

INVOCATION TO PATAÑJALI

Patañjali is considered to be the incarnation of Adishesha, the cobra, which is the seat for the Lord Vishnu. Three major texts are attributed to Patañjali, giving three different sciences to humankind: speech (grammar), medicine (ayurveda), and yoga (for consciousness). The compilation of the Yoga Sutras, a collection of 196 aphorisms presenting yoga as an art, science, and philosophy, is considered Patañjali's final and ultimate volume. BKS Iyengar writes, "in the Yoga Sutras [Patañjali] described the ways of overcoming the afflictions of the body and the fluctuations of the mind: the obstacles of spiritual development" (*Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, p.1).

The following verse is chanted in Iyengar yoga classes all over the world. Geeta Iyengar points out, "We chant so that at the very beginning the feeling of sanctification comes from inside, with the feeling of surrendering oneself, because nothing can be learned in this world unless you have the humility to learn."

People of all religious, spiritual, and nontheistic paths use this chant and find it useful. It centers us, prepares us for learning, attunes our senses, unifies a group, and acknowledges the lineage of yoga.



योगेन चित्तस्य पदेन वाचां
मलं शरीरस्य च वैद्यकेन।
योऽपाकरोत्तं प्रवरं मुनीनां
पतञ्जलिं प्राञ्जलिरानतोऽस्मि॥
आबाहुपुरुषाकारं
शङ्खचक्रासिधारिणम्।
सहस्रशिरसं श्वेतं
प्रणमामि पतञ्जलिम्॥

Om

Om is a sacred syllable representing all of creation as well as the creator. BKS Iyengar writes, "This sound is divine: it stands in praise of divine fulfillment" (*Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, p.18).

yogena cittasya padena vācām

yoga for bringing quietness of mind, grammar for eliciting effectiveness of speech

malaṁ śarīrasya ca vaidya kena

and the healing arts for removing the ailments of the body

yopākarottam̐ pravaraṁ munīnām̐

let me go near the one who has given these things to us

patañjaliṁ prāñjalirānato'smi

with folded hands I bow to Patanjali

ābāhu puruṣākāraṁ

whose upper body has a human form

śaṅkha cakrāsi dhāriṇam

bearing the conch and the discus

sahasra śirasam̐ śvetam̐

adorned with the cobra of 1000 heads

praṇamāmi patañjaliṁ

I bow down before Patanjali

hari-ōm

hail om