



November 2014

We are already drawing towards the end of another year. Time between now and Christmas will seem to pass quickly and lots of pressures will come upon us. There are not just time pressures but financial pressures, worries about children's exams, stresses associated with bringing families together, concerns over holidays and the preparation for them.

On top of this, traditional seasonal social functions heap upon us alcohol and edible food-like substances that do not contribute to our physical, mental or emotional well-being. Now is not a time to drop yoga practice but to recommit to yoga practice.

Yoga practice keeps us in our breath, calming our nervous systems. It keeps us in our bodies, aware of the way we are feeling and sensing what we need. It gives us a strong feeling of being grounded rather than caught up in a mad rush. Yoga practice gives us critical distance from the challenges that arise at this time of the year and allows us to meet those challenges with equanimity.

#### **Apollo Gift Vouchers:**

The gift of yoga is a gift of love. Give someone who means a lot to you the gift of yoga with Apollo Power Yoga gift vouchers. These can be for any sum as a specific pass or as a contribution to classes. Let us know what you need and we will customise a voucher for you.

#### **Timetable Changes:**

We are scheduling eight extra classes per week from the week beginning on Monday 1 December 2014. All existing classes remain with the one exception of the 9am Saturday PAL90 class.

The new classes are:

- Monday 7:30am PAL60
- Thursday 7:30am PAL60
- Friday 4pm Kids Class
- Saturday 8am PAL90
- Saturday 10am PAL60
- Saturday 3pm PR60
- Sunday 8am PAL60
- Sunday 10am PAL90
- Sunday 3pm PB60

The current Saturday 9am class is being removed from the timetable to make it possible to run two classes on Saturday mornings. Check [www.apollopoweryoga.co.nz](http://www.apollopoweryoga.co.nz) for a full timetable.

#### **Spring into Summer Special:**

Our Spring into Summer special of \$100 for 10-class passes and unlimited month passes **finishes on 30 November**. Take advantage of this special while it still lasts.



### **Keep up the Good Work:**

Everyone has been lapping up our October/November special pricing for monthly unlimited passes at \$100. Purchasing an unlimited month gives you an incentive to practice more frequently, because the more practices you get in, the cheaper each class is. More frequent practice makes you stronger and more mobile. The classes become even more enjoyable as you go deeper into your poses and become capable of things you used to think were impossible for you.

You can keep all that great stuff going and flowing by purchasing an annual membership. Our price is just \$1,200.

### **Mat Storage**

One of the benefits of annual membership at Apollo Power Yoga is free mat storage, so you don't have to lug your mat back and forth.

But, we're now getting so many annual members, you should probably put your names on your mats, so there are no mix-ups.

Unless you have made special arrangements with us, you may not store your mat at our studio if you are not an annual member.

### **Interview with Louise Clear:**

Louise Clear started practising yoga about four years ago in London after a friend suggested that she go to a Bikram class. Louise gave it a go and became hooked. After practicing Bikram for almost three years and moving countries, Louise felt like she needed a change in her practice. She enjoyed the heat and had developed a competent practice, but felt that she wasn't getting a full workout – and nor was she at Bikram. She recognised herself that her core and upper body strength were lacking and she was ready for a new challenge.

When Hamish and Margo opened Apollo Power Yoga last year, Louise was keen to try out the power yoga series and became one of the studio's first regular students. At first she felt a bit like she was starting from scratch with her practice which was a little frustrating for her. The classes offered at Bikram studios are called Bikram's beginning yoga class. They are quite simple. The only true intensity in the practice is an environmental one in the form of the heat (this shows up in other studios run by former Bikram teachers where lots of sweat is equated with a strong practice when in fact the excessive heat masks a weakness in the practice).

Louise felt uncomfortable in down dog because her arms would get tired and her ability to move with graceful power through the vinyasa was not great. She craved the familiarity of a practice she already felt confident in – she craved her comfort zone. Louise says she received great support and encouragement at Apollo Power Yoga's studio. She stepped out of her comfort zone and her power vinyasa practice went from strength to strength in a period of six months.



Yoga has acquired a reputation among the uninitiated general population for being gentle stretching for flexible women because, in part, too many yoga teachers teach gentle stretches with a focus on mobility. But yoga can and should be a means of creating and maintaining full body strength and mobility. Yoga has the ability to be a transformative practice - and nobody ever transformed themselves by doing something easy.

Louise says the best advice she can offer anyone who is about to embark on their journey of yoga discovery is that your best is your best and not anyone else's. Your practice will get better with persistence, and being in an encouraging supportive environment will make that journey easier. Louise says to remember why you first came to the mat and the feeling you get when you rest in savasana.

### **Asana Spotlight:**

Wheel (*urdhva dhanurasana*) is the final pose in our sequence on back bends. This pose is the climax of the power vinyasa sequence and is a powerful expression of strength and openness in your body.

Wheel is sometimes called Chakrasana as it is opening to all seven chakras. Wheel flushes your spine with blood and your nervous system is ignited. Some people recoil from or fear these strong sensations. They are, in fact, to be

relished, enjoyed and experienced with present awareness as they are a fantastic sensation of being truly alive and in your body.

- Begin lying on your back with your legs bent and your feet flat to the floor at hip width.
- Anchor your feet now. Most people have their feet shuffle or slip around making their way up into or down from wheel. Treat wheel as a standing pose and set your feet as you would for *tadasana* and keep them there.
- Set your hands at shoulder width, either side of your head. Look to bring your palms flat to the floor with your fingers tucking under your shoulders a little.
- Reach your tailbone forward towards your heels then lift upwards at your hips.
- Ensure your feet are still and that your inner thighs are engaged and turning inwards and downwards towards the floor. One of the most common errors here is to fail to engage, or to keep engaged, the inner thighs. If this happens your heels will spin inwards, your knees will collapse outwards and the power of your legs will be lost. Your thigh bones will angle inwards towards your sacrum and limit its free movement, making your back bend more difficult.
- Lift to the crown of your head. Do not try to bear the weight of your body on your head. Be strong in your hands and arms. You may not be able to go any further than this. If not, that is fine. Do what you can and keep trying.
- If your elbows are winging out to right and left, wrap them in to shoulder width distance. This will set your hands and arms as if for *chaturanga dandasana*. If you are in the habit of avoiding *chaturanga dandasana* then you are avoiding your wheel preparation.
- Take your shoulder blades along your back towards your hips, the inner edges of your shoulder blades turning inwards and lifting your thoracic spine towards the sky. This set of the shoulder blades is important. It will stabilise your shoulders and avoid the

potential for shoulder injury by trying to press into wheel with your shoulders hunched. Just as *chaturanga dandasana* with hunched shoulders or with your shoulders dropped forward is harmful, so too is wheel unless you set your shoulder blades properly.

- Check in again with your feet and thighs. Are your feet in *tadasana* and are your inner thighs engaged? Keep your elbows wrapping inwards to shoulder distance and straighten your arms, driving away from the floor.
- To come down you must draw your chin to your chest and lower carefully to the back of your head, the back of your shoulders and then down your back to your hips.
- Do NOT pull your knees into your chest at this point. That can shock the sacrum, the sacro-iliac arch and the muscles at the base of your spine. We recommend resting in *supta baddha konasana* before rolling onto your side and pressing up to standing.



Making progress towards wheel can be slow for many people. Choose to cultivate the wheel in your body the way a gardener cultivates their seeds. Plant the seed of intention. Nurture that seed with regular practice of the whole power vinyasa practice to give you strong arms and legs, mobile shoulders and hips, a supple and responsive back and calm, deep *ujjayi* breath. Then you will reap the benefits in the powerful liberation and open feeling that wheel provides.

## Yoga vs the Gym – How to Fit it All In?

One of the best things about Baptiste Power Vinyasa Yoga, as taught at Apollo Power Yoga, is that it brings all the benefits of strengthening gym work into your yoga practice.

We're all pushed for time in our lives, with work, family, and social commitments often leaving us with less time than we'd like to keep our bodies strong and healthy. Trying to fit both regular gym sessions and regular yoga sessions into our schedule can feel like a juggling act.

The answer is: Apollo Power Yoga. The Baptiste Power Vinyasa yoga that we teach was specially developed to keep athletes' bodies strong and mobile. If you're attending our classes 3-4 times per week, and following our cues regarding core engagement and alignment, your body will be as strong as it would be from that number of gym sessions.

But with yoga, you get the added benefits of:

- retaining and extending your full mobility
- coming into your meditative mind to sharpen your focus, and
- re-training your breath to restore your vitality and connect with calmness and composure.

Much of the exercise that is done in gyms actually breaks down your muscle, on the basis that the muscle will build itself back stronger to meet the demand placed upon it. But when that occurs, the muscle built back tends to be bulky, especially through the thigh region.

In power vinyasa yoga, muscles are stretched to their full length while under load. The muscle does get stronger in response, but in a lean, sculpted way. And this type of eccentric loading also makes your bones strengthen and become denser in response, which helps to avoid osteoporosis.

Many of our yogis have switched over from a gym membership to a membership at Apollo, and

have found that a regular power vinyasa practice is making them stronger than they were getting with gym work, as well as more mobile. For example, one of our yogis who does a lot of surfing has noticed that he now has a greater ability to maintain a low stance on his board, because his leg, back and core strength is so much better now than when he was going to the gym.

In fact, some aspects of gym work can be detrimental to your health. The muscle “shredding” which goes on with traditional gym work, and in particular the extreme version known as cross-fit, has been associated with a higher risk of renal failure, a condition known as rhabdomyolysis (“Rhabdo”). Basically, the shredded muscle and other by-products have to be released from your body through your kidneys, which can become overloaded and fail. Why would anyone do this to themselves? Rhabdo is a potentially fatal condition. In the USA, where the potential for injury-related law suits is greater than in New Zealand under the ACC regime, health warnings about the potential for serious illness from participating in traditional gym workouts and cross-fit are necessary.



Another big benefit of yoga over gym work is the emphasis on breathing correctly. How do you breathe when you go to the gym, or go for a run, cycle or a swim? Usually it's through your mouth, and often it's at a fast, panting pace. The effect of this is to activate your sympathetic nervous system: your “fight or flight” response. This floods your system with stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, which in turn causes your body to retain fat as a defensive mechanism, particularly around the tummy.

At Apollo Power Yoga, we teach *ujjayi* breath, in and out through the nose, and retaining your abdominal engagement to breathe deeply into your lungs. This type of breathing activates your parasympathetic nervous system, calming your heart and your mind, and encouraging your body to produce feel-good hormones such as serotonin. We've all experienced the way that the post-yoga class bliss carries on well after the class. And having learned the *ujjayi* breath in yoga class, we can employ it in any other stressful situation to keep our stress levels down.

What about the heart-health benefits of yoga as opposed to gym work? Do you still need get out for a run, swim or cycle if you've been to an Apollo power vinyasa class? The answer is, only if you want to. Those are all enjoyable activities, but they're not necessary for your heart health if you have a regular practice at Apollo. Hamish has previously been a long-distance runner, and Margo a regular swimmer. These activities are generally held to be good for your heart health, but they do take a certain toll on the rest of your body. Since leaving those other activities behind and practicing Baptiste power vinyasa daily, their resting heart-rates and blood pressure levels have stayed just as healthy as they were previously, or improved.

So, when you're next trying to work out how to cram it all into your busy life, come to Apollo Power Yoga to get the strength and conditioning that gym work and cardio give you, with the additional benefits of full mobility, improved breathing, and release from tension and stress.

## Bhagavad Gita:

Chapter Three in *The Gita* is called *Karma Yoga: the Yoga of Action*. It commences with Arjuna asking Krishna why, if the path of wisdom is preferable to the path of action, he is exhorted to go to war.

Krishna replies that he has given the world a two-fold path: one path is that of discerning wisdom (*Jnana Yoga*) and the other is the path of selfless action (*Karma Yoga*).

Krishna tells Arjuna about how powerful the thinking mind is. He says a hermit can retire on his own to a remote cave but still carry the whole world with him in his head. In order to excel, Krishna says, one must mentally control the senses and engage the body in selfless service, or Karma Yoga.



Giving more than you have,  
And expecting nothing  
But nothing in return,  
...means Selflessness

Krishna advises Arjuna to maintain his body and do his duty rather than attempting to renounce all actions. Instead, make every action a sacrifice, utterly free of personal attachment. He warns that the world is bondage for those who act for their own sake.

Nature requires certain actions in any moment. Everyone is moved to some action by the qualities of nature (Gunas) which are

restlessness, inertia and calmness. So long as one feels there is nothing to be gained for themselves by acting, and nothing to be lost for themselves by not acting and one has no dependency upon anyone else for anything, then one will be at peace in themselves.

Krishna recommends this selflessness to Arjuna and says that if someone acts without personal attachment or interest in their actions or the results of their actions then one will be an example for others.

In the modern world people speak of good karma and bad karma. For present purposes we should treat karma as being action and reaction. Right action is that done in accordance with one's duty and without personal interest or selfishness. This might be regarded as good karma as it results in an identification of the Self with that which is divine. Bad karma are those things done by someone for the gratification of their senses in the sense objects. Eating out of greed for instance. Or pursuing sex out of lust not love. By being caught in a trap of selfish gratification of the senses one experiences bad karma as the selfish actions have a negative reaction.

Krishna also addresses the notion of Dharma, which is an individual's calling according to nature. Krishna says it is better to do one's duty according to their dharma than not, and better to do one's own dharma imperfectly than someone else's dharma perfectly. It is Arjuna's dharma to be a leader and a warrior and to fight the just war for his people.

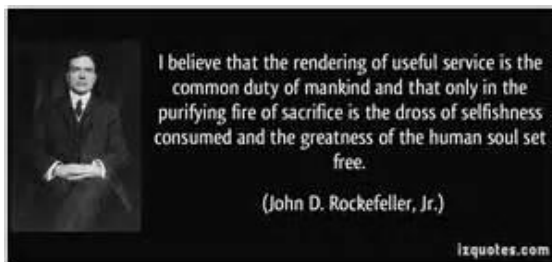
Krishna says personal desire is the true enemy on earth. It veils wisdom like dust covering a mirror or smoke concealing a fire. Krishna tells Arjuna that people must overcome their desire. The senses are stronger than the body. The mind is stronger than the senses. The intellect is stronger than the mind. The Atman, or true Self, is above the intellect. One can

control the lower, baser self with the higher self. This is not easy, but it destroys the enemy that is personal desire.

Chapter Four of *The Gita, The Wisdom Yoga of Action and Renunciation*, continues the theme of the previous chapter.

Here Krishna states that he is unaffected by all actions, nor does he desire any results. Everyone who shares these qualities with him will also be free. Having let go of attachment to the fruits of your actions you are ever content and have no dependencies. Whatever you do without personal desire for the results is wise.

In this state, your mind becomes absorbed in the truth and everything you do becomes a sacrifice and your karma melts away.



Sacrifice may take many forms. It may be in the form of alms (the wealthy providing money or goods for the poor). It may be through devotional fasting. It may be a vow of silence. Krishna says that giving knowledge freely is a good form of sacrifice as all other forms of sacrifice lead to the attainment of knowledge.

Chapter Four concludes with Krishna telling Arjuna that if he dedicates all his actions so his work becomes Karma Yoga, all his remaining doubts will be resolved, all bondage will fall away and he will remain in his true self.

Next month we will look at the next two chapters of *The Gita, the Yoga of Renunciation and the Yoga of Meditation*.

### A Tale of the Unenlightened:

Margo and Hamish were recently speaking with a person from the City Council about business matters. After our formal discussion concluded we shifted the discussion to yoga.

Our guest from the Council said they “were not really a yoga person”. It transpires that this person is into ultra-distance running and Golden Oldies rugby. We said that these were sports that caused a lot of tightness in important areas of the body. Our guest acknowledged this.

But he went on to say that runners who do yoga get injured. He stated he had even read an article in a runners’ magazine that made that claim. We asked how he was getting on injury-wise by avoiding yoga.

It turns out he had grown so tight in his gluteal muscles and had placed such strain on them running that he had torn his glutes off his hip bones and had taken two years to recover. Soon after getting that right he had developed an Achilles tendon problem. All this injury without ever having done yoga.

It is not the yoga that injures people, but the other activities. It may be true that the first step forward when beginning yoga feels like a step back as areas that are tight (they have essentially already been injured and the body has hardened around the injured site to protect it) are worked on by the asanas. But this process ultimately yields a freer, more resilient body that will allow you to continue with other activities (running/cycling/golf etc.) longer and more effectively.

The preventative medicine of yoga is valuable to all sportspeople (elite or those who participate purely for the fun of it). The issue is getting past the rigidity and tightness of mind of those who are in denial of how their lifestyle is impinging upon their freedom of movement.

### Peonies:

Many of you have commented on the beautiful peonies we have had at reception over the last two weeks. These were given to us by Steve and Catheryn, two regular 6:15am yogis at Apollo, who, in addition to their normal jobs, also own a peony farm. This is their time of year! Many thanks Steve and Catheryn for the peonies and for the pleasure you have given Apollo's students by their presence at our front desk.



- *Steve and Catheryn's peonies at our reception desk.*

### Christmas Orphan? Hang out with Hassan!

One of our yogis, **Hassan Bukhari**, is generously opening his home on Christmas Day to anyone who will be a "Christmas Orphan" – that is, living here in Christchurch without family. He knows that can be a tough day to be on your own, so he is welcoming anyone who wishes to join him to come to his place to hang out, eat and be merry. If you're interested, give Hassan a call on 0220779738 or find him on Facebook and he'll invite you to the event. He says that don't need to know him already. Ho ho ho!

### Linden Leaves Miraculous Facial Oil Giveaway

We have 10 sample size bottles of **Linden Leaves Miraculous Facial Oil** to give away. This is a great oil for either men or women to keep their skin supple, smooth and healthy. Massaging it into the skin around the eyes helps to repair the effects of too much outdoor time and/or too little sleep. For men, it's a great alternative to an aftershave – much more soothing.

The Linden Leaves range of face and bodycare products is organic and made right here in Christchurch. You can see the full range at **Ballantynes** in the central city Re:Start Mall, and it's also sold at Life and Dodds Pharmacies, as well as online: [www.lindenleaves.com](http://www.lindenleaves.com).

**Like Apollo Power Yoga on Facebook** to go in the draw (those who have already liked us will go in the draw, too.)

Namaste

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