

Yoga Sutra – Main Points October, 2020

Yoga is the foundation of spiritual unfolding & enlightenment.

Yoga Sutra is one of the 6 systems of Indian philosophy, also called the Darshanas or Upangas. Vedanta is another.

Originates in the Treta Yuga or silver age when there was a higher collective consciousness. It was an oral tradition until it was written down in the dark age. The latter is when historians date it.

4 short books, very compressed.

Book 1: Samadhi, Transcendence (Upanishads call this Turiya, the 4th.)

what is yoga? v2-3:

“Yoga is the complete settling of the activity of the mind.

Then the observer is established in their own nature.”

This is samadhi, meaning evenness of intellect.

Sutras describe levels of samadhi from 'with objects' down to seedless. Then able to think and act with samadhi within.

When samadhi is cultured, we may have episodes of witnessing where consciousness is awake, even in deep sleep.

"Avert the danger which has not yet come." v16

"Obstacles can be removed by repeated experience of the one reality." v32

"There resides the intellect that knows only truth." v48

Book 2: Sadhana, Practice

Text is Not techniques. Techniques are taught directly. Text describes results & benefits of yoga.

The language of this book does suggest a sequence of practice and unfolding but is not defining the practice itself.

Ashtanga, the 8 limbs of yoga: Observances (yama), rules (niyama), postures (asana), regulation of breathing (pranayama), retirement (pratyahara), steadiness (dharana), meditation (dhyana), and consciousness (samadhi). Last 4 all part of meditation, not separate practices.

Often interpreted as steps on a ladder with samadhi last. However, limbs are like legs on a table. Pull one and they all come along. Go for samadhi and all the others come along. Use the other limbs to support samadhi and samadhi will support them. Connecting to truth within leads to truthfulness automatically, etc.

Many teach control of the mind and concentration. Yoga is going beyond the mind, not making it stronger. It is relaxing restrictions, not increasing them. Effortless!

Similarly detachment is an effect of dropping identification rather than a practice. It is a natural result of yoga. Ditto renunciation. Letting go of personal control is key but we don't do this through the mind as that is the one trying to control. We do this by the direct experience of our infinite nature. Then we let go effortlessly. Ditto for equanimity.

Brahmacharya means "student of Brahman" but is often translated as celibacy. Moderation is a more suitable word. Yoga is not reserved for monks. Being a monk when it's not your nature leads to problems from suppression.

Effortless is the key word. The sutras define asana (posture) as "steady pleasantness" (v46). If yoga postures are not bringing this, the technique is incorrect.

"When non-theft is established, all jewels (wealth) rise up." v37

"From contentment, unsurpassed happiness is obtained." v42

Book 3: siddhis, abilities, or perfections.

Some abilities will arise spontaneously with spiritual development. Remembering past lives, for example. Or being able to understand any language, even animals.

The key is samyama that combines the last 3 limbs: dharana, dhyana, and samadhi. This is being able to have a steady focus of attention, with an intention, while in samadhi. If the mind runs off on thoughts, samyama cannot be maintained effortlessly.

Most of the book lists the formulae or intention and result. This is not for personal accomplishment (ego attachment will interfere) but helps to open the energy channels up for deeper embodiment of enlightenment.

"Through mastery of samyama, the splendour of complete wakefulness dawns." v5

Most famous is yogic flying. Yoga Vasishtha from the Ramayana speaks of group practice of yogic flying raising collective consciousness, stirring all of consciousness awake.

"When the intellect becomes as pure as purusha (consciousness), enlightenment dawns." v55

Book 4: kaivalya, singularity, awakening.

In the current time, enlightenment dawns when Self wakes up to itself, through this body-mind. You, as a person, never become enlightened. We wake up From the person, from the limitations of an identified ego. More commonly called Sat Chit Ananda, absolute bliss consciousness.

It's in a later stage that we recognize it's the point that woke up to it's wholeness.

"In the absence of activity (the gunas), the purpose of purusha is fulfilled, and what remains is kaivalya (singularity) - the infinite power (Shakti) of consciousness established in its own nature." v34

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