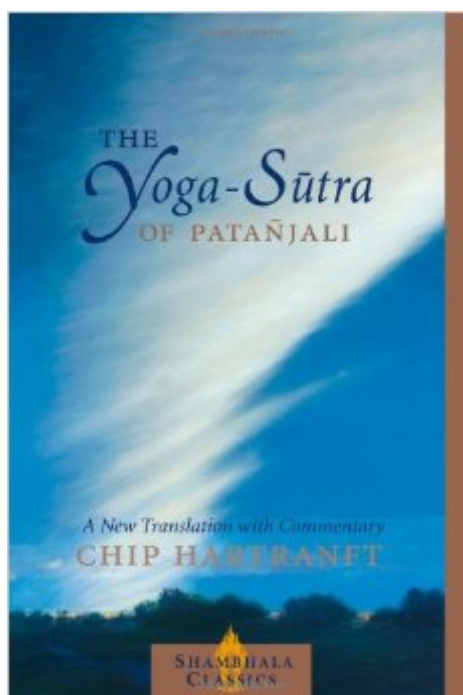


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The Yoga-Sutra Of Patanjali: A New Translation With Commentary (Shambhala Classics)



Synopsis

In just 196 short aphorisms, this classic work of Indian philosophy spells out succinctly how the mind works, and how it is possible to use the mind to attain liberation. Compiled in the second or third century CE, the Yoga-Sutra is a road map of human consciousness—a particularly helpful guide to the mind states one encounters in meditation, yoga, and other spiritual practices. It expresses the truths of the human condition with great eloquence: how we know what we know, why we suffer, and how we can discover the way out of suffering. Chip Hartranft's fresh translation and extensive, lucid commentary bring the text beautifully to life. He also provides useful auxiliary materials, including an afterword on the legacy of the Yoga-Sutra and its relevance for us today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you're a serious yoga student and meditator, you've probably been told by more than one teacher to study Patanjali's yoga sutras. Written around the 2nd or 3rd century AD (not BC as some used to think), they lay the philosophical and practical foundation for all of yoga, including the physical yoga that we all do now. If you're like me, you've dutifully plowed through one version after another, struggling with the often complex ideas and looking for something in them that actually made sense in terms of your life and practice. But until you've read this one, you haven't read the yoga sutras! What's different about Hartranft's translation and commentary is that, unlike the versions by Iyengar, Satchidananda, and most others, he doesn't confuse the meditative yoga of Patanjali with the much later gymnastic stuff. It's not that he isn't interested in it - Hartranft himself is apparently a

well-known teacher of hatha yoga as well as meditation, and considers them to be complementary - but it is clear he agrees with Patanjali that the primary purpose of yoga is enlightenment. Because the yoga sutras are couched in the often illogical samkhya philosophy, their striking similarity to the Buddha's teaching hasn't been noticed or explained very well by other authors until now. And unlike some of the scholars who have taken a crack at it - Miller, for example - Hartranft's breathtaking insights into the sutras seem to come from profound personal experience, which is the whole point of the teachings. As difficult as they can sometimes be, he manages to render them elegantly, proving that you can plumb their depths without having to wade through the tortured syntax of a literalist like Feuerstein. In short, Hartranft is that rarity, a true yogi who can truly write. Like Hartranft, I've never read a version of Patanjali that didn't teach me something, and I think it's best to have several different translations for the sake of comparison. But just make sure you have Hartranft's - it's the one you'll keep coming back to. And if you only get one, this is the one!

I have been studying Hatha Yoga with an Iyengar teacher for a couple of years. Curious about yoga's philosophical underpinnings, I took Hartranft's book out of the library. I have read the disputes about the authenticity of Hartranft's translation in other reviews on . I can't split hairs over fine points of translations from Sanskrit, or Hindu philosophy, but as a translator in other languages, I can say without reservation that Hartranft's translation is lucid and beautifully crafted. Also, I find Hartranft's commentaries accessible, palatable, informative, and refreshingly dispassionate. Hartranft frankly, openly, fairly and succinctly addresses the relationship of the Yoga-Sutra to the teachings of other Hindu philosophical systems and of Buddhism, and to modern scientific and historical findings. I suspect that the breadth of Hartranft's perspective is, in part, what some readers find objectionable. Or maybe it's that he avoids loading down the discussion with references to polytheistic Hinduism. But after all, the Yoga-Sutra is not about that, any more than the writings of Aristotle are about Greek gods. If you are looking to cloak yourself in devotional yoga culture, look elsewhere. But for a clear and concise introduction to the Yoga-Sutra, or to guide your way in a yoga practice, I highly recommend this book.

Why is it so much to expect that an ancient text be presented as it is in translation rather than bent, twisted and reinterpreted to suit someone's personal agenda? This book reinterprets the Yoga Sutras in a Buddhist light (without letting on that it is doing so!). It is not an accurate presentation of the words and thoughts of Patanjali. The Yoga Sutras are about Yoga and though there are some strong overlaps with Buddhism, in the final analysis the Yogic philosophy is about union with God

whereas the Buddhist is not. This commentator intentionally ignores this "elephant in the room" so he can promote Buddhism using a Yogic text. He explains the difference away with a wave of his hand by saying that Patanjali's Ishvara (the ultimate godhead) is impersonal and so can be ignored in favor of a Buddhist interpretation. My reaction is this is gross over simplification and even if it were so, Buddhism strictly denies any godhead, personal or impersonal. Earth to the author/translator/commentator---Patanjali was a Yogi--the ultimate yogi, perhaps--and, no matter how much wishful thinking goes on in the mind of the Buddhist translator/commentator Chip Hartranft, Patanjali, the author of the venerable Yoga Sutras, certainly was no Buddhist. Since the point of the Yoga Sutras is to teach union with the transcendent godhead through stilling the mind whereas the purpose of Buddhist meditation is to achieve total equanimity through stilling the mind, the 2 overlap but are not at all the same thing. The fact that the commentator (Chip Hartranft), perhaps with every good intention, glosses over this makes this particular version more about Chip Hartranft's ideas than Patanjali's. You walk away no closer to the Yoga Sutras than when you began. Is this really okay with you? Try one of the others...the translation in the appendix of "The Heart of Yoga" is especially good. Also, in The Yoga Sutras translated by Satchidananda, Satchidananda's Yoga Sutra commentaries are spot on

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