

WHAT IS YOGA?

About the Yoga Sutras on Patanjali – Based on traditional commentaries

Patanjala yoga sutra Darshana- (not just philosophy)

The definitive work on classical yoga dated to around 2000 years ago. It consists of 195 sutras in 4 chapters.

All the 4 chapters, point to Samadhi: samadhi pada; sadhana pada; vibhuti (extraordinary abilities) pada; and Kaivalya pada.

Yoga is defined as Samadhi, the pinnacle of concentration of the mind; the ability to hold onto a thought of choice that can lead to state of peace.

The goal of yoga is kaivalyam (state of permanent peace).

Commentaries

The principal commentary is by the sage Vyasa (5th c. C.E)

3 major sub-commentaries to Vyasa's:

Vacaspati Mishra (9th c. CE)

Vijnana Bhikshu (15th c. CE)

Swami Hariharananda (20th c)

Sankaracharya – (sometimes listed since it is not sure whether he actually wrote a commentary)

Yoga Sutra – List of (7 additional) commentaries

Bhoja Raja – Bhoja Vritti

Bhava Ganesar – yoga sutra dipika

Nagesa Battar – vritti

Ramananda Sarasvati – Mani prabha

Anaka deva – Candrika

Sadasiva Brahmendra – yoga candrika

Krishna Vallabhar

Unpublished Manuscripts (another 4, total 16 commentaries including Vyasa)

Yoga Rahasyam – Paramesvara Yogindra (secret of Yoga – Shiva tradition)

Yoga Rahasyam (vaishnavam) (Vaishnavite tradition)

Ashtanga Yoga Nirupanam (what it is all about)

Ashtanga Yoga Vivaranam (explanation on ashtanga yoga)

The Yogavalli - Krishnamacharya authored a Sanskrit commentary on the yogasutras when he was in his nineties. It was dictated to a few personal students. (Mohan was fortunate to have been one of those).

Bhashyam	Vyasa
Vyakyanam	Vacaspati
Vartikam	Vijnana bikshu
Vrtti	Bhoja Raja
Tika	Hariharananda

Sutras were explained by the commentators, not interpreted

If one reads all the commentaries, one can understand the depth of the Yoga sutras. There are different types of commentaries (given in the table above) - a single word from a sutra can be chosen and explained, the overall meaning of the sutra can be given, or important points may be taken and highlighted.

For example – **explanations for the word Yoga.**

Vyasa states yoga is Samadhi.

Vacaspati Mishra adds that there are 2 roots for the word yoga: yujir yoge or yuja samadhau and that the second root should be taken (so he is reiterating what Vyasa says).

Then Raghavananda further explains that the word Samadhi is from the root *dha* (to hold).

As we can see, each commentator is explaining the same meaning with some more details. They are not different interpretations.

Yoga darśana

Patanjali – sva paksha sthapanam

(establishes the facts)

Vyasa – includes para mata kandanam

(also refutes other view points)



Vyāsa bhāṣhyam is called sāmkhya pravacana bhāṣhayam

Samkhya, the oldest of all philosophies, was propounded by Kapila - earlier than Patanjali. **Samkhya states the facts (jnana) and yoga provides the means.** Without understanding the commentary of Vyasa, it is impossible to understand the pithy statements/sutras of Patanjali.

Summary

- Patanjala Yoga Darshana
- 4 chapters comprising 195 sutras
- commentaries mentioned are not interpretations but explanations
- Vyasa's commentary (Samkhya Pravacana Bhashya) is essential for understanding the Yoga Sutras

Atha yogānuśāsanam

Vyasa's Commentary

Athety ayam adhikārārthah

Yogānuśāsanam śāstram adhikrtam veditavyam

Yogah samādhi

Anusāsanam

Anusāsanam denotes something very definite - following the path laid out by saints like Buddha. There is no ambiguity in the path. (The text on Sanskrit grammar also begins similarly -atha shabda ānusāsanam.)

Vyasa states - yogah samādhi.

This definition is important.

Samadhi is a pāribhāshika sabdam (word that is subject specific and technical) derived from: basha = language; sabdam = words.

For example, in Ayurveda, vata, pitta and kapha are subject specific words defined in that literature.

In the Yoga sutras, there are many such subject specific words. However, they are more difficult to understand since they relate to transcendental truth.

Transcendental experiences are clearly defined through the *pāribhāshika sabdam*.

Yoga is an experience beyond the senses expressed through words. Therefore, the *pāribhāshika sabdam* becomes essential.

The nine samadhis described are such inner experiences and they are all milestones along the path to freedom.

Samādhi as described by Krishnamacharya

Samyak = very well/deeply/firmly

Dhīyate = rooted

(like when we want to anchor a pole we fix it firmly to the ground; similarly, we choose one peaceful thought and anchor/ root it deeply in our mind)

(The word Samādhi derived from union is also used for ‘tombs’ where mortal remains of the person become one with the earth.)

Vyasa’s commentary (continued)

sa ca sārvaḥaumaś cittyasadharmah kṣiptam, mūdham, vikṣiptam ekagram niruddham iti citta-bhūmayah

Bhūmi = state. Sārvaḥauma means all 5 states of mind. Samādhi is possible in all states of mind but not all of them will lead to the goal of yoga (kaivalyam).

The five states are: kṣiptam, mūdham, vikṣiptam, ekagram, niruddham.

These are related to the 3 gunas detailed in Samkhya.

Samadhi gained in the first 3 states do not lead to kaivalyam. In those states one may have the ability to hold onto one thought but it can lead to further bondage.

4th state ekagram - eka = one; agra = end; often translated as one-pointed.

It is the ability to hold onto one thought by choice in the mind.

Fifth state is nirodha (arresting all the thoughts).

The 4th and 5th states lead to kaivalyam, (moksha in some tantric texts; nirvana in Buddhist texts).

It is then explained how the 4th and 5th states are related to each other and how the 4th state can lead to samprajnata samādhi and how the 5th state can lead to asamprajnata samādhi which leads to kaivalyam.