



heartofyoga

ONLINE IMMERSION  
WORKBOOK



Heart of Yoga Online Immersion Workbook  
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*Yoga is not information-gathering: it is your daily embrace of what you are, the power of the cosmos.*

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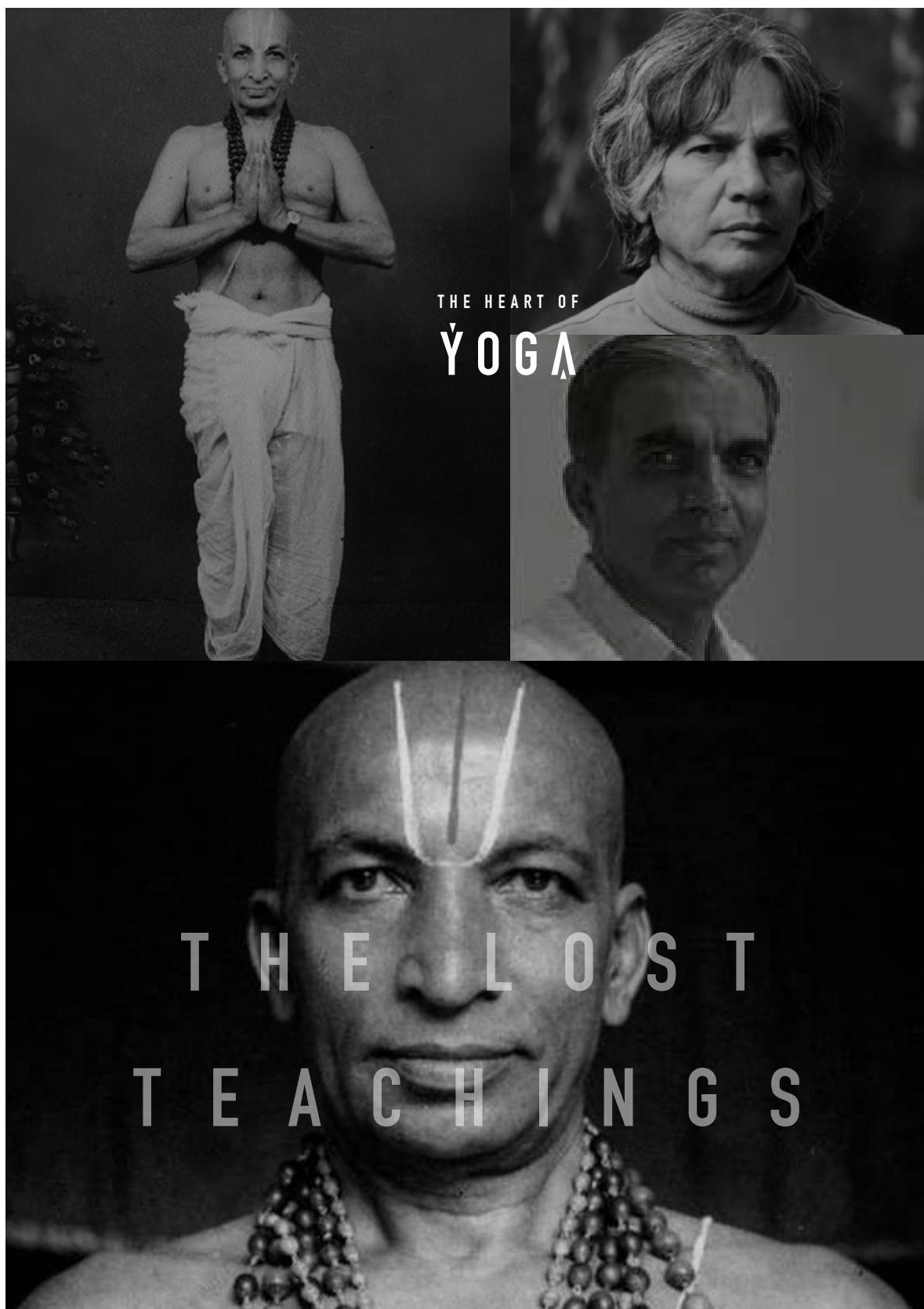
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## **Glossary**



*Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, U.G. Krishnamurthi, T.K.V. Desikachar*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Welcome

Welcome to the heart of Yoga. This is not a style, a brand, or a money-making enterprise, but the ancient method of enjoying and participating in your own life as you. It comes from the real-life experience of many people, and if it is philosophy, it is in the deepest sense, “to love wisdom.”

In a time when many are questioning what yoga actually is, we offer an answer. It's come through the meeting between four great teachers of our time, Professor T. Krishnamacharya, his son T.K.V. Desikachar, and their friends Jiddhu Krishnamurti and U.G. Krishnamurti (not related), and it lays the foundation of yoga in the ground of ordinary experience. Yoga begins and ends in the living reality of your breathing body.

This workbook is a condensed communication of the essentials of the heart of yoga, designed to complement the online video and audio materials. The most important aspect is not whether you read everything in this workbook, but whether you attempt to do your daily practice integrating the principles of practice. Your daily practice is at once a participation in life's wisdom and an honouring of its indestructible presence as each one of us. As such, yoga is passed from one to another in the strength of relationships of mutual give-and-take, respect, and real feeling. In this structure where a teacher is “no more than a friend and no less than a friend,” there is no wisdom in manipulating another.

The principles of breath-body

*Great blessings are upon you. You are the power of the cosmos arising as pure intelligence and utter beauty in perfect intrinsic harmony with the entire cosmos. It is your natural state, already true of you. This is a fact. Not a hopeful spiritual statement or poetry. You are not the person trying to meditate. You are not the person trying to know God or get enlightened. These are unnecessary thought structures that have been put in you that obliterate your noticing that you are indeed the power of the cosmos. Any movement of mind trying to know what is already true is useless. The mind is arising from the heart, hridaya, as a function of the heart, a function of life... that is its only purpose. What you do have are the Yogas of participation in the Given reality. And it is easy. Life is not a desperate, fearful affair of struggle, ill health, and death. Life is an eternal flow of nurturing that cannot be lost. You do not even have to search for it, because it is utterly given. You are loved and cared for completely.*

participation given here are a technology of relationship. With it, compassion, the ability to receive ourselves, arises. This allows us to receive others. Out of this intimacy comes all useful discussion of philosophy, teaching, lifestyle and ethics.

Your practice will cause questions to arise, as with music practice, and allow you to receive and integrate your experience during the onsite training, and after. This doesn't need to be anything obsessive — start with ten minutes of easy moving and breathing.

There are many good people around the world working in their local communities to practice and transmit a whole understanding of yoga, to take care of the full potential of yoga as a great science of wellbeing and life-enjoyment. It's the greatest treasure anyone can hold, and we are grateful to everyone embodying this and passing it on, and everyone who has done so throughout history.

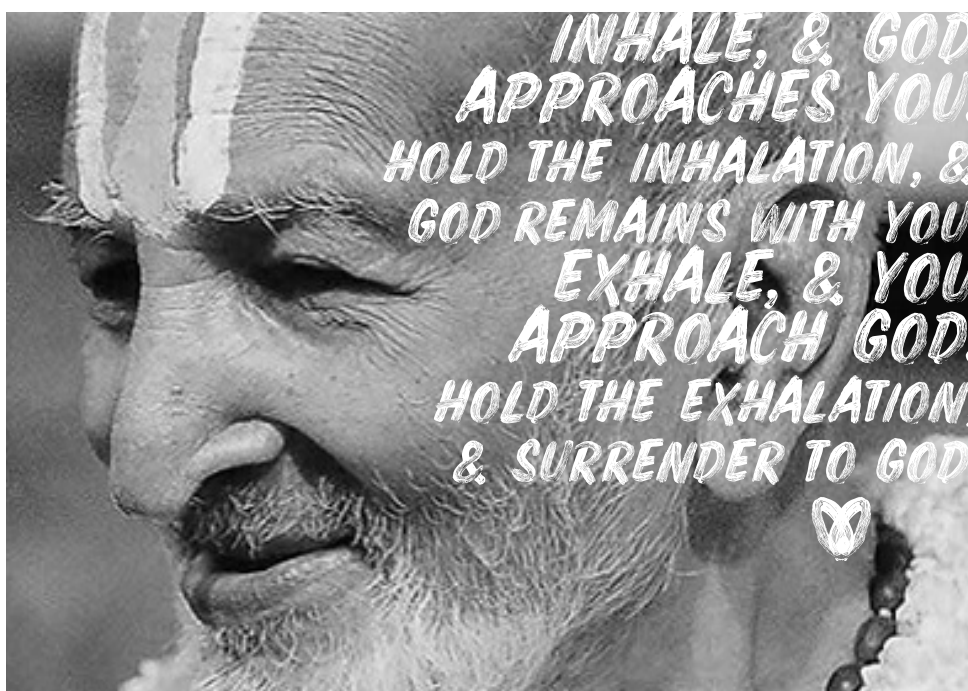
Here to Hold Your Hand to Practice:



*Mark Whitwell*



*Rosalind Atkinson*





## 1.2 How to Use This Course

This eight-week course is designed to get you comfortably practicing your own direct participation in Life, also known as Yoga.

Each week has a theme and contains video and audio lessons, self-care and self-enquiry practices, and recommended readings.

You can contact your Assistant Teacher any time with questions about your practice, or you can ask Mark any questions you might have during our two live Q&A calls.

The way to get the most out of this course is to commit to daily practice, even as little as ten minutes. You can follow the Week 1 Practice video each day, or you can download the iPromise app, in which Mark demonstrates an

even shorter simple daily practice. Or you can do one of the longer practices from later in the course.

Daily practice will create organic learning questions and enquiry to arise for you. You are welcome to discuss this in the discussion group or contact the Assistant Teacher.

We recommend you commit half an hour daily to a simple practice, and then spend one day a week going into the lessons for that week in more depth. We also recommend you repeat each practice several times until the principles are easily established. It is your own breath, so it will always be fresh and new.

Take a moment each week to contemplate the enquiry question, and you may like to write in response to it here in the workbook.



## 1.3 Learning The Basic Breath

The breath facilitates the movement and the movement facilitates the breath.

Consistently use the *ujjayi* breath. This establishes a central focus for *asana* practice and prepares for *pranayama*. *Ujjayi* (of the chest) is breath controlled at the throat (the larynx), not the nostrils. The structure of the whole body can be felt to participate and regulate the movement of breath in *asana* and *pranayama*.

All the movements are linked to the breath, the *ujjayi* breath in particular. Ideally when practicing *asana*, every move we make is linked to a specific breath. Certain movements go with the inhalation, and certain ones go with the exhalation.

*Ujjayi* means that we can hear the sound of the breath in the throat. We breathe through the nostrils only, but rather than sucking the air in at the nostrils we control it by using the glottis, which is in the throat near the voice box. This is what creates the unique sound of the *ujjayi* breath and also how to easily tell if someone is doing it correctly. Using the *ujjayi* breath gives the practitioner much more control over the breath than regular nostril breathing. This is

the breath we use when in deep sleep; it has a calming effect on the nervous system and mind.

There are a very few situations where *ujjayi* breath may not be appropriate, for example early stages of pregnancy and severe asthmatics. The *ujjayi* breath is powerful and can cause some dizziness in the beginning as an initial detox occurs. This can also be related to high or low blood pressure, low blood sugar (hunger), or forcing the neck back too far and pinching nerves in the neck. If there is dizziness, lie down and relax until the feeling subsides.

Also known as: Victory breath, ocean breath, Darth Vader breath.

*“The quality of our breath is extremely important because it expresses our inner feelings.”*

*— T.K.V. Desikachar*

### 1.3 Learning The Basic Breath

*People often breathe only in the abdomen, without expanding the chest. Others hardly use the diaphragm at all, restricting their breathing to the upper chest. Very tense people or asthmatics can sometimes hardly move the abdomen or chest at all when they breathe. The technique for gaining a fuller breath consists of consciously expanding the chest and abdomen on inhalation and consciously contracting the abdomen on exhalation. This simple breathing technique described below, together with the integration of breath and movement, is a means for bringing greater depth to the quality of our yoga practice. I suggest that when we inhale we first fill the chest and then fill the abdomen, and as we exhale we release the abdomen first and then finally empty the upper lobes of the lungs in the chest region.<sup>3</sup> This is contrary to the way of breathing taught in many yoga classes. The technique I am suggesting has the great advantage of stretching the spine and straightening the back. The moment we start to breathe in, the ribs rise and the spine, to which they are attached, is extended upward and slightly straightened. When using the other technique of breathing first into the abdomen and then into the chest, the abdomen expands so much that it inhibits the expansion of the chest and consequently the spine is not extended enough. As well, the abdominal organs are pressed down rather than the diaphragm being given room to move freely by the rising action of the chest. Because we are interested in breathing that assists the movements of the body and does not hinder the extension of the spine, this chest-to-abdomen breath is best to use. Experiment with both methods and feel the difference.*

*T.K.V. Desikachar, The Heart of Yoga: Developing A Personal Practice*

## 1.4 The Five Principles of Practice

The five principles of Yoga distilled from Krishnamacharya are not only easy to understand; they are the core, the heart, of Krishnamacharya's teachings. If there is only one piece of technical knowledge you absorb from this manual and your Heart of Yoga training, let it be the following five principles of practice! Embodying these principles is to engage the technology of relationship that brings all polarities into mutuality through the engagement of inhale with exhale, above to below. This is hathayoga, the union of "sun and moon" in which the heart, the whole, is realised. It is making love with Life itself.

At first you will find quite a bit of conscious attention is required to consistently follow these principles—breathing before moving, matching the lengths of breath and movement, etc, but over time they can become second nature, and can be incorporated into all the styles and brands of yoga that derived from Krishnamacharya but left out these crucial principles.

**1. Breath is movement. The body movement IS the breath movement.**

The movement of the body is consciously linked to the movement of the breath and felt to be the same movement.

**2. The breath envelops the movement.** Breath starts slightly before and finishes slightly after the movement. The breath initiates the body movement.

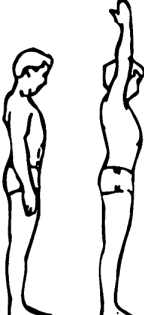
**3. The inhalation is from above as receptivity, the exhalation is from below as strength.**





Inhale into the upper chest, allowing the relaxed belly to expand naturally. Exhale by gently drawing the abdominals in and up, allowing the chest to settle naturally.

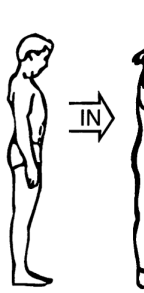


**4. Asana creates bandha, and bandha serves the breath.** *Bandha* exists naturally & not in isolation from *asana* and *pranayama*.

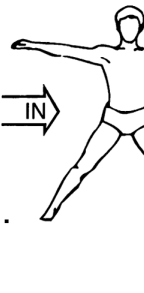
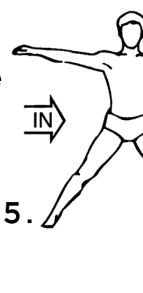
**5. Asana, pranayama and meditation are a seamless process.** *Asana* allows for *pranayama*, and *pranayama* allows for meditation. Meditation arises as *siddhi*, a gift, and cannot be forcefully practiced.





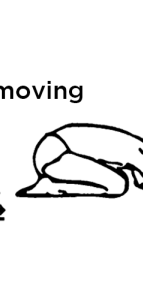
# 1.5 HEART OF YOGA ONLINE IMMERSION DAILY PRACTICE


1.  x4  
IN  
OUT


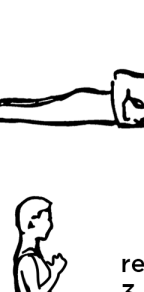
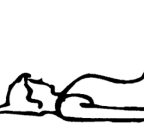
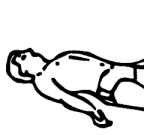
2.  x4  
IN  
OUT  
 stay x4  
IN  
OUT  
 OUT  


3.  IN  
OUT  
 IN  
OUT  
x4 moving, stay up x4  
step forward on retention  
 IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
repeat other side

4.  IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
x3 each side moving, stay x3 each side  
5.  IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
x4 moving, stay down x4  
IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT

6.  IN  
OUT  
step back on long exhale  
 IN  
OUT  
x3 moving, stay down dog x4-8  
 IN  
OUT  
x3 moving  
 OUT  
IN  
REST  


7.  IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
IN

8.  (IN)  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
x3 moving stay up x3  
rest holding knees  
9.  repeat cycle 3-4x  
 IN  
OUT  
IN  
OUT  
rest holding knees  
9. 

## 1.6 Going Deeper Into the Five Principles

### 1. The Body Movement is the Breath Movement

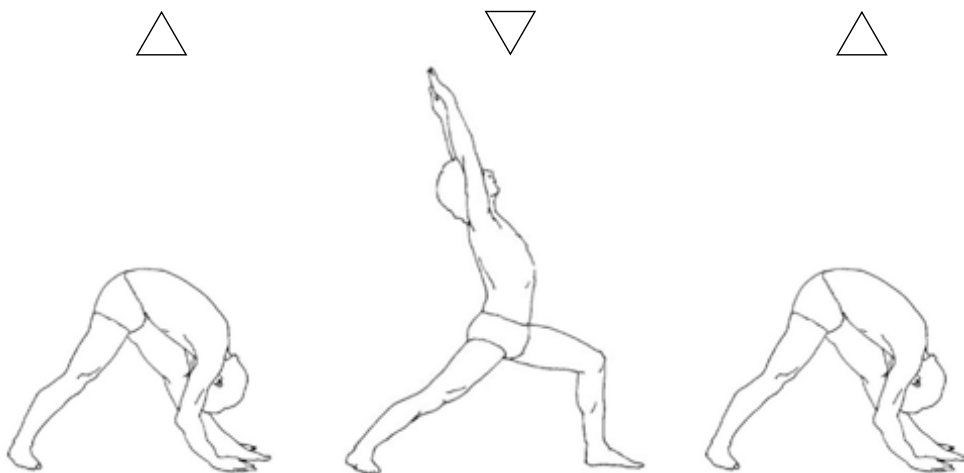
The breath facilitates the movement and the movement facilitates the breath. Consistently use the audible ujjayi breath (over time, it may become almost inaudible). This establishes a central focus for asana practice and prepares for pranayama. The structure of the whole body can be felt to participate and regulate the movement of breath in asana and pranayama.

All the movements are linked to the breath, the ujjayi breath in particular. When practicing asana, every move we make is linked to a specific breath (or deliberate retention). Certain movements

go with the inhalation, and certain ones go with the exhalation.

On a more subtle level, the whole body can participate in the breath process as energy and feeling. An ancient text says, “A true Yogi breathes through his feet.”

Breath is the link between body and mind. When the breath is slow, smooth and deep, the mind is quiet and peaceful. When the mind is peaceful, we are able to have a clear perception of ourselves, unobstructed by habits, associations, misperceptions and conditioning.



**1** ..... The body movement is the breath movement.

## 2. The Breath Envelops The Movement

Example: *Tadasana*: first the practitioner begins to inhale, beginning in the upper chest. Then raises the arms above the head. The movement finishes just before the inhalation finishes. There is a slight pause after the inhalation, then the abdominal area is pulled in strongly as the exhalation begins, then the arms lower back to the sides coming to rest just before the exhalation finishes.

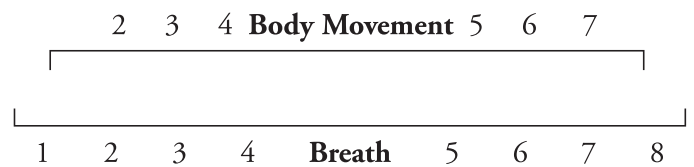
When encompassing the movement with the breath, there is a subtle but important distinction to be clear about: the movement should fit inside the comfortable breath. For example, if the natural deepened breath is eight seconds long, then the movement will be six or seven seconds long. DON'T stretch the breath out to fit around a long movement. Similarly, if you run out of breath during a movement, move faster, or rest until your breath returns to normal. The length of the breath should dictate the speed of the movement, not the other way around.

The simple reason for this is to keep the breath at its natural deepened rhythm to avoid possible dizziness or fainting,

or gasping for breath. Over-lengthening the breath will eventually become an unpleasant struggle. The breath is the boss!

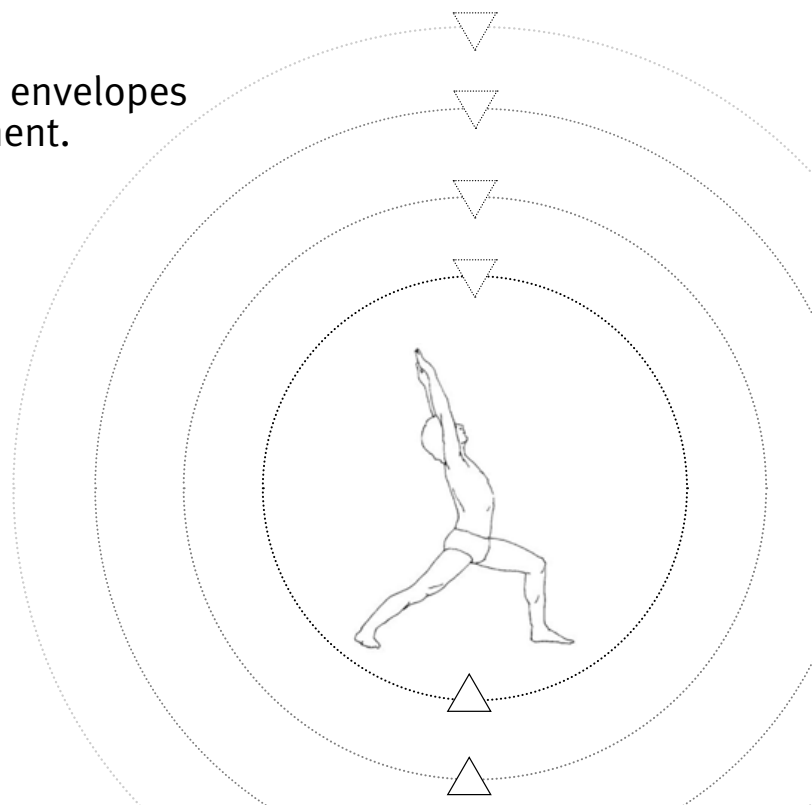
*Asana* is the participation in the elasticity of the whole body. It is vital not to push beyond the natural elasticity. The body will snap! Specifically, *asana* is designed to enhance the elasticity and strength that the system must have in order to breathe. *Asana* is essentially the same process as *pranayama*. The difference is that movement of the body is used to enhance the breath process in *asana*. In *pranayama*, the body is stationary and there is less attention on the body and more on the subtle aspects of the breath.

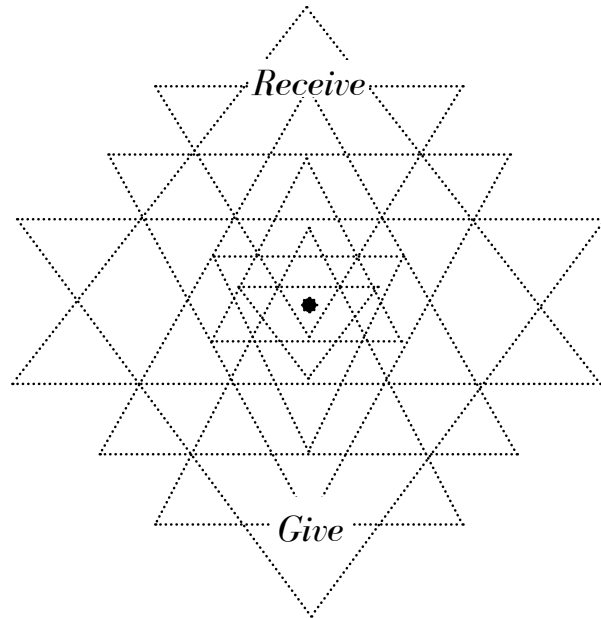
The gauge of *asana* practice is the quality of the breath, steady and comfortable. The breath is our guide and teacher. In Yoga, the breath is the means and reference, and the very purpose of *asana*.



# 2

The breath envelops the movement.





### 3 The inhalation is from above as receptivity, the exhalation is from below as strength.

Inhalation: expansive, lengthening, yin, strengthening, arching, receptivity, female.

As we breathe in, the ribcage starts to lift as the lungs fill up. Because the ribcage is attached to the spine this causes the spine to extend and straighten or arch slightly. As the ribcage lifts, the diaphragm moves downward creating an expansion in the abdominal region. Because the ribcage is lifted, it has created more space internally, the organs are not compressed and so the diaphragm has more freedom of movement which means that the inhale overall is very deep and complete. So the optimal inhale is: inhale into the upper chest first allowing the ribcage to lift, then allow the abdominal area to expand as well, creating a fully filled torso.

Therefore, the movements that coordinate with the inhale will be: lengthening and extending, back arches, raising the arms. In general, when the limbs move away from the body it is done on an inhalation.

Exhalation: contracting, softening, releasing, relaxing, strength from the base, yang, male.

As the breath leaves the lungs, the ribcage starts to drop back down and the diaphragm moves back up. This causes the belly to draw back in toward the spine. The spine also relaxes back into its normal position. As we consciously control the exhalation, we facilitate this drawing-in by pulling the abdominal muscles in further as we breath out.

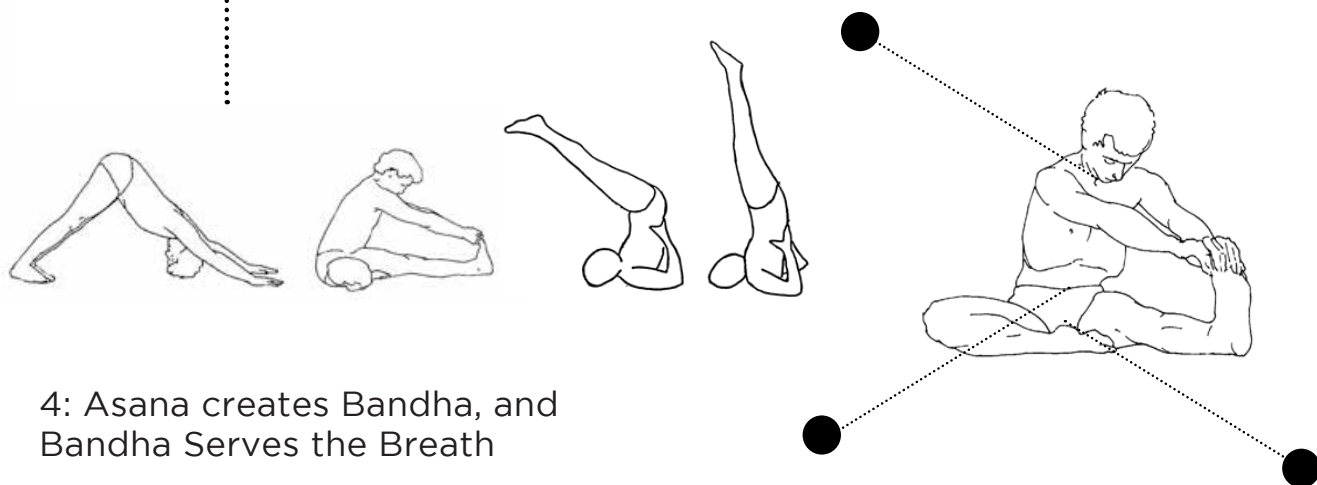
Therefore, the movements that coordinate with the exhale will be: forward bends, contracting, lowering the arms, twists. In general, when the limbs move in towards the body, or when the body is twisting, it is done on an exhale.

The exhale creates natural *bandha*, through the lifting and drawing in of the abdominals. It doesn't need to be forced, exaggerated, or aggressive.



## 4

## Asana creates bandha, and bandha serves the breath.



## 4: Asana creates Bandha, and Bandha Serves the Breath

The word *bandha* means “to tie, or to lock, or to close.” In practice, it is used to ‘lock’ certain areas of the torso into place. By doing this, we are able to increase the amount of ‘waste’ that is burned in the *agni*, the fire of life.

There are three main *bandhas*:

**Jalandhara Bandha:** the spine is straight, and the chin is tucked back and down towards the chest. This one is approximated in many asana.

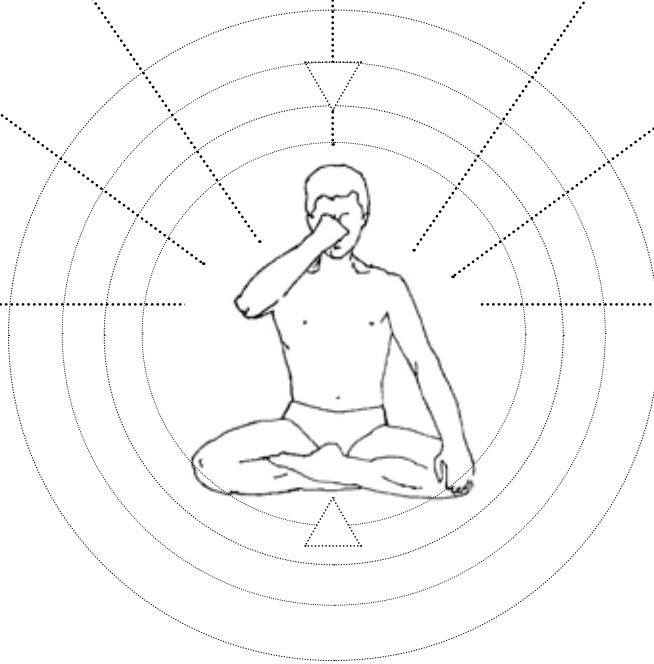
**Uddiyana Bandha:** the diaphragm and the abdomen are raised and pulled in towards the spine. This is established after the exhalation. The exhalation draws the abdomen in and up by the completion of the exhale; the diaphragm should be entirely drawn back up into the ribcage. The feeling in the abdominal area is of being drawn in and up. This process causes the back and the rectal muscles to contract also. (*Uddiyana bandha* can also be fully activated in retention after exhale).

**Mula Bandha:** this is the pulling up of the pelvic floor, squeezing the perineum and lifting it up. After es-

tablishing *uddiyana bandha*, we can then continue to breath with *mula bandha* maintained. In *mula bandha*, the area below the navel, including the rectal muscles, is held in the contracted position, whilst the area above the navel is relaxed slightly. Be cautious of complicated anatomical descriptions relevant only to male bodies.

Practicing the *bandhas* requires a good teacher for guidance. Before attempting *bandha* there should be a certain level of proficiency over the breath. If the exhale is weak, then *bandhas* should not be attempted. During *asana* practice, *bandhas* can be practiced in certain postures; a certain level of mastery in this should be accomplished before introducing *bandha* in to *pranayama* practices.

Several good positions to practice *bandhas* are: *Maha mudra*, *Adhomukha svanasana*, and *Savangasana* (shoulderstand).



# 5

Asana allows for  
Pranayama, and  
Pranayama for  
meditation.

5. Asana, pranayama and meditation are a seamless process.

Asana allows for pranayama, and pranayama allows for meditation. Meditation arises as siddhi, a gift, and cannot be forcefully practiced.

Deep, controlled and attentive breathing also increases clarity of mind. Literally the brain is energised and cleared by the uptake of oxygen. This is why pranayama is the preparation for meditation.

We could describe asana as moving pranayama, or moving meditation. They are all variations of immersing our attention in the life that is our body.

Krishnamacharya's summary instruction on meditation was "the Buddha was a Yogi," meaning meditation should not be practiced isolated from its full original yogic context.

*"Spirit means breath, that is the Latin definition of the word. Nothing more!"*

*— U.G. Krishnamurti*

## 1.6 Going Deeper with the Five Principles

### **Breath assists the movement of the body**

Remember, the movements are there to assist the breath. The breath will guide the practice. The movement of the breath affects the lungs, diaphragm, abdomen, spine and pelvic area.

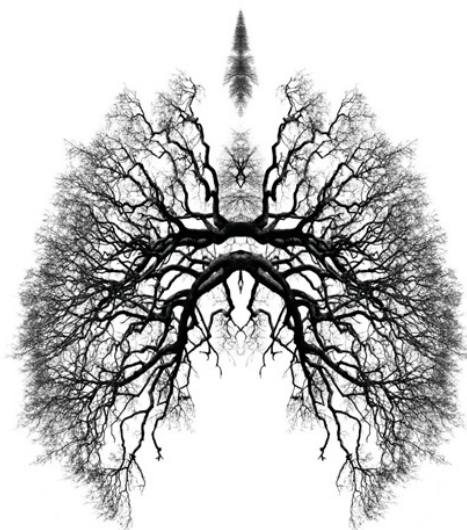
As a consequence of this breath movement, there is a related impact on the body movement, and vice versa. Each one effects and assists the other. This can be easily observed in several different ways. For example: lie face down on the floor, with the forehead to the mat and hands palms down beside the ribcage. Exhale fully. Then lift up into bhujangasana without using breath. Once in the position, keep the back muscles tightly engaged, and then take a full inhale and notice how the breath itself lifts you further into bhujangasana. This same experiment can be applied to a forward bend or twist to experience how the exhale assists these postures.

### **Why is there such an emphasis on the breath?**

A: From the yogic perspective, the breath is the bridge that links body and mind. The breath reflects what is going on in the body-mind. Consciously being attentive to the breath is the process which is Yoga (Patanjali's Sutra 1.2). Being able to direct our attention in one direction without distraction we become absorbed into that object of our attention: this absorption is

the classic definition of yoga. Furthermore, the old yogis believed that our life span is measured not in years but in breaths. By restoring and mastering the breath, it is believed that the life span is extended. The breath is also the major means by which we are able to concentrate prana in our system (prana being our life force or vital energy). By cleansing and strengthening our system with the breath, we eliminate blockages and so prana flows more easily.

A great deal of research has been done regarding the benefits of deep breathing and how it can reduce the risk of heart disease, lower high blood pressure, increase immunity and much more. Deep, controlled breathing also improves our entire circulatory system by rejuvenating the blood. The breath oxygenates the blood and brings fresh nutrients to all vessels and capillaries. For further info read pages 194-199 of Yoga for the Three Stages of Life, by Srivatsa Ramaswami.



Deep, natural and attentive breathing also increases clarity of mind. Literally the brain is energised and cleared by the uptake of oxygen. This is why pranayama is the preparation for meditation.

The use of breath and our attentiveness to it acts as a safeguard against injury. The breath reflects the state of the body-mind. For example, when we are angry the exhalation is difficult, when we are grieving the inhale is shallow, when we get a fright or injure ourselves there is an immediate and sharp intake of breath.

When practicing our asana we might think to ourselves, "I want to put my head on my knee in this forward bend." If we hold our breath and mentally impose the will of the mind on the body, then we may be able to force ourselves into that position. However, this is most likely only going to result in torn hamstrings, and certainly the dual elements of *sthira sukha* are not present. Furthermore, the practitioner will be susceptible to many longer-term problems both physically and mentally if they continue in this vein.

If this same position is approached using the breath, the breath itself will guide us as to when we are nearing the danger-zone by the simple fact that it will change. Instead of being the smooth, calm and controlled breath it was previously, it may become ragged or short or difficult. This is a clear and simple sign from the body

that you need to ease off or rest. **This is how the breath not only protects us but acts as the bridge between body and mind.**

Traditionally, the practice of asana is seen as preparation for pranayama, which is seen as preparation for meditation (moving from gross and external to subtle and internal). By incorporating the breath into the asana practice, we not only get all the benefits already mentioned, but also have the most beneficial preparation for pranayama. For example, if our pranayama is to work up to: inhale for 8, pause for 8, exhale for 16, pause for 8, then in our asana practice we could incorporate breath extension and retention. For example, *uttanasana* done with a counted exhale and a pause after the exhalation. If this is included in the asana practice, we are already mastering and practicing pranayama! We are warmed up for it so to speak, and the pranayama itself will be much more focused and deep than if we had not included breath in our asana practice (remember the movement facilitates the breath).

There are significant benefits from both the inhalation and exhalation. The inhalation is a stimulating and strengthening breath. Judicious use of it in the practice can lift flagging energy and create a sense of clarity in the mind. The exhalation is a reducing, cleansing and relaxing breath. It can help to calm someone who is angry or agitated, and it is unparalleled for releasing stress and tension from the body and mind.

## 1.7 Self-Care and Self-Enquiry

### Self-care tip

Set the tone for your day each day this week by spending a little time stretching in bed like a cat when you wake in the morning. Tune in to your body and how it wants to move.

### Self-Enquiry

Why are you doing this course? What attracted you to it? (Record your response below, if you like).

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## 1.8 Resources: Frequently Asked Questions

**Q** What if I have an injury or disability?

**A:** Yoga is about the movement of the breath, not any specific postural shape, so you are free to amend any practice to what you *can* do and what is comfortable.

**Q:** Can I play music while I practice?

**A:** Of course, but try it without sometimes also, so you can hear your breath clearly

**Q:** It hurts!

**A:** Don't do it!

**Q:** I learned to breathe into the lower belly. Breathing into the upper chest feels funny. Can I just do the "filling the pot" breath I'm used to?

**A:** Please give this breath a go first, for at least 40 days, then you can decide. The "fill the belly" breath was popularized by Sivananda swamis, and while it is beneficial for us shallow-breathing modern people to take a deep breath, you'll actually get a deeper breath if you inhale and expand the chest and then allow the breath to naturally flow all the way down into the soft belly. This also gradually expands the tight chest muscles and makes space between the vertebrae.

**Q:** How do i make my boyfriend / girlfriend practice yoga?

**A:** Just leave them alone, embrace them as they are, do your own

practice, and they may become organically interested when they observe changes in you.

**Q:** When should I practice?

**A:** Morning is best, the more day goes on, the harder it will be. But you may like to do a short little calming evening practice as well.

**Q:** The breath is making me feel dizzy.

**A:** This can happen in the first few days. Just lie down if you feel dizzy and continue on the floor when you feel ok. And talk to a doctor if you have high or low blood pressure.

**Q:** I can't sit still in meditation.

**A:** Make sure you are comfortable. Usually the knees need to be lower than the hips in order to sit comfortably cross legged or lotus. Don't ignore knee pain. Move.

**Q:** I keep falling asleep in *savasana*. How can I stay awake?

**A:** You are probably really tired and need a sleep. Trust your body that it's doing what you need.

**Q:** Why is the Yoga world so commercialised and warped?

**A:** Good question. It's called hegemonic co-optation, when something that has real potential for changing lives is taken over and colonised by the dominant value system until it duplicates it.

## 1.8 Resources: Key Principles on Alignment & Safety

1. Pain is an important and useful message to change what you are doing, not something to push through.
2. Keep the weight through the front of your feet. Maintain an even weight in both your feet in standing asana.
3. Keep the joints soft. Do not lock the knees or elbows. Keep a micro-bend in your knees and elbows whenever there is weight on them. Make the muscles do the work, not the joints.
4. Alignment comes from the feeling on the inside, not from ideas of correctness based on what your body looks like. Don't worry about whether it is "correct" or not, the important thing is to feel the breath moving above-to-below and to stay within your current comfortable movement range. As the body sensitizes, you'll be able to feel alignment based on the movement of prana (energy).
5. Never push or force your body into anything. If you can't inhale smoothly and fully in a pose, that's a sign you've gone beyond current capacity. The breath is the guide or guru of the asana.
6. If you feel dizzy, puffed or exhausted, have a lie down. Traditionally a short rest could be included between postures to allow the heart rate and breath to return to normal. Some dizziness can occur in the first few days as the breath has a detoxing function. If you have low or high blood pressure, talk to your doctor.
7. If necessary, soften the knees during forward bends to protect the lower back and allow for a deeper forward bend.
8. Always keep a smooth even curve through the spine in backbends. Do not kink the back or neck. Most people have compromised upper-back movement through rounded posture and too much sitting, so we need to take it easy in backbends to ensure that it's not just the lower back bending. Build flexibility into the whole spine gradually.
9. Avoid using gravity, momentum, adjustments or assists from another person, props, or one's own limbs to haul or force oneself into any asana (pose). The breath is what takes us into the pose, not ambition or outside force.
10. It's recommended not to do inversions during menstruation or pregnancy. During menstruation, you may like to also avoid strong standing asana, twists, and backbends on the abdominals.
11. Remember, Yoga is not a substitute for medical attention and this course is not medical advice of any kind. If you have health concerns, make sure to see a medical professional.

## 1.8 Extra Resources

### Heart of Yoga Teachers

There are many teachers around the world who have to various degrees integrated the principles of practice into their teaching. The relationship is informal, unmediated friendship — anyone is free to associate with the words, as it is not a brand, and students will discern for themselves if what is offered rings true.

### Apps

*iPromise*: A basic 10 minute video of Mark doing a practice suitable for most people, available on iPhone and Android

*The Yoga Promise*: A more indepth minicourse with 21 days of lessons, only available iPhone at present.

### Books

*The Heart of Yoga*, T.K.V. Desikachar

*Yoga of Heart: The Healing Power of Intimate Connection*, Mark Whitwell (Lantern Books, 2004)

*The Promise of Love, Sex, and Intimacy*, Mark Whitwell (Atria Books)

*The Promise: You Can Have What You Really Want*, Mark Whitwell (abridged redesigned version of the Promise)

*God and Sex: Now We Get Both* by Mark Whitwell (Silver Snake Press, 2019)

### Articles

'Connecting with the Heart of Yoga: Reflections on Yoga Teacher Training with Mark Whitwell' — Rosalind Atkinson. <https://theyogalunchbox.co.nz/reflections-on-yoga-teacher-training-with-mark-whitwell/>

'An Interview with Mark Whitwell: Yoga as Direct Intimacy with Life' — Namita Kulkarni <https://radicallyeverafter.com/2018/08/09/interview-mark-whitwell-yoga/>

'The New Masculinity and the New Feminism' — Mark Whitwell [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-new-masculinity-and-the-new-feminism\\_us\\_59f672d9e4b05f0ade1b5852](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/the-new-masculinity-and-the-new-feminism_us_59f672d9e4b05f0ade1b5852)

'A Soft Message for a Hard Time — Mark Whitwell' [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/yoga\\_b\\_1738686](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/yoga_b_1738686)

### Video Links

What's Wrong with Modern Yoga? via Uplife Connect

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-wxL-13tR\\_A&v=en](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-wxL-13tR_A&v=en)

Yoga by Candlelight (talk and practice) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-9wvpvxJB7c&t=6032s>

### Some Recent Podcasts

*Stuart Watkins Podcast* episode 8

*Soul Crush* w/ Adriana Rizzolo ep.15

*It's All Happening With Zach Leary* ep104

### Website

[www.heartofyoga.com/blog](http://www.heartofyoga.com/blog)



## 2.1 INTIMACY

### 2.1 Intimacy: The Principle of Yoga

To the ancient masters, a powerful physical practice was not merely a form of exercise meant to increase flexibility or fitness. It was a spiritual way of life based on the intuitive understanding that everything is arising from one nurturing source. It is direct embrace of that power. The key to the power of their practice was, and continues to be, the breath.

What is breath? It is life. It is a baby's first cry and a father's last sigh, and the mist that rises from a lake on a winter's day. It is every inconceivable force in the cosmos, the essence of all transformation and the supporting ground of all existence. It is the boundless depth of everything we see, feel, and experience.

Your body loves its breath. When we breathe well, we can feel strong and alert, and at the same time calm and relaxed. This is the best way to be in life. And yet breathing isn't as simple as it may seem. Emotions and experience have an intense effect on the body and breath. Whether in subtle or palpably visceral ways, we respond to every experience we have.

For many of us, the inhalation is qualitatively different from the exhalation. Most of the time, we take in short, narrow breaths that don't calm and refresh our body. Pervasive social conditioning has created a sense of separation in our minds, which causes many imaginary fears, threats, and self-doubts to arise. All this is imposed upon our perfect biological life machines. And it affects our body and breath in countless ways. We are then not

breathing fully or well due to fear or trepidation, exhaling too much out of some imagined loss, inhaling too little to receive any real nourishment.

Correcting the breath is an easy and pleasurable thing to do. It involves using your attention to soften into the feeling of your inhalation and exhalation, gradually lengthening both so that they are balanced and complementary. Immediately you will feel in your whole body the qualities of the inhalation and exhalation in perfect union. Not only does the breath movement offer guidance and support to the body, but the movement of the body also facilitates a deepening of the breath. All in all, the body, breath, and mind are felt to be part of a single, flowing movement. This is the life current that already runs through you, simply making itself known. The healing process has begun. With each inhalation, we draw the nourishing strength of life into this complex of mind and body. With each exhalation, we let go of the hardness of so many generations of violence against this being.

As we receive and release, we are literally healed and cleansed. Ultimately, as we soften into this natural state of affairs, one thing becomes certain: this world and this body-mind are no different. They dance in the same direction, toward growth, healing and new life, each contributing to the other's flourishing in total intimacy.

—Mark Whitwell, *The Promise, You Can Have What You Really Want.*

## 2.1 Intimacy, the Principle of Yoga: Establish the *Bhav*

Create the mood, or bhavana, of the practice

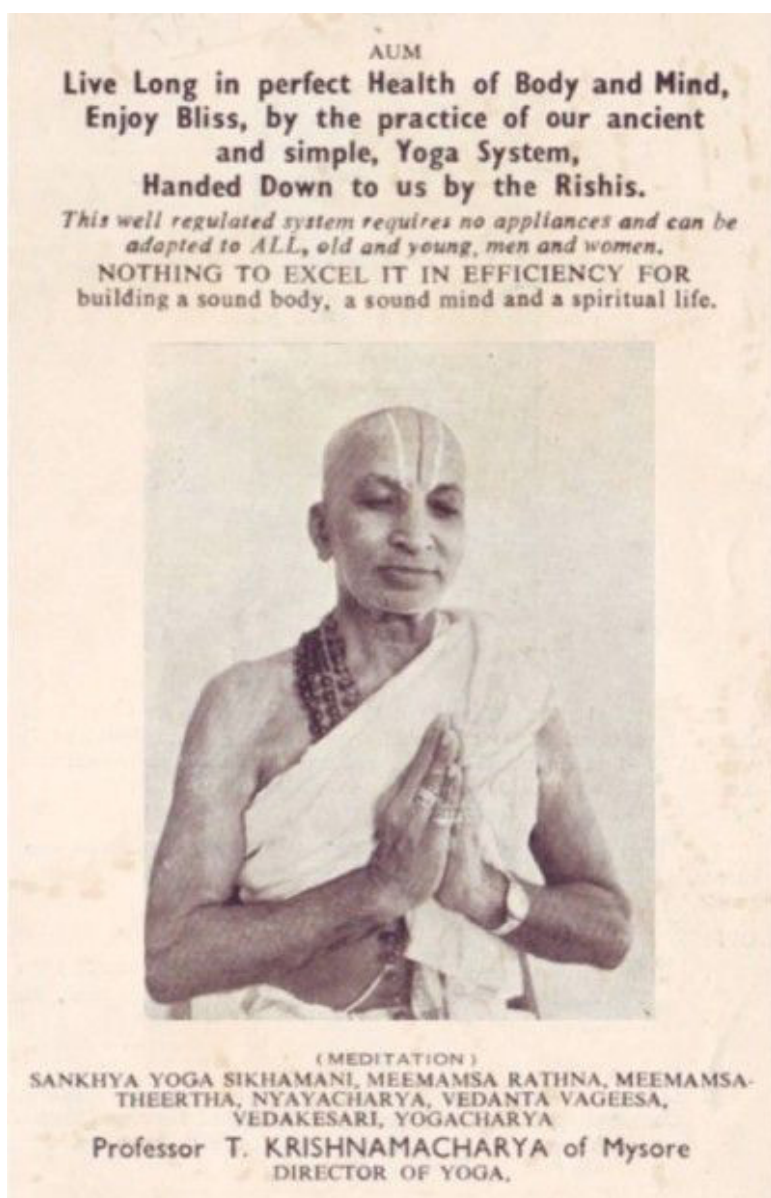
Allow a short time for transition between regular activity and *asana* practice. Rest with perhaps some music, chanting or silence with relaxed attention on significant objects with eyes open or closed. This will establish the mood, or bhavana, of the practice. Yoga begins from *savasana* (corpse pose) or any passive posture and moves as the natural movement of life energy, or prana, of the whole body, usually with easy simple movements at first. The body moves easily in the energy of the system throughout the practice. Nothing is imposed. Force disrupts rather than enhances movement of *prana*.



## 2.2 No Ideal Pose

We begin from where we are, and do what is do-able. It is pointless to set unrealistic expectations of ourselves. If we cannot bend forward comfortably in *uttanasana*, why would we attempt to do *halasana*? Knowing our limitations and accepting them are the keys to a successful and enjoyable practice. Of course it might be our goal to do *halasana*, but we should approach it from where we are right now. This

also means being realistic about the length of time we do our daily practice. If you have a busy and hectic morning it might be more realistic to do a short and soft practice in the evening. Other ways this applies: if you are a smoker, you do not have to give up smoking to start doing Yoga. You just start doing it and maybe the urge to smoke will reduce as you continue with your practice.



### A NOTE ON USE OF PROPS

Avoid the use of props wherever possible. Props were popularised by B.K.S. Iyengar to help practitioners achieve the ideal forms of *asana*, but the real ideal form is wherever the right position is for YOUR body—not approximating anything. Props tend to pull us out of the breath-oriented flow of *asana* as full-body prayer and reinforce the sense that *asana* is only about shapes imposed on the body, rather than the unitary flow of body, breath, and movement.

## 2.3 The Purpose of Practice

The intention of these ten principles is to succinctly present the concepts that make Heart of Yoga unique in a world filled with yoga teaching based on patriarchy, dogma, power structures, and denial of the equality of male and female. Ideally, the principles would speak to, and get the attention of, the millions of people practicing yoga burdened by the above mentioned problems as well as people who may have avoided yoga for those same reasons.

### Ten Principles of the Heart of Yoga

1. Yoga is freedom.
2. Yoga must empower the student to stand in their own ground, not create disempowerment and dependency.
3. Beware of power structures, statements about spiritual seeking, promises of attaining a future condition (such as enlightenment), denial of sex, and denial of feminine power.
4. Yoga cannot be transmitted within a power structure, or a paradigm where the student is dependent on getting something they lack, from the teacher who has it and can give it to them. One who claims to be a guru is not a guru.
5. Dogma is antithetical to Yoga. Teachings are useful to promote the student's inquiry into their own experience, but cannot be dogmatic.
6. Yoga is not seeking, there is nothing to seek for. Yoga is intimate, unobstructed participation in the given reality. This is the only enlightenment.
7. Enlightenment is not, therefore, something you attain; it is simply the natural state of freedom that is already within you, revealed through the authentic practice of Yoga.
8. Yoga must embrace the polarities of life, including the female-male polarity that is in every person, in order to reveal the source of all life.
9. Natural, mutual sexual intimacy between two equal partners is inherent in Yoga, and is not to be denied as it arises in the natural flow of life. (Same sex or opposite sex)
10. Yoga is available to all people, to empower them to be both receptive and strong, and to connect them to the source of life within them, which is the natural birthright of every human being.

Compiled by Galen Tromble, Climate Yogi  
([www.climateyogi.org](http://www.climateyogi.org))

## 2.4 Yoga of Relationship

### INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Mark has written extensively on the primacy of intimate relationship to yourself and others in a spiritual life. Your daily practice of *asana-pranayama* develops your strength to receive not just yourself, but all other people and experience. To love and be loved is the outcome of practice.

Mark's most recent book, *God and Sex: Now*, is a radical, lucid and gentle interrogation of how spirituality and relationships have been separated and toxified.

*The Promise of Love, Sex and Intimacy* is a book aimed at the general public that shares a variety of people's personal experience with restoring intimacy with life to their own lives.

Chapters on 'Restoring Intimacy', 'Secrets of Regenerative Intimacy', 'Procreation', 'Energy Paths and Relationship', and 'Brahmacharya', are in Mark's, *Yoga of Heart, The Healing Power of Intimate Connection*.

There is also a long essay called "Yoga of Love and Sex" freely available on the heart of yoga website.

### BIRTH, MOTHERING AND FATHERING

Krishnamacharya also anticipated the rise in female yoga practitioners. He worked hard against the misogyny in India that denied women a yoga education. He cited ancient texts to support women in chanting Veda, and recognised that in his community mothers were the nurturers, and so he felt they in turn needed to be nurtured and given the teaching, time and physical space to practice, which is direct intimacy with the nurturing force and source of life.

Giving birth is to participate in life as the actual Source of it. When children grow up with parents practicing yoga, they absorb it by osmosis and enjoy the strength of relationship between parents that their practice enables.

*"Mastery of yoga is really measured by how it influences our day-to-day living, how it enhances our relationships, how it promotes clarity and peace of mind." — T.K.V. Desikachar*

## 2.5 Intimacy with All Tangible Conditions

*There is a deep-seated assumption in our world that you can have God in your life, or you can have sex, but you can't have both. Consciously or not, if you aim to be a spiritual person, if you seek closeness to God, you probably think of sex as something that only puts more distance between you and the divine.*

*Our guilt and shame surrounding sex are so deeply ingrained that we may not even acknowledge them. After all, western culture has been through a series of "sexual revolutions" in the last century. By now, some may feel there's nothing more to discuss! But in my work I have met both religious people who have felt truly unable to reconcile their physicality with their devout practice and belief, and non-religious people who suffer from the lack of a sacred dimension in their relationships and physical being. However comfortable we may be, or think we ought to be, with our sexual practice, we cannot ignore the devastating effects of the reactionary sex denial of societies and denominations close to home and around the world, which manifest daily in violence against humans and the earth.*

*The fact is, whether or not we adhere to a particular religion, we have all known the wish to be released from the physical body's demands, and the fear that our desires and relationships are thwarting our quest for spiritual transcendence. We are all affected by the doctrine that we must renounce our desires and deny the natural state*

*to attain the holy—that we must step back from life in order to realize the divine. This ancient dualistic philosophy divides existence into matter and spirit, and claims that by diminishing our life on earth—the "seen" —the unseen "Source" can be known. Now, after thousands of years of dualism's influence, we are socially programmed to imagine "seen" and "Source" as separate.*

*Over the centuries, the idea that we can attain holiness by transcending or giving up sex has caused untold damage. The shadow side of righteous celibacy has manifested in the oppression of women, antagonism toward nature, and the proliferation of sexual exploitation and abuse. The denial of life and love, and the absence of mutuality in human society, harms men and women alike, blocking our realization of relationship—with others and with God.*

*I offer you the understanding that seen and Source are one, and that the union of man and woman serves that oneness. Please recognize that this is not an "approach," a piece of spiritual spin that you have to keep realizing again and again. It is simply a matter of seeing that it is true. You only need realize it once, and it will permanently change the way you live. I invite you to feel how you are loved and nurtured by Life, how you can love and nurture others—and how you can serve Life and God, which are one!*

*—Mark Whitwell*

## 2.6 Self-Care and Self-Enquiry

### Self-care

Water is the ultimate cleanser, and many of us live in a state of chronic dehydration, which can lead to a number of ailments. When you get up every morning this week, have a drink of filtered water that is at room temperature or warmer, add a squeeze of lemon if you like. Imagine the great journey this water has been on through sky, rock, and the cycles of nature. Aim to drink water throughout the day, rather than with meals. Think of it as a water blessing on your own body.

### Self-Enquiry

Listen to the audio meditation for this week. Now, think of the most painful experience of your life. How has life itself brought you back into flow, survival and participation? How did that experience serve the ultimate unfolding of your life? Hint: You are here, now.

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### Recommended Further Reading

The Yogas of Participation

<https://www.heartofyoga.com/blog/2018/5/11/the-yogas-of-participation>

*“The body is already in a state of enlightenment” — Samdhinirmocana Sutra*

## 2.7 Resources: The Only 'Rules'

1. Keep the weight mostly through the front of the foot, the joints soft.
2. Equal weight through both feet (unless standing on one leg etc)
3. Make the musculature of the body take the weight, not the joints — avoid locking the knees or elbows.
4. Never overextend knee beyond the foot, in Warrior, for example. Keep angle greater than 90 degrees.
5. *Dvipada Pitham* always precedes Shoulderstand.
6. Shoulderstand always follows Headstand as a counterpose.
7. Inversions are at the “peak” of the practice.
8. Arm balances are a part of standing *asana* and are not a substitute for headstand.
9. If a full and smooth inhale is not possible, soften up, modify, or come out of the *asana*.
10. Eyes closed in everything except standing *asana*. For yourself and your students you may initially notice a tendency for the eyes to “pop open” all the time as we are used to wanting to know what’s going on, and replicating *asana* based on someone else’s form, rather than allowing our own *prana* to create alignment. Closing the eyes can initially be uncomfortable also if a person is experiencing intense emotions or release, as we feel more without visual distraction / stimuli. Never make anyone close their eyes, just gently suggest it.
11. Soften the knees in forward bends if necessary, to protect the lower back and allow for a deeper forward bend.
12. Always keep a smooth even curve through the spine in backbends, no kinks. This means that most people with compromised upper back movement through slumped posture and too much sitting need to take it easy in backbends so it’s not just the lower back curving. Build flexibility into the whole spine *gradually*.
13. Avoid using gravity, momentum, another person, props, or the limbs to haul or force oneself into any *asana*. The breath is what takes us into the pose, not ambition or outside force.
14. Avoid the use of props wherever possible. Props were popularised by B.K.S. Iyengar to help practitioners achieve the ideal forms of *asana*, but the real ideal form is wherever the right position is for YOUR body — not approximating anything. Props pull us out of the breath-oriented flow of *asana* as full-body prayer and reinforce the sense that *asana* is only about shapes imposed on the body, rather than the unitary flow of body, breath, and movement.
15. *Asana* is for the breath, not the other way around.



## 3. LINEAGE

### 3.1 Introduction to Lineage

#### What is Lineage?

So many people have been badly treated in authoritarian systems of abuse that for some, the word has negative connotations. However, we have so much to gain from the great practices and traditions of our lineages, so long as they are freed from patriarchal power structures. We don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water. Hold the baby, and drain the water. I suggest we use a phrase like 'post-patriarchal' rather than 'post-lineage.' Lineage is not an exclusive club or a licence to bully others. It is a sharing of wisdom across generations through relationships of friendship and caring. Desikachar said "anyone who is a sincere student of my father is in the Guru Parampara (lineage) of my father." That may include you!

#### Why Have a Teacher?

"The process of healing and self realization occurs in relationship with actual others. It is in the mutual intimacy between two actual people who freely choose each other. Practice of intimate relationship, including sex, is the process of all psychological insight and correction, self-discovery and understanding. It cannot be bypassed.

In Yoga of Heart I wrote that when we are truly intimate with another by name and form we no longer

can tell the difference between that person and 'God', or the absolute condition of reality. We have been sold, however, that surrender or conversion to an abstract God or Guru is 'the human way'. Our cultures have concentrated on this assumption to the cost of denying the actual flesh, the actual embodiment of self and other. I am always saying that this living flesh and the appearance of anything is as much a wonder, profound intelligence and beauty as any proposed higher consciousness or God.

The ancient dharmic debate can be resolved in the statement, "source and seen are one, therefore the ordinary seen condition of reality is full and sufficient." So be the body. Obey the body. Follow the body and its real needs. An emotional conversion to the body and the body's natural relatedness to all conditions including sex is what we need. Not the surrender to an abstract idea of God or Jesus etc. This is the very means of God-realization.

Such phenomena as Jesus, the Guru function, is universally arising and is absolutely useful in releasing obstruction. It is the universal means of all wisdom tradition. But this too is an actual relationship between two actual people who love each other. And is not a replacement or superior to all other intimate relationships. — Mark Whitwell

## 3.2: Who are your teachers? & 3.3 Lineage from Krishnamacharya

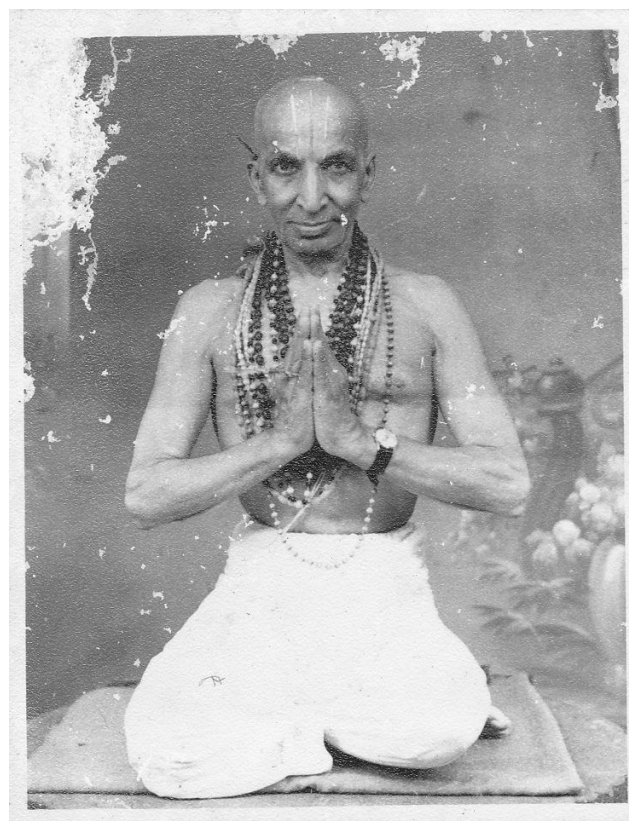
### Professor Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888–1989)

The source scholar and “father” of modern Yoga. Krishnamacharya was teacher to B.K.S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, Indra Devi, and his own son, T.K.V. Desikachar. His scholarship brought forth Yoga from the Great Tradition, making it available in our modern context. He clarified “what is yoga,” and more importantly, how does any individual practice and make use of Yoga according to their unique individual needs, body type, age, health, lifestyle and cultural background. Regretfully, Krishnamacharya’s principles of yoga have largely been left out of the modern styles of yoga popularised around the world. The yoga principles from Krishnamacharya need to be included in all the yoga that derived from him. Then, we have the full spectrum of practice, and your yoga becomes entirely your own, efficient, powerful and safe. The hallmark of Krishnamacharya’s work is that there is a right yoga for every person no matter who you are. “If you can breath, you can do yoga!” Krishnamacharya is of our own time.

Krishnamacharya was a prodigy, speaking Sanskrit from a very young age and achieving the equivalent of 6–7 PhDs in his early life. Unsatisfied, he wished to make his knowledge more experiential,

and travelled to the Tibetan Himalayas, where he studied for seven years with his guru Ramamohan Brahmacharyi (who lived in a cave at Lake Manasarovar near Mount Kailash with his wife and children). As payment for his studies, his guru requested that Krishnamacharya enjoy “family life” and teach yoga. At the time this was a little-known and low status occupation, but Krishnamacharya faithfully fulfilled his guru’s request, despite being offered many prestigious positions at Vedantic institutions.

In 1926 Krishmacharya began to teach yoga at the Mysore palace, where his young students included his wife Namagiriamma’s younger brother, B.K.S. Iyengar, and a young Pattabhi Jois. During



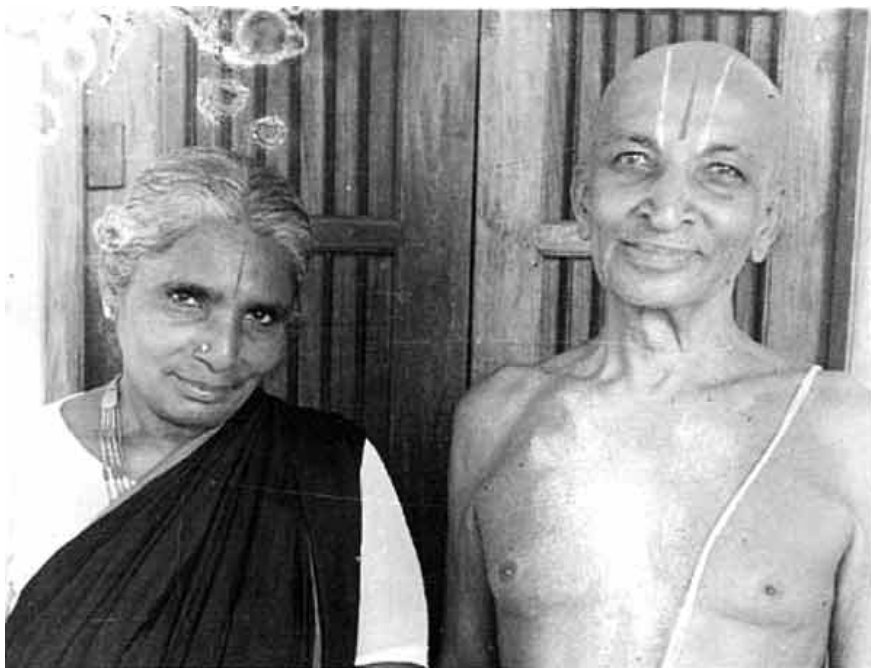
the 1920s, Krishnamacharya held many demonstrations to stimulate popular interest in yoga. These included suspending his pulse, stopping cars with his bare hands, performing difficult asanas, and lifting heavy objects with his teeth. The Palace archive records show that the Maharaja was interested in the promotion of yoga and continually sent Krishnamacharya around the country to give lectures & demonstrations. However, Krishnamacharya refused to teach these techniques, saying they were only attention-seeking methods to gain recognition for yoga, which was not popular or well-known in India at the time. It has been suggested that Krishnamacharya “innovated” in yoga by mixing it with western gymnastics, a suggestion that would horrify him. This myth may stem from the fact he taught in a “gymnasium” and taught many young men, two of whom went on to spread the yoga they learnt as young boys as if the very physical practices suitable for young male bodies were appropriate and suitable for every body.

With Indian independence, funding for the yoga school was cut off and Krishnamacharya moved to Madras

(now Chennai), where eventually the Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram was established. He lectured and taught here and in his home with his son Desikachar until his death in 1989 at 101 years.

Many considered Krishnamacharya a yoga master, but he continued to call himself a student of yoga throughout his life. His key principle was “Teach what is inside you, not as it applies to you, to yourself, but as it applies to the other”. Krishnamacharya was a humble man, a serious man, a deeply religious man, but he maintained that yoga was not religion, and was instead the crucial tool for people of any religion (or none) to embody their devotion and ideals and find health.

For more see *Health, Healing and Beyond* by T.K.V. Desikachar.



*T. Krishnamacharya with his wife Namagiramma*

### U. G. Krishnamurti (1918 - 2007)

“The greatest living Yogi I have ever met,” Krishnamacharya said. Krishnamacharya’s recognition of U.G.’s realization of Yoga is profoundly significant. Krishnamacharya, who was deeply informed of humankind’s wisdom traditions from primordial to modern times, considered U.G. a living example of Yoga, of which there are very few. U.G. brought clarity to the heart of yoga.

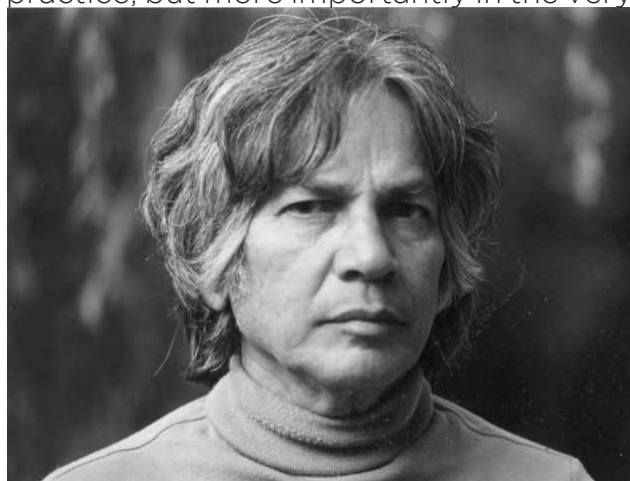
U.G. was a spiritual seeker for many years, studying with Sivananda for years as a young man (until he found him hypocritically eating pickles in the cupboard in the middle of the night). He visited sages such as the great Ramana Maharishi, but was unimpressed by religious models that posed that some people were enlightened and others weren’t, which he later called “the social model of disempowerment.” U.G. became a student of the older Jiddu Krishnamurti (no relation), who had rejected the spiritual organisation he was chosen to lead, declaring that “truth is a pathless land.” However, U.G. was critical of J. Krishnamurti for saying this, yet still presenting a path by sitting in a special chair giving long philosophical lectures. After 17 years of following J Krishnamurti, U.G. said he realised that “I was in the state he was talking about,” and walked out of the tent where the teaching was happening, whereupon an “explosion” of life took place in his system as he stopped believing himself second to anyone. He later called it his “calamity” because the usual mind, the limiting structure of thought, disintegrated in him. He just walked away from the social dynamic that confined him as a seeker. He literally walked out of the tent.

“Calamity” was his word for “enlightenment” because he said it was nothing like the state of beatitude that is speculated about. A Yoga process began for U.G. that he described as an immense ongoing explosion of life, followed by spontaneous and beautiful body movements with the rhythms of breath. He described it as the whole body renewing itself after the clinical death of all limits of body and

mind. The intrinsic polarity/collaboration of the male and female union of life took hold within him, and in his relationship with the outer world.

To cope with these feelings, U.G. sought help from Desikachar, who said “there is one person who might be able to help you—my father.” U.G. went to Chennai and studied with Krishnamacharya for three and a half years, before going to him with a problem: he found that the yoga he was doing very subtly “reversed his life current.” Krishnamacharya humbly admitted that this was outside of his realm of experience, and that he did not understand. U.G. loved Krishnamacharya for this honesty, and Krishnamacharya loved and respected U.G. because as a natural man, he was an extremely attractive person. U.G. had also been identified as a *jivamukti* (liberated person) by Hindu orthodoxy through the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram (like The Pope of Hindus), who Krishnamacharya also greatly respected. (U.G. denied this, saying “there’s nothing to be liberated from!”). Krishnamacharya therefore bowed to U.G.’s perspective, admitting that it was not in his own experience or understanding. U.G. loved Krishnamacharya because he said he was “an honest man” and later jokingly called him “my Guru” out of respect.

The two remained lifelong friends. In this way, U.G. held Krishnamacharya to the fire of his own teachings, insisting that yoga must be fitted to the person, not the person to yoga — not only in terms of asana, pranayama, and other forms of practice, but more importantly in the very



psychology and mood of practice: that the person is already perfect and perfectly functioning, and the yoga is purely participation in this, not manipulation in any way.

U.G. was a fierce critic of the perfect person (or the God-realised person), and religious-seeking and Yoga-seeking based on that model. He emphatically dismissed conventional yoga and all seeking. He was so certain about this that many around him were instantly relieved of their seeking by the force of his mere presence and logic. Many others, though, were bewildered because the usual assumptions of doctrine are so deeply ingrained in us as the axioms of our thought structures. We have been misled, or worse, brainwashed. This is why he was so fierce in his condemnation, standing in his own ground as life itself; and speaking (often shouting!) for the end of human delusion and suffering. Society's automatic assumptions that we have to find truth are so strong that many thought U.G. an enigma or iconoclast. However, those with no point of view to argue found him the most purely loving and natural person they ever met.

U.G. pointed out how the thought structure of seeking is the very mechanics of mind that prevent you from noticing the wonder of your own reality. Insight into the habits of subtle or gross seeking release you from the mental and emotional patterning that hide the power, consciousness, energy and beauty that you actually are. It's a logic worth listening to. The model of the perfect person implies that everyone else is not perfect. It puts everyone on the "merry-go-round" of seeking, therefore denying each person's intrinsic perfection of reality itself, in which we all appear. As his friend, Mark Whitwell has felt inspired to communicate what U.G. brought forth. Mark says, "I have seen immediate relief re-

sponse from thousands of every kind of person, many who weren't able to meet U.G. nor perhaps would they have understood him if they had. I was particularly struck by UG saying that the model of the 'perfect person' that civilization's power structures are built upon is destroying humanity, and he predicted it!"

U.G. was popularly known as a so-called 'enlightened' man, so how could he be dismissive of the perfect person, ideal, or culture!? Isn't that what enlightenment is? He was known as a natural man, in the natural state. He was very attractive as one is attracted to a cat in a room, in the corner sun. Natural and at ease. Responding naturally to everything happening. A person without social strategy at all.

U.G. clarified the very idea of enlightenment and all the archaic language of enlightenment that has entrapped humanity. He would have none of that language or allow any identification to land on him in any terms. He dismissed all such identification and anyone present or past assumed to have it.

In refusing to be identified as liberated or enlightened, U.G. clarified the very meaning of a Jivamukti; a Jivamukti or Buddha cannot be identified or described, requiring no identification or definition. In fact, the very nature of a Jivamukti is that he or



UG Krishnamurti and Desikachar with friends at the small temple known as the sannidhi (the presence) where Krishnamacharya is remembered. This photo taken by Mark is included in Desikachar's The Heart of Yoga.

she is indefinable because they are at one with reality itself as it is, as we all are! U.G. clarified and purified Yoga and the teaching function in the same way we might say the Buddha healed Vedic culture in ancient India from the heavy burden of ritual and superstition. U.G. would talk about how the historical Gautama Buddha did not want any remembering of him, no image, no teaching, no places of remembrance. In other words, no way or method to be left behind in his name. It is not required. But look what happened. Likewise, U.G. did not want to be remembered. He did not want any teachings left to create a method of becoming, because it is the method itself that creates the problem. In fact U.G. was fond of saying, "There is no need for a teaching. Life itself is doing a fantastic job of looking after you, thank you very much!"

U.G. is thought of as an enigma, but only to those still in an enlightenment model of thought. The perfect person of culture is so axiomatic to our structure of thought and all spiritual assumption, that U.G. seems an odd-ball to the social mind. To call him an enigma is the language of that limited structure, which seems very impenetrable. Many who came around him stayed in that axiom and treated him as an enigma; they didn't understand what he was saying and its implications. He stated: "There is no such thing as enlightenment," clarifying that there is "only the perfection of life arising as each person and every thing."

These statements left people confused in that archaic model of thought. They treat him as a mere curiosity and shuffle off his transformative words and presence as simply a puzzle, without hearing him. They either dismiss him or have no way of making use of what they felt in response to him. Or some take pride in having known him and glibly quote U.G., glamorising him in his critical dismissal of culture as if it were their own. They turn U.G. into a nihilist or into one more cultic guru, rather than understand the implication of his life.

Yet his argument that dismisses the perfect person has a clear logic that is easily understood and is useful. People of any background can understand that life is a pure intelligence, power, and beauty. It is already given and arising as all of us. Many have been profoundly relieved from the stranglehold of thought. Once your attention is drawn to this sincere reflection, it is very helpful. It ends the idea of being less, trying to get more. He rejected all methods of "becoming." Although U.G. can be difficult to penetrate, to hear him ends that structure of thought that is killing us and awakens a yoga transmission and process.

He called the conventional teacher-student relationship the "dynamic of disempowerment." This keeps the student looking to become something, denying that they are already Something: that which is already the case, pure intelligence, beauty, and the power of Life arising as all life.

U.G. had a special skill, a power, presence, or siddhi that extracted the virus from his friends. Even for those who never met him, his words enable the mind to relax from its patterns of automatic assumptions. This initiates a yoga process. It implies the free movement of life (or *prana*) in you, as you, as life itself, in all. Yoga begins then as free participation in what you are and all relatedness. It is direct embrace of reality itself. That is what yoga is.

U.G. said, "I maintain there is nothing for you to attain." Trying to attain something is the very mechanics of the mind that obliterates you noticing that you are a perfect arising of the intelligence and beauty of life. Without this understanding, yoga is only part of the imposition on life, instead of participation in it. "Prana has its own intelligence and movement and knows exactly what to do to maximise itself."

U.G. was helped greatly in his life by two important women, first Valentine de Ker-ven and later Melissa Forbes.

## **T.K.V. Desikachar (1938 - 2016)**

Son of Krishnamacharya. He became translator and chief communicator of his father's scholarship. Due to his Western science education and early engineering career, as well as his friendships with J. and U.G. Krishnamurti (and their understanding of global society), Desikachar was equipped to communicate his father's Yoga in modern times for East and West. Desikachar was the bridge that allowed his father's Yoga to make its way to the nonwestern students, as Krishnamacharya spoke next to no English.

Often, when students came to see him, Krishnamacharya would assign Desikachar to give them private tuition. J Krishnamurti was one such student, seeking help after suffering health problems in his older life due to the disasterously straining, inversion heavy practice given to him by Iyengar. Desikachar saw how B. K. S. Iyengar developed his yoga as an interest in gymnastic anatomy with scant regard for the principles of yoga, as a result of only having been with Krishnamacharya as a very young man.

In reaction to these exacting forms, T. K. V. Desikachar, who understood the principles of yoga, minimised asana and emphasised yoga as therapy, giving authority to Vedic scripture, Patanjali and the teacher as a solution.

This can be confusing to those who have already taken to the more rigorous popular styles, because they cannot understand the principles unless applied to the postures they already know. The yoga principles

must be given in the context of the popular styles that are familiar to people. Yogis are not built on assembly lines, and clearly the full spectrum of practices needs to be added to the popular forms so that practice becomes personally fitted, efficient and effective.

Some of Desikachar's western students used a word that he liked, viniyoga, (vini means "according to the situation") to describe the yoga they received from him. However, Desikachar asked everyone to not do this, and avoid putting a brand or style to the yoga because doing so would legitimise all the other brands and styles, which were often missing the crucial principles of breath, bandha etc. He said it was a habit of the western mind to want to label everything and put it in boxes.

The Heart of Yoga, Developing a Personal Practice is Desikachar's book put together by Mark that summarises Krishnamacharya's scholarship with a translation of Patanjali's Yogasutra for contemporary readers. The Heart of Yoga is now known as a basic textbook or "Bible" of Yoga.



**Mark Whitwell:**

"I met U.G. and Krishnamacharya in 1973. I came from the ashram of Ramana Maharishi to meet them both. The great non-dualist Ramana was a contemporary of Krishnamacharya who was just down the road. I became committed to the teaching of Krishnamacharya, understanding his emphatic instruction on Yoga as the practical means to actualise the great ideals of wisdom teaching. "Yoga is the necessary means to realise the [non-dualist] state that Ramana spoke from," he said. "Yoga joins the two to become One." He stated, "Without Yoga even the great ideas of God or non-dualism remain objects or 'other.'" He spoke about the necessity of yoga in saying, "Without the 'practical means' of Yoga, inspiration can make life worse due to the stark difference between the inspiration and the usual life droning on." He would also say "It's better not to be inspired in the first place if you don't have the practical tools."

U.G. took it further to make sure Yoga was not practiced in the model of "becoming," only in and as participation in the power, intelligence, and beauty of life that is already always the case. U.G. took Yoga from the linear path of trying to get somewhere ("becoming") that was limiting even Krishnamacharya's life and instruction."

Mark took U.G.'s state-

ment to heart that a Yogi is someone unique to life and not the duplication of any social pattern of any kind. "A Yogi lives their own unique life and does something in life that only they can do." He said, "There is no one remotely like you in the universe."

"With U.G., Melissa Forbes and I would get on the floor and he would demonstrate asana as beautiful rhythmic movement of life, no force required. U.G. helped me make complete sense of Krishnamacharya's teachings. He helped me realise that the mind is always seeking in the axiomatic models of social thinking. Being less and trying to become more. Being imperfect and trying to be perfect. Trying to surrender, which is really trying to get something! Trying to be more loving, peaceful, aware, conscious, or whatever the language of social idealism is in the hoax of the superior person. I saw how this mind is always operating to seek on many levels and even in refined, uninspected, devious or hidden ways."

In the model that U.G. demonstrated





to Desikachar and Mark, “the teacher is no more than a friend, and no less than a friend.” “Stop looking start living,” U.G. was fond of saying. Once you do this, there is a sudden or gradual death to this activity and assumption of seeking. Then, as U.G. said, “now yoga begins.” It begins with participation in the Given reality, which is only a nurturing and regenerative force.

Mark asks each person, “Are you the power of the cosmos? Is this power arising as a pure intelligence? Is it arising as utter beauty like everything else in the natural world? Is this a fact or mere conjecture?” It is not a spiritual statement or a poem. It is a fact. Your Yoga is merely to participate in this fact. It is to participate in the union of opposites in your own system. In the union of opposites, the source of opposites is revealed: the heart (hridaya). The heart is the seat of the mind from where the pranas of life flow as spirals in all directions. U.G. called Yoga “making love with life.” In this love relationship there is a great release from the social dysfunction placed upon us. Being sensitive to one’s own embodiment of the union of inhalation to exhalation, strength to receptivity, and male to female within, one becomes sensitive & receptive to another, in that same order, between any two intimates. Here the (wonder) full flow of life is shared between two, as one.

Mark represents this collaboration between Krishnamacharya & U.G. Krishnamurti in his own way and form. He was present in their lifetime and friendship, and has felt its full impact in his own life and in thousands of others. They were never yoga entrepreneurs;

they never had a website! They were serious people inspecting the nature of reality. And they were friends.

In the context of Yoga understanding, U.G. becomes an utterly useful person and presence. Yoga is what we do in response to such a one as U.G. Krishnamurti. In response to such an inspiring relationship. It is the natural way to acknowledge and participate in that relationship..

Yoga is not physical gymnastics, nor is it spiritual gymnastics, trying to get to some idealised place. U.G. cleared that off the table. Yoga is direct embrace of what is. It has its origins in the primordial wisdom of humankind. It is useful to see the Great Tradition as the entirety of human wisdom wherever it has appeared, in all times and geographies. The invention of the perfect person is only a recent historic aberration that is now corrected. Now Yoga and realization, Buddha-hood, call it what you will, can be embraced by all people. You are an “ordinary Buddha,” the perfection of life itself, not the exclusive Buddha invented by culture.

“I call for a daily, actual, natural, and non-obsessive yoga practice, to actualise whatever inspires you. This is what has come forth from the two Ks. Krishnamacharya and U.G. Krishnamurti have renewed/clarified Yoga for our time. The reports from students all over the world make this abundantly clear. Each person has a unique version of how the seeking mind dies and Yoga spontaneously arises as intimacy with all ordinary conditions, and therefore the condition of conditions, reality itself.”

### 3.4 Putting the Principles into Practice: Teaching Standards

*Yoga is taught within a completely unregulated market. There is legitimate concern within and outside of the industry of the danger of individuals claiming authority and expertise who are not qualified to teach. There is an urgent need to create standards by which the public know they are safe, as is required in other healing modalities. The following standards are proposed for Yoga teachers of all brands and styles.*

#### Yoga Teaching Standards:

1. Teachers are themselves guided by a competent teacher. Teachers have given themselves to the conditions of actual and mutual relationship with their own teacher.
2. Teachers are practicing Yoga themselves on a daily basis in an actual, natural and non-obsessive way.
3. Teachers understand that for it to be Yoga, breath participation must be the central feature and purpose of the asana.
4. Teachers understand that alignment in asana is created and guided by the breath movement and by the student's participation in the union of the inhalation with the exhalation as a whole-body integrated activity.
5. Alongside the breath-centric asana, teachers offer their guidance on the intelligent cooperation of muscle groups known as bandha in the upper and lower body. The engagement of bandha keeps the muscular and skeletal system safe and well-aligned. Bandha are easefully applied and released within the practice of asana.
6. Strength in asana is taught with equal emphasis on receptivity. This is achieved through teaching participation in the inhalation and exhalation. This is the most essential empowerment and therapeutic means offered to students.
7. Teachers have studied the practical ways to adapt asana to individual needs, according to body type, age, health, and cultural background. The teacher adapts Yoga to the student not the student to the Yoga.

8. Teachers respect the student. The teacher has through their own practice developed attitudes of caring for students, embodied in tolerance, non-reactivity, patience, courtesy, and friendliness in all circumstances.
9. All asana are threaded on a general template whereby there is an appropriate inversion in the mid-point of the sequence. Teachers should have education in the importance of preparation for inversion, the inversion, counter-poses after inversions, and the conclusion of the practice sequence.
10. There is no need for teachers to adjust or touch students in any way, aside from very light directional indication occasionally. Teachers do not interfere with students' physical or energetic process. Physical assists deny students their own intimacy with breath, bandha, and energy. Students will be carefully instructed on the principles of practice using words and, if necessary, gestures or moderate demonstrations can be made.
11. Any demonstrations a teacher makes of asana and pranayama avoid creating any idealisms for the student to emulate or pattern themselves upon, as this distracts the student from their own process of Yoga.
12. The teacher-student relationship is equal, negotiable, and non-hierarchical. Social assumptions of a teachers' seniority or authority are actively dismantled in the understanding that 'hidden hierarchy' is the main problem in Yoga. Hidden hierarchy makes a student feel inadequate and causes them to inappropriately strive for external ideals rather than simply participate in their own inherent perfection as Life. The teacher takes responsibility for dismantling the ideas of hierarchy that students bring to class from the cultural conditioning of wider society.
13. Teachers understand that teacher-student relationships are always, in all ways, equal. The teacher shares Yoga from their own experience, and carefully adapts it to individual needs. The mood of teaching is always friendship. Not necessarily personal friendship, but friendship as Life. The method of teaching is always respect, equality, and caring.

### 3.5 Self-Care and Self-Enquiry

#### Self-Care

Eating with the seasons and your body’s natural cycles helps promote optimal digestion and overall health. Commit to consuming organic seasonal foods where you can—without making this another area of guilt and struggle in your life. Aim to eat only when you are hungry and at around the same time each day to encourage proper digestion and elimination. Ideally, eat a light breakfast, a large warm lunch, and a lighter, smaller dinner at least three hours before bed. It’s not a good idea to eat in the two to three hours before your Yoga practice. However, your Yoga practice will nurture your digestive fire, making it easier to digest difficult foods and absorb the nutrients. Over time, as pleasurable participation in Life, your Yoga will make changes in eating easy and natural, removing this loaded area of life from the cycles of body dysmorphia, guilt, and stress.

#### Self-Enquiry

Standing up or lying down, close your eyes and notice how it feels to be in your body. If your body wanted you to know one thing right now, what would it be? Let the answer arise from your very depths. The centre of the universe is in your body.

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### 3.6 Resources: Mark's Tribute to Desikachar

*T.K.V. Desikachar died on August 8, 2016, in Chennai, India. He was 78 years old.*

I first met Desikachar and his father in 1973, following extensive travels in India. I had met many famous and not-famous Gurus and Yogis, but I was struck by the fact that Desikachar and his family had no pomp and ceremony, no business agenda, and no need for name or fame around their scholarship. They shared family meals with me on their kitchen floor. I soon realized that what they were teaching was logical and sound knowledge that was relevant to the entire tradition of India. It helped me make sense of everything that I had loved or felt confused by in the spiritual circus of India. My experiences became understandable and useful to me in the context of their Vedic knowledge and Yoga practice. I am forever grateful to this family for their dedication, clarity, and honesty, and the practical Yoga education they gave me.

No tribute to Desikachar is complete without acknowledging his wife, Menaka Desikachar, who has been a gracious tower of strength through these times. She has nurtured her family in the midst of their ill health while at the same time strenuously upholding the continuity of teaching.

Desikachar devoted his life to studying and teaching the Yoga that his father, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, brought forth from the Great Tradition. Professor Krishnamacharya was a renowned scholar and Yogi known throughout India. He lived 101 years and was a man of our own time — he died in 1989. He is a bridge between the wisdom of the ancient world and modern times. However, we would not have had access to or even been able to understand Krishnamacharya's teaching without the dedication and brilliance of his son.

Desikachar understood Western mind and was able to interpret wisdom culture with clarity and precision for us all.

#### **Auspicious Meetings**

At the tender age of 27, Desikachar witnessed a Western woman run across the front yard to hug Krishnamacharya with unusually profuse gratitude, because Krishnamacharya had healed her from a lifelong debilitating illness. To see a woman embrace an austere Brahman man in public was indeed a rare sight in India. This was a great surprise for Desikachar and showed him the power and importance of his father's work. That very day he gave up a bright engineering career with a German company and asked to begin studies with his father. His father agreed and immediately put his son's sincerity to test, saying, "Come at 4 a.m. for your first lesson!" Many years later, I took Desikachar to visit this now-elderly lady, Kay Malvenan, in Wellington, New Zealand, where he thanked her for inspiring him to yoke to his father's teaching. It was an auspicious meeting between dear friends.

Desikachar attributed his ability to understand his Western students to the two Krishnamurtis — J. and U.G. — who were both close family friends. Of Jiddu Krishnamurti (who in his late life studied diligently with him) Desikachar said: "His profound respect for the teaching and the teacher helped me become a good student of my own father. He also helped me understand everything about the West. He even helped me eat with a knife and fork!" These were important collaborations between sincere friends that will forever give the world a clear view of Yoga, unhinged from yoga business, power structures, and exaggeration.

#### **A Personal Approach to Yoga Practice**

The hallmark of Desikachar's communication is that there is a right yoga for

every person. He was determined to communicate that in Yoga, one size does not fit all. Rather, Yoga is adapted carefully to individual needs according to body type, age, health and, very importantly, cultural background. This ensures that each person's Yoga is their own, rather than striving to replicate someone else's ideal. Then, and only then, Yoga is practiced as direct intimacy with life itself, reality itself — the power of this cosmos that brought us here in the first place and presently nurtures us. This power is pure intelligence and utter beauty, and Yoga practice reveals that we are in perfect and intrinsic harmony with everything in our cosmos and with any as-yet-unknown cause or origin of it. "Anyone who can breathe can do Yoga," Desikachar would say. "It is the practical means by which the ideals of an inspired life can be actualized." Because of Desikachar's genius, Yoga is now able to be perfectly adapted to every kind of student. With the astuteness of his engineering science, he refined the ancient teaching tenet "that Yoga must be made relevant to everyone" into principles that are now broadly communicated around the world.

Desikachar, like his father, was a humble man committed to the accurate delivery of the Great Tradition without the empire-building that often clouds the picture in yoga and spirituality. He had a unique ability to truly respect all people and have each person actually feel respected and seen (also an ancient tenet of Yoga). He allowed each person to feel the truth or the answers to their questions come bubbling forth as their own experience and revelation, rather than confusing students with ideas and ideals that were not relevant or which would be out of their reach.

For Desikachar there was only one 'brand' of Yoga and that is capital-Y Yoga, adapted to the needs of every

person. Krishnamacharya and Desikachar were Yoga masters and never yoga entrepreneurs. Desikachar did not want his Yoga to be known as a particular brand. He did not want his father's scholarship to be identified as just another style, because when the principles of the Great Tradition, as brought through by Krishnamacharya, are added to the popular styles, they make Yoga entirely the practitioner's own: efficient, powerful and safe. All people can now be given a relevant Yoga. The principles of practice should be included in all the styles that derived from Krishnamacharya and other systems. Otherwise we have partial systems, and like a glossy pack of cards with five cards missing, the game never quite resolves for the player.

### **He Lives On. Desikachar is a Treasure Forever**

The exact words that Desikachar spoke to me about transmitting Yoga in the world were: "Anyone who is a sincere student of my father who do their best to pass Yoga on to others is in the guru parampara (lineage) of my father." Parampara is a beautiful cultural phenomena that can be used or misused. In its right form, it is only about actual relationship: mutual affection and respect between actual people — teacher and student, and student and student — both in linear historical lines, and also spread out in present time among affinity groups of people with affection and goodwill for each other. Its misuse is the idea that someone of special social status, or authority — the "knower" — somehow holds the knowledge that you don't yet have. And that you have to come and get it from that person, as if you don't have it. As the Krishnamurtis pointed out, this is only a mechanism of power, "the social dynamic of disempowerment," and is the problem itself that prevents Yoga transmission. Sadly, civilization has been built upon this model. It is patriarchy, a

power structure that arose using some of the principles of Vedic life, but perverting them. Seeking for future ideals with arbitrary methods sanctioned by social authorities in this way is the denial of the wonder of life already arising as each and every person. It has created dreadful damage to human life.

Prior to the imposition of such patriarchy, God, deity, spouse, and the body — in its intrinsic harmony with the universe — were known to be all equal and arising in and as the one reality. Intimate actual relationship with everything was the way of Vedic life. Yoga was the mother's milk of this culture and understood inherently. Yoga is the practical means of intimate connection to reality that is already given and arising as all of us. I know that Desikachar deeply understood this point, especially from his valued friendships with Jiddu and U.G. Krishnamurti. Desikachar was fond of quoting J. Krishnamurti's advice to him, "Don't become one more monkey." I was deeply impressed by Desikachar's uncompromising stand in a world where to make money and influence people this is what you do — create the patriarchy by saying, "I've got the goods. Come and get it. And pay me for it." I believe his approach has a sweeter and long-term influence as we gradually correct the toxicity of power structures.

This was the spirit and specific message of Desikachar. He recognized that the attempt to say "I am THE lineage holder" is a cultural fault. It is very hard for teachers and their students even to see what the problem is here, because the patriarchal model is so ingrained in our thought structures. Or even to know that there is an alternative means for the transmission of Yoga and self-empowerment. As we move along, bringing actual Yoga to the world, let us represent our teachers with this clarity, teaching the principles generously, free of brands, styles, or power struc-

tures. Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, "the teacher of the teachers," his dedicated son T.K.V Desikachar, and all those before them and all who follow them are no more than friends and no less than friends to all, in the beautiful way Desikachar showed us.

### **The Heart of Yoga**

In the early 90s, we did a book project for Desikachar to address the problems that his father's teaching was not available around the world and that genuine Yoga teaching was hard to come by. I was calling the book "The Art of Yoga." Then, one day while we were walking on Adyar beach in Chennai, Desikachar suddenly declared, "The Heart of Yoga is the correct title!" He later explained that the heart of yoga is the relationship between student and teacher. In this relationship, it is essential that the teacher is not a social or personal identity, it is a function—a natural function of nurturing between people in local community. He clarified how the mutual affection between two actual people is the universal means of transmission of all wisdom traditions and how the teacher is no more than a friend, no less than a friend—this friendship is the main method! Desikachar wanted this to spread throughout the world, but only in accordance with the ancient tenet that the best teacher is someone from your own culture, because he or she understands you the best.

When I showed Desikachar the published version of *The Heart of Yoga* in 1995, he cried quiet tears. He said, "I wish my father had seen this book. He did not see the worldwide effect of his work in his lifetime. But now he does from where he is." This book is Desikachar's gift to us, and includes his father's commentary on Patanjali's *Yogasutra*, the ancient text that defines Yoga. *The Heart of Yoga* has been translated into many languages and has become a source text for Yoga today.

### 3.6 Resources: The Yoga Sutras Attributed to Patanjali

Patanjali's Yoga Sutra is the heart of yoga. The heart, *hrdaya*, is that which does not change and Patanjali gave a permanent definition and form to yoga in his Sutra. The heart without prana, however, is not alive and is without relevance for us. Desikachar explains that the teaching relationship is the prana or life of the Yoga Sutra; it is the teacher who brings the heart into life. The Yoga Sutra is a potent tool for the teacher who is able to make it relevant to the student and thus transmit the transformative power of the heart.

Desikachar emphasized that the Yoga Sutra is vast in its scope. Krishnamacharya says that there is an ocean between *atha* and *iti*, the first and last syllables of the Sutra. In the study of the Sutra with one's teacher, meaningful and powerful insights seem to leap out of the words, sometimes in very unexpected ways. It is recommended that one study with a teacher who has likewise studied and practiced with a competent teacher, whose *tapas* (practice), *svadhyaya* (self-understanding), and *Isvarapranidhana* (surrender) have produced clarity.

Patanjali presented his work in the style known as *sutra*, that which has very few words, yet is free from ambiguity, full of essence, universal in context, and affirmative. The *sutra* (from which we get *suture*) links the teacher, the teaching, and the student. As yoga study and practice develop, the message of the Sutra takes on a deeper resonance and

becomes more relevant, more revealing. There can be no haste or exaggerated effort to gain its understanding; it must be a natural process.

There is uncertainty as to who Patanjali was. There are some who think of him as the divine incarnation of the serpent Ananta who supports the whole universe. He is the *Adhiseṣa*, "the first servant of God," who "being so close to God, knows the teaching of God best." We can assume that Patanjali did not originate the yoga teaching but inherited it from the vastness of the Vedas during the age of 'Classical Yoga'. On the instruction of a great teacher, he identified all the teachings in the Vedas about the mind and presented them in this precise, organized form. Yoga concepts such as *Isvara*, *kleśa*, *karma*, *gunas*, *purusa*, *samadhi*, *siddhi*, and *kaivalya* are all contained in the ancient Upanisads in different forms. The Vedas, however, are presented in no particular order, making it difficult to study anything in a coherent fashion. It is a great gift therefore that Patanjali systematized the yoga teachings from the Vedas into an accessible system of development.

The short, pithy words and meanings of the Sutra enabled oral transmission of the yoga understanding from teacher to student through the centuries. In our time, it was Krishnamacharya who had the privilege of learning the intricacies of these words at a very practical level from



his teacher, Ramamohan Brahmachari. Likewise, Desikachar's study and practice with Krishnamacharya has resulted in clarity and the present-day relevance of every sutra.

Krishnamacharya and Desikachar were not interested in spiritual or philosophical speculation. Rather, they have brought to yoga an intellectual rigor, technical definition, and practice to determine the means by which each person may reduce *duhkha* (suffering).

In contrast to other Indian systems of philosophy that state that nothing is real except God, Patanjali's position is that everything in a person's experience is *sat*, the "truth" or "reality," and cannot be denied. Even *duhkha* is *sat* and is not something to be ashamed of or react against. Everyone has *duhkha*. It is part of our reality and if recognized, serves to wake us up to further clarity and understanding. As Krishnamacharya would say, "Thank God for *duhkha*," which he described as the "unavoidable motive for practice." Furthermore, Patanjali makes

it clear that everything in our experience is changing; nothing, including *duhkha*, is in a fixed condition. Therefore, if there is the desire, we can make positive changes for ourselves. Patanjali gives innumerable means within our grasp that begin with the present reality of our experience. We must begin at the beginning and Desikachar puts it simply: "If you tell a person who cannot find their own house that there is a pot of gold inside, they would be happier had they not had this information. What use is the gold if it cannot be found? It only causes pain. First they must find the house and enter it. Then there are many possibilities."

Patanjali summarizes the process and the tools for self-understanding. If the appropriate means are selected and practiced with the help of a teacher, our turbulent minds can be brought to peace and extraordinary wisdom and well-being is our potential.

This is the essential message of Patanjali communicated by Krishnamacharya and Desikachar.

—Mark Whitwell

### **The key sutras we focus on in this immersion:**

1.1 *atha yoga-anuśāsanam*

1.2 *yogaś-citta-vṛitti-nirodhaḥ*

1.3 *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe-'vasthānam*

1.4 *vṛitti sārūpyam-itaratra*

2.1 *tapah svādhyāy-eśvarapranidhānāni kriyā-yogah*

# 4. VINYASA KRAMA

## 4.1: Vinyasa Krama: Intelligent Sequencing

Asana practice should proceed in an intelligent sequence, vinyasakrama, a logical sequence of preparation, pose and counter pose. Each pose is followed by a counterpose usually requiring less effort, but which balances any undesirable effects of the previous pose. A logical sequence of *asana* practice is: standing, kneeling, lying, inversions, backbends, twists, forward bends, rest, *pranayama*, meditation/contemplation and personal rituals. A practice should be planned carefully to include appropriate preparation, peak and descent, and timed to allow for appropriate rest. Generally an inversion is considered the peak of the practice around which the *asana* is planned.

Krama = step, Nyasa = to place, Vi = in a special way. (Vinyasa = of different parts of the body)

Asana should proceed with intelligently placed and well-structured steps. *Vinyasa krama* is the process by which we ensure our practice maintains the qualities of strength and receptivity, and all the while exerting progressively less effort to achieve this.

Part of *Vinyasa krama* is the understanding of these things:

- The goal is not reached in one large step, but in many little ones.

- Little steps mean we can easily see and evaluate our progress.
- An intelligent sequence will respect the individual needs of each person.
- Vinyasa krama is a self-checking process; each step is an approval for the next step.
- *Sirshasana* (headstand) must be followed by *sarvangasana* (shoulder stand) or *halasana* (plough) or *dvipadapitham* (desk) as counterpose to protect the neck.
- Pranayama and meditation practices should also include preparation, peak and descent.

A note on cat/cow/chakravakasana: as taught by Desikachar, chakravakasana has three positions, including the kneeling, arching position most people know as 'cow,' the neutral position often known as 'tabletop', and the folded position known as child pose. Confusingly, in this tradition the concave back arching, head lifting pose commonly known as 'cow' is usually called 'cat'. Mark uses both 'chakravakasana' and 'cow' to make it easier for people who have studied in other lineages to understand.

If child pose is too painful for you, you can try putting a bolster lengthways between the legs and supporting the buttocks.

## 4.1 Vinyasa Krama: Intelligent Sequencing

The asana practice follows a logical sequence through various standing, lying, sitting asana.

1. Generally, the classic approach is:

- Standing asana
- Kneeling asana
- Lying on the back
- Inversions
- Lying on the belly (Backbends)
- Sitting and or kneeling (Twists and Forward Bends)
- Rest
- Pranayama
- Meditation
- Devotions

2. However, there are other equally valid ways of structuring the practice:

- Lying on the back
- Kneeling / Sitting
- Standing
- Lying on the belly (Backbends)
- Lying on the back (Twists and Forward Bends)
- Rest
- Pranayama

\*\*\*\*\*

- Standing
- Kneeling / sitting
- Lying on the back
- Inversions
- Lying on the belly (Backbends)
- Lying on the back (Twists and Forward Bends)Rest
- Pranayama

\*\*\*\*\*

- Kneeling / Sitting
- Lying on the belly (Backbends)
- Kneeling / sitting
- Lying on the back (Twists and Forward Bends)
- Rest

- Pranayama

(Note: The main guiding principle is that of vinyasa krama: whatever way the sequence is planned, it should work towards a common goal, proceed with logical, intelligent and orderly steps. It should be balanced and relevant to the person doing it. Also, arm balances are a part of standing asana and are not a substitute for headstand.)

We move from...:

- "...Known to Unknown" — We know how to stand upright, but it is unknown how to stand on our head at first. However, we do not immediately rush into the unknown! Like a journey there must be a direction, preparation and then starting from where we are and taking it step by step. Introducing unusual asana too soon can put the practitioner off, not to mention potentially injure them. So it is a gradual progression.
- "...Easy to Difficult - This is essentially the same as above. However, for safety reasons this is even more vital. For the practitioner who attempts to do the difficult posture before building up strength/flexibility/breath, there is grave danger of serious injury occurring. This is common when people cannot accept where they are now and want to be better/further (somewhere else) immediately.
- ...Dynamic to Static

## 4.1 Vinyasa Krama: Intelligent Sequencing

Setting a goal or direction can help give some purpose and shape to our practice.

### 1. Specify the goal

This practice should be totally suited to your self. You decide how long it is, what time of the day it will be done, whether it is soft or strong, etc. Approaching your practice with a specific goal means you have a real ability to see how far you have come. If you do a daily practice with no focus to it, then there is the danger of becoming disillusioned with it. The goal can be very simple or more complex. It could be to do with a physical issue such as wanting relief from lower back pain, or it could be that you want to increase your concentration or confidence. Whatever the goal is, that will determine what makes up your practice. Furthermore, your needs, body and situations change frequently so you must be attentive and observant so you know when it is time to change the direction or focus. This might mean changing the practice from one day to the next! Remember, it's about the journey, NOT the destination.

### 1. Develop your practice to support your chosen goal

The purpose, requirements and desires of those practicing need to be considered.

Your goal can be physical, mental,

or emotional. It can be generalised or specific. You may want to work towards something and use the asana practice to support that. It may simply be to relax, or to build up the ability to do a specific asana.

Be specific about HOW each asana is done and WHY you have chosen each one. Take the following into consideration:

- Strength and Receptivity
- The Right Inversion
- Vinyasa Krama
- Dynamic/Static Movement
- Breath Cycles/Retention
- Stages of Life
- Modifications or Adaptations of Asana
- Resting
- Where You Are Now

“There is no bad yoga! If it's not good, it's not yoga!” The effectiveness of a practice is not measured by the achievement of asana, rather by the feeling created by it, which makes the practitioner feel better (and feel better!). Technically, a practice must make a person feel better. Only then is it correct practice. However, the point of practice is not to try to feel better, as this too can create a subtle striving and frustration, but rather to enjoy the movement of life in the body, participate in this, and offer a “whole-body prayer.”

## 4.2 Vinyasa Krama for Each Individual: Choosing an Inversion

### Benefits of Inverted Asana:

- Totally revitalizing to the whole system, especially for relieving swollen legs and ankles, varicose veins, and general lethargy.
- Inversions activate and improve the glandular system, such as the thyroid, endocrine and pituitary.
- Aids in concentration, improves sleep and strengthens the nervous system.
- Improves posture, balance and increases breath capacity.

### Focus:

- The primary function of inversions is to achieve viparita karani. (Viparita karani = active reversal)

### Contraindications:

- Menstruation
- Pregnancy
- Low or high blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Neck and shoulder injuries
- Osteoporosis
- Substantial overweight
- Weakness in lumbar spine
- Glaucoma, heart or ear problems
- Remove contact lenses.

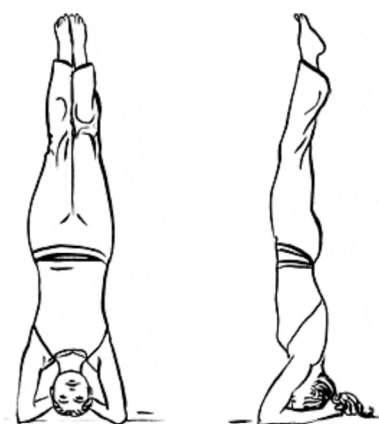
### Details:

- Shoulderstand requires strong muscular effort from the whole body. Headstand requires strength also, but is primarily a balancing posture. Headstand compresses vertebrae, whereas the shoulderstand stretches the neck.
- Please note it is *shoulderstand* not *neckstand*.
- The headstand is a mild back arch; the shoulderstand comprises forward bending.

There are so many benefits to inversions, and it is recommended everyone try and incorporate an inversion of some kind into their practice. Here are some options for inversions.

### *Sirsasana* (headstand)

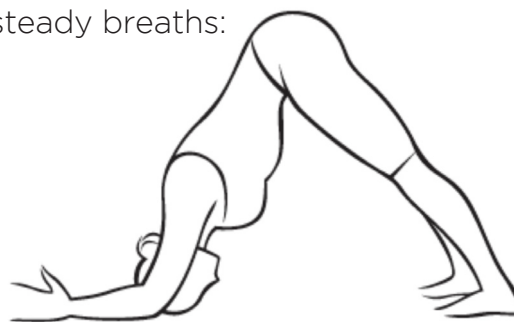
**WARNING:** Do not attempt headstand without instruction from a competent teacher. Never kick up or use a wall or another person as this can put a sudden and dangerous impact on the neck.



How to tell if headstand is right for you: Steadiness and smooth inhale for eight breaths in the following asana:



trikonasana, wheel pose, downward dog. Check upper body strength by coming into dolphin pose (head off the floor). This should be able to maintained for eight steady breaths:



Counterpose: rest and then shoulderstand

### Sarvangasana (Shoulderstand)

#### Classical Posture:

Head and shoulders are on the floor facing upward. The legs and torso extend up in a straight line. The legs are straight and the feet together. The upper arms and elbows are on the floor, the hands resting in the small of the back, supporting the body.



#### Function:

- increase the exhale capacity.
- relieve swelling in the lower legs and ankles.
- deeply stretch the upper back.
- release tension.
- get a different perspective on life.
- revitalise and stimulate the internal organs and glands.

#### Work:

- abdominal muscles are utilised when coming into shoulderstand, & during the pose with each strong exhale.
- the legs extend upward and the large thigh muscles and calf muscles are strengthened.
- neck & shoulders are strengthened.
- movements of the legs can be added in to increase strength in the legs.
- to decrease the work, do a half shoulderstand, keep the breath softer but still deep and do not stay in the position too long.

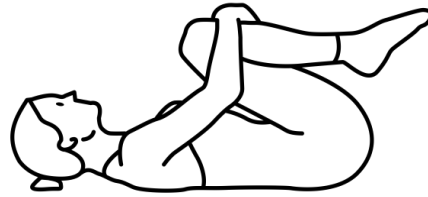
#### Preparation:

- *uttanasana* (forward bend),
- *trikonasana* (triangle),
- *dvipada pitham* (desk),
- *adhomukha svanasana* (down dog)

#### Counterpose:

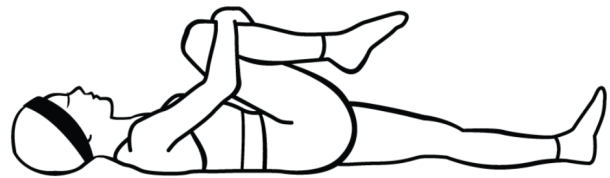
- Always rest immediately following shoulderstand. Then *bhujangasana* (cobra), *salabhasana* (locust), or *dvipada pitham* (desk).

### Apanasana (Wind-relieving pose)



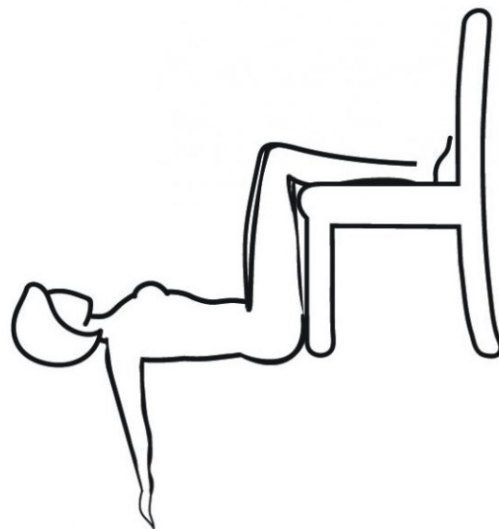
Definitely an inversion! Krishnamacharya called it 'worth one third of headstand.' This is a wonderful accessible inversion that has all the benefits of lifting the legs above the heart.

**Modification:** one leg at a time, knee in to chest with exhale, pause after exhale:



#### Legs on a Chair:

Another worthy inversion. Safer than legs up the wall, which can create too much pressure in the hip sockets for older people or those with hip problems.



Choose the inversion that is right for your body right now.

## 4.2 Vinyasa Krama for Each Individual: Modification

### **1. No two people are alike: a truth that is very pertinent to Yoga.**

- What works for and feels good to one person may actually disturb or injure another. Therefore, each individual person needs a practice that is relevant to them and their particular situation. In a class situation, the teacher can give a more generic practice that suits the majority of people, along with the tools to enable people to customise it themselves, to make sure certain people get what is appropriate.
- Yoga is not a systematised process. It is not a rigid occurrence that “makes the practitioner fit into what is going on here,” rather it is a constantly evolving and fluid process of feel good & feel better.
- *“Unfortunately, chief among the popular misconceptions about Yoga (including among many practitioners and even teachers of Yoga) is the idea that the value of each posture lies in achieving its precise, fixed form. Thus, emphasis has too often been placed on superficial details of positioning and the development of the body in the direction of preconceived, external standards of perfection - and the forms have been crystallised into rigid, static postures in which the living quality of the asana is lost.”*  
—Yoga for Wellness, Gary Kraftsow
- Adaptation is a skill that not every teacher has, and many do not even know there is such a thing, yet it is fundamental to the universality of the practice of yoga. The practice of yoga should speak to an individual in a language they can under-

stand and the tools that may be used to do this are numerous.

- You are not practicing someone else’s yoga; you are practicing your yoga.

### **2. Different Tools to Adapt and Modify the Practice (this list is not exhaustive)**

- Actual form of the asana
- Whether it is done dynamically or statically
- Where in the general sequence an asana is placed, and what other asana precede/follow it
- The length of the breath
- Adding retention after inhale / exhale (langhana & brahmana)
- Doing asana on breath retention
- Doing inhale movement on the exhale (but not the other way round!)
- What point of focus is given
- The goal of the practice
- The use of chanting, vocal sounds, music, poetry or prayer.
- Cushions and blankets to assist in postures, and to relieve parts of the body
- Rituals
- Group practice
- Inclusion into the practice of other exercises e.g. from the chiropractor
- Inclusion into the practice of other forms e.g. dance, tai chi (note: not as a substitute for practice. There are specific benefits from the yoga technology that do not come from other pursuits, no matter how invigorating.)
- Invention of new asana to address specific needs
- Visualization & creative imagery

**3. It is important to understand the differences between what is desired, what is achievable, and what is appropriate.**

- You may desire to do a strong fiery practice, and are certainly physically capable of doing it. However, it may be inappropriate for you to do this as you are actually suffering from migraine headaches. To keep your interest at the start, though, it may be necessary to incorporate some demanding vinyasa in the practice, preceded by and followed by very cooling, langhana asana. At all times, the practice must start from where the practitioner is at. At first our fiery mind is insistent on vigorous asana, but as time passes and we start to feel the benefits of the gentler practice, we may have a change of heart as to what is 'right' for us, or come to understand how to nonetheless maintain an energetic practice, but in a safe and balanced way.
- It is also true that at first most of us are not used to listening to the subtle messages of the body and mind. (This can be caused by any number of reasons: suppressed, painful life experiences, the fitness concept of "no pain, no gain," never been taught to do it, buying into someone else's idea of what to do & how to do it, feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, etc.) Therefore, at the outset, the programming is entrenched in the mind to; 'go hard', to mentally impose the will of the mind over the natural guidance of the body and breath.
- And so this is where the practice starts from, we work with our

teacher to meet our needs in such a way that the principles of practice are still there. Usually as you continue in your daily practice you become more attuned to the real state of their body, breath and mind, and the desire to adjust the practice to one that is more suitable arises naturally from within ourselves.

**4. The many factors to consider:**

- Body type. Body size
- Injuries, pain, health issues
- Structural alignment
- Strength
- Flexibility
- Endurance
- Age
- Sex
- Culture, religion, belief system, faith
- Emotional state of mind, especially if there has been recent trauma or grief
- Living environment
- Health of relationships especially those of an intimate nature
- Employment or occupation
- Activities, hobbies, sports, social scene
- Diet and eating habits
- Observation of breath
- Pulse rate
- Current medications, remedies
- Goal or requirement of practitioner
- Weather and temperature
- Time of day practice is to be done and length of time available
- The activities immediately before and after the practice



## 4.2 Vinyasa Krama for Each Individual: Human Variations

*“Where is your appendix? Most people who have studied anatomy will point to their lower right abdominal area. But as figure 3 illustrates, that is only where the appendix is located “on average.” This is where an appendix is normally, but are you “normal”? Imagine you are suffering an acute attack of pain in your upper left abdomen. Your friends rush you to hospital, where a new intern comes to your aid. His first instincts are that you are suffering from appendicitis, but then he realizes that your pain is nowhere near your appendix, or at least where he thinks your appendix is supposed to be. He puts you on painkillers and sends you home instead of ordering the life-saving operation you need. Not good!*

*Now imagine attending a yoga class where the teacher believes everyone can, eventually, do Lotus Pose (Padmasana). Maybe not today, but with diligence, practice and a firm guiding hand, with the right Lululemon pants and the best Himalayan incense, the teacher can show you how to get into this challenging cross-legged posture. He notes that every student who has stayed with his program long enough has managed to do this. What if you have never been able to sit cross-legged comfortably? Your knees are always up by your*

*ears when you sit on the floor, but you are game. You try – you ignore the little tweaky feelings in your knees until one day, the pain escalates into a burning fire that won’t stop even after the class is over. You have torn your medial meniscus and are no closer to doing Lotus Pose than when you started yoga. The teacher has been ignoring the reality of your uniqueness. Due to the shape of your pelvis and femurs, you will never be able to do Lotus Pose, and trying to get there is destroying your knees.*

*Yoga is a self-selecting practice. Those who have the correctly shaped bones to be able to do certain postures keep working and progressing. They stretch out all the tensile resistance that prevents achieving their maximum range of motion, and they get to their desire positions. However, those whose bones are not shaped so optimally, who are not stopped by tension but rather have reached compression, where the bones are hitting each other, will never be able to do the pose. They quit in frustration, convinced that some deep personality flaw is preventing their progress, a delusion secretly shared by some teachers.”*

This material is from the first chapter of *Your Body, Your Yoga* written by Bernie Clark,

## 4.2 Vinyasa Krama for Each Individual: Resting

Taking rests between asana is important to maintain control of the breath/transition/reflection. Rest should be taken on requirement, when breath is disturbed or when the body becomes fatigued, shakes or sweats excessively. Resting has several benefits:

Obviously, it gives us a chance to rest the breath and allow it to ease a little, especially if we have been doing demanding asana and our breath is working hard.

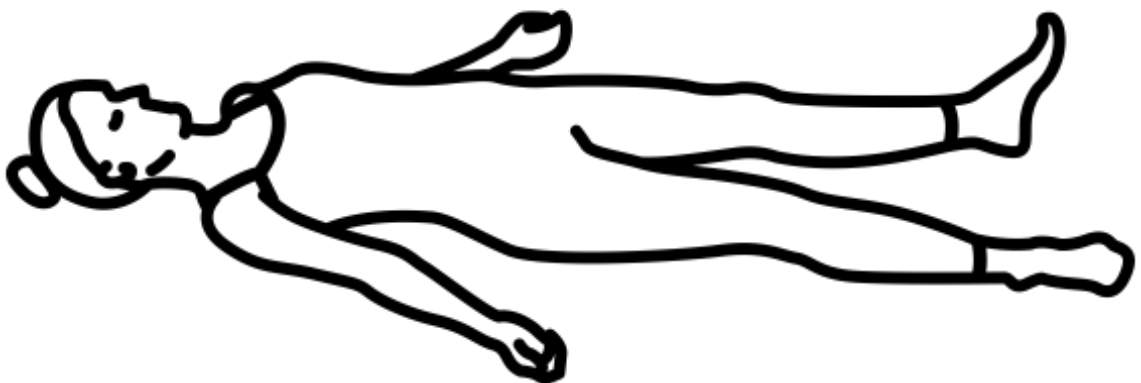
When we allow our breath to soften, our heart rate slows down also, and one of the definitions of a good practice is that our heart rate is slower after the practice than it was before.

Resting gives us a moment to make the transition from one asana to another with mindfulness.

In this moment of transition, we can also take a moment to evaluate our practice and how we feel. Perhaps we have started out thinking we will do a strong session but halfway through realise that actually we feel quite tired. Here we can alter our course to take this into account.

Taking this time also allows the full effect of the asana to take place in our system, and this, too, might indicate that we need to increase/decrease certain factors.

*“The body is already in a state of enlightenment” — Samdhanirmocana Sutra*



## 4.3 Vinyasa Krama Practical Resources: Developing the Breath

Basic general rules for integrating the breath into all asana:

- On inhale, limbs move away from the body, expanding,
- On exhale, limbs move towards the body, contracting.
- Backbends are on an inhale
- Forward bends on an exhale.
- Twists on an exhale, ease twist on the inhale.
- Lateral stretch usually on exhale.
- Exceptions: it is possible to come into an arch on an exhale, but not the other way around (contracting on an inhale) as you will be unable to breathe properly.

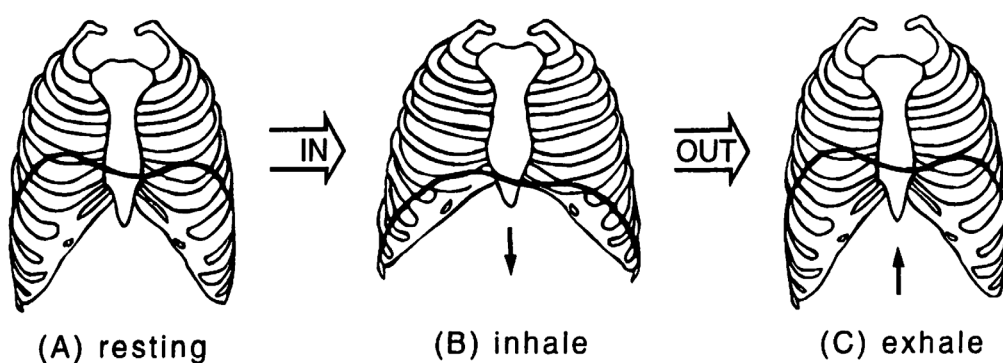


Figure 5:  
Movement of the  
diaphragm and rib cage  
through a breath cycle.

### Exploration: Making Space for Inhale

Experiment with making space (physically and in every way) for the inhale in several *asana*.

- Try sitting in a seated twist, *Matsyendrasana*.
- Deepen the twist on exhale, and check if there is a feeling that “deeper is better.”
- Deliberately half untwist on inhale, relaxing the upper body from all effort and making space for the inhale. Exaggerate this movement so there is a visible untwisting.
- Deepen the twist again on inhale
- Explore whether you feel the exhale and deepening is somehow better or more worthwhile than the refreshing and crucial inhale. Does it feel like the inhale is just something you do in order to twist deeper, or can it be felt as an activity in its own right?
- Aim to make the inhale half the *asana*, not just in terms of length, but also in terms of pleasure and sense of “achievement”.
- Repeat this exercise with a seated forward bend, e.g. *Janu Sirsasana*, again feeling if the exhale and forward bend feels more important and valuable than the inhale. If so, focus on the receptivity and sound of the inhale until gradually over time both feel equally beautiful and worthwhile.

### 4.3 Practical Resources

The following is a general guide to the development of breath capability over time. The entire development of *asana* practice should be understood as a means to develop the breath through these stages of capability.

1. Even and comfortable inhalation (*puraka*) and exhalation (*recaka*).
  2. Extend exhalation.
  3. Introduce retention (*kumbhaka*) after exhalation.
  4. Extend inhalation.
  5. Introduce retention after inhalation. (Note: 3. and 4. would be considered most readily interchangeable.)
- It is generally considered safer to emphasise exhalation in the beginning stages of practice, rather than inhalation.
  - It is easier by force of will to hold the breath after inhalation than after exhalation, and therefore strain the system. Generally speaking, retention (*kumbhaka*) after exhalation is considered safer and indeed, necessary. We emphasise exhalation to release from the systems what is not needed.
  - **To energise a system that is not yet released will only energise a stressful situation.** We release what is old to receive what is new.
  - Lengthening the exhalation and the retention after exhale are the important means to heal the body and clarify the mind. It facilitates release and makes inhalation and the reception of energy possible and useful.
  - Lengthening and retaining a breath movement should not alter the quality and length of the following, opposite breath movement.
  - If it does, a rest and/or adjustment are required. We learn to self-regulate our practices spontaneously and naturally as we observe and develop sensitivity to our system. In the meantime, guidance from a teacher is essential.
  - The key to practice is the exquisite link of the breath to the whole body. We learn to be 'with' the breath, therefore 'with' life.
  - An exhalation may replace an inhalation, but never replace exhalation with inhalation.
  - If in doubt as to which breath a movement requires, do it on exhale.
  - A poor inhalation need not be of too much concern, whereas a poor exhale is not a good sign and you should proceed with caution.
  - (Note: The above statements are general principles, not rules.)

## 4.3 Vinyasa Krama Practical Resources

The balance of *sthira* (steadiness, strength) and *sukha* (sweetness, softness) is achieved by maintaining awareness of our breath and body whilst in the posture and also between and after postures.

1. Patanjali's Sutra 2.46:  
*Sthirasukhamasanam*:
  - a. Asana must have the dual qualities of alertness and relaxation.
  - b. Ideally the practice of asana has two opposing forces present at the same time:
    - Strength is balanced with Softness
    - Alertness is balanced with Relaxation
    - Intensity is balanced with Calmness
    - Challenge is balanced with Comfort
2. *Asana* practice should not be a struggle. It should be steady and comfortable, simultaneously strong and alert, while soft and receptive, *sthira* and *sukha*, literally expressed, aware without pain. It is the same quality of energy it takes to succeed in the world without creating stress. *Asana* facilitates this capability. Right *asana* creates equanimity, flexibility and strength, in that order.
3. *Asana* is the participation in the elasticity of the whole body. It is vital not to push beyond the natural elasticity. The body will snap! Specifically, asana is designed to enhance the elasticity and strength that the system must have in order to breathe. Asana is essentially the same process as pranayama. The difference is that movement of the

body is used to enhance the breath process in asana. In pranayama, the body is stationary and there is less attention on the body and more on the subtle aspects of the breath.

### 4. How does this manifest in the actual practice of asana?

- a. Example #1: Look at *dvipada pitham* (desk pose) done with arms extended above the head. In this position the feet, legs, lower back and pelvic area are working hard, yet the upper part of the back and shoulders, the arms, neck and face are soft and relaxed. Not only that, but the practitioner is focused, aware of what's going on in the position, and is calm and unstressed.
- b. Example #2: Look at a practitioner who is struggling to do *virabhadrasana* (warrior) with clenched teeth, neck tendons bulging, breath held and arms shaking. *Sthirasukha* is not present, and so it is not asana.
- c. Example #3: Whilst this dual quality should be present in all *asana*, it is perfectly represented by the practice of *Samastithi* (standing with still attention).

### 5. How can we be sure that *sthira-sukha* is achieved/maintained in our practice?

- a. First of all, the practitioner must give up any notions of "no pain, no gain." Yoga is a process, or discipline, designed to make the practitioner feel better. There is no pain or struggle involved in this process. In fact, the definition of a good practice is one that feels good to the person doing it, while they are

doing it, and after they have done it. If the practice is too difficult, painful or too long, there will be little chance of the person continuing with it. Besides which, it could be doing long-term damage rather than good. Pain is a message from the body that things are not right and it is ignored at our peril! By ignoring pain and continuing with the practice, a person becomes insensitive to their body and disconnected from themselves. This is the opposite of the yoga definition of 'union.'

- b. Ideally the *asana* practice should be tailored to fit the individual. This is known as '*viniyoga*': proper application based on the situation. The yoga is shaped to fit us, not the other way around. This means taking into account a whole range of factors such as our age, body type, cultural background, level of fitness, strength, what we want from the practice, etc. This means that the whole range of *asana*, *pranayama*, meditation, or whatever else can be utilised to construct a personalised and highly effective practice for the situation. This means there is no one 'right' way to do an *asana* in terms of external shapes. There are however crucial elements such as those we are exploring which make it *asana* rather than just stretching.
- c. There are as many variations of *asana* as there are practitioners. If the practice is right for the person, it will be a lot easier for them to maintain *sthirasukha*.
- d. '*viniyoga*' is not meant to refer to a 'style' of Yoga despite the word having been used in this way but an approach. It means all the various tools of Yoga should be utilised to ensure each person gets the best Yoga for them. This is the spirit of Yoga.

"Owing to the difference in body structure, all the tools of yoga are not meant for everyone. For in reality some are stout, some lean, some crooked and some others are lame."

—*Yoga Rahasya of Nathamuni* 1:31

- e. All movement is combined with breath. In particular, the ujjayi breath.

### Exploration: The Balance of *Sthira Sukha*

*Sthirasukhamasanam*

*Sthira - sukham - asanam*

*Sthira*: firm, stable, without change, resolute, strong.

*Sukham*: easy, agreeable, comfortable, happy, soft, sweet, prosperous.

*Asanam*: yoga posture, being seated, way of sitting, the camp, situation, place, to be.

"The verbal root of the word *asana*/m/as, has many meanings in itself: It is the idea of being present in one's own body, inhabiting & existing in it. One acts without interruption, or holds a position for a while, maintaining it. It also encompasses the idea of ritual, & vigilance."

—from *The Essence of Yoga*, Bernard Bouanchaud

Contemplate the following questions:

- Is there a limit to strength and softness?
- How can *sthira* be maintained in my *asana* practice?
- How can *sukha* be maintained in my *asana* practice?
- How does this concept apply to my daily life?

## 4.3 Practical Resources: *Langhana* and *Brahmana*

*Langhana*: To reduce: the contracting principle

- Exhalation and retention relate to calming, releasing postures (forward bends, twists) and process: langhana practice
- Represented by Ida (one of the two major nadis in the spine; see glossary)
- It is Lunar (female)
- Qualities: passive, receptive, cool, calm, releasing, relaxing, reducing, quiet
- Breath dominates in the left nostril
- Activates the parasympathetic nervous system: “Relaxation Response”
- Increased by long exhalation and the pauses after exhale
- Increased by forward bending, twists and inverted poses which facilitate exhalation
- Langhana asana: savasana, apanasana, uttanasana, paschimotanasana, halasana,
- Langhana pranayama: sitali, anuloma ujjayi, kapalabhati
- If the asana practice has too much emphasis on langhana it may increase tendencies in some people such as: laziness, spaciness, passivity and lethargy. However, if there are problems with any of the following, then more emphasis on langhana is ideal: insomnia, tension, stress, anger, aggression and rage, headaches, lower back injuries, high blood pressure, constipation, and hot flushes.

*Bramhana*: To expand: the expansive principle

- Inhalation and retention relate to expanding, energizing postures (backbends) and process: bramhana practice
- Represented by Pingali (the other major nadi in the spine; see glossary)
- It is Solar (male)
- Qualities: heating, stimulating, energizing, vigorous, proactive, intense, expansive, clarifying
- Breath dominates in the right nostril
- Activates the Sympathetic nervous system: “Fight or Flight” (also known as “Freeze and Appease”)
- Increased by long inhalation and the pauses after the inhale
- Increased by back arches, looking up, sun salutations, any asana which increases inhale
- Bramhana asana: head stand, dvipada pitham, bhujangasana, navasana, utkatasana, ustrasana
- Bramhana pranayama: viloma ujjayi, surya bhedhana, bhastrika
- If the asana practice has too much emphasis on the brahmana aspect, there is a danger of overheating the system causing, or exacerbating, mental problems, anger, aggression, injuries, digestive problems, stressed sympathetic nervous system, insomnia, headaches, or migraines. However, there may

be times when certain people need extra brahmana focus in their practice to alleviate problems such as: depression, lethargy, laziness, fatigue, sleepiness, fuzzy head, confusion, indecision, overweight. NOTE: A long retention after exhalation will create a brahmana effect.

In asana practice the qualities of both langhana and brahmana should be present in equal amounts; this is further to the concept of sthira sukha: the balance of strength and softness. One will affect the other and a practice is always a combination of both, depending on the changing needs of the practitioner. A balanced or samana practice suitable for each person is achieved with the right combination of langhana and brahmana. Techniques are many and must vary from person to person.

Although it is generally best to have

an equal amount of both qualities in asana practice, it is advisable to start with more emphasis on the langhana aspect. This is because of the idea that it is better to release the system before strengthening it. This means, for example, that someone with a brahmana type condition should be relaxed and released before any more brahmana type activity takes place. The underlying philosophy here is that strengthening a dysfunctional system also strengthens the dysfunction (like having coffee when already feeling anxious).

Another thing to be aware of is that langhana and brahmana are not always clear cut or definite.

For example, doing a very strong exhale with a long pause afterwards can then in turn cause the following inhale to be deeper, thereby increasing the brahmana aspect.

### **Exploration: Breath is the Bridge between Body and Mind.**

Try the following investigation each day over the next week. The focus is on becoming familiar, intimate, comfortable, and confident with your breath.

This is also an exercise in observation—You are the observer and the observed.

- Notice any physical distractions that occur in the body.
- Notice the length and quality of the breath.
- Take note of whether the inhalation is longer or shorter than the exhalation.
- Is the breath smooth or jerky?
- Can you feel the chest rise first on inhale, followed by the abdomen?
- Is there any restriction in either area?
- Are you able to smoothly draw in the abdomen as you exhale?
- Does the time of day you practice have an effect on the breath?



## 4.3 Vinyasa Krama Practical Resources: Counterpose

It is important to know the counterpose to a main pose and the principles of counterpose.

### 1. Principles of counterpose:

- a. Follows main asana.
- b. Is easier than main asana.
- c. Is opposite or relieving of main asana \*
- d. Is symmetrical \*\*
- e. Is done dynamically \*\*\*

\* Opposite is not always appropriate, for example:

- The opposite of a headstand is to stand upright but the actual counterpose is a shoulderstand.
- Also after doing dhanurasana it would not be advisable to go straight into pascimatanasana as it is too extreme. There should be a sensible transition.

\*\* There are some variations to this principle, for example some apanasana variations are done asymmetrically but are very relieving.

\*\*\* This too has its exceptions; sometimes lying and resting or holding the knees in close to the chest can be a static counterpose. In fact, if in doubt as to what counterpose to do, simply rest. Rest can act in the same way. Furthermore, there are some sequences which incorporate a counterpose into the flow of asana, making a separate counterpose unnecessary.

*Example: a vinyasa comprising deep crouch, cat, down dog, up dog and reverse.*

For example:

- a. Bhujangasana might be fol-

lowed with cakravakasana into vajrasana.

- b. A shoulderstand is best relieved in the lower back by bhujangasana.

### 2. Why do we do a counterpose?

Although each asana has specific benefits, they can leave tension in the body if not counteracted.

For example, after doing a shoulderstand it is easily felt in the back how necessary it is to then

arch the back the other way. Or after doing trikonasana, there can be some tension in the neck

or shoulders, which a forward bend can relieve. What's more, the counterpose actually ensures

that the benefits of the main pose are reinforced in the system. In addition, when we understand how a practice heavy on the brahmana side can overheat and over stimulate the body, then it is clear why we would balance that with gentle and cooling langhana asana (or vice versa). Once again, it comes back to balancing the system.

### 3. A general rule

Forward bends are a useful universal neutralisers for all other directional movements of the spine. The forward bends are considered "the hub of the wheel", with back bends, lateral bends and twists forming the spokes of the wheel. It means that we would never place a backbend and lateral bend next to each other, or a backbend next to a twist - there always will be a forward bend of some sort in between.

### 4.3 Vinyasa Krama Practical Resources: Dynamic & Static

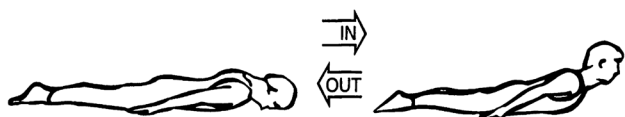
1. “Dynamic” simply means that we move in and out of the posture. For example, inhale and the arms raise above the head, exhale and fold into *uttanasana*, inhale coming upright again with arms overhead, exhale back into *uttanasana*, and continuing like this for several breath cycles.
2. “Static” means that we would exhale into *uttanasana* and then stay in the forward bend feeling the movement of the breath in the body also for several breath cycles.
3. Postures are generally approached dynamically before statically. It is generally best to do a posture dynamically to warm up first before attempting to stay in it. Of course there are some positions that are only static, for example headstand and shoulderstand, although we can do various leg movements in these postures, they are essentially static. Whether asana are done dynamically or statically can make a big difference to the overall feeling of the practice.
4. There is significant movement, however, even in static poses as the whole body participates in the elasticity of the breath process. The breath ratio in a static posture is usually the same as

that established in the preceding dynamic posture. Almost always keep the joints soft and never swing on the joints using mere momentum and weight to move from posture to posture. Move with the breath as the guide and structure of the movement. In standing from forward bend, always keep the knees soft to keep the center of gravity through the feet. This protects the lower back from strain. For most people, considerable strengthening standing asana, including *trikonasana*, should precede for some months before attempting inversions. Always keep the neck and shoulders soft.

#### MASTERY OF ASANA

Understand which positions prepare us for more demanding ones, and which positions should be mastered before attempting stronger asana. The definition of mastery is:

- *Sthira sukha* is present, i.e. the practitioner has equal amounts of strength and softness.
- The breath is smooth and controlled, and totally encompasses the movement.
- The practitioner is attentive to the breath and focused in the process of the asana.
- The physical form of the asana is aligned correctly and feels good to the practitioner.
- These principles apply to every asana, gentle or demanding, classical or modified.



Source: *The Heart of Yoga*, T.K.V. Desikachar

## 4.4 Yogas of Participation

The feeling of a posture has more importance than the look of it:

How the asana looks is secondary to how the asana feels. If the practitioner is achieving classical uttanasana but tears the hamstrings, then the essence of the practice has been lost. Whilst it is worthwhile to work towards perfecting a posture, the main ingredient should be that it feels enjoyable and comfortable to be in it, even when we are doing more demanding postures. The more we enjoy being in the asana, the more likely we are to feel integrated at the end of the practice because we were able to maintain our attention without the distraction of pain or discomfort. The aspect takes on significant relevance when dealing with people who physically cannot do the classic version and must be given adaptations to accommodate their situation. If the form

of the posture was the only thing that mattered, then a lot of people would simply be unable to do yoga!

The importance of asana is its energetic function, not what it looks like. What the practitioner actually feels is primary. How the asana looks outwardly is of secondary importance. Asana is principally a process of integrating body, breath and mind. It isn't there for its own sake. It facilitates pranayama. If pranayama is successful, the mind will be made clear and the body energised. Therefore, meditation, dhyana, spontaneously occurs. A short time should always be given at the end of the practice for this absorption in the natural state. No technique in yoga exists for its own sake. They are all there, sequenced logically to support each other. They are practiced with the single purpose of supporting life, the context of the whole body.



## 4.5 Self-Care and Self-Enquiry

### Self-Care

The skin is the largest organ in the body, and plays a major role in waste and toxin removal. You can encourage good circulation and a healthy lymphatic system through a daily (or occasional) self-care practice of dry-brushing or ayurvedic self-massage (abhyanga). Brush or massage the skin with a quality oil suited to your constitution. Gently yet firmly work from the soles of your feet, up the back and front of the limbs and torso, ending at the heart. Use clockwise circular motions for belly, joints, and heart, and long, firm strokes along the rest of the body. Don't forget the face!

### Self-Enquiry

Identify what you are seeking. A job, a mate, a fitter body, more money, recovery from illness, a life purpose, supreme understanding? Without denying any of these goals, can you see how seeking what you think will make you complete may be obscuring the awareness that you are already perfect as life itself?

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### 4.15 Recommended Further Reading:

The Heart of Yoga by T.K.V. Desikachar, Chapter 4 'The Careful Construction of a Yoga Practice.' This contains variations on the basic sequence we are doing together.

## 4.6 Resources: Pregnancy, Motherhood and Yoga

Pregnant women need special attention when doing yoga that is beyond the scope of this course and workbook. In general women can practice during the entire pregnancy, but they should definitely not force themselves any time when they don't feel like it. The psychologies of attainment must be addressed for the mother to be able to listen to the body's needs and not impose yoga ambition upon it. The body knows best what is good for mum and child!

If the woman feels good she can continue with a gentle practice during the first trimester, no inversions

In the second and third trimesters, the following should be avoided:

Headstand  
Shoulderstand  
Inversions  
Twists  
Backbends  
*Navasana*  
*Bandha*

*“The essence of motherhood is not restricted to women who have given birth; It is a principle inherent in both women and men. It is an attitude of the mind. It is LOVE—and LOVE is the very breath of life.” — AMMA*

Suitable *asanas* are:

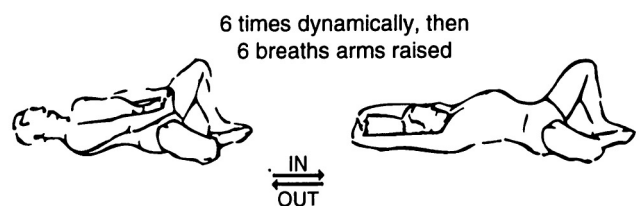
- *Utkatasana* or “frog pose:



- *Baddha konasana*



- *Konasana* (soft forward bends)
- Light *Mahamudra*
- *Supta Baddha Konasana* (not suitable for third trimester)



These should be gentle, dynamic, and breath centered.

Breath:

Gentle *Ujjayi*, *Ujjayi* inhale and *Fffff* sound exhale. Avoid strong *ujjayi* exhale.

## 4.6 Resources: Yoga for the Three Stages of Life

The title of Srivatsa Ramaswami's book, *Yoga for the Three Stages of Life*, is indicative of another Yoga concept: that the practice of yoga should be relevant to the stage of life the practitioner is in. Furthermore, each stage is quite different.

### Stage 1:

- From youth through to 30s- 40s
- Emphasis is on movement and challenging asana
- 3/4 asana practice, 1/4 pranayama and meditation \*\*

(Note: Stage 1. actually has a sub-category: Children. Their practice is all asana without any pranayama or meditation. The asana practice itself is very gymnastic and dynamic, with very little static asana. This is the stage of life that is filled with movement and high energy, therefore the practice should reflect that.)

### Stage 2:

- From 30's- 40's through to 60's
- Emphasis less on movement more on contemplation
- 1/2 asana practice, 1/4 pranayama, 1/4 meditation

### Stage 3:

- From 60's onward
- Most emphasis is on contemplative practice
- 1/4 asana practice, 1/4 pranayama, 1/2 meditation

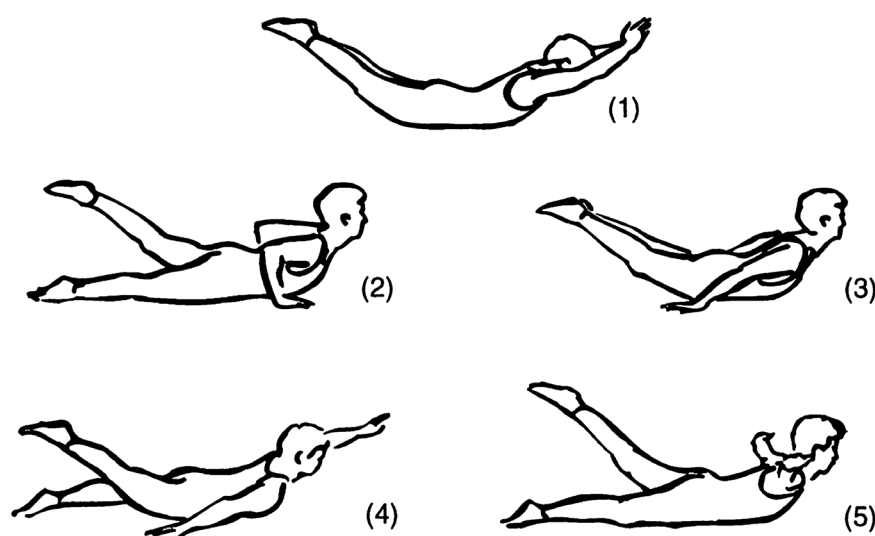


Figure 19:  
Variations of  
śalabhāsana.

# 5. PRANAYAMA & MEDITATION

## 5.1 Pranayama & Meditation within the 8 *Soft* Limbs of Yoga

*“The word ‘anga,’ or limb, is used to describe each of these areas of practice. Like the limbs of a tree, they develop simultaneously, rather than as sequential steps, even though in discussion they are arranged in an order that suggests movement from the gross to the subtle, or from external relationships to a refined state of introspection. In practice, however, the experience of each one informs the others at all times.*

*Often yoga is mistakenly identified either with postures or with sitting in meditation. A beginning student of the postures may feel that only these are necessary, while someone beginning to study meditation may feel that the postures are not useful. However, certain disciplines involved with the body and breath are essential to support any meditation practice, while postures done without mental involvement and proper breathing will not lead a student into the full experience of personal reintegration.”*

— *Yoga for Body, Breath and Mind*,  
A.G. Mohan

### Yamas

How we relate to the external world.

*Ahimsa*: doing no harm, thoughtful consideration of others. Being responsive to our ‘duties’. Whilst *ahimsa* is about not harming others, it does not mean that we wouldn’t defend ourselves if our life was in danger.

*Satya*: truthfulness. Speaking with honesty. However, if speaking the truth would mean harming someone or something, then it is better to say nothing.

*Asteya*: take nothing that does not belong to us: material or intellectual, including people’s confidences.

*Brahmacharya*: sometimes translated as celibacy, but literally the study of Brahma, a name for God; it is actually about establishing right relatedness to everything. It is the relatedness that is already established in us as life itself. It is to keep the life energy, “God’s energy”, moving in our life. In sexual intimacy, it is about not spilling energy from the system, but keeping the prana in *brahmarandra*, another name for *sushumna*. The sexual union with an intimate is the principal activity of life that moves

the prana. Asana and pranayama, when forced on the system as part of a search, actually restrict and reverse the natural flow of prana and create an addictive sensation. Only prana's unobstructed movement in the system's natural relatedness heals. Hatha yoga is supremely useful when practiced as intimacy with our own condition leading to intimacy with all of our experience, not merely a part of a complex reaction to experience in trying to know cultural myths beyond our experience. Otherwise it just intensifies the agony of the search and the righteous refusal of relationship, the struggle with self and other, and the self-conviction of being right. Hatha yoga belongs in the full context of a tantric yoga, but not conventional Hinduism that denies the wonder of this reality in its search for the beyond. [for the complete text, please see Yoga of Heart by Mark Whitwell. pp.193- 195]

*Aparigraha*: not taking advantage



of; not exploiting someone else.

## Niyamas

How we treat ourselves.

*Sauca*: cleanliness, both internal and external: wearing clean clothes, bathing ourselves, etc., and free, healthy functioning of our body and all its parts, including a clear mind.

*Santosa*: contentment; accepting what is happening now.

*Tapas*: to remove; to discipline; elimination; purification; self-control; literally to heat the body and by doing so, cleanse it. It is not about hard-core self-denial. It must cause no suffering.

*Svadyaya*: self-inquiry, study; hatha yoga allows the breath-body state to become the touchstone for knowing yourself and responding accurately to yourself.

*Isvrapranidhana*: "surrender to the Lord"; yoga of devotion; a principle means of freedom, kaivalya; in Mark Whitwell's words: devotion to the intelligence of your own Life by "surrendering spiritual ideals in order to live in the faith/srad-dha of your own ordinary reality".

## Asana

Bodily postures not usually assumed in regular activity.

1. Asana is moving pranayama, which prepares you for sitting pranayama



2. Postures must have the dual qualities of strength and softness (sthira sukha)

3. Postures must enhance your life and bring about a sense of balance and health

4. Having the strength to receive (sthira sukha) in asana makes it possible to have that same receptivity in the rest of your life; then true relationship becomes possible.

## Pranayama

Movement of life energy through regulated breathing technique.

1. Focus on the breath immerses the mind in Life's intelligence

2. *Pranayama* allows for meditation to arise spontaneously

3. Thereby increasing clarity of the mind, allowing us to see clearly

## Pratyahara

Withdrawal of the mind and senses from objects; drawing the senses within.

## Dharana

Mental concentration, direction of focus.

## Dhyana

The mind linked with an object and maintaining the link; meditation

## Samadhi

The mind at one with the object; complete union; bliss

<i>Yama</i> – Social Behavior <i>Niyama</i> – Personal disciplines	Social Wellbeing
<i>Asana</i> – the Body <i>Pranayama</i> – the Breath <i>Pratyahara</i> – the Senses	Physical Wellbeing
<i>Dharana</i> – the Mind <i>Dhyana</i> – the Mind <i>Samadhi</i> – the Mind	Mental Wellbeing

<i>Yama</i> – Social Behavior	Social Reintegration
<i>Asana-Pranayama</i> – the Body-Breath	Physiological Reintegration
<i>Niyama</i> – Personal discipline <i>Pratyahara</i> – the Senses	Functional Reintegration
<i>Dharana</i> – the Mind <i>Dhyana</i> – the Mind <i>Samadhi</i> – the Mind-Body	Psychological & Spiritual Reintegration

## 5.2 Pranayama

Pranayama is the movement of life energy through regulated breathing technique. So when you begin your practice using the Five Principles, asana is an expression of your breathing, and as such is moving pranayama. Having rested in savasana after your moving pranayama, you might want to spend some time in sitting pranayama, which is a further refinement of life energy.

Broken into its root words, prana-A-yama can mean NOT having control of prana ('a' is a Sanskrit prefix which negates what it precedes). Your practice is meant to create the circumstances for your life energy to move freely. Its freedom, and yours, is the gift, the siddhi, of practice. Yoga is releasing the body from the mind's confinement of it, not restricting it with more patterning. This is the beautiful refinement of Krishnamacharya's teaching. The paradox of yoga technology is that through deliberate engagement of breath and body, in Krishna's words to Prince Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita, "the sacrifice of the exhale to the inhale," all polarities in your own embodiment merge; the result is their mutual empowerment.

Like practicing scales prepares a musician to improvise freely, your yoga practice prepares you to live freely. Technique exists for it to be transcended. Desikachar addressed this in *The Heart of Yoga: Developing A Personal Practice*, pp. 67 & 68:

**Question: "Should we really be able to practice pranayama without counting the breaths or the ratios between the phases of the breath?"**

**Answer:** Yes. What else is pranayama than being with the breath? But that is very difficult and it's why we have so many techniques. Normally our body has its own rhythm and we are not conscious of our breath. As we count we are occupied with our breath. Lots of people say that pranayama is boring; they say that just sitting there and "doing breathing exercises" is quite ridiculous. There seems to be more challenge in asanas; they produce a visible result. But when we are totally occupied with pranayama, who is bothered about numbers then? Counting and types of breathing, ratios and techniques; these are just the means, not the goal. The goal is not to use any technique at all."



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)

Below are some considerations for sitting pranayama. The various methods can be of therapeutic help in certain life circumstances and health issues.

### **Pre-requisites for Pranayama**

1. *Reasonable mastery of asana practice:* this does not mean that the practitioner needs to become a super-flexi asana guru! It simply means that whatever asana is being done in the practice should be done as per the definition of 'mastery of asana.'
2. *Mastery of the breath in asana:* because pranayama is focused on the breath, then it is essential to become comfortable and in control of the breath during asana. The breath does not have to be amazingly long, with huge retentions after, just smooth, deep and in control.

The ability to sit comfortably with a straight back: because the spine is so involved with breathing it is necessary to maintain correct spinal posture. However, the actual sitting posture should be one where you will be the most comfortable and not likely to be distracted. There is no hierarchy of methods of sitting, whether in lotus pose or on a chair, the goal is a straight spine. See opposite for some options for sitting.

### **Qualities of Pranayama**

1. *Attention is focused on the breath:* naturally when we begin, the mind often wanders off somewhere else. Simply bring it back to focusing on the breath.

Remember—focused attention in one direction. This also serves to keep us very aware of how our breath is doing in the pranayama practice we have chosen to do.

2. *Incorporating dirga and sukshma:* this is similar to sthira and sukha in asana. Dirga means the breath is long and steady; sukshma means the breath is fine and subtle. Ideally, both are equally present. Each one can affect the other, for example, trying too hard to make the breath very long and steady might also make it loud and heavy which then compromises the sukshma.
3. *Three stages of practice:* As with asana, we begin pranayama gradually with shorter breaths, building up to the peak of longer breaths with retention, then gently reduce the breaths back to where we began.
4. *Suits the individual:* As with all of our practice, the pranayama also needs to be relevant to the person doing it. For example, asking an atheist to focus on a Hindu mantra during breath retention might not be appropriate. Likewise, the practitioner whose goal is to maximise relaxation will be better served with suspension after the exhalation rather than retention after the inhalation.
5. *Pre-determined breath/count ratio:* this helps to keep our focus on what we are doing rather than making it up as we go along! There are many different methods of pranayama and

some can get quite tricky so it is good to establish exactly what is going to happen prior to beginning.

6. *Asana practice prepares and supports pranayama:* asana physically prepares us by warming up and stretching the body, so when we get to sit in pranayama we are not distracted by the body. It also physically builds up the strength of our breath, and we are already establishing the habit of being attentive to what we are doing. Furthermore, we can incorporate some of the aspects of our pranayama into the asana for further preparation e.g.; if our pranayama involves the use of breath retention after

inhale, we would choose some postures in the practice to be done with retention after inhale.

7. *Result should be positive:* for this to happen we must be very attentive to the whole asana and pranayama practice. If there is any disturbance of breath, something needs to be adjusted. Incorrect use of these techniques can be dangerous and reinforce blockages or impurities rather than releasing them. That is why guidance of a good teacher is important. In addition, the practitioner should feel good during and after the practice. Certainly after continued daily practice there will be a noticeable increase in mental clarity.

### 5.3 Various Pranayama Methods:

NAME	INHALE	EXHALE	REMARKS
<i>Nadi Shodana</i>	1. Left nostril 3. Right nostril	2. Right nostril 4. Left nostril	Change nostrils after inhale. Very balancing.
<i>Surya Bhedana</i>	Right nostril	Left nostril	Very <i>Brhmana</i> . Use carefully.
<i>Chandra Bhedana</i>	Left nostril	Right nostril	Very <i>Langhana</i> . Good for hot conditions like headaches.
<i>Kapala Bhati</i> ( <i>technically not a pranayama method</i> )	Both nostrils into abdomen .	Both nostrils, strong abdominal withdrawal.	Very rapid breaths, 1 or 2 per second! Very <i>langhana</i> . Good preparation for other <i>pranayama</i> .
Plain <i>Ujjayi</i>	<i>Ujjayi</i> both nostrils.	<i>Ujjayi</i> both nostrils.	Good starting point for <i>pranayama</i> .

## 5.4 Examples of Pranayama Practice

This is a small sample of how different ratios, counts and cycles can be utilised. There are many, many possibilities for pranayama. Before you get too complicated, focus on getting plain Ujjayi and Nadi Shodana (alternate nostrils) to the point where you can enjoy them and stay focused without the recording. This might be a process of several months.

### Method: Plain Ujjayi – One Option

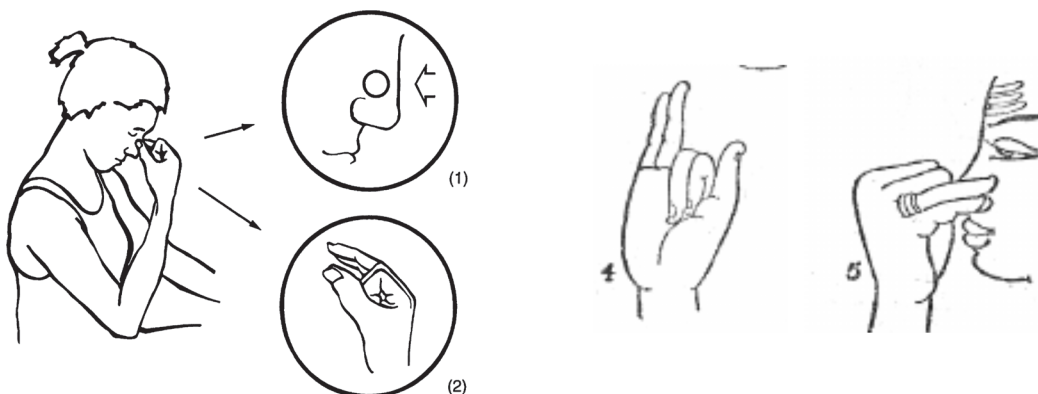
- Start: Inhale 5 seconds, Exhale 5 seconds, x3
- Add pauses: Inhale 5 secs, Pause 3 secs, Exhale 6 secs, x3
- Peak: Inhale 5 secs, Pause 3 secs, Exhale 5 secs, Pause 3 secs, x3
- Decrease: Inhale 5 secs, Exhale 5 secs, Pause 3 secs x3
- Finish: Inhale 5 seconds, Exhale 5 seconds, x3

### Method: Plain Ujjayi – Another Option

- Start: Inhale 5 seconds, Exhale 5 seconds, x3
- Increase: Inhale 5 secs, Exhale 6 secs, x3  
Inhale 5 secs, Exhale 7 secs, x3  
Inhale 5 secs, Exhale 8 secs, x3
- Peak: Inhale 5 secs, Exhale 8 secs, pause 5 secs, x3
- Decrease: Inhale 5 secs, Exhale 8 secs, x3  
Inhale 5 secs, Exhale 7 secs, x3  
Inhale 5 secs, Exhale 6 secs, x3
- Finish: Inhale 5 seconds, Exhale 5 seconds, x3

### Method: Nadi Shodana

- Start: Inhale left 5 seconds, Exhale right 5 seconds,  
Inhale right 5 secs, Exhale left 5 secs, x3
- Peak: Inhale left 5 secs, Pause 3 secs, Exhale right 5 secs, pause 3 secs,  
Inhale right 5secs, Pause 3secs, Exhale left 5secs, pause 3secs x3
- Finish: Inhale left 5s, Exhale right 5s, Inhale right 5s, Exhale left 5s, x3



## 5.5 Meditation

### PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRA 1:2

योगः चित्त-वृत्तनिरोधः *yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhah*

1. Sutra 1:2 defines yoga: “Yoga is to direct consciousness via the mind with continuity to an object of choice.”
2. This sutra describes how we might approach the process: we practice with intention and perseverance, yet paradoxically we are not concerned or attached to the outcome of our practice. This seemingly contradictory combination is key to the whole approach.
3. Some have described Patanjali’s Sutra 1:2 as the stopping of the activities of the mind, “Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuation of the mind”. However, Krishnamacharya insisted that it meant directing the mind. The over-emphasis on control of the mind may have come through from early European and German indologists translating yogic concepts through their own cultural lens. Furthermore, it is believed to be impossible to stop the mind from being active since this is its fundamental role.
4. ‘Witness’ is something that arises naturally, when deliberately cultivated or practiced without robust embodiment — “waking down”, rather than waking up — it can easily be dissociative. This may bring a temporary fragile peace but doesn’t fundamentally change anything in our orientation and approach to life and may in fact make us a worse person, defending our strangely fragile temporary peace experiences.
5. Meditation must be prepared for with appropriate asana and pranayama, so it arises effortlessly, whether that is for ten seconds or half an hour. Otherwise we take on the identity of the person meditating, whereas genuine meditation is when we forget to be a strategic person for a minute because we’re so absorbed in our object of meditation.
6. This is in fact what meditation is: the mind directed toward an object with such laser-like attention that the practitioner becomes ‘one’ with the object. That is the eighth limb of yoga: Samadhi.
  - “Samadhi means ‘to bring together, to merge.’ In samadhi, our personal identity – name, profession, family history, bank account, and so forth – completely disappears. In the moment of samadhi none of that exists anymore. Nothing separates us from the object of our choice: instead we blend and become one with it.” —T.K.V. Desikchar, *The Heart of Yoga, Developing a Personal Practice*
  - Meditation is becoming one with the object of our attention: a state of complete absorption, so much so that we cease to be aware of anything else other than the point of focus.
  - “The object is seen clearly, as it is, without any of our mental projections” -A.G. Mohan, *Yoga for Body, Breath and Mind*
  - The state is not exclusive to meditation; most people have experienced samadhi during other pursuits. However, utilizing this precise focus in the meditation can be very powerful to bring about changes in your life, and most importantly, to know ourselves as we are.

(Note: For a deeper discussion of the function of sacred texts in yoga, Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra specifically, his definition of Yoga, and how it has been mistranslated, and therefore misunderstood, please see ‘The Sacred Texts’ in Mark Whitwell’s *Yoga of Heart, The Healing Power of Intimate Connection*. pp.137-140).

## 5.6 Principle 5: The Seamless Process

1. When referring to the object of meditation, this literally could be anything. The only prerequisite is that it is clearly and voluntarily selected, and be something uplifting that brings about a positive sense of well-being.
2. Some examples are: nature; the sun or moon; the ocean; a person whom we consider inspirational and whom we would like to emulate, or a quality of theirs; God; prana; Life; a strong positive feeling in the body; a concept such as peace, or love; a quality we would like to have more of, eg. confidence; a symbol; a mathematical equation; solving a financial dilemma; a sound; ourselves as we are; the Oneness; a loyal and trusted pet; a microscope or telescope image, a flower...  
vite all the people, make nice food, organise a band, tidy the house, dim the lights, make the drinks...but there is no guarantee that anybody will come, and if they do, there is no way of knowing if the party will be a roaring success. Furthermore, it is pointless trying to manufacture an ambiance; it either happens, or it doesn't, so you may as well relax!
3. The practice of asana- pranayama creates the necessary conditions for meditation to arise spontaneously. We move from outer to inner, gross to subtle. Meditation is a gift/siddhi of practice, and cannot be willed. We can't sit down and say, "Right, now I am going to meditate." This is a crucial understanding: we have the intention to meditate, we set the scene, and then we just relax and let whatever happens happen.
4. Constructing your practice is like throwing a party. You invite all the people, make nice food, organise a band, tidy the house, dim the lights, make the drinks...but there is no guarantee that anybody will come, and if they do, there is no way of knowing if the party will be a roaring success. Furthermore, it is pointless trying to manufacture an ambiance; it either happens, or it doesn't, so you may as well relax!
5. Yantra is a geometrical composition basic to Tantra. A yantra expresses the source and force of Life, and in doing so, is not a mere symbol, but the power itself. One wonderful resource is *Yantra, The Tantric Symbol of Cosmic Unity* by Madhu Khanna, foreword by Ajit Mookerjee. Yantra artist Melissa Forbes holds annual retreats teaching people this ancient art.



*An Ancient Sri Yantra. Above meets below.*

## 5.7 Self-Care and Self-Enquiry

### Self-Care

Find yourself a “sit spot”. This is a place where you live or nearby where you can go and watch the changes of life around you in Mother Nature. It is not a spot for conventional meditation, but just sitting resting in yourself as yourself, as life itself. You are beauty observing beauty.

### Self-Enquiry

Observe your sequence of emotions: Numbness, Fear, Anger, Pain, Grief, Compassion, Forgiveness, Love. What are you feeling right now? Where in your body do you feel this? See if you can predict the next, more basic emotion underlying your current one and progress towards it. This is not a hierarchy of emotions or denial of any feeling. What you feel is completely valid. This process will help you not get stuck in any one emotion.

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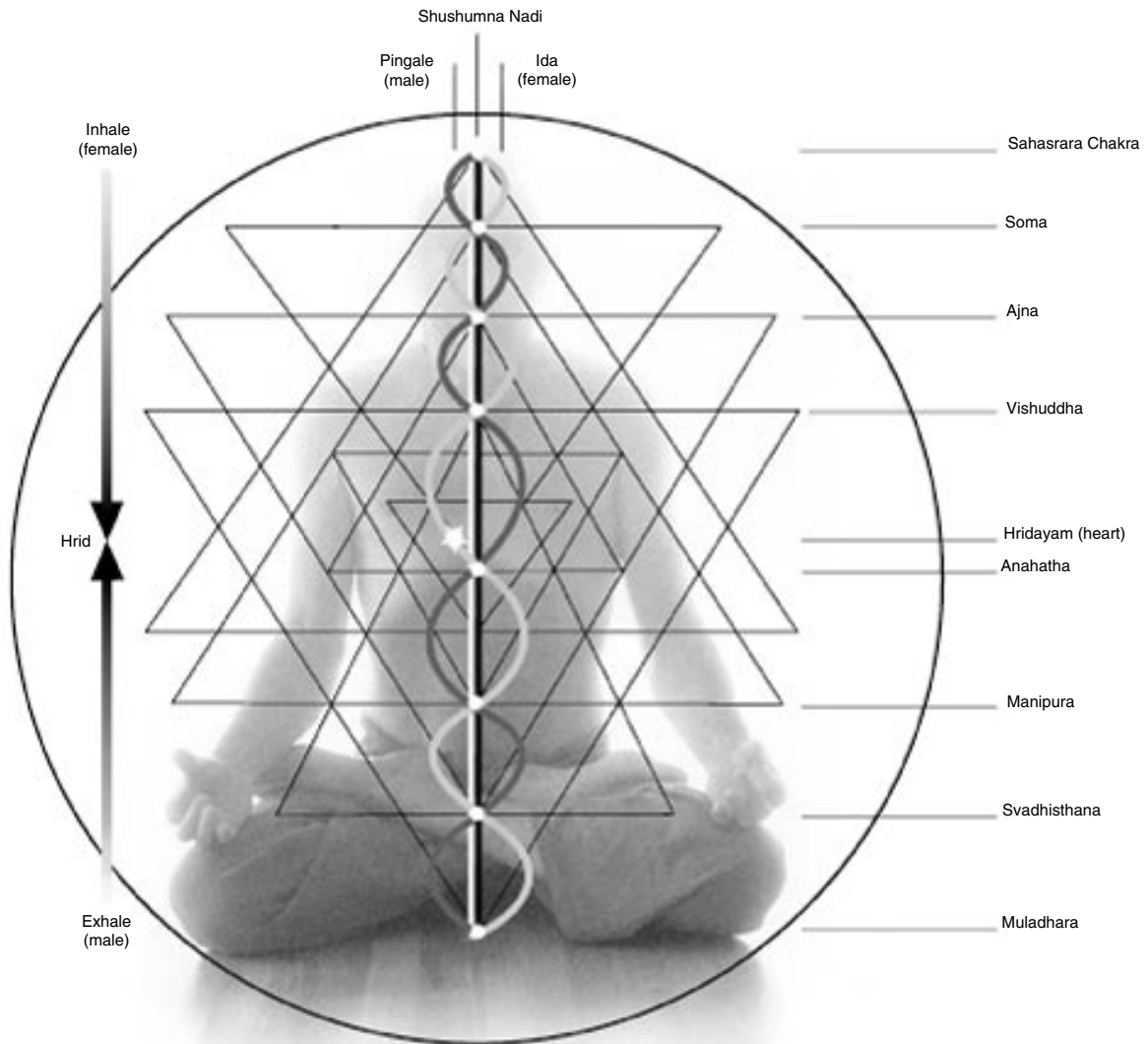
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### Recommended Further Reading:

‘Talk Five: Yoga is Relationship’ in *Yoga of Heart: The Healing Power of Intimate Connection*.



## 5.8 Resources: Energetic Anatomy



*“If you want to know about the chakras, don’t look at the chakras, look at your wife” — Krishnamacharya.*

In other words, relatedness is what moves energy in the body, not obsessive attention on energy systems.

# 6: MANTRA

## 6.1 An Introduction to Mantra

Use sound and chanting for lengthening the exhalation. The sound itself is irrelevant provided it is uplifting and has meaning to the practitioner [mantra however, is traditionally given first before its meaning]. Using sound has many benefits other than lengthening the exhalation. In a class situation, it can be fun and create a sense of unity and openness among the participants, especially for children! It is very solidifying to the senses: i.e. it is hard to be out of your body when using sound. Furthermore, certain sounds can actually be strongly felt moving from the base of the body up to the head. The Om sound is a good example of this.

The vibration of sound moves, and can be felt, throughout the body. Vibration is therapeutic. Because it is lengthening the exhalation, it is certainly a langhana practice, which increases elimination, relaxation and calmness. Sound is good to increase focus and concentration, and in certain applications can be used to improve listening skills.

Sound is a good preparation for the bandhas because energy moves upwards from the base, engaging the pelvic floor and the abdominals on the exhalation. For anyone who has difficulty practicing the bandhas, introducing the use of sound not only builds up the capacity and strength of the bandhas, but also

acts in much the same way.

In pranayama, the use of sounds such as chants or mantras can regulate the length of the breath and keep the practitioner focused on the process.

“Combining sound with yoga poses particularly helps people with breathing problems and speech difficulties. Not only does the force of the sound naturally regulate and lengthen your breath, it also breaks up muscle tension in your face, mouth, jaw and rib cage.” — Yoga for Your Life, M.D. and M.G. Pierce,

## 6.2 Mantra Masterclass: What Sounds?

Simple vowel sounds can be very effective, e.g.: aaaaaahhhhhhhhh, aaaaaahhhh hummmmm, aaahhh hhaaahh. Using Sanskrit seed sounds or mantras e.g.: hram, hrim, OM, om so hum, om mah ah hum, om shanti. Using chants from other cultures, or simple words like: reeeeelax, Aaamen, do ray me.

Using low-pitched sound is felt in the abdomen, as it resonates from the base; low-pitched sound is highly langhana.

Using higher pitched sound raises the energy and lifts the spirits, as it resonates in the face and skull.

A good practice might utilise both low and high pitches to balance the effects.

## 6.3 More On Mantra: Using Sound In Asana

For example: *uttanasana*, standing forward bend. The same principle applies: the sound envelops the movement. The sound lengthens the exhalation and so increases the benefit of the forward bend. Because the exhalation has lengthened, the inhalation is generally a lot stronger as well. However, if the opposite happens; i.e. the inhalation is shortened, then the sound needs to be a little shorter.

Other *asana*: sound can be used in all forward bends, twists, and the exhalation out of a back arch (this softens the *brahmana* effect of the back arch).

The quality of the sound is a reflection of the quality of the breath, which in turn is a reflection of the softness and strength (*sthira sukha*) of the body.



## 6.4 Self-Care and Self-Enquiry

### Self-Care

Yoga is intimacy with body, breath and relationship—in that order. We already have complete relationship with the elemental context upon which we are dependent. For example, the body has a profound energy and biological relationship with air that is beyond scientific understanding, a profound relationship with light, with water, with the green realm. Without these relationships there would be no life. You are the embodiment of these elements. Even if you are not in a circumstance to look upon the beauty and blessings of mother nature, the beauty and blessings are still your reality, wherever.

As a daily exercise, reflect on these intrinsic relationships. As you do your practice, hold close the understanding that you ARE spending time in Nature, wherever you are, because you ARE Nature. Spend some time bathing in some form, and feel water as a blessing and a cleansing. Consider its entire life before it came to your body, from ocean to clouds to rain to river to reservoir to your shower tap. Consider its regenerative and cleansing properties and its power to shift moods.

As you take your food, reflect on the chain of Mother Nature's events that brought the plant realm to your table, and to each and every cell of your body, and feel the body's gratitude for the event of green.

Be in the sunlight each day, and feel it's regenerative energising of every cell. Even in climates where you cannot see the sun, reflect on the fact that the light is there and functioning, powerfully, delivering sufficient amounts to all life on earth. Imagine yourself as permeable, rather than a solid object, with the sunlight penetrating deeply through your skin and into your form.

### Self-Enquiry

Reflect on the Yoga you have been practicing for the last several weeks. Have you noticed any differences in your relationship to yourself, others, and daily life?

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## Recommended Further Reading

- 'Introduction' in *God and Sex: Now We Get Both* by Mark. Available as free Kindle sample chapter download from Amazon.
- <https://upliftconnect.com/neuroscience-and-the-sanskrit-effect/>

## 6.5 Resources: Specific Mantra

On the following page are the written versions of some of the mantras (sacred sound) we have practiced together. But please don't rely on this printed text: reading with our eyes often activates the mind and take us into a place of performing sounds as meaning, like normal talking, rather than creating vibrations in the body as the experience itself, where the mantra IS the meaning, not a sign pointing to an abstract concept.

Experiment with just listening, closing the eyes, and feeling the subtle movements in the body that are making the sound. Your

whole body is creating the sound. Mantra doesn't have to be in sanskrit: you can create your own using whatever language or sounds evoke this feeling of awareness of the whole body.

For traditional Vedic chanting, there are three pitches: normal, one note higher (shown by a vertical line above) and one note lower (shown by horizontal line below). Some of the chants overleaf have pitches indicated. A horizontal line above means a long vowel, stay twice as long on that sound. The best way to learn is listening. For more on mantra see Yoga of Heart page 141.



## 6.6 Resources: Specific Mantra

### 1. From Taittiriya Upanishad

(OM) SAHA NĀVAVATU |  
SAHA NĀU BHUNAKTU |  
SAHA VĪRYĀM KARAVĀVAHAI |  
TEJASVI NĀVADHĪTASMASTU MĀ VIDVIṢĀVAHĀI ||  
OM ŚĀNTIŚŚĀNTIŚŚĀNTIḤ ||

### 2. Gratitude to Krishnamacharya

*On being requested by his students to give them a prayer through which they could pay their respects to him before beginning their studies, T. Krishnamacharya composed the following verse. Source: The Heart of Yoga by T.K.V. Desikachar.*

śrikṛṣṇa vāgīśa yatīśvarābhyām  
samprāpta cakrāṅkaṇa bhāṣyasāram  
śrinūtnarangendrayatau samarpitasvam  
śrikṛṣṇamāryam guruvaryamīde  
virodhe kārtike māse śatatārā kṛtodayam  
yogācāryam kṛṣṇamāryam guruvaryamaham bhaje  
śrī gurubhyo namah

### 3. Guru Vandanam

śuklām baradhāram viṣṇum śaśivarānam cāturbhujam |  
praśannavadānam dhyāyet sārva vīgno pāśāntāye |  
gurubhyastad gurubhyas ca nāmō vākamādhimahe |  
vṛṇimahe cā tat-rād yau dāmpatī jagatām patī ||

śrī gurubhyo namah  
hariḥ OM || ॐ ॐ ॐ

### 4. Samhita Pathah (to Ganesh)

ॐ गणानां त्वा गणपतिं हवामहे  
कविं कवीनामुपमश्रवस्तमम् ।  
ज्येष्ठराजं ब्रह्मणाम् ब्रह्मणस्पत  
आ नः शृण्वन्तूतिभिःसीदसादनम् ॥  
ॐ महागणाधिपतये नमः ॥

Om Gannaanaam Tvaa Ganna-Patim Hava-Amahe  
Kavim Kaviinaam-Upama-Shravas-Tamam |  
Jyesstha-Raajam Brahmannaam Brahmannaas-Pata  
Aa Nah Shrnnavan-Nuutibhih-Siida-Saadanam ||  
Om Mahaa-Ganna-Adhipataye Namah ||

### 5. Gayatri Mantra

*One of the very oldest if not the oldest prayers that has been in continuous use, the Vedic Gayatri Mantra is over 3000 years old. Krishnamacharya and Desikachar passed on this version, here written as sounded:*

Om bhoohu Om bhuvaha Ogm suvaha Om mahaha Om janaha Om tapaha Ogm satyam  
Om tat savitur varenyam, bhargo devasya dheemahi Dhiyo yo nah prachodayaat  
Om aapo jyoteeraso-amrutam brahma Bhoor-bhuvas-suvarom

*Source of phonetic spellings: Yajur Veda Aavani Avittam or Upaakarma and Gayathri Japam*

## 6. Selected Yoga Sutras

### Patanjali's Yoga Sutra

- a. 1.1 अथ योगानुशासनम् *atha yoga-anuśāsanam*
- b. 1.2 योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः *yogaś-citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*
- c. 1.3 तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम् *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe-'vasthānam*
- d. 1.4 वृत्तिसारूप्यमतिरत्र *vṛtti sārūpyam-itaratra*
- e. 2.1 तपः स्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि क्रियायोगः *tapah svādhyāy-eśvarapraṇidhānāni kriyā-yogaḥ*

7.

OM SHRIM SHRIYEI NAMAH

## 8. Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti

(Peace, or Not provoked, not provoked, definitely not provoked)

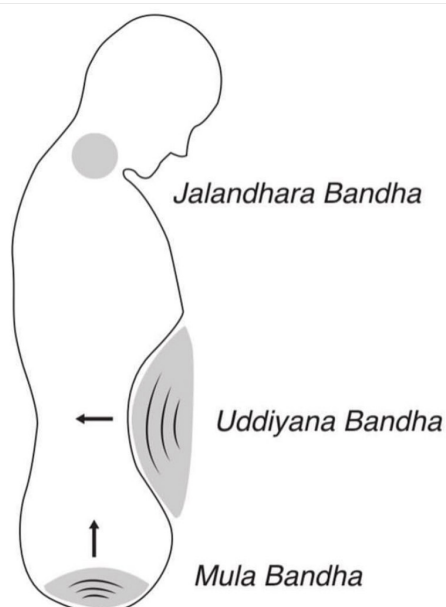
## 9. Invocation to Patanjali

**Invocation to Patañjali**  
*In the tradition of Sri T. Krishnamacharya*

YŌGENA CITTASYA PADENĀ VĀCĀM  
MĀLĀM ŚĀRĪRASYA CA VAIDYĀKENA  
YŌPĀKAROTTAM PRAVARĀM MUNĪNĀM  
PĀTĀÑJĀLĪM PRĀÑJALIRĀNĀ TOSMI |

ĀBĀHU PURUṢĀKĀRAM  
ŚAÑKHACA KRĀSĪDHĀRIṆAM  
ŚAHĀSRAŚIRASAM ŚVETAM  
PRĀÑĀMĀMI PĀTĀÑJĀLĪM  
SRĪMATE ANANTĀYA NĀGARĀJAYA NAMO NAMAH |

# 7: BANDHA



## 7.1 An Intro to Bandha

The word bandha itself means “to tie, or to lock, or to close.” In the actual practice, it is used to ‘lock’ certain areas of the torso into place. By doing this, we are able to increase the amount of ‘waste’ that is burned in the agni, the fire of life.

There are three main bandhas:

### Jalandhara Bandha

The spine is straight, and the chin is tucked back and down towards the chest. This one is approximated in many asana.

### Uddiyana Bandha

The diaphragm and the abdomen are raised and pulled in towards the spine. This is established after the exhalation. The exhalation draws the abdomen in and up by the completion of the exhale; the diaphragm should be entirely drawn back up into the ribcage.

The feeling in the abdominal area is of being drawn in and up. This process causes the back and the rectal muscles to contract also. Uddiyana bandha can also be fully activated in retention after exhale).

### Mula Bandha

This is the pulling up of the pelvic floor, squeezing the perineum and lifting it up. After establishing uddiyana bandha, we can then continue to breath with mula bandha maintained. In mula bandha, the area below the navel, including the rectal muscles, is held in the contracted position, whilst the area above the navel is relaxed slightly. Be cautious of complicated anatomical descriptions relevant only to male bodies.

Practicing the bandhas requires a good teacher for guidance. Before attempting bandha there should be a certain level of proficiency over the breath. If the exhale is weak, then the bandhas should not be attempted. During asana practice, jalandhara and uddiyana bandhas can be practiced in certain postures; a certain level of mastery in this should be accomplished before introducing bandha in to pranayama practices.

Several good positions to practice bandhas are:

- *Mahamudra*
- *Adhomukha svanasana* (downdog)
- *Savangasana* (shoulderstand)



**Caution:** Bandhas should not be practiced when:

- breath is weak,
  - practitioner is unable to suspend the breath after the exhalation
  - during pregnancy/menstruation.
  - There are serious bowel/digestive problem.
  - Recently undergone surgery.
  - Can't sit up straight .(weak back).
- High blood pressure.
  - It feels unpleasant during the application of the bandhas, or causes the heart rate to suddenly increase.
  - Excessive use of the bandhas can cause constipation and generally overheat and overstimulate the system.

## 7.2 Bandha in Action

*“As bandha develops we can feel the musculature of the whole body participate as one process. In asana and pranayama the entire base of the body is active in mula bandha and uddiyana bandha. There are minor bandhas in the feet and legs and lower back that are really part of a single process that moves energy and feeling attention upward to the perineum, lower abdomen and upper abdomen. In applying jalandhara bandha, the entire back, arms and hands, neck and head co-operate in a single process focused at the upper chest and throat.*

*Even without bandha being formally applied, these cooperating groups of muscles can be felt as a significant*

*quality of the asana that function to merge the female receptive qualities above with the male strength below.*

*Bandha is the culminating action of this development in asana and pranayama and depends specifically upon the synchronistic movement of body and breath with retentions, using the mechanics of the whole body.”*

*— Yoga of Heart*



### 7.3 Natural Bandha / Four Parts to the Breath

*The inhalation and the exhalation can be emphasized in various ways in asana practice. We can divide the breath into four parts:*

- *the inhalation*
- *the exhalation*
- *the retention after inhalation*
- *the retention after exhalation*

*We use breath retention in our asana practice to intensify the effects of a posture. Let us suppose we are bothered by a feeling of heaviness in the abdominal region and have decided to practice the seated forward bend to help us feel lighter. We can practice the asana in its simplest form, that is, dynamically, with a slow breath rhythm. Or we might also bend forward on the exhalation as usual, contracting the abdomen as we do, but instead of coming up again right*

*away, we might stay in that position and hold the breath for a few seconds. Holding the breath after exhalation intensifies the effects of the asana on the abdominal region. Conversely, holding the breath after inhalation in certain asanas intensifies the effects in the chest region. As a working rule, the following principles apply in our yoga practice:*

- *an emphasis on long inhalation and holding the breath after inhalation intensifies the effects of the posture in the chest area*
- *an emphasis on long exhalation and holding the breath after exhalation intensifies the effects of the posture in the abdominal area*
- *the forward-bending poses lend themselves to holding the breath*
- *following exhalation, while the backward-bending poses lend themselves to holding the breath following inhalation*

Source: The Heart of Yoga, T.K.V. Desikachar



## 7.4 Self-Care and Self-Enquiry

### Self-Care

Practice beholding the majesty that is all around you by taking a beauty walk. Walk by yourself, without a phone, slower than you usually would, noticing the feel and sound of your feet hitting the grass, pavement or sand. Let your arms swing freely by your sides, with the shoulders relaxed and the head gently lifted to encourage deep, full breaths through your nose. Walk for at least ten minutes, without aiming to feel anything in particular, just noticing the exquisite dance of life all around you, flowing through you. The more you practice seeing the abundant beauty in the everyday, the more you will awaken to the miracle that is your very existence.

### Self-Enquiry

Write down your version of the ideal woman, if you're a woman, or the ideal man, if you're a man. Notice if the description invigorates and inspires you, or causes you to tense up or feel the need to get busy. If the latter, take stock of how you came up with those ideal characteristics. Whose ideals are they? Where did they come from? If anything causes tension, replace it with a characteristic that feels more aligned to you, that allows you to relax into yourself.

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### Recommended Further Reading

- Recommended Reading: Chapter 7, 'The Bandhas' in *The Heart of Yoga* by Desikachar.

# 8: JUST THE BEGINNING

## 8.2 Not the End, Just the Beginning

*“You are here to enjoy your life.” — This was said to me once by a great teacher, and is actually a profound spiritual statement and teaching. Your life is in inherent harmony and dependence on the rest of existence. Simply, you cannot exist without air, water, light, green, or the male-female collaboration, intelligence, unspeakable beauty and power that is the substance of all life.*

*This yoga is about your easy participation in the intrinsic related seen and unseen condition that is your life. That’s what this statement means: you’re here to enjoy your life.*

*The obvious implication and result of this is that you will start sharing it with others who badly need it in this world today. A teacher is not an identity or a role to take on, it just describes the flow of nurturing in your relationships.*



## 8.2 Keep Participating

Be prepared: in the course of our daily relational lives there are clearly difficulties and pain. Love brings up everything that is unlove, to be seen and understood. In other words, as we embrace our yoga and relationships, much buried emotion may surface. It is like opening dusty old filing cabinets. This is why practicing intimacy, whether with our body and breath or with another, is so difficult, rewarding, and fiery! The process can be disturbing, as all of society's dysfunction and the pain in one's family lineage rears its head in order to be released. Deep pain is felt due to the lack of receptivity we have all experienced, and the flow of prana will uncover these feelings. Intimacy with ourselves demands that we have the capacity to see, receive, understand and let go of our inherited trauma. Trauma is a popular modern word for what some cultures have called karma, and we release it for ourselves, for our ancestors, and for future generations simultaneously. This is a difficult process, to be sure, but it is nonetheless a challenge

that is within our grasp. Acknowledgement of the pain is a healing process. We are in a great nurturing force, and we can move into our natural state and relinquish the patterns of the past that have been imposed on us.

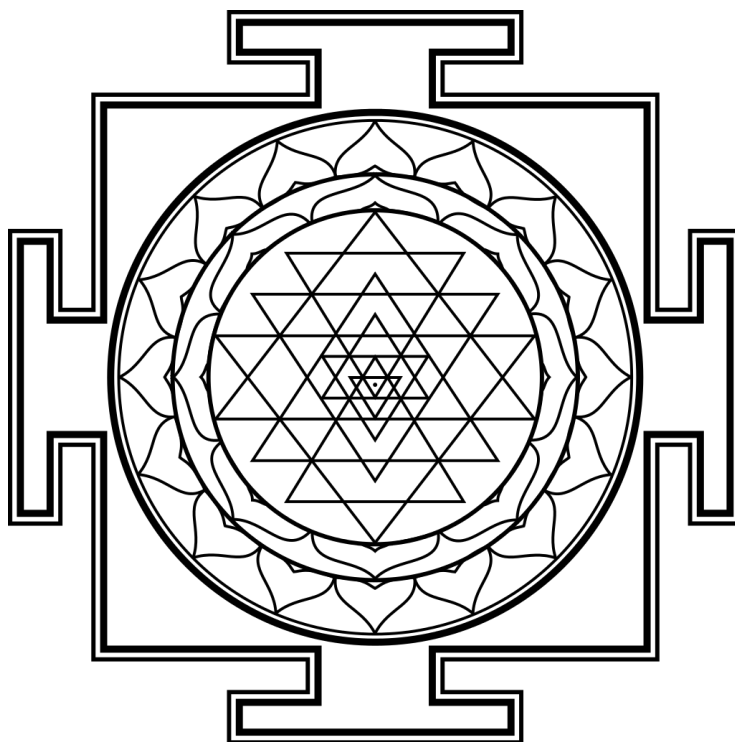
It is our practice of intimacy with ourselves, processing and meeting our emotional experiences, that prepares us to be intimate with another. Intimacy with body, breath, and relationship, in that order. Healing society's patterns can be a slow turning, but I promise you, an appropriate bodily practice of intimacy (the union of inhale and exhale) speeds it up incredibly. Within our commitment to relationship with all, coordinated moving and breathing practice helps return us to actual and natural participation in what is real and disintegrate the patriarchal impositions. The visceral changes quickly arise as the nervous system becomes receptive through the frontal line.

—Adapted from *God and Sex: Now We Get Both*

## 8.3 Breath is the Secret

She moves down from above  
Warm ocean air  
Fills me with her majestic beauty  
I hear waves pounding on shore  
She waits patiently for him at the door  
He rises up from below  
Surrenders to her completely  
They embrace, merge, dance only for a moment  
He receives her with unyielding strength  
She, his primordial protection  
He leaves knowing they will meet again  
She waits for him to return, over and over

— ‘Breath’, from *Postures, Prayers, and Poems* by  
Joseph Lauricella



## 8.4 Self-Care and Self-Enquiry

### Self-Care

Find a sit spot around your home where you can relax and observe the changes of the weather, the plants, the animals, the humans. Just relax and take it in. Being alone and empty-handed without anything “to-do”—even a meditation technique—offers us a potent non-practice in total acceptance. It is a simple experience of the truth of now, free of strain and manipulation. So just do nothing. Sit or stand, be outside or inside, eyes open or closed, whatever arises naturally. Perhaps set a timer for one minute and do nothing a few times each day. Or not. Allow the moment to flow and be, knowing that it is absolutely perfect and needs no more or less to make it complete. Just like you.

### Self-Enquiry

Just sitting here, without yoga, without meditation, just you being life, please ask yourself: Are you the extreme intelligence of life, this upright spine, these shining eyes, the ears that can hear, the tongue that can taste, the eyes that can see, the hair that grows, the heart that beats, the movement of breath and sex. Just as you are. This beauty. Answer yes or no. No caveats allowed. And please ask yourself: If there is such a thing as an unseen source, absolute condition or God of this wonder of you, this pure intelligence and beauty, can the source be absent from what it is appearing as? Answer yes or no.

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### Recommended Further Reading

Please look at *The Heart of Yoga: Developing a Personal Practice*, by T.K.V. Desikachar and *Yoga of Heart, The Promise* and the new book *God and Sex: Now We Get Both* by Mark Whitwell.

## 8.6 Resources: Diet And The Extreme Intelligence Of Life

A fundamental problem for society is excess consumption. Eating too much is a health and social problem that toxifies and burdens the system. Often the best thing that a person can do is minimise the diet; this lightens the system and brings health. Easily said, but social and personal habits run deep. Only when the pleasures of breath, movement and intimacy are installed as a natural part of a person's life is it easy to minimise diet. In fact, it happens naturally, because the pleasure of eating appropriately is greater than the forced pleasure of overeating. We are no longer consoling a pleasureless life with food.

Diet can be optimised to support life in terms of food groups, balances and portions to suit individual constitutions. The timing of meals is vital. To not eat anything some hours before evening sleep allows for a deeper rest, and to practice yoga with a very light stomach serves the practice. *However, the tendency is to become obsessed with food as a solution, like any method of seeking, promotes a problem that really does not exist.* Life as the body is supremely intelligent and can adapt to all kinds of changes and stresses. If we know this and stop adding our concern to the situations, the body and mind relax and life can do a perfect job of keeping us well. The realigning

of any biochemical or energetic imbalance is a spontaneous and constant process. Life looks after us flawlessly and no solutions are required. The food, health food and pharmaceutical industries sell us happiness and health as if we are unhappy and unhealthy. Our suffering is exploited. We tend to believe it, and that makes us sick. Looking for happiness is a mental imposition on the system that creates our unhappiness, and our mental reactions to illness are worse than the illness itself. A symptom is just the body adjusting to a changing circumstance. If we do not react, the symptom can pass quickly. For example, cold or flu symptoms can move through without inconveniencing us. The mind's reaction to illness and pain causes us more pain than illness and pain itself. The symptoms indicate the body dealing with change, and pain is the healing process. The body is dealing with cellular aberration constantly. But if it is not corrected, it is one of life's natural ways of taking the body out of here, and we can slip away peacefully. I am not suggesting that we ignore nutritional, pharmaceutical or medical help when we really need it; rather use them without fearful dependence, believing in our ill health.

Only when the pleasures of breath, movement and intimacy are installed as a natural part of a person's life, is it easy to minimise diet. (from *Yoga of Heart*)

*“Most Yoga problems are dietary problems” — Krishnamacharya*

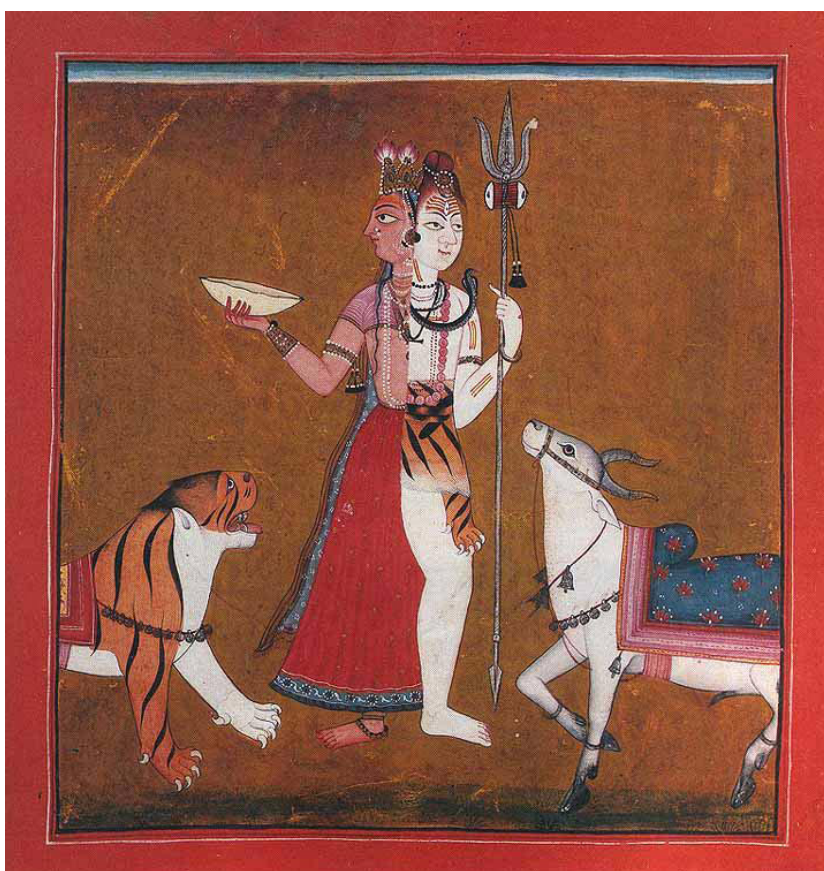


## 8.6 Resources: Yoga Is Not Business

Already in the 20th century, Krishnamacharya was dismayed at how spirituality was big business in India.

Today the merchandizing of yoga has become more of a phenomenon than anyone would have anticipated, caught up with the fashion and pornography industries, part of the vast industry selling body self-hatred under the guise of body improvement. Yet Yoga is not commercial activity, and we can find ways to practice and teach so that the Yoga comes through. The Yogi/ni has no conflict around money: it is not

the purpose of teaching, neither is it squeamishly avoided in the desire to look spiritual or fear of corruption. The Yoga teacher must live, and it's ok to be paid for your work if you are teaching. That's not why you do it, but you are giving people the chance to make an energetic exchange, which will actually facilitate their learning. And you will do good things with the money! Try and make sure money is not a barrier to anyone, however, and make opportunities for people to learn with you no matter what their financial means. A sliding scale can be one way of achieving this.



# GLOSSARY

- adhomukha svanasana:** downward dog pose
- advaita:** non-dualism; not two
- agama:** reliable source. Described as being the teacher, the text, or your own experience, with the third being the most important
- agni:** fire
- ama:** in Ayurveda, a toxic residue in the body from undigested food that promotes disease, created by consuming non-sattvic foods and destructive habits or emotions
- ananda:** a state of bliss
- anahata:** chakra near the heart
- anuloma ujjayi pranayama:** breathing practice involving inhaling with a sound in the throat and exhaling in a regulated way through alternate nostrils
- apana:** energy responsible for elimination
- apanasana:** knees to chest, affecting *apana*
- asana:** postures not usually assumed in regular activity
- astanga:** eight limbs; the eight aspects of yoga described by Patanjali. Popularised as a 'style' of yoga based on the teaching of K. Pattabhi Jois, a student of Krishnamacharya in his youth
- ayurveda:** indigenous Indian system of medicine
- bandha:** to bind or lock; the intelligent cooperation of muscle groups
- Bhagavad Gita:** a part of the celebrated Sanskrit poem the *Mahabharata*, in which God, incarnated as Krishna, instructs his pupil Prince Arjuna in yoga
- brahmacharya:** intimacy, study of right or relevant relatedness, self-discipline (often incorrectly translated as celibacy)
- brahmarandra:** the masculine principle at the base of the body, the heart and crown
- bhakti:** devotion
- bhakti yoga:** yoga as devotion
- bhastrika pranayama:** bellows breathing
- bhavana:** mood
- bhujangasana:** cobra pose, back arched
- bindhustana:** at the feminine brain core and crown of the head
- bindu:** feeling of source
- brahma:** the All-Pervading, God, the substance of everything
- brmhana:** to expand
- buddha parasite padasana:** leg raises
- buddhi:** the faculty of intellect and intuition
- chakras:** energy centers along the spinal column
- chandra:** Moon
- chandra bedhana:** alternate nostril pranayama
- chit:** consciousness
- chitta:** mind, the faculty of memory and imagination
- dharana:** mental concentration, direction
- dharma:** righteousness, duty, ethical value, purpose
- dhyana:** meditation, contemplation
- duhkha:** feeling of discomfort, pain, suffering, reduction of suffering, heart restriction
- dvipada pitham:** table pose
- gunas:** qualities of the mind (*sattva:* harmony; *rajas:* activity; *tamas:* inertia)
- guru:** spiritual teacher, weighty, leading from darkness to light — “no more than a friend, no less than a friend”
- halasana:** plow pose
- hatha yoga:** the yoga that acknowledges the union of two energies of ha tha, Sun/Moon, male/female, right/left, below/above, back/front, exhalation/inhalation; male and female meridians merge into central sushumna meridian
- hridaya:** heart
- ida:** a meridian that terminates at the left nostril; female side in the central and primary meridian
- indriyas:** senses
- ishta:** chosen ideal
- jalandhara bandha:** chin lock, head lowered to the heart
- jatharaga:** heart and digestive area
- jiva:** life principle
- jivamukti:** liberated person
- jnana yoga:** yoga of knowledge
- jnanam:** inquiry
- kanda:** egg-shaped hub of meridian network and distribution centre
- kapalabhati:** bellows breathing with free inhale, a *shatkarma* or cleansing exercise that can be done prior to pranayama
- kapha:** one of the three *doshas* in Ayurveda, constituent of the body, steady/solid constitution associated with water and earth elements, cause of heaviness or sluggishness when out of balance
- karma:** one's past actions condition one's present circumstances
- Krishna:** an incarnation of God who gave the teachings of yoga recorded in the Bhagavad Gita
- kriya:** action
- kriya yoga:** yoga of purifying action as taught by Patanjali
- kumbhaka:** pause between inhale and exhale
- kumbhaka pranayama:** breathing with emphasis on the retention of breath
- kundalini:** the obstruction to the flow of life energy, or the life energy itself
- langhana:** to reduce
- mantra:** sacred sound
- maya:** illusion
- mudra:** a symbol, sacred gesture
- mula bandha:** base-of-trunk lock, lifting of the base of the body
- muladhara chakra:** energy centre at the base of the body
- nada:** sound
- nadis:** 72,000 pathways/meridians in the body through which life energy (*prana*) moves as the whole body; pulse
- nadi sushumna:** central and primary meridian
- nadi shodhana pranayama:** alternate nostril breathing
- niyama:** personal discipline

**ojas:** substance of consciousness, vigor, opposite of *ama*

**OM:** the sacred Hindu word identical to the Absolute condition

**padmasana:** lotus pose

**parsva Uttanasana:** standing pose, asymmetric forward bend

**Patanjali:** author of the classic Sutras on the methods of yoga, believed by most scholars to have lived between 2nd and 4th century CE

**pingala:** meridian that terminates at the right nostril; male side in the central and primary meridian

**pitta:** one of the three *doshas* in Ayurveda, constituent of the body; fiery personality/constitution type; cause of overheatedness or agitation when out of balance

**pradhana:** original source

**prakriti:** strength of life; the body; the Earth; Mother; nature of all things; nature

**prana:** life-force; the energy of life; God's energy; heart's flow

**pranaprathista:** empowering process; placing prana into an object

**pranashakti:** natural energy of life

**pranayama:** movement of life energy through regulated breathing technique

**pratyahara:** withdrawal of the mind and senses from objects; drawing the senses within

**pratyasa:** perceptions

**puja:** a meaningful, personal, religious ritual

**puraka pranayama:** breathing exercise where emphasis is on the inhalation

**purusha:** consciousness

**purvanga:** preparatory stage of meditation

**raja:** royal, chief, king

**raja yoga:** union with the highest power, has become modern name for practices stemming from Swami Vivekananda

**rechaka pranayama:** breathing exercise with emphasis on the exhalation

**sadhana:** practice, that which can be done

**sahaj samadhi:** natural union, the natural state

**salabhasana:** locust pose

**samadhi:** supra-mental spiritual experience, complete union, bliss

**samasthiti:** standing pose; establishing an equal and steady stance

**samskara:** habit, conditioning, pattern

**sangha:** community of practitioners

**sankalpa:** statement of intention

**samsara:** this changing world

**sarvangasana:** shoulder stand

**savasana:** corpse pose, relaxation

**shakti:** female strength and movement, power

**shaktipat:** a sudden, permanent life-changing epiphany

**sirsasana:** headstand

**shitali pranayama:** breathing in which one inhales through the mouth, rolling the tongue

**shiva:** male strength and movement, bliss

**shraddha:** faith

**siddhi:** gift

**shodhana:** purification

**sthira:** steadiness and alertness

**sthira sukha:** strength with equanimity, one of the only directions regarding asana found in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras

**sukha:** lightness and comfort, happiness

**surya:** energizing Sun

**sushumna:** central meridian running through the centre of the spine, from the base to the top of the head

**sutra:** a style of Sanskrit composition; aphorism in a thread by which the teaching, in a highly condensed form, can be committed to memory

**svadharna:** your own position

**svadhyaya:** self-inquiry, study

**tadasana:** standing "mountain" pose

**tantra:** text, theory, system, method, instrument, technique or practice; the esoteric traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism that developed c. 1st millennium CE

**Tantras:** Hindu or Buddhist mystic texts dating from 6th-13th centuries CE

**tapas:** to remove, discipline, elimination, purification, self-control

**tejas:** brightness

**trikonasana:** triangle pose

**ujjayi:** breathing technique in which one inhales with a sound in the throat

**Upanishads:** mystical treatises in prose and verse

**urdhva prasarita padasana:** leg raise

**uttanasana:** standing forward bend

**uttaranga:** formal completion of meditation

**vata:** one of the three *doshas* in Ayurveda, constituent of the body governing wind / movement, cause of anxiety/nervousness when out of balance

**Vedanta:** later development of Vedic culture, philosophy based on the Vedas

**Vedas:** Hindu scriptures that form the basis of all yoga; divine knowledge; the oldest known books in the world

**vijnamaya:** discrimination

**vini:** according to the situation

**vinyasa:** a gradual progression

**vinyasakrama:** a course of asanas progressing toward a desired goal

**virabhadrasana:** warrior pose

**yama:** discipline concerning our dealings with society and the world

**yoga:** union; participation in the union of opposites

**Yogasutra:** Patanjali's classic text on yoga c.2-4th century CE

**yogi:** man who has realized yoga

**yogini:** female who has realized yoga

*“Help me spread the message that’s inside of you and me.*

*We come from a long line. I see it in your eyes*

*You’re part of your own time, I’m part of your songline.*

*All those things that I left behind,*

*All those things that I left behind,*

*They were never mine.”*

*— Tim Finn, “Songline,” from Feeding the Gods\**

*(\*A songline is a medium by which Australian Aborigines hold and transmit tribal knowledge.)*