

Invocation to Sage Patanjali

"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 that 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.

We decided to chant these two slokas (the invocation to Patanjali and the Guru Mantra) from the very beginning. When Gururji asked us to practice yoga we stayed with this recitation. But we didn't do it in the classes because when people came as beginners, they had this idea that it is a religious prayer of concern only to Hindus. It took people a little while to understand. Whenever we had some public program, celebration such as Diwali or Gururji's birthday, we would recite the prayers. People started taking interest and asking us what the prayers mean. When it was understood, everybody accepted it. For several years now we have been chanting these prayers before the classes."

- This explanation of the invocation to Patanjali is adapted from an interview given by Geeta at RIMYI in 1992 during the Canada intensive.

योगेन चित्तस्य पदेन वाचां।

yogena cittasya padena vācām

Yogena = through yoga; cittasya = of the mind-content;

padena = through grammar; vācām = of speech;

Yoga for bringing quietness of mind; grammar for eliciting effectiveness of speech

मलं शरीरस्य च वैद्यकेन ॥

malaṁ śarīrasya ca vaidyakena

malaṁ = impurity; śarīrasya = of the body;

ca = and; vaidyakena = through Ayurveda.

And the healing arts for removing the ailments of the body

योऽपाकरोत्तं प्रवरं मुनीनां।

yo'pākarottaṁ pravaraṁ munīnām

Yaḥ = he who; apākarot = removed; taṁ = to him;

pravaraṁ = most exalted; munīnām = among the contemplative sages

He bestowed these things that most illustrious of sages—

पतञ्जलिं प्राञ्जलिरानतोऽस्मि ॥

patañjalim prāñjalirānato'smi

patañjalim = to Patañjali; prāñjaliḥ = with folded palms; ānataḥ = bowed down; asmi = I am.
Patañjali to whom I make reverential obeisance.

आबहु पुरुषाकारं।

ābahu puruṣākāraṁ

Ā bāhu = up to the arms; puruṣa-ākāraṁ = to the one with a human form
Spirit rendered into human form

शङ्खचक्रासि धारिणं ॥

śaṅkha cakrāsi dhāriṇaṁ

śaṅkha- = conch; cakra- = discus; asi- = sword; dhāriṇam = to the one who holds
Bearing the conch, the discus and the sword

सहस्र शीरसं श्वेतं।

sahasra śīrasaṁ śvetaṁ

sahasra-śīrasaṁ = to the thousand-headed one; śvetaṁ = to the radiant one
Adorned with the cobra of one thousand heads—

प्रनमामि पतञ्जलिम् ॥

pranamāmi patañjalim

pranamāmi = I prostrate; patañjalim = to Sage Patañjali.
I bow down before Patañjali.

हरि ॐ

hari aum