

The Patanjali Yoga-sutra—An Ultimate Contrivance for Personality Development

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Date of Submission: 15-09-2020

Date of Acceptance: 30-09-2020

ABSTRACT: Personal growth and self help are big concerns for 21st Century humans, and no doubt rising every day. Yoga was never intended to be about the Body. The ancient Yogis of India who devised the system of living that is Yoga saw the body as merely a vehicle for the soul. In order to achieve the spiritual growth Maharishis took care of the body in order to sit in Dhyana posture for longer durations.

The Patanjali Yoga-Sutras, foundations of Hath-Yoga and basic texts of classical yoga-philosophy lead to path to enlightenment and growth through Yoga. While following this path, one can witness personal, emotional, spiritual growth and development.

What is more appealing to many in modern times is Physical yoga as compared to classical Yoga. But in true sense Yoga is a journey “By the self, through the self, and to the self”.

I. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH YOGA:-

Connection to self

Yoga helps us to see the parts we are not well aware of. Through regular practice of Yoga one can enhance stamina and capacity up to a great extent. Also, this can be termed as first step towards knowing self and gradual improvement day by day through regular practise.

Awareness of body

Through regular practice of Asanas (postures) and Pranayama (breath control) one can develop a strong awareness of body with respect to how it feels, and what it needs. In other words, one becomes more aligned with the body. We are also able to clearly understand, better respond to its needs and recognise the signals which body gives time by time and act accordingly.

Awareness of emotions

Emotions have a powerful impact on how the body feels. For example –when we are stressed,

angry, upset or sad, our body is also dull non-energetic and lethargic. When we are in happy mode our body language is different. Yoga helps us to control our senses and emotions and keep us in Sam-Bhav.

Awareness of thoughts

Our mind is a continuous workshop of thoughts, most of them are unheard by conscious mind, however, all of these are absorbed by subconscious mind. Through regular practice of stillness and **Swadhyay (self study)** we can bring those thoughts to our conscious awareness and process them healthily.

Awareness of behaviour

Much of the times our behaviour is based on circumstances and also on programming of subconscious mind. Yamas and Niyamas (Ashtaang-yoga) help us control and balance our behaviour. For stillness of Mind/Chitta- Dharna and Dhyana are the best tools.

Lets us know about the Patanjali Yoga-Sutra deeply first than we try to implement its teachings to develop one's personality.

Patanjali Yoga-sutra divides the human personality into various parts and each part is further dealt with in detail.

The effect of this on human mind includes how human mind functions, what are its drawbacks, how to slowly train the mind, what are the inborn tendencies, what are the tendencies you can generate, and how a person reach to Godhood.

That's why we call it the first **Psychiatrist** in the world.

The Yogasutra is a small text book which has 195 sentences.

Each one is called a Sutra.

The whole textbook is divided into four chapters, called Padas.

1. Samadhi Pada - Spiritual Absorption --51
2. Sadhana Pada - Means of Practice --55
3. Vibhuti Pada - Accomplishments --55
4. Kaivalya Pada - Absolute Freedom --34

Yoga-sutras an ultimate contrivance to develop ones personality.

The very first feature of a developed personality is systematic working pattern. Every system has its own rules and regulations. Rules and regulation means Discipline. In very first sutra of first chapter of the Yoga-sutra "Samadhi-Paad" Maharshi Patanjali says:-

॥अथयोगानुशासनम्॥1/1॥1

Meaning:- Now the discipline of Yoga begins. In the context of personality development this text gives us message of systematic planning and well disciplined line of action to improve our personality. The yoga-sutras enjoy a great reputation as it forms the base of **Classical Yoga**. Now question arises that through discipline what do we want to do?

To answer this question Patanjali says :-

॥योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः॥2/1॥2

Meaning- Restraining the Chitta from its modifications is Yoga. It is clear now, that we have to control whirls of emotions in our mind. If one has to develop him/herself completely, all the weaknesses and impurities should be adhered to. The **Chitta** is an instrument and has many other characteristics. It is continuously active and is responsible for developing emotions of pleasure and pain.

What are the Weaknesses/vrittis?

How can we identify them, and how can we stop them?

This is beauty of this text that in one sutra, Maharshi Patanjali states something very important, however at the same time raises a question which is subsequently answered in very next sutra .

॥वृत्तयःपञ्चतय्यःक्लिष्टाक्लिष्टाः॥5/1॥3

Meaning- The modifications are five-folded which can either painful or joyous All our thoughts can be characterised under five headings. These modifications cause pain and suffering (klishhta) . Also it includes which leads to enlightenment and creativity (aklishta).

॥प्रमाणविपर्ययविकल्पनिद्रास्मृतयः॥6/1॥4

प्रमाण---- right knowledge

विपर्यय---- wrong knowledge

विकल्प---- imagination

निद्रा---- deep sleep

स्मृतयः----memory

This helps in controlling the mind. Through this, if the exact issue that creates feeling of pain, then there are ways to stop this fluctuation. Those Pains or causes of pains are---

॥अविद्यास्मितारागद्वेषाभिनिवेशाःपञ्चक्लेशाः॥3/2॥5

Avidya अविद्या....wrong knowledge

Asmita अस्मिता....Ego

Raga राग.....Attachment

Dvesha द्वेष.....Aversion

Abhinivesha अभिनिवेश.... Fear of death

There are two ways to get rid of all the modifications /vrittis of the mind which are Repeated or regular and continuous practice and non-attachment or Desirelessness.

॥अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यान्निरोधः॥12/1॥6

Meaning:-Abhyaasa and Vairagya are the tools by which we can stop the modification of chitta. In this sutra, Patanjali describes two methods for stopping the flow of the chittavrittis.

Abhyaasa means repeated and persistent practice. Vairagya is very controversial word. For all it has different meanings. We may say that it is a mental condition where one is free from all kinds of attraction, he has reached a state of non-attachment. In other words, it is freedom from Raga and Dvesha.

There is another way also for removal of mental fluctuation.

॥ईश्वरप्रणिधानाद्वा॥23/1॥7

Meaning- By devotion to the Lord , Samadhi can be attained. Usually Ishwara is translated by the word God, but here God is neither physical nor mental but purely spiritual. Through the belief in God one can reach the state of universal consciousness. In the case of personality development this total surrender to God will help not to get in state of Ahamhara/Ego.

The highly intellectual and experienced students who have their mind steady are asked to cleanse mind through Abhyasa and Vairagya. The other students may feel it to be difficult to groom themselves through this path.

So in this context, Patanjali says that Kriya-Yoga will be the better option for them.

॥तपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि क्रियायोगः॥1/2॥8

Tapah/Self-discipline, Swadhyay/Self-study and Ishwarapranidhan/Devotion to God constitute Kriya-yoga/ Yoga of Action.

Second chapter Sadhan-Paad begins with this sutra, which confirms that Yoga is a Sadhana, Sadhan and Sadhya as well. This chapter has capability to teach beginners to rise through Sadhana and move ahead to the level of perfection.

We will discuss all the three elements of Kriya-yoga deeply, to understand that how they can be used as tools for personality development

Tapah.

Self discipline (tapas) burns away impurities and kindles the spark of divinity. By practicing austerities, impurities are destroyed and then comes perfection in the body and sense organs.

Swadhyaya-

By self observation and analysis, union with the desired deity is brought about. Swadhyaya means closing eyes and observing one's own self. Reading and following of our cultural traditional text like Bhagwadgita, Ramayana, and Vedas are also included in Swadhyaya.

IshwarPranidhana -

If one wants to purify him/herself physically and mentally both he/she has to practice (Abhyasa) constantly, for a longer period, with same enthusiasm. By this "Abhyasa" perfection will be attained in one's own deeds. In this, the practitioner becomes aware of his weaknesses, bad habits and ego and practices to get rid of all by the regular practice of "Vairagya".

Maharshi Patanjali has tried to emphasize tools for Abhyasa and Vairagya through which a sadhak (average student) can purify himself/herself through eight limbs of a systematic plan of Yoga named Ashtaanga-Yoga.

॥यमनियमासनप्राणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसमाध

योऽष्टावङ्गानि॥29/2॥9

Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi constitute the eight parts of Yoga discipline where --

Bahiranga-Yoga

Antaranga-Yoga

Yama—self-restraints.

Dharana--concentration

Niyama—Fixed rules.

Pratyahara—sense-withdrawal/Dhyana--meditation

Asanas—Postures.

Samadhi--moksha

Pranayama—Breath control.

Pratyahara is a bridge between Bahiranga-yoga(external) and Antaranga-yoga(internal).

In the reference of personality development Yama, Niyama are the most essential ingredients to follow.

Yamas will socially establish a person, they are 5 in numbers ----

॥अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहायमाः॥30/2॥10

ahimsa...non-violence **satya**...truth **asteya**...non-stealing **brahmacharya**...conservation of energy **aparigraha**... non-greed. They are universal discipline, there should be no modification due to difference of countries, birth, time, place and circumstances.

Niyamas are also five in number. They are---

शौचसन्तोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानिनियमाः॥३२

॥11

Sauca...purity of body and mind **containment**—santoshah...

tapah...training the sense **swadhyaya**...self-study of sacred text.

ishwarpranidhaanani...total surrender to God.

On the third place comes Asanas. Generally this word "Asana" is taken to mean yogic exercise, but here in "Patanjal Yoga-Sutra" it only means a posture which is meant for meditation. As per Maharshi Patanjali –

॥स्थिरसुखमासनम्॥४६॥12

Posture should be steady and comfortable.

Through the regular practice of Asanas one should get physical and mental steadiness, and there are no uncertainties, confusion and doubt left in life. All the Dvandvas, such as heat and cold, joy and sorrow, are controlled by practice of Asanas.

॥तस्मिन्सतिश्वासप्रश्वासयोगेतिच्छेदःप्राणायामः॥4

9/2॥13

Once the Asanas are practiced, Pranayama is controlling of the movement of inhalation and exhalation. After he has perfected Yamas, Niyamas, and Asanas sufficiently, the aspirant should take up Pranayama. By the practice of Pranayama the psychic centers are activated and as a result the covering of knowledge is removed. Pranayama will switch on the capacity of brain by which the inherent psychic faculties are released. th and last element of Bahiranga yoga is Pratyahara. Maharshi Patanjali states----

॥स्वविषयासम्प्रयोगेचित्तस्यस्वरूपानुकारइवेन्द्रियाणां

प्रत्याहारः॥54/2॥14

Pratyahara/Abstraction is that, by which the senses do not come into contact with their objects, and follow as it were the nature of the chitta. When we shift our focus from the outer world to the inner world, we come to know that there is an infinite facet of existence in us. These facets can only be experienced in Samadhi.

Interim Yoga or we can say last three segments of Ashtaang-Yoga i.e. dharna, Dhyana, Samadhi are used to be more concentrated, more focused and more devoted in the reference of personality development.

Mental steadiness leads to goal setting in life, by the constant and regular practice of Bahirang-Yoga all the dilemmas/ doubts were ceased. Now the soul of a person is pure and serene and ready to accept challenges and risks in their own way. Here Dharna helps very much and Dhyana will be the extreme of Dharna i.e. focused practice.

In this way this ultimate Contrivance (yoga-sutra of Patanjali) is capable to transform a person into a personality.

All the verses of Yoga-sutra are methodical sequence; each has its place for specific purpose. MaharshiPatanjali moves from one to the next, from one topic to the next, with faultless logic.

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