

# Patanjali and his contributions

March 3, 2021

## About Patanjali

- Patanjali, also called Gonardiya, or Gonikaputra, author or one of the authors of two great Hindu classics:
  - **Yoga-sutras:** It's a categorization of Yogic thought arranged in four volumes with the titles "Psychic Power," "Practice of Yoga," "Samadhi" (state of profound contemplation of the Absolute), and "Kaivalya" (separateness); and
  - **The Mahabhashya** ("Great Commentary"): It is both a defense of the grammarian Panini against his chief critic and detractor Katyayana and a refutation of some of Panini's aphorisms.
- He was a notable scholar of Samkhya school of Hindu philosophy.
- He is variously estimated to have lived between 2nd century B.C. to 4th century A.D, with more scholars accepting dates between 2nd and 4th Century CE
- Patañjali is one of the three most famous Sanskrit grammarians of ancient India, other two being *Pāṇini* and Kātyāyana who preceded Patañjali

## History of the name Patanjali

Indian history is presumptive of several individuals by the name of Patanjali. Three of them were well-known;

- the first one being the famous grammarian who wrote the commentary on Panini's Ashtadhyayi (the Mahabhashya) and compiled the Yoga Sutras, the classical text on Raja Yoga.
- The second person named Patanjali wrote the Nidana-Sutras, considered indispensable for the study of the

Vedic ritual literature;

- While the third was a well-known teacher of Samkhya Philosophy.

The above three people, in the historian's view, happen to come from different time periods and are considered to be different personalities.

**The Indian Tradition however, differs in opinion strongly** and advocates that the above different treatises were done by a single person and even further, attributes various medical treatises to him. In the Indian tradition, Patanjali is said to be self-born, swayambhu

### **More about Yoga-sutras**

- Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali is a collection of Sanskrit sutras (aphorisms) on the theory and practice of yoga – 195 sutras (according to Vyāsa and Krishnamacharya) and 196 sutras
- It was compiled sometime between 500 BC and AD400
- Patanjali begins his treatise by stating the purpose of his book in the first sutra, followed by defining the word “yoga” in his second sutra of Book
- The text fell into relative obscurity for nearly 700 years from the 12th to 19th century, and made a comeback in the late 19th century due to the efforts of Swami Vivekananda, the Theosophical Society and others.

Patañjali divided his Yoga Sutras into four chapters or books (Sanskrit Pada), containing in all 196 aphorisms, divided as follows:

- Samadhi Pada
- Sadhana Pada
- Kriyā Yoga
- Aṣṭāṅga Yoga
- Vibhuti Pada
- Kaivalya Pada

## About the Mahabhashya

- It is a commentary on selected rules of Sanskrit grammar from Pāṇini's treatise, the Ashtadhyayi, as well as Kātyāyana's Varttika, an elaboration of Pāṇini's grammar. It is dated to the 2nd century BCE. It
- In this he explains a large number of the sutras of Panini and Katyayana's varttika thereupon. Composed in a lively and absorbing conversational style, the Mahabhasya has set a model for exegetical writings for all time.