

Ashtanga Yoga Opening Prayer



वन्दे गुरुणां चरणारविन्दे संदर्शितस्वात्मसुखावबोधे ।
निःश्रेयसे जाङ्गलिकायमाने संसारहालाहलमोहशान्त्यै ॥

- ▶ vande gurūṇām caraṇāravinde
- ▶ saṁdarśitasvātmasukhāvabodhe ।
- ▶ niḥśreyase jāṅgalikāyamāne
- ▶ saṁsārahālāhalamohaśāntyai ॥

Gist: Because I want more peace of mind and stability in life, I faithfully practice yoga as it has been taught to me by my teacher (guru).

Interpretive: For the peaceful resolution of the deluding & toxic nature of existence, I bow at the lotus feet of my Guru to behold the awakened joy of my own Soul, to seek refuge and receive spiritual healing & enrichment.

vande = I offer respect; the idea is akin to going to the doctor's office: You greet politely, you are there because you need the doctor's services.

gurūṇām = the gurus'

caraṇāravinde = caraṇa + aravinde = lotus feet

saṁdarśita = completely seen

svātma = sva + ātman = one's own self

sukha = pleasant

avabodhe = awakening

niḥśreyase = supreme refuge

jāṅgalikāyamāne = jāṅgali + kāyamāne = jungle doctor; the "jungle doctor" can heal the mental, emotional & spiritual problems of life

saṁsāra = cyclic worldly existence

hālāhala = a mythical poison that arises from the churning of saṁsāra

moha = delusion, avidyā

śāntyai = inner calmness & peace; this is the reason we have come to yoga



आबाहुपुरुषाकारं शङ्खचक्रासिधारिणम् ।
सहस्रशिरसं श्वेतं प्रणमामि पताञ्जलिम् ॥

- ▶ ābāhupuruṣākāraṁ,
- ▶ śaṅkhacakrāsīdhāriṇam ।
- ▶ sahasraśīrasaṁ śvetam,
- ▶ praṇamāmi patañjalim ॥

I praise Patañjali - a principle proponent of yoga - who has assumed the form of a brilliantly luminous man with thousands of heads, and who bears a conch, a discus and a sword.

ābāhu-puruṣa-ākāraṁ = having a human form

śaṅkha = a conch shell which produces the primordial sound of creation

cakra = a discus which is ever spinning like the wheel of time

asi = a sword which can discern between the eternal & temporal

dhāriṇam = holds

saṁsāra-śīrasaṁ = thousands of heads; the reference is to a mythical snake with innumerable heads from Patañjali has descended

śvetam = luminously white

praṇamāmi = I offer respect

patañjalim = the Sage Patañjali who taught yoga

