



ACTIVE YOGA PHILOSOPHY SHORT SYLLABUS

I. Veda: Ritual Yoga

To know the secret of ritual is to direct the course of experience

Yoga's roots, like those of the lotus flower, lie in the water: the of ancient city of Mohenjo Daro on the banks of the Indus River. Here, water is the substance of life; the city's fully designed pools and canals embody metaphors of concentration, purification and recycling that inform yoga thought to the present day.



There are hints of the yoga's great patron, Shiva. There are hints that ancient yogis may have performed meditation here. Yet Mohenjo Daro is silent, its pools and canals dry, its script undeciphered. Yoga's voice only begins in the Vedas - with the sound of OM.

What You'll Learn

1. How the Indus yogins discovered the life-force, both subjectively and objectively, through concentration.
2. How the Vedas' ritual yoga maintains the energy balance of the cosmos through conscious 'sacrifice' (*yajna*).
3. How the sacrificial magic of the Vedas becomes a trap when models are taken as literal.

What You'll Explore

1. The yogic symbolism of the Indus Civilization.
2. The yogic procedures of the Vedas that recycle life-force through sacrifice (*yajna*).
3. The models of the universe that the Vedas use to maintain the balance (*rita*) of the cosmos, including both verbal and pictorial aspects.





II. Upanishad: Mystery Yoga

Search sacred speech - then you'll discover the subtle order it encodes and transmits

Sometimes metaphors can bind instead of liberating. This happens when we take them literally. And it happened to the ancient Vedic priests when they built an elaborate vision of the cosmos that tended to equate social structures with natural structures. Some people, the seers of the Upanishadic tradition, had stepped outside their matrix and found themselves liberated from it.



Now, instead of experiencing themselves as a social role, they directly understood who they were. Their very selves (*atman*) were in fact the exact same thing as the extended intelligent cosmos (*brahman*). This is immortality, freedom from death and thus from all fear. Those who have it desire only to communicate it. But how to do so when the realization transcends language? The Upanishads do it through cosmic equations and mysteries, a powerful technique if you have the key, but very problematic otherwise. For cannot tell you *how* to make the transition from limited, sense-bound consciousness to the ecstatic realization that you are in fact Brahman.



What You'll Learn

1. How the Upanishads work to reveal the illusory nature of what we perceive as 'reality.'
2. How the Upanishads work 'holographically' to project the ritual yoga of the Vedas internally.
3. How the individual self (*atman*) and extended cosmos (*brahman*) are actually one being

What You'll Explore:

1. The central doctrines of the Upanishads and consciousness-focusing Sanskrit formulas.
2. The techniques that Upanishadic yogins used to go beyond sense-bound reality
3. The subtle, intelligent order pervading the cosmos, which manifests subjectively and objectively.





III. Patanjali: Systematic Yoga

Apply the Eight Limbs - eliminate negativity, silence the mind, and find liberation



Patanjali makes the mysteries of the Upanishads practical by presenting a method for attaining a state of complete concentration or samadhi, and with it the liberating awareness (moksha) that we are pure consciousness (*purusha*) and not the eternal flux of nature (*prakrti*)

- The relationship between Nature (*prakrti*) and Consciousness (*purusha*)
- The process of liberation (*mukti*) from nature in Samkhya
- How to conduct reality-analysis using the techniques of Samkhya
- How the 8 Limbs of Yoga work together to generate concentrated states of awareness

There is a problem with the ancient Upanishad's technique that focuses on giving hints and clues: they cannot answer the question of 'how' to realize that Atman is Brahman. Patanjali will tell us how in his classic Yoga Sutras, but he will switch his language. Instead of striving to unite Atman and Brahman, Patanjali recommends that we discriminate Purusha and *Prakrti*, Consciousness and Nature. This can be difficult, because consensus reality and the ordinary mind mix them up habitually. We do, after all, habitually identify with our ever-changing thoughts, moods and bodies. Break the habit by dis-identifying with thought and thus halting its action. There are eight steps, and they culminate in the most important concept in yoga - *samadhi*.

What You'll Learn

1. How Patanjali created the first systematic yoga system.
2. How Yoga practice eliminates mental chatter and emotional imbalance.
3. How the components of Patanjali's yoga system work together to generate the state of *samadhi*.

What You'll Explore

1. The structure and language of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.
2. The components of the Classical Samkhya system of reality analysis.
3. The practical procedures that translate yoga ideas into yoga experience.





IV. Buddha: Impermanence Yoga

Solid things and permanent selves are illusions - watch closely and discover their true nature



In the Buddhist yoga, the most fundamental truth about the cosmos is that it is impermanent, *anitya*. Even the transcendent states of consciousness leading to *samadhi* are impermanent. This means that they too are within the realm of the conditioned, the chain of circumstance, *samsara*. So the Buddha resolves to find a new method out of this newly-conceived trap. As with Patanjali, the Buddha's method is eightfold. Again like yoga, it culminates in *samadhi* or concentration. Ancient Buddhist yoga develops an elaborate map of the universe based on meditative concentration. Mahayana Buddhism proposes the great claim that Nirvana be abandoned until one has saved all other beings first.



What You'll Learn

1. How impermanence (*anitya*) and non-self (*anatma*) produce *nirvana*.
2. How the Great Vehicle uses wisdom and compassion in an 'awakening mind' (*bodhi-citta*)
3. How the Buddhist philosophers perceive 'emptiness' (*shunyata*)

What You'll Explore

1. Ancient Buddhism's Wheel of Life, Eightfold Path, and Pali Canon
2. The texts of the Great Vehicle (Mahayana), which produce states of awakening (*bodhi*)
3. The philosophical yogas of Nagarjuna and the Yoga Practitioners (Yoga-Achara)





V. Hinduism: World Yoga

To practice yoga in daily life, use the forces of illusion against themselves



The Buddhist systems of concentration depend on the monastery, a world unto itself, sealed off from society. What then about the seeker and meditator who cannot leave the daily grind? For them, the ancient Indian spiritual genius would evolve the 'world yoga' of the classical Hindu tradition.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is the crown jewel of world yoga. Its setting is a battleground - a metaphor for the battleground of daily life in the world. Here, we discover how to use the basic problems inherent in the world to attain liberation. The earliest system of yoga types emerges here, and along with it the first explicit recognition of a hidden unity behind the diversity of practices. Like Krishna, 'manifestation' (*avatar*) of the divine intelligence Vishnu, world yoga takes many forms.

And the best place to find these forms concentrated is the temple, simultaneously a mountain and a cave, its structure symbolically revealing the heights and the depths of space, the beginning and the end of time. By experiencing these symbolic complexes in the concentrated environment of the temple, its rhythmically repeated symbols permeates experience and become the fabric of experienced reality.

What You'll Learn

1. How the *Bhagavad Gita* uses a new conception of sacrifice, *yajna*, as the model for 'world yoga'
2. How the yogas of the *Puranas* shape experience through multi-media arrays of symbolism.
3. How the temple traditions work to create a direct encounter between the human and the divine.

What You'll Explore

1. The classical yogas of the *Bhagavad Gita*, including Jnana, Karma, Bhakti, and Raja.
2. The textual and symbolic yoga of the *Puranas*
3. The nature of the temple yoga, especially the visual encounter (*darshana*) with the divine.





VI. Vedanta: Illusion Yoga

To inquire into the nature of illusion is to dispel that illusion



Shankara's system of non-dual (*advaita*) Vedanta is the cure for literalism. It arose from within the great temple system of medieval India, but transcends that system completely.

In the Vedanta, illusion permeates every experience in which there is the appearance of duality, including and especially the idea that liberation comes through any sort of action designed to attain it. Wherever there is consciousness of a distinction between symbol and thing symbolized, by these signs you will know you are asleep in a dream of 'reality,' this symbol-forged virtual world we call 'what is.' Just as an unconscious dreamer remains unaware they are in a virtual, symbol-made dream-world, so does the unconscious waker remain unaware that the 'real world' is fully symbol-made too.

So when dreamers realize 'this is a dream,' a symbol-forged virtual world, they remember who they are - dreamers. In the same way, when you realize that 'reality' is also a symbol-forged virtual world, you will remember who you are - the Great Dreamer, or Brahman. And in this way, you understand that the 'real world' is just a projection of Brahman, just like a dream-world is the projection of its dreamer. This weird world of birth and death is a dream, and we are its great dreamer, the real, intelligent and ecstatic Brahman who remembers Who he is by interrogating illusion of all types.

What You'll Learn

1. How to use Vedanta techniques to understand what we call 'reality' as a dream of Brahman.
2. How to dispel the illusion that our consensus reality is absolute.
3. How to see experience as 'projection' (*adhyasa*) of appearance (*pratibhasa*) on an object (*alambana*).

What You'll Explore

1. The key ideas contained in Shankara's foundational Vedanta text, the *Brahma-Sutra Commentaries*.
2. The four levels of reality as developed by Vedanta thinkers.
3. The approach that each major school of yoga philosophy takes to the phenomenon of illusion.





VII. Hatha: Sun-Moon Yoga

The power of symbol in Hatha Yoga unites all apparent opposites - the 'sun' and the 'moon'



Hatha Yoga is an interrelated system of postures, breath control and subtle concentration leading to *samadhi*. The central idea: release unbalanced tension from the physical body. Balance the chaotic breathing patterns and concentrate on the subtle sensations.

In Hatha Yoga, this subtle body is composed of three primary energy conduits and seven reservoirs. This is the system of *nadi*-s or subtle nerves and chakras. Is it real or a projection? By experiencing the subtle body and asking the question, you've taken a huge step. Now you're thinking like a Vedantin - and you are practicing like a yogin - philosophy and physiology fully united.

Tantra will go even further. It will condense the insights of the physical, symbolic and philosophic yogas into its yogic system. Often called *kundalini* yoga, the Tantric system concentrates myth, image, sensation and meditation. It weaves them together to help fuse attention and foster *samadhi*. It is a kind of internal ritual that rejuvenates the body by refining the flow of consciousness within it, allowing access to that which time cannot touch, the Immortal. Here, there is both the beginning and the ending of yoga.

What You'll Learn

1. How Hatha, or Sun-Moon yoga, works to balance opposite forces in the body and mind.
2. How symbolic models help generate awareness of subtle physiology and psychology.
3. How concentration on sound and image within the body awakens *kundalini*, potential conscious energy.

What You'll Explore

1. The structure and thought of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* of Svati marama.
2. The relationship between sound (*nadam*), life-force (*prana*), and potential energy (*kundalini*).
3. The nature of Tantric thought and practice as described in the *Sat-Chakra-Nirupana*

