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The Identity of Yoga: Modern Vs. Traditional Yogic Discourse

by

Octavia E. Nasr

Under the Direction of Timothy Michael Barouch, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2022

ABSTRACT

Modern yoga is a multibillion-dollar economy that penetrated many fields, from fitness to healthcare. Yoga's popularity shows its relevance and adaptability. However, scholars found that modern yoga is synonymous with postural yoga. In this thesis, I establish that yoga's identity is rooted in the Eight Limbs of the iconic *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*—postures being one of the limbs constituting yoga's identifiers. Then, I link the yogic postural shift to the truncation of yoga's identifiers in teacher training curricula. I argue that modern yoga schools focus more on postures and downplay the other limbs, especially the first two – ethical restraints and moral observances – cornerstones of all limbs per the Indian luminaries who brought yoga to the US. My cluster analysis of Yoga Alliance's curriculum shows significant obliteration of the limbs in comparison to traditional teachings leading me to offer a prescriptive counter curriculum and practical recommendations to preserve yoga's identity.

INDEX WORDS: Yoga, Ethics, Transhistorical identity, Identification, Rhetorical theory, Kenneth Burke, Cluster, Consubstantial, Terministic screens, Rhetoric, Yoga Alliance

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2022

The Identity of Yoga: Contemporary Vs. Traditional Yogic Discourse

by

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December 2022

DEDICATION

I dedicate my thesis work to all the fantastic people who inspired, taught, and supported me along this physical life journey. My fond gratitude goes to my late loving mother, Najat Nasr, whose words of wisdom echo in my head and whose unending love for learning she instilled in me at a very young age.

I also dedicate this thesis to my yoga teachers and my students. Thank you, Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati (Swami J) and Sadhvi Abha Saraswati (Mataji), for continuing to shower me with your guidance and love. Thank you to all my students who show up to their practice and bring out the best in me; I could not have completed this work without your commitment to yoga and adherence to your practice. Debbie Newmark, thank you for your wholehearted devotion to my teaching and for lovingly proofreading the final manuscript.

I dedicate this work to my loving family. Words are not enough to express my immense love and gratitude for my husband, Ameer Mackhoul, and my daughters, Noor and Aya, for their patience and support during my master's program. Thank you for unconditionally feeding my body, heart, and soul daily. I would not be whole without you three. To my daughter Noor, who was instrumental in my signing up for this master's degree, I am forever grateful to you for believing in me and being my Number 1 cheerleader!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. YS: Yoga Sutras of Patanjali
2. YA: Yoga Alliance
3. RYS: Registered Yoga School with the Yoga Alliance
4. RYT: Registered Yoga Teacher with the Yoga Alliance
5. YTT: Yoga Teacher Training
6. RYS-200: Registered Yoga School that applied to the Yoga Alliance and was approved to teach 200-level initiation RYT-200 Certification.
7. RYT-200: Registered Yoga Teacher who completed 200 hours of training at a Yoga Alliance affiliated RYS-200 based on the Yoga Alliance Curriculum.
8. ERYT-200: Experienced Registered Yoga Teacher who completed 200-hour training at a RYS-200 and has logged on their Yoga Alliance profile page one thousand hours of teaching.
9. RYS-300: Registered Yoga School that applied to the Yoga Alliance and was approved to teach 300-level advanced RYT-300 Certification.
10. RYT-300: Registered Yoga Teacher who completed 300 hours of training at a Yoga Alliance affiliated RYS-300 based on the Yoga Alliance Curriculum.
11. RYS-500: Registered Yoga School that applied to the Yoga Alliance and was approved to teach 500-level advanced RYT-500 Certification. The 500 hours are a combination of the RYT-200 + RYT-300.
12. RYT-500: Registered Yoga Teacher who completed 200 initiation + 300 hours advanced training hours at a Yoga Alliance affiliated RYS-300 based on the Yoga Alliance Curriculum.

PREFACE

I was born in the tiny Mediterranean country of Lebanon, the birthplace of the alphabet, once likened to Paris in sophistication and to Switzerland in inclusivity. The Cedars of Lebanon, prominently featured in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*—the oldest book ever written, continue to adorn Lebanon’s peaks and serve as a witness to the disintegration of almost everything that makes this ancient Phoenician land unique and extraordinary. A civil war raged in Lebanon for fifteen years forcing me to grow up in its mayhem and live through it until I moved to the US in 1990.

My first passion was theater. I studied with the late Luc Vissers, a Belgian Trappist Monk, who visited Lebanon as a missionary and stayed to join the Antonine Maronite Order, where I went to school. Since I was thirteen, I have performed with him in world-renowned plays from Sartre to Shakespeare. I later majored in drama and taught theater in schools. Meantime, the civil war that started when I was nine years old showed no end in sight; and working in the theater was not a viable option. I took a job at the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC)—the first independent TV station in the Middle East—and became a journalist and war correspondent.

In 1990, I spoke about the dangers of war journalism at a CNN conference in Atlanta, Georgia. Ted Turner asked me to work for him, and I accepted. I spent twenty years at CNN in many different positions on and off camera. My theater training came in handy, and so did my languages, curiosity, and determination. In 2005, I found yoga after intense Middle East coverage and was on the verge of a mental breakdown. From the first class I took, I was hooked,

and to this day, I cannot stop learning and growing as a dedicated yoga practitioner and certified teacher.

This thesis is not only the result of two years of research to delve into rhetoric and study Kenneth Burke. It is also the result of seventeen years of yoga studies, twenty years as a practicing journalist, and twenty years before that as a person trying to simply “be” against a backdrop of division and hatred. I am a human whose identity is defined by many opposites and unfulfilled dreams. My identity is a blueprint of mostly uncharted paths that cross and create new possibilities out of strife and obstacles. I am proud of my heritage that produced giants like Kahlil Gibran, Danny Thomas, May Ziadeh, and Amal Alamuddin. I can see tradition and modernity come together. We do not have to choose one way over the other.

When you read my thesis, you will meet the journalist investigating, the scholar searching for the truth, and the yogi leading you to your higher Self. Tradition, modernity, drama, and journalism can co-exist with yoga practice, philosophy, and scholarship. Thanks to Kenneth Burke’s rhetoric, I can show you how some of these concepts intersect to bring people together instead of pushing them further apart.

I have seen strife. I have lived through the ravages of war. I now seek peace!

1 INTRODUCTION

Yoga is a multibillion-dollar economic success story that penetrated many fields, from fitness to healthcare. The fact that yoga remains popular today proves its transcendence of the historical bounds and its adaptability to time and space. However, Modern Yoga scholars found that what is referred to as yoga today is more postural and less mindful. In this thesis, I tell the story of yoga's evolving identity from its mind-body roots as a tool to achieve Self-realization to its contemporary status as a 'class' where people gather to take instruction from a teacher – who was most likely certified by the Yoga Alliance (YA) – in a studio or gym setting, wearing trendy apparel and using specialized tools and props like mats, blocks, and straps. To tell this story, I will base yoga's identity on the 'Eight Limbs' presented in the iconic *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* text — postures being one of the eight limbs that constitute yoga's identifiers. Then, I will link the shift to postures in the US to their systematic emphasis over the other yoga identifiers in yoga teacher training curricula. My analysis will shed light on the role the YA and its affiliated schools play in erasing yoga's historic identity and re-writing it as a postural practice through the yoga teacher training curricula at the foundational 200-hour level. I argue that —because of the YA's regulatory supervision and curriculum requirements— modern yoga schools promote the physical body and its poses while demoting the other limbs, especially the first two – *Yama* and *Niyama* — ethical restraints and moral observances — which the Indian luminaries who brought yoga to the US considered as the cornerstone of all limbs. To test my argument, I will analyze the content of the latest YA's teacher training 200-hour core curriculum (Appendix A) in search of the eight limbs and compare the findings to the content I will index from traditional yoga studies as presented in Swami Vivekananda's book *Raja Yoga* that is based on the eight limbs.

The comparison between the two artifacts will show the transformation of the yogic identity through what modern yoga keeps and rejects from the original text and what reality it reflects in the process. By following Kenneth Burke's Identification Theory, I will analyze the modern rhetors' motives through their text choices compared to the original *Yoga Sutras* (YS) text. As I set out to discover what modern influences contribute to turning yoga postural and how much of yoga's identity is truncated in the process, this thesis will answer two research questions. The first one: Do the Yoga Alliance and its designated schools contribute to the truncation of yoga's historical identity?

I consider that yoga's authentic message is under threat of being curtailed further or even lost forever. However, I do not take a pessimistic position on the subject. Instead, I posit that there is a way to preserve yoga's identity by making the classical text more relevant to, and in synch with, modern living without losing its traditional heart and soul. This leads me to second prescriptive research question: What can modern yoga codifying organizations do rhetorically in their training materials to ensure the longevity of yoga's historical identity?

I will derive the answers from the cluster analysis of Yoga Alliance's initiation core curriculum and then offer a counter-cluster or a motivated vocabulary to revive yoga as I formulate my recommendations at the conclusion of the thesis. Understanding that my mission is a complex one, I present you with a roadmap to my thesis: In the literature review, I will showcase traditional and modern scholars' agreement that the *YS* and their eight limbs are the cornerstones of yoga's identity and the first two—ethical and moral—limbs as its indispensable pillars. In Chapter 3, I will explain the importance of the eight limbs as I analyze the traditional *Raja Yoga* by Swami Vivekananda (Document 1). In Chapter 4, I will conduct the cluster

analysis of the Yoga Alliance's curriculum (Document 2) and compare Document 1 and Document 2, to determine what modern yoga reflects and deflects from the traditional text.

1.1 History

To understand where yoga is today, it is important to be aware of its migration to the west and its arrival in the US as well as postures' rise to prominence within this ancient traditionally meditative practice. I aim to use this historical section to set the stage for my readers by providing the information pertaining to my research regardless of your knowledge level of yoga and its history¹.

In 1893, Indian yoga master Swami Vivekananda visited the United States as part of an Indian delegation to the World's Parliament of Religions. With him, yoga arrived in the US and found fertile ground as a secular practice built on systematic principles for unifying the body and mind toward Self-realization (Feuerstein & Bodian, 1993). The iconic *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (YS) offered a basis for Vivekananda's teachings through the system known as the *Eight Limbs of Yoga*, which Vivekananda called the *Eightfold Path* in his *Raja Yoga* (Vivekananda, 1920). The US reception of yoga rose steadily as more Indian luminaries arrived with their teachings, methods, and lineages, including the author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Paramahansa Yogananda. In the 1920s, B.K.S. Iyengar morphed what he learned from his teacher Tirumalai Krishnamacharya's *Ashtanga*² *Yoga* with his alignment-based postural style, creating the *Iyengar Yoga* method.

Because the US imposed an immigration ban on Indian nationals traveling to the US between 1923 and 1965, the trend shifted to American yoga enthusiasts and serious students

¹For readers who are interested in finding out more about Modern Yoga's history, I refer you to De Michelis (2008) and Singleton (2010).

² Ashtanga means eight limbs in Sanskrit. Ashtanga Yoga was first introduced by Tirumalai Krishnamacharya in the southwestern city of Mysore, India.

going to India and studying with the masters there. These teachers would then return to the US, open studios, and spread the yogic teachings as they received them (Hammond, 2007). Swami Rama of the Himalayas, the author of more than a dozen books on yoga, came to the US in 1969, shortly after the US lifted its immigration ban, and taught science-based practices in meditation, breath control, and Self-realization (Luce & Peper, 1971). Swami Rama captured the medical community's attention "when tests showed he could control his autonomic nervous system functions including heartbeat, pulse, and skin temperature" (Hammond, 2007, para. 20).

With the new openness and ease of travel to the US, another student of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, Pattabhi Jois, arrived in the US in 1975 and introduced the "intensely physical and athletic" *Ashtanga Yoga* style that will end up having its mark on every future yoga practice (YJ, 2007, para.1). It is crucial to remember that the posture-oriented teachings displayed the human body and what it is capable of, from flexibility to power and contortionism, while remaining steeped in the yogic code's core identity as represented in the Eight Limbs of Yoga within Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. Krishnamacharya combined all eight limbs – thus the name Ashtanga Yoga – and he integrated postures as "an integral part of meditation instead of just a step leading toward it" (Pagés-Ruiz, 2007, para. 3).

In the early '80s, yoga caught the attention of western medicine researchers as they demonstrated the power of "these ancient and rather simple adjuncts to conventional treatments" to cause improvement in ischemic heart disease through a consistent regimen of meditation, relaxation, and stretching (Ornish et al., 1983, p. 58). Medical doctors began listing the yogic practices as "stress management techniques" and "bio-behavioral techniques," giving yoga their stamp of approval with these labels (p. 55). In the early '90s, Ashtanga Yoga was popularized further in the US culture by Beryl Bender Birch and Larry Schultz, "two of the earliest

innovators on the American power yoga craze” (Singleton, 2010, p. 176). Ashtanga is a rigorous physical practice based on power and flowing sequences linking one yoga pose to another.

Ashtanga-inspired styles are common in today’s modern studio schedules, such as *Power Yoga*, *Power Flow*, *Vinyasa*, and many other variations and play on these words (Pagés-Ruiz, 2007; Singleton, 2010; YJ, 2007).

With yoga’s popularity and style diversity, a group of American yoga teachers and practitioners recognized the need to standardize yoga’s teaching and certification; they founded the US-based Yoga Alliance in 1999 (Yoga Alliance, 2020). The not-for-profit Yoga Alliance (YA) organization became the only self-styled regulator and registry for yoga schools and teachers; it grew in power and influence in the US and globally. The organization currently boasts 7000 registered schools and 100,000 registered teachers worldwide (Alliance, 2020). Today, the YA’s designation is a stamp of approval for teachers and yoga teacher training schools (Sittek, 2022). Although, technically, anyone can teach yoga anywhere to anyone, the YA organized the yoga scene and regulated the teaching of yoga in a way that makes it indispensable for any new teacher to be recognized and hired. While there are attempts to offer replacements to the YA (Brown, 2013), they remain overwhelming for someone who is just starting on their yoga journey and they refer to the YA as the standard-bearer to be relevant. Here is an example of the language used in this effort: “If your objective in registering with Yoga Alliance has been to prove the legitimacy of you or your organization, [...] you can “legitimize” yourself without a third-party organization simply by promoting your particular background and skills” (Brown, 2013, para. 10). This language is overwhelming at best for someone who just received their first initiation in yoga and has nothing to show for it yet. Whereas a YA designation of RYT-200 will bestow on the fresh graduate an aura of “legitimacy” and exposure

through its registry. I am interested in finding out whether the curriculum the YA imposes on its affiliated schools changes how fresh graduates identify with yoga. I operate on the basis that YA is important and it is here to stay and the way the YA presents yoga will have a major effect on how yoga is perceived in the future. I also believe that the time to make a difference is now, as the YA makes major changes to remain relevant and more efficient. I would invite the YA to also remain more authentic without losing its modern edge as it continues to be of service to yogis in the US and elsewhere in the world.

To understand why the YA plays an important role in the life of yoga teachers and yoga schools, it is essential to acknowledge that without the YA affiliation, teachers and schools would operate without a consistent form of branding and identification. While well-known or “celebrity” teachers with an existing following can function without the YA, the regular teacher and studio need the YA for credence and as a form of identification through its listing. To clarify the point, one should understand how the YA organizes its members: The YA RYT-200 designation denotes an individual—Registered Yoga Teacher—who completed 200 hours of yoga teacher training at a YA-Registered School or RYS-200 (Alliance, 2022b). This initiation training opens the door for individuals to officially teach yoga under the YA guidelines. Registrants pay a fee to receive the designation badge and to have their profile listed in the worldwide registry (Alliance, 2022a). Following the 200-hour initiation training, another (not required for teaching) training and designation of RYT-300 follows, denoting an additional 300 hours accrued by the individual of more in-depth studies, usually in a particular style or with a focused study area or subject matter at a registered school RYS-300 (Alliance, 2021a). After clocking 1,000 teaching hours on their YA profile, an ‘E’ is added to the teacher’s designation to recognize their ‘Experienced’ status. The YA recognizes a teacher who completes both training

levels as RYT-500. The YA fees rise with each level a teacher attains. In total, there are four levels that teachers can reach. The highest certification level with the YA is ERYT-500 (Alliance, 2022c).

From a business perspective, yoga has contributed greatly to local economies in the past two decades. The number of yoga practitioners in the US, estimated at 55 million in 2020, spend an average of \$90 per month between yoga classes, workshops, retreats, and apparel (Andre, 2021; Mackey, 2016). The economic success is a mirror of the practice's popularity. Judging by the number of studios available in many towns and cities and the number of teacher training programs offered, its upward pattern is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. The more success in the yoga business model, the more likely that the pattern of certifying teachers will continue to be important for the continuation of the business profitability. That trend too is likely to continue and even get more frequent, making the teacher training curriculum the only place where yoga's identity can be taught and preserved, or modified and lost forever.

Two names stand out in Modern Yoga scholarship and trace the practice's footprint beyond its philosophy and practice: Elizabeth De Michelis in England and Mark Singleton in the United States. They both have extensive research, mainly drawing the trajectory of yoga from its beginnings in its ancestral eastern home to its current transnational status. They refer to the genesis of Modern Yoga as the period when yoga became synonymous with postures before yoga migrated west (Singleton & Byrne, 2008). Singleton (2010) posits that the shift to postural yoga began in India when even a master teacher and yogi like Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, who was Pattabhi Jois and B.K.S. Iyengar's teacher, and the founder of *Ashtanga Yoga*, was under a mandate to "popularize the yoga practice" (p. 117). Singleton explains that before this "physical culture revivalism," yoga was mainly oral, and its postural concern involved cleansing practices

and meditative postures (p. 117). His view is echoed by other modern scholars like Bharati (2021a) and Feuerstein (2008). Singleton attributes the causation of the postural shift to a “worldwide revival of physical culture” with the popularization of gymnastics and other body-honoring practices (Singleton, 2010, p. 177). Aiming to popularize yoga, Krishnamacharya added *Hatha*³ practices and gymnastics to his teachings and kept the YS’ eight limbs as their base. He named his yoga style *Ashtanga*, meaning eight limbs in Sanskrit. Furthermore, Birch & Singleton (2019) examined a Sanskrit text the authors believe was written in the eighteenth century and housed at Mysore Palace, where Krishnamacharya taught yoga. In the *Hathābhyāsapaddhati* manuscript, the authors discovered “six groups of postures, many of which are unusual or unique among yoga texts” (p. 1). The illustrated postures, the authors found, “appeared to be arranged in sequences intended to be practiced in order” and bore a remarkable resemblance to what Krishnamacharya taught his pupils, including those who traveled west, and taught methods inspired or influenced by his teachings (p.1). Pattabhi Jois and B.K.S. Iyengar are such teachers who trained under Krishnamacharya. Both would later develop their styles, bringing the physical postures to the forefront, giving power (*Ashtanga*) and alignment (*Iyengar*) prominent roles in their teachings without diminishing Krishnamacharya’s influence or the value of the YS and the importance of the eight limbs.

While scholars like Singleton, De Michelis, and their contemporary counterparts highlighted how the “American power craze” played a crucial role in putting the focus on the physical body and postures and how they had the “greatest influence on radically physicalized forms of yoga across the globe,” they stopped short of explaining what is left of yoga’s identity and what was truncated and to what extent (Singleton, 2010, p. 176). What they failed to do is

³ Hatha is a preparatory process for yoga. It consists of postures that aim to cleanse the body’s vital energy for meditation. I recommend Singleton (2019) to read more about it.

look at factors, other than markets, that contribute to yoga becoming postural. Nor did they explore the importance of preserving the YS and their eight limbs, especially the first two — *Yama* (ethical restraints) and *Niyama* (moral observances) — to safeguard the identity of yoga. They left this task to communication scholars to tackle. Modern yoga scholars do, however, warn that the practice has become mainly postural, sounding the alarm that the body-mind message of yoga is under threat of disappearing and making way for more postural practices and less mindfulness (Jain, 2015; Antony, 2018; Bharati, 2021; Singleton & Byrne, 2008; De Michelis, 2008).

Through my research, I intend to explore what modern influences contribute to turning yoga postural and how much of yoga's identity is truncated in the process. My analysis will shed light on the role the YA and its affiliated schools play in serving the popular markets and favoring yoga's postural culture and enabling it to surpass and overshadow the other seven limbs, especially its ethical base. By focusing on postural practices, I hypothesize that modern yoga erodes yoga's original intention by the Indian luminaries who brought yoga to the United States. Through a rhetorical analysis of contemporary yoga terminology from an identification perspective, I will explore what modern yoga selects from the ancient texts and what it deflects. I will probe what constitutes identity in contemporary yoga and compare it to the original identity intended by the yogic masters. By indexing and analyzing the text in two rhetorical artifacts, I hypothesize that the more modern yoga misappropriates the ancient mind-body practice — focusing primarily on its postural aspects and business potential — the more it effaces its original message.

In following Kenneth Burke's identification process, I argue that yoga's message is relevant and necessary in our modern times, that yoga has much more to offer the world than just

postures, and that the ethics of yoga are universal and worth preserving to apply to other disciplines. Given the role of the YA in standardizing yoga studies and its influence in certifying and maintaining a directory of yoga teachers, the organization acts as the self-styled codifier of modern yoga. The more it erases Patanjali and his YS, and the more it turns the attention on itself, the more it becomes the de facto codifier of yoga. Member schools and future teachers do not have a choice but to abide by the code it imposes through a curriculum that holds the key to their certification and legitimacy.

1.2 The *Yoga Sutras* and Modern Scholarship

The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali (YS) is an iconic yoga text comprised of four chapters. It offers a total of 196 aphorisms that Sage Patanjali collected from at least two Indian philosophical texts and codified into threads. *Modern and traditional scholars* consider the 196 aphorisms to be the primary textual and rhetorical authority in contemporary yoga and constitute essential learning for any yoga teacher (Feuerstein & Bodian, 1993; Desikachar, 1995; Devi, 2022; Singleton & Byrne, 2008; Stone, 2008; Adele, 2009). Of the multiple ancient authoritative texts on yoga, the YS survived the test of time. It is one of several conventional texts the YA suggests choosing from towards its 200-hour yoga teacher certification.

Within the sutras lie thirty-one threads that detail the Eight Limbs of yoga which constitute the rite of passage of every yogi. For this thesis, I posit that the *Eight Limbs of Yoga* in the YS represent the pillars of the yogic practices and encompass the totality of the 196 aphorisms. The first two limbs represent a universal code of ethics – *Yama* (restraints) and *Niyama* (observances) – and serve as the basis of the other limbs. As I will establish in the literature review section, in-depth studying of Patanjali’s *Yama* and *Niyama* – a total of sixteen aphorisms – can help negotiate and establish an authentic yoga identity that is true to ancestral

teachings. Yoga teachers, authors, and scholars from ancient times to this day, refer to the *YS* and Patanjali's Eight Limbs as yoga's code, making the text the best representation of authentic yoga teachings. Analyzing how modern yoga reflects those limbs will help answer my research question: Do the Yoga Alliance and its designated schools contribute to the truncation of yoga's identity? If so, what role do they play in turning yoga into a more postural practice and obliterating its other pillars especially its ethical base?

1.3 Definitions: Traditional vs. Contemporary

For this thesis, traditional yoga references what the Indian luminaries brought to the US, represented by Swami Vivekananda's book *Raja Yoga*, in which he detailed the core of his teaching on the eightfold path, directly taken from the *YS*, as the Swami explains in the introduction of his book. By contemporary, I mean everything yoga represents today embodied in the YA and its affiliated businesses and schools, as found on the YA website. As I mentioned in the history section above, postures were more appealing to the populations and were used to lure more people into yogic practices even before they came to the west. The issue here is not why postures are a focal point of attraction; instead, I am examining whether postures are expunging the other limbs because of specific requirements by the modern codifiers of yoga.

One vocal critic of modern yoga practices has been Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati. A yoga scholar and teacher with hundreds of students who learn with him, cite him, and use his teaching methods worldwide, he paints a grim picture of today's yoga. In his essay on the subject, he states:

The starting point of most [modern] classes, books, magazines, articles, websites, and blogs on Yoga are so different from traditional Yoga of the ancient sages that it can be fairly called 'Not Yoga'. The wave of Not Yoga seems to morph further and further away from Yoga. (Bharati, 2021, para. 2)

Bharati lists several differing elements between modern and traditional yoga, and he admits that there does not exist “one, precisely agreed upon yoga,” but he stresses the role of the teacher-student relationship by explaining that the “[p]rinciples of yoga are usually communicated in sutra style, where brief outlines are expanded upon orally” (para. 3). He also stresses that, historically yoga was understood and taught as a “complete system, of which the postures are a small, though quite useful part” (para. 5). Bharati calls the twisting of yoga’s identity by modern forces a “lie” that has become too big to debunk: “We now have millions of people who totally believe in the Big Lie that Yoga is a gymnastic, exercise or physical fitness program” (para. 9). Bharati says that now he gets attacked for “revealing or highlighting the true nature of Yoga” (para. 9). Bharati says that “[t]he word ‘yoga’ has become a homonym,” with a traditional understanding that it is the union of the individual self with the universal Self, and a modern understanding that is a combination of several fitness workouts (para. 10). Foxen (2020) agrees. She refers to the mix of Indian and western postural styles in modern yoga as “the place where two trees, each with their own ancient root system, have entwined so intimately that they have become one” (p. 5). She suggests that some of the North American and European practices should not even be called “yoga” (p.7). For Bharati (2021), the mixture is confusing and misleading. He blames organizations like the YA for this situation. He advises his readers to stay away from “many so-called yoga teachers and yoga teacher training schools” (para. 30). Over the years, the YA made changes to its approach and devised ways to improve its standards (Alliance, 2019). I am a member of the YA at the highest designation of ERYT-500 — Experienced Registered Yoga Teacher who completed 500 hours of teacher training. I have completed more than that amount of training in my eighteen years of dedicated practice in various styles and modalities, some in the US and others in India. The point I am making here is that I am

comfortable in traditional and modern yoga settings. I can understand both sides, and, in many ways, I bridge the two sides in my teaching approach. I can tell you anecdotally that several other teachers individually bring the two sides together, but they work alone towards that goal, not in unison. There is a way to be authentic to yoga's traditional and historic teaching while being modern and up to date with the times. This thesis aims to investigate where things stand today, provide an honest assessment of the yoga status in the US, and provide recommendations to preserve what can be salvaged from the traditional system. Someone might claim that the original text is not important to teaching yoga and that the limbs can be taught outside of the YS. In a world where everyone is entitled to their opinion, I cannot argue with such claim; instead, I will just ask, "Why reinvent the wheel?" If we have a yogic code that is thousands of years old and has been translated, studied, and analyzed over the centuries and has survived the test of time, what is the point of truncating or ignoring it? The system has a recognizable name, a reputation, an identity, and a proven record. Deflecting away from such code, can only mean uprooting yoga or dismembering it. What could possibly be the benefit of such actions? Why not embrace the code instead and make it work for our various endeavors?

1.4 Scope

I will examine two rhetorical sources representative of the traditional and modern teaching modalities. The classic text represented by Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* book will serve as the base or the backdrop to compare the contemporary artifact against and determine what is kept of the traditional teaching modality and whether the limbs are truncated and how. The second artifact is the enhanced YA core curriculum (Figure 4.2) that details what YA-registered teacher training schools must use as a guide to initiate future yoga teachers. I will analyze how the YA evaluates the eight limbs through its level of acknowledgment of the YS

and the weight it places on the eight limbs in its curriculum. The YA's positionality on the eight limbs translates into guidelines the YA-affiliated schools follow, how much of the eight limbs future yoga teachers are exposed to, and to what degree each limb is the focus of those studies will illuminate my path to answering the research question. This thesis will focus on the 200-hour level teacher training as it is the foundational learning for any future yoga teacher to be inducted into the YA registry and designation. Since examining every school's manual is impossible, and since each every school must submit its own curriculum for approval by the YA to earn the RYS 200 designation I chose the YA guidelines in its published core curriculum because it is the base that all RYS 200 curricula are built around it and because it is the source from which future yoga teachers will be initiated with, or the code they will follow and abide by to be admitted into the RYT 200 after graduation. The curriculum plays several roles for schools, teachers, and critics, that makes it a potently representative artifact for me to examine. Additionally, it provides enough details that can lead me to its rhetors' motive.

1.4.1 Raja Yoga

As the Indian luminary most cited as the first to bring yoga to the mainstream, Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of the Eight Limbs of Yoga represents the traditional text (Sil, 2007). In the early twentieth century, Swami Vivekananda explained how to become a yogi to westerners who attended his lectures eager to learn about Eastern philosophies. For this purpose, Vivekananda used the eight limbs of yoga and presented them as practices people must adhere to on the path toward enlightenment. In *Raja Yoga*, Vivekananda offers his interpretation of Patanjali's *YS* as a science that practitioners can experiment with until they become established. He highlights the role of the two limbs as "moral trainings" without which "as a basis no practice of Yoga will succeed" (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 17). Vivekananda further explains that yogis will

begin to reap its benefits as the practice of the eight limbs becomes established, but he warns that, without the first two limbs, the practice “will never bear fruit” (p. 17). With these “first steps,” Vivekananda offers the eightfold path as a tool to reach the masses and spread the yogic message in the West.

1.4.2 Yoga Alliance 2022 Enhanced Curriculum

To regulate yoga teaching in the US, the YA was born out of “a need for national standards” (Yoga Alliance, 2020). In the past two decades, it has become an international organization with 7000 registered yoga schools (RYS 200 & 300 Hours) and 100,000 registered yoga teachers (RYT 200 & 500 Hours). The nonprofit organization requires and offers continued education classes. It provides its members with perks such as discounts on products, apparel, and services such as liability insurance. It is a self-styled certifier and registrant of teachers and schools, and its designation is a stamp of approval recognized on all continents from the US to India (Sittek, 2022). The YA’s guidelines serve as a reliable measurement of the role and significance of the eight limbs in the definition of contemporary yoga. They also help situate the yogic practice within its appropriate modern framework.

1.5 Kenneth Burke, Identification Theory, and Yoga

In explaining “identification” and “consubstantiality,” Burke could very well be defining yoga. In the following statement, consider “A” to be the individual self and “B” to be the universal Self. Also, think of yoga as the union of both, or yoga as the self, identifying itself with the universe around it and everything being pure consciousness.

In being identified with B, A is “substantially one” with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another. (Burke, 1969, p. 21)

By following Burke's identification theory and applying it to yoga, the "substance" in this case is the identity exemplified in Patanjali's aphorisms and summarized in the eight limbs, of which the first two – ethical abstinences and moral observances – are the cornerstone (Krishnamacharya et al., 2016; Vivekananda, 2022). According to Burke (1969), the related rhetoric to substance "selects its nearest equivalent in the areas of persuasion and dissuasion, communication and polemic" (p. 21). To preserve this identity, Burke proposes building symbolic motives on "identity as titular or ancestral term, the 'first' to which all other terms could be reduced and from which they could then be derived or generated, as from a common spirit" (p. 21). In the context of this thesis, I will identify the 'first' *Yama* and *Niyama* terms as presented in Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* and compare them to the language that modern yoga teachers use to determine how much is reflected, deflected, or modified of the 'ancestral' or original discourse. Here is an example that Burke (1969) offers that describes precisely what the first *Yama* (non-killing) represents: "The killing of something is the changing of it, and the statement of the thing's nature before and after the change is an identifying of it" (p. 20). Using Burke's reasoning helps us understand that the identity of an object – yoga in our case – goes beyond the language and the words to their meaning and spirit from their origin by the initial encoders and their transformation and evolution before their arrival to us. Burke describes it as "transcending" the narrowest implications of words and their imagery to encompass their true meaning in the big picture of life. What Burke suggests and what I am referring to here is to transcend the narrow meaning of individual words and focus on the big picture of what words and concepts afford. Just as there is no one yoga, there is no one 'true meaning' for words. Each rhetor can understand the word through their lens and give it their own meaning. In this case, focusing just on words will cause division and strife. But, by looking at the big picture, we can

achieve consubstantiality, identification, and agreement. By analyzing the selected rhetorical artifacts, I aim to measure how much of the modern rhetoric leads the yoga practitioners, mainly teachers, “through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard, the Give and Take, the wavering line of pressure and counterpressure, the Logomachy, the onus of ownership, the Wars of Nerves” (Burke, 1969, p. 23).

I will apply Kenneth Burke’s Identification Theory to investigate what traditional and contemporary yoga communicate and to whom. By linking persuasion to identification, Burke revolutionized how we understand rhetoric and gave us tools to utilize rhetoric with maximum efficiency in our life. Traditionally, rhetoric meant persuasion. Burke focuses on identification as a path to persuasion or as he puts it, as “an accessory to the standard lore” (Burke, 1969, p. xiv).

In his *Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke introduces his Identification Theory as a means to resolve conflict when “members of a group promote social cohesion by acting rhetorically upon themselves and one another” (p. xiv). Furthermore, Burke explains that rhetoric directly results from divisions among people who have many things in common but are experiencing disagreement over at least one issue. He also sees unification through the identification process when people focus more on what they have in common versus what divides them. He writes, “If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (p. 22). In other words, rhetoric is fundamentally the path to reconciliation when identities are in crisis. This unification role will be useful to my prescriptive research question when I will propose a peaceful reconciliation between traditional and contemporary —mindful and postural— to restore yoga’s postural versus mindful identity crisis.

1.6 Methodological Approach

By introducing his identification theory, Burke widened rhetorical studies from persuasion's narrow perspective to identification, where anything and everything (texts, media, objects) can serve as rhetoric and can be analyzed to understand how they influence and shape our identities and attitudes. With the understanding that rhetorical analysis "helpfully conveys an orientation to rhetorical inquiry that analyzes and seeks to explain real-world phenomena" (Ray, 2016, pp 44-45), I chose it as my method of inquiry into the past and present yoga discourse. It will also serve as criticism to explore what modern yoga texts keep, modify, or reject from the traditional text. Leff (1986) advises that "[w]e must pay heed to the human voice that resonates in all rhetorical discourse" (p. 388). In other words, texts speak to us in the voice, personality, and motive of their authors. We then understand the text through our experiences and reasons, or what Kenneth Burke calls "Terministic Screens" (Burke, 1966, p. 44).

According to Burke (1941), "the work of every writer contains a set of implicit equations." He refers to these equations as "associational clusters." He suggests that by analyzing the work, we can find "what goes with what" in the clusters (p. 20). When I survey the YA curriculum requirement, I will look for the fidelity level to the eight limbs or reflection of the original understanding and interpretation of the aphorisms. I was open to several possibilities that Burke spoke of, such as detecting a selection process involving picking and choosing what to cover and how to "direct the attention" to interpret traditional concepts in one way or deflect the readers' attention away from the original ideas (Burke, 1966, pp. 44-46). No matter what I find, I know it will lead me to what the rhetor intended to keep, modify, or completely cut off from the original text. Burke likens this analysis to having one dream and different therapists interpreting it. In this case, the therapists' backgrounds, lineages, motives, filters, and modes of interpretation

will affect the outcome, whether the choice of words was explicit or implicit and “whether choice of terms was deliberate or spontaneous” (p. 47), and the results will lead me to the rhetor’s intention or motive.

I employed various techniques to understand how the YA as a rhetor “made sense and articulated their understanding” of the text (Gulbrandsen, 2012, p. 90). To arrive at my conclusion, I followed a mixed-method approach:

- a. I conducted a word cloud and content analysis of the eight limbs in the traditional iteration of the YS as laid out in Vivekananda’s *Raja Yoga*. By doing so, I identified what differentiates modern yoga from the historical perspective.
- b. Secondly, I conducted a word cloud and followed it with a cluster analysis of the YA enhanced curriculum for the 200-hour teacher training program posted on the YA website. Because the curriculum document offers “the rhetorical grounding” for the YA (Gulbrandsen, 2012, p. 91), I sought to investigate the YA’s commitment to the YS and its eight limbs to determine whether postures get more attention than the other limbs. To determine the value and focus the YA places on the YS, especially the eight limbs, I drew a relational map between the curriculum’s words to find out what the text deflects the attention from and what it directs the attention to from the traditional eight limbs and sub limbs. The answers led me to the rhetors’ motives, just as Burke prescribed. I analyzed each key term and “the ways that term was figured as a cultural principle by examining the kinds of acts and situations that clustered with the term” (Gulbrandsen, 2012, p. 92). Following Burke’s “what-goes-with-what and what-follows-what” formula, I determined what the YA kept from the traditional language and what it discarded or truncated (Burke, 1969, p. 44). Burke (1969) detailed how to arrive at such a conclusion:

If the expressions surviving from a given past era were sufficiently ample, we could eventually extract from these themselves all the meanings that were known but concealed, and the meanings that were too obvious to be mentioned. (Even the wholly unperceived meanings might be detected by studying what-goes-with-what and what-follows-what in the images and ideas overtly expressed.) But the expression of past eras survives in fragments, and often without explicit reference to the situations in which it arose. (p. 111)

This detailed analysis was also helpful in examining what contemporary elements the YA emphasizes outside of the YS.

- c. Thirdly, I compared the results to identify the YA's motives through "Terministic Screens" (Burke, 1966, p. 44). Terministic screens are filters through which rhetors see reality. In the YA's case, the filter it applied to the original content resulted in the current document. Because the document represents the roadmap to the RYT-200 certification, it will lead me to the mindset of its rhetor and their attitude towards what they think is important for yoga teachers' first initiation into yoga, through elements in the document and those missing from it. While each tool will serve a different purpose, together they will give me a 360 view of where the YA stands vis-à-vis the traditional teachings. A view that will get me as close as possible to a motive.

Burke (1953) utilizes an interesting analogy that applies to words' relationship in a cluster analysis. He says, "Words are like planets, each with its gravitational pull" (p. 91). My role in this rhetorical analysis is to find out the key "planets" and discover what words, themes, or concepts they pull or repulse.

2 LITTERATURE REVIEW

Language has always been indispensable in preserving the ancient past and its traditions as civilizations evolve (Lasswell & Leites, 1965; Hall & du Gay, 1996). The words one chooses and how one weaves them together impact the words' outcome and effect on audiences. Greeks treated language "as an instrument of truth, as means of artistic expression, and a tool of persuasion" (Lasswell & Leites, 1965, p.3). Similarly, Burke (1966) describes how people interact with the world around them through "terministic screens" or filters through which they select, reflect, and deflect reality differently and "direct the attention" to what they choose in the moment (p. 44-46). Ancient texts translated from Vedic and Sanskrit languages introduced yoga to the world. Masters taught their pupils the science and philosophy of yoga in the oral tradition individually or in small groups through lectures, conversations, call and response, and direct experience (Feuerstein, 2008). *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* is an iconic text in which Sage Patanjali codified yoga's wisdom in a suture format or threads. Believed to combine at least two Indian philosophies, the YS came to the West through Orientalism as a critical stimulation of European philosophy (Jain, 2015). Later, Indian nationalists reclaimed the text and used it as modern Hinduism's base (Singleton, 2010). This historical trajectory from India to the West back to India and the text's contemporary relevance begs an investigation into what modern yoga rejected, kept, or modified from the early YS.

A series of 196 aphorisms or threads distributed among four chapters constitute the YS. Feuerstein (1998) describes these aphorisms as short notes filled with meaning as if directed at someone with deep knowledge of the material. He acknowledges their importance as a link between classical and modern yoga.

Often taken as the quintessential expression of "Classical Yoga," the YS has come to symbolize, among other things, the ancient authenticity of modern aspirations and the

fidelity of contemporary practices to the “yoga tradition,” in spite of the often-radical divergences between text and praxis. (Singleton & Byrne, 2008, p. 77)

In the first YS thread, Patanjali exclaims that “now” the practice of yoga begins, meaning any moment a practitioner is ready or that every moment or every “now” is a yogic practice. He then defines yoga as the stilling of the modifications of the mind. Modern yoga students and teachers attempt to understand Patanjali’s rhetoric as it relates to their lives. Because direct experience is key to learning in yoga, and because the text offers the code to direct experience, identification with the text and its messages is crucial. The *Eight Limbs of Yoga* make up thirty-six of the total aphorisms set, but they serve as the rites of passage for any serious yogi (Singleton, 2010). Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, considered to be “the father” and “inventor of modern yoga” (Shaw, 2011, para. 7; Pagés-Ruiz, 2007, para.1), regarded the YS as a yogi’s identifier. He expressed in no uncertain terms that it is incumbent upon every serious yogi to study the Eight Limbs of Yoga with a competent teacher. He stated that one could not become a yogi by only practicing postures (Krishnamacharya et al., 2016). It is, therefore, Krishnamacharya’s theory that the heart of yoga is in the YS, and the heart of the Sutras is in the Eight Limbs.

Furthermore, the first two limbs (*Yama* and *Niyama*) are the basis upon which yoga is built since they are — according to traditional and contemporary scholars — prerequisites to the other limbs. For Vivekananda (1920), the ethical tenets are indispensable to a yoga practice because they constitute “moral trainings” and without them as the base, “no practice of *Yoga* will succeed” (p. 17). He explains that once the five restraints (*Yama*) and five observances (*Niyama*) are understood and practiced, one can be ready to work on the other limbs; namely, body alignment, life-force control, withdrawal of the senses, focus, meditation, and Self-realization.

Because of their foundational importance and their universal utility, I will emphasize the *Yama* and *Niyama* — the ethics and morals that a yogi exemplifies — in my research.

Patanjali defined yoga as the stilling of the mind’s fluctuations. While this definition sounds simple, Patanjali proposes an entire system and almost 200 YS verses to explain it. The Patanjali code that yogis have followed since ancient times to achieve the required mind stillness for Self-realization introduces rhetoric high on symbolic words such as mind, memory, concentration, meditation, identity, and freedom (Desikachar, 1995). Scholars who focused on the evolution and prominence of Modern Yoga in the West found that it has become primarily linked to physical poses known as asanas⁴ (De Michelis, 2008; Singleton, 2010). Furthermore, the Yoga Alliance (YA) —the largest regulator of yoga in the US— says, “yoga is asana [posture] and also activism, yoga is about a quiet internal journey and a growing powerful outward voice. Yoga is action, curiosity, empathy” (Alliance, 2021c).

Feuerstein & Bodian (1993) discussed the history and spread of yoga in the United States and predicted that the yogic tradition had excellent prospects for growth in Western society. Their prophecy could not be more valid today, given the popularity of yoga, especially in the wake of digital innovations and yogis adapting to technological changes and help yoga adapt and thrive. However, according to Singleton (2010), modern contemporary yoga is a significant departure from the ancient texts’ model. He says a sign of yoga’s shift to postures and its current influence is that “postural yoga classes can be found in great numbers in virtually every city in the Western world” (p. 3). The human body is an essential aspect of yoga that endured shifts although Vivekananda taught Patanjali’s YS without much emphasis on the physical body (Jain, 2014). His exploration of the body challenged Americans to see it as “perfect” precisely as it is

⁴ *Asana* is the third of the Eight Limbs of Yoga. What scholars found is that yoga as practiced in modern times is reduced to this one limb, therefore taking it out of its Yoga Sutra context and changing its significance.

(Syman 2010, p. 55). This revolutionary view of the body shocked Americans as it exposed long-held misconceptions that “affect the way we relate to our body and to other beings” (Feuerstein & Bodian, 1993, p. 18).

As we examine the shift to postures, we cannot discount the representation of yoga in popular media outlets and how they portray yoga in their advertisements (Bhalla et al., 2022). A sign of yoga’s modern mediation through the body is what Markula (2014) discovered through his analysis of *Yoga Magazine’s* covers, that postural yoga has “Americanized, feminized, and commercialized (yoga) into a Western fitness practice” (p. 143). In other words, the media messages have contributed to the emphasis not only on postures but also on what a yogic body should look like or in what way it should behave or what it should wear. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that, just as yoga influences various aspects of people’s lives, there are many influences that contribute to the modern focus on postures in yoga. Between magazine covers and market forces that pull the attention to the physical body and its needs, there is the pedagogical area that I will focus on in my research with the full understanding that it is not the only contributor to the phenomenon of postural yoga.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Swami Rama of the Himalayan Masters introduced yoga as a science (Luce & Peper, 1971; Hammond, 2007; Bharati, 2021a). He also taught classical yoga through several Indian scriptures and the complete YS aphorisms. Swami Rama linked yoga to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy (Rama, 1985). He introduced the study of the subtle body and Yoga Nidra (conscious sleep) as a way to reach the causal body or subtle consciousness through meditation (Rama, 1992). His teachings evolved and continue to serve as rituals leading to healing through deep rest (Stanley, 2021). Existing scholarship has not given much attention to Swami Rama, even though he cultivated a lineage of his direct students. They

continue to investigate, explore, and advance a more profound understanding of the ancient texts, especially the YS. My interest in Swami Rama, in addition to his hundreds of hours of videotaped lectures, extensive writings, and all-encompassing teachings, stems from his approach to yoga as a science (Rama, 1985).

De Michelis (2008) highlighted the role and importance of the YS as the cornerstone of Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*, traced Patanjali's relationship to western esotericism and provided a state of contemporary yoga from the YS' perspective:

While the Yoga Sūtras are a highly sophisticated intellectual compendium providing a synthetic and semantically layered overview of all main types of yoga, within the conceptual universe of Modern Yoga the Sūtras find themselves demoted to representing only a very limited range of (usually occultized) hatha yogic practices. (pp. 179-180)

While De Michelis acknowledged the power of postures in the modern expression of yoga, she did not investigate whether there is a way to reverse the trend and salvage yoga's identifiers from the possible doom she prophesied. Foxen (2020) subscribes to the notion that what people practice at health clubs and gyms bears no resemblance to traditional yoga and should not even be called yoga. What she means is that what is being practiced at health clubs looks more like aerobics or other gym-related activities. Contrast that with what yoga encompasses historically from focus-inducing practices such as synching breath, body, and mind, to balancing postures, which in turn lead to concentration that leads to meditation. The historic yoga studies emphasize the combination of all those components to illuminate the path to Self-realization. Foxen (2020) admits, however, that calling it something else is not "realistic in a practical sense;" she then builds on the reality that modern yoga has become postural and theorizes that "modern Western yoga—different as it may be in its form and originating cultural

assumptions—has been naturalized as one form among the many that now fall under the rubric of transnational yoga” (p. 7).

In her foundational book, De Michelis (2008) sounds the alarm that yoga will become only postural unless humanities scholars enhance the research by plotting out in detail “the differences between modern and classical manifestations of yoga” (De Michelis, 2008, p. 7). Additionally, Singleton (2010) argues that the identifiers of yoga are in the scriptures and that the less contemporary yoga emphasizes this mindful identity, the more it gravitates towards a posture-focused practice. Moreover, as I discussed earlier, Singleton traces the history of postural techniques and explains that prominent Indian teachers borrowed the postures from gymnastics as early as the nineteenth century to make yoga more appealing to the masses. Thus, he traces the history of how the power-based style known as *Ashtanga Yoga* and the alignment-based *Iyengar Yoga* came to exist even before yoga came to the west. Still, authors and teachers like Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati, Tracee Stanley, Deborah Adele, Nischala Joy Devi, and Michael Stone, among others, continue their work in synch with the traditional teachings, with minimal postural practices and independently from the YA.

Such authors push through the thick resistance wall to keep the subtle techniques alive and thriving (Devi, 2022). “Here, yoga still means the union of the individual self with the universal Self” writes Bharati, 2021 (para. 1). While his definition can serve as a universal yogic identification, it is not clear how many current yoga teachers understand such truth well enough. Without such knowledge, yoga teachers can offer purely postural classes devoid of yoga’s original message. Speaking of what yoga teachers learn as they are initiated, certified, and credentialed, that is an area of study that scholars have not examined yet, especially the role the YA plays in this process. Because the YA controls the curriculum that yoga schools follow to

initiate and certify teachers, and because teachers receive their credentials based on the curriculum they study, and since teaching is the way to transmit the yogic practice, the YA is by default the custodian of modern yoga in the US, and its curriculum is key to what ends up being transmitted or not. So far, scholars did not look at the YA guidelines for the RYT-200 as an initiation training and the RYS-200 teaching manuals to analyze the truncation of the limbs, its extent, and the damage it inflicts on yoga's original message and identity.

In these modern times, when the interest in yoga is high, we have an important opportunity to fill a significant knowledge gap by providing comprehensive research comparing the contemporary yoga language with the traditional rhetoric passed down from the Indian yoga masters who facilitated yoga's journey to the west. Yoga contains within its teachings a communicative and empowering rhetoric to motivate behavior. To tap into this power, one must understand first which yoga we are talking about, the yogic language that informs future yoga teachers, and the messages modern yoga communicates.

I seek to fill this critical piece of the puzzle through my thesis to advance current research and call to preserve the yogic identity. As De Michelis (2008) highlights the urgency of humanities' research into yoga's language to create a solid foundation for Modern Yoga, she acknowledges the difficulty of such a task as it "requires knowledge – mainly textual and historical – of both ancient and modern/contemporary aspects of yogic disciplines and their respective social contexts, plus the will (and patience) to compare them and contrast them in systematic fashion" (p. 7).

I feel ideally situated to bridge this gap as I have studied the yogic tradition for two decades. One of my teachers, Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati "Swami J," is the direct student of Swami Rama (Bharati, 2014); he has been offering traditional yoga teaching for decades through

his website, in-person, and educational sites such as Udemy (Bharati, 2022b). As the founder of the Abhyasa Ashram, School of Self-Awareness in the Himalayan Meditation Tradition, his teaching preceded the YA's establishment in 1999, and his online meetings with students from around the globe and live streams took place long before Zoom became a household name (Bharati, 2022b). He has also written many essays and given lectures criticizing modern yoga practices for straying from the traditional yogic path (Bharati, 2021).

When studying the language of yoga, scholars agree that there exist many omissions and new interpretations in contemporary usage of the terms (Feuerstein, 2008; Jain, 2015; Desikachar, 1995). Perhaps the best way to classify the modifications and shifts from the past is to ask, what does the YA curriculum reflect, deflect, or select in its mode of instructions? Burke (1966) puts it this way: "Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology, it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality" (p. 45). That is why, I will examine how yoga's contemporary power and influence circles treat the original text. I will then investigate what remains of the authentic discourse as presented by Patanjali, the codifier of yoga, and presented in Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*. If the YS represent the heart of the yogic message, and the Eight Limbs of Yoga are the heart of the YS, then the first two limbs are the portal to a coherent practice. Therefore, I hypothesize that indexing the Eight Limbs as codified by Patanjali and comparing the amount of rhetoric communicating the central message of yoga between traditional and contemporary sources will lead me to a more nuanced view of modern yoga's identity and how it reflects reality. Although there is one language source for yoga, I aim to investigate how that language became diluted over the years and how it is vital to redirect it to ensure that yoga continues to thrive and be prosperous while being authentic.

We have a gap in research that I am trying to fill because it takes tedious work to break the language down to its core. Scholars have taken many positions on this topic. Some complain that postural yoga has taken over, others focus their research on postural yoga because they cannot change how things are, and there are those who ignore the problem and carry on with teachings that align with their principles regardless of the YA's requirements. I come from the perspective that all is not lost yet, and if I can answer the thesis' research questions scientifically and logically, there is a chance that we can turn the tide around and save yoga's historic identity for all who care to save it.

3 RAJA YOGA OR THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Patanjali presented his *YS* or threads as a code leading to the immense tapestry of yoga's identity, and Swami Vivekananda understood the value of this entire code, but he built his brand of Raja Yoga on Patanjali's eightfold path alone. That is why Vivekananda (1920) opens with a chapter entitled "The First Steps," in which the author declares, "Raja Yoga is divided into eight steps" and goes on to list Patanjali's eight limbs (p. 17). The literature review showed us how scholars view the eight limbs of yoga as the base for yoga's identity, and how the ethical code is its indispensable pillars. In this chapter, I will introduce you to each of the eight limbs of yoga including the ten tenets that make up the ethical code, through a thematic analysis of the relative sutras in Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*. The importance of this chapter is that it brings the limbs to life like characters in a novel. It shows the relationship they have to one another and why, together, they lead to Self-realization according to Patanjali, the codifier of yoga, and as understood and explained by Vivekananda as the first *YS* text to introduce yoga in the US. You will come to see the limbs in a more comprehensive, interactional, and interconnected way. This personification of yoga's limbs, its identity, and the ethical code, its nucleus, will provide the foundation that later, in Chapter 4, I will compare the cluster analysis to and find out what the *YA* requires in its initiation yoga teacher training, and how its curriculum reflects and deflects of the classic text.

3.1 Thematic Analysis of Patanjali's Eight Limbs in Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*

Vivekananda dedicates an entire chapter to the first two limbs, explaining that they are the cornerstone of the whole yogic system, and without them, the other limbs are ineffective. The brilliance of this text is that it shows how Vivekananda links all the sutras back to the eightfold

path. For example, he explains the importance of the third limb, *Pranayama* – life force control – to purify the mind and focus it on the higher goal of Self-realization, thus, threading several rungs together, leading to one practice and one goal. He stresses to his students the absolute necessity of training: “You may sit down and listen to me by the hour every day, but if you do not practice, you will not get one step further” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 20). He also explains that through the *Yama*, one can purify the mind and the chatter that overwhelms it. He gives examples of how “non-injuring anybody, truthfulness, non-covetousness, chastity, not receiving anything from another” keeps the mind quiet and free of worry and suffering (pp. 86-87). For Vivekananda (1920), the ethical tenets are essential to a yoga practice. Once the ten restraints (*Yama*) and observances (*Niyama*) are understood and practiced, one can be ready to work on body alignment, life-force control, withdrawal of the senses, focus, meditation, and Self-realization. Following his presentation of Raja Yoga as an eight-limbed practice, Vivekananda offers his interpretation of “Patanjali’s Yoga Aphorism” (pp. 97-223).

In the YS, one aphorism leads to another. The aphorism flow gets the reader/practitioner more profoundly into the practice and understanding of what yoga is, how to practice it, the obstacles to expect along the way, and how to overcome them. In other words, the aphorisms cannot be examined as complete in and by themselves. Instead, they all play a role in the big picture and connect back to the eight limbs. In many ways, the sutras are derivatives of one another; thus, their presentation is one large thread made from individual sutures or sutras. Every sutra is derived from the one that precedes it and leads to the one that follows. From a rhetorical perspective, Burke (1964) explains that the problem is that derivation “involves a close step-by-step analysis of the particular text, with the attempt to show how the various elements in the work require one another in the course of shaping and guiding and exploiting the expectations of

the reader” (p. 192). To understand the sutras, one requires a comprehensive analysis of the linkages of every sutra to the other to understand the complete message or yogic code that Patanjali presented to the world. A knowledgeable teacher can play this role until the student has experimented and explored the text and embodied it in their life. Patanjali organized the sutras into four books that go from easiest to most complex: Defining and explaining yoga (51 aphorisms), yoga practices (55 aphorisms), towards higher consciousness (56 aphorisms), and achieving freedom (34 aphorisms).

Thirty-one of the 196 sutras concern the eight limbs of yoga and reside in the second chapter and the beginning of the third. However, one can argue that every sutra in all four chapters refers directly or indirectly to the eight limbs and leads to the meaning of yoga, union, and its aim of liberation or freedom.

The eight limbs are *Yama* (Ethical Restraints), *Niyama* (Moral Observations), *Asana* (Posture), *Pranayama* (Vital Energy Regulation), *Pratyahara* (Inwardly Withdrawing the Senses), *Dharana* (Concentration), *Dhyana* (Meditation), and *Samadhi* (State of Bliss or Liberation).

3.2 Yoga Ethics: moral code, discipline, and observances

“The *Yamas* & *Niyamas* are foundational to all yogic thought” (Adele, 2009, p. 15). The first two limbs of the Eightfold Path to yoga serve as the ethical tenets or restraints and observances. They have no ties to any specific time or geography. They are secular and free of dogma and controversial thought, therefore appropriate to incorporate with an existing religion or belief system and into nonreligious vocations. Because these two limbs are universal in their appeal, understanding, and practice, and because Swami Vivekananda and others treated them as prerequisites to any yogic practice, I will focus on them as representatives of yoga’s identity for

this thesis' purpose. By focusing on the ethical sub-limbs, this thesis will serve two purposes: First, it will provide much-needed research to highlight yoga's identifiers and analyze what remains of them in modern yoga and what can still be reclaimed and restored. Secondly, it will highlight the yogic moral code that can inform future research that aims to apply yoga's ethics to other disciplines. My intention from this overview is to expose how these rungs are interconnected and how valuable they are to our life in general, not just to yoga. I believe that the eight tenets of yoga provide an inclusive identity that can bring people from all walks of life together despite their differences. Within yoga's moral values, we find unique identifiers that are not available in postures but are embedded in the language and depth of individual practices. Yoga's universality made it popular, which Vivekananda referred to as he emphasized the first two limbs before tackling other limbs in his *Raja Yoga* teachings.

3.3 The First Limb – *Yama* or Ethical Restraints

The word *yama* in Sanskrit means 'abstinence' or 'restraint.' In other words, these are the things to refrain from doing. Think of the *Yama* as a yogi's moral code towards society or the don'ts. What is interesting about yoga and why studying under a competent teacher, as Krishnamacharya et al. (2016) advise, is that each of those elements must be taken under advisement and explained in context instead of the literal meaning, which is absolute and limiting. In this section, I will explain the overarching significance of each sub-limb to set the stage for a detailed comparative textual analysis in the next chapter.

3.3.1 *Ahimsa or non-harming*

Ahimsa is the founding pillar of yoga and the most mentioned and analyzed yogic ethical quality, particularly around veganism and vegetarianism (Dylan & Muncaster, 2021). While the general meaning is easy to understand, yoga approaches the word from a deeper angle, such as

harming others and the self through actions, speech, attitude, or even thought. Vivekananda (1920) illustrates this point clearly leaving no room for doubt that harming is not acceptable in all its shapes, forms, and degrees: “If I tell a lie, or cause another to tell a lie, or approve of another doing so, it is equally sinful. If it is a very mild lie, still it is a lie” (p. 180). Notice that he included lying, viciousness, hatred, and jealousy as harmful behaviors explaining that once a person has put them into motion, “they will rebound on you with compound interest” and no power can stop that. According to Adele (2009), *ahimsa* or non-violence, is the basis of any yogic study and is the foundation of all yogic practices. Such an understanding requires contemplation of one’s life and a thorough evaluation of how one’s actions can cause harm beyond the conventionally understood signs of injury. Even the idea of killing can be symbolized by killing someone’s ambition or dreams. In other words, when yoga calls on practitioners to practice non-harming, it also invites them to make an honest assessment and examination to find out where they might be acting in harmful or injurious ways that require modification.

Vivekananda wants yogis to think about the consequences to avoid committing harmful actions. He says that remembering that harmful thoughts, intentions, or actions will return to you tenfold, “will prevent you from doing wicked things” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 180). In *Raja Yoga* we learn how an in-depth study of this sub-limb of yoga leads us to courage, balance, managing powerlessness, practicing self-love, applying all these principles to ourselves and others, developing compassion, and cultivating peace within ourselves and our relationships with others in the entire universe. To think that one can accomplish such a feat by mindlessly repeating the word “ahimsa” or “non-violence” is equivalent to building a castle on sand. Without a solid foundation, deep understanding, consistent embodiment, and sincere practice of peace in our life, yoga — “the realization through direct experience [...] of union between the microcosm of

individuality with the macrocosm of universality” (Bharati, 2021b, para. 2)— cannot be achieved. Vivekananda (1920) says “all enmities cease (in others)” when non-harming becomes yogis’ way of life and not just words they utter. He explains that when a yogi becomes “firmly established in non-injuring” they reach a state where “(t)he tiger and the lamb will play together before that *Yogî* and will not hurt each other” (p. 181).

3.3.2 *Satya or truthfulness*

This moral quality may sound obvious or straightforward at first encounter, but it carries philosophical depths within its letters that can fill books. In addition to defining truth and in a modern world where untruths and alternative truths are in direct competition with scientific and eyewitness or caught-on-camera facts, there remains much to be explored in yogic terms. In the yoga context, it calls for more than telling the truth or not lying. In *Raja Yoga*, Swami Vivekananda lists lying under harm and calls it a vice. He refers to truthfulness as a quality to be embraced and embodied just as non-injuring. For him, truth is a power; and when truthfulness is established as a way of life, it leads to “attaining [...] the fruits of work without the works” not only for the yogi, but for others as well (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 181). It is about aligning how someone thinks, speaks, and acts. If these three align, the practitioner is living their truth. The yoga practice is a journey to that truth, not once or twice or often, but every single moment of a yogi’s life. In other words, one cannot just declare that they are in alignment; instead, one needs to experiment and experience life and go through its ups and downs to discover their truth and then align their life to it. “When this power of truth will be established with you, then even in dream you will never tell an untruth, in thought, word or deed; whatever you say will be truth” (p. 181). While some people would love to simply read self-help books and seek a therapist’s counseling or receive guidance or advice from a teacher, they will have to find the truth on their

own through doing, which is why yoga invites us to practice. Let us consider how “truth” can start wars or end them, lead us into uncharted territory, and open life to us, exposing us to secrets or even larger truths. In these instances, we understand that truthfulness is a journey to measure our integrity and test our authenticity. Truthfulness is equivalent to honesty. It means being the real me no matter who I am with, regardless of where I am and when. This alignment is what yoga asks of its practitioners. It is an alignment that requires work, trials, and errors on the path to knowing who we are. Only then can we stop being friendly or polite and become genuine. That is when we turn away from self-indulgence to self-expression and benefit everyone around us. Truthfulness also means growing instead of remaining small and limited because of a desire to belong and be accepted. To understand the real meaning of this sub-limb, we must turn away from the simple idea of not lying as a moral quality. To live an authentic life in this context means speaking the inconvenient truth even if it costs a high price and accepting other people’s truth without judgment. It also means experiencing first-hand the power and the weight of the truth in our life and being courageous enough to face it, accept it, speak it, and live it. Vivekananda adds one more layer to speaking truth that means willing things and making them happen: “You may say to a man “Be blessed” and that man will be blessed. If a man is diseased, and you say to him, “Be thou cured,” he will be cured immediately” (p. 181). What he is referring to here is the very advanced levels of higher prana and yoga, the levels of saints and sages. In a way, he is inviting people to always aim to the highest level of their potentiality.

3.3.3 Asteya or non-stealing

The first idea that comes to mind is taking what is not ours, and that would be correct, but we should not stop there. Like all the other limbs and sub-limbs, *asteya* has meanings beyond material things and encompasses time, space, and every aspect of life. It, too, requires studying

the self and analyzing it objectively to determine where change needs to occur to get closer to being one with the universe around us. One must cultivate integrity and reciprocity to achieve *asteya*. When I look at others, what do I see? Is someone better than me or vice versa? Do I feel jealous or pompous as a result? In a yogic sense, both ways constitute stealing because I deflect the attention away from the subject at hand to my ego self. Vivekananda offers another option instead. He says when a yogi establishes their existence in non-wanting, “all wealth comes to the Yogi” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 181). Focusing on self, comparing, and judging are all practices that are not yogic. Wasting other people’s time or one’s own is stealing because want is at the base of these actions. Being late to appointments or filling time or paper with unnecessary details is also stealing. Cutting corners on yoga’s teaching is a form of stealing from yoga’s identity and core values. Other forms of this sub-limb that we encounter in our daily life are stealing from nature and the environment, such as taking without replenishing, or without sharing or giving back. It is a form of stealing from future generations if we leave them an environmentally unhealthy planet. We steal from past generations when we trample our ancestors’ hard work and cause upheaval. A current example of undoing the past’s hard work and struggle is the Supreme Court’s reversal of *Roe v Wade* (Brittanica, 2022). In yogic philosophy, one must ponder these ideas and apply them to life before claiming they understand them and moving to what’s next. We steal from ourselves by not resting enough and not getting the proper nourishment for our body, heart, and mind. Within the pages of *Raja Yoga*, we find examples of how one can apply this sub-limb in modern times just as Swami Vivekananda asked his students and readers to apply them in theirs. The lessons of the eight limbs are universal; they transcend time and geography. Additionally, Vivekananda promotes intellectual well-being and constant growth as a form of *asteya*. He advises that one must be aware of the negativity of the thought first and,

when we realize its harm on us and others, immediately replace it with a positive one or its very opposite to practice the virtues of the eight limbs. He says our untamed nature —the one not established in non-stealing— constantly desires things. When we yearn for those things and reach for them, we become their slave. Whereas “(t)he more you fly from nature the more she follows you, and if you do not care for her at all she becomes your slave” (p. 181).

3.3.4 *Brahmacharya or renunciation*

What many understand as abstinence from sex has many other interpretations that are more accurate and encompassing. Vivekananda (1920) speaks of the “chaste brain” saying it has “tremendous energy, gigantic will power, without that there can be no mental strength” (pp. 181-182). His word choice for this sub-limb is “continence,” meaning to be self-contained, which is another way to say that the power is within each one of us (p. 181). He says that when yogis are continent, they gain more energy and power. When he speaks of the yogi’s renunciation of sex, he clarifies that, “The soul has no sex; why should it degrade itself with sex ideas” (p. 179)? The idea here is that Swami Vivekananda could very well be talking about sexual practices as they are physical and pertain to the senses, but he could also be speaking about gender. All options are valid and give us more reason to think that the sutras are aphorisms and require deeper studying instead of jumping to conclusions or oversimplifying them by focusing only on their title. Swami Rama describes abstinence as the act of letting go. He explains that walking is an act of abstinence. Every step we take requires that we let go of the place where we were before it or denouncing that step, to take the next one and move forward. That, he says, is a form of abstinence that we can apply to anything in life, including sex if so we choose (Rama, 1992). So, quitting a harmful habit or a toxic relationship falls under renunciation. The main point is that each person must make those decisions for themselves. There does not exist one size that fits all.

These examples demonstrate the individuality of yoga and the necessity of learning, understanding, and growing by doing and not by receiving instructions from anyone. This is another example of how one can waste energy (*prana*) through lying, stealing, or being unvirtuous. Yoga leads us inward, where answers to our questions and the subjects of our higher desires (not our physical or instinctive desires) are. Yoga teaches that we should not look for contentment through the physical body or the senses, but through reaching the union with “the ideal being” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 178).

3.3.5 *Aparigraha or non-hoarding*

In the same vein as the other sub-limbs, we must understand non-hoarding or non-grasping or “non-receiving” as (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 182) puts it. He explains that by receiving we take more than the thing that is given to us. We receive its memories, its intentions, and its evils. He warns that all these concepts will unsettle the mind and prevent us from achieving the stillness we seek on the path to Self-realization. He calls practitioners to view gift-receiving in the context of their actions and those of the givers. For example, not being attached to results, people, or our senses are forms of *aparigraha*. Vivekananda teaches how yoga invites practitioners to release such attachment because clinging to things is harmful as it holds them back from moving forward and keeps them stuck in the endless loop of physical life. Senselessly accumulating material things is as hurtful as bottling emotions because we worry about upsetting others or losing a possession, a relationship, or a job. By letting go, a yogi is not “beholden by others, but becomes independent and free, and his mind becomes pure” (p. 182). On the same sub-limb, Adele (2009) offers this analogy, “A bird cannot hold its perch and fly. Neither can we grasp anything and be free” (p. 99). For Vivekananda (1920), *aparigraha* is about not accepting gifts from anyone because such an action can lead to a bind where the practitioner will owe the

giver something, and this kind of owing will shackle the yogi in the mind's chatter preventing growth towards a still mind.

3.4 The Second Limb – *Niyama* or Moral Observances

If the *Yama* represent a contract with society, the *Niyama* constitute a contract with oneself. Suppose the former are actions to prevent harm. In that case, the latter are observances that practitioners abide by, not because there exists such a thing as yoga police that will enforce behavior but because yogis voluntarily choose to abide by them. Yogis wish to live a peaceful, ethical, and non-harmful life that leads to Self-realization, and Patanjali summarized how Indian philosophies help manifest that stillness along the path. At least, that is the hope, the message of the original scriptures and those who translated them, interpreted them, and propagated them throughout the world.

3.4.1 *Saucha* or cleanliness

Purity is another word for this sub-limb. Physical cleanliness is of prime importance, but also cleanliness or purity of the heart and thoughts. Yoga calls on practitioners to have good intentions towards people, animals, and the environment because they are all the same. In yoga, there is no separation between the self and the universe around it. Therefore, the impurity of the heart or mind transfers to everything around us and harms the self and others. Yoga promotes purity that brings us to the present moment and invites us to be fully engaged in it rather than living in the past or the future and missing the opportunity of being in the “now,” the only moment we have control over. This kind of presence is what modern practices describe as “mindfulness.” Being mindful means acting where one can make a difference and letting go of the regrets of the past and the unknowns of the future. For Vivekananda, purity of the body deflects the attention of the practitioners from identifying themselves with the physical body to

understanding that they are much more than that by concentrating on higher themes and more subtle realities, such as being one with the universe or pure consciousness. He says, “This thirst after body is the great bane of human life. So, when this purity is established, the first sign will be that you do not care to think you are a body. It is only when purity comes that we get rid of the body idea” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 183). He later adds that this purity brings glee and cheerfulness to one’s life and yogis will have control over their mind because they are not distracted by the body. He highlights this feeling as a sign that yoga is taking hold in a practitioner’s life. The body becomes the vehicle to achieve Self-realization instead of its foe. “Instead of this machine being able to drag the soul down it will be its greatest helpmate”⁵ (p. 184).

3.4.2 *Santosha or contentment*

Oftentimes, people wage wars out of greed or to feed their egos. Vivekananda introduces yoga as a path to peace not by accepting the current situation and not having a desire to change it but by seeking change from a place of fullness and contentment instead. He weaves the cleanliness sutra with this one to explain that purity leads to happiness and the latter leads to wholesomeness. When one is happy, they do not look to change things, and when joyfulness is emanating from within oneself, it leads to contentment with how things are. “From contentment comes superlative happiness” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 184). In other words, when we let go of the things we do not control and accept our life as it is, we can experience fulfillment or contentment. To be content does not mean working less hard towards dreams and goals, being static in life, and not moving forward and seeking new experiences. Instead, it means going through life from a place of fullness instead of living from a place of need, want, and constant

⁵ Vivekananda is referring to the physical body as the machine that can be the practitioner’s friend or foe.

desires. *Santosha* invites us to understand that never-ending desires are the base of our suffering. That contentment offers peace and focuses us as we seek to better ourselves and our society. It also means being aware of the lessons learned and building on them for a better future. Not clinging and keeping a pure heart helps us on the path to contentment. *Santosha* can also be explained as the practice of looking inward for satisfaction rather than looking outside of us – and never finding peace because our physical desires are endless (Dylan & Muncaster, 2021).

3.4.3 *Tapas or austerity*

Also known as self-discipline, this sub-limb describes our humility and hard work towards becoming the yogi we seek to become and achieving Self-realization. Vivekananda choose “mortification” to describe this sub-limb. He says, “The results of mortification are seen immediately sometimes by heightened powers” (p. 184). While he is talking about physical powers involving the senses, he makes it clear that going through this form of sanctification is the way towards gaining more power and “destroying the impurity” (p. 184). Vivekananda continues to link the sub-limbs in a way to explain that one leads to the other and these limbs and sub-limbs would not mean much if taken individually. In this *Niyama* limb, cleanliness leads to happiness which leads to contentment, which leads to mortification towards purification. Yogic teachings point to going through the fire of hard work and consistent effort and focus to achieve enlightenment. This belief and the desire to become someone of high moral “character and strength” drive a yogi’s actions, thoughts, speech, and practices (Adele, 2009, p. 134). Because of all sub-limbs it encompasses and those it projects, this sub-limb can serve as a culmination towards an answer to the fundamental question of ‘Why do people practice yoga?’ We may find the main difference between traditional and modern understanding of yoga in the answer to such a question. The answer might pit the surface against depth, untruth against the truth, and what we

think is real against what is in actuality real and not an illusion of reality. How do we become people of firm moral beliefs without evaluating who we are and how we live our life and accepting our flaws before working – sometimes very hard – to reduce them or eliminate them? Can we utilize the heat of our struggles to build the moral character we seek toward self-realization? If a crisis throws us in shambles and lets us land in a different place than where we began, yoga empowers us to face our new truth and accept it with humility and sternness instead of running or hiding from it (Adele, 2009). Postural yoga works on the physical body and cannot offer this kind of quality processing unless it is accompanied by the practical understanding and desire to work through our troubles, trusting that things will work out in the end. As significant as this sub-limb is, Vivekananda did not give us but one short paragraph to explain. This might be his way of turning us inward for the analysis and understanding as it requires deep soul searching for its meaning.

3.4.4 Svadhyaya or self-study

This sub-limb serves as another identifier because it invites practitioners to observe themselves and their patterns regularly to bring improvements and changes towards Self-realization. When we watch the self in yoga, we realize its divinity, identity, or nature. Through *svadhyaya*, a yogi experiences pure consciousness as their true nature and that of the universe. What is this, if not the union of the individual self with the universal Self, which is the basis of yoga as explained and taught by (Bharati, 2022a) and other traditional yoga teachers like Vivekananda? This sub-limb might hold the secret to yoga's popularity as it puts the power in the individual's hands. It is not preaching or imposing any belief system. Instead, it empowers people and trusts them to be their own witnesses and their own healers. When people come together to practice yoga – even if it is only postural yoga – they feel empowered and surrounded

by like-minded people. Another union occurs at this point, “The higher the beings that you want to get the harder is the practice” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 184). Here Vivekananda is specifically speaking about repeating mantras as a way of studying scriptures towards Self-realization. Since mantras mention deities, he explains that the higher the being, the more effort a yogi must exert to reach them.⁶ This sub-limb links is interconnected with the one before it and the one ahead. These sub-limbs are complex and advanced practices and observances. Vivekananda leaves it to practitioners to explore them and analyze them in order to realize their true identity.

3.4.5 Isvara Pranidhana or energy-preservation

Vivekananda spends a large portion of *Raja Yoga* explaining that yoga is all about subtle energy known as prana or vital force. This life force is what distinguishes a person from being alive or dead. According to Swami Vivekananda, *Prana* is not just the breath, and breath is only one manifestation of the vital force. When people realize the importance of their energy to their longevity and well-being, they start conserving it and being more selective about where they spend this unique resource and how. Vivekananda (1920) says that “Every part of the body can be filled with *Prâna*, this vital force, and when you are able to do that, you can control the whole body” (p. 38). He describes this sub-limb as “resignation to the Lord” which in turn leads to liberation (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 184). In another part of *Raja Yoga* he clarifies that “the whole science of Yoga is directed to that one end, to teach men how to shorten the time for reaching perfection” (p. 43). He describes this perfection as controlling *prana*’s vibration and raising it to union with the highest levels of existence. Because of this important role, he says that by preserving the energy, focusing its vibration, and keeping it consistent, “(c)onsciously, or

⁶ Because Swami Vivekananda teaches the science of yoga, his mention of deities here refers to higher beings or enlightened beings. Vivekananda explains that *Raja Yoga* is based on the *Sankhya Philosophy*. To read more about *Sankhya*, refer to Vivekananda (1910) and Rama (1992)..

unconsciously health can be transmitted” (p. 38). Some scholars, such as Adele (2009), describe *isvara pranidhana* as surrender to a higher power. Others, such as (Bharati, 2021b) define it as a belief in something bigger than oneself.

3.5 The Third Limb – *Asana* or Posture

When Patanjali mentioned ‘asana’ or posture, he used the singular form and was very brief. In *Raja Yoga*, Vivekananda begins this thread with his translation of Patanjali’s aphorism: “Posture is that which is firm and pleasant” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 184). He then proceeds to elaborate on what this aphorism means. “Until you can get a firm seat you cannot practice the breathing and other exercises” (p. 184). In a way, Patanjali and Vivekananda put so much emphasis on posture that it is easy to understand that posture is the base of the yoga “exercises,” as Vivekananda puts it. The importance of reading the entire description cannot be overstated. I believe it is necessary to share the whole segment on ‘asana’ or posture since it is the postures we are investigating in this thesis.

Now comes *Āsana*, posture. Until you can get a firm seat you cannot practice the breathing and other exercises. The seat being firm means that you do not feel the body at all; then alone it has become firm. But, in the ordinary way, you will find that as soon as you sit for a few minutes all sorts of disturbances come into the body; but when you have got beyond the idea of a concrete body you will lose all sense of the body. You will feel neither pleasure nor pain. And when you take your body up again it will feel so rested; it is the only perfect rest that you can give the body. When you have succeeded in conquering the body and keeping it firm, your practice will remain firm, but while you are disturbed by the body your nerves become disturbed, and you cannot concentrate the mind. We can make the seat firm by thinking of the infinite. We cannot think of the Absolute Infinite, but we can think of the infinite sky. (Vivekananda, 1920, pp. 184-185)

As with most scriptures, there is much to unpack in the above paragraph. In it, Vivekananda is sharing the secret to a restful meditation. As we can see from the eight limbs, meditation is the seventh limb before bliss or liberation. Many other limbs and sub-limbs must be met and mastered before reaching the meditation level. In this thread, he is concerned with the

meditation seat. Our knowledge of what *asana* means here is conditional upon analyzing the whole aphorism instead of stopping at the title. Suppose the eight limbs make up yoga's identity, and the only posture mentioned in the YS is the "firm and pleasant" meditative seat. How can anyone justify all the other poses and the myriad of contemporary styles of yoga, each trying to lure people to Self-realization? At this point, I refer to the history and how the father of modern yoga, Tirumala Krishnamacharya, was mandated to make yoga popular. He introduced a postural practice based on western gymnastics. One might argue that physical postures directly result from modernization; they are its manifestation.

Another critical point to mention here is that Patanjali uses two more threads explaining that a firm seat will eliminate the dualities of the physical life — mainly caused by the senses — and the practitioner will achieve balance. Vivekananda (1920) describes these dualities as, "light and darkness, pleasure and pain [...] good and bad, heat and cold, and all the pairs of opposites" (p. 185). He explains that as students master the seat, the dualities do not block or hinder mediation (p. 185).

3.6 The Fourth Limb – *Pranayama* or Vital Energy Expansion

This fourth Limb is often reduced to 'breath control' in modern circles. Just as we experienced with the posture limb, if one only reads the headline, it is easy to come to such a conclusion (p. 185). For this reason, I would kindly ask you to indulge me as I share the entire text of this aphorism just as I did above to get the most out of this analysis:

Controlling the motion of the exhalation and the inhalation follows after this.

When the posture has been conquered, then this motion is to be broken and controlled, and thus we come to *Prânâyâma*; the controlling of the vital forces of the body. *Prâna* is not breath, though it is usually so translated. It is the sum-total of the cosmic energy. It is the energy that is in each body, and its most apparent manifestation is the motion of the lungs. This motion is caused by *Prâna* drawing in the breath, and is what we seek to control in *Prânâyâma*. We begin by controlling the breath, as the easiest way of getting control of the *Prâna*. (Vivekananda, 1920, pp. 185-186)

To stress the importance of this limb, Patanjali offers three more threads describing in detail how and why one controls the vital energy —the ultimate goal is to awaken the Kundalini⁷ energy that is dormant at the base of the spine.

3.7 The Fifth Limb – *Pratyahara* or Senses’ Suspension

Once the vital energy is controlled and contained, the practitioner begins to suspend the senses until they achieve “supreme control of the organs” as Vivekananda puts it (p. 187). By doing so, the practitioner experiences an out-of-body contentment that gets them ready for the next limb, concentration. This is also known as withdrawal of the senses. In other words, the practitioner withdraws inward through the subtle body, leaving the senses at the surface, in the physical body. This limb refers to the transition from the conscious level of being to deeper levels; it ushers in deeper consciousness states including the dreaming, deep sleep, unconscious, and subconscious states.

3.8 The Sixth Limb – *Dharana* or Concentration

The next three limbs are advanced practices that can only be learned through direct experience. I will do my best to use words to make sense of them, but the importance of these limbs and how they are taught is that no book or lecture can really ‘teach’ concentration, meditation, and bliss. Additionally, someone who has not had a direct experience with them cannot teach them to others. Patanjali put the three at the beginning of the third section of the YS, appropriately titled “The Chapter of Powers” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 189), highlighting their nature and advanced status. While breaking the eight limbs into two chapters might not make

⁷ Kundalini Energy, also known as spiritual energy, is believed to be present in the subtle body at the base of the spine. Awakening this energy is considered the ultimate spiritual advancement toward Self-realization. This awakening takes place through meditative practices.

sense, Patanjali did precisely that. The untrained eye will undoubtedly miss this nuance; I know I did for many years until my teacher explained it to me, and now, I explain it to my students with the knowledge and direct experience to support it.

Vivekananda explains concentration as the mind focusing on an object within (or outside) the body and maintaining that state. Vivekananda does not explain which “state” he is talking about (p. 189) because, by now, the practitioner has gone through the foundational limbs of ethical abstinences and moral observances. They steadied the meditation seat, controlled the vital force, withdrew from the senses, and kept themselves “there,” in a transitional awareness state ahead of entering the meditative state followed by the blissful state. Explanation with plain words only diminishes the experience and ruins it.

3.9 The Seventh Limb – *Dhyana* or Meditation

Meditation is “an unbroken flow of knowledge” to the object the practitioner holds their mind to inside the body or out (p. 189). In other words, meditation is a bridge to the higher consciousness. Just as concentration before it became meditation, now meditation becomes the uninterrupted truth of the practitioner’s one-pointedness. This limb, the one before it, and the one after it, can be understood as one big flow where the practitioner’s awareness flows deeper from one to the other and where it might fluctuate between the three until the deepest form is achieved. At this level, in the eight limbs, it is extremely hard to explain with mere words what these stages mean. The understanding comes from direct experience alone. Vivekananda says, “the mind tries to think of one object, to hold itself to one particular spot [...] and when the mind succeeds in keeping itself in that state for some time it is called *Dhyana* (meditation)” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 189). You can see how the rhetoric leads to direct experience and experimentation with these states of awareness. This precision makes the eight limbs a complete

sequence of practices, where one leads to the other and they support each other like an unbreakable chain. While people might be tempted to sit in what they think is meditation, they might be just in a thinking state. A yogi knows that they must start at the top of the list and make their way to deeper practices. Without honoring the contracts with self and society, no depth will be available to a yogi.

3.10 The Eighth Limb – *Samadhi* or Liberation

When all forms dissolve and only meaning remains, the “light of knowledge” shines through. This rung can be described as Truth, Freedom, Liberation, or Pure Consciousness or Super-consciousness” (Vivekananda, 1920, p. 257). Here is another rendering of the same thread by (Bharati, 2021b): “When the observer becomes so absorbed in the process of observing the object that there seems to be only the object, that is the beginning of *samadhi*” (para. 16). It could also be described as the union of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness (Devi, 2022). This union is the mere definition of yoga, where practitioners seek a “direct experience of the eternal center of our being” (Bharati, 2021b, para. 1). The YS explore *Samadhi* at an even deeper level later in Chapter IV, providing further proof that the threads of the YS are interwoven to reveal more with every aphorism leading to a complete whole. It also shows how the eight limbs represent the entire book and its 196 aphorisms.

3.11 Word Cloud of the Eight Limbs in *Raja Yoga*

In the early twentieth century, Swami Vivekananda explained how to become a yogi to westerners who showed up to his lectures eager to learn about Eastern philosophies (Feuerstein & Bodian, 1993). For this purpose, Vivekananda used the eight limbs of yoga and presented them as practices people must adhere to on the path towards enlightenment. In *Raja Yoga*, Vivekananda offered his interpretation of Patanjali’s YS as the tool to reach the masses and spread the yogic

message in the West. Vivekananda weaves the thirty aphorisms like a series of threads that make up a complete tapestry. He gives the sense that the sutras work together towards one goal: yoga, the union of the individual self with the universal Self through the eight-limbs path. As the most cited Indian luminary and the first to bring yoga to the mainstream (Sil, 2007), his interpretation of the Eight Limbs represents the definitive text. An exploration of the eight limbs or rungs of yoga and their place in the yogic practices and culture through Vivekananda's lens are essential to compare against the modern rhetoric.

A word cloud of the thirty aphorisms taken from Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* (Figure 3.1) hints at the author's intentions: Vivekananda's language is simple, succinct, and straight to the point. To explain the eighteen keywords of the eight limbs, Vivekananda stresses the body and mind equally as he gives them an equal mention. This distinction is important because yoga is a body-mind practice, and modern yoga has become primarily postural and body-focused (De Michelis, 2008). Another important detail is that the body, as mentioned by Vivekananda, references the various body sheaths, energetic, subtle, and physical. This understanding of the body distinguishes the yoga philosophy and mindfulness practices from postural yoga, which looks like gymnastics or aerobics.

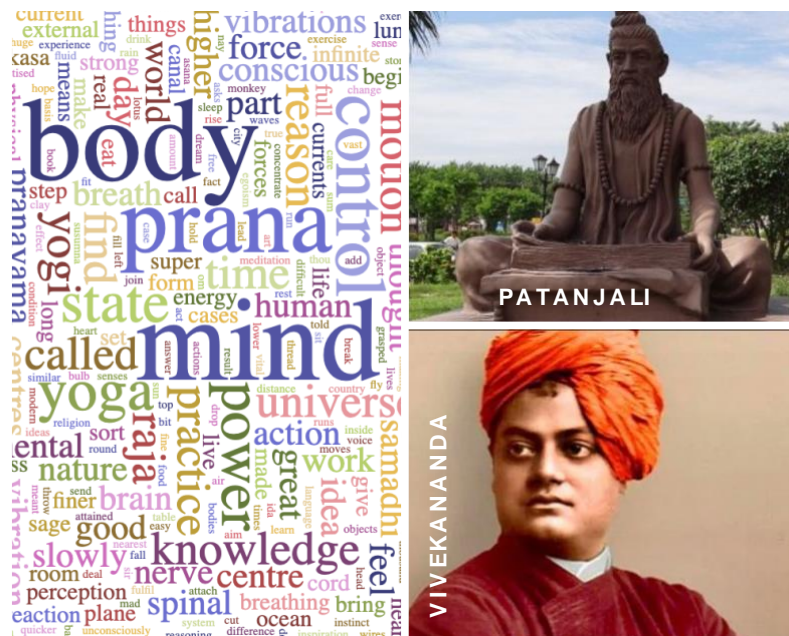


Figure 3.1: Raja Yoga Document Word Cloud

Word cloud of Swami Vivekananda's Eightfold Path. The top photo is a statue of Sage Patanjali, known as the codifier of yoga. Below is Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

One significant observation is that Vivekananda's language is authoritative with an oratory aura: While reading *Raja Yoga* one can conjure up the swami's image lecturing his students or his audience. There is confidence in his expressions but also much oration as if he expects his audience to know what he is talking about. The text does not always flow smoothly and sounds like it may be the result of a collection from Vivekananda's lectures and speeches that his disciples assembled and shared in the book format we are using today. It leaves you hungry for an explanation of terms, clarification of certain concepts, or a confirmation of what a certain lesson means. It leaves you in need of a guide or a teacher to show you the way. This is consistent with the YS and their aphoristic nature. "Posture" is one of the most used words in this text. However, as I detailed in the thematic analysis above, Vivekananda's use of the word 'postures' refers mainly to the sitting posture for meditation, not the physical shapes that postural yoga promotes. He explains that the meditative seat must be comfortable and firm. To explain

how one theme —the comfortable and stable seat— needs so many iterations and explanations, think that the mind needs to be clear of chatter and noise before you can sit in meditation. To reduce the modifications of the mind, many consistent practices need to be established. To establish those practices, one must be prepared and ready physically and mentally. If we hurt someone or if we are feeling victimized by someone, the mind cannot reach that quiet stage to allow us to sit in meditation. While we might think that it is just a seat, what is the big deal? One cannot achieve that meditative seat (the third limb) before the first two are well underway. Before the seat is achieved, the other practices (breathing, prana expansion, senses withdrawal, concentration, meditation, liberation) can only be postponed.

The word *yogi* is used repeatedly in this text, highlighting the importance of the eight rungs for the yoga seeker to establish themselves in practice. Control and organs also receive special attention by being used several times in the text. It is another way to see Vivekananda's emphasis on the importance of the yogic practice of controlling one's actions, stilling the body and the mind's thought patterns -- the mere definition of yoga – in preparation for meditation.

The key takeaways from Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* thematic analysis and the word cloud are that they spell out to us how traditional rhetoric defines yoga, how it views the eight limbs, and the practices it highlights in order of importance to reach yoga's highest goal of liberation. Vivekananda offers a complete aphorism for each limb and sub-limb instead of listing them in one word or headline format. He then expands on the meaning of the limbs when dealing with complex issues or if there is room for misunderstanding. For example, he spends five threads just explaining what vital force is to make sure that his readers understood that '*prana*' is not the breath, and that '*pranayama*' is not mere breathing exercises. He also explains the significance of this understanding to the rest of the limbs, particularly meditation. He calls on yogis to "give

up the idea of sex” (p. 179) and calls men, women, and children to follow ethical rules such as non-harming and non-stealing. He also emphasizes cleanliness by stating, “a dirty man will never be a Yogi.” Finally, in Vivekananda’s rhetoric, the word ‘body’ refers to the external/physical/gross and internal/subtle/energetic sheaths of body. For example, when he speaks about “keeping the body pure,” he clarifies, “internal purity is of greater value than external, but both are necessary” (p. 180).

4 THE YOGA ALLIANCE TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULUM

Established in 1999, the YA is a nonprofit organization born out of “a need for national standards” (Yoga Alliance, 2020) to regulate the teaching of yoga. Since its inception, it has become an international organization with Registered Yoga Schools (RYS 200, 300, and 500 Hours) and Registered Yoga Teachers (RYT 200, 300, and 500 Hours). It is a self-styled certifier and registrant of teachers and schools, and its designation is a stamp of approval recognized in several countries from the U.S. to India. Today, The YA considers itself as “the largest nonprofit trade association representing the yoga community in the U.S.” (Alliance, 2015, para. 1). The YA also speaks on behalf of the yogic communities across the US and advocates for them when need arises, like its official activism against government attempts to regulate Yoga Teacher Training programs (Alliance, 2016). Because of its current and future influence over tens of thousands of schools that initiate and graduate hundreds of thousands of yoga teachers, the YA’s guidelines provide a reliable measurement of the role and significance of the eight limbs in identifying contemporary yoga. Understanding how the YA treats the YS, the eight limbs, and their ethical basis will reveal how modern yoga teachings reflect those limbs, define their components, and situate them within United States’ yoga identity framework.

4.1 RYS-200 Enhanced Curriculum

To regulate how yoga is taught to aspiring teachers, the YA has created a curriculum that its member schools must abide by to be approved and registered by the organization. In 2020, the YA unveiled an upgraded curriculum based on 2019 recommendations from a committee of experienced teachers from around the US (Alliance, 2019). Schools traditionally go through an application process to prove to the YA that their proposed curriculum follows the YA standards. If approved, they receive a designation such as RYS 200, 300, or 500. This thesis is concerned

with the foundational training at the 200-hour level. This designation allows affiliated schools to teach and certify students as future yoga teachers. Those who graduate from a RYS-200 curriculum can later be recognized and registered with the YA organization as RYT-200 (Alliance, 2021b). In its ‘elevated standards’ published in 2021 (para. 1), the YA details what it requires of its affiliated schools. Those exigences range from what it describes as a ‘Core Curriculum’ to specific requirements for the ‘lead trainer,’ an application process for the school to follow for approval, and a list of its standards (Alliance, 2021b).

4.2 Word Cloud of the RYS-200 Curriculum

At first glance, the YA curriculum (Figure 4.2) looks like any modern learning tool, neatly organized into sections and using a mixture of visuals, color codes, and numbers to justify and clarify how the two hundred hours of yoga trainings are expected to be spent. In total, twelve sections that the document refers to as ‘key competencies’ are divided into four areas of study, with three segments in each area. The first – **TECHNIQUES, TRAINING, PRACTICE** – receives 75 hours and includes the three competencies —postures, breathing & subtle body, and meditation. If the bullet points are supposed to be equal elements, that would give five and a half hours dedicated for each. But the document does not specify a time distribution. The second – **ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY** – receives thirty hours and eleven bullet points covering the three sections of anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics. The third – **YOGA HUMANITIES** – receives thirty hours and thirteen bullet points, and includes history, philosophy, and ethics. Last, and certainly not least, **PROFESSIONAL ESSENTIALS** – receives fifty hours and thirteen bullet points, and includes teaching methodology, professional development, and practicum or practice teaching.



Figure 4.2: Yoga Alliance RYS-200 Curriculum

The untrained eye will look at the curriculum and find it to be efficient and complete: All the hours look like they are accounted for, there seems to be a balance in how things are listed and divided up. Judging by the aesthetics, one might find the YA's work to be superb and meticulous. Except, of what I have been describing up until now as the identity of yoga and the key identifiers of yoga, only three —meditation, *pranayama*, *asana*— are well articulated in the

document and show prominently in the word cloud. If the other identifiers are in the document, they certainly do not hold the same prominence and, therefore, frequency and intensity, that we saw in Swami Vivekananda’s word cloud. Let’s dig in then, to see what is going on.

Figure 4.3 gives us a broad view of the YA’s priorities. Key words like yoga, meditation, *pranayama*, and *asana*, are used frequently and they seem to be receiving enough power in the word cloud. A closer look shows that all the ten top words in the curriculum can be linked (literally or figuratively) to Patanjali’s eight limbs as used by Vivekananda (1920) as the basis for his *Raja Yoga*. However, the first two limbs –*Yama* and *Niyama*– that Vivekananda highlighted as being the cornerstone of any yoga practice do not appear in the cloud.



Figure 4.3: Yoga Alliance Document Word Cloud

Word cloud from the Yoga Alliance requirement page for the RYS-200. The top right is the YA logo, and the bottom right is the RYS-200 designation logo.

You can read a word document version of the YA’s curriculum’s 348 words in Appendix C. An examination of the top ten key words of the document (Table 4.1) shows that the document's most frequently used word is ‘yoga,’ followed closely by ‘practice, meditation, pranayama, and asana.’ The next level of frequency keywords revealed by the word cloud were

‘sequencing, body, and anatomy.’ The third level introduced ‘subtle, muscles, physiology, online, school, historical context, sutras, and ethics.’ Other words used less frequently, and sometimes mentioned just once, include names of breathing exercises and specific poses, examples of the physical and subtle body, and descriptions of nervous system reactions.

Table 4.1 Yoga Alliance Curriculum Top Ten Words

<u>Word</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
yoga	10
practice	9
meditation	6
pranayama	5
asana	4
sequencing	3
body	3
anatomy	3
subtle	2
muscles	2

While the keywords populating the word cloud are necessary to understand what the YA emphasizes in the initiation studies for new yoga teachers, it is not enough to understand the complete picture or derive the YA motive from it. I found that it was essential to go deeper into the artifact to see how the YA uses the words, in what context, and with what other words to determine what different themes cluster around them and gravitate toward them. This Burkean microscopical analysis will lead to the document motives, and perhaps those of the YA.

4.3 YA Curriculum Cluster Analysis

Here are the major findings of what reality the YA reflects of yoga’s essence:

4.3.1 Demotion of the YS

The YA curriculum mentions the YS twice acknowledging the pertinence of the text as a reference for yoga professionals. However, the way it references it is dismissive of the weight the iconic text plays in the life of a future yoga teacher. Compared with Vivekananda's traditional view that the eight limbs provide the path for every yogi, we find our first point of contention between traditional and modern approaches. Here's how the YA refers to the YS in the curriculum requirement (Figure 4.2): Under the 'YOGA HUMANITIES' heading and 'Philosophy' subheading, the third bullet point states that the YA requires "Familiarity w/major yogic texts (i.e., Yoga Sutras, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, Hatha Yoga Pradipika)." The YA does many things in this short space. All of them are worth analyzing closely. The word "familiarity" shows the YA's first attitude towards at least four significant scriptures, the YS being just one of them. The YA includes a list of other texts as substitutes for the YS and requires students to have "familiarity" with the texts. Compare this attitude with expressions such as "must include" when it comes to two specific "poses" that it refers to in the second bullet point of the document under the heading 'TECHNIQUES, PRACTICE, TRAINING' and the sub-heading 'Asana' or postures (Alliance, 2021b). In comparing the two attitudes towards two requirements in the curriculum, we conclude that the YA chooses forceful and direct language when it wants to leave no room for doubt or ambiguity in requiring two postures to be included and learned but when it comes to the identity of the practice and iconic texts, students only need to be "familiar" with them. The YA could have specified, "must include the eight limbs of yoga." By putting as much emphasis on the eight limbs, even it requires familiarity with at least four traditional texts, the YA would at least give the impression that it values the two poses from

the postural section and the eight limbs from the mindful side equally⁸. As things stand currently, these books that hold yoga's identity are lumped together under one bullet point within 'Philosophy' when they are a lot more than philosophy, and they represent a complete practice and a science as was evident through the Burkean analysis of the historic text.

4.3.2 Double-Standards in Favor of Postures

Although postures are a section all by itself in the curriculum, it is hard to miss how they are present in almost every other one of the 'competencies.' It is also hard to miss all the details surrounding requirements that relate to them. For example, the YA requires that teachers spend 30 of the 200 training hours learning about anatomy, physiology, and biomechanics. The details in this section are interesting because they are lengthy and specific. In other words, they are the opposite of what the document offers in the philosophy section. Additionally, 30 study hours sound appropriate for these topics. Comparing this section to the 'YOGA HUMANITIES' section which also receives 30 hours to complete, shows a grave imbalance, not only in the time afforded the physical elements but also in the language it uses to empower and embolden the 'ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY' section while at the same time, reducing and diminishing the 'HUMANITIES.' The YS are listed under humanities; they share thirty hours with eleven other bullet points. They also share their sole bullet point with three other ancient manuscripts. As I have explained, the YS comprises 196 message-laden aphorisms that require guidance, explanation, and deep study as they carry the heart and soul of yoga. I would argue that it takes about thirty hours to skim through the surface of all the texts mentioned with the YS. Unlike anatomy and postures, philosophy requires analysis, discussion, reflection, and clear expression. The humanities section also includes a sub-section for 'Ethics.' The YA finds in this area another

⁸ Author's counter curriculum list can be found in the recommendations section.

opportunity to belittle the YS and deflect the attention to itself and its ethical code. While the curriculum calls for ‘Awareness of Yoga Sutras or similar yogic ethical precepts,’ it requires a ‘Relationship to Yoga Alliance Ethical Commitment including Scope of Practice, Code of Conduct, and Equity Position Statement,’ among other YA-specific jargon. By burying the YS in the middle of this section and attracting the attention to its own ethical code, the YA is positioning itself as the de-facto codifier of yoga and using itself as a guide to its practice. In the RYS-200 Core Curriculum, the YA lumps the YS with three other lengthy and complex ancient yogic scriptures while it spends 40 words under the section about the YA’s ethics. Rhetorically, this move deflects the attention from the YS to the YA and from the traditional foundational yogic ethics limbs to the YA’s own standards.

In conclusion, with a total of 348 words, the curriculum mentions the YS twice, both times lumped in with other texts or concepts, and without a mention of Patanjali. The erasure of Patanjali and the meager appearance of the iconic text without acknowledging that most of the points mentioned in the curriculum originated from the YS is an example of how the YA deflects from the original identity of yoga to direct the reader’s attention to the YA itself. By doing so, the limbs are truncated, the YS are reduced to the two words of their title, and Patanjali is removed from the equation. In these actions, we start to find answers to the research questions as the YA’s motives begin to reveal themselves. The word count in Figure 4.2 and the absence of yoga’s main identifiers are the result of that deflection or its symptoms. Because the YA deflected attention from the original source of these symbolic terms, they appeared as lacking in the word count. My analysis shows intentionality to place the keywords in the text but surround them with other words that make them less important or less powerful or even strip them of their traditional power and symbolism to give them brand new agency with a YA stamp.

4.3.3 Advanced Practices Confusion

Another vague reference in the YA curriculum is the sub-section about ‘pranayama and subtle body’ which are advanced practices as they require pre-qualifications. The same goes for ‘chanting, mantras, and mudras;’ all of which are advanced practices that require a long time to learn, practice, and master. By not specifying that they are advanced, the curriculum causes confusion especially when it comes to time management. Instead of clarifying, the YA leaves the door wide open to interpretations and confusion. At the introductory 200-hour level, throwing in these big names like ‘Upanishads’ and ‘Hatha Yoga Pradipika’ and complex practices like ‘chanting’ and ‘mantras’ will have one of two effects: Either the school will take it upon itself to create a robust curriculum that is appropriate and encompassing, or the school will utilize the ambiguity to skim the surface and perhaps barely mention any of these requirements, and not explore even one in-depth. Between the two extremes, many scenarios can take place. In addition to the discrimination the YA shows in picking and choosing what to include in the curriculum, we see an additional motive to avoid specificity when it comes to topics the organization chooses to keep ambiguous. It is not clear how the 75 hours allotted to the section of ‘TECHNIQUES, TRAINING, PRACTICE’ are expected to be spent or towards what outcome. When the YA includes such advanced practices as ‘Pranayama’ and ‘Meditation’ along with ‘Asana,’ under one category and allots it 75 hours to complete, two motives can be deducted: It puts the most emphasis on this category in terms of placing it first and giving it the most amount of time, or the YA uses the guidelines as suggestions that are not enforceable in any way. This is because the YA does not have a mechanism in place to check whether the school followed the guidelines or not. Nor does it have oversight in the form of a test or follow-up to find out if the students learned what it referenced in its core curriculum in the first place. The result of this ambiguity is

that the YA covers its back by saying it required these topics and concepts to be taught when in fact it has no way to verify what the school did with them after receiving the YA's approval. As the curriculum stands now, it reflects language vagueness when presenting the mindful yogic elements in contrast to precision, emphasis, and clear instructions in the postural language. The YA imposes the core curriculum on its affiliated RYS-200 but does not express how it will enforce its rules and requirements. Therefore, the core curriculum document shows the YA's motive but does not hold the YA accountable for the resulting effects of the curriculum on the hundreds of thousands of future yoga teachers.

4.3.4 Deflecting Attention Away from Tradition

Another highlight from the YA's curriculum is the further deflection away from tradition and focus on itself as the source. Take for example the 'PROFESSIONAL ESSENTIALS' to which the YA allots 50 hours — a quarter of the entire training — to cover. In this area, in addition to covering postures again, their sequencing, pace, cueing, and class management is the focal point under 'Teaching Methodology,' as well as YA-specific credentialing, YA continued education and the YA's 'Ethical Commitment.' Additionally, the YA included marketing and liability insurance, mentorship, feedback, and a 'Practice Teaching' section under this title. This entire section is free of any tradition and focuses solely on postures, business, and the YA. Under 'Teaching Methodology,' there is no mention of any of the limbs or the YS, but at the very end, under 'Practicum,' the curriculum requires 'Knowledge, skills, experience across 12 key competencies.' Schools understand the YA requirements to be an improvement on prior teaching conditions because it involves the schools testing their students (not all schools did before this change). Still, schools remain unclear on how the YA will assess students' knowledge before certification (Ambassador, 2020). If left to individual schools, ambiguity leads to different

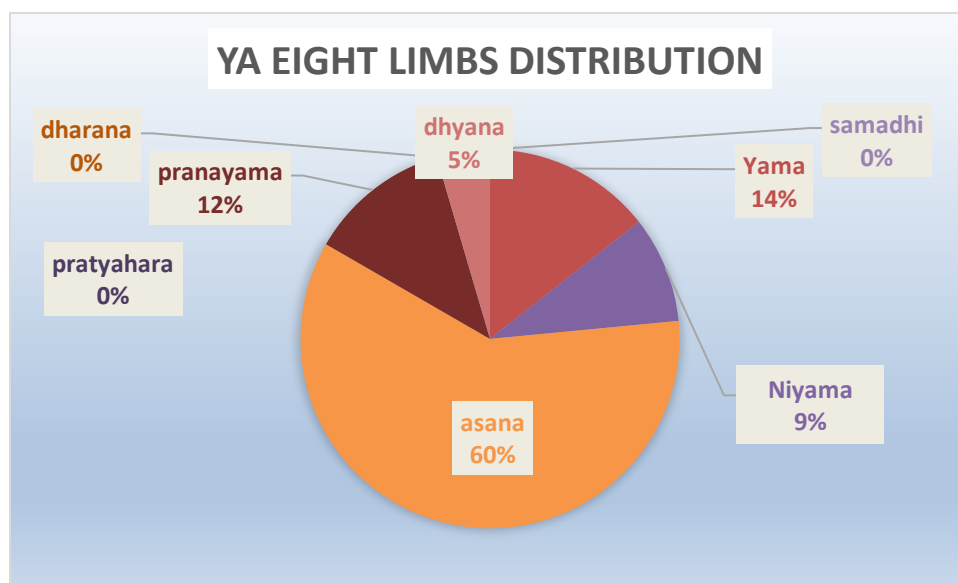
schools with various levels of commitment and unequal merit systems. In this final ‘Teaching Methodology’ section — to which the YA dedicates fifty hours — the focus, once more, is on ‘Postures’ and their five key components of ‘Sequencing, Pace, Environment, Cueing (verbal, visual, physical), and Class Management.’ The next main focus is on the YA itself, its role, and its requirements.

4.3.5 Reflecting the YA as Codifier of Contemporary Yoga

In the core curriculum, the YA picks and chooses what yoga schools will teach from the traditional texts, dictating how much time to spend on various sections and providing clarity in reference to postures and vagueness in other limbs. Where the RYS-200 core curriculum mentions “major yogic texts” other than the YS (Alliance, 2021b), it is referencing the same philosophies that Patanjali summarized to establish the yogic code of the YS. To appreciate the magnitude and size of these reference books, and because they are also written in scriptural form, let us compare them to the 196 threads of the YS. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika has 383 verses, and the Bhagavad Gita has 700. Fourteen different scriptures fall under ‘Upanishads,’ most of them beyond the range of even advanced students. Because Patanjali already did the work and codified yoga from these and other texts, and because yogis have been using the Patanjali code since its inception, deconstructing the code at the initiation level of yoga training cannot do anything but deflect attention away from it. It also causes confusion as to which text to choose, why, and how to measure students’ ‘familiarity’ with the texts in the small timeframe of about two and a half hours allotted to cover the material.

Now, it was time to compare the texts in search of the traditional key terms in the contemporary text. Analyzing the eight limbs represented in the YA curriculum document reveals a truncation of six limbs in favor of postures and their related practices (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Eight Limbs Distribution in the Yoga Alliance Document



In Table 4.2, we see how ‘asana’ or ‘posture’ constitutes 60% of the YA curriculum. I will remind you that according to Vivekananda (1920), posture was a reference to the meditative posture, and it was vital that it be “firm and pleasant” (p. 184). Following, are all the words from the YA curriculum that funnel into the asana or postures practice and how often they occur:

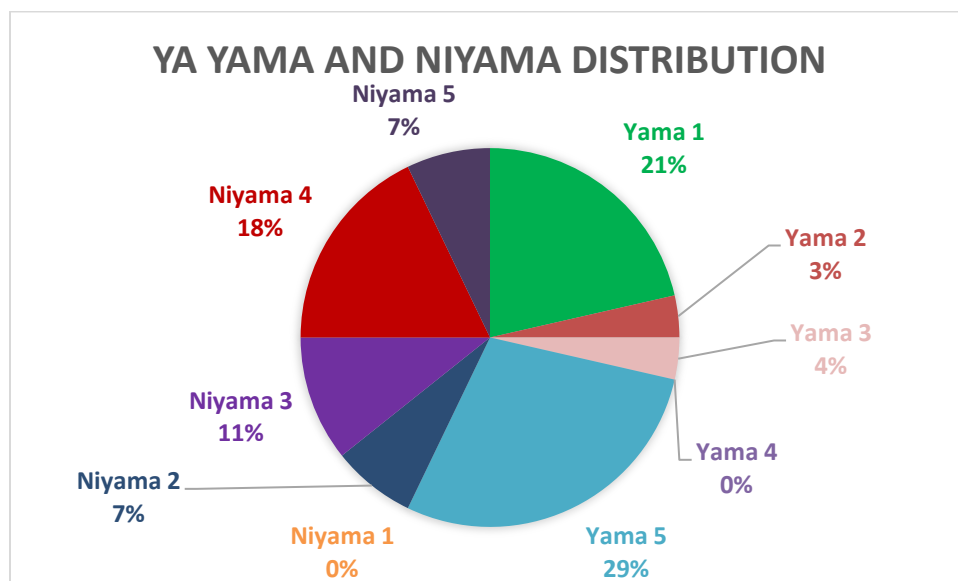
practice (7) asana (4) body (3) breathing (1) involuntary (1) sukhasana (1) savasana (1) poses (1) mudras (1) alignment (1) body (1) muscles (2) skeletal (1) joint (2) contraction (1) vagal (1) mindbody (1) cardiovascular (1) circulatory (1) endocrine (1) digestive (1) systems (1) respiratory (1) postures (1) biomechanics (1) stretching (1) bones (1) nervous (1) flight (1) fight (1) methodology (1) yoga (9) practice (7) anatomy (3) methodology (1) misalignment (1) physiology (2) adaptation (2) sequencing (2) safely (2) contraindications (2) yogic (2).

Notice that, even when the words “practice, yogic, yoga, breathing, mindbody,” and others were used in the document, they were used in reference to the physical postures. The YA curriculum uses expressions and themes that lead to the derivatives of three limbs without referring to them in their symbolic roles.

The first limbs (*Yama* and *Niyama*) were totally absent, but I found elements in the text that could fall under some of their tenets. Additionally, as Table 4.2 shows, three limbs, including *Samadhi* (Liberation, Self-realization, Union) that is yoga's purpose, are totally obliterated. By looking at the theme or themes the words cluster around, we understand that the YA does not treat all the limbs equally and that it severs certain limbs while promoting others.

Indexing the ethical limbs and their sub-limbs, as represented in the YA core curriculum document, reveals a truncation of seven sub-limbs favoring posture-related ones. As Table 4.3 shows, my analysis revealed the little weight the YA places on the first two limbs, which traditional yoga masters said must be the base of all limbs (Vivekananda, 1920; Krishnamacharya et al., 2016). I was able to find eight instances where the two texts come together albeit not around the traditional keywords but around their principle, their idea, or their essence.

Table 4.3 *Yama and Niyama Distribution in the Yoga Alliance Document*



Finally, the overemphasis on postures is matched by an unrealistic time distribution favoring posture-related lessons and practicums. Thus, the YA reduces the value of philosophy,

ignoring that yoga is a complete mind-body practice with a historical ethical code that leads to the union of the individual self with the cosmic Self. Most of the words needed to declare this truth are present in the curriculum document, but they do not translate into it at all. Instead, the document strips the YS of their historical reverence and placement, making the eight limbs an option that only those who know and care about them will include in their teaching. Without cluster analysis, it would have been difficult to see those details. Only through an in-depth content analysis of the curriculum document can we see clearly how certain words are included for decorum while they bear no actual weight on the training's outcome. The requirements reflect the YA as a codifier of yoga and the focal point of modern yoga in the US and possibly the world.

4.4 Burke's "Terministic Screens"

In the YA case, the "terministic screens" are the organization's filter through which it sees or reflects the traditional content (Burke, 1966, p. 44). The selective choices do not mention the eight limbs or reflect the original understanding and interpretation of the aphorisms.

Through my analysis of the YA's core curriculum requirements, I found partial fidelity to three limbs: the third, fourth, and seventh, dealing with postures, breathing exercises, and meditation. I say "partial" because I detected a selection process where the YA picks and chooses what to reflect from the traditional text and how to "direct the attention" to interpret traditional concepts in one way or deflect the readers' attention away from the original ideas (Burke, 1966, pp. 44-46). Because the selective choices do not mention the eight limbs or reflect the original understanding and interpretation of the aphorisms, the YA infuses those terms using their symbolic force and gives them a life of their own. In a way, if one did not know the origin of these words and their historic placement, it is easy to conclude that the YA is their originator.

The context of the curriculum is important because it is also infused with symbolic action with the YA as its main driver. We see rules, regulations, exigences, recommendations, but no plans on how to enforce any of them. Within this context, we understand in no uncertain terms that the YA acts as the custodian of yoga, its mouthpiece, and its codifier. It divides up the curriculum into four main sections and allocates the 200 hours not based on how much time each section requires to logically be completed but by level of importance the YA determines.

A Burkean microscopical analysis of “individual texts to gain insight into the author’s ideas” to unravel “motives within human symbolic action” (Brock & Kenneth Burke Society, 1999, pp. 1-3) reveals how the YA document frames the eight limbs, including postures and ethics, and exposes the reality it reflects that yoga under the YA is mainly postural. By comparing the classical YS text to the contemporary text, I determined what modern yoga keeps from the traditional discourse and what it modifies and rejects.

The rhetor showed no interest in acknowledging the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* as a yogic code, thus stripping Patanjali of his traditionally known role as the codifier of yoga. By doing so, the YS are seen as just another philosophy text that students can get “familiar with” or replace with another and again stripping the YS of its traditionally known role as yoga’s code. In these cases, how much exposure the YS get tells us the rhetor’s attitude towards the text, but also, the terms used around the YS and the terms missing are revelatory of the rhetor’s intention as well. In the orbit of the YS, we find competition to the traditional text. This competition symbolizes three things, each with its own consequences: Ambiguity for schools about which text to use disguised as options to choose from, choices reducing the relevance of the YS instead of highlighting their inclusion and uniqueness, and ambiguity serving as a cover because its mere presence gives the impression that the YS get a mention in case someone claims it was ignored

or omitted. The symbolic action of these word choices is that schools are left to handle the details or fill the gaps with the clear understanding that the focus is on postures. In a way, what is missing from the text is as important as what is included and how much coverage the chosen words receive in the text and what category they fall under are also symbolic in their interpretation. By breaking the text down to its essential components, I let the artifact unveil its motive organically, the YA word choices and the curriculum's word associations led to their rhetors' intentions vis-à-vis the traditional text.

4.5 Truncation of Yoga's Limbs

By comparing the YA requirements to what Vivekananda offered as the eightfold path, I can now answer the question: Does the Yoga Alliance push postures ahead of ethics and truncate yoga's limbs through oversimplification? From my perspective, the answer to both is a resounding yes. Furthermore, the YA erodes the traditional limbs' effect while underlining the postural aspects of the yogic practice.

The cluster analysis then illuminated my research as it helped me understand what modern yoga keeps from the ancient text and how much it grounds its education and certification of future yoga teachers in all the elements that make up yoga. I found that the YA curriculum grounds modern teaching in postures more than the other seven components, including the two ethical limbs. The omissions from the eight limbs of yoga led me to the truncation — its depth, breadth, and width — of yoga's limbs. Burke's brilliant understanding of language and identification and his cluster analysis led me to a robust understanding of how the YA identified and articulated its position in the RYT-200 curriculum.

5 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In my research, I explained that many yoga schools and teachers in the US are influenced by the YA and affected by its requirements. If the YA deflects away from tradition, so will its affiliated schools and registered teachers. Does modern yoga emphasize the eight limbs per historical tradition?

5.1 Discussion

My findings show that modern yoga, represented by the YA and its affiliated schools, does not emphasize the eight limbs per the historical tradition. Instead, they use traditional texts only ceremoniously. Some keywords are found but lack power or enforcement. They serve more of an aesthetic role and add traditional color but lack substantiality and weight. These choices give the impression of upholding tradition but the YA has taken the reins and deflected the attention toward itself as an organization.

This research found that not only is yoga becoming more postural and less mindful, but the limbs that make up yoga's original identity are being severed systematically. Cutting off the limbs of yoga as observed and practiced over centuries led to uprooting yoga from its origin and dismembering it from its unique identifiers. The result is a loss of this ancient science of mind, body, and breath that leads its practitioners to union. Union with their higher Self, union with consubstantial others, and union with the universe, its creatures, and phenomena.

This loss of an opportunity to come to union and peace when the world is becoming more radicalized and polarized by the day, is a big loss for humanity in general, and the United States in particular. At a time when our planet is threatened and our democracy is going through one of the worst challenges in its history, we must find more ways to unite us and reject divisive and

polarizing rhetoric. At a time where conspiracy theories are rampant, and truth wears as many masks as there are people, it is crucial to have a practice where we can all seek a universal truth that we can all agree on, that we are pure consciousness, that we are one, and that we must unite to save our planet — our only home — from doom.

If practiced as it was originally intended, yoga could offer a unique opportunity to connect with one another despite our differences no matter how many there are. If we can understand that our personal safety depends on the “other” and their safety, it will be much easier to practice compassion and acceptance toward that person and not be so focused on what separates us. When we understand that our safety depends on the planet’s safety, we might work together to safeguard the planet and work together to make sure we leave this earth better than how we found it.

Yoga leads practitioners to a unique path to freedom — their very own — independent of preaching or persuasion, and simply through identification. On the path to Self-realization, we discover the ‘Truth’ that we are much more than the physical body and its senses. We find that we are more than our roles, titles, and bank accounts, and more than our race, gender, and sexual orientation. We can come together through a practice that can encompass all of us from all walks of life and from all beliefs and ideologies. This kind of direct experience and its results brings so many benefits, not the least of which are peace of mind, heart, and soul.

Even though people will always show up to a yoga class for their own reasons - which can be purely fitness – my proposal is not to convert the world to yoga. Far from it. My proposal is for the modern custodians of yoga to tether themselves onto the eight limbs and ground themselves in their standards instead of uprooting yoga from what makes it unique, effective, and long-lived. In other words, no matter why people show up to a yoga class, we need more teachers

who have studied authentic yoga; not less. Such teachers are better suited to lead others on their journey inward “where one sees the self in the Self” (Rama, 1985).

This leads me to hold the YA and its core curriculum responsible for the truncation of the yogic limbs and shifting the focus to postures in three ways: by standardizing curricula that require more posture-focused study and practice hours than mind and ethics; by not providing equal precision and concrete instructions for the mindful sections that it gives the physical sections; and by lumping the *YS* with other texts and not specifying them and their *Eight Limbs* as capstone learning towards earning the initial certification and induction into its registry.

Kenneth Burke’s insight that rhetoric works when there is division but not too much of it is particularly valuable for my research. “Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division” (Burke, 1969, p. 22). In other words, “rhetoric gives us a useful tool for resolving our meaningful divisions -- the kind that arises between people who still have a lot of the elements of their identities in common” (Bashford, 2021). In the case of yoga’s traditional and contemporary messages, postures serve as a common identifier, but modern yoga puts more emphasis on them than traditional yoga. Although most of the first two limbs are cut out completely, some aspects of the *Yama* (*restraints*) and *Niyama* (*observances*) remain a common denominator even though the YA deflects to itself as their focal point in the contemporary milieu. Identifying and resolving the yogic divide illuminated my research and informed my upcoming recommendations for the YA and the rest of the yoga community to address yoga’s postural shift problems before the “separateness” becomes total and the division too much to heal.

Whereas identification builds on attitudes, perceived commonalities, and all the mind’s chatter before we act, and because yoga is rhetoric since it communicates through action,

language, text, speech, posture, and mysticism, I have reason to be hopeful. Yoga's rhetors can assume any or several of these roles, at any time, based on context. From there, they can deliver the yogic message by framing it in any way they choose.

I consider persuasion to represent modern yoga, including its business side, which involves marketing, advertising, and sales. Identification is what traditional yoga means by identifying with everyone and being one with the universe. In a Burkean way, modern yoga can use identification as a non-invasive form of persuasion. In other words, one can lead a practitioner to identify with yoga, without force and without the pressure of classical persuasion. I do think that marketers of yoga products are building on the identification already, drawing people in to buy more retail items and services related to yoga. The problem is that, if we do not preserve yoga's identity and allow it to slip into just another fitness form, the motivation will be lost as well, and everyone will lose at the end. Whereas, keeping the identity alive and the limbs whole, will lead to more sales in the long term. If yoga teachers can help us see our commonality to put aside our differences and come together around our similarities, then yoga can serve as the identifier and the path to our oneness. In this way, yoga is the medium and the message. Put simply, one practices yoga for yoga's sake. Yoga becomes the journey and the destination; and all the extra benefits happen along the way. The texts we teach others reflect one or more of these attitudes or motives.

Patanjali's Eight Limbs in the YS serve as the beacon that calls seekers in and inspires them to follow the yogic path and teach it to others. This path, the Indian luminaries like Swami Vivekananda said leads to Self-realization. The first two limbs, ethical abstinences and moral observances, are the base or the trunk and the engine that gets the other limbs moving. Nowadays, there are as many textual variations of the YS as there are schools selling what is

supposed to be a mind-body experience in the marketplace of yoga teacher training with a focus on postures. Yoga, in this light, sounds like merchandise or politics, with each rhetor—including this author— selling their brand in return for profit. In the contemporary environment, each school can have its text and motives. One school might sell yoga like a politician who says, “Vote for me because I am famous and likable.” Another will say, “Identify with me and vote for me because we are alike. Our identification might or might not grow and turn into a more enduring commitment in the future.” Another text says, “Identify with me and do as I say because, in return, I will give you credence through which you can do what you want” (Yoga Alliance). Then there is a pure text that says, “I am offering you identification for your Self-realization, and I want nothing in return.” The last example is also the least known in our modern times.

While there is no need for every yoga practitioner to understand the identity of yoga, I argue that yoga teachers must experience what they learn from their teachers and identify with the material just as lineages before them did to get the message through to us. According to Stone (2008), “a yoga practice matures not by adding more spectacular poses” but by focusing attention on the “space of the heart and the role of the mind with the body, not apart from it” (p. 6). This chain or line of teacher-student-teacher makes yoga what it is, a union of the self with the universe around it. If that chain breaks, the yoga identity risks vanishing forever. My research highlighted how traditional yoga, through its eight limbs -- the first two in particular -- contains all identification elements proposed by rhetorical critic and theorist Kenneth Burke. In my proposal, the teacher is the rhetorician facilitating the connection of practitioners to the practice, mediating their link to one another, and aiding them on the path back to themselves in yoga (union) of the individual self and the universal Self. While most contemporary yoga teachers

under the YA substantially truncate traditional teachings, we cannot underestimate the role of those who remain faithful to the tradition of the eight limbs, the YS, and the yogic ethical and moral values.

5.2 Recommendations

My research demonstrated that in the current state of yoga's identity in the US, the traditional text is used as a cover to justify the ancient practice's appropriation. By not giving appropriate credit to the traditional rhetors, the practice is misappropriated at best. Because some parts of the YA curriculum are still rooted in tradition—for example the YA selectively uses the words 'Asana' and 'Pranayama' directly from Patanjali's traditional text to refer to postures and breathing techniques but uses 'Meditation' instead of *dhyana*—and because the YS is still required even if at the 'Familiarity' only level and lumped with other 'major yogic texts,' there is room for reconciliation through identification. By identifying how reality is reflected in the two artifacts and what modern yoga selects and deflects from the rich text that the luminaries gave us centuries ago, I am ready to answer the thesis' prescriptive question: What can modern yoga codifying organizations do rhetorically in their training materials to ensure the longevity of yoga's historical identity (including both postural and ethical elements found in the eight limbs)?

Patanjali's aphorisms provide the roadmap to Self-realization. To understand the YS rhetoric, one must study with a knowledgeable teacher and experiment with the learning before sharing it with others (Krishnamacharya et al., 2016; Vivekananda, 1920; Bharati, 2021). The YS earned their prominent position in the history of yoga because Patanjali's aphorisms communicate a series of explicit messages about how to achieve Self-realization. Therefore, they have the rhetorical ingredients to convey a message and persuade people—through

identification—to do what is necessary for the Self-realization goal. This rhetoric is reflected in the ethics and moral practices of the eight-limbs path.

In his *Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke (1969) explored how identification is key to persuasion: “You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his” (p. 55). Put simply, yoga’s identity is the key to persuasion. But, as yoga started to become a lucrative business in the past two decades, the world saw a push to graduate more yoga teachers and fill more yoga studios that showed up on almost every corner and street in the west (Singleton & Byrne, 2008). Some even took it further and started offering eccentric yoga classes ranging from purely commercial *Yoga and Mimosas* to the strange, like *Goat Yoga*, to the bizarre, like *Twerking Yoga*, and catering to every possible kind of clientele’s interest, thus merging yoga with their patrons’ desires and indulgences instead of bringing them back to themselves as the original yogic message calls for.

One can argue that such classes serve the vital goal of making yoga more accessible to people who otherwise would not get exposed to the practice. In these cases, my argument is that preserving the identity of yoga lies in the hands of teachers and not so much the students or clients in the case of commercialization. If the teachers are initiated on yoga’s essence, how they share their yoga and in what format is up to them alone. The yogic approach would lead us to practice non-judgment and nonattachment, honoring teachers’ complete agency and autonomy over their teaching, style, method, and content. Burke (1969) agrees with my *laissez-faire* attitude because he warns of the potential of universality becoming “a partisan weapon” feeding divisions and strife among people (p. 23). The irony that I am calling for teacher autonomy but doing so by returning to traditional texts is not lost on me. But, like any other craft or science, we

must understand and learn the basics before we explore, experiment, and unleash our creativity. Eventually, I believe that more yoga is better than no yoga at all and certainly better than polarized yoga. However, I subscribe to the traditional view that yoga must be built on its all-encompassing original identity instead of emphasizing physiology, anatomy, postural sequencing, and business models. Emphasizing the postures makes it a practice of poses, postures, and exercise, and “yoga” does not belong in its name.

Modern life imposes restrictions, and when business is involved, the entire rhetorical equation shifts to accommodate the money-making aspects of what we are communicating. When we consider the business of yoga, we cannot—nor should we—ignore the impact that the market has had on yoga practice to this day and its continued effect in the future. I might say that there is a delicate balance and a dance between market’s profitability and yoga’s popularity. A relationship that must be analyzed and studied. Just as yoga provided markets with an opportunity to create products and services to sell eager consumers, markets have given yoga prestige and placed it in the high demand and even luxury category. Without trying to conclude who affected the other more, I would like to say that there exists a market for yoga today that Patanjali and Vivekananda could not have imagined. To think that in today’s world one can organize a trip anywhere in the world around yoga, would have been unimaginable a few decades ago. Today, yoga retreats are some of the most popular and most profitable endeavors and the travel industry is busy recruiting experienced yoga teachers (who can bring in the paying clients) to lead those retreats. The yoga tourism market raked in USD 154.11 billion in 2021, and is expected to continue to rise well through 2030 (Grand, 2021). While yoga-related businesses are in it for their share of the profits, they certainly must follow ethical guidelines that align with the practice they primarily serve. When Lululemon Athletica came to the scene, it made yoga

fashion history (Thomas & Peters, 2015). Canadian founder Chip Wilson was inspired by his own yoga practice when he created the yoga apparel company that “developed a cult-like following” in a short period of time (Weinger, 2013). Wilson’s first store in Vancouver, Canada, was in a space he shared with a yoga studio but his idea to make yoga-specific clothes was so popular that his company became a global business and inspired the yoga pants craze following Hollywood stars rocking them at their casual outings (Weinger, 2013). In a way, this commercialism drew the attention to yoga and made it even more popular. Yoga mats have become fashion statements over the years as mat production became more environmentally friendly with time. So, the idea of simplicity, humility, and self-observance that the eight limbs call for cannot apply here.

Considering how Burke modernized rhetoric and made it more accessible and more relevant, yoga can benefit from its own Kenneth Burke to call for upgrading and making the practice more accessible instead of limiting it to what brings in monetary profit. The identity of yoga changed with the times, and its original message changed as its modern decoders came into the picture. To understand the magnitude of yoga’s impact on modern-day life, one can easily search and find hundreds of popular applications offering postures, mindfulness, and meditation, ranging from physical and mental health to overall well-being and fitness. The adaptability of yoga helped it last this long and remain relevant today. The more media industries converge, the tighter mediation and consumption get, and the better mediated yogic messages can be to the masses.

Modern yoga codifying organizations can take the hint and ensure that the traditional yogic rhetoric is at the basis of their training materials to ensure the longevity of yoga’s historic identity (including both postural and ethical elements found in the eight limbs). This practice will

give the modern codifiers of yoga legitimacy and credibility from the scholars in the know and those holding the torch of the classical teachings, in addition to the respect and accolades from the scholars who are sounding the alarm and those critical of contemporary yoga's path towards more posture and less mind. One pragmatic solution is for the YA to categorize and regard the YS and its eight limbs as capstone learning. Another critical answer to the imbalance is to enforce the YS or eight limbs' studies just as it does for anatomy, physiology, and standards. Additionally, the YA can list the YS as a category all by itself and designate a specific amount of hours to study them with a teacher, contemplating their meanings and experimenting with them as Vivekananda (1920) prescribed. Finally, there must be a way for the YA to test teachers before certifying them. There are many closed-book online test-taking software packages that can be used to make sure teachers had the time to work with, learn, and experiment with the material before sitting for the test. Since all language leads to identification, one must not dismiss the present opportunity and responsibility to right the wrong and stop the demise of authentic yoga; we must ensure that modern yoga language reflects the original message authentically to ensure the transhistoricity of the yogic identity and re-incorporate it into contemporary yogic discourse.

In following Burke's identification process, my thesis concludes that studying the eight limbs of yoga aphorisms in depth can help negotiate and establish an authentic identity but is also in tune with modernity. By doing so, the modern stewards and regulators of US yoga can explore how yoga is a practice of body and mind, how the body is both physical and subtle, and the breath is different from the life force and how expanding the life force is an elaborate practice that goes beyond a few breathing exercises. Transparency in this area will help drive the

message and give more focus to the curriculum instead of having its elements scattered all over the place.

Identities cannot be rigid; they flow, shift, and change with time. Burke (1968) focused on how people receive information and offered them agency over the text by making “three terms synonymous: form, psychology, and eloquence” (p. 40). Thus, “instead of presuming the writer intends to persuade the reader of something specific, the reader is taught to consider the exigence of the particular writing occasion” (Manuel, 2019, para. 8). In this way, Burke invites rhetors to shift from persuasion to identification. An essential characteristic of yoga is that it is not a religion or dogma. It is not a tool for persuasion either. Instead, yoga offers a mystic experience, a universal moral compass, and a system of practices that lead to identification without the pressure of persuasion. Yoga influences because it provides a direct experience; it is a science, and all of life serves as its lab. The fact that postures are more appealing than scriptures does not negate the importance and value of the latter. Since postural yoga is popular, it is only fair to suggest that postures can be the form through which yoga’s identity can experience its longevity. However, if yoga becomes synonymous with postures, the scientific and philosophical identifiers of yoga will be lost forever. Ordinary practitioners do not need to study the intricacies of the YS, but a teacher must, if we are intent on keeping the identity alive.

Even though the research shows major truncation of the traditional limbs (Table 4.3), the results show that traditional and contemporary yoga still have more in common than they might realize. The symbolism might be different, the players as well, but, if there is goodwill and if modern rhetors choose to, they can use my findings to reconcile their differences and accommodate the past without losing any momentum, luster, or benefits. Do the stewards of

modern yoga care about tradition? Is omitting Patanjali and reducing his contributions done intentionally or is it an oversight? Are amends possible?

Suppose the YA can find a way to communicate the message of yoga by focusing on bringing people together as citizens and not just consumers (Giroux, 1980). In this case, yoga's identity will prevail, the YA will continue to be the modern-day codifier of yoga, and the business of yoga will continue to grow and be even more diverse and more profound. This does not mean that controversies and scandals will cease. What I am suggesting refers to the best-case scenario knowing very well that as life goes on, obstacles will arise, and divisions will occur. Guided by a clear identity rooted in history and tradition, we are more likely to unify efforts instead of stoking the fire of division and polarization.

When I started writing this thesis, I was concerned that yoga's authentic message was under threat of eroding further or even being lost forever. However, after conducting this research, I am filled with optimism about the future as I see a possible solution through Burke's consubstantiality as a form of identification. Following Burke's guidance means finding the substance that binds, such as "common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial" instead of focusing on the divisions and widening the gap further and making the divide deeper (Burke, 1969, p. 21). By recognizing the YA as the steward of yoga in the US, its positionality makes it an authority on modern yoga. In this role, it can and must preserve yoga's identity by making specific requirements at the RYT-200 level. Specifically, I recommend allotting an equal amount of time to studying the *Eightfold Path* as the YA imposes for learning postures, anatomy, business, and other subjects.

Furthermore, I propose Patanjali's *Eight Limbs of Yoga* as capstone learning for the Yoga Alliance's first-level teacher certification and registration. The YA can preserve yoga's identity

by making the ancient text accessible and relevant to modern living without losing its identity. The YA generates millions of dollars from members' registrations, continuing education, and global recognition of its logo for the various levels of RYT and RYS. It acts as the modern-day 'codifier' of yoga in the US and worldwide; it also holds the future relevancy of yoga within its language and requirements. Therefore, the YA must categorize and regard the YS and its eight limbs as capstone learning. It must enforce the YS studies just as it does for anatomy, physiology, and standards.

Because studying the YS is very time-intensive, and because students need time and guided analysis to fully understand the YS, the RYS-200 should dedicate a section of the curriculum for the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* and assign it 40 to 60 of the total 200 hours. This alone, will establish the YS as a power center with key words in its orbit (See Appendix D for a detailed counter curriculum). The YA should refer to this section as an 'Introduction to the 196 sutras in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali.'

The YA should require 'Fluency in all Eight Limbs' and name them. I recommend using terminology that reflects the notoriety of ethics by explicitly requiring knowledge of '10 sub-limbs of Yama and Niyama – Limbs 1 & 2.' Another recommendation is to 'Give students ample time to experiment and explore the YS text and embody it in their life.' The eight limbs should be mentioned by name in the curriculum either in Sanskrit or English and use motivated vocabulary to revive yoga as a Self-realization, unification, and wellbeing practice. By including the limbs and presenting them in a positive light, the YA will give them the respect they deserve and will indicate its position on them.

Since the limbs refer to other elements in the current curriculum like postures, breathing exercises, meditation, and ethics, the YA can simply reposition those sections to avoid

redundancy. This section will highlight the first two limbs by providing details of their combined ten tenets. Here are more language suggestions for the Eight Limbs section of the curriculum: requiring ‘Identification and understanding of Sutras in Books 1, 2, and 3 of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali that relate directly to the Eight Limbs;’ Under ‘Techniques, Training, Practice,’ list all the limbs by name and how they relate to the YS and the required physical practices. An example of that is, ‘Limb 4: Pranayama and its related breathing techniques. Effect of pranayama on anatomy and subtle body.’

Another language option could be adding a TRADITIONAL TEXTS section and assigning it a proportionate amount of time to cover—I suggest the same time allotted to postures. The YS can be listed in this section in addition to other traditional books that hold yoga’s identity and reflect the fact that these texts represent a complete practice and a science, in addition to philosophy. The YA can also indicate that there are many modern and traditional takes on the YS that schools can utilize. By keeping the YS separate and reflecting them as an ‘introduction’ at this level of the curriculum, the YA shows its appreciation for the iconic text and understanding of the required effort needed to assimilate their complex material.

In addition to the individual RYS-200 testing their knowledge on the various parts of the curriculum, the YA can require an Eight Limbs monitored test before teachers can earn their RYT-200 designation. In this test, new teachers will demonstrate their grasp of all limbs, their meaning and how they apply to their life and their teaching. An independent committee of senior teachers can be tasked with assessing these tests to determine whether a teacher is ready to teach.

A word cloud (Figure 5.1) of my proposed counter-cluster shows all eight limbs as key words with the ethics and morals as larger satellites reflecting their role as the pillars of all limbs. It is positive, inclusive, and motivational towards preserving yoga’s traditional identity while

embracing modern realities. Although the business of yoga including YA membership and continued education remain intact in the curriculum, the focus is not on them or on the postural aspect of the practice. The counter curriculum key words, represented by the top ten words frequency in Table 5.1, display yoga's inclusivity and redirects the attention to the mind-body practice where the yoga alliance can be the guardian. This all-encompassing view reflects yoga more transparently and guarantees its relevance and continued transcendence through time and space.

Table 5.1 Counter Curriculum Keywords Frequency

The top ten keywords in author's proposed counter curriculum and their frequency.

<u>Word</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Yoga	20
Sutras	13
Patanjali	8
Limbs	8
Practice	6
Meditation	5
Asana	5
Yama	4
Niyama	4
Pranayama	3

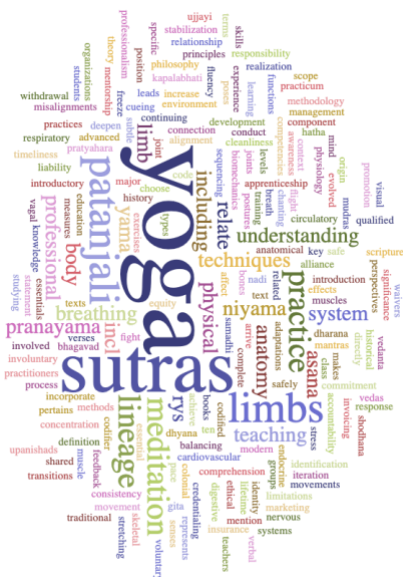


Figure 5.4: Counter Curriculum Word Cloud

A word cloud of the author's proposed curriculum to counter the YA core curriculum

5.3 Conclusion

Patanjali's first aphorism in the YS says, "Now the practice of yoga begins,"⁹ emphasizing this very moment you are reading these words, not the moment before it or the moment after. In this invitation to the *now*, we understand that the past has passed already, and the future did not happen yet, so the now is the only thing we have full control over. But as we read further in the YS, we find an embedded reverence to the before and after. We learn that we can heal the past and clear the future through our full presence in the *now*. Whether we speak of *karma* (actions) or *samskaras* (experiences' imprints) or *kleshas* (causes of suffering), we realize that this moment would not exist without the one that preceded it, and it would not mean much without the moment that follows. We understand that life is a series of actions and choices our ancestors made, and we make in every moment that leave imprints in our being for generations to come and we contemplate how fear of death, dying, and endings, is the biggest source of our

⁹ Author's own interpretation.

suffering. Life is a continuum, and we are only passing through in a borrowed vehicle with all the tools we need to enjoy this physical journey. As we enjoy the physical journey, we forget that we are pure consciousness, and yoga reminds us of that Truth. Of course, many others arrive to this or a similar truth through dogma, religion, or faith. Yoga offers the science and gives its practitioners agency to seek the direct experience to prove the union of the individual self with the universal Self theory or disprove it.

One question for future research becomes, how do we achieve that union, and what tools can we use to revitalize the practice through teacher education, more responsible business ethics, and less diluted versions of Yoga? Furthermore, I propose another question worthy of research: by applying Burke's "Paradox of substance," can the *YS*' rhetoric lead to personal yogic identity within the larger group identity; therefore, ensuring future transhistoricity of the form and function of yoga as an ancient science, philosophy, and practice? Where do you go for that, you may ask? (Bharati, 2022a) breaks it down to six "T's" that people might be drawn to look for —Truth, Teacher, Tradition, Teachings, Training, Texts— and he says, "Seek Truth alone, and the others will come" (para. 2). For our modern times, and in light of my research and findings, I will say, "Find a knowledgeable teacher who can lead you to the Teacher within yourself and go from there."¹⁰

Yoga's cultural identity comes from learning and living the *Eightfold Path*. Without it, there is no identity to preserve. Postural yoga is not "yoga" if devoid of its heart -- the eight-rung code found in the *YS*. Suppose the *YA* does not use its leverage to require the study of the eight limbs at the basic level of teacher training. In that case, the standards will have fewer identifying elements and more focus on postures, anatomy, and physical sequences. Understanding and

¹⁰ Author's advice on how to find one's yogic identity.

interpreting the past are necessary for any current and future generation to remember and form a cultural identity (Khrebtan-Horhager, 2018).

By focusing on the eight limbs of yoga in general and the ethical components of the first two limbs in particular, this thesis served two purposes: First, it provided necessary research to highlight yoga's rhetorical identifiers, analyzed what remains of them in modern yoga, and gauged whether enough of its identity remains that can serve as unifier of the old and new. Secondly, it spotlighted the yogic ethical code as a valuable resource to inform future applications to other disciplines. I detailed how the eight rungs of yoga are interconnected and stressed their value to our life, not just to yoga. I believe these tenets of yoga provide an inclusive identity that can bring a carpenter, a doctor, a professor, a student, an artist, a writer, a politician, and a plumber to the same postural yoga class or a lecture on the benefits of yoga. Within the yogic moral values are identifiers that can resonate with people from all walks of life, educational backgrounds, diverse languages, interests, and cultures.

Borrowing Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message," one can say that yoga is the message with satellites around it making up its limbs or channels (McLuhan, 1977). Yoga being the medium, McLuhan says, "What you print is nothing compared to the effect of the printed word. The printed word sets out a paradigm, a structure of awareness which affects everybody in very drastic ways" (tc. 2:33-2:51). Yoga is the medium that gives meaning to the printed words and turn them into identity. Therefore, it is important to gauge how the YA curriculum frames the yogic discourse to ensure it is appropriately received and utilized by various schools. To identify yoga by just one of its limbs changes the medium and changes the message; it obliterates the identity. If all we provide the audience to identify with are postures, then what differentiates yoga from aerobics, gymnastics, kickboxing, or any other exercise?

What makes yoga last beyond the fad stage? The fact that we have something to hang on to and build on is the source of my optimism. By examining the YA's curriculum, I found two mentions of the sutras, albeit not prominently and, indeed, not as identifiers of the practice. If the YA sees the sutras as the ancients see them, and if it takes this thesis' findings to heart, it might find that it can do something about this issue without having to incur any cost or endure any loss.

My scholarship is a rhetorical artifact inviting readers “to glean its perspective not only by identifying its arguments but also by interpreting its performative style” (Ray, 2016, p. 56). I expressed my explicit motive for writing this thesis. Maybe you will find that I provided enough evidence of it. Perhaps you can see through my lines and my word choices, associations, and clusters an implicit motive as well. My research analyzed contemporary yoga terminology and compared it to the traditional identification perspective. I investigated what modern yoga selects from the traditional eight limbs of the YS aphorisms —postures and breathing techniques— and what it deflects from — ethical restraints and moral observances. I analyzed what constitutes the yogic identity in contemporary yoga compared to the original identity intended by the masters to determine what remains of the traditional identity and what has been cut off. By indexing and analyzing the rhetoric in two artifacts, I traced how the US system turned the ancient practice of Yoga into a business, diluting its original message as intended by the Indian luminaries in the mid-twentieth century when they brought Yoga to the United States. In Burke's planet analogy, the modern yogic words are gravitating towards another planet that is called yoga only by name. If words have power to pull other words and concepts to them, Burke (1952) adds that “(t)he gravitational pull weakens, the farther away from the center a body is—and it may move so far away that it falls within the gravitational pull of some other planet (p. 91).”

My motive from this scholarship is to preserve the integrity of yoga by honoring its identity and utilizing its embedded ethics in as many fields as possible. In that spirit, I call on those responsible for yoga's future to embrace the past and use its unique powers to build communities, businesses, and world citizens instead of individual consumers of things. I argue that if yoga teachers receive appropriate initiation on the eight tenets instead of skimming their surface, their classes will be better informed and in line with the lineages that have sustained the ancient practice thus far. Their classes, even if only postural, would stand on the solid original universal yogic message instead of breaking ranks with the message of peace and non-harming that the world direly needs today. As a scholar, I am committed to finding ways to preserve yoga's identity and seek ways to incorporate yoga's teachings in everyday life, as I can see how this ancient science can bring peace, hope, and freedom to a divided world. I hope this thesis helps shift attitudes towards embracing the tradition of yoga — not only its postural side — as a tool to effect social and behavioral change instead of shunning it further.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

 RYS 200 CORE CURRICULUM			
TECHNIQUES, TRAINING, PRACTICE	ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY	YOGA HUMANITIES	PROFESSIONAL ESSENTIALS
 <p>75hrs</p> <p>Asana</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical context Poses specific to RYS's lineage—must include sukhāsana and savāsana Complete sequencing (asana, pranayama, meditation) to achieve particular effect safely Shared anatomical and alignment principles plus contraindications <p>Pranayama & Subtle Body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical context Effects of pranayama on anatomy and subtle body Complete sequencing of pranayama safely, including alternatives and adaptations Ujjayi, Nadi Shodhana, Kapalabhati, among others Koshas, kleshas, chakras, nadis and prana vayus <p>Meditation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key meditation terms Meditation methods by lineage Ability to practice school's chosen meditation practice Chanting, mantras, and mudras 	 <p>30hrs 20 of which can be online</p> <p>Anatomy</p> <p>Skeletal system, incl.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major bones Types of joints Major muscles involved in asana Types of muscle contraction <p>Physiology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nervous system, incl. 'fight, flight, freeze' stress response, vagal theory, overall mind-body connection Cardiovascular/circulatory, endocrine, digestive systems as they relate to yoga practice Respiratory system, incl. muscles that affect breathing, involuntary vs voluntary breath, how air enters and leaves body <p>Biomechanics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Types of joint movements Joint stabilization Safe movement as it pertains to balancing, stretching, awareness, and physical limitations Contraindications, misalignments, adaptations 	 <p>30hrs 20 of which can be online</p> <p>History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Term 'yoga' School's lineage, style, and methodology Dates and key ideas such as the Vedas, Vedānta, Hatha, Colonial, Modern <p>Philosophy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition of yoga and key terms Relationship between asana, pranayama, meditation per school's approach Familiarity w/ major yogic texts (i.e., Yoga Sūtras, Bhagavad Gīta, Upanishads, Hatha Yoga Pradīpikā) Self-reflection on how philosophy relates to practice <p>Ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness of Yoga Sūtras or similar yogic ethical precepts Relationship to Yoga Alliance Ethical Commitment including Scope of Practice, Code of Conduct, and Equity Position Statement Comprehension of and responsibility to increase equity in yoga Accountability measures Self-reflection on how yoga ethics relate to practice and teaching 	 <p>50hrs</p> <p>Teaching Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sequencing Pace Environment Cueing (verbal, visual, physical) Class management <p>Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yoga-related professional organizations, including the Yoga Alliance credentialing process Ethical Commitment, including Scope of Practice, Code of Conduct and Equity Position Statement Lifetime of learning and continuing education General professionalism, including timeliness, consistency, cleanliness Marketing and promotion Liability insurance, waivers, invoicing <p>Practicum (Practice Teaching)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge, skills, experience across 12 key competencies Mentorship component, incl. apprenticeship, feedback
<p>Plus Elective Hours (maximum of 15 classroom hours) Elective hours must fall under the above Core Curriculum categories</p> <p>To see a list of acceptable elective hour topics, view our Elective Hours Facts Sheet</p>			

Appendix B

[Yoga Alliance Core Curriculum 2022 as a Word Document](#)

Appendix C

[Author's Counter Curriculum](#)