



2021

# Diploma of Classical Yoga

Course Information Handbook

# Course Information

A guide to Yoga Teacher Training with the  
Australian College of Classical Yoga

*Yoga is like a geologist for the soul.*

*It can show you where to dig  
and what to dig for -  
but you must do the digging yourself.*



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## A Note from the Principal and Spiritual Director of ACCY

Hello, and welcome!

As you make your way through the choices available to you for teacher training, or as you embark on a journey with ACCY, I'd like to share with you a few thoughts on teaching authentic Yoga.

Authentic Yoga teachers are models for their students – and not only in Bhujangasana or Chakrasana. Needless to say, most people coming to a suburban Yoga class are looking for exercise and relaxation. That's ok – and we certainly give them that. Some people even want meditation, though, sad to say, most will be expecting only a pleasant guided relaxation, sometimes mistakenly called meditation. You must recognise that Yoga teachers have an obligation to be able to share the possibility of self-realisation – liberation or enlightenment - with their students. Otherwise even beginners will not learn much from you.

Does this mean you have to be fully self-realised yourself? No. But it does mean that you have to understand the fundamental difference between a yogic, enlightenment-oriented outlook and the ordinary state of mind, and the daily outcomes of such a difference. Clearing out obstructions to the enlightenment-oriented state involves work. And if you are not willing to do the work to reform your own understanding and share what Yoga really is with your students, then it would be better if you called what you do "Stretch and Relax Programs" instead of Yoga, and it would be better if your training ground was a gymnasium.

It is good to remember the actual meaning of the word "Yoga". It is a Sanskrit word that means, "union". The notion of a gym offering classes in Union, or of a 'Hatha Union teacher', or an Iyengar Union teacher, or Bikram's Hot Union, is as ridiculous as it sounds. So how can Yoga truly lead towards Union? That is the critical question to ask of the discipline of Yoga.

In your training with ACCY, you will become a very capable teacher of asana – but much, much more beside. With your enthusiasm and willingness, and with the help of real yogis to guide your training, you will uncover the knots and obstacles that get in the way of a unitary experience of being, and of contentment and compassion. You will become a yogi who teaches Yoga.

With very best wishes for your personal and professional development,  
Mataji





## Who We Are:

### Australian College of Classical Yoga



The Australian College of Classical Yoga has been training yoga and meditation teachers for over 25 years. We come from a lineage that comes directly from Bhagwan Nityananda in Ganeshpuri, and from a Kashmiri Shaivite tradition that stretches directly back over a thousand years and, as with all streams of traditional yoga, has its roots reaching millennia back into the Vedas.

Headed by founder Swami Shantananda, the Australian College of Classical Yoga brings to it her knowledge, experience, and wisdom; garnered over thirty years of training and practice in the Shaivite lineage. During this time, a profound shift of consciousness occurred. Such a shift brings with it a resilience and robustness in everyday activity, these qualities show through in the courses and teachings of the College.

The aim of authentic yoga is to awaken the student into the full consciousness of oneness with Reality or Universal Being. Classical Yoga embraces all aspects of Yoga. With its physical, mental, and spiritual components, Yoga is the ultimate therapy that includes movement and flexibility but is much, much more.

### Sarasvati Dawson



Sarasvati Sally Dawson has been practicing Yoga since 1996 and teaching Yoga and Meditation since she founded Waverley Yoga Studio in her lounge-room in suburban Melbourne in 2002. Before that she trained and worked a Medical Scientist for 20 years, earned a Graduate Diploma in Business Administration and trained as Yoga teacher with the Australian College of Classical Yoga in 2001. She is a Senior Member of Yoga Australia, and member of Meditation Australia. She is involved in many aspects of the Yoga teacher-training program at ACCY, including teaching anatomy, asana and Yoga wisdom.

Sarasvati has developed a number of post-graduate workshops for Yoga teachers, and also teaches a variety of workshops for ongoing students of Yoga and Meditation. As well as her ongoing classes, she has taught Yoga and Meditation in various settings, including the corporate sector and on many Yoga retreats with her teacher Swami Shantananda. Sarasvati is the author of 'Yoga off the mat, freedom in everyday life'!

### Natalie Robertson



Natalie Robertson discovered Yoga over 17 years ago, and is passionate in teaching Yoga students to develop strength, tone, flexibility and mindfulness. Due to her passion to educate others of the fundamentals of Yoga, she developed the company Yoga and U in 2010. Her yoga classes incorporate both flowing and static sequences focusing on alignment and breathing. Designed to restore balance and flexibility; plus rejuvenate the body, mind and spirit.

Natalie graduated with her Diploma of Classical Yoga teaching qualifications from Australian College of Classical Yoga (ACCY) in 2007. Her other talents include being a registered nurse for over 20 years; most of those in the critical care area. Her roles have included being a Clinical Educator and a Clinical Nurse Specialist in the Intensive Care Unit at the Alfred Hospital. As well as an Affiliate Lecturer for Latrobe University; lecturing to the Masters Of Nursing students (Critical Care). Plus a Clinical undergraduate teacher for Alfred Health for various universities such as Deakin and Latrobe Universities. She also has the Cert IV in Assessment and Training Certificate.



## Danni Brown



Danni has travelled a long personal journey of growth and development through yoga. Late to the physical practice of yoga, she grew up having Yogic and Western philosophy discussions with Swami Shantananda. In the '00's she embraced the physical practice of Yoga as well, and undertook the both the ACCY Yoga and Meditation teaching diplomas.

Danni also has a B Ed in Primary Teaching from Deakin University, and several years' experience teaching primary education. She brings a professional understanding of curriculum and class design, as well as the application of teaching methodology.

Danni is an administrator of ACCY & ACCY Waverley Yoga Studio. She has fused her passion for teaching Yoga and passion for the practice of teaching as ACCY's Education & Curriculum Co-ordinator.

## Course Summary

This is a one-year teacher training program that gives the student excellent training in the ability to teach Yoga in all its aspects, and development in Yogic understanding and way of living. Undertake the Classical Yoga Teacher training, and you will also explore your experience of life, being, and reality, guided by an intense study of the Yoga Sutras. You will learn how to practise and teach all Eight Limbs of Yoga.

As a non-dualist school, we practice Self Enquiry to find the deepest layer of Self. Our approach, handed down by master to student over hundreds of generations, is the authentic understanding that you yourself are an expression of Universal Consciousness. In Self Enquiry, the personal and the universal meet harmoniously in your thoughts, feelings and awareness.

The result for you is that not only will you become competent to teach the postures of Yoga, you will be a teacher with an understanding of what YOGA is. You will have more skills than only Asana, increasing your teaching options. And most importantly, you will have begun to take that path towards deep transformation, which is the birthright of all of us.

## Learning Outcome

What you will achieve from your training in Classical Yoga:

- You become an authentic yogi, with a proper understanding of what YOGA is. This will multiply many times the options available to you in teaching.
- You will understand the difference between an enlightenment-oriented mind-set and the ordinary mind-set
- You will have a strong asana basis from which to begin teaching competently and safely
- You will be able to aim your classes at all levels of ability
- As a teacher certified by the Australian College of Classical Yoga, you will be able to say that you teach Classical Yoga.
- You will be qualified for membership in Yoga Australia.



## Core Subjects

An overview of what is involved in the Diploma of Classical Yoga. For a more detailed analysis of the course, please see the section 'Major Components of the Training Program.'

### Asana & Anatomy

All asana training is accompanied by anatomical reference; all anatomical tuition is referenced to asana. That is, anatomy is taught within the framework of the body moving in Asana; Asana is taught within the framework of correct anatomical description.

#### Anatomy:

- Skeletal System
- Musculature System
- Joints and Movement
- Body Systems – Digestive, Nervous, Respiratory, Circulatory, Lymphatic, Endocrine.
- Human Development
- Yoga and Pregnancy

We use our knowledge of anatomy to move into further exploration of the techniques and practices of Yoga. We delve further into the movement and mechanics of the core components of Asana, and Yoga classes.

#### Techniques of Yoga:

- Forward Bends
- Backward Bends
- Inversions
- Twists
- Advanced Postures
- Shavasana
- Breathing Practices

### Meditation and the Yoga Sutras

#### Meditation and Mindfulness

- Meditation Techniques
- A mentored, personal journey developing and reflecting on your own meditation and mindfulness practice.

#### Yoga Sutras

Mind and Reality: The mind gives you a model of yourself and the world. What is the reality of consciousness without cognition? This is the concern of the first chapter of the Yoga Sutras.

- Thinking does not grasp reality
- The polarised mind
- Types of Cognitions
- Stopping Cognitive Patterns
- Transformed State and the Authentic Human
- Obstacles to Higher Consciousness
- Effect of Clarifying the Mind; Beyond Mind

The Means to Make a Difference: If it is true that the mind shortchanges our experience, can we make a difference? This is the concern of the second chapter of the Yoga Sutras and brings us to the Eight Limbs of Yoga.

- Yama
- Niyama
- Asana
- Pranayama
- Pratyahara





- Dharana
- Dhyana
- Samadhi

Kaivalya, freedom – The outcomes of Unitary Consciousness – that is, the outcome of Yoga. You will explore the meaning of:

- Living the Realised Life
- The notion of being the doer comes from the illusion of the ego self
- Past and present always leave footprints
- Everything transforms and evolves in the way proper to it
- The mind free of illusion is capable of reflecting both individual and universal Consciousness
- The personal I-sense does not bother you any more
- And so, freedom - Kaivalya

Note:

Meditation is an essential adjunct to understanding the Yoga Sutras. Understanding them, the spiritual writings of other traditions become understandable – even the Zen koans. You will be required to meditate for a one hour daily, in stillness.

Our school is placed within the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism. The central thesis of this tradition is that, rather than “having” consciousness as an attribute, you in fact are consciousness. (That is, you are Shiva). The Sutras of Patanjali are very accessible: you can verify what the Sutras say by checking out what your own mind does. However, you will see the context of both the Sutras and the living tradition of Shaivism as you begin to delve deeper into your attitudes and preconceptions about yourself. There is nothing to be taken on dogma, and it is not about acquiring a set of beliefs.

### Teaching Methodology

You will learn how to develop a safe, supportive, engaging, challenging and inclusive Yoga space, and design a Yoga class which accommodates whomever may walk into your studio. We shift from Yoga student, to Yoga teacher.

Major topics are:

- Principles of Teaching
- Class Design
- Teaching Methodologies
- Your Role as a Teacher
- Practical Experience





## Major Components of the Training Program

### Anatomy and Physiology

#### Asana

In our training, all asana is related to anatomy and all anatomy is related back to asana. Therefore, you will be included in the two streams – Asana, to see how anatomy relates to the movements; and Anatomy, to see how asana relates to the structures and processes of the body.

#### Principles of Asana

When most people say “yoga”, they are actually referring to “asana” – the flexibility programs for which Yoga is justly famous. There are many ways to order the varieties of yoga postures. At ACCY we take the approach that the principal issue is flexibility of the spine, which can bend forwards, backwards, sideways and can twist. Nothing is a clearer physical mark of health than a spine and joints that move easily through their range of movement. Little wonder that the metaphysical discussions of the kundalini energy are so much associated with the spine. In addition, the body can be inverted, giving the muscles and joints a different experience of the effects of gravity; and it can balance in many ways.

You will learn to teach asana from principles of movement, rather than by rigid rules. This way you will be able to teach the students you have, rather than some idealised student with idealised capabilities.

#### Asana Style

You may keep any “style” that you like. Classical Yoga is not a style so much as an understanding of asana and its potentials. We do not teach trainees “how to perform asana”. You are expected to have a background in asana practice. You are expected to have confidence in the level and style of asana that you wish to continue with, though we do focus on an incremental approach to flexibility rather than straining and forcing.

What we deliver to our teacher trainees is the ability to teach the postures, with an emphasis on understanding movement, rather than imitating a certain style. Our students come from many varied backgrounds – gentle hatha, Iyengar, Ashtanga, Oki Do, Buddhism, Satyananda and Gita, to mention a few, and some have primary experience in other fitness training such as Physical Education in the Government school system along with their meditative practices. Thus our students have much to offer each other in their class study and interactions. Our trainees may continue in any preferred style, but they must be able to give good anatomical reasoning for what they do. Therefore, all our asana is intrinsically related to anatomy. Whenever asana is taught or discussed, the main anatomical features are included, and trainees must develop enough basic understanding in anatomy and physiology to know which muscles are responsible for initiating and holding the posture. Exactly how to perform any posture is variable – there are many ways of being right, so long as they are anatomically justified. It is possible to perform a posture wrongly, too, and that is if the posture is anatomically dangerous. That is to be learnt. But it is learnt from principle, not from a “Mr Somebody says” starting point.

#### Major Postures

Major postures can be categorized in the following way:

- Spinal extension (backward bending, e.g. Bhujangasana)
- Spinal flexion (forward bending, e.g. Paschimottansana)
- Lateral Spinal Flexion (sideways bending, e.g. Trikonasana)
- Spinal rotation (twists, e.g. Matsyendrasana)
- Inverted Postures (e.g. Sarvangasana)
- Balancing Postures (e.g. Natarajasana)
- Resting postures (e.g. Shavasana)

Postures always involve contraction and relaxation of specific muscle fibres – i.e., they involve strengthening as well as stretching - and almost always involve joints other than the spine. For any major posture, there are many alternative ways of getting the benefit, either by a mix of other postures, or by a more advanced posture. More



advanced postures usually require greater strength and flexibility – but just as often, they involve a more extreme body movement, which may lead into problematic anatomical issues. You will have to take these issues into account when considering how to teach the benefits of asana. And claiming some magic benefit for the postures just because they are Yoga will not do. The body that God created (if you see it that way) is the same one that is potentially harmed by risky stretches whether in the home or the Yoga studio.

Your asana assignments will incorporate the following details, and your responses must give correct anatomical detail.

- Body targets – e.g. for freeing tight shoulders, or for stretching hamstrings;
- Movement targets – forward, backward, inverted, twisting and sideways movement;
- Organic targets- e.g. to help relieve constipation, or postures which may contribute to physical wellbeing in some way. For instance, some movements may contribute to easier breathing, and combined with the meditative/relaxation aspects of the class, may be beneficial for asthma sufferers;
- Yogic benefits of the movement or type of movement: this allows you to mention traditionally held metaphysical benefits. But do not mistake the metaphysical for the physical.
- Cautions and limitations in the movement
- Limbering to facilitate the posture
- Preparatory postures
- Counter postures
- Pranayama appropriate to the movement.
- Presenting the asana to more advanced students, with due caution for risk.
- Presenting the asana to less advanced students
- Alternative postures
- The anatomy and physiology of the posture

### Advanced Postures and Strength Training

You are not required to achieve advanced postures unless you want to. However, you will receive tuition on how to prepare the body for the more advanced postures – just what do you have to do to get that arm rotated over the shoulder for the perfect Natarajasana? How would you strengthen the body for Chakrasana? This area teaches you how to develop a program of strengthening towards the more demanding asanas – with due understanding that advanced postures may include a level of risk which must be accounted for.

### Physiology

Systems and structures in relation to Asana

You will acquire a basic understanding of the body, and its major systems, and you will be able to describe postural work in reference to anatomical systems.

### Musculoskeletal Anatomy

Bones, muscles, joints and movement

- The bones of the skeleton
- The major muscle groups
- Physiology of Movement
- Musculoskeletal relationships
- Physiology of flexibility
- Limits of stretching
- Safety in stretching
- Joint movement in stretching
- Agonism-antagonism-synergism of muscles in movement
- Specific strengthening/stretching diagnostics
- Types of stretching

A misperception common amongst yoga teachers is that the muscles that stretch in the posture (for instance, the hamstrings stretching in Padahasthasana) are the active muscles initiating the movement. In fact, muscles elsewhere



are initiating the action, and the stretching muscles are passive – they have to relax, not “activate”. You will become capable of saying which muscles initiate the action and how that affects the muscles you wish to stretch. Thus when you begin to understand the principles of movement, you will be able to work out what is happening in most of the postures, at least at the level of major muscle groups involved in the action. This will give you a sense of what is preventing your students from achieving some asanas, too. Are some muscles too weak, or are the muscles that have to stretch too tight? Or, perhaps the limitation is one that can't be overcome – the skeletal structure of the individual.

### Body Systems

You will receive a good introduction to body systems. This will enable you to develop a clear anatomical understanding of whatever the organic benefits of postures might be, and a realistic assessment of the likelihood of some of the benefits that have been routinely alleged for years. For instance, an old cliché is that a forward bend “tones the abdomen”. Whatever does “tone” mean? Instead, if you were to be able to say that compression on the intestines could stimulate peristalsis, that would be a reasonable statement. (And then you would be capable of discussing under what circumstances stimulating peristalsis would be a benefit or a caution of the posture.)

### Physiological Cautions and Limitations

Even more than in a discussion of the benefits of a posture, you must develop a clear physiological understanding of the limitations and medical cautions of the postures. Notice that some limitations might not be the same as a medical caution. For instance, a person with large body bulk might find it quite difficult to get into a seated twist, that is, their bulk might limit their flexibility, but that itself is not a medical caution. However, the potential strain on the spinal joints of a pregnant woman would be a medical caution. But you have to know why, to be able to offer the appropriate suggestion. So you see that, with even an introductory understanding of anatomy and physiology, you will have a much better ability to guide your students as to the limitations, cautions and benefits relevant to their situation. And the more we, as yoga teachers, understand about anatomy, the less likely are we to bring disrepute on our profession by making absurd statements that cannot be verified in fact. In the whole context of Yoga, you would keep in mind also that, although people frequently think of Yoga as a health program, the work of Asana in maintaining health is undertaken in order to enable the rest of the work of yoga, which is, above all, meditative.

### Common Ailments of the back and other joints

You will receive an introduction to some of the common ailments of the back, and other joints. Remember, you are not expected to be a medical expert, nor a physiologist, and you must not allow yourself to be drawn into such a role. But supposing a person were to tell you that they have a “slipped disc” – would you know what to suggest for them in the yoga room? Would you know that there is no such thing as a disc that can “slip”?

For other joints, such as knees, an understanding, even at the basic level, of the joint structure and things that can go wrong, gives you the understanding to be cautious about asking your students to do extreme stretches – e.g. Supta Vajrasana, lying on your back with your hips between your ankles – what are the risks to the joints in such a posture?

### Human Development

You will learn the basic structure of human development, and look at the stages of development from birth to old age, including physical measures and theories of psychological/emotional development.

### Yoga for Children

Children's growing bodies and minds are different from adult bodies and minds. The specifics of anatomical development, learning style, and attention span change often during childhood. There are many theories that give detailed explanations of child development. Whenever we explore child development we are looking at the following areas of development: Physical – gross motor and fine motor, cognitive, social, emotional and language / communication development. Learning how to teach Yoga to children must take these into account – importantly, the physiology of the musculoskeletal growth in children, but also their emotional development and susceptibilities



## Antenatal Yoga

Across the three trimesters there is enormous change in the mother and foetus. It is possible that any exercise during pregnancy contributes to easier and shorter labour and birth, less likelihood of induction, fewer caesarean births, quicker recovery postpartum. Women who exercise during pregnancy have reduced weight gain, more rapid weight loss after pregnancy, improved mood and improved sleep patterns. Thus it is a good thing to offer asana to pregnant women. But physiological changes occur in the pregnant woman's body, not just the obvious bulging uterus. These may be hormonal changes which also affect joints, differences in blood volume, and spinal stress, to mention a few; and you must become aware of them in order make sure what you do for your pregnant students does not put mother or foetus at risk. Common ailments of pregnant women, e.g. heartburn, are also taken into account.

## Psycho-social Problems in the Yoga Room

You may have to deal with disruptive behaviours when you establish your own Yoga teaching practice. These can be behavioural problems or lower order psychological problems, which may make it difficult for you to run your yoga class efficiently. You are not a psychologist or behavioural therapist! And you must not put yourself in the role of rescuer in emotional or psychological areas. However, you may profit from a little background in the sorts of problems that some of your students may be experiencing, and to provide for yourself a contingency plan in handling them, particularly if they are likely to be disruptive in the classroom.

## Yogic Philosophy

Yoga without Yogic philosophy is simply exercise. To teach Yoga, we need to develop an awareness and a competency in the non-physical aspects of Yoga. In Classical Yoga, we look to the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali as the foundation of that philosophy.

## Patanjali

Patanjali is the author of the Yoga Sutras. His dates are put rather broadly somewhere between 500BC and 500 AD. Although the Sutras draw on earlier Vedic understanding, Patanjali was a marvellous investigator of the human experience. There is nothing dogmatic in the Sutras, only the clearest possible exposition of what you are likely to find in your own mind. Patanjali takes you on a tour of the workings of the mind in its habitual state. From his clear discussion, you soon recognise that there is something not quite accurate in our perception of reality. Then he suggests that a transformation is possible – a new and illuminated way of experiencing reality. But the old habits of mind won't take you to it. There is work to be done first. Patanjali does not demand belief or faith. - the Yoga Sutras are perfectly rational, and his understanding of how we miss out on a clear perception of reality, because of misconceptions about the mind and self, is just stunning. Ultimately, it does not matter whether there is a text called Yoga Sutras or a person called Patanjali. What is important is to make a thorough-going investigation into being, self and reality. But since most of us can't do that without assistance, we can be grateful that there is help, in the form of the Yoga Sutras.

## The Yoga Sutras

The Sutras give us the chance to look at our way of using the mind and evaluate whether it is realistic or not. If you do look, you might find that all your thoughts fall into two major categories – "I like it" and "I don't like it" sort of thinking. That is, we see everything through a pleasure/pain, attraction/avoidance polarity, and we filter every single perception through that polarity. This means that we do not see reality as it is! We see through the projection of personal preference. Can you even imagine how much self-discipline it might take to put that view aside and begin to see reality objectively? In fact, the Sutras spend a good deal of time investigating what exactly is the seer in us and what is the seen. You might find some surprises there.

The Sutras investigate the mind, the way we normally use it, and the way we experience ourselves and the world, in great detail. There is nothing in the sutras to be taken on faith – it is not religious doctrine, and it is not a matter of taking up a set of beliefs. It is a 'look and see for yourself' approach. The Sutras also point out the sorts of things that keep us in our habitual rut, and they describe the compulsions of any ordinary mind. But happily, they suggest some tools for freeing ourselves from the pull of compulsion. The Eight Limbs of Yoga are the practical side of it.



## The Eight Limbs of Yoga

These are to be found in the second chapter of the Yoga Sutras. This is the chapter which suggests some practical ways to work on a reality-based outlook. Asana, or Hatha Yoga, is one part of the eight. Of course, a disproportionately large component of your training will be in Asana, and in training you to teach postures safely at every level. But all of the other aspects of Yoga will be addressed, too, and you will develop an understanding in them. They are briefly described in the pages to come. When you are reading the pages that deal with the work you will have to do, bear in mind that the '8 limbs' are part of a bigger exploration of the mind, self, the world and reality. They should always be seen in the context of the bigger discussion.

You will be provided with an easy to read English translation of the Sutras, a key to understanding them, and exercises to aid study. Students will need to read, study and contemplate seriously to see what the Sutras are getting at. Where possible, students will get the opportunity to read and discuss the Sutras together. The biggest problem for students is that at first they are approaching the topic of an enlightened mind-set with an unenlightened mind-set. To put it another way, they approach a non-mind way of looking at life with a busy-mind outlook. So there are some basic assumptions in your mind that you will need to reassess. You will never regret it!! At some point you will say, "Aha! Of course! Why haven't I seen that all my life?!!" That is not necessarily enlightenment itself. It is, however, an enlightened understanding, and it is a necessary first step towards enlightenment.

## Yama & Niyama

*Yama (ethics) and Niyama (Clear mental state)*

Yama and Niyama are the ethical teachings of Classical Yoga and the first two of the Eight Limbs. While each person's ethics is for them to decide, as a yoga teacher you ought to be able to discuss ethical questions from a Yogic perspective. This also means being able to understand Yama and Niyama from a meditative perspective. Seeing ethics as a set of rules is to mistake what the classical teachers were getting at. Often Yama is called 'restraints' and Niyama is called 'observances'. Really they are all disciplines. Yama involves behavioural commitment to certain ethical principles, while Niyama involves mental practice. But in all the 8 limbs, it is necessary to remember that they are not moral commandments – they are the means to free yourself of the distorted view of reality that your ordinary way of using the mind gives you. A person who practises the ethics of yoga is not more virtuous than someone else. Such a person simply has the self-discipline to see the world as it is, instead of through the eyes of self-interest. But that takes an enormous amount of work.

A structured set of rules is inconsistent with a state of ego non-attachment. And yet, non-attachment and a non-rule bound attitude does not mean that it's okay just to do whatever we feel like doing. Discipline without rigidity and ethics without rules is a hard path to tread. Understanding this paradox is the realm of the classical yoga teacher.

The Yamas do not give moral injunctions. The purpose of Yama is to clear the mind of the distortion of an egocentric filter on experience. Consider Satya for instance – truthfulness. Think about all the little concealments, all the little glosses we put on the truth, all the memory revision we do to cast ourselves in a virtuous light, all the defences we make against unflattering comments about ourselves. So if we make the effort to stick to reality and truth, it is not so much to become a better person. The point is that reality is what it is and a lie, no matter how big or how small, makes the ridiculous claim that reality is not what it is.

The Niyamas have us take responsibility for our own mental state. Consider Santosa – contentment, peacefulness. Think about how different this is from an ordinary state of mind, where we imagine we will be happy some time down the track when things go our way. But, no, the Sutras say, "Be happy now!" And how is that possible? Well, because whether we choose to be happy or unhappy, the world goes on. To attempt to control the world before we can be happy? How exhausting!

Ultimately all the Yamas and Niyamas are best seen as the sort of behaviour that would flow from an individual who did not filter his or her perceptions through the lens of egocentrism. If there were no ego, where would be the motivation to misrepresent reality? Or to exploit someone else for your own pleasure? Or to hope that someone



else will do less well than you? Could we be unhappy and discontented, without an ego-focus? Without egocentrism, we are much closer to the immediate experience of what reality is. This is part of enlightenment. Being a better person than someone else is not.

## **Pranayama**

### *Conscious Breathing*

Another aspect of Yoga that is justly famous, is Pranayama. Pranayama has been the subject of much esoteric theorising, and some of the more unusual Pranayamas reflect it. Pranayama is an important practice, leading to greater self-containment. The fact that it leads to better breath control and to being able to fully utilise all the oxygen in the lungs is an immediate outcome, but another real aim is the achievement of a stronger more stable sense of self. As such, pranayama is a meditative discipline, too. In fact, a time-honoured way of reaching a meditative state is to focus on breathing.

In the outlook of Yoga, prana does not just mean the air in the lungs. Prana signifies something more like life force. It is something like what we mean when we talk about the breath of life or the breath of the spirit. In fact, even in English terminology, breath, or life force, or Spirit, are inextricable from each other. The Latin word spiro – I breathe - is the root of other words like spirit, inspiration and aspiration. To aspire towards something literally means to breathe towards it. To expire literally means to breathe out, but has evolved the special meaning of to die - that is, to be able to breathe no more, to be empty of spirit. The expiry date of anything arises literally from the idea of the date of the last breath, the end of spirit in the body.

Pranayama also has a physiological function, of strengthening the musculature of the respiratory system. Conscious breathing allows us to move the body with the movement of the breath, to reduce the stress-response resistance to poses, and to find a mindful, meditative state within the strongest of poses.

## **Pratyahara**

### *Mindful sense experience*

Often given as 'restraint of the senses', Pratyahara is not at all about refusing to have sensory experience. It is about understanding it realistically. Don't forget that in the context of the Yoga Sutras, the Eight Limbs are intended to help us transform the mind, to make it more capable of an enlightened experience of reality. They are not moralistic and ascetic practices. Pratyahara gives us the means to stop creating a world in our head that doesn't exist in reality.

For example, refusing to enjoy a chocolate cake is not Pratyahara. Recognising that the source of the enjoyment is in your head and not in the cake is the role of Pratyahara. Refusing to project our enjoyments or displeasures on to the world is the task of the practice. But imagine how far-reaching that work is. Can you do it with your own body? Your experience at present is actually of a bottom on a chair, of the sensation of clothing and air temperature on your skin, of hands holding paper, of light rays on the retina. But instead of the actual, you are giving yourself the projected vision of yourself as an individual identity, of a person who can judge others, of a being separate and more integral to the universe than others. That's the projected image. What's the reality? Notice the recoil of the ego, the asmita, the sense of self, now. In sitting with the bare bones of reality, we see how our egocentric lens gives us a skewed view the rest of the time. We find that life can be a lot simpler, richer, full of the moment, when we opt for reality instead of projection. This is what Pratyahara is for.

## **Dharana**

### *Concentration – Contemplation*

The root meaning of 'dharana' connotes an empty space. It is quite close in many respects to the Zen notion of emptiness – a recognition that objects are empty of the significance and structure that we think defines them. We recognise that things are just what they are, regardless of what we like to think they are. This is true of our own self, too. What we think we are is not necessarily the reality of what we are.



Dharana practices are contemplations which challenge our facile projections. An ancient yogic book, Vijnana Bhairava, gives 112 examples of dharana practice. An example is to gaze up into a limitless blue sky until you begin to feel a sense that there are no boundaries – and then to reassess the mental conviction that there are boundaries. Other Dharana exercises might include something as simple as candle gazing, or as difficult as keeping your attention focused during a sneeze. More contemplative practices may be tried, like contemplating your own death. In some ways, dharana practice resembles the Zen practice of koan. The effect is always to bring you to understand that what is in your mind is only a reflection of what reality is, so that you stop mistaking it for reality itself.

## **Dhyana**

*Still-mind Meditation - Don't just do something, sit there!*

The very first statement of the Yoga Sutras is *Yogascittavrttinirodha* – ‘yoga (union) is slowing down the thought waves of the mind to a stop’. Thus the true foundation of yoga is meditation, or stillness of mind.

When Yoga was brought from India to the West, often this was either misunderstood or else it was thought too difficult to communicate to a society that had a limited history of meditating. Anyway, it was left out. Or else ‘meditation’ was given as a little guided relaxation at the end of a Yoga session. This is antithetical to Yoga! During your studies you will learn a great deal more about the ‘vrittis’, the incessant bubbling up of thoughts in the mind, and how we get our vicarious model of the world from that ceaseless activity. But from the very first, the Sutras point out that it is exactly that constant activity which has to stop for enlightenment to start.

Dhyana – still-mind meditation – is the most direct way of stopping it. Obviously, meditation is NOT visualization or pleasant relaxation. It has nothing to do with an active mental state, and is certainly not related to the mental activity of visualization at all. Meditation is a much more disciplined practice. In meditation we leap into the unknown with nothing to hold on to, and we don’t even take with us any words to describe it. By practising no-thought on a regular basis, eventually something becomes apparent. With no thought, there is no notion of “me”, either. Then we really touch the path of Yoga, where the possibility of experience is universal, and not limited to the tiny, limited notion of “me”.

To teach Classical Yoga teacher you will develop:

### *Insight into non-mind consciousness.*

Stillness eventually brings a recognition that our ordinary mind state – where we say “I”, “me” – is only a product of thinking. This asks big questions about who or what “I” am. The problem is that any answer you give involves going back into the thinking-mind that gives all the trouble in the first place. Understanding this is the first step towards being able to understand what Yoga is all about.

### *Understanding of teaching methods.*

There are some simple ways that a person can be encouraged to sit in stillness, and to be able to get at least a glimmer of understanding of the no-mind state, or even of that radical transformation called enlightenment. “Enlightenment” is in fact the capacity to experience reality directly without the intervention and distortion of mental constructs. But to offer meditation tools effectively, you have to understand how they achieve their purpose.

### *Competency to teach/communicate.*

The other essential aspect of teaching meditation is to be able to put into words information about a state that is empty of words and concepts. You must communicate rationally and analytically about a state that is neither rational nor irrational. This is confusing for many, but a rational communication can be achieved. Irrational statements rely on people trusting your word, because they won’t be able to see anything for themselves. All this achieves is to make some people dependent on you, and to turn others away from Yoga altogether, an unfortunate result in either case.





## Samadhi

### *Understanding enlightenment*

Samadhi cannot be taught and there will be no 'exercises in Samadhi'. It is a state of altered awareness, a transcendent absorption which comes of the work in the previous seven areas. Samadhi is not a full state of enlightenment – the Sutras go on to describe further development and more work to do beyond getting to Samadhi. Nevertheless, you can't say to yourself, "Now I'm going to go and practise Samadhi," or, "I plan to get Samadhi within a year." It is a state that comes of the work of preparing and the capacity of the student to allow an egocentric lens to change to a non-distorting lens. What you will be obliged to do in your studies is understand the discussion the Sutras give of what Samadhi is. And, in your own time, you will certainly want to be able to direct your students towards Samadhi if they want to go there.

## Yogic Physiology

This is where physiology meets metaphysics. These are the less anatomically driven physical aspects of Yoga. You will learn how to look at these with an eye to both practicality and honouring traditional aspects of Yoga.

## Mudra and Bandha

What is a mudra, and what is a bandha? The Sanskrit word mudra means gesture or seal, and the word bandha means a lock. Traditionally, mudras are gestures thought to seal or direct psychic energy. Bandhas are thought to lock the energy or the prana. Both of these practices, however, have anatomical aspects, too. For instance, mulabandha is a contraction of the pelvic floor muscles, and plays a physiological role in strengthening the body against incontinence. Mudra may also be asana, as you can see from the illustration of the Dancing Shiva, also known as the balancing posture Natarajasana.

There are countless mudras and four bandhas – or rather three and the combination of the three.

While Mudra and Bandha is a quantitatively a small part of the discipline of yoga, the capacity of to deepen awareness and consciousness should not be overlooked. You will have to understand the anatomical and physiological aspects of mudra and bandha, as well as being free to explore the pranic aspects. In so doing, you must make sure that you are clear about the difference between the physical, anatomical detail, and the more traditional energetic view.

## Chakras

Chakra study and etheric physiology is not included in a strict definition of Classical Yoga. The Yoga Sutras focus on the role of mind and thought in your experience of Self, and chakras theories do not enter the discussion. However, chakra study to a limited extent is included in this course to accommodate the traditional yogic view of the unity between the material and the spiritual. Yogic cosmology is not different from yogic physiology - there is a sense that the microcosm is a reflection of the macrocosm, quite different from the Western view that each body is a discrete and self-limited. However, you will have to be able to describe the chakras from a psycho-spiritual perspective in the path towards Self-Realisation, with good psychological reasoning, and, as always, not confusing the physical with the metaphysical. This means recognising the raw survival instinct associated with Muladhara Chakra as the inclusive starting point of a continuous development towards an enlightened, non-egocentric experience of self, reality and being, and describing how that development might take place. Any notions of etheric physiology should be seen in this light.

## Swadhyaya – Study

The core principle underlying this course is studying the enlightenment teachings of Classical Yoga. The root meaning of 'swadhyaya' is 'swa/self' and 'dhyaya/teach'. Thus it means to 'teach oneself', to sit by oneself and study. What we study are the guides to Self-Realisation, that is, enlightenment, offered to us through the Yoga Sutras.



## Teaching Methodology

You will learn the principles and methods of teaching effectively, developing an integrative teaching practice. This including developing some tools for planning safe, supportive, inclusive, challenging and effective Yoga classes. Additionally, over the year you will be encouraged to engage in some practical teaching experiences, shifting the mental thought processes from that of 'Yoga student' to 'Yoga teacher'. This includes classes where you discuss, practice, gain feedback and little by little change from having a student perspective to a teacher's perspective. For on-campus students, this is achieved in weekly classes. For Distance Ed students, it is achieved by detailed assignment work, case studies, local mentoring, and frequent contact with ACCY mentor. You will learn to deliver the benefits of Yogasana to the more capable and the less capable, the young and the not so young, the fit and the less fit.

## Principles of Teaching and Learning

You will develop an understanding of the basic principles of teaching and effective learning. Involvement in the teacher training tutorials will aid you in developing practical experience in teaching Yoga, and some of the classes in the course are dedicated to developing the theoretical principles of teaching, and approaches to class preparation, delivery and self-assessment.

## Class Preparation

Before you go off to teach your first class, you will be guided in developing a lesson plan that incorporates the holistic practice of Classical Yoga. You will develop the ability to create lesson plans that include all aspects of Yoga, including the specific Asana practice you intend to deliver, as well focusing on safety, inclusivity, support and challenge for your students, and is engaging for students and tailored to your own strengths and interests.

## Lesson Delivery

This aspect of practical teaching involves consideration of goals, delivery and measurement in training. Your class design will thus be purposeful rather than random, and you will be able to devise the means for measuring whether your students are learning well from you and whether you are teaching them well. You will use your understanding of Asana and Anatomy, as well as your understanding of the Yoga Sutras, to develop a competent and responsive teaching style, that is capable of reflecting the needs of the students in front of you at any given time.

## Practical Teaching Rounds

You will be required to take two classes under supervision as part of the work requirement. They may be taken at the campus or at any yoga school. If you take them elsewhere, we will write a letter of introduction for you and ask the presiding teacher to fill in a form giving an assessment of your teaching. Your students will also be asked to fill in feedback sheets. You will find the feedback very useful.

## Entry Requirements and Prerequisites

To be accepted in this course, you will need:

- At least two years' experience in Yoga
- Letter of referral from current teacher
- Willing to take up still-mind meditation

The Diploma of Classical Yoga focusses on the techniques and skills needed to teach Yoga, not on teaching a specific style of Yoga. Therefore, any style you are comfortable with, and wish to teach in the future, is applicable. You do not need to be trained in one specific style of Yoga (e.g.: Ashtanga, Bikram, etc).



## Study Commitments

The study program consists of:

- Saturday Training days as per calendar during school terms including digital weekly tutorials.
- Meditation practice of one hour per day.
- A 6 Week Learn to Meditate Course – these run at specified times throughout the year, however it is strongly recommended that you undertake this in the beginning of your course, to help build your personal practice.
- Two Practical Teaching Rounds – times are negotiated to suit.
- Meet assessment criteria (see assessment below)

Additionally, it is strongly recommended that you make use of your time with ACCY to be involved in the vibrant Yoga community. Students are offered a discount on teacher training oriented workshops, and there are many other workshops and events, both free and costed, which will broaden your education and understanding, and deepen the elements of Yoga which are enriched by observation and interaction with other Yogis.

## Assessment

You are encouraged to be a creative, resourceful and self-reflective yogi and teacher - not prescriptive in style. To become problem solving in asana and a teacher who lives the experience of Yoga. Assessment is aimed at ascertaining your academic development, to ensure you are a competent and safe teacher, but also at ascertaining your Yogic development, to ensure you are a teacher who is skilled in Yogic discourse and in delivering the whole context of Yoga to your students.

A substantial amount of assessment built into session, either through participation or through interactions within the class. Other assessment models include:

- Written assignments, either individually or in groups.
- Ongoing assessment of practical teaching methods (during tutorials)
- Structured email or online discourse between other students and ACCY teachers
- Feedback from two teaching rounds
- Exam
- Attendance and active participation in sessions

## Student Support

ACCY supports its trainees through

- Immediate and ongoing feedback of work and practices.
- Personal and confidential mentoring through meditation Journals by Principal and Spiritual Director Swami Shantananda.
- Detailed feedback on major assessment tasks
- A mentor to talk to and address any concerns to – both Yogic and academic.

If difficulties do arise, ACCY will do our best to accommodate your specific needs. Please be aware that this is highly dependent on the situation presented, and not always possible.

## Professional Compliance

### Yoga Australia

Yoga Australia (previously the Yoga Teachers Association of Australia) is the peak body for Australian Yoga teachers which provides peer recognition to Yoga teachers with appropriate levels of training, and to training providers who can verify that their program meets their standards for appropriate training of Yoga teachers. Our course has been recognised by the Association as meeting their criteria. Student membership may be taken during training. Full membership upon graduation is facilitated by being a part of a recognised training program.



## Insurance

During your training, you will not need insurance as ACCY has comprehensive liability for trainee teachers. Once you have graduated, you will need insurance to begin your teaching practice. This is your responsibility as a teacher and business operator. ACCY has no affiliation with any insurance company, but you will be informed enough to make your own choices here.

## First Aid

First aid is a responsibility of the Yoga teacher, and having a first aid certificate is a requirement for membership of the Yoga Teachers Association. General First Aid qualifications have to be renewed more periodically, while CPR requires renewal each year.

## Policies

### Absence

Absence should not be taken lightly. Although we understand life circumstances can occasionally interrupt your program, each segment of the class program must be accomplished and all absences will require catch up work. Falling out of synch with your class schedule is arduous for both student and teacher. It will be the student's responsibility to catch up. This may entail requesting arrangements with supervisors or mentors. The default is a fail in that component of the course.

### Fees

Classical Yoga Teacher Diploma: \$5990, which may be paid by quarterly instalments in advance, if you wish. This is applicable to both on-campus students and distance education students.

## How to Apply

Ensure you meet the pre-requisites for this course. In your application, you will have to give a little of your background to this end- how long you have been practising Yoga, whether you meditate, why you want to be a yoga teacher. You will also have to include a letter of reference from your yoga teacher, or if for some reason that is unavailable, you will get a statutory declaration attesting to your experience in Yoga. A \$500 deposit is required with your application.

Return the completed application form to:

Australian College of Classical Yoga  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 6 The Highway  
Mt. Waverley  
Victoria, 3149

Or submit a digital copy to

[info@classicalyoga.com.au](mailto:info@classicalyoga.com.au)

Please ensure that the subject line indicates your name and that you are submitting an application – e.g.:

To: [info@classicalyoga.com.au](mailto:info@classicalyoga.com.au)

Subject: Ima Yogi Application Form

## Application Form

Please print or copy and paste the form on the following page and return it via one of the two methods listed above.



## Application Form: DIPLOMA OF CLASSICAL YOGA

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach:

- a) a brief letter describing why you wish to undertake this course.
- b) A letter of reference from your yoga teacher. (if that is not possible, include instead a statutory declaration attesting to your background in Yoga.)

How long have you been practising Asana Yoga Postures? .....

What other related disciplines have you practised?.....

Do you meditate? Yes ... No ... If yes, how often?.....

If you meditate, is it with a still mind or by visualising? .....

If you do not meditate, or if you practise by visualisation, are you willing to practise still-mind meditation for a one-hour period per day?

Yes ..... No .....

Have you any personal or psychological issues which would affect your work in this course? Yes..... No.....

If yes, please give a brief description (for example if you are under the care of a mental health care provider, then approval from that provider may be required before undertaking programs which involve prolonged periods of still-mind meditation).

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I wish to train by Distance Ed (note Distance Ed is available only to students living more than 50 km from Melbourne.) .....

Highest level of schooling reached.....

Present Occupation.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

Email:.....

Phone Number.....

Signature.....  Date:.....
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How did you find us? .....

A deposit of \$500 is required with this application.