

**An Essay on**  
**MEDITATION**  
**ESSENTIALS**

*Based on*  
**PATANJALI Yoga Sutras**

**Essay by:**

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## Table of Contents

<b>PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO YOGA</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1: ABOUT PATANJALI MUNI – FATHER OF MODERN DAY YOGA	3
1.2: UNDERSTANDING YOGA - UNION OF SELF WITH SUPREME	5
<b>PART 2: PREPARING FOR YOGA</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1: FINDING A PLACE FOR PRACTICING	9
2.2: POSTURES FOR YOGA - THE STARTING POINT	10
2.3: TAKE CONTROL OF BREATHING	14
2.4: CONCENTRATION	15
2.6: MEDITATION	17
<b>PART 3: DISCIPLINE OF YOGA</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1 - TYPES OF THOUGHTS	19
3.2: CONTROLLING THE THOUGHT STREAMS	20
3.3: DIVINE POWERS	20
3.4: DEVOTION TO GOD	21
3.5: OBSTACLES IN THE PATH OF YOGA	21
3.6: OVERCOMING THE OBSTACLES IN YOGA	22
3.7: SUPREME WISDOM	23
<b>PART 4: DISCIPLINE OF SPIRIT</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1: ROLE OF AFFLICTIONS IN YOGA	24
4.2: YOGA (UNION) AUSTERITIES	25
<b>PART 5: PRANAYAMA</b>	<b>27</b>
PREPARING FOR PRANAYAMA	27
ODD-EVEN (ANULOM VILOM) PRANAYAMA	28
<b>PART 6: SUMMARY AND TAKEAWAY</b>	<b>29</b>

## Part 1: Introduction to Yoga

### 1.1: About Patanjali Muni – Father of Modern-Day Yoga

Muni Patanjali is said to be the father of yoga - not the stretching exercises but the union of the soul with the Ultimate. There are no distinct records about the birth and life of Muni Patanjali. There have been four persons with the name Patanjali in history who contributed to Hinduism in some way or the other. As a result, most of today's scholars consider them to be the same person. Some disagree citing the difference in style of work.

The Patanjali Muni that we are talking about belongs to an era around 250 BCE. This is established based on his style of writing. Aphorisms style was at its peak during that time so naturally, Muni Patanjali would have used that style. That gives us a rough idea of Patanjali's existence between 200 and 300 BCE.

The main work of Patanjali are the Yoga Sutras that form the base of modern day yoga - better known as meditation. There are many schools of yoga. The essence of these schools, however, is same. Almost all the present-day yoga schools are results of people inferring Muni Patanjali's Yoga Sutras (aphorisms) in their own way.

Muni Patanjali wrote four units (chapters) containing Yoga Sutras. We will discuss them in English (only) in this essay for ease of understanding. Please note that this is not a verse by verse translation. I have included the essence of Muni Patanjali's yoga sutras (aphorisms) and combined it with my own observations in this work.

There is some confusion whether the fourth unit is actually written by Muni Patanjali. Scholars in the field contend that the fourth unit is written as if someone who has already achieved the perfect yogic state. We will talk about yogic state in a while. The first three units are more like someone learning yoga while the fourth unit seems to be added later, by someone who achieved yogic state.

A Yogic State is where a person is above normal subconscious and his, or her, mind is calm because there is nothing left in the person to create “vrittis” (disturbances) like reasoning and emotions. It is the highest state a yogi can attain. There, the person is one with the God and thereby, can see everything clearly. There is nothing left to guesswork and reasoning. There is nothing more left to be learned as the yogi can then see both past and future at the same time. There is no fear and uncertainty to disturb the calmness of the yogi’s mind.

Coming back to Muni Patanjali’s life, nobody knows anything about him. Legend says Muni Patanjali was an incarnation of Sheshnag, the thousand-headed serpent that stays with Lord Vishnu. It is said that Adi Shesa (Sheshnag) was worried when Lord Vishnu suddenly became unstable and rhythmic in tune with Lord Shiva’s dance. When the dance ended, Lord Vishnu returned to His usual calm state. When Adi Shesha asked Him the reason, He said that Adi Shesha would someday, take birth as a human to understand and teach Yoga to humans.

From that point, Adi Shesha was looking for an opportunity. He saw a yogi woman praying to Lord Sun, asking for a child to whom she can pass her knowledge. At that time, Adi Shesha appeared as a tiny serpent in the woman’s hands, folded together to form a cup shape full of water. The serpent soon transformed into a boy who requested the woman to accept him as her child. Since it can be said that Adi Shesha fell (fall is called *pat*) into the hands (*Anjali*) of the Yogini, he was named Pat-Anjali or Patanjali.

There are no official records pertaining to the life or birth of Muni Patanjali but we sure have his Yoga Sutras that help us understand the Ultimate and break the barrier of reasoning.

Unfortunately, Yoga is now reduced to physical well-being. Yoga means "sum" or "union". It is an act that "adds you" to God thereby providing you the unlimited knowledge that cannot be obtained simply by debating and reasoning. The main aim of a Yogi is to become one with God. In the process, a yogi, if practiced properly, gets some powers that ordinary mortals do not possess. Most yogis are satisfied with these powers and give up Yoga. The real Yogi is one who goes ahead – without being bothered by these special powers. The ultimate aim is to reach God. Let nothing divert the yogi from the main aim.

## 1.2: Understanding Yoga - Union of Self with Supreme

Yoga refers to the union of the practitioner/yogi with God or Universal Knowledge, as you might decide to call It. First, the yogi must regulate his or her breathing system for the proper flow of life inside the body and soul. The proper flow of prana (life) inside the body makes one fit physically. Prana inside brain makes the mental health better. It is just the first part of Yoga. Most of us are satisfied with it and go on thinking we have mastered Yoga.

In reality, only a select few can master Yoga. Those who actually master Yoga, don't go around bragging. They also get metaphysical or supernatural powers. That too is just a part of the huge scope of Yoga.

The yogi's main goal is to get to God or the source of Ultimate Knowledge. Thus, Yoga is directly associated with aspiring to understand God rather than just physical well-being or obtaining psychic, and different types of supernatural powers. A Yogi will be tempted to use his supernatural powers and that may derail him from the path of realizing God. Muni Patanjali talks about these supernatural powers in his book but goes on to say that these powers are not the primary aim of yoga. Rather, he says yogis should not be tempted by such divine powers. Only then they can reach God, Force, Ultimate, or The Truth.

Before we can discuss Yoga, we must understand two important things

1. Chitta and
2. Vritti

Swami Vivekananda gives an excellent example of these two. Think of Chitta (mind material) as a huge lake and vrittis (disturbances) as ripples in the lake. When there are no ripples, you can see the bottom of the lake (provided the water (mind) is clean enough). That, in a sense, means you have to purify yourself all the while trying to stop different feelings and emotions that arise within you for different reasons. An example of vritti can be impatience. Another example is anger.

If you are angry, you lose your reasoning power and do whatever comes to your brain. As you proceed with yoga, you will realize that "reasoning" is also a form of vritti (disturbance), albeit a

subtle one. Yogis give up reasoning too, past a phase – when the truth comes automatically to them. They can sense truth and after that, the reasoning is not necessary. Until then, everyone, including Yogis, has to reason with themselves to stay sane in this fast-paced world.

Swami Vivekananda asks people to imagine a lotus and meditate on that. In my opinion, it may be good in the initial phase but is not exactly desirable. Imagination too should be given up for pacifying the mind material (Chitta). Imagination is described by Muni Patanjali as a form of vritti (disturbance). It is important that there are no disturbances in the mind material in order to know one's own self.

The reasoning is also a vritti, according to Muni Patanjali. Many philosophers have tried to prove that proper reasoning is the goal of yoga. In reality, the reasoning is only the beginning of yoga. There comes a phase in yoga when the truth starts coming to you automatically, just like streaming music on your phone when you turn on the radio. You don't have to reason anymore. The truth is already there.

Yogis should aspire for this stage because from there, all knowledge starts coming to him or her. He or she is then one with God. I suppose this is what they call "Moksha (freedom from the cycle of rebirths)".

One might mistake Chitta (mind material) as the subconscious mind. It is neither mind nor consciousness. It is above that. Mind is part of the subtle body, but it still requires a force that can guide it, to sense things physically or intuitively. That force is called Prana and it controls all consciousness. Consciousness can be categorized into three basic categories:

1. Lesser Consciousness,
2. Normal Consciousness, and
3. Super Consciousness

These are again, based on the types of gunas (characteristics; something like habits – I cannot find the accurate English word for it). Gunas describe the state of a person as Tamas, Rajas, and Sattvic.

Tamas is the state where a person is dull, lazy, carries no or impure thoughts, and harms others based as a result of his/her thoughts. Rajas is the state of the person who is active. He engages in Karma Yoga and yet enjoys the pleasures of life. The highest state of a person is called Sattva. It is characterized by a calm mind, pure acts, and generally doing good for everyone.

From outside, Lesser Consciousness sounds like Super Consciousness but in fact, the lower consciousness is devoid of thoughts because the person is reveling in tamas. The word "Tamas" also means darkness. On the other hand, Super consciousness is the ability to keep the mind calm. Maybe there are no thoughts in a dull mind because it is dull, under the influence of alcohol or any other substance. In the case of Super Consciousness, the human has exceptional thinking skills but with the ability to use it only when required. All the other times, the mind is calm. This is the state yogis aspire to reach. Super Consciousness connects to the constant stream of knowledge and the yogis who've reached that phase can then see everything in detail – without having to reason or debate about what they see.

In the next chapter, let us see how to prepare for yoga. We are talking of yoga as it is mentioned in Sanskrit and Pali Scriptures. It is different from the current definition of yoga, which is restricted to physical well-being. By yoga, I refer to the union of the self with the Supreme. If you still have questions about the above, please feel free to send an email to [arun@powercutmedia.com](mailto:arun@powercutmedia.com).

## PART 2: Preparing for Yoga

If meditation is to be explained in one paragraph, it is the union of the Self with God. It comes by concentrating on things internal to us. The best method is to first create a rhythmic breathing pattern that is not irregular; then focus between the eyes with eyes closed; and later shift the meditation point to the mind; when concentrating on the mind, aspiring yogis will feel many changes coming to their body and spirit; the yogi should not give up; the plane of consciousness changes as the yogi continues meditating; finally, the Supreme Truth is revealed to the yogi.

We've already discussed Chitta and Vritti. Just to recap, Chitta (the mind material) is like a lake full of water, the bottom of the lake is your real self, and the water represents vrittis (ripples). You can say that vrittis are disturbances that arise in the lake due to external or internal factors. There are only two ways to be able to see the bottom of the lake - that is, your inner self:

1. The water should be pure and not muddy
2. The water is calm - that is, no ripples or waves, etc are being produced

They mean a bit more than what they appear. First is cleanliness. It refers to the purity of thoughts. It is not easy but is not impossible either. The second is to calm the mind. This too seems impossible but is perfectly attainable. You just need to practice with persistence.

I used the word persistence because it would seem impossible initially. Only after practicing for a few weeks, you can see some improvement. Once you reach there, the path ahead is easier. The initial phase is where many of us give up - looking for alternatives. But the thing is the same across all schools of yoga or rather, meditation.

If suffering from anxiety or depression, there is no harm in popping in a pill to calm down the brain. But that is the case when the brain is too anxious or when you are panicking. Once you are a few weeks into yoga, you won't need those brain-calming medicines. Remember that persistence pays.



There are sages in Varanasi who smoke "ganja" (गाँजा) all the time and say they've attained perfection. They do talk beautifully but it is not yoga in any sense. I said, 'Medicines for anxiety'. It is different from doping to reach the calmness of the brain. Doping goes down to "tamas" while a calm mind without any external factors is the characteristic of "sattva". I'll come to the proper method in a while.

Let's talk about the purification of the mind. The method of yoga is devised in a form that first, you come across control over breathing, and thereby, purification of the thoughts. Then, slowly but steadily, you can control your thoughts so that the mind is calm. When the mind is calm, the yogi starts receiving knowledge about the Ultimate. It comes naturally, as does breathing. From there, perfection is not beyond. In the process of reaching out to the Ultimate, you may experience certain unexplainable things. These things show that you are on the right path. However, I know of people who got afraid of these things and left yoga completely.

The goal of yoga can be accomplished in different stages. You may mix them up but for most, there are the following stages.

1. Finding a place to practice
2. Posture
3. Breathe Control
4. Concentration and
5. Meditation or Samadhi

### [2.1: Finding a place for practicing](#)

There are some guidelines as to how to practice. One should find a secluded place for practicing yoga. It can be a separate room in a house or a particular corner of a room. The area must be clean and devoid of anything impure. It is best to light camphor and incense sticks before practicing so that the smell helps in guiding the spirit toward calmness.

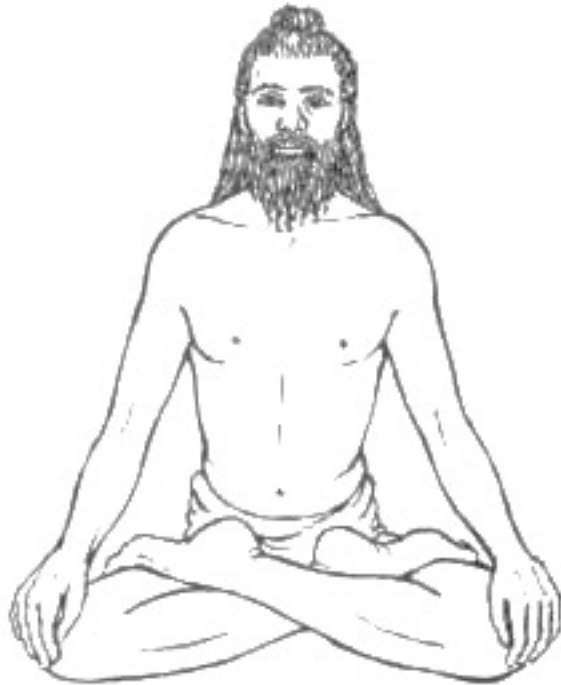
In short, it should be a pleasant experience so that you yearn to practice more. If the experience is unpleasant, it becomes hard for aspiring yogis to practice. If it indeed becomes difficult, look for a different place and keep it pure and calm to help you practice yoga.

## 2.2: Postures for Yoga - The Starting Point

If you are a beginner, the first few days of yoga practice are going to be tough. You have to figure out a posture that allows you to sit for a long time without numbing your legs. Ideally, padmasana is prescribed for yoga but it can be difficult for some. The main idea is to keep the brain, neck, and spinal cord straight. However, sitting stiffly in that position for a long period can give you a sore back or neck.

For the first few days, take breaks practicing a single posture, while trying to control your breath so that you do not feel sore and numb. At the same time, try to find a posture that allows you to sit in one place for long - keeping the spine, neck, and head in a straight line. It is okay to stretch out at regular intervals to avoid numbness/soreness.

The next page shows three postures that will help you decide how to get started.



**Padmasana**

This pose (image 1) is known as Padmasana (lotus posture). It allows a person to sit in the same posture for long. Look at the positioning of feet. The left foot is placed on the right thigh and the right foot is on the left thigh. In the case of Padmasana, both knees touch the ground, thereby dispersing body weight properly. However, some people may not be that flexible. Also, the above asana is not good for people with knee and ankle problems. It is not recommended for pregnant women either. If you are not comfortable with the above posture, try the Sukhasana (Happy posture). It is shown in the image below.



Sukhasana (happiness pose)

In this posture (image 2), people's feet are below the thighs as shown in the above figure. The left foot is below the right thigh and the right foot is below the left thigh. This posture is easier so you can begin with it. You may have to shift weight from one leg to another as sitting in this pose for longer durations may cause discomfort. Also, blood circulation to the legs is affected so take care of releasing the stress by moving and adjusting your feet at regular intervals.

The third posture I picked up is from the different postures they use while offering namaz. This third position can be used when your body is not flexible much. It looks like the image below



### Posture 3

This is the easiest for sitting down for people who have flexibility issues. In this pose, the feet are behind the buttocks. Each buttock rests on the corresponding leg. It helps you sit longer but affects the blood circulation in the legs, nonetheless. In this case, the body weight is transferred entirely to the hind legs so it might be more convenient for older people.

The Padmasana pose (image 1) is better as it allows you to sit for hours - once you are comfortable with it. Initially, when practicing the posture first mentioned, you might have to shift your feet, neck, etc. to maintain equilibrium. Once you are at ease, the pose allows sitting as such for hours. That is the posture recommended by many, including me.

You can start with posture 3 or posture 2 and eventually get to posture 1 (padmasana) by practicing a bit of it every day.

### 2.3: Take Control of Breathing

While trying to be comfortable with posture, you should focus on your breathing process. Breathing is called Prana (life). There are different ways to breathe in and out. Some people breathe by expanding their stomach so that the lungs get sucked in and air goes inside. Others draw in a breath so that the lungs expand upwards, and the stomach goes in, towards the spine. This is the method mentioned by many yoga methods for breathing

Try to practice the second method where you employ your stomach to breathe in and out. This will take time and depends upon several conditions. It cannot be learned in a day or two. It will take at least a week if you practice for - say, an hour every day! That's just an approximation. You may learn it sooner or might take longer, depending upon your abilities.

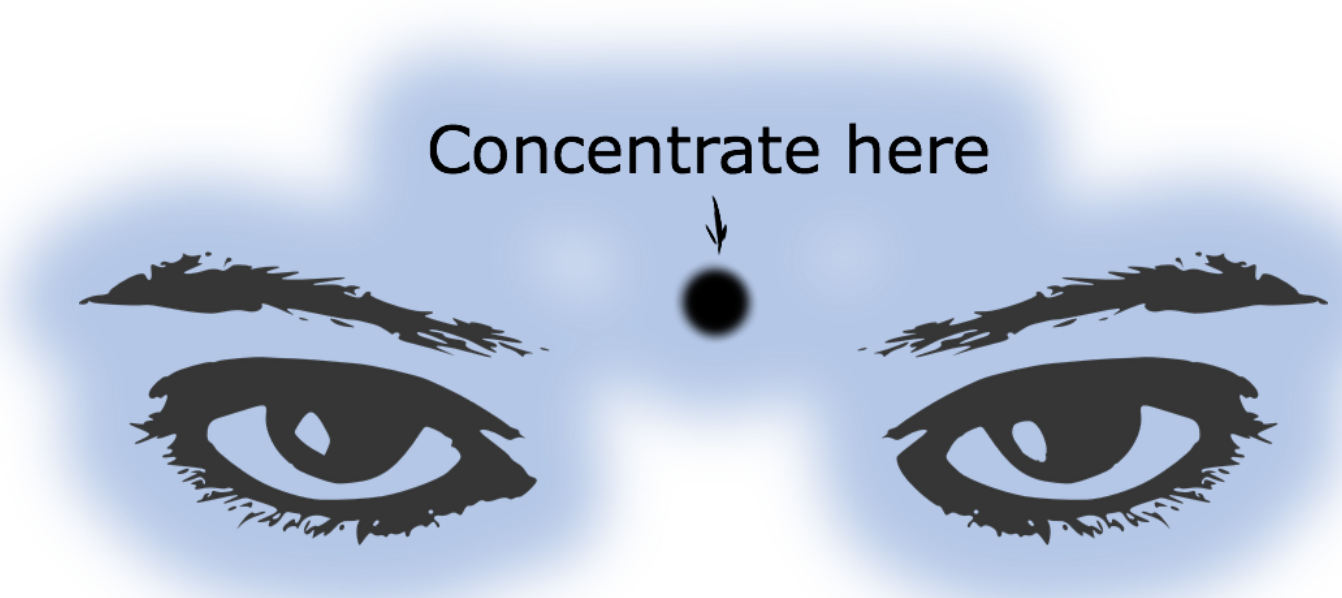
In the initial phase, just breathe by pulling your stomach inside and release. In the process, your lungs will expand inside the diaphragm towards up and fill in with air. Once you master this, and it comes automatically, you have to practice rhythmic breathing. Here, you breathe in, hold the breath for a while, and then release the breath suddenly. There is no timing prescribed but you can use two seconds for breathing in, hold your breath for a second, and release it as fast as you can. You can increase the timing later. The more you practice, the pure will your senses become. We'll talk about breathing in the section titled "Pranayama" towards the end of this written work.

The more you breathe properly, the more you purify your senses. In the initial days of yoga, you'll find too much disturbance. You will be losing concentration again and again. Do not think about concentration while trying to control and train your breathing. You can do it later. First make sure you get the rhythmic breathing pattern. Then move to concentration.

## 2.4: Concentration

Concentration can be frustrating. Most people give up here. This is the most difficult part for beginners because the mind is pretty active - reminding you of things, planning things, and doing everything to make you lose focus on yoga. It can be pretty frustrating and some may simply go - 'I can't do it; my brain won't allow it'. But remember that the aim of yoga is to control the mind and brain to the extent that you perceive not only calmness but also are fed with cosmic knowledge.

Concentration will not come in a day or two. Neither in a week. It might take several weeks before you are able to concentrate. The question here is "what to concentrate on".



An idea is to concentrate at the midpoint between your eyes with your eyes closed. You just have to keep trying to concentrate and focus on that middle point while keeping the brain muscles at ease. In the beginning, when you try to concentrate between the eyes, you will notice that the brain muscles are stressed/tense. You have to go back and release them before concentrating again on the point between your eyes. This will take some time but will surely come if you do not give up.

It is of no use trying to fight thoughts either. The more you fight them, the more powerful they become. These are Vrittis - disturbances that try to deviate you from the path of yoga. Try to ignore them. Keep coming back to the midpoint between your eyes. You will then see that the thoughts go away on their own and you are able to concentrate better.



## 2.6: Meditation

Once you are able to concentrate with a relaxed brain and almost zero thoughts, you should connect yourself to the Supreme. You will have to continue concentrating until the mind stops wandering. When the mind stops creating its own disturbances, you will be connected to the constant stream of knowledge that was blocked all your life. The mind starts receiving knowledge about the divine and unseen. You feel connected to God.

You become wiser and know what to do. If you continue further, you may also be able to become one with God so that you can see the truth - from past or future - just like that. You do not have to reason. Reasoning is an attribute of the mind. Do not mistake calmness for dullness. Dullness is having no thoughts because there is something lacking. Calmness is because you are able to remove all thoughts.

Meditation is the union of soul and body with God. Meditation is being able to receive divine knowledge without having to read books. Nothing can displace your mood once you reach here. You can keep your brain calm at all times and thus become a loved one of God, as pointed out in the "Bhagavad Gita."

The following parts of this work explain meditation in light of Muni Patanjali's "Yoga Aphorisms/Sutras"

## PART 3: Discipline of Yoga

Muni Patanjali's Yoga aphorisms start with a line saying "atha yoganusashanam". It means "discipline of yoga". Basically, the first chapter of his book contains aphorisms related to yoga (meditation; the union of Self with the Supreme) discipline. It explains how to reach the Samadhi (deep meditation state) and obstacles that the aspiring yogis may face when trying to practice yoga. We've not taken up yoga as a set of physical stretching exercises but are using it in its real sense. As explained earlier, "yoga" refers to the "union" of the Self with God. The following explains Muni Patanjali's sutras on the state of Samadhi and how to obtain it.

The first thing to know about meditation is that a person is the reflection of his thoughts and emotions. The person does not know the real himself or herself until the thoughts and emotions subside. Swami Vivekananda gave an example of a lake to explain Chitta and Vrittis. We spoke about it in the previous paragraphs. Just to recap, Chitta is the material that powers the mind. Consider the mind as a lake and vrittis as disturbances. These disturbances are basically thoughts and emotions that cloud our view. When the vrittis are restrained, the person can see the real himself or herself. For that to happen, the person should acknowledge and recognize the thoughts occurring inside his or her mind.

When the mind is calm and no disturbances are there, the real self is visible. It takes time to control the thoughts and no one can control them entirely. Even if stronger thoughts and emotions are controlled, subtle thoughts and impressions of the world remain in the mind. Still, it is desirable to get a view of the real self by controlling at least the gross thoughts. It is not impossible to completely restrain thoughts but very few have the patience to practice that much.

Controlling thoughts can be done by concentrating on something or by total devotion to God. Controlling the thoughts won't come in a week or two. It takes time and is based on how a person practices yoga. Some people sit for 15 minutes a day, some sit for an hour or two, and there are some that practice yoga all the time. There is no rule as to how much to practice. Anyone can practice as much as his or her body allows.

### 3.1 - Types of Thoughts

There are five types of thought streams. They can be divided into two broad categories: painful thoughts and non-painful thoughts. The thought streams could be one or more of the following five:

1. Right knowledge
2. Wrong knowledge
3. Fancy
4. Sleep, and
5. Memory

Right knowledge comes from inference, reasoning, and tradition. Inference is basically observation of things to deduce things/truth. Reasoning is the ability to think between right and wrong so that the person can keep the truth and reject wrong. Tradition is about learning from reliable sources such as scriptures that have stood the test of generations.

Wrong knowledge could be something based on wrong notions or false information. It also takes form of wrong beliefs that one may have been fed from his or her childhood. Reasoning and discrimination help in sorting out truth from fake knowledge.

Fancy can also be called imaginations. There are times when we imagine things that are not there. It happens to almost every human that he or she mentally constructs false situations and get anxious about them. An example could be imaginary communications - when you are about to meet someone and start thinking about what all you would say and what all the other person might say. All that is fancy.

Sleep is a state where the impressions in mind subside for the duration of the sleep. It is not permanent change in impressions because when the person wakes up, he or she goes back to his or her regular thought process. In other words, the change in mind during sleep has no solid foundation.

Memory are thought reflections from the past. For most people, they keep on remembering things from the past. In many cases, memory impressions are just fake. People, instead of remembering the actual event, tend to analyze and mix up memories to create a new one.

The above five types of thought processes are hindrances to yoga (meditation). As such, a person is the sum total of the above type of thought processes. These thought processes need to be restrained if a yogi wants to see his or her real self.

### 3.2: Controlling the thought streams

Controlling the thought streams is a difficult task that is not impossible. When a person is trying to concentrate, the thought streams mentioned above, make it difficult for him or her. The aspiring yogi should be able to identify and restrain those impressions. It comes with practice. It may become irritating - trying to control thoughts and memories; the key to success is patience and practice.

Remember that the practice should be steady. The aspiring should practice for a long every day. They should practice daily and without interruptions. As explained in the previous chapter, yogis should find a secluded place at home or somewhere else to practice and keep it pure. Devoted, persistent, lengthy practice helps in controlling the thought streams, emotions, and imaginations.

For faster results, aspiring yogis should renounce the desires of both the seen and unseen. By "seen", I mean something that a person saw and craves for. By "unseen", I mean the things a person has heard of and wants to see himself/herself or wants for himself. By shunning the desires towards both such things, it becomes easier to focus on God. This accelerates the journey of yoga and helps in a faster union of the self with God.

A subtle modification of meditation (yoga) talks of cognitive meditation. This is achieved by keeping a watch on the thoughts and impressions going through the mind and using willpower to control (calm) them. Identifying and removing thoughts of all types is possible so that only subtle impressions remain.

### 3.3: Divine Powers

I did not want to include this in the chapter but one needs to be cautioned about the special powers he or she may gain while practicing yoga of union (meditation). Some people might feel a cool breeze over their heads; some may see dreams that later turn into reality; others may get some other type of powers. It is not recommended that aspiring yogis should practice for such powers. They should be ignored, and yogis should continue meditation until they can feel one with God or Ultimate Knowledge.

It has happened to many that they got special powers and then were frightened by the changes to the body and mind. So much so that they stopped practicing and came back into the mainstream. One can master such powers but it takes another route. The best method is to ignore such special powers and keep the focus on God.

### 3.4: Devotion to God

There are multiple methods to speed up your progress in yoga (union with God). Besides time given to practice every day, one can expedite his or her progress with devotion towards God. In God, the eternal knowledge lies. Since time is not a factor for God, the Supreme is teacher of everyone. From the start of time, God has been the teacher for anyone who approached Him for knowledge.

It is desirable that you pray to God before starting practice for the day. The devotion towards God helps you maintain discipline of yoga. You will have a schedule for practice and a proper place to practice meditation. It also helps in concentration as you would be repeating some mantra.

Om is said to be the sound of the Universe that invokes God - irrespective of the religion the yogi follows. Om is synonymous to God. One should repeat the word OM while practicing yoga. That'd help in keeping the self, focused while giving you a feeling that you are moving in the right direction under the guidance of the God.

The word OM should be said without opening the mouth. Simply repeat the word using your vocal cords but not opening the mouth. That might create a slight sound coming from throat. It is known as Bhramar yoga (Bhramar refers to bee) since the voice is a bit related to that of humming.

### 3.5: Obstacles in the path of yoga

Repeating the mantra OM with an emphasis on its meaning helps in removing obstacles that a yogi may face during practice. The meaning of OM is God. The aspiring should be conscious that they are praying to God with each breath they inhale and exhale.

The known obstacles for an aspiring yogi during practice are listed below:

1. Diseases
2. Inertia
3. Doubts over their practice; yogis often wonder whether they are going on the right path; they are, irrespective of the methods they use; only the speed of results vary, based on the type of meditation they are using and the amount of time they are putting in every day
4. Laziness also hinders the practice
5. Lack of enthusiasm - the more enthusiastic a yogi is, the more he or she will practice and that will affect how soon he or she gets to the Ultimate
6. Sensuality
7. A wandering mind
8. Lack of focus on OM
9. Instability - practicing with interruptions is not good; a yogi should practice daily

With the above obstacles, come pain, frustration, nervousness, and shaken faith. Often yogis would be frustrated with not being able to keep their minds concentrated. It is not expected of anyone that they'll be concentrating properly from day one. It often takes weeks to focus the mind on OM. It takes time to identify the thoughts and emotions coming up in the mind; it takes time to remove these thoughts and emotions after identifying them so that the mind can focus again on OM.

### 3.6: Overcoming the Obstacles in Yoga

To overcome the obstacles in yoga, one must place his or her faith in God. Muni Patanjali says people should believe in one truth. That one truth is OM. Yogis should fix their mind over OM and follow it, asking God to give them the power for overcoming the obstacles - whatever they may be.

Certain other things that make the mind pure and healthy are good deeds. Forgive your enemies and those who wronged you. Show compassion towards other people, especially the suffering. Solitude is preferred for yogis but if you have to get social, join places where they focus on things essential for a yogi: meditation clubs, religious communities etc. Try not to hate anything - any virtue or vice in a person. Such things bring calmness to mind.

Deep breathing also helps in calming down the mind. Too much deep breathing can, however, create a shortage of carbon-di-oxide in the body, making it dizzy. When things start appearing wrong, take to deep breathing - repeating OM if possible. It often happens that no matter how much we try, we cannot forgive or forget some things. The best method is to ignore such thoughts that produce negativity. Thoughts have to be rejected anyway when you are practicing yoga so there is no harm in rejecting them even when you are not literally sitting and meditating.

### 3.7: Supreme Wisdom

When thoughts subside and the mind becomes calm, it is akin to a crystal. Whatever light falls on the crystal, the crystal turns to that color. That is to say, once the mind is calm, yogis can seek wisdom - being one with God.

Some yogis stop practicing once their mind is calm though still, the subtle impressions of the world remain in the mind. They procure divine powers. They are the ones we generally call angels, demigods, etc. Then there are yogis who do not give up even after the mind is calm. They become one with the Supreme God. Their minds are connected to the heavenly mind. Such yogis can obtain supreme wisdom. Things will be clear to them. Answers will come automatically. They can see the future as well as they can see the past. Nothing in the world can disturb their serenity of mind.

## PART 4: Discipline of Spirit

Yoga is the study of sacred texts, austerity, and dedication to God combined. People read books for knowledge. They act on the methods prescribed in the books for austerity. Both of these introduce devotion toward God. Thus, these three constitute the discipline of yoga (union of the self with the Supreme).

### 4.1: Role of Afflictions in Yoga

This discipline (yoga) should be free from impurities and should be practiced for fixing the mind of God. There are five afflictions that are roadblocks to obtaining redemption. They are as listed below:

1. Ignorance - when ignorance takes the front seat, it breeds many types of disturbances, including the other four afflictions mentioned below
2. Egoism - The sense of "I am" is ego; it is good up to an extent only until yogis learn that they're one with God and that they do not exist apart from God; once the yogis know they are one with God, the feeling of "I am" fades away and the yogi thinks of himself or herself as a part of the larger picture called God
3. Attachment - is affliction towards objects and/or people; as long as the attachment is present in a person, he or she will find themselves pulled to things and/or people
4. Aversion – is, on the other hand, the characteristic that pushes away yogis from certain things and certain people; it is the opposite of attachment in a sense
5. Lack of Insight - Almost everyone clings to life irrespective of their living conditions; people wish to live forever or for as long as possible; this clinging to life comes from the fact that attachments exist; it could be fear of afterlife for some; nobody wants to die; one has to realize that the body is not eternal but an instrument (of soul) for procuring greater knowledge and aspirations; that realization comes from meditation

Such afflictions should be removed. As long as afflictions are present, the cycle of birth and death will continue. These afflictions can be removed by producing contrary afflictions or better still, by meditation with a goal of reaching the Supreme. Once the impressions die out, the yogi realizes that he or she was always there since the beginning of creation and that he or she won't die even if the body dies. They can distance themselves from the body then and focus completely on the Divine.

These afflictions create body again and again. That means the cycle of rebirths continue till one realizes God and becomes One with Him using any means like devotion, meditation, or knowledge. The experiences of previous and this birth are carried forward to future births as long as people don't realize that they're considering an internal world to be external entity. Things we see, hear, think etc. are products of the One Gigantic Brain that we may call God. They manifest into souls and the body perceives it as being external.



With meditation, one comes to realize that the external appearances are just an illusion; that the real self is inside the body; that it is neither born nor dies; that it was always there. When a yogi realizes this much, he or she can remember his or her previous births as well. It can be painful to mix with the external world and still practice yoga.

However, pain can be avoided. The yogi just has to realize that he or she is wrong in thinking that the external world is real whereas, in reality, it is just his or her perception created by senses. Once the yogi can distance himself or herself from the external world, he is no longer physically or spiritually bound to the world as he or she sees it. As said earlier, most yogis stop when they acquire occult powers and can distinguish right from wrong. That means the yogis are still attached to the world and their mortal self. To completely understand God, meditation must continue until even the subtle mental impressions disappear. Then the yogi is perfect and in rhythm with God.

#### 4.2: Yoga (Union) Austerities

We already know that yoga is practice of associating self with God. There are a few things that help the aspiring yogis. For example, self-restraint is an important factor while practicing yoga. Initially, the brain doesn't let the yogis practice. Too many thoughts and disturbances occur when the yogi tries to concentrate. That needs to be handled subtly. Instead of getting up frustration and giving up, practice more and at regular intervals. It is a good idea to practice at the same time every day. Best time to practice is said to be between 4:00 AM and 6:00 AM. One should practice at a quiet place. It is not possible - however - that everyone can find a quiet place. In that case, one can use ear plugs to filter out and reduce noise.

Self-restraint is applicable to the following:

1. Violence,
2. Pretense
3. Falsehood
4. Sexual activities
5. Other simplicities like non-acceptance of gifts

Cleanliness, feeling content with whatever they have, a set of austerities as mentioned above, studying for wisdom, and complete devotion to God, help in reaching the goal of yoga easily. In the beginning, it may be a bit difficult to focus. When brain starts sending out unwanted thoughts, repetitive thoughts, or irrational thoughts, yogis should cultivate opposite set of thoughts to defeat the negative thoughts. For example, if anyone is angry, it is advised that the person/yogi thinks only of peace and not about the thing that brings negative emotions (klesha/क्लेश). That way, he or she can obtain stability in thoughts.

When anyone manages to get rid of desires, wisdom comes automatically. The person can tell right from wrong. He or she comes to know about the world's real state existence. These are experiences that cannot be defined or explained in words. One has to practice yoga in order to experience them. Just start with OM and concentrate on the midpoint between eyes. All other things will come naturally. It may take a while but aspiring yogis may start believing in the power of yoga as some psychic powers come to them. This is also a point where they should preserve. I have seen many who were content with that and give up. Then there is this set of people who are scared of these special powers and give up.

## PART 5: Pranayama

Prana is the force behind breathing. Pranayama is a scientific process that leads to the calmness of the Chitta (mind material) so that meditation comes easy. Unfortunately, in current India, it is just reduced to holding the nose while breathing - as long as the Brahmins ask them to hold their nose while they read mantras on behalf of people doing pranayama. It is just a show business, a token of what is the real pranayama.

Pranayama is making sure that the prana (life) reaches every part of the human body and soul. There are many types of Pranayama, all of them involving inhaling and exhaling air. I will discuss the best one only (according to my experience). This is preceded by another breathing exercise so that you can perform pranayama easily.

### Preparing for Pranayama

Choose a proper posture from the three postures described earlier. Since this is a breathing exercise, you can also use a chair provided the back of the chair is straight enough to keep your head, neck, and spine in a single straight line. Make sure your clothes are not tight because you need to allow the air inside everywhere.

Draw a deep breath. Release it immediately. After performing this a few times, try holding your breath inside. Draw in a deep breath. Hold on for a while. Hold it only as long as you feel comfortable. Do not choke on it. Release the breath as fast as possible. Again, this process should be smooth so that you don't end up nauseating.

In the initial cycles, hold your breath for smaller durations. For example, half a second. Then, increase the holding time to one second. Then later to two to three seconds. That much should suffice. If this becomes easier, you are ready for pranayama's *anulom vilom* (odd-even)

### Odd-Even (Anulom Vilom) Pranayama

You should proceed to this only after you are comfortable holding back breath after inhaling. The above was an attempt to explain the process of holding in breath.

Coming to odd-even method of pranayama, you inhale through one nostril and exhale through the other.

1. Keep your thumb on the right nostril (don't press it yet)
2. Keep your forefinger on the left nostril (don't press it yet)
3. Press the right nostril using the thumb so that it is closed
4. Inhale deeply
5. Press forefinger against the nostril so that it is closed too
6. Sit like that with both nostrils closed and air inside
7. After a second or so, release the right nostril by lifting the forefinger
8. Exhale through the left nostril

Once done, repeat the process using the right nostril. Basically, you are breathing in using one nostril, breathing out through the other, and then alternating between the nostrils. That's why it is called the odd-even (anulom vilom) method.

Once this comes easily, try repeating the OM word with your mouth and your nostrils closed while holding back your breath. That will help in purifying the nerves. With each breath, you can remember OM three times easily. But don't try and hold back your breath for long if you are not comfortable.

You can practice pranayama for a few minutes every day. You can increase the time later when you are comfortable. You don't need to do it always. Do pranayama just before starting meditation. Even a five minutes practice of odd-even pranayama will calm down your mind and allow you to meditate longer.

## Part 6: Summary and Takeaway

The following is the summary of the entire booklet and lists important points that need to be understood and followed properly.

1. Yoga is not about physical exercises. It is the union of the soul with what lies beyond perception
2. There are several types of yoga listed across the planet but the aim of each is equal and it is to reach God, the Ultimate Knowledge
3. To be able to practice yoga, you need to control disturbances in the mind
4. These disturbances can be fancies, imagination, memories, emotions, etc
5. The best method is to concentrate on one thing; it can be one emotion or one memory; or it can be the midpoint between your eyes
6. While concentrating on one thing, that thing becomes strong but other impressions become weak
7. Thus, we can conquer all emotions by concentrating on one thing; later we suppress the thing we were concentrating on; being a single thing, it can be conquered easily, leaving us with a cleaner mind
8. When disturbances in the mind cease, yogis can see their true selves
9. This true self is devoid of emotions and knows everything that the universe knows because then it becomes one with the universe
10. Dealing with the breath is the key to meditation
11. Breathing should be rhythmic to make meditation possible; people with irregular breathing are dealing with emotions internally and can't focus on anything for long
12. For yoga, first, the breathing should be controlled; this can be achieved by the practice of pranayama
13. Posture is important; there are no rules regarding how you sit as long as the body touches the floor via any organ; we've discussed three postures in the booklet; one can also use a chair if they have problems with knee and/or feet
14. Some sitting postures offer better practice; the padmasana is good for better and long practice
15. The place you select for yoga should be cleaned and purified using incense sticks and/or camphor; the aroma helps in easing out stress so that you can practice better
16. You must have heard people telling you that controlling thoughts is not important; just observe the thoughts; it is cognitive meditation; while doing cognitive meditation, you observe the thoughts and eliminate them one by one
17. It is easier to concentrate between the eyes and that mastered, shift to mind as a solid object; perceiving the mind as an object comes only after you are able to focus on things for long; in the case of concentrating between the eyes, you can then perceive mind as an object; this is where vairagya (non-attachment) begins
18. Certain things and activities make it easy to meditate; performing good deeds, abstinence from violence and sexual activities, devotion towards God, showing compassion towards others are some such activities
19. It is desirable that you attach the word OM with yoga practice; when breathing in, think of OM; while holding the breath inside, repeat OM with mouth closed; think of OM while exhaling; it expedites the process of yoga - union with God

20. You know you are advancing in the practice of yoga when you can sense things that are otherwise not available to normal people; it can be the ability to foresee things, hear things that are said far away, and similar abilities
21. You may also start foreseeing things - as visions or as dreams; you have to ignore them or else you might panic and give up yoga
22. When doing yoga, both mind and body undergo a change; new channels for thinking arise and new knowledge comes
23. While many give up yoga at the phase where they acquire divine powers and gain knowledge, it is desirable that you continue with non-attachment towards these special powers
24. The main aim of yoga is to become one with the Supreme
25. Do not give up until you reach God; from there, God will Himself guide you