



August 2017

### Step into your Power:

Plan and prepare now for Step into your Power, Apollo Power Yoga's yoga intensive and teacher training. The next instalment runs 13 to 20 January 2018 (both dates inclusive) at Wainui Park Camp, Wainui on the Banks Peninsula.

The practice and techniques are Asana, Meditation and Inquiry. You will **practice asana** at least twice daily. In so doing you will take your body to new levels of strength and expression and you will experience a tremendous sense of inner power and resilience.



You will **meditate** at least once per day, learning meditation technique and putting that technique into practice gaining insight into persistent underlying thought patterns and creating the possibility of new empowering patterns.

You will engage in **personal inquiry**, anchored in yogic principle, to open new pathways in your life.

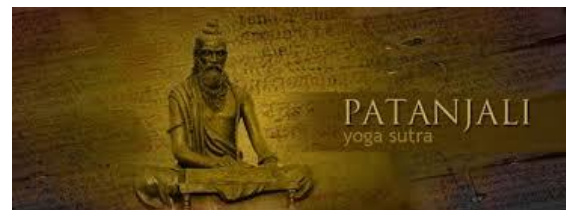
In addition there will be sessions on anatomy and physiology and practice teaching sessions which will enhance your connection with your group, your sense of connection with one another and your ability to draw forth your inner strengths and give expression to them as a leader and an inspiration to your group.

A wonderful group of people will gather for this intensive/training and you will form enduring bonds of friendship that will carry forward after the programme.

This programme is for YOU. BOOK NOW as spaces are limited! For more information visit: <http://www.apollopoweryoga.co.nz/Yoga-IntensiveTeacher-Training/>

### Yoga Sutras Discussion:

On **Sunday, 24 September** we will hold a two hour discussion on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. The Yoga Sutras are an essential source document for the practice of yoga, not just as a physical practice on your mat but as a way of being.



In this discussion we will give you an overview of the Sutras, their history, their significance

and the course that they prescribe as a way of being. If you are interested in yogic philosophy, if you are keen to appreciate yoga for more than just asana or if you are curious to extend your yoga practice into your whole life not just the time spent on your mat then this session is for you. Bookings are essential.

Please book by contacting Hamish:  
email: hamish@apollopoweryoga.co.nz  
phone: 021 0551884 or sign up at the studio).

**Date:** Sunday 24 September 2017 at 6:00 pm.

**Venue:** Apollo Power Yoga studio, 46 Salisbury Street, Christchurch.

**Cost:** \$40 (half price for Apollo Power Yoga annual members).

Bring your curiosity, a journal and pen if you wish to take notes and anything special that you like for meditation as we will spend time in seated meditation.

### **40 Days to Personal Revolution:**

We will be running the spring edition of 40 Days to Personal Revolution **beginning on Thursday 5 October and running to Monday 13 November**. There will be **6 workshops commencing on Thursday 5 October at 6:00 pm** and running weekly to a final workshop on Thursday 9 November.



Whether you have previously participated or are considering this programme for the first time, book now and make a commitment to your personal growth and development through an intense programme of daily meditation, daily asana practice, nutritional

awareness and personal inquiry. For more information about the programme visit: <http://www.apollopoweryoga.co.nz/40-Days-to-Personal-Revolution/>

### **Baddhas and Bandhas Workshop:**

Thanks to everyone who came along for the Baddhas and Bandhas workshop earlier this month.

Here is what a few people had to say about their experience:

*"Thank you for a wonderful workshop - Although I am certainly feeling quite sore and sorry for myself today, I am nevertheless inspired to try a few new things, being the overly cautious yogi I am... I had a great time yesterday - it was the perfect conclusion to what was a very demanding week at work."*



*"Actually it was really good to learn to use (better) stability and control for each pose, and also moving through the poses- as this is my own personal sloppy spot! Also the plank with a partner was good- that is a really good way of demonstrating how it is meant to be done. I really enjoyed the workshop and learned a lot. "*

### **Karma and Dharma:**

*Karma and dharma* are two terms associated with yoga and sometimes found in the offerings that yoga teachers make to their students when speaking at a philosophical level. From where do they originate? What do

they mean? What is their purpose in our modern world?

Both are Sanskrit terms. Sanskrit is an ancient but relatively un-used language. It is the parent of more modern languages but exists as an entity in its own right now only in relatively small communities in India.

Sanskrit was a language widely in use among Hindus in ancient times two or more thousand years ago. *Karma* and *dharma* are both terms that represent concepts from this time in Hindu culture.

*Karma*, in particular, is well-rooted not only in Hindu culture but in the religions that had their origins in that society: Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism for example.

*Karma* is often equated with fate or destiny and there is an element of those notions in its meaning and usage. However, it is much more complex than that. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, *karma* is explained in terms of action or deeds.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* there are two paths to the liberation of the soul: one is through contemplation and worship of the divine, Jnana Yoga, and the other is through good deeds and actions performed as a sacrifice, *Karma* Yoga.

In this sense, the word “yoga” qualifies the word “*karma*”. *Karma* is not, in and of itself, morally correct action or behaviour. *Karma* can be good or not. The quality of yoga attached to the action makes the *karma* of a morally good quality.

The place that fate plays in *karma* is that in the period when it was in current usage in Sanskrit and in Hindu culture there was a belief in the afterlife. The belief is, and here I summarise in a very general way, that one’s conduct or actions during the course of one’s lifetime would attract a colour or taint to one’s soul.

Once liberated from this mortal body the soul survived. Depending upon the colour, taint or *karma* the soul was re-allocated a new mortal existence.

In very simple terms, the soul would pick up in a new life where it left off in its previous existence. A thief and scoundrel in one life would be born into a life of thieves and scoundrels in the next.

The way in which *karma* differs from some notions of fate is that there is nothing immutable about one’s future when one is born into a particular life. The power of choice in respect of one’s actions or *karma* means that, however bleak, desperate or hard one’s circumstances are, one has choice as to how one lives one’s life.

There is a lot of yogic principle in that notion of choice. Yoga is the process of stilling the distractions and disturbances of the mind. A principal cause of there being distractions and disturbances in our minds is our aversion to things and circumstances that are uncomfortable, painful or unpleasant and our attraction to those things or circumstances that are pleasurable. Yoga as a process is one which teaches us how to be equanimous, how to practice *samadhi* (neutral vision) with respect to all things without being influenced by the dualities of pleasure and pain.

In the concept of *karma* there is also an element of the law of attraction. The Law of Attraction can be understood by understanding that ‘like attracts like’. What this means is that whether we realize it or not, we are responsible for bringing both positive and negative influences into our lives. A key part of the Law of Attraction is understanding that where you place your focus can have an intense impact on what happens to you. If you spend your days wallowing in regrets about the past or fears of the future, you’ll likely see

more negativity appearing, but if you look for the silver lining in every experience then you'll soon start to see positivity surrounding you every day. Therefore, the Law of Attraction encourages you to see that you have the freedom to take control of how your future develops, shaping it in the ways you choose.

*Karma* suggests that by doing good you will attract positive outcomes to you. This ought not to be the motive for doing good, however. In these columns we have previously discussed the *gunas* or states of nature. There is *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. *Tamas* is a state of ignorance, indifference and inertia in an imbalanced way. *Rajas* is a state of high energy and drive and desire in an imbalanced way. *Sattva* is a state of awareness, truth and intelligence in a balanced way. A rajasic person may engage in "good" conduct but they do so for a personal advantage. They will contribute to charity in order to receive plaudits for their generosity (and perhaps then deride people as being lipstick on a pig?). They will support a cause so as to off-set that portion of their income against tax obligations. These actions, ostensibly "good" do not, in the sense of *karma*, attract good outcomes for the doer of these acts.

According to the *Bhagavad Gita* good *karma* is action done with no personal motive but action which is done as a sacrifice. Here lies the significance of *karma* for present day purposes. Religious belief and belief in an after-life are on the wane in modern western society but that does not mean that we should disregard ideas of *karma* and become a competitive group seeking self-gratification.

Reflect on your greatest moments of fulfilment. Did they come from doing something selfish or something selfless? Do people speak of selfishness as being a good character trait? Are you inspired by stories of white collar criminals who perpetrate fraud to

maintain an extravagant lifestyle? Are you inspired by stories of sportspeople who use illegal drugs to obtain success by illegitimate means? Or are you inspired by stories of leadership such as Sam Johnson rallying the Student Army at the time of Christchurch's earthquakes? Are you, instead, uplifted by Captain Oates who stepped out into the ice to die to prolong the chances of his comrades trapped on Antarctica?

Ultimately, doing good and showing up well for others is more rewarding than being self-focused and driven by personal gain. *Karma* need not wait for an after-life. Make your actions/*karma* a service to the good of others and experience a sense of self-worth, purpose and fulfilment in this life-time.

What of *dharma*? In some definitions *dharma* is a decree or custom. The sense in which it is used in the *Bhagavad Gita* is that of calling or vocation. The customary nature of calling or vocation is that in ancient Hindu society as in many cultures all over the globe a family would pursue the same line of work generation after generation.

The idea of *dharma* is connected with the original source of the caste system. One commentator asserts that the roots of the caste system were not racist or based on stigma but were a recognition of farming families being farmers, merchant families being merchants, fishing families being fishermen and so forth.

The concept of *dharma* proclaims that each person has a true vocation and purpose in their life. The sense of purpose is an important one. Just recently I worked privately with a student who was undergoing many changes in their life, some of these being forced upon them rather than chosen. The student felt that she was lacking purpose. She had great insight into

this and was resolved to find a purposeful path for herself.

*Dharma* requires that we find the path that is right for us. It may not be the path at which we succeed the most. Indeed, in the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said that it is better to be a failure pursuing your own true *dharma* than to be a success in performing someone else's *dharma*. That means something to me as I was successful enough and effective enough at practicing the law to suppose that being a litigator was my *dharma*. But I never felt the same level of connectedness and purpose and the good fit with what I was doing when I practiced the law that I now experience as a yoga teacher.

Baron Baptiste quotes the saying attributed variously to notable figures such as Pablo Picasso that the meaning of life is to find your gift and the purpose of life is to give it away. This saying encapsulates for me the notion of *dharma*: find what is your unique, special gift and then apply yourself in sharing that gift with the world. This idea does not change from one era to another but is as applicable now as ever it was in India before the current era.

The beauty of this is that it ties with *karma*. If *karma* requires us to act in a good way for no selfish motive and *dharma* calls for us to find our gift and then give it away we can apply ourselves to our true calling, do good for the world and receive a sense of inner purpose and self-worth all at the same time. *Karma* and *dharma* may be of ancient origin but as a simple prescription for life they are as relatable to the modern day as ever they were.

### **Asana Spotlight:**

Last month we featured Bakasana as our pose of the month. Carrying on from that, this month we feature koundinyasana. There is no meaning for the name of the pose in English as it is named after the sage Koundinya (just as

side plank is not a literal translation of Vasisthasana, a pose named after the sage Vasistha).



There is a revolved or twisted variation of the pose that we will address briefly after describing the principal variation. A pose such as this does not happen overnight. It involves an integrated mix of strength, balance mobility and inner trust. These qualities are developed over time. Put the pieces together gradually and with patience.

Here is how:

- Begin in downward facing dog. Raise your right leg high to the sky with an internal rotation. To generate an internal rotation raise your right leg as if it were being lifted from the inner point of your right knee. As your leg lifts point the toes of your right foot towards the floor and keep your hips level.
- Press up high on the balls of your grounded left foot and tone strongly the quadriceps of your left thigh.
- Engage uddiyana bandha (the abdominal muscular lock) to generate a hollowing out of the front side of your torso and to create uplift of the midsection of your body.
- Shift the weight of your shoulders forward towards your hands. As you do so, draw your right knee forward to your chest with strong engagement of your right hip flexors. Hug up tight!

- Then move your right knee outwards towards your right upper arm and squeeze your right knee to your right upper arm.
- Slowly bend your elbows and lower your chest forwards to a chaturanga dandasana (low plank)-like position. Lift your chin away from your throat and look way forward in front of your mat.
- Sense the balance in your hands and, just like with crow from last month's magazine, shift your weight forward until you reach a tipping point. Your grounded left foot and your left leg are critical at this juncture. Press yourself forward using your left foot on the mat then strongly tone your whole left leg and, from hamstring and gluteal muscle strength, lift your left leg from the floor. You will see from the images that Hamish's shoulders have dipped a little lower than the height of his elbows. This is to create a see-saw-like effect: lowering his upper torso has allowed him to lift his lower body. Keep this to a minimum as the caution we offer for low plank associated with dropping your shoulders forward and downward applies here.
- Straighten your right leg at the knee and press your right foot strongly out towards the front-right corner of the room. This is the *pièce de résistance* and involves a similar quality of stability from inward muscular pull and mobility from outward expression as does straightening your lifted leg for bird of paradise pose (svarga dvijasana). If you are tighter in the backs of your legs or are still learning the balance of the pose you may need to keep your right leg bent at the knee in the early days of your practice of this pose (as per the second image of the pose).



- The revolved variation (parivrtta eka pada koundinyasana) is taken in very much the same way as the first variation but instead of taking your right knee to the outside of your right upper arm, take your right across your body to the outside of your left upper arm.



- You will see from the image that Hamish's hips and low back are rotated to the left but his upper body is square towards the floor. Also notice that Hamish's shoulders are relatively level and he has resisted any collapse of his right shoulder towards the floor – the essential qualities of chaturanga dandasana are present in his foundations.
- Hamish's right leg, extending out to the left side of his body is strong and straight. His left leg, extended straight out behind him should be straighter at the knee than it is (he blames the fact that the photographer was not a yogi and therefore did not have the eye to cue him to straighten it more!)



Koundinyasana and its variations are an opportunity for more advanced practitioners to extend themselves. Build on the foundations of chaturanga dandasana, honed over the course of much practice, by giving expression to your capacity to flare and straighten your legs. Once into the pose, maintain ujjayi breathing, relax your mind and let your spirit fly.

**From Baron Baptiste:**



Namaste

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