The Eight Components of a Yogic Lifestyle

Selections from the *Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*

> "Yoga is stopping the mind's habitual patterns of thought."

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Class One: The Meaning and Purpose of Yoga

अथ योगानुशासनम्

atha yogānuśāsanaṁ

And now for the authoritative teaching on yoga. (1.1)

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः

yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ

Yoga is stopping the turbulence in the mind. (1.2)

तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपऽवस्थानम्

tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpa'vasthānam

When that happens, the seer abides in his or her true nature. (1.3)

वृत्तिसारुप्यम् इतरत्र

vṛttisārupyam itaratra

Otherwise, one identifies with the turbulence (in the mind). (1.4)

अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः

abhyāsavairāgyābhyāṁ tannirodhaḥ

This stopping (of the habitual patterns of thought) is brought about through practice and imperturbabilty. (1.12)

तत्र स्थितौ यत्नोऽभ्यासः

tatra sthitau yatno'bhyāsaḥ

Practice means making efforts in staying present. (1.13)

स तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमिः

sa tu dīrghakālanairantaryasatkārāsevito dṛḍhabhūmiḥ

It will be firmly grounded when it has been done steadily, over a long period of time, skillfully, and assiduously. (1.14)

दृष्टानुश्रविकविषयवितृष्णस्य वशीकारसंज्ञा वैराग्यम्

dṛṣṭānuśravikaviṣayavitṛṣṇasya vaśīkārasañjñā vairāgyam

Imperturbability is said to be mastered when there is no craving for anything -- either what you have directly experienced or what you have just heard about. (1.15)

श्रद्धावीर्यस्मृतिसमाधिप्रज्ञापूर्वक इतरेषाम्

śraddhāvīryasmṛtisamādhiprajñāpūrvakaḥ itareṣām.

For others (i.e., embodied beings), there must first be confidence, joyful effort, mindfulness, full integration, and wisdom. (1.20)

ईश्वरप्रणिधानाद्वा

īśvarapraṇidhānāt vā

And (the goal is reached also) from surrendering to the Lord. (1.23)

भूमिकत्वानवस्थितत्वानिचित्तविक्षेपास्तेऽन्तरायाः

Vyādhistyānasaṁśayapramādālasyāviratibhrāntidarśanālabdhabhūmikatvānavasthita-tvāni cittavikṣepās te'ntarāyāḥ

The mental obstacles are sickness, rigidity, doubt, carelessness, laziness, intemperance, wrong views, failing to make progress, and not sticking with it. (1.30)

तत्प्रतिषेधार्थम् एकतत्त्वाभ्यासः

tatpratiṣedhārtham ekatattvābhyāsaḥ

There is one practice that has as its purpose to overcome these. (1.32)

मैत्रीकरुणामुदितोपेक्षणां सुखदुःखपुण्यापुण्यविषयाणां

भावनातश्चित्तप्रसादनम्

maitrīkaruṇāmuditopekṣāṇāṁ sukhaduḥkhapuṇyāpuṇyaviṣayāṇāṁ bhāvanātaś cittaprasādanam

The mind becomes calm with the practice of loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity toward all things and beings, whether they are pleasant or unpleasant, good or bad. (1.33)

क्षीणवृत्तेरभिजातस्येव मणेर्ग्रहीतृग्रहणग्राह्येषु तत्स्थतदञ्जनतासमापत्तिः

kṣīṇavṛtterabhijātasyeva maṇergrahītṛgrahaṇagrāhyeṣu tatsthatadañjanatāsamāpattiḥ

Among those special people whose habitual patterns of thought have diminished, there is a balanced consciousness which, like a jewel, reflects its object – whether it be the perceiver, the perceived, or the perceiving – steadily and clearly. (1.41)

तत्र शब्दार्थज्ञानविकल्पैः संकीर्णा सवितर्कासमापत्तिः

tatra śabdārthajñānavikalpaiḥ saṅkīrṇā savitarkāsamāpattiḥ

In such a case, the balanced consciousness that still is conceptual confuses words, meanings, and the concepts that come from knowledge. (1.42)

स्मृतिपरिशुद्धौ स्वरूपशून्येवार्थमात्रनिर्भासा निर्वितर्का

smṛtipariśuddhau svarūpaśūnyevārthamātranirbhāsā nirvitarkā

When memory is purified, a non-conceptual state of mind appears which is empty of having any self-nature and which focuses on only itself as the object of thought. (1.43)

Exercise for Class One

Every day this week, spend at least fifteen minutes examining your "habitual patterns of thought." What sorts of things do you often obsess about – your looks, career, relationships, finances, popularity, desire for consumer goods, etc.?

Notice how you identify with these thoughts ("I *am* overweight, underappreciated, unloved," or whatever). Notice also how often these habitual patterns of thought pertain to and rehearse the past. Then apply the antidotes of imperturbability (detach yourself from the thought and just observe it) and of "practice," defined in our text as "making efforts in staying present" (YS 1.13).

Class Two: Ethics

अविद्यास्मितारागद्वेषाभिनिवेशाः पञ्च क्लेशाः

avidyāsmitārāgadveṣābhiniveśāḥ pañca kleśāḥ

The five mental afflictions are ignorance, egoism, attraction, aversion, and grasping. (2.3)

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अविद्या क्षेत्रम् उत्तरेषाम् प्रसुप्ततनुविच्छिन्नोदाराणाम्

avidyā kṣetram uttareṣām prasuptatanuvicchinnodārāṇām

Ignorance is the field where the others grow – whether they be dormant, low-level, intermittent, or full-blown. (2.4)

अनित्याशुचिदुःखानात्मसु नित्यशुचिसुखात्मख्यातिरविद्या

nityāśuciduḥkhānātmasu nityaśucisukhātmakhyatiravidya

Ignorance is the belief that what is impermanent is permanent, what is impure is pure, what will bring suffering will bring happiness, and what is without essence has an essence. (2.5)

दृग्दर्शनशक्त्योर् एकात्मतेवास्मिता

dṛgdarśanaśaktyor ekātmatevāsmitā

Egoism is thinking that the seer and faculty of seeing are one and the same thing. (2.6)

सुखानुशयी रागः

sukhānuśayī rāgaḥ

Attraction derives from feelings of pleasure. (2.7)

दुःखानुशयी द्वेषः

duḥkhānuśayī dveṣaḥ

Aversion derives from unpleasant feelings. (2.8)

स्वरसवाही विदुषोऽपि तथारूढोऽभिनिवेशः

svarasavāhī viduṣo'pi tathārūḍho'bhiniveśaḥ

Grasping then arises; it naturally comes about, even for the wise. (2.9)

ते प्रतिप्रसवहेयाः सूक्ष्माः

te pratiprasavaheyāḥ sūkṣmāḥ

These (mental afflictions), subtle though they may be, are reversed by their opposites. (2.10)

ध्यानहेयास् तद्वृत्तयः

dhyānaheyās tadvṛttayaḥ

Habitual patterns of thought are reversed by meditation. (2.11)

ते ह्लादपरितापफलाः पुण्यापुण्यहेतुत्वात्

te hlādaparitāpaphalāḥ puṇyāpuṇyahetutvāt

There is a causal connection between meritorious and blameworthy acts and their respectively cool and pleasant or scorching and unpleasant effects. (2.14)

परिणामतापसंस्कारदुःखैर्गुणवृत्तिविरोधाच् च दुःखम् एव सर्वं विवेकिनः

pariṇāmatāpasaṁskāraduḥkhair guṇavṛttivirodhāc ca duḥkham eva sarvaṁ vivekinaḥ

The discriminating person sees that suffering pervades everything due to anxiety about change and because of the karmic imprints, and also because of our opposition to the way things are. (2.15)

हेयं दुःखम् अनागतम्

heyaṁ duḥkham anāgatam

Future suffering is avoidable. (2.16)

यमनियमासनप्राणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसमाधयोऽष्टावाङ्गानि

yamaniyamāsanaprāṇāyāmpratyāhāradhāraṇādhyānasamādhayo'ṣṭāv aṇgāni

The eight components of yoga are the restraints, the commitments, the physical poses, controlling the breath, withdrawal of the senses, concentration, meditation, and full integration. (2.29)

अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः

ahiṁsāsatyāsteyabrahmacaryāparigrahā yamāḥ

The restraints are non-violence, honesty, not stealing, sexual purity, and non-possessiveness. (2.30)

जातिदेशकालसमयानवच्छिन्नाः सार्वभौमा महाव्रतम्

jātideśakālasamayānavacchinnāḥ sārvabhaumā mahāvratam

(These comprise) the great vow of yoga. They are universally applicable, irrespective of one's class, country, time, or circumstance. (2.31)

शौचसंतोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः

śaucasantoṣatapaḥsvādyāyeśvara praṇidhānāni niyamāḥ

The commitments are purity, contentment, austerity, studying on your own, and surrender to the Lord. (2.32)

अहिंसाप्रतिष्ठायां तत्सन्निधौ वैरत्यागः

ahiṁsāpratiṣṭhāyāṁ tatsannidhau vairatyāgaḥ

When in the presence of those firmly established in non-violence, enmity is abandoned. (2.35)

सत्यप्रतिष्ठायां क्रियाफलाश्रयत्वम्

satyapratiṣṭhāyāṁ kriyāphalāśrayatvam

Among those firmly established in the truth, there is a predictable relationship between actions and their results. (2.36)

अस्तेयप्रतिष्ठायां सर्वरत्नोपस्थानम्

asteyapratiṣṭhāyāṁ sarvaratnopasthānam

All kinds of wealth comes to those firmly established in not stealing. (2.37)

ब्रह्मचर्यप्रतिष्ठायां वीर्यलाभः

brahmacaryapratiṣṭhāyāṁ vīryalābhaḥ

Energy is acquired by those firmly established in sexual purity. (2.38)

अपरिग्रहस्थैर्ये जन्मकथंतासंबोधः

aparigrahasthairye janmakathantāsambodhaḥ

When one perseveres in non-possessiveness, there arises a deep understanding of how life works. (2.39)

शौचात् स्वाङ्गजुगुप्सा परैरसंसर्गः

śaucāt svāṅgajugupsā parairasaṁsargaḥ

Because of purity, there is disgust for one’s own body and disinterestness in intercourse with the bodies of others. (2.40)

सत्त्वशुद्धिसौमनस्यैकाग्र्येन्द्रियजयात्मदर्शनयोग्यत्वानि च

sattvaśuddhisaumanasyaikāgryendriyajayātmadarśanayogyatvāni ca

And (mental purity) brings about the capacity for goodness, blamelessness, cheerfulness, one-pointedness, control of the senses, and the direct perception of one's true Self. (2.41)

संतोषाद् अनुत्तमः सुखलाभः

santoṣād anuttamaḥ sukhalābhaḥ

From contentment comes the attainment of unsurpassed happiness. (2.42)

कायेन्द्रियसिद्धिरशुद्धिक्षयात् तपसः

kāyendriyasiddhiraśuddhikṣayāt tapasaḥ

Because impurities are destroyed through austerity, attainments of the body and senses are achieved. (2.43)

स्वाध्यायाद् इष्टदेवतासंप्रयोगः

svādhyāyād iṣṭadevatāsamprayogaḥ

As a result of independent study, one reaches the divinity of his or her choice. (2.44)

समाधिसिद्धिरीश्वरप्रणिधानात्

Samādhisiddhirīśvarapraṇidhānāt

From surrendering to the Lord, full integration is achieved. (2.45)

Exercise for Class Two

For the next ten days, keep a spiritual journal in which you review each of the ten "restraints" (*yama*s) and "commitments" (*niyama*s), one per day.

Begin with the "restraint" of non-violence. During that first day, stop every two hours or so and check in on how you are doing. Start with the positive: "I did not step on the bug I saw on the floor"; then look at the negative: "I ate an unhealthy breakfast." End each entry with a do-able task for the future: "Tomorrow I will eat a healthy breakfast."

Continue the next day with entries reviewing the "restraint" of honesty, and so forth until you have completed a review of all ten of the "restraints" and "commitments."

Class Three: Meditation

स्थिरसुखम् आसनम्॥ ४६ ॥

sthirasukham āsanam

The physical poses should be comfortable and held steadily. (2.46)

प्रयत्नशैथिल्यानन्तसमापत्तिभ्याम्

prayatnaśaithilyānantasamāpattibhyām

(This happens) by maintaining a balanced consciousness of continuous but relaxed effort. (2.47)

ततो द्वन्द्वानभिघातः

tato dvandvānabhighātaḥ

Because of this, one is not harassed by dualities. (2.48)

तस्मिन् सति श्वासप्रश्वासयोर्गतिविच्छेदः प्राणायामः॥ ४९॥

tasmin sati śvāsapraśvāsayorgativicchedaḥ prāṇāyāmaḥ

When this (the physical postures) is accomplished, the control of the breath (comes next). It involves the interruption of the normal flow of inhalation and exhalation. (2.49)

बाह्याभ्यन्तरस्तम्भवृत्तिः देशकालसंख्याभिः परिदृष्टो दीर्घसूक्ष्मः

bāhyābhyantarastambhavṛttiḥ deśakālasaṅkhyābhiḥ paridṛṣṭo dīrghasūkṣmaḥ

It can pertain to exhalation, inhalation, or the retention of the flow of the breath, and is learned by techniques involving either deep or subtle breathing, modified by location, duration, and the number of repetitions. (2.50)

बाह्याभ्यन्तरविषयाक्षेपी चतुर्थः

bāhyābhyantaraviṣayākṣepī caturthaḥ

A fourth type transcends the limitations of exhalation and inhalation. (2.51)

धारणासु च योग्यता मनसः

dhāraṇāsu ca yogyatā manasaḥ

And then the mind is ready for concentration. (2.53)

स्वविषयासंप्रयोगे चित्तस्य स्वरूपानुकार इवेन्द्रियाणांप्रत्याहारः

svaviṣayāsamprayoge cittasya svarūpānukāra ivendriyāṇāṁ pratyāhāraḥ

Withdrawal of the senses is when one disassociates from outer objects and instead follows after the true nature of the mind. (2.54)

ततः परमा वश्यतेन्द्रियाणाम्

tataḥ paramā vaśyatendriyāṇām

And from this comes the supreme subjugation of the senses. (2.55)

देशबन्धश्चित्तस्य धारणा

deśabandhaścittasya dhāraṇā

Concentration is fastening the mind on one place. (3.1)

तत्र प्रत्ययैक तानता ध्यानम्

tatra pratyayaika tānatā dhyānam

Meditation is the continuous and exclusive conceptual flow on that. (3.2)

Exercise for Class Three

This week, make time each day for meditation. Get into a comfortable posture and promise yourself that you will not move for the next fifteen or twenty minutes (it's good to set a timer!). Concentrate on your breath. When your mind wanders, just gently bring your attention back to the process of inhalation, pause, exhalation, pause, inhalation, and so forth.

See how long you can stay focused without losing concentration, but don't judge or criticize yourself. Everyday's meditation is the perfect one for that day!

Class Four: Full Integration

तद् एवार्थमात्रनिर्भासं स्वरूपशून्यम् इव समाधिः

tad evārthamātranirbhāsaṁ svarūpaśūnyam iva samādhiḥ

Full integration is awareness of the mere appearance of objects just as they are; they are indeed empty of having any true nature. (3.3)

त्रयम् एकत्र संयमः

trayam ekatra saṁyamaḥ

Complete self-control is when these three (concentration, meditation, and full integration) come together as one. (3.4)

तज्जयात् प्रज्ञालोकः

tajjayāt prajñālokaḥ

Enlightened wisdom arises from that mastery. (3.5)

तस्य भूमिषु विनियोगः

tasya bhūmiṣu viniyogaḥ

The application of this (complete self-control) comes about in stages. (3.6)

त्रयम् अन्तरङ्गं पूर्वेभ्यः

trayam antaraṅgaṁ pūrvebhyaḥ

The three (parts of complete self-control) are the internal components of yoga as compared to the previous ones. (3.7)

ते समाधाव् उपसर्गा व्युत्थाने सिद्धयः

te samādhāv upasargā vyutthāne siddhayaḥ

These supernatural powers, when they become distractions, are troublesome to one's full integration. (3.37)

तद्वैराग्यादपि दोषबीजक्षये कैवल्यम्

tadvairāgyādapi doṣabījakṣaye kaivalyam

Because one remains imperturbable even when it comes to that (the attainment of supernatural powers), autonomy arises when the seeds for all faults are destroyed. (3.50)

कर्माशुक्लाकृष्णं योगिनस्त्रिविधम् इतरेषाम्

karmāśuklākṛṣṇaṁ yoginastrividham itareṣām

The karma of a yogi is neither white nor black, but for others it is of three types. (4.7)

परिणामैकत्वाद् वस्तुतत्त्वम्

pariṇāmaikatvād vastutattvam

Because there is a unity underlying all transformation, there is a reality to things. (4.14)

वस्तुसाम्ये चित्तभेदात् तयोर्विभक्तः पन्थाः

vastusāmye cittabhedāt tayorvibhaktaḥ panthāḥ

While things share a certain sameness, because of the differences in minds two things are divided in different ways. (4.15)

न चैकचित्ततन्त्रं चेद् वस्तु तद् अप्रमाणकं तदा किं स्यात्

na caikacittatantraṁ ced vastu tad apramāṇakaṁ tadā kiṁ syāt

An object is not tied to one single mind for its existence, for if it were, what would happen to it when it was not being perceived by that one mind? (4.16)

तदुपरागापेक्षित्वाच् चित्तस्य वस्तु ज्ञाताज्ञातम्

taduparāgāpekṣitvāc cittasya vastu jñātājñātam

An object is either known or unknown depending on whether the mind is aware of it or not. (4.17)

विशेषदर्शिन आत्मभावभावनाविनिवृत्तिः

viśeṣadarśina ātmabhāvabhāvanāvinivṛttiḥ

For the one who can make the proper distinctions, there is an end to speculation about the existence of the true Self. (4.25)

तदा विवेकनिम्नं कैवल्यप्राग्भारं चित्तम्

tadā vivekanimnaṁ kaivalyaprāgbhāraṁ cittam

Then the mind, deep in discrimination, moves toward autonomy. (4.26)

तच्छिद्रेषु प्रत्ययान्तराणि संस्कारेभ्यः

taccidreṣu pratyayāntarāṇi saṁskārebhyaḥ

When there are lapses (in discrimination), it is because of intervening factors that arise due to mental imprints. (4.27)

हानम् एषां क्लेशवद् उक्तम्

hānam eṣāṁ kleśavad uktam

It is said that they can be destroyed, just like the mental afflictions. (4.28)

प्रसंख्यानेऽप्यकुसीदस्य सर्वथा विवेकख्यातेर्धर्ममेघः समाधिः

prasaṅkhyāne'pyakusīdasya sarvathā vivekakhyāterdharmameghaḥ samādhiḥ

When one takes no interest even in such karmic accounting, the full integration known as the “Dharma cloud” is attained by one whose discriminatory viewpoint is complete. (4.29)

ततः क्लेशकर्मनिवृत्तिः

tataḥ kleśakarmanivṛttiḥ

It is then that karma and mental afflictions come to an end. (4.30)

पुरुषार्थशून्यानां गुणानां प्रतिप्रसवः कैवल्यं स्वरूपप्रतिष्ठा वा चित्तशक्तिरिति

puruṣārthaśūnyānāṁ guṇānāṁ pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyaṁ svarūpapratiṣṭhā vā cittaśaktiriti

Autonomy is the reversal of qualities that are devoid of meaning for the Spirit, or it could be said that it is the power of the mind when it gets to know its true nature. (4.34)

Exercise for Class Four

Each day this week, do some action and try to eliminate any self-interest or egotistical goal from what you are doing – try experimenting with "action for its own sake."

The experiment could involve doing something completely selflessly for someone else, without expectation of any return (even receiving thanks!). Or it could be an action which you do with mindful unselfconsciousness, totally integrated with the action itself.

Keep track of these experiments in "karma-less" actions, and notice how you feel when you're engaged in the act as well as afterwards. Are you able to fully let go of any intended "fruit" or result you might expect from the act and really just do actions selflessly?