



## HOW YOGA WORKS:

### The Yoga Sutra and the Three Trainings of a Spiritual Life

#### I. THE THREE TRAININGS OF A SPIRITUAL LIFE

शील	समाधि	प्रज्ञा
śīla	samādhi	prajñā
ethics	meditation	wisdom

#### II. THE TRAINING IN ETHICS

अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः २:३०

ahimsā satya asteya brahmacarya aparigrahā yamāḥ

THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF SELF-CONTROL ARE AVOIDING HARM TO ANYONE, ALWAYS TELLING THE TRUTH, NEVER STEALING FROM ANOTHER, KEEPING SEXUAL PURITY, AND OVERCOMING POSSESSIVENESS. (2.30)

शौचसंतोषतपः स्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः २:३२

śauca santoṣa tapaḥ svādhyāya īśvarapraṇidhānāni niyamāḥ

THE COMMITMENTS ARE TO BE CLEAN,  
TO BE CONTENTED WITH WHATEVER WE HAVE,  
TO EMBRACE HARDSHIPS FOR HIGHER GOALS,  
TO ENGAGE IN REGULAR STUDY,  
AND TO SEEK OUR MASTER'S BLESSINGS. (2.32)



### III. THE TRAINING IN MEDITATION

समाधिभावनार्थः क्लेशतनूकरणार्थश्च २:२

samādhi bhāvana arthaḥ kleśa tanū karaṇa arthaś ca

NOW THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF MEDITATION  
IS TO MAKE OUR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS DWINDLE AWAY. (2.2)

ते प्रतिप्रसवहेयाः सूक्ष्माः २:१०

te pratiprasava heyāḥ sūkṣmāḥ

CUTTING OFF THEIR FLOW  
REQUIRES THE ELIMINATION  
OF VERY SUBTLE PROBLEMS. (2.10)

ध्यानहेयास्तद्वृत्तयः २:११

dhyāna heyās tad vṛttayaḥ

THESE WAYS THAT THE MIND TURNS  
ARE ELIMINATED BY DEEP MEDITATION. (2.11)

तदेवार्थमात्रनिर्भासम् स्वरूपशून्यमिव समाधिः ३:३

tad eva arthamātra nirbhāsam svarūpa śūnyam iva samādhiḥ

PERFECT MEDITATION  
THEN SEES THIS SAME OBJECT  
AS ITS SIMPLE SELF:  
ITS CLEAR LIGHT, TOTALLY VOID  
OF ANY NATURE OF ITS OWN. (3.3)



#### IV. THE TRAINING IN WISDOM

##### A. OVERCOMING IGNORANCE

अनित्याशुचिदुःखानात्मसु नित्यशुचिसुखात्मख्यातिरविद्या २:५

anitya aśuci duḥkha anātmasu nitya śuci sukha ātma khyātir avidyā

IN IGNORANCE WE MISUNDERSTAND OUR WORLD:  
THINGS THAT CANNOT LAST,  
THINGS WHICH ARE UNCLEAR, AND PAINFUL,  
AND WHICH ARE NOT THEMSELVES,  
SEEM TO US AS IF THEY WILL LAST,  
AND AS IF THEY ARE CLEAR,  
AND PLEASANT, AND VERY MUCH THEMSELVES. (2.5)

##### B. GENERATING WISDOM

स्मृतिपरिशुद्धौ स्वरूपशून्येवार्थमात्रनिर्भासा निर्वितर्का १:४३

smṛti pariśuddhau svarūpa śūnya iva arthamātra nirbhāsā nirvitarkā

STAY IN THAT ONE PURE THOUGHT, AND NEVER FORGET IT;  
THAT SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT THING:  
THINGS ARE EMPTY  
OF BEING WHAT THEY ARE  
BY THEMSELVES.  
THIS IS THE CLEAR LIGHT,  
BEYOND ALL CONCEPTUAL THOUGHT. (1.43)



V. HOW TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF THE THREE TRAININGS

स तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमिः १:१४

sa tu dīrgha kāla nairantarya satkāra āsevito dr̥ḍha bhūmiḥ

YOU MUST CULTIVATE YOUR PRACTICE  
OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME;  
IT MUST BE STEADY, WITHOUT GAPS,  
AND IT MUST BE DONE CORRECTLY –  
FOR THEN A FIRM FOUNDATION IS LAID. (1.14)