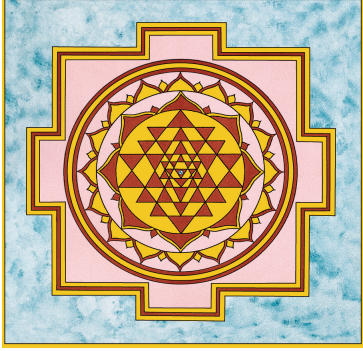


# American Sanskrit Institute



Shri Yantra by PennyLea Morris

## Sanskrit and the Certainty of Freedom

The “certainty of freedom” is a striking concept. Although the concept of spiritual freedom expressed through a word such as “liberation” exists in the English language, the actual meaning as we hear it is quite abstract, somehow foreign to the reality of our day to day lives. In Sanskrit the concept of spiritual freedom exists as a certainty. It exists within the context of an ancient proven sci-

ence, equally precise as our modern science which has managed to send human beings into outer space and have them actually walk on the moon. For modern science to accomplish that extraordinary feat, there had to first exist the certainty that it was possible. For this to even be considered, there had to be an already existing language, that could gauge the precise requirements to get a vehicle beyond the gravitational field of the earth, find the moon, land and return. The necessary language was that of mathematics and physics. Because of the existence of mathematics, some scientists conceived of the certainty that they could land human beings on the moon.

The language that long ago established the certainty of freedom was Sanskrit. Like mathematics, Sanskrit is a language of subtlety and functional precision. While the sciences of mathematics, physics, astronomy etc. continue to evolve, as scientists use them as tools to probe deeper into the nature of the universe, Sanskrit has not

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changed since 500 B.C., when it was meticulously codified by Panini. If the ultimate task of science, as well as the ultimate goal of life, had been to get a man on the moon, there would have been no need for science and mathematics to develop any further. It could have stopped right there. Sanskrit stopped being further refined precisely because it had become the sufficient instrument to facilitate human liberation, the ultimate purpose of human life. There simply was no need to go further. The enlightenment of the Buddha at exactly the same time in history could be viewed as an auspicious confirmation of the culmination of millennia of yogic research.

Although a wide range of manuals document the certainty of freedom by means of the technical language of Sanskrit from virtually every possible human perspective, there is one which stands apart as a jewel of scientific clarity, precision and brevity — the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Written sometime after the codifying of Sanskrit and the enlightenment of Buddha, the Yoga Sutras bring home the certainty of freedom as the inevitable outcome of the journey through life. A sutra is

a short word equation that conveys a potent truth. A collection of sutras, such as the 195 in the Yoga Sutras, represents the interlocking correspondence of many potent truths from multiple perspectives to create a mandala, a cosmology, a complete and universal perspective of life, specifically the life of an individual progression from an unknown beginning through change and evolution to kaivalyam, being established in that which is beyond change. The truth of each individual equation is a convincing proof contributing to the ultimate perspective of the whole and conversely, the whole, a context for the essential truth of the individual sutra.

Before taking on such a perspective it's essential to be convinced of the need to do so by the necessity of one's own life. The process of adopting the perspective contained in the Yoga Sutras is well documented in the sutras themselves. It is perhaps the most significant rocket stage of insight that exists to accelerate momentum towards kaivalyam.

Consider the impact of the "certainty of freedom" as the fundamental context of your life. If you woke up every morning and went to bed every night, living life in the certainty of freedom, how would things be different?

*No nagging fear of failure to accomplish this, of not resolving that with so-and-so, of being liked or disliked or controlled, of not being good enough, of losing health, suffering and dying not having accomplished goals, being less than others, than what you could have been.*

The italicized above represents the perspective unconsciously adopted by the human race collectively. It operates not through the certainty of freedom but through the certainty of death. "The clock is running — I'd better prove myself before it's too late." Motivated by the certainty of death, individuals struggle for

happiness or liberation all the time fearing they won't make it. Patanjali dispenses with all this in a few words, saying:

. . .duḥkham eva sarvam vivekinaḥ (2.15)

All is pain to those who have made a distinction.

In the present context, it would only be possible to fully adopt the Yoga Sutras' perspective of the certainty of freedom by being convinced that the only alternative credo, the certainty of death, is ultimately fraught with more struggle and suffering. There is no pessimism, whatsoever, in the statement, only a coming to terms with the lack of complete fulfillment that persists as long as one is not fully established in one's own true nature. Patanjali states in the next sutras:

heyam duḥkham anāgatam (2.16)

Pain not yet come is to be ended. The word heyam, "to be ended" can also mean "endable". That which is to be ended is endable. Anyone who decides to do so may — consider once and for all ending suffering which otherwise is inevitable.

draṣṭṛ-drśyayoḥ sanyogo heya-hetuḥ (2.17)

The cause of the suffering to be ended is the correlation (sanyoga) between the seer (one's true self) and that which is to be seen. What is to be seen is "seeable". Anything which is other than my own true nature as the seer is seeable. When I identify myself with that which is essentially not myself, I continue to feel something is missing. This dissatisfaction is painful.

tasya hetur avidyā (2.24)

The cause of the correlation is avidyā. The reason I correlate myself with what is not myself, fail to see what is to be seen, and therefore continue to feel dissatisfaction, is avidyā, the absence of self-awareness.

anityāśuci-duḥkhānātmāsu nitya-śuci-  
sukhātma-khyātir avidyā (2.5)

Avidyā is the defining of a self which is not the self, with happiness in what is really suffering, purity in what is impure, and permanence in what is impermanent. Not seeing the certainty of lasting happiness in my own being, I seek it elsewhere.

From Patanjali's perspective — the certainty of liberation can displace the certainty of death only on the condition that I see that all that I believed would bring me happiness and freedom has not satisfied me. If I continue to hope for happiness through anything which defines me as that which is the seeable, in effect, I deny the only possible true happiness, my own self. Any happiness other than my own self must be impermanent by nature, because all is changing. Seeking something I see in order to find happiness will create a correlation with it, will keep me identified with a self that is not the self, and will cause future suffering — that which is to be ended.

To the one who is able to make this distinction, the vivekin, all is suffering. It would be equivalent to deciding “I will no longer pursue happiness where it does not exist.” Only for this one can there be the certainty of freedom. Such a conclusion inevitably leads one to a perspective such as the Yoga Sutras.

Once the decision has been made to establish the certainty of freedom in oneself, the Sutras have to be internalized and assimilated, preferably in the original Sanskrit. It's not that they couldn't be translated into English, but rather that they are infinitely more potent and effective in Sanskrit. Learning the Sutras in English could be compared to scientists using words rather than numerical equations to solve their problems. Not only does Sanskrit offer a precise technical vocabulary, but it is a completely fluid language consisting of

vibrational harmonies, perfectly designed to bring the human energy system into phase with the subtlest matrix of creation. Since the Sutras are nothing more than word equations, the most rudimentary knowledge of Sanskrit suffices. The first step is to learn some basic Sanskrit, especially the pronunciation of its sounds. This is relatively easy, because the sounds of Sanskrit are based on being the purest, and most resonant the human vocal instrument is able to produce.

Another significant reason for the use of the Sanskrit is that the thorough assimilation of the perspective of the Yoga Sutras requires they be learned by heart. This is extremely pleasurable when approached through the chanting of them in the original Sanskrit. The fluid nature of Sanskrit lends itself to easy memorization. Each individual sutra being like a holographic segment, the overall perspective begins to gel just having learned one. The one links by way of sound continuity and philosophical context to the next and likewise that to the next. If one conceives the project as a quantitative one for the mind, it will tend to be abandoned. The number of sutras, 195, is more than most minds can deal with. A sutra can only be learned, one at a time. Each one must literally be learned “by heart”, an act of devotion to my true self, with a love for clarity and power of the truth being conveyed as well as the exquisite sounds it is conveyed through. It's far more efficient when the inputting of the Yoga model is an experience that is consistent with the model.

For example, the very first sutra — atha yogānuśāsanam — serves to effect the paradigm shift by saying atha — now, definitively, distinctly breaking from past structures, a new beginning — yoga-anuśāsanam — the model of yoga. The second sutra is the definition of yoga and the essential core of the entire text. All subsequent Sutras

reference back to and develop the foundational depth of this one:

yogaś-citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ (1.2)

Yoga is the nirodha of the vṛtti of citta.

In effect the rest of the text is largely devoted to expand the dimensions of these three words citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ. English has no exact equivalents. Although it can be helpful to use some English approximations such as, "Yoga is a process of removing identity from the mental, sensory and physical activities which specifically localize and define an individual (energy) field of consciousness" – the real task at hand is to associate the original Sanskrit terms with elements of one's own experience, especially through the process of yoga. In other words feel, the vṛtti — that which defines my individual energy field (citta). Now the nirodha — process of ending that vṛtti — definition can become a dynamic force, a direct experience rather than just a definition, by simply enjoying the sounds and the rhythm of the sutras.

With a little training in Sanskrit, there is the pleasure of the tongue vibrating behind the upper teeth in many of the sounds, specifically the tt in citta and vṛtti and the n and dh in nirodhaḥ. In the last word, the release of extra breath with the sound dha, and the closing breath ḥ. By chanting it a number of times, one can become absorbed in rhythm and vibration. The entire body can begin to resonate with sound. And followed by a moment's silence, one can look to observe a new meaning. Old definitions of self conforming to vṛtti drop away. The very act of learning the sutra can be a living experience of its meaning. Subsequent experiences can be easily accessed by using the word nirodha to define a specific shift. From the outset, the sutras become a dynamic internal software, a program which thrusts one's citta onwards towards a resolution of

vṛtti limitations. With each sutra learned, and linked to one's experience of life, the model gains momentum, establishing the certainty of freedom, while displacing the certainty of death, and the constraints that its companion fears impose on our lives. The sutras provide a new language of previously unknown distinctions by which we define and therefore determine our inner experience.

The subtlety of Sanskrit and the vitality of the truths conveyed through it, combine to propel the model to the very depths of the unconscious, where ultimately the certainty of freedom has to be established. This process of transformation is also well described in the Sutras:

vyutthāna-nirodha-sanskārayor abhibhava-prādurbhāvau nirodha-kṣana-cittānvayo nirodha-parināmaḥ (3.9)

The experience of yoga in which there is nirodha — simply an awareness in which identity is not attached to the immediate experience-vṛtti — deposits a sanskāra-subliminal impression in the unconscious, which then begins to serve as a subliminal activator for further experiences of nirodha.

Every time the nirodha sanskāra is activated, while at the same time there is a recession in the activation of the old patterning, there occurs a transformation of citta, the individual energy field, what Patanjali calls nirodha-pariṇāma or nirodha-transformation. The next sutra:

tasya prashānta-vāhitā sanskārat (3.10)

The calm flow of that transformation occurs because of continuous subliminal activation. The patterning that we establish in our fields each moment is a choice. By not choosing nirodha, in which lies and only in which lies

the certainty of freedom, we leave ourselves at the effect of the default setting, destined to repeat the patterns we know so well. A quote from the astronaut, Stuart Roosa, who orbited the moon alone while Alan Shepard and Edgar Mitchell explored the surface, sums it up nicely, “Space changes nobody. You bring back from space what you bring into space.”

In the final analysis, Yoga is the very essence of the great movement of life. All life is moving towards freedom. The repeated trials, pains and struggles of life ultimately help to establish nirodha and advance each individual life form beyond eternal repetitions of the same suffering. Patanjali sums this up in sutra 2.23

स्वस्वामिशक्त्योः स्वरूपोपलब्धिहेतुः संयोगः ॥ 2.23 ॥  
sva-svāmi-śaktyoḥ svarūpopalabdhi-hetuḥ  
sanyogaḥ

The sanyoga-conjunction (between draṣṭṛ-seer and dṛśya-seeable, that which creates the individual I) is the cause (ultimately) of the apprehension of the svarūpa-distinct essences of the powers (śakti) of the master (I, –svāmin-draṣṭṛ), and what is mine (my domain-dṛśya)

The Yoga Sutras are a scientific documentation of the process of life, by which we as human beings who do have a choice, may accelerate our journey, by seeing the root cause of suffering, and choose to not reinforce it. May we all choose to know the calm flow of the certainty of freedom, subliminally activated each moment, bringing about the transformation of citta and with that:

tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe'vasthānam (1.3)

At each of those moments, the establishing of I, the seer, in my own true nature.

## Part II

### Sanskrit, Sattva and Purusha

From Patanjali's perspective in his Yoga Sutras, there is ultimately one problem in life; not perceiving the difference between the transparent, luminous and reflective quality (guṇa) of the mind with its perceptual field – known as sattva, and my true nature as “I” purusha, my true self. The cost of not making this distinction is an uncertainty of identity based upon a fluctuating field, a loss of self, and a confusing and painful search for self in places where the self does not exist. Sattva is the very subtlest essence of what seems to be one's self but is not. Perhaps the most important aspect of sattva is that it can be discerned as an object of perception (dṛśya-seeable), whereas the self (puruṣa) is draṣṭā, the seer, or dṛṣi-mātra, seeing alone.

In effect, Patanjali says that all study of yoga exists for the sake of making this distinction, and only when this distinction is made continuously does there occur kaivalya, the freedom of the self from all limiting identities, and hence from what we refer to as “problems,” the big one and the little ones. Simple logic assumes that if kaivalya is free from all problems but we are being devoured by problems and their accompanying anxieties, that we are not familiar with kaivalya. Therefore the presence of problems is the absence of kaivalya and vice versa. But before kaivalya, we have the challenge of distinguishing sattva from purusha. The immediate choice is not between kaivalya and problems, but of one big problem or lots of little ones.

The specific term Patanjali uses to describe this distinguishing of the difference between sattva and purusha is viveka-khyāti. Khyāti implies “knowledge by naming.” It comes from the



root khyā — to name or define. Viveka means “distinguishing by separating apart”, from the root vic. In this case it refers to separating apart one’s own self, puruṣa from sattva.

Since nothing can be known or distinguished without naming it, the act of naming something is the decisive turning point where anything can be known. Through his choice of words, Patanjali implies that the only difference between those who have discovered kaivalya and those who haven’t is that the former have been careful to focus upon the act of naming sattva and puruṣa as distinct from each other. In the same context, Patanjali also uses the term puruṣa-khyāti — naming, hence, knowing puruṣa (my true identity) to be independent from and therefor not at the effect of any activity in the perceptual field. This being the ultimate viveka, or distinction, it is also referred to as viveka-khyāti. Without puruṣa-khyāti, or viveka-khyāti. it is certain that identity will be shaped by what is occurring in the always changing field. We suffer from a limited identity, whose happiness depends upon the weather, so to speak.

The best hope we have of making this ultimate distinction of life is to assume that it’s the most natural thing in the world to do so. It’s natural in the sense that others like ourselves, worn down by multiple problems, sought and found this simplicity. It’s perfectly practical to choose the one problem that resolves the others to say “my problem is that my perspective has not included sattva — light, the essence of clarity, the subtlest substratum of life, and the original pulsation.” But it’s hard to imagine that one could ever arrive at viveka-khyāti without problem-khyāti, the act of naming the problem.

Several things occur by the sincere declaration of such a problem. The first is that other problems lose their charge. This is not to

say that responsibilities or needs or relations disappear, or that discomfort, pain etc. go away, but that they no longer occur as “problems.” They can’t continue to exist in the same way when I say “my only problem is that I’m not looking at sattva and getting on to viveka-khyaati.” The funny thing about this is that by making the absence of sattva the big problem, sattva begins to show up. What becomes apparent is that the primary cause of not seeing sattva is a preoccupation with problems and worries. It also becomes clear that sattva, the medium of consciousness, is always present. The very fact that we are aware of a field is at once evidence of sattva, and can be a means of redirecting our attention to sattva. Another thing that occurs is an extraordinary appreciation of the Yoga Sutras and the Sanskrit language as the lenses that help to bring sattva into focus. They are lenses which we use, by our own choice, to focus, and thereby see. This is in contrast to a passive approach where we hope that something external, such as the Yoga Sutras, or Sanskrit, will enlighten us.

Most important, while seeing sattva, there a medium of clarity that makes it possible to become aware of the continuous presence of draṣṭṛ — I the seer, puruṣa, seeing sattva. Since sattva is subtle, “seeing” here refers to a direct experience of an expanded field of vibration, by a simultaneous seeing, feeling and hearing of finer frequencies. This process has been lucidly outlined in the Yoga-Sutras in a step by step process that begins with the physical body and proceeds in precise measured stages to the subtle. Patanjali refers to this as bhūta-jaya<sup>3.44</sup>, mastery of the elements, which in essence means the successful withdrawal of identity i.e. defining one’s self as anything physical or subtle. Once the subtle is reached following practice, the indriya-jaya<sup>3.44</sup>, mastery of the senses or the withdrawal of identity from even the finest of perceptions, is perfectly designed

by stages to define viveka – to distinguish sattva as other than self. With this comes in the discovery that I, the seer, am always present, but when seeing sattva, it's easier to remember.

Patanjali has made the alternative clear by his definition of avidyā (the absence of knowledge of self):

Avidyā is the khyāti-defining of a self on what is not the self, happiness in misery, purity in impurity, and permanence in impermanence.

Again, he uses the word khyāti as if to say “if there is no viveka-khyāti, there will be the khyāti (defining a self on what is not the self, etc.)” Another sutra, reinforcing the importance of dealing with the big problem adds:

avidyā kṣetram itareṣām . . .<sup>2-4</sup>  
avidyaa is the field of the other klesha  
(problems). . .

The use of Sanskrit as a lens to bring sattva into focus can be even more effective in a class environment with people who have agreed to exercise the continuous application of yoga to the study of Sanskrit (and Sanskrit to the study of yoga). Essential to this are abhyāsa — continuously choosing to focus on a predetermined point of focus — and vairāgya — the recognition of being off the point and not being stuck on staying off the point. Patanjali defines this as the “declaration of mastery on the part of one not holding on to prior experience.”

The Sanskrit required to grasp the Sutras is elementary, since the Sutras are only word equations. But, the richness of inspiration derived from this first step into the language is indescribable. It can never become one of those programs we try once and forget about.

Its purity draws us, inspires us, and constantly reminds us, in case we forget, of our biggest problem.

Vyaas Houston