

### Midterm Project: Your Yoga Experience

This assignment gives you a chance to spend a week trying out some of the exercises that comprise the early stages of the Eight-Limbed Yoga outlined in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*. Each day of the week, you will engage in morning and evening readings and meditations and complete a daily exercise in Yoga. To help you reflect on this process, you will keep a journal of your thoughts as your week unfolds. (You should obtain a [small notebook](#) for this purpose.)

Specific instructions for each day, including daily readings, will be posted in a designated folder in our class Google Drive. If you will not have consistent access to the internet throughout the break, you may wish to print or download these instructions.

You should complete this assignment over Fall break, beginning on **Sunday, October 20** and ending on **Saturday, October 26**. Each day of the week, you will undertake five activities:

#### 1. **Daily meditation**

For ten minutes in the morning or evening, try to concentrate your attention on a single object. It can be your breath, a word or short phrase, a physical object, a texture or sound, or anything else of your choosing. If you wish, you may couple this exercise with the postures (asanas) and/or breathing exercises (prāṇāyāma) described in sūtras 46-53 of Book II. (Instructions for these can be found in the Drive folder.)

This exercise should be done in a quiet, comfortable location where you will be able to sit without interruption or distraction. If you wish to do your meditation as a guided exercise or with the aid of a timer, MP3s can be found in the Drive folder.

#### 2. **Morning reading and intention-setting**

After waking up, take a moment to read the morning text for reflection (posted in the Drive folder). Then, in your journal, write down 2-3 concrete actions you can take during your day to more fully realize the principle (the yama or niyama) discussed by the text in your life. These might involve any of the following:

- Engaging in a substantive interaction with someone else about the yama/niyama
- Making a small adjustment to your lifestyle for the day to help you more thoroughly experience the yama/niyama
- Designing and practicing a visualization or other imaginative exercise related to the yama/niyama
- Completing a small creative project related to the yama/niyama.

Take a few moments to imagine practicing these steps today. Imagine possible challenges in the day ahead and reflect on what you will do to overcome them.

### 3. **Daily exercise**

During your day, try to carry out the steps you wrote down in your morning intention-setting, and complete any additional exercise from the daily instructions found in the Drive folder.

### 4. **Daily journal entry**

The main graded component of this project will be your Yoga Experience journal, which should contain at least **two entries for each day** of your week: one entry (described below) reflecting on the daily exercise, and one additional entry. These entries can be as long as you want, but should be at least one paragraph each. You are free to write your additional entry about anything that is relevant to the themes you are exploring this week. Some possibilities include:

- Reflections on the morning or evening meditation: What was it like to complete it? Did you learn anything about yourself by doing so? Did it help make any of the principles of the Yoga/Samkhya system more vivid?
- An account of one or more events from your day from the point of view of the Yoga philosophy
- Thoughts on one or more of the daily readings
- A poem, parable, or other literary composition inspired by the ideas of Yoga.

In addition to your daily entries, your journal should also contain a longer **final entry** that looks back on your week. This entry should summarize your overall experience practicing Yoga and should reflect on how viable the way of life recommended by Patañjali is in today's world, as well as any other lessons that can be drawn from your experience. Your final entry should consist of at least three substantive paragraphs.

### 5. **Evening reading and reflection**

Before going to sleep, take a moment to read the evening text for reflection (posted in the Drive folder). Then take 5-10 minutes to review the events of your day, reflecting on the extent to which you were able to implement the day's yama or niyama into your daily practice. Ask yourself what you did well, what you did not do well, and how you could have done things differently. Try to criticise your specific actions rather than yourself as a person in general, and to focus on ways in which you can improve. Don't dwell too long on things or go around in circles. Rather, try to keep a practical focus and arrive at clear decisions; if you are not able, then set your thoughts aside and return to them in the morning.

After reflecting for 5-10 minutes, record your thoughts on your daily exercise in your journal. You might address what it was like for you personally to undertake this exercise,

what you learned from doing so, or your more general thoughts on the yama or niyama you were trying to implement. Your entry can be as long as you want, but should be at least one paragraph.

All journals are due in class on **Monday, October 28**. To receive full credit, your journal must be *complete* -- i.e. contain at least 2 entries per day plus a longer final entry -- and each entry must be *thoughtful* -- i.e. display a sincere effort to engage with the principles of Yoga as well as a clear understanding of its core ideas.

## The Examined Life Yoga Experience: Daily Readings and Instructions

Patañjali's "eight limbs of yoga" begin with the yamas and niyamas, virtuous habits conducive to the attainment of spiritual liberation. These are seen as fundamental to yoga: without them, one cannot achieve the benefits of the meditative states defined later in the text. In the words of the 8th century commentator and philosopher Śaṅkara,

Following the yamas and niyamas is the basic qualification to practise yoga. The qualification is not simply that one wants to do yoga, for the holy text says, 'But he who has not first turned away from his wickedness, who is not tranquil and subdued, or whose mind is not at rest, he can never obtain the Self even by knowledge.'

This week, you will have the chance to practice and reflect on the yamas and niyamas, along with the remaining three "outer limbs" discussed later in the Yoga Sūtras: āsana (posture), prāṇāyāma (breath control), and pratyāhāra (focusing the mind in an effort to achieve samyama -- meditative concentration and insight). This will take the form of a week-long immersion experience, structured by the following daily routine:

1. Morning reading and intention-setting  
*Complete the morning reading on the yama/niyama. In your journal, write down 2-3 things you will do in the rest of your day that will help you realize the yama/niyama.*
2. Daily exercise  
*During your day, try to carry out what you wrote down in your intention-setting, and complete any additional activities given in the day's instructions.*
3. Evening reading and reflection  
*Complete the evening reading on the yama/niyama. Reflect on your experience with the daily exercise, and record your thoughts in a short journal entry.*

Each day, you should also complete the following two additional tasks:

4. Daily meditation  
*This can be paired with āsanās and/or prāṇāyāma. Instructions can be found [here](#).*
5. Daily journal entry  
*This entry should be at least one paragraph (and should be in addition to your evening reflection entry). It should relate to the overall themes you are exploring this week. Your completed journal should contain at least 15 entries: two per day plus a final entry.*

The yamas and niyamas, as stated by Patañjali in sūtras 30 and 32 of Book II of the Yoga Sūtras, are as follows:

### Yamas (restraints):

1. Ahimsā - nonviolence
2. Satya - truthfulness

3. Asteya - non-stealing
4. Brahmacharya - chastity
5. Aparigraha - non-avarice

Niyamas (observances):

1. Śauca - cleanliness of body and mind
2. Santoṣa - contentment
3. Tapas - self-discipline
4. Svādhyāya - self-study and study of scripture
5. Īśvarapraṇidhāna - devotion to God

After an initial day of reflection on the end goal of cultivating these habits, your experience this week will focus on three of the yamas -- ahimsā, satya, and aparigraha -- and two of the niyamas -- śauca and santoṣa. (Feel free to incorporate any of the other yamas or niyamas into your experience as well. Any journal entries you write as part of this process can count toward your required total. I am happy to provide readings on the other yamas and niyamas upon request.)

## Sunday: Restraint

### Morning Readings

Yoga is the stilling of the changing states of the mind.  
When that is accomplished, the soul abides in its own true nature.  
The changing states of mind are stilled by practice and dispassion.

- Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* I.2-3,12

The soul appears to undergo the experiences of the body and mind -- birth, death, disease, old age, happiness, distress, peacefulness, anxiety, etc., but these are mere transformations of the body and mind. In other words, they are the permutations of gross and subtle matter external to the soul that are pervaded by the soul's awareness. The mind misidentifies the pure self with these permutations and considers the pure self to be subject to birth and death, happiness and distress, etc. This misidentification, or ignorance, is therefore the root of bondage to the world. Yoga involves preventing the mind from being molded into these permutations, the impressions and thoughts of the objects of the world.

When the mind restrains even the ability to discriminate, and exists in an inactive state where all thoughts remain only in potential but not active form, in other words, when all thoughts have been stilled, one has reached a state of mind where nothing is cognized -- all cognition, after all, is connected to some external reality (since cognition requires a subject, the cognizer, and an object of cognition distinct from or external to this subject). With no further distractions including discrimination, consciousness can now abide in its own autonomous nature, the actual soul itself, *puruṣa*.

- Edwin F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*

Arjuna said:

Since everything is unstable, I cannot see the permanent foundation of this yoga that you have called 'sameness', Slayer of Madhu.

For the mind is unsteady, Krishna, tormenting, powerful, unyielding; it is as difficult to restrain as the wind, I suppose.

The Lord said:

Without doubt, Great Arm, the mind is hard to control and unsteady, but by repeated practice, Son of Kunti, and by cultivating indifference to passion, it can be held in check.

I agree that it is difficult to achieve yogic discipline if you lack self-restraint, but for the one who strives and is self-controlled there are means by which it can be achieved.

- *Bhagavad Gītā* VI.33-36

## Daily Exercise

Starting tomorrow, one of your daily journal entries will be based on intentions you set in the morning for realizing the day's yama or niyama. For today, take a few minutes to reflect on your broader goals and intentions for the week. What do you hope to get out of your week-long experience practicing some of the principles of yoga? Do you have any concerns or worries going into the week? What are the main challenges you anticipate in carrying out this project? In your journal, write at least one paragraph reflecting on questions like these and/or on the overall goals of yoga, as presented in today's readings.

## Evening Reading

Sage Yājñavalkya to King Janaka (From the *Mahābhārata*):

Consider now, O king, the characteristics of the yogi. The character of the yogi displays a tranquility like that of the contented person sleeping blissfully.

The wise speak of the yogi as like the upward motionless flame of a lamp full of oil burning in a windless place.

The character of the yogi is like a rock, which is incapable of being moved even when pummeled by torrents of rain pouring down from clouds.

The demeanor of the yogi is not moved by the noise of assorted conches and drums being played together, nor by outbursts of song.

Just as a person of composed nature might ascend a staircase while holding a container full of oil, and yet, despite being alarmed upon being attacked by assailants armed with swords, does not spill a drop out of fear of them, so, in the same way, the mind of one who is absorbed in the supreme is fully concentrated.

These are the characteristics of the sage yogi, which are displayed due to resolve and to controlling the activities of the senses.

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Remember also to complete your [meditation](#) and second journal entry at some point during the day. Here are some possibilities for your journal entry:

- Reflections on the morning or evening meditation: What was it like to complete it? Did you learn anything about yourself by doing so? Did it help make any of the principles of the Yoga/Samkhya system more vivid?
- An account of one or more events from your day from the point of view of the Yoga philosophy
- Thoughts on one or more of the daily readings
- A poem, parable, or other literary composition inspired by the ideas of Yoga.

## Monday: Ahimsā - Nonviolence

### Morning Readings

Ahimsā is the not causing of pain to any living creature in any way at any time. The other yamas and niyamas have their origin in it. They are meant to achieve it. They are taught with the object of teaching it. They are taken up with the object of rendering the light of its appearance purer.

- Vyāsa-Bhāṣya II.30

The other yamas and niyamas when performed without observing the vow of ahimsā are, as it were, not performed; because in that case they are quite useless.

- Vācaspati Miśra, *Tattva-vaiśāradī* II.30

Nonviolence also encompasses giving up the spirit of malice and hatred, since these produce the tendencies to injure others. This includes avoiding violence in the form of harsh words, or causing fear in others. Ahimsā must be followed in thought, deed, and word. The degree of violence is determined by intent -- acts of violence performed without malice and hatred by a normal person, such as self-defense or cutting the grass, are not the same as murdering one's parents in cold blood. But yogis avoid even retaliating in self-defense against an attacker, and will shoo off a snake rather than kill it, and thus attempt to inflict as little aggression as possible on their environments.

- Edwin F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*

### Daily Exercise

With the morning readings in mind, write down 2-3 concrete things you can do today that will help you more fully realize nonviolence. These might take the form of a specific kind of interaction (e.g. an in-depth conversation about this virtue), a 24-hour lifestyle tweak, or an imaginative or creative exercise. During the day, try to carry out these steps. At the end of your day, after completing the evening readings, write a journal entry of at least one paragraph reflecting on your efforts. Ask yourself what you did well, what you did not do well, and how you could have done things differently. Try to criticise your specific actions rather than yourself as a person in general, and to focus on ways in which you can improve. Don't dwell too long on things or go around in circles. Rather, try to keep a practical focus and arrive at clear decisions; if you are not able, then set your thoughts aside and return to them in the morning.

## Evening Readings

Certain communities of observant Jains, who have taken the principle of nonviolence further than any other tradition recorded in human history, are required to follow strict principles to minimize any possible violence to other creatures. For example, they are admonished not to eat root vegetables, since creatures in the soil may be harmed when uprooting these and not to engage in any farming activities, for the same reason. Needless to say, they must reject any type of military career. Observant members of this community do not cook after sunset, since insects would be attracted to the flame of the fire and perish; strain their water to remove any hapless microscopic creatures that may have fallen in; wear gauze over their mouths so as not to inhale any tiny airborne creatures; and sweep the road before them as they walk, again so as not to step on any creature, etc. Since embodied existence invariably entails that one will sooner or later inadvertently harm some creature or other, no matter how hard one attempts to avoid this, the ultimate act of nonviolence performed in rare instances by exemplar Jains is to fast to death, sacrificing their own life to save those of other creatures. Sacrificing one's life to save others is the definition of heroism (and, indeed, the perfected Jain yogi is called mahavira, great hero).

This practice may seem extreme (it is of course not mainstream but performed on very rare occasions by exemplar ascetic Jain monks), but it needs to be considered within the parameters of the Jain (and Hindu) belief that all living beings contain an atman (puruṣa), and all atmans are spiritually equal. Even as our modern world respects the heroism involved in sacrificing one's life for the protection of fellow humans in recognition of a common humanity or humaneness, and certain moral commentators are presently taking a hesitant step beyond the concept of human equality by grappling with the extent of our commonality with the great apes, and the moral issues this might present in our responsibilities to them, so Jains extend this principle and, from their perspective, deepen it, by recognizing the common atman-ness among all beings.

- Edwin F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*

In the presence of one who is established in nonviolence, hostility is abandoned.

- Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* II.35

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Remember also to complete your [meditation](#) and second journal entry at some point during the day. Here are some possibilities for your journal entry:

- Reflections on the morning or evening meditation: What was it like to complete it? Did you learn anything about yourself by doing so? Did it help make any of the principles of the Yoga/Samkhya system more vivid?

- An account of one or more events from your day from the point of view of the Yoga philosophy
- Thoughts on one or more of the daily readings
- A poem, parable, or other literary composition inspired by the ideas of Yoga.

## Tuesday: Satya - Truthfulness

### Morning Readings

The speech spoken to convey one's own experience to others should not be deceitful, as when one states what one knows to be a fact, but this very truth is being spoken with the aim of tricking some other person. [...] Nor inaccurate, as when one speaks what is untrue in the belief that it is true, nor uninformative, inappropriate to enlighten the hearer, as when the speech is characterized by ambiguous expressions and inconclusive arguments, dark sayings or archaisms and the like.

- Śaṅkara, *Vivaraṇa* II.30

Such speech must also be uttered for the good of others. If not so uttered, it is only the semblance of truth, not truth... Take, for example, the case of a man who has taken the vow of truth, being asked by a gang of robbers if the caravan they are in pursuit of had passed that way. He has seen it passing that way and says so. This utterance of his, even though technically truth, is not so in reality, as it tends to the injury of others.

- Vācaspati Miśra, *Tattva-vaiśāradī* II.30

### Daily Exercise

With the morning readings in mind, write down 2-3 concrete things you can do today that will help you more fully realize truthfulness. These might take the form of a specific kind of interaction (e.g. an in-depth conversation about this virtue), a 24-hour lifestyle tweak, or an imaginative or creative exercise. During the day, try to carry out these steps. At the end of your day, after completing the evening readings, write a journal entry of at least one paragraph reflecting on your efforts. Ask yourself what you did well, what you did not do well, and how you could have done things differently. Try to criticise your specific actions rather than yourself as a person in general, and to focus on ways in which you can improve. Don't dwell too long on things or go around in circles. Rather, try to keep a practical focus and arrive at clear decisions; if you are not able, then set your thoughts aside and return to them in the morning.

### Evening Readings

Satya consists in word and thought being in accord with facts. Speech and mind corresponds to what has been seen, heard and inferred as such. Speech is uttered for the purpose of transferring one's knowledge to another. It can only be said to have been employed for the good of others, and not for their injury, if it is not deceptive, inaccurate, or uninformative. If, however, it proves to be injurious to living beings, even if it is called truth, it is not truth; it is a sin only. By

this facsimile of virtue, the appearance of a truthful utterance, one gets into painful darkness. Therefore, let everyone examine well and then utter truth for the benefit of all living beings.

- Vyāsa-Bhāṣya II.30

Hurting is not only physical, it can also be done by speech. By speaking falsehood one deceives someone, or ruins his reputation or causes some grief. One may not tell a lie with the intention of deceiving. But even if unwittingly our words wound someone, nay, even if a truthful statement does harm to someone, it is already an infringement of satya.

- Gaspar M. Koelman, *Patañjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*

When truthfulness is established, there is a proper foundation for action and its fruits.

- Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* II.36

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Remember also to complete your [meditation](#) and second journal entry at some point during the day. Here are some possibilities for your journal entry:

- Reflections on the morning or evening meditation: What was it like to complete it? Did you learn anything about yourself by doing so? Did it help make any of the principles of the Yoga/Samkhya system more vivid?
- An account of one or more events from your day from the point of view of the Yoga philosophy
- Thoughts on one or more of the daily readings
- A poem, parable, or other literary composition inspired by the ideas of Yoga.

## Wednesday: Aparigraha - Non-avarice

### Morning Readings

Aparigraha is the non-appropriation of things not one's own, consequent upon seeing the defects of attachment and of the injury caused by the collection, preservation and destruction of goods.

- *Vyāsa-Bhāṣya* II.30

Attachment increases in consequence of the repetition of enjoyment, as also the deftness of the powers in their functioning... Aparigraha is the not making one's own of objects, inasmuch as their possession originates in undesirable means if they are not sanctioned by scripture and are obtainable without effort even; and because there is harm done even in the preservation of possessions, that are obtained even in accordance with scripture.

- Vācaspati Miśra, *Tattva-vaiśārādī* II.30

### Daily Exercise

With the morning readings in mind, write down 2-3 concrete things you can do today that will help you more fully realize non-avarice. These might take the form of a specific kind of interaction (e.g. an in-depth conversation about this virtue), a 24-hour lifestyle tweak, or an imaginative or creative exercise. During the day, try to carry out these steps. At the end of your day, after completing the evening readings, write a journal entry of at least one paragraph reflecting on your efforts. Ask yourself what you did well, what you did not do well, and how you could have done things differently. Try to criticise your specific actions rather than yourself as a person in general, and to focus on ways in which you can improve. Don't dwell too long on things or go around in circles. Rather, try to keep a practical focus and arrive at clear decisions; if you are not able, then set your thoughts aside and return to them in the morning.

### Evening Readings

There is trouble involved in acquiring things in the first place, trouble again in trying to preserve and upkeep them, and trouble and distress when we inevitably lose them. For such reasons, possession produces [...] distress in the form of hankering for objects, or lamentation for having lost them. Hoarding wealth without sharing it is sheer selfishness and points to a complete lack of sympathy for the plight of others. Therefore, yogis attempt to give up all objects of enjoyment and take only what is required for their maintenance.

- Edwin F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*

When non-avarice has become steady, there arises knowledge of how rebirth occurs.

- Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* II.39

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Remember also to complete your [meditation](#) and second journal entry at some point during the day. Here are some possibilities for your journal entry:

- Reflections on the morning or evening meditation: What was it like to complete it? Did you learn anything about yourself by doing so? Did it help make any of the principles of the Yoga/Samkhya system more vivid?
- An account of one or more events from your day from the point of view of the Yoga philosophy
- Thoughts on one or more of the daily readings
- A poem, parable, or other literary composition inspired by the ideas of Yoga.

## Thursday: Śauca - Cleanliness of Body and Mind

### Morning Readings

Śauca is external when brought about by earths and water, etc., and consists in the eating of pure things, and so on also. It is internal when it consists in the washing away of impurities of the mind.

- *Vyāsa-Bhāṣya* II.32

The words 'and so on' in connection with the eating of purifying things mean the limitation of mouthfuls in size and number, etc.

Mental impurities are pride, jealousy, vanity, etc. Mental purity consists in their removal.

- *Vācaspati Miśra, Tattva-vaiśāradī* II.32

The word 'also' implies purity in seeing and listening.

This is the external purity. Now the internal, namely washing away stains of the mind such as desire and anger, by the waters of meditation on their opposites.

- *Śaṅkara, Vivaraṇa* II.32

### Daily Exercise

In the morning readings, Śaṅkara refers to "stains of the mind such as desire and anger". What are some other examples of "stains of the mind"? How might they manifest themselves in a person's life (yours or someone else's), and what concrete steps can you take to "wash away" these stains?

In your journal, write at least one paragraph reflecting on these questions (and any related issues that come to mind). If you wish to set intentions that will help you "wash away stains of the mind", you may write a second entry at the end of the day reflecting on your efforts to carry out these intentions.

## Evening Readings

Meat and intoxication cause the mind to be agitated and stimulated, and yoga requires a steady and peaceful mind. Therefore, a yogi never imbibes such substances.

Internal śauca is to be accomplished by benevolence -- exuding a friendly attitude toward all.

- Edwin F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*

Upon the purification of the mind, [one attains] cheerfulness, one-pointedness, control over the senses, and fitness to perceive the self.

- Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* II.41

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Remember also to complete your [meditation](#) and second journal entry at some point during the day. Here are some possibilities for your journal entry:

- Reflections on the morning or evening meditation: What was it like to complete it? Did you learn anything about yourself by doing so? Did it help make any of the principles of the Yoga/Samkhya system more vivid?
- An account of one or more events from your day from the point of view of the Yoga philosophy
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## Friday: Santoṣa - Contentment

### Morning Readings

Santoṣa is the absence of desire to secure more of the necessities of life than one already possesses.

- *Vyāsa-Bhāṣya* II.32

As a result of the satisfaction with what is at hand, even though there may be some lack, he has the feeling, 'It is enough.'

- Śaṅkara, *Vivaraṇa* II.32

It is desire, it is anger, produced from the constituent of passion, all-consuming, all-injuring; know that this is the enemy here.

As a fire is covered by smoke and a mirror by dust; as an embryo is covered by a sac, this world is enveloped by that.

By this perpetual enemy of the wise, by this insatiable fire in the form of desire, knowledge is obscured.

- *Bhagavad Gītā* III.37-39

### Daily Exercise

Imagine that you must give up virtually all of your possessions -- everything but five items of your choosing. (Maybe your house is on fire and you only have time to salvage five things.) In your journal, list the five items you would choose to keep. Then, in an entry of at least one paragraph, reflect on any or all of the following questions: In what ways do you think your life would be different without all the things you would be giving up? How hard do you think it would be to do without these things? What is the one thing you would miss the most, and why? How did carrying out this thought experiment make you feel?

If you wish to set intentions for the day that will help you realize the niyama of contentment, you may write a second entry at the end of the day reflecting on your efforts to carry out these intentions.

### Evening Readings

Joy and bliss do not belong to the spiritual Self as an accidental and ephemeral state, as something over and above its metaphysical nature. The Self is by identity substantial peace and bliss. But if reflected in a mind undisturbed by any mental intrusion can this bliss become experienced in our present empirical life. Contentment is a kind of anticipation, a terrestrial

participation of substantial bliss itself. Only for those who are so tied down to empirical life that they cannot conceive the value of an immaterial other-worldly joy, such a state may seem a void, an emptiness. But for those whose heart is fixed in the transcendent Spirit, this void is the condition required for the echo of the Absolute -- a peace such as the world cannot give.

- Gaspar M. Koelman, *Patañjala Yoga: From Related Ego to Absolute Self*

From contentment, the highest happiness is attained.

- Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* II.42

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Remember also to complete your [meditation](#) and second journal entry at some point during the day. Here are some possibilities for your journal entry:

- Reflections on the morning or evening meditation: What was it like to complete it? Did you learn anything about yourself by doing so? Did it help make any of the principles of the Yoga/Samkhya system more vivid?
- An account of one or more events from your day from the point of view of the Yoga philosophy
- Thoughts on one or more of the daily readings
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## Saturday: Resilience

### Morning Readings

Upon being harassed by negative thoughts, one should cultivate counteracting thoughts. Negative thoughts are violence, etc. They may be [personally] performed, performed on one's behalf by another, or authorized by oneself; they may be triggered by greed, anger, or delusion; and they may be slight, moderate, or extreme in intensity. One should cultivate counteracting thoughts, namely, that the end results [of negative thoughts] are ongoing suffering and ignorance.

- Patañjali, *Yoga Sūtras* II.33-34

If an aspiring yogi experiences feelings of dislike for a person, which is a type of violence, resulting from ignorance (ignoring the true self of the person), then, upon becoming aware of this feeling, the yogi can make the effort to think of the person in a nonviolent fashion, perhaps by viewing him or her as simply an embodied being victimized by the *gunas* and *karma*, etc., and ultimately as a pure *purusa* soul. One might additionally consider how the world might be a better place to live if people could go beyond the superficial impressions and view others as fellow spiritual beings.

- Edwin F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali*

### Daily Exercise

In your journal, make a short list of negative thoughts or emotions that you are likely to experience in the near future. Then, for each thought or emotion on your list, write down a "counteracting" thought that you could cultivate in response. Do you think that cultivating counteracting thoughts would be an effective way to overcome the negative thoughts or emotions you wrote down? Why or why not?

If you wish to set intentions for the rest of your day that will help you cultivate counteracting thoughts, you may write a second entry at the end of the day reflecting on your efforts to carry out these intentions.

Before you submit your Yoga Experience journal on Monday, **remember to complete your longer final entry** looking back on your week as a whole. This entry should summarize your overall experience practicing Yoga and should reflect on how viable the way of life recommended by Patañjali is in today's world, as well as any other lessons that can be drawn from your experience. Your final entry should consist of at least three substantive paragraphs.

## Evening Reading

When during the practice of the yamas and niyamas sinful thoughts give trouble, the mind is to be habituated to the contrary ideas. When thoughts of the sins of causing injury to others and other sins appear in the mind of the devotee of wisdom, such as, 'I will kill him who offends me,' 'I will tell lies,' 'I will take his wealth for myself,' 'I will spoil this man's wife,' 'Why should I not possess the things which this man possesses' -- when he is touched by the high fever of these sins, which tend to push him along the wrong path, he should habituate himself to think upon the contraries of such sins. He should entertain such ideas as these: --Roasted as I am in the cruel fires of the world, I have taken refuge in the practice of Yoga, giving as it does protection to all living beings. Were I to take up the sins, having once given them up, I would be acting like a dog. As the dog licks up his own vomit, so should I be acting, if I were to take up again what I have once given up.'

- *Vyāsa-Bhāṣya* II.33

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Remember also to complete your [meditation](#) and second journal entry at some point during the day. Here are some possibilities for your journal entry:

- Reflections on the morning or evening meditation: What was it like to complete it? Did you learn anything about yourself by doing so? Did it help make any of the principles of the Yoga/Samkhya system more vivid?
- An account of one or more events from your day from the point of view of the Yoga philosophy
- Thoughts on one or more of the daily readings
- A poem, parable, or other literary composition inspired by the ideas of Yoga.

## Instructions for Meditation:

*Yoga is the stilling of the changing states of the mind.*

- *Yoga Sūtras* I.2

1. Find a quiet, private spot, free of distractions.
2. Sit (or lie down) comfortably.
3. Set a timer for your desired time. (The recordings in our folder last for 10 minutes.)
4. Gaze ahead of you (or at your object of concentration, if you will be meditating on a visual object) with a soft, relaxed focus.
5. Begin with a series of deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.
6. After a few moments, allow your breath to return to its normal rhythm, inhaling and exhaling through the nose. If you are not meditating on a visual object, allow your eyelids to close.
7. Optional: Take a few moments to scan your attention down through your body, starting at the top of the head and ending at the tips of the toes. Notice how your body feels overall, and notice any particular areas of comfort or discomfort.
8. Direct your attention to your focus of concentration (e.g. your breath, a visible object, a word or phrase, a sound, or a texture). If you become distracted, don't get frustrated; simply note the distraction and gently redirect your attention.
  - a. If you have chosen to focus on your breath, you may find it helpful to count your breaths silently to yourself, counting 1 on your inhalation, 2 on your exhalation, and so on up to 10, then starting over at 1.
9. When your time ends, let go of your focus. For a moment, allow the mind to do whatever it wants to do. If it wants to think, let it think. If it wants to be still, let it be still.
10. Allow your awareness to return to the space around you. Notice the feeling of the ground or seat underneath you, and of any other points of bodily contact. Notice any sounds or smells around you.
11. When you are ready, gently open your eyes.
12. Before getting up, take a moment to notice how you feel, and whether it is different from how you felt when you first sat down.

Feel free to write a daily journal entry reflecting on your meditation. You might wish to address one or more of the following questions:

- (1) During your meditation, did you arrive at a deeper understanding of the nature of your object of concentration? What did you learn about it?
- (2) Do you feel that this exercise strengthened any of the *sattvic* aspects of your mind (as listed below) and/or weakened any of the *rajasic* and *tamasic* aspects? Which ones?

*Sattvic*: balance, harmony, goodness, purity, creativity, positivity, peacefulness

*Rajasic*: passion, activity, egoism, drivenness, movement

*Tamasic*: disorder, chaos, anxiety, impurity, delusion, negativity, dullness, apathy, lethargy, violence, viciousness, ignorance

- (3) At the end of your meditation, did you have a more pronounced sense that your consciousness is something different from your body, as compared to how you felt before your meditation?

### The Eleven Classical Āsanas:

*Posture should be steady and comfortable.*

*Such posture should be attained by the relaxation of effort and by absorption in the infinite.*

*- Yoga Sūtras II.46-47*

In his commentary on Patañjali's text, the commentator Vyāsa lists the following eleven āsanas:

#### 1. Padmāsana (lotus pose)



*From sitting cross-legged on the floor, one foot is placed on top of the opposite thigh with its sole facing upward and heel close to the abdomen. The other foot is then placed on the opposite thigh as symmetrically as possible, and the toes are held with the opposite two hands.*

#### 2. Virāsana (hero pose)



*One foot is placed on the opposite thigh, and the other is placed on the ground below the other thigh.*

3. Bhadrāsana (gracious pose, throne pose, bound angle)



*From a sitting position, the legs are hinged at the knees so the soles of the feet meet. The legs are grasped at the ankles and pulled toward the body. The knees move down to the ground, and with practice reach there.*

4. Svastikāsana (auspicious pose)



*One sits with the left foot placed between the right thigh and knee, inclined slightly downward, and the right foot placed in the same fashion between the left thigh and knee. The toes should not be seen.*

5. Daṇḍāsana (staff pose)



*The thighs and legs are stretched along the ground, with the legs squeezed together and the toes pointing inward toward the body.*

6. Sopāśraya (support pose)

*The specific form of this āsana is unknown; however, its name is derived from the fact that it involved the use of some sort of prop, perhaps a table or chair.*

7. Paryāñka (corpse pose)



*This āsana involves lying down with the arms stretched by one's knees.*

8. Krauñca-niṣadana (heron pose)

9. Hasti-niṣadana (elephant pose)

10. Uṣṭra-niṣadana (camel pose)

*These āsanās are modeled after the seated positions of the animals named.*

11. Sama-saṁsthāna (level pose)



*The heels and tips of the feet are pressed together with the knees somewhat bent.*

### **Prāṇāyāma (breath control):**

*When āsana is accomplished, prāṇāyāma follows. This consists of the regulation of the incoming and outgoing breaths.*

*Then, the covering over the light [of knowledge] is destroyed*

*And the mind becomes fit for concentration.*

- *Yoga Sūtras* II.49,52-53

The durations of inhalations, exhalations, and retentions are measured by *mātrā*, a unit taken to correspond to a single clap of the hands, the opening and closing of the eyes once, or the utterance of a single syllable (i.e., approximately one second). The commentator Vijñānabhikṣu prescribes drawing in the breath through the right nostril for the duration of sixteen mātrās and, once the lungs are full, holding the breath for sixty-four mātrās, after which one exhales for the duration of thirty-two mātrās. This is to be accompanied by meditation.

The durations recommended by Vijñānabhikṣu will be difficult to achieve without practice. In their place, you may substitute any durations that stand in a ratio of 1:4:2 (for inhalation, retention, and exhalation, respectively). For example, you might inhale deeply for five seconds, hold for twenty seconds, and exhale for ten seconds.