

The
YOGA

Sūtra

Patañjali



WIM
VAN DEN DUNGEN

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The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali

English, French and Dutch Translations

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the moment speaks of yoga

Patañjali

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Male Yogi ? – Mohenjo-Daro (third millennium BCE)

Islamabad Museum (NMP 50.296)

PREFACE

‘It is hard indeed to notice anything for which the languages available to us have no description.’ – Alan W. Watts

In *The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali : Translations and Commentary* (2021), I understand Yoga as a pan-Indian practice of spiritual cultivation or meditation (bhāvana), targeting the end of ignorance and thus suffering. Indian Yoga calls for the practitioner to end ignorance by personal effort alone. *Grosso modo*, its two branches are ‘Hindu’ and ‘Buddhist.’ On the one hand, Hindu Yoga unyokes the Divine, impersonal substance within man (ātman, puruṣa) from Nature (prakṛti). Hence, the seer abides in absolute essence. On the other hand, Buddhist Yoga ceases the false ideation superimposing substantial nature upon any phenomenon, ending substance-obsession, recognizing the luminous mind of awakening. Hindu Yoga, focusing on Nature to finally escape from Her, leads to a spiritual approach of Nature, Buddhist Yoga to a science of mind.

The *Yoga-Sūtra* of Patañjali consists of about 1200 words in 195 Sanskrit aphorisms, forming a system codifying the best (rāja) yoga practices. Classical or Royal Yoga (the name for Patañjali’s system in the *Bhagavad Gītā*) became known as one of the six schools (darśana) of orthodox (āstika) Hindu philosophy, teachings retaining allegiance to the *Vedas*. This in contrast to Jainism and Buddhism, rejecting the tenets of these scriptures.

The word ‘yoga’ is derived from the root ‘yuj,’ meaning ‘to join,’ ‘unite’ ‘connect,’ ‘bring together,’ ‘yoke,’ ‘hold fast,’ also found in the French ‘joug’ and the Latin ‘jungere.’ Yoga designates any physico-mental technique of liberation or method of spiritual practice. Yoga implies *spiritual cultivation* or meditation. It is the living experience of

personal deliverance accomplished by training the will. Individual experience is paramount.

The *Yoga-Sūtra* is short, condensed, and impersonal, giving us no clues about who Patañjali was. He is said not to be a founder nor the leader of a new movement but rather a codifier or redactor of the yoga lore of his time. If so, the text is a *vade mecum* of sorts. Despite these various opinions, nothing of any degree of historical certainty is known about the author of the *Yoga-Sūtra* himself. Whether he is identical with Patañjali who wrote the *Mahābhāṣya*, a commentary on the grammar of Pāṇini composed mid-second century BCE, is not established with certainty. Most Western scholars today do not think this is the case, nor do I. Estimates of the date of composition of the *Yoga-Sūtra* range from 400 BCE to the fifth century CE. It could indicate the range of the experiential database from which Patañjali collected and systematized. We know the ascetic movement started around 700 – 600 BCE. The text could be a millenarian storehouse. Feuerstein (1979) situates Patañjali in the third century CE, placing him *outside* the Sāṃkhya and identifying his system as Kriyā-Yoga instead of the ‘aṣṭa-aṅga’ Yoga and/or ‘Sāṃkhya with Īśvara.’

Many legends about Patañjali exist. According to the most prominent one, Patañjali was the incarnation of the serpent-king Ananta, a serpent race associated with guarding esoteric lore (the ‘nāgā’-theme also reappears in Buddhist lore). It is also said he was the initiator of a school, while others claim he was a solitary yogi. ‘Patañjali’ would be the name given to a string of authors. For some, he is the same person as the grammarian. For others, merely a compiler auto-commenting his own work under the name ‘Vyāsa,’ etc. Where we find two scholars, we find at least three opinions. Finally, more than one contemporary ‘svāmī’ claims to belong to a line of succession (paramparā) going back to Patañjali, said to have established a line of Yoga gurus. The *Yoga-Sūtra* has a remarkable biography (White, 2014).

In *The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali : Translations and Commentary* (2016), Yoga is introduced with a summarizing account of the textual history of the *Yoga-Sūtra*. In the present book, the reader finds the English, French and Dutch translations underpinning the Buddhist commentary found in that book. Thanks to dr. Jozef Deleu, I learned some basic Sanskrit. Because of Georg Feuerstein's *The Yoga-sūtra of Patañjali : an Exercise in the Methodology of Textual Analysis* (1979), my earlier translations of the *Yoga-Sūtra* in English & French acquired depth (*Yoga-Sūtra of Patañjali*, 1997). In 1999, a Dutch translation followed. In the present publication, another, more laconic English translation is offered below the first English translation. All translations were revised. 'Puruṣa,' 'ātman,' 'prajñā,' 'prāṇa,' 'sattva,' 'guṇa,' 'Dharma,' 'Īśvara,' 'maṇipūra-cakra,' 'viśuddha-cakra,' 'anāhata-cakra' and 'kūrma,' one of the subtle veins, were not translated.

Mistakes are due to my ignorance. May the *Yoga-Sūtra* stimulate daily practice. May all sentient beings recognize their Buddha Within and find total cessation of suffering.

BOOK I : PATH TO UNION

PRINCIPLES

1.1

Now the teachings of yoga begin.

The moment speaks of yoga.

Ici commence un exposé sur le Yoga.

Het nu is een uiteenzetting over Yoga.

1.2

Yoga is the restriction of the flux of consciousness.

Yoga limits the yo-yoing of consciousness.

Le Yoga est la restriction des fluctuations de (dans) la conscience.

Yoga is the beperking van de fluctuaties van (in) het bewustzijn.

1.3

Then the seer stands in his own form.

Then the seer abides in essence.

Dans ce cas, le voyant s'établit dans sa forme propre.

In dat geval staat de ziener in de eigen vorm.

1.4

At other times, there is conformity with this flux.

If not, the seer assumes the form of the seen.

Sinon, il existe conformité entre le voyant et ces fluctuations.

Anders zijn ziener en fluctuaties conform.

THE FLUCTUATIONS

1.5

This flux is fivefold ; afflicted or non-afflicted.

Flux is fivefold ; each to be avoided or not.

Les fluctuations sont de cinq sortes, ayant les caractéristiques d'affliction ou de non-affliction.

Er zijn vijf soorten van fluctuaties ; pijnlijk of pijnloos.

1.6

They are : valid cognition, misconception, conceptualization, sleep, and memory.

The yo-yoing defined : valid cognition, misconception, conceptualization, sleep, and memory.

Les fluctuations sont : la cognition valable, l'opinion erronée, la conceptualisation, le sommeil et la mémoire.

Deze zijn : geldig kennen, onjuiste mening, conceptualisatie, slaap en geheugen.