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The Stories of Modern Yoga - History or Myth?

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Abstract

In the West, yoga of today is practiced with a strong focus on the physical exercises; whilst in India yoga is generally understood to be a mainstream ancient spiritual philosophy [1]. This difference is at the core of a rigorous ongoing debate of historical arguments between Indian scholars and secular gurus; and Western researchers and yoga experts about what yoga, its practices and origins really are.

The process of documenting history is always an attempt to frame events and actions within the context of time with man as the essential component. But both elements are culturally conceptualized; in Europe time is perceived as of an essential quality, but in India an illusion where reality is of "timeless nature" [2].

This cultural disparity has compelled me to analyze the arguments as to how man and time as social and cultural constructs are expressed in these opposing understandings of Yoga. The arguments with implied assertions form fundamental presumptions in which there appears to be an incompatibility between a fundamental Indian belief in the eternal truth in comparison with Western faith with its reality of documented facts.

The starting point for my analysis was Agamben's statement about time, history and culture: "Every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated. Similarly, every culture is first and foremost a particular experience of time, and no new culture is possible without an alteration in this experience" [3].

I have first discussed temporality; how the cultural understandings of time create the framework of logic in these arguments and how this affects the conclusion arrived upon. Thereafter the interpretations of modern yoga as cultural and social narratives for the archetypal meanings they espouse, and lastly how they are related to history, myth, legend and the understanding thereof. The final debate between the Western and Indian scholars was then eventually put into a perspective of representation, which seems to boil down to who has the right to tell the story of Yoga.

Here are the main findings of my analysis:

Temporality: The Western conception of time being solely linear has been culturally and historically amplified in Europe, where to prognosticate is to foresee a development with elements of the past introduced into the future. In the Western story of modern postural yoga āsana's origins are seen to be the key element of the interpretation, both in the near and the distant past. This presumption has an ingrained cultural bias whereby the amount of āsana are considered to have increased over time due to human causation [4]. This logic leads in the Western interpretation to the final conclusion that modern posture-based yoga cannot be considered a successor of the Indian tradition of Hathayoga [5] In the Indian presentation the past is not an object but present in the current moment and this cultural framework sets the condition for what can be considered knowledge. From this perspective it is not imperative to know by whom or during which period the āsana appeared, was created or developed as they are seen as timeless instruments.

Narratives: Western history is written about men who, in their quest to master time, perform great deeds, by other men who use superlatives to capture those events [6]. The Western biography interprets the great Yogi Krishnamacharya without the mythical glow, and extraordinary knowledge, as in the Indian version. A narrative where the qualities and nature of the main character are not credible must therefore be presumed not to be creating the same impression for the reader as the Indian [7]. The view presented by the Western researchers of casting doubt on the main character's qualities thus weakens and disfigures that which the readers of the Indian version aspire to.

In a comparative analysis of these two interpretations and their different agendas it therefore at first resembles a contrast between history according to Western standards versus the Indian practice of recounting legend and myth [8]. The disciplinary boundary dissolves though as they are both culturally framed interpretations with differing objectives.



Myth: History, following Western standards, contains in theory no greater knowledge or truth than myth, although greater importance may be attached to it if it is deemed to be a historical fact [9]. The legend of Krishnamacharya embodies the message of epic Indian myths that divinity can be experienced through the combined yogic practices of right belief, pure action and sacred ritual. Krishnamacharya's character, his qualities, and his nobility are therefore key elements for the understanding and meaning of the Indian message of yoga; even understanding the role of myth in his life.

The meaning and the significance of his character can then only be fully understood as a mythical or legendary figure in its proper cultural context [10] and therefore become upheld and honoured as a blueprint for a yogic way of life.

Introduction

Yoga is a phenomenon that has its roots far back in the history and culture of India. For more than a century this discipline has had a growing following in the West where interest has increased exponentially and in recent times reached many millions of practitioners [11].

In 2014 the UN General Assembly declared June 21st to be the annual International Yoga Day, upon the request of the current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to UN resolution 69/131. "Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India. The word 'yoga' derives from Sanskrit and means to join or to unite, symbolizing the union of body and consciousness. Today it is practiced in various forms around the world and continues to grow in popularity" [12].

In the West, yoga of today is practiced with a strong focus on the physical exercises; whilst in India yoga is generally understood to be a mainstream ancient spiritual philosophy [1] and view of life, darśana, within three major indigenous religions of South Asia; Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism [13]. This difference is at the core of a rigorous ongoing debate between Indian scholars and secular gurus; and Western researchers and yoga experts about what yoga, its practices and origins really are. Arguments are made with references to sources and stories, which from a cross-cultural perspective are an expression of the differences of thought, meaning and practices between the two opposing views.

The process of documenting history is always an attempt to frame events and actions within the context of time with man as the essential component. But both elements are culturally conceptualized; in Europe time is perceived as of an essential quality, but in India an illusion where reality is of "timeless nature" [2]. This question compels me to analyze these arguments as to how man and time as social and cultural constructs are expressed in these opposing understandings of Yoga.

In Patañjali's yogasūtra, commonly regarded as the foremost authority on traditional Indian Yoga, yoga is, in verses 1.2 and 1.3 defined as:

yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ

Yoga is controlling the states of the mind,

tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe'vasthānam

so, the seer's standing is in its own nature.

[14] (my translation)

This definition in Sanskrit is widely accepted and translated in

the majority of interpretations but must, (no matter how close to the original source) be said to have certain metaphysical notions about who and what the seer is with a presupposition of man being comprised of both consciousness and matter.

As a result of my studies into the aforementioned dialogue I have come to question the fundamental non-explicit assumptions of these arguments. There appears to be an incompatibility between a fundamental Indian belief in the eternal truth in comparison with Western faith with its reality of documented facts. A contradiction not unfamiliar to those studying India's traditions of storytelling and mythology, whereby cosmic principles are often reframed within everyday stories "expressing human dilemmas" which "supplies listeners with a moral" [15].

I will therefore, in a comparative cultural analysis, discuss these implied assertions which form fundamental presumptions in the arguments and their interpretations with the hope of reaching a comprehensive evaluation of what appears to be an unresolvable dilemma. For this purpose, I will in the following paragraphs make a thorough investigation of these matters. I will use the comparative cultural methodology of temporality (human perception of time), narrative analysis and the function of myth within this context in order to make the meanings explicit. In doing so I will refrain from assessing the validity of the facts presented or the accuracy of the stories and instead focus on discussing these culturally divergent interpretations and their implications.

Methodology and problem formulation

The starting point for this discussion is Agamben's statement about time, history and culture: "Every conception of history is invariably accompanied by a certain experience of time which is implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated. Similarly, every culture is first and foremost a particular experience of time, and no new culture is possible without an alteration in this experience" [3].

The stories of modern yoga make use of selected historical sources and interpretations of past experiences which take place in a different time frame from the one in which the texts were written. Following Agamben's statement, there are both built-in chronological and cultural differences in the understanding of Time conceptually, when the story or myths of modern yoga are told. I'm questioning to what extent this temporality of past, present and future are explicit in this discourse, and how Time directly experienced as inferred in the original Indian manuscripts is used in the contemporary interpretations of Yoga. In the academic

process I have used in this analysis I first discuss temporality; how the cultural understandings of time create the framework of logic in these arguments and how this affects the conclusion arrived upon. Thereafter I will examine the interpretations of modern yoga as cultural and social narratives for the archetypal meanings they espouse and lastly how they can be related to myth, legend and the understanding thereof. Finally, I will seek to put the debate between the Western and Indian scholars into a perspective of representation, which seems to boil down to who has the right to tell the story of Yoga.

Agamben's text on time and history also introduces a political theme [3]. which here I refrain from going into (although political motives naturally exist when a resolution is enacted in the UN as is the case for International Yoga Day).

In a comparative cultural analysis, I will proceed to examine and discuss the differences between the relationship the Western and Indian perspectives have with regards to time and assess the opposing logic their arguments reflect. I will continue by analyzing the narratives in these interpretations for character and plot in order to clarify the points they seek to convey. I will then question in what way the Indian story can be understood as myth or legend and discuss what result it produces culturally. Finally, I seek to put into perspective the debate between Western and Indian scholars as a cultural encounter.

A Study of a Modern Yoga Story

In *Yoga Body*, a controversial book by researcher Mark Singleton, published by Oxford University Press [5], various substantiated, though culturally influenced, claims are made that modern yoga, understood as physical postures called *āsana*, has never been the primary aspect of any Indian yoga tradition [5]. Instead, a connection to Scandinavian forms of gymnastics is emphasized: "how closely his [Krishnamacharya's] system matches one of the most prominent modalities of gymnastic culture in India, as well as in Europe" [5] (in brackets [] my note). The legendary historical yoga guru Krishnamacharya stands as a central figure in this debate with his actions, abilities, and credibility playing a crucial role in the controversy between this ancient "sacred truth" and the historical representation.

Several high-profile Danish newspapers printed articles on the subject, following the publication of *Yoga Body*, with reference to the book. These articles confirmed Western understanding of yoga as physical body culture: "Yoga - the well-known Danish national sport" with reference to the world-famous Danish gymnastics pioneer Niels Bukh from the 1930s [16]. Another article referred to yoga as exotic gymnastic: "[A] mix of physical exercises from the British Army, Scandinavian gymnastics, bodybuilding and esoteric teachings of the 19th century added an inciting Indian touch" [17] of which both, in most likelihood have been inspired by the internet article "Open Magazine 12th February 2011 – Not as Old as You Think.. nor very Hindu either" [11]. Indian sources cited in *Yoga Body* [16] dispute the interpretation that yoga is only *āsana*. Yoga is perceived by these Indian scholars as a spiritual discipline in which the practitioner strives for a physical, mental and spiritual experience of both the sensory and the metaphysical: "Only then

it is called yoga" [18]. It is this conundrum that I will attempt to analyze with particular respect to the cultural definitions and interpretations which yield different understandings that in turn result in a lack of cross-cultural dialogue regarding the story of modern Yoga.

The Comparative Cultural Analysis

In the next sections, I will be using the aforementioned methodological grips, and be discussing the cultural assumption that the stories and arguments rest upon with the aim of uncovering their innate logic and concealed mechanisms [19].

Time, linear versus circular

The story of yoga dates back to ancient times and its millennial history forms a backdrop for the current debate regarding modern yoga [20]. This setting with its inseparable relationship to the past and its expanded concept of time has significance for the current perception of the story of Yoga. The underlying relationship with time of the Western and Indian stories, respectively, are not the same since time is a cultural parameter which the logic of the arguments follow. This has an impact on the interpretations depending on whether this temporality is of a linear or circular character. When time, in Western culture, is understood as a linear concept comprising events and experiences in a chronological order of beginning, middle and end [3], then development is an irreversible structured process in which cause and effect explain the before and after. An implicit Western assumption shaped by the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution of Europe within a Christian context in which time is seen as a resource [3]. A resource that the Western mind has constantly strived to master since Aristotle defined time as a continuum of infinite and measurable moments [3].

In the age of globalisation this concept of time is an all-pervading presumption whereby progress is measured in terms of advancements on the timeline of experiences [21] and therefore development is automatically understood to be a progression of measurable steps and quantifiable changes. This commonly accepted understanding of time has continuously shaped our perception of the accounts of science and the humanities. Thus, the cultural presuppositions which inform this dialogue are rooted in these overarching assumptions [22]. A tacit understanding which provides a perspective of linear progression all too familiar to the Western mind meaning that arguments which use other forms of cultural temporality become difficult for it to reconcile and instead nurtures a stereotyping of the "other".

This conception of time being solely linear has been culturally and historically amplified in Europe, where to prognosticate is to foresee a development with elements of the past introduced into the future. This means that the experience of the present is understood in an interpreted historical context. Thus, the past is understood through elements that occur in the future and interpreted from this vantage point, just as the present is seen and experienced through selective analysis of the past [4]. A transient understanding of time which is a truism in Western thinking even in scientific traditions but is not however sufficient to explain all phenomena in other cultures or countries outside Europe.

In the Western story of modern postural yoga; āsana's origins are seen to be the key element of the interpretation, both in the near and the distant past. The number of āsana being used in the investigation of the historical sources are then sequenced in a chronological order, producing the argument that their number has evolved over time from 15 in the earliest text to 32 and subsequently 84 [5]. The past is in this view sought to be experienced and interpreted based on the present's focus on the understanding of the amount of āsana in a linear continuum, where the oldest texts contain the fewest number of postures. This interpretation of the proliferation in the quantity of āsana is based on the assumption that older texts have greater authenticity than more recent texts, so that yoga postures in the oldest texts are considered original. An interpretation that follows the modern logic of acceleration eg. the greater the number, the more recent its development due to the law of cause and effect. This presumption has an ingrained cultural bias whereby the amount of āsana are considered to have increased over time due to human causation [4].

This logic leads in the Western interpretation to the final conclusion that modern posture-based yoga cannot be considered a successor of the Indian tradition of haṭhayoga [5] claiming that new yoga postures have been developed by recent Indian innovators: "By his own estimation, therefore, Krishnamacharya is familiar with over eight times more asanas than any of his contemporaries (the best of whom know about eighty-four), making him a major authority within this vastly diminished tradition" [23].

The above quote makes the case for Krishnamacharya having known more yoga postures than anyone else during this era, and, as they are not mentioned in the source texts, they could not be authentic or from the pure haṭhayoga tradition. This logic of cause and effect based on a linear sequence of events leads these researchers to the conclusion that Krishnamacharya's knowledge must have come from texts known at the time and unfamiliar postures must therefore have been invented by him. By this logic his insights are not considered his own or of divine inspiration

but reappropriated from obscure sources. On the other side of this cross-cultural debate, the Indian scholars see this conclusion as an interpretation purposely intended to show that Krishnamacharya did not have his own wisdom and postures were mimicked from Western gymnastics [18]. Western academics do not consider Krishnamacharya's revelation of āsana in trance of importance or give merit to its transcendence of time or due credit to the significance of metaphysical phenomena within the Indian context which gave rise to the yoga tradition [24].

This Western argument thus rests upon the assumption that the historical texts reflect the complete knowledge of the time, i.e. that the described āsana were also the total number known by the authors of the original texts at the time of composition.

Another assumption could be that the studied texts contain examples of selected yoga postures, whilst others were omitted. In Indian traditions oral transmission between teacher and student is the foundation of the teaching methodology, not least the teaching of physical yoga postures [20]. It can therefore also be argued that the manuscripts in question merely express that more āsana were inserted over time in the newer texts, but not that a variety of āsana did not exist and were not also practiced and taught earlier. The Indian scholars are critical of the Western argument as āsana existed in India before the British colonial era and are depicted in many ancient Indian temples [18]. A view later confirmed in Western scholarly work: "In fact, it is clear that more than eighty-four āsana-s were practiced in some traditions of Haṭha Yoga before the British arrived in India." [25].

These Indian scholars consider the western hypothesis but without chronological reference, instead they refer to major events. In this case specifically; when the British ruled in India, a long time after the temple constructions and carvings on the walls were completed. This observation also positions yoga within a religious context with āsana being ubiquitous temple ornamentation [Figure 1].



Figure 1: Yoga-posture carved out on wall in the Jain temple Śravaṇa Beḷagoḷa.

Haṭhayoga is a centuries-old tradition with original texts from the middle ages rooted in the ancient history of India [13], in which yoga and āsana are referred to as religious practices [5]. In these texts references are made to the god Śiva and in one of the earliest texts, Gorakṣa Paddhati verses 1.8-1.9, Śiva is attributed as the source of āsana and his creation of 84 yoga postures:

“There are as many postures as there are species of beings. [Only] Maheshwara [i.e., Shiva] knows all their varieties of the 840,000, one for each [100,000] has been mentioned. Thus, Shiva created eighty-four seats (potha) [for yogins].” [26] The 84 āsana represents one for every 100,000 creatures, where only Śiva knows all of them. A sacred truth, which is also mentioned in a later text of this tradition the Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā, verses 2.1-2.2:

“All together there are as many asanas as there are species of living beings. Shiva has taught 8,400,000.” “Of these, eighty-four are preeminent, of which thirty-two are useful in the world of mortals [27].”

In his book *Yoga Makaranda* from 1934, Krishnamacharya has the same approach: “we generally only find eighty-four postures in use” [23]. He puts the total number at 8.4 million, which over time has been reduced to the 700 he practiced himself. Krishnamacharya’s thinking follows the mythology of the Sanskrit texts which believe that āsana has a divine origin of which only a limited number have been passed on. In his trance-revealed text *Yoga Rahasya*, the secret or mystery of yoga [24], Krishnamacharya displays his conviction in the origin of āsana; śloka I-48:

“In this regard, eminent yogi-s have only shown a few āsanās, as examples. In the *Dhyāna Upaniṣad*, Lord Śiva tells Pārvati “There are as many āsanās as there are living species””

He argues that the number of known yoga postures is irrelevant and that a focus on this is an expression of lack of understanding; in śloka I-49:

“Therefore, who has the authority to count the number of āsanās? If someone says this is the number of āsanās, it is a reflection of his lack of knowledge.” [24]

In Indian thinking, knowledge regarding the total number of āsana means absolute truth is known by the god Śiva which has only partly been given to the wisest of men. These enlightened sages have imparted knowledge of yoga to humans, including āsana. It is in this sense of transmission that past knowledge has been lost over time and the number of known āsana has decreased. When Krishnamacharya rediscovered āsana, he exhibited what would from an insider’s view be considered divine yogic qualities through his insights into wisdom and eternal truth (see Patañjali’s definition of Yoga, p. 2).

In the Western interpretation, the opposite logic is used, meaning that over time people develop more āsana, although of course some also could be lost along the way. A cultural analysis of āsana having a divine or mythological origin is not considered in the Western interpretation of the source material. The Western stories by Singleton, White and de Michaelis are rational and chronological descriptions, which follow the norms of an academic claim to recorded history. The development of āsana is documented from original scriptures and texts as a consequence of human actions

according to the Western understanding of linear progression as cause and effect.

This way of putting the human being at the center of the development of āsana in a linear understanding of time, following Koselleck, has a background in the historic time of the Reformation in Europe with the secularization and reduction of the Christian church’s dominance and the corresponding increase in the power of monarchs. A way of writing history with time measured against the monarch’s lifetime with a beginning, a middle and an end which shifts the focus towards human actions, and away from the eternal and divine [4]. This approach to recording history with a contemporary western mindset explains linear time, based on developments in European history. India has another background both culturally, philosophically and historically which surely must therefore lead to different interpretations of its own past.

In the authoritative Indian epic *Mahābhārata* time is explained as being endless in nature underpinned by the concept of Yuga as an infinite recurring cycle of four ages; “the age of the world, long mundane periods of years *Kṛta* or *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpara*, and *Kali*, of which the first three have already elapsed, while the *Kali*, which began at midnight between the 17th and 18th of Feb. 3102 B.C., is that in which we live. The four Yugas comprise an aggregate of 4,320,000 years and constitute a ‘great Yuga’ or *Mahā-yuga*.” [28].

One thousand cycles of the period *Mahā-yuga* are called a *kalpa* and are equal to a day or night for the creator of the universe, *Brahmā*, meaning that 4,320,000,000 years of human life is 12 hours for the creator [13]. We are in this regard to understand that Time is infinite, and our lives are very short moments within the dimensions of creation. Thus proportions of cosmic Time are not simply measurable with orbits around the sun and the relation to human life can be expressed as “this mythological conception of time in which the scale of human existence pales into insignificance in comparison to this infinite cycle, we consequently understand why the Indians seem far removed from the problems of time and the meaning of their own actions in daily life.” [29].

In an Indian context time and history often have a background in a religious setting and with circularity that conceptually is comparable to the understanding of time in ancient Europe. A circular time like the ancient Greeks before Aristotle understood it to be, as a continuum of moments that with the seasons returned connecting the past and future in the present. Time without direction but in periodic repetition, as an image of eternity in motion. Time without beginning, middle and end, but with returning events of repeating actions [3].

This kind of temporality leads to differing interpretations of the story of modern yoga which can be explained using Indian examples as the meeting of civilian life and the infinite where circular and linear time intersect one another. A clash between society’s representations of civil time and eternal time illustrated by an example of the Indian goddess *Durgā*, who restores order upon her return in an annual celebration [30]. This public celebration of the return of *Durgā* exemplifies the relationship between the linear and circular as the humans socially organize their life of time and place within the mythological realm of *Durgā*’s controlling principle. A realisation of the meaning of events perceived as beyond human

control in the restoration of universal order [30].

A similar argument can be brought forward with regards to a circular understanding of the origin of yoga postures within the context of the divine and eternal concept of time. Logically it would therefore follow that: Śiva knows all āsana. Thus, āsana exist in eternity no matter how many of them the mortals have knowledge of. The mortals, the humans, will learn the āsana from Śiva, who will reappear to selected yogis and restore order. From this perspective it is not imperative to know by whom or during which period the āsana appeared, was created or developed as they are seen as timeless instruments. In researching the origins of yoga, the over emphasis of āsana misses the fundamental purpose of this discipline and in the circular conception of time āsana is not considered to be the essential element of Yoga.

“If it’s just exercise, we do not consider it yoga in India” [18].

“You know the first distinction in India about this, is what they call parā and aparā. Aparā is the sensory domain of the world, which everybody can now experience. Parā is an internal experience, that is parā sensory. India claims the yoga is the bridge, the aṣṭāṅga yoga, 8 limbs of yoga, is the bridge between the aparā and the parā. So, I smoothly enter the domain of parā by āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra I start the aparā. Then I am in my mental emotional domain. The mental emotional domain I can take care of by dhāraṇā and dhyāna. And these two lead to another domain called the spiritual domain” [18].

This Yoga story does not place āsana at the center, neither in the present nor in the past, but it points to the aim of a discipline that gains meaning when explained by the experiences of human beings who have attained a particular kind of existential knowledge and introspective realisation that can be recognized in moments of meditative trance.

A larger discussion might be about the significance of the relationship between individual insight and universal wisdom. An existential dilemma between universal duty and the individual’s own personal morality. This moral paradox is described in the primary religious text of India, The Bhagavad Gītā, BhG, which deals with two central themes [31], dharman and karman ; Sanskrit words that can be translated as order of nature, law of the universe, established order and action, duty or execution [28]. In Indian thinking dharman, the law of nature, must be accepted, allowing the individual through accepting his duties in life to meet death in moral peace. The consequences of one’s actions, karman, are whether one achieves liberation from the cycle of life and rebirth or has more births to come [13]. A circular understanding of human life.

In a synthesis of Indian and Western views on the nature of life the Indian scholars have critically interpreted Christian teachings on the belief in cycles of births. A life span understood in linear time which is then placed into circular Indian perception of a variable of cyclical rebirths. For example, being born a Christian is perceived as the last birth. This can then be interpreted as liberation in the Indian sense: “Being born as a Christian is the last birth, so you will get to liberation - just surrender to Jesus” [18]. A similar intersection is seen in Arendt’s argument about human time being

linear and biological time being circular. With action as the human agent intervening in the cycle of nature. Man’s rectilinear motion intersects the circularity of biological life. Mortality is understood to be moving in a straight line in a universe where everything else moves circularly [6]. Actions can be seen therefore as being man’s attempt to make himself immortal by creating his own history, specifically when these actions are performed according to his concept of free will [6].

Human action has another meaning in The Bhagavad Gītā’s explanation of karmayoga, as an expression of Indian thought regarding the individual’s place in the universe eg. The renunciation by the yogi of all fruits or results of his actions; an unselfish or desireless action termed niṣkāma karma in Sanskrit [28]. In a simple comparison Western thinking emphasizes the purpose of man having the desire of writing himself into history thereby attaining immortal status by changing the course of nature. In Indian philosophy man seeks liberation from the cyclical law of the universe by doing one’s natural duty through selfless actions so that divinity, and therefore immortality, is attained and the individual is freed from the cycle of birth and death. In the Western story of modern yoga events are based on human action in a horizontal progression interpreted and historicized based on the logic of cause and effect. A development whereby āsana in the modern age is understood as a product where more means recent and fewer means ancient. Āsana and the quantity evolve over time, so the more there are the newer. Krishnamacharya’s development of yoga postures is therefore interpreted as his desire to write himself into history. An intention which does not correspond to the Indian belief in selfless action.

The Western academic’s understanding being that āsana has never been the primary object of the Indian yoga tradition does not contradict the Indian understanding of yoga, where āsana is seen as the bridge to the spiritual domain, but the distinct focus on āsana in the western story about yoga leads to a very different set of results. The conclusion that haṭhayoga traditions have no successor in modern yoga is built on the implicit assumption of a linear continuity of cause and effect. An understanding that creates the past as an object. This is the rewriting of history without giving due consideration to culturally distinct concepts of time and their relationship with the notions of past and present. A historicity, historical authenticity, based on Western comprehension dependent on the assumption that what has not been documented does not exist. When evaluating this western hypothesis surely objectivity should be expected from the authors in order that their point is made explicit to the reader as they construct their historicity. Here it is clearly expressed as: “No writer of history can claim to be without a particular view or certain theory, when he or she shortens the distance between cause and effect. The ethic requires recognition of this interplay” [32].

The Indian custom of illustrating profound truths using parables and stories does not lead to the same questioning with regard to the issue of how many āsana Krishnamacharya knew; whether he had learned them from a Himalayan sage or rediscovered them in trance. In the Indian presentation the past is not an object but present in the current moment and this cultural framework sets the condition for what can be considered knowledge. This condition is

also true for Western scholars when they construct arguments with probable causation that is not found in the source material itself [32]. The Western interpretation neglects the cultural significance of temporality and although the format is of a non-personal level of abstraction, this interpretation also contains a narrative of character and plot [7]. A narrative which requires the reader's complicity, but a completely different compliance than the Indian perspective which will be discussed in the following section.

Narratives of Modern Yoga

Stories can be analyzed as narratives with character and plot for the interpretation of inner landscapes of thinking and intention and external landscapes of action and social relations [7]. Arendt points out that the modern Western human understanding of history is a product of ancient Greece with an emphasis on individuality, actions and events in which men become immortalized when they perform great deeds, and the writers and poets, speak great words about them [6]. The story is written about men who, in their quest to master time, perform great deeds, by other men who use superlatives to capture those events.

The history of modern yoga contains just such a story of great actions described with grand language about the legendary yogaguru Śrī Tirumalai Krishnamacharya from Mysore called the grandfather of modern yoga [33]. A historical personage of whom there is both a Western and an Indian story, which in contrasting ways lay out the character's inner and outer landscapes. Thoughts and beliefs that are made comprehensible for others through the reports of his actions and relationships, which therefore convince the reader into complying with the relative cultural perception [7].

The interpretations and conceptualisation of the two sides of the same coin will now be investigated with particular reference to the divergence of these opposing narratives. Commencing with the Indian account, Krishnamacharya studied the philosophy and vidyā of yoga in Tibet from a sage on the shores of Lake Manasarovar in the Himalayas, where he spent seven years with his teacher. Later, having cured the Maharaja of Mysore of ill health [34], he was invited to teach yoga at the Maharajas Sanskrit College in Mysore. In 1934 Krishnamacharya wrote his first book, *Yoga Makaranda*, on the practice of yoga [34,35].

The heart of this story can be interpreted thus; Krishnamacharya taught authentic yoga, deeply rooted in the Indian tradition which he had learned from a great guru residing in the near mythical Himalayas. He had traveled far to the highest mountains and had searched for many years before discovering and experiencing the fruits of yoga. It is through his great deeds and sacrifices that we understand the value of his conviction and call to the science of yoga. He and his qualities are finally recognized by the king who wants him to come to Mysore to teach at the palace, a fitting conclusion to a heroic tale.

In our analysis we point to the plot of this narrative where we are to understand that action causes change, changes in the character's mind and his relationships. The character, Krishnamacharya, who following his inner quest acquires knowledge of yoga, pure wisdom, in a persistent quest of great importance with regard to his relationships with his teacher and the Maharaja. His reward

comes when he finds a revered guru, Rama Mohan Brahmachari, and becomes immersed in the ancient secret teachings of yoga. A narrative with a universal message about perseverance in following one's inner conviction leading to the achievement of goal and recognition of it. A version of events exemplified by a character with strong convictions and an unyielding sense of purpose with important alliances that can be understood across cultures [7].

In the Western academic compiling of history, it is "imperative" for the authors to focus on the "displacement" in the shift between postmodernism's (Western) self-preoccupation with physical exercise and fitness and Indian traditions [36]. This focus on displacement through "critical scholarship" is with the aim to put into relief the history of Krishnamacharya, his teachings and knowledge of yoga in such a way that he cannot be considered as a succession of the Indian yoga tradition [36].

The historical popularity of the main character is acknowledged in the Western version with the words: "No person on the planet has had greater impact on contemporary yoga practice than Tirumalai Krishnamacharya" [33], but the nature and credibility of the main character cannot stand for their research. They do not find documented evidence of his travels and studies: "There are a number of problems with this biographical sketch." Krishnamacharya's character and credibility are questioned in the book "The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali" [33]. A doubt is substantiated with a chronological timeline where his actions cannot be established or reconciled as historical events: "Another chronological problem in Krishnamacharya's academic itinerary . . . as well as the relations in the plot are doubted in the form of "None of these dates permits an encounter of any sort" [33].

The main character's insight into yoga is challenged as well: "While his biographers repeatedly stress the depth of Krishnamacharya's personal teachings of Yoga Sutra philosophy none of his later writings show any evidence of progress beyond the superficial and inaccurate treatment of the subject found in his 1935 and 1941 works" [33].

A biography that interprets the great Yogi Krishnamacharya without the mythical glow, and extraordinary knowledge, as in the Indian version. A view that casts doubt on the main character's qualities, which the readers of the Indian version would have aspired to. An account in which the Western striving to focus on displacement could be said to be a character assassination of him as the protagonist as the meaning is changed profoundly due to the nature of the context. The overall Western retelling of the story of modern yoga can therefore be asserted to deconstruct the narrative with Krishnamacharya as the main character in particular and the plot of the origins of āsana and connection to the Indian yoga traditions in general. A selective interpretation which recontextualizes the main character that does not lead the reader to the same conclusions as the original Indian intention. The Western academic's timeline is curated as a scientific analysis with documented facts about men, selected events and individual actions that lead to a different rationale, a different interpretation of history and the past with a contrary intention than readers of the Indian narrative would perceive. A Western narrative where the qualities and nature of the main character are not credible must

therefore be presumed not to be creating the same impression for the reader as the Indian narrative [7].

The focus on āsana as analyzed in the previous paragraph also leads to a different conclusion, as the plot is not about relationships with sages, events in the high North of India or travels to the Himalayas. The plot of āsana as divine origin is obscured and replaced by a mix of Western gymnastics and body culture unrelated to Indian yoga traditions. As a result of this obfuscation, the story as it is told in *Yoga Body* [36] contains a narrative based on European concepts and notions about history and yoga's place in it. It would therefore seem that the thoughts about the past have consequences for present actions in which a series of carefully selected events are chosen to reaffirm the chronological journey to illustrate this conclusion [37].

This Western reframing is designed to be understood as a factual account of a concretized interpretation of the past based on research conducted on ancient manuscripts as well as more recent accounts from the Colonial era. The selected elements which comprise this cohesive narrative have been conducted according to rational academic principles. This reframing is then widely accepted as the truth in the eyes of the Western readership and finally achieves academic consensus [8]. This story has been quoted in newspaper articles reinforcing its credibility, predominantly due to the reputation of the publisher Oxford University Press [5]: “..what we today call yoga is in fact a mix of the physical exercises of the English army, Scandinavian gymnastics, bodybuilding and esoteric teachings from the 19th century added into an enticing Indian imprint” [17] based on Singleton's claim about yoga postures: “At least twenty-eight of the exercises in the first edition of Bukh's manual are strikingly similar (often identical) to yoga postures occurring in Pattabhi Jois's Ashtanga sequence or in Iyengar's *Light on Yoga*” [5] though omitting Singleton's vague reservation on the following page: “I point out these similarities not to suggest that Krishnamacharya borrowed directly from Bukh..”. Historical authenticity within an alien cultural context presupposes the researchers' agenda with regard to how social understanding of the past and future inform the present and are included in the actions of the people living in it. Therefore, this alternate historicity changes the meaning of what is being observed [8]. This lack of nuance is interpreted critically by the Indian scholars as a problematic facet of Western reproductions of Indian history. “The problem with the West is, black is black, white is white. It is not so in India” [18]. This overlooking of cross-cultural variance misses the point of Indian stories whereby significant events are doubted due to lack of factual documentation and then judged from outside their cultural settings. The message becomes adulterated for the reader, which then in the West confirms yoga as physical exercises, whereas in the Indian story it is a central pillar of society's conventions and truths.

This strategic approach to cultural reappropriation with its inherent neglect of awareness of the disparity with other modes of thought and practices must therefore presuppose one's own tacit assumptions. This is necessary for clarification of comparative differences in an objective presentation particularly in the format of critical scholarship [37]. Though when critical scholarship refers to an accepted convention in the Sanskrit tradition it seems to be

a limited consideration without the full cultural meaning: “The attribution of his learning [Krishnamacharya's] to the grace of his guru and to the mysteriously vanished Yoga Korunta [manuscript] can be understood as a standard convention in a living (Sanskritic) tradition where conservation and innovation are tandem imperatives” [5].

A preconditioned historiography that does not relate to a fuller Indian context and therefore cannot explain these changes and consequent developments for a culture that does not see itself as separate from the past but lives with the understanding of the present which simultaneously consists of the past and the future; eg. Krishnamacharya is considered in India to be a preeminent example of Yogic authority but in the above quotation it disappears when placed within an alien cultural context. This appears to be a displacement that objectifies the past and repositions its key moments in order to crystallize tradition into a solidified narrative. Surely it would be more accurate if historiography related to the cultural signifiers and prevalent thought when retelling their history [8].

In a comparative analysis of these two interpretations and their different agendas it therefore at first resembles a contrast between history according to Western standards versus the Indian practice of recounting legend and myth. The disciplinary boundary dissolves though as they are both culturally framed interpretations with differing objectives [8]. Then what is the mythical essence of the Indian story and what function does it serve?

The Myth of Yoga

The main objective of the Indian account of yoga positions Krishnamacharya as the main protagonist and is set in an ancient landscape; it features relationships with gurus in the Himalayas and royal patronage and could be seen as legend or sacred myth. It is the kind of story that can be true for those who believe and an adventure for those who do not [9].

Should then this history of modern yoga be categorized as history, or as myth? History, following Western standards, contains in theory no greater knowledge or truth than myth, although greater importance may be attached to it if it is deemed to be a historical fact. The distinction between the opposing interpretations is therefore culturally conditioned when it is assumed that history is true and myth false [9].

Such a distinction is arbitrary depending on relative cultural context, whereby the Western account of modern yoga is implicitly understood as history, and the Indian one is described as legend. A legend which is universally understood to be a mixture of historical facts and mythical events regarding the heroes and gods that India is so well known for [38]. Stories which in India are common narratives for the wider population to emulate in the yogic pursuit of moral perfection [39, 15].

If the Indian tale is interpreted as a legend Krishnamacharya can be seen as a cultural hero who reestablishes and reconfirms the yogic ideal. A legend about attainment of the divine through resolute conviction and noble action, where the myth is not just a fairytale of and in the past but is to be understood as the truth in a circular eternity that is lived and experienced in everyday religious

rituals in the Indian subcontinent. It can be understood in this case to be a yoga practice based on Krishnamacharya's revelation during trance state of a 1000-year-old lost text [24], which in India is regarded as a perfectly legitimate method of reconnecting with the past [8]. Hence the truth becomes a temporal as though time itself can be expanded into an eternal present moment. This societal truism unites Indian scholars and yoga gurus in the shared belief in a living philosophy which emphasizes moral standards, behavioral observances, and sacred daily rituals. The subject of Yoga therefore must be understood within its cultural context and can be categorized according to its function as both legend, a living truth, and a powerful spiritual practice [40].

A legend where, not long ago, tales were still told about Krishnamacharya and his extraordinary feats of physical and mental prowess, e.g. perfection of āsana and the stopping of his heartbeat [35]. Former students, family members and neighbours regularly recount their own firsthand recollections or local folklore: "Even today, I meet middle-aged people who remember the almond powder he'd given them as children at the end of a lesson" or "Indian priests would come to chant with him, sometimes for hours, and I began to realise that they didn't know how to chant." [34]. These truisms which have become widely familiar and are now considered to be an integral thread in the tapestry of Krishnamacharya's mythology, contribute in no small way to its enduring plausibility. This ever-evolving biography consists of vivid recollections which interweave past and present into the future and give the legend life for the next generations to draw inspiration from [40, 41]. The retelling of such a legend within its specific set and setting casts upon Krishnamacharya a holy glow; his deep seated faith and the actions he took led to his transformation into an enlightened personality largely due to his rediscovery of forgotten āsana and his vast knowledge from studies of all aspects of classical Vedic wisdom [34].

This claim of enlightenment or divine character can be substantiated by referring to almost all classical Indian mythology. Could it be that this mythology from a strict structuralist perspective, that does not refer to its context, is simply concerned with the human obtaining God realisation? This transcendent state can be seen as the fulfillment of an inner desire which appears to be incompatible with the mundane worldly experience. When this state is reached, the distinction between culture and nature or ideal and corporeal disappears [9]. The Indian myth is therefore not simply a fairy tale but should be interpreted as a message from the distant past to the present speaking to a hypothetical future regarding the existential dance between life, death, and immortality. In Indian philosophical understanding and terminology, all human beings possess a life force, the ātman, which is of the same quality as universal consciousness, the brahman. One definition of Yoga is

the effort made by the individual to transcend the dualities of the world with equanimity as explained in verse II.48 of the preeminent Indian epic The Bhagavad Gītā, BhG [31], reaching the state of divine being, BhG IV:10 [31], by dissolving into oneness with the infinite, BhG VI:31 [31]. In myth unmanifest forms of reality are illustrated using tangible imagery [9] and in the Bhagavad Gītā, [31] the mythical is envisioned as the Indian warrior Arjuna who meets absolute reality in the form of the god Kṛṣṇa. (Kṛṣṇa being the supreme godhead principle in the Bhagavad Gītā). Arjuna is a hero, an earthly protagonist with divine qualities, who could be considered an archetype for the quintessential hero in Indian culture. To quote White's presentation of the Bhagavad Gītā the revelation that the human hero is indeed a god embodied on earth [23]. The hero Arjuna is then told about the science of yoga by the god Kṛṣṇa to enable him to master his earthly form: ".yoga is all about taming and gaining control over oneself (ātman), that is, over the ongoing mental, emotional, and physical activities that dominate much of one's corporeal existence" [23]. Arjuna is able to recognize the unobservable, the supreme. Quoting White: "The BhG includes different realms and thus the ultimate goals of yogins, such as brahman (the cause of creation) or the immortal self [ātman], as well as the god Kṛṣṇa, who is depicted as being beyond both brahman and the immortal self." Arjuna gets a vision of absolute truth presented as obtainable through devoted yoga practice:" Kṛṣṇa is either superimposed on well-established pathways of yoga or his yoga is depicted as the object of devotional practices that culminate in a vision of him" [23]. Reading of the overall goal of yoga in the Bhagavad Gītā as visioning Kṛṣṇa, a view of an otherwise unmanifested absolute reality. The legend of Krishnamacharya embodies the message of this epic Indian myth that divinity can be experienced through the combined yogic practices of right belief, pure action and sacred ritual. Krishnamacharya's character, his qualities, and his nobility are therefore key elements for the understanding and meaning of the Indian message of yoga; even understanding the role of myth in his life. The meaning and the significance of his character can then only be fully understood as a mythical or legendary figure in its proper cultural context [10] and therefore become upheld and honored as a blueprint for a yogic way of life. This analysis of the legend gives practitioners of Yoga profound meaning, in the classical Indian sense. Thus, even in the modern age it can therefore be argued as seeing the present moment as part of a larger continuum comprised of both past and future from a linear and circular perspective. A perception of reality which implies that the forming of thoughts and feelings in relation to oneself and the eternal truth can be seen as the horizontal human timeline crossing the biological cycle of the universe which thereby resolves the question (also of the BhG) of rebirth and immortality [41].

¹<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/atman>

²The definition White gives of the purpose of yoga practice refers to "taming" the ātman. This sentence appears to be a misunderstanding of the term. The aim of yoga practice is generally understood across numerous commentaries on the classic yoga texts as the process of recognizing the ātman as the source and origin of both mind and material existence, transcending one's bodily form one can rid oneself of spiritual ignorance.

Krisnamacharya grew up with a family tradition of Vaishnavism and had an in-depth knowledge of this epic mythology of Arjuna and Kṛiṣṇa [35]; the Bhagavad Gītā being the most significant Indian religious text and formed the foundation of his religious upbringing. A myth or a sacred truth that in India has inspired millions of people to adhere to and which over generations has been crucial in the formation of traditions and cultural pathways akin to how Western societies are forming traditions stemming from their own myths [9].

The authors of the Danish newspaper articles do not seem to have considered the possibility of divergent cultural renditions of myth and history in their reproduction of the Western interpretation. Using the word 'myth' to imply a 'fairy tale': "Mark Singleton convincingly punctures many common myths about what he calls "modern, transnational yoga" [17]. Similarly, Mark Singleton's own understanding does not seem to take the basic function of myth into account either: "My main point is that yoga does not exist in a vacuum, that it always is in perpetual development. Personally, I think it is difficult to argue against unless one believes in myths" [16]. Statements that do not serve to demystify the cultural translation of the Indian understanding of Yoga and consequently ignore the role of and the messages contained within myth.

The differences between these two perspectives lead to dissimilar conclusions and go on to develop into different beliefs and attitudes. These opposing conclusions carry profoundly divergent meanings regarding the purpose and goal of Yogic endeavor. This results in antithetical attitudes with regards to Yoga's function within this cultural dialogue which then appears to be either an entirely physical pursuit or the quest for spiritual knowledge, jñāna, as though one excludes the other.

This co-opting of yoga's historical narrative with its insinuation of authenticity and factuality appears therefore from an analytical perspective to be a dispute over who exercises the rights over the history and ownership of the story of India's past and the authoritative interpretation thereof. A meeting of minds that has a familiar ring to it.

The Cultural Encounter

The Indian scholars see the Western approach to storytelling largely as entertainment with additional evidence assimilated into the plot especially to satisfy the western palate, but from an Indian perspective, erroneous and irrelevant [18]. Krishnamacharya's first book, the Yoga Makaranda, has recently been translated into English by Dr. Jayashree and Sri Narasimhan with editing by Mark Singleton [23]. In their face-to-face meetings during the period of their joint research and fieldwork on the source material, [5, 23] it must be assumed that they shared a common purpose with the intention of continuing the ongoing discussion regarding the implications of past events on the current worldview [8].

In the subsequent problematization, one cannot help but wonder about the qualitative study made by the Western researcher and the purpose of his fieldwork in relation to the Indian scholars' participation. After publication the Indian sources expressed their desire to have a follow-up meeting, which was not granted. At the time of publication, they question the motives of the interviews

that were conducted; motives which they do not now consider to be objective, and that Singleton's Yoga Body only uses illustrative points that serve a theory that they had not been presented with priorly [18]. There is therefore a convincing argument that casts significant doubt upon Singleton's entire methodology with regard to his field studies in India. As he himself testifies to having acquired his theoretical knowledge of haṭha yoga largely through his studies with these same Indian teachers: "His wife, Dr. M.A. Jayashree, and brother-in-law Śrī M.A. Narasimhan were also helpful in developing my understanding of haṭha yoga theory, guiding me through a close reading of the Sanskrit text of Brahmānada's Jyotsnā commentary to the Haṭhayogapradīpikā" [5].

Dr. Jayashree and Sri Narasimhan have expressed their doubts regarding the researchers' objectives as they felt they may have been misconstrued in an attempt to prove that yoga as taught in India today has become "terminally disconnected from the core Indian traditions" [5] which most likely would have resulted in the Indian scholars refusal to participate any further. Another point of critical reflection is the matter of how Singleton seems to regard himself as the guardian of the truth: "Following this line of reasoning, indeed, critical scholarship is the only way to distinguish "tradition" (itself a highly problematic multivalent category) from popular innovation" [5].

This could be considered a questionable methodology in qualitative research and might even be thought of as unethical, following Carrither, it could very well be regarded as a "declaration of war" against the Indian participants' world view [7]. One can only assume this to be an expression of a conventional academic form, which is accepted and understood by a Western audience. This approach was received by the Indian scholars with a mixture of incredulity and dismay. Sri Narasimhan expresses his distrust as follows: "They are out to find out fault with everything that India claims" [18].

Dr. Jayashree and Sri Narasimhan subsequently became suspicious of the whole purpose of the interview pointing to the lack of information regarding the overall purpose of the investigation for which they were interviewed. Upon publication it appeared that the western researchers who after many hours of interviews had selected only the quotes which reaffirmed their hypothesis.

"You have taken extracts which suit your thinking and put it in the book."

"We have talked to them for two hours, three hours but the extract is only the words they want..." [18].

It would appear that the academic process was presumptuous and had ulterior motives. Did Singleton upon meeting with these Indian specialists intend to have them corroborate his preconceived notions about India's vast philosophical and metaphysical heritage whilst consciously omitting the emic view? [41].

In researching Eastern wisdom, Western academics have routinely assumed the outsider's vantage point which Edward Said [42] expressed as: "The Orient functions as a theater, a stage on which a performance is repeated, which can be considered from a privileged standpoint" [42]. An approach recognized by the Indian

scholars who having read Yoga Body find the complexity of the entire topic reduced to “a single goal, which is not true” [18].

It would therefore be fair to say, (considering Singleton’s silence when his main interviewee’s requested a formal response to their objections), that his own capacity to reflect upon his motives for conducting the research could potentially be called into question. With particular regard to the Indian scholars, (as well as the further contacts they provided him with in Mysore), who were the primary sources used to legitimize the hypothesis he presents in his book Yoga Body [5].

Round-up

I believe with this cultural analysis to have illustrated that Krishnamacharya exemplifies an archetype of the cultural hero confirming the classical Indian myth that man has divinity waiting to be discovered within himself. The narrative of the legend of Krishnamacharya has Indian mythology as an allegorical context with the message of yoga formed as a reliable template to model one’s life upon. To paraphrase Arendt’s words, I express it as the human search for an eternal truth: A belief in immortality is in a context of eternity, history and nature remembered in the heart of man [6]. The interpretations of the story of yoga are equally composed of history, legend and myth, which must be interpreted in its full cultural context, even when propagation occurs according to Western standards. This Western paradigmatic account with its emphasis on physical yoga postures gives them, as objects, an equal significance both in the past as well as in the present day. This produces an anachronistic view of āsana’s role in the greater scheme of yoga which results in the overemphasis of the human body and creates the misapprehension of yoga as being only gymnastic exercise and therefore leads to accusations of transculturation.

Indian gurus in the modern era have been accused of teaching a style of physical postures relabeled in the West as yoga and not the traditional haṭhayoga particular to India’s cultural heritage. This is the dislocation that these Western researchers are so preoccupied with because they are not, I believe, sufficiently aware of the subtleties contained within the Indian outlook or their own innate bias.

Following on from this positivistic slant, Krishnamacharya’s role is relegated to an incidental one which no longer inspires the quest for the understanding of the real purpose of yoga. This stands in stark contrast to him being the legendary figure carried in the hearts of millions of Indian citizens.

The contradiction revealed when comparing these two opposing interpretations is almost impossible to reconcile, but the clear-cut boundaries separating the Indian concept of truth and the concrete notions of Western reality dissolve when analyzed using the methodological grips of temporality, narrative, and myth utilizing a sophisticated and culturally sensitive vision.

As an additional point of concern, Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism should be applied to question the motives behind this kind of culturally weighted research and could include a discourse analysis of what in the introduction of Yoga Body [5] looks like a misreading of the term as being more concerned with Singleton’s ‘own’ world than the world he is claiming to make a depiction of [44]. In order for an effective evaluation to shed any light on the asymmetrical power imbalance implicit in the debate, the study must compare the resources available (from universities, public funding, publishing houses and media coverage) to the Western researchers in comparison to the research that has been available to the local Indian paṇḍita³ in order to illuminate the missing view of the Indian contributors.

In the larger picture of this postcolonial debate of representation Yoga has been recognized as being India’s unique cultural heritage (by the nations of the world at the 2014 UN general assembly). An acknowledgment that should be noted when considering the academic methodology employed when dealing with India’s history and which is especially for British researchers a delicate matter.

A thorough and earnest enquiry into the largely uncharted waters of the as yet unrevealed secrets contained within the countless ancient Sanskrit, Pali, and Tamil manuscripts stored throughout India’s universities, pāṭhaśālās⁴, temples, libraries and family homes is long overdue. It would make for an act of academic humility worthy of the 21st century; translating one culture faithfully into another with the common goal of sharing the fruits of the philosophy of yoga universally.

³Sanskrit for a learned person, a scholar [28]

⁴Sanskrit for school

In this paper I have given more consideration to the Indian perspective, as it became more clear as the work progressed, that the story of yoga in the West clearly comes at the expense of a profound cross-cultural reflection on the process required when translating India's history of Yoga. In this regard I note that the people of India without doubt have the right to be subjects in their own history and not objects of testimony for a Westernized historicity.

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Conflict of interest

None.

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