

Invocation to Patanjali

yogena cittasya padena vācām
(yo-gay-nuh chih-tah-syuh pah-day-nuh vah-chahm)
malaṁ śarirasya ca vaidyakena
(mah-lahm shah-ree-rah-syuh chuh vy-dyuh-kay-nuh)
yopākarottam pravaram munīnām
(yo-pah kar-oh-tahm prah-vah-rahm moo-nee-nahm)
patañjalimī prāñjalirānato 'smi
(pah-than-jah-lim prahn-jah-leer ah-nah-to-smee)
ābāhu purusākāram
(ah-bah-hoo poo-roo-shah-kar-ahm)
śaṅkha cakrāsi dhārinam
(shahn-kah chah-krah-see dar-ee-nahm)
sahasra śirasamī śvetam
(sah-hah-srah sheer-ah-sahm shvay-tahm)
pranamāmi patañjalim
(prah-nuh-mah-mee pah-than-jah-lim)
hari om

From *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* by B.K.S. Iyengar, with the addition of approximate pronunciation in parentheses. The translation from *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* is:

“Let us bow before the noblest of sages, Patanjali, who gave yoga for serenity and sanctity of mind, grammar for clarity and purity of speech, and medicine for perfection of health. Let us prostrate before Patanjali, an incarnation of Ādiseśa, whose upper body has a human form, whose arms hold a conch and a disc, and who is crowned by a thousand-headed cobra.”

Comments by Geeta Iyengar on chanting these verses before class or practice:

“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. So the moment you think of the Lord at the beginning of doing a practice, you know that you are very small in front of that greatest soul. Once that is understood then the other problems which always arise while practicing, mainly concerned with the ego, will be affected. You know that you are “coming down” to learn something. And you can’t learn anything unless you come down; if you think you are on the top and you know everything, then you are not a learner at all. In that sense, the chanting helps.

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