

# Camp Utopia Yoga

## Lifestyle Project 1: History



### Part 1. What is Yoga?



Some believe yoga is a religion; for many, it's just a workout. Yoga is big enough to be both and neither and more. Yoga is (or can be) a whole program for living.

It's a process of self-discovery that has been evolving for almost 5000 years. The philosophy and practice of yoga are a discipline without dogma, based on observable, verifiable truths derived from centuries of study, practice and observation. Yoga is a science, therefore, it can embrace any religion, or none.

Yoga is not only the postures; they represent one branch of an "8 limbed" path. The first mention of yoga was not about poses, and a written record of specific poses didn't appear until the 1300s. Then, only 16 poses were mentioned, and they were focused only on making the body comfortable for sitting in meditation.

Through most of it's history, meditation was the primary practice, and the early yogis figured out that it was easier to sit for longer periods and be successful at clearing and mastering the mind when the body was clear and healthy and "mastered."

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we've placed the physical practices of yoga at the top of the priority list, and many practitioners will never want or need to go beyond that.

Yoga traditionalists bemoan the modern yoga "fitness" classes, saying that without the deeper elements, the other "limbs" and all the spiritual practices, that our work and our practice are useless.

Lesson 1. Idealists don't always notice that reality exists.

The teachers who came to the West understood: beginning with the poses in a culture as stressed out and toxic as ours can free the body from pain. A body free from pain is free to explore deeper and live more fully, and inevitably does. You will hear from students – and for certain you experienced it yourself – even with the "just the poses," deeper shifts are happening in all students. Some, like you, will be called to go deeper, while many will simply live happier, healthier lives.

This is perfectly ok. This is the work of yoga in this moment in time.  
This is our work.

Yogi Bhajan, the founder of modern day Kundalini yoga, predicted that 40 million people would be practicing yoga in America by 2020. About 20 million are practicing in 2015, and growth is not slowing down, it's speeding up. 50% of Americans say they "want to start yoga," according to one recent Yoga Journal Yoga in America study. According to the same study, 42% of new yogis are coming because their doctor advised it.

The yoga of teaching in your time is to welcome all these people to the mat and give them safe, effective, health focused instruction.

And Pada Pada, step by step, the deeper work of yoga, the awakening of the soul, will unfold in all those millions of people.

In his translation of The Yoga Sutras, one of the 4 main books from yoga's past, Sri Swami Satchidananda wrote that we need the strength and flexibility of steel to keep the body fit for being still.

"The body must be so supple it can bend any way you want it to. Such a body will always be healthy and tension-free. The moment we sit down for meditation in such a body, we'll forget it." ~ Sri Swami Satchidananda / The Yoga Sutras

True. But also, the moment we jump out of bed and get moving with our day, we'll forget it too. And that's the point. In America, over 80% of people will experience a major back pain incident in their lives. Spinal surgeries are ineffective at removing pain 95% of the time, and the fastest growing group of dying people in our culture are white people 45 – 54, and they are dying of pain related issues like drug overdose, suicide, alcoholism, addiction related side effects, etc. Our nation is dying of pain.

Our job is to focus on that. While we help them learn about and listen to their bodies, we help them heal pain, improve breathing, and calm down. You know from your own experience with your body, and the teachers who've inspired you to explore further, that the simple practice of yoga, as we practice it here and now, is enough. It's everything.

However, it's good to know where you came from. **The history of yoga** is your history, and as they evolve, your students will want to know more also. So here it is...

The most popular definition of the word yoga is "yoke" or "union" from the root word "yuj". It describes the disciplines and practices as a self-chosen binding, a harness to help us unite body, mind and spirit toward the ultimate goal of liberation from worldly attachments and desires. It is a non-dualist philosophy, which means union, or oneness, with the universe (God and His Creation are the same), as compared to dualism, which sees God as separate from His Creation.

In 1943, psychologist Abraham Maslow described the hierarchy of human needs in “A Theory of Human Motivation.” It looks a lot like the chakra system, which is the way the ancient yogis described the energy of the physical and spiritual bodies.

Maslow’s theory speaks to the same traits and functions at each level of growth as the yogis did. The triangular form Maslow takes is a direct visual representation of the importance of each piece in our growth. If we don’t have our basic needs met, nothing else is possible.



Through most of human history, most of humanity has been living “in the red,” meaning they do not have “survival” as a given in their daily lives. Life for most is a constant struggle for enough food and water to live. The ancient yogis tried to master the internal energies of every human, so that happiness could be achieved regardless of the external reality. The early yogis were scientists and explorers of health and happiness.

This is your lineage. You are that also.

The earliest writings on yoga appear in the earliest of all writings on earth. **The Vedas** are among the oldest known books, and are said to be the source material for all religious texts. Definitely they are the foundation texts for the Hindu religion, which in turn was the foundation for Buddhism and Jainism.

**Veda** means knowledge; the Vedas were collections of knowledge that had been passed down orally for most of history, and they included spells, incantations, and advice for living. They were almanacs, self-help books, and how-to manuals.

The 4<sup>th</sup> book of Vedas, the Rig Veda, contains the Vratya Kanda, a book of advice for daily living, and the first mention of the word “yoga,” in reference to “harnessing the breath.”

The Rig Veda describes the Vratya sect, a group of spiritual outcasts who worshipped Rudra, the god of wind. Their musicians had learned to sing more powerfully because they practiced a technique of breath control they called pranayama. Because so much of history was passed down orally – from teachers, families, professional story tellers and musicians, and the stories might take days to tell, the ability to control the breath would be a useful skill and practice, and the yoga we practice today has a direct connection to this first mention of yoga as a physical discipline.

### **Exploring yourself in yoga. (Optional assignment)**

Write about what yoga is to you. Think about how it was at the beginning, when you first experienced it as something “more than a workout” and how it is changing as you begin the shift from student to teacher.

There are many Vedas (books of knowledge). 800 years after the Rig Veda first mentioned yoga as a means of harnessing the breath, yoga appears again in the Upanishads, another in a long line of Vedas. The Upanishads is most ancient book of revelations of Hinduism, a religious philosophy that evolved from an even older philosophy: Brahminism. If you are planning to read any of these ancient texts, the Upanishads are the most important; they are said to contain the entire essence of the Vedas. The word Upanishad means “to sit near” – implying the need to study with a teacher to obtain wisdom. Here, yoga is not described as a physical practice for body or breath, but as **a disciplined, scientific path to achieving enlightenment.**

The Vedas, which were books of advice for living, taught that the path to a peaceful life came from rituals and offerings to external gods, like many primitive spiritual belief systems. In the Upanishads, however, the sacrifices and rituals are more inward focused – they teach the sacrifice of the self, or ego, as a path to attain liberation.

According to the Upanishads, these are the “self-evident” truths:

- Your true essence is the same as the universe.
- Everyone is subject to birth, death, and rebirth.
- Your actions in this lifetime determine the nature of your rebirth. (Karma). If you do good, you will move up the caste system in the next life. If you do bad, you will return as an outcast or a lower animal.
- You can reverse your bad karma through spiritual disciplines like meditation and renunciation, which here means doing good works and living without desires and attachments. These are internal sacrifices, and in later Upanishad texts (remember the Vedas and the Upanishads are many books, not just one) yoga becomes known as the path of renunciation.

Subsequent Upanishads also discuss pranayama, defining yoga as a way to “bind the breath” and also to introduce the sacred syllable OM, or AUM. The Maitrayaniya Upanishad says: “The oneness of breath and mind, and likewise of the senses, and the relinquishment of all conditions of existence, this shall be designated as yoga.”

The next major book about yoga is the **Bhagavad Gita**, (The Song of God) which appears between 1500 and 2500 years ago. The Gita is considered to be “the bible” of yoga, and it appears in the middle of The Mahabharata, one of longest, oldest stories in the world. It is India’s story of the origins of humankind. The “poem” of the Mahabharata contains 100,000 2 line stanzas that takes several days to perform in its entirety. It is narrated by the elephant headed god, Ganesha, also known as “the Remover of Obstacles.” Its overarching tale describes a war between two sides of a family, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, each with a legitimate claim to a kingdom. In 18 days, the war claims 6 million lives and ushers in the dawn of the Kali Yuga - the dark ages, in

which we still live. Whatever actual history the epic recounts is thought to have taken place as long as 3500 years ago.

Much of the story is the background and lead up to the war: 2 families, rivalries between cousins, magic and deceit and exile and meetings with gods. Hundreds of side characters and storylines fill in the complex plot. It is just before the opening of the battle that the Bhagavad Gita is told, by the God Krishna, to the great Pandava warrior Arjuna. As he sits at the front of his armies, preparing to go to war and kill his cousins and teachers, he is overcome with doubt. He doesn't want to do it, and Krishna comes to tell him that he has no choice, and he describes to him what yoga is, and how to attain an enlightened state through the central practices of yoga.

Krishna instructs Arjuna that the way to liberation is 3 fold: service, wisdom, and devotion. What he is describing are the major forms of yoga right up to today: **karma** yoga (service), **jnana** yoga (wisdom), and **bhakti** yoga (devotion).

Krishna tells Arjuna he must fight because he is a warrior. Even if he knows it is wrong, it's his duty (**dharma**). Doing your duty poorly accumulates better karma than trying to do someone else's dharma, even if you do it well. That is service on a universal scale. You have to be a happy cog in the wheel and do what you were meant to do – and that is karma yoga. Karma yoga also includes doing “good works” in the here and now. **Karma yoga is the yoga of “right action” – no matter how hard.**

For Arjuna, because of yoga's non-dualist view of the universe, the outcome of the battle ultimately makes no difference. That's wisdom – **jnana** yoga. In day to day life, the practice of **jnana yoga is one of intense study, internally and externally.** The two together are “disinterested action.”

Krishna tells Arjuna that we can all achieve liberation through disinterested action, but can achieve even higher states of awakening through worship. **That's devotion, bhakti yoga,** and when Krishna, a god, who has also been manipulating this story since the beginning, describes it, he's talking about worshipping himself.

Krishna says, “Victory and defeat are the same. You must act without reflecting on the fruit of the act. Seek detachment. Fight without desire. Don't withdraw into solitude; renunciation is not enough. You must act, yet action mustn't dominate you. **In the heart of action, you must remain free from all attachment.**”

Arjuna says, “How can I put into practice what you are demanding? The mind is capricious and unstable. It is harder to subdue than taming the wind.” Krishna replies, “See with the same eye: a mound of earth and a heap of gold; a cow and a sage; a dog and a man who eats the dog. There is another intelligence beyond the mind.” Arjuna says, “Passion drags us away, darkness dulls our senses. How can I find this intelligence? With what will?”

Then Krishna tells him of the Yoga of Wisdom, the mysterious path of action, and the true battlefield, where all men must fight alone. As Arjuna struggles with seeing the truth through the veil of illusion, he finally gets a glimpse: “I see you – one point and the

entire world. All the warriors hurl themselves into your mouth. You grind them between your teeth. They wish to be destroyed. You destroy them. Through your body I see the stars. I see life and death. I see silence. Tell me who you are. I am shaken to the depth. I am afraid.”

And Krishna gives him the big picture (**bhakti**): “I am all that you think. All that you say. Everything hangs on me, like pearls on a thread. I am the earth’s scent and the fire’s heat. I am appearance and disappearance. I am the trickster’s hoax. I am the radiance of all that shines. I am time grown old. All beings fall into the night and all beings are born back to daylight. I have already defeated all these warriors. He who thinks he can kill and he who thinks he can be killed are both mistaken. No weapon can pierce the life that informs you. No fire can burn it, no water can drench it, no wind can make it dry. Have no fear and rise up, because I love you. Act as you must act.”

And so the war begins. The bad guys behave honorably, the good guys behave dishonorably, millions are killed. At the end of the tale, the end of their lives, the bad guys go to heaven and the good guys go to hell, and still Krishna says, there is no difference. None of it matters, because none of it is real. In this way of thinking, heaven and hell are simply more illusions of the mind. In the mind, we go where we believe we are going. In yoga philosophy, “oneness” or nondualistic philosophy, it’s all the same.

**In a nutshell, the Gita teaches us: “your business is with the deed and not with the result.”**

Win or lose, we don’t grow if we don’t try, and we don’t succeed if we aren’t doing what is ours to do. The importance of doing your unique life purpose, even if you fail, is paramount.

### **How does this knowledge apply?**

In our practice, we play this truth out every day. Your business is with the pose, the body in the present moment, and the breath, moving in and out. There is no beginning or end to the pose, or the class, there is only the “deed” – the practice. As both student and teacher, our business is with this moment, this student, this class, this pose. Without an eye to the end goal, simply showing up because we believe the practice works, whether we feel it or not, is an important lesson to teach and learn. Because pada pada, step by step, we see the improvement. The end goal is imaginary anyway. It keeps moving ahead of you.

**Let’s dig into the first forms of yoga more deeply.**

**KARMA YOGA - Path of right action  
BHAKTI YOGA - Path of devotion  
JNANA YOGA - Path of knowledge**

**Karma Yoga:** the path of selfless action. Karma yoga is the dedication of all work as an offering to God, with no thought of personal reward. It transcends worldly ideas like success or failure, selfishness, and egoism. It leads toward doing service to all beings. This is a non-dualist philosophy – believing that all life is a part of the universal spirit, Karma yogis serve all beings with the respect worthy of a divine presence. Striving to serve everything, including human beings, animals, the planet and the whole world, the heart is expanded, egoism destroyed, and oneness (enlightenment) ultimately realized. Karma yoga asks you to perform duties in the external world so that actions become means, rather than obstacles, in the path of self-realization. This allows you to live successfully in the world while remaining above it, unaffected by worldly filters.

Historically, the practice of Karma yoga emerged early, because Bhakti yoga, the yoga of devotion to God (Krishna), was calling a growing number of people to renounce their worldly lives and go off to meditate in the forests. The religious authorities began to preach that life unfolded in 4 stages: student, householder, forest-dweller, and free-wandering ascetic. Karma yoga encourages the householder to seek liberation through duty, maintains the idea of devotion to God, and sets the stage for later life, when the children are grown and responsibilities to society diminished, for the householder to drop out of society and go off to meditate in the forest.

**Bhakti Yoga:** the path of devotion. The yogi on the path of Bhakti puts sincere, heartfelt devotion toward the “divine” into every thought and action. On this path you attempt to realize enlightenment by devotion to and love of God in a personalized form. Prayer, chanting, singing devotional songs, ceremonies and rituals are the basic techniques of Bhakti yoga. When love is all-consuming, and the heart is completely open to “divine love”, the material world, the unsettled mind, and worldly thoughts drop away.

Bhakti yoga emerged around the same time as Karma Yoga, and is first described in the Bhagavad Gita, with Krishna as its focus for worship. In the modern world, Bhakti can apply to any religion or personal understanding of divinity. According to TKV Desikachar, Bhakti comes from the root word Bhaj, which means “to serve.” In this case, serve does not mean a person or the world, as Karma Yoga does, but to serve a power greater than yourself. For Bhakti yogis, the Niyama (observance) Ishvara-pranidhana (be devoted) is central.

**Jnana Yoga:** the path of knowledge. Also described in the Bhagavad Gita, Jnana Yoga’s goal is wisdom, or the direct knowledge of the “divine” by eliminating all illusion. The Jnana yogis strive to explore deeply into themselves through questioning, meditation, and contemplation, until they finally find the knowledge deeply hidden within everyone. TKV Desikachar says, “The underlying assumption of Jnana yoga is that all knowledge lies within us – we only have to discover it.” It consists of the constant exercise of discriminating reality from unreality, the self from the non-self. Jnana yoga is said to be the most difficult path, not because it is superior, but because one must be firmly grounded in the other disciplines before attempting it. A sharp keen intellect, unclouded by emotions, is necessary to be successful on this path. Everything you think, believe, or feel is questioned and contemplated. Knowledge dawns on one who persistently discriminates between the real and unreal, between the transient and the everlasting. When every illusion or untruth drops away, all that is left is yourself and the

universe, which are the same.

### **What's the elephant got to do with it?**

Ganesha, the Remover of Obstacles is a popular character in modern yoga practitioners; many yoga studios have a statue of the elephant somewhere in the facility. As teachers, we must recognize that most yoga practitioners in America are technically beginners, and there is a huge resistance to becoming healthy, many obstacles to overcome. We are too busy, too stressed, too fat, too unhealthy, too much pain, too much everything. We can't cope with our lives, and the one place we need to go to cope with it – yoga class – is often the first thing to go from the schedule each week. It is extremely hard for most people to fit wellness into their lives. Everything that we can do as teachers (and studio owners) that makes it easier for them to find us and show up is important. We teach to the need of the marketplace, and we need to be removers of obstacles. It should be a central element of your business practices.

Thousands of years later, around 200 A.D., Patanjali's Yoga Sutras is the most important text that appears, and remains one of the fundamental books of yoga today. It is a book of 195 short statements that begins with advice on how to behave in society and ends with enlightenment. But this is not simply a yoga "self-help book." Patanjali believed you could only get enlightenment with a guru, so the sutras are a guru's teaching manual. And we don't really know who Patanjali was, or even if it was one person. Patanjali goes back to the Bhagavad Gita's idea that hard work (karma yoga) and deep meditation (jnana yoga) is key to enlightenment. Patanjali described 8 essential practices that allow the yogi to tame and balance the 3 Gunas. The Gunas are Tapas (inertia), Sattva (balance) and Rajas (heat) and at the time, our unhappiness was understood to be an imbalance in these three forces. The 8 essential practices are ethics, accountability, exercise, breathing, detachment, concentration, meditation, and happiness.

Patanjali called his yoga Kriya Yoga – the "yoga of transformative action." Today it is better known as Raja yoga, the Royal Path, or The 8 Limbed Path, which is practiced by all the major styles of yoga in the west. The words Kriyas also refers to cleansing, so Patanjali's teachings describe how the yogi can erase or "cleanse" samskara by adhering strictly to the 8 limbed path – especially austerity, self-study, and devotion.

Samskara are "karma scars" of our good and bad behavior and they are like imprinted memories on the subconscious, causing constant chatter in the mind, attaching to objects and sensations, and dictating our birth, life and death experiences. If we learn how to overcome the power of the samskaras, we can find peace of mind and liberation.

Patanjali wrote during the time that the Samkhya sect was dominant in yoga philosophy, so he follows the Samkhya belief that the world is dualistic. He teaches that our misery comes because we are attached to the natural world – prakriti, and separated from our connection to purusha – higher consciousness. As yoga evolves, this idea is largely rejected for the oneness idea from the early Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita – the essence of Self is Atman, the same as the essence of the universe.



By the time we get into the post-classical era, when new schools of thought are evolving, including Tantra and Hatha, the dualist notion is gone from yoga philosophy, and that remains true today. Oneness suggests that we are suffering because we are disconnected (versus separate) from our true Self, our higher consciousness. We can't understand that we are one small part of something much larger than ourselves. We can't tap into our own true nature, so we are lost and suffering. So dualists strive to attain enlightenment, non-dualists strive to regain it.

### **The 4<sup>th</sup> FORM**

Over time, Patanjali's Kriya Yoga came to be known as **Raja Yoga**, (The Royal Path) and is considered the fourth form of yoga. It's known as the science of mental control and technically, is a sum of all other forms. Its foundation is moral restraint. Raja adheres to and follows the 8 Limbs most directly and constantly, with an emphasis on controlling the intellect to attain enlightenment. This is the yoga of the mind – and meditation, concentration, and breath control are key aspects of this practice.

Here's where the branches of the yoga tree get a little complicated. Raja Yoga is closely linked to 3 sub-branches, or derivative lineages that appear later: Mantra, Kundalini, and Hatha.

Hatha Yoga is viewed as a preparatory discipline for Raja yoga, and together they focus on each of the 8 Limbs. Once control of the body is mastered (through practice of yamas, niyamas, asana and pranayama, the first 4 limbs) - control of the mind comes more easily (detachment, concentration, meditation and bliss, the last 4 limbs).

Mantra yoga is focused on sacred sounds, but the ultimate goal of achieving liberation by focusing the mind is the same.

In Kundalini yoga, breath control is paramount; it works to awaken the dormant kundalini energy, then control of the mind comes automatically.

Each of these sub-branches of Raja Yoga follows the same 8 Limbs, which are also known as Ashtanga yoga. However, the modern practice of Ashtanga yoga is a physical practice, so stick with the term Raja, or The 8 Limbed Path.

### **How does this knowledge apply?**

All modern yoga schools today have the 8 Limbed Path as a core philosophy, so we are all Raja Yogis. From there, you may have a very strong pull toward one of the original forms, and your life purpose will be expressed more powerfully through that form. Or, you may be a comfortable balance of work, wisdom and devotion.

For all the areas of thought, one elemental belief of all forms of yoga is that you have not yet tapped into all the potential of yourself as a human being. Through the practices of yoga, you can go beyond the present understanding and appreciation of the world and beyond your current state of existence. And you don't need to believe anything other than the possibility that you have the power to transform yourself.

## **The Evolving Science of Yoga**

From 200 AD until 1760, the other forms of yoga evolved, including Hatha, Tantra, Mantra and Kundalini. Like any evolving art or science, some of these practices began as marginal or radical offshoots from the major yoga philosophies of their time. Although Hatha is mentioned as one of the 8 limbs, Patanjali describes only the seated meditation posture, and physical practice was a tool to keep the body prepared for seated meditation, not necessarily a meditation in and of itself. Today, Hatha is the predominant access point to the study and practice of yoga, particularly in the west.

### **97% of yoga in America is HATHA yoga. You are a hatha yogi.**

Hatha began as a small and somewhat radical sect, related to and arising from Tantric philosophy. Hatha yogis were focused on the physical body as the main pathway to understanding God. The word means “the union of opposites” and their aim was to transform the physical body into the subtle, divine body to attain enlightenment, through supreme control. Once transformed, Hatha yogis believed they would be impervious to disease, eternally youthful, flawless, and also have extraordinary powers. From their research, we get the yoga we know and practice today. That research continues through your teachers, and you, and beyond you. Yoga is the art and science of enlightenment; we are the artists and scientists of yoga today.

As well as the postures, cleansing rituals and breathing techniques are fundamental to this practice. Hatha yogis believe that it takes strength and disciplined effort to bring together the body and mind, overcoming the opposing forces that cause imbalances. This is spirituality through physical fitness, and balance is the key. The goal is to find enlightenment while we still have a body to enjoy it.

The texts we have from this period include the Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati by Goraksha. Goraksha was closely linked with Tantra, but he’s generally considered to be the father of Hatha yoga. He teaches us about nadis and chakras, 16 points of meditation, the levels of existence, and other key elements of Hatha yoga.

In the 1300s, the Hatha Yoga Pradipika appeared. It is the ultimate manual for Hatha Yoga, and it discusses purification rituals, pranayama breath retention techniques, mudras, bandhas, and 16 postures, most of which are variations of lotus.

In the late 1600s, 32 asanas and 25 mudras are discussed in the Gheranda Samhita, along with more purification techniques (kriyas) and internal practices (niyamas). In the early 1700s, the Shiva Samhita describes 84 asanas and the 5 major pranas, and is the first to emphasize the shocking idea that even a common householder (male only, of course) could practice and benefit from yoga.

Sometime in the late 1800s, a book called Sritattvandhi introduces and illustrates 122 asanas. The first text to focus primarily on asana; it provides the prototype of a modern yoga workout, and is based traditional yoga practices, plus training techniques used in the military and calisthenics from the British education system.

**Tantra:** the yoga of ritual and visualization. Tantra means technique. It uses ritualized technique, including postures, breath control, chanting, and rigorous practice of the restraints and observances of the 8 limbed path. Related to Hatha Yoga, Tantra was a break from traditional yogic thought. It keeps elements of Bhakti yoga, the path of devotion, and celebrates the physical body as being a sacred temple of the divine source “Atman,” or Self. Like Hatha, the body in Tantra is the vehicle for liberation.

**Mantra:** the yoga of potent sound. A sacred sound or series of syllables, traditionally passed from teacher to student, the practice of repeating mantras is usually accompanied by a special image that is visualized during the chanting. The mantra is designed to clear the mind and encourage spiritual awakening – the sound basically protects the mind from itself. Once awakened, the body is energized to a higher state of consciousness. According to TKV Desikachar, “repeating the mantra for a period of time, as we were taught, mantra yoga can have the same effect as jnana or bhakti yoga.”

### **Yoga comes to the Western World**

In the 1800s, the first westerners (Henry David Thoreau) began to take an interest in Raja and Jnana yoga. Like the ancient yogis, the early enthusiasts from the west were primarily interested in techniques that could help them transcend the physical, but by the end of the century, Swami Vivekananda arrived in Chicago at the first Parliament of World Religions and passionately espoused the path of Raja. Vivekananda toured and lectured extensively in the United States and Europe, and as the 1900s started, yoga was slowly becoming known throughout the western world.

A couple of other influential gurus to the western world are Krishnamurti, who toured and spoke extensively and beautifully about Jnana yoga for 60 years, and enthusiastically practiced asana, and Paramahansa Yogananda, whose Autobiography of a Yogi was influential to the hippie generation in the 60s. Although the “Tuned-in-Turned-on” generation did practice asana, they were generally more interested in the meditative and spiritual aspects of yogic philosophy.

### **From 2 lines, the students of T. Krishnamacharya and Yogananda’s brother Bishnu Ghosh, we get virtually all of the most popular styles of modern yoga.**

Krishnamacharya used the 122 asanas of the Sritattvandhi at Mysore Palace, the home of his patrons and location of his school. His students included

- Pattabhi Jois, who developed **Ashtanga** yoga, which uses vinyasa flow and focuses on the movement of the body with breath to create heat (tapas) in the body, to cleanse and purify.
- BKS Iyengar, who developed the **Iyengar** style of yoga, with its focus on precise internal and external alignment, and adapting and improvising to meet the healing, therapeutic needs of his students. Iyengar writes extensively on Yoga and provides many of modern yoga’s best writings on the subject.
- Indra Devi added chanting, meditation and prayer to her classes and offered a central asana to focus on. She’s was Hollywood’s first yoga teacher to the stars.
- Krishnamacharya’s son TKV Desikachar developed **Viniyoga**, which focuses on adapting the sequence and the postures to suit the needs of the individual like Iyengar, while also utilizing the power of the breath, like Pattabhi Jois.

Bishnu Ghosh, the brother and student of Yogananda Paramahansa, trained Bikram Choudhury, who developed the hot yoga style that carries his name in virtually every major city in America. Some of **Bikram**'s offshoots include Sunstone Yoga, which is Camp Utopia's lineage, and therefore yours. This is the lineage of Kriya Yoga, the yoga of spiritual, or transformative action.

Together these teachers have influenced millions of practitioners of yoga in the world today, whether their practice is purely for the physical benefit, or mixes asana practice with deeper spiritual endeavor. However, "style" designations like Iyengar, Ashtanga, Bikram, Vinyasa, and many more, are no different than Nike, Reebok, Puma, Adidas. Each "style" is simply one teacher's interpretation of his own teacher's, being passed along to others. Yoga is a living thing; new teachers will continue to transform it.

### **What does this mean for you?**

Yoga is a big tree, and still growing. Allow yourself to be open to all forms and styles, and choose the things you are passionate about to explore in a positive way. If one form calls to you more than another, explore it. Yet, try to avoid falling in to the trap of dogmatic thinking – that there can be only one "right" way to do yoga suggests there is only one "right" way to be happy and whole. Consider that the infinite may be possible in all things, including paths to God. Some of you may be deeply drawn to the religious or spiritual path, and that's fine. Simply understand it is not the only path, and as a teacher in a country of beginners, it can be an exclusionary, rather than inclusive, choice. What your personal journey is may not be what your students need. Finding ways to authentically, ethically teach to the largest number of people automatically increases the size of your potential market. At this time in our history, what Americans need most is to become healthier, not holier. One leads to the other, and the most successful yoga teachers will be standing at big open doors, not tight knit cloisters.

### **Why does this matter?**

It's good to know where you came from.

Modern yoga philosophers debate the merits of the physical focus of modern yoga. Some like Georg Feuerstein suggest that the pure physical practice is flat compared to the deeper spiritual practices of traditional yoga. In Feuerstein's view, pure physical practice doesn't go to the core, or spirit of yoga, and we only get out what little we put in. Other philosophers believe that yoga's future lies in the west; that the next great developments in the understanding of yoga will be here, in the modern world.

What do you think? Is the true intention and spirit of yoga is being eroded away by the obsession with the physical practice, or do you think the deeper spiritual benefits eventually reveal themselves even to the most fitness oriented, but dedicated, practitioners? Many modern yoga teachers came to yoga for the physical practice and eventually found their way to teacher training, wanting to go deeper. As today's teachers grow and learn and pass their wisdom on, will they look back or forward? Which will be true in your life, and how will this apply to your teaching practice?