

A serene landscape with a large tree, a person in yoga, and a star in the sky. The background is a soft, light blue sky with a bright starburst in the upper right. In the foreground, a large, stylized tree with a thick trunk and a wide canopy of leaves stands on the left. A small figure of a person in a yoga pose is visible at the base of the tree. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

8 Limbs of Yoga

An Introduction

Workshop by Nina

Yoga – The Science of the Mind

When we speak of Yoga today, most people immediately think of the physical practice, asanas, and stress reduction.

But for a really long time, yoga just meant meditation. Even the physical side of yoga, asanas, was a seated meditation.

Hatha Yoga was primarily designed to facilitate the real practice of yoga, the understanding and complete mastery over the mind. So the actual meaning of Yoga is the science of the mind.

Questions like:

- What is the mind?
- Does it determine our behaviour and experience or do we create and sustain activity?
- What is consciousness?

That is the subject matter of Raja Yoga (mental science). The primary text of *Raja Yoga* is called the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*.

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

- The Yoga Sutras were written by Patanjali around 200 CE and consist of 196 aphorisms which are broken down into 4 chapters/books. Patanjali compiled all previous mentioned information on yoga.
- Sutra = thread
- Patanjali is believed to be a manifestation of Lord Vishnu's snake.
- Each sutra being the barest thread of meaning upon which a teacher might expand by adding his or her own 'beads' of experience for the sake of the students.
- This is the classical presentation of Raja Yoga, the royal yoga of the mind.
- Raja Yoga is a study of the human mind, becoming aware of its habitual tendencies, and ultimately transcending identification with the body-mind-intellect complex through meditation to rest in the vast ocean of consciousness, which comprises it all.

The 4 Books of the Yoga Sutras

Book 1: Samadhi Pada

- The meaning of yoga: “CHITTA VRITTI NIRODHA” and the states of mind
- Theory of yoga and a description of the most advanced stages of the practice of samadhi.

Book 2: Sadhana Pada

- The eight limbs of yoga

Book 3: Vibhuti Pada

- Yogic Superpowers (Siddhis): The effects of Yoga
- Discusses the final three steps of Raja Yoga

Book 4: Kaivalya Pada

- Achieving liberation
- Discusses yoga from a more cosmic, philosophical viewpoint

Yogas Citta Vritti Nirodhah – Book 1, Sutra 2

Patanjali begins with a simple question: “What is Yoga?”

“Yogas citta vritti nirodhah”

‘The restraint of the modifications of the mind-stuff is yoga’

Quieting the fluctuations of the mind

Chitta = mind

Vritti= waves, fluctuations

Nirodaha= removal, stillness

Patanjali states that for a keen student, this one sutra would be enough because the rest of them only explain this one. If the restraint of the mental modifications is achieved, one has reached the goal of Yoga.

“If you can control the rising of the mind into ripples, you will experience Yoga.”

Citta Vritti Nirodaha

"If you can control the rising of the mind into ripples, you will experience Yoga."

Citta is the sum of the mind. Within the citta there are different levels of the mind.

- Ahamkara = Basic mind or the ego, the 'I' feeling
- This gives rise to the intellect which is called the buddhi
- Manas = the desiring part of the mind which gets attracted to outside things through the senses

Example: You're in your room and start to smell something in the kitchen. The moment the manas records 'a nice smell from somewhere', the buddhi discriminates 'what is this smell? I think it's cheese. Oh what kind of cheese'. Once the buddhi decides what kind of cheese it is and that you like it, ahamkara says 'then I should have some'. These three things happen one at a time but so quickly that we seldom distinguish between them.

Citta Vritti Nirodaha

- The want is now created to want the cheese and unless you fulfil it, your mind WON'T go back to its peaceful state.
- Normally you are in the peaceful state, that is the natural condition of the mind but the *citta vrittis* disturb that peace.
- All the differences in the outside world are the outcome of your mental modifications.
- The entire outside world is based on your thoughts and mental attitude. The entire world is your own projection. Your values may change within a fraction of a second.
- That is why yoga doesn't care much about changing the outside world.

CITTA VRITTIS METAPHOR

“[Chitta] is the mind-stuff, and Vrittis are the waves and ripples rising in it when external causes impinge on it. The bottom of the lake we cannot see, because its surface is covered with ripples. It is only possible when the ripples have subsided, and the water is calm, for us to catch a glimpse of the bottom. If the water is muddy, the bottom will not be seen; if the water is agitated all the time, the bottom will not be seen. If the water is clear, and there are no waves, we shall see the bottom. That bottom of the lake is our own true Self; the lake is the Chitta, and the waves are the Vrttis.” - Swami Vivekanand

THE MONKEYMIND

We all have the mind of a monkey.

This analogy, slightly humorous though it may be, is actually quite salient.

Consider that we humans have around fifty thousand separate thoughts each day, many of them on the same topic.

You might imagine that each thought is a branch, and you, or at least the attention of your conscious mind, is indeed a monkey, swinging from thought-branch to thought-branch all day long.

This might sound like it might be fun, but in our troubled human way the thoughts that are often in our minds are concerned with the fears and pressures of life:

What will happen if I lose my job? I wonder if my partner might be unhappy with our relationship?

What if I don't have enough money when I retire?

Irrational fears perhaps, but made real by our own constant attention. How infuriating and exhausting it becomes.

The Buddha, who coined the word some two and a half millennia ago, termed this mental state "Kapicitta."

Of course, he defined it best when he said; 'Just as a monkey swinging through the trees grabs one branch and lets it go only to seize another, so too, that which is called thought, mind or consciousness arises and disappears continually both day and night.'

Beautifully and poetically put, but why does this monkey rule our thoughts, when we are supposed to be in charge?

THE MONKEYMIND

Under the conscious spark of awareness, we are accompanied by the ego – the chattering monkey of our internal monologue. With the noise of this monkey going on, it becomes near on impossible to be present and focused on the moment we are in. Instead we are carried away through the treetops!

Because of our innate capacity for thinking, it is easy for the Monkey Mind to feed on stimuli.

When we give our attention to too many things at once, spend our lives rushing from one appointment to another and focus on what we are yet to do instead of what we are currently doing, these are like dozens of trees with enticing fruit for our monkey to chase.

Amazing! Look at him go, there he is worrying about your date next Tuesday, oh, now he's up that tree criticising your performance in work last week, then he's reminding you that the car needs servicing.

The point is; we actually need the monkey on our side. He's useful in that in our busy lives he keeps on top of things. The problem occurs when, like all small monkeys with lots of things to do, he's quite excitable.

THE MONKEYMIND

The result of the Monkey Mind, which has not been adequately trained, results primarily in mental and physical fatigue. We've all had days where it feels like we've achieved nothing and there's a mountain to climb tomorrow, and yet we can't relax.

Because we cannot relax, the monkey mind says, "Hey, why aren't you relaxing? You have another BIG day tomorrow!" Is it any surprise that cases of depression, anxiety and stress disorders are on the rise?

The problems human beings faced in the days of Buddha are still with us, and while we have perhaps advanced in some ways since then, we are the same fragile species.

What is clear is despite our technological achievements we have yet to master being in the world.

TAMING THE MONKEYMIND



- Become the OBSERVER of your thoughts; don't judge yourself or react or identify with yourself. Simply observe.
- Meditation and Yoga help us in becoming less reactive and stepping into the role of the observer rather than the reactor.

COURSEWORK:

What other tools do you have to quiet your mind?

8 Limbs of Yoga – Book 2

1. **Yamas** = 5 Restraints
2. **Niyamas** = 5 Self-Disciplines
3. **Asana** = Physical Practice
4. **Pranayama** = Breath Control
5. **Pratyahara** = Withdrawal of the Senses
6. **Dharana** = Concentration
7. **Dhyana** = Meditation
8. **Samadhi** = Bliss

- The Yoga Sutras define the 8 Limbs of Yoga
- Also referred to 'ashtanga yoga' but different from the modern physical practice 'Ashtanga Yoga'

