

Creative contemplation

Application of Patanjali's Aphorisms to life



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First edition in English, Medellín, Colombia, August 2019

Traduction by Luisa Torres, from

La contemplación Creativa, Aplicación de los Aforismos de Patanjali a la Vida

by Enrique Posada Restrepo

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Acknowledgments

To my wife, Luz Alba, my dear, intelligent and patient companion; and to my five children, Rodrigo, Alberto, María Cecilia, David, and Ricardo, for whom, above all, I have written this book.

To my mother, María de los Ángeles Restrepo, a true yoga teacher in my life.

To those who invited me to the path of meditation and the Sidhis, especially to Lucero Orozco and Jorge Baquero.

To my colleagues on this journey, especially Jairo Jaramillo and Juan David Mejía.

To my teachers and students of Avatar courses.

To Luisa Torres, for her wonderful and loving translation to English.

To you, reader, friend.

Introduction

Who is Patanjali, what are his aphorisms, and what is an every-day mechanical engineer doing writing about an author we know so little about? This is what I want to talk about in this introduction.

Who is Patanjali and what are the Yoga Sutras?

Patanjali's Yoga Sutra or Aphorisms of Yoga are considered the fundamental texts of Yoga. They are traditionally attributed to the sage Patanjali. We know little about him and what is known is legendary and full of contradictions.

The texts known by this name are thought to have been written between the 2nd century BC and the 6th century AD. But the identity of their author or the date of their composition is not clearly known. It is thought that the first author of the Yoga Sutra could be Patanjali, the Hindu philologist of the second century BC.

However, the orientalist Feuerstein argues that it is unlikely that the two Patanjali are the same person and, consequently, the author of the Yoga Sutra would better be someone who lived during the second century of our era.

These texts have four chapters, and there are differences between the first three and the fourth. In the fourth chapter, a different terminology is used with clear differences of style and repeated affirmations from previous chapters. At the end of the third chapter, a Sanskrit word appears which indicates the conclusion of a work. This same word appears at the end of the fourth chapter.

This, which is mentioned in the literature I consulted, has been evident to me and for this reason, this book refers only to the first three chapters.

The work seems to be a text that has been worked on for several centuries, even orally, until its first comment was published; therefore, Patanjali could have been a school or the leader of a school of Yoga ideas, rather than a single author. In its origins, everything could have started with techniques of magical or traditional origin associated with trance, that later were contextualized coherently with the traditions and philosophies of Vedic India.

The Yoga Sutra has been subject to numerous commentaries that try to explain the obscure meaning of many of the aphorisms and give coherence to the whole. The first known commentaries are from the V Century, made by Vyasa; those of Vâchaspati Mishra came in the IX Century. Later many more appear.

As with any commentaries, they are written by authors from different schools and, naturally, some ideas are added that another commentator may find foreign to the original work.

In any case, the authority and respect given to Patanjali's aphorisms within the teachings of Yoga are generalized.

The practice of yoga is a path to search for wisdom that tries to awaken a person's true nature, destroying different afflictions and ignorance. The aim is for the person to recover his or her origin as an essential being, capable of functioning in higher states of consciousness, in which the duality between the objects and the subject disappears. This union is yoga.

The paths of yoga are based particularly on mental techniques such as concentration, meditation, and contemplation. In Patanjali's texts, these tools are worked in detail.

Why this book?

It is a personal investigation of these texts and the meaning they can have for a person dedicated to a normal life.

My work is based on the text PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRAS, with the commentary of Vyasa and the gloss of Vachaspati Misra, translated by Rama Prasada. It is an English text published by Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., in its fourth edition 1988, New Delhi, India.

I have written this book because I have worked the techniques of the Yoga of the mind since I was just over 20 years old. I always felt curious about the ancient texts related to meditation and decided to embark on the adventure of reading Patanjali from my own vision, taking advantage of the fact that I was able to get a good text in English like the one from Rama Prasada. I discovered that it was worth reading the texts calmly, practicing them, digging deeper, and taking notes. This is how I began to find a new coherence, an interesting vision, which was refined as I went along and wrote. Then I decided that I was going to share my learning with other people and that is where this book comes from.

Book structure

This book is composed of five parts. I talk about each aphorism as follows:

- The aphorism is presented in the translation to English taken from the Rama Prasada text

- I write a second version with a freer sense, in every-day language
- My versions are entirely personal, although they are surely influenced by my knowledge of transcendental meditation, Sidhi, Avatar, and Yogananda's techniques.
- A comment is then presented, in which I try to explain my personal vision of the aphorism and relate it to my own experience. The idea is to help the reader gain a deeper understanding compared to what can be achieved by reading the translations. This can guide the reader to the practical meaning of the aphorism.
- I include a poetic or literary text to reflect on the aphorism, with the aim of provoking evocations in the reader. Writing or researching these texts was very interesting. As a writer who lives and feels the text, it definitely added value to my experience and gave greater coherence and transcendence to the aphorisms. In some cases, I used poems and writings from some authors who came to my mind naturally when working the aphorism.
- I end with a practical exercise. Formulating the 110 exercises that are proposed has been another very significant experience and a great challenge because I wanted to transmit exercises that were real, that worked, that were related to my personal experience, and that at the same time referred to the aphorism, to give the reader its practical sense.

I have the confidence and hope that this work will be useful to its potential readers. Writing it has been very rewarding. This book is to be read calmly; each aphorism is to be tasted. You can start, take a break, and start again later.

The essence of the practical exercises has to do with meditation. Given its importance, many aphorisms describe it and teach it.

CHAPTER ONE

The yoga of recurrent meditation

This chapter refers to the practice of recurrent meditation to reach the state of pure consciousness, which is known as Samadhi.

Through this practice, inner knowledge is developed and a good balance between the mind and the body is reached. The essential practice is that of the recurrent observation of objects, especially of one's thoughts and beliefs. This practice allows us to play with points of view to achieve greater flexibility and a better approach towards objective and personal reality.

1- Now a revised text of yoga

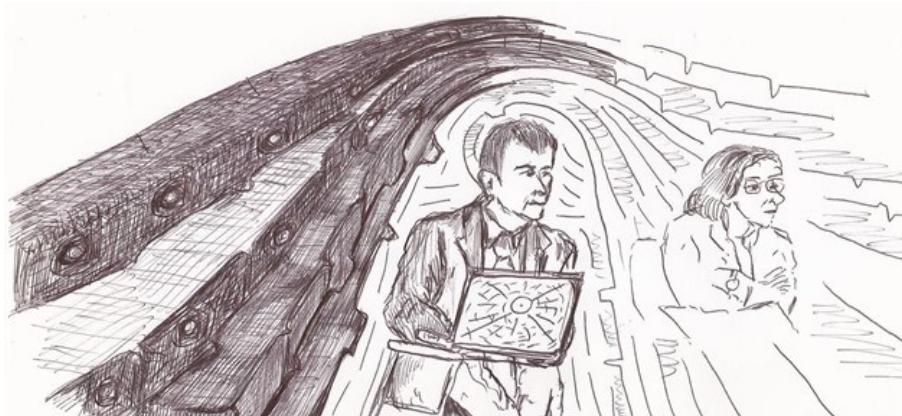
It is time to review the textual meaning of our entire life

Ancestral wisdom has been communicated to us since always, in an endless chain of which our parents, grandparents, teachers, good friends, books, traditions, and religion are all part. But there comes a time when we own our life and review the meaning it has for us. This meaning is, like our fingerprints, -unique to us- and finding it deserves our full attention. The text is hidden, waiting for us to be willing to read it; and it becomes evident when we describe it.

Now means the beginning of something. In this case, that something is yoga, the transcendent contemplation that touches all planes of life. Yoga is presented as a revised text.

For the practical man, the reading of the personal texts of life starts with a moment of decision (the now), and it becomes a set of

recurrent and transcendent revising actions that cover the different planes (the revised text of Yoga).



The text of life

Today I can find the purpose
of the enormous wisdom that underlies
the reason for the cells and the ancestral tissue
the end dreamed by incredible forces
by the mothers of everything that is born.

Today I can read the text of life
of eternal and hidden meanings
that wait for the seer to make them evident
and that wait for this supreme moment,
origin of the journey that arrives at its destination.

Exercise 1

Review of the planes of life

Some of the planes of the body are pain, fear, memories, aggression, pleasure, and the senses.

Some of the planes of the mind are digression, forgetfulness, distraction, concentration, meditation, and emotion.

Some of the transcendent planes are imagination, intuition, creativity, and loving, affectionate, and appreciative attention.

Calmly observe the way you function as a human being and examine the enormous range of possibilities. The contemplation of how we handle these aspects in our personal life helps us act and find alternatives.

It is best to contemplate recurrently. Focus your attention on one object at a time and then on another object. Contemplative revision is about returning to the central object again and again. This is the form of contemplation that allows you to read the texts hidden in reality.

A form of learning and teaching is developed when a written, verbal, graphic, descriptive, artistic or creative work is done on the discovered texts we discover. This benefits the world.

2- Yoga is the restraint of mental modifications.

Knowing oneself as the author of ideas and beliefs and acquiring the capacity to handle them, allows to calm and unify life.

The mental forms are related to three qualities of the mind: the awakened mind, in an alert, illuminated state; the active mind, and the inertial mind. Patanjali points out that yoga is the control of these states.

These mental forms are reflected in thoughts and ideas, beliefs that have a determining influence on the reality that people live. Ideas manifest themselves as imposing realities that condition

living. If one assumes creative control of ideas and personal beliefs, the underlying unity in the apparent mental disorder is discovered, and life is simplified and pacified.

Due to the high mobility of mental states, control works better if it is done in harmony with that variable and playful nature. Mobility is the key to control; this is so surprising that it escapes us.

The forms of the mind

That friend of mine, the mind
full of power, with her three apparent states
and her essence that, insistent,
is reflected when I think,
it is revealed when I sleep,
it is awakened when I transcend.

That out-of-control friend,
imposing in a thousand ways,
lets herself be carried away and humbly
lets herself be handled
when I understand the processes
and when I recurrently knock on the door
that sustains the unit
of life and death.

Exercise 2

Location and control of the three mental states

The unifying element of the three mental states appears in the transition between states, as a point of union and of origin. If one observes these states of transition, a growing awareness of mental functioning is achieved, a consciousness that is reflected in a personal activity that is more coherent, orderly, and happy.