

SAMAYOGA

C E N T E R

Sama Yoga Academy 200 Hour Yoga Teacher Training

With Rebekah Jacobs & Angie Mandl



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Sama Yoga Academy
200 Hour Yoga Teacher Training

Training Manual
By Angie Mandl



Contents

Foreword.....	5
Lesson 1: What Is Yoga?	6
Lesson 2: The Eight Limbs of Yoga.....	13
Lessons 1 & 2 Review Sheet	17
Lesson 3: Prānāyāma	21
Lesson 4: Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali	28
Lesson 5: Yoga Teachers, Happiness Teachers	32
Lessons 3, 4 & 5 Review Sheet	36
Lesson 6: Beginning a Yoga Class	39
Lesson 7: Intro to Anatomy and Physiology	43
Lesson 8: Master Principles of Alignment.....	55
Lessons 6, 7 & 8 Review Sheet	58
Lesson 9: Meditation	61
Lesson 10: The Three Bodies in Vedanta Philosophy	69
Lesson 11: OM.....	75
Lessons 9, 10 & 11 Review Sheet	78
Lesson 12: Restorative Yoga.....	79
Lesson 12 Review Sheet	83
Lesson 13: Pose Classifications and their Benefits: Standing Poses.....	84

Lesson 14: Pose Classifications and their Benefits: Forward Bends	88
Lessons 13 & 14 Review Sheet	91
Lesson 15: Pose Classifications and their Benefits: Backbends	92
Lesson 16: Pose Classifications and their Benefits: Twists	95
Lesson 17: Sūrya Namaskar	98
Lessons 15, 16 & 17 Review Sheet	103
Lesson 18: The Philosophy of Sāṅkhya	105
Lesson 19: Intro to Ayurveda.....	110
Lessons 18 & 19 Review Sheet	113
Lesson 20: The Five Categories of Āsanās and their Foundations	115
Lesson 21: Misery and its Elimination in the Yoga Sūtras	118
Lesson 22: Sequencing 101	121
Lesson 23: Pose Classifications and their Benefits: Inversions	125
Lessons 20, 21, 22 & 23 Review Sheet	130
Lesson 24: The Principles of Observation and Demonstration.....	132
Lesson 25: Support & Intelligent Cueing	135
Lessons 24 & 25 Review Sheet	139
Lesson 26: Yin Yoga.....	140
Lesson 27: The Business of Yoga	145
Lesson 28: From the Perception of a Limited Self to Liberation.....	150
Lessons 26, 27 & 28 Review Sheet	152

Foreword

Welcome.

What a treasure it is to be with you and support you on this journey. Your commitment and courage, especially at this time, are seen and heard. So well done already.

Whatever evolves for you, we are here. Our passion and joy are to support you in your desire to jump in, refine, absorb, move, re-harmonize, re-engage, perhaps serve - and everything in between.

We love the space between.

Between you and the development of our training program together, there was an idea - a need - to offer a comprehensive, cohesive, holistic yoga training for every body, age and ability. A training to nourish our own bodies and minds and perhaps those in our community - from loved ones to students to someone's glance we catch. This is a program born from stepping into the unknown with faith, skill, some fear and an open mind that every hue of a dream is possible. That our practice has lasting effects that reach beyond our skin. That, through courage, education and consistency, we come back to what matters most. You matter - to us, to our community, and to the world. What a guiding light you already are.

Sama Yoga Academy was born from two like-minded forces infusing decades of experience with the desire to meld the traditional practices of yoga into our modern lives. It's possible. It's essential. It's time.

May this training and our time together help to reignite a dream, your passions, spark your creativity, enhance your flourishing skills and deepen your awareness of just how marvelous and complete you are - we are – vasudhaiva kutumbakam, the world is one family.



Rebekah Jacobs, E-RYT®, YACEP®

Founder, Sama Yoga Center, Co-Founder Sama Yoga Academy

Lesson 1:

What Is Yoga?

Definition, brief overview of the history and intro to Yoga philosophy and Sanskrit

Definition

Yoga is an ancient spiritual and ascetic discipline, including breath control, meditation and bodily postures with the ultimate aim of spiritual purification and knowledge of the self.

It is widely practiced for health and relaxation.

Philosophy

The common goal of all Yogic traditions and texts is to gain knowledge of the self in order to reveal our innate joy. It is important to note that the joy or happiness referred to is not so much something that exists outside of the self, but rather to remember and identify this part of our own nature.

Yoga is a practice of looking inward to eliminate obstacles that may stand in the way of connecting with our innate sense of joy, contentment and self.

History and Insights into Yoga Philosophy

Yoga is first mentioned in the Vedas, a collection of texts that are at least 5,000 years old. The Vedas are divided into four books and they are the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.

Well known texts within the Vedas are the Upanishads, the Śāstras, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata. The Bhagavad Gīta is a part of the famous Hindu epic Mahābhārata.

The word Veda means knowledge or wisdom. The Vedas are written in Sanskrit, the mother of all languages, in the form of verses that are to be chanted.

The goal of all Vedic studies is to know the ātman (the I, the self). The words of the Vedas serve as a mirror to see the self (the eyes cannot see themselves – to know which eye color you have, you have to look into a mirror). When the “I” is discovered, the true self is revealed. The true self, the true nature of all human beings, according to the Vedas, is happiness.

All Yoga practice (including but not limited to the physical practice of yoga āsana) is a means to an end: the ultimate goal freeing the mind from misconceptions about oneself/about the limitations of the self, freeing the mind from wanting and achieving moksa (moksha) (=freedom).

The belief is that the ātman (the I) is limitless – therefor your happiness is limitless. Moksa (moksha) is referring to the freedom (of the mind) from limitations.

If that freedom is achieved, the ātman (the “I” or “self”) recognizes its limitlessness and its true nature of pure happiness.

The purpose of practicing Yoga is to discover and recognize the happiness that already resides within us.

This happiness, in Sanskrit, is called

Sat Cit Ānanda

Sat= that; Cit (chit) = awareness; Ānanda= limitless happiness

Sat Cit Ānanda can be translated as being aware of the pure and limitless happiness that is (within) you.

It is NOT a state of mind. It is YOU, all layers, all misconceptions, all unnecessary wanting stripped away. It is also not bliss, but the spatial limitlessness of (the happiness that is) you!

A Vedic chant that refers to the completeness and limitlessness of the “I” is:

Pūrnamadah Pūrnamidam

Om pūrnamadah pūrnamidam pūrnāt pūrnamidacyate

Pūrnasya pūrnamādāya pūrnamevavas isyate

Om Śāntih Śāntih Śāntih

Completeness is that, completeness is this
From completeness, completeness comes forth.
Completeness from completeness taken away
Completeness to completeness added,
Completeness alone remains.

Swami Dayananda interprets this as follows:

I am pūrnam, completeness, a brimful ocean which nothing disturbs. Nothing limits me. I am limitless. Waves and breakers appear to dance upon my surface but are only forms of me, briefly manifest. They do not disturb or limit me.

They are my glory - my fullness manifest in the form of wave and breaker.

Wave and breaker may seem to be many and different but I know them as appearances only; they impose no limitation upon me - their agitation is but my fullness manifest as agitation; they are my glory, which resolves in me. In me, the brimful ocean, all resolves. I, pūrnam, completeness, alone remain.

Om Śāntih Śāntih Śāntih

Śāntih at the end of prayer/chants, or as part of our Yoga practice, do not (necessarily) refer to world peace.

But to the personal peace that comes with knowing the self ("I", ātman) and moksa (moksha), freedom from desires.

Of course, if every individual would have this kind of personal peace, world peace would form eventually.

The word śāntih literally means "go away, resolve". In the Vedic context: all obstacles and misconceptions have gone away - therefore only peace remains.

Intro to Sanskrit

Sanskrit is often called the Mother of all languages. The word Sanskrit means “highly developed, very well done” and refers to the sophistication of the language.

The Sanskrit alphabet has, unlike the English alphabet, a precise order and it is, like Latin, a root-based language.

A lot of everyday words, especially in European languages originate from Sanskrit.

Sanskrit is commonly written in Devanāgarī (not Hindi, as often believed).

It is pronounced similarly to German and uses diacritical marks to distinct certain sounds (see pp. xi – xv in “Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali” by B. Ravikanth)

The word āsana literally translates into “seat”, since the first known Yoga pose has been Padmāsana, lotus seat. Now, the word āsana refers to any Yoga pose.

Some pose names have two words, like Ardha Uttanāsana, Half Standing Forward Fold. Ardha means “Half”, and Uttanāsana “Standing Forward Fold”.

Another example is Ardha Chandrāsana, Chandrāsana meaning Moon Pose and Ardha “Half” => Half Moon Pose

Another commonly used one is Parivṛtta, meaning “Revolved” as in Parivṛtta Trikonāsana (Revolved Triangle Pose), for example.

Utthita means “Extended” => Utthita Trikonāsana means “Extended Triangle Pose”

Adho means Downward and Urdhva Upward.

Supta means Reclined (for example Supta Baddha Konāsana = Reclined Butterfly Pose. Seated Butterfly Pose is simply Baddha Konāsana)

Salamba means “Supported”. Example Salamba Śīrsasana (salamba shirshasana) Supported Headstand.

Pose Name	Pronunciation	Translation/English Pose Name
Adho Mukha Śvānāsana	Adho-mookha-shvuuh-nuuh-sana	Downward Facing Dog

Ardha Candrāsana	Ardha-chund-ruuh-sana	Half Moon Pose
Baddha Konāsana	Buh-dha-ko-nuuh-sana	Bound Angle or Butterfly Pose
Bālāsana	Buuh-luuh-sana	Child's Pose
Bhujangāsana	Bhoo-jung-uuh-sana	Cobra Pose
Caturanga Dandāsana	Chatu-runga-dun-duuh-sana	Four-Limbed Staff Pose or Low Plank
Dhanurāsana	Dha-noo-ruuh-sana	Bow Pose or Floor Bow
Garudāsana	Gu-roo-duuh-sana	Eagle Pose
Gomukhāsana	Go-mookh-uuh-sana	Cow Face Pose
Jānu Śīrsāsana	Chuuu-noo-sheer-shuu-sana	Head-To-Knee Pose
Krauñcāsana	Krown-chuuu-sana	Heron Pose
Mālāsana	Muuh-luuh-sana	Garland Pose or Yoga Squat
Matsyāsana	Muh-tsee-yuuh-sana	Fish Pose
Navāsana	Nuh-vuuh-sana	Boat Pose
Padmāsana	Pud-muuh-sana	Lotus Pose or Lotus Seat
Pārsvakonāsana	Puuh-shva-konuuh-sana	Side-Angle Pose
Pārsvottanāsana	Puuh-shvotta-nuuh-sana	Intense Side Stretch Pose or Pyramid Pose
Paścimottanāsana	Puh-schee-motta-nuuh-sana	Seated Forward Bend Pose
Prasārita Pādottānāsana	Pru-suuh-reeta Puh-dottuh-nuuh-sana	Wide Stance Forward Bend
Rāja Kapotāsana	Ruh-juh-kuh-po-tuuh-sana	King Pigeon Pose
Śalabhāsana	Shu-luh-bhuuh-sana	Locust Pose
Śavāsana	Shu-vuuh-sana	Corpse Pose
Śīrsāsana	Sheer-shuu-sana	Headstand Pose
Tadāsana	Tuh-duuh-sana	Mountain Pose
Trikonāsana	Tree-ko-nuuh-sana	Triangle Pose
Ustrāsana	Oosh-truuh-sana	Camel Pose
Utkatāsana	Ootka-tuuh-sana	Chair Pose

Uttanāsana	Oota-nuuh-sana	Forward Bending Pose or Forward Fold
Vajrāsana	Vuj-ruuh-sana	Thunderbolt Pose
Vasisthāsana	Vuh-sish-thuu-sana	Side Plank Pose
Viparīta Karani	Vee-paree-tuh-kuh-ruh-nee	Legs-Up Pose
Vīrabhadrāsana	Vee-ruh-bhuh-druuh-sana	Warrior Pose
Vīrāsana	Vee-ruuh-sana	Hero Pose
Vrksāsana	Vrk-shuuh-sana	Tree Pose

The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit verbal root “yuj”, to which the English word “yoke” is also related. Based on this root, yoga has two key meanings: to unite and to control. A yoke is used to harness an animal to pull a cart. The yoke serves to control the animal’s movements as well as to unite it to the cart.

Yoga in India

In India, Yoga has originally been, and still widely is, practiced by boys and men exclusively. Although more and more girls and women in India are practicing Yoga nowadays, too, in more rural and traditional parts, it is still a male-dominated practice.

It should be noticed that Yoga practice is often part of a religious belief system, like Hinduism. However, it is not necessary to belong to any religion to practice Yoga – Indian religions have the common belief that the Divine is within us and one does not necessarily have to belong to any religion to participate in the practice.

Teaching is considered the noblest profession in India. When a teacher passes on knowledge, it is a great honour. The word of the teacher (or guru) is to be revered whilst the students develop their own sense of agency. The teacher will only use words necessary for instruction and true and beneficial for the student – alignment, breathing patterns, focus of the mind, anything related to the āsana and its benefit. No personal stories or other extra words are used, as they are considered a distraction.

Yoga in the West

Although Western intellectuals showed interest in the philosophical foundations of the practice in the 19th century already, it is really the physical practice of Yoga, yoga āsana practice, that has set deep roots in our Western cultures.

Specifically, Sri T. Krishnamacharya's students had a strong influence on the popularity of Yoga āsana practice in the Western public.

In the late 1940s, Indra Devi started teaching āsana in Hollywood circles.

In 1966, B.K.S. Iyengar published his famous book "Light on Yoga", a comprehensive guide on āsana practice.

In the 1970s, K. Pattabhi Jois, founder of Ashtanga Yoga, started teaching in the US and Australia.

Since then, many different styles of Yoga spread throughout many Western countries. They all share the intention of mind/body balance.

A 2016 Yoga in America study, conducted by Yoga Journal and Yoga Alliance reveals growth and benefits of the practice:

- There are 36.7 million US yoga practitioners
- Women represent 72% of practitioners, men 28%
- 30-49 year olds make up 43% of the practicing public, followed by those ages 50+ (38%) and 18-29 year olds (19%)
- 86% of practitioners self-report having a strong sense of mental clarity, 73% report being physically strong, and 79% give back to their communities – all significantly higher rates than among non-practitioners
- All audiences surveyed agree that warm and friendly demeanour, clarity, and knowledge of the yoga poses are characteristics that make for a great yoga teacher.

Full study available at www.yogajournal.com/yogainamericastudy

"Everything you need is already within you."

- Unknown

Lesson 2:

The Eight Limbs of Yoga

Overview of the Eight Limbs of Yoga and Insights into the first two, the Yamas and Niyamas

Yoga was first mentioned in the Vedas (ancient Hindu scriptures) about 5,000 years back. But it wasn't until much later, some 1,700 years back, that a sage named Patanjali created the Eight Limbs of Yoga. They are part of a seminal collection of texts, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, which will be presented and discussed in lesson 4.

The Eight Limbs of Yoga are a template that, if followed properly, is supposed to help the practitioner to realize the limitations of the ego and subsequently reach self-realization (the limitlessness that is the self).

Patanjali describes the eight limbs of Yoga (astānga, ashtānga) to eliminate afflictions, restrain the activities of the mind, and attain liberation. (see pp. 138-173 The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali by B. Ravikanth).

The Eight Limbs of Yoga are:

- Yama (restraint) => restraining yourself from doing harmful things
- Niyama (observance) => encouraging yourself to do beneficial things
- Āsana (posture) => stable and comfortable posture
- Prānāyāma (regulation, expansion of breath) => regulating the breath in order to stabilize the mind
- Pratyāhāra (withdrawal of the senses) => detachment from the objects of the senses
- Dhāranā (concentration) => focusing the mind on something specific
- Dhyāna (meditation) => continuous contemplative focus on something specific
- Samādhi (absorption; union with the divine) => complete absorption with the object of concentration

Yama, the First Limb

There are five Yamas, advising our relationships with others:

- Ahimsā (Nonviolence) => turns us from harming self and others to kindness and compassion for self and others
- Satya (Truth) => the practice of truthfulness; communication with others should not be deceitful or misleading. It should be kind and for the benefit of the listener.
- Asteya (Non-stealing) => not taking things from others without permission, rather cultivating new skills and abilities yourself
- Brahmacharya (Non-excess, celibacy) => sometimes interpreted as sexual restraint; not taking more than needed/appreciated, enjoying pleasures without excess
- Aparigraha (Non-possessiveness) => the practice of not being greedy; the practice of not accumulating objects of the senses, things we don't need for surviving

Sutras 2.35 – 2.39 talk about the benefits of the Yamas (see pp. 148 – 150 of Yoga Sutras of Patanjali by B. Ravikanth):

Practicing the five Yamas universally is called the Great Vow.

Non-harming is praised as the core of all virtues and conduct (dharma). It should be practiced in mind, speech and action and will result in the loss of all feelings of hostility.

The practice of speaking truth results in the ability of seeing the truth even when things are yet to manifest.

When the practice of non-stealing is established, the best of all objects (ratna = something excellent) present themselves.

The practice of non-excess results in strength and perseverance for mind and body.

The practice of non-possessiveness leads to knowledge of one's own body in past, present and future lifetimes.

Niyama, the Second Limb:

There are five Niyamas, advising our relationship with ourselves:

- Śauca (śauca)(cleanliness, purity) => external cleanliness: keeping one's body and surroundings clean and internal cleanliness: not being deceitful in mind, speech and action.
- Samtosa, Santosa (santosa) (contentment) => being satisfied and happy with what one has
- Tapas (self-discipline) => avoidance of short-term self-gratification, and tolerating dualities like heat and cold in performing one's duties.
- Svādhyāya (self-study) => be the witness: watch yourself act and respond, watch the ego rather than identifying with it.
- Íśvara-pranidhāna (surrender, devotion to the divine) => often translated as devotion to god, one needs to know that Vedanta says we are all Íśvara (god), we are all one. Depending on the context, Íśvara can mean supreme soul, ruler, lord, supreme being or special self. Íśvara-pranidhāna, the fifth Niyama, wants us to bring our attention to identifying what life is asking of us and devote our thoughts and actions to it.

Sutras 2.4 – 2.45 talk about the benefits of the Niyamas (see pp. 151 – 153 of Yoga Sutras of Patanjali by B. Ravikanth):

The first Niyama deals with the identification of the self with one's body: every body will eventually turn to dust, but the self is NOT the body. By practicing awareness of cleanliness, a Yogi loses attachment to his own body by seeing its imperfections. By practicing the mental aspect of cleanliness (śauca), a Yogi gains clarity of the mind. Control over the senses is achieved and with it, consciousness in its true form is experienced (without any misconceptions, mistakes about the self).

Samtosa (samtosha), the second Niyama is very important – it is about the happiness, contentment that is within us. Samtosa (samtosha) states that the happiness gained from suspension of desires is many times greater than the pleasure received from enjoying sensory objects. When a Yogi loses the attachment to pleasure from sensory objects, happiness that is within the self is recognized.

The third Niyama, tapas, is needed to gain power over the senses. So that, be it heat or cold, loud or quiet, meditation can be practiced. The concept is that circumstances cannot be controlled, but the reaction to these circumstances can be controlled.

Svādhyāya, the fourth Niyama, has the purpose of studying the self. It is the continuous study of the limitlessness of the self, of the difference (viveka) between the body and the self, the ego and the self. If perfected, one gains moksa (moksha) (freedom) from the limitations of one's mind.

The fifth and last Niyama, Ísvara-pranidhāna, wants the Yogi to meditate on God or the Divine in any form that one prefers and surrendering all forms of action to Him/Her/the Divine. The goal is to achieve perfect concentration.

The Third Limb, Āsana

Introduced in the Yoga Sūtras with famous sūtra 2.46:

Sthirasukhamāsanam

Sthira = stable, sukham= comfortable, āsanam = posture

Posture should be comfortable and steady

It should be mentioned that, as far as the Yoga Sutras are concerned, a comfortable sitting posture that aids in meditation is the sole purpose of our āsana practice.

The first mentioned yoga āsana has been Padmāsana, the lotus seat. With the invention of Hatha Yoga, many more āsanas have been created to keep the body fit and healthy and aid in gaining control over the mind and senses.

Sūtra 2.48 (see p 157 of Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali by B. Ravikanth) talks about the results of our āsana practice:

It says that, with the perfection of posture, one overcomes pairs of opposites like heat and cold, or praise and insult (and as a result one gets more independent from circumstances).

Which brings us back to the ultimate goal of all Yoga practice:

Yoga is a practice of eliminating obstacles that may stand in the way of our own innate sense of joy, and self.

“You can't control the wind, but you can adjust your sails.”

— Unknown

Lessons 1 & 2

Review Sheet

1. What is the common goal of all Yogic traditions and texts?

2. What does Sat Cit Ānanda mean?

3. What are the Eight Limbs of Yoga?

Now name them and give a brief explanation for each:

I.

II.

III.

IV.

V.

VI.

VII.

VIII.



4. Translate the Yamas and Niyamas from their original Sanskrit into English:

Yama - The First Limb

I . Ahimsā	
II. Satya	
III. Asteya	
IV. Brahmacharya	
V. Aparigraha	

Niyama - The Second Limb

I . Śauca	
II. Santosha	
III. Tapas	
IV. Svādhyāya	
V. Íśvara-Pranidhāna	

5. Translate the following words from Sanskrit to English and give one Pose example with the word in it:

I. Ardha =

Pose Example:

II. Parivrtta =

Pose Example:

III. Adho =

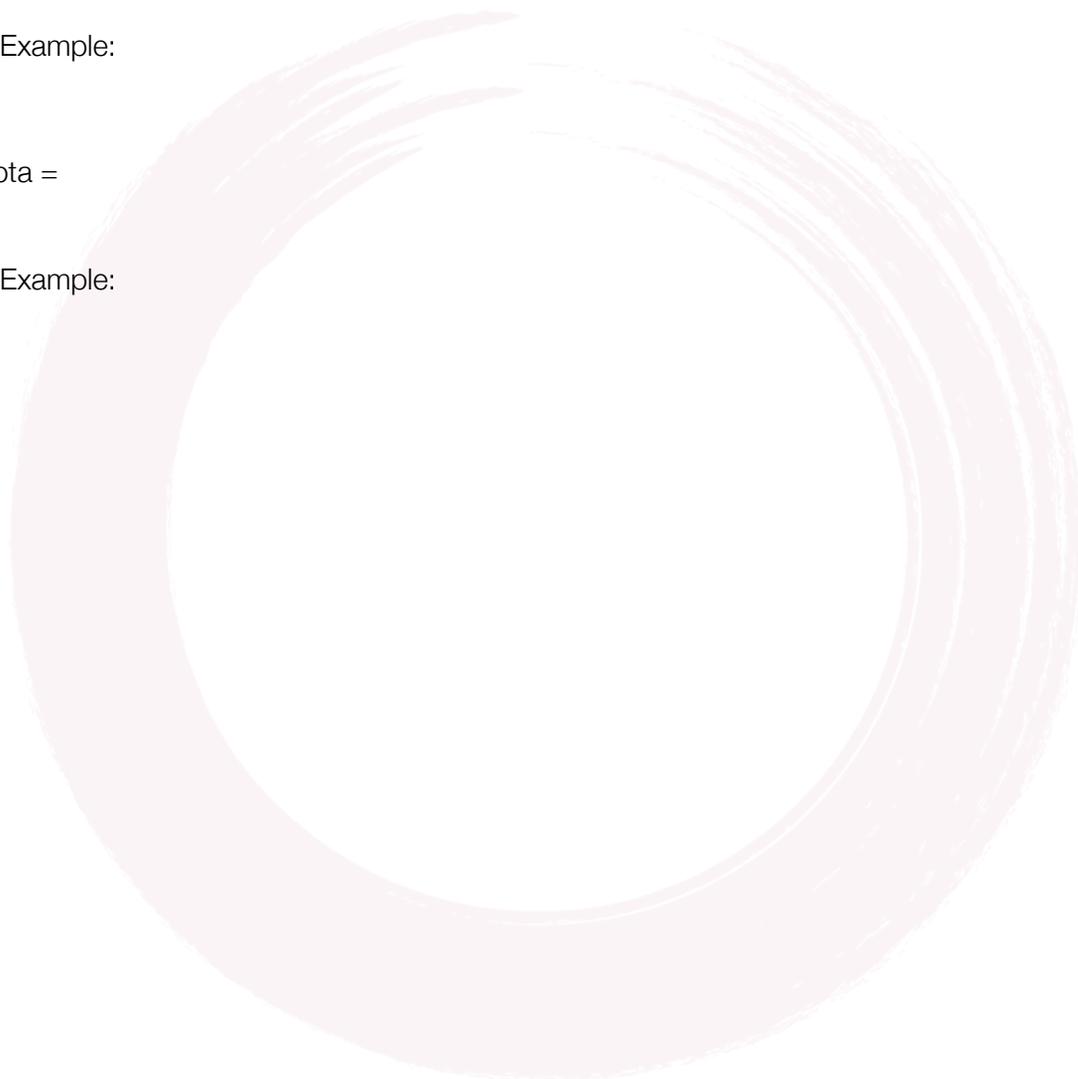
Pose Example:

IV. Urdhva =

Pose Example:

V. Supta =

Pose Example:



Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next ☺

Lesson 3:

Prānāyāma

The Foundation of Every Yoga Practice
Incl. a Short Intro to the Bandhas

Prānāyāma

The word Prānāyāma is a Sanskrit word composed of two words: prāna meaning life force or breath and either the positive form āyāma (to control the prāna) or the negative form ayāma meaning to extend or draw out (as in extension of the life force). Mostly, it is translated as breath control.

It is a Yogic discipline originating from ancient India.

We are always breathing.

Yet, just like waves on the shore, just like snowflakes and fingerprints, each breath is unique!

The breath is also one of the few functions of our body that is both, voluntary and involuntary.

Breathing techniques, called prānāyāma in Sanskrit, are the foundation of all Yoga practice – in fact, my Yoga teacher in India always said that, without the breath the āsana practice becomes pure exercise, but if one is only sitting and breathing consciously, then one is practicing Yoga.

The main goal of prānāyāma is to connect the mind to the body, which is foundational to all Yoga asana practices.

There are many different prānāyāma techniques. We'll explore the most commonly used ones in Yoga āsana practice (many of the prānāyāma are used in Ayurveda to balance out the doshas; more to Ayurveda and the doshas in lesson 19).

The natural breath happens with no conscious effort and has a couple key characteristics:

- The pelvic floor expands and descends on the inhalation; it contracts and lifts on the exhalation
- The collarbone lifts and rolls upward on the inhalation; it descends and rolls back down on the exhalation

In a relaxed state, the natural breath is unrestricted. Restrictions to this natural flow happen for instance when we are threatened: the abdomen tightens, breathing becomes more shallow. This is a healthy reaction when a situation calls for a fight-or-flight response.

However, a fast-paced lifestyle can cause chronic stress and with it, continuous and long-term restricted breathing patterns. As a result, only a small percentage of the breathing capacity is used.

In Yoga, we bring the awareness back to the breath, recovering healthy breathing patterns.

The main muscle responsible for breathing is the diaphragm. It creates the natural rise and fall of the belly. The diaphragm, a muscular membrane, is situated at the bottom of the chest cavity, forming a separation to the abdominal cavity. It attaches to the bottom of the sternum (where the ribs attach, middle of the chest) and follows the lowest outline of the ribs all the way back to the lumbar spine.

The lower surfaces of the lungs are attached to the upper surface of the diaphragm.

On the inhalation, the diaphragm contracts and moves down. This increases the space in the chest cavity, into which the lungs expand.

Different Techniques

Sama Vrtti

The “basic” breath in Yoga practice, commonly used for centering and meditation, as well as all “Yin” asana practices like Yin Flow, Gentle Yoga, Restorative Yoga is Sama Vrtti.

Sama Vrtti is a soothing, calming and centering practice; helps in calming the mind.

Sama means “equal” or “equanimity” and Vrtti means “fluctuation”.

It is an equal-ratio breathing technique without restrictions to the throat.

The inhalation through the nose is the exact same length as the exhalation through the nose (about a four-count for the beginning student, a six-count for the seasoned practitioner).

Considered a more basic prānāyāma, it also can be used in other (“Yang”) practices for the beginner student, before Ujjayi breath is learned and applied.

Sama Vrtti can be beautifully combined with a gentle, seated warm-up:

Sama Vrtti Prānāyām

Find a comfortable seat,

take a long breath in through the nose (all the way up to the collar bones) and a long breath out through the nose (all the way down to the sitting bones)

repeat 1-3 times;

Inhale your arms up, exhale them straight back down

Inhale the arms up, exhale and twist to your right, inhale them up to center, exhale and twist to your left

Inhale them up to center, interlace your fingers and flip your palms (make sure your shoulders come down, away from your ears)

Exhale and bend over to your right, inhale up to center, exhale bend over to your left

Inhale up to center, exhale release your fingers and let your arms come down, interlace your fingers at your low back with your palms touching (glide shoulder blades together)

Inhale your fists to your right, exhale your left ear towards your left shoulder

Inhale your fists to your left, exhale your right ear towards your right shoulder

Inhale back to center, release your arms by your sides;

Ujjayi

A heat-creating, invigorating breathing technique used in all “Yang” āsana practices like Hatha, Vinyasa, Ashtānga is the Ujjayi breath.

Ujjayi can be translated as “to be victorious” => often referred to as victorious breath.

Both, inhalation and exhalation are performed through the nose, with a slight constriction to the throat. This creates a rushing or hissing sound that some liken to ocean waves. The exhalation breath is slightly longer than the inhalation breath (for the seasoned practitioner, a six-count is used for the inhalation and an eight-count for the exhalation).

The breath fills the lower belly first, then the lower rib cage, the upper chest and throat. The exhalation empties out from the top down: throat, upper chest, lower rib cage and finally lower belly.

In short, it is always belly-heart, heart-belly.

The low belly stays constricted during this action.

To understand the purpose and action of the activated abdominal muscles in the Ujjayi breath, a short introduction to

The Bandhas

A bandha is a “lock” or “bind” in Yoga, which is performed in order to direct and regulate the flow of prāna (life force/energy).

Certain sets of muscles are constricted in order to provide a lock or closure that is supposed to hold energy in and move it through the energy channels of the subtle body (a more detailed explanation to the Subtle Body will be given in weekend 4).

There are 3 types of Bandhas:

Mūla bandha, Uddiyana Bandha, Jalandhara Bandha.

For the Ujjayi breath, the Uddiyana Bandha is always active: the abdominal muscles are pulled in towards the spine, which moves the energy up more forcefully.

Uddiyana means “to rise up”.

For the seasoned practitioner, the Mūla Bandha may be activated as well.

Mūla means root, and this Bandha sits at the pelvic floor, making sure to keep the energy in and moving it upwards toward the Uddiyana Bandha.

The Jalandhara Bandha is the chin or throat lock (slight/soft restriction at throat) and Maha Bandha is the “great lock”, combining all three Bandhas.

In appropriate class levels, Ujjayi breath may be introduced after the centering/grounding and warm-up.

Since the friction of the air passing through the lungs and throat generate internal body heat, it is recommended to switch to Sama Vrtti for the cool-down phase of practice.

Anulom Vilom

A breathing technique that is widely practiced in India, is Anulom Vilom (in Hindi) or Anuloma Viloma (in Sanskrit).

Sometimes it is practiced for spiritual reasons. It is then called Nadi Shodana – believed to balance the nadis, energy pathways in the Subtle Body (more to the Subtle Body in weekend 4).

The Sanskrit name is put together from several words: anu meaning “with”, vi meaning “against” and loma meaning hair => with the hair against the hair, hair here being used as a synonym for grain. With the natural grain, against the natural course of the grain.

In both cases, alternate nostril breathing is practiced, but with different intentions. Unlike the spiritual practice, the physical practice of Anulom Vilom has very practical reasons: it balances out the nostril breathing.

We never breathe evenly through our nostrils, and the dominant nostril changes every two to three hours.

Anulom Vilom is, therefore, traditionally practiced before any other prānāyāma, to set an even foundation.

Depending on the format and length of any given class, it may be a part of seated centering and is practiced as follows:

Find a comfortable seat; relax your shoulders and soften your belly; rest your left hand in your lap, take your right hand and extend your thumb and your ringfinger and pinky (rest pointer finger and middle finger in your palm); now close your right nostril off with your thumb and inhale through the left nostril; switch your grip (softly press ring and pinky finger against left nostril to close it off) and exhale through the right nostril; inhale the same way, through the right nostril; then close your right nostril with your thumb again and exhale through the left nostril; inhale through the left, and at the top of your breath, switch your grip to exhale through the right; continue. The grip is always switched at the top of the breath.

The Breath in Action

While traditional prānāyāma are wonderful, there is room for more. Or less. What are the students' needs? What kind of practice are you planning to teach (style, pacing...)? Who are your students ('seasoned' practitioners? Different age groups? Do you know them well and do they know you?) These and other questions might inspire you to "dial it down" or "step it up", or get creative and introduce visuals with your breathing guidance.

We will explore several ways to guide the breath in class.

One example to get creative with guiding the breath is the

Elevator Breath:

Imagine your body like an elevator. Supported and full.

Level by level, all the way down to the pelvic floor (or toes) inhale,

Level by level, all the way up through the crown of the head exhale,

Each inhale, pause at the next floor,

Inhale on the way down,

Exhale on the way up

Fill up on the way down,

Empty on the way up

Welcome fresh air as you descend,

Expel what isn't needed on the way up.

Now write some ideas down in your own words, so that you can share them later on ☺



“Every emotion is connected with the breath. If you change the breath,
change the rhythm, you can change the emotion.”

— Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

Lesson 4:

Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali

What are they and what is their goal

What Are the Yoga Sūtras

The Yoga Sūtras are a collection of 195 aphorisms (sūtras), divided into four chapters (pādas) on the theory and practice of Yoga. They were written at least 1,700 years ago (prior to 400 CE) by the Sage Patanjali.

The word sūtra literally means “thread”, referring to the words strung together like beads on a thread. There are many different sūtras, often used in chanting and meditation practices.

The Yoga Sūtras are the second of the six darśanas (six orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy):

- Sāṅkhya – distinction between consciousness and nature, written by the Sage Kapila
- Yoga – control of the mind which enables the distinction between consciousness and nature, written by the Sage Patanjali
- Nyāya – methods of investigating the truth and discussion of proof, written by the Sage Gautama
- Vaiśeṣika – entities found in the universe and atomic theory, written by the Sage Kanāda
- Pūrva Mīmāṃsā (also called Daksina Mīmāṃsā) – discussion of virtuous conduct and interpretation of the Vedas, written by the Sage Jaimini
- Vedānta (=end of the Vedas, also called Uttara Mīmāṃsā or Brahmasūtras) – discussion of the nature of Brahman (God or the Divine), written by the Sage Bādarāyana

The Yoga Sūtras are words of wisdom, composed as brief as possible, so that they can be memorized. The tradition is that they are taught from the teacher to the student, who memorizes each sūtra and learns the elaborate meaning behind it – when later on, a sūtra is remembered, the whole meaning of it comes to mind.

They are organized into related topics, with general categories and subcategories:

1) The First Pāda – Samādhipādah (Contemplation)

- Introduction to the mind; the goal of Yoga
- Methods of restraining the mind
- Kinds of Samādhi (contemplation)
- Obstacles and their elimination
- Purity of thought; stages in attaining Samādhi

2) The Second Pāda – Sādhana-pādah (Means)

- Definition of Kriyā-Yoga (=Karma-Yoga)
- Kleśas (=afflictions)
- Misery, the cause of misery, its elimination and the means of elimination
- The eight limbs of Yoga; definition of the first five

3) The Third Pāda – Vibhūtipādah (Accomplishments)

- The eight limbs of Yoga; definition of the last three
- Transformations of the mind and objects
- Siddhis, the attainments obtained through concentration
- Discriminating wisdom and liberation

4) The Fourth Pādha – Kaivalyapādah (Nature of reality)

- Powers and transformations
- Actions, impressions and consequences
- Objects and perception of them
- Distinctness of the mind (seen) and the consciousness (seer)
- Final stages

What Is their Goal

B. Ravikanth states in his book “Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali” that the ultimate goal of all spiritual pursuit is to eliminate every kind of misery, and to experience our true self.

All Vedic texts, all Yoga philosophy and practice, share this common goal. The Yoga Sūtras are meant to be guidelines in pursuing this common human goal and are not to be taken literally and exclusively (like all texts and models used, they need to be seen as part of a holistic approach). Therefore, one can practice Yoga regardless of religious or cultural background.

Patanjali focuses on the root causes of all problems, methodically describing the problem-creators (afflictions) and then the solution-creators.

Sūtras 1.1 – 1.11 give an introduction into the mind and are building the foundation for all other sūtras:

In order to eliminate all suffering, control over the mind and thoughts has to be obtained.

Sūtra 1.2 introduces the concept of restraining the thoughts:

Yogaścittavrttinirodhah = Yoga means restraining the activities of the mind (see p. 52 Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali, B. Ravikanth)

So that we can observe without judgment, we need to practice to distinct between unconscious and conscious thoughts. We need to practice focussing on one thought exclusively to keep uncontrolled, habitual thoughts out. When this practice is mastered, we gradually stop identifying with our thoughts and emotions.

The practice of Yoga is the practice of managing our thoughts and emotions.

To quote B. Ravikanth: “When we think that ourselves and our minds are the same, we respond to situations in a reflexive fashion, with little control and not much certainty – which produces anxiety about the result.”

With the practice of discernment, with the practice of observation without judgement, we are essentially practicing to respond to situations with conscious thought, rather than reflexive actions.

Patanjali analyses the different functions of the mind and then gives guidance in how to control the mind.

Yoga philosophy states that the mind is not separate from the self, but the self is separate from the mind.

There are different terms used in Sanskrit for the mind:

Citta is the most common one;

Buddhi also means mind, but refers to the intellect;

Ahankāra translates into mind as well, but refers to the ego;

Manas refers to the emotional mind;

Citta can be used if the mind with all its aspects is referred to, the other terms are used if a certain aspect of the mind is highlighted.

The purpose of all the practices described in the Yoga Sūtras is to enhance the power of discernment or discrimination (viveka) => to be able to differentiate between the different parts of our brains that are evaluating a situation: buddhi – intellect/reality, ahankāra – ego, manas – emotion. To be able to differentiate between the consciousness that is the true self (purusa, purusha) and the mind (citta, chitta).

It is essentially a guidance in how to improve one's awareness.

Our Yoga practice is “awareness practice” – practicing to be aware of the body, with its strengths and weaknesses, its limitations and our minds with its different facets and how to be in control of it all.

Coming back to the goal of all Yoga practice, to eliminate all obstacles that may stand in the way of our own innate sense of joy and self, the Yoga Sūtras are guidelines in helping to practice awareness, so that future misery can be avoided.

“I am aware that happiness depends on my mental attitude
and not on external conditions.”

— Thich Nhat Hanh

Lesson 5:

Yoga Teachers, Happiness Teachers

The Purpose of Teaching Yoga, the Qualities of a Good teacher
and Teaching Ethics

The Purpose of Teaching Yoga and the Qualities of a Good Teacher

We have established that Yoga is a practice of eliminating obstacles that may stand in the way of our own innate sense of joy, contentment and self.

Or, to quote Judith Hanson Lasater: “The complex five-thousand-year-old tradition of Yoga is about a very simple thing: happiness (ānanda).”

Our main purpose of teaching Yoga is to help students to work through the obstacles that may stand in their way.

Opposed to other physical practices, the unity of mind and body is of the foremost importance in Yoga āsana practice and is achieved through the breath-movement coordination.

As Yoga teachers, we help students to develop observation and listening skills, so that a thorough understanding of the self can be realized. This may offer understanding of the body and its strengths and weaknesses. It may be a clearer understanding of one’s holding patterns in the body (how does one’s body react to stress, how can this be counter-acted, for example with breathing techniques or certain poses). It may be to develop the understanding of how to control the mind, the thoughts – how to school the mind to choose thoughts and reactions with care.

It is important for Yoga teachers to understand that every person is unique and different – a different body, a different story, different holding patterns. The most important skill of a good Yoga

teacher is to be a good and kind listener – so that the teacher can meet each student wherever they are => always teach to the student's needs.

Equally important to good listening skills are clear teaching ethics:

Ethical Guidelines for Teachers:

The foundation of all teaching ethics can be found in the Yamas and Niyamas.

The Yamas guide us to choose optimal thoughts, words and actions to enhance relationships with ourselves and our students.

- Ahimsā = Non-violence: meet your students with loving kindness, choose your words and actions in a way that doesn't hurt (physically or emotionally); always have compassion and remember that everyone does the best they can in any given moment;
- Satya = Truthfulness: as a teacher, admit your limitations and stay honest – be willing to admit not knowing the answer to a question (and maybe offer to look it up and get back to the student); admitting your limitations, both, in knowledge or physical abilities, creates inclusivity and is the basis for a respectful relationship between the student and the teacher;
- Asteya = Non-stealing: don't take what isn't yours – credit for a student's achievement for example goes to the student; a brilliant quote or a nice pose variation can be used (we are all sharing the yoga love and knowledge) but should be acknowledged – the teacher could say something along the lines “a quote by XYZ that I love/that resembles for me” or “a variation of this pose that my teacher introduced” ...;
- Brahmacharya = Non-excess: not taking more than needed; can be interpreted as not expecting more from a student on any given day than they are willing to do at the time (letting go of the need to “perfect” their poses; accepting that sometimes it might serve them best to do less). Also, not taking more praise/feedback/time from your students than appropriate (after classes for example).
- Aparigraha = Non-possessiveness: always remind yourself that the students are not yours to keep, you are simply guiding them on a part of their journeys. This becomes an important ethical guideline when a teacher teaches at different studios – your first and foremost interest should be the student's best interests, keeping him or her part of their community rather than having the

student follow you around and acknowledging that a student's practice may grow best when a variety of classes is attended;

The Niyamas guide us to choose optimal thoughts, words and actions to enhance our relationship primarily with ourselves:

- Śauca = cleanliness: keeping the body clean and maintained and the mind clean (free from harmful thoughts about the self);
- Santosa, Santosa (santosa) = contentment: being content with who you are and what you have – don't compare yourself to others/other teachers;
- Tapas = self-discipline: avoidance of short-term self-gratification and tolerating dualities like heat and cold – as a teacher, always step into the room with self-discipline and for the purpose of serving the students (for example, if you are feeling a bit chilly, but your students are comfortable, have their interests in mind first and maybe put a layer on; or if you aren't feeling perfectly well, aren't in the best mood, tolerate it quietly, keep it to yourself); always keep in mind that you are teaching to the students, and not to yourself; this also applies for poses that you don't like or favor – you might not love forward folds, but they might serve your students well;
- Svādhyāya = Self-study: be the witness, watch yourself act and respond; always reflect on your teaching, this is how we grow as teachers;
- Ísvara-pranidhāna = Surrender, devotion to the Divine; this Niyama reminds us that in Yoga, we are all one; every God is of the same importance than another one and the Divine lives within all of us; as teachers of the ancient practice of Yoga, we welcome all students, regardless of their religion, race, gender, cultural background etc.

As the name of our studio says – SAMA: we are all equal!

In addition to these guidelines, teachers should

- always be on time (at least 15 minutes before class starts), start on time and end on time
- plan teaching times generously (having time for student's questions or concerns after class)
- make sure the room is ready and prepared for class
- leave the room ready for the next class (tidy)
- place personal situations outside the room

- announce upcoming events at the studio
- share what other teacher(s) your students might enjoy practicing with at the studio

When we adhere to these guidelines, we create a safe, supportive and welcoming environment. One prime for exploration and a mindful, sustainable practice. One in which we feel secure to connect from the inside out.



“The heart carries the feet.”
— Hebrew Proverb

Lessons 3, 4 & 5

Review Sheet

1. Which of the following statements is true for the natural breath:

- The pelvic floor expands and descends on the exhalation
- The pelvic floor contracts and lifts on the inhalation
- The pelvic floor expands and descends on the inhalation

2. What is the name of the main muscle responsible for breathing, and where is it located?

3. Translate the term “Sama Vrtti” and explain how it works, and when (in what part of the practice, or in which styles of Yoga) it is commonly used in āsana practice

4. What prānāyāma is commonly used in “heat-building” practices like Vinyasa?

5. What does the Sanskrit term 'Bandha' mean?

Name the three types of bandhas and their location in the body:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

6. The Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali are

- The bible of Yoga
- A concise text on all Yoga āsanās
- A collection of 195 aphorisms on the theory and practice of Yoga

7. The different terms for mind in Sanskrit are Citta, Buddhi, Ahankāra and Manas. Citta can be used if the mind with all its aspects (intellect, ego and emotion) is referred to. Translate the other terms:

- Buddhi =
- Ahankāra =
- Manas =

8. Reflecting on the topic of “good teachers, good classes”: what are, in your opinion, the main qualities of a good teacher?

9. What does sūtra 1.2 yogaścittavrttinirodhah mean in English (see pp 51 & following in Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali by B. Ravikanth):

Translate the following words into English:

Purusa	
Citta	
Ekāgra	

10. The Sanskrit term ‘viveka’ means discernment. In your book Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali, look at the model on page 56 and compare it to the model on page 57. What is the main difference between the two?

Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next 😊

Lesson 6:

Beginning a Yoga Class

Welcome, Centering and Basic Warm Up

Welcome – Personally and As A Group

The way we welcome our students sets the tone for practice.

As teachers, we don't know where our students are coming from and what their days looked like before getting to class – it is significant to take the time to welcome each student personally as they enter the room.

This is also a good moment to check in with your students about their well-being and potentially inquire about injuries (better to ask personally than in front of the class, not everyone likes to share their medical stories with the room).

It is important to be at least 15 minutes early – your students might come early to set up, and the teacher should check the room before getting started and set up whatever is needed before class, if applicable (for example, when teaching with props, set them up in the front as a display, so that students know what they need for this practice).

Once students enter the room, it is a caring gesture and helps to keep the start of the class disruption-free to go around and make sure students have all they might need for the class.

Once everyone is seated, speak a general word of welcome. This might be a brief welcome to draw everyone's attention to the here and now. It could include a "theme", like: "since the weather has been challenging these last days, our focus today is on balance", or: "The new year is here and it is an excellent time to reset and renew – we'll play with some inversions today to shift our perspectives and will end in a restorative Śavāsana" or "a quote I really love was my inspiration for preparing this class..."

If you have new students, introduce yourself personally before class, and if there is a good number of new students in the room, give a short general introduction of yourself in front of the room.

Keep in mind that your students came first and foremost for their Yoga āsana practice => they came to move, potentially to have a moving meditation.

This means, when preparing your class, prepare words that are meaningful to your students and keep your welcome short – can it be said in one word or one sentence?

Leave personal issues outside the room. As teachers, we are there to listen to our students and to guide them to be in listening with themselves. Sharing personal stories has to be done with consideration and only if it benefits the students (if it is relevant for your teaching).

For example: coming in rushed and complaining about the horrible traffic does not set a good tone for class. Coming in and sharing that today's traffic served as a good reminder to you to accept that we can't control circumstances but CAN control our reactions => a wonderful way of living your Yoga off the mat. The teacher could then extend an invitation to the students about observing their emotions in certain poses and what would happen if they could just observe them, without the need to judge, without the need to put a label on it like “an easy pose, a hard pose, good or bad, etc...”

Centering

After welcoming the students and setting the tone for the class (with or without a theme), it is time for centering => to guide students to their breath, their foundation of practice and set the pacing for class.

This can be done seated, or in Śavāsana or Child's Pose, depending on the class format.

Example:

“Find a comfortable seat. Relax your shoulders and let go of your beautiful smile for a moment – relax your cheeks and jaw.

Now, take a deep breath in, and a soft breath out. Again. Long inhalations, and long exhalations (two more rounds). Sama Vrtti: equal breath in, equal breath out, like the name of our studio (Sama = equal).

With your next inhalation breath, reach your arms up, exhale hands to heart. Inhale them back up, exhale and twist to your right. Inhale up to center, exhale and twist to your left.

Inhale back to center and let your hands come down by your sides with your exhalation breath.

Your students have made a breath-movement connection and are ready to start practice.

Warm up

A thorough warm up is important to keep everyone in the room safe. Keep in mind that every body is different, and there might be many different levels in the room.

The warm up relates to the class format: for a Vinyasa class, the warm up can be a bit faster and more heat-building than for a Yin or Restorative class. In any case, the warm up includes all major joints and muscles and assures that everyone in the room is ready to move.

There are three parts to a comprehensive warm up: seated (this part fits best right after the centering, as your student are already in a seated position), all fours, and prone (on the belly). Incorporating all three parts allows you as the teacher to observe your students in different positions before starting your practice, and it offers students different ways to warm up their bodies. It is therefore not only holistic from a physical standpoint, but also inclusive.

Example:

Seated:

In Sukhāsana, easy seat, reach your arms up, interlace your fingers and flip your palms. Seated cat-cows: inhale reach, exhale round, continue... reach and bend over to one side, other side, again... hands behind the base of your skull, for support, wrap high toward this side, other side, again... reach, bow, any amount. Walk your hands back up, switch the orientation of your feet, bow again.

All Fours:

Take a few cat-cows at your own pace. Rock forward and back.

*Inhale your right leg out behind you, exhale knee towards chest. Extend, knee towards outer elbow; extend, knee towards other elbow; extend, knee towards chest, step forward and rise (anjaneyāsana). Hands behind head for support, inhale lengthen, exhale bow, repeat. Touch down, runner's stretch. Soften your front knee and move your toes side-side.

Child's Pose. Take a long breath in, and a long breath out. Back to all fours, other side. Repeat from * with the left leg.

Prone:

Come back to all fours and slither to your belly. Inhale low Cobra, exhale lower. Repeat 4 times. Place your hands outside your mat and come to fingertips; inhale curl, exhale lower, repeat.

Depending on where you'd like to go from there, possible transitions are: back to all fours, downward facing dog; or back to all fours, child's pose, for example.

Please keep in mind that your students might have a different athletic level and practice than you and might have a tighter muscle structure => a Downward Facing Dog before a thorough warm up can feel very uncomfortable and might be, due to tightness, quite mis-aligned (and therefore not beneficial).

Centering and warm up are often followed by Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar). Sun Salutation A (Surya Namaskar A) is sometimes considered part of the warm up. We will learn more about Sun Salutations in upcoming lessons!

“There is a voice that doesn't use words. Listen.”

— Rumi

Lesson 7:

Intro to Anatomy and Physiology

A Basic Introduction

Some Numbers and Definitions

The human body is composed of 206 bones (270 at birth, some of them are fusing together), between 340 and 360 joints (scientists have not agreed on a number yet) and over 600 muscles.

Bones are dynamic living tissue that forms the body's structural framework (skeleton). The form or shape of the bone reflects its function.

Joints are the connection made between bones to create a functional whole in the body. They are also shaped according to their function (and their function reflects their shape).

There are different types of joints. The hip joint, for example, is a ball and socket joint =>it confers greatest mobility in all planes.

The elbow joint is a hinge joint => it provides greater stability.

The muscular system is responsible for the movement in the human body. Muscles make up approximately half of a person's body weight. Muscles are constructed of skeletal muscle tissue, blood vessels, tendons and nerves.

There is an exceptionally large amount of tendons in the human body – according to different sources between 900 and 1,320!

Tendons attach muscles to bone (with a few exceptions). A muscle or muscle group can have more than one set of attachment points, especially in the spine.

A ligament is the fibrous connective tissue that connects bones to other bones, and maintains the position of the organs.

Tendons and ligaments have limited capacity to stretch and do not contract.

The Human Nervous System is very complex, perhaps the most complex system of any organism! The human brain alone contains over 100 billion nerve cells. The Human Nervous System contains the Central Nervous System (CNS) and the Peripheral Nervous System (PNS). The Central Nervous System contains the brain, spinal cord and retina. The Peripheral Nervous System consists of the nerves and ganglia outside of the brain and spinal cord. The Peripheral Nervous System (PNS) is divided into the Somatic Nervous System and the Autonomic Nervous System. The Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) has two branches that work in conjunction: the Para-Sympathetic Nervous System (PNS) and the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS). In Yoga practice, we aim for healthy balance of the two; more to the ANS in upcoming lessons!

Anatomical Terminology

- Front of the body = anterior
- Back of the body = posterior
- Above = superior
- Below = inferior
- Closer to the core = proximal
- Farther away from the core = distal
- Towards the midline that divides left and right = medial
- Away from the midline, to the sides = lateral

Anatomical Positions and Planes

(please take a look at pages 16 & 17 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- On the belly = prone
- On the back = supine
- Midline: (theoretical) division that runs vertically from top to bottom, dividing the body into left and right = sagittal plane
- Front/back: a (theoretical) division that runs vertically from top to bottom, dividing the body into a front part (anterior) and back part (posterior) = frontal or coronal plane
- Upper/lower body: a (theoretical) division that runs across the horizontal midline (waistline), dividing the body into inferior (below the waistline) parts and superior (above the waistline) parts = transverse plane

Types of Body Movement

(please take a look at pages 20 & 21 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- Bending at the joint = flexion
- Stretching out = extension
- Leading away = abduction
- Bringing together (add)/leaning towards = adduction
- Bending sideways = lateral flexion
- Rotating the body or limb around its long, vertical axis = rotation

Types of Muscles

- Agonists = cause action
 - Antagonists = block action
 - Synergists = muscles that act in concert with another to enhance effect
-

Key Muscles

Muscular stabilizers of the shoulder

(please take a look at pages 60 & following in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- Rotator Cuff (Subscapularis, Infraspinatus, Supraspinatus, Teres Minor) = primary shoulder stabilizer
- Triceps and Biceps = secondary shoulder stabilizers

The Rotator Cuff encircles the Humeral Head (ball in socket), stabilizing it within the shoulder joint. Of all joints, this one enjoys the greatest mobility (and therefore the least stability!).

Chest muscles

(please take a look at pages 74 & following in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- Pectoralis Minor => small, three-headed muscle lying deep to the Pectoralis Major
- Pectoralis Major => large, flat muscle forming the front of the chest
- Serratus Anterior (Outer Serratus) => multi-headed muscle that forms the lateral part of the chest wall, giving it a “serrated” appearance. Contracting this muscle draws the scapula (shoulder blade) forward and away from the midline. Weakness in the Serratus Anterior limits postures such as Chaturanga Dandāsana.

Back Muscles

(please take a look at pages 80 & following in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- Lattissimus Dorsi => forms two thirds of the superficial back muscles; draws arm down and toward the body from overhead; contraction of the Lattissimus Dorsi draws the chest forward and opens it;
- Trapezius => triangular-shaped muscle, originating from the center of the back, extending from the lower thoracic spine to the base of the skull, inserting on the scapula (shoulder blades) and clavicle (collar bones)
- Rhomboids => the Major and Minor Rhomboids are flat, rectangular muscles originating from the vertebral spinous processes; contraction draws the scapula (shoulder blades) towards the midline and opens the chest

Core Muscles

(please take a look at pages 90 & following in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- Abdominals => Rectus Abdominis, resting on the front of the abdomen, building the “washboard” or “six-pack” look and Transverse Abdominis, lying deep to the Rectus Abdominis, closer to the skeleton; engagement of the latter helps to press up in inversions and to “float” from Downward Facing Dog to the front of the mat
- Obliques => Internal and External Obliques, the External Oblique being the larger muscle, in charge of stabilizing the side body and protecting the lumbar spine; contraction of the External Oblique draws the shoulder forward

Leg Muscles

(please take a look at pages 102 & following in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- Quadriceps => form the front of the thigh, attaching to the patella (kneecap); it is a four-part muscle, consisting of Rectus Femoris, Vastus Intermedius, Vastus Medialis and Vastus Lateralis
- Hamstrings => form the back of the thigh, consisting of Biceps Femoris, Semitendinosus and Semimembranosus; the hamstrings act as hip extensors and knee flexors; micro-bending the knees helps to protect tight hamstrings, for example in Downward Facing Dog (Adho Mukha Śvanāsana)

Buttocks Muscles

(please take a look at pages 96 & 97 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- Gluteals => consisting of three muscles: Gluteus Maximus, Gluteus Medius and Gluteus Minimus; they originate from the Ilium and Sacrum and insert on the Femur; contracting the Gluteus in backbends like Camel Pose (Ustrāsana, Ushtrāsana) extends and stabilizes the trunk (torso)

Hip Muscles

(please take a look at pages 86 & 87 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- Iliopsoas => Psoas Major and Iliacus, often referred to as “Psoas”; important hip flexor and low back stabilizer; running from the front of the hip all the way around, inserting into the lumbar spine, it is the only muscle that connects the spine to the leg;

Key Bones and Joints in Yoga Āsana:

- Spine (also known as backbone), divided into three parts (please take a look at pages 32 & 33 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)
 - Cervical Spine (7 vertebrae)
 - Thoracic Spine (12 vertebrae)
 - Lumbar Spine (5 vertebrae)
- Clavicle = Collarbones, one left and one right of the Sternum (breastbone); the clavicle is the only long bone in the body that lies horizontally
- Scapula = Shoulder blades, located on the back of the torso; together with the clavicle, the scapula makes up the shoulder girdle
- Patella = kneecap; a thick, circular-triangular bone which covers and protects the anterior surface of the knee joint

It Is All Connected

Author of 'The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book', Kelly Solloway says: "The muscular system is where we live in our āsana practice."

It is muscles that keep the bones aligned, that contract to stabilize and release to stretch and lengthen.

The muscles we have control over are referred to as 'skeletal muscles' and they have four main features:

1. Contractibility => muscle contraction
2. Extensibility => stretching of muscle
3. Excitability => muscle's ability to react/respond
4. Elasticity => muscle's ability to return to shape of origin

When we move, our muscles work together, and take on different roles. For any given āsana, this means that we always have to keep more in mind than just the main muscle ‘worked’ in the pose. How do they work together? Which muscle takes on what role in a posture?

Our skeletal muscles can play four different roles (pretty impressive, right?):

1. Agonist => strongest muscle at work, often ‘prime mover’
2. Antagonist => the agonist’s “dance partner”: when the agonist contracts, the antagonist stretches and vice versa
3. Synergist => the agonist’s “helper”: assists the agonist at work and is sometimes referred to as ‘secondary mover’
4. Fixator => the joint stabilizer

Now that we know WHERE the key muscles are in the body, let’s take a closer look at HOW they work together. (See pg 50 & following in *‘The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book’* by Kelly Solloway)

1. **Pose Name:** Adho Mukha Śvanāsana (Downward Facing Dog)
2. **Located on:** Page 55
3. **Benefits:** strengthens arms and shoulders, stretches hamstrings and calves; brings blood flow to the brain
4. **Contraindications:** high blood pressure, detached retina or any other infection or inflammation of eyes and ears
5. **Muscles at work:** arm muscles (biceps and triceps), shoulder muscles (deltoid), chest muscles (pectoralis major and serratus anterior), core muscles (external obliques and glutes), leg muscles (hamstrings, quadriceps, calves, shins)

1. Pose Name:

2. Located on:

3. Benefits:

4. Contraindications:

5. Muscles at work:

1. Pose Name:

2. Located on:

3. Benefits:

4. Contraindications:

5. Muscles at work:

1. Pose Name:

2. Located on:

3. Benefits:

4. Contraindications:

5. Muscles at work:

1. Pose Name:

2. Located on:

3. Benefits:

4. Contraindications:

5. Muscles at work:

1. Pose Name:

2. Located on:

3. Benefits:

4. Contraindications:

5. Muscles at work:

1. Pose Name:

2. Located on:

3. Benefits:

4. Contraindications:

5. Muscles at work:

Questions for you to consider, as the teacher, might be:

- What category of posture is it?
- What posture precedes it (in your sequence plan)
- What posture follows?
- What parts of the body need to be prepared in order to move towards this pose?
- Who might have trouble with this posture (or an aspect of it)?
- What modifications can be offered?

The last question is significant for every pose in your sequence – be prepared to offer modifications, if applicable, different layers to a pose => so that all your students feel included, accomplished and safe.

“Learn how to see. Realize that everything
connects to everything else.”

— Leonardo da Vinci

Lesson 8:

Master Principles of Alignment

To quote B.K.S. Iyengar: “We practice āsana in order to create an environment of quiet and ease in the body, so that the mind can also dwell in quiet and ease.”

Proper alignment is not only keeping the body safe during practice, it also creates optimal balance in the body - balance between effort and ease, stability and freedom, strength and lightness in the poses. It allows the breath to flow freely, laying down the foundation for an āsana practice that serves as a (moving) meditation.

The first alignment principle can be found in the Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali:

Sthirasukhamāsanam || 2.46 || (posture should be steady and comfortable):

There are strength and surrender elements in every pose – the goal is to create balance between the two.

This said, the alignment of every pose is always from the foundation up. The foundation being whatever touches the mat:

- Feet and hands
- Sitting bones
- Head
- Toes

From the foundation, (somewhat even) lines in the body should be created and the joints be stacked along one track, following the rules of gravity:

- Knees under hips
- Ankles in line with knees
- Wrists under shoulders

- Wrists in line with elbows
- Elbows under shoulders

Keep in mind, that every body is different! For example, in Bhujangāsana, some students might have their feet wider than others, depending on the distance between their SI joints.

One way to create awareness about alignment in our students is to instruct contrasting alignment. For example: “Take your feet wider than your hips – what do you notice?”

Muscle energy flows to the core lines of the body: skin to muscle, muscle to bone => “Pull in to centerline” or “Hug into the midline”

This provides the necessary stability to “lift up” => concept of integration before expansion (“root down, lift up”)

A detailed look into the alignment of each āsana will be provided as we go along.

General alignment cues that can be applied for most of the poses are:

- Bring the chin back to neutral (bottom of the ears back) => enhances better alignment for the neck and shoulders
- Lift the chest/sternum => broadens the collar bones and opens the chest, helps to keep the neck area relaxed
- Release the jaw, gently separate your teeth in your mouth => tension in the jaw often relates to tension in the neck – this alignment principle helps to keep the neck area relaxed and the mind at ease (letting go of “over-efforting”)
- Draw the inner ankles in and up => helps in stabilizing the knee joint and steers focus towards the foundation of the pose
- Draw the bellybutton in towards the spine, or the belly in and up => creates stability from the core, protects the back and supports proper breathing

Not every alignment cue works for every student. The focus should always be on the well-being of the student, and NEVER on the “perfect” of a pose.

These are all mere guidelines to help the student to achieve optimal alignment in their bodies in each pose, with the focus on keeping the student safe. The true achievement is the bodily awareness that is created, the understanding of one's physical strength and weaknesses, as well as holding patterns.



“Most rarely align with their true power, because it seems illogical to them that there is power in relaxation, in letting go, or in love or joy or bliss. Most people do not understand that their power lies in releasing resistance which is the only obstacle to their true power.”

— Abraham Hicks

Lessons 6, 7 & 8

Review Sheet

1. Which prānāyāma can be used for the centering part of every practice (no matter which style and pace are taught afterwards)? Explain your reasoning in a few words.

2. What do the following anatomical terms mean?

• Anterior =

• Posterior =

• Prone =

• Supine =

• Flexion =

• Extension =

• Abduction =

- Adduction =

3. What type of joint is the shoulder joint and what are its primary muscular stabilizers?

4. Name the two groups of core muscles

5. Pair the muscle with location on the body:

Quadriceps

form the back of the thigh

Hamstrings

form the front of the thigh

6. Name the three parts of the spine, in order from the top down (from head towards hips):

I.

II.

III.

7. What are skeletal muscles and what are their four main features?

8. What do the following terms mean? Explain each one briefly.

Agonist =

Antagonist =

Synergist =

Fixator =

9. In Adho Mukha Śvanāsana (Downward Facing Dog),

The hamstrings _____

The arm and shoulder muscles _____

The core muscles _____

10. Translate sūtra 2.46 sthirasukhamāsanam into English:

Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next 😊

Lesson 9:
Meditation

What Is Meditation, Different Techniques and How to Guide
Śavāsana

“The mind is like water. When it is turbulent, it is difficult to see.
When it is calm, everything becomes clear.”

— Prasad Mahes

What is Meditation and What Is Its Role in Yoga Practice

Meditation is an interruption.

There are many forms and techniques of meditation and they all have one common goal:
to interrupt uncontrolled habitual thoughts, so that there is only one mental activity remaining, or
even none.

The state of having only one mental activity remaining, or even none, is called “Samādhi” in
Sanskrit.

Samādhi is the eighth and final anga or limb in Patanjali’s Yoga Sūtras. In fact, the Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali are an eight-step system of meditation – Yama and Niyama, the first two angas or limbs, prepare the Yogi for practice, which begins with proper posture: the third anga or limb, Āsana. The fourth anga or limb is supposed to settle the mind with breathing exercises: Prānāyāma. After that, the Yogi is ready to sit in silence and withdraw all attention from the surroundings (the fifth anga or limb: Pratyāhāra). From there, the awareness is focussed on an object of meditation => Dhāranā. Eventually, the attention will stay on the object of meditation without any interruption, and so, the seventh anga or limb is in action: Dhyāna. Each of these steps are tools to gain control over the mind (to control the thoughts) and lead to the final anga or limb: Samādhi, a state of union.

How does meditation do that – interrupt uncontrolled habitual thoughts?

By focusing the mind. By telling the mind exactly what to think, directing our mind to a specific thought, mental image or sensation (emotion).

Conclusion:

Meditation is a mental concentration. It is a skill!

It is the opposite of “checking out”: meditation is not trying to get you out of reality, it is trying to bring you presence.

It is never happening by itself, it’s a training of the mind.

The common goal of all Yoga practice is to eliminate every kind of misery and subsequently to reveal our innate sense of joy and self. Meditation is a means to an end, a tool to “practice the pause”, to control our thoughts and with it, our reactions – ultimately bringing us more freedom, and with it, more joy.

On a physical level, meditation increases the calming hormones melatonin and serotonin.

On a mental level, it increases acceptance, and ultimately, happiness.

It clearly improves concentration and heightens memory.

It gives us the capacity to withstand painful or negative emotions.

Recent studies are looking into the medical benefits of meditation (i.e. Medical Meditation by Dharma Singh Khalsa, MD)

Different Techniques

There are many different techniques, all entertaining the same goal (to interrupt uncontrolled habitual thoughts).

Swami Tadatmananda, in his book “Meditation, A Journey of Exploration”, divides all techniques into four broad groups:

- Concentration => directing the mind and focussing the attention on a particular object of meditation, like breathing, a mantra, image or sound.
- Observation => watching the activities of the mind without being involved in the process of thinking; being a detached witness to all mental activities.
- Contemplation => employing specific thoughts or evoking specific emotions to produce a desired change in the thinking patterns.
- Developing a prayerful sense of being intimately connected with a chosen aspect of God; evoking feelings of reverence and adoration.

Some well-known schools of meditation are:

Taoist Meditation

Open monitoring meditation => monitoring all aspects of our experience (what we see, hear, smell etc) without judgment or attachment. It is the process of non-reacting monitoring. Also known as Daoism, it is a religious or philosophical tradition of Chinese origin. Techniques include concentration, mindfulness, contemplation and visualization and vary from school to school.

Zen Meditation (Zazen)

Zazen means “seated Zen” in Japanese.

Zen Buddhism was brought to China by the Indian monk Bodhidharma in the 6th century CE. It was called Ch’an in China.

Practiced in meditation seat, with a straight back (as an aid for concentration) it focusses only on the breath and/or, like in Taoist meditation, open monitoring. It spread from China to Vietnam, Korea and Japan. There are variations in the teachings of different schools, but in general all techniques are a means to gain insight into the nature of existence and subsequently “sit” with it without judgment.

Vinyasa Yoga

Although in the West known as a vigorous flow of Yoga asana poses, in India Vinyasa is a moving meditation, practiced in the rhythm of the Ujjayi breath (one breath, one movement). Therefore, it is traditionally practiced at a slower pace than what we are used to here.

Surya Namaskar or Sun Salutation comes in as many different variations as there are regions in India (we’ll explore this in upcoming lessons) and is often practiced for prolonged periods of time.

The repetitive practice is one way of keeping uncontrolled habitual thoughts out and getting the mind to focus.

Vipassanā or Vipāsyanā Meditation

The word Vipassana has two parts: passanā means “seeing” and the prefix vi can be translated as “through” or “in”.

Vipassanā means “insight” and is one of India’s most ancient techniques of meditation. It is often named “the mindfulness of breathing” and, in its basic steps, starts by focusing the mind on the breath.

A classic example of Vipassanā meditation is the ocean-breath:

Close your eyes. Bring your awareness to your breath. Notice the rise and fall of your chest. Shifting your awareness to your nostrils, notice how you inhale cool air into your nostrils, and how you exhale warmer air back out of your nostrils - every time you breathe.

Now, imagine you’d be sitting at the beach. You can feel the sun on your face, a slight breeze in your hair. You can see the sun reflecting on the surface of the water. You notice gentle little waves.

Now imagine, with every inhale, there is a wave coming towards the shore, and with every exhale, the wave is retreating back into the ocean.

You breathe in, and the wave is coming towards you, you breathe out and the ocean is taking the wave back.

Do this, and nothing else, for 5 (10) rounds of breath.

Mantra Meditation

The word Mantra translates into “sacred message” and is often interpreted as “mind protection”.

The earliest mantras were composed in Vedic Sanskrit by Hindus in India and are at least 3,000 years old. They come in many forms, for example verses from the Rigveda and musical chants from the Sāmaveda. Mantras are typically melodic, mathematically structured meters and the simplest, yet one of the most powerful mantras known is OM (more to OM coming up).

In mantra meditation, a particular phrase is repeated over and over again to help the mind to stay present.

Often, these phrases are connected to the breath, like:

“From the surrounding universe I gather peace” (Inhalation breath) – “into the surrounding universe I radiate ease” (exhalation breath).

Or, simplified: “I inhale peace, I exhale ease”.

Kirtan is a form of mantra meditation, where certain words or sentences are chanted and repeated (for example, Krishna Das or Snatam Kaur).

Intentional Placement Meditation or Mindfulness

Popular in the West for its easy, three step technique, it draws from different meditation techniques. We already explored some of them.

Here is how it works:

Step 1: Get Present

Get aware of your surroundings, get aware of your breath, yourself/your position in your surroundings.

Step 2: Get Clear

Where do you direct your thoughts to? What are you meditating on? Pick an image, place, concept.

Step 3: Be With

Be with your meditation subject (for example: image = bird, concept = freedom)

Implement a mantra to stay with it (with every inhale, I gather freedom; with every exhale, I radiate freedom)

Example:

Find a comfortable seat. Take a deep breath in, let it all out (repeat two to three times). Come back to your natural breath. Get present to where you are, the room you are in, the mat or prop you sit on.

Take a walk in your mind, out the door, into the reception area (notice the different surface you are walking on). Put your shoes on, leave the studio and get into your car. Turn the ignition on and drive towards the beach. Any beach you know – could be Bailey beach, or Tods Point, or...

Park your car and walk down to the beach. Sit down on the warm sand, feel the sun warming your skin and a slight breeze in your hair. Now, bring your gaze up towards the sky and watch the seagulls circling the shore. Picture them clearly, with their wide wings, white feathers. Maybe you can even imagine their squawking calls.

Think of the seagull as free and focus your mind on freedom. For the next 5 (10) rounds of breath, repeat the following mantra in your mind: “From the surrounding universe, I gather freedom (inhale), and into the surrounding universe, I radiate freedom (exhale)”. So that it can fill you up, so that it may surround you.

Now, in your inner mind, make your way back to the studio. Passing the same street signs, the same buildings, parking your car in the same spot. Walk back into the building, leave your shoes in the reception area and make your way to your mat. Lie down on your mat, that’s already spread out there for you and picture yourself lying there, content and filled with a feeling of freedom in your body and in your mind.

Guiding Śavāsana

Śavāsana (Shavāsana) is made up of two Sanskrit words: śava = corpse and āsana = pose; the Hatha Yoga Pradipika states “lying full length on the back like a corpse is called Śavāsana. With this āsana, tiredness caused by other āsanās is eliminated; it also promotes calmness of the mind”.

Śavāsana is typically practiced for 3-10 minutes at the end of Yoga Āsana practice (depending on the class format and time) but can be practiced for 20-30 minutes as well.

First, the attention is brought to the physical body => the body is scanned for muscular tension and the tension is then consciously released. Then, the awareness is guided to the breath, sometimes a guided meditation is offered. This helps the student to stay present. Seasoned practitioners can then let go of all control of the breath, mind and body, without having uncontrolled habitual thoughts entering their practice (like to do lists, shopping lists, etc). The āsana is released by slowly deepening the breath, and bringing gentle movements back into the body (wriggling fingers and toes, stretching arms overhead, etc), then, in honour of the rising sun, rolling over to the right side and getting back to a seated position.

An example:

Make your way into Śavāsana. Take a deep breath in, open your mouth and let it go. As you seal your lips softly, keep your teeth separate.

Bring your awareness to your head. Feel your head heavy on the ground, no effort of holding it up. Feel the space between your eyebrows widening, the corners of your eyelids relax. Relax your cheeks. Relax your jaw. Guide your attention to your shoulders, feel them heavy on the ground. Feel your arms heavy, the palms of your hands and all ten fingers light as feathers.

Now, bring your awareness to your hips, feel them heavy on the ground. Feel your legs heavy, your heels sinking deep into the mat.

Move your attention to your belly. Notice the rise and fall of your belly with the rhythm of your breathing.

Feel the space, the freedom in your body that you have created during practice today and, for the next 5 (10) rounds of breath, implement the following mantra: with every inhale, gather freedom into yourself, with every exhale, radiate freedom right back out. You inhale freedom, you exhale freedom. Until you are filled with freedom and surrounded by freedom. Śavāsana.

Meditation is a vital part of Yoga Āsana practice, some even consider it to be the most vital part.

As teachers, we guide our students through the breath, and sometimes with a guided meditation in Śavāsana.

As practitioners, a regular meditation practice is highly beneficial to our lives on and off the mat.

It is easiest to start a regular meditation practice as a routine like brushing your teeth – a daily task, performed at the same time and place every day, without giving it much contemplation (if it should be done or not, why it should or should not be done, etc). Meditation practice does not have to be done seated, or for a prolonged amount of time. Finding a space and time frame that work with the daily schedule are more successful and can look as easy as sitting in bed in the morning after waking up, and before looking at the phone. Dedicating 5 (10) minutes to a meditation practice, maybe starting with a technique like the ocean-breath for the first few times to train the mind to stay focussed. If this goes well, a mindfulness meditation in three steps, for the duration of 10-20 minutes can be practiced.

A journal can be a great tool to strengthen self-discipline, boost memory and gain clarity. Journaling should be done right after meditation practice, and can be short, or more detailed. It should always have comprehensive notes of the date and time of the meditation and the meditation technique and/or object.

“Meditation is the journey from sound to silence,
From movement to stillness,
From a limited identity to unlimited space.”
— Sri Ravi Shankar

Lesson 10:

The Three Bodies in Vedanta Philosophy

Understanding the Gross Body, the Subtle Body
and the Causal Body

(including Related Terminology/Chakras, Nāḍīs and Koshas)

According to Vedanta, the human being is composed of three bodies, called “Śarīra” (Sharira) in Sanskrit:

- The Gross Body = Śthula Śarīra (Shtula Sharira)
 - The Subtle Body = Suksma Śarīra (Sukshma Sharira)
 - The Causal Body = Karana Śarīra (Karana Sharira)
-

Śthula Śarīra – The Gross Body

Śarīram (=body), descending from the Sanskrit root “śr’ literally translates into “that which decays, that which falls apart”.

Śthula Śarīra is the physical (mortal) body, with its five external sense organs (ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose), its five external motor organs (tongue, hands, legs, genitals and excretory organs) and the brain, which coordinates these organs of senses and action.

The Śthula Śarīra is anātman (=non-self).

(see model on p. 11/Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali by B. Ravikanth)

Suksma Śarīra – The Subtle Body

The Subtle Body (Sukshma Śarīra) is the body of the mind (citta, chitta) and the vital energies (five subtle sense organs hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell and five subtle motor organs speech, grasping, locomotion, excretion and procreation). It is what keeps the Gross Body alive. The Gross Body is WHERE you experience, whereas the Subtle Body is the means to experience. The Subtle Body is the “container” of the mind, with its thoughts and emotions and the ego. Both, the Gross Body and the Subtle Body are made of matter. The Suksma Śarīra is also anātman (=non-self).

Sanskrit has several terms for the mind, distincting the mind by its different functions:

- Citta – mind of memory/used as a synonym for all parts of the mind;
- Buddhi – intellect, responsible for judgment and decision-making;
- Ahankāra – ego, responsible for the idea of “I”, “me” and “mine”;
- Manas – emotional mind, coordinates sense and motor organs and is the instrument of desire and impulse;

In Yoga philosophy the belief is that the mind is not separate from the self, but the self is separate from the mind.

The Gross Body has the brain, whereas the Subtle Body has the mind. The “self” is external to both of them.

It is also believed that the Subtle Body is persistent across rebirth – upon death, the soul along with the Subtle Body migrates to another body.

Karana Śarīra – The Causal Body

The Causal Body (from karana = causing and śarīra = body) is considered the most complex of the Three Bodies.

It is merely the cause or seed of the Subtle Body and Gross Body and has no other function than that.

To quote Swami Sivananda: “Karana Śarīra is the beginningless ignorance (avidyā) that is indescribable”. The Karana Śarīra is what continues on after the other bodies are gone, and is the “seed” for a new life in a new body.

Karana Śarīra is also anātman (non-self).

Ātman (the self) is distinct from all three bodies, but the three bodies are not distinct from ātman (the self).

The three bodies are connected and a person functions best, when they are in harmony with one another – in spiritual Yoga practice, it is this harmony that the Yogi tries to achieve through prānāyāma, āsana and meditation.

Avidyā – The Ignorance Responsible for All Human Misery

Avidyā stands for the misconceptions of the self/soul (ātman). The effect is a suppression of reality, the real nature of things. It is an illusion created by the human mind (citta), ignorance about the nature of “being” (sat).

One model about these misconceptions is

Pancha Kośa (Pancha Kosha) = 5 sheaths, often called the Koshas

Kośa is a mistake, an error, a covering of the ātman (self) and the 5 (pancha) different kośas refer to the different mistakes we make about ourselves.

It is important to note that a kośa is not a real thing, a physical thing. It is a model, not to be taken literally.

The five kośas are, from outermost to innermost:

- Annamaya Kośa – sheath of the physical self, named from the fact that it is nourished by food. In this layer, one identifies with the Gross Body, not knowing the discrimination (viveka) between the body and the self.
- Prānamaya Kośa – the vital sheath, from prana = life force, breath; the force that holds mind and body together.
- Manomaya Kośa – referring to manas = mind; it is the cause of diversity, of “I” and “mine”, the cause for all misconceptions but also the means to liberation.
- Vijñanamaya Kośa – vijñana meaning intellect, that which discriminates (viveka); sometimes referred to as the “knowledge sheath” it identifies itself with the body, organs etc.; it cannot be the self, as it is not constantly present and also limited (the self is limitless).
- Ānandamaya Kośa – referring to ānanda = limitless happiness, sometimes called “bliss”; this sheath is a reflection of the ātman (self), which is limitless happiness, joy, truth. It is experienced in deep sleep or a state of sleep, like Yoga Nidra, where the mind and senses cease to function.

Although often described as layering on top of each other, they are really meant as individual sheaths. Sometimes, one might have to go systematically through all the Kośas in Yoga practice to reach Ānandamaya Kośa and subsequently experience a deep state of meditation, revealing the Self. And other times, one’s confusions and misconceptions might only concern one or two Kośas before clarity takes hold.

The Kośas are “coverings” which surround and obscure the Self (ātman).

They are rooted in Vedanta philosophy.

In Shaivism (one of the major traditions within Hinduism that worships Shiva as the creator and destroyer of worlds, and therefore the Supreme Being), the Subtle Body (Sukṣma Śarīra) also contains Chakras and Nāḍīs. It is then often referred to as the Energy Body.

The Energy Body

The Nāḍīs are energy channels (nāḍī=channel) in the Subtle Body and the Chakras are focus points where nāḍīs meet (cakra = circle).

The 7 Chakras and the human qualities they represent

Mūlādhāra (Root Chakra) – basic trust, foundation of the energy body

Svāsthāna/Svāsthāna (Pelvic or Sacral Chakra) – sexuality and creativity (lit. “one’s own base)

Manipūra (Navel or Solarplexus Chakra) – power, will power (lit. “jewel city or city of jewels)

Anāhata (Heart Chakra) – healing and love

Vīśuddha (Throat Chakra) – (self-) expression

Ājñā (Third Eye Chakra) – inspiration and intuition

Sahasrāra (Crown Chakra) – spirituality and enlightenment, pure consciousness => the chakra from which all the other chakras emanate

The Nāḍīs

The literal meaning of the word nāḍī is “tube” or “pipe.

It is a term that is used to describe the energy pathways in the Subtle Body and the Causal Body.

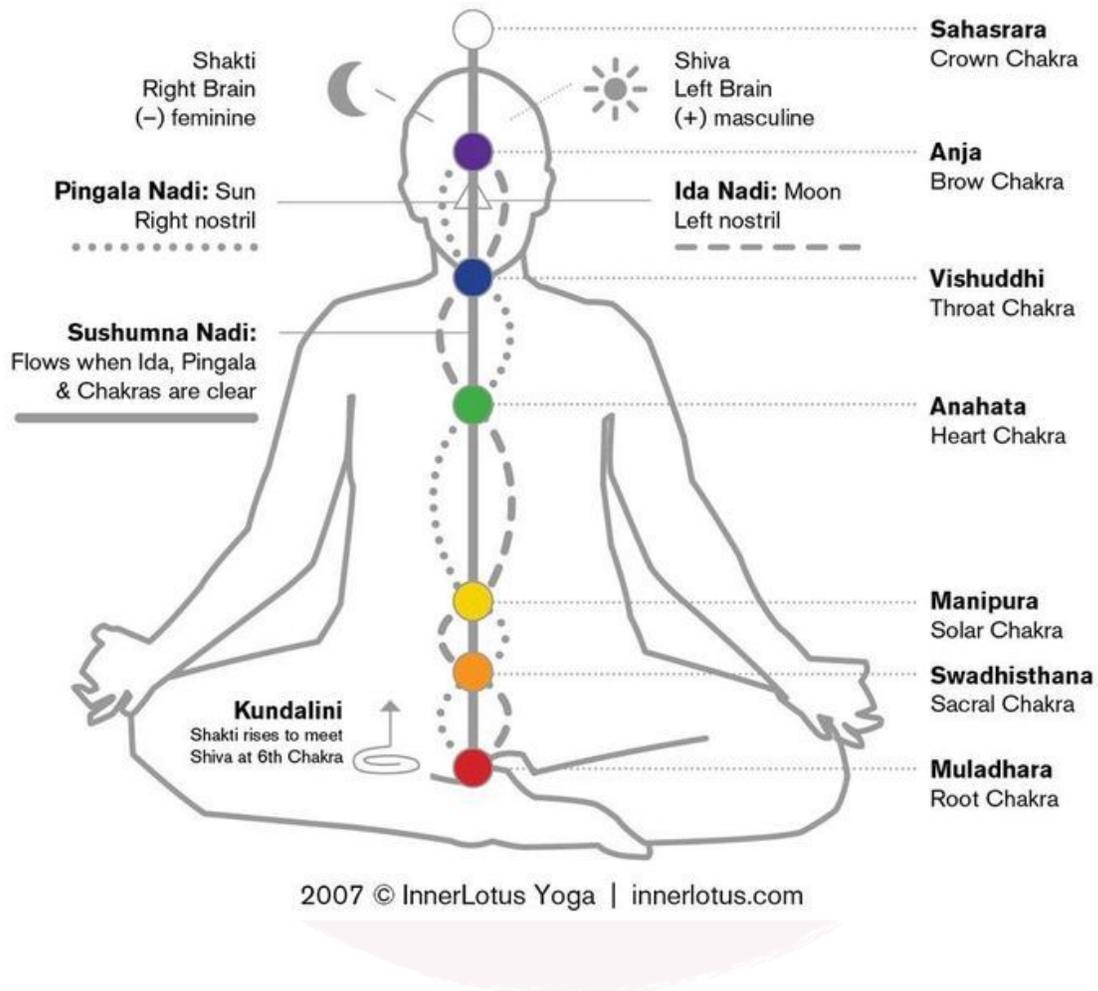
Some sources state that there are more than 72,000 Nāḍīs. They are said to connect at special points of intensity, called nāḍīchakras.

The three most important ones are:

- Sushumnā Nāḍī => central channel, originates in Mūlādhāra Chakra, running up the body to Sahasrāra Chakra

- Idā Nādī => lies to the left of the spine, representing the moon energy (feminine, cool); originates in Mūlādhāra Chakra, circling around Sushumnā Nadi, ending in the left nostril
- Pingala Nādī => lies to the right of the spine, representing the sun energy (masculine, hot); originates in Mūlādhāra Chakra, circling around Sushumnā Nadi, ending in the right nostril

The 3 Major Nadis (rivers) and the 7 Chakras (wheels of energy)



“You don’t have a Soul. You are a Soul. You have a body.”
 — Gautama Buddha

Lesson 11:

OM

A Sacred Sound in Indian Religions



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OM is supposedly the single most important sound in chanting of the Vedas. It can be chanted by itself, or at the beginning and/or end of verses, mantras or prayers.

Its roots are in Hinduism (it has first been mentioned in the Upanishads, which are part of the Vedas), from where it has spread to Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism.

Om consists of four syllables:

1. A => "awe", at the back of the throat
2. U => "oo", rolling forward, up the throat, stretched out
3. M => "mm", with front teeth gently touching
4. Deep silence

A vibration to be chanted, the sound is gradually rolling forward (vibration can be felt in the throat).

There are many different interpretations of OM.

In the Rig Veda (oldest part of the Vedas), the three phonetic components of OM (AUM) correspond to the three stages of cosmic creation, and when it is chanted, it celebrates the creative powers of the universe.

In later texts of the Vedas, it sometimes is referred to as “the whole Veda” or “the infinite language, the infinite knowledge”.

In the Upanishads (verse 1) it is stated that time is threefold: the past, the present and the future – these three are OM (AUM), with the fourth syllable, silence, representing that which transcends time.

In the Bhagavad Gita, verse 10.25, Krishna associates OM with himself as one of his infinite glories: “Of the great sages I am Bhrgu; of vibrations I am the transcendental Om. Of sacrifices I am japa (repetition of mantra), and of immovable things I am the Himalayas.”

In Buddhism, it is believed that each universe begins from the destruction of the previous one, and OM is the sound of that. (Therefore, one should always exhale fully before inhaling for OM => getting rid of all the old, stale air, the past before invoking the future).

In our Western Yoga world, Om is sometimes interpreted as a representation and embodiment of Śakti (Shakti) in its three main characteristics creation, preservation and liberation.

It is often chanted at the beginning of Yoga classes, because the three phonetics are believed to invoke speech, body and mind – “A” representing the throat chakra (speech), “U” representing the crown chakra (body) and “M” representing the heart chakra (mind) => speech, body and mind are doing the same thing at the same time = I Am Here Now.

Many scholars agree that OM is recommended as a meditation tool.

Also, since everything in the universe is always pulsating and vibrating – nothing ever stands still, it is believed to be a way to connect with all other living beings, nature and the universe.

OM is a way to connect to one another and the world around.



“OM is everything. It is the source. It is the vibration and
consciousness of the entire universe.”

— Unknown

Lessons 9, 10 & 11

Review Sheet

1. What is meditation – in one word or one sentence?

2. What does the word 'mantra' mean. Give one example for a mantra.

3. Translate the word 'Śavāsana' into English.

4. What are the four Sanskrit terms for the mind, and what is their respective meaning?

5. What are the Koshas?

Together, we will go over these questions when we next meet ☺

Lesson 12:

Restorative Yoga

And Insight into the Human Nervous System

What is Restorative Yoga

Restorative Yoga is a slow-paced style of Yoga, using props to support the body, with the aim of deep relaxation for body and mind.

Often used to release stress, it is a deeply meditational practice, consisting of a small number of āsanās that rely on gravity and props.

Judith Hanson Lasater, an early disciple of B.K.S. Iyengar, helped create this practice in 2007.

It can be a practice in itself, or a valuable part of the cool-down phase of any other practice, preparing mind and body ideally for Śavāsana.

To understand deep rest, let's take a look at:

The Autonomic Nervous System

(please take a look at page 26 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

The Autonomic Nervous System is a control system that acts mostly unconsciously and regulates bodily functions (such as heart rate, digestion, respiratory rate etc.).

It is divided into two parts:

The Para-Sympathetic Nervous System is responsible for 'rest & digest' and the Sympathetic Nervous System is responsible for 'fight-flight-freeze'.

Due to our fast-paced lifestyles, our Sympathetic Nervous System is often overly active.

The practice of Restorative Yoga is aimed towards the Para-Sympathetic Nervous System.

Restorative Yoga Teacher and author of 'Deep Listening', Jillian Pransky, likens the Autonomic Nervous System to a house with several rooms:

One House - Several Rooms

Either this is active (our natural operating state)	Separate Plumbing & Electricity	Or this is active
Para-Sympathetic Nervous System 'Rest & Digest'		Sympathetic Nervous System 'Fight-Flight-Freeze'
Immunity		Survival
Reproduction		
Build & Repair		
Digestion		
Elimination		

Note that the **Para-Sympathetic Nervous System** responds to **Relaxation**, whereas the **Sympathetic Nervous System** responds to **Stress**. And only one of them can be active at any given time.

What does it take to get a Relaxation Response?

Let's look at some Restorative Yoga Poses together, and how to optimally support someone in them.

One example for a restorative āsana is Viparīta Karani, Legs up the Wall Pose. To add deep relaxation to this position, the knees and shins can be elevated on 2 bolsters, instead of placing the legs up the wall. A folded blanket on the belly for warmth adds comfort. Some practitioners may wish to add a folded blanket under head and shoulders for support of the neck area.

The space below is for your own notes, to describe the āsanās in your own words, and if you like, add a little drawing (or anything that helps you remember the set-up of the pose)





“The brain is the hardest part of the body to adjust in āsanās.”
— B.K.S. Iyengar

Lesson 12 Review Sheet

1. What is Restorative Yoga?

2. Which part of the Autonomic Nervous System is responsible for relaxation responses?

3. What does the other part of the Autonomic Nervous System respond to? And what is its name?

Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next 😊

Lesson 13:

Pose Classifications and their Benefits:

Standing Poses

Standing Poses strengthen the leg muscles and increase the strength and the suppleness of the spine.

They stretch the arteries of the legs and increase blood supply to the lower limbs, which can help to prevent thrombosis.

Below, an overview of some foundational Standing Poses is given, complete with their meanings.

Tadāsana — Mountain Pose

(pages 25 & 27 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

The Sanskrit word “tada” means mountain. Tadāsana is put together from the two Sanskrit words tada and āsana and is called Mountain Pose because the Yogi is supposed to stand as firm as a mountain.

Tadāsana teaches awareness of standing evenly on both legs (which habitually is often not the case) and is the foundation of all other Standing Poses.

Tadāsana helps in improving bad posture by straightening and strengthening the spine and tones the buttock muscles.

- Root your feet
- Pull your bellybutton in and up towards the spine
- Tighten your buttocks
- Lift your chest
- Bring your chin back to neutral

Adho Mukha Śvānāsana — Downward Facing Dog

(pages 54 & 55 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

This Pose name is put together from the Sanskrit words “adho” meaning down, “mukha” meaning face, “śvāna” meaning dog, and āsana meaning pose or posture.

Sometimes referred to as a “Resting Pose”, Adho Mukha Śvānāsana slows the heartbeat down and helps in calming the brain and nervous system.

It strengthens the arms, upper body and legs and it stretches the palms, chest and back, hamstrings, calves and heels/feet.

- Soften your knees
- Hips up and back, to offer space to your low back
- Shift your gaze forward

Vīrabhadrāsana 1 — Warrior 1

(pages 92 & 93 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

Vīra means hero, badhra can be translated as friend, and āsana means pose or posture.

All the Warrior Poses are empowering poses that promote mental focus and energize the mind and the body. They stretch and strengthen the shoulders, arms, neck, legs, hips, ankles and back.

- Turn your back heel flat
- Press evenly into both feet, so that you can lengthen from the waist up
- Lift from the chest

For Virābhadrāsana 2 — Warrior 2

(pages 74 & 75 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

- Reach your arms equally to the front and back of the room
 - Gaze (drishti) to the front, over your fingers
-

For Virābhadrāsana 3 — Warrior 3

- Coming from Warrior 1, shift your weight forward into the front foot
 - Slide the back foot in and lift it up
 - Lengthen through the crown of the head
-

Ashta Chandrāsana — Crescent Lunge

Ashta means eight, Chandra means moon.

Ashta Chandrāsana strengthens the arches, ankles, knees and thighs; it stretches the hips and shoulders and opens the chest.

- Soften your back knee
 - Draw your belly in and up, so that you can lift and lengthen
 - Soft elbows, arms at comfortable distance
-

Utkatāsana - Chair Pose

(pages 76 & 77 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

Utkata translates into intense, powerful and āsana means pose.

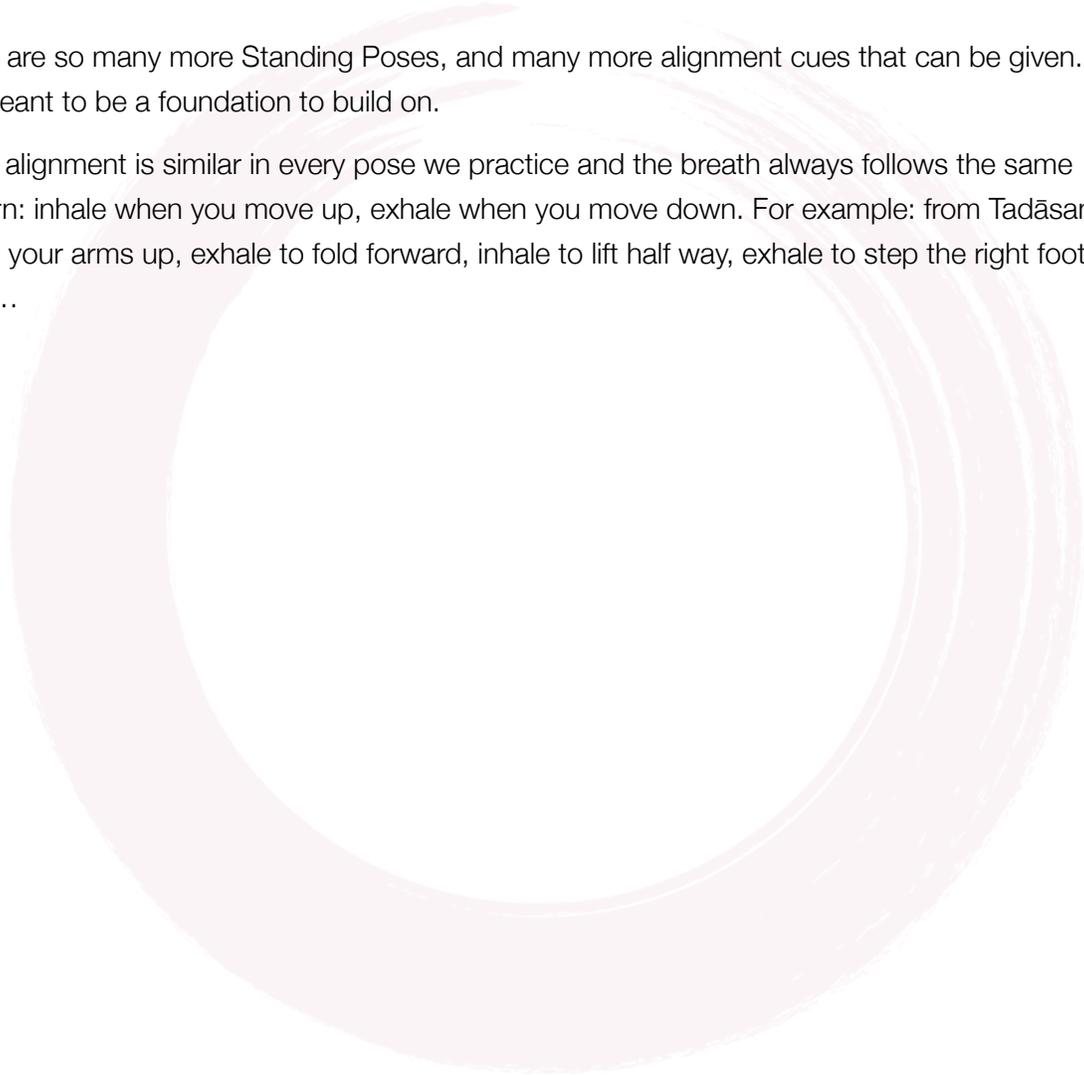
Utkatāsana is a powerful Standing Pose that requires balance and strength.

It strengthens the feet, ankles, calves, knees, buttocks and thighs. And it lengthens the spine and opens the chest.

- Lift up your toes for a moment and bring some weight into your heels
- Lift your chest, and soften your shoulders
- Engage your glutes

There are so many more Standing Poses, and many more alignment cues that can be given. These are meant to be a foundation to build on.

Basic alignment is similar in every pose we practice and the breath always follows the same pattern: inhale when you move up, exhale when you move down. For example: from Tadāsana, inhale your arms up, exhale to fold forward, inhale to lift half way, exhale to step the right foot back...



“Be an encourager, the world has plenty of critics already.”

— Dave Willis

Lesson 14:

Pose Classifications and their Benefits:

Forward Bends

Forward Bends target the backside of the body. They stretch the hamstrings, buttocks and low back. At the same time, they keep the spine strong and supple.

Their calming and soothing quality on the nervous system helps to turn the mental focus inwards.

Uttānāsana – Standing Forward Bend

(page 107 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

The Sanskrit word “ut” means deliberate or intense, and “tana” means stretch. This “intense stretch” posture has a deeply surrendering element in it, with complete balance between activity and passivity in the body. It is an important connector pose in Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutations).

Uttānāsana deeply stretches the spine, hamstrings and calves. It strengthens the feet, knees and thighs.

- Soften your knees
- Pull your bellybutton in and up, so that you have stability from your core
- Keep your head relaxed, gaze back towards knees

For Ardha Uttānāsana, the alignment of the feet and legs stays the same.

- Lift the head half way up and bring your gaze slightly forward on the ground
- Lengthen the spine

Ardha means half, and although the correct terminology for this pose would be “Half Forward Bend” in English, it is commonly called “Halfway Lift”.

Paschimottanāsana – Seated Forward Bend

(page 51 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

Paschim means “west” and refers to the back of the body, from the heels to the head. Ut means “intense” and tan or tana means stretch. If translated word by word, this posture would be called “Intense West Stretch Posture”.

Paschimottanāsana stretches the length of the spine, as well as the hamstrings and calves.

To get a deeper insight to healthy alignment in this seated forward bend, take a look at page 43 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway, where Dandāsana is presented. This pose has a similar general shape, without the forward bend.

- Sit with your legs extended
- Keep your knees soft and your legs in a comfortable distance, to give your low back space
- Leading from the belly button towards the thighs, fold forward

Jānu Śīrsāsana – Seated Head-to-knee Forward Bend

(pages 64 & 65 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book/different version of this āsana)

Jānu means knee and śīrsa means head. Jānu Śīrsāsana (Jānu Śīrshāsana) opens the chest and gives the lungs space to extend. It stretches the muscles of the backs of the legs as well as the low back.

- Sit with your legs extended
- Bend the right knee and place the right foot to the inside of the left thigh
- Widen your sitting bones, so that you feel evenly grounded
- Fold forward

All these alignment cues are guidelines.

Every body is different and it is important to keep the students safe, as well as to help them find their optimum in each pose. Due to the differences in student's bodies, the optimum sometimes might look different than the picture of the pose in a book.

In his book "Your Body, Your Yoga", Bernie Clark points out the femoral neck-shaft angle variations from 110 degrees to 150 degrees.

We will explore safe modifications and ways to support in our upcoming lessons!

In all forward bends, the inhalation breath lengthens and the exhalation breath leads the forward fold.

“Being both, soft and strong, is a combination
very few have mastered.”

— Unknown

Lessons 13 & 14

Review Sheet

1. What are some benefits of Standing Poses:

2. Give an example of a pose classified as a Standing Pose, with the Sanskrit and English Pose name. Name one major benefit of this āsana.

3. Which of the following statements is true?

Forward Bends

Target the front side of the body

Strengthen the legs

Target the Parasympathetic Nervous System with their calming and soothing quality

4. Choose an āsana that falls into the category of Forward Bends and give its Sanskrit and English Pose name, as well as one of its major benefits

Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next 😊

Lesson 15:

Pose Classifications and their Benefits:

Backbends

Backbends stretch the hip flexors and increase spinal flexibility; they strengthen the back muscles, legs and shoulders. In addition, they help to open shoulders and chest, where a lot of physical tension can be found in response to stress factors.

Backbends are often referred to as ‘heart-openers’. Another way to think about a backbend is seeing it as an ‘uplift’.

Bhujangāsana – Cobra Pose

(pages 84 & 85 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

The Sanskrit word “bhujanga” means serpent, or snake. Bhujangāsana is put together from the two Sanskrit words bhujanga and āsana.

Bhujangāsana is a gentle backbend that warms and strengthens the spine while opening the chest.

By opening the chest and shoulders and lengthening the spine, Bhujangāsana helps in improving posture.

- Lie down on your belly and place your legs in a comfortable distance
- Bring your hands in line with your chest
- Draw from the belly to lift up the heart

Ustrāsana (Ushtrāsana) – Camel Pose

(pages 86 & 87 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

This pose name is composed of the two Sanskrit words “ustra/ushtra”, meaning camel and āsana meaning pose.

Ushtrāsana stretches the thighs, chest and shoulders while strengthening the pelvis and low back.

It is considered a deep backbend and often increases the heart rate.

- Kneel with your thighs parallel
- Firm your belly, to create freedom to lift and lengthen
- Lift your chest
- Gaze moves up, while the tips of the ears draw back (long and stable neck)

Setu Bhandha Sarvāṅgāsana – Bridge Pose

Five Sanskrit words make up this pose name: setu meaning bridge, bandha meaning lock, sarva meaning all, anga meaning limb and āsana meaning pose.

Bridge Pose stretches the chest, neck, spine and hips while strengthening the back, buttocks and hamstrings.

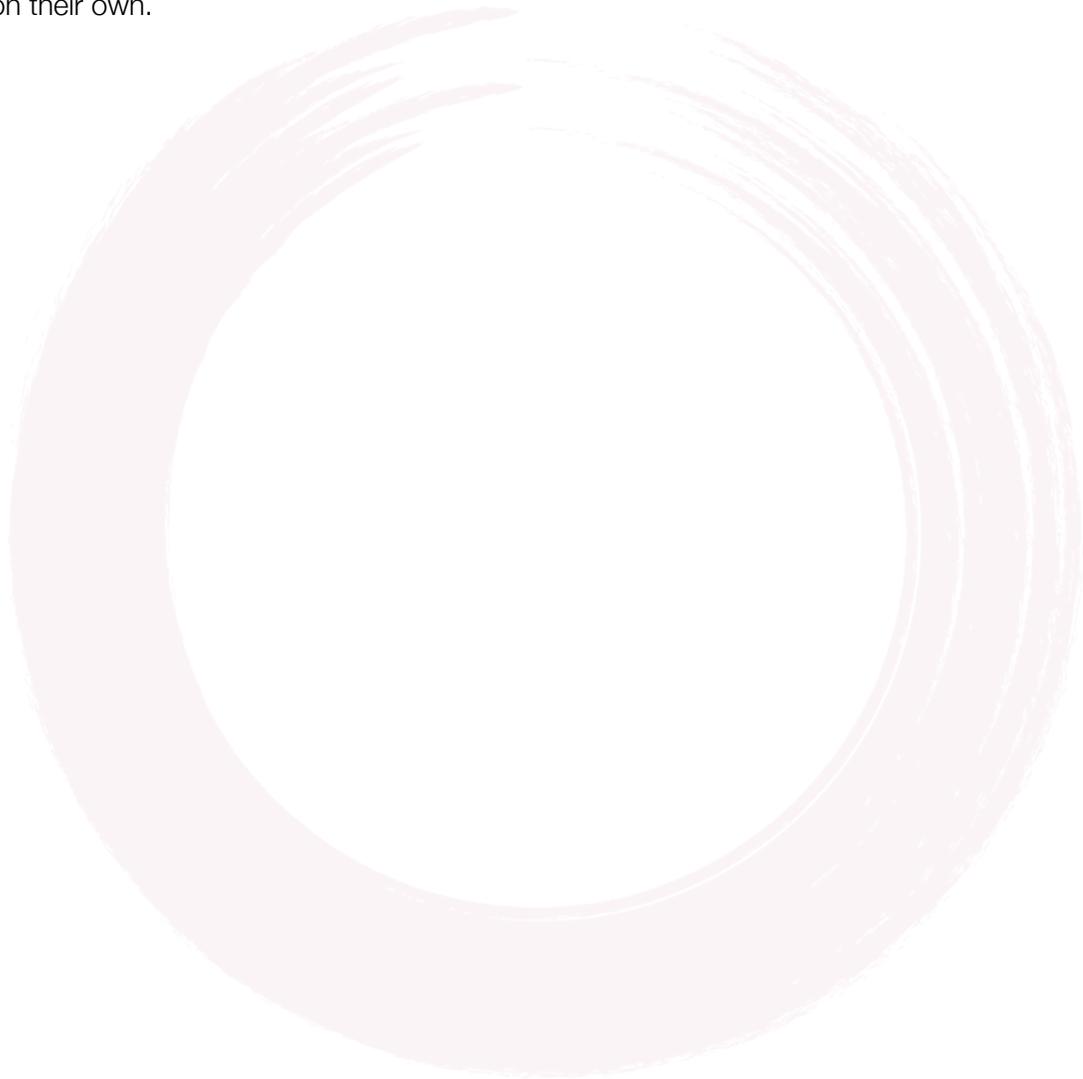
It is considered a basic backbend and easy accessible for a wide range of bodies.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet separate
- Press feet firmly down into the mat
- Lift your hips
- Relax your jaw, so that you can relax your neck

Many additional, detail-oriented instructions can be offered. The above instructions are meant to be a foundation to work from.

It is advisable to not teach/offer every instruction for every pose => instructing less may be an impactful gateway to hone listening skills (keeping in mind that Yoga is awareness training).

Experienced practitioners may appreciate the freedom to explore their own refinements, while beginning students might feel empowered by the trust that is placed in them to discover the shape a bit on their own.



“Beauty is not in the face; beauty is a light in the heart.”

— Kahlil Gibran

Lesson 16:

Pose Classifications and their Benefits:

Twists

Twists help to maintain and/or restore the spine's natural range of motion. They also stimulate circulation which is believed to be beneficial for the organs and associated glands in the torso.

To take a look at the general shape of a twist from an anatomical view point, open *The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book* by Kelly Solloway on page 57, where *Ardha Matsyendrāsana*, a seated twist, is presented. The general shape of all standing and seated twists is similar.

Parivṛtta Anjaneyāsana – Revolved Low Lunge Pose

Some say, the pose name *Anjaneyāsana* is named after Anjani, the mother of Hindu god Hanuman. *Parivṛtta Anjaneyāsana* is put together from the Sanskrit words *parivṛtta*, meaning revolved, *anjaneya* meaning salutation or praise and *āsana* (pose).

Parivṛtta Anjaneyāsana improves balance and stability and helps hone focusing skills. It opens the hips and stretches the quadriceps. For stability, *mula bandha* (“root lock”) and *uddiyana bandha* (abdominal lock”) should be engaged.

- From Low Lunge (*Anjaneyāsana*), shift the weight forward
- Bring your hands in prayer in front of your heart (*Añjali Mudrā**)
- Lift from the chest and revolve to your right

*Añjali Mudrā is a gesture of reverence, salutation. Añjali can be translated as “divine offering”, the root word añj means “to honour” and mudra means “seal”. Añjali Mudrā is often translated as “salutation seal” and is an integrative part of Yoga āsana practice. It is also a common way of greeting in most Asian countries.

Parivrtta Utkatāsana – Revolved (twisted) Chair Pose

Parivrtta means “revolved”. Utkata can be translated as “intense” or “powerful” and āsana means “posture”. Utkatāsana is also sometimes called “fierce pose”, or, in Bikram Yoga “awkward pose”.

Physically, Parivrtta Utkatāsana requires balance, stability and strength. Mentally, it sharpens focusing skills and promotes will power as well as acceptance.

This āsana strengthens the legs and buttocks and stretches the spine, hips and shoulders.

- Root down through your feet
 - Pull your belly in, so that you can lift and lengthen
 - Bring your hands together in front of your heart (Añjali Mudrā*) and revolve to your right
-

Jathara Parivartanāsana – Reclining Spinal Twist

Jathara means “abdomen”, parivarta (derived from parivrtta) means “turning” or revolving” and āsana “pose” or “posture”.

Since this āsana is practiced reclined, no balance, stability or strength are required and it is deeply relaxing.

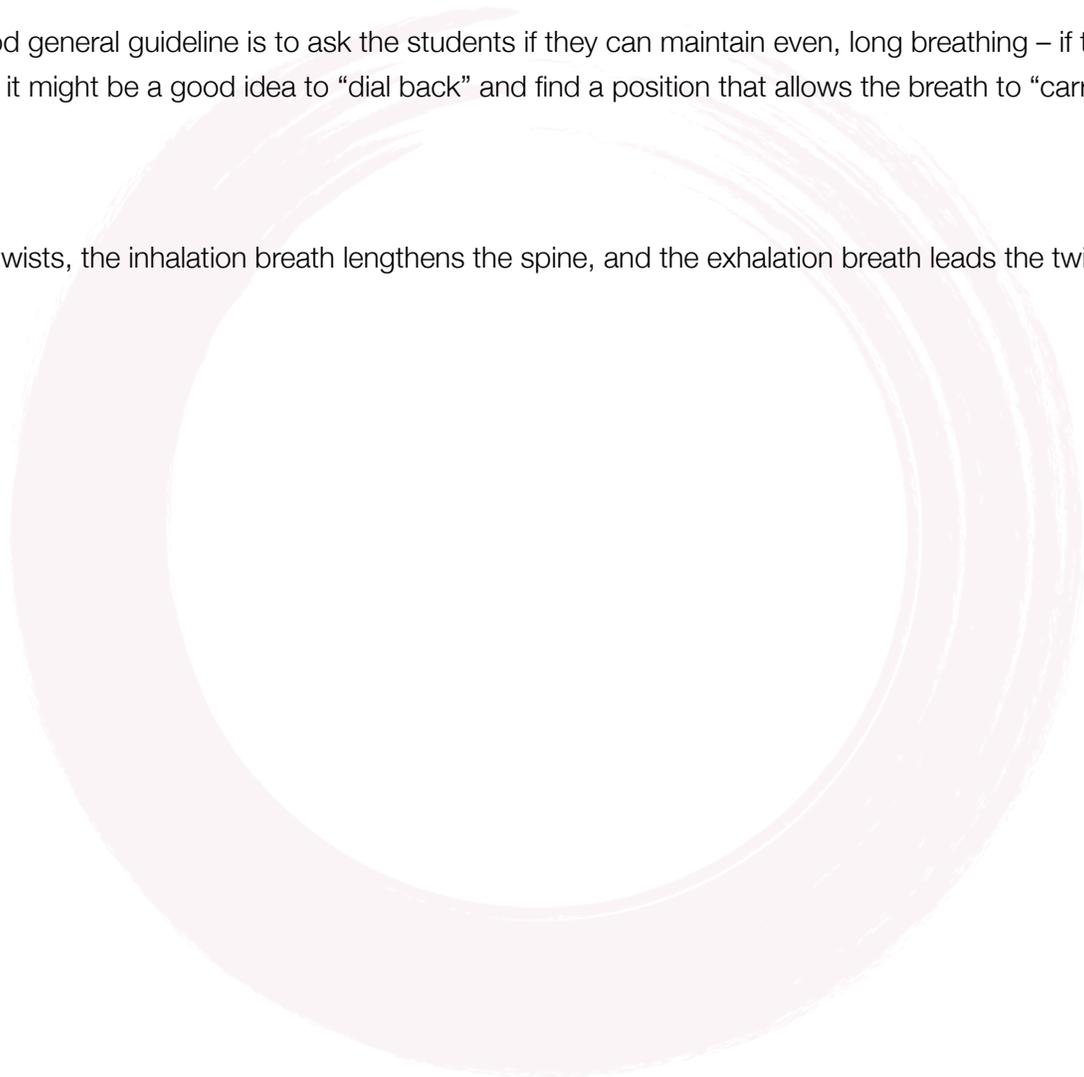
It strengthens the low back and stretches the spine and shoulders.

- Lie on your back
- Draw your knees towards your chest and bring them over to your right
- Let them find the ground, or a prop (bolster, block, folded blanket) to rest on

We have already determined that every body is different and all alignment cues are meant to give a general direction. There are many ways to modify each āsana (we'll look into them), and the main focus should always be the safety of the student.

A good general guideline is to ask the students if they can maintain even, long breathing – if they can't, it might be a good idea to “dial back” and find a position that allows the breath to “carry” the pose.

In all twists, the inhalation breath lengthens the spine, and the exhalation breath leads the twist.



“Yoga does not just change the way we see things,
it transforms the person who sees.”

— B.K.S. Iyengar

Lesson 17:

Sūrya Namaskar

What Are They and What is Their Purpose

Sūrya means Sun. Sūrya also refers to the solar deity in Hinduism, the God of Light, Day and Wisdom.

Namaskar means “bowing down”.

Fundamentally, Yogis devote this practice to the source of all forms of life, the Sun. It is a meditational practice, a ritual to honor the rising of the sun.

Sūrya Namaskar is considered a complete Sādhanā (lit. “a means to accomplish something; => spiritual practice), as it includes āsana, prānāyāma, mantra (chanting) and dhyana (meditation).

In India, it is often practiced repetitively and exclusively (without other practices to follow).

Traditionally, it is practiced before sunrise, and sandals, flowers and rice grains are offered with water. With each āsana, a different mantra is recited, each of the 12 mantras stands for a different name and quality of the Sun God.

The Sūrya Namaskar Mantra

Om Mitraya Namah (Samasthitih)

Om Ravaye Namah (Urdhva Hastāsana)

Om Suryaya Namah (Uttanāsana)

Om Bhanave Namah (Anjaneyāsana)

Om Khagaya Namah (Kumbakhāsana/Plank Pose)

Om Pushne Namah (Ashtānga Namaskara/knees-chest-chin)

Om Hiranyagarbhaya Namah (Bhujangāsana)
Om Marichaye Namah (Adho Mukha Śvanāsana)
Om Adityaya Namah (Anjaneyāsana)
Om Savitre Namah (Uttanāsana)
Om Arkaya Namah (Urdhva Hastāsana)
Om Bhaskaraya Namah (Samasthitih)

Meaning

Salutation to

Who is friendly to all (Samasthitih)
The shining one, the radiant one (Urdhva Hastāsana)
Who is the dispeller of darkness (Uttanāsana)
One who illumines, the bright one (Anjaneyāsana)
Who is all-pervading, who moves through the sky (Kumbhakāsana/Plank Pose)
Giver of nourishment and fulfillment (Knees-chest-chin)
Who has golden color brilliance (Bhujangāsana)
The giver of light with infinite number of rays (Adho Mukha Śvanāsana)
The son of Aditi, the cosmic divine mother (Anjaneyāsana)
One who is responsible for life (Uttanāsana)
Worthy of praise and glory (Urdhva Hastāsana)
Giver of wisdom and cosmic illumination (Samasthitih)

Sūrya Namaskar prepares the muscles, blood flow, the heart and the soul for any form of Yoga practice. It brings the practitioner to the HERE AND NOW, and keeps him there. It is the first step to a (moving) meditation and sets the tone and rhythm for any practice that follows.

There are many different variations of Sūrya Namaskar, some say as many as regions in India. Definitely as many as there are different schools of Yoga.

We will take a closer look at two variations: the first one has its roots in Ashtanga Yoga and is classically practiced in Vinyasa Yoga as well. It is a more vigorous Sūrya Namaskar. Sometimes it is referred to as the “Mysore” variation of Sūrya Namaskar A.

The second one comes from the South of India, and is, in some schools of Yoga, referred to as Chandra Namaskar (Moon Salutation), due to its more mellow sequence; in the West it is often practiced in Yin classes.

Sūrya Namaskar A

Samasthitih (Tadāsana with hands in Anjali Mudra)

Urdhva Hastāsana (Raised Arms)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Ardha Uttanāsana (Halfway Lift)

Kumbhakāsana (Plank Pose)

Chaturanga Dandāsana (Plank Pose with bent elbows, modification with knees down)

Urdhva Mukha Śvānāsana (Upward Facing Dog)/ or Bhujangāsana (Cobra Pose)

Adho Mukha Śvānāsana (Downward Facing Dog)

Transition to the front of the mat (step or jump)

Ardha Uttanāsana (Halfway Lift)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Urdhva Hastāsana (Raised Arms)

Samasthitih (Tadāsana with hands in Anjali Mudra)

Sūrya Namaskar/ Chandra Namaskar

Samasthitih (Tadasana with hands in Anjali Mudra)

Urdhva Hastāsana (Raised Arms)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Ardha Uttanāsana (Halfway Lift)

Anjaneyāsana left side (step right foot back)

Bālāsana (Child's Pose, knees parallel)

Bitilāsana (Cow Pose)

Anjaneyāsana right side (right foot forward)

Ardha Uttanāsana (Halfway Lift)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Urdhva Hastāsana (Raised Arms)

Samasthitih (Tadāsana with hands in Anjali Mudra)

If Sūrya Namaskar A is not practiced exclusively, but part of a Vinyasa sequence, it is followed by Sūrya Namaskar B.

Here is a classic variation:

Sūrya Namaskar B

Tadāsana (Mountain Pose)

Utkatāsana (Chair Pose)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Ardha Uttanāsana (Halfway Lift)

Kumbhakāsana (Plank Pose)

Chaturanga Dandāsana (lower halfway from Plank)

Urdhva Mukha Śvānāsana (Upward Facing Dog) or Bhujangāsana (Cobra)

Adho Mukha Śvānāsana (Downward Facing Dog)

Virabhadrāsana 1 (Warrior 1) right side

Kumbhakāsana (Plank Pose)

Chaturanga Dandāsana (lower halfway from Plank)

Urdhva Mukha Śvānāsana (Upward Facing Dog) or Bhujangāsana (Cobra)

Adho Mukha Śvānāsana (Downward Facing Dog)

Virabhadrāsana 1 (Warrior 1) left side

Kumbhakāsana (Plank Pose)

Chaturanga Dandāsana (lower halfway from Plank)

Urdhva Mukha Śvānāsana (Upward Facing Dog) or Bhujangāsana (Cobra)

Adho Mukha Śvānāsana (Downward Facing Dog)

Utkatāsana (Chair Pose)

Tadāsana (Mountain Pose)

These are classic examples. There are many other variations and many ways to get creative with Sun Salutations. If not practiced exclusively, they always have the same place in a sequence: directly after Centering and Warm Up, before Standing Balances, they set the rhythm and tone for practice and further warm the body up to prepare it for longer holds and/or more challenging poses.

“The sun is a daily reminder that we too can rise again from the
darkness, that we too can shine our own light.”

— S. Ajna

Lessons 15, 16 & 17

Review Sheet

1. What category of poses opens chest and shoulders, where habitually a lot of physical tension is found due to stress and habitual patterns? Name the pose category and one pose example with its original Sanskrit name and the English pose name:

2. Describe a major benefit of a twist. Instruct a twist of your choice with no more than three cues:

3. Translate the following Sanskrit terms into English:

Sūrya Namaskar =

Sādhanā =

Chandra Namaskar =

4. Why are there, traditionally, 12 poses in a Sūrya Namaskar?



Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next 😊

Lesson 18:

The Philosophy of Sāṅkhya

Including the Six Darśanas

The Sanskrit word Sāṅkhya means “number” or “enumeration”.

Sāṅkhya is one of the six darśanas, the six classic schools of Indian philosophy.

The word darśana literally translates into “sight”, “vision” and can be interpreted as “way of viewing the world”.

There are six darśanas, six orthodox schools of Hindu Philosophy; and they are still taught in traditional Indian schools:

- Sāṅkhya => distinction between consciousness and nature, written by the Sage Kapila
- Yoga => Control of the mind which enables the distinction between consciousness and nature, written by the Sage Patanjali
- Nyāya => Methods of investigating truth or reality, a logic-system based on meta-physics, written by the Sage Gautama
- Vaiśeshika => distinction of different substances, atomic theory and the universe, written by the Sage Kanāda
- Pūrva Mīmāṃsā => pūrva means prior and mīmāṃsā means reflection; this text is an interpretation of the earliest texts of the Vedas and has had significant influence on Hindu Laws. Written by the Sage Jaimini
- Vedānta or Uttara Mīmāṃsā => Vedanta literally means “end of the Vedas”, utttara mīmāṃsā translates into posterior reflection; it focusses on the Upanishads, and the discussion of the nature of Brahman (God), written by the Sage Bādarāyana

Sāṅkhya

It is a dualist philosophy- it perceives the world being made of two elements:

1. Prakṛti = Matter; Gross Body and Subtle Body
2. Puruṣa (Puruṣa) = Consciousness, Soul; separate from Gross and Subtle Body

The Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali are based upon Sāṅkhya philosophy.

In this (Yogic) belief system, the Soul or consciousness, is a separate entity from the gross material body. This is called Puruṣa (Puruṣa).

The Gross and Subtle Body are both made of matter/Prakṛti.

This is important, because it forms the understanding of the Self/ātman in Yoga Philosophy: The Gross Body has the brain, the Subtle Body has the mind. The Self (Consciousness, ātman) is separate to both of them.

See p13 Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali – Representation of Consciousness, Subtle Body and Gross Body.

With the realization that the Self is distinct from the mind, and, by practicing Patanjali's Yoga, one will eventually be freed from the miseries that come from attachment with mind and body. This freedom is called mokṣa (mokṣa) in Sanskrit.

Puruṣa (Puruṣa):

All Vedic texts are based upon logic and thoroughly explained.

There are several explanations in Sāṅkhya as well as in the Yoga Sūtras that determine the existence of the Soul as different from the mind and body.

One of these is the principle that any given combination of elements exists for a purpose other than itself. Example: a chair has multiple components (seat, back support, legs, etc); it exists for someone other than itself => a chair cannot sit on itself! (see p15 Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali). This is true for any object in the universe. Conclusively, our sense organs cannot sense themselves – it is the soul that experiences things through the sense organs! Following this logic, the mind cannot sense or experience itself – it is experienced by the Soul and exists for the purpose of the Soul.

Where does the Soul reside in the body?

According to the Upanishads and Ayurveda, the Soul resides in the “hrt” = the heart region.

“Hrt” can also be translated as brain (which is the “container” of the mind, with its thoughts and emotions). Scholars aren’t conclusive on where the Soul resides – in the heart or the brain region, but have the common understanding that the Soul/Self is different from the Gross Body and Subtle Body (remember: the Self is separate from the Mind => we are not our thoughts, basic understanding of all Yoga Philosophy and practice).

Prakrti

Prakrti is composed of three Gunas.

The word “guna” can be translated as ingredient or quality. The model of the three Gunas in Yoga Philosophy is used to understand natural objects, beings or occurrences. According to Sāṅkhya, every being carries all three Gunas in it, and by practicing Yoga, a person can achieve balance and harmony of the three.

The three Gunas are:

1. Sattva (purity, light; conducive to knowledge and needed on the path of self-realization => ILLUMINATION)

Example: being harmonic and peaceful, one is considered sattvic. The sattvic mind experiences understanding and healthy attitudes.

2. Rajas (passion, birth; that which is moving and therefor needed for physical energy => MOVEMENT)

Example: being anxious, one is considered rajasic. The rajasic mind motivates change, both positive and negative.

3. Tamas (heavy, negating movement, needed for stability => STABILITY)

Example: being destructive, one is considered tamasic. The tamasic mind promotes stability but can also lead to stagnation.

Due to mentality, circumstances and other influences, a person can feel the pull of one Guna more than another – this can be brought into balance by practicing Yoga (all Eight Limbs of Yoga).

In Sāṅkhya Philosophy, Prakṛti is defined as the equilibrium state of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Purusa (Purusha) and Prakṛti

Purusa (Purusha) is the originator of action, and Prakṛti is the performer.

The Soul performs action in the form of initiating the mind. Subsequently, the mind and body carry out the actions initiated by the Soul. In “Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali” by B. Ravikanth, the author likens this to the analogy of a car: while accelerating, the person driving the car only pushes the accelerator, while the actual increase in speed is brought about by the car’s machinery and fuel. Here, the person acts as the Soul and the car acts as the Mind.

This is important to understand, so that the Yogī can work on his or her power of discernment (viveka): with enhanced discernment, the Yogī can differentiate between the consciousness (purusha), which is the true Self, and the mind (citta).

It is Purusha, the Self, that experiences the perceptions conveyed by the mind.

When perceiving something external, the sensory input travels from the gross sense organs to the physical brain. From there it is passed on to the subtle sense organs and the mind. When the mind has perceived sensory input, the Soul (purusha) will receive and store the input/information. One is then “aware”, “conscious” of said input/information => consciousness, awareness itself.

Therefore it can be said, that consciousness (purusha) is indivisible; it is different from nature and its elements. Whereas everything we experience is made of matter (prakrti) and is made of a combination of the three elements Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Consciousness (the Self, ātman) is not the same as the mind (citta), since our thoughts, emotions and memories are all formed from the nature or matter of things.

Distinguishing purusha and prakrti means distinguishing consciousness (the self) from the mind (nature) and leads to liberation (moksha).



“Freedom is a state of mind.”

— Unknown

Lesson 19:

Intro to Ayurveda

Including Dosha Quiz

Ayurveda is an ancient medical system originating in India over 5,000 years ago. It is, in fact, the oldest documented holistic health care system.

The Sanskrit term Ayurveda consists of two words:

Ayur, meaning “life” or “longevity” and

Veda, meaning “knowledge” or sometimes translated as “science”

Ayurveda can be translated as “knowledge of life” or “science of life”.

Ayurveda was first mentioned in the Vedas. It is sometimes referred to as Upaveda (sub section or sub text) of Atharva Veda, the fourth book of the Vedas.

Both, Yoga Philosophy and Ayurveda state that the body and mind are interconnected. The Ayurvedic healing principles are partly based upon the idea that the mind is strong enough to heal the body.

According to Ayurveda, the body is a combination of three dosas (doshas).

- Vāta Dosa (Dosha)
- Pitta Dosa (Dosha)
- Kapha Dosa (Dosha)

Every person has one dosha (lit. “fault” or “disease” but in the context usually translated as “bio-element”) that is more dominant than the others, depending on the natural constitution, called Prakrti (=nature).

Each Dosha is derived from the five gross elements of nature, called panchamahabhuta:

- Ākāśa = space
- Vāyu = air
- Agni/Tejas = fire
- Apas/Jala = water
- Prithvi/Bhudevi = earth

(note that in Buddhism, there are only four elements, Ākāśa/space being left out)

Vata is a combination of air and ether.

Vata Dosa (Dosha) controls movements in the body, such as blood flow, digestion and breath. Since Kapha Dosha and Pitta Dosha can't move without it, it is sometimes referred to as the primary dosha.

It is dry, light, cold and always changing.

If Vata is predominant, it can show up in creative energy and liveliness as well as sensitive digestion.

To keep Vata Dosa balanced, one should keep the body warm, eat regularly and exercise balanced with a focus on balance and flexibility. Yoga āsanās to support Vata Dosa are, for example, Vrksāsana (Tree Pose), Virabhadhrāsana (Warrior Pose) and Śavāsana (Corpse Pose). Prānāyāma practices that support balance are helpful for Vata dominant bodies or seasons, such as Sama Vr̥tti and Anulom Vilom.

Pitta is made of water and fire.

Pitta Dosha controls the metabolic system, temperature and transformations of the body and the mind.

The main characteristics of Pitta Dosha are hot, intense, liquid. Pitta dominance shows up in the form of a good digestion, a strong appetite, strong will and determination.

To keep Pitta Dosha balanced, it is recommended to eat cooling and grounding foods, such as rice and cucumber.

Although people with Pitta dominance are usually drawn to Yoga āsana practices that build heat, such as Ashtanga or Vinyasa, it is more beneficial to practice Candra (Chandra) Namaskar and more Yin-oriented styles for balance. Shitali, a “cooling” prānāyāma is also recommended: during open mouth- inhalations, the tongue is rolled and rests lightly at the top of the mouth, exhalations are done through the nose. If one is unable to roll their tongue, a variation of this prānāyāma, Sitali, can be practiced: open mouth-inhalation through the teeth, with the tongue floating just behind the teeth, exhalation through the nose.

Kapha Dosa (Dosha) is a combination of water and earth.

Kapha Dosha controls recovery from illnesses and creation of new cells. Its nature is heavy and damp. Its characteristics manifest in people as calm, grounded and sensual. To counterbalance the earthy and watery nature of Kapha Dosha, āsana practices that strengthen the air element are recommended, such as Surya Namaskar. Prānāyāma practices that build inner heat are beneficial for Kapha Dosha, such as Ujjayi.

The Doshas are predominant in people, but also in nature. Each season has a dominant Dosha.

- Vata season: from late fall to early winter
 - Weather turns cold, winds blow, earth becomes dry => especially in Vata dominant people resulting in dry skin, irregular digestion, lightheadedness. Vata Doshas perceive this season as cold and uncomfortable and benefit from warming foods and activities.
- Kapha season: from the coldest part of winter into spring
 - From cold, frigid winter days, frozen earth to melting snow => in Kapha dominant people leading to dense energy, slow digestion, big appetite. Kapha Doshas often feel stagnant during this season and benefit from warming foods and activities.
- Pitta season: from late spring to early fall
 - Hot weather, that turns only slightly moist towards the end of the season, that brings change => Pitta Doshas will feel the heat of the season as uncomfortable and overwhelming and benefit from cooling foods and activities.

Both, Ayurveda and Yoga aim to create perfect health by creating balance between body, mind and spirit.

“You are the universe experiencing itself.”

— Alan Watts

Lessons 18 & 19

Review Sheet

1. What is Sāṅkhya Philosophy – in one sentence?

2. What role does Sāṅkhya play in Yoga Philosophy/in the Yogic belief system:

3. Translate the following Sanskrit terms into English:

- Prakṛti =
- Puruṣa =
- Ātman =
- Mokṣa =

4. Pair each Guna with their respective quality:

Rajas	Illumination
Tamas	Movement
Sattva	Stability

5. What is Ayurveda, and what is the literal translation of the term?

Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next ☺

Guidelines for Determining Your Constitution

Instructions: To determine your constitution it is best to fill out the chart twice. First, base your choices on what is most consistent over a long period of your life (your prakruti), then fill it out a second time responding to how you have been feeling more recently (your vikruti). Sometimes it helps to have a friend ask you the questions and fill in the chart for you, as they may have insight (and impartiality) to offer. After finishing the chart each time, add up the number of marks under vata, pitta and kapha.

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This will help you discover your own ratio of doshas in your prakruti and vikruti. Most people will have one dosha predominant, a few will have two doshas approximately equal and even fewer will have all three doshas in equal proportion. For instance, if your vikruti shows more pitta than your prakruti, you will want to follow a pitta-soothing regimen to try and bring your vikruti back into balance with your prakruti. If your prakruti and vikruti seem about the same, then you would choose the regimen of your strongest dosha.

OBSERVATIONS	V	P	K	VATA	PITTA	KAPHA
Body size	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slim	Medium	Large
Body weight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Low	Medium	Overweight
Chin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thin, angular	Tapering	Rounded, double
Cheeks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wrinkled, sunken	Smooth flat	Rounded, plump
Eyes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small, sunken, dry, active, black, brown, nervous	Sharp, bright, gray, green, yellow/red, sensitive to light	Big, beautiful, blue, calm, loving
Nose	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uneven shape, deviated septum	Long pointed, red nose-tip	Short rounded, button nose
Lips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dry, cracked, black/brown tinge	Red, inflamed, yellowish	Smooth, oily, pale, whitish
Teeth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stick out, big, roomy, thin gums	Medium, soft, tender gums	Healthy, white, strong gums
Skin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thin, dry, cold, rough, dark	Smooth, oily, warm, rosy	Thick, oily, cool, white, pale
Hair	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dry, brown, black, knotted, brittle, scarce	Straight, oily, blond, gray, red, bald	Thick, curly, oily, wavy, luxuriant
Nails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dry, rough, brittle, break easily	Sharp, flexible, pink, lustrous	Thick, oily, smooth, polished
Neck	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thin, tall	Medium	Big, folded
Chest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flat, sunken	Moderate	Expanded, round
Belly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thin, flat, sunken	Moderate	Big, pot-bellied
Belly-button	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Small, irregular, herniated	Oval, superficial	Big, deep, round, stretched
Hips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Slender, thin	Moderate	Heavy, big
Joints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cold, cracking	Moderate	Large, lubricated
Appetite	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irregular, scanty	Strong, unbearable	Slow but steady
Digestion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irregular, forms gas	Quick, causes burning	Prolonged, forms mucous
Taste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweet, sour, salty	Sweet, bitter, astringent	Bitter, pungent, astringent
Thirst	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Changeable	Surplus	Sparse
Elimination	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Constipation	Loose	Thick, oily, sluggish
Physical Activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hyperactive	Moderate	Slow
Mental Activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hyperactive	Moderate	Dull, slow
Emotions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Anxiety, fear, uncertainty	Anger, hate, jealousy	Calm, greedy, attachment
Faith	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Variable	Extremist	Consistent
Intellect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quick but faulty response	Accurate response	Slow, exact
Recollection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Recent good, remote poor	Distinct	Slow and sustained
Dreams	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quick, active, many, fearful	Fiery, war, violence	Lakes, snow, romantic
Sleep	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scanty, broken up, sleeplessness	Little but sound	Deep, prolonged
Speech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rapid, unclear	Sharp, penetrating	Slow, monotonous
Financial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor, spends on trifles	Spends money on luxuries	Rich, good money preserver
TOTAL						

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Lesson 20:

The Five Categories of Āsanas and their Foundations

The Parts of our Bodies Closest to Earth

We categorize yoga poses (āsanas) into five categories:

1. Standing Poses
2. Forward Bends
3. Twists
4. Backbends
5. Inversions

To gain a deeper understanding of healthy alignment, we need to understand what the foundation in each Pose is – which part (parts) of our body is closest to earth, which part “carries” the weight of the pose?

Alignment always happens from the ground up – from the foundation, the part that is closest to earth, up.

This part, the foundation, is the “stability” part in a pose. With a stable foundation, expansion and lightness can be achieved in other parts of the body. (Remember: there is effort and ease, or muscular tension and expansion in any given pose).

We’ll look at each category, with one exemplary pose:

Standing Poses

The feet are the foundation in Standing Poses. Their proper position and muscle energy is crucial for the poses.

Example Warrior 2 (Virabhadrasana 2): press evenly into the front and back foot (the back foot, due to its outer rotation, tends to “fall in” so that the outside edge of the back foot lifts off the ground); bring weight into the outside edge of the back foot and pull the inner ankle in and up. Keep all ten toes light.

Keep this muscle energy from the ground up, drawing the inner thighs together. With this stability in the feet and legs, you can expand from your bellybutton up towards the crown of the head and out towards the fingertips.

Forward Bends

Here it depends on if it is a Standing Forward Bend (then the feet would be the foundation) or a Seated Forward Bend (then the sitting bones and the backside of the legs build the foundation).

Example Seated Forward Bend (Paschimottanāsana): widen your sitting bones and extend your legs out in front of you. Firm your core and extend from your bellybutton towards the crown of the head. Keep that length and draw from the bellybutton towards the thighs; reach the chest and heart forward towards the front of the room.

Twists

Dependent on whether it is a Standing Twist (the feet would be the foundation), a Seated Twist (the sitting bones build the foundation) or a Supine Twist (the back body is the foundation).

Example Twisted Chair Pose (Parivrtta Utkattāsana): root your feet; make your legs strong and lengthen the spine towards the crown of the head; keep the length and twist to the right (option to bring left forearm down on thighs and draw right elbow back or bring hands together in Anjali Mudra)

Backbends

Based upon the nature of the backbend, the foundation could be the front body, as in Cobra Pose (Bhujangāsana) – here the tops of the feet, the front of the legs and hips build the foundation. In Camel Pose (Ushtrāsana) the tops of the feet, or curled-under toes, together with the shins, build the foundation: press the tops of the feet (or the toes) into the ground and distribute your weight evenly between your feet and knees; firm your belly, knit your ribs down and lengthen your spine; the gaze moves up while the tips of the ears draw back; option to bring arms back (to heels or blocks) while length in the lower spine is maintained.

Inversions

In Viparīta Karani (supine, legs up), the back body builds the foundation, from the backs of the shoulders down to the tailbone. In Shoulderstand (Salamba Sarvāṅgāsana), the shoulders (not the neck!) build the foundation together with the triceps: on your back, draw your knees up and lift your hips off the ground; extend your legs towards the ceiling and place your hands supportively onto your back; draw your shoulders towards each other and press firmly into the shoulders and triceps; firm your core and buttocks, so that you can draw the thighs back; keep your neck soft.

All poses (āsanas) are built from the ground up, meaning from their foundation. It is helpful to identify the strong points in anyone's foundation first, before looking for possible adjustments. And it is vital to keep in mind that EVERY BODY IS DIFFERENT and therefore, different adjustments might be useful to different people. To quote Leslie Kaminoff: "āsanas don't have alignment, people have alignment!"

“Like a tree, you have to find your roots,
and then you can bend in the wind.”

— Angela Farmer

Lesson 21:

Misery and its Elimination in the Yoga Sūtras

Chapter 2/Sādhanapādah, Sūtras 2.15 – 2.26

While Chapter 1 of the Yoga Sūtras, Samādhipādah, focusses on the workings of the mind, Chapter 2 is dedicated to the practice of Yoga.

It is in Chapter 2, Sādhanapādah, that Patanjali introduces the 8 limbs of Yoga (āsana being the third limb).

However, before he presents the 8 limbs of Yoga as a systematic concept to achieve liberation, he gives a detailed analysis about what could be in the student's way.

According to Patanjali, there are four different ways we experience misery:

- Parināmadukha = Misery due to change. The nature of everything is change, yet this change often causes misery and distress (for example seasonal change, aging, changes of organizational matter like government etc.)
- Tāpadukha = Misery due to hardship and anxiety that comes with achieving and maintaining objects of pleasure. This form of misery is in direct reference to the attachment we establish to our achievements and the hardship we are willing to take on in order to keep said achievements. For example we work hard to buy a nice house and then harder to maintain it.
- Samskāradukha = Misery due to impressions of attachment and longing. Here, the memories of pleasures or achievements are the cause for misery or distress: for example the memory of a certain period in one's life that seemed very enjoyable, like the student years. Or the memory of a wonderful vacation.
- Misery due to the conflicting operations of the gunas. We have learned that the three gunas are always present in combination, yet not necessarily balanced. Sattva (ILLUMINATION) which represents purity and light, always comes with Rajas (MOVEMENT) and Tamas (STABILITY).

The logical conclusion of this is, that every event, no matter how much the joy, causes pain or misery of some sort.

The pain of the event changing (for example, your child growing up and moving out of the house), is called Parināmadukha.

The misery of working long into the retirement years to support your child's education even after he or she left the house, is called Tāpadukha.

The (emotional) pain of longing back for the days where your child was still living at home, the void that might be left, is called Samskāradukha.

And finally the misery that the three ever conflicting gunas bring with them, on a seasonal or situational basis (for example said child visits from college, and it is such a joy to have him or her home, but at the same time a big distress to have the rhythm of the daily life interrupted, to have the energy of a young adult bring the gunas in the house in disarray!).

The important point is that the ordinary person sees only the pleasures and, without having knowledge of the miseries that come with it, has no means to manage expectations and avoid future misery.

The Yogi has at this point in the Sūtras already learned the power of discernment (Viveka) and can now pursue liberation from all these miseries through discriminating wisdom.

While past miseries cannot be changed, future miseries should be avoided.

Sūtra 2.16

heyam dukhamanāgatam = misery that has not yet come should be avoided

Now that Patanjali has analyzed and explained the causes of misery, he moves on – past miseries only served to gain understanding, but cannot be changed. Present miseries also cannot be changed. The only control one has is the one of future actions and reactions.

He then determines that the ātman (Self, Soul) remains constant, while the world around it with its objects is ever changing. The ātman (Self, Soul) is described as the “seer” – the one that sees, perceives objects, nature etc.

In Sanskrit, the seer is called drastā (drashtaa).

The objects of the senses, and even the sense organs themselves (including the mind = citta) are what are making up the universe and are called the “seen”, called drśya in Sanskrit.

This is important, because it leads us to a solution of the problem, elimination of misery:

Sūtra 2.25

Tadabhāvātsamyogābhāvo hānam taddrśeh kaivalyam

The absence of the union (of the seer and seen) results from the absence of that (ignorance). That (cessation is) the isolation of the seer.

So, by discriminating between the seer and the seen, the Yogī can isolate consciousness itself; he or she no longer identifies with the mind or objects of the senses. The ātman is identified as awareness, as consciousness itself.

(The self is not the mind with its thoughts, the self is not the body with its limitations).

This true independence is called kaivalya in Sanskrit (lit. translation: solitude, detachment) and is the ultimate goal of Raja Yoga (the Yogic practice as described by Patanjali, the Yogic practice that includes all 8 limbs of Yoga).

Patanjali concludes that it is through Viveka (discriminating knowledge, sometimes referred to as “right knowledge”), that the student of Yoga can achieve liberation.

It is through viveka that control over the mind can be achieved, and with that, the mind can be free from attachments (to objects, to status etc), free from wanting (since it is recognized that no attachments are necessary, that the Self is already complete) => this leads the practitioner to freedom (moksha).

“The root of all suffering is attachment.”

— Gautama Buddha

Lesson 22:

Sequencing 101

Why Sequencing (the Order in which Poses are Set Up) is Important

From a physical aspect, the way a sequence is set up ideally prepares the body for practice.

A thorough warm up is key to keep the body safe. It also should be geared to the practice planned ahead: are there backbends planned – then hip opening is crucial. If arm balances and/or inversions are planned, the shoulders and chest have to be carefully warmed up => when planning a sequence, ask yourself what needs to be open (stretched, lengthened), and what needs to be stable (strengthened).

For the Energy Body, a sequence should balance the energies in the body (such as contraction and expansion, upward and downward), so that there is even distribution of energy in the body once the student comes into Savāsana.

This is best done by creating a cycle, from “cool, calm” to “warm, hot” and back to “cool, calm”.

The General Order of a Sequence

As a guideline, the following order can be used

1. Welcome & Centering
2. Warm Up
3. Sūrya Namaskar/Chandra Namaskar
4. Standing Poses
5. Prone Poses
6. Seated Poses
7. Supine Poses

8. Cool Down

9. Śavāsana

Note that No 5 and 6 are interchangeable, depending on the Pose transitions.

A well-rounded sequence guides the students from one pose to another with an equal amount of steadiness and ease (this is called sthiram sukham āsanam in Sanskrit).

Dependent on the class format, one part might get more focus than another one: in a Vinyasa sequence, the “warm, hot” part (Sūrya Namaskar, Standing Poses, Prone Poses) is more dominant, whereas in a Gentle or Yin class, the “cool, calm” part (Seated Poses, Supine Poses, Cool Down) gets more attention.

This is also in reference to the Yin and Yang, or Sūrya (Sun) and Chandra (Moon) energies.

The Pacing

It is important to match the pacing to the format of the class: if it is a Vinyasa class, it might be a tad faster (although traditional Vinyasa classes aren't fast-paced: they are paced “one breath, one movement in the rhythm of the Ujjayi breath, where the inhalation is approx. a six-count, and the exhalation an eight-count breath).

For a Gentle Yoga, Restorative or Yin Class, “slowing down” is part of the practice -that said, all but the Restorative practice should still have some rhythm to it in order to enable a moving meditation (keep the mind focused on movement and breath, so that it won't be distracted by uncontrolled habitual thoughts).

Class Timing

With respect for our students' time, it is critical to begin and end class as scheduled.

Therefore, be at least ten minutes early (15 minutes would be better), so that you can prepare the room (set up props that will be needed for that class in the front of the room, so that incoming students know what they will need), and greet the student (check in about well-being).

The Centering part of the class should be appropriate for the class format and class level, as well as length (60 or 75 minutes). For example, if you are teaching a Vinyasa class, your students came to move, alas the centering should not take longer than two minutes. If you are teaching a

Restorative class, the Centering might take up five minutes. In general, newer students are more comfortable with a shorter Centering and a seasoned group of students might benefit from a longer Centering.

Also dependent on class format and timing is the warm up and cool-down phase of class: it should have enough space and there should always be enough time for Savāsana (for the beginning students that might be 2 minutes, for the seasoned group 5-10 minutes, or longer if the class format allows).

Planning a Sequence Based on a Theme

There are many ways to bring a theme into a class.

It could be as simple as the change of season: to celebrate and invite the Spring, a “twisty” sequence to wring out the old and invite the new for example.

Or it could be based on a “quote”: “The music is not in the notes, but in the silence in between.” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart => students could be invited to steer their focus to the transition of the poses rather than the poses themselves.

Or it might be simply to shine attention on a particular quality of a certain set of poses: heart-opening for backbends, for example.

A theme is best introduced in the beginning of class, during centering, in a clear and concise way. It should be of relevance for the students regarding both, the emotional quality of the theme and the poses that were chosen to support it. A nice way to invite the students to take something with them, off the mat and into their lives, is to come back to the theme in Savāsana.

Sequencing to a “Peak Pose”

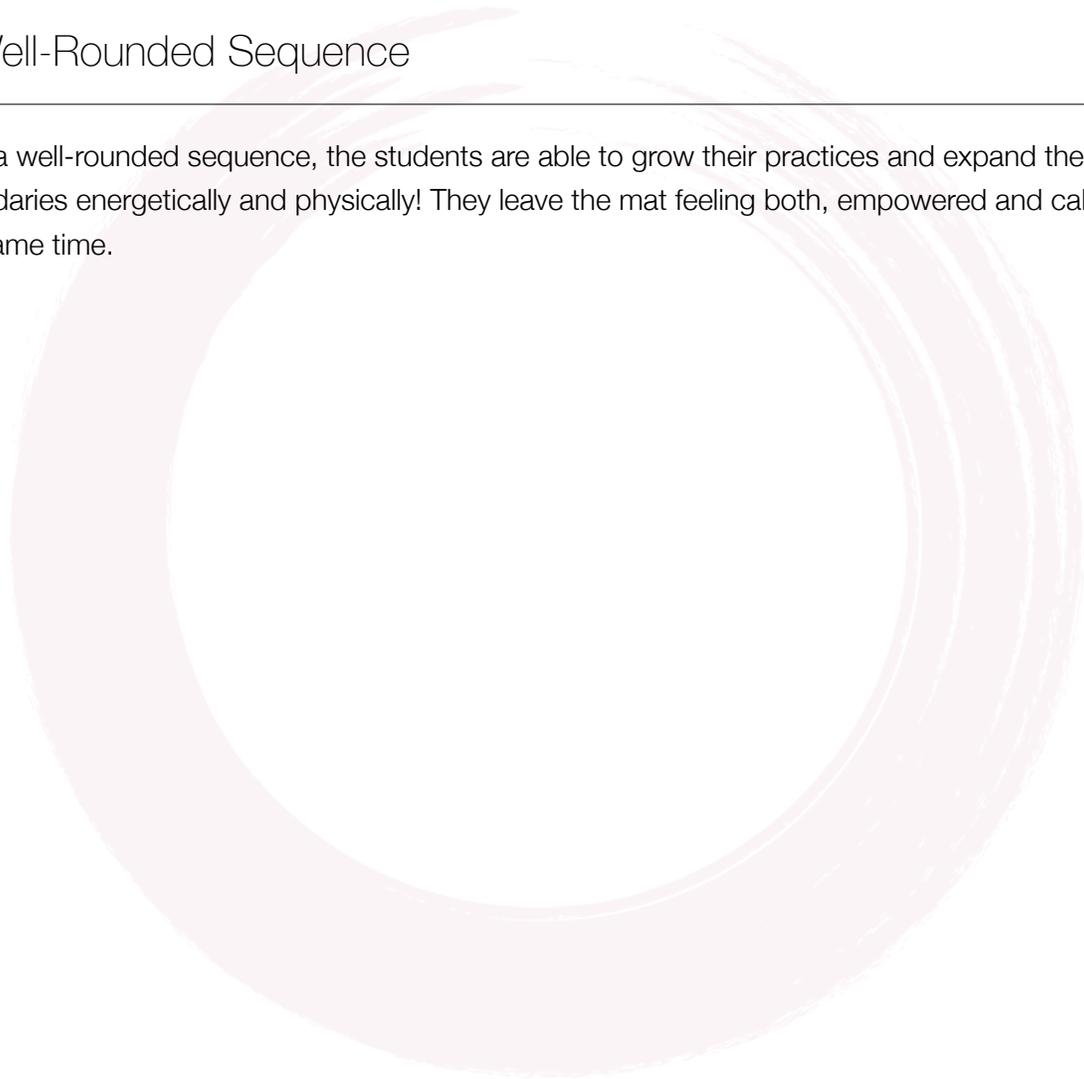
A peak pose is a (sometimes more advanced) pose that builds the peak of a class, like, for example, Ushtrāsana (Camel Pose). When sequencing to a peak pose, the following questions might affect the sequencing strategy:

- What are SOME common challenges in this posture?
- What parts of the body need to be opened and prepared?
- What are the key actions that can be offered to be comfortable in the pose?

- What is the meaning (lineage, why, etc) of the pose and what are its repeating shapes?
- Do the students know this pose already, but need to be prepared for it?
- If so, is there a new refinement or nuance that could be presented?
- Or is this pose new to a majority in the room?

A Well-Rounded Sequence

With a well-rounded sequence, the students are able to grow their practices and expand their boundaries energetically and physically! They leave the mat feeling both, empowered and calm at the same time.



“Life is a balance between holding on and letting go.”
— Rumi

Lesson 23:

Pose Classifications and their Benefits:

Inversions

By definition, any āsana in which the heart is at a higher level than the head is an inversion. This means, that one can practice inversions without being completely upside down!

Which āsanās can we think of that classify as inversions:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Inversions reverse the effects of gravity and have a revitalizing effect. On a physical level, they reverse the normal flow of blood and lymph and strengthen the upper body. Mentally, they increase focus and concentration and often create a sense of calmness.

Below is an overview of some inversions, complete with their meanings.

Viparīta Karani – Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose

Viparīta means “inverted” or “reversed” and karani means “doing” or “making”. So, basically, any inversion could be named Viparīta Karani! It is used for an āsana we know as “Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose”, which can be practiced with the legs against a wall or in the middle of a room.

Physically, it relieves fatigue in the legs and feet and increases circulation.

As a restorative āsana, it has a calming effect on the mind, activating the Para-Sympathetic Nervous System (PNS), the part of the Autonomous Nervous System responsible for relaxation.

- Lie down on your back
- Place a folded blanket underneath your low back, so that you feel at ease
- Lift your legs towards the ceiling, keeping the knees soft

Sarvāṅgāsana – Shoulderstand

Sarva means “all”, anga means “limb” and āsana “pose”.

Sarvaṅgāsana stretches and strengthens the neck, shoulders and rhomboids. Like all inversions, it improves circulation and calms the mind.

- Lie on your back, placing the tops of your shoulders on a folded blanket
- Bend your knees
- As you lift your hips, place your hands onto your back for support
- Extend your legs up

From Sarvangāsana, the practitioner can transition to Halāsana – Plow Pose (page 97 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

Śīrsāsana (Shīrshāsana) – Headstand

(page 59 in The Yoga Anatomy Coloring Book by Kelly Solloway)

Śīrsa (shīrsha) means “head” and āsana means “pose”.

This āsana strengthens the back, arms, legs and abdominals.

While it has a calming effect on the mind, like all inversions, it is also highly empowering.

- Interlace your fingers and bring the back of the head to the heel of the hands
- With your knees bent, walk your feet in as close as you can
- Activate your core and draw knees towards chest, lift feet off the ground
- Make your shoulders strong, so that can you extend your legs

A supported version against the wall with the use of six blocks can be a wonderful and safe way to make first contact with this āsana:

- Place two sets of three blocks against the wall, roughly shoulder width
- Place your shoulders on the blocks, hands on the floor (head dangles in between)
- With your knees bent, walk your feet in until your back touches the wall
- Activate your core and lift your feet off the ground

The space below is for your own notes, drawings, etc 😊





“When the world turns upside down, the best thing to do
is to turn right along with it.”
— Mary Poppins

Lessons 20, 21, 22 & 23

Review Sheet

1. What are the four different ways we experience misery, according to Patanjali (English description suffices)? Give a real life example for one of them.

2. What is the meaning of Sūtra 2.16 heyam dukhamanāgatam?

3. In which order would the following poses go into a sequence – match the poses with the right numbers:

Supine Twist	4
Warrior 2	3
Seated Forward Fold	2
Śavāsana	1

4. What is an inversion? Give one example, and 1-3 verbal cues to guide your students in this pose:



Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next ☺

Lesson 24:

The Principles of Observation and Demonstration

Observation

For optimal support and growth of the practices of students, thorough observation is crucial. By careful observation, teachers can teach to what they see: rather than giving out generalized cues that might not apply (maybe all the students are already doing what is cued), constructive cues can be given.

Not only is this important to help students grow body awareness, it also helps choose verbal cues that respond individually.

There are many different alignment cues that can be offered in any given pose, and it is important to note that they can never be all offered at the same time. Therefore, offering specific instruction, based on observation, is essential to keep students safe and create a balance between effort and ease: *sthiram sūkham āsanam* – steady and easeful, in every pose!

Teaching to a group, the teacher has a limited amount of time in any given pose to observe and analyse. It is by training the eyes to pick up on detail that teachers can truly teach to what they see. Some helpful guidance points to observe successfully are:

- Observation of the class as a whole to assess the harmony and balance.
- Observation of the breath and facial expressions.
- Observation of the foundation – every pose is built from the ground up.
- Look for the good – observation of what's strong and steady already, possibly with the intent to invite lesser used muscles to join the effort or to give positive feedback.

- Observation of the students' responses to verbal cues: did the instruction land? If it is important enough to speak it, it's important to make sure the instruction was processed and implemented, to the best of the student's ability (not ours!).

Demonstration

Demonstrations give students a visual impression of the posture, key action or refinement that is instructed. They are part of what might set a teacher who 'teaches' apart from a teacher who 'leads' classes. When used effectively, demonstrations can be an invaluable tool for helping students progress in their practice.

If a demonstration is part of the flow in class (meaning the teacher doesn't interrupt the class, but moves with the students), it is helpful to keep eye contact and demonstrate facing the room. This applies for many poses where students don't need a side-view (like for example in Dancer's Pose), but benefit from demonstration, words and body language at the same time. For example in Warrior 1: "draw your low belly in and up, now lift from the chest" – verbal cue while demonstrating and pointing the movement out (hand points to chest while chest lifts). This is best done while mirroring the students, so that they can move to what they see.

Demonstrations are also helpful to show and explain the concept of 'balanced action': which body parts are the foundation of the pose, where to strengthen and where to lengthen. This steers the students' focus on safe alignment rather than a "perfect" result, a "perfect pose" and helps to train body awareness.

Some demonstration principles are:

- Demonstration is about "how to". How to do a pose, refine a pose, transition between poses, use a prop, etc.
- Demonstrations are an opportunity to introduce the pose name (potentially in English and Sanskrit).
- It is essential to be clearly visible for all students in the room/space.
- Eye contact is helpful to connect; gestures can direct the attention to the body part or parts that are in focus in any given demonstration.
- If applicable, demoing while facing the room, mirroring the students, helps students to copy movements better. This is especially helpful in pose transitions.

A general point for observations and demonstrations to be answered is, what needs to be strong in this pose, so that expansion becomes possible – both observations and resulting verbal cues, and demonstrations help enhance the students' understanding of the anatomy of a pose.



"Your work is your love made visible."
— Kahlil Gibran

Lesson 25:

Support & Intelligent Cueing

Different Ways to Support Students in their Yoga Āsana Practice

Support is a vital and integral part of teaching yoga. It begins with the emotional aspect of support – to hold space for the students, regardless in what state of mind they might come to their mat. It begins with a welcome that is personal and signals the students that they are seen and their presence is valued. It begins with listening.

Observe – From the Foundation Up

Only with skilled observation can we as teachers support our students ideally. The first step to successful support is to observe students individually and carefully. A good starting point is the foundation in any given pose – a strong foundation helps to feel steady, and builds the baseline to expand and find ease in a pose.

The principles of alignment can be a useful tool for teachers to understand the ‘baseline’ for a posture. This baseline can look different from person to person, depending on their unique anatomy and physiology. As an example, the positioning of the hands in tabletop might be directly underneath the shoulders in one student, while another student (maybe due to particularly strong shoulders) places them further apart. Even greater differences can be found in poses that involve hip opening, notes Bernie Clark in his Book “Your Body Your Yoga: because the femoral neck-shaft angle can vary from 110 degrees to 150 degrees, triangle pose can’t possibly look the same in every student. When bone meets bone, no further “stretching” or “pushing” is possible and the student risks injury.

This means, the best support we can offer students is to observe which parts of the body are already strong, and which parts we can suggest they add for more stability – or, in anatomical terms: which muscle (or muscle group) is the agonist/prime mover in the pose, and which muscle (or muscles) can act as synergists/secondary movers. Example Utkatāsana, chair pose: the

quadriceps act as agonists and are hard at work; a supportive cue would be to invite the glutes to act as synergists and help 'carry' the pose: squeeze your buttocks, to help stabilize, so that the chest and heart can be lifted with ease.

Invite Ease – Common Areas of Tension

Another way to support students is to address common areas of tension. Physical tension, as a response to stress and/or lifestyle are often unconsciously stored in the body. An example are the shoulders: due to our lifestyles, which often involve a lot of forward and down movements, the shoulder area is a common point of tension, which transports to the surrounding neck and upper back area. A supportive cue in this case might be: "soften your shoulders, so that you can lift from your heart center with ease."

Another common point of tension is the jaw: clenching the jaw is a widespread response to stress, and it transports tension to the sides of the neck and from there down to the tops of the shoulders. There are several ways to offer support in form of targeted verbal cues: relax your jaw, roll out your jaw, smile, separate your teeth, for example.

Last, but not least, great comfort and support for students to be where they need to be in their physical practice is the willingness to share physical limitations as a teacher. By acknowledging physical limitations, and offering what modification has proven helpful, the students are invited to explore their own shapes and feel content in them.

To quote Rebekah, founder of Sama Yoga Center: "Each of our bodies is so magnificently unique, that we shouldn't be universally confined into a single shape made up of angles and lines."

And anatomy teacher Mary Richards adds: "There are no straight lines in nature."

Languaging and Cueing

After observing and listening, mindful responses can be formed, hence, intelligent cues offered.

The way students are addressed in class does not only influence their minds, but can also lead to physical responses. For example, if your voice is clear and calm during the Centering part of class, students might unconsciously respond on a physical level by relaxing their shoulders. If your voice and the choice of your words are very directive during the Centering part of class, the result might

be apprehension in those who don't know you very well yet and/or are generally more insecure => the shoulders might come up a bit.

If, on the other hand, your words aren't clear and directive during Standing Balances, students might unconsciously respond with physical insecurity/in-stability. These examples show how intelligent and conscious use of voice and words create optimal circumstances for practice.

Only What's Needed

When creating and leading a moving meditation, the goal is to keep the mind focused on the breath-movement coordination and on bodily awareness. Too many words can be distractive.

Also, every body is different and the focus should always be on the well-being of the student and NEVER on the "perfect" pose.

Observe first, then instruct only what is needed.

Active Language

Active language is used to guide with purpose and the aim to empower the student.

Examples include:

- Curl
- Wrap
- Reach
- Bend
- Extend

Passive Language

Passive language is almost never helpful in guiding āsana practices, as adding the suffix "ing" to an action word turns it into an indirect action. For example, the active quality of the instruction "press"

becomes less impactful when changed to “pressing”! Passive language might sometimes be useful in guiding meditations.

Linking Language

Linking language is used to offer a reason why to your cue, such as, “dial your toes from side to side (in runner’s stretch), SO THAT you can warm up all parts of your hamstrings, not just the middle of this muscle group.”

Unnecessary “Filler” Words

Unnecessary filler words are often unconsciously used words, such as “so”, “and then”, “good”, “like”, etc; they don’t add meaning to the instruction and distract the mind. Consciously avoiding unnecessary filler words offers space to listen and enhances the moving meditation aspect in yoga āsana practice.

“Do not listen with the intent to reply, but with the intent to understand.”

— Unknown

Lessons 24 & 25

Review Sheet

1. Name a common area of tension in the body and a supportive cue you might want to instruct:

2. Mark all the correct answers:

- Observe the foundation of students first
- All joints need to be aligned correctly in any given pose
- If a student can't go deeper on his or her own, an assist should be given
- The student's facial impression is important to evaluate their pose/practice
- The most important alignment cues for a pose must always be given
- Teach to what you see

3. Name an example for an āsana that you might want to demo in a class and explain why/what you'd like your students to see:

Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next 😊

Lesson 26:

Yin Yoga

Definition and Sequencing

Yin Yoga is a slow-paced style of Yoga in which āsanās are held for longer periods of time.

Mentally, the goal is to experience and appreciate inner silence. To meditate on awareness itself (to become aware of awareness itself).

This open monitoring meditation is often referenced to Dharmakāya. The Sanskrit word Dharmakāya can be translated as “body of truth”, dharma meaning “reality/truth” and kāya meaning “body”.

In Buddhism, Dharmakāya is one of the three bodies that make up Buddha, and is considered reality itself: the energy of everything that exists.

In Indian, Vedic tradition, Dharmakāya is seen as the ātman (the true Self).

In both schools of thought, the mind is trained on monitoring all aspects around it, without engaging, without judging (allowing thoughts to arise and melt away without getting attached to the stories they tell, practicing to quiet the commentary of the mind).

Physically, Yin Yoga targets deeper tissues and joints, with the goal of improving flexibility and motion range.

The Western method of Yin Yoga is mostly based on Paul Grilley’s teachings, who was a student of Paulie Zink’s Taoist Yoga. In this method, there is no flow element and āsanās are built and subsequently broken down without movement in between.

In India and most parts of Asia, however, Yin Yoga is practiced with a long warm-up, a slow flow to set the pacing for the mind, and to get some circulation going, followed by āsanās that are held longer (usually with the rhythm of the breath). Often, counter poses are implemented in between and the breath is a substantial part of the practice (Sama Vrtti).

Traditionally, it ends in a Yoga Nidra or Vipassanā meditation. It is usually practiced in the evening (contrary to Yang practices that are usually practiced in the morning) or during hot seasons or monsoon seasons.

Some of the many benefits of Yin Yoga are:

- Releases fascia and improves joint mobility
- Increases circulation
- Improves flexibility
- Calms and balances the mind and body

In Yin Yoga, deeper tissues and areas that encompass a joint (hips, sacrum, spine, shoulders...) are targeted.

It should be noted, that for a lot of bodies, this can only be accomplished by targeting the surrounding muscles first.

Example - 60 Minutes Yin Flow “Neck & Shoulder Love”

- Welcome: “Today we will work on the neck and shoulder area to relieve some major stress points and increase circulation”
- Centering & warm-up – 20 mins
- Flow – 15 mins

“Half” Sūrya Namaskar A (3x)

Samasthitih (Tadāsana with hands in Anjali Mudra)

Urdhva Hastāsana (Raised Arms)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Ardha Uttanāsana (Halfway Lift)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Urdhva Hastāsana (Raised Arms)

Samasthitih (Tadāsana with hands in Anjali Mudra)

Chandra Namaskar/Sūrya Namaskar A (2x)

Samasthitih (Tadāsana with hands in Anjali Mudra)

Urdhva Hastāsana (Raised Arms)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Ardha Uttanāsana (Halfway Lift)

Anjaneyāsana left side (step right foot back)

Bālāsana (Child's Pose, knees parallel)

Bitilāsana (Cow Pose)

Anjaneyāsana right side (step right foot forward)

Ardha Uttanāsana (Halfway Lift)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Urdhva Hastāsana (Raised Arms)

Samasthitih (Tadāsana with hands in Anjali Mudra)

Sūrya Namaskar B

Utkatāsana (Chair Pose)

Virabhadrāsana 1 (Warrior 1) right side (step right foot back)

Parshvottānāsana

Utkatāsana (Chair Pose)

Virabhadrāsana 1 (Warrior 1) left side (step left foot back)

Parshvottānāsana

Utkatāsana (Chair Pose)

Uttanāsana (Forward Fold)

Transition to belly

- Yin – 30 min

Sphinx Pose -3 rounds flow: lift crown of head on inhale, draw chin to chest on exhale; on last exhale, invitation to let head hang and gently draw from side to side

Prone Shoulder Stretch – right arm under, right ear to the ground/other side – 4 rounds of breath on each side

Prone Shoulder Release -3 rounds of breath: lie on belly, fists under shoulders

Child's Pose -3 rounds of breath per side: thread the needle/both sides

Vajrāsana -approx 6 rounds of breath: circle and stretch wrists, then interlace hands at low back to stretch the front of the shoulders. Stay or bow.

Sukhāsana (easy seat) -4 rounds of breath per side: eagle arm flow/both sides

Reclined cow face arms – 3 rounds of breath on each side: one hand cradles back of head, other hand to low back with palm facing out, recline

Supported Bridge Pose on hands -4 rounds of breath

-2 rounds of breath with walking legs out long to stretch front of the hips

Viparita Karani -5 rounds of breath (option to stay in stillness or invite movement/circling legs)

Supine twist in two variations: start with knees side/side and let knees fall to one side, then the other. Then draw knees to chest, bring them over to one side/other side -3 rounds of breath on each side

Happy baby or any other last pose

- Śavāsana – 10mins

Dharmakāya meditation

Take a deep breath in, hold it at the top of your lungs, sigh it all out. Come back to your natural breath.

Bring your awareness to your head. Feel your head heavy on the ground, no effort of holding it up. Feel the space between your eyebrows widening, the corners of your eyelids relax. Relax your cheeks. Relax your jaw, gently separate your teeth in your mouth and soften your lips.

Guide your attention to your shoulders, feel them heavy on the ground. Feel your arms heavy, the palms of your hands and your fingers relaxed, at ease.

Now, bring your awareness to your hips, feel them heavy on the ground. Feel your legs heavy, your heels heavy.

Move your attention to your belly. Soften the space around your bellybutton, relax your whole belly and ribcage.

Now bring your awareness to the sounds around you. Can you hear them, tell them apart, without judgment?

Shift your focus inwards and start noticing sensations and sounds of your body – maybe you can feel and hear your stomach rumbling...feel and hear your breath. You observe all this without attachment – it just “is”.

Let thoughts enter your mind, as if they would move across a tv screen, passing you by. You witness them, unattached.

Turn your attention now to awareness itself, let yourself be the witness, observing YOU, as from a bird’s perspective.

For the following three rounds of breath, repeat the following mantra in your inner mind: “I inhale and gather presence into myself, I exhale and radiate presence back out.” Inhale presence, let it fill you. Exhale presence, let it surround you.

Śavāsana.

“Yoga isn't WHAT you do. It's HOW you do what you do.”
— Bernie Clark

Lesson 27:

The Business of Yoga

Independent Contractors vs Employees

In many studios, Yoga teachers are independent contractors. In some, teachers are employees. It might be advisable to set up a business entity: LLC or INC so that business related expenses can be included in tax reports.

Insurance

Studios and most other venues have insurance. In addition to that, it is important to obtain teacher's insurance. It costs about USD 125 per year. Many studios ask to be added as additional insured.

Work Ethics

The Yamas and Niyamas are a wonderful guideline for work ethics.

Some inspiration:

- Professional boundaries with students, staff and management should be maintained.
- Śauca – appearances should be clean and presentable.
- The students' benefit is of the utmost importance. A considerable part of yoga is the aspect of community – students benefit from trying different classes and teachers, for the benefit of the community as well as for the benefit of their own practice.
- The goal of all yoga practice – to eliminate obstacles that may stand in the way of connecting with the innate sense of joy, contentment and self – can be a wonderful inspiration for teaching.

Presenting Yourself as a Teacher

- A concise bio is important to have at hand, when interviewing with yoga studios or other institutions. A good source of inspiration are bios of other teachers (can often be found on studio websites); the more clear and short it is, the better the chance that it resonates – “only what’s needed” is a helpful guideline for a successful bio.
- Social Media: Business Account(s) vs Personal
Some teachers prefer to set up separate accounts. This can be especially helpful when the personal account really is highly personal. It may also be helpful to draw students to the teacher’s classes, since the (business) account can then be used to advertise the studio and the classes. Tagging the studio widens the circle of potential viewers and supports the studio at the same time.
- Seva/Service: A charitable contribution – a nice way of giving back to community and at the same time growing community is to support a good cause.

Self-Inquiry as Inspiration for your Yoga Teacher Bio

A few questions to spark your creativity and help you get started on your personal bio:

What kind of Yoga classes do you like to take? This will help you to verbalize what kind of classes you might like to teach!

Describe your personality (can be brief – maybe think of key words to describe you)

What are your primary aims as a Yoga teacher? What are you hoping to accomplish? What is it that you would like to offer?

Where do you see yourself teaching? What is the culture of the environment you see yourself teaching in?

What style(s) would you like to teach?

What are your core values? Name 5 (out of the ones listed below, or add your own)

Responsibility, Leadership, Respect, Community, Integrity, Generosity, Space, Creativity, Grace, Dignity, Service, Support, Excellence, Mastery

Besides group classes, what are some other forms of teaching/teaching venues that might serve? (series, private lessons, workshops, trainings, work places, schools, libraries...)

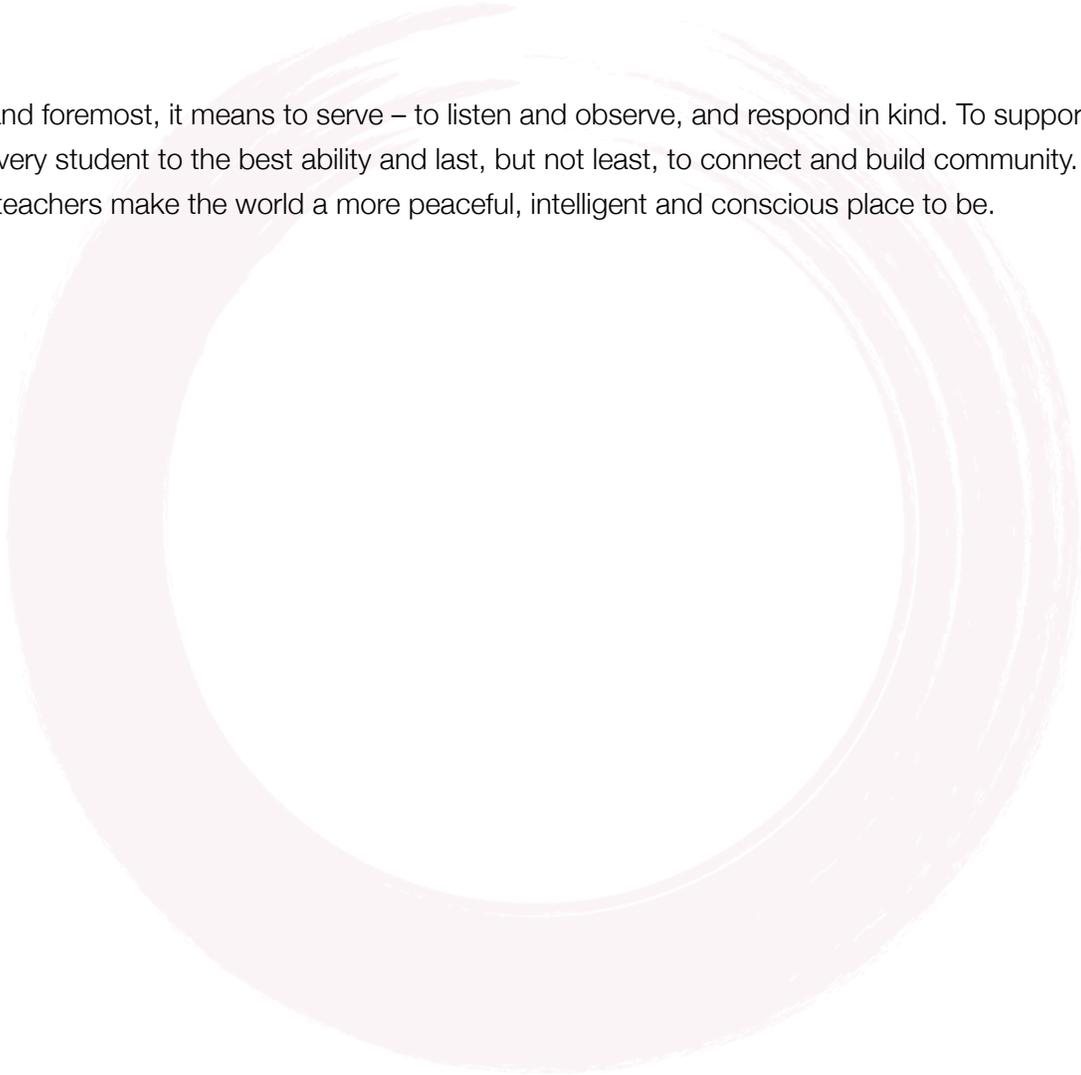
What is/could be your teaching mantra or ritual before teaching? (examples include: “may I serve”, ten finger breath, “I see you”...)

What does it mean to be a Yoga teacher?

“To be a Yoga teacher is to embody what it means to have well-being in life
and in turn to impart that understanding to others.”

— Rebekah Jacobs

First and foremost, it means to serve – to listen and observe, and respond in kind. To support each and every student to the best ability and last, but not least, to connect and build community. Great yoga teachers make the world a more peaceful, intelligent and conscious place to be.



“THE BEST TEACHERS ARE THE BEST STUDENTS.”

— Rebekah & Angie

Lesson 28:

From the Perception of a Limited Self to Liberation

Kaivalyapādah, Chapter 4 of the Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali

Patanjali moves methodically from outlining the goal of Yoga in Chapter 1 (Samādhipādah), to the means of getting to said goal – the practice of Yoga in 8 steps – in Chapter 2 and 3, Sādhanapādah and Vibhūtipādah.

In the fourth and final Chapter, Kaivalyapādah, Patanjali concludes in 34 sūtras the path from a limited perception of the Self to the realization of the limitlessness of the Self and liberation.

The Sanskrit term kaivalya can be translated as “solitude” or “detachment” and refers to the isolation of purusha (consciousness => ātman/self) from prakrti (matter => gross body, subtle body).

Recognizing the Self as distinct from the mind, the Yogī can detach himself from the miseries that come from attachment with the mind and body. As a result, the ultimate goal of Yoga, freedom/ liberation (moksha) from the attached, the “wanting” mind is achieved.

While some of the sūtras in this chapter refer to religious beliefs and reference moksha to being freed from the cycle of re-birth and past karmas, others are more generic.

Sūtra 4.24 undermines that consciousness is independent of nature (purusha is independent of prakrti):

Tadasamkhyeyavāsanābhiścitraṃ parārtham samhatyakāritvāt

= > being imprinted with numerable impressions, the mind is for the purpose of another (not for itself), because it works with many components.

We have already learned that any given object in nature, or man-made, is for the purpose of another, not for itself (a chair cannot sit on itself, the eyes cannot see themselves...).

Patanjali reminds in this sūtra of the fact that the mind doesn't serve itself – but the soul/the ātman.

With this sūtra, Patanjali successfully sums kaivalya up in only one line!

The Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali are, as we have learned, one of the six darśanas, the 6 Orthodox Schools of Hindu Philosophy – in that, they were never meant to be a complete, holistic guide to life, but rather being contemplated in the context of the other texts. Patanjali did not repeat any content of the other texts (such as Sāṅkhya), but assumed a student would learn them all.

Therefore, none of the texts or models within the texts should be taken literally and interpreted individually. Since all the Vedic texts are deeply rooted in Hinduism, some parts might not apply to different cultures and belief systems. If we see them as tools, guidelines, for a more joyful life, we can take what appeals to us, what “works” for the life we are living.

To quote B. Ravikanth, author of Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali, Nature of the mind, the universe, and the true self:

“May people from all cultures come together to enhance knowledge and happiness, and help shed misconceptions to eliminate misery.”

Lessons 26, 27 & 28

Review Sheet

1. What is Yin Yoga, in one sentence?

2. What does the Sanskrit term Dharmakāya mean? Give a literal translation and a brief explanation of the concept:

3. What is the physical goal of Yin Yoga?

4. Pair the following poses with their place in a Yin Yoga sequence:

Anulom Vilom

Cool down

Anjaneyāsana

Chandra Namaskar

Supported Bridge Pose

Warm Up

Seated Side Stretches

Centering

5. What does the Sanskrit term Kaivalya mean? Literal translation and a brief explanation:

Together, we will go over these questions when we meet next 😊
