



ParaYoga Master Training

Secrets of the Sutras: Light on Self Mastery



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1

Yoga Sutra comprises the core of the yoga tradition's approach to complete mastery of the mind. Its aim is to lead you to lasting freedom and fulfillment through the gateway of self- knowledge.

Two fundamental concepts shape your perception—Momentum and Content. The *Tantra Shakti* and *Vinyasa Krama* trainings focused on Momentum. By incorporating, among other things, *dosha*, *vayu*, *bandha*, *pranayama* and *mudra*, you experienced the power of momentum to shape your experience. Through theory and practice, you learned that skillfully affecting momentum can positively impact your mind, capacity and even physical wellbeing. This approach could be summed up as “change your energy, change your life.”

The *Yoga Sutra* marks a shift. While there are sections of the scripture that focus on Momentum (i.e. the sutras on *pranayama*), the heart of the text—and its emphasis for creating positive change—is based on shaping Content, aiming to directly affect the constituents of mind and the field of all experience, conscious as well as unconscious. From the point of view of the sutras, you have two kinds of Content: innate and acquired.

In simple terms, your innate content refers to the pristine essential nature with which you came into this life; acquired content is the mind stuff you will collect through the course of your life. Your innate content is an island of self-luminosity, innately Divine. It is the light of consciousness, identical to that essence from which all things are born and by which all things are sustained.



However, the teachings of *samhkyā* and the *Yoga Sutra* make it clear that because you identify with your acquired content (i.e. memory, belief, past impressions, expectations and attachments), you fail to see your essential nature (your innate content). Furthermore, your acquired content blinds your ability to recognize your most fundamental misperceptions, including the very fact that you are identified with your acquired content, not your innate content.

However, the most fundamental factor obstructing the mental clarity and tranquility necessary to reach the highest freedom and fulfillment is that your mind is constantly spinning (*vritti*).

Whether you think pleasant thoughts or less than pleasant thoughts, whether your mind is confused or is able to rationalize and infer correctly, the mind's endless tendency to spin prevents you from experiencing the luminous joy that is your innate content. Learning to stop the endless pattern of spinning is the key to unlocking the state of yoga. Indeed, achieving this is the very definition of yoga: "complete mastery of the roaming tendencies of the mind is yoga" (*sutra 1:2 "yogas citta vritti nirodha"*).

Patanjali offers the yoga tradition and its systematic approach to teach you how to get past the limits and prejudices of your acquired content, in order for you to abide in your innate content—the shining light of excellence that is your soul.

Achieving ultimate freedom, lasting happiness and the realization of your true nature, is all but impossible if you continue to remain identified with your acquired content. It is this misapprehension (*avidya*) that is the basis of suffering—*dukham*. For those wanting to break the cycle of pain and suffering, for those interested in solving this existential challenge, Patanjali offers the *Yoga Sutra*—a methodical approach to *viyoga* (separation) from your acquired content.



Our approach to the scripture is as a guide to practice, specifically how practice most profoundly affects perception. This orientation is consistent with the “Moon” of the three stages of Moon, Sun and Fire. The *Yoga Sutra* teaches you to engrain the habit of attaining and maintaining a peaceful and steady flow of mind. It is the systematic approach to stop the roaming/spinning tendencies of the mind.

The word *sutra* refers to a terse or pithy statement, one that is steeped in “su” (goodness). Also, like a “suture,” the *Sutra* acts as a thread linking together all the previous teachings and thereby offering you the opportunity to suture together the gaps in your consciousness.

Yoga Sutra is systematic, consisting of 196 statements in 4 Chapters:

- *Samadhi Pada* 1 – yoga and its goal
- *Sadhana Pada* 2 – the practice of yoga
- *Vibhooti Pada* 3 – the powers, siddhis and capacities that arise out of the practice
- *Kaivalya Pada* 4 – the goal of yoga – *kaivalya*

Sutras 1:19 and 1:20 describe the qualities of *samadhi* (stages leading to enlightenment). They are very revealing, because they help you to see the practical nature and value of perfecting your mind. *Samprajnata* (partial) *samadhi* and *asamprajnata* (complete) *samadhi* describe the state where you have full understanding of the objects of your choosing. In *samprajnata*, you will have a full understanding of some “thing” (this object can be material, mental, subtle or even sublime), whereas *asamprajnata* *samadhi* refers to the highest realization, allowing you to perceive beyond all limitations, to have complete understanding of everything—in other



words, enlightenment. Thus the two stages of *samprajnata* and *asamprajnata* refer to either merging with a chosen object or ideal or transcending all objects (*asamprajnata*).

Patanjali then provides guidance, telling us that five specific virtues must be cultivated until you reach *asamprajnata*. This also suggests that once you are enlightened, you will embody these five virtues completely and perfectly. They are:

- *shraddha*: faith
- *virya*: will, potency
- *smrti*: retentive power
- *samadhi*: absorption
- *prajna*: illuminative wisdom



3

Of the text's 196 sutras, Patanjali addresses the subject of *asana* in only four (all of which are found in Chapter 2, Yoga and Its Practice). Despite the brevity of the teachings on *asana*, the four "*asana sutras*" are a profound rendering of the role of *asana* and how its practice relates to the ultimate intent for realizing the state of yoga. The word *asana* first appears in Chapter 2 (2:29), where it is simply listed as one of the eight limbs. It is not until 2:46 – 2:48 that *asana* practice is presented in three principles: one, how to practice *asana* two, how to master *asana* and three, the signs that you have mastered *asana*.

For most modern practitioners, *asana* is commonly practiced primarily as a tool to accomplish *asana*. Patanjali's teachings offer this approach: the sole focus is on *asana* as a tool to master the mind.

The first principle of *asana*, according to Patanjali, is that it must be practiced with ease (*sukham*) and steadiness (*sthiram*): not forcing yourself into a pose for the sake of mastering it. From the view of the yoga tradition, *asana* is not a means for accomplishing anything other than the realization of complete ease and steadiness. The next teaching on *asana* presents the key to mastering it: "loosen effort, while meditating on the Infinite." Following this, we find the final principle—the result of mastering *asana*, specifically: "The pairs of opposite cease to have impact."

The ultimate achievement of *asana* practice is that you are no longer affected by changing circumstances; life's constant swing from good to bad, light to dark, success to failure, etc. no longer conditions your experience. You are the embodiment of centeredness and stability in the midst of change; you are at peace in the midst of uncertainty.



3

To achieve this, you will need to practice systematically. In the *Tantra Shakti* training, we covered the lunar (*chandra*) approach to practice: fewer poses, 1:1 breathing and developing “witness consciousness.” When applied consistently, this approach establishes a safe harbor for the mind and a deep sense of tranquility; it slowly teaches you to internalize attention and sets the stage for non-attachment or self-surrender.

The point is that Patanjali has made it clear what you are meant to achieve through *asana* practice. In short, the most meaningful sign of progress in *asana* is that you are more stable, more at ease and less distracted; you are consistently aware of the higher meaning and purpose of your life.

SECRETS OF THE SUTRAS M3



4

Yoga Sutra is a road map for reaching the heights of human capacity—directly experiencing one's divine nature. While the text can be studied from many different approaches, there is only one way to arrive at the final destination and fulfill the promise of its teachings: practice. Its essence and the powerful truths that fill this scripture can never be fully understood or realized unless it is treated as a practice manual.

The entire spectrum of yoga practice is outlined in its pages. The great sage Patanjali gathered and organized, with absolutely perfect clarity and sublime insight, all previous systems of Vedic knowledge, including *Vedanta*, *Tantra*, *Veda*, Buddhism, and Jainism. The teaching of the *Yoga Sutra* is so far-reaching that it would eventually become known as *yoga shastra*, the final authority on yoga philosophy and practice.

From the viewpoint of the *Sri Vidya* tradition, the three systems of yoga, *Vedanta* and *Tantra*, along with *Samkhya* (yoga's philosophical background) are part of a single, comprehensive, sublime science. In fact, one can find all three spiritual systems throughout the text. Thus, rather than approaching these systems as separate and seeing the teachings of the *Yoga Sutra* as distinct from the other systems, our approach will integrate yoga, *Vedanta* and *Tantra* and apply them as a continuum. This approach incorporates all three systems and breathes the full force and wisdom of Pantanjali's gift to all seekers wishing to overcome the darkness that covers their mind and heart. The *Yoga Sutra* is a path, leading to everlasting and self-luminous joy.

Instead of trying to achieve happiness and freedom by mastering the external world, the *Yoga Sutra* asks you to master your mind and gain



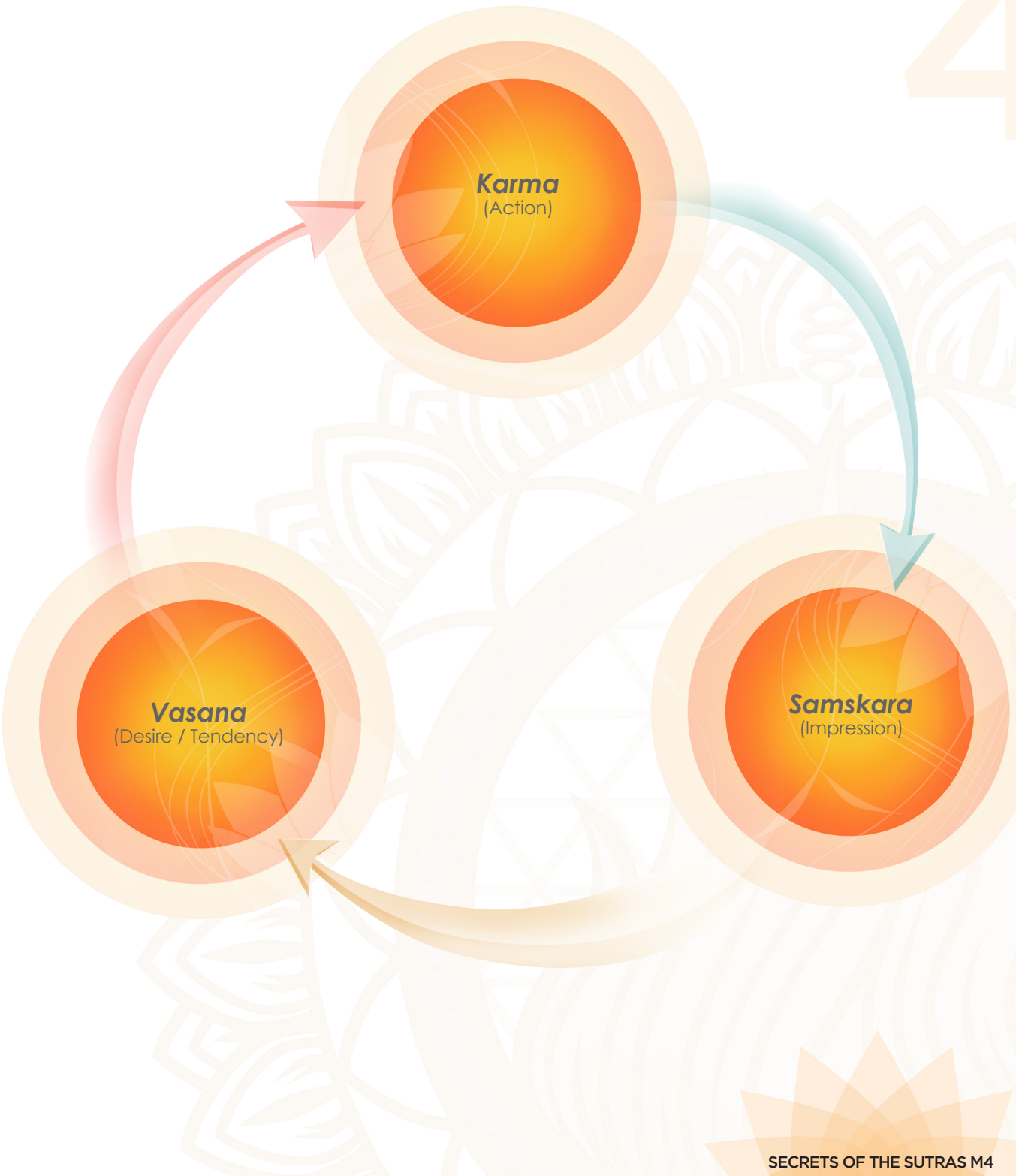
access to its innate power and intelligence. Only through mastery of the mind can eternal freedom be yours. To see yourself as you really are, you must restore the pristine nature of mind, clear the karmic impurities and allow your mind's innate luminosity to shine.

The timeless sage, Vyasa provided the text's greatest commentary four centuries after Patanjali revealed it. Vyasa's commentary is vital in order to understand and apply its teachings, particularly the methodologies that are referenced in its pages. The terse nature of the *Yoga Sutra* limited what Patanjali could include, in as much as he assumed that it would be studied under the guidance of a master. He offers the uninitiated seeker little to nothing in the way of practical detail—i.e. he'll describe a practice, but only the bare minimum about how to do the practice. A teacher would be required to guide the student into the specifics of the practice. Vyasa's commentary serves to fill in these gaps and provides the living wisdom necessary to apply and embody the sutras. From the viewpoint of the *Sri Vidya* tradition, Vyasa's commentary and the sutras themselves are a single body of knowledge.

4



4



SECRETS OF THE SUTRAS M4