



Yoga Teacher Training

The Yoga Sutras

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The Yoga Sutras

Introduction

The Yoga Sutras were written by Sri Patanjali about 2000 years ago and is a foundational text of yoga (or raja yoga). There are few details of the life of Sri Patanjali, but most scholars place his birth sometime around the second century BC to the second century AD. He may have been one person or several with the same name. Sri Patanjali is known as the “father of yoga.” Although yoga had been around for many years before his teachings, the Yoga Sutras were the first step-by-step manual for the practice of yoga. In Sri Patanjali’s time, many teachings were handed down orally, rather than written. This is probably one of the reasons that each sutra is short and fairly easy to remember. No one knows for sure who was the first person to put the sutras in written form.

The main purpose of yoga is to learn to control our mind and not be controlled by our thoughts. Through yoga we learn to dissociate from our thoughts. The teachings and practices of the Yoga Sutras are based on three principles:

- 1) Suffering is not caused by forces outside of us but by our faulty and limited perception of life and of who we are. Suffering is not caused by the situation, but by our thoughts about the situation.
- 2) The unwavering peace we seek is realized by experiencing the unlimited and eternal peace that is our true identity. Though hidden by our ignorance, it exists within us, waiting to be revealed. Peace exists within us.
- 3) Peace and self-realization is attained by mastering the mind. Only a single-pointed, calm mind can reveal the true self.

There are 196 sutras presented in four chapters (or padas). Each pada emphasizes a different aspect of the science of yoga.

Patanjali divided his Yoga Sutras into 4 chapters or books (Sanskrit pada), containing in all 196 aphorisms, divided as follows:

- Pada 1: Concentration (Samadhi Pada)
- Pada 2: Practice (Sadhana Pada)
- Pada 3: Experiences (Vibhuti Pada)
- Pada 4: Absolute Freedom (Kaivalya Pada)

Samadhi Pada (51 sutras) - Concentration

Samadhi refers to a blissful state where the yogi is absorbed into the One. Patanjali describes yoga and then the nature and the means to attaining samadhi. This chapter contains the famous definitional verse: "Yoga is the restraint of mental modifications". This chapter defines yoga and its characteristics and discusses the problems encountered in reaching the state of samadhi and how these problems can be handled.

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Sadhana Pada (55 sutras)

Sadhana is the Sanskrit word for "practice" or "discipline". Here the Patanjali outlines two forms of Yoga: Kriya Yoga (Action Yoga) and Raja Yoga (Eightfold or Eightlimbed Yoga).

Kriya yoga, sometimes called Karma Yoga, is also discussed in Chapter 3 of the Bhagavad Gita, where Arjuna is encouraged by Krishna to act without attachment to the results or fruit of action and activity. It is the yoga of selfless action and service. Raja Yoga describes the eight limbs that together constitute the full yoga practice. This chapter describes the qualities necessary to change the mind gradually from a state of distraction to one of attention and what the practice of these qualities entails. It discusses the obstacles to yoga practice.

Vibhuti Pada (56 sutras)

Vibhuti is the Sanskrit word for "power" or "manifestation". 'Supra-normal powers' (Sanskrit: siddhi) are acquired by the practice of yoga. The temptation of these powers should be avoided and the attention should be fixed only on liberation. This chapter describes the capacity of the mind to achieve a state free of distraction. It discusses the sixth, seventh and eighth components of the eight fold path, which focus on the deeper states of meditation. It discusses the extraordinary powers that may be achieved through yoga.

Kaivalya Pada (34 sutras)

Kaivalya literally means "isolation", but as used in the Sutras stands for emancipation, liberation and used interchangeably with moksha (liberation), which is the goal of Yoga. The Kaivalya Pada describes the nature of liberation and the reality of the transcendental self. It presents the possibilities for a person with a highly refined mind, when the mind becomes the servant and not the master.

It focuses on what happens when you take control of your thoughts rather than having your thoughts control you.

The Sutras exhibit the influence of Upanishadic, Buddhist and Jain thought. As far as its terminology goes, there is much in the Yoga Sutras that may remind you of Buddhist formulations. Many believe that Patanjali was influenced by the success of the Buddhist monastic system to formulate his own version of thought he considered orthodox. The division into the Eight Limbs (Sanskrit *Ashtanga*) of Yoga is reminiscent of Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path; inclusion of Brahmaviharas (Yoga Sutra 1:33) also shows Buddhism's influence on parts of the Sutras.

The Sutras not only provide yoga with a thorough and consistent philosophical basis, they also clarify many important esoteric concepts which are common to all traditions of Indian thought, such as karma.

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You will find many different translations and interpretations of the Yoga Sutras today. The many versions display a wide variation, particularly in translation. The text has not been submitted in its entirety to any rigorous textual analysis, and the contextual meaning of many of the Sanskrit words and phrases remains a matter of some dispute. It can be helpful to see how different yoga scholars interpret the sutras and what rings most true for you. In this manual, you will first find an overview of the Pada (chapter), followed by the sutras within that Pada. The sutras are grouped by themes and the overall message of each group of sutras is summarized. Most people recommend that you only read a few sutras each day and spend time meditating on those particular sutras before moving on to the next.

When reading the sutras, try to interpret them through your own perspective. Get into quiet postures after reading a few sutras (or while listening to the sutras) and notice what meaning you get from each one.

Pada 1 of the Yoga Sutras: Concentration (Samadhi Pada)

The first part of the sutras (Pada One) introduces the main themes and practices that are expanded on in the rest of the text. This section gives us the basic definition of yoga. It presents the five categories of mental modifications (vrittis). It also introduces the idea of nonattachment, and it discusses obstacles to our yoga practice and to nonattachment and ways to overcome or prevent these obstacles. It finally examines specific practices for quieting the mind. Look through the different sections and see which sutra or group of sutras is especially meaningful to you. Why?

What is Yoga? (Yoga Sutras 1.1-1.4)

Question: How would you define the practice of yoga? What does yoga mean to you?

The first section of Pada One defines what yoga is. That definition is expanded upon in the other sutras. In a systematic process of meditation, you gradually move your attention further inward. There is a fundamental simplicity to the process of Yoga that is outlined in the Yoga Sutras. While the process might appear very complicated when reading the Yoga Sutras, the central theme is one of removing, transcending or setting aside the obstacles, or false identities of the mind to create peace of mind and a sense of unity with all that is. The many suggestions in the Yoga Sutras are the details or refinements of how to go about doing this. By being ever mindful of this core simplicity it is much easier to systematically progress on the path of Yoga.

1.1 Now, after having done prior preparation through life and other practices, the study and practice of Yoga begins.

1.2 Yoga is the control (nirodhah, regulation, channeling, mastery, integration, coordination, stilling, quieting, setting aside) of the modifications (gross and subtle thought patterns) of the mind field.

1.3 Then the Seer abides in Itself, resting in its own True Nature, which is called Self-realization.

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1.4 At other times, when one is not in Self-realization, the Seer appears to take on the form of the modifications of the mind field, taking on the identity of those thought patterns.

What identities do you give yourself?

Un-coloring your thoughts (Yoga Sutras 1.5-1.11)

This section of Pada One explains the different kinds of thoughts you may have, and how to gain correct knowledge. While Yoga was defined in sutras 1.1-1.4, the process of experiencing the goal of Self-realization begins in this section.

This part of the sutras looks at the idea that many of our thoughts are colored by our judgments and expectations. For example, when we're driving down the street, we may think that we see a squirrel run in front of the car, so we step on the brake. But, then it turns out to just be some dry leaves blowing across the street. Things aren't always as we think they are. We also tend to think of things as "mine" or "yours" and Patanjali would say that there is nothing that really belongs to any one person and that by releasing our attachments, we find more peace. The sutras encourage us to enjoy things, people, experiences and roles, but without claiming ownership or clinging to them.

To observe the coloring of thoughts simply means that when a thought and its corresponding emotions arise, you simply say that, "This is colored," or "This is not colored." Coloring simply means to attach an assumption or bias to a thought, rather than sticking to the facts. The sutras encourage you to examine a thought and determine if it is a fact or if it is a mental concept. For example, saying that a car is driving down the street is a fact, while saying that the car driving down the street is mine, or I want it to be mine, is a concept. Similarly, to notice whether some decision or action is useful or not useful brings great control over your habits of mind. It is simply observing, and saying to yourself, "This is useful," or "This is not useful."

These sutras focus on the idea of not fighting against the negative thought or against the feeling of anxiety or depression, but just letting it be and observing it. The mind may want to make something a problem, but it's best if we just observe the thought, feeling, or situation, rather than labeling it as good or bad. Even if you are feeling physical pain, your suffering can be reduced by simply observing the pain with a sense of detachment, rather than creating a story of suffering around the pain.

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1.5 Those thought patterns (vrittis) fall into five varieties, of which some are colored/biased (klishta) and others are uncolored/objective (aklishta).

1.6 The five varieties of thought patterns to witness are: 1) knowing correctly, 2) incorrect knowing, 3) fantasy or imagination, 4) deep sleep (nidra), and 5) recollection or memory.

1.7 Of these five, there are three ways of gaining correct knowledge (pramana): 1) perception, 2) inference, and 3) testimony or verbal communication from others who have knowledge.

1.8 Incorrect knowledge or illusion (viparyaya) is false knowledge formed by perceiving a thing as being other than what it really is.

1.9 Fantasy or imagination (vikalpa) is a thought pattern that has verbal expression and knowledge, but for which there is no such object or reality in existence.

1.10 Dreamless sleep (nidra) is the subtle thought pattern which has as its object an inertia, blankness, absence, or negation of the other thought patterns (vrittis).

1.11 Recollection or memory (smriti) is mental modification caused by the inner reproducing of a previous impression of an object, but without adding any other characteristics from other sources.

Practice and non-attachment (Yoga Sutras 1.12-1.16)

This section of Pada One explains how, with sustained practice, you can reach the state of non-attachment. Practice (abhyasa, 1.13) and non-attachment (vairagya, 1.15) are the two core principles on which the entire system of Yoga rests (1.12). It is through the cultivation of these two that the other practices evolve, by which mastery over the mind field occurs, and allows the realization of the true Self.

In yoga, our daily inner practice should include the following: 1) being careful never to hurt others, 2) learning to meditate, and 3) exploring the question of where things really come from. We start by giving up our attachments to things, then to distractions (experiences), then to people, and finally to our own identity. While we will still enjoy and love certain things, people, or experiences, through yoga practice we can learn to let go of our attachment, which is the cause of pain. It emphasizes that the labels of who we are do not define us. Many people identify with their labels (their job, their role in society, their hobbies, where they live, etc). Notice what happens when you let go of these labels, and let go of your story. If they go away, you are still here.

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1.12 These thought patterns (vrittis) are mastered (regulated, coordinated, controlled, stilled, quieted) through practice and non-attachment.

1.13 Practice (abhyasa) means choosing, applying the effort, and doing those actions that bring a stable and tranquil state (sthitau).

1.14 When that practice is done for a long time, without a break, and with sincere devotion, then the practice becomes a firmly rooted, stable and solid foundation. Yoga practice should be steady and without gaps.

1.15 When the mind loses desire even for objects seen or described in a tradition or in scriptures, it acquires a state of utter non-desire that is called non-attachment (vairagya). This is the ability even give up the attachment to distractions.

1.16 Indifference to the subtlest elements, constituent principles, or qualities themselves (gunas), achieved through a knowledge of the nature of pure consciousness, is called supreme non-attachment (paravairagya). We should enjoy life, but we should also enjoy finding deeper meaning in life, and not lose our life in little distractions and attachments.

Question: What are you currently attached to?

Sometimes the first sixteen sutras are referred to as the “Sweet Sixteen,” since they present the fundamentals of the Yoga Sutras. It introduces the idea that true happiness comes from within and not through any thing, experience, role, job, or person outside ourselves.

Types of concentration (Yoga Sutras 1.17-1.18)

In this section of Pada One, we learn of the different types of concentration and the definition of samadhi. Building upon practice and non-attachment, the meditator systematically moves inward, through four levels or stages of concentration on an object, and then progresses to the stage of objectless concentration. You can think of it in terms of listening to a song. First you only note that a song is being played, then you begin to examine the words or melody, then a feeling of pleasure washes over you as you enjoy the song, and finally you begin to lose yourself in the song completely.

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1.17 The deep absorption of attention on an object is of four kinds, 1) gross (vitarka), 2) subtle (vichara), 3) bliss accompanied (ananda), and 4) with oneness (asmita). This last stage is called samprajnata samadhi.

1.18 The other kind of samadhi is asamprajnata samadhi, and has no object in which attention is absorbed, wherein only latent impressions remain; attainment of this state is preceded by the constant practice of allowing all of the fluctuations of mind to recede back into the field from which they arose. We stop “seeing” things in the wrong way.

Efforts and commitment (Yoga Sutras 1.19-1.22)

This section of the Pada examines how different people reach samadhi in different ways and in different time frames. Level of intensity and commitment to practice can determine how quickly someone reaches samadhi. It introduces the idea of the “five powers” which include: belief, effort, awareness, meditation and wisdom. Belief is the knowing or belief in our own power to reach enlightenment. Awareness has different stages; from the ability to be present in the moment to the ability to keep our mind on where the things that happen to us really come from. Being able to objectively examine our thoughts and the factors that shape those thoughts is part of mediation. We begin to understand that we create our own world through our mental projections.

1.19 Some who have attained higher levels (videhas) or know unmanifest nature (prakritilayas), are drawn into birth in this world by their remaining latent impressions of ignorance, and more naturally come to these states of samadhi.

1.20 Others follow a five-fold systematic path of 1) faithful certainty in the path, 2) directing energy towards the practices, 3) repeated memory of the path and the process of stilling the mind, 4) training in deep concentration, and 5) the pursuit of real knowledge, by which the higher samadhi (asamprajnata samadhi) is attained.

1.21 Those who pursue their practices with intensity of feeling, vigor, and firm conviction achieve concentration and the fruits thereof more quickly, compared to those of medium or lesser intensity.

1.22 Because the methods may be applied in slow, medium, or speedy ways, even among those who have such commitment and conviction, there are differences in the rate of progress, resulting in nine grades of practice.

Direct route through AUM (Yoga Sutras 1.23-1.29)

Through remembering the meaning of OM (AUM), our connection with the universe is more quickly developed. Remembering the sound vibration of AUM

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(or OM) brings both the realization of the individual Self and the removal of obstacles that normally block that realization. In a sense, this practice is like a short cut, in that it goes directly to the heart of the process. These sutras also encourage people to find a living master from whom they can learn.

Who are some of your current teachers and what is the main thing you have learned from each?

1.23 From a special process of devotion and letting go into the creative source from which we emerged (ishvara pranidhana), the coming of samadhi is imminent.

1.24 That creative source (ishvara) is a particular consciousness (purusha) that is unaffected by colorings (kleshas), actions (karmas), or results of those actions that happen when latent impressions stir and cause those actions.

1.25 In that pure consciousness (ishvara) the seed of omniscience has reached its highest development and cannot be exceeded.

1.26 From that consciousness (ishvara) the ancient-most teachers were taught, since it is not limited by the constraint of time.

1.27 The sacred word designating this creative source is the sound OM, called pranava.

1.28 This sound creates deep feeling for the meaning of what it represents.

1.29 From that remembering comes the realization of the individual Self and the removal of obstacles.

Obstacles and solutions (Yoga Sutras 1.30-1.32)

This section of Pada One explains the major obstacles to reaching samadhi, as well as the consequences of these obstacles and how to prevent or deal with them. There are a number of predictable obstacles that arise on the inner journey, along with several consequences that grow out of them. While these can be a challenge, there is a certain comfort in knowing that they are a natural, predictable part of the process. Knowing this can help to maintain the faith and conviction that were previously discussed as essential.

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Doubt, including worrying about what others think, and worrying about the future can be a major obstacle.

One-pointedness is the solution: There is a single, underlying principle that is the antidote for these obstacles and their consequences, and that is the one pointedness of mind. Let other things pass through you without resistance or judgment, and return your focus to one-point.

Predictable Obstacles

Illness	Dullness	Doubt
Negligence	Laziness	Cravings
Misperceptions	Failure	Instability

Companions to those Obstacles

Mental and physical pain	Sadness and frustration
Unsteadiness of the body	Irregular breath

1.30 Nine kinds of distractions come that are obstacles naturally encountered on the path, and are physical illness, tendency of the mind to not work efficiently, doubt or indecision, lack of attention to pursuing the means of samadhi, laziness in mind and body, failure to regulate the desire for worldly objects, incorrect assumptions or thinking, failing to attain stages of the practice, and instability in maintaining a level of practice once attained.

1.31 From these obstacles, there are four other consequences that also arise, and these are: 1) mental or physical pain, 2) sadness or dejection, 3) restlessness, shakiness, or anxiety, and 4) irregularities in the exhalation and inhalation of breath.

Our unhappy thoughts can cause physical problems, which can then cause more unhappy thoughts.

Are there any recurring negative thoughts in your life at this point in time? What positive thoughts do you frequently have?

Stabilizing and clearing the mind (Yoga Sutras 1.32-1.39)

These sutras examine how the mind can maintain a state of peace regardless of the situation. They examine the ways to deal with obstacles and they provide practical steps for finding inner peace.

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Sutra 1.33 is especially important in shaping our attitude towards peace. It suggests that we should have infinite kindness, which is the desire to bring happiness to all living things. We should use kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity in our thoughts and dealings with others. This group of sutras places importance on not only serving others, but really thinking about what others want and focusing on their needs, so we can stop obsessing about our own lives. Helping others and thinking about how other people are feeling and what they want, helps us eliminate our own unending wanting which leads to a life of pleasure and pain rather than true happiness. Once we are free from attachment to our own desires, we can find true and lasting happiness.

By serving others, thinking about their needs, and letting go of our own attachments, we can find true and lasting happiness.

1.32 To prevent or deal with these nine obstacles and their four consequences, the recommendation is to make the mind one-pointed.

1.33 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 virtuous, and indifference or neutrality towards those we perceive as wicked or evil.

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

1.35 The inner concentration on the process of sensory experiencing, done in a way that leads towards higher, subtle sense perception; this also leads to stability and tranquility of the mind. The physical practice of yoga can help unblock our inner energy channels.

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

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

1.38 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.

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

Results of stabilizing the mind (Yoga Sutras 1.40-1.51)

These sutras focus on the results of having a tranquil mind. It looks at the wisdom and peace gained from having an objective, clear and unbothered mind. Once the mind is reasonably stabilized and clear, the deeper process of Yoga can begin. The mind eventually becomes like a transparent crystal, and is a purified tool for the subtler explorations of the gross and subtle levels. Such a mind can explore the whole range of objects, even the smallest or largest.

Four levels of meditation on an object: There are only four levels of meditation on an object. These are systematically experienced, all the way to the level of un-manifest matter:

1. With gross thoughts, savitarka samapattih
2. Without gross thoughts, nirvitarka samapattih
3. With subtle thoughts, savichara samapattih
4. Without subtle thoughts, nirvichara samapattih

1.40 When, through such practices, the mind develops the power of becoming stable on the smallest size object as well as on the largest, then the mind truly comes under control.

1.41 When the modifications of mind have become weakened, the mind becomes like a transparent crystal, and thus can easily take on the qualities of whatever object observed, whether that object be the observer, the means of observing, or an object observed, in a process of engrossment called samapatti.

1.42 One type of such an engrossment (samapatti) is one in which there is a mixture of three things, a word or name going with the object, the meaning or identity of that object, and the knowledge associated with that object.

1.43 When the memory or storehouse of modifications of mind is purified, then the mind appears to be devoid of its own nature and only the object on which it is contemplating appears to shine forward.

When we communicate briefly with the ultimate reality, we begin to understand how we see things wrong, how we attach opinions and feelings to things that don't need it.

1.44 In the same way that these engrossments operate with gross objects in savitarka samapatti, the engrossment with subtle objects also operates, and is known as savichara and nirvichara samapatti.

1.45 Having such subtle objects extends all the way up to un-manifest prakriti.

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1.46 These four varieties of engrossment are the only kinds of concentrations (samadhi) which are objective, and have a seed of an object. We begin to understand that our thoughts are merely that – just thoughts, and are not reality unless we decide to experience them.

1.47 As one gains proficiency in the undisturbed flow in nirvichara, a purity and luminosity of the inner instrument of mind is developed.

1.48 The experiential knowledge that is gained in that state is one of essential wisdom and is filled with truth.

1.49 That knowledge is different from the knowledge that is commingled with testimony or through inference, because it relates directly to the specifics of the object, rather than to those words or other concepts. Once all negativity is gone we progress through the final stages to total purity.

1.50 This type of knowledge that is filled with truth creates latent impressions in the mind-field, and those new impressions tend to reduce the formation of other less useful forms of habitual latent impressions.

1.51 When even these latent impressions from truth filled knowledge recede along with the other impressions, then there is objectless concentration. We can be in this state at any time and feel the connection to everything around us, and feel no limitations.

Experiencing our truth, gaining our knowledge through our experiences rather than as mental constructs, can help us find peace. Knowing through experience, rather than believing through information is the answer.

Pada Two of the Yoga Sutra: Practice (Sadhana Pada)

While Pada One focuses more on the theoretical aspects of raja yoga, the focus in Pada Two is on motivation for regular practice, while offering clear, comprehensive instructions for yoga practice. It outlines specific tools of attention that are used to systematically carve out, or cut away the obstacles of the inner mental shield that is blocking the light of the Self within. In sutra 2.29, we are introduced to the eight limbs of yoga, which are then elaborated on throughout the remainder of Pada Two.

Minimizing gross coloring (Yoga Sutras 2.1-2.11)

These sutras explain the role of active yoga in the dissipation of wrong thinking or wrong attitudes. They describe the different types of problem thinking that the practice of yoga can help eliminate. There are four principles that help stop our pain (the four higher truths). These sutras look at the first truth; the truth of where our pain comes from. Our pain comes from our ignorance – which allows our minds to turn around the truth. We look for pleasure in things that will eventually end and cause pain, rather than realize that everything we really want, or see “out there” is within us, and is everlasting.

2.1 Yoga in the form of action (kriya yoga) has three parts: 1) training and purifying the senses (tapas), 2) self-study in the context of teachings, and 3) devotion and letting go into the creative source from which we emerged.

2.2 That Yoga of action (kriya yoga) is practiced to bring about samadhi and to minimize the colored (or mistaken) thought patterns (kleshas).

2.3 There are five kinds of coloring (kleshas): 1) forgetting, or ignorance about the true nature of things, 2) I-ness, individuality, or egoism, 3) attachment or addiction to mental impressions or objects, 4) aversion to thought patterns or objects, and 5) love of these as being life itself, as well as fear of their loss as being death.

2.4 The root forgetting or ignorance of the nature of things (avidya) is the breeding ground for the other of the five colorings (kleshas), and each of these is in one of four states: 1) dormant or inactive, 2) attenuated or weakened, 3) interrupted or separated from temporarily, or 4) active and producing thoughts or actions to varying degrees.

2.5 Ignorance (avidya) is of four types: 1) regarding that which is transient as eternal, 2) mistaking the impure for pure, 3) thinking that which brings misery to bring happiness, and 4) taking that which is not-self to be self.

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2.6 The coloring (klesha) of I-ness or egoism (asmita), which arises from the ignorance, occurs due to the mistake of taking the intellect (buddhi, which knows, decides, judges, and discriminates) to itself be pure consciousness.

2.7 Attachment (raga) is a separate modification of mind, which associates pleasure with some memory. It's where the three modifications of attachment, pleasure, and the memory of the object are then associated with one another.

2.8 Aversion (dvesha) is a modification that results from misery associated with some memory. It's where aversion, pain, and the memory of the object or experience are then associated with one another.

2.9 Even for those people who are learned, there is an ever-flowing, firmly established love for continuation and a fear of cessation, or death, of these various colored modifications (kleshas).

2.10 When the five types of colorings (kleshas) are in their subtle, merely potential form, they are then destroyed by their disappearance or cessation into and of the field of mind itself.

2.11 When the modifications (false thoughts) still have some potency of coloring, they are brought to the state of mere potential by meditation (dhyana).

Breaking the alliance of karma (Yoga Sutras 2.12-2.25)

These sutras focus on the idea that the choices we make in life determine whether our experiences are of happiness or suffering. The key to breaking the cycle of karma is to set aside the connection between "observer" and that which is "observed." You have thoughts in your mind, but who is listening to those thoughts. Two people can have the same thought, but have very different reactions to that thought. Why is that?

You always have a choice to change your perspective on a situation in a way that helps reduce your suffering. For example, if your car breaks down in the rain, you can get angry and play the victim role, or you can accept the situation and calmly find a solution to the problem. Either way, your car will still need to be fixed, but when you create a story around the situation and cast yourself as the victim, you cause yourself undue suffering. If you just take the situation for what it is, doing what you can to solve the problem, and accepting what you can't change, you create more peace for yourself.

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What are some thoughts about your current life situation that make you feel very happy or very sad? Are there people in the world who would have a different reaction to the same situation?

2.12 Latent impressions that are colored result from other actions (karmas) that were brought about by colorings (kleshas), and become active and experienced in a current life or a future life. All of our actions are stored in our minds as seeds. When we do good deeds and have good thoughts of others, we eventually create better experiences for ourselves.

2.13 As long as those colorings (kleshas) remains at the root, three consequences are produced: 1) birth, 2) span of life, and 3) experiences in that life.

2.14 Because of having the nature of merits or demerits (virtue or vice), these three (birth, span of life, and experiences) may be experienced as either pleasure or pain.

2.15 A wise, discriminating person sees all worldly experiences as painful, because of reasoning that all these experiences lead to more consequences, anxiety, and deep habits (samskaras), as well as acting in opposition to the natural qualities.

2.16 Because the worldly experiences are seen as painful, it is the pain, which is yet to come that is to be avoided and discarded.

2.17 The uniting of the seer (the subject, or experiencer) with the seen (the object, or that which is experienced) is the cause or connection to be avoided.

Our thoughts and actions come back to us eventually. So, if we have kind, loving thoughts and do kind actions without thought of what's in it for us, eventually that same kindness returns to us. If we have thoughts of fear, doubt, or anger, those same aspects will eventually show up in our lives. You have to guard your thoughts and keep them kind, positive, and confident, and really desire happiness for other people as much as you would want it for yourself. And, remember to let go of your story, and to not label experiences as good or bad.

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2.18 The objects are by their nature of: 1) illumination or sentience, 2) activity or mutability, or 3) inertia or stasis; they consist of the elements and the powers of the senses, and exist for the purpose of experiencing the world and for liberation or enlightenment. Our perceptions of all things are coming from the seeds in our minds. We can either blindly consume what we've been conditioned to believe, or begin planting new seeds in our minds for a perfect world of freedom.

2.19 There are four states of the elements (gunas), and these are: 1) differentiated, 2) undifferentiated, unspecialized, 3) indicator only (mere signs), and 4) without indicator (beyond all signs).

2.20 There are two realities. In the first level, things seem different from each other. On the second level, we realize that all things are one thing in that they all come from our mental seeds, from our mind. If we understand this, we can build a new world free of pain.

2.21 The essence or nature of the knowable objects exists only to serve as the objective field for pure consciousness.

2.22 Although knowable objects cease to exist in relation to one who has experienced their fundamental, formless true nature, the appearance of the knowable objects is not destroyed, for their existence continues to be shared by others who are still observing them.

2.23 Having an alliance, or relationship between objects and the Self is the necessary means by which there can subsequently be realization of the true nature of those objects by that very Self.

2.24 Avidya or ignorance (2.3-2.5), the condition of ignoring, is the underlying cause that allows this alliance to appear to exist.

2.25 By causing a lack of avidya, or ignorance there is then an absence of the alliance, and this leads to a freedom known as a state of liberation or enlightenment for the Seer.

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Reason for the 8 rungs (Yoga Sutras 2.26-2.29)

These sutras explain that there are specific steps in yoga, a certain order of steps, that lead to enlightenment. It is here that the eight fold path is introduced. The eight rungs include:

1. **Yama**: codes of conduct towards others (kindness, self-control)
2. **Niyama**: observances, self-training (self-study, purity)
3. **Asana**: meditation posture
4. **Pranayama**: expansion of breath and prana
5. **Pratyahara**: withdrawal of the senses
6. **Dharana**: concentration (fixation, one point concentration on an object)
7. **Dhyana**: meditation (focus, becoming one with an object)
8. **Samadhi**: deep absorption (wisdom)

2.26 Clear, distinct, unimpaired discriminative knowledge is the means of liberation from this alliance. We understand that things happen *from us* – not *to us*.

2.27 Seven kinds of ultimate insight come to one who has attained this degree of discrimination.

2.28 Through the practice of the different limbs, or steps to Yoga, whereby impurities are eliminated, there arises an illumination that culminates in discriminative wisdom, or enlightenment.

2.29 The eight rungs, limbs, or steps of Yoga are the codes of self-regulation or restraint (yamas), observances or practices of self-training (niyamas), postures (asana), expansion of breath and prana (pranayama), withdrawal of the senses (pratyahara), concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana), and perfected concentration (samadhi).

The first five rungs of the eight limb path are externally oriented, where our progress is easier. The final three are inwardly focused practices.

Yamas & Niyamas, #1-2 of 8 rungs (Yoga Sutras 2.30-2.34)

These sutras explain the specifics of yamas (self control) and niyamas (cleanliness of mind and body).

2.30 Yamas: Non-injury or non-harming (ahimsa), truthfulness (satya), abstention from stealing, walking in awareness of the highest reality, and non-possessiveness (or non-grasping with the senses), are the five yamas (codes of self-regulation), and are the first of the eight steps of Yoga.

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2.31 These codes of self-regulation or restraint become a great vow when they become universal and are not restricted by any consideration of the nature of the kind of living being to whom one is related, nor in any place, time or situation.

2.32 Niyamas: Cleanliness and purity of body and mind, an attitude of contentment, training of the senses (tapas), self-study and reflection on sacred words, and an attitude of letting go into one's source, are the observances or practices of self-training (niyamas), and are the second rung on the ladder of Yoga.

2.33 When these codes of self-regulation (yamas) and practices of self-training (niyamas) are inhibited from being practiced due to perverse, unwholesome, troublesome, or deviant thoughts, principles in the opposite direction should be cultivated. Develop the habit of pure thoughts.

2.34 Actions arising out of such negative thoughts are performed directly by oneself, or caused to be done through others. These actions may be preceded by, or performed through anger, greed or delusion, and can be mild, moderate or intense in nature. To remind oneself that these negative thoughts and actions are the causes of unending misery and ignorance is the principle in the opposite direction that was recommended in the previous sutra.

Remind yourself that anger, jealousy and judgment directed towards another person only eventually hurts you. To mitigate your anger, try the loving kindness meditation.

Benefits from Yamas & Niyamas (Yoga Sutras 2.35-2.45)

These sutras provide the motivation for practicing the yamas and niyamas by illustrating the benefits of such practice. Ideas such as loss of hostility, improved concentration and contentment, are some of the benefits mentioned. However, it is important to note that, while these are benefits, they really result from the opening of what is already there, by the removal of obstacles.

2.35 As a Yogi becomes firmly grounded in non-injury (ahimsa), other people who come near will naturally lose any feelings of hostility. If you make it a way of life never to hurt others, then in your presence all conflict comes to an end.

Be kind to others and they will be kind to you. See the good in other people. If you judge others, you have to judge yourself. By giving other people a break, you give yourself a break.

2.36 As truthfulness (satya) is achieved, the fruits of actions naturally result according to the will of the Yogi.

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- 2.37 When non-stealing is established, all jewels, or treasures present themselves, or are available to the Yogi.
- 2.38 When walking in the awareness of the highest reality is firmly established, then a great strength, capacity, or vitality is acquired.
- 2.39 When one is steadfast in non-possessiveness or non-grasping with the senses, there arises knowledge of the why and wherefore of past and future incarnations.
- 2.40 Through cleanliness and purity of body and mind (shaucha), one develops an attitude of distancing, or disinterest towards one's own body, and becomes disinclined towards contacting the bodies of others.
- 2.41 Also through cleanliness and purity of body and mind (shaucha) comes a purification of the subtle mental essence, a pleasantness, goodness and gladness of feeling, a one-pointedness with intentness, the conquest or mastery over the senses, and a fitness, qualification, or capability for self-realization.
- 2.42 From an attitude of contentment (santosha), unexcelled happiness, mental comfort, joy, and satisfaction is obtained. Rather than having never ending wanting and grasping, happiness comes from an attitude of contentment with what is – being content with where you are now.
- 2.43 Through training of the senses (tapas), there comes a destruction of mental impurities, and an ensuing mastery or perfection over the body and the mental organs of senses and actions. Maintain your own peace.
- 2.44 From self-study and reflection on sacred words (svadhyaya), one attains contact, communion, or concert with that underlying natural reality or force.
- 2.45 From an attitude of letting go into one's source, the state of perfected concentration (samadhi) is attained.

Asana, #3 of 8 rungs (Yoga Sutras 2.46-2.48)

These sutras focus on the proper form for asana practice. They emphasize that postures should be held in an effortless manner, so that one can merge with the moment. The posture (asana) for Yoga meditation should be steady, stable, and motionless, as well as comfortable, and this is the third of the eight rungs of Yoga. By learning to control the body and keep it in balance, avoiding lethargy and hyperactivity, we learn to control the mind and keep it in balance. Experience the movement of the asana as it comes, with no attachment to how it looks or what your body can or can't do.

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2.46 The posture (asana) for Yoga meditation should be steady, stable, and motionless, as well as comfortable, and this is the third of the eight rungs of Yoga.

2.47 The means of perfecting the posture is that of relaxing or loosening of effort, and allowing attention to merge with endlessness, or the infinite.

2.48 From the attainment of that perfected posture, there arises an unassailable, unimpeded freedom from suffering due to the pairs of opposites (such as heat and cold, good and bad, or pain and pleasure).

The physical part of yoga (asana) helps to release blockages in our bodies and in the way we see things.

Pranayama, #4 of 8 rungs (Yoga Sutras 2.49-2.53)

These sutras explain the practice of pranayama and the benefits of this practice. Pranayama is the mastery of prana, the universal life force, through the breath. The fourth of the eight rungs of Yoga is Pranayama, which is regulating the breath, leading to the experience of the steady flow of energy (prana). While asana works from the outside in, pranayama works from the inside out.

2.49 Once that perfected posture has been achieved, the slowing or braking of the force behind, and of unregulated movement of inhalation and exhalation is called breath control and expansion of prana (pranayama), which leads to the absence of the awareness of both, and is the fourth of the eight rungs.

2.50 That pranayama has three aspects of external or outward flow (exhalation), internal or inward flow (inhalation), and the third, which is the absence of both during the transition between them, and is known as fixedness, retention, or suspension. These are regulated by place, time, and number, with breath becoming slow and subtle.

2.51 The fourth pranayama is that continuous prana which surpasses, is beyond, or behind those others that operate in the exterior and interior realms or fields.

2.52 Through that pranayama the veil of karma (2.12) that covers the inner illumination or light is thinned, diminishes and vanishes.

2.53 Through these practices and processes of pranayama, which is the fourth of the eight steps, the mind acquires or develops the fitness, qualification, or capability for true concentration (dharana), which is itself the sixth of the steps.

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Pratyahara, #5 of 8 rungs (Yoga Sutras 2.54-2.55)

These sutras explain the state of pratyahara. The senses do not function independently of the mind. Therefore, when the attention is pulled inward, they disconnect from their objects and also go within.

2.54 When the mental organs of senses and actions cease to be engaged with the corresponding objects in their mental realm, and assimilate or turn back into the mind-field from which they arose, this is called pratyahara, and is the fifth step.

2.55 Through that turning inward of the organs of senses and actions also comes a supreme ability, controllability, or mastery over those senses inclining to go outward towards their objects.

Pada 3 of the Yoga Sutras: Experiences (Vibhuti Pada)

Chapter 3 starts by presenting the last 3 of the 8 rungs of yoga, which are concentration, meditation, and samadhi, collectively known as samyama. The rest of the chapter explains how samyama is used as the finer tool to remove the subtler veils of ignorance. Pada Three lists the accomplishments that can result from the practice of yoga. In this Pada, Patanjali also examines the nature of the material world and its relationship to the mind. The powers listed in this Pada seem extraordinary because we do not see the true nature of our world. It also explains how these abilities can actually hinder our path to self-realization, if we don't learn to control the ego. We must let go of any attachments to these new abilities. This Pada ends with a description of the final stages that lead to self-realization (or direct experience with the Absolute).

Dharana, Dhyana, & Samadhi, #6, 7, and 8 of 8 rungs (Yoga Sutras 3.1-3.3)

These three sutras complete the concepts presented in Pada 2. Even brief concentration is success: It is also easy to think that a meditation session was "not good" because it did not bring some deep sense of bliss. Actually, when one understands the tremendous value of simple concentration training, then even the brief, shallower practices are seen in a proper context of having positive value.

In meditation, we begin by focusing on larger or more concrete objects, and then gradually moving to smaller, more subtle objects, until the mind is aware but unattached to anything.

3.1 Concentration (dharana) is the process of holding or fixing the attention of mind onto one object or place, and is the sixth of the eight rungs.

3.2 The repeated continuation, or uninterrupted stream of that one point of focus is called absorption in meditation (dhyana), and is the seventh of the eight steps.

3.3 When only the essence of that object, place, or point shines forth in the mind, as if devoid even of its own form, that state of deep absorption is called deep concentration or samadhi, which is the eighth rung.

Samyama and the final practices (Yoga Sutras 3.4-3.8)

These sutras present the major stages of mental mastery that practitioners will experience. Samyama is the collective practice of concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana), and samadhi, which are the sixth, seventh, and eighth of the eight rungs of Yoga. These stages can be described as fixation, focus, and

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wisdom. Once you master these stages, you have the ability to put your mind on a single point and keep it there. At the same time, you really understand where the thing you're focused on is really coming from – that everything comes from you. You are the seer of the mind projections.

Purpose of the first five rungs: The primary purpose of all the preparation work and the first five rungs of Yoga is to build this tool called samyama.

3.4 The three processes of dharana, dhyana, and samadhi, when taken together on the same object, place or point is called samyama.

3.5 Through the mastery of that three-part process of samyama, the light of knowledge, transcendental insight, or higher consciousness (prajna) dawns, illumines, flashes, or is visible.

3.6 That three-part process of samyama is gradually applied to the finer planes, states, or stages of practice.

3.7 These three practices of concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana), and samadhi are more intimate or internal than the previous five practices.

3.8 However, these three practices are external, and not intimate compared to nirbija samadhi, which is samadhi that has no object, nor even a seed object on which there is concentration.

Witnessing subtle transitions (Yoga Sutras 3.9-3.15)

This section provides a more detailed description of the progression from dharana to dhyana and finally to samadhi. It is the process that leads to self realization. In this section, it looks at our thoughts as *objects*. However, the thoughts in the mind field not only interact with one another; they also come and go. Just imagine for a moment that you had mastery over that process of the coming and going of the thoughts, the *transitions*. With mastery over the *transition process itself*, you would gain tremendous insight and mastery over the thoughts themselves, as well as the *subtlest* inner transitions of mental process. Those subtle *transitions* are also *objects* themselves, subject to exploration and witnessing, as well as to setting aside through non-attachment. The mind doesn't stop, but it becomes connected with everything and becomes clear. Being in this state can eliminate certain negative thoughts for good.

3.9 That high level of mastery called nirodhah-parinamah occurs in the moment when there is a convergence of the rising tendency of deep impressions, the subsiding tendency, and the attention of the mind field itself.

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3.10 The steady flow of this state (nirodhah-parinamah) continues by the creation of deep impressions (samskaras) from doing the practice.

3.11 The mastery called samadhi-parinamah is the transition whereby the tendency to all-pointedness subsides, while the tendency to one-pointedness arises.

3.12 The mastery called ekagrata-parinamah is the transition whereby the same one-pointedness arises and subsides sequentially.

3.13 These three transition processes also explain the three transformations of form, time, and characteristics, and how these relate to the material elements and senses.

3.14 There is an unmanifest, indescribable substratum or existence that is common or contained within all of the other forms or qualities.

3.15 Change in the sequence of the characteristics is the cause for the different appearances of results, consequences, or effects.

Experiences from Samyama (Yoga Sutras 3.16-3.37)

These sutras explain that samyama is a way of obtaining knowledge through experience. It is direct perception of the highest order because it is just the mind confronting objects head-on. The suggestion is to set aside as not-self all the levels of our physical being and levels of discovery, by a process of discrimination and non-attachment. This section describes some seemingly remarkable feats that can be obtained through the practice of yoga (such as psychic abilities – knowing what others are thinking, predicting future events). You may want to think of some of these feats as metaphors. For example, instead of thinking of it as “reading people’s minds,” just thinking of it as being able to read people better. Or instead of taking the idea of levitation literally, thinking of it as feeling lighter.

It suggests that by performing samyama on desirable characteristics, we can obtain those characteristics for ourselves. However, some people may use these powers to further their ego identity. The true yogi realizes this and sets aside feelings of pride. When reading the sutras, it is important to not feel as though you must attain all the experiences to progress on the path to self-realization. In fact, sometimes when we are able to achieve great feats, then our ego comes in the back door, as we want everyone to see what a great yogi we’ve become. As a yoga teacher, remember to make the practice about your students and not about you.

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People who meditate very regularly, even if it's just to chill out for a bit, will gain more power simply because in any deep state of meditation, we can not commit the negative actions and thoughts towards others that keep us from these powers.

3.16 By samyama on the three-fold changes in form, time, and characteristics, there comes knowledge of the past and future.

3.17 The name associated with an object, the object itself implied by that name, and the conceptual existence of the object, all three usually interpenetrate or commingle with one another. By samyama on the distinction between these three, the meaning of the sounds made by all beings becomes available.

3.18 Through the direct perception of the latent impressions (samskaras) comes the knowledge of previous incarnations.

3.19 By samyama on the notions or presented ideas comes knowledge of another's mind. (This is the idea of being able to "read" another person).

3.20 But the underlying support of that knowledge (of the other persons mind, in 3.19) remains unperceived or out of reach.

3.21 When samyama is done on the form of one's own physical body, the illumination or visual characteristic of the body is suspended, and is thus invisible to other people. (It is said yogis can intercept the light that reflects off their bodies, making it seem they have disappeared).

3.22 In the same way as described in relation to sight (3.21), one is able to suspend the ability of the body to be heard, touched, tasted, or smelled.

3.23 Karma is of two kinds, either fast or slow to manifest; by samyama on these karmas comes foreknowledge of the time of death.

3.24 By samyama on friendliness (and the other attitudes of 1.33), there comes great strength of that attitude. (By performing samyama on a desirable quality, such as friendliness, we can attain its benefits).

3.25 By samyama on the strength of elephants comes a similar strength.

3.26 By directing the flash of inner light of higher sensory activity, knowledge of subtle objects, those hidden from view, and those very distant can be attained.

3.27 By samyama on the inner sun, knowledge of the many subtle realms can be known.

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3.28 By samyama on the moon, knowledge of the arrangement of the inner stars can be known.

3.29 By samyama on the pole-star, knowledge of the movement of those stars can be known.

The next sutras discuss the idea of the chakras and gaining knowledge of the chakras (energy channels in the body).

3.30 By samyama on the navel center, knowledge of the arrangement of the systems of the body can be known.

3.31 By samyama on the pit of the throat, hunger and thirst leave.

3.32 By samyama on the tortoise channel, below the throat, steadiness is attained.

3.33 By samyama on the coronal light of the head, visions of the siddhas, the masters can come.

3.34 Or, through the intuitive light of higher knowledge, anything might become known.

3.35 By practicing samyama on the heart, knowledge of the mind is attained.

3.36 The having of experiences comes from a presented idea only when there is a commingling of the subtlest aspect of mind and pure consciousness, which are really quite different. Samyama on the pure consciousness, which is distinct from the subtlest aspect of mind, reveals knowledge of that pure consciousness.

3.37 From the light of the higher knowledge of that pure consciousness or purusha (3.36) arises higher, transcendental, or divine hearing, touch, vision, taste, and smell. You develop super-normal abilities of the senses.

These sutras are also saying that we often put limitations on ourselves based on what we are conditioned to think is possible. But we are often capable of more than we imagine. Difficult asanas show us that we can surpass our limited thinking.

Are there any limitations that you currently place on yourself? What are these? Visualize yourself surpassing these limitations.

What to do with experiences (Yoga Sutras 3.38)

This sutra explains that the powers gained from samyama are expressions of great mental power, but still exist in the realm of relativity and can actually be obstacles to self realization. When under the influence of attachment, these powers can tempt the ego to “perform” and become obstacles to samadhi.

3.38 These experiences resulting from samyama are obstacles to samadhi, but appear to be attainments or powers to the outgoing or worldly mind.

More from Samyama (Yoga Sutras 3.39-3.49)

These sutras discuss how a yogi gains knowledge of the way mind-stuff moves into and interacts with the body. It examines how samyama helps to break the false identification with the body.

3.39 By loosening or letting go of the causes of bondage and attachment, and by following the knowledge of how to go forth into the passages of the mind, there comes the ability to enter into another body.

3.40 By the mastery over udana, the upward flowing prana vayu, there is a cessation of contact with mud, water, thorns, and other such objects, and there ensues the rising or levitation of the body.

3.41 By mastery over samana, the prana flowing in the navel area, there comes effulgence, radiance, or fire.

3.42 By samyama over the relation between space and the power of hearing, the higher, divine power of hearing comes.

3.43 By Samyama on the relationship between the body and space (akasha) and by concentrating on the lightness of cotton, passage through space can be attained.

3.44 When the formless thought patterns of mind are projected outside of the body, it is called maha-videha, a great disincarnate one. By samyama on that outward projection, the veil over the spiritual light is removed.

3.45 By samyama on the five forms of the elements (bhutas), which are gross form, essence, subtleness, interconnectedness, and its purpose, then mastery over those bhutas is attained.

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3.46 Through that mastery over the elements, comes the abilities of making the body atomically small, perfect, and indestructible in its characteristics or components, as well as bringing other such powers.

3.47 This perfection of the body includes beauty, gracefulness, strength, and adamantine hardness in taking the blows that come.

3.48 By samyama on the process of perception and action, essence, I-ness, connectedness, and purposefulness of senses and acts, mastery over those senses and acts (indriyas) is attained.

3.49 By that mastery over the senses and acts (indriyas), there comes quickness of mind, perception with the physical instruments of perception, and mastery over the primal cause out of which manifestation arises.

Renunciation that brings liberation (Yoga Sutras 3.50-3.52)

These sutras say that to attain liberation, a yogi must let go of everything – even of the desire to know everything or to be a more powerful yogi. It is important to let go of attachments to people, ideas, or states of mind, as well as to the idea of liberation itself. Accept everything as it is, and continue your regular practice, and you will find peace.

In the preceding sutras, many types of experience were described. As these are encountered, the yogi goes ever deeper into the levels of his or her own being. Each is encountered, explored, experienced, and set aside, so as to go still deeper.

3.50 To one well established in the knowledge of the distinction between the purest aspect of mind and consciousness itself, there comes supremacy over all forms or states of existence, as well as over all forms of knowing.

3.51 With non-attachment or desirelessness even for that supremacy over forms and states of existence and the omniscience (3.50), the seeds at the root of those bondages are destroyed, and absolute liberation is attained.

3.52 When invited by the celestial beings, no cause should be allowed to arise in the mind that would allow either acceptance of the offer, or the smile of pride from receiving the invitation, because to allow such thoughts to arise again might create the possibility of repeating undesirable thoughts and actions.

Higher discrimination through Samyama (Yoga Sutras 3.53-3.56)

This section discusses discrimination, as in the ability to distinguish between that which changes and that which is changeless. This allows us to distinguish between the individual self and the universal self. Moments and succession: Experience usually comes like a movie. It only *appears* to be an unfolding process, whereas it is actually independent events. It is like the movie film being many independent frames, all of which coexist on the same reel. However, when you look at those frames sequentially, there is the appearance of a uniform and unfolding event or process. Beyond moments and succession: When samyama is done on the moments and the process of succession, the higher knowledge of what is *really* going on is revealed. One comes to see the nature of movie production of the mind and virtually the whole of the creation process. This opens the door to the realization of the Truth.

Notice how you process each experience through the lens of your mind. See life as a movie or play and with the so-called problems just being part of the play's plot. When you see things this way, you realize that most problems are very small in the overall scheme of things. Think about the parts of your life situation that have changed through the years. Is there something within you that has not changed?

3.53 By samyama over the moments and their succession, there comes the higher knowledge that is born from discrimination.

3.54 From that discriminative knowledge (3.53) comes awareness of the difference or distinction between two similar objects, which are not normally distinguishable by category, characteristics, or position in space.

3.55 That higher knowledge is intuitive and transcendent, and is born of discrimination; it includes all objects within its field, all conditions related to those objects, and is beyond any succession.

3.56 With the attainment of equality between the tranquil individual mind and the purity of the universal mind (pure consciousness), there comes absolute liberation, and that is the end. The universal minds is much greater than your single body and mind, and through the universal mind, you are connecting to something much larger.

Is there a part of you that is the same now as it was when you were a small child? Sometimes there are no words for that part of you that remains the same, so just feel it. Is there something that feels the same? Experience it.

Pada 4 of the Yoga Sutras: Absolute Freedom (Kaivalya Pada)

Chapter 4 of the Yoga Sutras is entitled *Kaivalya Pada*, which means the chapter on final liberation. Pada Four covers different subjects, which all lead to enlightenment. The causes of evolution (or change) are addressed, as well as the inner workings of subconscious impressions. Patanjali also contrasts the individual mind with the universal mind (or pure consciousness). Chapter 4 explains how the mind is constructed and veils the inner light of the Self. It describes how the yogi deals with the natural breaches in enlightenment, and how the primal building blocks of the mind resolve back into their cause, allowing final liberation.

Means of attaining experience (Yoga Sutras 4.1-4.8)

The first eight sutras address evolution, paying particular attention to the role that our actions play in the process of change. It examines the barrier between our typical waking state of consciousness, and higher levels of consciousness. It says that we can remove some barriers by going inward, instead of looking outside of ourselves. It says that experiencing our true self is a process of allowing natural consciousness to flow forward, rather than a process of gaining new information or developing new identities. We can't construct self-realization; we can only remove the barriers to it. See how long you can experience things without creating a story about it. How long can you experience each moment without thinking or talking about your story (the story of your life situation).

4.1 The subtler attainments come with birth or are attained through mantra, austerities or concentration.

4.2 The transition or transformation into another form or type of birth takes place through the filling in of their innate nature.

4.3 Incidental causes or actions do not lead to the emergence of attainments or realization, but rather, come by the removal of obstacles, much like the way a farmer removes a barrier (sluice gate), so as to naturally allow the irrigation of his field.

4.4 The emergent mind fields springs forth from the individuality of I-ness (asmita).

4.5 While the activities of the emergent mind fields may be diverse, the one mind is the director of the many.

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4.6 Of these mind fields, the one that is born from meditation is free from any latent impressions that could produce karma.

4.7 The actions of yogis are neither white nor black, while they are threefold for others.

4.8 Those threefold actions result in latent impressions that will later arise to fruition only corresponding to those impressions.

Being careful with your thoughts allows you to take back control of your life. It means understanding how your thoughts and actions now will affect you. Feel the energy in the moment. Realize that thoughts are just mind stuff.

Subconscious impressions (Yoga Sutras 4.9-4.12)

These sutras examine the idea that what we picture in our minds and what we would consider a real experience are not that much different.

All the memories and thoughts about the past and future exist only in the present moment. The appearance of past and future comes from our conditioned minds.

4.9 Since memory and the deep habit patterns (samskaras) are the same in appearance, there is an unbroken continuity in the playing out of those traits, even though there might be a gap in location, time, or state of life.

4.10 There is no beginning to the process of these deep habit patterns (samskaras), due to the eternal nature of the will to live.

4.11 Since the impressions (4.10) are held together by cause, motive, substratum, and object, they disappear when those deep impressions disappear.

4.12 Past and future exist in the present reality, appearing to be different because of having different characteristics or forms.

Yogis understand that the mental images you play over and over will become your experience. So you become careful about the thoughts you choose. These sutras also suggest there is a continuous thread of individuality that links lifetimes or personalities.

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Objects and the 3 gunas (Yoga Sutras 4.13-4.14)

These sutras look at how the three gunas (sattwa, rajas, tamas) are present within every object.

Sattvas: The aspect of the subtlest primordial matter, which has the nature of existence, light, illumination, sentience, harmony, or clearing.

Rajas: The aspect of matter, which has the nature of activity, motion, energy, movement, or changing.

Tamas: The aspect of matter, which has the nature of stability, stasis, darkness, dullness, heaviness, insentience, obstructing, and veiling.

Gunas are at all levels, including the subtlest: The principles of the three gunas operate at all levels. For example, you might eat: 1) sattvic (light) food, which will lead to a clear state of mind, 2) rajasic (spicy) food, which will lead to a restless state of mind, or 3) tamasic (heavy) food, which will lead to a lethargic state of mind.

4.13 Whether these ever-present characteristics or forms are manifest or subtle, they are composed of the primary elements called the three gunas.

4.14 The characteristics of an object appear as a single unit, as they manifested uniformly from the underlying elements.

Mind perceiving objects (Yoga Sutras 4.15-4.17)

4.15 Although the same objects may be perceived by different minds, they are perceived in different ways, because those minds manifested differently.

4.16 However, the object itself does not depend on any one mind, for if it did, then what would happen to the object if it were not being experienced by that mind?

4.17 Objects are either known or not known according to the way in which the coloring of that object falls on the coloring of the mind observing it.

These sutras look at how different minds (different people) perceive the same object in different ways. Some people feel that we can never totally see the truth because our minds are ultimately defective. Yogis say that we can see the truth if we work by way of our self awareness. By keeping a little independent corner

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of our mind that watches and observes the rest of the mind, even though the mind itself never sees anything correctly, we can become aware of this and get closer to the truth.

Illumination of the mind (Yoga Sutras 4.18-4.21)

The activities of the mind are always known by the pure consciousness (purusha), because that pure consciousness is superior to, support of, and master over the mind.

4.18 The activities of the mind are always known by the pure consciousness, because that pure consciousness is superior to, support of, and master over the mind.

4.19 That mind is not self-illuminating, as it is the object of knowledge and perception by the pure consciousness.

4.20 Nor can both the mind and the illuminating process be cognized simultaneously.

4.21 If one mind were illumined by another, as its master, then there would be an endless and absurd progression of cognitions, as well as confusion.

Buddhi and liberation (Yoga Sutras 4.22-4.26)

These sutras explain the foundation of individual consciousness. The countless minds of the universe are born of the reflection of the one universal mind. Thus, we have the potential to understand all minds (or all other objects).

4.22 When the unchanging consciousness appears to take on the shape of that finest aspect of mind-field (4.18), then the experience of one's own cognition process is possible.

4.23 Therefore, the mind field, which is colored by both seer and seen, has the potential to perceive any and all objects.

4.24 That mind field, though filled with countless impressions, exists for the benefit of another witnessing consciousness, as the mind field is operating only in combination with those impressions.

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4.25 For one who has experienced this distinction between seer and this subtlest mind, the false identities and even the curiosity about the nature of one's own self come to an end.

4.26 Then the mind is inclined towards the highest discrimination, and gravitates towards absolute liberation between seer and seen.

Breaches in enlightenment (Yoga Sutras 4.27-4.28)

These sutras mention the final obstacles to self-realization.

4.27 When there are breaks or breaches in that high discrimination, other impressions arise from the deep unconscious.

4.28 The removal of those interfering thought patterns is by the same means by which the original colorings were removed.

This is when the physical practices of yoga are very important, working from the outside in, as well as the inside out. So first the negative emotions go for good, and then gradually all the seeds that created those negative emotions go as well.

Perpetual enlightenment (Yoga Sutras 4.29-4.31)

These sutras look at how the yogi moves from discrimination between the mind and the universal mind, now is purified of ignorance and moves toward union with the absolute (self-realization). We learn to keep the mind focused on the distinction of what seems real and what is real. We release anything related to old negative thoughts and actions.

4.29 When there is no longer any interest even in omniscience, that discrimination allows the samadhi, which brings an abundance of virtues like a rain cloud brings rain.

4.30 After that dharma-megha samadhi, the colorings of the kleshas and the karmas are removed.

4.31 Then, by the removal of those veils of imperfection, there comes the experience of the infinite, and the realization that there is almost nothing to be known.

As a culture, we tend to think that we know more than people in the past because we know more things. But there is also the idea of knowing one thing really well; knowing how things really work. Once we understand our connection to all things, all knowledge is right there.

Liberation (Yoga Sutras 4.32-4.34)

This section examines how the gunas provides us with lessons we need to go beyond ignorance. The yogi then “sees” the true nature of existence and is completely free of all limitation and pain.

4.32 Also resulting from that dharma-meghah samadhi (4.29), the three primary elements or gunas (4.13-4.14) will have fulfilled their purpose, cease to transform into further transformations, and recede back into their essence.

4.33 The sequencing process of moments and impressions corresponds to the moments of time, and is apprehended at the end point of the sequence.

4.34 When those primary elements involve, or resolve themselves back into that out of which they emerged, there comes liberation, wherein the power of pure consciousness becomes established in its true nature.

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Questions:

What would you say are the three or four main points of the yoga sutras?

What are some practical ways you could bring some of the ideas within the yoga sutras into a regular hatha yoga class?

Which part(s) of the yoga sutras ring true for you? What, if any, lessons do you take from the yoga sutras that you could apply in your daily life and in your yoga practice or teaching?

Are there ideas that you disagree with or find faulty in the yoga sutras? If yes, which ideas?