


OLLI: Winter 2024

The Philosophy and Practices of Yoga

©2024 Cheryl Fenner Brown, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500, YACEP

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History of Yoga

Lecture

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What is Yoga?

- Originated 5,000 years ago as a practice to unite the mind and body
- YUJ is the root of 'yoga', meaning 'to yoke'. Early texts used the metaphor of a chariot being yoked to out-of-control oxen to mean the harnessing of an undisciplined mind
- Originally, only male ascetics who removed themselves from the householder lifestyle could practice yoga
- All texts were passed orally from guru to disciple.

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Yoga Philosophy

- **Samkhya** philosophy explores:
 - The separation of spirit or pure awareness (purusha) and the material world or nature (prakriti)
 - Prakriti is comprised of the three gunas or states of the material world:
 - Tamas (inaction), raja (action) and sattva)
 - Dualistic view is how many of us think: good/bad, right/wrong, black/white
- **Vedanta** (Tantric) philosophy explores:
 - The non-dual relationship between the individual soul (atman) and universal consciousness (brahman). All is one!
 - Suffering comes from believing the illusion (maya) that we are separate from each other and universal consciousness.
 - The kleshas (spiritual obstacles) and how they impact our practice and progress

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8 Limbs Samkhya + 7 Limbs of Vedanta

There are various types of subtle practices that use the body and breath as tools to create change in the subtle body (* notes the limbs that appear in both philosophies):

The 8 Limbs of Samkhya Yoga

1. Yama
2. Niyama
3. Asana*
4. Pranayama*
5. Pratyahara*
6. Dharana
7. Dhyana*
8. Samadhi*

*Began in 1st century, Yoga Sutras,
Bhagavad Gita, Samkhya-Karikas*

The 7 Limbs of Vedanta Yoga

1. Shatkarma (cleansing practices)
2. Asana*
3. Mudra
4. Pranayama*
5. Pratyahara*
6. Dhyana*
7. Samadhi*

*Began in 7th century, Upanishads, Vedas,
Yoga Vasishtha, Gheranda Samhita*

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Samkhya vs. Vedanta World View

Samkhya

Classical yoga has a dualistic worldview and sees the body as an obstacle to be overcome. We must find liberation FROM the body through the 8 Limbs so that the soul escapes the circle of death and rebirth.

*This is the yoga of
Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*

Vedanta

Tantric Yoga sees the body as a sacred tool that we must use through the 7 Limbs in order to achieve liberation WHILE we are still embodied.

*Most modern yoga is
Vedanta*

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The Kleshas

- Patanjali describes the kleshas (literally translated as 'poisons') as mental afflictions or challenges that impede spiritual progress toward liberation.
- They are the ultimate cause of human suffering and each kleshas gives rise to the next. They are:
 1. Avidya - ignorance
 2. Asmita - ego
 3. Raga - attachment
 4. Dvesa - aversion/hatred
 5. Abinivesah - fear of death
- Fortunately, practicing yoga and understanding yogic philosophy can help!

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Avidya

- 'Vidya' means knowledge so 'avidya' means a lack of knowledge or spiritual ignorance
- We mistakenly see our experiences as reality and our sense impressions and opinions as truth
- This mis-understanding of reality (remember 'maya', or illusion) leads to all the other kleshas
- Ignorance is bliss, after all!
- Avidya gives rise to ego (asmita)



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Asmita

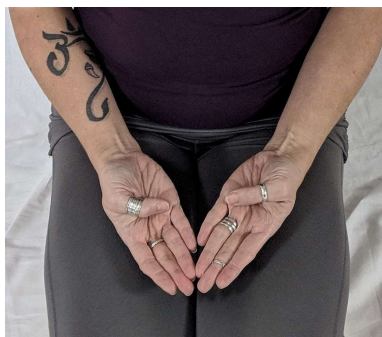


- Ego, misidentification with the 'self'
- Suffering arises when we become consumed with our own identities and self-perceptions
- The more we think the world revolves around us and our preferences, the more we identify with our "I"ness
- Asmita gives rise to attachment (raga)

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Raga

- Attachment, identification with what we "like"
- Arises from our previous experiences
- This leads to a dualistic view of the world
 - Good/Bad/, Me/You, Like/Dislike
- Leads to more suffering as we realize that we might potentially lose what we are attached to
- Raga gives rise to aversion (dvesa)



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Dvesa



- Aversion
- Attempting to avoid things that cause us pain to protect ourselves
- Mistake the person or situation that caused us pain for the pain itself
- Dvesa gives rise to the fear of death (abhinidvesa)

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Abhinidvesa

- Clinging to life/fear of death
- Fear states cause a powerful negative shift in all systems of the body
- When we realize that the **prakriti**, the material world cannot affect **purusha**, the soul, then we can let go of this fear



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History of Yoga (1800-500 BCE)

- **Rig Veda** (1800-100 BCE) – the foundation of Sanatana dharma (Hindu religious practices shared by all castes) in the form of chanted hymns and mantras to pacify the old gods; origin of caste system.
- **Mahabharata** (1000-500 BCE) – Story of the Kurukshetra war between the Pandavas and Kauravas; emphasis on dharma (duty).
 - **Bhagavad Gita** is the story of warrior Arjuna, who has lost his way on the battlefield. Krishna teaches him about his dharma (duty). Everyone can practice the spiritual path, regardless of their caste.
 - Focus on higher consciousness (Laya yoga), mental control (Raja Yoga), body and breath control (Hatha Yoga).

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History of Yoga (900-600 BCE)

- **Brahmanas** (900-500 BCE) – Divinely revealed instruction on the liberation from the world and from suffering by the union with the divine through myth and story.
- **Early Upanishads** (600 BCE) – Mystical texts regarding the nature of Atman (soul/Self) as the individual spark of Brahman (ultimate consciousness) that cannot perceive the nature of Brahman due to human limitations.
 - Brhadaranyaka Upanishad – nature of Atman
 - Chandogya Upanishad – Tat tvam asi – ‘I am that’
 - Taittiriya Upanishad - duality is an illusion
 - Aiterya Upanishad – joy achieved through living by dharma
 - Kena Upanishad – understanding Brahman through self-study
 - Katha Upanishad – Moksha, freedom
 - Isha Upanishad – Karma and dharma
 - Svetasvataran Upanishad – Self-discipline is the path to Brahman
 - Manduka Upanishad – types of knowledge, self-knowledge being most important
 - Prashna Upanishad – Bhakti (devotional love) as solution to human condition
 - Maitri Upanishad – Suffering and liberation through self-realization
 - Mandukya Upanishad – Sacred syllable OM and detachment.

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History of Yoga (500 BCE-900 CE)

- **Ramayana** (500-300 BCE) – Epic story of King Rama (Brahman) rescuing his beloved Sita (Atman) from the demon Ravana. Allegory for liberating our souls from the cycle of attraction and aversion to the material world.
- * **Patanjali's Yoga Sutras** (200 BCE-200 CE) – Samkhya philosophy outlined eight limbs of Yoga to achieve liberation from the body and escape the cycle of reincarnation.
- **Samkhya Karika** (200 CE) – Oldest mention of the duality of Prakriti (nature) and Purusha (spirit).
- **Purana** (200-900 CE) – Teaches the nature of the universe from creation to destruction through legends, folklore, grammar, cosmology, astrology, and medicine.

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History of Yoga (1000-1400 CE)

- **Amarsaka Yoga** (1000-1100 CE) – Rajayoga's text describing tantric practices, including pranayama, mudra, and meditation, greatly influenced Hatha Yoga Pradipika.
- **Amrita Siddhi** (1000-1100 CE) – Earliest Hatha Yoga text, discusses the role of channeling prana into the central channel (sushumna nadi) and preserving amrita (nectar of immortality) through breath and energetic locks (bandhas).
- **Dattatreya Yogahgastra** (1200 CE) – Raja and Ashtanga yoga techniques to achieve Samadhi (freedom) through chanting (mantra), dissolving individual consciousness (laya), and breath-based poses (Hatha).
- **Vashishta Samhita** (1200 CE) – Explanation of dynamic poses (asanas)
- **Yoga Bija** (1300-1400 CE) – Further explores body-based mantra, laya, hatha, and raja practices.

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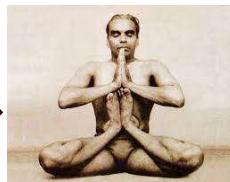
History of Yoga (1450-1934)

- * **Hatha Yoga Pradipika** (1450 CE) – Most well-known text on Hatha Yoga; through breath control, and 18 asanas, the mind is calmed, and liberation is achieved.
- * **Siva Samhita** (1500-1800) – Story of Siva and his consort Parvati; non-dual philosophy of Advaita-Vedanta; Naada yoga mentioned, the yoga of sound meditation
- **Yoga Cintamani** (1500-1600 CE) – Details 34 asanas, science of ayurveda
- **Gheranda Samhita** (1600-1700 CE) – 7-limbed approach to purifying the body
- **Sritattvanidhi** (1800) – Mysore practices of Krishnamacharya
- **Yoga Maskaranda** (1934) - Also by Krishnamacharya explains the Ashtanga form of postures and the importance of breath, energetic locks (bandha), (internal gaze point) drishti, and counting. Origin of Vinyasa Yoga.

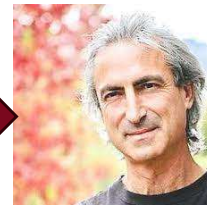
Lineage



Krishnamacharya
(1888-1989)
Ashtanga Yoga, brought yoga to US



B.K.S. Iyengar
(1918-2014)
Original form of Hatha Yoga, use of props



Richard Rosen
(1947)
Broke from Iyengar lineage to teach Hatha Yoga



Joseph LePage
Founded Integrative Yoga Therapy in 1992



Setting Intention

Practice

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What is a Sankalpa?

- The word Sankalpa translates to:
 - Idea, volition, conviction, thought, persuasion, intention, will personified, declaration of purpose, will, determination, wish
- It isn't just a wish to be fulfilled, but a deeper idea that enables a connection to our highest truth.
- While creating intention, give yourself time to look at your core beliefs, especially those about worthiness that are outdated and you are ready to move beyond
- The Sankalpa should speak to some idea we have about ourselves that is getting in the way of our spiritual progress.

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Two Types of Sankalpa

- I AM Statement
 - This type of Sankalpa is a statement of your innate worth and goodness
 - I am peace
 - I am happy
 - I am healed
- Goal/Wish Fulfillment
 - This type looks at your goals and guides you to take a specific step toward that goal
 - I focus on the positive
 - I love and accept myself in every moment
 - My work fulfills me financially, mentally, and emotionally

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Using Sankalpa in Yoga Nidra

- Explain to students how they are to create their intention in succinct, clear language
 - "A short, positive healing affirmation made in simple present tense beginning with 'I am' or 'I verb'".
- It is repeated at the beginning three times silently to implant this intention in the consciousness, like planting a seed into fertile soil. It is repeated at the end of the practice again three times silently to water the seed.



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Using Sankalpa in Yoga Nidra

- Use the same Sankalpa until it comes to fruition; this may take weeks or months. With consistent practice thoughts, words and deeds are brought into alignment with the sankalpa.
 - What we think, so we create!
- 
- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| I have the power to make this world a better place! | I take pride in working hard and tackling challenges. | I am the true symbol of a champion... joyful when others win! | Every problem has solutions and I am committed to seeking out those solutions! |
| My work ethic determines daily successes that will lead to future successes. | I am in control of my success! | I know that the rewards for practicing hard are AMAZING! | I am worthy of wonderful things in my life. |
| I have so much to offer this world! | I am important! | No matter what has been done, I am a lovable person. | My courage and bravery continue to grow. |
- Be careful how the statement is crafted - "I wish I were rich" and "I see the abundance in my life" both deal with prosperity but have very different energetic signatures.
 - Write down Sankalpa and post it where you will see throughout the day to continue fertilizing the seed

Setting Sankalpa with Mudras

- Mudras are hand positions that work with the natural energy vortices located in the palms of the hands and fingers.
- When we place the fingers together to create certain shapes, we redirect this energy back into the body. Mudras can bring focus and attention to certain areas of the body through breath awareness, they can also have an immediate effect on the emotions.
- There are three mudras in this lesson that highlight the of considering the mains stressors of your life, contemplating your goals for this time, and how you might achieve those goals.

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Purna Hridaya Mudra



- **Seal of the Strong Heart**

- Interlace fingers inside of palms, touch thumbs together and reach them towards chest so that a heart shape is formed with the hands.
- Opens you to a sense of sense of self-resilience. Use to connect with the deep emotions of the heart.
- Setting Your Sankalpa: Hold this mudra while you contemplate the challenges you are facing right now.

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Padma Mudra



- **Seal of the Lotus**

- Place hands together at the heart, keep thumbs and little fingers together, open other fingers and create cup shape between palms.
- Elevates heart energy, integrates body and mind. Use to stay open while healing your emotional heart.
- Setting Your Sankalpa: Hold this mudra while imagining the best possible outcome for your challenge

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Vajrapradama Mudra



- **Seal of Unshakable Trust**
 - Clasp fingers and open palms toward heart; point thumbs upwards. Hold a few inches away from the chest.
 - Builds confidence, security, opens the heart very gently. Use when frightened or anxious or filled with self-doubt.
 - Setting Your Sankalpa: Hold this mudra while creating your "I am" statement encompassing your goal.