



The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali: A New Edition, Translation, and Commentary

Patañjali, Edwin F. Bryant (Editor)

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A landmark new translation and edition

Written almost two millennia ago, Patañjali's work focuses on how to attain the direct experience and realization of the *purusa* the innermost individual self, or soul. As the classical treatise on the Hindu understanding of mind and consciousness and on the technique of meditation, it has exerted immense influence over the religious practices of Hinduism in India and, more recently, in the West.

Edwin F. Bryant's translation is clear, direct, and exact. Each sutra is presented as Sanskrit text, transliteration, and precise English translation, and is followed by Bryant's authoritative commentary, which is grounded in the classical understanding of yoga and conveys the meaning and depth of the su-tras in a user-friendly manner for a Western readership without compromising scholarly rigor or traditional authenticity. In addition, Bryant presents insights drawn from the primary traditional commentaries on the sutras written over the last millennium and a half.

The Yoga S?tras of Patañjali: A New Edition, Translation, and Commentary Details

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Keegan says

It was hard to label this book as "read", as I will be reading from this for many many years. The text itself provides insight and advice for anyone, on any kind of journey. The translation is clear, and Bryant's commentary is thorough and thoughtful. This text is best explored with a teacher, guru, or at least a small group of people.

Manish Mehra says

I have been a practicing Buddhist for last 3 years and have had subtle appreciations and understanding of meditation and the benefits.

Having now read "Yoga sutras of patanjali" recently I am so grateful that such a book not only existed but has made it so easy for a western reader to understand and decipher the meanings of the subject matter.

I believe in years to come I will look back and again be ever so grateful to the author for being able to get me started on this beautiful journey.

Malissa Larson says

An amazing academic translation of the yoga sutras. This book will always be in my library.

Belle says

A dense book I frequently pick up and put down as I "chew on" each precept. Loving it so far...

Samantha says

From all the translations available (that I have flicked through or read in part along the way) this offered the most literal translations and in depth discussions on each sutra and is very eloquently written. I did find myself dipping into other translations to find for more 'easy on the ears' descriptions but if you only buy one (which appears to be rare) then this book will serve you well.

Crystal says

If you want a deeper exploration of yoga and its fundamental teachings, this text is wonderful. It's written by an academic, and the language is difficult. But I appreciate the practice so much more after sloughing through this the last six months.

Becky Schaaf says

I find it difficult to give this book five stars for two reasons. One, I have not read other translations of/commentaries on the Yoga Sutras to know how it compares to other texts. And two, I found the topics covered by the sutras themselves of variable interest. Despite these misgivings, I can't bring myself to give this book less than five stars because I was extraordinarily impressed with how well delivered the commentaries are. Drawing primarily from classical commentaries but also weaving in contemporary commentaries and the authors own well thought out commentaries, linkages between sutras, and comparisons to Buddhism, Bryant manages to make a complex and dense work accessible through clear explanation rather than by dumbing it down.

While it is hard to find a subject like the Yoga Sutras conclusive, I feel this book has given me a strong foundation for further reading.

David Smith says

Arguably the most articulate English translation available. This translation is indispensable to any serious English speaking practitioner of Yoga. One does not simply 'read' The Yoga Sutras, they are to be studied. This translation provides the Sanskrit text alongside the English and is complete with a pronunciation guide and glossary. If I could only have 5 books, this is one of them.

Darshana Jayemanne says

Performs the complex task of conveying over a millennium's worth of commentary - both traditional and academic (in a more contemporary sense) - with great success. Places the rather gnomic Sutras in the context of the philosophical milieu of South Asia in a way that is clearly derived from considerable scholarly experience but is also accessible to the non-specialist.

Armen Melikian says

The author has carefully reviewed the primary sources of yoga, including the major historical commentaries, in a painstaking attempt to provide a thorough intellectual background and analysis of Patanjali's often-abstruse yoga sutras. He has done a remarkable job, but one that has fundamental shortcomings.

A commendable point is the author's own philosophical outlook, surfacing throughout the book in snippets

of criticism of the consumerist conception of yoga in the West—which is indeed an utter distortion and travesty. But a book of academic significance must be held against higher standards of scholarship, and the author’s acknowledgment that it mostly targets the general reader is irrelevant when the flaws can be misleading and lead to an essential misinterpretation of the subject matter.

One of the issues that plague this book is the author’s almost uncritical assessment of yoga as a theistic philosophy. Bryant acknowledges unequivocally that the avowed cornerstone of Patanjali’s yoga, the samkhya philosophy of Kapila, is non-theistic, if not outright atheistic. He fails to provide, however, an explanation as to how an atheistic interpretation of nature vis a vis samkhya has radically shifted into a theistic one vis a vis yoga, a philosophy that has organic links with samkhya, to the degree of often being considered as its offspring.

The author indirectly and unconvincingly attributes this radical shift from “atheism” to “theism” to Patanjali’s eclecticism. But such an interpretation may well stem, at least partly, from his own superficial knowledge of Indian history. Another reason, minor yet crucial, is the misinterpretation of the term “isvara,” which occurs in the yoga sutras as “God” or rather a “personal God”—a rampant interpretation that precedes Bryant, if that can be an excuse.

The author also defends the integrity of the Yoga sutras as they have reached us, discounting the work of highly reputable specialists in the last century who have questioned the integrity not only of the Yoga sutras, but the Samkhya-Karika, the Bhagavad Gita, and all major texts of Indian antiquity. While he does not delve into his reasons for rejecting them—if we assume he is thoroughly familiar with them—his own position is tenuous at best. That some of these disputed sections complement the core of Patanjali’s sutras (the second half of chapter 2, and chapter 3 only of a four-chapter book) is only as good a reason as stating that the interpolated first chapter of John, at a later date, which equates a historical person with God, beautifully complements the evangelist’s gospel, and the last 12 verses of Mark, also later interpolated by devious clerics to create the fictitious account of the Ascension, beautifully complements what precedes it. Such a posteriori apologetics have lived their age in Christianity, despite the fact that many ideologically motivated theologians still uphold the integrity of the Gospels, but apparently it is far from exhausting itself in Indology, whose original texts of reference are equally, if not even more, corrupted and interpolated than the Christian scriptures.

Had the author been more familiar with Indian history, he would have been appalled by the degree of revision, corruption, and interpolation that has swiped all ancient Indian texts throughout the ages at the hands of the Brahmins, the agents of power, who have done so to institute their own ideology and theology, and would have had an altogether opposite starting point as to where the burden of proof should lie. This may entail rewriting the entire book—a work that may take a full lifetime—if, that is, Bryant, a promising scholar despite his shortcomings, proves capable of getting out of the hole he has dug for himself and does not yield to a whirlwind of self-justifications in defense of a heavily invested tower in the clouds.

The foreword, by Iyengar, is worthless as it serves merely commercial purposes for this expensive paperback. The endorsement by Larson is disappointing, even if he qualifies the book as being geared for “the thoughtful but non-specialist general reader,” and seems to be but lip service to support a colleague in the field. To the best of my recollection (from over two decades ago), Larson is acutely aware of the interpolations which occur in the major ancient Indian texts, and has widely quoted or referenced Garbe, the German scholar and a pioneer in the field of Indian textual criticism.

John Hawkins says

I refer to this translation first. This may be my favorite translation.

Christine Mckenna says

Wonderful resource. Foreword and Introduction, chapter summaries and notes offer valuable insights to anyone interested in this text. Discussion of each aphorism (or s?tra) in light of the most influential available commentary (by Vy?sa) adds tremendous value.

For students of the Sanskrit language, this book offers more--Sanskrit text along with the English translation and a word index.

Victoria Klein says

The Yoga Sutras is the pulsing core of the practice of Yoga - which is much more in-depth than the mere *asana*/postures that are so very popular in the West.

Unfortunately, the original sutras are presented in an extremely simplistic fashion, meant to be “unpacked” by a long-time teacher, according to the traditional Indian system.

Because of this, there are countless translations + commentaries of the The Yoga Sutras available in-print today (2 of which I’ve read + reviewed before).

Edwin Bryant’s interpretation of the Yoga Sutras is nothing short of remarkable. Along with his own intelligent perspective (backed by 30+ years of study), Bryant also includes insights from “traditional” commentators who “unpacked” the Yoga Sutras thousands of years ago. Perhaps even more important, he includes detailed information on the spiritual/religious lineage that Yoga developed from; a background in the metaphysics that underpin all Yogic concepts; + comparisons in how Yoga differs from other spiritual lineages that developed from the same root beliefs, including Buddhism.

There is a lot on conflicting information about what Yoga *really* is, especially due to the rise of importance to *asana* over the past few decades. If you’re looking to take your physical practice to a whole other level (it involves a lot less moving), this book will crack open your mind to all that Yoga has to offer, along with challenging your spiritual + scientific beliefs.

If you have never read a translation of the Yoga Sutras, this book may be overwhelming, unless you really love diving deep right off the bat. This book is truly vital reading for Yoga teachers of all “types” of Yoga - it takes us back to “our roots” + reminds us *why* we practice (spoiler: it doesn’t involved flat abs or tight buns).

Karan Bajaj says

From Christ to Buddha to Rumi to Mohammed, mystics through the entire history of human life have had stunningly similar experiences of the ultimate reality, the One who cannot be expressed. Patanjali, the mystic-intellectual from 2nd century BC, has a true gift for expressing this ultimate reality. He collated the entire body of ancient Eastern yoga in a taut, highly readable summary. In my view, this is the only book you need to dive into the heart of Eastern spirituality. For me, this is the most definitive thesis ever written on what it means to be a human. Without ambiguity, it lays out man's true purpose and gives us a step-by-step guide to achieve that.

It was one of the only books I carried on my year long sabbatical to learn yoga and meditation and write *The Yoga of Max's Discontent*. It took me a year of almost everyday reading to even begin to understand it. I will continue to read it through the years.

See more at: <http://www.karanbajaj.com/writing-cre...>
