

CREATING EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE, LIFE-AFFIRMING
COMMUNITY THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF YOGA
Tejas, Musings and Portals



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Gratitude

Work must start in gratitude....

....to the long lineage of transformative '*storymakers*' who have worked for justice, for freedom, for *moksha* of individual, society, and all beings; to my many teachers who have shaped this weaving; to this land beside the Salish Sea which stirs a deeper meaning of *vrksasana*; in acknowledgement of the Coast and Straits Salish peoples who have never ceded this land; to the Centre for Co-operative and Community Based Economy (CCCBE) for opening the door, and supporting the creation of this project; to the local yoga teachers who gave their time and their stories; to the many in this evolving culture of yoga who continue to find ways to create more life-affirming society in this moment.

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Endpoint

Introduction

"We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations."

– The Earth Charter

Yoga. Yogi/ini. Yoga Teacher. The modern day North American world of yoga. Evolution. Yoga entrepreneur. The global reality. 2014. We are living in a time of expansion, of crisis and creation, interwoven of many strands of cultural knowledge, perspectives and wisdom. We are embedded in a culture and a moment in time shaped by globalization and technology, entwined in old systemic patterns, or might we say 'cultural samskaras', including capitalism, sexism, homophobia, individualism, racism and colonialism. Yet, a creative brightness continues to bubble forth rising on the current of a long lineage of transformative liberatory cultural change, including movements for equal rights, women's rights and the rights of Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered people (LGBT); deep ecology and green movements; engaged Buddhism and yoga; democracy and alternative economics. Overwhelming to consider at times, as we live our busy lives figuring out happiness, meaning, remembering to breathe as we fit in our own practice, wondering where we left the phone and keys, when to pick up the kids AND make it to class to teach...on, oh yes "Sutra 2.35: *ahimsa pratisthayam tat vaira-tyaga*"...that one about non-violence towards others, and hmmm, oh yes, towards self too. Amidst this flow/flood/turbulence/changing we try to figure out our intentions, our choices, and attempt, aspire to bring them into action on and off the mat.

Yoga draws us into a deeper and deeper enquiring as to who we are, and into seeing the world with increasing clarity as our practice swirls open the *maya*¹ that cloaks and gives foundation to illusion,...*making the invisible...visible*. This practice of yoga can offer us a healing of body and internalized trauma. Provide us that juicy, buzzy feeling at the end of a class, and give us the grounding to be our brightest self, power/full in this world. Yet, beyond the personal inward journey it is said that yoga can also stir us to move into a deeper knowing of compassion for others, perhaps even moving us to act for others. At some point in our yoga journey 'we' took another step, choosing to become '*teacher*' bringing with it, its own mantle of identity and power, as we move into a relationship with another the stirs learning, potentially healing, perhaps growth and change. And with power comes

¹ Here the Sanskrit meanings of cloaking and veiling, in illusion is emphasized.

² Paulo Freire has had an enormous influence in shaping the field of adult education, beginning with his classic book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) to *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994). For a précis of the

responsibility. Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire contends that ‘no education is neutral’ illustrating the bigger perspective which points out how embedded we are within our culture always ‘showing, reinforcing, reifying, illustrating, teaching’ some culturally laden perspective². Our teaching stories, our languaging, our clothing, how we came to the studio, what we mention or are silent about, all convey ‘messaging’ in our teaching. At any point our teaching contains a perspective about the larger stories of our culture and our time. Yoga in the West can be said to be evolving shaped by the bigger cultural factors, or ‘stories’ of our historical moment. This Guide is choosing to draw from the work of Eco-philosopher and Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy because her articulation of the significant stories of our historical moment can be seen playing out in the world, and within this evolving culture of Western yoga³. Furthermore, her articulation integrates a longstanding ‘tension’ in the ongoing story of humanity, between freedom and oppression, or dukkha⁴, or dis/easefulness. She states that the choice of this time lies between continuing to support a *Business as Usual* story and the expansion of an Industrial Growth Society, or move us towards a *Great Turning* focused on creating a more ‘life-affirming’⁵, equitable, inclusive and just society. As we examine the evolving world of modern Western yoga we can see these choices playing out here too. Choices being made ranging between reifying a limited capitalist, consumer, exclusionary manifestation of yoga or creating a more inclusive, empowering, life-affirming culture of yoga.

This writing came about as result of a long time transformative environmental and social justice leadership educator/become fledgling (2 year old) yoga teacher gaining a short term (2 month) Community Research Fellowship through the Centre for Cooperative and Community Based Economy (CCCBE), at the University of Victoria. The CCCBE is fascinating as part of the university setting for many reasons, but the one I will mention is their belief in supporting research initiated by members from within the community. So, a desire to do karma yoga and give back to ‘my local community of yoga’ found backing. It is also important to acknowledge that I am a white, North American, middle class man choosing to work in a field, and very much so in this *local community*⁶, shaped mostly by women. And, while I still

² Paulo Freire has had an enormous influence in shaping the field of adult education, beginning with his classic book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) to *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994). For a précis of the latter see http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_sc/freire/sh.html. Freire’s work represents yet another strand ‘of kin’ to that of ‘engaged Buddhism’ or ‘socially engaged yoga’ that is contributing to the weaving in the West of a movement towards creating a more equitable, inclusive, life affirming society.

³ This project draws strongly upon the work developed by Engaged Buddhist scholar and deep ecologist Joanna Macy as articulated in her book *Active Hope*, 2012.

⁴ Dukkha - Dukkha is a Buddhist term commonly translated as "suffering", "anxiety", "stress", or "unsatisfactoriness".

⁵ ‘Life-affirming’ is meant here to include relationship and culture that celebrates life, generosity, freedom and compassion - those things that we uphold as creating a whole/heartedness towards other humans and other beings.

⁶ Local represents the Capital Regional District (CRD) centred around Victoria, BC on the land of the Salish and Coast Salish peoples.

feel fledgling to this field of yoga, which has only been part of my life for 10 years or so, I realize that in many ways I have walked the path of Jnana (of knowledge) and Karma yoga (of service) off the mat as a transformative educator for many years, which has strongly influenced this project. To ground this writing in the local Greater Victoria culture of modern western yoga, which has been part of my life since 2010, I combined a survey of websites of the regional yoga community with interviews with fifteen local experienced yoga teachers. As ideas emerged and solidified, further exploration spiraled out through the yogic blogosphere and cyber world, searching for writings, books and films organized around exploring this social cultural evolution of Western Yoga. The result is offered as a Guide to support an individualized enquiry into, *Creating Equitable, Inclusive, Life-Affirming Community through the Practice of Yoga*. This document is not one that will directly feed the typical paths of enquiry of teaching asana more clearly, with better alignment and breathing. This document is meant to support a more Jnanic yoga form of enquiry into examining the illusions, samskaras, or patterns of our society which shape, constrain or enable our practice along with exploring what it means to express the yoga of karma into this world. It is hoped that this guide will support those yoga teachers who are drawn to this kind of yoga work, as well as supporting the further development of our local yoga community.

But before continuing, it seems important to alert you the reader that this document may stir discomfort and resistance, along with the warmth of resonating visions, both of which we know from our practice on the mat and off, can be amazing doorways to learning. This text was not written in a way that will stir us to 'easily recognized' places of pleasure, but accepts that pokes, prods, tickles, grittiness are all important parts of our journey as much as the deep juicy feeling we often get at the end of an asana practice. That this too is part of our abundance in living in this world. I invite you to hold in your consciousness as you read the interplay of *raga*, craving for the joyful, and *dvesha*, aversion to the uncomfortable and triggering. I appreciate that we who 'do this practice of yoga', or accept that yoga arises through us, have skills from grounding and centering, to breathing, to having concepts and theories that help us work with our arising emotions and stories. We know that at times dropping into *balasana*, literally or metaphorically can be useful. We know too that dropping behind our armour built up over years can be useful at times, as much as it is limiting. Please hold in thought too, words attributed to the Buddha, to be both open and skeptical seeing where this offering meshes with your experience of life, of where you are choosing to walk. I am reminded of the words of Swami Radha (Yasodhara Ashram),

Compassion isn't "niceness." It can be fierce. The most compassionate action is to break the cycle of illusion. Illusions are built from unrealistic expectations. They create a sense of a false reality. That's the thing with the Light, it keeps breaking the pots. Krishna breaks the pots and keeps things moving, so your life

*doesn't become a museum. He frees the rich butter to become available instead of being hidden away.*⁷

So, in continuing onwards I first invite you to take a moment if you have not already...

Ground
and feel the earth beneath your feet

Find centre

Find your breath,
*which reminds you that you are in this moment
that allows you to ride experience
with curiosity and openness.*

As I talked with yoga teachers I was constantly amazed at their depth of practice in self-enquiry, into the body of knowledge that is 'yoga', and their ability to share how it has shaped their life journey. The integration of Jnana the way of knowledge, with karma, that of service was very alive in those I talked with over the weeks in very practical ways, often beyond the level of somewhat intellectual offered here. So, it feels right to offer back a document both strongly *jnanic* and *karmic* in nature. I was also touched by the richness expressed by these teachers of what it also meant to be 'human' with our struggles with our own frailties, questions, unfoldings, and fiery beauty figuring out their path as a constantly emerging yoga teacher. And, while I have worked in many different contexts supporting the development of practice of educator and leader, there was a sweet, deep complexity in being with practitioners who explored not only conceptually and rationally, but through their body, their breath and their capacity to learn to witness; to explore through various meditative practices, and finally their ability to offer teaching from foundations of compassion and love.

These conversations, along with the many words of yogini/i's that write in this world of modern Western yoga kept bringing to mind the question, who are these people who choose to become yoga teacher in this day and age. And in the spirit of intention of this writing, I was drawn back into the *Bhagavad Gita* as one weave of exploration as it is a text, which has inspired many to work to create a more life-affirming society. At one point, the god Krishna in his teaching of the warrior Arjuna, talks of the four groups and their duties in the society of the time. And while, the use of such constructs can be limiting as we explore further on, they can also offer us an entryway into understanding. In an odd way, perhaps, it seems that the modern day yoga teacher contains elements of all these identities. We are asked to express self as a kind of 'brahmin', priest, intellectual, or teacher providing a body of knowledge that does contain an inherent spirituality, beyond religion. Yet we must also craft

⁷ <http://www.ascentmagazine.com/columns.aspx?columnID=68&issueID=1>

the living as 'vaishya' merchants or farmer, or entrepreneur finding ways to market, brand, and share our services. For many of us we work or live too as 'shudra', members of the working class. Yoga teachers do not necessarily have the old time status of priest or monk, teacher or doctors of today's society. Instead we often live a marginalized economic reality, as teacher or business owner walking a fine line of staying out of the red. Some might say, that many yoga teachers have a further quality of 'shudra', simply due to being born women in a patriarchal world. And here for many we could stop in this imagining, yet in talking with yoga teachers, and exploring more broadly the world of yoga in North America one can see an expansion of this role of 'Kshatriya', Arjuna's role - becoming leaders in our communities and learning to act too as spiritual warriors in our society. As I say this, I know too that this last category may not feel unfamiliar to many women, who often carry the role of defender, protector of family, clan, community, and earth. Throughout the *Gita*, through Krishna's teaching Arjuna's role and dharma become clear, while for many of us, a fusion of multifaceted roles and identities our choices may not be as clear. Yet, this stir of the song of the *Gita* lies, in finding what is our truth, our calling, finding what we wish to stand for in the world.

There are many ways to see this world...both in what is happening and how we focus consciously or unconsciously our attention. There are many truths, or perhaps many ways to see truth. There are many descriptions of the story of the moment we live in, but I would like turn to Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy's description of three great stories that are presently unfolding today in our world; *Business as Usual*, *the Great Unraveling* and *the Great Turning*. As you will see Macy's use of the term *The Great Turning* tends to represent a continuation of the longtime story of a humanity choosing to move towards realizing its brightest self, its potential evolution as a species to something more complex and beautiful. This is the story that has been used throughout this guide to represent this striving for *moksha* or freedom, both in the world of consciousness and embodied reality of the human species. The story that is the work of compassion that leads to the liberation of all beings.

The first story with which we have much experience with, and probably for most of us is the paradigm that shapes much of our existence, and many of our choices, is the *Business as Usual* story in which we are told that we are enacting a wonderful success story, where economic and technological development has made our lives easier and better. In going forward we need to do more of the same. It is the story of modern living sold in our media around the globe by our mainstream policy makers and corporate leaders. It is characterized by a number of assumptions:

- Economic growth is essential for prosperity
- Nature is a commodity to be used for human purposes
- Promoting consumption is good for the economy
- The central plot is about getting ahead
- Problems of other peoples, nations and species are not our concern

This is the story we see in our advertising, the story that attempts to move a pipeline across our land, a story that positions us as mostly 'consumers' as our main expression of power. It is the story that emphasizes the competitive drive to get ahead of others, and look after our needs and wants, often defined by our media.

The second story is one resulting from the actions of the first, and is called *The Great Unraveling*. It includes a movement towards economic decline, resource depletion, climate change, social division, war, and mass extinctions. This story is much more painful and challenging to see in our world and learn about. This is the story that can so easily overwhelm and stir defense mechanisms in dealing with its inherent despair. It is also one which *while we know of it at some level*, we also encounter contesting views of where it might be happening, how bad it is, if it is actually true, and when it will be critical. The scale of this story both in the everyday, in its relationship to time, can make it easier to choose to live in denial, rationalization, or ignorance of its implications, especially when one lives in a place, as we do in North America, where one tends to both benefit the most strongly from the story *Business as Usual*, and where the impacts of the second tend to be minimized.

The third story is called *the Great Turning*. Others have called it the sustainability revolution, the ecological revolution or even the necessary revolution. It does not come out of nowhere, as alluded to earlier but is built upon a foundation, a lineage of many people who throughout *history/herstory* have worked to create a brighter, more life-affirming way of 'being human' in relationship to each other and other beings, a way to freedom. And from this place we can start from a place of gratitude for all those who have done work to the present working to create the possibility of a choice of a different way. A lineage of engagement of which we can only see the tips of the iceberg in those such as ... a Buddha, a Patanjali, a Tara, the Haudenosaunee *Great Peacemaker*, a Nellie McClung, a Gandhi, an Indra Devi, a Rosa Parks, a Mandela, a Gandhi, a labour movement, waves of a feminist movement, equal rights movements, a bell hooks, a David Suzuki, a Harvey Milk, a Mary Oliver, an Aung San Suu Kyi, engaged Buddhism, a Malala Yousafzai...so many moments of brightness in action⁸. Many too many to name well, but to simply appreciate that while we know our histories of empire, and conquest and economics, important to remember that there has long been another bright radiant strand of human 'storymaking'. While this story of the *Great Turning* can appear to be happening mostly on the fringes, it continues to exist and grow in justice movements, green and sustainable technologies, emergence of different ways of being awake and engaged in the world, alternative economics, and more sustainable and fair food systems. Paul Hawken in his book *Blessed Unrest*⁹ maps out thousands of organizations around the world working on the issues of the *Great Unraveling*, to ways to bring about a *Great Turning*.

⁸ You might consider identifying your own lineage of transformative change that allows you to find hope in knowing the work of many that we build upon in crafting a *Great Turning*.

⁹ In his book, *Blessed Unrest*, Paul Hawken identifies small organizations worldwide that are working to bring about a vision of a *Great Turning*, often invisible in our everyday media.

These three stories are shaping our evolving culture of Western yoga where we can see *Business as Usual*, ways that yoga can contribute to the *Great Unraveling*, and yoga as part of the *Great Turning*. We can look at the imagery of Modern Western Yoga seeing easily how it is influenced by the patriarchal commodification and celebration of the skinny young bendy female body that is mostly white, excluding the majority of female body shapes. In a culture aspiring to 'inclusion', we can see also see how easily exclusion plays out in bigger patterned ways due to race and class, sexual orientation and ability. Competition between places of yoga, homegrown and corporate chains, between yoga teachers, between students on the mat can be all too common¹⁰. Our culture of yoga feeds all too easily that world of (over)consumerism of product, vacations, and experiences. We can see capitalist practices of 'ownership' of age old ideas creating pain, instead of offering the deserving recognition of creation. We can see how easily a focus on body, disconnected from breath, heart or deeper intentions of the 'practice' can happen. One simply has to watch the film "Yoga Inc."¹¹, to feel some of discomfort of yoga meeting the story *Business as Usual*. And we can increasingly read and hear the critiques of 'just another consumer fad'. Yet, when we listen to the stories of those who practice, or reflect on our stories, we see often healing and transformation, and a 'growing'. We can find the writings, and teachings, and research, on the work of a practice that can offer individual healing, can bring empowerment to individual and community. We can see where it is being used to address the trauma of sexism, homophobia and racism. Used to advocate for peace. Provided teachings and a practice that support us living in this world containing a mixture of despair and hope, beauty and pain. It has offered a necessary sanctuary or community for many, within a culture where one can get isolated all too easily. It offers support to those finding whom they are, finding their voice, in a world where it is all too easy to be silenced. We can even see the possibilities of how this practice can be supporting the deeper growth of an, 'evolving consciousness' that some would say it is essential to truly bring about a *Great Turning*.

So we as yoga teachers and entrepreneurs dance between these stories, entwined in the tension. We live busy, mucky lives, tangled in the reality of the everyday. In one day we might move through all three stories living *Business as Usual*, then encountering some triggering of deep sadness or pain in hearing a story of the *Great Unraveling*, then continuing on to teach a yoga class where we can see a brightness unfolding in a particular student and feel a sense of a *Great Turning*. Living this dance can at times be disorienting and depressing. It can lead to shame and guilt, and overwhelm. While we might know, consciously or intuitively what choices could lead us to more of a brightness of being, all too often 'we don't make them'. It can lead to crafting lifestyle patterns that help us cope, ignore, or even fashion some illusion of advertised happiness (if you own this you will be happy!). Then there are

¹⁰ Not to say that competition is absolutely bad or wrong, simply to acknowledge that when manifesting from a condition of scarcity as emphasized in a world shaped by capitalism, how easy pain, minimizing of others, disconnection, distrust, hurtfulness etc., can be generated.

¹¹ This is one website to watch the film *YogaInc*. http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/yoga_inc

moments when we do act brightly, with clarity, perhaps freed from *devesha* (aversion) or *raga* (attachment)... we remember, we come back to our breath, we find ground and our centre for another brief moment. Perhaps some inspiration can be found in this poem by Hillel.

*I get up
I walk
I fall down
Meanwhile I keep dancing.*

This Guide is an offering to support your own ‘*storymaking*’¹², to finding your way to dance. It is organized to support a personal or collective enquiry into some paths that we as yoga teachers may choose to create to support some version of a *Great Turning*, which while an assumption that the desire for is there, seems born out in the words of all those I talked with, along with many of those that I read, as much as it seems inherent in many aspects of yoga itself. The chapters of this Guide seemed to reveal themselves as an opening flower petal by petal arising from listening to stories, and the spaces within stories, interplaying with my own perspective, which grew clearer as research further strengthened their essential nature; *B'community*, *B'local*, *B'cooperative*, *B'inclusive* and *B'engaged*. You might notice that they tend to bring light to shadow sides that can be seen in the way that modern Western yoga can manifest in our society: to be isolated, individualistic, alienated; to be local in a way that while including some, often misses where we live, and does not consider our impact on others in their homes that we encounter in our journeys of travel; to be overly competitive, in fear and over focused on profit as purpose; to be impacted without knowing by *cultural samskaras*; to be disengaged from society, or our own intentions and ethics in life. Know too, that other stories could have been shared which are arising in the evolution of Western yoga. This one simply seemed to touch on a deep resonating song of freedom and compassion, and service for other that is an integral part of the story of yoga. As a result you will find that they overlap and inter/play and may be explored in any order. Each chapter is organized by a flow through *Tejas* – the Sanskrit term for glow, fiery energy, brightness, or radiance. It is used here to represent places, businesses, groups, etc., which manifest this luminescence in our local community. Followed by *Musings* – thoughts and conceptualizations framing the choice of resources. Ending with *Portals* – websites, articles, blogs, books, videos and films that manifest some aspect of the chapter essence. In each of them you will find links to the many remarkable stories of people doing work they feel leads us towards a creating a more life-affirming world.

B'community

Community is such a complicated term. It is built on the interplay of inclusion and exclusion, give and take, difference and homogeneity. It offers identity, belonging, and relationship all quite powerful in a Western culture so shaped by individualism,

¹² This idea of ‘*storymaking*’ is offered as a way to see creating our own story, in contrast to simply consuming, flowing with the mainstream, or cultural stories of our time.

which oftentimes has created deep feelings of disconnection, isolation and alienation. This chapter examines our ideas of community in yoga, along with considering how do we create community, including setting a seed for exploring what we mean by leader/ship.

B'cooperative

Our 'businesses of yoga' are embedded within a mixed capitalist system, a system that accentuates competition, scarcity, and profit as goal. Yet yoga contains a set of ethics, practices and perspectives that can challenge the limiting aspects of *Business as Usual*. It tends to potentially lean towards creating more of a 'social or purposeful economy' where the community and perhaps the natural world benefit as well. In addition, there is some introduction to the 'essence of cooperation' in economics.

B'local while there has long been a conversation around finding ways to support the local economy, and within that at times specifically locally-based businesses this section explores the potential of yoga to engage in place based learning about the local natural world that shape our everyday lives. In addition, it poses the question of how do we work to recreate a healthier relationship beyond colonialism with the First Nations peoples who live in this place. Finally, we both receive travellers, and we have the privilege to often be travellers as yogis. So how do we travel with intention, mindfully, bringing our practice off the mat?

B'inclusive

We tend to see inclusion as what we aspire to in our classes, studios, and practice itself, though the why of it may vary. However yoga in the West is typified by a demographic of the 25-45 year old, white, middle class female yogini¹³. Increasingly there are those who are demonstrating that there are larger patterns, or cultural samskaras of our culture that can consciously and unconsciously exclude some while privileging others, and further reinforce internalized socio/psychological patterns, which limit our enquiry into self as yogini/i. From this perspective and others, there are those who are increasingly working to expand the culture of inclusivity of yoga in the West.

B'engaged

Late in the 20th century the concept of 'Engaged Buddhism' began to permeate our realities. It arose with folks such as Thich Nhat Hanh and Joanna Macy. It stated the need for a more 'socially engaged Buddhist practice' focused on addressing issues of injustice in the world, in contrast to the tendency of spiritual seeking to draw away from society or be blocked from engagement. While perhaps not completely new as a concept, its naming coincided with the arising of a number of global movements focused on addressing social and ecological justice issues arising in our time. Other integrations of spiritual practice with working on the challenging social and

¹³ <http://www.ascentmagazine.com/webexclusive.aspx?WEID=5&issueID=23> & <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2533368/>

environmental issues of our times have been called spiritual activism, sacred activism, and increasingly in our Western yoga world 'socially engaged yoga', or simply the reinforcement of what it means to do the work of karma yoga. It is the place of practice in this world integrating evolving beliefs with service to community, to the land, to the others peoples of the globe.

This guide is not complete, or comprehensive as say in the way of an academic *literature search*, as there are so many yogi/inis, yoga teachers, yoga business folks who are doing work, which supports the creation of a more life-affirming society. The resources included here are generally those most easily found on Internet, or popular books or films that are easy to find, as it was beyond the scope of this project to delve into the increasing research done recorded in academic journals. There is more out there. If you find a blog site or website useful I encourage you to search within it for the key terms that you have found useful here such as community, community building, sense of community, leadership, leadership capacities, diversity, territorial acknowledgement, first nations protocols, ecotourism, responsible tourism, social economy, social enterprise, socially engaged yoga, intimacy and action, etc. There are so many small stories, amazing actions arising of a *Great Turning*, often overshadowed by those of *Business as Usual*.

Please, take this work, grow your own learning journey, bring these ideas into your teaching, and build a workshop. If you want to chat about these ideas, to *B'collaborative*, please let me know, or find a friend or colleague in your community to create a new project. This project is simply one of the many that folks are doing to create this local yoga community, and working to create a more equitable, inclusive life-affirming society...to bring about the *Great Turning*...there is so much more that could be done.

B' community



B' community

Tejas: 30 day yoga challenge; film nights; walks in the wild; newsletters and blogs; stories of yogis on websites; celebrating teachers; Victoria Yoga Conference; Iyengar newsletter; Yellowyogi; high tea and capture the flag; 40 days of kindness challenge; what pose do you need today?; connections to global lineage community; this Guide; Every name on a card; brunch after?; your feedback tells us; If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution; kirtan; celebration of the life of a student.

Musings

Community. There is something about hearing it, thinking about, feeling it that feels good. It seems that we long for community - belonging, being seen, and valued, working and playing together. It can make us feel safe, and provide the support to take risks and grow. At times too, it can enforce a shadow of over-conformity, and homogeneity, and the giving away of our power. We can get hurt in community. There are boundaries in community, a knowing who is in and who is out. Inclusion and exclusion created through visible and invisible actions. Identity can come with community showing us an aspect of which we are that can be both grounding....and limiting. It seems to touch something deep within us, which we might call primal, a sense of tribe-centred consciousness. One might say it offers us a taste of that interconnection that we might hold to be at the root of everything, something that we are trying to remember. At times, we might further expand that tribe-centric sense of community and ethics to one that is more world-centric¹⁴, of understanding our relationship to humans around the globe and perhaps even to other beings.

We might pose the question of whether our desire for community in the West is further accentuated by living in a modern culture structured by the interaction of capitalism, individualism, globalization and technology, and the mainstream story *Business as Usual* where it is easy to see and feel disconnection, alienation and aloneness; where we can be reduced to simply being consumers, numbers and not the unique beautiful hearts we are beneath our conditioned realities? Which feeds a seeking to create connection or build a form of 'community' through our technology; laptops and iPhones, Facebook and texting. And while we create this weaving of text and message, shared 'selfies' and 'friendings' we yearn too for those places where embodied community, beyond the superficial exists in which to participate, and belong. While our neighborhoods and schoolyards, our places of worship, churches, mosques and sanghas, have traditionally offered us some place for this potential to exist, there have also always been some businesses that have become centres of community, such as the classic pub (anyone remember the theme song of the TV

¹⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worldcentrism>

series, *Cheers*, 'where everyone knows my name'), or perhaps these days the contemporary coffee shop. Nowadays it seems too that every business wants to play to this desire for community, working to develop its 'community', in person or online around its service, product or brand. So here our places of yoga practice we experience the confluence of intention to create a community of shared practice of deep meaning making, along with creating community loyal to a business identity. As teachers and entrepreneurs we navigate this complex space of weaving intentions in creating community; of consumers dependent on a brand, with one that lifts its members up in shared learning; to the potential creation of a nexus, which may serve to grow a more life-affirming societal culture. Creating a form of community is one place where yoga can become a business with a social purpose, beyond simply creating a profit for its owners, as is the essence of capitalism. As this is said, I can also hear in the background shadows the danger that it could become simply another process of commodification of the concept of community itself as another strategy that feeds the *Business as Usual* story of society. But again this is *our dance*, in choosing how *we wish* to create the business of yoga, the service of yoga, the path/s of yoga in the West.

What is community?

If we were to ask a group of people, what is community?...or, why is community important, or valuable?...we would get many answers. And, certainly there are many forms of community, that can be quite different; neighborhood, learning, mosque, school, city, yoga, paddling, skiing, monastic, feminist, online, university, to antique cars. One set of basic definitions of arising from various dictionary sources of community¹⁵ is:

- *a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common;*
- *a group of people living together in one place, especially one practicing common ownership a particular area or place considered together with its inhabitants;*
- *a group of plants and animals living and interacting with one another in a specific region under relatively similar environmental conditions;*
- *a feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, goals.*

Generally, our Western yoga communities tend to accentuate this last definition of community developing relationship through sharing the way/s of yoga (philosophies, practices, interpretations), although the quality of a geographically identified community can be created at times in the 'neighborhood' of the studio, or occasionally at the level of city or region. Further, yoga teachers talk of crafting a sense of community in their classes, their teacher trainings and even longer workshops, while teachers, owners and boards seek to create community within

¹⁵ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/community>

studio or centre. Examples exist of yoga communities drawing from other lineages of practice such as Buddhism's precept of 'sangha', to shape their community. We all see contemporary intentional crafting of innovative forms of community such as Anusara yoga's principle of 'kula' (community of the heart), or through creating a 'community of practice'¹⁶. And, as has happened throughout time, communities form around strong personalities, leaders, teachers, creators, or gurus. Finally, our ideas about community and yoga have often been shaped during our journeys as yogis and teachers which have led us to living in more 'intentional communities' of some kind be it ashram, monastery, sangha, ecovillage or retreat centre. All of these experiences, and more, have given us stories, language, concepts and myths about what a community is or could be; provided idealizations and stories of caution; and perhaps even given us some skills. Community seems both simple and complicated at the same time, but in the end there is something there that stirs a longing, and that offers opportunity in moving us towards a *Great Turning*.

*Human being is a social being. We live in a society and like to share our feelings, happiness and sorrows with our friends, relatives and others. This wish of togetherness and belonging leads to create a community as a whole.*¹⁷

*Having a solid community of people who you can trust enough to be vulnerable and honest with is a foundational part of life. Everyone needs people who encourage, listen to and cry with them. Community offers several valuable gifts that combine to improve our emotional state, relationships and quality of life. **1) Community gives courage:** People who say just the right thing at just the right time give courage to pursue dreams, confront fears and live with less anxiety. A life free from fear is a life that can accomplish anything. **2) Community gives hope:** In a painful, uncertain world the understanding and supportive nature of good, honest community can provide the hope necessary to press on and take chances – even in the midst of pain. **3) Community gives options:** Life without community is lonely; it's lacking in social events, intimate conversation and deep relationships. A strong network of people grants options for a night out, friend to call in a crisis and someone to share a funny story with.*

***4) Community gives constructive feedback:** No one is perfect. The loving people in our lives know that better than anyone and can be a significant part of our individual growth and change. Listen carefully when people offer constructive feedback about your communication styles, decisions and relationships. They have your best interest at heart. **5) Community gives joy:** The long and short of it is that community is fun. The shared memories, laughter and times spent with your closest circle of friends provide memories that truly last for a lifetime. By nature and social practice we are wired to live in groups, to feed on each other's energy and love. We get satisfaction from serving each other, just ask anyone who volunteers. At the same time we are scared of loneliness. This causes a dependency on each other. We are meant to be part of a group of people serving and caring for each other; we call this a community. Evolution has shown us that this is how we can best survive and thrive.*¹⁸

¹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practice

¹⁷ <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/what-is-the-importance-of-a-community.html>

¹⁸ <http://seekingcommunity.ca/blogs/multicultural-cinema-club/why-community-important#sthash.s7HbHpYl.dpuf>

A 'brand community' is a community formed on the basis of attachment to a product or marque. Recent developments in marketing and in research in consumer behavior result in stressing the connection between brand, individual identity and culture. Among the concepts developed to explain the behavior of consumers, the concept of a brand community focuses on the connections between consumers. A brand community can be defined as an enduring self-selected group of actors sharing a system of values, standards and representations (a culture) and recognizing bonds of membership with each other and with the whole. Brand communities are characterized in shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility.¹⁹

'Learning communities' are built on the premise that learning is a social endeavor and that quality learning is enhanced by quality relationships.²⁰

'Sangha' provides you with support and sustenance through those tough times. Being with people who can understand your changing perspective on life is validating and up-lifting. Those of us who choose to follow this path are in the minority at the moment. We are swimming up stream against a culture saturated in materialism, indulgence of the senses, repression, binge-drinking, violence, individualism, fear, victimhood, and egoism. it's easy to get caught in the current and start drifting and before you know it... you're headed out to sea.²¹

'Communities of practice' are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope. In a nutshell: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.²²

How do we create community?

Creating community is hard work. Community is a give and take. We adapt, blend, share, and explore our attachments in community. Community is conflict, not a bad thing, but simply 'IS' part of the relationship²³. It is useful to consider that on this continent we live in a culture that has been shaped by an emphasis on the individual, individual rights, individual choice, the INDIVIDUAL, the needs and wants of the individual. So how prepared are we to really be in community where we must 'compromise' or 'adapt' or 'meld' those needs, wants, identity, rights? Can we move beyond a 'romantic' or 'superficial' notion of community? Finally, how do we learn the skills of discrimination to see when the community does not serve us in our

¹⁹ Wiki: 'brand community'

²⁰ <http://occr.illinois.edu/articles/the-case-for-learning-communities/>

²¹ <http://theyogalunchbox.co.nz/why-sangha-spiritual-community-is-the-most-precious-thing-on-your-life-path/>

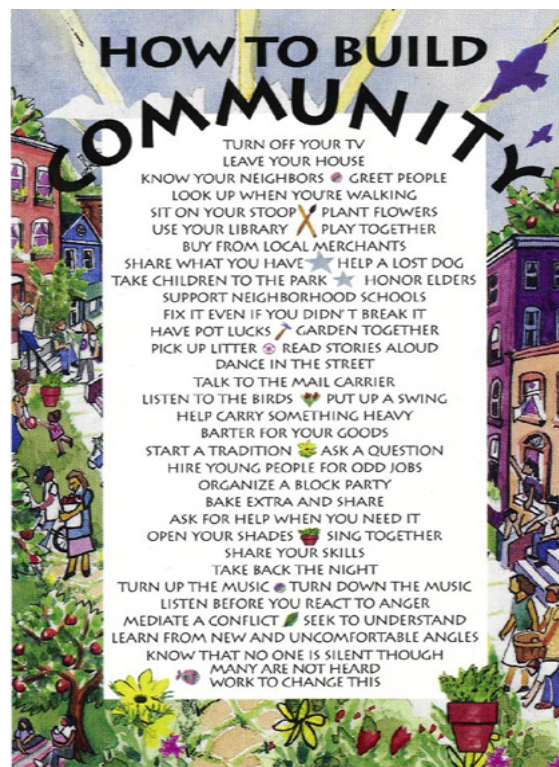
²² <http://wenger-trayner.com/theory/>

²³ Conflict is striking in the way that how we see it often provides us a way to look at our own dvesha (aversion), and engaging with community gives us 'many' opportunities to explore this process.

process of enquiry, not because we have been culturally conditioned to be individualistic in the way of Western culture, but where we must truly be on our own mat of practice of deepening enquiry? What glorious complications our practice of yoga offers us when it comes to explore *B'community* - to learn to explore the boundaries of self and world, self and community, self and ?

A survey of web based resources for what might be applied to creating yoga communities, tended to cluster around three types of community; 1) the geographical based community of neighborhood and town; 2) creating community in the school classroom; and, 3) the creation of online communities often with an emphasis on building a vision around brand, blog, or business. The first grouping or creating a local community has, in the last 30 years, been further accentuated by approaches focused on creating sustainable, environmentally friendly, life affirming neighborhood communities....*B'local*. An example of this can be seen in the classic poster, “How to build community” shown below in Figure 1. And while this focuses on neighborhood it could be a fascinating exercise to working with ones yoga community to adapt it to your setting.

Figure 1. *How to build community.*²⁴



It is suspected that further research would locate more ideas that could be applied but were beyond finding in the time frame of this project. In addition, while research

²⁴ How to build community poster.

is out there around creating a community around 'brand' or 'product' that steps outside the intentions of this research project, but exist easily for those to find²⁵.

Sense of Community

In exploring the process of creating community the following term 'sense of community' kept arising. A *sense of community* is a concept in community and social psychology, as well as in several other research disciplines, such as urban sociology, which focuses on the 'experience of community' rather than its structure, formation, setting, or other features.²⁶ MacMillan and Chavis (1986) who originally define the term, 'sense of community', identify four key factors that contribute to a *sense of community*.²⁷ In reading through them, consider what you do to create a *sense of community* in your class or studio.

- Membership - Boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment, a common symbol system
- Influence – influence needs to work both ways; members need to feel that they have some influence in the group, and some influence by the group on its members is needed for group cohesion
- Integration and fulfillment of needs – members feel rewarded in some way for their participation in the community
- Shared emotional connection – the definitive element for true community includes a shared history and shared participation (or at least identification with the history)

Exploration of this model could provide either reinforcement for what we are doing to create community, or provide the seed for the development of other strategies. It is interesting to look at the typical studio *30 day yoga challenge* here as an application of these factors: students signing up ie. joining by choice; creating an opening ceremony and closing potluck; sharing an emotional connection with others, both those doing it and those witnessing it; creating a community tracking device that encourages investment and accountability, and illustrates to all in the community who is taking this on; sharing a common vision and symbol system; rewards are possible; coming to know the others who are also in the challenge, mutually supporting each other to make it; developing a shared history that could be carried forward in time. Finding ways to apply this model to our classes, and places of practice offers one tool in developing the kinds of community that could serve our intentions in creating community.

²⁵ Researching the language of creating community around product, service or brand is definitely useful, representing yet another portal into exploring the choices for our creation of yoga in a Western world that while built on a capitalist foundation, might also be shaped to lead us towards a *Great Turning*.

²⁶ Wiki: 'sense of community'

²⁷ <http://www.wright-house.com/psychology/sense-of-community.html>

Finally, it should also be noted that there is a large body of team building, or group development literature that contain ideas and tools that could be readily applied to creating community in class or studio setting for doing visioning, trust building, conflict resolution, decision-making, creating inclusion, developing communication skills, providing feedback and evaluation, and celebration. From obvious ideas such as clearly defining the vision of the class (both personal and reinforcing the community culture of the studio potentially), to being transparent in what one is teaching, to inviting participation in asking students if there are any poses they would be interested in that evening, to seeking feedback on the lesson, to finding a way to go to brunch in celebration of a practice.

Creating a community beyond borders

It quite appropriate that most of our energies are directed towards creating community in the *most immediate settings* of our classes, our teacher training programs, our studios, and neighborhoods, supporting one's business or organization, or creating the level of intimate relations through the development of trust and shared vision that supports risk taking and deeper learning. Yet, I want to pose the question of possibilities in growing a more expansive geographical community of yoga, one 'beyond the borders' of a studio or centre of practice. I pose this question in great curiosity wondering what common vision might arise if it was engaged with, and even to what form it might take, if any. Perhaps it is vision enough for a regional yoga community to simply stimulate an interest in yoga that would bring in more students, customers, potential studio community members to any studio or place of yoga practice, and to purchase more yoga products. Yet, there is a part of me that wonders if there could be more possibility in purposefully developing a broader, more intentional local community. I wonder about creating a dedicated community of practice that would further support the development of our capacities as teachers whatever yoga lineage or approach we take. Certainly, as these questions are posed, it is done knowing that there are already informal linkings that serve some of this purpose, web networks such as yellowyogi and that projects such as the Victoria Yoga Conference working to create this wider sense of community? Yet, there is this wondering of whether more is possible and, whether more is useful? Is there possibility to create weavings that would support ways in coming together to work on issues within our community? What would it look like if every studio created a 'soup kitchen' support activity of some kind in synchrony? If every studio sent a female teacher as part of a team to run in the Victoria Goddess Run to raise money for the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, knowing that when we look out at our students, there will be a percentage who have suffered from violence of some kind. Are there ways to further stir up the potential arising from the creation of so many newly minted yoga teachers to expand yoga practice, along with other mindfulness work into our larger community. What would it look like if teachers, owners, board members, and other yoga entrepreneurs came together at the 'kitchen table' to envision possibility in this region? The following ideas have grown out of conversations with a wide range of yoga teachers towards growing a regional yoga community.

Figure 2. *Ideas for Creating a Regional Community*

- Creating a community visioning project
- Creating a survey of yoga teachers, yoga students of what would benefit our yoga community/ies
- Creating a counsel of elders
- Whole community organized support of local issues ie karma yoga
- Further developing the Networking/sharing sites such as YellowYogi
- Yoga conferences, celebrations and workshops that cross disciplines/studios and offer learning of asana, jnana, bhakti and karma
- A jnana yoga series that looked at the sociology of evolution in the West
- Creating a community of practice (See Wiki: Community of Practice or <http://wenger-trayner.com/theory/>)
- Addressing an issue as a whole yoga community eg. A teacher from each studio as part of a project.
- Workshops on community building and that are community building
- Create a yoga leadership series
- Teach community building and leadership as part of one's Teacher Training
- Inclusivity training as described in the chapter *B'inclusive*
- Network with other local larger life affirming community development networks or projects
- Researching what other communities are doing

And, perhaps in our age shaped by the competitive nature of capitalism, by an ideology of individualism this vision is limited to the story of *Business as Usual*, where a culture shaped by strong competition, and focus on individual needs limits this coming together? But then again, maybe there are weavings that are entwined in growing a *Great Turning* in this community, and that indeed is may already be happening! As, Arundhati Roy observes,

Another world is not only possible, she's on the way and, on a quiet day, if you listen very carefully you can hear her breathe.

Leadership and Community

In exploring the creation of community one cannot help but engage with the concepts of leader, leading, or leadership. Leaders or acts of leadership tend to emerge in response to issues and opportunities, crisis and danger, as much as they are woven into positions of authority. Often, they are the result of many years of training, prep or experience while at other times they were simply the spontaneous act of something that wished to stand up for something. When we look at yoga in the West we tend to see leadership originating from owners of studios, senior teachers of a lineage, guru or other spiritual leaders, board of a non-profit, yoga rockstar, or yoga association, or teacher of a class, innovative entrepreneur or some combination of the aforementioned. Additionally, we might also say that we are

interested in crafting an internal capacity of leadership of our students of their own learning; developing their self awareness, ability to vision, develop rigour and processes of feedback, trust in listening inwards, capacity to work with internalized conflict, working with others. Increasingly, we see this strand of enquiry into leadership arising in yoga courses and conference workshops, fed by research from corporate or other research settings, or arising from within the practice itself further shaping the evolution of Western yoga.

When we begin to explore leadership we find that it too is quite diverse, and multifaceted. While the study of leadership dates back to folks such as Plato, Sun Tzu and Machiavelli it only starts to become a place of focused academic study sixty or so years ago, seeing a further acceleration of investigation in the last couple of decades.²⁸ It is a study containing many myths (that were once *common sense*) such as; is a leader born or made, are women too emotional to be leaders, or does every good leader need to have charisma? Many theories of leadership have been created from 'servant leadership' to 'situational leadership' to 'transactional leadership'.²⁹ Lists identifying the key qualities or characteristics of a good leader abound (ie the list of '10 things'). Studies look at not only the concept of leadership, but followership as well. It is a conversation that has been strongly shaped by research in the corporate setting, along with folks using spiritual texts such as the Tao or the Gita to deepen our understanding of this concept. Leadership theory also bleeds into the broader exploration into governance, citizenship and democracy, and general engagement in the wider world of issues, and community. While it is beyond the scope of this Guide in the moment it seemed important to, at least tease open the portal of enquiry into an idea very relevant to our explorations of *B'community*.

In closing this chapter, I want to return to a remembering of forces within our present day culture that stimulate experiences of isolation and disconnection, or the creation of unhealthy connections to others, stuff and experiences in coping and adapting to our historical moment that stirs an aching, or a longing for healthy connections. Secondly, that there is something in the *idea of community*, of working, learning, acting together that continues to draw us, and provides one model of healthy connection to others. Thirdly, that community can be quite practical and useful in both developing a business and supporting our learning and practice. Lastly, that it can be used both to support a story of *Business as Usual* and one of a *Great Turning* depending on our intentions, craftings, and choices. Furthermore, perhaps through our exploring the *experience of community* in our yoga communities we can learn the ways to truly work, act, govern together in ways that are shaped by the ethics and skills of our practice (what would a house of commons look like if it contained periods of grounding, centering and breathing as part of its Rules of Order?), with a weaving of deeper wisdom traditions. We might find that we can create community, which not only celebrates commonality, but also finds ways to deeply embrace where we are different and unique. Create forms of

²⁸ Wiki: 'Leadership Studies'

²⁹ <http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/p/leadtheories.htm>

community that offer greater healing, deeper learning, places to dispel illusion to see clearly, for ourselves as individuals and in wider and wider circles spiraling out in a *Great Turning*. Better prepared to find the dance between the unfolding of individual knowing and the unfolding that supports other beings.

I think a major act of leadership right now, call it a radical act, is to create the places and processes so people can actually learn together, using our experiences.

- Margaret J. Wheatley

A community is the mental and spiritual condition of knowing that the place is shared, and that the people who share the place define and limit the possibilities of each other's lives. It is the knowledge that people have of each other, their concern for each other, their trust in each other, the freedom with which they come and go among themselves.

- Wendell Berry

Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person. Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.

- Mother Teresa

"The Buddha, Shakyamuni, our teacher, predicted that the next Buddha would be Maitreya, the Buddha of love.... It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The next Buddha may take the form of a community, a community practicing understanding and loving kindness, a community practicing mindful living. And the practice can be carried out as a group, as a city, as a nation."

- Thich Nhat Hanh

There can be no vulnerability without risk; there can be no community without vulnerability; there can be no peace, and ultimately no life, without community.

- M. Scott Peck

True leaders understand that leadership is not about them but about those they serve. It is not about exalting themselves but about lifting others up.

- Sheri L. Dew

In every community there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart there is the power to do it.

- Marianne Williamson

Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage. Truth and courage aren't always comfortable but they are never weakness.

- Brene Brown

Portals

http://www.yogajournal.com/for_teachers/2645

Article: Building a yoga community.

<http://www.yogitimes.com/article/yoga-business-advertising-studio-building-community-students-teachers/>

Article: Building yoga community, building business.

<http://www.mindfulnessbell.org/wp/2013/08/dharma-talk-sangha/>

Dharma talk on Sangha by Thich Nhat Hanh.

<http://www.communitteam.org/cbinworkplace.pdf>

Article: Building community from within.

<http://www.wright-house.com/psychology/sense-of-community.html>

Description of McMillan and Chavis psychological sense of community theory.

<http://www.senseofcommunityresearch.org/research/updates/identifying-concepts-that-build-a-sense-of-community>

Article: An updated research article exploring McMillan and Chavis model of sense of community.

http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Documents/soc_biblio.pdf?noredirect=1

Exploring a sense of community: Annotated Bibliography.

http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/27380_Chapter3.pdf

Article: Understanding group dynamics and systems.

<http://www.cdc.gov/phppo/pce/part1.htm>

Community engagement: Definitions and organizing concepts from the literature.

<http://www.edtec700de2.sdsu.edtechsource.com/content/7-characteristics-learning-community-whatever-form-it-may-take>

Article: 7 characteristics of a learning community whatever form it may take.

<http://wenger-trayner.com/theory/Website on Communities of Practice>.

Website outlining communities of practice

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_of_practice

Wiki: "Community of Practice".

<http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/2855.html>

Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge - Seven Principles for Cultivating Communities of Practice.

<http://communityyogavancouver.com/resources-2/>

Webpage of Community Yoga Vancouver to a variety of sites that relate to some topics, and beyond shared in this Guide.

Trauma in Community

Note: Resources on trauma have been centred in the *B'inclusive Portals* section.

<http://yogauonline.com/yogatherapy/yoga-for-stress-relief/yoga-for-stress-relief-practice/1531021714-trauma-informed-yoga-y>

Article on Trauma_informed yoga: yogahope and a new strategy for change by Carol Horton.

Leadership

http://www.etsu.edu/ahsc/documents/Leadership_Theories.pdf

Brief overview of leadership theory development.

<http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/p/leadtheories.htm>

Brief overview of leadership theory development.

<http://www.ansc.purdue.edu/courses/communicationskills/leaderqualities.pdf>

The 21 indispensable qualities of a leader.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4A87XJ7iPMI>

Yoga mindfulness and leadership with Aetna CEO.

<http://www.couragerenewal.org/parker/writings/leading-from-within>

Article: Leading from within by Parker J Palmer (*Courage to Teach*).

<http://www.elephantjournal.com/2012/02/six-leadership-lessons-from-my-yoga-teacher-dale-myers/>

Article: Example of deriving leadership lessons from yoga practice.

<http://www.medimanager.com/my-worries/more-articles/yoga-develops-leadership-qualities.aspx>

Article: Example of deriving leadership lessons from yoga practice.

https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability

TED talk on power of vulnerability by Brene Brown

B' local



B' local

Tejas: *West Coast Flow Series, Yoga in the (Beacon Hill) Park, Nature High Yoga Series, (paddle)Board Yoga; karma class funds to Raincoast Conservation Foundation; community hikes; Teaching tree/Teaching forest; Auroville, Pune, Chennai; Sama Fabian, Mishra family, Christina Sell, Christine Price-Clark, Nancy Gilgoff, Jawahar Bangara; Saltspring Centre of Yoga or Linnea Farm; workshops led by local teachers who travel to deepen their learning.*

Musings

Localwhere we live, here, now. We live in the land of big trees of Douglas Fir and Red Cedar beside the Salish Sea, where orca and sea otter play, beneath the flow of eagle and raven. We live within the nation state of Canada, in British Columbia in the Capital Regional District centred in Victoria, called at times Greater Victoria. We live on the unceded lands of the Straits and Coast Salish peoples. We live within Cascadia on the western edge of Turtle Island on the rim of fire. We live within a tapestry of ecosystem, First Nations, demographics, and cultures that is unique. We are not Toronto, or San Francisco, Halifax, or Chennai or Pune. And while we live in a world of globalization, rapid movement of materials, people, ideas, a world entwined through iPhone and laptop, we still have a sense of the LOCAL, and there is an understanding that power exists in knowing our place.

Over last decades as the world has become bigger and bigger we have seen a further shift to the support and naming of the 'local' as both a reclaiming power and a movement, as decisions that affect us are increasingly made far away by government, and by corporations, which funnel profits to other places. Our food and 'stuff' travel huge distances creating huge impact including dependency, exploitation, vulnerability and instability. Many contend that we still live in a time of empire, of colonialism, and that we who live in this place of Greater Victoria enjoy the privilege of that global relationship. Somewhere in the last decades a saying, became popularized 'think globally, act locally'.³⁰ It was a movement towards supporting local economies, local culture/s and languages, and the local land. It also contained the belief that if we know the local...land, we would look after it more consciously, mindfully. We might say that 'acting locally' IS a mindful practice of its own from knowing one's place, 'buying locally', to understanding and addressing local issues.

Often, the pursuit of yoga in the West has tended to be deeply woven into the local. Studios tend to be locally owned. Teachers are local. Businesses that serve yogis are often local from coffee shops, to restaurants, to printers, to musicians, to

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Think_globally_act_locally

bodyworkers, to carpenters, to artists, to therapists, to photographers. And while, the accouterments of yoga such as mats, and blocks, and clothing tend to be from away, increasingly there may be a local maker as well. This seems to lead potentially to the development of a web of small businesses supporting each other. As well, financial affairs may even be conducted through relatively local credit unions, which focus on the supporting the regional, instead of remaining entwined in the realm of the mainstream banking institution. Building a local economy where funds stay within the community and grow the community. *B'local*. And, local exists on oh so many layers....

The Land

We live in a local dominated by us - the human species and our constructions of houses, buildings, roadways and, yoga studios. Yet our home lies embedded within a landscape of Coastal Temperate Rainforest beside the Salish Sea (or Puget Sound/Juan da Fuca Strait) where winter rains give way to summer drought. Land meets ocean. Tide and current move our waters where Humpback whale, orca, and Dall's porpoise live. Five species of salmon return to these waters. Southern California Sea Lion meet up with Northern Stellar Sea Lions, and hang out with Elephant Seals on nearby Race Rocks. Overhead, Bald and Golden eagles cruise knowing no political boundaries. Conversations of raven and crow, low thrum of hummingbird, punctuated by the raucousness of Kingfishers create a background soundscape. Three species of innocuous snake, including the Garter Snake and the Sharp-tailed snake shed their skins like cobra. Forests of big trees of Douglas Fir, Red Cedar and Sitka Spruce dominate our senses interspersed by twisting trunks of Arbutus, and the meadows of Gary Oak and Camus.

Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.

- Albert Einstein

Our asana practice contains a strand that has been shaped by the land, other beings or nature; cobra, lizard, tree, dog, crow, eagle. Elemental nature can be also be found woven in to the teachings...of water, earth, air, water, ether through the teachings of the Indian medical science of Ayurveda. Stories - metaphoric, mystical and literal of the natural world are entwined in our practice.

What if?....we were to expand our insertion of our local into our programing and teaching language. Teaching place. Teaching within place. In ways that respect and connect us to, and guide us to, look after those places, those beings...all our relations. We tell stories of gods and goddesses. Could we not tell stories of cedar and salmon, at least with children (and I suspect that there are children's yoga teachers who have already caught on), though adults need this too. Could we not expand our students' understandings of what it means to look after this natural world (as the occasional studio, teachers have begun to do)?

Then too, I remember my own humble beginnings of practice surrounded by rain tree, bamboo and Banyon. Where cobra did move through the underbrush surrounding the yoga circle in my community of Auroville in India. Our program had an ecology strand that also concurrently taught us the ecology of the landscape where we practiced. Layers upon deepening layers of knowing who we were in relationship to interbeing. Appreciating that numerous teachers already do practice in parks and on beaches, how rich it could be to weave in storying from the wild places as we taught in those places! Drawing inspiration from the trees, the orca, the kingfishers and garter snakes, the camus and pileated woodpeckers. Finding our breath moving outwards, carbon dioxide nurturing the trees while their production of oxygen fills our beings moving our prana as we stand in tadasana.

Could we integrate our practice of seva and service, and even business to directly support those who do the work of conservation of place their priority, or do more of it in our work of teaching? Can we shift, expand our students understanding of place, of what it means to *B'local* by integrating a new mapping of place based practice growing an understanding of the local ecologies, and the local beings who are not human? Perhaps expanding the traditional maps in our minds of place built upon images of roadways and shopping malls to growing more bioregional maps in our imaginations that contain the habitat, homes, and lifeways of other local beings, or species.

What if in coming to stand in vrksasana, tree pose, we were asked to find arbutus or cedar, manifest some essence of our towering Douglas Firs or dancing Gary Oaks?

First Nations

When I moved to Victoria and began participating in, attending various events, teaching in various youth and adult leadership programs I noticed that folks often sought to acknowledge and identify a relationship shaped by historical and present day issues with the local First Nations peoples. It made me aware that in this place, there is an important movement that seeks to examine, acknowledge and develop 'right' relationship to the first peoples of this land. While exploring this relationship is a complex endeavor of its own that will be the path of some, one action that has bubbled to the surface consistently is the action of creating a protocol of recognition and respect in acknowledging our living on unceded First Nations lands. These *Territorial Acknowledgements* usually identify, however briefly the difficult history and impact that colonialism has brought to these peoples (often simply including the term 'unceded lands' in verbal acknowledgements), and our commitment to supporting a deeper life affirming relationship that will lead to a healing of our cultures (through some sort of territorial acknowledgement).

For we, a community who celebrates inclusivity and an understanding what it can mean to draw from others' histories, attempting to learn these protocols along with developing a knowledge of who the First Nations on this land are seems an act of the yamas; ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthful) and asteya (non-stealing), at least. Learning to integrate an understanding of place beside the Salish Sea (Puget

Sound/Juan da Fuca Strait) or, while practicing on the slopes of p'kal (Mount Douglas) into our mapping of home seems also important to consider. This is a complex 'asana' of its own, and these words are only a start, but if we do wish to make yoga truly open to First Nations, and to others who have been marginalized this seems important. We may not get it right. It may make us uncomfortable. But holding intention around this question seems important in being local.

Below are included a number of *Territorial Acknowledgments* found on local educational and service websites which may provide us a first step to creating our own acknowledgments. Of course it certainly would be respectful to ask those nations themselves what could be the appropriate protocol for our yoga studios, our teacher trainings, or our workshops/classes, which might be a process some in our community would be willing to take on for us all. Verbal acknowledgements in prefacing workshop, or conference or event are also quite common, often quite straightforward and short as noted earlier, which might be something to bring into our teaching of yoga in this place.

Territorial Acknowledgements

Camosun College Website

Camosun College campuses are located on land that is the traditional territory of the Lkwungen, Esquimalt, and W SÁNEĆ peoples. We acknowledge their welcome and graciousness to the students who seek knowledge here. The College serves the communities of southern Vancouver Island and the south Gulf Islands that are located in the traditional territories of the Esquimalt; Lkwungen; Malahat; Pacheedaht; Pauquachin (W SÁNEĆ); Scia'new; Tsartlip (W SÁNEĆ); Tsawout (W SÁNEĆ); Tseycum (W SÁNEĆ); and T'Sou-ke Nations.

Royal Roads University Website

Daily, we acknowledge the ancestors of the territory and raise our hands to give thanks to them that allow us to work within their ancestral territory. There are traditional stories owned by First Nations families that speak to the history of the lands Royal Roads University and Hatley Park rests upon. We acknowledge this territory as shared traditional lands of the Coast Salish people who once lived here to harvest the land for clothing, tools, food, and medicine.

This land is defined by the 1850 Douglas Treaty with the Teechamitsa people. Today, the Songhees, Esquimalt, Scia'new and T'Sou-ke First Nations have members who are descendants of the Teechamitsa. We are filled with gratitude to the Coast Salish people who allow us to work within their traditional territory. It is our mission to build a strong working relationship Coast Salish people and Royal Roads University with trust, humility, kindness and respect for each other.

We will remember to begin each day to remember to acknowledge the history of this land, to continue to walk softly on these ancestral lands of the Coast Salish people.

Uvic Indigenous Governance Course Acknowledgement

The University of Victoria is situated on the unceded territory of the Lekwungen people. This is their land, a reality that all of us who have come here must acknowledge. We must also recognize how our presence here interrupts ancient ways of being in this world. We all therefore we have a responsibility to prevent further intrusion into Lekwungen lives, and if

called upon lend out support to the expression of Lekwungen nationhood. We must also recognize that we are living on top of someone's home—spread across Greater Victoria are the hunting and fishing grounds, village sites and ceremonial places of Coast Salish people, and we must acknowledge how our presence here can disrupt the relationship between the original people and their land.

Victoria Native Friendship Centre

We would like to acknowledge the Coast Salish People of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations for their gracious hospitality. It is an honour and a distinct pleasure to work within their traditional territory. ³¹

The Anti.Violence.Project

The Anti Violence Project would like to acknowledge the Host Communities and Nations in whose territories we work and live: the Lekwungen (Chekonein, Chilcowitch, Swengwhung, Kosampsom, Whyomilth, Teechamitsa, Kakyakaan, Songhees, Esquimalt) and WSÁNEĆ (STÁUTW/Tsawout, WJOLELP/Tsartlip, BOKÉĆEN/ Pauquachin, WSIKEM/Tseycum) Peoples. We would also like to express gratitude to the other local Peoples and Nations in this region including the MALAXEt (Malahat), Scia'new (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke(Sooke), Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht Peoples. We recognize the inherent connections between colonialism and all forms of violence. Recognizing the violence of ongoing colonialism and engaging in anti-colonial actions is critical to our work as anti-violence advocates.

Finally, as is beginning to be done, where might it be possible *and appropriate*, to reach outwards to groups within First Nations to create ways to offer an 'evolving practice of yoga'?

Travel as 'yoga off the mat'

Throughout the year, though with an upsurge as we move into the summer drought in this temperate rainforest beside the Salish Sea, more and more travellers, and tourists show up in our local. They will generate mixed feelings of gratitude in supporting local economies, along with a combination of feelings of frustration, anger, irritation at the way that they can be oblivious to the impacts of tourism on the local culture and the land. If we could request of them right and ethical behaviours as visitors what would it look like? Of course in posing this question it is important to consider that we, yoginis and yogis from this place, probably share the cultural privilege of being from the First World, whose economics make it easier for us to travel as tourist, pilgrim, expat, student to far away lands. Also, that we hold an understanding that the privilege of choosing to travel is NOT a truth for all in our globalized world.

And we do travel as yogis, yoga teachers, business owners...we travel to retreats to heal, find spaciousness, deepen our learning, find adventure, and open ourselves to the stimulus of the exotic. Periodically we might travel to work to support ourselves,

³¹ It is important to note that acknowledgments differ depending on whether one is First Nations from a different place, or of Eurocentric or other origin whose descendants were part of the colonialization of this land.

and our families. Sometimes we might travel to serve others, or to look after the land and other beings. There are so many reasons that draw us into travelling - hopping into a vehicle, onto a bike, into a boat or for long distances mostly, onto an airplane. We do this perhaps not knowing that travel does have impact (or the scale of that impact) that can be detrimental (as much as it can be seen to be supportive of local economies and the global economy) in contributing to the loss of culture and language, and the degradation of environments. We can overlook too, that we of Eurocentric origin have a long history of traveling as adventurers, seekers, pilgrims, exploiters, colonizers, immigrants, conquerors, those who serve, expatriates, aid and development workers, tourists, that has shaped how local peoples see those who travel, and has not necessarily been forgotten. The world we travel into today has been shaped and impacted by folks who come from away...who everyday come from away, as our community is impacted, shaped by those who come from away. How do we approach this conundrum of travel with its weaves of deep richness and intense grittiness? Certainly we can choose to deny the impacts, or their scale of effect; we can potentially spiral through feelings of guilt and shame; we can find all the pluses (and many exist); or simply choose to ignore it...but if our ideal is to approach all aspects of our lives as yogi/nis as intentionally, mindfully as we can what could it look like to travel with this in our minds, energies and bodies?

Well perhaps one obvious way is to stay local, stay home. And interestingly this has become one highly advocated practice of developing a culture of sustainability and being green...stay home. We can calculate our 'eco' or 'carbon' footprint and take a breath. And if we do stay local, perhaps we learn online. We can support our local studios, and businesses that work to bring in teachers from away minimizing the impacts of travel. Or we choose to travel more regionally where impact is not as significant. We can learn from our teachers and, colleagues who have made their ethical choice to go to India, or other sites that deepen learning...we don't all have to go.

And then, when we do travel to places far away...as many of us will.....*as I will*...we can bring our mindfulness, our ethics, our awareness of privilege, our intention, our ability to live with discomfort and joy, our ability to be in clarity, to be intimate with the world...and consider right action, responsible and ethical practice. While, for some travelers the integration of how to visit faraway lands ethically, mindfully, with respect and consideration of the local has long been a practice, the late 20th century saw the identification of more formalized ethics around ecotourism, sustainable and responsible travel, that could support this place of individual choice and practice.

In 1990 The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defined the concept of *ecotourism* as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."

They created six basic principles

- * Minimize impact.

- * Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.
- * Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- * Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.
- * Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.
- * Raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.

Since that time a number of other definitions of 'responsible travel have been conceived.

- *Eco-conscious travel* Conscious means being aware of something. Eco means concerning the environment, so "eco-conscious travel" essentially means being aware of the environment, and your impact on the environment, when you travel.
- *Eco-friendly travel* Again, eco relates to the environment and we all know what friendly means, so "eco-friendly travel" means being nice to and having little impact on the environment when you travel.
- *Eco-Tourism* is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.
- *Responsible Travel* expands beyond the traditional notions of environmentalism and encompasses socially-conscious travel. It means understanding, respecting, and supporting the cultures and people in the area you are visiting. We like this definition from Lonely Planet: Responsible tourism can be more-or-less defined as travel that takes into consideration the 'triple bottom line' issues of: Environment: travel that minimizes negative environmental impacts and, where possible, makes positive contributions to the conservation of biodiversity, wilderness, natural and human heritage. Social/Cultural: travel that respects culture and traditions and fosters authentic interaction and greater understanding between travelers and hosts. Economic: travel that has financial benefits for the host community and operates on the principles of fair trade.
- *Sustainable Travel* is defined as "a level of tourism activity that can be maintained over the long term because it results in a net benefit for the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of the area in which it takes place"
- *Organic Travel* Honestly, "organic travel" doesn't make sense. Organic, in the context of being green, generally means produce or dairy grown or raised without the use of pesticides or hormones. So strawberries can be organic, shirts can be organic, even sheets can be organic. But travel can't be "organic."
- *Green Travel*: Thinking about your impact on the environment (both the physical and social environment) when you travel.

Traveling has become a part of our world of *Business as Usual* AND is also part of the *Great Turning*, even given the understanding that air travel is problematic. However,

we who have the privilege to choose to travel more easily than most in this global village, can choose how, where, when and if, we travel. We can travel mindfully, with intention, integrating the Yamas and Niyamas, Buddhist precepts, ecotourism principles, or whatever other ethical foundation, or philosophy we use.

Portals

Ecology

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/ecology/ecoregions/>

Ecoregion map of British Columbia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_temperate_rain_forest_\(WWF_ecoregion\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacific_temperate_rain_forest_(WWF_ecoregion))

Wiki article describing the rain forest ecosystem that we live within.

http://www.oregonwild.org/oregon_forests/old_growth_protection/pacific-northwest-research-station-old-growth-a-unique-ecosystem

Old growth forest factsheet.

<http://www.victoriatravelguide.com/vancouver-island/west-coast-forest-ecosystems.htm>

Basic introduction to west coast forest ecosystems for travellers.

<http://www.geog.uvic.ca/viwilds/index.html>

Precise description of our Gary Oak meadow habitats.

<http://www.goert.ca>

Garry Oak ecosystems recovery team. Information, resources and projects on promoting Gary Oak conservation.

<http://www.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/GarryOakEcosystems.html>

Garry oak ecosystem overview.

<http://www.seadocsociety.org/salish-sea-facts/>

Basic introduction to the Salish Sea.

<http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/initiatives/ecosystem-mapping/types-of-sensitive-ecosystems.aspx#mveg>

Brief descriptions of small ecosystems in our area.

<http://www.wallawalla.edu/academics/departments/biology/rosario/inverts/>
invertebrate descriptions of the Salish Sea.

<http://depts.washington.edu/fhlk12/links/NatHistory/mammals.pdf>

Description of marine mammals found in the Salish Sea.

<http://www.orcahome.de/salish.htm>

Article on orca natural history.

<http://www.raincoast.org>

Raincoast is a team of conservationists and scientists empowered by our research to protect the lands, waters and wildlife of coastal British Columbia.

<https://vancouverislandnature.wordpress.com>

Nature musings on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

<http://www.artistresponseteam.com/handbooks/>

Music, ecology, entertainment, education, action!

<http://coastalspectator.ca/?p=1750>

Poet explores Garry Oak's Vitality in her book, *Garden's Aflame*.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cascadia_\(bioregion\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cascadia_(bioregion))

Bioregionalism is an alternative approach to mapping in contrast to our typical maps, including things such as ecosystems, first peoples and contemporary actions aiming at creating a more sustainable culture. Cascadia is the bioregion that our area falls within.

First Nations

<http://maps.fphlcc.ca>

First peoples language map of British Columbia.

<http://www.vnfc.ca/home>

Home website of the Victoria Native Friendship Centre

<http://www.esquimaltnation.ca>

Esquimalt First Nation website.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esquimalt_First_Nation

Wiki article on Esquimalt First Nation.

<http://songheesnation.ca>

Songhees First Nation website.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Songhees>

Wiki article on Songhees First Nation.

<http://firstnationspedagogy.com/theory.html>

One overview of First Nations approach to education.

http://web.viu.ca/firstnations/doris/trees_3.htm

First nation study of trees.

Ecotourism

<http://studyabroad.unc.edu/downloads/Green%20PassportHandbook.pdf>

Article on sustainable travel.

<http://traveler.nationalgeographic.com/sustainable-travel-tips>

50 ways to journey responsibly and still have fun.

<http://www.yale.edu/yalecollege/international/sustainability/tips.html>

Tips for sustainable travel abroad.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecotourism>

Wiki article on ecotourism.

B' cooperative



B' cooperative

Tejas: *Community classes; Vision program, Didi Society; Coast Capital Credit Union; Barter with B'love, Monk Office supplies; Deva Premal and MC Yogi, Yoga for Youth, board of directors, yellowyogi, class by donation; listing of business friends in the local; teacher seva for 108; 40 day kindness challenge; non-profits & collectives; green tips; TT referrals.*

Musings

Yoga in a capitalist world

Economics, “the management of the household” for we who live embedded in the world as ‘householders’, not yogis or monks living lives removed, in forests and caves, ashrams and monasteries, but regular people, yogis and yoginis, teachers, crafters of yoga spaces and products, writers who must find the way to ‘manage our households’, and pay the bills as a significant portion of their lives. This world of economics in North America (and the globe) shaped by capitalism and consumerism, and by the power of corporation mediated by government intervention, has become the solid illusion in which we live immersed, as fish live within the sea. It strongly influences how we share this gifting of yoga, that is both beyond this world and deeply within it. It is not a world of Buddhist ‘dana’³², the gifting from the heart to our teachers, though we may carry this sensitivity somewhere within us. Mostly we live and share a practice that has been increasingly commoditized and trademarked, driven by competition and feelings of scarcity, often subtly or overtly twisted by the capitalist bottom line of profit. Furthermore, we can see how its intersection with our Western culture of individualism that can lead to disconnection and aloneness, plays out often reducing the student to consumer or client, a number on the monthly spreadsheet. We exist in a world, which often emphasizes a ‘craving’ or, ‘greediness’ for the material and the experience, challenging those of us who might aspire to a yama ethic of ‘aparigraha’, non-possessiveness or non-greediness, or other similar ethic.

We are asked to conduct the sharing of this system of wisdom as the ‘business of yoga’; to compete and create the competitive brand to be communicated on website, facebook and twitter. We are further affected by an advertising industry touched by

³² Dana (generosity) Practice - In the Buddhist tradition, the teachings are given freely because they are considered priceless; in the Buddhist tradition we also practice dana, or generosity, by making monetary offerings for the teachings. Dana is not payment for goods or services rendered; it is given from the heart. Generosity is a gift that supports not just the teachers, but also the Sangha, the larger Dharma community, and your own practice.

patriarchy where selling the beauty myth³³ of the ever skinnier, and in yoga 'bendy', woman is still the norm to be aspired to. We are further molded by an economics of ownership, leading us to the expanding commodification of ideas of an age old practice. This is not to imply that there is anything inherently wrong with aspiring to healthy images of beauty and practice of flexibility, or creating innovative systems of sharing knowledge and being acknowledged for our artistry. It is simply how our present system of capitalist economics, defines the rules of the game emphasizing the predominant story of *Business as Usual*. And the rules of the game can be harsh where teachers can be paid minimally struggling to create a living, while studio owners ride the fine edge of solvency, doing something they love, doing something to create a more life-affirming society of healthier people. This world of economics becomes so prevalent and powerful that it takes on the power of *common sense*...this is the WAY IT IS!....implying that there is no other way. As mentioned earlier, the film *Yoga, Inc.*, uncomfortably paints certain aspects of this picture. Yet, even within the film some speak of bringing different perspectives and strategies to our mainstream capitalist system, implying that the seed that is yoga, along with many other wisdom traditions evolving in this capitalist world, can stir something different - seeds that can be seen in *Tejas*, the actions of yogini/is in our local world of 'business of yoga'. People making creative choices, and not simply bending to the rules of the economic game. One contemporary yoga researcher Carol Horton states,

*In this society, whatever can be marketed and sold will be, so there is no escaping the conundrum. My conclusion is therefore to accept it, and do what I can to build bridges between the commercialized dimensions of yoga and what I believe are the more valuable ones*³⁴.

And so we build bridges, find ways to act in service, create an economics of inclusion and 'right action'. We often seek to find ways to cooperate with others, and not simply compete to win our bit of the pie. We attempt to look beyond scarcity and fear to the possibilities of abundance. We see yogis, among others attempting to bring mindfulness to the 'business of yoga' in the West, figuring out how to craft 'right livelihood', or apply their interpretation of the yogic ethics or Buddhist precepts, or ethics drawing from other aspects of their spiritual unfolding. As arose in conversations with teachers, this exploration manifests too in how folks choose to live their lives, raise their children, work in their communities and even redefine the concept of 'wealthiness'. As children's author Byrd Baylor does so well in her book, *Where the rich people sit*³⁵; alerting us to the wealth that comes from *having time* to play with blocks with our kids, creating time to do the work that truly nourishes us, watch sunsets and full moons rising, deepen into our studies, pick blackberries,

³³ In 1991 Naomi Wolfe wrote a book *Beauty Myth: How images of beauty are used against women* contending as women have gained increased social power and prominence, expected adherence to standards of physical beauty has grown stronger for women.

³⁴ <http://yogamodern.com/categories/culture/does-the-yoga-community-create-a-sense-of-otherness/#IDComment189993828>

³⁵ Baylor, Byrd, *The table where the rich people sit*. A children's book, which explores what, it means to be truly rich.

move through the world in different speeds, and walk in meadows when the Camus is in bloom. Lastly, worth noting is a curiosity about the how the growth of woman-centred small businesses within this economic world shaped by patriarchy might be shifting this business of yoga.³⁶ The challenge arises from a place where our spiritual self meets our economic self, and some might say pragmatic self...everyone needs and deserves to eat, have a bed a bed to sleep in, and something to keep off the rain. This tension arising from the *troubling of our common sense way* to 'do business' may be one of the key deep beauties of yoga evolving in the west...how it shapes our perceptions of what is valuable, what is true wealth, and what is right action in the conducting our economic relationships with each other. And one day perhaps we will move beyond the need for building bridges between dimensions, because the ground itself will have shifted.³⁷

So, as noted in *Tejas*, as in the stories of many yoga teachers across North America, there are attempts to transform a capitalist economic system that can all too easily lead to unhealthy competition, exclusion, isolation, indeed all the delusions of the kleshas, and feeding the stories of *Business as Usual* and the *Great Unraveling*. These small stories are arising increasingly in the creation of external actions in addition to the more common ones of transforming of one's inner self in defining what is valuable, important in goal and how to simply be walking in this world. And, of course as in all parts of our life as we walk, we can/WILL fall, fail, be small, get lost in our ego, not be our brightest selves in action...but for those of us who remember the learning of our practice we know that when we fall out of *vrksasana* or *natarajasana* we can ground, centre, breathe and try again. This includes learning to hold a compassion and ahimsa towards self that we will not always live into/up to our aspirations and intentions. These skills of our practice of yoga allow us to live within this tricky dance between *Business as Usual* and the *Great Turning* - we will attempt to listen to into our body and breath, our intuition, find clarity, cultivate a deeper intimacy with the world, and work to dispel the illusions that limit our seeing, and acting out, our full beauty.

Business of a more Cooperative Character

As entrepreneurs we step into a business structure of some kind – we as teacher are generally a sole proprietor or employee or owner, within a business or non-profit or corporation in general. Expanding this local view to a survey of North America yoga will generally illustrate the same picture of Sole Proprietorships, Partnerships and Corporations, with a scattering of non-profits often grounded in some sort of spiritual practice, which can contain aspects of both *Business as Usual* and *The Great Turning* stories. However, alongside this expected picture there is also an increase in Non-Profit, as a well as Collective and Co-operative structures. This former is especially seen in sharing yoga with 'underserved populations (often marginalized

³⁶ See work done on women entrepreneurs and women and business.

³⁷ This represents the conceptualizations and actions of some who are seeking to envision and create a different form of economic relationship, believing that we must move beyond bridges to reconfiguring the ground itself.

groups).³⁸ Collectives and Cooperatives tend to be arising as mixed groups of individuals or centres meeting a diversity of needs from yoga, to bodywork, to health, groceries, to addressing other issues, or simply searching out more cooperative ways of doing business.

Figure 1. *Types of Business Organizational Structures*³⁹

	Purpose	Ownership	Control	Distribution of Surplus Earnings	Liability
Collective	Benefits to members or society in general	Members	One member. One vote	Determined by members	Unincorporated. Collective members have full liability.
Non-Profit Society	Benefits for clients or society in general.	Really has no owners; seeks funding from members and the general public.	Members generally entitled to one vote, but many have multiple votes or not votes.	Used to increase or improve services to clients.	Directors liability limited. Members not liable.
Co-operative	Benefits for the members (is service, cost savings and/or dividends).	Members	One member, one vote,. Proxy voting limited.	To members in proportion of service.	Members limited to share subscriptions. Directors have limited liability.
Sole-proprietorship	Profit for proprietor	Sole proprietor	Controlled by sole proprietor	Income to sole proprietor	Unlimited liability of sole proprietor
Partnership	Profit for partners	Partners	Controlled by partners, typically according to time or money invested.	Allocated among partners, typically according to time or money invested.	Unlimited liability of partners.
Corporation	Profit for shareholders on investment of time or money.	Shareholders	Based on number of voting shares held per shareholder, directly or by proxy.	To shareholders paid in proportion to investment.	Shareholders limited to share subscriptions. Directors have limited liability,

³⁸ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rob-schware/yoga-nonprofit_b_1642091.html

³⁹http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cccbe/assets/docs/publications/RochdalePress/Cooperatives_by_Design.pdf

Economy that gives back to Society

Increasingly, as an expression one might say of the *Great Turning*, models of organizations that emphasize giving back to society, and potentially acknowledging or integrating our relationship to the natural world, are being developed and even normalized challenging the capitalist emphasis on financial profit as defining force of motivation as this excerpt from the Canadian Youth Business Association website identifies;

Figure 2: *Continuum of Financial and Social Returns*⁴⁰



This movement towards more socially oriented business is further generating the creation of a number of economic definitions including; *Social Economy*, *Social Enterprise*, *Social Economy* and *Values Based* or *Social Purpose Businesses*.

1) *Social enterprises* are revenue-generating businesses with a twist. Whether operated by a non-profit organization or by a for-profit company, a social enterprise has two goals: to achieve social, cultural, community economic or environmental outcomes; and, to earn revenue. On the surface, many social enterprises look, feel, and even operate like traditional businesses. But looking more deeply, one discovers the defining characteristics of the social enterprise: mission is at the centre of business, with income generation playing an important supporting role.

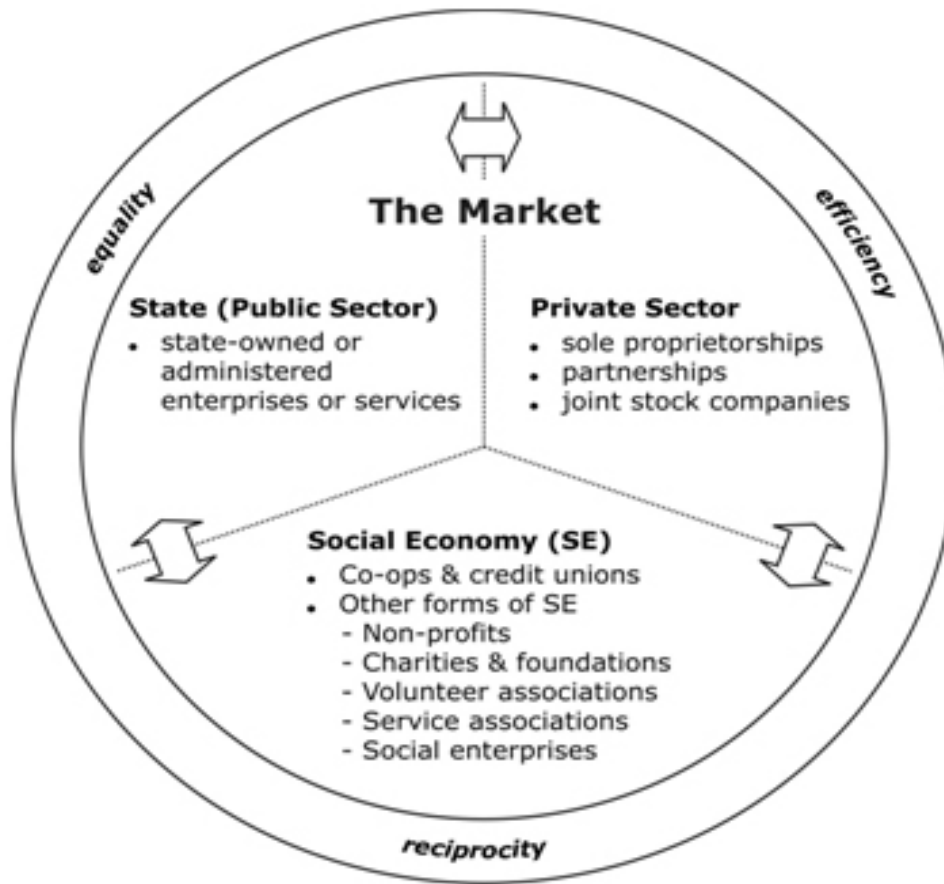
- BC Centre for Social Enterprise

2) *Social Economy* includes those organizations, which are animated by the principle of reciprocity for the pursuit of mutual economic or social goals, often through social control of capital. This definition would include all co-operatives and credit unions, non-profit and volunteer organizations, charities and foundations, service associations, community enterprises, and social enterprises **that use market mechanisms to pursue explicit social objectives**. It would thus include for-profit businesses, where those businesses share surpluses and benefits with members (and/or the wider community) in a collectively owned structure (e.g. a co-operative). In this definition it would not include those non-profit and voluntary organizations that are entirely grant or donation dependent (though some do include such organizations in their definitions of the social economy).

- BC Social Economy (Balta)⁴¹

⁴⁰ <http://www.futurpreneur.ca/resources/social-purpose-business/articles/what-is-social-purpose-business/>

Figure 3. Social Economy⁴²



3) Values-Based, or Social Purpose businesses (SPD) are a growing class of small business that also contributes to community through formal commitments of profit, fair trade principles or by entering a sector where business solutions are needed (such as food). These businesses are privately held, or employee owned (versus being owned by a democratic non-profit). Their social or environmental commitments may or may not be the PRIMARY purpose of the business, however they do have social or environmental goals. Social purpose businesses (SPBs) emerge from industries like clean technology, health, education, finance and micro-finance, to name a few. No matter what the industry, innovative, non-traditional business models that capitalize on socially and/or environmentally beneficial opportunities have arisen. The key difference between a SPB and a traditional business venture is the social mission that is core to the business. A viable SPB business model consists of a clearly defined social mission guiding the strategy, value proposition and best practices. The business model makes the case that the

⁴¹ <http://www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca/social-economy/>

⁴² Ibid.

SPB can achieve its intended social impact and sufficient profit simultaneously. A strong SPB business model will be built where these two goals intersect successfully—where both social and economic value creation result.⁴³

We can see the growth of these ideas of social economy and social enterprise local in the in the Greater Victoria area in conferences and events, and stories such as *Living the New Economy 2013*, or the *Social Enterprise Catalyst* event, or Vancity's listing of 'stories of impact'. In addition, simply reflecting on our own yoga studios and centres, or the crafting of our identities as yoga entrepreneurs using the 'lens' of these approaches to business might further illustrate, or support growing a kind of business that moves us more towards a *Great Turning*.

Non-Profits and Collectives

In moving towards business structures in the Western Yoga, which emphasize more and more the social welfare, along with more participative decision-making processes we tend to see more commonly the model of the *Non-Profit Organization*, such as our local *Iyengar Centre*, or non-profits supported with yoga services or funds, either directly by a yoga studio such as *Yoga for Youth*, or indirectly such as the *Didi Society* or, included as part of a teacher training program service project. For many of us this kind of structure is also more common for many of us in the yoga world to see this structure manifested in associated organizations that have often supported a concurrent development of a meditation, and integrated philosophy practice, such as Buddhist organizations such as The Victoria Shambhala Centre or Victoria Insight Meditation Centre, Zen Centres such as the Saltspring Zen Centre to further afield such as The Centre of Gravity Centre associated with Buddhist yoga teacher, Michael Stone, or within our traditional places of religion of church, or mosque, or temple. A striking story is shared by Sarah Joy Marsh on Portland's *DAYA Foundation* website of a decision to move from a sole proprietorship to a non-profit⁴⁴. The non-profit structure seems to provide the structure for a deeper form of community with its shift towards a more participative decision-making, as well as a model more common to integrating a broader exploration of consciousness, and an engagement with social issues. The next most common alternative structure is that of the Collective such as the local *Victoria Yoga Collective*, or *Brooklyn Yoga Collective*⁴⁵, allowing a group of professionals to pool their talents and resources to follow a vision of practice. One common model here is the collective centred around health where yoga is offered as one service.

Co-operatives

However, while unusual for the yoga world this guide wishes to provide space and entry point into exploring the model of 'co-operative' because of the challenge it brings to the negative aspects of the *Business as Usual* story that plays out in Western Yoga; that its values seem to resonate with yogic associated ethics; and

⁴³ <http://www.marsdd.com/articles/social-purpose-business-spb-models/>

⁴⁴ <http://dayafoundation.org>

⁴⁵ <http://brooklynnyogacollective.com>

finally that it may provide another model for 'some' to integrate their practice with their 'economics'. This will only be basic introduction, knowing that *Portals* contains many strong resources.

Circle Yoga Cooperative

In 2012 Circle Yoga became Circle Yoga Cooperative, the first worker-owned and member operated studio in the area and possibly the largest yoga studio cooperative in the country. One can read their story on their website (<http://circleyoga.com>) and also access an article in *Elephant Journal* by founder Annie Mahon on Fair Trade Yoga (<http://www.elephantjournal.com/2012/05/fair-trade-yoga-annie-mahon/>).

Third Root Community Health Center

Upon our founding, Third Root decided to become a worker-owned cooperative rather than a non-profit. Given that we were immersed in dialogue around the non-profit industrial complex, and committed to the history of collective work in other countries, and that we wanted social justice work in the United States to expand beyond the framework of non-profit organizations, we became an LLC with worker-owned cooperative by-laws. <http://thirdroot.org/worker-cooperative/>

*Why People Co-operate*⁴⁶

Economic Reasons

- Market not providing enough goods and services
- Prices aren't fair or affordable
- Members can save money by pooling their buying power or other resources
- Workers or producers are not getting a fair return for their labour
- Depressed area with a lack of outside investment

Social Reasons

- Community building
- Desire to be of service
- Overcoming social barriers or disadvantages
- Group synergy

Philosophical Reasons

- Value cooperation over competition
- Value equity and economic democracy
- Value social over personal gain

Personal Reasons

- Have needs that can be met only by working with others
- Have needs that can be met only by working with others
- Opportunity to meet and interact with other people
- Learning and/or sharing skills

⁴⁶http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cccbe/assets/docs/publications/RochdalePress/Cooperatives_by_Design.pdf

What Inhibits Cooperation

- Money as primary motivator
- Impatience with collective decision-making
- Unwillingness to delegate authority
- Desire to avoid conflict
- Competition
- General lack of knowledge about cooperatives and how they work

The following seven principles were established in 1995 by the International Co-operative Alliance, an organisation of co-ops from around the world. The principles are based on the co-operative values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity, and the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

Figure 4. Principles of Cooperatives⁴⁷

Voluntary and open membership: Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

Democratic member control: Each member has one vote in a co-op. Members who are elected to the board of the co-op are accountable to the membership.

Member economic participation: Members contribute financially to their co-op and make decisions about finances democratically. Generally, surpluses are distributed to members in proportion to their participation in the co-op. This is called a patronage rebate and is based on the amount members sell through the co-op, or purchase, or the hours they work. Co-ops may also direct surpluses back into the co-op or to other community activities approved by the membership.

Autonomy and independence: Co-ops are self-help organisations. No one owns a co-op except its members. Co-ops maintain their autonomy, although they may have relationships with other organisations and may receive financial contributions from external sources.

Education, training and information: For members to participate effectively in their co-op, education and training are important components in co-op development and operations. Co-ops also take an educational role about co-ops with the general public, especially with youth and policy-makers.

Co-operation among co-operatives: One of the most important strengths of the co-operative movement is that co-ops work in solidarity with each other at the local, regional, national and international level.

Concern for community: Co-ops are committed to work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their member

⁴⁷ <http://ica.coop/en/whats-co-op/co-operative-identity-values-principles>

Perhaps one of the beauties of Co-operatives is that they provide a symbol, along with a literal experience of what an economics of cooperation could be, knowing that it DOES stretch our imaginations and our conditionings. Learning to work effectively with others, truly listening, embracing diversity, holding patience, learning to hold one's needs and desires without attachment...all what might be termed 'yogic' is a strong practice of its own. The *Portals* section contains many rich resources on co-operatives for those who feel drawn by curiosity.

Other Approaches to a more Cooperative Economic System

Finally, it seemed appropriate to identify a number of strategies that further stretch our conditioned beliefs around the economics of Western yoga, in acknowledgement to the traditional idea of 'dana' that this chapter began with, which require the shift in consciousness of not only in those who offer a service or product but also in those who receive, consume, partake of a service offered.

Donation based approach – A common method in yoga studios, based upon a much older and traditional approach to compensating a teacher for their teachings. This approach offers the student the power to decide on what feels right to them, and acts as one mode of providing access to yoga for those marginalized by financial situation. The challenge arises in knowing what is suitable recompense for teaching, in this complex culture in contrast to the past when things were simpler and potentially clearer. As a result, it has become much more common to identify the recommended level of donation with a suggested price or sliding scale.⁴⁸

Barter – A barter economy is a cashless economic system in which services and goods are traded at negotiated rates. Barter-based economies are one of the earliest, predating monetary systems and even recorded history. People can successfully use barter in many almost any field. Informally, people often participate in barter and other reciprocal systems without really ever thinking about it as such -- for example, providing web design or tech support for a farmer or baker and receiving vegetables or baked goods in return. Because barter is based on reciprocity, it requires a mutual coincidence of wants between traders. This requirement complicates barter, but in a sufficiently large system traders can be found to supply most wants. According to proponents, the mutuality fosters a sense of connectedness and community among traders. In recent years, barter has enjoyed a resurgence as a means of countering economic insecurity, unemployment and worker exploitation⁴⁹.

Gift Economy A gift economy is one in which services or goods are given without an agreement as to a suitable payment or trade to be made in return. Instead of monetary gain, gift economies often rely on intangible rewards like a sense of contribution, community, honor or prestige. This might represent the first idea of economy in which prehistoric social groups collaborated to feed, hunt, gather and

⁴⁸ Bryan Kest is a power yoga teacher who shares his views having taught donation-based classes for 18 years (<https://www.poweryoga.com/i-want-to-teach-at-a-donation-based-yoga-studio/>)

⁴⁹ <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/barter-economy>

care for the young. The idea is that although gifts may not be directly reciprocated, broad participation leads to a system in which people give according to their abilities and receive according to their needs. Gift economies can also be reciprocity-based or may require a return of the original gift. In these cases the distinctions between a gift economy, a sharing economy and a barter economy become blurred. However, the concepts are not mutually exclusive and people often participate in all three simultaneously without ever really thinking about it as such.⁵⁰

Local Exchange Monetary System (LETS) - A local exchange trading system that is locally initiated, democratically organised, and not-for-profit. It provides a community information service and along with recording transactions of members exchanging goods and services by using the currency of locally created LETS Credits. It depends on growing a wide range of services and resources that can support the local LETS currency⁵¹.

Cooperation necessitates a conversation, a listening, observation and a going beyond one's individual needs and adapting one's perception of individual rights. Certain business organizational structures require increasing levels of cooperation, which is thought to bring its own value and richness. Folks tend to like the idea of cooperation, may seek to cooperate, and often don't have the skills to cooperate well, or find themselves too entwined in structures which don't support cooperation. Living embedded in a capitalist and individualist society, which encourages competition and, disconnection and isolation, along with individual oriented decision-making makes it challenging, yet cooperation is seen as so necessary as a balance to growing a more life affirming society. Further, some would say that it is a 'yogic' value, and that yoga offers the potential to shift our deeply conditioned perceptions of economics, wealth and what is important and challenge the *Business as Usual* story of society shifting us towards a *Great Turning*.

Portals

Social Economy

<http://socialeconomyhub.ca>

Canadian social economy hub; coordinating research to build the social economy. Includes resources including "Building and Strengthening Communities Through the Social Economy".

<http://www.communitycouncil.ca>

Sustainable and inclusive communities creating their own social, economic and environmental futures.

⁵⁰ <http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/gift-economy>

⁵¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_exchange_trading_system

<http://neweconomy.ca/victoria.html>

Website to past conference 2013, “living the new economy” on Vancouver Island held in Victoria.

<http://www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca/social-economy/>

Research and resources site for Social Economy in BC.

<http://strengtheningnonprofits.org/Webiste/Strengthening>

Nonprofits: A capacity builders resource library.

<http://www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic/english/whatisE.asp>

Social economy and sustainability research network.

<http://socialearth.org/21-inspiring-quotes-for-social-entrepreneurs>

Quotes on website of Social Earth: promoting social entrepreneurship, businesses and ideas.

Capitalism and Yoga

http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/yoga_inc

Site where one can watch 2007 film *Yoga Inc.* (based on the book), which looks at the commercializing of yoga in America.

<http://www.itsallyogababy.com/yoga-capitalism-bffs/>

Article: Questioning capitalism and yoga.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ira-israel/yoga-for-more-pleasurable_b_3349944.html

Article posing question; Are yoga and capitalism fundamentally incompatible?

<http://www.canadianbusiness.com/lifestyle/terry-mcbrides-yyoga-expands-east/>

Article: Expansion of a yoga corporation in Canada.

<http://www.economist.com/news/business/21589841-western-capitalism-looking-inspiration-eastern-mysticism-mindfulness-business>

Article: Mindful business: Western capitalism is looking for inspiration in eastern mysticism.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YASZeM0vVMs>

Conversation with Julia Butterfly Hill, Seane Corne and Mark Whitwell talking about Spiritual Activism, Yoga and Money.

<http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-MISC/101784.htm>

Article: Can corporations become enlightened? A Buddhist critique of transnational corporations.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjqDbJR6mo0>

Applied mindfulness in business by John Kabat-Zinn.

<http://www.yogameansbusiness.com/blog/>

Stories of applying yoga to the workplace.

Cooperatives

http://coopzone.coop/en/about_coops

Website on building a co-operative, links definitions,, resources.

<http://www.canadabusiness.ca/eng/page/2853/>

Government of Canada resources for starting your own business; corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship or cooperative.

http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cccbe/assets/docs/publications/RochdalePress/Cooperatives_by_Design.pdf

Direct link to CCCBE resource , *Co-operatives by design: Building blocks for Co-op development*.

<http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cccbe/assets/docs/publications/RochdalePress/EffectivePractices.pdf>

Direct link at CCCBE, *Effective practices in starting co-ops; The voice of Canadian co-op developers*.

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/new-economy/cooperatives>

Link to theme issue on Co-operatives of *Yes! Magazine*, which explores positive manifestations of social and environmental transformation.

<http://www.elephantjournal.com/2012/05/fair-trade-yoga-annie-mahon/>

Article written by Annie Mahon founder of one of the only yoga cooperatives in North America.

<http://www.learningcentre.coop/content/what-co-operative>

Website of the co-operative Learning Centre.

Alternative Economics

<http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/gift-economy>

Definition of gift economy.

<http://www.poweryoga.com/i-want-to-teach-at-a-donation-based-yoga-studio/>

Article on teaching at a donation based studio.

B'inclusive



B'inclusive

Tejas: Yoga classes for youth, children, moms and those 50+; teachers offering services at Diversity Events eg. Manscape; offering studio as a safespace workshop area for a marginalized group; women's only network of empowerment; funds directed to towards creating accessibility for groups affected by systems of discrimination; trauma training; community classes and pay by donation offering accessibility to those marginalized by classism; yoga studios hiring teachers who are different from the norm in identity; programs created for marginalized groups that would have difficulty attending a yoga studio, yoga in prisons.

Musings

What does it mean to *B'inclusive*? Certainly, we profess that yoga is for all, that all may benefit. And whether this is from the motivation of bringing a practice to all in service, and/or to fill our classes and studios so that our businesses may flourish we believe that inclusion is a good thing. In contrast to its home in India where it has long been the pursuit of men, demographics of yoga in the West show that it is practice of women, often educated, middle class, and generally white⁵². When we look a participation in Greater Victoria, this demographic tends to be illustrated as well. In looking at these demographics one may pose the question, as it is increasingly done throughout North America of whether there are invisible barriers to participation or inclusion? *And if so, how far are we willing to go to expand our boundaries of inclusivity?* This chapter focuses on outlining a perspective growing in our world of Western Yoga, aimed at examining and dismantling cultural patterns in our Western society that permeate our yoga classes and communities both limiting participation, and the quality of that participation. *Portals* illustrates the range of yoga teachers, writers and entrepreneurs who are doing this work through the offering of leadership courses⁵³, writing, to the creation of focused websites supporting exploratory writings into making yoga more inclusive, boundaries more permeable and culture more life-affirming for all. This work within our local and global communities further illustrates the growth of an *B'engaged* leadership that is shifting practice more towards manifesting a story of *Great Turning*.

Before going onwards it seems important to note that in a patriarchal world, or society containing the 'cultural samsara'⁵⁴ of systemic sexism, it is important to

⁵² <http://www.ascentmagazine.com/webexclusive.aspx?WEID=5&issueID=23> & <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2533368/>

⁵³ This chapter has benefited in inspiration and ideas from the author's participation in *Off the Mat's* first online diversity course for yoga teachers *Beyond Duality: Yoga and Social Justice*.

⁵⁴ The *Beyond Duality* course called these broad cultural patterns of discrimination and oppression 'cultural samsaras' integrating a yogic terminology that will be used throughout this chapter.

note that the evolution of modern Western yoga is mostly being shaped by a community of women - teachers, writers, thinkers, entrepreneurs of all kinds. The practice has become a place of potential deep learning and empowerment for women (and beyond on the gender continuum), yet also remains a place where sexism (and other cultural *samskaras* such as racism, heterosexism, or classism) continues to be expressed such as the reinforcement and commodification of the skinny, young female (and bendy too, given its' yoga) and where eating disorders and diets not for health reasons can be part of the whole package. This is also a place where the antics of teachers who transcend boundaries of trust, tend to be male, which at times might overshadow the many men, and transgendered folks who continue to support the evolution of this practice.⁵⁵ So, from the start as we move into an exploration of creating inclusive spaces it is important to acknowledge how yoga has already been transformed on this continent to be a space that is inclusive of an identity, women who have been and still are marginalized and discriminated against across the globe.

Approaches to the 'work' of Inclusion

The work of inclusive community building ("the work"), is in many ways a Jnana yoga (yoga of knowledge) all its own, seeking to dispel veils and illusions that keep us from clearly seeing the world, and ourselves. It is work that strives, as does yoga, to 'make the invisible visible', which is often uncomfortable. This 'work of inclusion' is conducted under multiple titles including; diversity, anti-racism, multicultural, intercultural, human rights, social justice, and anti-oppression, to name a few. These approaches may come with different sets of assumptions and emphasize different approaches. The approach outlined in this chapter is an anti-oppression (social justice) approach, which focuses its strategies on dismantling historically constructed systems, or *cultural samskaras*, of oppression, discrimination and marginalization. It represents the growing movement in Western yoga to create more accessible and inclusive spaces, and to work on points where these *cultural samskaras* continue to limit our practice.

This anti-oppression diversity approach has grown out of the research and actions arising from the intersection of freedom movements of the last 50 years including the equal rights, feminist, environmental racism and gay rights movements all seeking to transform limiting cultural patterns.⁵⁶ It seems useful to note while many folks will acknowledge the existence of aspects of the impact of these patterns of discrimination or oppression difference exists in seeing the ***scale of influence*** on individuals, and existing within culture and institution. This said, this writing does work on the assumption this approach is necessary to weave into our spiritual practice as yoga teachers and entrepreneurs, and that there is something deep

⁵⁵ At this point it seems important to note that the author is a white, North American, middle class male benefiting from multiple identities of privilege. This said, he has also worked to create inclusive spaces for many years as a transformative educator.

⁵⁶ Of course, important to remember that this work of inclusion, emancipation or freeing of those marginalized or oppressed has long been part of our expression of humanity.

within the foundation of yoga in the interpretation of *moksha*, or liberation that asks of us this work too. That when we look into our own *maya*⁵⁷, or into the *maya* of our students that some knowing of these *cultural samskaras* is part of the responsibility one carries in choosing to be a yoga teacher in the evolving world of yoga in the West. Finally, as you move forward into this chapter, keep in mind that this work is **complex**, the work of a lifetime, and that in this document it has been both simplified and reduced to an introductory mapping to some of the key concepts that frame this approach to creating inclusive spaces. Furthermore, it is a perspective that strongly benefits from being explored experientially, beyond simply reading about it. That said it is hoped that the *Portals* will further support you in deepening your capacity to create more inclusive and life-affirming spaces.

Developing a Responsive instead of Reactive Pattern

Before continuing into this exploration it is useful to remember that this work can be ‘triggering’, stimulating strong emotional responses, and resultant stories. The concept of triggers is not unique to this work, and many of us may have developed some understanding about triggers. But whether review, new or deepening *it is* an important skill to develop in doing this work. Triggers do not necessarily threaten our physical safety, but we may feel psychologically threatened. We can also be triggered on behalf of another group - though we don’t feel personally triggered, our sense of social justice feels violated. These emotional responses can include hurt, confusion, anger, fear, surprise, embarrassment, or simply some ‘feeling of resistance’. We can respond to being triggered with reactions ranging from denial (eg. Its not that bad, it is not part of my life experience), to taking on personal or identity guilt or shame (for being male, or North American, or white, or upper class, etc.), to rationalizing it with some pattern (I don’t see race, if they just would work harder). Moreover, denial and guilt/shame along with staying theoretical/in one’s head are quite common responses for those who find themselves in the *group/identity that benefits* from systems of discrimination (be it white, or male, or straight, or able-bodied). Finally, a last caution, especially for those who have not explored this work - this work does not easily lead to the juicy *end of practice* joy feeling. It is tough work, and easily stirs *dvesha*, or aversion. Yet, it can also generate its own joy, belonging, satisfaction, deep understanding, or simply sense of seeing clearly amidst the grittiness.

When we are triggered, something arises be it emotional, embodied or in our heads. In this practice it is important to develop **resources** that offer the potential for a more responsive behavior rather than a reactive one. A responsive behavior is considered to be one in which we can remain more open, curious and compassionate, instead of shut down or overwhelmed, defensive, or only in our heads.

⁵⁷ The Sanskrit definition of ‘maya’ used in this document is as ‘illusion’ or ‘veil’ or ‘mist’ that obscures our clear seeing leading to ‘avidya’, lack of knowledge.

Figure 1. *Trigger equals...*⁵⁸

Trigger + **no** resource = reactive behaviour

Trigger + resource = responsive behavior

In past diversity work I have done, the emphasis on developing resources to respond, and stay open, compassionate, curious, and not react tended to emphasize the conceptual knowing of the triggering itself one could deal with rationally, or take various other actions to work with the emotions. Participation in a recent diversity and yoga course⁵⁹, reminded me of how much our yoga practice (or other mindfulness practices) can be used to help us navigate the range of emotions, reactions and stories that can arise in doing this work.

One method that I would invite you, the reader to engage in before continuing on, is to take a moment to (in whatever way is part of your practice);

Figure 2. *Grounding*

Ground

(feel the earth beneath you)

*

Centre

(notice your body)

*

Breathe

(bringing you into the moment of now)

*

Know that at any time this 'resource' is available to you if you find yourself triggered.

To which I would further add, that at any time you need to go into the physical - breathing/recentreing; feeling into your body; or other 'manifestation of balasana, or child's pose', even if it means handstand (because certainly this work can turn us upside down at times), then use those resources too. Of course, this is offered knowing that what follows may be relatively 'untriggering' or safe for some, because it is mostly words and theory, concepts and big pictures. Yet hopefully, even here if you find 'resistance' of any kind arising it can be explored as we learn to do in yoga as a place to examine self.

⁵⁸ For more on triggers See: <http://www.uww.edu/learn/diversity/triggers.php>

⁵⁹ *Beyond Duality: Yoga and Social Justice course.*

A Map

What follows is a basic mapping of the diversity approach that is focused on understanding and working to transform these limiting systemic patterns, or *cultural samskaras*. It includes the defining of a number of concepts, along with an integration of relevant yogic concepts that may support this form of Jnamic enquiry leading to a final section of application of creating more inclusive yoga spaces and relationships. This map is also offered as a foundation of a potential workshop or course, as it has drawn from a number of diversity education curriculae.

Constructs

Humans build patterns, generalizations, or *constructs* of information to guide their thinking, acting and discernment. These patterns can be used to distinguish or separate. They may lead us to greater understanding as 'yoga' or, 'democracy' or 'ecology' as constructs' can do AND important to consider, may contribute to *maya* or illusions, and perspectives, which limit our understanding as the aforementioned constructs can also do. Constructs may be built upon limited or even erroneous information. They may be given the 'weight' of common sense. Whatever they are they require of us the cultivation of a spirit of 'enquiry', or questioning as much as acceptance. Of course, for most of the time for most of us, we go with the flow as a part of living this mucky, chaotic life.

Doing diversity work means looking deeply at constructs such as *cultural samskaras* that are often invisible to many of us. One practiced way to doing this is to follow the cluster of constructs which include; *stereotypes*, which can lead to thought patterns of *prejudice*, which can lead to the broader systemic patterns of *discrimination* such as sexism, homophobia or ableism. This linking can support us in seeing more clearly the relationship between the act of the individual to the broader patterns woven into, and arising out of our cultural conditioning.

Stereotype – simplified and generalized signs, which represent a set of values, judgements and assumptions concerning a group of people. Most often people are grouped together based on inaccurate information and false generalizations, which ignore individual differences.

Prejudice – to pre-judge; predisposed aggression towards a group of people that have been stereotyped according to simple characteristics based upon incomplete information.

Discrimination – the unequal treatment of people or groups of people usually resulting in the subordination and deprivation of social and political power with respect to resources such as education, accommodation, health care, employment as well as goods and services.

This particular manifestation of constructs interwoven with power, of stereotype and prejudice and discrimination has developed over hundreds of years growing into systemic patterns of discrimination or oppression. Power is expressed as

‘power over’ where greater status, access, power, and being seen as the norm is given to one group often called the ‘dominant’ or ‘privileged’ group, while another/other groups who are seen as less are termed ‘marginalized’, ‘minorities’, ‘oppressed’, or are identified as the ‘other’ limiting their capacity to gain status, access and power. These *cultural samscaras* include sexism, heterosexism, ageism, ableism, racism, classism, and colonialism.

Table 1. *Common Cultural Samscaras*

Ableism – a social/political/economic/ideological system that allow physically able people to exploit or marginalize people with disabilities.

Ageism – a social/political/economic/ideological system where some have privileges or experience discrimination because of their age. It can work against a person for being too young or too old, and sometimes a person can be too young in one situation and too old on the same day,

Classism – the practice that beliefs that assign differential value to people according to their socio-economic class including; working class, middle class, wealthy, ‘the 1%’, Can be expressed as a form of colonialism eg. First world/third world.

Heterosexism (*Inc. homophobia*) – the individual, institutional and societal/cultural beliefs and practices based upon the premise that heterosexuality is the only normal and acceptable sexual orientation.

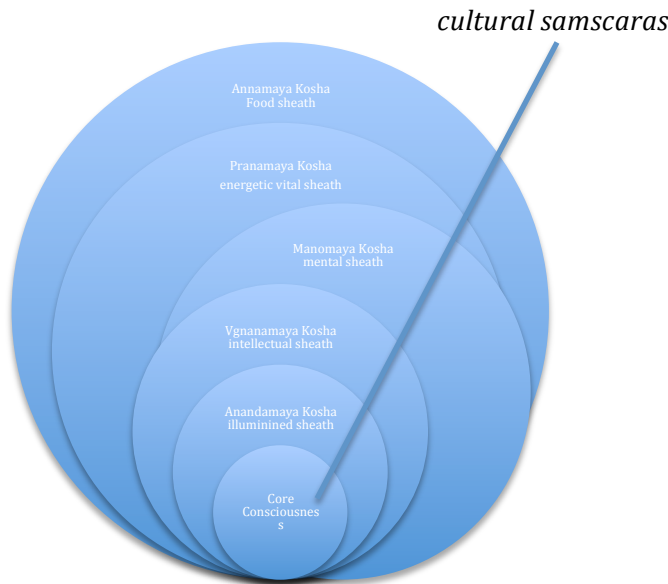
Racism – a social/political/economic/ideological system that marginalizes some and privileges others based on the colour of their skin.

Sexism - a social/political/economic/ideological system that privileges some and marginalizes others based on their sex/gender. Generally expressed as patriarchy within our society for thousands of years.

If we integrate the construct of the yogic model of *koshas*⁶⁰, into our way of interpreting our reality then it becomes important to consider how these *cultural samscaras* may affect our everyday thinking, feelings and actions as Figure 2 is meant to stimulate. Working with this integration shows another reason why the practice of yoga could be useful in doing this work. How might focused asana work, or breath work, guided meditations or interpretations of Yamas and Niyamas among other parts of our practice aid us in transforming the power flowing through these cultural samscaras.

⁶⁰ A **Kosha** (Sanskrit), usually rendered "sheath", one of five coverings of the Atman, or Self according to Vedantic philosophy. They are often visualised as the layers of an onion.

Figure 2. *Cultural Samscaras & the Koshas*



Each of us is an amalgam of mixed identities, some of which may be considered dominant or privileged while others are those of marginalized or discriminated against groups. In Table 2 below you are invited to identify what you feel tend to be the most ‘privileged’ or ‘marginalized’ identities along with ‘mapping’ your own amalgam in reference to these *cultural samscaras*.

Table 2. *Identifying Dominant and marginalized Identities*

Circle the identities which are given the most status, access, privilege, or described as the dominant identity in a culture in our society, in contrast to identities which can be more easily marginalized or discriminated against. Consider where you are in this chart.

Gender	Race	Sexual Orientation	Class	Age	Globe
Female	White	LGBT Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender	Middle class and up	25-45	3 rd World or Global South
Male	Non-white (including folks of colour and aboriginal)	Heterosexual	Working class	Youth and Plus 55	1 st World or Global North
sexism	racism	Heterosexism, homophobia	Classism	ageism	colonialism

This mixing can shape our perceptions in various ways from, accentuating or blinding us to our marginalization, to blinding us where we do have privilege, or accentuating the responsibility that comes with privilege. This understanding that we are all mixed hopefully further illustrates the importance of not ranking one system as more important than another such as racism is worse than sexism, or classism is more impactful than heterosexism, which of course, adds yet another layer of complexity. Therefore, in moving forward, or in finding where you wish to enquire, learn, work it can sometimes benefit to focus on one *cultural samscara*, (eg.

on sexism, or ableism, or ageism), while *knowing that it is just one piece of a matrix of power*.

Levels of Discrimination

Another working with constructs that can help us better understand discrimination as a systemic phenomena comes from learning to see it manifested at three levels – *making the invisible...visible!* The first level is illustrated at the level of action of the individual, which is what we tend to see reported in the news or experience in our everyday lives⁶¹, such as the homophobic joke, comment of a woman's body, or way we might interpret forgetting in an elder parent. The second level, the institutional can be seen when we start to analyse policies and laws, statistics such as pay scale, patterns of reporting news, approaches to advertising, looking at who makes up the demographics of a body such as the house of commons or upper echelons of corporations. Lastly, the manifestation at the societal or cultural level permeates our everyday interpretations of the world, which we can learn to see through an analysis of our cultural norms, beliefs, judgements based on 'common sense', or 'what is considered normal, or even mainstream', ways we construct knowledge such as the emphasis on science in the West. This last level can be the trickiest to see because we are so immersed in it as a fish within an ocean. The following definitions contain some examples as well.⁶²

Individual – attitudes and actions of an individual person that demonstrate prejudice against those of marginalized groups/identities. Eg. Harassment; rape; joking; minimizing stereotypic comments, shootings.

Institutional – policies, laws, rules, norms and customs enacted by organizations and social institutions that disadvantage some social groups and advantage other social groups. These institutions include religion, government, education, law, the media and health care systems. Eg. Profiling by police services, or border crossing agents of certain identities; housing and employment discrimination; sexual orientation in the military services; pay by gender, or the 'glass ceiling'; images used to normalize participation in advertising or on magazines; membership in government houses; population demographics in prison system.

Societal and Cultural – social norms, roles, rituals, language, music, art that reflect the belief that one social group is the dominant, or superior to others. Cultural norms can perpetuate implicit and explicit values that bind institutions and individuals. Cultural guidelines such as philosophies of life definitions of the good, the normal, what is health or deviance or sickness,

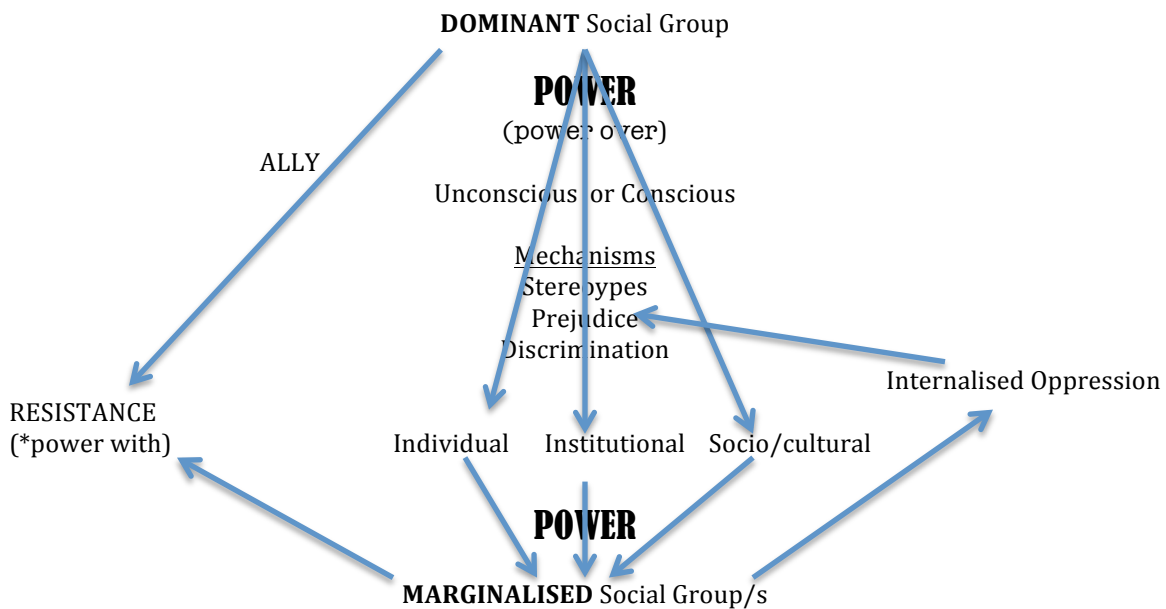
⁶¹ An example of this is the everyday sexism project, [which](http://canada.everydaysexism.com) catalogues instances of sexism experienced by women on a day to day basis in order to illustrate that sexism does exist and is a valid problem to discuss. <http://canada.everydaysexism.com>

⁶² The choice has been made here attempt to not provide egs. of stereotypic comments so as to not further reify them, even though they can be important in understanding the power of such statements. You may find that pulling out such statements from those who you work with is necessary to growing understanding of the power of words.

often serve the function of systemic marginalization, limitation or oppression of specific identities Eg. Gender and leadership capacity; perception of homosexuality; acceptance of nuclear family as the only model of a 'good' family; rape culture including assumption of what the 'rape victim' did to incur the rape; concept of beauty in body shape in yoga.

Definitions of power are diverse and often contentious⁶³. One simplified construct that can be useful in doing this work is the contrast between 'power over' and 'power with'. *Power over* as described earlier, refers to a traditional dominance model where decision-making is controlled by one person or group giving it power over another. Yet, it is important to note that this form of power can also generate a power of resistance evident in various human rights movements. In contrast, *power with* reflects an empowerment model where dialogue, inclusion, negotiation, and shared power guide decision-making. We can see this potential in Figure 3 at the point of meeting where people in the dominant social group work to resist or challenge systemic discrimination in cooperation with marginalized people who work to resist or challenge systemic discrimination.

Figure 3. *Systemic Dominance*⁶⁴ eg. Classism, Racism, Sexism, Heterosexism, Ableism



Two other KEY terms, identified in Figure 3 are that of 'ally' and 'internalized oppression'. People of dominant identity who work with marginalized groups are generally called 'allies'. Canadian educator Anne Bishop defines ally as,

⁶³ <http://www.powercube.net/analyse-power/understanding-power/>

⁶⁴ Adapted from Harris & davis (2004) Diversity and Adult Learning Course, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB.

Allies are people who recognize the unearned privilege they receive from society's patterns of injustice and take responsibility for changing these patterns. Allies include men who work to end sexism, white people who work to end racism, heterosexual people who work to end heterosexism, able-bodied people who work to end ableism, and so on. Part of becoming an ally is also recognizing one's own experience of oppression. For example, a white woman can learn from her experience of sexism and apply it in becoming an ally to people of colour, or a person who grew up in poverty can learn from that experience how to respect others' feelings of helplessness because of a disability.⁶⁵

I am reminded of yoga teacher who as a heterosexual white woman acting as an 'ally' co-taught with a queer colleague a workshop on what it meant to be marginalized and privileged, and how to act as self advocate and ally in yoga spaces....how yogini/s could work together to create more inclusive yoga spaces, and beyond.⁶⁶ This relationship also illustrates the conversations that need to happen between allies and marginalized in coordinating suitable approaches of education.

Secondly, the term 'internalized oppression' is used to describe the action where *members of a marginalized group* adopt the negative or limiting beliefs about their social group that are held by the structure of systemic discrimination. Eg. women who accept that they are too emotional to be good leaders, or folks of colour who feel that they are more sexually active or better athletes because of their identity, or sixty year old people who believe 'old dogs can't learn new tricks, or have good sex!'. This form of limitation can be quite difficult to explore because of how deeply it can be woven into our sense of self, which further supports the potential of yoga to do amazing diversity work with its focus on jnana – self enquiry.

Finally, it is important to note that at all levels 'resistance' to the oppressiveness of this manifestation of power can exist in often subtle or unseen ways, be the gay man who chooses when to pass as straight, and when he may express his fuller identity, to the female yogini who understands the power of sexism in shaping how it has led her through eating disorder to be 'skinny' and now holds a healthier sense of body shape, or young man in the wheelchair who states how they cannot speak for all folks with disabilities when asked, to the elder yogi who simply continues her practice in response to the comment 'aren't you remarkable at your age'.

Privilege

The cultural identity arising from being born into being *a member of the dominant group* comes with the inherent power of 'privilege' that can shape how we interact with this work. It is made further complex in that we are amalgams of identities, as mentioned earlier, some which may be privileged while some are marginalized. It is

⁶⁵ http://www.becominganally.ca/Becoming_an_Ally/Home.html

⁶⁶ This co-teaching relationship also illustrates the power of collaboration arising when folks from different identities of dominant and marginalized work together on an issue.

interesting to return to the typical demographic of Western yoga in considering this question of mixed identities of privilege and **marginalization**;

*North American, **woman**, 25-45, middle class, educated, white (probably able-bodied).*

Oberlin College provides us with the following defining of privilege ⁶⁷

...as a special advantage, permission, right or benefit granted to or enjoyed by an individual, class or caste. In the context of relations between social groups, privilege is a consequence of social hierarchies and power dynamics. Privilege is not a right or a deserved entitlement; it is an arbitrary advantage or benefit enjoyed by an individual or a group, based upon prejudicial and/or discriminatory norms, attitudes and practices. The "normalization of privilege" implies that members of society are judged, and succeed or fail, measured against characteristics that are held by those who are privileged. The privileged characteristic becomes the norm. Those that stand outside these norms as regarded as 'alternative' or 'the other'. Thus when examining privilege we find that it consists of the following elements:

- *characteristics of the privileged group define the societal norm, often benefitting those in the privileged group*
- *due to conflicting privilege with the societal norms and the implicit choice to ignore oppression, privilege is often not recognized by the holder of privilege*
- *members of privileged groups may opt out of struggles against oppression if they so choose*

These spaces serve as means of self-education, where members may learn about those aspects of their histories and cultures that have been invisibilized by the dominant or mainstream society of privileged groups may opt out of struggles against oppression if they choose. They provide personal and emotional support by allowing members to share their stories with those who share common or similar histories and experiences, privilege exist and operates in various forms, shaped by the societal power relations, from which it results. Since we all are players in these power systems, we all enjoy some form of privilege. By being critically conscious of our privileges and responsible for how we exercise it, we can position ourselves as allies in the movements for social justice.

Researcher Peggy McIntosh was one of the first academic researchers to name some of the outcomes of possessing privilege. She analyses the privilege of being born white in her article '*Unpacking the knapsack of white privilege*'.⁶⁸ "I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group".⁶⁹ She created a list of the privilege of being white. These lists can offer us an understanding of what it can mean to be different, as much as it can show us how our own privilege can affect our perception of reality. In sharing her list of white privilege Peggy notes that, "As far as I can tell, my African American coworkers, friends, and acquaintances with whom I come into daily or frequent

⁶⁷ <http://new.oberlin.edu/dotAsset/2012201.pdf>

⁶⁸ <http://amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

contact in this particular time, place and time of work cannot count on most of these conditions”⁷⁰. In this community I wonder if we could use this list in considering our relationships with our First Nations friends as well. The following list is excerpted from McIntosh’s article.⁷¹

White Privilege

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
5. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
6. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
8. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
13. Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
15. I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
20. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
21. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
25. If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
26. I can easily buy posters, post-cards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
30. If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my race will lend me more credibility for either position than a person of color will have.
35. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my race.
39. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
40. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
46. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" color and have them more or less match my skin.

Others have gone on to apply this technique to other forms of cultural samscaras such as *male*, *heterosexual* and *ability* privilege.

*Male Privilege Excerpt*⁷²

2. I can be confident that my co-workers won't think I got my job because of my sex – even though that might be true.
3. If I am never promoted, it's not because of my sex.
8. On average, I am taught to fear walking alone after dark in average public spaces much less than my female counterparts are.
10. If I have children but do not provide primary care for them, my masculinity will not be called into question.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² <http://amptoons.com/blog/the-male-privilege-checklist/>

11. If I have children and provide primary care for them, I'll be praised for extraordinary parenting if I'm even marginally competent.
12. If I have children and a career, no one will think I'm selfish for not staying at home.
13. If I seek political office, my relationship with my children, or who I hire to take care of them, will probably not be scrutinized by the press.
22. If I'm careless with my driving it won't be attributed to my sex.
25. I do not have to worry about the message my wardrobe sends about my sexual availability.
27. The grooming regimen expected of me is relatively cheap and consumes little time.
30. I can be loud with no fear of being called a shrew. I can be aggressive with no fear of being called a bitch.
31. I can ask for legal protection from violence that happens mostly to men without being seen as a selfish special interest, since that kind of violence is called "crime" and is a general social concern. (Violence that happens mostly to women is usually called "domestic violence" or "acquaintance rape," and is seen as a special interest issue.)
33. My ability to make important decisions and my capability in general will never be questioned depending on what time of the month it is.
34. I will never be expected to change my name upon marriage or questioned if I don't change my name.
40. If I have children with my wife or girlfriend, and it turns out that one of us needs to make career sacrifices to raise the kids, chances are we'll both assume the career sacrificed should be hers.
41. Assuming I am heterosexual, magazines, billboards, television, movies, pornography, and virtually all of media is filled with images of scantily-clad women intended to appeal to me sexually. Such images of men exist, but are rarer.
42. In general, I am under much less pressure to be thin than my female counterparts are.
43. If I am fat, I probably suffer fewer social and economic consequences for being fat than fat women do.
46. I have the privilege of being unaware of my male privilege.

*Heterosexism Privilege*⁷³

1. I feel comfortable holding hands with my partner in public.
2. As a child growing up I am presented with figures of my orientation, in cartoons, children's book, and family movies.
3. Even if I am part of a social minority group (specifically ethnic or religious) I will have role models of my orientation to look up to.
4. My orientation is accepted by all mainstream religions and all governments.
5. People will not make fun or ridicule me because of my sexual orientation.
6. I know that when the mainstream media makes reference to men or women, they are referring to men and women of my orientation, unless specifically mentioned as homosexual men and women.
7. I can be sure that children of my orientation will be given curricular materials of their orientation.
8. I know that children and teens of my orientation will have teachers that will be

⁷³ <http://safezone.uncc.edu/allies/oppression>

- tolerable and accepting of their orientation, as well as employers, doctors, etc.
9. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my orientation.
 10. I am not expected to be a representation of my orientation.
 11. If I declare that there is sexual orientation prejudicial situation at hand, my orientation will lend me more creditability than a person of one of the other orientations.
 12. I can worry about homophobia and not be seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
 13. I will never have to specifically seek out heterosexual establishments to be around others like me.
 14. I do not have to explain how or why I am heterosexual, or when I realized that I was.
 15. I am not accused of being abused, warped or psychologically confused because of my sexual orientation; and thus a potential danger to other.

Analysing our privilege can support us in coming to understand the experiences of our colleagues, and our students who live the life of someone impacted, marginalized or discriminated against due to the workings of a cultural samscara. It can also help us potentially understand why some of these patterns may be invisible to us, and shaping how we engage with diversity in our yoga settings, relationships and society. Finally, to be transparent as writer and educator, I do appreciate how the privilege of being born white, male, middle class and North American, coming to be educated has given multiple layers of privilege shaping my journey, as I can see it not having privilege shaping the journeys of those around me. In addition, my coming to understand it over the years has made appreciate how challenging it can be for one to recognize and then learn to work with the power that comes with privilege, which has led to the inclusion of this topic here.

Colour Blindness

One approach to diversity that is common amongst folks of privilege is the strategy of expressing a 'colour blindness' – "I don't see colour" (As you read on about colour blindness and racism, understand that there are elements that can also be applied to other forms of systemic discrimination as well be it blindness and heterosexism, or ableism etc.). This approach contends that the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity. While beautiful and aspirational in many ways, one which does contain seeds of an important way forward, it can also lead white people (or other dominant identities) who are unlikely to experience disadvantages due to race, to potentially ignore overt or subtle racism in life, justify the current social order, and feel more comfortable with their relatively privileged standing in society. Most minorities, however, who regularly encounter difficulties due to race, experience colorblind ideologies quite differently. Colorblindness creates a society that denies their negative racial experiences, rejects their cultural heritage, and invalidates their unique perspectives.⁷⁴ Even while we attempt to see the beautiful uniqueness of the

⁷⁴ (<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/colorblind/201112/colorblind-ideology-is-form-racism>).

individual, we must also keep in mind how these *cultural samskaras* are impacting us, and hold consciousness that choosing not to see these patterns can in fact further reify the patterns.

Political Correctness

As diversity work is integrated into our practice and life, in our places of play, schools and work we begin to examine that language we use, knowing how language can be all too easily exclusive and marginalizing. This work has included a movement towards creating culturally inclusive and gender neutral language. One response to this, described as a pushback from the 'political, conservative right' beginning in the 1990s, was the use of the phrase 'politically correct'. It has increasingly been used as a pejorative towards this intentional use of inclusive language, contending that the process was overdone, or done to toe the progressive and humanist line. Nowadays telling someone that, "that they are being politically correct" has become a quick 'putdown' to folks trying to act more inclusively.

Spiritual Bypass

As mentioned in the chapter *B'engaged*, over the last decades as 'spiritual work' has become a more normalized process in the west seeing a growth of the 'new age movement' or other forms of spiritual exploration it has also generated the origin of the psychological concept of 'spiritual bypass' where a practitioner may choose to avoid or deny 'earthly experiences' through focusing on one's spiritual beliefs. This concept can be one more that folks can allow systemic oppression to remain invisible. It is also perhaps useful to see how easily one could bring together the two concepts of 'privilege' and 'spiritual bypass' in understanding why folks with good intentions don't see the scale of *cultural samskaras*, or don't act on them.

In conclusion, developing an understanding of patterns or cultural samskaras that may limit both us, and our students from finding the fullness, brightness and completeness so possible through our yoga practice is an important Jnamic process of enquiry in our role as yoga teacher. Yet, given the complexity and inherent conflict and discomfort that are part of this work it is easy to comprehend why it is a work that can be invisible to many of us seeking to create more inclusive spaces, and yet again so important if we are truly trying to offer yoga to all. And so, we make choices.

Strategies for Creating Inclusive Spaces and Relationships

What follows is a brief description of some strategies that may serve us as teachers, or creators of yoga communities in building a culture of inclusion, that further shifts us to a more life-affirming society.

- *Visual Representation*

If we were to explore the 'visual representation' shared on our websites, in our programs, workshop leaders or our teachers' bios are we sharing diversity in colour, shape, age, gender, etc., that would appear welcoming to someone who is not our

mainstream demographic. One can see how some yoga centres such as Kripalu and Omega, and occasionally yoga magazines, even the front cover of YogaJournal expanded our vision of the skinny, young, white, bendy yogini.

- *Stories illustrating diversity*

Are there 'stories' contained in teacher or staff bios, in newsletters, in sections of our websites, or in workshops offered that illustrate diversity. If there are stories of yogis on the website do they reflect a diversity of experiences...the gay man, the older woman, the youth...Will the observer see their own identity, story valued, or will it be the traditional demographic of Western yoga. This has often been a place of revision of educational curriculum. Where only certain stories were included in a curriculum.

- *Diversity or anti-oppression Trainings*

Trainings for studio teachers on different aspects of diversity eg, working with fat or Transgendered folks, or folks with disabilities; workshops on gender inclusive language; or how to watch for trauma arising.

- *Celebrating Multiculturalism*

While, not the approach focused on in this chapter, one approach to creating more inclusive spaces is to celebrate the cultural stories and identities of those who are not the mainstream identity or culture in our place, our studio, our yoga community. Finding ways to celebrate or acknowledge the holidays or significant people of another culture in our introductions to lessons, visually on our studio websites in our newsletters. Are there ways to celebrate the cultures of students, in addition to the mainstream white, Eurocentric culture, who might come to our studio - Black Canadians (of either African or Caribbean descent), Latin American Canadians, or First Nations. At this basic level do our websites contain imagery or story that illustrates, who we wish to be inclusive of in our studios?

- *Links*

Can we offer readings, or links that would illustrate an inclusion of diversity from whatever perspective we integrate into our lives. A book recommended, or review of a website that explores some aspect of diversity. Even, subtly such as a book review written by someone from a marginalized group.

- *Outreach to marginalized or minority groups*

Are their programs, classes or workshops by local or visiting teachers either at the studio, or in outreach that include those who do not fit the mainstream demographic eg. for youth or older adults, Transgender or Immigrant communities.

- *Men's work*

I think that it is worth special note to mention men's work as a strategy given we live in a Patriarchal world, the privilege is very present, many women have been doing focused work on sexism for years while the comparative numbers of men who work to dismantle sexism is relatively small. In addition, there are questions arising for men, especially in North America as to what does it mean to be a man? Finally, given my privilege as male and white and North American and middle-class it simply seems important to do so.

- *Addressing the culture/s of yoga origin*

Is the culture of origin of yoga treated with respect?

- *Addressing Trauma*

Are there trainings for yoga teacher to expand their knowing of working with trauma arising from eating disorder, abuse or identity shifting. etc. learn how to recognize trauma, attend as listener, know where and how to refer someone. Is there any indication that the studio, or teachers have the capacity to work with trauma resulting from identity. Eg. Fundraising for a Program, or outreach program to a specific group.

- *Analysing the architecture of our yoga spaces*

Are washrooms inclusive of all genders? Is safe entry and exit around studios communicated, or worked with?

- *Safe Spaces*

Safe spaces are spaces that are create of, by and for members of marginalized or underrepresented social groupings who share common (or similar) histories and experiences, and/or are routinely subjected impacted by socioeconomic, cultural, political and other social hierarchies and oppression. Safe spaces are generally identity and/or issue-experience based. Their creation may be supported by allies.⁷⁵ Are their programs that support specific groups beyond the mainstream norm group...programs for youth or for older folks, or specifically to men, Transgendered folks, or working moms. In addition, they are seen as often more effective if taught by someone of that marginalized identity.

- *Cost inaccessibility*

Are there strategies in place that make yoga more available to those whose funds are lower, or programs created in places such as community centres that are more cost affordable or inclusive of different class.

- *Inclusive Language*

Are there trainings in creating inclusive, or non-gendered or other language for yoga teachers?

- *Inclusive Teaching themes*

If teaching theme is part of the practice can these be woven into creating inclusive spaces in some ways...acknowledging events, personal stories, etc.

- *Teaching at 'diversity events'*

Are there events, conferences or community happenings that would welcome a yoga teacher.

- *Teacher Training*

Could not some of this work be included in TT, perhaps as an assignment of enquiry for becoming yoga teachers to 'design an inclusive studio'.

⁷⁵ See more at, <http://new.oberlin.edu/dotAsset/2012201.pdf>

Portals

Important note: Diversity is quite logically a place of intersection of multiple issues so you will find that a number of sites listed below are excellent portals to many of the ideas discussed in this chapter such as 'Decolonizing yoga' (US), or 'itsallyogababy' (Canada), or adiosbarbie (US). In addition a number of local sites in Greater Victoria for connections to counseling, and other local resources have been included, and while not complete a start.

Diversity Work

<http://www.itsallyogababy.com/diversity-training-do-yoga-teachers-ytt-programs-need-it/>

Article: Diversity training: Do yoga teachers and YTT programs need it?

<http://www.itsallyogababy.com/diversity-in-yoga-chelsea-jackson-dianne-bondy-conversation/>

Conversation between 2 women of colour Canadian and American yoga teachers about diversity in yoga.

<http://www.diversitydufferin.com/glossary.html>

Diversity glossary created in Canada

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/cared/issues>

Comparison of Multicultural education and Anti-racist Education

<http://www.decolonizingyoga.com/category/class-privilege-capitalism/>

Website of Decolonizing yoga: Where spirituality meets social justice. Many articles and resources.

<http://communityyogavancouver.com/resources-2/>

Community Yoga Vancouver – yoga studio striving to be Inclusive. This resource page links to other sites.

<http://offthematintotheworld.org/blog/otm-news/beyond-duality-yoga-and-social-justice/>

Online training for yogis willing to talk about race, equality and oppression with honesty and mindfulness.

<http://www.elephantjournal.com/2014/01/beyond-binary-undoing-the-samskara-of-ism-nikki-myers/>

Article exploring 'isms' in yoga. Nikki teaches for mentioned Beyond Duality course.

http://www.becominganally.ca/Becoming_an_Ally/Home.html

Canadian based adult educator talks about what it means to act as ally.

<http://www.ascentmagazine.com/webexclusive.aspx?WEID=5&issueID=23>

Yoga Demographics

<http://www.statisticbrain.com/yoga-statistics/>

Yoga demographics 2013

[http://www.yogajournal.com/press/yoga_in_america \](http://www.yogajournal.com/press/yoga_in_america/)

2012 Yoga in America Market Study demographics. \ /Article on expanding diversity of yoga (includes 2003 yoga demographics)

<http://moonlitmoth.wordpress.com>

Yoga and social justice blogsite.

Sexism

<http://www.yogawoman.tv/yoga-resource-articles/a-short-history-of-women-in-yoga-in-the-west>

Film: Yogawoman: Never underestimate the power of inner peace (A short history of women and yoga).

<http://www.decolonizingyoga.com/yoga-feminism-why-you-shouldnt-fear-it/>

Article: Yoga and feminism: Why you shouldn't fear it.

<http://www.decolonizingyoga.com/if-you-know-someone-who-doesnt-believe-sexism-exists-show-them-this/>

Video project illustrating sexism exists.

<http://broadrecognition.com/opinion/towards-a-feminist-yoga-practice/>

Article: Towards a feminist yoga practice.

<http://www.decolonizingyoga.com/yoga-diversity-size-body-image/>

Yoga and Diversity: Exploring body size and shape in yoga.

<http://feministing.com/2014/02/18/the-academic-feminist-melanie-klein-on-yoga-and-feminism/>

Article: The Academic Feminist: Melanie Klein on Yoga and Feminism

<http://yogatheoryculturepractice.blogspot.ca/2013/05/the-feminist-yogi-reconciling.html>

Article: The feminist yogi: Reconciling a problematic sexist culture and the practice of yoga.

<http://www.curvyyoga.com>

Resources and training website for women with curvy bodies.

<http://www.adiosbarbie.com>

The body image site for everybody.

<http://bethberila.blogspot.ca>

Blogsite on yoga feminism and the body.

<http://canada.everydaysexism.com>

The everyday sexism project exists to catalogue instances of sexism experienced by women on a day to day basis in order to illustrate that sexism does exist and is a valid problem to discuss.

http://books.google.ca/books?id=NuoDAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA141&lpg=PA141&dq=sexism+yoga&source=bl&ots=uAynsrpTVc&sig=uuC28VtymtYEUYC5P7bqNNFHLk&hl=en&sa=X&ei=B1FQU8_aBMHq2AXgwoGYCQ&ved=0CDAQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=sexism%20yoga&f=false

The feminine critique: Most ancient scriptures were written for and by men. Nischala Joy Devi and Esther Myers question their relevance for modern women.

Fox, Matthew (2008). *The hidden spirituality of men: Ten metaphors to awaken the sacred masculine*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

hooks, bell (2004) *The will to change: Men, masculinity and love*. NY: Atria Books.

Walker, Rebecca (Ed.) (2004). *What makes a man: 22 writers imagine the future*. NY: Riverhead Books.

Racism

<http://www.decolonizingyoga.com/yoga-diversity-people-color/>

Yoga and Diversity: People of Color Video

<http://ucalgary.ca/cared/formsofracism>

University of Calgary website with anti-racism theory (including anti-racism, whiteness, forms of racism, myth of reverse racism, intention vs effect).

<http://saapya.wordpress.com>

South 'Asian American Perspective on yoga in America: Platform, network for panels, articles, speakers.

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/colorblind/201112/colorblind-ideology-is-form-racism>

Article: Discussion of colour blind approach to racism.

<http://www.ottawacitizen.com/life/privilege+colour+blindness/9597402/story.html>

Article: discussion of colour blind approach to racism (Canada).

Heterosexism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXI9w0PbBXY>

Transgender basics: gender identity project – youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWubtUnSfA0>

TED talk on transgender basics.

<http://www.originalplumbing.com/index.php/the-basics/interviews/item/731-an-interview-with-a-trans-yogi>

Interview with a transgender yogi.

<http://safezone.uncc.edu/allies/oppression>

University website containing definitions and resources on heterosexism including a Heterosexism Checklist based on Peggy McIntosh's original article.

Privilege

<http://www.decolonizingyoga.com/calling-for-community-care-a-reflection-on-whiteness-privilege-connection-and-spirit/>

Calling for community care: a reflection on whiteness, privilege, connection and spirit.

<http://realcanadianhistory.tumblr.com/post/45899928679/what-is-white-privilege>

Definition of white privilege.

<http://amptoons.com/blog/files/mcintosh.html>

White privilege: Unpacking the white knapsack by Peggy McIntosh.

<http://amptoons.com/blog/the-male-privilege-checklist/>

A Male Privilege Checklist based on Peggy McIntosh article.

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/michaelblackmon/17-harrowing-examples-of-white-privilege-9hu9>

white privilege examples.

<http://queersunited.blogspot.ca/2008/10/heterosexual-privilege-checklist.html>

Heterosexual privilege checklist.

http://www.mtroyal.ca/cs/groups/public/documents/pdf/pspace_heterosex_p_clist.pdf

Identification of heterosexual privilege.

Inclusive Spaces

<http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/diversity/>

Resources and ideas on how to create an inclusive classroom.

http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/feminist_teacher/v021/21.3.musial.html

Article: Engaged pedagogy in the feminist classroom and yoga studio.

<http://communications.uvic.ca/publications/style/section-5.html>

University of Victoria document on using inclusive language.

http://www.ryerson.ca/lt/resources/supporting_students/inclusive_teaching/inclusive_classroom.html

A Sample of a University inclusive teaching site (most universities will have some sort of support for creating inclusive learning spaces). This one includes a variety of sites on creating inclusive learning spaces.

<http://hrcouncil.ca/hr-toolkit/diversity-language-guidelines.cfm>

Human Resource Council of Canada document on using inclusive language

Working with Trauma

There are numerous places we could have named portals supporting enquiry into using yoga to work with trauma in this Resource, but choice was made to include it here because of the potential arising due to the manifestation of systemic oppression that can generate multiple sources of trauma in our lives from how sexism can lead to abuse issues, or eating disorders, to generational trauma due to racism, to trauma arising from exploring one's gender, or the effects of colonialism in the world.

Emerson, D. & Hopper, E. (2011) *Overcoming trauma through yoga: Reclaiming your body*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Forbes, B. (2011) *Yoga for emotional balance: Simple practices to help relieve anxiety and depression*. Boston, MA: Shambhala Press.

Emerson, D., Sharma, R., Chaudry, S., Turner, J. (2009) *Trauma-sensitive yoga principles, practice and research*. Brookline, MA: Trauma Center at Justice Resource Center.

Weintraub, A. (2012) *Yoga skills for therapists: Effective practices for mood management*. NY: Norton Press.

<http://thefeministwire.com/2013/05/towards-community-wellness-healing-from-trauma-through-yoga/>

Healing journey story exploring potential of yoga to heal trauma.

Local Connections

There are more sites but this is a selection to start with educating self, or offering a connection to someone.

www.vsac.com

Victoria Sexual Assault Centre

Crisis and Information Line: 383-3232

<http://www.menstrauma.com>

Men's Trauma Centre

250-381-6367

Victim Support Services, Group and Individual Counselling

<http://www.vicrisis.ca>
Vancouver Island Crisis Line
www.civics.ca

1-888-494-3888

<http://www.coun.uvic.ca/personal/eating-disorders.html>
Eating Disorders Program in South Vancouver Island 250-387-0000
Basic information on eating disorders.

<http://www.vircs.bc.ca>
Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Society (VIRCS)
To assist in the settlement and adjustment of immigrants and refugees in Canada,
and to provide services designed to increase the newcomer's participation in
Canadian society, by assisting the newcomer to overcome barriers.

<http://www.icavictoria.org>
Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA)
Variety of services including The Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA)
offers a variety of fee-for-service educational workshops and training seminars
covering a range of topics related to multiculturalism, diversity awareness,
immigration and human rights in the workplace and community.

<http://youthcore.ca>
Youthcore.ca
Greater Victoria's online youth portal.

<http://onmyplanet.ca/mundo/>
Onmyplanet.ca
Onmyplanet.ca is a queer and trans positive website and home of The Queer Story
Archive. Contains educational materials.

<http://youthspace.ca>
At Youthspace.ca no issue is too big, or too small... our professionally-trained
volunteers offer emotional support and crisis intervention services for children,
youth and young adults under 30yrs in Canada.
Text: 778_783_0177

<http://web.uvic.ca/eqhr/>
University of Victoria Equity and Human Rights
(For Uvic Campus Community)
250-721-412

B'engaged



B'engaged

Tejas: *Global Mala for Peace; serving food at a shelter; creating access for marginalized women; teaching queer friendly yoga classes; teaching yoga teachers to work with trauma; requiring seva practice as part of teacher training; green tips for living sustainably; Walkamileinhershoes; encouraging bike to practice during bike to work week; creating conference workshop spots for 'socially engaged yoga' teachers.*

Musings

We often ask our students to consider their intention in beginning a class, as we do the same considering our theme and/or intention determining our offering to our students. Our practice as yogini/is and as teacher is one shaped by Yamas and Niyamas or Buddhist Precepts, by ethics of teaching or counseling relationships, or other ethical/philosophical frameworks that we use as a foundation to living with intention to coming 'awake'. Living with intention is so much a part of our practice of yoga shaping our questioning, our enquiry as to who we are, and how we live our lives in relationship to others, both human and beyond human. What does it mean to try to live consistently with intention more often 'awake' than asleep unquestioning in the flow of the mainstream? Living into our busy and filled lives, between stories of *Business as Usual* and the *Great Turning*. How do we moment by moment make intelligent or heartfelt choices and create action based on our intentions and ethics for living life? Doing this knowing that we will fall asleep, stumble, fall, and not live up to our aspirations at times, often quite dramatically. Learning to live with an imperfect flow to life, while constantly aspiring to the live the full brightness of our being.

This chapter is about putting in that extra '+1%' into manifesting our intentions, ethics and values into our regular flow of the day... standing, walking, acting, doing 108 sun salutations, making a stand...against or for, engaging, living into our dharma, becoming intimate with the world, not being silent, living compassion, wholeheartedly, looking back in time and telling our grandkids we did all we could, and creating our own unique path in ways that lead to creation of a more life-affirming world...the best we can! Making whatever small choices, whenever we can that move us towards more of a *Great Turning*. Choosing to act for something. And, appreciating, that we cannot always be as fully awake as we would like, or make the choices that feel more right. Ahimsa directed outwards. Ahimsa directed inwards. It is about becoming awake, seeing clearly, making the invisible visible and finding how to walk, and enact our truth, manifest our fullest self, perhaps in coming to know 'not me not mine' or all is god as well. Confusing stuff this, yet as we 'muck along' in life, in this practice of teaching yoga, and acting as entrepreneur we know we have a choice, each moment, with each breath to create the world anew.

Stuckness

There are multiple understandings, grounded in multiple perspectives that explain how we can get 'stuck', remain blinded to our own completeness and brightness, or 'blocking us' from acting fully and compassionately towards self and others; from Western psychology and the DSM⁷⁶, to Buddhism and our dukkha, or *exploring just what does it mean to be 'not attached' to something*, to the kleshas of yoga, to various religions' perspective such as seeing us flawed, to Al Gore's observation 'that we live in a world of distraction'⁷⁷, to the language of 'samskaras' be they individual or cultural. At different points in our unfolding and enquiry as yoga teachers we have probably encountered and explored aspects of these ideas in coming to understand who we are, and how to support the learning of our students. While an exploration of these ideas is well beyond the scope of this Guide, it does feel useful to illustrate some example of the relationship of engagement and *stuckness*, particularly when it comes to expressing compassion and service to others in this world we share.

First, in continuing to bring into Guide some of Joanna Macy's work with big stories, she talks of the daily challenges of living within the stories of *Business as Usual* and the *Great Unraveling*, from climate change to violence against women to increasing influence of corporations, and goes on to identify a number of responses that can lead to a 'blocked response' to acting or *B(eing)'engaged* on such issues that seems quite relevant to our Western culture⁷⁸.

- I don't believe it's that dangerous.
- It isn't my role to sort it out.
- I don't want to stand out from the crowd.
- This information threatens my commercial or political interests.
- It is so upsetting that I prefer not to think about it.
- I feel paralyzed. I am aware of the danger, but I don't know what to do.
- There's no point doing anything, since it won't make any difference.

Have you ever uttered or felt one of these statements? Haven't we all at some time/s...and then we find our practice, or our distractions, or we walk on...make it to practice, teach the second class, write, love our sweetie, meditate walk the dog...walk on, and simply deal with the everyday. Blocks based on denial, fear, overwhelm and despair. These fears are powerful, but in the process of naming them...with others comes a power as well, that may support a *Great Turning*, as the past can show us. This also points out the need to cultivate twin strengths, or *asanas* of vulnerability and courage that bit by bit become part of our practice.

Add to this picture the contribution of Western psychotherapy in its study of spirituality unfolding specifically in the West in identifying the concept of 'spiritual

⁷⁶ DSM – Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

⁷⁷ http://www.ted.com/talks/al_gore_s_new_thinking_on_the_climate_crisis

⁷⁸ Macy, J. (2012) *Active Hope: How to face the mess we're in without going crazy*.

bypass', a term attributed to John Welwood in 1984;⁷⁹

"Spiritual bypassing is a term I coined to describe a process I saw happening in the Buddhist community I was in, and also in myself. Although most of us were sincerely trying to work on ourselves, I noticed a widespread tendency to use spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing unresolved emotional issues, psychological wounds, and unfinished developmental tasks.

When we are spiritually bypassing, we often use the goal of awakening or liberation to rationalize what I call premature transcendence: trying to rise above the raw and messy side of our humanness before we have fully faced and made peace with it. And then we tend to use absolute truth to disparage or dismiss relative human needs, feelings, psychological problems, relational difficulties, and developmental deficits. I see this as an "occupational hazard" of the spiritual path, in that spirituality does involve a vision of going beyond our current karmic situation."

Ingrid Matthieu, defines it as,

*"Spiritual bypass is a defense mechanism. Although the defense looks a lot prettier than other defenses, it serves the same purpose. Spiritual bypass shields us from the truth, it disconnects us from our feelings, and helps us avoid the big picture. It is more about checking out than checking in—and the difference is so subtle that we usually don't even know we are doing it."*⁸⁰

In our learning our way into our spiritual practices, how often have we perhaps lost the way into the avenues of *spiritual bypass*, or an emphasis on 'overpositivity' with a potential attachment to raga and aversion to working with our shadow or the shadows of our society, to coming to understand how easily our exploration of the process of becoming 'unattached' may manifest as 'detached'. And, finally it is worth posing the question of whether living in the relative privilege of the West more easily support these kinds of 'non-engagement'?

Blocks, engrained habits, samskaras of many kinds exist. They are not easy to get rid of, move beyond or transform. However, in learning to identify that which limits, blocks or brings 'stuckness' offers a power of a kind that we may use to create strategies of dismantlement, or help us see the path through, or simply help us know that it is not just 'us'. But whatever the blockages, the ways we can create or reinforce our own illusions and armours, it seems that there is something too that moves us to deeper engagement with the world. Something that moves us to act kindly and compassionately towards others and to work on difficult issues that limit the freedom of others no matter our own 'stuff', or coercive power from without.

⁷⁹ emotionalsobriety.wikispaces.com/Spiritual+Bypassing

⁸⁰ <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/emotional-sobriety/201110/beware-spiritual-bypass>

That brings us to a place of *B'(eing) engaged*.

What does it mean to act for others?

It is useful to realize, as noted earlier that when we do this kind of engaged, intimate work for the world we walk on the shoulders of those of a lineage who worked to create some form of more life-affirming society extending backwards into the mists of time. That their stories and lessons and practices are something we carry into engaging today. Important too, to appreciate that when we look at lives lived through historical lens, or those shaped by media we are often not seeing all the falls that are interspersed between the moments of awake, and engagement. Some of this is illustrated in yoga teacher Stephen Cope's book, *The Great Work of Your Life*⁸¹, in which he teaches the lessons of the Bhagavad Gita through relating the stories of many significant folks who 'engaged' in the world. And, as we tell our students to not compare themselves to the yogis practicing around them, it too is beneficial to not get caught in comparison to those who have been celebrated, or the BIG actions in moving us towards freedom, because that was their work off the mat. It is vital too, to see that those journeys are entwined with many small actions...of many people. It perhaps serves us better to see those we look up to as tips of an iceberg of the many people who supported them, taught them, loved them, into acting as they did. That while some will find themselves in the midst of BIGNESS it is so important to learn the way of small actions of engagement that define us, and contribute to a bigger turning, knowing that at some point maybe a SHIFT to a *Great Turning* happens similar to the way that change can transpire as a result of our yoga practice.

There are countless ways to see action. Certainly, as many would say 'we must work on ourselves for that is who we can change' which is both true, and can at times lead us in traps as mentioned above, reinforced by patterns of cultural conditioning that disengage us from working for others too. Perhaps it is more useful to see a combination of both acting inwardly, and outwardly as we walk forward in life. As B.K.S. Iyengar voices, "When you inhale, you are taking the strength from God. When you exhale, it represents the service you are giving to the world". Zen Buddhist Yoga Teacher Michael Stone describes this idea using the concepts of vertical and horizontal transcendence,

*Vertical transcendence is when we're working so that I can connect with something bigger than myself, which can be self-serving and self-focused. Horizontal transcendence, however, involves recognition that my devotion to your freedom creates the conditions for my own freedom. It's about a relational, cultural awakening, rather than a personal awakening.*⁸²

Drawing the arrow inward to our inner work so that we may release the arrow in our outer work. Whatever our motivation, to a god, goddess, our dharma,

⁸¹ Cope, Stephen (2012) *The great work of your life: A guide for the journey to your true calling*. NY: Bantam Books.

⁸² <http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/no-priests-no-temples>

intuitive felt rightness, sense of Bodhisattva, driving urge towards moksha and freedom...there seems to be a part of realizing self that exists through service, or at least deeper engagement with all. And, for those of us who have stepped into the role of 'teacher of yoga' it seems that we have ALREADY ventured onto this path. This in the world of chaos of everyday lives, making it to work, meeting the deadlines, getting children to where they need to go, holding presence for that close one in need, remembering finally to pay the credit card bill due, last week. All this emerging, as things do arise in when one practices yoga, in a world where yoga is evolving and naming purpose, being shaped by stories of *Business as Usual*, and *Great Turning* - a time of fluidity, crisis, possibility and choice. How do we want to bring our practice to our students, communities, world and lives?

As we are seeing there are many portals of entry into this exploration. Yoga writer, educator, activist Carol Horton offers us,

...by, socially engaged yoga, I simply mean practicing in ways that are devoted to connecting in compassionate and constructive ways with the world, rather than disengaging and escaping from it.⁸³

This identification of 'socially engaged yoga' as a term seems resonant with the development of the approach 'Engaged Buddhism'⁸⁴. This phrase came in to being in the latter 20th century attributed to Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh, and picked up by other Buddhist teachers such as Joanna Macy, Tara Brach and Gary Snyder focusing on developing Buddhist solutions to social, political and ecological problems. It acknowledged the tendency present in Buddhism, as in other spiritual practices to withdraw from, renunciate, disengage from the social and political realities of our time, and sought to reaffirm the act of engaging with serving others...engaging with working for freedom, engaging with creating a more life-affirming society...engagement, living with intention, but with intention that includes serving beyond our own growth. Furthermore, as Michael Stone believes that as we go inwards developing a greater intimacy with our experience and the world, we concurrently find an arising compassion for others within us, which moves us into acting for other beings⁸⁵.

For a moment it serves us to return to one of the classic texts that we use to shape our learning of yoga, the *Bhagavad Gita* which offers us one view of what it means to act and engage in the world. In the book the god Krishna leads Arjuna to seeing what it means to live out his duty, to be fully engaged in the manifestation of his dharma as *Kshatriya* (warrior) in his world at that moment in time. The *Gita* is both known

⁸³ <https://www.prana.com/life/2013/05/17/socially-engaged-yoga-healing-a-world-in-crisis/>

⁸⁴ Wiki: 'engaged Buddhism'.

⁸⁵ Ibid. As well consider exploring the various youtubes, TEDx talks of Stone online searching intimacy & activism.

for its stirring of action in the world, as it is full of lessons of acting in the world, such as⁸⁶,

Chapter 4 Verse 8

karmany akarma yah pasyed akarmani ca karma yah sa buddhiman manusyesu sa yuktah Krishna-karma-krut

One who sees inaction in action, and action in inaction, is intelligent among men, and he is in the transcendental position, although engaged in all sorts of activities.

Could we bring an application of this verse to considering that our typical busy, busy way of living our daily lives embedded in the story of *Business as Usual* often disconnected from our intentions, or intimacy with the world, or detached from *B'(e)ing*engaged could be viewed as a form of 'inaction in action'. That we are missing something important to our unfolding as we move from 'keeping up with the Jones', to staying ahead, to making it to our 4th spiritual retreat of the year.

Chapter 2 Verse 47

karmaṇy evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana mā karmaphalli-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo 'stv akarmaṇi

You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.

Is there something here that allows us to hold consciousness that working, doing small actions, engaging in work towards a *Great Turning* on issues that feel HUGE or OVERWHELMING, that may not be done in this lifetime, before we retire, **is important action too**. Further bringing us to the question on *B'engaged* articulated by many First Nations...'what does it mean to act as if for seven generations?' Can we let go our attachment of the need to see it done by tomorrow or next week or by the time of the 'years end report'? Can we do the work, knowing that we might not see the BIG changes that the longer picture of history/herstory can hold?

In further considering the impact of the *Bhagavad Gita* is in intriguing to see how it has become one significant weaving in defining contemporary ideas of what it mean to *B'engaged* in social transformation. American writer, known for the book *On Walden Pond*, Henry David Thoreau is said to have read the *Bhagavad Gita* integrating it into his essay on *Civil Disobedience*, which crosses back across the ocean to influence Mahatma Gandhi's thoughts and writings on his non-violent action of *Sarvodaya* challenging the oppressive colonialism of the British Empire. Gandhi's work then crosses back to North America to influence among many, the

⁸⁶ There are many ways to read the Bhagavad Gita, as are there different ways to interpret the messages so the reader is encouraged to find which Gita speaks to them, which translation draws them and to craft one's own experience of the text as much as we can draw from it 'classic interpretations such as above/

work of Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement in its challenge of racism. Add in other ideas of spiritually inspired socially engaged action coming from the east in Buddhism blending with ideas from Global south from *liberation theology* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to those of the many local, and indigenous peoples rising up against the oppressive history of centuries of colonialism, in countries around the world attempting to redefine their fate in the world. All these ideas, woven together with a yogic text laying a foundation of both consciousness and practical action worldwide for a *Great Turning* in the face of *Business as Usual*. And while yoga as we know it was perhaps not fully part of this moment, the seeds of a practice mostly practiced by men starts to find fertile ground in the imaginations of women in the West, shaped by waves of women's rights, grown in the crucible of the latter decades of North America's socially engaged movements beginning to find its feet. Finding its dance of *Natarajasana*, as a socially engaged movement further feeding the growth towards a more life-affirming society.

Other ideas have also arisen that entwine spirituality and action moving us towards a *Great Turning*, that could support our enquiry into this process of engagement including the '*spiritual activism*' principles (See Figure 1.) outlined by the Satyana Institute, or the concept of '*sacred activism*' defined by yoga teacher Andrew Harvey⁸⁷. Any of these ideas may provide us ways to integrate our practice, with engagement in social issues, with our daily lives.

Figure 1. Principles of Spiritual Activism⁸⁸

Transformation of motivation from anger/fear/despair to compassion/love/purpose. This is a vital challenge for today's social change movement. This is not to deny the noble emotion of appropriate anger or outrage in the face of social injustice. Rather, this entails a crucial shift from fighting against evil to working for love, and the long-term results are very different, even if the outer activities appear virtually identical. Action follows Being, as the Sufi saying goes. Thus "*a positive future cannot emerge from the mind of anger and despair*" (Dalai Lama).

Non-attachment to outcome. This is difficult to put into practice, yet to the extent that we are attached to the results of our work, we rise and fall with our successes and failures—a sure path to burnout. Hold a clear intention, and let go of the outcome—recognizing that a larger wisdom is always operating. As Gandhi said, "*the victory is in the doing,*" not the results. Also, remain flexible in the face of changing circumstances: "*Planning is invaluable, but plans are useless.*" (Churchill)

Integrity is your protection. If your work has integrity, this will tend to protect you from negative energy and circumstances. You can often sidestep negative energy from others by becoming "*transparent*" to it, allowing it to pass through you with no adverse effect upon you. This is a consciousness practice that might be called "*psychic aikido.*"

Integrity in means and ends. Integrity in means cultivates integrity in the fruit of one's work. A noble goal cannot be achieved utilizing ignoble means.

⁸⁷ <http://www.beliefnet.com/Wellness/2009/11/Sacred-Activist.aspx>

⁸⁸ http://www.satyana.org/principles_new.html

Don't demonize your adversaries. It makes them more defensive and less receptive to your views. People respond to arrogance with their own arrogance, creating rigid polarization. Be a perpetual learner, and constantly challenge your own views.

You are unique. Find and fulfill your true calling. *"It is better to tread your own path, however humbly, than that of another, however successfully."* (Bhagavad Gita)

Love thy enemy. Or at least, have compassion for them. This is a vital challenge for our times. This does not mean indulging falsehood or corruption. It means moving from *"us/them"* thinking to *"we"* consciousness, from separation to cooperation, recognizing that we human beings are ultimately far more alike than we are different. This is challenging in situations with people whose views are radically opposed to yours. Be hard on the issues, soft on the people.

Your work is for the world, not for you. In doing service work, you are working for others. The full harvest of your work may not take place in your lifetime, yet your efforts now are making possible a better life for future generations. Let your fulfillment come in gratitude for being called to do this work, and from doing it with as much compassion, authenticity, fortitude, and forgiveness as you can muster.

Selfless service is a myth. In serving others, we serve our true selves. *"It is in giving that we receive."* We are sustained by those we serve, just as we are blessed when we forgive others. As Gandhi says, the practice of satyagraha (*"clinging to truth"*) confers a *"matchless and universal power"* upon those who practice it. Service work is enlightened self-interest, because it cultivates an expanded sense of self that includes all others.

Do not insulate yourself from the pain of the world. Shielding yourself from heartbreak prevents transformation. Let your heart break open, and learn to move in the world with a broken heart. As Gibran says, *"Your pain is the medicine by which the physician within heals thyself."* When we open ourselves to the pain of the world, we become the medicine that heals the world. This is what Gandhi understood so deeply in his principles of ahimsa and satyagraha. A broken heart becomes an open heart, and genuine transformation begins.

What you attend to, you become. Your essence is pliable, and ultimately you become that which you most deeply focus your attention upon. You reap what you sow, so choose your actions carefully. If you constantly engage in battles, you become embattled yourself. If you constantly give love, you become love itself.

Rely on faith, and let go of having to figure it all out. There are larger 'divine' forces at work that we can trust completely without knowing their precise workings or agendas. Faith means trusting the unknown, and offering yourself as a vehicle for the intrinsic benevolence of the cosmos. *"The first step to wisdom is silence. The second is listening."* If you genuinely ask inwardly and listen for guidance, and then follow it carefully—you are working in accord with these larger forces, and you become the instrument for their music.

Love creates the form. Not the other way around. The heart crosses the abyss that the mind creates, and operates at depths unknown to the mind. Don't get trapped by *"pessimism concerning human nature that is not balanced by an optimism concerning divine nature, or you will overlook the cure of grace."* (Martin Luther King) Let your heart's love infuse your work and you cannot fail, though your dreams may manifest in ways different from what you imagine.

What does action look like?

When we think of action, or advocacy, or activism; when we think of many of the people mentioned throughout this Guide; it is possible that stereotypes of action

may arise; the protest, the strike, the walk of Gandhi to the sea, hunger strikes, or the freedom rides of the civil rights, the speeches...oh the glorious speechifying, and so many more. Knowing that this will be the stereotype for many of *B'engaged*, further reinforced by our media, our entertainment industry, our government all of which work on a principle of strategic elevation of 'conflict and action', it seems essential to illustrate that there are many ways to *B'engaged*. Of course we could look at the wide diversity of actions of someone like Gandhi himself; in his walk to the sea for salt, or his writings, his wearing of homespun linen and advocacy for developing local industries (instead of depending on the industrial mills of Britain) to his hunger strikes...so many ways to act. Yet, even here we might still find ourselves mired in a stereotypic world of 'tactics' and 'strategies', that while useful may potentially still limit our imaginations in engagement. One model, which may support an expansion of our imagination of *B(eing)'engaged*, is Joanna Macy's typology of dimensions of action that are necessary to create a *Great Turning*. In considering them in Figure. 2 appreciate that she feels that they are mutually reinforcing and equally necessary. What they may offer us is a seeing where we are already, or where we may choose to focus our engagement in the world, showing where and how we wish stand for something important to us.

Figure 2. *Dimension of Actions for the Great Turning*

1) **Holding Actions**- this is essentially what we normally call activism or direct action. It's getting out there in the streets and saying a Holy No to the destructive and unjust practices that are taking place on the planet right now. It's putting bodies in the way of an out of control global system as it marches its *sick juggernaut* towards some form of deterioration or collapse. Macy says this could take the form of "blockades, boycotts, civil disobedience, and other forms of refusal...Work of this kind buys time. It saves some lives, and some ecosystems, species, and cultures, as well as some of the gene pool, for the sustainable society to come. But it is insufficient to bring that society about" and vital as it is For some of this this will be our place of action in integrating yoga into these actions, or creating actions in themselves such as yogamobs around an issue, and for some it will be to hold the energy of our yoga classes as places of healing, grounding, centering for those who choose this work.

2) **Structural Change**- this is where we actively work to build new societal forms, new economies, new ways of being together and organizing etc. This is the realm of the famous Buckminster Fuller quote, "To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete". Structural change is where we develop the forms of a new society right within the old one, eventually having what's needed to shed our former skin. There are a lot folks working on these sorts of projects today, ranging from *permaculture*, to *Transition Towns*, *resilient communities*, *food sovereignty* and *the local food movement*, *peer-to-peer production*, *gift economies* and the idea of social economy and other *alternative economic forms*, green technologies, *eco-villages*, *education initiatives* and the list goes on. Here we see the work of yoga to bring mindfulness work into the school systems, the prisons, integrating it with alternative health models.

3) **Shift in Consciousness**- this is where we do the work of inner spiritual and psychological transformation, what Joseph Campbell called *the inward journey*. Here we

intentionally try and develop beyond our "skin encapsulated egos" and open into wider spheres of identity with the earth, cosmos, and the whole of humanity. This can happen through **new forms of thought**, understanding **the Great Story** of which we're a-part, and in particular, through the many spiritual traditions that have developed the methods for such transformation over the centuries. For Macy this is important because, "These structural alternatives cannot take root and survive without deeply ingrained values to sustain them. They must mirror what we want and how we relate to Earth and each other. They require, in other words, a profound shift in our perception of reality--and that shift is happening now, both as cognitive revolution and spiritual awakening". And perhaps here could be our greatest work as yoga teachers providing the tools that could support or enfuse this shift in consciousness.⁸⁹

In so many ways simply choosing to bring yoga into our lives as a practice; then to further take on the role and journey of 'yoga teacher' is to become engaged at some level, challenging and transforming a world shaped by the tensions between stories, *Business as Usual* and the *Great Turning*. In our most basic work as yoga teachers we can offer a space for our students to enquire, to drop into their bodies, find their breath, and create a healthier integration with that Western dominant paradigm of the mind. We can support people reconnecting with a love for self, and support them in developing tools that lead to clarity and greater awareness. We can create potentially safe spaces for women and others on the gender continuum that have been negatively shaped by living within a patriarchal world, or other inclusive spaces for those who have been marginalized by race, or sexual orientation, age, ability or class. We can be creating ways to support a compassion for all beings in life beyond, our embodiedness as human. We can support new ways of exploring reality and what is actually important in life, by bringing vision to our websites and programs of how we could be living our way into the *Great Turning*. And, if we are ready we can integrate into our work and lives broader, tougher, more complex issues that affect us at the global scale. As Stephen Cope observes in *The Great Work or your Life* - we all have our own dharma to manifest yet we must find how to walk it because in finding that walk and engaging in life we change it for all.

"I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim."
-Elie Wiesel

"Do not wait for extraordinary circumstances to do good; try to use ordinary situations."
- Jean Paul Richter

"It is not enough to be compassionate – you must act."
- His Holiness The Dalai Lama

"When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?"
-Eleanor Roosevelt

⁸⁹ <http://www.joannamacy.net/three-dimensions-of-the-great-turning.html>

"There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."
-Audre Lorde

"Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral."
- Paulo Freire

"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."
— Martin Luther King Jr.

"I raise my voice not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard"
— Malala Yousafzai

"If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day."
— E.B. White

"Speak your mind even if your voice shakes."
- Maggie Kuhn

"When asked if I am pessimistic or optimistic about the future, my answer is always the same: if you look at the science about what is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand the data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse."
— Martin Keogh, *Hope Beneath Our Feet: Restoring Our Place in the Natural World*

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."
— Anne Frank

*"Every morning think as you wake up:
I am alive,
I have a precious human life,
I am not going to waste it.
I am going to use all of my energies to develop myself,
To expand my heart out to others,
To achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings.
I am not going to get angry,
Or think badly about others.
I am going to benefit others as much as I can."*
- Dalai Lama

Portals

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Book Review: *Awake in the world* <http://www.itsallyogababy.com/review-awake-in-the-world-by-michael-stone/>

<http://www.yogaactivist.org/about/mission-statement/>

Empowering individuals and communities through yoga and mindfulness.

<http://www.greenyoga.org/home>

Green Yoga Association – spiritual activism for the planet resources, networking.

<https://www.dosomething.org/training/activismandadvocacy/activism-vs-advocacy>

One of the largest organizations for young people and social change, our 2.5 million members tackle campaigns that impact every cause, from poverty to violence to the environment to literally everything else.

<https://www.facebook.com/seynchicago>

Socially engaged yoga network of Chicago.

<http://workthatreconnects.org/>

Joanna Macy website of work of the Great Turning.

<http://moonlitmoth.wordpress.com>

Yoga and social justice blog based in Vancouver.

http://dangerousharvests.blogspot.ca/2014_05_01_archive.html

Writings about zen Buddhism, yoga, social justice and politics, the arts and life in general.

<http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/our-work/network-of-buddhist-activists/>

Buddhist Peace Fellowship: Cultivating compassionate action.

<http://carolhortonphd.com>

Writer, educator, activist: Co-editor of 21st Century Yoga, and author of YogaPhD.

<http://wagingnonviolence.org>

Waging Nonviolence is a source for original news and analysis about struggles for justice and peace around the globe. Ordinary people build power using nonviolent strategies and tactics every day, even under the most difficult of circumstances, yet these stories often go unnoticed or misunderstood by a media industry fixated on violence and celebrity. Since 2009, *WNV* has been reporting on these people-powered struggles and helping their participants learn from one another, because we know that they can and do change the world.

<http://www.yogajournal.com/wisdom/2532>

Change the world: Meet five yogis whose practice has informed their activism.

<https://www.prana.com/life/2013/05/17/socially-engaged-yoga-healing-a-world-in-crisis/>

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Expressing a Buddhist response to climate change and other threats to our home.

<http://www.permanentculturenow.com/what-is-activism/>

Article exploring term of activism.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/claire-n-kaplan/the-next-generation-of-activists/b_5228688.html

Article talking about young generation of upcoming activists.

<http://jivamuktiyoga.com/about/activism>

Jivamukti yoga perspective on activism.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andrew-harvey-and-karuna-erickson/a-response-to-todays-challenge_b_699190.html

Article on the Sacred Activism of Andrew Harvey.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OyeSac8V3Go>

Youtube on the Sacred Activism of Andrew Harvey.

<https://www.dosomething.org/training/activismandadvocacy/activism-vs-advocacy>

Article contrasting activism and advocacy.

<http://yogamodern.com/categories/innovation/socially-engaged-yoga-an-idea-whose-time-has-come/>

Blog article 'socially engaged yoga: An idea whose time has come.

<http://www.wikihow.com/Become-an-Activist>

12 easy steps in becoming an activist.

<http://yogamodern.com/categories/featured/who-is-afraid-to-get-political/>

Is yoga automatically political?

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/emotional-sobriety/201110/beware-spiritual-bypass>

Article in Psychology Today defining concept of 'spiritual bypass'.

<http://robertmasters.com/writings/spiritual-bypassing/>

Article describing 'spiritual bypass'.

<http://arewelisting.net/index.html>

Conversations is a radio show hosted by KVMR radio show host in the US, Michael Stone, bringing you leading edge thinkers, authors and activists in the areas of Environmental Restoration, Social Justice, Evolutionary Cosmology and Spiritual fulfillment.

<http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1579>

Interview with Thich Nhat Hanh on engaged Buddhism.

<http://www.stonecircles.org/our-work/accessible-retreats/yoga-of-social-change/>

Our Yoga of Social Change program, led by Claudia Horwitz and Michelle Johnson, explores the ways that yoga can deepen the journey of awareness & inform our desire for collective liberation.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOMLkcWSDYI>

Youtube of Shiva Rea talking about her ideas of Yoga Energy Activism.

<http://www.offthematintotheworld.org>

Off the Mat, Into the World ® (OTM) is dedicated to bridging yoga and activism. Offered online diversity course *Beyond Duality: Yoga and Social Justice* mentioned in chapter *B'inclusive*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5difNCbU4o>

Mark Whitwell 'heart of yoga peace project' – bringing folks from disadvantaged regions to places such as Omega for yoga trainings.

<http://www.centreofgravity.org>

Buddhist sangha of Michael Stone in Toronto.

Closing

What is important? We wake up. We meet our body, our breath, our THOUGHTS, or our THOUGHTS meet us first and eventually we notice our body, our breath. Perhaps we meet our intentions, ethics in how we live life. For those able to construct a morning practice of asana or sitting, possibly a moment of deepened dropping in, while the rest of us move somehow into the day. We meet those in our lives over the next hours, children, sweeties, pets, friends, gardens, co-workers ...perhaps an early morning teaching. Maybe we notice that we live in this land of big trees, Douglas Fir and Cedar, beside an ocean bringing in some sort of weather. A few might remember, that these are first peoples' lands as well. As we take in our food, drink our tea, dress sens/ibly/uously, drive, bike, bus, send out our first texts we interact with those in our globalized world. At moments throughout our day we might encounter stimuli, which brings to our attention the BIG stories that we live wrapped within of *Business as Usual*, *Great Unraveling* or *Great Turning*. As we make our decisions and choices, unconsciously and consciously we maneuver through our everyday lives, where small things can become oh so BIG...Where is my phone? Why haven't they texted me back? Did that person with the 'scowl' like my class? Why couldn't my sweetie, listen that bit longer? Ahhh my body...shape, size, colour, age, gender? Why...did he have to cut in front of me...going to a fire? The *Bhagavad Gita* reminds us to observe 'the action in inaction and the inaction in action' ...wonderful stirring words. Yet as insightful as they are, tough to live moment to moment, like attempting to live any of our ethics or values as fully as we might desire. So *ahimsa* directed inwards as much as *ahimsa* directed outwards. Further as we address our needs we might notice ourselves pulsing between meeting the self of some configuration including perhaps ego; to one that is *tribe centric*, looking out to meet the needs of our immediate relationships of communities, and students, loved ones, or even those who challenge us; to occasionally perhaps acting in ways that expands further into a *world centric* view (all beings, or other peoples or seven generations). We juggle our time, making meetings, finishing deadlines, to simply showing up. At some point, we fit in our daily practice...or not.

But then we, who as yoga teachers have stepped into a role that comes with power, responsibility and ethics of its own, we have already stepped to some degree into some of the essence conveyed within this guide... from *B(eing)'engaged* to *B(eing)'community*. Possibly further into *B(eing)'cooperative* and *B(eing)'inclusive*. Maybe even into *B(eing)'local*, making the choices of living our practice, both on and off the mat or *walking our talk*. Perhaps today, is one where we have strode more strongly into acting as *Great Turning*...creating, experiencing moments of greater clarity where the veils of *maya* thinned, or the pull of *dvesha* (aversion) and *raga* (craving) lessened, or we simply felt more grounded or softer, kinder, more compassionate towards others, towards ourselves. Possibly, we were able to act in a way that further built a *sense of community* within our studio, or class; or we remembered to breathe in with gratitude as we walked through the Gary Oak meadow; or noticed that student struggling, and found the way to attend with the right words that

brought them more *sukha*, or easefulness in their pose; found oneself sharing of a workshop good for ones' students at another studio; or decided that cause was worth juggling more time to teach a class as seva at that event. And then, the cultural waves of *B'usiness as Usual*, or the pain and despair in acknowledging whatever aspects of the *Great Unraveling* floods back into the consciousness or unconsciousness of our movements, actions and silence, permeating our realities.

Yoga - 'yoking' us to our breath, the moment, our inner light, compassion towards other beings, interbeing. This guide is about developing a different, yet possibly the same 'yoking' depending on your perspective, of weaving of a specific age-old tapestry, of liberation, and freedom, moksha, compassionate action and intimacy. It is unabashedly and transparently weighted to encourage us to make choices, develop intention, however small or grand that would lead us to more of a *Great Turning*. It is not a new story for yogini/is and yoga teachers and entrepreneurs in the evolving of Western yoga, but increasingly exists entwined with the manifestation in Western yoga of the story of *Business as Usual*. It is a story that is illustrated in this Guide drawing from conversations with local yoga teachers, to tracing that 'storymaking' through the *Portals* offered here, interwoven with the other 'stories of kin', such as engaged Buddhism or spiritual activism. It is hoped that this yogic offering of *Jnana* and *Karma* has made some '*invisible, visible*'; that you have found some gem, of inspiration, deepening understanding, belonging, or even resistance that has caused you to examine some personal assumption; to support your own enquiry, or one that you can gift to another; or maybe even lead to a richer crafting of relationship, community, or project that will feel enriching.

The *Bhagavad Gita* encourages us, asks of us, to find our own unique path, or calling or might we say our own 'authentic dance'....

Some words are worth repeating...

*I get up
I walk
I fall down
Meanwhile I keep dancing.
- Hillel*

Some words are worth holding on to...

*Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and
precious life?
- Mary Oliver*

Some words are necessary to honour a conversation

Namaste

Endpoint

I write this with curiosity as to what evolution of humankind might occur if we continue casting an Indra's net⁹⁰, of bright sparks of small transformative communities around the world webbing it in a bright weaving of that could lead to a shift towards a Great Turning. I want to believe that one day our great, great grandchildren may be practicing vrksasana by watching a humpback whale breach, perched in the top branches of a 400 hundred year old Red Cedar sitting on a land which finally holds right relationship with all the peoples and beings living there beside the Salish Sea. That they will begin their day in gratitude for what we have done this day.



⁹⁰ Indra's net - jeweled net which hangs in the air above the god Indra. In each cross-hair of the net rests a single jewel which reflects all the jewels in the net ad infinitum. This image is a symbolic reference to the interconnected nature of the universe.