



atha yogānuśāsanam

“Now follow the teachings of Yoga.”

The study of Yoga is a vast undertaking that requires sustained effort and guidance. The term *atha* signifies auspicious beginning, uninterrupted continuity, and an appropriate end.

Another aspect of *atha* is *saṃkalpa*, which in Vedic tradition is the decision to initiate something important and to ensure that it is completed at any cost, without distraction or deviation.

Yoga is a *saṃskāra*, a process that prepares us to realize the things we wish to achieve at various moments in life.

For instance, when children approach school age parents must prepare them to make the adjustment from being at home to being with other children and teachers. This cannot be done suddenly, some orientation is necessary. This is a *saṃskāra*.

Yoga is a *saṃskāra* in that it equips us to realize our greatest potential. If we wish, it can prepare us for and lead us to the beatitude of the divine presence. The *saṃskāra* of yoga prepares a person for *ātma vidyā* and is open to everyone.

Yoga is *anuśāsana śāstra*. It is experiential, not speculative, it is ancient, with its origin in the Vedas. Sages followed the Vedic teachings and transmitted their experience to their students.

The students, in turn, learned and experienced the teachings in their own lives, and thus became competent to teach. In this way the lineage of Yoga teachers is established.

One of the most notable sages in this lineage, Patañjali, respecting Vedic tradition and blessed with proximity to the Lord, presented this teaching in the form of the Yoga Sūtra, enabling succeeding generations of Yoga teachers and students to transmit their own experiences in a systematic and structured way.

It is because of this that every aspirant of Yoga pays homage and respect to Ānanta, the spirit of Patañjali, before proceeding with Yoga *saṃskāra*.