



June 2016

Yoga Perfectionism versus Yoga Purism:

In a recent class I began to speak about the distinction between a Yoga Perfectionist and a Yoga Purist. When speaking to the philosophical side of the practice I have no plan. I speak to what I am feeling and to what I am sensing from the students in the room. If I quote someone in so doing I draw on what I have learned but do not try to remember something I read two minutes before class. I do not walk into class with a piece of paper with information on it and read to the class. I seek to sense the need of the moment and speak to whatever will meet that need.

In this case, I sensed that there were those who were trying very hard in class to “do yoga right” and that there were others who were less proficient who were seeing themselves as in some way not doing yoga at all or that yoga was not right for them because they were not “good at yoga”.

I started to speak of the Yoga Perfectionist. This is someone who is consumed with the mechanics of poses and seeks to “do” the pose in a text-book correct fashion. Anything less than that is in some way a failure. They seek to perform all possible asana and take on advanced variations as if in some way being able to perform asana will prove them as a person. There is no room for forgiveness or joy in the Yoga Perfectionist. They criticise themselves for any shortcoming in their practice and berate themselves when they do

not meet the standards they imagine they must achieve. Their focus is on outcomes when, as the *Bhagavad Gita* tells us, we find freedom by being unaffected by all actions and unconcerned about all outcomes.

The Yoga Perfectionist treats their body as if it is something to be dominated and forced into performing actions regardless of any feedback the body may be giving the mind. Mind is dominant in Yoga Perfectionists and their bodies are just tools to be compelled into poses no matter the degree of duress required. Yoga Perfectionists epitomise the notion of “trying hard” and because every moment is a fight for more precise alignment or a greater degree of depth there is no room for the Yoga Perfectionist to enjoy and take pleasure in what they are doing.



There is a phrase used in the Bikram yoga dialogue that says, “If you are doing the pose 99 percent right you are doing it 100 percent wrong”. That is the Yoga Perfectionist’s mantra.

The Yoga Perfectionist is obsessed with competitiveness and comparisons. If someone else is doing something then they must be able to do it also – and better than the other person. They will scan the people within their field of vision to see how well they are doing their pose and will seek to out-do everyone. They crave praise for their poses. Their practice becomes a performance in which they seem to project the message, “Look at me and see how this should be done”.

Finally, there is a quality of self-absorption about the Yoga Perfectionist. They do not radiate positive energy to others in the room. They are not part of a group process and group flow. They are stuck in their own selfish drive to be the best, to perform yoga asana exactly, and in so doing they fail to come from any place of connection with the others in the room.

I began yoga practice in a Bikram studio where a competitive atmosphere was encouraged. I received praise from teachers for my performance in poses, and came to crave the praise. I was asked to give demonstrations of poses from time to time and revelled in that attention. Ninety-nine percent right, 100 percent wrong? I liked that idea and strove for perfection. I was a Yoga Perfectionist. The seeds of losing that attitude were born when I acknowledged for myself that I was cheating in a particular pose (a locust variation where your arms are placed beneath you, your arms and upper chest remain on the floor and you raise your legs as high off the floor in a back bend as you can). This was a pose I had been asked to demonstrate on a number of occasions because I got my legs up pretty high. I fought hard every time I did the pose to get my legs way up because another student who had been at the studio when I first started attending could do so and I wanted to be better than him. I was never corrected in the

way I did the pose by the teachers but often praised. Then I realised that I was cheating by not keeping my arms pressed flat to the floor. Instead, I was bending my arms at the elbow and using the lift of my elbows to give lift to my torso. I lost respect for myself for using this device and being proud of the superficial depth of the pose when it was founded on a cheat. I also lost respect for my teachers that they had either not seen this flaw in technique or, having seen it, had done nothing to correct it.



It was an instantaneous epiphany with respect to that pose but not to the whole concept of being a Yoga Perfectionist. I went to every teacher training and workshop as if all eyes were on me and as if I had to perform.

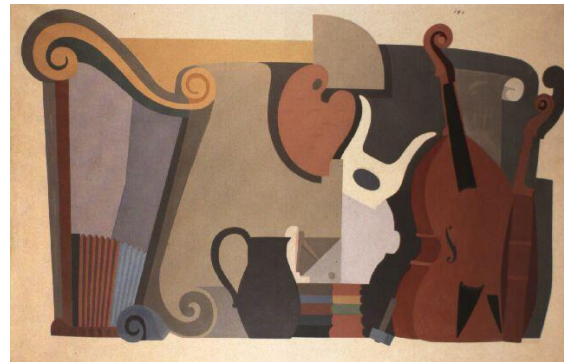
I undertook my first training to be a yoga teacher in the Baptiste Power Yoga methodology, with nothing behind me but my Bikram yoga practice. My body was attuned to Bikram yoga (a practice which does not challenge or develop all-body strength) and was not strong enough to sustain the upper body and core stability work demanded by power vinyasa practice. I found in one long session that I was able to hold Down Dog no longer and needed to take Child’s Pose – not even Extended Child’s Pose but Child’s Pose with my arms back alongside my body.

That moment started to shift my attitude to yoga further because I was given complete

freedom to take that resting pose. No one criticised me or openly judged me or in any way held me up to ridicule. I was just given space to rest. I did not have to do every pose. I did not have to fight and strain and kill myself on my mat. I could just be a yoga practitioner with the awareness to know when to rest.

Over time I have developed further and find myself less and less feeling the need to do everything on the basis that I have to perform or achieve any standard of perfection. Injuries have helped in that process. Injuries require one to back off, modify perhaps, leave out certain poses or extensions and just flow with what is available. Injuries are educational and humbling and help bring one out of Yoga Perfectionism. Simple awareness of the fact that I am in a state of mind where I am not *part of the class* but am *a part from the class* and am acting as if all eyes are on me helps change my way of practicing. By giving up my concern for the way that I appear to the other students in the class and by coming from a place of simply having fun in the practice and using it as a vehicle for feeling good rather than looking good I can drop the Yoga Perfectionist mind-set.

What is possible as a consequence? We ask a lot for students to reach into possibility. On our trainings we invite the participants to drop certain disempowering ways of thinking or of seeing themselves and then ask, "What is possible right now?" What is possible from not participating in Yoga Perfectionism is a taste of Yoga Purism. Yoga Purism is of the moment. It is an expression of your breath. It has no care for what other people think. It is unaffected by actions because it is not concerned with outcomes and achievements.



Amédée Ozenfant – Purist art

What does it mean to be of the moment? It means to be free in your mind from thinking about the past or the future. The past tends to plague us. Some people can be extremely past-oriented in their thinking, nurturing grievances, wallowing in self-pity, even basking in past glories. This past-oriented focus prevents us from making the most of this moment. It causes us to bring a past bad experience with a person into play in our present experience of that person. It is fundamentally limiting in confining us to what has been rather than what is possible now.

Similarly, future-focussed thinking can be harmful too. It helps to have some sense of vision, purpose and direction but it does not help to fret about what might be in an uncertain future. It does not help to imagine that fulfilment is only possible at some undetermined point in our future rather than right now in the present. There is a well-known prayer that says, "God, give me the Courage to change that which I can, the Serenity to live with that which I cannot change, and the Wisdom to know the difference." The future falls into the category of that which we cannot change – except by what you we do now. Put your awareness and attention on what is now and the future will take care of itself. That is a feature of the Yoga Purist.

Yoga Purism as an expression of your breath is a fundamental notion. All vinyasa practice is, at essence, a breathing practice. The single element of the practice where I feel students have the greatest resistance is that of breath. Some individuals have adopted *ujjayi* breathing well and it shows in their practice – they are calm, patient and strong.

However, many more students seem secretive about their breath, reluctant to let themselves hear their own breath, let alone let anyone else hear them. These people drop to their knees and take a drink of water when they are out of breath, misunderstanding their lack of breath and life force for tiredness or overheating. All students grow in the power of their practice and lose self-consciousness when they embrace *ujjayi* breathing, the breath of victory, in their vinyasa yoga practice.

The Yoga Purist effectively understands the difference between challenging themselves to grow and trying hard. Trying to compel results or setting deadlines by which time certain outcomes must be achieved is counter-productive. It suggests that the student controls the process and the outcomes. I often say that we do not “do yoga”. Rather, the yoga does us. The Yoga Purist takes this concept to heart. They show up on their mat with no expectation and no intention other than to breathe and bring themselves to an edge, wherever that may be on a particular day, and then they are open to receive whatever the practice has to offer their body, mind and spirit that day. It is not a case of taking from the practice but of receiving.

By adopting these practices, the Yoga Purist loses all need to be better than anyone and loses all concern for looking good and the pride associated with that. Instead they access the possibility of connection –

breathing, moving and taking their whole way of being from a place of oneness with everyone else involved in the practice. Make this Purism your way of being rather than the isolating and ultimately unfulfilling practice of Perfectionism. Be a Yoga Purist, not a Yoga Perfectionist.

Africa Yoga Project

Through the Africa Yoga Project, we sponsor and mentor a yoga teacher in Africa. His name is Kriza (Chris) Mandela. He lives in Nairobi, Kenya and is a yoga teacher. When Kriza was 4 years old he became very unwell. His parents did not know what was wrong and doctors did not diagnose his issues. A consequence of the illness was that he became deaf. There are specialist schools for the deaf in Kenya but there were none close to where Kriza’s family lived. He was sent to schools for the deaf as a boarder for his whole primary and secondary schooling. He is now 25 years old.



Kriza had a desire to become a chef but the training courses available to him did not accommodate deaf students. He has had an interest for some years in acrobatics and through this circle he was introduced to yoga. He trained with Baron Baptiste through the Africa Yoga Project in October last year and is in his first year as a teacher.

Kriza teaches at schools for the deaf and teaches to other people with disabilities including the blind. The normal method for Baptiste-trained teachers is not to teach from your mat doing the poses along with the class

but Kriza has to teach a lot by demonstration and, when teaching deaf students, uses sign language. Sometimes an interpreter is available when he teaches groups who do not have sign language.

Your donations to our Sunday morning 8:30am Contribution Class pay Kriza a wage that will keep him and allow him to make a difference for his family and in his community. Thank you very much.

Class Cancellation:

The 1:10pm class on Wednesdays has not been taken up with any enthusiasm and is cancelled with immediate effect. We are sorry to the very few for whom this may have an adverse effect but it is not feasible to continue running that class.

Possible New Class:

Are you interested in a Power Restore class on Fridays? If so, at what time? We would consider changing an existing class to Power Restore or adding an additional Power Restore class at some point in the afternoon. Let us know what your preferences are. Thank you.

Yoga Everywhere:

Some of you will be aware that the NBA finals have just finished, with Cleveland defeating Oakland (Golden State Warriors) in Game 7. The coach of the Oakland team is a former NBA player from Michael Jordan's Chicago Bulls team, Steve Kerr. Steve stuck to his normal routine for Game 7 of the NBA Finals on Sunday. For him, that meant a 60-minute

session of Power Yoga with assistant coach Luke Walton.

"I'm guessing Bill Belichick and his staff don't do that," Kerr joked of the New England Patriots' coach. "Got to get in the right mindset, so it's the usual game-day routine."

It is good that Steve Kerr is staying fit and mobile even after his playing days are over, and that he is using his yoga practice to stay calm and measured so that he can bring equanimity to his role as a coach and not bring agitation into the energy he communicates to his players. Oakland may have lost the finals series, but this year they set a record for the most regular season wins ever in the NBA, eclipsing the record set by the Bulls team Kerr and Jordan played in.

International Day of Yoga

In 2015 the Indian Prime Minister, Mr Modi, prevailed upon the United Nations to establish an International Day of Yoga. The United Nations acceded to Mr Modi's request and 21 June is now the International Day of Yoga.

Last year, Apollo Power Yoga marked the occasion at our studio with a special class. This year, we thought it would be good to do something on a larger scale, and make it a fundraiser for the Christchurch City Mission.

So we got in touch with lululemon athletica. They were keen to organise an event for yogis from all over Christchurch. Ellie Cooper, Juls Moore and Rebecca Cameron from lululemon set the project in train. They posted an event, and spread the word to other yoga studios, including Flow Hot Yoga, Aoteayoga, Grassroots Yoga, Bikram and the Breathing Room.

We arranged a venue: Christ's College auditorium. College pitched in by allowing us to use the venue at no charge, and provided a

camera, filming, set-up and tidy-up services from Vincent Kenworthy, and technical support from Jake Eastwood. Quentin Clough, a teacher and house master at Christ's College and an Apollo Power regular, arranged a posse of boys to shift furniture beforehand.

lululemon arranged warm-up entertainment from busker Paul Shearer, and our teacher Rachel organised kirtan chanting and dancing from her group at the end of the practice. Spot prizes were supplied by lululemon athletica and Apollo Power Yoga.

The event was a fundraiser for the Christchurch City Mission. On Tuesday night, the winter solstice and, coincidentally a full moon, 100 people gathered to practice and their combined efforts raised approximately \$4300 for the City Mission.

We wish to extend a massive thank you to everyone involved. For the event next year, we're looking forward to even greater involvement from the yogis who practice at other studios. Some students from these other studios heard of the event and came out for it, and it was great to have them along. Before next year we hope that the notion of union, oneness and community on International Yoga Day will have penetrated the consciousness of these studios' owners and that they will encourage their students to take part.

The Press sent a photographer along and an item appeared on stuff.co.nz the following day in the Thursday morning edition of The Press. This is the link to the stuff.co.nz article and photographs: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/christchurch-life/81319942/giant-yoga-class-raises-money-for-christchurch-city-mission.html>

Thank you, again, to everyone involved and especially to Margo for all her tremendous work in imagining and setting up this event.

Apollo Yogis in Business

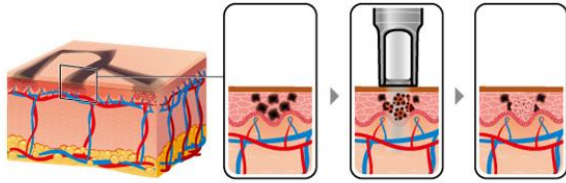


Our yogi Tracette Owers has recently opened the Tattoo Removal Company (TRC), close to the Central City in St Albans.

Tracette and her staff recognise that there are many reasons why you might want to have a tattoo removed: poor tattoo art, a mistake in the tattoo, lifestyle change, or maybe you want some new tattoo art and something has to go. All clients are treated professionally and without judgment.

TRC specialises in Laser Tattoo Removal using the Avensis Tattoo Removal Machine. This is advanced technology which uses lasers to break up the ink into small particles which your body can remove through its lymphatic system. The process is no more painful than getting a tattoo in the first place, and leaves no scarring.

How does it work? Light is radiated at a specific wavelength of high peak, ultra-short nanosecond energy pulses. The light penetrates the skin tissue and is absorbed by the pigment in the ink. The ink pigment is shattered into very small fragments which can be released from your skin and eliminated by your body's lymphatic system.



Removal takes between 1 and 8 sessions, depending on the size and age of tattoo you want to have removed, and the ink types and colours used. The Avensis machine can target all tattoo colours with its different wave lengths of laser.

You can learn more on the Tattoo Removal Company website: www.gonetattoo.co.nz or contact Tracette at 022 046 7746 or email info@gonetattoo.co.nz.



Sweat Etiquette

We love to see our yogis sweating during their power vinyasa sessions – it's an indication that they're turning up the internal heat "tapas" by engaging their muscular strength. Sweating is also a great way to cleanse, releasing toxins that build up in our bodies. And it helps to cool us down.

BUT we're not so keen on having puddles of sweat on the floor for people to step in, possibly slipping and falling. So if your sweat escapes the confines of your mat, please use your towel to mop it up straight away. Better yet, if you're in a position that takes your body off of your mat (e.g. frog pose), put a

towel down on the floor to catch the sweat before a puddle forms.

Thanks!

From Baron Baptiste:



Diabetes Youth Canterbury Fundraiser

Test Your Knowledge! We all love a Quiz Night, and this one is raising funds for Diabetes Youth Canterbury and Type 1 Diabetes. **Wednesday 10 August**, 7-9pm, Elmwood Trading Company, 1 Normans Road, Strowan.

These organisations provide financial, educational and emotional support to the families of young people with diabetes and people with Type 1 diabetes, through camps, activities, books, equipment and newsletters. They also lobby the Ministry of Health, PHARMAC and Canterbury District Health Board for improved care, services and products that might allow their children to lead as near a normal life as possible despite having a chronic health condition.

The Quiz Night is being organized by our yogi **Rona Wilson**. You can contact her for tickets, at \$10/person, on 027 252 5808. Make up your team (maximum of 6 in a team), shine up your brain, and get ready for a fun evening.

Asana Spotlight – Flying Warrior

Flying Warrior is a point of transition in the Budokon Yoga Practice. It is both a place to get to in its own right and a leaping off point for new horizons. It appears in Stage Two of the sequence, Divided Mind, and provides an extension from the pose known as Deep Lunging Warrior and a point from which to hop and spin to face in the opposite direction as a challenge to core stability, balance and mental focus. For all that, it is remarkably straight forward. Here is how:

- From *Skandasana* (drop stance), a position we addressed in detail in the April magazine, with your left leg bent, your right leg straight and extending towards the front of your mat, and your arms reaching towards the left side of your mat, use your right hand to draw an imaginary sword from your belt at your right side.
- Begin to shift your weight out of your left foot and transfer it to your right foot. Bend into your right knee and seamlessly straighten your left leg. In this process, gradually rise up away from the floor.
- Reach forward over the front edge of your mat with your right arm with your palm turned up to the ceiling, your fingers squeezed together and your drishti gaze straight forward over your right hand.
- As your weight is transferred to your right foot squeeze your right leg straight. Thrust off your left foot and raise your left leg up to hip height with your left leg extending directly behind you towards the back of the room.
- Reach your left arm back alongside your body towards the back of the room. This completes Flying Warrior.



At this point there are two alternative courses open. The first is used in section two of Stage Two of the practice. The second option is used in section three of Stage Two of the Budokon yoga primary series.

- In the first option reach your left foot back down towards the floor at the back of your mat. Do so with control rather than collapse. Cameron Shayne, the creator of this practice, instructs students to set their left foot down as if they were placing it on a baby's face. Land with that degree of control, awareness and lightness.
- Once your left foot touches the floor, pivot your feet towards the back left corner of the room, bend deeply into your left knee and straighten your right leg.
- As your feet and legs are doing their bit beneath you, extend your right arm straight up towards the ceiling and lower your left arm towards the floor. Keep your arms circling in these directions before drawing them across in front of your chest to press your left hand backwards and upwards towards the ceiling and your right arm forwards and down alongside your right leg. At all times keep your drishti gaze forward towards the front of the room. This is Double Block.

Option two proceeds rather differently.

- Draw your right arm in towards you and turn your right palm forward in front of your right shoulder. Simultaneously, bend your left elbow forward to set your left hand, palm forwards, in front of your left shoulder. Let us call this the leaping off point.
- Keep your left leg straight and firmly engaged and sweep it straight forward beneath you and out in front of you. As you do so hop straight up away from the floor on your right leg. The kick of your left leg towards the front of the room tends to create a forward momentum that makes those new to this transition land further towards the front of the room than they took off. Avoid this as it will disturb your balance. As you sweep your left leg towards the front of the room drive straight up from the floor on your right leg such that when you land your right foot it is to the exact same spot from which you took off.
- As your body leaves the floor spin towards the right, namely in the direction of the leg upon which you were standing, and turn a full 180 degrees to face the back of the room.
- In taking this spin, keep your left leg extending towards the front of the room, that is, now straight out behind you, and roll your left hip up and over your right hip such that as you land again on your right foot you are in essentially the same position as you were three bullets ago in the leaping off point but facing in the opposite direction.
- Straight away raise your left leg upwards and hinge your torso forwards into an approximation of standing splits.
- Reach your hands towards the floor and drape the backs of your fingers onto your mat. Sweep your hands gently away from you along your mat then flip your palms

towards the floor and set your hands flat to the mat, shoulder width apart.

- Slowly and with control lower your body towards the floor. Bend your elbows alongside you and lower through *chaturanga dandasana* (low plank) until you set your body flat to the mat. This transition from Flying Warrior is called Falling Warrior. The use of the verb “fall” suggests there is a disengaged, out of control, collapse to the floor. The verb “fall” is purely symbolic and the transition is intended to be performed smoothly and gracefully with integrated strength and power.

Flying Warrior is a great name for this pose and a great indicator of the state of body and mind for the transitions into and out of it. Create a tremendous inward pull of your muscles to your bones in these transitions. Let no part of your body go neglected as you pull in to lift up and take flight physically. Anything disengaged will be deadweight denying you of the opportunity to fly. Drop the deadweight of doubt too and let your mind be free to imagine and then experience your body flowing freely and elegantly through these transitions. “Angels fly because they take themselves lightly” says Baron Baptiste.

Namaste

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