Yoga Sutras

PATAÑJALI
c. 2nd century BC – 5th century AD

Yoga Sutras

योगसूत्र

Translated from the Sanskrit with AI (Claude) and edited

FORAGE
forage.com

Yoga Sutras · Patañjali (c. 2nd century BC – 5th century AD)

Translated from the Sanskrit with AI (Claude) and edited. Reading edition, Forage, October 2026. forage.com/patanjali/yoga-sutras

Sanskrit text: the sūtras as printed in the continuous sūtra text (*yogasūtrapāṭha*) of Rājārām Śāstrī Bodas's edition, *Pātañjalasūtrāṇi with the scholium of Vyāsa and the commentary of Vācaspati* (Bombay Sanskrit Series 46, Bombay, 1892; public domain), transcribed from the Internet Archive scan (archive.org/details/ptajalastriwitoopata), without Vyasa's commentary; ब is written where the edition's type prints व. Bodas reads the sentence usually counted as 3.20 as part of the commentary, so it is not included here. English: translated from the Sanskrit with AI (Claude), then edited for accuracy and consistency. Not reviewed by a human specialist. Free to reuse under CC BY-SA 4.0. The small numbers set in the text are book and sutra, in the standard numbering.

The original text is in the public domain. This translation is free to share and adapt under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International license (CC BY-SA 4.0): creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0

Set in Source Serif 4, Noto Serif Devanagari.

CONTENTS

Introduction vii

Book 1: Concentration 1

The five movements of the mind 1
Practice and dispassion 2
Kinds of absorption 2
The Lord 3
Obstacles and remedies 3
Coalescence 4

Book 2: Practice 7

The afflictions 7
The seer and the seen 8
The eight limbs 9
Posture, breath and withdrawal 10

Book 3: Powers 13

Concentration, meditation, absorption 13
Transformations of the mind 14
The powers 14
Beyond the powers 17

Book 4: Freedom 19

Karma and latent tendencies 19
Time, things and minds 20
The mind is not self-luminous 20
Isolation 21

INTRODUCTION

The *Yogasūtra* is the founding text of Yoga as one of the classical schools of Indian philosophy. It is traditionally ascribed to Patañjali, about whom nothing certain is known; most scholars date the work to the first centuries AD, perhaps around 400. It consists of some 195 *sūtras*, "threads": aphorisms of a few words each, so compressed that they were meant to be memorized and unpacked by a teacher. The oldest and most authoritative commentary, ascribed to Vyasa, became inseparable from the text.

The second sutra gives the whole work in a phrase: yoga is the stilling of the movements of the mind. Patañjali analyses those movements, the afflictions that keep them going—ignorance above all, which mistakes the impermanent for the permanent and the not-self for the self—and the means of quieting them through practice and dispassion. His famous "eight limbs" lead from ethical restraints, posture and control of the breath to concentration, meditation and absorption.

Behind the practice lies a philosophy close to Sāṃkhya: pure consciousness, the "seer," is wholly distinct from nature and from the mind, which belongs to nature. Suffering comes from confusing the two. The third book describes the extraordinary powers that focused contemplation brings, and warns against them; the fourth ends with *kaivalya*, the "isolation" of the seer, at rest in its own nature.

Book 1: Concentration

समाधिपादः *(Samādhipāda)*

Yoga is the stilling of the movements of the mind; the five kinds of mental activity, practice and dispassion, the kinds of concentration, and the Lord.

1.1 Now, the teaching of *yoga*.[1]

1.2 *Yoga* is the stilling of the movements of the mind.[2]

1.3 Then the seer abides in its own nature.

1.4 Otherwise, it takes on the form of the movements.

THE FIVE MOVEMENTS OF THE MIND

The movements are listed and defined: valid knowledge, error, conceptual construction, sleep and memory.

1.5 The movements are of five kinds, afflicted or unafflicted.

1.6 They are valid knowledge, error, conceptual construction, sleep and memory.

1.7 The kinds of valid knowledge are perception, inference and testimony.

1.8 Error is false knowledge, resting on a form that is not the object's own.

1.9 Conceptual construction follows on knowledge from words and is empty of any real thing.

1.10 Sleep is the movement that rests on the cognition of absence.

---

1 *Yoga*: literally "yoking"; here the discipline of the mind that this text sets out.

2 "Movements" translates *vṛtti*: the activities or modifications of the mind (*citta*).

1.11 Memory is not letting slip an object that has been experienced.

PRACTICE AND DISPASSION

The movements are stilled by practice and dispassion, and each is defined.

1.12 Their stilling comes from practice and dispassion.

1.13 Of these, practice is the effort toward steadiness.

1.14 And it becomes firmly grounded when cultivated for a long time, without interruption and with devoted care.

1.15 Dispassion is the awareness of mastery in one who no longer thirsts for objects, whether seen or known from scripture.

1.16 Higher than that is the absence of thirst for the qualities, which comes from discernment of the self.[3]

KINDS OF ABSORPTION

Absorption with awareness of an object is distinguished from absorption beyond it.

1.17 Absorption with awareness of an object comes from the accompanying forms of gross reflection, subtle reflection, bliss and the sense of "I am."[4]

1.18 The other kind is preceded by the practice of the cognition of cessation; in it only latent impressions remain.

1.19 For the bodiless and for those dissolved into nature, it comes from birth.[5]

---

3 The self (*puruṣa*): in Sāṃkhya-Yoga, pure consciousness, wholly distinct from nature. The qualities (*guṇa*s) are the three constituents of nature: *sattva* (clarity), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (inertia).

4 Absorption (*samādhi*): the mind wholly given over to its object. "With awareness of an object" renders *saṃprajñāta*; its counterpart, "beyond awareness of an object," is *asaṃprajñāta* (1.18).

5 Nature (*prakṛti*): primal matter, everything that is not the self. The "bodiless" and "those dissolved into nature" are beings who have reached such states without final liberation.

1.20 For others, it is preceded by faith, vigor, memory, absorption and insight.

1.21 It is near for those whose resolve is intense.

1.22 Even here there is a distinction, as that resolve is mild, moderate or extreme.

THE LORD

Devotion to the Lord is offered as another way; the Lord and the syllable Om are described.

1.23 Or from devotion to the Lord.

1.24 The Lord is a distinct self, untouched by afflictions, *karma*, its ripening and its store.[6]

1.25 In him the seed of omniscience is unsurpassed.

1.26 He is the teacher even of the ancients, since he is not limited by time.

1.27 The word that expresses him is the syllable Om.[7]

1.28 Its repetition, and contemplation of its meaning.

1.29 From that comes attainment of inward-turned consciousness, and also the absence of obstacles.

OBSTACLES AND REMEDIES

The obstacles to practice are listed, with several alternative methods for steadying the mind.

1.30 Sickness, dullness, doubt, carelessness, sloth, indulgence, false vision, failure to reach any stage, and instability: these distractions of the mind are the obstacles.

1.31 Pain, dejection, trembling of the limbs, inhalation and exhalation accompany the distractions.

1.32 To counter them, there is practice on a single principle.

6 *Karma*: action as the law that binds every act to its fruit.

7 *Praṇava*: the sacred syllable Om, chanted at the beginning and end of Vedic recitation.

1.33 Clarity of mind comes from cultivating friendliness toward the happy, compassion toward the suffering, gladness toward the virtuous and equanimity toward the non-virtuous.

1.34 Or from expelling and holding the breath.

1.35 Or an activity involving a sense object, once it arises, binds the mind to steadiness.

1.36 Or one that is free of sorrow and luminous.

1.37 Or a mind whose object is one free of attachment.

1.38 Or one that rests on knowledge from dream or sleep.

1.39 Or from meditation on whatever one chooses.

1.40 Its mastery reaches from the smallest atom to the greatest magnitude.

COALESCENCE

The mind becomes one with its object, from gross to subtle, ending in seedless absorption.

1.41 When the movements have dwindled, the mind, like a flawless jewel, rests on the knower, the knowing or the known and takes on its color: this is coalescence.[8]

1.42 Here, coalescence with gross reflection is mixed with the conceptual constructions of word, meaning and knowledge.

1.43 When memory is purified, coalescence beyond gross reflection shines as the object alone, as if empty of its own form.

1.44 In the same way, coalescence with subtle reflection and beyond subtle reflection, whose objects are subtle, is explained.

1.45 And the subtlety of objects ends in the markless.[9]

1.46 These alone are absorption with seed.

1.47 When coalescence beyond subtle reflection is lucid, there is inner clarity.

1.48 There, insight is truth-bearing.

---

8 Coalescence (*samāpatti*): the mind's becoming one with its object, as a clear jewel takes on the color of what lies near it.

9 The markless (*aliṅga*): nature in its unmanifest state, the subtlest level of the seen.

1.49 Its object differs from that of insight from hearing and inference, because it concerns the particular.

1.50 The latent impression born of it blocks other latent impressions.

1.51 When even that is stilled, since everything is stilled, there is seedless absorption.

Book 2: Practice

साधनपादः *(Sādhanapāda)*

The yoga of action; the five afflictions and their root in ignorance; the seer and the seen; the eight limbs, from restraints and observances to posture, breath and withdrawal of the senses.

2.1 Austerity, study and devotion to the Lord are the *yoga* of action.[1]

2.2 It serves to cultivate absorption and to weaken the afflictions.

THE AFFLICTIONS

The five afflictions are defined, with ignorance as the field from which the others grow.

2.3 Ignorance, the sense of "I am," attachment, aversion and clinging to life are the afflictions.

2.4 Ignorance is the field for the others, whether they are dormant, weakened, interrupted or fully active.

2.5 Ignorance is taking the impermanent, the impure, the painful and the non-self for the permanent, the pure, the pleasant and the self.

2.6 The sense of "I am" is the seeming oneness of the power of the seer and the power of seeing.

2.7 Attachment is what follows upon pleasure.

2.8 Aversion is what follows upon pain.

---

1 Study (*svādhyāya*): the recitation and study of scripture.

2.9 Clinging to life, carried by its own flow, is rooted in this way even in the wise.

2.10 These, when subtle, are to be given up by their return to their source.

2.11 Their movements are to be given up through meditation.

2.12 The store of *karma*, rooted in the afflictions, is to be experienced in a present birth or in births unseen.

2.13 While the root remains, it ripens as birth, length of life and experience.

2.14 These bear fruit in delight or distress, because their causes are virtue and non-virtue.

2.15 For one who discriminates, all is suffering, because of the suffering of change, of anguish and of latent impressions, and because the movements of the *guṇa*s conflict.

THE SEER AND THE SEEN

Suffering comes from the conjunction of seer and seen; its removal is isolation.

2.16 Suffering yet to come is to be avoided.

2.17 The cause of what is to be avoided is the conjunction of the seer and the seen.

2.18 The seen has the nature of light, activity and stability; it consists of the elements and the senses, and exists for experience and liberation.[2]

2.19 The levels of the *guṇa*s are the specific, the unspecific, the mark alone and the markless.[3]

2.20 The seer is seeing alone; though pure, it looks on the cognitions.

2.21 The very nature of the seen exists only for the seer's sake.

2.22 For one whose purpose is fulfilled it has ceased, yet it has not ceased, since it is shared with others.

---

2 Light, activity and stability correspond to the three *guṇa*s: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

3 In Sāṃkhya-Yoga these are the gross elements and senses, the subtle elements and the sense of "I," the great principle (*mahat*), and unmanifest nature.

2.23 Conjunction is the cause of grasping the true nature of the two powers, the owned and the owner.

2.24 Its cause is ignorance.

2.25 When that is absent, conjunction is absent; this is the removal, the isolation of the seer.[4]

2.26 Unwavering discriminating insight is the means of removal.

2.27 For one who has it, insight is sevenfold, up to the final stage.

2.28 From practicing the limbs of *yoga*, as impurity dwindles, the light of knowledge shines up to discriminating insight.

THE EIGHT LIMBS

The eight limbs are listed, and the restraints and observances are defined with their fruits.

2.29 Restraints, observances, posture, breath control, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation and absorption are the eight limbs.

2.30 Of these, the restraints are non-violence, truthfulness, not stealing, chastity and non-possessiveness.

2.31 Not limited by birth, place, time or circumstance, and holding at every level, they are the great vow.

2.32 Purity, contentment, austerity, study and devotion to the Lord are the observances.

2.33 When perverse thoughts obstruct, one cultivates their opposite.[5]

2.34 Perverse thoughts such as violence—whether done, caused to be done or approved; preceded by greed, anger or delusion; mild, moderate or extreme—bear endless fruit in suffering and ignorance: this is cultivating their opposite.

2.35 When non-violence is established, hostility is given up in one's presence.

---

4 Isolation (*kaivalya*): the seer standing alone, that is, liberation.

5 Here *vitarka* means harmful thoughts, as 2.34 explains, not the "gross reflection" of 1.17.

2.36 When truthfulness is established, one becomes the ground of action and its fruit.

2.37 When not stealing is established, all jewels come to one.

2.38 When chastity is established, vigor is gained.

2.39 When non-possessiveness is steady, there is understanding of how births come about.

2.40 From purity comes disgust for one's own body and avoidance of contact with others.

2.41 When *sattva* is purified, there also come cheerfulness, one-pointedness, mastery of the senses and fitness for seeing the self.

2.42 From contentment comes unsurpassed happiness.

2.43 From austerity, as impurity dwindles, come powers of body and senses.[6]

2.44 From study comes union with one's chosen deity.

2.45 From devotion to the Lord comes the attainment of absorption.

POSTURE, BREATH AND WITHDRAWAL

Posture, breath control and withdrawal of the senses are defined.

2.46 Posture is steady and easy.

2.47 It comes from relaxing effort and from coalescence with the endless.[7]

2.48 From that, one is not assailed by the pairs of opposites.

2.49 When that is achieved, breath control is the cutting off of the flow of inhalation and exhalation.

2.50 Its movement is outward, inward or held; measured by place, time and number, it becomes long and subtle.

2.51 The fourth sets aside the outer and inner domains.

2.52 From that, the covering over the light dwindles.

2.53 And the mind becomes fit for concentration.

---

6 Power (*siddhi*): an accomplishment, especially a supernormal capacity gained through practice.

7 "The endless" (*ananta*) may also be read as Ananta, the cosmic serpent who supports the earth.

2.54 Withdrawal of the senses is their imitating, as it were, the very nature of the mind, when they are not engaged with their own objects.

2.55 From that comes supreme mastery over the senses.

Book 3: Powers

विभूतिपादः *(Vibhūtipāda)*

Concentration, meditation and absorption; the transformations of the mind; the extraordinary powers that arise from focused contemplation, and why they must be let go.

3.1 Concentration is binding the mind to one place.

CONCENTRATION, MEDITATION, ABSORPTION

The three inner limbs are defined and together called focused contemplation.

3.2 Meditation is the unbroken flow of a single cognition there.

3.3 Absorption is that same meditation when it shines as the object alone, as if empty of its own form.

3.4 The three together on one object are focused contemplation.[1]

3.5 From mastery of it comes the light of insight.

3.6 Its application is in stages.

3.7 These three are inner limbs, compared with the preceding ones.

3.8 Yet even they are outer limbs of the seedless.

---

1 Focused contemplation (*saṃyama*): concentration, meditation and absorption practiced together on a single object.

TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MIND

The transformations of stilling, absorption and one-pointedness, and those of things in time, are described.

3.9 When the latent impressions of emergence are overcome and those of stilling appear, the mind's connection with the moment of stilling is the transformation of stilling.[2]

3.10 Its calm flow comes from latent impression.

3.11 The dwindling of the mind's scattering over all objects and the rise of its one-pointedness are its transformation of absorption.

3.12 Then again, when the cognition that subsides and the one that arises are alike, this is the mind's transformation of one-pointedness.

3.13 By this, the transformations of attribute, temporal phase and condition in the elements and the senses are explained.[3]

3.14 The bearer of attributes is what persists through its attributes, whether subsided, arisen or not yet nameable.

3.15 Difference in sequence is the cause of difference in transformation.

THE POWERS

Focused contemplation on various objects yields knowledge and extraordinary powers.

3.16 From focused contemplation on the three transformations comes knowledge of past and future.

3.17 Word, meaning and cognition are confused because each is superimposed on the others; from focused contemplation on their distinction comes knowledge of the cries of all beings.

3.18 From direct perception of latent impressions comes knowledge of previous births.

---

2 Emergence (*vyutthāna*): the mind's ordinary, outward-turned state.

3 "Attribute" renders *dharma* in its technical sense, a form or property of a substance; "temporal phase" (*lakṣaṇa*) is its being past, present or future.

3.19 From focused contemplation on a cognition comes knowledge of another's mind.

3.21 From focused contemplation on the form of the body, when its power to be perceived is suspended and the eye's light no longer meets it, comes invisibility.

3.22 *Karma* is either already under way or not yet under way; from focused contemplation on it, or from omens, comes knowledge of one's death.

3.23 From focused contemplation on friendliness and the rest come strengths.

3.24 From focused contemplation on strengths comes the strength of an elephant and the like.

3.25 From directing the light of the activity comes knowledge of the subtle, the hidden and the distant.[4]

3.26 From focused contemplation on the sun comes knowledge of the worlds.

3.27 From focused contemplation on the moon comes knowledge of the arrangement of the stars.

3.28 From focused contemplation on the pole star comes knowledge of their movement.

3.29 From focused contemplation on the circle of the navel comes knowledge of the arrangement of the body.

3.30 From focused contemplation on the hollow of the throat comes the cessation of hunger and thirst.

3.31 From focused contemplation on the tortoise channel comes steadiness.[5]

3.32 From focused contemplation on the light in the crown of the head comes the sight of the perfected ones.[6]

3.33 Or, from intuition, everything.

3.34 From focused contemplation on the heart comes awareness of the mind.

3.35 Experience is a cognition that does not distinguish *sattva* from the self, though the two are wholly unmixed; since experi-

4 The "activity" is the luminous activity of the mind described in 1.35–36.

5 The "tortoise channel" (*kūrmanāḍī*): a channel in the chest below the throat, said to be shaped like a tortoise.

ence exists for the sake of another, from focused contemplation on what exists for its own sake comes knowledge of the self.

3.36 From that arise intuition, hearing, feeling, sight, taste and smell.

3.37 They are obstacles in absorption, powers in emergence.

3.38 From loosening the cause of bondage and from knowing the mind's pathways, the mind can enter another's body.

3.39 From mastery of the upward breath comes freedom from contact with water, mud, thorns and the like, and rising up.[7]

3.40 From mastery of the equalizing breath comes radiance.[8]

3.41 From focused contemplation on the relation between hearing and space comes divine hearing.[9]

3.42 From focused contemplation on the relation between the body and space, and from coalescence with light things such as cotton, comes movement through space.

3.43 A movement outside that is not imagined is the great bodiless; from it the covering over the light dwindles.

3.44 From focused contemplation on gross form, own form, subtle form, connectedness and purpose comes mastery of the elements.

3.45 From that come the appearance of minuteness and the other powers, perfection of the body, and freedom from obstruction by the properties of the elements.[10]

3.46 Perfection of the body is beauty, grace, strength and diamond-hard solidity.

3.47 From focused contemplation on perceiving, own form, the sense of "I am," connectedness and purpose comes mastery of the senses.

---

6 The perfected ones (*siddhas*): semi-divine beings who have attained perfection.
7 *Udāna*: one of the five vital breaths, the one that moves upward.
8 *Samāna*: the vital breath centered at the navel, which distributes nourishment through the body.
9 Space (*ākāśa*): the element whose quality is sound.
10 Minuteness heads a traditional list of eight powers, which includes becoming vast, light or heavy.

3.48 From that come swiftness like the mind's, action without instruments, and mastery of primal matter.[11]

3.49 For one who has only the insight into the difference between *sattva* and the self come sovereignty over all states of being and knowledge of everything.

BEYOND THE POWERS

Dispassion even toward the powers leads, through discriminating knowledge, to isolation.

3.50 From dispassion even toward that, when the seeds of fault dwindle, comes isolation.

3.51 When invited by those in high places, one should not give way to attachment or pride, since unwanted consequences could arise again.[12]

3.52 From focused contemplation on the moment and its sequence comes knowledge born of discrimination.

3.53 From that comes the discerning of two similar things whose difference cannot be determined by class, characteristic or place.

3.54 It is the deliverer, has all things for its object in all their modes, and is without sequence: this is knowledge born of discrimination.

3.55 When *sattva* and the self are equal in purity, there is isolation.

11 Primal matter (*pradhāna*, "the principal"): another name for nature (*prakṛti*).
12 Those in high places (*sthānin*s): gods and other beings in celestial stations.

Book 4: Freedom

कैवल्यपादः *(Kaivalyapāda)*

How powers and new minds arise; karma and latent impressions; the mind is not self-luminous; discrimination, the "cloud of dharma" absorption, and the final isolation of the seer.

4.1 Powers come from birth, herbs, mantras, austerity or absorption.

4.2 Transformation into another kind of being comes from the overflowing of nature.

4.3 The instrumental cause does not set natures in motion; it only breaks through barriers, as a farmer does.[1]

4.4 Created minds come from the sense of "I am" alone.

4.5 Though their activities differ, one mind directs the many.

KARMA AND LATENT TENDENCIES

How karma ripens and latent tendencies arise and cease.

4.6 Of these, the one born of meditation has no store of *karma*.

4.7 The *karma* of a yogi is neither white nor black; that of others is threefold.

4.8 From that, only those latent tendencies become manifest that accord with its ripening.

4.9 Even when separated by birth, place and time, they follow without interval, because memory and latent impression are of one form.

---

1 The image is of a farmer who breaches a dike so that water flows into his field of its own accord.

4.10 And they are without beginning, since desire is eternal.

4.11 Because they are held together by cause, fruit, support and object, when these are absent, they too are absent.

TIME, THINGS AND MINDS

Past and future exist; a thing does not depend on a single mind.

4.12 Past and future exist in their own form, since attributes differ in their course through time.

4.13 They are manifest or subtle, and are made of the *guṇa*s.

4.14 The reality of a thing comes from the unity of its transformation.

4.15 Though the object is the same, because minds differ, the two follow separate paths.

4.16 And a thing does not depend on a single mind; if a thing had that mind as its only measure, what would it be then?[2]

4.17 Because the mind needs to be colored by a thing, that thing is known to it or unknown.

4.18 The movements of the mind are always known, because their master, the self, does not change.

THE MIND IS NOT SELF-LUMINOUS

The mind is seen by the self and exists for its sake.

4.19 The mind is not self-luminous, because it is seen.

4.20 And it cannot grasp both at the same time.

4.21 If the mind were seen by another mind, there would be an endless regress of understanding of understanding, and a confusion of memories.

4.22 Consciousness does not pass over into anything; yet when it takes on that form, there is awareness of one's own understanding.

2 Bodas reads *ced vastu tatpramāṇakam,* "if a thing had that mind as its measure"; the common text reads *vastu tad apramāṇakam,* "that thing, when not perceived by it."

4.23 The mind, colored by seer and seen, has everything as its object.

4.24 That mind too, with its countless latent tendencies, exists for the sake of another, because it acts in combination.[3]

ISOLATION

Discrimination leads to the cloud of dharma absorption and the final isolation of the seer.

4.25 For one who sees the distinction, the cultivation of the feeling of selfhood ceases.

4.26 Then the mind slopes toward discrimination and is drawn toward isolation.

4.27 In its gaps, other cognitions arise from latent impressions.

4.28 Their removal is said to be like that of the afflictions.

4.29 For one who seeks no gain even from the highest contemplation, from discriminating insight in every respect comes the absorption called the "cloud of *dharma*."[4]

4.30 From that comes the cessation of afflictions and *karma*.

4.31 Then, because knowledge freed from all coverings and impurities is infinite, little remains to be known.

4.32 From that, the *guṇa*s, their purpose fulfilled, come to the end of their sequence of transformations.

4.33 Sequence is the counterpart of moments, grasped at the end of a transformation.

4.34 Isolation is the return to their source of the *guṇa*s, now empty of any purpose for the self; or it is the power of consciousness established in its own nature. Thus.[5]

3 Bodas reads *cittam api*, "the mind too"; the common text reads *citram api*, "though variegated."

4 "Cloud of *dharma*" (*dharmamegha*): the final absorption; *dharma* here means virtue or right order, and the name is traditionally explained as a cloud that rains it down.

5 *Iti*, "thus," marks the close of the work.