

THE YOGA SŪTRAS

for a 21st Century

Thomas Paul Emerson

INNERSIGHTS

DANA POINT, CALIFORNIA 92629

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DEDICATED TO
Jiddu Krishnamurti
IN LOVING MEMORY



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BOOKS BY THOMAS PAUL EMERSON

Song of the Lord: The Bhagavad Gita
Jesus You Weren't Supposed To Know
The Art of Dying: An Eastern Approach
Zero Point; Moments Before Conscious Thought

INTRODUCTION

A spiritual understanding has evolved for thousands of years in India, producing one of the world's oldest and most profound traditions. The earliest writings from the Far East are believed to date back to 3,000 years before the birth of Christ. In the east it is believed that over the centuries quite a few people besides Christ have experienced enlightenment, and they too have known the same truths as Christ. Many of these enlightened souls have contributed their understanding to what is now a vast growing body of spiritual knowledge. The number of scriptures, books and sources of truth today from these enlightened ones is quite extensive.

The insight discussed in this book represents the cream of eastern philosophy regarding the ancient science of Raja-yoga. The word "yoga" means to unite, and in this case it means to unite oneself with God. "Raja" means royal, so this means a Royal Union. A "yogi" is someone who practices yoga. This is similar in Christianity in the Eastern Orthodox Church, where they have a similar purpose: to realize the Holy Spirit within, and achieve a "mystical union with God." They

too believe that God created man so that man could discover God deep within himself. Just as Christ says, “I and my Father are one,” and “The Kingdom of God is within you,” yoga is saying that we too are ultimately one with God.

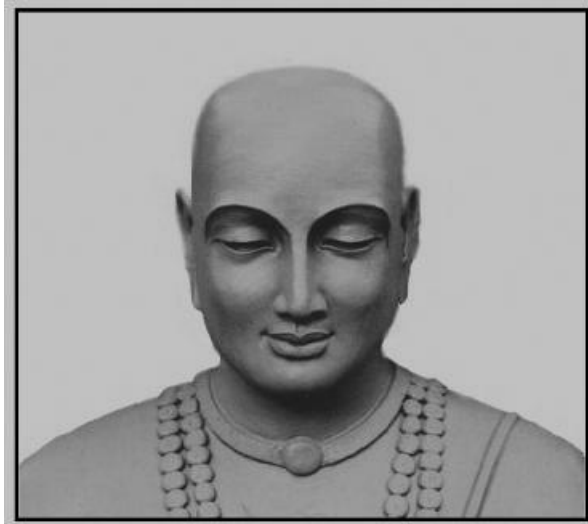
In eastern religion they welcome Jesus into their family of God-realized men, and they say that Jesus was a God-realized soul. They say, however, there have been others who have attained Christ consciousness and so can you! In fact, that is why we are here. They say that Christ’s understanding is the potential realization for each one of us. So where the Christians say that Jesus is the only one who is an incarnation of God, yoga says that we all can, and will eventually attain God-consciousness.

Pātanjali

One of the greatest of all enlightened souls was *Pātanjali*, who is believed to have lived sometime around 400 BCE. It is said that he was born in Sri Lanka, and he was unbelievably brilliant. He was able to not only understand all the eastern scriptures, but he condensed this extensive literary knowledge into 200 verses, or the “Yoga Sūtras.” He wrote these verses in Chidambaram India, and this proved to be quite a remarkable achievement! Pātanjali in these verses explains yoga, meditation, God, spiritual powers, liberation, and much more. Many consider his verses the definitive explanation when it comes to understanding the philosophy of yoga. To many yoga instructors he is considered the father of yoga, and he has become one of the primary reference sources throughout the world when it comes to understanding the principles of yoga.

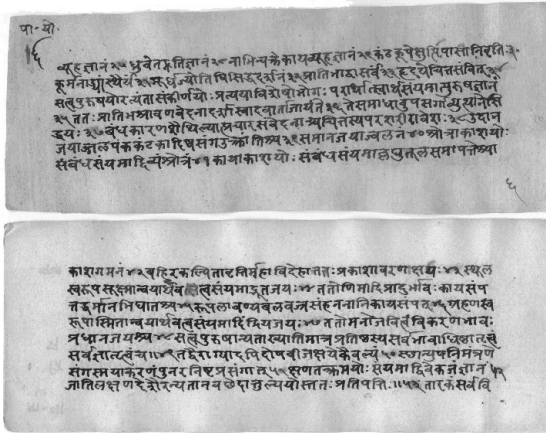
His short verses seem to explain what it would often take pages and pages of other scriptures to explain. His verses are so concise, however, that many people have

difficulty actually comprehending what he is saying. His verses are just the bare minimum it takes to convey an idea, and are often just keywords and not even stated in complete sentences. One reason that the verses may have been so short was because they needed to be memorized due to a lack of books in those days. This way a student or teacher could more easily commit the verses to memory and then pass the understanding on orally to one another. However, usually only those who are already very familiar with these teachings or have had a prior understanding of yoga are able to follow along with the verses. Otherwise the reading of Pāntanjali's verses usually proves to be a most difficult task for most students.



Maharaji Pāntanjali
(*Maharaji* means Great King)

In this book we will discuss the meaning of Pātanjali's verses, and to accomplish this goal quite a bit of additional commentary has been added after each verse. Pātanjali's verses in this book are numbered and in **bold**, and separate from the commentary, so if you wish you can easily read just the verses and skip the commentary.



Above: The Yoga Sūtras consist of four chapters, and about 50 verses in each chapter. Each verse is numbered like in the Bible. The verses are usually referred to as "chapter 1, verse 1" (or 1:1). The English translation used in this book is from one of the earliest, by Rāma Prasāda (1718-1775).

East & West

There are a couple of introductory concepts that may be helpful to mention here before we start. One of the main differences between eastern and western religion is that in the east they believe that in the beginning there was God alone, and that God became everything in creation. However, unlike the west, the east believes

that everything is still God—it's just God manifesting as all the different souls of our universe.

In others words, imagine that you have one of those small dental mirrors, and you look at your own reflection in it. Perhaps all you can see in the tiny mirror is your left earlobe. And if you move the mirror a little to the left perhaps now all you can see is your left nostril. While the images are different, both these reflections are still you. In the same way, in yoga each person is a reflection of God, and IS ultimately God. Just like you can't say that you aren't both of the images in the mirror; you cannot say that each person isn't God. While an earlobe may look different from a nostril, they are both still of the same being.

This distinction is also an example of the two broad classifications that exist in religious thought; that of dualism, and that of non-dualism. Dualism says that there is a God, and then there is the creation. These, the Christians say, are two separate things and they are forever separate. Non-dualism says on the other hand, that while they may appear to be two separate things, the whole creation is actually God. God created everything from itself, and therefore God has become everything that there is. In non-dualism, in the final analysis God is ultimately the only reality. Pātanjali is also saying that the creation is not ultimately separate from God; instead they are like two sides of the same coin. Through each entity's perception and awareness being modified by certain specific subjective traits, the omnipresent God becomes each of its separate beings. In this way God becomes all the different souls in the universe.

God

In the verses God is called *Īśvara*, and God is the Supreme Consciousness of the universe. God is

Omniscient and Omnipotent, and the creator, sustainer, and eventual destroyer of the world. Ísvara is our inner Spirit and the ultimate teacher of all teachers. God doesn't see anything in the universe as out of order, or that anything should be different from the way it is. Yoga explains that God created the world as part of a synchronistic universe that operates according to certain specific physical and spiritual laws, and everything is interwoven.

In the *Upanishads*, Taittiriyaopaniṣad says:

He (God) thought, I may become many and multiply. He objectified himself and evolved all this, everything whatsoever. Having evolved this, He entered into it; and entering became all positives and all negatives, all spirit and all matter, all infinite and all finite.

Our soul exists in the spiritual realm, where it looks out over our physical life here on earth. The yogis tell us that in heaven the soul does not age, get sick, need food, and there is no competition for resources, or any chance of losing anything. So the soul is much happier in heaven, and that's why people who have had near death experiences report how wonderful they feel when they are free of their body. Their soul feels so much more joy and peace when it doesn't have the burden of the physical world to contend with. The yogis tell us that our body is the physical version of our soul, or what the soul becomes when it expresses itself in the physical world. When our soul is a body, it then has to face plenty of challenges; fear, suffering, sickness, not to mention death.

It is these physical concerns that bring out the worst in us, and they allow us to actually see just how much we have actually developed true unconditional love for

others. It is easy to be a saint in heaven, but it's much more difficult here on earth. As a human being we live with an underlying concern for our well-being, and we all have to struggle and compete to survive. Life is like a school, and the curriculum is to learn to love others, and to transcend our own self-centeredness. We have to learn to do what is just and fair, and we also need to learn how to forgive others who have mistreated us. Once the soul has achieved these virtues, it doesn't have to come back here to earth anymore. However, a perfected soul like Jesus or Krishna can still come back if it wants to help others.

Our soul tries to communicate with us, it wants to encourage us to do what is right. Our soul is our higher unconscious mind, and it's also our spiritual guide that's watching over us. It's our inner voice, and our conscience, but will we listen and do what it is telling us to do? The yogis tell us that our body and soul are the same, in the same way that an object and its reflection are the same. It's like the everlasting you is watching from above, and the physical you is your soul's manifestation here on earth. The soul and the body are partners, like a blind man and a deaf man, each one assisting and benefiting from the faculties of the other. In other words, the body becomes alive due to the energy of the soul, and the soul is eventually freed of the body by the knowledge that it gains by being a body. The soul is also responsible for its own pleasure and suffering, because when the soul incarnates in the world it experiences the very conditions that it has created due to its own past actions (karma).

Spirit

The soul is a manifestation of the “Self” or Spirit (both spelled with a capital “S”). Yoga says that the Spirit has become God and all the souls that exist. To illustrate this point; imagine that you have a dream, and in your dream you see yourself at a family reunion. Perhaps there are 30 to 40 people there, and you can actually see what each person is wearing, or hear what they are saying. Perhaps you see your mother in a yellow dress talking to your sister. And in the dream you may even feel uncomfortable when the two of them start arguing. You really feel like you are there—but when you wake up you see that you are actually EVERYONE in the dream—you are your mother, sister, father, cousin, aunt, and grandfather. You have created everyone in the dream, and every detail of the dream. However, while dreaming you actually believe that you are only your character in the dream, and you think that everyone else is separate from you. In this same way, the yogis tell us that the Spirit has become this universe and all the souls in it. We are the Spirit, but as long as our mind is caught up in this dream of being a certain person in the world, then we fail to realize our true spiritual nature. So when someone would ask a great yogi like Nisargadatta; “Do we reincarnate?” He would say; “That’s only an illusion,” because from his enlightened vantage point he sees that only the Spirit really exists. That's why he also says that it’s our interest or preoccupation with our body and our ego that keeps us from experiencing Self-realization (waking-up).

Nisargadatta tells us that this realization occurs when you constantly hold the thought, “I am” in your mind. Not I am this or that, just “I am.” Just keep negating everything else. Gradually you realize that you are not your body, your memories, or even your current beliefs.

Because all those things change with time—but there is a “you” that always exists. This is your “soul.” The soul is what is watching over us. It's what wakes us up in the morning right before our alarm clock goes off, or suddenly reminds us of something that we need to remember.

Self-Realization

Yoga tells us that to know that we are an infinite Spirit, we first have to realize who we ARE NOT. Yoga says that to find out who we are we have to think in terms of what is it that doesn't change? Something beyond everything that changes or doesn't last; and it's through this inquiry that we realize that we definitely aren't our body, our relationships, our past, or even our present physical location, and so on. You eventually realize in the final analysis that you are simply consciousness, or an unlimited awareness. The Yogis say that all we need to do is just let-go of all our attachments and desires in order to see this truth. However, our individual consciousness is formed by our mind accepting a multitude of impressions, associations or ideas of who we think we are, in regards to our surroundings and others. We are encouraged to do this so that we feel that we have a means to always get what we need or want.

Instead, the yogis say that it is through this process of self-awareness that you see that you are not really your associations, or something in particular, you are ultimately a free Spirit. After meditating on this for some time, this awareness that “I am,” but, “I'm not my body”—and all of the implications and considerations that arise from this, you eventually realize for yourself that nothing is wrong anymore, and you are just a witness of this pure awareness.

Humans are the only creatures that are capable of Self-realization. Take other animals for example; animal behaviorists tell us that animals that have the least developed consciousness—like worms and insects—operate on just instincts. They are only aware of such things as their current position in regards to their prey, or their shelter, or finding a food source. Then more conscious animals, such as chimpanzees and dolphins, they have emotions, a social hierarchy, and even a social etiquette. The eastern scriptures say that humans have the most evolved consciousness, and that we can understand the concept of a tomorrow, and we also have the ability for self-awareness.

Purpose of Yoga

The purpose of yoga is to quiet the mind, and learn to see and observe ourselves and our life more objectively. Through an increased objective awareness of ourselves, we can transcend our ego, and eventually through developing an inner silence we realize God. We must first see, however, through our own rationalizations, false perceptions, excuses, and realize who we really are. This is where the journey starts at whatever level of development that we are currently at. Then through a greater insight and understanding, together with a desire for what is good, we can become a more kind, thoughtful, and loving person. In time, through the higher realizations that come through yoga the yogi has a direct experience of the soul, which reveals to them the nature of their own immortality, and they see for themselves the existence of heaven. This provides the necessary drive and determination that spurs them on to finally achieve lasting freedom. So rather than just

believing that there is a soul, or having faith that there is a God, the yogi actually has these realizations.

Our soul is our inner witness and it isn't fooled or swayed by the rationalizations of our ego, and it sees all of our earthly affairs much more objectively than we do. The soul knows that any accurate perception is not going to be a question of what our ego wants, or what we believe; it is a perception that is actually true, completely independent of our own personal desires. So if we could see things as our soul does, then in every moment we would see things more as they really are, and we would know why something is the way it is, and we would know that God has truly become everything; the good, the bad—and our soul doesn't judge or condemn anybody—and through this acceptance we too would feel, “that peace that passes all understanding.”

If instead, we judge, condemn, and only approve and accept what we want, then we're bound to feel sorrow and be disappointed throughout our life. This complete acceptance is so hard for most of us, because most of the time we are judging, or really wanting something, and trying to control things as much as we can. Yoga understands that we all have to live our lives, and plan, act, and participate in our own life; but it says that if our mind can just stop judging, and stop wanting what we don't have; then in each moment we can experience real peace and tranquility.

Devotion

While God is omnipresent, most yogis do worship a personal form of God, such as one of God's human incarnations—like Krishna, Dūrḡa, or Rāma (2:44). A human incarnation of God is much easier for us to cultivate an intense love and devotion for, rather than the more abstract aspect of God as a undifferentiated Spirit, or a formless Supreme Being. To worship, the

yogis would repeat God's name over and over again, or recite prayers, sing devotional songs, or dance ecstatically out of their adoration for the Lord. Yoga says that a strong and intense emotional love for God purifies the heart (2:32). The mind is also purified through our love for God, a love that erases arrogance, envy, jealousy, and anger.

Many great yogis, like the great saint Ramakrishna, have taught that the best and surest method to achieve a union with God is through an intense love for God. Through an ecstatic love, a yogi keeps their mind always fixed on God. Loving God with all our heart and soul, Ramakrishna said would quickly remove all obstacles and would unite us with God. The verses also tell us that by constantly thinking of God, or a great saint, we may remove all mental barriers and our mind becomes pure (1:32).

Ramakrishna once said:

Repeat God's name and sing His glories, and now and then visit God's devotees and holy men. The mind cannot dwell on God if it is immersed day and night in worldliness, in worldly duties and responsibilities; it is most necessary to go into solitude now and then and think of God. To fix the mind on God is very difficult in the beginning, unless one practices meditation in solitude. There are three ways of meditating: think of God while doing your duties, or meditate on Him in a secluded corner of your house, or contemplate Him in the woods. And you should always discriminate between the Real and the unreal: God alone is real, the Eternal Substance; all else is unreal, that is, impermanent.

States of Consciousness

In the first chapter Pāntanjali explains the different states of consciousness, and this can also get rather confusing, so some brief introductory remarks here may be helpful. Pāntanjali will explain what steps the yogis take to free their mind and emotions so that they can realize God. First they must slow down and observe what is running through their mind. Our mind is constantly circulating thoughts; and most of the time we are worrying about something, hoping for something else, and trying to remember all sorts of things at the same time. No wonder we aren't at peace. Take for example, if you're sitting on a train you may be thinking to yourself; "These cars are too crowded... why do I always end up next to a child... and they are never on time... I hope my wife has dinner ready when I get home." For a mind like this, that is always preoccupied and disappointed, peace is a long way away. Yoga says, loose these thoughts and peace will be what remains. So the yogis would use a meditation technique to quite their mind.

A Trance

Pāntanjali will explain that when the yogis begin meditating they first concentrate on an object—something tangible such as a candle flame, the tip of their nose, or their palate. They focus all of their attention on this, and as they concentrate, as other thoughts come into their mind, they just gently brush them aside and return their attention to that one-point of their concentration. This allows the internal dialog in their head to quiet, and their mind to become very calm. And eventually their thoughts will begin to enter their mind much more slowly. With continued practice this results in a trance. An example of a trance would be; have you ever been staring at a campfire on a very quiet

dark night, and you become mesmerized or transfixed by the flames? If so, you may have noticed that as you were staring, there may have been only very subtle thoughts that remained in your mind—perhaps noticing the brightness of the fire, the amber color, the hypnotic movement of the flames, and so on. During a trance other thoughts will fade away, and you may forget for a moment where you are, or why you were there. You may also lose a sense of time; this is an example of a trance.

More Advanced

In the next stage the yogi concentrates on something more subtle, such as a concept or an idea; like God, love, or compassion—and with practice, again most other thoughts eventually fade away. During this stage, usually on a slightly more subtle level, you may realize that there is a *you* that is noticing you observing these characteristics. This is referred to in yoga as the “knower,” and the thing that you are observing is the “known.”

As the yogi’s continue with meditation, they begin to see things much more clearly and objectively. In yoga, an actual “reality” of something does exist, regardless of what our opinions are. Like the question; “If a tree falls in the forest, and there is no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?” Yoga says, that if a tree falls it creates a vibration and one person’s mind may describe the sound one way, and another person may describe it very differently. However, regardless of these descriptions, there is the vibration itself that is produced whether or not I hear it, or describe it. When we truly see without mixing in our own personal interpretations, this is what yoga calls observing *the thing itself*.

The great Raja yogi Jiddu Krishnamurti, taught that we could see the thing itself if we are serious and determined enough to let-go of all of our previous

impressions, opinions—including everyone else’s opinions, conclusions, and so forth; then we can see the true nature of something like authority, or what is truth, or freedom, or fear. He explained that it is when we can just observe something without being influenced in any way by any previous impressions, our society, public opinion, prejudice, the past, and so on—then we can truly see.

In yoga often an analogy of a lake is used to illustrate this inner peace and clarity. The lake represents the mind; and every thought, feeling, or memory that you have is like a wave on the surface. If you look into a lake and the water is perfectly still, you can see clearly the bottom of the lake, as well as a reflection of the mountains, sky, clouds, and trees on the surface. However, if there are ripples or waves on the lake, or mud in the water, this distorts what you can see. Thoughts in the mind are like these ripples, and emotions are like the mud that clouds our perception.

During meditation a yogi’s perception is also not limited to only physical or psychological observations. We have all been spirits in the spirit world, and we have all known God; but most of us don’t remember this. When an advanced yogi is in a trance, they may remember all sorts of things about God and the spirit world. A simple example of this is when a person remembers a past-lifetime while under hypnosis. So in a trance the yogis may realize all kinds of spiritual knowledge as well.

Most Advanced

As the yogi’s thoughts become even fainter, even thoughts of a subtle nature will begin to fade, and they eventually see only the thing itself as it really is, without any of their own subjective impressions. Let’s say you are concentrating on “love,” and as you transcend any

personal associations you have about love, you begin to sense more deeply what love really is, perhaps you sense any barriers separating yourself from others dissolving, and this overwhelming feeling of being inseparable from others. You see the beginning of this realization when a mother says that she literally feels that her child is a part of her—because actually she is. Then if you concentrate only on this sense of oneness or omnipresence, and every time the mind wanders you simply bring it back. The yogis tells us that one day you may experience a completely undifferentiated state.

At this final stage, the yogi transcends all thought no matter how clear or insightful it might be. So at this point any meditation technique used is now also a hindrance, because any technique also relies on thoughts, so even these thoughts must now be stilled so that the mind disappears into its own inactive cause. So as a yogi's thoughts become even fainter and they ascend to a higher vibration, a moment comes when they lose any trace of separateness. At that moment the "I" or "me" completely disappears, and there is only ecstasy and joy. This is the union that yoga speaks of, or the Unitive State.

It is this final stage of a trance that Krishnamurti used to describe to us; a state that is beyond thought, when there is no longer a division between the thinker and thought, and without a method or technique; was how he explained this state. And this is not an awareness that we are actually unfamiliar with; because this is where our mind goes every night when we enter deep sleep, it's just that we're not usually awake or aware when it happens. This is perhaps why Krishnamurti didn't even offer us any advice about following a certain diet, breathing exercises, special postures, or even suggesting that this would take years to accomplish; he knew that this state was as natural as

sleep, and all we had to do is just break the habit of our usual way of thinking.

So in the analogy of the lake; when the lake, the person looking into the lake, the mountains, sky, and trees are all seen as the same energy and undifferentiated, then we see what God ultimately sees. Then we are beyond all words and labels; all thoughts disappear, and therefore so do the thought-waves in the mind. Then there is only pure-consciousness, and that peace that passes all understanding. Yoga says that when we are aware and alert during this perfect stillness of the mind, then you experience this Bliss of Pure-Consciousness.

These stages of consciousness are explained in more detail in the first chapter of the sutras (1:42-48). In chapters 2 through 4, the insights that are gained by the yogis through this practice of meditation are revealed, regarding such subjects as the nature of the soul, God, freedom, life after death, spiritual powers, and many other fascinating subjects.

Yoga Postures

And lastly, in the United States we generally think of *yoga* as stretching or postures, which is just one aspect of yoga. There are eight different branches, or limbs in yoga. All the disciplines in yoga are practiced as a means of achieving union with God, which from an eastern perspective is considered the goal of life. In these verses there is actually very little discussion about postures or stretching. Pātanjali seems to have left that explanation up to others. The yogi's goal was to realize God and everything about their practice was aimed at this goal. They knew that to achieve this goal it was important that the body could sit in meditation for periods of time, and remain limber and free from pain. They also understood that a free flow of blood and nerve

energy through the body was vital to maintain a healthy body and a clear and lucid mind. This was why the postures were practiced, and why they were considered a part of yoga.

Chapter 1

On Trance

1:1 **Now a revised text of Yoga.**

Much had been written about yoga before Pātanjali, and in his first verse he acknowledges that this is his revised text.

1:2 **Yoga is the restraint of mental modifications.**

As the sutras unfold, we will see that Pātanjali is going to say that these “mental modifications” are the subjective interpretations that we make of our world. As mentioned in the Introduction, each person is separate from a state of Pure-Consciousness due to their understanding being modified by certain specific subjective impressions, so yoga is then restraining these modifications so we see things in a true unmodified way. Most of the time our world is mostly what we interpret it to be, and not what it might be independent of our interpretations. So the question is; can we observe our world without modifying or altering it?

Yoga says “yes,” when we let-go of any of our previous interpretations, and we don’t assume anything, or accept anyone else’s opinion, then we can truly see something more clearly and objectively. Then, eventually it is as if our usual interpreter is absent, and it’s at moments like this when we make no judgments, and our mind stops searching the past for an answer, that an extraordinarily clear perception can take place.

Our mind’s hardware is the brain, and it stores impressions so it can quickly arrive at future conclusions, opinions, choices, or strategies to satisfy our needs and desires. One lobe of the brain, for example, processes our visual information; another recognizes objects and labels them, and another applies words and language to images, and so on. In this way we construct a model of the way we think the world is, which is based on how we have interpreted it. Our future observations are then influenced by these opinions, our memory, and this includes everything that we have been told by our parents, teachers, siblings, friends, the media, and so on. As a young child we are constantly told what to believe and what we should do. So these pre-conceived ideas and beliefs start forming at a very young age, and as time goes on we don’t even take the opportunity to really question or observe many things anymore, nor are we free of the subjective thought process that we have.

1:3 Then the seer stands *in his own nature*.

Our modifying thoughts are our personal interpretation of our reality. We think the world is what we interpret it to be, and not what it might be independent of our interpretations. Can we observe

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