

Yógena cittasyá padená vācām

Málám śárīrasya ca vaidyákena |

Yópākarottaṃ pravaraṃ muṇīnām

Pátāñjalim̐ prāñjalirānátosm̐ ||

Ābāhu puruṣākāraṃ śaṅkhacaḥkrāsīdhāriṇam

Sahāsra śírāsaṃ śvetam̐ práṇámāmi pátāñjalim̐ ||

Śrīmate anātāya nāgarājāyā namo namaḥ ||

“We chant so that at the very beginning that 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.” Geeta Iyengar, 1992

Patañjali is the (possibly apocryphal) name given to the composer of the Yoga Sūtras, the key text of yoga philosophy. While we can date the Sūtras to around 200-400 CE, we do not know if Patañjali was a single person, a euphemistic name (continuously falling gift) taken by a single person or group of people, a name given to an unknown composer, etc. We do know that the context of the Sūtras is oral tradition: the Sūtras are an exquisite composition of teachings previously

handed down from teacher to student for generations. And yet they are more than 'oral' tradition: the brilliance of their structure is sharply philosophically sound and beautifully woven - artistic - at the same time. The Sūtras are a masterwork of human possibility. Importantly, THEY ARE NOT APHORISMS. Please don't read them like koans. Study them with a teacher.

This chant is typically used before study of the Yoga Sūtras. It is also used by Iyengar classes. When I was studying Ayurveda, I was touched to hear women singing this invocation before their work with medicine: Patañjali is said be the father of much medicinal wisdom in addition to his work on yoga. Further, he is said to be a great grammarian. The chant itself speaks to the all-round human development of a practice, as Patañjali gave us grammar for our relationships, medicine for the body, and yoga for the mind.