

# THE YOGA SŪTRAS OF PATAÑJALI, BOOK 1

## translated and commented upon

### **1. Thereupon the instruction in yoga.**

Commentary: “Thereupon” means that the practical application should follow upon the theoretical study of the world view, in this case the sāṅkhya system (KofR 7.2.2, KofL3 7.7.3). The Pythagorean’s theoretical study is devoted to hylozoics. The word “yoga” is best translated by “application”. The translation, “union”, used in a routine fashion by theosophists, Alice A. Bailey, and others, is erroneous and not supported by the text. To the Pythagorean, the term “union” in this connection seems unsuitable also because it appears to confirm two theosophical misconceptions saying that man’s “true self” is not the “lower self”, the human empirical self, manifest in human self-consciousness, but a “higher self” existing in some higher world; and that consciousness development consists in the union of the “lower self” with the “higher self”. To the Pythagorean, the self is always the monad’s consciousness, which is experienced in moments of self-consciousness, and in the case of man the monad is always in the first triad in the causal envelope. In his commentary to this sūtra, Vyāsa says: “Yoga is samādhi.” This means that the aim of yoga is samādhi, that yoga without samādhi remains incomplete.

### **2. Yoga is the stopping of the automatic and mechanical activity of envelope consciousness.**

Commentary: Patañjali generally does not distinguish emotional and mental matter or consciousness but sums both up with the term *citta*, here rendered “envelope consciousness”. Sometimes, such as in sūtra 35, he expressly speaks of mentality, in which case he uses the term *manas*.

### **3. Then the seer remains in himself.**

Commentary: The “seer” is the self, the monad. Literally it says: “Then the seer remains in his own form.”

### **4. Otherwise he is identified with envelope activity.**

Commentary. The text says only *vṛtti*, “activity”, but this should be understood as an abbreviation of *cittavṛtti*, the word used in sūtra 2. Sūtra texts are characterized by the brevity of expression which often goes to extremes, tries the student’s comprehension severely, and necessitates commentaries. That is why this translation is not literal but supplemented with some of the stages in the reasoning left out in the original and such as they are conceived by a Pythagorean.

### **5. Envelope activity is of five kinds and is either connected with suffering or not.**

Commentary: “Connected with suffering or not” is an approximative translation of two technical terms (*kliṣṭa*, *akliṣṭa*) referring to five factors that limit consciousness and curtails the individual’s freedom. These five are: ignorance, “I am this”-ness (the self’s identification with some one of the self’s envelopes and its consciousness functions), passion, hatred, and fear of death. The first factor, ignorance, is the cause of the other four.

### **6. The five kinds are: Right knowledge, erroneous perception, erroneous conception, dreamless sleep, memory.**

Commentary: Dream sleep is not a category of its own, since dreams fall within one or more of the other categories.

**7. There are three sources of right knowledge: experience, reliable authority, and correct conclusion from the aforementioned two.**

Commentary: “Correct knowledge of objective reality is acquired through correct observation, through reliable information, and through a correct conclusion from the two former. Too often all three grounds are wrong, still more often two are wrong, and seldom all three are right. Where superphysical reality is concerned, all three are downright wrong without the esoteric knowledge of immemorial age. Still nobody has seen correctly or guessed correctly.” WofM 9.143.6

**8. Erroneous perception is false knowledge that does not correspond to its object.**

Commentary: Erroneous perception is the misinterpretation by reason (subjective consciousness) of the perception of sense (objective consciousness). (PhS 1.31.7)

**9. Erroneous conception depends on mere learning of words and has no basis in reality.**

Commentary: Erroneous conception is subjective construction of reason.

**10. Dreamless sleep is envelope activity the object of which is a state where the conceiving consciousness is absent.**

Commentary: Even if the conceiving consciousness is absent, yet impressions can be registered superconsciously to be conceived later by the monad consciousness when it occasionally attains this superconscious. The corresponding is true of impressions registered in the subconscious.

**11. Memory is the preservation of experience had.**

Commentary: “Memory” is an inexact term. It can refer to: 1) the faculty of memory; 2) the memory elements individually or collectively; 3) the places of storage which may exist in the individual himself (envelope centres, triad units, the monad) or outside of him in so-called globe memories or special memory centres in the mental world, etc. What is meant here is 1), the faculty of memory.

**12. The stopping of the automatic and mechanical activity of the envelopes is effected through exercise and non-identification.**

Commentary: “of the automatic and mechanical activity of the envelopes” is supplemented here; the text only says “Their stopping” etc.

**13. Exercise is the effort directed at achieving stillness of the envelopes.**

**14. When this exercise is done for a long time without interruption and devotedly, it gains a firm foundation.**

Commentary: “Devotedly” means with self-control, restraint of selfish desires, study, and reverence for whatever is superior.

**15. Non-identification (freedom from passion) is the yogi’s empowering awareness of not thirsting after sensuous objects, whether those which he has experienced himself or those mentioned in the scriptures.**

Commentary: “Empowering” means that it affords the monad power over the desire tendencies of the lower envelopes.

**16. The highest kind of non-identification is that absence of thirst after the objects of the three guṇas which is part of the insight of (puruṣa =) the third self.**

Commentary: The three guṇas are material energies of world 49 (tamas), world 47 (rajas), and world 45 (sattva). KofL2 7.15.15. At least objective self-consciousness in world 45 and, with it, incipient subjective self-consciousness in world 44 are thus required for the attainment of this non-identification. KofR 7.11.18

**17. Samprajñāta is the kind of samādhi that is accompanied by concrete thinking (mental thinking), abstract thinking (causal thinking), bliss (46-consciousness), and I-am-consciousness (45-consciousness).**

Commentary: The term “samprajñāta samādhi” can be translated by “conscious samādhi”, namely in contradistinction to asamprajñāta samādhi, “unconscious samādhi”. For everyone practising samādhi there is an upper limit beyond which his developed self-consciousness does not extend. The different kinds of samādhi practised on this side of that limit are summed up by the term “samprajñāta”; the kinds of samādhi that are beyond it are called “asamprajñāta”. The boundary between the two is individually different and is conditioned by the stage of development. For the average yogi the boundary is between mental and causal consciousness. Patañjali makes 45-consciousness the limit, which is connected with the fact that this consciousness is the goal set for mankind in our seven-globe and so has traditionally been defined as the “highest” generally speaking. Hence, for example, the theosophists’ talk of the “seven principles of man” of which the 45-envelope is the highest one (KofR 3.3.24, 3.4.6).

**18. The other kind of samādhi is that which is obtained when all envelope activity has ceased and only latent impressions remain; the yogi reaches that kind of samādhi by constantly exercising non-identification.**

Commentary: The “other kind of samādhi” is asamprajñāta samādhi.

**19. This kind of samādhi occurs in those who are liberated from bodies (of lower kinds) and in those who have merged with higher kinds of matter and possess this samādhi as a state conditioned by their being.**

Commentary: There are as many kinds of samādhi as there are worlds and envelopes for the monad. When the monad is set free from a lower envelope, it enters a state of samādhi in relation to that envelope and its distractive automatic activity. The etheric human races, who lack organisms, live in constant samādhi, conditioned by their being, in relation to the organism, all its possible sufferings and disturbances (disease, old age, death, hunger and thirst, heat and cold, etc.). Discarnate people in the mental world live in samādhi of long duration, conditioned by their being, in relation to both physical and emotional life and all its sufferings and disturbances of which only latent impressions remain (as said in sūtra nr 18).

**20. In the others, it is obtained through faith, energy, self-remembrance, samādhi, and insight.**

Commentary: “In the others”, that is to say, in those whose state is not conditioned by their being. In his commentary, Vyāsa calls this other kind of samādhi “conditioned by means”. “Energy” means energetic, repeated effort.

**21. It is attained in the quickest way by those who have an intensive will to liberation,**

**22. Even within this group of intensive ones there are differences between weak, average, and exceedingly strong individuals.**

**23. Or it is attained by devotion to the Lord.**

Commentary: The Lord is first and foremost Augoeides.

**24. The Lord is a particular (puruṣa =) monad, who is unassailed by suffering, bad sowing and reaping, and the latent impressions thereof.**

Commentary: Augoeides is at least a 46-self, some of them are 45-selves, and such a one must have blotted out all bad sowing in the lowest three worlds, annihilated it so thoroughly that not even the memory of it remains. PhS 3.51.10; KofL1 3.5.3; WofM 10.20.6, 11.16.4; CI 2.13.16, 13.6.12, 14.11.14

**25. In him exists the supreme seed of omniscience.**

Commentary: Being at least a 46-self Augoeides is omniscient in the worlds of man (47–49) and in the entire seven-globe (planetary chain).

**26. Thanks to his unceasing presence he is the teacher also of the earlier teachers.**

**27. His designation is the sacred syllable AUM,**

Commentary: The sacred syllable AUM is a symbol of trinity: both unity and its three aspects; thereby also a symbol of the three main departments in the cosmos, in the solar system, and in the planet. Out of the three main departments, the seven are scaled down. All of this is reflected in the cosmic, solar systemic, and planetary organization, in the planetary government and planetary hierarchy, Augoeides and the causal envelope with its centres. Also the seven laws of life mirror the basic septenary division. In the sacred syllable AUM, A represents the will or motion aspect, U the consciousness aspect, and M the matter aspect. All the other correspondences are obvious from this starting-point: A = 1st department, U = 2nd department, M = 3rd department in the planetary hierarchy as well as in the planetary government and the solar systemic government. Where the three centres of the causal envelope are concerned, A = the will centre (the petals of sacrifice), U = the unity centre (the petals of unity), M = the knowledge centre (the petals of knowledge); and that is why AUM is the symbol of Augoeides as well, since he manifests himself through the triune centre of the causal envelope, its three tiers of petals.

**28. which the yogi should repeat and on the meaning of which he should meditate.**

Commentary: Mere repetition (chanting) of the sacred syllable AUM, without understanding of its meaning, thus is useless. The same is true of other mantras.

**29. From this devotion to the Lord the yogi obtains individual consciousness and the removal of the hindrances.**

Commentary: Only causal consciousness is considered to be individual consciousness the complete acquisition of which presupposes man's cooperation with Augoeides and devotion to him.

**30. Disease, inertia, doubt, negligence, laziness, identification, false views, inability to reach higher states, and inability to maintain oneself in them – these distractions by envelope consciousness are the hindrances.**

**31. Grief, despondency, restlessness of the body, inhalation and exhalation accompany these distractions.**

Commentary: There is more said of the distracting effect of unregulated breathing rhythm in sūtra 34.

**32. Concentration on one single principle is designed to counteract these distractions.**

Commentary: What is translated by “one single principle” here also means “one single truth”. To a Pythagorean, this can be one of the eight cosmic truths mentioned in light technology, for example the unity of everything, the three aspects of everything, or the laws of life.

**33. By cultivating shared joy with others in their happiness, compassion with them in their suffering, delight in their virtues, and disregard of their faults and failings one reaches peace and serenity of mind.**

Commentary: Hatred, envy, malicious joy, and many other negative emotions prevent contact with higher consciousness and so the individual must eliminate them from his own consciousness. Here Patañjali assigns an overall procedure. “Shared joy” is an attempt at rendering the Sanskrit word *maitrī*, which means precisely this.

**34. Or by exhaling and holding one’s breath.**

Commentary: The change from from exhalation to inhalation, just as the one from inhalation to exhalation, entails mechanically and automatically an interruption in the stream of consciousness, and it is in these interruptions that distractions usually occur. To bridge the gaps and so maintain the continuity of consciousness, one must consciously put in extra energy in these very pauses. An other option is, just as this sūtra says, holding one’s breath.

**35. Or by activating higher objective consciousness mental consciousness is stabilized**

Commentary: At least objective causal consciousness is meant here, and since this comprises also objective mental consciousness, it makes it impossible for the monad to identify itself with all lower consciousness, according to the principle saying that you cannot be whatever you observe as being something material outside you.

**36. Or by that higher state of consciousness which is free from sorrows and is called resplendent mental consciousness is stabilized.**

Commentary: Causal consciousness (47:1-3) is free from sorrows and manifests itself objectively as light, which is emphasized in light technology. Also higher mental consciousness, however, 47:5 and 47:4, partakes of these qualities to the extent that it is in contact with causal consciousness, which it can do in contradistinction to lower mental consciousness (47:7 and 47:6). The words “mental consciousness is stabilized” are not found in the text but should be supplemented from the immediately preceding sūtra, 35; the same is true of sūtras 37–40.

**37. Or by that higher state of consciousness which is free from desire mental consciousness is stabilized.**

Commentary: This higher state of consciousness is the causal one. Any kind of consciousness can be controlled only by the immediately higher (triad unit): the physical only by the emotional, the emotional by the mental, the mental by the causal, etc. Therefore, the essential (46) cannot control either the emotional or the mental, but only the causal.

**38. Or by directing attention at a state of consciousness which has been obtained in a dream or in dreamless sleep mental consciousness is stabilized.**

Commentary: Not any dream-state is meant here but only those in which correct knowledge has been received; see commentary on sūtra 6. This can occur in dreamless sleep as well; in such cases the pertaining impressions are registered in some one of the higher molecular kinds of the envelope concerned which are carriers of that which is still superconscious to the monad.

**39. Or by directing attention to whatever one has found suitable mental consciousness is stabilized.**

**40. When mental consciousness has once been stabilized, its control of attention extends from the smallest to the greatest things.**

Commentary: The words “When mental consciousness has once been stabilized” and “of attention” are not in the text but have to be supplemented.

**41. When mechanical envelope activity is reduced, consciousness assumes, like a transparent jewel, the qualities of that which it is observing, whether this is the observer, the observation or the the object of observation.**

Commentary: Emotional-mental envelope activity distorts reality as much as, or more than, it renders it correctly. Two quotations from Laurency illustrate this: “The mental envelope conveys the vibrations and the exchange of energies between the emotional and causal envelopes. When man receives thoughts from without or thinks himself, there is quite a complex procedure of interaction of vibrations in the mental envelope with vibrations in the etheric envelopes of brain cells. This transmission is effected via emotional vibrations in the emotional envelope and etheric vibrations in the etheric envelope. To what extent the procedure is undisturbed and efficient depends on how well all these envelopes function in their respective molecular kinds. Distortion through emotional ‘colouring’ is extremely common.” PhS 2.22.3 “Insufficient control of consciousness causes us to have made faulty observations, assimilated spurious facts, drawn incorrect conclusions. Our memory feeds our waking consciousness with experiences distorted by emotion. When such experiences are remembered, they become the sources of new misconceptions. In this manner many people deceive themselves into believing what they have said.” KofL1 1.2.8 “Organic beings develop through the vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms, being equipped with – or rather limited by – special sense organs.” PhS 2.13.5

**42. There is a kind of meditation where the word, the object, and the knowledge of it are united. This meditation is called savitarkā samāpatti.**

Commentary: This is mental meditation. This synthetic consciousness of the word, the object, and the concept so obtained must be preceded by analytical comprehension of the difference between the three.

**43. When memory is purified, consciousness is emptied of its own nature (of mirroring what is being observed), as it were, and only the very object remains in consciousness. This is called nirvitarkā samāpatti.**

Commentary: This is supermental, that is to say, causal meditation.

**44. Through this (nirvitarkā samāpatti), such savicāra och nirvicāra contemplation is explained as is directed to objects of subtle matter.**

Commentary: Savicāra is causal (at least 47:3), nirvicāra is essential (at least 46:7). By “objects of subtle matter” are meant at least those of 47:1-3.

**45. And when meditation on objects of subtle matter is extended to such of ever higher kinds, it reaches the indetermined (or the unmanifested).**

Commentary: The boundary between (objectively) determined (objectively perceptible, manifested) and (objectively) undetermined (objectively imperceptible, unmanifested) reality is individually conditioned. As has already been seen, the sūtras describe both such states as can

be attained in the human kingdom and such states as can be attained in superhuman kingdoms only. To the normal first self, the mental world and all higher worlds are the unmanifested; to the perfect causal self, world 46 and all higher worlds are the unmanifested; to the 43-self, the cosmic worlds 1–42 are the unmanifested, etc.

**46. Only these kinds of contemplation are such with seed.**

Commentary: “With seed” means with objective content.

**47. According as one acquires skill in nirvicāra, one partakes of that stillness and clarity which result from the contact with ātma.**

Commentary: nirvicāra is 46-consciousness, the same as ānanda; ātma is 45-consciousness. The expression “stillness and clarity” renders a Sanskrit word (*prasāda*), which has no exact counterpart in English. The word “serenity” comes rather close in meaning. Compare with “peace and serenity” in sūtra 33 for the same Sanskrit word.

**48. The insight attained in that state is truth-bearing.**

Commentary: 46-consciousness is omniscient in the worlds of man (47–49), cannot be mistaken, cannot fall victim to fictions or illusions, and also possesses precognition to some extent. 45-consciousness extends even further in omniscience since it comprises world 46 as well.

**49. And that insight differs from such knowledge as is obtained by hearsay or inference, since it concerns the objects in their concrete reality.**

Commentary: The expression “such knowledge as is obtained by hearsay or inference” should be understood in the light of what is said in sūtra 7.

**50. The impression which is received through such an insight and becomes latent counteracts the production of other impressions.**

Commentary: Those “other impressions” whose production is counteracted in this manner are, among others, such as could otherwise have a distracting effect and so drag the monad down into lower states.

**51. When even this activity has been stopped, all envelope activity has been stopped, and samādhi without seed is obtained.**

Commentary: The monad reaches ever higher kinds of samādhi by liberating itself successively from ever higher envelopes and finally, from the highest envelope the monad has activated till then. At this limit the monad’s ability of objective consciousness ends, and so its next higher kind of samādhi must be “without seed”, that is, without objective content.

L.A. March 22, 2014.