

Musings on Yoga: Turtle Log

June 2022

Walking within the thin natural world margin of trees and shrubs surrounding the urban realities of the Cedar Hill golf course can be such a sweet quieting time. Gently walking the soft path, occasionally dodging golf balls of those seeking a different practice of slowing down. ...there's yin and then there's yin, different readings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. At one point you come to the spot looking across a wee pond, which has a log, and on that log, may be turtles. Turtles stacked up along the log, most probably Indigenous Painted Turtles, though it could also be Red Sliders (so similar but with a red dot on their heads) another interloper in this island space beside the Salish Sea. Perched, seemingly precariously balanced yet deeply still, drawing in their heat from the external heat source of the sun, as all ectotherms do. I can't help but feel that I am watching a natural world Yin Yoga class in session. Stillness for a time, deeply present, listening and noticing, with the occasional movement ...slide, plop into the water, to move into even deeper depths into the dark of the soft mud below.



Turtles are on the move these days coming out of hibernation moving to summer wetland homes, and searching out spots to lay this year's eggs. Slowly, tenaciously moving as they have since the time of the dinosaurs. They are survivors, used to the possibility of living lives as long as, or much longer than the lives of we humans. Always carrying some sense of their 'home' with them, their place of practice. I certainly feel some resonance with them this year as I transition to this new place, living between the chapters. The psychologist Carl Jung sees the archetype of turtle as that of 'primordial chaos'...leaving me feeling that perhaps my draw to turtle may also be a bit of intuitive processing at work. Where do I practice, where do I teach, where next work? How do I maintain relationships of the last chapter/s along with developing the new relationships with those around me? Streaming *Yin Space*, from a different place and time? Figuring out my bike routes, hot drinks and libraries. Slowing down to listen, pay attention; create balance amidst the lively flows. Yoga turtle/ling!

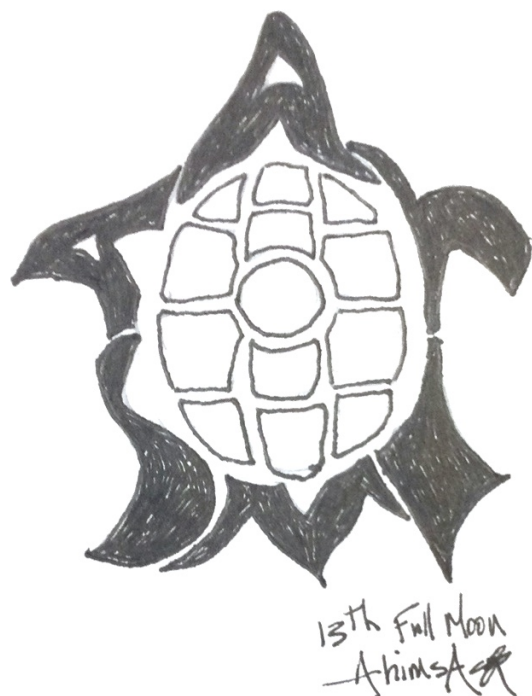
As I do, as turtle does, looking for the ways across the energetic yang roadways that literally and metaphorically crisscross our realities. I'm sure you can picture the dilemma of yin meeting yang in opposition as a turtle crosses the road, - not so much complementary energies. Reminding me of a time years ago when I was making that long drive from west to east on the trans Canada highway reaching one of those typical sections of opposing single lane traffic full of cars and trucks moving either direction. As I was crossing a bridge over a small creek I glimpsed a turtle moving across the road. Images jumped to mind of smucked, and squashed turtle, and I actually managed to slow and stop. Ran back to the bridge. No cars, no trucks in the moment. Carefully stepped in. Snapper, big but looked carryable. Snapper ...oh the stories... don't hang your toes in the water off the dock small boy. No cars, no trucks in the moment. Noted its probable direction of travel, which I now know is the important first thing to do in helping a turtle cross a road, or they will simply turn around once you've gone. Then gently, but firmly clasped the turtle on either side of its shell about 1/2 way back. Now I know that 2/3 could be better, or the hand under the belly technique, especially as I suddenly learned how far back an angry snapper can reach. Not quite reaching my hands but disturbingly, too close for comfort. Thankfully, still no cars or trucks on the road, seemingly an interlude of soft grace as I waddled across the highway to its edge where I could finally lower the hissing turtle onto the ground nearer the creek that it was heading towards. I remember being so awake in the world, so conscious of relationship with the world of the creek and forest all around me. Another of those 'nature mindfulness bells' startling me into awakesness. And then the giant truck roared by...shattering the flow of the moment, bringing me back into the driving world of yang energies, and a different kind of attention.

I wish that turtles could, at times, move more with the speed of the hare, or take on the agility of a 'teenage mutant ninja turtle' that would get them to where they needed to be to lay their eggs, and to live with the most 'live-li-ness' of a turtle being. But this being that has been around since the time of the dinosaurs, simply continues to move slowly, tenaciously against the odds. And I suspect these days, even moving with the speed of a hare there are so many more roadways moving through our world that 'roadkill'd' for any being is a random, or systemic, or moment of inattention away. Making the yin-like wisdoms of turtle, its steadiness and perseverance, slowing down, listening, and going within that much more important in creating balance in life, as Aesop's hare found out in that classic race against the tortoise.

Taking my seat here, learning to dwell and create home in London has meant walking along the watershed of the Thames River, or *Deshkan Ziibi* the original name of the Anishinaabemowin, watching for turtles, so much an integral part of the web of life of these forests, lakes and wetlands. Looking forward to getting to know Spiny Softshell, Spotted and Blanding's Turtles, even old Snapper, who have lived here... a while. Remembering too that first peoples of this land, *Attawandaron*, *Anishinaabeg*, *Haudenosaunee*, and *Lunaapeewak Peoples* (*Chippewas of the Thames First Nation*, *Oneida Nation of the Thames*, and *Munsee-Delaware Nation*) all share a version of the creation story in which the world was created on the back of a great turtle. A story so spread across North America that the continent is generally known by many as Turtle Island (a quick look at a map provides perhaps another reason why...see a tail in Mexico, legs in Florida and Baja as turtles reached northward to the Arctic). Moving me to consider as I walk and cycle and live daily on the back of a great turtle the value of the

seeing the sacred in the world around us, finding the slow, the going within that is so much a part of this yogic practice, be in yin or yang.

Stories within stories....Protection, longevity, slowing down, wisdom, trickster, perseverance, creator, tenacity, holding up the world, water....turtles around the world, key players in cosmologies and myths, symbolic of some desired sense of a wholehearted, full human being.



Honouring this practice of Yoga has meant exploring India's relationship to turtles. Noticing how the god Vishnu, is said to have manifested as one of his avatars (manifestations in the human world to protect or restore dharma, or the cosmic order of things) Kurma, a giant tortoise in order to hold up the spindle made of Mt. Meru that the Devas and Asuras used to churn the ocean of milk to create Amritar the nectar of eternal life. Noticing how the 15th century Hatha Yoga Pradipika identifies the pose 'Kurmasana', tortoise or turtle pose as one of its 15 carefully defined poses, or asanas. It is described as an advanced forward fold, legs extended long in front, spread apart to allow the chest to rest on the earth with arms extended to either side beneath the legs. Emphasizing the yogic action of looking within oneself, as limbs are withdrawn into the shell ...just as the yogi practices one of the 8 limbs of yoga, 'Pratyhara' - withdrawing the senses to meditate. Kurmasana is a challenging pose not suited for any with woundedness of lower back, reminding me of the video (<https://youtu.be/e5zXtvTuTEo>) sent by one of our circle, sharing the story of a powerful act of compassion towards turtles. Outlining the efforts of an Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre that works with turtle trauma, taking in those who have been wounded, shells cracked while crossing the road among other causes of concern, and works to rehabilitate and educate about the lives of turtles. A small, but potent action of kindness and compassion for another being ...May they be free. May they be happy. May they be safe. May they be peaceful and at ease....in their way. Using the wisdom of the practice to work with the cracks and flaws, the broken places within us.

Practice: *Turtle Yin*

June 21st 7:30-9pm PST

Free Class

It is National Indigenous Peoples Day on Turtle Island

.....it is the UN International Day of Yoga

.....it is the first day of summer!

While I encourage all of us to find our way to events acknowledging National Indigenous Peoples Day, in honouring this day I would like to offer up a practice of gentle Yin Yoga and storytelling acknowledging the many wisdom stories and teachings of turtle from this land and around the world, appreciating how this gift of yoga from the land that gave us Kurmasana (Tortoise/turtle Pose) can help us more fully listen and shift the patterns that may limit us and others in our lives as we work towards reconciliation.

Send me an email if you would like to attend so that I can send you a zoom/vite.

Class streamed from the traditional territories of the Attawandaron, Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Lunaapeewak Peoples (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee-Delaware Nation).

The advent of summer, with its yang energies of heat and sun, and our decreasing community care Covid-19 protocols are opening more roads to cross, and travel upon offering opportunity and choices not seen over the last couple of years. It is probably drawing many of us into the running of the hares taking in the fullness of the season. Yet, even as we lean into the yang, there is that seed of wisdom to find some kind of balance in the yin, creating those small ways to chill and restore. Perhaps hiking the day until we come to our tent, or finding our hammock, a log in a pond, returning to our mat yet again, a cool drink in the setting sun or laying out a blanket beneath the summer's night of stars. Slowing, stilling, moving with the flow which speaks to us in the moment, perhaps to find breath and reflection on our internal landscape of being. If you feel yin drawn...more feeling the slow energy of turtle... please feel free to join us in *Yin Space*, streamed to your home live into your warm or cool, cozy 'shell'. An opportunity to turn inwards, slow down to nourish for a few minutes of a day. Or doing your yoga off the mat supporting, or starting the initiatives that may shift our evolving consciousness as a species, supporting the business of local, or even ensuring a turtle has a place to rehabilitate!

And as we move with our rhythms of 'this' summer, where we might be tossed about in discomfort or, lodged momentarily in a joyful place, there is still so much usefulness in learning to be steady as turtle, taking one more step and then another...moving towards the wetlands of our human imaginations with compassion, and kindness...perhaps with some sense of wisdom or wiser choice, knowing that at times it will simply mean learning to embrace the discomfort of the moment, learning to work with the roadways crossing our paths in a way that may bring us to our paths of awakening and joy..... neither pushing away nor craving the better times. Cultivating the perseverance, when to go

within, when to slow, when to dance outrageously, always listening...knowing life's river
will carry us along no matter what.
in weaving,

brad

brad davis
E-RYT200 RYT500 M.Ed.
Yin Space®
www.dragonflyvision.ca
yinspacebrad@gmail.com

I am grateful to be able to live and share this ancient and evolving practice of yoga from the traditional territories of the Attawandaron, Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, and Lunaapeewak Peoples (Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee-Delaware Nation), beside the river Thames, Deshkan Ziibi.

June 2022 Yin Space®

Drop in to the slow, quiet embodied practice of yin yoga to nourish self, release and open, develop resilience and deepen presence. End your day with this deeply nourishing hour and a half practice, both simple and complex, as we use stillness and time to focus on the deep connective tissues (ligaments, joints, bones and fascia networks) of the body, opening flow of energies, and working our own stories at times. There is a strong emphasis on mindfulness practices, along with the inclusion of the natural world and the world stories that shape our daily lives.

Tuesdays 7:30-9 pm PST drop in
or 3 Tuesdays in June for 25.00

Tuesday 21st is free to all

Thursdays 7:30-9pm PST - Drop In
or 5 Thursdays in June for 35.00

Sunday 5th 6-7:30pm PST - Drop In

*Drop In 10.00

OR

30 days all classes for 40.00

Why are we here, Old Turtle? What is our purpose in life?

*Within your question is its own answer, " said Old Turtle,
"for the purpose of life is life. We live that there might
be more of life in the world. More live-li-ness,
More beauty, more generosity, more variety,
more of the gift of life itself....*

- *from Old Turtle: Questions of the Heart (2017)*