

• **Yoga School of Kailua, Inc.** •
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• **Beginning (first year) Yoga Students Should Know:** •

The discipline of yoga is one of the most fulfilling journeys one can undertake. Disciple means, the love of learning. We mean by discipline that yoga is a tool for lifelong learning. One has to remain disciplined to succeed in yoga. When you begin to think you understand yoga, it grows exponentially (a growth of infinite expansion), so that you realize you will never understand it fully. The fun is in exploring its many mysteries and discovering a personal fulfillment that is beyond measure, for the body, for the mind and for the spirit. Yoga is a science *and* an art; and is not a religion, but has deep philosophical and spiritual roots.

Yoga is a discipline of the practice of meditation, and a vehicle and path to a meditative mind; essentially freeing the chatter, chit-chat (chitta vriti), mental fragments that go on inside the mind at a seemingly endless pace.

Yoga comes from the Sanskrit word: yug, or yoke. The "yoke" comes from the analogy of the harness (yoke) that holds two oxen together to pull a heavy load, so the large beasts do not go in opposite directions. This illustrates how yoga harmonizes, balances, and brings into union ***the body, mind, and spirit*** of our individual self, and ultimately uniting us with the Whole.

Think, too, that yoga by its very nature helps us to chip away at the obstacles, ill health, dis-ease, confusion, and conflicts which prevent us from seeing that we are already one with the universe and with our own true nature. When we heal ourselves to oneness through the discipline of yoga we affect the fragmentation of a mis-aligned world. Our healing is the healing of the world.

The movement of one's true nature is operating whether one is aware of it or not. When one becomes conscious of this movement one can stay with it as long as one can remain in awareness, free from the thinking mind which is responsible for conflict. One becomes more and more aware of one's true nature in this ground of being as a witness. This is the path of yoga.

We think Patanjali, who wrote down the Yoga Sutras, which the YSK (Yoga School of Kailua, Inc.) studies and teaches, lived around 200 BCE (before the current era). We believe that he codified the sutras from an ancient system (perhaps thousands of years old as an oral tradition), so that it wasn't exactly his own words, though he may have embellished it. We are pretty sure he was a great sage and had a deep understanding of the complex mental and spiritual issues he discusses in the sutras.

There are 196 sutras. The word *sutra* can be understood as "to thread, " making up the tapestry of yoga; or as a bead or flower of a mala or lei which begins and ends in the same place. The *Yoga Sutra* come together with all of its myriad pieces finally combined, making up the whole. The *Yoga Sutra* is the classical commentary of the discipline of yoga. The sutras are short aphorisms of a sentence or two exposing or describing the discipline of yoga. An aphorism is a moral precept or wisdom-saying reduced to a few words

The first sutra of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is "And Now Yoga." Yoga is always in the now, never past or future. The exposition of yoga is about to begin.

The second sutra tells us what yoga *is*. "Yoga is the cessation of the chitta vriti (thought, the whirling movement of mind stuff or consciousness)." One can think of "chitta vriti" as chitchat or chatter of the mind going like a whirlwind.

Three and four say, "this cessation (of whirling thought/chitta vriti) is our true nature, but sometimes we identify with it." We at times identify with our thoughts; the whirling movement of the busy mind, but that is not our true nature. The ending of thought is our true, fundamental nature.

So, we see that these first yoga sutras are pointing the way to meditation. Meditation is *now, and*, meditation can be defined as the cessation of thought or the "whirlwinds" of the mind. Freedom of

thought is the clear mirror of relationship, both inward and outward. The judgments, fragments, cultural imperatives and chatter are not. Remember sutra 1: "and now yoga."

One could say that yoga nurtures a healthy mind and frees it and the ego-self structure of conflict, which is thought. We cannot be in conflict when we see "*what is*" from moment to moment, free of chitta vritti.

We are like drops of water which merge into an ocean of oneness and consciousness. Here, we can address the dilemmas of humanity. We cannot think of harming another when aware of our oneness with others. Yoga "practice" is appropriate to all religions, as its principles will enhance one's religion. One who disputes this doesn't understand what yoga is.

In Yoga Sutra 2:29 Patanjali tells us what constitutes, establishes, organizes, and develops within oneself the discipline of yoga. They are the ¹⁾**yamas** and ²⁾**niyamas** (restraints and disciplines), ³⁾**asana** (postures) and ⁴⁾**pranayama** (movement of life currents/breath); ⁵⁾**sense withdrawl** (just before meditation), ⁶⁾**awareness/observation** (being aware of thought/chitta vritti, and all "what is" in reality or in the moment), ⁷⁾**meditation** (a natural outcome of observation and awareness of the movement of the mind and of reality), and ⁸⁾**samadhi** (enlightenment). This will be on the test (just kidding). Think of this as a circle, forever interacting, not a linear list.

Meditation is relatively easy and we do it all of the time. When we become aware of what it is, as it moves in and out of our lives, we can harness the energy and meaning of meditation to clear the mind of unnecessary, painful, fragmented, conflicting thoughts. Meditation can be a few seconds long. *Samadhi*, on the other hand is longer held and therefore, a deeper meditative mind, and can be translated as *enlightenment*.

The (5) restraints, **yamas** are **non harming, truthfulness, non stealing, chastity** (self-controlled), and **greedlessness** (not coveting what belongs to another). In sutra 2:31, Patanjali says the yamas are always valid wherever we are, regardless of our social standing, time, place or circumstances. In other words they are timeless and universal.

The (5) **niyamas**, disciplines are **purity** (clean body/mind), **contentment, self-control/self-discipline**, awareness of self; **study** (study yoga, study something to keep the mind sharp, clear, always growing and learning/life-long-learner); and finding, discovering, nurturing the **force** within and without, the **source**.

One of my favorite sutras is 1:33. Patanjali tells us there are obstacles which get in the way of our practice of yoga. One of the ways to eliminate these obstacles is, "to nurture the attitudes of friendliness, compassion and joy, but not to be attached to these." If we are attached to friendliness, it is no longer friendly, etc. In our society today, fear and insecurity permeate. Friendliness, compassion and joy are the antidote to this malaise.

The study of yoga begins when you come to it with an open mind and an open heart. Yoga serves the yogin (student) regardless of one's particular philosophical or spiritual upbringing. Yoga helps everyone grow in awareness and expansion of one's own spirit. Yoga, as an ancient practice, combines two major branches practiced today. We at the YSK practice both, and we call this, appropriately, **Yoga**. We don't like to fragment the word yoga, as its very nature is *union*. Swatmarama said around 500 CE, that *hatha* yoga is not separate from *raja* yoga, and *raja* yoga is not separate from *hatha* yoga. Hatha is generally recognized as the physical aspect of yoga and raja as the mental, intellectual, and spiritual aspect of yoga; and to us they cannot be separated and are *Yoga*. The exercise (asana) and breathing exercises (pranayama) are the beginning of *hatha* yoga. *Raja* yoga (royal, crown) is the result and refers to the expansion of consciousness or enlightenment of one's whole being. *Hatha* cannot be done without *raja* yoga and *raja* cannot be done without *hatha* yoga, they are *Yoga*.

An interesting footnote, is that Vivekananda, who was born a few days after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, in January 1863, **was the first yogi that we know of who came and taught in the U.S.** He attended the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 and stayed and taught here until 1897, and later returned and stayed from 1899-1900. He was a brilliant raja yogi, who also taught Jnana-Yoga, Karma-Yoga, and Bhakti-Yoga. Peace be with you.

QUESTIONS FOR: FIRST YEAR YOGA STUDENTS SHOULD KNOW

- 1.) What does discipline/disciple mean?
- 2.) Is yoga a religion? What is it?
- 3.) Where does the word "yoga" come from, and what does it mean?
- 4.) How many yoga sutra are there?
- 5.) Who wrote them down and when?
- 6.) What is a sutra?
- 7.) The first sutra tells us "and now yoga;" what does this mean?
- 8.) What is yoga, according to sutra 2?
- 9.) What is a "chitta vriti?"
- 10.) According to Patanjali, what constitutes our "true nature?"
- 11.) What part, according to sutra 4, do we often identify ourselves?
- 12.) In sutra 2:29 Patanjali tells us what constitutes the discipline of yoga. There are 8 things, two of which make up our physical practice, *asana* and *pranayama*. What are the other six?
- 13.) What are the Sanskrit words for the *restraints* and *disciplines* of the eight limbs of yoga?
- 14.) What are the five restraints? If the World Com executives practiced yoga, which restraints did they betray?
- 15.) What are the five disciplines?
- 16.) Fear and insecurity permeates society today. Why would sutra 1:33 be helpful?
- 17.) What did Swatmarama say in 500 CE that can be helpful for today's yoga practitioners?
- 18.) What two major elements of the eight limbs of yoga constitute hatha yoga?
- 19.) What is the basis for raja yoga?
- 20.) Are raja yoga and hatha yoga one yoga or two?
- 21.) Who was the first yogi to come to North America?
- 22.) When did he come here and why?