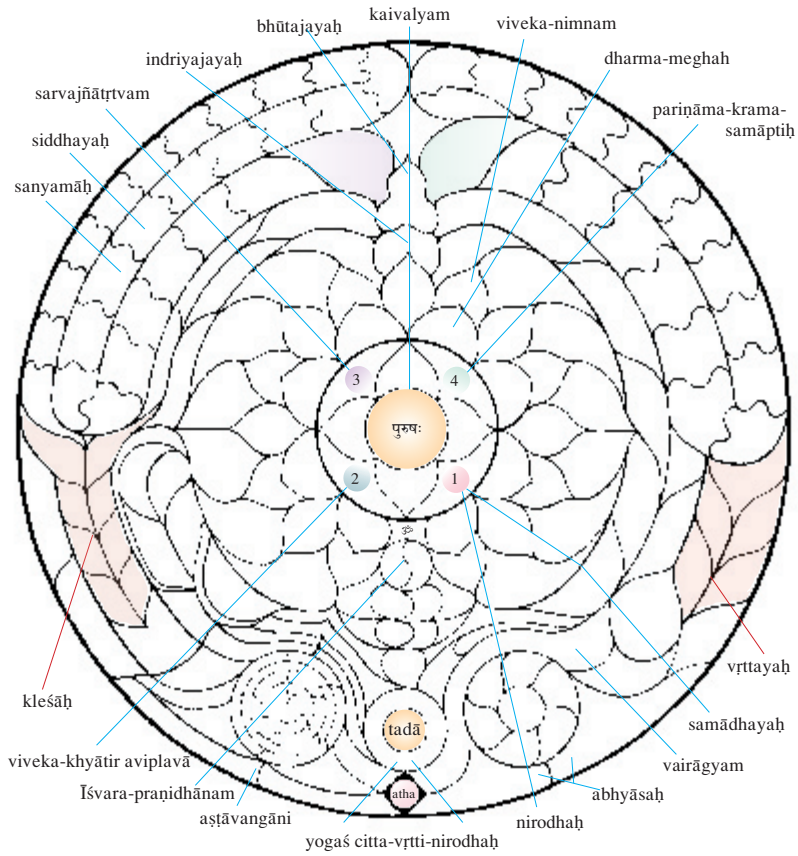


Yoga Sūtras

The Practice



by
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*Note: This pdf contains only the Introduction to
the entire text being prepared for publication.*

Introduction

There seems to persist a belief among us that the various states of samādhi, let alone nirvāṇa or kaivalya described in ancient classical texts on yoga are unapproachable. For thousands of years before the more recent ages of worldwide commerce, industry and technology, this was not the case. In the vast body of sacred Sanskrit texts as well as vernacular literature, we see a continuous outpouring of unbounded enthusiasm and encouragement, a seemingly endless reservoir of inspiration from countless enlightened sages, generation after generation. The apparent result of this long sustained outburst was that throughout its duration, the expectation of spiritual illumination was very high.

In my mind there is no doubt that this tidal wave of blissful and nurturing wisdom is the blessing of ancient rishis who divined a perfect language to sustain a love for knowledge and the cultivation of the purest essence of truth, the discovery of one's self. I had the good fortune to meet numerous Indian lovers of Sanskrit, infused with the brilliance of this magnificent tradition. One in particular kindled the fire in me.

This book outlines the precise and reliable information of classical texts as a direct means for anyone to apply yoga, access samādhi and fulfill the model of Yoga. The basic premise is that anyone who chooses to use meditation practice in conjunction with the insights of ancient yogic wisdom, can always proceed on to the discovery of something yet subtler than the prior days' practice yielded until one day one's experience becomes so subtle that all boundaries disappear. It's difficult for me personally to imagine how that might be possible without the teachings so tenderly crafted in the Sanskrit language. This book outlines that progression from the perspective of classical yoga.

During my early years of Sanskrit study, the greater part of the 1970's, my wonderful teacher, Ramamurti Mishra, would from time to time focus on the

Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali. Although I was enchanted by all aspects of Sanskrit, there was a distinctly different feeling whenever we touched on the Sūtras. I had only a superficial grasp of the meaning at the time, but I was deeply affected by an indescribable feeling they conveyed. It pulled on me. After devoting more than thirty years to their study I now have a sense that the feeling I experienced was the power of a vast and voluminous body of yogic knowledge, compiled over millenia that had been concentrated and perfectly captured in essence into just 195 Sūtras, terse word equations.

This concentrating of knowledge had long been a highly valued literary form for many hundreds of years before Patanjali. The most notable sūtra work of antiquity was Pāṇini's great grammatical treatise Aṣṭādhyāyī "Eight Books", wherein through something beyond conceivable genius, the master had concentrated the correct forms of infinite potential words and grammatical relationships into just 4000 sūtras. The standard which Panini, in approximately 500 B.C. and those who had come before him had set was absolute brevity. Not even a syllable was wasted by repetition where information gleaned from context could be connected even from remote chapters. What such a system of literature makes possible is knowledge of the whole, once the individual pieces are known and the connections between the parts are made. In the case of Panini, what is known is grammar, the proper forms of all existing words and potentially, those which do not yet exist, all maintaining the exquisite harmony and purity of Sanskrit aesthetics in each and every word.

Patanjali's Sūtras are a similar proposition in regard to knowledge of yoga. His requires just 195 sūtras in 4 books. Whereas Panini provides the mechanical process for achieving the correct forms of infinite possible words, Patanjali provides through his sūtras all stages of practice and insight that span the entire spectrum of life from physical creation i.e. identity with a

physical body to complete transcendence of form and absolute freedom. Patanjali so perfectly captured the essence of yoga in his Sūtras, that there is virtually no difference between theory and practice. The text is the practice.

Patanjali's formulas are equations that precisely describe the progression from form to formless exactly as mathematical formulas in the science of physics describe the behavior of the matter-energy continuum. In the matter of self knowledge, Patanjali's work is every bit as much a science as modern particle physics with its long developmental history in earlier mathematics and physics. But it's a science which can only be understood and verified by applying and proving his theorems through one's own internal practice of *sanyama*, the topic of Patanjali's third book, at which point all sūtras come into play as definitions of all the subtle changes that occur in consciousness through all the stages leading up to *kaivalya*. Patanjali's work is a bit different from physics in that his appears to be based on a complete science that was well established long before his lifetime. His contribution was in describing that science with a clarity and brevity never before or since achieved. No grammar in 2500 years has replaced Pāṇini's, and over a comparable span of time, no description of yoga has replaced Patanjali's. It's worth noting that Patanjali was the name of the author, of the *Mahābhāṣya*, the Great Commentary on the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini.

In the early eighties, while working on a Master's Degree in Sanskrit at Columbia University, I had the idea that I could deeply assimilate this text by choosing it as the topic for my thesis. I began with the theory that this work could be truly understood if committed to memory, and worked on internally as a guide to spiritual practice.

Approaching the memorization in a methodical way, along with many chantings, I was able to learn it by heart.

I remember the day that I completed the memorization. Though it was just the beginning of really understanding the meaning of the text – which has unfolded precisely as it has been useful to the deepening of practice – there was a feeling of completion

and fullness within, a glimpse of the great completion promised by the teachings. This completion is referred to four times in the *Yoga Sūtras*. The term Patanjali uses is *kaivalya*, from the word *kevala*, meaning **only, alone, isolated' or whole, entire, perfect or pure, simple, unattended by anything else**. *Kaivalya* is the state of freedom that could be described by any or all of these qualities.

The four sūtras defining *kaivalya* each in its own unique way are reached by various pathways in the text. Each pathway provides a valuable perspective by plotting useful practices and insights to be recognized on this journey to self knowledge.

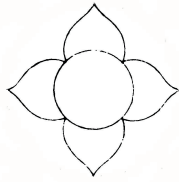
The definitions of *kaivalya* occur with climactic finality, a kind of ultimate punctuation at key points in the text: ¹ halfway through the 2nd pāda at the conclusion of the segment on the *kleśa*, the causes of human suffering persisting in the deep memory and perpetually activating thought and feelings that are painful. Here *kaivalya* is defined in relation to the inevitable ending (*hāna*) of the root cause of suffering, the absence of self-knowledge (*avidyā*).

Kaivalya appears twice in the third or *Vibhūti Pāda*; ² the first is the conclusion of the *vibhūti* section which describes the enhanced faculties or insights (*vibhūti*) arising from sustained concentration (*sanyama*) focused on a broad range of *dhāraṇā*-supports or locations. It was in the conclusion of this section that I discovered, some years later, the key to a practical experience of Patanjali's teaching – the last in his primary list of *sanyama* practices, named by their results as *Bhūta-jaya* and *Indriya-jaya* – mastery of the elements constituting the body and mastery of the senses.

The remaining two definitions of *kaivalya* occur as ³ the final sūtra of the third pāda and again ⁴ of the fourth, named the *Kaivalya Pāda*, which is the conclusion of the text.

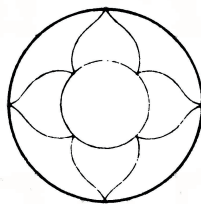
At the same time that I was writing my thesis, I met a gifted stained glass artist who as a gesture of friendship offered to do a work for me. It could be any design I desired. One day while I was meditating, it came to me – the very beginning stage of a mandala that diagrammed the entire text of the *Yoga Sūtras*. What I imagined was a circle at the very center of four

stylized lotus petals, each representing one of the four sūtra definitions of kaivalya.



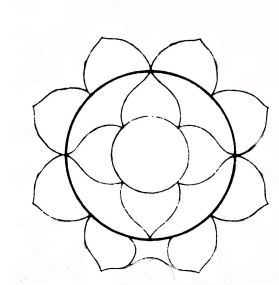
From that beginning, an organic evolution of forms expanded outward in concentric stages, petals intertwined with leaves and serpentine sections, representing the stages that precede kaivalya. The most interesting thing about this mandala is that it seemed to expand effortlessly outward in graceful interlacing forms, each representing a sūtra, until all 195 sūtras were represented within one large circle. It seemed that the evolution of this whole diagram was possible only because it grew outward from the center, kaivalya.

Since the mandala evolved from the center out, the space between the original kaivalya lotus petals circumscribed by the next concentric circle describes what immediately precedes kaivalya; an infinitude of knowing and mastery over all states of being, the ultimate expansion of the mind - all limits to the mind having been removed - transcending all other states, but not yet absolute freedom.



The very definition of yoga (nirodha) implies the removal of any constraints (vṛtti) on the essential creative substance that molds into all life forms (citta). The logical outcome of this is omniscience.

The next concentric circle of petals describes the insights leading up to infinite knowing and kaivalya. These represent various sūtras that describe viveka-khyāti, the continuous defining of viveka or distinguishing one's true self, the seer, from the field or the subtle form of one's individual life, citta constrained by vṛtti.



The defining-khyāti of viveka occurs primarily through the application of Patanjali's definitions at the appropriate stage of sanyama practice. It is viveka-khyāti that eradicates the tendency to identify with the activities of the field and establishes oneself strictly as the knower of the field. The field is defined as dṛśya or *what is to be seen* or is *seeable* as opposed to *the one who sees that* - draṣṭṛ, *the seer*. Kaivalya refers to the isolation of the seer when identity is completely withdrawn from citta, its practical use having come to an end.

Prior to that, citta the field hosts a broad spectrum of activities-vṛtti whose sanskāra-impressions on citta continue to activate a repetition of patterns that contain some mixture of pleasure and pain accompanied by their results of attraction (rāga) and aversion (dveṣa) along with a tenacious will-to-live (abhiniveśa). The sūtras which describe this vṛtti-activity along with the kleśa, their causes, lie along the outer circumference of the mandala, which accurately represents the limited consciousness at the edge (although the kleśas do continue to operate right up to the end). The outer edge of the circle¹ depicts the external world. Because of kleśa and their vṛtti- the active state of mind, one's back is turned on the vast and spacious internal world. Hence one sees only the edge representing the outer world of form.

¹ See diagram on Title page.

Near the bottom edge directly at the center of the mandala, right in the midst of kleśa and vṛtti is the definition of yoga, and arising from it a dynamic form propelled upwards from the base, thrusting its force through viveka-khyāti and infinite knowing to the inner lotus of kaivalya. This is Īśvara-praṇidhāna, the centerpiece of Patanjali's teaching. Essentially Īśvara-praṇidhāna is a transfer of identity of the individual to Īśvara and the absorption of citta in the word-syllable OM, whose meaning is the whole of life, all movement, all states, past, present and future, and the silence beyond, described by Patanjali as the expression of Īśvara - the omniscient and eternal awareness at the source of

all life. The key to understanding OM in the context of Īśvara-praṇidhāna is beyond the scope of the Yoga Sūtras. An omission of such an essential topic would have been inconceivable for Patanjali without absolute reliance on the earlier teachings of the Upaniṣads and in particular the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, the ultimate instruction on OM, well understood by Patanjali, and the long established background to his presentation of Īśvara-praṇidhāna. A primary purpose of this book is to integrate the insights of the Māṇḍūkya into essential practices outlined in the Yoga Sūtras, especially Īśvara-praṇidhāna. The 12 statements that make up the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, another text that embodies reverence for brevity, are primarily devoted to describing the four pādas or quarters of Ātman-self in relation to OM. Patanjali's work is as well divided into four pādas or quarters. Although not uncommonly a book could contain four quarters, nevertheless this structural harmony between the two texts lays a ground for many

subtle parallels in meaning.

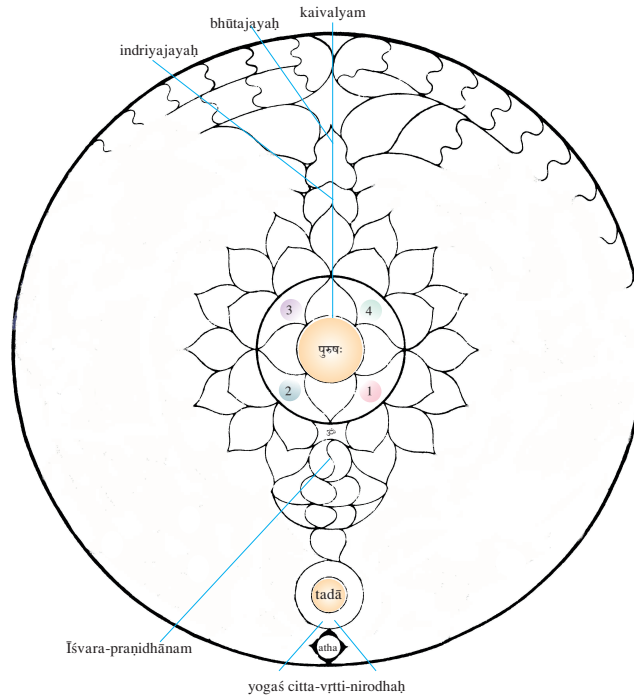
The pathway which Patanjali features most prominently as the preparation for Īśvara-praṇidhāna - the Bhūta-Jaya - mastery of the elements i.e. the body and the Indriya-Jaya - mastery of the senses, are shown

pressing down towards the outer petals from the reverse direction at the top of the mandala. These are the last of many sanyamas, comprising the primary practices of yoga and the larger part of the Vibhūti Pāda leading up to the second definition of kaivalya.

One thing I learned from many years of practice of these sanyamas is that the actual meaning of their stated results, namely, mastery of the elements and senses is quite different from what

it appears to be. One might imagine developing a superior ability to control, but actually it's much more about letting go of control – a steady deliberate process of releasing the control that the experience of physical reality known through the body (composed of elements) and the senses exerts on us. These two companion practices are entirely oriented to a progression of internal meditative experience that eventually proceeds in perfectly calculated stages deeper into the matter-energy continuum of life than the subtlest influence of the senses, and this includes the physical and subtle bodies' capacity to experience bliss. So the jaya-mastery or victory over the senses is actually the discovery of a degree of subtlety beyond their influence.

The way that Patanjali positions these two Jaya-mastery sanyamas is worth noting. Leading up to these final practices, he lists 25 other sanyama practices. In all but one case, the practice and its result or vibhūti are contained in the same sūtra – e.g.



III.34: “By sanyama on the heart, (one gains) knowledge of citta.”

In the case of the two Jaya sanyamas, Patanjali requires no fewer than five sūtras. It was particularly the health restoration described in the two benefit sūtras following the Bhūta-Jaya that originally attracted me to it:

45. From that (mastery of the elements), the emergence of such powers as becoming minute, etc., perfection of the body (kāya-sampāt), and non-injury (through heat, cold, sickness etc.) by its constituents.
46. Beauty, gracefulness, strength, and diamond compactness is kāya-sampāt-the perfection of the body.

The special emphasis by Patanjali on the mastery of the elements and the senses over all other sanyama practices – both by their final position in the long list of sanyamas and by the three additional sūtras that accompany them and describe their benefits – implies that the preparation of the body by a harmonizing of its deep subtle structure along with redirecting and refining the senses, and finally going beyond them, is essential to the fulfillment of the model of yoga. The listing of powers which appear magical if they are interpreted from our normal physical orientation, are from the perspective of the subtle (sūkṣma), the third stage of the Bhūtajaya, not so remarkable. They are, in fact, perfectly natural to subtle inner dimensions.

The association of Īśvara-praṇidhāna with the mastery of the elements and the senses is first articulated in the definition of Kriyā Yoga which outlines the core of Patanjali’s teaching.

The first book, the Samādhi Pāda defines the essential processes of Yoga as Nirodha, Īśvara-praṇidhāna and Samādhi. The second book, Sādhana Pāda, begins with the definition of Kriyā Yoga, which requires all of the second book and most of the third to complete. Kriyā Yoga is defined as ¹ tapas, ² svādhyāya and ³ Īśvara-praṇidhāna. It includes the eight limbs of yoga which in turn is the basis of sanyama practice. Within the eight limbs, tapas, svādhyāya and Īśvara-praṇidhāna themselves are three of the five niyama,

the second of the limbs. It’s in this section that the results of tapas, the removal of impurities, are stated as: kāya-indriya-siddhiḥ - the perfection of the body and senses. The result of the Bhūta-jaya sanyama, kāya-sampāt is nearly identical in meaning to kāya-siddhiḥ, the result of tapas. Both of these are respectively followed by “mastery of the senses” and “perfection of the senses”. This equates the two Jaya sanyamas with tapas. Hence they may become the direct means to the necessary removal of impurities that along with svādhyāya, one’s personal study and application of mantra or sacred teaching such as the very definitions of Patanjali and the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, precede Īśvara-praṇidhāna in the Kriyā yoga system.

In the same niyama section, the stated result of Īśvara-praṇidhāna is samādhi-siddhiḥ – the perfection of samādhi. Once the perfect refining “siddhi” of the body and senses is accomplished by the Bhūta- and Indriya-jaya sanyamas, there remains the perfecting-siddhi of samādhi by Īśvara-praṇidhāna.

At first the Jaya practices appeared complex because they required five applied stages. For example the Bhūtajaya’s 5 stages of sanyama are:

1. sthūla (the physical element e.g. water)
2. svarūpa (the essential nature of the element e.g. wetness)
3. sūkṣma (the subtle - non physical / energy)
4. anvaya (the impact on citta - transformations to citta)
5. arthavattva (the truth that all experience exists ultimately for the seer)

But each time I made the effort, I found a structured pathway from matter to energy – from form to space – to tranquillity. It worked consistently day after day.

When the Indriyajaya, the mastery of the senses practice is added, the two together represent every stage of transition in the life continuum from the physical body composed of the elements and operating by the physical senses at the outer perimeter of the maṇḍala to the last inner circles before kaivalya. They provide a practice by which the entire theoretical outline of yoga explained in the Yoga Sūtras can be grasped and

directly applied to personal experience. This is highlighted by Patanjali in his own definition of *dr̥śya*-the seeable, that which is to be known as distinct and separate from *draṣṭṛ*-the seer. In Sūtra 2.18, He describes the “seeable” from three useful perspectives:

- 1) – it consists of the three *guṇas*;
- 2) – it is characterized by the *Bhūta* and the *Indriya*, the elements and the senses;
- 3) – it has the dual purpose-*artha* of experience and liberation.

This third perspective of the seeable is configured into both the *Bhūta-Jaya* and the *Indriya-Jaya* practices as the fifth and final stage *sanyama*, named *arthavattva* - purpose-ful-ness, which brings into play the many sūtras that utilize “*artha-purpose*” as a primary means of distinguishing the difference between *draṣṭṛ*-seer which is *svārtha*-existing for its own sake and *dr̥śya*-seeable which is *parārtha*-existing for another. This is an important representation of the ultimate distinction of yoga known as *viveka-khyāti*, the defining in deep meditation of the characteristic differences between seer and seeable.

The other significant mentioning of the *Bhūta* and *Indriya* is early in the Third Pāda. Following the defining of *sanyama*, there is a sequence of sūtras (3.9-12) that describe three *pariṇāma*-transformations: *nirodha* (non-identification)-*pariṇāma*, *samādhi-pariṇāma* and *ekāgratā* (one-pointedness)-*pariṇāma* which occur to *citta* as a result of the various internal dynamics of the *sanyama* process. Patanjali uses the word “*anvaya*” to describe the impact on *citta* at the moment where the activations (*sanskāra*) of *nirodha*, *samādhi* etc. are manifest and as a result a transformation to *citta* occurs. The very next sūtra (3.13) states that by the description of these transformations of *citta*, the transformations of the *Bhūta*-elements and *Indriya*-senses are also described. Because of the deep integration of *citta* with the *Bhūta* and the *Indriya*, the transformation of their deep memory patterning is inseparable.

Accordingly “*anvaya*” as the fourth *sanyama* of both the *Bhūtajaya* and *Indriyajaya* practices, addresses this relationship directly by making the transformations a conscious part of the practice.

When the data is correlated, the text makes it clear

that: *sanyama* is the means that brings about the three transformations to *citta*, preparing it to go through the final stages leading up to *kaivalya*. These transformations encompass the three most essential defining factors in the process of yoga: *nirodha*, *samādhi* and *ekāgratā*-one-pointedness. In the same process the *Bhūta* and the *Indriya* are transformed so that they are completely harmonized with the purification of *citta*. It also implies that the *bhūta* and *indriya* are extensions of *citta*. Since they represent all that we know, they are a direct pathway to knowing *citta* in its pristine state. The *Bhūta* and *Indriya-Jaya* practices are flawlessly layered so that anyone can trace the very roots of the elements and the senses step by step back to their source in pure *citta*.

There are other important clues in grasping the weight which Patanjali assigns in particular to the *Bhūta-jaya* as the necessary pathway to the *Indriya-jaya* and *Īśvara-praṇidhāna*. Many years ago I had dinner with the Sanskrit scholar Edwin Bryant at Rutgers University. When we began discussing the *Yoga Sūtras*, I mentioned to him that I practiced the *Bhūtajaya sanyama*. He asked me if I was aware of the 17th century commentator *Vijñānabhikṣu*. I remembered from my thesis research that *Vijñānabhikṣu* had been practically the only commentator in a long tradition who had shed any new light on the *Yoga Sūtras* since the much earlier original commentary by *Vyāsa*. Edwin told me that *Vijñānabhikṣu* commented that the section near the end of the 1st Pāda that defines four variations of *samāpatti* (a *samādhi*) was a corollary practice to the *Bhūtajaya*; *śavitarkā* (with language describing the *sthūla*-physical elements) and *nirvitarkā* (without language); and *śavicārā* (with language describing the *sūkṣma*-subtle) and *nirvicārā* (without). The connection of the *samāpatti* to the *Bhūtajaya* was obvious since its most prominent *sanyamas* are on *sthūla*-physical, *śvarūpa*-essential nature of the physical element, and *sūkṣma*-subtle.

Their introduction into the *Bhūtajaya* was a great refinement in the practice and ultimately revealed an even more profound, but stunningly obvious correlation in the deep structure of the *Yoga Sūtras*. The definitions of *nirvitarkā* (without language) *samāpatti* in the 1st pāda and the definition of *samādhi* at the begin-

ning of the third are virtually identical. Since the prior savitarkā samāpatti is clearly from context a practice related to the bhūta-elements that leads directly to nirvitarkā samāpatti or samādhi as defined in the third pāda – savitarkā samāpatti is identical in function to the two steps that lead up to samādhi defined in 3.1 and 2 as dhāraṇā-placement of citta and dhyāna-sustaining the placement of citta.

Together dhāraṇā, dhyāna and samādhi constitute sanyama. This makes it clear beyond a doubt that Patanjali is directing us toward an implementation of sanyama in which dhāraṇā, the placement of citta – and dhyāna, the sustaining of that placement are achieved by the application of descriptive language (sa-vitarkā) specifically in reference to the elements as the chosen locus.

तत्र शब्दार्थज्ञानविकल्पैः सङ्कीर्णा सवितर्का समापत्तिः ॥ 42 ॥
tatra śabdārtha-jñāna-vikalpaiḥ saṅkīrṇā savitarkā
samāpattiḥ

There (in such a case), samāpatti-cognitive blending which is savitarkā-with description, is mixed with words, meaning, knowledge and conceptualization.

Patanjali’s approach both esteems language as the means to achieve samādhi and discards it as unnecessary once it’s done the job. The practical genius of Patanjali lies in his precise defining of a natural rhythm in meditation that allows the practitioner to make an astonishingly easy transition from the physical to the subtle. The rhythm consists of flooding citta with ¹ descriptive language (sa-vitarka) to the point where it is established at a single location e.g. the wetness, the weight, the lubrication, the circulation etc. of the all pervading water element field of the body the whole of which is then synchronized with the rhythm of the breath; then language, no longer necessary, is ² terminated (nir-vitarka) and one can simply observe citta continuing on in the established pattern.

When language is no longer required to hold citta in the selected location, there is a release of effort and identity which frees citta to merge into a subtler state (energy) blended with a slower deeper breath rhythm; again a ³ specific language that describes this subtle spacious non-physical state of energy (sa-vicāra) is applied

to secure the continuity of citta there; then that language, no longer necessary is ⁴ terminated (nir-vicāra) and one can simply observe citta continuing on in the established pattern. Again there is a release of effort and identity which frees citta to blend into a still subtler state. By this process there is a transformation of citta, a new capacity to go where it has never gone before.

With this discovery as a foundation there is another piece of evidence that falls perfectly into place. The introduction leading up to the section that defines Īśvara-praṇidhāna^{1,23} as an accelerated means of attaining “anya-the other” – transcendence of form, begins at Sūtra 1.17, listing the sequence of:

1. vitarka (describing the physical-sthūla) and
2. vicāra (describing the subtle-sūkṣma),
3. ānanda (bliss) and
4. asmitā (the sense of “I am”)

This is the natural progression of content or form leading up to the “anya-other” which transcends form – required for the mastery of the senses. The means for attaining “the other”, described in sūtras 1.18 through 1.23, climax in Īśvara-praṇidhāna.

The introduction to The Bhūtajaya utilizing sa- and nir-(with - and without-) vitarkā-, sa- and nir-vicārā samāpatti (a feminine noun that requires the final long ā), is the implied practice of choice to cover 1. vitarka and 2. vicāra.

The Indriya-jaya, mastery of the senses, immediately follows, so that sensory experience, including 3. bliss, and 4. asmitā-sense of “I am”, the root of identification with sensory experience, is directly addressed. The Indriyajaya addresses 3. ānanda by it’s 2nd sanyama on the svarūpa-essential purity of citta as the means of attaining pratyāhara^{2,54}, supreme mastery of the senses^{2,55}. 4. Asmitā, the final item in the range of form^{1,17}, is the 3rd sanyama of the Indriyajaya. By addressing ānanda and asmitā of the progression, the Indriyajaya becomes the logical insertion point for the practice of Īśvara-praṇidhāna.

Strikingly, in the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad, an identical progression with the exception of asmitā, understood by context to pervade the three:

1. sthūla (physical)

2. sūkṣma (subtle) and
3. ānanda (bliss)

corresponding to the A, U and M of OM, precedes the presentation of Sarva-Īśvara, the master of all. This aligns perfectly with the designated practices of the Yoga Sūtras.

But Patanjali's sequencing the Indriyajaya and Īśvara-praṇidhāna is even more specific. He further confirms the third sanyama of the Indriyajaya on asmitā as the precise insertion point for Īśvara-praṇidhāna. Asmitā-the sense of "I am" is defined as occurring at the conjunction-sanyoga of the seer (draṣṭṛ) and the seeable (dr̥śya). It is based on the seeming notion of a single self between two distinct and separate powers - the power of seeing, pure awareness (seer) and the sensory power of perceiving (something)^{2.6}. This conjunction, not distinguished, is the cause of suffering^{2.17}. But in the context of yoga, when citta, through the progression of the Bhūtajaya and Indriyajaya, has arrived at a subtle state, which is actually sensitive to the conjunction-sanyoga of seer and seeable – the term sanyoga is redefined in 2.23 as the "cause of grasping the distinctly different essences of the two (distinct) powers of seer and the seeable." However in this context the words seer and seeable are intentionally not used. In their place we see svāmin-master and sva-domain, property. This language is used to replace what is normally described in terms of the components of perception e.g. seer / seeable etc. Here, when the sanyoga is the "cause" of realizing the difference between the two powers that otherwise perpetuate asmitā, the word svāmin-master, a synonym for Īśvara-master is selected precisely to indicate that the practice of Īśvara-praṇidhāna begins here.

The link to Īśvara-praṇidhāna is completed in sūtra 4.18 where yet another synonym for svāmin and Īśvara is used; "all vṛtti-activities of citta are known by the prabhu-master of those, due to the changelessness of puruṣa-the self/seer." This time two different names are applied to the "seer" i.e. prabhu-master and puruṣa-self just as in the original definition of Īśvara in 1.24 "Īśvara is a distinction of puruṣa unaffected by kleśa . . .". The combined power of these two sūtras is an ingenious way of establishing their unity distinct from

citta with its vṛttis, perpetuated by kleśa etc.

At precisely the right moment when the Bhūtajaya and Indriyajaya sanyamas have prepared the ground for the disassembling of asmitā, the definition of Īśvara in the 1st Pāda is drawn into operation by related sūtras from the 2nd and 4th Pādās and this begins a natural transfer of identity that is sustained by the very definitions of the Īśvara-praṇidhāna section and most particularly through the replacement of all prior descriptions of self by OM, the expression of Īśvara. This is an excellent example of how the multi-dimensional, non-linear operation of the Sūtras utilizes definitions from multiple perspectives characterized by the 4 different Pādās.

The purpose of this text is to set up the Bhūta- and Indriya-jaya sanyamas, in practical stages, along with the supplementary sūtras essential to the progression leading up to Īśvara-praṇidhāna, at which point the practice draws both from the Yoga Sūtras and the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad. All stages of this practice are completely accessible to anyone who chooses to begin with the first step of the Bhūtajaya, describing in detail the water element in the body. With the solid grounding that this provides, a foundation is prepared for all the other stages. A basic beginning practice of the Bhūtajaya sanyama on the elements is the key to success in all more advanced stages of practice.

All sanyama practices bring about three transformations to citta: 1. nirodha, the strengthening of citta to operate without the restriction of identity; 2. samādhi, the strengthening of citta to repeatedly return to a single location; 3. ekāgratā, the complete habituation of citta to remain constant at a single location. The beauty of beginning with the Bhūtajaya, is that the elements within the physical location of the body are already the habitual location of citta. Although near the end of Patanjali's long list of sanyama practices, the Bhūtajaya is really the easiest way to master sanyama. One does not need to look outside the body for anything. All the secrets of life, including the vastness of space are contained within, and a sanyama on the physical elements is the perfect way to begin a probe into the subtle.

Introduction

Part II

Like all pathways to kaivalya, the sanyama practices depend on the definition of yoga, the second sūtra, a circle centered at the base of the mandala, symbolizing its integrity with the entire mandala as well as the circle in the center from which the kaivalya petals emanate:

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः ॥ 1.2 ॥
yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ

Yoga is the nirodha-arresting of (by ceasing to identify with) vṛtti (the active state) of citta (the field of consciousness).

This definition of yoga is the key to understanding the whole of the diagram. It connects and illuminates all other sūtras. By reference to this essential definition, the meaning of others tends to become clear. In turn the remaining 194 sūtras create the context for which this sūtra's meaning may become the single most powerful force in one's citta.

Contextually, citta is the individual life field. Its visible form is the body, but citta is not limited to the body. The body as a living field exists only by virtue of its being perfectly integrated into an infinite continuum of life. Citta is the primary medium of this continuum. Citta's essence is the purest and finest guṇa-substance of creation (sattva), capable of infinite expansion and contraction. Citta is like a multidimensional lens-film-recorder that, being completely empty of content, is able to perfectly capture the totality of experience, and then becomes programmed by the experience it has captured in an effort to repeat what's pleasurable and avoid what's painful. Citta has the capacity to record and process an infinite range of experience. Since its own form

is imperceptibly subtle, citta is defined by the activity - vṛtti - occurring in it.

Apart from the new dimensions of potential activity or experience that begin with yoga, citta tends to be restricted to the activities of the body and identification with that. This is perpetuated by patterns that are deeply rooted in the struggle to sustain and/or enjoy life. Citta is the very essence of life which has been channelled into form and is continuously recycled by the ancient and mighty process of creation. Although at times calm and blissful, as in deep sleep, citta, entangled in complex flows of interaction is experienced as fluctuating and often turbulent. In the end, it is up to every individual to arrive at the distinction (vivekinaḥ) that it is painful that citta be perpetually controlled by such forces and for one's identity to be limited to the ever changing vṛtti of citta.

It is essentially language, beginning with the word "I" (asmitā) that directs the activities that define citta. A repetitive unconscious structure of language perpetuates the repetitive nature of the activities of citta. The whole purpose of the language of the Yoga Sūtra text is to bring an end to the old language structure and its domination of citta. The term nirodha, used to define yoga, signifies an ever strengthening force in citta that selectively eliminates any language and related activity - vṛtti that limits or confines citta to established patterns of identity.

Yoga could have been defined as the focusing and discovery of the unlimited possibilities of citta, infinite subtlety of insight and capacity of knowledge. It is that as well, but the most essential truth of such a discovery is that the unknown is revealed when the known is relinquished. A good example of this is the idea that it would be too difficult to learn Sanskrit and memorize the Yoga

sūtras. It's true that to accomplish this, something would have to be given up, most likely related to a limited idea of self; and some specific actions would have to be taken. It begins with a first step – to set about learning Sanskrit, not in the sense necessarily becoming a scholar, but in regard to the knowledge of pronunciation and familiarity with the very minimal grammar required to grasp the Yoga Sūtras. Sūtras are the most simple word equations, e.g. *yogaḥ = citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ* or grammatically even more simply; *yogaḥ = nirodhaḥ*.

The application of Patanjali's definitions occur with so much more subtlety, fluidity and clarity of understanding through the original language of Sanskrit, that the time and effort to learn rudimentary Sanskrit makes the whole process of yoga inestimably easier.

While the practice of the Bhūtajaya could easily begin without a knowledge of Sanskrit by using the guide to the steps of its practice featured at end of this book, it's unlikely that the far more subtle Indriyajaya could be achieved without some knowledge of Sanskrit. A good plan for fulfilling the vision of the Yoga Sūtras would be to begin the study of basic Sanskrit and the practice of the Bhūtajaya to prepare oneself for the Indriyajaya.

The other great value of Sanskrit is that it's chanting before meditation induces a deeper and subtler state more directly than anything I have ever known in forty years of practice. And this effect is enhanced to the degree that pronunciation is refined by practice and the meaning of what one is chanting is understood.

Originally I began a Sanskrit Institute on the premise that if anyone wanted to learn Sanskrit I would help them to find a way. Twenty-five years later, after working with thousands of students, a model for doing this has been through many refinements. We have in place a direct working pathway to Sanskrit accessible to all.

Yoga, which is nirodha, comes about by the implementing of specific actions that effectively establish new patterns (*abhyāsa*), and a readiness to let go of old patterns and identities (*vairāgya*). Perhaps the greatest truth to be derived from Patanjali is that one's choice to exercise this combination is more powerful than any pattern that inhabits citta, the mind-body life field. Like

the four petals of kaivalya that exist at the beginning of the maṇḍala we have made this truth the centerpiece of our Sanskrit Trainings and Immersions, and thereby the process of learning Sanskrit and the Sūtras and other supporting sacred texts into a direct path of yoga.

I have come to see through thousands of applications that this model always works because it is based on infallible fundamental principles, namely *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*. Patanjali distilled the essence of yoga, which in his time was rooted in an ancient tradition that was time tested. Centuries before the Yoga Sūtras were conceived, Kṛṣṇa assures Arjuna who has just acknowledged his doubt about being able to regulate a turbulent mind:

असंशयं माहाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येन च गृह्यते ॥

asanśayam mahābāho mano durnigraham calam
abhyāsenā tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate

“No doubt, Arjuna, an active mind is hard to control,
but by *abhyāsa* and *vairāgya*, son of Kunti,
it is held steady.”

Bhagavad Gītā 6.35

By relying on these principles whenever I taught, I always expected excellent results. Not only would my mind be held steady but the mind of each student would be focused, because we had set up agreements based on the effort to hold a designated point of focus (*abhyāsa*) along with recognizing and letting go (*vairāgya*) of extraneous motives and thoughts that pull one's attention from the point. As much as the results were based upon sound principles, they were based on the confidence I had that it worked. I saw it class after class. Seeing it work for others gave me the confidence that once teachers were trained in the model, it would work for them as well. It proved true. This is the certainty that working with the model of yoga produces.

The confidence that something is going to work and keep on working is reinforced when you incorporate into it any discoveries you make along the way. The basic working model for an optimal Sanskrit learning envi-

ronment was in place 25 years ago. Fine tunings have been made based on the responses and unique needs of students. The model is a flexible one that benefits from feedback. The new insights realized from prior classes kick in at the same point in subsequent classes. The breakthroughs of previous students become incorporated into the presentation of the format and benefit new students. Like countless others I rediscovered the ancient model of yoga to be a simple structure of language that gives human beings a secure foundation for experience that is beyond the realm of what they know. In its application to learning Sanskrit, it prepares students and then gives them practice in a process of yoga that makes learning absorbing and enjoyable.

Practical experience bears out the principles described in texts such as the Yoga Sūtras. One gains confidence in the truth of all that is described there along with a growing capacity to understand it. This creates certainty, known in the tradition of yoga as śraddhā.

Such a study of Sanskrit is expedient not only to mastering the language element but also of strengthening the basic tools of yoga, abhyāsa and vairāgya. This combination makes it a truly excellent way to prepare for deeper sanyama practice.

Patanjali's meditation or sanyama on the elements (Bhūta-jaya mastery of the elements) works in precisely the same way as the model described above. But in addition to its foundation in abhyāsa-vairāgya, it offers a structure for delineating and navigating the subtle stages of meditation progressing from an ordinary waking consciousness through what would be the equivalent of dream states and deep sleep, without the loss of consciousness. Just as prior mapping built into a GPS provides security that one can reach one's destination, although previously unknown, it is the structure and only the structure of the sanyama with its correlated definitions from the text that makes it possible to venture into previously unknown inner territories, named and recognized as actual destinations. This is another way the Sanskrit language is so precious - to each phase of the progression, until you reach your goal.

Without the focus that a structure like that of the Bhūta-jaya sanyama, the mastery of the elements,

one's identity tends to default to a seemingly solid form consisting of the elements, just an appearance which in reality is constantly changing. From Patanjali's perspective it is a starting point, whereby the physical elements can be experienced with single focus effortlessly created by a detailed description of their prominent characteristics, svarūpa, and thereby become doorways to a progressively subtler experience. One begins within the body itself consisting of skeleton, tissue, water, air, space etc. Of these the elements water because of its pervasiveness in the body (98%) and the sensitivity of water rich tissues, and air because it's the perfect transition to space, are really the only elements required to achieve mastery.

Although this sanyama with its five stages may appear complex, it's actually much easier to make progress using a multi-staged approach. The presentation of a fresh new category, something finer and subtler to look for, and the natural response of becoming quieter to see it or feel it, sustains alertness far better than a single monotonous focal point. Through regular practice it becomes a self refining process, where prior insight automatically kicks in at the stage where it first occurred, making subsequent visits progressively easier and smoother.

It's similar to having a whole connected series of yoga postures to practice rather than a single pose. Once the stages have been identified and practiced, they evolve into a seamless, effortless flow of consciousness from the ordinary physical waking state to a deeply subtle bliss and finally peace. The progressions of the element and sense sanyamas can be seen as a series of internal asanas, one flowing easily into the next.

Just as with a good asana practice it's possible to bring about profound changes to the body's suppleness and strength, these sanyama make the mind strong and supple and capable of penetrating to subtleties otherwise inaccessible. While they transform the body and the senses, they simultaneously exercise and train citta, ultimately preparing it for ananta-samāpatti, blending with the infinite.

Vyaas Houston