] Attachment occurs when the self focuses on pleasure and is involved with emotion.

8] Hatred has its origins in unhappiness and grief.

9] Even wise men are afflicted by the subtle affliction of attachment to the physical life.

10] These afflictions can be minimized by becoming aware of their true subtle origins.

11] Reflective meditation will silence their origins and will prevent them from manifesting as the fivefold movements of the mind.

12] Karma is a reservoir of sorrows resulting from deeds and actions rooted in afflictions, both visible and invisible, which manifest as fate to be experienced in this life and future lives.

13] So long as the roots of actions exist, their fruition will be birth, life, and experiences resulting in pleasure or pain.

14] The quality of life, be it delightful or painful, is a direct result of our good, bad or mixed actions.

15] Enlightened ones keep aloof from experiences knowing that even pleasant ones are tinged with

sorrow for they are tinged with the fivefold movements and the qualities of nature and subliminal impressions.

16] Pains which is yet to come may be avoided.

17] Pain has its cause when one becomes attached to material phenomena and the remedy lies in the dissociation from material phenomena.

-= Nature =-

18] Nature's three qualities of light, inertia and vibration and the elements, senses of perception, and the organs of action exist externally to serve the Yogi for enjoyment or liberation.

19] The divisions of nature (or qualities of matter) are fourfold; the specific, the non-specific, the indicated and the untouchable. They generate their characteristic divisions and energies in the Yogi.

20] The Yogi is pure awareness. Though pure, awareness perceives through the medium of the mind.

21] Nature's purpose alone is to support the souls goal of liberation.

22] In the case of the man who has achieved yoga (or union) his relationship with nature has ceased to be. Yet it existeth still for those who are not yet free.

23] The association of the soul with the seen is for the Yogi to comprehend his own true self.

24] The cause of this association is spiritual ignorance. This false attachment has to be overcome.

25] When ignorance is brought to an end through non-association with the things perceived, this is the absorption in the supreme soul.

26] Unfluctuating sound judgement and uninterrupted awareness is the means for removal of spiritual ignorance.

-= Stages of Illumination =-

27] Uninterrupted awareness (or illumination) is sevenfold and is attained progressively.

28] When the means to yoga have been steadily practiced, and when impurity has been overcome, the crown of wisdom radiates in glory.

29] The eight means of yoga are, self restraint, law, proper postures (used in meditation), breath control, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation and superconsciousness.

30] Non-violence, truthfulness, not stealing, chastity and not being greedy are the 5 pillars of self restraint.

31] These restraints are the great, mighty, universal vows, unconditioned by place, time and class.

32] Purity, contentment, religious fervour, study which leads to the knowledge of the self, and total surrender to God are the sacred observances.

33] When thoughts which are contrary to self restraint and the sacred observances are present there should be the cultivation of their opposite.

34] Dubious knowledge leads to violence, falsehood, theft, incontinence, and avarice, whether committed personally, caused to be committed or approved of, whether arising from avarice, anger or delusion (ignorance); whether slight in the doing, middling or great. These result always in excessive pain and ignorance. For this reason, the opposite thoughts must be cultivated.

35] When non-violence in speech, thought and action is established, all enmity with others cease.

36] When truth to all beings is perfected, the effectiveness of the Yogi's words and acts comes to realization.

37] When abstention from theft is perfected, precious things come.

38] By chastity is firmly established, knowledge, vigour, valour and energy flows to the Yogi.

39] When abstention from greed is perfected, knowledge of past and future lives unfolds.

40] Internal and external purification produces aversion to self-gratification.

41] Through purification of mind and body comes joyfull awareness of the true inner self.

42] As a result of contentment, supreme happiness is achieved.

43] A burning desire to reach perfection removes impurities and kindles the attainment of pure soul awareness.

44] Self-study results in the realization of God.

45] Surrender to God brings about perfection in superconsciousness.

-= Postures and Breath =-

46] The posture assumed must be steady and easy.

47] Perfection in posture is achieved when the requirements to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is realized.

48] From then on the Yogi is undisturbed by dualities.

49] When right posture has been attained there should follow proper inspiration and expiration of the breath, with retention, which controls the vital energy.

50] Breath control has three phases: prolonged and fine inhalation, exhalation and retention; all regulated with precision according to duration and place.

51] There is a fourth stage which transcends those dealing with the internal and external phases and appears effortless and non-deliberate.

52] Breath control removes the veil covering the light of knowledge.

53] And the mind is prepared for concentrated meditation.

54 & 55] Withdrawal of the senses and consciousness from contact with the external world and then drawing them inwards toward the Yogi results in absolute control of the sense organs and the mind is ripe for spiritual quest.