

A British Wheel of Yoga module on **The History and Philosophy of Yoga**

Course tutor – Dr. Peter Connolly

This course, which can count towards the Wheel's in-service training requirements, is for all BWY members and other approved teachers of yoga who want to develop their knowledge and understanding of the yoga tradition. It will explore the emergence and development of yogic ideas and practices in ancient and medieval India. Key themes will be:

- (1) the interplay between orthodox brahmanical traditions (as found in texts such as the Upanisads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutra) and heterodox ones such as Buddhism and Jainism in terms of who borrowed what from whom;
- (2) the differences in the world-views of the major yogic traditions and how we can make sense of them;
- (3) the identification of common patterns that run through the various forms of yoga, and
- (4) the importance of studying original sources rather than people's interpretations of them. A brief introduction to philosophical and historical methods will also be provided.

All sessions will mix presentations from the course leader with question, answer and discussion slots. Small group work on key texts and practical activities are also a feature of this course. Students will be required to undertake preparatory reading for each session and there will be one formal assessment, an essay of 1000 words. That said, this course is for **you**, the participant. So bring along all those questions, queries wonderings and hunches that you have about the history and philosophy of yoga and share them with us.

Broad outline of the course content

1. Historical and philosophical overview of yogic traditions.
2. Meditation: a typology.
3. The Indus Valley Civilisation.
4. Thinking philosophically.
5. Vedic Religion.
6. The Upanisads.
7. Sramanic traditions (Jainism & Buddhism).
8. Buddhist yoga.
9. Yogic meditation and Altered States of Consciousness.
10. The Bhagavad Gita.
11. The darsanas: Samkhya; Yoga and Vedanta.
12. Mahayana Buddhism.
13. Spirituality and Ethics.
14. Yoga and Shamanism.
15. Tantric yoga and the Hatha Yoga Pradipika.

Texts: You will need access to translations of the Upanisads, the Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. It does not matter which translations you get, as

one feature of the course will be a comparison of different translations and a discussion of their significance. It is useful to have access to at least two versions of each text for the sake of comparison. I will provide copies of the Buddhist text. My personal favourites for the Upanisads are the translations by Deussen (60 Upanisads of the Veda), Hume (The 13 Principal Upanisads), Olleville (The Upanisads) and Radhakrishnan (The Principal Upanisads); for the Gita, Edgerton or Van Buitenen (The Bhagavad Gita in the Mahabharata) or Zaehner; for the Yoga Sutra, Feuerstein or Woods (The Yoga System of Patanjali). See Bibliography for details. For the Pradipika, Gharote and Devnath or Sinh. There will be plenty of opportunity for discussion and questions.

Weekend One

Saturday

Welcome; introduction to the course; questions and answers; simple stretching; brief meditation. Historical and philosophical overview of yogic traditions. The Hindu game of life. Discussion. Meditation: a typology.

Sunday

Study Groups: the Mundaka Upanisad. Concentrative meditation. The Indus Valley Civilisation (+ video). Thinking philosophically.

Weekend Two

Saturday

Vedic Religion. The Upanisads. Study groups: the Katha Upanisad. Sramanic traditions. Stretching; insight/mindfulness meditation.

Sunday

Study groups: the Svetasvatara Upanisad. Buddhist yoga. Study groups: an early Buddhist text. Yogic meditation and Altered States of Consciousness.

Weekend Three

Saturday

The Bhagavad Gita. Study groups: the Bhagavad Gita. The darsanas: Samkhya. Stretching; Brahma Vihara meditation

Sunday

The darsanas: Yoga. Study groups: the Yoga Sutras book 1. Mahayana Buddhism. Short meditation.

Weekend Four

Saturday

Spirituality and Ethics. The darsanas: Vedanta. Study groups: the Yoga Sutras, books 2-4. Yoga and Shamanism.

Sunday

Stretching; Shamanic meditation. Tantric yoga and the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Study groups: the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Plenary discussion and short meditation.

Written work requirements

Between each day/weekend participants will be required to:

- a) write a paragraph or two outlining their most significant learnings from the previous day/weekend and any questions that it raised for them. These will be shared with the group and submitted to the tutor with the essay for comment;
- b) read and make notes on one or more of the course texts (in whole or in part). Prior to the first weekend students will be required to read and make notes on: the Mundaka Upanisad; prior to the second on the Katha and Svetasvatara Upanisads plus a Buddhist text supplied by the course tutor; prior to the third on the Bhagavad Gita and book one of the Yoga Sutra, and prior to the fourth on books 2-4 of the Yoga Sutra and on the Hatha Yoga Pradipika (4 chapter version).

At least six weeks before the end of the module submit to the tutor a short essay (approximately 1000 words) on a title from the assignment list.

The tutor will provide written comments on each of the outlines and the essay. Throughout, the aim will be to offer participants guidance on how they can develop their skills of philosophical and historical enquiry.

Methods of assessment and evaluation

In order to pass the module participants will need to demonstrate to the tutor that:

- a) they have attended at least 80% of the face-to-face sessions
- b) they have undertaken the preparatory work for each day/weekend
- c) they have participated in group discussions
- d) they have written a competent essay on an agreed topic.

Enquiries: contact Dr. Peter Connolly *either* in writing (38 Neville Road, Bognor Regis, PO22 8BJ) *or* by e-mail (info@turningpointconsulting.co.uk) *or* by telephone (01243

Peter Connolly

Bibliography

This is a brief list of some useful general books and translations. Students may study and bring whichever translations they find most congenial. Dates given are those of original publication. Most of these works have been reprinted many times.

Connolly, P	<i>A Student's Guide to the History and Philosophy of Yoga</i>	Equinox, 2007
Dasgupta, SN	<i>Yoga as Philosophy and Religion</i>	Motilal Banarsidass, 1973
Eliade, M	<i>Yoga: Immortality and Freedom</i> (2 nd ed.)	Princeton University Press 1969
Feuerstein, G	<i>The Yoga tradition: its history, literature, philosophy and practice</i>	Hohm Press 2001
Feuerstein, G	<i>The Shambala Encyclopaedia of Yoga</i>	Shambala 2000

Hamilton, S	<i>Indian Philosophy: a very short introduction</i>	OUP 2001
King, W	<i>Theravada meditation: the Buddhist transformation of yoga</i>	Motilal Banarsidass 1992
King, R	<i>Indian Philosophy: an introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought</i>	Edinburgh University Press, 1999
Larson, GJ	<i>Classical Samkhya (2nd ed.)</i>	Motilal Banarsidass 1979
Lipner, J	<i>Yoga: tradition & transformation</i>	Routledge/Curzon 2000
Texts:		
Buitenen JAB van	<i>The Bhagavad Gita in the Mahabharata</i>	University of Chicago Press 1981
Desikachar TKV	<i>Patanjali's Yogasutras: an introduction</i>	Affiliated East-West Press 1987
Deussen P	<i>Sixty Upanishads of the Veda (2 vols)</i>	Motilal Banarsidass 1980
Edgerton, F (trans)	<i>The Bhagavad Gita</i>	Harvard University Press, 1944
Feuerstein, G (trans)	<i>The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali</i>	Dawson, 1979
Gharote, ML & Devnath, P	<i>Hathapradipika of Svatmarama (10 chapters)</i>	Lonavla Yoga Institute 2001
Hume, R E (trans)	<i>The Thirteen Principal Upanishads (2nd ed.)</i>	OUP, 1931
Johnson W J (trans)	<i>The Bhagavad Gita</i>	OUP 1994
Olivelle, P (trans)	<i>Upanisads</i>	OUP, 1996
Parrinder G	<i>The Bhagavad Gita: A verse translation</i>	Sheldon 1974
Radhakrishnan S	<i>The Principal Upanishads</i>	George Allen and Unwin 1953
Sinh, P	<i>The Hatha Yoga Pradipika</i>	Munshiram Manoharlal, 1975
Woods, J H	<i>The Yoga System of Patanjali (Contains translations of Vyasa's and Vacaspatimisra's commentaries)</i>	Harvard University Press, 1914 (Motilal reprint 1966)
Zaehner, R C (trans)	<i>The Bhagavad Gita</i>	OUP, 1969

Peter Connolly studied for BA, MA and PhD degrees in Comparative Religion and Philosophy at the University of Lancaster and a BSc in Psychology with the Open University. He has taught Indian religion and philosophy on BA and MA courses for over 20 years and has worked with various yoga organisations throughout that time. He is interested in how people go about constructing histories of yoga and the methods they use for making sense of yoga texts. He is also fascinated by all forms of altered states of consciousness and has trained in both Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and hypnosis, both of which offer an interesting perspective on the psychology of yoga. His classes are well known for their clarity of exposition and informal style. Some students have suggested that he be cloned so that he can teach more courses.



Dr. Peter Connolly