

Bhagavad Gita

>> Well, you look like life is good, well rested.

>> Thank you, I was just painting my house for a hot second.

>> You know what -- Chris Chris Christa cuberyrista Kuberry sibsibSibylValentineCybill.

>> Yoga Alliance.

>> Hello, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us today. My name is Dr. Christa Kuberry and I am thrilled to be here with you. You might see that poll just popped up in front of you. We are wondering where you are joining us from so that we may be able better serve you. And today we are getting to talk about this wonderful new book, the stories behind the poses and we are joined by Dr. Raj Balkaran who happens to be a prolific scholar of Indian mythology. He is also a spiritual adept. He is a seasoned on-line educator who teaches within the Oxford center for Hindu studies. He is on their course development board and he is also the founder of the school of Indian wisdom where he delivers his own original on-line courses. He also aside from that, very busy man, runs a thriving coaching practice which he delivers public talks and hosts the Indian religions podcast. He has a website, RajBalkaran.com if you would like more information, I also am so happy to call him not only a colleague but a friend. Thank you so much for joining us today. Raj. And I will hand it over to you. One more quick housekeeping thing, however, there is a Q&A so if you have questions for Raj during this presentation, please feel free to put them in the questions and answer box. If some of you have similar questions they will get up voted and we will make sure to get to them at the end of this session. Thank you so much, Raj. I look forward to learning as well.

>> Thank you, Christa, for that generous and lovely introduction. It is my hope that you can see my screen in its totality. And if not, just let me know. The stories behind the poses. So delighted to be back. My last and first such workshop was in October nine months ago. It happened to be the very time that I was finishing the writing for the book. The writing was due around the time I had my last workshop on the greatest on the goddess in October and nine months later, soon brought to gestation and popped out into the world. There is an exciting back that you are aware of. What I will do is share with you the gist of what the book does.

I will share with you why stories are important for in the tradition or in general. What is the story of ancient India. How do you use these stories. You will get an exclusive overview and preview of the stories behind the poses. We always start here.

The book will be out on the 26th of July in North America. It's already out in UK. Some of my American students ordered it from Amazon UK and received it. The book is meaningful for a number of reasons. Relevant to our context. Continuing studies education.

I was teaching a continuing studies class yoking studies called yokic mythology. One of the students shared the content with one of her students and she worked in publishing and she went to her bosses at the publisher and a month later I got an e-mail saying, hey, do you want to do a book on this. I have other things planned for this year but hey, why not? The genesis of this book is to serve the Yoga community, people who want to deepen their understanding and experience in teaching of Yoga in a meaningful grounded way. And so rather than you -- dozens of texts, the book makes accessible for

you 50 snippets from Sanskrit stories.

And how they might be useful to your practice and your teaching.

I run a podcast. I host authors on their new books. We did a flip interview and it was none other than Dr. Christa Kuberry who interviewed me for my own podcast for the 200th episode. If you are interested there is a conversation about the book as well. There are four parts to this I promise without question that there will be time, ample time for Q&A. That's a vital part of my pedagogical process. So I will go on for at most to part two and then leave 15 minutes and dive in.

Four parts tell you the significance of story. What they have to do with Yoga or anything really. And then we will do an overview of the stories in the book. I will share some broad themes that come out and then take a deep dive into a few select stories depending how much time we have. And then I will share a pedagogical section on how you apply them.

The significance of story, stories are not mundane things. Story telling how we make sense of reality. It's why NetFlix does as well as it does. NetFlix show cases stories. The better the stories the more money they make. And that means the more value they have exchanged for the value they added to our lives. Stories are valuable. They are how we make sense of the news. How we make sense of lives. They are how we make sense of life's bigger question. The stories are what it means to be human. The grandness of questions and most intricate issues called these methodological stories. Variety of ways which to look at story telling and I will happily answer in the Q&A if you are interested in literature and literary theory and response theory. But the power of mythological stories, these are the stories that hold entire world views. They are lenses for looking at the world in a meaningful way.

Stories we have been told was told about ourselves and our families and about our nations and about our world and other people. These stories impact directly how we behave, what we think.

It's so the case that time we are living in is unraveling in great many stories told by colonial powers, told by various interest groups and told about self and others. Story telling is a powerful thing.

I want to say is Indian stories, Indian mythology in particular is extraordinarily rich. I will jump ahead to the slide and talk about the fact that the stories that we tell perpetuate the values that we want to perpetuate. So there is a simbiassis of the stories that last and the culture that carries those stories the store is preserve the story and the culture preserve the stories. One hand washes the other and the Sanskrit epics that are in this classic text called the Puranas and the Sanskrit narrative and I will address your questions in the Q&A. They are rich. They are rich. They bespeak of a fluid dynamic oral performative tradition. It's a telling of the story that's powerful. The story functions to encode key ideas, encode key experiences.

In addition to understanding the power of story, whether or not one adopts the world view, it's useful to understand that this story telling is part of a world view in which one cycles from life after life after life compelled by karma. Most of you are firmly aware of karmic theory, if not I will answer your questions no problem.

These stories are laden with insights about how to navigate reality. How to navigate Samsara. How to gain awareness.

The stories are conditioning and we are striving to get rid of our conditioning but certain conditioning

uplifts your consciousness where you are now. So part of what I do is personal coach or spiritual counselor is help the person adopt a more liberating story about themselves. The reality, their potential. Find a story that is more empowering. Otherwise put, to chisel away at the shackles of a disempowering story. These stories have a transformative quality to them. Where they uplift consciousness. That is part of how they function. They teach us about life. They bring us closer. They bring us closer to the unstoried self. All of ourselves, all of our conditioned self is a story itself. They bring us closer to that self which is unconditioned because of the results ideas and the ways which they massage the consciousness.

I won't go into the Croantias but any of you are interested in the human complex and where the story fits, the story massages the Manomaya Kochas. We can talk about that. A lot there and not to worry. You see, if you are looking at this image, for example, that dude in the middle holding a LP? A CD? A CD rom what's going on there? Understanding the stories, the storied soil of indic civilization will help you realize who these figures are. The three great Gods of the Ramadah, the grandfather of time, foreheads, bearded. Vish knew in the middle. That's his discus. And Shiva. Garlanded with a cobra. Can't miss that symbol if you ever heard of chiiva. What does it mean? Have you heard the tale of the churning of the ocean. The deals and Gods were looking for the elixir of life and the poison emerged and they were all imperilled and chiiva was able to neutralize the poison and lodge it in his throat? What is that talking about? That's where mythologists or interpreters come in. And interpreting stories is not the work of professional mythologists as myself. It's the work of everyone, any reader. It's yours to interpret.

However, resonates to you. Laxmad born of the churning of the sea foam. Akin to Aphrodite or perhaps not.

On a bed of arrows fell during the father of war. Waiting for the sun to change course to leave his body. In all that time his body tortured wisdom emerging from him. The very people who felling him before. Rich, rich narrative vignettes that pull us into thought and into philosophy, into civilization, to culture. Orderinous standing straight in his chariot thanks to krishta in the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna as a child in dirt. His mother looking into the mouth and seeing the expanse of the cosmos. What does that mean? Where does that story come from? Why is that story told?

Stories are powerful. Turn the news on and see the stories that people are trapped in. Stories of old. Stories of angtient text. Western civilization have certain texts that don't serve us as perhaps they once did if ever. And some of those texts are still being used. It's an old software. Stories encode software with a logical story, cultural software.

It is a snippet about the significance of story, there is far moto say about that but indeed let me prepare a buffet for you with some sumptuous dishes and you can help yourself to more in the Q&A if you like.

I want to give you an overview of the book so you have a sense whether you are interested in the book or not, have a sense of power. Have a sense of the storied soil of Indian civilization. Have a sense that less the bannian -- the story we transplanted the bannian may not have thrived. France planting the bannian will yield limited thriving transplanting something of the soil ensure the bannian thrives.

The 50 stories in the book divided 50 tales related each related to an asna. This suspect formulaic.

This is the only story. Sometimes it's obvious. Warrior pose. Warrior pose is an English rendition of. That's a character. A character that was born of Shiva's outrage. Certainly knowing a thing or two about the war he was fighting, his mission. That can only illumine your understanding of the energy of the warrior that is evoked in that pose.

Then poses like tree pose where the number of stories could be told about tree pose. So chapter 1 is ten stories dedicated to Shiva. Chapter 2 is Vishnu and chapter 3 is goddess and chapter 4 various powers of the God and chapter 5, the sages. Why is this pose named there. And certainly the sage will tell you about the pose. Why else would they be named after a sage.

If you are interested in this stuff, there is more content that you will need at the school. Just don't worry about it. There is content out there. There is Shiva stories and Vishnu stories course, et cetera, et cetera. Not to worry about the details, just grasp the overview and the concept. A -- a sage stories course. And actually what -- why I'm sharing this is there is an official companion course to the book and I will gift that to all of you because today is a full moon and I have an initiative where I do a full moon boon every full moon I give something to my audience and today you are part of my audience. I will gift that course to you. The companion course takes a deep dive into what I'm trying to share a bit of today in terms of how to use the book.

It's not just 50 stories divided in these chapters. There are themes. You can look at these stories and you will notice patterns and what I share is not meant to be limiting. It's meant to be generative. I'm sharing principles and see what you can sprout and turn around in your mind and see in different ways. There are key themes. So this course for example that will gift you with theme of overcoming obstacles and number of stories about overcoming obstacles. In the book I look at the story, the theme of divine animals. The theme of devotion. See the stories encode themes that are valuable, both to understanding all things human but beyond the understanding all things human. Themes that are beyond the horizon of the culture. What else do we need by a classic? Why else can we appreciate literature from different time periods and different cultures because they speak to something of the human experience. We will look at this pose today since it's the full moon.

Divine knowledge. The stories talk about divine knowledge. Spiritual power. Very much related to spiritual power. The sacred feminine. There is a number of goddess stories I tell. Sandra, Kundlany, many of the stories relate to the rising of Kundlany Sacketty for example. The themes one can enjoy looking at Indian myth or reading the -- wherever you are looking at mythic material from ancient India discern the theme. Discern what the story is trying to share with you. Here let the stories speak to you. The space in your consciousness for the voice of the story. What is the story trying to tell you?

Beyond these eight themes that I cover in this course which I mention I will share with you no strings attached entirely free of charge there are a number of themes large themes that just stuck out to me as I was preparing stories of surrendering the ego. A common theme in philosophy.

Is this -- yes, the story encode various trends of philosophy. When you tell a story, you will impart those philosophical spiritual truths to someone in a way that is more deeply implanted than when you give them sutra or treatises or dos and don'ts.

Indian philosophy without question is encoded. So stories of surrendering the ego, many surprise the

decapitation, we see. Stories of a lot of stories of surrendering.

Decapitates-- Shiva's first wife self-implates and sad and will decapitate this egotistical figure and they take mercy on him toward the end and he gets the head of a goat.

Another decapitation moment. The form of Shiva who decapitates who? None other than bramma himself. For his insolence. Stories of devotion. Bacty, look at reverence pose today.

The birth of laxmy. Where you see this terrible man lion ripping apart this egotistical tyrannical figure and then the bottom left you see this itty-bitty with his -- anoint the Lord with his garland in devotion which summons the fierce form of the divine to protect him.

. 16-year-old, his devotion, the Lord comes to take him because he is only supposed to live 16 years but his devotion earns him an ever lasting life as an eternal youthful sage.

Stories of overcoming obstacles and it's not that this one is about devotion and this one is about overcoming obstacles. We have to think dynamically. Various stories encode various themes. Various lenses can be used for various stories.

Certainly. I talk about the Ganesa's race around the world.. The story of the age with eight bents in his body. Could barely walk and he has to overcome that.

The sage was thrown into the ocean as a babe. There is an obstacle and a half. Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Various themes. The celestial sage, the quest for I mortality. Divinity in disguise. Divine protection and destruction. Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. This gives you a snippet of some of the themes, some of the lay of the land of book. Now I want to dive into some specific stories. And then we will do some notes on pedagogy or applying them and I will address your questions.

So let me see here. Very common popular perhaps even pedestrian in some minds asana. What do we see? For those of you who may or may not know the story, the ganga, the river ganga was not always an earthy river. She was a celestial river and descends to earth and her fall is broken with Shiva, what an image. What would you have to be like to gracefully break the fall of a tunneled river? What would you have to be like? That's thatdousna. That's the mood mode, mind set. That's the energy, archetype, whatever word you want to use. That's the energy. Grounded. Strong.

So the story goes shall I read it? Basically, I will summarize it. Some I will read more closely for you. This story goes that there is a drought on the earth and the earth is imperilled and the earth cries out to vish knew and vish knew goes to see bramma the creator on the left and says, hey, what are we going to do. There is a drought on the earth. And you know, ask ganga to descend. And goes over to ganga and she is in the story she is mighty and haughty and proud. She is like, you want me to go down to the earth plane and vish knew is like, yeah, they need hydration. Well, even if I wanted to, do you have any idea how strong I am? I will -- if the earth is actually withered at you say, I will crack her in two like a porcelain plate. This will never do. So goes back to bramma and says to bramma, look, she won't go. Et cetera, et cetera. Brama says, okay, I don't know what to do but Shiva will know what to do.

To goes to see Lord Shiva on the right and seated in his meditative posture and Shiva with his third eye open and sees the scene. Think of a psychic zoom where you can zoom in various channels. He already knows the issue and he says, look, at the time her to come see me. Just tell her to come see

me. That's all. Tell her to come see me and I will fix it. Don't worry.

Return to ganga and informed that I request your presence here. I will take care of the rest. And returned to his meditation.

Fully trusting that Shiva will handle the situation, took leave in order to return -- the message. Lord Shiva has asked me to descend. Now she is intrigued and concerned. Maybe trepidation in her voice. Truly I cannot refuse the destroyer himself but the earth, how will she handle my might. Shiva says to descend. Descend I shall. You can piece her together when I'm done. That's your problem. But wants me to descend I will descend. Don't think she can bear my power.

Pride as ever and wise enough to reply, ganga flung herself from the heavens downwards toward the earth flowing directly toward the abode of Shiva searching she would crack the earth in two. Shiva positioned himself to receive the turbulent might of gung as upon his head. Thus as he -- she found herself slowed, calmed, grounded by the yogic presence of the Lord. Time slowed down as the space for converging on his head and his intoxicating presence she experiences herself as no more than a single drop of dew and in the locks of Shiva. She lingered in an internal moment before inebriated slid down his body, paying homage in respect to his feat before continuing to flow down to hydrate and bless the earth. Pacified by the grounding power of Shiva, the ganga descended to earth and purifies countless souls to this day all by the grounding grace of Shiva.

So there is a lovely image -- lovely image -- I will keep that image there and maybe read you the commentary. Some of you may not read along but many of you are visual learners so let's see if I can manage this.

There is the text but rather than watch the boring text watch the image. Two types of standing. Mindless standing and standing with attention. Many of us mill about. Standing here and there to pass the time. The souljure stands to attention with attention. And all the more so the Yogi. The tree whose roots bureau down so too does the Yogi plant their feet. Beyond the planting of the feet to mirror the roots of the tree, the Yogi mirrors the trunk as the body is erect allowing the life sap to permeate their being aligned with the spine. Just as the branches the tree reach out to touch the sky, so too does the Yogi elongate their body, the top of their head touching the sky as it were collapsing the space between heaven and earth. This energized attentive standing is more than milling about. It's a standing which we refer to when we say something stands the test of time.

This is a standing of trees of pyramids and mountains. Shiva Lord of Yogis symbolizes and inhabits the mountains like Shiva the mountains are grounded, secure and during majestic. He is the Yang principle to support the yep of shackty. He is the riverbed which the river could not flow. All of the stories have the commentary toward the end of the telling but one example one close up of a way in which a story brought to mind whether one imagines a story before, during or after the practice can relate to the mood, the mode, the fruit of the practice, what is the practice aiming for? Everything is aiming for something. If you think Yoga poses are destinations, then perhaps re-thinking that would be helpful. Yoga poses are not destinations they are maps, they are means, they are vehicles. They are vehicles to what? States of consciousness. States of awareness. States of healing, states of wellness. States of flow.

We had Shiva standing straight up. Why don't we have Shiva now. Corpse pose. So for corpse pose I tell the tale of the amorous couple Shiva and Parvati, Parvati was consort and vice versa. And they were engaged in their cosmic dalliance and Kama, the Indian cupid, desire incarnate in the end sends his -- doesn't take too well for that the metaphor of Yogi meant to subdue desire on some level but it's ambivalent. On the one hand he is a celibate Yogi and on the other hand he is evolved perfectly, fascinating paradox. He doesn't take well to coma striking him when he leaves expect it. He does what Nick would do, he opens his third eye and incinerates poor coma. What are you doing? Like, coma is gone and what's going to happen now. No desire in the world? What's going to happen now? Great Lord now that coma destroyed he can no longer kindle desire among beings. They will isolate themselves and die out. Surely this fate cannot come to pass. Your beauty matched by your wisdom, my love, I will resurrect coma in spirit so desire may dwell in the creature of earth. Though I myself have no use for coma. Really? Says the goddess. Really, is that so? Certain about that Lord? Her mood shifted and her loving gaze faded and she continued. Of course, I have raised my spiritual power to the point of transcending desire. Do you not realize this. He did not know it, Shiva sparked a deep anger. The light and color of her complexion drained away as her presence expanded. Even the mighty Shiva trembled as her energetic field grew larger and larger and blacker and blacker. Lack as ink encompassing night. Even he fell to the ground in utter submission because he was no longer in the midst of perfectly. Withdrawn from the universe. Manifesting her most great and terrifying form. Shiva lay corpse-like utterly still. Corpse pose. Stood over him and her terrible laughter echoed. Then she spoke. You are the conscious of the universe and I'm its energy without my power all beings nearly lie inert as you do now, impotent corpses. I'm the primordial power that drives the galaxies and all beings of the Cosmos I'm the desire there is no karma or field of karma. Even your meditation is born of desire. How else can you be? You are the walker but I'm the walk. You are the dancer but I'm the dance and when my energies are moved from you are awareness alone inert and incapable of action. You hold my colossal powers and I return to the universe and all beings in it and including you.

Learned a lesson. A great lesson that day about the power of Sakti, the goddess. The feminine divine and its relationship to desire. He learned what it's like to be completely inert. And the witness creation's dynamic play but unable to engage in it. When Kali withdraws from Shiva, he is little more than a sava, a corpse. As you embrace the inert stillness of sava, unconscious illness is called sleeping. Practice witnessing. Cease becoming for that time. And practice being and embrace being. Through the practice of divine inertia. Divine inertia. Sava. The capacity of witnessing stillness. Even as you move through the turbulence of life. There is another snippet into a story and the teachings of the story and the ways which it might pertain to a Yoga posture. So you have a taste of the connection. We will talk more in the final section of the talk how to use those stories. I think I will share maybe one more story with you. But I realize it wouldn't get to do as many as I would have liked which is part of the reason why I'm happy to share the course with you and you can learn about more stories. Let's see. Okay. This is what we will do. We will share two stories. Solar story and a lunar story. Namaste, y'all. Inside joke. Anyhow. A very special monkey. Indeed, conceived by means of a special

blessing from Lord Shiva himself. His mother and his father were childless for sometime before he took great penance to Shiva in order to obtain a son. So does penance to Shiva and Shiva wants to bless her so the seed of Shiva carried by the wind God to the womb. The son of the wind. As well as -- comes from his --

Very young age he is curious. Very strong. He is Shiva, powerful. He loves banjo. One day he saw the rise in the son and decides to take a leap up and thought it was a mango. Oh, breakfast is served. He is flying through the heavens mistaking the sun for a mango. Strong kid. But he is told that he can't. It's not a mango. That's the sun. Go back.

So as he grows, he proves himself not only to be physically powerful but spiritually powerful.

Remarkably self-controlled, contained, content. Happy to serve and loved learning. Curiosity is natural for all monkeys. We take curious George. His was of a different order. Curious about how the world worked and mysteries of life. He would seek out sages at every turn and learn about virtues and do all events at Yoga Alliance. There came a time when he learned all he could from the elders of his clan but he still wanted more. Remember his childhood visit to the sun and so an adulthood he left towards the sun. And he beseeched the sun. Please teach me. Please take me as your student. The sun scoffed and said you can try if you would like, but the longer you keep pace the more you are exposed to my fiery presence and would be singed in no time. If you have me as a student, I will keep pace even as long as I can. Even a day of your instruction is more than a lifetime without it.

So agreed perhaps somewhat skeptical. He positioned himself to face the sun, the sun is going with the elliptic, sun going in the direction of the heavenly bodsies and he facing him flying backwards in front of him. Match his celestial chariot. So begins to teaching him and teaches him all kinds of amazing lessons about life. The sun sees all so he can separate the weak from the chaff -- the wheat from the chaff. He has been around forever.

So day in and day out he kept pace. Suriyah impressed of the monkey's forbearance marched on with his teachings and they did this for one solar cycle, aka a year. The time it takes for the sun to pass through the entire backdrop of the heaven. When they were done, the wise and blackened -- offered his prostrations to the sun. He said, look, I've learned the mysteries of life to you. From you. I would like to give you a duction -- and noble and wise a vitriol for a teacher duction. And the sun said whatever it is you wish. Whatever, give me whatever you desire to give me. Not a problem. I wish only to honor you as my guru for the rest of my days but I want for all the world on thisser in you too. I know you worshiped around the world but I will device a sequence of Yoga postures dedicated to you.

These will not only activate your solar energy but the sequence will call people to reverence before your glory. Call the sequence -- and the first will be a salutation to the sun. The first pose will be -- to pay respects. To the sun. You can think of that as the sun in terms of the actual sun or the sun as a source. The source in our solar system, the source of life. Can think of that as source, source within as well, connecting with the source within.

Doing planmousenna. Your attention is going to heart and internalize. The first step. Requires to be centered. Focused and reverent. We are called to respect them. If we are to succeed in receiving all they have to give. This posture naturally brings our attention to the heart center so crucial for the

mutual devotion flowing between student and teacher. The sequence calls us to lower our heads, subdue our mundane selfs or egos. So there is space to receive the grace of whom ever that teacher is in that moment. So far more than a healing practice. It's a sequence of balances both channels when you are able to do it well. Sun is light of awareness.

The next and final story I will share with you today up close and personal is the story. Half-moon pose. Not full moon and not new moon but half-moon. About a balancing act. The story is about who is a charming show boy and enamored with the 27 daughters of -- and they with he and they struck up a deal. You can marry them all but he has to spend one night with each of them. The sun's movement through what's called the -- the lunar As ares. 27 constellations that mark the ecliptic in ancient vedic sky walking. The moon occupying bedding different wife in each lunar.

So the moon is going around and doing his thing but the favorite wife is -- what we call because of the Persians, the eye of the bull of Taurus. So. His favorite wife stays there for awhile and goes on and on. And 27 days pass. Ignores all of them and is staying. Can't get enough. So they go complain. He goes to him, you can't do this. You can't neglect your other wives and the moon is like, what's the problem? I'm enjoying myself with Rohani and she is enjoying herself with me. Be that as it may, life is not about enjoyments. You have a responsibility. To be there for all of your wives. Surely they knew what they were signing up for. It's my free spiritedness that they love so much. Furious, since you are satisfied with your own lust, the same that blinds you to decency I curse you to lose your sheen. We'll see how enjoyable a life is now for you.

He wastes away. He is upset and not particularly healthy but upset because of his vanity, look, my luster is gone. And he pines away. And so decides to do worship to Lord Shiva to ask for help and a great deal of penance to Shiva and Shiva, you reverse the curse and Shiva replies, I cannot reverse the curse but I can modify it. Since you are repentant you are changed. You humble and you are aware and dutiful because you luster. I want you to keep that and enjoy your show marksmanship your charm, your charisma, your allure, enjoy that as well. I want you to have that as well. Lord Shiva, I don't understand, which I be bright or dark? As much Indian myth, is it A or B, the answer is yes the not either-or. It's a both and. Both replied Lord Shiva. All things sway of time and henceforth so too shall you for you will wax in luster until the curse eclipsed by your brightness. And then at the moment you attain your fullest luster, two hours from now-ish, is when the moon attains its fullest luster, the moment you attain your fullest luster is the moment you start to lose it again. Over the course of a second Fortnite to apiece the curse. It shall be so. Bowed deeply before the Lord grateful for this blessing. For this day the moon waxes and wanes across the heavens.

The waxing moon is associated with outwardness, social jex, indulging pleasures. While the waning moon is with inwardness, isolation. The new moon can be understood when our awareness is internalized. Perhaps meditative posture. In this state the moon was able to commune with Shiva through meditation. Asked the question in his heads remember. When we are able to let go, we are able to diligently perform our duties and serve others and yet there is more to life than self-be a diggings. The full moon represents jovialty, this is the energy of joy of life. So human experience needs to oxalate between the two to find balance. It's a balancing act. The exact midpoints is the half-moon.

Half-moon. Exact midpoint. When engaging this posture, reflect on the story of the moon when engaging this posture for the key to -- is finding your balance between heaven and earth between supine and upstanding postures. It's a balancing act much as is the ebb and flow of the moon.

I will go another maybe at most five minutes. We have ten minutes for Q&A. There are a number of other stories we could dive into. But it's more important to share with you the power of the story telling in general for this question that you can dive into the stories through the book or elsewhere we would like. But I would like to share a word about how you use them, how you apply them.

And the answer is without question any skilled teacher especially of Indian wisdom traditions will understand this very clearly, have a crassup analogy, advice is like underwear. It can't be one size fits all. Far too personal. Must be tailored to that person and their needs. It has to be who are you sharing it with? For what purpose? In what context? That is absolutely crucial.

Something to consider is, yeah, practice in general. It's goal oriented. Contextual, provisional. Whether you are teacher, student or both. Pertain to that specific example. But when you are using the stories for yourself or for others, keep -- be conscious of who you are teaching. What you are trying to teach them. Why are you teaching them? Where are they at? There has to be some level of ability, integrity. Tradition and innovation. You may or may not be a traditional wisdom teacher. You might be innovating from tradition but even when it's innovating from tradition, one has to understand the tradition to innovate.

One of the crucial pieces I would say about integrating the stories in your practice is first integrating them into your consciousness. In order to transmit the power of the story, one first has to experience the power of the story. The story is a means of uplifting. Awareness. And imbibing the story and having it roll around in the back of your brain and becoming part of the tissues of your consciousness then when you share it you share it from an embodied perspective and it holds tremendous power and you understand more clearly sharing it in this context.

It's a number of things I could share about your teaching presence, holding space, sacred space. If you have questions about any of that, I will happily entertain them.

Understand the stories a vehicle. Much like the asana itself it's a vehicle. It's an inspiration and it points you to something. Guides you to something to experience. The assonna is a vehicle of experience. The story is a story of experience. Don't mistake the raft for the shore.

So it's crucial to understand that the story itself is a tool. It's crucial to become familiar with the story and the ones that you should teach or the ones you should grok are the ones that call to you. Will speak to you. The ones that most speak to you, the ones that resonate. Understand why they resonate. Understand what they are teaching you. And share that with others if you would like if you are a teacher.

Some potential times when one can share them in a class setting is perhaps at the opening of a class. Particular story, less is more. Don't share 50 stories or even five. Share a snippet or a single story or a vignette that encapsulates an idea that resonates with you and what you are trying to accomplish in the class.

Perhaps the opening of class and then do the asana class. After pranayama is a wonderful time

because the monkey mind is quieted. Before practice. Using the stories as a means of guided meditation. Telling the story when folks are in sas havana can be powerful or outside class. And talks in story telling sessions.

I will end with what I end with in the book. Which is essentially these stories are told in order to be told. They are told in order to be shared. So engage them if they speak to you. Engage them. Read, reflect, rinse and repeat. See how they come out of you when you try to tell them to others. But their power is in their telling. In their telling is propelled by their embodiment. Through hearing. Hear them. Digest them. Embody them. Share them. Variety of stories that I mentioned at the outset from a indic tradition that holds tremendous insight on what it means to be a seeker, what it means to be a Yogi, what it means to be human. What it means to be more than you think you are.

And with that note, I want to come to close and touch on the hope that I've shared with you, the connection between stories and postures. Something of the story in living in India and how to use these stories in your own practice and teaching. By all means if you are interested, I have a companion course for the book entirely free of charge to -- I will leave it open until the end of the month. Use the code YA. There are eight stories I go into in the course. Just look at the course page and that's the easiest thing to do.

I will end with this ancient Sanskrit prayer. May everyone be happy.

Now it's time for you to ask me anything and everything pertaining to the talk.

>> In nine minutes. We will try to get to as many as we can. Thank you so much, for that, Raj. The first question that we have is where do the images come from? They are beautiful.

>> They are absolutely beautiful. They come from the illustrator of the book, Dana. You can look her up. There is a bio, you can go on Amazon and find her bio as well for the book. She was found through the press and I think she did a brilliant job. No question. Other questions?

>> Second question, this is fascinating. I thought most ancient Yoga poses were only the basics. And most of the poses we it are now informed by gymnasts in Europe in the late 1800s. Would you be so kind to speak to the poses and links to the ancient mythology.

>> Yes, there is a lot there. The poses have to do with states of awareness. And the stories have to do with states of awareness. Which is why certain poses are named specifically after particular mythic characters and mythic vignettes. The book is not an historical one. I don't trace an historical trajectory if and when folks consciously attach stories to poses. It's a thematic one. It's a journey into the experiential of both the stories and the assonnas -- asanas.

>> Anja and I trace is this Yoga that questioning, too. If you want more on that Karen, please feel free to read -- there is a lot out there. -- what's the difference in naming conventions and other standing and attention.

>> I would say those questions have to be asked by the person who taught you that. Because they may be from a particular tradition. One thing that's crucial, crucial is that Indian philosophy, mythology is a living, whether we believe is viable or not. It's in the context of a particular person that you are choosing to study with and how they are using it. The naming conventions will always give a different hue. If you are invoking a deity, you can call him big belly one. You are invoking his grounding energy.

The different names of the poses will give -- with accentuate different qualities. The question should be taken up with whom you are receiving that knowledge from.

>> Thank you. The next in which ancient text can we find these stories? What is the source?

>> Yeah, so broadly speaking, these stories are in the two Sanskrit epics which are the -- the story of Ramah and the -- the great story. Two Sanskrit epics. Much of which are translated into English. It has been fully translated. The m project has not been fully translated but Smith has an abridged version.

And there is another translation of the entire critical edition. The two Sanskrit epics and then this massive, massive, massive body of text called the 18 -- they are 18 Maha.

>> Puran la s. There is a Shiva and a linka and a -- so in the Puranas, and the Ma hapuranas is where you will find the tales.

Next question, we are moving right along. How detailed do you get in actual classes with the story telling?

>> That will be context dependent. Based on your goal with your students, how much spice do you put in it? It depends on who is eating it and what their tolerance is and what their Dosha is. It all depends - - it's a function of your accomplishing your goal as a teacher. Right.

>> Wonderful. There is a gratitude one and then comment question, there is such a wonderful balance between masculine and feminine energies to use traditional terminology in the mythologies. Why is it that sages were overwhelmingly in maillot bodies. The history seems to have been shaped by the masculine can you speak to this imbalance

>> Absolutely. So there are a couple of levels. This is something I'm passionate about but I will put it as succinctly as possible. Histories and systems of power on the earth across the world as far as we know have been patriarchal, whether in the ancient Middle East, whatever, India is no exception. So by and large traditions were for and by men. Without question. And of course women were barred from certain levels of initiation from renouncing times have changed a great deal and this are stories in the - - about powerful female aesthetics who schooled the great philosopher king. There is a sociocultural dimension to the story that will function within brammaism or patriarchy, et cetera, et cetera. Beyond that, there are spiritual truths in the story.

So you will see spiritual energy -- feminine energy and feminine power at every turn. And there is a reason why one of the great -- the three great objects in the Hindu world are -- chapter one on Shiva stories, chapter 2 on vish knew stories and his incarnations, chapter 3 is on goddess stories but there aren't stories overtly named after the goddess. So what I do is I talk about goddess stories related to the energy we find in the poses. Throne pose. Warrior pose. And battling the buffalo demon.

The energies are definitely at play and indic thought very much has to do with bringing the masculine and feminine into balance but the face of tradition all too often has been male throughout history.

>> Yes, definitely. I'm not sure we have -- we only have two minutes left. There are continued questions, but of course you can find the companion course that he has so generously made available to you all as well as find Raj himself on his website, et cetera. But I will pass it back to you, Raj, if you want to leave us with any final thoughts, closing, auspicious blessings, whatever.

>> Blessings, scholarly insights. You name it I'm grateful to the Yoga Alliance for facilitating in getting

the word out about the importance of stories. I would encourage you if you are interested by all means get the book. Look at the course if it's of interest to you. And the larger theme for me is nourish yourselves. And nourish your students if you are teachers. Most of you will be. Find what you need to find for your nourishment. Certainly this is a wonderful avenue of storied nourishment but be sure you are fed by tradition and you facilitate in feeding others by tradition. If you are interested in me, you know how to find me. I have a CV site, [Raj Balkaran.com](http://RajBalkaran.com). The school site is courses at [Raj Balkaran.com](http://RajBalkaran.com). And that's that. Be well. Happy --