"An in-depth investigation of the interweaving strands of Yoga and Buddhism. The broad range of perspectives provides a wealth of illuminating insights."
—JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN, author of *A Heart Full of Peace* and *One Dharma*

FREEING THE BODY

WRITINGS ON THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN

YOGA & BUDDHISM

FREEING THE MIND

EDITED BY

MICHAEL STONE

Foreword by ROBERT THURMAN

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CONTENTS

Foreword — vii
Robert Thurman

Timeline — xi

Introduction — xiii
Michael Stone

Sanskrit Pronunciation — xxiii
Michael Stone

1. Awakening to Prāṇa — 1
Chip Hartranft

2. Body and Mind Dropped Away — 31
Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara

3. The Broad Tongue of the Tathāgata: Spatial Breathing in Ch'an — 40
Ming Qing Sifu (Daniel Odier)

4. Zen or Yoga? A Teacher Responds — 44
Shosan Victoria Austin

5. Joining with Naturalness — 64
Ari Goldfield and Rose Taylor

6. Zen Body — 87
Eido Shimano Roshi

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7. Mind and Body at Ease 90
Sarah Powers

8. Brahmā Vihāra, Emptiness, and Ethics 101
Christopher Key Chapple

9. Buddha and the Yogi:
Paradigms of Restraint and Renunciation 113
Mu Soeng

10. A Twisted Story 129
Jill Satterfield

11. Mindfulness Yoga 144
Frank Jude Boccio

12. The Body of Truth 165
Ajahn Amaro Bhikkhu

13. Practice Maps of the Great Yogis 195
Michael Stone

Acknowledgments 227

Notes 229

Contributor Biographies 240

Contributor Credits 247

Illustration Credits 248

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FOREWORD

THE WONDERFUL THING about writing a foreword for a good book is having to read the book through first. American life tends toward busyness, and often we are compelled to put down without finishing even an excellent book that serves to reveal more of reality to our awareness. But on duty with this book, I read every word with delight. I contemplated each exercise, I appreciated the many insights, and I was moved by the stories of the contributors. Adapting the felicitous phrase of Thich Nhat Hanh, I "inter-read," and enjoyed "inter-being" with the realm of the book.

Furthermore, since the topic is Yoga and Buddhism, reading the accounts of these accomplished teachers, dipping into their stories, sharing their streams of experiences and insights—and their valuable and eloquently presented teachings—is like having a bit of a retreat. Calmness, awareness, wisdom, kindness, and compassion bubble up in the pages of this book and make it a joy to visit. Those deep into Buddhism can find a lot to help their understanding and meditation practice in the wisdom and embodying practicality of the Yoga tradition. Those deep into Yoga can find enriching dimensions in the Buddhist Yogas presented herein. And the broad range of readers can find practical help, methods, and tools for a better health, life, and state of mind in the integrated paths presented.

I have always maintained that Buddhism can make its best contribution to our modern culture by offering its multifarious methods and insights without insisting on being Buddhism, and certainly Yoga

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is in essence a highly skillful way of being realistic about the body. The essays here encourage taking responsibility for one's own health, cultivating a stronger sense of meaning in one's life, finding the inner strength to express joyful altruism, and developing an artful connoisseurship toward enjoying every moment as if it is the ultimate in every sense.

I especially enjoy the sincerity and depth of Michael Stone and the writers he has invited to contribute to this feast of insights. During the fifty years I have been learning, studying, practicing, teaching, and trying to perform the Buddhist teachings, there were long decades when it seemed that American people were intently preoccupied with the pursuit of money, status, possessions, and experiences of pleasure, and unrelentingly unconscious of the impact of their lifestyle on the world around them.

In academia, one doesn't really teach the Dharma; one can only teach *about* the Dharma, the history of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Indian civilization, the philosophies of the great masters, the literatures produced, and so on. Young people are launched into the world as graduates with lots of skills and information, and with some adeptness in critical analysis for scientific wisdom—but absolutely no training in how to use the mind's higher faculties through cultivation of mindfulness, one-pointed concentration, and wisdom's critical insight meditation. Even ethical awareness is only developed haphazardly through immersion in literary classics or the occasional philosophical study of various ethical systems. And what has been appropriately called "emotional intelligence," the self-knowledge of the workings of emotional and conceptual conditioning and reactivity that is essential to a person's living of a good life, is absolutely ignored.

Therefore, books such as this are essential to the continuing curriculum of hopefully ever greater numbers of students in order for them really to be prepared to live a meaningful, productive, altruistic, and satisfying life, and make a positive contribution to our globalizing society.

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I welcome it, I heartily congratulate the editor and the contributors, I salute the publishers, and I strongly recommend it to readers of all ages, and all walks of life.

Robert Tenzin Thurman
Jey Tsong Khapa Professor of
Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies,
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TIMELINE

This timeline offers approximate dates of authors, teachers, and texts referred to throughout this collection.

2000 C.E.	1888–1989	Krishnamacharya
	1863–1902	Swami Vivekanānda
	17th–18th c.	Śiva Samhita
	17th c.	Gerandha-Samhitā
	15th–16th c.	Svātmārāma
1500 C.E.	15th c.	Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā
	1200–1253	Dōgen
	1100–1200	Yoga Vaśiṣṭa
1000 C.E.	1000	Goraksha birth of Hatha Yoga
	788–820	Śaṅkarācārya
	8th c.	birth of Kashmir Shaivism
	8th c.	Padmasambhava
	600	Heart Sūtra
	6th–7th c.	Vajrayāna
500 C.E.	5th c.	Bodhidharma
	150	Patañjali
	150–250	Nagarjuna
	2nd c.	Sāṃkhya Karika of Īśvarakrsna
C.E.		
B.C.E		
500 B.C.E.		
	563–483	Gautama Buddha
	600	Bhagavad Gītā
	800–100	Upaniṣads
1000 B.C.E.		
1500 B.C.E.		
	1700–1100	Ṛg Veda

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INTRODUCTION

This book is written for those who, like myself, find themselves not only compelled by the teachings and practices of both Yoga and Buddhism, but also moved to better understand the porous border between them. Whether described in terms of transcendence, enlightenment, freedom, compassion, or deep stages of meditative quietude, both Yoga and the Dharma taught by the Buddha and his disciples have a long interdependent history weaving backward from present-day Western culture through Tibet, India, Mongolia, China, Japan, Thailand, Korea, Burma, and many other countries. These various strands of practice all share the unifying goal of recognizing suffering and bringing it to an end.

The Buddha was not only exposed to diverse Yoga practices, he was himself a yogi who wandered from the known cultural milieu of his time into the dense forests and open deltas of the Ganges seeking to bring an end to his relentless existential questions. Looking into the entanglements of his mind and the flux of reality as it manifested in his body, the Buddha made a pilgrimage in the external sense—leaving cultural and familial comforts for the unpopulated natural world; and also internally—settling his breath, mind, and body into one another until a clear and quiet awareness appeared under the surface distractions of consciousness. On discovering the innate stability of awareness, he found true freedom in the body and mind—a freedom that revealed the truth that nothing moving through awareness refers back to a central or locatable self.

For too long, Western interpretations of Yoga and Buddhism have separated one from the other by narrowly describing Yoga as a body

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practice while characterizing the Dharma teachings of the Buddha as exclusively mind practices. Such oversimplification not only misrepresents the two traditions but also disregards the long history of dialogue that both Yoga and Buddhism share and the complex ethical, philosophical, and cultural components that underscore each system.

If we imagine the traditions of Yoga and Buddhism as two trees, perhaps an oak and a maple, at first these two systems seem quite similar: we can characterize them as being trees, relying on water and photosynthesis, containing multitudes of leaves and branches and roots that extend deep into the earth. But as any simple observation reveals, maple trees and oak trees are quite different from each other; they require different amounts of water, they grow branches in quite dissimilar patterns, and the leaves of the oak, with their fine detail, hardly resemble those of the maple. If I were painting an oak leaf and a maple leaf, I'd use a different palette of colors for each; the lines that represent their internal structure would bear little resemblance; and if I tried to capture the way their leaves change color and decay in autumn, I'd have to sit under the maple well in advance of the oak. Yet, if I were to continue this observation one step further, the similarities between the two trees would start to become clear once again: their roots systems grow in congruent ways, and their respective leaf patterns and growth cycles follow the seasons in very similar ways. When comparing two systems, whether trees or complex spiritual traditions, when we look for parallel comparisons, we find difference, and when we look for difference, we find similarity.

Yoga and Buddhism are as complex as the ecology of trees, and like trees they share characteristic patterns that reveal some profound similarities—similarities that in turn teach us about ourselves, the way we construct the world, our attempts to deal with suffering and anguish, and the human possibility of cultivating genuine altruistic action. Both traditions draw on mind and body practices, ethical contemplation and action, a turning inward of attention in order to still psychophysical distractions, and a path to awakening. Are the paths of Yoga and Buddhism truly separate? Are they pointing at similar truths or are they speaking about different categories of awakening? Obviously a book

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of this size cannot adequately deal with the variations, differences, and combinations of all the various schools within what we call "Yoga" and "Buddhism," but can help us understand what these two traditions are asking of those who undertake committed practice.

While the themes of the contributors are varied, the main thrust of this book has to do with the possibility of freedom and how great teachers like the Buddha, Patañjali, Dōgen, and Nagarjuna, among others, understood freedom and consequently described a path, or at least repeatable techniques, that create the conditions for genuine realization. All of the contributors herein are practitioners first and thinkers second, and we are all writing from personal experience having practiced within and between these two systems for many years. Although the situation is slowly changing, there is still a significant disparity between academics and practitioners, and the English literature on Yoga practice suffers from this more than the Buddhist. Looking at traditions like Yoga and Buddhism as mere philosophies, especially without practicing the techniques described within them, is not good science, good research, or good history. A purely intellectual approach to these practices leaves the core teachings unexamined, and in such cases the scholar is blinded by his or her books. Therefore, this book attempts to describe not only the philosophical basis of Yoga and Buddhism but also what it's like to practice within and between these systems.

If we take the Buddha and Patañjali as leading figures of the two traditions we are comparing, it's perhaps unsettling to learn that we know very little of the personal history of either of them. We know Patañjali only through his short aphorisms and attributed mythology, and we know the Buddha primarily through the early writings of the Pali canon, which began being compiled over a century after his death. About the Buddha, Karen Armstrong writes:

> After his enlightenment we get no sense of his likes and dislikes, his hopes and fears, moments of desperation, elation, or intense striving. What remains is an impression of a transhuman serenity, self-control, a nobility that has gone beyond the superficiality of

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> personal preference, and a profound equanimity. The Buddha is often compared to non-human beings—to animal, trees, or plants—not because he is subhuman or inhumane, but because he has utterly transcended the selfishness that most of us regard as inseparable from our condition.[1]

Gautama Buddha, like other leading figures in the Yoga tradition, clarified for us what it means to be human and what liberation from lack and suffering (duḥkha) might look like. But we can only know such awakening for ourselves. Furthermore, if we can know awakening only through this subjective life—through our particular mind-body process—the only place we can begin a reasonable investigation into reality is here and now in *this* mind, in *this* body. It's not just distractedness and habitual preferences that we come up against in our attempt to see through the illusions and constructs that veil the mind's clarity and the heart's potential for compassion, it's self-centeredness. Karen Armstrong continues her description of the Buddha:

> In the West, we prize individualism and self-expression, but this can easily degenerate into mere self-promotion. What we find in Gautama is a complete and breathtaking self-abandonment. He would have been surprised to learn that the scriptures do not present him as a fairly rounded "personality," but would have said that our concept of personality was a dangerous delusion.[2]

Our discontent and delusions stem from the ways we create a false and separate self that, over time, feels like a subject in relation to a body. Since we no longer live in a sense-absorbed natural environment in which we are constantly attending to the feel of the wind or the changing weather patterns, and since we live primarily indoors, we have come to rely on the mental sphere much more than the other sense media. This comes at a price. Our attention span is so short and easily interrupted that we no longer have the sensitivity to the other senses that we would have if we lived outdoors. We don't need to navigate the physical world

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in the same way we once did, so as modern people we are relying too much on the mind's proliferation at the expense of the other senses.

Even in Buddha's time, the body was used as the primary object of meditation so that one could study the universe not through books or theory but through one's subjective experience. Likewise the Yoga postures, when practiced with breathing and sensitivity, become opportunities for deep meditative insight because they are designed to calm the nervous system and return us to earth. When we tune in to the internal energetic patterns of the breath as we move within the various shapes of the Yoga poses, we are, in essence, working the habits of the mind as well. Though the Yoga postures we practice in modern Yoga studios have obvious therapeutic benefits at physiological levels, we seem to have forgotten how the postures also teach us how to work with the mind. And for most of us, our troubles are not simply in the body but primarily in the mind. How can we use the body to study the mind and work with the mind through the body? We do so by seeing and experiencing how the two are completely interrelated.

There is a fundamental affinity between mind practices and body practices because they are both simply curves in a grand concentric circle that continually spirals in, on, and through itself with no beginning or end. Work deeply with the mind and you give attention to body processes from breathing to listening or seeing. Likewise, when you study the intricate holding patterns in the web of the body (called kośas in Sanskrit), you end up seeing where the mind sticks, where it can't focus, where it gets caught in refrains of old tape loops. What you thought was "body" is mostly mental, not "the body in the body" that the Buddha says to direct mindfulness toward. When the Buddha teaches mindfulness practices, he begins with the body.

Each of the many schools within Yoga and Buddhist traditions may touch universal truths about human experience and the transformation of suffering, yet it's important to remember that each school arises out of particular cultural conditions. Indian Hatha Yoga and Tibetan tantric practices have many similarities and roots, but the way they are described and performed are influenced by the cultures in which

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they've been refined. The metaphoric language and esoteric maps of the tantric traditions (Tibet) bear little resemblance to the dry psychology of Buddhist Abhidharma (India) or the ferocious clarity of Nagarjuna's deconstruction of language (Tibet). Even the Buddha's teachings changed depending on what and to whom he was teaching. As Hatha Yoga practices become increasingly popular in North America, Europe, and Asia, we also see very unique characteristics in the emerging culture of Yoga, among which are commercial Yoga studios, teacher training programs, and a new focus on the physical and muscular geometry of Yoga postures with perhaps less attention to the subtle winds of the breath, ethics, or the stillness of sitting practice.

Buddhism also looks different in the West than it does in Japan, China, and Burma, with less of a monastic population, many more lay practitioners, and a strong focus on meditation practice. As both Yoga and Buddhism enter into dialogue with each other, as they each plant seeds in modern secular culture, it's important that we understand these traditions as shifting descriptions of reality and not fixed truths untouched by cultural traditions. As soon as we call something a "system," we narrow it down within specific cultural parameters, and unfortunately if we focus too much on the form of the system, we might forget what it's pointing at. No system is created or practiced in a vacuum. The *Upaniṣads* were a response and refinement of the *Vedas,* and early Buddhism another radical refinement of Upaniṣadic wisdom.

The Buddha moved beyond the notion of freedom as something one finds somewhere else. Liberation for the Buddha did not come by touching something inside oneself, through finding something in the beyond, or by having faith in a creator-god, but rather through the process of waking up to *this* ground; not waking up to the fixed nature of reality but waking up to the way things happen. This process reveals the groundless ground of transience, the temporary nature of how things come into being and then pass away again—not the eternal notion of a savior beyond space and time.

The sages, seers, and yogis of ancient India or the poet-artist-students of medieval Japan did not develop their practices in idyllic

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conditions of peace and quietude. "And if you are born into a heavenly realm of peace and stillness," one of my teachers once said to me, "it's bad for your Yoga practice because there is not enough suffering to motivate you to practice." Even in the European and American Yoga "scene" we can begin to see a more wholistic approach to Hatha Yoga emerging in which students are beginning to expand their practice beyond the physical practice to include sitting meditation, prāṇāyāma, chanting, and textual study. Eventually, perhaps, these commercial Yoga studios may even become community centers where Yoga is offered and taught to the diverse members of the community including the aged, the ill, and families.

Yoga shows up in times of distress, when the principal paradigms and religious practices don't offer enough of a solution to our internal discord. Sometimes the dominant cultural institutions can't offer us the answers we hope will put an end to our suffering, so we must leave behind the answers being offered all around us and instead turn to the basic questions that being born and having to die press upon each and every one of us. Being separated from those we love, living in bodies that are aging and prone to illness, and discovering that we are not being skillful in working with habitual energies of the mind and emotions, motivate us to slow down and pay attention to the basic truths of being alive. When we look to the causes of violence and hatred, even in contemporary times, we do not have to look far; for if we look into our own psyche, our own body, our own families and communities, we can begin to see the psychological causes at work. The yogis of old have continually turned to their own minds and bodies, to the breath and the natural world, as sources of inspiration for awakening, and not to the "ready" answers that the dominant culture promotes. We see our holding patterns appear in our own bodies, our intimate relationships, and the habitual grooves of our minds.

"The old Indian practice of Yoga," writes scholar Karen Armstrong, "meant that people became dissatisfied with a religion that concentrated on externals. Sacrifice and liturgy were not enough: they wanted to discover the inner meaning of these rites."[3] Turning inward means taking

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responsibility for the spiritual path by focusing on the microcosm of reality that exists in the body's functioning in this and every moment. Although yogic practices can supposedly be traced back some five thousand years, and although yogins described their paths and discoveries in very different terms depending on their respective cultural vocabulary, they share the same common focus: the body as the primary object of meditative inquiry. When we begin by taking care of the body and paying attention to its workings, we find ourselves focusing the mind, settling the breath, and learning much more about the nature of reality than we'd know by extraverted thinking alone. There are some things we just can't figure out with ordinary thinking.

Chip Hartranft and Frank Jude Boccio both explore the way their own Buddhist and Yogic practices interweave, and they set their respective practices against the backdrop of traditional teachings. Though Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara does not refer to her own Yoga practice, she draws deeply on her Zen insight to explore the way we can touch our most basic and creative self through the dropping away of our self-concepts. Mu Soeng, codirector of the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, has written a controversial and important chapter on the way both Yoga and Buddhist practices can slip into mechanical and unconscious patterns for which we must be vigilant. Daniel Odier and Eido Shimano Roshi have explored the body from the perspectives of Zen and Ch'an respectively and in so doing help break down the false view that meditation is a mind practice divorced from the body and the sensuality of the breath. Victoria Austin articulates her unique perspective as both a Zen teacher and an Iyengar Yoga teacher and in so doing draws some fascinating parallels between what a new student to each tradition might experience in their first foray into practice, including some of the similarities and differences of Yoga and Zen. Ari Goldfield, a stellar translator of Tibetan Buddhism, and his partner Rose Taylor, a longtime Buddhist and Yoga practitioner, draw on the Tibetan understanding of the term of *Yoga* along with the tantric practices that underpin a mature understanding of the nature of body and mind in Tibetan Bud-

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dhism. Christopher Chapple, one of the most prominent scholars of Yoga in the United States and also a longtime practitioner, draws some fascinating parallels between traditional Yoga and Buddhist teachings. In so doing he paves the way for future conversations about the way in which these systems have continually drawn from each other in the course of their maturation and how as contemporary practitioners we cannot easily divorce one system from another. Jill Satterfield tells the story of how Yoga and Buddhism have been integrated not just in her teaching but also in a dramatic transformation in her own body and heart. Lastly, Sarah Powers has brought together her unique synthesis of Hatha Yoga, yin practices, and Buddhist training, and has offered a very personal and accessible account of what it's like to practice both Yoga and the Buddhadharma day in and day out.

By "the body," these ancient traditions are not referring to the body in relation to the world: large, small, healthy, beautiful, round—but rather to the sense of the body as a frame of reference. Just resting in feeling the sense of the body without any notions or concepts, we begin to tune in to the glorious operation of the natural world only available to a quiet mind. Of course, the mind is not separate from the body in any way, just a seamless continuation of the sense organs. We begin with the body because it is always present, always grounded, and the very apparatus we need to receive and explore any corner of the natural world. We use "the mind" to explore "the body," but as we get closer and quieter, we come to see that mind and body are inseparable. The seeker Uddālaka in the *Yoga Vaśiṣṭa,* a story that interweaves Yoga and Buddhist philosophy, enters a remote practice place and begins practicing Yoga. After some time he exclaims,

> Just as the silkworm spins its cocoon and gets caught in it, you have woven the web of your concepts and are caught in them.
>
> . . . There is no such thing as mind. I have carefully investigated, I have observed everything from the tips of my toes to the top

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> of my head: and I have not found anything of which I could say: This is who I am.[4]

If we approach Yoga practices simply through books and words, and not direct contact with the physical and material reality of the body and breath, all we are left with is conceptual scaffolding. We can't know these practices from the outside; they were never meant to be mere philosophy or codified ritual. Knowing *about* practice is not enough, for we must drop our "knowing" and feel our way into present experience by seeing things clearly. By seeing, the old yogis are not referring to the eyes but to what the Zen tradition calls "the true dharma eye"—the eye that sees without clinging, without sculpting, without allowing what is seen to get stuck in this or that, like or dislike. The spirit of Yoga and Buddhism embodies a radical approach to human experience whereby we begin practice through paying attention to what is here in this moment, allowing each and every one of us to wake up without needing to adopt a new ideology or belief system. When we return to present experience through the sense organs themselves—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and mind—we enter the freedom of this very moment, and the old paths of the yogis come alive here and now. There is no freedom in just repeating the words and rituals of the old masters—we must express freedom and interdependence through the actions of our whole being, and community, through mind, body, and speech.

Every morning we wake up under the same bright northern star the Buddha saw when he awoke one dawn in his early thirties. Every moment we breathe the same molecules of air that once nourished Śāntideva, Dōgen, Thich Nhat Hanh, your parents, and their parents. Perhaps practice fulfills a responsibility to the yogi-poets and wanderers that long ago traveled the great magnificent rivers of this human body and then took great care in putting together words and phrases as they tried to leave helpful maps we can now pick up, compare, and put to use.

May this book help clarify your practice.

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SANSKRIT PRONUNCIATION

In this collection there are Tibetan, Japanese, Pali, and Sanskrit terms. Because Sanskrit is the dominant technical vocabulary used throughout the collection, I've offered diacritical marks throughout the text to help you familiarize yourself with these common yogic/Buddhist terms. The following is a guide to pronouncing Sanskrit terms:

There are five Sanskrit diacritic markings in the text:

A line above the letter (ā)

A dot above the letter (ṅ)

A dot below the letter (ḍ)

A tilde above the letter (ñ)

An acute accent above the letter (ś)

a (short) is like the *a* in *sofa,* as in the word *manas* (mind).

ā (long) is like the *a* in *father,* as in *āsana.*

i (short) is like the *i* in *pin*, as in *cit*.

ī (long) is like the *i* in *pique,* as in *jīva* (soul).

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u (short) is like the *u* in *put,* as in *guṇa.*

ū (long) is like the *u* in *rule,* as in *rūpa* (form).

ṛ is pronounced like the *ri* in *rivet* and is usually found in *Kṛṣṇa.*

au is like the *o* in *how,* as in *Gautama Buddha.*

c is like the *ch* in *church* and never pronounced like *k* in *car* or *s* in *sent.* An example of this is *cakra* or *cit.*

ñ is palatal and nasal, like the *ny* in *canyon* or the word *onion,* and this is how a name like *Patañjali* is pronounced.

ṣ or *ś* are pronounced as *sh,* though the tongue position of *ś* is palatal and the tongue position of *ṣ* has the tip of the tongue at the roof of the mouth, as found in the English *shun* and the romanized Sanskrit word *Śūnyata.*

Although Sanskrit words are not pluralized by adding an *s* the way English words are, we've used the *s* in such terms as *āsanas,* in order to ease readability in English. Any errors in the diacritical marks and spelling of Sanskrit terms are mine; I added the diacritical marks after the authors signed off on their chapters.

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AWAKENING TO PRĀṆA

CHIP HARTRANFT

Surveying the contemporary landscape of Yoga and meditation practice, one might be forgiven for concluding that Yoga is primarily concerned with the body, and meditation with the mind. Even to many of its most devoted and accomplished adherents, doing Yoga primarily means pouring the energies of body and breath into a series of postures that can range from soft to strenuous. Few are aware, though, that this dynamic approach was developed mostly in the last millennium or so, and is the still-evolving "baby" in the Yoga family. Its tenth-century creators called it Hatha Yoga—meaning "forceful" or "energy" Yoga—to distinguish it from the "royal" or "highest" path, Rāja Yoga—the cultivation of mental unification, or samādhi, leading to wisdom and liberation. That path had been laid out by Patañjali nearly a thousand years earlier in the definitive text of classical Yoga, the *Yoga Sūtra*. The oldest surviving Hatha Yoga text, dating from the fifteenth century, insists that Hatha and Rāja Yoga were related and were meant to be practiced side by side. Although this decisive instruction is not universally acknowledged, nor followed very closely in most Yoga rooms today, when it is obeyed the relationship of Hatha to Rāja

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Yoga becomes clearer, and they may be seen to form a single path with many portals.

This becomes evident not only at the deep end of the Yoga pool but also in the shallows where most of us first dip a toe or two. Yoga does promise—and can quickly deliver—a smorgasbord of physical self-enhancements, to flexibility, strength, health, and beauty, as well as the possibility of dwelling in a relaxed bodily environment with fewer pressures, restrictions, or even clothes, imposed upon bodily form. However, it is the peaceful glow one is likely to feel after even the very first Yoga experience that may bring one back. That ineffable sense of contentment, clarity, and presence can awaken us to the possibility of something far greater, like a trickle of oil bubbling up out of the ground from a vast subterranean reservoir of energy. What may have sprung from the desire to enhance oneself can be transmuted over time into a quest for what lies beyond the self and its desires. It is then that yogis begin to tap the ancient, meditative roots—more likely to be emphasized in Buddhist practice than Yoga at present, at least in the West—and seek to draw upon their enormous stores of knowledge.

At first glance, though, meditation hardly seems to involve the body very much at all. One generally sits still, hushing the lush music of bodily gesture, and contemplates something. While that "something"—the breath or a mantra or perhaps a principle—may be related to or even located in the body, awakening would appear to be about arriving at a fresh, nonordinary, and enlightened understanding. It is difficult for the mind to imagine, much less accept, that this understanding might occur to something other than itself.

As we move beyond these superficial impressions, however, and peer in more closely at both the traditions of yogic liberation and our felt sense of how Yoga actually unfolds in oneself, it may become clearer how misleading and confining these views are. In the process of breaking down false barriers of distinction, the terrain of Yoga cannot help but broaden and perhaps deepen as well. We may even be able to penetrate to the great source, the luminous energy that underlies all practice and lights the way to freedom.

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The Tree of Yoga

ROOTS, TRUNK, BRANCHES

It would be an extraordinary thing to be able to follow the traditions of Yoga and meditation back along their branches to the trunk, and perhaps even down to the roots hidden beneath layers of time. But is there any way of knowing where and when Yoga actually began? Despite the hopeful inclination of some today to see yogic practices in the most ancient remnants of the Indus Valley civilization—for example, in four-thousand-year-old clay seals that are often claimed to depict a yogic posture or even a proto-Śiva figure—there is no compelling evidence that any sort of inward-focused, as opposed to god-centered, spiritual tradition existed among either indigenous or migrant peoples of the Indian subcontinent before the beginning of the first millennium B.C.E. Certainly the spirituality of the Aryan tribes that appear to have infiltrated from the northwest and to have come to dominate the area and its cultures throughout the second millennium B.C.E. was heavily materialistic and oriented toward hearing, obeying, and propitiating the gods of a pantheon to rival the Greeks.

There is considerable evidence that by the end of that millennium, a newly expanding capacity of human consciousness for self-awareness and internal motivation had begun to spread in the region. As in other parts of the world, this development gradually superseded the earlier, divinely directed status quo, and likely was related to the widespread social upheaval and fragmentation that characterize this period. In fact, by the seventh or eighth centuries B.C.E. there had developed a broad tolerance and support, sometimes verging on veneration, for a vast counterculture of wandering ascetic spiritual "strivers," or śramaṇa. Rejecting Brahmānical authority, with its relentless sacrifices and rigid hierarchies of race, class, and gender, untold numbers of men and women dropped out, shunning conventional social roles and mores by going forth into homelessness and independent spiritual seeking. Their "inner sacrifices," ranging from harsh austerity to blissful meditation, also began to inform post-Vedic Brahmānical teachings such as the *Upaniṣads*.

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The thread that united most of these starkly diverse early Yogas was their intense focus on self-liberation from suffering. Whether through meditative trance, philosophical inquiry, naturalistic observation, hypermorality, or self-mortification, almost all the various approaches operated from a belief that it must be possible somehow for individuals to shake the bonds of misperception that shackled them to an unending cycle of birth and death, saṃsāra—a distinctly non-Aryan worldview. Indeed, since one's salvation lay not in a relationship to external gods but rather in overcoming ignorance (avidyā), one had to transform oneself and one's own perceptions. Even as ascetics clustered around charismatic and compelling seekers such as the Buddha and the Jain Mahāvīra—both emerging from the warrior caste instead of the Brahmān—the prevailing ethos was self-empowering. Regardless of background, liberation was within one's grasp.

Ironically, the spreading tent of the much later Hinduism eventually came, after many centuries, to enclose the unorthodox praxis of Yoga, linking Patañjali to Viṣṇu and installing his teaching as one of the six orthodox philosophical perspectives, or darśana. This has never been a perfect fit, though, Yoga being primarily a path rather than a philosophy, and the *Yoga Sūtra* more a road map than an ontological treatise. It is often forgotten that Patañjala-Yoga shares not only the same basic meditative approach as the Buddha, but also a similar spirit of independence or even anti-orthodoxy. As with the Buddha, Patañjali gently points to the fundamental limitations of a spiritual authority based on revealed texts such as the *Vedas*—and even the *Yoga Sūtra* itself, for that matter—or restricted to any one class or gender. Though later Hindu traditions, eventually including even the countercultural extremes of Hatha Yoga, came to regard it as the essential expression of yogic truth and still look to its 196 lines for inspiration and direction, the radical nature of the *Yoga Sūtra*'s meditative roots has largely been obscured by the intervening centuries and their layers of assimilation, intellectualization, and conflation.

But what of this Patañjali, whose *Yoga Sūtra* is the definitive non-

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Buddhist guide to liberation? Although tradition claims he was an important grammarian of the second century B.C.E., more recent scholarly investigations have identified several illustrious Patañjalis and reliably place the author of the *Yoga Sūtra* much later. The work was probably composed between 100 and 300 C.E., but it is now clear that most of its teachings are ancient, based on oral traditions that harken back to a time at least a millennium earlier, and concern the contemplative practices prevalent well before and also after the Buddha (newly corrected dates suggest the Buddha lived roughly from 460 to 380 B.C.E., teaching the Dharma from around 425 B.C.E. on). It is also apparent that by the early centuries of the Common Era the meditative Yoga tradition Patañjali sought to encapsulate in the *Yoga Sūtra* had absorbed many key Buddhist teachings, especially as articulated by later schools such as the Sarvāstivāda (Skt: lit., the teaching that everything is in this moment). It had also begun to question certain elements found in others, for example, what it took to be idealism in the Yogācāra perspective.

Now that the time frame of the Buddha and Patañjali is clearer, and perhaps as well some sense of the interrelated nature of their teachings, one might say that the techniques of Buddhist and yogic meditation form a single braid. The oldest strands—those that predate the Buddha and include practices such as blissful absorptive concentration prevalent among śramaṇa like the Jains—are woven into both the fifth-century B.C.E. Buddha's teachings and also the second-century C.E. *Yoga Sūtra,* where they are in some cases augmented, modified, or refined by later yogic or Buddhist understandings.

The Meditative Yoga of the *Yoga Sūtra*

The shared perspective of these two traditions clearly emerges in the very first lines of the *Yoga Sūtra,* where Patañjali begins by defining Yoga and the universal misperception it resolves:

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> Yoga is to still the patterning of consciousness (citta-vṛtti).
> Then pure awareness can abide in its very nature.
> Otherwise awareness takes itself to be the patterns
> of consciousness.[1]

Stilling reveals something that is generally not seen (avidyā) by human beings, condemning us to suffer: that which actually knows nature in all its manifestations is a timeless, subjectless, unconditioned awareness. Although the mind can imagine and express this awareness as having both a divine universal perspective (Īśvara) and also an individual one (puruṣa), knowing is not an entity or point of view at all, lying beyond the reach of the mind and its insistence on location, orientation, temporality, and attributes. This has riled scholars and religionists who have equated puruṣa with the Ātman—Soul, Self, Seer, Spirit—common to other systems, or confused Patañjali's Īśvara with the divine cause of the universe described in some Hindu texts. This is not surprising, as Patañjali appears to have borrowed the term *puruṣa* and several other concepts from another, even more ancient system, Sāṃkhya, the analytical perspective traditionally if not always accurately paired with the more experiential Yoga, and also bound to be absorbed eventually into Hindu orthodoxy. Sāṃkhya is fundamentally atheistic, and although the *Yoga Sūtra* departs from that to some extent in its description of Īśvara, Patañjali makes clear that puruṣa and Īśvara are beyond causality, attributes, or worship, being nothing more than the unchanging property of knowing immanent in the cosmos. This realization, stripped of all personal, material, or devotional associations, is what will be seen directly—vidyā—as opposed to imagined in the mind when awakening occurs.

In other words, what is important for a suffering being to realize is that it is this imperturbable witnessing that knows, and not one's perceptions, feelings, or thoughts. Every bit of conscious experience, including sensations, emotions, and ideas, issues from contingent body-mind phenomena that are in constant flux and are not "self" in and of themselves. When the pure, unchanging awareness of puruṣa is mis-

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taken for these shifting contents of body or mind, we are not seeing things as they are (avidyā). Though the inconstancy of their ups and downs feels unsettling and personal, in fact, sensations, thoughts, and feelings are nothing more than momentary displays projected as consciousness unfolding before awareness.

This is the great discovery of the ancient Indian yogis: though our bodies and their surroundings may be real, all we can actually know of them are representations appearing as one's consciousness, citta. Each distinct display, also called citta, is a fleeting shadow play involving one of the six types of phenomena: sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile feelings, and thought forms. Even though separate and sequential, these cittas unfold so rapidly that we usually misperceive them as an unbroken, simultaneous flow we call "reality," "the world," "me," and "you." This makes it almost impossible to distinguish between mind and matter, or between events and our reactions to them. So our patterns of perception and volition are largely determined, automatic, and nearly inescapable.

How to Do, How to Be

Under ordinary circumstances this illusion of a me navigating myself through a seamless life is virtually impenetrable. But when attention is focused on the processes of body and breath, which orient the yogi in what Patañjali calls Yoga or "yoking," consciousness begins to settle spontaneously and become transparent and reflective, like the ocean growing calm. The meditative intentions that move the yogi down this natural path to tranquillity are twofold. First, the yogi trains himself or herself to keep returning to the point of focus and to sit with it. This intention, called abhyāsa (sit facing), is the basis for sustained practice and begins with witnessing the current stream of bodily sensations. As the yogi keeps noticing and returning from distraction, he quickly comes face-to-face with conditioned habits of thought and reaction. No matter how numerous or overwhelming the distractions, though, they always dissolve unless actively recharged. As they dissipate, the yogi may

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soon begin to sense a developing aptitude for remembering the focus, a power that starts to grow stronger than his penchant for forgetting it. As this aptitude is cultivated and concentration—samādhi—begins to coalesce, Patañjali points out, the yogi will require only occasional, subtle prompts to direct and train awareness on the object, and the need even for these will drop away as samādhi ripens.

The other intention one must keep in mind if meditation is to move from doing to being is to soften in the midst of what's being experienced. Again and again, the yogi unclenches, relaxes his psychosomatic grip on the moment and allows the events in his chosen field of observation to be just as they are. His success is proportionate to his willingness to let each new impulse to control or improve upon experience simply appear, bloom, and fade. As he does so, it becomes ever clearer that each of his bodily contractions was conditioned by a mental one, arising from desire, aversion, or simply the holding of a self-image in mind. The yogi realizes how much of his mental life has been engaged in reconnoitering on behalf of the self-image for stimulation and gratification. He may also recognize how attaining them never produces anything like a lasting happiness, for the self-image is itself inconstant and can never satisfy, any more than the water in a mirage. This perceptual reeducation, called vairāgya (nonreacting), involves entrusting oneself to one new quantum of experience after another. As each fresh agitation or stab of resistance is recognized and permitted to settle, one unexpectedly notices that familiar sources of disturbance—"triggers"—are no longer having any effect. In this way the yogi realizes that a profound equanimity has quietly developed.

Yoga's Eightfold Path, Aṣṭāṅga

Like most yogis of his time and place, Patañjali appears to have been deeply inspired by the Buddha's teachings, and the *Yoga Sūtra* clearly owes much of its organization and thrust to the Buddhist traditions both ancient and contemporary up to the second or third century. Despite certain differences of philosophical description and emphasis, their

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yogic paths are virtually indistinguishable, as we shall see, and verbatim quotes abound. Patañjali's path diverges from earlier, non-Buddhist models by adopting the well-known structure of the Buddha's eightfold path (Pali: aṭṭanga-magga), reconfiguring it to be more explicitly about developing dhyāna—or in Pali, jhāna.

YAMA

The first of Yoga's eight aspects or "limbs" is yama. In five pithy lines Patañjali lists "disciplines" that address the yogi's relationship to the world. These depart from the customary precepts—likely familiar to the yogi already—in order not only to inspire but to offer benchmarks for progress:

> Being firmly grounded in nonviolence creates an atmosphere in which others can let go of their hostility.
> For those grounded in truthfulness, every action and its consequences are imbued with truth.
> For those who have no inclination to steal, the truly precious is at hand.
> The chaste acquire vitality.
> Freedom from wanting unlocks the real purpose of existence.[2]

NIYĀMA

The second limb of Yoga is niyāma. These five types of "discipline" are more "internal," yoking different aspects of the yogi's personal sphere to the process of realization:

> With bodily purification, one's body ceases to be compelling, likewise contact with others.
> Purification also brings about clarity, happiness, concentration, mastery of the senses, and capacity for self-awareness.
> Contentment brings unsurpassed joy.

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As intense discipline burns up impurities, the body and its
senses become supremely refined.
Self-study deepens communion with one's personal deity.
Through orientation toward the divine ideal of pure awareness,
Īśvara, one can achieve samādhi.[3]

ĀSANA

As with the Buddha, Patañjali's meditation begins with the body. No elaborate movements are recommended in the third yogic limb, merely a simple sitting posture in which one can relax all physical effort. In fact, āsana derives from the root *ās,* which means "to be here" and also can connote "sitting here." With sustained practice, the first benchmark (samāpatti) of concentration occurs, as the stream of body sensations is recognized as indivisible from the rest of nature—whether internal or external, all experience is projected through the yogi's consciousness. As even beginning meditators can attest, the harsh polarities of self/other and pleasure/pain begin to soften:

The meditation posture (āsana) should embody steadiness and
ease (sthira-sukha).
This occurs as all effort relaxes and the first attainment
(samāpatti) of samādhi arises, revealing that the body and the
infinite universe are indivisible.
Then, one is no longer disturbed by the play of opposites.[4]

As this first meditative practice makes clear, Yoga's eight elements should not be thought of as progressive, like rungs on a ladder, but more like limbs that must interact to carry one forward on the path. Each can mature to the point of transformation, as here samādhi, the eighth limb, blooms directly from āsana, the third.

Of course, many modern treatments of the *Yoga Sūtra* have been written by Hatha Yoga masters understandably inclined to interpret

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Patañjali's words "stable" and "easy, comfortable" in line II.46—sthira-sukha—as referring to the "firmness" and "softness" of much later dynamic Hatha Yoga postures such as the Triangle pose. Just a few minutes into sitting meditation, though, it becomes clear that the relaxation of effort Patañjali is advocating here leads to the discovery of increasingly subtle degrees of contraction, which then can be released as well. As if by themselves, extraordinary qualities of steadiness, composure, and bodily pleasure begin to arise. It is significant that, in describing the experience of deepening relaxation and stillness in sitting meditation, the Buddha appears to have used the very same words.

PRĀṆĀYĀMA

With mental images of the body-as-entity starting to dissolve, the yogi can observe a similar progression unfold with energy, or prāṇa, observed manifesting as "breath" in the fourth limb. Becoming attuned to the flow, phase by phase, reveals ever subtler patterns of reaction and resistance that would otherwise trigger more unconscious, automatic patterns. As these become visible, they can be let go, allowing the breath to naturally become softer and less hurried, its duration extended—the literal meaning of āyāma. So, prāṇāyāma in this pre-Hatha teaching is an unforced, natural "breath elongation" that develops the more the yogi lets go. Just "yoking" to this process and letting it ripen is enough to cause the "breathness" of prāṇa to drop away, leaving a luminous or vibratory distillation of consciousness—called nimitta or "characteristic sign" or "counterpart (of consciousness)" in Buddhist teaching—as the pervasive, unifying object or field. When absorption, or dhyāna, fully ripens to its fourth stage, there no longer remains any sense of breathing at all—another phenomenon attested in the Buddhadharma:

> With bodily effort relaxing, the flow of inhalation and exhalation can arrive at a standstill; this is called "breath energy elongation" (prāṇāyāma).

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> As the movement patterns of each inhalation, exhalation, and lull are observed—duration, number, and area of focus—breath becomes spacious and subtle.
> In the fourth dhyāna, the distinction between breathing in and out falls away.
> Then the veil lifts from the mind's luminosity.
> And the mind's potential for concentration can be tapped.[5]

Here, too, many interpreters today insist that these lines concern dynamic forms of breath control probably pioneered many centuries later by Tantric Hatha yogis. In fact, with these powerful, relatively newer techniques the yogi can sometimes plunge directly into presence, which is unusually sensitive to the breath energies. It is important to realize that this can happen readily even without the later techniques, though, and both Patañjali and the Buddha clearly indicate that no active effort to control breath, body, or mind remains in the higher stages of dhyāna, which is defined below.

PRATYĀHĀRA, THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SENSES

Observing one's consciousness of body and breath energies become distilled into a vibrant nimitta epiphenomenon of some kind completely unifies attention, temporarily neutralizing the power of externals to distract:

> When consciousness interiorizes by uncoupling from external objects, the senses do likewise; this is called withdrawal of the senses (pratyāhāra).
> Then the senses reside utterly in the service of realization.[6]

Although this factor is listed fifth, pratyāhāra signals the ripening of all six meditative limbs, as might already have been gleaned from

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the effects of āsana and prāṇāyāma described above. Patañjali says elsewhere that beyond this turning point, the yogi's perspective becomes more fully interiorized, not unlike the Buddha's powerfully elegant instruction to abide in the "body within the body," explored below.

Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, and Samādhi

Whatever type of object or field the yogi has welcomed or moved to center stage, the progression is the same: the more collected and purified mind becomes, the less hospitable its environment grows for the usually unconscious patterns of physical and mental contraction. The final three limbs of Yoga are a continuum where all names, concepts, psychosomatic structures, and volitions come to subside, after which only a phenomenon's bare arising and passing away remain:

> One-pointedness (dhāraṇā) locks consciousness on a single area.
> In meditative absorption (dhyāna), the entire perceptual flow is aligned with that object.
> When only the bare qualities of the object shine forth, as if formless, samādhi has arisen.[7]

Discrimination and Freedom

As the eight factors of Yoga mature in samādhi, it starts to become clear that consciousness (citta) does not really know, but is merely a display being known in the emptiness of pure awareness (puruṣa). The discriminating insight (viveka) that recognizes the difference is not an idea but something that must be directly seen. This direct vision (vidyā), possible when the relentless agitations of mental and physical reactivity have calmed to crystal clarity, is what sees through the everyday misidentification (avidyā) that produces the illusory sense of "I," whose wanting, not wanting, and self-preservation underlie all human suffering:

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> As soon as one can distinguish between consciousness (citta) and awareness (puruṣa), the ongoing construction of the self ceases.
>
> Consciousness, now oriented to this distinction (viveka), can gravitate toward freedom—the fully integrated knowledge that awareness is empty and of a different order than unfolding nature.[8]

This now utterly nondiscursive Yoga terminates in the direct vision (vidyā) and knowledge (prajñā) that suffering is nothing more than an artifact of consciousness. Unconditioned knowing, whether conceived subsequently on a universal and divine scale (Īśvara) or on an individual one (puruṣa), is untouched by change, uncolored by suffering, impersonal, timeless.

One who regards even the most exalted states disinterestedly, discriminating continuously between pure awareness and the phenomenal world, enters the final stage of integration, in which nature is seen to be a shower of irreducible experiential states (dharma-megha). This realization extinguishes both the causes of suffering and the cycle of cause and effect.

Once all the layers and imperfections concealing truth have been washed away, insight is boundless, with little left to know. Then the seamless flow of reality, its transformations colored by the fundamental qualities of nature (guṇā), begins to break down, fulfilling the true mission of consciousness.

> One can see that the flow is actually a series of discrete events, each corresponding to the merest instant of time, in which one form becomes another. Freedom (kaivalya) is at hand when the fundamental qualities of nature, each of their transformations witnessed at the moment of its inception, are recognized as irrelevant to pure awareness; it stands alone, grounded in its very nature, the power of pure seeing.[9]

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Though awareness has been designated "puruṣa" and linguistically cast as an entity, it is not even an "it," being naturally of a different order, standing apart (kaivalya) from the constructs of birth, identity, thought, and experience, with which the yogi had previously confused it. Although most of his inherited and acquired personal attributes will continue to some extent, they are joined by the postcessation fruitional knowledge (prajñā) that they're mere processes. Even though spinning like juggler's plates, held up by the momentum of some earlier push, they're doomed to topple before long.

Thus, the yogi has not become free from anything—awareness was already free, awaiting recognition from a purified consciousness. Not unlike the power in Dorothy's ruby slippers, the path to awakening is waiting within us, ready to appear when mind is brought together with some aspect of unfolding reality and yoked to it persistently enough for the dizzying dramas of self to dissipate. The yogi now feels an unprecedented security in the impersonal and impermanent: there's no place like home.

The Yoga of the Buddha

A careful exploration of the Buddha's Yoga, both through practice and analysis, finds it virtually indistinguishable from the praxis elucidated by the *Yoga Sūtra*. Like Patañjali, the Buddha was highly pragmatic, as we shall see, but his central style of practice is no less a Yoga of energy than the āsana-prāṇāyāma approach described above. One need look no farther than Buddha's name for it, *ānāpānasati,* a Pali compound rendered as *prāṇa-apāna-smṛti* in Sanskrit Buddhist texts. Ānāpānasati means "remembering [to be aware as] energy flows down and up." Many Yoga practitioners will be familiar with the terms *prāṇa* and *apāna,* identified with the influx and outflow of what we today call breath. It's important for modern practitioners to look beyond the modern conceptualization of this as respiration, however, in which the yogi practices "mindfulness of breathing." To the early yogis, respiration was not conceived as

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a physiological process so much as one of the ways that the life force or vital energy—prāṇa—pervading all creation could be perceived directly. Breathing is therefore the experience of prāṇa as a specific tidal pattern infusing the whole being, and not limited to the respiratory apparatus. The early yogis discovered that training themselves to experience this energy's movements with growing awareness and precision—what the Buddha called a "body in the body"—brought about a more intimate and wise connection—presence, or upaṭṭhāna in Pali, upasthāna in Sanskrit—with unfolding reality. Since its movements are ever changing and can only be felt in the present moment, prāṇa and apāna comprise a powerful and reliable avenue to knowing things as they are, right now.

Furthermore, this path leading from the body to its experience as energy is available to the yogi at all times, as long as life and breath continue. However, in the beginning yogis can hardly be conscious enough, despite their best efforts, to avoid forgetting where they are and repeatedly falling back on the usual, everyday bodily and mental patterns that comprise our illusory but very convincing sense of self. Because the body is energetic by nature, each time the yogi "remembers" (sati) the possibility of presence in the bodily form, the tides of prāṇa or apāna are there for the observing, just as the source of a spring continually produces a fresh stream of waves and ripples. The Yoga of directing and maintaining one's attention on this source, whatever the "field"—the Buddha used the remarkable phrase yoniso manasikāra, or "keeping attention right where things are being born"—orients the yogi to the present moment. Furthermore, it sensitizes him to recognize and let go of each mental structure—such as memory, imagination, or self-feeling—that attempts to pass for reality.

As might be growing evident, the heart of this "Yoga of liberation," as we might call both Patañjali's path and the Buddha's, is seeing (Pali: vijjā; Skt: vidyā, related to both the Latin and the modern word *video*). Both Patañjali and the Buddha carefully and repeatedly instructed their followers to regard seeing as the primary means by which human beings

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can come to freedom. The root cause of suffering, the primary kleśa or affliction in the *Yoga Sūtra* is avidyā (Pali: avijjā), or "not seeing." Specifically, human beings generally fail to recognize that awareness itself is empty of characteristics or reactions, not unlike space, and therefore already free. Though the Buddha famously identified craving (tanhā) as the cause of suffering—the principle he called the Second Noble Truth—he also traced craving and its consequences back to their source in avijjā/avidyā in his later analysis of the conditioned, impersonal processes that support the illusion of selfhood, namely dependent origination (paticca-samuppāda).

Although commonly translated as "ignorance," avijjā/avidyā does not actually mean that one lacks some special information that, once acquired by the mind, will produce awakening and freedom of the heart. Broad or deep though one's knowledge may be—of wisdom teachings, scientific findings, or logic—there is no guarantee of, or even correlation to, what the Buddha called seeing things as they are. It is important to stay within the true meaning of vijjā/vidyā as "direct seeing," which only applies to what is actually in front of one right now, at this very moment. Both Yoga and dharma arise in the profound recognition that this moment is the only reality, and therefore all one can truly know and work with.

As we saw earlier, the actual meaning of vidyā is underscored by Patañjali in the *Yoga Sūtra* when he identifies the two poles of the yogic will as abhyāsa and vairāgya. Abhyāsa literally means "being with what's in front of you right now." Abhyāsa is worth breaking down. *Abhi* means "toward," and it also carries the sense of "higher" or "superior." *As* is a verb root meaning "to be here," in the sense of existing in the present moment; its secondary meaning, usually positioned in dictionaries as the primary, more usual one, is "to sit." This makes sense—in everyday life, when something is right here, it's usually sitting here, so the root *as* is the platform for words like "sitting posture" and even "chair" or "throne." To Patañjali, however, abhyāsa means the practice of repeatedly turning toward and facing what is before one right now.

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After all one cannot see something that one isn't facing, and the moment it's not here, the only way to "see" it is to remember it or to imagine it, once again turning away from what is here right now. Each time we forget that the "events" unfolding in memory and imagination are not really happening now, we are once again caught up in identification and no longer seeing things as they are.

THE INTENTION TO AWAKEN

Likewise for the Buddha, the practice is centered around seeing in the present moment. When the yogi turns attention to the body, he or she is unlikely to see it as it really is in its elemental form (yathā bhūta), namely, a complex stream of impersonal matter animated by various mental and physical actions that are largely conditioned and subliminal. Instead, the yogi will initially experience the body as solid, personal, and enduring—namely, "me." What the yogi must do, though, is begin to study it more closely.

The yogi abides observing the body within the body (kāye kāya), remembering (satimā) to be intensely (ātāpi) present and immediately aware (sampajāno).

The most essential yogic act to enable a deeper knowing is to remember—one must remember to keep at it so that the quality of seeing can develop and clarify. The Buddha's key word, *sati,* is usually translated as "mindfulness," but literally means "memory," and in this context is a skillful means that in the late stages of awakening will no longer be required.

Once the yogi resolves to sit in meditation and awaken, the first instance of sati is remembering to form an intention, expressed by a phrase attributed to the Buddha, parimukhaṃ satiṃ upaṭṭhapetvā.[10] Although some traditions have understood this phrase to mean that the yogi "establishes mindfulness around the face," *parimukhaṃ* usually means what's "ahead" or "in front." In other words, the Buddha is asking the yogi to remember what lies ahead and to form a clear intention. We know that this intention is of vital importance because the Buddha ad-

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vises the yogi that awakening requires the quality of ātāpa—an intensity of will to both see and surrender that requires a strong initial intention, sustained by disciplined "remembering." Furthermore, experience shows that attempts to arrive at clear seeing tend to founder without it.

THE CURRENT OF PRĀṆA

Once this intention is established, the yogi is to become aware that prāṇa and apāna are indeed flowing at this very moment. This current is to be the basis for each of the Buddha's four key instructions leading to the refined seeing (vidyā) of what is happening now that leads to the end of suffering. The first aspect—that which most readily becomes tangible—is the direction of the flow.

> The yogi is mindful as breath flows in, mindful as breath flows out.[11]

The yogi begins by remembering—sati—to refresh awareness each time the flowing energy of breath changes directions. It is important to understand that the Buddha is not saying "be aware of the breath." Instead, he's saying "be aware—directly and immediately—of the energy of this current only." That fact, generally overlooked, is of the greatest importance because it cuts like a razor to the very heart of the misperception that grants one's "I," or self-feeling, its illusory sense of continuity. For most beginning yogis, ordinary breathing has long since dropped from the screen of conscious awareness and therefore only exists subliminally except in times of respiratory distress. As such, its behaviors and their relation to other bodily and mental behaviors are almost completely hidden from normal view.

When the yogi attempts to observe the breath, he may first encounter a sense of the "whole breath"—breathing in and out—as a repetitive and relatively uniform rhythmic event. As he studies each distinct flow, however, a more nuanced sense emerges. The duration of a "whole breath" is simply too long for it to be experienced except as a composite,

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a mental mirage unconsciously produced by short-term memory. Absent that mode of remembering, one can only be aware of the momentary feelings of the current—mere instants in the arc of a single flow. At any time from that point on, the yogi may suddenly notice that the "I" of self-feeling is no different.

As soon as the vague outline of "now flowing in" and "now flowing out" become observable to the yogi, the Buddha's second instruction can then begin: to know that the current is long as it unfolds long, and short when short.

> As breath flows in or out for a long time, the yogi is aware how long; as breath flows in or out for a short time the yogi is aware how short.[12]

The Buddha is suggesting that one can know directly—pajānāti, a verb form of paññā/prajñā—as opposed to merely thinking how long each breath takes to transpire. Under ordinary circumstances, the most likely, if not necessarily self-evident, way to gauge the length of the breath is to unconsciously control it and then mentally label the span as "long" or "short." This is not the intention, however, nor does the yogi need to quantify the duration of each breathflow by, for example, timing it with a stopwatch. What is being offered here is the possibility of greater intimacy and presence in the momentarily flowing energy that comprises the "body in the body" (kāye kāya). In the famous simile, which may or may not have originated with the Buddha himself, this process is compared to a craftsman turning a lathe or pottery wheel. As the object—clay, for example—rapidly spins, the potter applies a finger or tool at some point and slowly moves along, then lifts it away. Clearly the potter's sense of how long this turn or "pass" lasted derives from the sensations of actual contact from the beginning of the pass, through the middle to the end. It's being present and aware of the continuity of contact, and not some mental conception of the "whole," by which the potter knows the long and short of it directly (pajānāti).

Nor does the yogi need to establish or become entrained in a rhythm

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—in fact, the opposite. The experience of a rhythm requires a mental action "putting together" (saṅkhāra/saṃskāra) at least two durations, and the instructions explicitly are about confining one's attention simply to the flow happening now. In the Buddhist approach, the yogi is to let go of deliberate breathing, and therefore has no way of knowing how long the next current will be. He must therefore observe the actual sensations that are making contact with awareness moment by moment from beginning to middle to end.

With these two simple but profound instructions—observe only the current direction of flow and sense its duration through sustained contact—the Buddha has led even the least sophisticated yogi to a profound, face-to-face encounter with the bodily energies of this moment, narrowing the window of observation to the unfolding present. The usual, everyday mode of observation unconsciously entails thinking, analysis memory, anticipation, emotional reactions, and other mental and physical responses. But by simply focusing on the unfolding body energies of the current flow, and knowing them as they unfold from the beginning of one flow until the end, the Buddha has laid the foundation for the two most important instructions—how the yogi is to now "train" himself—sikkhati—to see things as they are:

> The yogi trains himself to experience the whole body as breath flows in, then to experience the whole body as breath flows out.
>
> The yogi trains oneself to relax bodily activity as breath flows in, then to relax bodily activity as breath flows out.[13]

In the first of the two trainings, the Buddha now instructs the yogi to remember the possibility—sati—of experiencing the "whole body"—sabba-kāya—directly just during the duration of the prevailing current, to which he or she has become sensitized. But what did the Buddha mean exactly by the "whole body"? Although the answer to this question may seem self-evident, it has aroused much controversy in the various Buddhist traditions. The relevant Pali commentaries conclude,

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rather oddly, that by "body" he actually meant the breath phase itself, with "whole" referring to its duration. However, the yogi has already been doing this very thing. These commentaries and some later teachers insist that the Buddha must have meant this, though, since in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* he refers to the breathflow as "a body among the bodies,"[14] which they claim supports the idea that the breath is the "body in the body" that is the basis of satipaṭṭhāna as well as the referent for the "whole body."

Relying on pronouncements found in one or two other sūttas to argue these kinds of points turns out to be a risky business, however. Today we have no reliable idea what the true contexts were for many of the key discourses—it is doubtful, for example, that the Buddha ever traveled as far as Delhi, the purported setting for the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta,* a key discourse in which these instructions appear—much less which of the words attributed to the Buddha are actually his, since none of them are in the Ardha-Magadhi dialect he himself appears to have spoken. Although the various recensions of the Canon that we have today in full or in part—Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, Dharmaguptaka, MulaSarvāstivāda, Mahāsaṅghika—present a philosophical edifice that appears astonishingly coherent and consistent considering its scope, a close examination reveals not only countless discrepancies but also abundant evidence that the Buddha's circle and their immediate followers in the presectarian period following his death were often unclear about what he had meant. Their attempts to arrive at ironclad definitions and thereby "close the book" on key phrases such as "the whole body" and "bodily formations" appear to be unmistakable signs of disagreement. It seems that the Buddha, acting out of pragmatism and wisdom, was often careful to avoid specifics, both when describing the nature of things as he saw it and even more so when prescribing a course of action. This, more than any other single factor, may account for much of the doctrinal squabbling, sectarianism, and one-upsmanship prevalent in succeeding generations, and even to some extent the eventual rise of Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna, and Zen.

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even more quickly, with each fleeting moment of contact as awareness expands to include all sensory-mental phenomena.

The perception of instantaneous arising and passing away, in turn, is the threshold crossing over into Vipassanā, the direct "seeing through" that teases apart the unsatisfactoriness and impermanence—duḥkha-anicca—of all constructive mental and physical events, and the impersonality—anatta—of phenomena. These are the three characteristics of being that are visible with the discernment, or cakṣu-darśana—the "dharma eye"—that is near the terminus (nibbāna/nirvāṇa) in this continuum of clear knowing.

RIGHT EFFORT

Moving along the continuum of development (bhāvanā), many seasoned meditators have arrived at a pair of initially dismaying discoveries: using the same approach every time they sit produces variable results, and the most effective way to become present in any given instance is often a departure from their teacher's instructions. The Buddha seems to have encountered this among his earliest students, and described several different types of temperaments and responses to practice. He is also portrayed in a sizable number of mindfulness teachings as pragmatic and contextual, such as when instructing Sona in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* to fine-tune his meditation as if he were playing the vīṇā, a sitarlike instrument whose strings may be found either too tight or too loose. When experiencing too much tension while trying to concentrate on a particular object, one can relax the exclusivity and open up to a wider field; likewise, if the quality of presence and immediacy is flagging, one might focus more sharply and energetically. The Buddha seems to be careful to avoid being too specific with Sona, and is similarly vague in the neighboring sutta about the king's favorite cook, whose success stems from arriving at the appropriate balance of ingredients for each new meal.

As the particular properties and processes of each meditation—the "meal" or "tune"—begin to be recognized as unique, evolving as the yogi adjusts the approach, he or she may come to a more flexible and intui-

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important factor that powerfully conduces toward awakening begins to become accessible and therefore workable. This factor is called "investigation" (dhamma-vicaya).

Gathering Energy

To understand dhamma-vicaya, it is helpful to examine the word *vicaya*. The root *ci* means "to gather," and refers to the act of selecting and gathering objects based on their quality, such as firewood or the right stones to build a wall or foundation. When one goes out into the forest to gather wood, very little thinking is required in order to distinguish seasoned pieces, likely to burn well and supply energy, from green; and with experience the process becomes ever simpler. As we have seen, meditative progress depends on making the right kind of effort, which is based on the skill of recognizing the wholesome and letting go of the unwholesome, much like the wood or, say, the cook's ingredients.

To continue the former analogy, if one wished to gain a better sense of where to look for wood, one might move to higher ground in order to survey the whole forest and locate areas with more fallen trees. In the same way, when one "takes in" the whole body, one begins to sense the intuitive way this process of discrimination might zero in on those areas within the greater field of the whole body (sabba-kāya) that are discovered to be more concentration-worthy. Instead of imposing or even choosing an object, the yogi begins to notice that the field or object presents or "selects" itself to some degree.

Within and Without

The yogi may also become aware that under certain conditions the most energetic or engaging phenomena available happen to lie outside the sphere of the body. For example, the evolving qualities of sound or sight may provide a more powerful and stabilizing "surface" on which to see the unfolding present: in other words, external to oneself (bahiddhā) instead of within (ajjhatta).

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> In this way the yogi abides observing the body in the body regarding experience within, without, or both.[15]

As vision clarifies and awareness first begins to discern the energetic, impermanent nature of being a body, this same nature can start to be recognized in other sensory and also mental phenomena. The cognitive structures that had compartmentalized existence into "me" and "the world around me" likewise cease to seem ultimate or enduring, and instead merely appear momentary and contingent on mental fabrication (saṅkhāra/saṃskāra). One recalls the way Patañjali described āsana:

> This occurs as all effort relaxes and the first attainment (samāpatti) of samādhi arises, revealing that the body and the infinite universe are indivisible.[16]

It should be noted that most scholastics and monastics seem to have agreed with the improbable notion that by "internal" and "external" the Buddha here meant "in oneself" and "in somebody else." There are a few places in the various recensions where the Buddha does use these words in that sense, but not in the satipaṭṭhāna instructions, where he has just advised the yogi to remove himself from the company of others and practice in solitude. Again and again in the suttas the Buddha describes how the four domains of satipaṭṭhāna, the basic arenas for the development (bhāvanā) of mindfulness (sati), set the stage for profound absorptive states of concentration (jhāna/dhyāna) best cultivated when off by oneself. This is in fact how the Buddha's personal practice is always depicted.

This is not to say that the commentarial understanding—that "external" here means "in someone else"—is without value, however. In the context of a meditative community (saṅgha) or group retreat, mindfulness of others and their energies is one of the most important aspects of practice regarding action, taking its place alongside mindfulness of the

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is constantly trying to reach us to say something or teach something."[30] We are always invited to reconnect with naturalness; we just need to accept the invitation.

Conclusion

In practicing Buddhist Yoga, we join with naturalness by relinquishing the burden of attachment; developing great compassion; and meditating in nondual, luminous awareness, the true nature of reality. Through applying these methods in all phases of our activity, our experience becomes open, spacious, and relaxed. Initially, we have to apply more effort, but gradually we experience the benefit of this approach to life, and practice becomes natural and joyful. When we do not fixate on situations as truly existent, all circumstances become workable. Fear and self-doubt fall away, and our ability to benefit ourselves and others grows.

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6

ZEN BODY

EIDO SHIMANO ROSHI

As far as we know, Śākyamuni Buddha, before beginning his ascetic practice, was trained in Yoga and in sports and was very fit. Nevertheless, his mind was not at peace. His easy and comfortable upbringing did not draw him any closer to understanding the roots of life and death, or the cause of duḥkha (suffering). After leaving the five ascetics who were his practice companions, he started to thoroughly investigate the relation between body and mind, health and peace, and he systematically dropped what went against peace and cultivated what could increase it. He had gone to the end of what a human being can endure, and realizing he was not coming closer to his goal, he accepted an offering of rice cooked in milk and proceeded to abandon his former ascetic practice. He clearly realized that the body is as indispensable as the mind for finding ultimate liberation.

In modern Western civilization, religion has been regrettably reduced to intellectual study. The physical aspect of Judeo-Christian practice has been almost relinquished. While Buddhism was originally a religion of perfect body-mind integration, nowadays, even in Oriental countries, it is fading in favor of ritual and organized events. After the Industrial Revolution in England, life became more and more comfortable, and human beings were less and less allowed to use their own bodies. As

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a result, body and mind became disconnected from each other. This is where real dualistic ways of thinking began. Human beings started to overestimate their brain and neglect the hidden power and intelligence of the body.

Yet, modern people are not satisfied with mere study and literature, and the body gets diseased when not used properly. The Buddha's Four Noble Truths are timeless and are vividly experienced by modern people as well, namely, (1) life is suffering; (2) cause of suffering; (3) there is an end of suffering through the practice of (4) the Noble Eightfold Path. The last point of the Noble Eightfold Path discovered by the Buddha under the bodhi tree is right meditation. In order to meditate, we need our body. We also need our breath, which is of vital importance, to say the least. From the day we were born, we have been breathing freely, without the need to be instructed. Upon reaching adult age, filled with knowledge and concepts, the breath not being cultivated becomes shallow and short. Impatience, anxieties, short temper, lack of confidence, instability, and even stomach ulcers and high blood pressure, all come from the breath not being allowed to flow freely. In Zen Buddhist training, three things are really essential: (1) regulated breath, flowing in a (2) healthy body, and a (3) healthy mind (in this case, psychological mind) with a quest. Those three essentials flow into one when the spiritual aspirant is healthy.

The reason Buddhism and meditation are gaining interest in the West is that it addresses this particular problem and offers a practical solution. Many of my students come from a Judeo-Christian background, and though their philosophical and religious (academic) knowledge is plentiful, they don't feel satisfied. Unless we truly return to the source of our original nature, which is our birthright, our innate wisdom before knowledge took place, we cannot rest at peace.

In Zen Buddhism, sōji (cleaning) is of extreme importance. Not using any appliance, but using bamboo brooms and wet rags, the body is highly stimulated. This stimulation influences our breath, and therefore

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