

# Preparation for Philosophy Discussion II

Sunday, February 8, 2009 (2:30 – 4:00pm)



STRENGTH  
BALANCE  
EQUANIMITY



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Last month, as we used our asana practice as a laboratory, we observed that we play dual roles. We are both the experimenter and the subject of our experiments. The philosophy of yoga tells us that this experience of duality is fundamental to existence and is characterized as *purusha* (the seer, or awareness) and *prakriti* (the seen, or nature). Consciousness, or *citta*, is reflective of both *purusha* and *prakriti*. As we observe *citta*, we recognize pure awareness and we recognize the impermanence that is characteristic of nature, for example irritability or despair caused by fatigue.

*Yogah cittavrtti nirodhah.* Yoga is the process and result of stilling the fluctuations of consciousness. *Tadah drashtuh svarupe avasthanam.* Then we dwell in our own true splendor. We are practicing yoga when we train consciousness to remain aware but unmoved by the impermanence of the world.

The individual can be seen as both the musician (*purusha*) and the instrument (*prakriti*). In an unexamined life, we may age and observe the decay of the instrument without ever fully understanding its potential. Or we may develop clear awareness but lack the power or organization to manifest our vision in the world. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras teach us how to strengthen and coordinate the musician and the instrument so that we perceive clearly and act with harmonious power. The second chapter, the Sadhana Pada, gives us specific and practical instructions on how to proceed.

Sadhana means spiritual practices. This month, we'll begin our investigation of the practical means for developing the self. Begin by reading the entire chapter. Read it a couple times without the commentary so you gain an idea of its logical organization. Dedicated students may want to create a synopsis of the chapter; it will help your understanding now and serve as a resource for you in your studies.



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For our next meeting read Sutras 2.1 – 2.11 with the commentary. Consider the following in your asana practice.

1. Why do you, personally, practice yoga? In general? Right now?
2. Observe the qualities of tapas, svadyaya and ishvara pranidhanani in your asana practice. Are they discernable? Are they present in equal measure? Is their presence consistent from day to day? If not, is there a pattern to the changes?
3. Become familiar with the klesas. The sutras tell us that all problems stem from these five fundamental (and related) obstacles. Does that make sense based on your experience? Why? Why not?
4. To resolve and attenuate these obstacles, we are told to begin at the end with abhinivesha, fear of death. That's a pretty dramatic emotion for asana practice, but can you discern any element of abhinivesha in your asana practice? How might you use asana to resolve this klesa?

2-4 could be practiced off the mat as well as on. I encourage you to consider these questions in regard to your life beyond your yoga practice. However, asana practice gives us an opportunity to dedicate a limited amount of time to intense scrutiny. Notice, does limited, intense scrutiny yield different insights from longer-term general awareness?