



Yoga is not just about postures, making yourself into a pretzel or becoming so enlightened, you levitate! There are different facets of yoga which you rarely learn in a regular asana class. One aspect of yogic philosophy is the koshas, or sheaths. There are five koshas: anandamaya kosha – the physical body where your focus is the asanas and learning what's a downward dog or what's a chaturanga. Then, you have pranamaya kosha – your energetic body – the breath, the life-force and its flow where you become more aware of your breath, connection to nature and chakras. Third, you have manomaya kosha – your emotional body – exploration of your emotions and emotional patterns. Fourth, you have vigyanamaya kosha - the intellectual body – where you exercise a higher faculty of mind, discernment and liberating intuition. Finally, you have annamaya kosha – the bliss body – the closest to 'self' there is.

Yoga is about union of the body, mind and soul and this union is only possible if these five koshas are in harmony with each other. If one is out of balance or neglected, that will throw all the other four out and can lead to disharmony, stress or strain. These five koshas cannot exist alone and are interconnected. They depend on each other. It is through your practise and meditation, that you will discover them. With experience and regular yoga practise, you'll notice that you can't go long without going to a class or do some sort of 'yoga' whether it be stretches on the mat, or what I like to call "Taking yoga off your mat" - being aware of your posture and breath in a stressful situation, going for a walk in the park or just sitting quietly enjoying a cup of tea.

But like I said earlier, yoga isn't just about postures. If you like to travel, think about your yoga journey like you're going on a trip. You first think about where you want to go, then you research flights or trains or buses; accommodation; what you could do and see, and most importantly, how much it's all going to cost! You might buy a Lonely Planet guide or use the internet. This first part is you deciding, I want to try out yoga and which studios you want to try. Then, just like you actually actually getting to your holiday destination and doing and seeing all those things, taking photos and having those memories that make it all worth it! That's you actually finding yoga studio and doing a class and finding you like it. Then returning to class or going back over a pose is like you returning to the same holiday destination but every time it's different – you take a different

route, you see something you didn't see before or you find yourself in a new location. Your experience in yoga is like travelling, you might be going with someone else but your experience, perspective and 'a-ha' moments will be different. And every time you learn a new pose and go back over it again and again, sometimes with a different teacher, sometimes not, you will revisit your holiday destination and find challenges and obstacles along the way but eventually, it will be amazing!

Finding your yoga is not just about doing the yoga poses, it's not just about stretches. It's not even about reading yoga books. *Life* is your yoga – wherever you find it. For example, in this day and age, we are sometimes busy with work and other commitments to take out our mats and dedicate an hour a day to our practise. It would be ideal but it's just not always possible so, instead, try and find ways to do yoga poses in your every day activities eg. Getting in and out of a chair like your doing chair pose; putting on your shoes while stretching your hamstrings; bending in a squat to look for something in the cupboard. The list is endless.

Another example is we all have 'teachers' in our lives, people we respect and who have the advice and experience we need at the right time. I'm a thinker, I love analysis and puzzle solving. I'm in my head 99% of the time so for me, since becoming a mother, my son taught me how to appreciate the little things in life again and to be totally in the moment and find quietness in my mind. When we first got him his sandbox, I remember him running the sand through his fingers and him just staring at it for ages, feeling the sensations and how it caught the sunlight. It's very easy for me to focus on the here and now when I find myself on my mat but when I'm off it, life is a little more challenging.

This is what I love most about yoga. I love that it teaches you about you. How you deal with things in YOUR life. How you deal with a stressful situation or don't deal with it and then gives you a way to relax, find your breath, to take a step back and observe, immerse yourself and then find a way to discern what's going on. It teaches you about your physical body – your limitations and movement but also how your mind and your ego affect you as well. I love that it's for everyone and I love that it's got everything – challenges, stretching, strength, relaxation, healing, flow, stamina, breathing, warmth, inquiry, problem solving, feeling alive.

Just like a lot of you, I had no idea what yoga was really about before I went to my first yoga class. My friend from high school had been doing it for a while and when she told me she was going, I asked if I could go with her some time. Without hesitation. She couldn't even really tell me what it was like. She just kept saying, just come and see for yourself. So I did. And it was during that very first lesson, in uttanasana, I said to myself “One day, I'm going to be a yoga teacher.”

To this day, I'm not really sure why from that very first lesson I decided I wanted to be a yoga teacher. For me, my yoga journey started with the physical challenges of yoga, the acrobatics and strength building. Over time, I learnt to unite my practise with my breath. My emotional journey with yoga, didn't manifest itself until about 2-3 years later and it was the first time ever, my yoga brought me to tears. I remember I was having an amazing class with my teacher, I felt no sorrow or sadness. My yoga always brought me peace and tranquility. I remember that I was doing upavistha konasa, I grabbed my big toes, leant forward, then gently squeezed by middle back muscles in to lengthen my chest away from my navel and before I knew it, the tears started rolling down my cheeks. At first, I was surprised and started to question it but then I went into 'yoga mode' - I didn't shy away from it, I didn't let it overwhelm either. I went back to my yoga, my witnessing of what was going on without judgement, without over-analysis. I still don't know what caused it because it doesn't matter.

In the past decade, my yoga journey has taken me in search for new teachers, new insights, going to various workshops and reading different books. I discovered my penchant for rehabilitation and

healing along with my own ups and downs (injuries and relationship breakdowns) but throughout it all, yoga has always been there like a friend that always there for you when you need them. It's truth is beyond compare – it doesn't tell you what you want to hear, it tells you what you need to hear but only if you listen.

I'm really excited about the UN announcing June 21 as International Yoga Day and giving yoga the recognition it deserves as a holistic healing modality. It connects every yogi throughout the world, whether you're just thinking about it or a yogi of years of experience. I'm also super blessed to have you here with me, sharing our yoga and raising some funds for the survivors of Nepal.