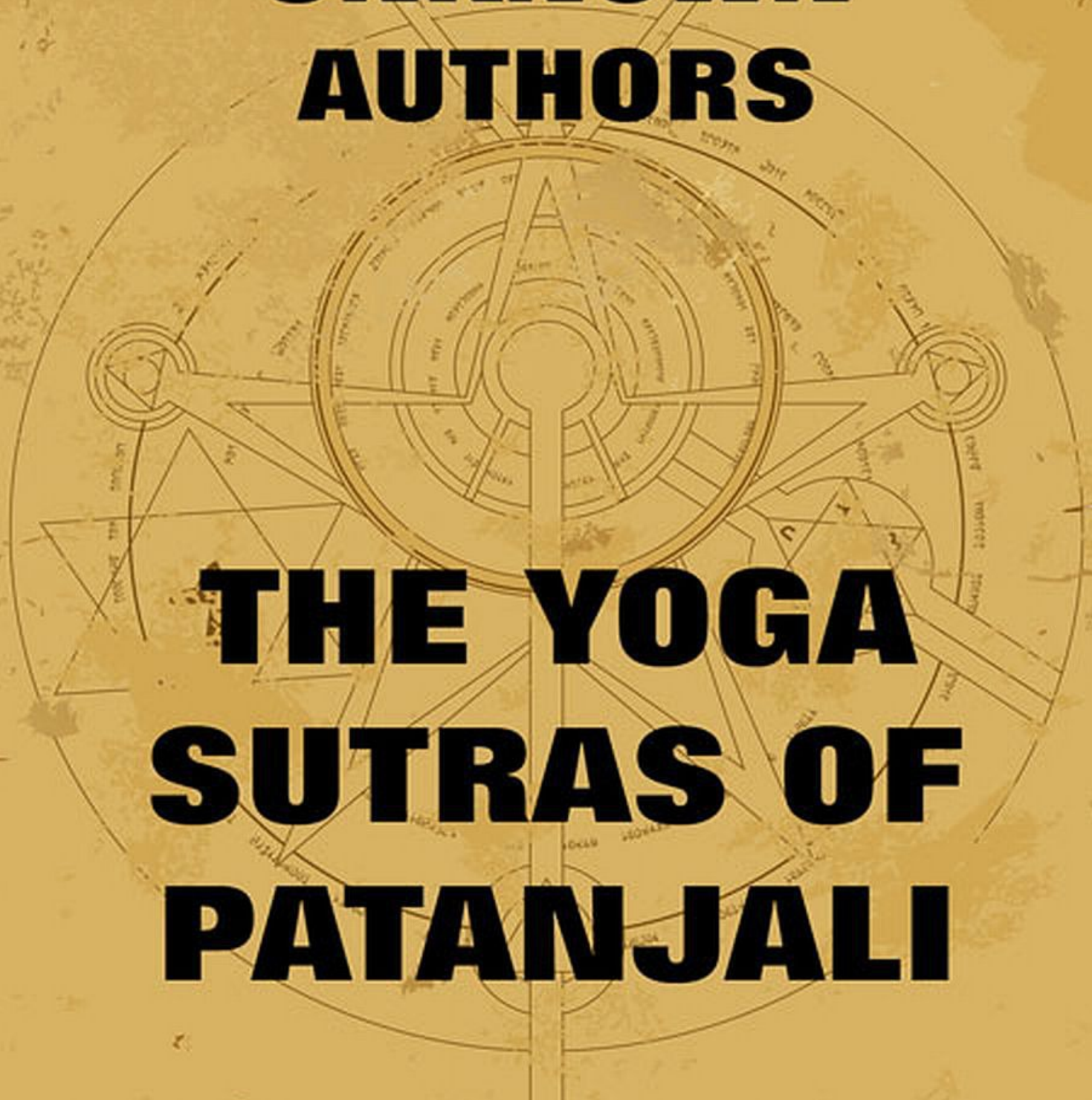


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**THE YOGA
SUTRAS OF
PATANJALI**

**THE SACRED BOOKS
COLLECTION**

#36

THE YOGA SUTRAS OF PATANJALI

The Book of the Spiritual Man

*Extended Annotated Edition including a
Foreword by Swami Vivekananda*

An Interpretation By Charles Johnston

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YOGA AND THE THE ULTIMATE AIM OF LIFE.

Swami Vivekananda

According to the Vedic Scriptures there are four objects for which men strive and struggle during their life on earth. These are discharge of duty, acquisition of wealth, gratification of desire, and moksha or the attainment of final liberation from the bondage of matter. This is a fairly good classification of the common aims of human life, but it is evident that all four cannot be held in the same esteem. The fourth one—final liberation—is very properly considered to be the highest and most important, for by it alone can the soul come to know and realize its own divine origin and divine destiny. The other aims of life have all to be held in subordination to this supreme one; but they are not to be ignored or suppressed altogether. There is nothing which is absolutely and in itself wrong either in the love of pleasure or in the love of wealth. To the man who has understanding and who does his duty neither pleasure nor wealth can prove a stumbling block. If he loves wealth, he does so because he knows that when properly used it is one of the most potent instruments for good placed in the hands of man. If he loves pleasure, he also does so because he knows that when it is derived from worthy objects and directed to worthy ends, it is capable of transforming the whole inner nature of man. Neither will endanger his spiritual well-being so long as he guards unclouded his higher sense of duty, for duty or Dharma is the pole-star which guides the soul of man safely and truly across the troubled waters of wealth and desire to the final haven of eternal peace and bliss.

Duty is variously defined in Indian sacred literature. A man's place in life determines what his duty is. The Vedanta

recognizes the value of renunciation or asceticism and gives to the order of ascetics an honored place, but it does not claim that the soul's final deliverance and bliss can be achieved by that path alone. It holds that salvation is as possible for the ideal householder as for the ideal Sannyasin (one who has renounced) ; and that while only a few are fit to lead the ascetic life of renunciation, the majority of mankind are intended to live as householders. It also recognizes more than one method of realizing the ultimate aim of life. The path of work {Karma Yoga), of Wisdom (Jnana-Yoga), of devotion (Bhakti-Yoga), and of self-surrender (Prapatti) are the chief among those which the Vedanta declares make men blessed and lead them to the final goal of freedom.

Karma-Yoga is the realization of God through works. It consists in the performance of righteous works without wishing to obtain the fruits thereof and with the conviction that such performance of work is itself an act of worship. Every person is born to some definite station and condition in life and is endowed with certain natural capacities and qualities. According as these vary the nature of the work that he has to do in life also varies. But whatever may be the work that a man has to do, he is expected to do it well and without the least attachment to the fruits thereof. It is not held that the work will not produce its fruits and that the worker ought not to live upon them. It is the selfish love of the fruits of work that is condemned; and who is there that does not know that morality rises only on the ruins of selfishness?

"Every action is right which, in presence of a lower principle, follows a higher; every action is wrong, which, in presence of a higher principle, follows a lower." Such is Dr. Martineau's beautiful, simple statement of the canon of right and wrong; and the practice of Karma-Yoga is

intended to train men always to follow the higher principle even in the compelling presence of a lower. The world of work is the world of temptations. It is also the gymnasium in which the human soul is drilled and disciplined that it may gain strength to work out its destiny. The allurements of sin and the pangs of sorrow are powerful factors in determining the shape and use of human life. Unless a man passes through the fiery furnace of active work in the world, the encrusted impurities of his mind and heart cannot be burned away. That sinful or ignorant actions obstruct the knowledge of the real nature of the Soul and God and thereby lead man on through successive births and deaths, is clearly stated in almost every page of the Upanishads. "Every wrong act destroys wisdom"; "When one's nature is purified by works, then wisdom begins"; "Whoever understands the nature of wisdom and work, overcomes death by work and obtains immortality through wisdom." These passages plainly declare that true wisdom comes only after the evil propensities of the heart are all destroyed by the steady practice of unselfish work.

Jnana-Yoga or the realization of God through wisdom is possible to those only who are pure in heart. "We desire, and desire most passionately when we are most ourselves, to give our service to that which is universal and to that which is abiding," says Mr. Balfour in his "Foundations of Belief." That which enables one to distinguish between what is universal and abiding and what is limited and transient is the wisdom which leads the soul to God. In the "Mahabharata" San jay a declares to the king: "He that hath no wisdom and whose mind is shrouded in the darkness of ignorance knoweth not the Lord. . . . Having obtained purity of heart through faith, I have come to know God with the help of the Scriptures." Here wisdom, it is evident, is understood to consist in knowledge of the Supreme resulting from faith and purity of heart. In the

same way in which work fortifies the struggling heart against temptations and disciplines human life into proper shape, wisdom enables the aspiring man to perceive the divine purpose of life on earth and points out to him the way to God. To know the nature of God, the nature of soul, and the relation between God and soul is really to know how and for what purpose to live. Not to know how to work well in life means not to be well-equipped for the holy pilgrimage of the soul to the abode of God; and not to possess wisdom means not to know where God's abode is and how one may approach it. As man is now situated his knowledge of the glory and greatness of God must be faint and imperfect; but even such faint and imperfect knowledge is quite enough to make him realize his own littleness and the folly and futility of selfishness. When through wisdom man learns that in God's glorious universe all is law and yet all is love and that the purpose of creation is the abiding salvation of the soul, he at once awakens to the grandeur and the beauty of God's love to man. This realization naturally fills his heart with love to God and thus wisdom leads to love.

Bhakti-Yoga or the realization of God through love and devotion is a theme on which Indian saints and sages have sung the sweetest songs and composed the most soul-enrapturing hymns of praise and supplication. Bhakti is regarded by many as the ultimate path. "Two sciences have to be known, the higher and the lower," it is said in the Mundaka-Upanishad; and if, as we have just seen, wisdom leads to the love of God, the higher science may well be the science of this supreme love. In the Bhagavad-Gita, we read: "Only by love and unswerving devotion to Me can I be known in My true nature and entered into. He who works for Me, who regards Me as the Supreme Goal, who is free from selfish attachment and who hateth no living being, that devotee comes unto Me." God must seem the Highest

Goal to the devotee; otherwise how can he love Him and Him alone with unfaltering devotion? When the heart of the devotee is fully immersed in the ocean of God's love, he naturally sees his Beloved everywhere and in all things; and all that he does, he does for Him and Him alone. Such a man can have no selfish attachment of any kind, nor can he hate any being. It is not the fear of punishment in hell or in any other place that makes the devotee do his duty. His morality depends on what has been called a "higher religious sanction," which appeals to the motives of love and reverence rather than of hope and fear. "In this higher frame of mind we keep God's commandments because we love Him, not because we hope for His rewards or fear His punishments." We love and revere God and therefore we strive to be like Him, to be perfect even as He is perfect. Prapatti-Yoga is the method of realizing God by complete surrender to Him. "Thy will be done" is the only prayer which this Yoga knows. "Take thou refuge in Me alone. I will free thee from all imperfections ; grieve not": these are the final words or the "supreme secret" of the teachings of the Gita, words which fully embody the spirit of this path of absolute surrender. According to one of the Indian Sacred writings, this Yoga of "refuge-taking" is six-fold in nature. It consists in "the practice of that which is good, and the avoidance of all that is harmful, in strong faith that God alone is the deliverer, in earnest prayer to Him for protection, in a complete entrusting of the soul to Him for His use, and in the sense of our own littleness." When one throws one's self entirely at the feet of God, one cannot do wrong. The man who has thus taken refuge in God need not be afraid of sin; God works through him and he is free and blessed.

Work, worship, love and surrender all lead to the supreme goal of liberation, in attaining which the soul knows God as a blissful Reality; and knowing Him, "forthwith enters into

Him." This does not mean however complete annihilation or submergence as so often supposed by western scholars. On the contrary, when in the state of Moksha or freedom the soul becomes united with God, it acquires a fuller and nobler personality, in relation to which all human limitations are abolished and evil is non-existent. Is it possible that knowledge of our oneness with God, the Source of all consciousness and life, could destroy our conscious existence? God does not cease to be God when He is known as the All and the All-in-all. Man does not lose anything of value if he rises above his finite condition to know that he is one with the Infinite. In this world of Divine realization there is no place for evil or imperfection. The realm of ego and moral struggle has been transcended and the Ultimate Goal of Eternal Peace and Blessedness is attained. "He whose passions are quieted and mind perfectly tranquil, who has become one with God, being freed from all impurities, to such a Yogi comes Bliss Supreme."

INTRODUCTION TO BOOK I

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali are in themselves exceedingly brief, less than ten pages of large type in the original. Yet they contain the essence of practical wisdom, set forth in admirable order and detail. The theme, if the present interpreter be right, is the great regeneration, the birth of the spiritual from the psychical man: the same theme which Paul so wisely and eloquently set forth in writing to his disciples in Corinth, the theme of all mystics in all lands.

We think of ourselves as living a purely physical life, in these material bodies of ours. In reality, we have gone far indeed from pure physical life; for ages, our life has been psychical, we have been centred and immersed in the psychic nature. Some of the schools of India say that the psychic nature is, as it were, a looking-glass, wherein are mirrored the things seen by the physical eyes, and heard by the physical ears. But this is a magic mirror; the images remain, and take a certain life of their own. Thus within the psychic realm of our life there grows up an imaged world wherein we dwell; a world of the images of things seen and heard, and therefore a world of memories; a world also of hopes and desires, of fears and regrets. Mental life grows up among these images, built on a measuring and comparing, on the massing of images together into general ideas; on the abstraction of new notions and images from these; till a new world is built up within, full of desires and hates, ambition, envy, longing, speculation, curiosity, self-will, self-interest.

The teaching of the East is, that all these are true powers overlaid by false desires; that though in manifestation psychical, they are in essence spiritual; that the psychical man is the veil and prophecy of the spiritual man.

The purpose of life, therefore, is the realizing of that prophecy; the unveiling of the immortal man; the birth of the spiritual from the psychical, whereby we enter our divine inheritance and come to inhabit Eternity. This is, indeed, salvation, the purpose of all true religion, in all times.

Patanjali has in mind the spiritual man, to be born from the psychical. His purpose is, to set in order the practical means for the unveiling and regeneration, and to indicate the fruit, the glory and the power, of that new birth.

Through the Sutras of the first book, Patanjali is concerned with the first great problem, the emergence of the spiritual man from the veils and meshes of the psychic nature, the moods and vestures of the mental and emotional man. Later will come the consideration of the nature and powers of the spiritual man, once he stands clear of the psychic veils and trammels, and a view of the realms in which these new spiritual powers are to be revealed.

At this point may come a word of explanation. I have been asked why I use the word Sutras, for these rules of Patanjali's system, when the word Aphorism has been connected with them in our minds for a generation. The reason is this: the name Aphorism suggests, to me at least, a pithy sentence of very general application; a piece of proverbial wisdom that may be quoted in a good many sets of circumstance, and which will almost bear on its face the evidence of its truth. But with a Sutra the case is different. It comes from the same root as the word 'sew,' and means, indeed, a thread, suggesting, therefore, a close knit, consecutive chain of argument. Not only has each Sutra a definite place in the system, but further, taken out of this place, it will be almost meaningless, and will by no means

be self-evident. So I have thought best to adhere to the original word. The Sutras of Patanjali are as closely knit together, as dependent on each other, as the propositions of Euclid, and can no more be taken out of their proper setting.

In the second part of the first book, the problem of the emergence of the spiritual man is further dealt with. We are led to the consideration of the barriers to his emergence, of the overcoming of the barriers, and of certain steps and stages in the ascent from the ordinary consciousness of practical life, to the finer, deeper, radiant consciousness of the spiritual man.