

Patanjali's Yogasutras

SUTRA 1.1

अथ योगानुशासनम्

ATHA YOGA-ANUŚĀSANAM

VED VYASA

Yoga here stands for samadhi, or communion, or the control over the functions of the mind. The nature of such communion is the nature of the mind. The states of the mind are: *ksipita* – fickle – which resides in rajas, *mudha* – dullness – which resides in tamas, *vikshipita* – distracted – which occurs in sattva, *ekagra* – one pointed – in which all states of mind have ceased, *nirudha* – inhibited. Communion or yoga that happens only in the one pointed state illuminates the true nature of things, destroys afflictions, loosens karmic bonds, and brings you face to face with *nirudha* or the inhibited nature, that is *samprajnata* yoga, or concrete communion. *Asamprajnata* yoga or the abstract communion, is that in which all states of mind are surpassed. Such yoga is known by its characteristics of perception, conception, joy, self-consciousness. *Samskara* is the residue, and is left behind.

SWAMI SATYANANDA

Explains the line etymologically. 'Atha' he says is the pause. Why use 'now therefore'? why not use 'atra' or here are the instructions? That is indicative, he says, that these instructions are a continuation of a previous instructions and therefore such yoga comes after purification through karma yoga and bhakti yoga, the paths of action and devotion. When you arrive at yoga after these paths, yoga is intelligible and fruitful. Wavering minds and tendencies will not achieve the unlocking of yoga. 'Anu' is the suffix to 'shasanam', which is a command. The word 'shastra' and 'ishwara' both derive from 'shasan', and mean instruction and he who gives the instruction. It does not mean exposition. The Yogasutras he points out are brief, concise and instructive. This is how you practice yoga. These are the conditions of the mind. This is how the individual experiments. This is the place of God in yoga. It is this that is the complete instruction.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Now, concentration is explained. He doesn't really get into it, he treats it as a simple introductory line and goes into the second sutra. In the introduction to the sutras however, he points out the 'now' indicates that moment of time in the present, in which we see that we are the outcome and manifestation of an absolute condition, prior to our present relative condition, and are going forward to return again to the absolute.

B.K.S. IYENGAR

Now, with prayers for divine blessings, procedural guidance in the codes of conduct instructions which are to be observed and which form the base from which to cultivate one's spiritual and ethical life. He observes that these are detailed, these come step by step, in a specific and correct order, and it moves towards an end which is self-alignment for the purpose of enlightenment. Patanjali is the first to give us the new path and his use of the word 'Now' 'atha' is an expression of immediacy. Now take it up. Start now. Now it is clarified. It is also a continuation from his previous treatises on grammar and ayurveda. As grammar is a prerequisite for lucid speech and ayurveda of health of body, together these (the moksha sastras) work to support our journey to establish equilibrium, the cultivation and transcendence of consciousness, culminating in liberation from rebirth, which is the ultimate end. Atha also is the beginning of the brahma sastra, and hence it is a proclamation of the desire to know Brahman. In the Yoga sutra it is the seer who is the object of knowledge. Therefore, he points out, Yoga is a subjective art, philosophy, science. It has many meanings, but it is in the yoga sutra the state of samadhi or the indivisible state of existence.

So 1.1 means: the disciplines of integration are here expounded through experience and are given to humanity for the exploration and recognition of that hidden part of man which is beyond the awareness of the senses.

OSHO

Now the discipline of yoga. Why now? Because if your mind has reached a state of Kierkegaard's existential anguish, a state of despair, then you are ready for yoga. If that moment has not come you can keep studying yoga but you will not be a yogi. Intellectual interest in the sutras is not the path to being a yogi. If you have come to that point where it is darkness, confusion, no path is clear and your seeking of the path is the driver, then, your time has come. If your mind has come to realise that whatsoever you have been doing up to now was just senseless, it was a nightmare at its worst and a dream at its best, then the path of discipline opens before you. Up until now you have lived as chaos, a crowd, Yoga means now you will have a harmony, you will have to become one. You will undergo a coming together, a crystallisation, a centring. And unless you attain this, everything you do is useless, fragmented, a waste of time and life. Hence, he says Patanjali says 'Now the discipline of Yoga'. This moment can change your direction, your direction of being. Only someone with a centre can be blissful but you have to work for it. You have to earn it. A crowd he points out cannot be blissful, because there is no doer no seer, so who is going to be blissful? You see, he says, identify the locus. Then the bliss will follow. This act of centring is what becomes the discipline, what Patanjali calls the anushasanam. Discipline comes from the word 'disciple' Osho points out and it indicates the capacity to learn to know. But you cannot learn and know until you have attained the capacity to be. And yoga is not about asanas but about the

capacity to be. Discipline is the establishing of order to the chaos, a structure. It is using yoga to crystallise a centre in you. Then he tells this amazing story about a man who goes to the Buddha and says 'I agree with you, the world is in misery, tell me what I can do to save it'. The Buddha, who never said the world is in misery, he said you, the beings, are in a state of misery, Osho clarifies, stays silent. His disciple, Ananda, asks him why he is not guiding such a sincere aspirant. The Buddha replies, because I do not see a centre in you, I do not see you seeing your self. And unless you are centred whatever you do will create more mischief. Social service, compassion, charity all the things we do to save the world will not help. The things done through a centred being will help. When you become a disciple, you become centred, you empty yourself out and the guru can pour his instruction into you. In Yoga, the master is very important. A disciple is one who is ready to receive. A disciple is ready to be centred and he is unafraid, he becomes fearless. A disciple is a seeker who is not a crowd.

BARBARA STOLER MILLER

She explains the first four aphorisms together. She translates the first one as 'This is the teaching of yoga'. The first four aphorisms define the nature of yoga as a state of mental tranquillity and spiritual freedom as well as the means to achieve this state. She essentially treats the second aphorism as the first and doesn't really analyse the oneness of yoga. So we will analyse her commentary when we move into the fourth aphorism or sutra.