



November
2019

Mat Bags for Sale – Support Kriza Mandela in Nairobi:

Kriza Mandela, our mentee in Africa through the Africa Yoga Project, has made yoga mat bags and we have them for sale at Salisbury Street.

They are a great colour and design. Each bag has a shoulder strap, a zip and an outer pocket. They are large enough to fit all mats, even the extra-long or extra-thick varieties.

The bags cost \$50 from which we will account for GST and all net proceeds will go to Kriza. Kriza has trained in sewing/tailoring and makes mat bags and tote bags for Africa Yoga Project in Nairobi.



These bags are an attractive and functional item for you or are a great gift for your yoga friends. Kriza would greatly appreciate your support of him in his financial independence.

While we have been mentoring him Kriza has received a monthly stipend from the proceeds of our contribution classes. His four year term with the AYP Academy is coming to an end this year and he will be supporting himself financially with his work as a yoga teacher and his tailoring work. Please help support him.

Annual Membership Sale:

As of 1 December the up-front price for an annual membership at Apollo Power Yoga is on sale for just \$1250.

For this you receive:

- Unlimited practice at our two locations at Salisbury Street in the city and Humphreys Drive at Ferrymead.
- Mat storage at Salisbury Street.
- Half price on in-house workshops and 40 Days to Personal Revolution programmes.
- The ability to pause your membership should you be away from practice for two weeks or more due to travel for

work or holiday, or due to illness or injury.

This sale runs up to 31 January 2020. If you have an existing annual membership that does not expire until after 31 January 2020 you may still purchase a new membership at the special rate by 31 January and we will run the new membership consecutively after the expiration of the existing one.

Our annual memberships are non-transferable and non-refundable.

Do leap in on this tremendous offer and make power vinyasa yoga and restorative yoga at Apollo Power Yoga an integral element of your health and well-being in 2020.

40 Days to Personal Revolution:

Our 40 Days to Personal Revolution wrapped up with a final 90-minute practice on Thursday 14 November.

Many thanks to the participants. You did a great job and we loved working with you all.

We will run the programme again in 2020 so if you missed out this time, keep your eyes peeled for our 2020 dates and seize the next opportunity to participate in this extremely rewarding programme.

Step into your Power – January 2020:

Now is the time to apply for Apollo Power Yoga's next 8-day intensive, **STEP into your POWER**. Our course begins on Monday 27 January 2020 and runs to and including Monday 3 February 2020 at the YMCA Park Camp at Wainui on Banks Peninsula.

This course features:

- meditation,
- asana,
- personal inquiry,
- yoga history and philosophy,
- anatomy related to yoga practice,
- practice teaching.

As one participant from September put it, "I have left with a whole new outlook on life. It was a hard week but so worth it. Words cannot describe how valuable I found this experience."



Another 2019 trainee said this:

"Hamish and Margo have a strong partnership and offer so much more than just learning how to teach yoga. They both embody the principles of the yoga sutras and are well on their way to being some of the most influential yoga practitioners in the nation."

All the teachers at Apollo Power Yoga have been through our Step into your Power course. Our programme is effective in training teachers to deliver a consistent style of practice with a consistent methodology. It is also effective in empowering our trainees to address those things that block them in their lives and to make progress to a more contented and powerful way of being.

Book now to secure your place for January 2020. Email hamish@apolloweryoga.com or download and complete the application form from our website (<https://apollopoweryoga.com/step-into-your-power-yoga-teacher-training/>) and

forward it to Hamish. We would love to have you join us in 2020.

Apollo Power Yoga on Demand:

For those of you who cannot make it in to our studios for classes or who are travelling and want to maintain your power yoga practice, we offer an online service where you can either rent access to a collection of video-recorded classes or you may purchase and download to use indefinitely at your leisure a class or classes from the collection.



Now you can have access to some of our classes through an online service. Check out our website: <https://apollopoweryoga.com/apollo-power-yoga-on-demand/> or go direct to the on demand page: <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/apollopoweryoga>

Practice with all the joy, power, strength, mobility and inspiration that you know and love from classes at Apollo Power Yoga anytime!

Africa Yoga Project – Eye Pillows:

Two of our students, Eunju Nam and Junghee Kim, have been working with Margo and they have made lavender scented eye pillows. These are on sale for \$20 with the proceeds to go to Africa Yoga

Project. You may purchase these from either of our studios.

They are a great accompaniment to savasana and a great way to settle your mind, calm your nervous system and create a relaxed state of being before you go to bed in the evening.

These are good for yourself as a treat and make a great present too.

Many Paths:

Yoga does not fail you. You fail yourself when you do not practice yoga. I see it so often when people have been coming in to practice, have been growing in themselves and improving in their overall state of health, physical, mental and spiritual, and then they stop coming.

When I began yoga practice I had no real idea what yoga was or what to expect. I first practiced Bikram yoga (now there is a name that is a hissing and a by-word!) and did not appreciate how HOT the room was going to be and I was introduced to unexpected poses and actions. I recall a regular of the practice asking me after my first class how it was. I was not sure how to reply as I had no previous experience of yoga against which to assess the class or my performance in it.

That practice is the same every time with 26 poses and two breathing exercises. That practice has no poses where you bear weight on your hands and no inversions (unless, in each case, you count the locust variation from that practice but for the vast majority of students there is limited arm

strength applied and very little in the way of inversion achieved).

The practice is taught with a strict dialogue where the cues given are the same all the time. There is little room for the teacher to offer anything of themselves and certainly little room for anything spiritually uplifting or philosophical. Some teachers would depart from script and give something of themselves to the practice. One that I recall particularly who I liked as a teacher was excluded from teaching at the studio I was practicing at because she departed from the dialogue and offered some of her own interpretation.

I assumed that what I was getting, was “yoga”. I had a very blinkered view of the concept of yoga.

About 18 months after I began practicing I was introduced to power vinyasa yoga. In a 90 minute power vinyasa class we perform around 60 poses, many of them repeatedly. We carry our weight on two feet, on one foot, on our two hands and two feet together and on our two hands alone. We practice standing, seated, lying down prone and lying supine and we practice upside down in inversions. There are not two breathing exercises book-ending the practice but one breathing practice, ujjayi, which spans the entire class. In Baptiste-style power vinyasa yoga we repeatedly speak into the spiritual and philosophical side of the practice. We are concerned not just with the physical but with the mind and spirit too.

I found moving from Bikram practice to Baptiste-style power vinyasa yoga to be like stepping out of a narrow alleyway into a vast open plain of possibility. Power vinyasa yoga speaks to me in a meaningful way and supplies what I seek from my practice.

Baptiste yoga introduced me to meditation as well as asana and to inquiry/svadhya – the process of looking into one’s way of being to gain insight and be able to grow.

The longer I am associated with yoga the more I become aware of the reach of the practice into all elements of my life and my being. It truly is a comprehensive practice.

There are lots of different styles of practice. Some are slower moving, some faster. Some involve fewer poses, some more. Some have a greater emphasis on certain elements of practice and others a different emphasis. The reason we teach the practices we do at Apollo Power Yoga is that Margo and I believe we get all that we need from Baptiste-style power vinyasa yoga.

Part of what I get from my practice is mental clarity, relaxation and relief from the cares and concerns of everyday life. Many students share with us that it is the effect of the practice upon how they feel in their minds and emotions as much as in their bodies.

When I get to this part of my practice I tap in to the real basis for yoga. The late Mr B. K.S. Iyengar says of asana:

“Asanas are not meant for physical fitness, but for conquering the elements, energy, and so on. So, how to balance the energy in the body, how to control the five elements, how to balance the various aspect of the mind without mixing them all together, and how to be able to perceive the difference between the gunas, and to experience that there is something behind them, operating in the world of man - that is what asanas are for. The process is slow and painstaking, but a steady inquiry facilitates a growing awareness.”

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, an ancient epic poem that relates the life advice offered by the Lord Krishna (the divine manifested in human form) to Arjuna (a young warrior prince), on the eve of battle.

In the *Gita* advice is offered on how an individual may conduct themselves during their life so as to come closer to the divine and be freed from the effects of karma and the cycle of reincarnation.

In the *Gita* there are multiple paths offered to achieve the desired union with the divine – just as there are different practices. There are multiple paths. One may suit one person and another may suit someone else.

The pathways described in the *Gita* are:

1. Jnana yoga – the intellectual approach to oneness with the divine.
2. Karma yoga – the yoga of selfless service.
3. Bhakti yoga – the yoga of devotional worship of Brahman.
4. Raja yoga – the yoga of practices to concentrate the mind. The eight limbs described by Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*, for example.

The *Gita* asserts that Krishna gave the world a two-fold path: the paths of Jnana Yoga (discerning wisdom) and Karma Yoga (the way of selfless action) (*Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 3, Sloka 3). However, the *Gita* also addresses the way of Bhakti (devotion) and Raja. A committed approach to any of the paths will yield the desired outcome: many paths, one destination.

Jnana Yoga: this is said to be the most difficult path. It requires one to use one's own mind to inquire into its true nature. There is an element of the Greek philosopher kings in this as they applied

their powers of reasoning and deduction to penetrate into truth.

In Jnana yoga the practitioner uses their mind to filter out the misperception and misconception of cloudy thought. Once the web of unreliable thought is removed then the practitioner can realise their connection with the divine and can be free.

I find it challenging to be clear in my head. All things seem to be filtered through my perceptions and I fall into judgment easily. Even when I meditate and I have periods of quiet and stillness in my mind I observe those periods and a thought arises that those periods are good. That necessarily makes other times, when my mind is busier, less good. That thought gets me back to where I started – with a busy mind.

Karma Yoga: this is the yoga of selfless service. Chapter 3, sloka 9 of the *Gita* states, "The world is bondage when actions are done just for your own sake. Therefore, Arjuna, make every action a sacrifice, utterly free of personal attachment."

The *Gita* asserts that personal desire is a danger to the Self as it locks one into a practice of personal gratification and attachment to things (for example, the smoker is attached/addicted to nicotine; the alcoholic is addicted to alcohol). It recommends, therefore, that one's actions be performed without any desire for personal gain or benefit. In this practice of selfless service there will be freedom from the identification and attachment to worldly things. Free of such attachment the Self will unite with the divine.

Selflessness is something I struggle with. I experience obvious motives for my actions that are centred on myself. An obvious one is that I teach yoga, but I charge a fee to do so. There are more subtle ones. Are the good deeds I do purely for the sake of service or do I seek some sense of myself

as good or some acknowledgement by others that I am good.

The more I examine my actions the more I notice the potential, at least, for ulterior motives that are directed to myself rather than pure service. I see this, also, in others. Just as one person may put down another person to make themselves feel better by comparison, so some people put others up and flatter or praise them with the desire to be valued, appreciated or liked by the person they are flattering.

Be awake to what motivates you and where there is the question “What is in it for me?” in what you do. Use this knowledge to align your actions and your being in a way that sits comfortably with who you seek to be in the world.

Bhakti Yoga: this is the yoga of devotion. In this practice, which again can take many forms, the practitioner worships their perception of the divine. They may choose to worship a particular manifestation of the divine (idols or images for instance) or they may choose to worship the divine in an unmanifest state, “beyond name and form, infinite and indescribable”.

Whatever the method of worship the *Gita* states that such devotees will “quiet their senses, become even-minded, and naturally think of the welfare of all other creatures. Certainly such devotees also come directly to me” (Chapter 12, sloka 4).

I do not identify with this practice of yoga. I have never being a worshipper of a god or any gods. I do not identify with the notion of a god. However, for those who do, worship is a powerful way to express humility, gratitude, repentance and a commitment to a way of being that serves a higher purpose. Those are laudable qualities. There is also something extremely powerful to witness someone at worship. I saw a nun praying at the tomb

of St Francis of Assisi and the gravity of her devotion has stayed with me.

Raja Yoga: Raja yoga is the path that we who come to yoga through asana are engaged in. The process I described earlier of having commenced yoga as a physical practice and, through that practice, having opened up to me other elements of yoga practice is Raja yoga.

Raja Yoga is the yoga of meditation. As the Yoga Sutras describe and as Mr Iyengar identifies in the quote I gave earlier, asana operates as a step in the clarification of the practitioner’s mind. With a clear ethical conscience, with a stable, comfortable body, with strong breath awareness and a clear, directed mind, the practitioner of Raja Yoga is able to achieve a state of freedom of their soul/spirit/Atman/Purusha from the suffering of everyday life.

As I have said, I have some taste of this and I regularly receive comments from those who practice with us here at Apollo Power Yoga that their asana practice is a gateway to a mental state of calmness and presence that balances the stress and concerns of the rest of their lives.

The path you choose is varied but yoga offers the way to the way. Pull on the chain at any link and keep pulling and eventually you will have the whole chain.

Asana Spotlight:

Pincha mayurasana (feathered peacock) is a forearm balance. It has some additional stability relative to headstand (because your forearms are at the floor giving a foundation akin to classical headstand) but stability is also compromised somewhat because the capacity to adjust your position over your base (wobble room) is limited to the length of your upper arms as

opposed to the full length of your arms in handstand.

- Begin kneeling on the floor. Set your elbows on the mat in front of you, shoulder width distance apart. Lay your forearms flat to the floor with the palms of your hands on the mat and your fingers wide spread. Your forearms need to be parallel at shoulder width distance.
- There is a powerful tendency as you come up into this pose to have your elbows skew apart further and your forearms to angle inwards towards one another. This causes a loss of power in your arms and is to be resisted. When learning this pose it helps to have a block between your hands with your thumbs pointing towards one another along the near edge of the block and your index fingers pointing forward away from you along the outer edges of the block. The resistance of the block helps keep your arms in good alignment.
- Lift your knees off the floor raising your hips as high as you can manage. If possible walk your feet forward in small steps to bring your hips as close as possible to vertical over your elbows and shoulders. Your head does not rest at the floor in this pose but hovers an inch or two off the mat. Your chin lifts away from your throat and your *dristhi* is at the floor between your arms.
- Press onto the balls of your feet then raise one leg back and up towards the sky. Maintain an internal rotation of that leg. Reach through that foot towards the sky with the intention "Up!"
- Firm inwards at your abdomen, engaging *uddiyana bandha*. It is important that you keep this engagement throughout the pose. If you lose *uddiyana bandha* your low back will tend to collapse into a sway and your legs will pull over behind you.

- Engage the inner thigh of the grounded leg and thrust off the floor. With an internal rotation of that leg reach it up to meet the already raised leg. Keep your inner thighs engaged and your feet reaching powerfully for the sky.



- You may feel your balance shifting through the length of your forearms. Make your hands active at the floor, pressing down and utilising your finger tips to hold your balance.
- Use the serratus muscles that wrap around your side from your shoulder blade to your chest to keep your elbows and upper arms drawing inwards.
- Breathe deeply and powerfully.
- Should you over-balance and start to fall over backwards the fact that your forearms are on the floor limits your capacity to twist and drop safely out of the pose as you would do from a handstand. You may choose to practice this pose close enough to a wall that you can stop your fall by

bringing your feet to the wall behind you. You could then push off the wall with your feet and land back safely where you began the pose. If you have a deep back bend you may be able to allow your back to bend and lower your feet towards the floor behind you, coming into *viparita dhanurasana* (wheel pose on your forearms). The best option is to endeavour to take one leg and then the other (or both together) back towards the front side of your body allowing yourself to come back safely to your starting position.

When you invert your body you receive a powerful rush – significant increased fluid pressure builds in your head, your glands (thyroid, pituitary and pineal) are charged with energy, and you gain a wonderful sense of personal strength bearing your weight on your arms. All of this is present in *pincha mayurasana*. Allow yourself to love these strong sensations. Acquire a familiarity with them and a taste for them over time. As challenging as an inversion may be, it has a chill effect on us – just look at how languid a sloth can be and they are upside down most of the time.

From Baron Baptiste:



The work you do on your mat facilitates your whole life.

Namaste

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2019

