# UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRA -I

UNIT STRUCTURE

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## 1.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- Understand the concept of Yoga Sutra
- Know about Sage Patanjali
- Know the nature and goal of Yoga explained in Yoga Sutra
- Look at the different perspectives of the commentators and their commentaries

## 1.2 INTRODUCTION

This Unit presents the knowledge of Yoga and its systematization done by Patanjali. The beginning of yoga developed in the Indus Valley civilization; yoga found its root in Vedas. Later developed and got to merge in the Upanishad. In a number of Upanishads, we found the description of yoga philosophy. In Bhagavadgita and Yoga Vasistha also, various yoga concepts are explained.Though, the word 'yoga' is used in Vedas, Upanishads, Smiritis, Bhagavadgita, Yoga Vasistha and other texts, it's philosophy was not presented systematically anywhere. Thus, in the philosophical era,it gave rise to the need

of standardization. In modern time, we owe to Maharishi Patanjali for the systematic presentation of traditional yogic lore embodied in the Indian scriptures prior to Patanjali. Maharshi Patanjali compiled the wisdom of yoga in his masterpiece 'Yoga Sutra' or 'Patanjali's Yoga Sutra' through 196 aphorisms and Sutras. Yoga Sutra of Maharishi Patanjali is made for internalizing the wisdom of understanding our minds and provides the technology to stop the waves of our mind which helps to connect the Self to Supreme Self.

## 1.3 BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO PATANJALI AND PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRA

**About Maharshi Patanjali:**

The name "Patanjali" is a compound derived from the Sanskrit words "patta," meaning "falling" or flying", and either "anj," which signifies "honor," "rejoice," or "lovely," or "Anjali," which denotes "reverence" or "the act of uniting palms in prayers".

There are numerous fascinating legends and mythical tales surrounding the birth of the great sage Patanjali who authored the Yoga Sutra. Many scholars also hold differing opinions about the time and place of his birth, reflecting his divine origin and spiritual significance.

One legend state that Patanjali was born from the hands of a pious age who was offering *arghya* (water) to Surya Devata (the Sun God). As the sage poured water from his palms (Anjali), Patanjali emerged. Hence, he was named "Patanjali," signifying one who descended (pat) into the hands (Anjali).

Another tale describes Patanjali as the son of Sadhvi Gonika, a devout ascetic who longed for a divine child. As she offered *arghya* to Sun, God Sheshnaga, the divine serpent, chose her as a virtuous mother for incarnation on the earth. While Gonika was pouring water, a divine snake appeared from her hands and transformed into a baby. Since he emerged from her palms (Anjali), he was named Patanjali.

Another narrative describes Patanjali as one of the three sons of devi Anusuiya, alongside God Dattatreya and sage Durvasa. Devi Anusuiya was blessed with

these sons as a reward for succeeding in the challenges set by Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesha

In another story, Patanjali is said to have appeared before Maharshi Panini in the form of a snake. Out of fear, Panini mispronounced his query, saying "Korbhawan" instead of "Ko bhawan" (who are you?). The snake corrected him, demonstrating his mastery over Sanskrit grammar. Patanjali then began giving teaching to scholars but insisted that he remain unseen. He delivered his discourse from behind a curtain, and his students listened in awe of his profound knowledge.

These legends not only highlight Patanjali's divine origin but also emphasize his connection to grammar, spirituality, and yogic traditions.

## Time Periods of Patanjali

The time period of Patanjali has been debated and referenced in various texts. The philosophical texts examine the authorship and timelines of Maharishi Patanjali, distinguishing between the Patanjali who authored the Yoga Sutras and the grammarian Patanjali of the Mahabhashya. The grammarian Patanjali was contemporaneous with Pushyamitra Shunga, who ruled after overthrowing the last Mauryan king, Brihadratha, around 200 years before the Vikrama Samvat era.

This places the grammarian Patanjali approximately 2200 years ago. In contrast, scholars suggest that the author of the Yoga Sutra lived even earlier, further distinguishing their timelines and identities. It has also been accepted that the famous commentary called Vyasa-bhasya on the Yoga Sutras is authored by the same Veda-vyasa who composed the Mahabharata and Brahmasutras (Vedanta-darshan). This Vyasa-bhasya belongs to a time approximately 5000 years ago, predating the grammarian Patanjali by thousands of years.

Some later texts have speculated that Veda-vyasa was a Chiranjivi (immortal) figure and that the Patanjali who authored the Yoga Sutras came around 1000 years after him. However, no definitive proof supports such assumptions. Human longevity, even with great discipline and adherence to yogic principles,

as practiced by legends like Krishna or Bhishma, rarely exceeds 200 years. This makes the identification of Veda-Vyasa as the commentator or as the same as the author of the Yoga Sutras highly questionable. In light of such ambiguities, some scholars have hypothesized that the commentator on the Yoga Sutras is not Veda-Vyasa but someone else, possibly a different figure with the same name. However, this remains uncertain. Importantly, the author of the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali, is different from the grammarian Patanjali of the Mahabhashya. It elaborates on the longstanding debate about the authorship of the Yoga Sutras and their commentary. The view is based on the assumption that the same individual authored works on grammar, yoga, and philosophy, despite differences in the subjects. It is clarifying the commentator of the Yoga Sutras should not be equated with Vyasa, the author of the Brahma Sutras or the Mahabharata. Instead, it argues that the Yoga Sutras commentator and Patanjali, the grammarian, are likely the same person. This confusion likely arises due to the absence of significant discussion of Patanjali's name in historical texts, and its references are often overlooked. Here, we are considering the time of Maharshi Patanjali as the time of Classical Period (500-600 BC).

## YOGA SUTRA

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, compiled over 2700 years ago, is a foundational text on yoga's practice and philosophy. It presents the eight limbs of yoga, which guide individuals in living a yogic life and detail the outcome of consistent practice. The text begins by defining the ultimate goal of yoga and then explains the methods to achieve it.

Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are a Compilation of Sanskrit aphorism (sutras) focused on the theory and practice of yoga. The collection contains 196 sutras. Complied by the sage Patanjali in the early centuries CE, these sutras organize and preserve knowledge about yoga from older traditions; they are best known fordescribing ashtanga, the eight-fold path of yoga practice, culminating in Samadhi, or the concentration of the mind on a meditation object.These eight elements are: Yama (ethical restraints), Niyama (personal restraints)

Pranayama (breath control), Pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi (absorption).

The central aim of the Yoga Sutras is Kaivalya, the liberation of Purusha (witness-consciousness), from Prakriti (the cognitive apparatus), freeing Purusha from the distortions and distractions of Prakriti.

The Sutras are grounded in the Samkhya philosophy, which distinguishes Purusha from Prakriti, and are often considered complementary to it. The Yoga Sutras also share similarities with Buddhist teaching and adopt some of its terminology. However, unlike the Bhakti traditions and Vedic rituals prevalent at the time, the philosophies of Samkhya, Yoga, Vedanta, as well as Jainism and Buddhism, are seen as distinct expressions of broader ascetic tradition in ancient India.

Maharshi Patanjali has divided the 196 sutras into four chapters. The name of these four chapters are-

1) Samadhi pada
2) Sadhana pada
3) Vibhuti pada
4) Kaivalya pada

## THE CONTENT OF THE CHAPTERS OF YOGA SUTRA:

### Samadhi Pada:

The first chapter of the "Yogasutra" known as Samadhi Pada, consists of fifty-one aphorisms. In this chapter, Maharishi Patanjali defines yoga as the state of complete cessation of all kinds of "chittavrittis" (mental fluctuations). He explains the various types of "chittavrittis' and the means to achieve "chittanirodha" (the cessation of these fluctuations). The chapter also elaborates on the true nature of "Ishwara" (the Supreme Being) and describes "Samprajnata Samadhi" (a state of concentrated, conscious meditation). Maharishi Patanjali goes on to discuss the nine types of obstacles, along with their five associated afflictions, that practitioners may encounter on the path of yoga. He provides guidance on how to overcome these obstacles. Additionally, this chapter introduces the teaching of "Chittaprasadana" (cultivating a serene mind), helping the

practitioner maintain a cheerful and balanced mental state in any situation. Finally, it outlines six different techniques to train the mind in concentration.

**Sadhana Pada:**

The second chapter of the Yoga Sutras, known as Sadhana Pada, consists of fifty-five aphorisms. It provides a detailed explanation of the various Sadhanas (practices or tools) that lead to the ultimate cessation of suffering (Atyantika Dukha Nirvritti). Maharishi Patanjali classifies these practices into three levels of Abhyasa (disciplines), designed for different types of Sadhakas (practitioners) to achieve the pinnacle of human excellence:

1. Ashtanga Yoga (eightfold Path) – For Beginners.
2. Kriya Yoga (Path of Action) – For intermediate Sadhakas
3. Ishwarapranidhana (Surrender to Divine) – Prescribed for advanced practitioners of the highest Calibre.

Patanjali also elaborates on the transformative results of these practices:

- Through the disciplined practice of Ashtanga Yoga, the body and mind are purified, and the Sadhaka is illuminated with wisdom (Jnana).
- By engaging in Kriya Yoga, the Kleshas (afflictions or mental impurities) are weakened, preparing the practitioner for deeper meditative absorption (Samadhi).

With Ishwarapranidhana, the practitioner attains Samadhi, transcending all sensory pleasure and pains. This leads to the state of Atyantiksa Dukha Nirvritti or liberation while living (Jeevanmukti).

Ultimately, after attaining Jeevanmukti, the Jeevatma (individual soul) reaches the state of Videhmukti – complete liberation – or simply Moksha, Kaivalya (absolute freedom), where the soul merges with the eternal, free from the cycle of birth and death.

**Vibhuti Pada:**

The Vibhuti Pada consists of fifty-five aphorisms and focuses on the last three components of Ashtanga Yoga: Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi (absorption). These three components are collectively referred to

as the Antaranga Sadhana (internal discipline) of Ashtanga Yoga. The integrated application of these three practices is termed Samyama (perfect control), and it is through the mastery of Samyama that the practitioner (sadhaka) attains various extraordinary powers or accomplishments, known as Vibhutis. This chapter describes more than forty-five such Vibhutis.

**Kaivalya Pada:**

The Kaivalya Pada, the final chapter of the Yoga Sutra, comprises thirty-four aphorisms. At the very outset, it is stated that apart from Samadhi, there are four other means through which Vibhutis or Siddhis (spiritual powers) can be attained:

*Janmaushadhi-mantra-tapah-samadhijah siddhayah* (P.Y.S 4/1)

This means Siddhi can be achieved through birth (Janma), medicinal herbs (Aushadhi), scared chants (Mantra), intense austerities (Tapa), or profound meditative absorption (Samadhi).

However, Maharishi Patanjali emphasises that only Samadhi leads to Kaivalya (absolute liberation). The other methods- through effective in acquiring Siddhis – stimulates the latent samskaras (impressions from previous births) that bind the practitioner to the cycle of action and reaction, perpetuating the cycle of birth and death. Thus, only through Samadhi can one attain the ultimate state of liberation, Kaivalya.

Patanjali also categories actions (Karma) into four types:

1. Shukla (white or virtuous actions),
2. Krishna (black or non-virtuous actions),
3. Shukla-Krishna (mixed actions), and
4. Ashukla-Akrisna (actions that are neither white nor black).

In the final aphorism of this chapter Maharishi Patanjali elaborates on the nature of Dharmamegha Samadhi, the highest state of meditation that precedes Kaivalya.

## 1.4 SAGE PATANJALI AND COMMENTATORS OF THE SUTRAS WITH THEIR COMMENTARIES

Sage Patanjali is traditionally credited as the compiler of the Yoga Sutra, a foundational text of classical yoga. Patanjali synthesized and systematized pre-existing knowledge about yoga into a concise format. The Yoga Sutra is a part of the dualistic Samkhya philosophy, emphasizing Purusha (Pure consciousness) and Prakriti (matter). Yoga serves as the practical means to separate Purusha from Prakriti and attain liberation. Over centuries, many scholars have written detailed commentaries on the Yoga Sutras to clarify and expand on Patanjali's aphorisms. The most ancient and widely accepted commentary available on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is the Vyasa Bhashya. It is extensive and named after its commentator, as the author did not specify a title. Another notable commentary is Sankhya Pravachana Bhashya by Vijnanabhikshu. In ancient times, authors often did not name their works, but this changed over time, with later scholars adopting distinct titles. Vijnanabhikshu's era marked this transition, where naming works became more common to emphasize their contributions. Some of the most notable commentaries on Yoga Sutra are:

- Yoga Bhashya by Vyasa (4$^{th}$ CE)
- Tattva Vaisharadi by Vachaspati Mishra (9$^{th}$ CE)
- Bhojavritti by Bhoja Raja (11$^{th}$ CE)
- Yoga Vartika by Vijnana Bhikshu (14$^{th}$ CE)
- Raja yoga by Swami Vivekananda (19$^{th}$ CE)
- Rajamartanda Vritti - By Bhojadeva
- Yogasutradipika Vritti - By Bhavaganesha

**YOGA BHASHYA:** The Yoga-Bhashya by Maharishi Vyasa is the earliest and most authoritative commentary on the Yoga Sutras. In this work, Vyasa not only explains the teachings of the Yoga Sutras but also provides their philosophical and scriptural background. While Patanjali does not elaborate on concepts like the 47 types of Bhoomis or clarify terms such as Ahimsa, Satya, and Asteya – likely because their meanings were already well-established in the Vedas and

related literature – Vyasa addresses these gaps. His commentary meticulously clarifies each aspect of Patanjali's sutras and ensuring a deeper understanding of the text.

**TATTVA VISHARADI:** The Tattva Visharadi by Vachaspati Mishra is a significant commentary on Vyasa's Yoga-Bhashya, which itself is the foundational exposition of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Written in the 9th century CE, this commentary serves to clarify and expand upon Vyasa's interpretations, making the philosophical and practical teachings of the Yoga Sutras more accessible. Mishra offers a thorough explanation of key concepts such as Chitta Vritti (the mental fluctuation), Ashtanga Yoga (the eightfold path, and Kaivalya (the nature of liberation). He ensures that abstract philosophical ideas are well-articulated and understandable. In addition to philosophical depth, Tattva Visharadi provides practical insights into yogic practices like meditation, ethical discipline, and concentration, making it a valuable guide for practitioners. In essence, Tattva Visharadi is a cornerstone of classical yoga literature, preserving and enhancing the teaching of Patanjali and Vyasa for scholars and practitioners alike.

**BHOJAVRITTI**: The Bhojavritti is the commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutra written by the renowned scholar king Bhojaraja or Bhoja of the Parama dynasty. This commentary is also known as Raja-Martanda and is believed to have been composed in the mid-11th century CE, Bhoja was a celebrated ruler and polymath, excelling in various fields such as philosophy, poetry, medicine, yoga and military science. Bhoja integrates elements of Hatha Yoga into his commentary, using terms like *Pooraka* (inhalation), reflecting the growing influence of Hatha Yoga during that period.

Notably, Bhoja was a contemporary of the Persian scholar Al-Biruni (1030 CE) and demonstrates the intellectual and cultural vibrancy of the 11th century India. Bhoja's dual role as a king and scholar adds a unique perspective to his interpretations.

Bhojavritti has been praised for its logical structure and systematic explanation of the Yoga Sutras, making it an important resource for understanding the text in

the medieval period. It has influenced subsequent interpretations of yoga philosophy.

**YOGA VARTIKA:** The Yoga Vartika is a significant commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras written by Vijnana Bhikshu, a renowned philosopher and a scholar of the 16th century CE. Vijnana Bhikshu is celebrated for his profound contributions to Indian philosophy, particularly for integrating and harmonizing the Samkhya and Yoga systems. This text provides a detailed and systematic explanation of the Yoga Sutras, building upon Vyasa's foundational commentary. Bhikshu's commentary emphasizes the non-dualistic nature of ultimate reality, aligning it with Vedantic though. This text also addresses practical aspects of yoga, offering insights into meditation, ethical practices, and the path to liberation (Kaivalya).

**RAJAMARTANDA VRITTI**: composed by Bhojadeva—There is no ambiguity regarding the person Bhojadeva. Bhojadeva, a Parmar dynasty king, is considered the author of this commentary. His capital is said to have been 'Dhara,' located in Ujjain or the Malwa region." Dhara Nagari is renowned in folklore, with King Bhoja often regarded as a contemporary of Kalidasa. Historians place his reign in the 11th century. Known for his brilliance and influence from a young age, Bhoja faced challenges early in life. After the death of his father, King Sindhul, his uncle Munja attempted to usurp the throne and eliminate Bhoja's claim to power.

The text discusses Bhoja's contributions and writings in various fields and provides context about his work and its significance.

*शब्दानुशासनसमंविश्वतापातञ्जलेकृतंता।*
*वृत्तिःराजमार्तण्डाख्यमपिव्याप्ततावैद्यके।*
*वाक्चेतोलेपोषधवपुःमलःफणिभर्तुश्चलेखनधृतं।*
*सत्यंश्रीराजमार्तण्डपतेर्वचांजयनित्यज्वलता॥*

In this passage, Bhoja highlights three fields in which his writings have been created. These are Shabdanushasana (Grammar), the commentary Rajamartanda on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, and Rajamriganka on Ayurveda. The grammar text Shabdanushasana is also called the Karanabharana of Bhoja's

writings. Similarly, Patanjali (considered as Phanibharta, "Bearer of the Serpent") authored texts on grammar, Ayurveda, and Yoga, focusing on speech, mind, and body, addressing their impurities and flaws. Similarly, King Bhoja's scholarship on these three topics continues to influence scholars today.

By aligning the Rajamartanda Vritti with Patanjali's texts, Bhoja demonstrates his own alignment and equality with the author and expresses the significance of his literary contributions. From this description, it becomes clear that a person named Patanjali wrote texts on these three subjects. However, it is not explicitly stated that this Patanjali wrote the Yoga Sutras. In the previous verses, enough light is shed on this topic.

The Rajamartanda Vritti, which is the commentary on Bhojaraj's Yoga Sutras, is deemed an inadequate commentary. The language is simple, and the explanation of subjects, though extensive and rooted in its essence, is not deeply detailed. Examples like *नातूलंलिख्यतेकिञ्चनानारोप्यक्षमंयतः* are cited to illustrate its limitations. In the lineage of early studies on the Yoga Shastra, this commentary served as an essential foundation. Works like Yoga Sutradipika by Bhavangesh also emerged within this tradition.

**YOGA SUTRA DIPIKA**: Bhavaganesh was a devoted disciple of Vijnanabhikshu and followed his teacher's style in his commentaries. He named his work on the Yoga Sutras Yogasutradipika, which aligns with the Yogavritti tradition. His commentary effectively clarifies obscure meanings while summarizing established ideas concisely, reflecting his teacher's logical and critical approach.

Vijnanabhikshu, believed to have lived around the mid-14th century Vikram Samvat, was an ascetic associated with the Samkhya-Yoga tradition. His works extended beyond Yoga and Samkhya, including a commentary on the Brahmasutras. His Samkhya Pravachana Bhashya explores both metaphysical and philosophical realities, presenting Samkhya as an authentic truth rather than just a theoretical framework. The exact lineage of Vijnanabhikshu is uncertain, but his writings suggest an influence from the Dashanami Sannyasi sect. Bhavaganesh, as his disciple, seems to have incorporated these

influences into his own works, though the extent of this incorporation remains debatable.

**RAJA YOGA:** Raja Yoga by Swami Vivekananda is a seminal text that presents the ancient practice of yoga in a structured and accessible manner, emphasizing its practical application for spiritual growth. This work serves as a comprehensive commentary on Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, the foundational text of classical yoga philosophy.

In Raja Yoga, Swami Vivekananda elucidates the philosophy, psychology, and methodology of yoga, focusing on the path of dhyana (meditation) and ashtanga (the eightfold path) as described by Patanjali. He emphasizes yoga as a means of achieving self-realization and controlling the mind to reach higher states of consciousness. The text highlights key principles like concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana), and ultimate absorption (samadhi), providing practical instructions for individuals seeking to discipline the mind and transcend ego-driven limitations. It also played a crucial role in introducing Indian spiritual practitioners and scholars of yoga and Vedanta worldwide.

## CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q1** Who has authored the text 'Yoga Sutra'?
**Q2** How many chapters are there in Yoga Sutra
**Q3** Write the name of four chapters of Yoga Sutra.
**Q4** Write the name of commentary written by Vyasa on Yoga Sutra.
**Q5** What is the name of commentary on Yoga Sutra written by Vijnanabhikshu?

## 1.5 LET US SUM UP

The Yoga Sutras serve as a comprehensive roadmap for the Yoga Sadhaka comprising 196 Sutras, this scared text provides detailed guidance on everything a Sadhaka needs to know. The aphorisms in the Yoga Sutras are not only profound but also practical, providing methods to focus the mind, transcend virtuous and vicious thoughts, and achieve ultimate liberation and the state of Kaivalya or Moksha.

The Yoga Sutras define the destination, familiarize the Sadhaka with the path, equip them with the necessary tools, describes the experiences encountered along the way, and elaborate on the state attained after reaching the goal. It is often regarded as the autobiography of a yogi – Maharishi Patanjali, who skilfully and authentically encapsulated his profound experiences of yoga. While the sutras themselves are concise, understanding them in their true essence requires a study of the other texts in the yoga tradition. Maharishi Vyasa's commentary, Vyasa Bhashya, plays a pivotal role in this regard. It delves deeply into the subject, explaining each term used by Patanjali and linking it to its roots in the Vedas and Vedic literature. Subsequent commentaries on the Yoga Sutras have further enriched the understanding of this profound text, making it an enduring guide for all seekers of truth.

## 1.6 FURTHER READINGS

1. Karambelkar, P.V. (2017). *Patanjala Yoga Sutra*. Kaivalyadhama Lonavla, Pune
2. Saraswati, S. S. (1983). *Four Chapters on Freedom: Commentary on Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Yoga Publications Trust
3. Iyengar, B. K. S. (2014). *Light on Yoga*. HarperCollins Publishers India

## 1.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS.

**Answer to Q1** - Maharshi Patanjali
**Answer to Q2** – Four
**Answer to Q3** – Samadhi pada,Sadhana pada, Vibhuti pada, Kaivalya pada
**Answer to Q4** – Vyasa Bhashya
**Answer to Q5** – Yoga Vartika

## 1.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

**Very short questions:**

**Q1:** Who is the author of the Yoga Sutra?

**Q2:** How Many Sutras are there in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra?

**Q3:** - What is the main aim of Yoga according to Patanjali?

**Q4:** Name any two chapters of the Yoga Sutra?

**Q5:** What is meant by 'Chitta Vritti"?

**Short questions:**

**Q.1** Write a brief note on Maharishi Patanjali.

**Q.2** What are the eight Limbs (Ashtanga Yoga) mentioned in the Yoga Sutra?

**Q.3** Describe the concept of Kaivalya in Yoga Philosophy?

**Q.4** Write short note on Samadhi Pada.

**Long Questions:**

**Q.1** Discuss in detail the life and time period of Maharishi Patanjali.

**Q.2** Explain the structure and content of the four Chapters of the Yoga Sutra,

**Q.3** Describe the philosophy, and objectives of Patanjali's Yoga Sutra in detail.

**Q.4** Discuss the important Commentaries on Yoga Sutra and their Contributors.

**Q.5** Explain Sadhana Pada and its significance in the practice of yoga.

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