



We are all connected - physically, spiritually and wholeheartedly.

Yoga Sutras – 4 books

Book one: *Samadhi Pada: a Portion on Contemplation.* The first chapter of the Yoga Sutras defines yoga, the aim of practice, and the various problems that may crop up as one endeavors to reach the yoga state. The first book also talks about the process of separating our identity from our thoughts. We should concentrate and absorb our self into the Spirit (Purusha) instead of mis-identifying with our Prakritic self.

Book two: *Sadhana Pada, The Portion on practice.* In this book, Patanjali explains how to attain the goal of *Samadhi*. This book explains the mind, suffering, and how to live a yoga lifestyle (classical yoga, renunciant). Patanjali explains the three paths of practice that The Bhagavad Gita teaches. Patanjali says we can use our Body/Karma/Action, our Mind/Jnana/Alignment, and our Heart/Bhakti/attitude.

In 2:29, Patanjali outlines the eight limb path which is made up of *yama* (the don'ts), *niyamas* (the do's), *asana* (postures), *pranayama* (breath control), *pratyahara* (sense withdrawal), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and *Samadhi* (contemplation).

In sutras 2.4 – 2.9, Patanjali defines the five afflictions (*kleshas*) that cause suffering. The primary klesha is ignorance, or misperception, which gives rise to the other four: ego consciousness (identifying with the small, limited, individual self), desire, aversion, and clinging to life (or fear). To reduce the kleshas, meditation is prescribed. Otherwise, actions will be conditioned by suffering and one's experience in the world will be determined by the intention behind those actions. Here, the Sutras establish the cause and effect nature of existence and call on the yogi to recognize that actions have consequences.

Book three: *Vibhuti Pada: The Portion on Supernatural Abilities and Gifts.* This book focuses on the supernatural abilities (*siddhis*) gained from the practice of *samyama*. However, Patanjali makes sure to warn us that these powers are not the goal of yoga, they are the by-products (3:38)

The third chapter of the Yoga Sutras, *Vibhuti Pada*, is primarily about practicing *samyama*, the “perfect discipline” in which the yogi directs the mind into *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and *samadhi* (complete union) with a single object of focus. *Dharana* is focusing the mind on an object, *Dhyana* is the uninterrupted flow of the mind toward the chosen object, and *Samadhi* occurs when mind becomes transparent and no separate sense of self is felt, only the object shines forth in awareness. These are the final three limbs of *Ashtanga* (8-limbed) yoga, and they concentrate the energy of consciousness.

Book four: Kaivalya Pada: The Portion on Absolute Freedom. In this last book Patanjali talks about the forces of nature (*gunas*) and how to move past the limitations of time and space. He explains that yoga's goal is a continuously unfolding process of self-knowledge and that this will lead to *moksha*, liberation. This reminds me of the reasons we practice *yoga chit ananda*, to know more and to be happy.

The ability to discern between mind and spirit is the ultimate practical achievement of the yoga path. Doing so interrupts the manifestation of a separate, individual identity and instead, generates serenity. Lapses in discernment, on the other hand, allow mental disturbances (errors in speech, judgement of others, egocentric thoughts, etc.) to resurface, so such lapses should be carefully avoided.

Ultimately, one must let go of even the desire for higher understanding in order to prevent the *gunas* from disturbing the contemplative mind. This will allow actions to become pure and agenda-less. When meaning is no longer derived from changes in circumstance, one attains supreme knowledge, and the spiritual entity rests in its own awareness.

<http://swamij.com/yoga-sutras.htm>

<http://authenticselfyoga.blogspot.com/2010/06/my-summary-of-yoga-sutras-of-patanjali.html>

<http://www.yogawithdelana.com/sutraschants.html>