


Ocean of Yoga

MEDITATIONS ON YOGA
AND ĀYURVEDA FOR BALANCE,
AWARENESS, AND WELL-BEING



JULIE DUNLOP

FOREWORD BY VASANT LAD, B.A.M. & S., M.A.Sc.

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“*Ocean of Yoga* is an obviously authentic and truly unique expression of Julie’s years of study and experience. Unlike any other book, *Ocean of Yoga* conveys the beauty of Yoga and Āyurveda through poetry, contemplations, and practices. *Namaskāra* to Julie for providing our community with such a special gift.”

—*Nicolai Bachman, author of The Language of Yoga
and Path of the Yoga Sutras*

“An experiential tool inspiring each of us to dive deeper into our own personal practice...ancient wisdom comes alive as each page reveals new conscious insights into our true Self.”

—*Clayton Bell, M.D., Integrative Medicine Physician,
University of Tennessee Medical Center*

Explore the vastness of yoga with meditations infusing the wisdom of practice into daily life. Weaving together the practical experience of yoga with its ancient oceanic depths, these short readings encourage a centering that directs attention to the breath, the present, and appreciating the gifts that each moment of life can bring.

Meditations welcoming awareness and well-being are included, offering a taste of Āyurveda and an introduction to yoga’s eight limbs. Included also are opening and closing meditations for yoga class or home practice, as well as guided relaxations. Providing nourishment for the heart, mind, and body, let this book turn your attention towards a life of balance and the essence of yoga.



Julie Dunlop, a graduate of The Ayurvedic Institute, is certified as an AyurYoga® teacher and an Ayurvedic Health Practitioner. As a poet, author, and teacher, her work integrates writing, yoga, and Āyurveda for harmony of mind, body, and soul.

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Ocean of YOGA

Meditations on Yoga and Āyurveda for
Balance, Awareness, and Well-Being

Julie Dunlop

Foreword by Vasant Lad, B.A.M. & S., M.A.Sc.



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This Book Is Dedicated...

To yoga, in all of its many forms

To Āyurveda—its beauty, its balance, its healing potency and grace

To all those who have carried the teachings and lineage of yoga and Āyurveda through the generations to arrive to us, today, here, now

To the *doṣhas*, *guṇas*, and *pañcha mahābhūtas* that comprise us and our world, as well as the prayers, *mantras*, *prāṇāyāmas*, and *āsanas* that support us in our daily well-being

To Vasant Lad, founder of the Ayurvedic Institute in Albuquerque, whose compassion, knowledge, kindness, wisdom, innovation, humor, and humility have inspired me daily since I first heard him speak in 2005; the weaving together of science, medicine, history, philosophy, art, poetry, stories, and music in his teaching is profound

To all of my teachers in yoga, in Āyurveda, in writing, and in life who have taught me more than I could measure, and to all of my students whose dedication to learning is an unending source of inspiration

To Grandmother, who, through the beautiful book of her daily life, shared tranquility, creativity, and integrity, and who, by welcoming me into her home in the mountains of Appalachia, blessed my life immensely

To Margaret (“M”), my dear four-footed one who loved to be near meditation, *prāṇāyāma*, and *āsana*, and whose patience, enthusiasm, intuition, authenticity, and unconditional love was and is a deeply healing presence in my life

To my parents, Karen and Jim Dunlop, for giving me the gift of life, and whose love, encouragement, understanding, and support humble me daily as my journey continues to unfold

To our ancestors, without whom we would not be here

And to you, reader, whose sacred presence brings the words of this book to life.

In Memory



This book is dedicated to the memory of:



“M”

(Margaret)

circa 2000—July 8, 2016



Into the palpable presence of the absence of the four-footed yogini who had been by my side for fifteen years came the words of this book, arriving just as unexpectedly as she did back in 2001.

Yogis and yoginis come in many forms.

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Foreword

The word “yoga” has become popular all over the world since Swāmī Vivekānanda, an innately loving, very compassionate disciple of Śrī Rāmākṣṣṇa Paramahansa, came to the United States over a hundred years ago to attend an all-religions conference, and there he spoke about Vedanta and yoga philosophy. As we know, “yoga,” coming from the word “*yuj*,” means “to unite.” It is an ancient art of union of the lower self with the higher self by following yogic discipline. Yoga is very ancient in India. Even before Patañjali’s *Yoga Sūtras*, there were *rishis* all having their own names with the yoga; for example, the guru of Śrī Rām was Vasiṣṭha: Vasiṣṭha yoga. Vālmīki yoga, Sandīpanī yoga, Śāṇḍilya yoga, and Kaśyapa yoga: all these different *rishis* had their permutations and combinations in the unique system of yoga, and they developed their own system of enlightenment.

Aṣṭāṅga yoga is the eight limbs of yoga—*yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, *samādhi*. The first two *āṅga*, the first two limbs, *yama* and *niyama*, are a wonderful discipline, and that discipline is the foundation of the yoga system. Then comes *āsana*. *Āsana* is *sthira sukham āsanam*; one can sit in that posture without any pain, without any discomfort, without any effort. Such an effortless, quiet, peaceful, relaxing state of awareness is called *āsana*, and there are 8.4 million postures; I think out of 8.4 million, we should know 84. Out of 84, we should do at least eight *āsanas* in our daily life to keep our body, mind, and consciousness in harmony with the universal law. Yoga follows the universal law of perfect health.

My student Julie Dunlop's book reflects her dedication, devotion, and great commitment to the ancient yogic disciplines. This is definitely her lifetime work, and she has put it into wonderful poetry in constant, continuous flow of awareness under the name *Ocean of Yoga*. In the ocean, all rivers come and meet with the ocean; similarly, in this book, all different systems of yoga blend together in order to bring the radical healing of the body, mind, and consciousness.

This book, *Ocean of Yoga*, includes meditations on yoga and Āyurveda for balancing awareness and well-being. My loving, compassionate, dedicated student Julie Dunlop has learned the basic principles of Āyurveda by heart, and she has completed Ayurvedic Studies Program 1 and Ayurvedic Studies Program 2. From Julie Dunlop's great experience of Āyurveda and following yogic discipline, this book is an outcome of her effort, experience, dedication, and devotion; it is a very sacred work of integration of Āyurveda and yoga.

In this book, the endless, timeless wisdom of Āyurveda and yoga are beautifully woven together. She talks about walking along the shore, gratitude, the riding of the waves, the setting of intention, and she talks about heart, laughter, tears, and receiving the teachings. She also talks a great deal about the three *doṣhas* and how to bring them into harmony. Chapter by chapter, she has revealed the yogic discipline and Ayurvedic discipline. This is a great work of integration that Julie has done, and I truly admire this; it is a masterpiece of work of Julie's devotion. I'm quite sure that this book will help readers to bring Ayurvedic and yogic discipline to their lives, and I hope this book will help the reader to attain *samādhi*, the transcendental state of awareness. The secret meaning of yoga is "skill in action" (*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*). The reader will develop not only the skill in action but also the skill in daily life-relationship, which will make the life whole, and whole is holy.

Love and Light,
Vasant Lad, B.A.M. & S., M.A.Sc.
The Ayurvedic Institute
Albuquerque, New Mexico
May 2017



*May we infuse the wisdom of our practice
into
the moments of our lives*



Preface

Yoga, with its rich tradition of millennia, is as vast and deep as the ocean. When we go to the ocean and step in, perhaps even swim in the waves a bit, we feel we have been to the ocean—and we have—and yet, we have sampled only one tiny part of one of the many vast oceans of the world. Similarly, when we go to a yoga class, we become immersed within yoga—and yet it is just one day’s practice out of a lifetime, and it is one style or lineage of yoga out of many; we have touched the ocean of yoga.

Yoga, while often understood to be the practice of *āsana* (physical postures) on a mat, extends well beyond this realm, flowing into every moment of our lives. In our fast-paced, electronically-stimulated world, it is easy to move away from, rather than towards, our own well-being, forgetting our center. Through the various challenges and stresses we face, we can temporarily lose touch with a balanced life, a balanced perspective. However, through awareness and meditative focus, both in our thoughts and actions, we can regain a sense of well-being. The eight limbs of yoga and the basic principles of yoga’s sister science, Āyurveda, offer us many gems of wisdom that reflect the essence of light like ocean waves sparkling in the sun.

Introduction

The ocean of yoga can surprise us with what it washes up on our shore. That has certainly been the case for me. I share with you these meditations and reflections that I did not know would be coming until they began to arrive in the autumn of 2016. If, for you, they in any way hint at the depth and calm and power of yoga's ocean as you have experienced it, I am profoundly grateful, and if they do not, please let them drift back into the cosmic ocean to be further washed and purified by the divinity of transformation that exists in all things.

When we sit in *Baddha Koṇāsana* (Bound Angle) and gently open the inside edges of our feet, it is as if we are reading a small book. In the lines of the soles of our feet and in the invisible vestiges of the inches and miles they have traveled is the story of our individual lives and of life as a whole. A record of every place we have stood and every moment we have traversed in this life is present as we continue writing with the divine ink of each of our experiences, each day greeting us with beauty, challenges, and possibility.

This book, a drop in the ocean, is an offering of gratitude to yoga and Āyurveda for the many gifts and lessons they have brought and continue to bring, and to my teachers who, through their patience, skill, inspiration, and wisdom, have helped me in innumerable ways.

Ocean of Yoga comes forth from everyone and everything I have known in this life, all of the places, people, animals, conversations, silences, interactions, and experiences that have become a part of me, shaping me, teaching me, uplifting me, humbling me, and helping me grow.

To God and this divine life, I bow.

As We Begin...

- Thank you for your presence, for arriving here to this page, just as you are. You are an exquisite part of the ocean of breath and life, connecting us all in sacred community.
- The meditations in this collection are best read slowly, one at a time, silently or aloud, either in part or in full, perhaps in a yoga class, or as part of your personal practice.
- Just as the ocean cannot be crossed all at once, pace yourself as you read. You might start at the end, middle, or beginning, depending upon what you feel drawn to. The book begins with a collection of opening meditations that can be used at the start of a yoga class or at the start of an individual practice. The book then continues into a “Diving Deeper” section of yoga philosophy, contemplating the eight limbs of yoga, five obstacles that can interfere with our practice, and the seven *chakras* that grace our anatomical architecture. The next section, “Yoga’s Sister Sea: Āyurveda,” explores facets of Āyurveda, the ancient medical science from India, which shares yoga’s focus of enhancing the well-being of body, mind, and soul. “The Ocean’s Depths” offers a collection of guided meditations that can be read aloud during the resting period (*Shavāsana*) at the end of a yoga class or read silently to invite relaxation. Finally, there are closing meditations to seal the practice, either in a yoga class or on your own, as well as contemplations for reflection. Please take what works for you and let the rest drift back to sea.