*Photo: NASA*

# Patanjali's Yoga Sutras

## पतञ्जलियोगसूत्रम्

### A 21st-Century Translation of Ancient Hindu Practices

***The First Ancient Handbook on Meditation***

*Sanskrit Text by Patanjali.* [*www.YogaSutras.org*](http://www.YogaSutras.org)

# Contents *(3 July 2023)*

# Introduction

About two thousand years ago, a Hindu sage in India named Patanjali wrote the *Yoga Sutras*. His handbook describes how you can "yoke" to a higher state of Presence or your deepest inner Self by clearing your mind. People now hail it as a masterpiece of concise instructions for meditating.

Its author left little historical trace. We only know he probably lived sometime between 400 BCE - 400 CE.

Hindu tradition, however, suggests more: that Patanjali lived about 150 BCE in what is now the southeast Indian state of Tamil Nadu amidst rugged hills, winding rivers, and sandalwood forests. He first attained the pure state of *samadhi* (like Buddhist *nirvana* or Zen *satori*) in an ancient temple in Tirupattur, about a week's hike west of India's eastern part of the Pacific Ocean, the Bay of Bengal.

Legend says he wrote each sutra on a palm leaf, a common form for paper then. Unfortunately, no ancient copy exists. The first printed version that history records was carefully handwritten c. 400 CE by a person named "Vyasa" (a word meaning "editor"), along with Vyasa's own commentaries about the sutras. Scholars have argued for more than a thousand years about the dating of the *Yoga Sutras* and who wrote the book.

The standard version of the *Yoga Sutras* contains 195 to 196 brief, pungent aphorisms in pure, clear, song-like Sanskrit chants. They are meant to help you develop your mind so it can become perfectly clear. The chanted sayings were written specifically so that their sound aided memorization at a time when very few people could read or write.

A special brilliance of the book is its precision. Patanjali's sutras manage to summarize much of the Hindu wisdom about meditation that previously had been scattered—often vaguely—in such places as the *Bhagavad Gita* and in even older scriptures such as the *Rig Veda*. In addition, while many of those earlier recommendations for a spiritual life demanded an almost harsh asceticism, Patanjali's way is kinder and gentler.

**Clearing the Mind**

I discovered Patanjali's book in my third year of college. In my first year, I'd had several strong experiences in meditation that no book on psychology or spirituality was able to explain. Then I read Chapter One of the *Sutras* and found I had intensely experienced Patanjali's "clear mind." I also learned that the little husks of ideas I'd seen outside my head—which, when I focused on them, blossomed as ideas—were what he called "burnt seeds." Both descriptions were a relief and a revelation. Today, decades later, the sutras continue to explain practical elements

about my inner life. Just three examples Patanjali's psychological self or selves, his ancient version of the Buddhist Middle Path, and his descriptions of bodily joy and bliss.

The basic thrust of the *Yoga Sutras* is that you can achieve an emptied mind, and that doing so even in part will give you increased peace, mental strength, and joy in life. What is this "clear mind"? It is—when you wish—one that can be free of thoughts, memories, emotions, and desires. Following Patanjali's instructions, you gradually dissolve what he calls negative, troubling, or repetitive "whirlings" inside your awareness much of the time.

Patanjali offers nineteen methods for reaching this clarity, and many dozens of additional techniques, some of them like those of mystics around the world throughout time. Others are practical psychological, physical, and ethical details to make your path easier.

**How is this translation different?**

(1) It clarifies Patanjali's own words, defines, and discusses them in six steps:

**The Six Steps**

***The sutra*:** The brief saying in Anglicized Sanskrit

***Literal translation*:** English words in the same order as in the Sanskrit

***Meaning*:** A clear restatement of the sutra in similar word order

***Chant*:** A songlike statement offering a simple contemporary meaning

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***Extended definition*:** A factual description of what Patanjali likely meant

***Comment*:** Explanation of the sutra using insights from Eastern and Western spirituality, psychology, and science

(2) Patanjali's actual meditation experiences also are emphasized, one sutra after another. Some translations change sutras into philosophical concepts; this version shows the practice imbedded in each.

(3) This translation also uses what is called "close reading," a method of textual examination that uses word-by-word analysis. Here, close reading emphasizes root meanings of ancient Sanskrit words from the oldest scripture in particular, the *Rig Veda*, and from even older Indo-European oral sources. His collections of Buddhist practices from hundreds of years before him also are recognized.

Close reading also reveals that Patanjali chose raw, direct, and practical phrases that often use nature and simple rural and agricultural activities. His writing style, in fact, suggests that he always kept his audience firmly in mind: he not only develops a brilliant summary of meditation and crafts it into beautiful chants; he also

names the steps to a clear mind using simple but vivid metaphors that many plain-spoken seekers in his society would understand.

For example, one of the most important words in the sutras is the Sanskrit *vrtti* or *vritti*. The original root means "swirl." Patanjali uses it to describe how thoughts, memories, and images "swirl" in and around the mind like whirlpools in a river or whirlwinds in the air. These descriptions mirror how the eddies of thought and feeling often may appear in deep meditation. Many translators change *vrtti* to abstract or philosophical terms such as "mental modifications," "changing states of the mind," and "fluctuations," all them paling in comparison to the real experience.

Another example of these powerful root words is the Sanskrit *duhkha*. It often is translated as "suffering." It exists not only in the *Yoga Sutras* but also in Buddhism's "Four Noble Truths," which start by announcing, "Suffering (*duhkha*) exists." However, the ancient root of *duhkha* is more subtle. It means "bad axle hole." In Patanjali's (and Buddha's) time, this meant a wagon's wheel hole was having trouble turning around its axle. The result was a squealing wheel, a bumpy ride, or even a broken cart. As a result, Patanjali (and probably Buddha) meant *duhkha* to imply a range of troubles—from small annoyances to a breakdown on a dangerous road at night.

In addition, consideration of Patanjali's own meditation experiences solves another puzzle with which many translators have grappled: the order of his lessons. Some have argued that they jump back and forth between simple and advanced methods. However, as an adept and teacher, he ordered them according to the level of students. Chapter 1 introduces a variety of ways to start meditating. Chapter 2 offers more specifics in what can get in the way of success, and what lifestyle will help. Chapter 3 warns of experiences in deeper meditation that can sidetrack you. And chapter 4 provides more advice and explanations for advanced practitioners. He intended meditators to use the book for many years.

**Conclusion**

The *Yoga Sutras* deservedly is ranked among the world's classics of perennial-wisdom literature. Patanjali crafts poetically vivid images, sounds, and feelings as he lays out an architectural vision of meditation experiences in practical psychological terms. And when he is correctly interpreted, his words resound not in ascetic pain and withdrawal but rather with humor, caring, and joy.

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*Dawn*

# The Start: Patanjali's Title

**Anglicized Sanskrit**: *patañjali-yoga-sūtram*

**Literal translation**: *Patanjali's Yoking Woven Threads*

**Meaning**: *Patanjali's Joining-with-God Sayings*

**A chant in English**: *How to Discover the Presence*

***Book Title Definition***: "Yoga" is a Hindu Sanskrit word that means "yoking," "joining," or "union with the divine." This is, simply, the experience of connecting with an awareness beyond—a "Presence"—whether within yourself or without.

"Sutras" in Sanskrit means "aphorisms" or "brief chants." In more ancient language, it means "woven threads." Here, the single thread of each saying is woven into the complete fabric of a book.

What does "yoga" mean to us now? During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the institution of "yoga" in the West became synonymous with receiving lessons in breathing exercises and physical posture or movements. However, in ancient India, "yoga" was what is called "meditation" today. Breathing and body postures were important, but they were just one helpful part. If Patanjali were alive today and writing his book, he might call it *Meditation Handbook*.

The *Yoga Sutras* is *not* a religion or philosophy. It is not against, or counter to, any particular belief system. The sutras can fit well with almost any religion open to meditation. It is part of what sometimes is called "perennial wisdom" or similar names since the Renaissance: a belief that all the world's religions are talking about the same underlying experiences.

This means that while some of Patanjali's sutras do have what might be called "spiritual" meanings, his practices here can relate easily to people's experiences in many religions. Patanjali says that you can connect with a state of higher Presence, whether within yourself, outside of you through nature or art, or in many other experiences and practices. The sutras also can help you understand unusual meditation experiences. And they fit the scientific approach for those who believe in no religion at all: even if you think there is nothing higher or greater than the human mind, you can learn through the *Yoga Sutras* how to harness its greater abilities.

Thus this book offers clear, step-by-step directions, provides a variety of ways to meditate, and describes what then happens. It can go right to the heart of what works for you, why, and how to learn techniques gently and slowly—or more quickly.

***Comment***: Each sutra in Patanjali's book is a saying of a sentence or slightly more (usually with no verb), written as a chant. In Patanjali's time, only one or two percent of people could read, so almost all communication and teaching was oral. Written works were very rare. You can hear how the *Yoga Sutras* sound as chants by searching online for "yoga sutra chant." (Two good links as of this writing are youtube.com/watch?v=WzCrhOPxt6M and http://yogasutrastudy.info/ysp-audio.)

The "Comments" added after most of the sutras in this translation highlight a sutra according to meanings from history, psychology, or the science of meditation. They also add the similar experiences of well-known meditation experts and mystics, East and West, to explain a method Patanjali has mentioned. You also will find asterisks ("*") after some sentences in the "Definition" and "Comments" sections. These asterisks show that an author, book, or longer explanation is described in the "Endnotes" of the book.

Many individuals throughout the world and history have discovered the experiences Patanjali describes here. Most meditation systems and major religions

contain people within their orders, ranks, or schools who have experienced a great peace, love, strength, or special awareness—events that traditional religions would call spiritual or mystical. People who are nonbelievers in religion, even those who are agnostics, have such experiences, too. In recent decades science has verified the practical value of meditation and of many of these experiences.

Patanjali was not trying to create or sustain a religion. Rather, this is a simple instruction manual on how to find, make sense of, and enjoy such experiences.

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# Chapter 1: *Samadhi Pada*

## *Chapter 1's Beginning: What is Samadhi?*
### - The Windless Lake -

**Anglicized Sanskrit**: *Samādhi Pāda*
**Literal translation**: *Blessed-Freedom-Union Step*
**Meaning**: *Union-with-Presence Chapter*
**A chant in English**: *Chapter for Joining Presence*

***Chapter Title Definition***: Each chapter of *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* has a title. The name of Chapter One is *Samadhi Pada*.

The word *samadhi* means, in Hindu yoga meditation, the ultimate freedom of having a perfectly clear mind. The roots of the word—"*sam*" and "*adhi*" (possibly from "*aditi*" in Hinduism's oldest written scripture, the *Rig Veda*)—contain such meanings as "blessed freedom," "blessed pairing together" (of your awareness with that of Presence), and "pairing freedom." One good way to define this almost indefinable word is to say, "Union-with-Presence."

The word *Pada* often is defined as "one of four parts," just as this chapter is one of the four in the original *Yoga Sutras*. The word also means "step"; a "trace or mark of a foot"; in Buddhism, the Buddha's "footprint"; or, especially in Hinduism, "path."

One of the clearest ways to express the full title is, simply, "Chapter for Union with Presence." It also could be called "Step One: Joining Presence" or "The Path to Ultimate Freedom."

***Comment***: The word *samadhi* is Hinduism's word for what other religions call *nirvana*, *satori*, *moksha*, the Presence of Yahweh/Elohim, Union with God, and similar phrases and words that convey an ultimate or deepest experience. It is important to stress that *samadhi* is not an abstract philosophical or theological concept, but rather an actual experience. The Western words "Bliss," "The Peace That Passeth Understanding," and "Energy"—or even "The Force" as imagined in *Star Wars*—also capture what the experience is.

Different religions and spiritual practices, and different schools within them, sometimes divide the experience into higher and lower stages, or slightly different versions, for example, "blissful" or "non-blissful," "full" or "empty," etc. Such

divisions are fine: they exist. Patanjali himself describes several different versions of *samadhi* in his sutras, the best known of which are called *"samadhi* with seed" and "*samadhi* without seed," in addition to others. So, dividing the ultimate experience into different categories is not only acceptable but also accords with the realities of the experience. The event of it comes to a meditator in shades, steps, or mixtures, as Patanjali himself discusses in this chapter.

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# *Sutras 1.1 - 1.3*

# *What is yoga's goal?*

## - The Crystal-Clear Mind -

### ***Sutra* 1.1**: *Atha yogā-anuśāsanam* (Anglicized Sanskrit)

***Literal translation***: "Now yoga instructions"

***Meaning***: "You are blessed in learning how to yoke with the divine."

***A chant in English***: "Welcome to lessons in meditation!"

***Definition***: In this book, each of the sutras is shared using the same pattern of six steps:

Given briefly:

1. The original (Anglicized) Sanskrit saying from Patanjali
2. A literal translation
3. Its basic meaning
4. A modern chant

Discussed at more length:

5. A "Definition" of the sutra
6. A "Comment" about it

To define this first sutra, the technical translation of "yoga" is "yoking" or "union." Patanjali here means yoking to, or gaining union with, what is true Presence, which is a very real and pure Awareness through your own consciousness. "Yoga" also implies a weaving of strands or threads into a united whole.

Patanjali's "instructions" or "lessons" are not just about physical yoga postures, though those are a small part of them. This book, *Yoga Sutras*, is not just about

breathing exercises, however important, though those also are briefly discussed. The great majority of these sutras are about what your mind can accomplish if you choose to use it. For example, the *Yoga Sutras* explains how you can stop or throw out thoughts to arrive at a clear mind space, break up emotions so they are less controlling, and eventually even master your desires.

***Comment***: What kinds of inner mental lessons are these? It is perhaps useful to divide the world's history of meditation, spiritual practices, and mystical experiences into two camps or styles. One can be called "The Way of Concentration." The other can be named "The Way of Waiting."

**The Way of Concentration** normally asks you to focus on a specific point, object, or subject. You might focus on a point on or above your body; an image or a repeated word or phrase; a memory, perhaps, of an especially deep or high experience; or even an especially saintly person or leader of a religion. In fact, Vyasa, ca. 400 CE, the first commentator on Patanjali, says that in using the *Yoga Sutras*, your mind space becomes "clear" and "one-pointed." This "one-pointed" method may vary from very traditionally religious methods to the very nontraditional.* (Wherever "*" appears, it indicates a note about the subject in the "Endnotes.")

Usually, this path suggests specific subjects, objects, or points of concentration that are positive, such as experiences involving love, light, joy, or peace. Some more-extreme versions in the Way of Concentration do make use of darker, deeper, or lower inner forces, sometimes even psychologically and physically dangerous ones. Those who are experienced in these methods strongly recommend that you have a trusted leader to help you at each step. Legitimate adepts of these methods discourage people from following this path unless followers have daily or weekly contact with an initiate who can guide them along the way.

However, if your meditations focus on higher subjects, objects, or points, then you may pursue the Way of Concentration safely using indirect advice such as from reading, recordings, and friendly discussions. In fact, in the West, this approach sometimes is called the *Via Positiva*—Latin for the "positive road." Christian mystic Thomas Merton refers to it when he says, "There are, in Christian tradition, a theology of light and a theology of darkness. On these two lines travel two mystical trends."*

There are many examples of safe concentration: visualizing, praying or chanting to, or practicing the advice of a saint, guru, or adept; focusing on higher points on one's own body, especially the heart or just above the head; encouraging transcendent experiences through nature, the arts, or physical activities; and others. The key question to ask yourself is, "Does my concentrating aim for peace, joy, love, or something similar?" If the answer is yes, then your path is reasonably safe.

**The Way of Waiting** is a path you can take by patiently watching and hoping

for a higher or deeper inner experience. You do not concentrate on a specific subject, object, or point. In this camp or style of meditation, you may sit in silence; you may ask or pray for an inner awakening; you may work, if you wish, to empty yourself of normal thoughts and feelings, rejecting everything "not it"; or you simply may stand back within yourself, apart from your normal thoughts and feelings, and look for the higher or deeper to come to you.

If you pursue this method, multiple choices from traditional spiritual practices are available to you such as prayer, fasting, spiritual retreats, withdrawal to nature, chanting, special breathing and postures, and many others. Extreme methods also are available: for example, self-inflicted pain, lengthy fasting, imprisoning, profound hermit-like activities dangerous to your health, and others. These practices are neither recommended nor necessary for most individuals.

In the West, the Way of Waiting sometimes is called the *Via Negativa* or "negative road." This is because as you wait for light, love, or peace to come to you, many troubling thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations can present themselves, often from your past but also from your present. And it is easy to become caught in their sticky webs before you even know what is happening. For this reason, legitimate adepts who recommend this road also strongly recommend you have help: a well experienced guide to help you through the more difficult experiences.

Where do Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* fit into these two paths? Patanjali makes it clear early in his book that people may concentrate on whatever they choose to gain light, love, and peace—and especially a crystal-clear mind. Thus the *Yoga Sutras* clearly fit into the category of self-help for those who want to use the Way of Concentration with a positive orientation.

However, Patanjali's recommendations also may be useful to you if you are using the Way of Waiting. As you meditate and wait, these sutras may help you better understand what is swirling and whirling through your mind space and your emotional self—what is useful and what is not. Patanjali's clear intent is to be practical and, in simple language, help you no matter what road you choose.

In fact, some people combine both Ways. For example, those who Wait sometimes decide to go into their heart, concentrating on it, and Wait there. Or those who concentrate may wait on a point above their heads, focusing there. Transcendentalists may concentrate on the beauty around them, waiting for it to fill them.

No matter your path, you will have experiences that these sutras can help you better understand: what is valuable and what is not? What can you reliably hold onto, and what should you ignore or push away? The sutras can help you better understand what you experience and more easily make choices.

In fact, the *Sutras* offer a very wide umbrella under which people from the most

spiritually devout to the highly rational and scientific may gather, whether in Concentration or Waiting. Jerome Engel, Distinguished Professor of Neurology at UCLA, says, "Numerous writings in recent years have exacerbated the traditional rift between science and religion [but] [n]euroscientists have become increasingly interested in using...introspective inquiries of the mind to complement...scientific investigations of the brain. [C]ontemplative practices are particularly amenable to such collaboration, inviting efforts to find neurobiological explanations...."*

In other words, there are few differences among all the different schools and methods of religion and spirituality when it comes to goals. Whether you are a fervent follower of one of the major world religions, a confirmed scientific atheist, or someone who is between, the objectives for all are much the same: calm, peace, and control of your mind; joy and love; and triumph over bad health whether physical, emotional, or mental. Patanjali wrote a practical manual two thousand years ago for reaching these goals.

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** For most authors or works mentioned in these sutras, please see the "Endnotes" for further information. For details about references, see "Sources/Bibliography."*

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## ***Sutra* 1.2**: *Yogaś citta vṛtti nirodhaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Yoga: mind-whirlpools cessation no-storm" (Note: The "literal translation" of each sutra sometimes adds punctuation marks for clarity. They are not part of the original *Sutras*.)

***Meaning***: "In yoga, you learn to calm the whirlpools or waves of thought in your brightening mind space."

***A Chant***: "Still the whirlpool of your thoughts and enter the great silence."

***Definition***: Yoga concentration is a way to clear your mind space of what might be considered the "Big Four Obstacles" to clear meditation:

**"Big Four" Obstacles**

**Thoughts** (verbal and visual thinking)

**Memories** (thoughts from or about the past)

**Emotions** (mixes of thought and physical feeling)

**Negative Sensations** (negative physical feelings such as despair, excessive desire, and overexcitation)

Patanjali describes them as swirling around in your mind space (Sutra 1.3-1.4), and later in the sutras he labels the really troubling ones as "throwaways" (1.30-1.31), which also may swirl around or within you.

One frequently used image for describing the mind space is that it rests like a deep, wide pool into which different thoughts, feelings, and other mental impressions are tossed like stones. When these "stones" are thrown in (or when you draw them in), they create waves in the natural stillness of the mind's water. These waves obscure the clarity of the pool.

If you adopt this way of understanding what thoughts and feelings are, then you can view them as things that are *not* forever trapped inside your mind or body; rather they are external to your truest Self or Awareness and thus can be thrown out or otherwise blocked or rejected. There are, according to Patanjali, a number of ways to clear yourself of them.

***Comment***: Modern science observes our brain processes using neural imaging and similar physical tools of observation. In 2020, a team of scientists at Queen's University in Canada reported their observations of the thinking of first-year psychology students watching movies. The scientists used their scanning instruments not only to examine where in students' heads their thoughts occurred, but also how often. The results regarding frequency were that tentatively "one could estimate over six thousand daily thoughts for healthy adults of a young-adult demographic...." Needless to say, so many bits and pieces of thinking in our heads do not exactly create a calm, peaceful mind.*

In this sutra, the word *nirodhaḥ* usually means "to cease" or "stop." Interestingly, the *-rodhaḥ* part of it may come from *Rudra*, a Hindu god or sometimes goddess of storms. *Ni-* means "no" or "not"; combining it with the name of the god gives us a root meaning of "no storm." In other words, in successful yoga meditation, the swirls in your mind stop, and you experience a state of "no-storm."

Another Hindu way of looking at our thinking, called the *kosha* (plural) in Indian psychology, also may be helpful for understanding Patanjali's idea of thought control. The ancient scriptures of India, from which Patanjali almost certainly drew many of his ideas, are the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*.* The *kosha* are mentioned specifically in the *Taittirīya*, likely written well before Patanjali's time. This scripture explains that five *kosha* exist as sheaths or layers surrounding your innermost Awareness. You may access them through simple awareness or with the help of verbalization or visualization techniques used in normal life, psychological introspection or therapy, and meditation. They are like the layers of an onion:

**The *Kosha***

**Inner Center**: Your pure Awareness or true Self

"**Wisdom**" **Layer**: Your intuitive "knowing" awareness that does not require thought

**Middle Layer**: Verbal ideas and images—thoughts, visualizations, memory

**Second-to-last Layer**: Emotion, desire, physical energy and feelings, bad and good; normally somewhat controllable

**Outer Layer**: Physical body, bones, nerves, sensory input—autonomic/ automated systems *

What is important to remember about the *kosha* is that Patanjali and Hinduism in general say the four outer layers are outside and beyond your innermost Awareness, which is your true Self. For this reason, he names the Middle and Second-to-last Layers— thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations—as places with "whirlpools" or "swirls" because, as they enter your center Awareness, they resemble swirls that fly into you like a whirlpool. Other translators call them by such names as "turnings," "perturbations," or "waves"—like movements on the surface of a clear, still pool when a stone is dropped in. Later, in Sutra 18, Patanjali also will describe some of these swirls, when they are completely outside of your *kosha*, as looking like "burnt seeds" as they enter you.

Another way to consider Patanjali's ancient Hindu psychology is the manner in which it defines the word "mind." In Patanjali's sutras, "mind" is similar to the concept of "space," "sky," or, say, "hole." These words all signify something that is not a real "thing" in itself, but rather is defined by what is present within or around it.

"Space," for example, is not an object from which you can carve out a piece, weigh it, and describe the piece's width, length, and height. Rather, it is something that is, simply, empty—nonexistent. "Space" is defined only by what it contains—what is inside it. For example, you might say, "There is an empty space in the corner of my living room," or "the sun and stars are in space." The word "space" always is an abstract—a place or location with something in it—but space itself is not a real object.

"Mind" is similar in ancient Hindu psychology. A "crystal-clear mind" is a location, not a thing. It is an empty mind space. Patanjali does explain that some forms of liberation or enlightenment may involve, or contain, such real energies as a deep and abiding presence of peace, love, or joy, and even mental thinking of a purer sort can occur. But a "crystal-clear mind" in the *Yoga Sutras* is, in its most absolute or pure form, a space empty of the Big Four: all thoughts, memories, emotions, and

negative sensations.

The Western scientific "brain" certainly is a physical place, part of the human body, where a tremendous number of chemical energies perform highly complex physical activities. But "mind" is an ancient concept in both West and East. And in both, it operates more like an eye or an ear. You can close your eyes and see nothing, or plug your ears and hear nothing. Similarly, says Patanjali, you can clear out your mind and think nothing, revealing your true Awareness in its center.

Note: The "Literal translation" of each sutra in this book sometimes uses additional punctuation marks. They are not part of the original Sanskrit but are added here for greater clarity.

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## ***Sutra* 1.3**:

## *Tadā draṣṭuḥ sva-rūpe 'vasthānam (avasthānam)*

***Literal translation***: "At that moment, awareness: natural color standing"

***Meaning***: "When you complete *Sutra* 1.2, you will find your Awareness, standing or radiating in its own natural color, pure and crystal-clear."

***A chant***: "Learn how to shine from your crystalline Self."

***Definition***: At the base or center of your normal mind and personality, you are an Awareness. This center within you is not an emptiness, a death, a midnight, or a nothingness. It is, instead, filled with Awareness, a fullness, a blazing consciousness. For example, consider a time when you have been most filled with a strong sense of something higher, deeper, more powerful than mere thought or daily emotions. Have you been transported to a powerful sense of love, of peace, or simply of pure awareness? It is times like these that you come closest to experiencing your pure Awareness.

***Comment***: What is this Awareness of Crystalline Self? The Hindu sage Vyāsa, who wrote the first commentaries on the *Yoga Sutras* ca. 400 CE, calls each person's basic Awareness "pure consciousness": "unchanging, free from dissolution," separate from "objects presented" to it, "pure, and infinite" (trans. Geer). Other Hindu *Sanskrit* names for it are the *Purusa* (or *Purusha*), the *Atman*, and the most central

*kosha* layer or "bliss *kosha*." In other spiritual systems, this awareness has more names: for example, the Self (with a capital "s"), Inner Self, Inner God, the divine spark inside, the Void within (Buddhism), the divine indwelling (Christian Centering Prayer movement), and many others.

The 20th-21st century Franciscan priest and mystic Richard Rohr—an important advocate of the Centering Prayer movement—has many names for it, as well, He says it is your "immortal diamond" and "True Self" that is "God [and] human...at the same time." He adds that it is, in the New Testament of the Christian Bible, the Gospel of Matthew's "treasure hidden in the field" and "pearl of great price," St. Teresa of Avila's "actual spring" of water, the Greek "psyche (soul)," and "the indwelling Holy Spirit."*

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*Rocky Islet in the Sea*

# Sutras 1.4 - 1.11

## *What Are Whirlpools and Swirls?*

### - The Mind's Energy Forms -

### ***Sutra* 1.4**: *Vṛtti sārūpyam itaratra*

***Literal translation***: "Whirlpools—these appearing at other times"

***Meaning***: "These swirling energy-forms that you assume are "me" appear at other times (than in Sutra 3)."

***A chant***: "When you're not clear, your thoughts swirl round and seem like you."

***Definition***: In this sutra, Patanjali defines how normal, everyday mental impressions act. Patanjali's definition of mental impressions contains what were labelled the "Big Four" in Sutra 1.2. He will go into much more detail about the Big Four starting in

Sutra 1.6, where he names what he considers the five main types of whirlpools; and then he names two additional groups of them and their results later in Sutras 1.30-1.31.

Patanjali describes these impressions as swirling about your inner core, creating your small self, what can be called your personality. They enter you like whirlpools circling into points within yourself. They are not permanently stored as a necessary and indivisible part of your deepest core of real selfhood, which is your central Awareness. Instead, they come from outside that core Awareness.

Patanjali suggests, in this sutra, that you can sense them entering your central core of self like swirling forms. The real you is not these mental impressions; they are exterior to it. One example that perhaps most people can relate to is sleep. Patanjali considers it a mental impression coming from beyond your deepest core of self. And, in fact, you perhaps can remember how sleep sometimes seems to come in waves, gradually approaching and becoming increasingly stronger until you finally must give in to it. Likewise, sometimes when you wake, the sleep waves seem slowly, gradually, to recede from the core of your self until you are fully awake.

***Comment***: When you reach the point at which you have calmed your mind space in meditation, in going into or coming out of sleep, or sometimes in other states, you can literally see and feel mental impressions coming into you. They may appear as independent, floating energy-forms or shapes beyond you, like little bundles of energy. In a perfectly calm state, you can ignore them or push them away. But if you are curious and concentrate on them, that very focus on them will pull them into you like, as Patanjali says, a whirlpool with its point somewhere in your head or body.

Imagining this concept of mental impressions coming into your center from the outside might be easier if you remember the ancient Hindu explanation called the *kosha* listed in Sutra 1.2—the onion-like layers of self with a center of pure self or Awareness and, around it, from inside to outside, a wisdom-knowing layer; a layer of normal thoughts and memories; and a heavier layer of emotions, desires, sleep, and physical sensations. Finally, the outermost layer is your physical body: bones, tissue, and blood. Patanjali is saying that your mental impressions are outside your core, and these impressions whirlpool into your center, where you become aware of them.

Another way of understanding the small self is the forms in which Western psychology labels it. For example, Rick Hanson and Richard Mendius in *Buddha's Brain* list five "selves" that one typical person might have:

**Five Selves**

- the *reflective self* ("I am solving a problem.")
- the *emotional self* ("I am upset.")

- [t]he *autobiographical self* [that] provides the sense of "I" having a unique past
  and future [I did/will work hard.]
- [t]he *self-as-object*...when you deliberately think about yourself [in the abstract—"My 'self' is friendly."]
- the *self-as-subject* [that] is the elemental sense of being a person [living your] experiences ["Now I am walking."]

"In the brain," Hanson and Mendius add, "*every manifestation of self is impermanent.* The self is continually constructed, deconstructed, and constructed again" [italics theirs]. These small selves, says Patanjali, however much they may help you through life (or impede your life), are just outer swirls and whirlpools around the true Self—the Awareness—that lies at the heart of them.*

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## ***Sutra* 1.5**: *Vṛttayaḥ pañcatayyaḥ kliṣṭa-akliṣṭāḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Whirlpools five, good or bad"

***Meaning***: "The primary mental impressions are five types of energy-forms [listed in the next sutra], each of which can be helpful or hurtful."

***A chant***: "The five whirlpools may help you or hurt you."

***Definition***: Patanjali classifies the whirlpools, or mental impressions, into five main categories, which he explains in the next sutras. He does not say these are the only kinds of mental impressions or energy-forms, just that they are the most common or important. While there are literally thousands of other classification systems for mental impressions, ancient to modern in both West and East, Patanjali's five types are very practical. They are simple to understand and common in human experience. For example, one type of thought he classifies is sleep; it can be a deep, restorative rest, or it can be a shallow restlessness troubled by discomfort and nightmares.

***Comment***: Each type of thinking that Patanjali is about to list is neutral. That means each one, in and of itself, is neither innately good or bad. This is important to remember: thinking itself is not bad. Though the goal of yoga, says Patanjali, is to develop a clear mind space, you still may have good and useful thoughts. Patanjali clarifies that the good versions of these five types of thought help you grow closer

to having a clear mind space. And he implies (much later, at the very end of his fourth and final chapter) that you can use good thoughts even after you have achieved a perfectly clear mind.

The Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) have a similar concept. Some thoughts (and actions) are called justified or righteous ("righteous" in Hebrew literally means "in right ways"), or gifts of the spirit. However, others are considered unjustified, "in wrong ways," or—to use a similar word—"sinful." Unfortunately, now in Western culture, the word "sinful" implies committing evil. Originally, the word meant, simply, "in wrong ways to God" or, more in modern wording, "out of sync with God." "Sinful" means, basically, "imperfect."

Generally, whether in East or West, it is not thinking itself that is good or bad, but rather whether the thoughts help an enlightened process or, instead, prevent such enlightenment. Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, says "there are so many...diverse thoughts and emotions we experience on a daily basis. Some of these thoughts and emotions are harmful, even toxic, while others are healthy and healing. The former disturb your mind space and cause much mental pain. The latter bring you true joyfulness."

If, for example, you talk to a friend, is your talking hurtful to you or your friend? Or is it, instead, positive for you or the other person, tending toward a wider, greater sense of light, love, or peace?

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## ***Sutra* 1.6**: *Prāmaṇa viparyaya vikalpa nidra smṛti-ayaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Measured logic, false logic, verbalizing imaginings, deep sleep, recollecting"

***Meaning***: "The whirlpools in Sutra 5 are of five types:

(i) verifiable logic

(ii) inverted or illusory logic

(iii) creative mixed thoughts

(iv) the blankness of deep sleep

(v) remembering."

***A chant***: "Your whirlpool thoughts are reason, illusion, creativity, inner voice, deep sleep, or memory."

***Definition***: This sutra divides the whirlpools, also called mental impressions or energy-forms, into five major types. Patanjali describes all five in more detail in the sutras following this one, so here is just a brief definition of each one for now:

a. The first of the five is logical reasoning based on facts. Such thinking does not use guesses, just clear reality. For example, the existence of a chair is a fact, and a series of facts, added logically, show it can be used for sitting.

b. The second is reasoning based on non-facts: in other words, fantasizing or illogical reasoning. For example, if you say that the chair, above, floats on air every Friday, that would be a fantasy or illogical thought.

c. About the third energy-form, translators have some disagreement. A modern view is that Patanjali may have meant creative thinking—what now is called storytelling. By "verbalizing imagining" he may have meant the kind of talking that you do within yourself: your silent inner voice. Though what he meant is not completely clear, it is not simply unreal logic but rather something more complex and richer, such as might occur if you were to make up a story about the chair, above: how it becomes a flying chair whenever the moon is out, enabling you to break through evil air spirits to travel to other planets.

d. The fourth type of mental impression is the blankness or "blank page" you remember that you had in deep sleep if you are awakened from it. This state is not normal dreaming, which he probably included in the first three categories, above. Instead, the blank-page state during sleep is the seeming absence of dreams (which he will explain in a sutra below).

e. The fifth swirling or whirlpool is memories: basic, simple remembering of something you experienced in real life. It is not fantasy about these memories, nor is it logical (or illogical) thinking about a single memory. Rather, it is just a memory or series of them in pure form, just as you remember them happening, such as you might recall a pleasant meeting with a friend or an unpleasant accident you once had.

***Comment***: Patanjali clarifies, later, that if knowing these types of whirlpools helps you identify and quiet or calm them, then the description of each may be helpful. However, he points out, if you have found other ways to quiet all such energy-forms, then you do not need to worry about identifying these five by type.

How does Patanjali classify emotion, desire, and other partly-physical feelings or expressions? This is an open question. However, you will find, if you read the sutras to the end, that he obviously believes in the existence, value, and even importance of higher, deeper feelings that a person might call spiritual such as profound states of love, peace, joy, and others. You'll also discover, in the "Comment" section of sutras yet to come, that translators and commentators for the

past two thousand years have disagreed about the value of desire, such as desire for food or sex, in the *Yoga Sutras.* Some say all desires must be stricken. Others say that, like these five types of mental impressions, some desires can be good or useful, and some bad or troubling.

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## ***Sutra* 1.7**: *Pratyakṣā-ānumānā-āgāmāḥ pramāṇāni*

***Literal translation***: "Direct experience, close logic, scripture: measured logic"

***Meaning***: "First-hand experience, finely-measured inference, and words of an expert: these are sources of verifiable logic."

***A chant***: "Search the reality of your senses, raw logic, and true reports."

***Definition***: The first one of the five types of whirlpools, or energy-forms listed in Sutra 6 is measured by verifiable logic. It comes, says Patanjali, from any of three sources: your direct sensory experiences, your direct logical connections, and highly competent testimony from trusted sources. Such logic does not stem from wishful thinking or from your own feelings or opinions and those of others. Instead, they are evidenced by what your or others' senses report, or from direct, simple, logical reasoning thereof.

For example, if the evidence of your senses tells you that a fruit has given you an upset stomach every time you've eaten it, then you logically may assume it will continue to do so. However, you cannot logically say that the same will happen to others without further external evidence. Even then, you must consider that your connection between the fruit and your own indigestion may be a qualified truth based on other factors you haven't examined, such as the time of day you eat it or the foods with which you have eaten it.

***Comment***: Why is Patanjali bothering to offer so much detail about these five types of mental impressions? He hopes to help you answer three questions:

(1) "How can I better identify the different patterns in my own mind?" Recognizing them is one way to slow them down and eventually clear them.
(2) "How can I make use of a pattern to help me meditate?" If you understand a pattern, you can better use it to take you closer to good meditation, or you can more easily see how it takes you away from useful meditation.

(3) "How can I make use of a pattern as I become more enlightened?" For example, if you realize you have a purpose in life, then some readings may help you to help others.

All three of Patanjali's categories for logical thinking also are understood as logical and factual mental processing in modern times. It is worth noting that his third item, "words of experts," was always called, in Patanjali's time, "scripture." "Scripture" two thousand years ago meant "accurate descriptions of spiritual or mystical experiences by experts." Because scriptures were just beginning, then, to be placed in written form, many of them were the actual words of mystics passed down through many centuries. It wasn't until after these early ancient scriptures were written that commentaries—sometimes written by people who were more philosophical than mystical—began to be written.

Also noteworthy is that our culture currently thinks of the early scriptures of Hinduism—stories and anecdotes of the activities of different gods—as myths. However, those early scriptures, primarily the *Vedas* and the earliest *Upanishads*, had esoteric (spiritual-symbolic) meanings. They were descriptions of meditators and mystics' experiences. Therefore, to Patanjali and other ancient writers, they were "truth" just as much as first-person newspaper accounts are meant to be today.

Thus in modern times, this second item in the list—close logic or finely-measured reasoning—means accurate deduction (and perhaps carefully used induction). The steps of deductive (and inductive) reasoning must be based, according to Patanjali, on real, verifiable experiences you or others have had, using facts on which most people can agree.

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## ***Sutra* 1.8**:

## *Viparyayo mithyā-jñānam-atad-rūpa pratiṣṭham*

***Literal translation***: "False logic: conflicting knowledge—not appearance based"

***Meaning***: "Inverted or illusory logic is false knowledge, not standing on what true observation brings forth."

***A chant***: "Illogical thoughts aren't real."

***Definition***: The second of the whirlpools or energy-forms that was listed in Sutra 6 is unreal or fake logic. Patanjali is not talking about creative storytelling or creative

imagination here: that is a different category. Rather, he means that illusory knowledge is defined by its not being based on actual observed nature. The classic example given by many translators is that from a distance, observed too quickly or at night, a person might see a snake. Upon closer examination, however, the person might realize the "snake" is really a rope

***Comment***: Throughout the sutras, Patanjali clearly demonstrates that he believes in a "real" reality. In other words, he does not take the position, as some in Hinduism and Buddhism do, that all reality is just an illusion. Patanjali believes that the world really exists. However, he stipulates in this sutra that illusory thinking also can happen: it is what you or others talk or write about as if it were true, but it is not based on observing what is real.

Is this kind of thinking bad? Patanjali doesn't have much that is positive to say about it. However, he already has stated in Sutra 6 that each of the five basic types of mental impressions can be used for good or bad.

Thus it is good, perhaps, to remember that such illusory thinking, as in this sutra, does include illogical rhetorical devices like satire, irony, sarcasm, and other "illusory" or reversed logical forms. The purpose of such turns of language often is either to emphasize what is not true, or to entertain. Patanjali already has made it clear, if indirectly so, that you are using good thinking when you learn what is not true. In addition, entertainment is not bad. Laughter and humor are acceptable—not everything need be serious—if they take you closer to a lightness, joy, or peace that is compatible with meditation. For these two reasons, this sutra's "illusory thinking" has both good and bad uses as a method of thinking.

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## ***Sutra* 1.9**: *Śabda-jñāna-anupātī vastu śūnyo vikalpaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Verbal knowledge in sequence with perceivable objects unoccupied = creative thoughts"

***Meaning***: "Normal thinking in your head using verbal word sounds, not referring to real objects, is 'creative mixed thoughts.'"

OR (alternative): "Verbal thinking in your head mixed with fantasy-swollen images is 'creative mixed thoughts.'"

***A chant***: "Your mental fantasies can be either good or bad."

***Definition***: For Patanjali, this third type of energy-form or "mind swirling" is a type of internal verbal thinking that makes connections without referring regularly to real objects. In other words, it is jumping to conclusions without careful reference to reality.

Many of us has an internal thinking process or what Psychologist Lev Vygotsky names as an "inner speech" or silent voice within. Psychologists also call it our "stream of consciousness." It is a series of internal word-sounds or sensory images in your head, often a mixture of both, along with intermixed feelings. In other words, it is what we call inner "normal thinking." It flows ever on with its own mix of logic, memories, and imaginings, somewhat different for each of us.

Patanjali appears to be referring to this general word-image-memory-feeling flow, especially when it is allowed free reign without any kind of reality check. For example, if you see someone in a mask outside on a dark night, your stream of consciousness might begin flowing with thoughts and feelings about robbery or worse and then consider whether—and how—you might go outside or, instead, call calling the police. However, when the figure walks under a street lamp, you see that mask is part of a costume (and you remember it is Halloween).

Another example is more positive. Perhaps a friend says to you, after you gently have explained to your child why he or she cannot run blindly across the street, "You might make a good counselor or teacher." Your mind then becomes filled with ideas, memories, and images of other events that might be related, and you begin to ask yourself, "Should I become a teacher, or maybe a counselor?" This stream of consciousness, too, is not entirely reality based, especially if you haven't yet analyzed the real possibilities and problems of making such a change. However, your thinking, at least, is creating a new and positive possibility. In this sense, such thinking is creative and sometimes quite useful.

***Comment***: Many translations tend to make this thought-form, like the previous one, merely a negative activity. They do so by interpreting it a form of lying or of creating a technically false statement: for example, "all cows are like cattle" (which is, in the discipline of logic, false: cows are not "like" cattle—they *are* cattle).

However, Patanjali's definition of this form of thinking appears to go far beyond mere illogical statements. In fact, he has told us in Sutra 6 that each of these five thought forms can be positive or negative, depending on their use. Well respected scholar and meditation expert Georg Feuerstein says in his translation of the *Yoga Sutras* that such creative thinking, though it sometimes can mislead us or be distracting, at other times can be helpful: for example, he says, it can help us gain "a concept of a 'higher Self' or a 'path'" so that we can "exercise our will to overcome...limitations...and...break through to the level of the transcendental Self."

One other intriguing possibility exists in translating "perceivable objects

voided" (*vastu śūnyo*." The root of *śūnyo* is *śvi*, or "to swell." Thus it may be that Patanjali is talking about "perceivable objects swelling," which could mean that this type of thinking clearly is creative imagination that swells or inflates perceivable objects into imaginary objects that are interesting and different. This creative process could involve the arts, imagination attached to nature, or other acts of imagining.

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## ***Sutra* 1.10**: *Abhāva pratyaya-ālambanā vr̥ttir nidrā*

***Literal translation***: "Voidness, notion of—resting in: whirlpools/ swirls of deep sleep"

***Meaning*** [*Nidra* yoga]: "Being 'empty of mind' is a feeling in which you rest when you experience the thought-form of deep sleep."

***A chant***: "The blankness of deepest sleep is also a swirling thought."

***Definition***: "Deep sleep" in this sutra actually is a form of thought, says Patanjali. It may seem like unconsciousness; however, experienced meditators can access this blankness of deep sleep in a conscious way, too. There even is a specific school of meditation—*Nidra* Yoga—that works on accessing this type of consciousness. In a state of *nidra*, for example, everything slows down: you have no thoughts, images, memories, or emotions and few, if any, physical sensations; you experience a very slow heartbeat and sense of timelessness; and, afterward, you gain a feeling of refreshment as if from a deep sleep.

***Comment***: *Nidra* or blank sleep is, according to the scientific journal *Neuroscience*, "the deepest level...stage IV sleep," considered so because it is the most difficult sleep from which to rouse someone. In stage IV, your brain's "predominant EEG activity consists of low frequency (1—4 Hz), high-amplitude fluctuations called delta waves...."*

When you fall asleep, says, *Neuroscience*, you move through sleep stages I-IV, with IV being the lowest or deepest, in about an hour. As you come out of this cycle, you move backward and upward through stages III, II, and then I, and then into "REM" ("rapid eye movement") sleep. The full cycle of I-IV and back again tends to be repeated, but only once. After that, your mind space tends to cycle through I, II, and III, skipping four, and then backwards from III and II to I again.

Each time you return closer to wakefulness in stage I, you then enter an even higher or closer-to-wakefulness level called "REM" (rapid eye movement) sleep,

which is most like normal waking awareness. Then you cycle back downward through I, II, and III again. You repeat this full down and up cycle several more times through the night, skipping IV, with the REM level lasting a little longer each time.

Because the deepest sleep, delta, occurs early in the sleep cycle, meditators who seek *nidra* consciousness may best look for it there, and not at the end of a night's sleep, when it is unlikely to occur. And they may need to pass through only an hour or less of meditating to find it if they search at the beginning of what normally would be a night of sleep. How likely are you to find it? In most people, most of the time, sleepiness does lead to sleep. But meditators who do not fall asleep easily may find themselves slipping into ever-slowing brainwaves and then reaching the "blank-slate" delta waves while remaining conscious.

However, *nidra* consciousness, says Patanjali, still is one of the five *vrittis*: whirlpools or swirling energy-forms of thought that he defines in Sutra 1.5 and lists in Sutra 1.6. In other words, the blank slate is, itself, actually a "thing": a blank slate. He says that its emptiness is only an illusion. It is like looking at a blue wall and thinking we're seeing empty sky.

And as Patanjali says, these five thought-forms can be useful for a clear mind space, or they can be obstacles. If *nidra* consciousness comes to you as you meditate, you may be able to mark it as an interesting experience—or perhaps even, if it regularly deepens your meditations, a temporary goal. It certainly is considered restorative, whether you have it in sleep or in meditation. There even is a type of meditation system called *Nidra* Yoga. It is helpful to remember, though, that it is only one type of swirling energy-form. And the eventual goal is to be able to still, or clear, all energy forms in the deepest crystal-clear mind meditation.

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## ***Sutra* 1.11**: *Anubhūta viṣayā-asaṁpramoṣaḥ smṛtiḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Experienced-in-the-world, going-active-again, not stolen: memory"

***Meaning***: "A worldly or natural experience, happening again in your mind space, not whisked away by time: this is remembering."

***A chant***: "Lingering memories may swirl in your mind."

***Definition***: A recollection or memory, the fifth whirlpool listed in Sutra 6, is an energy-form not forgotten, but rather reoccurring in your mind space. It is not logic, imagination, or sleep, though it can occur with these. Instead, it is a recall something

you perceived or felt. For example, if you recall your meditation experience from the previous day, you may be able to use this memory to begin your meditation faster or better. On the other hand, if you can't clear a string of bad memories from your head, memory is not helping you but rather hurting.

***Comment***: Memories are thoughts, too. This may seem obvious, but in the context of meditating, they are like other mind forms: something to clear away, often, when you meditate. Sometimes people worry that clearing away thoughts will mean you cannot get them back. Usually, if they are strongly imprinted in you, that doesn't happen. However, if you consider the memories important, then go ahead: remember them. But doing so a few times, or at most once a day, usually is more than enough to recall them at a future time. If you consider them extremely important, write them down, or take notes about them enough to recall them again.

If a memory is especially valuable to you, incorporate it as an object of meditation. You can do this with other thoughts, too. Using any kind of thought as an object of meditation is called *jnana* or "mind" yoga. Typically, you choose a verbal thought, image, or single memory, and you hold it in your mind as if you might focus on the flame of a candle or a beautiful sunset. You then let is sit or rest there, watching it, waiting to see what might spring from it. What does it make you think of or feel? Let it unreel or move forward (or backward) one step: what happens, what do you feel, or what pattern, if any, do you sense?

If your thought object takes you more deeply into meditation, it may be a starting point well worth using. Memories especially—of particularly strong or pure meditative experiences—can be helpful beginnings in meditation: let the memory of something beautiful, strong, and pure wash over you, let it fully possess you, and you may find your way to the experience once again.

Practicing *jnana* on a deeply troubling memory sometimes is helpful, as well. As you focus on it, letting it rest at the front of your mind space, also become aware of its disturbing nature: why does it bother you, and what part of you is bothered and how? And finally, can you switch your focus ever so slightly to the feeling of being troubled, as if you were facing it. Doing so is an ancient yoga technique that modern psychology now calls "accepting" or "managing" your negative emotions. Doing this does not mean you have chosen to remember bad feelings repeatedly; rather, the purpose is to disassemble a bad feeling by facing and examining it, either on your own or with a therapist.

The more purely you can experience the bad feeling itself, especially when you can cut it away from your mental thoughts and images normally attached to it, then the more you may control or dissipate it. Buddhist psychiatrist Mark Epstein says in *Psychology Today* that you "need a state of reverie…to know [y]our emotions. Whether...through meditation or the quiet holding space of therapy, it is always

necessary." You must have, says, Epstein, "acceptance of feelings rather than talking and analyzing."*

Occasionally, bad feelings are a warning of someone or something about to approach. However, a regular bad feeling usually is just another whirlpool swirling in or around you. Usually you can dive into it, watch it, or let it envelop you, if necessary, without reacting to it, and it will go away. Strong or stubborn feelings may need several meditation sessions—and renewal meditations in future times—but usually, with such meditative focus, a bad feeling gradually dissolves or melts away.

Those who practice this also learn to have a lifebuoy or life preserver on hand to rescue them if observing a feeling becomes too overwhelming. Those in therapy have their therapist. Those who practice the Way of Waiting as explained in Sutra 1 often have a meditation adept. Those who practice alone choose a high or deep experience to "rescue" them: a point or object of meditation, whether within or without, to which they always can turn—as Patanjali will discuss in Sutra 23.

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*One Path through Woods to Water*

# Sutras 1.12 - 1.16

## *How Do You Handle Old Desires?*

### - Creating New Habits -

***Sutra* 1.12**: *Abhyāsa vairagya-ābhyāṁ tan-nirodhaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Applying yourself and lack of excitement, both: the five stormless-stilling"

***Meaning***: "(1) Practicing and (2) avoiding attraction to them: they are two ways to quiet these five whirlpools."

***A chant***: "Learn to resist these swirling interruptions."

***Definition***: You can block, calm, or ignore these five types of swirls or energy-forms

through simple practice; and, during a meditation, you can work on losing your interest in them, blocking them, or even destroying them. Patanjali will discuss several ways to block or suppress swirling energy-forms in Sutras 20, 23, 27 and 32-39.

***Comment***: The problem in this sutra of the five "whirlpools"—and the solution of practicing to avoid attraction to them—is reflected two thousand years later, in the present, by popular advice columnist Carolyn Hax. A woman writes to her:

> My husband...and I currently live with my family while we struggle to pay down debt. Space is limited. We've been at each other constantly with little annoyances.... I'm also...pretty emotional right now.... Any suggestions? I'm getting too much of him, but I still miss "us."

Hax offers an Eastern-spiritual, perhaps even Patanjali-like response:

> It's time to go Buddhist and start wanting what you have.
>
> Live in the moment. Let all kinds of stuff go. By the bucketload. Annoyances? Ha. Maybe for lesser souls they are, but you are beyond annoyance into a soft-focus netherworld of who gives a flying (toy truck).
>
> Connect where you are. "Us," as-is.
>
> Frustration is for people who think things should be a certain way. Reject "should" for the tyranny it is and go all in, all whatever, all now.*

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## ***Sutra* 1.13**: *Tatra sthitau yatno-'bhyāsaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Of these (two), steady effort = practice"

***Meaning***: "Of these two in Sutra 1.12, sustained, steady marshalling of yourself defines 'practice.'"

***A chant***: "Practice makes perfect."

***Definition***: "Practice" here means regular restraint, steadiness, and application in your meditations over a period of time, and also in each session of meditating.

***Comment***: Practice is the *sine qua non*—the "without which, not possible"—in Patanjali's meditation vocabulary. Some Hindu systems, especially those in the Buddhist traditions, suggest that enlightenment can come suddenly, like a strike of lightning. However, most spiritual and mystical traditions emphasize that you must prepare yourself. "Getting lucky" is a common phrase. However, most "luck"

accrues when you have prepared yourself with learning, planning, and aforethought. Then when conditions are ripe, your "luck" will seem to suddenly occur. But without preparations, it wouldn't happen.

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## ***Sutra* 1.14**: *Sa tu dīrgha kāla nairantarya satkāra-āsevito dr̥̣dha bhūmiḥ*

***Literal translation***: "It [practice], however: with no interruption in right doing, resorting to (it) fastening onto becoming earth."

***Meaning***: "But practicing works best when you do it right, without interruption, until you have tied it to (grounded it in) your normal life, wherever you live."

***A chant***: "Meditate thoroughly, deeply; make it part of your nature."

***Definition***: Patanjali appears to be stating that if you want to make meditation work, you can't just dabble each time for a few minutes, casually. You can't just meditate once or twice a month, or for just two or three minutes now and then, and expect much change. Rather, you should meditate long enough each time to make it sink into your life: for example, ten to thirty minutes or more at least twice a week, and preferably once per day.

***Comment***: Note: Some translations offer a more demanding and rigorous interpretation: that you must practice all the time, or very frequently on a daily basis, for months or years. However, most meditation experts will tell you that even a practice of, perhaps, two half-hour sessions per day can satisfy what Patanjali is talking about. And even less frequent practice than that can still help you grow in meditation.

As with sports, a profession, or so many other activities in life, the more you meditate, the better you become and the deeper you understand it. Another way of saying this is that you can succeed well with Patanjali's meditation suggestions without having to become a reclusive ascetic who withdraws from the world and leaves regular life.

An additional sense of this sutra exists in the word *bhūmiḥ*, which can be translated as "grounded" or, more literally, "in or of the earth." This latter, earthy interpretation may have held special meaning for Patanjali: as a Hindu, he likely

believed that long-held thoughts, habits, and intentions literally sink downward within oneself to unite with the very base or matter of the physical or psychological body. There, they become so grounded or deeply embedded in a person that they turn into a part of you, almost like a leg or a foot. This may sound bad; however, on the positive side, it also implies that long and regular meditation practice also becomes like another limb or organ in your body.

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## ***Sutra* 1.15**: *Dr̥ṣṭa-ānuśravika viṣay vitr̥ṣṇasya vaśīkāra saṁjṇā vairāgyam*

***Literal translation***: "Perceptions, hearings/learnings—these interesting matters: without thirst and controlled, your blessed-swelling consciousness not grabbing onto"

***Meaning***: "What you've seen and heard are attractive objects; but you—without thirst for them, and ruling over them—can, in your pure, clear knowing, remain separate from them."

***A chant***: "Gain a clearer mind by ignoring your worldly attractions."

***Definition***: Sutras 15 and 16 are a pair. Sutra 16 continues from 15 by saying that you may stay in the world as long as you don't let your mind, heart, and body go this way and that with everything your desires indicate or whatever or whoever outside of you grabs onto you.

For example, if you spend an hour before eating dinner imagining what food you will cook and eat and how much pleasure it will give you, another hour eating it with constant critical attention to whether each bite is good enough, and another hour afterward considering how to make it taste even better—or you do the same with other pursuits—then you are so embroiled in the world of the senses that you are taking much time away from what will make you happier. Choose your foods—or other desires—for health and balance of the body and mind. Take pleasure in them as you enjoy them. Then move on to more important pursuits.

***Comment***: You may have pure, clear interests and pursuits, but these should be established from a pure, clear mind space. It is okay to enjoy physical sensations, but not to endlessly pursue lusts for the tastes of food, the adrenaline highs of power, or other purely worldly sensations just for their own sakes if they do not help you draw

closer, directly or indirectly, to your clear awareness or Self. That clear awareness or Self will, in its own way and time, bring plenty of deeper pleasure and meaning to your life.

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## ***Sutra* 1.16**: *Tat paraṁ Puruṣa khyāter guṇa vaitr̥ṣṇyam*

***Literal translation***: "That highest: your *Purusa* (Self), known beyond the strands of natural forces by non-thirst"

***Meaning***: "The purest is when you know your own Awareness, beyond the threads of nature around and within you, thanks to your not desiring anything."

***A chant***: "Your pure Self blossoms when you stop grabbing natural life."

***Definition***: A Supreme form of knowing is to know or be aware of your truest, purest Awareness—your *Purusa*, true Self, or Atman. It is like a "manna" from—or a spark of—Brahman or the Divine (see Sutra 1.3). You achieve this Awareness of your Self when you are able, in meditation, gradually to have no desire, craving, or thirst for what is in nature and its powers, risings up, or inertia. This does not mean you must always have this Awareness, nor does it mean that you must give up the world. You may still live in the world and experience it. However, you also can become "Other" or Aware by learning first in meditation—and then gradually, as your years move forward, in other parts of your life—to acquire this type of consciousness.

In other words, a fruit is not ready to eat in a second. First, the tree must grow; then arrive rain, flowering, and pollination; at last, slowly, the fruit ripens. This is the meaning of the mustard seed in the Bible's Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which liken it to growth in the "realm of the spirit": meditation is very effective, but like most great opportunities, takes work and time.*

***Comment***: In Hinduism, having no desire for—i.e., de-attaching yourself from—the forces of nature means detaching yourself from the three primary elements of nature, called *gunas*. *Guna* means, among its oldest definitions, a "strand," "single thread from a weaving," bow string," or "string on a musical instrument." The three strands or threads in nature, the *gunas*, says ancient yoga, move through all matter and life. They are the primary three forces of the natural world, very similar, perhaps, to what physics now calls the "strings" of string theory, which combine to form the

fundamental elements of all observable matter: quarks and electrons. Quarks come in six "flavors": up, down, charm, strange, top, and bottom.

The lowest *guna* is *tamas*, or inertia, the force of matter continuing onward in whatever state it has been set, whether in motion or in rest, earthy, material, slow moving. The second is *rajas*, the essential active power, strength, and force, of nature, willful and strong. The third is *sattva*: the sublime or creative energy always trying to move higher or gather you more holistically or in unity in nature. You also can feel these around and in you.

Thomas Keating gave what might be called a Western version of the three *gunas* when he delivered the 1997 "Wit Lecture on Living a Spiritual Life" at Harvard Divinity School. Though he never named them by their Hindu designations, they are similar. He calls them the "three essential biological needs" (13) of the Human Condition: "security [*tamas*], affection and esteem [*sattva*], and power and control [*rajas*]" (17). These three conditions are not bad, according to Keating—and as described in Hindu systems. Rather, they just are. They exist simply as the basics of our lives with which we must deal, one way or another. The question is not "Should we get rid of them" but rather, "What forms of them do we choose to honor and include in a life of the clear mind?"*

Hinduism, and Keating, say that each of us has a personality that is a combination of these three in several different ways. Any given personality, however, tends to emphasize just one or two of the *gunas* at any given time, place, or situation. If, for example, you live a highly mental life, you may tend to be *sattvic*; if you are very willful or seek power quite a bit, *rajasic*; if you live your life largely or often in physical activity (or bodily sloth), *tamasic.* Patanjali will talk more about these in later sutras.

The *Purusa* blossoms in this sutra as an extremely important state of Presence within everyone. It is the true Self, sometimes also called the *Atman* in Hinduism, the Crystal-clear Awareness in the *Yoga Sutras*—as described in Sutra 1.3. Finding it seems hard, until you do: then its apparent presence is so suddenly obvious that it is like a slap in the face, like not noticing the air around you until suddenly you feel a badly needed cool or warm blast of it; like wondering what sweetness means, then first tasting sugar. In Zen Buddhism in particular, gaining this Awareness is called *satori*, or sudden awakening. Zen expert Alan Watts describes this in talking about a great medieval Zen adept who, says Watts, was famous for

> lecturing his students in informal and often somewhat "racy" language...as if...to force...immediate awakening. Again and again he berates them for not having enough faith in themselves, for letting their minds "gallop around" in search of something which they have never lost, and which is "right before you at this very moment." Awakening [is] the courage to "let go" without further delay in the unwavering faith that one's natural, spontaneous

functioning is the Buddha mind.*

In a later sutra here, Patanjali will offer similar advice. He says that discovering the crystal-clear mind is more a matter of letting what is natural happen, rather than trying to build something up or think your way through a problem.

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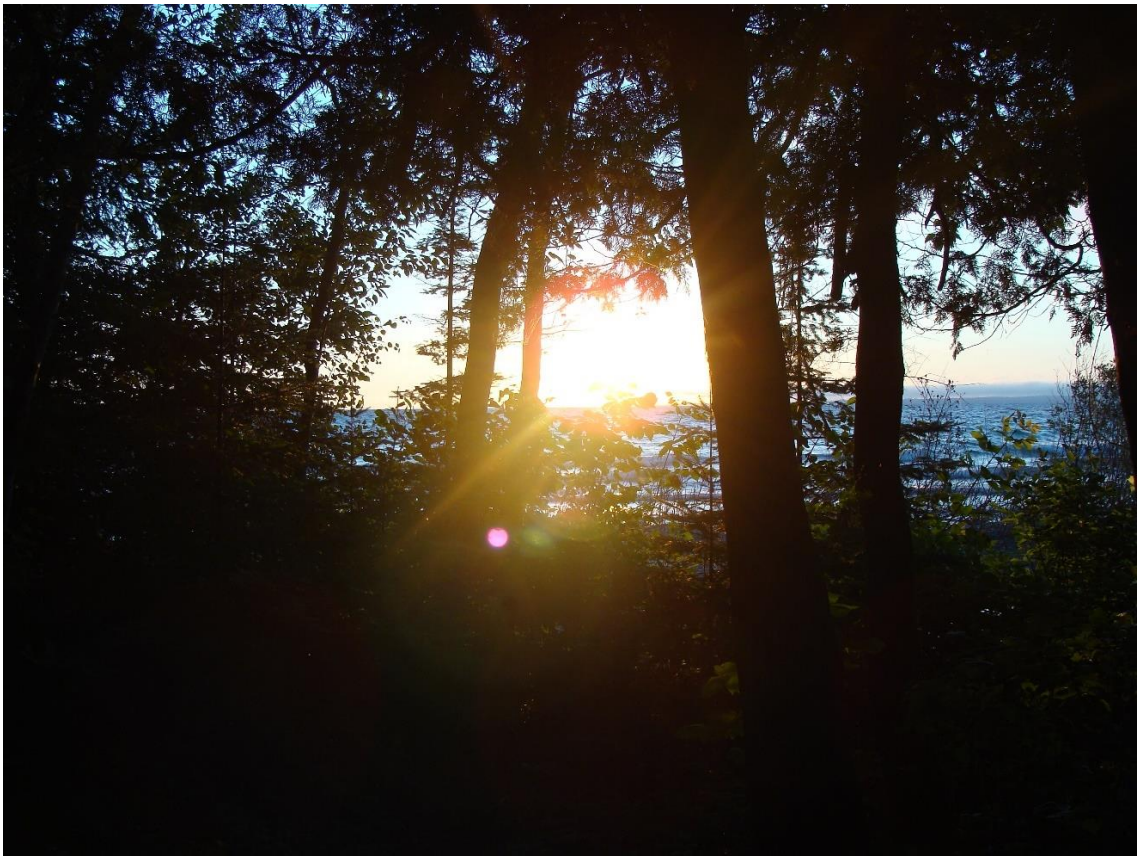

*Dawn through Woods over Water*

# Sutras 1.17 — 1.22

## *What Is Pure Awareness or Gnosis?*

### - Signs Along the Path -

### ***Sutra* 1.17**:

*Vitarka vicāra-ānanda-asmitā-anugamāt saṁprajñātaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Reasoning, insight, joy, an 'I-am-ness' rising to a knowing-gnosis"

***Meaning***: "Analytical thinking, creative movement, bliss, and an awareness of one's own Self—all four can take you to a crystal-clear mind or level of pure Awareness (*samadhi* with seed)."

***A chant***: "Logic, insight, joy, and knowing your Self can bring you perfect Awareness."

***Definition***: These four types of experience, alone or together, can connect you to aware of, and in tune with, your higher, purer Self, your inner Presence, your pure Awareness that you already have and already are, beneath and behind all your thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations.

***Comment***: Patanjali's generosity of spirit here is unmistakable. His embrace of paths to the spiritual is so wide that it not only includes the many schools of Indian Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism in his day, of which he was well aware, but also other religions. It is quite likely, given his erudite knowledge about different spiritual practices, that Patanjali also was aware of Judaism, Chinese Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and other religions that stretched westward into the Middle East and north and east through China to Japan.

And in his knowledge, he recognized the core of all these and other world religions by saying that such qualities as reason, intuitive insight, joy, and higher sense of "I-am-ness" can lead to a gnosis or aware knowledge of spiritual states. Other spiritual systems that work to reveal inner, deeper states of Presence recognize some or all the qualities as possible pathways to finding enlightenment or liberation.

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## ***Sutra* 1.18**:

## *Virāma pratyaya-ābhyāsa pūrvaḥ saṁskāra-śeṣo-'nyaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Complete stopping of ongoing thoughts by practice—former echoes like burnt seeds: another"

***Meaning***: "Strong silencing of whirlpool energy-forms, through practice, leaves you seeing echoes of former energy-forms only as little bundles of leftover remnants outside of you: this is another kind of pure Awareness (*samadhi* without seed)."

***A chant***: "Sometimes in your pure Awareness you'll see burnt seeds of thoughts."

***Definition***: In meditation, when you silence your thoughts entirely, you will rest in another type of consciousness: pure Awareness. There, you may see shapes like

burnt seeds, husks, or dust balls approaching you. They are not illusory or imagined. Rather, they are what many who enter deep meditation have seen. For example, if you are sitting in meditation and your mind space is completely clear with not a thought, you might see, in your mind's eye, a seedlike image hovering around your awareness, but outside of it. If you let it—or make it—stay there, then you will know only that it is a thought-form without knowing specifically what the thought is. If, however, you concentrate on it even a second, it will suddenly form in your mind space as a specific thought.

***Comment***: In deep meditation, you may see thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations coming toward your central awareness before they arrive. If you ignore or reject one of these seeds, it goes away, and the thought never forms. Sometimes the seed looks more like a hairy or bushy ball, like the tumbleweeds of the American West. Then it is more likely to be a darker thought or memory, or an emotion. Even thicker, denser, and larger balls are, once they blossom within, darker, stronger emotions or desires. Sometimes a series of thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations can appear as external whirlings like husks of leaves rattling around you in a whirlwind, waiting to get in.

These ways of seeing thoughts are part of Hindu yoga psychology. To understand them better, you may want to think once again of the ancient concept of the *kosha* listed in Sutra 1.2—the onion-like layers of the self with the pure Awareness at the center; thoughts, emotions, and physical feelings in succeeding outer layers; and the outermost layer of the material body. The center *kosha* of Awareness can see the "burnt seeds" of thoughts and feelings in the outer layers, swirling around the central layer before entering it.

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## ***Sutra* 1.19**: *Bhava-pratyayo videha prakṛ̥ti-layānam*

***Literal translation***: "In this pre-birth state of awareness, bodiless, or absorbed in nature"

***Meaning***: "In this state of awareness in Sutra 18, you may go outside of your body or become one with (something in) nature."

***A chant***: "When you clear your mind, you might leave your body or merge with nature."

***Definition***: As you learn to have a clear Awareness, you may find yourself leaving

your body during meditation, or even at another time; or you may find yourself merging into one or another part of nature or natural material around you. Doing so does not mean you won't go back into your normal self. In fact, most people return to their normal body and self very quickly.

For example, a typical first-time out-of-body experience is to rise above your body, sometimes only part way, sometimes so far up that you can look down and see yourself. Or, for example, a typical merging-with-nature experience is to suddenly see or feel like you are inside a flower you have stared at, or even inside a mate, friend, or pet, looking at yourself.

***Comment***: Another typical experience, especially in mating, is to feel like you have merged with the other person, however briefly. In the West, such experiences often are called out-of-body or astral-body events. They are so common that many dozens of books have been written about the phenomenon. Again, such experiences when caused by meditation or during a time period when you are first beginning to effectively clear your mind space almost always are brief, with a quick and natural return to life as normal.

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## ***Sutra* 1.20**:

## *Śraddhā-vīrya-smṛ̥ti-samādhi-prajñā-pūrvaka itareṣām*

***Literal translation***: "Assurance, eager energy, remembering, *samadhi*, and higher intuition: these leading to stilling, otherwise"

***Meaning***: "Confidence, strong effort, keen memory, Awareness, and gnosis: all can lead to stilling your whirlpool energy forms."

***A chant***: "You also may clear your mind through faith, will, memory, finding your Self, and wise insight."

***Definition***: This clear mind as discussed in Sutras 18-19 also can come, or is further developed by, (1) acts of faith (trust or assurance in someone or something), (2) strength of will beyond thought and feeling, (3) mindfully being aware of each instant, (4) insight that reaches ultimate meanings, and/or (5) absorption into or merging of your own awareness with universal Awareness (the experience of *samadhi*). It is not developed through normal thought processes. Rather, they need to be interrupted, paused, or cleared away.

***Comment***: Most of these mental activities or attitudes that Patanjali mentions in this sutra fall under the modern category of "mindfulness." What is it?

Mindfulness expert Thich Nhat Hanh, a twenty-first century Zen Buddhist, defines it as "keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality." He says, "In mindfulness, one is not only restful and happy, but alert and awake...a serene encounter with reality." [K]eep your attention on the work. Be alert and ready to handle ably and intelligently any situation which may arise...." He adds that starting with daily meditation is good, but the ultimate goal is to gradually become mindful throughout each day.*

Psychology offers a similar definition of mindfulness. It means you become more aware of thoughts, memories, impressions, and especially feelings—physical or emotional—without reacting to them. You do not ignore them; neither do you let them rule you or run away with your mind. You simply become aware of them, standing back from them as a watcher. You watch them one at a time as they develop or flow, neither grabbing them nor running away.

The *Yoga Sutras* version of "mindfulness" is *dharana*, or "concentration," which means that you bind your attention to one thing. *Dharana* is the sixth of eight "limbs" in the *Yoga Sutra's* of *Ashtanga* Yoga, here in "Chapter 2B: *Ashtanga* Yoga." Similarly, in Buddha's famous Eightfold Path, the seventh "fold" is *smrti* (Sanskrit) or *sati* (Pali), often translated as "mindfulness" or "alertness."

Almost all spiritual systems throughout time and the world account for this concept in some way. Spiritual practices in Christianity, for example, often equate mindfulness with reminding yourself, each time you perceive an object or thought, "This is part of God's universe," "That is part of God's universe," and "So is this." In Indigenous native spiritual practice, you learn to remember that each object you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch is a perceptible part of God because you live in—and you are part of—God's body. Zen practitioners sometimes call mindfulness the ability to live in the Zen moment." Taoists teach you to be aware of each experience in the flow.

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## ***Sutra* 1.21**: *Tīvra-saṁvegānām-āsannaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Intensity enthusiastic, immediate"

***Meaning***: "With your strong cheerfulness, you will quickly have success."

***A chant***: "Clear your thoughts now with cheerful strong will."

***Definition***: This sutra is about having an intense and highly positive attitude, in which case, says Patanjali, you are more likely to have immediate success. It does not guarantee success, and some people labor for months or even years, trying to clear their mind spaces. However, here Patanjali is saying that being extra calm, cool, and collected will not necessarily bring results faster than an intense, willful, cheer. That is, don't sit in meditation and fall asleep. Choose a time when you are wide awake. Or get up and walk somewhere as you meditate.

***Comment***: The old thoughts hanging around outside of you—looking like burnt seeds, dust balls, tumbleweeds, thick clouds, or husks—completely disappear, at least for a time in meditation. Here Patanjali is encouraging active meditation (as opposed to passive meditation): the Way of Concentration (rather than the Way of Waiting), telling you that you are allowed to work hard at pushing and kicking thoughts out of your head. Having what amounts to a fiercely cheerful determination to clear them helps do so faster, if that is your goal.

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## ***Sutra* 1.22**: *Mṛdu madhya-adhimātratvāt tato'pi viśeṣaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Soft, medium, excessive—after that, also quite distinct"

***Meaning***: "Whether your practice is modest, moderate, or intense, what comes next (in the sutras below) will yet again be quite different."

***A chant***: "Move in Awareness from 'seeded' to 'unseeded' and see a big change."

***Definition***: Patanjali is announcing that whatever the amount of your meditating, the next step, stage, or level—after clearing your mind space for periods of time—will be a significant change. He does not expect that you will successfully have a totally clear mind space all the time. Rather, he is saying that when you start experiencing periods of mental clearness, whether for ten seconds or ten minutes at a time, you will reach a new stage of possibility.

***Comment***: In this sutra, Patanjali is clarifying that whether you pursue your meditation practices at a desultory pace (such as meditating once a week), a medium pace (practicing perhaps ten or twenty minutes per day), or more intensely (such as

meditating strongly and willfully for half an hour or hour or even more each day), the next event, step, or occurrence will be a big change. Other spiritual systems suggest the same. For most meditators, eventually they have some kind of "cosmic," "enlightening," or "union" experience that is higher, deeper, quite different.

And most spiritual systems say that not only can you purposely seek such an event but also, by your work, will, or practice, it likely will happen. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you," says the Christian New Testament.* Buddhism says to follow the Middle Way and use the Eightfold Path to find enlightenment. "Look within," say those two religions, along with Patanjali and many others, "and you will find what is higher, truer, in some way divine." Almost all spiritual systems were created specifically so you can seek and find something greater.

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*The Sound of Water*

# Sutras 1.23 - 1.29

## *What Is Presence and Its Sound?*

### - Chanting Your Way to the Spirit -

***Sutra* 1.23**: *Īśvara-praṇidhānād-vā*

***Literal translation***: "Supreme God, breathing as one with, also"

***Meaning***: "The Omniscient, self-contained, infinite, eternal Lord of Presence always is present for you to become one with, as well."

***A chant***: "You may yoke with the Ultimate Presence."

***Definition***: Patanjali believes your true Awareness or Self is a part of, and linked to, a cosmic form of Self that is universal. He is not talking about some kind of simplistic,

limited Hindu (or other) god or goddess. His concept as expressed here and in several other sutras is, instead, of an infinite, omniscient Presence that is conscious, essentially like that of the personal God in the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and in many others, as well.

***Comment***: What is the meaning of *Īśvara*? Georg Feuerstein says that "all schools of Yoga recognize the existence of a supreme Presence, variously referred to as *īś*, *īśa*, *īśana* or *īś vara*." If Patanjali was one of the first creators of this concept, then he may have developed it from the ancient *Rig Veda*. The University of Texas Sanskrit Linguistics team says that *Is* means "having mastery over," *va* is "blow" [which implies breath as spirit], and *ra* signifies "to grant" as from a ruler or royal leader. When a Great Presence is implied, as in this sutra, then combining these meanings suggests a Presence with mastery over spiritual breath who can grant us this sacred breath.*

Whatever the original meaning, *Īśvara* sometimes is called by yogis the "God of Yoga." It is Patanjali's way of saying that in his meditation experience, the Awareness that you are—that you have within you—links to a Presence of Awareness universally, and that you can "breathe as one" with this Presence. Patanjali calls this Presence *Isvara* (in Sanskrit; also spelled *Iswara* or *Ishwara*). This kind of link—between your own basic Awareness and that of a Universal Presence—is explained in a variety of religions. Patanjali appears to be talking, quite plainly, about not just the ultimate God, but God as a personal presence that responds to you individually.

Some translators of this sutra offer a slightly different or additional interpretation, one that is supported, as well, in ancient versions of Sanskrit. This additional or alternative meaning of *Isvara* suggests that the word may refer to any spiritual entity or person filled with the Universal Presence. Examples include saints, founders of religions, or advanced meditation adepts. In this additional or alternative interpretation, that spiritual entity or person is someone on whom you may concentrate.

Noteworthy, if you do not believe in a Universal Presence of any kind, is the work of neuroscientists on human and animal awareness. You can translate *Īśvara* as meaning your own very highest Self. Scientific studies suggests that, at a minimum, there may be more connections of physical awareness between humans than are now recognized. For example, Changhong Research Labs and Freer Logic demonstrated a car headrest at the 2017 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas that is "able to read brain activity while being six to eight inches away, without any contact." And researchers connected with the HeartMath Institute discovered that some people—and even owners and their pets—sometimes can stand within a few feet of each other and read each other's emotions or physical feelings; and within a few inches,

sometimes one can use his or her brain to perceive the other person's emotional state.*

Such experiments are just a beginning, as the science of the brain and neuro-perception is in its infancy. Between the work of physicists finding ever smaller particles and waves of energy, and the investigations of neuroscientists exploring the mysteries of human consciousness, factual science grows closer to suggesting that when you choose to—perhaps with training—your mind can reach outside itself.

One modern theory for this already exists. Highly respected twentieth-century paleontologist and philosopher Teilhard de Chardin describes a "layer" of thinking around the earth that he calls the "noosphere" (*noo-* being Greek for "mind"). It is similar to the biosphere, the layer of living matter around the earth. The noosphere, says Teilhard, is "a new skin," "the 'thinking layer,'... an immense edifice of matter and ideas," the "psychic interpenetrability" of which "grows and becomes directly perceptible in the case of organised beings" and is "felt by us directly." He calls it "a harmonised collectivity of consciousness equivalent to a sort of super-consciousness," a "*spirit of the earth*" (italics his).*

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## ***Sutra* 1.24:**

## *Kleśa karma vipāka-āśayaiḥ-aparāmr̥ṣṭaḥ Puruṣa-viśeṣa Īśvaraḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Your burdening loads and actions (*klesa*)—and what is cooked from them—and the storehouse of whirlpools—all in no way connected to the pure Self of the universe that is different: *Isvara* (the Supreme Presence)"

***Meaning***: "Your troubles or worldly problems (*klesa)*, your actions or deeds ("karma"), and what ripens from them: these and your swirling thought-forms are, all them, separate from the Inner Awareness of the universe. That Awareness is beyond containment: the omniscient, infinite, eternal Presence."

***A chant***: "Pure Awareness is the crystal-clear soul of the universe, beyond all burdens, karma, and their fruits."

***Definition***: There is an Ultimate, Infinite, Universal Consciousness, says Patanjali (often the word used for it in modern times is "God") on which you can meditate and in which you can place yourself. In Hindu yoga, this is called the *Purusa*. *Purusa* can refer to the individual Self or spark of the divine within you. Or it can, as in this case, refer to the universal divine.

The earliest written Hindu scripture, the *Rig Veda*, to which Patanjali likely is referring, says, "A thousand heads hath *Purusha*, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet [meaning all Presences]...all that yet hath been and all that is to be.... All creatures are one fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in heaven.... [*Purusha*] formed the creatures of the air, and animals both wild and tame…moon...and...sun ...sky ...Earth...the worlds." *Purusha* and *Purusa* are the same word. Usually, *Purusa* refers to the individual Awareness or pure Self within you. Here, Patanjali calls it by the name *Isvara*, emphasizing that it also is universal. The individual, personal *Purusa*, he is saying, and the universal *Purusa*, which he calls *Isvara*, are the same in the sense of both are of the same consciousness or Presence.*

Meditating upon *Purusa*/*Isvara* within yourself is yet another way to reach your own high clearness of mind. They are separate and different from your *klesa* (a plural word meaning "troubles," "distresses," or "afflictions") and karma (past actions still affecting you in the present). Meditating upon your *Purusa* does not mean you must join a religion and practice it. Instead, you may focus on your own *Purusa* and/or God directly or indirectly, such as through traditional meditation, prayer, or meditative ritual, whether in a religion or outside of it.

***Comment***: You may meditate on Aware Presence directly, or through concentrating on a mediating spiritual presence or person. You can meditate on the closest experience you have had to experiencing God. You can do so also by meditating on a great spiritual adept such as Moses, Jesus, Muhammed, Buddha, Lao-Tse, or others. You can focus on an angel, if you wish. Any of these, says Patanjali, can bring you success in meditation.

The word *klesa* has several interpretations and meanings, depending on the religion (Hinduism or Buddhism) and the branch within it. However, Patanjali uses the word to clarify that the varied anxieties, worries, bad habits, meannesses, self-doubt, and other negative energies that sometimes inhabit you are not "you." "You" are separate from them. The *Purusa*, whether the purest part of you or the pure universal state of Presence he calls *Isvara*, is above, beyond, outside of, and not subject to such troubles.

*Klesa*, or troubles, often are a wasted trip to nowhere. Rick Hanson and Richard Mendius say, for example, in *Buddha's Brain*, "Emotional pain with no benefit to yourself or others is pointless suffering. And pain today breeds more pain tomorrow. For instance, even a single episode of major depression can reshape circuits of the

brain to make future episodes more likely (Maletic et al. 2007)."*

This emotional pain is one type of Patanjali's *klesa* or "troubles." Patanjali's point, here, is to emphasize that you can find a place within you that excludes, deletes, washes away, or otherwise defies or cleanses your *klesa.*

In fact, there is a relationship in the word *klesa* or "troubles" to the word "sins" in the Abrahamic religions. In these three religions' scriptures, says John O'Gara, a "sin" means—in both the Hebrew word *chat·ta'th'* and the Greek word *ha·mar·ti'a*—something that is "missing" or gone wrong, as in the Christian book of Acts 22:16: "Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away...." In Sanskrit, when you have *klesa*, or troubles, you are missing the perfection of the crystal-clear mind. One of the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*'s definitions of a "sin" is "an often-serious shortcoming: fault."* O'Gara says that "to sin" means "to miss the mark of perfection." Because each person is missing this perfection, says O'Gara, each is a "sinner" in this sense. Sinning in this sense means to have within yourself a fault, shortcoming, or imperfection.*

Also worth noting is that Patanjali's *Isvara* or "Presence" may be what Jesus of Nazareth offered his followers. According to mystic poet and interpreter Robert Bly, the word "Heaven" in Jesus' sayings also can be translated "Spirit." Bly says that "a simple error of translation like this can destroy a religion." Thus, says Bly, Jesus' original followers may have understood Jesus to mean what might be translated today as "Realm" or "Land of the Spirit"—*not* the phrase that, says Bly, is a misnomer: "Kingdom of Heaven."*

If Bly and other Christian Bible interpreters are correct, then Jesus' "Realm of the Spirit" is similar to what Patanjali is saying. This Realm is much like the *Yoga Sutra*'s land of the *Purusa*—a place of Aware Presence that extends everywhere.

Noteworthy in addition for those who are scientific agnostics or atheists is that if a "collective unconscious" or "noosphere" of human and animal minds does exist, Patanjali would argue that it has a pure part or being within it. This pure part, he would say—from his experience of whatever it is—exists as a perfectly clear, fully conscious experience of the totality of this collective mind.

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## ***Sutra* 1.25**: *Tatra niratiśayaṁ sarvajña-bījam*

***Literal translation***: "In that [Presence] beyond all highest and lowest excelling, with omniscience incomparable, unrivalled: the original seed"

***Meaning***: "That Supreme Awareness is matchless—in each second, of all Knowing, the first source."

***A chant***: "Each instant of ultimate Presence is ultimate Awareness."

***Definition***: This simply means that before, within, and after all time—and before, within, and after all matter—says Patanjali, a universal Awareness exists, just as you are an Awareness. It is like a field of matter throughout the universe, except it is not matter, but Consciousness. As in the previous sutras about *Isvara*, Patanjali is not talking about a smaller god or goddess, nor is he talking about abstract religious or philosophical ideas. Rather, he is referring to a state of presence, or a process. Some people call this Awareness "Presence"; some, a state of "Being" (either a verb or a noun); and some call it "God." It is known by a thousand other names. Those presences or holy ones who constantly embody this Spirit also are constantly in a state of ultimate Awareness.

***Comment***: Similarly, God always should be thought of as a process, not an object, says Jewish rabbi and scholar Arthur Green. He explains the Hebrew name that God first offers to Moses in Exodus, a book in the Bible, really refers to an always unfolding, ongoing event. "The Hebrew name for God," says Green, "which...is transcribed in English as YHWH...is an impossible compilation of the verb 'to be....' It really should be translated not G-o-d but 'Is was will be...' all at once.... God is a verb."*

In addition, another frequent Torah/Old Testament name for God is "Elohim." It, too, has a mixed meaning, a definition that scholars have argued about for many centuries. To convey its mystical meaning, a reasonable translation is that "Elohim," usually translated as a singular noun, "God," literally means the "he/she/it/god(s)." In other words, the singular "God" is a masculine, feminine, and neuter pronoun, all at one time, and also is both singular and plural. Like the word "Yahweh," this combination is impossible to translate accurately with our inadequate languages.*

Green, above, calls "God" a verb. Richard Rohr says, similarly, "Christian mystics Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and John Duns Scotus taught...*'Deus est Ens,'* that is, God is Being itself...different from saying that God is *a* Being." In other words, "God" is Presence itself, not just an object or single Person.*

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## ***Sutra* 1.26**: *Sa pūrveṣām api guruḥ kālena-anavacchedāt*

***Literal translation***: "That [Presence] to the Earliest Ones, even: a

guru, uncut by time"

***Meaning***: "That Presence was, even to the Ancient Holy Ones, their teacher, for the Supreme Awareness is outside the dimension of time."

***A chant***: "Timeless Presence taught even the most ancient gurus."

***Definition***: Patanjali is saying that Ultimate Presence is timeless—outside of or beyond time—and that this Presence taught the first ancient sages thousands of years ago. Any great mystics who are speaking and acting from within this eventful Presence are, while they are embodying it, also, in a sense, offering experiences outside of time and matter.

***Comment***: Hindu tradition says that the greatest rishis—wise yoga mystics—lived in India before recorded history, ca. 1700-1500 BCE and possibly much earlier. According to tradition, these brilliant, highly-experienced male and female yogis created the earliest Hindu scriptures. Those scriptures—in the form of hymns—were passed down orally by memorization and chanting for hundreds of years (or longer) until finally, sometime in 1700-1000 BCE, someone wrote them in Sanskrit, starting with the *Rig Veda* and other *Vedas*. In Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and in several other related religions and ancient ethnic groups, these rishis continue to be venerated.

Regarding their inspired scriptures, says twentieth-century mystic Sri Aurobindo, "The Vedic Rishis believed that their Mantras were inspired from higher hidden planes of consciousness and contained secret knowledge. The words of the Veda, [they said], could only be known in their true meaning by one who was himself a seer or mystic; from others the verses withheld their hidden knowledge."*

Here in the *Yoga Suras,* when Patanjali mentions scripture as being filled with complete truth—for example, in Sutra 1.7—he is referring to the *Vedas* and possibly the *Upanishads*. In his time, such scriptures were believed to be factual reports of the rishis' meditation experiences using descriptions that only advanced meditators could understand.

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## ***Sutra* 1.27**: *Tasya vācakaḥ praṇavaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "That Supreme Presence speaking exultant humming"

***Meaning***: "The Ultimate Awareness's ancient word is the cosmic, vibrant 'aum.'"

***A chant***: "The humming of Presence is like 'om.'"

***Definition***: The last Sanskrit word of this sutra, *pranavah*, means "humming." Patanjali has experienced Presence as basic vibration, as in sound and other energy waves. While he does not exclude other definitions of Presence, he does say that vibration is a close embrace of it. For Hindus then and now, one way that meditators can come closer to this experience is the "humming" sound *om*, a Sanskrit word that now is used so much in Western languages that it is spelled (without the normal italics for foreign words) as "om" or "aum."

***Comment***: Patanjali's mention of "humming" references what is an important meditation activity, both modern and ancient, throughout the world. Mystics who practice it assert that a special sound is *with* Ultimate Presence or *is* Presence—and is a way to reach toward that Presence when you meditate.

Christians, for example, declare, from their New Testament Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the *Word*, and the *Word* was with God, and the *Word* was God" (emphasis added, John 1.1, HNV). The "Word" is sound, and sound is vibration.

An ancient Hindu scripture offers a very similar statement: Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood note that the *Rig Veda* says, "In the beginning was Brahman [God], with whom was the Word; and the Word was truly the Supreme Brahman."*

In Judaism, the sound of God is YHWH—Yahweh. In English, " this translates into "I Am that I Am," a phrase with a humming sound that rolls through the mouth nasally, like a chant. And in paganism and some ancient religions, the sound of God is "Ma" for the Great Mother, another rolling, vibrating sound for meditation.

In ancient Aramaic, the language of Jesus of Nazareth and all others Jews in Israel at that time (and in countries around them), the word *rahme* may have served a similar purpose, says Aramaic scholar Neil Douglas-Klotz. *Rahme*, which means "womb," "love," and "compassion," appears in Jesus' Beatitudes, where its presence implies that it might have occurred in chants that doubled as breathing exercises.*

Physicists may have identified this hum of the universe. In 1964, two young radio astronomers, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, heard a strange, continual hum everywhere they pointed their new, gigantic radio telescope. They eventually won the Nobel Prize for discovering a whispered humming or hissing of microwave radiation in the background of the entire universe. It was caused by—and came from—the big bang: the creation of the universe.

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## ***Sutra* 1.28**: *Taj-japas tad-artha-bhāvanam*

***Literal translation***: "That repetition, its intention becoming"

***Meaning***: "Om's repeating by you in an undertone makes its intended purpose fill up in you."

***A chant***: "Repeat your Om in a low undertone so it blossoms within you."

***Definition***: Such repetitions are a long-honored tradition in India. They are called *japa*. To "say *japa*" is to use a mantra—a key meditative word or phrase—repeatedly. Repeating the word om is not, in Hinduism, the repetition of the name of a god or a spiritual power or Presence. Rather, the sound of it is a connector, a device, to reaching a higher or deeper meditative experience.

In other religions, examples of saying *japa* include repetitive prayer phrases; meditating while repeating a key phrase from the Talmud, Bible, Koran, or other scripture; repetitious chanting and singing; repeating words or phrases of power, as in Wicca; and, in modern centering prayer, repeating a bridge word with special meditative meaning to you.

***Comment***: How do you say om? It is a practice whose beginning is so ancient that its beginning is unknown. It can be pronounced "awm," "aw-oo-m" or "owmm." Generally, you use a very medium- to low-register sound. Start with a deep, short "o" as in "aw" or "ow," with your mouth open. Then you slide into a short "u" with the tongue moving from touching the back of the palette (top of the mouth) to the front of the palette, then to just behind the teeth. The "m" is drawn out low in a nasal tone so that it reverberates in nose, jaw, throat, and chest.

You say it as you breath out. Then, after a pause and another deep breath, repeat it. Meditating upon this, sometimes you may feel you are becoming the sound, and the sound is becoming you. One of the best ways to understand the sound and related breathing is to search for and listen to the word spoken online.

You can use it to meditate, to calm yourself in any situation, or even to simply to rest. You may do so out loud, or you may use your inner voice, subvocalizing it. Either way, it creates a vibration in your larynx (your "voice box"). The larynx is a two-inch long organ in your throat that contains the vocal cords. These two cords—muscles that look like skin folds—vibrate when you talk, and they relax when you

are breathing and not vocalizing verbal thoughts in your head.

Likewise, similar chants work. You may especially want to try those that have in them—or draw out the sound of—the "mmm" sound of om. The important thing is, simply, to hum in some form.

*For more on breathing, see "Appendix C: How to Breath."*

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## ***Sutra* 1.29**: *Tataḥ pratyak cetana-adhigamo 'py(api)-antarāya-abhavaś ca*

***Literal translation***: "Then, bending back upon itself, consciousness going to mastery; barriers disappearing also"

***Meaning***: "As om reveals itself, your consciousness also, as it looks upon itself, gains attainment. Your obstacles go away, too."

***A chant***: "Say om and move your Awareness to see itself; then barriers fall."

***Definition***: Saying om and becoming aware of your own Awareness will bring you to success as your mental obstacles fall apart. This does not mean you necessarily are finding the perfect clear mind space. However, it means you are getting closer. The barriers Patanjali mentions are listed in the next sutras.

For example, regarding this sutra, when you repeat the word om, the combination of the sound and the improved breathing that happens with it often will place you in a space or zone where your awareness seems to sharpen and/or your mind-space becomes calmer. This experience using repetitions of sound happens in all general meditation practices and religions throughout the world and time.

***Comment***: As previously stated, you don't have to use the specific word om. Other vibrating and humming words work, too, or just simple humming itself. In Hinduism, humming words and phrases are called "mantras." The word is so common that it has become Westernized. Sometimes, in the West, "mantra" also means "a resolution" or "a common saying." However, in yoga meditation, it means an act of vocalized word-humming (external or internal) that clears the mind and body. The word itself comes from the Hindu word *manas* or "mind," and from the even earlier root word "manna" or "food or gift from heaven."

Saying a mantra is a one-pointed way of concentration that some meditators use consistently. Speaking a mantra is a method that can be combined with other practices. On the other hand, it can be a single, primary method of meditating: one of several methods recommended by Patanjali and others that are among the more difficult but purer for one-pointed concentration.

There also is another specific meaning—very important—in one part of this sutra. This phrase is Patanjali's implicit recommendation to become aware of being aware: "bending back upon itself, consciousness going to mastery." What does consciousness "bending back upon itself" mean? As a meditation practice, you can use your awareness to look at your own awareness. It is a specialized way of meditating that requires you to look at your looking, to see your seeing, to hear and feel your hearing and feeling: it is, to use the metaphor of the layered *kosha* above, the center of your onion looking at the center of your onion.

The process seems impossible: how can you "know" your knowing? It may feel like looking at invisibility, or listening to the sound of silence. However, it is defined by its results. At first, you may find that trying to practice this bending of consciousness back upon itself flips you into an unconscious mode or to random thoughts. But if you practice it, even if for a few minutes each day, you gradually may find it opening new doorways of reflection and feeling within you. Some expert meditators experience this regularly.

In Western spiritual terms, you may find awareness-of-awareness meditation easier to understand if you think of it as an act of "faith." The original meaning of "faith" in the Abrahamic religions is not, as popularly translated, merely a mindless, proofless acceptance of religious belief or ritual. Rather, "faith" in its highest, deepest meaning is an act, an experience, or an event. It is, in meditation, a reaching out to the very core or height of Presence itself, or at least waiting with an expectation of the experience or event coming to you.

William James says in his classic *Varieties of Religious Experience*, "faith-state and mystical state are practically convertible terms." He means that faith does not simply say, "Oh well, I'll let God take care of it." Rather, faith in its active sense is a handshake, an intention, a searching that uses your most basic, deepest sense of knowing and focusing to find Knowing or Awareness—to find Presence.*

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*Troubled Waters*

# Sutras 1.30 - 1.40

## *How Do You Break through Obstacles?*

### - Problems and Solutions for the Clear Mind -

***Sutra* 1.30**: *Vyādhi styāna saṁśaya pramāda-alasya-avirati bhrānti-darśana-alabdhabhūmikatva-anavasthitatva-ani citta-vikṣepāḥ-te-antarāyāḥ*

***Literal translation***: [The "Obstacles" are:]

"[1] Being ill,
[2] feeling dense,
[3] indecision,

[4] dilution of interest,
[5] idleness/not shining,
[6] pursuit of sensual pleasures,
[7] overblown notions,
[8] not developing good yoga habits,
[9] restlessness
—all mental whirlpools these: throwaways"

***Meaning***:

"[1] Sickness,
[2] languor,
[3] doubt,
[4] no excitement,
[5] laziness/lethargy
[6] excessive attention to sensuality/worldly desires,
[7] wandering into illusions or false identities,
[8] not establishing a good grounding in yoga meditation practices, and
[9] unsteadiness in yoga meditation practices
—they are, all them, just swirling energy forms. They are obstacles."

***A chant***: "Om and breathing may dissolve your internal obstacles."

***Or***: "Sick or heavy? Doubtful? Bored? Lazy or restless? Trapped in desires, illusions, routines? All are just eddies that deep breathing may help you dissolve."

***Definition***: You are completely normal in experiencing the barriers to having the crystal-clear mind that are listed in this sutra. These obstacles are normal human hurdles to overcome. They are not required, fated, or destined. Patanjali says you can overcome these hurdles if you choose to gradually clear your mind and body of them, first in meditation, and then in daily life, step by step. For example, just the simple practice of chanting a resonant phrase or sound and/or using slow, deep breaths can create wonders of focus temporarily. Patanjali also offers other solutions that follow, here, in Sutras 30-40.

***Comment***: It is important to understand that in meditation and in regular life, most of us have accepted the emotional and mental walls that close us off from wider, deeper, or more sensitive awareness. Psychologically, each of us sees them as insurmountable. You do this so naturally that often you don't even think of these blocks or stopping points as walls that can be broken down. Instead of letting these barriers confine you, you can concentrate on them and wash or break them away. Once you have melted one of them, or made it begin to crumble, you realize that you also can tear it down completely and dissipate others.

We all have many obstacles or walls like these with which we have grown up. Which ones should you concentrate on first? The order is up to you. If you have a simple or seemingly lightweight burden, try that, first. Or if you come across a relatively gentle or new burden, try staring it down by focusing on it, and see what happens. Bigger, harder, heavier, and more long-established barriers or walls may look or feel much harder; however, even some of the apparently more difficult ones are moveable—can be dissipated—with sufficient concentration and time. Try whichever ones you like, in any order you prefer, and if one doesn't appear to change, try another, and yet one more. Working on such clumps and masses of unwanted negative physical feelings can take time, but they do break down.

Many meditators rank them according to difficulty. You can use your own ranking or the rankings of others. For example, B.K.S. Iyengar, a modern yoga expert regarding Patanjali, classifies this sutra's nine obstacles as follows: "1"-"2," he says, are physical; "3"-"7" are mental; and "8"-"9" are spiritual.

Yet another way to look at this sutra is its similarity to Buddhism's "Five Hindrances." According to Buddha, the "Eightfold Path is to be developed for direct knowledge of these hindrances...for their utter destruction, for their abandoning." The Five Hindrances weave in and out of Patanjali's list of "obstacles" above and can be used in combination with this sutra or separately:

**Buddha's Five Hindrances** (what they mean and what they do not)

1. **"Sensual desire":** Letting desire control you too much
   (However, actual enjoyment of the senses is not forbidden.)
2. **"Ill will":** Hate, resentment, hostility
   (But feeling a positive empowerment of willpower is necessary.)
3. **"Sloth and torpor":** Half-hearted action, little effort
   (However, regular sleep and rest are necessities.)
4. **"Restlessness and remorse":** Overexcitement, being hyper
   (Steady internal energy is good, though.)
5. **"Doubt":** Indecision, insecurity, confusion
   (But maintaining basic caution and discernment is needed.)*

Similar to Patanjali, Buddha enjoyed teaching by natural metaphor to explain what you see and feel in deep meditation. Buddha says that, as an extreme, "when one dwells with a mind obsessed by [each hindrance], overwhelmed by [it], and one does not understand...the escape from" it, then it is one of the following "bowls of water":

**Buddha's "Bowls of Water" of the Hindrances**

1. **Sensual desire:** "a bowl of water mixed with...turmeric, blue dye, or crimson dye"
2. **Ill will:** "a bowl of water being heated over a fire, bubbling and boiling"
3. **Sloth and torpor:** "a bowl of water covered over with water plants and algae"
4. **Restlessness and remorse:** "a bowl of water stirred by the wind, rippling, swirling, churned into wavelets"
5. **Doubt:** "a bowl of water...turbid, unsettled, muddy, placed in the dark"

Buddha says about each bowl, "If a man with good sight were to examine his own facial reflection in [it], he would neither know nor see it as it really is." This also occurs in looking at each hindrance in meditating.*

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## ***Sutra* 1.31**: *Duḥkha daurmanasya-aṅgam-ejayatva śvāsa praśvāsā vikṣepa saha-bhuvaḥ*

***Literal translation***:

"[1] Physical pain ('bad axle hole')
[2] mental pain ('bad thinking')
[3] bodily unsteadiness ('limb/body stirring tremor')
[4] bad panting in, bad panting out
—throwaways, together becoming"

***Meaning***:

"[1] Physical discomfort (e.g., an uncomfortable ride or grinding joint),
[2] mental anguish/depression,
[3] a shaky body, and
[4] poor or disturbed breathing
—these may come side-by-side with the obstacles in the previous

sutra."

***A chant***: "Pain, despair, bad breathing, shaky body and mind may join the previous obstacles and barriers."

***Definition***: The nine difficulties in the previous sutra may become repeated enough, or extreme enough, to create physical and mental pain and unsteadiness, along with poor breathing habits. Patanjali is suggesting that such side effects are not permanent and should be stopped. Meditation can help heal them, whether mental or as meditation breathing.

For example, both physical and mental stress, especially over a long period of time, can lead to heart problems and other diseases. The recommended mental activities in these sutras, as well as the breathing exercises, can help alleviate them. You may need a doctor to find immediate relief; do not avoid doctors when they are necessary. However, over a longer period, you also can find relief through meditation mentally and/or through breath.

***Comment***: The first word of this sutra, *duḥkha (*also spelled *dukkha)*, is another example of Patanjali's use of agricultural metaphors. In the root language of Sanskrit, which is ancient Indo-European, the word literally means a "bad axle hole." This was a very serious problem in old India. People—especially farmers and merchants—often traveled the roads by wagon. This was how goods were moved from place to place. For riders, a bad axle hole meant either a poorly centered hole, creating a very bumpy ride, or an axle hole in disrepair, leading to a loudly creaking or squealing hole joint and the possibility of the wheel or axle breaking down. Such problems could range from regular small annoyances in travel to major disruption

*Duḥkha* also is famous as the key word in Buddha's "Four Noble Truths." In those, his *duḥkha*, used four times—one per Noble Truth—may be translated as "suffering," "pains," "distress," "sorrows," or "troubles":

**Buddha's Four Noble Truths**

**There is suffering.** (Troubles exist.)

**There is a cause of suffering.** (Troubles have a cause.)

**There is an end to suffering.** (Troubles have an end.)

**There is a path to end suffering.** (A path to end troubles exists.)

That path in Buddhism is the famous "Eightfold Path" that leads to nirvana, or, in the *Yoga Sutras*, what Patanjali calls *samadhi*. As a result, experiencing *duḥkha*, or a "bad axle hole," not only is a concept important in Hindu yoga meditation, but also

one that is central to Buddhism. In neither religion does the word mean that all life is endless suffering: that is a very limited view of what they are expressing. Instead, both Patanjali and Buddha are noting that life is, too often, a series of "bad axle holes"—from petty annoyances to major suffering—jolting us and hindering our journey forward. Both Patanjali and Buddha are saying you can bring such *duhkha* to an end.

Another important element in this sutra is Patanjali's reference to "poor breathing. Why would he bother to talk about breath when it may seem a minor concern compared to the other problems he mentions like "depression" and "tremors"? It is because difficulty with breathing is a clear symptom of deeper physical and psychological problems that need fixing or healing. Ancient yoga practices—and similar practices in other ancient cultures—exist because ancient experts consistently observed that physical problems can be improved, sometimes dramatically, by gradually learning ever better breathing. To breathe well is, says ancient yoga—not to mention other ancient health systems and modern science—as important as exercise and maintaining a positive attitude.

*For more on breathing, see "Appendix C: How to Breathe."*

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## ***Sutra* 1.32**: *Tat pratiṣedha-artham-eka-tattva-abhyāsaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Their countering, to do it: one 'That-ness' practice"

***Meaning***: "To ward off the obstacles listed in the previous two sutras, apply yourself [consistently] to one chosen form of meditation on Presence."

***A chant***: "Fight troubles by a single path."

***Definition***: In Sanskrit, the word *tattva* means "that-ness." A similar word in Sanskrit, *tathātā,* has a similar meaning, as does the Sanskrit phrase *Tat tvam asi*—"That Thou Art." Together with *abhyāsaḥ*, *tattva* means "that-ness practice." The word "that-ness" has been made famous in the West especially by Zen expert and Christian Protestant minister Alan Watts:

> In the Sanskrit saying tat tvam asi, "that art thou," Zen is concerned with "that." "That," of course, is the word which is used for "Brahman," the absolute reality in Hindu philosophy. And you're it—only in disguise, and

> disguised so well that you've forgotten it. But unfortunately, ideas like the Ultimate Ground of Presence, the Self, Brahman, Ultimate Reality, the Great Void—all that is very, very abstract talk, and Zen is concerned with a much more direct way of coming to an understanding of "that." Or "thatness," as it's called; tathātā in Sanskrit.

Watts is referring to the idea that, according to Hinduism, ultimate Presence is divided into two ways humans can perceive it: "Brahman" is the experience of God-everywhere, and "Atman" is the experience of the spark or point of God within each person. In this Sutra, Patanjali is saying, simply, choose a single practice that takes you close to —or into —the state of ultimate Presence. Then use that practice consistently to counter or ward off the obstacles listed in the previous two sutras, 1.30-1.31.*

***Comment***:

Patanjali's use of *tattva* or "that-ness" in this sutra means that where there is something higher or deeper, there It is: That is Presence. This is like American yoga adept and Harvard psychologist Ram Dass' phrase "Be Here Now" as previously described. Part of the value of this saying is that it can be restated as "Now Be Here" or "Here Be Now," and even with the different emphasis of each version, it has the same basic meaning.

This Sanskrit word, *tattva*, also occurs as *tattvam* in a famous Hindu saying from an ancient *Upanishad* used by many yoga meditation practitioners. Sometimes it even is made into a mantra: *Tat Tvam Asi*. You can translate this in several ways. The primary meaning is "That Art Thou" (God-ness is in You), as discussed above by Watts. But like "Be Here Now," this Sanskrit phrase can be reversed to show two other emphases: "Thou Art That" and That Thou Art." In whatever order you say it, it means that your own awareness, itself, is a spark of ultimate Presence.*

Other ancient and modern spiritual systems and religions have very similar or related phrases: for example, philosopher-psychologist and Jewish scholar Martin Buber's "I and Thou."* All them are sayings meant to stop you from thinking of "Presence" as an abstract concept, category, or thing, and start considering it a living actuality. Fifteenth-century Indian Sufi mystic poet Kabir says, "If you want to find the Lord, please forget about abstract nouns." These phrases about Presence mean that it is more than an object or concept. Rather, it is a verb, activity, and event—an experience. Patanjali is saying in this sutra, "Choose your approach to Presence and use that approach regularly."*

What method or practice should you choose? In the next several sutras, Patanjali names several ways. They can work for almost anyone who wants to search for "That-ness."

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## ***Sutra* 1.33**: *Maitrī karuṇā mudito-pekṣāṇām sukha duḥkha puṇya-apuṇya viṣaya-aṇāṁ bhāvanātaś citta prasādanam*

***Literal translation***: "Empathy, compassion, rejoicing, seeing all sides: applying these to pleasures or physical pains, doing good or bad. Radiating-whirlpools settling"

***Meaning***: "Loving kindness, no-matter-what caring, gladness, and equanimity, all them—when applied to life's ups and downs, and its virtues and vices—will calm your swirling energy forms."

***A chant***: "Give kindness, mercy, joy, and balance to clear your mind in life's ups and downs, good deeds and bad."

***Definition***: Patanjali is saying that as you move through your world, there are certain guidelines for acting that can help you gain greater calmness and clarity of mind, especially if you practice these guides regularly. They are not rigid rules, and you generously are allowed accidental forgetfulness. You are not at all expected to be perfect at all times. But learning to practice them ever better can help you considerably. They are practices for a lifetime. They not only help you gain a clearer mind but also maintain it better and longer.

For example, if you say a harsh word to someone or carelessly hurt his or her feelings, your words not only might trouble that person at the time, but may also bother you later. As such, it becomes another thought or feeling that may prevent a calm, clear mind. If you apologize—or if you practice loving kindness toward that person in the first place—then this gives both of you more peace within your hearts and minds.

***Comment***: Sutra 1.33 represents what might be called "The Way of Joy." It is a devotion to giving, spreading, and receiving love, joy, and peace that is at the heart of every major religion and people-centered ethical system.

The very first word, *maître*, has itself become a school or type of meditation called "maître yoga." The word *maître* means "loving kindness." It is practiced by millions of followers Western and Eastern.*

The practices of being at peace and having a quiet mind also are popular. Thich Nhat Hanh, a modern adept of Zen Buddhism, echoes this when he says, "To realize

a tranquil heart and clear mind is to have gone far on the path of meditation." Desmond Tutu, the revolutionary Anglican Archbishop of South Africa, says your goal should be to make of yourself "a reservoir of joy, an oasis of peace, a pool of serenity that can ripple out to all those around you."*

Vyasa, Patanjali's first editor and commentator, emphasizes the practice of happiness, joy, and loving kindness. He says that you "should foster friendship among all beings (who have) gained the enjoyment of happiness, compassion among the afflicted, joy among (those) whose character is virtue, (and) neutrality...."*

"Compassion" or, as translated here, "no-matter-what caring" is of great importance in both Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddha himself taught that compassion alone can be enough to take you to life in a heavenly abode after you die. In the ancient "Karaniya Metta Sutta," he says you should offer compassion to "all living beings; / Radiating kindness over the entire world: / This is said to be the sublime abiding.... / The pure-hearted one... / Is not born again into this world." He is saying compassion leads to the ultimate release into Presence.*

In Hinduism, specific devotions in the Way of Joy come under the heading of love devotion, or *bhakti*. In India and elsewhere in places of Hindu worship, many households and businesses have small home displays that are like mini-temples, a majority celebrating *bhakti* worship, often of a particular incarnation of God and/or of a beloved great adept, past or present. The idea of them is not to treat the person or incarnation as *a* god, but rather to celebrate the ultimate pure Presence-Love that is channeled through that celebrated person.

In the West, the Abrahamic religions celebrate love in their scriptures as a primary force coming from God. The Bible's Song of Songs (Song of Solomon) is entirely devoted to love as a mark of loving and being loved by God. And Judaism has the "*Ahava raba*" (prayer and blessing of abundant love).

Among Muslims, the Sufi sect in particular practices tolerance and special dances as "whirling dervishes" who turn love into ecstasy through dance. In Christianity, The Way of Joy sometimes is called "the way of the sacred heart" (especially as related to Mary, mother of Jesus), or the "via positiva" (spiritual path of positive feelings such as ecstasy. And Christianity also states in its New Testament that "God is love" and teaches Jesus of Nazareth's "Golden Rule" to love God and each other as the highest of commandments.*

In addition, there is science. Hundreds of scientific studies in both West and East show how the practice of all these traits of the Way of Joy improve physical, emotional, and mental health.

The Way of Joy is not just for yourself. Patanjali recognizes that such traits and the feelings they produce radiate outward to people around you when he writes, "Empathy, sympathy... seeing all sides." Archbishop Tutu says, "[U]ltimately our

greatest joy is when we seek to do good for others.... It's how we are made. We're wired to be compassionate." This saying of Patanjali might also be called the Sutra of Compassion.

American poet Robert Bly offers a final phrasing, with a tongue-in-cheek wryness, to describe the joy, love, and compassion embodied in this sutra:

our gusty emotions say to me that we have
Tasted heaven many times: these delicacies
Are left over from some larger party.*

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## ***Sutra* 1.34**: *Pracchardana-vidhāraṇa-abhyām vā prāṇasya*

***Literal translation***: "Throwing out and then holding, also, breath energy"

***Meaning***: "You also can strongly expel, then pause, your breath."

***A chant***: "Push your breath out; then hold it."

***Definition***: In addition to the previous real-world activities that help you gain calm mental clarity, you can use a breathing technique recommended here by Patanjali. Such breathing is not something to do casually and then forget about it. Rather, Patanjali intends good breathing to be a gradually built, lifelong activity, just as he expects a lifelong commitment to *The Way of Joy* in the previous sutra.

Here in this sutra, he describes his most basic type of good breathing for calming the mind. First, firmly and deeply exhale *all* your breath; next, at the bottom of this exhale, pause for several beats; finally, inhale deeply and then repeat. The number of beats for your pause will depend on the intensity level of your physical activity: you'll be able to pause longer when you are at rest. Practice such breathing at least several minutes each day to expand your lung capacity, especially by learning to take deeper breaths, so you can take more oxygen into your body. Doing so clears your lungs and other air passages of old air and its sediments, and also can aid health and physical energy substantially. See also Sutras II.50-51.

***Comment***: Patanjali has been describing breathing increasingly beginning with Sutra 1.23 in which he recommends "breathing as one with *Isvara* [Presence]." Here in Sutra 1.34, he provides his first specific lesson in using breath. He lists it as yet one more way you can meditate. Breathing has a long and highly respectful heritage among most world cultures as a meditation method. Roman Catholic meditation

adept Thomas Keating, for example, calls it "following the breath as a sacred experience."*

It is interesting and helpful that Patanjali describes the two steps of yogic breathing as exhaling and then pausing (rather than inhaling and then pausing). In part, his choice of instructions are simply mechanical: if you exhale and then pause or hold your breath first, then you may be more likely to take a deeper breath when you inhale.

Patanjali's recommendation to exhale first, then pause, also may be an ancient Hindu tradition. There is a saying in India that in the pause between inhale and exhale is Presence. Whether or not you actually find God in that pause, especially after an exhale the pause may offer the quietest seconds in the breathing cycle for concentrating on your chosen point or method of meditation. You exhale, pause and concentrate on your point, then let your inhale happen automatically and deeply.

Filling your lungs more deeply is one of the specific recommendations by James Nestor in his science-oriented, self-journey book called *Breath*. He describes as exemplary the fact that deep-sea divers can train themselves to hold their breath much longer than normal, even up to ten minutes—when they are underwater. Nestor says learning such lung expansion offers many health advantages. He also points out that it is a long-used technique by yogis.

*For more on the science of meditative breathing, see "Appendix C: How to Breathe."*

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## ***Sutra* 1.35**: *Viṣayavatī vā pravṛ̥tti-rutpannā manasaḥ sthiti-nibandhanī*

***Literal translation***: "Sensory experiences, also, evolving rising up mental steadiness—binding on original basis"

***Meaning***: "Focusing on a sensory object is another method to bring mental calm if concentrating in this way helps you."

***A chant***: "What object of great presence do you sense? It can be your focus."

***Definition***: The meaning of this sutra has many different interpretations by translators. One older tradition suggests that if you focus on certain parts of your body, you'll gain supersensory awareness (of the sense on which you are focusing).

For example, if you spend months or years focusing on your nose, you will gain super-smell of the smallest or most distant scents.

However, another interpretation suggests that Patanjali appears to be offering a series of several sutras in a row, here, about using clearly physical, external methods of concentration. In this interpretation, Sutra 1.35 may mean that if you focus on something external using one of the five senses as a method of bringing calmness to yourself, then that may help you clear your mind.

If, for example, you focus on a candle for perhaps ten to thirty minutes, that singular focus may help clear your mental space. Patanjali's first interpreter, Vyasa, suggests that this interpretation (in addition to the earlier version about supersensory powers) is correct. He even names examples of objects on which to focus: "the moon, the sun, a planet, a crystal, a lamp, a jewel, and so on...."*

***Comment***: Maybe supersensory powers do exist, as many stories from ancient times tell us. But it is more likely that Patanjali, being such a practical adept of meditation, is simply describing one of the most simple and basic methods of meditation natural for people around the world: if you focus on something that grabs your attention long enough, it can elicit a calm, slower breathing pattern and a deeper stillness of the body and mind.

This interpretation appears particularly appropriate because in this smaller group of sutras, Patanjali suggests a variety of one-pointed physical methods to create a clearer mind. In addition, other traditions, especially Zen Buddhism, recommend this type of meditation on the objects in one's life to improve mindfulness.

Some people use a lit candle, others a spiritual symbol or icon, or even the scent or sight of a flower, a favorite song replayed, or a sunset every evening. Choosing an object like this is similar to using a mantra—a repeated word or phrase. Any such powerful aesthetic-sensory experience can work. It is a key, a door, or a stairway to finding Presence, just as is a traditional prayer, a bow of reverence, or a spiritual song.

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## ***Sutra* 1.36**: *Viśokā vā jyotiṣmatī*

***Literal translation***: "Unburning, too, light-pregnant"

***Meaning***: "You also can find your mental calm when you are pregnant with light that does not burn you."

***A chant***: "Feel your bliss and bathe in the light inside it."

***Definition***: The "light" referenced here is, in ancient yoga tradition and in many others, the "inner light" you might find within. It is not a real, physical light, though sometimes it may seem so because of its intensity. Rather it is a light viewed by the inner mind space. Some traditions, for example, describe it as a luminous heart, others a radiant shining, still others a figure or symbol surrounded by bright light.

***Comment***: The point Patanjali makes in this sutra is, simply, that this is yet one more practical way to find your one-pointed method of meditating. He is aware that this light can grow and strengthen for you, if this is your chosen way; and he understands that this light is a beam, spark, or shaft from the greater light, love, and strength of Presence from which it comes. In the Hindu division of all the world's forces into three—*sattva* (creative energy), *rajas* (power/strength), and *tamas* (inertia)—this light is a pure, radiant version of *sattva*.

Hanson and Mendius note in *Buddha's Brain* that such "'brightening' likely involves a surge of norepinephrine throughout the brain; that neurotransmitter...is a general orienting signal that fosters alertness." In addition, they say, "Some parts of the brain are linked by *reciprocal inhibition*: when one part activates, it suppresses another one. To some extent, the left and right hemispheres have this relationship; thus, when you stimulate the right [visual] hemisphere...the verbal centers of the left hemisphere are effectively shushed." Thus this light, when it appears to many people, may also be accompanied by a surrounding silence.*

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## ***Sutra* 1.37**: *Vīta-rāga viṣayam vā cittam*

***Literal translation***: "Without excitation, sensuous objects, also in mind space"

***Meaning***: "You also can find mental calm with real objects in mind space for which you hold no passionate attachment."

***A chant***: "Focus freely on a thing if you do not desire it."

***Definition***: Patanjali appears to be clarifying that you can choose a sensory object to hold in your mind space, too. Here he means the object is not real, or at least not there with you at present. Rather, it is an object in your memory or in your creative imagination. However, he specifies that you cannot be attached to the object, real or

imagined, by human desire. Rather, it must be pure to you.

For example, imagining a candle or flower might bring you to a calmer state of peace, love, or joy; however, if you choose your favorite food or memory of physical pleasure that makes you "excited," this thought instead may just stir a host of associated thoughts, memories, emotions that take you away from calmness and clarity of mind.

***Comment***: A fine line sometimes exists between what makes you calm and clear as opposed to what makes you overly excited. Traditional translators of Patanjali often convert his recommendations to a more severe, ascetic meaning, which is that anything leading to physical pleasure—food, drink, or sex—is forbidden.

However, some translators say, instead, that this is too extreme, that under some conditions, certainly physical pleasures are allowed *if you do not become attached/addicted to them*. Some Buddhists point out that Buddha's "Middle Path" recommendation means precisely this, that nothing need be taken to an excessive extreme. Buddha himself ate and drank with others and did not say you must forbid yourself from feeling pleasure in these.

Most yoga adepts do not forbid the great physical feelings that come from successful stretching and breathing. Jesus of Nazareth even was criticized by other rabbis and priests of his time for enjoying eating and drinking with others. Some Zen Buddhist adepts might say, "Eat, drink, go hungry, go thirsty, all is the same in *satori*." Some physical pleasures, in fact, can be useful to meditating: pleasure itself creates a type of mindfulness, a concentrating upon the pleasure, that is good practice of mindfulness. And intense physical pleasure sometimes can lead to intense spiritual pleasure, especially in the arts or in appreciation of nature, where intense enjoyment of a painting, a sunset, a musical composition, a statue, a piece of stonework driftwood, etc. can lead from physical appreciation to an experience of wonder, beauty, or the joy of creation itself. All these can help one reach enlightenment.

Whatever helps you develop greater concentration and deeper calm is helpful. One translator even says that an adept meditator who does not live in "excitation" can be your chosen object. This, too, is fine. If your "objects of the senses"—persons, things, events, or acts—help you arrive at greater peace, then they are helpful.

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## ***Sutra* 1.38**: *Svapna-nidrā-jñāna-alambanam vā*

***Literal translation***: "Dream or deepest sleep—wakeful knowing—deriving from, too"

***Meaning***: "You might use a dream or a deep, dreamless sleep, and when you wake up and concentrate on it, you can clear your mind, too."

***A chant***: "Awake from sleep and wrap yourself around the good that was in it to clear your mind."

***Definition***: A dream of the right kind, or remembering your state of awareness from a dreamless, very deep state of sleep, also can help you clear your mind space. This is not a recommendation to remember all your dreams or try to return to sleep. Rather, it is a selective method of using any dream or dreamless state that might help you clear your mind when you wake up.

For example, if you have dreamed a powerful experience of love, peace, joy, or some other deep or high state, you can use it whenever you meditate to clear your mind. Recalling dreamless sleep—the deepest state—can calm and clear you, too. You don't have to re-dream it, just recall it as best you can, then think of it anytime.

***Comment***: Western psychology sometimes values dreams as a pipeline for discovering your unconscious or subconscious motives, feelings, and desires. Dreams (even the deepest state of *theta* dreamless sleep) also can give you spiritual or clear-mind experiences. Joel Morwood, spiritual director for the Center for Sacred Sciences in Oregon, says, "St. Augustine...divided dreams into two main categories, those that are *true* and those that are *false*, while Tibetan Buddhists distinguish between *clarity* dreams and dreams that are merely *karmic* or (as we might say) *egoic* in nature."*

These divisions are not complex: if you have a dream that gives you greater clarity, then it may be useful for meditation, just as recommended in Sutras 35 and 37. However, if remembering the dream takes you "down the rabbit hole," as it were, into swirling, Alice-in-Wonderland distractions, realistic or fantastic, then these whirlpools of memory would be what St. Augustine and the Tibetan Buddhists above would call "false," or merely "karmic" and "egoic." And the blank of dreamless sleep (in Hinduism, it is called *nidrā)*, if you can recall it, can be very soothing and calming, too.

Another interesting aspect of this sutra is that you can use dreams purposely to expand the range of your meditation practice—not just an observer or interpreter of them. You can, in fact, go one step further: sometimes you can create dreams. If you try this, then before sleeping, simply instruct yourself to dream of love, peace, or joy in any way, shape, or manner of your choice. Or tell yourself to remember your dreamless sleep (called "theta" sleep by scientists). Then remember either one on

waking and use that memory for meditation.

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## ***Sutra* 1.39**: *Yatha-abhimata dhyānād vā*

***Literal translation***: "As desired from personal religious practices, meditating, too"

***Meaning***: "You can use what you desire from your own spiritual practices, too."

***A chant***: "Choose what you know will make you blossom in meditation."

***Definition***: Once again, Patanjali is saying that you may use one of many methods. He now has mentioned some of the common successful ones of which he is aware. He is not saying that anything is okay. Rather, he is defining what works by the result you get: whatever gives you a clear mind—anything that is a one-pointed method that you can use repeatedly—may be acceptable. For example, if you think of a relative or friend who has died, a perfect painting or song, or a particular dance, and it works to help you meditate, then fine: use it.

***Comment***: Vivekananda, author of one of the most all-embracing translations of the *Yoga Sutras*, says of this sutra, "Anything that will concentrate the mind" can work."* One of the most respected recent modern Western mystics, Thomas Merton, adds,

> There are all kinds of techniques and methods of meditation and mental prayer.... [T]hey are all good for those who can use them and everyone who can get profit out of systematic meditation should not fail to do so.... The best thing beginners in the spiritual life can do...is to acquire the agility and freedom of mind that will help them to find light and warmth and ideas and love for God everywhere they go and in all they do.*

In this regard, Vivekananda, Merton, and Patanjali's recommendation of a broad number of methods for discovering spirituality is like Jesus of Nazareth's dictum that "whoever is not against us is for us."

However, clearly, Patanjali—like Jesus and almost all other spiritual teachers—does limit "anything that works" to what also is ethical. He does not believe you should choose activities that are immoral in the world. He believes, if you read all his sutras, that meditation leads to greater ethical behavior, and stronger morality

can help better establish a good meditation practice.

On the other hand, "good morality" does not mean that you must live like an ascetic hermit. Rather, Patanjali's repeated insistence on the value of a wide variety of practices suggests that he takes a more Buddhist position regarding how you act in the world: the Middle Way or the Middle Path of behavior often is best: halfway between ascetism and luxury. Buddha lived somewhat before the time of Patanjali, and so Buddha probably had a significant affect, directly or indirectly, on Patanjali's sutras about meditation.

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## *Sutra* 1.40:

## *Paramāṇu parama-mahattva-anto-asya vaśīkāraḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Smallest particle to greatest, extending your mastery"

***Meaning***: "From the smallest particle to the greatest expanse, using Sutras 33-39 will extend your mastery of consciousness."

***A chant***: "Awareness lives from the smallest particle to the infinite."

***OR*** "The smallest atom to the universe itself can raise you up in meditation."

***Definition***: Two reasonable meanings exist for this sutra. The first is that as you learn to meditate better, your ability to understand or perceive smaller and greater parts of the universe will increase. The second is that you can use anything from the smallest to the largest element in the universe upon which to meditate, if it helps you. This sutra does not mean that you become a "master or mistress of the universe" who rules the cosmos. Rather, it simply means that nature can be helpful in meditating: it can be supportive or even directly useful as a one-pointed object of meditation.

For example, you might discover, after months or years of meditation, that you more deeply appreciating the smallest details in nature, or perhaps the entire cosmos and its workings. Or you might find that when you choose a flower or bee, or the constellations of the stars in the sky—their special beauty or meaning to you—that focusing on any of these may help you gain greater clarity of mind and body. Whichever you choose, your choice does not mean you are worshipping these

elements. Rather, they are convenient objects to reach a deeper or higher goal, just as for some people a religious symbol, statue, prayer, or image aids them.

***Comment***: Unfortunately, many translators interpret this sutra as having a supernatural meaning: Patanjali, they tell us, is saying the you will become a ruler of the universe over nature.

However, this interpretation is unlikely. Georg Feuerstein, an eminent scholar, meditator, and translator of Patanjali, says of this sutra that "mastery" means, simply, you gradually learn "to hold [your] mind stable in relation to any object irrespective of its size or type. In other words, those who are skilled in the art of concentration can achieve [one-pointedness] with regard to any of the myriads of cosmic forms." Plainly stated, the presence of an atom or of an entire universe in your awareness will not surprise or disrupt your meditative calm.*

Feuerstein's simpler and more elegant interpretation is likely for two reasons: historical analysis and textual analysis. First is historical analysis. Throughout his sutras, Patanjali is a "nature writer." In his ancient lifetime, he was surrounded by natural objects. He—like many of the earliest Hindu authors—demonstrates an obvious and deep affection for nature, calling it to attention often in his sutras by word and metaphor. Historically, he is a type of "nature writer."

Second, textual analysis of *Yoga Sutras* also suggests Feuerstein's interpretation. Much of Patanjali's writings are based on the ancient Hindu *Vedas*, written before Patanjali's time, and possibly some of the similarly old *Upanishads*. These writings consistently support the belief that seeking power is an obstacle to true meditation. Textually, Patanjali repeats this argument time and again in his own sutras: seeking power for its own sake is unethical, anti-spiritual, and thus destructive of meditation. He more likely echoes this moral viewpoint here in Sutra 1.39, as well: an advanced meditator is not one seeking to become "ruler of the universe" but rather a person comfortable with nature, be it infinitesimal or universal.

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*Calm Stream*

# Sutras 1.41 - 1.45

## *What Are Signs of Success?*

### - The Clear Mind Begins -

### ***Sutra* 1.41**:

*Kṣīṇa vṛtter abhijātasy-eva maṇer grahītṛ*
*grahaṇa grāhyeṣu tad-stha tad-añjanatā-samāpattiḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Dissipating/decreasing whirlpools giving full birth to what is like a flawless crystal that is knower, knowing, and known: that abiding, that anointing = consummated assumption of its original form, a falling back into its oneness *samadhi*"

***Meaning***: "Dissolving your mind-forms, you can experience a state of pure, clear Awareness that is at once you as knower, the act of knowing, and the object of your knowing. That state of Presence, that blessing, is your joining with Original Contemplation."

***A chant***: "Clear your mind and invert your consciousness upon itself, Awareness aware of itself."

***Definition***: The wording of this sutra is complex. That is because, though the meaning is clear once you've experienced it, using words to describe it is difficult, whether in Sanskrit or English. Again, once you've seen and felt it yourself, the meaning becomes clear.

One interpretation of this sutra is that you can keep turning your awareness upon your awareness, or that you otherwise clear your mind so all that remains is awareness itself. This in no way suggests that you use your memory to think of your personality or history; neither do you use organized thinking to count the ways in which you exist, think, or live. Rather, your awareness, itself, has no other object other than itself. Your consciousness turns itself on itself. Your awareness looks at your awareness: your person who is the knower stares into your person who is the knower.

You can get a similar experience by looking into a person's eyes and searching for their basic essence or Self—their awareness that is looking at you. Another similar experience is to stare at your eyes in a mirror to see yourself seeing yourself. If you have a different dominant sense, such as hearing or touch, then you can practice hearing yourself hear, or feeling yourself feel.

A different interpretation given by some translators is that as your mind clears, it becomes transparent, showing or reflecting exactly whatever you are perceiving. Thus if you are looking at a river, your mind will not think about a river, remember one, or feel emotion or desire about a river. Rather, it will just simply see nothing else but the river.

It is possible that both interpretations apply. Patanjali might be saying, simply, that you as an Awareness become, in this state, a Consciousness that sees or perceives only itself and the raw reality around it.

***Comment***: Being aware of being aware is one of the more difficult methods or levels of meditation. Learning to hold it even briefly, for just one instant, and then for a second or two, is a special accomplishment for beginning meditators. Typically, each time you manage it, you will be thrown out of the center of this point or circle and find yourself spinning away into thinking, feeling, or remembering something else—

which are busy whirlpools or swirls in the mind, the emotions, and the body.

However, this activity can be, for your meditating, at the heart of your finding Presence: of discovering Awareness, Ultimate Consciousness, the Place of Peace, Joy, and Strength, or whatever else you may name it. Finding the middle or point of this experience will center and balance you, and help you advance toward whatever your deeper or higher meditation goals are.

This "knower, knowing, and known" experience, as Patanjali calls it, is one reason for Zen Buddhist koans. Koans, of certain fame among Zen meditators, began among Zen priests in China in the twelfth through thirteen centuries. They are brief riddles or questions meant to break you away from logical thinking so that you can see the deeper truth of Presence. For example, three modern versions are:

"What is the sound of one hand clapping?"

"What is the color of the wind?"

"If you see the Buddha on the road, you must kill him."

In trying to solve these, you realize there is no logical answer, not, at least, one that is satisfactory. And in that moment, hopefully, you turn inward toward a deeper, living/experienced knowing beyond (without) mere thinking.

"That abiding, that knowing," as Patanjali calls it, also is at the heart of all other one-pointed meditation objects/subjects that you might choose. This is because whichever method you choose among the many options Patanjali offers, you are (ideally) choosing one that takes you, an individual, into the midst of the center of Presence. As a result, turning Awareness upon Awareness, as this sutra describes, is another significant method you may choose, says Patanjali, as a one-pointed object or subject for meditation.

When you are sustaining this state, your mind becomes a clear, transparent jewel that shows only Itself and the objects around you that you perceive in raw reality. It is a pure, lower form of *samadhi*, *satori*, or nirvana.

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## ***Sutra* 1.42**: *Tatra śabdārtha jñāna vikalpaiḥ saṁkīrṇā savitarkā samāpattiḥ*

***Literal translation***: "There, word-forming knowledge constructions mixing reflectively: oneness *samadhi*"

***Meaning***: "There or then, verbal-concepts thinking mixes in deep

contemplation."

***A chant***: "Into your pure crystal mind will come new understandings of Original Awareness."

***Definition***: In the crystal clarity described in Sutra 41, conceptual thinking—new processing of ideas—mixes with the clarity. These new ideas provide reflective understandings—labels—for your experience of Original Consciousness. This is not an outcome of a logical process of thinking. Nor is it the type of yoga called *jnana*, in which you hold an idea or memory in mind and allow related thoughts and impressions to swirl into or out from it. Rather, the experience in this sutra involves directly being in Awareness of Awareness and then finding, mixed with it or after it, new words for it. Another possible meaning of Patanjali's also is that from your knowing your knowing, you may have new, surprising conceptual insights.

For example, after coming out of Awareness of Awareness, or as you continue to experience it, you might suddenly have a crystal-clear, bell-like realization of one or more of the words used to label this experience. Words for it may occur to you such as "knowing," "Awareness," "consciousness," "Presence," "gnosis," "*samadhi*," or many others.

Or, regarding the second definition—"verbal-concepts thinking mixes in deep contemplation"—you suddenly may conceive of a solution to a problem that has perplexed you for days, even years. Or you may suddenly see a completely different view of a complex relationship between two people, or within your own self. Such concepts coming from your experience of *samadhi*, however brief, usually feel like inspirations rather than logical deductions.

***Comment***: This special thinking is perhaps normal for many people. When you come out of Awareness of Awareness, whether after an instant or after seconds or minutes—you may have a special insight into some idea, memory, or other thought. Feuerstein, for example, calls such incidences "flashes of understanding...which, although grounded in the concepts derived from ordinary experiencing, have a different quality or feel about them."

Patanjali himself, near the end of the *Yoga Sutras*, also mentions that you can suddenly perceive, mentally, entirely new patterns of how life works as you attain ever deeper levels of meditation. In fact, having such inspirations or realizations is one sign of your success in meditating upon Awareness of Awareness. This—a signpost on the road to success—may be why Patanjali wrote this sutra.

Unfortunately, some people brush the true source of the inspiration—the experience of knowing your knowing—so briefly that they may not see this

experience for what it is. Rather, they grasp the result of the experience, their intuitive inspirational thought, and consider that intuition as their ultimate inner experience. Instead, you should look to the source, not the results: the knower-knowing-known experience is what to pursue in meditation, not the resulting intuitions. The latter—intuitions—will come, and even arrive more quickly and often, if you just pursue the aware-of-awareness source.

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## ***Sutra* 1.43**: *Smr̥ti pariśuddhau svarūpa śūnya-eva-artha mātra nirbhāsā nirvitarkā*

***Literal translation***: "Memory unused; in its own natural state empty, as it were, an object just shining contemplation without thoughts"

***Meaning***: "When you are not using your memory, then a natural object can just shine, without thoughts, empty of all else."

***A chant***: "Or watch an object shine in your crystal Awareness, with no swirling thoughts in the way."

***Definition***: In the crystal clarity described in Sutra 41, a further step (beyond Sutra 42) can occur. In this step, when you look at an object, you simply see it just as it is, as if it shines purely in its own true nature—no thinking attached. This does not mean that you observe an object while mentally dissecting it, nor can you—in this state—observe an object and let meditative thoughts about it, or anything else, occur. Rather, your mind is completely clear of all but the presence of the object itself. For example, if you observe someone's face with no thoughts, no memories, no listening to what they're saying, then you are observing the person's face purely as described in this sutra.

***Comment***: An interesting occurrence when in this state is that sometimes (not always) the object becomes numinous. This means that if the object is visual, it may literally shine by being brighter or acquiring a light around it like a halo. If the object is a sound, the hearing of it may appear to swell in intensity or acquire a joyous, loving, or especially peaceful feeling. This also can happen with an object that you are touching, tasting, or smelling.

It is worth noting that this "shining object" experience is common among those using psychedelics (and some other drugs) for spiritual growth. The drugs often

make the event especially intense. However, you don't need psychedelics to make it happen. Part of what makes psychedelics appear special is that they create greater intensity. However, meditation usually will bring about the same experiences, if less intently.

If you are using psychedelics for such growth, you may also find that another unique attribute is that meditation experiences seem to happen more easily. However, the more accurate reasoning is that you may be paying better attention to inner experiences. Or you may be devoting more time for meditation by using drugs. In one 8-hour LSD trip, for example—in which you have eight hours of inner-generated experiences—you are yielding what would be the equivalent of sixteen 30-minute meditation sessions, normally spread (by beginning meditators) over a period of sixteen days or weeks.

In addition, the intensity of meditation during drug use increases dramatically: you are literally forced to pay closer attention to what is happening to you. Because of this intensity, your mind does not stray and wander away from your meditative focus, as is typical for most meditators. In other words, psychedelics literally force you to be constantly mindful. Because your mind is not straying, one 8-hour LSD trip might yield the equivalent of thirty, forty, or even fifty 30-minute meditation sessions during weeks or months.

This comparison is not meant to suggest that LSD or any other drug is a shortcut, but rather that many people may have the same results in drug-free meditation over time as during a psychedelic trip. In addition, though psychedelic drugs may create faster results, in many people they may not create better results.

Meditation using drugs also offers both a greater temptation toward—and higher chance of derailment into—some of the false and difficult experiences that meditators occasionally find. This is why for psychedelic drug meditation—just as for some of the more difficult or dangerous traditional forms of meditation in the Far East—an adept or experienced guide is needed.

Normal meditation—without drugs and by concentrating on higher mental powers and forces—is safer for your normal life and existing personality, and it doesn't require a psychologist or yoga adept to get you through it safely. Drugless meditation may seem slower, but even that is arguable: just as the tortoise reaches the finish line before the quick but sidetracked hare, so, too, the steady way of meditation can yield quieter but equal results compared to the more uneven way of drugs.

However, having noted the above, you may find that in some circumstances, psychedelic drugs—if you use them with an experienced counselor or meditation adept in a therapeutic setting—can accomplish changes that a similar amount of meditation cannot. The intensity of the experience itself may make a difference. This

is not a recommendation for the general meditator, especially because a licensed psychologist or similar person should be present to help when you "trip" on a psychedelic for inner exploration. Under those careful conditions, though, some research suggests psychedelic drugs may be helpful.

For example, Sarah Scoles reports in November 2020's *Popular Science* on recent studies that such drugs and resulting spiritual experiences sometimes can affect mental health positively.* She describes the work of scientists Roland Griffiths and William Richards (author of the 2015 book *Sacred Knowledge*), who work with thirty others in their university's Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research. Their first study was funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse.*

They alternately dosed 36 participants with either psilocybin (a psychedelic mushroom) or a placebo. The research was double blind: neither participants nor researchers knew who was using which. Of participants receiving the active drug, 61% reported a full mystical experience, and a year later, two-thirds said their trips were among the top five spiritual moments in their lives. The placebo-receiving subjects had few such experiences.

Again, though, it is important to emphasize that this kind of spiritual growth may *not* be needed or even desired by most people. Such "trips" for spiritual or psychological growth also require, for both safety and effectiveness, the presence of a calm, experienced, and trusted counselor, guide, or meditation adept.

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## *Sutra* 1.44:

## *Etayā-iva savicārā nirvicārā ca sūkṣma-viṣayā vyākhyātā*

***Literal translation***: "Likewise, indeed, awareness—with and without mental thoughts—of subtle objects explained"

***Meaning***: "In the same way as in Sutra 1.43, having a clear awareness—with or without mental thoughts—of subtle-energy forms also is explained."

***A chant***: "Also watch for subtle objects shining in your clear mind."

***Definition***: As in Sutra 43's natural objects standing alone and ultra-clear, you also may become aware of subtle-energy shapes—i.e. psychic objects. They often look in meditation (or from a very clear mind) like small bundles, threads, strings, or whisps around you. They are not realized or obvious forms of thought that already have

arrived in your head as memories, images, sounds, or in other mentally complete forms. Rather, they are like the "burnt seeds" in Sutra 1.18. For example, when your mind space is mostly or completely clear, you may see a darkish dust ball, or perhaps a swirl of wispy or thick energy swirling outside of your inner awareness. Sights such as these are some of the "subtle objects" of which Patanjali speaks.

***Comment***: Patanjali's references throughout the *Sutras* regarding psychic objects, "burnt seeds," etc. are part of the ancient belief common in many cultures that thought forms, emotion forms, and desire forms (to name a few) come from external sources, whether they are swirling close to you or they arrive from other people or events nearby or far away.

Again, it is worth noting, as in Sutra 1.23, that at the least, when humans are within several feet of each other, scientists can demonstrate people can sense each other's heart-energy signals. Patanjali is saying that patterns of energy forms do exist outside of the human body and can be perceived by those who are sensitive to them. In addition, he is saying that thoughts, emotions, desires, and feelings (our own and others') can have residence outside of us at times, and that your nervous system can act as a sensory receiver and broadcaster of such energy forms.

In short, your brain is not just a photographic or computer-byte file system as in Western psychology, but also (or instead, according to ancient Hindu psychology) a sensory tool like your eyes, ears, and other sensory organs. In this way the brain is more like a phone or computer that can send and receive information through the airwaves.

In this regard—the brain as receiver-sender, as opposed to a storage vault of memories—neuroscientists cannot yet identify cells where specific memories are stored. Nor can they explain how the brain interacts with finer or more subtle forms of energy such as radio waves and light waves, much less subatomic dark matter. For these reasons and because of new evidence of the brain sensing heart and brainwaves, the ancient Hindu model of the brain as an energy-wave receptor remains an interesting hypothesis.

In addition, there is a large body of evidence for psychic phenomena that has not been disproved. For example, former Harvard professor Diane H. Powell speaks in *The ESP Enigma: The Scientific Case for Psychic Phenomena* about how Abraham Lincoln had a clear predictive dream of his death ten days before it happened. She adds that everyone potentially is psychic. She argues that modern scientists generally conduct experiments to help prove or disprove what they already believe—and then ignore evidence that doesn't support their belief. Instead, she suggests, they should look at all the raw data and gradually construct an understanding of what that data might be telling them.

She also says that famous nineteen-century psychologist William James argued

for viewing the mind as being like a prism (very much like Patanjali's "crystal-clear mind"). James explained this "prism model" as the mind filtering differing shades of light through it, which are the different shades of thoughts and feelings, but also, said James, the mind can see all these "colors" at one time—seeing their combination as the color white.*

Hundreds of scientific studies have validated that psychic phenomena exist. They are too numerous to list here, but a good introduction to them is "Do Psychic Phenomena Exist?" in *Psychology Today* by Steve Taylor, PhD., a senior lecturer in psychology at Leeds Beckett University in the United Kingdom. Taylor explains a different model of the brain, one which considers the brain to be an additional type of sense, much like the five senses: "some theorists...propose what might be described as the 'radio model'" of the brain in which people "receive" what "exists outside of us." He also discusses significant experiments helping to prove that psychic perceptions exist and even describes how physicists' quantum mechanics may help prove, theoretically, how such perceptions happen.*

All these brain-as-receptor models are how the ancient Hindus viewed the human nervous system. Patanjali assumes his readers already understand that the brain is a sensory organ, just like our other five senses.

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## ***Sutra* 1.45**: *Sūkṣma-viṣayatvam ca-aliṅga paryavasānam*

***Literal translation***: "Psychic objects, also, unattached to matter, originating in"

***Meaning***: "You may also experience subtle objects not part of matter, from what you can sense to what is the purest of forms."

***A chant***: "Look for immaterial things from strong energy to the most subtle of all forms."

***Definition***: Patanjali here states that psychic objects you might see can run the gamut from the most obvious to the most subtle—from large to tiny. He also suggests that some of them have existed since before the beginning of time and space. Note that he is not saying you can perceive God of the highest spiritual states because they are objects. He says in other sutras of his that God and such states are beyond the existence of objects, whether in material nature or in subtle, psychic form. Rather, in this sutra, Patanjali is suggesting that you might even perceive something so fine

that it is the basic material from which the cosmos in made. Ancient Hindu mystics named it, in Sanskrit, *prakrti* or *prakriti*.

***Comment***: Again, as in Sutras 1.42-44, Patanjali is telling you what you might see as your crystal-clear mind begins to develop in meditation. In Sutra 1.45, he explains that you might begin having experiences of any of several levels of subtle or normally invisible forms, from the most obvious or gross to the most subtle or finest. These may include, as well as the usual panoply of whirlpools or swirls of thoughts and feelings around you, smaller or more perfected particles or energies.

These finer subtle energies in and around you might even include the original substances of the universe from which, says Patanjali, the cosmos itself was made, such as *prakriti*, sometimes visible as vibrations, sometimes as fine white-gold particles of original fire, as original vibrational waves or sounds, as feelings of water or rain within you, and as similar sensory events. They perhaps also may be larger clusters of the tiny, invisible, sub-subatomic "threads" that physicists now describe in "string theory" that make up the slightly less small but still invisible sub-subatomic particles in atoms.

In the more immediate world of your life, it is easy to assume that your own mind, emotions, and physical feelings produce some of these psychic or subtle objects: if we feel anger, for example, the assumption we make is that it is "our" anger: we made it. But this is not necessarily so.

It may be worth remembering the story John Travolta tells in the movie *Phenomenon* about the rabbit. The rabbit, he says, was eating his garden plants every time he was not looking. Travolta explains that he built a fence, but that didn't work. Next, he installed the fence several inches deep so the rabbit wouldn't go under it. That didn't work. Then he dug a long ditch a few feet deep and sunk the fence into that hole. His vegetables still were being eaten. Then one day, figuring he might as well let the rabbit have his fill, he left the garden gate open. Several minutes later, he saw the rabbit hop out. All that time, the rabbit was trapped inside.

Similarly, you may find that all you need to do—in order to rid yourself of some of your own troubling thoughts, emotions, and physical feelings—is just open your psychic gate and let them out. You may find you have been trapping them inside your own fence, but that you can release them or even throw them out. Once they're out, close your psychic gate, the borders of your mind, and don't let them back in. If they return, throw them out or dissipate them again. This is part of what Patanjali proposes to teach you how to do in the *Yoga Sutras*.

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*Reflective Lake*

# Sutras 1.46 - 1.51

## *What Is the Perfect Clear Mind?*

### - With and without Seeds -

***Sutra* 1.46**: *Tā eva sabījaḥ samādhiḥ*

***Literal translation***: "The above, as it happens, with seed as types of *samadhi*"

***Meaning***: "Sutras 41-45, as it turns out, come with mental connections or traces, along with pure Samadhi Awareness."

***A chant***: "In your clear Awareness, thoughts still may float."

***Definition***: The states of mind in Sutras 41-45, as it so happens, still bear traces or kernels of thoughts that can blossom into thinking; thus they are a crystal clarity that is "seeded" (*sabījah*). In these states, you may not have normal thoughts that flow on and on. But even so, there are traces of such thinking. As a result, you are in *samadhi*, but you are not yet in its full purity. Individual memories and ideas mix with

*samadhi*, even if the former two may bear an illuminated presence.

For example, if you hold a clear image of a word or symbol in your mind for ten seconds or, perhaps, ten minutes, thinking of nothing else but sensing its luminosity or brightness, or you illuminate a strong sense of peace or joy about that word or image, then this is *sabijah samadhi*: crystal-clear mind with seed.

***Comment***: Some of the greatest thinkers throughout history have worked from the highest elevation of critical thinking: the crystal-clear mind with seed. Albert Einstein once said, "I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know His thoughts, the rest are details" (Salaman).* He first discovered his all-encompassing formula $E = mc^2$ (energy equals mass times the speed of light squared) in 1905 by having a singular, illuminated insight. He derived it from similar formulas in physics (Rothman).* However, his version of this brilliant idea was his own full illumination. His wife helped him develop the mathematical implications of it, and it worked! He then published it, creating a new physics during the following decades (Troemel-Ploetz).*

Similarly, Moses used the word "YHWH" or "Yahweh"—"I Am That I Am" ("I Will Be What I Will Be")—to describe "God" as a verb. It was an inspired, illumined choice. The Jewish Torah—the Christian Old Testament--relates how he received this illumined word directly from God. Moses also most likely had an excellent formal education as a child who was adopted and raised by Egyptian royalty, so he knew a brilliant idea when he heard it.*

Another person of royal parentage and top education for his time was Buddha. He developed the "Middle Path": a single, clear directive that summarizes a practical spiritual journey between the extremes of asceticism and sensuality. It, too, was an illumined idea, simple yet rich with complexity. It has become a beacon for hundreds of millions of followers for thousands of years.*

Such singular, clarifying ideas are "aha" moments for you when you have them. You even can have such an "aha" experience when, for the first time, you truly and deeply understand an important insight from someone else. Such ideas, whenever and however they occur, are very sensible and very inspiring, filled with bright clarity, light, peace, or love, whether they appeal to millions of people or just you.

Even so, illumined ideas may help you, but they are not the end of the path or goal in meditation. They do not contain the fullness of pure, seedless, no-thought *samadhi*, the complete crystal-clear mind.

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## ***Sutra* 1.47**: *Nirvicāra vaiśāradye 'dhyātma prasādaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "*Nirvicāra*—a flow of silent Awareness: the supreme *Atman* clear."

***Meaning***: "Your *Awareness* without seed is a pure crystal silence as your inner Self is perfectly clear."

***A chant***: "The clear mind is pure with no seeds of thought."

***Definition***: There are no "seeds"—thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations—in the *nirvicara samadhi* state, which is nirvanic. This state is neither a state of unconsciousness nor a trance. Rather, it is a more-than-fully-conscious experience. It is a pure, thought-free, subtle-impression-free, flow of constant, aware peace or grand silence. In this state, the basic Self or Awareness (called *Atman* in Hinduism) is a pure Awareness of what surrounds it, so obviously clear that there is nothing else except it and raw, direct, ever-present reality.

For example, farmers on a tractor in a field might find, for a few minutes or an hour, that they are having a "perfect day" of no complaints, worries, or emotions—in fact, no thoughts at all—just a sheer, continuing awareness of everything around them, even within their own body—without any kind of idea, memory, emotion, or bad physical feeling. The same experience might happen to someone fishing, playing a sport, gardening, or simply walking in nature. You are super-aware of your surroundings and even your body's sensations. But you are completely empty of any kind of normal thought or feeling.

***Comment***: The goal of reaching your own, perfect, crystal-clear mind is to learn—through whatever form of meditation works for you—to capture, return to, or rise to such moments regularly. You want to extend such peak times so you can live in them more constantly. People who do so neither starve nor thirst, do not lie down and die (unless, of course, they prefer to—usually at a ripe old age), and do not sacrifice their mental abilities, should they need them.

Rather, gradually through meditation, you can live your life with much less of the normal spinning and whirlpool of mental and emotional turmoil in which most people live day to day. You can be as you choose, on your own terms, in a crystal clarity of increasing peace, joy, resolution, and love. You still will have feelings, but they will be higher feelings, rather than emotions (which are, as mentioned before, a mix of thoughts and physical sensations) that jerk you around. You still can have thoughts and memories, but only when and as you need them, and they will be more illumined and help you make more—and higher quality—mental connections.

Usually attaining this high level of *samadhi* is a gradual process. However,

occasionally, some people suddenly are thrown into its nirvanic state for days, weeks, or even months. This usually happens from sudden, often intense changes in other aspects of their lives as they pursue meditation. Examples may include (though ordinarily do not happen from) psychedelic drug use, self-infliction of pain, a long sickness, a long and intense spiritual retreat, or other extremes. But even if you become a nirvanic voyager in this way, you will return to normal thinking and feeling after a time. Then you, too, like most others, must practice meditation to regain your high *samadhi* sufficiently in a more controlled manner.

A serious question among scholars and Buddhists is whether anyone other than Buddha can experience nirvana. Patanjali clearly thinks it can happen to many—that *samadhi* and *nirvana* are the same. Buddha, with whom the word *nirvana* is most associated, also believed many can find it. He defines *arahants* (or *arhans*)—those who reach the highest nirvana—as a group that includes multiple people in his own time; thus, one would assume, he would include thousands, even hundreds of thousands, who have become *arahants* experiencing nirvana since his death millennia ago. Similarly, modern Zen adept Thich Nhat Hanh says that "any person can become a Buddha, and the Buddhas are all those countless persons who have obtained enlightenment."*

However, whether you call this experience nirvana, *samadhi*, *satori*, being touched by the Holy Spirit or by Yahweh/Elohim, ecstasy from whirling wisdom dance, or some other entrance event, the basic dimensions of such an experience are clear and unmistakable. It is an intense experience of conscious Awareness—of Presence.

Patanjali is trying to say, in these sutras, that it is available to everyone, whether you gain it slowly or quickly. And especially, says Patanjali, you can work your way to it.

*For more on nirvana, see "Appendix D: What Is Nirvana?"*

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## ***Sutra* 1.48**: *Ṛtam-bharā tatra prajñā*

***Literal translation***: "Final truth you bear, in that: absolute knowing"

***Meaning***: "Therein lies the real truth that you carry when you have that gnosis awareness."

***A chant***: "That perfect Awareness is the real truth."

***Definition***: In that gnosis or blazing clear awareness of crystal clarity in the previous sutra, you are experiencing the real truth of existence, not the world's seeming multiple ideological, mental truths. Patanjali's kind of "knowing" is, in Western languages, called a "gnosis"—a personal, experiential knowing. It is knowing what the ocean is like from walking into it yourself rather than just hearing about it, or tasting pure salt rather than reading about its chemical composition. This knowing is explained further in the next sutra.

***Comment***: Patanjali's use of the words "real truth" and "knowing" are very important. There are two kinds of "knowing." One is an intellectual process of learning: something you "know about," which you've learned in school, from friends, from books, etc. It is word- or picture-information you have been given by others: intellectual knowledge that to you is secondhand. The information in this (and any) book is, for example, something you only "know" about because someone else has told it to you.

However, Patanjali is talking here about "knowing from experience": knowing what a burn is like because you once got burned yourself; knowing the pleasure that a specific song can bring because you have been uplifted by that song yourself. The spiritual knowing that Patanjali is talking about here is a direct perception of a beyond-typical experience. Call it a bright inner light, an intense calm, a deep joy; call it whatever you will, but it is not an intellectual object of your thinking from simply hearing about it, but rather something you directly experience.

The medieval German theologian and mystic Meister Eckhart describes this knowing as a final truth, a form of inner seeing. He says, "If my eye is to discern colour, it must itself be free from all colour. The eye with which I see God is the same with which God sees me. My eye and God's eye is one eye, and one sight, and one knowledge, and one love."*

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## ***Sutra* 1.49**: *Śruta-anumāna prajñā-abhyām anya viṣayā viśeṣa-arthatvāt*

***Literal translation***: "Experiential tradition and logic—correct knowing of both: in a separate, material domain. (The other) a higher grasp of gnosis"

***Meaning***: "Truths that you hear or read, and your own mental logic—knowing these are truths in the world of matter. But the other kind

(as in Sutra 48) is a higher, deeper, direct knowing that is an end unto itself."

***A chant***: "Teachings and logic are mental truths; pure Awareness is an ultimate Truth that you only can Know."

***Definition***: As in the previous sutra, Patanjali clarifies the meaning of two very different kinds of truth. One is truth from nonfiction books and films, friends' factual reports, etc., along with your careful logical thinking about such things. These are intellectual or mental truths that you assume are factual. However, the truth of experiencing the clear crystal mind—of *samadhi*, *satori*, the holy spirit, etc.—is a reality that is personally experienced, just as is the direct knowledge of pain, for example, or knowing the taste of something sweet or sour. These are available to you as self-evident in your own sensory and mental immediacy. Likewise, your mind apprehends *samadhi* as a sensed event.

***Comment***: It is possible to keep looking at the same or similar sunsets, taste ice cream by buying more, or touch a velvet cloth as often as you wish. However, inner experiences seem to appear and then fade. How can they be repeated or maintained?

Fortunately, at the least, *samadhi* and other true experiences of spirituality become memories. As such, they are not the original state, just a reflection of it. However, they still may shine in memory with the glory, beauty, love, or peace within them. As a result, you may be able to find your way back to the experiences by first remembering them intently. The mind often wants to return to such an experience. If so, you may be able to recall it thoroughly and give yourself over to the real experience once again.

Memory, itself an abstract thought, still can function as a doorway. If you gain a repetition of the experience itself, that is true. That event you felt and is not a mental abstraction but rather continues to exist just as truly as does a rock, an ocean, or your breath. Spiritual states always are available to the open mind and heart: they exist in a realm of their own. They are an energy of sorts, as much so as the power of the sun or the wind.

If remembering alone is insufficient, then you may need to recreate whatever conditions or steps brought you to *samadhi* in the first place. Setting up the background—the cause-and-effect workings—of your mental and physical state can trigger the return of the *samadhi*. This is like regaining, for example, an excellent taste of a specific meal: you must duplicate the source of the food, its cooking, the herbs and spices, and sometimes even the setting of the meal to find it again.

Such recalling and recreating of spiritual states is a part of the very purpose of

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. He is saying that such experiences are not an accidental, lucky, one-of-a-kind happening: Patanjali's entire plan in the *Sutras* is to help you find, repeatedly, such events and then make them not just regularly accessible but, eventually, normal. The *Yoga Sutras* is a spiritual cookbook, if you will, for whatever level of mastery you wish to obtain. It is a recipe manual for life.

Or you may experience what many people on the path of meditation find: you might have a brilliant spiritual experience of a specific kind for the first time (a variety of which are possible). You may have found your way to this experience through a combination of your own actions on the one hand and, on the other, of events beyond your control. As a result, your fortunate mixture—whatever its known and unknown ingredients—may lead you to an experience of deep and intense clarity. It does not have to be a one-of-a-kind experience, though. You can pursue it.

Rediscovering such a wonderful state is not just uselessly chasing a dream. Such states are what you are meant to find, repeat, and keep, if you wish. It is not selfish to want such states, but rather selfless to give up your normal self so that you can experience this deeper Self that is part of such experiences.

What were the ingredients that helped you gain what you experienced? How can Patanjali's instructions—and/or those of other systems of inner discovery—help you?

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## ***Sutra* 1.50**:

## *Tajjaḥ (Tad jaḥ) saṁskāro-anya saṁskāra pratibandhī*

***Literal translation***: "That (*samadhi*) born of past vibrations, your vibrations replaced"

***Meaning***: "That clarity (in Sutras 47-49) having been born and developed from your old patterns, your echoes and attachments fall away."

***A chant***: "In that clarity your old mental echoes begin to dissolve."

***Definition***: The *samadhi* in Sutras 47-49 creates a state of Presence—an impression—that is pure and strong, full and intense, such that when you are in it, old connections and impressions are wiped away. You do not lose your normal mind or memory and can return to them whenever you wish. However, you do perceive life and its

connections differently, as you are more and more often in the here and the now, with life presenting itself to you as an unreeling presence to which you react less and are more likely to use your increasing "I Am" perspective.

For example, says Sri Satchidananda, this sutra means that you could even be in "the middle of Times Square" without being personally involved in—not reacting to—all the events and movements going on in it. He also quotes "a beautiful Tamil verse" that says if a person in this state "sees the cool rays of the moon in the broad daylight, or a three-day-old corpse get out of its coffin to walk, he or she will not wonder, 'Oh, how can that be?'"

***Comment***: Alan Watts bundles Buddhism, Zen, and the *Yoga Sutras* together when he talks about nirvana. Nirvana—one of several words used to describe this experience—has, he says,

> such a dubious etymology that a simple translation is exceedingly difficult...the blowing out of a flame...or...the cessation of waves, turnings, or circlings (*vritti*) of the mind.... Thus nirvana is the equivalent of *moksha*, [which means] release or liberation...to lose one's life is to find it—to find freedom of action unimpeded by self-frustration and the anxiety inherent in trying to save and control the Self [which is] synonymous with the aim of *yoga*, defined in [Patanjali's] *Yogasutra.**

This experience—whether you call it *samadhi*, nirvana, *satori*, *moksha*, liberation, the fullness of the holy spirit, or other traditions' names—can become such a filling of your own self—a saturating or oceanic completion—that all other *vritti* (swirling energy forms), *klesa* (difficulties), *duhkha* (troubles), and *samskaras* (old impressions/vibrations)—that is, all your old normal thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations—disappear during the experience. In this crystal-clear state, mystic Sufi poet Kabir says, "[S]uppose you had to cut your head off / and give it to someone else, / what difference would that make?"*

However, after the experience, usually your old normal self is sitting there, available to you once again if it fits you well (like a useful outfit of clothing) for living in the world. Most people gradually adjust their "normal" self so that it works increasingly better in intermixing with the true Self—the liberated Self (or the "no self" of Buddhism)— they are discovering. The returning old self reassert itself gradually or quickly.

It is said that Buddha, when he reached the age of 35, discovered nirvana and sat in it for seven weeks. But even he returned from it. And then, for 45 years, he taught others as he, himself, went in and out of the experience. Almost everyone, after first experiencing the crystal-clear mind, whether mildly or intensely, returns to normal consciousness and then works slowly, step by step over many years, to strengthen and lengthen the experience. Chapters 2-4 are a more specific guide for

doing this.

If everyone simply could tap into the crystal-clear mind and instantly gain permanent liberation, then not only would you see many holy people everywhere, but also Patanjali would not have bothered to write the other three chapters of his *Yoga Sutras*. In this first chapter, now almost at an end, Patanjali has offered his basic thesis: the crystal-clear mind exists. Chapter 1 summarizes what it is, the obstacles to it, a list of ways to work toward it, and the appearance of the results. In Chapters 2-4, he will elaborate on these in more detail.

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## ***Sutra* 1.51**:

## *Tasya-api nirodhe sarva nirodhān nirbījaḥ samādhiḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Of this, too, clearing away, (then) all stilling—no-seed *samadhi*"

***Meaning***: "When your memory of this *samadhi* also is restrained, you reach the ultimate seedless form, *nirbija samadhi*."

***A chant***: "Silence even your thoughts about your crystal-clear mind, and its purity is complete."

***Definition***: The Sanskrit language of this sutra calls this ultimate state *nirbijah samadhi*. The literal translation of this phrase is "liberation without seed" or "seedless Presence." It is "without seeds" because in this state, not even seeds of thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations cross your awareness. (See Sutra 1.18's explanation of a thought seed.) This condition is a perfectly realized, fully aware state in which you have the crystal-clear mind without any thoughts about it, no self-examination of this state, and no memories about its existence a minute earlier.

This pure state first may last only a few minutes. However long, it is perfect in its clarity.

Again, this is not a state of un- or semiconscious trance, but completely the opposite: an intensely awake and present awareness. It is not a death of yourself as a walking, talking, breathing person, either. You will continue to live (unless you are near death and choose it). Once more, it is not a complete end to your regular life. You will return to normal, or at least appear to do so. But you never will be quite the same again.

The experience does create an entirely new way of having a personality: you realize that you have no true personality. Or rather, the personality you retain is turned into a conditional—not necessary—state of living. This now-adjustable self continues to help you live in the world. But it no longer is the center of your life. The heart of your individual self has become the eternal Self within you. Your true nature, your true "I," is now for you a singular pure, unadulterated state of Presence. It is your Awareness itself.

***Comment***: Imagine, for example, that you are a newborn infant. The world is an experience about which you have no thoughts or memories, no desires, no emotions. You feel pain, but that is a raw physical experience. You may feel wonder or a sense of awe, but that is a pure, non-emotional super-awareness, a gift of bliss. You have no particular desire for—or distaste against—anything or anyone. And you have no sense of an individual self. You and the world are one. You are just a raw, fully present awareness—a camera, audio recorder, and sense-impression receiver.

You might experience your first desire, hunger, as you are introduced to milk, and the need for elimination as another desire. Slowly, you will gain experiences and develop memories.

This is very similar to nirvana. Perhaps all infants are born in some way nirvanic.

Little children often retain much of this pure awareness, often without much thought about what is happening, has happened, or what they mean. Jesus of Nazareth comments on this:

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the realm of the spirit?"

> He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the realm of the spirit. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the realm of the spirit. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me."*

Alan Watts speaks of this childlike attitude or awareness when he describes the Mahayana Buddhist word and concept *tathata*, which, he says, "we may translate as 'suchness,' 'thusness,' or 'thatness.'" He tells us the first part of this word, *tat*,

> is probably based on a child's first efforts at speech, when it points at something and says, "Ta" or "Da".... When we say "That" or "Thus," we are pointing to the realm of nonverbal experience, to reality as we perceive it directly...the world just as it is, unscreened and undivided by...thought.*

In being childlike, you become as a newborn, no thought, empty mind, in the crystal-clear Awareness of the true Self.

The Gospel of Thomas—an early Christian manuscript from the first century CE,

buried for about 1600 years and rediscovered in 1945—tells the story of Jesus of Nazareth speaking of this true Self. Jesus says, "[D]ivine Reality exists inside and all around you. Only when you have come to know your true Self will you be fully known...."*

**- End of Chapter 1 –**

**- Ch. 2-A, on *Kriya* yoga, begins with Sutra 2.1. -**

*Sunset*

*Broad Peak*

# Chapter 2-A: *Kriyā Yoga*

## *Beginning: What is Patanjali's* Kriya *or "Action" Yoga?*

### - Burning, Learning, and Devotion -

**Anglicized Sanskrit**: *Sādhana Pāda*

**Literal translation**: *Practices Path*

**Meaning**: *Starting a Regular Practice: Chapter 2, Part A, Changing Your Actions*

**A chant in English**: *Chapter on Practicing*

***Chapter Title Definition***: This chapter of *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* is titled *Sādhana Pāda*. The ancient version of Chapter 2 has two parts: Patanjali's own invention of *Kriya* yoga; and the more ancient Hindu methods known as *Astanga* Yoga. Here, in Chapter 2-A, only Patanjali's *Kriya* yoga is presented. Later, Chapter 2-B offers the older *Astanga* yoga and it's eight parts that are called "limbs."

What is *Kriya* yoga? It means "action yoking." In Patanjali's words, "Warming exercise and burning away what is unwanted, learning about yourself both inner and outer, and devotion to Conscious Presence, these are the action (*Kriya*) yoga" (Sutra 2.1). *Kriya* also can be translated as "work of the soul, breath, or spirit" ("*kri-*" is work; "*-ya*" is a word for soul/breath/spirit). It is "soul work" or "spirit action."

*Kriya* yoga is a transition from Chapter 1, in which Patanjali assumes you are a spiritual beginner with few or no spiritual experiences, to a middle stage. You graduate into this middle period by knowing spirit and figuring out how you can access it more easily or often.

As you access spirit in your own way, you begin a journey that usually is many years of what the modern world calls psychological changes. These gradual (and occasionally sudden) shifts within yourself are both positive and, sometimes, troubling. In Chapter 2-A, Patanjali's *Kriya* yoga explains some of the major changes in one's psychological self that are required as you advance further.

Thus this chapter on *Kriya* yoga is a guide for intermediate meditators, after the more basic introductory Chapter 1. The third and final stage, becoming an adept, is equally long. Daniel Goleman and Richard Davidson, for example, estimate in *Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body* that typically, finishing the intermediate stage takes about 10,000 hours of meditation, at which point one may start to become a final-stage adept; full adepts, they suggest, may have accomplished upward of 30,000-40,000 hours of meditation.*

So, in short, the first chapter described dozens of techniques for starting and continuing meditation. This second chapter's *Kriya* yoga offers advice about how to deal with psychological patterns as you develop a middle-stage meditation practice.

In particular, Patanjali outlines the traps or enmeshments that you experience with your "small self"—your psychological self or selves—and what to do about them. Like almost all Patanjali's sutras, those in Chapter 2-A are quite practical.

Note that Patanjali's *Kriya* yoga is not the specific school of "*Kriya* Yoga" developed in the early 1900s by Sri Swami Yogananda Paramahansa, or other schools that have followed. The latter's system primarily involves mantras and breathing. Instead, Patanjali's *Kriya* yoga, according to one of his best translators, Swami Satchidananda,* is a series of "practical hints to be followed in our daily lives to prepare us for the more subtle practices that follow." Another excellent translator, Patanjali expert B.K.S. Iyengar,* describes *Kriya* (and *Astanga*) yoga as "the path of

action": of "the external quest" that prepares us for the inner.

***Comment***: Satchidananda* implies in his own comments on Sutra 2.2 that *Kriya* is a yoga of yogas. He says, "Mainly, all we do in the name of Hatha Yoga [breathing, postures, and physical movements], Japa Yoga [mantras/prayers], [and] living in Yoga institutes and *asrams* [Hindu monasteries] is all part of our Kriya yoga—our preparation for meditation and *samadhi*." In other words, *Kriya* yoga is the discipline of disciplines, the guidebook of guidebooks, in a person's preparation for moving into deeper states of experiencing Presence. *Kriya* can serve as a basic outline, explanation, and instruction manual in getting ready for deeper, longer use of most meditation systems.

Also noteworthy is that traditionally in India, *Kriya* yoga was open to a wider sector of people than other spiritual paths. In India's "past few thousand years, practices that contributed to Self-Realization were often banned or restricted," says Keith Lowenstein, M.D.* However, "those who knocked on the Kriya yoga door were most often welcomed," unlike in "other traditions, which were curated and protected by a privileged and segregated community that prevented the so-called lower castes and outcasts in India from accessing the teachings. Women, too, were often forbidden to enter these traditions...."

The greater acceptance of women and those interested in nature, says Lowenstein, creates an appealing feature of *Kriya* yoga, and in this respect makes it related in some of its practices to tantra, a system involving energy centers—including the famous seven "chakras" aligned with the spine. "Mother Nature, the Divine Mother, is often the initial attraction for those who enter the Kriya line," he says. This is an important concept to keep in mind in understanding several of Patanjali's later sutras in "Chapter 2-A" regarding the joining of Self or Presence with nature while not becoming trapped or enmeshed in it.

Patanjali's *Kriya* yoga, of course, makes use of Hindu Sanskrit terminology for its meditation methods. However, also important to note is how *Kriya* offers the same underlying advice at the heart of most deep meditation practices. You can gain similar results whether from *Kriya*, modern Centering Prayer, Christian monasticism, Zen, Buddha's Eightfold Path, the mystic love poems of Kabir, Tibetan Kundalini yoga, Chinese Maitri Loving Kindness, or yet other ways. Each at its core offers the same practice to explain a person's human psychology and to find freedom within it.

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** For most authors or works mentioned in these sutras, please see the "Endnotes" for further information. For details about references, see "Sources."*

*A Tall Butte across the Path*

## *Sutras 2.1 - 2.2*

# *What are obstacles to the Clear Mind?*

### - The Small Selves: A Psychology -

## *Sutra* 2.1 (in Anglicized Sanskrit):

*Tapaḥ svādhyāya-Īśvara-praṇidhān-ani kriya yogaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Burning the impurities; studying the self-layers; being with Supreme God, breathing as one with—these, *kriya* yoga"

***Meaning***: "Warming exercise and burning away what is unwanted, learning about yourself both inner and outer, and devotion to Conscious Presence: these are the action (*kriya*) yoga."

***A chant in English***: "Attend to your body, emotions, soul, and Presence or True Self. This is Action yoga."

***Definition***: Multiple interpretations of this sutra exist. First, all translators do agree that it is defining *kriya* yoga. Patanjali named this new type of yoga from elements of a practice he developed using Hindu scriptures such as the *Upanishads* and, perhaps, Buddhist texts.

All interpreters agree that this sutra says *Kriya* or "action" yoga has three parts. And they tend to concur that one part involves what Patanjali calls *Isvara* or what could be called God. *Isvara* in Patanjali is like what he says is Atman and Brahman—God as True Self and God as a Presence beyond oneself. As explained in Chapter 1, Patanjali and Hinduism in general see the Atman as your internal spark of God, the True Self; and Brahman is the universal aspect of God, or in more modern terms, the transcendent sense of an ongoing, active Presence everywhere and in everything.

But even with this explanation of *Isvara,* some translators have minor disagreements. And their translations of the rest of this sutra can vary dramatically.

The traditional interpretation from the earliest medieval commentaries is that the three parts involve (1) ascetic, monk- or nun-like renunciation of the world, (2) strict scriptural study, and (3) absolute surrender to God.* Such translations are similar to medieval Christian beliefs about how to find God. However, more recent linguistic interpretations—by Feuerstein, Iyengar, Stiles, and others, as well as studies of Indo-European root words—support more gentle alternatives. They are: (1) warm heat, (2) self-study, and (3) Awareness of Self/ Presence.

One way of translating the first, "warm heat," is the burning away of random or useless thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations. However, "warm heat" also may mean the warming physical activity of regular, consistent exercise to burn away bodily impurities. In fact, using a modern, more moderate interpretation, both types of "warm heat" may apply.

The second, "self-study," has differing major interpretations, as well. Traditionally, it means strict examination of holy scripture. However, it also can mean that you should study in general: first, you can study your own layers, parts, recesses, and excesses of mind, emotion, and body in order to learn what they are and what to do with them. Second, you can self-study any helpful external sources: take lessons, read or listen to explanations, and watch helpful videos.

The third, "Awareness of Self/Presence," may traditionally have meant a type of total surrender to God. However, it also clearly has two other interpretations. Though the idea in it is to look for and make use of your connection to the highest or deepest spiritual state of being you can find, you may choose—according to Patanjali's first chapter—either to seek this spiritual ultimate state by looking for your own spark of God or True Self, or you can look for God or a state of Presence wherever you might find it beyond or around yourself.

***Comment:*** Sutra 2.1 defines Patanjali's own system of practice, *Kriya* yoga. The modern interpretations make his words open and forgiving: methods of loving kindness, rather than rigid rules of harsh asceticism.*

Why does this stark difference exist between the medieval and modern interpretations? It can be explained, perhaps, by the harshness of medieval times throughout the world. In East and West, plagues, famines, and wars killed hundreds of millions over many centuries. One of the safest places to practice spirituality was in ascetic monastic communities. The inhabitants had neither wealth nor power, so they were more likely to be left alone by thieves or marauding hordes, and, because they grew their own food, they were more likely to survive. Their interpretations of their scriptures favored giving up the trappings of the world, including pleasures and desires, in order to survive in society.

However, Patanjali was a scholar of the ancient Hindu scriptures. The developers of these earliest scriptures were called *rishis*, a word that means "saints" or "wise ones." Patanjali would have known about them. They often lived normal lives in their early years, which included marriage, a family, and a job. Then, as they grew older, they retired to spiritual communities to practice their meditations more regularly, even as they remained religious and cultural icons and leaders of the larger society around them. Rishis, though often upper-caste males, sometimes included women and people of lower castes. In this they partly ignored India's caste system.

Similar spiritual communities, safe and relatively comfortable (though without luxuries), have existed throughout ancient history in both East and West. Linda Johnsen,* a researcher of ancient religions, describes several such groups in the West. Two notable examples include the c. 700 BCE or earlier followers of poet and musician Orpheus, who focused on the wild and mysterious rites of the Greek wine

god Dionysus; and the spiritual settlement created a century later by the famous Greek mathematician and holy man Pythagoras.

And thousands of years before them, says ancient-civilizations historian Riane Eisler,* many towns in the large geographic area of the Middle East lived in relative peace as agricultural communities that were led spiritually and politically by women. These communities had their own rites and practices of meditation that celebrated the fullness of their agricultural, artistic, and spiritual abundance in their mild climates. Their religious practices were deep and lively, but not necessarily ascetic.

Patanjali not only had to be well aware of the history of the *rishis* but also, because of the lively exchange of goods and information along the trade routes between India and the Middle East, he probably had at least some knowledge of these other ancient groups. In addition, he had the profound influence of Buddha, who taught a Middle Path of neither ascetism nor luxury.

For all these reasons, contemporary interpretations of a mild, loving-kindness *Kriya* yoga are reasonable. This gentle but rigorous attitude on the part of Patanjali is even more likely if you pay greater attention to ancient root-word meanings in these sutras.

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## ***Sutra* 2.2**: *Samādhi*
## *bhāvana-arthaḥ kleśa tanū-karaṇa-arthah (arthaś) ca*

***Literal translation***: "*Samadhi*—bringing it: striving for *klesa* (obstacle)-thinning, weakening also"

***Meaning***: "[The three methods in Sutra 2.1] lead to *samadhi*—your clear mind—being reached: your *klesa* (troubles, distresses, and afflictions) diminish in difficulty and grow weaker in their power, as well."

***A chant in English***: "*Kriya* yoga weakens your troubles and clears your mind."

***Definition***: You can better reach the several types of *samadhi*, or the clear mind, by using Active yoga (*Kriya* yoga) as in Sutra 2.1. This is because the three elements mentioned in 2.1 ("Warming exercise and burning away what is unwanted, learning about yourself both inner and outer, and devotion to Conscious Presence") of *Kriya* (active) yoga will result in two events.

First, you will "thin" or diminish your *klesa* (troubles), as if turning them into a vapor that stretches out so finely that it can more easily be destroyed or ignored. And second, it will make these troubles weaker: less potent or powerful, less demanding, and thus again easier to break up or not let them bother you.

***Comment:*** What are these *klesa*? They are described in Sutra 1.24 as "troubles, distresses, and afflictions." They are, as the 1.24 "Comment" section says, "the varied anxieties, worries, bad habits, meannesses, self-doubt, and other negative energies that sometimes inhabit you." They are your troubling whirlpools: negative and unnecessary repetitive thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations that swirl around you.

Vyasa, Patanjali's first editor in about 400 CE, says in his comments about Sutra 2.1 that these troubles are "similar to burnt seeds" (as in Sutra 1.18) that in deep meditation you might see around you or coming toward you from elsewhere. Vyasa adds that *Kriya* yoga can help you make these troubles "unproductive...by the fire of deep meditation...." This, he implies, is part of "burning the impurities" mentioned in Sutra 2.1.*

Patanjali was a keen observer of human psychology. He may have been able to describe humans' many negative psychological problems from his own experiences, both in life and in learning during meditation to get rid of them. However, Patanjali also likely was part of a community or town in his younger days, where he may have had a regular job, perhaps even a family. All this was normal for many spiritual leaders then.

He likely was a teacher, as well; and we know from his then-rare ability to write and to reference scripture that he was a scholar who probably belonged to a scholarly group who exchanged books and talked. In addition, as someone aware of the life of the Hindu *rishis*, he may have been part of a similar spiritual community in his retirement or later years.

In all these communities, he would have had ample opportunity to observe the best and worst in people of many kinds. Because of this wide and deep knowledge of personalities, he was, as is amply evident in his sutras, a psychologist of his times. He observed emotional and personal dilemmas. And he prescribed, using the sutras.

*Flooded River below Mountain Range*

# *Sutras 2.3 - 2.9*

# *What psychological problems prevent it?*

## - The Swamp of Five Illusions -

***Sutra* 2.3**: *Avidyā-asmitā rāga dveṣa abhiniveśaḥ-kleśāḥ*

***Literal translation***:

"[1] Not seeing,

[2] me-ness,

[3] raging attachments,

[4] dividing against dislikes,

[5] drive to stay alive

—the *klesa* (afflictions)"

***Meaning***:

"[1] Ignorance in seeing (within or without),

[2] egoism or self-centeredness,

[3] lusting too much after your pleasures,

[4] avoiding too much your dislikes, and

[5] clinging to one's body life"

—these five are your *klesa* (obstacles/problems)."

***A chant in English***: "Your blindness, ego, desires, hates, and clinging to body life will keep you from Self and Presence."

***Definition***: In this sutra, Patanjali lists five major *klesa*. *Klesa* are obstacles, afflictions, or problems that keep a person from having a clear mind. After this list, he then details these five problems or behaviors in Sutras 2.4-2.9.

These five afflictions are what some translators call Patanjali's "theory" or "philosophy" of yoga. However, calling them such is somewhat misleading, at least in Western terms. "Philosophy" in Western culture usually means abstract ideas or beliefs that work for establishing a belief system or theory of living. However, in India traditionally, a "philosophy" is something you see, feel, or know directly by intuitive perception.

Thus in Hinduism, Patanjali's insights are not abstractions. Instead, they are what in the West might be called a practical psychology that is learned from immediate experience. These five *klesa* are, in fact, much like Jungian archetypes—they are behaviors—not ideas—universal to the human race. Each person afflicted with them exhibits them in slightly different ways and to differing degrees, like fences of slightly different patterns and colors, keeping us from realizing your best potential.

As a villager, teacher, neighbor, and part of a *rishi* community, Patanjali saw these problems and their traits regularly. In this regard, he was an excellent psychologist.

In addition, the core of each of these five psychological constructions appear more clearly within oneself in deep meditation. You also can see them in others through clear observation. Iyengar notes, for example, that these five problems appear to meditators in reverse order in their subtle form.*

Indeed, after meditators experience a days- or weeks-long *samadhi* or

nirvana, they find on their return to normal life, a reawakening of these major traits in a roughly reversed order. First, the "lower" or more basic ones come back—of wanting to live, avoidance of fears, and desires. Soon after is a reestablishment of an ego—though now only a provisional stand-in or greatly reoriented version—and a resumption, slowly, of a busy life full of "blinders."

Why does the ego return, and how is it different? Your brain and body simply reset themselves to their default or usual patterns—what neurologists call the "Default Mode Network" of executive functions for the ego—as a matter of habit. However, the profound days or weeks of living in pure Awareness shows all ego constructs are secondary. From that time you are changed.

Why do the blinders return? Again, the brain and body reassert their normally ingrained ways. But because you are changed, the barrier between your normal thinking and the experience of Self/Presence is much thinner, more loosely woven, and susceptible to change you might allow.

A correspondence also exists between the *klesa* and five of the seven major Hindu chakras or energy centers of the body. The correspondence is rough, with some of the centers being responsible for a greater variety of functions than are listed here. But Iyengar's "reverse order" still is, in general, evident:

**Comparing Chakras to *Klesa***

| **Seven Main Chakras (Energy Centers)** | **Five *Klesa* (Primary Troubles or Problems)** |
|---|---|
| **Crown** (just above head) | *(spirit)* |
| **Third eye** (between eyebrows) | Psychological blinders retained in normal life ("not seeing spirit") |
| **Throat** (larynx) | Assertion of ego/central small self |
| **Heart/center of chest** | *(love)* |
| **navel** (ancient) **solar plexus** (modern) | Desires, lusts |
| **Sacrum** (between navel and base of spine) | Avoidance of what you fear |
| **Root** (base of spine) | Basic attachment to life ("clinging" to it) |

Patanjali, well versed in the ancient Hindu scriptures with their mentions of chakras, would have been fully aware of these correspondences.

This reverse order also may be how psychological constructs gradually build starting at birth. A child is born with a raw Awareness that can last to some extent for years: hence Jesus of Nazareth's saying that to enter the realm of the Spirit, one must become as a child (Matthew 18.3). However, right after birth, a "normal" life also starts asserting itself. One might imagine the inner growth of a child in its early hours, a cycle then repeated in the days and years of *klesa*:

> **First**, the child naturally develops a deep clinging to body life at birth.
>
> **Second**, it begins trying to avoid what it fears: cold, pain, too much light and sound, etc.
>
> **Third**, the child discovers the pleasure of being fed and cuddled.
>
> **Fourth**, as it gathers experiences, it develops a sense of me-ness, of "I-am-these-sensory-events."
>
> **Fifth**, as time passes, it ever more deeply dives into this world of me-ness, becoming increasingly blind to spirit.

The result is, over many years—indeed, a lifetime for many—an awareness that builds itself only around what it thinks, remembers, and feels. When it does catch brief glimpses of something higher or deeper, as most people do at some point in their lives, it labels them as phenomena that are unusual—beyond ordinary—rather than a state of existence that could blossom into a new spiritual normal.

***Comment:*** Reading descriptions of negative psychological traits sometimes is unpleasant. This may be so because, as in the saying about college students taking their first Abnormal Psychology course, you tend to think you have each neurosis or psychosis as you read about it. However, the five *klesa* are, according to Patanjali, just the usual condition of being human. Everyone lives with them and operates—in both pains and joys—through them. He just wants us to do better.

In short, Sutras 2.3-2.9 hold up a mirror to humanity, describing five of the world's major psychological problems that hamper the clearing of the mind. Moreover, they keep us so busy, within the demands and energies of each, that we can't think of much else.

Buddhist adept Thich Nhat Hanh offers a helpful observation on how people live with such psychological problems.* He says,

> There is a Zen story about a man riding a horse which is galloping very

> quickly. Another man, standing alongside the road, yells at him, "Where are you going?" and the man on the horse yells back, "I don't know. Ask the horse." I think that is our situation. We are riding many horses that we cannot control.... Our lives are so busy.

The most important question is not which problems afflict you or how much; rather, it is how badly you want to be free of them or, at least, to decrease their hold on you. Once you've decided, then it is time to identify the path to take through the forest of problems and possibilities.

Patanjali (like most mystics) does not say you have to completely banish the feelings of attachment to life, fear, desire, ego forms, and being unaware of Self/Presence. Rather, it is your constant *attachment* to these—and your life being completely submerged in them—that you may change for something better.

Patanjali teaches that in meditation, preferably at least for a time each day, you can move away from these five psychological patterns and toward real peace, a sense of joy and love, and the development of inner strength or will-to-meditate. Meditation thus can become, in its early stages, a refuge from problems, a time to recoup one's energy, and an opportunity to self-heal. It is a brief vacation, a chance to step outside the door of your psychological house. Over the weeks, months, and years, its positive attributes increase.

*Kriya* yoga is Patanjali's introduction to that beginning course in abnormal psychology. Vyasa, Patanjali's first editor, says these five negative afflictions are "vibrating" and thus "give rise to the continuous flow of cause and effect," creating ever more negative karma.* Instead of living with those conditions, says Patanjali, you should take a look at yourself when you are negative and ask, "Is this really how I want to be?"

Also note that Patanjali does not condemn positive experiences in life. Such positive experiences can be so deeply imbedded in your normal life that you may think you have to get rid of them, too, to pursue the clear mind. However, this is not necessarily so. Patanjali already has stated in Sutra 1.33, "Loving kindness, no-matter-what caring, gladness, and equanimity, all them—when applied to life's ups and downs, and its virtues and vices—will calm your swirling energy forms." He is not against every single thought, feeling, and physical experience, just those that take you nowhere.

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## ***Sutra* 2.4**: *Avidyā kṣetram uttareṣām prasupta tanu vicchinna-udārāṇām*

***Literal translation***: "*Avidya* ['not seeing' in Sutra 2.3]—the fertile ground of soil for the others (in 2.3): whether dormant like a seed, thinly stretching up, partly cut off, or growing vigorously"

***Meaning***: "'Not seeing' (the first obstacle in Sutra 2.3) is the field of soil from which grow the other four obstacles in 2.3. Any of these other four obstacles may exist like weeds in one of the following ways:

(a) "from the dark soil of sleep, dormancy, or 'burnt seed-ness'"
(b) "thinly and weakly growing, stretching up,"
(c) "hoed (cut) but not yet rooted out,"
(d) "vigorously growing or opening."

***A chant in English***: "Your blindness is the dirt bears weeds: they are seeds, thin stalks, plants you have cut but not rooted out, and mature wild growth."

***Definition***: "Not seeing" is the first of the five *klesa* or problems Patanjali listed in Sutra 2.3. It means not seeing the truth of spiritual reality. Here, in Sutra 2.4, he says that it leads to the other four problems.

To explain this, he uses an agricultural metaphor. He calls the first *klesa* of "not seeing" a "fertile soil" or "field" in which the other four *klesa* grow. He then compares the others to how weeds appear in a farmer's field. Each of the other four can appear in any one of these modes:

(1) "Dormant" or "sleeping" in the fertile soil, says Vyasa, is like "having a seed" that, lying in the dark, then might be awakened.*

(2) Patanjali's "thinly stretching" weeds also come from this soil, the type of weak plants that are relatively easy to pull up so that, perhaps like a farmer, you can tug them out, root and all, or destroy them by raking their soil on a hot day so they dry in the sun.

(3) Some types of weeds have been "half cut" in pieces, likely meaning that they have been cut above ground but still have roots from which they keep growing and bothering a person.

(4) Vigorous, fully growing weeds are the blooming, whirling, negative energies that we often think about or feel. They also may be compared to

perennials that revive themselves each year, spread, and grow out of hand, becoming a nuisance or infestation. These are old habits that die hard.

***Comment:*** Here in Sutra 2.4, Patanjali develops his symbol of the karmic field of soil. Hariharananda, a twentieth-century founder of his own version of Kriya yoga centers throughout the world, speaks in a similar way of the types of growths from this soil.* He says a person's own "reservoir of *karma* is analogous to a seed; desire, greed and lust are shoots from the field; life is the plant and life's pain and pleasure are the flowers and fruits." While the specifics may differ regarding what types of growth are meant, the idea of different types of plants or weeds is the same as Patanjali's.

Some translations accurately state the first two words of this sutra, *avidya kṣetram*, as the blindness of *avidya* being a "fertile field." Unfortunately, most translations miss the additional development of this extended agricultural metaphor. Patanjali proposes a progression through four types of plants infesting the soil of a farmer's field. He moves from underground, dormant seeds to thin, spindling weeds, then to "half-cut" plants like those chopped just above the dirt but with roots still growing, and finally to fully blossoming weeds.

This sutra implies a very important set of questions: "How do you actually see your own negative thoughts and feelings that sprout, grow, and blossom within you?" Patanjali is asking you to move apart from each negative energy within you and—instead of becoming caught up in it—examine it. Learn to watch it begin and develop. Discover its source, pattern of grown, and blossoming result.

More specifically, one way of grappling with a negative energy is to ask yourself how—using Patanjali's metaphor—it acts as a weed. Is it a wildly growing bush bothering you regularly? Or is it a weed you keep cutting but which then grows back? Is it, instead, a thin plant you can pull up by its loose roots to dry out? Or it is a surprise plant: something long ago buried and forgotten—or even a new and troubling thought that comes to you from the seeds of negative energies of others around you? Being able to back away from your and others' negative energy and identify it will help you get rid of it, says Patanjali.

Even more important, though, is that these patterns of nurturing your weeds are caused by a blindness: your "not seeing." In *Kriya* yoga, you gradually learn to recognize, appreciate, and join into the chorus of the True Self/Presence—within or without—and let it help you clear your soil of weeds.

What is the "True Self/Presence"? Patanjali explains it in Chapter 1. Your "Self/Presence" from the first chapter is your connection to your inner True Self (Atman, Purusha, or the "I Am" spark of God within); or the wonderful parade and sense of Presence everywhere around you whether you call it God, Isvara (Patanjali's name), or something else. Becoming increasingly aware of "Self/Presence" gradually cures you from the *klesa* of "not seeing."

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## ***Sutra* 2.5**: *Anitya-aśuci-duḥkha-anātma-su nitya śuci sukha-ātma-khyāter-avidyā*

***Literal translation***: "Ephemeral, shadowy, bad-axle-hole troubled, and unaware of Atman/Self—[however] pretending to be eternal, glowing, rejoicing, and aware of Self = [all this is] *avidyā* (not seeing)"

***Meaning***: "If you live as noneternal, dark, with pains, and with no true *Atman* or Self/Presence—but you pretend to yourself that you are eternal, pure, joyful, or know Self/Presence—then you are living in an illusion of not seeing."

***A chant in English***: "Pretending to yourself to be happy when you live in darkness and pain creates the illusion of a good life.

***Definition***: This is another explanation of the first *klesa* or problem from Sutra 2.3, "not seeing." In the previous sutra, Patanjali told us that this problem is the fertile soil for weedy growth of the other four major problems. Now here in Sutra 2.5, he further describes "not seeing." He tells us that it refers specifically to people who say they are living a happy, meaningful life when really they are filled with negativity.

***Comment:*** Who are these people who apparently are faking it—to others, themselves, or both? The Christian New Testament's Book of Revelation has one example: "You say, 'I am rich and have grown rich, and want for nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked!"* The scriptural passage refers to people who think having all the material goods they want is the most important sign of happiness, no matter how unhappy they may be from day to day or even hour to hour.

Another example of someone faking it, in this case to himself, is the famous

early-Christian theologian Saint Augustine of Hippo.* He started his life as a well-to-do young man who ate, drank, and made merry on many occasions. When he began to understand how to meditate—to find Presence—he infamously prayed to God, "Lord, grant me chastity and continence, but not yet." His example demonstrates that people who pursue a life of constant pleasure think they're happy, even while each morning their recovery time increases from the previous night's excesses, and they grow steadily more bored with their pleasures or more trapped within them.

Yet another famous example is a world leader in the 1900s who started his career by passing out picture postcards of himself. Next, he wrote a semifictional autobiography inventing wonderful things about himself. In order to avoid sounding egotistical, he talked another writer into taking credit for authoring and publishing it as a biography. This self-aggrandizing young man worked his way up in politics to become the most powerful person in Europe for a time. However, his personal life was filled with increasing physical pains, diseases, drug dependencies, and fits of anger, paranoia, and melancholy. His name was Adolf Hitler. Many people adore power, seeing it as the ultimate success and happiness in life. However, without knowing True Self or Presence, they grow increasingly empty, unhappy, and even mentally and physically ill.

However, before you start comparing yourself to people like these, remember that Patanjali appears to have been an astute observer of psychological problems in himself, too, as well as in those around him. He understood that if people didn't have problems, they wouldn't need to clear their minds. In other words, all us are human, imperfect, and troubled at times.

Regarding this, Anthony the Great, one of the early Egyptian Christians who withdrew to live in the African desert west of Alexandria, said, "Whoever has not experienced temptation cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."* He added, "Without temptation, no-one can be saved." In other words, you—and every other person alive—has negative energies. The key is to accept that this condition exists, identify the whirling negativities, and then let the light of Self/Presence dissipate them.

It may help to remember, too, that Patanjali believed you can indeed feel "the eternal [and be] glowing, rejoicing, Aware of Self." You gain these qualities increasingly, he says, the more you see Self/Presence.

Certainly, there are times in life when you become closer, within or without, to Self/Presence. Those are the times when you experience great peace and quiet, joy and love, or deep inner strength. Lowenstein, a physician, says that as you pursue meditation or expanded awareness of Presence, "A feeling of deep

pervasive relaxation and embodied joy spills into the whole body and mind...that were previously experienced in fleeting moments but can now be utilized as easily as spoken language."* Such experiences of Self/Presence, he says, as they become more common in your life, "allow for extended periods of time...in the orgasmic moment of bliss...." Lowenstein declares that through such practices, "humans are hard-wired for joy."

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## ***Sutra* 2.6**: *Dṛk (dṛg) darśan śaktyoḥ (śaktyor) eka-ātmata-iva-asmitā*

***Literal translation***: "Perceiver and the instrument of perceiving, twinned but enmeshed as a single self in appearance, a me-ness"

***Meaning***: "The Seer or True Self, and the experience of seeing/ sensing, are separate; but if you enmesh them as one, together they appear as a false self or ego that feels like a real 'me.'"

***A chant in English***: "Your thoughts and constructions are not your real You."

***Definition***: This is the second *klesa* or problem Patanjali lists in Sutra 2.3: "me-ness" or egoism. Patanjali defines your real "You" as an eternal, infinite, pure, crystal-clear Awareness. If you say you are, instead, this or that type of person, thinker, actor in life's dramas, whether controlled or uncontrollable, then you are living an illusion because these are only your outer self. You, the Awareness within this psychological self, is the real Self.

***Comment:*** In his discussion of this second major problem, Patanjali is talking about having too much ego. Another way of saying it is that each person has a psychological self or selves, and if you identify with them too closely, they get in the way of seeing Self/Presence.

On the one hand, it is normal to see a central, controlling psychological pattern—a constructed self or ego—in others and in your own self. Even the great founders of major religions such as Buddha, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, Jesus, Mohammed, and others appear to many people to have a psychological self of some kind, complete with thoughts, interests, dislikes, and a rooted way of living. To some extent, we humanize them—make them more like us so that we

can better understand them.

However, what we think we see in another person's central personality does not fully describe their own inner life as they experience it.

In the same way, your own psychological self, your "me," does not need to limit what you are. Each person alive has a collection of tendencies, thoughts, dreams, feelings, and actions. But these are not your True Self. Your real Self is your eternal, pure Awareness, your "I-Am" with nothing else attached, rather than just a "me-ness" that is a construction. You live in this house called a psychological self, but you are not the house. The house surrounds you, but it is not you.

Patanjali's purpose in this sutra is to help you step away from your normal egoisms—your limited small self or selves—and start you on the path to realizing these egoisms are constructions. He is not saying you must give them all up and flee to the desert. Rather, he is saying, "Look for Self/Presence. Then see what happens." You'll gradually develop a new, truer center. Many parts of your psychological self may remain the same; others may fall away. But you'll be more really You.

Note: English versions of the *Sutras* sometimes translate this *asmita* or false self as an "I"-ness or "I am"-ness. Here, though, it is called a "me-ness" and egoism, instead. This is done to avoid confusion when the Hindu tradition of *Atman* (the individual's True Self or spark of God) sometimes is called the "I"; in addition, the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions of the name for God "YHWH" or "Yahweh" often is translated as "I Am That I Am." In those meanings, the "I" is Self/Presence. *Asmita* means the lower, smaller, "me" self.

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## ***Sutra* 2.7**: *Sukha-anuśayī rāgaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Pleasuring lying under longing"

***Meaning***: "Pleasure is the substratum for desires that create attachments."

***A chant in English***: "Pleasure may come and go, but longing for it is a distraction."

***Definition***: Here in Sutra 2.7, Patanjali discusses the third *klesa* or problem from his list in Sutra 2.3: longing or attachment to pleasure. Note that he says the

problem is *longing* or *attachment—not* pleasure itself. In Chapter 1, he listed many pleasures from ethereal to physical that are acceptable. The key is not to become attached to them. Excessive longing means you are attached. This attachment can become a whirlpool of distractions. This is especially so if you develop an entire part of your self—such as an angry self or a pleasure-oriented one—in which you gather a series of thoughts, desires, and even plans. This kind of small self may keep you from seeing Self/Presence.

***Comment:*** In reading Sutra 2.7, it may be helpful to think of Sutras 2.7 and 2.8 as a *sukha-duhkha* pair. *Sukha*, here in 2.7, is pleasure, rejoicing, and feeling happy. In contrast, *duhkha* in 2.8 is "bad axle hole" experiences of unease and difficulties. The pair also appeared in Sutra 2.5 as opposites, and elsewhere in the *Yoga Sutras*.

Also noteworthy is the final word in this sutra. *Raga* means "longing" or "attachment." However, it also means "color" or "passion." Patanjali's choice of words emphasizes that longing and attachment are a coloring of your mind, like the ink a squid squirts into the water around it to hide itself. *Raga* can fill you with passionate desire for what you want to retain or regain—a heavy, thick ink of wanting that may be hard to dissipate. Occasionally such desire is a longing for Self/Presence itself, which can be good if you then pursue it. However, much of the time, the whirling of such craving, hunger, or thirst is a strong distraction that leads you ever deeper into the complex spider's web of desire.

A famous saying in the Christian New Testament speaks of passion. Paul of Tarsus, also known as St. Paul, author of many of the scripture's Letters, talks about one form of such pining or burning: sexual desire. After telling his readers that they are better off abstaining from sex, he then says, "But if they cannot control themselves, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to be consumed with passion."* Paul, a mystic, understood that some attachments to pleasures can be so strong that compromise may be needed to bridle them.

A similar point of view can be said of the biological requirement that we eat. Patanjali, who appears to teach moderation (like Buddha before him, who taught the "Middle Path"), might say that experiencing pleasure in foods that taste good to the palate is acceptable, not to mention the good feeling that comes to your body after eating what it needs. However, you should not become attached to these foods. On the one hand, it is good when your body prompts you to desire the right foods at the right time: that is a natural action on the part of the body.

On the other hand, lusting after certain foods can become a problem, especially as the desires increase in frequency each day. The list can become endless: sugar on sweetened cereals, snack chips that are mostly oiled and salted

starch, cookies, candies, sugared and over-caffeinated drinks, and extra-large portions of liquor and meat. As with other pleasures, compromise and control often are the key so that you can continue to "see Spirit" instead of a constant parade of out-of-control cravings.

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## ***Sutra* 2.8**: *Duḥkha-anuśayī dveṣaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "'Bad-axle-hole' troubles [*duhkha*] leading to dislikes"

***Meaning***: "Earthly discomforts result in negative-energy aversions"

***A chant in English***: "Dislike is natural, but don't get hung up on it."

***Definition***: In this sutra Patanjali defines the fourth *klesa* or problem from his list in Sutra 2.3. This time, the problem is the latter half of the *sukha-duhkha* pair: bad-axle-hole pains in life. Such troubles can too easily lead, says Patanjali, to avoidance behaviors. This means that a person builds a construction around/within one's small self in which you make an automatic list of what to avoid so that you feel no discomfort in life.

Thus, for example, whenever a muscle starts hurting, you stop exercising. Or, perhaps, every time you feel tired at breakfast, you decide to skip work. Does someone occasionally make you angry, such that you decide to completely avoid them? Do you dislike talking with a neighbor because they look ugly, haggard, or unkempt?

Are you uncomfortable around people who are very different from you? Do you then ascribe this to unrelated issues such as their skin color, or imagined problems such as their lack of intelligence? When you can't understand someone's words, do you then make fun of them or dismiss their importance?

If so, you are building permanent habits based on occasional, small or confusing negative perceptions and feelings. You are creating a *duhkha*-avoidance self.

***Comment:*** Patanjali is not talking about clear, rational decisions to stay out of significant trouble. Such reasoned thinking can help you stay safe, sane, and better able to clear your mind. Rather, he is describing how a person might use discomforts, pains, accidents, and fears—small or big—to build permanent

dislike-and-avoidance pattern.

Some fears and resulting avoidance schemes are justified, from simple ones such as not jaywalking on a freeway to important choices such as staying away from a harmful, toxic person.

But many such patterns, if you rigidly adhere to them, keep you from growing, being happier, and helping others more. How do you decide? You can "see the truth" by viewing it through—by going to—Self/Presence. Through that lens, you then can choose.

Worth remembering, too, is that in Chapter 1, Patanjali wrote about normal and even spiritual pleasures. There he offers positive methods for learning to view life through Self/Presence. In Sutra 1.15, for example, he says, "What you've seen and heard are attractive objects; but you—without thirst for them, and ruling over them—can, in your pure, clear knowing, remain separate from them." And in 1.17 he states, "Analytical thinking, creative movement, bliss, and an awareness of one's own Self—all four can take you to a crystal-clear mind or level of pure Awareness (samadhi with seed)." These four traits and others like them can help guide you in breaking up a negative, reactive psychological trait.

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## ***Sutra* 2.9**: *Sva-rasa-vāhi viduṣah (viduṣo)-api thathā rūḍhah (rūḍho)-abhiniveśaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "One's bone marrow [life] and sap flow through sages even, also growing downward as roots, dwelling deep (in the soil), intent on living"

***Meaning***: "Within a person, the marrow of the life force can dominate even the wisest, who find themselves rooted deeply in the ground of self with the intent to stay alive."

***A chant in English***: "Like a plant grown deep in its soil, each of us is rooted to staying alive."

***Definition***: This is the fifth and final cause from the list in Sutra 2.3 of major psychological tendencies leading to "not seeing." It states, simply, that a too-strong love of life or of the life force—or a too great fear of death—can be a major

distraction from seeing Presence. Some people are so in love with the act of living that they want to experience everything; others are so afraid of death, especially nearer the end of life, that they do anything to avoid it.

Patanjali's point of view—that you should not be trapped by attachment to the life force—is so hard to achieve at times that even otherwise very wise people are trapped in it. The life force is a biological imperative in a majority of species: stay alive at all costs. However, death also, at the right times and in the right places, should be accepted, especially when it is inevitable.

***Comment:*** Was Patanjali simply saying in this sutra, "Don't get stuck on the relishing taste of body life"? If so, he was expressing it as an extreme. In other words, he was not issuing a call to become a ascetic who lives in the desert or a bricked-up cell to forsake all pleasure in life. Loving life and enjoying it is, when not pursued too absolutely, a normal part of being human.

Patanjali told us in Chapter 1 about some of the normal joys of such living. In 1.21, he encourages us: "With your strong cheerfulness, you will quickly have success." In 1.33, he remarks, "Loving kindness, no-matter-what caring, gladness, and equanimity, all them—when applied to life's ups and downs, and its virtues and vices—will calm your swirling energy forms." He offers even more suggestions in 1.34-1.39.

Other religions state the same. Buddha made a very important point of it: those who seek through his Eight-fold Path of liberation should follow a "middle" way between extremes of ascetic denial and excessive pleasure. Several Greek philosopher-mystics recommended a life of reasonable self-discipline. The best-known, Plato, recommends moderation and temperance in his *Republic*: he imagines what a perfect society would be like, and he says that its leaders, known as "philosophers," "will have the quality of gentleness. And...if educated rightly, will be gentle and moderate.... And [they] ought to have both these qualities...in harmony...[a]nd the harmonious soul is both temperate and courageous...."*

The Jewish Bible's Book of Isaiah offers several traits of the spirit such as "wisdom," "understanding," "heroism," and "knowledge."* And the Christian New Testament's Letter to the Galatians describes "fruit produced by the spirit": "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindliness, generosity, trustfulness, gentleness, self-control." So do many other sources: for example, the famous "Peace Prayer" by the mystic St. Francis of Assisi. These fruits should not be mistaken for mere external acts; rather, they also are internal feelings—what one might call experiences of the spirit-in-the-body.*

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*A Climb*

# *Sutras 2.10 - 2.16*

# *How Can You Handle These Patterns?*

## - Dissolving Your Troubles -

***Sutra* 2.10**: *Te pratiprasava-heyāḥ sūkṣmāḥ*

***Literal translation***: "For these each, reverse-birthing ["dis-integrating"] it, in its subtle, psychic beginning"

***Meaning***: "For each of the five psychological problems [in Sutras 2.3-2.9], focus on its psychic source to banish it."

***A chant in English***: "Where your stresses start as vibrations, focus on them to melt them."

***Definition***: The previous section, Sutras 2.3-2.9, was an initial road guide to—an overview of—the *klesa*: five psychological problems formed in creating the false self or selves. For a more immediate cure, Patanjali expects you to read other sections—especially Chapter 1—to determine what your own best practice of success might be in "seeing spirit."

In this new section, 2.10-2.16, he offers additional advice in what may appear, as you meditate using "spirit," as you observe and deal with your *klesa*. He assumes that as you focus on your own method from Chapter 1, you will be able to profit from additional techniques in (a) understanding what you observe upon viewing your *klesa* and (b) working with it. In this regard, he is like a carpenter showing you how to replace a ramshackle porch on an old house: remove the roof before the outer pillars, leave the inner wall alone, and then take off the floor to reveal the rotting timbers underneath. In the house of the *klesa*, he offers advice in dismantling the addictive psychological patterns of the false self or selves.

In the first sutra of this section, 2.10, he explains one way to get rid of these five psychological afflictions. He tells you it may be necessary to find the mental or emotional expression of them within yourself, and then go to its source, psychic or subtle, to get rid of it there. He calls this process "reverse birthing," by which he means psychologically "dis-integrating" or "de-constructing" them at their source: taking them apart, down to their basic vibrational elements, and dissolving them where they lie.

Vyasa repeats in his commentary on this sutra that what you must get rid of, psychically, is "similar to burnt seeds...in the mind, [which are] dissolved."* This is what some translators call an "involution" or a returning to the original source of the affliction, then getting rid of it at that point by dissolving, banning, or burning it.

What does this mean, exactly? Patanjali talked in Sutra 1.18 of "burnt seeds" appearing to your Awareness in meditation. They look like small, blackened seeds, husks, or dust balls. Each one is a kernel as described in Sutra 2.4 that can shoot up like a weed in the "soil" of your "field" of false self.

Once a negative seed enters uncontrolled into your field of awareness, it

blossoms into a trouble. It is a *klesa* or negative energy form. If you continue to live with it, support it, and feed it with additional thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations, then it will grow into a complex negative psychological trait.

When you are clear of *klesa*—and we all have times when this occurs—then at such moments, then in that instant, such "seeds" are the start of all the *klesa* or negative psychological traits discussed in Sutras 2.3-2.9. Indeed, every wayward, useless thought, memory, feeling, or emotion in which we find ourselves enmeshed starts as a seed of this sort, says Patanjali.

***Comment:*** Here is an example of a "burnt seed": Let's say that you have a small husk, a little piece, of a bad memory floating on the periphery of your consciousness. Perhaps it is a memory of someone who hurt you in some way, and that memory is a mixture of an image (or sound) and a negative physical feeling. Together, they make you relive the emotion of hurt, fear, or resulting anger.

Maybe, as you go about your daily life, you even can vaguely sense that kernel of negativity hanging there, but sometimes you just ignore it. Then one day it comes into you fully once again, as it has in the past, blossoming in your mind and senses. Maybe you thought it was gone, but now, before you know it, you are trapped like a butterfly in a net. Even though you know the thought is distracting, unpleasant, and upsetting, you add additional negative thoughts and feelings, making it grow longer or bigger. As a result, the next time you think of it, it traps you even more. If you act on it, you become further enmeshed, threatening to disable some part of your life, small or big. Such is the pattern of *karma*—you are creating your own karmic debt.

What happened to the burnt seed? It is what started the whole train of thought. However, in meditation, you can stop it at its point of creation. When it is in seed form, on the periphery of your awareness, don't invite it in.

Throw it out or destroy it. But how?

Several ways exist. One is to "burn" it with pure meditation through seeing Self/Presence: you find your truest pure Awareness, inner or outer, and offer the seed to it (or vice versa). That works for some meditators. A second is to ignore it by showing no interest whatsoever in it; then it goes away. A third is to forcibly (with your mind power) throw it away from you or out of you: as you see it hovering near you, you imagine it hurtling far away, or even picture a human or animal consuming it and flying off.

A fourth way is to deflect it for a while—a common but temporary method—through what Patanjali has called "hot exercise." A fifth way, similar to the first,

is to offer it up to a person or being of great spirituality. And a sixth, a more advanced method in meditation, is to dissolve it, an approach Patanjali explains in the last several sutras of his book.

Some translations of the *Yoga Sutras* call this rejection of the seed an "involution." It is the opposite of evolution, which is defined as something developing. Instead, involution is a process of awareness that stops a thought before it fully enters your conscious self and takes control. Another way of describing this blocking maneuver is "disintegration" or "deconstruction": you are "dis-integrating" or "de-constructing" it: taking away its ability to integrate or construct in your mind and feelings.

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## ***Sutra* 2.11**: *Dhyāna-heyāḥ (heyās)-tad-vr̥ttayaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Meditation to let them go, those, swirling whirlpools"

***Meaning***: "Turn to meditation to release yourself from them if they've invaded your mind and body."

***A chant in English***: "When your distress comes into you, use meditation to break it."

***Definition***: Sutra 2.10 explained what to do if these *klesa*—these psychological constructs—hover just at the edge of your awareness in subtle form. Now, here in Sutra 2.11, Patanjali explains what to do if they have become physical *vrtti* ("*vr̥ttayaḥ*")—swirling whirlpools—that have entered your awareness—your mind and body. They grip you with whirling thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations, including physical discomforts. Patanjali states here that you need regular meditation to help deal with these negative energies.

Vyasa uses a good analogy for first getting rid of these swirling whirlpools in meditation, and next destroying their seed-forms hovering outside of you. He says, "And as gross dirt is first shaken off of clothes,...afterwards, the subtle (dirt) is removed...."*

***Comment:*** When your *klesa* or problems reach the point of taking over your thinking, memory, emotions, and/or body, they no longer are the burnt seeds or husks hovering just beyond your true Self. Instead, they have come into you like

growing weeds, becoming the *vrtti* or swirling whirlpools Patanjali described in detail in Sutras 1.4-1.11. When this has happened, he says, you may rid yourself of them by practicing meditation. And he continues to discuss this in Sutras 2.12-2.16 and, indeed, the rest of Chapter 2-A.

Breathing and posture meditations can help unkink your body and emotions and steady your inner energy. The practices of right thinking, acting, eating, drinking, breathing, and exercise all can help, too: they are discussed as *Astanga* yoga in Chapter 2-B.

Developing daily mindfulness in everything you do, especially in your breathing and bodily movements, can be very useful, too. Meditating within yourself—or outwardly on nature, beauty, or a spiritual person—can help you find a greater measure of quiet, of calm awareness, and of comfort. As you attain these in meditation, you can begin to work more fruitfully on dealing with your *klesa* in their whirling mental, emotional, and body forms.

Modern psychology explains an additional important technique for getting rid of these pieces of pain that have developed repetitively in your life. Instead of letting them take over, you watch them: choose one; then stand back within yourself and see and hear it unreel without becoming involved in it; break it into its component parts, separately identifying the thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations. As you learn to observe it neutrally and dismantle its parts, gradually you can deteriorate its strength and frequency until it is a minor annoyance or starts going away. See Sutras 1.11 and 1.20 for more about this.

Other standard forms of psychological therapy also can be helpful. You might practice self-therapy by writing about your problems, or you can talk about them out loud to yourself, to a tape recorder, or to a person who wants to listen to you. Or you may seek a therapist.

Making use of a trained, licensed therapist is, essentially, similar to the process of talking out your problems, except this time you are using the assistance of a trained guide. A good therapist can assist you to find—and keep returning to the core of—your problem, pain, or discomfort. You discuss your thoughts and feelings until you find what starts them in you. And gradually, you learn to stop them before they can really dig into you and start their whirling.

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## ***Sutra* 2.12**: *Kleśa mūlaḥ*
## *karma-aśayaḥ (aśayo) dr̥ṣṭa-adr̥ṣṭa janma vedanīyaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "The problems' roots shooting up—they from your actions-womb—already seen and in future birthings yet to experience"

***Meaning***: "The negative psychological problems [*klesa* in Sutra 2.3-9] grow from the subtle seeds and roots in your karmic actions-and-reactions womb. Some you have seen; others lie in future birthings."

***A chant in English***: "Your negative actions grow and repeat until you weed them."

***Definition***: This sutra is about karma: how your actions and reactions create further actions and reactions that keep coming back to you. For example, if you develop a negative thinking habit, it will persist with you if you don't work to dissolve it. Or, for example, what if you purposely hurt someone's feelings? That negative energy is in and around you, such that you unconsciously broadcast it to others, and someone eventually will hurt you. You reap what you sow, both negative and positive. Your actions and reactions are reflected back at you by the mirror of other people who "catch" what you've done and throw it back.

What does the term "birthings" mean? It is possible for you to interpret it as your actions and reactions in this life, before you die: the sooner you heal yourself of them, the happier you will be in this life. Another interpretation occurs if you believe, as some people do, in an individual afterlife. Then the message is that you must heal yourself of your negative karma in order to go to a good place after you die.

However, scholars and interpreters of Patanjali agree that he believed in reincarnation. A majority (though not all) of Hindus and Buddhists in his time held this belief, and the ancient Hindu scriptures often spoke of it.

Here, Patanjali is recommending that you not become overly enraptured with life if you want to break free of the unending cycles of rebirth. It is not wrong to experience life, he says, even enjoy it: Hindu scriptures recognize that living a full life can lead later, eventually, to greater interest in finding Self/Presence. However, he says, if you change your center of focus to Self/Presence, then you can gradually become free of additional required trips reincarnating back on earth. In addition, as he points out near the end of the sutras, you still can find great pleasures in this life when you focus fully on Self/Presence. In a way, he is saying that in the long run, you can have your cake and eat it, too.

Regarding reincarnation, Patanjali does warn or explain, here, that from lifetime to lifetime, you are carrying around your "karmic actions-and-reactions womb," and your troubles "grow from the roots" that are planted in it. These roots were there in past lives, he says, and will continue to grow, always repetitively but in somewhat new circumstances and slightly different paths, in your future lives.

***Comment:*** In Hinduism and other Eastern religions, reincarnation means that you are born into one lifetime after another. In each lifetime, you have a tendency, because of your attachments to life, to build karmic debts. However, each time you come back, you also have opportunities to release yourself from old karmic debts. It is as if you have built chains of delicate gossamer spider webs so thin you don't notice them. But they are strong; they entrap you nevertheless, and impel you to act, feel, and think in patterned ways.

You might choose one lifetime to work on one set of problems and another lifetime to manage a different set. Gradually, you lift the webs away as you clear your troubles, ideally growing increasingly freer in each life.

Who in history believes in reincarnation? Ancient and modern Eastern religions bear majorities of followers who took it quite seriously. These religions encompass major groups in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh religions. These believers generally agree on several principles regarding reincarnation: each soul is eternal, it is an individual, and that person lives dozens of bodily lives over thousands of years.

Reincarnation also implies that friends, family, small groups, and even large movements of similar cultural and social classes often travel together through the ages into new times, some in one lifetime, others in different ones. If you were in Rome or Calcutta two thousand years ago, some of you—not necessarily all—may have returned as a larger group now. In addition, relationships can change: while people might be, for example, married in several lifetimes, in another one might become the parent and in yet a different lifetime the child or a close friend.

Eastern theologians and philosophers have argued for thousands of years about other aspects of reincarnation. For example, some have said that people may reincarnate very soon after dying, while others say many hundreds of years usually pass between two lives; however, most agree that a typical passage of time before assuming a new body is somewhere between as little as twenty and as much as three hundred years, rarely less or more. Another argument concerns

whether it is possible to have been an animal in earlier lives (or even become one in the future!). Still another debate focuses on whether people retain the same gender, caste, or station in life, or even race through all their lifetimes, or can switch.

Reincarnation in Western philosophy and religion sometimes is called "transmigration." The ancient Greeks called it *metempsychosis*. Often, now, the West simply calls it "rebirth." It has been a belief, past and present, in some branches of Paganism, among modern New Age followers, and also among some Native First People, Jewish groups, and in ancient Celtic, Gnostic, and other religions.

Evidence suggests that important Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato may have believed in it. One of the most prominent modern American schools of reincarnation is those who study the life of Edgar Cayce, a twentieth-century seer of unusual prognostic ability, especially in the book about him *Many Mansions* by psychiatrist Gina Cerminara.*

You can interpret this sutra as being about rebirth. Or you can understand it to apply to this life here and now—no belief in rebirth. Either way, the sutra simply states the age-old truth that what you do will come back to you, usually: both good and bad. However, if you clear your negative energies, you will have an increasingly happier, more productive, and increasingly aware life now.

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## ***Sutra* 2.13**:

## *Sati mūle tad-vipākaḥ (vipāko)-jāti-āyuḥ (āyur)-bhogāḥ*

***Literal translation***: "This state of sound-presence [that is, your karmic "actions-and-reactions womb" in 2.12]: its root, from it, cooking and ripening into new life stations, lifetime goings-on, and enjoyments"

***Meaning***: "From this basic repository of all your actions, its roots ripen into your life statuses, the length of your activities, and the enjoyments that keep you returning to them."

***A chant in English***: "Your karma brings you your positions in life, its length, and pleasures that keep you returning."

***Definition***: Here, Patanjali features reincarnation. He says you have a repository—your own "storage bag," if you will—of karma from lifetime to lifetime.

Traditional Hindu reincarnation theory says that "karma" means "actions and reactions." In reincarnation theory, you carry these tendencies of action and reaction like travelers carry a bag of necessities strapped to their back. Your luggage items join you in each lifetime. Sometimes you make them smaller or even throw them out, sometimes you add more to your suitcase of goods, and usually for each "trip" (a lifetime), you only take some of your items out of your case. Your karmic travel clothes and accessories also determine the status or societal class(es) that you tend to join, the length of each life, and the travel destinations you choose.

Vyasa proposes another way of imagining karma. The admixture of all these karmic strands, he says, "is like a fish net decorated with knots stretching in every direction" that "have (accumulated from) several previous births."* In any one lifetime, some parts of this fish net are closer to you, tugging at you incessantly, while others may be so distant as to seem unnoticeable.

Your travel luggage also means that in each life, you enjoy certain pleasures and rewards: not all karma necessarily is bad. After your current trip, your old baggage and your current life's pleasures and pains will then lead you to be reborn someday in many decades or even centuries with similar trip plans, strengths, and needs.

However, according to the tradition of Hindu reincarnation theory, you can use meditation and good deeds to escape one or more rounds of rebirths. Some theories say you won't need to return to human rebirth once you've dissolved your karma. Other belief systems in India argue that you may choose to return, even if you don't have to, so that you can help others.

***Comment:*** Some estimates suggest that perhaps a fourth to a third of Westerners believe in some form of reincarnation. (*See "Endnote 2.12.") If you are among those who don't believe in it or if you mostly discount it, you still may apply the concept to just your current lifetime. In a single life, what Patanjali calls your "karmic womb"—and Vyasa your "fish net"—is similar to modern theories of psychology.

Two notable concepts are Sigmund Freud's "unconscious" and Carl Jung's "collective unconscious." (Teilhard de Chardin's "noosphere" is a third one: see Sutra 1.23.)

From the unconscious, say Jung and Freud's theories, a person receives

thoughts, memories, emotions, and feelings into conscious awareness. In Freud's theory, they come often from unremembered childhood experiences; in Jung's, from childhood memories and especially the common deep roots of humanity, often instinctual. Everyone, for example, fears great pain.

They pop into your conscious mind, often unbidden and troublesome. Then you react to them. And you must decide whether to let them affect them in this way, or to lessen or dissolve their influence. Dealing with them may include facing them down through therapy or using meditation, exercise, good deeds, and other methods to lessen and even erase them. The goal is to clear your negative tendencies and problems sufficiently to gain greater inner freedom and happiness.

Whether you believe in Western psychology, reincarnation, or a mix of both, the journey is similar. You start with a set of psychological selves that are mixed positives and negatives. These selves and *klesa* or troubles are deeply intertwined, a complex fishnet or web network.

One path is to use meditation within you, or pursuit of God outside of you, to heal, grow and become better. This is the path of finding True Self/Presence.

Or you can use psychological therapy, with others or on yourself. That, too, can help you separate the webbed strands of your psychological selves. You can examine each lattice or knot for what it is individually, and release yourself from its hold.

Which is faster, meditation or therapy? Which do you prefer? Use what works. As Patanjali, Freud, and Jung all might say, do whatever best clears your mind and body to live a more positive life.

Many mystics and psychologists add that doing good deeds can be a significant method that gradually burns or grinds away old negativities through a mix of love, understanding, and habit. The goal for all methods is freedom: awareness, steadiness, and strength; stillness, rest, and peace; and love and joy.

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## ***Sutra* 2.14**:

## *Te hlāda paritāpa phalāḥ puṇya-apuṇya hetutvāt*

***Literal translation***: "They [in Sutra 2.13], joyful or much too hot as fruits ripened from [them], good or bad stirrings"

***Meaning***: "They [from Sutra 2.13: "life statuses, the length of your activities, and the enjoyments that keep you returning to them"] offer joyful fruits or burn you, according to whether your deeds, good or bad, have stirred you up."

***A chant in English***: "Your past bears fruits of delight or pain from the good or bad you have done."

***Definition***: The basic message in this sutra is simple. Karma means, simply, that the good that you do will lead to "joyful fruits" and the bad to "overheating" or "burning." This is true whether you believe that you pay for the results of your actions in just this lifetime or over many lives.

More deeply, Patanjali once again uses vivid physical descriptions. He is not saying just that good deeds lead to pleasant living and bad to discomfort. Rather, he stresses that the results of your actions lead to "joyful fruits," surely events of great physical or emotional pleasure, or to "overheating" or "burning," which sound, physically and emotionally, very painful.

***Comment:*** Patanjali also describes how your previous acts "incite" these results. An "incitement" means, here, "a stirring up" of the positive and negative swirlings or whirlpools surrounding you, just as if you are stirring a soup or a whipping your arms about to conduct your daily symphony. Patanjali means that you are arousing, whipping up, and your positive and negative psychological traits, along with their accompanying thoughts, memories, emotions, and sensations. Such is your personal fishnet or web that is your psychological profile and life.

Science can measure many physical reactions that correlate with internal sensations, feelings, emotions, and strong thoughts. Measurements now exist for heart rate, brainwaves, pupil dilation, skin conductivity, internal and external temperatures of different parts of the body at any given time, body language, facial expression, et al. If scientists were to record all such measurements in a person, along with their self-reporting of internal feelings—and do so with thousands of subjects—then maps of people's "stirrings" could be created. However, at present, such predictions of patterns are the province of psychology—and of meditation.

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## *Sutra* 2.15:

*Pariṇāma tāpa saṁskāra duḥkhaiḥ (duḥkhair) guṇa vr̥tti virodhāt (virodhāc) ca duḥkham eva sarvaṁ vivekinaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Life's hard bends, negative heatedness, and echoing vibrations with bad-axle-hole troubles from them; from forces of nature, whirlpools, stoppages, and resulting oppositions; axle-hole grating indeed, all to the discerner"

***Meaning***: "Life's troubling changes, hot messes, and constantly vibrating impressions causing difficulties—they and the forces of nature, mental swirlings, ruptures in flow, and the oppositions in life they create—are troubling, indeed, all them, to a person of discernment."

***A chant in English***: "Life is so uneven and harsh, whether in joys or pains, if you want to stand more in peaceful clarity."

***Definition***: Older translations—pre-21st century—usually give this sutra a very ascetic, religious translation. They suggest that ultimate happiness requires giving up a normal human life to become a hermit withdrawn from the world.

However, Patanjali's words, if you follow them to their ancient root meanings—simple and physical—appear more likely to state that if you feel entangled in the thorn bush of existence, that's not the real you: you can get out by seeking your True Self/Presence. And when you begin extricating yourself, suggests Patanjali—in other positive and hopeful sutras—then you can live a life of awareness, peace, and joy here on earth.

***Comment:*** One interesting note about this sutra is that Vyasa uses it as an opportunity to explain *dukkha*—bad axle-hole problems—in much the same way as did Buddha. Vyasa does not mention Buddha specifically; however, he argues strongly that the "science" of this sutra has just "four parts," and they sound very similar to Buddha's Four Noble Truths:*

**Hindu *Dukkha* & Buddhist Four Noble Truths**

| **"Science" of *Dukkha* (Vyasa)** | **Four Noble Truths (Buddha)** |
|---|---|
| 1. Life is "relative" because of *dukkha* (bad axle-holes). | 1. *Dukkha* (suffering from bad axle-holes) exists. |
| 2. *Dukkha* has a cause. | 2. *Dukkha* has a cause. |
| 3. "Liberation" is possible. | 3. Suffering can be stopped. |
| 4. The "means of liberation" is yoga leading to *samadhi*. | 4. The way is the Eightfold Path leading to nirvana. |

Vyasa does not tell us whether he takes his four "scientific" points directly from Buddhism (Buddha taught them eight centuries before Vyasa) or from even earlier Hindu sources that predate both Buddha and Patanjali. In any case, this sutra was Vyasa's opportunity to offer his version of the Four Noble Truths.

Another useful point in this sutra is the Sanskrit word *tapa*. It means "heatedness," "over-heatedness," or, in contemporary casual slang, what sometimes is called a "hot mess." It also can be translated as "distress," "afflictions," or "torment." Taken together, they sound like the Western concept of hell. But what, precisely, is "hell"? The West has well detailed it for thousands of years, from the definitions of *Ge Hinnom* in the Jewish scriptures and *Gehenna* in the Christian New Testament, and other cultures' underworld,* to Dante's classic defining of it in his 1300s CE book *Inferno*. It gradually has become, in Western culture, a richly defined supernatural location where bad people go after they die.

However, many mystics Western and Eastern describe hell differently. Hell is not a specific location or a punishment reserved for the afterlife. Rather, it is always a possible current condition for a soul —for a Self that has not found itself and is living in intellectual, emotional, or physical pain that it can neither escape nor diminish. Satchidananda says in his comment on this sutra, "The same world can be a heaven or a hell."*

In this regard, as in Dante's many circles of hell, each increasingly worse, humans can live in torture just as easily, unfortunately, as in peace. The choice, say Patanjali and other mystics, is up to you.

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## ***Sutra* 2.16**: *Heyaṁ duḥkham anāgatam*

***Literal translation***: "Leaving behind bad-axle-hole troubles not yet going on"

***Meaning***: "You can abandon wearying problems before the unknown happens."

***A chant in English***: "Clear your troubles before they come."

***Definition***: The concept here is simple. On the one hand, you can employ all sorts of mental, emotional, or physical devices to cover up or distract yourself from old, recurring psychological tapes: e.g., every time you start thinking of an unpleasant memory, you eat snacks and watch television; or, perhaps, each time a negative emotion develops inside you, you take it out on someone else. On the other hand, you can use the methods Patanjali lays before you to not have such negative difficulties continually returning or, at the least, to fairly easily dissolve them when they occur.

***Comment:*** This sutra completes Patanjali's section 2.10-2.16 in which he explains how problems—bad "whirlpools"—enter you, stay with you, or come back to haunt you. This section of sutras is a map of darkness, a road guide to the obstacles in front of and around you. These difficulties are what some religions have called the little and big demons that persist in a person's life. Note, though, that Patanjali does not give them consciousness or a soul: they are not devilish entities but rather just psychic habits and patterns you would be better off shedding.

In these sutras, he offers you an overview of such problems from their genesis outside of your psychological selves to their attachment and reoccurrence. Though his explanation is intertwined with a theory of multiple births over time, you also can read his instructions as a set of guides for handling difficulties in just this lifetime.

A.A.—Alcoholics Anonymous—provides an example. It was founded in 1935 in the U.S. and is famous for its Twelve Step Program to help people stop drinking (and later, overcome other addictions). Patanjali views *klesa* or troubles like A.A. contemplates addictions: you have three choices. You can continue to accept and live with using alcohol or your drug of choice. Or, second, you can attempt short-term methods to avoid it or forget your gnawing desire for it; however, these courses of action often lead to relapses. Or, third and best, you can "get on the Program," as people in A.A. are known to say, and use the

methods given to you A.A. for transcending your addictive behaviors—or by Patanjali for going beyond life's troubles.

The importance of Sutras 2.10-16 is in not letting yourself be overcome or overruled by outer realities. They exist, but you can learn to set yourself apart from them within you. Mystic and theologian Howard Thurman speaks of this in "Life Goes On":

> …Over and over we must know that the real target of evil is not destruction of the body,
>
> the reduction to rubble of cities;
>
> the real target of evil
>
> is to corrupt the spirit of man and to give his soul the contagion of inner disintegration.
>
> When this happens,
>
> there is nothing left,
>
> the very citadel of [a person] is captured and laid waste.
>
> Therefore the evil in the world around us must not be allowed to move from without to within.
>
> This would be to be overcome by evil.
>
> To drink in the beauty that is within reach,
>
> to clothe one's life with simple deeds of kindness,
>
> to keep alive a sensitiveness to the movement of the spirit of God in the quietness of the human heart and in the workings of the human mind—
>
> this is as always the ultimate answer to the great deception.*

In summary, Patanjali does not offer a lot of relief in Sutras 2.10-16. However, these sutras are a good roadmap for identifying negative traits within you so that you can begin to banish them.

**---**

*Dead End*

# *Sutras 2.17 - 2.22*

# *Can You Go Beyond but Still Be Here and Now?*

## - Seer, Seen, and Nature -

### ***Sutra* 2.17**:

*Draṣṭṛ dṛśyayoḥ saṁyogaḥ (saṁyogo) heya hetuḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Pure Seer, and the seen in nature, together yoked, creating stirrings"

***Meaning***: "You, the perceiving True Self, and the natural objects you perceive are tied together as if one, causing mental and emotional whirlpools."

***A chant in English***: "Your Awareness living in the world leads to inner whirls."

***Definition***: Patanjali declared in Sutra 2.16 that you can abandon your troubles before they can happen. How do you accomplish this? You come to the realization that is in Sutra 2.17: you are not what you perceive.

This means, for example, that you are not the chair or couch on which you are sitting. You also are not the emotions you feel—they are separate from your True Self or from Presence. And you are not the mental thinking, and not the constructed sense of self, that you have developed in memory. They do exist. They are what Patanjali calls part of nature. But they are external to your core of pure Awareness. Once you realize this, you can begin to disentangle yourself from future troubles.

***Comment:*** A related myth found in cultures West and East comes from the dawn of humanity. This story tells of souls who, before humans existed, wanted an earthly existence. Enamored of the beauty of the earth, they came down into it and entered biological objects like animals and trees and even inanimate ones like rocks, wind, and bodies of water. They were so in love with their new bodies that they soon forgot who they were—free spirits—and became trapped forever unless other entities released them.

This tale is, at the least, symbolic of how one's individual self can be caught in material life. We can go for days, months—a lifetime—ignoring deep inner life. As Patanjali indicates in sutras 2.17-2.22, you can seek control of your bodily life within. Being "caught" in it, says Patanjali, is not bad. Rather, it is an opportunity to purify your life so that you live a new existence of improved thinking and sensing.

To succeed, you let your True Self or Ultimate Presence gradually convert your "stirrings"—your energy whirlings—from the aspects of unnecessary thoughts, memories, and emotions to purer, calmer, and more healthy energy waves. None of these three human aspects are bad. They still will come, but in very different forms and shapes in the spiritual life Patanjali recommends. What you need to rid yourself of, increasingly, is the experience of being *trapped* in them when they are constant, repetitive, and distracting.

Ascetic individuals and communities throughout the world since the beginning of human life have worked especially hard in attempting to rid themselves of their "stirrings." For example, the Christian desert Fathers and Mothers were hermits and ascetics who lived for this purpose in the wilds in and

near Egypt primarily in the 300s-400s CE. Their homes were caves, small "cells" they built individually, or small rooms in simple communal monasteries.

They fasted and prayed daily, read only the Christian Bible or nothing at all, and owned so little that some wore rags and ate and drank from one simple bowl. They earned just enough money for scant food each day by such jobs as weaving reeds into ropes and baskets.

Notably, their goal usually was to spend the great majority of their time each day for years, often a lifetime, learning to rid themselves of all impulses that kept them from inner silence and God. One of the most famous was Father Poemen. He says that a person must "abstain from everything which is contrary,...anger, fits of passion, jealousy, hatred and slandering...." How do you accomplish this? Poemen says, "Vigilance, self-knowledge, and discernment; these are the guides of the soul.... The victory over all the afflictions that befall you, is, to keep silence."*

Likewise, the more you know—as in Sutra 2.3—that your thoughts, memories, and emotions are not Presence—not your Self or Awareness—the better you are able to "abandon wearying problems" as in Sutra 2.16. This means giving up constructs of self such as illusions of power and of the need for your hot messes, the deeper you fall into an inner silence. In that quietude, says Patanjali coaches, more profound gifts and healings come.

Sometimes called gifts of the spirit, they are newer, clearer, more immediate and deeper thoughts, memories, feelings, and sensations than in the old nature-bound versions of self. Almost always, there are much fewer of them, like the single note of a bell. And when you are in this state of True Self/Presence, these gifts are more useful, more profound, and far less troubling.

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## ***Sutra* 2.18**: *Prakāśa kriya sthiti-śīlaṁ bhūta-indriya-ātmakam bhoga-apavarga-arthaṁ dṛśyam*

***Literal translation***: "Brightness, activity (*kriya*), ongoing steadiness/continuation: the pre-matter natures. Matter's becomings (the elements of nature), the sensory organs: the embodied expression of them [of those first three pre-matters]. Enjoyment and turning away from them: their purpose. [All this] the seen"

***Meaning***: "Brilliant clarity, action, and stable inertia [the *gunas*] are the three underlying essences of nature. All other physical elements, along with the sensory organs (five senses and mind), express those three essences in material life. Enjoyment of them—and freeing ourselves from them—are the two reasons for their existence. All this defines what is 'the seen' (as in Sutra 2.17)."

***A chant in English***: "The natural world and your doors of perception can lead you beyond material pleasures to experience true freedom."

***Definition***: In the previous sutra, 2.17, Patanjali talked about the seer" and the "seen." Now in Sutra 2.18, he defines the "seen."

Almost all translations agree that the first three words of this sutra ("brightness," "activity," and "steadiness") refer to ancient Hinduism's three main constituents or forces of nature's essences: the *gunas* of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The earliest Hindu scriptures define them as the three underlying qualities of the entire universe and all other form and matter. See Sutra 1.16, where the three are introduced and explained.

The second part of this sutra, about the physical elements and the sensory organs, refers to the material world that we can see and touch. It is worth noting, though, that the ancient understanding of the "elements" of nature is not of molecules and atoms; rather, in much of both East and West in ancient times, the main elements of nature were four or five: earth, water, fire, air, and sometimes ether/spirit.

***Comment:*** Especially interesting in this sutra is how Patanjali refers to the mind as yet another sense organ, similar to the five senses. Mind is, in the ancient Hindu view, not a storage device for retention of memories. Rather, for Patanjali, mind is an "eye" and "ear" that retrieves vibrations of thoughts, feelings, and other energy-whirlings or stirrings around it, just as the five senses retrieve energy vibrations of color, sound, and smell. For more on mind as sense organ, see the "Comment" section of Sutra 1.2.

Another notable phrase in this sutra occurs in its next-to-last phrase: "Enjoyment and turning away from them: their purpose." This means that the purpose of all nature, at least for a human, is to create two states. The first is enjoyment of life's higher, finer rewards: they help you desire ever more illumination, will to grow, and steadiness. The second state, "turning away from"

nature, often is translated as "liberation" or "freedom." However, two ways of understanding this have developed, as follows.

In general, older translations assume that liberation means you are freed forever from the *bondage* of nature, at which point you stop being reincarnated or even that you stop life itself, and you then die. Newer translations sometimes suggest, however, that meditating will prevent your being *compelled to follow* the same old bondage, and that you will, instead, be transformed into a newer, better way of life here on earth.

Is the ultimate liberation—whether it is called *samadhi*, nirvana, *moksha*, *satori*, mystical union, or another name —the time when you forever leave earthly existence? Or is it a renewal of a different kind of existence on earth? In both scholarly and spiritual circles, this sometimes becomes an issue quite sharply argued with strong opinions on both sides. (For example, see the disagreements Buddhist schools of thought have about the meaning of nirvana—as the end of your physical existence vs. the beginning of a new life in our world—in "Appendix D: What is Nirvana?")

There are reasons to argue that Patanjali and others may have experienced a transformational liberation of, or within, their bodies, a change that leaves a person still alive on earth but with a liberated soul. The reasons for this point of view are made best through looking at his final discussion, at the end of this book in Sutras 4.29-4.34, about experiencing *dharmamegha* or the "raincloud of virtue." To learn more about this transformation, you may read those last six sutras and/or examine "Appendix E. How to Meditate after *Dharma Megha*" and "Appendix F. *What Is Ultimate Dharma Megha*?"

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## ***Sutra* 2.19**:
## *Viśeṣa-aviśeṣa liṅga-mātra-aliṅgāni guṇa-parvāṇi*

***Literal translation***: "Specific (divided leftovers), nonspecific (undivided leftovers), differentiated (barely attached), undifferentiated (unattached): nature's (the *guna* strands or threads') levels"

***Meaning***: "(1) Physical objects, (2) the material energies (like light and sound), (3) formed essences (what the West calls "psychic energies")

and (4) unformed God-energy: these are the four levels of nature.

***A chant in English***: "Meditation reveals not just objects and energy in the world, but otherworldly forms and the pure energy of God."

***Definition***: In this sutra, Patanjali is teaching readers the four levels of nature that meditators may experience, and how all them are part of nature (the *gunas*). His purpose is to help you dissolve your troubling psychological traits by your becoming more aware of how they are made in nature.

All four of these parts are described in ancient Hindu scriptures before Patanjali's time. The first two are obvious to everyone: (1) material objects and (2) material energy (such as sound and light).

The second two, however, are "essences" or "psychic energy," something Western science generally doesn't recognize. Of these two, one is "formed essences"; the other, "unformed essence" or pure "God-energy."

Formed essences are things that, says Patanjali in other sutras, you as a meditator may experience with your psychic inner vision: for example, the "burnt seeds" that some meditators see coming into them or circling around them. Another example is *vritti*—the swirling, whirling thoughts, memories, and emotions that you need to clear from your mind.

The main theme of this chapter on *kriya* yoga is the five psychological types of troubles, and how you can get rid of them. Patanjali now offers a description of these four levels of nature to further help you. Each psychological trait has obvious physical manifestations in the way you and others act, and in the way people see, hear, and otherwise sense life and think about it.*

However, each psychological trait also—especially in meditation—has "formed essences" associated with it. Just like the "burnt seeds" of basic thoughts coming into your head, each psychological trait, says Patanjali, has an essence or psychic energy pattern: for example, fear often appears psychically in meditation as a jagged, piercing explosion; desire often is more like heavy, watery waves. And in each person, there are individual variations: for example, fear may be red in one person but brown in another, and desire have agitated waves in one but smooth currents in another.

What about Patanjali's "pure essence" or "God-energy"? This, according to ancient Hindu theory and to mystics throughout the world, is the basic stuff of the universe, the Hindu Shakti, Chinese Qi, the pneuma of the Greeks, spirit-breath of Native Americans, and many other cultures and names. Patanjali says

that once you begin experiencing this pure essence, you can use it to disintegrate or deconstruct your clinging psychological trait, as described in Sutra 2.10.

Many medieval and modern translations fail to mention why Patanjali discusses these four levels of nature. They are, simply, another method in his roadmap to meditation success.

***Comment:*** If you want more detail about the Hindu four levels of nature, see Endnote 2.19.* However, as a practical matter, this sutra is emphasizing what was already said in Sutra 2.10: you can "dis-integrate" or "de-construct" your psychological troubles. They are just nature formations.

Patanjali describes getting rid of them as a "reverse birthing" process. You start with your body and brain using diet, exercise, and physical interruption of negative actions.

You also can work on disentangling them inwardly in what you think, remember, imagine, and feel emotionally. You are able to stare them down until they start to become less intense or less attached to you. You can break them apart. You may be able to stop them from entering you—like the burnt seeds mentioned earlier. And in higher or deeper meditation states, you learn to let pure essence enter you in one or several forms to cleanse negativities and keep you cleared.

All of this, says Patanjali, is governed by focusing on your Self or Presence. In the most advanced meditation practices, you learn to stay within your Self or Presence for ever longer periods of time—the ultimate *samadhi*.

B.K.S. Iyengar describes this as a process, a step at a time, that moves from objective reality to a holy union. In your awareness, when you join any part of nature to the originator of all essence—Self or Presence—it is, says Iyengar, "the merging of nature into spirit [as] a divine marriage, which becomes possible through the work of yoga."*

Also worth noting, what are the *gunas*? Patanjali uses the word in this sutra to describe nature. *Guna* literally means "strand," "thread," or "string that is plucked" as in a bow or gut string. *Guna* means "vibration." Like a bow string releasing an arrow or a guitar string releasing sound—or the threads of contemporary physics' string theory—a *guna* releases energy into the universe. *Gunas* are similar to the word "Om" as the humming of the universe; or the "Word" that, in the first verse of the Christian Gospel of John, is one with God and the beginning of Creation.

There are three *gunas*. *Tamas* (like the word "tame") is continuance or

inertia. *Rajas* (like "raja" and "royal") is activity or force. *Sattva* (like "sage") is brightness or upward movement. According to ancient Hindu theory, everything formed in nature has a differing amount and mix of one or more *gunas*. And each day and hour has a tone or wave-current with one or another *guna* often dominating.

Regarding Hinduism's "essences" as part of basic nature, Western society has two similar theories. One is Plato's ancient concept of forms and philosophical idealism.* The other is current science's "string theory" and "quarks" proposed by physicists.* For more on these, see the 2.19 Endnote.

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## ***Sutra* 2.20**:

## *Draṣṭā dr̥śi-mātraḥ śuddho-api ('pi) pratyaya-anupaśyaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "The Pure Seer, perceiving: only pure. But (from) notions/sensings an after-seeing"

***Meaning***: "You, the Aware One, as you are being aware, have a pure, continuous perception; however, you also usually develop memories. These are mind-forms that are afterimages."

***A chant in English***: "You are an Awareness who also has memories of being Aware."

***Definition***: In Sutra 2.17, Patanjali described the "Pure Seer, and the seen in nature." Then he used Sutras 2.18 and 2.19 to define "the seen in nature" in more detail. Now here, in Sutra 2.20, he defines the "Pure Seer." He is saying that the Pure Seer, which is your deepest Awareness or true Self, has a completely pure perception of a natural object when it observes it. The object exists in your consciousness. And you can do this without becoming involved in thoughts, memories, or emotions.

But he also suggests that your mind may then recall what you have observed by having an "after-seeing" or afterimage: a memory. This memory has a purpose: to help you realize what you have experienced and to seek it again.

His implication also is that your mind, with its memories and thoughts, then tends to take credit for your identity, as if the center of your true self resides in those memories and thoughts. In other words, you are not the photos or videos

you take. You—the real you—are the ongoing, watching, listening, sensing Camera.

***Comment:*** One of the clearest points in this sutra is that the mind might declare itself alive and existing just because it has thoughts or memories. This, in fact, is like French philosopher René Descartes' famous declaration, "I think, therefore I am" (which he wrote in Latin as "*Cogito, ergo sum*").* That statement, it is said, represented the start—in the seventeenth century—of modern Western philosophy: it began by using Descartes' doubt about humans' existence, and then it used the scientific method to philosophize about how/why humans can prove they exist.

However, as Christian mystic and theologian Thomas Merton states, "Nothing could be more alien to contemplation than the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes [because in contemplation] there is...only *SUM*, I Am."* In other words, say Patanjali and Merton, the act of thinking does not prove a person exists. Instead, such thinking is merely the activities of the mind. The proof of human aliveness is the existence of your true Awareness or True Self: that is the real "I Am."

You become aware of this when you can make your mind perfectly silent for a time. You do not have to have thoughts to be able to be and to operate as a human being. Sometimes you come to such clarity by experiencing Presence around or outside of you, first. Sometimes you find it within yourself as the most basic precursor to all other awarenesses.

Through either entry point, you then realize that thinking has nothing to do with your primary Awareness, your primary self. Instead, your root consciousness, on its own, is the "Pure Seer" behind the mind. And you discern that you are different from your perceptions.

Patanjali realizes it is easy for a human being to think their awareness *is* their thinking, and if they weren't thinking, then they would lose consciousness. On the simplest level, that of a very young child, for example, you tend to think that you are what you see. An infant seeing the sky thinks of itself as being the sky. As Swami Hariharananda says in his translation of the *Yoga Sutras*, when the "objects of Buddhi [mind], *e.g.* cow, pot, etc. are [perceived], then the mind is similarly coloured, *e.g.* sometimes like a cow, sometimes like a pot."* The obvious mistake is then to believe you are the cow or the pot.

The more subtle error is to assume that your *thoughts* of the cow or the pot are your most important and deepest self. Instead, your "I Am" is behind that thinking, and not dependent on thinking for its existence. Your "I" exists through

all perceptions, with or without thoughts.

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## ***Sutra* 2.21**: *Tad-arthaḥ (artha) eva dṛśyasya-ātmā*

***Literal translation***: "This [from the previous sutra] for the intention only of the world of sensory experiences of the going-through-nature Presence [Atman or True Self]"

***Meaning***: "Memories or afterimages (as in Sutra 2.20) are for the purpose—in the world of nature—to help you find your essential True Self (the seer)."

***A chant in English***: "As you pass through the world, remember your times of closeness to Presence or True Self."

***Definition***: This sutra is about the placement of your True Self in nature, especially as stated in the final two words, *drsyasya-atma*. They create an important phrase. The first, *drsyasya,* in its earliest Sanskrit form may be translated as the world of sensory experiences or pleasures.

The second word is the famous Hindu "Atman," a word meaning the "True Self" or "portion" or "spark" of Presence or God within you. The compound word also may refer to your "vital breath" or "essence."

*The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* indicates that this important word, "Atman," comes from combining the two ancient words *at-* and *-ma*. *At-* means "going through"; *-ma,* means "the mother." That is, your True Self or vital essence, as Atman, is "going through the mother." "The mother" in all ancient religions was Mother Nature, the Cosmic Mother out of which all else in the universe was born.

Thus the meaning of this phrase is this: your deepest Self moves through the rivers and mountains, inner and outer, of mother nature in all her forms and essences.* Your Atman is a "Presence-in-the-mother"—in your body here on earth in nature, and in all of the world that surrounds it.

***Comment:*** The feminine principle or Cosmic Mother is very important in ancient Hinduism. In the four ancient Vedas, "womb" is mentioned sixty-nine times.*

Ancient Hinduism also developed the concept of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*—

Presence and Matter. According to Monier-Williams' standard classic, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, the word *Prakriti* represents many female elements: for example, "a goddess," "personified energy or wife of a deity," "original or primary substance," "the material world (consisting of three constituent essences or Gunas)," "Nature (distinguished from purusha)" and "primary essences which evolve the whole visible world.*" All of that is *Prakriti*.

*Purusha*, on the other hand, is the God-Presence within: the Atman, inner spark of God, or True Self. It always is attached to each bit of matter. *Prakriti* is the outer manifestation or "body." *Purusha* is its soul.

Patanjali is clarifying in this sutra that the Atman or True Self travels through the world of matter (and, indeed, often unconsciously, through the less obvious levels of "nature," too). He adds that for meditators, the real purpose and end goal of memories—and, in fact, all energy/matter—is to help you find your Self/Presence.

This also offers a reassurance. If, in meditation, you find yourself confronted by even more awareness of matter, energy, and even essences, it is okay. That is normal. Keep meditating on your meditation point or source of Self/Presence. But new experiences are a sign of your progress.

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## ***Sutra* 2.22**: *Kṛ̥ta-artham prati naṣṭam api-anaṣṭam tad anya sādhāraṇatvāt*

***Literal translation***: "Having done that objective (as in the previous sutra), perished or not, that other, commonly normal"

***Meaning***: "Even if you have completed the goal [i.e., discovered your True Self/Presence by going through nature, as in Sutra 2.21], then in spite of how the bonds of nature (the seen) have perished for you, they have not perished for others, as nature itself is common and normal."

***A chant in English***: "When you find your Self or Presence and break matter's bonds, matter itself still will be there."

***Definition***: This is Patanjali's way of saying that nature is real, and even when you succeed in going beyond or behind nature's matter and essence—eventually becoming totally liberated from their bonds—still the mountains, the birds in the

sky, and your body will exist. And if you stay in your own body as a fully awakened meditation adept, the universe and your own sensory experiences will continue to be present in your daily functioning.

***Comment:*** Science tells us that what you see, feel, hear, touch, etc. is real. So, too, is what researchers observe under microscopes and microphotography.

Scientists also are quick to point out that what we experience does not represent the whole range of matter and energy. For example, some animals are able to see ultraviolet or infrared frequencies of "color" that humans cannot. Dogs and many other species can detect sounds and smells that humans are unable to notice. Most animals, including humans, are unable to perceive many physical phenomena: radio and television waves, atoms, galaxies almost invisible to the best of telescopes, etc. Thus it is sensible to say that while what you perceive is real, that is not all of reality.

Even so, in spiritual matters, some Westerners find great relief when a spiritual system such as Hinduism declares (usually) that matter does exist and the world is real. Many people interested in Eastern thought have read or heard about the Hindu term *maya*. It means "illusion." Unfortunately, what many have heard is "The world is *maya*: reality is an illusion."

It is true that most branches of Hinduism teach that the world is *maya*. But to many Hindus, the word means something entirely different than "nature is an illusion." To many of them, the "illusion" of *maya* is not the world of matter itself: nature is very real. The illusion lies in our falsely thinking, they say, that you and I—and every bit of the universe—are separate and individual. Instead, say these religions, we all are connected. And once you break through the illusion of non-connectedness, you discover all the parts of nature are connected to each other by each one's underlying connection to Presence.

This is most noticeably true regarding the connections among individual human beings. The closer you are to others, the more noticeable this may be. According to Hinduism, you are connected to each of your friends, family, neighbors, and acquaintances through sharing the same objects and physical energies (such as seeing and hearing each other) and through the essences discussed in Sutra 2.18.

This is of particular significance to Westerners—the "People of the Book," who are Jews, Christians, and Muslims who share the Books of Moses and the Prophets in common. These three groups sometimes are called "social" religions because they emphasize, so much, the actions of the divine as it is revealed in large groups of society. In these religions, God much more often sends messages

through a prophet to a tribe, an army, or a nation. This is contrasts with Eastern religions, which often are called "individualist" belief systems because teachers give instructions to each person for how to practice their religion.

Thus if you are a Westerner, you may have been raised to think more about other people in your spiritual questioning. Western psychology in particular focuses heavily on how to get along with others. On the one hand, what happens—as you find your Self/Presence through meditation—are experiences that are universal to both West and East. On the other hand, the path you take, the questions you ask, and the way you seek Self/Presence is to some extent affected by the culture around you.

For this reason, in the West, the more you meditate and have started finding Self/Presence repeatedly, the more you may see, feel, or otherwise find other people during your meditations. Their actions, thoughts, and feelings may enter your meditations. And, more deeply, you may have a keener sensing of their psychological self or selves, or even just their presence, as you meditate, or during your resulting calm centeredness afterward. And in both West and East, meditation may make you experience their edges merging with yours—as if the waves of two bodies of water briefly are joining, or different breezes are meeting from two directions in the air.

And in both West and East, at the deepest, most intimate levels with others, your increased spiritual sensitivity may cause you to feel, sometimes, like your souls are merging. However accidental it may seem, it is no illusion. It happens to many, especially, for example, in paired or group events such as meditating, praying, or seeking Self/Presence together; lovemaking; dancing, singing, or playing music together; and other intensely close paired or communal activities. Such oneness is an underlying reality, deeper than matter or essence.

Zen adept Thich Nhat Hanh describes the shared cosmic dance of people's Selves/Presence(s) like this: (See Endnote 2.22 for the full poem.)

> You are me, and I am you....
>
> You cultivate the flower in yourself,
>
> so that I will be beautiful.
>
> I transform the garbage in myself,
>
> so that you will not have to suffer....
>
> I am in this world to offer you peace;
>
> you are in this world to bring me joy.

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*Mountains Full of Life*

# *Sutras 2.23 - 2.27*

# *What Are the Blessings of Yoga?*

## - Awareness and the World of Nature -

### *Sutra* 2.23:

*Sva svāmi śaktyoḥ sva-rūpa-uplabdhi-hetuḥ saṁyogaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "The controlled and the controller, enabled together, (with) a controlling experience acquired (by) incitement = blessed yoga"

***Meaning***: "Your own controlled nature and your Self as controller, working together, result in a controlling that produces blessings of yoking."

***A chant in English***: "Your body and Presence, working together with purpose, create gifts of union."

***Definition***: Many translators turn Sutras 2.23-2.27 into statements of abstract philosophy. Even worse, translations from medieval through mid-1900s times argue that this philosophy says to become a strict ascetic who turns away from most of physical life, except what little is needed to survive.

But Patanjali, judging from other parts of *Yoga Sutras*, likely is saying something quite different, here. First, in 2.23-2.27, he continues to offer practical advice, not philosophy. Second, his recommendations do not call for you to give up everything and flee to the desert, the mountain, or a lonely island.

Is Patanjali pro-body? In a way, he is. He recognizes, especially in the last five sutras of his book, the joy the body is capable of feeling. And in these next several sutras, 2.23-2.27, he begins speaking about this bliss.

He begins in this sutra by careful use of root words from ancient scriptures by talking about control, mastery, or power over the body. The first three *svas* here in 2.23—*Sva svāmi śaktyoḥ sva-rūpa*—are the Sanskrit root from which the English word "swami" comes. A swami is a meditation adept, a controller or master. The beginning of this sutra speaks of a power of complete mindfulness. It says that three types of power in the experience of being an adept: the body is controlled, the Self/Presence is its controller, and the result is an experience of spiritual controlling.

Then, later in the sutra, Three more words appear. *Hetuḥ* means "incitement" or "production." *Saṁyogaḥ* ends the sutra: *saṁ* means "blessed" or "togetherness"; *yogaḥ* is "yoking" or "union." When you combine all three, you learn that the Self/Presence's controlling of the body creates an "incitement" of "blessed yoking."

What is an "incitement of blessed yoking"? It is, when it occurs for a moment, an hour, or for days, a bonding of spirit and body. It is a physical shift. If, for example, your body is feeling stressful, then when you connect with your Self/Presence, for that moment in time your body may suddenly say, "Let's turn on some healing instead." The results of this bond are, at the least, what hundreds of scientific experiments show meditation causes: a slower heartbeat and pulse rate, greater calm, and better focus. Other typical reactions are improved digestive function, a slowing of a racing brain, and the relaxation of tense muscles.

The change may last for a second or much longer. Sometimes the shift

depends on how long in meditation you stay connected to your Self or Presence. The depth and length of the transformation also can depend on how many distracting thoughts, memories, emotions, and other sensations are swirling around and within you when you started your meditation session, and how long a time you may need to slow and then clear them.

***Comment:*** The Christian New Testament clearly reflects this sutra. Its Letter to the Ephesians notes that your "whole body...will grow into complete union...closely joined and knit together by the contact of every part with the source of its life [from which it] derives its power to grow, in proportion to the vigour of each individual part; and so [it] is being built up in a spirit of love."*

The "source of its life" in this Letter is, for Christians, Jesus or God. In the *Yoga Sutras*, this same source is the Atman (True Self) or Brahman (Presence)—two of Patanjali's ways of saying "God." As for the Letter to the Ephesian's phrase "power to grow," that is the same as Patanjali's "incitement" or "production" to blessed union.

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## ***Sutra* 2.24**: *Tasya hetuḥ (hetur)-avidyā*

***Literal translation***: "Its incitement (cause)—apart from sky/ daylight"

***Meaning***: "(However) this union (in Sutra 23)—its incitement or development—can lead us back into a condition of not seeing—of returning to darkness."

***A chant in English***: "Watch out when your body is blessed that you return to Presence or Self, not just body."

***Definition***: The "blessed union" of seer, seen, and seeing is fine: it is good for the Self/Presence to join with the workings of your physical nature. However, Patanjali warns you, don't fall into the trap of always staying with the result of this union. The result—a better functioning of your body in nature—is good, but focusing only on that functioning, on the pleasure of it, or on the workings of it will once again take you away from your blessed union with Self/Presence.

***Comment:*** This is a more advanced practical recommendation, well beyond just

saying, "In meditation, look for your True Self or Presence." Sutras 2.23-2.24 assume that you have found your True Self or Presence. 2.23 stated that the joining of spirit and body can cause "blessed" physical changes. Now 2.24 is telling you, "When Self/Presence causes your body to work better, don't get stuck in noticing just the physical result; stay focused (or focus again) on Self/Presence."

For example, you may find, at some point in your meditations, that your focus on the True Self or Presence reaches to your body itself, bringing relaxation to some part of it, warmth, better physical working, or other gifts of spirit-in-nature. You very well may first experience such physical blessings by noticing them with surprise, watching them unfold as you enjoy their fruits. But letting your whole attention bathe solely in the experience, however unique or pleasurable, takes you away from your focus on the Self/Presence—and away from receiving more of the experience. To keep the body receiving such gifts—and to follow yoga thoroughly—you should learn to return to your focus on Self/Presence as soon as you are able.

Mystic scholar Teilhard de Chardin describes this as the need "to desire being—that...the access to the great waters may open within" you. The result, he says, creates a "sacramental action...*precisely because it sanctifies matter*" (italics his).* You are arranging to have your Self or Presence create a reordering of your body's immediate activities and sensations.

However, again, you must return your focus to Presence or the Self, rather than becoming focused only on the results. Regarding this, a famous story about Jesus of Nazareth occurs in the Christian Bible's New Testament Gospel of Matthew. Whether you believe in the physical event described in it, or only in its symbolic meaning, the lesson is the same.

In this story, Jesus has sent his disciples off, ahead of him, on a boat on the Sea of Galilee so that he can go alone to pray on a high hill. The wind has come up, creating waves on the Sea. The disciples, still on the waters as they grow choppy, then see Jesus walking on water toward them. Terrified, they cry out, "It is a ghost." But Jesus calls to them:

> "Courage!" he said, "It is I; do not be afraid!"
>
> "Master," Peter exclaimed, "if it is you, tell me to come to you on the water."
>
> Jesus said, "Come."
>
> So Peter got down from the boat, and walked on the water, and went towards Jesus; but, when he felt the wind, he was frightened, and,

beginning to sink, cried out, "Master! Save me!"

Instantly Jesus stretched out his hand, and caught hold of him. "You of little faith!" he said, "Why did you falter?"*

The lesson is the same as Patanjali's. When you concentrate on your True Self/Presence, don't let what happens physically keep you from maintaining or returning to your focus.

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## *Sutra* 2.25:

*Tad abhāvāt saṁyoga-abhāvo-hānaṁ tad dṛśeḥ kaivalyam*

***Literal translation***: "That return to darkness causing the blessed-yoking to no longer happen: not doing that, seer/seeing alone liberation"

***Meaning***: "When you keep your mind from returning to darkness, your blessed-yoking will continue. Then you your Self/Presence, constantly self-aware, will liberate you.

***A chant in English***: "Don't see yourself as the seen; keep looking to yourself as the Seer!"

***Definition***: This advice is a continuation of the previous two sutras. Patanjali emphasizes that it doesn't matter how wonderful, exciting, or surprising the events are, here in the physical world, that happen to you from the blessed union. Of course you will notice them. And they will be in your peripheral consciousness. There is no reason to throw them out or put blinders on yourself to avoid feeling their peace, pleasure, and bliss. But their flow will be piecemeal, interrupted, until you learn to be with your True Self or Presence as steadily as possible in meditation. In that way, you also can maintain the benefits of the blessed union.

***Comment:*** A story: A man was pulling a small cart by hand to the top of a hill. But the hillside was filled with stones. He knew he had to avoid the sharpest and highest rocks, so he turned to look back at his cart behind him, especially the front wheels. He jerked the cart this way and that. But then he bruised his foot and staggered. He paused, then began again to pull and to watch the wheels

behind him. Once more he encountered a stone, this time tripping and falling. He raised himself up, shook his head, and decided to look ahead, not behind. Slowly he learned to move himself around the sharpest and tallest rocks. The cart followed.

Another example: learning to ride a bicycle. If you let yourself feel wildly and happily successful every time you stay up for one second, you're likely to wobble or fall down again. Instead, you must focus on whatever you were doing that made you stay up.

In your life, you might have the best day ever. But if you insist on reliving it in memory repeatedly, rather than actually focusing in the same way on whatever made it happen, you may doom yourself to experiencing that event very rarely, if ever.

That is not to say that memory—looking back at what happened—is bad. Sometimes, when you are not with Self or Presence, just remembering your blessed-union moments may help you jump into your awareness of Self/Presence again—back into the flow of the blessed union. Best of all, though, as you advance further in meditation, is simply to learn to stay in that river of oneness as often and as well as you can.

How does this blessed union proceed? It's moments often are too rare in a normal life: you may have a few moments or even an hour or two from an experience with art, beauty, or nature; from being with a special person or group; or from other experiences. Such moments stand as a brightly lit central post, like a lighthouse or the summit of a mountain, midst life's normal grey murk or busy activities.

However, as you begin to depend on Self/Presence more often, starting with meditation and extending outward to other times, the peace, light, or joy begins blossoming like a flower into more of your activities. In this way, Self/Presence vibrates in or around you as a live, ever-evolving event. You then need to pay attention to its core, its source, as you might listen to music, following the leading edge through time, not just remembering one catchy phrase and losing track of the melody.

As you ride the crest of this wave, it changes you in steps. Often the changes are small, occasionally big. They all add up. Mystic Thomas Merton says, "The contemplative [meditator] enters into God in order to be created.... If we attach too much importance to...accidentals [such as surprising sensations in our bodies, which may come and go] we will run the risk of losing what is essential."*

In other words, learn, gradually, to return your focus to Self/Presence. If you

are more likely to return to that Oneness by first celebrating and treasuring your new and great physical experiences, then, do so: but not for long. As Patanjali suggests, let Self/Presence mold you.

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## ***Sutra* 2.26**: *Viveka-khyātir-aviplavā hāna-upāyaḥ*

***Literal translation***: "Recognition by learning to flow: eliminating the reflection"

***Meaning***: "Recognize, through awareness continuously maintained, how to stop paying too much attention to the results."

***A chant in English***: "Learn to be in the flow by staying in the Source."

***Definition***: This sutra is the positive expression of the more negative viewpoint offered in 2.25. The previous sutra, 2.25, essentially tells you to avoid getting stuck in the "seen" and stay with the "seer" (as described in 2.17).

This sutra, 2.26, states that you can accomplish this by watching your process of going in and out of experiencing the Self/Presence. The typical pattern as you build more ability in meditation is, as an early step, to become aware of Self/Presence; then, in a middle step of focusing more on it, you often reflect on the results you gain and go back for more. But in a more profound and advanced final step, you muse less about the effects, instead more often returning or adhering to Self/Presence—just because you can, or because you are so committed.

Meditators often are, through important parts of their meditation careers, ponderers. Your self-reflection about what you have experienced is fine, especially if it helps you bend ever more toward focusing on Self/Presence. However, in this sutra, Patanjali is saying that we need to gradually give up our frequent musings. They are memories—mirroring images of what already has happened—that also keep us from fully engaging in our goal of simply staying attached to Self/Presence.

***Comment:*** People often imagine that jumping into Self/Presence entirely will create a loss of consciousness of everything but spirit itself: a submerging into the ocean where you no longer can see safe dry ground. Sometimes initial mystical experiences may feel exactly like this. However, one of the great

mysteries—and paradoxes—of ultimate mystical experiences is that they are not an "either/or" event in which you lose the earth to gain heaven. Rather, they develop the "blessed union" into a "both/and" blend or fusion. This is, for example, one reason why descriptions of mystical union sometimes use contradictory language such as "darkest blinding light," "awe-ful," "soundless Word," etc.

Thus in daily life, increasing mystical consciousness provides you with a more constant awareness of Self/Presence and, simultaneously, it issues a continuing awareness of nature, the body, and your surroundings. Physician, professor, and longtime meditation expert Culadasa (Dr. John Yates) offers one explanation for this dual nature of inner perception. He says:

> Conscious experience takes two different forms, ***attention*** and ***peripheral awareness*** [emphasis his]. Whenever we focus our *attention* on something, it dominates our conscious experience. At the same time, however, we can be more generally *aware* of things in the background [such as] other sights, sounds, smells, and sensations in the periphery.... It's important to realize attention and peripheral awareness are two different ways of "knowing" the world.*

In this manner, your peripheral awareness remains even as your focused attention holds itself to Self/Presence.

It is like the best focusing that happens during success in sports, professional training of people and animals, or other jobs that require close attention: you do not zero in on every little detail as you act; rather, you hold a general attention that is ready for whatever comes or is on the "flow" of events, aware peripherally of everything important around you, acting or not acting as your central attention demands. In meditation, that central focus becomes Self/Presence.

Is this anything like the initial awakening you may have experienced. Yes and no. That awakening welcomes you to the life of spirit. It may be a Christian "born again" descent of a dove or white light, a Hindu reaching down of a "thousand-petalled lotus" or light, or a piercing of the heart with supernatural love; or it may be an ascent or meeting of a spiritual realm above you, in nature, in an unearthly experience of art, or with another person or in a group.

Patanjali implies—and other mystics say—that such introductory descents and ascents become more common in middle-stage mystical life. And in late-stage mysticism, you learn to connect yourself to them—and receive "grace" or a flow of other spiritual benefits—as often as you can. This transforms you in small steps, daily, weekly, yearly.

Twentieth-century Hindu adept Sri Aurobindo calls this type of mystical awareness a connection with the "superconscious." He says, ""There is above the mind, as the old Vedic sages discovered, a Truth-plane, a plane of self-luminous, self-effective Idea, which can be turned in light and force upon our mind, reason, sentiments, impulses, sensations and use and control them...."*

Descent and ascent become interchangeably interactive in this blessed union. They are like an elevator constantly going up and down, delivering people and goods to and from higher and lower floors.

This superconscious exchange moves your meditation practice beyond the "either-or" of human spiritual truths to the "both-and" awareness. This elevator of God has spiritual benefits and awareness travelling both ways. In increasingly frequent steps, your Self/Presence takes over the transformation of your individual self into a new self. It still is individual, often in many ways like your old smaller selves, but calmer, more intuitively rational, more healing, and more filled with peace, consciousness, and joy/bliss/love.

---

## ***Sutra* 2.27**: *Tasya saptadhā prānta-bhūmiḥ prajñā*

***Literal translation***: "It, with sevenfold, in the highest resting place of intuitive knowing"

***Meaning***: "In it [in your practice of staying with Self/Presence in the previous sutra], seven layers help you maintain true knowing."

***A chant in English***: "You will live in the seven layers if you maintain your liberation."

***Definition***: This Sutra, 2.27, is the final one in this *Kriya* yoga section. Typical of Patanjali, he ends with a grand, positive flourish. Most translators agree that here he is saying, "You are discovering and regularly practicing oneness with Self/Presence: there are seven ways or layers for continuing it."

However, Patanjali does not tell us what his "sevenfold" group is. This likely is so, posits scholar and practitioner Georg Feuerstein, because "presumably...it stands for a yogic theme well known to his contemporaries." Translators differ regarding the nature of the sevenfold group.

***Comment:*** What are the seven?* Intelligent guesses abound among translators. Before discussing them, it is helpful to set three guidelines for choosing: (1) Are the seven well-known as a group in Patanjali's time, as Feuerstein suggests?* (2) Are they a common experience among advanced meditators? (3) Are they practice-based experiences, as in almost all of Patanjali's sutras?

In Sanskrit tradition, scholars of history know of no Hindu practices from Patanjali's time that clearly meet the burden of all three of these requirements. However, Buddhist tradition does offer a set of seven that in India was well-known, commonly experienced, and based on practice: the "Seven Factors of Enlightenment."

The "Seven Factors" list is described frequently in an important early Buddhist text from the first century BCE, the *Tripitaka* (Pali: *Tipitaka*) and probably taught orally hundreds of years earlier by Buddha. Patanjali would have known it. Would he reference it in his *Sutras*? Certainly, he shows a knowledge of many other Buddhist practices, and the "Seven Factors" fits well with his other meditation practices that bring peace, focus, and joy:

**The Seven Factors of Enlightenment***

Buddha said that a monk "develops the enlightenment factor[s] of..."

- "mindfulness" (awareness, attention)
- "discrimination of states" (internal and external conditions)
- "energy" (willpower)
- "rapture" (bliss, joy)
- "tranquility" (peace)
- "concentration" (focus, one-pointedness)
- "equanimity" (balance, "dispassion")

Other interpretations of "sevenfold" are worth noting. See the Endnote for this sutra.

A final definition of "sevenfold" that may answer all three questions above is the seven traditional chakras, or energy centers, of Hinduism. Though writings about them did not develop until early medieval Hindu times, the ancient Vedas talk about "wheels" of psychic energy that sound much like the chakras,* and it's very possible that a long oral tradition of teaching them may have existed in Patanjali's times. They are listed in Sutra 2.3 and described in more detail in the Endnote to this present Sutra, 2.27.

**- End of Chapter 2-A, *Kriya* yoga -**

**- Ch. 2-B, *Astanga* yoga, begins with Sutra 2.28. -**

*Far-reaching Landscape*

*River and Trees Lead to the Peak.*

# CHAPTER 2-B on *Astanga Yoga*
# Sutras 2.28 - 2.55

**Title in Anglicized Sanskrit**: *Yoga-Aṅga*

**Literal translation**: *Yoga Limbs*

**Meaning**: *Astanga Yoga's Eight Limbs*

**A chant in English**: *The Shining Eight Limbs of Yoga*

***Definition***: Tradition says that at one point, Patanjali's manuscript—which he had written on lotus leaves, a common version of paper then—was lost, and he had to rewrite it. Another tradition tells the story that after Patanjali was gone, the leaves became jumbled; then someone else put them together again—but out of order.

Any reader plainly can see that Chapter 2 of the *Yoga Sutras* has two very different sections. The first half, 2.1-2.27, is titled "*Kriya* Yoga." However, 2.28-2.55 is named "*Astanga* Yoga." Worse yet, the *Astanga* yoga section reappears in the first fifteen sutras of Chapter 3. What happened? To help make more sense of it all, this translation divides Chapter 2 into two parts, "A" and "B." This present section, Chapter 2-B, is all about *Astanga* yoga.

*Astanga* means "eight-limbed." This type of yoga consists of eight basic methods or practices that the chapter says are necessary for long-term progress in meditation. The five "limbs" in Chapter 2-B consist of ethical guidelines, personal behaviors, and methods of posture, breathing, and mental focus. In short, this *Astanga* yoga section appears to suggest that once you've had your initial spiritual breakthrough experiences as in Chapter 1—and you've started having progress as a meditator—you also should begin following an overall plan. That plan, *Astanga*, helps moderate your life to make it healthier and more attuned for meditation.

As it turns out, *Astanga* is closely related to Buddhism. Six of the "limbs" closely resemble parts of Buddha's famous Eightfold Path to Enlightenment.* Buddha developed his eight "folds" long before Patanjali wrote the *Yoga Sutras*. On top of that, a third major Hindu religion, Jainism, described the same ethical guidelines of *Astanga* yoga's first limb, and named them the *vratas* or "Five Vows"*--again, long before the *Yoga Sutras* were written.

Did all three sources separately invent such similar guidelines? It is unlikely. Rather, Buddha and the Jainists created their religions from many of the same sources as Patanjali did his sutras. That source was the oral tradition of the ancient Hindu Vedas.

In addition, it's quite possible that Patanjali made his list of eight limbs after consulting Buddha's Eightfold Path and, perhaps, the Jains' Five Vows. He also would have been aware of them in the India's marketplaces, which for many hundreds of years in his time were melting pots of many religions, cultures, ideas, beliefs, and practices. All those influences were shared not only on the streets, but also among yogis, scholars, and monks in public and private.

Thus the simplest historical interpretation may be that Patanjali decided to add an updated yoga version of the Eightfold Path and/or the Five Vows. Perhaps he felt his own list would be more in keeping with Hindu scripture, or even that it might work better for common use after the hundreds of years since Buddha and the Jains created theirs.

***Comment***: Translators and scholars have a variety of explanations for how the *Astanga* yoga section of the sutras was added to the book. Some argue, for example, that someone else added them (some say it was Vyasa, the book's first known editor). Another argument is that Patanjali himself may have written them when he was a young meditator and then added them much later as he wrote the *Yoga Sutras*.

Almost all translators agree, though, that the precepts of *Astanga* yoga, each taken separately, were taught by the ancient Vedic gurus and wisdom teachers many centuries before Buddha, Jainism, and Patanjali. The Vedic scriptures themselves speak, in their symbolic language, of several possible "folds" of eight. They contain, for example, an eight-footed path or method for the earth's eight points of guidance, and also eight wheels, cows, steeds, and chariots.

Two other reasons exist to believe the eight limbs were not written at the same time as the other sutras. First, the *Astanga* section—especially the first five limbs—uses a plainer, simpler style than the other parts of Patanjali's book. In addition, the first five limbs often repeat suggestions from other parts of the sutras; outside of this section, chapters show little repetition.

However, the *Astanga* section does fit well at this point in the *Yoga* Sutras—whether Patanjali inserted it himself from something he wrote at a much younger age, or someone else added them. The eight-limbs sutras emphasize that no matter how many spiritual experiences a seeker may have had, at some point he or she must bring a reasonable moderation to their ethics, inner discipline, and physical regimens. The limbs as described in the *Yoga Sutras* also reveal deep roots in ancient Vedic mystical practices that are windows to even earlier times and spiritual methods.

The limbs are simple—yes. But they remain relevant in all times as living guidelines for a good life. As such, they stand with other perennial-wisdom guides in the history of world religions, whether Buddhist or Jain; or, for example, the Abrahamic Ten Commandments of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*; or those of other long-lived cultures.

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*Healthy even in winter*

# *Sutras 2.28 - 2.29*

# *What is* Astanga *Yoga?*

## - The Eight Limbs -

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# ***Sutra* 2.28**: *Yoga-aṅga-anuṣṭhānād aśuddhi kṣaye jñāna-dīptir ā viveka-khyāteḥ*

## Why the Eight Limbs?

***Literal translation***: "Yoking the body members in dedicated performance, error dwindling, gnosis blazing all the way up to recognizing knowing"

***Meaning***: "Yoga's [eight] limbs, with dedicated practice, will wear away your faults, leading to a blazing and wise knowing by you that will go all the way up to recognizing (as in sutra 26) the difference between the Experiencer (your Self) and the experience."

***A chant in English***: "Eight Limbs practice will cleanse your unneeded swirls so your Self or Presence can shine."

***Definition***: "*Astanga* yoga" means "eight-limbed" or "eight-part yoking." Each limb supports the other seven in the mind and body of a meditator. All eight are a guide for a person's True Self learning to live in the world and become more spiritual. This sutra points out that by adopting these eight standards, you not only live a better life but you also actually develop the pure, clear mind that Patanjali has so thoroughly discussed in Chapter 1. Whatever your level or stage of spiritual awareness, the eight limbs can help you.

***Comment***: An interesting question about *Astanga*'s eight limbs is whether the author meant them as steps to follow, one at a time, or as a group of actions a meditator uses whenever they are needed during a person's lifetime of spiritual growth. Which are they?

On the one hand, the similar Eightfold Path of Buddhism often is understood as a series of improvements that must be completed as individual steps accomplished in their specific order, first to last. On the other, five of the best-known English translators of the *Yoga Sutras*, Feuerstein, Hariharananda, Hartranft, Iyengar, and Satchidananda, among others, argue that the eight limbs are what might be called eight points on a compass that you must develop continually, review regularly, and perfect slowly during a lifelong practice of meditation.

Hariharananda, an early-1900s, cave-dwelling yoga mystic, says, for example, "Many think that Yamas...have to be practiced first, then Niyamas" (the first two limbs). "That is wrong. "From the very beginning, Dharana [the sixth limb]

favourable to [the first five] has to be practiced."*

Part of answering the "steps vs. compass points" question revolves around another problem: what perhaps should be called "the myth of the single enlightenment." In this myth, many beginners assume that when a meditator finds *samadhi*, *nirvana*, *satori*, a "born-again" descent of light, or some other such awakening, that person is changed forever and no longer needs to worry about guidelines or further personal growth. He or she thus, according to the myth, can dispense with following such guidelines as the Eight Limbs, the Eightfold Path, the Ten Commandments, or other written standards.

However, that simply is not true. Buddha *came out of* his first nirvana after seven weeks. Jesus of Nazareth said on the cross, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" Every mystic who ever has lived will tell you (and many do, through their writings) that inner growth continues, even to the day you die. Thus the classic written and oral guidelines such as *Astanga* yoga still help everyone, even those with decades of meditation practice.

In this regard, there is the old story of a Hindu yogi living alone in the desert for many years, who decided he was advanced enough to make a trip to the nearby town without becoming corrupted. When he arrived, a parade was proceeding in the street. He stood, watching, behind a youth, when suddenly the boy stepped backward onto the yogi's bare foot, causing the older man great pain. In frustration, the yogi raised his hand to strike the boy. But then the older man became aware of what he was about to do. He stopped himself, turned around, and immediately began the journey back to his desert home. As he travelled, he said to himself, "The corruption I feared is not in the town. It is in me. I still need more years of meditation to rid myself of such impulses."

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## ***Sutra* 2.29**: *Yama niyama-āsana prāṇāyāma pratyāhāra dhāraṇā dhyāna samādhayo' aṣṭāu-aṅgāni*

### What are the Eight Limbs?

***Literal translation and meaning***:

"1. *Yama*: **Social guides**—Using a code of support for yourself when interacting with others
2. *Niyama*: **Inner guides**—Using a code of support for your own inner life with helpful observances, rituals, and/or spiritual or

psychological practices

3. *Asana*: **Posture**—Abiding in a comfortable position
4. *Pranayama*: **Breathing**—Controlling your breath
5. *Pratyahara*: **Sense withdrawal**—Going inward from and/or managing your world of the senses
6. *Dharana*: **Sustained attention**—Nurturing a concentrating mindfulness
7. *Dhyana*: **One-pointed focus**—Finding your meditative womb vision
8. *Samadhi*: **Absorption**—Integrating into, merging with, or joining the True Self [*Atman*] Ultimate Presence [*Brahman*/God], or Super-Consciousness

*Astau-angani*: Eight Limbs—[These are yoga's] eight limbs, members, parts, or components"

***A chant in English***: "The dance of meditation has eight limbs: Four are goodness without, goodness within, useful posture, and breathing well. Another four are going within, mindfully focusing, finding your vision, and merging with Self or Presence."

***Definition***: These eight guides for living the meditative life—the life of yoga—were part of an ancient code of conduct. The ancient rishis of the *Vedas* established them perhaps as long ago 1500-2000 BCE and passed them down orally. When Jainism and then Buddhism, were developed—roughly about 500 BCE—they incorporated parts of these guidelines as the Five Vows (Jainism) and the Eightfold Path to Liberation (Buddhism). In the Hindu *Yoga Sutras* listing of them, they are called the Eight Limbs, reminiscent of ancient statues of the elephant avatar Ganesha or the warrior goddess Durga, holder of many weapons.

The first four limbs clearly have to do with life in the external world. They encourage you to develop an ethical way of life outwardly and inwardly, and to adopt a reasonable physical posture and breathing pattern that will help you become more inward.

The second group of four deliver you to that inward journey. First, you pay more attention to what happens within, thus withdrawing at least some of your attention from the outer world, especially in meditation. Second, you learn increasingly to

nurture or build your focused attention, also sometimes called "mindfulness." Third, you find your "one-pointedness"—your main vision, sound, or feeling that acts like a raft helping you cross to the True Self/Ultimate Presence. Then, fourth, you submerge yourself in—merge increasingly more often with—that Self/Presence.

The steps are simple. The practice of them will keep you busy for a lifetime.

***Comment***: Why did a later editor of the *Yoga Sutras*—or possibly Patanjali himself—add the eight limbs of *Astanga* to an otherwise complete book? The answer may lie in the society surrounding him. His times were dramatically different for teaching spiritual practices.

In the beginning of Hindu times in India, thousands of years ago, the ancient rishis—accomplished mystics—developed the oral stories that eventually would become the Vedas. The roots of the Eight Limbs—and of the Eightfold Path and Jain Five Vows—were established then. Gurus passed them down to disciples one or a few at a time, who then would pass them down to their followers. Quite possibly, a guru would take on a student as the beginning of his or her (female rishis and students existed, then) discipleship, requiring them to practice the early steps of ethics, inner disciplines, breathing, and posture first—for years.

However, in the centuries of Patanjali's era,* written scriptures had spread. Society also had changed. Cities and towns were active supermarkets of many local and foreign goods, cultures, and spiritual techniques from several religions.

Some of the written scriptures were new medical texts, such as the *Ayurveda*. These health texts started the oldest practical system of healing in the world, India's Ayurvedic medicine. It used dissection of corpses, surgeries, herbs, and other means to understand the human body systematically, cure diseases, and increase longevity. Ayurvedic medicine was organized in eight "*anga*" or "limbs," which required that each aspect of scientific health balance with the other seven.

The *Yoga Sutras* were written, say most historians, after the appearance of the *Ayurveda*. Patanjali or a later editor of the *Sutras* would have been very aware of the new medicine's eight-limbed system. This may have caused the elements of *Astanga* yoga to be gathered into eight equally important parts. Clearly the different aspects of *Astanga* existed in the oldest scriptures. But the *Ayurveda* may have hastened the gathering of *Astanga* into eight sections in the *Sutras*—like eight spokes of a wheel or compass points, keeping all steps balanced with each other.

Another reason for the addition of eight-limbed yoga to the *Sutras* may have been a greater need for meditators' independence. All of the *Yoga Sutras* is a written set of instructions useful for individual meditators working on their own—a modernist change in a new age of the written word, circumscribing the need for passing down everything by oral instruction alone.

*Ancient Cedar with Two Trunks and Many Limbs*

# *Sutras 2.30 - 2.32*

# *What are the 1st Two Limbs of* Astanga *Yoga?*

## - The Social *Yamas* and Inner *Niyamas* –

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***Sutra* 2.30**: *Ahiṁsā satya asteya*
*brahmacarya-aparigrahāḥ yamāḥ*

**Of the first limb, *Yama*,**
**what are the five individual parts?**

***Literal translation and meaning***:

"a. *Ahimsa*: **Not hurting**—harmlessness (in all five of these *yamas*)

b. *Satya*: **true to Self/Presence**—truth in seeking word and deed

c. *Asteya*: **not stealing**—not taking for yourself what isn't yours

d. *Brahmacarya*: **God, moving to**—physical movement for/with the Supreme

e. *Aparigraha*: **not grasping**—not giving in to uncontrollable selfishness

—*Yama*: **[These five define] *'Yama'***—a self-control code for your social life."

***A chant in English***: "Live to not hurt, lie, steal, or grasp, and move with God."

***Definition***: "No harm" is the key phrase in the ethical codes of *Yama*. Don't hurt yourself or others. This means not harming your own and others' bodies, not hurting factual truth, others' property, or your own and others' physical and sexual welfare, and not unbalancing your own needs by becoming grasping.

These are not hard and fast absolutes requiring you to be harshly limiting, over-ascetic, and expectant of everyone around you following nit-picking rules. Rather, the "no-harms" are simple but major guidelines. They require individual monitoring of yourself, learning, balance, growth in your life and circumstances, and deep consideration of others. For example, stealing generally is bad, but if you steal bread as the only way to keep a child from dying, that may be the lesser harm.

***Comment***: One of the most troubling of the *yamas* to many people is *brahmacarya*, often translated as "celibacy." But this is not its root meaning. The original word tends to convey the idea of "Supreme movement or conduct in walking." That translation suggests non-harmfulness to all physical movements in tune with God or the Spirit.

This means that as you gradually discover your higher and deeper energies over years of time, you learn to bring a mindfulness to each physical act, each moment of bodily movement. This is much closer to the original meaning of "**God, moving to**—physical movement for/with the Supreme." Those who meditate using spiritual dance, for example, are very aware of this: their meditative movements are tuned to giving and receiving in a physical, harmonic dance with spirit.

Concerning sexuality, this means that as in all other physical activity, gradually

learning to give it to spirit is the best policy. Doing so with balance, meaning, and mindfulness leads even the strongest physical ecstasies to Self/Presence.

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## ***Sutra* 2.31**: *Jāti deśa kāla samaya-anavacchinnāḥ sarva-bhaumā mahāvratam*

### Are the *Yamas* universal?

***Literal translation***: "Begetting situation, location, era—all joining together—not cutting down the universal brilliance of this Great Willingness"

***Meaning***: "Your birth in society, place in space, and time—none of these stop the light of the universal Great Conduct of the *yamas*."

***A chant in English***: "No matter who, when, or where you are or have been, the light of the *yamas* continues."

***Definition***: These principles were encoded in scriptures by mystics not just because morality is needed for society to work, but also because it is necessary for progressing in meditation to higher and deeper spiritual and mystical levels. Feuerstein says in his commentary on this sutra, "Patanjali's ethical code is substantially identical with the moral principles advocated by the major religions of the world."

The *yamas* apply to both you and your interactions with others around you. The spiritual progress of you as an individual and your society are inextricably interwoven as moral acts and inner growth.

***Comment***: This guideline becomes even more important when you realie that through meditation, almost all people become more sensitive to others' feelings and needs. As a result, if you want to continue long-term progress in meditation, you cannot decide to cut out or block others' feelings. What you do to others will cause them to have thoughts and feelings, which you, too, will experience to some degree. Their reactions become part of your own psychic atmosphere.

Hindu yoga psychology describes the influences of others' feelings around you. Each person radiates a set of feelings that can vary from hour to hour and day to day. As you become more sensitive to others, you may more easily absorb their feelings temporarily. It is as if their air and waters are, for example, red and salty: then your

own may become more red and salty, too.

If you do not let their feelings attach to you, then those feelings will pass, even if they create a brief, temporary whirlpool in or around you. And if their feelings are too much for you to handle in a calm, meditative way, it is acceptable to withdraw from them for a time, perhaps longer: this is one of the main reasons people going through new spiritual experiences must withdraw for a time from much of society.

However, as your own inner "waters" of thoughts and feelings become increasingly clear, consistent, and strong, your presence around others sometimes can help them calm their own air and waters. Then your conduct of following the *yamas* becomes not just an example for them but an instrument of peace.

On the one hand, as a good meditator, you aren't required by any special law of the universe to spend extraordinary amounts of time living out others' worries and problems. To the contrary, this is self-punishment that may prevent you from meditating well.

On the other hand, however, you will experience others' reactions to you: you'll reap what you sow. At the least, for peace, calm, and love in your own psychological ecosphere, as well as the world, you can resolve to think well of people and hope for their balance and happiness.

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## ***Sutra* 2.32**: *Śauca saṁtoṣa tapaḥ svādhyāy-Iśvara-praṇidhānā-ani niyamāḥ*

**Of the second limb, *Niyama*,**
**what are the five individual parts?**

***Literal translation and meaning***:

"a. *Sauca*: **Pure golden radiance**—cleanliness, a shining inside and out

b. *Samtosa*: **Not seeking more materially**—satisfaction with this golden radiance

c. *Tapah (Tapas)*: **Fiery/heated will**—burning fervor [hot on the trail of] inner growth

d. *Svadhyaya*: **Study going near to Self**—studying of books and use of mantras (chants or repetitive prayers) to find your true self

e. *Isvara pranidhana*: **God, full openness to**—situating your life's moments to God's Presence

—*Ani niyamah*: **The group *Niyama***—as a group, these are the Niyamas."

***A chant in English***: "Be pure in the flow of life, content with its brightness, strong of inner will, searching for Self, and open to Presence."

***Definition***: The *Niyamas* are guidelines for your inner life. In the writing of a sutra, often the first element is the most important. So it is here: "pure golden radiance." The others in the list are variations of that theme.

Many translations, unfortunately, use nothing more than the word "clean" for the first *Niyama*, as if washing yourself is most important. Such cleanliness is just one aspect of this sutra. Using root words from Vedic times, a more basic meaning of this first element is "pure radiance." It implies the golden purity of Hinduism's most basic substance in the universe, the light-gold strings of vibration that contain God-created matter: the Hindu *dharma* or golden substance that controls the workings of the universe. The other four *Niyamas* include not seeking more physical essence or matter than just this radiance, maintaining a fiery will and mental search for this inner truth, and keeping yourself open to the resulting discovery of the True Self/Presence it reveals.

***Comment***: The five *Niyamas* do not require rigid obedience. Rather, they suggest a way of life for you gradually to develop inner growth. For example, the famous early-medieval Christian mystic St. Augustine of Hippo admitted that when he was a young man starting to be converted to a spiritual way of life, he prayed, "Lord, give me chastity, but do not give it yet."* Later, he grew into what he considered an inwardly appropriate lifestyle for himself. He also counseled others to follow what he called a "middle path"—a path of marriage that was neither a rigid ascetic withdrawal from normal living nor a lifestyle of lush pleasure-seeking. In suggesting this "middle path," he was much like the Buddha, who taught the Eightfold Middle Path of Buddhism.

Another interesting facet of Patanjali's *Niyamas* comes from Iyengar. He views the five as reflections of the five traditional Hindu *kosha* or layers of a human as described in Sutra 1.2. He also relates them to the five basic elements taught by Greek and other philosophies in the West. He says in his commentary on this sutra, "These five observations accord with the five [*kosha*] sheaths of [humans] and the elements of nature: the anatomical (earth), physiological (water), psychological (fire),

intellectual (air) and spiritual (ether) layers." Iyengar's commentary further suggests the Hindu ancients taught the *Niyamas*, just as they did the *kosha* and the five elements of matter.

Worth noting, too, is that much of this sutra repeats what Patanjali's says earlier in Sutra 2.1. This repetition is a further indication that Patanjali or another author may have written the *Astanga* yoga section at a different time and added much of it to the *Yoga Sutras*.

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*Beautiful Limbs*

# *Sutras 2.33 - 2.39:*

# *What is more detail about the 1st Limb of* Astanga *Yoga?*

## - The Five Social-Guide *Yamas* -

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## ***Sutra* 2.33**: *Vitarka bādhane pratiprakṣa bhāvanam*

**How can you practice the 1st of the five *Yamas*, *Ahimsa* or "Nonviolence"?**

***Literal translation***: "Unwholesome cogitation—repelling it, the opposite becoming"

***Meaning***: "When negative thoughts disturb, repel them by empowering their opposite."

***A chant in English***: "When doubts and bad thinking invade, wipe them away with their opposites."

***Definition***: This is, in its simplest form, a suggestion that you often can break the power of a negative idea or feeling by thinking or feeling its positive opposite. This process does not mean that all bad can be destroyed by thinking nothing but good. However, sometimes you can stare into the depths of a bad feeling. And then you can banish it by thinking of its opposite. For example, you might deconstruct an emotion of hate by instead creating thoughts and feelings of love or comfort—a sort of emotional decision to turn the other cheek.

***Comment***: The use of the first word in this sutra, *Vitarka*, or "Unwholesome cogitation," is very different from Patanjali's use of it in the same word early, in Sutra 1.17. There he uses it in a very positive way as "reasoning." This stark difference is another potential inference that the first five limbs of *Astanga* yoga may have been added here later. Even so, this sutra offers a strong useful lesson.

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## ***Sutra* 2.34**: *Vitarkā hiṁsādayaḥ kṛṭa kārita-anumoditā lobha krodha moha pūrvakā mṛḏu Madhya-adhimātrā duḥkha-ajñāna-ananta phalā iti pratiprakṣa bhāvanam*

**Why is this 1st *Yama*, *Ahimsa* or "nonviolence," so necessary?**

***Literal translation***: "Unwholesome cogitation: hurtings etc. performed, caused to be performed, or applauded—from desires, anger, or deluded viewpoints small, moderate, or extreme—grating pain and not knowing unending fruits. Thus the [need for] opposite becoming"

***Meaning***: "Negative thoughts are hurtful and violent truths when you think them, cause them to happen, or take pleasure in them. Whether you do so from your desires, angers, or false beliefs—in small, medium or large measure—they come from and lead to painful suffering and unending ignorance as they spread and ripen. Thus you should creaate opposite thoughts."

***A chant in English***: "Your bad thoughts, no matter how small, hurt you and others always, whatever your reasons, spreading troubles and blindness that ripen beyond you."

***Definition***: This sutra explains why you should replace negative thoughts with positive ones. If you don't, you become a harsh rock thrown into not only your own pool of calmness but also the lake of society, spreading bad ripples everywhere. You can't just fake positivity; you must *be* it, however hard you must work to learn it.

Ancient Hindu Ayurvedic medicine—and now Western medical science—teaches that excessive negative thinking not only can make you emotionally and psychologically unhappy and unbalanced. It also literally can make you more inclined to be physically ill and take longer to recover from sickness.

***Comment***: Certainly, avoiding a lot of negative thinking is good advice for an individual. What also is significant here is how the sutra explains that such thinking is a poison that spreads throughout society. It is the bad word left hanging in the air that stops conversation at an enjoyable gathering; the hurtful comment that someone remembers for years as a painful earworm; or the spontaneous loud, troubling declaration of emotion that others pick up and amplify, making it into a false rallying cry for thousands or millions through months or decades.

All this, says *Astanga* yoga, is why we need to counteract negative thinking. It is a version of the universal Golden Rule in many societies and religions: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

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## *Sutra* 2.35:

## *Ahiṁsā pratiṣṭhāyaṁ tat sannidhau vaira tyāghaḥ*

### What happens when this 1st *Yama*, "nonviolence," is established?

***Literal translation***: "A no-hurtings-energy steadfastness: within its presence, enmity of others abandoned"

***Meaning***: "When nonviolence is established as a state of being within you, its very presence can cause your hostilities and those within others to dissipate."

***A chant in English***: "Be one with Peace to melt anger within and

without."

***Definition***: This *Yama* begins a series of ten sayings—five *Yamas* and five *Niyamas* — that can be called the "ten stabilities," also sometimes known as the "Ten Observations" or "Ten Virtues." They are not rarified mystical or spiritual perfections; rather, they are practical states of thinking and acting that are within the power of almost everyone to do. They also are guideposts of ethical behavior, both outer (the *Yamas*) and inner (the *Niyamas*).

***Comment***: The first two "Limbs" of yoga have served for thousands of years as guidelines in Hinduism for all living beings. In this way, they resemble Moses' Ten Commandments in the West's Judaic, Christian, and Muslim codes, and similar simple, direct, yet deep guides in other cultures and religions.

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## ***Sutra* 2.36**: *Satya pratiṣṭhāyaṁ kriyā-phala-āśrayatvam*

### How can you practice the 2nd of the five *Yamas*, "Truthfulness"?

***Literal translation***: "A truthfulness steadfastness: actions' fruits resting strongly in it"

***Meaning***: "When honesty is established within you, your activities' results can rely upon it."

***A chant in English***: "Tell the truth; it ripens into results."

***Definition***: This sutra—the second of the stabilities, Observations, or Virtues—says that truth-telling is such a potent force that it almost seems to predict or cause what will happen. It does not mean, as some translations imply, that you control the future. Rather, truth-telling helps a more accurate version of the future to be seen.

For example, if I say, "The moon has been destroyed" on a night when it is invisible in its new-moon phase, then people will be confused when it reappears. But if I say, instead, "The moon is there but covered in shadow," then this helps people more accurately understand the phases of the moon. Knowing this creates more clarity for everyone.

Historically, in the ancient Vedic scriptures, telling the truth was very important. *Sutras* translator the Reverend Jaganath Carrera says in his commentary on this sutra, "In Hindu tradition and mythology, there is a great emphasis on...keeping

one's word.... Before there were courts [and] the written word and contracts—there was one's word.... Break your word and you became someone...not trusted." This sutra helped codify, orally, the great importance of truth-telling.

Another important note about this sutra is its first word, which comes from *Sat.* This word means, for meditation, "the Peace of the holy"—or what in the West sometimes is called "The Peace That Passeth Understanding." Thus "Truthfulness" is, ultimately, a state of perfected authenticity, honesty, or a best reflection on reality, resting in its own great calmness and simple quietude, outer and inner. In this state of being, telling the truth is neither a game nor a series of logical suppositions: rather, it is a knowing—being in harmony, a restful balance—of reality as you best are aware of it. It is not an abstract, ideological truth. It is, instead, a living *kriya* or "action."

***Comment***: "Truthfulness" also helps you and others act to move forward in life more authentically and purely. Hindu mystic and Vedic scholar Sri Aurobindo says that as we rise to higher levels of consciousness, we forego lower fates to find ourselves in higher and better ones—thus we find freedom from these lesser mechanisms that control us.* A clearer and more perfect level of freedom awaits those who practice telling the best truth.

For example, if I have experienced deep love with my spouse, I might tell others, "You should marry so that you, too, can find love as I have." However, if I have meditated deeply and learned more of the true nature of love, I might instead say, "The truth of the matter is this: profound love is available to everyone if they but look for it, whether in marriage, outside of it, or within." And socially—ethically—saying this might release others to find strong love not just with a spouse, but also with friends and, indeed, in oneself, especially through the Self/Presence.

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## *Sutra* 2.37:

## *Asteya-pratiṣṭhāyāṁ sarva-ratna-upasthānam*

### How can you practice the 3rd of the five *Yamas*, "Non-Stealing"?

***Literal translation***: "A non-stealing steadfastness: all gems approaching"

***Meaning***: "When you establish non-stealing within you, life's treasures appear."

***A chant in English***: "Don't wish for others' possessions. Then you'll find your own wealth."

***Definition***: The traditional surface meaning of this sutra is, "Being grounded in non-stealing, all jewel(s) appear." However, Feuerstein notes that "I.K. Taimni remarked, it 'does not mean that precious stones begin to fly through the air and fall at [your] feet.'"

Most translators of this *Astanga* sutra agree that the deeper meaning is that by not stealing—or perhaps even by not desiring—others' possessions, you will receive better treasures. They may be material goods, or perhaps they are a greater appreciation of the "gems" you already possess in your inner life.

For example, if you stop stealing or even desiring the fancier, more expensive clothes or vehicle your neighbor owns, you then will begin to better see and appreciate your own inner gifts of patience, tolerance, and even love. It is acceptable to admire the beauty or utility of others' possessions, but, says the Eight Limbs, you should not spend a lot of your time doing so. Rather, learn to appreciate what you already have. If you really need something material for better yoga practice, it will find its way to you.

***Comment***: There is another possible symbolic meaning in this sutra. One way of translating the root words is this: "By practicing desireless-ness for what is around you, the 'jewels' within you will appear"; and these "jewels" might refer to the chakra energy wheels of Hinduism mentioned in Sutra 2.27 and its Endnote." *Astanga* yoga precepts were developed in oral tradition about the same time that the Vedic scriptures were being developed. In those scriptures, precious stones, jewels, gems, and pearls sometimes are symbols for the chakras.

For example, in the *Yajur Veda*, Lord Agni—a divine aspect of the golden fire of the universe, is the "bestower of jewels" who "bestow[s] upon us that radiant wealth...bestowing seven jewels in every home."* In symbolic language, these likely are the seven primary energy centers in each human body.

Or in the *Rig Veda*, Lord Savitar acts in like manner: "Borne in his golden chariot [body], Savitar, God who looks on every creature...moves by the upward path, the downward; with two bright Bays [horses], chariot decked with pearl, of various colours, lofty, with golden pole...."* In Kundalini yoga, the energy serpent Kundalini ascend and descends along the "golden pole" or spine. Two "bright Bays" or channels—called *ida* and *pingala* in Kundalini yoga—are close by on either side; and the chakras, "pearls," indeed shine with "various colours."

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# *Sutra* 2.38:

## *Brahman-carya pratiṣṭhāyāṁ vīrya-lābhaḥ*

**How can you practice the 4th of the five *Yamas*, "Going to God"?**

***Literal translation***: "Brahman (God)-related physical movements with steadfastness: subtle energy obtained"

***Meaning***: "When a spiritual physicality is rooted within you, you will acquire new vital energy."

***A chant in English***: "Move your body with God to find the energy of the Presence."

***Definition***: This sutra was mistranslated for well over a thousand years. Medieval times were tough throughout the world, and going to a monastery or even becoming a hermit often was safer than remaining in a pestilence- and war-plagued society, all of which was male dominated. *Brahmancarya*, or "celibacy," came to mean "stop having sex."

However, a deeper meaning of *Brahman* + *carya* from Vedic roots is "God movement": physical movement with God. Spiritual dancers have it. So do those who sway and swing with the Spirit as they sing God's songs or chant divine praises. Those whose physical body processes are working fully and well in healing flow during meditation also are "moving physically with God."

Newer interpretations point to how *brahmancarya* also can be translated as "moderation." Iyengar, for example, tells the story of "the great yogi Vasista" who "had one hundred children" but was considered chaste. "Continence or control in no way belies or contradicts the enjoyment of pleasure," says Iyenger. It is when sensory pleasure is the sole motivating factor" that such continence "is infringed."*

The second part of this sutra, equally important, is about how moving with God" provides more "subtle energy." What, in Hinduism, is this subtle energy? It is the background essence of the universe that pervades you, body and soul, sending shivers up your spine and pleasant tingles on your skin; a flow like water or a fresh breeze in the body; and sudden increases in heart and pulse rates, even warming your body. It also is responsible for much of the pleasures felt during sex. On the negative side, it is the additional energy coming into you in waves of fear, anger, or frustration. All of these are powerful experiences, good and bad.

***Comment***: We live in a world with much stimulation of our energy, sexual,

emotional, artistic, and intellectual. We are in, fact, bombarded so much that most of us have learned to desensitize ourselves. Though going to a monastery, mountaintop, convent, or cave can help us escape, few of us can—or even want to—take this option. Thus it becomes important to learn moderation in what we absorb, and what we do, so that our "subtle energy" does not fly off the scale, our emotions stay even, and our lives feel relatively stable.

Using anything other than very mild amounts of alcohol and drugs or engaging in anger and violence to help us balance our extremes of energy are bad for us. Science says that other forms of "relaxation"—the hypnotic effects of television, video games, and social media—also aren't very healthy, except in very mild dosages.

Energy in the body works better, say hundreds of research studies, through meditation, exercise, time in nature or the sounds and sights of it, and even hot, relaxing baths (according to one Japanese study). Good sleep and eating also are important if you want to move with God.

Regarding sex, on the one hand, many scientific studies point to the benefits to the organs and body of an active sex life. One European study even suggests that near-daily orgasm in males lowers the incidence of prostate cancer.*

On the other hand, a life spent pursing it for its own sake is almost like a desperate plea by the person for the bodily pleasures of the spirit at any cost. Hindu and Buddhist scriptures about the *jhanas* (*janas*) and *dharma megha* (*dammamegha*) talk about intermediate and advanced yogis experiences of moderate to intense physical states of pleasure throughout the body when meditating.*

These sensations are different from—but not unlike—sexual pleasure. For medieval mystics, this physical joy from God sometimes may have been one of the hardest fruits of the spirit* to accept. Patanjali himself discusses *dharma megha* as an endpoint in the last five sutras of this book.

Finding that pleasure, though, requires moderation in many other ways in life. The pursuit of sex for its own sake—like the use of heroin and other drugs that provide an intense, almost sexual rush—brings with it disturbing physical results in the body and in life. Unregulated sex can lead to wildly unbalancing emotions for one or both partners and a forgetfulness of the spirit that underlies it. Again, in moderation, sexual feelings and experiences can lead to discovery of "moving with God."

For meditation, such moderation means greater and more frequent general energy for living and focusing. In all things physical, "moving with God" is the ideal toward which to build.

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# *Sutra* 2.39:

## *Aparigraha sthairye janma-kathaṁtā saṁbodhaḥ*

### How can you practice the 5th of the five *Yamas*, "Non-Covetousness"?

***Literal translation***: "Nongrasping in standing: begettings, their 'why' knowing"

***Meaning***: "As you no longer hang on selfishly to belongings, feelings, and thoughts—and stand firmly in this—then your birth purposes (begettings) will become better known to you."

***A chant in English***: "Let go of your ego so your past and future makes sense."

***Definition***: This sutra means that if you let go of grasping what you possess, then the deeper purposes of your existence will become clearer. It doesn't mean you must give away all your possessions. Rather, you must learn not to clutch at them for comfort, not as excuses, and not to create distractions. This applies both to external material objects and to internal ones such as selfish thoughts, emotions, and habits. Be willing to let them go, at first in meditation, then gradually in life.

Many of them may not have to go, as they may be useful or even necessary to the good you are doing in your life and your assigned jobs or responsibilities in it. But you must be willing, at least, to distance yourself from them enough that, if necessary, you could walk away from them in the search for living the complete truth.

***Comment***: Long ago there were three kings in three parts of India. The first, throughout his life, held his sword and his pouches of gold close to his body at all times, even as he slept. He killed others to keep his throne, and he died groaning because he couldn't take his money and power with him to the afterlife.

The second king, as he grew in age and love of his family, gradually distributed all his gold and even his power over his ministers to his children. But as he lay on his deathbed, he was sad to see them fighting among each other and selfishly clinging to all the gold and the offices of leadership he was bequeathing them.

The last king undertook a long road of wisdom. He distributed his wealth among all of his subjects over the years, gave away his powers to so many leaders that they had to form a monthly congress to decide equally what to do in the

kingdom, and died as a monk who owned only his own clothes and bed, content that his kingdom was in the hands of the many who would work together. Only some of his children were with him on his deathbed, but dozens of followers also were there, and all of them surrounded him with love for his wisdom, kindness, and selflessness as he passed away.

When you have begun practicing the *Yama* of "moving to God" in the sutra previous to this one, you find that it is not always easy to maintain the necessary clarity and energy for it. That is why this present *Yama* of "no longer hang[ing] on selfishly to belongings, feelings, and thoughts" becomes important. This *Yama* not only allows you to keep "moving to God"—both as a physical discipline and a life journey—and also helps you discover what your purpose in life is.

That is the existential question. Why are you here? What do you want to accomplish, to do, to be in this real life that you are living? Denmark's Søren Kierkegaard, a famous 1800s existentialist theologian, said in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* that a person must make a "leap of faith" beyond normal thinking and feeling—a decision about who or what they are.

This *Yama* is saying that you already, on some level, have made that free choice. However, to find out what it is, you must raise your head out of the murky waters of life where you are submerged in self-centered possessions.

These possessions obviously include outer belongings. You don't have to suddenly sell all you own and become a beggar. However, you need to not be so attached to them that you would feel like you are dying if you had to get rid of them. They are passing phantoms in the night, says this sutra. All—every "thing" —goes away eventually. Can you reach a point at which you can give them up?

But this applies not just to material goods. It also means inner "belongings." Each person has certain thoughts—memories and ideas—that they cherish. They have specific emotions to which they regularly return to think about and feel. You don't have to deny any of them forever: examine them at times, if you wish, to see if you understand more about them. However, if you constantly return to them, they become structures that trap you in a windowless room, or crutches on which you regularly lean, preventing you from more clearly seeing what your purposes in life are. You can learn to give them up for the duration of a meditation period. And then, gradually, you can let them go—at least most of the time—in your regular life.

One significant meaning of the final word in this sutra, *sambodhaḥ*, is "together with awakening wisdom." The implication of this ancient word is that learning to be non-possessive inside and out leads to a blessed state of awakened awareness or wise knowing. This final thought thus concludes the five *Yamas*.

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*Inner Life of a Well-Watered Forest*

# *Sutras 2.40 - 2.45*

# *What is more detail about the 2nd Limb of* Astanga *Yoga?*

## - The Five Inner-Discipline *Niyamas* –

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***Sutra* 2.40**: *Śaucāt svāṅga-jugupsā parair-asaṁsargaḥ*

**How can you practice the 1st of the five *Niyamas*, *Sauca* or "Pure golden radiance—cleanliness, a shining inside and out"?**

***Literal translation***: "Cleanliness a golden shining in one's own limb, detachment from others' not-blessed emittings"

***Meaning***: "Keep your own limb (body and soul) shining with clean radiance, and detach yourself from emittings that are not blessed (pure)."

***A chant in English***: "Be clear in body and soul; don't muddy yourself with others' muddy swirls."

***Definition***: As Sutra 2.32 explains, the most ancient roots of saucat mean a "pure radiance." *Sauca* gradually came to mean cleanliness. In this sutra, keeping yourself "clean" means doing so not just outside your body, but also within.

As part of this cleanliness, the phrase *svanga-jugupsa* ("limb-protected" or "-detached") also is defined as accepting one's own body but not being controlled by its desires and those of others. Unfortunately, medieval and older modern translations use another definition, "body disgust." They call for a yogi to fight and get rid of all physical desire, his/her own and those of others they can sense, and suggest that the yogi should become a hermit or recluse.

The more ancient roots don't suggest rejection, say Feuerstein and several other contemporary translators. Instead, the original meaning simply implies that you keep your own body clean inside and out, physically and psychically, and protect or detach yourself from others' negative impulses. A desire to eat, to sleep, or, for example, to avoid violence are natural and useful as long as they do not rule you.

Let raw cravings, driving desires, and impulsive hungers diminish. The body gradually will become more attracted to healthy physical needs and wishes.

In addition, says this sutra in its ancient meaning, a life of "pure radiance" protects you from unwanted desires and impulses. An inner shining light gradually takes over, dissolving or "eating" negative impulses that may come from your depths, swirl around you, or transfer from others. Both Eastern and Western mystics long have taught that maintaining the body as a temple of the good, open to the divine, also makes it a house of greater safety.

***Comment***: In Vedic or proto-Vedic languages, there is no previous record before the writing of the *Yoga Sutras* of a reference to uncleanly "disgust with" or "detachment from" from the body. For this reason, some translators argue that this sutra is an invention made by Patanjali himself. However, this seems unlikely. It is out of character for him. Elsewhere in the *Sutras*, he shows more openness to the human body. If it is an invention placed here, it likely comes from a different author, added

later.

An interesting note is that this sutra refers to "your own *anga*" or "limb," which usually is translated as one's body. However, the word also can mean the male genital member or its "stirring" (and, one would assume or hope, the equivalent in a female). "Emittings" then would be translated as sexual releases that are pure in substance or intent, as opposed to impure. The idea of "pure emittings" once again calls up questions about sexuality and yoga in ancient times, contrasting with the medieval ages in East and West, when religions and ascetic withdrawal so often became inextricably linked and only people thought hermits were holy.

Sacred sexuality was, in fact, practiced for well over a thousand years, perhaps more, in yoga and Buddhist meditation and in Western earth religion. These practices often were secretive in medieval and modern times; in ancient eons, less so. In the East, Hindu and Buddhist tantric practices arose. In the West, especially in pre-Christian centuries, rituals existed in which human priests and priestesses joined as representatives of God and Goddess energies, or they individually merged with these energies. Such joining generally was performed alone as a type of sexual prayer or, at most, as joint meditation with a sacred partner.

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## ***Sutra* 2.41**: *Sattva-śuddhi saumanasya-ekāgrya-iṅdriya-jaya-ātma-darśana yogyatvāni ca*

### How does *Sattva* or "Rising-light Peace" add to the 1st of the five *Niyamas?*

***Literal translation***: "Rising-light peace, benevolent thinking, one-pointed concentration, body-instruments' winning-ness, True Self's direct-seeing capacity—in addition (added to the results from the previous sutra)"

***Meaning***: "Your rising awareness of peace, cheerfulness, attention, sensory control, and a Self that sees clearly—all these are further results from following *Sutra* 2.40."

***A chant in English***: "Gaining clear radiance brings peace, kindness, focus, sense control, and the True Self."

***Definition***: The "cleanliness inside and out" of *Sutra* 2.40 leads to other forms of

being radiant. One is a clearer, rising awareness. In Hinduism, this "*sattva*" is one of the three gunas or basic forces in the universe, and it means the inclination to rise upward to higher states of awareness or light; and *Sat* is one of the three primary qualities of the Godhead, a state of grace known as great Peace.

A second cleanliness or purity is a tendency to become more heartfelt. You find yourself becoming more benevolent, loving, and kind.

A third is greater ability to focus with better one-pointed concentration. This is very important in meditation, and it is a penultimate mental goal in *Astanga* yoga.

A fourth is to gain greater control of the body's sensory instruments, both of the five senses and of the inner mental and "feeling" senses. This means not letting them control you with their habits and desires.

The fifth is more frequent and clearer discovery of and living within the Atman. It is the True Self or spark of the divine within, comparable to Brahman or the Ultimate Presence outside of you. The Atman-Brahman experience is the ultimate state in *Astanga* yoga, through which all changes toeward ever greater spirituality are accomplished over years of practice.

***Comment***: This sutra's positive personality traits and the next sutra's "content-ment" and "joy" are *Astanga* yoga's version of the Judaic and Christian scriptures' "gifts" and "fruits" of the spirit. Many other religions describe such fruits, as well. They are the positive internal qualities that gradually come to define you when you follow a path of clarity and spirit. The Jewish Tanakh promises wisdom, good sense, guidance, strength, knowledge, and honor of God; justice, peace, quietude, and security (Isaiah 11.2-3 and 32.16-17).* The Christian New Testament names the fruits as affection, exuberance, serenity, consistency, compassion, awareness of holiness, loyalty, non-pushiness, and life balance (Galatians 5.22-23).* See the "Endnotes" for more details.

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## ***Sutra* 2.42**: *Saṁtoṣāt-anuttamah sukha-lābhaḥ*

### How can you practice the 2nd of the five *Niyamas*, *Samtosa* or "Not seeking more materially"?

***Literal translation***: "Contentment unexcelled = a wheeling flow of delight gained"

***Meaning***: "From your contentment with *Sutra 2.32*'s golden radiance

that is unsurpassed, your chariot-car of your body will obtain joy."

***A chant in English***: "Learn perfect contentment to attain joy."

***Definition***: This sutra simply explains that if you can learn inner contentment, you'll gain joy. Contentment is not nonresistance: it does not mean you give yourself up to whatever or whoever makes demands on you. Contentment also is not a complacency in which you are unwilling to change. Rather, you simply learn to rest at peace within yourself even as you decide what is best to do or not. In such inner peace lies the path to joy if you but let it bloom.

***Comment***: Hariharananda says in his translation of the previous sutra, "Without such a feeling of gladness, one-pointedness of mind is not possible, without which it is not possible to realise the Soul beyond the senses." He means, simply, that if you cannot learn at least some contentment—so you can settle your thoughts and emotions into a more neutral state for at least a short time for meditation—you will find meditating difficult. And you especially may have difficulty finding or sustaining the experience of the True Self or the Ultimate Presence.

Contentment, even if temporary—setting aside the troubles of the world and your own self for a few precious moments—thus is needed. The more you can cultivate such quietude and inner comfort, the more easily your meditation will flow.

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## ***Sutra* 2.43**: *Kāya indriya siddhih-aśuddhi-kṣayāt tapasaḥ*

### How can you practice the 3rd of the five *Niyamas*, *Tapas* or "Fiery/heated will"?

***Literal translation***: "Body's perfected-senses successful, from dwindling of the not-pure using burning"

***Meaning***: "Your material body's perfection of its sensory receivers is successful when you remove incoming impurities, doing this through burning them away."

***A chant in English***: "Burn your inner impurities to find the wind and rain of the pure."

***Definition***: The most common interpretation of this sutra from medieval times is that

you must have *tapasah* or a "burning" of your impurities through ascetic practices. However, there are problems with this interpretation. First, it does not mean that "burning" must involve pain or flame: a false belief spread by *fakirs*—those who display yogic powers for personal gain. Rather, "burning" means you must, in meditative practice, dissolve or dissipate mental and emotional imperfections.

In fact, sometimes in the Sutras, this particular word, tapasah, refers to "warming or heating exercise" as a way of burning your troubles. It is one of Patanjali's nineteen suggestions in Chapter 1 for finding the clear mind. In this sutra, it may also be a metaphor developed from ancient Hindu home life: thoroughly cooking your food to remove bad bacteria, or to use India's hot curries, which have antimicrobial properties. This kind of tapasah means properly "cooking" your inner spiritual self's "food" so it is clean.

Medieval translations also often assume this sutra requires an ascetic life of denial: give away all that you have, go live in a cave, avoid most people, sleep on the hard ground in rough wool clothes, or similar acts. Some medieval ascetics even have whipped and cut themselves, like the founder of one of the largest Christian Catholic sects, the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola. Thankfully, even those who try this approach to mysticism modify it as they reach success and discover a more middle path works better.

Yet another medieval misinterpretation is that this sutra's *tapasyah* or burning austerities are the road to discovering great yogic powers. They are called siddhis (here in this sutra, "siddhih"), and are described in detail in Chapter 3-B. The siddhis often are called the psychic or occult results of yoga. Just three examples are, as it was said in medieval times, that you can become bigger than the universe, control any person, or learn all of the future.

However, true mystics and advanced yogis will tell you that these powers are only side products of real yoga and should be paid little attention. Patanjali himself warns in Chapter 3-B that they are side attractions that should be ignored as you grow ever more in the spiritual life.

Fortunately, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, more translations have stated that *tapasyah* or "burning" can be a heating or warming exercise as above, or an inner yogic experience. In meditation practice, an inner "fire" that can feel like a flowing warm heat or a pleasant rain or fountain spreads through the body and the brain, dissolving negative emotional, mental, and sometimes even psychologically-induced physical bonds that previously have trapped you in their spiders' webs.

This experience is well supported both in ancient literature and in Western psychological literature. Ancient scriptures from many cultures speak of an inner fire or of inner waters that spring within, purifying. In Buddhism, for example, as

previously mentioned, they are the jhanas; in Buddhism and Hinduism, dharma megha (see "Appendix E" and "Appendix F.") In twenty-first century psychology, therapy helps you learn to observe your negative thoughts and feelings without reacting to them, and then you let them melt away, watching them disappear gradually under the gaze of your calm observation.

***Comment***: Noteworthy, too, is how some translators long have argued that a meditation practitioner must keep returning to all eight limbs of *Astanga* throughout life. Regarding *tapasyah* or burning of impurities, this is very sensible. Each stage or level of advancement in meditation has its own swirling clouds and muddy waters that will trouble you. The need exists for dissolving or dissipating them at every step. Jesus of Nazareth, for example, on his cross, did not calmly wait for death. Rather, he called out to God, "Why have you forsaken me?" What was he waiting for or expecting? At every stage of meditation there is opportunity for more cleansing and growth.

For this sutra, yet another interpretation also is available, perhaps the most ancient. The second word, *indriya* or "body senses," derives originally from the name of an ancient, major god, Indra. This symbolic god, according to the Vedas, was golden and rode on a rain cloud. Both the color and the cloud may refer to the state of *dharma megha* (Buddhist *jhanas*) mentioned above.

In the ancient Vedas, the god-force Indra, a symbol for inner meditation experience, is *dharma megha* riding a cloud of rain spreading throughout you as you meditate. In the West long ago, mystery cults celebrated it as the ecstasy of the Goddess or the God. In Christianity and Islam, it was known as ecstatic contemplation or union.

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## ***Sutra* 2.44**: *Svā-adhyāyāt-iṣṭa-devatā-saṁprayogaḥ*

### How can you practice the 4th of the five *Niyamas*, *Svadhyaya* or "Study going near to Self "?

***Literal translation***: "Study of Self (through) Truth (in revealed-scripture readings, bringing) desired shining one—a blessed joining forth together"

***Meaning***: "Your studying of your True Self (as in *Sutra* 2.32) through Truth (in readings and sayings) will bring you to your desired blessed state of Self/Presence in yoga union."

## *A chant in English*: "Study revealed truths for union with Self and/or Presence."

***Definition***: This sutra, like others, has been understood in a variety of ways through the centuries. One common mistranslation that comes to us from medieval Hinduism is that *istadevata* ("desired shining one") means you should desire or decide upon a Hindu god of your choice. Medieval Hinduism lists dozens of gods and demigods from which to choose.

However, many scholars and mystics now consider this translation limiting. Sri Aurobindo, for example, one of India's most respected translators of the *Rig Veda* into English, reminds readers that the ancient Hindu gods were symbols for spiritual energies and states of being, not actual deities.* Thus what comes to you as a "desired shining one" is not a "god" but rather a spiritual energy or experience.

A second point relates to "the expectation from ancient times to read or listen to the "Truth" through revealed scriptures or chants from them. In ancient times, about the only way of transmitting "Truth" was through sayings and recorded scriptures. Perhaps just 1-2% of the population could read, and everyone else depended on listening to oral sayings repeated through many centuries.

Now in contemporary times, most translators understand that "Truth" is available not only from writings and audiotapes describing spiritual experiences, but also directly from mystical and spiritual experiences themselves. In other words, "Truth" is just scriptural. It also can come non-scriptural books, articles, and other methods of learning. The ways to find Self/Presence are like hundreds of paths surrounding a great mountain, twisting about and joining each other, the higher you climb. Millions of people each day throughout the world are padding upward along one trail or another, working their way toward the peak.

***Comment***: Patanjali points out time and again in Chapter 1 that you should find your own personal way—your point of focus or experience—that takes you toward the True Self or Ultimate Presence. This sutra emphasizes the message when it suggests you discover your own *istadevata*: your "desired shining one" or "blessed state."

A final point about this sutra is that it may be a follow up to the mention of the god-force Indra in the previous one. In Sutra 2.43, Indra is the "shining one." Now here in 2.44, he may be the "desired shining one" with his mystical raincloud of golden essence.

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# ***Sutra* 2.45**: *Samādhi-siddhiḥ īśvara-praṇidhānāt*

## How can you practice the 5th of the five *Niyamas*, *Isvara pranidhana* or "Full Openness to God"?

***Literal translation***: "*Samadhi* a power perfected or attained by God-dedication"

***Meaning***: "*Samadhi* (a blessed paired union of pure Awareness) becomes a power that is refined or strengthened by merging into the Ultimate Presence."

***A chant in English***: "The clear mind, *Samadhi*, will lead you to the power of knowing the Presence."

***Definition***: This sutra concludes the five *Niyamas* and, with them, the second limb of *Astanga* yoga. Like the other four *Niyamas*, this final one is part of developing personal control of your inner life. To follow it, you are not required to retreat from life and become a monk or nun (though you may, if you wish). Rather, this sutra is saying that applying yourself and/or giving your devotion or surrender to *Isvara* (*Ishvara*), the "Lord of Yoga," can lead to experiencing the pure awareness that is called *samadhi* (see *Sutra* 1.20).

Who or what is the "Lord of Yoga"? There are many interpretations, but in general, most translators consider *Isvara* to be a mystic, unembodied, ultimate God, or an "arm" or aspect of the Godhead that is accessible by mystical experience. In this respect, *Isvara* refers to a real power of a deity, the same one that the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) call Yahweh/Elohim, God, and Allah.

The ancient messages of the *Niyamas* likely were important teachings long before Patanjali. Their lesson is that you can experience ultimate Awareness and have union with God by becoming devoted, surrendering, or applying yourself to Self/Presence.

This sutra also calls *samadhi* a *siddhi* or "spiritual power." This is quite different from other parts of Patanjali's book, in which the *siddhis* are more akin to supernatural, psychic, or occult powers. However, in this sutra, the meaning clearly is that during meditation, when you learn to give your Awareness to the Ultimate Presence, you experience a type of *samadhi* that becomes a very strong experience. In the *Niyamas*, this *samadhi* power is similar to other pure spiritual experiences such as a great Peace or Bliss/Joy, an inner event that clears away lesser thoughts, memories, and feelings.

***Comment***: Regarding Isvara, does this sutra imply you must join with God to reach samadhi? Many traditional interpretations say "yes." However, some contemporary translators, working with a variety of ancient sources, are beginning to realize that a yogic joining with God is just one path to finding samadhi—not an absolute necessity. The reverse can happen—first you find sam*adhi*, without Knowing God, and that leads to finding the Self/Presence.

In fact, Patanajali's intent in Chapter 1 seems to be this very progression of discoveries—the clear mind and samadhi first; then this leads inevitably, sooner or later, to mystical experience. In this regard, well worth remembering is that Patanjali lists such simple physical activities as "hot" or "warming" exercise, a practice of deep breathing, a focus upon a "white light" that may appear, and several other activities (among his nineteen methods) that can lead to the clear mind and samadhi without yet finding God. Perhaps Patanjali wrote it when he was much younger, or someone else added it.

However, in another way, this sutra almost seems like a beginning historical point for Patanjali to decide to write the Yoga Sutras. Why? Because of its four words are keys to the meaning of the entire book.

First is samadhi, the ultimate state of pure awareness, the famous goal of the Sutras. Second is siddhih, meaning a supernatural or psychic power, one of many that dominate the siddhi section of the Sutras, which is most of Chapter 3. Third is Isvara, referring to Patanjali's idea of God or the Godhead. And fourth is pranidhanat, which Patanjali uses several times in the Yoga Sutras to indicate devotion or surrender. These four words are four of the great themes spread throughout the rest of the book.

Historical and cultural research and close reading of the Yoga Sutras suggests Patanjali was a mystic who used many ideas from the Vedas as his guideposts in understanding and explaining himself. Perhaps here is an intrinsic psychological high point in his studies—a single Niyama that helped him bring his thinking together. Thus are masterpieces of world literature developed.

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*Keeping a Straight Back*

# *Sutras 2.46 - 2.48*

# *What is the 3rd Limb of* Astanga *Yoga?*

## *- Asana* (Posture) –

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## ***Sutra* 2.46**: *Sthira sukham-āsanam*

### What is a basic yoga posture?

***Literal translation***: "Steady-standing, a well-lubricated axle-hole, in posture"

***Meaning***: "A firmly set, smoothly-moveable position in which you can use and hold a good posture is *Asana* (the third Limb)."

***A chant in English***: "Find the moveable positions for meditating."

***Definition***: In *Astanga* or Eight-Limbed yoga, *Asana*—the postures or positions —are discussed in only three sutras, a rather small portion compared to how important they are in many yoga systems today. This sutra thus implies that though posture is important, it is less so than your internal states. This sutra suggests three elements:

**Three Elements of *Asana* or Posture**

(1) Find postures that are stable and effective.

(2) Like a well-oiled axle hole, they should be comfortably moveable.

(2) They also should work well in regular life.

***Comment***: Clearly, this sutra is not about the modern physical yoga movement's strong emphasis on dozens of positions and breathing patterns. This trend began in Sweden in the early 1900s and has swept through the West. Rather, for thousands of years, Hindu yogis developed hundreds of teachings and schools of thought about how to do *asana*—to stand, sit, lie, and, especially, move for better health—in support of improved meditation.

Asana now generally is called hatha yoga. Hatha is one of the five great traditional branches of yoga that also include, karma (physical work), bhakti (love work), jnana (mind work) and raja (concentration work). Hatha is excellent for stretching and as mild to moderate exercise, a sort of yoga version of physical therapy. You should combine them, according to Astanga yoga, with meditative focus so that you are "going to God" with them, as Sutras 2.30 and 2.38.

One popular form of Western Hatha practice is "hot yoga." Patanjali anticipated this: it makes you sweat. Chapter 1 describes how "warming" or "heating" exercise is one road to the clear mind.* Hot yoga can be accomplished through asana or through running, vigorous walking, or other forms of heating exercise. A form of the clear mind occurs, in fact, when athletes experience "runner's high."

The element of smooth movement also is important. The language for it in this sutra is "sukham" or a "well-lubricated axle hole." This refers to the body as a cart pulled by an animal (much like the Vedas refer to a human as a chariot pulled by a horse), with its parts needing to be healthy and comfortably moveable.

Perhaps the most important lesson in this sutra is maintaining a relatively straight spine (firm but not rigid). And you may do so not just in sitting, but also in walking, running, sleeping, or even dancing (swaying is allowed).

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# ***Sutra 2.47:*** *Śaithilya-ananta samāpatti-bhyām*

## Why does posture work?

***Literal translation***: "[Posture] loosens [you] like the cosmic serpent on the waters of infinity [and in] the oneness of Awareness"

***Meaning***: "Best posture happens when your tensions relax in infinite waters where *samapatti samadhi* happens (where subject and object merge)."

***A chant in English***: "You'll find good posture when your tensions relax like water, or when you reach a deep Awareness."

***Definition***: This sutra explains that learning a good posture is not that difficult. You can adjust your posture according to what releases your inner physical and emotional tensions, or in step with experiencing deepest meditation states.

For example, if anger swirls within you, one effective method of chasing it away can be to relax your fists, arms, and legs; sit straight and breathe deeply again and again; let your jaw loosen; and relax your forehead. All of these are part of developing an improved posture. In addition, movements, even dances, that are meditative, however spontaneous, that include swaying and turning are allowed. They are the undulations of "the cosmic serpent on the waters of infinity."

***Comment***: Why is there such a stark contrast between the previous sutra's seemingly straitlaced postures that imply holding still for meditation versus this sutra's dramatic "cosmic serpent" twisting about? And how does this lead to a very deep type of *samadhi* called, here, "*samapatti*"?

One reason is that this sutra may refer to ecstatic states of union of God. These can occur in as simple a situation as watching a sunset or sunrise, meditating deeply, or seeing beautiful art. But they especially are common in normal life when people are singing or dancing and reach a point of sudden ecstasy when a "oneness of Awareness" occurs. Such also is an aspect of *asana* when the mind and body are clear and "going to God" has succeeded in a marvelous experience of joy or bliss. That kind of brief, temporary *samadhi* erases or melts away the swirling difficulties within us.

Another reason is that much of these troubles we harbor—our constantly

replaying tapes of worry, fear, doubt, blame, anger, etc.—are set in place by some small or large part of our inner body. And if we can release or relax that part of our body through better posture and breathing or even through stronger movements such as dance, then we can more easily get rid of the troubles. Hartranft remarks in his translation of the *Sutras* that we must create "relaxation of even the subtlest bodily efforts, almost all of which arise subliminally from suffering one cause or another, and which promote instability. *Āsana* [posture] is a window that opens onto some of our deepest personal conditioning and the suffering it generates."*

Posture thus includes not just a straight back. It also means developing an inward physical disposition to feel the "infinite waters" inside you. This relaxes your hypervigilant body tensions, offering them to the Self/Presence.

An interesting historical note about this sutra is the identity of this "cosmic serpent." Its name, says Satchidananda, is *Ādiśeṣa*, snake of a thousand hoods. Each hood is like that of the Indian cobra.

The word *Ādiśeṣa* divides into two ancient roots, *Ādi* and *śeṣa*. *Ādi*, possibly *Aditi*, is the boundless Mother of all who in one Hindu version of the creation story started the cosmos. This goddess represents the original "golden dust" or "gold raindrops" of the first material creation, which is the golden *dharma megha* raincloud discussed in Patanjali's final five sutras.

The other word, *śeṣa*, means "leftovers." These leftovers are the thousand "hods" of the cosmic serpent: extra energy and matter lying around in the universe after creation. All of it forms not just our bodies but also our thoughts, memories, and emotions swirling within and around.

Another symbolic interpretation that advocates of chakra yoga might make is that this cosmic dragon represents the internal Kundalini or "snake" that awakens to dance through one's spine. In this symbolic vision, if you can let the internal serpent "dance on" your internal "waters of infinity"—the golden energy you can develop in your body—then you will be more likely to experience a cosmic "oneness of Awareness."

All of this symbolism is conjecture. The rishis who authored these texts long ago, changing them from oral tradition to scripture, are no longer with us to explain. However, the ancient writers were as logical as they were visionary. Mystical and meditate experiences help guide an understanding of their ancient words.

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# ***Sutra 2.48:*** *Tato dvaṅdva-anabhighātaḥ*

### *How does posture calm opposition?*

***Literal translation***: "[As in Sutra 2.47] the 'two-twos' [pairs of opposites], not towards striking [not afflicting]"

***Meaning***: "(From good posture from feeling infinite waters or in deep samadhi), pairs of opposites will not disturb you."

***A chant in English***: "With deep, relaxing posture in strong meditation, opposites no longer afflict."

***Definition***: Once you have achieved the states of meditation in Sutra 47—one or both—you will no longer be bothered by extremes of opposites like hot and cold, pain and pleasure, doubt and pride, fear and anger, etc. Some of the extremes simply go away. Others, especially physical ones, may remain, but they will not bother you as you develop increasing equanimity about life's forces, emotions, and seeming opposite contradictions.

This does not mean you suddenly and easily will stop experiencing them. Rather, you gradually, first in meditation and then in the rest of your life, will see them affect you less. Even pain will diminish in importance and intensity.

***Comment***: When I used to experience sudden pain, I would jerk away, grit my teeth, and worry about what was wrong. Now I have learned, instead, to relax into the pain and let my body energies work to heal it. The same is true of pleasure: I accept it but try not to snatch or hoard it as a young child might grab onto a piece of candy. They are just opposites, nothing more or less, that I learn to accept and to give to Self/Presence.

Some opposites are insidious, more difficult to treat with balance, diffidence, or retreat. The world always is falling apart in some way because of bad decisions. Why not escape? Eternally there are those who, purposely or accidentally, make you feel sorrow or despair while others lead you to excitement. Why not react to them, attach to them, with anger or desire? But in meditation is balance. Good posture in deep meditation helps you balance such forces so that you are in the eye of life's hurricane, rather than helpless in its winds.

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*Leaves Breathing*

# *Sutras 2.49 - 2.53*

# *What is the 4th Limb of* Astanga *Yoga?*

## *- Pranayama* (Breathing) –

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## ***Sutra 2.49:*** *Tasmin sati*
## *śvāsa-praśvā-yoh-gati-vicchedaḥ prāṇā-yāmaḥ*

***What is pranayama or "breath control"?***

***Literal translation***: "After posture set, inhalation-exhalation-pausing = breath regulation"

***Meaning***: "Once you've established your meditative position, then comes the inhaling, exhaling, and pausing called *pranayama* or breath

control."

***A chant in English***: "Decide on your posture; then breathe long, slow, and deep."

***Definition***: *Pranayama* or breath control can come at any time, but it works best in combination with a posture in which the spine is relatively straight. As with your choice of position—which may be sitting, lying, standing, or even moving—breath control may be of several kinds if it engages the lungs, diaphragm, and stomach. It should not consist of shallow, short breaths just from the chest (except in the deepest meditative states, when breathing may become automatic). Instead, both the chest and stomach should expand, allowing much more air to enter.

For example, as implied in the words of this sutra, one of the most basic patterns is a deep inhalation, a long exhalation, and a pause. The inhaling and exhaling usually are about (but not exactly) the same number of seconds. The pause happens for a shorter time, very briefly or for a few seconds, and it may come after the in- and out-breaths or between them. Some people (especially those who are chanting or singing) may choose an out-breath that is longer than the in-breath). Flexibility is allowed.

***Comment***: In many ancient languages, "breath" and "spirit" are the same word. This is true, for example, in the Western heritage of the Greek language, and of the Hebrew of the Jewish Torah and Christian Old Testament. In both languages, if you breath in, you are taking in spirit. Without one, said their ancient speakers, you cannot have the other.

Similarly, the ancient Sanskrit word *prana* in this sutra means both "breath" and "spirit." Iyengar says that *prana* is to yoga "what the heart is to the human body.... [It] acts as sexual energy, spiritual energy, and cosmic energy. All that vibrates in the Universe is *prana*: heat, light, gravity, magnetism..., electricity, life and spirit.... It is the prime mover of all activity…, the wealth of life." Other sources in Hinduism refer to *prana* as *shakti* or univervsal energy. In one story of the creation, says Iyengar, this is "'the nectar of immortality...' produced through the churning of the ocean," much like stories in Greek mythology of early gods and goddesses being born from the sea.

Yogic breathing over thousands of years has evolved in hundreds of methods taught by thousands of yoga schools. These variations sometimes have very different effects. Some, for example, are very practical for outer life, such as helping you sleep or, when you are cold, warming your body. Others have inner meditative benefits like helping you grow more calm or more energetic, quieting or activating imagination or sensations, and even developing stronger feelings of peace, strength,

or love.

However, most of them are unnecessary for the inner life of advancing in meditation. Becoming too concerned with breathing, other than the basic rhythms stated by Patanjali, even can become a distraction to meditation. The key to using *pranayama* is choosing what helps you maintain physical, mental, and spiritual moderation in any given time and place. For more information, see Patanjali's discussions in Sutras 1.23, 1.28, and 1.34, and "Appendix C: How to Breath."

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## ***Sutra 2.50:*** *Bāhya-ābhyantarastambha-vr̥tti-deśa-kāla sankhyābhiḥ paridr̥ṣṭahh dīrgha-sūkṣmaḥ*

### *What are some varieties of measured breathing?*

***Literal translation***: "Outside-inside-stopped movements; place-time-repetitions measured long/strong or short/gentle"

***Meaning***: "Breathing for meditation includes a variety of elements: exhaling, inhaling, and pausing movements; regulate it by the place in your body to which you direct it, number of seconds, and number of repetitions; and choose breaths that are intense (long or strong) or subtle (short or gentle)."

***A chant in English***: "You may try different ways to breathe in meditation."

***Definition***: This sutra is not a recommendation, but rather just a list indicting there are numerous combinations of breath patterns. For example, you may breathe fast, deep, and hard in physical exertion, slow and shallow in deepest meditation, etc.

***Comment***: Especially important is to remember that just as in the posture/position sutras, breathing is an aid, not the center of, yoga in the *Yoga Sutras*. As mentioned throughout Chapter One of the *Yoga Sutras*, there are a number of methods for focusing on higher/deeper Awareness. The eight-limbs of *Astanga* yoga are assistants to that.

It is desirable to learn simple breathing patterns without excessive, forceful, continuous, dramatic inhales, exhales, and/or pauses (except as needed during strong exercise or labor). In fact, there can be dangers in making breathing patterns the center of meditation practice: some breath-control patterns can awaken dark,

subconscious thoughts and feelings or even a deeper energy, kundalini, that can blast your normal life apart and be difficult or impossible to turn off.

The simpler deep breathing methods will contribute to your finding focused Awareness—the Self/Ultimate Presence. Such breathing not only is enough but also can take you, says Patanjali in Chapter 1, to the perfection you most need.

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## *Sutra 2.51:*

## *Bāhya-ābhyantara viṣaya-akṣepī caturthaḥ*

### *What is the "fourth sphere" of breathing?*

***Literal translation***: "Breath internal and external: a sphere abandoning them = fourth way"

***Meaning***: "Breathing, within and without, as in Sutra 50, also has a realm that abandons the normal three movements of inhaling, exhaling, and pausing: it is a fourth way."

***A chant in English***: "Look also for the deep fourth way of breathing unaided."

***Definition***: This sutra is undefined except to announce a fourth type of breath unlike normal yogic inhaling, exhaling, and pausing. Most contemporary translations say it is a nearly undetectable shallow type of breathing.

This shallowest form of breath likely is the same kind scientists have recorded in the deepest phases of sleep. Yogis with long meditation experience can access these deepest layers of unconsciousness even when they are still conscious. Other deep states of meditation may lead to deeper breathing, also automatic as your body is filled with energy. And as a beginning meditator, you may encounter states of meditation in which your breath automatically falls into either of these patterns. The key is to allow your natural body rhythms to take over and support the meditation you are experiencing.

***Comment***: A fun fact is that many medieval translations (and a few in more recent centuries) have interpreted this shallow breathing as no breath at all. Magical stories developed over thousands of years in India of yogis who completely stopped their breath for hours, days, or even months at a time. Some practitioners, the stories said, even were buried or weighted to lake or river bottoms for days as proof of no need

to breathe. Fakirs—Hindu magicians who claim all sorts of miraculous powers—still find ways to pretend such feats are possible. Such people have existed throughout the world and time.

Meanwhile, in both East and West, science has intervened. It shows no recorded cases of anyone not breathing but staying alive for more than perhaps an hour at most. The longest breath-holding on record is that of a few deep-sea divers who can avoid surfacing for air for up to ten or fifteen minutes at a time, or a little longer. Likely there are yogis who can do this, too—but not significantly more.

In terms of the automated type of breathing, this sutra uses the word *aksepi*, meaning "abandon" or "transcend." This suggests that the deep inhaling and exhaling of longer-breath periods is set aside entirely in this "fourth way"—thus assumedly the shallow breathing of both deepest sleep and deep meditation.

When you are in deep sleep, scientists report, you take almost the same number of breaths per minute as in normal resting activity when awake. However, you need much less air, so you breathe very shallowly. In addition, your throat muscles relax, partly collapsing your throat. This is, in fact, why some people snore. As a result, they need to adjust how they place their heads so that air still can pass through their windpipes.

Thus this sutra also acts as a mild warning: expect this more-relaxed type of breathing in deeper meditation. As a result, you may need to adjust your head or body slightly to clear your air passages in preparation for this shallow breathing.

Sometimes people also discuss how deep-breathing techniques can create a need for fewer breaths per minute. In controlled yogic breathing, most people can learn in several months of practice to take just two to four breaths per minute. Such self-training is like how deep-sea divers with no equipment slowly learn to hold their breath for several minutes at a time, or even longer, so they can harvest seafood from the ocean floor.

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## ***Sutra 2.52:*** *Tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśa-āvaraṇam*

### *How does good breathing help?*

***Literal translation***: "That [i.e., your good breathing] decreases the shining-forth coverup"

***Meaning***: "Good breath lessens the light being covered or veiled."

***A chant in English***: "Breathe well in meditation for your light to shine

forth."

***Definition***: Good breathing helps your inner light shine forth more. No matter which kind, breathing that is appropriate to the activity and depth of your meditation moves you away from darkness and toward brightness.

***Comment***: This inner light develops as thoughts, memories, and emotions subside. It can take many forms, from an idea with a deep sense of intimate, experiential "knowing" or gnosis, to an experience of inner light itself.

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## ***Sutra 2.53:*** *Dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ*

### ***Does breathing aid concentration?***

***Literal translation***: "Concentration also (from breathing) yoked to go for the mind"

***Meaning***: "Your concentration (which is the sixth limb) from these breath practices also will make you ready in your mind."

***A chant in English***: "Breathe well to better focus your mind."

***Definition***: This is the last of the *pranayama*—or yogic breathing—sutras in this fourth *Astanga* limb. The sutra is again simple as it offers two ideas, explicit and implicit. First, good meditation breathing will help your next steps in the eight limbs. And second, the learning of such breathing is, itself, a form of focus that will improve your all-important concentration necessary in the sixth or *dharana* limb.

***Comment***: Deep, regular breathing improves the oxygen distribution in your body—organs and brain. This, in turn, promotes a more relaxed, calm demeanor that allows clearer, stronger, and longer awareness. As you gain such calm, you are able, increasingly, to bring more awareness and control to your thinking and feeling. Such calm prepares you for the deeper states of meditation, in which shallow and/or more automatic breathing then begins to play a part, as well.

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*One Tree Managing Four Trunks*

## *Sutras 2.54 - 2.55*

# *What is the 5th Limb of* Astanga *Yoga?*

### *- Pratyahara* (Focus) –

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## ***Sutra 2.54:*** *Dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ*

***What is Pratyahara or "focus"?***

***Literal translation***: "Their objects [those of the senses] with yoking to them broken by ceasing the similar mental impressions within =

*pratyahara* or controlling sensing"

***Meaning***: "Your senses normally 'yoke' or join with objects in the real world. Clearing your mental impressions interrupts this otherwise automatic yoking of senses with material things. This is called *pratyahara*: abstraction and supervision of sensory life."

***A chant in English***: "Clear your mind so you can control your sensory life like you can your thoughts."

***Definition***: Most translations call *pratyahara* "sense withdrawal." However, a slightly more accurate phrase might be "sense abstraction" or "sense manage-ment." You make your sensory impressions become of no greater or lesser impor-tance than random thoughts, memories, and emotions that may pass through you.

This is accomplished, says this sutra, not by fighting against or shutting off each sense impression. Instead, according to this fifth limb of *Astanga* yoga, you clear your mind of sensory impressions in meditation, just as you would clear it—during meditation—of mental ideas, memories, and emotions. The well-cleared mind is one that can resist not just internal thinking but also external sensory input. The world remains present to you, but only through peripheral awareness, at most.

Some medieval translations—in tune, once again, with ascetic practices—suggest that you withdraw your sense organs from the world forever by living in a cave or simple dwelling with the most rudimentary of surroundings. But much harder—and more accurately, what this sutra really says—is to *manage* your senses wherever you may be. "Yoga" means "yoking": it is imbedded in this sutra in the Sanskrit "*asampra*yoge." The entire word says that you "unyoke" your awareness from the sensory world by clearing your mind in meditation.

This unhooking from automatic sensory life is a significant turn in the development of a meditator. The Reverend Jaganath Carrera says, "Many seekers...find [it] is often the first step that leads from belief…to faith…and to self-transformation." This is a sea change from a rational, intellectual belief about meditation to a dawning experience of the inner clear mind.

In its increasing clarity, you then gradually slow your constant, automatic yoking with sense objects. Vyasa says that as a queen bee flies from one hive to another and is followed by all the worker bees, so the mind, calming itself, brings calm to all the buzzing of the sensory organs. The mind no longer constantly amplifies sights, sounds, smells, etc. by attaching mental meanings and emotional responses to them. Instead, you gain the ability to be aware of sense impressions as simple data that you may choose to ignore (or not).

***Comment***: This change in focus is a central part of the type of meditation called mindfulness. In mindfulness, you become calm and clear during the mind's constant reactions to everything, and you gradually replace these responses with an ever more simple, pure awareness of the moment. In doing so, you then give yourself a choice: you can think about what your senses report, or you can let the data pass. You don't banish reality; rather, you clear it of unnecessary connections.

Sensory impressions are not wrong or bad. They can be useful if you plan to continue living on earth. Whether you are a hermit in a cave, a householder with a family, or a professional with a job, there are multiple tasks each day that you must assume: keeping your utensils and home clean, talking, making decisions. With *pratyahara* or mind management, you learn to do them mindfully with a clear head. You develop this ability first in meditation or in small, daily commitments to mindfulness; then you spread it through more of day, your life, and yourself.

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## ***Sutra 2.55:*** *Tataḥ paramā vaśyatā-indriyāṇām*

### *To what does "focus" lead?*

***Literal translation***: "From this [Sutra 2.54], paramount subjugation of any sense organ"

***Meaning***: "Sutra 2.54 results eventually in the highest obedience of your senses."

***A chant in English***: "Tame your senses so they obey you."

***Definition***: This sutra continues the one before it by saying that successful *pratyahara* or management of the senses gives you highest control of them. It does not mean that you snuff them out. You handle them. Gradually you gain the power to clear them away within you whenever needed.

***Comment***: The ancient Hindu *Katha Upanishad* offers an excellent metaphor for this: your True Self is the chariot master, your mind the reins, and the senses are your horses straining to race around the arena of sense objects in the world. You gradually learn not just to control where the horses go but also whether they run, walk, or even rest in a contented state simply to stand and just be.

Similarly in the West, Plato developed a metaphor of the charioteer controlling two horses, regarding the senses. One horse has reason and morality. It must must

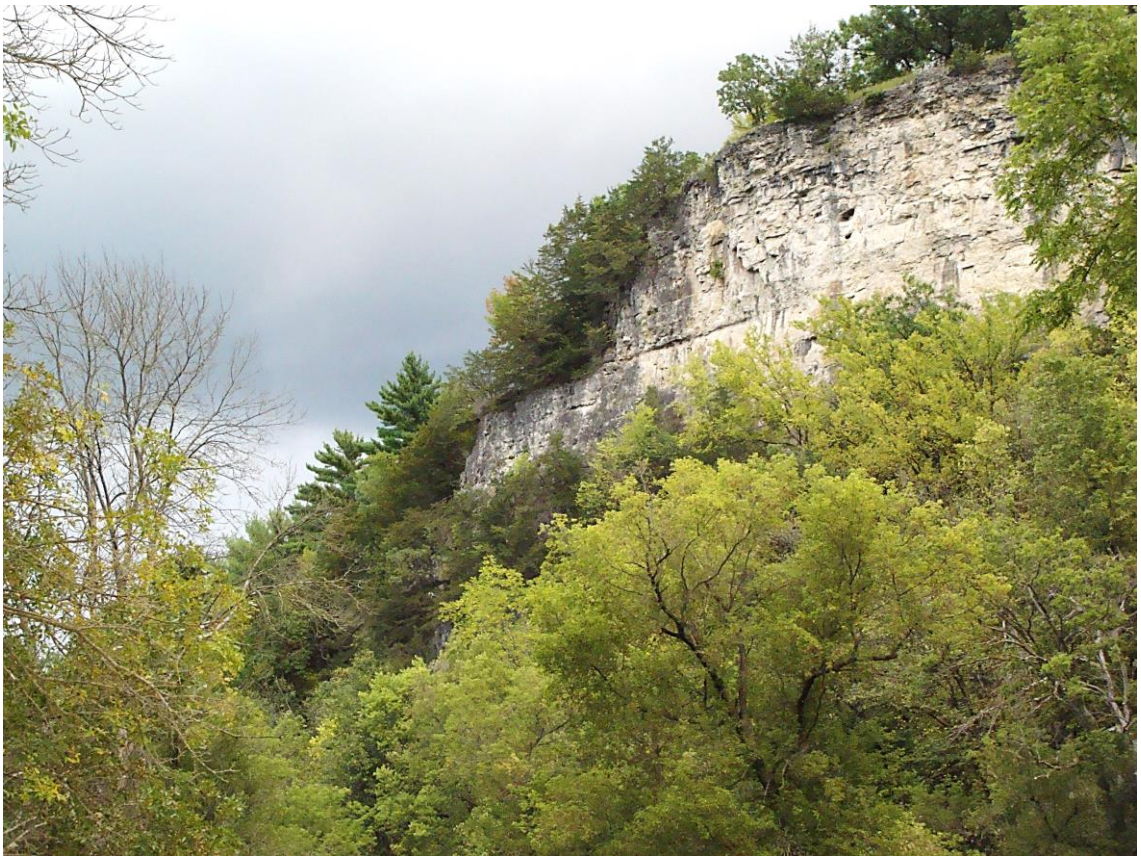
control the other one, which possesses spontaneous passion and desire.*

On a nonmeditation level, another name for such control is "delayed gratification." This psychological act uses reason (e.g., one of Plato's horses) to put off experiencing a particular sense delight until a later time. The idea isn't necessarily to get rid of thoughts and feelings, but rather to disconnect them from automatic reactions and reorient them as your spiritual self needs them.

A Western example of *pratyahara* occurs in the biblical story of Jesus of Nazareth's beginning ministry in Israel. First he went into the desert where he fasted for forty days. Next—soon after—he joined a wedding party in Cana, probably taking part in its feasting, drinking of wine, and perhaps even its group dancing, just as would have been expected of all guests. But he was not lost in sensual gratification (even as some of the guests quite likely were). Rather, he probably retained the lessons of his desert meditations about the senses. From a clear mind he let his sense impressions flow like water, neither forbidding them nor becoming trapped in them.

**- End of Chapter 2-B, The First 5 Limbs of *Astanga* Yoga -**

**- Ch. 3-A (*TBA*), the final 3 Limbs of *Astanga* yoga, begins with Sutra 3.1. -**



*A Landscape of Ascending and Descending Limbs*

*An Evergreen Forest from on High, or a Close-up?*

# Endnotes

***Below are Endnotes** for the Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2-A, Chapter 2-B, and the Appendix. (Other chapters and their endnotes are forthcoming.)*

*You may use the pdf's "Find" function to search for the specific sutra you want.*

*For details about sources, see **Sources**.*

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# Endnote for the INTRODUCTION

Introduction to *Yoga Sutras*:

Richard Rohr, *Jesus' Alternative Plan: The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 38.

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# Endnotes for CHAPTER 1

**Chapter 1 Introduction:** Simone Weil. *Love in the Void*, p. 41. (See "Bibliography" for more.)

Simone Weil was a twentieth-century French Roman Catholic mystic and political activist who championed the poor as part of her interpretation of the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. She spent many years living with, and as, an impoverished worker, dying early from poor health.

**Sutra 1.1:**

**(a)** Vyasa, "The Yoga Sutras with the Commentary of Vyasa," Sutra 1.33. Translated by David Geer in his book *The Essence of the Yoga Sutras*.

**Vyasa**, means, simply, "Arranger," "Compiler," or "Editor." Who he was is not well known. Historians date the *Yoga Sutras* authored by Patanjali as having been written sometime, at the extreme, between 400 BCE and 400 CE. However, the first written text we have of the *Yoga Sutras* is in Vyasa's copying of the Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, and Vyasa's corresponding commentary about each one, c. 400 CE. Some scholars argue that Vyasa and Patanjali were the same person. Others disagree. (See "Appendix A: Who Was Patanjali.")

**(b)** Thomas Merton, *A Thomas Merton Reader*, p. 331.

A fuller version of Merton's quotation is:

> There are, in Christian tradition, a theology of light and a theology of darkness. On these two lines travel two mystical trends. There are the great theologians of light: Origen, Saint Augustine, Saint Bernard, Saint Thomas Aquinas. And there are the great theologians of darkness: Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius, Saint John of the Cross. The two lines travel side by side. Modern theologians of genius have found no difficulty in uniting the two, in synthesizing Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint John of the Cross. Some of the greatest mystics—Ruysbroeck, Saint Theresa of Avila, and Saint John of the Cross himself—describe both aspects of contemplation, "light" and "darkness."
>
> There are pages in the works of Saint Gregory of Nyssa [theology of light]—as there are also in those of Saint John of the Cross [theology of darkness]—which might easily fit into a context of Zen Buddhism o[r] Patanjali's Yoga (pp. 331-2).

**Thomas Merton**, 1915-1968, was a Roman Catholic Cistercian monk and popular

author who converted to Catholicism at a young age. He has become one of the most trusted and respected modern Western mystics. Among his most successful works were *The Seven Storey* Mountain and *New Seeds of Contemplation*, the latter a revision of his original *Seeds of Contemplation*. In his later years, he was drawn to dialogue between Western and Eastern mystics and contemplatives.

**(c)** Jerome Engel in *Buddha's Brain* by Hanson and Mendius, third page of introductory review quotations. *Buddha's Brain* is a comprehensive guide to meditating using scientific explanations for why meditation works. The book gathers 187 resources, most of them scientific papers, to explain the advantages of Buddhist, Eastern spiritual, and related thinking and feeling.

**(d) Buddha**, c. fifth-fourth century BCE, was the founder of Buddhism in India. His name was Siddhartha Gautama and, as a prince, his family was rich and he lived a life of wealth and privilege. Unhappy, he became a wandering monk living in poverty and practiced extreme ascetic methods of finding truth such as near-starvation and extreme exercise. Then one day he sat under a tree until he experienced nirvana. From that point on, he taught a "Middle Path" for liberating oneself.

He did not see himself as the founder of a new religion, but rather as simply another in a long line of Hindu teachers. (In this regard he is similar to Jesus of Nazareth, who did not see himself as the founder of Christianity but rather as someone in a long line of Jewish teachers and prophets.) However, Buddha's teachings spread far and wide in Asia, with Buddhism becoming one of the world's most popular religions.

**Sutra 1.2:**

**(a)** Jordan Poppenk and Julie Tseng, *Nature Communications*.

**(b) The *Vedas***, c. 1500 BCE or earlier, are Hinduism's oldest orally transmitted scripture, in whole or, perhaps more likely, in various parts that gradually became knitted together under one group name. There are three main *Vedas*, the *Rig*, *Yajur*, and *Sama*. A fourth, the *Atharva*, is composed of later *Upanishads* (see below). The *Vedas* are India's oldest written scriptures, having been first recorded as early as 1200 BCE and existing in oral tradition at least five hundred years earlier, perhaps much longer ago. The Sanskrit language of the *Vedas* is like the ancient Middle Eastern Avestan/Zoroastrian language; the two languages are believed to have a common origin several thousand years ago. The *Rig Veda*, a series of sacred chanted hymns, is considered the oldest, and is one of the most ancient texts in any Indo-European language.

**The *Upanishads*** also traditionally are considered authoritative Hindu scriptures. They were written later than most or all of the *Vedas*. The *Upanishads* are the body of

work that established the Hindu spiritual system and philosophy of Vedanta, a continuation of the Vedic teachings. The earliest—considered the main—*Upanishads* come from an ancient oral tradition like the *Vedas* and were transcribed into writing starting as early as 800 BCE and into or just past 100 BCE. Additional minor *Upanishads* continued to be written as late as the 15th century CE, and some scholars argue they continue now.

**(c)** *Taittirīya Upanishad*, c. 6th cent. BCE, part of the earlier *Yajurveda*, pp. 381-502.

**Sutra 1.3:**

**(a)** Vyāsa. "The Yoga Sutras with the Commentary of Vyāsa." Translated by David Geer in his book *The Essence of the Yoga Sutras*, p. 93. For a description of Vyasa, see Endnote 1.1.

**(b)** Richard Rohr, *immortal diamond*, pp. vii-xiv, 12 (from the Christian Bible's New Testament, The Gospel of Matthew 13.44-46), 15, and 56.

**Note**: In this "Endnotes" section, the word "Bible" hereafter refers to the Christian Bible, and its books are given by shortened name and passage number (e.g., Matthew 13.44, or Chapter 13, verse 44). (Other "Bibles" are called by their proper names: e.g., the Torah, the Qur'an, the *Rig Veda*, etc.)

**Richard Rohr**, 1943-present, a Roman Catholic Franciscan, mystic, and popular author, is one of the progenitors of the Centering Prayer Movement in the U.S. It advocates a type of meditation, along with a mystical interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth and of the Christian Bible.

**The Christian Bible** is composed of the Old Testament and the New Testament. The traditional Old Testament is composed of the main Jewish scriptures called the Torah (which are the first five books of the Christian Bible) and the Prophets; and it includes several other books not in the Jewish scriptures. The traditional New Testament is composed of the four Gospels about the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, along with the Acts of the Apostles, the Letters of Paul and others, and the Book of Revelation. Some versions of the Bible also now include additional historical Christian "Wisdom Tradition" texts such as the CE (Common Era) New Testament "Gospel of Thomas" and "Thunder: Perfect Mind," along with assorted BCE (Before Common Era) Old Testament Apocrypha.

**Judaism's Torah, the Prophets,** and the **Midrash** (Commentaries) are the scriptures of Judaism. Christians use much of the Torah and the Prophets in their Old Testament, and believe their own, added New Testament is a more recent revelation from God.

**Islam's Qur'an (Quran, Koran)** is considered by Muslims to be the most recent scripture of revelation from God. However, Muslims also believe that the Jewish and

Christian scriptures were the best scriptures of received revelation before the Qur'an.

**The Abrahamic religions** are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, so called because they all recognize Abraham as the founder of their Western belief in a single God. All three of these religions also have in common the early stories of the Abrahamic people: Noah, Abraham, Jacob Israel, Moses, and others. The three Abrahamic religions, together, often are compared and contrasted to the group of Far Eastern religions that are interrelated in many ways or times: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, and others.

**Sutra 1.4:** Rick Hanson with Richard Mendius, *Buddha's Brain*, pp. 208-212. See Endnote 1 for more detail about this source. For a description of Buddha, see Endnote 1.1.

**Sutra 1.5:** The Dalai Lama and the Archbishop Desmond Tutu. *The Book of Joy*, p. 93.

**Tibet's Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Rinpoche (Tenzin Gyatso)**, 1935-present, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, and Tibet's spiritual leader, is famous for his speeches throughout the world and his writings on cultivating joy, mindfulness, and peace. He fled his native Tibet in 1959 during a nationalist uprising against China and now lives in India.

**Reverend Desmond Tutu**, 1939-2021, was the (Christian Protestant) Anglican Archbishop of South Africa, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, author, and important activist in his country's anti-apartheid political movement.

**Sutra 1.9:** Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali*.

**Georg Feuerstein**, 1947-2012, was a yoga practitioner, scholar, and mystic. He was born in Germany and, after postgraduate research, moved to the U.S. and Canada. He wrote over thirty books on the mystical and philosophical meanings of tantra, yoga, and related subjects, including a well-respected translation of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*.

**Sutra 1.10:** "Stages of Sleep," *Neuroscience*.

**Sutra 1.11:** Mark Epstein. "Therapy and Meditation," *Psychology Today*, from his book *Going to Pieces without Falling Apart.*

**Sutra 1.12:** Carolyn Hax, *Washington Post*.

**Sutra 1.16:**

**(a)** Christianity's New Testament, Matthew 13.31-32, Mark 4.30-32, and Luke 13.18-19. Note: The phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" also can be translated as "Realm of the Spirit," according to Robert Bly. (See Sutra 1.24 and its Endnote.) Thomas Keating, *The Human Condition*, pp. 13 and 17.

**Thomas Keating**, 1923-2018, was a Roman Catholic monk and mystic in the Cistercian Order. A prolific author and speaker, he is best known as one of the

founders of the Centering Prayer movement in the U.S. Centering Prayer is a contemplative, inner-spiritual practice.

**(b)** Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen,* pp. 100-101.

**Alan Watts**, 1915-1973, was a philosopher, British Episcopal priest, mystic, and author. In the twentieth century, he was one of the most respected Western interpreters of Chinese and Japanese religious ideas, especially of Zen Buddhism and Taoism. He authored some twenty books on the philosophy and psychology of religion and was especially popular, along with Timothy Leary, Aldous Huxley, and Baba Ram Dass [see Endnote 1.32] in the 1960s-early '70s psychedelic countercultural revolution.

**(c) Lin-chi (Linji Yixuan)**, c. 9th cent., founded the highly influential Linji School of Zen. It, along with his writings, have figured prominently in both Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. The *Lin-chi Lu* is a collection of sermons, sayings, and acts attributed to him.

**Sutra 1.20:** Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation,* pp. 11, 60, and 14.

**Nhat Hanh**, 1926-2022, was a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, mystic, and 1960s founder of the School of Youth for Social Service in South Vietnam. He was a proponent of "engaged Buddhism" and was praised by such diverse sources as the *New Age Journal* and Martin Luther King, Jr. (Sources: Find him in "Sources" at "Nhat Hanh, Thich.")

**Sutra 1.22:** Matthew 7.7, NIV.

**Sutra 1.23:**

**(a)** Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali*. For a description of Feuerstein, see Endnote 1.9.

**(b)** "Sanskrit: Base Form Dictionary" and "Sanskrit: Master Glossary" of the *Rig Veda* by the University of Texas at Austin Linguistics Research Center.

**(c)** EEGs (electroencephalograms) are brainwave readings, usually made by attaching EEG monitors to your scalp. However, they can work at a distance.

For example, Changhong Research Labs and Freer Logic demonstrated a car headrest at the 2017 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas that is "able to read brain activity while being six to eight inches away, without any contact." Company president Peter Freer said, "It has an attention algorithm within it, so it will calibrate to your brain and you will be able to control the graphics on the screen." (See Burgess, *Wired*; and Kreetzer, *Auto Futures*.)

**(d)** ECGs (electrocardiograms) are heart monitors. Heart pulses can be measured much further away than brainwaves: "the magnetic field produced by the heart...can be detected up to 3 feet away from the body...using...magnetometers," says the HeartMath Institute. The pulses from the heart can allow two individuals, apart from each other, to make a rough reading of each other's emotional states. Using ECG (electrocardiogram) and EEG monitors, researchers discovered "a significant degree of signal transfer occurs through skin conduction, but it also is radiated between individuals."

In addition, HeartMath researchers discovered that in some instances, when two subjects were within a few inches of each other (not touching), one person's EEG brainwave also could "read" the other person's ECG heart wave. Lastly, researchers also discovered that "a type of heart-rhythm synchronization can occur in interactions between people and their pets." (See "Energetic Communication.")

**(e)** Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, pp. 182-183, 239, and 251-253.

**Teilhard de Chardin**, 1881-1955, was a French Jesuit priest, prominent paleontologist, and respected 20th-century author, philosopher, theologian, and mystic who used scientific and evolutionary theory to explain new psychic and mystical outlooks regarding Earth.

**Sutra 1.24:**

**(a)** *Rig Veda* 10.90 as translated by R.T.H. Griffith. For a description of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, see Endnote 1.2.

**(b)** Rick Hanson with Richard Mendius, *Buddha's Brain*, p. 68. See Endnote 1.1(c) and (d).

**(c)** John O'Gara, "Sin." *Quora.*

**(d)** Bible, Acts 22:16, NRSV (New Revised Standard Version). Bible: For a description of the Judeo-Christian Bible, see Endnote 1.3.

**(e)** This is one of several definitions by Merriam-Webster online at "Sin."

**(f)** Robert Bly, "Preface," *Kabir—Ecstatic Poems* (xvi). In his "Preface," Kabir interpreter Robert Bly tells us, "Kabir says a simple error of translation like this can destroy a religion" (xvi).

**Robert Bly**, 1924-2021, was a well-known American winner of a National Book Award in poetry, lecturer, and author of the nonfiction bestseller *Iron John*. Bly often used poetry and prose to describe spiritual states. In addition, as in his *Kabir—Ecstatic Poems*, he published interpretations for English-speaking audiences of important non-English poetry.

**Kabir Das**, 1398-1518, was a widely influential Indian saint, mystic, and poet who helped establish the modern *bhakti* or love-devotion movement in India. He was

raised as a Muslim, but became a Hindu Sikh who believed his mystical poetry was for everyone. Both Hindus and Muslims consider him a saint.

**Sutra 1.25:**

**(a)** A longer version of this quotation from Rabbi Green is as follows:

> God is a verb. The Hebrew name for God, which...is transcribed in English as YHWH...is an impossible compilation of the verb "to be." *Haya* is past and *hove* is the present and *Yihiye* is the future. If you take past, present, and future all together and put them in a firm form that does not exist, you get YHWH, the name of God. It really should be translated not G-o-d but "Is was will be." "It was will be" all at once. You cannot say that, of course, so we substitute for it.... It is too holy to be spoken by mere mortals like us.
>
> When Moses goes down into Egypt, God reveals the name to him and then [Moses] says, "If the people ask me what do you call "What you say"? and God says, "I am that I am" or "I shall be what I shall be," which means "I am really a verb. Here is my name. But if you think that name is a noun, which is to say, if you can put me in a little box and say, 'I have God,' I will be what I will be. I will go conjugate myself and become a verb again. I will fly away and be a verb again. I will be a verb, which is to say, I am the one you cannot catch; I am the ultimately inaccessible one" (pp. 42-3).

**(b)** The word "Elohim" had many meanings in the ancient Middle East, including "God," "angels," and "the gods" (this last usage existed especially among the Canaanites, whose lands the Israelites conquered). Medieval scholar Maimonides, perhaps the most famous rabbinical scholar in Israel's history, mentions all of these and adds the word even applied to "judges and rulers."

Most current scholars agree that the primary meaning in the Torah/Old Testament was a singular "God." However, the word itself conveys both masculine and feminine genders, as well as both singular and plural numbers. If one assumes these meanings fit with the original mystical meaning of God, then—like "YHWH"—the word means several impossibly lumped-together meanings. In mystical language, all of them can be assumed as part of God's contradictory singular-in-many nature.

A good general source of information about "Elohim" is an excellent article about it in *Wikipedia* (as of 2021). To read Maimonides' thoughts on the subject, see his *Guide for the Perplexed* beginning with Chapter Two.

**(c)** Richard Rohr, *immortal diamond*, p. 130.

**Sutra 1.26:** Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, *Hymns to the Mystic Fire,* p. vii. Worth noting, as well, is that for modern people, the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* are even more difficult to

read because of the cultural references that are very different from our modern times: for example, what did "ray cows" and "Lord of Fire" mean three to five thousand years ago to the Aryan people who migrated from Iran to India? The Vedic hymns are beautiful, especially when chanted, but their original meanings have become elusive to most people. And non-mystic translations from a merely literary or philosophical perspective usually fail to understand the underlying mystical experiences embedded in the names, places, and wording.

**Sri Aurobindo**, 1872-1950, was a prominent Indian mystic, author, teacher, editor, poet, and Hindu nationalist. He interpreted ancient Indian texts using their esoteric meanings, and he founded the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry. He was noted as a philosopher and theologian for explaining personal and social growth spiritually using historical cycles and the evolutionary scientific theories of his centuries, much as did Teilhard de Chardin in the West (see "Teilhard" in Endnote 1.23).

**Sutra 1.27:**

**(a)** Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, *How To Know God: The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, p. 39. Prabhavananda and Isherwood's translation of and commentaries on the *Yoga Sutras* have been perhaps the most popular introduction in America to the *Sutras*. Their book was first published in 1953.

**Swami Prabhavananda**, 1893-1996, was an Indian mystic, philosopher and noted follower of one of India's greatest saints, Ramakrishna (1886-1936). Prabhavananda moved to the U.S. in 1923, where he remained until his death, founding the influential Vedanta Society in 1930.

**Christopher Isherwood**, 1904-1986, was a British-American novelist, playwright, and nonfiction author who also wrote, co-wrote, and edited works on Hinduism. He was a monk at the Vedanta Society under Swami Prabhavananda and a close friend of British-American author Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), author of fiction such as *Brave New World* and *Island*, and nonfiction such as *The Perennial Philosophy* and *The Doors of Perception*.

**(b)** Neil Douglas-Klotz, *Prayers of the Cosmos*, p. 61.

**Sutra 1.29:** William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 424.

Using your awareness to look at your awareness: Eastern meditation expert and psychologist Culadasa (John Yates) defines this in *The Mind Illuminated* from his Buddhist perspective. He describes this as a "cessation event": "a ***pure consciousness experience*** (PCE), or an experience of ***consciousness without an object*** (CWO)" (emphasis his, p. 286).

**Sutra 1.30:**

**(a)** Iyengar, Sutra 1.30

**(b)** Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*, pp. 1564-5 and 1611-13.

**Sutra 1.32:**

**(a)** Alan Watts, "2.3.8 The World as Just So Part 1." In "Eastern and Western Zen, Searchable, Transcript." For a description of Watts, see Endnote 1.16.

**(b)** *Tat tvam asi* is repeated often in the *Chandogya Upanishad* written c. 600 BCE. For a description of the *Upanishads*, see Endnote 1.2.

**(c)** Martin Buber, *I and Thou*.

**(d)** Kabir Das, *Kabir—Ecstatic Poems*, p. 40. For a description of Kabir, see Endnote 1.24.

**Martin Buber**, 1878-1965, was an Austrian-Israeli theologian and existentialist philosopher. The key idea for which he is best known is the difference between the I-Thou and the I-It relationship in humans, and between humans and God as a state of Being.

**(e)** Baba Ram Dass. *Be Here Now.* In "Sources," look under "Ram Dass."

**Baba Ram Dass**, 1931-2019, was born as Richard Alpert. He was a Harvard psychologist who, along with colleague and professor Timothy Leary, conducted experiments on psychedelics and spirituality involving students at Harvard University and Harvard Divinity School in the 1960s. Though their activities were legal at the time, Harvard dismissed them. Alpert moved to India where he studied Hindu spirituality and received his new name. A frequent speaker and conductor of seminars after his return to America, his most famous written work is *Be Here Now*, which helped interest grow in the U.S. in Hinduism.

**Sutra 1.33:**

**(a)** Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, p. 37. For a description of Nhat Hanh, see Endnote 1.20.

**(b)** The Dalai Lama and the Archbishop Desmond Tutu, *The Book of Joy*, p. 59. For a description of the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, see Endnote 1.5.

**(c)** Vyasa. "The Yoga Sutras with the Commentary of Vyasa," 1.33. For a description of Vyasa, see Endnote 1.1.

**(d)** "Karaniya Metta Sutta: The Buddha's Words on Loving-Kindness," (Sn 1.8), translated from the Pali and written c. 400 BCE-150 CE from oral tradition. For a

description of Buddha, see Endnote 1.1.

**(e)** Bible: John 4.8 and 16; Matt. 7.12, which is quoted from Judaism and Christianity's Lev. 19.18. For a description of the Judeo-Christian Bible, see Endnote 1.3.

**(f)** Robert Bly. "Tasting Heaven." *The Value of Sparrows*. For a description of Bly, see Endnote 1.24.

**Sutra 1.34**: Thomas Keating, *The Human Condition*, p. 36. For a description of Keating, see Endnote 1.16.

**Sutra 1.35:** Vyasa. "The Yoga Sutras with the Commentary of Vyasa," 1.35. For a description of Vyasa, see Endnote 1.1.

**Sutra 1.36:** Rick Hanson with Richard Mendius, *Buddha's Brain*, pp. 185-6. See Endnote 1.1(c) and (d).

**Sutra 1.38:** Joel Morwood. "The Mystical Interpretations of Dreams."

**Sutra 1.39:**

**(a)** Swami Vivekananda, "Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms," *Raja Yoga*.

**(b)** Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, pp. 214-16. (For a description of Merton, see Endnote 1.1.)

**Sutra 1.40:** Georg Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali*. For a description of Feuerstein, see Endnote 1.9.

**Sutra 1.43:**

**(a)** More studies followed, and researchers found the continuing results consistent with the first one. In addition, those who reported mystical experiences also scored much higher, in psychological testing, on more quickly developing greater "openness"—the kind of change that may take most people years to attain. Another study found that the same psychedelic was more than twice as effective in getting people to stop smoking than normal drug or cognitive behavioral therapy. Additional work suggests psychedelic trips may help create faster than normal improvements with other addictions and also mood disorders such as depression. —Sarah Scoles, "What happens when psychedelics make you see God," *Popular Science*.

**(b)** William Richards, *Sacred Knowledge: Psychedelics and Religious Experiences*.

**Sutra 1.44:**

**(a)** Diane Hennacy Powell, M.D., *The ESP Enigma: The Scientific Case for Psychic Phenomena*.

**(b)** Steve Taylor, Ph.D., "Do Psychic Phenomena Exist? Why my mind is open to telepathy and pre-cognition," *Psychology Today*.

**Sutra 1.46:**

**(a)** "God's thoughts": Esther Salaman, "A Talk with Einstein." *The Listener*, 1955, 54:370-371.

**(b)** Einstein's historic formula: Tony Rothman. "Was Einstein the First to Invent $E = mc^2$?" *Scientific American*.

**(c)** Einstein said his wife, Mileva, "solves all my mathematical problems." Senta Troemel-Ploetz, "Mileva Einstein-Marić: The woman who did Einstein's mathematics."

**(d)** "YHWH" or "Yahweh" is first used in Exodus 6.2-3 in the Hebrew Torah and Christian Old Testament, along with "I Am Presence." Yahweh previously revealed himself to Moses in Exodus 3:13—15 as "I Am" or, at greater length, "I Am That I Am" or "I Am Who I Am." For different translations, search online for "bible multiple translations." For descriptions of the Jewish and Christian Bibles, see Endnote 1.3.

**(e)** For a list and description of Buddhism's "Middle Path" (also called the "Eightfold Noble Path"), search online for "buddha middle path" or "buddha eightfold." For a description of Buddha, see Endnote 1.1.

**Sutra 1.47:** Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, p. 13. For a description of Nhat Hanh, see Endnote 1.33.

**Sutra 1.48:** Meister Eckhart, born 1260, died c. 1328, *Sermons*, p. 24.

**Sutra 1.50:**

**(a)** Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen*, p. 50. For a description of Watts, see Endnote 1.16.

**(b)** Kabir Das, *Kabir—Ecstatic Poems*, p. 3. For a description of Kabir, see Endnote 1.24.

**Sutra 1.51:**

**(a)** Bible, Matthew 18.1-5, New International Version (NIV). In the version shown

here, "kingdom of heaven" has been replaced with "realm of the spirit," a phrase Robert Bly says equally can be used in translation (see Endnote 1.16).

**Bible**: See Endnote 1.3(b).

**(b)** Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen*, p. 67.

**Watts**: See Endnote 1.16.

**(c)** Gospel of Thomas, Saying (Logion) 3, *The Luminous Gospels*, p. 9. The Gospel of Thomas, discovered in 1945 near Nag Hammadi, Egypt, is not in the traditional Christian New Testament. However, it likely was one of the first writings shared among early Christians. It lists 105 sayings by Jesus of Nazareth. Some scholars believe it may have been a primary source for the Christian New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

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# Endnotes for CHAPTER 2-A

*Note: For full bibliographies of the authors and texts, see "Sources."*

**Chapter 2-A Introduction:**

**(a)** Daniel Goleman and Richard J. Davidson, *Altered Traits: Science Reveals How Meditation Changes Your Mind, Brain, and Body.* (British edition: *The Science of Meditation*.) Their estimates are based on thorough research and surveys.

Their book has been one of only a few bestsellers about meditation in the early decades of the 21st century. It deservedly is so. It offers a clear view, both broad and detailed, of the best scientific research confirming the benefits of meditation. It also earns respect because the two authors are long-term meditators.

**(b)** Satchidananda in his introduction to the *Sutras*, Chapter 2, and in his commentary on Sutra 2.2.

Swami Satchidananda, 1914-2002, was an Indian-American mystic, author, and founder of the American version of the Integral Yoga movement, which brings all basic forms of yoga together into a group of practices based on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and other ancient Indian yoga and meditation methods.

**(c)** Iyengar in his introduction to the *Sutras*, Chapter 2.

B.K.S. Iyengar, 1918-2014, was a well-known Hindu mystic, American yoga teacher, and founder of a worldwide school of yoga exercise and asanas (postures), "Iyengar Yoga." His 1966 *Light on Yoga*, considered by some as the bible of the modern yoga exercise movement, has sold over three million copies.

**(d)** Keith Lowenstein, M.D., *Kriya Yoga for Self-Discovery*, pp. 28-29.

**Sutra 2.1:**

**(a)** Especially in commentaries by Feuerstein, Iyengar, and Stiles in their translations of this sutra. For longer bibliography entries about these authors, see Section 1 in "Sources (Works Cited)." (See also a description of Feuerstein in Endnote 1.9, and of Iyengar in the Endnote immediately above.

**(b)** Vyasa's early-medieval commentary on this sutra as translated in David Geer's *The Essence of the Yoga Sutras*. For a description of Vyasa, see Endnote 1.1.

**(c)** Linda Johnson, *Lost Masters*, Chapters 3 and 5.

**(d)** Riane Eisler, *The Chalice & the Blade*.

**Sutra 2.2:** Vyasa in this sutra in Geer.

**Sutra 2.3:**

**(a)** Iyengar in his translation, Sutra 2.10. He says they "begin with attachment to life, move in the reverse order, contrary to spiritual evolution...and end with...ignorance." This especially can be true if a meditator comes out of an extended period of time—days or weeks—in *samadhi* or nirvana:

> First, you feel attached (again) to life itself (a "clinging" to it);
>
> second, a strong drive to avoid what you dislike;
>
> third, lust and other desires;
>
> fourth, a reasserting of your sense of ego or main small self;
>
> fifth, a reinstitution of your blinders by not seeing spirit and
>
> going about your usual earthly life.

For a description of Iyengar, see the Endnote for "Chapter 2-A Introduction."

**(b)** Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace*, p. 215. For a description of Nhat Hanh: See Endnote 1.33.

**(c)** Vyasa in this sutra in Geer.

**Sutra 2.4:**

**(a)** Vyasa in this sutra in Geer.

**(b)** Hariharananda as quoted in Iyengar's Sutra 2.12.

**Sutra 2.5:**

**(a)** Revelation 3.17, *A New New Testament* edited with commentary by Hal Taussig.

**(b)** Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, 8:7.17.

**(c)** Keith Lowenstein, M.D. pp. 65, 67, 202.

**Sutra 2.6:** Anthony the Great in (see) *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, p. 2.

**Sutra 2.7:** I Corinthians 7.9, *A New New Testament* edited with commentary by Hal Taussig.

**Sutra 2.9:**

**(a)** Plato, "Book III," *The Republic*.

**(b)** "Yeshayahu—Isaiah—Chapter 11," 11.2. *The Complete Jewish Bible with Rashi Commentary*.

**(c)** Galatians 5.22, *A New New Testament*.

**Sutra 2.10:** Vyasa in this sutra in Geer.

**Sutra 2.11:** Vyasa in this sutra in Geer.

**Sutra 2.12:** Dr. Gina Cerminara, *Many Mansions. Wikipedia* also has an excellent introduction to "Reincarnation" at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reincarnation.

**Sutra 2.13:** Vyasa in this sutra in Geer**.**

**Sutra 2.15:**

**(a)** Vyasa in this sutra in Geer.

**(b)** An excellent scholarly article on "Gehenna" by Lloyd R. Bailey is at www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.2307/3210000?journalCode=biblarch.

**(c)** Satchidananda in his translation of this sutra.

**Sutra 2.16:** Howard Thurman, final two-fifths of "Life Goes On," *Meditations of the Heart*, pp. 110-11.

**Sutra 2.17:** "Poemen" in (see) *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

**Sutra 2.19:**

**(a)** According to ancient Hinduism, your brain is a sensory organ just as are your eyes and ears. The basic levels of essences mentioned here in Sutra 2.19 were

identified and described by meditators over a period of hundreds, possibly thousands of years before and during the first (oral) versions of the Hindu scriptures.

**(b)** In this sutra, Patanjali defines nature very carefully. It has four levels that you might find, feel, or experience in meditation:

1. "**Specific (divided leftovers or remains)**": These are physical, material objects—touchable reality that we experience with our senses. Chairs, potatoes, blue sky, human bodies—they are a part of the universe that yoga meditation accepts, neither condemning nor banishing them from spiritual life. Rather, through outer and inner means, we can learn to control them.
2. "**Nonspecific (undivided leftovers or remains)**": These are the modern Western equivalent of physical energies that we cannot perceive with our senses. Sound waves, light waves, gases, atoms, and the electro-chemical energies passing through our nervous systems and brains are in this category. We have the power to control many of these, too, through both outer and inner means—more than we realize if we pursue meditation.
3. "**Differentiated (barely attached)**": These are more subtle than most modern science accepts. They are, at present, more a psychic type of energy, though physics' "dark matter" and "string theory particles" may account for them. They are like Plato's pre-matter "forms." The "burnt seeds" you may see coming toward you in meditation, discussed above, are part of this category, as are other psychic sensings from afar, intuitions of the future, illuminated or "bright" ideas, and the like. You may sense these in deeper meditations or as you advance further in your practice.
4. **"Undifferentiated (unattached)**": These are pure energy—the basic, general energy that exists throughout the universe, including the energy behind physics' dark matter and string theory, and anything else that may be there at a deeper level. In various cultures, it is called breath, spirit, Shakti, dharma, et al., with symbols such as stars and waves. It may appear in meditation as images or feelings of a pure flow of essence; of tiny, soft-golden particles; as rains or showers of undivided energy pouring down or in; or simply an unexpected increase in energy coming into you from without.

**(c)** Iyengar in his translation of this sutra. (For a description of Iyengar, see the Endnote for "Chapter 2-A Introduction.")

**(d)** In the West the philosophical theory of idealism, especially as described by the Greek philosopher Plato, exhibits an idea similar to Patanjali's, and Hinduism's, "differentiated" essences in forms or shapes. This is the Platonic theory of "forms." Plato describes them as essences that are shapes and ideas, like little bundles of structures invisible except to our subtle intuition. They exist, he says, eternally in a realm purer and more original than our objective reality. They help form physical

energy and matter to make it what it is.

For example, a perfect square or circle does not exist in nature. However, says Plato, the idea-essence of it helps create shapes that are almost perfect circles or squares naturally and in our minds as we try to build them. Or, for instance, Plato suggests that you know intuitively what a dog is: a creature that exhibits "dog-ness"—a collection of traits that define a dog as separate from any other animal. A chair has "chair-ness." A human has "humanness."

Each such form, says Plato, continues eternally. And he argues that if you can learn to become a person of virtue who sees the inner life clearly, you also can see the world of forms. In this, he agrees with Patanjali regarding "divided, barely attached" essences.

More on Plato's forms: See Mary Varney Rorty, "Lecture 5.1: Plato's Theory of Forms." http://web.stanford.edu/~mvr2j/ucsccourse/Lecture5.1.pdf.

*Wikipedia* also has a good introductory article on Plato's forms at its "Theory of forms."

**(e)** Modern Western scientific theory also makes claims that are similar to what the ancient Hindu rishis saw in meditation. Two concepts from physics about matter even smaller than atoms sound similar to the *gunas*.

Regarding the first of the two, "*guna*" means "thread" or "string," especially one that vibrates like a bowstring or can be used to shoot an arrow. Physicists have developed "string theory": the argument that all reality may be, at its deepest pre-matter level, vibrating strings of energy.

Second, most scientists now argue that inside the atom's components of protons and neutrons are even smaller units they call "quarks." Quarks are infinitesimal bits of matter that also sound, by definition, something like the *gunas*. On the one hand, the *gunas* have three major "shadings" or "tendencies" —light/brightness/upness (*sattva*), strength/force/outness (*rajas*), and stability/inertia/sameness (*tamas*). On the other hand, by comparison, quarks come in what physicists call six "flavors" that might also be called tendencies or inclinations. Their six names are "up," "down," "charm," "strange," "top," and "bottom." The flavors work through a "strong force" to join together as protons and neutrons. And protons and neutrons (along with electrons) form atoms—the building blocks of all matter.

Even quarks may not be the end of scientific discoveries. Dr. Michael McCann says, "We know there must be new particles out there to discover because our current understanding of the Universe falls short in so many ways—we do not know what 95% of the Universe is made of, or why there is such a large imbalance between matter and anti-matter, nor do we understand the patterns in the properties of the particles that we do know about."

For more on this subject, see Imperial College London's "New Result from Large Hadron Collider" on the web.

**Sutra 2.20:**

**(a)** René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, www.gutenberg.org/files/59/59-h/59-h.htm.

**(b)** Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, pp. 8-9. (For a description of Merton, see Endnote 1.1.)

**(c)** Swami Āraṇya Hariharānanda, *Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali with Bhasvati*, in his commentary on this sutra.

**Sutra 2.21:**

**(a)** "At-" and "-ma," *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*.

**(b)** *Four Vedas*, https://archive.org/details/FourVedasEng.

**(c)** M. Monier-Williams, "Prakriti," *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 654.

**Sutra 2.22:**

> You are me, and I am you.
> Isn't it obvious that we "inter-are"?
> You cultivate the flower in yourself,
> so that I will be beautiful.
> I transform the garbage in myself,
> so that you will not have to suffer.
> I support you;
> you support me.
> I am in this world to offer you peace;
> you are in this world to bring me joy.

—Thich Nhat Hanh, "Interrelationship," Call me by My True Names — The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh, on the web.

**Sutra 2.23:** Letter to the Ephesians 4.15-16, Christian New Testament. See Open English Bible, https://openenglishbible.org/.

**Sutra 2.24:**

**(a)** Teilhard de Chardin, The Divine Milieu, pp. 79 and 125. (For a description of Teilhard, see Endnote 1.23.)

**(b)** Gospel of Matthew 14.25-30, Christian New Testament, Open English Bible,

https://openenglishbible.org.

**Sutra 2.25:** Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation, pp. 111 and 211. A longer version of his thoughts on this subject is as follows:

> The contemplative [meditator] enters into God in order to be created.... [A]s communion deepens,...it becomes more and more intensive and at the same time reaches out to affect everything else we think and do.... The function of faith is...to integrate the unknown and the known together in a living whole.... it embraces all the realms of life....
>
> True contemplation is the work of a love that transcends all satisfaction and all experience to rest in the night of pure and naked faith.... And the effect...is often a deep peace that overflows into the lower faculties...and thus constitutes an 'experience.'" [However, if] "we attach too much importance to these accidentals we will run the risk of losing what is essential.... And since I cannot directly produce that feeling in myself whenever I want to,...the one important reality [is] union with...God... (pp. 111, 135-137, and 211-12).

(For a description of Merton, see Endnote 1.1.)

**Sutra 2.26:**

**(a)** Culadasa (John Yates, PhD), *The Mind Illuminated*, pp. 19 and 21.

**(b)** Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 372.

Sutra 2.27:

Note: Trying to understand this sutra's sevenfold methods is of particular interest to two groups of people: those who are advanced meditators, and scholars. Other meditators also might be helped, depending on what the sevenfold methods are. Thus the following endnote is a discussion of possible interpretations of the "sevenfold."

(a) Feuerstein in his translation of this sutra. For a description of Feuerstein, see Endnote 1.9.

(b) "The Seven Factors of Enlightenment": Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*, p. 1567.

Scholars generally recognize that some schools of Buddhism believe the "Seven Factors" exist to help you develop yourself *before* you find enlightenment (nirvana). However, other Buddhist experts teach the "Seven Factors" as qualities to continue developing *after* you have first discovered liberation. As a practitioner, you certainly may treat them as both. However, in this sutra, the latter interpretation may better fit Patanjali's intention. This is because first, in Chapter 1, he has given you the means of finding a spiritual awakening; but here at the end of Chapter 2-A, he offers a grand summary of *Kriya* yoga for developing that awakening, which he appears to assume

has now happened.

Also noteworthy is that in Buddhism, the "Seven Factors" often are contrasted with "The Five Hindrances." The Hindrances and how they appear as energy forms are listed in Sutra 1.30.

**(c) Other "sevenfolds"**: Several additional interpretations are worth noting. One is that Patanjali simply is offering an introduction to *Astanga* Yoga, which comes immediately after this sutra: perhaps, as this suggestion goes, Patanjali's "sevenfold" means the first seven or "material" steps of *Astanga*'s eight parts.

Patanjali's first editor/commenter, Vyasa, offers his own formula for the sevenfold.* Many well-respected translators mention it:

**Vyasa's List of "Seven Accomplishments"**

1. (What is) to be avoided is known....
2. The causes of (what is) to be avoided are diminished [to] nothing....
3. Release is directly experienced by *nirodha-samadhi* [cessation-liberation].
4. The means of release is known....
   This is thus the fourfold material liberation (that occurs) from insight.
   However, liberation of *citta* [mind-stuff] is threefold (as follows):
5. *Buddhi* [intuitive discernment] (has) performed (its duties).
6. The *gunas* [nature]...are inclined to dissolution.... There is no further appearance of these dissolved (*gunas*)....
7. [*P*]*urusa* [atman] is beyond association with the *gunas*, the light of its own form alone, pure, (and) absolute.

—See Geer, *The Essence of the Yoga Sutras* with the Commentary of Vyasa, pp. 133-4. (For a description of Vyasa, see Endnote 1.1.)

**(d) Are "sevenfold" in Ancient Scripture?** Many sets of seven appear in Hinduism's oldest written scripture, the *Rig Veda*.

On the one hand, the *Rig* is difficult to translate unless you are triply blessed with being an expert in Sanskrit, a cultural and theological historian of Hindu ancient beliefs, and an experienced mystic. Western English translations of the *Rig* are of little help, as they make it a strange tangle of mythic tales of gods and events, rather than the descriptions of mystical states it is meant to be.

However, for those interested in trying to make sense of the *Rig*, there are clues. It contains almost two hundred references to sacred sets of seven. For example, Sukta (Hymn) 1.164 alone describes seven sons of a deity, seven horses, a chariot's seven wheels, seven spiritual sisters, and seven sacred cows (one to three times each); the seven cosmic threads of nature (five times); seven meters of Vedic stanzas (twenty-four or more); and seven holy seeds (thirty-six times). If some of these sound like sacred energies, powers, spiritual guidelines, or mystic events, they likely are.

Several stanzas in the Rig further describe the seven meters or poetic forms of ancient chanting—discussing them so thoroughly that some students of the *Rig* say that the meters relate to all two hundred of its sets of seven. The author of the famous ancient grammar work *Mahābhāṣya*, who also bore the name Patanjali, spoke at length about these meters as being conduits to God. If the grammar author and the author of the *Yoga Sutras* were the same person, as Hindu tradition states, then this theory of the meters being the set of "seven" in Sutra 2.27 is worth considering.

But of these many sets of seven, nothing is systematized in clear, plain language. The early Hindu scriptures purposely were written to be unclear to those without mystical experience. They remain wide open to interpretation. (For a description of the *Vedas*, see Endnote 1.2.)

**(e) The Seven *Chakras* or Energy Centers**: One intriguing possibility for Patanjali's "sevenfold" is the *Kundalini* yoga system of seven *chakras* (also spelled *cakras)*. In medieval India after—and possibly during—Patanjali's time, the *chakras* were organized into a physical, psychic, and psychological system of seven centers aligned on or near the spine. They include the crown of the head, the forehead's "third eye," the throat and heart centers, another center either high or low in the gut area (depending on the text), a sixth between the navel and the genitals, and the seventh at the base of the spine.

The original sources for this system, say those who developed it, are the ancient Hindu scriptures. No such system is clear within the earliest scriptures, the Vedas. However, *chakra* means "wheel," and the Vedas are full of symbolic wheels that sound like whirling energy centers. For example, the *Rig Veda*, says, "High on the forehead of the Bull one chariot wheel ye ever keep, [t]he other round the sky revolves" (30.19). This suggests that in a meditator's spiritual power or force ("the Bull"), there is a forehead energy center, and another ("round the sky") above the crown of the head. Yet another verse states that "God with far-seeing eyes, is mounted on the lower seven-wheeled...car [chariot]": in this, the human body and soul are the "chariot," and its wheels are the seven energy energy centers (164.12).

A later *Veda*, the *Atharva* (composed of early *Upanishads*), adds, "Time, the steed, runs with seven reins (rays), thousand-eyed, ageless, rich in seed. The seers [i.e., Vedic mystic sages], thinking holy thoughts, mount him.... With seven wheels does this Time ride, seven naves [central areas of holy places] has he..." (39.53.2).

From these and other wheel-related references—along with ample inner experience—even an English reader can begin to find *chakra* meanings. For example, in the *Rig*, the chariot/human's "golden seat," "reins of gold," "golden shaft," and "axle of gold" fit comfortably with the inner Hindu *chakra* system (5.27-29). (See "Appendix F" for more about the meditation experience of the color gold.) The *Rig* adds, "The rich new car hath been equipped at morning; four yokes it hath, three whips, seven reins to guide it" (18.1). Traditional *Kundalini* yoga often describes the

bottom four *chakras* as the physical ones (perhaps here the "yokes"), and the top three centers as the mental ones (the "whips"). Many more possibilities exist.

Regarding these "yokes" and "whips," early Greek theology in Christianity describes a similar division. Thomas Merton says the Greek theologians used the words *anima* and *psyche* to describe the two. *Anima* was the label for the "animal" part of each person—"the realm of instinct and of emotion, the realm of automatism...." The words *psyche* and *nous* denoted humans' mental thoughts. And according to Merton, beyond or around *anima* and *psyche*—infusing them—were the *pneuma* or *spiritus* (breath/spirit), the highest "superconscious" force in which "both the others are joined and transcend themselves" (pp. 138-140). Likewise, in *Kundalini* yoga, spirit/breath is an animating force for the energies of the seven *chakras*.

In any case, it is possible that in Patanjali's time, an orally-shared understanding of seven *chakras* may have existed. If so, he might be referring to them as the "sevenfold" in this sutra.

—See *Four Vedas* and Merton's *New Seeds*. (For a description of the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, see Endnote 1.2. For a description of Merton, see Endnote 1.1.)

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# Endnotes for CHAPTER 2-B

**Chapter 2a Introduction:**

**Buddha's Eightfold Path**: Right view, resolve, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and meditation

**Jainism's Five Vows**: *Ahiṃsā* (non-violence), *satya* (truth-telling), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (chaste behavior), and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness)

**Abrahamic Ten Commandments from Moses**: Make no other gods higher than God; do not worship images or likenesses or use God's name in vain; remember the sabbath day; honor your parents; and do not kill, commit adultery, steal, lie, or be possessive

**Sutra 2.28:** Harihārananda's commentary on Sutra 2.35 in his *Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali with Bhasvati*

**Sutra 2.29:** For more on culture and society in ancient India, see B.N. Puri's *India in the Time of Patanjali* in "Sources."

**Sutra 2.32: St. Augustine of Hippo.** *Confessions* ("Lord, give me..."), and *On the Good of Marriage* and *On Holy Virginity* ("middle path").

**Sutra 2.36: Sri Aurobindo.** *Letters on Yoga*.

**Sutra 2.37:**

***Yajur Veda***. "Bestower," 3.11.f and iv.i.2.t), "bestow[s]," iv.3.13.f), and "bestowing"

(iv.1.3.n).

***Rig Veda***. 35.2-4

**Sutra 2.38:**

**Prostate cancer.** Jennifer R. Rider, Kathryn M Wilson, Jennifer A. Sinnott, Rachel Sabine Kelly, Lorelei Mucci, and Edward L. Giovannucci, "Abstract," *European Urology*, 2016.

***Jannas*.** See especially "Appendix D: The Jhanas" in Culadasa's *The Mind Illuminated*.

***Dharma Megha*.** See "Appendix E" and "F" of this book.

**Sutra 2.41: Gifts of the spirit; fruits of the spirit.** The "gifts of the spirit" in the Jewish Tanakh (*Tanakh Online)* are listed in part in the scripture of Isaiah:

**Jewish "Fruits of the Spirit"**

> 11.2 And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and heroism, a spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord.
>
> 11.3 And he shall be animated by the fear of the Lord, and neither with the sight of his eyes shall he judge, nor with the hearing of his ears shall he chastise.
> 11.4 And he shall judge the poor justly, and he shall chastise with equity the humble of the earth....
>
> 11.5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faith the girdle of his loins.
>
> 32.16 And justice shall dwell in the desert, and righteousness shall reside in the fruitful field.
>
> 32.17 And the deed of righteousness shall be peace, and the act of righteousness [shall be] tranquility and safety until eternity.

The "fruits of the spirit" in the Christian Letters are listed in Galatians 5.22-23 (*The Message Bible* Online). God:

**Christian "Fruits of the Spirit"**

> 5.22 God...brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like an affection for others,
>
> exuberance about life,
>
> serenity.
>
> We develop a willingness to stick with things,
>
> a sense of compassion in the heart, and
>
> a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people.

We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments,

5.23 not needing to force our way in life,

able to marshal and direct our energies wisely."

Legalism is helpless in bringing this about; it only gets in the way.

"Gifts" and "fruits" also are implied in one of Christianity's most famous prayers, the "Peace Prayer," by mystic St. Francis of Assisi: peace, love, pardon, faith, hope, light, joy, consolation, understanding, love, forgiveness, and eternity.

**Sutra 2.44: Sri Aurobindo.** "Foreword," *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*.

**Sutra 2.46:** Patanjali discusses "warming exercise" in Sutra 2.1.

**Sutra 2.47: Hartranft**. Sutras 2.46-48, p. 38.

**Sutra 2.55: Plato.** *Phaedrus*

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# Endnotes for the APPENDIX

**Note:** For full bibliographies of the authors and texts, see "Sources."

## Appendix A:

See the American Press Institute's definition of "journalism" at www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/what-is-journalism.

## Appendix C: How to Breathe

**"Using a Mantra":**

Eddie Weitzberg and John O.N. Lundberg, "Humming Greatly Increases Nasal Nitric Oxide," American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine.

**"The Science of Breathing":**

**(a)** James Nestor, Chapters 1-7, Breath: The New Science of a Lost Art. Nestor describes a multitude of scientific studies that demonstrate just how many physical illnesses can be treated by improving patients' breathing patterns. His work, and that of the dozens of scientific studies he describes, highlight ancient and modern yoga's emphasis on the importance of breathing well.

**(b)** Thich Nhat Hanh, The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation, pp. 14-16. For a description of Nhat Hanh, see Endnote 1.33.

**"Patanjali's Breathing"**

B.K.S. Iyengar. Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Iyengar's primary book on breath control is Light on Pranayama. For a description of Iyengar, see the Endnote for "Chapter 2-A Introduction."

# Appendix D: What Is "Nirvana"?

**"Is Nirvana Always One Type of Experience?":**

**(a)** Thomas Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation, p. 227. (For a description of Merton, see Endnote 1.1.)

**(b)** No one is sure of the origin of this Gaelic blessing, but it has been adapted by both Christians and nature spiritualists in several forms available online. In 1978, well-known composer John Rutter developed a hymn from it, as have others.

**"Nirvana as a Buddhist Concept":**

**(a)** "Nirvana," Rigpa Shedra Wiki, www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Nirvana.

**Patrul Ringpoche** was a nineteenth-century wandering Tibetan Buddhist mystic and teacher. For his Commentaries on The Ornament of Clear Realization (Abhisamayālaṃkāra), see "Patrule Ringpoche" in "Sources."

**(b)** The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha—A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya, Translated by Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, pp. 42-43. (This book won the 1995 "Outstanding Academic Book Award" by Choice magazine, and the "Excellence in Buddhist Publishing for Dharma Discourse" Tricycle Prize.) The Theravada Buddhist Majjhima Nikaya (Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha) is one of the earliest written authoritative scriptures in Buddhism.

**Buddha**: See Endnote 1.1(d).

**(c)** What are Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism? According to most Buddhist scholars and historians, they are the two great branches of Buddhism. (A third, lesser known, is called Vajrayana.)

**Mahayana**, means "great vehicle." This Buddhist tradition emphasizes finding liberation within society, and continuing to serve society after finding it. Chinese and Japanese Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and others often are Mahayana.

**Theravada** means "elders' vehicle." It usually is considered the oldest Buddhist tradition. Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon), Myanmar (formerly Burma), Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos often follow this more monastic, individualistic way.

**Vajrayana** is, according to some scholars, a third division of Buddhism. The word means "diamond vehicle." The "diamond" represents a part—or the whole—of the individual's spiritual body, or a point on which to concentrate within the body's seven main or spiritual Kundalini yoga chakra energy centers.

# Appendix E: How to Meditate after Dharma Megha

See “Sources” for specific references.

# Appendix F: What Is Ultimate Dharma Megha?

See “Sources” for specific references.

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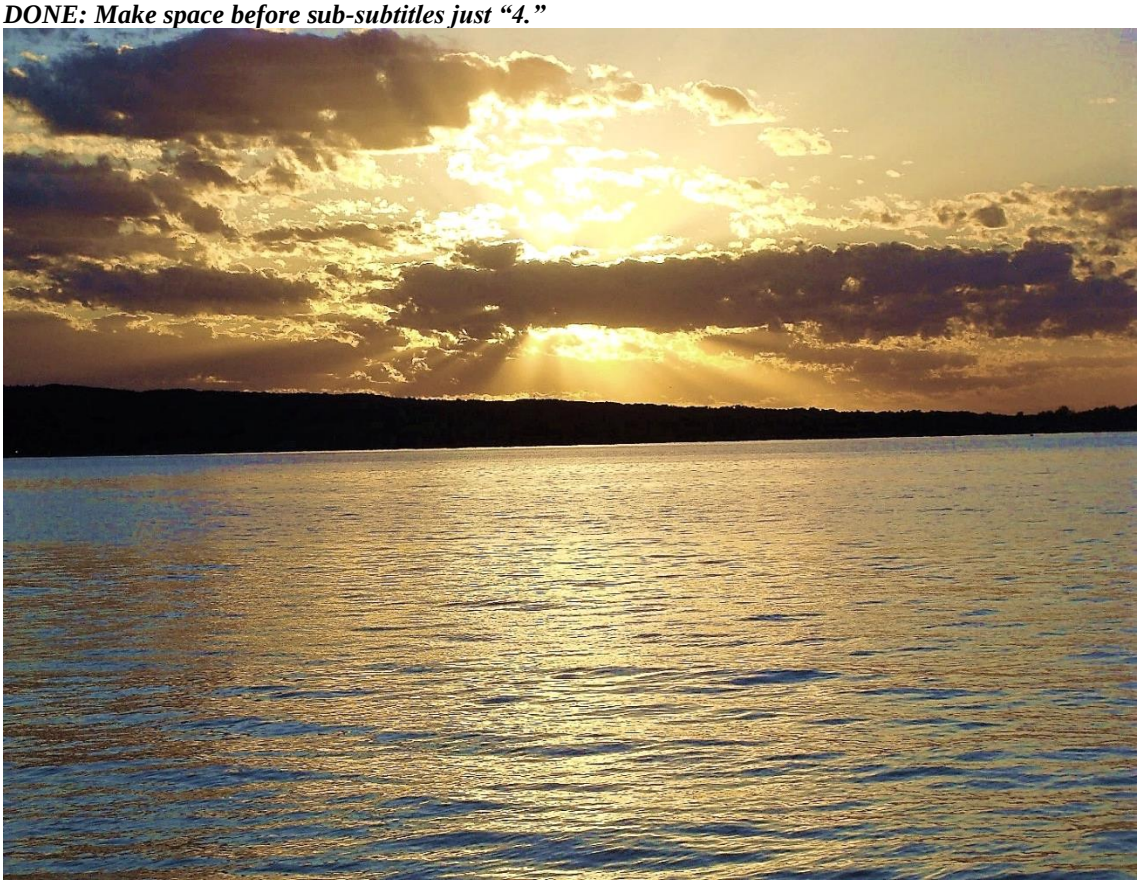
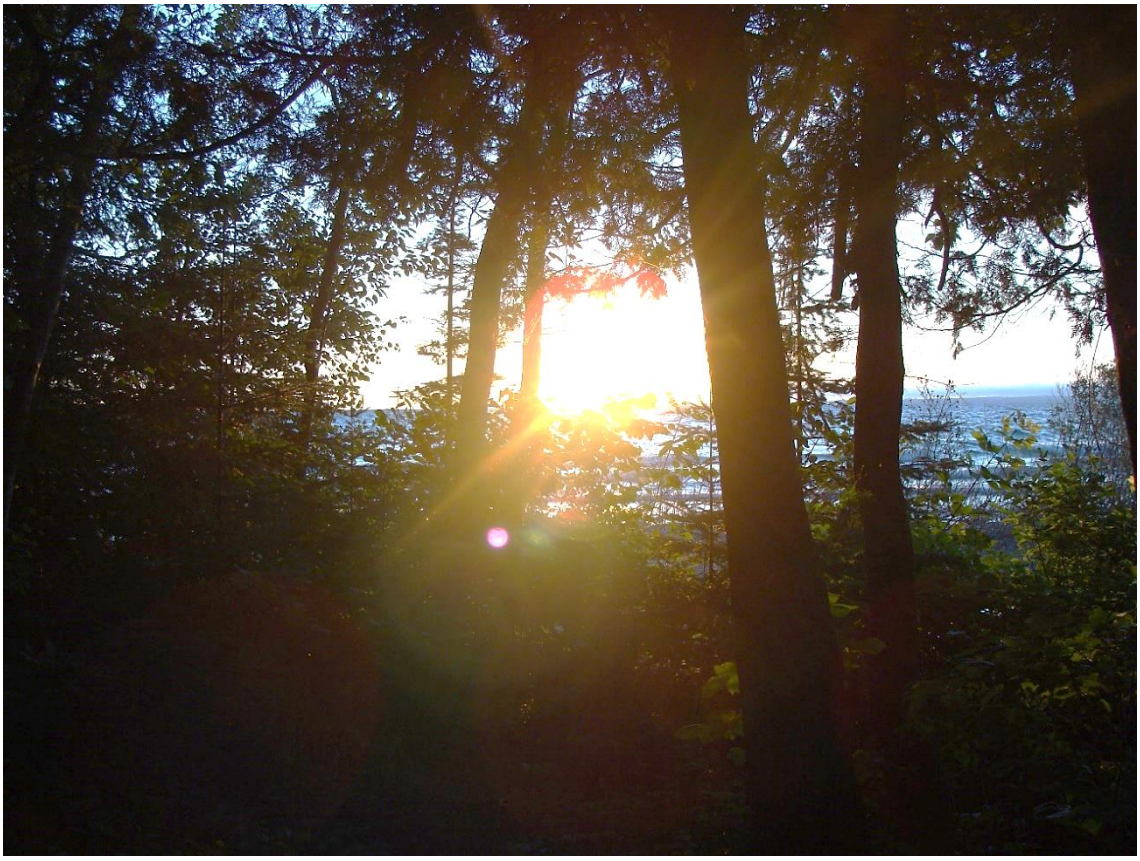


*Sun over Hills and Water*

# APPENDICES



*Sun on Water through Trees*

# Appendix A: Who was Patanjali?

No one knows much about Patanjali except that he wrote his sutras in the form of musical chants in Sanskrit roughly 2000 years ago. Otherwise, he is a mystery.

Some argue that he lived as early as 400 BCE (or even earlier); others, as late as 400 or 500 CE. Some say he was the legendary Patanjali the Grammarian, who lived in the mid-100s BCE and wrote a treatise on Sanskrit grammar and linguistics called the *Mahābhāṣya*, which formulated the rules of Sanskrit usage for many hundreds of years after his time. Others insist that Patanjali may have been one and the same as the first person to write a lengthy commentary on the *Yoga Sutras*, a writer we know only by the name Vyasa, which means "compiler" or "editor," around 400-500 CE. Some scholars suggest the *Yoga Sutras* had two or three authors, with the earliest parts written by Patanjali and other sutras added later.

Some call Patanjali the father of yoga meditation. However, he really was more of an inventive and creative aggregator—a collector and organizer—of methods that existed in Hinduism from 3000 BCE or earlier. Many of his methods also can be found in the *Bhagavad Gita*, probably written before the *Yoga Sutras*. In the form of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Hindu meditation arrived to special notice in the West in the

1800s. In Europe, well-known philosopher Friedrich Hegel wrote about it, as did transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau (of *Walden* fame) in America: Thoreau said what he practiced at times was yoga meditation.

What is now, in our twenty-first century, called "yoga" was developed in the early 1900s as a series of breathing, posture, and movement exercises also known more formally as *hatha yoga* or "physical yoga." Though hatha yoga can involve meditation as part of its physical activities, it is not the full meditation yoga taught for thousands of years in India. Patanjali and the *Bhagavad Gita* represent the full tradition that uses different, often mental pursuits and concentrations. Such mind techniques now also sometimes are called *raja yoga* or "mental concentration yoga."

About Patanjali himself, we don't have precise records. However, we can use his writing style, content, and his times in India to determine several likely facts.

A first assumption is that he was bright and literate for his times. In India, as in most countries then, perhaps only 1-3% of the populace could read, and the percentage who could easily write Sanskrit—a scholarly, written language—was even smaller. Patanjali's excellent writing shows a broad and deep knowledge of the important scriptures of Hinduism in early times and even, perhaps, Buddhism. He likely was an accomplished scholar.

A second deduction is that Patanjali experienced everything he talked about. People sometimes describe him as a philosopher, and indeed, it is possible to make philosophies from his comments. However, he clearly was writing about Hindu spiritual states that he, himself, had experienced. In short, he was a Hindu mystic.

A third observation is that he was what might be called a "spiritual journalist." The American Press Institute defines journalism as "the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information."* [An * means there is more in the Endnotes.] Patanjali was a reporter of the basics of Hindu yoga meditation. He summarized the most important meditation practices mentioned in different parts of the lengthy Hindu scriptures. He organized and wrote these summaries as simple chants that large numbers of people could understand.

Fourth, Patanjali liked using metaphors from nature and agriculture. Though he uses few obvious literary metaphors, he often chooses words that have root meanings involving nature, planting, and even using wheeled carts. His sutras also speak of forms of light, water, and geographical features. This suggests that he lived in or near a rural area of India, possibly a location where he enjoyed greenery, rivers, hills, and the comings and goings of agriculture-based commerce.

A fifth likelihood is that he used many such metaphors and other words directly from the earliest Hindu scriptures, the *Vedas*, perhaps especially the oldest, the *Rig Veda*. In addition, he used a particular methodology or teaching pattern popular in ancient Vedic times: problem and solution. It is how ancient Vedic physicians and

medicine in general diagnosed an illness and a prescription for it. Patanjali (like Buddha before him) diagnoses the problems that humans encounter; then he describes the solutions.

These two inclinations—ancient Vedic root words and medical-like diagnoses—suggest he may have lived in the earlier times of the estimated range of dates for his *Yoga Sutras*: that is, before the turn of the millennium—before 0 CE. At the least, even if he lived later, he appears to have been a traditionalist, looking to early Hindu times to develop his sutras.

Why is his personal inclination toward earlier, ancient times important? A disagreement exists among scholars about Patanjali's resources—the sources of his ideas. On one side are translators and historians who believe he was eclectic in collecting his materials: his ideas, they say, apparently came from the ancient *Vedas*, Buddhism, Hindu Pali scriptures (a tongue "of the people" different from the scholarly Sanskrit language), Jainism (a somewhat slightly different early religion), and his own fertile mind.

Scholars on the other side insist Patanjali was a follower of the *Samkhya* school of Hinduism, which didn't fully develop until the early classical era of Hinduism in 0-300 CE. For this reason, they say, Patanjali not only lived well after 0 CE, but what he wrote should be interpreted by the later precepts of the *Samkhya* system of beliefs.

Was Patanjali an eclectic ancient Hindu writer, or was he a follower of the later classical school of *Samkhya*? His writing style and content—his likely adherence to more traditional root-word meanings for his experiences—would suggest the former. And this, in turn, might tell us something important: that Patanjali's central organizing principle in his *Yoga Sutras* was not the precepts of a school of philosophy, but rather a set of inner meditation events that he, himself, experienced.

If this scholarly disagreement about Patanjali's resources interests you, there is more. See "Appendix C: Interpreting Patanjali.")

A final two points about Patanjali is that he not only had an excellent command of Sanskrit, but he also possessed a sense of humor, largesse, and good will. In other words, as a person he probably was bright, warm, and giving. In fact, these three attributes were said to be true of a mid-100s BCE linguistic master named Patanjali. History clearly records that that Patanjali wrote the Sanskrit grammar masterpiece *Mahābhāṣya* (the *Great Commentary*). It is interesting that Hindu tradition says these two Patanjali's were one and the same. Did the Patanjali who founded classical Sanskrit then retire—as was traditional among Vedic gurus—to become a yogi and meditation expert? If so, it would make perfect sense that he would use his mastery of writing to produce the Sanskrit *Yoga Sutras.*

In short, Patanjali was a well-educated scholar, a mystic, and a practical journalist. He likely either lived in the ancient, pre-Common Era times (before 0 CE),

or he was a traditionalist in his sources and writing. He also was a musician of skill who produced chants that many Hindus even today describe as haunting. That he also had a keen eye for beauty in nature, excellent Sanskrit writing skills, and a sense of humor and warmth make his life and teachings all the more special.

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*Bend in the River: Shadow to Sunlight*

# Appendix B:
# How Should Patanjali Be Interpreted?

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* may be understood best using similar pure, simple words he offers, and especially by applying a deep understanding of the inner meditation experiences about which he wrote. Unfortunately, many translations do not adhere to the simpler meanings of Patanjali, they add philosophical shadings he didn't intend, and they haven't had the benefit of Patanjali's experiences.

## Four Reasons to Reinterpret Patanjali

First, Patanjali's original words were written in simple, practical language for a wide audience, without excess philosophical or theological abstractions. Eminent Sanskrit scholar Barbara Stoler Miller (see the "Bibliography") argues that many translators miss the direct meaning of the original Sanskrit. She said that in her own translation of the *Yoga Sutras*, she worked to use "consistent equivalents in English

for Patanjali's core vocabulary, rather than perpetuating the loose array of incomprehensible technical inventions on which translators have too often relied" (xii).

Stoler believes Patanjali's words were simple and basic. She adds that the *Yoga Sutras* is written with Patanjali's "precision" in a prose style tight and highly efficient, using as few words as necessary.

Second, Patanjali's writing deserves an update. Most of the translations of his work are from the mid-twentieth century or earlier, some of them from the medieval ages in India. Most translations tend to favor one particular school of Indian philosophy or another. Many of them also tend toward academic or scholarly language.

This present book uses ordinary concepts to describe Patanjali's sometimes impressively clear descriptions. He was a plain speaker who carved his sutras into simple chants with metaphors from nature and from simple living. Stoler describes Patanjali's prose style as practical and sensible with "basic insights [that] have a self-referential clarity that is independent of knowledge outside the text" (xiii). In other words, you don't need to be a scholar of Sanskrit or Hindu theology and religion to understand Patanjali.

Third, Patanjali intended each sutra to be understood, not as a philosophical concept, but rather an experience that happens in or related to meditation. If you like your talk of spirituality to be abstract concepts, Patanjali is not for you. If you prefer to hear about real experiences, Patanjali should appeal to you.

It is true, on the one hand, that some of Patanjali's sutras can be thought of as both experience and philosophy. However, those who see the sutras as *only* philosophy are missing something important: the "Invisible Gorilla" in the room.

The "Invisible Gorilla" experiment was conducted at Harvard University. Researchers showed a video to research subjects in which six people, three in white shirts and three in black, pass around basketballs. The job of the research subjects watching the film was to count the number of passes by the people in white shirts. During the video, a gorilla (a person in a gorilla suit) enters the scene, faces the camera, thumps its chest, and then walks off. After the test, subjects were asked if they had seen the gorilla. Half of them did not remember noticing it. (See www.theinvisiblegorilla.com/gorilla_experiment.html.)

This test, says its authors, shows that you easily can miss what is happening around you without realizing it. In the *Yoga Sutras*, it means that some translators may be so busy studying the philosophical, theological, and linguistic meanings that they miss seeing Patanjali's inner experiences and simple practices.

Fourth, an ideological war about Patanjali is ongoing among historians. Some say he wrote in India's ancient times, which were c. 500-0 BCE or earlier, but others

insist he wrote at the beginning of the Hindu "classical" era (0-800 CE). Unfortunately, all translations come from this later classical era or later, and translators often assume that Patanjali's statements resemble those of one or two specific schools of Hindu thought that existed in those classical times.

However, Patanjali's sutras, when translated plainly and simply, appear to model more closely and directly the concepts of ancient times as exemplified in the earliest written Hindu scripture, the *Rig Veda*, and similar ancient texts. This preference in Patanjali's writing (no matter the era in which he wrote) creates a guiding beacon for understanding that his language is like that of the *Rig Veda.* The spiritual and mystical meanings of many of his sutras appear to come directly from these earlier texts, as do the root meanings of many of his key words.

It is easy to conclude that Patanjali—no matter what era in which he lived—had a clear preference for the ancient texts and their meanings. This current book honors Patanjali's apparently preferred original meanings from ancient Sanskrit.

## Was Patanjali a *Samkhya*?

This particular section on Hindu *Samkhya* philosophy gets a little technical. Feel free to skip to the end if this technical discussion doesn't interest you.

In particular, many translators claim that Patanjali was an adherent of the *Samkhya* School of Indian philosophy, especially in its classical-era form. Certainly, some of his explanations in the *Yoga Sutras* use *Samkhya*-like expressions: for example, the existence of a *Purusa* or divine self, and the contrasting reality of *Prakriti* or independent matter.

However, many other descriptions in his book are from other sources. Edwin Bryant, for example, demonstrates this in four points he explains in the "Concluding Reflections" chapter of his translation of the sutras.

First, says Bryant, *Samkhya* tends to reject that each person's basic Awareness (the *Purusa*) has freewill. However, the *Yoga Sutras* imply that freewill does, indeed, exist. And its home is in the *Purusa*.

Second, adds Bryant, Patanjali appears to believe that the *tattvas*—direct forms of the basic stuff of the universe—are psychological in nature: we can perceive them psychologically. *Samkhya*, on the other hand, considers them irrelevant and at a far distance in the universe, simply cosmological principles that are not helpful in psychologically freeing or developing yourself in yoga.

Third, Bryant tells us, *Samkhya* yoga argues that the ultimate condition of *kaivalya*, or "singular aloneness," means that once a yogi fully achieves this state, he slowly dies, leaving human life behind. But Patanjali appears to suggest, at the least, that a *kaivalya* yogi can decide to die or to stay in one's body and serve humankind.

In fact, Patanjali's final state for a meditator—which he discusses in his last several sutras—is called *dharma megha*. There is a tendency among *Samkhya* translators to think that *dharma megha* is a final stage that leads into death. However, plenty of evidence in Buddhist and *Vedic* literature from Patanjali's time, and from earlier *Vedic* literature, suggests a meditator who finds *dharma megha* is not dying but rather starting an important new stage of both his meditation life and outer actions. Patanjali makes strong, sweeping statements in these final sutras about how grand *dharma megha* is. So, it is unlikely he thinks, as do followers of *Samkhya*, that the ultimate state of meditation is to fade away and die.

Fourth and—according to Bryant, "most intriguing"—is the meaning of "Patanjali's mysterious *Isvara*—a state of Being or "yogic Godhead." *Samkhya* yoga does not believe in a God that is above all others or exists behind or in all. Patanjali's *Isvara* apparently does fill this role. It is similar to (though possibly somewhat different from) another Hindu idea of God, which is *Brahman*. In a sense, both *Brahman* and *Isvara* serve in Patanjali's meditation system in some important ways as the Western equivalent of "God" serves in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

## Useful Translations

Thus this current translation was helped most by translators who (1) provided a variety of possible English meanings of Sanskrit words, and (2) included older meanings from ancient Indian times, not just adopted meanings from classical Hinduism. The translations that most provided these qualities were by David Geer, B.K.S. Iyengar, Swami Vivekananda, and best of all, Georg Feuerstein and Sri Swami Satchidananda. However, almost all translations in the "Bibliography" provided a helpful variety of contexts.

Especially helpful, too, were three sets of dictionaries and glossaries. First is the Monier-Williams *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, a massive, masterful work. An online project at the University of Texas-Austin, *Ancient Sanskrit Online*, was a wonderful resource of definitions of ancient words in the first written Hindu scripture, the *Rig Veda*. And the *American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* always is helpful.

So, how *should* Patanjali be translated? The answer is "simply." Harry Truman, President of the United States at the end of World War II, was legendary for being "plain speaking." So should be the words of Patanjali. He uses the easiest-to-understand language he can, from nature and the human senses, to describe the states of meditation. He offers them in steps. He gives you a menu of alternatives and tells you, "Pick what works." If you practice his simple instructions, you'll find a glimmer—and then a gradually burgeoning dawn—of new experience. He knows it well, draws a map, and gives you the compass for going into the light.

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*Frog in Pond*

# Appendix C: How Should You Breathe

In several sutras, Patanjali discusses breathing. Like everything else in his sutras, he provides just brief, tantalizing notes about it.

Throughout history, thousands of sages have taught breathing in tens of thousands of ways to millions of followers, listeners, and readers. Breathing methods have been highlighted from ancient times in many cultures. And the reasons for such breathing are many, as well, from spiritual practices to healing and from preparing for mental tests to getting ready for physical combat.

In India, breath and breathing are called *prana*. Chinese medical texts call breath *chi*; in Japan, *ki*. Indigenous Americans have many names for it: a few are *hah oh* (Tewa), *oenikika* (Cree), and *orenda* (Iroquois). The Hebrew language calls it *ruah* or *ruach'*. Greeks call it *pneuma* or, earlier, *psyche*. And in many ancient languages, the meanings of "breath" and "spirit" intermix or overlap.

How, precisely, should one breathe for meditation and health? Here are some modern, scientific recommendations to complement Patanjali's "breath sutras."

## **Using a Mantra** (Sutras 1.27-1.29)

A mantra is a repeated word or phrase you use to help regulate your breath and focus your attention in meditation or prayer. Two examples are *om* and, in the West, "Hail, Mary, Mother of God."

Many mantras have a humming part, as do the two examples above. Humming may be especially useful, say scientists. They have known for some time that nitric oxide is created when you breathe through your nose. The *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine* reported in 2002 that nitric oxide levels in your blood increase up to fifteen-fold by humming compared to normal breathing.* What does nitric oxide do? It relaxes blood vessels, allowing more blood to circulate so that your blood is better oxygenated. This, in turn, improves lung and heart functions. Nitric oxide, which also happens to be the main ingredient in Viagra, is mildly antibacterial and antiviral.

In addition, whether you are humming or not, when you repeat a mantra, you use what scientists call "vocalizing" and "subvocalizing." The former means you are talking aloud; the latter, that you are using your inner voice to think the words firmly and strongly, doing so silently but as if talking within you. In both experiences, you use your vocal cords, also called your larynx. It is about two inches long and is formed of two muscles or cords (folds of skin) that vibrate when you talk, and also when you verbalize thoughts in your head. These cords relax when you are breathing silently—neither vocalizing nor subvocalizing.

However, when you make any kind of noise, your vocal cords vibrate. They rattle rapidly. When you hum, they create the sound of the hum.

If you use your vocal cords out loud without taking a breath, you run out of breath and the sound stops. Therefore, for meditation, it is helpful to choose a mantra that aids deeper breathing. Whether you hum a long, drawn-out ending of your mantra, or whether you say it shortly, you should take a deep breath between each vocalizing or subvocalizing of your mantra. If your mantra is to be most successful, usually it will have a relaxation of your vocal cords at its end, and a deep breath to reconstitute the air and energy for saying it again. According to traditional yoga meditation, that pause after each repetition is a space that allows your consciousness to fall ever further into a deep mental and physical silence.

You can observe your own voice box relaxing and opening. It feels like two curtains, folds, or small muscles relaxing in your throat. You even may put your fingertips on it gently as you speak. The movement of the cords feels like a slight spreading and then closing up of the two sides. Both vocalizing and subvocalizing—talking and internal verbal thinking—create such movement. If you can maintain a complete silencing or relaxation of the voice box, you may even clear your mind of most or all of its constant internal flow of verbal thoughts.

Thus using a mantra—or learning more directly to relax your throat muscles—becomes yet another way of clearing your mind. You can start clearing it of verbal thoughts. If you also learn to relax your nearby muscles in your jaw, mouth, and forehead, you can quiet other types of thoughts: images, mixed verbal-and-visual thinking, and even, to some extent, memories. If you work your way downward to your chest muscles, diaphragm, and stomach successfully, you can clear many emotional and feeling-related disturbances, as well—as Patanjali discusses in the next sutras.

## **The Science of Breathing** (Sutras 1.31 and 1.34)

Science began confirming in the twentieth century how important proper breathing is. James Nestor says in his deeply researched book *Breath* that four factors in particular are extremely important for maintaining physical health through good breathing.* Failing these, you are likely to develop significant illnesses (or may already have them) and age much faster. The three greatest problems that science confirms, he says, and how to counter them are:

**Four Factors of Health through Good Breathing**

(1) Avoid breathing through your mouth: almost always breathe in through your nose.

(2) Use less shallow breathing: fully inhale and exhale deeply to increase lung capacity.

(3) Try to avoid rapid breathing: breathe long and slow.

(4) Breathe less often: learn to take fewer breaths per minute (see below).

Thich Nhat Hanh, a highly respected author, mystic, and Vietnamese Zen Buddhist, says in a section titled "Taking hold of one's breath":

> You should know how to breathe to maintain mindfulness [close attention], as breathing is a natural and extremely effective tool which can prevent dispersion.... Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath to take hold of it again. Breathe in lightly a fairly long breath, conscious of the fact that you are breathing a deep breath. Now breath out all the breath in your lungs, remaining conscious the whole time of the exhalation.... In a Buddhist monastery, everyone learns to use breath as a tool to stop mental dispersion and to build up concentration.*

Rick Hanson and Richard Mendius offer several science- and tradition-based suggestions in *Buddha's Brain*:

**Breathing Guidelines from *Buddha's Brain***

(1) "Inhale as much as you can...." Deep breathing "stimulates the PNS" (parasympathetic nervous system), which will "lower stress...and improve your long-term health," making "calming, soothing, healing ripples spread through your body, brain, and mind.... When you're relaxed, it's hard to feel stressed (Benson 2000)" and you also may "reduced the cellular damage of chronic stress (Dusek et al. 2008)."

(2) "[E]xhale slowly while relaxing. A big inhalation really expands your lungs, requiring a big exhalation.

(3) Be aware of your body as you practice your deep breathing. "Parasympathetic fibers are spread throughout your lips; thus touching your lips stimulates the PNS.... Be attentive to physical sensations.... For example, notice the sensations of breathing, the cool air...and warm air...the chest and belly rising and falling...."

(4) "The HeartMath Institute...has developed numerous techniques," one of which is to breathe so "that your inhalation and exhalation are the same duration; for example, count one, two three, four in your mind while inhaling, and one, two, three, four while exhaling."

## Science and Breathing while Meditating

Nestor says in *Breath* that the ideal for meditation (and much of living) should be 5-6 breaths per minute, or once every 10-12 seconds.

The average American, says Nestor, takes 18 breaths per minute (80). "Normal" shallow breathing has a range of 12-20 breaths per minute (85). Scientifically, the ideal for meditating (and much of living), he says, should be 5.5 breaths per minute: a 5.5 second inhale, and a 5.5 second exhale—one breathing cycle per every 11 seconds (83, 104). According to scientific measurements, not only does this create a better, healthier, and more stable use of oxygen and carbon dioxide in your body, but also it mimics the mantras or verbal prayers of several traditional religions. Says Nestor,

> When Buddhist monks chant...*Om Mani Padme Hum*, each spoken phrase lasts six seconds, with six seconds to inhale before the chant starts again. The traditional chant of *Om*...used in Jainism and other traditions [including Patanjali's yoga] takes six seconds to sing, with a pause of about six seconds to inhale. The *sa ta na ma* chant...in Kundalini yoga also takes six seconds to vocalize, followed by six seconds to inhale.... Japanese, African, Hawaiian, Native American, Buddhist, Taoist, Christian—these cultures and religions all had somehow developed the same...breathing patterns (82).

He then describes how researchers in 2001 in Italy measured physical reactions

of two dozen subjects who recited a Buddhist mantra and also a Latin version of the Roman Catholic "Ave Maria" rosary. The researchers didn't quantify the amount of time each should be said. Even so, "the average number of breaths for each cycle was 'almost exactly' identical…, 5.5 breaths a minute." "Even more stunning," he says, was that the subjects' "blood flow to the brain increased" and their "heart, circulation, and nervous system [were] coordinated to peak efficiency." This coordination ended when they stopped the chanting (82-83). Similar experiments elsewhere, which he describes, showed parallel results.

Another system he mentions is that of Swami Rama, who surprised and impressed American scientists, when he visited them starting in the 1970s, with his breathing abilities. The Swami said, according to Nestor, that practicing a breathing pattern of twice as long exhaling as inhaling, if extended eventually to a ten-second inhale and a twenty-second exhale, used for a time each day, will give you a body with no toxins in it with no disease (191).

Nestor adds a final note regarding animals in nature. He says, "Mammals with the lowest resting heart rates live the longest" and "breathe the slowest.... This is as true for baboons and bison as it is for blue whales and us" (104).

## **Patanjali's Breathing System** (Sutras 2.49-53)

In Sutras 2.49-53, Patanjali recommends a way of breathing in meditation and what it will create for your inner experiences. By the time Patanjali was writing, the use of breath for meditation already had a long history from earlier Hindu scriptures. As a result, Patanjali likely was summarizing the best advice from the scriptures and meditation practices of his time.

The word for such breathing is "pranayama," which has become so common a word in English that it no longer italicized as a foreign language: pranayama classes are everywhere. The original Hindu word, *prāṇayāma*, is composed of two words. *Prāṇa* means "energy"; *āyāma* means "restraint," "control," or regulation." Patanjali says that pranayama has three movements:

### **Inhalation**

### **Exhalation**

### **Retention/holding/pause**

Patanjali also says that there are many versions of how long or short each of these three steps takes, and each version has a different effect. (This is well illustrated by the literally hundreds of ways breathing is taught in twenty-first century yoga classes.) B.K.S. Iyengar, a follower of Patanjali, translator of his *Yoga Sutras*, and a

world-renowned yoga posture and breathing expert, says that the retention step can occur after inhaling, or after exhaling.*

Some scholars, translators, and experts, argue that Patanjali's Sutra 2.51 states the ultimate goal of breathing exercises is the ability to suspend your breath as long as you want, even to infinity. However, Iyengar and others say this is, at best, a fantasy, as no one can stop breathing indefinitely without dying, and that Patanjali' intent is to encourage either "automatic" proper breathing (Iyengar, 2.51) or a technique of breathing very, very slowly (such as just one breath per minute or less) to induce deeper meditative states (Feuerstein, 251).

Some breathing experts also say that the pause between breaths, wherever this stop of several seconds may be, is a doorway. They say it reveals or leads to the inner Self or to some other spiritual awareness.

## Breathing for Sleep or Alertness

If you need to fall asleep, you may want to try the Wim Hof Method. Wim Hof spent many years learning yogic and other breathing techniques that he has demonstrated by immersing himself in ice water for almost an hour without ill effect, or regularly running on snow and ice barefoot, again without ill effect. He teaches his methods throughout the world.

To fall asleep faster, he recommends that you breathe deeply, then exhale quickly. Do this as many times as you want: for some, ten such breathes is enough; others might need forty or more. Note: do *not* do this in any situation where you might drown (like in a bathtub or swimming pool) or fall and hit your head, and do not try it when you are driving or operating machinery. Occasionally, especially when people are not used to this type of breathing, individuals have been known to pass out. However, tried in a safe physical space (such as sitting on a bed, couch, or the floor when you first try it), it is generally considered very safe.

For alertness, do the opposite. Breath in quickly and deeply, then let it out slowly. After thirty or forty such breaths, breath in and hold your breath to a count of five or ten, and then let it out slowly. Then repeat. Note: the same precautions as above should be taken, as people sometimes pass out from such breathing. Also, do not overdo this kind of breathing at first, until you know how it affects you, as it hyperactivates parts of your body systems. The best policy is to use it just enough to regain alertness, not more.

## Breathing with Patanjali and Nestor

Here are three examples of combining Nestor's and Patanjali's breathing systems. They are similar to the number of breaths per minute that Nestor suggests.

However, they add a pause as Patanjali suggests.

You may want to use a clock or watch that counts seconds. Try counting out loud or in your head with the timer so that you eventually can know the number of seconds with your eyes closed. Some people learn to do this by saying or thinking, "one thousand one, one thousand two, one thousand three," etc. (After one thousand twelve, most people revert to saying the simple number, "thirteen, fourteen," etc.)

Note: The pauses shown below are placed after exhaling. However, if you prefer, you can place them after inhaling.

**Breath—Patanjali and Nestor**

| **Total Breath of 9 Seconds** | **Total Breath of 12 Seconds** | **Total Breath of 15 Seconds** |
|---|---|---|
| Inhale 3 seconds | Inhale 4 seconds | Inhale 5 seconds |
| Exhale 3 seconds | Exhale 4 seconds | Exhale 5 seconds |
| Pause (or push it out) 3 seconds | Pause (or push it out) 4 seconds | Pause (or push it out) 5 seconds |

You may vary how long you complete each part of a cycle: e.g., in the first method above, you might want, instead, to inhale for three seconds, exhale for two seconds, and pause for four seconds. Do what is comfortable for you.

You may need to try a method for at least five or ten minutes to see what its effects are, or even experiment with it several times. The goal is to reach more inner peace and greater physical comfort. You may also find that different breathing patterns work for different activities: e.g., one method for calming yourself; another for exercise, to stay alert, or to wake up; and yet another to fall asleep.

If your goal is to learn to take longer, deeper breaths, then start with what is comfortable and gradually, as your lung capacity slowly expands, develop slightly longer breaths each week or month. Many people eventually can reach the point, during meditation, at which they comfortably take just two or three breaths per minute. The result is deeper relaxation of mind and body. With long practice, a breath per minute can be realized.

What if, as you breathe, you start falling asleep? If you *want* to sleep, that's fine. If you do not want to sleep, but rather meditate or even just be calmer and more alert, then try a different breathing pattern or, perhaps, a different position (such as standing up or even walking).

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*Vast Waters*

# Appendix D: What Is "Nirvana"?

Why do the "Comment" sections of Sutras 1.47-50 include references to nirvana? It is because nirvana is a Hindu concept, developed from the teachings of Buddha, who was a Hindu meditator. He had no plans to create a new religion. Rather, he saw himself, in his own lifetime, as part of a Hindu spiritual tradition. This means that nirvana is not just an important Buddhist experience but also a Hindu one, born from Hindu practices and root words.

## Is Nirvana Always One Type of Experience?

The answer to this question is that it is one Awareness but can come in many different shadings, flavors, or vibrations. It may be entirely empty of content, or it can be surcharged with one or another mystical experience of peace, love, joy, strength, etc.

In its purer forms, it is untinged by normal thought, emotion, or desire (or may sometimes contain just one burning, central, illuminated thought or feeling). How

long does it last? It may be only five or ten supreme, perfect seconds, or it may last hours, days, or months. In advanced masters, it is an experience that comes and goes regularly, or may even be nearly continuous, especially in their later years.

How does your first nirvana occur? Have you already experienced it? It may be kindled or jump started by something as simple as a beautiful sunrise, a supreme moment of athleticism, or a look from a master teacher. O it may come through harder work or effort such as a very long process of meditation, in the midst of deep illness, or in a spiritual retreat. Some people say nirvana is when they first felt God; others, their first experience of being in a transnormal state of being, which is beyond what most people consider normal thinking or feeling.

Many names for nirvana exist. Zen Buddhism calls the experience satori, generally portraying it as a sudden awakening available to many who can learn to see or find it—but then Zen masters explain that every moment or instant is an opportunity for satori. Dominican Christian mystic Thomas Merton describes it similarly as a passage of the psyche: "A door opens in the center of our being, and we seem to fall through it into immense depths, which although they are infinite—are still accessible to us. All eternity seems to have become ours in this one placid and breathless contact."* Those using psychedelic drugs for spiritual illumination call it by many names, whether they believe it represents God or just their own deeper perceptions.

An old Gaelic (Celtic-language) blessing echoes Eastern descriptions of the nirvanic state. Here is a Christian version of this blessing that reflects an experience of enlightenment in nature:

**Peace Blessing**

Deep Peace of the running wave to you,
Deep Peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep Peace of the quiet earth to you,
Deep Peace of the shining stars to you.*

This type of nature-nirvana is one of several common themes in Buddhism, as next discussed.

## Nirvana as a Buddhist Concept

Nirvana is, traditionally, the name given for this experience by Buddhism. Buddha himself discussed it, as mentioned in the "Comment" section of Sutra 1.47. Thus it may be particularly helpful to look a bit into whether Buddhists believe nirvana can be experienced by many people.

Traditionally, some Buddhist teachers say people seeking Buddhahood may

experience several types of nirvana. The "Comment" parts of Sutras 1.47 and 1.50 already have quoted two modern Zen Buddhist experts, Thich Nhat Hanh and Alan Watts, saying that nirvana is available to many who seek it.

The Rigpa Shedra Wiki offers a more detailed Mahayana Buddhist explanation. Mahayana Buddhism is one of the three or four major branches of Buddhism. This discussion reveals four levels of nirvana as described by Buddhist scholar and practitioner Patrul Ringpoche:*

**Mahayana* Buddhist Four Levels of Nirvana**

1. natural nirvana" [awareness that "mind" is an empty object, like "space" is an empty object; natural state of having an empty mind]
2. non-abiding nirvana, which is...beyond both ordinary samsaric existence [the cycles of life and death] and [is] the lesser nirvana" of personal or individual liberation [which Patrul also describes as a "nihilistic" nirvana]
3. nirvana with remainder (Skt. *sopadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*)...attained by arhats"—those who have overcome normal emotional life but who continue to live in order to teach
4. nirvana without remainder (Skt. *nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*), the consummate realization of the arhats...who [have left] their psycho-physical aggregates [body and self] behind

The *Majjhima Nikaya* of the Theravada division (another of the Buddhist major branches) provides a slightly different four levels of nirvana reached through "wisdom" or "faith," along with the "fetters" or chains that are released at the occurrence of each:*

**Theravada* Buddhist Four Levels of Nirvana**

> "**Stream-entry**" occurs when your absolute chaining to these first three fetters begins to dissolve: (a) your personality is your true self, (b) the teachings of Buddha (and other mystics) are logically impossible, and (c) your rites and rituals (whether religious or personal) are necessary for living. You do not necessarily leave these fetters behind entirely; however, you begin breaking their chains when you realize that they are not centers of your being and meaning. What *is* your center, you discover, is living in and with the blaze of conscious awareness that you are.
>
> The "**Once-returner**" level takes you further outside of a life of "lust, hatred, and delusion" as you continue to learn the stream-entry lessons and become more deeply adjusted to your new center.
>
> The "**Non-returner**" stage is simultaneous with getting rid of your absolute bonds to two more fetters: "sensual desire" or being compelled by your

> sexual feelings, and "ill will" such as anger, jealousy, and the desire to act bad.
>
> "**Arhantship**" occurs when you eradicate your necessary or absolute ties to the final five fetters. These final chains begin with "desire for...the fine-material realm" (lust for material existence), and "desire for ...the immaterial realm" (lust for heaven). The final three chains that you break and begin dissolving are "conceit, restlessness, and ignorance."

This scripture adds that the beginning of each of these four stages is "followed immediately by its fruition, which consists of a string of momentary [awarenesses] that enjoy the bliss of Nibbana [nirvana] made accessible by the breakthrough of the path."

To those who have the experience—whatever you call it and in whatever religious or nonreligious setting in which you have it—it is very real, supernormal, pure, and unusual in an otherwise normal life. If you find that a possible nirvanic experience of yours has started to "cut the first three chains or fetters," then it is likely that you have experienced "It." Don't worry, implies Patanjali, about what "It" is. For the sake of talking about the experience, he is suggesting, you may call it "the crystal-clear mind" or by some similar name. In whatever way you experience "It," you can pursue it.

The world's great mystics tell you not to turn it into an object for purely intellectual argument. Rather, they say, pay attention. Be mindful of the experience in its most intimate purity. Certainly, if you wish, read about it, explore its meaning, ask questions. This orientation to a new experience and your adjustment to it are natural and normal if they help you grow closer to it.

However, primarily, says Patanjali and others, you should learn how to rediscover it. You can seek it more, more often, more thoroughly. Immerse yourself in it, or in the inner knowing that helps establish it. Patanjali says you should follow the path that works for you, for there are many paths but the same general result. All it takes, he says, is practice.

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*Freshwater Stream*

# Appendix E:
# How to Meditate after *Dharma Megha*

*Dharma megha,* as described in Patanjali's final six sutras, is an experience that feels like rain, a raining cloud, a thundercloud, a river, flowing water, or a fountain within one's body, or even like a fire. Some translators of the *Yoga Sutras* say that once you have realized this advanced state, you then gradually fade away from living, and you die.

However, Patanjali likely means *dharma megha* to be the start of a new way of life on earth, rather than an end. Throughout his book, he always assumes that each major level or experience a meditator has will then require that person to become accustomed to it—to more deeply impress and imbed it in themselves for days, months, and years—reminding themselves time and again to return to this state of grace in the midst of their daily thoughts, feelings, and lives. *Dharma megha,* like other signal experiences, takes years—or many months, at least—to fully absorb throughout one's soul and body. In addition, it is quite possible that Patanjali believed many meditators, having gained this ultimate experience, might stay

around on earth to help others.

First is the fact that *dharma megha*, after you begin to experience it, will take months or years to be fully active. No matter how dramatic any new experience is in meditation, rarely are you completely transformed permanently. Even the great mystics appeared to live normal human lives at many times—eating, drinking, walking, and talking with others in daily life while they gradually let their newest experiences fully enter their minds and physical frames. Even when a change that might happen to you in meditation, breaking upon you in a glorious sunburst of discovery, you then will need a slow, step-by-step process of absorbing that discovery, imbedding it into yourself fully, and gradually making it a regular part of your life.

Many meditators who discover *dharma megha* experience it just briefly, like the preview of a great film, sometimes even in the earlier stages of meditation. By the time you reach the advanced or final steps in meditation, it becomes a regular experience in some way.

But even then, it doesn't come all at once as a total experience, nor is it a permanent constant for most people, not at first. While it is a very significant experience, still there are steps in increasing its cloud of rain or fire within your body and your life. It is likely that this is what Patanjali intended in his final instructions. But what, exactly, can you do once you've begun to experience it?

Buddhist scriptures offer suggestions. They provide stages, parts, or differing elements to learn in the experience of *dharma megha*. Scholar Karen O'Brien-Kop provides a number of helpful references in her "*Dharmamegha* in yoga and yogacara" in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy.* She says, first, that the enlightened meditator

> enters into deeper meditation, acquiring endless *samadhis* [enlightenments] and limitless powers, and overcomes even the subtlest trace of the *klesas* (mental afflictions). The cloud has a beneficial function in that it produces growth, proliferation and propagation of virtue [showing] progress and..."pervasion."

Written in circa 100 BCE-200 CE, the Buddhist scripture *Milinda Panha* mentions *dhammamegha* (*dharma megha*) as having five qualities of the cloud. O'Brien-Kop says, "The cloud is...understood to be a raincloud, and the five qualities of rain—settling, cooling, nurturing, protective, and abundant—are mapped.... *[D]harmamegha* is a fruit of...yoga discipline, and its function is to provide sustenance and nourishment to the world." These five qualities of the "rain-cloud" are as follows as translated by Horner in O'Brien-Kop (with additional translations by Klostermeier, in O'Brien-Kop in parentheses):

**Buddhist Five Qualities of *Dhammamegha***

> [1] [T]he earnest student of yoga must allay the dust and dirt of the defilements (settle the dust of afflictions) that are arising....
>
> [2] ...the earnest student of yoga must cool the world...by the meditation of loving-kindness (through his practice of friendliness)....
>
> [3] ...the earnest student of yoga...should sow the seed of faith (make faith...arise and grow)....
>
> [4] ...the earnest student of yoga...must, by means of...careful attention (mindfulness), preserve the Dhamma of recluses (protect the *samanadhamma* [i.e., "monks" or "ones who wander in aloneness"]), so that all skilled states are rooted in careful attention (mindfulness)....
>
> [5] ...the earnest student of yoga (the yogin) having rained down the rain-cloud of Dhamma for the mastery of the tradition, should perfect the mind (of others) for the spiritual realisations they are longing for (open the...*dharmamegha*...and make it pour down fulfillment to the minds of those who are desirous of learning)....

In other words, these five qualities provide five ways for improving the experience of the "rain within." They are an instruction list for going beyond the first experiences of *dharma megha*, both for working on/within oneself and working in the world. Here is a rewording and description of these five qualities:

1. "allay the dust and dirt of the defilements (afflictions) that are arising" means continuing inner work in one's meditations to continue opening oneself to the inner rain to cleanse the "dust and dirt" of klesas (afflictions) and vritti (psychic whirlings) that come from within oneself and from without.
2. "cool the world...by...loving-kindness," also called "friendliness," means spreading the calm, rest, love, kindness, and peace from and of the inner rain by experiencing it while interacting with and for others.
3. "sow the seed of faith," making it "arise and grow," means, while experiencing the inner rain, finding the acts and words that help others become interested more deeply in meditation.
4. "preserve the Dhamma [Dharma] of recluses, so that all skilled states are rooted in careful attention" may mean, while you experiencing the inner rain, helping those working on the "skilled states" of meditation to find their way to higher and deeper meditation experiences. The phrase "one who wanders in aloneness" can be translated as monk or yogi. However, it also has a special meaning in Buddhism: a yogi who wanders in a state of aloneness means, in Buddhism, a meditator who has experienced the unique, sharp, ever-present existential reality of how, within each of us, we are essentially alone, or we at

least feel that way—until we connect with some form of God.

5. "perfect the mind (of others) for the spiritual realisations they are longing for"—or "open the...*dharmamegha*...to the minds of those who are desirous" —means that, by act, example, and osmosis, you give your experience of the *dharma megha* experience, and of the steps leading to it, to others.

A final step is described in the Mahayana Buddhist *Lankavatara Sutra*, ca. 400 CE, according to O'Brien-Kop. In it, "the last subtle remnants...—cognitive hindrance...and afflictive hindrance...—are completely eradicated by the diamond-like *samadhi*" or diamond body. Samadhi in Patanjali's sutras, of course, comes in several forms and stages. O'Brien-Kop's final stage, here, would be Patanjali's highest samadhi. In Hindu and Buddhist thought, as in some Western systems such as Old-World religions and mystical alchemy, the diamond body is a highly advanced level of awareness that is pure and hard with an impossible-to-pierce, protective surface.

One of the best instruction manuals for learning how to extend the *dharma megha* water experience in meditation also is one of humankind's earliest written set of hymns. They are the poetic chants to the mystic fire Agni in the Hindu *Rig Veda.*

The *Rig Veda* is one of the earliest written texts in the world. It appeared in written form *ca* 1700-1000 BCE, but it was memorized through chanting for many hundreds—and possibly thousands—of years before. Part of the *Rig Veda* is a book-length set of chants or hymns to Agni, the "Mystic Fire." This mystic fire also is the *dharma megha* experience; however, a person must read the *Rig Veda* as meditation experience, not as abstract poetry, philosophy, or mere ritualistic chanting.

In conclusion, *dharma megha* is a rich, blissful gift of the spirit that begins a transformation of one's body and mind. Some translations of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* say it is the end of your life, that you drift into death of the physical body after it. Perhaps some ascetics, already withdrawn from the world in many ways, do this. However, a greater number continue to live—and not just to be alive, but joyously so—healing their own physical hurts and limitations and bringing greater knowledge of meditation to those around them. Patanjali hints in his final sutras that *dharma megha* is not an end. Rather, he implies, it is a joyous new beginning.

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*Wavelets Lapping Gently at the Shoreline*

# Appendix F:
# What Is Ultimate *Dharma Megha*?

If you're interested in more detail about what, exactly, the experience of *dharma megha* is, this section of the "Appendix" may help. The definitions and comments about this final stage of meditation in Patanjali's last six sutras describe the experience as a physical sensation like rain throughout a person's body. Another way of describing it is a feeling of fire, as discussed below in relation especially to the symbol of the Hindu god Agni. As a fire within, it is more like what our modern times might describe as a mild to medium electric current in the body, one that feels good. The following discussion describes examples of this rain and fire experience in additional Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and other religions' scriptures.

## Introduction

*Dharma megha* is the last major state of meditation Patanjali discusses in his final sutras, 4.29-4.34. As described in them here, *dharma megha* is not just an abstract concept or symbol: it also is a lived experience.

But is "rain" an accurate word for the phrase *dharma megha*? And how important is the experience? What does it mean to meditators? Here is both a spiritual and scholarly explanation of *dharma megha* from what likely were Patanjali's own scholarly readings and from sources in other religions.

## What is *dharma megha* in Hinduism?

Linguistically, *dharma megha* often existed in Hindu and Buddhist scriptures as a single compound word: *dharmamegha*. However, in Hindu texts about its meaning, the word more often gained its definitions in the use of two separate words: *dharma* and *megha*. For that reason, it is separated into two words in this section of the "Appendix."

In most classical and modern translations of Patanjali's sutras, *dharma megha* is interpreted approximately as "a rain cloud of dharma." Clearly, Patanjali believes it is important because he not only places it at the very end of his sutras but also appears to be saying that it is the final or end peak experience to which all of his other sutras are leading. It is, in short, Patanjali's capstone experience in "yoking to God."

Just what, exactly, is this experience? Translators and interpreters have given it a variety of meanings, from the first commentator on the sutras, Vyasa, in about 400 CE, to the present. The meaning is vague enough, however, that if you read twelve contemporary translations, you easily may find a dozen somewhat different explanations. Unfortunately, in many translations, the phrase is explained as an abstract concept, or just a symbolic change. Some of those interpretations say it stands for the idea of losing or shucking away all worldly thoughts, feelings, and concerns. Others says it is means no more than that you become perfectly in step with how the world works in a good or virtuous cosmos.

However, there is strong evidence that Patanjali does not intend mere abstractions. He likely is talking about a specific inner experience—just as he does in the rest of his sutras. Turning to early texts before and after Patanjali's time can better explain *dharma megha*.

Starting with classical and modern Hindu scriptures after Patanjali's lifetime, the word *dharma* usually is translated in words and phrases like "natural law," "order of the universe," or "goodness and morality in the world." *Dharma* is, in Western religious terms, God's Law, or the Laws of the Universe when they are working well and rightly for furthering good purposes.

In these classical and modern Hindu scriptures, the word *megha* usually is defined in words and phrases such as "rain," "cloud of moisture," or "rain cloud." Placing these meanings together for the two words is the reason that many translators of Patanjali have developed the definition of *dharma megha* as, or in words similar to, "rain cloud of virtue."

However, the pre-classical, ancient Hindu scriptures, especially the earliest written one, the *Rig Veda*, define *dharma* a little more specifically: it is the basic "stuff" of the universe. This "stuff" is the individual particles or energy of pre-matter that eventually form into the patterns of physical matter that science can see. It is the "hum" or "Om" of the universe's creation, still present: astronomers point to the constant background hum or whisper of microwave radiation quietly present in and through everything in the universe. Physicists sometimes suggest it is the "strings" of their "string theory" of the cosmos. These strings, they say, vibrate to form matter: first, quarks, which are the building blocks of neutrons and protons—which are, in turn, the building blocks of the nuclei of atoms.

And *megha* has its own history of ancient meanings. Generally, it means "cloud," usually a "rain cloud" or a "rain shower." It also may mean "cloud filled with rain droplets" and "thunderhead."

When all these definitions are combined, the result is something like "basic energy particles of the universe appearing as clouds of rain droplets and thunderheads" in meditation. So, what, exactly, is Patanjali saying? Why are these two words descriptive of a *felt* event in meditation?

## *Dharma Megha* as an Experience in Early Buddhist Texts

Fortunately for better understanding, we can turn to a different set of scriptures developed in India: Buddhist texts. The phrase *dharma megha*, together as one, is common in them. These texts were written just before and during Patanjali's era, and as a scholar, he would have had access to them. Would he have used ideas from them? Georg Feuerstein says in his own scholarly translation of the *Yoga Sutras* that Patanjali obviously borrowed from a number of sources close at hand, and sometimes, Patanjali may have taken advantage of Buddhist writings.

For example, Feuerstein says that six of Patanjali's eight *Astanga* Yoga "limbs"—discussed extensively in over twenty sutras in Chapter 2-B—are the same as six of the eight "folds" in Buddhism's important "Eight-fold Path." Thus it is reasonable to assume Patanjali borrowed other elements of Buddhist language. In addition, why would he even use the words *dharma* and *megha* together when it was uncommon to do so at that time in Hindu writing. It is reasonable to think he borrowed the phrase and its meaning from Buddhist texts.

What does *dharma megha* mean in those ancient Buddhist texts? Scholar Karen

O'Brien-Kop provides many such references in her "*Dharmamegha* in yoga and yogacara" in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy.* She describes how some of the older Buddhist scriptures call *dharma megha* a "virtue cloud," "rain of substance," "cloud of irreducible experiential forms," "delightful, fragrant rain shower," "cloud of well-being rain," and "anointment or coronation."

Notably, she adds, *dharma megha* is the tenth and final stage for an enlightened yogi in Buddhism. That person then is called a *bodhisattva*. For such a person, she says, *dharma megha* "is like an ocean that can soak up the infinite amount of knowledge that rains down like a deluge from a raincloud."

Another Buddhist scripture, the *Apadana*, speaks similarly. It is a Pali canon—a work of great importance—in Theravada Buddhism. According to O-Brien-Kop, the scripture says, "While the *dharmamegha* rains, may all contaminations cease; may [people] live according to their perfections, may they become stream-enterers" (trans. O'Brien-Kop). Yet another text, she says, the *Buddhavamsa*, describes Buddha as "the agency of the cloud," which "rain[s] the showers of *dharma*:...'he rained down from the cloud of Dhamma [dharma] making the world...cool" and "moistening" it (trans. Horner in O'Brien-Kop).

She says that the early school of Buddhism called "Mahayana" claims that Buddha himself is the provider of such experiences for meditators experiencing them. O'Brien-Kop tells us that the *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra* describes Buddha as the "King of Dharma...who arose [to] teach to beings...this great cloud, filled with water, wreathed with lightning" that "[r]esounds with thunder, and refreshes all the creatures" (trans. Conze in O'Brien-Kop).

## Rain Clouds of Virtue in Early Hindu Vedic Sources

Once a person understands, from this Buddhist literature, just what the experience of *dharma megha* is, s/he then can look for similar descriptions by other names in very early Hindu scripture. There we find in the *Rig Veda* that the highest god was Indra.

Indra was India's version of Zeus and Thor in the West. In the *Rig Veda* he is a storm god who "milks the cloud-cows" that give life, strength, marriage, and healing. Indra's vehicle for moving about is, in fact, a cloud, which in even earlier times was a chariot, and later became a white elephant. The source of Indra's name is debated, but one theory says it was developed from the word *indu*, which means "raindrop," because in the *Rig Veda*, he conquered rain, bringing it to earth. Another theory says his name came later from similar root words meaning "great power," "strong," and "fire starter" who ignites the vital life force of *prana* ("breath/spirit"). All of these descriptors thus may be metaphors for the *dharma megha* experience within a meditator.

An interesting story about Indra in the *Rig Veda* shows him slaying his greatest enemy, the evil serpent-demon Vrita. From this killing, Indra is called *vrtraghna* or "slayer of obstacles." Notably, according to Patanjali, *vrtta* (also spelled *vritta*, similar to the serpent-demon's name "Vrita") are "whirlpools" that act as obstacles you must dissolve or slay to enable you to reach the clear mind and, with it, *dharma megha*.

So important is Indra in the *Rig Veda* that over a fourth of this most-ancient book's 1028 hymns mention him. In the complete *Vedas* (the *Rig Veda* was first; several others followed), he is a lightning god (related to thunder and lightning, or rainstorms), rain god, and river-aiding god. The pressing of *soma* (a fermented fruit juice used in rituals) was dedicated to him: *soma* is a famous food of divine intoxication. The *Vedas* also sometimes refer to Indra as the twin brother of the fire god Agni. Some passages say they are the same.

Indra's twin or namesake, Agni, also is featured in the *Rig Veda*. He is described as both fire and water. His "[w]aters make [the inner flame] grow increasing in his bulk like a sea in its motion...bliss-giving like fast-running water...and like a flowing river.... He is the close comrade of the Rivers.... He breathes in the Waters.... He is the God of the Wine..." (Aurobindo, Mandala One, Sutra 65, "Parasara Shaktya," *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*). "He is like a river running in its channel and sends in his front the descending Waters... (Sutra 66). "He who has perceived him when he is in the secret cave, he who has come to the stream of the Truth...he is Knowledge in the house of the Waters... (Sukta 67). All of this is meant, according to this esoteric translation of the *Rig Veda*, to describe the inner experience a meditator may have of Agni.

## Golden Fire in Early Hindu Vedic Sources

This same Agni—the god's force and power, and its description as a spiritual experience—is not only water, thunder, and rain, but also fire. His "flames range wide, [his] lustres touch the heavens," "a luminous energy," his "red active smoke of passion...full of vision.... Burn utterly every eater of our being...O Vast of lustre.... [F]orceful are thy flames;...always thou do burn utterly the powers who detain..." (Sutra 36, "Kanwa Ghaura). He is "the Fire who came forth from the Truth...seated in the sun-world, making true all our works" (Sutra 70, "Parasara Shaktya").

In addition, says the *Rig Veda*, Agni is a golden fire. He is "honey...possessed of honied tongue" and "sprinkled...clarified butter..." (Sutra 13, "Medhatithi Kanwa"). "[M]ay all bear him in themselves [the] sun" (Sutra 69, "Parasara Shaktya").

In this esoteric meaning of the *Rig Veda*, all these descriptions are details of what you can experience in *dharma megha*. The "rain cloud of virtue" looks like Agni or golden fire. It streams throughout the universe. On an individual basis, it appears in *dharma megha* in, around, and throughout a meditator as the *Rig Veda*'s Hiranyagharba, which literally means "golden womb" or "golden egg." "In the

beginning rose *Hiranyagarbha*," says the *Rig Veda*, "born Only Lord of all created beings. He fixed and holdeth up this earth and heaven, [g]iver of vital breath, of power and vigour, he whose [laws] all the Gods acknowledge" (Hymn X.121.1-2, *Rig Veda, Four Vedas*).

The combination of the fire god Agni and the concept of Soma or divine medicine highlight this interchangeable sight and feeling of golden fire and water. And this golden medicine is wonderful. The idea of Soma goes back even earlier to pre-Vedic times. Another Sanskrit word for it is *amrita*, which means "not mortal." It can be translated as "immortality" or as "Soma—nectar of the gods/goddesses." It comes from an earlier Prot-Indo-European root which also gave birth to the ancient Greek word "ambrosia" (which also means "not mortal"). In long-ago Greece, ambrosia was the "nectar" of the Greek gods and goddesses.

Much of Patanjali's yoga is sourced from ancient Vedic practices. "The entire Vedic Yoga," says David Frawley, "is based upon the underlying polarity and mutual transformability of Agni and Soma...like Yin and Yang.... The simplest way to look upon [them] is as Fire and Water.... We ourselves are a kind of fire...which exists in the field of body and mind as its Soma...with an ascending current of fire...and a descending current of nectar or grace" (p. 200).

The gods Indra and Agni are maps of the golden, fiery, ambrosial water experience of Patanjali's final stage of meditation. The *Prasna Upanishad* (embedded in the *Atharva Veda)* also classifies the god Agni as part of prana, which usually is translated as the most basic "breath" and "spirit" of the universe." Verses 2.3 and 2.5 say, "Prana, the primal energy, [is] supreme over...all [the senses].... As fire, prana burns; as the sun, he shines, as cloud, he rains; as Indra, he rules the gods; as wind, he blows; as the moon, he nourishes all. He is that which is visible and also that which is invisible. He is immortal life" (in Prabhavananda and Isherwood, p. 113).

In the Vedas in other words, *dharma megha*, Agni, Soma, Indra, fire, rain clouds, nectar, sun, and indeed the smallest units underlying matter itself are the same in experience and in substance. They are the underlying pre-matter of the universe, a building block of all that is material, and even, perhaps, what physics might term the most fundamental pure energy of which all else is formed.

Patanjali is saying that when you reach a more advanced stage in meditation, you regularly will feel *dharma megha*. It will be like rain, like fire—a showering, circling, or rising of what some call *Shakti*, *ruach*, psychic energy, *ch'i,* or *qi*--and an anointment of honeyed ambrosia as pure and scintillating as the breath of the spirit.

## *Dharma Megha* in Other Religions

If such an experience is so definitive in Patanjali, Hinduism, and Buddhism, then it should be apparent in other religions. There are references elsewhere if we know

where to look.

The Christian Bible has a similar concept in the *Gospel of John* 3.3-8, as translated by French philosopher and mystic Simone Weil. In the following passage, Nicodemus, a Pharisee on the ruling Jewish council called the Sanhedrin, visits Jesus secretly and asks him how a person can be born again. Jesus answers, "Unless a person is born from on high of water and Spirit, he cannot see the realm of God."

Weil considered the phrase "from on high" to indicate a mystical source "on high." To be born "from on high" by both "water and Spirit" implies not just an experience of Spirit, but one of water. In fact, this Christian scripture resembles Patanjali's own Sutra 29: "In an elevated state of disinterested, steady discernment, *dharmamegha* [comes] in deep meditation" (translation mine).

Then the same *Gospel of John*, in its next chapter, tells the story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman by the well of Jacob. This occasions another discussion of water by Jesus. It is a particularly remarkable story because Galileans, as was Jesus, did not get along well with people from the next-door province of Samaria. Especially, a Galilean man never would be caught talking with a Samaritan woman.

Nevertheless, Jesus asked her, "Will you give me a drink?"

She responded, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?"

Jesus then says, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

She says, "Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself?..."

Then Jesus supplies us a key statement. "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (NIV 4.6-14).

This "living water" has an esoteric—an experiential—meaning. It is the Christian version of *dharma megha*.

A later text that was very popular in Christian churches in the first century CE refers to this, as well. The book, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, helped train new disciples in what Jesus and his first followers called "The Way." Hermas, a shepherd, had a vision of an old woman who represented the newly developing Christian church. He describes the vision and then, in his vision, the old woman details the meanings of the symbols. She says,

> The tower that you see being built is I, the church.... Here, then, is why the tower is built on water. It is because your life was saved and will be saved through water.... [The tower is built from] stones dragged from the deep water [representing spiritual leaders] and others were falling near the water [and] wanted to roll and to come to the water.

The key experiences in this passage are (1) the church is being built by people who come from deep in the water, (2) being "saved" (the key spiritual experience for joining "The Way") means doing so through water, and, by implication, (3) some people come close to the water and want to enter it.

Similarly, the Jewish Qumran Essenes also spoke of water experiences in their *Book of Everyday Virtues*. They were an ascetic community, primarily male in their Dead Sea campus at Qumran, and they used their *Book* for guidance in their daily life in the desert. According to their lawbook *Damascus Rule*, they believed in a "fountain of waters," which their *Psalms Scroll* calls "the eternal spring…, the fountain of glory…, the well of knowledge" (Hanson 8 and 45). "May the eternal open an unending fountain for you," says their *Blessings*, "never holding back water from the thirsty ones" (104). "But you, my God, have placed in my mouth what amounts to an early rain which will water all—a fountain of living water. The skies will never fail to open," says their *Psalms Scroll* (145).

These Essenes channeled fresh water into their monastic buildings. They bathed in it each day before eating. They did so not just for outer cleanliness but also, as their rulebooks describe, for inner spiritual cleansing.

Further emphasis on the importance of a water experience exists in the life of John the Baptist, cousin and friend of Jesus of Nazareth. Some scholars say John the Baptist may have been an Essene, and from their ritual and mystical baths he may have developed Christianity's sacrament of baptism. In the first century or two of Christianity, baptism was accomplished in the same way as in the Dead Sea Essene community: by immersion.

In non-Essene Judaism, water in its purifying form is called a "mikveh" or "collection of water" that cleanses both body and soul. Earlier Jewish scripture in the Book of Jeremiah 17.13 and 22 refers to God using this word "mikveh." Normally, the word is translated as "hope," but it can be associated with "living water." Verses 17.13 and 17.22 also refer to God as a "fountain," "rain," and "showers":

> The hope [meaning *mikveh* or "living water"] of Israel is Jehovah, [a] fountain of living waters. Are there among the vanities of the nations any causing rain? And do the heavens give showers? Art not Thou He, O Jehovah our God? (*Young's Literal Translation).*

In other religions, water also is highly important in spiritual life. For example,

in the very ancient Zoroastrian religion, still practiced, water is a central rite as both ritual and mystical event. In ancient Egyptian creation myths, the sun (fire) was above, the watery firmament below, with a space between for earth and humans. And in Islam, its holy book, the Qur'an, says that "heaven" is, among other experiences, "rivers of clean water" (47.15) and "a gushing fountain" (88.11-12).

## Conclusion

In Patanjali's view, *dharma megha* is a final stage of meditation experience commonly available to all advanced meditators. Clearly, it also plays an important role in the mystical experiences of other religions. Most notably, it is an experience, not an abstract philosophical concept: real, present, and powerful in the later stages of meditation experience.

Patanjali discusses almost every step in his 196 sutras as some sort of experience. And offers all of his instructions in an abbreviated form. That he devotes six sutras—especially his final ones—to this beautiful rain-fire of goodness that fills up your whole being is testimony to how important he thinks it is.

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*India from Space: NASA*

# Appendix G: Photograph Credits

*All photos © by Richard Jewell except as noted*

**Home/Contents Page, Top Bar** (on Website)**, and as Above**:

India on Earth, taken from space by NASA. © by North American Space Agency. Public Use Permitted.

## Chapter 1:

Sutra 1.1: Sunrise, Lake Michigan, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

Sutra 1.4: Islet off the coast, Seward, Alaska

Sutra 1.12: Lake Michigan, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

Sutra 1.17: Lake Michigan, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

Sutra 1.23: Lake Michigan, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

Sutra 1.30: Lake Michigan, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

Sutra 1.41: Whitewater River, Whitewater State Park, Minnesota

Sutra 1.46: Wonder Lake, Mt. Denali, Alaska

Sutra 1.51 (end): Sunset, Lake Michigan, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

## Chapter 2-A:

Introduction: Mount Rainier, Washington

Sutra 2.1: Elephant Butte, Monument Valley, Arizona

Sutra 2.3: Susitna River and Alaska Mountain Range from Talkeetna, Alaska

Sutra 2.10: Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin River, Wisconsin

Sutra 2.17: Monument Valley, Arizona

Sutra 2.23: Salmon River, Idaho

Sutra 2.27 (end): The Matterhorn (Mountain), Switzerland. 

## Chapter 2-B:

Introduction: Mount Rainier, Washington

Sutra 2.28: Lake of the Isles, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Sutra 2.30: Leelanau State Park, Michigan

Sutra 2.33: Bde (Lake) Maka Ska, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Sutra 2.40: Olympic National Park, Washington

Sutra 2.46: Lake Superior, near Two Harbors, Minnesota

Sutra 2.49: Whitewater State Park, Minnesota

Sutra 2.54: Loring Park, Minneapolis, Minnesota

End: Whitewater State Park, Minnesota

## **Endnotes**:

Is it a forest, or shrubs? Hand-high juniper shrubs in Loring Park, Minneapolis, Minnesota

## **Appendix**:

Contents Page: Sunset from Grand Traverse Bay, Michigan

A. Sun through woods, Lake Michigan, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

B. Rapids and clear water, Whitewater River, Whitewater State Park, Minnesota

C. Frog in a tidepool, Lake Michigan, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

D. Endless sea and sky, Lake Michigan, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

E. Small Waterfall, Whitewater River, Whitewater State Park, Minnesota

F. Lake Michigan Bay, Leelanau State Park, Michigan

G. India from Space by NASA (above)

H. The author with family in Rochester, Minnesota (photo by family member)

## **Sources/Bibliography**:

Busy beavers at work, Whitewater River, Whitewater State Park, Minnesota

## **Bottom Bar** (on Website):

The author with family (photo by family member)

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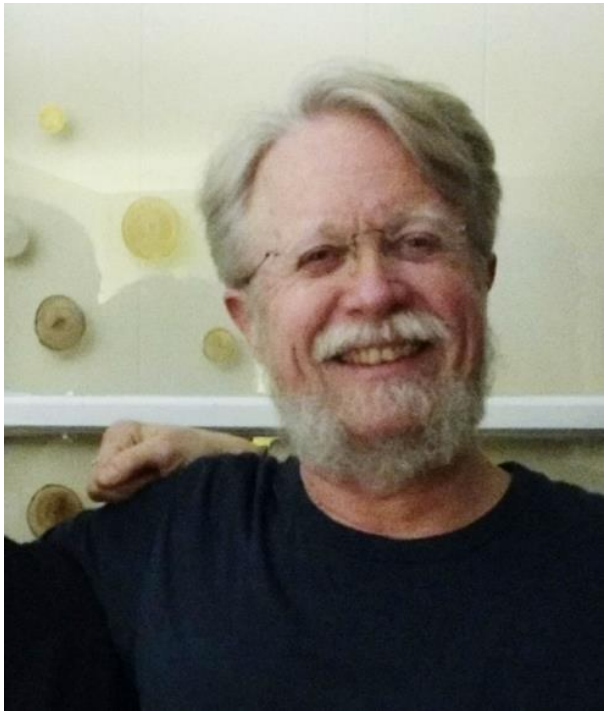

*Richard Jewell*

# Appendix H: Who Is the Author

Richard Jewell has been meditating for about sixty years. He has followed the Hindu meditations of Sri Aurobindo and his companion, The Mother, for over fifty of those years while also experimenting with other religions' methods.

He has graduate degrees from San Francisco Theological Seminary and St. Cloud State University in theology, ministry, and English studies. His undergraduate degree is in philosophy. He was a professor of English composition and multi-disciplinary research writing—and of literature, the humanities, and religious studies—for over thirty-five years in Minnesota. In retirement, he meditates, writes, and teaches meditation. He also leads the annual Minnesota Writing and English Conference (www.MnWE.org), which he co-founded with Donald Ross at the University of Minnesota in 2007.

Richard is the author of six other online works. They are available online as free texts for meditators; for college and university students of introductory and advanced composition, creative writing, and literature; for college and advanced high school students studying the humanities; and for general readers:

***BodyMeditation.org: An Introduction to Hindu Meditation***, basic to advanced

***MeditationDictionary*.org**, a comprehensive resource for meditators

***5thGospel*.org**, a novel about the untold story of Jesus of Nazareth, traveler and mystic

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***WritingforCollege*.org**, a full-text college and advanced-high school composition textbook with student examples

***ExperiencingtheHumanities*.org**, an introductory handbook to the Humanities and the Creative Arts

***Writing Consciousness***, The Phenomena of Critical Thinking, Heuristics, and Metacognition in Composition (forthcoming)

You may email Richard at richard at jewell dot net (convert the "at" and "dot" to the usual @ and period, and delete the spaces). You may read more about Richard by going to his professional page, www.RichardJewell.org.

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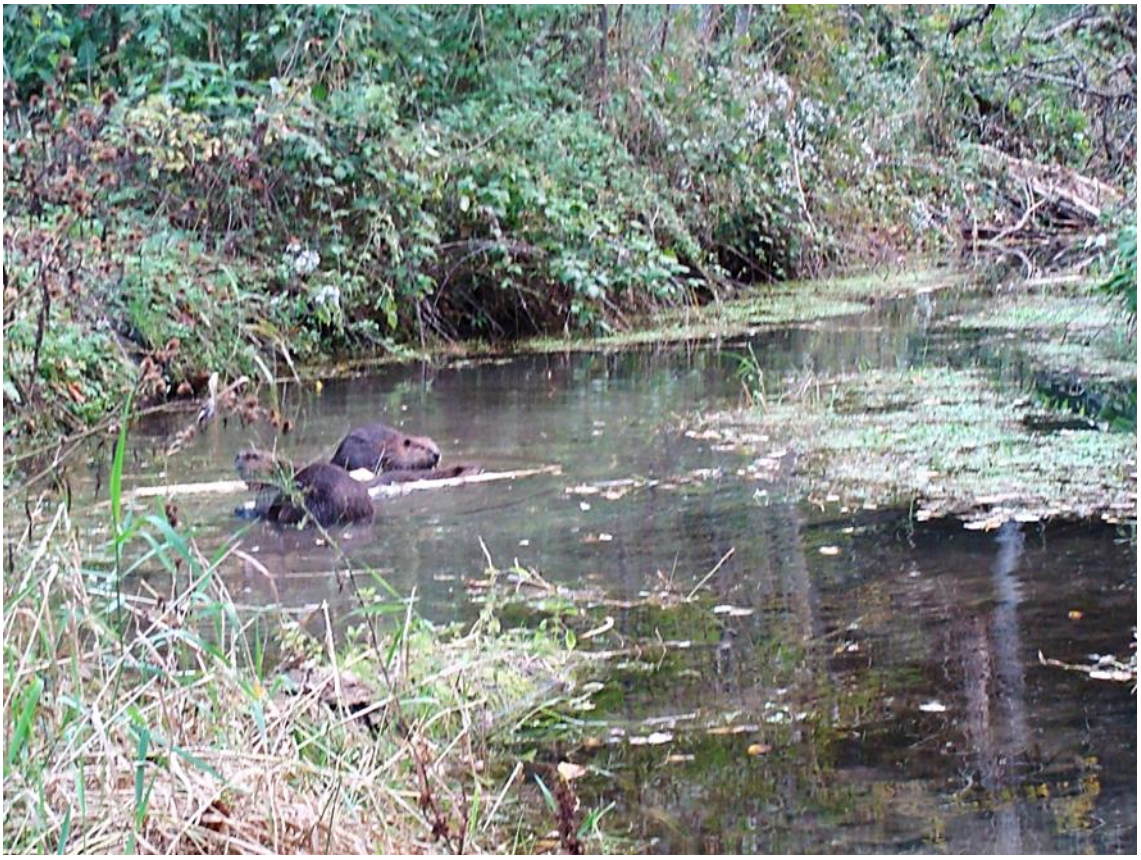

*Busy Beavers at Work*

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