Prologue: What I'm going to tell you

- How to know if you're qualified to teach yoga philosophy
- The difference between 'personal truth' and 'personal realization'
- How to overcome obstacles to integrating yoga philosophy
- A simple structure that will make giving great 'Dharma Talks' easy

Why integrate yoga philosophy?

- Adds value by placing the practice in the context of its metaphysical purpose
- Contributes to discovery of meaning and purpose in students lives
- Enhances teacher's personal connection with students
- The best way to learn something is to teach it to someone else

Overcoming obstacles

- Lack of knowledge of yoga philosophy
    - Read yoga wisdom texts and act on what you hear
- Fear of public speaking
    - Have a conversation with a friend:
        - See the crowd as one person with many faces
        - Make eye contact: speak to each individual one at a time
- Anxious practitioners want to get moving
    - Introduce the topic / stop on a cliff-hanger / finish in a resting pose
- Youth and inexperience
    - Humility and deference to authoritative knowledge
    - Tell us your personal realization, not an objective 'truth' or 'the way it is'

Qualifications for teaching yoga philosophy

- It's not what you know; it's what you know relative to those around you
- Preparation invites opportunity
- *Svadhyaya:* guided introspection
    - Self-study: hearing and contemplation
    - Assimilation of knowledge is a 3-step process of

        - Hearing / Contemplation
        - Acting
        - Sharing
- Learning to see through the eyes of *sastra*
    - What to study: Yoga-sutras and Bhagavad-gita
        - Biggest challenges?
    - How to study
        - First, read just the sutras or verses from start to finish
        - Read the commentary on a second pass
        - Contemplative reading and journaling: stop and write when something inspires you
    - Action on the path of knowledge

Personal truth vs. personal realization

- Yoga is not post-modern; it's inconceivably ancient.
- Personal truth is when we conform the teachings of yoga to support our own conceptions, desires, etc.
    - Personal truths are not yoga wisdom; they are 'you' wisdom.
- Personal realization is when we conform our conceptions, desires, etc. to the teachings of yoga.
    - Personal realizations are not 'you' wisdom; they are your personal insights based on your direct experience of yoga wisdom.
    - Realization comes from the practical application of transcendental knowledge in your life
- Deference to authority
    - Don't just make stuff up!
    - Humility as the pre-requisite for knowledge and the symptom of wisdom
    - Pushing back against celebrity culture will (ironically) make you a counter-culture celebrity

Elements of theme-based classes

- Dharma talk
- Centering Meditation
- Intention based on theme
- Chanting mantras that relate to the theme
- Re-introduction of the theme during practice
- Music that echoes the theme
- Asana poses that connect to theme
- Resting poses that create space for the theme

Elements of effective communication

- The rule of threes: beginning, middle, and end
    - Murrow's Law
        - Tell them what you're going to tell them
        - Tell them
        - Tell them what you told them
- Clarity: what do you want them to know?
    - Make every word count / know what every word means
- Logic: make sure that what your saying makes sense
- Emotion: how you feel about the theme?
- Empathy: how do you hope your students will feel about the theme?
- Humor: don't take yourself or the subject too seriously

A simple structure for a 'Dharma Talk'

- Choose a theme or philosophical focus based on personal experience, then …
- Me / You / Transcendental Knowledge / Me / We
    - Me: "this happened to me"
        - This = amazing: climbed a mountain, jumped out of a plane, saw the Aurora Borealis, etc.
        - This = something ordinary: walking my dog, doing the laundry, visiting a relative, etc.
    - You: "you may have had a similar experience."

        - Accomplished a goal, forgot something important, seen an amazing natural phenomenon
    - Transcendental Knowledge: “There’s a sutra / verse that relates to this kind of experience.”
    - Me: “my personal realization from seeing the experience through the eyes of yoga is …”
    - We: When we see X through the eyes of yoga wisdom,
        - Individual affect (be the change)
        - Collective affect (you want to see in world)

Things to avoid

- Candy coated platitudes
- Spoken-word recordings

Finishing your class

- Give your message space
- You’re done at *savasana*: let your message be subconsciously assimilated

Epilogue: What I told you

- Integrating yoga philosophy adds value
- Learn yoga philosophy before you teach it
- Keep it conversational
- Use a structure to keep it tight

Articles about Integrating Yoga Philosophy in an Asana Class

by **Hari-kirtana das**

How To Integrate Yoga Philosophy & Asana

One of the most challenging elements of teaching yoga is integrating yoga philosophy directly into the physical practice. For starters, we need to know something about yoga philosophy, which presents challenges in and of itself. And if we're going to teach yoga philosophy in a meaningful way then we have to practice the philosophy we're teaching. But beyond both book knowledge and personal experience is the skill it takes to maintain our concentration on cueing the poses and observing our students while simultaneously connecting what's happening on the mat to a concpet that goes beyond the mat.

Bringing yoga philosophy to life on the mat takes preparation and practice. Here are some tips that can help:

Choose a philosophical focus for the month.

You don't have to come up with something new for every class or even every week. Give your students (and yourself) the opportunity to delve deeply into one theme by sticking with it for a while.

Speak from a position of authority by referencing a traditional yoga wisdom text.

Deference to a traditional teaching will confer more authority on you as a teacher than making up your own philosophy or even referencing contemporary teachers. Remember that yoga philosophy is the systematic illumination of basic concepts and principles that underlie the practice of yoga. Traditional texts are treasure-troves of timeless wisdom that present those concepts and principles while offering valuable insights into the human condition.

Speak authentically by sharing your personal realizations.

Sharing your understanding of a sutra, verse, or philosophical concept is as important as the concept itself for two reasons:

1. Realization is applied knowledge: sharing your experience of putting yoga philosophy into practice makes it real for your students.
2. Sharing makes it personal: when you share a part of your life with your students you cultivate a relationship based on the experience of yoga as a way of life.

A friend and fellow yoga teacher, Peg Mulqueen, recently posted a great example of combining traditional wisdom with personal insight on her Facebook page:

> *"Practice alone is the means to success. This is true, there is no doubt." (Hatha Yoga Pradipika)*
>
> *And yet, how do we measure success? For me, success is simply finding the discipline and the courage to practice (whatever) – and letting go of anything beyond that.*

The beauty of this is that it's universal; it applies to practice in general and makes the point that practice is both the means to an end and an end in itself. You can riff off of this at any point in a class.

If you want to deal with a more intangible element of yoga philosophy and connect the concept to specific poses, then…

Choose three or four poses that embody a philosophical concept.

Give your students an opportunity to *feel* the idea by designing your sequence around a philosophical theme. For example, if I wanted to speak about *ahimsa* – non-violence, the foundation of universal morality in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, I might choose *Vrksasana* (Tree Pose), *Tittibhasana* (Firefly Pose), *Gomukasana* (Cow-face Pose) and *Matsyasana* (Fish Pose). Why?

1. Using a variety of types of poses (standing balance, hand balance, seated hip and shoulder-opener, and reclining backbend) will allow me to integrate the philosophy into a well-rounded sequence.
2. *Ahimsa* in the Yoga Sutras is based on the idea that all sentient beings are 'people' (*purusa-s*) who share a spiritual equality while inhabiting different kinds of material bodies. If we think of a tree as a person in a tree body, a firefly as a person in a firefly body, etc., it can radically change how we perceive other types of living beings.
3. Asking students to imagine what it would feel like to be in a tree body or a cow body is an opportunity for cultivating empathy for other living beings while entertaining the possibility that we can take birth in different kinds of bodies. The corollary idea that we are not our bodies is an unspoken premise that can be elaborated on in another class and regular students can connect the dots from previous classes.
4. While everyone is in (or attempting) Firefly pose, I can tell students to imagine that their butt is glowing. This practically guarantees that everyone will start laughing: humor is a good way to lighten things up while contemplating 'deep thoughts' (and it can add some extra challenge to an already difficult pose).

Speak in sound bites.

Eloquence is essential truth spoken concisely: try to articulate your thoughts using the fewest possible words. You can also think about when you are going to speak. For example:

1. Before you center your class, establish your theme by sharing a short story – 5 minutes or less – about your insight into the meaning or relevance of a passage from a yoga wisdom text. Try to use a conversational tone rather than making it sound like a lecture.
2. Plan to hold students in relevant poses for a little longer than you ordinarily might and, after you've given the appropriate alignment cues, offer one or two short sentences about the philosophical theme for each side (right and left) of that pose.
3. During resting poses, ask students rhetorical questions or suggest ways of thinking about the philosophical theme that can help students examine their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences relative to the philosophical idea you are focusing them on.

Let your music do the talking.

If you use music in your class, do a Google search for 'songs about (whatever)' or a keyword search in iTunes and see what pops up. Odds are you'll find a wide variety of songs and music to echo your theme that you can sprinkle into your mix.

Let it be.

Don't mess with *Savasana*: Corpse pose is not the time to make a philosophical point, to say nothing of proselytizing your point of view. Don't buy into the notion that your students are more open to your message while they're relaxing after an intense asana practice. *Savasana* is not the time for playing a spoken-word recording about your theme or reading a passage from a book. Instead, have trust that you've conveyed your message by the end of the practice and let your teaching settle in on its own as your class relaxes, which, at that point, is all they want to do and all they should be doing.

5 Keys to an Effective Dharma Talk

Objectives: make it personal, stay focused, and keep it short.

Method: Use this simple structure.

1. Tell a story: yoga is about relationships and your students want to get to know you. So share a little piece of your life by telling a quick story about something you did or something that happened to you. It doesn't have to be extraordinary. In fact, it's better to share something that could happen to anyone: a common challenge, a simple joy, or one of life's familiar annoyances. Take just a couple of minutes to share the experience and tell your students how it made you feel or what you thought about it, how you responded to it or, perhaps most significantly, how you wanted to respond to it.

2. Have a conversation: odds are that your experience is not entirely unique. So take a minute to ask your students if your story sounds familiar. You'll probably see nods of recognition, of 'been there, done that, know how you feel'. We share the same triumphs and tragedies, big and small. How we respond to life's roller coaster is what matters. One definition of 'dharma' is 'the best way to respond to one's destiny'. The question that your dharma talk is answering is, "How do we know the best way to respond to our destiny?"

3. Ask the experts: reference a passage from a yoga wisdom text that speaks to your story. What advice do the sages have for us? How do self-realized yogis respond to such situations? The amazing thing about traditional yoga wisdom texts is that, if we spend a little time with them and try to live their teachings, they have a way of telling us just what we need to hear just when we need to hear it. Take a minute to read the text and some relevant commentary that illuminates the text.

4. Share the effect: tell your students how your perception, thoughts, and actions were changed by looking at your story through the eyes of yoga's wisdom tradition. You can bolster your student's faith in the transformative power of yoga by telling them how you have been transformed! Realization is simply applied knowledge so you don't have to be a philosophy scholar to teach yoga philosophy; all you have to do is try to live whatever little bit of yoga philosophy you're studying and share your realizations along the way.

5. Use your imagination: ask a rhetorical question about what the world would be like if we all took our cues from the masters of yogic wisdom. After all, we don't just do yoga to change ourselves; we do yoga to change the world by changing ourselves. So encourage your students to join you, to take the journey down the path of yoga wisdom together,

starting right now: link the experience of yoga wisdom in the world to the experience of doing yoga on one's mat. You can make the story elements a metaphor or demonstrate a direct relationship to one's practice. Either way, the key to helping students take their practice off the mat and into their lives is to show them how your life of yoga off the mat applies to your practice on the mat.

Time-mapping the structure: Practice giving about two minutes to step 1, one minute to step 2, one minute to step 3, two minutes to step 4, and one minute to step 5: aim for six minutes of total time from casually starting your story as your yogis settle in to getting grounded and starting the practice.

The Pay-off: You'll feel a genuine connection to your students by sharing a little part of your self with them and your students will feel inspired by your personal example of how they, too, can live the philosophy of yoga.

Ethical Imperatives: Teaching Yoga as a Moral Philosophy

Most people come to a yoga class for the physical practice. After a while, some may develop an appreciation for the psychosomatic aspect of yoga. And yogis who take their practice to an even deeper level may feel inspired to re-evaluate how they live in the world; how they act in relationship to others. It's at this point that they may be curious to hear what yoga has to say about ethics and morality.

Yoga is, among many other things, a moral philosophy: it offers a specific set of ethics, a way of living that's conducive to the experience of yoga.

Definitions

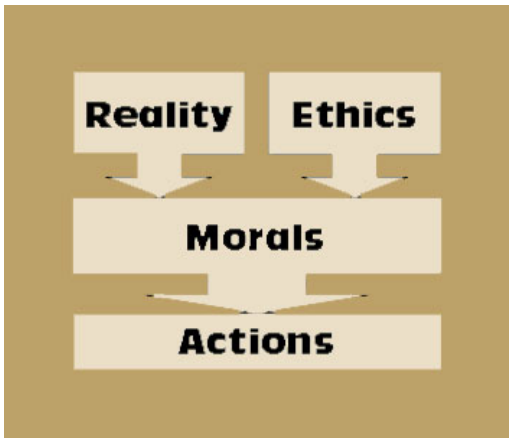
Moral Philosophy, also known as *Ethics,* is the branch of philosophy that addresses questions of morality.

The word 'ethics' is "commonly used interchangeably with 'morality' and sometimes narrowly defined as the moral principles of a particular tradition, group, or individual."

Some ethical theories distinguish between 'ethics' and 'morals', restricting morality to notions such as duty, obligation, and principles of conduct, and reserving ethics for methods of practical reasoning based on a notion of a virtue.

Ethics: externally imposed standards of acceptable behavior provided by institutions, groups or a culture to which an individual belongs. For example, lawyers, policemen and doctors have to follow a consistent ethical code laid down by their profession regardless of their own feelings or preferences.

Morals: personal principles of acceptable behavior that may be influenced by institutions, groups or a culture, but are created and upheld by the individuals themselves. Individual morals usually remain consistent but can change if the individual has a change in their personal beliefs and values.



Your perception of reality determines the nature of your moral philosophy.

How does yoga provide an ethical context that guides moral behavior?

What is reality according to yoga philosophy?

What is the means by which we can perceive reality according to yoga philosophy?

The Yamas and Yoga

Conformation to the *yamas*, the univeral ethics of yoga, is not a matter of subordination to a list of life-denying "thou shalt not"s based on some arbitrary ideal or blind obedience to an absolute authority. Rather, yoga's universal principles of morality are essential elements in the transformation of consciousness, in the personal development of an existential condition that facilitates the elevation of consciousness.

In other words, our state of being determines what we can know and understand. So it stands to reason that, in order to experience yoga, one must live in accordance with yogic principles.

Which brings us to the second thing to teach your students: how the *yamas* relate to the goal of yoga. In the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali follows his definition of yoga - the stilling of the turning of the mind - with the goal of yoga: experience of our true nature by direct perception. And the *yamas* describe the behavior of one situated in their true nature. By living according to the ethical imperitives of yoga, we act in accordance with our true nature.

Students may sense a fundamental difference between the ethical methodology of yoga and the ethical methodology of conventional wisdom. But they might not be able to articulate that difference. That's because students may not recognize unspoken assumptions about how we determine the morality of one's actions. Those assumptions can be found in two competing paradigmes of moral philosophy: Consequentialism and Deontology.

These are terms that are good for yoga teachers to be familiar with even if we never use them directly in the course of teaching our students. Consequentilism is the idea that the outcome of one's conduct is the ultimate basis for judging the rightness or wrongness of one's conduct. From a consequentialist standpoint, an act is morally right if it produces a desirable (or "good") result. If we value worldly prosperity, happiness, justice, righteousness, etc., then our sense of morality will be determined by those values.

But traditional yoga philosophy encourages us to be equipoised in both happiness and distress, to give up the pursuit of wordly prosperity in favor of the pursuit of transcendental knowledge, and re-defines justice and righteousness in terms of karma and surrender to an Absolute Reality. The values of yoga, being fundamentally different from worldy values, form a different premise upon with morality is determined. That premise is Deontology, which judges the morality of an action not on the consequences arising from that action but on how well the action conforms to rules of conduct conducive for the elevation of consciousness. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna urges Arjuna to act in his capacity as a warrior

because he is duty-bound to do so, not because fighting will produce a desirable outcome according to worldly values. Arjuna's action is elevated to the level of transcendental morality when he performs his duty as an act of selfless surrender to the Absolute Truth. In yoga, the sanctity of an action is found in an intention of submission to universal principles for a cause that's higher than one's own subjective values based on attachments and aversions.

If we teach our students the foundations of yoga as a moral philosophy before we teach them what the principles of universal morality are - if we put the 'why' before the 'what' - students will have a frame of reference that will both support a deeper appreciation for the *yamas* and provide greater impetus for attempting to follow them. And following the *yamas* is where yoga's potential for personal transformation and social activism really happens.

Tips for Teaching the *Gunas*

The *gunas* – the three qualities of material nature – are a secret hiding in plain sight. *Sattva* (purity, goodness, and knowledge), *rajas* (action, passion, and attachment), and *tamas* (inertia, ignorance, and oblivion) are present everywhere. But because they're affecting us we can't easily see them. It's a little like trying to understand how drunk you are when you're… drunk.

Here are four ways you can help your students become aware of when, where, and how the modes of material nature work:

The Classic Example: Creation, Maintenance, and Destruction

Most of us get our introduction to the *gunas* through their respective personifications in Vedic cosmology: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Brahma, the architect of the universe, is the personification of the mode of passion, Vishnu, the preserver of the universe, is the personification of the mode of goodness, and Shiva, the destroyer of the universe, is the personification of the mode of ignorance.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna describes the *gunas* as his "divine energy". By associating the *gunas* with their corresponding aspects of divinity, students can see a spiritual hand at work in the material world. This insight offrs the opportunity to associate creative activity, such as developing a new project at work, with the creative work of Brahma and the mode of passion. Similalrly, the few moments stillness on a yoga mat before or after an asana practice becomes an opportunity to associate the experience of tranquility with Vishnu and the mode of goodness, and the times when the wheels come off of life's wagon as opportunities to associate the experience of destruction with Shiva and the mode of ignorance. Each instance of associating goodness, passion, and ignorance with a divine principle offers the chance for everyday events to become moments of spiritual insight.

The Transitional Example: Morning, Noon, and Night

The hour just before sunrise is usually the most peaceful time of day. And as the sun approaches the horizon it brings pure light, illumination, and knowledge. This is the time when the world is influenced by the mode of goodness and the best time to practice meditation. If students are encouraged to take up a spiritual practice that starts right after

late night revelers have gone to bed and before the rest of the world wakes up, they'll have an opportunity to experience the radiant stillness that can only be felt when the mode of goodness is in session.

Once we get into the middle of the day, the world gets busy; the quality of passion take over. But the most significant aspect of the crimson mode is attachment to the results of our work. So the most important way we can teach our students to see the mode of passion is to encourage them to be aware of when they become caught up in passionate and results-oriented endeavors and ask them to notice how this may be distracting them from the pursuit of higher levels of consciousness.

As the sun sets and the sky darkens the mode of ignorance begins to hold sway. Whether you have students who toke up at 4:20 or head to a bar for 'happy hour', the distortion of consciousness that results from intoxication is the most obvious example of *tama guna* other than just plain sleep: unconsciousness is the quintessential condition of the mode of ignorance. So if you suggest to your students that they make a connection between nightlife and the quality of darkness they may start to see nighttime in a different light.

The Artistic Example: Primary Colors

Like the three primary colors, the three *gunas* mingle with one another to create combinations of complimentary and contrasting qualities with unlimited gradations of tints, shades and tones. The result is a palette of qualities that generates innumerable physical shapes, states of mind, environmental conditions, and cause and effect relationships.

Here's an example you can illustrate this with: you might say that someone absorbed in reading a book early in the morning in a serene pastoral setting is under the influence of the mode of goodness, that someone engaged in vigorous activity in the middle of the day in a bustling environment is being influenced by the mode of passion, and that someone who's asleep in a dark and quiet room late at night is being influenced by the mode of ignorance.

But the modes are not always so one-dimensional. For example, our early morning bibliophile may be reading a book on how to make a bomb; the reader's destructive intention colors the activity toward the quality of ignorance even though the activity itself is taking place in the mode of goodness.

A person vigorously engaged in some mid-day activity may be very attached to a desired outcome. However, the endeavor may be a selfless one, undertaken for the welfare of others. In that case we see a mix of both the mode of goodness and the mode of passion. On the other hand, they may be endeavoring for personal gain without regard for any ill-effect his success may have on others, in which case the combination of passion and ignorance is in play.

The person who's sleeping may have gone to bed early with the intention of rising before sunrise. They may be sleeping in a clean, peaceful environment conducive to restfulness. Even though sleep itself is in the mode of ignorance the intention and environment mix with the hue of the mode of goodness.

We can use examples like these to teach students how to recognize combinations of the *gunas* and notice how they relate to one another.

The Introspective Example: Seeing the *Gunas* in Ourselves

The most challenging place to be able to see the *gunas* at work is within our own field of consciousness. After all, our egos are invisible to us even though they're plainly visible to everyone else. And the *gunas* are what the mind, intelligence, and ego are made of at their

most fundamental levels.

The best opportunity to ask students to look for the *gunas* within themselves may be at the start of a class: once seated, ask them to take a deep breath and turn their senses inward for a moment of self-study. Then describe each of the qualities of nature:

- **Goodness:** born of purity, characterized by knowledge, clarity of thought, and detachment, it results in illumination, elevation of consciousness, and happiness.
- **Passion:** born of hankering, characterized by distortion of intelligence, intense endeavor, and attachment, it results in greed, anxiety, misery, and stalled spiritual progress
- **Ignorance:** born of delusion, characterized by insanity, apathy, and sleep, it results in illusion, foolishness, violence toward others, and degradation of consciousness

Ask your students to reflect back on the last 24 hours and see if they can remember when they felt the influence of each of these characteristics. It may be difficult, but it's a healthy exercise because seeing how the modes of nature affect our consciousness is the first step toward breaking through the illusion that we are the modes we identify with! And the goal of yoga is liberation: the elevation of consciousness to a spiritual state of freedom beyond the influence of the three modes of material nature.

7 Great Strategies for Reading Yoga Wisdom Texts

You've probably had students ask you which translation of the Yoga Sutras or the Bhagavad Gita you think they should read. It's great when our students want to explore yoga's philosophical foundations. But it's disheartening if we hear later that they stopped reading because they couldn't get past the first chapter without feeling lost. Reading translations of ancient Sanskrit texts requires some guidance, determination, and persistence, especially when the translations are accompanied by lengthy commentaries, as is the case in so many authoritative editions. Here are six helpful reading strategies you can share with your students that will help to make the texts accessible and fuel their enthusiasm for yoga philosophy:

1. Just read the translations first, then go back and read the commentary

If a student has an edition that includes the Sanskrit and elaborate commentaries, suggest that they start by ignoring the Sanskrit and the commentaries and just read the translation from start to finish. This will allow them to get a general sense of the complete text. Then they can go back and dive into the details of each verse by reading the commentary. It's easy to feel lost and overwhelmed by reading all of the commentaries along with each text on the first pass, and that can be very discouraging.

2. Try to understand the message of the author.

This may sound obvious but actually it's very tempting to interpret a yoga wisdom text in ways that validate our own 'personal truths'. We assume that there's no such thing as an objective or 'Absolute' truth, so we privilege our own perspective. We've also been taught to look for deeper meanings behind simple statements, especially when reading fiction. For example, when we read, "the curtains were blue", we may be tempted to read more into it

than just a description of the curtains. Yoga wisdom texts are not works of fiction; reading them as if they are will take us further away from their message rather than closer to it.

Communication requires both the articulation of the message by the sender and the comprehension of the message by the recipient. Anytime you try to communicate with another person you have an intention; you want to be understood by the person you're communicating with. The authors of traditional yoga wisdom texts want their message to be understood. If we interpret the text with the intention of validating our own opinions or lifestyle, then our egos will sabotage the reception of the message. So encourage students to read with a receptive attitude. That will increase their chances of understanding the message of the author.

3. Keep it in context

Taking verses out of context is another way that we can miss the message of the author. Sutras and verses are generally grouped together around a particular topic. For example, in the Bhagavad Gita we read that one should not lament for the living or for the dead. Taken in isolation we could entertain numerous speculations about what this means and why it may or may not be true. But if we read the subsequent verses we find the reasoning for the proposition; grieving for the body means that one has mistaken the temporary body for the eternal self. We risk sacrificing comprehensive understanding for the sake of personal meaning by interpreting a verse in isolation from previous or subsequent verses.

4. Defer to the authority of the author

Sometimes we come across passages that fly in the face of our modern sensibilities. It's tempting to accept the parts of the text that we like and reject the parts we don't by dismissing them as cultural anachronisms or by turning them into metaphors or by inventing a more favorable interpretation.

The problem with cherry picking the verses we like and casting the ones we dislike aside is that, by doing so, we elevate our own attachments and aversions – the very things yoga wisdom texts encourage us to transcend. In effect, we make we make ourselves the ultimate authority on yoga rather than deferring to the authority of the author of the wisdom text we are trying to understand. Students who do this effectively disconnect themselves from the line of transmission through which we receive yoga wisdom.

A better strategy is to encourage students to use their power of critical thinking to try to understand how a disconcerting passage or concept may be true rather than dismissing it, allegorizing it, or re-interpreting it according to their own prejudices.

5. Do some contemplative reading

The goal of contemplative reading is to allow the text to affect us rather than to absorb information. It's about associating with the author, listening carefully to the author's message, and letting the author's words penetrate deeply into the core of our consciousness.

Encourage students to take their time and hang out with what their reading. Taking a moment to set an intention of reading with an attitude of humility and gratitude is a great way to slow the process down right from the start. Then they can read through the verses and commentaries with rapt concentration until a word, a phrase, or an idea captures their attention. Repeating the significant phrase to themselves a few times will also help them assimilate an idea. Ask them to stay with that point until it releases them, and then

continuing their deliberate and attentive reading until another point captures their attention.

6. Act on what you read

Yoga philosophy is not armchair philosophy. A unique attribute of yoga wisdom texts is that they give the reader the means by which to re-create the revelatory experience of the author. Realization is applied knowledge: the knowledge contained in the texts comes alive for us when we actively apply the principles that such texts describe. This is the difference between book knowledge and realized knowledge. And the realizations that come from applied knowledge inspire us to dive even deeper into the texts that stimulate such transformative experiences.

So follow up with your students; ask them not just about what they've read or what they understood from their reading, but also about how they're applying their realizations in their life, both on and off the mat.

7. Re-read what you've already read

Something I always tell my students is, "Once you've read it, assimilated it and lived it, go back and read it again and repeat the process". I can read something that I've read 100 times and each time I find something that I feel like I'm seeing for the first time or something will stand out to me that I never thought much about before, or I come up with new questions that had never before occurred to me. This phenomenon never ceases to amaze me and helps me to appreciate the limitless depth of wisdom to be found in the yoga's literary tradition.