

**DECOLONIZING YOGA IN ACADEMIA:
NARRATIVES OF YOUNG ADULTS USING YOGA TO MANAGE STRESS**

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Abstract

This inquiry explores the experiences of thirteen Canadian yoga-exemplars, ages 25-40, who use traditional Yoga knowledge and practices to handle life's stresses and strains. The young adults describe Yoga as a holistic and spiritual practice as a way of life, a philosophy, and not merely a physical exercise. Their stories about how they cope with the challenges of life such as school, relationships or existential angst, demonstrate how Yoga has helped them effectively cope with stress. Their discussion of Yoga is important because of concerns that unmanaged stress leads to negative impacts, such as anxiety, depression and drug and alcohol abuse.

There are numerous studies on programs for college students in which yoga is used to help manage stress. However, researchers have concluded that, due to the heterogeneity of Yoga, it is difficult to compare Yoga programs to know their quality or content. Also, these programs are usually limited to practice of *asanas*, or physical postures, along with some mindfulness. Yet, as the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* explain, Yoga teaches the complete psychology of the mind and provides a holistic, spirituality-based, embodied and experiential approach to wellness and increased-self-awareness. Using the Art of Living programs as a case study, this inquiry provides an example of a program that provides all eight limbs of Yoga and also the foundational Yoga-based theoretical framework researchers can use to study programs that are based on Yoga.

Purva paksh, or critical review, of western scholarship on Yoga has led Indigenous scholar-practitioners to conclude that Yoga has been, and continues to be, studied through colonial lenses. This study proposes and demonstrates how Yoga may be better understood and analysed using Yoga's own theories and Sanskrit terminology.

This study uses decolonizing methodologies to theorize Yoga as indigenous knowledge, similar to other indigenous knowledges of the world which are based on the oral tradition. Indigenous scholars have asserted that the authority to speak for or teach the knowledge belongs to its own knowledge keepers and scholars, and not to outsiders. The study further decolonizes western studies on Yoga to show that the significant contributions made by Yoga to western psychology, mind sciences, and philosophy remain mostly unacknowledged. A review of the many threats faced by Yoga from western Indology provides the backdrop to the yoga-exemplars narratives.

**Dedicated to my Guru, His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar
and the ancient oral tradition of Yoga gurus: past, present and future**

Acknowledgements

I am in wonder and awe for having completed my doctoral work. So many people have been instrumental for my success and I owe them a debt of gratitude. I present my doctoral work with humility, in recognition of the vastness of the knowledge of Yoga, which is far, far deeper and complex, and beautiful, than I have been able to articulate in this dissertation.

I offer my heartfelt appreciation to my Supervisor, Celia Haig-Brown, for her inspiration, expert guidance and unwavering encouragement throughout this process. Also, to my Committee Members, Stuart Shankar, Nombuso Dlamini and Esther Fine for their contributions. I thank Heesoon Bai, Ruth Koleszar-Green and Sarah Flicker for being on my Examining Committee.

I express my deepest gratitude to my Guru, His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, for his beautiful teachings, love and inspiration. The best ideas for this study came after I meditated, and when I felt stuck, listening to his words got my words flowing again. His words of wisdom are written all over my dissertation, and I dedicate this dissertation to him with gratitude.

It has been privilege for me to interview the thirteen extraordinary young yogis for this study and their courage, resilience, and wisdom has been an inspiration for me. Their stories helped me go deeper into Yoga knowledge, understand it better and appreciate it more.

I wish to thank Rajiv Malhotra, whose critical research on American Indology had a deep impact on my understanding of what Yoga and *dharma* are, and why *swadeshi* (indigenous) scholarship in Indology is urgently needed. *Sangachhadhwam* – let's move together - onwards with our collective *yajna*.

I express my deepest gratitude and love to my husband, Vinod. I would not have been able to succeed in this endeavor without his unconditional love and support. I am deeply grateful to my daughter, Anita, for editing the final draft of my dissertation and for always cheering me up with her smile and interesting conversations about my work. I also express my gratitude for my older daughter Kalpana, for all her encouragement and faith in my success. I also remember with fondness numerous family and friends all over the world, including those within the Art of Living, who have supported me over the past six years of my doctoral studies. Special thanks to my friends Patricia Furze and Angela Sahota for editing draft chapters and their joyful support. I also dedicate my dissertation to the memory of my late parents, Ram Nagina Singh and Lakshmi Singh for their love and for their encouragement to pursue academics.

I wish to express my gratitude to all the gurus of the Yoga tradition, past and present, from time immemorial, who have kept the knowledge of Yoga alive so that people all over the world can benefit from this amazing knowledge today. And finally, I express gratitude to yogis all over the world who practice Yoga to keep this knowledge alive in their hearts and minds and help spread the light of Yoga. May the divine continue to guide me on the path of Yoga.

Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu, OM Shanti, Shanti, Shanti

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Prologue: On becoming a ‘Word Warrior’ⁱ

I want to acknowledge that I am located, as a researcher at York University, Toronto, on the traditional territory of the Mississauga of the New Credit. I also want to recognize the Neutral, the Petun, the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee and many other Indigenous peoples who have occupied and lived in relationship with this land over time (Haig-Brown. 2012, p. 73).

This dissertation is about embracing “being different” (Malhotra, 2011) and about a Yogic return of the gaze to western universalism. My intention in writing this prologue is to help readers understand the circumstances that led to this study’s focus, especially the part on decolonizing Yoga in which I provide a strong critique of western approaches to Yoga. Without due warning, I am concerned that some academicians, and others, could be offended by the content, finding it audacious and unnecessarily confrontational. I do want readers to engage with the entire dissertation, which I see making an important contribution to the field. This prologue therefore briefly explains the journey that shaped the focus of this dissertation providing something of a map as guidance into the depths of the document. The complimentary epilogue focuses on the contributions that this study makes to research on Yoga and stress.

The present study represents the evolution over the past six years of my scholarly interest in area of Yoga and stress among young adults. During the initial period of my studies, my intention was to undertake a non-randomized quantitative study with high school students using the *YES! Program* of the Art of Living Foundation as a case study. The proposed research was to involve implementing the *YES! Program* in 2-3 Toronto-area high schools and the use of physiological measures, such as blood pressure, heart rate and cortisone levels, to assess the impact of the program’s breathing techniques on stress among students. As well, psychological tools would be used to measure the program’s impact, such as assessing quality of sleep.

However, after several failed attempts to secure the funding required for implementing the study in high schools, I was forced to seek an alternative that did not require funding. I decided to focus instead on the *YES! Plus* Program for college students and changed the research methodology to a qualitative approach using narratives from the young yogis during face-to-face interviews. As a social worker with twenty years' experience in working with youth and families, I was aware of the issue of stress and that, neither at home nor at school is one taught how to handle negative emotions, feelings and thoughts. At the same time, I had noted the interest among youth in the Art of Living programs towards managing stress and I thought a study on this topic could prove insightful.

As is the case with many scholars, my dissertation work is deeply personal. A turning point for me came in the third and fourth years of my study, when I was writing the proposal. I came across literature that indicated several concerns with how Yoga was being studied in the western academy and I became interested in taking up a decolonizing lens to return the colonial gaze in the examination of western studies of Yoga. I provide below an excerpt from my proposal which addresses the related autobiographical material (October 2014).

The process of writing the proposal, about how the ancient Indian knowledge of Yoga is being used here in the West to manage stress, became excruciatingly difficult for two reasons. First, it stirred up deep resentments about how Yoga has been colonized by the West and second, there was the challenge of trying to fit the square peg of Euro-centric thought into the round peg of Yoga philosophy. I was incredibly relieved when I read *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism* (2011) a book written by an American-Indian scholar, Rajiv Malhotra in which he reverses the gaze on the west through an eastern lens. The book presents a comprehensive decolonizing review of how western hegemony has led to misinterpretation of Yoga and related Hindu knowledge from India (referred to as *dharmic* concepts) and the great challenge of discussing this knowledge using western conceptual frameworks

In a follow-up book, *Indra's Net* (2014), Malhotra goes on to tackle some damaging myths that have been perpetrated about Indian philosophy with a goal to provoke a conversation about confronting prejudice against the Indian civilization. This dissertation proposal cannot avoid taking up this challenge because its subject is Yoga, a sacred Hindu knowledge. I have put these problematic issues up front in this thesis proposal to foreground the difficulties I face in defining and discussing the key concepts of my study here.

Thereafter, I began to delve into the work of indigenous scholars who write on decolonizing methodologies. My contemplation of these works led me to theorize Yoga as indigenous knowledge and to search for a methodology that privileged an indigenous approach to research on Yoga. However, I found that such theorizing, to contextualize my case study on Yoga, was not available in existing western academic works. I was therefore motivated to create a methodology that drew from conventional approaches but was different in that it uses Yoga theories. My literature review, for example research by Elwy et al. (2014), suggests the use of the Eight Limbs of Yoga as a theoretical framework to study Yoga. It appealed to me because I wanted to use Yogic theories of change to analyse the youth's narratives of their experiences.

Due to my growing interest in decolonizing Yoga, my dissertation incorporates extensive theoretical content which has become as important to it as is the case study of young adults' narratives of using the Art of Living programs to handle stress. To me, this dual focus represents my realization that without the theoretical backdrop, I would have foreclosed the important discussion on decolonizing Yoga, the importance of the oral tradition in Yoga and the theorization of Yoga as indigenous knowledge.

I mention here a well-known Sanskrit *shloka* (verse) as a prayer every day, at the end of my Yoga and meditation session. The sound of the prayer resonates with such peace, joy and love - I feel it in my heart, my body, my mind and somewhere deep inside. The chant is as follows:

लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तु

lokāḥ samastāḥ sukhino bhavantu

(low-kaah'-ha suh-muh-staah'-ha soo-khee-no' bhuh'-vun-too)

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om, shanti, shanti. shanti

“May all beings everywhere be happy and free and

may the thoughts, words and actions of my own life

contribute in some way to that happiness and to that freedom for all.

OM, Peace, Peace Peace”

Ancient seers have said that is who I am – sat *chit ananda* – truth, consciousness and bliss.

Indeed, it is Yoga’s message to the world. Peace inside each person, leads to peace outside – in

the world. I think about this idea of “creating a peaceful world”. Does it sound airy-fairy,

idealistic and Utopian? Like a dream? “I have a dream,” said Martin Luther King. “Imagine, all

the people, living life in peace,” sang John Lennon. However, the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* say,

“*sarvam evam dukham*” - all of life is pain and that there are many obstacles on the path of Yoga

and to living with joy. So how can one live joyfully when we have so much stress – when our

minds, bodies and emotions are in turmoil? How about young people who suffer from so much

stress and take pills, drugs and alcohol to handle it. Can young people learn how to experience

inner peace? *YES!*: through the practices and knowledge of Yoga. “You may say I’m a dreamer,

but I am not the only one”, sang Lennon. As is turned out, the participants of my study are

dreamers too and they are living their dreams.

“I find that, that joy within the depths of experiencing meditation just is naturally seeping into all aspects of my life.” (Luke).

“I’m able to bring things back to love no matter what” (Tara).

” Self-love: having compassion and forgiveness for yourself that uh...when you can forgive your own mistakes, nothing can touch you” (Leah).

Through the narratives in Chapters 8 and 9 that follow, the youth yogis explain what Yoga means to them and how it helps them to handle stress and to keep smiling. I believe that readers will find the narratives of the young yogis, as discussed in the last section of the dissertation, inspiring, moving and educational. I believe that the foregrounding, extensive discussions in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 on decolonizing Yoga serve to locate the importance of preserving the Yoga knowledge that the yogis speak about and value.

¹ Turner, D. (2006). *This is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Chapter 1: Introduction to Yoga and key concepts

According to surveys conducted by the American Collegiate Health Association (2015), 30% of college students are experiencing levels of stress that is not only negatively affecting their physical, mental, emotional, and social wellbeing, but also their educational success (p. 5). Emerging research suggests that the knowledge and practice of Yoga is one effective way, among others, to reduce the negative effects of stress and promote wellness. However, there is much debate about what Yoga is and, why and how it should be used in the west, given Yoga's roots in India's spiritual and cultural contexts. As well, most research related to managing the stress of daily life has been conducted on mindfulness meditation based on Buddhist *Vipassana* meditation rather than on Yoga related systems and with adults rather than with college students.

The purpose of my dissertation research is to broadly understand how Yoga is being studied in the west as an approach to manage stress of daily life and, using a case study, to explore how youth, who stand as exemplars, use Yoga practices and knowledge to handle stress of daily life. To contextualize the youth experiences, I was interested in identifying the broader tensions that lie in studies on Yoga in the west. As a Yoga practitioner-scholar, I chose to use decolonizing methodologies approaches in my study and privileged indigenous voices and interests rather than the western, colonial ones. Through interviews with practitioners, my study aimed to explore and explain what sense the young people made of this ancient traditional knowledge and how they applied the knowledge to their lived experiences. Specifically, my inquiry aimed to learn from and about young adults (18-40) who had learnt Yoga knowledge and practices when they were in college or of college age. I chose the *YES! Plus Course*, of the Art of Living Foundation, as a case study because the programs are founded on Yoga and its ancient oral traditions. The cornerstone of the program is a unique healing breath program called

Sudarshan Kriya. I found only one empirical study published directly on the *YES! Plus* program for young adults, although there were numerous publications on the *Sudarshan Kriya* (the unique breathing practice that the *YES! Plus* Program) teaches in the context of adult practitioners. In my study, I aimed to gain an understanding of the youth experiences and their understandings of the ways Yoga knowledge influenced their self-awareness (of body, mind, emotions) their abilities for self-reflection and their relationships with others, including the larger community.

I situate my study in a broad and holistic understanding of education that includes spirituality and character education in personal ethics and values (Miller, 1988; Shorten, 2011). In Yoga, spirituality refers to “anything that uplifts the spirit” (Shankar, Feb. 23, 2011). Within this broad definition of education and spirituality, I explore questions of the usefulness of education in Yoga for managing stress and life in general for college students. My study supports a rigorous definition of Yoga that views Yoga not merely as a form of physical exercise, but rather a philosophy, a psychology of the mind and an ‘inner science’. I therefore use the small case ‘yoga’ when I use the term in the context of a physical practice and a capitalized ‘Yoga’ when I use the term in the context of philosophy and spiritual practices. In presenting the rationale for using Yoga as a philosophy of education and theoretical framework for this study, I contextualize Yoga as a form of Indigenous Knowledge and use feminist, anti-oppressive and decolonizing approaches.

Further to a literature review of the emerging research on the application of yoga for stress management among college students in the west, I studied how the western academia discusses Yoga’s philosophy, theory and a practice. It led to a chapter about decolonizing Yoga’s place in academe and showing its worth as Indigenous knowledge. Using a decolonizing methodologies approach, I anchored my study in the theoretical frameworks based on Yoga. I

interviewed youth exemplars about their experiences of using Yoga to manage stress and life in general. I conducted in-depth interviews, using semi-structured questions, with 13 young adults (ages 18-40) who had been regularly practicing for at least five years. I was interested in finding out why these yoga exemplars took the *YES! Plus* program and what was the impact of Yoga on the mental, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual domains of their life. In addition, I was interested in learning about the challenges Yoga, as a *dharmic* philosophy and practice, had posed to them in context to their different ontologies and epistemologies.

This study then explored the following three related research questions:

1. How is the western academia studying Yoga and what are the tensions that define this area of research when taking a decolonizing perspective that privilege indigenous interests and voices?
2. How do youth exemplars define Yoga and apply the knowledge and practice of Yoga, as taught in the *YES! Plus Course*, to handle the stresses and strains of daily life?
3. What are the theoretical, practical and ethical questions and issues raised about Euro-Christian western approaches to using Yoga, an eastern spirituality-based practice, as a tool to manage stress or life in general?

The study intends to use these questions to provide insight into the current debates in the area of studies of Yoga in the western academia about how Yoga can help college students to manage stress and be happy. My study sought to further the understanding about how such holistic, meditative practices can be understood as an educational right with implications for pedagogy and curriculum, within the context of decolonizing studies on Yoga.

The dissertation is organized in nine chapters. The first six chapters provide a critical analysis of the philosophical and theoretical approaches taken in studies on Yoga and serve as

the necessary backdrop for the case study and the analysis of the narratives of the experiences of 13 young adults of Yoga that follows. Chapter 1 provides an overview of Yoga and then discusses three key concepts: self-awareness, stress and experiential learning in the context of Yoga. Chapter 2 reviews academic studies on how Yoga is being used to help college students handle stress and identifies some of the major challenges related to research on Yoga. Chapter 3 examines examples of theoretical frameworks that are used in studies on Yoga and stress; I discuss the reasons I chose a Yoga-based theoretical framework for my study. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 focus on decolonizing studies of Yoga. In Chapter 4, I take up a decolonizing perspective to discuss the reasons Yoga can be theorized as indigenous knowledge. Chapter 5 discusses how indigenous scholars have used decolonizing methodologies to examine concerns about appropriation and to present respectful ways for non-indigenous scholars to engage with indigenous knowledges. Chapter 6 attempts to decolonize Indology by delving into concerns about the digestion (appropriation, distortion and denigration) of Yoga and related *dharmic* knowledge. Chapter 7 discusses research methodology used for this research study. Finally, Chapters 8 and 9 present the analysis of the narratives of the thirteen young adults about how they use Yoga to manage life's stresses and strains and ends with concluding remarks on the study. I end with an epilogue in which I discuss the contributions and limitations of my study.

I have added a couple of excerpts from the youth narratives in Chapter 2 in the section on the "Overview of Yoga" to provide a glimpse of the student narratives. I have not mixed the narratives of the yogis in the earlier chapters because I wanted to preserve the integrity of the deeply personal stories they told and respect them as yoga experts or exemplars. Similarly, in the two chapters on the narratives, I have kept the focus on the narratives and not brought the analysis of the earlier chapters into those discussions. The young adults were only asked to talk

about their personal experiences of Yoga and stress and not about the political or decolonizing aspects of studies of Yoga in the academe, which I discuss as a background to their narratives.

In the sections that follow, I begin with an introduction to what Yoga is and then provide a brief comparative analysis of three key concepts in my research: stress, self-awareness and experiential learning in the west and in Yoga. The aim of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with the subject of Yoga as a psychology, philosophy and a holistic approach to health and wellness in relation to the purpose of my study that is: to examine the ways in which college youth use Yoga to handle stress and life in general. The study is situated within the backdrop of threats to the indigenous knowledge of Yoga from several different western sources.

Overview of Yoga

When I say the word “Yoga”, I am talking about the whole tradition - not a practice of *asanas* or practice of *Sudarshan Kriya* or a practice of mantra-based meditation or a practice of *karma* yoga or bhakti yoga - but a whole tradition in which I was educated. A whole way of life, a worldview, and an epistemology...

- Margo, study participant

I begin with an overview of Yoga because my study is about Yoga. Interestingly, the period of the writing of my dissertation coincided with the celebration of first International Day of Yoga (IDY) on March 21, 2015. The motion, moved in the UN General Assembly in December 2014 and approved by a record of 178 countries, was a testament to the acceptance of Yoga in the world. The UN Resolution 69/131 recognized “that yoga provides a holistic approach to health and wellbeing” (UN, 2014, p. 2). The late B. K. S. Iyengar, the eminent Yogi, begins his commentary on *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, a Sanskrit text that is the authoritative treatise on Yoga, in the following way: “Yoga is an ocean of lore; this book is just a drop in the ocean. I ask forgiveness if I have erred or digressed from the subject” (Iyengar, 2014, p. xx). I could not agree more: the knowledge of Yoga, as part of India’s ancient indigenous knowledge, is incredibly vast and complex and I similarly seek the readers’ forgiveness for any errors and

omissions. The purpose of this section is to introduce the philosophy of Yoga, using a decolonizing methodologies perspective, in order to contextualize my study about Canadian youth using Yoga to handle stress and life. In her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies* Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a prominent Maori scholar, defines decolonization as having a “more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices” (1999, p. 1).

One of the research practices that behooves decolonizing concerns the decisions a researcher makes about whose work she cites and why; these decisions indicate whose voice the researcher legitimizes or delegitimizes – in this case, the indigenous or the western. Farah Shroff, in her writing on Ayurveda, the Indian science of medicine, makes similar observations about the interpretation of ancient Hindu texts. She observes that, “Foreigners tend to write from their own perspective and in some cases they document *Ayurvedic* concepts incorrectly. They often write for a European audience that knows virtually nothing about Ayurveda. Some of the writings thus try to “westernize Ayurvedic concepts” (p. 221). At the same time, Shroff observes that the Indian writers often assume that the reader has a basic understanding of the concepts, such as foods, cooking and nature. This assumption is because such knowledge is ingrained in the culture and tradition of Indian life. Shroff offers the classification of “insiders/outsideers” perspective to explain her choice of the authors she cites. “Some of these writings offer caste, class, and sexist interpretations of Ayurveda. This is also true of writings of outsideers. So none of the sources are flawless. I have chosen to focus more on the writings of insiders, as I am trying to understand Ayurveda from an Indian perspective” (Shroff, p 221). Similarly, I have used Shroff’s “insider/outsideer” perspective to choose authors whom I cite, with the additional caveat that outsideers are not only foreigners, but also colonized Indians and, insiders include foreigners who

are practitioner-scholars. In doing so, I move away from westernized academicians who have largely privileged their own western peers' writings on Yoga; I explore this insider/outsider as a tension in the academy in a later chapter on decolonizing yoga. Overall, the issue of 'insiders' and 'outsiders', in the context of who has the authority or *adhikara* to speak for the indigenous knowledge, has consistently been raised by academic practitioner- scholars and I discuss this issue in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. In my dissertation I have used the term '*Dharmic texts*' to collectively refer to Yoga and related sacred texts, that were originally written in Sanskrit, and later translated in different Indian and other world languages. It is related to the term '*dharmic traditions*' which is a collective word that is used by practitioner-scholars to refer to "the family of spiritual traditions originating in India which today are manifested as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism" (Malhotra, 2011, p. 3). These diverse traditions display an underlying integral unity at the metaphysical level and are open and non-aggressive in their approach to differences (Malhotra, 2011, p. 3). The term signifies the integral philosophical unity of these traditions despite their significant differences; some contest this idea and I discuss that in later chapters on the decolonizing and then, move on to the subject of the re- colonizing of Yoga (Malhotra, 2014; Malhotra, 2016). I have used the term '*dharmic traditions*' throughout the dissertation synonymously with "eastern knowledges" or "indigenous knowledges" of India.

This study proposes that the immense scholarly work on Patanjali Yoga undertaken by western scholars such as Mircea Eliade (2009) and Carl Jung (1996) never intended to promote *dharmic*-centered yoga philosophy or practice. Rather it was, and is, mostly geared towards sanitizing and secularizing aspects of Yoga knowledge to enhance western Euro-Christian philosophy, religion, psychology and many other areas of academic inquiry. For its patronizing and eroticizing gaze on the non-Euro-Christian world, much of the immense work of Orientalists

is criticized (Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988; Bhabha, 1994; Prakash, 1995) and the same criticism applies to the gaze of Orientalists on Yoga as well. As a practitioner-scholar of Yoga, I use a decolonizing methodologies perspective to focus on the work of indigenous practitioner-scholars who have translated, interpreted, or written commentaries on the Yoga texts. These texts were originally written in Sanskrit or another regional language such as Hindi, Bengali or Tamil. These include, for example, Swami Hariharananda Aranya, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Chinmayananda, Das Gupta, BKS Iyengar, and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. In this way, I privilege the voices of the colonially labelled “native informants” and view them to be the experts on the subject of Yoga. For example, I cite Sri Sri Ravi Shankar extensively because he embodies Yoga knowledge and he represents the knowledge keepers of the ancient living tradition of Yoga in which gurus orally transmitted the knowledge over thousands of years. I work to describe Yoga directly, privileging the perspectives of the indigenous scholars through the lens of my insider knowledge of Yoga, rather than indirectly, through those western outsiders who interpret the work of indigenous scholars through books, using the filter of Euro-Judeo-Christian worldviews. I therefore do not rely of western scholars, such as Andrew Nicholson, choosing to go directly to the indigenous authors, such as Das Gupta, his work relies on.

I therefore cite numerous Indian scholars such as Ram Swaroop, Sitaram Goel, Rajiv Malhotra, Subhash Kak and Dharampal, who write from an indigenous perspective. Lastly, I do cite the works of selected western authors, such as Georg Feuerstein, David Frawley, and Koenraad Elst, who support the authority of insiders to speak for the knowledge of Yoga.

A Historical context of Yoga. Scholars continue to explore the origins of Yoga, rooted in Indian philosophy and there are many contested views. The dispute is primarily between western Indologists who claim the ancient Vedic knowledge originated from an Aryan race of

people who came to India from Eurasia in ancient times. Many scholars reject the Aryan race theory as a colonial ploy by the west to claim ownership of the knowledge and reaffirm instead that the knowledge is indigenous to India (Feuerstein, G., Kak, S. & Frawley, D., 1995, pp. 153-161). Archeological findings indicate Yoga related knowledge, called the Vedas, to date back to 1900 BC (ibid, p. 105).

Yoga, a Sanskrit word derived from ‘*yuj*’ meaning ‘yoke’ or union, was cognized 5-6000 years ago in India by numerous different *rishis*, Sanskrit term for enlightened teachers or contemplative scientists (Malhotra, 2011, p. 73)). These ancient documents describe yoga as the ‘yoke’ to mean the union of matter, meaning the body, with *Atman* (divine Self), and hence the traditional connotation of yoga with spirituality. Another interpretation of the term ‘yoke’ refers to the achievement of union of the mind and body through the breath (Desikachar, 2011). In this explanation, the mindful or purposeful synchronization of movement of the body with breath leads the practitioner to higher levels of consciousness. In Yogic context, the term consciousness refers to “that which is beyond time and space: it is all just vibration, both at the individual level and cosmic and universal level” (Shankar, 2003, p. 4).

Some scholars state that Yoga is the union of the body, mind and spirit or soul (Chopra and Simon, 2004, p. 10). Malhotra (2011) contests this common use of the term ‘spirit’ or ‘soul’ as, according to him, these terms are not commensurable with the Sanskrit word, *Atman* (p. 252-255). Explaining the cosmological difference between the Abrahamic religions and Hindu philosophy, Malhotra explains, “In Hinduism, one’s true self is known as the *Atman*” (ibid), a part divine universal consciousness. Malhotra links the concept of *atman* is to the concepts of reincarnation and *karma* contends that this link implies that race, gender and other forms of identity are relative to this birth only. As well, not only humans but also animals, plants and

other creatures have *atman*, although only humans have the ability to experience spiritual transcendence. On the other hand, in Christianity, a religion based on historicity of the Nicene Creed, only humans have souls and the souls only live for one lifetime. Born a ‘sinner’, a person can achieve salvation only by believing in Christ, the Son of God. Such major differences in ontology and epistemology indicate the reasons why using Euro-Christian lenses to analyze Yoga is problematic, as I further discuss in the chapter on decolonizing yoga that follows.

The knowledge of Yoga, both the physical practices and philosophy, derives from several different ancient *dharmic* texts including *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradeepika* and *Gheranda Samhita* (Verma, 2010, p. 3). There are a large number of classical translations of these original works in Sanskrit, which present a vast array of interpretations. “Even intellectual giants like Vyasa, Vacaspati, Misra and Vijnana Bhiksu, on whom all later commentators depend, are in disagreement with each other” (Iyengar, 2014, p. xx). It is therefore not surprising that interpretations of these ancient texts continue to be a contentious.

Different interpretations in the west arose also because, “Many Sanskrit words have no exact equivalent in English and occasionally...words that have the same literal meaning in English have vastly different implications in the context of Yoga practice or experience” (Saraswati, 1976, p. 6). For example, according to White, “There are only four verbs in the entire work” (2014, p. 10) and the meanings of words can change with the context or intonation, that is the word is sounded out. As noted by Shroff (2000), modern translations offered different interpretations based on the epistemological and ontological perspectives of the translators, whether from India or from abroad (pp. 219-22). The earlier discussion on the problems of translating *Atman* as soul or spirit was one example. Another example relates to the theory of tri-

doshas that is about the interconnectedness of environment and humans: “The macrocosm is governed by cosmic forces, and the microcosm is governed by the principles of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*...However, the concepts of these three principles and the Sanskrit words, are very difficult to translate into western terms (Lad, 1984, 29). Meanings of Sanskrit words have cultural contexts.

Overall, the heterogeneity of interpretations of the extensive Sanskrit texts, along with the significant tensions and contradictions therein, are overwhelming for an average person. I therefore acknowledge that experts in these fields have differing interpretations. I offer the caveat that my writing represents my best efforts of understanding based on my own thirteen years of learning from the oral teachings of my spiritual Guru, His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. I further rely on further readings of the academic and non-academic works of practitioner-scholars.

The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, (PYS) written in the second Century CE, are accepted worldwide as the most authoritative text on Yoga and its author, Patanjali, is considered to be the world’s first psychologist. Patanjali is “one of the earliest systematic scholars of the mind sciences in the world. His famous *Yoga-Sutras* contain an elaborate theory and framework for understanding the mind, various practices to achieve specific states, and descriptions of what the practitioner experiences at each stage” (Malhotra, 2004, p. 292). Further, *Kriya* Yoga represents all the three paths of Yoga as discussed earlier: *Karma* (action), *Gnana* (knowledge) and *Bhakti* (devotion) described in the *Bhagavad Gita*, a Hindu sacred text written in Sanskrit, which also describes what Yoga is. The Sutras are considered to be written with irrefutable logic and reason and are regarded as the “most precise and scientific text ever written on Yoga” (Saraswati, 1976, p. 4); they therefore cover *Jnana* Yoga (path of

knowledge). The Sutras also include strong elements of *Karma* (action) Yoga (path of action) because they emphasize praxis, in the context of its social and personal ethics. The Sutras also suggests *ishwharaha pranidhana* or surrender to the divine and therefore include the path of *Bhakti* Yoga (path of devotion).

Dharmic scholars and practitioners accept the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* (PYS) as the classical text of Eastern psychology with firm philosophical underpinnings. Moral and ethical teachings form the foundation of Yoga philosophy that focuses on creating inner tranquility. However, unlike in the three Abrahamic religions, these ethical guidelines were not “seen as commandments imposed by an outside source but rather as commitments accepted in order to create the external peace and harmony that is a prerequisite for internal equilibrium and tranquility” (Tigunait, 1983, p. 25). The *Yoga Sutras* are comprised of 196 *sutras* or aphorisms (rules or formulae written in 4-7 words) and are therefore are a rather text in terms of the number of words and pages. *Sutra*, a Sanskrit word that means a thread, refers to a mnemonic statement that ancient *gurus* used to “codify their main thoughts so that their students could keep these teachings intact...A sutra text is a collection of many aphorisms arranged in numerous sections according to various topics” (Tigunait, 1983, p. 16). However, these short aphorisms are loaded with depth of meaning and several commentaries running into books, have been written to explain their meanings.

Patanjali begins his discourse on Yoga by enunciating, “Now I speak of the discipline of Yoga” which sets the theme of his exposition on an “Eightfold Path of Yoga” (Yogananda, 1992, p 72) which lays out the details of how to follow the path of Yoga. This opening sutra speaks to the importance given to discipline in Yoga because without the commitment to the experiential practice, Yoga knowledge is incomplete, even impossible to acquire. Patanjali

further enunciates the main message of Yoga philosophy in the second and third *sutra*, “*yogah chitta-vritti-nirodhah*”: Yoga is the stilling of the modification of the mind; the third *sutra* that says, “*Tada drustuh svarupe vasthanam*: Then the Self is revealed” (Hariharananda, 1983, p. vii). Vivekananda (1995) provides this beautiful metaphor to explain how the stilling of the disturbances in the mind leads to one having a glimpse of the Self: “As soon as the waves have stopped, and the lake has become quiet, we see the bottom. So with the mind; when it is calm, we see what our own nature is; we do not mix ourselves but remain our own selves” (p. 120).

The *Yoga Sutr*as has four chapters. The first chapter, *Samadhi pada*, defines yoga and the nature of consciousness, *chitta vritti* and is speaks to an already evolved spiritual seeker who has discipline and wisdom (Iyengar, 2014, p. 4). In the second chapter, *Sadhana pada*, Patanjali speaks to the spiritually unevolved, the ordinary person, to help them, too, to aspire to achieve freedom. For them he prescribes *kriya yoga*, dynamic action taken by a spiritual seeker or *sadhak*, through the eight limbs of Yoga, or *Ashtanga* Yoga. In the following section, I will expand on these two chapters as they have direct relevance to my study on college students using Yoga to manage stress. The last two chapters are less relevant to my study. Chapter 3 speaks of the divine effects of Yoga, which include having various *siddhis* or supernatural powers that come from intensive practice (beyond the experience of my study participants). The fourth chapter, the *Kaivalya pada*, is more esoteric and describes the transcendent state that only the few achieve but serves as an inspiration for the *sadhak*.

Patanjali’s theory of the mind suggests that the mind cannot be the source of consciousness because it too is an object of perception. In other words, “The mind does not illuminate itself” (Saraswati, 1976, p. 19) meaning that the *atman* is not an object of the mind; it cannot be perceived by the mind and it is beyond the mind. Further, Patanjali’s theory indicates

that the mind is the organ of perception (through the five sense organs) and perceptions are modified by emotions and past impressions (including from past life experiences and *karma*) and affect how an event or object is perceived (Saraswati, 1976, p. 16). Emotions are seen as transient and thinking is seen as an activity of the mind; observing the mind through meditation can lead to a state of 'No-Mind', as explained below by Osho (1978):

Become aware there is no mind, mind is an activity. It is not something there that you can pinpoint... If it is an activity, then don't do the activity; that's all. If it is like walking, don't walk...whenever you feel that you are uneasy, just look within, where that uneasiness is. The very look is anti-mind, because look is not a thinking. (p. 14)

Explaining the epistemological viewpoint of Yoga philosophy Patanjali comments that "Abiding in the form, in the nature of the seer, is Yoga" (Shankar, 2009, p. 15) implying that the form, the seer, is not the mind, as experienced through the senses or the intellect. In chapter one, further to defining Yoga, Patanjali describes five activities of consciousness, or *chitta* or mind that lead to stress or loss of centeredness (Shankar, 2009, p.15-21). The first mode of consciousness or mental activity is in seeking proof or *pramana*, which is the knowledge that the mind is constantly engaged in arguments or proof (Shankar, 2009, p. 17). Patanjali lists three kinds of proof-seeking mental activities that provide experiential knowledge. The first type of proof one seeks is in the form of solid experience or *pratyaksha*. For example, only when one sees, touches, feels, tastes or hears it, one believes it. The second type of proof one seeks is called, *anumana* or inference, which related to guessing when things are not so obvious. The third type of proof is called *agamaha* or that proof found in the scriptures, the *Vedic shrutis*. As a yogi, one has to remember that truth and "Self is beyond proof that the mind seeks; one's feeling of "I am, I exist" does not need proof (Shankar, 2009, p. 17). In the metaphysical sense, the seer, as the Self, is beyond proof, meaning it is beyond experiences through the five senses. The Self is the

observer, the one that experiences the senses, that is only experienced as *anubhava*, described as “integral experience” (Radhakrishnan, 2014, p. 475) or “direct intuition” (Sharma, 1993, p. 742).

The second, of the five activities of the mind, is called *viparyaya* or “perverse, contrary or unreal cognition” (Iyengar, 2014, p. 329). In practical terms it categorizes wrong knowledge that comes when the mind imposes or projects one’s “own view, ideas and feelings on others and thinks that is how they are” (Shankar, 2009, p. 18). The third activity of the mind is called *vikalpaha* or hallucination or fantasies, which could be either pleasurable or unpleasant due to baseless fears. In this way, the mind “either goes to proof, or wrong knowledge, misconceptions, fantasies” ((Shankar, 2009, p. 19). The fourth activity of the mind is called *nidra* or sleep and the fifth is *smriti* or remembering the past. When the mind is actively caught up in any of the five activities, then one is not in meditation, which is abiding in the Self (Shankar, 2009, p. 20). Meditation is facilitated through *abhyasa* or regular practice or application of the eight limbs of Yoga. Meditation happens when the mind is in the present moment. *Abhyasa* refers to the effort that is needed to bring the mind to the present moment, not dwelling in the past or future (Shankar, 2009, p. 21). Along with *abhyasa*, is the requirement of practicing *vairagya* or dispassion or detachment, meaning being centered or not being feverish about experiencing sense-objects. Shankar explains *vairagya* as follows: “Anything can change at any time, in any manner. The whole world is a field of all probabilities and possibilities. But your mind fixes things, people, ideas and places into definite items and quantities, quantifying them” (2009, p. 20). Together, *abhyasa* and *vairagya* can help the yogi free her mind from these mental activities that cause stress.

Patanjali describes nine obstacles to Yoga: two physical obstacles (illness in the body and illness in the mind), four mental (lingering doubt, pride or carelessness, laziness, obsession with

senses), one intellectual (living in a world of delusion) and two spiritual (lack of perseverance and stagnation in practice) (Iyengar, 2014, p. 79). Patanjali provides further details about the nature of the mind, which I describe later in my discussion of the other key concepts, and I will therefore not repeat here.

As mentioned earlier, the second chapter of the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* provides a guide to the ordinary spiritual seeker to experience *Samadhi* or profound meditation through the path of *Sadhana*, a ‘non-translatable’ Sanskrit word that roughly means spiritual practice. Patanjali refers to this path, as *Kriya Yoga* understood as the Yoga of action or path to perfection. According to Patanjali, *Kriya Yoga* has three inter-related elements: *tapas* (self-discipline of body, senses and mind) as the path of *Karma Yoga*, *swadhyaya* (self-study from the body inwards to the core of Self) as the path of *Gnana Yoga* and third, *ishwara pranadhana* or surrender to God as a path of *Bhakti Yoga* (Iyengar, 2104, p. 102-103). It is noteworthy that *Ishwara* is another Sanskrit ‘non-translatable’ word that is best understood as universal consciousness (*Hathayoga Pradipika*, 1972, p. 84); the term is often misinterpreted to mean “God” as understood in Christianity, as an external entity. Patanjali explains that *Ishwara* is that “in which the seed of all knowing is present” who can be addressed simply as “OM” (PYS: 1.25, Iyengar, 2014, p. 75); Sri explains *Ishwara* as the core of all this pervading consciousness is what we call “love”, which includes the individual Self (p.47). The idea or act of prayer to *Ishwara* is also to be understood in this context.

Much later, in 1896, Swami Vivekananda, in his reinterpretation of *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, described a fourth path of Yoga, *Raja Yoga*, as a psychological path, to emphasize the importance of understanding the nature of the mind towards achieving higher levels of consciousness (Vivekananda, 1995 [1896]). This view of Yoga has largely been lost with Yoga

now widely viewed today in the western world as a series of physical postures or *asanas*. However, according to Patanjali, the physical *asanas* comprise only one of the eight limbs (domains) of Yoga. The other seven limbs of Yoga relate to qualities of the mind, such as purity of thought, truthfulness and nonviolence that relate to the spiritual domain. The broad categories of the eight limbs are summarized below:

1. *Yamas*: the five social ethics or the universal vows:
 - a) *Ahimsa* - nonviolence in action, speech and thoughts
 - b) *Satyam* - truthfulness in intention, remaining established in the higher truth
 - c) *Asteya* - non-stealing, physically and mentally, not desiring things that belong to others
 - d) *Brahmacharya* - continuously abiding in the awareness of Divine consciousness and celibacy (moderation in all pleasures)
 - e) *Aparigraha* - not accumulating things unnecessarily
2. *Niyamas*: the five personal ethics:
 - a) *Shaucha* - cleanliness of the body and mind
 - b) *Santosh* - contentment and happiness
 - c) *Tapas* - austerity and self-discipline
 - d) *Swadhyaya* - study of the Self and abiding in the Self
 - e) *Ishwara pranidhana* - honoring and surrendering to the Divine
3. *Asanas*: Physical postures
4. *Pranayamas*: proper regulation or control of life force (Prana) through certain breathing practices
5. *Pratayahara*: Taking awareness inwards
6. *Dharana*: One pointed focus
7. *Dhyana*: Meditation
8. *Samadhi*: merging with the Self, a super-conscious state beyond words.
(Verma, 2010, p. 4-5)

The above description of the *Eight Limbs of Yoga*, referred to as *Ashtanga Yoga*, indicates that Yoga is not only about developing a healthy body but also about cultivating a calm state of mind that is grounded in self-awareness, ethics and spirituality.

The Eight Limbs of Yoga are not to be understood to proceed in a linear process; “The practice of Yoga...is not understood in terms of a succession of linear steps, but a step of polar tensions on a circle” (Feuerstein, 1974, p. 10). Rather they present the inter-related domains that

work together to move the practitioner towards the goal of the union of the body, mind and spirit and to live in harmony with others. In this way, Yoga also provides an ethical framework for interpersonal and social interactions. For example, the *yamas* and *niyamas* set out moral and ethical principles, such as truthfulness and nonviolence, which “make up a code of social and moral laws that regulate one’s relationship with others” (Tigunait, 1983, p. 161). Without the discipline and ‘purity of mind’ that these ethical and moral approaches represent, the practitioner is unable to sustain the spiritual experience of the higher states of consciousness; for example, arrogance, anger, hatred or fear are seen to be obstacles to progress on the spiritual path (Shankar, 2009, p. 50-51). In this way, Yoga can provide a practitioner a theory of change: both physical techniques and mental tools are used to facilitate a balance between the practitioners’ experience of the outer worlds of existence (as experienced through the five senses) and of the inner world of silence.

It is noteworthy that in Yoga, the mind is seen as the vast net of stimulation that comes from the five senses, whereas the intellect is seen as the faculty of discrimination. The Yoga practitioner needs to be grounded in the foundation of the first five domains (*Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama and Pratyahara*) that represent the external practices of Yoga. A proper grounding in these five domains better prepares the practitioner’s body and mind to experience the last three domains of Yoga (*Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi*), the internal practices that lead to the experience of peace and bliss (Saraswati, 1976, p. 10). In historical context, until the 200 years of British colonial rule ending in 1947, India was a destination for westerners seeking Yoga related knowledge. However, starting in the early nineteenth century there was a huge wave of Indian Gurus who took the knowledge of Yoga directly to the west, beginning with those who emphasized *dharana, dhyana* and *samadhi* (the last three steps in *ashtanga yoga*) the

meditative aspects of yoga. Swami Vivekananda is credited with bringing the philosophical knowledge of Yoga to the west, starting in 1893 when he gave his first rousing speech at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago (Saraswati, 1976, p. 10). Vivekananda explained Yoga in a way that westerners could understand it and relate to it. For example, in explaining the four paths of Yoga he declares:

To the worker, it is union between men and the whole of humanity; to the mystic, between his lower and Higher Self; to the lover, union between himself and the God of Love; and to the philosopher, it is union of all existence. That is what is meant by Yoga. (Swananda, 1989, p. 167)

In the above quote, Vivekananda simply explains the four paths of Yoga in a slightly different way than Patanjali, as described earlier; specifically, he explains *Karma Yoga* as the path of action and selfless work for work's sake whereas Patanjali had framed it as *tapas* at a personal level. Vivekananda also added *Raja Yoga*, as the psychological way to Yoga to expand on the importance of understanding the mind. Vivekananda's explanation of *Bhakti Yoga* path of devotion had an extended idea of service to God and his description of *Jnana Yoga*, the path of philosophy was similar to Patanjali, that is, the study of scriptures and application of the knowledge to daily life (Swananda, 1989, p 170-74). Together these four paths offer a way of life that can be adapted to suit individual interests or mental orientation. Later, other Indian Yogis and Gurus such as Paramhansa Yogananda, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and Rajneesh (Osho), among others expounded similar, yet unique explanations of Yoga to audiences all over the world.

At the same time, *Hatha yoga* (the physical practices) combined with *pranayama* (breathing practices), which form two of the Eight Limbs of Yoga, were popularized all over the west by gurus such Amrit Desai, founder of *Kripalu Yoga*. He had fought prejudice against yoga in India and in the west and paved the way for Yoga to become an international phenomenon.

Among the many notable Yoga Gurus was T Krishnamacharya, who along with his prominent disciples, B K S Iyengar, Pattibhi Jois and T K V Desikachar, adapted Yoga to western interests while preserving its integrity. For instance, Iyengar introduced modern elements, such as the use of props like blocks and bands to improve the stretch of yoga poses. Also noteworthy was the Hatha Yoga lineage of Swami Savanna Saraswati and his many disciples including Swami Vishnudevananda who established yoga ashrams worldwide in his guru's honor, Swami Satyananda Saraswati who founded the seminal Bihar School of Yoga, and Swami Satchidananda who became famous as the "Woodstock guru" (Sanu, 2015).

The various Hatha yoga gurus created diverse styles of yoga and even today, the different styles are recognized in the modern Yoga culture all over the world, along with the importance of teachers to be trained under one of these well-established lineages. It is important to note that while in the west Hatha Yoga was positioned as a physical exercise, the Yoga masters saw it a path to achieving *Samadhi*, uniting with the Self. According to BKS Iyengar, "in *hatha yoga*, *ha* represents the life force, while the *tha*, the consciousness. *Ha* also represents the very being – the seer, while the *tha*, is the reflected light of the seer, representing the *citta*. Through *Hathayoga* these two forces are blended, and then merged in the seer" (2014, p. 58).

The declaration of the first UN sanctioned International Yoga Day on July 2, 2015 generated significant discussion in social media and print media about what Yoga is. In an online article titled, Is Yoga a Hindu practice? Sankrant Sanu (2015) argues that while yoga comes from Hindu roots, yoga transcends religious identity and anyone could learn it. Sanu skillfully uses the analogy of a tree of knowledge to refer to the Eight Limbs of Yoga to discuss appropriation in terms of ethics and morality enshrined in Yoga. More importantly, he argues that it behooved a practitioner to acknowledge the debt of past yoga gurus or *rishis*:

Honouring the lineage of masters by proper learning and transmission of the knowledge fulfills the rishi's debt. If we simply learn it without honour, or distort it, it becomes a form of stealing. We are then stealing the fruit of the tree without nurturing its roots. If everyone were to do that, the tree would die. Stealing violates the *yama* of *asteya* as enunciated by the sage Patanjali in the Yoga Sutra. The *yamas* and *niyamas* (two limbs of the eight-limbed path to yoga or ashtanga yoga) are an essential part of yogic practice. Thus, stealing not only kills the tree, it also is an obstacle on the path of a yogi to progress.

In the 21st century, His Holiness Sri Ravi Shankar is one modern guru that has greatly inspired yogis in the west and the east with his teachings on Yoga and related knowledges. Over the past 35 years of service, Sri has greatly expanded the influence of Yoga *darshana* throughout the world through his numerous yoga-based courses and oral commentaries in English on the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Upanishads*, *Bhakti Sutras*, among others. These knowledge series, as they are called, are available as audio, video and written texts (translated in many languages) and through social media, the impact of his teachings has been greatly expanded. Since my doctoral research involves interviewing youth trained by Sri Ravi Shankar, through his *YES! Plus*, program, I will discuss the impact of these orally based programs at length as part of my research in chapter 8.

Tigunait explains that “All systems of Indian philosophy include a practical aspect, called *sadhana*, which allows the practical application of theoretical knowledge to solving the problems of daily life and to attain the highest goal of life, which is uniting with the divine Self” (1983, p. 18-19). However, while each philosophy offers “a practice of meditation, concentration, and mental control, as well as moral and physical disciplines”, they are different in how they are done in the different traditions (Tigunait, 1983, p. 23). For example, Sri Sri does not recommend a path of renunciation for his followers, which some traditions recommend. Instead, he teaches that enlightenment is available to everyone, including those who live normal lives with their families in mainstream society. Such differences in approach to Yoga have led to the

heterogeneity of Yoga and the resultant vast diversity of knowledge represents the richness of the knowledge, the description of which is beyond the scope of my dissertation.

The Yoga Sutras offers a complete guide for an ordinary person about how to maintain and promote a healthy body, a calm mind, and stability of emotions that allows one to participate in all the aims of life. According to Yoga, there are four aims of life: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. *Dharma*, as discussed further later, refers to following one's personal calling, within ethical, social, intellectual, spiritual and religious duties (Iyengar, 2104, p. 267). *Artha* related to "acquisition of wealth in order to progress towards higher pursuits of life" (Ibid). Sri Sri explains that wealth is not just material wealth. "Whatever supports life is wealth" (Shankar, May 19, 2011). It is important to note that in the path of Yoga, the pursuit of material wealth is one of the aims of life. However, yogis are reminded that the mind gets disturbed when the acquisition of wealth involves unethical means or it becomes an obsession. Similarly, the pursuit of *Kama* is related to the enjoyment of pleasures of life, including all sensual pleasures such as sex, within balance and equanimity (Iyengar, p. 268). *Moksha* "means liberation...It is the experience of emancipation and beatitude, possible only when one is free from physical, psychological, intellectual and environmental afflictions" (*Bhagavad Gita*, 1.30-31; Iyengar, p. 268). As will be discussed later, the way to control these "afflictions" (*kleshas* and *dukhas*) is the whole purpose of Yoga. All these four aims in life work synergistically. For example, my dharma is in academia, and while working in this field to earn money to pay for my expenses, I enjoy good food, travel and so on. At the same time, I follow the path of Yoga, doing my *sadhana* (meditation and other practices) and contemplating on Yoga knowledge.

Yoga offers a holistic and practical theory of being, rather than of thinking. Pointing to the difference between 'being' (experiencing the Self) versus 'thinking' (experiencing the body

and mind) and the relationship between the two, Osho (1978) declared, “Yoga is not a religion. It is not a philosophy. It is not something to think about. *It is something you will have to be; thinking won’t do*” (emphasis is mine, p. 6). With its focus on experiential learning and action with awareness, Indian philosophy, offers:

A way of life...It is not a religion, for it has nothing to do with the confines of ritual, dogma, institutions, blind faith, or anthropomorphic deities. Nor is it mere intellectual speculation, for it extends beyond the senses and the rational mind, and it provides methods to attaining experiences of transcendent Reality” (Tigunait, 1983, p. 7-8).

The argument that Yoga is not a religion is also based on the idea of *Dharma*, a non-translatable Sanskrit word that is often mistranslated to mean religion. The *Bhagavad Gita* most clearly describes the meaning of *Dharma*, which is derived from the root *dhar* (*Dhri*) and means to uphold, sustain or support and refers to the “Law of being” (Chinmayananda, 1996, p. 12).

Chinmayananda provides the following definition of *Dharma*.

Dharma means, therefore, not merely righteousness or goodness but it indicates the essential nature of anything, without which it cannot retain its independent existence. For example, a cold dark sun is impossible, as heat and light are the *Dharmas* of the sun. Similarly, if we are to live as truly dynamic men (*sic*) in the world, we can only do so by being faithful to our true nature. (Chinmayananda, 1996, p. 12)

What is one’s true nature? According to Yoga, as described in the Gita, it is up to each one to discover his or her own unique dharma, called *swadharma*, or personal call-of-character (Chinmayananda, 1996. p. 89). Each person must discover his or her own *swadharma*, according to one’s own interests, talents and inclinations. Yoga can be seen to value the uniqueness of each individual’s experience because “Indian philosophy represents the same single truth as realized at different levels and from different perspectives” (Tiguniat, 1983, p. 13). However, *swadharma* is firmly rooted in the ethics, both personal and social, for example, as previously described in the *yamas* and *niyamas* of Patanjali’s *Eight Limbs of Yoga*.

Yoga gives importance to the human capacity to think critically. For example, in *Yoga Vashishta*, a storehouse of Yoga wisdom, there is a reoccurring message about critically examining one's thoughts and assumptions. For instance, one can become aware how often one gets upset because of erroneously seeing unrelated events as linked to each other. This theory is explained through the story of a crow alighting and landing on a coconut palm tree and at that very moment a ripe coconut falls; "The two unrelated events thus seem to be related in time and space, though there is no causal relationship" (Venkatesanada, 1993, p. x).

In addition to the emphasis on meditation and related practices aimed at experiencing this state of "No-mind", Yoga is also explained as a practical "skill in action" and scholars refer to the following verse from *Bhagavad Gita* to explain the meaning of this idea:

*Buddhiyukto jahaateeha ubhe sukrita dushkrite
Tasmaad yogaaya yujyaswa: yogah karmasu kaushalam // BG 2.50 //*

Endowed with the Wisdom of evenness-of-mind, one casts off in this very life
both good deeds and evil deeds;
therefore, devote yourself to Yoga, Skill in action is Yoga.
(Chinmayananda, 1996, p. 117)

Shankar explains the practical implication of Yoga being a "skill in action" as follows:

When we do something, we do not do it half-heartedly thinking 'Will this happen or not?', or, 'May be it will be only half-done or so', or, 'Oh! This is going to take a lot of time', etc. Once you decide upon something, just do it. When things start to happen merely by our thinking about them, then that ability is called a *Siddhi* (extraordinary ability). The goal of human life is to be able to gain this *Siddhi*, and not just to enjoy the pleasures and material gains of the world. (Shankar, Oct. 26, 2013)

The description of Yoga as "skill in action" underscores the link between spiritual practices and living a purposeful life and therefore refutes the misconception that a yogic lifestyle is a form of escape from reality or the normal responsibilities of life. As Shankar further explains, inner peace leads to outer dynamism:

The inner peace of spirituality does not support complacency. Inner peace supports dynamism. When you are happy, you only wish to do something more. When you are enthusiastic, you feel like doing something better. (Shankar, June 25, 2015)

In addition, in Yoga, thinking is not linear; contradictions abound and are complementary. For example, darkness is the absence of light or the opposite of light or something that provides rest; it all depends of the context. As well, Yoga and related knowledge systems “are more relaxed and comfortable with multiplicity and ambiguity than the West. Chaos is seen as a source of creativity and dynamism” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 8). Malhotra refers to the analysis of great Indian yogi and philosopher Sri Aurobindo to explain these phenomena: “since unity in the *dharmic* traditions is grounded in a sense of oneness, there can be immense multiplicity without fear of collapse into disintegration and chaos” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 8).

In conclusion, this section intends to introduce the key concepts and terms of Yoga that the participants of my study are familiar with and discuss in their narratives of their experiences. One of the study participants actually raised this issue during the interview: “I am using Yoga terms with you with the assumption that you understand what I mean when I use them”. I have benefited from having a Yoga master as my living Guru. Sri summarizes the teachings of Yoga in extensive discourses and even his short answers indicate his deep knowledge. I give the following excerpt as an example of his brief explanation of what is Yoga, which in Patanjali words is “*chitta vritti nirodhah*” (PYS, 1.2.) Sri explains it simply: “When we remain happy and centered whether our desires get fulfilled or not, then you can say that you have killed or overcome the mind” (Shankar, Oct. 11, 2015). Sri has adapted his interpretations of the ancient texts to the modern context and often uses humour, science and stories to convey the meaning of ancient texts conveyed through the oral tradition of teaching. He interprets the ancient texts in his own unique way, particularly blending both *advaita* (non-dual, formless divinity) and *dvaita*

(dual, divine in form) approaches to the divine Self and *Ishwara* (a ‘non-translatable’ word for God) respectively. Sri Sri’s position as a leading Hindu spiritual master continuing the ancient *guru parampara* or tradition, entitles him the freedom and authority to do so. I therefore quote from his oral teachings freely throughout the dissertation and use his teachings as a primary source of knowledge of Yoga.

Key Concepts

Berg (2004) suggests that operationally defining key concepts can clarify their intended meaning to a particular study for the reader. By “declaring the term to mean whatever you want it to mean throughout the research...they [the readers] can understand and appraise how effectively the concept works in your study” (29). However, due to differences in language, epistemology and ontology, outsiders to the tradition often interpret the meanings of Yoga terms and theories quite differently from the insiders to the tradition. For example, while Western philosophy is an intellectual pursuit, in Yoga, philosophy is an experiential pursuit. “The Sanskrit word for philosophy is *darshana*, which mean direct vision...of truth and pure *Buddhi* (reasoning) (Tigunait, 1983, p. 3). These differences presented an existential challenge to me, as a practitioner-scholar of Yoga, studying in a western university, to find ways to balance the importance I gave to the two very different philosophies. While it was not my intention to do a comparative analysis of eastern and western concepts, doing so has been unavoidable to a degree. I therefore discuss the key concepts both from western and eastern points of view.

Key concept #1: Stress

Concept of Stress in Yoga. The *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* (PYS) are the oldest text on human psychology because they provide a comprehensive theory about the nature of the mind, as discussed in the previous section. In the context of my study on stress, I have found that Patanjali

does not provide a direct reference to ‘stress’ and in fact, I did not find an exact translation for the term ‘stress’ in the Yoga Sutras. Instead, Patanjali gestures towards the experience of stress as an outcome of an unsteady or distracted mind or the *chitta vrittis* or “modulations of the mind” (PYS, 1.2). The modulations or activities of the mind lead one to experience *Kesha*, which translates as “pain, affliction or distress” (Iyengar, 2014, p. 313). There are three types or sources of pain: first: *adhayatmic* which are of two kinds, bodily and mental; second: *adhidaivika* are those caused by the external source of planetary influences or genetics; and third, *adhibhautika*, caused by nature such as animals or the natural elements such as fire, wind, water. Here we see that Patanjali acknowledges that pain is experienced both from internal and external sources, including from sources over which one has no control.

According to Yoga philosophy and psychology, suffering is due to “one’s false identification with the external objects of the world” (Tigunait, 1983, p. 26). Stress can occur when the mind engages with the external objects of the world through the five activities of the mind: looking for proof, wrong knowledge, fantasies or delusions, sleep and memory (Shankar, 2009, p. 15-21). In other words, mental disturbances occurs when one forgets that the mind itself is “the object of one’s perception” (Shankar, 2009, p. 14) by the Self, as the witness consciousness.

Patanjali further explains that pain is caused by the following five mental activities: *avidya* (ignorance), *asmita* (consumed with one’s own interests to the exclusion of others), *raga* (cravings), *dwesha* (aversion or hatred) and *abhnivesha* (fear) (Shankar, 2009, p. 50-51). Briefly, *avidya* or ignorance is “giving importance to something not worth giving importance to” (Shankar, 2009, p. 50). For example, thinking temporary situations are permanent. *Asmita* refers to the tendency of the mind to get caught up with its ego, thinking about itself alone, colloquially

referred to being caught in the ‘me, me, I, I’ self-talk. “*Asmita* eats you up” (Shankar, 2009, p.51). *Raga* and *dwesha* are the craving and aversions, respectively, about objects of the five senses (touch, taste, smell, sound or sight); they can overpower the mind and take away one’s peace of mind. Finally, fear is also described as a mental activity that disturbs the mind.

These activities of the mind can cause both positive and negative experiences at the level of emotions, thoughts and body sensations. In Yoga, even positive experiences are seen as modulations that take one away from being centered. Patanjali says “*Sarvam evam dukham vivekinam*” which means ‘become aware that everything is pain’. Every event causes some pain because no matter how pleasant the event is, when an event finishes, the joy ends. (Shankar, 2009, p. 132-3). Also, when one is excited or happy, one can lose awareness of what is happening in the environment. Patanjali gives this caution in relation to both the day-to-day activities and to meditation (Shankar, 1999, p. 29-30). Patanjali cautions that positive experiences in meditation can be a distraction and cause a spiritual seeker to leave or fall off the path if they get caught up in these distractions (PYS, 3.52; Iyengar, 1993, p. 219). However, it is a misunderstanding to conclude from this idea that ‘everything is pain’ that Patanjali speaks against the enjoyment of material things or sensory pleasures; he only cautions about being feverish about one’s desires or losing control of one’s senses.

It is noteworthy that Patanjali does not prescribe the yogi to search for happiness as a remedy to remove *klesha* (afflictions or mental disturbances) or *dukkha* (sadness or pain). While the opposite of pain is described as *sukha* or happiness, pleasure or joy, Patanjali sees both *sukha* and *dukkha* as two sides of the same coin because both pain and pleasure cause mental disturbances, whether in the form of craving or in the form of aversion (PYS, 2.5-17; Iyengar, 2014, p.107-17). Instead, the remedy is seen in the striving for a calm and centered mind. In fact,

equanimity of mind, a kind of happiness, is seen as the natural outcome of meditation or a meditative state of mind. The goal of Yoga is to enable a practitioner experience a state of ‘*samadhi*’ characterized by “the continuous experience of centeredness or equanimity, in the present moment” (Shankar, 2009, p, 39). In this state, the experience of happiness naturally occurs.

More importantly, in Yoga, the ideas of pain and suffering are seen as different. His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has often said in his public discourses that, “In life, pain is inevitable, suffering is optional” to signify that how one observes, interprets and responds to events, circumstances and people in one’s life is seen differently in Yoga. Events are seen as happenings; how we respond to events is a subjective experience. Patanjali equates stressful responses as a “signs of a disturbed mind” and they are described as fourfold: *dukha* (emotional sadness or grief), *dourmanasya* (mental pain, despair or bitterness), *angame jayatva* (restlessness in the body or lack of coordination in the body) and *svasaprasvasah* (irregular breathing pattern) (Shankar, 2009, p. 65-66; Iyengar, 2014, p. 79). In this way, Yoga describes the experience of stress/pain at all levels: emotional, mental, physical, breath and consciousness. Patanjali also states that *dukkha* leads to hatred (Iyengar, 2014, p. 110) gesturing the link between the experiences of negative emotions and stress, which again is experienced all levels: body, mind, breath and emotions.

In public discourses, H. H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has often provided the analogy of a circle to explain that the stress or suffering experienced at the level of the body or mind resides at the periphery. At the core or center, there is only peace; the core of every human is pure consciousness, the Self, which is *sat-chit-ananda* (truth, pure consciousness and bliss). Through self-awareness and mental skill, the tendencies of the mind that are obstacles to having a calm

mind and cause pain and misery can be overcome (Shankar, 2009, p. 52). Accordingly, stress relief comes by stilling the mind so that it can reconnect with the core and experience that inner peace that is ever-present within the Self.

Concepts of stress in western thought. In their book *Mechanism of Physical and Emotional Stress* Chrousos, Loriaux and Gold (1988) discuss the history of the term “stress” which they state has been understood in different ways over time and “is, according to dictionaries, synonymous with the term ‘strain’” (p.3). The early discussions of stress were in the context of human physiology. The authors state that term ‘stress’ was first used by Hans Selye in the late 1930s in the way that it is understood today (p. 3) although the idea of stress was first discussed by Claude Bernard in 1879 in the context of “*milieu interieur*”. Bernard idea was that “all vital mechanisms...have one object, that of preserving the conditions of life in the internal environment” (Bernard, as cited in Chrousos, Loriaux and Gold, 1988, p. 11). Walter Cannon, in 1929, further developed Bernard’s idea of stress into his theory “of ‘homeostasis’ to describe ‘the coordinated physiological reactions which maintain the steady states of the body’ by integrated cooperation of as wide range of organs” (Cannon, cited in Chrousos, Loriaux and Gold, p. 11).

Hans Selye went on to develop Cannon’s idea of “fight or flight” response (Jackson, 2014, p. 84) to define stress “in terms of a specific reaction pattern, with emphasis on the pituitary-adrenocortical system” (Chrousos, Loriaux and Gold, 1988, p. 12). Selye later proposed a philosophy of life that could help people to manage ‘stress without distress’ and thereby greatly improve their quality of life and be happy (Selye, 1974). Later, Fontana (1989) provided a practical and useful explanation of stress as a demand made upon the adaptive capacities of the mind and body of a person. If these capacities are able to handle the demand and enjoy the

stimulation involved, then stress is welcome and helpful; if they cannot handle the demand and find the demand debilitating, then stress is unwelcome and unhelpful. The growing belief that stress is a condition that needs coping skills became the cover story of the June 1983 Time Magazine, a defining moment in the history of studies in stress. In a story under 'Health and Medicine', an article titled, "Stress: Can we cope?" by Maria Wallis covers physical and mental health effects of stress and ways of coping, and she talks about the famous quote by cardiologist Robert Eliot: "Don't sweat the small stuff. It is all small stuff. And if you can't fight and you can't flee, flow" (Wallis, 1983).

In a recent book, *The Age of Stress* (2013), Mark Jackson discusses the history of scientific studies on stress that began in the post-war years. Jackson argues that,

Despite our familiarity with the notion, stress remains an elusive concept. While we intuitively recognize when we are stressed, we have as yet no precise or consistent definition of the term 'stress', only a partial understanding of how stress is generated or moderated, and limited insight into the complex mechanisms by which stress affects our mental and physical health (p.1-2).

Jackson describes stress as "both a condition and a metaphor" (p. 2) and a "hybrid phenomena" that is a "product of both biological and cultural forces rendered visible by the technology and language of biomedical science" (p. 16). In the historical context, Lazarus (1984) developed the psychological stress theory that viewed stress as a relationship, or transaction, between individuals and their environment, and he proposed the notion of 'coping' with stress. He suggested that stress originated from some external demand that exceeded one's coping resources or ability.

Not everyone agreed with the implied approaches that are premised on the belief that reducing stress can increase happiness or stability in functioning. Some critics assert that stress is a positive aspect of life and not something negative. For example, Peter Hanson's self-help book

called “Joy of Stress” (1987) and psychologists Robert Sharp and David Lewis’s book called “Thrive on Stress” (1977) suggests mental tools and exercises of how to use stress in positive ways to create positive mental outcomes. However, such approaches to stress were later overshadowed by the vast majority of research that portrayed stress as having a negative impact on stability in human functioning and happiness (Jackson, 2014). Jackson expresses skepticism about programs, philosophies or interventions that seek to help manage stress by pointing out that, “Attempts to mitigate the effects of stress by promoting individual stability and control have failed to generate greater happiness or to stem the tide of chronic disease” (p. 269). Nevertheless, in the concluding paragraph of his book, Jackson appears to strike a compromise between the two opposing sides by pointing to studies that suggest that “a certain degree of stress and instability appears to be necessary in order to adapt, evolve and function” (Jackson, 2014, p. 270).

Stress has also been seen as a threat to the “biopsychosocial equilibrium and general well-being” of a person (Rabin, Feldman & Kaplan, 1999, p. 159). Ward, Jones, and Philips (2003) proposed viewing stress as a life-course process and recognized that individual differences in predispositions, susceptibility, and perceptions of stress affected how and explained why stress is differently experienced - physically, emotionally and mentally. More recently, a growing numbers of studies using neuroscience have shown the link between stress and the brain. For example, McEwen and Akil (2011) represent the growing interdisciplinary field of social neuroscience that recognizes the considerable impact on the brain and body function of physical and social structures that range from “molecules to societies” (p. vii). Studies on stress and illness today appear to cut across an ever-widening range of scientific domains including behavioral, emotional, physiological, cognitive, biochemical areas of inquiry

and, while these are not the focus of my research, I have mentioned them here because they dominate current studies in stress and provide a background to the understanding of stress.

With respect to young people who are the focus of my research, studies have shown that they experience negative emotional, physical and mental reactions when their experience of the external and/or internal demands that are beyond their level of energy or ability or are unpleasant in some way (Lazarus, Lazarus, Campos, Tennen & Tennen, 2006). Stress is considered a major factor in psychosomatic illness and a contributing factor in a number of psychiatric conditions such as depression and anxiety, especially among youth (McCraty et al., 1999). Stress can be mediated in various ways and these mediating variables can occur at the level of the mind, body, emotions or actions in an ongoing dynamic interplay. For example, stress can lead to strains such as difficulty in falling asleep or anxiety that can then lead to negative outcomes such as drug or alcohol abuse (Vo and Park, 2008).

While the foregoing authors have focused on the individual's ability and need to handle life stresses with better coping methods, others are critical of holding individuals entirely responsible for their wellness and instead hold society to be responsible for many of life's stresses and strains. For example, Boston and Louw (1987) argue that "meditating may make us calmer but it can't pay the rent" and advocated for broader social change and better value systems that made the world less stressful for everyone (p. 1-2). In the context of youth, Vo and Park suggest that, "Although it is important to strengthen individual's capacity to cope with stress and adversity, it is also critical to develop social policies that reduce stressors in the environment." (2008, p. 354). It would seem obvious that both approaches, individual coping ability and societal changes, are valuable and complementary.

Key concept # 2: Self-awareness

I found two different concepts in Yoga that relate to self/Self-awareness, *prajna* and *swadhyaya*, and I discuss them in context to western concepts of stress and to Yoga as an inner science or *adhyatmic vidya*. As will be evident from my discussion, comparing western and eastern approaches is challenging due to differences in worldviews, epistemology and ontology. In Yoga, the word for awareness is *prajna* and awareness is discussed in context to the mind, intellect, and the *atman* or Self. In his translation of the PYS, Iyengar provides a table on the “Types of awareness” and he linked them to the level of achievement by a yoga practitioner (PYS, 1.21-23, Iyengar, p. 72-73). The levels range from mild to intense awareness of a practitioner in relation to their ability to detach themselves from the five senses and thus become absorbed in divinity (Iyengar, p. 72-73). A yogi with “supreme detachment” is described as one who is “clear in head and pure in heart, heroic and supremely energetic” (Iyengar, p. 73).

In the west, self-awareness is seen in context to experiences through the five senses. For example, in education, holistic approaches have sought ways to enhance students’ ability for self-regulation through classroom interventions that enhance their self-awareness; these approaches have been found to reduce the experience of stress among students as young as age five (Shanker, 2012). I turn to Fogel (2009) to describe two related categories of self-awareness: exteroception and interoception. He explains exteroception as the observation of the sensations in response to external sources; in other words, it can be understood as an individual’s experience or awareness of sensations in response to external stimuli through the five senses (taste, touch, sound, sight, smell). On the other hand, interoception is interpreted as awareness of experiences, including sensations, coming from one’s own body.

Together, both exteroception and interoception, as related elements of self-awareness, can be interpreted to loosely refer to the Yoga concept of *swadhyaya* (Shankar, 2009, p. 101-3). *Swadhyaya* is a Sanskrit word that does not have a literal translation in English; it refers to the practice of “being alert, self-study, observing the breath, observing the emotions” (Shankar, p. 103). The concept of *swadhyaya* in Yoga is similar to Fogel’s description of the concept of self-awareness in that it refers to the awareness of the body, mind and emotions. However, *swadhyaya*’s concept of embodied self-awareness includes awareness at the level of consciousness, the Self, which is beyond thoughts or feelings; it involves the direct experience of the Self (Malhotra, 2011, p. 6). *Swadhyaya* therefore includes concepts of self-awareness that Fogel (2009) describes. Fogel uses the term 'embodied self-awareness' to collectively refer to its different components - the body, mind and emotions. According to Fogel, “Embodied self-awareness involves interoception - sensing our breathing, digestion, hunger, arousal, pain, emotion, fatigue and the like - and the body schema - an awareness of the movement and coordination between different parts of the body and between our body and the environment” (Fogel, 2009, p. 11).

According to Fogel, embodied self-awareness is different from conceptual self-awareness based on linguistic and symbolic forms of expression. The latter is rational, logical and explanatory and can be abstract, transcending the present moment (Fogel, 2009, p. 43). Embodied self-awareness is “based on sensing, feeling and acting, it is spontaneous, creative, open to change and it is concrete, lived in the present moment” (Fogel, 2009 p. 31). An example of that may be the “Aha moments or key moments in which people come to a meaningful and creative integration of understanding” (Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p. 26). The authors add that these are rare moments of deep learning and transformation can happen as a surprise, at any time.

In these rare moments the “puzzles and challenges become grounded in, and become apparent through, life ...experiences” (p. 26). All these ideas about self-awareness are included in Yoga.

At the level of the mind, the quality of the mind and body is influenced by quality of one’s awareness in three areas: perception (of the world, including awareness of how one is seen by others), observation (awareness of one’s body, thoughts and emotions) and expression (in one’s speech and relations with others) (Fischman, 2010). These three areas of self-awareness are related to the *Panchakoshas* or “five sheaths” of our experience: the environment, body, thoughts, feelings and the blissful inner core (Saraswati, 1976, p. 11). In this way, the awareness moves from the gross level of the self, starting with the body and breath, progressively to the subtler layers of the mind: intellect, memory, ego, and the *atman* or Self.

Yoga philosophy and practices have a strong component of embodied self-awareness at the level of the body, breath and emotions. In Yoga, while the emphasis is on freeing the mind from its turmoil so one can experience divine consciousness, the physical body is seen as a temple that houses the individual consciousness. Therefore, there is also an emphasis to keep the body healthy and Yogis are expected follow Ayurveda, the Vedic science of medicine. Ayurveda and Yoga are complementary sciences. Ayurveda is described in ancient Sanskrit texts and it explains the negative effects of repressed emotions on the body and mind (Lad, 1984, p. 40-1). According to Lad, toxins are created in the body by negative emotions. For example, he states that fear and anxiety alter the flora in the large intestine, which leads to bloating and causes pain, repressed anger, changes the flora of the gall bladder, bile duct, and small intestine and, it aggravates the fire element of the body. “When emotions are repressed, that repression will cause disturbance in the mind and eventually in the functioning of the body (Lad, 1984, p. 41).

Yogis are asked to be aware of their body sensations; practitioners of yoga *asanas* or meditation learn to observe sensations in the body, particularly to tensions related to negative emotions such as fear, sadness and anger, as a way of letting them go (Shankar, 1999, p. 155). For example, *Pranayama* and *Sudarshan Kriya* (breathing techniques) were found to be effective in helping army veterans diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder experience reduced symptoms of emotional, mental and physical stress; for example their sleep was better (Seppala, Nitschke, Tudorascu, Goldstein, Nguyen, Perlman & Davidson, 2013). In this way, Yoga offers a way to listen to the body and a way of healing body, emotions and mind and found to help youth experiencing trauma (Spinazzola et al., 2000). The differences among ideas of conceptual self-awareness, embodied self-awareness and embodied Self-awareness in Yoga can be encapsulated in the following three maxims: “I think therefore I am” (Descartes), “I feel therefore I am” (Greenspan, 2004; Fogel, 2009) and simply “I am” respectively. Yoga, with its focus on spirituality, goes beyond the duality of mind and body/emotions to take a unified, integrated and holistic approach to Self-awareness (Goswami & Chopra, 2011). Yoga offers the idea of the Self or consciousness as the witness or observer, the “yogi as an inner scientist is himself the instrument of observation and experience (Malhotra, 2011, p. 72). I end with an excerpt from one of the participants, Harry, who very beautifully explained the idea of witness consciousness as told in the parable of two birds from the *Rig Veda* (a classical Sanskrit text).

The story is, there are two birds who sit on the side. There is one bird who sees everything and just sits and watches and the other bird, I forgot, who sees a worm and flies down and catches it and it gets lost or something. And so it engages in the world and activity and at some point it turns around. It's tired after its journeys and it turns around and sees the other bird just peacefully sitting there and it goes back to join. It's to represent the bird that sits and watches is the witness consciousness. So part of us is engaged in the world and part of us is just watching and watching is where the rest is and the peace is. We nurture the activity part but we need to nurture the watching the witness consciousness.

Key Concept #3: Experiential learning

The previous section has already referred to experiential learning several times. In this section I discuss what is meant by experiential learning in Yoga and in education, as explained by John Dewey. Experiential learning is different from learning only at the level of the intellect. Experiential learning is about one's own subjective experience and can come from all the five senses and also from the sixth, described variously as intuition or spiritual knowing.

Experiential learning in Yoga has been explained on two levels: first, the level of the senses as experienced in the mind, body, breath and emotions and second, at the level of the Self, as witness consciousness. The Self is the observer is the one that experiences all the senses and the subjective experience is referred to as *anubhava* which has been explained as “integral experience” (Radhakrishnan, 2014, p. 475) or “direct intuition” (Sharma, 1993, p. 742). Together, these experiential learnings constitute *adhyatmic vidya* or an ‘inner science’ that are related to the *antah karana* or inner faculty of knowing (Malhotra, 2011, p. 72). Vivekananda cautioned, “It is imperative that all these various Yogas should be carried out in practice; mere theories about them will not do any good” (Swananda, 1989, p. 174). Here Vivekananda is emphasizing experiential learning at the level of the body, mind and emotions and especially to the direct experience of the Self, as the *atman* or higher consciousness. Later interpretations of his work by proponents of neo-Hinduism and modern Yoga have missed or ignored Vivekananda's emphasis on experience and have seen him mostly as a philosopher. Yoga asks each person to have “a direct experience the Self” rather than relying on any text or person to understand or believe in the existence of the Self (Hariharananda, 1983, p. viii).

In Yoga, experiential learning is also discussed in the context of the mind's activity of looking for proof of what one is seeking, be it material, mental or spiritual (Shankar, 2009, p.

16). Looking for proof through experience or *pramana* is described as being one of the five activities of the mind, the other four being *viparyaya* (the psychological idea of projection), *vikalpaha* (fantasy or daydreaming and fear), *nidra* (sleep) and *smirti* (remembering the past) (Shankar, 2009, p. 15-20). Patanjali describes three types of experiential learning through proof seeking: *pratyaksha*, *anumana* and *agamah*. *Pratyaksha* involves the mind looking for proof in the form of solid experiential truth; we believe it when we see it, hear it, touch it, smell it and so on. *Anumana* relates to experiential learning that comes from something that is obvious or from inference or guesswork (Shankar, 2009, p. 16). For example, if a stove's electric coil element is red, it is obvious or we guess or infer that it is hot and will cause a burn if touched. The third type of proof a yogi takes is from scriptures or books: it is there in black and white.

The quality of experiential learning of a Yoga practitioner is influenced by the three *gunas* or qualities of nature present in the body and mind and, the emotions and thoughts that are behind his or her actions and behaviors. The three *gunas* are: *tamas* (inertia or dormancy), *rajas* (passion or vibrancy) and *sattva* (luminosity or serenity) (Iyengar, p. 62). The theory of the three *gunas* is forms the basis of Ayurveda (Science of health) as discussed further in Chapter 4.

In his public discourses, Sri Sri has also offered another well-known Vedic theory of experiential learning from *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishads: *manana*, *sravana* and *nidhidhyasana* (Aiyar, 1914).

The ancient Rishis in the Vedas have said, 'Shravana', first listen, and then 'Manana', i.e., contemplate about it, or think about it. You listen to an answer, and you think about it. Then make it your own. See if it is in your own experience? Don't believe anything because someone says it. This is the basic thing that one has to remember. My experience is my own and your experience is your own. Don't take anything just because I am saying it. Simultaneously, don't discard what anyone says; you should be a good listener. First, listen, and then contemplate on it. Then, make it your own experience. Then, that becomes wisdom. Knowledge turns, and becomes wisdom (Shankar, May 19, 2013)

Nididhyasana, as state of spiritual knowing, has been described as follows: “*Nididhyasana* is a state in which a knowing is present without needing words. The words used during contemplation, can fall away and will lead the seeker to silence. It is a silence filled with knowing. The seeker can rest in this knowing” (Vadakayil, 2014).

Yoga presents a comprehensive theory of change based on experiential learning. For example, *Karma* Yoga gives the theory of action based on praxis. *Raja* Yoga gives several psychological theories about the how the mind works and how to handle mental stress. *Bhakti* Yoga explains theories of love and devotion. Finally, *Jnana* Yoga offers theories of knowledge and philosophy of existence, both as an individual and in society (Swananda, 1989, p. 170-74). All these theories have one common element: they ask practitioners to base their knowledge or understanding of knowledge on their personal experience rather than on the directions or opinions of others. As Vivekananda explains, “It is imperative that all these various Yogas (paths of Yoga) should be carried out in practice; mere theories about them will not do any good” (Saraswati, 1976, p. 174).

In the context of education, John Dewey (1938) transformed the commonplace term of experiential learning into educational language and made it central to the educational experience. For Dewey, experience is both personal and social; the two aspects are inter-related and occur in the social context and historical context. In this way, my study of youth stress is to be understood in relation to the youths’ family, peers, teachers, school, community and society. Furthermore, Dewey explains that experience has the criterion of ‘continuity’ meaning that the notion of experiences grows out of other experiences, and experiences lead to further experiences. Continuity implies that memories, contexts and experiences all work together to give meaning and direction to life and that they are ongoing throughout life. While asserting, “Experience is a

moving force” (Dewey, 1938, p. 38) he cautioned, “The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative” (p. 25).

As a doctoral dissertation in Education, my study postulates the teaching and learning of the ‘Fourth R’, the ability to relax, is an educational right within a context of social emotional learning (Goleman, 1995, 2011), holistic education (Miller, 1988, 2006) and as framed in the UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights. In considering a theoretical framework for my study on the *YES! Plus* educational program I draw on educational theorists who speak to the issue of experience, in particular on John Dewey’s theory of experience and Paulo Freire’s theory of ‘praxis’ which bring theory and practice together as learning. Discussions on experiential learning through praxis together with Bakhtin’s theory of ‘Ideological Becoming’ (1981) can be used to explore how issues of culture, language and teaching are implicated in education.

Dewey’s ‘Theory of Experience’ proposes two main ideas; the first idea is that, “All education comes about through experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25) and second, that experience involves continuity, which he refers to as the “experiential continuum” (p. 28). He further explains that continuity of experience is needed to “discriminate between experiences that are worthwhile educationally and those that are not” (p. 33). The criteria that he proposes to determine what is worthwhile are the experiences that promote “democratic and humane arrangements” rather than those that were “autocratic and harsh.” Dewey suggests that the continuity of experience involves, “growth, or growing as developing, not only physically but intellectually and morally” (p. 36). Emphasizing the relational base of human experience, he also argues that “All human experience is ultimately social: that is, it involves contact and communication” (p. 38).

Speaking to the connection between inner and outer worlds of human existence, Dewey says, “Experience does not go on simply inside a person” (p. 39); internal experience is expressed as behavior and both internal and external experiences were seen as interrelated and interdependent. In this way, inner thoughts of conflict may be expressed as outward acts of violence and together they can create a vicious cycle of violence on the level of an individual or group or society. “There are sources outside an individual which give rise to experience” (p. 40) and therefore for example, poverty, classroom climate and culture all influence young people in schools. The interpretation of such experiences depends on the “interaction’ of the person with the “situation” in which there is interplay of “both factors in experience - objective and internal conditions” (p. 42). In this way he explains that, ‘continuity and interaction are not separate from each other. They intercept and unite” (p. 44). Dewey also suggests that experiences are relationally based, and since individuals are all unique, there was a need for personal attention or relationships in education.

Dewey further suggests a theory of the mind and its link to freedom and education. “Freedom is not only external but also internal. The old phrase, ‘stop and think’ is sound psychology...The ideal aim of education is creation of power of self-control. But the mere removal of external control is no guarantee for the production of self-control” (p. 64). Here Dewey is recognizing that the environment may condition a person’s response but that internal control was what determines action. I am reminded of later work of Paulo Freire and Bell Hooks who emphasize the role of education in the promotion of social justice and democracy (Freire, 2007, 1970/2009 and hooks, 1994, 2010). One of my hopes is that this dissertation can provide an argument for the teaching and learning of Yoga (as part of the growing contemplative studies arena) in education at all levels of schooling, from grade school to university.

The experientially based educational philosophy of Dewey when linked to Bakhtin's theory of ideological becoming provides some important insights into the role of experience in the ways Yoga may be understood by the participants of my study. Yoga is not only a philosophy that can be contextualized to Dewey's theory of experience. Yoga also discusses the importance of communication, at the level of the mind, body and emotions, a Bakhtinian 'ideological becoming' which involves an ongoing experiential process based on intertextuality. "Human consciousness does not come into contact with existence directly, but through the medium of the surrounding ideological world...In ideological environments characterized by a diversity of voices, we would expect not only new communication and challenges, but also exciting opportunities and possibilities for expanding our understanding of the world" (Ball & Freedman, 2004, p 6). Bakhtin's idea that relations with others shape who we are is relevant to my study and as mentioned earlier, the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* directly speak about how to avoid stress in relationships (PYS: 1.33; Iyengar, p. 80). These discussions are important to my study because my study asks my study participants how they handle the stress of relationships.

The foregoing section of key concepts serves to provide a context to the terminology and concepts that were used in my interviews with my study participants. The concepts are all inter-related although I have emphasized the yoga terminology and concepts because my study is on Yoga – on how youth use Yoga. As yoga exemplars, my study participants were familiar with these terms, both in their western and Yogic contexts. The various concepts of Yoga, stress, self-awareness and experiential learning are important for my study on stress and Yoga because they provided the language and theoretical frameworks to analyze the narratives of youth experiences in the context of managing stress.

Chapter 2: Research on Yoga and Stress

In the spring of 2014, I completed a literature review on the subject of college students using Yoga and meditation to manage stress. My literature review involved an on-line search of several periodical databases including ERIC, Educational Abstracts, PsychINFO, Sociological Abstracts, International ERIC and CINAHL and PubMed. I found thousands upon thousands of articles on yoga and meditation that indicated to me the immense popularity of yoga practices among the public and in research. For example, a search with the key word “yoga” on ERIC came up with 220,988 results, “yoga and youth” with 32,071 results. I therefore had to use several search strategies to narrow my search. By using the key words “yoga or yogic AND stress management or wellness or health AND youth or young adults or college student,” and choosing scholarly journals published after year 2000, I was able to find articles that were more relevant to the current context. A search using “yoga or yogic AND health or wellness or stress management AND youth or young adults or college students” on PsycINFO provided 85 useful articles. As well, searches on different databases provided different results. A search on “*Sudarshan Kriya*” on the ERIC database led to zero results, 17 on PubMed, 115 results on the ProQuest Dissertation and Thesis and 368 on PsychINFO database.

In the section that follows, I discuss some of the studies that I found relevant and useful to my research study. I found that the vast majority of studies used positivist-based, quantitative methods based on medical and scientific approaches to research. As the sections that follow will show, these studies have investigated the effects of yoga and meditation mostly on people with a medically defined illness, whether mental or physical and to a lesser extent on the general or normal healthy population. The studies have used both psychological indicators such as stress and, physiological indicators, such as heart rate, cortisol, gene expression, and brain activity to

measure the impact of yoga and meditation on a variety of symptoms such as pain, depression, anxiety and stress. A number of studies have approached yoga and meditation interventions from the perspective of cognitive-behavioral science and numerous scales to measurement have been developed and used accordingly to measure outcomes related to mental and emotional stress or wellness.

Research on Yoga and meditation

I have structured this section of my literature review around an authoritative article published in the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA, 2014) on the evidence of the efficacy of meditation programs to reduce stress. The article is significant because it foregrounds many of the tensions and challenges that I have identified during my literature review. The article raises important questions and provides a comprehensive framework for me to organize and discuss the findings of my literature review. I will first present the highlights of the JAMA study and then discuss them in the context of several interrelated topics on Yoga and meditation that are relevant to my study. I critically examine how yoga and meditation have been defined, what research methodologies have been used and why, and what theoretical frameworks have been used or proposed in studies done on Yoga in the western academia. Since my study uses a narrative approach, on occasion I will tell some parables or stories to emphasize some esoteric or key messages or meanings and to provide a context for the topic of discussion.

The JAMA article is titled “*Meditation Programs for Psychological Stress and Wellbeing: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.*” It involved a team of more than fifteen researchers led by Dr. Madhav Goyal, of John Hopkins University. In declaring that, “The purpose of the study was to inform medical clinicians about what the evidence says about the health benefits of meditation so they can appropriately counsel their patients,” the study gestures

to the intended importance of its findings and to the authority of the medical profession to make such claims. The significance of the article was evident when, after its publication, Dr. Goyal, the lead author, was interviewed by media sources around the world. Academicians working in the meditation research community saw the study as “an ambitious review that tries to identify all literature that has been published regarding meditation and meditation research” (Walach, 2014, para. 1). A journalist who interviewed academicians about the study described the study as “one of the most comprehensive reviews ever published on the effects of meditation” (Wilmers, 2014, p. 4). Before I delve further into this report, I want to clarify that my critique the work of Dr. Goyal is not on him personally as a person of Indian heritage. This means that my purpose is not portray him as a ‘Sepoy’ as discussed by Malhotra (2004, p. 298). Rather I comment on his work in the context of the role he plays as a physician representing the western medical model.

The Goyal et al. study, with its team of over 50 researchers, reviewed 18,753 citations and 1,651 full text articles of which 47 studies, involving 3,515 patients, that used randomized clinical trials with active controls for placebo effect were approved for a meta-analysis (2014, p. E1). Among the 47 studies, four were from 1976 to 1994, twenty from 2000-2010 and twenty-three from 2011-2013, indicating a trend towards better study designs over time (2014, p. E6-8). Of the interventions, three quarters (36) used various mindfulness meditation programs (17 on Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, 13 on Mindfulness Meditation, 6 on Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy), 9 on mantra meditation (8 on Transcendental Meditation, one on another mantra meditation), and two on “Clinically Standardized Meditation” (2014, p. E6-8). The study summarized its finding as follows:

Mindfulness meditation programs had moderate evidence of improved anxiety..., depression...and pain...and low evidence of improved stress/distress and mental health-related quality of life. We found low evidence of no effect or insufficient evidence of any effect of meditation programs on positive mood,

attention, substance abuse, eating habits, sleep, and weight. We found no evidence that meditation programs were better than any active treatment (i.e., drugs, exercise, and other behavioral therapies). (Goyal et al., 2014 p. E1)

The study's conclusion and comment on its relevance is as follows:

Clinicians should be aware that meditation programs can result in small to moderate reductions of multiple negative dimensions of psychological stress. Thus clinicians should be prepared to talk with their patients about the role that a meditation program could have in addressing psychological stress. Stronger study designs are needed to determine the effects of meditation programs in improving the positive dimensions of mental health and stress-related behavior. (Goyal et al., 2014 p. E1)

In the sections that follow, I attempt to unpack key messages and implications, concerns and challenges that the study provokes for researchers interested in the use of meditation, Yoga and related practices for stress management and wellbeing.

The Implications of the JAMA review. When I first read the title of the article, the impression I got was that the article was only on meditation and not on Yoga. However, when I reviewed of Protocol of the study, I noted that the study had looked at Yoga and related practices. According to the protocol the key words used for the literature review cast a wide net and included the following: “meditation, mindful, Transcendental Meditation, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, Vipassana, zen, Qi-gong, Chi kung, Tai Chi, Yoga, yoga, Yogic, dhyana, asana, pranayama, sudarshan” (2014, Appendix B).

The key words “yoga or yogic, asana, pranayama, asana and sudarshan” (referring to the *Sudarshan Kriya*) indicated that the Goyal et al. study was relevant to my dissertation research. The other impression I got when I first read the article was that in using psychological stress and wellbeing, rather than illness and mental health as their two main constructs, the Goyal et al. study gestures to a holistic approach in their analysis of research on Yoga and meditation, reflecting Goyal's own education in public health at Harvard. However, as indicated in the

summary of the study, it is clear that the Goyal article takes a medical, rather than holistic, approach to research on Yoga and meditation. In the section that follows, I critically analyze the study and its implication for research on Yoga and meditation by looking at two key areas: defining yoga and meditation and research methodologies. I intertwine the discussion of the Goyal et al. study with the findings of my own literature review on Yoga and meditation.

Defining meditation. Defining meditation is intrinsically difficult, because by nature meditation is an inner state experienced at the subtle level of human consciousness.

Two stories told by His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a meditation master, can help to understand what meditation is and why doing research on it is challenging. Once two meditation masters had a chance meeting and their followers were eagerly waiting to listen to their discourse. Instead, the two masters sat together for a while with eyes closed and after that exchanged some social niceties; Sri Sri explains that the masters had already communicated on the level of consciousness during their meditation. The other story is about a mother who called out to her son, as he slept in his room, “Are you sleeping?” The son was perplexed about how to answer; he had been sleeping when her question woke him up. It is the same with meditation; when asked about one’s experience during meditation, one is already out of it. In public discourses, I have often heard Sri Sri assert, “Meditation is the art of doing nothing”. When leading a meditation, he often says, “For the next 10-15 minutes, just tell yourself: I am nothing, I want nothing and I do nothing”. Sri Sri explains that in meditation, one is not awake, nor asleep nor dreaming. He describes meditation as the fourth state: the state of wakeful alertness in which one is one with consciousness, which is “a vibration, a scintillating energy”. In Yoga, the fourth state of consciousness is referred to as *Turya* (Hathayogapradipika, 1972, p. 71).

The Goyal et al. study recognized the challenge of defining eastern meditations and selected only three main meditation “techniques” for their meta-analysis: mindfulness, Zen and mantra. Studies on mindfulness meditation formed the majority of studies included by Goyal et al. in their meta-analysis. Mindfulness meditation is a Buddhist meditation philosophy and practice that prominent Buddhist monks such as Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama have introduced to the west. Hahn (1990) has written 100 books on mindfulness meditation and together with Dalia Lama, he continues to be the inspiration for its modern proponents and neuroscientists interested in research the effects of meditation on the brain. Goyal et al.’s meta-analysis includes studies using the three main standardized interventions: Mindfulness Meditation (MM), Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). My literature review indicated that the mindfulness-based meditation practices often accompanied the practice of physical movements such as Hatha yoga and breathing exercises. Yet, Goyal et al. did not appear to recognize that Yoga includes meditation and aspects of mindfulness, and therefore excluded all studies using Yoga from its meta-analysis. This global lack of awareness has also become apparent in my literature review.

Research methodology. Many objections and criticism came from the peer-review process and were related to how the meta-analysis was conducted. For example, the study chose to include intervention programs involving only adult patients, those who had a medical or psychological illness. Only studies that were done with patients who reported a negative affect such as “stress-related outcomes (anxiety, depression, stress/distress, positive mood, mental health–related quality of life, attention, substance use, eating habits, sleep, pain, and weight) in diverse adult clinical populations” met the inclusion criteria (2014, p.1E). The researchers’ decision to exclude all studies involving general or normal healthy populations points to the

prevalent use of a medical model for research studying holistic practices such as yoga and meditation. This issue of methodology is relevant because holistic practices such as Yoga do not have the treatment of these affect-related illnesses as their stated purpose or goal (Janowiak, 1993); rather the goal is wellness or preventing illness. There are millions of people worldwide who practice meditation, the vast majority of yoga and meditation practitioners are those who practice yoga and meditation in the community settings or at home and for holistic reasons such as wellness. Further, the Goyal et al. report has been criticized for stereotyping of the medical profession as fixated on treatment rather than prevention. Walach, in his response to the Goyal et al. report points out the challenge of comparing yoga interventions to interventions using prescription medications. Wallach questions the validity of pharmacology-based assumptions from a medical model of intervention to study meditation:

They (the assumptions made) seem to be relatively close to the medical model... While this may be true for very targeted pharmacological interventions, although it may be even doubted for that, it is certainly not a particularly useful assumption for assessing the effectiveness of behavioral interventions that are quite holistic, such as meditation approaches” (Walach, 2014, section vii).

In fact, meditation is not merely a behavioural intervention but rather it involves all aspects of human experience – body, breath, mind, intellect, memories and the *atman* (as consciousness, the observer of the all experiences). As indicated in the section on Yoga, meditation is an inner science that leads to experience of peace within and that in turn mediates their behavior towards others.

Another objection to the criteria for exclusion/inclusion used in the Goyal et al. study was inclusion only of studies that used psychological measures to test for stress reduction from the meditation interventions. As Schneider (2014), also from the TM movement, points out, “The review was narrowly focused on research showing that meditation alleviates psychological

stress, so objective benefits such as reduced blood pressure were outside its scope” (para. 4). This criticism refers to the exclusion of the many studies that used objective physiological indicators such as heart rate, cortisol and other hormones, neurological indicators including vagal nerve, gene indicators and so on in their studies to measure effects of meditation and yoga on stress. Schneider (2014) responded with the comment: “These selection criteria resulted in the omission of many rigorous studies, which, when taken as a whole, show that there are indeed benefits for reducing stress and anxiety” (para. 6).

While research in neuroscience is not within the sphere of my research or academic field of knowledge, I refer to this important area of research because neuroscience is increasingly corroborating what Yoga and meditation practitioners have known for centuries: that meditation helps to calm the mind, body and emotions and experience peace. Emerging research in neuroscience is at the cutting edge of using objective physiological indicators to investigate the effects of stress and meditation. There is a growing interdisciplinary field of social neuroscience that recognizes the considerable impact on the brain and body function of physical and social structures that range from “molecules to societies” (McEwen and Akil, 2011, p. vii). Using brain-imaging technology has enabled scientists to measure how contemplative techniques affect the brain of war veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Seppala, Nitschke, Tudorascu, Goldstein, Nguyen, Perlman & Davidson, 2014). Specifically, in the context of youth, systematic contemplative practices, based on meditation and yoga, have been found to “induce plastic changes in brain function and structure, supporting pro-social behavior and academic success in young people” (Davidson et al., 2012, p. 1). Neuroscience also seems to impress many educators. For example, in a meeting in 2014 with schoolboard administrators

about introducing the *YES!* Program to high-school students, I was asked if there was any neuroscience-based research on the program; there were none at that time.

However, some have argued that neuroscience cannot explain the totality of the subjective experience of meditation or of the nature of consciousness. As Nassim Haremeini observes, "Looking for consciousness in the brain is like looking inside a radio for the announcer." An example is about a study of near-death experiences, Richard Davidson, a prominent neuroscientist based in the University of Wisconsin, who has spent years studying the neuroscience of meditation. In a recent article in the National Geographic, he stated that the subject intrigued him especially after he saw a monk in *thukdam* at the Deer Park monastery in Wisconsin in 2015. "If I had just casually walked into the room, I would have thought he was sitting in deep meditation", Davidson observed (p. 51, Henig, 2016). He was interested in studying the specific changes that may occur in the brain during such experiences. In an apparent attempt to gain empirical scientific data on the phenomena he has assembled some basic medical equipment, such as EEGs and stethoscopes, and set up two field stations in India and has trained an onsite team of 12 Tibetan physicians to test these monks. He planned to begin the testing of the monks starting in the initial stage of *thukdam*, while they are still alive – to see whether any brain activity continues after their death. "It's likely that in many of these cases, the practitioners enter a state of meditation before they die, and there is some kind maintenance of that state afterward. Just how that occurs, and what the explanation might be, eludes our conventional understanding" (p. 51). The article notes that Davidson's research, "though grounded in western science, aims for a different kind of understanding, a more nuanced one that might clarify what happens not only to monks in *thukdam* but also to anyone travelling across the border between life and death". (p. 51). While it is still unknown what this neuroscientific study

will explain about *thukdam*, the study raised for me some ethical concerns about research on indigenous knowledge, especially regarding spiritual, often sacred matters. A Buddhist monk, Sogyal Rinpoche (2002), provides the following description of *thukdam*.

A realized practitioner continues to abide by the recognition of the nature of mind at the moment of death, and awakens into the Ground Luminosity when it manifests. He or she may even remain in that state for a number of days. There is still a certain color and glow in their face...the body does not become stiff, the eyes are said to keep a soft and compassionate glow, and there is still a warmth in the heart. Great care is taken that the master's body is not touched, and silence is maintained until he or she has arisen from this state of meditation. (p. 270)

As indicated above, given the guideline that the monks should not be disturbed during this spiritual journey, it does not seem ethical to test them in this state. Therefore, I wonder about Davidson's study receiving ethical approval from an educational institution. My interest in this scientific turn is not for using neuroscience to validate the usefulness or value of Yoga and meditation to human development and wellbeing but rather in how neuroscience can help to explain the physiological mechanics of its impact on the human health. More importantly, I am interested in how the research in neuroscience can help to promote and safeguard the integrity and continuity of the authentic techniques of the ancient oral eastern traditions. Neuroscience is showing how Yoga and meditation can promote physical, mental, social and pro-social wellbeing, something that Yoga and meditation practitioners have known at the experiential level for thousands of years. I contend that such research also needs to come from researchers, who as practitioner-scholars are interested in the preservation of these ancient knowledges. Indian scholars are at the cutting edge of reframing neuroscience from the Vedic science perspective. For example, Subhash Kak's article, *The Gods Within: Vedic understanding of mind and neuroscience* (2000), discusses the usefulness of a philosophical, rather than the physical study of the brain in neuroscience, through the Vedic knowledge which transcends the duality of matter and mind.

My literature review found numerous scientific studies, with randomized control groups, on *Sudarshan Kriya* and Related Practices (SK & P) as taught in the *YES! Plus* Program. Most of the studies use physiology based objective indicators to show how meditation, yoga, breathing practices can calm the body, mind and emotions. For example, a study by Qu, Olafsrud, Meza-Zepeda, & Saatcioglu (2013) looked into the mechanisms of *how* yoga may change the “global gene expression profiles in the peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) in healthy people who practiced either a comprehensive yoga program or a control regimen” (p. 74).

The Art of Living official website (<http://www.aolresearch.org>) lists several independent studies published in peer-reviewed journals on *Sudarshan Kriya*, including a study using neuroscience. For example, a study by Emma Seppala et al. (2014) that found a positive impact of *Sudarshan Kriya* on war veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. These research findings on SK&P are examples that demonstrate the value of studies that have used physiology-based objective indicators to show how meditation and yoga affect stress. These articles also indicate the value of research using ordinary ‘healthy’ populations to understand how stress affects health and disease prevention. The relevance of stress management with general populations is important to my area of interest because my study will be looking at how college youth in general are using Yoga to manage stress. Researchers have recognized the need for stress management programs for the general youth population (Vo & Park, 2008) and I discuss this subject in a later section on youth.

In addition to excluding studies that used physiological measures to study stress, the Goyal et al. study also excludes Yoga and breathing-based stress management programs from their meta-analysis. The study notes that it excluded any “movement based meditations, such as yoga: “Iyengar, Hatha, shavasana, tai chi, qi gong, spiritual therapy, breathing exercises,

pranayama exercise, any intervention that is given remotely or only by video or audio without the involvement of a meditation teacher physically present” (p. 2). Since Goyal et al. included mantra meditation, which originates in the Yoga tradition; it is not clear why they did not include studies on Yoga and breathing-based programs. The rationale given for the exclusion criteria was the following statement, “Some meditative techniques are integrated into a broader alternative approach that included dietary and/or movement therapies (e.g. Ayurveda or yoga)” (p. 2). However, this statement does not adequately explain why breathing-based practices were also excluded or indeed why any these integrative meditative techniques were excluded. In my view, as in the view of Walach (2014) and Schneider (2014), the exclusion of these meditation practices appears arbitrary and unreasonable. According to Saatcioglu (2013), “Integrative medicine (IM) approaches have gained significant interest in recent years to provide a solution for the health care challenges we face today. Yogic cognitive-behavioral practices are among the most widely used integrative medicine approaches and include diverse practices such as yoga *asanas*, meditation, breathing exercises, Qi Gong, Tai Chi, and various others” (p. 1).

My literature review provided examples of studies that used different exclusion and inclusion criteria. Chong, Tsunaka, Tsang, Chan & Cheung (2011) completed a literature review of articles on Yoga-based interventions for stress management dating from 1998 – 2008. In the review, they use the key words ‘yoga or yogic, psychological stress, distress, and stress management or stress reduction’ and their exclusion criteria were opposite to the one used in the Goyal et al. study. They exclude interventions that included mindfulness but do not mention the term ‘yoga or yogic’; by corollary they include interventions that included mindfulness and yoga. Of the eight studies they examine, half are on healthy subjects while others are on adults with some mental health affect. Yoga interventions are mostly using Hatha Yoga with one study on

the *Sudarshan Kriya* (Kjellgren et al., 2007). Their review shows positive effects of yoga on stress reduction in a healthy adult population; the authors suggest caution in interpreting these results due to the small number of studies and the associated methodological problems.

A similar literature review by Birdee et al. (2009) is important only because the authors study the clinical application of yoga with a pediatric population, including youth. A review of studies with randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and non-randomized controlled trials (NRCTs) that include yoga or yoga-based interventions for individuals aged newborn to 21 years, identify thirty-four controlled studies published from 1979 to 2008, with 19 RCTS and 15 NRCTs. Many studies were of low methodological quality and most published controlled trials indicated positive results. The study shows that a large majority of studies were conducted in India (21), US (9), Australia (2) Canada (1) and Germany (1). It is noteworthy that eight of the studies on young adults 18-21 were on healthy and normal subjects. Studies vary in the yoga techniques and often include mindfulness and other co-interventions such as postures (79%), breathing (67%), and/or meditation (59%) and *shavasana* (corpse pose) separately, (26%). Nearly one-third of interventions include yoga techniques such as locks (*bandhas*), cleansing exercises (*kriyas*) and hand gestures (*mudras*), along with lectures on yoga philosophy, yoga diet, and devotional songs. Duration varies from a single day to an entire year, with an average length of 9 weeks. Longer studies and those that used techniques other than postures, breathing and meditation were mostly conducted in India. Similar to the Goyal et al. study, no adverse effects of yoga or meditation were reported in any of the studies reviewed. (There are some studies that discuss adverse events associated with yoga *asanas*, for example article by Cramer, Krucoff and Dobos, 2013). Importantly, Birdie's study does not include any study on the *Sudarshan Kriya* and this confirms that there is a gap in research in this area.

Given the importance and implication of the Goyal et al. study, the exclusion and inclusion criteria the study uses are subject to scrutiny for ideological and other biases, whether intentional or unintentional. In the next section, I attempt to examine the key messages of the Goyal et al. article using anti-oppression, anti-racism and feminist frameworks.

The Goyal et al. report makes the point that the differences in outcome “may relate to the way the research community conceptualized meditation programs, the challenges in acquiring such skills or meditative states, and the limited duration of the random control trials” (p. E9). As indicated in my literature review, yoga interventions have been relatively short, and therefore it is unlikely that participants had the time or training needed to achieve a level of expertise or to improve outcomes that depend on mastery of the mental and emotional processes. Moreover, as Goyal et al. and Janowiak (1993, p. 82) point out, historically, that meditation, which is included in Yoga, was not developed as an expedient therapy for health problems. Rather, as part of holistic approach to wellness, as Janowiak points, meditation was a skill one learned and practiced over time to increase one’s awareness towards self-realization. Nevertheless, as noted by Goyal et al., “Training the mind in awareness, in non-judgmental states, or in the ability to become completely free of thoughts or other activity are daunting accomplishments” (2014, p. E9). These abilities require mastery and other factors such as the qualifications of the teacher and to the interest and effort of the practitioner are influence them. While acknowledging the interest in meditation in the west, which has grown exponentially over the past 30 years, practitioners today face the modern culture of expecting instant gratification. That may explain why study designs have short time frames and therefore can be out of step with eastern traditions that emphasize lifelong practice and growth. To address some of the methodological challenges indicated by his study, Goyal e al suggest longer terms research

designs. “The translation of these traditions into research studies remains challenging. Long-term trails may be optimal to maximize the effect of meditation on many health outcomes, such as those trails that have evaluated mortality” (p. E9).

Yoga is a diverse, complex and multifaceted discipline with a wide range of styles and approaches; many programs such as *TM* and *Sudarshan Kriya*, among others, have standardized curricula that allow for scientific research in the way that mindfulness meditation is currently studied. However, tensions exist within Yoga traditions on the knowledge and practice of Yoga, and practitioners and researchers alike have a lot of choice in the type of yoga they learn, practice, teach or research. In addition to the content, the training of teachers varies in time and duration and these variations have resulted in a wide range of quality of practice and depth of theoretical knowledge of teachers.

All these factors affect the outcome of the studies and further complicate the challenges faced in evaluating Yoga interventions. Among them is the concern that research interventions appeared to vary in duration widely from single sessions to daily practice over weeks or months and they too affect outcome. Another issue, particularly in the context of youth, is that, “Repetition and practice may be critical to...creat[ing] healthy habits of mind and body so understanding the differential effects of dosage and intensity and how they may vary by age, population and intervention goals is a key goal for further research” (Greenberg and Harris, 2012, p. 165). Huppert and Johnson (2010) raise the issue of frequency of home practice, which varies and is often not indicated or discussed by researchers but may affect outcomes. Analyzing variations in intervention frequency and intensity indicated that limited exposure to practice might initially increase awareness of stress and emotional experience before observable benefits occur (Hayes & Feldman, 2004). The complexity of analyzing the impact of different factors,

such as frequency, quality and regularity of practice, further suggests that short-term studies may not adequately capture the impact of Yoga interventions. Researchers are now recognizing that Yoga and meditation practices are difficult to evaluate. In his study, Goldwert (2013) interviews fellow North American yoga practitioners and yoga teachers and reports their collective impression on research efforts as follows:

The essence of yoga is beyond the reach of such medical and public health research; despite the legitimizing findings it increasingly offers, they maintain, such studies will never explain the depths of yoga's healing potential because this can only be understood through experience, through feeling the body in practice, and through letting go of our 'left-brain dominant' way of expressing and knowing ourselves and the world - verbally, rationally - in favor of feeling... (p. 56).

Janowiak (1993) also raises a cultural issue that may limit meditation research and outcomes: "In a Western culture that places great emphasis on activity, performance, tangible and material success, there may be a social stigma associated with just sitting around rather than doing something constructive and economically viable" (p. 16). What does that imply for the teaching of mediation to youth in the modern culture of video games, TV, iPhones and iPads?

In summary, research in Yoga and meditation has grown exponentially over the past decade and researchers and program providers alike are working to explore and analyze several key areas, for example, study design, standardized curricula, teacher training, home practice, longer duration of intervention, to improve the quality of research and the outcomes. In a recent study, "Systematic Scoping Review of Yoga Interventions and Study Components" Elwy et al. (2014) points out that the while heterogeneity of Yoga reflects the richness and diversity of yoga approaches, it also makes the research comparisons of the various studies difficult, even futile (p. 221). Having reviewed 3,062 studies that used randomized controlled studies on yoga, Elwy et al. also finds, as did Goyal et al., that the studies were poor in design and the heterogeneity of Yoga presented a challenge to making meaning comparisons between the studies. Unlike Goyal

et al., though, Elway et al., in acknowledging these challenges in methodology, choose to not go on to go ahead with a meta-analysis of the studies; Elwy et al. therefore also chose to refrain from making sweeping statements to generalize the effectiveness of yoga interventions. Instead, Elwy et al. study compiles the different components of yoga that these studies included and went on to propose that future studies on Yoga include information of the components of the interventions. Elwy et al. suggest that *Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga* provided a useful framework for the various domains of Yoga practice that every Yoga intervention study could provide in order to make comparisons between studies more meaningful and relevant (p. 231).

The 97%

To ignore the evidence is to ignore the scientific basis of medicine.

- Schneider, 2014, para 11

In *Yoga Vasishtha*, a well-known text on the philosophy of Yoga, it is stated that, “The remark of even a child is to be accepted, if it is in accordance with reason; but the remark of even Brahma Himself, the creator of the world, is to be rejected like a piece of straw if it does not accord with reason” (Venkatesananda, 1993, p. viii). The quote conveys the importance given in Yoga to reason, freedom and justice. I mention this quote as I analyze, from a decolonizing feminist perspective, the Goyal et al. report’s findings based on only 3% of studies published on the subject. The objections to the Inclusion and Exclusions Criteria discussed in the previous section indicate how the report’s findings privilege the voice of the AMA researchers. As Walach, a researcher with the Maharishi Management Institute which promotes Transcendental Meditation, in his peer-review of the publication’s draft observes in the context of some studies that were excluded, “This leaves one with dubious feelings about a lot of the elements of this metaanalysis” (Maharishi Management Institute website, 2014, section VI, e).

The report reminds me of the public protests held during the ‘Occupy Movement’ of 2008 that sought to protest the hegemony of the rich and powerful in society. In the same vein, the Goyal et al. report, by its exclusion of 97% of research studies, can be similarly criticized for representing the hegemony of the American Medical Association. In the context of the question “Who benefits from the Goyal et al. study?” Wilmers (2014) asked Chris Dowrick, Professor of Primary Medical Care at the University of Liverpool, this questions and the latter pointed to a global surge in the diagnosis of depression and the resultant high rates of prescriptions of anti-depressions. Dowrick gives the example of USA where 11 per cent of people over the age of 11 take antidepressants to contend that the high rate of diagnosis is a consequence of what he calls ‘the medicalization of unhappiness’ (Wilmers, p.1). Goyal et al.’s study conclusion that, “We found no evidence that meditation programs were better than any other active treatment (i.e. drugs, exercise, and others behavioral studies)” (2014, p. E1) has been questioned by academics in the field and ordinary meditation practitioners who have studied or experienced the benefits of meditation and yoga.

Those, for example, the TM researchers, who have been in the field for over 50 years, and the millions of people all over the world who practice TM, contest the Goyal report’s findings. The TM website points to more than 350 peer-reviewed research studies on the TM technique published in more than 160 scientific journals; these studies are reportedly conducted at more than 200 universities and research centers, including Harvard Medical School, Stanford Medical School, Yale Medical School, UCLA Medical School, and Medical College of Georgia. Schneider comments, “A 2012 review of 163 studies that was published by the American Psychological Association concluded that Transcendental Meditation had relatively strong

effects in reducing anxiety, negative emotions, trait anxiety and neuroticism while aiding learning, memory and self-realization” (2014, para. 3).

In an online article in the “New Internationalist” magazine, Wilmers (2014) makes similar arguments in favor of meditation. She points to the global surge in the sale of pharmaceutical drugs for depression and relates that to the pressure on doctors from the pharmaceutical industry to prescribe drugs. She asserts that powerful lobbying by the industry have led successive editions of the Diagnostics Manual (DSM IV and DSM V) to have be updated to include forms of sadness which are common reactions to ordinary life events and which have then been treated by drugs. The article also points to the ‘white elephant in the room’ regarding the funding of alternates to drugs, which include meditation, yoga and others such as psychotherapy. She observes that studies involving randomized control trials with active control groups are expensive to conduct without proper funding and wonders who will fund therapies that do not benefit the medical field. Wilmers’ insights raise an important question: Who will pay for studies that show that people can sit at home and meditate for 20 minutes twice a day to get rid of anxiety and depression?

In summary, the foregoing section shows that there is significant research interest in the area of meditation and Yoga related practices for stress management. Since the Goyal et al. report gives a voice to only 3% of the studies; my discussion introduces some of what the other 97% of the research indicates. In the above sections, I have examined several methodology-related issues that the Goyal et al. article raises regarding research on Yoga and meditation. Many of these issues raised appear to infer that Yoga itself is not a scientific approach and this is an incorrect interpretation of Yoga as a body of knowledge. To repeat for emphasis:

In the *Yoga Vasishtha*, expounding a rational approach to philosophy, a common expression is that of the ‘*kakataliya*’: “a crow alights on the coconut palm tree and

at that very moment a ripe coconut falls. The two unrelated events thus seem to be related in time and space, though there is no causal relationship.
(Venkatesananda, 1993, p. x)

The rational approach taken in Yoga is similar to that taken in scientific research methodology; in the scientific method the relationship between two variables are seen to be either related or not related, and findings must demonstrate a causal relationship if they are to be acknowledged as causal. The Goyal et al. study with its insistence on research rigor is similar to the approach taken in yoga and it is unfortunate that the study's exclusion criteria lead to excluding of most research studies on Yoga.

Further research in meditation could address the remaining methodological and conceptual issues. For example, most forms of meditation involve training in and practice of skills that require expert instructors and time dedicated to practice. "Thus, more training with an expert and practice in daily life is supposed to lead to greater competency in the skill or practice, and greater competency would presumably lead to better outcomes" (Goyal et al., 2014, p. E9). This expectation sounds logical in western linear thinking as explained by Feuerstein (1974) who states that linear progression of consciousness is foreign to Yoga and its incorporation into Indian thought has led to many misconceptions (p. 10). In Yoga, one is asked to be more open to multiple possibilities, paradoxical truths and even unknown reasons or random explanations, as indicated in the quote from *Ashtavakra* about the crow alighting on the tree. These subtle differences between the approaches taken in eastern and western thinking, about what is meant when the term 'the mind' is used, are explained in the following comment:

Study of mind and consciousness through established scientific methods is often difficult due to the observed-observer dichotomy. Cartesian approach of dualism considering the mind and matter as two diverse and unconnected entities has been questioned by oriental schools of Yoga and Vedanta as well as the recent quantum theories of modern physics. Freudian and Neo-Freudian schools based on the

Cartesian model have been criticized by the humanistic schools which come much closer to the vedantic approach of unitariness.
(Aravinda, Prabhu & Bhat, 2013, p. S182)

Sri Sri answers the question, “What is the mind?” in a simpler language as follows:

The mind is energy which is all over the body. See, every cell in your body is emitting some energy and the totality of that energy around you is what you call the mind. Mind is not present in some point in the brain, but mind is all over the body...the aura of the body is mind. We think the mind is inside the body, it is the other way around – the body is inside the mind. Body is like the wick of the candle and the mind is like a glow around it. (Shankar, 07/2010)

It is in this context of the larger mind that Yoga gestures to when it refers to the effects of meditation on the mind. The mind is therefore not only not just the thoughts, feelings and sensations that one experiences through the five senses; it is also energy.

Perhaps the main criticism of the Goyal et al. report is the overall criticism made about the limitations of quantitative research, which suggest that psychological scales, tests and measures cannot capture the experience of meditation, which is an inner subtle experience. Such quantitative research approaches reduce a person to a machine; it reduces Yoga to a mechanistic intervention that “excludes notions of choice, freedom, individuality and moral responsibility” (Cohen & Morrison, 2011, p. 14). In this approach there is no space given to account for differences in outcomes related to subjective experiences; for example, a participant may be having a bad day, may be sick, may not be interested or engaged, may be bothered by smell or temperature of the room or any other subjective factor.

In denying the subjective experiences, the quantitative approach “fails to take account of our unique ability to interpret our experiences and represent them to ourselves...Social science, stands in a subject-subject rather than subject-object relation in its field of study, and works in a pre-interpreted world in the sense that the meanings that subjects hold are part of their construction on the world” (Giddens, 1976, as cited in Cohen and Morrison, p. 15.) In this way,

quantitative methods are limited in their ability to account for subjective factors on research outcomes, for example, the influence of interpersonal factors, such as presence of the teacher.

Using a decolonizing methodologies lens shows how the western medical model of Goyal et al.'s study has failed to capture the knowledge, essence or practice of yoga. In pointing out the challenge that the heterogeneity of Yoga presents, Goyal et al. and other western scientists are actually acknowledging the limitation of their scientific method. "The endless variety of Indian philosophy and religion seems to the European mind interminable, bewildering, wearisome and useless" (Malhotra, 2014, p. 9). The *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Hatha Yoga Pradeepika* and other Sanskrit texts provide a rich and varied range of systematized practical approaches to the body, mind, emotions and spiritual wellbeing. However, the narrow criteria selected by the Goyal study did not allow for the possibility that studies based on Yoga might be equally important.

The rich diversity of Yoga, in all its varied branches, is its strength and charm and efforts to over-standardize these fabulously diverse practices and knowledge are attempts to limit the creativity and individuality of these practices. "The western mind prefers everything to be fixed, separated and in its proper place" as defined by western essentialism (Malhotra, 2014, p. 13). In addition, Yoga and its related systems of *dharmic* philosophies of India represent living knowledge that has changed, grown and adapted to the needs of over historical times. At the same time, these diverse *dharmic* traditions have maintained an "integral unity" characterized by an "open architecture" which resists western universalism and attempts to limit its rich diversity (Malhotra, 2014, p. 12-13). As well, yoga values personal instruction because every individual is a package of unique experiences. Sri has said, "Just giving the road map does not work, you have to meet the student where he is and take it from there" (Shankar, 1999, p. 196). Can western

science cope with the diversity of yoga and personalized approach beyond turning that into a post-modern concept? Yoga is about spirituality, something that is beyond the political and cultural limitation of post-modernism and therefore challenges western scientists to study its effectiveness. “Yoga and meditation are rooted in indigenous Indian theories of self and mind...Indian traditions often start with an inquiry into the nature of the self (Malhotra, 2004, p. 292). The main point of this section is to disrupt commonsense assumptions about science and Yoga – to break Yoga and meditation out of the confines of the conventional understanding.

Studies on Sudarshan Kriya and Related Practices (SK & P).

In this section, I discuss findings of research conducted on the Art of Living Course provided by the Art of Living Foundation, based in Bangalore, India. The course was renamed as the *Art of Happiness Course* in 2014 to reflect its goal of creating a stress-free and violence-free society, and is similar in content to the *YES! Plus* program (for youth 18-32) on which my study is based. The difference is that the *YES! Plus* program components have been adjusted to address the developmental issues faced by youth; for example, it includes group discussions on issues affecting youth, for example, relating to school, parents, peers, sex and so forth. The course is based on the traditional knowledge of Yoga and includes a meditative breathing practice called *Sudarshan Kriya*. Over 6 million youth and adults, hailing from diverse traditions and backgrounds, in over 152 countries have learnt these practices. His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar cognized the *Sudarshan Kriya* in 1981, after a 10-day period of silence and meditation. It is a meditative breathing practice, with cycles of breaths in varying lengths and known to provide deep rest at the many levels of the body, emotions and mind. After the initial group practice in the course, individuals learn a short, 20-minute, daily practice that can be done at home.

My literature review indicated some graduate studies done directly on the Art of Living course, including on *Sudarshan Kriya*. Arielle Samantha Warner's doctoral dissertation (Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, USA, 2006) is in the area of transpersonal psychology and it explores the "psychological and spiritual well-being of women with cancer participating in the art of living program". It involves an exploratory mixed method study with 26 women diagnosed with cancer who began practicing *Sudarshan Kriya* and related practices she refers to as 'psycho-spiritual practices'. She used standardized measures of quality of life, spiritual well-being, perceived stress, and positive states of mind along with semi-structured interviews. Results after a five-week follow-up period of practice demonstrated a significant improvement in scores of all measurements; qualitative themes indicated that the participation in the Art of Living program was associated with "enhanced sense of spirituality, experiences of self-exploration, self-transcendence, and psychospiritual transformation" (p. 1).

Robert Carlos Gause's Master's Thesis (OISE, University of Toronto, 2005), co-supervised by Rina Cohen, and by John Miller, author of "The Holistic Curriculum" (1988), is titled "From crying to laughing: The transpersonal curriculum. Sharing experiences of transformative learning with participants in an "Art of Living" course: A holistic program for self-directed change in adult learners", his study is a qualitative inquiry involving hermeneutic phenomenology. Gause describes the Art of Living course as having a holistic curriculum with several experiential elements. The study described the various components of the Art of Living course, including the *Sudarshan Kriya* breathing practice and other related breathing practices and the social and cognitive-behavioural processes. Given its extensive discussion of psycho-educational theories, Gause's thesis is of relevance to educators and other professionals

concerned with the design and delivery of holistic learning programs across multiple disciplines and target populations.

In her Master's thesis in Cultural Anthropology (Carlton University) Susan Bedford (1993) carried out the first academic study in North America on the Art of Living program. An ethnography, employing phenomenological interview methods, her study's thesis is that, "Experiences derived from ritual practices such as meditative techniques are meaningful for the experiencer and may result in new views of the self and the world" (p.3). She provides a rich discussion and descriptions of the experiences of eleven participants who took the Art of Living course. She collected the ethnographic data, during her stay at the Art of Living Centers in Quebec, England and India. Through her formal and informal, often intimate, conversation and experiences with the participants she makes an important contribution in describing how spiritual practices influence how people see themselves. Bedford portrays the Art of Living practices as a ritual and her discussion of the course from the stance of a cultural anthropologist provided valuable insights. Bedford's contributes greatly to understanding the relevance and importance of researcher self-awareness in qualitative research.

All three of these studies are relevant to my dissertation in many areas and they inform my dissertation in the areas of methodology, researcher self-awareness and theoretical frameworks. The studies are based on experiential learning and all of these researchers, as practitioners of spirituality-based practices themselves, emphasize the importance of altered states of consciousness being an integral part of Yoga. What is different about my study is that it focuses on healthy youth and stress and, views the *YES! Plus* program as an educational program: in this way is like Gause's study. As fellow practitioners of *Sudarshan Kriya* and

related practices and grounded in the Yoga philosophy, the authors point to the importance given in qualitative studies to shared cultural experiences with participants. I draw on Bedford here:

Without cultural similarities, the common reference points possible when language, symbol and experience in the ritual domain will become fewer and more tenuous. Without access to the same fund of cultural metaphor, simile and analogy, constant lack of match between experience and reference point may well result (p. 96).

Bedford's comment reminds me of the issues of culture, language and teaching in all educational milieus of which the Art of Living course and *YES! Plus* program are examples. The differences and similarities in approaches to the analysis of qualitative data analysis, especially related to studies that include discussion of altered states on consciousness, have been informative and influenced the development of the design of my study. In addition to the theses and dissertation above, I found 112 other graduate studies that referred to *Sudarshan Kriya* as an example of how yoga-based breathing based practices can help with health or healing and this indicated to me the growing interest among scholars in this area. In the section that follows, I discuss some research directly related to *Sudarshan Kriya*.

The Science of Breath and Sudarshan Kriya. Numerous studies have shown the beneficial effects of breathing practices on health. The *Sudarshan Kriya* referred to as the 'healing breath' technique in the past featured prominently in my literature review; there is emerging interest in studying the power of the breath to heal the body and mind. In Sanskrit, the breath refers to '*prana*', which is similar to the idea of chi in Chinese medicine. According to Subbalakshmi et al. (2005) "Prana refers to all forms of energy in the universe" (p. 11). In a study on stress, Umezawa (2001) posits that the voluntary modification of breathing patterns in order to change mental or physical tension states was the most utilized technique for managing stress. His study involved 217 Japanese male and female graduate students who reported

experiencing stressful events in their lives and he provided them with relaxation strategies to manage their stress. Participants were asked this question: “How do you control yourself under the stressful situation in your daily life?” Sixty percent of the participants reported that they control breathing to calm down in stressful situations. Furthermore, participants identified diaphragmatic breathing as an effective strategy to calm themselves down. Similarly, the impact of ‘yogic breathing’ had been studied by Armand’s doctoral research (2011).

Studies in psychophysiology offer two important explanations to how breathing practices may contribute to the lowering of stress, as part of emotional self-regulation. First, researchers have found that brain activity is reflected in the breath, emotions and sensations and their interrelationships; for example, emotional intensity alters heart rhythm patterns (Bloch, Lemeignan & Aguilera, 1991; Phillipot et al., 2002; Takase and Haruki, 2001). The second explanation about how breath can be restorative is provided by an explanation about ‘respiratory sinus arrhythmia’ (RSA). The quote below by Fogel (2009, p. 233), explains the physiological mechanics of RSA and its link to breathing and to stress or relaxation.

In normal breathing, inhalation is controlled by the phrenic motor nerve to the diaphragm and the intercostals. It is accompanied by sympathetic nerve activation that increases heart rate (HR) and blood pressure (PB). Exhalation is the inhibition of the phrenic nerve and the relaxation of the diaphragm and intercostals, accompanied by the parasympathetic (vagus) nerve activation that slows HR and BP. RSA is the normal variability in HR between inspiration and expiration. If there is a sense of threat or high metabolic demands from exercise, the sympathetic activation continues through the expiration phase leading to increased tension of breathing muscles, increased HR and BP, and a decrease in RSA (the heart does not slow during expiration). Low RSA is an indicator of both physiological and psychological stress.

Since low RSA can be normalized through the voluntary control of breathing patterns, breathing based guided relaxation techniques have the potential to transform mental and physical health.

Research into meditation and breathing has shown the interconnectedness of breath with emotions and physical sensations (Bloch et al., 1999; Phillipot et al. 2002). Phillipot et al. studied “the relationship between emotional feelings and respiration” (p. 2). Their research indicates that just by inducing people to voluntarily breathe in different patterns researchers were able to predict corresponding emotions. This research shows that one can consciously influence one’s emotions through one’s breathing pattern and points to the secular nature of breathing practices. It led me to conclude that scientific research has gestured to the important fact that the breath has no religion; in fact, in Yoga breathing is seen as a science (Sovik, 2000). Brown and Gerbarg (2005b) found that breathing technique in the *Sudarshan Kriya* “stimulates the vagal nerve afferents to the brain, ultimately increasing attention and vigilance...Stimulation of the vagal efferent neurons induces a parasympathetic reduction in heart rate and most likely a withdrawal of the sympathetic input to the heart” (p. 138). The researchers conclude that the regular practice of *Sudarshan Kriya* leads to a “state of alert but calm, rather than alert but scared” (p. 138). Overall, *Sudarshan Kriya* is a spiritual practice that promotes well-being (Pandya, 2014).

In addition to the two previously mentioned studies on *Sudarshan Kriya* and Related Practices (SK and P) by Qu, Olafsrud, Meza-Zepeda, & Saatcioglu (2013) and Saatcioglu (2013), I found 17 other studies on SK & P when I did a Medline search on PubMed. A literature review completed by Zope and Zope (2013) comments on several of these studies on the health effects of SK &P, including many studies that involved randomized clinical trials that the Goyal et al. study could potentially have included in its meta-analysis if the exclusion criteria had included breathing based programs.

Research on Yoga and youth

According to the 2013 Canadian national survey of college students (ACHA-National College Health Assessment II), while 88.7% of students reported their physical health as ‘very good or excellent’, there were significant concerns about their emotional and mental health. Students reported the following main factors affecting their academic performance: stress (38.6%), anxiety (28.4%), sleep difficulties (27.10), internet use (21%) and depression (17.3%); 25% reported experiencing a ‘verbal threat’. At the Ontario Academy of Art and Design, the rates of depression were the highest, with 66% of students saying they felt hopeless at some point in the past 12 months and 15% saying they seriously considered suicide.

In the context of the growing pressures of 21st century lifestyle, recent research articles with titles such as “Do children have stress?” (Shanker, 2012) indicate that children as young as age five show signs of strain of stress leading to difficulties in self-regulation and learning. A Census of 103,000 grade 7-12 students in the Toronto District School Board found significant concerns about the emotional well-being of students. For example, 66% of grade 7-8 students and 72% of grades 9-12 students reported that they feel anxious sometimes or all the time; 40% of grades 7-8 students and 66% of the grades 9-12 students reported that they were “under a lot of stress” sometimes or all the time (TDSB, 2012). These reports are alarming and concerning.

McCraty et al. (1999) report that, “Unmanaged emotional reactions to stress not only lead to behavior problems in young people but also create physiological conditions that inhibit learning and potentially increase the risk of disease” (p. 247). This linking of stress to risky behavior among youth has been a subject of emerging research. For example, in a literature review of programs aimed at treating youth with mental health issues, Vo and Park (2008) expressed the need for programs in stress management. “Youth are increasingly facing mental

health and behavioral factors such as injury and violence, risky sexual behavior, substance use, and suicide so the role of stress management in mental health and risk behaviors is particularly important in this age group” (p. 361). The study indicated that stress reduction programs may be useful to prevent and reduce risky behavior outcomes associated with stress. They suggested that such programs need to “attend not only to risks and negative health outcomes of stress and youth, but also maintain an emphasis on understanding and promoting positive youth development and resiliency, so that our youth can achieve physical and mental well-being” (Vo and Park, 2008, p. 361).

The idea of education in stress management as a means to promote the overall development of students is supported by the intent of the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights (UDHR, Article 26 (2), 1948). It declares that, “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.” In this way, my research takes the position that education for positive youth development, that includes education in how to manage stress, should be considered a human right. Kelly (2003) Vo and Park (2008) indicate that stress reduction programs using strategies from mindfulness and relaxation could be implemented in schools, youth development programs or juvenile justice settings and may be useful to prevent and reduce risky behavior outcomes associated with stress. In the field of education, Roxana Ng, a Professor at Ontario Institute in Education Studies, has written about the benefits of using the Chinese breathing and meditation practices of Qi Gong with university students (Ng, 2009). Mindfulness based programs such as MINDUP! are now being taught in schools in Canada (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Heesoon Bai at the Faculty of Education at the Simon Fraser University has also written about the benefits of breath and mindfulness meditation with youth (2001). There is

growing interest in these holistic approaches to education in the academia. Sandra Wilde, at the University of Calgary, in her review of the book, *Cross Cultural Studies in Curriculum: Eastern Thought, Educational Insights*, edited by Eppert (2008) speaks about the importance of bringing meditation and breathing into the curriculum dialogue. Cohen (2010) provides details of mindfulness in school curricula. To promote education in stress management in schools, Janowiak (1993) noted, more than two decades ago, that people who suffer from stress have difficulty accessing education in stress management and by the time they get to a clinical setting seeking help, they find themselves in an advanced stage of mental stress. He asserts:

However, the educational setting offers a unique opportunity for preventive stress-control measures. A majority of children, adolescents, and young adults spent the major portion of their waking hours at school, and educational institutions provide at centralized locations a large number of individuals who are available for stress prevention programs, whether or not they are classified as patients or students (p. 11).

In my initial literature research, while I was unable to find a single published study or dissertation that have been done directly on the *YES! Plus* program experiences of college students, I found one article on the *YES!* Program taught to high school students. A publication in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* indicates “that adolescents undergoing the *YES!* program show reduced impulsive behavior. Given the link between impulsivity and harmful coping behavior, the program may be protective against risk behavior detrimental to adolescent health” (Ghahremani et al., 2013, p. 1). However, in January 2016, there was an article published on a study on *YES! Plus* in the US in which 75 young adults participated (Goldstein et al, 2016). In a one-month follow-up investigation, after the youth had taken the *YES Plus* course, the study found significant improvement in emotional regulation, social connectedness, life satisfaction and affect. The study found significant reduction in sadness, fatigue, depression and perceived stress. The study has used a standardized scale (PANAS, Positive and negative Affect Scale).

The study concludes, “These findings suggest that a life skills workshop integrating yogic breathing techniques may provide self-empowering tools for enhancing well-being in young adults. Future research is indicated to further explore these effects, particularly in regard to vagal tone and other aspects of stress physiology” (p. 1). In the discussion section, the researchers stated that the findings of their study are limited because the study involved non-randomized trials and did not have a control group. As well, the results were based on self-reporting.

A search with key words “Yoga or yogic, and health or wellness or stress management, or youth or young adults or college students” garnered 85 results but none of them involved research on a university or college course being taught specifically on stress management. Rather, all the studies involved researchers accessing students as subjects attending a variety of regular college courses. In the following section, I discuss some of the articles that were on college students and stress to show the trends, conversations and tensions in this research area, including on methodology and theories.

A review of studies done on Yoga indicates that most studies conflate yoga with exercise. Many studies use quantitative approaches to compare effectiveness of Yoga to reduce stress in comparison to other physical activities and I mention a few here to provide some insight into the approaches taken. Wei, Kilpatrick, Naquin, & Cole’s (2006) study compare psychological responses to yoga, water aerobics, and walking in college students. Similarly, Shestopal (1999) looks at the psychological effects of physical exercise and yoga. Students took one of three options: a physical education class, a yoga course or abstain from both. Permuth-Levine, (2007) looks at the differences in perceived stress, affect, anxiety and coping ability among college students in physical education courses such as golf, bowling, and weight lifting or step classes. I purposefully do not discuss the finding of these studies because of Goyal et al.’s concern that due

to the heterogeneity of yoga instruction and lack of rigour in these quantitative studies, the findings of these studies lack validity.

Researchers also studied Yoga as a holistic approach to wellness for university students. A study by Wimberley (2011) was interesting because it delved into the aspect of spirituality in managing stress. Another example of a holistic approach is the study by Benejam (2013) which uses Thermal Biofeedback Training and Yoga Practice to assess the stress levels of college students. Some studies reference yoga-based breathing techniques to embark on research on other, different breathing techniques. For example, Baker (2012) investigates the effects of a daily breathing technique called “Coherent Breathing” which is not related to Yoga. Similarly, Hauf (2010) studies the relationship between anxiety and physiological symptoms such as breathing rate and heart rate among college students.

Hatha yoga, as one important component of traditional Yoga, is also a subject of several dissertations. The studies look at the effects of various types of Hatha yoga practices (physical postures that include some breathing techniques). For example, Oretzky (2007) studies the issue of depression and somatic symptoms among youth and investigates the effects of 5 week *Vinyasa* Yoga intervention. Another study on *Hatha* Yoga by Dhebar (2013) is relevant to my study because it specifically looks at the impact breathing on health. The study looks at the effects of short-term *Hatha* yoga on lung function, aerobic capacity and quality of life in healthy young adults. In another study on *Hatha* yoga, West, Otte, Geher, Johnson and Mohr (2004) compare African dance and yoga to study if their practice shows differences in improvements in psychological well-being. One important observation that the study makes is that while both African dance and *Hatha* yoga reduce perceived stress and negative affect, cortisol levels increase in African dance and decrease in *Hatha* yoga. This means that while dance and hatha

yoga produce similar positive psychological effects, the effects may be very different on the physiological level, an important component of the stress experience.

I was interested in Gordon's qualitative study (Master's thesis, 2013) on yoga as a social work intervention with clients affected with anxiety or depression that are significant mental health concerns for young adults. Another study that stands out for me is a doctoral dissertation by Maureen Dolan (California Institute of Integral Studies, 2012). I find Dolan's discussions on researcher reflexivity and self-awareness as a practitioner scholar insightful and instructive. Dolan, also an ordained Swami (Chaplain and teacher) in the *Kriya Yoga* tradition of Sri Aurobindo, explores university students' stories of transformation related to their practice of integral yoga. As well, I was interested to read about how, as an academician, she handles the teaching of Yoga and meditation in her academic courses. In addition, I found her research methodology relevant to my study that also involved interviewing students. She uses the narrative inquiry method to tell stories of transformation of 12 students who, for her, stood as exemplars. I adopted her idea of interviewing exemplars in my own study.

Other studies provided insight into to the sources of stress among young adults. For example, Kong (2008) studies meditation as a coping tool for stress; the study includes a lengthy discussion on the different sources of stress for students. Similarly, a study by Bland, Melton, Welle & Bigham (2012) provided insight into the developmental issues related to college students and about why students' life is stressful. The researchers propose the term 'millennial generation' to describe the unique characteristics of college students, including the manner in which they handle stressors. Their study identifies lifestyle habits and coping strategies that may be significantly associated with high or low stress tolerance among them. The study was interesting because it found that most students lack effective coping skills. It concludes that the

coping mechanisms and lifestyle habits currently employed by the students are ineffective for alleviating stress; they also put these students at risk for low stress tolerance.

While I found two studies with college students involving Transcendental Meditation (Aron (1981; Brown, 2008), the majority of studies conflated yoga with mindfulness meditation. For example, Gard et al. (2012) examines the effects of Yoga-based intervention for young adults on the quality of life and perceived stress using the mediating roles of mindfulness and self-compassion.

Trotter's (2010) dissertation study is also an example of yoga being conflated with exercise and combined with mindfulness. The study on stress involved an intervention group of 29 students who learnt body awareness exercises using gentle Hatha yoga and mindfulness meditation. A control group of 29 students participates in self-management and academic skill development. I was intrigued that, contrary to the other studies, this study found no significant differences in stress between the two groups and it reminds me of the many questions raised by the Goyal et al. study regarding the difficulties in evaluating research studies due to the range of quality or content of different yoga or mindfulness programs.

Some studies compare the effectiveness of Yoga to other holistic approaches to wellness. A study by Nowak and Hale (2012) was relevant to my research as it provides an analysis of programs used by college students for health and wellness. The study found that students' use of acupuncture, homeopathy, massage therapy, healing therapy/Reiki and yoga was significantly higher among U.S. college samples than the general U.S. adult sample. As discussed in the earlier chapter, Yoga, as a discipline, is an approach to wellness rather than a method to address illness, whether of the body or mind. In this regard, Garcia's (2011) qualitative study provides insight into how wellness is defined. Garcia examines the impact of college students' life

experiences on six dimensions of wellness: physical, social, spiritual, intellectual, emotional and occupational. Based on interviews with 173 college students the study reports that the six dimensions of wellness interacted continually and synergistically and therefore all were important. I find their following concluding comments relevant to my methodology, in particular:

The need for stress management and stress reduction is linked mostly obviously with emotional wellness; however, should one practice yoga for stress relief; he/she is impacting their physical, social, and spiritual health as well. Segmenting students' narratives about their college life experiences into discrete domains represented a challenge – one that reflects how activities that support wellness cannot easily be segmented into discrete domains, either” (p. iv).

I note that there were few studies specifically on stress among youth in colleges, which is the subject area of my study. A study by Rizzolo, Zipp, Stiskal & Simpkins (2009) investigates stress management for graduate students by comparing the immediate effects of three very different and interesting interventions on acute stress: yoga, humor, and reading. Twenty-two students participate in a 30-minute yoga, humor, and reading intervention session, once a week on the same day and at the same time for a total of three weeks. The results of this study indicate that one 30-minute session of yoga, humor, and reading had similar effects in decreasing acute stress in health science students in a relatively short amount of time.

One of my research interests is to see the role of education or educational institutions in helping students develop better coping skills to manage stress. A study Oswald & Riddock (2007) examines institutional efforts to address the issue of stress among college students. According to the study, a significant number of students feel stressed (48.9%) or very stressed (24.7%) and that there were significant differences in coping strategies between males and females. Many students are interested in learning about new coping strategies such as massage, yoga and meditation. Some college counselling centers are integrating Yoga into their wellness programs

(Adams and Puig, 2008). For example, Milligan (2006) implemented a *Yoga for Stress Management Program* as a complementary alternative therapy resource at an undergraduate university. Overall, program evaluations indicated that students found the program to be effective in reducing stress. Baker, Boland and Laffey (2006) describe Health Connection, a program provided at The Mission of Cedar Crest College, an independent women's college, to support the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual health of its college students. In addition to alternate therapies, and complementary therapies, studies in yoga and meditation are also found under 'contemplative practices' and transformative studies; for example, the study by Greenberg and Harris (2012) on mindfulness as mentioned earlier.

I also looked at studies that saw or used Yoga as a tool for self-care or self-help to help youth manage stress. For example, Snell (2012) supports the need for students to have access to stress management programs. Stern (2012) examines the potential benefits of a 9-week yoga practice on music performance anxiety and mood in music conservatory students, including vocalists and instrumentalists. The study concludes that yoga, as a holistic mind-body practice with cognitive and somatic elements, is a promising intervention.

Lastly, I mention some studies that look at how yoga *asanas* was incorporated into school curriculums to become part of daily school routine. Lowry (2012) surveys 206 yoga teachers involved in teaching students in grades K-12 using a youth yoga curriculum. The study concludes that the curricula were diverse and not standardized. The study notes that yoga content was adapted from elements associated with the Yoga Sutras but mostly from modern texts, interpretations, and personal experiences. More importantly, for my work, the study concludes that the yoga curriculum was focused on physical postures and that the benefits of yoga, beyond the physical postures, needs further study. Gonzalez (2009)'s study investigates the impact of

incorporating yoga into the occupational therapy curriculum. The study reports that with the inclusion of yoga methods, students are able to concentrate better and focus on their required material to prepare them for the demands of academia and the future workforce. Difficulties in implementing yoga into their busy lives are an issue for students and the study suggests that the benefit of Yoga depends on the continuity of practice (p. 102).

All the issues mentioned in my literature review became relevant to my study with young adults, many of whom now work as professionals in different fields. In conclusion, my literature review indicates a growing interest in the area of youth and stress. Overall, the literature review points to a growing interest in yoga and meditation interventions with children and youth, although there was a gap studies grounded in developmental theory. However, as similarly pointed out by the Goyal et al. report in context to meditation, my literature review also shows that due to the heterogeneity of yoga, it is difficult to compare the studies. Most studies do not provide details of the qualifications of the programs or the content of the yoga program that they teach. As well, most researchers conflate yoga with mindfulness and have a limited understanding of yoga, seeing it merely as a form of physical exercise. As well, my review shows that almost all the studies studied only short-term impacts of yoga practice. Only couple of the studies I reviewed mention teaching of Yoga as a philosophy or Yoga and only in the context of traditional Yoga practice, as explained in the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Considerations

My literature review provided a range of examples of the cognitive-behavioral and philosophical theoretical frameworks used to study Yoga and meditation programs to reduce stress. Having reviewed some of the major western theoretical frameworks used in studies on Yoga, I decided to use Elwy et al.'s suggestion to use the Eight Limbs of the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* as a theoretical framework to study Yoga interventions in my own research study. I find this approach significant because it gives it primacy to Yoga over western constructs that have been used, albeit inadequately, to measure, code and evaluate the efficacy of yoga interventions. In the section below, I mention some of the useful discussions I came across on theoretical frameworks used in studies on stress among youth.

As early in 1993, John A. Janowiak, Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the Appalachian State University, had studied the emergence of studies on Yoga for managing stress among students during the 1970s and 1980s and had made important observations about the difficulty of studying yoga and meditation. He noted that there was growing interest in finding “an efficacious, easy to learn technique that promotes self-growth while reducing stress” (p. 15) and recognized the potential of meditation practices from the eastern traditions to reduce stress. However, he expressed concern about the efficacy of research on the effect of meditation on stress because he recognized that there were “individual differences in cognitive analysis of stress and stress management...meaning that stress is an individual experience, and the same situation is experienced differently by different people (1993, p. 4). As well, Janowaik recognized that challenges faced by researchers in the west studying meditation because they did not perceive yoga and meditation as offering a theoretical framework for research. At the same time, he pointed out that while researchers investigated yoga and meditation as techniques for

reducing stress or anxiety, the primary eastern disciplines of Hinduism, Buddhism and Zen do not mention relaxation or anxiety reduction to be the goal of their meditative practice. For example, as explained in Chapter 1, Patanjali states that the purpose of Yoga is *chitta vritti nirodhah* or to free the mind from reacting to its *kleshas* or modulations so that one can abide in one's or pure form, the *atman* or spiritual Self (*Patanjali Yoga Sutras* 1-4). Similarly, there is an emphasis on *kensho* or 'seeing into your nature' in Buddhism and Zen (Bai & Cohen, 2014). The methodological and theoretical issues raised by Janowiak continue to be relevant even today, as echoed in the Goyal et al. report discussed earlier. In this section, I describe some of the more recent theoretical approaches that have been applied to the study of Yoga.

Prominent Theories used in studies on Yoga

In this section, I briefly present some of the theoretical approaches to Yoga that I came across during my literature review and which I gave consideration to in deciding the theoretical and methodological approaches for my own research.

Psychological Stress Theory: In a study on stress that compares the stress level of college students who took either yoga or classes weight lifting, aerobics, and golf, Permuth-Levine (2007) uses the Psychological Stress Theory, as proposed by Selye in 1976 (p. 47). The theory it is based on the recognition that there is some cognitive mediation/moderation between the stressful event and one's reaction to the event. Lazarus (1999) further develops this understanding of psychological stress and he proposes two concepts that are useful to understand how individuals perceive and react to stress. The theory suggests that stress levels are mediated by how one evaluates the significance of what is happening for their well-being, and by one's coping, which is an individual's effort in thought and action to manage specific demands (Permuth-Levine, 2007, p. 47-48). That stress is an individualized, unique and subjective

experience and that reactions are psychosomatic fits with the discussion of the activities of the mind as discussed by Patanjali Yoga Sutras.

Maslow's concept of Self-Actualization: (1971) was proposed by Janowiak (1993) to theorize yoga and meditation interventions. Maslow equates self-actualization with being a “mature, fully human person...in whom the human potentialities have been realized and actualized...Self-actualization is an active process of being and becoming increasingly inner directed and integrated at the levels of thinking, feeling, and bodily response” (Maslow, 1970, p. xx, as cited in Janowiak, p. 5). Amongst the objectively describable and measurable characteristics of the healthy person, Maslow mentions the following: increased clarity of thought, greater efficiency in perception of reality, increased integrity and wholeness, increased spontaneity and liveliness, a firm self-identity, autonomy and the ability to love. Maslow's theory of self-actualization led to the development of psychological scales that were used by researchers to investigate the influence of meditation on self-actualization. While citing research that indicated a positive relationship between self-actualization and meditation (Harvey, 1988), Janowiak points to several problems inherent in adapting eastern constructs to those of the west. As discussed in a later section, while Maslow's idea of self-actualization has been linked to the *dharmic* ideas of embodied awareness, without the spiritual elements of inner sciences or consciousness as witness, the theory does not fully cover the experience of Yoga.

Transpersonal Psychology Theory: In her study on meditation as a therapeutic intervention for grief, Philbin (2007) refers to a quote from its founder, Robert Frager, to explain the transpersonal approach. It includes “a focus on the whole person, including body, intellect, emotions and spirit; an interest in states of consciousness...an open-ended approach to human potential, with particular interest in optimal health, creativity, transformation and transcendence”

(Philbin, 2007, p. 6). Transpersonal psychology seeks to examine a range of human awareness and uses a combination of methods to collect data: third person data through scientific methods of testing and observation, 'first person' data through experiential observation and, 'second person' data through direct inquiry with the individual using an "I-Thou" relational inquiry (Philbin, 2007, p. 7). In reviewing books written by Frager, I noted that he converted to from Judaism to Sufism, a philosophy that had a significant impact of the development of the idea of transcendence in his theory (Fadiman and Frager, 1997). However, like Maslow's theory, the transpersonal theory is similar to theories based on *dharmic* tradition because ideas of the Self as transcendent and the Self as divine consciousness and unchanging observer are not present in Christianity or Sufism, as a variation of Islam. In this way, both these theories represent distortions and appropriations of Yoga theory. I discuss these criticisms further in the chapter on decolonizing Yoga.

Relational Frame Theory: I mention Timothy Gordon's Master's thesis (Wilfred Laurier, 2013), study because he looks at yoga as a social work intervention with clients affected with anxiety or depression. He draws on Fields (2011) for studies that have examined yogic practices as a possible means of treating people suffering from a variety of many mental health symptoms. Perez-De-Albeniz and Holmes (2000) reviewed 75 scientific articles that examine the effects of meditation and provided a classification of the outcomes of these interventions under 'psychological' and 'psychotherapeutic effects' which other researchers could use as a framework to analyze outcomes of interventions. While psychology-based theories, as mentioned examples show, are well represented in research on yoga and meditation, there are significant ontological and epistemological issues related to using Euro-centric psychology-based approaches to studying eastern contemplative approaches, including Yoga and meditation.

In the section that follows, I present and discuss some examples of theories that are based directly on eastern thought, particularly on Yoga.

Taittiriya Upanisad theory: Manickam (2013) states that there are numerous psychological concepts in Yoga and related Vedic texts that are similar to western thought and are worthy of exploration. For example, he discusses the integrative concept of the person on *Taittiriya Upanisad* in which the person is considered more than a body, mind or soul or cognitive functions. The person is considered to have five *koshas*, or sheaths or dimensions of existence: they roughly translate into environment, body, breath, mind, feelings and spirit (p. 322-23). In meditation one's awareness progresses through these dimensions as it moves from the gross layer to the subtler layers of existence. This discussion of the levels of the mind is included in the *YES! Plus* program and is therefore relevant to my study.

Triguna Theory of Personality: Das and Gopal (2009) also a theory from Yoga called the *Triguna* Theory of Personality to study mental and physical functioning of 114 college students, specifically the relation between *trigunas* and emotional and behavioral problems. *Triguna* is a Sanskrit word (tri-means three, *gunas* means qualities i.e. *Sattva* (stability), *Rajas* (intense activity) and *Tamas* (laziness) (sic). Achenbach & Rescorla (2003) developed a behavioral checklist to measure emotional and behavioral problems. The study states that the results support the postulations made by ancient Ayurveda theorists that *rajasic* and *tamasic* personalities, especially *tamasic*, are predisposed to psychological maladies while *sattva*, being pure, is free from these problems. The results indicate the need to explore and implement the ways to increase the *sattva* aspect of personality, particularly with the use of yoga and meditation. I expect the youth in my study will be familiar with the theory of the three *gunas* because the *YES! Plus* and other Art of Living programs include discussion on these ideas from

Ayurveda. This research shows how the constructs of mental, spiritual and physical health, as discussed in Yoga and Ayurveda, can be used to study these interventions.

Chakra theory: Musial (2011) presents a qualitative study as an example of a creative intertwining of ancient Yoga theory with modern theory in an essay that explores the “connective tissue between teaching undergraduates and teaching yogis/yoginis” (p. 212). The author draws on Bell hooks’ work on teaching from a place of love and compassion. Based on her understanding of hook’s ideas of “engaged pedagogy” (p. 215), Musial’s study asks, “what does anti-oppressive yoga pedagogy look like and what does yogic, heart-centered university pedagogy look like?” (p. 212). To answer these questions, the author uses the Yoga theory of the *chakra* system to organize how teachers can conceptualize this ‘heart-centered’ pedagogy. *Chakra*, a Sanskrit word meaning “wheel” related to the seven energy centers aligned along the spine and “for energy to flow freely throughout the subtle body, the wheel must be turning at a reasonable pace” (p. 212). Musial creates an analogy between chakras situated in the body to *chakra* qualities inherent to a classroom saying, “Just as one attempts to turn the energetic wheel to promote spiritual growth through yoga, one attends university classes to energize, expand, and challenge the intellect.” The author describes how each *chakra* corresponds with the different aspects of a teaching environment. She starts with the root “*chakra*” (“*muladhara*”), which represents the desire for safety, and ends with the crown “*chakra*” (“*sahasrara*”), which represents a space of contemplation in which students may have a “light bulb moment’ or where “collective learning takes place that produces the sensation of communal spirit” (p. 225). The author shows the ways in which the teaching spaces of classrooms for university students and yoga practitioners are similar. The study discussed how these spaces can be transformational and that the classroom can be seen as “an integrated, nurturing, mutually constitutive feminist, anti-

racist, heart-centered yogic pedagogy that benefits all” (p. 212). The participants of my study were all aware of the chakra theory both as a concept and as an experience during various meditations.

Anasakti: Banth and Talwar (2012) used the Yoga concept of *Anasakti*, a Sanskrit term for traits like non-attachment, equipoise, selfless duty orientation, and effort in the absence of concern for the outcome, to represent an-ideal cluster of personality traits. The researchers explored the relationship of *Anasakti* with well-being and the three distinct happiness orientations through a study of 676 US college students and a sample of 65 yogic practitioners in India. The findings, based on scores on the Orientation to Meaningful Life (scale), revealed that the Indian yogic practitioners were markedly higher in *Anasakti* than the US student population and were therefore assessed as having experienced a higher level of wellbeing and happiness. While my study does not directly engage with this theory, the participants were familiar with the idea of *dharma*, *viveka* and *vairagya*, as discussed earlier, which appear to be close in meaning to the theory of *anasakti*.

Spirituality: Sageman’s (2002) research specifically involved participants in group therapy; participants had practiced *Sudarshan Kriya*, a breathing practice that is also taught in the *YES! Plus* program, and is the subject of my study. She used spirituality as a theoretical framework in her “Spirituality and Health Group” for psychiatrically disabled women. The group sessions involved participation in prayers, breathing techniques taught in the Art of Living Course, and the reading of poetry from different sources and inspirational spiritual passages written by its founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Sageman referred to studies on *Sudarshan Kriya* done by Brown and Garberg (2005) to conclude that, “The psychodynamic and neurophysiologic

perspectives provide a framework for understanding why this approach may be much more effective than traditional therapy for these patients” (p. 139).

Patanjali’s Eight Limbs of Yoga

I found the different psychologically based theoretical frameworks discussed above not suitable to my study on Yoga because of their constructs are incommensurable with Yoga’s own theories. I find the Yoga-based theories more suitable for my study on Yoga but the aforementioned ones did not appear comprehensive. Instead, a recent study by Elwy et al provides some critical insights into the research on Yoga. In a recent ‘scoping review’ of studies on Yoga, Rani Elwy et al. (2014) made an important contribution to formulating a theoretical framework for research involving Yoga. Elwy and her team discuss the challenge of conducting research on yoga because of its heterogeneity. They point to the numerous different ways in which the components of yoga interventions are being identified and measured in studies. The team completed a comprehensive international literature review and identified 3,062 yoga intervention studies through six indexed databases and hand searching of five selected journals. Of these, 465 were unique studies spanning 30 countries (p. 220). Elwy et al. report that most yoga interventions took place in India (n=228) or the US (n=124). (p. 220). Although the importance of *asanas* (postures) was prominent in 79% of the studies, *asanas* were not included in 112 studies, suggesting the importance of other components of yoga as well (p. 220). Similar to the Goyal et al. study (2014), the Elwy et al. study also mentions the challenges of conducting research on Yoga because of the heterogeneity of its practice. For example, differences in outcome can be related to many factors such as duration of home practice, nature of teacher training, length of practice and so on. The team also conducted nine focus groups with 68 yoga teachers and students across multiple sites in the US, using a semi-structured focus group guide and used

grounded theory for analysis of the data. Yoga teachers and practitioners interviewed identified several key areas of yoga practice. For example, the benefits of yoga in daily life, the importance of cultivating inner awareness, both physical and mental and the therapeutic and empowering effects of postures. They also mentioned the following other factors that they found to be important: the therapeutic effects of breathing exercises and the emphasis on breath during practice, the ways in which yoga helps participants to focus and calm their minds to develop meditation practice, and the emphasis on spirituality (Elwy, 2013, p. 279). The most significant part of their finding is their suggestion that, “Each of these themes can be mapped out on to one of the eight limbs of yoga, suggesting this may be a potential framework for coding the important elements of yoga interventions” (Elwy, 2013, p. 279). Elwy et al. suggest that Yoga researchers keep the eight-limb framework in mind during the development of their interventions as well.

In conclusion, the foregoing examples of theoretical frameworks based directly on Yoga show a growing interest and awareness of these indigenous theories to study the efficacy or usefulness of Yoga for health and wellness. From a decolonizing methodologies perspective (Haig-Brown, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999), my study seeks to engage with this indigenous turn to the research on Yoga in which Yoga is recognized as a distinct philosophy and approach to wellness and, where western psychological theories are replaced with theories based on Yoga.

My study argues that western psychology-based theories are limited in explaining Yoga; a later chapter on decolonizing Yoga will explain this argument further. I make this assertion on the bases of my own experience of attempting to hang the components of Yoga on western constructs. In 2013, as a volunteer researcher of the *YES! For Schools* program (students in schools, grade 4-12), unrelated to my dissertation, I was involved in the analysis of the *YES!*

Program in relation to educational models based on western psychology. The process involved attempting to fit the Yoga-based course processes, points and messages into western psychological frameworks such as social-emotional learning, self-regulation or school climate indicators. I recall the difficulty that the *YES!* Teachers faced in completing this task. The outcome of the exercise was that it became evident that much of the *YES! Plus* course material was related to inner experiences, spirituality and human values. Many of these elements did not fit into the western psychological frameworks that were being used in research involving schools. Similarly, it was difficult, or rather impossible, to capture the course content, that is based on embodied awareness and meditative breathing, using western psychological evaluation tools – an incredible array that included scales for resilience, Positive Youth Development, social competence and so on (Oregon State).

The incommensurability of Yoga terms and theories with those in western psychology may be the reason why most research on *Sudarshan Kriya* has been done using physiological indicators instead. For example, there were studies on sleep (Sulekha et al., 2006), cortisol levels (Janakiramaiah et al. (1998) and genes (Sharma et al., 2008). Neuroscience appears to be at the cutting edge of research on meditation and it aims to show the ways in which meditation affects brain activity. However, as discussed in an earlier section, its usefulness to explain the spiritual experience and the ethics involved in the tests is being contested and questioned.

Four Pillars of Knowledge

In addition to the *Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga*, I use the *Four Pillars of Knowledge* as theoretical frames to both describe the *YES! Plus* program and to analyze the narratives of my study. My study will demonstrate the effectiveness of using such a theoretical framework for discussing Yoga interventions. My study offers some insights towards the use of these Yoga

theories in research on Yoga. While Yoga means different things to different people, as my study will show, the *Eight Limbs of Yoga* and the *Four Pillars of Knowledge* provide a comprehensive theoretical framework that is specific and practical.

In the chapter on Yoga, I have already described the elements of the *Eight Limbs of Yoga*; I recount them briefly here. A yogi takes vows for social ethics or *yamas*, such as non-violence, truth and personal ethics or *niyamas*, such as non-stealing and personal ethics such as cleanliness of body, contentment and self-discipline. Yoga involves the practice of physical *asanas* or postures along with *pranayama*, or breathing practices that enhance *prana* or life force. These physical practices are outer processes that prepare the yogi to take the journey inwards towards the Self by using the three inner processes: *pratyahara* or taking awareness inwards; *Dharana*, one-pointed focus; and *dhyana*, meditation leading to the experience of *Samadhi*, or abiding in the witness consciousness.

Patanjali explains in detail the reasons for the modulations of the mind – *chitta vritti nirodhah* – and how to overcome these mental disturbances. As discussed earlier, the knowledge of Patanjali is in context to numerous other knowledges imparted through the ancient texts, including the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Upanishads* and *Hatha Yoga Pradeepika*. In the context of applying the psychology of the mind towards wellness, Sri Sri has often referred his students to the short but deep knowledge enunciated in the Upanishads summarized as the “Four Pillars of Knowledge”. I explain these Sanskrit ‘non-translatable’ words as follows with the awareness that they have deeper and complex meanings within their cultural and spiritual contexts they are situated in. The four pillars are first: *viveka* (discrimination); second: *vairagya* (dispassion); third: six wealths (namely, *shama* (tranquility of mind), *dama* (control over senses), *titiksha* (forebearance), *uparati* (rejoicing in one’s own nature), *shraddha* (faith) and *samadhana* (being

at ease); and fourth: *mumukshatva* (desire for highest). Please see Appendix A for a transcript of a talk given by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on the Four Pillars of Knowledge.

The youth exemplars that are part of my study are all familiar with these teachings because they form the basis of the *YES! Plus* courses and other follow-up courses they have taken through the Art of Living. During his public discourses Sri Sri has often reminded students to apply the Yoga related knowledge in three stages as described in the Upanishads: *shravana* or listening to the knowledge and then *manana* or contemplating on it can lead to *nididhasana* or spiritual knowing or wisdom (Malhotra, 2014, p. 213-15). In the chapter that follows on decolonizing Yoga, I further discuss the reasons why I have chosen Yoga-based theoretical frameworks as discussed above in my research.

CHAPTER 4: Decolonizing Yoga: Yoga as Indigenous knowledge

Background

The purpose of this chapter is to explore why and how decolonizing studies on Yoga might provide useful insights into the complex nature of studies of Yoga in the west. The following three chapters related to decolonizing studies on Yoga were not part of my original intent for the study but came about in response to several niggling questions I had after examining the findings of the Goyal et al report on meditation as discussed in Chapter 2 and 3. Several questions arose, such as: Why are studies on mindfulness so prominent in western research while studies on Yoga and eastern meditations, on which mindfulness is based, are being sidelined? Why are western psychological theories primarily being used to study Yoga even though many of western cognitive science theories seemed to have components of eastern thought such as the divine Self and spiritual consciousness? How does my research on Yoga fit into western academic work? What are the tensions between western and eastern approaches to wellness that my study would unpack? How does Yoga fit into western approaches to wellness? Since my previous academic work and employment experience has involved research in anti-racism and anti-oppression, I felt compelled to explore answers to these questions from a decolonizing methodologies perspective. In this chapter, I attempt to answer these important questions because I think they are relevant to my research area.

My literature review has shown me that research on yoga has mostly conflated yoga with the practice of physical *asanas* and that yoga had been studied mainly using Euro-centric psychological constructs. At the same time, I have shown that Yoga is not limited to the performance of the physical *asanas*. The Patanjali Yoga Sutras present the psychology of the mind and discuss how one can maintain a calm and centered mind in daily life, with the aim of

having experience of higher levels of spiritual consciousness. As well, I had decided in my research methodology to reject western psychological approaches to analyze my interviews with youth exemplars that were practicing Yoga. Instead, I decided to use theories in Yoga to analyze the interviews. However, I needed to provide the justification or rationale for this decision based on theory and practice. I therefore began to read academic articles to search for a strong scholarly foundation to justify that choice. My literature review had shown that almost all studies I had come across had used western psychological approaches. These approaches included theories about social-emotional learning, resilience, self-regulation and so forth. It was during this research for yoga-based theories that I came across articles that asserted that many of the western theories and psychological approaches involving embodied learning, mind sciences or contemplative sciences have their base in Yoga and other *dharmic* traditions. As I dug further into these readings, I experienced many epistemological ruptures or “Aha moments” including the need to decolonize Yoga and theorize Yoga as indigenous knowledge. This led to my delving deeper into the issue of decolonizing methodologies and I felt compelled to make space for this additional chapter. My research on decolonizing Yoga has validated my decision to study Yoga using its own theoretical frameworks. It has also enabled me to better argue for Yoga to be situated as a legitimate approach to holistic wellness, as an alternative to western psychology-based approaches.

Taking a yogic turn to the theoretical framework for this chapter, I argue that *Yamas* or social ethics, the first limb of *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* (PYS), can provide a researcher with a set of ethical tools or lenses to assess, analyze and guide academic work in the field. While the PYS were written as personal ethics for each seeker to follow on her own spiritual path, I posit that *yamas* may be similarly applied to assess one's own academic work or that of others. The *yamas*

behoove the seeker, or in this case, the researcher, to commit to the ethics of *ahimsa* or nonviolence (read respectful discussion of other's work), *satyam* or truthfulness in intention (read critical analysis) and *asteya* or non-stealing (read non-appropriation or academic honesty). As this chapter will show, these ethical guidelines have provided a useful moral lens to contextualize my discussion on issues of decolonizing the language, culture and teaching of Yoga, including its appropriation, distortion and denigration. A fourth ethical commitment of *brahmacharya* or celibacy or moderation in sensual pleasures could also be considered useful in the context of asking the researcher to resist sensationalizing or eroticizing the work of Yoga.

To the question of why decolonizing studies on Yoga matters, I refer to a rhetorical question Celia Haig-Brown asks in one of her articles on education: "Is there anything new since Dewey?" (2008, p. 19). My rhetorical question is: Is there anything new since Yoga? The thesis of this chapter is that Yoga and related dharmic knowledges such as Buddhism among others have enriched and informed western philosophy, education, psychology, neuroscience and various fields of human development. In decolonizing studies on Yoga, my goal is to interrogate the prominent narratives on Yoga in western academia and to challenge their misinterpretations of Yoga. In returning the gaze, I delve into the reasons why the important contribution of Yoga to western thought is mostly unacknowledged today. As well, I aim to examine the systemic ways in which western, Euro-Christian scholars have distorted and denigrated traditional Yoga knowledge, and by extension, the *dharmic* civilization it inspires. Overall, my purpose here is to examine this systemic phenomenon towards goals of education and awareness about the history of Yoga and not to denigrate western Euro-Christian thought. My attempt to unpack this fact led me to the approach taken in decolonizing methodologies. In this chapter, I use this critical lens to inquire into why Yoga knowledge is being systematically misunderstood, misrepresented and

denigrated in western academe while at the same time it is being systematically appropriated to enrich western culture and knowledge.

Decolonizing autobiographies

I came to the idea of decolonizing Yoga in the process my working through a pedagogical tool that Celia Haig-Brown uses in her classes in which university students engage in writing their own “decolonizing autobiography”. In writing my own decolonizing autobiography, I use feminist, antiracist and decolonizing lenses to analyze my own academic experiences and to focus on, the western (mis)interpretations and (mis)uses of Yoga-related knowledges. Earlier in my graduate work, I had completed a similar assignment on writing an auto-ethnography in a course with Nombuso Dlamini. Students were asked to use the idea of psycho-geography of space, as a Flaneur (to gaze without being seen) (Jenks & Neves, 1995) to analyze their experiences of living in Toronto and studying at York University as diasporic Canadians. In writing about my experiences, I realized that the hegemony of western Euro-centric thought was a brick wall that I faced in my efforts to introduce the alternate ontology and epistemology of Yoga into my academic discourse.

Later, during the fourth year of my working as a teaching assistant for a course on human rights, I gained knowledge about the cultural genocide of the Indigenous people in Canada. At some point, in an Aha! Moment of my own, as I read about western appropriation and denigration of Yoga and related *dharmic* text, I made some connections. I theorized that Yoga could be understood as indigenous knowledge, similar to the way in which the indigenous knowledge that belongs to the colonized indigenous people in the different continents. That I could use Yoga as indigenous knowledge to enter the discourse came in the fifth year of my studies – after I read Rajiv Malhotra’s books on Indology and *dharma*. According to the Oxford

English Dictionary (2002, p. 722) Indology is the “study of Indian history, literature, philosophy and culture.” Notably, the definition does mention religion while much of the work of Indology has involved interpretation of dharmic texts. The lumping together of culture, language, philosophy and literature indicates that in India these variables are inextricably woven together. For example, Sanskrit, the language of ancient Indian texts is said to form the foundation of its *Sanskriti* or civilization. Therefore, decolonizing the study of Sanskrit by western Indologists also involves the decolonizing western interpretations of Indian philosophy and culture.

As a yogi-scholar of Indian heritage attending a Eurocentric university, I found that Malhotra’s explanation about the sense of alienation an Indian scholar feels resonated with me. While his work helped me to understand my experiences in my doctoral studies, it also opened up a new direction to my research work, which served to negate my thoughts of dropping out of the program due to feeling alienated from the academic fraternity. As he explains:

Liberal arts education in the US [read Canada] is based on a set of theories to interpret texts, music, art, culture and society in general. Students read the books where these theories are explained, demonstrate their understanding by writing book reviews/critiques on them, and then practice how to apply these theories to a variety of topics of current interest. This set of intellectual tools, sometimes called “literary theory” or “hermeneutics,” is entirely by Westerners and as a non-Westerners operating within the Western intellectual system...I found myself agreeing with many aspects of these theories, and even finding that many of these ideas could be found within Indian texts that gave them deeper interpretations. At the same time, I disagreed with many central tenets in these theories. It became clear that the reason why so many Indian scholars and writers have become self-alienated is that these theories have permeated intellectual circles, and are often unconsciously applied without question. (Malhotra, 2004, p. 290-91)

My questioning of western constructs was not an easy or pleasant experience. If you detect an underlying tone of resentment in this chapter, it would gesture to the self-regulation skills that Stuart Shankar is rallying to teach young students in schools to handle stress. Indeed, Yoga is all about learning how to deal with negative emotions and I have hoped that the praxis of writing

this chapter on decolonizing Yoga would be transformative for me. I do beg the committee members' forgiveness, as I do acknowledge and accept that, as a yoga practitioner, teacher and practicing Hindu, born and raised in India, the findings of my academic research have stirred up feelings of resentment towards western universalism. I am reminded of Celia Haig-Brown's comment on her own frustration about the ways in which western educational academe has marginalized indigenous knowledge. "Do I sound defensive? Do you detect an unattractive note of sarcasm? Many days, I feel that way...No longer can serious scholars simply see Indigenous thought as an exotic addition to the real work that Western European and American (read Canadian) theorizing does" (2008, p. 17). I could not have expressed my message any better.

My point of entry into the discourse of decolonizing Yoga's place in the academe and showing its worth as indigenous knowledge is located in my attempt to uncover the power of resistance of Yoga's oral tradition that has successfully defied oppression, colonization and appropriation for over one thousand years. In this section, I use the work of Indigenous scholars on decolonizing methodologies to understand and later contextualize colonization of Yoga. As well, my approach has been to investigate how 'western universalism', a term coined by Rajiv Malhotra, has failed in its understanding of Yoga's indigenous ways of knowing. I discuss this idea further in a later section on indigenous history.

Purva Paksh: Reversing the gaze

Taking a yogic turn to my discussion on decolonizing Yoga, I refer to the approach called *purva paksh* or critical response found in the oral tradition of discourse in ancient India. The ancient *dharmic* philosophies were based on reason, logic and direct experience and *purva paksh* was "a kind of respectful, engaged confrontation" similar to the one employed by Edward Said (Malhotra, 2011, p. 50). Debates and dialogues were valued and there was a strong tradition of

respecting prior knowledge produced by different scholar sages, called *rishis* (Tigunait, 1983, p. 21) or contemplative scientists (Malhotra, 2011, p. 73). There was tradition of acknowledgement, not unlike in modern academic tradition of today. “When a teacher advocates a new philosophical system, he cites the established scriptures or writings of authorized sages to support his statements” (Tiguniat, 1983, p. 19). For example, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* begins with salutations to 34 pervious Yoga scholars (1972, p. 5).

A foundational principle in the development of knowledge is a commitment to openness in the pursuit of truth and in the ancient days in India, it was accomplished through oral debate and discourse. The most legendary debate was held in public between philosophers Adi Shankara and Mandana Misra, around 8 Century CE; the debate lasted for several months. When Misra conceded defeat, he selected his learned wife Ubhaya Bhariti to continue the powerful debate with Shankara. Finally, Shankara’s arguments prevailed and all the parties accepted his view of the unity of Hindu thought (Sethumadhavan, 2013). To refine and renew existing philosophy and perhaps adapt to changing times used this scientific, ancient scholars used such logical and rational dialogic methods. In the context of this discussion, *purva-paksh* has required me to undertake a limited literature review of what has been written about Yoga in western academe.

The process of *purva paksh* proposes that a researcher needs to understand the opposing views prior to critically responding to the discourse of others on a given topic. The approach of *purva paksh* reminded me of the approach John Dewey (1938) suggested in the preface of his book, *Experience and Education*, for a healthy discussion on the theory of education:

It is the business of an intelligent theory of education to ascertain the causes for the conflicts that exist and then, instead of taking one side or the other, to indicate a plan of operations proceeding from a level deeper and more inclusive that is represented by the practices and ideas of the contending parties.

(Dewey, 1938, p.5)

Purva paksha involved three stages: first, to explain and comment on the prior view of the subject at hand, second, to refute this prior view and to describe a subsequent view (*uttar paksha*) which, third, established a higher step that is called a conclusion or final theory (*siddhanta*) (Tigunait, 1983, p. 20). In this way this chapter can be seen as *purva paksh* (review of Western Indology) and my application of Yoga-based research methodology, including the theoretical framework for analysis, as a form of *uttar paksh* (response) as one example of what Malhotra has called Swadeshi Indology, or Indigenous Indology. In other words, my work, on behalf on the Indigenous knowledge of Yoga, is a response to call to action by Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (2000) to not only “disrupt the prevailing ideas about what constitutes knowledge” (p. 8) but also “the need to disrupt mainstream standard academic knowledge” (p. xi).

For their deep impact on my learning and critical thinking or *purva paksh*, I acknowledge the influence of the writing of numerous scholars who have written on indigenous methodologies and I refer to their theories and ideas to formulate my *uttar paksh* in the chapter that follows. For example, these scholars’ work provides me with meaningful insights into my decolonizing autobiographical discussion about the problems and challenges faced by academia about the (mis)representation of Indigenous knowledges and the tensions they engender within academe, and outside academe. I am reminded of Ania Loomba’s comment in her book *Colonialism/Post-colonialism* that “to uncover the rootedness of ‘modern knowledge’ systems in colonial practices is to bring what Raymond Williams called the process of ‘unlearning’ whereby we begin to question received truths’ (Loomba, 1998, p. 66). My dissertation has indeed involved the ‘unlearning’ of many truths in my colonized mind.

Yoga as Indigenous Knowledge: share common characteristics

In India, as elsewhere, indigenous knowledges stem largely from spiritual or religious thought forms. - Shroff, 2000, p. 215

In the lowest worm, as well as the highest human being, the same divine nature is present. - Vivekananda, Advaita Ashram

In this section, I provide the rationale for considering Yoga as Indigenous knowledge and I then discuss Yoga in context to the history of colonization and attempted cultural genocide of indigenous knowledges all over the world. I begin with Maori scholar Makere Stewart-Harawira's (2005) general definition of indigenous knowledge that I believe also applies to Yoga. According to her, indigenous beliefs

...include beliefs that interrelationships between and among all things are fundamental to sense making; that knowledge is sacred; that it cannot be found in a 'codified canon', but in life itself; and that it is holistic in that it always already acknowledges four dimensions - physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. In sum, a refusal to divide and compartmentalize in any reductionist way is accompanied by adherence to recognizing all things existing in relation to one another.(p. 35)

I turn to the book *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts* edited by Dei, Hall and Goldin Rosenberg (2000) for the explanation of the rich diversity of the sources of indigenous knowledges, along with their complex intellectual, social and spiritual complexities. I find the book's interrogation of these forms of knowledge from a critical rather than romanticizing approach instructive for my own critical interrogation of Yoga as indigenous knowledge. The book questions and challenges the "continuing absence, erasure, and subordination of local people's knowledge, history, and experience from academic texts, discourses, and material, social and political practices" (p. 8). It is precisely the same dilemma that Yoga, as another form of indigenous knowledge, is confronted with and in this section, I am to unpack some of these problems. As David Frawley, an American Hindu, who has written numerous books on Yoga, Ayurveda and related texts and knowledges observes:

The Hindu cause is similar to the cause of native and tribal peoples all over the world, like native American and African groups. Even Hindu concerns about cultural encroachment by western religious and commercial interests mirror those of other traditional peoples who want to preserve their cultures. Yet while the

concerns of native peoples have been taken up by the left worldwide, the same concerns of Hindus are styled right-wing or communal... (Frawley, 2014)

Frawley's above analysis comes from his book *Hinduism and the Clash of Civilization* (2001) in which he elaborates about the colonization of the minds of Indians that has led to an erosion, and sometimes loss, of Indian culture and heritage. This includes the loss of its indigenous Sanskrit texts on psychology, spirituality, medicine, herbs, astrology, astronomy, mathematics, dance, music, metallurgy and so on. In their introduction to the book, Dei, Hall and Goldin Rosenberg provide the following definition of Indigenous knowledges:

We conceptualize Indigenous knowledge as a body of knowledge associated with the long-term occupancy of a certain place. This knowledge refers to traditional norms and social values, as well as to mental constructs that guide, organize, and regulate the people's way of living and making sense of their world. It is the sum of the experience and knowledge of a given social group, and forms the basis of decision making in the face of challenges both familiar and unfamiliar. (2000, p. 6)

I argue that the practice and knowledge of Yoga is consistent with this definition of indigenous knowledge, within all the interrelated contexts of individual, social, spiritual and community existence. I turn to the section on *Situating Aboriginal Knowledges: definitions and boundaries* to explain why I consider Yoga to be indigenous knowledge. In this section, Marlene Brant Castellano, a Mohawk researcher who was the co-director of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal People*, writes about sources and characteristics of Indigenous knowledge and I relate her description to Yoga knowledge (I have used the term "Indigenous" throughout the document except in direct quotes in which the scholar has herself used the term "Aboriginal" instead).

Brant Castellano reports that, "Aboriginal societies derive from multiple sources, including traditional teachings, empirical observation and revelation. These categories overlap and interact with each other" (2000, p 21). Traditional knowledge is known to have been passed down the generations through an oral tradition, and it includes empirical knowledge gained

through careful observation and revealed knowledge “acquired through dreams, visions or intuition” (2000, p. 23). Similarly, *rishis*, or contemplate scientists (Malhotra, 2011, p. 73) discovered Yoga knowledge after much observation and experimentation, combined with intuition and knowledge gained through meditation to attain higher levels of consciousness (Tigunait, 1983, p. 18). This knowledge was initially passed on from teachers to disciples through an oral tradition for thousands of years and later documented by writings on dried palm leaves (Saraswati, 1976, p. 7-9).

Describing the characteristics of Aboriginal knowledge, Brant Castellano reports that Aboriginal knowledge was rooted in personal experience. Teaching of knowledge was based on a personal relationship, both social and emotional, between a teacher/elder and student. Teaching “drew on shared experience of a common environment” and was “validated through collective analysis and consensus building” (2000, p. 25-27). Importantly, she observes, “Aboriginal people know that knowledge is power and that power can be used for good or evil. In passing on knowledge the teacher has the obligation to consider whether the learner is ready to use knowledge responsibly” (2000, p. 27). Elders often refused or resisted the taping of their discourses with their people because teaching was individualized, and was adjusted for the “maturity of the learner and thereby influencing the ethical use of knowledge” (ibid). Aboriginal knowledge is experiential knowledge where the “learning process on subjective experiences and introspection... forms an essential part of the praxis of inner and outer learning” (2000, p. 28).

Similarly, in Yoga, for example, the *Sutra* literature, which was a common form of writings in Sanskrit, was often cryptic and needed a teacher who had personal experience to explain them, for example the breathing techniques (Saraswati, 1976, p. 214). As well, Madhu Khanna notes that Hindu texts emphasized proper qualifications for teachers by “spelling out the

rigorous prerequisites for being an *adhikarin*, a person who has the psycho-physiological preparation to be qualified to make sense of the esoteric practices. The practitioner must have internalized the sophisticated system of symbols and cosmology” (cited in Malhotra, 2007, p. 91). This approach to knowledge stands in stark contrast to that taken by non-indigenous Indologists who claim a right to study the esoteric Sanskrit texts as mere historians. For example, David Gordon, who recently (2014) in his monograph on *the Patanjali Yoga Sutra: A Biography* has asserted, “I am a historian of South Asian religions and not a Tantric practitioner” (Malhotra, 2007, p.167) to claim his *adhikara* or authority to speak on the subject. Yet, as discussed later, the book is very much about the interpretation of the *meaning* of Yoga and the context of yoga, of which he claims to have no *anubhava* or inner experience.

In private discourses that I have attended with my own Yoga preceptor, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has explained that some key details of yoga knowledge were kept secret. In the *Hathayoga Pradipika*, one of the Yoga texts, yoga practitioners are asked to keep the knowledge secret “for it is potent when kept secret and ineffective when (injudiciously) revealed” (Hathayoga Pradipika, 1972. p. 6). It also implies that the most important processes are to be learned directly from the Guru (ibid) in a confidential manner. The *Hathayoga Pradipika* also indicates the qualifications of a student seeker or *adhikarin*: “He should perform his duties, and be free of personal motives and attachments. He should have perfected himself in *Yama* and *Niyama*...and cultivated the intellect. He should have conquered anger. He should be entirely devoted to his Guru and the *Brahmavidya* (knowledge) (1972, p. 7).

The above statement highlights that Yoga techniques were only transmitted through a *guru-shishya* (teacher/disciple) relationship that provided the intimate space required to provide personal instruction, to protect its integrity and sacredness and prevent its misuse and

misrepresentation. Teaching was highly individualized in this oral tradition as explained by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar through the following story I heard him recount about spiritual growth during one of his public talks some years ago, as I recall it. A Yoga Master had two disciples – one was an older disciple who had been practicing for many years and the other was a youth who was new to the spiritual path. One day, after being pressured by the older disciple to tell him when he would become enlightened, the Master said, “After 10 more lifetimes.” The older disciple was angry and complained about why he had to wait that long. The young man had not asked but the Master told him, “You will need to wait for as many lifetimes as there are leaves on that tree (pointing to a big tree).” The young disciple joyfully exclaimed, “Is that all? I thought I would need to wait a lot longer.” It is said that at that very moment, the youth is said to have become enlightened. The story message is that it is not the length of time one has practiced but rather the purity of mind, or what Sri Sri refers, in his yoga and meditation courses, to as the quality of being “hollow and empty” (personal communication).

Another characteristic of Aboriginal knowledge that Brant Castellano writes about is that it is both holistic and embodied. “All of the senses, coupled with openness to intuitive or spiritual insights, are required in order to plumb the depths of aboriginal knowledge” (2000, p. 29). She refers to the medicine wheel as one of the most powerful instruments or symbols used convey the holistic character of aboriginal knowledge and experience. The idea of embodied self-awareness is the cornerstone of Yoga and related philosophy. Malhotra coined the term “embodied knowing” to refer to “the extensive range of inner sciences and experiential technologies called *adhyatmic vidya* to access divinity and higher states of consciousness” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 3). *Adhyatmic vidya* refers to the accumulated body of wisdom, such as the Patanjali Yoga Sutra, that is based on the “first person empirical inquiry into the nature of

consciousness and undertaken by advanced practitioners” (ibid). Meditation is therefore a form of embodied knowing, including that of the body, mind, emotions and *atman* or the spiritual Self.

Overall, I have found that while having major differences in content, indigenous knowledge has significant similarities with Yoga knowledge. For example, celebrating the interconnectedness of nature and humans, gaining knowledge through spiritual means, and seeing knowledge as spherical, sacred, enduring and holistic are common to both.

I now turn to Farah Shroff’s chapter on the indigenous knowledge of Ayurveda, in the above-mentioned book edited by Dei, Hall and Goldin Rosenberg, to support my argument for Yoga being an indigenous knowledge. In a chapter titled, *Ayurveda: Mother of Indigenous Health Knowledge*, Farah Shroff provides a detailed explanation of Ayurveda or the science of health. She observes that Ayurveda is one of the oldest documented forms of indigenous knowledge and that it emerged in ancient India from the same Hindu roots as Yoga does. In a later chapter of the book, she has written about Ayurveda, as an indigenous knowledge from India. Shroff explains that Ayurveda is a Sanskrit word, *ayur* means life, and *veda* means science or knowledge. Ayurveda’s link to Yoga is explained in the following quote in which she cites Nikilananda:

Knowledge has two-fold meaning: “the first (type of knowledge] is derived from the sense-organs and corroborated by various evidence based upon the experiences of the sense-organs” (Nikilananda, 1963, 13). From this knowledge came the physical sciences. The second type of knowledge is “transcendent and is realized through the mental and spiritual discipline of yoga” (p.13). This latter type is the subject of the *Vedas*, the ancient Indian texts to which both Ayurveda and Yoga are inextricably linked. Ayurveda is thus a science of life – a system of health and medicine that aims to help people live healthy lives. (2000, p. 217)

Sri Sri similarly explains that there are three types of knowledge, giving importance to one that comes from the space of the transcendent space:

1. *Indriya-janya Jnana*, knowledge which is received from the senses. 2. *Buddhi-Jnana*, knowledge that comes through the intellect. 3. A kind of knowledge that is more subtle and deep, and is beyond the intellect. Being stuck in the lower two levels of knowledge can become a bondage or obstacle in rising up to the higher and more subtle knowledge. (Shankar, January, 2016)

While Yoga is the science of the mind and Ayurveda is the science of health, they share many common theories and elements because, as in Yoga, in Ayurveda, “Ideas about unity and connection stem from a body of indigenous knowledge that seeks to integrate mind, body and spirit” (Shroff, p. 215). While Yoga deals with the modulations of the mind, Ayurveda deals with the body, within the context of the body/mind connection and provides medical, clinical, and disease treatment aspects of medicine. However, they both share the *tridosha* theory of the three *gunas*. Patanjali directly refers to the three *gunas* (*Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, 2.18 and 2.19) in his discussion about their role both in humans and in *prakriti* or nature and their interactions (Iyengar, 2014, p. 118-122). A yogi is urged to use *vairagya* (dispassion) to maintain a balance among the *gunas* by enjoying the sense pleasures without being caught up or obsessed, with them. In fact, due to common acceptance of Ayurveda in the daily life of Indians, including regarding food and hygiene, it is assumed that a Yoga practitioner is well grounded in a basic knowledge of Ayurveda. Although Patanjali does not directly refer to Ayurveda, the first of the eight limbs of Yoga, namely the *niyamas*, includes *shaucha*, meaning cleanliness of the body and mind, which implied the yoga practitioner to be knowledgeable about Ayurveda.

Much of what Shroff recounts about the history of Ayurveda also applies to Yoga. For example, she states that Ayurveda originated in the Hindu culture, which while deeply influenced by religious and spiritual thought, is best described not as a religion but a way of life. Like Yoga and other indigenous thought, the original source of knowledge is from divine source. “Ayurveda theory is believed to have originated with Hindu Gods and Goddesses and to have

been transmitted to ancient seers and then to other humans” (Shroff, 2000, p. 218). The first Yogi is known to be Lord Shiva. However, in its practical application, like Yoga, the philosophical worldview of Ayurveda is related to health in the context of the human body/mind/spirit complex, and not a religion. According to *Charak Samhita* (main Ayurvedic text), wellbeing is defined as a “disease-free state” to be pursued for the attainment of virtue, wealth, and gratification (Desai, 1989, 22, cited in Shroff, p. 222).

In *Ayurveda* the Sanskrit word for health is *svastha*: *sva* means self and *stha* means established. Thus to be healthy is to be established in the self, with the self being made up of three parts – body, mind and spirit. Therefore, health involves wellness in the mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual domains (Naidoo, 1989, cited in Shroff, p. 222). All these ideas are integral to Yoga as well as Ayurveda and are derived from the same origins of Hindu philosophy. Both Yoga and Ayurveda share, along with all indigenous knowledges, the notion of unity of nature with humans and the constant interaction between internal and external environments (Shroff, p. 226). “Mind, soul and body – these three are like a tripod; the world is sustained by their combination. They constitute the substratum for everything - *Caraka*, c500 BCE” (Shroff, p. 277).

The foregoing section has shown how Yoga and Ayurveda are inter-related as disciplines for the development of a healthy body and mind, towards the goal of achieving balance in life and both promote spirituality. That they have emerged from common Hindu philosophical roots points to their philosophical unity. I end this section with a clarification that India has Indigenous people living in several protected parts of the country, whose rights are protected. Therefore, the idea of Yoga as indigenous knowledge is not directly related to the knowledge of India’s indigenous people, who have their own distinct traditions. The indigenous knowledge of Yoga

and related Sanskrit text is related to the *dharmic* traditions that underlie India's culture, wisdom and traditions.

A historical perspective: Protecting Indigenous knowledges. In an article on *Royal Commission on Aboriginal people of Canada* Budd Hall, reminds us that, "The struggle for the survival and recovery of the words, images and dreams of the original people of our threatened planet goes on in all parts of the world" (Hall, 2000, p. 203). This section will briefly analyze the historical impact of racism, and its twin tools of colonialism and imperialism, on Yoga.

It is a well-documented fact that India was a 'land of milk and honey' in pre-colonial times and the colonizers came to exploit her wealth (Feuerstein, G., Kak, S. & Frawley, D., 1995, p. 250). A study by the Organization for Economic-Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the History of Economic Development from AD 0-2000 indicates that India had 33% of the world GDP, the highest in the world, in 0 AD. India's GDP remained high over the next 1700 years: 28% (percent) in 1000 AD, 24.5% in 1500 AD and 24% 1700 AD. However, further to India's colonization, its GDP had plummeted to 7% in 1913 and 4% in 1950, after it gained independence in 1947 (Madison, 2007). Indian historians have documented the immense extent to which England, Portugal and France (Goel, 1992, chapter 3) violated the political, cultural, social, economic and religious rights and freedoms of the people of India during the 200 years of colonization. Once colonized, Indians lost their citizenship rights and became impoverished.

In an article titled "*Hate on the net: A Question of Rights / A question of Power*" Evelyn Kallen (1998), a Canadian, provides a conceptual framework to analyze how racism works, both historically and today. Kallen's thesis is that people in power can incite racial prejudice and discrimination "by manipulating deeply held invalidation myths to provide 'evidence' for their arguments" (p. 5). Kallen explains that, "organized hate groups rely on and promote invalidation

myths and ideologies through which they attempt to invalidate, in essence, to dehumanize, identified minorities and thus to legitimize violation of their human rights” (Kallen, p. 5). She defined invalidation myths as, “falsified statements which allege that identified human populations are innately inferior or invalid (defective) with regard to particular human attributes” (Kallen, p. 5). Kallen presents her concept of invalidation as a process that takes place in a sequence of the following three main stages:

- Invalidation myth (prejudice): definition of target group as inferior/dangerous
- Invalidation ideology: development of theory of vilification and provision of arguments and “evidence” to “justify” denial of fundamental right.
- Platform for action: incitement to hatred and harm (discriminatory action), denial of human rights (Kallen, p. 5)

Invalidation ideology takes many forms such as racism, sexism, homophobia and so forth. Kallen provides the following example of racism against blacks to explain how invalidation is used to justify racial discrimination. “Blacks are classified in racist myths as racially, culturally and morally inferior sub-human beings - criminally inclined dope-peddlers, wife-beaters and murderers” (p. 5). Similarly, racist ideology has been, and continues to be, applied to Indians and Indigenous people. Kallen cautions that, “the repetition of racist falsehoods and pseudo-facts can leave behind a residue of prejudice and hate among non-target recipients - a seed bed from which more widespread incitement to hate and harm can flourish” (p. 4). Kallen explains that such problematic social constructs and false myths are used as grounds for inferiorization and ways to project these societies as dangerous and threatening. Using this ideology, “hate propaganda urges its audience to take steps to eliminate the purported threat” (p. 5).

- Invalidating myths: Indians (blacks, indigenous) are dirty, ignorant, superstitious, barbaric and savages with no culture, laws or civilization
- Invalidation ideology: They need to be civilized and it is the white man’s burden to civilize them; need to bring to them laws, education for their own good.
- Platform for discrimination: white people take control of land and resources

It is this kind of invalidation ideology that led to Mahatma Gandhi being thrown out of a train in South Africa and set him on the path of becoming a freedom fighter. It is the same ideology that led to the Jewish holocaust, the enslavement of Africans, the forced migration of indentured laborers from India to the Caribbean islands, Guyana and Africa and the cultural genocide of Indigenous people all over the world. An application of Kallen's conceptual framework on the invalidation ideology of racism to Hinduphobia (a term coined by Rajiv Malhotra, 2007, p. 63) can be used to explain how the denigration of Indian religion in western academia:

- Invalidation myth (prejudice): Hinduism is a war-mongering, politically oppressive religion. Hindus gods, Gurus represent sexual perversion; Hindus are sexual deviants.
- Invalidation ideology: All those who support Hinduism are part of "Hindutva" - a political organization rooted in the violent oppression of minorities. As religious extremists, Hindutva forces pose a serious threat to safety to India and to the world.
- Platform for action: Urge media, academia, NGOs and so on to organize the defamation and disempowerment of Hindutva forces, by violent socialist, Christian evangelical and academic, political and social activities, as needed.

Common experiences of colonization: India and Indigenous peoples. I suggest that any discussion about the colonization of Yoga cannot be separated from the political colonization of India, because Yoga originated in India and Yoga is a way of life there. Additionally, Yoga knowledge cannot be separated from Sanskrit, the ancient original language of India in which all the sacred texts that form the indigenous knowledge were written in. In his latest book titled, *Battle for Sanskrit* (2016), Malhotra asserts that the discussion about Indian civilization or *Sanskriti* is inextricably linked to Sanskrit, the language; *Sanskriti* or the cultural civilization is derived from Sanskrit based texts. And finally, *Sanskrit* and *Sanskriti* cannot be separated from Hindus, the people who are now the followers and keepers of this language, culture and tradition. That language and culture are linked is well understood by western academe. In addition, Sanskrit and *Sanskriti* are terms that also apply to the other traditions that originated in India, namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism. As mentioned earlier,

practitioner-scholars have used the term *dharma* to assert the philosophical unity of these diverse traditions. In this dissertation, I have used the words Hindu, dharma and Indian interchangeably, to refer to their collective identities. I acknowledge that the discussion of Yoga, as related to India and Hindus, makes it messy and complicated. At the same time, as it is for the different Indigenous nations of the world, the fight of preserving culture, languages and spiritual traditions is both in the social-political sphere and in the academy.

Malhotra extensively describes many of the invalidation myths that underlie academic Hinduphobia in his books, *Invading the Sacred* (2007, Chapter 25) and *Indra's Net* (2014, Chapter 1). Similarly, the invalidation ideology of racism, that justified colonialism and imperialism, led Euro-Christians to dominate the Indigenous people and other the colonized countries. In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Maori activist and author, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), mentions the historical link between colonialism and Christianity by referring to the decrees of the Catholic Church regarding the colonization of the world outside Europe.

The imaginary line between East and West, drawn in 1493 by a Papal Bull(degree) allowed for the political division of the world and the struggle by competing western states to establish what Said has referred to as a 'flexible positional superiority' over the known, and yet to become known world (p. 120).

By the 1930s, an estimated 84.6 % (percent) of the world was covered by European colonizers in their search for resources, labour and markets (Loomba, 1998, p. 15). By viewing the lands of racialized peoples as "*terra nullius*" (empty lands) the white Christians justified the occupation and exploitation of lands and resources as their right and privilege (Haig-Brown & Nock, 2006, p. 7). Haig-Brown explained its link to racism as follows: "Tied to social Darwinism and its misguided notion of the hierarchy of the "races of man" was the conviction that First Nations people – Indians – were a vanishing race" (Haig-Brown, 2012, p. 79). Despite major differences in histories, there are strong similarities in the experience of colonized people all over the world.

Indigenous people in Canada and Indian people, for example, experience colonialism in a similar historical period and in a similar pattern.

For example, like in India, the colonization of the Indigenous people in Canada occurred in the 1500s and in three stages. Claire Hutchings' article, *Canada's First Nations: A legacy of Institutional Racism* describes first "contact stage", starting in the late 15th century, during which the British and French "explorers" made contact with indigenous groups (2002. p. 2). The indigenous groups taught the 'explorers' how to survive the harsh winters and to understand the land and its resources and led to the second stage of trade during which the Indigenous groups exchanged pelts and other natural goods for guns, alcohol and other goods from the white traders. It was during this time that the west brought contagious diseases to the Indigenous people that led to the death of almost 50% (percent) of the population (p. 2). In 1867 the British claimed control over all the land and resources and enforced the racist Indian Act in 1876 that restricted Indigenous people to live on small "reserves" and intruded on every aspect of their public life (p. 3-4).

The 2015 Report of the Government of Canada on the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Residential Schools described what occurred to Indigenous children as a cultural genocide. Like the slavery of the black Africans, the residential schools were an example of extreme institutional and systemic racism. The impact of abuse on four to seven generations of people, who did not experience the love of a family or the safety of a community, destroyed the fabric of many Indigenous families and cultures. However, today, numerous inspiring Indigenous leaders, such as scholar Taiaiake Alfred, are showing the way forward through social action and powerful books such as *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways to Action and Freedom* (2005).

Similarly, in India, there were these three stages in the colonial history. During the first contact stage during 1500s, many Indian kings welcomed the British, Dutch and Portuguese explorers. The second stage was the trade stage when the British East Indian Company bought cotton, silk, spices, gold and so on for the West. Then came the colonial stage when through the trading company, the British took control of India's land and resources by military force, and Indians became servants to the British Crown. This chapter will provide numerous other examples, from history, philosophy, psychology and religion to show how aspects of Yoga were appropriated into Euro-Christian thought. The violent onslaughts on Yoga strike at the heart of this knowledge's main message: that of immense inclusivity in which paradoxes and differences can co-exist. The knowledge of Yoga upholds power of the individual and unity of mankind, requiring no organized bodies of power over people.

By the late 1960s indigenous peoples around the world were beginning to reconnect with their ancient traditions and were inspired to fight individual, systemic and institutional racism and begin "to rise above oppressive, devastating influences – become a bracing and creative movement" (Couture, 2000, p. 158). Over the past 50 years, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, along with numerous other Indigenous scholars and their western allies have analyzed and written about the damage caused to their people by colonialism, imperialism and Christian evangelism. The colonization of Indigenous knowledge in the academia and the domination of the research by the western worldview was viewed by indigenous scholars as an obstacle for the indigenous people working to their own culture, language and traditions (Smith, 1999).

My argument to consider Yoga and related knowledge as indigenous knowledge is purposeful because I am aware that from a decolonizing perspective, the definition of Yoga as indigenous knowledge has political and social implications, as evident in the foregoing

discussion. Yoga's current place in the world can only be understood when it is contextualized to its historical oppression. Indigenous scholars have used critical race lenses and decolonizing methodologies to analyze these historical contexts.

In order to preserve indigenous knowledge, its systemic appropriation, accompanied by distortion or denigration, by the dominant western world needs to be addressed. Historically, indigenous knowledge was viewed as authorless; just as indigenous land was seen as "*terra nullius*" (empty space). Therefore, appropriation of indigenous cultures was not viewed in the same way as modern intellectual property is today. Dei, Hall and Goldin Rosenberg (2000) discuss the problems of "biopiracy and intellectual piracy whereby Western commercial interests claim products and innovations from indigenous traditions as their 'intellectual property' (through protections such as patents), have emerged because indigenous systems have been devalued and have not been afforded protection" (p. ix). The appropriation of indigenous knowledge is accomplished through a "reductionist approach" such as the ones used to apply for patents or intellectual property rights, concepts that were unknown or did not fit the worldview of the indigenous people. The strategy worked for appropriation because it "reduce(s) biodiversity to its chemical or genetic structures; thus indigenous systems get no protection, yet the theft of these systems is protected" (ibid).

It is noteworthy that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People calls for the recognition and full ownership, control, and protection of cultural and intellectual property of the Indigenous people (p. Haig-Brown, 2010, 931-2). However, the declaration does not protect the knowledge of Yoga and Ayurveda of India because the protection applies to that of the people who are designated as being Indigenous. India, therefore, has to rely on the complex system of intellectual property rights to protect her traditional knowledge, which they

are, according to my discussion above. Similarly, while physical genocide is recognized under the Geneva Convention of 1948, cultural genocide is not. (Note: India has indigenous peoples as well, referred to as the Vanavasis (forest dwellers). The Indian laws protect them, and their culture; their fight for rights is not part of this discussion).

Farah Shroff provides an example of the harsh impact of colonization on indigenous knowledge, using the example of Ayurveda. The story demonstrates how advanced holistic indigenous approaches to wellness of Ayurveda, over time, were devalued and replaced by medical systems based on western worldview. With the advent of spice trade between the Indian and Europeans, Portuguese colonizers arrived in India in 1498, and by 1510, they had colonized the west coast, with Goa as capital. During the initial period prominent members of the Portuguese community praised Indian physicians (Comba, 1987, 24, cited in Shroff, p. 219). However, by the beginning of the seventeenth century Portuguese doctors had denounced Indian doctors as faith healers and colonial violence escalated. In the eighteenth century the British defeated the Portuguese and Dutch in battle; in 1762, the British East India Company defeated the French on land and using the state-sponsored military violence, the British domination of the Indian subcontinent followed. British policies to ‘push out the native medicine of India and patronize the European system’ (Gupta, 1976, p. 370, cited in Shroff, p. 219) led to the marginalization and demonization of Ayurveda, Yoga and the Sanskrit based educational system. Shroff observes that during the initial contact period “a number of Europeans praised the sophistication of the indigenous medical systems, especially in the areas of herbology, caesarean sections, inoculations, and plastic surgery (Shankar, 1992, cited in Shroff, p. 219). Shroff explained that the biggest harm of British colonialism on Ayurveda was the closing of the

thriving Ayurveda universities at Banaras and Taxila, effectively causing a loss not only of manuscripts and knowledge, but also of its prestige (Shroff, p. 220).

David White (2014) gives another important example of how indigenous knowledge was lost through the loss of its ancient manuscripts. White states that in the 1800s the British administrators of the East India Company appropriated thousands of Sanskrit texts on Yoga and related knowledges. For example, Henry Thomas Colebrook, founding father of British Orientalism, travelled all across India appropriating manuscripts. Colebrook personally donated 2,749 manuscript bundles or “codices” to the British Archive of Indian Manuscripts in Kolkata, opened in 1818, and it accounted for nearly two thirds of the collection that totaled over 4000 manuscripts (White, 2014, p. 76). One can only imagine the loss of this cultural wealth to the indigenous knowledge of India; even today an estimated 500, 000 ancient Indian Sanskrit and manuscripts in other Indian regional languages lay in western museums and libraries (Malhotra, 2016). In addition, although some are being re-patriated, many historical artifacts and works of art and culture from Indigenous people of North America are in museums and private collections all over the world.

Another factor that led to the loss of the indigenous knowledge was in the field of education, which was a tool of colonization. For example, “Ancient India was celebrated for its learning all over civilized Asia and Europe” (Swarup, 2000, Chapter 7, para 1). However, the British replaced the flourishing indigenous school system of *gurukuls* in India with a British school system in which the training in Sanskrit texts and scriptures was denied. This led to the loss of ancient knowledge on many sciences such as metallurgy, medicine, art, dance, astrology, astronomy, mathematics and so on. The English bureaucrat, Thomas Macaulay who did not have respect for Indian culture, language and history (Goel, 1992, chapter 4), spearheaded the new

system. In his infamous *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) he “derided Indian vernaculars as ‘poor and rude’, describes Sanskrit and Arabic as ‘fruitful of monstrous superstitions’ and declares that, ‘a single shelf of good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia” (Zastoupil and Moir, 1999, pp. 161-173). Dharampal (2000) provides a comparative historical review of indigenous education in India and England during the pre-colonial and colonial period; for example, in the 1800’s the extent and quality of education was quite similar in both countries.

However, the replacement of indigenous *gurukuls* by British system of education led to a fundamental change in education in India, both in quality and purpose. In India, the British colonial educational policies and practices aimed to create a class of Indians in the image of the English, with the English language, which was and continues to be used as an “active instrument of Western hegemony” (Vishvanathan, 1989, pp. 166-67). In effect, the system was set up to create India *babus* (clerks) who would faithfully serve England and also serve as police/army Sepoys, as needed. The British educational system was not about creating critical thinkers who would question the Raj. “The imperialist-missionary policies of the British have now become the political religion of our own neo-intellectuals and administrators. The attack continues under the guise of ‘Tradition versus Modernity’” (Swarup, 2000, Chapter 7, last para). Most of these schools, that glorified the west, were run by Catholic nuns and Jesuit fathers and were seen as the best schools in India. Haig-Brown observes similar trends in the British educational systems set up in Canada to “Christianize and civilize” the First Nations people, in particular through residential schools. Later, as in India, “schooling fairly quickly became a source of labor demanded by the marketplace mentality of the early colonizers” (Haig-Brown, 2012, p. 77).

To conclude this section on historical perspectives, I note that after a freedom struggle of about 100 years, India became independent in 1947. While some western scholars such as Keonraad Elst, Stephen Knapp and David Frawley have written extensively to expose the historical crimes against Hindus of India, some recent Indologists have attempted to downplay the violence of colonialism. For example, I refer to the position taken by David White, a prominent author on Yoga who studied with Mircea Eliade and wrote the forward to the latest publication of Eliade's seminal book, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (2009). He refers to the British colonial period of oppression merely as "the strange two-hundred-year clash of cultures commonly known as the British Raj" (White, 2014, p. 53). There has been neither an apology from the British Government for the atrocities of colonial rule nor any talk of compensation. The historical impact of colonial policies, which led to colonized minds, has led to a fractured Indian society and in the following section, I briefly discuss the impact of colonization on the psyche of the colonized people of India to contextualize the state of Yoga in India and the western academic studies in Yoga.

Fighting the enemy within: Internalized racism and existential duality. One of the main concerns that *dharmic* scholars, such as Malhotra, have raised is the challenge of protecting Yoga and related *dharmic* knowledges from the work of those who come from the indigenous culture itself. In this section, I examine these issues from a historical, anti-oppression and anti-racism perspective in order to provide some insight into the idea of needing to fight the 'enemy within'. Further to the end of colonial rule, the colonized people continued to experience the negative impacts of their colonialization. The concept of the colonized mind has been theorized by Frantz Fanon (1963, 1967), Malcolm X (1965) and by other anti-imperial scholars. Concepts such as "the intimate enemy" (Nandy, 1997) and "colonized mentality" (Memmi, 1991, p. x),

further expanded on the idea the ‘internalization’ of an inferiority complex as explained by Fanon (1967) and “the existential duality of the oppressed” as explained by Paulo Freire (1970, p. 46). Together, these ideas are useful to understand the colonized mind and the collective impact on their culture and health.

The Canadian First Nations lost control of their lives, their land and resources and were forced to live on reserves; later residential schools led to the loss of connection to their culture, language and families (Hutchings, 2002, p. 5). Due to the breakdown of their social, cultural and spiritual fabric, today, the indigenous people have double the rate of incarceration and teen suicide; there is high alcoholism, child abuse and spousal abuse related to their emotional trauma in residential schools (Hutchings, 2002, p. 8). Similarly, a long shadow was cast on the psyche of other indigenous communities and of colonized people around the world, and damage to their societies is now being understood and written in their own words.

One of the common phenomena experienced by colonized people has been referred to as ‘internalized racism’ that occurs when the colonized or oppressed people take in the qualities of the colonizers. The colonized persons not only hate themselves and their culture, they also assume the role of the colonizers and oppress others, mostly their own people. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator activist who worked with peasants, explains this complex idea in terms of an “existential duality” (1970, p.45). Colonized or oppressed people are often not even aware of this mental conditioning. In the following passage, Freire describes the mental process of internalization of oppression and existential duality:

The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of their concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity... This is because they cannot “consider” him sufficiently clearly to objectivize him - to discover him “outside’ themselves. This does not necessarily mean that the oppressed are unaware that they are downtrodden. But their

perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression. (Freire, 1970, pp. 45-46)

In his discussion of the idea of internalized racism, Freire was influenced by the writings of Frantz Fanon (1968), a Black Algerian psychiatrist, who is renowned for his analysis of the psychology of racism experienced by colonized and enslaved Blacks. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), based on his interviews with black people, Fanon describes how internalized racism manifests in the lives of black people. In a later book, *the wretched of the earth* (1965) he makes the following observation: “The colonized man will first manifest his aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people” to explain black on black aggression. Similarly, Albert Memmi, a Jewish man who grew up in Tunisia in a predominantly Muslim community, in his 1957 book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* explained the “colonized mentality” as “the contempt he felt towards the colonizer, mixed with the ‘passionate’ attraction towards him” (pg. 62).

Another way that the oppressed internalize the oppressor is by “self-deprecation”. Internalizing the dehumanization forced on them by the oppressor, the oppressed distrust themselves, are unaware of their own capacities and may even refer to themselves as ignorant and having less freedom than even animals (Freire, 1970, p. 63). Their lack of confidence and self-esteem comes from internalizing the oppressor’s view of them as objects, as “things” owned by the oppressors for their own use. It can become a self-fulfilling prophecy when the oppressed give up on themselves and their future. While Freire was making these connections about oppression in the context of class, his arguments are similarly relevant to understanding the impact of racism. Interestingly Freire’s ideas have also been applied towards “critical spirituality” (Boyd, 2012) in which freedom from oppression is seen from a spiritual lens.

When one understands this idea of internalized racism as experienced as an existential duality, it becomes clear that racism has shaped the Indian psyche in similar ways. Ram Swarup (2000) referred to it as “Cultural Self-Alienation” to describe the internalized racism among Indians. “They disowned their nationhood and their culture and adopted the ways and attitudes of the victors [British] whom they regarded as their superiors. They saved their self-respect through self-alienation” (Chapter 2, para 1). The internalized racism continues among Indians today. Malhotra talks about the “pain and self-alienation” that many non-resident Indian children experience about their Indian heritage in the face of western portrayal of Indian culture as deficient in the American media and academe. At the same time Malhotra observed that the blame for the negative portrayal of Yoga, along with other *dharmic* traditions, in the media “cannot be laid at the doorstep” of Western Academy or Religion alone (Malhotra, 2007, p. 6). Malhotra observes that “Many Americans are shocked to learn that there is a deep prejudice among India’s intellectually colonized intelligentsia...and their condemnation of Indic religions in civic society – which is the exact opposite of the respectful place given by American secular civic society to its majority Judeo-Christian traditions” (ibid).

The colonization of minds and their internalization of racism, as explained by Swarup (2000); Malhotra (2007, 2014); Elst (2001) and others, has similarly led to problems of self-hatred and aggression in the minds of Indians. “The long period created an atmosphere of mental slavery and imitation. It created a class of people Hindu in their names and by birth but anti-Hindu in orientation, sympathy and loyalty. They knew all the bad things and nothing good about Hinduism” (Swarup, 2000, Chapter 1, para 123). By attacking their own language, religion and culture, these Indians have taken on the role of the colonizer (Malhotra and Neelakandan, 2007, p. 1-3). Indian scholars have used the term ‘sepoy’ to describe westernized Indian elites in

positions of power or influence; they have “become proxies for western culture” (Malhotra, 2004, p. 298). Having internalized the racist ideology of the colonial powers, sepoys believe that Indians are of inferior intelligence and culture, and that the white people are superior (Malhotra, 2004, p. 298). Incidentally, the context of the use of the word “sepoy” relates to an incident during India’s colonial time. During British rule, Indian soldiers, called sepoys by the British, were deployed to suppress Indian freedom fighters. Every Indian probably knows about the Jallianwala Park massacre of 1919 when the British Army General Dyer ordered the Indian sepoys to shoot at a crowd of non-violent protesters and hundreds were killed. (Hindustan Times, April 15, 2015) Historically, the sepoy mentality was groomed by the British colonial rule through a colonized education system that glorified western history and culture, and denigrated Indian culture and history (Goel, 1992, chapter 4).

Malhotra postulates that in modern India today, sepoys, for example Ananya Vajpeyi, are being trained in the US academia under the tutelage of American Indologists and American Orientalists. For example, in his attempts to engage with American Indologists, Malhotra came across a few Indian Indologists, who were educated in western universities, were attending conferences on Indology. He observes that they “were either keen to show that they had nothing to do with their traditions, or were adopting the position that Indian thought could just as easily be mapped as a subset of Western thought, and had little to offer as itself” (Malhotra, 2004, p. 289). The reason I have included a discussion about the role of internalized racism in the context of my study on Yoga is that much of the academic work that distorts and denigrates Yoga and dharma related traditions is being done with the support of Indians trained by or impressed with the work of western Indology academy.

Chapter 5: Decolonizing Methodologies: Indigenous scholars lead the way

The foregoing sections have discussed what yoga is, why I theorized it as indigenous knowledge and how the colonial history of cultural genocide has posed a threat to its integral unity and survival. In this chapter, I discuss the ways in which Indigenous scholars in western academia have used decolonizing methodologies both as a response and as a strategy to reclaim their authority over how their language, culture and traditions are presented in the academe. I turn to some well-known scholars, both insiders and outsiders, to unpack this topic and its relevance to Yoga. Indigenous academicians, such Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith along with other indigenous scholars, and western collaborators clearly articulate their criticism of how western academia has misused and misrepresented indigenous culture and the importance of indigenous people to rewrite their own histories in their own voices, using their own methodologies.

However, how should non-indigenous academicians who collaborate with of indigenous scholars approach these knowledges? I refer to the work of numerous indigenous scholars and western collaborators, such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Marlene Brant Castellano (2000), Celia Haig-Brown (2008, 2012), Margaret Kovach (2009), Peter Shand (2000) and Dale Turner (2006) and others for their rich insights. These scholars provide decolonizing methodological perspectives to suggest how non-indigenous scholars can engage with indigenous knowledges and people. However, before I get into the discussion of decolonizing methodologies, I have written a short section to reflect on and explain my approach to my area of research, how I came to my particular viewpoint and what factors motivated the directions of my study.

Researcher subjectivity: an approach and academic tool

I am a practitioner-scholar of Yoga doing research on Yoga and therefore I thought deeply about researcher objectivity. As Haig-Brown reminds, “While there are some people who

chose to hide their particular reasons for doing research, the possibility of impartiality and objectivity has been thoroughly interrogated and found wanting when one takes context into account” (2012, p. 84). As a Hindu practitioner-scholar born and raised in India, and a long time diasporic Canadian, this dissertation is rooted in my own subject positionality and research background in yoga for youth (Sharma & Arbuckle, 2010).

In attempting to negotiate my subject positionality in relation to my academic work, I was struck by some ideas Haig-Brown conveys in her article, *Decolonizing Diaspora: Whose Traditional land are we on?* (2012) Haig-Brown reminds the reader that the land on which she was located belonged to particular indigenous peoples. She reminds readers of the Indigenous ontology in which “Land is never owned. Rather it is a spiritual and material entity to be treasured and cared for as a relative for all those generations of beings who will follow” (Haig-Brown, 2012, p. 73). In an earlier article, Haig-Brown explains that by welcoming others to the land, the indigenous message was, “You too can come in and live here in peace. We share this land together” (Haig-Brown & Moses, 2000, p. 69). This indigenous approach to land reminded me about the similar approach taken by Hindus to their indigenous knowledge of Yoga, Ayurveda and numerous philosophies. These knowledges, authorless in the western context of copyright ownerships, are not owned by anyone; the knowledges belong to every seeker in the world. Asking every non-indigenous person living on colonized lands to reflect on the fact that they are situated on indigenous lands serves to prevent historical amnesia of the history of colonization. Similarly, there is historical amnesia, intended or unintended, that many ideas in western psychology and philosophy are rooted in Yoga related knowledges from India. In the section that follows, I dig into some of this historical amnesia to disrupt some common myths about the relevance of Yoga knowledge to modern psychology or philosophy.

As a diasporic Canadian I was struck by Haig-Brown and Moses' "niggings and theorizing about diaspora" in which they suggest that asking non-Indigenous Canadians the question, "Whose traditional land are you on?" is "a step in our long processes of decolonizing our countries and our lives" (2000, p. 74). She suggests that it is in the answer to this question that "there are obvious implications for all people living in a colonized country" (ibid). It was in processing these ideas that I made the link between the colonization of the Indigenous people in Canada and colonization of India and to go on to theorize Yoga as indigenous knowledge. Haig-Brown and Moses' article gave an example of the process of making the kinds of connections that resonated with my own experience. They talk about a black student who arrived in Canada from Jamaica and became depressed due to the trauma of racism she faced here – a story that echoed my own experience. "As she read and heard about the First Nations experiences in the class, she said she felt as if she was now beginning to understand much more clearly the sets of colonial relations underpinning racism she faced...She began to see the complexity and depth of what she faced" (2000, p. 77).

From a decolonizing methodology approach, as an Indian immigrant living here in Canada, I could relate to racism experienced by the indigenous people of Canada and initially only made the connection to the racism I experienced as a naturalized Canadian. It was much later that I was able to make the connection between indigenous knowledge and the indigenous knowledge of Yoga, in the context of their shared experiences of attempted cultural genocide. As a naturalized Canadian of Indian origin, I have maintained an emotional, mental, physical, social, political and spiritual connection to India while also developing strong roots in Canada, a hybrid identity I was comfortable with, until I entered the doctoral program to study Yoga. Faced with an entrenched Euro-Christian curriculum and worldview, I found it hard to find an entry point for

Yoga philosophy. My initial response was to focus the academic essays I wrote during my coursework on comparing eastern and western philosophies. For example, I wrote a paper comparing Emanuel Levinas' idea of the Unknowable Other to the idea of non-duality in *Advaita* philosophy. I was looking to make a connection between them but the connections I made seemed forced and synthetic, rather than natural or authentic.

Given my grounding in Yoga theory and holistic education, I had difficulty accepting Freud's libidinal based psychoanalytical theory as an education theory or approach to teaching or learning. However, at the time I did not possess the ability to articulate the theory, language and conceptual framework of dharmic philosophy in order to present my counter arguments. I got those almost four years later when I started to read books written by Rajiv Malhotra and others, such as Linda Tihuwai Smith, who theorize decolonizing in powerful ways. I realized why, I could not position myself comfortably in western academe because, at that time, I felt that the fundamental underpinnings of my identity as an indigenous scholar was often neither acknowledged nor respected. At the same time, the reality that my doctoral committee has supported my dissertation is a testament to the fact that there are western academicians who are willing to make space for my different views, for which I express deep gratitude.

I found Haig-Brown's use of "decolonizing autobiographies" as a process to analyze ones' own subjective experience useful in reflecting on my own experience as a diasporic. Haig-Brown purports that anti-racist pedagogy "had the potential to inform all who currently dwell in colonized lands" (2012, p. 82-83) and by extension, to colonized lands that recently won freedom from colonization, like India. In this project, Haig-Brown states that she took inspiration from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's text, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999) and Ania Loomba's *Colonialism/ postcolonialism* (1998), along with reflexivity in research. Her insight was that

“Inextricably tied to this work is the consideration that the physically embodied and historically located self of the researcher is always an integral part of any research one conducts” (Haig-Brown, 2012, p. 83). I recognized that my own subject positionality was reflected in my work.

In the following reference to Werbner’s work on Diasporas, Haig-Brown’s remarks totally capture how I ended up doing my doctoral research on Yoga. As Haig-Brown correctly points out in the following quote, as a new immigrant, I was caught up with my personal and individual life, but over the long term, my activities and interests broadened to include involvement in the social, political and spiritual connections to my Indian heritage.

Although the experience of exile is, in the first instance, personal and individual, long term diasporas create collective literary genres, symbolic representations, historical narratives of loss and redemption, and practical forms of political alliance and lobbying that is uniquely theirs. They are embodied and perpetuated through communal celebrations and transnational economic and political (*spiritual/religious*) connections that are often invisible to the wider society. (2012, p. 85)

A question of *adhikara* (authority)

Given my subject positionality as a yogi-scholar, I pondered on what topics or concerns were going to be the fire that fueled my research interest in Yoga. What role would I play in the academic theatre in the context of my interest in the protection of indigenous knowledges? I found some answers from the writing of indigenous scholars working in context to the Indigenous nations and peoples. I begin with these questions: Who owns the knowledge? Who has the *adhikara* or authority to explain and teach the meaning of the knowledge, including about its symbols, words and ideas? Haig-Brown suggests that given the colonial past, indigenous knowledges ‘inhabit border world’ (2008, p. 14). She turns to Anishnaabe scholar Dale Turner to look at the ways in which indigenous knowledge responds to this border world. Haig-Brown explains “Turner lays out three philosophical projects (in the sense of philosophy being ‘thinking

about thinking’) relevant to a ‘vigorous indigenous intellectual culture’ (p. 9)” (Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 14). Haig-Brown explains Dale’s three projects as follows:

“1. ‘Understanding Indigenous philosophy’ which is represented by community-based knowledge keepers who understand Indigenous philosophy, ideally articulated orally.”

“2, ‘Indigenous scholars who are educated in Western European traditions and engage them on their own terms’; these scholars can articulate their people’s differences usually in scholarly writing” (ibid).

“3. Indigenous intellectuals who engage western European thought ‘as both a philosophical and a political activity’. These he calls ‘word warriors.’ (Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 14)

Turner’s three groupings of indigenous knowledge holders can be similarly applied to Yoga. The first group, the “knowledge keepers” could be seen to include the gurus of the tradition and those they train and authorize to teach the knowledge. Gurus, as living embodiments of knowledge, carry out their own work of spreading knowledge without being involved in academic work or contact with the western academe. The second group, “indigenous scholars” is engaged with the border world of western academia. It includes a large number of academic and other traditional practitioner-scholars, who are able to explain the various components of Yoga is, but they lack the *purva paksh* or critical review of problematic western interpretations of *dharmic* texts, as explained in the next section. As well, this group would include many Indian academics working on projects with Indologists on different projects that add to the western control of the discourse on Yoga.

The third group, “indigenous intellectuals,” would include practitioner-scholars like Malhotra, and others who are vigorously engaged both politically and academically, in the ‘border world’, to challenge the western (mis)representation and appropriation of Yoga and other *dharmic* knowledge. Malhotra argues that while there are several important Indian Yoga scholars who have spoken and written in English to interpret Yoga knowledge to the west, their teachings

and writing do not have *purva paksh*. For example, while modern Hindu preceptors such as Yogananda, Osho, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi were excellent in conveying Yoga and related Hindu philosophy to the west, even relating it to Judeo-Christian thought, these *gurus* were not familiar with the works of Indologists about Yoga and related knowledge. While their extant oral teachings are available in English publications, mostly as transcripts of their public talks, their influence on or use by western academics is negligible, and in fact marginalized. This indicates that there is a disconnection between the living oral tradition of teaching Yoga and the academic work in Yoga in western academia. As well, Indologists have appropriated the work of non-English speaking indigenous scholars – while their translated works are initially referred to as primary sources or commentaries, over time, the authorship of their work is assumed by the western scholars who paraphrase and interpret their work. Additionally, there are the “field informants” who provide the analysis, field data or material but they are not afforded the authority or recognition of expertise they deserve. What I find important to note here is that Malhotra too has been marginalized and in fact caricatured by western Indologists, who have found it easy to dismiss his powerful writings by claiming he does not have academic affiliations or a doctorate. While respectful, Malhotra is passionate in challenging the status quo, addressing the power imbalances and reversing the gaze from the east to the west. Malhotra is faced with what Haig-Brown had warned about: “Indigenous scholars who engage in any of these projects, I would argue inhabit a border world created by colonial conditions” (p. 14, 2008). I take this matter up further in a later section titled “Indology as racism” in which Malhotra raises many important questions about authority and responsibility of non-indigenous scholars to undertake revision of indigenous history. He asks difficult questions:

By what authority are Doniger et al. ‘in charge’ of such ‘restoration’ of Indian tradition? By what justification are they privileged to frame the subject in a

particular manner as opposed to the many other alternate frames possible? For whose sake is this restoration being done? What is the track record of their Judeo-Christian controlled intellectual institution in achieving restoration for other peoples in the past? To whom are they accountable? (Malhotra, 2007, p. 84)

One of the important contributions of indigenous scholars has been is to clearly articulate when western interactions with indigenous knowledge or people are problematic. Their writings on decolonizing methodologies serve to provide frameworks for academicians having an interest in working in this area. There are two main areas that indigenous scholars express significant concerns: one is about cultural appropriation and the other is about maintaining authority over their own knowledges.

On academe: addressing systemic barriers and appropriation

Decolonizing Methodologies (1999), written by Linda Tihuwai Smith, a Maori (Indigenous people of New Zealand), is a required reading for anyone interested in understanding decolonizing academe. One of the most famous lines from the book that “‘Research’ is the most evil word in indigenous world’s vocabulary” (p. 28) can similarly applied to concerns about research done on Indian history, culture, religion, language and civilization by some prominent American Indologists. It is a generalization that I make with awareness about the perils of doing so in academia; as Bruce Robbins warns academia, scholars must stay away from ‘easy generalizations’ in cultural contexts, yet they need to retain the right to difficult generalizations (1992, pp. 174-76). In this dissertation, I have already made numerous generalizations, such as eastern and western culture and thought, which in the context of Robbin’s discussion of cosmopolitanism, could be contested for being an overgeneralization (p. 183). Yet I find it useful in the context of my analysis. Smith makes the ‘difficult generalization’ that the “imperial eyes” of modern western academia are not neutral but represent its own set of values, assumptions, culture and subjectivity (p. 50). She raises the issue of

educational silencing which numerous Indigenous scholars have prominently discussed. For example, Margaret Kovach notes, “From indigenous perspective, the reproduction of colonial relations persists inside institutional centers...Regardless of whether research emerges from a positivist, constructivist, or transformative paradigm, it is still ‘researching’ Indigenous people, and it is still deeply political” (2007, p, 29). Both Smith’s and Kovach’s concerns are reflected in Malhotra’s allegation of the existences of ‘cartels’ in Western academia that work towards silencing the voices of the ‘natives’ they write about. At the same time, western academia has continued to use ‘native informants’ to collect data although often these native informants are the real experts. By denying them agency as experts, westerners deny them the recognition they deserve as keepers of the knowledge. As Smith observes, “our talk is reduced to some ‘nativist’ discourse, dismissed by colleagues as naïve, contradictory or illogical” (1999, p. 50). She links colonialism to imperialism and calls it the “outpost, the fort and the port of imperial outreach” (1999, p. 63) to benefit economically through subjugation of others and as a way to control the field of knowledge (p. 60). This is an argument that this dissertation asserts in context to the work of Indologists on Yoga, as discussed in detail in the following chapter.

In a chapter titled *Colonizing Knowledge*, Smith appeared to be describing what Malhotra terms as “western universalism”. Malhotra uses the term “western universalism” to describe the idea that the “west is both the driver of history and its goal, providing the template into which all other civilizations and cultures must fit” (2011, p. 308). Similarly, Smith uses the metaphor of an “archive” to convey “the process in which the west drew upon a vast history of itself and on multiple traditions of knowledge incorporating cultural views of reality, time and space” (1999, p. 117). Similarly, Gough (2000) talks about “avoiding the imperial vault” (cited in Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 16). While appreciating the early work of anthropologists, Smith expresses concern for

work of modern researchers that serves to deride the indigenous culture, language and history. Without rejecting all western psychological and other theories, she asserts the right of Indigenous writers to develop and use their own cultural lens to discuss their experiences. However, Haig-Brown points out that indigenous writers do not play in a level field because the western academe privileges work that promotes the hegemony of western theories. As an example, she notes that “the word “theory” seems to be assigned to particular bodies of knowledge – most often written ones – and denied to others. In the current climate within the university, Indigenous knowledge remains relegated to the margins” (2008, p. 16). Here she is pointing to a systemic concern: Why are indigenous teachings also not considered as ‘theories’? She gives the example that when scholars use one of Freud’s teachings - scholars refer to it as working with Freudian theory. “When we imagine base and super structure, use and exchange value in a Marxist analysis, we use those metaphors as theory” (Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 17).

Walking the fine line between appropriation and the sincere acknowledgement that aimed to inform western education for all, Haig-Brown referred to Stewart Harawira’s (2005) assertion that attempts to universalize Indigenous belief systems or world view are problematic. The problem is that “ontologies are relative and that the particularities and historicity of indigenous peoples and nations...give rise to unique characteristics and differences (p.35)” (Harawira cited in Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 18). Harawira cautions against globalization which “too often employs moves more culturally and economically imperialist than reciprocal and dialectical” (Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 18). Haig-Brown therefore recommends that the efforts to globalize indigenous thought should be controlled by indigenous scholars engaged with western academe.

Haig-Brown challenges western academe to address the lack of indigenous voices in the academy in the following way:

We can respectfully support those who do engage in such theory when the occasion arises – in reviews for publication, in applications for tenure and promotion - or we can continue to marginalize and dismiss those who insist that Indigenous thought has much to contribute to an impoverished theorizing that we are facing in education. (Is there anything new since Dewey?). (2008, p. 19)

In all the above discussion about indigenous knowledge, I find myself substituting the words ‘Yoga’ in the above quote and then ask the question. In answer to which I argue, it is Yoga, as my discussion in next chapter will show.

A related issue of appropriation involves the question about who is in control of the dominant discourse and who has the authority to speak for the knowledge or the interpretation of cultural texts, symbols or images. Haig-Brown uses Foucault’s Repressive Hypothesis in which he “focuses on the production of discourse that repression of an existing discourse incites” (2010, p. 932). She applies Foucault’s analysis of power to the indigenous context and observes how the residential school system has served to repress the indigenous language and culture and create a secondary discourse, which then become the dominant discourse. Indigenous scholars and practitioners on the language, culture and teaching of Yoga and related knowledge can similarly apply Foucault’s analysis of power to the field of Indology to examine how the secondary discourse by western Indologists has come to dominate over the primary discourse. For example, western Indologists have found it necessary to first claim ownership of Sanskrit by inventing the Aryan invasion theory (Elst, K. 1999; Feuerstein, G., Kak, S. & Frawley, D., 1995, p. 153-161). Further, many Indian scholars allege that by removing Sanskrit and its texts from its sacred, spiritual roots the work of many important American Indologists has implied the denigration and distortion of the culture, history and civilization that Sanskrit represents. Similarly, by controlling the discourse in ways that undermine Hinduism’s spiritual claims about Sanskrit, Malhotra alleges that Indologists have rendered its philosophy “fake and hypocritical”

(2007, p. 92). Malhotra further observes that “Hinduphobia in the mind of mainstream Americans see every day Hindu symbols as weird and as representing immoral practices” (ibid). At the same time, he points out that selected fragments of the knowledge of Yoga have been appropriated into the vault of western universalism to enrich western culture and philosophy. I take up a detailed discussion of these controversial allegations in Chapter 6.

Here I provide one example of American Indologists’ controlling the dominant discourse of Hindu sacred texts; several others are described in Chapter 6 on Rajiv Malhotra’s writings. In an important journal article called, “*Mythology Wars: The Indian Diaspora, “Wendy’s Children” and the Struggle for the Hindu Past*” (2011), Indologist Taylor McComas, from Australia, summarizes the western Indologists’ response to Malhotra and the American Hindu diasporas’ strong negative reaction to the denigration of its religious deities, gurus and rituals by Indologists. Hindus have objected to Indologists using Freudian psychoanalysis to analyze Hindu deities. For example, Lord Ganesh’s trunk has been described as a limp phallus (Courtright, 1985) or Goddess Kali as a mother with a penis (Caldwell, 1999). In response to these concerns, McComas refers to the institutional domination of the west on the discourse on studies on India and makes the following remark:

There was a time when the parallel universes of the Indian diaspora and the Western academy had few points of contacts...Scholarly journals, books and conferences were beyond the reach of most Hindus in India, and Indians in the West...had little time for the sleepy backwaters of academia...Indian attitudes to the academy have shifted from disinterest to a more critical and assertive position.” (2011, p. 152)

McComas’s comment can be understood in context to Shand’s concern about “who is speaking and who listening” and Foucault’s concern for who is controlling the dominant discourse and indicated what Gayatri Spivak refers to as “epistemic silencing” (Spivak, 1988). As the Maori scholar, Bishop observes, western research benefits often went to the researcher, not the people

being researched (1997, p. 36). McComas, in his one-sentence reference to Foucault, mentions the latter's idea of each epistemic community having its own "regime of truth" but he did not appear to have related it to one of the main context of Foucault's discussion, which is to examine power differences (2011, p. 163).

The "clash zone" McComas addresses is related to the question he put forth: Who has the right and power to represent Hinduism? (2011, p. 156). I believe that the work of many prominent Western Indologists, removed of cultural context and dialogue with Hindu practitioner-scholars or gurus, has brought about growing concern among Hindus scholars and Hindus in general about the western academia's secondary discourse on their sacred texts. In the later part of his article, McComas's comments indicate his lack of acknowledgement of institutional racism in western academia and the issue of power imbalance in studies of Indian history and indigenous knowledges. For example, he dismisses Malhotra's concern that Caldwell "gives white people individuality and agency, whereas Indian, and especially Hindus, are being denied [the same agency]" (2011, p. 157). In response McComas states:

The interesting point is that this (Malhotra's) criticism is cast in terms of race, nationalism and religion. The view emanates from a postcolonial milieu in response to historical and religious discourse that has been produced and codified, primarily by members of the colonizing powers. Not that American scholars of the twentieth century were ever directly part of the imperial project in India, but they are seen to have inherited the sins of their fathers, because contemporary scholarship is inextricably and genetically linked to the imperialist, Orientalist past. (2011, p. 157)

By portraying Malhotra's concerns in the context of "race, nationalism and religion", McComas may be viewed as deflecting the legitimate issues Malhotra raises about who should have the power and authority to explain the meaning of sacred dharmic texts. Studies in critical race theory and decolonizing methodologies suggest that avoiding addressing issues of power and privilege in academic dialogue has often been used to exclude non-hegemonic and indigenous

voices for the academe (hooks, 1994; Shand, 2000; Spivak, 2004; Smith, 1999; Haig-Brown & Moses, 2008). McComas's criticism could be seen as an attempt to discredit and silence the voice of an indigenous scholar who has dared to reverse the gaze and caused discomfort to those who control western academy. Malhotra asserts that the hegemonic American Academy has a history of successfully silencing dissenting voices by claiming academic freedom to interpret *dharmic* texts in whatever ways they choose, even if Hindus find these works to be offensive and inaccurate. McComas appears to be unaware of the cultural sensitivity that Haig-Brown's work addresses and which is needed when a dominant group engages in secondary discourse on a minority group (Gee, 2004). This included what Haig-Brown refers to as sensitivity to "radical epistemic disjuncture", which is an awareness of discomfort of the people whom one is writing about (Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 935-6) which this example about Indologists pointed out. At the same time, Malhotra defends the right of westerners to criticize Indian texts and culture; his objection is to western-non-practitioners attempting to define the meaning or wisdom of the indigenous knowledge texts, in particular, when it is in conflict with the insider view.

I found it striking that McComas reverts to the idea of having 'good intentions' to defend Indologists. He states: "The objects of our study, no matter how much we love them, are still our Other...The fact that many have white skin is not lost on the other side of the barricade...Diasporic critics attribute malice where none is intended and perceive offence where none is meant" (2011, p. 163). Indeed, the road to hell is paved with good intentions, as Haig-Brown and Nock recount in a book they edited, *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada* (2006). This book tells stories of several well-intentioned white people who, while questioning the evils of some colonial policies, were still perpetuating its racist ideology of needing to civilize the indigenous people in Canada (p. 8).

Third space

The popularity of yoga *asanas* has led to a growing interest in western academe to study it as an academic subject. It is therefore not surprising that there is growing academic work being done on Hatha Yoga by non-practitioners or practitioners trained outside the Yoga tradition of gurus. How should these non-insiders approach Yoga? Haig-Brown provides a clue when she describes herself as speaking as a “Euro-American white woman who can never experience what it is to be Aboriginal in this country no matter how empathetic I aspire to be” (2008, p. 10-11).

At the same time, Haig-Brown echoes what many insider practitioner-scholars of Yoga recognize, which is that Yoga is not a static or dead knowledge of the past. It is a living knowledge that grows in its depth with time. For example, B. K. S. Iyengar, added many props, such as blocks, elastics and ropes to his yoga *asanas*. The idea that all cultures are fluid and alive is something that Homi Bhabha suggests in his idea of ‘Third Space’:

It is that *third Space*, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37. cited in Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 13)

To relate Bhabha’s idea that cultures are fluid to indigenous knowledges, Haig-Brown refers to Métis scholar Carl Urion to convey that Indigenous knowledge is not frozen in some ideal of long ago tradition but that in fact, “Traditional knowledge is living knowledge” (Urion, 1999, cited in Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 13). This is also true as well for the indigenous knowledge of Yoga and Hindu philosophy. In today’s internet age, many of the scriptures and information are available on line and knowledge about Yoga is available online as well. While modern practitioners are imagining their own versions of Yoga, they often do so without much contact with the ancient tradition of Yoga. At the same time, modern Hindu Gurus are adapting their

traditional teachings. For example, I have often heard Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, my spiritual master, say in public meetings that the “Guru is there to answer questions that cannot be answered by Google”. In his interpretation of *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*, he refers to modern contexts such as science as way to keep the ancient knowledge relevant and relatable. In this way, Sri Sri reflects the continuity and flexibility of the oral tradition today. Rajiv Malhotra’s book, *Indra’s Net* (2014) talks about how the integral unity of traditional knowledge has been maintained over the millenniums as successive living gurus from different traditions, who have celebrated diversity of approaches to Yoga, have adapted the knowledge to the changing times. At the same time, clashes between traditional and modern interpretations are inevitable and it is the third space where many of the tensions about what Yoga is will be teased out. Much of the tension is and will be between practitioner-scholars and non-practitioner Indologists and/or Orientalists.

The idea of a “third space” provides an intriguing analogy of space for indigenous knowledge. While the indigenous people are in a sense confined to the space of their reserves, they assert their first right to their knowledge and in that respect can claim to be first, as keepers of the knowledge. In another context, indigenous scholars are not first in line for grants or academic opportunity, yet, the non-indigenous academe that have first opportunities, can only lay claim to having a ‘secondary discourse’ on indigenous knowledge. In the end, though, indigenous knowledge is not linear and being in first, second or third space is a relative idea in a culture that sees knowledge as spherical or multi-dimensional. What matters is that indigenous people assert and keep the right to speak for and teach their knowledge.

Border clashes

In the process of asserting their authority to explain, teach and speak for their knowledges, indigenous scholars are inevitably confronted with outsiders who assert academic freedom to

also speak on what they learn about indigenous knowledge. In an editorial article in a book called *Decolonizing Academe* (2000) Haig-Brown and Moses use Marker's (2000) term "clash zones" to refer to challenging space between indigenous and non-indigenous where the scholars from the two side interface. In pondering a question that every non-indigenous researcher should ponder, Haig-Brown observes that "Ever conscious of the risk of merely 'colonizing better', I ponder the possibilities of decolonizing: the interstices of appropriation and learning, of reciprocity and exploitation...I strive to see how to work in good relation" (Fitznor, Haig-Brown & Moses, 2000, p. 76-77). Her thoughtful response leads me to ask, "What message can indigenous scholars and their allies give to western researchers who are or wish to engage with Yoga and related *dharmic* knowledge?" In the chapter that follows, I explain the ways in which western scholars have mostly not worked in "good relation" with Yoga and related indigenous knowledge and philosophy and the keepers of these knowledges. Indigenous scholars are aware of institutional control and power of the dominant discourse. They assert that western academic discourse about the indigenous perspective "risks overshadowing the importance of *speaking or voicing* Indigenous perspectives: the heritage of oral tradition" (Fitznor, Haig-Brown & Moses, 2000, p. 81). They noted that the denial of primacy to the oral tradition of indigenous knowledge raises issues of authenticity and authority. Brant Castellano's (2000) cautions that "Writing things up gives authority to a particular view and a particular writer" (p. 31) and reminds scholars "to be respectful in how we put pen to paper when we are working with our communities where oral traditions are core" (Brant Castellano cited in, Fitznor, Haig-Brown & Moses, 2000, p. 81). The neglect or dismissal of the oral tradition of Yoga is an important issue that I take up in the next chapter.

Deep learning vs appropriation

I don't think there is any substance to the argument about western scholars "appropriating" Indian texts – the texts are there for anyone to write about them, if he or she simply takes the trouble to learn Sanskrit or Telegu or whatever, and a bit of the historical and social context. - Wendy Doniger, Indologist (Dutt, 2015)

I have provided the above quote from Wendy Doniger as an example of how Indologists have rationalized a disregard of cultural context in their translation of indigenous texts written in Sanskrit and other indigenous languages. Such approaches to the study of *dharmic* texts have led to clashes with the insiders who are practitioner-scholars. Doniger's remarks are a sharp contrast to other scholars, like Haig-Brown who have talked about experiencing "social and personal angst" about using indigenous language or concepts" (2010, p. 929). While Haig-Brown's writings are primarily aimed at those working with the Indigenous people and their knowledge, I find her discussions of the issues are relevant to the concerns raised by *dharmic* insiders about the work of Indologist about appropriation and denigration of *dharmic* knowledge. Haig-Brown herself acknowledges that, "For those who care to make the connections, there are implications for colonized lands and Indigenous people around the globe" (Haig-Brown, 2012, p. 74) which I have here extended to apply to the colonized indigenous knowledge of Yoga.

Haig-Brown explores the following question: "What is the relationship between appropriation of Indigenous thought and what might be called 'deep learning' based on years of education in Indigenous contexts?" (Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 925). Speaking from a decolonizing methodologies stance, Haig-Brown further clarifies that her term "deep" learning was different from "shallow" learning which can lead the most well intentioned person to violations of cultural protocol and demonstrations of cultural insensitivity (2010, p. 927). Haig-Brown goes on to further discuss the process and implications of such violations that lead to cultural appropriation,

an issue that is very relevant to Yoga and related knowledges. She provides the following definition of cultural appropriation from Wikipedia:

Cultural appropriation is the adoption of some specific elements of one culture by a different cultural group. It can include the introduction of forms of dress or personal adornment, music art, religion, language or behavior. These elements are typically imported into the existing culture, and may have wildly different meanings or lack of subtleties of their original cultural context. Because of this, cultural appropriation is sometimes viewed negatively, and has been called “cultural theft”. (2010, p. 929)

The questions that she invites non-indigenous scholars to work through are: When and how does learning a secondary discourse become cultural theft? Can it be anything else? (Ibid). She draws on Peter Shand to further discuss the different forms of appropriation. Shand describes three types of cultural appropriation in his examination of copyright law and First Nations Visual Arts, which I found useful to apply to Yoga as well. The three types are: commercial exploitation, modernist “affinity” and post-modern quotation (cited in Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 930). I discuss these with respect to Yoga because they provided significant insights into the ways in which Yoga and related knowledge is being appropriated.

Commercial exploitation is the most obvious form of appropriation, for example use of Indigenous art or images, names, food or medicinal plants. For example, the recent attempts by Harvard University to claim copyrights over the designs of Hopi ceramic art (Free Nampeyo, May, 2016). In the context of Yoga, as mentioned earlier, it is the concern that numerous physical postures of *Hatha* Yoga have been patented in the west even though India has claimed Hatha Yoga as indigenous knowledge that should not be patented.

Shand’s second form of cultural appropriation, modernist “affinity” refers to the use of Indigenous images in the hands of non-Indigenous people. For example, indigenous people see the naming of sports teams such as “Eskimo” “Mohawks” or “Redskins” as derogatory to their

culture. Recently the Inuit leaders have demanded that the Edmonton Eskimos change the name of their football team (CBC news, Nov. 28, 2015). Further, Haig-Brown brings the readers through a series of questions that prompt them to reflect on the intentions that underlie appropriation of indigenous cultural icons. She asks,

What does it mean and what happens when one (read non-aboriginals) (attempts to or) does occupy culturally-based concepts, beliefs, values, and thought processes for purposes other than what may have initially been intended by the originators (read Aboriginal)? What is the significance of original intentions and the world unfolding in unanticipated ways? (2010, p. 931).

Haig-Brown uses Homi Bhabha's observation that "an originary culture is only ever imagined in its re-creation in the current context" (2010, p. 931) to gesture to the complexity of defining culture. These questions relating to cultural reimagining are significant to my research on Yoga and I discuss them further in this section.

Shand's states that the third type of appropriation is "post-modern quotation", is the most insidious and potentially harmful form of appropriation. It is the type of appropriation that I posit has done the most harm to Yoga. Shand explains that post-modern quotation "reflects a pervasive sense of contingency and dislocation, in which all forms, regardless of their original cultural context are available for re-inscription" (Shand p. 5, cited in Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 931). Shand (2002) is concerned with ensuring that indigenous art reflects its "cultural and spiritual values." I suggest that this type of appropriation that has allowed western Indologists to take the liberty to denigrate the sacred and spiritual aspect of Yoga knowledge and for example, use Freud's psychoanalysis to interpret Hindu deities, gurus and rituals in sexual contexts. It has also allowed for the appropriation of Yoga knowledge in parts, namely the physical *asanas*, because yoga that is part of the spiritual path of Yoga may be unpalatable in the west for religious and cultural reasons. Another example is prominent western *kirtan* artists such as Deva

Premal claiming that Vedic chants or mantras are not Hindu because they are ancient; making such claims allows them to appropriate Hindu sacred chants into western universalism (Hindu Human Rights, 2016). As Haig-Brown points out, “In Shand’s terms, this decontextualization emphasizes the significance and implications of who is speaking and who is listening. The severing of the language from its specific meaning has the potential to and does effect real harm for indigenous people, their ancestors and descendants” (Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 931). In the context of Yoga and related knowledge, much of the “clash zone” is because westerner Indologists’ have not engaged in meaningful dialogues with indigenous practitioner-scholars to allow for what Haig-Brown refers to as “deep learning”. Malhotra addresses one aspect of the clash-zone in his book *Being Different* (2011) where he discusses several Sanskrit words that are misused and misunderstood when translated into English – for example God, soul, religion, suffering, holy spirit among others. Malhotra recommends that original Sanskrit words should be used instead to their English translations to assert authenticity of meaning and cultural context.

The previous section discussed what Yoga is and touched upon the issue of appropriation of Yoga. Sankrant Sanu, a practitioner-scholar of Yoga has used the metaphor of a ‘tree of knowledge’ to refer to the Eight Limbs of Yoga. Reflecting upon the moral and ethical concerns about the appropriation of Yoga, Sanu described appropriation as ‘stealing the fruit’ and distortion of yoga as ‘not nurturing the roots’ of the tree of yoga (Sanu, 2015). Together, the stealing of the fruit and not nurturing the roots of the tree of Yoga can lead to the death of the tree, meaning the destruction or loss of the authentic Yoga practices and knowledge. The section that follows discusses the concerns of the appropriation, distortion and denigration of Yoga knowledge in the western academic work in context of threats to indigenous knowledges.

In November 2015 the University of Ottawa Student Union announced the cancellation of a Yoga program that they had been running at the Centre of Student Disabilities for 6 years due to objections raised about cultural appropriation. The Ottawa Sun reported that the Centre official explained their concern that since many of those cultures "have experienced oppression, cultural genocide and diasporas due to colonialism and western supremacy ... we need to be mindful of this and how we express ourselves while practicing yoga." While I was unable to contact the union to fully understand what happened, it is a fascinating development of Yoga being reclaimed as a cultural practice. In a later statement, the Centre staff stated, "We are trying to have those sessions done in a way in which students are aware of where the spiritual and cultural aspects (of yoga) come from, so that these sessions are done in a respectful manner." (Ottawa Sun, November. 26, 2015). I propose that the cancellation of Yoga at Ottawa University is one example of resistance to the worldwide trend of Yoga being digested into western universalism. The reasons underlying this resistance speak to this whole chapter on decolonizing Yoga.

Digestion vs deep learning

Rajiv Malhotra had added significantly to the analysis of how Indologists and non-practicing-western scholars are now dominating the discourse on Yoga, Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. Specifically, Malhotra's analysis shows how a process of denigration often accompanies the process of appropriation, in order to justify the appropriation. Together they achieve what he has called "digestion". He explains this concept in his book *Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism* (2011). Having a goal of "refuting western claims of universalism" (p. 308) Malhotra presents a powerful analogy of 'digestion' to explain the complex issue of appropriation:

Western scholars and westernized Indians are accustomed to translating and mapping *dharmic* concepts and perspectives onto western frameworks, thereby enriching and perhaps even renewing the western 'host' cultures into which they are assimilated... This approach is highly problematic. One does not say of a tiger's kill that both the tiger and prey are 'changed for the better' by the digestion, or that the two kinds of animals have 'flowed into one another' to produce a better one. Rather, the food of the tiger has become a part of the tiger's body, breaking down and obliterating, in the process, the digested animal. (p. 9)

In the section on Malhotra that follows, I use this word digestion to discuss appropriation of yoga along with his other theories of western domination of Yoga and related knowledge. Haig-Brown's in-depth discussion of her idea of "deep learning" is different from Malhotra's idea of digestion in that it does not involve appropriation, distortion or denigration of the indigenous knowledge. Rather deep learning is a respectful way of engaging with indigenous knowledge. Haig-Brown further explains, "Deep learning is different from gaining deep knowledge. But rather engaging in the never ending process of learning, in this case, striving for "deep learning" that disrupts and interrupts business as usual" (2010, notes, p. 947). While her discussion is in the context of ethnography, the questions raised by her about appropriation and the authority to speak or use indigenous knowledge are relevant to all non-indigenous scholars working with indigenous knowledge.

Haig-Brown's discussion is directly aimed at decolonizing academe and having clarity about the roles of the two parties, indigenous and non-indigenous. In this context, she asks the question, "What, then, are the possibilities that a person from outside this complex discourse community can learn that discourse?" Her answer is the following: "I argue that it is possible – never easy but possible – and the two words "deep learning" are my effort to make sense of learning, what, most recently, James Gee in his work in socioliteracy studies has called secondary discourse" (Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 935).

Using Gee's work, Haig-Brown discusses the difference between acquisition and learning. "The former is the way we learn our own first language, our primary discourse, through a process that could be linked to osmosis... The later, in contrast a conscious process, involves knowledge gained through direct teaching" (ibid). These distinctions are well known to diasporic people, who hybridize and hyphenate not only their citizenship, as in 'Indian-Canadian', but also in their thinking and speaking, while at the same time maintaining the language, culture and faith of the country of birth.

Gee further refines secondary discourse "by dividing the process into instructed and deep learning... deep learning on the other hand involves a cultural process" (ibid). Gee emphasizes that, "...it is clear that deep learning works better as a cultural process than it does as an instructed process" (Gee, p. 13, cited in Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 936). Haig-Brown's discussion of Gee raises many questions about when and how non-indigenous scholars can and should write or teach about non-indigenous. Haig-Brown cautions that even with 'deep learning', there is a risk of cultural appropriation which prompts her to ask several important questions that should be asked by non-indigenous academicians working with indigenous knowledge:

If this potential for "deep learning" exists for those who are doing fieldwork over time, what does it mean for cultural appropriation: how and when does it differ from learning, or do the two always exist in direct relation to one another? Perhaps it is what one does with the knowledge and how it is done that raises questions and generates problems. Perhaps it has something to do with who is speaking and who is listening to what has been learned. How does acknowledging one's teachers (the oral equivalent of citation) affect the idea of cultural appropriation? What of intellectual property and entitlement? Where do appropriate protocol and cultural sensitivity come in? - (Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 938)

Haig-Brown asserts that non-indigenous scholars do not have the authority to interpret, write about or teach indigenous knowledge; only indigenous people themselves can do that. However, she proposes that "non-indigenous people who chose to listen and learn from Indigenous

intellectuals in either or both of the academe and the communities outside the walls, may also find themselves transported in a life-changing process to the recognition (or is it cognition?) of their existence in a border world” (2008, p. 15). In the context of Yoga and related knowledges, these questions are critical for Indologists to contemplate. However, most Indologists are non-Hindus and non-practitioners. Therefore, they have limited, if any, embodied experience or contact with an indigenous Guru who can provide them with the indigenous cultural interpretation or instruction.

In fact, the questions Haig-Brown raises do not appear to be on the radar among many American Indologists. The approach taken by scholars of Indology stands in stark contrast to the sensitivity shown by scholars such as Haig-Brown who experiences “social and personal angst” over appropriation of indigenous terms into popular use. For example, as a non-Indigenous writer, Haig-Brown decided to not use the indigenous concept of the sacred circle in her writing and teaching due to her concerns of appropriation (2010, p. 940). Similarly, when she was tempted to use the Indigenous Maori word “*tino Rangatiratanga*”, a word that means “chiefly control” (Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 934) she consulted with her Maori scholar-friends. The Maori response was that: “Without a conversation with living First Nations people about what they think and feel about their writing, their culture, and their lives, the likelihood that we will have produced bad interpretations arises, as we make ourselves the experts, and them into mute subjects of monologic expertise” (ibid). Thereafter, Haig-Brown decided against using the term, saying, “I do not feel secure in the knowledge to be sure I am using it respectfully” (2010, p. 944). It appears that Haig-Brown defaults to respect indigenous knowledge whenever she is in doubt about the meaning or cultural context of word. These examples explain what Haig-Brown has meant by her idea of “deep learning”. It seems obvious that the work of most Indologists

does not describe the kind of “deep learning” that Haig-Brown speaks of. I submit that this lack of interest in deep learning that has led to the Yoga and *dharmic* to becoming fodder for anthropological and psychopathological studies (Malhotra, 2007). It is the reason why the content of some of the western Indology is often difficult, often offensive, to those who teach or live the traditional knowledge.

Impossible Knowledge

In the chapter on Yoga, I have explained that Sanskrit is a complex language, with cultural and experiential context. For example, in his book on *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, White (2015) has provided a chart to show over 20 translations of the second four-word sutra: *yogah_ chitta vritti nirodhah* (2014, p. 13-14). To me this conveys that those without proper training in the language should be more respectful of its complexity. I find Pinder’s observation refreshing: “What if we really believed that we didn’t know anything. We didn’t understand anything. We didn’t have any information... There would be no embarrassment. There would only be delight. Delight exists at the place of encountering the unknown” (Pinder, 1991, p.1, 13-14 cited in Haig-Brown, 2004, p. 415). I find the suggestion of this approach particularly applicable for non-indigenous scholars approaching indigenous knowledge like Yoga and other Sanskrit texts. As Haig-Brown pointed out, “I want us to be able to acknowledge our inability to commodify and grasp some forms of knowledge, to admit our incompetence as readers of particular texts, without abandoning our ethical commitments” (2004, p. 416). Referring to differences in culture, language and ontologies, Haig-Brown talks about “ways of avoiding embarrassment as academics when we encounter “impossible knowledge”, that is knowledge that is beyond our grasp because of the limits of our language and our lived experience” (2004, p. 415). She talks

about outsiders recognizing their limitations and “not refusing such knowledge due to being subjugated to our unexamined limitations” (2004, p. 416).

The discussion of “impossible knowledge” makes me think about western encounters with Yoga and the possible role of wonder in these encounters. Instead, Indologists have sought to dismiss their limitations when faced with the “impossible knowledge” presented in Indian texts in different languages and cultural contexts. One example of mishandling of “impossible knowledge” is Jeffery Kripal, an American Indologist who in his book, *Kali’s Child*, (1995) based on his PhD dissertation under Wendy Doniger. He fails to understand the cultural and spiritual context of the intimate guru and disciple relationship and instead fantasizes the revered 18th century Hindu mystic, Sri Ramakrishna as a sexual pervert who was a “lover of...young beautiful boys” (Ramaswamy, 2007, p. 31). The book won the Prize for Best book of 1995 from the American Academy of Religion (AAR), which also indicates the depth of fetishization of oriental traditions, as explained by Edward Said (1979), in western academy. In this book, Kripal, a historian with no training in psychology, applies Freudian psychoanalysis of repressed sexuality to interpret Bengali and Sanskrit texts. When confronted by Indian scholars providing proof of his (mis)understandings of the Sanskrit translations, along with the indigenous cultural contexts, Kripal gave the following explanation for his controversial writings. “I do not honestly believe that the many important differences that have become apparent through this controversy can be fully resolved...as many of us are clearly operating out of radically different worldviews, moral values, and understandings of human sexuality and language” (Kripal).

Kripal’s response is far removed from what Haig-Brown gestures to in her reference to Haig-Brown’s idea of ‘deep learning’ of “impossible knowledge” as discussed earlier and Pinder’s observation about the possibility for the delight which exists at the place of

“encountering the unknown” (1991, p. 14, cited in Haig-Brown, 2004, p. 415). Pinder further asks, “What if we are delighted instead of threatened by what we don’t, and possibly can’t know?” (1991, p. 14, cited Haig-Brown, 2004, p. 416). Such open-minded approaches to indigenous knowledge may have prevented the imposition of Freudian, Marxist and Christian ideologies on ancient Sanskrit texts. As Haig-Brown states “Being open to new knowledge forms and striving to find new ways of resisting the imposition of culturally and linguistically inhibiting structures upon what we hear and/or we read can affect constructions of knowledge within academe...” (2004, p. 418). In particular, she draws attention to the importance of respecting the complexities of language and the risk of interpretations when grammar is a challenge, as it is in Sanskrit Yoga.

Language is the basis upon which epistemologies are structured: through the use of particular discourses, knowledge assumes certain forms rather than others. For example, if an Aboriginal [read Sanskrit] language is founded upon verbs and process rather than upon nouns and things, then what are the implications for understanding that language once it is doubly translated: first from oral to written form, second from one language to another? What are the implications for the reading practices of academics? (2004, p. 418).

Haig-Brown’s observation can be similarly applied to analyze the ways in which Indologists misinterpreted the orally transmitted knowledge of Yoga, written in the language of Sanskrit, during translation. Such differences are not just differences between theory and practice but rather differences at the foundational level of epistemology and ontology. Gesturing towards acknowledging these differences, Haig-Brown notes, “To leave the creation of meaning to the sense-making process of people outside the cultural ways of knowing of indigenous people is problematic” (2004, p. 428).

Haig-Brown is here also gesturing to the problem of literal translations of indigenous languages by non-indigenous people without the understanding of cultural contexts. In a recent

interview, Wendy Doniger, who has written 30 books based on Sanskrit texts, responded to the criticism about her lack of understanding of Sanskrit: Doniger maintains that, “Western scholars can’t damage the texts they interpret, no matter how wrong their ideas about them may be...Indians can air their view at any time” (Dutt, 2015). To which Malhotra asks a perplexing question, articulated over and over again within the Hindu community: “Why are such unsympathetic academicians, conditioned within biblical traditions, in a position to decide which portions of a text on Hinduism are literal and which ones are not? (Malhotra, 2007, p. 90). The problem of literal translations of Sanskrit texts, without their spiritual and cultural contexts, had begun with early Orientalists such as Max Muller (1823-1900) who translated the ancient Rig Vedas (Feuerstein, G., Kak, S. & Frawley, D., 1995, p. 104).

Haig-Brown speaks to an ethical code of conduct for non-indigenous researchers on this question of authority to write on indigenous knowledge and her work is an enlightening example for best practices about having meaningful discourses with non-Euro-Judeo-Christian people. In the quote below, an indigenous person speaks about the approach taken by Haig-Brown. The quote is an example of the type of listening that leads to the “deep learning” that Haig-Brown was striving for:

The skills we used? We asked questions on meaning, identified our assumptions, listened to each other, waited respectfully when the other was thinking or feeling; we validated, acknowledged, and cooperated...Celia didn't get defensive when I talked angrily about the injustices I feel...She didn't rationalize her White privilege. I could see she'd delved into the roots of our joint histories and how they affect our worlds today (social justice, antiracism) ...Culture means 'a way to live' and we were both open to sharing what we knew about our own worlds, learning and (we hoped) contributing to a healthier, more honest, and safer place within which to live and learn. (2004, p. 431)

The above quote is an example about the process of ‘deep learning’ involving listening. One of my criticisms of some Indologists is that as non-indigenous scholars, they have not felt it

necessary to listen to Indian practitioner-scholars even after the latter have complained about the former's interpretations. Indologists have failed to become what Haig-Brown calls 'spacemakers'. By 'spacemakers' Haig-Brown is referring to the role of western scholars "to quite literally find ways to open up research, publishing, and academic time and space to words that are not conventionally spoken or written there, and then (in a sense) step aside" (2004, p. 428). This concludes my sections on Haig-Brown's discussion about best practices by non-indigenous scholars' resulting in respectful engagement with indigenous knowledge. As this chapter has shown, *dharmic* practitioner-scholars have expressed concerns about the ways in which Indology has interacted with *dharmic knowledge*. In the chapter that follows, I delve further into the concerns about Indology and what Malhotra has termed as the "recolonization" of Sanskrit, Yoga and related *dharmic* texts and knowledges, in Indology.

CHAPTER 6: Decolonizing Indology – “The colony strikes back”

Just about every facet of Hindu sacredness is under direct and systemic attacks.

- Rajiv Malhotra, 2007, p. 27

I am simply using the *dharmic* perspective to reverse the analytical gaze which normally goes from West to East and unconsciously privileges the former. This reversal evaluates Western problems in a unique way, sheds light on some of its blind spots, and shows how *dharmic* cultures can help alleviate and resolve some of the problems of the world today.

- Rajiv Malhotra, 2011, p.1

Throughout the Mahabharata...Krishna goads human beings into all sorts of murderous and self-destructive behaviours such as war. The Gita is a dishonest book; it justifies war.

- Wendy Doniger, American Indologist, on the *Bhagavad Gita*, Hindu sacred text (cited in Malhotra, 2007, p. 13)

In decolonizing studies on Yoga in the western academia, I theorize that the problematic aspects of Indologists’ interpretations of eastern *dharmic* texts and knowledges are related to the west viewing Yoga as a ‘knowable other’ despite the irreconcilable ontological, epistemological and theological differences. In this chapter, I begin with analyzing these differences using Rajiv Malhotra’s work. I then give some examples of appropriations and mis(representations) of Yoga and related texts in western psychology and western Indology to demonstrate the nature of the tensions that lie between insiders and outsiders to Yoga and related knowledges in academia.

Academic discourse on Sanskrit and *Sanskriti* or civilization of India, has been dominated by western Indologists who are mostly historians or philologists and who are non-practitioners of Yoga or meditation. What this means is that outsiders to the culture dominate the academic discourse on the culture, language, traditions and philosophy of India. For example, David Gordon White, an American Indologist, in his book *Patanjali Yoga Sutras: A Biography* (2014), states that, “relatively few modern day Yoga scholars are either Indian or Hindu. Over the past one hundred years in particular, foreign scholars have generated the bulk of the new

theoretical perspectives on Patanjali's work" (White, 2014, p. 53). Similarly, McComas states that the studies in Indology are dominated by outsiders, mostly non-Indians (2011, p. 52) who, as Malhotra notes, are largely non-practitioners (2011). Their observation highlights the concern Haig-Brown has made about the problematic academic environment in which the discourse on indigenous knowledge is dominated by westerners, non-practitioners. The concern is that the west privileges western written texts over the "speaking or voicing perspectives" of the oral tradition, which in fact is the living tradition of the knowledge. Western scholars such as Jonathan Bader have recognized these issues and he observes:

One of the major shortcomings I have found in the writings of many Western authors is the tendency to ignore the traditional context of Sankara's work. This leaves the results of their findings in a vacuum which has little relevance to the spirit of Sankara's thought. We must remember that Advaita Vedanta [related to Yoga knowledge] is a living tradition. (1990, p. ix)

In this section, I cover important contributions of insiders and practitioner scholars, and in particular Rajiv Malhotra, towards decolonizing how Yoga and related Hindu philosophy and knowledge is being studied and taught in the west, by the outsiders, non-practitioners. Malhotra is an Indian-American scholar who has challenged the authority and interpretations made by many western Indology scholars by reversing the analytical gaze from the east to the west in powerful ways. In this way, I see his groundbreaking critical work as influential as Edward Said's work was in the context of dismantling Euro-centric interpretation of the east. While Said's critical analysis focused on western studies on Islam and the Middle East, Malhotra's analysis focuses on western Indology's interpretation of Sanskrit and *Sanskriti*. The purpose of his extensive work to expose the digestion, corruption and misrepresentation of Indian culture, language and philosophy can be seen as threefold. One, to help western academy recognize and acknowledge the harm caused to *dharmic* traditions and to work towards to a more informed

understanding. This has proved to be a difficult, if not impossible task, as discussed later. His book *Breaking India* (2011) and a second book, *Invading the Sacred* (2007) in which he is the chief protagonist, present an analysis of the denigration of the culture, language and sacred traditions of Hindus by propaganda by many different sources, including Christian evangelicals and foreign funded NGOs. Second, he aims to “wake up” Indians towards taking responsibility for the preservation of the *dharmic* cultures, traditions and languages, in their personal, political and academic spheres of interactions. His books *Being Different* (2011) and *Indra’s Net* (2014) discuss how *dharmic* traditions are different from the Abrahamic religions and aim to dispel the harm caused by “the myth of sameness” (Malhotra, 2014, p. 295). He seeks to create a positive grand narrative for India that is inclusive of all *dharmic* faiths. Third, he seeks to provide a strong intellectual response that challenges western academia’s hegemony over the discourse on studies on *dharma*. He seeks to expose the digestion of traditional knowledges in all academic centres, including in India (Malhotra, 2014, p. 295). His call to action is for traditional *dharmic* scholars to do what he calls *purva paksh* to take responsibility for creating, what he calls, *swadeshi* or indigenous Indology.

In an earlier section, I have explained Malhotra’s theory of digestion as the main driver behind what he calls the threat of ‘western universalism’. His work is particularly pertinent to my dissertation because it is centered on education and the academe. Of his numerous and extensive theories, I have chosen two theories proposed by Malhotra that most influenced my analysis of decolonizing Yoga: “Being Different” (vs sameness) theory and the U-Turn theory. I use the term ‘theories’ purposefully and consciously to privilege his Indian voice and presence, with the recognition that western academia has attempted to silence his contributions. As the discussion that follows will show, western academia has been unwilling to take his work seriously; or

rather, they do so possibly because his writings expose the systemic and institutional racism of western academe in a provocative and audacious manner. For the same reason I have provided some longer quotes from Malhotra because, despite the relevance of his critical analysis, that challenges the hegemony of western (mis)interpretations, western academy has refused to recognize his works. That he does not have academic credentials and is not affiliated with an academic institution has been cited as basis for the rejection of his work. For example, in the review of Malhotra called *Invading the Sacred* by Rahul Peter Das (2008).

Malhotra's has written or co-authored five books. *Invading the Sacred* (2007, in which he is the main protagonist), *Breaking India* (2011), *Being Different* (2011), *Indra's Net* (2014) and *Battle for Sanskrit* (2016). Of these books, only *Being Different* has received significant attention from the western academia. The other books were largely ignored even though they were well received by the Indian diaspora and in Indian academe. There were six reviews of *Being Different* published in the International Journal of Hindu Studies (Kearns; Yelle; Gross; Tilak; Gier; Larson; 2012:3) presenting a diversity of views. The book was referred to as an "idiosyncratic and challenging book" (Gross, p. 323) which presents a "spirited defense of the dharmic traditions (Kearns, p. 349). While the book was seen to present a "barometer of the current culture wars", Malhotra approach to difference was criticized for being absurdly reductionist leading to "cultural relativism" (Yelle, p. 336) and for overstating the "integral unity" of *dharmic* traditions (Larson, p. 322). Gier criticized Malhotra's discussion of difference as promoting a "superiority of the Indian tradition" and that "in overreaching to find difference, Malhotra has undermined any basis of mutuality" (p. 259). However, the same journal issue, Malhotra provides a response to these reviews of his book; he emphasizes that the purpose of his book was to reverse the gaze from the east to the west. He noted that while he was not opposed

to “cross-fertilization of ideas” between the two, his main concern was with appropriation of *dharmic* knowledge into Euro-western thought and the lack of recognition of the same by the outsiders to the tradition. Malhotra was also invited by many universities, such at the University of Toronto, for a panel discussion of the book (2013). However, despite the importance of the book, Malhotra neither invited to present at academic conferences nor were his papers approved for publication in academic journals. He continues to be marginalized by the western academia.

In the section that follows I discuss Malhotra’s analysis of institutional colonialism entrenched in studies on Indian culture, history, religion, art, languages, and philosophy under the umbrella of South Asian Studies. In an upcoming book, he calls it Academic Hinduphobia. Malhotra, now 65, has devoted over 20 years to what he calls ‘serving *Dharma*’ (a collective word to refer to all the diverse eastern based spiritual traditions), after quitting a successful career in business. Malhotra attributed his turn towards a life of service to a spiritual calling. His work on Indian philosophy developed from his practical involvement with his own children’s schools in New Jersey where he engaged with students and educators to educate them about Indian culture, religion and philosophy. It led to his inquiry into the powerful and influential American academy’s approach to studying India and a serious engagement with the academe as a philanthropist. While criticized for being confrontational, Malhotra describes his approach to that of Mahatma Gandhi, as indicated in the quote below:

My ‘Indology Swaraj Movement’ started in a fashion similar to Gandhi’s movement. Gandhi did not want the British individuals to leave India; they were welcome to stay. But the colonial *system* of governance would have to leave, and the principles and framework of dharma put in its place. The British ways had to be thrown out and replaced by Indian traditions. Everyone would be welcome to participate in the new system, he said. In a similar fashion, *my movement is not meant to throw Westerners out of Indology. Rather, I want to adopt Indian frameworks and let genuine Indians and Westerners participate in correcting the mis-information that is being developed about us.* The African-American movement teaches us that we better have our own leaders, and all well-intended

Westerners are welcome to work in such a system. So it is about having our own *adhikara* (authority) over who, what, how we study our culture. We do not need to apologize to Western Indologists for Indian culture being different. We offer them mutual respect; this ‘mutual’ clause is critical. (Malhotra, Sept. 15, 2015)

Malhotra funded numerous western studies on Indian philosophy through his Infinity Foundation, using his own saved earnings, to facilitate a positive change of direction. His point of departure came when he realized that while western Indologists welcomed the funds he provided, his suggestions about a change in approach to studies in Indology were not. Along the way, he experienced several ruptures, which he refers to as “surprises”. I briefly present them here because they tell the story behind the development of his critical theories and the ways in which they informed my decolonizing approach to studies on Yoga. Paradoxically, Malhotra’s ‘surprises’ both disrupted and resonated with my own experiences in western academe during my doctoral studies. He validated the angst I felt about the western hegemony I was resisting and gave words to the thoughts that I had not been able to verbalize or express because I lacked the critical frameworks of analysis. Malhotra’s extensive works have greatly influenced my critical analysis of decolonizing Yoga and, while I do not agree with everything he postulates, I owe a debt of gratitude to him for the insights I gained from his foundational work. I propose that the *Malhotra School of Swedeshi Indology* (as I coin here) is transforming the field of Indology.

Malhotra’s surprises

In a 2004 article titled *The U-Turn Theory*, Malhotra describes the “surprises” that prompted his work to decolonize Indology. He recalls that the first surprise was discovering that:

Indian Philosophy was not being taught in most US Philosophy departments except very superficially...Furthermore, Western philosophers openly said that *there is no such thing as Indian Philosophy*. When I tried to argue by citing examples of Indian Philosophy’s relevance in influencing American thought, I was told that those examples were from Psychology or new age or were in Religious Studies, but that Philosophy per se did not recognize them or have any use for them. (Emphasis in the original; Malhotra, 2004, p. 288)

Malhotra described seven other ‘surprises’ and together they elucidated the originality of thinking with which he returned the western gaze. Malhotra subsequently undertook a thorough investigation of the thriving academic areas known as “consciousness studies, mind-body healing, transpersonal psychology, mind sciences, philosophy of science”, among others. His second ‘surprise’ was when he found out that “while many ideas were clearly of Indian origin, these were presented with no reference to their Indian roots. Instead, they were usually repackaged as Greek and/or European thought, or with a Judeo-Christian spin” (2004, p. 288-9).

In his extensive communications with western scholars he learned that of “the terribly negative associations with Hinduism in particular” while not with the Buddhist sources (2004, p. 289). He suggests that westerners felt more comfortable with Buddhism because of its atheistic foundation. It allowed for an easier digestion into Judeo-Christian discourse. Malhotra’s third rupture was regarding the curriculum on Hinduism in a Religious Studies Department which

...was not mainly about explaining its deeper meanings or practices. Nor did it make an honest and serious attempt to make sense of these traditions in the lives of students today. Instead, it was mainly about the anthropology of poor villagers in India, women’s abuses, dowry, sati, Dalits, and so forth. This was clearly not the Hinduism that I knew. It seemed to be either the Christian missionary view, or the view of Marxists, Freudians and various other kinds of Eurocentric lenses. Shockingly, many learned Sanskrit scholars had joined in this ‘caste, cows, curry’ theories of exotica. (2004, p. 289)

Malhotra’s fourth ‘surprise’ was that the Hindu gurus and diasporic community leaders he met with did not understand the gravity of the situation and dismissed his concerns. His fifth rupture came when he saw appropriation of Hindu *dharmic* knowledge; he describes it as “a pattern of learning followed by distancing” among westerner scholars (2004, p. 289). The sixth surprise was when his analysis of Indian scholars showed that “some of the dirtiest work against Indian culture was being done by Indians who were ever eager to oblige and impress their Western colleagues” (2004, p. 290). Malhotra seventh surprise came when he uncovered the institutional

racism and colonialism that is entrenched in western academe. He found that there were gatekeepers working as cartels to keep dissenting voices out of peer-reviewed journals (2004, p. 290). Malhotra's final surprise was discovering the hegemony of western Eurocentric theories in the Liberal arts education that exclude alternate eastern theories and worldviews. He notes that western theories served as intellectual tools, sometimes called "literary theory" or "hermeneutics" that students need to master in order to be accepted in western academia. The Euro-centric worldview had been adopted by educated Indians who "unconsciously applied without question" because of internalized racism (2004, p. 291). The above-mentioned eight ruptures gave direction to his later books and theories. Malhotra's surprises rang true for me - both as a student in the western academy and a diasporic Canadian.

Being Different (vs sameness) theory

In his book, *Being Different: An Indian challenge to Western Universalism* (2011), Malhotra explains the fallacy of sameness argument which is often used to shrug off differences between India's *dharmic* spiritual traditions and Abrahamic religions (Jewish, Christianity and Islam). Malhotra asserted that there are major differences in the worldviews, metaphysics, cosmologies and philosophies between the two systems and he challenged many assumptions and myths about them. For example, he has used the term *dharma* to refer collectively to Hindu spiritual traditions that he explains are not religions in the Abrahamic sense. By *Dharma* he means, "a family of spiritual traditions originating in India...manifesting as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism" which "share integral unity at the metaphysical level" (2011, p. 3) despite having important differences in beliefs. This argument of integral unity of these diverse eastern faiths has been similarly discussed by other scholars (Swarup, 2000; Goel, 1992; Frawley, 2001; Elst,

2001) and by my guru, Sri Sri. While attempting to eschew glorifying one tradition or religion over the other, Malhotra explained the differences under four key areas:

“Embodied knowing versus History-centrism”: Malhotra explains that in *dharmic* traditions one is focused on achieving higher states of consciousness through ‘embodied knowing’, using first person empirical inquiry with the guidance of spiritual teachers. Humans are seen as intrinsically divine beings. In contrast, the Abrahamic religions depend on the historical revelations of prophets and salvation can only be achieved through obedience to God’s will and not directly through some inner science; man is born a sinner (2011, p. 5-6).

“Integral unity versus synthetic unity”: Malhotra explains that *dharmic* world view “sees the cosmos as a unified whole and despite profound differences in theory and practice, they account for some form of unity”; science and spirituality are not in conflict (2011, p. 7). On the other hand, in Abrahamic religions science and religion are in mutual tension and contradiction because of the conflict between revelation and reason (2011, p. 7-8).

“Anxiety over Chaos versus comfort with complexity and ambiguity”: Malhotra explains that *dharmic* civilizations are comfortable with contradictions, multiplicities and ambiguity and chaos is seen to spur creativity (2011, p. 8). In contrast, “in the west, chaos is seen as a ceaseless threat both psychologically and socially – something to be overcome by control or elimination” (2011, p. 8).

“Cultural digestion versus Sanskrit non-translatables”: Malhotra explained that Western scholars and westernized Indians have historically appropriated *dharmic* concepts and perspectives using western frameworks. This has led to “enriching and perhaps renewing the western host culture into which they are assimilated” while robbing the host culture of its value and therefore, diminishing its cultural capital. (2011, p. 9-10).

Malhotra’s above discussion of the differences and limitations is not a criticism of Christianity; rather his interest is in the open discussion about these differences towards the goal of mutual respect and understanding. I have found these explanations of differences between Abrahamic religions and *dharmic* traditions useful to contextualize my later discussion of the appropriation and denigration of Yoga in western academe. These differences in worldviews help to explain the western academics’ discomfort with many of the eastern thoughts. He sees the Abrahamic religions’ claim of exclusivity and superiority at the root of religious conversions and interference in Hindu civilization in political, social and religious spheres. Malhotra uses the

term “difference anxiety” (2011, p. 25) to describe the responses of people from both the Christian and *dharmic* traditions when faced with these differences. Malhotra suggests that, due to colonization, many educated Indians suffer from inferiority complex about not being from the “White, Christian, progressive race”. They accommodate for the inferiority by making the “sameness” argument: that all religions are the same (ibid). This discussion of sameness and differences between the *dharmic* traditions and Abrahamic religions is relevant to my study because my study is based on Yoga.

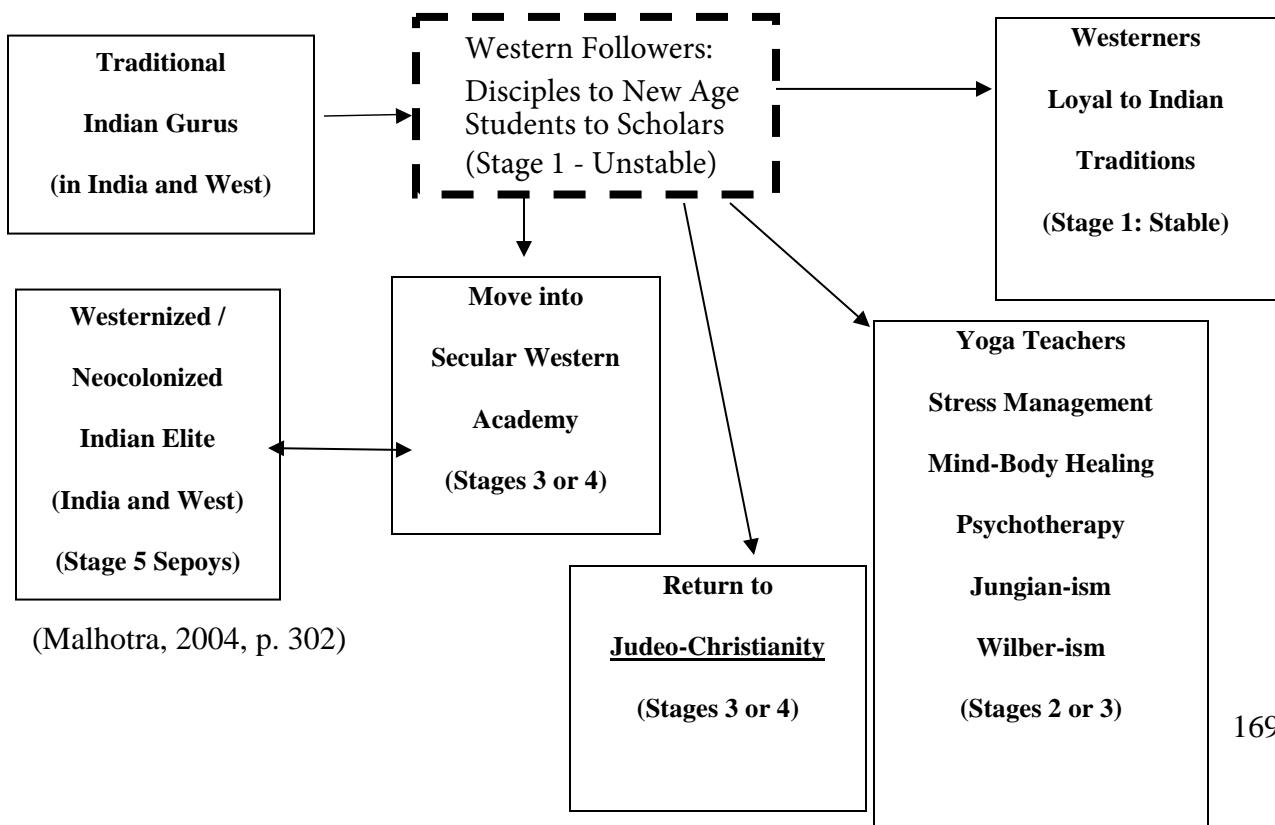
U-Turn Theory

To take a culture apart into its components, and to pluck out some key parts here and there, while denigrating the rest, is an act of violence.

- Malhotra, 2004, p. 297

According to Malhotra, the Western appropriation of the Indic indigenous knowledge systems has a long history. His U-Turn Theory, published in 2004 in a journal he created, presents his analysis of appropriation of Indian knowledge as a complex multi-staged activity (2004, p. 291).

Malhotra’s U-Turn Theory



In this section, I first explain Malhotra's U-Turn theory and I then discuss it using some examples. The flow chart explaining the U-Turn theory is reproduced here with the written permission of Malhotra. As the above diagram shows, the knowledge of Yoga and related knowledge flows from the traditional Indian gurus who are the knowledge keepers. The knowledge has been passed down by them through an ancient oral tradition in an intimate guru-disciple relationship. Gurus are living embodiments of knowledge and they represent the "*Sampradayas*, Indian lineages and traditions that change over time, and yet also retain *continuity with the past*" (Malhotra, 2004, p. 298, author's emphasis). Starting with Vivekananda in the early 20th century, and accelerating in the period after the world wars, numerous revered saints and seers of India imparted the sacred knowledge of the east to rest of the world. In reading their biographies and their writings, it is apparent that they gave the knowledge from a space of love and compassion, for the good of humanity, emancipation and world peace. Malhotra suggests that the knowledge that the Gurus 'gave away' represented the cultural capital of India, a wealth that had been orally transmitted through sacred *guru paramparas*, or uninterrupted lineage of gurus over thousands of years.

In brief, the five stages described by Malhotra are as follows: in the first stage, a Westerner approaches an Indian guru or tradition with deference, and acquires the knowledge as a sincere disciple. Many westerners remain in this stage for the long term (2004, p. 295). However, some move on to the second stage in which, once the student has gained the knowledge, the former disciple, or/and his/her followers progressively erases all traces of the original source and repackaged the ideas as their own thought (2004, p. 296). The third stage is where the disciple returned to his original tradition to assimilate the appropriated knowledge into his or own tradition (2004, p. 296). In the fourth stage, the person proceeds to intentionally

denigrate the source (2004, p. 297-298). In the final, fifth stage, the former disciple or his follower scholar exported back the original knowledge to India for consumption. Often this was done by training colonized Indians who are eager to please westerners due to an inferiority complex or for social, political or financial gain (2004, p. 297).

In his three later books, Malhotra cites numerous examples to support this theory and he attributes the U-Turns to several different reason, “primarily due to unconscious Euro-centrism of different depths” (Malhotra, 2004, p. 299). First reason he suggests was the U-Turner’s inability to reconcile the major differences between Judeo-Christian religions’ and *dharmic* traditions’ worldviews and their spiritual underpinnings, as discussed in the previous section. Closely related to these religion-based differences, was the problem of Hinduphobia, which reflects the scholars own discomfort with or misunderstanding of what is Yoga.

Malhotra uses the term “difference anxiety” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 25) to refer to westernized scholars’ worries about her or his work being rejected by the western audience if found to be linked to the baggage of Hinduism (Malhotra, 2004, p. 289). While this may be a legitimate concern, the ethical guidelines in western academia behoove all scholars to report the original sources, instead of claiming original authority to these ancient Yoga related knowledge. Malhotra contends that Hinduphobia, guruphobia and other misunderstandings about Yoga happen due to the Yoga knowledge being interpreted without its proper contexts: inner science, mind science, contemplative studies, embodied knowing, spirituality based experimental phenomenology and psychology (Malhotra, 2004, p. 291-4).

As mentioned in my literature review, Yoga and other contemplative studies are being studied by neuroscientists, psychologists, educators and others. The third reason for appropriation happens when western scholars come to the guru with the intention of

appropriation in order to use Yoga knowledge to renew or enhance western approaches. The scholars justify their intent in the context of his or her racist ideology of Yoga being illogical, exotic and religious, while having some elements that are useful for them. Fourth, scholars progressively distance themselves from the original sources to complete the appropriation for economic gain and ego related reasons such as for fame, position and prestige (2004, p. 296-297). Malhotra states that often this happens through second generation followers who are Hinduphobic or have other concerns as mentioned above.

Malhotra explains that the mechanism of the stages of the U-Turn theory are better understood by examining how western scholars have manipulated the contexts of the appropriated indigenous practices and wisdom. He explained this in the following quote:

In stage 1, the knowledge and experience is understood in its native context.

In stage 2, the Indian context is removed, and replaced by as much “generic” or “universal” context as possible – i.e. it gets de-contextualized. However, this is seldom a stable long term representation of knowledge, as the dominant culture is well organized to push it further along the U-Turn process. The knowledge is later re-contextualized into Judeo-Christianity and/or “Western” science, often with patents, trademarks and other claims to ownership – i.e. stage 3 of the U-Turn. In stage 4, the source Indian traditions are mis-contextualized so as to make them seem inferior, and to be not worthy of such positive cultural assets. (Malhotra, 2004, p. 299; emphasis is author’s)

Malhotra is purposefully provocative in his writings and his U-Turn theory is obviously controversial in the way in which he seeks to expose the digestion of Indian philosophies and practices by western scholars. Malhotra alleges that his writings were kept out the academic journals by the powerful cartels of Indologist who did not approve of his work, mainly because they challenge the status quo and western gaze (2007, p.3). As well, the criticism of his work that is found in some journal articles (McComas, 2011; Gier, 2013), but mostly in social media blogs and magazine articles, appear to focus on denying Malhotra a seat at the academic table. For example, in a magazine article Wendy Doniger states that Malhotra “knows nothing about the

subjects he writes about but he keeps publishing books.” She goes on to state that he was trying to stop others like her from writing (Dutt, 2015) but does not address his critique of her work. Martha Nussbaum has similarly criticized Malhotra (Nussbaum, 2009, p. 258) for not having academic credentials.

Others in western academe have defended Malhotra’s work recognizing that the main thrust of Malhotra’s argument has been that western “scholars should *criticize* but not *define* another’s religion” (Braverman, 2007). Hinells (2010) and Larson (2012) have defended Malhotra’s rights to question the hegemony of western universalism, with some reservations about his critical approach. Malhotra’s work represents an effort to do what Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird refer to as “using the enemy’s language” (p. 21, cited in Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 429) to reverse the gaze from the east to the west.

What was I found intriguing about Malhotra’s writings was the threads of similarities in his arguments and those of indigenous thinkers such as Linda Tihuwai Smith and White Euro-American academics such as Celia Haig-Brown; except that Malhotra’s analysis and language is more direct and provocative. For example, the arguments made by Malhotra in his U-turn theory were echoed in Haig-Brown’s discussion about the challenges of ‘deep-learning’ of indigenous knowledge by westerner engaged in secondary discourse:

Non-Aboriginal people may begin the process of learning what for them are secondary discourses, even eventually finding their fundamental world view effected. Over time, a secondary world view may be unconsciously acquired sometimes leaving the primary one fundamentally and irreversibly altered, even alienated. (Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 937)

Not many Indologists appear to display this degree of reflexivity or commitment to decolonization methodology that Haig-Brown has described in her writings as “deep learning”. Earlier I had discussed Haig-Brown’s concerns about appropriation of indigenous knowledge and especially about the appropriation of indigenous knowledge in small parts. As Haig-Brown

notes, appropriation of small parts of indigenous knowledge leads to the distortion of knowledge, which when engaged with without the spiritual context, loses its intended meaning or purpose.

Malhotra has called it an act of violence, as noted in earlier quote from him.

Malhotra also explains the phenomena of “Ornamentalism”, a twist of Said’s “orientalism”, in which appropriation is presented as the colonizer doing a “favour” or paying a compliment to the colonized culture (Malhotra, 2004, p. 297). This rationale has often been bought by colonized, westernized minds of Indians who, due to inferiority complex, are ashamed of their traditions unless they are validated by the west. Indians eschewed all yoga, meditation, sitar music, henna, nose rings and *bindis* (dots worn by Indian women on foreheads) until they were popularized in the west. Malhotra has calls this the “pizza affect” (Malhotra, 2006). The ‘pizza effect’ is the result of western universalism, the idea that the west is the repository of everything worthwhile, in culture as well as in other respects. This concludes this section on Malhotra, although his work is widely cited throughout this dissertation.

Digestion of Hatha Yoga

As mentioned earlier in the section, Hatha Yoga was made popular in the west by Yoga masters such as Yogi Amrit Desai, B. K. S. Iyengar, Krishnamacharya and Patabhi Jois, among numerous others who, starting in the 1960s created the yoga movement in the US. Desai is credited with training over 5,000 Americans in yoga. Desai was one of the first Indians to train and certify Americans to teach yoga. Through his Kripalu Yoga center in Massachusetts, he became the leading trainer of American yoga teachers (Malhotra, 2004, p. 20).

Yoga is now a multi-billion-dollar business in the world and numerous patents application were made for Yoga related items in the US. In the past few years the approval of such patents has slowed down due to the intervention of Indian Government. India has claimed

Yoga to be her cultural heritage. Since 1995, the Indian Government has attempted to protect Yoga from further appropriation and exploitation by the west (Vats, 2013). The Ministry of AYUSH, acronym for what Indian government refers to as India's "traditional knowledges of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani and Siddha and Homeopathy" was established in 2014 to accelerate India's effort to protect and promote this knowledge. The Indian government has used of the term "traditional knowledge" to Yoga that I find is not in conflict with my use of the word "indigenous", as explained earlier by Dei, Hall and Goldin Rosenberg (2000). Since 2008, the Indian Government began its intervention to protect its knowledge. The first few successes came when it fought and won cases against two US patents given for common Indian Ayurveda items: *turmeric*, a spice with health and medical benefits and *neem*, an ingenious tree in India that has medicinal properties used in agriculture and human health (AYUSH). The Indian Government website includes a Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) that is available for international patent offices to consult. For example, there are photos and instructions for over 900 Hatha Yoga postures. The TKDL website reports an enormous level of appropriation of India's traditional knowledge in the west. For example, it reports in the US alone there are 2315 yoga trademarks, 150 yoga-related copyrights and 134 patents for yoga accessories have been registered by 2005 (Hauser, 2014, p. 6). Among them were patents given for Hot Yoga and for Superbrain Yoga, patented by Master Choa Kok Sui of the Philippines (Sui). Superbrain Yoga simply involved the pulling down of the two earlobes together while bending up and down from the knees, with arms crossed in front of the chest; it is a common practice in India in how one greets Lord Ganesh (Shankar, September 21, 2015). The TKDL website explains that the reason for much of the misappropriation of Yoga has occurred because the traditional medical knowledge exists in local languages, such as Sanskrit, Urdu, Arabic, Persian and Tamil, which is

not accessible to international patent offices for review. To rectify this problem, in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization, the Indian Govt. has created a digital library. The digital library represents a significant cost, both in time and money, to the Government of India to fight these numerous patent requests. For example, India's case against a US corporation's attempt to copyright neem, a tree indigenous to India, took ten years to win.

As well, money and power appear to be the driving force in the Lululemonizing of Yoga in the West; yoga clothing and paraphernalia are a billion-dollar business all over the world and symbolize the commercialization of Yoga. However, some recent developments could change the way Yoga is taught in the world. Recently the World Health Organization and the Government of India have reached an agreement aimed to regulate the certification of Yoga and Ayurveda practices globally. "The ministry of AYUSH and WHO on Friday [May 13, 2016] signed a project collaboration agreement (PCS) for cooperation on promoting the quality, safety and effectiveness of service provision in traditional and complementary medicine. The PCA will deliver for the first time WHO benchmarks for training in yoga as well as practise in traditional systems of medicine such as Ayurveda" (Sharma, May 15, 2016). These developments could address the challenges related to heterogeneity and quality of instruction that Goyal et al. (2015) and Elwy et al. (2014) raised about studies on Yoga. However, without information on the details, it is unknown if this agreement will lead to further fragmentation and digestion of Yoga into western universalism or it will strengthen the adhikar or authority of the Indian knowledge keepers, for example, the Yoga Gurus, over the meaning and content of the knowledge. Most importantly, the concern is whether the involvement of WHO, in an attempt to 'secularize Yoga', will strike injury at the *adhyatmic* or spiritual roots of this knowledge, while attempts are made for the world to continue to take the fruit of this tree of knowledge.

In the section that follows, I discuss some specific examples of the digestion of Yoga into western psychology, another area of concern about studies on Yoga that is relevant to my study.

Digestion of Yoga into Western Psychology

We need more studies on the ancient Indian psychology. Modern psychology, compared to ancient Indian psychology, including Buddhist psychology, looks like kindergarten level. Ancient Indian psychology is highly developed.

- Dalia Lama, 2015

In the course of the centuries, the West will produce its own yoga, and it will be on the basis laid down by Christianity. - Carl Jung (1996, p. 537)

Over the past century or so, the spiritual and psychology knowledge of India's *dharmic* traditions has been digested into western thought through both invisible and insidious methods and covert methods. In a two-hour presentation in 2014 at the Lady Sree Ram College in Delhi University, Malhotra gave numerous examples of western scholars making U-Turns to their original western ideologies after learning at the feet of eastern gurus or through immersion in eastern texts. In the sections that follow, I discuss some examples of U-Turns that include prominent scholars in psychology and mind sciences such as William James, Carl Jung, Herbert Benson, Mark Singleton, Jon Kabat-Zinn, and Daniel Goleman. In private conversations, Malhotra has informed me that his draft book on his *U-Turn theory* will discuss the impact of eastern thought on over 50 prominent western thinkers, including Foucault, Husserl and Derrida, who shaped 20th-century Western thought. He questions why much of this fact has remained unacknowledged and uncredited. While a full investigation of Yoga's influences is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I present several examples to contextualize the work of key western academe in two related areas. First, studies in Yoga and second, in mind sciences that impact psychology, education and other fields related to the "stress-management" fields to highlight how Yoga has been digested into western thought.

My research indicates that the ideas of embodied awareness and consciousness as the observer, which are now firmly established in western psychology and philosophy, originated from *dharmic* traditions. Malhotra has uses the term “inner sciences” to refer to these ideas (Malhotra, 2011, p. 74). For example, as mentioned earlier, Patanjali is considered the first psychologist because the *Yoga Sutras* provided a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the mind and how to handle the stress causes by its activities. According to Malhotra, contemplative science began thousands of years ago with Yoga and the *rishis*, *yogis* and *buddhas* were “living human laboratories pursuing the methods and techniques needed to refine and develop the inner scientists’ capabilities” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 73). Malhotra explains that as the first psychologists and “inner scientists”, the rishis “pioneered research in the area of experimental phenomenology....to increase the resolution and clarity of the inner observation...Over time this led to the development of many sophisticated conceptual models and epistemologies” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 74). These models were all based on the interconnections of mind/body/spirit and were later transferred into western psychology, holistic education and health and, spirituality.

One of the major differences between *dharmic* and western approaches to human psychology is that the former provides a self-help model of holistic wellness. The *dharmic* approach seeks to provide individuals with tools to increase their embodied self-awareness towards progress on a spiritual awakening. The guru is there to support the student to examine his own mind and provide a wide range of knowledge and techniques that include Yoga, Ayurveda and spiritual scriptures. They also include yogic techniques such as sacred mantras, breathing techniques and meditation. Most importantly, the knowledge imparted was meant for the student to apply to his own mind and for his growth on the spiritual path. Knowledge was not

imparted for the purpose of using the knowledge as a weapon to judge others or a tool to analyze others.

I am reminded of Foucault's caution about the potential of power to abuse and in the case of western approaches in psychology, the power is firmly held by the analyst. The point I make here is that the western medical approaches of "treatment" or "analysis" are radically different from the holistic approaches taken in Yoga in which embodied self-awareness, self-inquiry and self-reflection is emphasized.

In this chapter, I discuss the work of some western scholars, including practitioner-scholars, who delved deeply into the knowledge and practice of Yoga and related texts but later went on to either renounce, distort or appropriate parts the *dharmic* knowledge into western universalism. While at some stage these western authors may have acknowledged the connection of their work to Yoga, as time progressed these connections were lost, hidden or denied.

In his seminal book, *The History of Stress* (2014), Mark Jackson discusses at length the contribution of the western scholars to studies on stress. His coverage of the contributions of Hindu and Buddhist practices and philosophies towards western studies in stress provides a valuable example to analyze how marginalization and digestion of eastern thought, that is typical of the hegemony of Euro-centric academe today, has happened. I use the example Herb Benson, a cardiologist, whose work is recognized to be seminal in the field on stress and mind sciences. In a section titled "The Relaxation Response" (the name of a stress management technique developed by Benson), Jackson began by providing a brief history of the western approaches to stress. He briefly mentioned the growing interest in the 1940s in the application of yoga and meditation for managing stress (p. 229-237) including Hatha Yoga taught by Yoga teachers Iyengar and Swami Sivananda (p. 230) and the yoga shows on TV in the 60s that popularized

yoga. He refers to authors such as James Halliday and Desmond Dunn to discuss Yoga's usefulness to westerners in that period, which, as mentioned before, has been the focus of western interests in Yoga.

Jackson separates his discussion into two streams: one, the discussion of eastern knowledge of Yoga in the form of physical *asanas* and two, the western research into inner sciences such as managing stress. I contend that the positioning of Yoga as different and separate from western research in inner sciences was a key method of digestion of Yoga. This is because this separation and division denies the fact that the idea of 'inner science' actually originated from Yoga. The idea of 'inner science' was not there in the western thought prior to the introduction of Yoga to Euro-Christians. As discussed previously, the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, for example, offer a comprehensive theory of the mind that modern psychologists later digested. For example, in his book, Jackson acknowledges that William James, the father of modern western psychology, recognized that Yoga had the potential to address mental health in the west. Jackson then states that after the Second World War, Edmund Jacobson's "work in particular provided a theoretical and practical basis for the gradual *adoption* (emphasis is mine, read appropriation) of yoga and other relaxation techniques not only to promote health and happiness, but also to ensure "peace of mind" (2014, p. 229-230). Jackson goes on to describe the compartmentalization of Yoga into old and 'modern yoga', a theory that is highly contested by *dharmic* scholars. This is because proponents of modern Yoga deny the integral unity and continuity of the Yoga by de-linking it from its ancient *dharmic* spiritual contexts (Malhotra, 2011, 106).

Jackson does not delve into acknowledging the appropriation of Yoga into western psychology and studies on stress. Appearing to have bought into the neo-Hinduism ideology, Jackson states "Western adaptations of Yoga, sometimes referred to as modern yoga, modern

postural yoga, or yogism, had become increasingly popular since the 1940s” (p. 230). He portrays the work of Desmond Dunne on stress as using ‘modern yoga’ and comments that Dunne supplemented his use of yoga with insights from psychology. Jackson then compares Dunne’s work to the work of B. K. S. Iyengar, the Yoga Master and stated that Iyengar’s work, “Much like Dunne’s deep relaxation, served to counter the effects of stress” (p. 231). Here, we see how Jackson’s language privileges western scholars by describing it as an improvement of the traditional eastern practitioner of Yoga. Jackson continues to maintain a separation between Indian Yoga teachers and scholars and western scholars’ approaches to stress and thereby can be seen to ignore or not acknowledge the fact that much of western research on stress, starting with Benson, was actually based on Yoga and its extensive and complex inner science.

Herb Benson. The purpose of my Foucauldian deliberation on the language of Jackson’s writings on Yoga and Western studies on psychology and stress is to show how the discourse of appropriation is often unconscious and imperceptible. Herb Benson provides a good example of how this digestion happened. In his book, Jackson discusses at length the clinical research Benson carried out through the Mind/Body Medical Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital he founded in 1988. However, he does not explain, for whatever reason, that Benson’s technique was based on Transcendental Meditation (TM), as taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. It is a fact that Benson himself has acknowledges in his book called *The Relaxation Response* (1975). Benson himself describes his method as a simplified version of TM and that he does not claim innovation but rather a scientific validation of ancient wisdom of TM (2014, p. 129). Yet, Jackson credits Benson for being the first to develop an approach to promote relaxation as a means of coping with fatigue, anxiety and stress. Further, he credits the source of Benson

inspiration not to TM or Yoga but to western thinkers such as Elin Wolff and Hans Seyle, among many other westerners (2014, p. 232-33).

Benson's first study on stress was at Harvard Medical School in 1968 where he was approached by the TM organization (Wallace, Benson and Wilson, 1971). Further to his personal meeting with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of TM, his study use TM meditators as subjects to show that the meditation practice lowered blood pressure. Benson went on to develop what some call a "spiritually sanitized version of TM". In an interview with the Sambala Sun, he makes the following statement to explain his reasons:

It made no sense to say that TM was the only way to evoke this quieting response, so I looked for the basic steps that made up Transcendental Meditation. Ultimately, I felt there were two: Step one was repetition, of a sound, a word, a prayer, a phrase, or a muscular activity. The second step was that when thoughts came to mind, you tacitly disregarded them and returned to the repetition. When I looked for these two steps in the religious and secular literatures of the world, I was astounded to find that in every single culture of man that had a written history, these two steps were described. (Sambala Sun, April 13, 2011)

Benson's words represent a classic example of a U-Turn to show how indigenous knowledge is digested and how the sameness argument can be used to deny important differences between *dharmic* traditions and Abrahamic religions, as explained by Malhotra in the earlier section. The process of digestion described in Benson's case can be broken down into several components. First, *dharmic* knowledge was found to be useful and then they were appropriated into western psychology using some New Age, modern non-indigenous contexts which served to marginalize the original knowledge. Second, by enabling the original knowledge to be used in a hybrid version, the authors avoided the stigma of appropriation. Third, the original knowledge was distorted because it lacked the meaning that comes from cultural, spiritual context of the original knowledge. For example, by de-linking the mantra from meditation, Benson's message was that mantras can be replaced by ordinary words. For example, Benson had research participants use

"neutral" words like "one" and even "Coca Cola" (Sambala, April 13, 2011) to replace TM's sacred and secret mantras. By extension, Benson implies that TM meditation program was replaceable by his own hybrid, sanitized program. In the earlier section on Yoga, I have explained earlier that mantras, such as the one used in TM, are sacred sounds and are Sanskrit 'non-translatables'; the mantra is a vibration whose impact resonates on the body, mind, emotions and spirit in ways that is now being discovered by neuroscience (Malhotra, 2011, p. 226-8). To assert that mantras are replaceable by any other commonplace word represents a gross misrepresentation and denigration of Sanskrit and *dharmic* traditional knowledge.

Benson's appropriation of TM into his "Relaxation Response Program" led to his having an illustrious career in the stress-management field and his books became bestsellers. Benson's old website, RelaxationResponse.org is now defunct and his work is now carried out through the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital.

According to this website:

Benson has been a pioneer in Mind Body Medicine, and one of the first Western physicians to bring spirituality and healing into medicine. Throughout his 40+-year career, Dr Benson has worked to build awareness of Mind Body Medicine, to validate it through research, and to bridge the gap between Western and Eastern medical practices.

There is no mention of Benson's link to TM and this serves as an example of how digestion of TM into the mainstream was accomplished and how the severing of the link to TM happened. Benson method of appropriation became the hallmark of other western scholars that followed in the field of psychology, in particular in area stress management. For example, twenty-five years later, Benson's words are echoed in Mark Singleton and Byrne's thesis, as follows. "(T)he roots of Western interests in yoga for stress were predominantly secular rather than spiritual.

...(P)rinciples of yoga were fused with relaxation techniques and psychological theories to produce a form of yoga that was adapted to the life in modern Western cultures" (2008, p. 231).

Again, we see the justification for stages 2-5 of Malhotra's U-Turn theory about how fragments of the practices and psychological teachings of Yoga and TM were digested to enhance western culture. The denial of the spiritual roots of Yoga, due to Hinduphobia, was a way to appropriate Yoga knowledge into Euro-Christian frameworks, without proper acknowledgement. In doing so, the appropriation was characterized almost as an improvement of the original Yoga knowledge – another play to hide or circumvent acknowledging the source.

The appropriation of eastern thought into mainstream western thought is endemic in western academic and represents what Malhotra has calls a “synthetic unity” into Euro-Christian frameworks. This is because the import of Yoga knowledge represents a unity that is not integral, but artificially imposed, to west's Judeo-Christian worldview (Malhotra, 2011, p. 7). Malhotra claims that the very idea of what he calls “embodied knowing” was introduced to the west from Yoga and it remains the single most important contribution to western psychology that remains unacknowledged (Malhotra, 2011, p. 3). By extension, Buddhist and Yogic traditions are the original sources for the numerous mind/body and contemplative sciences institutes that populate western universities.

Other examples of digestion. Notwithstanding the above discussion on Benson, the appropriation of *dharmic* knowledge into western psychology did not begin with Benson. My purpose is only to use Benson as an example to show how western digestion of *dharmic* knowledge took place. More than a hundred years ago, William James, the father of American psychology who had read about Yoga, anticipated the potential Yoga to improve human functioning. He wondered “whether the yoga discipline may not be a methodological way of waking up deeper levels of will power that are habitually used, and thereby increasing the individual's vital tone and energy” (James, 1902 as cited in Bloomfield, Cain, Jaffe & Kory,

1975 p. 87). Later on in the 1930s, Carl Jung, who studied Yoga, changed the direction of modern psychology by integrating the spiritual dimension into its scope (Hoffmann, 2014, p. 90). Jung's ideas of Self, collective consciousness, archetypes were based on Yogic thought that he had studied well. However, Jung did not go on to recommend Yoga practice for the west. In a classic U-Turn, as described by Malhotra, Jung wrote that in its cultural and spiritual entirety, the ideas of Yoga were contrary to Christianity and the western worldview (Jung, 1996 [1936], p. 534-6). Jung went on to take fragmented ideas from Yoga what he found useful for his work on psychology and he famously declared that, "In the course of the centuries the West will produce its own yoga and it will be on the basis laid down by Christianity" (Jung, 1996 [1936], p. 537). While in his lifetime, the influence of Yoga knowledge on Jung's philosophy was well known, over time the academics that followed him slowly stopped mentioning the influence of Yoga on his work. Today most scholars are unaware that Jung's philosophy was based on Yoga and Buddhist knowledge of the mind.

Similar to Benson's example, Integral Theory in psychology developed by Ken Wilber, a New Age guru, was heavily based on Buddhist and Hindu sources (Malhotra, 2014, p. 261). Wilber went on change Integral Theory into Integral Christianity (Malhotra, 2014, p. 280). Another important example is of Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003) who has been credited with developing 'mindfulness meditation'. While he had early on acknowledged that he based the technique on Buddhist *vipassana*, mindfulness meditation's link to *vipassana* is less known today. The digestion of *vipassana* into mindfulness represents a distortion of an ancient practice, which originated in the ancient indigenous knowledge of Vedic texts. Others have used the term McM mindfulness (Purser & Loy, 2013) to describe the commercialization of these Buddhist spiritual contemplative practices in the west. As discussed earlier by Haig-Brown and Malhotra,

taking parts of ancient indigenous practices is a form of violence; not only does it distort the original knowledge, it also fools people into thinking that the western versions cover all there is to know about the practice. Mindfulness therefore denies people the opportunity to delve deeper into the rich authentic Buddhist philosophy and practices that underlie *vipassana*.

Others, such as Miller (1988, 1994, and 2006) can be seen to promote the secularization of meditation and promoting these secular versions in education. Appearing to sideline the roots of eastern meditation methods, Miller has asserted, “through meditation we gradually dismantle the ego so that we see how things are. The ego is the source of our sense of separateness, and thus by gradually letting go of ego, we connect to others and the universe in a more direct and compassionate way” (1994, p. 27). Similarly, others have promoted secular versions of spirituality in health (Aldwin, Park, Jeong & Nath, 2014). The conceptual and therapeutic rationale for enhancing a transcendent sense of self in psychology was developed by Hayes (1984). The concept was recognition of spirituality or “you-as-context” (p. 108) as an essential component of the human experience and was based on eastern philosophy. Later writings of Hayes built these eastern philosophical ideas of inner science into mindfulness and emotional regulation (Hayes & Feldman 2004; Hayes & Plumb, 2007). As the earlier discussions have pointed out, such secularized versions of spirituality are firmly rooted in *dharmic* frameworks of spirituality that are largely unacknowledged. These authors represent another form of digestion of *dharmic* knowledge and Malhotra’s U-Turn theory has explained the rationale western thinkers have used to justify this appropriation.

Similarly, Daniel Goleman’s work on emotional intelligence is based on *Vipassana* and related Buddhist thought and he has written numerous books to apply eastern philosophy to western psychology (1995, 1997, and 2011). His early work was to study how interventions of

meditation could help relieve stress (Goleman and Stwartz, 1976). In his new book, *Force for Good: The Dalai Lama's Vision for Our World* (2015) Goleman recognizes and honors the influence of the Dalai Lama and Buddhist thought in his development of his theory of emotional intelligence. While proceeds of the book are advertised to go to charities, it is unknown if they will go towards building centers of *Vipassana* meditation for westerners given Goleman's appreciation of it. Instead, what is evident is that, Goleman, along with numerous others, have continued to develop, trademark and sell their so-called "secularized" versions of *Vipassana* meditations, which Malhotra describes as digestion and distortions of the original Buddhist meditation practices.

It is notable that Goleman, along with other eminent researchers such as Herb Benson, Jon Kabat-Zin and Ken Wilber have all gone on to establish major institutions and centers of research on "mind sciences" based on eastern meditation techniques. It begs the question, if *Vipassana* is so effective, why did they not devote funds to create centers of research on *Vipassana* that would promote the teaching of the Dalai Lama or the Buddhist monks on whom their research is based on? Much of the original research done by these eminent scholars, whether in psychology, medicine or neuroscience, was done with Buddhist meditators as subjects. Again, Malhotra's U-Turn theory explains this trend of digestion. It sounds strange, but the present Dalai Lama may be unknowingly presiding over the death of Buddhism as it is speedily digested into western universalism. Being the last Dalai Lama chosen under the ancient tradition may turn out to be true in more sense than one.

The above examples explain how appropriation of dharmic knowledge is being repackaged and presented as new knowledge. "A new generation has thus been falsely established as original thinkers. This is not merely a question of plagiarism but also a form of

cultural and civilizational imperialism which takes the spiritual traditions of a people and distorts and dilutes them so as to appeal to the imperial palate” (Malhotra, 2014, p. 267). The unconscious, often invisible, ways in which Yoga has been digested into western universalism through the academy continues to solidify this imperialism. For example, a comprehensive book on the history of posture based Yoga. Edited by Beatrix Hauser’s, *Transcultural Yoga: Analyzing a Traveling Subject* (2013), postulates the “knowledge transfer” of Yoga from India to the west (p. 20). Hauser stated that her book avoids making moral issues about the “ownership authenticity or the morals of transnational appropriations, rather it aims to describe and analyze social phenomena that are part of the globalization in one way or another”. Therefore, in a chapter in this book, Mark Singleton recounts how “yoga began to expand and adapt beyond the borders of India” (2014, p. 54) rather than how Yoga was appropriated, denigrated or distorted in the west. From a decolonizing perspective, the use of language and approach conveys the typical denial or ignoring of the issue of digestion in western academy. In fact, the book provides numerous excellent examples of U-Turns and the related contextual interpretations that facilitate the digestion of Yoga. At the same time these books, as those by Indologists, greatly contribute to understanding the rationales that outsiders have been used to justify the digestion Yoga into western universalism. From a decolonizing yoga perspective, these books provide important insights into how western academics have framed their secondary discourse on Yoga and below I give a few examples from Hauser’s book.

In a chapter on the impact of Kundalini Yoga, Hoffmann has provided an excellent detailed account of the deep influence of *dharmic* thought on western psychology. However, she has avoided the term appropriation and instead talked about ‘adaptations’ to western Euro-Christian society. For example, she mentions Carl Jung’s deep knowledge of Kundalini Yoga

and his eventual rejection or U-turn due to its conflict with his Christian religious beliefs; he was unable to accept the two top chakras that symbolize transcendence (2014, p. 84-7). Therefore, while Jung is celebrated as the “forerunner of transpersonal psychology...because he was one of the first Western psychologists who explicitly included the religious dimension of human experience in the framework of his analytical psychotherapy” (2014, p. 91-2), the vital influence of yoga on Jung’s theories is sidelined. Similarly, Singleton, along with many of the other authors of the book, has framed digestion in the context and language of ‘adaptation’ rather than digestion. I propose that by viewing Yoga as authorless and “*terra nullius*” (empty space) westerners have justified its appropriation and fragmentation.

In another chapter in Hauser’s book which is about Yoga and the environment, Strauss and Mandelbaum, state that “few people in the mainstream of yoga practice, whether in India, Europe, or North America, were making explicit statements about ecology and yoga” (2013, p. 176) and implied that the west was introducing ecology to yoga. These developments are examples of Stage 5 U-turn and demonstrate the way in which indigenous knowledge is first broken into fragments and then delinked from its original culture and tradition to allow it to be repackaged as new knowledge. It is well known that indigenous cultures are ecologically based, as discussed in my earlier section on the characteristics of indigenous knowledge (Brant Castellano, 2000). Indigenous worldview is deeply rooted in the belief of the inter-connectedness and interdependence of humans and the environment and does not need to be taught about how to care for the environment by the west. In fact, it should be the other way around; for example, indigenous farming techniques protect soil health and bio-diversity (Shiva, 2000).

On the other hand, in the traditional Judeo-Christian worldview, the environment is not viewed as ‘sacred’ but rather as a creation of God for human consumption; for example, Genesis,

1:28 states God asked man “subdue nature” and “have dominion over” creation. Therefore, protection of nature is for the purpose of human survival. This view is different from the indigenous approach to nature; nature is viewed as sacred (Malhotra, 2011, p. 349). Rivers, animals, trees and rocks are worshipped not for their consumer value but because they are part of the same divinity as humans. For example, the first tree-huggers, as a form of non-violent resistance, happened in India by Hindus in 1730. Over 300 men and women clung to trees to protect them from being cut down as raw material to build a palace (Earth Island Journal, January 12, 2012). Therefore, Strauss and Mandelbaum’s conclusion that ‘environmentalism’ was invented in the West and was being exported to Yoga tradition in India represents a misunderstanding of Yoga philosophy and Indian History. Having made these criticisms, I consider these books on Modern- Yoga important in documenting, from the western point of view, the history of influence of dharmic knowledges on western psychology. These studies also document the Hinduphobia and Euro-Centricism that has led to the distortion and denigration of dharmic knowledge into western psychology, which in their distorted forms is being exported back to India as Stage 5 U-Turns. In this stage, indigenous knowledge is reimported back to the indigenous culture as western knowledge, whether as environmentalism, vegetarianism or western psychology.

Western Indology

To learn who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticize.
- Voltaire

The fetishization and relentless celebration of ‘difference’ and ‘otherness’ can...be seen as an ominous trend. It suggests...the spectacularization of anthropology...cannot easily be distinguished from the process of the empire.
- Edward Said (2002, p. 302, cited in Rampersad, 2007, p. 108)

Indrani Rampersad uses the above second quote by Said to begin her chapter titled *Its all about Power*, to preface her discussion on the hegemony of the western Indologists along with the fetishization of Hindu religious symbols, gurus and deities. The quotes remind me that as a doctoral student, my strong criticism of the dominant western discourse of Indologists places me in the margins, and not the mainstream, of western academy and I risk losing favor of gatekeepers that guard the doors of western academy. Nevertheless, my *dharma*, as a student and practitioner-scholar, compels me to write without fear of reprisals from or desire for favor from the academe. For that I credit inspiration from Yoga, my Guru, Malhotra and numerous indigenous scholars and academic collaborators, among whom I include the members of my doctoral committee. I propose that the digestion, denigration and distortion of Yoga and related *dharmic* texts by outsider-scholars of Indologist are the outcome of the irreconcilable, ontological, epistemological and theological differences. I contend that the alternate view of human rights and other sociological constructs, offered by the outsider-scholars, are a muse or a Trojan horse intended to either dismiss or excuse the Hinduphobic and Eurocentric underpinnings of their work. In this chapter, I provide some details of their work in order to demonstrate why insiders and practitioner-scholar, in addition to ordinary people from the traditions, find it objectionable.

Malhotra has never advocated that westerners should not write about Indian civilization; he only seeks to expose how much of the work of scholars of American Indology has served to denigrate the culture, language and civilization of the India. He therefore suggests privileging the voice of the ‘insiders’, including both Indian and western authors, who have the protection (versus denigration) of *dharmic* knowledge guiding their ideology, purpose and interest. As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, the four *yamas* or social ethics of the *Patanjali Yoga*

Sutras, namely, *ahimsa*, *satyam*, *asteya* and *brahmacharya*, guides insider- scholars towards respectful and truthful engagement with scholarly work of others.

Margaret Kovach, in her book *Indigenous methodologies* observed,

From indigenous perspective, the reproduction of colonial relations persists inside institutional centers...[R]egardless of whether research emerges from a positivist, constructivist, or transformative paradigm, it is still ‘researching’ Indigenous people, and it is still deeply political”. Kovach also recounted Maori scholar Bishop’s observation that western research benefits often went to the researcher, ‘not the people being researched’.” (Kovach, 1997, p. 36)

In his book *Invading the Sacred* Malhotra provides a detailed analysis of how the American Academy of Religion, made up of over 8000 professors, functions like a cartel that exclude practitioner-scholars from *dharmic* traditions from teaching positions, research grants and other academic activities (Malhotra, 2007, p. 3). Such cartels represent the institutional racism within the American academe, with gatekeepers such Wendy Doniger. “Institutional racism includes organizational policies and practices that, regardless of intent, directly or indirectly disadvantage racialized minorities” (Tator and Henry, 2013, p. 373). It includes systemic racism, which refers to rules and policies woven into the social, economic or educational systems that serve to keep “others” out. In the context of universities, such systems include those involved in the production of knowledge, curricular decision-making, funding within the academy. These systems reflect who holds power and who doesn’t and as McIntyre states “Under conditions of systemic inequality, dominant groups, their world views, and their interests are entrenched... and normalized as unstated standards against which ‘Otherness – that is...non-Western origin and culture – is (re)marked as different...” (McIntyre, 2000, p. 162).

McIntyre’s above analysis can be applied to academic institutions, such as the American Studies on Indian Religion, to examine how the work of outsiders has tended to otherize parts of Yoga that are related to its cultural contexts. Malhotra observes that, “There are no true outsiders

– because those who stand outside Hinduism remain firmly inside their own ideologies, institutions and cultures” (Malhotra, 2007, p. 18). Mark Singleton takes up a different insider/outsider issue: the split between western academic writers along the lines of theory and practice. Singleton explained that, starting with Max Muller and Mircea Eliade, western scholars have “tended to denigrate (or, more often, simply ignore) practical, contemporary expressions of yoga in favor of the purely philosophical and theoretical” aspects (Singleton, 2008, p. 3). I contend that this split between theory and practice is a western construct and that imposing it on the traditional teaching of Yoga is an oversimplification and a way to excuse appropriation. As discussed in an earlier section on key concepts, Yoga promotes experiential learning and praxis, loosely referred to as *swadhyaya* or self-study. As the earlier discussion on indigenous knowledge using Haig-Brown has shown, the issue of insider and outsider is critical to the discussion of who has the *adhikara* or authority to explain the meaning of and to teach the knowledge of sacred texts, in their spiritual contexts.

Insider/outsider perspectives

Throughout this dissertation, I have claimed to speak from the perspective of a practitioner-scholar or insider and also used these terms. These divisions into insiders and outsiders is complex and fraught with challenges due to the overlaps between these groups and again I am reminded of Robbins discussion about scholars having the option to make “difficult generalization” in the context of culture, while eschewing “easy generalizations” (Robbins, 1992, p.174-5). Malhotra states that his analysis of insider/outsider scholars is not based on race or religion, but rather on the lens of ideology used by the scholar. He explains the difficulty in making these broad generalizations:

Insiders/outsiders are not determined by race, ethnicity, nationality, etc., but only by the positions one adopts on a set of issues. So, all Westerners are not outsiders;

many have a relationship with the tradition that makes them insiders. Likewise, many Indians I know are definitely outsiders despite having Hindu names, and many of them call themselves Hindus to hijack the tradition from within. It depends only on the lens you use. (Malhotra, July, 2015, post on his private discussion board I subscribe to)

Malhotra introduces the idea of the “lens of the tradition versus the lens of the Western social sciences” to differentiate between these two camps. Therefore, while insiders are primarily Indians, they include western practitioner-scholars, whose work is respectful of the tradition. Outsiders are social science academics, journalists and others, both Indian and western, who use western Judeo-Christian lens. The outsiders appear to regard the history, culture, language and religion of India broadly as subjects for research in the social sciences field and their writings. The vast majority of writings on Indian culture, for example by ethnographers is descriptive and informative and is not a concern for Hindus. However, Malhotra’s analysis has shown that there are important groups of Indologists and others whose work has had, and is having, a negative influence how Sanskrit and *Sanskriti* (civilization it inspires) is understood, not only in the west, but by Hindus and Indians themselves. I briefly discuss four loose categories of western activism to highlight the negative impact of their work on dharmic civilization. In a nutshell, with some exceptions (Feuerstein, for example), their writings generally represent Yoga and *dharmic* knowledge stripped of its sacredness and tradition.

1. Outsiders and U-Turn Indologists: This group includes Indologist scholars who are either outsiders or insiders who have made a U-Turn back to their western roots. They have broken down the Yoga related *dharmic* knowledge into smaller parts to facilitate digestion of Yoga into Euro-Christian thought and invented ideas such as neo-Hinduism to deny Yoga tradition’s integral unity and historical continuity.

2. Outsiders, primarily Indology historians, who apply Freudian psychoanalysis to Hindu texts, deities, symbols and gurus in order to portray them as sexually perverse and evil.
3. Outsiders, politically driven Marxists and atheists who strip the Sanskrit language of its sacredness while appropriating it for academic research as a dead language. They misinterpret Sanskrit's historical literature as oppressive and as the root of all historical oppression, social and political, in the world.
4. Christian missionaries and their evangelical scholars who denigrate Yoga and Hindu texts while at the same time appropriate/digest Yoga and related knowledges into their Judeo-Christian religion.

Western historians/Indologists

With no reading ability in Sanskrit and no access to primary source material he (Georg W. F. Hegel) was interpreting, he nonetheless felt himself authorized to pontificate on the (in)validity of Yoga as a philosophy. As we will see later, he was but the first in a long line of dilettantes, both Western and Indian, who have interpreted the Yoga Sutras on the basis of little or no understanding as means to furthering their own agendas. (White, 2014, p. 91)

An analysis of the above quote from a well-known American Indologist reveals several important insights into how western outsiders have related to the philosophy and meaning of Yoga and related texts. First, these scholars base their analysis on their study on literal translations written texts, without knowing their cultural or linguistic contexts. Second, as non-practitioners, they have no access to knowledge that can only be accessed through one's own embodied experience or through spiritual gurus who teach in the ancient oral teaching. Third, their work represents a western interpretation of Yoga using a Euro-Christian lens. In particular, they examine how Yoga and related knowledge fits into the western worldview and their interest in Yoga is mostly academic – as historians. I therefore propose that the work of American

Orientalists, as Malhotra refers to them, and Indology historians is a compilation of the Westerners' interpretations of Yoga and related texts rather than an explanation of what the knowledge represents for the adherents or followers of the traditions. I contend that Indology compiles the history of the west' encounter with Yoga and so I propose that Indology is better labelled as the "western interpretations of Yoga and Hinduism". At the same time, I also assert that Indology, as defined in this way, is a perfectly valid area of research, albeit, with a more honest title. Using a decolonizing lens to reverse the western gaze, insiders can, in turn, analyze and deconstruct how western academics have misinterpreted their sacred texts, philosophies, symbols and traditions. As an insider, I submit that I do not feel compelled to accept that western Indologists have the authority or ability to explain the meaning of the texts to insiders. Rather Indologists' work represents what Yoga means to them, as outsiders and non-practitioners.

Starting with the early 20th century, after Vivekananda's speech in Chicago on Hinduism, Indologists' encounters with Yoga and related *dharmic* ideas led westerners to reimagine the knowledge in context of western constructs that led to revolutionizing western thought (Malhotra, 2011, 2014). Indologists and other scholars use terms such as Neo-Yoga or Neo-Hinduism to describe the west's 'discovery' of Yoga in order to delink it from its *dharmic* roots. In the following section, I review the work of a few prominent western scholars in this regard.

Eliade's legacy. I begin with examining the writings of Mircea Eliade (1907-86), who is considered the father of western studies of Patanjali Yoga Sutras (PYS) and other dharmic texts in general. His appreciation of Indian philosophy is expressed in the following quote:

It is impossible...to disregard one of India's greatest discoveries: that of consciousness as witness, of consciousness freed from its psychophysiological structures and their temporal conditioning, the consciousness of the liberated man...and therefore knows the true, inexpressible freedom.

(Eliade, 2009 [1958], p. xxxiv)

Eliade, a Romanian philologist, has written several editions of his treatise on Yoga originally written in 1958 and they form the foundation of studies on Yoga in the West even today. In his writings, he expresses appreciation for the philosophical but also the practical wisdom of Yoga and remarks that, “All Indian philosophy has been and still is existentialist” (Eliade, 2009 [1958], p. xxx). He also understands that the focus of Yoga practices and knowledge was not to gain materially, but spiritually. Most importantly, Eliade understands Yoga involved *tapasya* (penance) and, given his own difficult experience with the practice of Yoga, was more forthright about how he saw the west could benefit from Yoga. I provide here this longer quote to clearly show the ways in which Eliade defines western academic approached Yoga, as non-practicing academics, whether in psychology, mind sciences, history, anthropology and so on:

Let us not be misunderstood. We have no intention of inviting Western scholars to practice Yoga (which, by the way, is not so easy as some amateurs are wont to suggest) or of proposing that the various Western disciplines practice yogic methods or adopt yogic ideology. Another point of view seems to us far more fertile – to study, as attentively as possible, the results obtained by such methods of exploring the psyche. A whole immemorial experience of human behavior in general here offers itself to Western investigators. *It would be at least unwise of them not to take advantage of it.* (2009, xxxi-ii; emphasis is mine).

Eliade goes on to clarify that he is not proposing a kind of “philosophical syncretism, or of Indianization” which would indicate a replacement of Christianity based western philosophy with Hinduism. Rather he proposes that the west should use Yoga knowledge to develop “universal spiritual values” as way to enhance Christian thought (xxxiii) while rejecting parts of Hinduism that they found objectionable (best understood as Hinduphobia as described later by Malhotra). In this way, I view Eliade’s work is a classic example of a U-Turn from Hinduism.

From a historical perspective, Eliade’s proposal, for the west to take from Yoga what it found useful, was in response to the rupture in western civilization after the atrocities of World War 2. The resulting vacuum in philosophy and leadership led to scholars to search for

answers about how to reimagine western civilization towards preventing another holocaust from occurring. Eliade appears to be echoing concerns expressed by other philosophers such as postmodernist Jean-Francois Lyotard who in the 1950s was also searching for an alternate philosophy for the west after the World Wars. Pondering on the failure of modernity, Lyotard points to the “fact that it is only in the light of the democratic and humanitarian aspirations of the Enlightenment that fascism and Stalinism appeared in their full horror” (Lyotard, 1986, pg. 9). Similarly, Hanna Arendt, in her book *Between the Past and the Future* (1954), writes about the “crisis” in western culture and, the resulting loss of traditions and the authority of the church and religion in the west during the post-World War 2 period. It was in the context of such concerns that Eliade sees the promise of Yoga to allow the west to reinvent itself at the philosophical and spiritual level, and by extension, social, political and educational level. In this context Eliade speaks to Western civilization’s questions about “what solution India proposes for the anxiety produced by our discovery of our temporality and historicity, that means by which one can remain in the world without letting oneself be exhausted by time and history” (2009, p. xxxiii). Eliade then provides his answer to this question:

It is from now on that, any cultural provincialism having been outstripped by the very course of history, we are forced – Westerners and non-Westerners alike – to think in terms of universal history and to forge universal spiritual values. It is now that the problem of man’s situation in the world dominates the philosophical consciousness of Europe – and to repeat, this problem is at the very center of Indian thought. (Eliade, xxxiii)

Eliade was a philologist who also referred himself as an “Indianist.” He learnt about yoga theory and practice, as part of his doctoral work, during his two year (1928-31) stay in India at the University of Calcutta under Professor Surindernath Dasgupta, an authority on Yoga (Dasgupta, 1970) when he was a young man in his early twenties (Eliade, 2006, xxxiv). He referred to Dasgupta as his ‘guru’ but his youthful transgression into having a love affair with Dasgupta’s

sixteen-year-old daughter, Maitreyi Devi, led to his terse removal from his guru's home, favor and tutelage. He then moved to live in the holy city of Rishikesh for six months where his experiments with Tantric sex appeared to have led him to abandon or never write about his experiences of Yogic spiritual practices and experiences (Kamani, 1996). He thereafter chose to defer to the work of Indian scholars to describe Yoga and related texts and instead, his work "emphasized less known or inadequately studied aspects: the ideas, the symbolism, and the methods of Yoga, as they are expressed in tantrism, in alchemy, in folklore, in the aboriginal devotion of India" (p. xxxv). It is a trajectory that has been followed by many of his followers.

Eliade never returned to India but spent the rest of his life refining his ideas on Yoga-based. He wrote numerous books on Yoga of which, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom* (1958) has become his seminal work. His books, along with other written European Indologists led to growing interest in studies in Yoga in the west and later to controversial interpretations of Hindu texts, as discussed in a later section (Halfbass, 1995, p. 14-15). Eliade's work spurred an explosion of interest in Yoga and related *dharmic* texts, with foreign scholars generating the "bulk of the new theoretical perspectives on Patanjali's work" (White, 2014, p. 53). What is important to note here again is that western interest in Yoga has been, and remains, the following: how the knowledge of Yoga can be used to enrich the life, philosophy, psychology and religions of westerners. Western interest in Yoga is not, and has never been, about westerners practicing or embracing Yoga in its full cultural and spiritual contexts.

Along with Eliade, there were numerous other western thinkers such as German Indologist, Paul Hacker, whose work studied how *dharmic* ideas, such as those expounded by Patanjali, could be digested into western universalism, after being stripped of Hindu religious contexts. These modern reincarnations of Yoga were based on the theory of Neo-Hinduism, as proposed

by Hacker, which attempts to deny the integral unity of Hindu philosophy (de Michelis, 2005, p. 38). Neo-Hinduism questioned the relevance of *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* to the west and decoupled yoga from its *dharmic* spiritual roots in India to situate it as “modern yoga” invented in the west based on the idea “western esotericism” (de Michelis, 2005, p. 21). However, De Michelis and Joseph Alter (2004) who are credited with theorizing the idea of “Modern Yoga” have failed to trace the root of “western esotericism” itself to Yoga and the dharmic spiritual the idea of consciousness as the observer and a divine Self.

The new branch of academic studies in “Modern Yoga” has become popular in the west and several books have been written. For example, *Yoga in Modern India: The Body Between Philosophy and Science* by Joseph Alter (2004), *History of Modern Yoga* by Elizabeth de Michelis (2005), *Yoga in the Modern World* (2008) edited by Mark Singleton and Jean Byrne and *Transcultural Yoga. Analyzing a Traveling Subject* (2014) edited by Beatrix Hauser. Their work has spurred an explosion of academic books on these western reframing of Yoga’s history and it is discussed later under neo-Hinduism.

Western Psychology and Yoga. In addition to the reinterpretation of Yoga texts, other attacks on Yoga have come from mis-interpretations of its related Sanskrit texts using western psychology. In the previous sections, I have already given examples of the work of Wendy Doniger, a prominent Indologist who currently holds the Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor Chair in History of Religions at the University of Chicago. Doniger invented an academic genre in which Indology historians apply Freud’s psychoanalysis to analyze Hindu religious texts, gurus and deities. She has written prolifically on this topic and has inspired numerous protégés or followers, like Jeffery Kripal and Paul Courtright, who like her are historians and not trained Freudian psychoanalysts. Applying Freud’s psychoanalysis to interpret

ancient Hindu texts, symbols, deities and revered gurus is now an accepted academic method and field of inquiry in western universities, especially in the US. I classify these works as fiction.

Needless to say such approaches to interpret ancient Hindu texts, gurus and deities has been seen as harmful and hurtful by Hindus living in the US, India and worldwide.

Invading the Sacred, a book edited by Krishnan Ramaswamy, Antoine de Nicholas and Aditi Bannerjee (2007) in which Malhotra is the main protagonist, has become a required reading for those interested in understanding the complex issue of western academic work that now dominate the narratives about India's ancient knowledge. In the book, thirteen authors write articles that expose the trend among American Indologists to eroticize, sensationalize or demonize Hindu texts, gurus and deities. The 8000-member strong American Academy of Religion that includes South Asian Studies, led by Wendy Doniger and Martha Nussbaum, among others, have nurtured doctoral students in academic work that has served to distort and denigrate Hindu texts, gurus and deities using armchair Freudian psychoanalysis.

The *Invading the Sacred* book provided several examples of the work of Indologists using psychoanalysis. Jeffery Kripal's book theorizes that the eighteenth century revered Hindu mystic Ramakrishana Paramhansa, guru of Swami Vivekananda, was a "conflicted homosexual and pedophile" (Chapter 3). Sarah Caldwell's award-winning book describes the Hindu Goddess Kali as "the mother with a penis" (Chapter 4). Paul Courtright uses Freud's Oedipal complex to describe the elephant headed beloved Hindu God Ganesh's trunk symbolized a "limp phallus". He further describes Lord Shiva temples are notorious for "ritual rape and murder" (Chapter 5). Stanley Kurtz theorizes that Hindu mothers did not "have a western-style loving emotional partnership with their babies" (Chapter 6).

Freud in Indology. Given the influence of Sigmund Freud on western psychology in general and the American Indologists' use of psychoanalysis to analyze Indians texts, gurus and deities, I reviewed Freud's writings on his understanding of Yoga. Freud expresses his views on Yoga in his book, *Civilization and its Discontents* (2002 [1930]). Freud begins the book with reference to his friend and colleague, Romain Rolland (1866-1944) who had written to him about the positive effect of Yoga and meditation on the mind after researching and writing about the lives and philosophies of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda. Rolland had written about the feeling of expansion and dissolving of boundaries of the Self in reference to Yoga.

Freud recounts Rolland describing this as a "sense of 'eternity', a feeling of something limitless, unbounded – as it were 'oceanic'...it was a source of religious energy" (2002, p. 4). Freud, deeply distrustful of religions, which he refers to as "examples of mass delusion" (2002, p.19) imagines Rolland's experience as an "oceanic feeling" which to him was "bizarre"; he confesses that "I can discover no trace of this 'oceanic feeling' in myself" (2002, p. 4). From his rational, intellectual and libidinal context Freud states that he could not relate to the "notion of limitlessness and oneness with the universe" (2002, p. 6) and further "confessed" that he finds it "very hard to work with intangible concepts". It appears that Rolland was accurately portraying what experiential Yoga was about, as Freud recounts: "Romain has assured me that in practicing yoga one can actually arouse new sensations and universal feelings in oneself by turning away from the outside world, by fixing one's attention to bodily functions and by breathing in special ways" (2002, p. 11). However, Freud was unable to comprehend this "wisdom of mysticism" and dismisses such experiences pathologically as "obscure psychical states such as trance or ecstasy" (2002, p. 11).

Later in the book, while discussing how to deal with suffering, he revisits Yoga. Freud states that human suffering is caused by limitations to libidinal pleasure and comes from three sources: from our own bodies, from the external world and from our relations with others (2002, p. 12). From the libidinal 'pleasure principle', a human being "strives for happiness, they want to become happy and remain so" (2002, p. 14). In his discussion of how a human being can move from suffering to happiness, Freud suggests, "One can therefore hope to free oneself of part of one's suffering by influencing these instinctual forces. In extreme cases, this is done by stifling the drives in the manner prescribed by the wisdom of the east and put into effect in the practice of Yoga. If it succeeds, one has admittedly given up all the activity too – indeed sacrificed one's life" (2002, p. 17). Incidentally, the idea that Yoga involving renouncing the world and running to live in a cave persists in the west even today. Instead, Freud prescribes one to follow a "less extreme route": "we seek merely to control our drive". While Freud indicates that he himself is unable to experience Yoga's "oceanic feeling", he nevertheless accepts that others can. However, to him, from his psychoanalytical mindset, such a person had to be a "hermit who had turned his back to the world and refuses to have anything to do with it" (2002, p. 18). For him the "art of living" was "the way of life that places (libidinal) love at the center of everything and expects all satisfaction to come from loving and being loved" (2002, p. 19).

The above discussion has shown that Freud could not relate to Yoga. Notably, he does not use his psychoanalytical approach to analyze Hindu texts, deities or gurus, as the Indologist did much later, as I described earlier. Alan Roland, a psychoanalyst, blames the misuse of psychoanalysis in South Asian Studies to "temptations of interpretation, over reductionism and limited knowledge of psychoanalysis" (cited in Malhotra, 2007, p. 410).

Stuart Sovatsky, an American scholar and practitioner of Psychology using Hindu traditions, has provides a critique of psychoanalytical approaches to Yoga and related subjects. In an interview with Malhotra (2015), Sovatsky recalls several western authors who pointed out the limitations of Freudian psychoanalysis' libidinal fixation including Aldous Huxley, who in his book *Brave New World* warned of a "coldly mechanistic 'sex-centric' world". He also mentions Herbert Marcuse's warning in his book, *Eros and Civilization* (1955), of the de-spiritualizing effects of Freud's "bio-sensate" psychoanalytic theory and called for a "re-spiritualization of the instincts." Sovatsky recalls that Carl Jung distanced himself from Freud over similar concerns.

Further, Sovatsky discusses Michel Foucault's views on Yoga in the context of its potential for an alternate to Freud's view on sexuality. Sovatsky points out that in his 1980 book, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, "Michel Foucault wrote that an entirely new category which he termed, *ars eroticas* (profound pleasures of the body and soul) was needed to even approach an accurate understanding of the erotic wisdom of India (as well as that of Greco-Roman, Chinese, Japanese and Arabic cultures." Sovatsky states that Foucault's idea of *ars eroticas* was "completely free from psychoanalytically-derived sexology" which operated from fear and sin based "moralistic indictments" that fueled Freud's theories.

Carl Jung. In addition, other western psychologists such as Carl Jung also expressed their interest in Yoga in the context of sexuality. Jung writes, "Our studies of sexual life, originating in Vienna and in England, are matched or surpassed by Hindu teachings on this subject. . . Psychoanalysis itself and the lines of thought to which it gives rise-surely a distinctly Western development - are only a beginner 's attempt compared to what is an immemorial art in

the East” (Jung, 1933, p. 216). At the same time, Jung cannot accept eastern theories fully and as discussed earlier, made a U-Turn into Euro-Christian beliefs. Jung went on to incorporate many Yoga concepts, such as the idea of spiritual Self and collective consciousness into his work.

Referring to Jung’s concerns about Christianity, Marie Louise von Franz, a prominent Jungian psychotherapist, who was trained by Jung, describes three main deficiencies of Christianity that Jung tried to address through his analysis aimed to “revive Christianity”. First, the lack of acceptance of the dark side of femininity, with Mother Mary as pure; second, seeing matter as dead and in the realm of the devil and third, not facing the problem of opposites, of evil (Whitney, 1986). Franz’s observation alludes to what can be seen as the deficiencies in Christianity. In this context, Yoga was seen to offer insights. For example, Aranya talks about how in Yoga, the dark alien sides are accommodated:

Millennia before Freud, yoga psychology recognized a four-fold division of the psyche into the mind, ego, intellect and the inner Self. While modern psychology tries to get in touch with the subconscious material, raise it to the level of the conscious mind and deal with it there, yoga actually makes assimilation of the dark and alien contents of the subconscious easier by showing us the perfect self from which it springs. (Aranya, 1983, p. vii)

The foregoing discussions suggest reasons why Wendy Doniger and her cohort’s use of Freud’s psychoanalysis was viewed as culturally insensitive and misguided and, limited in its ability to shed light on its subjects. My earlier discussions of Smith, Haig-Brown and Malhotra have already pointed out to the cultural sensitivity issues that caution non-indigenous people to refrain from interpreting the meaning of indigenous texts and cultures. However, despite these criticisms, the American Indology and South Asian Studies academe has strongly resisted change and I provide one example of their response.

Indology examples: An article written by Narayanan Komerath (2004) is an example of the fierce resistance that Hindus face in seeking change in the American academe. The Hindu

community in Atlanta had complained to the Methodist Emory University about one its professors, Paul Courtright's book on Ganesh. They had found Courtright's portrayal of their beloved Lord Ganesh's truck as a limp phallus along with other perverse sexual descriptions of his parents, Lord Shiva and Parvati, using Freud's Oedipus complex, to be offensive. The university response was to protect Cortright's academic freedom and no action was taken against Prof. Courtright's work. Few western academicians spoke up against such hurtful and indefensible racism; Prof. Antonio de Nicholas was one of the few who spoke on academic ethics and the systemic issues:

The first responsibility of a scholar in describing, writing, speaking, and teaching other cultures is to present those cultures or the elements of those cultures in the same manner those cultures are viewed by themselves and by the people of those cultures. If not, then the scholar is using those cultures in name only and his goal is their destruction, if not in intention at least in fact. (Komerath, 2004)

The incident at Emory pointed to another way that institutional and systemic colonialism is used to silence non-Abrahamic voices. Komerath explains that the Baptist-origin University of Chicago has located Studies on India and Hindu religion in their Religion Studies programs as interdisciplinary centers – which are affiliated with the Law or other schools. On the other hand, the “scholars” in these Religion Studies Departments are, as Courtright describes himself, “visitors” interpreting these religions. Meanwhile, studies about Christianity, Judaism and Islam are kept “safe from malicious interpretation” in Schools of Divinity or Theology where the scholars on Christianity in the Theology/ Divinity Schools are practicing believers.

Similarly, studies on India and Hinduism are conflated in all western universities and writings and the books used in these institutions present a negative view of Hindus and their religion. The unequal treatment of Hindu religion has led to the widespread dissemination of Hindu religion as sexually perverted and India as an oppressive country. The racism of the

Indologists is however being challenged more and more by practitioner-scholars such as Malhotra in the west and others, including ordinary Indians.

In my opinion, the irreverent language of modern Indologists such as David Gordon White represents modern western reinterpretation of the history of Yoga that are divorced from and incompatible with Yoga's ancient oral traditions and cultural contexts; they approach the texts as historical documents rather than sacred texts. In a monograph titled *Sinister Yogis* (2009) in which, as the title suggests, he describes yoga as being sinister, in keeping with much of American Indology works that tend to debase Yoga. In a lengthy scathing review of White's book, James Mallinson (2015) states that White "leaves no room for nuance, ignoring almost everything that argues against his position...When contradictions to his theses are noted, they are dismissed with hubris" (p. 2). In a later monograph, *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* (PYS) White claims that the PYS were "discovered" by the British in the 1800s by Colebrook (White, 2014, p. 55) after they had been "lost" in the sixteenth or seventeenth century (p. 75). The fact that the PYS were kept 'alive' for the previous 1,300 years due to oral tradition appears less important to White, only it's so called 'discovery' by the Europeans seems important to him. White goes on to suggest that "Colebrook's reading of Patanjali's work effectively cut the Yoga Sutras (early 1823-27) free from its Indian moorings – from which it has been drifting ever since" (p. 60). White's books indicate an insufficient appreciation of Indian history, the thousand years of oppression until political independence in 1947. His analysis does not include examining the need or possibility for the Sanskrit works to have gone underground during the 800 years of Muslim invasions and rule during which there was incredible destruction of Hindu temples (Shourie, Narain, Dubashi, Swarup & Goel, 1990) and forced mass conversions (Goel, 1996). This history of cultural genocide during Islamic rule has suffered from negationism (Elst, 1992).

My contention is that, as a non-practitioner/outsider, who has based his entire thesis about Yoga on limited written texts, White has no access to or understanding of and appreciation for the wealth of knowledge historically, and currently, held in the oral tradition, which has been, and still is, the basis of the indigenous knowledge. For example, White interprets the brief coverage of physical postures or *asanas* and breathing exercises or *pranayamas* in the PYS to indicate Patanjali's lack of interest in these aspects of Yoga. However, according to India gurus, such as Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, this lack of detail was because *asanas* and *pranayamas*, along with sacred *mantras* for meditation, were practical aspects of Yoga that required direct, sometimes secret, one to one instruction within a private, intimate *guru/shishya* or teacher/disciple relationship. Such details were therefore not part of Patanjali commentary on the topic of *chitta vritti nirodhah*, which is "controlling the modulations of the mind". White fails to recognize that in the *dharmic* traditions the impartation and acquisition of knowledge or *gnana* of the ancient texts was founded on an oral dialogic pedagogy, mostly in groups with a revered *guru*, not on solitary study of printed texts. Love and respect, or *bhakti*, towards the teacher was a requirement, not as a sign of servitude, but rather as a sign of an open mind, a willingness to learn. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar refers to this form of knowledge, or *gnana*, as "knowledge beyond the intellect". I wonder how academics can bring this type of knowledge into the academia.

The fact remains that almost none of what White has written about YPS has been vetted or read by Hindu scholar practitioners or Gurus who currently live, breathe or teach this precious indigenous knowledge; it is the Gurus who are the protectors and keepers of this knowledge. The relevance of White's work is in conversation with other Indologists, who use Monier's Sanskrit/English dictionary (1976) for translations of Sanskrit works, to reflect on what aspects of Yoga philosophy are useful or interesting to the west. His work bears little resemblance to the

work of indigenous scholars who use their Sanskrit speaking gurus and indigenous, non-English dictionaries to understand and appreciate the sacred texts. White himself neither pretends nor seeks to speak for these indigenous scholars. At the same time, having made these criticisms of White, I do find his work important and relevant to understand how western academics view the history and content of Yoga. For example, White's discussion about how Hegel interpreted Yoga was of interest to me because it is not something I had come across in my readings of Hegel's work in non-Yoga contexts.

The irreverent approach taken by modern American Indologists towards Yoga and other Hindu texts serves as an invalidation ideology that allows the dismissal of the sacredness assigned to Yoga in the eastern tradition. In a recent interview Doniger, White's mentor, conveys that she "believes ancient Indian texts are open to interpretation by experts around the world" and she "decried any effort to stop the free flow of ideas" (Dutt, 2015). Her response to Hindu writers who object to her sexual interpretation of Hindu deities is as follows: "A Sanskrit word can have ten different meanings. A translator must choose...It's a matter of, Did the author mean that? You can make that judgement, and another person can argue and say you chose that wrong meaning" (Ramaswamy, di Nicholas & Bannerjee, 2007, p. 382). This example speaks to Shand's caution about "post-modern quotation" as the most insidious type of appropriation that allows westernized academe to deny, reinterpret and disrespect indigenous knowledge. This type of appropriation and denigration rests on the erroneous view of ancient indigenous knowledge, preserved either through oral transmissions or ancient texts, as "authorless" and, therefore, analogous to "terra nullius" (empty space) available for exploitation.

Proponents of neo-Hinduism. Parallel to the incredible damage done, and being done, to integrity of the indigenous knowledge of India by colonial and evangelical forces,

was that done by many well-known German Indologists, for example Paul Hacker and Max Muller, who translated many Sanskrit texts. In the forward of Wilhelm Halbfass's seminal book, *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Traditional and Vedanta*, Lambert Schmithausen describes Paul Hacker (1913-1979) as "one of the most important and influential German Indologists" not only because he was well versed in the Hindu Sanskrit texts but also because he was also learned in ancient Hindu Puranic texts and the non-dualistic philosophy of *Advaita Vedanta* through the Sanskrit works of Adi Shankara (Halbfass, 1995, p. vii). Having dived deep into Yogic knowledge, Hacker made a U-Turn (Malhotra) when he converted from Lutheran Protestant to Roman Catholicism in 1962; incredibly Halbfass called this important event "unrelated to his academic career" (Halbfass, 1995, p. 2) though he acknowledges Hacker's interest in exploring their differences between the Hindu and Christian faiths (p. 15-16).

Hacker most famously went to on to challenge the integral unity and continuity of Yogic and related knowledge, and by extension that of Hindu identity, by asserting the idea of neo-Hinduism. Hacker and Rambachan's theory of neo-Hinduism was based on their finding differences in the works of Shankara, the great Hindu revivalist from 8th Century CE, and of Swami Vivekananda, in early 20th Century. Rambachan claims that Shankara rejected Patanjali Yoga Sutras and that Swami Vivekananda preached a new version to Hinduism (Rambachan, 1994). He claims that Vivekananda, who was the first Indian Guru who brought the Yogic knowledge to the US, re-conceptualized Hinduism on the basis of western influences, for example by Indologist Paul Deussen and Christianity. This was because Vivekananda spoke about appreciating Deussen's views and frequently referred positively to the Bible and to Jesus during his public discourses (Rambachan, 2015). Malhotra, in his book

Indra's Net: Defending Hinduism's Philosophical Unity (2014), along with many other scholars (Rukmani, 2006; Sharma, 1993; Bader, 1990; Comans, 1993), have strongly challenged Hacker's, and later Anantanand Rambachan's, theory of neo-Hinduism as misinterpretations of Shankara and Vivekananda's work and strongly refute the idea of neo-Hinduism.

The reductionist approach taken by western Indology that emphasized differences in strands of Hindu thinkers and lineages served to create fragmented "Indian Schools of thought" and thereby deny the integral unity and continuity of the ancient tradition (Malhotra, 2014, p. 167). Further to Vivekananda work in the west, from 1920 onwards Paramahansa Yogananda (1893-1952) further engaged westerners, especially Americans, in eastern philosophy. His seminal book, *Autography of a Yogi* (1946) has been a bestseller in the west even today. In his public lectures and books, he wrote with appreciation for some of the teachings Jesus Christ and referred freely to some of the words of the Holy Bible to convey the Hindu philosophy to western audiences who were unfamiliar with esoteric Hindu texts. Similarly, Osho (Rajneesh) who was a popular Guru in the US in the 1980s was very audacious and innovative and he used humor and satire in explaining his interpretation of the ancient Hindu sacred text to westerners. He used science, modern psychology and Christian ideas to contextualize his teachings to his Judeo-Christian western audiences (OSHO).

Similarly, my own Guru, His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, has in his public talks has referred to some lines or ideas in the Bible and referred to the message of love and service of Jesus Christ, while being firmly established in Yoga and Hindu sacred knowledge. An acceptance of other spiritual traditions has been the tradition in Hinduism. My contention is that some westerners have misconstrued the magnanimity and interest shown by these Hindu

Gurus in Christ or western ideas to create a false narrative of the Bible being a source of or cause for change in Hindu religious teaching, including of Gurus such as Vivekananda. I contend that the references these Gurus made to Christianity and western thought were to better relate to or communicate with their western audience. These references have been misinterpreted by westerners as a weakness or a need to enhance their own ancient knowledge. The openness among Gurus to appreciate different ideas in the west has been misconstrued as influence. I therefore strongly contest the claims of neo-Hinduism and assert that Indian Gurus, who were and are established in ancient tradition knowledge from a lineage that went back thousands of years, did not need western knowledge to enhance their teachings. Sri Sri even wrote a book titled *Punarnava: New Again* (2009) which he translates into “ancient New Age” to convey how Hindus continue to reinterpret ancient knowledge to modern contexts.

As well, I contend that the reductionist approach of western Indologists’ also has tended to limit and cubbyhole the Gurus to one single strand of Hindu tradition rather than understanding that the Gurus take freely from numerous approaches expounded in Dharma. For example, Sri Sri teaches both *dvaita* (dualistic) and *advaita* (non-dualistic) philosophy and he explains that in Hinduism contradictory teaching are complementary. Therefore, Sri Sri gives his oral commentaries on a variety of Hindu texts from both strands, for example on *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, *Bhagavad Gita*, *Shiv Sutras*, *Ashtavakra Gita* and the *Upanishads*. In fact, Sri Sri teaches that to get to the formless (*advaita*) it is easier for the seeker to begin with the form (*dvaita*): “Any worship is only for the formless, but the path through the form makes it joyful, easier and more perceivable for people” (Shankar, Oct. 26, 2015). The ancient lineage of Gurus that Sri Sri represents includes Shankara and many others and Sri Sri teaches knowledge from different

sources because there is an integral unity among the diverse *dharmic* traditions and differences can coexist.

The above discussion is meant to challenge Hacker's invented theory of neo-Hinduism from a practitioner's point of view. Hacker also comments on what he saw were the limitations of both Hindu and Catholic faiths (Halbfass, 1995, p. 15-17) and his discussion gestures to the development of an important new area of western discourse - that of Hindu-Catholic dialogue. Hacker's work became a "rich supply of precious building material...and stumbling blocks" (Halbfass, 1995, p. 18) and spawned many westerners to take up his theories. Among the strongest proponents of his neo-Hinduism was Ursula King (1980), based in the UK (Malhotra, 2014, p. 88) and her student Anantanand Rambachan, Professor of Religion at the Catholic University of St. Olaf College, Minnesota, is the foremost proponent of the neo-Hinduism theory today and a prolific writer (Malhotra, 2014, p. 96). Rambachan reiterates the western claim of academic freedom to "interrogate" ancient *dharmic* texts and oral teachings. He stated *dharmic* works need "to be critically evaluated in order for the tradition to be relevant and creative...The traditional reverence for Shankara and his deified position in the Advaita lineage ought not to exclude critical questions and historical inquiry" (2009, abstract). Notably, many of such critical academic works are being done by non-practicing westerners or 'sepoys' (as discussed earlier) and their work is divorced from feedback from Indian practitioner-scholars who are directly engaged with the oral tradition that the outsiders profess to speak for or analyze.

Rambachan, along with his colleague Father Francis Clooney, Harvard Divinity School, for example, have engaged in giving talks at Hindu temples in the US and writing articles in the *Journal of Hindu-Christian Studies*, of which they are both on the editorial board (Rambachan, 2013, 2009, 2002, Clooney, 2010). In his articles, Rambachan appears to be presenting and

explaining the Hindu viewpoint (1994, 2015), a role that appears to relate to his position of teaching at a Catholic university and being an advisor on Hinduism for the Vatican, as indicated in his biography on the Saint Olaf University website.

In addition to the damaging theory of neo-Hinduism that attacks the integral unity and continuity of India's *dharmic* knowledge, there are numerous other western historians, such as Sheldon Pollock, are among those who portray Sanskrit as a "dead" language that is valuable only in its aesthetic form and literary form (Malhotra, 2016). Pollock is an eminent American philologist whose work on Sanskrit has made him, the author of over 30 books, and a world's authority on Sanskrit. The 'epistemic silencing' of his work involves not only delinking Sanskrit from its sacred roots but also in declaring the sacred roots as the cause of oppression and violence in India and all over this world.

The key impact of the idea of neo-Hinduism is related to the politicization of the sacred texts. I am reminded of Said's claim that "Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine' (p. 204) and Pollock work indeed could be called a political doctrine. Based on his Marxist interpretation of ancient Indian history, Pollock infuses social theories into the Sanskrit texts (Malhotra, 2016). For example, he theorizes that events such as Hitler's Jewish holocaust and other forms of oppression in the world such as colonialism were inspired from Sanskrit texts (Malhotra & Neelakandan, 2011, p. 35-36). For example, in a 2001 article titled, *The Death of Sanskrit*, he declares that Sanskrit is a dead language and he politicizes post-colonial India's efforts to revive Sanskrit as an effort to revive its oppressive trajectory against Muslims and Christians. Malhotra's upcoming book, *Battle for Sanskrit* (2016) examines the implications of the work of Pollock on Sanskrit and *Sanskriti*, the Indian civilization it created and sustains.

Additionally, many Western academics continue to claim that Hatha yoga was revived in India by westerners and that Yoga in its present western form was invented in the west (White, 2014; Singleton & Byrne, 2008; De Michelis, 2005; Alter, 1997). For example, in her book, *History of Modern Yoga* (2005), de Michelis documents the development of a new branch of academic scholarship on “Modern Yoga”, starting with Joseph Alter (1997, p. 6) that theorizes Yoga in the west as a western invention. She describes Modern Yoga as a product of the interaction between western esotericism and traditional Yoga based on the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, Vivekananda’s philosophy and other modern Indian thinkers (p. 13). In the concluding chapter of her book, Michelis theorized “Modern Postural Yoga” (MPY), in which the focus is on practicing *asanas*, “as a healing ritual of secular religion” (2005, p, 248). She goes on to describe Yoga as a response to the psychosomatic stress of modern life and discusses the research on stress by Hans Seyle (p. 250). She describes MPY as being successful towards the end of secularization of religion; MPY refer to Fuller’s description of secular religion in which there is “experiential access to the sacred” (de Michelis, 2005, p. 250). Here again, one sees how Yoga, as a complete approach to wellness based on spirituality, with references to physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual domains, has been coopted and replaced with western appropriation of it. As Malhotra has pointed out in his U-Turn theory, all such reframing of western philosophy are appropriations and distortions of Yoga. Since western thought, based on Judeo-Christian religions, does not have the concept of embodied knowing, divine self and consciousness as observer, all the ideas of “experiential access to sacred” are rooted in Yoga, as noted by discussions by Eliade and Jung earlier.

These theories of neo-Hinduism, which led to theories of “modern Yoga”, have taken root and entered the mainstream discourse on Yoga. In an article on *Patanjali Yoga and*

Constructive Orientalism, Mark Singleton suggests that the main thesis of the primary western academic work on modern Yoga is to “relocate *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* within neo-Hinduism” (2008, p. 78). Singleton’s neo-Hinduism theory made five main claims that are similar to the ones made by Gordon White (2014). First, the Patanjali Yoga Sutras (PYS) were lost in India and were re-discovered and “refurbished” by western scholars (Singleton, 2008, p. 77). Second, that PYS are inadequate as a text to explain Hatha Yoga, which explain the *asanas*. Third, that Hatha Yoga of today is in invention of the west. Forth, and most importantly, the west reimported modern yoga back to India. Fifth, that Indians scholars or practitioners, led by extremist ideology known as *Hindutava*, were trying to reclaim this modern yoga as part of Hinduism, as their own heritage. This neo-Hinduism thesis is captured below in Singleton’s words:

The installation of YS as the Classical Yoga text in the modern age is bound up with several dialectically interlinked, ideological currents. These include colonial translation projects intended to inculcate the critical habits and values of European philosophy in Indian minds via Hindu scriptures and subsequent reclamations of these texts by Indian cultural nationalists seeking to identify and interpret the definitive canon of modern Hinduism. (Singleton, 2008, p. 177)

It is noteworthy that, in the above quote, Singleton uses the word ‘colonial’ in context of transfer of Yoga from the west to the east. He uses this western colonial construct to explain and justify, what insiders like me describe as digestion, in which Yoga knowledge is distorted and denigrated, while at the same time appropriated into ‘vault’ of western universalism. Similarly, modern westerner thinkers have positioned their discourse on these developments as movements to “adapt, adjust, accommodate” Yoga (Struass & Mandelbaum, 2008) and transform it into Modern Yoga or Neo-Yoga or Transcultural Yoga (Hauser, 2014), as Stage 5 U-Turns.

By extension, the neo-Hinduism theory implies that scholars such as Rajiv Malhotra and others, who use terms such as ‘digestion’ for western digestion of Yoga and who assert that

Yoga belongs to India, represent an extremist ideology or a denial of the western influence on what is Yoga. Further, proponents of neo-Yoga and neo-Hinduism regard attempts made by Indian scholars to reclaim Yoga as egregious or irrelevant to the western view. Therefore, the voices of insider practitioners are mostly missing, whether due to being silenced, discredited or excluded, from the academic discourse on Yoga. Outsiders who are divorced from the oral tradition of Yoga, its authentic source, dominate the academic discourse on Yoga. More importantly, such approaches to reframe Yoga appear to not fully acknowledge the impact of Yoga on western philosophy, instead attempt to assign the knowledge to a western invention.

Christian Evangelicals. Similar reframing of Yoga in the west is happening through Christian reinterpretations of Yoga. In this section, I briefly discuss how Christianity based organizations and individuals have digested Yoga while at the same time they have denigrated or distorted it to show it as deficient (Malhotra, 2014, pp. 300-302). For example, there is ‘Christian Yoga’ in which the Yoga practice of *Surya Namaskar* or Sun Salutation, a series of yoga *asanas* or postures, has been adapted into Sun Salutations, as in Son of God (Jesus) Salutations. This relocation of yoga happened because Yoga was seen as a threat or a menace to the Christian faith. Yoga “could open people to demonic influences” and the postures were seen as “prostrations before Hinduism’s multiple deities and therefore incompatible with the beliefs of Jesus” (B. C, Economist, June 24, 2015). As Malhotra has asserted, attempts to decouple Yoga from its Vedantic metaphysical roots and its social and ethical roots (*yamas and nimayas*) is an attack against Hinduism (Malhotra, 2014, p. 303).

As discussed previously, Christian missionaries were involved in the cultural genocide of indigenous people all over the world. In a chapter titled, *Imperial Evangelism Shapes Indian Ethnology* Malhotra and Neelakandan (2007) discusses how Biblical stories were imposed as

historical facts on colonized communities all over the world, and were used to justify colonial dominance through institutionalized racism. In India, Christian inculturation began in 1608, with the arrival of Tuscan Jesuit missionary Robert de Nobili (1577-1656), who studied Sanskrit and Tamil to facilitate conversions. He evangelized in the guise of a Hindu Brahmin, complete with saffron robes, the sacred thread, wooden sandals, shaven head with tuft of hair left, water pot and so on, and deceptively “taught the gospel dressed in words and ideas that were Hindu equivalents or approximations to Christianity” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 31).

These inculturation techniques are similar to those used by Christian missionaries to “civilize” indigenous people all over the world (Haig-Brown and Nock, 2006). These techniques of deception, with the addition of incentives in the form of money, education, food and so on, continue today. Inculturation in India also has included methods such as inserting or substitution the name of Jesus in classical Hindu chants and prayers to Hindu Gods to facilitate conversions (Clooney, 2010). In addition, Malhotra and Neelakandan provide a detailed historical account of colonial administrators and evangelicals who used the “European Race Science” to wedge divisions along racial identities (Malhotra and Neelakandan, 2011, p. 79). The book exposed “ridiculous” theories such as that in 150 CE, Jesus’ disciple “St. Thomas created Sanskrit language. The purpose of Sanskrit was to help spread Christianity” (Malhotra and Neelakandan, 2011, p. 129). This theory was extended to “Re-imagining Hinduism as St. Thomas Dravidian Christianity” (ibid). Overall, these inculturation and conversion activities represent a blatant violence towards Hinduism (Malhotra, 2014, p. 303).

In addition, in his book *Being Different* (2011), in a section titled *Piercing the Pretense of Pluralism* (p. 15) Malhotra talks about some current concerns. For example, he challenges the idea of “tolerance” touted in interfaith dialogues, suggesting instead the need for “mutual

respect” for non-Abrahamic faiths. He points to the lack of mutual respect in the “aggressive campaigns” of conversions carried out by the Catholic Church to save souls (p. 17). Even the current Pope Francis has clearly spoken skeptically about Yoga saying, “You can take a million courses in spirituality, a million courses in Yoga, Zen and all these things. But all this power will never be able to give you the freedom of being children of God” ((B. C, Economist, June 24, 2015).) At the same time, the Christian Churches have been reported to appropriate and extensively (mis)used Vedic texts and Yoga texts to enhance the perceived deficiencies in the Christian texts and for inculturation purposes. For example, the Indian version of the Holy Bible is reported to have over on hundred references to Vedic texts, as footnotes (Times of India, 2008). For example, Patanjali Yoga Sutras is quoted as a footnote in the gospel of John (Malhotra, 2011, p. 41). Stephen Knapp has written extensively, in over 25 books, about the influence of the Vedic texts on Christianity, crimes against Hindus and the validity of Vedic texts in general to Christianity and the modern world.

Today, Christian evangelism is taking place in India through a vast network of Christian missionaries and numerous foreign-funded NGOs, most prominently by World Vision (Malhotra, 27, p. 344). I mention these evangelical influences on Yoga here to contextualize the continued significant impact of colonial and evangelical forces on the language, culture and teaching of Yoga.

Concluding remarks

In his book, *Education for Consciousness* (1983) Paulo Freire, talks about “education as the practice of freedom” and he encourages colonized people to participate in what he calls ‘epochs’. “An historical epoch is characterized by a series of aspiration, concerns, and values in search of fulfillment...The epochs are fulfilled to the degree that their themes are grasped and their tasks

solved” (p. 5). In the context of India in the 21st Century, many scholars, such as Swarup, Goel, Malhotra, Frawley, Elst, Dharampal, as discussed earlier, present an opportunity for more Indians to participate in an ‘epoch’ that involves the critical analysis of western studies on Indian civilization, language, culture and indigenous knowledges from a decolonizing lens. I want to add that while in this dissertation I have prominently taken a position to defend the sanctity of ancient Yoga and Sanskrit texts, some of which are sacred to Hindus, I do acknowledge that there are problem areas within the Indian cultural contexts that need to be addressed. I did not see any reason to bring those up in this dissertation since they are peripheral to my study.

The foregoing discussion about the differences in interpretation of Yoga and related knowledges between practitioner-insiders and non-practitioner-outsiders has been part of my own angst in my doctoral studies. Having one foot in practice and one foot in western academe, this angst reflects the struggles within my own mind that was attempting to integrate the two different approaches into my dissertation studies. Everything that I read during my first four years of doctoral research, I read with an intension to integrate my eastern practice and philosophy with the western academic work. So for example, the margins of Freud’s book, *Civilization and its Discontents*, Paulo Freire’s book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Hanna Arendt’s book, *Between Past and Future* and Bell hook’s *Engaged Pedagogy*, to name a few, were chock full of my comments comparing their thoughts with that of Yoga, both similarities and differences. My essays often involved comparing the two systems of knowledge, searching for their commonalities and differences, both ontological and epistemological. During that period of my academic work I very much related to the thinking of western scholarship on Yoga along the lines of Eliade, Hacker or White – that is, how to fit Yoga or how Yoga fits into Euro-Christian western thought. In those early years, my colonized mind thought that without the

integration of western thought and theories, my doctoral thesis would lack credibility or academic rigor and would not be understood or appreciated. In short, I suffered from the inferiority complex that comes from my internalization of racism. In keeping with my use of narratives in my dissertation, I provide the example of an excerpt from the reflective journal that I was maintaining during my course work. The journal is dated: 6 a.m., Nov. 22, 2011 and is a reflection about my taking notes during a doctoral seminar I was taking in which I wrote about my experience of resistance to Freudian theory in education:

The professor reviewed the last class on Freud and asked how did people feel or want to talk about. Among issues brought up was how some students felt uncomfortable about the issues being raised about religion with relation to Freud. The professor called it resistance and she gave us a lecture on education - that when we come to school we need to drop all we know - or put it aside - and be here open to learn and listen and be open to new ideas. Resistance is an indication of an inner psychological issue - she linked it to Freud. She gave the example that if one of us was using the idea of religion to resist, it indicates our own psychological struggle. I felt nauseated - totally resistant to this suggestion....

The journal entry shows the resistance I felt to being pressured to adopt Freud's psychoanalytical view of human experience centered on libidinal urges because of my own grounding in Yoga knowledge. However, being different, as in 'not fitting in' with the hegemonic western euro-centric academic framework, was not something I was comfortable with or had the competence to discuss until much later, after I read *Being Different* (Malhotra, 2011).

In her doctoral research on indigenous education in Canada, Haig-Brown relates the following comment from one of the indigenous leaders, "Every time a White person stands up to talk about Indians, I get knots in my stomach" (Haig-Brown, 2005, p. 27). I get the same visceral response when I come across a book on Yoga written by a westerner. This chapter has provided an extensive discussion about the reasons why: many Indologists have denigrated or misapplied the sacred texts under the guise of academic freedom. I present my criticism of western

academia's claim to having the *adhikara*, meaning authority, to write on these sacred texts in eight inter-related points that summarize the discussions I have covered in this chapter.

First, Hindu gurus and traditional scholars assert that the literal translation of sacred texts in Sanskrit represents a low level of understanding because the scriptural works are in the realm of symbolism and spirituality (Shankar, live television broadcast, Oct 17, 2015). Second, Sanskrit is a very difficult and complex language with words having multiple meanings, depending on the context. Western authors base their work on the limited translations and use of the Monier dictionary rather than having proficiency, within the cultural and linguistic contexts, in the language itself. Third, I assert that words are limited to explain the meaning of the Sanskrit texts; the texts are cryptic, based on oral tradition, and are to be understood through dialogue with a self-realized guru who embodies the knowledge. Fourth, the teachings are highly individualized and knowledge is imparted on as-needed basis, depending on the ability and interest of the student. Fifth, in *dharmic* traditions, the knowledge is understood to be beyond the intellect; knowledge is an inner knowing as *anubhava* in the *antah karana*. However, since western interpretations of knowledge are based only on printed texts and not *anubhava* or inner experience or cultural context, their interpretations are necessarily limited.

Sixth, the sacred texts are vast, running into thousands of Sanskrit texts and millions of pages (Ganesh & Ravikumar, 2015). To claim to interpret their comprehensive meaning, without the context of the whole and the integral unity it signifies, represents an oversimplification. Seventh, positivist western frameworks involve linear thinking and view of reality in binaries; they are therefore unable to cope or grasp complex *dharmic* ideas. *Dharmic* traditions celebrate diversity in which chaos and contradictions coexist as part of knowledge – something westerners have difficulty coping with. Eighth, Western Indologists have mostly avoided contextualizing

their interpretations of Yoga texts to the one-thousand-year-old of history of both colonial and pre-colonial suppression, oppression and genocide, including cultural. In fact, Indologists have imposed foreign interpretations to Indian history, which is highly contested. The history of colonization has led to concerns about internalized racism and ‘colonized minds’ that have led many Indians to join westerners in finding ways to denigrate the language, culture and teaching of the indigenous knowledge of Yoga.

Earlier in this chapter I have referred to Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s ideas on decolonizing methodologies that honor indigenous ways of knowing and Haig-Brown’s ideas of “deep learning” of indigenous knowledge and the possibility of wonder when faced with “impossible knowledge”. In theorizing Yoga as indigenous knowledge, this chapter asserts a similar approach to academic work on Yoga by westerners. In reversing the gaze from the *dharmic* traditions to the proponents of western universalism, I further propose that western academics re-imagine their encounters with eastern knowledge as an adaptation to the Levinasian encounters with the “Unknowable Other” (Levinas, 1989). I make this assertion in response to my dissatisfaction with the western academicians’ historical and current view of Yoga as the ‘knowable other’, an approach that has resulted in cultural violence. Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), a Jewish French philosopher, argues for a significant departure from the concept of ‘knowable other’, which includes the racialized, colonized or in any way marginalized others, to that of an “Unknowable Other” who was almost “a kind of a Messiah”, a “liberator” (Derrida, 2000, Pg. 10). Levinas asserts that the encounter with the Unknowable Other was the foundation for an “ethics of responsibility”, and he pleads for the preservation of this alterity. The fact that idea of alterity has pervaded the west’s relation to Yoga despite 300 years of study is telling: Yoga remains an elusive and foreign subject, yet it captivates the imagination and intellect of the

western academia. The reframing of Yoga as the ‘Unknowable Other’ allows westerners to be more honest and authentic in their interpretation of the *dharmic* ancient texts instead of claiming authority to speak on behalf of the indigenous people to whom Yoga belongs. Their secondary discourse on Yoga cannot claim authority to explain or teach the meaning of Yoga.

These differences in interpretations and approach to Yoga, as this chapter has shown, have led to the straining of relations between western academics who have written about Yoga and eastern adherents of faith, including scholars, to whom the Yoga knowledge belongs. In suggesting this Levinasian turn to westerners who write about Yoga, I point to the value of Levinas’ views the ‘Unknowable Other’: one who gives a summons, a call to action; a call that came with a “guiltless responsibility” to attend to the Other (Levinas, 1989, p. 83). Levinas suggests that one of the most important aspects of this responsibility to attend to the other is to *listen* and that listening was critical to the ethics. As discussed in this chapter, Hindus, both lay and scholars, have raised many ethical issues about who has the right to speak for this knowledge. “Listening always already occurs because of the presence of the difference, and it lies prior to any understanding that we can make of the Other’s speech (Levinas, p. 135-36). Levinas suggests that real listening often brings “profound disturbance to the self” which is when the learning happens. I suggest western academicians really listen to the critical feedback from those whose culture, language and sacred texts they claim to speak. I propose that westerners relating to Yoga and related indigenous knowledge as the ‘Unknowable Other’ has the potential to change in positive ways how Yoga is studied in the west: a way that is more respectful towards Yoga and honors Yoga in its authentic indigenous contexts. A similar application of Levinas has been made in the field of ethics in education (Todd, 2003).

In conclusion, writing the previous two chapters on decolonizing Yoga has been instructive and has served as a *purva paksh* (review of the other) of Indology. I now understand, to some extent, the nature of the metaphorical academic battlefield or *Kurukshetra*, as it was called in the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which one takes action for *dharma* or righteousness. The *Bhagavad Gita*, which also is a source of Yoga knowledge, teaches one how to be calm, centered while rooted in spiritual knowing and ethics; righteous action, to handle the challenges one faces, should only come from that space of peace and clarity. As the Gita reminds, *yogah karmasu kaushalam // BG 2.50 //*: Yoga is skill in action. Having understood the challenges of digestion, distortion and denigration faced by Yoga from Indologists and others, my work joins the work of numerous other *dharmic* practitioner-scholars who seek change. The *dharmic* community of practitioner-scholars seeks to reverse the gaze, claim space, to sit at the academic table, so that their voices, that challenge the hegemony of Indology outsiders, can be heard. At the same time, in the spirit of *dharmic* tradition of *purva paksh*, I respect the Indologists for their hard work and dedication to studying Yoga. In context of this dissertation, my study is one small step – it represents an *uttar paksh* or response to the current debate on who has authority to teach, explain and speak for Yoga.

I am aware that this chapter is contentious and some may find its tone, in parts, harsh. I therefore end with Haig-Brown’s kind and wise words that she wrote to end an article in which she “rants” about the need to “take indigenous thought seriously”.

I wish I had a gentler conclusion. I wish it were funnier. I wish I could take you to a place of ceremony...and being in good relation to one another and the world. But I leave that to you. Consider indigenous thought. Read, listen and watch: inform your selves and when you feel ready, offer tobacco and seek out those who can teach you a new/old way of being in and with the world.

- Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 19

Chapter 7: Drawing on conventional research methodologies

In this section, I begin with a brief discussion on how my methodology draws on conventional qualitative research methodology but reverts to the everyday use of the terms case study, narrative and inquiry. I then provide details of the methods of my research including the recruitment of study participants, data collection and data analysis. In my literature review of studies on Yoga I found three studies that directly focused on the Art of Living programs (Sageman, 2004; Warner, 2006; Gause, 2005; Bedford, 1993). While they used both qualitative approaches such as open-ended questionnaires and quantitative methods such as administering psychological tools, my study focuses on qualitative approaches because I was interested in asking the “how” and “why” questions. Qualitative research methods can be used to search for “answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10). I was interested in asking several questions about ‘how’ and ‘the ways in which’ the young adults were using to handle stress and life in general in its existential context.

Case Study

My research is a case study in that it focuses the impact of one particular program, the *YES! Plus* program of the Art of Living Foundation, as an example of a Yoga intervention with young adults. As explained by Cohen and Morrison, “Case study is an investigation into a specific instance or phenomenon in its real life context” (2011, p. 222). The purpose of my study is to portray, analyse and interpret the experiences of a small number of youth who are using yoga to reduce stress and be happy. Case studies involve “holistic treatment of phenomena, what can be learned from the particular case” (Cohen and Morrison, 2011, p. 129). While I am aware of an extensive literature on “case study” research, my work is centred on the idea of engaging with a particular program, story or phenomena, in this case *YES! Plus* program.

Using Narratives

I chose to focus on narratives because there is a strong tradition of using narratives for teaching and learning in the oral traditions of indigenous knowledges in general. In *dharmic* traditions the transmission of knowledge has occurred over thousands of years through stories, mostly in the form of discursive narratives involving questions and answers. Hindu philosophy has been conveyed through a vast collection of orally transmitted knowledge that was later transcribed into texts. These texts were classified as either *shruti* (that which is heard) or *smritis* (that which is remembered). *Shruti* are “a set of wisdom writings that reflect direct inner embodied knowing of the divine” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 257); these include the vast orally transmitted knowledge of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. On the other hand, *smriti* are written historical accounts and are “a disparate group of second-order commentaries and contextual applications” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 257) such as the *Upavadas*, *Vedangas*, *Puranas* and *Darshanas*. Importantly the knowledge of Yoga is found in many texts, such as in the *Bhagavad Gita*, a *purana*, about the historical war in which Lord Krishna gave knowledge about *dharma*. The *Yoga Vashistha*, a more esoteric collection of stories, explains the nature of consciousness.

As well, there is a strong tradition of storytelling in the teacher-student (*guru-shishya*) relationship in ancient India and it continues today in different forms. For example, in her ethnography, *Storytellers, Saints and Scoundrels*, Narayan (1989) provides many examples of how a spiritual teacher in India conveyed Hindu philosophy to his followers through stories, told mostly in small, informal and intimate gatherings. It is in this context of narrative and storytelling that I use the words ‘narrative approach’ in my study.

In order to draw from the conventional understanding of the narrative approach as a research methodology, as I prepared to engage in research, I reviewed the writing on the

“narrative inquiry” methodology, for example that proposed by Clandinin and Conelley (2000) and Elbaz-Luwisch (2010). I present here some of the highlights from my readings which I considered as I prepared my study. As Connelly and Clandinin convey, life can be thought of as a story and how one tells a story and what sense one makes of it is the focus of narrative inquiry (1990). In my study, a group of thirteen young yogis narrate what sense they make of their lives, from a yoga practitioner point of view. As well, JoAnn Phillion (2002) writes, “A narrative inquiry almost always seems to have strong autobiographical roots, mine is no exception” (p. 3). As indicated in earlier chapters, my interest in Yoga for stress management is deeply rooted in my own experience with this topic and I share with my participants a common path of Yoga, as taught by His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The participants in my study told stories of their lives and of the ways in which their practice and knowledge of the Yoga influenced how they handle stress in their lives. Clandinin explains that the “turn towards the narrative” has four components: “1) the relationship of the inquirer to the researched phenomena; 2) the move from numbers to words as data; 3) the examination of the particular in place of the general; and 4) the multiplicity of knowing in human experience (Clandinin, 2007, pp. 7-30). These themes guided how I approached my study and in particular, as a practitioner-scholar, the relevance and importance of my interviewing yogis about the practice and knowledge of Yoga.

Narrative inquiry also incites the researcher to examine the “characteristic, personae and specific individual features of the participants and their agency, as these influence interventions and their effects” (Cohen and Morrison, 2011, p. 66). I appreciated that the analysis of narratives would allow me to present the depth and complexity of youth experiences of using Yoga to manage stress and explore their interpretation of the way in which they assigned meaning to certain constructs, such as self-awareness.

Further, narrative inquiry involves an interpretive process to find answers to the ‘why’ question behind human experiences (Lyons & Kubler LaBoskey, 2002). Such interpretive research approaches seek answers to the ‘why’ or ‘how’ questions and do not make assertions about predictability but rather seek to learn of the meanings people assign to their experiences. The idea that interpretations are not the grounds for predictability is particularly relevant to Yoga, where uniqueness and individuality of experience are underscored. In exploring their experiences with Yoga, I anticipated that the yogi exemplars would provide very personal and private accounts of their experiences. And, “narrative inquiry is the best way to think about experience” (Clandinin & Connelley, 2000, p. 80).

As noted earlier, I find a narrative approach suitable to learning about the experiences of the yogis. However, in keeping with my decision to decolonize methodologies, I decided to use the *Eight Limbs of Yoga* and the *Four Pillars of Knowledge* to structure the discussion and analysis of the narratives. This decision foreclosed my use of “narrative inquiry” as my research methodology. Therefore, my research does not use the “narrative inquiry” method as conventionally understood in the academe. Instead, I use ‘narrative approach’ in its everyday sense. That being said and as indicated above, I have drawn from conventional “narrative inquiry” methodology to inform my approach to hearing the participants’ stories. For example, the awareness that my interpretation involved retelling the stories told by the participants required me, as the researcher, to be reflexive. I was mindful of my own experiences so as not allow my own familiarity with the subject on Yoga to foreclose details and descriptions the study participants offered. At the same time, I take the position that a study of Yoga like mine requires familiarity with Yoga concepts and theories.

My status as a yoga practitioner contributed to a sound analysis of the narratives because the youth spoke in the context of yogic theories and terms. They expected me to have familiarity with these terms and theories and this expectation is one of the reasons that I have devoted so much of the dissertation to discussing what Yoga is, and what it is not. For a reader without this knowledge, the possibility for depth of understanding is curtailed. The issue was directly raised by one of the participants. Mary:

I know that my interview includes a lot of references to a philosophy that's within Yoga, that if the background information, about philosophical foundation, is not given, then people reading the research cannot fully understand my answer. I assume that you know that what my particular meaning of all the, you know – responsibility and self-steady - and all those words are – they all have such rich backgrounds. But that's the only thing that I can say. I trust that you know all that and are going to explain all that.

The open-ended questions I used to draw out the yoga practitioners' narratives delve into the challenges they faced in applying the Yoga knowledge. Through the telling of their stories I explored the range of factors that influence youths' experience of stress and the unique ways in which they have used Yoga to manage stress.

In conclusion, my study does not use the “narrative inquiry” methodology as it is conventionally used. Rather my study takes a narrative approach to understanding knowledge and experiences within the structural framework of Yogic practices, psychology and philosophy. My study uses the theories of Yoga, as discussed in the section that follows, to analyze the narratives. In doing so it strives to create an indigenous methodology that honours the Yogic theories based on Yoga epistemologies and ontologies. It is my hope that my alternative approach to methodology will contribute towards developing more Yoga-based approaches to research on Yoga.

Method

In this section, I will elaborate on how I carried out the process of interviewing my study participants and how I analyzed the interviews.

Study participants. All participants were recruited through the Art of Living Foundation that provides *YES! Plus* program in Canada and I have received approval from the organization to run this research. A criterion sampling method (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 28 as cited in Cohen and Morrison, 2011, p. 230) was used to select 14 participants. I provided several *YES PLUS* program instructors a copy of the informed consent form for this study that provides information about the purpose of my research. I also provided the program instructors of the following criteria for selection in writing, through email. All the selected participants have taken the *YES! Plus* program when they were in college and were in the program's age group (18-35). Participants had to have been regularly practicing *Sudarshan Kriya* and related practices and immersed in Yoga knowledge continuously for over 5 years (this implies that the participants will range between the ages of 23-40). The study participants stand as exemplars of the thousands of youth who have taken the *YES! Plus Course*. By exemplars, I refer to those youths who exemplify or best illustrate practitioners a commitment to Yoga practice and knowledge.

The sample was purposeful to the extent that participants were sought from different backgrounds of race, culture and ethnicity to provide my study with examples of diverse student experiences and perspectives. As it turned out, no one who responded to participate in the study was rejected, except if the person did not meet the study's criteria of selection. That is, if they were above age limit (of 40), had less than 5 years of Yoga practice or could not meet due to travel distance or availability. I communicated with the *YES! Plus* program instructors through emails, texts and phones for the purpose of locating the study participants and they provided me

with names of young adults who reside in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal. Further to receiving the contact information for the potential participants' from the *YES! Plus* program instructors, I contacted them via phone or email to discuss their interest and availability to meet for the interview and focus group session and to ensure they meet the selection criteria mentioned earlier. I chose participants for my study based on my ability to arrange convenient locations for my interviews with them. I forwarded to them, by mail or email, a copy of the Informed Consent form, so that they were familiar with the intent, purpose and protocol of the study and were assured that their participation was voluntary and confidential.

Data collection tool. I collected data through private face-to-face interviews with each of the 13 participants using a questionnaire with a list of 22 pre-set questions. A sample of my questionnaire tool is attached as Appendix B. The questionnaire was an adaptation from Kathy Charmaz's suggested questionnaire (2006, p. 30 and 31). I found the questionnaire to be suitable for my study because it uses open-ended questions that delve into participants' experiences of an intervention or a specific significant experience or event in their life. In the case of my study, this significant event or experience refers to the youths' experiences of the *YES! Plus* program, including the practice of *Sudarshan Kriya* and related breathing practices and Yoga knowledge. The questionnaire tool was well received by the participants.

The questionnaire was divided into three main sections. The first few questions were about what they know about Yoga and thought about Yoga is, before and after taking the *YES! Plus Course*. In the middle there were numerous questions about their experiences, for example their relationships, what had changed, what was important to them and so on. The last 4 - 5 questions were about how they reconciled the epistemological, ontological and cultural differences and what they saw was the relevance of the course for youth and to their education.

Overall, I found that the questions had a good flow, with one question leading to the other easily. Several participants complimented the questionnaire to say it was comprehensive and that the questions were good at pulling out the narrative of their experiences. All questions were well understood although some were seen to be repetitive and at times, I had to skip questions. However, most of the time, one question flowed well into the next and the slight overlap in the questions, from different angles, helped provide rich narrative, referred to as “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973). The narratives are rich in detail about their life experiences, covering areas of physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual domains.

Data collection process. Further to email and phone contact to arrange interviews, I interviewed 14 participants in face-to-face private interviews in diverse locations during the months of May, June and July 2014. The interviews lasted from between 50 minutes to one and half-hours. I interviewed six people in Toronto: one in the business center of a condominium building, two participants in their own homes, two in offices at York University and one at her office downtown. In June 2014, I travelled to Ottawa to interview one participant in her home. From there I travelled to Montreal for two days and interviewed four participants: three participants in my hotel room and one participant at their workplace during his lunch hour. In July 2014, I travelled to the International Art of Living Centre near Montreal and interviewed three participants there.

Further to the interviews, I transcribed the interviews and returned them to the participants by email with a request for them to verify the contents of the interviews and to add further comments, as they desired. As well, the reflective process served for participants to reflect on how they handle stress by using Yoga. This step was a way for my research to benefit the participants themselves and thereby enhance the ethics of my research project. Prior to

starting the face-to-face interviews, I requested participants to fill a short demographic questionnaire about their name, age, address, profession, education, ethno-cultural background and number of years Yoga practice. This information allowed me to present a profile of my study participants and to contextualize the experiences of the participants. All interviews were kept anonymous and participants' names and other personal identity details were altered, as needed, in order to protect their privacy. All interviews were audiotaped.

Data analysis. The thirteen interviews were transcribed and emailed back to the participants for review for errors or omissions or any additional comments. Almost half of the participants did not respond, which I understood to indicate they did not have any concerns. Some wrote back that they trusted me and did not have time to read the transcripts but were happy that I had sent it to them. Of those who wrote back, some made corrections to a few sentences and suggested that the “umms” be deleted to allow for clearer and cleaner reading of the interview. One person requested one section of the interview deleted because she did not feel comfortable with the disclosure. One person added further comments that she wanted added to her transcript.

The transcripts of the interviews averaged 20 pages, double-spaced, 12 fonts. I decided to drop one person's interview from my analysis because that person was above age 40, my cut-off age limit. There were seven men and six women interviewed; the interviews with women were consistently longer as they tended to give more details about their experiences. My approach to data analysis was guided by my research questions. They were as follows:

1. How is the western academia studying Yoga and what are the tensions that define this area of research when taking a decolonizing perspective that privilege indigenous interests and voices?

2. How do youth exemplars define Yoga and apply the knowledge and practice of Yoga, as taught in the *YES! Plus Course*, to handle the stresses and strains of daily life?
3. What are the theoretical, practical and ethical questions and issues raised about Euro-Christian western approaches to using Yoga, an eastern spirituality-based practice, as a tool to manage stress or life in general?

Since my interview questions were guided by my research questions, the questionnaire provided the framework to discuss my analysis of their narratives. For example, the questionnaire delves into their initial experiences of the course, and then explores their longer term experiences including questioning them about how they have reconciled important differences in cosmology and metaphysics between eastern traditions and western religions and so on. I had the option of discussing the interviews under those themes. However, as indicated in the section on theoretical framework and methodology where had proposed to use Yoga own theories and philosophy, I posit that studies on Yoga are best discussed or analyzed using Yoga-based constructs. I had therefore decided against using western constructs such as self-regulation, social emotional learning or self-awareness to discuss or analyze the experiences of my participants. However, Yoga is a vast subject and there are numerous theories and terms to choose from to focus my research on. I therefore needed to choose some specific constructs and provide a rationale or reason for choosing those particular constructs. As explained earlier, I had referred to research done by Elwy et al. (2014) on the challenge posed by heterogeneity of Yoga contents in different Yoga programs and the suggestion to use the *Eight Limbs of Yoga* to assess the content of any Yoga course. I therefore decided to use *Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga* to discuss the components of the Art of Living Programs, including the *YES Plus Course*.

I also noted that the first two limbs, the *yamas* and the *niyamas*, offered important constructs for analysis of the interviews. For example, *yamas* (social ethics such as non-violence, truth, non-materialism and moderation in pleasures) could be seen as mental and social constructs towards handling stress. Similarly, *niyamas* (personal ethics such as cleanliness of body and mind, contentment and happiness, self-discipline and hard-work, study of self, and honoring the divine) could also be seen as mental tools to handle stress. Sri Sri has often presented the *Four Pillars of Knowledge* in his public discourses and has asked his followers to apply them to their lives, as praxis. I therefore decided that the *Four Pillars of Knowledge*, in addition to *Patanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga* would provide a useful framework of Yoga-based theories and terms to analyze the interviews.

In summary, I use a combination of methods to analyze the interviews. The analysis themes are based initially on the questionnaire used for the interviews; these questions were about their background and what is Yoga. From the discussion of these initial questions, I move on to applying the Eight Limbs and the Four Pillars of Yoga to analyze the interviews in the context of how the students use Yoga knowledge to handle life's stresses and strains. I discovered that the task of applying the participant's responses to the Yoga theories and terms was not easy or straightforward, as I had imagined it to be. The difficulty or challenge it posed to me, as the researcher was that the task required me to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Yoga terms and theories – something I discovered I needed to develop and sharpen. Even though I have been familiar with these teachings and had been applying them to my own life for over a decade, I had been doing it in a more intuitive and general manner, not with the rigor or specificity that an academic discourse requires me to do. I had to spend some

time really becoming familiar with the differences of the terms and their application in order to be more accurate in applying the different terms to the interviews of my study participants.

The interviews were quite long and the narratives related to the Yoga concepts in complex, multi-layered and multi-dimensional ways. Therefore, the exercise of labeling the interview segments to their corresponding Yoga terms and theories became a difficult and complex task for me to complete.

As well, since Yoga teaching are meant for one to apply to one's own experience and not for judging the experiences of others, I had to exercise a heightened awareness of how I was labeling the experiences so I could be as true and authentic as possible in my interpretation. I had to be careful not to get involved in projections of my own bias, opinions, assumptions or underlying concerns on the participants. Patanjali has labeled this tendency of the mind, to project one's own ideas onto others, as *viparyaya* (Shankar, 2009, p. 18). For example, by the third interview, I had decided the question, "What advice would you give to other youth who may be facing stress and challenges as you have faced?" was a leading question. I thought the answer was obvious: youth should learn yoga, breathing and meditation or take the *YES! Plus* course. So I said as much to Larissa, in an apologetic manner, when I came to that question. However, she did not agree with my assumption. Instead, she said she would tell youth to:

Realize that you, that you can change things, like, you can't even believe how much freedom and happiness you can have in your life and that it is possible. And there are many routes to achieve that. I think that for me, the Art of Living Courses were what really resonated for me and really worked for me. But when you find something, you have to commit to it and become dedicated to it. But you can't even imagine or understand how much freedom, how much you can break out of whatever place you're stuck in now, and there is so much hope and there is so much potential for you, that, that you can't even imagine it....

I therefore continued to ask that question and although most participants did talk about Yoga, breathing, as I had assumed, they did give it their own unique perspective. The interviews were

extensive and therefore I had to select the excerpts that best illustrated the Yoga theory, idea or term to which the participant was alluding. This process required me to present the stories told by the participants in parts rather than as a whole. At times, when reading the interviews, I was deeply moved by the totality of their story – at times to tears by the beauty, depth or sincerity of their narrative. At those moments, I would pause and think about what about their narrative had moved me and how I could bring that into my analysis. Even though I am unable to provide the entire narratives of the participants, I have selected excerpts that eloquently and more fully convey the emotions and thoughts that they were expressing. It was a challenge to keep the excerpts short while conveying the complexity of their story. It was also challenging to fit thirteen interviews into the numerous Yoga terms and ideas and vice versa in a concise and coherent narrative. I had to balance the space I gave to the emotional parts, the knowledge parts, the historical parts of the interview in order to tell composite stories about the youth experiences.

When using the key Yoga terms and concepts as the topics for analysis, I used a word search in all the interviews to find how each of the participants had used those terms or concepts, such as *vairagya* and *guru*. I also used the word search for some other key concepts in my study, for example stress and discipline, which came up for discussion during my analysis of the Yoga related discussions. The layout of the analysis chapter follows the order of the questions or topics as laid out in the questionnaire, which also reflect the order of the research questions. I therefore begin with analyzing what the participants knew about Yoga prior to taking the *YES! Plus* course, what was their initial experience with the program and how their idea of what is Yoga had changed over time. I then analyze the interviews under the key concepts outlined in the Four Pillars of Knowledge: *viveka*, *vairagya*, the six wealths and *mumukshatva*. I would then go back to the research questionnaire to analyze what the participants thought about the unique ideas in

Yoga: guru, self as divine, *karma* and reincarnation. Further to that I analyze what the participants saw was the value of such programs for youth as education.

One of the time-consuming tasks was in breaking up the long, run-on sentences narratives that went on for 5-8 lines into smaller sentences. I broke the sentences using the “and” or “but” words. As well, as is common to conversations, storytelling and narratives, many sentences were incomplete or disjointed. While editing the quotes for use, I often had to leave these incomplete sentences as is using “...” in order to show the flow or movements of their thoughts. In fact, I thought that these sentences, that were incomplete or disjointed, would engage the reader, to pay attention to what the narrator was saying. Since the exemplars are experts in their field, as teachers of Yoga, I wanted to honor the particular, and unique, ways in which the different yogis spoke.

Some participants did not speak English as first language and therefore there were grammar issues; in most parts, I only corrected them to the extent that this preserved the content of the sentence. The participants made numerous quotes from others within their narratives; some of these I do show as quotes and others I left as is because they seemed more like reflections or internal conversations they were verbalizing. My intent with using the excerpts from the narratives has been to preserve their integrity by allowing the natural unfolding of the narratives, in their own rhythm or speed. I attempt the excerpts to mirror the holistic approach they come from – the unifying themes they represent. This has required keeping the quotes a lot longer, instead of cutting sections of the quotes to come straight to the ‘point’ they are making. The longer quotes allow for “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973), as explained earlier, to come through in the narratives.

Chapter 8: Young Canadian Yoga-exemplars: Narratives on Yoga and stress

I realized that Yoga is a whole path of how to live your life. Like, it's a way of developing self-awareness and tools to help you be more skillful in your life, and that it goes much far beyond the physical body. But it's all about how you perceive situations, how you handle things, how you're aware of your own self, and all of that and how you can interact and engage with the world. - Leah, participant

The aim of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, to present the experiences of the thirteen youth yogis of my study, in the context to how they use knowledge of Yoga to handle the stresses and strains of daily life. Second, to use the vocabulary and language of Yoga to do so. Further to these aims, this chapter has two objectives: First, to analyze and discuss the *YES! Plus* and other Art of Living Programs in the context of Yoga philosophy and practice. Second, to develop and use a theoretical framework based on Yoga to analyze and discuss the narratives of my study's yogi-participants, and thereby to propose Yoga-based key constructs, such as *viveka* (discernment or discrimination) and *vairagya* (dispassion) to explain Yoga-based theories of the mind. I therefore use the lens of Yoga terms and philosophy to discuss the narratives of the yogis in relation to the key concepts, of stress, self-awareness and experiential learning, of my study.

In this chapter I use the term 'yogi' to refer my study participants because, as this chapter will show, they are yoga exemplars and they offer important insights about what Yoga is and its usefulness for youth to handle life's stresses and strains. By calling them exemplars, I mean that these yogis are living the knowledge of Yoga, as best they can. All thirteen Canadian youth (now under 40) who are part of my study are exemplars because, as yogis who learnt Yoga when they were college age youth, they all have practiced Yoga for over seven years. Over half (7) have been on the path of Yoga for more than 13 years. Most of the yogis now teach Yoga knowledge and practices, as teachers of the *YES! Plus* or the *Happiness Course*, through the Art of Living Foundation.

In the previous chapters, I have argued that Yoga is best understood in the context of its own terms and theories, using Sanskrit words that are often ‘non-translatable’ due to their original cultural and linguistic contexts. In this chapter, I use these Sanskrit terms and theories to analyze both the Art of Living programs and the narratives of the youth experiences. My work therefore attempts to provide an example how Yoga vocabulary can be used to discuss research on Yoga. As I use these common terms and theories of Yoga bringing them into mainstream use, I further propose that other academicians can use these Yoga terms and theories. The common use of these terms and constructs will lead to them becoming better understood by both practitioners and scholars. This could spur additional research into developing a more comprehensive Yoga-based language and vocabulary for scholarly writings on Yoga.

Case Study: Yoga as taught the in Art of Living programs

In this section, I examine the Art of Living programs in light of the system of knowledge provided in Yoga. I use two resources that Sri Sri has often referred to in his discourses to situate the main message of his teachings. First, the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* (PYS) and second the *Four Pillars of Knowledge*, both of which I have already described in detail in the section on Yoga. While recognizing that Sri Sri’s teachings or his courses cannot be reduced to them, I use these two sources to provide a theoretical framework to explain the Art of Living programs and to analyze the interviews of my study participants. In this section, I briefly recap the main ideas of the PYS and Four Pillars, including their philosophical, spiritual and psychological underpinnings.

As discussed in my literature review on studies on the Art of Living Programs, including on *Sudarshan Kriya*, I found that researchers have mostly used western, psychological lenses to describe the Art of Living programs and to analyze their research. For example,

Ghahremani et al., 2013 describe the *YES!* Program as comprised of three modules: “Healthy Body”, “Healthy Mind”, and “Healthy Lifestyle” (Ghahremani et al., 2013, p. 1). The healthy Body module is described as consisting of physical stretches such as *Surya Namaskar* (Sun Salutations), education in mindful eating and interactive discussions about nutrition and eating habits. I argue that such descriptions of the *YES!* Program, while useful to explain the program to the western audience, are unable to capture the spiritual Yoga-based contexts or content of the program. As discussed in Chapter 4, western psychological constructs are often by researchers because of Hinduphobia, the fear or assumption that authentic Yoga concepts are too strange or unfamiliar for western audiences to accept. My dissertation argues that western constructs are not ideally suited to the study of Yoga because ideas about inner science and experiential embodied self-awareness are specific to Yoga. I therefore propose that Yoga is best studied using its own theories and terms.

I further assert that the Art of Living Programs are best referred to and understood in the context of Yoga and related knowledges. Elwy et al. (2014) discuss the challenge of conducting research on yoga because of its heterogeneity; for example, there are numerous schools of Yoga and they teach different styles and aspects of Yoga. Elwy et al. have recommended that one way to standardize the method of evaluating the content of Yoga programs is compare it to the content or essential components of Yoga as described by Patanjali as the *Eight Limbs of Yoga*. Elwy et al. assert that any Yoga-based program can be explained using Yoga’s own theories and cultural contexts, such as the Eight Limbs of Yoga that are: *yamas, niyamas, asanas, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhayana and samadhi*. I agree with Elwy et al.’s recommendation and my use of the Eight Limbs in my study contributes to furthering their proposed methodology for studies on Yoga. I have described the Eight Limbs of Yoga in detail in Chapter 1. In the section

below, I apply the elements of Eight Limbs to explain how they form the content of the Art of Living programs.

His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, an enlightened Guru, who embodies Yoga knowledge, has developed all the Art of Living courses. This knowledge has historically been passed down through the unbroken lineage of teachers referred to as *guru parampara* or tradition of gurus, for thousands of years. The various Art of Living programs, as developed by Sri Sri, are firmly based on Yoga and related *dharmic* knowledges, adapted so they can be delivered in all cultures, in numerous world languages, all over the world. The content of the course is secular because Yoga is not a religion, as discussed earlier in the section on Yoga. At the same time, while secular in nature and presentation, the *YES! Plus* course and other programs are based on the philosophical and practice elements of the Patanjali Eight Limbs of Yoga and other *dharmic* philosophy, for example from the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*. For example, the *YES! Plus* course includes the practice of *asanas* (physical postures), *pranayama* (breathing practices) and *dhyana* or meditation, including the chanting of the sacred sound or vibration, OM, as a mantra (Kumar, Nagendra, Manjunath, Naveen & Telles, 2010). The *sadhaks* or spiritual aspirants also learn about Yoga's theories of the mind and about strategies to cope with the mental stresses and strains of life. As well, students are invited to consider ideas of divine Self, *karma* (cause and effect), *reincarnation* (rebirth of *atman*) in the context of understanding the meaning of life events, relationships, situations and happenings (Shankar, April 2, 2013). Students are also introduced to *Ayurvedic* knowledge for health and wellness. For example, they learn about eating a healthy vegetarian diet, which has high *prana* (life force), and about the concepts of the three *gunas* or qualities (*sattva* or *light*, *rajas* or *active* and *tamas* or *heavy*) in

the context of food, body, thoughts or emotions. As Sri Sri has explained, “Moving through the *gunas* without cravings or aversions is Yoga” (Shankar, 2009, p. 34)

Oral tradition. Perhaps the one most important aspect of all Art of Living programs, including the *YES! Plus* program, is that it is based on the ancient tradition of oral instruction, albeit with the addition of modern technology, for example audios and videos on Yoga knowledge. Participants of the program typically, but not always, sit on the floor during the programs. Teachers certified by Sri Sri teach the course in groups through oral instruction; some courses are taught directly by Sri Sri himself. The teachers themselves have been trained in a similar oral tradition and have been directly trained by Sri Sri. The knowledge is imparted and received in the intimacy of a guru-disciple relationship, in which there is both love and respect for the teacher. Sri Sri or Guruji as commonly referred to by his followers, has explained the idea of “sitting close” to the guru. It is an idea rooted in the ancient Hindu scriptures called the *Upanishads*, a word that means “sitting close”. It is an example of the individualized teaching method that is followed in many indigenous cultures, as discussed in Chapter 4. A positive relationship between the teacher and students is emphasized because it creates the safety and intimacy for students to ask questions related to their own growth. In this study, I have used ‘guru’ when I speak generically about the subject and the capitalized “Guru when participants speak about Sri Sri, as a spiritual guru they have accepted.

All programs of the Art of Living programs follow the oral tradition of personal instruction of dialogue and discourse and there are no required textual readings in the courses. At the same time, in the tradition of *swadhyaya*, or self-study, the *sadhaks* or spiritual seekers are encouraged to explore the philosophical texts on the knowledge of Yoga to further engage with the philosophy and knowledge. Students of my study appear to have listened to Sri Sri’s

discourses on several ancient Hindu scriptures such as the *Bhakti Sutras* (Aphorisms on Love), the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, *Upanishads* and *Ashtavakra Gita*. The oral tradition, similarly explained in the west as the Socratic method, relies on *samvada* (asking question, having a dialogue and listening to discourses on knowledge or practices) with the guru or peer group. This outer communication is complemented by inner experience: through *swadhyaya* (self-study) and *abhyasa* (continually returning to the Self or coming back to the center, to the seer). The participants of my study may have accessed these knowledge series, as they referred to by them on their own or in group sessions. These materials are available in books (transcripts of Sri Sri's lectures), audios and videos in English and other languages. In the excerpt below, Frank commented on applying the knowledge in the *Ashtavakra* to his life:

A lot of it (stress) is just concepts in my mind. That's something I learnt from *Ashtavakra* – the knowledge - is that my mind manifests everything. Which is weird and bizarre to try to reconcile with yourself. But then, I was like, I manifest everything - anything that I bring to me is brought to me by my mind, my belief systems and thoughts. It's fascinating...It makes everything real and unreal, it's all true and it's all fake. But there is a joy to it...sometimes I see it, and sometimes I don't see it and get frustrated...Like when I am frustrated... like, right now I have to work with three woman I don't like at all (laughs). So I reflect on it, I pray about it, I live the knowledge points – acceptance and...and I talked to (names 4 people). But I know that I manifested that as well, into a lesson that I have to learn as well.

In addition, there are hundreds of resources (books, audios and video of talks) available in which Sri Sri has answered questions asked by people during his public talks; the talks cover his teachings on the nature of the mind and human sufferings, both at the individual and societal levels. Sri Sri's talks have also been digitalized and thousands of excerpts of his talks are available online in various languages. These are accessed through texts, audios and videos available on the internet. As well, Sri Sri's public talks are often telecast live and he questions about Yoga knowledge and current affairs to help his followers apply the knowledge to themselves or to the current world affairs. Together, these resources serve to modernize the

promotion of the teachings of oral tradition through textual and digital media. While these written sources have allowed for greater access to this knowledge, in order to maintain a connection with Sri Sri's teachings, the followers regularly attend courses with him.

To understand Yoga knowledge, the *sadhak* or seeker requires the guidance of a guru and the company of fellow seekers. Therefore, teaching and learning in Yoga is personalized and individualized, as each individual follows his or her own *swadharma*, a personal path, with the guidance of a guru. As well, the participants of my study have weekly opportunities for group practice of hatha yoga, meditation and *Sudarshan Kriya* with fellow yogis to stay in touch with the practices and the knowledge. They also participate in community service projects or help plan public events such as public meditations or yogathons as a way to strengthen their links with the knowledge and to the community of knowledge seekers or *sangha*. As Tara explains:

Things that have helped me maintain my discipline is the *sangha* [company of truth]. Like the group [she meditates with] and I think also that we started doing long *kriya* (*Sudarshan Kriya*) regularly as a family...So even if I wasn't doing my home practice regularly, okay, we still had long *kriya* [group practice] and the people we loved seeing there. They were cool people and like seeing people our age and of all ages relating to everybody. That regularity... the *Sangha* is so important, it's this community that you are bonding over good things. And they become part of your family bonding over good things to the point that that community reinforces it and you become - you just feel more connected and then you can share more parts of your life with the same people.

More importantly, the participants in my study, as exemplars, have regularly (at least annually) attended retreat programs with Sri Sri or other teachers to deepen their spiritual practices and experiences, and to delve deeper into the Yoga knowledge that helps them cope with stresses and strains of daily life. In a section that follows, I describe the Art of living programs in the context of the theoretical frame of the *Eight Limbs of Yoga*.

Applying Patanjali's *Eight Limbs of Yoga* to the Art of Living programs

The knowledge of the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* is well represented into the teachings of the Art of Living courses and Sri Sri regularly reinforces it during his discourse and dialogues, both public and private, with students. For examples, students learn that about the nature of the mind is to vacillate between regretting the past or worrying about the future, seeing intensions behind peoples' mistakes or being stuck with negative memories. The courses remind participants about the importance of forgiveness of self and others and that bringing the mind to the breath and the present moment helps to reduce stress and take responsibility for change.

The second chapter of the PYS describes the *Eight Limbs of Yoga* and provides the practical framework for Yogis to embark upon the path of Yoga. All the elements of the Eight Limbs of Yoga are present in the Art of living courses. I recap them here in brief in order to contextualize them to the Art of Living course components. The first limb of the Patanjali Eight Limbs of Yoga is called *yamas*, which are the social ethics, and they included the commitment to *ahimsa*, roughly translated to non-violence and *satya* or truth. The core message of the Art of Living Programs is that peace in the world begins with peace at the individual level; Sri Sri asserts that there cannot be peace in the world until there is peace at the level of the individuals. This approach to achieving world peace emphasizes education in *human values*, personal ethics and the practice of meditation as opposed to the western focus on the enforcement of *human rights* although the two approaches can be seen to complement each other. In this way, the Art of Living programs emphasizes that one's presence can emanate peace to one's environment.

The second limb, called *niyama* includes personal ethics such as cleanliness of body and mind, contentment, self-discipline and austerity, self-study and honoring the divine. All

these values are emphasized in the course, for example, an attitude of gratitude and the being committed to the daily *sadhana* or practice. The third limb is *asana* or physical postures that calm the body and increase body awareness. The postures also enhance the physical ability for stillness of body and mind. All the Art of Living programs include practice of *asanas* and most students have also taken the Art of Living Yoga course that combines the teaching the PYS along with instruction of Hatha Yoga.

The fourth limb is *pranayama* and is foundational to the teaching of the *YES! Plus* or *Happiness Program*. Students learn several breathing exercises such as *Ujjai* breath or victory breath, *Bhastrika* or bellows breath and they form a part of their daily regimen of Yoga practice. According to Patanjali the breath has many healing properties and he alludes to breathing patterns, including the holding of breath (PYS, 1.34; Shankar, 2009, p. 72; Iyengar, 2014, p. 81-82). The fifth limb of yoga is *Pratayahara* or taking awareness inwards. The sixth is *Dharana*, one pointed focus, which Sri has explained can involve a mere 5 seconds of time in the form of an intention or conscious attention (public discourse, not recorded). The seventh limb is *Dhyana* or Meditation as described by Margo:

I feel in general, even very difficult impressions don't stay for me. Things - where I was meditating to begin with and then I continued meditating, during and after, those things are very light in my memory... You know, when you meditate you are completely alone, beautifully alone in a good way, in a deeply restful way. But somehow in that depth of being, so peacefully alone, it's the least alone I could ever feel. It's the most connected, not just in an ethereal... everything is connected. I'm in a deep state so I know I'm connected to creation.

The eighth limb is *Samadhi* or merging with the Self, a super-conscious state that is beyond words and a state that only few *sadhaks* or spiritual practitioners achieve.

Patanjali does not provide any detailed instructions on *asanas* and *pranayama* (the physical and breathing practices) or on *pratyaharas*, *dharana* or *dhyana* (the internal practices leading to an inner experience). As discussed in the section on PYS, this is because there are

numerous such techniques and techniques are to be taught through individual instructions by a qualified teacher to be effective and safe. All these techniques and practices are taught in a particular way in the Art of Living programs. For example, the PYS 1.34 states that “breaking the natural rhythms of the breath, and holding the breath, sustaining the breath in different rhythms” is one way to bring “the mind to become calm and one pointed, one focused” ((PYS, 1.34; Shankar, 2009, p. 72). Sri Sri has stated that this sutra is the link to the *Sudarshan Kriya*, a healing breath practice, he cognized. The *Sudarshan Kriya* is a rhythmic breathing technique that must be facilitated only by an instructor trained by Sri Sri. The *Sudarshan Kriya* forms the cornerstone of the Art of Living and Happiness Program. The *kriya* has the following main breathing components (Zope and Zope, 2013, p. 5). I quote:

1. *Ujjayi* or “Victorious Breath”: This involves experiencing the conscious sensation of the breath touching the throat. This slow breath technique (2–4 breaths per minute) increases airway resistance during inspiration and expiration and controls airflow so that each phase of the breath cycle can be prolonged to an exact count.
2. During *Bhastrika* or “Bellows Breath,” air is rapidly inhaled and forcefully exhaled at a rate of 30 breaths per minute.
3. “*Om*” is chanted three times with very prolonged expiration.
4. *Sudarshan Kriya* is a Sanskrit term meaning “proper vision by purifying action” and it is an advanced form of rhythmic, cyclical breathing with slow, medium, and fast cycles.

However, as the discussion in this chapter will show, the *Sudarshan Kriya* is much more than the above physical description conveys. It is a technique or process whose impact is beyond its physical description and involves what can only be referred to as grace or benevolence or blessing. Similarly, the explanations of the participants’ experience of these practices are limited because the participants themselves often are unsure how to explain the impact of these inner experiences of meditation. Margo gestures to the inner knowing that come from inner experiences for those who regularly meditate.

I don't know if it's intuitive but some knowledge that I have, that I see coming out as I get older - just daily life things, about how to raise a child, how to be in a relationship, how to live life in a healthy way. I feel I have this wealth of knowledge within me. Sometimes I feel it comes from some other place that I don't know, some other lifetime, some other something...and its very precious.

As mentioned earlier, the knowledge of Yoga is meant as a teaching tool to develop one's own awareness towards one's own spiritual growth. The knowledge is not meant as a weapon or tool to do a psychological analysis of others – as a form of judgement. A yoga teacher may refer to the teachings of the PYS to gesture to their teachings for a student to become more self-aware, and they may serve as Aha moments or moments of rupture where knowledge dawns. Yoga therefore provides a path for personal self-awareness, both as a psychological and an embodied experience through meditation and silence. In this way, its approach is different from, but complementary to, western psychological approaches; while western approaches are limited to the mind; eastern approaches integrate body, mind and spirit. As Tara (PhD, Psychology) explained:

I am in the field - I see my psychology field as completely complimentary to the spiritual path. I see them as very much overlapping too. But, it's not here (not part of the education system). I feel like the spiritual path is what gives me the ability to observe myself and observe the world around me, from a place that is calm, that is steady and that is unbiased, and biased but knowing what my biases are. Everybody is biased. But psychology provides the informational content, let's say. I can have great insights with psychology, I have. But just that starting point, of being able to look in the first place – is that first step, and is so crucial. That is what I've gotten from yoga, from mediation, from the spiritual path. It's just that ability to know that I'm bigger than my circumstance, that I'm bigger than my situation, know that I'm bigger than my thoughts.

Psychology doesn't have that. Psychology is that you are your body and your brain and those are two separate things. And that's the western model of looking at things - it is quite limited, I found. When it's like, no! You are more than your thoughts, your thoughts are happening within something, and that within something is what you experience when you meditate and what you translate into your daily life. ... It happens effortlessly, it's not a spinning wheel. So then, the skills that I've learned through psychology can be expressed. Because, the space is created - like I said, that catalogue that I have in my head, the catalogue is psychology, the catalogue is what I have learned, it is the content. Those are skills

too that I can have because of my training in psychology - critical thinking, synthesizing different ideas, creating different models and understanding relationships between people, between variables, between all sorts of thinking, thinking experimentally, thinking qualitatively. All different skills that I have as well – are soft skills. But they have manifested because I was from a space where I can learn it. It wasn't a busy, messy crazy, street up in my head. It was clear - because it was clear I can take things in. Because it was clear, I can actually form a clear network of information in my brain. Otherwise, it would just be a jumble of messy information that one, I would have forgotten at the end of an exam and two, it wouldn't necessarily be as well connected or meaningful to me as it is now...

It is because of yoga, because I had that coming from a space of clarity and silence and listening that... You know like psychology has training. At the same time its much longer, much harder much more in the head - limited to your thoughts, than seeing things... Yeah, it's either it's all about your feelings, it's all about your thoughts, it's all about your body, it's like its all of it together and more. And being able to come from that, and more and experience all those things as connected. And I find that yoga is essential for it. And that I have gained many skills from psychology and from yoga and they both work very beautifully together. Like the critical thinking and the ability to evaluate, intuition, together... it's so good.

In the context of Tara's observation, I provide the following excerpt from Hussein who was seeing a counselor about a mental health issue.

The YES+ program was really helping with dealing with social situations and just people and all those different things... So, I was seeing a counselor and then, coming from, I think, as someone who comes from a first generation (immigrant) family, you know mental issues are, you know, families don't immediately understand (mental health issues). So I think it really gave an outlook - it provided a nice community of people to you know, who are positive. And developing more confidence as a person. And also the volunteering component of it was really nice...

Immersion in Yoga. In chapter 5 on decolonizing methodologies, I have discussed the ideas of Yoga being “impossible knowledge” (Pinder, 1991) and the challenge of people from non-*dharmic* backgrounds coming to this knowledge with spirit of wonder and a desire for “deep learning” (Haig-Brown, 2010). The participants of this study provide one example of what “deep learning” looks like in the context of Yoga. The participants have learned about the practice and knowledge of yoga and meditation from a variety of sources, including personal instruction,

audio recordings, video recording and printed materials of talks and commentaries given by Sri Sri. All the participants began their entry into the Art of Living programs either through the *YES! Plus* program or its equivalent Art of Living, now renamed, Art of Happiness Program. The program's 20-24 hours of instruction is structured over 4-6 days and taught only as an interactive group program. The participants may have repeated this course several times.

My research study is on Canadian youth who had taken the *YES! Plus* Program of the Art of Living Foundation and who are exemplars, meaning, they have been practicing for several years. In the context of my study, I decided the criterion for exemplar was someone with more than 5 years of continuous practice. This criterion led a co-incidence that all, except one, of the participants of my study are Art of Living teachers (as volunteers). As exemplars, the participants of my study have also taken several other programs that allowed them to delve more deeply into a variety of meditation, yoga and knowledge components. All the participants have repeatedly taken the 3-10 day-long residential Art of Silence courses in which there are group sessions on knowledge and group meditations. Harry explained why repeating courses and doing *seva* or service is important to become grounded in the practices and knowledge.

Doing the courses definitely makes a big difference. Periodically coming back and doing it. As he (Sri Sri) says, it's like a tune up for the mind - makes a big difference. So doing (Silence) courses occasionally, helps. The diversity of courses is nice - keeps it fresh. Of course doing the daily practice, being in knowledge. You know like watching his commentary on different things like *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* makes a huge difference. It just gives so much more depth, so much more clarity... Doing *seva*, helping other people, that's where the knowledge really gets implemented, practiced. That's where it gains even more depth. You just learn by doing hard things with people. Doing with what you can for whatever is around you for whatever need is there. Which isn't original. He always says "*seva, sadhana, satsang*. That's it.

The yogis in my study have internalized the value of *seva* (selfless service), *sadhana* (spiritual practices) and *satsang* (company of truth, knowledge) in their yogic path. The yogis also practice daily *asanas*, watch videos of knowledge talks given by Sri Sri. As well, almost all the teachers

have taken extensive training in *Sri Sri Yoga* to develop a personal Hatha Yoga practice and in *Sahaj Samadhi*, a meditation practice in which a sacred *mantra* or sound is used. An additional course includes the *Blessings Course* in which they experience their ability to “bless” others, from a place gratitude and peace. They have taken the *DSN Course* that focuses on building confidence and leadership towards serving society through voluntary work. Other courses include specialized Yoga courses such as *Shakti Kriya* and *Guru Pooja Course* in which they learn to chant the prayer of gratitude for the lineage of gurus, the *guru parampara*. All, but two, of the participants of my study are certified teachers of the Art of Living programs and they have therefore attended extensive teacher training in residential programs and received follow-up training and mentoring. Here is Hussein’s recollection of the timeframe that reflects a rather quick succession of his taking the various courses – over about 18 months.

I did the *YES! Program* (for high school age youth) in December (2001), *Basic Course* in February and *YES Plus* in May. And then I did the *Silence Course* in July at the Ashram. And then I did *DSN* in October. I took *Silence* in December. And then I did *Sahaj Samadhi* meditation and then basically the summer after I went for *TTC* (Teacher’s Training Course).

In addition, the participants have all watched videos of or listened to audios of commentaries by Sri Sri on *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* (9 hours), *Bhakti Sutras* (24 hours), and *Ashtavakra Gita* (33 hours). They have also listened to commentaries on other ancient *dharmic* texts, such as the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, either on their own or in knowledge group sessions, which offer the opportunity of discussion and reflection. They have probably heard or watched these series or read transcripts of these commentaries on numerous occasions, in whole or in part. As well, the participants may have taken the initiative to subscribe to daily “knowledge sheets” online which are sent by Art of Living volunteer-run web sites. These sites send automatic daily emails of short excerpts of talks given by Sri Sri, as daily reflections. Participants can visit many

Art of Living websites where one can search by topic to read Sri Sri's comments on a topic of interest.

As well, there are over 30 books, which are compilations of Sri Sri's talks and commentaries, and hundreds of audios and videos of Sri Sri's talks can be downloaded from Art of Living YouTube website, or purchased on line or in centers across the globe. In summary, the exemplar participants of my study have immersed themselves in the practice and knowledge of Yoga from materials accessed from diverse sources. I provide the excerpt below as an example of how the various programs of the Art of Living complement and build on each other. Harry begins by talking about the *YES! Plus* or *Happiness Program* and then adds comments about *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* and other knowledge series he has been introduced to.

You know, the course itself is holistic. It's designed very intelligently so you get all these different aspects without knowing you are getting all these different aspects. So for example, there are a lot of breathing techniques which is the usual focus of a yoga class. You also get the yoga *asanas* and meditation. You get knowledge. You get service, and so on. All of these are different aspects of yoga but they are not usually the focus at all. So from the course I got an experience of those things and of course experience with a lot of depth and that's the beauty of the course itself. It's very strong. It didn't become...how do I put it... It wasn't conscious learning. Does that make sense? But that came later. When we watched Guruji's commentary on the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*. ...The experience is crucial because without it, information remains abstract and it won't stick and it can't become a part of your life so it can't become transformative. The thing that's makes it transformative is the experience. So you start by having this experience first of all, discriminating between the layers of existence, body, breath, mind and so on. And then experiencing each layer and going deep into the self through the breath, through *Sudarshan Kriya* and then you wind up with this crystal clear mind - the experience of what it means to be at peace, the experience of what it means to recognize the modulation of the mind...

Most importantly, all eleven teacher participants in this study have been personally trained by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and therefore have spent personal time with him on numerous occasions in different contexts: as teachers in training, as participants of courses being taught directly by Sri Sri. At the same time, it is worth mentioning here, that the spiritual Guru, as a living embodiment

of knowledge, is not about a person in a physical body, rather it is a presence. All teachers are volunteers and many teach the programs as service to community because they have personally found the programs helpful in dealing with the stresses and strains of their own lives, as their narratives in this chapter will show.

I end this section on the content and the purpose of the Art of Living programs with an excerpt from Sri Sri's talk given during a live webcast on January 28, 2016 that had 6000 location connections, from people in 60 countries. The following is Sri Sri's answer to the question: What is the objective of meditation? His answer speaks to the topic of this dissertation – the ways in which practices of Yoga affect how one handles stress:

Meditation is the food for soul. It nurtures your core, of existence. Meditation has multiple benefits. It keeps you physically healthy and fit, mentally focused and sane. Intellectually, it brings such sharpness, keenness of attention, awareness, observation. And your emotions feel lighter, softer, purer. You are able to let go of all past garbage, it creates very positive vibes around you and so it influences your behavior with others and the others' behavior with you. There are multiple benefits of meditation. Meditation gives the deepest rest in the shortest time...It does not matter what technique you do, when you get into the space of stillness, the state of stillness and the space of nothingness – you get it...We convey more through our vibes, than through our words.

Profile of the Yoga-Exemplars

The thirteen yogi practitioner-scholars, 7 men and 6 women, I interviewed ranged from age 27-38, with the majority (62%, eight) being between ages of 30-35. Their educational backgrounds were as follows: PhD and Post-Doctorate (1, Psychology), Naturopathic Doctor (1), M.A., PhD. student (2; Music and Education), Software Engineer (1), B.A., M.A., B.Ed. (1), M.A., Religious Studies (1), M.Sc., BioMed (1), B.Sc., B.Ed. (1), B.A. (1), B.Sc. (1) and one undergraduate student (1). In short, the participants are a well-educated group of young adults who, except for three participants, had either professional or post-graduate degrees. Among the Canadian colleges and universities attended by the students were: York University, Queens

University, UQAM (Montreal), McGill University (Montreal), University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, Mt. Allison University (Halifax), Ecole Polytechnic of Montreal, University of Ottawa, University of Montreal, Concordia University, University of Victoria (B.C.) and Saint Mary's University (Halifax). Other universities included Yale University (USA), City University of New York (USA) and University of Southampton (UK). All participants have studied in a Canadian University.

The participants were mostly born in Canada (8), with others born in Russia (1), Middle East (2), Pakistan (1) and Iran (1). They described their ethno-racial background as follows: Pakistani, Iranian, Eastern European, Georgian, mix of German-Mennonite and First Nations, mix of Indian and Jewish, mix of Jewish and Guyanese, Arab (2), English, Irish English, and White Anglo-Saxon (2). None of the participants was a lone child; they all had siblings, equally split between older or younger. Almost half (6) had only one sibling and others had a range from 2-4 siblings, with one person having six siblings. The parents of the participants had a variety of work backgrounds: auditor, teacher (2), military, editor, *Ayurvedic* technician, academic advising, Dean at a university, yoga teacher, business owner, businessman, business consultant, esthetician, dentist (2), doctor, wardrobe production, architect/interior designer, nurse, salesman, psychotherapist, engineer and stay at home mother (2).

The majority of the participants were born into the Christian faith (4 Protestant, 4 Catholic). The other religions mentioned were: mixed Hindu and Jewish (2), mixed Christian and Indigenous (1) and Muslim (2). When asked if they practiced the religion of their birth, three Christians answered "Yes" and the other five Christians answered as follows: "partly", "occasionally", "not really", "ok", and "no." The answers from the two Hindu-Jewish participants were: one "yes" and the other person said "partly"; neither indicated which religion

their answer applied to. The person with mixed Indigenous and Christian religion wrote that she practices Indigenous spirituality plus traditional Yoga. Of the two Muslim participants, one replied “yes” and the other “party”.

Participant Demographics

TABLE 1

NAME	LUKE	FRANK	GRACE	TARA	HUSSEIN	FARAH
AGE	35	38	38	33	27	35
GENDER	MALE	MALE	FEMALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
COUNTRY OF BIRTH	CANADA	CANADA	CANADA	CANADA	PAKISTAN	IRAN
RELIGION AT BIRTH	CHRISTIAN	CATHOLIC	CATHOLIC	HINDU/JEWISH	MUSLIM	MUSLIM
PRACTICING?	NO	YES	OK	YES	NOT REALLY	NO
ETHNO-RACIAL BACKGROUND	ENGLISH	ENGLISH IRISH	WASP	INDO/GUYANESE	PAKISTAN	IRANIAN
EDUCATION (DEGREE)	M.A. RELIGIOUS STUDIES	B.A.	B.A. M.A. B.ED.	PHD, POST – DOC	B.COM.	B.SC. B.ED.
AOL TEACHER (YES/NO)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

TABLE 2

NAME	JAMIE	LEAH	MARGO	TSIURI	HARRY	PHIL	SAMAD
AGE	28	36	30	32	30	35	35
GENDER	MALE	FEMALE	FEMALE	FEMALE	MALE	MALE	MALE
COUNTRY OF BIRTH	CANADA	CANADA	CANADA	RUSSIA	CANADA	LEBANON	LEBANON
RELIGION AT BIRTH	CATHOLIC	CATHOLIC	CHRISTIAN/-FIRST NATIONS	CHRISTIAN	HINDU/JEWISH	CHRISTIAN	CHRISTIAN
PRACTICING?	YES	NO	INDIGENOUS SPIRITUAL	YES	PARTLY	OCCASIONALLY	NOT REALLY
ETHNO-RACIAL BACKGROUND	WASP	EASTERN EUROPEAN	GERMAN MENNONITE/ FIRST NATIONS	GEORGIAN	INDIAN/JEWISH	ARAB	ARAB
EDUCATION (DEGREE)	STUDENT	NATUROPATHIC DOCTOR	M.A., PHD STUDENT	B.SC.	M.A. PHD STUDENT	SOFTWARE ENGINEER	M.SC. BIOMED

The ambivalence towards their religion of birth expressed by the majority of the participants will be better understood in a later section in which they talk about reconciling Yoga with the Abrahamic western religions. Their answers mostly reflect their adopting a broader perspective

towards religion that relied on using their reasoning and their experience; as one participant, Hussein, put it, “I am not a dogmatic person.”

In the section on the analysis of the participant interviews that follows, I use excerpts from the narratives. However, these excerpts, removed from the context of the whole narrative, provide only glimpses of the nature and quality of the narratives. I therefore wanted to provide a few longer narratives, as examples of “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973), to show some of their richness. In these three narratives, participants talk about their existential angst and spiritual journey; their search for emotional stability, meaning in life and needing guidance. These insights came when they were asked to talk about their initial experiences of the *YES! Plus Course*. (R: respondent; I: interviewer)

Leah’s story

R: My initial experience was very profound, I had been seeking for a spiritual path for a long time...like I’d, pulled myself out of a depression in my undergrad years...I was suicidal...and I ...my realization coming out of that was that I needed meditation. Meditation helped me get myself out of it and I reached a point where I was evolving but I lacked knowledge. Like there was... like I got to a certain point, and this intuition came “I need a guru” ...and I... but did not know what that was, that was just the intuition that came to me.

I: Can you tell me a little bit about those early years, ... when you had.... can you just let me know what that was about?

R: I was going through a hard time miserable, going through a hard time...miserable...I was living... with my parents. My relationship with my parents was distant...I was very miserable...isolated from friends I didn’t have access to friends, just not happy with the way my life was going or the kind of values that we were living by...just not knowing what to do about it...and I think, the straw that broke the camel’s back was when... I broke up with a boyfriend that I had been with like for two and one half years ...and it is just like my whole world fell apart...like I didn’t know up from down anymore...it was just like what is my life? It became very existential. What is the meaning of my life? What ‘s this all about? And it shook me up really profoundly because that was really basically the only good thing happening in my life and so I found Zen Buddhism. I went to the library, found a book called *The Three Pillars of Zen*. I read it cover to cover....it had instructions at the back on how to meditate. I taught myself how to meditate and I started doing it every day...because that I knew, somehow I knew this is what

I needed to help myself get out of this depression and it worked. I went from meditating ten (10) minutes a day to two (2) hours a day within like a week or two (2). I was able to meditate a lot...and so you know along with doing *sadhana*, knowledge comes to you, right. Like you know...like when you go in any one direction, the others follow too right...so even though all I was doing was meditating, all this knowledge started coming as well, and so I reached a point where I was really evolving, getting all these new insights, having these crazy experiences. But then, I hit a wall at a certain point where I couldn't go beyond it for some reason...and then the answer came, I need a guru...and I didn't know what a guru was.....

I: Mmhm.....

R: But, you know...so things just kinda stopped at that point...

I: Yeah.....

R: I was still meditating here and there but it wasn't really, it was more like maintenance I guess, yeah so I was looking for something...there was something I still needed.

I: What was that...you were talking about a suicide...what was that about, when was that?

R: Well, around the whole time when I was living with my parents, it's just, you know the values, you know the values they had were just very materialistic, my step-father was really mean and my parents.... my mom didn't really show that she cared about me at all. It was like, I was just kinda a nuisance and a pest, you know, we didn't interact at all. It was very isolating. And I just felt that my life was meaningless or worthless...and you know. Is this all there is to life? you know...this kind of we're all locked in each other's rooms ...we don't talk to each other and when we do we fight...and you know...it was just really, really miserable and of course I'd turn it back on myself....it would always become..... I would turn it back on myself for, something wrong with me or something like that, so that's where that came from, but yeah I don't know the exact timeline but it was all these things together.

I: Ok, so then you were searching and you did your Buddhist meditation and you said you came to the realization you can't go beyond until you have a guru....

R: Yeah...

I: So then what happened?

R: I would come home to spend the summers with my parents and then I'd go back to school in the fall. And then, yeah, at that point then for the last couple of years. That was after the second year Bachelor's degree and for the so the next

couple years after that were pretty miserable times but I kept up my meditation practice to some extent.

I: So that was your coping mechanism to deal with....

R: Yeah, it did help but it was still a miserable time in my life...but yeah, I was still searching. Like I went, remember going to spiritual bookstores and reading about like, what do they call it...astral travel and chakras and like all this kind of stuff cause, I knew there was something about it

I: Ok.....

R: It was a new age bookstore and I'd go there all the time and check out and I read a lot of books and they were helpful too in their own way, to help me to understand myself as a spiritual person not just as you know, through the physical body and all that stuff, but you know ... it was good and it helped me a lot but I was still searching for something and when I did the Art of Living course it was like, Ahhhh..... this is what I have wanted my whole life, this is what looking for and it just, it struck me right away how profound it was, how simple it was, but I was this was the real thing. This is, you know, true knowledge is very simple. But the way it is delivered, and everything you know, it felt authentic. I felt, this is the real deal, it is not just some trend or you know, created by someone who doesn't really live it...you know, it felt very authentic so, what did I learn from the course? Well, the *Sudarshan Kriya* was a very powerful experience, like...I think.... coming out of that course, what did I get out of it. I was extremely emotionally unstable, before going into it, and doing the practices, employing the knowledge, you know, don't see intentions in people's mistakes and accepting people and situations, it helped handle so many things, I was noticing within, you know weeks of the course how much more stable I was emotionally, how things didn't affect me as easily...I was able to cope with problems and have a different perspective on things than I did before....And generally over time the most tangible thing I noticed was that stability, just emotional stability. Whereas before, I noticed I would cry easily about things when they would go wrong or be anxious about exams, or just worrying about things and I had so much strength after that and was much more, ...I had never experienced that in my whole life...that kind of stability...emotional stability.

Frank's story

Frank told his life story when asked about his initial experience of the *YES! Plus* course.

R. I mean...the breathing is all I remember. 'Cause my mom died when I was a kid - I was fifteen. I was angry about it and nothing had ever really gotten rid of that anger. And then I did the breathing and I remember it was like there was two energy balls in my hands and I told the teacher after the breathing, after the *Kriya*, "I don't want to do that anymore." It was too intense. And I just - but I did it and

then, I started doing it every day. It was the first time in my life I could, cause usually I would do, it would be action. No, incident, life incident, like whatever: a chair falls, I react, then I think. Right. Then after I did the breathing, it was: chair falls, I think, then I react. Instead of, like, I used to do pretty dumb things. I'd had quite a bad temper and I had bad decision-making. And I was kicked out of three schools when I was in high school. Or elementary school, I got kicked out of a school. Yea, when I was 12. And 15, I got kicked out of school and 18. I got kicked out of school...I just spoke my mind. I was very aggressive with my words. I didn't think and then I would do things and then I would do things and regret it afterwards or I would throw things. Like I threw a chair through a window to scare a teacher or something. Anyways, then I did the course and then I didn't do that stuff anymore. I mean it stopped...

I: But that was in high school?

R: Yes, but at university what happened was I started getting in trouble with academics. I went to academic judicial - for cheating on papers. But I didn't cheat really but I was... it was grey. It wasn't plagiarism but I cited different sources for my works than the ones I actually used, so it was plagiarism but not like I stole someone else's paper. Yea, but I knew I did it. I did it on purpose. That's when I had developed a drinking problem. So I was drinking a lot. So the anger shifted from like, to mask - instead of like having outburst, I would just drink and then I got in trouble from that. Then I started getting suspended from like events at university because of my behavior with drinking and then, anyways I knew it was a problem and then I took the course and I was able to get sober a year and a half later. But it was because of the breathing and spending time around... It's a big deal... And I have been sober for 12 years. Yeah...

I. So you let go of the anger...

R. No, I didn't let go of it (anger). It left! I couldn't let go of it. It was with me and then I would start breathing and then it wouldn't be there. I would wait, to look for it - okay, here it comes and then it was gone. Gone. The anger from my mother's death...that passed for sure.

I. When, if at all, did you first notice any difference it was making? What other things?

R. Instantly. Within the first 24 hours...I stopped smoking pot. That was funny. What other things? What do you mean?

I. What difference did it make in your life - the choices you were making?

R. It's all true and it's all fake, but there is joy to it. It made life really weird. Because everything I was told to value was meaningless. I knew that already - like wealth, pretty girlfriend, tons of money, a fast car, a nice house. Like all these things didn't mean anything. Yea, what I was told to achieve by society - I already knew kind of that it was a joke. Cause of my dad he had some bad experiences and

I had a bad experience with a company where I was promised this certain amount of money and I didn't get it. But then I when I took the course it was like, nothing. Like I was happy but then I saw how meaningless everything was. And that was difficult for a little while to reconcile with my life because like, everything was so big and so vast and I didn't see the beauty of it. I just saw the tragedy of it. So I used to walk around for hours. Because it was like, I wasn't sad, I just didn't, there was no point, and I didn't want to go to bars...Cause partying and being funny and getting a good job and getting money - that was what I was told. And then I realized at this age, right around when I took the course, it's like none of those things make you happy it's just all a lie...So then, I had no idea. Then I spent time with Guruji, and that was when everything was, Oh, I felt like, he was the walking Bible...

Luke's story

I. What was your experience after you began meditating?

R. I first started meditating when I turned 19. I went to a Buddhist Monastery and did a month long intensive meditation. It was Tibetan Buddhism - we did 8 hours meditation a day, 2 hours chanting a day, and our meals were done in offering, and group chanting mantras. So it was three and a half weeks of silence. It was a month and that was my first experience of meditation...I took refuge in the *Buddha Dharma Sangha* on my 19th birthday, that's when the retreat started and (the monk?) gave me my new name and said it was my new birth and after that I like, it was the, one of the best months of my life. And I, we become monks for the month. And so after that was over, I was really confused because I lived quite a party lifestyle before that. I was, me and my best friend were kind of the charismatic leaders in our small town for party life. Everyone would call us during the week and ask us where the parties were and they would try to book us for their parties - lots of drinking and smoking pot and stuff like that just having wild times.

I. How did you end up doing that meditation course given your party life?

R. I dropped out of university in the first year and I spent all my student loan on booze and I didn't do anything but party for six months. I didn't even work. And people would ask me what I was going to do since I dropped out of university. And I started joking around that I'd become Buddhist monk if it comes to it. And then my mother brought me a pamphlet for a youth [Buddhist camp] for ages 18 to 25 and it was a month long intensive. And I was like, well, I might as well. I have been joking about it. So I went. But as a child, I had quite a spiritual life as well. I felt an innate connection with God and I'd always chant 'God's the best' like a mantra over and over again...and I felt a connection with God. But I didn't have any formal religious practice or anything, but I felt a presence.

And then in my 18th year I completely got screwed up. Like I was really antisocial, didn't have a lot of friends. And then I started partying and within 3 months - from, in my hometown - I went from one of the least popular people to

one of the most popular person. So that psychologically, that creates a weird effect and then for the next two or three years, I partied like crazy. But then, when I started meditating, I finished this retreat, I was really confused for the next year. I would party every day and party for about a half a year and then I just gave up everything and devoted my time to meditation. I would still go to the parties but people, I wouldn't drink and people would wonder what happened to me. One guy even started calling me Rama because I went into silence for a week and stuff like that. And then I started studying with Yogananda (Self Realization Fellowship). So it created a really profound change in my lifestyle. I realized that everything else that I was doing was meaningless basically and I had a deep desire to experience yoga to its fullest. That's all I wanted. I wanted to be a monk. I wanted to experience the epitome of yoga. And then when I came to Guruji, what - in the Art of Living what changed was that I realized that I didn't have to renounce everybody in my life. I didn't have to renounce worldly society, that I could achieve the depth of yoga while still being active in society and craving change in society. So it moves more from an individual pursuit to a collective pursuit. With Yogananda, I wanted to be a contemplative monk, I wanted to sit in my room meditate all day and experience god and nothing else. But with Guruji, I want to bring that experience of love and God into society. So it was move from a selfish pursuit, to a pursuit of service. So that was the biggest change with Art of Living.

Later, Luke went on to do an MA in Religious Studies. In the section that follows I begin the analysis of the participant interviews in the context of Yoga.

Living the Knowledge: Key Yoga concepts applied to narratives

I reached my decision to discuss the experiences of the yoga exemplars of my study in the context of Yoga knowledge, rather than using western constructs such as social-emotional learning, for three main reasons that I have elaborated in earlier chapters. One, the programs of the Art of Living Foundation are based on Yoga and two, I assert that Yoga already has its own theories based on embodied knowing that are best suited to discuss Yoga. Third, I assert that western constructs are not adequate to describe or understand Yoga because they cannot capture the 'non-translatable', culturally contextual ideas of Yoga.

As explained earlier, my dissertation argues that Yoga offers the psychology of the mind that is so different from western Euro-Christian psychology that it best understood and discussed in context of its unique terms and spiritual and cultural context. I purposefully use

Sanskrit terms here because I seek to experiment with introducing the terms and ideas into scholarly work on Yoga. In this way I propose to begin a process to create a vocabulary for discussion of Yoga in academic work using Yoga terms and theories. In this section, I will analyze the youth interviews using the *Four Pillars of Knowledge* that I have heard Sri Sri mention regularly in his talks with his followers as a tool to keep their attention on the theory and practice of Yoga knowledge. Sri Sri has often referred his students to the short but deep knowledge enunciated in the Upanishads that are summarized as the “*Four Pillars of Knowledge*”. Briefly, the Four Pillars are: first: *viveka* (discrimination), second: *vairagya* (dispassion), third: six wealths (namely, *shama* (tranquility of mind), *dama* (control over senses), *titiksha* (forebearance), *Uparati* (rejoicing in one’s own nature), *shraddha* (faith) and *Samadhana* (being at ease), and fourth: *mumukshatva* (desire for highest). As a reference, I have attached a translation of a talk given by Sri Sri on the *Four Pillars of Knowledge* (Appendix A).

What is Yoga? Impression of Yoga prior to taking YES! Plus Course. My literature review showed that in the west, Yoga is mostly conflated with *asanas*, the physical postures that represent only one of the *Eight Limbs of Yoga*. I was therefore not surprised when almost all the participants of my study had similarly understood Yoga prior to their taking the *YES! Plus* Course. When asked about what they knew about Yoga prior to taking the course, their responses ranged from, “Zero, nothing” to one participant whose said, “I was immersed in the world of Yoga because I had been brought up in a family where my parents were doing yoga and meditating from before my birth.” In between there was a diversity of ideas about Yoga and where they came from. Several participants had no experience of even doing yoga *asanas*, they had only a vague idea about what Yoga was. Samad said, “I knew hardly anything on yoga and I

had the preconceived idea that yoga is mostly for girls. It was more physical I had no idea that it had some impact on the mind as well”.

Similarly, Farah noted that when she was in college at McGill, “yoga was starting to become a thing...I thought of it as a new age type thing. I didn’t know very much about yoga.” Phillip said that he had only heard about meditation from his brother who was practicing Transcendental and “he was telling me about the benefits so that triggered my curiosity.” Tsiuri said she thought yoga was “stretching, that was it, nothing more”. There were several participants who had taken classes in yoga in their home, community or yoga studio and they described different experiences or impressions of what Yoga was. Jackie had taken yoga classes in which yoga was presented as stretching or exercise. “I knew that I liked it, it was more than just exercise to me, I could tell there was more than exercise, there was an energetic component, there was an emotional component to it.” Similarly, Leah noted, “I had done a few yoga classes in a fitness studio; some stretching, but it was, I had a good teacher, and there was something more subtle about it I could appreciate”. Three participants had been exposed to yoga. Her mother introduced Tara and her brother to yoga.

My mother is a yoga teacher, so I grew up with yoga. I knew about *asanas* - I knew vaguely. How do I put it - I knew, but I didn’t know them deeply...And I knew that yoga *asanas* had many more benefits than you know, keeping a trim body, more than the superficial physical stuff, physical benefits. And I knew about meditation. Again, only vaguely.

Tsiuri described seeing her grandfather in Europe practicing *asanas* and the impression that created on her mind.

Well, he was a doctor and I guess someone gave him a translation of a book about yoga by an American author and he read the book and he loved it. And then he used to practice yoga but we didn’t take him seriously. He would do breathing techniques and yoga but we thought it was just weird stuff he was doing.

Jackie was introduced to Yoga at her school when she was 13 years old, “The principal of my school had some interest in yoga and she was doing some postures with us after school. Yeah, I remember the *yoga nidra*... But at 13 it didn’t make a big impact.” However, that experience led her to take classes in yoga when she was at university.

Lastly, Luke had already learnt about the philosophy of Yoga through a program provided by Yogananda’s Self-Realization Fellowship; he mentioned that the program does not give importance to *yoga asanas*. In conclusion, the participants of my study, none of whom were from India, came to the *YES! Plus Course* and to Yoga from many different experiences. Only three participants were introduced to Yoga as children; the rest were introduced to Yoga later in life. They saw Yoga mostly as physical postures or *asanas*, a view that is shared in the west, both in the academic and the public sphere.

Why they took the course: Inter-related to the question of their early exposure to knowledge of Yoga was the question about the circumstances that led them to take the *YES! Plus Course*. Again, there was a variety of reasons – from wanting to get over some stress in their lives to searching for meaning in life. In one way or another, all the participants may be seen to be spiritual seekers or *sadhaks* – whether they were searching for ways to handle some stress in their lives or to answer some existential questions such as the meaning or purpose of life. In this section I will give some examples; I discuss some other examples in a later section on the fourth pillar of knowledge, *mumukshatva* or desire for the highest. The participants told poignant intimate stories. For example, Frank’s story is about how he came to make a connection with Sri Sri:

I wanted to know why September 11 happened. Cause I had read all of Chomsky’s stuff and I was like okay, but I was getting a little sick of the conspiracy theories...And then, I saw a picture of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar in the newspaper and the article said that he was the keynote speaker at the United

Nations Millennium Peace Conference. So I thought that he must have something nice to say. So I went to see him speak and that's it. I saw him speak and then my life was changed forever.

Several students described coming across posters about introductory talks about *YES! Plus Course* organized by the Art of Living Club on university campuses that led them to attend a talk where they experienced some yoga and meditations. Here are some examples of what those talks were like. Several students talked about making a personal connection with the presenter that led them to register for the course. For example, Leah said,

I saw poster at U of Waterloo, plus I met (a teacher) at the talk. She was promoting Art of Living Club and talking about this course and she just said "Just do it, it changed my life" or something...She told me nothing about the course. There was something about her energy that I connected with, I could sense something special and that was enough for me.

As mentioned earlier, three people had been introduced to Yoga in their childhood and therefore, their taking the course was not a surprise to them – they were already open to learning more about Yoga. However, even these three students, along with almost every participant talked about experiencing some emotional or mental stress for which they were seeking help. In the section below, I provide some of these examples. Significantly, many participants talked about searching for or needing to find ways to handle stress, whether social, emotional, physical or mental. For example, Hussein noted that while due to "cultural related reasons" (not being from India), he had never encountered Yoga but after attending an introductory session, he felt comfortable taking the course to help cope with his emotional issues.

I would say I wasn't really coping. Yeah, it was really overwhelming. I think due to my mom or just family influences, I just never really got into that stuff (Yoga). I signed up for an intro session and they demonstrated some *pranayamas* and we did some meditation and I remember feeling physical sensation during the pranayama and then they announced the course and I signed up.

Several students talked about searching for ways to handle stress of academic work in college.

Tsiuri:

At the time I took the course I was overwhelmed with school, my undergrad degree... Yes. So it was overwhelming. You know just the number of people in my class and the nature of the program... But also at the same time, I was reading about meditation and yoga on my own. I was reading different books. I read Deepak Chopra, Donald Walsh - books about spirituality. So I was definitely searching for something and I was frustrated that when I would try to meditate at home by myself, I wouldn't have the experience that was described in the books, so, Art of Living came at the right time...I was feeling especially stressed with school.

Hussein had attended an introductory talk by Sri Sri in Toronto and later he invited an Art of Living teacher to give a similar talk on managing stress to a group of high school students he was working with as a volunteer. He later ended up taking the course himself.

In several cases, their friends introduced participants to the course. James:

I was kinda just interested in developing a healthier life style. I had a friend who was in Vancouver Island university at the time. I saw a poster there and I read it, and it said Art of Living *YES! Plus* course. I was very interested and I told my friend about it. I thought he would also be interested and he told me he had just taken it and he said it was a great and so just got me on board right then and there.

Several participants were introduced to the course by word of mouth or were referred to the course by a trusted friend or family member. For example, Samad was inspired to take the course by the positive changes he saw in his friend's personality. Here is the story:

I was going through a very tough time during my grad studies...because of the work load... Yeah, it was too tense and I lost my motivation and I was lucky I met my friend at the lab. I think I didn't see Phillip for I think the past ten years...I knew him in (place in Middle East). We used to play when we were kids, same neighborhood, same middle school, same high school. I met him and at first when we met he didn't mention anything about the course. But I saw someone whose personality has drastically improved since the time I knew him. And he called me by the end of the semester asking me how I was and I told him well, I'm going through tough times cause of university, the work load. He said, hey, why don't you consider taking this breathing course? And seeing the changes in him, I didn't hesitate a second - I just enrolled to the program.

Word of mouth seemed to have been the most cited reason for taking the course; it was about seeing a positive change in a person they knew and being curious about how that change come about or being convinced that this was something worth investigating. However, Luke's story

was different. He was seeking for a living guru to guide him on a spiritual path – he was already familiar with Yoga philosophy. Here is his story.

I was practicing with Paramahansa Yogananda (Self-Realization Fellowship) and he was no longer alive and I felt like I needed a living teacher to go deeper into my practice...After September 11th (2001) my mother brought home a pamphlet for prayers for peace at the Hindu temple in Halifax Nova Scotia so we decided to go and ... they were advertising the course coming up. And so we went and there was a guided meditation with Guruji at the end and when he said the *shloka* it just felt myself really open up. And I felt, wow, this is a really incredible...And then over the course of the week I had two rather profound experiences and which led me to want to take the course. I had an experience when I was sleeping that I was in a deep state of meditation, like expansive void and Ravi Shankar's name kept repeating over and over again in this expansiveness. And I slowly woke up and I felt his name repeating in my heart. And I'm like, well, that's kind of weird. The same thing happened again and I woke up and his name was repeating inside me. And I was like okay, maybe I'll take this course.

Initial experiences and why they continued: Further to the discussion of questions about how the participants came to take the course, I had asked them about their initial experiences of the *YES! Plus* Course and what made them remain involved, and continue with the practice and knowledge of Yoga, given the many challenges one faces in pursuing any area of interest that involves discipline and commitment. Most of the participants spoke at length about their initial experiences. For many, the “healing breath” practice, or the *Sudarshan Kriya*, as it was called earlier, appeared to be a transformative experience. The youth spoke about the impact of the course on many of the issues that they were stressed about, related to mental and physical health. They also spoke of emotional issues related to their relationships that seem to have come up during the course. Every participant had a different and uniquely poignant story that I would have liked to tell in detail. But, given the constraints of the study's purpose, I am only able to provide some important glimpses. They all talked about the complex interplay of the three key concepts of my study: stress, self-awareness and experiential learning.

When talking about their initial experiences, it was not surprising that many participants were talking about their experience with the *Sudarshan Kriya*, the healing breath program that is the corner stone of the *YES! Plus* course. *Pranayama*, or breathing exercises is the fourth limb of *Palanjali's Eight Limbs of Yoga*. As discussed in the literature review section, different breathing patterns indicate corresponding emotions (Bloch et al., 1999; Phillipot et al. 2002). In the *YES! Plus Course* the participants have an experiential knowledge of this connection of the breath with the body and emotions, and not only as an idea or academic subject. Hussein expressed the impact of *Sudarshan Kriya* on calming the mind and reducing stress in this way.

I had a very powerful experience with the Kriya ...I was feeling a lot more relaxed than I usually was. So that peaked in my interest in that there might be something here... my initial experience was that it was a calming technique. I felt mentally very relaxed so at the same time very energetic and it just gave me a way to sorta detach - is the wrong word - but you now have a way to cope with the amount of mental activity of a regular person has. It was a way to quiet the mind and start the day fresh...

As the above quote shows, Hussein was alluding to several different components of self-awareness – of body and mind. Similarly, many participants were able to describe their experience of *Sudarshan Kriya* in the context of embodied awareness in the context of the link between body, mind and emotions. Several participants talked about health issues dissipating after doing the *Sudarshan Kriya* and growing self-awareness of the mind-body connection, even if their experience of healing seemed inexplicable. In this excerpt, Harry explained making this connection.

I also saw that some chronic lung and respiratory issues had gone away. I had chronic bronchitis. Every year except for one exception since the time I was ten I kept having bronchitis in the summer. In the summer I don't know why, yeah, very strange. And then after doing the course it just never came back. Which doesn't seem like a big deal...But it was also a subtle thing. It was like crippling but not so severely. I wasn't hospitalized for it ever or anything like that. But still there was that difference. I got much stronger. That was in the beginning. I also, I didn't keep up the practices...I would do it if I started getting sick. Oh I'm getting a cold I should do my short practice and it would subside faster...

Many participants found that their words were insufficient to explain their experience. For example, Luke, who had been a spiritual seeker since age 19 and wanted to become a monk, said the following: “I did *Sudarshan Kriya* and I felt like it was everything I was looking for.” He was gesturing to the breathing program’s spiritual dimension of experience that is hard to define in words. James’s narration of his initial experience provides another glimpse into the initial experiences. James went on to talk about the stress relief that he experienced during the course.

I was just personally amazed at how powerful the *kriya* was, the impact it had on myself. How like even driving home at night, I would drive for an hour and out of nowhere I would just start singing...it was creative and spontaneous. I just felt more at peace with myself. I just really shed something off...You know, whatever kind of stress, whatever kind of mask I had on, kind of shed off during and after the course.

I questioned the participants about the challenge of keeping discipline towards maintaining their daily practices, for example, of *Sudarshan Kriya*, *Sahaj* Meditation and *Hatha* Yoga. Most participants mentioned the support of the Art of Living follow-up sessions and personal relationship with the teachers. The company of fellow practitioners was another important support that helped them keep up with their practices. Several *YES! Plus* participants mentioned that they initially did not keep up with the breathing practices, an issue of discipline that is Patanjali stresses right in his first sutra: he begins his discourse by describing Yoga as a discipline (PYS, 1.1). Later Patanjali described nine obstacles to Yoga, among them being *alasya* (laziness or lack of motivation), a common issue when one is engaged in any pursuit or practice. In the context of the young people, it could also be related to immaturity, a developmental issue related to young age, which creates doubt or *samshaya* about the practice, another obstacle to Yoga. In the excerpt below, Harry gave the example of another obstacle: bitterness.

I used to be interested in knowledge like intellectually and abstractly, more than experience. And now I respect the importance of learning intellectually -

happening in line with your experience growing... I'm focused much more on increasing my *vairagya*, my dispassion, developing my steadiness, thinning down my *kleshas* (distress), observing if I find myself exhibiting any of the symptoms of the obstacles... (gives an example) I was living in England and I didn't like it at all and I would complain a lot and I found there was some bitterness coming up and I would be like oh, what obstacle am I coming across now? My focus is much more on knowledge and my own growth than it used to be. I think it used to be much more on external developments.

The challenge of having the discipline to keep up with the daily *sadhana* or spiritual practices was also mentioned by Tsiuri, while talking about her initial experience of *Sudarshan Kriya*.

I don't remember anything about my course but I remember how I felt during *Sudarshan Kriya* and I felt a sense of relief. And although I felt something was happening, I felt it was almost a bit difficult. And from then on even though I didn't have a sense of discipline right away but whenever if I needed it, that's what I would do from time to time - till I acquired the discipline.

Similarly, Harry reflected on his not keeping up with the Yoga practices initially.

I noticed the benefit of the techniques immediately. Yeah, and mental as well. I didn't notice the emotional side until later. Way later - when like life got harder... I think that was my undergrad year when I really started noticing. But through CEGEP which was a Quebec institution called pre- university post high school phase that only exists in Quebec. I had a very intense time there... I didn't just practice, foolishly.

The challenge of keeping up with the practices is covered in the beginning of the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* under the topic of "Honoring the Practice" in which practice is defined as "the stability in that moment" (Shankar, 2009, p 23-27). Sutra 1.14 declares that achieving this stability (of practice) "takes a long time" and it comes from practicing "without a gap" from an attitude of "honor and respect" for the practice ((Shankar, 2009, p. 23-27). As the examples above have shown, being established in the practice of Yoga is something that is a challenge for Yogis. Several of the youth yogis reflected on how they were not regular with their practices until they got involved in the group practice sessions offered by the Art of Living teachers. The support of the peer group was seen as an important element in their becoming established in their Yogic knowledge and practices. As Tsiuri explained further:

I think as a beginner even though you might understand the benefits you might not have the discipline - which I found in my case was true. But as soon as I connected with a community of people who were doing the same thing, that helped integrate the practices in my life. So I feel community is key. But now I have reached a place where I would do it anyway.

Others talked about having no difficulty with keeping up with the breathing practices. Farah took it as a challenge:

At the end of the part 1 course they give you a challenge to do the breathing practices for forty days. For some reason I love challenges. I think if they wouldn't have told me that I wouldn't have done it. Cause I was like I can do this for forty days. So anyways, I did it for forty days and so I've been doing it for like however many years since then.

Similarly, Tara follows up with talking about the challenge for youth to balance their involvement with their peers involved in meditation with peers who do not, who are also important part of her life.

One of the challenges I used to have was seeing these things as separate: this is my spiritual side and spiritual community (and), this is my regular friends from school, this is my other... Now, it like, there is no separation. I show - my friends who haven't taken the course or whatever or don't practice yoga or a spiritual inclination, (they) are still exposed to me and all my aspects. So they know I have a Guru. I practice meditation...But just that, it's not something that I feel, Oh, I do this privately, I'm not going to talk about it. Instead, I'm like, Oh, I meditated this morning and it was awesome. And they're like, Oh, good for you...It's something that I share. Same on the other side, with spiritual people, I feel like it's okay to tell a dirty joke. You know like, oh! This is clean, this is not clean, there is nothing like that. I feel that it's meshed together now.

Here Tara is speaking about being natural, in the sense of feeling free to share her spiritual side with her regular friends, and vice versa. In the same vein, Luke, a fulltime volunteer teacher, offers further perspective on the issue of finding a balance between the "spiritual side" and the other "worldly side". Luke talks more about seeing spiritual qualities in everyone and accepting his friends as they are, which is a yogic teaching he wants to live.

I have such a close relationship with the friends I grew up with and we come from a small town in the Maritimes and there is a lot of drinking and a lot of partying and they're like family to me. And I feel as close to them as I do to my

Art of Living friends. And so I have this almost paradox - between this alternative lifestyle. Very good people, so loving, and they actually live some of the knowledge points more than Art of Living - like accepting people as they are. But there are other knowledge points that Art of Living people live more. Which is a really nice balance for me because it allows me to integrate Art of Living into the real world. Because I can appreciate, if you only hang out with people on the path then you lose sight of what other people are going through. But I think it's important to have a dichotomy.

So *satsang* (company of truth) allows you to exist in both worlds...Well it keeps you from keeping your nose in the air as well, right. Because sometimes what happens is, people experience grace, experience the depth of yoga, they think, 'Okay, this is the best. I want people to experience it' and you almost become fanatical to those who aren't experiencing it. Those who are experiencing this pure lifestyle... a holier than thou attitude can come up and that become a detriment to your own progress. And you're not accepting people as they are, and you are not living in the present moment, and your ego is pumped up spiritually. So it's really important to have, in that sense, that becomes *satsang* too. Because they show you when you are getting out of line with real people, within people, because you have to love everything. That's what Guruji does, that's why it's important to have a teacher because the teacher shows you that he loves everyone and he will take care of everyone no matter who they are.

For other, keeping up with the daily practices at home was a challenge. Leah talked about being fearful of losing her wellness if she stopped her practices:

Yeah, it was a sense of fear, of, if I don't do my practices, something will go wrong, or I won't feel good or I won't do my best, or there will be consequences. So I want to be at my best...it is also at times been driven by a, an internal feeling, like feeling really good, and wanting to keep that going, you know, or feeling that craving. Like I really need to meditate right now...which you don't get unless you are meditating regularly. So, I think fear is the most effective one (laughter). But, the discipline also, you know, but I have gone through different phases of, you know, if this time of day works, just do it then, just don't ask any questions, just get up and do it, and making a point of including knowledge.

Some participants faced the challenge of keeping up with their practices by doing them at work.

"I also meditate at work at lunch time. Yeah, it's really nice. They don't have a room but I have a cubicle. I just turn my chair around and people know I meditate they don't mind and nobody disturbs me...I do my *pranayama* and meditation in the morning (at home)". Several yogis raised the issue of the time needed to maintain the discipline of daily practices. And length of

practices ranges widely – from half hour to three hours a day. Harry made the following comment about his priorities.

In the morning I do...*Pranayama, Kriya Sandhya Vandanam* and then *Sahaj*. And then in the evening I do *Sandhya Vandanam* and *Sahaj*. And I should be doing it a third time in the middle of the day but it rarely happens. But I'll get there. There should also be yoga, that is yoga *asanas*, they come and go. I have consciously set it up hierarchy. So there is a core and I build around it and yoga *asanas* are the least important. So you know, when there is more time then it gets in but it is pretty long. I also do a lot of chanting but that happens in between other things. It's not so steady it can be every day... it can be once a week or something like that.

Here is another description of daily *sadhana* regimen. Samad explained:

I do my *sadhana* I start with some sun salutations, some *asanas*. I go into Kriya; I end with some meditation. In the evening I do my *padmasadana* (a series of *asanas*) followed by another meditation...I also do *Guru Puja* from time to time. Only if I'm able, I also do my *Rudram* (chanting).

It is evident that the yogis enjoy and give great importance to their practices: Luke.

I do *Sudarshan Kriya, Gayatri jappa* (mantra repetition), *Sahaj* (meditation) and *sandhya vandanam* (chanting), which is the best thing ever, it's my favorite practice... and then I do that at lunch as well so 45 min to an hour at lunch. And before I go to bed, I do another 45 min. So I do about 3 hours practice every day...I have always really respected *sadhana* and loved it.

Some participants found comfort in their discipline - of being able to keep up with the breathing practice of *Sudarshan Kriya*. Samad:

The *kriya* -I didn't feel anything during my first course. Nothing, nothing at all. No experience but because I have a good discipline - I have been told to do it for 40 consecutive days and I do it and I kept doing it for the rest of the year and I think during one long *kriya* follow-up I had a very nice experience which was a bit rewarding for my discipline consistency. It difficult to describe the experience...sometimes you go into a different dimension, sometimes you hear voices that are not of this world, sometimes you either see a light, sometimes you feel that your body - you have an out of body experience.

Towards the end of his narrative, Samad is referring to experiences in meditation that this dissertation will not be exploring but at the same time are important to mention. When asked by yogi practitioners about these experiences, Sri Sri has mentioned that such experiences are

common in meditation but that it is important not to get attached to them. Instead, he asks yogis to observe these experiences with dispassion or *vairagya*; otherwise, they can become expectations or distractions and therefore obstacles on the path of spiritual growth. Sometimes in meditations, a Yogi may experience some visions or message and again this can lead a Yogi off track into *yoga maya* or illusions (Shankar, 2009, p. 62). This is explained in the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* in the discussion about the obstacles to Yoga under *bhranti darshana* or hallucination (Shankar, 2009, p. 62).

Two women who were mothers of small children gave a different perspective on the idea of having discipline to keep up with the yogic practices. While faced with the challenge of time, they talked about which practices they prioritized and why the knowledge aspect of Yoga became more important for them in handling the daily stresses and strains of life. In the following lengthy excerpt, Margo, a doctoral student and a mother of a two-year-old child, reflects on how she handles the challenge of finding time to do her *sadhana* or spiritual practices and how her *sadhana* affects her life, including parenting of her child. She referred directly to Patanjali's discussion of *tapas* (self-discipline of body, senses and mind) that is required of a yogi on the path of spirituality:

Well it has been very difficult for me to do my *sadhana* as a new mother. For the first year, my practice was very scarce and then it started getting better as I got used to being a mom and my one year became a two-and-a-half-year-old and could handle it. Then I have opportunities to do it every day, most days, most days I should say. And I what I do is...it's still much more challenging than it ever was when I was a student, which is funny. Because, when I was student I was like "Well, I don't feel like doing it today or I'm so busy. Well, it would make me feel good but when I'm older then I will have more disciplined to do my full practice every day". And now, I'm older and I say I had so much freedom when I was younger! Still I think I have done a lot of practice over the course of my lifetime. For me, my practice has never lost the aspect of *tapas* (penance, pain, austerity) ...

As soon as I miss a few days of my practice I don't like the way I'm acting as much and I really don't like the way I act with my son. My stress just comes out and I'm short tempered and sharp with my son, and he is very sensitive and even if

I'm able to contain my temper he feels that I'm not, that something is different. I can see in his actions that he is not feeling as open around me and relaxed as usual. And I make a mental note that, no matter how busy I am, this is not good for my home environment and myself and my son and I want to get back into that space.

So then I take a vow which is part of, which is one of the ways we traditionally do it in yoga. So I will take a vow of forty days which is the traditional number and for everyday for forty days I will do my *sadhana*, come what may. Even if I'm exhausted and stay awake after I put my son to bed and have to do it in the middle of the night, I will do it for as long as my vow takes ... and then it resets me and I'm in a good space and I notice during those vows how smoothly things start to run in my house. And I start to feel that it's because of other things. And other people. Oh, my son was very well behaved today or Oh, my husband was very helpful and cheerful today or, wow, my supervisor at school. But then I realize that I just have more energy and ease and so everything around starts moving more smoothly and practically...

It's not the full practice that I wish I could do every day. I mean, I say it's like *tapas* to sit down and do my pranayama every day. But it feels so good once I'm halfway through them and I miss that sometimes. But I have a bare minimum that I make myself do that helps maintain a level of - I don't know - the effect, of the connection to the bigger space that I feel changes the way I feel, the way people feel around me and the way I behave. Yes, I feel that...doing *Om* and *Sudarshan Kriya* and ten minutes of meditation - that's the minimum practice that I do on a normal day. And then when I'm able, when my son is at preschool or life situations are manageable, then I do *pranayama* or even *asanas* before that and especially a longer meditation at the end.

Similarly, James had challenges to keep up with the practices, but for different reasons.

Usually to be honest it was twice a day this past year (but) I've been employed with the Canadian Forces – I had to make some adjustments to my lifestyle. I have not been able to practice regularly. When you are working with them, it's like you have to be in the field at this time and if you are digging a trench you have to dig a trench all night. Routine (yoga) is there but practice is not all the time. It's unfortunate...I would prefer to just meditate twice a day, because *Kriya* does take a bit of time. I have found that it does help me tremendously and change my life around just like that.

What is Yoga?: Impressions after taking long-term practice:

In the previous sections of this dissertation, I have written extensively about what is Yoga, not just *asanas* but as a philosophy and a way of life. I had theorized that because the Art of Living courses along with the discourses of His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the participants of my

study would reflect this more holistic and comprehensive understanding of Yoga. I was therefore not surprised that almost every participant reflected on how much his or her idea of what is Yoga had evolved over time. For example, Phillip said:

My understanding has evolved through the years of course, from experience and from knowledge...So I would say from when I took the course it was zero and now it's so much more. Yoga to me is uniting with myself. Is being natural, connecting with nature and being comfortable with myself, serving others, living a life that is more uplifting and positive and taking that wherever I go.

Overall, all the participants commented that Yoga was not just about doing physical *asanas* but rather a philosophy or a way to handle stress.

I started thinking that yoga is a way of exercising... and now I really see yoga as a life path...We all know that Yoga means the union between the mind and the body but really it's not exercise. It is all about your approach, how you approach different situations cause it's basically a philosophy of how to exist in the world.

I was not surprised by the depth of their understanding but deeply touched by the sincerity of their responses and the simplicity of language in describing the complexity and depth of the Yoga knowledge. Again there was a range in amount of detail with which they described Yoga: some said a few sentences; others spoke at length. I present some more of them below to show the diversity of ideas and depth of insights of the philosophy, cosmology and metaphysics of Yoga and related *dharmic* knowledge that the young participants presented. One of the key questions that I wanted the participants to respond to was "What is Yoga"? Many participants correctly defined Yoga as a union of the body, mind and spirit. The participants were unanimous in describing Yoga in holistic terms and in the way that Patanjali has described it. I begin with Margo's description of Yoga in the context of its roots in the tradition of India. Margo's parents were TM practitioners prior to her birth and therefore she was raised within the traditional knowledge.

When I say the word “Yoga” I’m talking about the whole tradition - not a practice of *asanas* or practice of *Sudarshan Kriya* or a practice of mantra-based meditation or a practice of *karma* yoga or *bhakti* yoga - but a whole tradition in which I was educated. A whole way of life and a world view and an epistemology...

In this context, Hussein talks about praxis and integration that is Yoga.

So since I first started, it’s been an ongoing process of integrating yoga both as practice and as a way of living into my day to day. I think it really shapes my understanding of events, relationships and just how to best react or deal with situations as they arise. So it’s become you know - it started as a practice I did just to relax and deal with stress, and it became more of a way of looking at the world....

Margo discussed Yoga in the context of a holistic approach to life in which the “fragments” of her different interests, strengths and identities became united.

I have a yoga teacher who I love very much who used to say ‘spirituality is uniting all the fragments of our being into one whole’ and that is what I feel has happened. You know, all these things that were interests for me, but for some reason I felt a very important part of me - like cooking or gardening or being in nature or education - they’ve all come together and it all fits with my experience of yoga and meditation and myself. And maybe intuition - all these faculties were coming up, creativity, strength, and how do you say *tapas*, O.K - *tapas* and passion ... and unconditional love and confidence in both myself and some other power and clarity of understanding others and connecting to others. I feel all these internal and external parts of myself came together into some kind of smoothness in becoming a mother who will also meditate and do yoga. ...

The theme of interconnectedness of different aspects of life into a united whole, a key idea of Yoga, was similarly mentioned by Tara.

I mean, growing up I thought of it (Yoga) more as like you know some postures and practices... we sit and meditate. I had no idea what that was. And then well when I took the Art of Living course that was definitely a turning point because it’s so holistic. It’s so complete and well-rounded and it’s not just we do this posture or we breathe this way and it’s done...It was really a way knitting together the knowledge and the practices and that like, that love connecting everything together and the whole universe. And it was suddenly, like oh, this is so vast. I’m part of something so vast and then understanding Yoga more and more, with the knowledge tapes and ...

Samad saw yoga as a “constant evolution” and reflected on his growing self-awareness.

I have a much deeper understanding thanks to all the knowledge courses and the training I went through. Well, today I know that yoga is not at the level of body only but at the level of the mind as well. Basically to bring focus, to enhance awareness, to bring clarity to the mind and to be able to cope with negative emotions and I believe it happens a lot in our daily interaction with people and in relationships and in tough situations and I know that it has an impact on the soul and spirit.

The idea of evolving was a theme that was similarly mentioned by many of the participants. For example, Tara commented, “I’m learning, I’m changing, I’m evolving” in reflecting on the changes she saw in herself over time on the path of Yoga. Similarly, Leah reflected on how she had begun practicing meditation on her own by reading books and realized that she needed a teacher to guide her further on the path: “I reached a point where I was evolving but I lacked knowledge.” Phillip explained what he meant by evolving on the path of Yoga:

And I’m on a path (of Yoga) and I wanna evolve. I’m working hard to evolve...But, to me I don’t aspire to be enlightened or anything like that. I never did. But I’m on the path and it’s happening. But that is not a goal for me. I don’t feel like I’m on a mission to attain something. It just felt natural and I’m sticking with because it’s natural.

Several people directly mentioned *dharmic* texts such as *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* as the source of their growing self-awareness. Tara talked about the insights from the knowledge series and how she applied them in her life.

Since that first course and keeping with practices and soaking up in different yogic knowledge, *Patanjali, Yoga Sutras* and *Ashtavakra, Bhakti Sutras*...Yeah, so the knowledge series... Every single piece was opening up something else. It started with that sense of belongingness but also moving into that sense of unconditional sense of happiness. From there, it was things like getting stuck in what other people think of me and moving beyond it and then taking responsibility and it was just everything. It was just so complete and then, you know with every little bit that I learnt, there was, oh, there is so much more and understanding that... It wasn’t just *asanas* and sitting calmly but it was really like this whole system of growing of growing and of helping others grow in the most complete way...by having these aphorisms on hand, from doing *seva* and service and like you really being able to live it.

Another participant, Luke, who had already delved into *dharmic* knowledge prior to coming to the *YES! Plus* course, talked about Yoga as embodied experiential knowledge. The excerpt is an example of the complexity and depth of understanding of what is Yoga that many of the participants eloquently articulated. Luke explained as follows:

Well I guess that even though I had a general understanding of what yoga meant as in union and the philosophy to begin with, over years of practice it becomes more of an experiential reality than intellectual thought. ...When I first started practicing I would meditate quite a bit and I would experience a joy in deep meditation that I hadn't found in other aspects of my life. But as I have practiced under the guidance of Guruji I find that, that joy within the depths of experiencing meditation just is naturally seeping into all aspects of my life. Within my relationships with people, within my daily activity; whatever this feeling of presence where I don't have to try to achieve anything, it's already there. It's just letting go to the experience of it. I don't know if that answers your question about what I've known about yoga but it feels like you don't need to know about yoga, it needs to be experienced and the more intellectual ideas you have about yoga it can actually interfere with the experience. It's still good to have some sort of philosophy in guidance because the mind has all kind of tricks to throw you off centre and there are habitual patterns that come up. So when you have a little bit philosophy to bring your mind back to its centre, then it helps you relax into the experience.

While Luke was more focused on the experiential aspect of Yoga, Jackie spoke more directly about Yoga in the context of managing stress and the body-mind connection.

I recognize the ability for yoga to manage stress. Well first I thought, I would have referred to yoga only as being physical *asanas* and now if I were to say yoga, that would encompass like spiritual knowledge, breathing, meditation, the application of that knowledge, all of those things would be covered under the word yoga. And before that, it would have been these physical *asanas* which I recognized had some ability to affect my nervous system in a way other physical exercise didn't. But all those other things were not part of my understanding of yoga prior to taking the art of living course.

Frank clarified how Yoga is more than the physical *asanas*. His comment about being overwhelmed by the depth of Patanjali's teachings resonated with many others.

I am continuously learning about Yoga and knowing that it's not just stretches. And that it's about every component of life. And I just did another (Yoga) program with Krishanji recently... As far as the body goes, you know you have to move a little bit, you wanna not be fat, you eat a little less, and you don't eat as much fried food...its straightforward... But the depth of it is that yoga is the

union of the mind and the body, and your thoughts and your feelings. It's endless. It never stops. Like I'll never learn. My whole lifetime I'll never figure. I'll never. There is no end to the learning. If I devoted my life to Patanjali studies of yoga I would never learn 5% in my lifetime, I wouldn't think.

Several other participants provided more short and concise answers to what is Yoga, after having taken the many Art of Living Programs. Tsiuri:

I didn't know what Yoga really was. It involved some physical postures and I knew that it made me feel nice but I didn't know it was a whole philosophy and a way of living. Now I know and I still feel that I don't know everything about Yoga.

Another participant related it Yoga being a way to reach his full potential. James:

I've found that Yoga is much more than yoga and postures - just a way of being, it's much more than stretches. I found that it's a series - its knowledge, its *asanas*, stretching, meditation - there is so much to yoga... it's almost like a way of life or just kinda like a philosophy if you will, that I can use to help me maximize my potential - just be successful.

Several participants reflected on assimilating the knowledge of Yoga, as taught in the *YES! Plus* course and later discourses, into their lives as experiential learning and described the complexity of the holistic teachings. Harry explained what he saw as the difference between book information and knowledge that comes from experience. While I had discussed it in Chapter 1, I did not explain it as well as Harry does in the following excerpt.

So it started with experience. So the course makes it experiential without making it academic - big difference. Well it's a question between an intellectual activity, what do you call it? An experiential activity. I guess that's it. If it's just an intellectual activity it remains at the level of the mind, they are just ideas. Those ideas only fit, in fact they can only be understood properly, if there is an experience. If there isn't one, people wind up dismissing it because they don't get it. And that's often what I've seen in other yoga classes, or just informal discussions of principles or ideas from yoga. People just don't get it. Because, they don't have the means to get it because they don't have the experience. Which is why Guruji says in the *Ashtavakra* basically like if you have never experienced meditation, you shouldn't even touch *Ashtavakra*. So it's like that. If there is no experience than the knowledge just won't stick. It's like trying to plant a plant without soil. Where would you put it? So it needs somewhere to go (laughs). Once you've had the experience of something like meditation, then the knowledge resonates with your own experience. It speaks to something you've already

experienced - only with more like clarity. It is more refined. So then studying the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* through Guruji's commentary was how it became a conscious intellectual pursuit, as opposed to stuff I had experienced on the course.

Each of the participants spoke from their unique subject positions and each narrative had a different focus – whether social, emotional, physical, mental and spiritual. For example, Tara's focus was on her relationships, how she handled her fear of conflicts with others and keeping her focus on being positive. Margo talked about being a sensitive and intuitive person and her focus was on keeping her life “whole” and “integrated”. Hussein's narrative was focused mainly on his relationships with family and his own mental and physical health. Leah focus was on resolving her childhood family conflicts and her search for guidance on her spiritual path. Harry spoke mostly about Yoga knowledge and how he was saw it in his own life. Tsiuri's focus was on handling family drama and trauma and “keeping it simple”. Luke was focused on going deeper on his spiritual path. Almost all the participants spoke at length about facing the challenges of family and other relationships and their existential angst. Almost all, except two full time volunteers, were employed full-time in diverse fields in urban centers and dealing with the stress of normal life using Yoga knowledge and practices.

Chapter 9

Yogis speak on Yoga experiences, knowledge and practices

As the previous section has shown, the participants of my study have presented a clear understanding of Yoga in its proper context: as a philosophy and practice as explained by Patanjali's *Eight Limbs of Yoga* and other related *dharmic* texts and commentaries. In this chapter, I apply their narratives to some key terms and concepts that are in the *Four Pillars of Knowledge* to delve into the Yoga knowledge. In addition, I apply the narratives to the key concepts of my study: self-awareness, experiential learning and stress, from the Yoga point of view. As discussed in the methodology section, my attempt to analyze the interviews using the Sanskrit Yoga terms was challenging and required me to first better familiarize myself with the Sanskrit terms and ideas. What I present below is a preliminary or tentative attempt at bringing Yoga-based vocabulary into the language of discourse about Yoga.

***Prajna* (awareness) and *swadhyaya* (self-study) leading to self-awareness**

Taken together, the Yogic idea of *prajna* (awareness) and *swadhyaya* (self-study) lead to increased self-awareness and involve taking responsibility for one's behavior, thoughts and feelings. In one way, the entire narratives of the participants of my study speak to self-awareness. However, some participants directly use the term 'self-study', for example, in the excerpts below; Margo uses the term in the context to her relationship:

Now that I am married, it's helped us to fight! And this has been a huge, huge blessing for us. I don't even know if I'd still be with my partner who I love so, so much if it was not for the knowledge and the self-study - that I practice, that we practice. Because, all those skills about - feeling emotions and feeling anger and knowing what to do with them and how to act. Even when I'm overwhelmed with anger...instead of just screaming things out with anger - to take time to myself to calm down, to discuss everything openly and freely in a fair, conscious, conscientious way. I mean, I can't even imagine how we would be together if I didn't, if I didn't have that level of self-study to maintain the relationship and get through difficult disagreements and angers and fears and so on.

Yeah, we threw in a child into the mix very early, we had just, just moved in together. We weren't even ready to get engaged yet we threw a kid in there, a difficult kid who had you know gone through - a toddler adoption is very, very, very difficult thing. Right. So, that was very hard but, the same way that we practice self-study in ourselves, we would just express carefully the root of what was causing what feelings and take responsibility for our own feelings, have the strength to do that, and keep coming to each other from a place of taking responsibility for our actions, and giving to the other, and through that, we are able to settle all disputes no matter how complex.

Similarly, Tara spoke about her growing self-awareness. The first part of her narrative refers to an 'Aha! moment' she experiences when participated in a trust game played during the YES! Course during which participants form a circle, with one person in the middle falls back into the circle, having faith that those in the circle will catch her.

I was so self-conscious as a teenager, so self-conscious, like about my body. Like all sort of acne and I was overweight and then it was like what if I smell? And oh god! Everything you could possibly, you know, as a seventeen-year-old girl. It was like, uh, I'm so awkward and so self-conscious. And you know having people, you're like leaning back and they're grabbing you to make sure (you don't fall), so you have to trust that they're going to catch you and then I was like nooo, I'm so heavy. I'm going to be so heavy and like I was actually trying not fall back and like lean and keep my weight on the floor so nobody would know my weight and they are like "Tara, what is this wiggly thing you are doing?" Yeah, they saw. So I was like 'Woop!' So I just leaned back. It was okay and we also did the 'hmp' breath right there. And, it was like a steadiness that had come out, that wasn't there before. And everybody saw it and then they're like, "Are you seeing how she is looking everybody in the eye". And I was like yeah, I feel it and then they're like, "Yes, she is totally with us".

And that carried over in my life like, it, where it was anytime I felt self-conscious or nervous or whatever, suddenly I felt at ease and really steady and grounded. And then when I took the Art of Living course just the next month, it was I did the *Sudarshan Kriya*, it was amazing. I just felt so good, so good... I was felt so much relief. So much like that calm but energized feeling. It was so good. 'Cause I was usually used to being this hyper crazy. Like I still have the hyper excited, but whatever, but it's tempered, but it's not off the wall and tiring me out - it's boundless like this energy source I've tapped into. And or it would be lethargy. Like if you wanted to be calm, you had to be food coma or not sitting all day...

Like over the years since then, one of the big lesson that I've continued to be learning is that I can still be myself...like my essence and being able to embrace all those aspects fully and not keep them as separate things. And seeing how the wisdom and the knowledge and the practices enriches all those parts of my life

instead of being, oh. This is my spiritual and this not my spiritual side whatever. But now, it's like, no. It's okay, nobody is asking you to be different people. They are asking you to be you and the best you could be. And so that's been the big lesson since then...Before I was just hyper, either super charged, but like you know, shaky, like that restless or feverishness.

All the participants talked about their experiences of Yoga in the context of self-awareness – mental, physical, social, emotional and spiritual. In the following excerpt, Harry mentioned mental and physical awareness after the course. “Often the people (who have taken the course) talk about greater focus, greater energy, clarity in the mind, quieter mind, calmness - and I experienced all those things”.

Every participant reflected on his or her emotional and mental state when discussing their experiences, both before and after taking the courses. Tara commented on the issues she had been dealing with prior to taking the course, “I was angry and brewing or sad and brewing. I was very tense very self-conscious I was very worried...” Hussein reflected on the two main benefits that he gained after he began his Yoga practices and applying the Yoga knowledge to his life, “I think the emotional stability and the dedication to whatever I take on. I think those would be the two big things.” Several participants talked about their growing self-awareness of the link between their body and the mind, their body and food and their body and breath and so on.

Phillip:

My first experience right during and after the course was feeling much lighter and getting rid of anger and getting rid of frustration and more focus and concentration. Those are the main things I immediately observed after taking the five-day course. I remember at the end of the course I felt much lighter, I felt very different.

The participants talked at length about how the breathing practice of *Sudarshan Kriya* increased their awareness about the stresses and strains in their life, including physical, mental, social and emotional issues. For example, several participants talked about noting an improvement in their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing after restricting their diet to vegetarian food over the

six-day duration of the *YES! Plus* course. In the following excerpt, Hussein describes the complex issue he was dealing with related to his health. He describes the growing awareness about his body, mind and the relationship of food to his mental and physical health.

So prior to yoga and meditation I felt sorta had had trouble with anxiety and stress and...So I actually had... I was dealing with a mental disorder at the time called body dysmorphic disorder. It is essentially...like so the way I would describe it, it's like a combination of OCD and with like anorexia. Not necessarily anorexia but sorta very concerned about your looks all the time and you feel very socially conscious and it sorta impacts social functioning. So I was seeing a counselor at my university. So like I said it is very consuming in the sense that it takes a lot of mental activity cause you're constantly preoccupied. Yeah, so you know you feel uneasy in social situations and then it's also has like that compulsive aspect to it as well. There are different components that like constantly checking the mirror or there are other activities as well. It sorta has a life of its own almost. It makes you very prone to like anxiety and stress and then also depression. And so you know whether it was exams or assignments and stuff. It just sorta added more weight to the situation than they usually require so it just made things unnecessarily difficult I would say.

Once I did *kriya* and uh started changing my diet to be more vegetarian. I immediately noticed a decrease in the amount of stress I was experiencing and I started continuing my practice. One of my first experiences with diet was just being able to just seeing its impact on my sort of thoughts or how I would like experience certain situations. Eating meat or tuna or just seeing how that sorta impacts... I guess my ability to deal with the situation at time. Just like the... How do I say, it's like, I think diet was really interesting cause I would eat something and then I would immediately notice really heavy or really like . yeah, and a lot of activity in the mind and you know not being able to clearly deal with the situation at hand. Yea so when I became vegetarian, it was a very on and off process...It took me a while to give up meat completely. I was trying to experience how food affects the body differently.

One other person spoke at length about the effect of being a vegetarian for the 6-day duration of the course. In the following excerpt James talked about his experiences:

Is vegetarianism a thing to talk about here? Okay so I adopted a vegetarian diet and I believe that it embodies part of the yogic philosophy. Within the first week actually, first couple of days I didn't know what I was supposed to eat, it was a little difficult. But I found out, you know, what I should be eating and it became much easier and within about the first week I was sleeping a couple hours less per night. I didn't need an alarm clock to wake up. I was feeling a lot more energized, very enthusiastic, very bubbly. I just - it almost felt like my perception and my vision became less cloudy. This is a personal, it's kinda subjective

experience right? But it just felt like, the way I perceive things and the way I process of my thoughts became a little less cloudy.

Several participants saw a link between breathing practices and releasing stress. James talked about the release of emotions during the initial *Sudarshan Kriya* practice and becoming more open to receive the knowledge of Yoga after that:

They [the teachers] introduced us to the *Sudarshan Kriya* and wow. I can't even describe. It's like just releasing so much stress through the breath. You know, you can feel it physically and emotionally. You just start releasing emotions. Anger, laughter it just comes out. My experience was tingling in my hands like numbness even just so much built up stress over time and just letting it go like that. You know, after the first time we did it, I was just amazed. I said, Wow! This is something - and I don't see why anyone else wouldn't want it. It's phenomenal. So, that was my experience during the course. Then after that the teachings the instructors were giving and the lessons became much easier to receive. Maybe I had to shed off stress or something, but much easier to digest and understand.

Jackie talked about the changes that she noted in her physical health from doing the *Sudarshan Kriya* breathing practice. Her story gestures to the mysteries or secrets of the breath and Yoga.

I had back problems for a long time and I still struggle here and there but I had I think, I had x-rays and I think 10% curve in my spine and I think at 15% that's when they consider operating. It wasn't insignificant. Yeah, like scoliosis and I had had for it a long time. I had a couple falls when I was a child and I think it just affected the way my spine developed and so I was seeing a chiropractor. I went for this course...and I went to the chiropractor afterwards and she put her hands on my back and without doing much she said "Oh my god! What happened to you?" Like, with just doing this *Sudarshan Kriya* twice. Because I hadn't done any home practice or anything like that. So it was really right after the course and she touched me and she was like, what happened? Like, she could feel some change in my body and in my back. And two years later after having practiced, I went to see my other chiropractor after living in Japan for a couple of years. I came back and I asked her how is the curve in my spine? and she said, "What curve?" The curve wasn't really there anymore and after the age of 25 (I was 25 (age) when I started doing *kriya*) it (the spine) is not supposed to change. It's like at the age of 25, you are sort of stuck with it - it's sort of managing it and making sure it doesn't get worse. And so I was able to physically improve.

Similarly, Frank told a story that he had needed back surgery for years for two years but he had avoided it because it would interfere with his drinking. After he took some Art of Living courses,

he went to India and he found that sleeping on the floor for six weeks got rid of his back pain, “It was amazing...that was the best part of India.”

Patanjali Eight Limbs – *Yamas* and *Niyamas*

Several participants spoke about *yamas* (social ethics) and *niyamas* (personal ethics) as discussed by Patanjali in his first two limbs of the *Eight Limbs of Yoga*. When asked about how her view of herself has changed over time, Leah’s response is an example:

I don’t think it’s changed at all. I think it has just confirmed or verified what I thought was important... and that I can only...it has given me a very clear moral compass and a very clear set of guidelines of how to live my life, that is in alliance with what I always believed in.

Four Pillars of Knowledge

In the following section, I present the yogis’ narratives in the context of the Yoga knowledge explained in the Four Pillars of Knowledge. Please refer to Appendix A for Sri Sri’s talk on this knowledge, as needed

Viveka

All the participants’ stories included examples of *viveka* (loosely translated into ability to discriminate or discern between the changing nature of the world and the non-changing Self).

Tsiuri’s response to the question about what lessons she had learnt over the years of practice and knowledge of Yoga speaks to the idea of having *viveka*.

I guess for me, what I feel like saying is the value of the present and the fact that situations are very liquid and they are changing all the time. Not to take it as fixed. It doesn’t mean that it will be fixed about myself just because I feel that I am this way. Right? It doesn’t mean that it will always be that way. The giving space for things to change. I think a lot of times we get depressed when we think this is the way it is but when you realize things are flowing, things are changing. You know it’s just, daily. Or even like in an interaction with someone I might think, you know. I wish our interaction was a little bit different but even in my language instead of saying, “Oh, this person is always like this”, its, “Well, right now, it is like this”. So yeah, thinking right now it’s like - speaking this way, I’m saying to myself: It doesn’t mean it will always be like that - Yeah, things might change.

Another aspect of *viveka* is about being focused on the present moment and being open to new possibilities at any given moment or situation. In the following excerpt, Tsiuri refers to one of the knowledge books that the participants may have read.

What I like about Art of Living and doing meditation is you never hit a plateau. At least I feel like you never hit a plateau, you are always growing. But I really like the line from *Yoga Vashista*: “I shall now live a life of spontaneous and non-volitional action” and that’s how I feel like how I would like to live my life. I don’t want to have a set idea of how I will be living. Because I feel that is limiting and the present moment is so rich. And so I want to say that I will spontaneous in whatever happens and so the non-volitional part meaning, I don’t mind which direction my life goes. I just hope that I will always be close this knowledge and keep up with the practices. Because if I do that, I know I will be on the right path.

Vairagya

Sri Sri has described *vairagya* as dispassion towards worldly or sense pleasures. Frank explained *vairagya* in the following way:

There is never an end to what you can want. The mind can never stop wanting. If I would honestly, truly tell someone, that’s what I would say. I would say - you might as well breathe and meditate, listen to some knowledge cause you’re never going, your mind is never going to stop wanting. Even if you do *kriya* and meditate you still (will) want but at least you are aware of your wants and desires.

Vairagya also involves accepting people and situation (own body, place, time others) as they are rather than wanting them to be as one wants them to be. Often that involves forgiving oneself and others and, not blaming or complaining about people and situations. These experience of *vairagya* follows from *viveka*, knowing that everything is changing – people, situations, thoughts and feelings. The participants talked at length about *viveka* and *vairagya* in the context of their relationships and life events. Here is Tara’s example of having *vairagya* in the context of her family drama.

Before I took the course, I was very tense very self-conscious. I was very worried. Now I’m not. Now I feel free, I feel myself, I feel open. I feel relaxed. I feel, even in times of tension, okay, I can still be relaxed or stay calm. I don’t have

to get crazy upset about things. I can still empathize with people instead of not and I'm able to bring things back to love no matter what. Even in a state of conflict, like okay, what's important here, what are intentions. Our intentions are always to love each other even when we are upset with each other - no matter who it is. Like I'm having an argument with my mum or my brother or my friend or my whoever. Know that I love this person and this person loves me and I don't doubt that. Okay, now we can step forward. Now I can take responsibility... I have learnt many skills. Like before, instead of seeing things as black and white or seeing things as this is just who I am and that's it. No it's seeing I can expand myself, that I can expand my skills, that I can have all experiences in the world. Where it's like yea, that sense of being multi-dimensional. Like, instead of it being something that I feel limited. No. I can have many different skills and I can relate to many different people cause I've had highs and lows and it's not a bad thing that I've had highs and lows.

While Tara did not directly use the words *dispassion* to describe her experiences, Harry spoke directly on the complexity of the idea of having *vairagya* or *dispassion*.

I'm not dead weight. I would describe myself as very stable. I don't know if I can say *dispassionate* because it's too big a word. It's a moving target. I would say *dispassionate* certainly more *dispassionate* than I used to be. And I can feel it increase at new depths as time goes on - so things that used to bother me, don't bother me anymore, things I used to get feverish about, I don't anymore. And some of the hardest buttons are slowly getting scrubbed away. Slowly.

In the following excerpt Leah gives an example of having *dispassion* through forgiveness about the past events and relationships in her life.

Self-love, having compassion and forgiveness for yourself that uh...when you can forgive your own mistakes, nothing can touch you, you know. Like everything else that happens in the world can't affect you if you can realize that... you know, everything is ok, and you are doing the best you can, and that...I am trying to formulate a sentence...Yeah, for me forgiveness is key cause it was always about blame, right? Blaming someone else or blaming myself and ultimately I would turn it back on myself and... How can I make mistakes?

I grew up in a very critical environment and criticism was very predominant so, I internalized that and would be very critical of myself though I think the biggest thing that is pervasive for me is that I feel the solution to all of my...or a lot of my difficulties in life...is being able to forgive others for their mistakes, forgive myself when I make mistakes and just keep a perspective of the grand scheme of things... that we make mistakes, that we are all human beings, and we're all doing the best we can, and ultimately we all are good people and we are all doing the best we can.

All the participants told stories about needing to deal with stress of family relationships. As Frank explained, family is where most of life's drama happens.

Family is the hardest thing. My friend calls family "your SAT", your spiritual aptitude test. So you go home and you check in see how you're doing spiritually and it's tough. It's tough but family is the toughest. They know you so well. They push your buttons; you push their buttons...

Leah gave an example about coming to accept her step-father. Towards the end of her comments, she directly used the word *vairagya* to discuss her experiences.

I had a terrible relationship with my step-father, I really, really hated him and after doing these practices, and being in knowledge for a while, I would slowly and gradually be able to forgive him for everything and not hold any grudges or, you know, and now I feel like no reaction whatsoever. Like, I am completely detached from all those issues I had in the past, although I think it helps that we don't live together. But you know, I was just able to let go of the past and be able to realize, you know, if people behave badly, it's also their own stress, they are not trying to hurt you, they can't help it, and we have to have compassion for them and forgive them. And even with my mother too, like with all the problems that we had, I kept persisting over the years, I want to have a relationship with her, and using that knowledge to help handle it when she hurt me. And be able to get over it or have perspective on it and be able to see that, it's really about her, it's not about me and, eventually we've actually become very close.

Vairagya (dispassion) was explained further by Harry as a "moving target" – something to aspire towards. He gave the example of developing *vairagya* by observing what he refers to as the drama of feelings or the "romanticizing of emotions": "If I feel things, I feel things, that's it. They are just feelings, that's it. And I can enjoy them if they are nice, and I can endure them if they are not nice, and I just keep going in life." He goes on to talk at length the importance of taking responsibility for his mind or behavior, which become obstacles to his path of Yoga.

You know it was just like drama...I would get swept up in it and I thought that was a big deal and of course, I blamed the situations and people for my own feelings, my thoughts and my own state of mind. So there was no responsibility taken for my own state. Very little and then, that changed. So now I feel more empowered because the knowledge and the practices have given me the means to not just be a victim of what happens to me... Now I say nothing, I just take charge. I shut up and take charge. Yea, on the part one course itself, we teach not to be a victim - to take responsibility for your own mind, for your own feelings. So if I

feel a certain way it's because of my own, well, as Patanjali might put it, because of my own *kleshas* (afflictions): because of my ignorance, my own fear, cravings and aversions. So it's my work to thin those down the *kleshas*, [*Vairagya*] makes everything else easy and happy.

Hussein also talked about the importance of forgiveness and acceptance as part of living with *vairagya*.

I'd say the biggest lessons I've learned [is that] people, everyone's got a story. Everyone is dealing with their own issues and even though it seems like they intentionally are out to hurt you and, or they make mistakes that you find hurtful, is just to really see them as humans who, like you, have limited understandings of things. And so I think in terms of holding grudges or not being to let go of things, really accepting people and giving them that...yea...I think...I grew up in a family that we had a lot of siblings. So it's like when you have a lot of siblings, it's obviously like you get into fights and you have many different perspectives...I think before I lived in a black and white world. You were either someone I sort of accepted and talked to or you were someone I didn't really like.

And now it's just this big grey paradigm and everyone is just kind of everywhere. I would say there is less harshness in terms of dealing with people or accepting. So like when conflicts come up I think it's really understanding the other person's point of view and accepting that there is nothing that is going to force them or get them to think exactly how I think because we have very different life experience. And because of that you know they have the outlook they have and I have the outlook I have and that is perfectly okay.

Six Wealths

The third pillar of knowledge is the *Six Wealths: shama, dama, titiksha, uparati, shraddha and samadhana* and these are all connected to or flow from having *viveka* and *vairagya*. In the section, I apply the interviews with the yogis to these six yogic qualities.

Shama (tranquility of mind). In Sri Sri's explanation of *Shama*, he gives this example: "many times you don't want to say something, yet you do". *Shama* can be applied to communications in relationships: how to maintain the tranquility of mind when emotions boil up and thoughts become scattered. The following excerpt is one example of *shama*. Tsiuri spoke of being self-aware during conflicts with her family.

Well with my home, you know, we all tend to show our worst selves to our family but we are so nice to strangers. But I think the real test of your progress is with our family. I fight with my mom with my sister. But now I've noticed that I've become aware at least you know you catch yourself like okay I'm doing this right now, you become aware of what you are doing so that's very important and I've also noticed that I'll make an effort to keep my mouth shut. So that's helping. Like before I remember I would erupt with angry and I would just walk out and not talk to my sister for example. You know we will fight and you know few minutes later we will be okay. Whereas before that would be grounds for not speaking to somebody. And I think that's how families get into feuds and you know can be something so insignificant but you feel hurt. But you feel like the other person should come to you first and I think that happens to many family and now, it's like okay our family is much better.

Knowing when to "keep one's mouth shut" in relationships requires *shama*. Samad, of middle-eastern background, is fluent in French and Arabic, with some limitations to his English language skills. In the excerpt below he talked about self-awareness in handling his relationship with his parents and others.

Something very important is not to, with my family, is not discuss and state some concepts of Yoga and knowledge. Because it's as if I'm teaching them something - as if I'm telling them: Hey, there is something that is absent in the Christian tradition. You need to be very careful about that. And also there is a saying even in India. "You don't teach your parents". And till today, I have to say with honesty, I have learned so much from them... So, for me, I apply in my relationship with my family - I apply the knowledge on me, to be able to really create a harmonious relationship with them. So, if ever we have to discuss about some issue - some taboo issue, that is too open sometimes, I tend to be a very good listener and to make sure that I don't, I don't speak much. I speak, but very simple things. And something also that don't discuss it too long. It's exactly what Guruji tell us - is that you know whenever teacher, volunteers are involved in organization of event or anything, keep it short. because the longer you talk, the tougher it may get. So that's one thing that I applied.

I need my practice more than ever when I'm with my parents because you know they always challenge you, what's your life, where are you going what are your plans. They always question you. So the practice allows you to restrain yourself, remain calm and composed - not to say things that might bring fire into the relationship. I have to say that with this... practice and the knowledge of ten-eleven years, it has...become part of your personality. You don't specifically see it, but you know that you are a different person - you are soaked into that... One of the good quality that has enhanced in me is the listening part and also something also is to come from a perspective of sharing and not being a teacher or something... And being very simple. I had a colleague of mine who at the

beginning he felt very distant. But then he opened to me and tell me his issues and problems and I was very happy to listen to him and to share my experience to recommend some specific thing. So for me, what it helped me is to have a more humane relationship with my coworker and also with my clients.

Dama (control over senses). Sri explains that *dama* relates to the ability to have a say over one's senses. Having control over senses is a challenge for everyone, especially for young people. In the following excerpt Luke, reflected on his desire for a partner, while maintaining *dama*, which in this case was about love and lust.

I feel my main vice is probably lust. I've always been a romantic and because I have such a big heart and I feel divine love, like, it's really easy to become intoxicated with a beautiful woman as well. So when I fall for someone, I fall very hard. And that can, if you're not centered, it pulls you off your path, as well. So that's what I struggle with as well because I have this idealism. Like that, like Hollywood romanticism - where I need to find my perfect partner, something like that, maybe someday, I will possibly, I mean, Gururji gives all the blessing. I would like to be married at some point. But also, I just would like to get rid of this lust because being a young male that's natural. Being a human being, its natural and because I wanted to be a monk, when I was younger so much, that I developed a really negative perspective of that feeling. Which gave me a more or less, low self-esteem because when those feelings would arise, I thought I was a bad person or not being a good devotee or proper person on the path. So I was really hard on myself for years and years. And then I had to learn from Grace that sexuality is a part of human life and it's okay to feel those feelings. So now it's not as bad. But I mean it's still comes up every now and then and that's probably what gives me the must struggle on the path - is a beautiful woman...

Along the same lines, Tara explained the process she went through to handle the "soap opera" of her fiery intimate relationship and why it became about her choosing her path.

You know it's like not everything I do is beneficial or righteous but you know that awareness is there, it kicks in - it definitely kicks in at some point. It takes less time to realize like Oh! am I doing something fruitless or potentially harmful for myself and others and oh especially things like relationships. This is where it comes in the most. Well this is like a couple years ago, well more than a couple now, but like I went out with a fellow and then realized it wasn't healthy.

Our attachment to each other was just hurting each other. Even though we wanted to be together so much and there was so much chemistry and all those things I was like okay I'm not here to entangle anyone. That's not my purpose. I'm here, if we can share something that we grow together, great. But if we can't, then its entanglement. ...I mean it's like... caught up in games... and it was just too much

fire and of course the fire feels amazing but it's like, it burns you out if there is nothing with the fire to ground it, to build intimacy, to build trust - something for the long term... It's just like, well, I have to honor him and to honor myself and to do that I have to let go of it and not hold on it ... it was some drama.

We were trying to make this whole thing pleasant and lala and understanding. But at the same time we were so emotional and we kept wanting to come back... It was like what I am doing? This is like a soap opera and you know I don't want to live a soap opera...it's not fair, it doesn't make easier... It's a different kind of hard. There is hard when you're stagnating and there is hard when you are moving forward. I chose the hard when you are moving forward because we were just stagnating...one is just sitting in pain and suffering for nothing... not even knowing... So when I actually broke it off it was like, "look this is where we are and I kept dragging you in the wake of my desire to like be with when we know it's not healthy and not going anywhere and I'm sorry." And of course he was upset but he also... But now we are friends. That's the other thing, cause it was kind of like I took responsibility and I was honest with myself and with him and caring still and it was coming from a place of love and acceptance and then that was what was built since then too...But by the end of it we can be friends. Like, what's new in your life or happy birthday. Now, it's just warm...

What Tara also demonstrated in the way she handled her relationship was her ability of *dama* or control over one's senses – she was able to go past her lust for her partner, to see that her relationship with her partner did not meet her need to be on the spiritual path. Her ability to go through with the breakup of her relationship with compassion indicated *titiksha* or endurance, the third wealth.

Titiksha (forebearance, endurance). Sri Sri has described it as follows: when difficult times come, forbearance allows you to go on without being completely shaken. In the following excerpt, Tsiuri talked about the sudden death of her father and how she and her family coped with the trauma from the Yogic knowledge and practices.

Looking at it (death) as something, an inevitable thing. And you know little bits of knowledge like this, the long *kriya*. I remember, the emotions and now I feel like I feel like, I wonder, I look at my sister and I wonder how did we deal with this traumatic experience. We could have been traumatized by something like this but we are not. We are not... It was a sudden thing - we were not expecting it. But the practices definitely helped, the practical pranayama, the breathing and also the knowledge with Guruji was very helpful.

Others spoke of stress in the context of relationships, for example, as explained by Tara.

I mean I was young. My life was about crushes and little relationship drama and dating, right through high school... I think that *YES! Plus*, I can't remember exactly the time line, but that *YES! Plus* was really close to the time I had my very first serious boyfriend whom I wanted to marry then I had a break up that really crushed me just severely for a long time. It (the course) really gave me strength and wisdom and purpose and focus.

Titiksha is the quality that allows one to move through difficult times without losing composure or inner calm or faith in oneself or one's future. In this way, *titiksha* may also be understood as having "perspective" to not take events or situations personally, as discussed by Hussein in the example he gave about how he handled losing his job.

I think a lot of it is just perspective. I think a lot of times when we don't have experiences that are beyond our body or day to day lives, it is very easy to see each thing that goes wrong or each negative event or exam or you know relationship that goes sour as sort of like a life threatening event. Or sort of like the world is very bleak at that instance and nothing can go right. And so it's very easy to get stuck in this cycle of, you know, stress, anxiety, depression. Whereas now, I feel - thanks to these practices - it's like, regardless whether some good happens or something bad happens, I understand that it's just momentary...it really helps...

So I mean, recently I was laid off from my job on Monday. Yea. And it was actually very freeing. I had ideas of what I wanted to pursue on the side and wanted start my own design business. It's sort of, you know, instead of getting down on it or letting it bog me down...Well it wasn't a huge surprise. But at the same, it was like the way I dealt with it would've been differently had it happened if I had not been doing yoga and *kriya* and meditation and knowledge...any of these things. Because it is really easy to tie an event to yourself - whether it's your ego or your wellbeing... and sort of take things personally. But I think you can just see it as what it is then it sorta is an opportunity to kind of explore some next steps so or some ideas that were lying around anyway, so...

In his description of perspective, Hussein has also alluded to many other Yogic ideas such as *viveka* (awareness that everything is changing) and *vairagya* (having dispassion towards events and sense pleasures), as discussed earlier. As Sri Sri has explained, all the knowledge points are interconnected and making a connection to one indicates a connection to the others. In this way, the different components described in the Pillars of Knowledge are integrated and interrelated

and the discussion of one often involves the other components. In the following excerpt, Harry explained what Sri Sri has used the analogy of a table to explain the unity of Yoga knowledge and practices:

The awareness increases just by doing the practices. And of course, the awareness increases much faster if you're doing the practices and you have the knowledge at the same time and then...The awareness increases and just by the awareness increasing, then changes happen as well. Guruji has this great line in the last tape of the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras* where he was talking about the Eight Limbs of Yoga – they are limbs, like the legs of a table, they are not steps. Even if you pull one leg of a table, the whole table will come. So it's like that. The (Art of Living) courses are set up in that way - they accelerate everything. Even if you take only one part of it you'll get a huge benefit. And it will bring along everything, just slowly.

Here is another example, from Leah, about the inter-relationship of the different pillars of knowledge such as *viveka* (knowing that relationship could change), *vairagya* (letting go of past pain) and *titiksha* (kept trying). Leah describes enduring a difficult relationship with her parents during which she felt distant and unloved by her mother. Yet, she had continued to work on resolving her relationship with her mother:

I've always been working at it, Jackie was saying to me the other day, "I can't believe you persisted for so long to keep your relationship going with your mom, some people would have just given up and walked away". But I really, I wanted to have a good relationship with my mother, you know, that was important to me...and so, I just kept trying and trying and things got gradually better over time, but in the last while, we've become really close, and you know, a lot of healing has happened...

Another aspect of *titiksha* is becoming more skillful in handling difficult situations in life and overcoming them; *titiksha* involves *dama* (control over emotions and senses) and *swadhyaya* (self-study) as discussed earlier. In the following excerpt, Leah was responding to the question about how she handled stress prior to taking the Art of Living courses:

Uhm... well yeah, just very unstable, very emotional, very sensitive, and just having a lot of anxiety and worry and just wasting a lot of energy and not being able to deal with things. I have a lot of compassion for people when they just like "I can't leave the house today" because I understand what that's like. When you

are so anxious that you just feel paralyzed, and you can't do anything or I'd be wasting a lot of energy rather than just focusing and being successful and effective at studying. There'd be all that worry and stress about it, that was not necessary and did not have to be there. So I guess and just, kinda anticipating obstacles, anticipating conflict and things like that. Whereas after having more knowledge I was able to realize that I can, I can work around things more skillfully. I hope to continue to drop my hang-ups.

We are our own worst enemies, we are our fears, self-imposed fears. The only things that block us from achieving our potential. So I'd like to see myself become more fearless with regards to achieving my goals professionally, being able to let, drop whatever fears or inhibitions around being able to be as effective as I can be, you know, for organizing courses or effecting change in the world, making an impact in the world, you know.

Uparati (rejoicing in one's own nature). Dropping the "hang-up and...self-imposed fears"

as Leah described above, moves a yogi towards *uparati*, that is rejoicing in one's own nature.

Sri Sri has described this fourth wealth "rejoicing in your own nature, being with your nature.

Often you are doing things because someone else says or does something". It is like being a

football of others' opinions, that is leading life according to what others say or do. Leah talks

about this wealth – of appreciating who one is. The answer below was to the question about what

she values about herself:

... like realizing all of those great qualities that I had, but were overshadowed by insecurity, but being able to see them and use them and appreciate them, and all those things that I already had within me: my sense of humor, and, playfulness, and all these other things that before I wasn't really showing to the world 'cause I was too afraid. And I now, now I can enjoy them and share them with people so much more easily not being a football: people value my insight, I think, people comment that I have interesting perspectives on things and my finger is always on the pulse of what matters.

People value, that I take a position and I stand behind it because I have that clear moral compass, like this is what I believe in, what's right and I will defend that and I won't change my mind, like I'm convinced (laughter). But it is good to take a position because sometimes we don't, right, we are wishy-washy or something. I know people like that and I am very clear about what, what matters and what doesn't to me, I think people notice that I operate from a point of caring and that I really, really care about how other person, how I affect other people, and that I want, that I fundamentally want to help people, and create harmony in my environment.

The above quote shows how *uparati* is a combination of being playful and at the same time handling serious issues with lightness. A very different aspect of this idea of *uparati* or rejoicing in one self was presented by Margo. In reflecting on how she overcome her shyness and instead celebrate who she is. She refers to the idea of self-study or *swadhyaya* towards understanding one's mind, towards greater self-awareness.

I've been thinking recently a lot about ... like times, difficult times, where I've been intimidated by others or you know that shyness that stayed with me... I still have quite a strong fear of conflict and of judgment by other. And I feel intimidated easily by other people who are very strong spoken and confident and or over confident. And I have allowed myself to get pushed around quite a bit even though on the outside it looks like I'm fighting back for myself. I feel like I'm still uncovering that layer, that whatever - shyness or inhibition I had as a child. It's still coming off -through a lifetime of practice and self-study. And at this point, I see the greatest gift it has given me, is the glimpse of myself: that I have nothing to ever be afraid of, that I am clean, and pure, and strong, and good -regardless of any mistakes I make and regardless of what everyone else's opinion of me is.

The idea of *uparati* again is about celebrating who one is, regardless of the opinions of others. It is a significant issue for young people who are deeply influenced by the opinion of peers. Tara went on to provide an insight into how *uparati* can be understood.

The other thing I mentioned before was this idea of being more myself and kind of more and more celebrating who I am and like that my personality you know, that this is my personality, this is who I am. Of course I'm learning, I'm changing, I'm evolving. But it's that like, I've been put in this world with this personality because it's a good thing and...that I can share that with other people and not try to be like, I have to fit in and that's it. Oh, I can fit in and fulfill my roles, like you know I can go teach my courses put on my suit but I'm still Tara. I can still share a laugh with my students you know like I can still be myself. I can still talk about punk and whatever like that I enjoy and share that it's not something that I have to choose between. It's something, that, like being on the spiritual path means that all parts of myself, and all parts of my life, are being fed with this life and this energy, and can connect together in a meaningful way. It also means making hard decisions sometimes, right. Like what I was talking about with that relationship that I had, where I had to accept that it wasn't moving in the direction that was good for us.

Sri Sri describes the quality of *uparati* that Tara referred to as the ability to be playful or serious, taking them together and living them together. Farah gave an example of realizing that she was

not able to be playful or to relax and let go. It was during a course process in which participants relax by dancing to music with eyes closed.

I remember I did the first course and the first *Sudarshan Kriya* experience I had a pretty profound experience and you know I cried and lots of things sort of came up. It was all fine. Emotional stuff yeah - it was very good. But some of processes in the course are mind blowing. Like they seem so simple but when you are in that space where you are expecting these things you realize how basic some values are to humans. I don't know if that makes sense. It was just amazing. Okay, so for example, eye gazing and dancing. And I remember that I couldn't dance. And everybody eyes are closed and it's a very freeing time but I was so stiff and rigid and made me reflect like - What's wrong? Not what's wrong with me but what's going on that I can't just be free. So that was an amazing realization.

Tara's words below describe *uparati* in the context of love being one's essence.

I think the theme of love comes up a lot. Just cause it's like that everything comes down to it. When Guruji says love is not an emotion it's your very existence. It's like that pulse that drive everything and like. So that's been the biggest thing, that's my fuel. I know when I'm having a good day because the love is flowing. But when I'm having a bad day its cause I'm feeling tense and small and its blocking the channel. Okay, so I need to open up again. Yeah, that's been the biggest lesson (I have learnt) no matter what.

Shraddha (faith). Sri Sri has talked about faith in three areas: faith in oneself, in the practices or knowledge, and faith in the guru. In the excerpt below, Tsiuri hints at faith when she responds to the question about what she values about herself the most.

I value the fact that I've stuck (to the path). I'm still on this path. Many people learn the tools and don't use them, but I use (them). Yeah, I value it very much. I don't know if it's my own doing but ...

The earlier sections have demonstrated the yogis' faith in their practices. On the path of Yoga, the three kinds of faith are often interlinked. In the excerpt below, Jackie explained how all these components faith work together for her:

It's so much easier to have faith that everything is going to work. That faith is not an abstract concept. When you really feel there is this divine person that is looking out for you and you really believe it to be 100% true. You know it would be much harder to have faith in an abstract form of divinity but to know that you have a master who embodies that divinity that is taking care of you with his own human hand and his own human brain, that makes every moment bearable...I do

feel that we are all living beings and the divine is supporting and loving all of us and to have this person (the Guru), it makes it so much more personal and so much easier to have that confidence and that faith that like really your, you're loved and supported.

The participants discussed having faith in one's guru at length because I specifically asked a question about what having a guru meant to them. I discuss this topic further in detail in a section that follows in context to eastern philosophy and traditions.

Samadhana (feeling at ease). Sri Sri explained *samadhana* as being at ease, being content, calm and serene with the whole existence – people and situations around one. Tsiuri provided one example in context to her job and her life in general.

I would say I'm easy going. Even though I'm not necessarily ambitious. By not being ambitious I mean, I'm not career oriented. But I still got a promotion. I'm still able to do all those things. And take the opportunities that I need to take. But my focus is elsewhere. I feel like yeah, I'm living life more spontaneously and I don't have any particular preference as to which way it goes. I'm kinda taking it day by day. So I yea, I guess I feel happy and sociable and I would describe myself as energetic and a certain skills and I'm happy.

The quality of *samadhana* seems similar to *shama* (tranquility of mind) and *uparati* (rejoicing in one's own nature) in that they all originate in *viveka* (knowing that everything is changing, discrimination) and *vairagya* (dispassion). As explained earlier, all these 'knowledge points' are inter-related, like the legs of a chair all come together when one is pulled. The excerpt below from Tara gives an example of these inter-relations. She is at ease with who she is (*samadhana*), she celebrates her uniqueness (*uparati*), her mind is tranquil because she does not judge others (*shama*). All this comes from her knowing that people and situations are fluid (*viveka*) and she can have dispassion (*vairagya*) about pleasures and pains of life.

I like who I am now. I feel like, this happened, I'm thirty-two now and I felt like when I turned thirty I felt 'ahh' all the aspects of myself are finally linked up and integrated together in this whole person and I can celebrate it. And who I am now has been one consistent with who I have been as a kid and at the same time more, more transformed, more complex. I feel like I'm happy, I'm joyful, I'm mischievous. I love it... that I think about. I'm super intelligent, like I'm a

professor. I can own that. I can be like Yes! I'm intelligent and I'm funny and I'm loving and it's a great time and I can like celebrate, and that I'm quirky and that I can be a weirdo and still be not a weirdo. Like I can be a weirdo. That I'm quirky but I'm still I'm still close with people. It's not something that sets me apart from people -it's something that helps me still be close and be friends. Like I see myself as a friend to everybody and a place where like I'm a person where people can feel comfortable. I don't judge them I've been through my own stuff and like I'm also aware of my you know like I've been through hard times.

I've been through good times in life I've been through periods of my life like even now. It's an ongoing process where it's like oh I have these limitations, I have these strengths, I can work with them. I can work on them. I can let them flourish, and we are all going through that is like being somebody, everybody can feel comfortable with. Yeah, that I can feel comfortable with other people, I don't need to be self-conscious, I feel like, I feel very much more at ease with myself now and I keep learning more things about myself and about the world around me and it feels amazing.

The path of a Yogi has ups and down, as described in Tara's quote above. But with the knowledge of Yoga, these ups and downs of life, instead of leading to stress and strain, become more manageable. In the excerpt below, Farah reflects on her experience of being a social activist and the change in her views after she took the course.

I guess I just started to see the world from a different perspective I started to, at that time, I was very much involved in sort of like activism. So I worked for this group - it's basically this hub of social justice that students can plug into. So I was one of the coordinators there and I was doing work with immigrant rights groups and then environment. So, well you know, when you're an activist, there are a lot of binaries, capitalism and anti-capitalism you know, racist not racist...Its very much, you like it, you're for it or against it. And when you sort of take the Art of Living course and do these practices, and you practice yoga, things aren't so black and white anymore. I guess it is, like I used to hate people before, like I used to say you are... that you the head of this corporation and this is what you are doing to these people in this part of the world and I hate you.

And after the course, I couldn't really hate people. I mean I wasn't actively hating people, I had this strong sense of wrong, you know, that people are doing wrong, people are wrong, people are bad. And some people are good and that that's a very, that got very muddled when I first took the course. I mean it's actually, is probably the reason I slowly got out of activism. Because I felt like in those communities there wasn't very much love, although it's a value that is espoused a lot. But it's not really practiced you know. I just, you know, just thinking about things. If I could speak to the head of some corporation doing some evil things,

could I accept them? And that's a major tenant of the part one course – like, accept people as they are.

You know before I took the course, I couldn't have, I could not have imagined not yelling at a person when I saw them. Whereas now, I could probably sit and have a conversation and see them just as a person and you know with a different perspective and things. It doesn't mean that I don't have beliefs. It just means that they approach...I do believe in activism and like, actually my views are probably quite similar to what they were before. I just think they got toned down from what they were before whether that's because I am just older now or but I think it is partly to do with yoga because I think you just get a perspective from life - it's just the world and people are moving through it and things are the way they are for a particular reason, and because of the time we are in and that kind of thing. And not to accept it, not do anything but accept it for the situation and take the action... And not from a perspective of destruction, maybe from a perspective of like building something up which is very much what Art of Living does. Instead of criticizing something or protesting something, they actually go into the communities and do work for a change. Yea, just criticizing is very draining. This way you build yourself back up rather than breaking other people down and in turn breaking yourself down. Yea, I mean I think I became very... I used to be very, I don't know if angry is the right word, but very tense and anxious. And over time, that has like gone away to the point that I think my friends who I was friends with in high school still see me that way. But then they are like, wow, you're so chill now and being able to relax in situations.

Mumukshatva (desire for the highest or spirituality)

The last pillar of knowledge is described by Sri as “the desire for the highest, a desire for total freedom, for enlightenment, whatever you want to call it...a longing for the Divine.” Every participant of my study reflected on *mumukshatva* and spoke about thinking beyond a materialist life. As Frank put it, “wealth, pretty girlfriend, tons of money, a fast car, a nice house. Like all these things didn't mean anything.” Several participants talked about their interest in philosophy and spirituality or looking for guidance on their spiritual path – which is what Yoga is about. For example, in the following quote, Leah answered the question about what she values the most about herself. She reflects on her childhood and youth during which her parents were focused on material things.

Spiritual values and you know, what is the true value in a person. What is true beauty, and all that kind of thing, you know, those inner qualities. And rather

than focusing on material things and superficial things, and temporary things. It (Yoga knowledge) just validated all the things that I always believed in but that were always kind of condemned in my family, where I was always treated like...that is dumb...that is a waste of time...that's stupid.

On the other hand, Harry's mother was a yoga instructor and he learnt about meditation in his youth. He talks about his desire to go deeper into knowledge about the Self. In the excerpt below, he gives the analogy of two birds about the Self being a witness.

I had an inclination towards logic and philosophy and there was an appeal to seeing things in a bigger perspective ... You know we talk about how like there is witness consciousness there is those two birds and there is some part of you that just watching and I feel like that part of me is there. In high school, more than later, later, it got more complicated so that other bird got a little more lost...

The story is there is two birds who sits on the side. There is one bird sees everything and just sits and watches and the other bird, I forgot, who sees a worm and flies down and catches it and it gets lost or something. And so it engages in the world and activity and at some point it turns around. It's tired after its journeys and it turns around and sees the other bird just peacefully sitting there and it goes back to join. It's to represent the bird that sits and watches is the witness consciousness. So part of us is engaged in the world and part of us is just watching and watching is where the rest is and the peace is. We nurture the activity part but we need to nurture the watching the witness consciousness. That witness consciousness I remember being there in high school without understanding what it was so that emotional drama stresses were kind fun cause it was something that was happening.

Harry's narrative is completely focused on living the yogic path. He goes on to explain the difference his realization of being a witness to his mind's activities made to his life.

For some participants *mumukshatva* came after taking the Art of Living courses. Tsiuri:

Yea I think it (the course) really shifted my understanding of things like success and you know and even prosperity and... what it means to not necessarily get caught up the rat race that you know a lot of people find themselves in... and really Yeah, you know it was really understanding that yes, it was fine to you know go after prestigious ...you know whether it was degrees or roles or all these different things but you know a lot of them had you know associated with them a life style that was really unhealthy and very all consuming.

So I would say it helped me to understand the importance of finding work that sort of more in line with who I was a person. And at the same time making time for myself and you know making sure that I incorporate my daily practices and am

taking care of myself - on a day to day basis as opposed to more like when something goes wrong and then you know sorta...yea more Band-Aid solutions.

Mumukshatva is a state that is experienced by those who have meditated. In the excerpt below, Margo explains the idea of *mumukshatva* as it manifested in her life.

I was in a relationship where I was deeply in love and then the relationship ended and to me it seemed very painful and sudden the way it ended. And then in meditation and in yoga I could experience the same being in love even though that person was gone. I could still be in the state of intimacy and joy. That is the most soothing balm for heartache so that saved me at that time when I was falling into depression.

What Margo alluded to, the inner experience of love, is what in Yoga is referred to as spirituality. As explained in the section on Yoga, the Vedic tradition views the *Atman*, the witness consciousness as described by Harry earlier, as *sat-chit-ananda* (truth, consciousness and bliss). Sri Sri has explained that anything one does to uplift the human spirit is spirituality. The participants understand spirituality in this context.

A review of the interviews for the specific mention of the word spirituality showed that all participants, except one, had used the word. Even Phillip, who did not directly use the word spirituality, used terms such as ‘Self’ or ‘consciousness’: “the Self - that we are part of the same consciousness, the same light, we are all interconnected.” These terms are commonly used to convey ideas about going beyond the body-mind limitations and to include spirituality in the discourse on human identity. Among the yogis, Tara used the term spirituality twenty-four (24) times in different contexts. She talked about wanting to avoid conflict between her ‘spiritual side’ and her ‘regular side’ in her thinking or her social life. She explained why she was seeking a partner who was ‘fun and spiritual’ rather than ‘serious and spiritual’ or ‘spiritually heavy’. She referred to being on a “spiritual path” on eleven occasions; she also talked about having ‘spiritual values’, ‘spiritual inclinations’, ‘spiritual community’ or ‘spiritual people’.

Similarly, Jackie used the term spiritual ten times. She said, “I am a spiritual person” and she was seeking “spiritual knowledge.” She referred to the *Sudarshan Kriya* practice as a “spiritual experience” and experiencing a “spiritual state”. Referring to people in her life, she referred to a peer as having “deep spiritual grounding” and being attracted to a partner because “he had some spiritual depth”. She referred to Sri Sri as her “spiritual master” as did several others including Frank. Frank referred to the quality of relationships with close family as being “SATs” – spiritual aptitude tests that allows a yogi to gauge “how you’re doing spiritually”.

Luke and Leah used the word spirituality, ten and 6 times respectively, in the context of being on the ‘spiritual path’ since childhood and searching for a living guru. Wyle said he had a “deep desire to go deeper in the spiritual practices’ and as a child “I had quite a spiritual life”. He thought that the Art of Living courses was about “making people aware of the spiritual connection to divinity within ourselves”. He was searching to make a “spiritual connection with a guru” and seeking “spiritual knowledge” within the “spiritual traditions”. Similarly, Leah referred to herself as a “spiritual person” since childhood even though at that time “I didn’t know the word spiritual”. She spoke of being on a “spiritual path” and having “spiritual values”.

Others used the word spirituality in similar contexts, such as being on the “spiritual path” or reading books on spirituality. Hussein talked about balancing a “spiritual perspective” with science, reason and logic to understand ideas of *karma* and reincarnation. Margo spoke of spirituality as “uniting all the fragment of our being into one whole”. Samad saw Yoga as teaching one to “grow spiritually’ and therefore understood Yoga to be about spirituality and not a religion. Several of the participants went further into the analysis of Yoga as being different or similar to Abrahamic religions and those discussions are covered later in the section on adapting

to eastern philosophies and theories. In the lengthy excerpt that follows, Tara explained what being on the spiritual path meant to her and she echoes many of the thoughts discussed by others.

Being on the spiritual path means that all parts of myself and all parts of my life are being fed with this life and this energy and can connect together in a meaningful way it also means making hard decisions sometimes...My first boyfriend was not on the path he didn't want to it was like oh I have a choice between doing the things I need to for myself and for my growth cause that takes time or spending time with the person I'm in love with...and I was choosing the person I'm in love with and what we are sharing is lethargy and comfort and nothing else and I was not regular with my practice. But I was miserable because I wasn't focusing on growth and neither was he, so that's where it was like there were challenges in that sense. So that was when I had to choose - can this relationship move into something else and it wasn't and we tried and we were giving lots of opportunities for it but he didn't want that and I didn't want what it was.

So I had make that decision and it was those really hard decisions, those were challenges, especially when you're in love it's like heart-breaking but at the same time it was like no I'm made for something different this is not, I'm not healthy this way, not the right person, not the right path so looking for it to the challenge for it now is, the challenge now is being brave, keeping that balance between all the demands in my life, being able to make the hard decisions in my life when I need to... Being able to like keeping on the course that I've taken, keeping prioritizing my growth over my comfort. Or growth over my fear, things like that now.

But now I don't find that its challenge to stay on the path. I find that since taking that first decisions with my first boyfriend that was a huge turning point because then it was like I know what I'm looking for - my core is always maintained; my core is my soul... I'm taking care of what is good for my wellness and that extends into the people that I love ...and I'm kind of maintaining that core, I got my boundaries set up. I knew that was paramount and I wouldn't do anything that would compromise... For anything, like even for myself and knowing that the spiritual path is my backbone, is my central nervous system...

My challenges now are when I'm faced with pursuing. So right now I have this job, and my career has been good and I have been super disciplined with that. Now it's like a worldly goal - I wanna find a life partner that I fit well with but on all those fronts. I'm a complex multidimensional person trying to find someone that I can relate to in that sense too - where we share the spiritual path but enjoy interests, punk rocks, that I can be quirky and mischievous you know like those kinds of things.

Challenges of being on the path

In the forgoing section, I have applied Yoga theories and philosophy to discuss the youth experiences, as way to demonstrate an alternate method of analysis. However, as already alluded to by the yogis in their narratives thus far, my discussion of their experiences is not intended to imply that their lives were now free from stress, pain or problems. It is a commonly held misconception that people who are on the path of Yoga are running away from their problems rather than facing them and that they are reclusive and live isolated lives. The narratives have clearly painted a different picture. Their stories are about how they have used Yoga to better cope with stress of normal life and how to live with increased self-awareness, compassion and purpose. Frank:

I get along great with my family. I realize that my dad and I have a strange relationship. And we fight a lot (with him) and with my little brother and I...but it's only because I love them the most and my dad and I are identical. That's why we fight. But at least I'm aware of that and it's great and they're proud of me and like, I'm proud of them...

The purpose of my discussion is to shine a light on their growing self-awareness of the reasons for their mental turbulences – this awareness itself is part of Yoga. Hussein explained this further:

I think practicing yoga and meditation doesn't exclude you from life's challenges but it makes it easier to deal with it...whether its relationships where you have two people trying to get along with each other or whether it is work related or financial, all these things (problems) are always going to be there. And I think just understanding how (the knowledge), (and) the practices, does not necessarily make it easier. But, it just gives you a better perspective on dealing with them. So you don't feel - I mean it's like from a relationship perspective, you might get into a fight and hold a grudge for a week because somebody did something as miniscule as like not doing laundry or not doing dishes or stuff like that...A lot of couples just deal with ... but like you have those arguments but you can make up really quickly.

With me and my wife, sure we will fight but at the same time we won't hold on to it for long. Or even with careers...I've taking a lot of risks in the midst my careers... a lot of it is still exploratory and its sort of going with hunches and I've

landed in some really good situations and I've landed in some really bad situations. But I think fundamentally I don't get so caught up with the stress people get caught up with in their day to day life or their day to day work - where they are really political or insecure and then just that cycle of being stressed and then inefficient. So I think for me ... those downward spirals become minimized. So you have those bad experiences and you feel bad but whether it's at work or in relationships - it's like you bounce back a lot faster.

On Stress

As indicated in the discussion so far, the theme of being better able to handle stress that was repeated by all of the yogis and two questions are directly ask about stress. However, as explained in the section on key concepts, the concept of stress in *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, as in other Yoga related texts, is in context of an unsettled or disturbed mind. For example, the *Eight Limbs of Yoga* or the *Four Pillars of Knowledge* facilitate a calm, focused and alert mind that can experience the Self. It is in the context of this calm and centered mind that the participants spoke about stress. Therefore, in a way, this entire chapter is about handling stress. At the same time, a word search on the word "stress" in the interviews showed a range of frequency of use: six participants used the word from 1- 4 times during the interview, 2 people used it 5-7 times and 5 people used it between 9-12 times. I provide below, three excerpts from participant who used the word stress more often. For example, Tsiuri reflects on the changes she sees in how she handles stress now compared to when was in college, before she was introduced to Yoga.

I think I was overwhelmed. Because I was always academic and perfectionist and then when I went to university things changed so I would have, I remember this one period of time I just wouldn't go to class for a week cause I felt like it was so overwhelming and I also I would use food, so I would overeat. So I think withdrawing and using food to manage my stress was what I was doing...I think my values are the same, my level of stress and anxiety have gone down.

In another explanation, Margo, responds to the question about the one thing that helps her to handle stress of daily life and spoke about Yoga as holistic living:

Well, actually, my husband I always go back to basics whenever we get stressed out in the house. I mean it's become so obvious now that we have a

toddler. It's really none of the major teachings or advance techniques. It just, you know, there is a simplicity to the yoga tradition, and also to the knowledge that comes with yoga, that just shows a harmony with life. And I feel that we get stressed when we are out of harmony with nature and when we are in harmony the stress melts away. And so for us that translates to going to sleep early, and waking up with the sun, doing some meditation at quiet times during the day when it comes naturally, eating natural food, organic foods, at the right times of the day. Just taking the right balance of rest and activity which is such a foundational rich teaching in Yoga. So, it can be so complex yet so simple and when we attend to that, then our stress goes away.

A third example is from Phillip when he answered a question about how Yoga knowledge had affected his relationship with others at home, work and community.

Work - huge. My career path is dramatically influenced by my practice. Interviews - so feeling comfortable with the person during the interview and connecting with the person on an interview sells it. That's a huge thing. Not getting stressed preparing for an interview. Being more focused at work - concentrated. Not getting stuck or not getting stressed out when huge challenges come and thinking positively how to find a solution. Supporting people in the working environment and finding them ways to be less stressed whether it's through just company or offering stress management workshops...And honestly the job hunt is a very stressful thing. When you have a job you get so many job offers and when you don't have a job you don't. I think this happens because we are so much more stressed when we are looking for work we don't attract work.

Frank's answer to the question about what are the best ways for youth to handle stress was quite different:

Calm your mind down. Breathe and meditate. Breathe and Meditate. Sex. I mean, if I'm going to be, I mean this a truthful interview right? I would do breathing and meditation, sex, masturbation and spending time with Guruji. In reverse. In reverse. Guruji is the best and then the other four. I mean, if this going to be a truthful interview. But I also find that people get so stressed out about their practices that they cause so much stress. I gotta meditate. I gotta mediate. There is also a joy to life. From minute to minute that is lost. Cause mediation is supposed to get you to a point where its life I don't even need to meditate because I am. I am the consciousness I'm just one. Then you just go to meditate because that is what you're doing with the consciousness.

I end this section with a long quote from Margo, who has been practicing meditation since she was very young and was educated on Yoga since her childhood. In her excerpt, she reflects on how meditation and Yoga knowledge helped her overcome a broken relationship. She then

moves on to narrate the impact of meditation on her life and describes the ways in which meditation brings the different aspects of her life together, through increased intuition and self-awareness.

I think the worst part of it would've been the first year and during the day I was in so much depression I didn't want to move; I didn't want to eat. You know it was a very intense classic bad scenario that a lot of people go through.... I did not feel good during the day but I had these windows of relief – (similar to) where someone might go and drink alcohol to get really drunk or get super high where they can't feel the pain... A few times a day I could go deeply into my own practice of meditation and knowledge.

At that time, I was reading *Yoga Vasistha* every day...It was so deeply relieving that it brought so much joy ... (realizing) everything is so fleeting in life. And there is something about when I would sit and think logically: I've got pull myself out of this slump anyways, I have my life ahead of me and relationships change and so on and so forth. Everyone has break-ups and they move on and I'll be happy in the future. It didn't work for me. It didn't do much for me. But in the space of doing the practice and meditating and then opening *Yoga Vasistha*. Reading that text - the effect is so much deeper and so much more profound that, for the time that I am reading those pages, nothing else exists except this truth. So I am free. Free from all the things that cause pain. To read like that and to feel free from all the things that I want. My wish, that I could be in a relationship, that I could be happy, to just sink into meditation and feel a different kind of total intimacy. I would just open my eyes and feel so refreshed. Like I could go on and handle anything...

Since that time, as I got older, I went through more painful things, more painful experiences in my life and each time I felt, 'I can take this and I can take more as long as I remember who I am'. Yeah, it's like a process of refinement about life throughout my life - that I think I know and I discover some other facet about myself because I'm going deep within myself and then I realized that I want this to be a part of my life too. Like that happened with my interest with nature and cooking and gardening... and taking care of the home in a more traditional way. I had these moments of inspiration...these moments of clarity in meditation where I know myself. And then it come into full expression into my life...Instead of trying lots of things, trying lots of hobbies and seeing what I like. I mean that happens naturally in the course of life but instead of looking for things that I find amusing, that I know myself deeper and deeper.

Through more experiences of meditation and *samadhi* I know something else about myself and I start moving toward that direction in my activity. The more I do that, the more I feel fulfilled and feel oh this is an important part of me. And teaching - being involved in the education system and teaching in the university was just as much a part of that as realizing that I like to go camping as much as

possible and I like to cook food every day and spend time quietly in my kitchen for my friends and family. Those are all part of myself that came out in meditation rather than trial and error in the outside world because like the more the I'm in the rest of meditation cause, the more the activity in my life is like efficient, clear and not just jumping trial and experiment in life.

While the above discussion has specifically looked at the participants' discussion of stress, the issue of stress underlies almost the entire narrative of the participants of this study and stress has therefore been part of discussion in this entire chapter.

On the role of the Guru on the path of Yoga

In the section on the third pillar of knowledge, the Six Wealths, I discussed *shraddha* or faith as one of the six wealths. As mentioned earlier, Sri Sri has defined three areas of faith that a yogi needs: faith in oneself, faith in the yogic practices and faith in the guru. The earlier sections have demonstrated the participants' faith in themselves and the benefits of the yogic practices. This section covers the participants' discussion about their faith in the guru. Every participant spoke about having a personal relationship with Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the founder of Art of Living programs, as their Guru.

I felt like he was the walking Bible. Like I had seen him originally and that's how I started in February 2002. But when I saw him in February 2003, I felt there is a point to life ... there is a depth and love to all this that I was missing. Then I did four advanced courses in silence. Then I went to AA for three months, then, I went over to India in 2004 and lived there for 6 months. That's when I got sober for the first time. - Frank

In earlier sections, I have discussed the reasons why Yoga and related knowledges are best learnt, not from books, but directly from a realized guru who embodies grace and knowledge. In the oral tradition of Yoga, information becomes knowledge when it received in the intimate guru and disciple relationship. In the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, in the section about the different techniques that can be used to still the mind. In addition, Patanjali spoke about the guru in the context of *dharana* (gaining a one-pointed focus) as one type of meditation. Patanjali states that

“by contemplating on enlightened sages who are free from desires and attachments, calm and tranquil or by contemplating divine objects” the mind can be ‘calm and benevolent’. (PYS, 1.37, Iyengar, 2014, p. 83-4). Iyengar explained this further: “If a *sadhaka* (spiritual seeker) reflects on the serene, pure state of such divine persons and emulates their practices, he gains confidence, attains stability and develops a desireless state of mind” (Iyengar, 2014, p. 84). Therefore, faith in the guru is very much valued in the path of Yoga.

The term ‘guru’, while now wide used in English language, is a Sanskrit ‘non-translatable’ word, which has a much more nuanced meaning than those applied loosely in the west to a teacher or expert. As the discussion below will show, all the participants speak about being inspired by Sri Sri as their Guru. However, they provide very different descriptions of what having a guru meant for each of them and their different viewpoints are examples of what the term ‘guru’ gestures to – from just being in his presence or being able to ask personal questions. I begin with what Frank, a full time volunteer teacher with the foundation, commented because he speaks of many of the negative stereotypes in the west about gurus; he also talked about why a guru is needed on one is on the path of Yoga.

And then the spiritual master... I hate the word master. Cause it feels like a dog and a master. I think it might have a different meaning in Hindi or Sanskrit...I mean, it's the weirdest thing in the world it's like...I don't want to have to explain... cause it's so annoying to have to explain why you have a Guru. But at the same time it's like it's the most incredible thing ever. You have a glimpse of someone who is truly happy and unconditional love and it's amazing. But yea, it's definitely different. I mean it's not normal in this (western society) ...and like that's what my friend asked me: Why you follow the little man in robes and beard around the world? And it's just like - I was always angry all the time and now I'm not. So that's pretty worth it. I mean Guruji is amazing. I mean he gets it and he's cool. But he has to look that way cause that's how Gurus look. It would be funny if he was in a suit - with short hair and no beard... It's hard to explain... I don't try anymore. I used to try and explain and there is nothing to explain. It's just nice. It matters a lot to me. Its matters a lot to me because I want others to have this experience with Guruji like I have.

Harry's also spoke about why a guru is needed on the spiritual path in the Yoga tradition. When asked about the idea of having a guru, he responded as follows:

Yea, you know, well, that is difficult to explain. What I tell people is that the word "Guru" means teacher and Guru means remover of darkness, remover of ignorance. Guru is one who can show you something that you have never seen before. Someone that teaches. So you have math guru, music guru and art guru you name it. And so a *Sadguru* is one who can teach you about the Self. It's nothing, so you know, crazy.

We have teachers for everything in life. So something so subtle and so powerful as going inwards and complicated and so difficult should definitely needs a teacher, more than anything else...And I would like you know, imagine you were interested in geometry but you didn't want anyone to teach you anything you just wanted to do it all on your own. How would you? How would you do all the geometry. Even if you happen to do everything perfectly how will you make up for a thousand years of geometry. Like how you are dealing with so many geniuses who came before you, you can learn so much from someone who has done all the work. And you know there is no good reason to do it on your own. It's much harder you are so much more prone to make big mistakes. So that's what a guru is there for, to give you guidance and guide you a long. That's it. Still, you know you still have plenty of work to do on your own.

Similarly, James saw guru as teacher:

Having a spiritual teacher - it's almost like having a teacher for a school subject but keeping that teacher for a long time like you know you find a teacher and rather than just have them for a semester. And you have that teacher and you learn under their wing for lifetimes.

The ways in which the participants responded to the idea of a guru was explained in different ways because none the participants were not from India and only one of them had been brought up with the idea of a guru. In the excerpt below Tsiuri hints at the conflicts she has worked through with her family and with her religious beliefs about having a Guru:

It happened very seamlessly for me. I never put much thought on it. Like when they presented Guruji on the course I was like Oh! That's great. So I actually felt privileged that I could experience the Guru-devote relationship - it may be quite common in the east. It means to me like how we have a teacher for so many different things, like you know in university. I looked up to my professor for certain subjects or whatever expertise you want to go into you look for someone who has reached or who has gone a little further than you. So for me it means that we have a guide and teacher and an ever personal guide for some of life's very

personal questions. Yea, I integrate it very well, but I mean of course, my mother has a bit of an issue. But it hasn't taken me away from my religion. It has enhanced my understanding of religion in general.

Margo, whose parents were practicing TM since before her birth, was the only participant who was already familiar with the idea of a guru. Therefore, her explanation of what is a guru was more detailed and nuanced.

Well, you know in Yoga...knowledge came through different sources. You have the written text... and then you have oral text and commentaries and the living tradition which is the masters. They are all honored but the guru is honored the highest. Because he understands all the other sources and can give the knowledge in a new way. And so, to find a true guru, an enlightened guru who takes you as a devotee and disciple as such, there can be no greater blessing in a birth, for a human birth, for any life. That is considered the greatest blessing and I feel I have experience that that is so. And I can't even really express like how lucky I feel to not only have that but to have been brought as a child in suburban (Ontario town) and to have found a Guru who took me as a disciple and devotee, even though he hardly knew my parents. He knew my father but it was not like I came from a family who studied under his tradition or anything. I was a just some little Canadian girl who loved this man, this Guru and when I saw him I wanted to be around him and wanted to sit and listen to him speak. And he took me and I feel like he raised me as my parents did. But he was a third parent to me and I had guidance in my life in, you know, practical choices in my life. Some guidance and deep guidance when I faced any kind of hurdle and encouragement every time something great happens.

I feel, you know, as you get older you may respect your parents more. But you also discover that when you used to think that they knew everything they're just struggling along just as you are. But having a Guru as another parent to me, guiding me and caring for me and teaching me this old traditional knowledge that it used to be that you had to spend a life time studying to get a glimpse of some of the things he has taught me and realize that as I get older this is a great blessing. The greatest. I think that I would feel like I'm just floating in an abyss without that rock. Like, when you always have a home to go back to or family member that you can go in and check in with and some wisdom comes from there and some strength - I always have that. Yeah ... like I don't want say coming back to a parent because like, we have funny relationships with our parents but something about, you know, when a family has lived on the same state for many generations and a child goes back there or you go to college whatever. In your life you feel lost. You go back to that home, something about that place that land where you ancestors have been, it given so much strength. That's how I feel. I have this Guru that gives that. In addition to practical lessons about life and the knowledge of yoga and meditation and techniques that help me and so on and so forth, there's something very

powerful and strong that I always have something to go back to and ground myself.

The idea of the guru as a source of comfort during difficult times was a reoccurring theme.

Tsiuri's story about the comfort Sri Sri provided her when she was faced with the trauma of the sudden death of her father gives a glimpse of what Margo alludes to above.

My father's death was very sudden and you know it was very difficult. I was at work when I got the call. And then we had to rush to New York and you know every family that loses someone has to deal with this. Then you have to plan a funeral. You barely feel like getting out of bed. You know two weeks after my father passed, Guruji was the Boone ashram so we went to see him. We told him and it was a great source of comfort. Even during the *satsang* (evening program) at that time, the topic of death came up three or four nights and he spoke about death.

A similar story of getting support from Sri Sri regarding a loss was told by Jackie:

My husband took the decision to leave me, the marriage needed to end. But he took it (the decision) when he was not well – so, like, you know, when someone has paranoia, delusions, you assume that it will probably undo itself. But then, as he continued to improve and become more stable, he still wanted to leave. I was assuming that eventually it was going to be reversed and something would happen and there would be some clarity and we would discuss it together. I don't know what I was thinking but I ended up waiting a long time... I couldn't let go and I knew it needed to be over and I knew I couldn't let go. But then it wasn't until I spoke to Guruji ...But when I asked him and I said, "I need to leave him" even though my husband had already left me... and he said, "You know you do". Whatever you know is behind his words and ...whatever that connection is that we have there - those words were the things that pushed me forward. If I didn't have a Guru I don't know how I would have gotten out of that. I was surviving, but I was stuck and just to have this person say that - you know, those words. Like how many times had I told myself, like my parents, whoever the people that I love and respect - they could tell. But it's something different when your spiritual master says those words. And he said, "When was the last time you were India?" And then he was like, "Oh it's been too long... and I will be there for these dates" and you know, I really needed it. I really needed that time (in India) to heal and he just prescribed for me exactly what I needed.

Others like Phillip talked about the "presence of a master" making a difference:

That's a very big question. I think it's very important because I see people who don't have a master and they are on the path of yoga. They benefit a lot but the depth is missing. I feel a master allows me to go so much further... and there is (are) so many explanations and so many levels. At one level, I can explain, is that: he is somebody who has gone through it -who has experience, who is what

maybe I'm aspiring to be - who completely (has) no cravings or aversions... So learning from and listening and doing at that stage for me accelerates the learning process so much more. And there is the presence of a master. The physical presence of a master - that is very positive and uplifting. Having a guide in my life that - not dictates what I do - but guides and shows what will allow, what is better. I think it's important to have a master. I don't think it's bad not to have one at all but I think it really makes everything so much easier. So much simpler.

However, for many of the participants, the idea of guru was more challenging. For example, many of the participants who were Muslim found accepting a guru difficult at first and each of the two Muslims provide quite different stories about the idea of having a guru. Farah, a Muslim woman, explained her journey as follows:

Culturally, No. That doesn't happen at all in Islam. So at the beginning it was hard for me. Actually because coming from activist point of view, it was like, Oh, I'm supposed to submit to a man? Like what? ... We were just in California and he (Sri Sri) happened to be there at the same time and I got to see him on my birthday and it's just like, you know, this thing where being in the same room as him is enough for me. I'm not one of those people where I have a lot of questions...I do want to see him once or twice a year. He is someone I really look up to ... I see him as my guide. I see him as my friend ... and sometimes I can picture, like when I'm having some problem, I can imagine myself saying the problem to him and him being like, really? Cause you know it always comes down to, the only thing that he ever says to me is: Are you happy? I used to always be like, Ugh. How come he doesn't say other things? That's just what he says to everybody. And at one point, I was like, that's a really profound question and that's actually the only question. Not, do you have children? Or do you have a good job? Or how much money are you making? Or, all these things that we think are the questions. But he just asks, Are you happy? And that's it. That's all it comes down to in this life and, you know, he's just, he's like a force in our life...

Hussein, another Muslim yogi explains his struggles with the idea of having a guru and the intimate personal relationship that it signifies to him:

So, it was obviously something that I struggled with in the beginning and it took me quite a bit of time to develop that devotional element or that relationship I now have with Guruji. I think a lot of it was sort of understanding that in the east the tradition of a teacher and student is much different than to what it is perceived here. And just the sort of the guidance and love and support I receive from him as a person - it's been a very uplifting and intimate experience...I might not...it was understanding that everyone's relationship to their teacher is very different and you go to the ashram and you see people how people come from that walk of life or that faith - how they react.

And then for me it's different. I think it's coming to an understanding that, that's okay. But at the same time, it's been very beautiful...I think my very first Silence course, you know, it's something I really struggled with the insight I had was - it was like - this is someone who is has completely mastered the art of being... and you know, it's kind of like learning piano from Mozart. Yea so it's having an instructor who is not just the best but the very best in the world and so it's a privilege, I'd say.

Similarly, Samad, a Christian from the Middle East explained in detail the challenges, both personal and religious, he has faced in taking Sri Sri as his Guru:

So the concept of Guru and for me - I learned through the Art of Living...I think at the beginning there was a bit of resistance...Guru is a guide, is someone leads you on the spiritual path and he wants to elevate you, to bring you to his level - basically that...Well you have to be very careful and avoid...they know it through the media, through other sources that he is referred to as a Guru. But I avoid saying that because the word Guru has a bad connotation in Middle East and even more in Islam...because over there it's Mohammed who is the only prophet...

James narrative may reflect a typical skeptical western response to the idea of a guru:

Yeah, it was it was weird at first, even when I came here for the first time to the Art of Living Centre... and I took a long silence course at the time - still kinda skeptical slightly inside. You know like, who is this guy in white clothes and long hair and beard? And you know his Kriya works really well. But what is he trying to say to me? How can I trust it? It was very interesting at first. But you know, talking to me, he is just like anyone else. He is just the most lovable person ever. Like I had no idea why I was so skeptical or had this kinda put a barrier between myself and him or other the other instructors - he's just like me or just like you.

Tara and her brother Harry were more open to the idea of having a guru because while their father was Jewish, their mother was a Hindu and a Hatha Yoga teacher. In the excerpt below, Tara tells the story about how her mother took Sri Sri to be their family guru when she was a teenager.

We went for lunch (at a restaurant) and (there) she (her mother) saw his (Sri Sri's) picture in this Indian newspaper. She just felt drawn to him, she didn't know why. She was just like. "I have to meet him. I don't know. I don't care. I just have to meet him." ...So she just went for a long weekend (to the ashram to see him) ...and she was like. "Oh my god! This is the most amazing thing like we have." She had done yoga for so many years, she was teaching yoga and she was like,

“This is the most profound experience I have ever had in my life, there is nothing like it and Sri Sri is amazing”. And she was like “He is our Guru now”.

Many of the participants were seeking the guidance of a guru. In the excerpt below, Leah talked searching for a guru for many years; she had been practicing meditation on her own for many years and felt she had hit a wall in her progress on her spiritual path. After she took the *YES! Plus Course* she came to know of Sri Sri as a guru but she was doubtful if he was a real guru and was looking for a sign that he was her guru.

I was looking for a sign that he was my Guru. Like I was waiting to see what happens at first.....it was like, I don't know, he looks like a regular guy but then I, the first time we had eye contact, I had this, I saw this light go from his head to my head, and that was my sign.... because I wanted a sign, I guess, I never had anything like that since, but it was like, to me, because I had read all of those new age books about light and crystals and everything that I, like, that was going to be affirming to me. Like ok, you know, that's my sign (laughs), so that's all I needed really.

What's it like to have a Master? Having a personal relationship with someone who is your ultimate mentor and who loves you unconditionally, you know all of us in life, we can make mistakes and people around us, hurt us or whatever. But your Guru is like that person whose love is completely unconditional and is an example for you about how to live your life - a role model that you can follow. You know, over the years I was always looking for signs that maybe he was, he was fake or he was corrupt or something like that and I could never find it and that's why I was fully able to just surrender and embrace him into my life. Cause you know, I used all my intellect and scrutiny and tried to, you know, be as critical as possible of him and I had absolutely you know...Instead I would be blown away by how exceptional he was, and how he handled things, and I've never seen another human being in my life ever able to handle things as skillfully and with so much love, and understanding as he does. And anyone who is capable of doing that is, that's the ultimate, you know, how can you aspire to greatness if you don't have an example of it in front of you, but that it's also about a personal relationship that is also very personal. It's not just a teacher, but like a close, a close dear friend, that you can tell your secrets to andso it's much more than just a teacher.

Luke, who had been searching for a guru for many years, explained further:

I asked my teacher if Guruji was accessible because I was looking for a living Guru that I could go to the ashram, become a monk and study with directly and Bharti said a little white lie and said, yes, if you're sincere enough he's accessible...I met Guruji a couple months later and that was the end of searching for me. For me it (having a Guru) means everything. He's my best friend and it

means that I have a constant love in my life - if whatever I'm feeling. If I'm happy I can direct it to him, If I'm sad I can direct it towards him and I know that if I really ever need help that he will be there. That he will take care of me. I always have the ashram to go to him. Like, it's his responsibility to take care of me and to know there is someone out there that is willing to go even beyond your immediate family for you is unbelievable. Because life can feel lonely. It can feel daunting and to know that someone cares for you because you are you, no matter what you do that is unbelievable. It gives you a perfect example to live up to for other people as well. So for me it means that I have my best friend, my lover, my family all wrapped in one person.

As the above discussion has shown, all the participants have clearly articulated that they value the role of a personal Guru on the path of Yoga. However, they have also spoken about the challenges that they have face in speaking publicly about their having a guru when they talk about being on a spiritual path. Frank gestured to this challenge:

I think people dig meditation now. I think people like it now. I don't think its... it's a stigma. I think the thing that stigma is Guruji. There is Guru. The component of someone controlling you, I think that's what the fear is - (people think) you're brainwashed...People ask me about meditation all the time but the Guru is the thing that people are really freaked out by.

It again speaks to the negative stereotypes that persist in the west, and to an extent in the east, about gurus. In the following excerpt Frank also raised the challenge that he, along with the other participants, face in being publicly open about having a Guru.

Like, in Art of Living - they present Guruji as this thing... always to hide him and present him... It's just such bullshit. Only reason I'm here and most people are here, is because of Guruji. So I don't know why we hide him. No idea. I try my best not to. I mean I put him all over my Facebook. I put videos up and talk about him. It's true but there is also a certain way that he needs to be presented which is also you know he can't just walk in here and sit with us. That's not appropriate but if you don't know anything about that, it's like. He is just a man but he is also not just a man. So he needs to like sit. He doesn't sit at the same level of us or there has to be protocol. I don't know. I never thought about that before.

In the above excerpt Frank has gestured to a larger organizational issue, not just a personal issue about how to speak about Sri Sri or present Sri Sri in the programs. Luke expressed similar thoughts about how being open and authentic about having a Guru is important to him.

I'm honest about my relationship with my Guru and connection and what it offers. I think a lot of the time what people bring to the table isn't truth when they're talking about their relationship with Guruji and people can feel it and that's what makes people uncomfortable about Gurus. People try to hide what it actually is because it feels like we are trying to hide something. So if you are open about it like even if they don't accept it, at least you are presenting the truth.

In addition, Margo spoke about some of the challenges she faces with regard to having a Guru or being on the spiritual path.

And so I get very little negative feedback. I can feel when people either think I'm crazy or doing something stupid or particularly, if they find out I have a Guru. That's where the biggest negative emotion comes from. Or I can tell they think: Am I being a sheep? Do they even believe there are true Guru? Do I have some business man? Am I weak willed? There are a lot of misconceptions. That's one, that the most extreme negative I get. But people don't generally have the guts to say it to my face. They are polite but I feel I can tell from the way they are interacting with me that's how they are feeling. Otherwise people will say "Well, that's cool, but that's not really for me". But I know underneath, what they feel is, "That's crazy". But that's fine. I get a lot of people who are very interested and want to know more about what I do. That's actually a harder situation. It's hard to tell someone an entire lifestyle and entire holistic path. To give them a glimpse of what that means that I meditate. Then people don't understand that it's not about what I experience in the 20 minutes that I sit down and do meditation practice. That it's in my life.

Reflections on ontological and epistemological differences

In Chapter 5 on decolonizing methodologies I referred to Haig-Brown and others' discussion about how those who do not come from the Yoga culture can approach the "impossible knowledge" and the "border clashes" that occur due to the many ontological and epistemological differences. Overall, the impression from the narratives of the participants was that they had mostly used words such as "different" but as in many of the excerpts so far show, some had used the word "weird" to describe some of their initial impressions or reactions to the ideas they came across in the courses. The previous discussion, about the challenges of having a spiritual Guru, is part of a larger discussion about the differences between the eastern and western worldviews that the participants reflected on. The participants found the question about

reconciling the epistemological and ontological differences between eastern traditions and Judeo-Christian religions provocative and they gave lengthy and complex responses. For example, Frank explained how accepting some of these ideas was a process that took time. His narrative is an example of why non-practitioners, without experiential knowledge, may find it difficult to appreciate the path of Yoga.

So everything was cool. Everything makes sense except for reincarnation. That was the one I didn't believe. I couldn't understand... I didn't feel it. It wasn't authentic. Then I did the eternity process and did all those things. Nothing, nothing, nothing. It just doesn't make sense. It seems like a load of crap to be quite honest. Then I did the *Shakti Kriya* and I saw all my... I have always felt connected to black people and hated First Nations Indians. Then in this process I saw was black in my last life and I got killed in the 60s in the States ...And then I was a First Nations (man). I kill. I was a warrior. I killed so many people and I loved. Part of the thing is I have so much anger but I also have so much aggression. Cause I just want to kill things all the time and then I saw this vision of like, I killed. I slaughtered people for life times. And then at the end of it, the last one I was this old man in the battlefield and I was just crying for the death of my people, because they were dead. Not just dead they were dead but, the culture was dead. They were lost forever and I have always hated First Nations people because of that. Knowing that they were now so pathetic - compared to how beautiful they were before. And then when I did this process, then it made sense - I was like "Oh, that's why I'm so angry about it." And that's why I believe in reincarnation. I just know it's true.

Since all participants, except one, were unfamiliar with Yogic knowledge prior to taking the *YES! Plus Course*, they narrated diverse perspectives they came from. Farah, a Canadian-born Muslim, narrates the challenge she faced at home in practicing Yoga:

When I was living at home with my mom, it was a little awkward cause I was like doing these weird breathing things in my room and she was like, "What is this?" So that was one challenge I had to get over. But now I'm like my own person. There are not any challenges to doing the practices and to be on the path.

Several participants who were Christian mentioned that they found many similarities between the Vedic and Christian religion. Several participants asserted that there were many sacred scriptures that are still held by the Vatican and that much about Christianity is still unknown or been kept secret. Samad, a Christian who emigrated from the Arab region as college student also faced

challenges in working through the different eastern ideas. In this lengthy excerpt, he gives many examples of finding links, making choices or compromises when his beliefs were challenged.

I love this question. Well there is not much difference between the Christian tradition and the Hindu or Vedic tradition... The main thing is about reincarnation, like the three ...Abrahamic religions, they don't recognize reincarnation... How can I reconcile with that? It made sense little by little. You can't reach ... enlightenment in one lifetime, it is difficult...It's also, whenever you do good deeds you are rewarded. Good deeds, honoring the divine, being devoted to the divine. By definition if you're a Christian you believe in Jesus of course yea...Like for me, I can say that Guruji upholds the Vedic tradition.

There is a lot of similarity with what he says and what is written in the gospel. So for me it wasn't difficult to accept that. Especially because he quotes Jesus a lot ...*Karma*, just realizing that people are born and they are not as fortunate as others. It could mean God is not fair if it's their first and last birth. So that's why I believe that *karma* is something that was there... It is something that we are carrying on from our previous life. Yeah, so it was logical - like someone born with disease for example. Like for me I was saying, that how can God be fair and all that so. So that's for me the reconciliation was there...Saint and Guru are two different things. Well Jesus is like a Guru. He is Guru and he was referred to as Rabbi which means master, teacher. And same thing in Hebrew its Rabbi, yeah, teacher and also it has another meaning, Rabbi which means God.

The word Guru in the middle east has a very bad connotation because its associated with people who are robbing you of your freedom... I think it's the media. And also unfortunately the three Abrahamic (religions), I would say the people who adopt the Abrahamic religion especially I would say the Christians, they are not open to other religions...They don't know that Hinduism - it was revealed through Krishna, through Adi Shankara. So they think that over there, there are so many Gods. (Its) lack of education...

Samad explained the areas where he did not see a conflict and the areas where he faced challenges. For example, with reference to many of the knowledge points taught in the course about the nature of the mind, he did not see conflict with his Christian tradition.

For me, to understand and to accept the notions, it wasn't difficult. Because I am coming from Christian tradition and, having been brought by parents who, in a way, were promoting, somehow, these knowledge points. It was very easy to accept them...At the same time, (on) top of my studies (for graduate school), I was taking some Bible course. The fact that I was practicing the Kriya, I was able to read and understand in a much more depth the scripture than I used to before. And that for me was a major thing.

He then talked at length about the challenges he faced from his peers, friends and family in taking Sri Sri as his Guru and following the path of Yoga:

I have to be careful with that but I also lost a lot of friends because of that. People who were - the most difficult thing is to deal with people who are too attached to their religion. I had a girlfriend at this time and she was a very strong Catholic and she couldn't accept...it was about the faith. I said to myself: I don't want to impose that on anyone and she wanted to speed things up (to marry) and because of the fact that I didn't see any opening on her side or there was an opening. There was a lot of effort but no sufficient to say okay, we will be a harmonious couple for the rest of our life. That might not have been the case. But also among friends, when people knew I was into Yoga, they didn't, they also were very faithful to their religion - they couldn't accept easily some concept of Yoga. And they feel that Yoga is quite linked to the Hinduism and whenever we say Yoga, we associate it with guru. So and the whole concept, yeah, so for them it's like they are betraying their God, their religions. It was tough, even with my parents, my family. It's a taboo. Now more and more, I don't feel the need to hide. But, it's a taboo. Yea, you don't speak about it. It's a very difficult thing to accept for them. This is one of the reason I didn't go full time (as an Art of Living teacher). Because of my parents. That was the main reason and it's still so.

Living in Canada, away from his parents in the Middle East has allowed Samad to follow the path of Yoga, with a Guru. However, as the above excerpt shows, it is a path his family eschews. Further, he narrated that his sister decided to take the course because she said "I want to understand you"; she did not continue the practices but it meant a lot for Samad. On the other hand, Luke, a full time volunteer of the Art of Living, told a different story about how his family, who are practicing Catholics, had accepted his chosen path of Yoga

My mother and I took the course together at the same time uh my mother has pretty intense spiritual experiences all her life, so the same with my grandfather. So there seems to be a tradition of that in our family...Guruji came to Halifax and I brought my father to see him and when he walked into the room my father said he felt his presence just fill the entire room. And so he took the course after that with my sister. ...My father has done *Shakti Kriya*. He still lives his normal life style. He still eats meat and drinks alcohol but he practices *Sudarshan Kriya* semi-regularly and does advance courses once in a while. And they're all aware that there is something special about Guruji but no one is as dedicated as I am. I'm the only one who does everything regularly but they all have an appreciation for it...My grandfather is a devout Catholic but when he saw a picture of Guruji on my laptop he said, Oh, there is our friend. So, I'm like, yea, "He is kind of like Jesus and he's like, "That's what I thought". So my family

understands...(but) they don't understand why I put that above everything in my life. I think they are scared because I haven't figured out a career for myself and I don't have a mass amount of wealth and they are afraid that at some point when I'm old and need to retire that will be without because my mother is currently struggling with that so they worry for my future but they understand what I'm doing.

I'm not so worried about my future. And my friends understand I have brought a few of them to do the course and like I continue to go to parties. When I quit drinking and I would be having just as good a time as they and people would ask me how I could quit drinking? Well, if I drank it would actually bring me down from my high because I'm experiencing a greater high. And they are like, what are you talking about? and I'm like, "God" and they are like, "Man I wish I could get high of God" and I'm like, "Well you can". But not a lot of them pursued that route.

In the excerpt below, Tara, whose mother was Hindu and father was Jewish, narrated how she was able to reconcile the differences between the two worldviews:

Okay, so of course growing up Hindu and Jewish... I had to think of those things early on too. Very different, very different and very the same, so this is the part where it is coming to the realization: Oh there is so many similarities, and the manifestations of those things are specific. Yeah, different histories but, you know I think, like when I was growing up to realizing: Oh okay, on one hand I'm in this Jewish school. And of course when you're in this homogenous single school of thought, it's like this is the way it is, this is the way to go. Yeah, it was rough and then it was like uh well there is always more than one way of looking of things...So the school was always like: There is a God who is omnipresent permeating everything but formless. And Hinduism on the surface has many gods, many forms, but like what I was learning is that both of them are about this all-encompassing divinity that existence is. But Hinduism emphasizes the form as a way of expressing those qualities of relating to god in way that's close and intimate. You have a relationship with Krishna, you have a relationship with *Durga Ma*, with *Shiva*. And Judaism emphasizes the formless and that's a way of relating to God in a way of ... you know like: Oh wow! the vastness, oh wow! the infinity you can't fathom. Yeah, both of them, Hinduism has that too. So both of them have that and it's just a different question of emphasis in terms of relationship but it's still divinity, it's still God. All those good things, like all those spiritual values are there in both. And then, they have a sense of, I mean like, cause and effect - that's always, they have that.

But I mean... Hinduism is reincarnation and it more that like, I believe in reincarnation. So that was in a way, so let's say in a bigger sense unifying spiritual values that both share and those that are different. It's either that something that I have a belief, that I have to choose between one or the other. Or I can see the strength in both - like you know or practice both. Both of them has teacher

traditions and wisdom traditions and both of them value learning and knowledge and spirituality...Judaism is more behavior based. It's more like do the right thing, take the right action. Less about I am born with this sin... I'm vegetarian so that both Kosher and vegetarianism... You know, it's like all these things that can be linked or lived simultaneously - not in conflict with each other. But yeah, I've been able to reconcile them. But things like reincarnation, I believe in reincarnation. I don't believe that there is just one life and that would be an example of where I had to choose between one of them.

I celebrate both. It's fantastic and I yeah, both cultures are like love family, love education, love closeness with others. You know the strong literary education traditions like there is, more of a tradition of masters in yoga, in Hinduism and those things, as a personal master, it exists in Judaism...there are stories of enlightened Rabbis who essentially serve as a master...But that is something we discovered later. But my dad's side is more conservative...but you know just the sense that wisdom is there from both sides is important and...I feel like I can be a good Jew, good Hindu and it's okay. Yea, at first it was like, "Huh, you have a Guru?" My dad had more of this image of in the 80s. Oh! Guru having a big honking car or like...you give your money and they get a big car. I was like, No! Guruji lives out of one suitcase that's it. I mean he has many homes but it's in the homes of people. It's like he travels to the meditation centers where he takes care of everybody and then the next meditation center and other people's homes. It's not like he has a luxury yacht, like it's a different thing. At first he was concerned about that but then he was like, Oh, this is different. Yeah, so for my mom side it was like Oh, Great! We have a Guru. And on my dad's side, it was resistant.

Margo, whose parents were practicing Transcendental Meditation before she was born, had no difficulty in reconciling with the ideas in eastern traditions. "These are all second nature to me. I was taught them as a child and often directly from the Guru which I find a very great blessing on my path in particular and they are second nature to me." At the same time, she faced challenges in her youth about being a Yoga practitioner:

I remember as a child - at that time yoga had not become prevalent in our society. It was still weird. It was still like a hippie thing to do and it was kind of lumped in with New Age practices and like, the integrity or the richness or the ancient quality of the yoga tradition was not recognized or honored. So that was very hard for me particularly going through high school - it may be a little earlier - was the toughest. But at some point in high school, I really embraced my identity. Like, I'm a very young person becoming a yoga teacher already - I think yoga is wonderful. I started teaching yoga classes to other kids in my classes. I had a fairly easy time. I was popular and well liked in high school and it was alright. But a little earlier, in middle school and high school there is a lot of insecurity personally, I was really shy and embarrassed and I didn't know what people would

think about me for being so involved in yoga and meditation. I was very focused from a young age I just wanted - I was like a sponge - I wanted the traditional knowledge. I wished that some of the courses that we have now put traditional knowledge into a really wonderful kid friendly manner were taught at that time.

Margo's situation was unique because her parents were practicing Yogis when she was born and she grew up with Yoga. The majority of the participants were new to Yoga. As indicated in the above excerpts, many of the participants applied logic and reasoning when confronted with the ideas of *karma* and reincarnation. As Tsiuri explained:

I think the concept of *karma* makes sense to me. That how you can explain someone like a good person, let's say, "a good person" quote, unquote, going through difficult experience and then may be, quote, unquote "not so great person" enjoying the fruits of life. And actually it helps me because I think if something unpleasant happens to me in life well, you know, it came to me because it helps me take responsibility for something that happens in life instead of blaming and saying oh why? I mean it's not part of Christian religion, *karma*. But I think it makes sense...The divine self. Yea, you know, I'm fine with that. I like it.

In the excerpt below, Phillip, a Christian who grew up in the Middle East, explained the challenges he faced and how he reconciled the differences in worldviews:

So I never had thoughts about this because...before I was never subjected to Hinduism or Vedic knowledge or any of that. So I didn't have any judgment about it before. That has changed. But going through the courses and volunteering and being so involved and understanding and listening to the explanations about the real significance of this wisdom really is... And seeing the judgments people have on it and how people see, perceive worshiping idols and all that and misunderstandings about what Hinduism is allowed me to understand what it is really about. To me how I really see it: Yoga is for everybody and I see it doesn't have any connection with any religion...I don't see any conflict...I was going through the practices and connecting with people from Art of Living and understanding about yoga, I had some doubts at some point. Cause when you go to people's home you see all these deity photos and everything. And I asked questions and they explained. And I heard Sri Sri Ravi Shankar explain what the significance is but it was never a discomfort or an uncomfortable feeling being there.

The idea of divine self - it didn't resonate with me initially... resonate is not the right word. It didn't hit me when it was mentioned. It sounded weird but it never sunk in. It's like you saying a foreign word, divine self. But I don't even remember it when I took the course. There was no reaction, nothing. It was not like Oh what is divine self? Later, as I think I was practicing and hearing more about it,

the experience made me understand what it really is. The experience made understand that divine self is the connection that I have with the Self - that we are part of the same consciousness, the same light, we are all interconnected. That is what divinity is and not an understanding that divine and whatever god is. It's not really a concept - it's really everything. And that is my understanding of what Yoga is.

Karma is very complicated. I'm not, my, yea... it was a new concept. I learned about it from people. It's still mysterious to me. Of what I understand of it, first of all it does not have any conflict with my culture and religion. But what I understand is that...How is not a conflict? Before I answer it maybe I will tell you what my understanding of *karma* really is: that your actions influence your future actions and or your previous actions from your previous birth influence what you...That's really the simplistic explanation of *karma*.

But to me, I guess from my religion - I'm not attached to any specific concept or growing up with my religion. Its superficial. By doing yoga it allowed me to understand my religion in a more profound way. What is the real value of my religion and what was Jesus really preaching about. So that connected me with the depth of my religion. Before it was just a practice and I didn't really know why I was doing it and there was no experience with it. So then, that's how *karma* doesn't...I don't follow. I don't follow any specific rules in my religion. I follow it as a way to I don't know as a way to basically the common values, helping others and being good to people and whatever Jesus was preaching. I never even considered *karma* as compared to (what) Christianity teaches because I was not so well versed in Christianity or what are all the rules...I didn't study it. We went to church with family but we never really studied it. What I take from it are those values - I believe in that definitely.

Similarly, in the excerpt below, Hussein, a Muslim, explained how he reconciled the differences:

I was fortunate to grow up in a house where my older sister, for example, she started studying ...woman studies and world religions in university and so I was always had books lying around on different religions and different schools of thought and it really challenged us to think through our beliefs and our understanding, even though our parents would say otherwise...my sister really helped with broadening my perspective. So I think it was then that I started exploring outside the bounds of Islam ...seeing it as *a* way, not *the* way for me, and respecting it as a school of thought. And as I've been exploring these schools of thought or philosophies, I think a lot of it is sort of relating it back to just nature or what I think feels natural...not necessarily being tied to it, but trying to find a way to see what the seeing the intention was, when it came about and how people relate to it today...So what is *karma*? It is essentially every action has a reaction...So, boiling it down to its most basic fundamentals - understanding that you live in an interconnected world where nothing you do is devoid of consequences. And how those consequences sort of pile up, whether good or bad, that influence your outlook and your ability to handle life's challenges or life's

opportunities as they come about...So, *karma* is existence - do unto others as you would have them do to you and as this other good stuff.

In terms of reincarnation... I would say I would I have a good blend of seeing things from a scientific and spiritual perspective and you know if nothing in this existence - if all this energy recycled anyway and you know there is no energy that goes to waste or ceases to exist, then you know nature recycles itself. It seems to me like, a more natural than to have a more linear perspective. Whether it's your Brahmin traditions or currently I mean science is neutral on it - but thinking that you just get born and then you die and so what happens before or after is sort of outside the bounds of human knowledge. You know, through the Art of Living or these experiences we also have experiences of a deeper self and so you relate to yourself physically and then you also relate to something that is much bigger than you are. I think, there are several ideas. As they become relevant to me, as they come in experiences only then do I actually find a way to use them to deepen my understanding. I wouldn't really say I'm a dogmatic person. I sort of take things as they come.

Jackie, a Catholic by birth was stumped when she was filling the participant information form and she had to answer the question whether she was practicing her religion. Like many of the participants, it appeared that she had not seriously contemplated on this question before.

Reflecting on the differences between the Catholic religion and the path of Yoga, she explained that the idea of a divine self (versus the Abrahamic sinner self) rang true for her. Speaking of her love for Jesus, she expressed, as many others did, that Jesus' message was probably similar to those in Yoga but suggested that organized church had changed or misrepresented Jesus' words.

She then went on to interpret biblical events in the context of *dharmic* beliefs:

Karma, *karma* is brilliant. *Karma* and reincarnation I think those two concepts are in fact, I don't think I ever understood. I never understood the crucifixion and how Jesus crucifying himself be the method that we became saved. To me, that made no sense and there was nothing in Christianity that explained it to me. And it wasn't until that I understood karma that you know for whatever reason and now I look at Jesus and I look at him as an enlightened master. That's how I understand him...It's really helped me understand my own religion and accept my own religion. But like, for someone who has that soul, that enlightened soul, to make that kind of sacrifice, the karmic implications for everybody can be huge.

Jackie gave an example of *karma* in relating her story about going through a difficult divorce:

Like everything that I went through and actually I feel, coming onto this path and being with Guruji and I feel like I'm going through so much *karma*, like lifetimes of *karma*. Cause really, I look at that period, that relationship, that's enough for an entire life to look at it. And I'm like, that's a whole life time of *karma* and boom! It's gone. And now we are onto something else and who knows what else will happen and Boom! That will have gone. So or maybe, it'll be that one phase where it was really intense. But I really do feel like that car that came out of the car wash and I really do feel an increase sense of strength and stability. So it's great...Reincarnation I don't think that was ever not an option in my mind like if I talked to my mom she would be like, "I don't believe that at all." But you know it's an idea that was always floating around. I think I always had this feeling. It seemed very natural. Like a very natural thing to and incorporate. The idea of heaven and hell never really worked for me like...

So I guess, I realize that Jesus was living master and now I have an actual living master. There have always been people on the planet like this and Buddha and other people... Intellectually you can say, yea, I get it. This (Jesus) is an enlightened master but to personally have an enlightened master and not to have anything in your upbringing that prepares you for that relationship was like confusing in the beginning. It would be like maybe you were straight your whole life and you were gay and you fell in love with a woman and you were like "Why am I in love with this women?" It would challenge different concepts that you had and comfort zones that you had and things like that.

Similarly, Luke talked at length about how he reconciled his Christian faith with being a Yogi, following a Guru. Having studied comparative religion in graduate school, he had a lot to say about the ideas of divine self, *karma*, reincarnation and guru in the *dharmic* traditions:

I wouldn't even call them Eastern philosophy... they are also present in western traditions as well. It's just that the attention those details aren't given. If you read any of the medieval Christian mystics and their writing so like St. John of the Cross... and like the work called "the cloud of unknowing", it's very very similar and all those teachings are present there. Same with mystical Judaism and Sufism. It's everywhere, it's always been everywhere. It's just that the eastern traditions seem to give it more weight, whereas in the western society, the Abrahamic religions tend to go in a different direction, at some point. That wasn't always the case. But over the past few centuries it seems that they have gone in a different direction. So, in a sense the Art of Living course is revitalizing those traditions by making people aware of the spiritual connection with divinity within themselves. The thing is reincarnation was present in early Christianity as well.

Karma, 'what you sow that you shall reap', the ideas are there. Guru there is always spiritual connection with teacher, in Christianity Guru is Jesus Christ. The initiation, the baptism, is linking you to Christ; and even in Sufi and Islam, they have their teacher and their connection to their teacher and in Judaism to there is

communities of truth that develop around the Rabbi...the idea of guru has always been there. It might not have actually used the word guru because that's Sanskrit. But the idea has always there, and in spiritual traditions where the focus is on wisdom and experience of truth and love, there has always been a teacher. And those people, that would often experience divine truth, without coming from a tradition of teacher, were sometimes considered dangerous because, of that. For the most part, there always has been a guru-disciple relationship, a teacher student relationship. For me it wasn't a contradiction, like I said, I was studying religion in University. My undergrad I focused on a comparison of contemplative traditions of the west and the east. So, in my graduate studies I studied the globalization of religion. But uh so I was studying mystical traditions in my undergrad. So in most of my studies I was making those comparisons already.

James narrative explained the cultural differences standing out right from when he took the course.

My initial experience during the course, first couple of days I felt a little uneasy with myself. I wasn't too sure about the instructors or the knowledge being taught and then. It's going to make me sound bad now. They were dressed in white clothes or you know robes. It was a little different, the knowledge it was okay but it wasn't out of the world or anything like that. I was just skeptical at first because of the outfit but then they introduced us to the *Sudarshan Kriya* and wow...So, I kinda mentioned with the instructors having a different attire. It was a little culturally different for me so I was a little skeptical at first, you know especially with the idea of the spiritual guide...I found it very interesting you know I have I really enjoy philosophy in school, It's my favorite subject especially logic, logic I really enjoy it I do really well in it so listening to you know some of the discourses or lecture on these yogic philosophies reincarnation and *karma* and what not, divine self - everything - it's very you know.

For me I always approached it from a very logically perspective and face what he said with faith. But at the same time, thinking logically or using reason. Like are there any flaws in what he is saying. I spend a long time thinking about *karma*, the divine self, reincarnation - had hour long talks with my friends and I'm even able to convince them and they don't even practice yoga and just approaching it form a logical sense it just made sense it just clicked well with me.

Leah had talked about reincarnation in the excerpt below in her childhood experiences.

Well I always believed in reincarnation. Like, I was raised Christian, and predominantly, predominantly they don't believe in reincarnation, but since I was a child, I always believed in reincarnation. I never questioned it, and I never, it was something, I was a very reflective child and I thought about these things on my own and I was always convinced of that. but I had a lot of very mystical experiences as a child, like under the age of five (5) ...which really shaped my realizing that there is something special about me, I didn't know the word spiritual,

but I was drawn to it because of my experiences as a child, like I'd have intuitive psychic conversations with plants and stuff like that and other things like that, so...yeah, the Eastern mysticism really was not foreign to me...

As the above discussion has shown, the participants in my study came from diverse backgrounds and experiences, which influenced their different approaches to and experiences of being exposed to the knowledge of Yoga. Overall, their narratives show that they were able to reconcile the different worldviews to varying extents. My impression was that this questions was a difficult one for them to answer partly because the topic itself is controversial and raises difficult issues that they may or may not have thought of or ignored or avoided. Nevertheless, their narratives provided them an opportunity to enter into that discussion and work through these differences using logic and reasoning. As mentioned earlier, in Yoga, seeking proof is one of the activities of the mind. *Pramana* (proof) can be gained through *pratyaksha* (solid experiential truth), *anumana* (inference) or by *agama* (what is written in scriptures) (Shankar, 2009, p. 16). All three kinds of proof were mentioned in the responses that the yogis gave.

Relevance of Yoga for young adults to manage stress and to education

The interview questionnaire had two questions that related to Yoga and youth: “What advice would you give youth who are experiencing stress” and “What do you think is the relevance of Yoga to education of college students in Canada?” In this section, I discuss the narratives of my yogi participants on both these inter-related questions. Most of the youth yogis spoke both from the personal and societal perspective, viewing service to society as part of a yogic approach to life – that inner peace (or lack of stress) at the level of the individual leads to outer peace, peace in the world. James, now serving in the army:

Towards the end of the course for some reason, I had this dying need to, like, do something for someone. I don't know why. I used to be like this person who used to be very self-centered. My focus and my concerns were generally more about my personal needs. But at the end of the course, they said there is even volunteering if anyone wanted to do. It was a really enlightening experience it was

great... There is so much that could be done in the world. You know, when I'm just walking somewhere, see someone doing - being violent or using aggression - I just see it as being very unfortunate. Something is missing there. For me, I mentioned, I found that what changed between me then and me now - I had all this garbage (stress) I had to get rid of. And yeah, just seeing people with... it's kinda wrong for me to stereotype it... but seeing people with all this built up garbage (stress) and at least, how they are expressing it, makes me assume that there are people with problems and it's unfortunate, especially global issues that you hear on the news.

All the yogis spoke about the relevance of Yoga to college students and described their experiences both before and after taking the *YES! Plus* courses. Hussein spoke about having *shraddha* (faith):

Yeah, I think it's extremely relevant. So, I was in second year dealing with several issues and finding a way to cope with them in a way that was non-destructive. I think a lot of people or college students face similar life situations but have only at their disposal, you know, alcohol or drugs or prescription medicine or not dealing with it at all and feeling stuck. I think it (Yoga) is a great way to boost perspective and energy and give people at that very fragile age that confidence to realize that they've had challenges in the past and they have overcome them. And they have challenges now and they have ability to overcome them and they will face challenges in the future and they will be able to deal with them as they come.

Several participants characterized their education in Yoga as education in life skills. Margo commented as follows:

Yeah, I mean we were, we have never been taught how to handle emotions and even people talk about life skills education, lack of life skill education, bringing life skill education. But personally I have not found in my studies and experience, both as student and researcher of education, any life skills program other than maybe the *YES! Plus* course. But any life skill program out there generally addresses really helpful practical things. The quality of these courses is not great because the people teaching them are just doing it for their job and are not experts. And that's the thing about having a Guru. In the old tradition, to have a teacher who is not just as stressed out as you are and just putting in the hours of work and go home and they are just as stressed out as you are too. It's finding an individual that's living something so fully, so incredible - that they have such a deep knowledge about life to give. Like you know, there could be so much deep meaning to the guidance given. But you would have to begin with making teachers at peace and in harmony and so on.

Harry saw the value of Yoga providing practical techniques to manage stress:

Oh my god! College is hard. Life is stressful. I think college is like you have to go class, you have to sit there, you have to have the energy to absorb at the same time you have the time to maintain healthy relationships with friends and family. It's a difficult task, that's what college is much more than learning some information and so and so of course yoga is the skill that allows you to do all of these things. that's it.

Similarly, Tsiuri commented about the various sources of stress for college youth.

I would say learn about the breath and experience the power of the breath and that's it. I think it's extremely relevant (to education of college youth) because lots of college students face many different pressures, academic pressure, anxiety about the future, whether they will find a job or not, whether they will get into the next program or not. Being in a new place. Often students move. Like I had moved from my family...and that was very stressful, and managing finances. So I feel it's very relevant, very practical techniques they can use to manage their stress.

The following example of Phillip provides another example of how education in Yoga can help college students cope with stress of school life as a new immigrant.

I was going through a lot of pressure at school. So a lot of changes ... Basically three different school systems...Moving to a new environment and switching two times to a new university. So I lost a lot credits I had already...so and then at the same time, you don't choose your courses in the first semester. So there were a lot of heavy courses for me and being in a new environment, new education system, new culture. That was a lot of pressure for me. It was difficult, it was challenging. I was passing my courses but it was tough. So after doing the (*YES! Plus*) course that tension went away and I felt I was, it became easier to study, easier to deal with people, easier to integrate in my environment, easier to make friends. So, and one thing I always tell people is my concentration level really really changed completely...So I am the kind of person that can lose focus easily, or I used to be. So I had to take a lot of notes in the classroom and go home and study again. So what changed very quickly - I sit in class fully focused, don't take too much notes, understand everything well. And when I'm home, I don't need to study as much because I'm grasping things much more. So my attention level went up and my concentration level went up that year.

Similarly, Samad talked about how his practices improved his school work.

I was writing papers and articles to publish, and even doing my master degree, my master project. It was too much demanding. But I had the tool to be able to go through it, to have the energy to do it. Yea. I tend to be very angry so this practice made me calmer.

Student under stress seek help. However, Tsiuri differentiated between the self-help approach of Yoga to the help offered from counseling services.

I think we place a lot importance right now on talking things out and verbally helping people through counseling to manage their stress or through expressing their emotions or verbalizing they feel but you can only go so far with that because the mind is involved. You are trying to manage the mind, the breath allows you to very directly, in a very tangible way, transform your emotions in way no amount of talking can do. The breath is very transformative, very quick and it uh goes to the root of the problem so I feel like instead of I mean, yes, you need communication. Yeah, exactly so I think we need to place more importance on the breath and meditation as ways to deal with stress for sure. Yeah, I've experienced that myself. And the continuous practicing of doing some breathing. The situation looks more manageable. Breath.....

Leah viewed the training provided through Yoga as value-based education that enable youth to reach their full potential and be healthy.

Well, it's about life skills, it's about learning how to manage your own mind, how to not allow your feelings and emotions to somehow inhibit your potential...Nobody's teaching you how to use your mind skillfully, how to be aware of ourselves, of our emotions and our thoughts, and to realize how much power we have to change our experience. Just through our own perceptions and our own behaviors make all the huge difference. So, and, you know, where else are you going to learn that? It's a fundamental, it's a part of who we are, and that needs to be nurtured and cultivated if we want effective people in society. Yeah, that's values- based education. That's really I think much more important than any academic subject you can study. How skillful are you in your life in interacting with other people and managing your own problems? I consider... vitality to mean how well you can cope with problems, how well can you bounce back or deal with things as they come up.

Harry advocated for such programs to be held in high school years, which in his view, is a period when youth are already pondering about existential issues:

I also didn't realize how much more there was to experience. I was really informally into philosophy which is to say I didn't really even study western philosophy. I just liked thinking hard about stuff and friends, I would sit and talk about things. Cause actually I found at that age people like to think hard about things and after high school that subsided. People, older, adults, tend to have this impression of teenagers, well its mostly a negative impression. But actually my experience was that it wasn't only me. A lot of people in my grade, in other years in my high school - it was this, where we were learning to interact very differently from how we had interacted with each other as kids. We were introspecting, which

we had never done before I think - its purpose, wondering what we were doing, wondering even what the purpose of the school was, all sorts of things. How our families differed. All sorts of things - like all sorts of issues that eventually became normal and we just stopped thinking about it. But at that age we were much more open to growing in different ways, stuff with lots of depth. We just lacked the education...

When asked what advice she would give to a youth who is under stress, Margo, doing her PhD in education, took the position that the best she can do is to inspire other youth on the path of Yoga, a holistic way to learn how to handle stress:

I feel that it's such a holistic path and ...if there is one overall theme, I think... it's about harmony with ourselves and the nature and that going out in nature, which is in itself a form of meditation. A step to getting back in touch with ourselves and from that state. Then you can begin to bring *prana* up and learn meditation and so on. But also, I don't think it's right for us to just give advice to youth. I think our youth really face a lot of stressful situations. A lot of lifestyles that are just not natural to human beings and to people of this age...There are so many things that are causing so much stress and our job is not to give advice but to show by example. And to go and bring those people into our inner world - not necessarily pick them up and teach them meditation. But pick them up and make them a part of our life and our world. And let them see all that we are doing, all the many, many ways that I use the path of yoga to bring me peace in my life and health.

Frank spoke at length about what advice he would give to youth under stress.

Breathe. Sit on a chair and focus on the tip of your nose for 5 minutes. That's what I tell everyone. Take the Art of Living course, learn *Sudarshan Kriya*. Learn to meditate. Eat better. Drink less. Those are things, but the one thing, is meet Guruji. I would say meet Guruji, breathe a little bit, do *kriya* and realize that nothing is that big a deal. Like nothing in your life is that big a deal. Like whatever stupid relationship you're in or whatever dumb thing or horrible, they all just pass with time. And do not take anything so seriously. I mean you could have everything I mean (a person's) father just committed suicide... He had everything you would want, but he wasn't happy... So you need to realize that you don't need to achieve, there is nothing to achieve. You can never achieve anything to make you happy. There is no where you can get to - you go to Jamaica. And you go to a 4-Star resort. And the first thing you think of is, I want to go to a 5-Star resort and you go to a 5-Star resort and you think oh, I want to do it on a private island. Oh, you do it on a private island then I want a bigger private island. There is no end.

Like my friend that I'm going to see tomorrow, he makes \$250,000 a year. He is 38 years old. He vacations with the owner of the team. He works for a basketball team. He flies in, he comes in a private boat. But the own comes in a

private helicopter. So he's like a pauper compared to this guy. It's a joke...there is never an end, the mind is never want to stop wanting...I'm not better than anybody just because I breathe and meditate. The point is to take everything away so you connect to everybody - not add things to make you difficult to be around, to separate. Which is what happens a lot of the times. It's like you are just a human. It's like John Lennon - (sings) "I'm just sitting here watching the wheels spin round and round, I love to watch them go" - like John Lennon had everything in the world. I mean so people take themselves too serious. But I mean like you have to take yourself too serious before you can... Cause then, like Luke has a friend who is 34 years old but he doesn't want to live in the world. So he sleeps till 5 every day. Gets up at 5 and smokes pot and goes to some overnight job and then comes home and sleeps till 5 - and does that every day. Cause he is scared of the world. There are other people who are just not trying to achieve anything, they are just trying...

Frank then went on commenting on a similar theme when asked about the relevance of Yoga to the education of college students in Canada.

I mean, it will give them a chance to open their mind to relevances (sic). I mean. I wouldn't say it's important for them to learn it (Yoga), I would say, it's important for them to have the opportunity to do it. And then, if they are ready, they can do it. I don't think yoga is the right word for it, I mean it's like, it's just the *asanas* (suggesting inclusion of meditation and knowledge). It's important because, you get a glimpse of the mind and you get to see how the mind works. And that you're not the only one that going through this stuff. Your mind does all these crazy things...yea it can help the people. Yea. Well, also just, be aware, if you're mentally ill or what, all these problem that plague society. I mean, it's a big question. Because, I mean I would never want to force it on anyone to do it. But you know I'm sitting here. It's like, I would've never done yoga, breathing, *kriya* or meditation in university. It wasn't my focus. I just wanted to drink and do drugs and have sex with girls and party and laugh.

But it's just, I would say it's like, it's like having a level of importance, of value to it. To sit, be with yourself. Even at a young age, even younger than 20, like 8, 10 ... you're just okay with yourself. Okay if you're gay. Okay if you're straight. Okay if you're fat. Okay if your ugly. Okay if your pretty. Like no one, like even pretty girls. Like you know, girls I know who are models and live in New York and never pretty enough. They (think they) are too ugly, too fat and they look - so, ya, I would say. I would never want to force it on people, but the level of importance, for people to be exposed to the knowledge. I mean to sit with Guruji. Or sit around Krishanjii for an hour - for these people could change their life. I mean one person can - the butterfly effect. One person could be nice to one person, could be nice to another person...

Jackie, an educator for over 10 years, spoke about her personal experience of teaching high school students. Her focus was on the issue of high levels of stress among youth.

Yeah, I think it starts with stress. First you get rid of everything negative and then once a certain amount of negativity has been dropped, then all these positive things begin to come in...Like in gardening. Make sure there is nice room (space) for things to grow and nice nurturing for the roots and beautiful blossoms. But you have to, like, get rid of the weeds so that you are not killing the plants. And I have never come across something as effective as *Sudarshan Kriya* for creating that big cleaning, that big shift of stress, and whatever else is there. I think with young people it's really important because it's such axis, like you are on an axis. Like is your life going to in one direction or is it going to go in another? ...You know whatever educational programs that you graduate from, you know, or the company that you keep or whatever, they have a huge impact on what, on the trajectory of your life. And what are these human capacities that you are going to bring to this world ...

You know, you feel ready for college, but you are feeling burnt out. Where is your optimism? How are you going to feel that you and go out and make a difference in other people's life when you can barely hold your head above water? ...I think you know 20% of university students are depressed - it's a really high number. That a lot of people that are probably not believing in themselves and in what they're going to accomplish in their life...And education should be about developing your capacities. You are unlocking the door to so many capacities that you may have inside. Like I was the director of operations at (age) 25. Like I could organize. It was stressful and it was affecting my health and whatever. And, like I don't know how long before I burnt out and not be able to do that job. Or, before I was very angry person. What was the point of having these skills if all these negativities are there too? You have to have something that takes the negativity away too. You have to be personally happy and express your skills...

I end this section about what the participants of my study thought was the relevance of Yoga for college students with an excerpt from another educator, Farah, also a high school teacher, who spoke from the context of her own college experience.

We are never taught any of these things, ever, at all. Like kids are not taught to cope and not to taught to transition from high school to university, where the stakes jump tremendously; where now you're working for something in your career, and that kind of thing. And making connections, and I think that some kids can just do it, but most get highly stressed out. And you know find solace, you know, drinking or drugs, I did all those things too. But somehow this came into my life where I think I could've.....Well, when I was in high school, I was very strong academically. I mean I worked very hard, got As. But when I got to university, I did not do very well. I just partied. It was my first time away from home and I was

living in a dorm. I had classes but you didn't have your mother waking you up to go to classes so I didn't go to classes. I just didn't do very well. I was smoking a lot of pot and drinking a lot and then I made a conscious effort in my second year. This is actually before the art of living course, that I woke up one morning. Like I was stoned the night before or whatever. I was just like, I'm not doing this anymore.

It's actually funny. I had some drugs and drinking in high school but I had like a crazy year in first year and then I just stopped. I stopped when I was 21. I was actually able to discover that I could have fun without it, that was probably the pre step to doing Art of Living. Cause I was able to see: this is who I am. Because when you're on drugs and alcohol, you are a different person. Like your just, like people who are like, "I can't dance without drinking." It's like that's a pretty profound thing...I know that when I stopped doing drugs... my grades got a lot better. By the end of it, I was getting A's instead of getting C's and D's. And so, I just came to find my interest. I wasn't into this big program, where I was lost. I subspecialized. I got a degree in ecology and really liked it and found someone to work with, who was in the field. And yeah, its immensely important for college kids, because it's just this point of transition in your life, where you are going to be a kid, like you know, a responsible kid to being an adult - handling money and cooking for yourself for the first time and all that kind of stuff. And I think that the stuff that is taught in these courses are just so.... Just the *Sudarshan Kriya* practice can bring that routine in your life.

And then, the thing that had the biggest impact on my life, after doing kriya, I did a knowledge course - the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*. That was the first time I had ever watched knowledge and even saying "knowledge". It's even a weird word for people who aren't on the path - watching somebody speak about something that isn't like biology or psychology or whatever you are studying in school. So just like, those little bits really consolidated the practice for me. If I had not done that, I don't think I would've, like so much, gotten into the knowledge part. I would've done the *kriya* it would've just been like an exercise and so yea.

I think it's important that college students sort of are in that space a little, where they can talk now. I know it's all about technology. You always see, I always see, this part of their head. Because they are always on their phone. I mean people don't even talk on the phone anymore. Like even myself and I called four friends and I like, why do we just text all the time? Like why don't we just pick up the phone and just call and talk to each other? So in some ways, I know this, often say, we feel more connected because of Facebook and all these things. In other ways, we are so less connected because we don't talk to each.

So I think these kind of courses can bring people together, where you get back to that human to human contact and deal with the changes... I think it's so important that we get some skills yeah, cause it's the skill that need to be practiced. Like if you are a teenager or like 20 or 21, then you spend your whole life practicing.

Summary of the yogis' narratives

The participants, as ordinary working young adults who demonstrate extraordinary wisdom, provide numerous concrete examples about how they faced the challenges of life using Yoga knowledge and practices. They come from diverse background and came to Yoga without much prior experience or knowledge of Yoga. They were attracted to the *YES! Plus* course for different reasons, including existential angst, searching for a spiritual guide and for way to handle life's stresses, including college life. Mostly, they happened to take the course because of word of mouth referrals or attending introductory talks done by Art of Living at their university campus. They remained engaged with the practices, despite the challenges of maintaining the practices, due to their positive experiences of the *Sudarshan Kriya*, (the healing breath practice), feeling a personal connection to Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and enjoying the company of others young people who had done the practices and were interested in going deeper into the knowledge.

The young adults spoke at length about their understanding of and reconciliation to specific Yoga-based ideas that are different from Abrahamic religions – such as the idea of a spiritual *guru*, Self as divine, reincarnation and *karma*. They spoke eloquently about feeling a strong personal connection of love and respect to His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, as their Guru, despite many of them being initially resistant or uncomfortable with the idea. They also had little difficulty in accepting the idea of divine self, given their experiences during meditation and *Sudarshan Kriya*. Due to ontological, epistemological and religious differences, their acceptance, to various extents, of the idea of *karma* and reincarnation was based on reason, logic and personal experience. Importantly, none of them spoke of feeling any pressure to change the religion of their birth; at the same time, they expressed a broader vision of religion in which all religions are respected.

They recognize the vastness of the knowledge, “If I devoted my life to *Patanjali Sutras of Yoga*, I would never learn five percent in my lifetime” (Frank). Their command of the knowledge of Yoga was impressive, which is not surprising, given their immersion into Yoga. What is significant about their narrative is that it dispels the widely held misconception about Yoga that it involved a reclusive life that is divorced from society. As normal working young adults, the participants of my study are volunteer teachers of the Art of Living program.

The yogis also expressed their strong support for education in Yoga for college youth. They saw Yoga as teaching life skills that help youth handle the challenges of life, including that of dealing with pressure of school, stress of relationships and existential angst. Using examples from their own lives, they contended that education in spirituality was part of this education towards living with more ease and joy, and less stress.

In the context of the discussions of decolonizing methodologies in Chapter 5 the narratives of the yoga-exemplars certainly gesture towards the idea of “deep learning” that Haig-Brown imagines to be a respectful and effective way for outsiders to engage with indigenous knowledge (2010, p. 927). Indeed, the young adults, who come from diverse non-dharmic traditions, approach the “impossible knowledge” of Yoga with “wonder” and “delight” as Pinder (1991) suggests, in context to how outsiders could best approach indigenous knowledges. The young people speak eloquently, albeit with logic and reason, about how they negotiated the ontological and epistemological “border clashes” between dharmic and Abrahamic religions, for example, in relation to the ideas of divine self, *karma* and reincarnation. Their discussions about how they mediated these “clash zones” within their own families in order to maintain “good relations” with them are examples that show how deeply they have internalized a key message of Yoga: “Yoga is skill in action”.

It was noteworthy that the yogis did not make any comments in the context of decolonizing Yoga that I discuss at length in Chapter 6. The yogis had some discomfort when talking about how they reconciled the dharmic ideas of guru, divine self, *karma* and reincarnation, given their Abrahamic religious backgrounds. However, they recognized the misconception in the western world about Yoga being merely about physical *asanas*. The yogis did not appear to have thought about the appropriation of Yoga in the west nor did they have awareness about the domination of *dharmic* studies by non-practicing western academics. In reflecting on the reasons for this apparent lack of interest or awareness, I think about the fact that they are not Indians or born in the Hindu tradition. They do not have colonized minds of Indians who have been trained to see their traditions, history and culture as inferior to that of the west.

At the same time, their discussion of Yoga appears to perpetuate the “myth of sameness” (Malhotra, 2014, p. 295) in which all religions are seen as having the same goals, to the same God. They did not appear to be aware of differences such as historicity and the superiority claims of Abrahamic religions or that the ideas of embodied knowing and Self as divine are ideas that are only present in *dharmic* traditions. When directly asked about such differences, they handled their “difference anxiety” (Malhotra, 2011, p. 25) by pointing to the “myth of sameness”. For example, the discussions about the theory of *karma* were diverse and often did not accurately reflect its meaning in the Hinduism. Some incorrectly compared *karma* to the Biblical idea of “what you sow, so shall you reap”. However, the theory of *karma* is firmly tied to the theory of reincarnation, which is absent in the Bible. Part of their response can be attributed to their need to avoid cognitive dissonance and part of it to accepting the *dharmic* view in which diversity of paths and mutual respect of other paths is valued.

I am struck by how dry and colorless my foregoing summary of youth experiences appears, compared to the juiciness and richness of the youth narratives, with their “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973), the stories with emotional content and beauty of language. The difference is a reminder of the power of narratives and the usefulness of the narrative inquiry method to provide rich descriptions about subjective experiences.

In conclusion, the above discussion has shown that the participants of my study, as yoga exemplars, are living the knowledge of Yoga as best they can. Their candid and sincere narratives about their experiences on the path of Yoga and spirituality offer valuable and deep insights into how Yoga has helped these young adults to handle the stresses and strains of daily life. This chapter has also demonstrated that the experiences of the yogis can be discussed using the language of Yoga. By using the Sanskrit terms and ideas to explain their experiences, I have proposed a Yoga-based language to discuss studies on Yoga. While

An extensive section of the analysis was devoted to applying the ideas and theories in the Eight Limbs of Yoga and the Four Pillars of Knowledge to the narratives. This section was particularly challenging for me because it required me to develop a greater understanding of these Yoga concepts. However, the resulting analysis led to a vocabulary of terms to discuss experiences of Yoga using Yoga-based terminology – such as *swadhyaya* (self-study), *viveka* (discrimination), *vairagya* (dispassion), *shama* (tranquility of mind) *dama* (control over senses), *titiksha* (forebearance), *uparati* (rejoicing in one’s own nature), *shraddha* (faith), *samadhana* (being at ease) and *mumukshatva* (desire for the highest). These ten unique Sanskrit terms, among others, represent ideas that are incommensurable with their English translations, due to ontological and epistemological differences. The explanation of these terms using the examples from the narratives is therefore an important contribution to Yoga research.

Epilogue: Making space for *Swadeshi* voices

In this section, I review the contribution and the limitations of my dissertation work. I propose that my study makes an academic contribution in four related areas of research on Yoga and stress. First, the study decolonizes Yoga's place in academe and shows its worth as Indigenous knowledge. Second, in its case study, it describes a Yoga-based holistic wellness program for young adults to learn how to handle stress using Yoga-based practices, psychology and philosophy. Third, I propose a Yoga-based foundational theoretical framework and related methodology that is different from those that have been commonly used thus far in research on Yoga. Fourth, the study presents portraits of thirteen young adults who are yoga-exemplars in Canada. The students discuss their understandings of what Yoga is and how their knowledge and practice of traditional Yoga impacts the ways in which they handle stresses and strains of daily life. In the following sections, I discuss these contributions in further detail.

My study provides an introduction to what Yoga is, a holistic spiritual approach to life and theorizes Yoga as indigenous knowledge from India. From that context, the study decolonizes the (mis)representation of Yoga in the academe and the appropriations of fragments of Yoga into western universalism to enrich mainstream Euro-Christian academe and society. The study scrutinizes some examples of western scholarship to highlight Yoga's contribution to areas such as health, psychology, contemplative sciences and mind sciences, which largely remain unacknowledged. The study views the fragmentation of Yoga for appropriation as cultural violence and a threat to the continuity and integral unity of traditional Yoga. The analogy provided is that of stealing the fruit of the tree of Yoga, while neglecting to feed its roots – a process that can lead to the death of the tree, however unintended. The study advocates for the preservation of Yoga in its traditional holistic form - as a part of a larger matrix of indigenous

knowledge known as *Vedic dharma*, representing a living knowledge based on the oral tradition and ancient sacred Sanskrit texts.

The study examines scholarship related to indigeneity, such as that of Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Celia Haig-Brown, to unpack the tensions in the western academy about who has the authority to teach and speak for Yoga, as an indigenous knowledge. Indigenous scholars strongly assert that the authority to explain and teach indigenous knowledge resides solely with indigenous people. My study argues that in the case of Yoga, this authority or *adhikara* rests with the knowledge keepers – within the oral traditions of the Yoga Gurus and traditional scholars. The study highlights the writings of several scholars on decolonizing methodologies who articulate respectful ways in which non-indigenous people can engage in their “secondary discourse” (Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 937) on indigenous knowledge. For example, by seeing indigenous knowledge as “impossible knowledge,” outsiders can approach the knowledge with wonder and a desire for “deep learning” that respects the sacred and spiritual contexts of the knowledge (Haig-Brown, 2010, p. 925).

My study also delves into the issue of the marginalization of indigenous scholars in the academy and advocates for mainstream academic institutions to ‘make space’ for the work of indigenous practitioner-scholars to enter the academic discourse on Yoga. This move recognizes the institutional, historical barriers to their participation, such as racism and colonialism, as attempts to silence indigenous voices. The study recognizes the clashes that occur in ‘border zones’ of the academy where indigenous scholars often are confronted by the work of non-indigenous scholars who attempt to speak on their behalf. My research on Yoga is situated in that space of academic tension - between the insiders and outsiders of Yoga and its related *dharmic* knowledges. I have used this dissertation to put forth some of the arguments from insider,

practitioner-scholars, whose voices have been largely dismissed from or disallowed entry into academic discourses. In this context, my dissertation stands as one successful entry.

The study examines concerns about western, non-practitioners currently dominating the discourses on Yoga and the exclusion of the contributions of most practitioner-scholars. It points out that the latter, especially those who chose to reverse the gaze using *purva-paksh*, with decolonizing lenses, have been denied space in academic spheres. The academic space of Indology urgently needs, what Malhotra (2016) calls, *swadeshi* (indigenous) Indology that can present *dharmic* interpretations of Yoga, and related texts that privilege the voices of oral traditions and Yoga practitioners. In the study, I have attempted to build awareness of these issues and thereby generate, even provoke scholars, both insiders and outsiders, to further examine the issues related to decolonizing studies in Indology, including on Yoga. I also seek to promote a healthy dialogue among *swadeshi* practitioner-scholars about how the fruits of Yoga knowledge are best shared with outsiders, especially in the west, while the roots of the tree of Yoga are protected.

Second, using the Art of Living Programs as a case study, the study provides a portrait of a traditional Yoga program, adapted for young adults from diverse backgrounds, that aims to help youth handle stress and function effectively in the 21st Century world. The study also successfully demonstrated how Yoga-based programs, such as the *YES! Plus* and other Art of Living Programs, can be described, analyzed and discussed using constructs from Patanjali's *Eight Limbs of Yoga*. The programs' description, complemented by youth narratives, brings alive many important elements of Yoga, with its emphasis on oral tradition, that call for a personal connection to a spiritual guru who provides individualized instruction. The program provides an example of how to use modern technology not only to communicate the knowledge of Yoga, but

also to allow yogis to maintain a connection to the knowledge and the teacher. The limitation of this case study of this Yoga-based program is that the Art of Living programs are unique and cannot be, neither are they intended to be, duplicated by others.

Third, the research provides a foundational Yoga-based theoretical framework that provides a Yoga-based alternative to western psychological theories and constructs that currently dominate studies on yoga. A decolonizing methodology approach to using narratives demonstrates how Yoga theories can be successfully used to discuss the narratives on key concepts, such as stress, self-awareness and experiential learning. In addition, the study provides a concrete example of how narratives of experiences of Yoga can be analyzed and discussed using a vocabulary made up of Sanskrit terms and theories from Yoga. It is hoped that other researchers will apply Patanjali's *Eight Limbs of Yoga* as a theoretical frame in their own examination of Yoga programs and also build and refine the vocabulary of Sanskrit words to describe, analyze and discuss Yoga-based research.

Fourth, this study provides unique portraits of thirteen mainstream Canadian young adults, all except one of whom are teachers of the Art of Living *Happiness Program*. Their stories are deeply personal and poignant. They talk about mental, physical, social, emotional and spiritual aspects of life that college youth and young adults commonly face and that cause stress and strain. As yoga exemplars, it is not surprising that the participants of my study clearly articulate an understanding of the larger context of Yoga as a philosophy, and not merely a physical exercise. They value all the aspects of their spiritual paths: the physical practices such as *asanas*, and *pranayamas*; the meditative practices, such as *Sudarshan Kriya* and meditation; contemplations on Yoga's psychology of the mind, philosophy and theories such

as on karma and reincarnation; and involvement in social aspects, both in the collegial peer group and in service or volunteer activities.

The narratives challenge many common myths about Yoga and yogis. One of the myths is that yogis are anti-social recluses who are running away from their responsibilities to live their life in isolation; it is the idea that yogis are people who ‘wear Birkenstocks and watch flowers grow’. In fact, the participants are mainstream people who have careers in mainstream society and live with their families and communities. Another myth about yogis is that they have boring, dry uneventful lives. Nothing could be further from the truth. The participants are involved in ordinary activities that other young people are engaged in: jobs, partners, children, music, sports, arts, entertainment and so on. They do refrain from drinking alcohol or using drugs to manage stress or for recreation; instead, they regularly practice yoga *asanas*, meditative, chant *mantras* or read or listen to yoga knowledge. Along with regular vacations, they also go for Yoga retreats to renew their connection to their guru and to Yoga knowledge and practices. It is less known that the experience of *artha* (wealth) and *kama* (pleasure) are among the four goals of life in Yoga; the others being *dharma* (duty) and *moksha* (liberation) (Iyengar, 2014, p. 267).

Another myth about yoga is that it is only about inner experience and is divorced from social interaction and therefore lack outer dynamism. However, as the narratives have shown, the yogi participants see community work or *seva*, as it is called in Yoga, as an outer expression of love and they are all involved in community service projects, including teaching the Art of Living courses in universities, community centers and schools, as volunteers. I believe that the narratives of these young yogis will be of interest to other young adults and to those who care for them, including parents, teachers, psychologists and counsellors. At the same time, a limitation

of this research is that the experiences of these young adults cannot be generalized to other long-term yoga practitioners.

This dissertation aims to contribute to decolonizing Yoga's place in academe and to show its worth as Indigenous knowledge. As Haig-Brown has famously observed, "Indigenous thought has the potential to reframe and decentre in intellectually productive and practical ways, conventional scholarship about most things..." (2008, p. 13). In the case of Yoga, my study points out that Yoga has already had a foundational impact on western thought but that its contribution goes unacknowledged, for a variety of reasons. It will be up to the readers to decide the extent to which this dissertation was successful in accomplishing this goal. In this sense, as a researcher, I would like to be seen one of those "word warriors" that Anishnaabe scholar Dale Turner (2006) writes about. "Word warriors" are "Indigenous intellectuals who engage western European thought 'as both a philosophical and a political activity' (as cited in Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 14). Interestingly, a similar idea of "word warriors" is present in the *dharmic* practitioner-scholar community: the tradition of intellectual *Kshatriyas* (warriors) who fight in the academic battlefield, the *kurukshetra* (Rajaram, 1998) in which *Satyamav Jayate* – truth alone triumphs.

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APPENDIX A

Transcript of a talk by His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Shankar on the Four Pillars of Knowledge given on November 17, 2012

You have heard “Everything is God. There is nothing outside of God.”. Then why is this not your experience? This is a fundamental question. Why is God not an experiential reality for you?

To reach the self, there are four major tools, the four Pillars of Knowledge:

The first one is called **Viveka**. Viveka is grossly translated as discrimination, but it’s not just discrimination. Viveka is the understanding or observation that everything is changing. Whatever you consider as stationary or solid is neither stationary nor solid. Everything is changing. Existence is an ever changing reality.

Our own bodies are changing. Every minute new cells are born and old cells are dying. Every time you breathe, old energy goes out and new energy comes in. Our body is a bundle of atoms and atoms are always disintegrating. Our thoughts and emotions are changing. You are not the same person you were yesterday. You cannot maintain the same degree of happiness or sadness all the time. It fluctuates. Emotions, feelings, view points are all changing.

But there is something different from all this that is not changing. The one who is observing the change is non-changing, otherwise how can one recognize the change? The reference point to recognize change has to be non-changing. Discriminating between that which is not changing, and everything else which is ever changing is “Viveka”. Understanding that everything in this world is changing would reduce 99% of the misery in this world.

The second pillar is called **Vairagya**. Vairagya is translated as Dispassion. Behind every misery there is hope. Hope is the fuel for miserable people. There is deep desire for some joy in the future: If I change my town, I will be happy. If I change my relationship, or my job, or my company, I will be happier. People who are single think they will be happy if they get married. Married people think they were better off when they were single. A child thinks when he/she grows up and goes to college they will be happy. A college student says “Once I get a job I will be happy”. A manager says “When I become the director I will be happy” Postponing happiness sometime in the future can make you miserable right now.

Pleasure can also tire you. How long can you look at something beautiful? Eventually you will get tired of it; your eyelids will fall off. How long can you smell a beautiful fragrance? People working in the perfume factories are sick of perfumes. If you like donuts, how many can you stuff through your mouth? How much ice-cream can you enjoy? Music- how much can you hear? Touching, and being touched, how long can you enjoy? The world is full of pleasure for the five senses, but the senses have their limitations. But the mind wants endless joy. An attitude of “So what! Let it be, whatever” takes away the feverishness in you and brings you to that pillar of dispassion.

Dispassion is NOT apathy! Often we think dispassion means being unenthusiastic, depressed and not interested in anything. This is not dispassion! Dispassion is lack of feverishness. Dispassion is full of activity and enthusiasm, yet devoid of feverishness. Dispassion towards the enjoyments of the five sense or the spiritual enjoyment, towards the seen and the unseen, the outer world or the inner world, is the second pillar of knowledge.

The third pillar consists of the **Six Wealths**. The Vedas have mentioned six types of Wealths: **Shama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Shraddha, and Samadhana**.

The first wealth is **Shama**. Shama is tranquility of the mind. When the mind wants to do too many things, it gets completely scattered. When shama is established, you are able to focus and your mind is more alert. When dispassion is firmly established, shama automatically starts happening, the mind is tranquil.

The second wealth is **Dama**. Dama means control over senses, the ability to have a say over one's senses. Many times you don't want to say something, yet you do. Many times you don't want to look at something, yet you look anyways. You decided you are full and you will not eat anymore. Then some nice food is served, and it smells so good that you go ahead and take a bite, and another. Soon, to your surprise, you find that you have stuffed in more than your tummy can take. Having Dama, you are not carried away by our senses. You will say "Yes" or "No" to the senses, not the other way around.

The third wealth is **Titiksha**. Titiksha means endurance or forbearing. When difficult things come, forbearance allows you to go on without getting completely shaken. In life, some pleasant events happen, some unpleasant events happen. So what! None of them stay forever. Health comes and sickness comes. Moods come and go. Profits come and losses come. People come and go in life. Titiksha is not getting shaken by what happens. Of ten what is unpleasant can become pleasant later on. What you thought was very bad, later on was found to be very good for you. It made you strong. Understanding this helps not hanging on to the past and not judging events as good or bad. *The ability to not get carried away by the events is Titiksha*. When you play a game, winning and losing is a part of it. The game has more value when it is a little tough. If you already knew who will win the game, you will lose interest in the game. Look at life as a game. Just turn back and look at all the difficult situations you have gone through in life. In spite of it all, you are complete today. The difficulties could not destroy you. They only made you stronger. You are more powerful than them.

The fourth wealth is **Uparati**. Uparati means rejoicing in your own nature, being with your nature. Often you are not with your nature, you are doing things because someone else says or does something. Often people do things for approvals from others. Being in the present moment, being the joy that you are, the ability to rejoice in anything that you do, that is Uparati. Letting go of everything, being playful is Uparati, and then taking everything seriously is also Uparati. These are completely opposite values, but taking them together, living them together, that is Uparati.

The fifth wealth is **Shraddha**. Shraddha means faith. Faith is needed when you have found the limit of your knowledge. You know something this far, and you don't know anything beyond

that. Your willingness to know the unknown is Shraddha, the faith. If your mind is fixed, and says “That’s it. I know it all”, that is ego. The more you know, the more will be the feeling that you don’t know. Recognition of the unknown is Shraddha. Faith in your self, faith in the Master, faith in the Divine, faith in the infinite order of things, faith in that love of infinity, is Shraddha. Observe the nature of doubt. Doubt is always about something positive. When someone says, “I love you”, you doubt asking “Really”? But when someone says, “I hate you, I am angry at you”, then you don’t doubt it, you don’t ask “Really?”. Doubt the negative, and be confident of the positive. Without faith, it would be like someone saying, “First let me learn how to swim, then I will get into the water”. You have to get into the water to learn swimming. The entire world works on faith. For example, any system, whether a credit card system, airlines, banks, even a medical system, although there is no guarantee, there is a high probability that everything will work the way it is meant to. If there could be 100 percent probability, then there would be no need of faith. When there is less than 100 percent probability, that means the result is not knowledge, it is based on faith.

The sixth wealth is **Samadhana**. Samadhana means being at ease, being content. How do you feel when you are at ease? How does it feel when you are totally at ease, calm and serene? Being at ease with you, at ease with the people and situations around you, with the whole existence, is Samadhana. This is a great wealth by itself.

These six wealths together form the third pillar.

The fourth pillar is called **Mumukshatva**. Mumukshatva is the desire for the highest, a desire for total freedom, for enlightenment, whatever you want to call it. First of all you can desire something only when you feel it is possible for you. When you think it is not possible, then you cannot even desire it. When you think enlightenment is not possible for you, then slowly you eliminate the possibility, and then the next possibility, and then the next. Mumukshatva is present when there is a deep desire for the highest, a burning desire, a longing for the Divine. When there is a desire in someone to learn, it should come from within. Don’t think you have to attain it. Think you already have it.

To some degree, to some extent, you have all the six wealths also. If you put a little more attention on them, they become stronger and more solid in you. The pillars are already there, you only have to make them stronger, build them a little higher.

Appendix B: Interview Questions: College youth using Yoga to manage life

The purpose of this *narrative* inquiry case study on *YES! Plus* is to learn about how college youth exemplars like you are using *Yoga* practices and knowledge to manage stress and life in general. I invite you to talk about your own *Yoga* practices, stories, metaphors and experiences, both past and present. Since my study is on *Yoga*, and as you know I am familiar with the program, I welcome quotes or references to *Yoga* terms or knowledge in your answers. *This study is not an evaluation of the YES! Plus program and or of your progress on the path. Rather, the study seeks to gain insight into the ways in which youth understand Yoga practice and knowledge and the ways in which you use it in your life. The study is therefore also interested in understanding the challenges or difficulties youth face on the path of Yoga. I will be asking you a series of questions, please ask me to repeat the question if needed. I may jot a word or line during the interview, that's just to prompt me to ask you for clarification. The interview should take about 1 hour. Everything you say will be held in strict confidence, in compliance with the academic research ethics guidelines.*

1. What if anything did you know about *Yoga* before you took the *YES! Plus* program?
 2. How has your understanding about what is *Yoga* changed since?
 3. How did you come to take the course?
 4. Tell me about your initial experiences with your *Yoga* practices and knowledge that you learnt in *YES! Plus* program?
 5. When, if at all, did you first notice any difference it was making? Can you give me some examples?
 6. What was going on in your life then?
 7. How would you describe the person you were then & how you were handling life's stresses then?
 8. How, if at all, have your thoughts and feelings about what's important to you in your life changed since you began your practices?
 9. What changes have occurred in your life since you have been doing these *yoga/breathing* and *meditation* practices and applying *Yoga Knowledge* to your life?
 10. Tell me how you would describe the person you are now?
 11. Tell me about what a typical practice of your *yoga/breathing/meditation* practice looks like?
 12. As you look back on the way you use to handle life, how have you changed the way you handle it now?
 13. Can you describe the most important lessons you learnt through *Yoga* practice and knowledge? The most important lessons.
 14. Where do you see yourself in five years? Describe the person you hope to be then. How would you compare the person you hope to be compared to the person you see yourself as now?
 15. The *YES! Plus* Program introduces students to *Yoga* based Eastern philosophy, which includes ideas of the divine self, *karma*, reincarnation, spiritual Master and so on. What are your thoughts on these alternate philosophies?
 16. Optional: What does it mean to have a Master and how would you explain that to those who are not familiar with this concept?
 17. What has helped you to maintain the knowledge and practices of *Yoga*? What challenges do you face in staying on this path and why?
 18. How has *Yoga* knowledge affected your relationship with others at home, work and community?
 19. What do you think are the most important ways to reduce stress? How has your experience and learning *yoga/breathing/meditation* affected how you handle stress now?
 20. How have you grown as a person since you have been doing your practices and learning *Yoga* knowledge? Tell me about your strengths that you discovered or developed.
 21. What do you most value about yourself now?
 22. What do others value in you most? What changes have they noticed in you since you have been doing these practices?
 23. What advice would you give to other youth who may be facing stresses and challenges as you have faced?
 24. What do you think is the relevance of *Yoga* to education of college students in Canada?
 25. Is there anything you would like to add? **THANKYOU**
-