

Annotated Bibliography of Texts on Yoga

Easwaran, Eknath. *The Bhagavad Gita*. The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, 2007.

The Bhagavad Gita is part of the Mahabharata. It tells the story Prince Arjuna, a warrior destined to fight his loved ones for his rightful seat at the throne. He doesn't want to fight with his family, friends and advisors but knows it is his dharma. This is the premise of the Gita: self-mastery and the internal dialogue each of us face.

Easwaran's translation of the Bhagavad Gita provides the reader with a thoughtful yet basic explanation of this scripture. I read this edition of the Gita when I began my practice in Ashtanga yoga. The first time I read this, I struggled to get through it. I thought it was dull and I couldn't relate to it at all. The deeper I dove into my practice, the more I began to reflect back on the Gita. Arjuna asks many pivotal questions around Dharma. He begs his charioteer and advisor, Krishna, if he has to fight this battle and why. I started to wonder about my own dharma, if I am living it out and what that even means. This made me reflect if we create our own destiny or if it is pre-determined. This translation of the Bhagavad Gita has given me a lot to question.

The Bhagavad Gita was written around 600 BCE. This was during the rise of Buddhism and many Brahmin men were running off to the mountains to practice renunciation. This meant leaving their families and responsibilities behind. Another translation of "Dharma" is duty. A central message of the Gita is that for one to obtain enlightenment, one must do their duty. It may not be glorious, but if you signed up to do something, you better do the dang thing to the best of your ability.

Easwaran, Eknath. *The Upanishads*. The Blue Mountain Center of Meditation, 2007.

The Upanishads translates to "Sit beside". This is in context to the vedas. There are endless amounts of Upanishads and it is likely that there are still more that have not yet been discovered. The Upanishads are a collection of stories and poems that often teach a lesson. This copy gives a translation of the 13 principle Upanishads. I have studied these as they relate to yoga. A central message of these stories is to practice everything you do with compassion and devotion. These stories have been a reminder for me to practice everything, including my day to day activities with intention.

Iyengar, B.K.S. *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*. Aquarian/Thorsons, 1993.

Iyengar's *Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* is a commentary on Vyasa's commentary of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. These Sutras are 196 verses on how to attain enlightenment. Patanjali's second sutra states: "Yoga Citta Vritti Nirodah".

This loosely translates to “Yoga calms the fluctuations of the mind”. The rest of the sutras outlines how to get there. There are four chapters in the sutras: on samadhi, practice, mystic powers and absolute independence. In theory, these sutras gave given me tools to calm my mind, although that’s easier said than done.

Jois, Sri K. Pattabhi. Yoga Mala. North Point Press, 2011.

Yoga Mala gives the vinyasa and breath count for each asana in the Ashtanga yoga primary series. It also gives instruction on how to execute each asana. Furthermore, it gives the reader a description of prescribed benefits for each posture. This text is instrumental in my development as a student and a future yoga teacher. It is imperative to know the count for each vinyasa to properly understand how to practice and lead a class. Preparation, including knowledge of what one is leading, ensures the safety of the student.

Menon, Ramesh. The Ramayana. North Point Press, 2012.

The Ramayana is the first of three great epics in Indian literature. This book can be read through many lenses such as poetry, mantra or history. The Ramayana tells the story of Vishnu, the preserver, returning to earth to preserve Dharma. The protagonist is a man of perfect dharma and must destroy the demon that is plaguing earth. The story of Rama, the incarnation of Vishnu, is meant to inspire the reader to live out their duty.

Syman, Stefanie. The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010.

This book discusses yoga’s migration to the west. I found it interesting to read about history continuing to repeat itself. When Britain invaded India, Swami’s headed to the united states to raise funds and exemplify that India was fine without being under British rule. The Swami’s hosted conferences to share their messages. These meetings were usually hosted during the weekdays meaning primarily upper-class women were in attendance. These women were interested in what the swami’s said and started to learn yoga. In typical patriarchal fashion, men wanted to control women by dictating what their bodies should look like. When the women started engaging in yoga and the spiritual practices accompanying it, the men felt like they were losing control and began to think of these women as “demented”. I think it is important to understand the history of this practice and how it came to be because it’s origins. yoga was originally only taught to high caste men in India.