Mediating yoga: An exploration of the cultural translation of yoga in the UK through its popular representations (1955-1975).

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements of Birmingham City University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Preface

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Abstract

Mediating yoga: An exploration of the cultural translation of yoga in the UK through its popular representations (1955-1975).

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This thesis uses media representations of yoga during a phase of its popularisation in the UK (De Michelis, 2004) to examine the processes of its cultural translation as a transcultural practice. Located at the intersection of yoga studies and media and cultural studies, it considers the contextual (re)creation of yoga as the product of a series of overlapping and competing understandings. Using a discourse-theoretical analysis approach (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Van Brussel et al., 2019) and the framework of cultural translation (Maitland, 2017), such understandings of yoga emerge as the result of a complex interplay of discourses and relationships rather than attempts to replicate a pre-existing practice. This approach, in turn, enables the work to address issues relating to yoga's appropriation and commodification from a new perspective.

Based on a study of media texts and archive materials relating to yoga from 1955 to 1975, the thesis draws out a series of key 'discursive contours' as used by Bowman (2021). These are used to interrogate how representations of yoga in the UK were shaped in part by colonial and orientalist discourse, media engagement, the contextual understandings and experience of yogis, and commercial interests. These representations are triangulated with ethnohistorical interviews with practitioners from the period and their personal collections, conceptualised within a (yoga) community archive ecology model. This allows the research to challenge and/or corroborate the mediations of yoga, not in terms of whether they were factually accurate, but as important discursive texts themselves.

It is argued that the cultural translations of yoga which permeated, and the way yoga came to be understood in this period, were never intended to be a facsimile or replication of a pre-existing South Asian practice (even if they suggested they were), but contextual creations built upon discourse, experience, and cultural needs. Therefore, the value of

researching such varied representations comes not from questioning what aspects of yoga they focus on or omit but what they can reveal about the contextual time and space of their creation. This thesis will be of interest to those researching the transcultural movement of cultural practices or forms, and exploring the dynamics of power, which can play a role in shaping how something is understood and developed within that process.

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Glossary and Cast

Terms

Asana	Refers to the physical postures or poses of a yoga practice, often translated as a seat. Asana is also the third stage in Patanjali's eight fold path of yoga.
Asram	A spiritual hermitage or location where people of a community reside or come together for shared practice.
Ashtanga	The eight fold path of yoga detailed in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Also the dynamic yoga practice popularised by Pattabhi Jois.
Bhagavad Gita	A prominent Hindu text, part of the Mahabharata dating from between 5th century BCE and 1st century BCE.
Guru	A spiritual teacher or guide who helps students. Often revered for their knowledge, experience or ability to impart their teaching of yoga.
Hatha yoga	A rigorous system of yoga in medieval India focusing on physical practices (cleansing techniques, breath-control and postures). Also used now to describe body-yoga.
Kriya	Purification techniques in yoga aimed at cleansing the body and mind, often involving breath control, specific physical exercises, and meditation.
Niyama	Moral restraints. Also the second stage of Patanjali's path of yoga, including cleanliness (*saucha*), contentment (*santosha*), austerity (*tapas*), self-study (*svadhyaya*), and devotion to a higher power (*ishvara pranidhana*).
Parampara	A method of knowledge transmission in yoga and other spiritual traditions, where teachings are passed down from guru to disciple through an unbroken lineage
Pranayama	Breath-control and breathing techniques involving techniques to regulate the breath and enhance the flow of *prana* (life force) in the body.
Pranayama yoga	The system of yoga taught by Yogini Sunita, including relaxation and physical posture. It is not limited to breathing techniques as the name may suggest.
Raja Yoga	Often referred to as the "royal path," raja yoga is a comprehensive system of yoga that emphasises meditation and mental control to achieve self-realisation.
Sanskrit	An ancient Indo-European language of India, in which many classical yoga texts, including the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Yoga Sutras, are written.

Vinyasa	A combining of movement and breath.
Vinyasa yoga	A flowing or dynamic yoga practice.
Yama	Moral observances. Also the first stages of Patanjali's path of yoga, including, non-violence (*ahimsa*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), celibacy or moderation (*brahmacharya*), and non-possessiveness (*aparigraha*).
Yoga Sutras of Patañjali	A collection of Sanskrit sutras on the theory and practice of yoga.
Yogis / Yoga Teachers	
Yogi Bhajan (1954–2004)	The founder of the 3HO (Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization) Foundation, who introduced his version of Kundalini Yoga to the US in the late 1960s.
Rammohan Brahmacari	The renowned Hatha yogi and ascetic who Krishnamacharya reported he stayed with in a Himalayan mountain cave for seven years.
Bikram Choudhury (1944-)	The controversial founder of Bikram Yoga where 26 postures practiced in a heated room. He has been marred by numerous legal issues
Wilfred Clark (1898 - 1981)	The founder of the British Wheel of Yoga, an organisation dedicated to promoting yoga education and standards in the UK.
Indra Devi (1899 – 2002)	Often called the "First Lady of Yoga", Devi was a student of Krishnamacharya who went on to write books about yoga and teach the practice to Hollywood celebrities.
Sir Paul Dukes (1889 – 1967)	A spy and early British authority on yoga, Dukes was the first person to demonstrate yoga on BBC TV and wrote several books on the subject.
Richard Hittleman (1927 – 1991)	A prominent American yogi and the host of the television show *Yoga for Health* which aired in dozens of countries in the 1960s and 1970s.
B.K.S. Iyengar (1918 – 2014)	A student of Krishnamacharya, Iyengar went on to become a highly influential yoga teacher and the author of several yoga books including *Light on Yoga* (1966).
Pattabhi Jois (1915 – 2009)	The founder of the dynamic practice Ashtanga Yoga, which combined breath and movement, Jois was also a student of Krishnamacharya.
Tirumalai Krishnamacharya (1888 – 1989)	Often referred to as the "Father of Modern Yoga" Krishnamacharya was the teacher of several globally renowned yoga teachers.
Lyn Marshall (1944 – 1992)	A ballet dancer and model who demonstrated yoga postures on the TV show *Yoga for Health* going on to write yoga books and host of her own yoga TV shows.
Patanjali	An ancient sage credited with authoring the "Yoga Sutras," a foundational text of classical yoga philosophy outlining the eight limbs of yoga.

Sivananda Saraswati (1887 – 1963)	The yoga guru and proponent of Vedanta who founded the Divine Life Society. He authored more than 200 books about yoga.
Yogini Sunita (1932 – 1970)	An influential yoga teacher based in the West Midlands in the 1960s where she was the owner of the first 'yoga studio' in the UK.
Vishnudevananda 1927 -1993)	Disciple of Sivananda Saraswati and author of yoga manuals including the popular *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga* (1960).
Vivekananda (1862 – 1902)	An influential Indian philosopher and often credited with introducing yoga to the West with his address at the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893.
Interview Cast	
John Cain	Joined the BWY in 1968 after taking up yoga with his wife. He attended one of the first BWY teacher trainings and authored a short history of the BWY publication for the organisation. First interviewed 26 June 2021.
Stella Cherfas	A yoga practitioner since 1947 where she took lessons with Sir Paul Dukes. After moving to the UK in 1962 she opened the London Yoga Studio in 1964. First interviewed 10 November 2022.
James Crichlow	An Ashtanga teacher from Birmingham who took up yoga in 1975. First interviewed 1 February 2019.
Tony Crisp	A journalist and a founding member of the BWY who has practiced and taught yoga since the mid-1950s. He has written for yoga magazines and had books published on yoga and dreams. First interviewed 27 June 2021. (No relation to author).
Angie Donoghue	Has practiced yoga since 1979 after taking an Iyengar class within the adult education system. First interviewed 18 January 2021.
Pamela Gartery	Has practiced yoga in the Iyengar tradition since taking it up in 1973 with a teacher who practiced with B.K.S. Iyengar. First interviewed 11 January 2021.
George Hewitt	A yoga teacher who began practicing yoga in the late 1960s in Birmingham. First interviewed 17 May 2021.
Sheila Haswell	A Senior (Level 3) Iyengar Yoga Teacher who started practicing in 1973 when her mother Lilian Biggs, an early student of B.K.S. Iyengar, sent her a copy of his book *Light on Yoga*. First interviewed 14 July 2020.
Shelly Lea	A student of Diana Clifton, who was one of B.K.S. Iyengar's first students in the UK. She was given items from Clifton's personal collection related to yoga after her passing. First interviewed 15 June 2022.

Gill Lloyd	A former teacher trainer for the BWY and former chair of Viniyoga Britain who was a student of TKV Desikachar (the son of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya). Gill started practicing in 1972. First interviewed 16 July 2021.
Audrey Maric	A student of Yogini Sunita who took classes with her at her centre in Sutton Coldfield (Birmingham) from 1966. She has continued to practice Pranayama Yoga. First interviewed 13 August 2020.
Rosemary Martin	HR consultant and yoga teacher who was inspired to practice yoga after seeing the TV show *Yoga For Health* and sought in-person instruction with Iyengar teacher Ruth White in 1972. First interviewed 8 January 2021.
Maureen Oddy	Yoga teacher who follows the lineage of Yogini Sunita but took it up in 1970 after her death so completed her training with the BWY. First interviewed 13 September 2021.
Jayne Orton	Director of Iyengar Birmingham and an Advanced Level Iyengar teacher. She first practiced with B.K.S. Iyengar in 1970 and subsequently made annual trips to Pune to study with him. First interviewed 26 June 2021.
Korinna Pilafidis-Williams	Editor of Dipika, the annual publication of Iyengar London and a senior teacher there. She has written extensively about the history of Iyengar yoga in the UK. First interviewed 10 May 2022.
Blanka Peters	A former primary school teacher who took up yoga in 1971 after watching Yoga For Health on Yorkshire Television and practiced Iyengar Yoga. First interviewed 19 September 2020.
Laura Potts	A yoga teacher who started practicing yoga in the mid 1970s after visiting a family member who was attending a yoga holiday in Greece with Angela Farmer. First interviewed 15 January 2021.
Alessandra Quaglieri	Yoga teacher and owner of the only remaining studio to teach yoga in the style of Yogini Sunita. She also holds personal and archive collections of Yogini Sunita. First interviewed 29 May 2019.
Bhalsenender Randhaawa	Took up yoga in retirement after living Dudley in the UK since 1963. First interviewed 15 February 2022.
Baljinder Sanghera	Housewife from Birmingham who began practicing yoga in 2019 at a community group for South Asian women. First interviewed 15 February 2022.
Ranjit Sondhi	Former BBC Governor who taught yoga at the University of Birmingham in the late 1960s and at the Asian Resource Centre in Handsworth in the 1970s. First interviewed 28 January 2022.

Maxine Tobias	Internationally renowned yoga teacher, student of B.K.S. Iyengar and author of bestselling books including Stretch and Relax (1985). First interviewed 13 March 2021.
Angela Thompson	Early member of the BWY with which she had held many roles. She also ran *Angela's Yoga Books* which began selling books in the 1970s. First interviewed 27 September 2021.
Ken Thompson	A founder member of the BWY and BWY chair (1985-88) who was involved in development of the BWY teaching syllabus in 1971. He started practicing yoga in 1955 and was one of the first full-time yoga teachers in the UK. First interviewed 27 September 2021.
Helen Ward	Began practicing yoga after her mother (a fan of Yehudi Menuhin) took her to a class in 1973. First interviewed 21 January 2021.
Ruth White	An early student of B.K.S. Iyengar in London who is said to have played a role in the introduction of the modern yoga mat. First interviewed 19 January 2021.
Linda Wilks	Began practicing yoga in 1969 and has taught it since 1973. First interviewed 10 January 2021.
Velta Snikere Wilson (1920 – 2022)	Latvian poet and yoga teacher who was a founding member of the BWY and was involved in development of the BWY teaching syllabus in 1971. First interviewed 7 July 2021.

Introduction

This thesis employs media representations of yoga during a phase of its popularisation in the UK between 1955 and 1975 (De Michelis, 2004) to examine the processes of its cultural translation (Maitland, 2017) as a transcultural practice. To do this, I drew on a corpus of 900+ media texts relating to yoga, triangulated alongside archive materials, interviews with 28 practitioners from the period, and their personal collections. I found that yoga, as it was permeated and represented, was never intended to be a facsimile or replication of a pre-existing practice (even when presented as such). Instead, it was an assortment of contextual creations built upon discourse, experience, and cultural needs which through their mediation and interplay contributed to developing an increasingly narrow understanding of yoga in the popular UK psyche. In this way, issues such as yoga's cultural appropriation and commodification are used as starting points for an analysis of power structures rather than judgment. I argue the value of researching such cultural translations and representations of yoga, therefore, lies in what they can reveal about the temporal and spatial context of their creation rather than fixating on aspects of the practice they foreground or omit. In this way, my thesis is not just about yoga. Rather, it uses yoga to explore how cultural practices or traditions move across cultures. Yoga becomes a discursively rich object through which to explore dynamics of power, which can play a role in shaping how something is understood and developed within that transcultural process.

This project is informed by my personal experience and my engagement with yoga when I had just returned to academia to pursue an MA. As I stood at the front of my yoga mat, ready to embark on the sequence of postures and vinyasas which make up the *Ashtanga* primary series, I heard the instructor telling a new student, as was often the case, that what we were doing was part of a lineage tradition dating back thousands of years, and how he had been authorised to teach this specific sequence in India. Instantly, I was mentally out of the yoga studio and back in a media and cultural studies lecture, my mind racing to apply what we had been discussing to the subject of yoga. This thesis is the culmination of that thought. I attempt to address questions relating to why I wanted to practice yoga and how this was tangled in issues of authority and authenticity as well as cultural appropriation and commodification. My initial interest in yoga came sometime after Madonna spoke about it on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* (1998), and my partner subsequently dragged me to a class at our

local gym. I hated it and vowed never to return, but I occasionally joined her at-home practice facilitated by Spice Girl Gerri Halliwell's DVDs *Geri Yoga* (Kemsley, 2001) and *Body Yoga* (Kemsley, 2002). Working as a journalist for national newspapers, I also wrote occasional articles relating to yoga, always with the hook of a celebrity, be it a pop star using it to relax before a concert, or footballer Ryan Giggs' endorsement encouraging more men to do it. However, it wasn't until 2014 that I (on the advice of a doctor who informed me I had the spinal condition ankylosing spondylitis) developed a practice and interest in yoga, which could be described as anything more than passing. I soon joined a yoga studio in Birmingham and promptly started practicing for more than 10 hours per week after feeling physical benefits. Here, I began to hear many teachers and practitioners talking about the historical traditions of their yoga lineages. In the case of some teachers, having been taught by gurus who were regarded as the epitome of authenticity and authority. This was at odds with the yoga I thought I knew through the media (and had contributed to as a journalist), but I wanted to be part of that tradition. However, around the same time, some of my fellow practitioners started talking about the cultural appropriation of yoga, whether what we were doing was culturally insensitive at best and potentially harmful. Some teachers began to be more considered in their use of language and cultural reference points, such as no longer saying '*Namaste'* at the end of class or referencing ideal body types, which could be obtained through practice. After a series of yoga abuse cases were revealed (see Remski, 2019), some of my teachers stopped referencing their respective gurus when teaching; others changed the way they taught yoga entirely. While yoga teaching and classes continued; they were similar but different. The teachers who had said we were doing the same thing that had been done for thousands of years had adapted what and how they taught because of contemporary considerations. This couldn't be the first time this had happened.

It was at this point that my yoga practice and scholarly interests intersected. The field of yoga studies was embracing research highlighting the varied history of the practice (Alter, 2004; White, 2012) and its transformation in transcultural adoption (De Michelis, 2004; Singleton, 2008) where focus was placed on the dynamic relationships between cultures and the development of hybridised or new forms of yoga. In my practice (see Appendix A for a piece of reflexive writing on the subject), I was questioning how much of what we were practicing in classes was really yoga, and how much of what was really yoga was represented

in the classes? However, many of those I was practicing yoga with seemed reluctant to break from what Wildcroft (2020: 7) would later refer to as the "persistent myth of 'traditional yoga'" as a singular unbroken tradition, despite the changes to their own practices. I wanted to understand how a varied history and contextual cultural translations, or how that which is different is understood and recreated contextually, played a role in shaping understandings of yoga between the 1950s to the mid-1970s. This period is highlighted by De Michelis (2004: 191-192) as one of popularisation for modern postural yoga in the UK. I identified that the media representations of yoga that had introduced me to the practice and that I had contributed to as a journalist, though distinct entities, selectively drew from a wider discursive constellation of yoga. Freeman et al. (2017) consider media representations of yoga in terms of which aspects of the practice they focus on, suggesting there is some correct way to portray a complete yoga. Through focusing on media representations as selective understandings of yoga, I recognised they could instead be used to interrogate and understand both the varied cultural translations of yoga which were circulating but also how these were shaped in part by colonial and orientalist discourse, media engagement, the contextual understandings and experience of yogis, and commercial interests. In doing so, I intended to contextualise yoga's mediations while acknowledging the importance of issues such as its cultural appropriation and commodification. As detailed in chapter 2, my use of the concept of cultural appropriation is shaped by Ayra's (2021) definition of it as when items from one culture are taken by another, where there is an imbalance of power, and Rogers' (2006) suggestion that such appropriation is determined by implications not intent. However, it should be noted that I see cultural appropriation as a starting point for analysis rather than a judgement.

Since the recognition of the "persistent myth of 'traditional yoga'" (Wildcroft, 2020: 7), academics in the field of yoga studies have begun to recognise the value of, and need for, more nuanced approaches to the subject of yoga's cultural appropriation. Whereas Carrette and King (2005) consider commercial yoga's separation from religious and spiritual dimensions as its cultural appropriation, Jain (2020) further entangles this concern with broader issues of neoliberal spirituality. Bucar (2022) complicates the issue of yoga's cultural appropriation by unpacking the ethical dilemmas of contemporary practices, while Black (2021) explores the recent increased nationalist Indian interest in yoga. Dalal (2023) also

questions how non-essentialist arguments can conflict with and undermine public debates of cultural appropriation, calling for approaches that do not overlook cultural power issues. Newcombe (2013, 2019) has written about how yoga became an accepted mainstream practice and was institutionalised within the UK. However, I identified an opportunity to explore this period further by focusing on popular media representations of yoga, considering the contextual understandings of yoga, and adopting some of the disciplinary approaches from the field of cultural studies. I suggest this has allowed for the sort of nuanced consideration of yoga's cultural appropriation and commodification Dalal advocates.

This investigation seeks to enrich the historical contextualisation of yoga as a practice in the UK, and both contribute to and stimulate further debate surrounding its cultural appropriation and commodification through a focus on issues of cultural power. I use a media studies focus and Maitland's (2017: 28) framework of cultural translation, as explored further in chapter 2, but understood as "the traceable presence of hermeneutic gestures of reading and writing in the construction and reception of a range of cultural phenomena present in the public sphere" to consider these issues. I explore the role played by mediations of yoga in yoga's cultural translation. In doing so, I identify five key features of yoga's mediated cultural translation: first, the researched cultural translations of yoga were contextual transformations, not attempts to replicate an existing or essential practice; second, they were shaped by a complex interplay of existing discourse, experience, and cultural, commercial and media requirements; third, popular mediation of yoga became a site of cultural struggle to control the discursive entity of yoga as it was becoming to be understood. Fourth, the mediation and interaction among cultural translations of yoga played a role in shaping a progressively confined discursive representation of yoga, and finally, the popular mediated understanding of yoga lent itself to commodification. As such, this work uses a non-essentialist approach to yoga to recognise the relationship between transformations, societal dynamics, the media, and the economy of yoga's teaching and propagation.

My research sets out to address the central question:

> *What can the mediation of yoga in popular media, institutional archives and personal collections reveal about the processes of its cultural translation in the UK between 1955 and 1975?*

To answer this question, I used over 900 media texts to identify emergent and recurrent themes and trends or discursive contours relating to yoga's popular mediation within the UK. The media texts and the understandings of yoga represented therein were interrogated using a discourse-theoretical approach to consider the roles of discourse and agents of cultural translation in this process. The purpose was to highlight the role of factors such as historical discourse, networks of influence and media demands in shaping and narrowing how yoga was understood in the public psyche. My method also triangulated these representations and cultural translations of yoga with interviews with 28 practitioners from the period 1955-1975 and their personal collections - conceptualised within a (yoga) community archive ecology model – to challenge and/or corroborate the media representations. I argue that such understandings of yoga emerge as the result of a complex interplay of discourses and relationships rather than attempts to replicate any pre-existing practice and offer new ways to address issues relating to yoga's appropriation and commodification.

The theoretical framework by which the mediation of yoga's transcultural practice is considered is the focus of chapters one and two. Chapter one explores the messiness of defining yoga as an object of study and how ideas of authenticity, tradition, and authority shape knowledge of it as a transcultural practice. I discuss how yoga can be understood through a non-essentialist perspective, considering its contextual cultural flows, adaptations, and translations, suggesting this allows for a consideration of its commodification and cultural appropriation not as a judgement which invalidates a version of yoga, but as a starting point for an analysis of power. In chapter two, I argue that representations of yoga and its development can be used to understand the cultural context surrounding portrayals of yoga at any time, centralising issues of social power relations. I introduce the framework of cultural translation and how it is used by Maitland (2017), suggesting that how it foregrounds the role of agents and situates actions within a broader cultural context offers a novel approach to studying a transcultural yoga practice.

In chapter three, I discuss how I researched yoga's cultural translation through its popular mediations and using ethnohistorical data collection methods. I introduce the model I developed to triangulate mediations and the lived experience. I show how the combination of a discourse-theoretical approach (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Van Brussel et al., 2019) and the concept of discursive contours, as used by Bowman (2021), were used to identify

distinct periods and features of yoga's popular mediation. I also reflect on my own positionality as a yoga practitioner, scholar, and journalist, recognising both the advantages and limitations of these. This allowed the research to address considerations of power in the study of yoga's cultural translation. The chapter closes with a consideration of how I dealt with ethical considerations I encountered throughout conducting the research and the implications of COVID-19.

Chapters four, five and six each address discursive contours of yoga's popular mediation identified across three chronological periods. In chapter four, I explore the representation of yoga in the popular UK media between 1955 and 1963. I suggest there was initially a lack of consensus on what yoga was and who practiced it during this period, and that the media relied heavily on orientalist ideas and historical context to shape their understanding of yoga. Using the case studies of Yogini Sunita and B.K.S. Iyengar and the differing ways they gained media attention, I highlight how such yogis were what I term key agents in the cultural translation of yoga due to their shaping and perpetuating specific understandings of yoga through their media engagements. I conclude by discussing the transformation of yoga in the media, demonstrating how it was aligned with discourses of health, fitness, and celebrity culture.

In chapter five, I argue that as yoga became an increasingly visible practice in the UK between 1964 and 1968, how it was represented in the popular media changed. Due to media and commercial demands, I show how yoga was frequently aligned with the discourses of physical health and fitness, enabling a separation from traditional sources of authority and the media to teach yoga itself and contributing to an erasing of yoga's ethnic associations. The case study of the Beatles' practice of Transcendental Meditation (TM) is then used to demonstrate the process of meaning transfer which can occur with such endorsements. Drawing on mediations of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi I also suggest the guru figure and the economic aspects of the guru business showed greater resistance to cultural translation compared to other facets of yoga that could be aligned with existing contextual Western discourses.

Chapter six considers specific cultural translations of yoga between 1969 and 1975, namely the television show *Yoga For Health* and the activities of yoga communities. I look at how the broadcast of *Yoga For Health* introduced a version of yoga that appealed to a broad

audience, emphasising its physical aspects while omitting certain elements. Demonstrating how this representation of yoga was intended to be authentic-enough while maintaining broad appeal, I situate it as a contextual creation, showing how this version of yoga was commodified through tie-in products and associated branding. The yoga communities of the British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) and those around B.K.S. Iyengar are also used to demonstrate how different understandings of authority, expertise and authenticity played a significant role in shaping the understanding of yoga through publications and media coverage, and how such mediation became a site of cultural struggle over how yoga was understood.

The research concludes that yoga's cultural translation during this period of popularisation was shaped, in part, by colonial and orientalist discourse, media engagement, the contextual understandings and experience of yogis, and commercial interests. In this way, I suggest that popular media representations of yoga, which frequently drew on certain aspects of yoga's broader discursive entity, and made associations with other discourse and ideas, contributed to the development of how it was understood in the popular psyche. I argue the value of researching such representations comes from what they can reveal about the temporal and spatial context of their creation. A contribution of this study therefore lies in its interdisciplinary approach to understanding how yoga is culturally translated and its critical analysis of media representations. However, it also has important implications for broader discussions on cultural appropriation, commodification, and power dynamics within the transcultural development of cultural practices and traditions. In this way, this thesis, and the approach used within it, will be of value to researchers studying the transcultural movement of cultural practices or forms, and wanting to investigate the power dynamics that influence the interpretation and changing nature of these practices.

Chapter 1: Yoga as a transcultural subject

This is the first of two chapters which construct a theoretical framework for this study. Chapter one recognises the challenges and complexities of defining yoga and conceptualising it as a changing transcultural practice. I consider how yoga has been approached within academic studies and how non-essential and kaleidoscopic understandings of the practice offer new research possibilities for exploring yoga in transformation. In chapter two, I introduce cultural studies approaches which I propose can be used to study yoga and how understandings of it change in a transcultural context. I then discuss concepts related to power in the academic study of yoga, suggesting Maitland's (2017) framework of cultural translation offers a model by which to incorporate this. My opening chapter performs several functions. First, it addresses the messiness of defining yoga as a transcultural subject. It acknowledges this messiness and then establishes a specific focus for my research project. This is not a universal definition of yoga which is something that has evaded practitioners, critics, and scholars alike for several hundred years, and is well beyond the scope of this work. In defining a focus, I attempt to navigate the highlighted pitfalls created by conflicting definitions of yoga and consider where my thesis sits in relation to historical, current, and emerging yoga scholarship. Concern then moves to an exploration of the binary understandings of, and approaches to, yoga which much existing knowledge of the subject relies upon. This is explored through literature concerning the development of yoga practices in the West, and how this links to concepts of commodification and cultural appropriation. A discussion of the roles of authenticity, tradition, and authority in the knowledge and development of transcultural yoga practices follows, and how consideration of these issues ultimately offers the possibility for a greater understanding of the transcultural development of yoga and other cultural forms or practices.

1.1 The messiness of defining yoga

One of the main challenges in researching and writing about yoga is aligning the focus and content with the expectations of the audience. As a way of dealing with this ambiguity some attempt to address the question of 'what is yoga?' by looking to Sanskrit translations of the term to define it. However, as Rosen (2017: 7) points out, this can lead to even more

confusion, noting that in a Sanskrit-English Dictionary from 1872 there's a 360-word entry on the word yoga which "reads like a grab bag of meanings" including the familiar "yoke" and "union" alongside things like it being “a remedy", "a trick, a fraud" and "a violator of confidence". Indeed, yoga has and continues to mean a variety of different things to different people with a multitude of contrasting and often competing definitions existing at any one time. Writing about historical yoga practices and the ways these have been defined White (2012: 2) states that "every group in every age has created its own version and vision of yoga" adding that, "one reason this has been possible is that its semantic field — the range of meanings of the term ‘yoga’ — is so broad and the concept of yoga so malleable, that it has been possible to morph it into nearly any practice or process one chooses". Therefore, while the word yoga is old, what can be meant by the word is significantly less so. This argument, which challenges a mainstream view of yoga as a singular unchanging practice was demonstrated by White (2012), using translations of yoga texts spanning hundreds of years. The work of Sanskritists like Mallinson and Singleton (2017) and Birch (2018, 2024) who have produced translations and critical editions of texts on yoga, equally illustrates how yoga has had different meanings, and been practiced in different ways throughout its long history.

For contemporary yoga practitioners who attend classes at a gym, corporate yoga studio, community centre, or practice at home, their understandings of what yoga is could be comprehended similarly. Yoga might be how they keep fit and healthy, a positive way of life, something they do for their wellbeing, a spiritual pursuit, or a combination of the above. Even in a single class at a yoga studio or village hall (just some of the many places yoga, or something being called a yoga practice, exists), we can see how yoga can be defined and understood in very different ways, and with different meaning to the practitioners. During his recent survey of British yoga teachers, Lawler (2024: 117) found that 20 percent taught in yoga studios, but that “the number of non-studio spaces is strong evidence that at present, yoga in Britain remains embedded within local community settings”. Within his focus of modern postural yoga Singleton (2010: 208) says of such practices: “They may indeed be at variance with ‘Classical Yoga’ but it does not follow from this that these practices, beliefs, and aspirations (whether conceived as yoga or not) are thereby lacking in seriousness, dignity, or spiritual profundity”. Singleton's work therefore acts to illustrate the difficulty of having a shared understanding of what we are referring to when discussing the subject of yoga.

Academic studies of yoga arguably date back more than 200 years with examples from orientalist[1] scholars including Charles Wilkins who translated the Bhagavad Gita[2] into English in 1785, and Colebrook's 1823 study of the Yoga Sutras[3] just some of those which have attempted to offer understandings of India, Indian practices, and yoga itself. As will be argued in the section of this chapter on authenticity, tradition and authority, this work has and continues to play a role in shaping what is known on the subject of yoga, particularly Western interpretations and was based on the "colonial use of Sanskrit texts" (Larios and Singleton, 2020: 40). However, it is only since the turn of the 21st century that the field of yoga studies, has transitioned from being a sub-field of other disciplines to a field in its own right (Newcombe and O'Brien-Kop, 2021: 3) with departments and MA courses established at a number of universities (Newcombe, 2024). O'Brien-Kop (2019) has also observed there has been a revival of academic interest in yoga within India, with the an increased number of undergraduate and postgraduate courses, sometimes taking a clinical and biomedical approach to the study of yoga with courses pairing yoga and naturopathy and focusing on professional applications of yoga.

Therefore, it is useful to consider how this growing number of yoga scholars have developed definitions to fence off specific areas or aspects of yoga to study. Alter (2004: xx) uses the term "modern Yoga" in his ethnographic history of the practice in India, stating that while it "has been constructed as a timeless icon of Indian civilization, Yoga is, in fact, a very modern phenomenon". Alter considers how yoga changed form and its significance in the twentieth century with its medicalisation and the development of yoga as an exercise through the influence of the Hindu nationalist movement. Alter contends that a scientific framing of yoga within India allowed for yoga's international development as it became to some, separated from philosophical roots. This not only again identified modern yoga as a practice and knowledge system which was of valid study, but in drawing attention to how it

[1] The term "Orientalist" is used in this instance in the sense of scholars who were researching and writing about the languages and cultures of Asia but is not (at this point) intended to convey the meanings associated with the word after the publication of Said's *Orientalism* (1978), discussed in later chapters.
[2] The *Bhagavad Gita* is the sixth book of the *Mahabharata* and a principal text within Hindu religious thought. It is thought to date from between 400 BCE and 200 CE and is seen as a foundational text for yoga philosophy.
[3] The *Yoga Sutras*, or *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* is a text believed to date from around 200 BCE which compiled knowledge on the practice and philosophy of yoga. It's teaching, such as the eight limbs of yoga, are fundamental to many contemporary practices and understandings of yoga.

emerged through interaction with colonialism, anti-colonial nationalism, and post-colonial Hindu nationalism, it also shaped future enquiries of that field.

"Modern Yoga", as used by De Michelis (2004), is also considered to be pivotal in this regard, not only for how it legitimised modern yoga as a subject worthy of academic investigations but also because it defined an aspect or subsection of yoga traditions which was being studied. The term was used to refer to types of yoga which have evolved over the prior 150 years mainly through interactions between Western individuals and Westernised people of Indian origin or heritage. In doing this she indicates such practices, which can be varied yet have shared origins, account for the majority of yoga practiced in the West. In defining Modern Yoga in a way which encompassed the majority of yoga practices within the West, De Michelis essentially freed future researchers from having to address thousands of years of yoga history every time they approached the subject. Her model, while accounting for different forms of modern yoga (Psychosomatic, Denominational, Postural and Meditational), has predominantly been used by subsequent writers in the investigation of postural yoga, and the traditions in which postures, or asana[4], are a crucial factor. Though the term gained momentum with scholars, it has also been criticised because of how it invites contrasts and comparisons with an undefined and potentially undefinable 'traditional' yoga. Wildcroft et al. (2024: 2) also observe that in the two decades since De Michelis's first publication a number of scholars have identified "significant elements of historical continuity" between contemporary, early modern and pre-modern yoga practices. Another criticism is the emphasis placed on the appearance of Vivekananda[5] at The World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, which De Michelis (2004: 92) affirms played an essential role in the development of yoga lineages which would go on to become dominant forms of modern postural yoga. However, Deslippe (2018) posits that knowledge of yoga in the West was not as reliant on this moment as has been suggested and that yoga was understood by some in North America both before and after this moment as a mental and magical practice, rather than a physical or postural one. Re-examining the "modern yoga phenomenon", De Michelis (2020: 425) developed her earlier observations incorporating

[4] *Asana* are the postures or seats of a physical yoga practice.

[5] Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) is often seen as an influential figure in the transnational development of yoga practice due in part to his appearance at the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago where he spoke representing India and Hinduism.

scholarship from the 16 years that had followed its initial publication. She suggests modern yoga practice resulted in the development of five discourses; (revivalist, nationalist, transnational, globalized, and healthist). However in concluding that “while yoga did change continuously throughout the centuries and millennia of its history, it would seem that this last change into modernity may have been more radical than any preceding one” (De Michelis, 2020: 447), she continues to suggest that there is something distinctive about the transformation of modern yoga in this period.

Singleton (2010: 18) was understandably cautious with regards to terminology, choosing not to use the term Modern Yoga and its subdivisions because: "While they have proven invaluable in delineating a field of enquiry, it seems to me that they have quickly exceeded their mandate as provisional and workable constructs with a finite heuristic value". Instead, in detailing the origins and rise to prominence of yoga asana and intersections with social movements such as New Age ideas and the physical culture movement he used Modern Transnational Yoga and Transnational Anglophone Yoga to refer to practices which developed in Europe, the United States and in India from the mid 19th century. He states the use of the word transnational is intended to indicate the "flow of ideas, beliefs, and practices that extends or operates across national boundaries" (Singleton, 2010: 10) subsequently stating this approach also “avoids the suggestion that we are talking about a unified and categorical body of discourses and practices” (Singleton, 2013: 38). Notwithstanding this, Singleton did use the phrase modern yoga (rather than Modern Yoga) though this was to refer more widely to the practice of yoga in the modern age rather than De Michelis’ (2004: 3) more technical use of the term to refer to certain types of yoga, with a defined origin. However, the mainstream popularity of Singleton’s (2010) publication *Yoga Body* led to common misreading, where contrasts were once again drawn between a modern yoga and a classical yoga. Singleton (2015) addressed this in the preface to the Serbian edition of his text reiterating that it was not his intention to contrast modern yoga with an ancient yoga, and that his focus on the use of physical asana in modern yogas did not imply modern yoga is all about asana, or that asana has not been significant in other previous or co-existing yogas. Though this acts to highlight the complications of defining yoga, or even subcategories of yoga, the book, which can be found on the shelves of many yoga studios and on the reading lists of many yoga teacher training courses, also acted as a catalyst for other

academic investigations of yoga in transformation. As discussed in the following sections of this chapter these include Hauser (2013), Jain (2015), Newcombe (2019) and Armstrong, (2020). It should also be noted I predominantly use the term transcultural rather than transnational when referring to the movement of yoga practice. This is, in part, because as has been illustrated, yoga practices and understandings of it have changed over time, not just as it, and its practitioners, moved across national borders. In this way it is not only the more recent international movement of yoga, but it's longer history too, which meets Welsch's (1999, 2024) understanding of the transcultural as the ongoing mixture of cultures rather than understandings which rely on the notion of "cultures as homogeneous spheres" (Welsch, 2024: 14).

While I have shown how definitions of yoga, and subsections of yoga practices can be useful in delimiting a field of enquiry, such approaches are not without their limitations. Scholars including Deslippe (2012), Remski (2019) and Atkinson (2010) have each approached the subject of developed practices of yoga via investigations which focus on specific forms, traditions or lineages of yoga. This has the advantage of using an externally understood definition and a specific object of study, however perhaps the most obvious disadvantage is that the singular focus does not apply to broader yoga practices and study. It is also the case that scholars writing about a specific lineage are sometimes criticised by practitioners invested in those lineages who claim the works target their practice as an attempt to discredit it, or those from other lineages arguing that the narrative of their practice is being ignored. Looking at understandings of yoga beyond the field of yoga studies, where the topic of what is and what isn't yoga is rife, also reveals the scale of challenge facing those writing about it academically. For example, Jain (2015: 131) takes issue with the "Hindu origins position" whereby a definition and understanding of yoga is created through its connection to India and the Hindu tradition. She counters this exclusive definition, arguing that yoga should be considered as a more expansive South Asian practice which has been seen to be Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu, situating the position within the nationalist discourse of India. In challenging common misconceptions about yoga, noting that "statements about the history of yoga, which presume an unbroken lineage do not reflect historical reality" Jain (2015: 2) approaches the subject of yoga through the understanding of it as a transnational product in investigating the way in which yoga in America moved from counterculture to popular culture

with branded versions of the practice. However, as Graham (2014) observes, there are those who will see any Westernised yoga practice as inauthentic and corrupt. There are also those who claim the validity of a yoga practice can be identified through its relationship to ‘key’ or 'traditional' yoga texts, with the implication that practices not aligned with these texts are not yoga. However, White (2014: xv) has described the Yoga Sutras as a “comeback classic” showing how texts have moved in and out of social and cultural prominence over hundreds of years. This challenges the use of such a relationship to a text as a way of defining yoga as it would mean the yoga practices in India historically have not always been yoga.

Those scholars addressing the contextual transcultural expansion of yoga practices have been required to develop approaches which acknowledge that while yoga has a South Asian origin, there is not an unbroken or essential tradition, and that practices can both change and co-exist. Newcombe (2018: 569) makes the case that "Yoga is presented in particular ways depending on the requirements of particular social or physical locations", proposing that it occupies different spaces in contemporary society, and therefore questioning the use of essentialist definitions of yoga. She goes on to discuss the "highly contested field of definitions, narratives and politics" faced by academics writing about yoga, calling for a broader understanding of what yoga "is" and what yoga "is not". In the conclusion to her book *Yoga in Britain* Newcombe (2019: 270) offers that the publication’s fundamental contribution is to "highlight what a complicated and multi-layered phenomenon yoga is”. She notes that such an approach has the methodological advantage of countering understandings of yoga as a single entity, and criticisms based on this. Indeed, Newcombe (2019: 270) goes on to advocate that appreciating the varied understandings of and approaches people have to yoga "is one way of being respectful to both yoga’s roots in the Indian subcontinent and the complexity of its current forms”. Wildcroft (2018) equally calls for yoga to be seen as a diverse array of practices and beliefs beyond the single commodified entity which she argues it is often presented as, while Blinne (2020) addresses the development and range of contemporary yoga practices by viewing them as remixes. Borrowing the idea of remixing from its audio recording origins and applying it to yoga, Blinne offers a new way in which to consider the development of yoga practices in different times and places. However, application of the concept means all yogas are remixes, there is no end to the times this can take place and that remixes of yoga are culturally defined and

understood. Because the construction of versions of yoga take place culturally in this model, through identity work and yoga ecologies, there also needs to be a commonly shared understanding of what yoga is before it is remixed, even if the pre-existing yoga is itself a product of such a process. In the following chapter I suggest that Maitland's (2017) concept of cultural translation offers a model which while similar to Blinne's remixes allows for a more sophisticated way in which to conceptualise the changing understandings and practices of yoga encountered in my research. The idea of remixing relies of there being a definitive item from which an accurate sample is combined with other material, though potentially altered, in the creation of a remix. However, cultural translations are based on the reading of a text by the translator, an interpretation rather than a sample, offering the potential for (re)creation rather than a remix.

My reservations about the typological use of terms to define yoga mean they will not be used throughout this thesis. Using 'Modern Yoga' feels too much like it is a contrast to an undefined other traditional or classical yoga and would potentially exclude focusing on some yoga practices. Given the focus of this thesis, 'transnational anglophone yoga' seems equally redundant and again potentially excludes some practices. Drawing on Blinne's (2020) broad understanding of contemporary yoga practices, this work applies such a lens to the yogas happening within the identified time period of its focus, proposing an approach which identifies and defines iterations of yoga as a viable object of study through their practice in a time and space. In this sort of model, it would be those who practiced yoga who defined it according to their lived and embodied experience. Rather than impose a definition of yoga, my research will let subjects and the archives used, define it themselves. My use of the term yoga will refer to the subject of the practices, asana-based and otherwise experienced within the UK between 1955 and 1975. This does not question or challenge the validity of practices elsewhere, or at other times, to also be yoga. Reflecting on Newcombe's (2019: 270) kaleidoscopic view of yoga which she describes saying "what a complicated and multi-layered phenomenon yoga is", I set out to embrace the messiness of defining yoga, and build this into the research in a way that does not delegitimise understandings of it.

Highlighting the plurality of understandings and interpretations of yoga, Singleton and Byrne (2008: 5) offer that it "might be helpful to think more generally of yogas". Hauser (2013: 25) also notes the methodological advantages of thinking of yoga plural and as "a

related bundle of ideas, discourses, and practices" including the acceptance of "potentially inconsistent meanings that (may) exist". This offers a useful way to consider both co-existing and changing practices and throughout this thesis I will occasionally refer to yoga practices as yogas plural. That said, it is not suggested this approach will offer a way of defining or looking at the whole of yoga, or all yogas, nor is it believed that those yogas which are focused on are any more meaningful or relevant than those which are not. Having outlined a focus for my research which understands yoga as non-essential, changing, and plural, I now explore some of the binaries through which yoga has been defined, understood, and imagined.

1.2 Binary ideas of, and approaches to, yoga

The previous section was concerned with how definitions of yoga have been used as a focus for academic enquiry. I now consider some of the binary ways in which yoga has been more widely understood including those of, East and West, Old and New, Appreciation and Appropriation, and finally, Yoga and Not Yoga. These illustrate some of the challenges facing yoga studies scholars, and how they have been considered. They are also pertinent for investigations such as mine which locate yoga as an object of study in a transcultural context and acknowledge transformation as taking place in that process. In exploring the work of scholars who have written about yoga and its transcultural and transnational development beyond South Asia, it is apparent that binary ideas of East and West have and continue to play a role in approaches to the subject. From the previously mentioned works of Wilkins and Colebrook in the 18th and 19th centuries, Westerners writing about yoga have predominantly done so as outsiders looking in, with their status as being from the West a defining characteristic, whether intentional or not. White (2014: 65) notes how Colebrook describes the Yoga Sutras as "fanatical" and in claiming belief in magic is prevalent among Hindus adds that the Yogi is "imagined to have acquired such faculties is, to vulgar apprehension, a sorcerer, and is so represented in many a drama and popular tale" (Colebrook, 1873: 250). This situating of Hindus and their beliefs as in contrast to and inferior to those with Western sensibilities confirms to the definition of othering put forward by Chawla (2017), and acts to illustrate the historical approaches to understanding yoga through Western ideas of colonial domination. This process is explored in more detail in the following chapter in conjunction with the concepts of eurocentrism, where Europe is seen as the historical and cultural marker

by which everywhere and everyone else is compared (Chakrabarty, 2000) the embedding of the idea within Western thought that Europe possesses internal qualities which make it superior (Blaut, 1993), and orientalism (Said, 1978) the discourse by which the West has acted to manage the concept of the Orient.

For Campbell (2007), recent decades have seen a cultural change in the West, via a process of what he terms Easternization. Writing about yoga, Campbell claims early imports of the practice were versions stripped of spiritual significance making it a Westernized practice, but recent Easternization has seen a reinstating of its spiritual traditions. Despite the intentions of Campbell, who indicates Easternisation is not a reversal of Westernisation, this idea still relies on the general binaries of East and West and does not sufficiently account for the ongoing role of agents in the movement of culture. In writing about the practice of yoga in the West, Goldberg (2010) similarly suggests Indian spirituality was imported through translations of Hindu texts and the role they played in the work of intellectuals and artists, like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Aldous Huxley, long before the rise of modern yoga. He states such activity lay the ground for the growth of interest in, and adoption of, Eastern practices in America. While once again offering useful historical context, Goldberg's work does not satisfactorily address the ongoing adaptation of practices, their hybridity as products of a process of transnational and transcultural dialogue, or the role of the agents of this change.

Approaches which take into account a range of factors including, though not limited to, the colonial history of yogic knowledge and the authenticity or dislocation of yoga's many modern export manifestations offer a more nuanced understanding of yoga’s transcultural practice. Singleton and Byrne (2008: 1-2) state "the international yoga diaspora began well more than a century ago" well before it was seen as the global phenomenon it has developed into, and that in attempting to examine contemporary yoga practices their publication aimed to "map the movement, development, and consolidation of yoga in global settings in the modern era". Singleton (2010) subsequently offers a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the cultural flow and processes involved in the transnational popularisation of yoga practices. Highlighting the potential roles played by factors including the physical culture movement and developing technologies such as photography, Singleton challenges notions that yoga, as it has been understood and practiced transnationally in recent history, can be considered a purely Eastern phenomenon or tradition. This distinction sees

contemporary transnational yoga not as a migrated practice between East and West, but as the result of a dialogic transnational process. For example, historical associations with magic, contortion, and physical culture offered a basis for understandings of yoga at a time when India opened up to the world with technology-enabled flows of information. This, he holds, meant that as technologies of the body travelled around the world, there was a new synthesis of yoga practices which became something people had an interest in doing rather than merely learning about or spectating.

Similarly, Syman (2010) considers the role of wider cultural flows and the migrations of cultural practices in outlining how knowledge of yoga has been embedded in the culture of America, allowing its recent rise to prominence. She does not rely on the binary concepts of East and West to suggest an interest in Indian spirituality lay the ground for the contemporary popularity of yoga within the US. Instead, she considers the contextual setting of yoga practitioners along with the selective teaching of yoga gurus by investigating examples of interest in yoga practices throughout the history of America. Writing about the institutionalisation of yoga in Britain, Newcombe (2019) highlights the migration of Indian yoga teachers who worked with education authorities. However, this is not only done on the level of understanding it as physically moving yoga from East to West, but exploring how they appealed to the sensibilities of a certain section of the British population in the post-war period. This adds yet another layer to the increasingly complex way understandings of yoga in the West need to be understood through a network of cultural flows where distinctions of East and West are important, yet are not the only consideration to be made. As a counter to traditional binary location-based approaches to understanding the transmission of yoga practices Hauser (2018) also argues for consideration of the role of the human body and the intricacies of cultural flows. This is illustrated in her study into the practice of mantras and chanting in some German yoga locations, which it is proposed should not be seen as the successful transmission of a tradition, but also in relation to the German history of vocal and breathing therapies.

Distinctions of Old and New are another binary through which understandings of yoga are shaped. Although the previous definitional work illustrates the inaccuracy of ideas of a traditional or classical yoga, much work within the field of Yoga Studies distinguishes between pre-modern forms of yoga and modern yoga, as detailed by De Michelis (2004).

While the more ascetic and non-public status of pre-modern yoga can be used to differentiate it from the predefined modern yoga, understanding how it has been practiced over time offers a level of insight into the development of contemporary or modern practices. For example, the recent Hatha Yoga Project[6] has, among other things, analysed several key pre-modern yoga texts including the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* an 18th-century text which is now the first known example of sequences of postures in Hatha yoga. This, in turn, has implications for what is known or thought to be known about the development of sequences such as those by Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, the Mysore teacher and his students who went on to develop some of the most prevalent yoga lineages of contemporary practices. The relevance of this is that it would be easy to approach the subject through its common understanding, without recognizing that this is always in a state of flux. Being aware of this and the biases which have contributed to the stories of what we think is known allows us to focus on the processes at play at any set time, rather than trying to write an impossible narrative history. In exploring the development of more recent transnational modern yoga practices, scholars have had to deal with the issue of how new practices of yoga adopt and incorporate additional or supplementary practices. These have included the incorporation of recognised physical culture exercises and calisthenics (Singleton, 2010), along with gymnastics (Foxen and Kuberry, 2021). There is also the issue of how these practices can be related to older ones which originated before them, though can still co-exist. Some, such as Carrette and King (2005: 119) suggest newer postural yoga practices stand in contrast to pre-modern yoga because it has been promoted as a product and recoded in a way to be less challenging to Western cultural norms, but at the same time still playing on its "exoticism". However, scholars, including Jain (2015), Newcombe (2019), Armstrong (2020), and Wildcroft (2020), are beginning to deal with this binary through the previously mentioned non-essentialist definitions and their considering developments in yoga practice through ideas of cultural flow and dialogical exchange. As Foxen and Kuberry (2021: 169) say "Eventually, all of this comes to be called 'yoga'".

When considering the transcultural practice of yoga, other binaries encountered can be that of Appreciation and Appropriation, where issues of intent and outcomes of that

[6] The Hatha Yoga Project was a five-year 2015-2020 research project based at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS), University of London, charting the history of physical yoga practice.

practice are concerned, and Yoga or Not Yoga. In considering the authenticity of Hatha yoga, Liberman (2008) questions how much license it is possible to take with a form of culture like yoga before it becomes something else. Although this will be explored in the next section from the perspective of what it means in relation to the authenticity of yoga practices, it here serves to introduce the binary, whether a practice is Yoga or Not Yoga. This is an issue which is linked to the related concepts of commodification and appropriation which are at the core of this investigation. While exploration of these concepts takes place in the following chapter, commodification is understood here as the process which sees a culture turned into a mass-produced object or service (Hebdige, 1979). This means it can be traded and there are power dynamics with the commodified culture lacking power compared to the one that is commodifying it. Cultural appropriation here could be seen through Rogers' (2006: 474) assertion that it involves "the use of a culture's symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies by members of another culture". It is also more than mere borrowing in the way Ziff and Rao (1997) suggest it is when members of a dominant culture use indigenous practices or objects without due attribution, authentic intent, consideration of origin, or for commercial gain through commodification. Both terms therefore see a removal of power from the originating culture.

De Michelis (2008: 24) says there has been an unprecedented scale and reach of yoga's commodification in its modern forms, but this is not to imply pre-modern styles of yoga were not also linked to money and power. The distinction, she contends, is how this happens within modern global capitalism and consumer societies with the development and spread of modern yoga practices, yoga products, studios and retreats which did not exist prior to this process. In highlighting the rise of such examples, which also include yoga patents, and the role of them media in the expansion of forms of modern yoga, De Michelis's work raises questions of how the commodified forms of yoga and the related products which surround them should be approached. Jain (2015) indicates that the popularisation and increased visibility of yoga practices in the West in the latter half of the twentieth century, along with a burgeoning consumer culture, allowed yoga to develop into commodified versions and products which could be traded in a global market. Specific consideration in this process is given to the role of gurus as mass marketers and how yoga became a product in itself. Jain (2015: 128) does not see commodification as meaning modern versions of yoga

cannot hold meaning and significance for its practitioners, noting that some yogis, even within the modern postural traditions, reject what they see as "over-commodification". This, she says, can see them rejecting overly commodified yoga products as a way of rejecting commodified definitions and versions of yoga. While challenging its correctness within her model of post-lineage yoga communities, Wildcroft (2018) equally looks at media portrayals of yoga as being of a commodity and that this process acts to separate the practice from its religious or spiritual roots in what she describes as a symbolic displacement. This raises the debates of whether commodified versions and interpretations of yoga are 'yoga' or 'not yoga', which Graham (2014) illustrates by observing that although yogic philosophies are firmly embedded in many modern postural yoga practices some observers see any Westernised yoga practice as inauthentic and corrupt. Liberman (2008: 111) offers a possible counter saying "If yoga were not commodified, it is quite possible that it could not even be communicated in the modern world, for nothing incapable of being marketed can survive for long".

While commodification of yoga can be seen as appropriation through the aforementioned definition, Ghandhi and Wolff (2017) contend that the cultural appropriation of yoga goes further, saying that "The reasons why yoga became popular, and why various Indian yogis started travelling to England and the United States to "sell" yoga, is also tied up with colonialism". They state yoga became popular in the West because it reinforced ideas about India as being inferior but spiritual in comparison. It is also argued appropriation is taking place because many Western yoga teachers focus on yoga postures and do not teach, or learn themselves, the Hindu and Indian traditions with them claiming "this modern day trend of cultural appropriation of yoga is a continuation of white supremacy and colonialism, maintaining the pattern of white people consuming the stuff of culture that is convenient and portable, while ignoring the well-being and liberation of Indian people" Gandhi and Wolff (2017: n.p.). Despite agreeing appropriation is taking place, Jain (2018: n.p.) disputes how it is manifest, suggesting that "capitalism and white supremacy engender and reify one another through the yoga industry (among other ways) by discouraging reflection on historical and contemporary systematic forms of oppression". She also adds that aspects of the aforementioned article were intellectually problematic highlighting their proposal that yoga teachers should study Hindu traditions and that yoga "rightfully belongs" to Indian women.

Jain (2020) further problematises the Hindu origins position - which sees yoga as having its origins in the Hindu tradition and with modern globalised forms of yoga as examples of appropriation - in observing it is actually of South Asian origin and has been practiced by people of all different religions. Confronting this diverse history and practice of yoga with the concept of appropriation, she says a practice can offer spiritual liberation for one community and oppress and marginalise another. Offering a model for practicing yoga which minimises appropriating it, she suggests a need to confront stereotypical ideas of India as seen through an orientalist lens and reflect on the history of colonialism and yoga, and not just see it through white voices. Having explored some of the binaries which have been used to understand and define what yoga is, and what is not yoga, focus now turns to the related considerations of authenticity, tradition and authority, and how they have been, and are, used to manage understandings of yoga, and who it belongs to.

1.3 Authenticity, tradition and authority: Whose yoga is it anyway?

When a potential student of yoga embarks on a practice, the chances are they see themselves as entering a tradition with an ancient, or more recent history. This is because while the idea of an essential authentic yoga existing, either now or in the past, has been dismissed as factually inaccurate (Jain 2015; Singleton, 2010), such understandings can still be perpetuated through an interplay between ideas of authenticity, tradition, and authority. My focus in this section is on how these concepts have been deployed within and by yoga practices as they have grown in popularity and moved around the globe. This, once again, highlights both some of the challenges and opportunities for those involved in the academic investigation of transcultural yoga practices.

There are multiple ways in which ideas of authenticity and tradition within yoga, particularly transnationally developed practices, are created by lineages and teachers and understood by yoga practitioners. De Michelis (2004) demonstrates how yogis such as Vivekananda have attempted to portray practices as authentic, even when reshaping them to appeal in contemporary settings. She points out that in his presentation of Raja Yoga[7], Vivekananda (1894) appeals to longer-standing aspects of yoga, while at the same time

[7] Raja Yoga is Swami Vivekananda's interpretation (and book) of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras but adapted for a Western audience. In older Sanskrit texts, Rāja yoga (Royal yoga) was typically seen as both the goal of yoga and a method by which to attain it.

carrying out a "major revision of yoga history, structures, beliefs and practices" (De Michelis, 2004: 3). E. Goldberg (2016: 357) shows that Krishnamacharya, in suggesting he was taught the traditions of yoga from hermit and yoga master Rammohan Brahmacari could have been attempting to offer a story which appealed to, and was of value to him. As written about by Singleton (2010) Krishnamacharya went on to become one of the key figures in the propagation and development of yoga teaching, where, at the request of the Maharaja, he established a Yogashala at the Mysore Palace[8], teaching students who would go on to develop and popularise his teachings. Indeed, it was his student Pattabhi Jois who would go on to popularise the Ashtanga[9] method of yoga, which he in turn claimed was rediscovered by his guru in a 5,000-year-old text, the Yoga Korunta, which was subsequently lost and eaten by ants. The work of the Hatha Yoga Project into the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati,* an 18th-century text offers potential insight into the origins and contested history of sequential postural practices such as Ashtanga. However, Shearer (2020: 155) suggests that while it would be easy to dismiss Jois' claim as a fraud, what is important to note is that such a story would adhere to ideas of tradition which were prized over innovation in the Indian context. Therefore, what can be seen as important is not the authenticity of a yoga practice, but the role ideas of authenticity have played within the yoga practice. The previously mentioned history of Yogi Bhajan's Kundalini Yoga by Deslippe (2012) is yet another high-profile example of how ideas of tradition are used within developments of transnational yoga practices and popular lineages.

Writing about what he called "the classical in contemporary transnational yoga". Singleton (2008: 91) also asserts that by centralising key texts on yoga (such as the *Yoga Sutras*) yoga practitioners and teachers construct a sense of authenticity about their practice. However, the authority and authenticity such texts can be understood to hold, can and should be questioned. For example, White (2014) has written about how the *Yoga Sutras* have moved in and out of prominence, while Larios and Singleton (2020: 40) note that early studies of yoga by western scholars were "produced in the broader context of the colonial use of Sanskrit texts, which were intended to help rule the subjects according to their own

[8] Under the patronage of the Maharaja of Mysore Krishnamacharya established a dedicated space for the teaching of yoga.
[9] Ashtanga yoga is a practice originating from Mysore in the first half of the 20th century, led by Pattabhi Jois but which only rose to transnational prominence in the US and UK from the 1980s.

laws". Singleton (2008: 91) adds that transnational gurus such as B.K.S. Iyengar[10] have added weight to ideas of tradition through canonical works and made links between it and the more physical asana practices they have promoted, such as placing a devotional focus on Patanjali in asana classes. Indeed, the use of the concepts of authenticity and tradition, and signifiers of these have frequently been used in the promotion and development of yoga practices in the West, both by teachers of the practices and commercial interests. Lau (2000: 96) for example, comments on the way American forms of yoga are traditionalised "forging histories that imply a certain continuity with ancient practices" providing commodified versions of yoga an attractive mystique to would-be practitioners. Such practices are explored in more detail in the following chapter in a section on how they relate to yoga's appropriation and commodification and ideas of Orientalism (Said, 1978). Graham (2014) has indicated how modern practitioners negotiate meanings of yoga, and media representations of yoga, are often linked to ideas of what contextually constitutes an authentic modern yoga practice. In doing so, she demonstrates the way this is often based on understandings of the relationship between modern yoga practices and premodern yoga traditions. Highlighting how authenticity in yoga "is deployed in an increasingly commercial environment as not only an authorizing discourse, but also a marketing tool" Graham (2014: 85) explores the effects such assumptions can have.

Liberman (2008: 104) moves the concept of authenticity in yoga into a more reflexive position, considering the varied history of yoga's development, stating that "At no time was there a 'pure' yoga, except perhaps in the subjective experience of an accomplished practitioner". However, while bringing the sense of authenticity inwards, Liberman (2008: 107) simultaneously questions this in observing how some contemporary Western practitioners can find a level of authenticity in the "strangeness of the few Sanskrit terms they have learned", adding that the foreignness of common things in yoga settings, such as sandalwood incense, sitar music and reciting "Om"[11] provides some yoga practitioners with a "veneer of sufficient authenticity" which means they feel no greater need to explore what authentic might mean in the context of a yoga practice. In this way things that are additional

[10] B.K.S. Iyengar was a student and brother-in-law of Tirumalai Krishnamacharya and went on to develop the Iyengar lineage of yoga practice which is one of the most practiced forms of yoga (particularly physical practices) transnationally.

[11] Om, a sacred spiritual symbol in many South Asian religions, is pronounced A-U-M and often chanted during meditation.

or adjacent to a yoga practice become recognised markers of its authenticity. Liberman (2008: 109), goes on to suggest that what can be authentic in yoga can be found by reflexivity operating within a set of conditions found within the traditions of yoga practices such as overcoming egoism, observing moral practices and self-control. However, Sajovich (2015: 3) challenges the way Liberman uses the yamas and niyamas[12] as outlined in the Yoga Sutras as an ethical core for authenticity in modern yoga, though observes there is a "culturally established connotation of yoga as a practice that entails certain ethical principals". This, Sajovich puts forward, means some contemporary practitioners can see holding "specifically modern ethics" as constituting part of having an authentic yoga practice. Wildcroft (2018) also looks at the way in which practitioners of yoga can have what they consider authentic experiences within yoga which do not conform to the predefined rules of authenticity laid out in common mainstream understanding of what yoga is, or specific lineages of yoga. Wildcroft suggests members of post-lineage yoga communities instead come to understandings of authenticity and authority based on the group, the expert, and themselves, rather than history, science and the guru. Newcombe (2018: 563) writes that many longstanding yoga practitioners and teachers have developed a particular understanding of what “authentic yoga” is based on their own experience. This, she claims, can sometimes be used to contrast practices which they deem not to be yoga, but which others would consider to be. Lucia (2020: 91-92) makes the case that the “yogic world” is concerned with questions about authenticity in part because of its “underlying anxiety about the fact that contemporary global yogis are engaged in new acts of translation and representation”.

The role of authority, lineage and the guru figure are intertwined with the above considerations of authenticity and tradition and crucial in understanding the development and popularisation of transcultural yoga practices. However, it is first worth noting that the role of the guru in the context of the yoga practiced and taught at a global level is significantly different to that seen across yoga’s longer South Asian history. According to Shearer (2020: 15), gurus were historically responsible for carrying on traditions and practices of yoga, and there was, for many years, a direct one-on-one guru-disciple

[12] The yamas and niyamas are the first two limbs of yoga according to the *Yoga Sutras of* Patanjali and can be seen as a moral or ethical code of yoga practice in terms of restraints and observances.

relationship, however, this has changed as yoga has spread around the world. For Singleton and Goldberg (2014: 2), this has been further complicated with 'guru' yoga teachers operating in foreign cultures where they are trying to attract a wider audience to their teachings. They go on to propose that understanding of the guru in the modern globalised world has for many people shifted to that of a yoga expert who is detached from traditional features and more religious connotations. Through the development of specific yoga practices and lineages, yoga gurus can become the ultimate holder of authority within that practice, with the power to further develop it or not. Such a model also gives the guru the power to decide who else gains authority, as Byrne (2013) considered in writing about the role of *parampara* (how a student becomes recognised as a lineage holder) within Ashtanga yoga. Students of this system became authorised to teach the practice, not by passing a test or qualification, but by being authorised or certified by Pattabhi Jois, and since his passing in 2009, his grandson Sharath Jois. This is an extension of the authority Smith (2004) wrote about and in turn explains the reverence with which early students of Pattabhi Jois are held within the Ashtanga community. Singleton and Goldberg (2014: 3) note "the encounter with modernity had brought yoga to the forefront of the spiritual marketplace where gurus (must?) compete with each other for disciples and practitioners". As such it is possible to question the role of these interactions on the perceived authority of both yoga and specific practices of it. In positioning themselves as a singular authority within a specific yoga practice gurus are able to retain a sense of power over it.

Hot Yoga guru Bikram Choudhury[13] attempted to assert his authority over the system of yoga he teaches in trying to copyright the sequence of 26 poses, (Vats, 2016). However, recent revelations in the yoga world have also illustrated the way in which gurus have abused this power of ultimate authority with Remski (2019) highlighting the abuses of Pattabhi Jois within his teaching of Ashtanga. While a yoga guru can offer a tantalising way in which to approach the subject, Deslippe (2018) highlights that focusing on the role of one guru can overstate their roles in that it ignores the broader context and history of their actions. Meanwhile, Wildcroft (2018: 40) suggests a confining of yoga investigations to "its most ubiquitous and commercially successful expressions" can also lead to common conclusions

[13] Bikram Choudhury, the controversial founder, and populariser of Bikram Yoga, where a fixed series of 26 postures are practised in a hot environment of 40 °C

which are not often challenged. Newcombe (2019) also argues the role of certain figures or gurus has since been forgotten, noting that this has been the case in the UK with female yoga teachers who have been overlooked. Armstrong's (2020) work into the history of Buddha Bose and Bishnu Ghosh equally demonstrates how the focus on teachers and gurus who have had a legacy within yoga can mean that others, who play equally important parts in the narrative, get overlooked.

Syman (2010: 201) shows how interactions between yoga gurus or teachers and celebrities saw public interest in and the popularity of yoga increase in the twentieth century, highlighting how gurus garnered media attention such as Maharishi Mahesh orchestrating a photo shoot with The Beatles when they visited his ashram. Such media attention gives yoga gurus, teachers or practices authority through the way in which it is framed and is explored in more detail in chapter five. Newcombe (2019) demonstrates that it was his relationship with violinist Yehudi Menuhin[14] that both initially brought B.K.S. Iyengar to the UK, and enabled a level of publicity and media coverage. Therefore, though celebratory status can be seen as allowing a personality closeness to a guru, the guru also benefits from the exposure and authority which comes with this relationship. Newcombe (2019: 202) goes on to note that there are “important authoritative implications" in the media coverage of yoga, suggesting for example that in framing yoga as being for health fitness and relaxation in its television programming, the BBC offered a "semi-official BBC sanction" to the practice of yoga. She also considers factors such as how B.K.S. Iyengar gained authority for his teaching of yoga by becoming authorised to teach in adult educational settings by the London Education Authority (LEA). In noting that B.K.S. Iyengar presented his form of yoga as being both scientific and safe, Newcombe observes, through the reading of minutes of meetings, that this appealed to organisations who were looking for yoga teachers, but also that the LEA then set restrictions on what should form part of a class in terms of talk of spirituality and asana. These negotiations and the willingness of B.K.S. Iyengar to conform and adapt or tailor his teaching to these rules potentially indicates that gurus and yoga teachers are able to see the potential rewards on offer if there are able to achieve a status of authority.

[14] Yehudi Menuhin (1916-1999) was a high-profile American-born violinist, who is considered one of the great violinists of the 20th century. His interest in yoga, and his practice as a student of B.K.S. Iyengar was highly publicised.

1.4 Conclusion - The role of this research

In this chapter I have illustrated some of the difficulties facing those studying the transcultural practice and development of yoga as an academic subject. However, it is hoped that in exploring the ways scholars have, and are addressing these challenges, such as issues of authenticity, tradition and authority, I have demonstrated the value of approaches which seek to explore yoga in transformation and the power dynamics at play. This has also highlighted the relevance of such issues and considerations in the context of examining the transcultural practice of various other cultural forms. I began by proposing there exists an inherent messiness when it comes to defining yoga, due in part to the fact that the word has meant different things to different people for hundreds, if not thousands of years, and continues to do so. I suggested the recent work of Sanskritists including Mallinson and Singleton (2017) and Birch (2018, 2024) continues to uncover and highlight the rich and varied history of co-existing yoga practices, but also how elements of continuity can be present (Wildcroft et al., 2024). This challenges previous popular discourse of yoga as an unchanging practice, and opens the path for academics to approach the subject of yoga in transformation in new ways. I also showed how the work of De Michelis (2004) and Singleton (2010) had, through the respective definitions of "Modern Yoga" and "modern transnational yoga", offered those studying transcultural practices of yoga a way in which to navigate thousands of years of yoga history by delimiting the boundaries of their enquiry. Though I opted not to used such typological definitions in my research, I argued these works had been pivotal in the recent development of yoga studies as a distinct field of inquiry whereby iterations of yoga could be investigated as that, rather than attempts to encompass yoga in its entirety.

It is notable that even within the study of transcultural and identifiably changing yoga practices, binary considerations of East and West, old and new, yoga and not yoga, shape how yoga is considered. I demonstrated how this is of particular significance when the yoga being studied is practiced outside of South Asia, and questions of appropriation or commodification are also raised. This subject is returned to in more detail in the following chapter. By referring to scholars like Liberman (2008) for who questions might be asked about the boundaries of yoga practice, and Graham (2014) who observes that Western

adaptations of yoga may be viewed as inauthentic, I illustrated the restrictive nature of binary perspectives in the field of yoga studies.

Finally, I discussed how ideas of authenticity, tradition, and authority within yoga have and continue to shape how yoga is understood, particularly in a contemporary transcultural context. The intention of this was not to distinguish what was or was not yoga, but rather to understand the role played by these notions in the development of transcultural cultural forms such as yoga, and how this has been addressed in scholarship. Instead of seeing considerations of whether something is yoga, or the authenticity of a yoga practice as a barrier to investigations of yoga, I suggested they could be used to examine power dynamics, which can influence the understanding and development of something within the transcultural process. It was shown how Newcombe's (2019) kaleidoscopic view of yoga allowed her to consider instances of its institutionalization in the UK, while Jain's (2015) consideration of branded iterations of yoga allowed her to address questions of whether commodified modern versions of yoga could still be meaningful to practitioners. This reiterated how non-essentialist approaches to transcultural yoga practices do not inevitably avoid addressing underlying issues of power within yoga's transcultural practice, which Dalal (2023) suggests can sometimes be the case, but can rather be used to focus on them.

This research proposes that yoga, or yogas, be understood through a non-essentialist understanding and explored through contextual transcultural flows, adaptations and translations. In exploring considerations of commodification and cultural appropriation within yoga, these have also been linked to ideas of authenticity tradition and authority. In this way the chapter has grounded my project within considerations of power relations and imbalances. Therefore, in exploring both what mediations of yoga can reveal about the practice of yoga in the identified period, as well as what it hides, this work contributes to knowledge about the transcultural development of yoga without limiting itself to dominant definitions or narratives. These concerns are not unique to yoga and can equally be applied to the investigation of the transcultural practice of other cultural forms, my focus on yoga is due to my own involvement and interest in the practice. In the following chapter, I introduce the concept of cultural translation (Maitland, 2017) as a way in which to centralise issues of power within the transcultural development and representations of yoga.

Chapter 2: Cultural translations and yoga

I now turn my focus to frameworks and concepts which can be used to explore and understand the development of different mediated yoga practices as they increased in popularity in the UK between 1955 and 1975. As asserted in the previous chapter, yoga is best understood as a kaleidoscopic variety of cultural practices with contested meanings (Newcombe, 2019: 7), it can be seen as a selection of cultural forms or activities created and mediated in a public arena. In this chapter, I propose Maitland's (2017) framework of cultural translation offers a way to investigate the power dynamics highlighted in the previous chapter which have shaped changing understandings of yoga. I begin by contending, leaning heavily on Hall's (1981) understanding of popular culture, that this is one way to see popularised practices of yoga. However, it is not the practices themselves which are most important, but the relations and processes by which they have developed. Second, I argue the specific history of yoga and the context of its development in the UK require the adoption of postcolonial lenses such as orientalism and eurocentrism to adequately address the conditions of power which have played a role in this process. Third, I discuss the concepts of cultural appropriation (Rogers, 2006; Ziff and Rao, 1997) and commodification (hooks, 1992; Rogers, 2006), demonstrating both their strengths and limitations when addressing yoga as a transcultural practice. Finally, I introduce Maitland's (2017) framework of cultural translation as a way to explore the contextual development of yoga's transcultural practice. I demonstrate how this can be used to offer contextual readings of yoga practices and their media representation, while foregrounding the role of agents in the process of change. I therefore recommend that the concept of cultural translation can provide an intricate approach to examining and understanding the power dynamics involved in transcultural activities like yoga.

2.1 Approaching yoga through popular culture

In the previous chapter, I highlighted some of the many ways in which the subject of yoga has been approached in academic investigation. In addition to these, there are scholars for who yoga is best considered as an expression of religion (Bucar, 2022), a practice of sport and fitness (Powers and Greenwell, 2017), or a lifestyle (Atkinson, 2010). Even in limiting

attention to transcultural practices of yoga, focus can be on how yoga practices have changed and developed (De Michelis, 2004; Singleton, 2010), yoga's growth in a variety of contexts (Deslippe, 2018; Jain 2015, 2020; Newcombe, 2019; Strauss 2005, 2008) how it is interpreted by practitioners (Wildcroft, 2022), or as a site of production of social, human and body capital (Koch, 2023). While there are political elements to many of these approaches, Black (2023: 3) goes one step further by challenging suggestions that yoga is principally about spiritual growth or physical well-being, instead proposing that it be reframed as "a deeply political exercise in how to imagine the world". It is with this in mind, and my present focus on the mediated popularisation of yoga practices in the UK context 1955-1975, that I suggest one of the many ways yoga can be approached is therefore as a form of popular culture. As Lawler (2024: 98) observes "Yoga has become a highly visible part of popular culture in recent decades". Identifying yoga as a form of popular culture allows for my previously outlined working focus, which is defined by those who practiced it, while also allowing attention on the power relations at play in the development and mediation of those practices.

Hall (1981: 189) states popular traditions and practices can be seen as expressions of popular culture, which is defined through its relationship to a dominant culture. Thus, popular culture results from cultural power and domination processes. For Hall, the study of popular culture and cultural forms quickly moves from being the things people do to the meanings created within cultural power dynamics. It is not a specific cultural object or practice which is most important, nor is it a historical version of this object or practice, but the power relations and cultural struggles. Hall's point is that understanding popular culture forms, means understanding these underlying power dynamics. This aligns with the work of the previous chapter reiterating that the value of studying cultural forms lies not in questioning its authenticity or difference to a pre-existing form but the power structures in which they were created and understood. Hall is concerned with the impermanence of meaning ascribed to a cultural form, and where that meaning originates. In considering that the meaning of a cultural form is neither fixed or inherent, nor is its status or practice within a cultural field, the study of popular culture becomes dynamic. As Hall says, "It is not the intrinsic or historically fixed objects of culture, but the state of play in cultural relations: but to put it bluntly and in an over-simplified form — what counts is the class struggle in and over

culture" (Hall, 1981: 235). Jain (2020) has previously adopted Hall's approach in the study of yoga as neo-liberal spirituality, using his idea that popular culture is a site of cultural struggle and hegemony. Jain explores how some yoga practitioners support and resist the neo-liberal system by purchasing yoga-related products, while at the same time having the intention of challenging and contesting that same system due to the ethical values seen to be represented in those services or products.

Considering yoga as a form of popular culture, representations and mediations of it become ways in which to understand the dynamics of cultural power which give yoga its contextual meanings. Hall (2013: xvii) highlights the role of representation as a critical moment in Du Gay's (1997) circuit of culture where its interaction with the other aspects of consumption, production, regulation and identity is seen as being a required consideration when studying a cultural text or artefact. However, it is Hall's exploration of representation theory and the creation of meaning which is of most relevance to this thesis. Here, the things of the world do not hold inherent, fixed or real meaning; it is people and cultures which bestow meaning upon them: "In part, we give things meaning by how we *represent* them — the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify them and conceptualize them, the values we place on them" (Hall, 2013: xix. emphasis in original). Because meanings are therefore always in a state of change – between cultures, space and time – what becomes the subject of interest is how these meanings are produced and developed through processes such as representation.

Foucault's (1980) definition of discourse and his concept of the axis of power/knowledge can also be used to centralise the role of power in the understanding of representation. Foucault considers all knowledge and meaning to have been created and developed contextually, there is no such thing as pure knowledge as everything that is known is the product of social and power relations. Foucault (1980: 145) contends that all knowledge is power/knowledge in that what is known cannot be separated from the relationships of power which created it. As Lidchi (2013: 158) observes, this means for Foucault that discourses do not reflect reality, or describe objects but "rather they constitute them in specific contexts according to particular relations of power". The different sources of representations of yoga used in this study; media archives, yoga community archives,

personal collections and the lived experience, can therefore be used to offer insight into how these relations of power existed across varied aspects of society, and the contextual meaning ascribed to the concept of yoga. In this section I have proposed that one way in which to investigate the transcultural practice and popularisation of yoga in the context of my investigation is as a form of popular culture, and through its popular representations. I have suggested this approach not only allows for plural and changing contextual understandings of yoga, but also focuses consideration on the power dynamics which have played a role in the development of those understandings. Moving on to the following section, my focus shifts to those power dynamics emphasised by post-colonial theorists, which can be especially relevant to understanding yoga's transcultural practice and development.

2.2 Post-colonial lenses on yoga's cultural translations

The long-standing and problematic relationship between the UK, and India and wider South Asia has shaped the ways in which yoga and yogis are perceived in the UK, as detailed in chapter 1 (see Alter, 2004; Diamond, 2013; Singleton, 2010; White, 2014). In this section, I consider the work of post-colonial theorists whose ideas and concepts offer ways to frame and understand the representations and mediations of yoga which form the core of this thesis. By asking "How do we represent people and places which are significantly different from us?" (Hall, 2013: 215) along with the related query of why difference is so interesting and compelling, Hall is exploring the power relationships involved in the identification, representation and creation of meaning about the other. Benedito and Santos (2017: 181) state "the concept of the 'Other' in cultural theory and literary studies is diffuse and flexible" and highlight how it can be used to identify the self or that which is not other, or to offer a binary opposite, the reverse of the norm. Derrida (1982) proposes there is always a power difference between binaries. Applying this to the concept of the other, seen as the binary of the self, the other is immediately at the wrong end of a power differential.

Given the aforementioned colonial history between the UK and South Asia, it is not surprising that many theorists have suggested that knowledge of the East, and the basis for that knowledge, has and continues to have an important influence over its representations. Said's (1978) model of orientalism, which can be understood as a study of how the West represents the East, can be used as one such lens through which to offer insight into the

ways representations, translations, and the actions of agents in the process of yoga's development and popularisation in the UK are understood through the roles of power. Said (1978) says orientalism is not a way of rationalising colonial rule, but that orientalism justified colonial rule in advance, by packaging it into frameworks to be judged, studied and governed. An example of this could be seen in the way British colonising classes looked to texts such as the *Yoga Sutras* when developing laws by which it governed India (White, 2014; Singleton and Larios, 2020), as noted in the previous chapter. Indeed, King (1999: 90) says that while Said's work predominantly relates to a Middle-Eastern context it has been left to scholars to explore its implications in other regions such as South Asia. For Said, orientalism is the discourse which has been used to create and manage the concept of the Orient since the late 1800s when the Western academy identified it as a subject capable of being studied and understood.

Said argues that judgments of the identified orient are made from a position of assumed superiority, and that representations are based on these, stating, "these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient" (Said, 1978: 30). Here, Said is again highlighting how relationships of power and the long-standing discourse of orientalism has produced a perceived understanding in the West of what and who the Orient is, but that this is based on processes of stereotyping and standardisation. However, while Chow acknowledges the inevitability of stereotypes in acts of cross-ethnic representation (2002: 52), the suggestion they should always be seen negatively is problematised with the observation that critiques of those using stereotypes equally rely on using stereotypes themselves (2002: 57-58). Chow also invites us to consider the way in which stereotypes can function representationally, how they can be "enabling" and "have the potential of effecting changes in entire intellectual climates" (Chow, 2002: 63). A relevance of this, and Chow's (1995: 180) observation that those from non-Western cultures represent themselves in a way which is shaped by a history of being a subject of ethnography, are illustrated in acts of self-orientalism (Xingcheng, 2006; Yan and Santos, 2009). This includes how "self-produced images of the Orient are heavily influenced by Western conceptions" (Yan and Santos, 2009: 298) which can be used in commercial activities (Goto-Jones, 2014: 1455) or to invoke a difference or visibility in contrast to the West (Yan and Santos, 2009: 299).

In making the case that orientalism defines the Orient by contrast to the West, Said (1978: 57) asserts that if the West sees itself as and defines itself as being "rational, peaceful, liberal, logical" the other of the Orient is therefore seen as not being these things. While for Said (1978) these binary contests typically present the Oriental negatively, Inden (1990) illustrates how a romantic or affirmative orientalism has promoted India as profoundly spiritual, mystical and idealistic, but with the caveat that it is still a fictional cultural essence, even if it is created out of appreciation or respect, and therefore allows for a domestication of India. King (1999: 92) makes the case that the romanticist conception of India has also influenced the self-awareness of Indians who have, in adopting aspects of it, then used it to fight against the powers which created it. Writing of Vivekananda, who as detailed in the previous chapter presented ideas of yoga to the West and is seen by many as being the starting point of “modern yoga” (De Michelis, 2004), King (1999: 93) says, "In Vivekananda's hands, Orientalist notions of India as 'other worldly' and 'mystical' were embraced and praised as India's special gift to humankind". Here there is the demonstration that discourses which had been used to alienate and subordinate were being repurposed. Said (1978: 58) also observes that visions of the foreign other as opposite, leads to what is termed “typical encapsulations” and can be seen as familiar tropes of encounter with the other such as a journey, a confrontation and stereotypes. For Said (1978: 58), the result of this is that the foreign becomes more familiar, creating what is called a “median category” wherein things that are being seen and experienced for the first time are seen as versions of things people are already familiar with. Said (1978: 59) contends that this is not a way of receiving new information but "a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things". This is therefore a category into which developments of yoga can be seen to fit. For example, Spatz (2015: 84) writes about how embodied practices such as yoga have been understood in some Euro-American contexts as being practices of health and fitness, and how this can, in turn, see them assimilated to conform to this understanding. Said (1978: 19) has proposed that as a result no American or European can study the Orient as an independent individual, but only as someone from an Occident culture contrasted with the Oriental other. Indeed, this is an issue for this research both in terms of approaching the attitudes and relationships of those representing yoga in the UK, but also my own

positionality as a Western yoga practitioner and scholar. This is a subject which I explore in more detail in chapter 3 of this work.

The lens of eurocentrism is another which can be used to explore the power relations which are both present in and played a part in the representations of cultural forms, traditions and practices which have an origin in areas of the globe beyond that cultural region. Blaut (1992) says that from the period of colonisation European civilisations developed, and benefited from, a position of assumed superiority over the rest of the world based on achievements within Europe and with a tunnel vision which excluded it from seeing merit in things that had and were occurring beyond Europe. The case is made that this assumed superiority was used to justify colonisation through the idea of eurocentric diffusionism whereby European cultures saw themselves as spreading what they perceived as the “internal qualities” of Europe around the globe (Blaut, 1992: 7). Blaut is, however, cautious of using the concept of eurocentrism in a way it might be understood as an attitude of prejudice which is akin to racism and sexism. This is because in his words "Eurocentrism includes a set of beliefs that are statements about empirical reality, statements educated and usually unprejudiced Europeans accept as true, as propositions supported by the facts" (Blaut, 1992: 9). It is the hegemonic role and social currency that such beliefs and ideas gain which Blaut suggests has established ideas of eurocentric diffusionism within Western thought and scholarship. Indeed, Blaut (1992: 13) goes as far as to say, "My basic argument is this: all scholarship is diffusionist insofar as it axiomatically accepts the Inside-Outside model, the notion that the world as a whole has one permanent center from which culture-changing ideas tend to originate, and a vast periphery that changes as a result (mainly) of diffusion from that single center". The case is made that this notion was so integrated into European thought that it permitted, and was accepted by, the arts, science and philosophy and continues today through a modern diffusionism which is the "body of ideas which underlay, and still underlies, this new set of conditions in the Third World. The diffusion of modernization, as it is carried out by public policy makers and private corporations and theorized by intellectuals" (Blaut, 1992: 29). Such an approach once again highlights the issues of studying a subject like yoga which is understood to have South Asian origins, where knowledge and representations are so bound up with ideas of what is foreign, and different. Blaut's understanding of how such difference can counter-diffuse back into the “inner” or

“civilized core” culture in the form of ideas of evil, magical and ancient (Blaut, 1992: 20), offers another way in which to consider the representations of certain yoga practices, traditions and even individuals, especially when thought about in conjunction with, and contrast to, the previously mentioned romantic orientalism.

Chakrabarty (2000) builds on the idea of eurocentric thought, inviting us to consider how it permeates, and burdens concepts such as human rights and the public sphere. In this understanding historicism and our knowledge of the world is deeply political and based on a eurocentric worldview whereby Europe is the cultural marker by which everywhere and everyone is compared, whether explicitly or not. Chakrabarty (2000: 7) discusses how this process is institutionalised in part by the use of terms such as "late capitalism" which is seen as belonging to "developed" societies rather than "developing" societies, despite having a worldwide impact. This, it is argued, reaffirms the assumed structure and progression that ‘developing' societies are moving towards the same thing as Europe already has, and that as such they are not as developed, and inferior. However, Chakrabarty goes beyond this, in arguing this institutionalised thought is inadequate for thinking and representing non-Western nations. In highlighting how Marxist ideas of European bourgeois were not transferable to a South Asian context, Chakrabarty demonstrates how European models cannot be applied elsewhere. This equally illustrates the extent to which eurocentric understandings of the world are so central to European thought and knowledge perpetuated by institutions and universities. However, it is proposed that this dominance of eurocentric thought is so all encompassing that it plays a role in how non-European (or non-Western) people identify and represent themselves in history. "In this sense, "Indian" history itself is in a position of subalternity; one can only articulate subaltern subject positions in the name of this history" (Chakrabarty, 2000: 27). But while Chakrabarty accordingly says this means Indian historians can't ignore Europe, the case is made that European writers do not feel so compelled to include India, or other non-European areas within their work. Therefore, it is contended that while non-Western academics and writers may feel the need to reference great Western thinkers, this is not reciprocated. While having problematised the institutionalisation of eurocentric thought, one might expect a call for a discarding or rethinking of it. Instead, Chakrabarty (2000: 16) recommends a project of "exploring how this thought - which is now everybody's heritage, and which affect us all - may be renewed from

and for the margins". This, it is said, would involve de-centering the imaginary concept of Europe which remains central to structuring the narratives we have of the world, and recognising its repressive strategies.

The established power structures and the institutionalisation of eurocentric thought offer an obvious limit to how Chakrabarty's provincializing could occur. However, it also raises the question as to who has power (and authority) to represent a culture or cultural practice. Spivak (1994: 70) contends that subaltern people have been systematically silenced by means of representation, which can take the form of attempting to speak on behalf of someone, as in politics, or re-presentation as portrayals in media or art. Spivak illustrates this with examples such as the introduction of Hindu laws in India, and British use of the education system to create a class of local interpreters who they could use to influence and control the others within the population. The suggestion is made that this resulted in an othering of the subaltern from a Western perspective but also meant people were speaking on behalf of them, restricting their self-representation and role in producing accounts of history. Spivak makes the case that oppression can therefore be realised through language and education, not just direct rule. It is this removal from society and lack of power to self-presentation which is used to define the subaltern and the way in which their voice is never heard. The aforementioned example also acts to make Spivak's case that Western theory is embedded with European views and beliefs, the European concept and understanding of class was held as universal, rather than specific to its time and place, and then tried to be applied elsewhere. It is this relationship between power and the ability to be heard which is central to this thesis. When studying the development and translation of a cultural form, who is it who has the authority to represent that culture? In exploring how the act of representing others leads to a distortion of their position and deconstructing the idea of any objective truth in favour of a plurality of truths. Spivak also highlights the difficulty faced by people from outside of a colonised group trying to grant the colonised speech, and questions whether there is an ethical way for others to speak for the subaltern. This section has introduced the work of some postcolonial theorists which will, in conjunction with the framework of cultural translation detailed later in this chapter enable this work to address some of the issues of power at play in the development and mediation of yoga practices in the UK between 1955 and 1975. Focus now turns to two key concepts which have been used

to critique transcultural practices and mediations of cultural forms or practices such as yoga; cultural appropriation and commodification.

2.3 Cultural appropriation as a starting (not ending) point

In the previous chapter, I illustrated some of the ways in which ideas of cultural appropriation and commodification have been used by scholars to consider power relations within yoga's transformation in its transcultural practice. In this section, I define these terms as they will be applied and used within this thesis, and how they relate to understandings of cultural translation, where they are considered as potential and problematic features of that process. I also demonstrate how they can be differently understood in academic and more mainstream dialogues. In doing so, I highlight the possibilities and limitations of using them when considering yoga's transcultural practice and development. Notably, I outline how seeing yoga's cultural appropriation and commodification as starting points for analysis, rather than a moral judgement on its cultural translations offers a better way by which to understand the cultural power relations which played roles in the development and mediation of yoga practices within the UK between 1955 and 1975.

Ayra (2021: 1) defines cultural appropriation as the "taking of items (whether tangible or intangible) including ideas from one culture by another" adding that an imbalance of power between the respective cultures is integral to the concept. It involves a dominant culture taking from a subordinate one. The concept of cultural appropriation is therefore increasingly relevant in a globalised world because it can be used to draw attention to such imbalances of power in cultural exchanges (Ayra, 2021: 9). Given the post-colonial considerations of the previous section, cultural appropriation becomes one way in which to draw attention to the identified power dynamics of yoga's transcultural practice, development and popularisation. In formulating his definition of cultural appropriation, Rogers (2006), draws on dictionary definitions and Shugart's (1997: 210-211) consideration of it as "Any instance in which a group borrows or imitates the strategies of another — even when the tactic is not intended to deconstruct or distort the other's meaning and experiences — thus would constitute appropriation". In doing so, Rogers (2006: 476) formulates cultural appropriation as not being limited to acts where those doing the appropriating are knowingly doing it for their own benefit, stating "Acts of appropriation and

their implications are not determined by the intent or awareness of those engaged in such acts but are instead shaped by and in turn shape, the social, economic, and political contexts in which they occur". Therefore, cultural appropriation can occur within acts of cultural translation, a concept explored in more detail the following section, and this is determined not by intent. This is significant in considering the transcultural development of yoga practices where agents involved in the process of change may have been acting out of appreciation, but this does not mean that they were not appropriating at the same time. Therefore, it could be that the followers of B.K.S. Iyengar, as written about by De Michelis (2004), while practicing and propagating his yoga out of appreciation were also appropriating it.

Rogers' approach allows cultural appropriation to be seen existing in four categories or types of appropriation; cultural exchange, cultural dominance, cultural exploitation, and transculturation. Whereas cultural exchange takes place between cultures with similar levels of power, cultural dominance refers to appropriations where members of a subordinated culture use elements of a dominant culture imposed onto them. However, it is the remaining categories which are arguably most relevant to this thesis. Cultural exploitation sees elements of a subordinated culture appropriated by a dominant culture "without substantive reciprocity, permission, and/or compensation" (Rogers, 2006: 477). This is how yoga's cultural appropriation is frequently framed in the mainstream and by those such as Barkataki (2020). Transculturation, meanwhile, sees cultural elements created by multiple cultures and "structured in the dynamics of globalization and transnational capitalism creating hybrid forms" (Rogers, 2006: 477). This understanding of a form of cultural appropriation is compatible with Maitland's (2017) framework of cultural translation, and the creation of new forms, or translations, of cultural practices and traditions such as yoga. However, I heed Rogers (2006: 499) conclusion that "cultural appropriation is inescapable, but that is not to say all acts of appropriation are equal", and the suggestion that transculturation offers a way to draw on the cultural domination model of subordination-domination and is another tool for thinking through cultural dynamics. Therefore, it is not the identification of acts of cultural appropriation in the transcultural practice and development of yoga which is most important, and using this as a judgement, but instead using these as a starting point to explore the power dynamics at play in the process.

In exploring the ethical dilemmas of cultural appropriation across a range of practices including yoga, Bucar (2022: 2) distinguishes between cultural borrowings which do not cause harm, and cultural appropriations which do. Ziff and Rao (1997: 7) also centralise the issue of harm caused by cultural appropriation, which they identify as one form of cultural transmission. Seeing appropriation through its relationships to power, they raise four significant concerns; how appropriation harms the appropriated, how appropriation impacts the appropriated cultural object, claims to ownership of the cultural goods being appropriated, and how one party benefits from appropriation to the detriment of another. In the first of these acts of cultural appropriation can be seen to harm an appropriated culture by leading it to be seen and understood through the appropriation rather than of itself, which can in turn lead to issues of cultural identity. An example of this could be found in the way yoga's popularity has led to some people to view India, and those from India, through their own understanding of yoga. Black (2023: 139-140) suggests cultural appropriation can be used to address the recognition that cultural practices such as yoga can be valued over people, and to raise questions "when the benefits of those cultural practices can be enjoyed by all but their costs are paid by only a few". In observing that some people argue cultural objects are best understood in their original setting and protected by stewardship, Ziff and Rao (1997) raise questions about damage that can be done to an original as it is moved, and potentially transformed in the process of appropriation. That said, in addressing the appropriation of intellectual property, they also illustrate the difficulty in identifying damages to an original when a new cultural object is formed.

Given the understanding of yoga adopted in my investigation as outlined in the previous chapter, where new understandings are being created and can co-exist with previous ones, this could be seen as problematic. However, scholars such as Carrette and King (2004: 118) have shown how Western appropriations of practices such as yoga have seen them rebranded as bodily regimes and practice for mood-enhancement rather than spiritual practice. While their assertion largely relies on an understanding of "classical" yoga having Hindu-based origin, the transformation, or the development of co-existing understandings of what yoga remains relevant. Spatz (2015: 81) also highlights the harm which can be caused to yoga in making the case that by calling a variety of different practices yoga "we actively bracket and ignore their differences to 'punctuate the flux' of the field".

This offers a way to consider the development of new forms of yoga practice, and the impact they have on the practices they originate from, which can continue to exist, but might be seen differently in relation to the new context.

Ziff and Rao's (1997: 7) remaining concerns question the issue of ownership of a cultural object being appropriated, relate to claims over who should govern it, and who benefits from this. These aspects of cultural appropriation are particularly relevant when considering the commodification of yoga practices, with De Michelis (2008: 24) observing the unprecedented scale and reach of yoga's commodification in its modern forms and Bucar (2022: 15) noting that economic exploitation is "the most common way of describing the harm caused by cultural appropriation". The process of commodification describes the transformation of cultural goods or ideas into commodities which can be traded (Ayra, 2021: 4). While the term commodification has relatively recent origins according to the Oxford English Dictionary, which recognises its first use in the 1970s, it has existed considerably longer as a process whereby things and relationships are transformed into objects which can be traded. Indeed, though the term was not used directly, this is the process Marx (1848) described when writing about labourers selling themselves as a commodity.

However, as Rogers (2006: 488) observes, to understand commodification merely as the transformation of something into something which can be traded, overlooks its cultural implications. For Rogers, commodification can be seen to perpetuate cultural power imbalances. It is therefore the meanings which become attached to the commodity, as something different, something to be fetishised, which is represented as having value. It is argued that in the process of commodification, difference is overcome as something becomes one's own. This, Rogers (2006: 488) suggests, means that commodification "plays a key role in perpetuating unequal power relations" adding that "Commodification is therefore a key element in the hegemonic strategy of incorporation, in which an alternative or oppositional practice is redefined by the dominant culture in order to remove any genuinely oppositional meaning or function". This raises concerns about who has the ownership of the cultural commodity to be traded, who is doing the commodification, and why? With relevance to yoga's transcultural practice and development, aspects of these can be seen played out in Newcombe's (2019) accounts of yoga's institutionalisation in the UK where competing organisations and agents competed to be the official yoga organisation. However,

they also raise questions around Dalal's (2024) concerns of indigenous agency and yoga, and who has the authority and permission to grant others the right to practice and disseminate a cultural practice or tradition. It is also relevant in Gautam and Droogan's (2018: 19) consideration of how Hindu nationalist claims of ownership over yoga can be seen through attempts to use it as a "soft power narrative" along with India's Prime Minister Modi's UN-proclaimed "International Yoga Day".

In writing about branded versions of yoga developed within a Western consumer culture, Jain (2015:160) says that such practices can be considered context specific products. Spatz (2015: 82) equally highlights Bikram Yoga as an example of the commodification and standardisation of postural yoga practices, drawing attention to the way the success of the brand was not only due to marketing, but also "the cleverly applied research that gave rise to his highly saleable and easily standardized version of the embodied technique of yoga". In doing so, Spatz questions how teachers and practitioners resisting yoga's commodification and taking an epistemological perspective on their practice, could challenge understandings of it. Making the case that by the start of the twenty-first century "the embodied technique of yoga is inextricably bound up with the biopolitics of health and healthism" Spatz (2015: 83) illustrates how the commodification of yoga has played a role in it being understood in certain discourses. The Bikram example also raises the question of who can appropriate a practice. Though while Rogers highlights that native cultures can be seen as participating in the commodification of their own cultures, it is insisted this should not be seen as happening free of context or existing power structures. Relating this to the case of Native Americans, Rogers (2006: 490) says "The production and sale of elements of subordinated/colonized cultures with their active participation occurs under economic conditions in which few other opportunities may be available to earn a living in the economic system they have entered into without, in many cases, their consent". Applied to the popularisation and mediation of yoga practices in the UK, this raises issues around the opportunities for, and expectations of, those of South Asian origin who participated in yoga's commodification.

bell hooks (1992: 21) sees the process of commodification via fetishism as an act of cultural cannibalism wherein members of a dominant culture purchase aspects of another in order to consume it and gain from it in some way, saying "the commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying

than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture". Indeed, Black (2023: 115) sees this within yoga practices whereby “Yoga is a cipher for cultural fantasies about an ideal life in an age of globalization" while Heath and Potter (2006: 260) say practicing yoga can be one way to “indulge in the exotic” in acts of rebellion. hooks’ approach further draws attention to the power differentials in the process of commodification, with those in a position to purchase the commodity of another, seeing the appeal in making their own experiences more varied and interesting. Indeed, hooks (1992: 28) makes the case that the ability to purchase and consume the culture of another in this way means that the subordinate culture's significance is reduced through decontextualisation, further reiterating it's perceived subordinate position. For hooks, the concern of such commodification is that it could result in the forgetting of the original, which had been fetishised for its difference. This can be seen in Arjana (2020: 171) demonstrating how the commodification of yoga in the West saw its marketers “removing just enough of the Hindu (as well as Buddhist and Jain) origins of the practice to make it palatable to North Americans and Europeans, but not so much that it loses its exotic appeal”. Lau (2000: 127) also calls attention to the way in which commodified practices and products can erase ethnic associations of practices such as yoga which come to be represented by its new practitioners.

I have here illustrated how the lenses of cultural appropriation and commodification can be used to better understand the power relations at play in the development of cultural forms as they move across place and time. However, I concur with Bucar (2022: 203) that value comes not from using them as a “moral judgement” but “to unpack the ethical issues at hand”. They are tools which are strongest when used as starting points from which to analyse issues of power. Therefore, as I introduce the framework of cultural translation in the following section, I propose that cultural appropriation and commodification are understood as a process which can occur within the translatory act.

2.4 (re)creating cultural translations of yoga

So far in this chapter I have outlined and justified the way in which the object of yoga is approached through popular culture in my investigation, highlighted relevant post-colonial considerations of power dynamics and how they can be addressed using the concepts of

cultural appropriation and commodification. I now introduce the framework of cultural translation (Maitland, 2017) which I argue offers a beneficial way in which to consider the power dynamics at play in the transcultural practice and development of yoga in the UK between 1955 and 1975 while accepting yoga as transforming and plural. While there are those who have addressed the development of modern transnational yoga practices through concepts such as globalisation (Hoyez, 2007), the diversity of practices and the transnational dialogue demonstrated by Singleton and Byrne (2008) alerts us to the ways in which these models can be too simplistic. Accordingly, Tzanelli (2011) proposes cultural flows can be used to refer to multidirectional movements of culture, pointing out how the concept can allow for a consideration of the intercultural dialogues, ignored in some traditional views of globalisation as a homogenising force resulting in standardisation of world cultures. Building on such an approach, I suggest Maitland's (2017) understanding of the concept of cultural translation can provide a framework for analysing the role of cultural processes in the development and mediation of transcultural cultural forms such as yoga practices in the UK. I propose this addresses Hall's call for approaches to meaning and knowledge "which facilitates cultural communication while always recognising the persistence of difference and power between different 'speakers' within the same cultural circuit" (Hall, 2013: xxvi) by centring the role of agents of change and power relations.

However, given the term cultural translation can be seen as "as diffuse as it is tantalising" (Maitland, 2017: 14) and differing scholars have used the term in varying ways, it is necessary to first define it as it will be used in this investigation. As Maitland observes, while the phrase cultural translation is currently in popular use, its academic origins are within anthropology. It was used by Keesing (1985) to refer to, and criticise, the ways some anthologists localised the activities of tribal societies by repackaging separate practices so they make sense to Western audiences. Asad (1986) progressed this idea by describing cultural translation as an institutionalised practice in which anthropologists translate foreign cultures in a way which makes sense to their own culture, and in a manner which is expected by their academic institutions. In doing so, Asad raises the question of power relations in the assumptions which are made when dealing with other cultures. Bhabha (1994) notably developed the concept of cultural translation in using it to address issues of transformation of cultural identity. Asserting that all cultures are the product of a mix of influences, Bhabha's

idea of hybridity challenges binary notions of culture. Focusing on the development of hybrid cultures, Bhabha explores the concept of cultural translation using post-colonial migration to the West and how migrants can use existing discourses to create new identities which subvert these binary ideas. For Bhabha, culture is a constantly changing process. Rather than seeing an unchangeable essence to a culture, it is in fact the change and transformation which is, it is contended, at the core of culture. Suggesting hybridity is formed in a "third space" which is neither Western or Other, Bhabha (1994: 325) highlights the agency of subjects involved in the process of cultural translation and the creation of the new as a performative "staging of cultural difference". In this way hybridity can be used to subversively challenge colonial power structures.

Chow (1995: 179) continues the distinction of cultural translation as a concept from ideas of linguistic translation, using it to consider ethnography and media as ethnographic texts saying, "I think it is by focusing on visuality that we can come to terms with the subjective origins of ethnography most productively". Chow (195:192) sees such cultural translations as being influenced by conditions of power, and that translation is not a case of one culture translating another in terms of language alone, but a wider process which includes "the change from tradition to modernity, from literature to visuality, from elite scholastic culture to mass culture, from the native to the foreign and back, and so forth". For Chow, how non-Western cultures represent themselves is shaped in part by the history of being the subject of ethnography. In asking the question "How is tradition to be transmitted, to be passed on, if not through translation?" Chow (1995: 183) draws attention to the hierarchy of translation, where an original is valued over a translation. This is relevant in developing ways to conceptualise change in the development of transcultural yoga practices, particularly in relation to the binaries and interplay of ideas about authenticity and tradition as discussed in the previous chapter. Considering similar issues in relation to martial arts, Bowman (2021: 204) described what was termed "The Micro-Ontological Inevitability of Change" drawing on Derrida's (1974) notions of *différance* and discontinuity, and how change takes place even within attempts at repetition. For Bowman (2021: 204), this allows for the challenging of the "*meta-myth of history as continuity*" (italics in original) and recognition that even in attempts to teach embodied practices traditionally, teachers will "inevitably be the instruments and drivers of untold changes within their practice".

Within the approaches detailed above, cultural translation can be seen as moving from a process towards being a framework for understanding. Bachmann-Medick (2009: 2) has also written about the “translational turn” in the humanities and how the concept of translation is used to consider factors beyond language. In going on to state "It is no longer possible to ignore how crucial the processes of cultural translation and their analysis have become" Bachmann-Medick (2009: 2) highlights how the concept has been applied in the exploration of the cultural transfer and globalisation of world society. This illustrates how the concept can be used to address those power relations, detailed earlier in this chapter, which have played a role in the development and representations of cultural forms such as the yoga practices focused on in this thesis. However, the concept of cultural translation is not without its critics. There are those who contend that use of ‘translation’ in cultural translation, and in relation to the movement of culture is potentially problematic. Tymoczko (2010: 110) highlights how scholars in varied fields have attempted to use translation as a way of navigating their own theoretical problems, without recognising that it brings its own, while Trivedi (2007: 282) argues that “if there is one thing that Cultural Translation is not, it is the translation of culture”. For Trivedi (2007: 286), use of the concept where “newness constantly enters through cultural translation” jeopardises not only literary translation, but it also has significant implications for how we experience other cultures. In this way he suggests that in seeing cultural translations as new creations, the original and still foreign is left behind because of its difference. Pym (2023: 161) equally has concerns that because they can be studied “without reference to different languages” theories of cultural translation can sweep away “the very otherness that they generally proclaim to espouse”. This idea is also picked up by Kapsaskis (2019) who questions the way the concept of cultural translation could be used to achieve racist or oppressive goals.

Though it is important to acknowledge this history of cultural translation and its criticisms before attempting to deploy it, it is Maitland's (2017) approach to the concept, which I suggest addresses the above concerns relating to power and how we experience that which is different, and which my investigation draws upon most heavily. Maitland set out to develop an understanding of cultural translation that attempts to act as a model for exploring sociocultural phenomena as a way of understanding the world. Her approach, which draws on Ricoeur's (1994) hermeneutics, offers a way of understanding society through that

change, shifting its intention to addressing acts of interpretation which impact an audience in a certain way, or as a way of critiquing ideology (Keown, 2017). Maitland (2017: 10) approaches cultural translation seeing it through five distinct dimensions, interpretation, distanciation, incorporation, transformation and emancipation (each explored below), in a way which is "concerned as much with interpreting the objects of the world as 'source texts' with which we each can and should engage as it is with the communication of this interpretation towards an eventual audience". Therefore, while based in linguistics, the intention is a model which can be deployed across different disciplines. This could be interpreted as meaning everything can be seen through the lens of cultural translation, indeed Maitland (2017: 53) states "cultural translation is thus a gesture of interpretation - of contested understandings of the objects of human expression that suffuse the practice of everyday life in the social sphere". However, it is added that the model's focus is the gesture of interpretation combined with a "gesture of desire", the intent to change behaviours and ways of thinking. Maitland (2017: 53) adds that to qualify as cultural translation "phenomenon of human expression in the social sphere must be shown to engage in a contemplative work of understanding addressed towards a particular substance, but it must also have as its primary objective nothing short of the transformation of human hearts and minds". Cultural translation can be seen as grounded in the act of interpretation and knowledge-creation; how we make sense of the world through understanding things beyond what they are.

Maitland (2017) argues translations are never a reflection of something, but something as seen through the eyes of the translator. Applying this to cultural forms or objects as translated texts it is suggested a reader first sees the cultural object, understood through their own perspective, and if then recreating it, layers this understanding with something more of themselves. This could be understood as an example of Said's (1978: 59) "median category" introduced earlier in this chapter, and the way yoga postures have in various contexts been understood and adopted as physical exercises (Singleton, 2010). Also of relevance here are Csordas' (2009: 4) notions of "portable practices", practices such as postural yoga which can be easily learned and performed, and "transposable messages", messages or experiences that can be transposed or applied across different contexts while

retaining its meaning or significance. Such considerations can be seen to influence how easily a practice can be transculturally translated.

However, it is with Maitland's consideration of distanciation (the way in which the author of a text and the reader exist in separate places and times) which highlights both the ways texts can be read in various contradictory ways, and the importance of understanding a text in the contemporary context of when it is read rather than when it was written. Such an approach therefore sees my research interested in practices and representations of yoga between 1955 and 1975, rather than looking back for some source text, or directly comparing practices to those that may have gone before them. Moving into the dimension of incorporation, and to the understanding of a text, is where Maitland asserts the unfamiliar is made familiar in order for it to make sense, and that the power of the translator can be seen in the public sphere. This perspective can therefore be used to consider the factors which question how people in the UK during the time period I am investigating made sense of yoga, making it their own through both their understandings of it as foreign (shaped by their societal knowledge creation) and how this was brought into their own frames of reference. For example, seeing asana as physical exercise, positioning yoga in the Western discourse of health and fitness (Spatz, 2015). Maitland (2017: 85) says this is the dimension of cultural translation in which a "dialectical 'struggle' manifests itself as a confrontation with the foreignerness of the text-for-translation with respect to the language of the translation's end user". Building on Ricoeur's (1976: 43) hermeneutical interpretation of appropriation where "to appropriate is to make 'one's own' what was 'alien'", it is suggested the process of incorporation can be seen as historical and embodied. Interpretation and readings take place in a spacial and temporal context says Maitland (2017: 92), adding that they are "filled with the reader's here and now". This once again shows how the concept of cultural translation can be used to understand the processes and power relations involved in the development of yoga explored through their representations. As Maitland (2015: 579) had previously stated, "translations reveal more about the realities of appropriation on the part of the translator than the 'reality' of the texts themselves".

It is then within the transformation dimension of cultural translation that the development or creation of the new is addressed. Maitland (2017: 117) proposes that in translating texts to create something new, cultural translators both retain aspects of the

source material and appropriate it so that it becomes theirs. For Maitland, translating it is not a case of receiving what the source text is giving, but rather taking from it. While an ideal model of translation can be seen as trying to reproduce something, the "perfect double" (Steiner, 1998: 318) of an original text or cultural form, Maitland suggests cultural translation is never about reproducing a likeness. Instead it is conceived as a constructive process which does not need to be considered as a loss, but echoing Chow (1995: 199) can also be seen as a site of gain, in this case where the new text can be seen through its relevance and use in the contemporary, increasing the perceived value over an original. Such a view of cultural translation allows this work to offer insight around yoga practices which developed and were mediated in the UK without having to address this long and tangled history of yoga. While translations can be seen as a way of preserving something while at the same time overcoming the difference between the source and the now, the creation of translations can also be seen as acts of renovation or revolution. For someone to want to translate something, they have to have recognised some value in it, either for them or the intended audience of the translation.

Having located the act of translation in the present, Maitland (2017: 116) says a forward-looking understanding of translation can be adopted whereby a translation does not have the power to damage its source. However, in considering how a translator's distanciation from a source will mean translations are transformed, Maitland (2017: 129) draws attention to how this can also create the opportunity for translations to deliberately encourage change to hearts and minds. It is through considering cultural translation using the dimension of emancipation, that Maitland shows how the process can be used as a critique of ideology. In considering the dimension of emancipation in examples of cultural translation, Maitland first highlights that there is a difference between an author’s meaning and a translation, because there are different ways of seeing a text, it therefore proceeds that there are different interpretations. However, for Maitland this can be seen as a battle to identify the most probable interpretation of a text, an inherently argumentative and circular process, and moves the focus from the subject of translation towards the ideology of the transformation. Maitland (2017: 151) says "By translating back to the agents and institutions of ideology their own ideologically marked translations of others, in other words, by placing them in the position of interpreting subjects, enmeshed within a circle of conflicting

interpretations in which their hermeneutic guesses must be articulated, defended and validated, we take the first steps towards operationalising interpretation for emancipatory purposes in the domain of the real".

It is this model of understanding cultural translation – seeing the process through the framework of these five dimensions – upon which my investigation relies. The 'concrete' objects of this translation are therefore the practices and presentations of yoga, and the act of cultural translation which occurs at each of these stages. Therefore, what is interesting is the intercultural encounter "between a translator, the text-for-translation and an audience" (Maitland, 2017: 159). There is an act of cultural translation both in the presentation of yoga in a certain way, and the reading of this presentation. Cultural translation can be seen as "a thoughtful journey outwards, across the terrain of otherness and back again" (Maitland, 2017: 159). Such an approach again places importance on the role of agents in the movement of culture, and the on-going act of translation which takes place in the communication and dialogue of culture. Applying this approach, and the way agents create themselves as subjects to yoga, gives many possible ways in which to consider its cultural translation. This includes exploring how early yoga teachers transformed the yoga practices they taught based on the audience, the embodied practice of yoga students from that period, and those representations of practices in media and institutional archives. In this study I use representations of yoga not to understand that yoga, or its similarities or difference with another yoga, but instead to understand the subjectivity of its translators and the power relationships in which they operate. This is compatible with the outlined understanding of yoga in the previous chapter as a subject and practice in a constant state of flux, as a translation which changes. However, by centring the ethical role of a translation model, which Maitland previously described as being "to navigate our anxieties of otherness by making difference accessible while also protecting the 'other' from appropriation" (Maitland, 2015: 570) cultural translation can also be seen to shift its intention to addressing acts of interpretation which impact an audience in a certain way, or as a way of critiquing ideology (Keown, 2017). This approach allows my research to respond to Maitland's (2017: 161) call to "employ cultural translation if only to learn something about who it is that we are and what it is that we know and understand”.

2.5 Conclusion

Understanding the popularisation and mediation of yoga practices in the UK (1955-1975) requires approaching the subject in a way which centralises the roles of power in those processes. It is not the practices themselves which are the most important, but the conditions and relationships under which they were created and those which allowed them to flourish. Representations of yoga, from newspaper articles to institutional archives and the embodied experience of practitioners can therefore all be seen as representative texts, they are sites where contests for meaning take place and understandings of yoga are formed. I propose, given the previous work stating there is no singular essential yoga with which to compare, representations can therefore be used to explore the cultural struggle for meaning in terms of the ideological frameworks.

I made the case that due to the specific history of yoga there are certain post-colonial concepts such as eurocentrism and orientalism, which can and need to foreground legacies of cultural power inequalities. I suggested this approach also offers the potential to address the issue of who has the power and authority to represent transcultural practices or traditions such as yoga. It was with this in mind that I introduced the concepts of cultural appropriation and commodification, defining them and how they are used within this thesis. While they are often seen as ways of approaching the power relationships and inequalities which can exist within cultural transmission, I demonstrated how they can also be dependent on an essential understanding of a cultural form which has been appropriated and commodified. Therefore, I proposed they could be seen as potentially exploitative aspects of the process of transcultural cultural translation. I argued that as tools for cultural analysis, cultural appropriation and commodification are best used as starting points from which to explore the power dynamics at play rather than to wield a negative judgement about a practice or mediation.

Finally, I illustrated how Maitland's (2017) framework of cultural translation, offers a new way in which to approach the object of yoga when seen from this perspective. Exploring yoga practices and mediations as cultural translations, with a focus on the contextual reading of translations rather than their similarity or difference to some original, allows an increased understanding of the discourses which played a role in the popularisation of yoga practice and its mediation in the UK. Yoga's cultural appropriation and commodification are therefore

features of, or processes within, the cultural translation of yoga. Yoga can be seen to have been culturally translated and (re)created through the actions of yoga teachers, media representations, and the experience of yoga practitioners, not just the high-profile yogis. This framework also acts to foreground the role of agents of change in this process and situates actions within a broader cultural context, allowing focus to become the broader issues of power, and ethically grounding the research. Having outlined the theoretical framework for my research I will, in the following chapter, discuss how I researched the power of yoga's popular history using a model which combined a discourse theoretical approach with ethnohistorical methods through a triangulation process.

Chapter 3: Researching the power of yoga's popular history

This chapter discusses how I researched the power of yoga's popular history as it became an increasingly widespread practice in the UK between 1955 and 1975. I build on the theoretical framework introduced in the previous chapters, outlining the approach I developed to address my suggestion that research of yoga's development and popularisation in the UK can, and should, also be an investigation of the powers involved in those processes. Specifically, I present my use of a method combining a discourse theoretical approach to analysing media and archive materials with ethnohistorical methods of data collection. By triangulating media reportage, archive material, and interviews with yoga practitioners from that period, I illustrate how the cultural translation of yoga took place across multiple levels of interaction with it. As Maitland (2017: 26) says, agents of cultural translation "are not the privileged polyglot elite but every single one of us engaged in the practice of encountering and questioning difference in every aspect of everyday life". The high-profile yogis focused on by much of the research into yoga's transcultural practice were agents of cultural translation, but so was the media's representation of the practice, as were those who engaged with the teachings or mediations. This approach has allowed me to challenge and/or corroborate dominant narratives about the history of yoga in the UK while analysing the power dynamics involved in its transcultural practice and popularisation.

This research project was built around a central research question:

> *What can the mediation of yoga in popular media, institutional archives and personal collections reveal about the processes of its cultural translation in the UK between 1955 and 1975?*

From this inquiry, I identified several sub-questions that played a role in structuring my investigation. These were:

- In what ways can popular mediations of yoga be positioned as cultural translations?
- How did popular media, yoga lineages and communities of practitioners contribute to yoga's cultural translation?
- How did existing conceptions and knowledge of yoga shape its mediation?
- In which ways were popular mediations of yoga related to the processes of its cultural appropriation and commodification?
- How can yoga community archives and the lived experience be used to challenge and/or corroborate popular media representations of yoga?

The previous chapter showed how the theoretical framework of cultural translation offers a way to explore power relations within the development of yoga in the UK while not relying on an essentialist view of the practice. It also foregrounds the role of agents of change while situating them contextually. I argue that triangulating media reportage, archive material and interviews with yoga practitioners from the period allows me to better consider the varied sites of yoga's cultural translation and to answer the above questions. I begin the chapter by looking at the way approaches traditionally adopted by scholars when investigating yoga's transnational and transcultural development, such as De Michelis (2004), have resulted in a limited focus on high-profile yogis and yoga communities as the sites of that development. I also illustrate how a recent embracing of new methods, as the field of yoga studies broadens, offers the potential for new considerations, including researcher positionality and reflexivity around the practitioner-scholar (Larios and Singleton, 2020).

I then detail my approach, demonstrating how triangulation widens the scope of who is considered to play a role in the transcultural development of yoga and, therefore, its cultural translators. After this, I provide more practical details of my use of this method to research the cultural translation of yoga in the UK, including how conceptualising the archival spaces of yoga as an ecology enabled me to better navigate/negotiate with gatekeepers when gaining access to materials. I close the chapter by considering the ethical concerns and limitations of the research, focusing on the challenges encountered throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the changes this introduced to the research, and the unforeseen benefits and outcomes from this situation. This chapter, therefore, advocates for approaches within yoga studies that address the limitations of previous investigations which focus on the role played by prominent yogis on the transcultural practice and dissemination of yoga by taking into account the role of other agents of cultural translation. While my focus in this investigation is of the cultural translation of yoga in the UK, it should be noted that this is due to my personal experience and interest, and that I suggest the approach taken could be equally illuminating when applied to researching the role that cultures play in translating other cultural forms, particularly when there are power differentials at play such as the transcultural movement between East and West.

3.1 Questioning power when studying yoga

Yoga studies has seen a methodological shift in recent years, with a once philological-focused field embracing various methods and approaches. As Singleton and Byrne (2008: 3) observe, scholars such as De Michelis (2004), Alter (2004) and Strauss (2005) were significant in bringing contemporary transnational yoga to academic interest and establishing it as a "legitimate focus of inquiry". More recently, O'Brien-Kop and Newcombe (2020: 4-5) have highlighted the increasingly multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to the subject, showing that yoga is now being studied not just within departments of religious studies, sociology and Indology but also medical science, biomedicine and cognitive psychology amongst many others. This change brings exciting research opportunities to expand further the field's purview and how yoga is studied. In this section, I draw attention to the way in which such developments are enabling scholars to look beyond what were once the limits of transnational and transcultural yoga studies. I show that adopting more ethnographic and ethnohistoric methodologies positions the practitioner within yoga studies and how reflexivity of researcher positionality allows for another consideration of power in relation to yoga's popular understanding. By situating my research at the intersection of yoga studies and media and cultural studies, I address a significant gap in the existing literature, exploring how the cultural translation of yoga occurs through various levels of mediated interaction, an area largely overlooked.

As noted in chapter one, a challenge of researching and writing about yoga is aligning your focus and content with the audience. A consequence of this can be an over reliance or focus on certain high-profile practices or figures. Indeed, Deslippe (2018) has suggested that reappraisal is required of the historical importance placed on certain yogis. Meanwhile, Wildcroft (2020) has identified a lack of research into the lived experience and subcultures of yoga practice across different sites. This is not to dismiss the importance of figures such as Vivekananda, Yogananda, or, in the context of my investigation B.K.S. Iyengar, and organisations like the British Wheel of Yoga (BWY), but rather a call to understand them and the roles played by them within a broader context, and alongside other figures which have played a role in the transcultural development of yoga. In his investigation of yoga's early history in the United States, Deslippe (2018: 8) used the "significant, but largely neglected" literature of magazine features, newspaper articles and book chapters about a wide range of

swamis and yogis to create a portrait of yoga in the United States from the late-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. This approach, which did not limit its focus to certain high-profile yogis, broadened the contextual understanding of yoga's transcultural practice and development. Such source information can therefore be used to deepen knowledge of previously identified acts of cultural translation. Wildcroft (2020: 17), by contrasting her focus on post-lineage yoga with that of the "visible yoga mainstream", equally makes the case that a focus on widely recognised practices of yoga has left significant gaps in the research of yoga studies.

As mentioned above, a diverse range of methodologies are now being used across yoga studies. The Hatha Yoga Project (2015-2020) can be seen as an example of this with its use of embodied philology, bringing together textual investigations and physical practices through reconstructions of postures and its ethnographic work into the yoga practices of contemporary ascetics. Such approaches allow scholars to address a lack of existing research that considers aspects like the embodied experience of practicing yoga. Bevilacqua (2020: 395) has charted the growing use of ethnographic methods within yoga studies, the way they are emerging as a "preferred method", and how they have been used to address factors such as the "cultural diffusion and knowledge transfer" highlighted by Hauser (2013: 1). Bevilacqua (2020: 398) asserts this has enabled yoga studies researchers to "expand the area of interest by bringing to light often overlooked consequences of the spreading of yoga practices and schools". Wildcroft (2020) developed a notation system for physical practice and called for approaches in which the researcher's body and the materiality of the research space are embedded in the research. Other examples include combining ethnographic observation with interviews of yoga practitioners (Schnåbele, 2010), long-term multi-sited ethnographic research (Strauss and Mandelbaum, 2013) and ethnographic participation to reflect on the embodied experience (Smith, 2004).

While the aforementioned methodological shift is a relatively recent development for yoga studies, cultural studies has a considerably longer history of using varied and interdisciplinary methods. Although some have seen this as a negative (Tudor, 1999), others like Gray (2003: 5-6) say this "methodological eclecticism" is a strength of the field and that "it is during that process of thinking and working out our methods, formulating strategies and clarifying our position that interesting questions and dilemmas arise". I argue that introducing

approaches from media and cultural studies to the examination of yoga's transcultural practice, therefore, allows for a reconsideration of the processes of its cultural translation. In the following section, I make the case that through a triangulation of media reportage, archive material and interviews, I have widened the scope of who is considered to have played a role in the transcultural development of yoga and are, therefore, its cultural translators. This is significant because it incorporates the lived experience of all yoga practitioners and those who have engaged with the concept of yoga into the development of how yoga has come to be understood in the popular psyche.

In chapter two, I referred to the consideration of researcher positionality and how this can relate to issues of power when researching yoga. While being a scholar and practitioner has been written about across multiple disciplines (McClintock, 2003), there are many additional factors to reflect on when working with yoga as an object of study, particularly given the post-colonial considerations of the previous chapter. This goes beyond concerns of "insider" or "outsider status" (Merriam et al., 2001). It includes how position within the yoga community enables engagement with research subjects, with yoga teachers acting as "sponsors" (Walsh, 2004: 231), making introductions to stakeholder gatekeepers (Sixsmith, Boneham, & Goldring, 2003) and building a level of trust with research participants (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007), each discussed later in this chapter. Writing on the subject of scholar-practitioners of yoga in the Western academy, Larios and Singleton (2020: 41) note a long history of yoga scholars masking their practitioner status, living "consciously partitioned, double lives as (public) scholars on the one hand and (secret) practitioners on the other". While they observe some scholars are now more open about this, deriving kudos within their practice community, it is still not uncommon for yoga scholars to pointedly refuse to comment on their own practice. The authors suggest several reasons why this can be the case, including that scholars may consider their practitioner status could "damage their academic respectability" or that they consider their own spiritual practice private (Larios and Singleton, 2020: 42). Other factors that may influence a scholar's openness about their own practice include the number of scholar-practitioners who have come under attack from "right-wing Hindutva critics in India, Europe and the United States who present these scholars as neo-colonialists trespassing on sacred ground" (Larios and Singleton, 2020: 44). This was experienced first-hand when comments were posted on my research-adjacent blog

and related social media posts accusing me of being a “yoga coloniser” and stating that because I am “White and English,” I could have “no real authority on the subject of yoga”, and echoes the issue of popular claims of cultural appropriation in the previous chapter.

Of the categories of scholar-practitioners of yoga outlined by Larios and Singleton (2020: 38), the one which resonated most with me was that of the "prior practitioner of yoga who subsequently joins the academy and subjects yoga to academic scrutiny", for which Larios and Singleton draw on Puttick's (1997: 6) notion of an “insider going outsider, going native in reverse”. This position became further complicated because I have, at times, also fallen into the category which the authors say, "do not come from a culture that has traditionally practiced yoga, having adopted it as a somatic and spiritual practice later in life, often in social and cultural contexts quite different from those of 'traditional' yoga" (Larios and Singleton, 2020: 38). Throughout my research I had to address my positionality as a white, male, middle-aged scholar and former journalist who has practiced yoga for 13 years, primarily in the UK, in urban commercial yoga studios. Of note, around 88 percent of yoga practitioners in England are female (Ding and Stamatakis, 2014) and yoga studios only account for 20 percent of the public spaces yoga is taught (Lawler, 2024). As detailed later in this chapter, I responded to Bevilacqua’s (2020: 396) call to adopt an “attentive, reflexive approach”, conducting a process of reflexivity alongside this project. For me, this involved ensuring that the issues and power dynamics addressed in the forthcoming chapters were also considered in the methodological approach and implementation of the project. For example, throughout this project, I have needed to consider what assumptions my prior and ongoing experience of yoga led me to make and the role these have played in the progress of this research. I have also needed to question how comfortable I am with the criticism, as mentioned above, being levelled at me, how I reacted to those around me – people I have and continue to practice alongside – as they acted in ways that I began to see as problematic as a result of this research, and how my research has also influenced my yoga practice. I have included several examples of this reflexive practice in Appendix B because of its direct influence on the approach and conduct of this work. Moreover, I hope it encourages more scholars within the field of yoga studies to openly acknowledge how their experiences and practices have shaped their research.

3.2 Triangulating yoga's mediations and lived experience

My research has followed a similar trajectory to yoga studies in that initial plans involved a predominantly textual methodology based on a discourse analysis of media and archive materials. However, questioning how to address issues of power adequately in conjunction with the considerations mentioned above of positionality, several fundamental changes were made. These included incorporating ethnohistorical methods to include the unwritten experiences of yoga practitioners from the investigated period and the contents of their personal collections relating to yoga. This can be seen as a direct result of my reflexive work, which led to developing a considered model that combined discourse theoretical and ethnohistorical approaches through the triangulation process to bring these sources together, as detailed below. This allowed my research to address the limitations of excessive focus on high-profile yogis by considering the lived experience of practitioners, allowing more figures to be seen to play active roles in the cultural translation of yoga.

My research began with a discourse theoretical approach to media and archive texts inspired by the Brussels Discourse Theory Group (BDTG). This moves the focus from micro to macro, from language to frameworks of understanding, representation and ideology. As Van Brussel et al. (2019: 14) state, discourse theory aims "to make visible the political nature of the social, also exposing attempts to make that inherently political nature invisible". Using the definition of discourse as "a structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed" (Laclau, 1988: 254), such a model can also be used to focus on media and communication in exploring the "politics of everyday life" (Van Brussel et al, 2019: 93). By adopting such an approach analysis is not limited to media content or the resulting mediations, but also the "fantasmatic logics", and the resulting grip or ideologies (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 153). This methodological approach addresses several of the challenges facing yoga studies mentioned in chapter one, including how to consider transcultural yoga as a non-essential practice separated from an imagined historical while at the same time addressing issues of power. In doing so, it addressed Miller's (2023: 153) concerns about studying yoga in "a way that is simultaneously critical and sympathetic". A discourse theoretical approach allows my research to question the roles played by orientalist and eurocentric ideas, as discussed in the previous chapter, in the context of the creation of articulations of yoga throughout its cultural translation.

In presenting potential uses of their model of discourse theory, Van Brussel et al. (2019: 17) also draw attention to the way it allows for consideration of media production and media professionals as well as those who engage with the produced media, saying, “These analyses point to how media practices and institutions are strongly informed by, and contribute to, a variety of (also competing) discourses about the media”. This is significant because it broadens the spectrum of who can be considered to have played a role in the transcultural development and practice of yoga and who can be considered its cultural translators. As demonstrated across chapters four to six, this approach enabled me to look beyond high-profile yogis when exploring the processes of yoga’s cultural translation. It considered the roles played by media institutions, journalists and other media professionals, and those who were the subject of media coverage about yoga or engaged with it. While discourse theory, and in particular the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), has been criticised for not laying down methodological guidelines for practitioners (Howarth, 1998: 291), others argue the value of discourse theory comes from the resulting methodological bricolage (Torfing, 1999: 292). This embracing of methodological freedom allowed me to adapt my approach early in my research, to combine a discourse theoretical approach with ethnohistorical methods.

During my research, I recognised that the period of yoga’s popularisation being researched fell within living memory. I saw the opportunity to address the limitation of yoga studies not addressing the lived experience of practicing yoga. To achieve this goal, I incorporated ethnohistorical methods of data collection, which involved conducting interviews with practitioners from the period and examining their personal collections related to yoga. As Strong (2017) notes, ethnohistory combines approaches from anthropology and history to study cultures, with a focus often being on indigenous perspectives. She says the 'ethno' in 'ethnohistory' refers "substantively to Indigenous and other ethnic groups" for some, while for others it "has methodological significance" (Strong, 2017: 35-36) and relates to a use of ethnographic approaches to studying history. Ethnohistorians often rely on a number of data sources which can include institutional documents, written records, collections, oral traditions and histories and ethnographic research. In my investigation I draw on the work of Kuhn (2002) who combined ethnographic description with oral history and more traditional historical sources in their study of 1930s

film audiences. More specifically, I draw on Carter (2023) who adapted Kuhn's approach in his investigation of the pornographic industry from the 1960s to the 1980s using ethnohistorical data collection including interviews with those involved in the industry and archival research. As with Carter (2023), I used these methods, not to produce an ethnohistorical biographical narrative, but as a data collection tool. Therefore, I developed a model combining the discourse theoretical approach with ethnohistorical methods through a triangulation process. Discussing "triangulation", Saukko (2003: 23) notes how the combining of methodologies continues the tradition in cultural studies of "studying the interplay between lived experience, discourses and texts and the historical, social and political context". She goes on to observe that triangulation aims to combine methods and materials "to see if they corroborate one another". Using a triangulation model and combining discourse theoretical and ethnohistorical approaches allowed me to broaden considerations of who can be understood to have played a role in the cultural translation of yoga. While my interviews, archival research and media analysis could each be seen separately, they were conducted simultaneously, with one informing the other. This approach is also similar to that of Carter (2023: 11), who highlights the value of using triangulation processes to corroborate information from diverse materials. For example, in finding newspaper articles about the opening of the first yoga studio in Birmingham (or yoga parlour as it went by then), I asked interviewees specifically about it. Equally, it would be typical for an interviewee to mention a specific event or happening, which could be searched for in relevant media or yoga archival spaces. I decided that interviews would be approached as a non-linear, semi-structured, and ongoing process, allowing them to inform media and archive searches.

Following Kuhn (2002) and Carter (2023) I attempted to interview each participant multiple times, this enabled me to build a level of trust with them, and gave them time to remember and return to things they had not initially been able to recollect. Significantly, this also meant the interviewees were revisited upon finding materials in the archives. This process of triangulation, which saw the interviews used to corroborate and/or challenge findings from the analysis of media texts, offered a way of being able to "look at the same thing from different points of view and in different ways" (Laws, 2013: 143). This informing and triangulation of analysis has been at the heart of this research, enabling it to address questions where the answers arguably lie as much in the spaces around the media and

archive texts, as the texts themselves. A visual representation of my triangulation model can be seen below (see Figure 3.1), showing the connections between my research questions and each of my main sources, including a corpus of media texts, interviewed practitioners, and archival sources. This also illustrates the way in which my model enabled me to use each of the sources to corroborate or challenge each other.

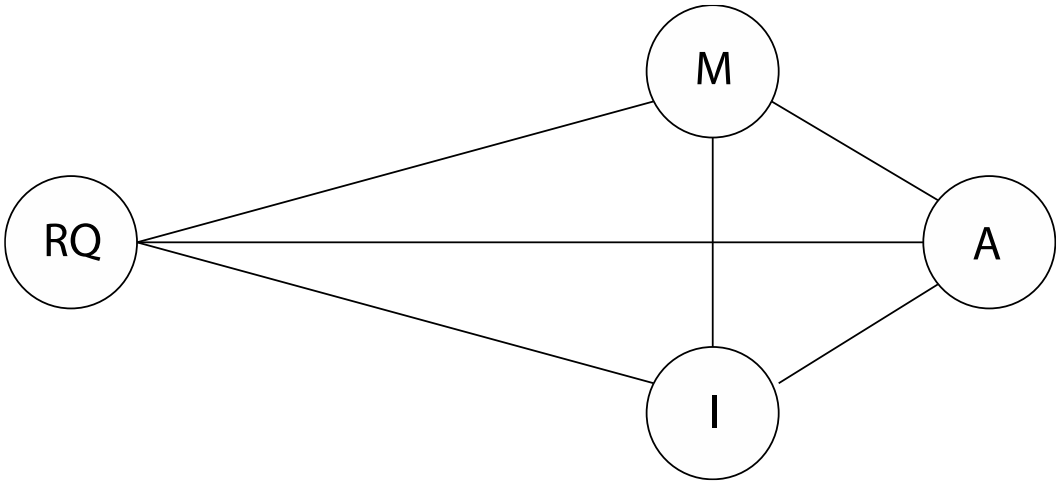

FIGURE 3.1: A visual representation of the process of triangulation whereby the (RQ) research questions were asked of each of the main sources of (M)edia, (A)rchive, and (I)nterviews, and the sources were triangulated with one another to corroborate and/or challenge elements of their accounts.

Of note, while my archival sources included yoga organisations, yoga communities and the personal collections of yoga practitioners, which could be categorised as institutional archives, community archives, and personal collections, they are conceived within what I term a (yoga) community archive ecology model. This model draws on Holden's (2015) writings on cultural ecology and Simard's (2018) contribution to understanding forest networks, proposing a model in which the network and connections are treated with the same reverence and interest as the individual archival spaces. Specifically, I return to the forest metaphor to consider the network connections which enable the development of community archive collections and how they draw on and acquire materials from personal collections and their community. I suggest parallels can be seen between the mycorrhizal network under a single footstep in a forest (Simard, 2018) and connections such as lineage or a history of shared practice which exist across yoga communities. This offers an alternative to Holden's non-hierarchical ecology in acknowledging that some connections are stronger than others. Equally, the way Simard writes about injured mother trees (2021) sending resources

and messages to the next generation of seedlings was used to think about the way yoga practitioners and teachers with significant collections deal with them as these curators age and the connections which play a role in determining what happens to that material and how it is distributed. In this way, archive spaces are seen similarly to how Simard (2016) proposed a forest is much more than you see, when ecological networks are mapped, and the exchange of resources and knowledge (as pictured below in Figure 3.2). As will be explored in the following section, considering the archival spaces as part of a (yoga) community archive ecology model enabled me to navigate them better and understand their essential connections.

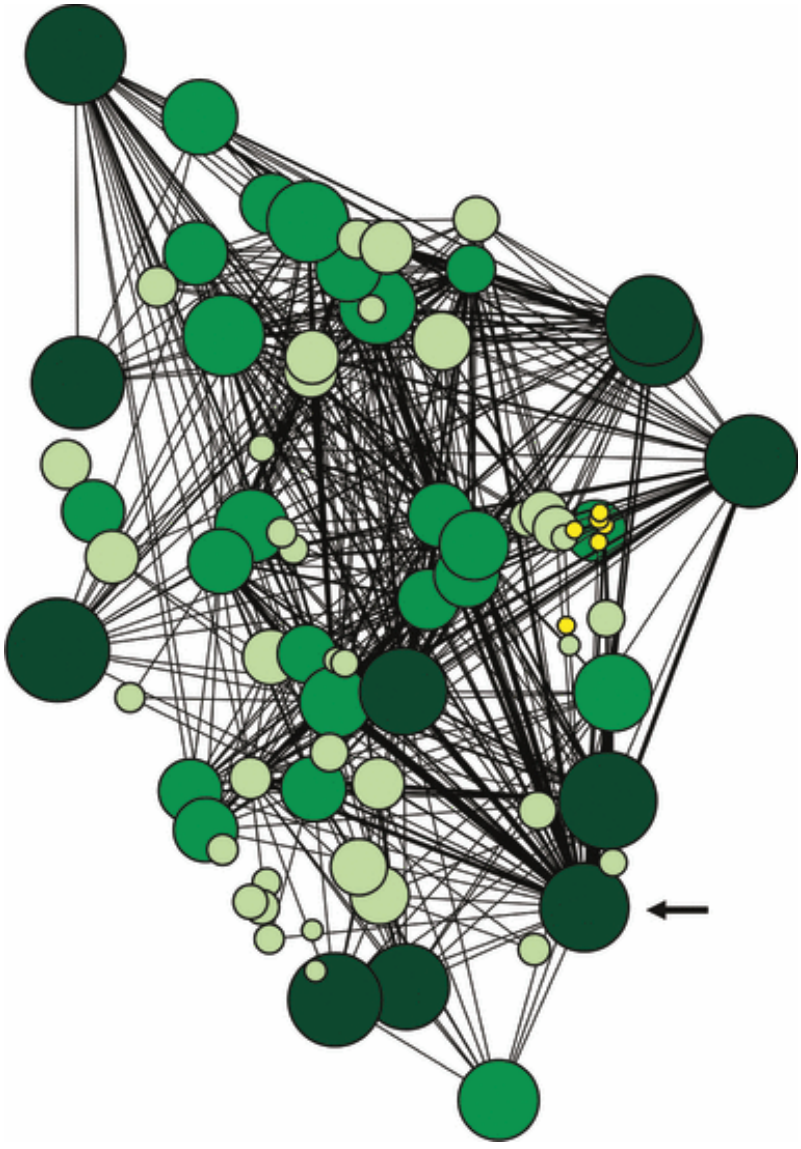

FIGURE 3.2: A network model of linkages between Douglas-fir trees through a mycorrhizal network. From Beiler et al. 2010.

In incorporating interviews with yoga practitioners from the period, many of who were in their 80s or 90s, with the media and archive material, I also drew on Summerfield's (1998) use of life-history interviews alongside official discourses of women's lives during the Second World War. While recognising the criticisms levied at oral narratives and that they should not be considered as offering "unmediated access to 'reality'" (Watson, 2012: 384), it is suggested Summerfield's work illustrates how discourses and cultural representations can be used alongside and triangulated with the lived experience to challenge and or corroborate the discourse in media and official accounts. My approach, therefore, allows this work to build upon those investigations which focus on similar times and locations in the development of yoga in Britain (De Michelis, 2004; Newcombe, 2019). While Willis (1980: 91) says that ethnographic approaches attempt to "represent the subjective meanings, feelings and cultures of others", they are also positional (Barker, 2004), raising questions about which voices are represented and the role of memory (Keightley and Pickering, 2012). As a result, the ethnohistoric aspects of my research were conducted alongside and in response to my previously mentioned reflexive practices. Considerations included my access to yoga communities and their archives, as well as identifying and approaching interviewees. These are reflected on in the following section, which discusses how I used the triangulation model to research yoga's cultural translation.

3.3 Conducting research and navigating/negotiating with gatekeepers

As outlined above, my research drew on three main sources: media texts, interviews with yoga practitioners from the period, and archival spaces related to yoga. In this section I discuss how I researched yoga's cultural translation using these sources, and how my triangulation model allowed me to broaden understandings of who played a role in yoga's cultural translation. Also explored is how, through a reflexive consideration of positionality, I navigated and negotiated with gatekeepers to gain access to archival material and the lived experience of yoga practitioners from the period.

My research began with identifying a corpus of media texts relating to yoga from 1955 to 1975. I initially did this through online searches of media archives, including the *British Newspaper Archive*, *Times Archive*, *Daily Mail*, and the *Guardian Archive*, generating a

selection of roughly 450 local, regional and national newspaper articles. As Nicholson (2013: 60) has made the case, digital technology advances, including keyword-searchable digital archives based on optical character recognition (OCR), have transformed the methodologies of media historians. However, while they have made millions of articles available instantly, they are not without their limitations. For Bingham (2010: 229), keywords can be a "rather blunt instrument" that can remove content from a broader context, and the absence of a keyword does not mean that it has not been discussed. This can be seen as one of the reasons Huistra and Mellink (2016: 221) call for uses based on words but "less dependent on exact phraseology". These were all issues I encountered during my searches. For example, I found that some services delivered individually cropped articles, while others included the whole newspaper page on which the result appeared, sometimes featuring relevant context. I also recognised that errors in the OCR process sometimes meant that the word "yoga" was not recognised in searches even when it had been on the printed page. Adapting searches to include such variations, along with mis-spellings of prominent yoga teachers of the time, resulted in many additional search results. Because online archive services constantly update material to include more publications or cover more dates, I regularly conducted further searches on these platforms throughout this research. This was also done in other media archives such as MACE, The National Archives, British Pathé, and The British Library. Combined with additional media cuttings and material held in yoga archival spaces, my resulting corpus consisted of 900+ media texts.

Throughout the collection of the media texts, I scanned each using Optical Character Recognition so that they remained text searchable to me, then entered key details (see below) into a spreadsheet, cataloguing the media texts. I also logged information, including media type, publication name, type of content (e.g., advert or editorial), page and prominence (e.g. page-lead, 1/4 page, nib). While I reviewed each text, I assigned up to five coding terms from a list of 51 (see Figure 3.3 below). As Saldaña (2021: 35) notes coding terms are "actively constructed, formulated, created, and revised by the researcher". Using categories of code Saldaña (2021) would describe as descriptive, concept and values, I developed and refined my list of coding terms throughout the reading and coding of the first 150 randomly selected texts. Descriptive codes included topics, recurring people and organisations, such as "Yogini Sunita" or the "BWY". Concept codes included ideas rather

than objects, such as “Religion” or “Hippy”. Value codes used included values, attitudes and beliefs which Saldaña (2021: 374) says can represent “perspectives or worldview” and included “Weird” and “Yoga for the West”. After deciding upon the final list of 51 codes, I re-read and re-coded the first 150 texts, and then used this list to code the remaining texts.

Aspirational	Health/Fitness	Money	TM/Maharishi	Yoga How To
Beauty	High Performance	Mystic	Truth of Yoga	Yoga Over There
BWY	Hippy	Quirky	TV Listing	Yoga Popularity
Celebrity	Hobby	Relax	Weird	Yoga Practice
Classes	Hittleman	Relaxation	Wilfred Clark	Yoga Product
Crime	Indra Devi	Religion	Women	Yogini Sunita
Event	Iyengar	Science	Yoga Business	3HO
Fashion	Joke	Science of Yoga	Yoga Classes	
First Person Feature	Media engagement	Sex	Yoga Event	
Food	Medical	Sir Paul Dukes	Yoga Feat	
Foreign	Mental wellbeing	Sport	Yoga for the West	

FIGURE 3.3: An alphabetical chart of coding terms developed for this research. Up to five of these were assigned to each media text and visualised in several ways to establish discursive contours.

The significance of the coding lies in its use to identify trends within the popular mediation and representation of yoga. This process, detailed below, aimed to establish the basis of what Bowman (2021: 99) would describe as the “discursive contours” within the “discursive constellation” of ways in which yoga and yogis were represented and understood within popular culture. I have previously outlined my approach which embraces the many ways yoga has been practiced or understood. Nevertheless, how these varied forms and

understandings can be recognised as yoga, also illustrates the way it can be considered a discursive entity (Bowman: 2021, 2023; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). As Bowman (2021: 16) highlights in relation to martial arts, diverse practices can be understood through a singular entity when in current usage they share “enough in common with the others to be recognizable as part of that identity”. Acknowledging the impossibility of writing a complete history of a cultural practice such as yoga within the UK, my approach instead sought to sample popular mediations of yoga to illustrate how it has been culturally translated. This included considering which aspects of the wider discursive constellation of yoga these mediations drew on, whether focus on certain ideas, or the inclusion of others, played a role in shaping how yoga was understood in the popular psyche of the UK context. In this way, my research addresses an absence of chronological (Goldberg E, 2016) and social (Newcombe, 2019) histories of yoga’s transcultural practice, which attempt to create a more complete narrative history while recognising the value of such work.

My focus on specific discursive contours does not suggest that other themes, trends and events have no significance. Instead, it seeks to place them within a discursive constellation constructed by wider yoga scholarship. The coding terms and themes within the media texts were visualised using techniques including graphs plotting recurrence over the period investigated and annual bubble charts to highlight trends within the coverage and representation of yoga. When viewed sequentially as a developing topography, this was used to establish discursive contours that appeared and developed or diminished from 1955 to 1975. It also enabled the identification of three distinct periods when particular discursive contours or themes were more dominant within mediation. These are the basis of the findings in the following three chapters. As will be shown throughout the rest of this chapter, this process also informed interviews and archival searches. The media texts shaped questions asked of interviewees or items searched for in archival spaces, but the results of interviews and archival visits also shaped media searches.

Gaining access to institutional archives, practitioners from the period and their personal collections presented more of a challenge than media archives. This often involved navigating and negotiating tensions with gatekeepers, something that had not been fully appreciated when this project began. I became acutely aware of how gatekeepers can "help or hinder research" based on their thoughts about the research and subject (Reeves, 2010:

317) and the extent of the role they play in controlling access to institutions and organisations (Singh and Wassenaar, 2016). Identifying people who practiced yoga in the UK between 1955 and 1975 to be able to incorporate their lived experience into my research offered a significant challenge. Many of them have died or are in their 70s or older and, therefore, unlikely to be as active in yoga communities as they once were. However, some of the people I practiced with had previously practiced with those I sought to interview. In this way they became a self-appointed gatekeeping network who I mainly interacted with through my yoga practice. This included the way I approached my practice. In the eyes of the gatekeepers, this approach gave me a sense of credibility, allowing them to trust that I was conducting my research from a position of shared respect. However, this also raised issues of positionality, mainly because my yoga practice had been primarily within the lineage of Ashtanga; most (though not all) of the interviewees I gained access to through my personal network initially came from this community or practice. Because I did not want my research to be situated within one practice of yoga, I needed other ways of identifying potential interviewees.

I achieved this by reaching out to several large-scale yoga organisations and communities, including Iyengar UK, Iyengar Yoga London and the British Wheel of Yoga, which had the power to grant access to more significant numbers of practitioners, where I encountered a different type of gatekeeper. These gatekeepers were aware of their potential power and some had a vested interest in encouraging and perpetuating certain narratives and discourse. An example of this was one Iyengar-based organisation with a network of contacts going back several decades. They asked me to write a summary of my research and provide details of the sort individuals I wanted to contact and interview. It was suggested that if this was suitable it could be included in their newsletter sent to hundreds of members. Therefore, while not misrepresenting my research, I needed to be mindful of the organisation's aims to preserve the heritage of this lineage of yoga and include the role my research could play in documenting experiences of yoga practices. While these two approaches generated a significant number of willing interviewees, I knew that they were still predominantly associated with large yoga communities and practices. To be successful in broadening the view of who had played a role in the cultural translation of yoga I needed to address this limitation. As such, I drew on my triangulation model to use media texts and

archival sources to identify and approach people who had practiced or taught yoga in the UK between 1955 and 1975. Examples included identifying a yoga teacher from a 1970s news broadcast (accessed via the MACE archive) and recognising the name, contacting them online to request an interview. Such approaches also increased the "seed diversity" (Kirchherr, 2018: 12) for the snowball effect of these people recommending other potential interviewees. Identifying that there were still significant gaps in those being interviewed, such as an absence of voices of South Asian origin, I also worked with a charity[15] within the West Midlands, which organises community projects, including hosting meetings and events for older women of South Asian origin. I presented my research at several of these events. I then spoke with several women who attended, allowing them to reflect on their own experiences of practicing something they would have considered yoga during the period I was researching. I mention this here because while producing relevant contextual information, these interviews are not directly reflected in my thesis. As such, it would otherwise not be known that these measures had been taken. This demonstrates why I suggest academics within yoga studies need be more open about their positionality beyond status of practitioner-scholar. Similarly, while some scholars have reflected on how their positionality enabled them to navigate issues of access and gatekeepers (Jain, 2015; Strauss, 2005), many do not address the way they navigated such issues.

I conducted interviews with 28 people as a result of the above actions. While not all are directly represented or quoted in this thesis, all have been instrumental in shaping it. This is where the model of triangulation saw the interviews informing other aspects of the research, whether in highlighting events or discourse, which were then researched across media sources, their knowledge of materials held in archival and personal collections which were searched for, or raising topics in our conversations which I used to ask questions in other interviews. Because I frequently returned to the interviewees, I triangulated their responses with each other. These interviews allowed me to incorporate the lived experience of people who had practiced yoga then, and to use their responses to corroborate or challenge mediations. This included recognising the roles they and those around them had played in yoga's cultural translation and some of the underexplored powers which played a role in shaping how yoga was understood.

[15] Breakthru Community Interest Company. Charity Reg No. 14909186

In the previous section I stressed that while my interviews, archival research and media analysis could each be seen separately, they were conducted simultaneously, with one informing the other. Indeed, combining a discourse theoretical approach with ethnohistorical methods, required not only methodological coherence, but also balance. Following Saukko's (2003: 34) call for combined methodological approaches that create "dialogues between them," I sought to achieve balance between the discourse theoretical analysis and ethnohistorical approaches of this research. However, maintaining consistent methodological balance presented certain challenges, particularly due to the historical scope of the research and its proximity to living memory. While all interview participants practiced yoga in the UK between 1955 and 1975, their experiences were not uniformly distributed across this timeframe. Consequently, the later findings chapters more substantially incorporate practitioners' lived experiences. To address this challenge I also drew on oral history recordings and transcripts, from interviews with yogis who have since died, held within yoga archives (where used these are clearly identified). Rather than viewing the limited incorporation of lived experience in the earlier findings chapters as a methodological shortcoming, I instead consider it evidence of this research's timeliness. Delaying this study further would have risked losing access to valuable lived experience accounts from practitioners from this period.

As those interviewed had been referred to the research via different means (personal introductions, at the request of a yoga organisation, by responding to a call-out request in an institutional newsletter or being approached by myself), their understandings of the research and its intentions needed to be aligned before proceeding. To do this and gain informed consent, all interviewees were sent a consent form which provided an outline of the investigation, my contact details, and information about how their responses may be used. The forms also enabled me to ensure the interviewees knew their right to withdraw from the research and the option to be anonymised in the work. Initial interviews followed a semi-structured format with core questions prepared for each 45-minute session. However, because of the need to develop relationships with interviewees to ensure their ongoing participation, these interviews sometimes ran over by up to 30 minutes[16]. This relationship-

[16] A very small number of initial interviews ran considerably longer, this was only on occasions the interviewee suggested future interviews would be impossible, and would rather have one long interview.

building process also meant that in early conversations with interviewees, certain more controversial subjects were avoided and returned to after a level of trust had been developed between researcher and interviewee. Early conversations often felt like treading an interview tightrope, whereby one misstep could lead to an interviewee refusing to participate. However, getting to the other side meant future conversations could occur on more solid ground. While it should be noted that access to practitioners' personal collections relating to yoga came about through interviews with practitioners from the period, a discussion of this is included below in the following archival considerations.

Having identified potential institutional and community archives, including the British Wheel of Yoga (BWY), Iyengar Yoga UK (IYUK), Iyengar Yoga London (IYL), and Pranayama Yoga, two sub-categories of gatekeeper were encountered, which could be understood through the model of formal and informal gatekeepers (Reeves, 2010). Formal gatekeepers included those who held official archival roles (or responsibilities) within the yoga organisations. Their formal position came with rules and procedures governing access and use of the materials they held. For instance, the archive manager at one organisation said they would have to discuss my intended use of their materials with others before granting me access to the archive. However, the rules give them guidelines and ensure the archive is used in a certain predetermined way, limiting their role as free agents in the translation process. Such regulations and the need to abide by them also determine how the archive contributes to discourse. It reiterates the power differential that Reeves (2010) contends can exist between formal gatekeepers and researchers. The second category of archive gatekeepers encountered was those responsible for a less formal archive (one with no stated aims) who can see themselves as protectors or custodians of a history or memory. These can be seen as the grassroots community archives which (Baker and Collins, 2015: 2) say can be "run by enthusiasts who have no experience as archivists, curators or heritage managers" or the sort of personal collection which could develop into a community archive (Sheffield, 2017: 370). These gatekeepers tended to be less confident of their role as agents in the ongoing articulation and translation of yoga, which in itself needed negotiation on my part, helping them recognise the role they and their archive can play in understanding. For example, a teacher within the Pranayama Yoga lineage who had been given archive documents said she did not know how she would use them but wanted to make sure any use

would be positive for the lineage and memory of her guru. This confirmed Chaudhuri's (2017) suggestion that relationships with informal gatekeepers can be more complicated to navigate than their formal counterparts with defined bureaucratic protocols.

Unobservable connections between the archives of yoga organisations and communities and the personal connections of those interviewed were also pivotal in gaining access to them. They are part of my conceiving these spaces as part of a broader (yoga) community archive ecology model. Examples included an interviewee and personal collection holder contacting people on my behalf to arrange access to another collection or even, in one case, telling those at an organisation what material they had and their storage locations so I could access it. Another example involved a senior yoga teacher who knew that their teacher had left materials to a particular organisation or archive and had more knowledge about what those materials were than those responsible for the un-catalogued archive. As detailed in chapter six, information and resources can be seen to be shared across the network, with people borrowing materials and leaving it to others after their passing. As in Simard's (2021) forest ecology, certain connections across the network are stronger than others, such as shared history, lineage, and practice. Still, many pathways can connect material across the (yoga) community archive ecology.

Before visiting any archival spaces, I attempted to ascertain a summary of the material housed, cataloguing methods, how accessible the materials would be to me during any visit, and what off-site access I could have to materials. Other factors, such as the organisational structure, resources, activities and future plans for the archive collections, were also established. This resulted in the ability to make the most of my time in these archival spaces. At some places, such as Iyengar Yoga London, I interviewed the archive manager about how they handle donations to the collection, their use of the materials stored, and future plans before he showed me around the collection. This was stored across the building, including in the changing rooms (see Figure 3.4 below), cupboards in the administration office and studio spaces and included items such as photos, documents, correspondence, transcripts of oral history interviews with early members, audio and video recordings (mostly in outdated formats and requiring digitisation). Only a fraction of the collection had been formally catalogued, and many items had not been sorted. This can be seen as illustrative of the significant "investment of labour" required to develop and maintain

a community archive (Baker and Collins, 2015: 9). Additional photos from my visit to the archival space of Iyengar Yoga London are included in an example of my reflexive summary writing, Appendix C.

FIGURE 3.4: One of the archival storage spaces in the men's changing room at Iyengar Yoga London, UK, being unpacked during my visit. Image author's own.

Over several hours, I scanned items relevant to this investigation, and those already existing as digital files, such as photographs or the transcripts of oral history interviews, were copied to an encrypted USB drive. I also made arrangements for the digitisation of potentially interesting video and audio recordings, with some processed by Iyengar Yoga London and others by myself, with samples being posted to me after I had acquired the relevant reel-to-reel audio equipment to ascertain their relevance before proceeding. This experience contrasted with my trip to the BWY headquarters in Sleaford (Lincolnshire) where I was

presented and left alone with several boxes of archive materials and a cabinet displaying items relevant to the history of the organisation and its founder. The boxes consisted of BWY publications from the period I was investigating and organisational documents detailing things such as early plans for yoga teacher training. I scanned these over an eight-hour period for potential use in my research (see Figure 3.5 below). Given the difficulty I had in arranging my visit and access to the archive materials, I could not rely on needing to return to regain access.

FIGURE 3.5: Boxes of newsletters and publications stored at the British Wheel of Yoga's Sleaford HQ, Lincolnshire, UK, and an example of the scanned and digitally searchable files that were produced. Images author's own.

Different approaches were adopted for the less formal archival spaces due to the gatekeeping issues discussed above. For example, I made four visits to Pershore (Worcestershire) to meet with Alessandra Quaglieri, who is a de facto guardian of *Pranayama Yoga* after being given all of the documents relating to Yogini Sunita from Sunita's son and owning the only remaining yoga studio which teaches in this lineage. Each visit consisted of us having a conversation about my research and progress, as well as things that had emerged via media searches and interviews. On each visit, she provided me with a curated folder including newspaper cuttings, flyers, teaching notes, and audio recordings based on our previous conversation. I kept these for several months and returned them at the following meeting. During my visit to the extensive personal collection of Ken and Angela Thompson in

Norwich (Norfolk), I stayed with them for three days. A reflexive summary of this visit can be found in Appendix D. This allowed Ken to give me a more guided tour of the material they have amassed over 65 years of practicing and teaching yoga. As Ashmore, Craggs and Neate (2012) consider how such collections are frequently kept in domestic spaces and reflect Brown's (2010: 67) observation that "Humans have a penchant for preserving things, all kinds of things". This situation applied to Ken's collection which featured an array of materials and was stored all around his home, reflecting Woodward and Greasley's (2017) thought that personal collections can spread beyond a single location, into spare rooms, living rooms, garages or attics. I made time to digitise materials, including correspondence between Ken and people including Wilfred Clark (the founder of the BWY) and media professionals with whom he worked, as we discussed them. Incorporating Ken's lived experience enriched the analysis of media texts, allowing them to be challenged or corroborated. This discussion also revealed the way Ken and Angela's collection had acted as a community resource with their students and other interested parties accessing and borrowing from it to draw on the knowledge housed.

These archival spaces, the materials in them, and the conversations around them were used to inform the establishing of the discursive contours explored in the findings chapters. Still, the model of triangulation also meant my searching of them had been shaped by the media sources and the interviews conducted. My model of triangulation and corroboration also allowed me to explore the frictions that can exist between such archival spaces, each of which has an interest in their narrative of yoga being understood as the history of yoga in the UK. I will now reflect on the ethical considerations of my research.

3.4 Ethical considerations and the implications of COVID-19

All research comes with ethical considerations, but this can be seen as being a "major concern" (Ghimire, 2021: 79) for ethnographic studies, whereby the researcher is dealing with the real lives of real people. It is suggested the ethical considerations of this project can be seen as falling into one or more of three categories: the positionality of the researcher, in part addressed above; the ethics of interviews and archival visits; and concerns around data collection, storage and conforming to the accepted field and organisational guidelines. As such, I have considered ethical issues throughout all stages of the investigation in the way

Arfin (2018: 30) advocates being done to "keep the balance between the potential risks of research and the likely benefits of the research". While I will not re-tread the ground previously covered relating to scholar practitioner positionality, I will expand on the concern that having worked as a national newspaper journalist - where interviews are not always approached from the same ethical standpoint as within academia - could influence the carrying out of interviews.

Having interviewed people daily for nearly 15 years, conducting research interviews did not pose the same level of intimidation as is the case for some researchers. Instead, my concern focused on whether that experience, where interviews are often seen as a process of getting someone to say what you want them to say, meant that they would not be conducted with the academic and ethical rigour they need to be undertaken with. As such, I reflected on Gillham's (2005) work on "research interviewing" and the techniques used, as well as the "responsibility you have to your respondents" (Gray, 2003: 77). Conversations with colleagues and peers about whether this required further academic training ultimately resulted in this not being pursued. It was suggested that foregrounding such concerns probably meant they were already being dealt with accordingly and that the experience of interviewing people should instead be seen as an advantage. My journalistic background proved particularly relevant when considering the way a discourse theoretical approach can be used to analyse media-related identities, "not only through discourses about media but also through media production practices and institutional arrangements" (Van Brussel et al., 2019: 16). Therefore, my journalistic and media background could offer more insight. For example, when an interviewee criticised a newspaper article about her published in the 1960s as full of errors, my knowledge of journalism and media production meant analysis could also consider potential editorial decisions which may have taken place from a position of experience.

As with the vast majority of research projects taking place over 2020/21, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic also had several implications for my work. This involved producing an ongoing series of updates to research plans and schedules, as well as the need to work around additional caring responsibilities and home-schooling while schools were closed and during periods of family isolation. However, such complications very much became the norm rather than the exception for doctoral students during the pandemic

period (Byrom, 2020). Therefore, while these factors had a significant impact on the day-to-day progress of the research and felt all-encompassing at times, it is noted that this was a common experience for many and consideration of COVID-19 is limited to its direct methodological implications on this research. Because periods of lockdown in England coincided with times research interviews were due to take place, many interviews could not occur in person and needed to be conducted virtually. My previous experience of conducting interviews remotely suggested it can be harder to get subjects to open up if you are not there with them and that responses are often more guarded. However, the actuality proved otherwise, potentially because the lockdown period had forced everyone who wanted to continue social relationships with friends and family to do it online. One complication this did cause was that many of the interviewees insisted on using technologies they were already used to, an issue potentially related to the average age of them being in their 70s or 80s and their technical savvy or not. However, as Melis, Sala and Zaccaria (2022: 478) demonstrate, drawing on Richardson et al. (2020), there is a need, especially during stressful pandemic times, to tailor interview modes to "adhere to older people's preferences and skills" and "accommodate older people's needs and reduce respondent burden". In my research, this frequently meant older interviewees wanted to use FaceTime (which seemed to be a common way of video-calling grandchildren) or Zoom, which became established during the lockdown as the platform of choice for online yoga classes (Kastrenakes, 2020), which many of them attended instead of their regular in-person practice. With the interviewees consent I made contemporaneous audio recordings of all interviews. When using Microsoft Teams, and where the interviewee had provided explicit consent, I also recorded videos in encrypted cloud storage (see Figure 3.6 below).

FIGURE 3.6: A screen capture from one of the video interviews with Rosemary Martin. Image author's own.

In addition to helping to develop relationships between interviewer and interviewee, video calls also meant that because people were in their own homes, they could access and show their personal collections of yoga-related materials. When this happened during video calls only being audio recorded, I captured screengrabs with the interviewee's consent. As detailed in the previous section, between and after periods of lockdown, interviews and archival visits were conducted in person, highlighting additional ethical considerations, particularly visits to peoples' homes and, in one case, a multiple-day stay with an interviewee who had an extensive personal collection relating to yoga. In this case, I had to repeatedly check whether things said around the breakfast table or during times we did not have an audio recorder between us were "on record" (Blackman and Commane, 2011: 237) or not. As referred to above, personal collections differ from traditional and community archives in the materials that make them up (Brown, 2010), the intentions behind them, and where they are stored (Ashmore, Craggs and Neate, 2011). Their location, predominantly within domestic spaces, as seen below in Figure 3.7, necessitates a different approach than working with archives in institutional spaces.

FIGURE 3.7: Working with Ken Thompson and his collection in a domestic space in Norwich, Norfolk, UK. Images author's own.

Heeding Ashmore, Craggs and Neate's (2011) warning not to approach such personal collections as a consumer, I took additional care to be respectful to those people who maintained the personal collections used in this project, but also the other people who resided in the domestic spaces where they were kept. I was not a visitor to an archive but a guest in someone's house. Interactions could not be transactional requests for information. A successful visit to a personal collection became based on the materials housed within it, the cups of tea drunk, the biscuits eaten, and the conversations about grandchildren. This built a relationship with the holders of the personal collections, enabling me to access their expertise and knowledge. In those moments, I became what Ashmore, Craggs and Neate (2011: 85) call the "intern" to their expert.

My research project was devised and implemented in accordance with the Birmingham City University Ethical Principles and Practice Policy Statement and underwent departmental ethical review. The informed consent of all research interviewees was sought and obtained before interviews were conducted and recorded. A copy of the consent form, which interviewees signed either in person or digitally via Adobe Sign[17], can be found in Appendix E. As part of this process, I made interviewees aware of the nature of the research and how their quotes may be used in related research publications. All agreed on interviews

[17] Adobe Sign uses a digital footprint to ensure digital signatures originate from the person emailed.

being audio recorded. While most interviewees agreed to be identified in research publications, some wanted to remain anonymous or wanted specific comments not to be credited to them. To protect their identity I followed the advice of Seidman (2019: 130-131) in using pseudonyms which took into account "issues of ethnicity, age, and the context of the participant's life" and to "Err on the side of understatement rather than overstatement" by making only minor changes to contextual details, such as their location or employment, so that the interviewee could not be identified via another means.

All materials and data used in this research were dealt with in a manner conforming to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and stored on offline hard drives. I also needed to ensure respect for intellectual property rights in collating media texts and materials from institutional archives or personal collections, particularly where the person providing access to the material did not hold the rights. I experienced this with the discovery of a recording of the television show *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru* (BBC, 1963), discussed in chapter 4, a show which I was informed via email communication with BBC Archives had been identified as missing or lost by the organisation. An unlabelled VHS containing the show had been given to a yoga instructor at Iyengar Yoga London, who only knew its significance once we had it digitised following our conversations. Once the contents of the tape were identified, I corresponded with BBC Archives and negotiated my usage, including publication of pre-approved clips and stills on my research adjacent blog[18] (with permission granted until September 2025), publication of pre-approved stills in an article I had agreed the write for the IYL annual magazine *Dipika*[19], and research screenings, where current Iyengar yoga practitioners reflected on the show[20], see Figure 3.8 below. I also had to explain the importance of going through this process for IYL and assisting them. An example of the "Permission to Use BBC Archive Content" documentation can be found in Appendix H.

[18] Yoga Memories accessible at yogamemories.com

[19] The article 'Rediscovering BKS Iyengar on the BBC after Sixty Years' was published in Issue 55 of Dipika in July 2023, see Appendix F.

[20] A copy of the consent form given to attendees of the screening, and the questions to which they supplied written replies can be seen in Appendix G.

FIGURE 3.8: A research screening of the 1963 BBC TV show Yehudi Menuhin and his Guru at Iyengar Yoga, Birmingham, UK. Image author's own.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed how the research of yoga's development and popularisation in Britain can, and should, also be an investigation of the powers involved in those processes. I have shown how the growing trend within yoga studies for approaches that move beyond the philological and embrace ethnographical methodologies (Bevilacqua, 2020) is allowing scholars to address a lack of research into the lived experience of practicing yoga (Wildcroft, 2020) and a reappraisal of the role played by specific figures (Deslippe, 2018). In presenting my model which combined a discourse theoretical approach with ethnohistorical methods through a triangulation process, I have proposed my model offers three benefits to the study of the transcultural practice and development of yoga. Firstly, triangulation of the varied sources makes it possible to challenge and/or corroborate dominant narratives about the history of yoga's practice and development. Secondly, it addresses the lack of consideration of the lived-experience of practicing yoga, therefore offering insight into the contextual processes of cultural translation. Finally, through a discourse theoretical approach, it broadens considerations of who is seen to have played a role in yoga's cultural translation.

However, I also addressed the limitations of the approach, such as that of researcher positionality and being a scholar-practitioner of yoga (Larios and Singleton, 2020). I showed I adopted an "attentive, reflexive approach" (Bevilacqua, 2020: 396) by conducting a process of reflexivity alongside this project. This included reflecting on what assumptions and understandings I brought to this research due to my positionality and how to address this through research methodologies. This is not just something I deemed necessary but something I suggested could benefit yoga studies if adopted openly by more scholars. In outlining how my research was conducted, I drew attention to the role of gatekeepers in granting me the access necessary to conduct this research (Reeves, 2010) and to show how my positionality and interactions with them played a role in its success. I also explored how my conception of yoga's archival spaces as a wider (yoga) community archive ecology model enabled me to navigate them while at the same time highlighting the importance of the spaces and connections between them. The chapter ended with reflections on the ethical considerations made within the investigation, recognising how ethical issues can arise which need to be dealt with sensitively, along with some of the complications of conducting research during a global pandemic where the lives of both researchers and those other people and services required for the study to take place, are changed unrecognisably. In doing this I have outlined a methodological approach which is suitable not just for investigating yoga's cultural translation in the UK, but researching the role that cultures play in translating other cultural forms, particularly when there are power differentials at play. The following chapter is the first of three in which I bring together data collected from the analysis of media texts, interviews and archival research to examine the processes of yoga's cultural translation as a transcultural practice in the UK between 1955 and 1975.

Chapter 4: Reporting on yoga and meeting yogis (1955-63)

This chapter is the first of three that map yoga's discursive contours in the popular UK media between 1955 and 1975. It considers how yoga was mediated between 1955 and 1963, using recurrent themes and trends to demonstrate the roles played by various discourses in developing understandings of yoga, which became more commonly shared. The following chapter moves onto the period 1964 to 1968 and focuses on how the press frequently evoked understandings of yoga by selectively drawing on those aspects of its broader discursive entity which allowed it to develop an understanding of yoga which could be commercialised. The chapter also considers the meaning transfer of the high-profile Beatles' association with yoga. The final findings chapter then looks at how yoga was mainstreamed through its popular cultural translations on television and by the actions of yoga communities between 1969 and 1975. Combined, these chapters address the identified limitation of previous scholarship (De Michelis, 2004; Newcombe, 2019; Singleton, 2010) by broadening the scope of who can be seen to have played a role in the cultural translation of yoga in its transcultural development. In them, I also address through the consideration of power dynamics the wider role cultures play in translating cultural forms as they move transculturally.

In chapter three, I demonstrated how a thematic analysis of a corpus of 900+ media texts had indicated three periods when particular themes and discursive contours (Bowman, 2021) were more recurrent. In this chapter, I focus on the first of these periods (1955-1963). I start by considering the ways in which representations of yoga in the popular UK press were shaped by pre-existing understandings of yogic feats and orientalist ideas of India as inherently mystic, along with questions of who does yoga, and why. I then show how interactions between yogis and the press began to shape popular representations. This is achieved using case studies of two yogis who used different methods by which to obtain press and media interest, but who equally relied upon ideas of authenticity, tradition and authority in their presentations of yoga. These understandings of yoga, it is suggested, were increasingly based around ideas of how it could be used to contribute to the mental and physical wellbeing of people in the West. A discourse-theoretical analysis approach (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Van Brussel et al., 2019) is used to consider the roles of

discourse and agents of cultural translation (Maitland, 2017) in this process, highlighting factors such as, historical discourse, networks of influence and demands of the media.

I also apply the process of triangulation described in chapter three to challenge and/or corroborate the mediated representations of yoga with material from yoga community archival spaces and interviews with yoga practitioners from the period. The identified cultural translations of yoga are not seen as attempts to replicate or represent a mythical original yoga, but contextual creations of their time, location, and culture. Equally, it is not the intention of this chapter, or thesis, to provide a social history of yoga in the UK. Instead, it builds on the context of such works (Newcombe, 2019) and focuses on the role of discourse in the mainstream mediation of yoga in shaping how yoga was considered and what people contextually understood to be yoga. However, it also recognises the context and pre-histories into which these texts were published or broadcast. I therefore propose the value of this chapter lies in its ability to reveal the roles played by various discourses in leading yoga to be represented in the media in the ways it was.

4.1 Understanding yoga and who practices it

De Michelis (2004: 191) argues that in the second half of the 20th century yoga expanded rapidly across the globe moving through phases of "popularization" in the 1950s to mid-1970s, to "consolidation" in the mid-1970s to late 1980s, and to "acculturation" from the late 1980s. She would later add that while yoga has changed throughout its long history "this last change into modernity may have been more radical than any preceding one" (De Michelis (2020: 436). My research is situated in the first of those three periods, the popularisation of yoga. By the mid-1950s, yoga was interpreted and represented in various ways across the popular UK media, and the question of what yoga was, was for many, an open-ended one. While Antony (2018: 9) suggests yoga's appropriation and commodification acted to detach it from a "foundational philosophy" making it a "free-floating signifier", I conceptualise the varied understandings and definitions of yoga as aspects of its boarder "discursive entity", as used by Bowman (2021: 15). In this way, the yoga being evoked was recognisably yoga to its contextual audience, even though what was being described could vary greatly. I argue that at this time there was not one dominant and distinct understanding of yoga but several, sometimes contradictory understandings which drew on features of the broader, and

changing, constellation of meaning within yoga's discursive entity. This section demonstrates how this was manifest in the popular media by considering how representations of what yoga was changed depending on who is practicing it and where. I first focus on those presentations of yoga which rely on ideas of otherness and the mystic, before moving onto those which understand yoga as a more adaptable practice which can be tailored to the context of a practitioner, and were shaped through interactions between yogis and media professionals. In doing so, it positions the development of these understandings of yoga as a life-political issue, demonstrating the "politics of everyday life" to use the terminology of Van Brussel et al. (2019: 93).

While this section focuses on popular UK media representations of yoga and their roles in developing understandings of yoga and playing a role in shaping its discursive entity, they were not the only source of yoga knowledge. Newcombe's (2019: 9) assertion that those who wanted to learn more about yoga in early 20th century Britain would turn to books was corroberated in my interviews. Ken Thompson and Tony Crisp, who would become founding members of the British Wheel of Yoga[21], told me they gained their early knowledge from books. Tony Crisp had been interested in philosophy and spirituality, while Ken Thompson's early interest came from a physical performance focus. Both read extensively on the subject during this period, noting the importance of *Hatha Yoga* (Bernard, 1950) for them, reinforcing the suggestion it was a "major sourcebook for yoga throughout the 1950s and is still read today" (Shearer, 2020: 149). Speaking of his earliest yoga experiences and Bernard's book, Ken Thompson said:

> I hadn't got a clue what I was doing, apart from the fact that I had a history of sport and activity. I was a physical person let's say, but not in any way exceptional. I suppose in reading the yoga books, I mean, what was good about the yoga books was, it seemed to suggest to me that there was something to get back from this, some positive thing coming out of it, if you stuck at it.
>
> (Interview with Ken Thompson, 2022)

[21] The BWY has gone by many names (with usage sometimes overlapping) including Birmingham Yoga Club, Midlands Yoga Association, the Wheel of British Yoga, Western Yoga Foundation, The Wheel of Yoga, and the British Wheel of Yoga. It's current moniker it therefore, for the ease of reading, used throughout.

Ken added that he was unable to find a yoga teacher's classes to attend until 1962, and Tony Crisp said he taught his own in High Wycombe during the late 1950s to share the knowledge he had gained from reading hundreds of books. Such examples illustrate how some of those already interested in yoga had their understandings shaped from sources, including books, correspondence courses, or in-person teachers if they could find them. While recognising this, the rest of this section explores how the popular media, and its audiences were grappling with defining and understanding yoga at this time. It considers how existing understandings and often orientalist discourses were used to make sense of yoga, and yogis, and what this meant in relation to reporting on celebrities and people practicing yoga in the UK.

4.1.1 Yoga, yogis, and yogic feats

The frequent use of definitions and descriptions of the term yoga in media texts in the mid 1950s demonstrate there was no popular mainstream understanding that the reader of a newspaper or viewer of a television programme was expected to know, even if yoga was the answer to the *Birmingham Post's* (10 January 1955: 1) crossword clue 38 down on "Goya was not a Hindu philosopher (4)". An image-lead article about American actress Nancy Valentine leaving a yoga retreat in Hollywood in the *Daily Mirror* (Lionel Crane, 16 January 1956: 5) included the additional description of yoga "[Yoga is a Hindu philosophy whose followers seek union with the Supreme Being by fasting, meditation and mental concentration]". A sense of confusion about yoga and a desire to know more is also illustrated in a "People are asking..." article in the *Halifax Evening Courier* (2 March 1956: 5) where the question "What is the difference between yoga and yogi?" was raised alongside queries about inflation and deflation, with the answer stating:

> Yoga is an ancient Hindu philosophical system said by some to be even older than Buddhism. The exercises which go by the name of yoga have the object of the "diversion of the senses from the external world, and concentration of thought within" Yoga itself embraces the conception of a personal god indissolubly connected with the subtlest form of matter.
>
> *Halifax Evening Courier* (2 March 1956: 5)

These examples serve to demonstrate that the terms yoga and yogi required further explanation at the time. Therefore, while White (2014: 2) notes that the word yoga has been used transnationally for more than two hundred years, it was not presumed that a general newspaper audience would understand it to mean the same thing, or that which the author intended. However, while many articles did not provide an explicit definition of yoga, they did present distinct understandings of what yoga was. While this illustrates there was no singular or dominant understanding of yoga prevalent at the time, analysis of examples suggests that its discursive entity had been shaped in part by that history and an overriding discourse of orientalist ideas. Recollecting Hall's (2013: 215) question about how we represent those who are significantly different to us, such representations also highlight the power differential which Derrida (1982) argued always exist between binaries. As will be explored below, much coverage of yoga during the mid 1950s relied on understandings of it shaped by orientalist notions. By positioning yoga as a foreign cultural practice, and yogis as others, media outlets were able to represent them through prevailing colonial understanding.

As Singleton notes, the performance or demonstration of extreme postures could be read through associations with European contortionist performance (2010: 58), while the yogi-fakir (or magician) had for decades been a fascination for European occultists with performances of the seemingly impossible. As such, it was not uncommon for representations of yoga during this period to draw on ideas of the yogic feat. Cinemagoers in 1957 might, for example, have been introduced to yoga through the *British Movietone News*[22] item from New Delhi "Yoga for Strength"[23], which showed a yogi performing pranayama breathing exercises, advanced postures, and then lying down so that a truck full of people can drive over him, followed by a steamroller. Read discursively such mediations of yoga can be seen as a continuation of the longstanding fascination the British had with images of Indian ascetics, which predated photography when drawings and paintings of exotic yogis performing and sitting on a bed of nails had been popular (Diamond, 2013: 238), but now reaching a mass media audience. They also illustrate the distanciation dimension of cultural translation that Maitland (2017) refers to, with attempts to understand or make

[22] The British Movietone News newsreel ran twice weekly in British cinemas between 1929 and 1979.
[23] The current licence-holder of the British Movietone News archive (AP) lists a creation date of 25th November 1957 for the item Yoga for Strength, with the slug "Yoga Feats" and the clip can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvx8Bn7uwao

sense of that which is separated by location, time, and culture. Newspapers also reported on yogic feats, such as when the *Daily Mail* (Kenneth Ames, 26 September 1955: 7) ran the story "Yogi buries himself alive 8 days" detailing how an 18-year-old planned to survive without food or water. Such representation is a continuation of presentations of yoga where the yogi is seen as capable of superhuman feats (Singleton, 2010). They are also a product of the orientalist discourse Said (1978) argues has been used to create and manage the concept of the Orient, as discussed in chapter 2.

Other articles problematised this understanding of yoga as the embodiment of a superhuman feat. The *West Briton and Royal Cornwall Gazette* (Lanston Mallory, 23 January 1956: 1) stated that "nobody familiar with the Indian scene can have failed to observe the cruder of these results" going on to detail a fakir on a bed of nails, a contortionist holding a "grotesque" posture for days, and those buried alive for days. It stated that such yogis were not seen as holy men in India but as "stunt-merchants", adding that yoga can be a "dangerous science" and detailed Hatha Yoga as a system which teaches "basic physical discipline" as a more approachable version of yoga. The idea of yoga as dangerous was picked up in an article in the *People* (Peter Forbes, 31 August 1958: 8), "Now Yogi is a real bogy". While the article stated that "thousands of yoga fans in Britain" stand on their head or put their bodies through "strange contortions", it said that for those developing beyond the "learner stage" yoga could be dangerous. The article claimed that an estimated six hundred people died in India in the previous ten years because "yoga practices misfired", detailing some of those who tried to swallow flames or acid, or be buried alive. It told of how the government in India requested yoga institutions use their influence to curtail the performance of such stunts, which could attract crowds of 50,000 people. The article therefore acted to discredit yogis who performed feats by stating that they are not held in high esteem in India and questioning their apparent abilities by referring to them as "stunts". However, it also suggested an alternative yoga existed that was more suitable to a Western audience, with an accompanying photo of an "English ballet dancer" limbering up in *Yoganidrasana* (also known as *Supta Garbhasana* or Yogic Sleep Pose) a posture where she lay on her back with her legs under her arms and her feet behind her head. The caption said "This may look dangerous, but actually it's as safe as touching your toes" and added, "It's when you try the more advanced yoga that it becomes dangerous". This act of cultural

translation incorporates yoga into a discourse which is seen as more suitable for the West, by limiting the yoga to be practiced to physical postures, and away from any dangerous practices, it navigates having to make sense of that which it does not understand or cannot be easily appropriated into the lifestyle of the newspaper's readers.

Several UK-based performers were also featured in UK newspapers claiming that yoga allowed them to perform their stunts. Michael Costello, who went by the name of Blondini the White Yogi, who British Pathé featured sleeping for 12 hours on a bed of nails[24], also appeared in the *Daily Mail* (21 August 1956: 5) when he attempted a 65-day fast in a glass coffin in Brighton. Eddie Sinclar also argued yoga allowed him to have his tongue nailed to a wooden table in a demonstration of mind over matter in the *Nottingham Evening Post* (8 February 1958: 4) article, "Nail-through-tongue act is yoga, claims Eddie". Several fire-eaters who made the headlines also claimed their ability came from practising yoga, such as Rahnee Motie in the *Daily Herald* (David Nathan, 12 October 1959: 4). These performers claiming to be yogis came after decades of Indian performers travelling to Europe, which along with the cultural exchange due to the British Raj and a Western fascination with the "exotic" meant that the words "yogi" and "fakir" were "part of the pop-culture lexicon" (Diamond, 2013: 261-62). Indeed, the work of the Theosophical Society can be seen as contributing to such interest in Eastern mysticism. Here, the claiming of yoga is a play to the association of the exotic and the mysterious, something foreign which cannot be explained or understood; the definition of Said's (1978) orientalism. As is considered later in this chapter, such displays of being a yogi by British performers raises questions about how South Asian yogis would later present themselves in the media. Goto-Jones (2014: 1464) notes in relation to the feud between American performer William Robinson and Chinese magician Ching Ling Foo, the way the interaction of orientalism, modernity and magic "calls direct attention to the intertwined problematics of origination, authenticity, and performance". He highlights how Robinson, presenting himself using popular oriental stereotypes became to be seen as more authentically Chinese than Ching Ling Foo (born Chee Ling Qua and originating from near Beijing). The above performative claims to harnessing the power of yoga equally use the sort of binary oppositions Said (1978) suggests are deployed in the West's creation of the concept

[24] The British Pathé clip of Michael Costello sleeping on the bed of nails is tagged with the descriptions "Bizarre Items" and. "Stunts" and can be viewed at https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/253292/

of the East, in that while the West is rational and scientific, the East is superstitious and mystic. Attempts to make sense of the magic of yoga and yogis through a scientific discourse can be seen in the *Lincolnshire Echo* (15 April 1957: 4) article "Wanted, Men Who Can Float on Air", which reported on the fact that scientists from the US were trying to carry out "a scientific study of Yoga" to understand if it could be used to achieve suspended animation, thought control, or the slowing of the heart. This rationalisation of yoga through science echoed movements within India, which were concerned with presenting yoga as a science comparable to those of the West (Strauss, 2008: 62).

One consequence of the above understandings of yoga which rely on orientalist ideas of otherness and Eastern mysticism is that the media often used this stereotyping to view, and other, Indian yoga practitioners visiting, or based in, the UK. This illustrates the cultural degradation Ziff and Rao (1997: 9) suggest can result from acts of cultural appropriation whereby misleading depictions shape how people from a culture are seen, and their cultural identity. An article in the *Acton Gazette and Post* (27 January 1956: 7) claimed that when SVR Sastry, an Indian man whom the article states came to England in 1951 and by 1956 was working at a north Acton factory, visited the newspaper offices he had filled it "with some of India's oriental mysticism" describing him as a "small, dark-skinned man" who was there to demonstrate "his powers of mind over matter". However, the rest of the article did not suggest he intended to demonstrate any such powers. His comments instead questioned their understandings of yoga and detail his physical yoga practice, though interview questions return to the topic of supernatural things he has seen yogis do. Understood through Chawla's (2017) consideration of othering and otherness this presentation of a yogi of South Asian origin can be seen to revolve around presentations of the East (or non-West) which cannot be escaped. His existence is intertwined with India's perceived oriental mysticism, and his lack of agency suggests the other as object. As will be seen next, the relationship between orientalist ideas of mysticism and a yoga practitioner was often considered very differently when that person was not of South Asian origin and their practice of yoga was not as part of a feat-based performance.

4.1.2 Do/Can people here do yoga too?

When the *Birmingham Sunday Mercury* (8 May 1955: 11) ran a full-page special on two local people who practiced yoga, it adopted a different understanding of yoga from that seen above. In the article "How Hazel won her beauty title" (John Hornsby, *Birmingham Sunday Mercury*, 8 May 1955: 11) Hazel Cleaver, dubbed "one of Britain's leading Yoga girls", was shown performing a headstand with the accompanying text stating she used yoga to gain better marks in school and win beauty contests. It was also noted that she wrote articles on yoga for magazines and had people from India contact her, asking for advice. The second yogi on the page is Harvey Day, who the article "His secret of a happy life" (Lawrence Marks, *Birmingham Sunday Mercury*, 8 May 1955: 11) said does yoga exercises to "keep his body relaxed and his mind free from anxiety". As E. Goldberg (2016: 352) notes, Westerners living in the post-World War II period were living through the "Age of Anxiety" and yoga had been promoted to Americans as a potential way of calming a troubled mind. This can be seen as a discursive shift whereby the yoga referred to in the articles has been limited to postural exercises rather than yogic feats, and their aim is one of physical and mental well-being rather than the acquisition of supernatural abilities. The report also mentioned Day's book *About Yoga* (1951) - in which he introduced yoga and how it applies to subjects including hygiene, eating, breathing, and sleep - saying that his wife had expected it to only sell to "half a dozen friends" but had already sold 30,000 copies. As cultural translators of yoga both Hazel and Harvey had seen in yoga something of worth, as Maitland (2017: 110, emphasis in original) says "Before appropriation, then, there is a profound *belief*: in the presence of something worthy of appropriation". This, along with their interpretation of yoga in turn shaped by their contextual understanding and experience of it, was the yoga being represented in these newspaper articles. In both examples, the yoga detailed was primarily physical, and through reference to their expertise, illustrated with photos of them performing a headstand and their sharing of their knowledge, both were positioned as authorities on the subject.

FIGURE 4.1: Articles from the *Birmingham Sunday* Mercury (8 May 1955: 11) (Left) and *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* (18 April 1958: 43) (right) showing how inversions such headstands and shoulder-stands were used to demonstrate expertise in yoga. Images redacted from the version of this thesis submitted to University's e-repositories and made available online due to copyright.

Other non-famous Western yogis who appeared in the press included Eileen Griffin, who was also reported in the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* (18 April 1958: 43) to practice "her yoga exercises" "in between household chores" to relax, with her expressing the opinion that it was "the answer to modern day high tension and anxiety". Also of note is that each of these yogis was pictured in an inversion of a headstand or shoulder stand, quickly becoming a visual shortcut for someone with a yoga practice (see Figure 4.1 above). These postures therefore acted as symbols with multiple meanings. They demonstrated to the reader not only that the person doing them could put their body in that position, but that this was a person interested in, or with knowledge of, the foreign practice of yoga. The posture became a signifier of yoga. Ken Thompson said in one of our interviews that before yoga became mainstream, friends who knew he practiced yoga would introduce him to others, saying things like, "Oh that's Ken; if you give him a peanut, he'll stand on his head".

While the above examples focus on the idea of yoga as a series of physical and breathing exercises that could be used to improve mind and body, this was not always the case. In the example of George King, who appeared in the *People* (Ken Gardner, 10 June 1956: 8) and *Daily Mirror* (Noel Whitcomb, 5 March 1957: 2), it was used to illustrate his unusualness, with the focus of the articles being his claims to have met aliens and going on flying saucer "jaunts" across space. A connection is being made here between people interested in yoga, levels of eccentricity, and those susceptible to ideas like a belief in UFOs. This reiterates the way Chakrabarty (2000) suggests understandings of the West, as rational and standing in contrast to a superstitious East, can be deployed. This is also seen in the reporting of crimes where the practice of yoga by a criminal is seen as significant enough to have been mentioned. For example, an article in the *Rugby Advertiser* (8 July 1955: 11) quoted the brother of Frank Breakspeare, who had been charged with taking a car without permission, as saying he had "interested himself in hypnotism and yoga, which may have caused him to do unusual things". The suggestion that yoga made him do this can be seen to draw on ideas of sinister yogis and yoga as having the ability to corrupt or control through supernatural abilities (White, 2009). As seen in previously referred to newspaper articles, it also suggests that yoga's mysticism made it dangerous, and points to yoga as having a

corrupting nature which could act to challenge a 'civilised' Western way of life, therefore demonstrating another example of the orientalism written about by Said (1978).

The yoga practices of Western celebrities show yet more ways in which yoga was understood during this period, with a proliferation of examples of a celebrity practicing yoga being used within newspaper articles as an aside or interesting tidbit. When yoga was mentioned in relation to a Hollywood actor or musician, it appears it evoked a particular understanding for the readers of UK newspapers at this time, based around ideas of fitness and beauty, and was aspirational. This also supports the assertion that "how Americans have defined yoga has had profound implications" (Syman, 2010: 7). Much of this influence can be seen to come from Indra Devi, who Syman (2010: 188), M. Goldberg, (2015: 163) and E. Goldberg (2016: 350) note had achieved success in promoting yoga in the US, opening a yoga studio in West Hollywood in 1947 and securing high-profile endorsements from her celebrity students. In both photoshoots she conducted with her students, and in her 1953 book *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, Devi achieves what Syman describes as a refashioning of Hatha yoga which narrowed the scope of the practice to postures and simple breathing exercises, which was seen as being practiced by pretty, young women. Syman (2010: 192) asserts that Devi reduced yoga to "something that fit more readily into American ways of thinking". Though Maitland (2017: 26) contends that we are all agents of cultural translation, the translations of key figures such as Devi can be seen to have been amplified through the media coverage and publications generated. This connection to celebrities can also be seen as a source of Devi's perceived authority on the subject and was referenced more than her connection to Krishnamacharya and his influential lineage (E. Goldberg, 2016: 350).

Such an understanding of yoga can be seen in articles about some of Devi's famous students, which followed reports in the UK press about how Devi had persuaded Hollywood film stars to "eat moss, drink potato water, stand on their heads and tie their legs in knots" (*Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 29 December 1953: 4). The article "How Gloria stays eternally youthful" in the *Bristol Evening Post* (Ian Templeton, 18 January 1955: 2) suggested yoga was the key to actress Gloria Swanson's youthful appearance. It also referenced Devi as Swanson's teacher and "the only Occidental woman to teach yoga in the country of its origin", which can be read as another signifier of her authority and expertise, which also acts to suggest that the yoga she taught was correct, traditional and approved, rather than a

refashioning of something else. Actress Olivia de Havilland also garnered much press attention for her yoga practice, which she credited for keeping her "slim, trim and highly attractive" in the *Sunday Mail* (8 September 1957: 12). Extolling the virtues of yoga in a *Daily Mail* article (Gordon Young, 9 April 1957: 19), she also noted that she knew nothing about the philosophy of yoga, only that it was a "marvellous form of exercise" and that she was initially sceptical of it because "like many British people I regarded Yoga as something slightly absurd". Recognising the news media's interest in her practice of physical yoga postures, de Havilland also put on a demonstration in her hotel suite as part of a promotional event for her film *The Proud Rebel* (1958, Curtiz), leading to coverage in the *Daily Herald* (18 September 1958: 3) and the *Daily Mail* (18 September 1958: 14). This can be seen as an appropriation of the yoga postures; de Havilland having already distanced her postural practice from other aspects of yoga was incorporating them into her life as a form of exercise. However, she was still using them, and interest in their otherness to promote her new film.

Sporting figures were also frequently linked to yoga practice during this period, with it often being attributed in the press for their high performance. The *Sunday Mirror* (Vic Selwyn, 13 May 1956: 20) published an article "Winning the Yoga Way", about an Oxford University runner using yoga to prepare for the Olympic 800 metres, which he would go on to finish 2nd in the final in Melbourne. A *Daily Mail* article (Alan Peters, 10 August 1959: 9) equally told how a West German cyclist had "brought yoga" to the world cycling championships, shattering records "after standing on his head for half an hour in a semi-trance". Aston Villa footballer Pat Saward also made the news that year when he revealed he was practicing yoga to regain fitness after suffering an injury to his knee; he was pictured in the *Nottingham Evening Post* (28 January 1959: 6) performing a headstand, and as is often the case with local or regional content later being picked up by national publications, the *Sunday Mirror* (8 February 1959: 27) followed up the story in a short article "Head Down". This sports-focused version of yoga can be seen as like the Hollywood celebrity interpretation, but one which can be used to achieve improved sporting prowess. The connection to rehabilitation or healing also draws on previously mentioned ideas of yoga practice leading to the acquisition of physical powers or abilities. However, in this context yoga becomes a tool which can be used for healing or a specific sporting gain. In this way it is

an example of how Maitland (2017) suggests translations make sense of the unfamiliar by making it familiar and incorporating it. The yoga being referred to in relation to sports stars is a translation of yoga which overcomes the dimension of distanciation by containing this otherness of yoga into something that makes sense locally, exercises to improve fitness or recovery. It falls into what Said (1978: 58) referred to as a "median category" where something people are seeing for the first time in this case yoga, is seen and experienced as a version of something they are already familiar with, in this case physical exercise and speeding recovery from injury. During one of our interviews Ken Thompson said that when he started practicing yoga, he used to do headstands between badminton matches "because it quietens the brain down". However, Tony Crisp challenged such accounts with his experience and was adamant that people did not attend his yoga classes which began in the late 1950s, for a sporting or performance reason saying that most of those who he taught in those early days were housewives who were dealing with problems in their lives such as health issues, adding: "They were not trying to get better at golf, they were trying to deal with their blooming life problems" and that he saw his students learn to relax. Newspapers focusing on such an association between yoga and sporting endeavour can be seen to draw on and continue the existing discourse of yoga being embedded in ideas of physical culture. (Singleton, 2010). This also illustrates some of the varied reasons people had for practicing yoga in the UK at this time.

This section has served several functions; firstly, it demonstrated that though distinct understandings of yoga were represented in the media, these could be varied. This meant that while the word yoga was being used, it could refer to various complimentary or contradictory practices. This can be seen as the media grappling with the questions of what yoga was, who practiced it (and maybe whether they should). It was then demonstrated how many of yoga's different understandings were partly shaped by historical context and an orientalist discourse. Focusing on coverage of yogic feats and performers as one of the more recurrent themes and, therefore, a discursive contour, it has illustrated how such popular representations of yoga often relied heavily on ideas of orientalist nodal points such as yoga as foreign, dangerous, mystic, and standing in contrast to a rational West. The questioning of who practices yoga, whether they should, and whether they practice the same yoga was highlighted as another discursive contour. It was found that while yoga practitioners of South

Asian origin were often seen and represented through the orientalist framing of yoga, this was less likely to be the case with Western practitioners. It was also shown that yoga was predominantly understood as a physical practice when mentioned in relation to Hollywood and sporting celebrities, one where discourses of health, beauty, mental wellbeing, and high achievement become the defining characteristics of what yoga means. A relevance of this is the sociocultural currency or celebrity capital (Driessens, 2013) that such famous faces would have held, and that their public practice of yoga could be seen as a celebrity endorsement of sorts. While it is not clear if these public endorsements of yoga were here performed for commercial gain, they still meet Bergkvist, Hjalmarson and Mägi's (2016) definition of a celebrity endorsement as an agreement where a person of public recognition uses their celebrity for the purpose of promoting an entity. Celebrities posed for photos to be used in Indra Devi's books, or spoke about their practice of yoga, and with specific teachers, in media interviews, lending their status to this practice in the public eye and transferring their fame to that of yoga. Therefore, the very specific version of yoga they are commonly seen practicing, one which is distanced from other understandings, can be seen to be given a boost, along with the associated discourses of health, beauty, and well-being. As Rojek (2001: 187) notes, celebrity culture is an important mechanism for mobilising desire and "provides consumers with compelling standards of emulation", therefore popular media coverage of the celebrity practice of yoga introduces a way of emulating the Hollywood stars, and their lives, by practicing the same yoga as them.

4.2 The media meets yogis

The previous section characterised a period when the media was trying to make sense of yoga by drawing on existing discourses and knowledge along with new information about who was practicing yoga, how and why. However, common themes identified in the analysis suggest that towards the end of the 1950s there was a rise to media prominence for specific yogis and their yoga practices, with them playing an active role in this process via engagement with journalists. Through recurrent appearances in the media, these yogis can be seen to have a more significant influence on the understandings of what yoga is and yogis are, and therefore become increasingly relevant when considering the development of how yoga was understood in the public psyche. Viewed through the framework of cultural

translation, this also raises questions of which people can be seen as what I will refer to as key agents in this process, and why certain people were allowed to have a more significant influence over the popular coverage of yoga.

This section explores these discursive features primarily through the case studies of two yogis, Yogini Sunita, a Birmingham-based yoga teacher and B.K.S. Iyengar, who visited the UK annually. Newcombe (2019) has written extensively about both figures, considering the role of their charisma in their popularity, authority, and position in the history of yoga's development in Britain. It is also noted that these were not the only yogis who attracted press attention at this time. Others, including Sir Paul Dukes and Maharishi Mahesh, who will both feature more prominently in chapter five, appeared in the media on several occasions. However, the focus is here on how the yogis in the two case studies, achieved their status within the media during this period and a discourse-theoretical analysis of how they, and their different approaches to yoga, were presented in newspapers, on the radio, and on television.

4.2.1 Even yogis have PR people now

Yogini Sunita, formerly Bernadette Cabral, was a high-profile Birmingham-based yoga teacher in the 1960s having moved to the UK from Mumbai, India (Newcombe, 2019). However, according to an unidentified newspaper cutting[25] (but understood to be from October 1960) found in the collection of Alessandra Quaglieri, the owner of the only remaining yoga studio to teach in the style of Yogini Sunita, her first appearance in the UK press had little to do with yoga. The article instead focused on how Cabral, a former nun, had started performing Indian dance, after failing to become a concert pianist, and had become worried that she may have to add striptease to her act, as that was more in demand. From the perspective of a former journalist, the question can be raised as to whether the mention of resorting to striptease in the article originated from Cabral or the journalist speaking to her. While that appearance in the press was not related to yoga, in coming years, that would change and "by mid-1961, Bernadette Cabral, a westernised Indian had transformed into 'Yogini Sunita', a sari-clad

[25] Several of the newspaper cuttings in the collection of Alessandra Quaglieri had been cut so that the name of the publication or the date of publication was not present. In instances where such information was missing, article headlines were searched for in newspaper collections to complete missing information. In this case that was not possible and the date included is that which was handwritten next to the article.

Indian yoga teacher – and a living promotion for Pranayama Yoga" (Newcombe, 2019: 79). An appearance on an Associated Television *(*ATV) Midlands programme *Midland Profile* may have been the catalyst for this according to another unidentified regional newspaper cutting (31 October 1960) found in the collection of Alessandra Quaglieri. It stated that "On October 17 Mrs Caberal [sic] was interviewed on her views of the British way of life on TV's Midland Profile" going on to say that she mentioned that she had studied yoga for eight years, prompting a "flood of letters". The article included a photo from the first such class with Cabral sitting cross-legged wearing a red sari in front of three housewives and quoted her saying, "Most people get the idea that Yoga means standing on one's head, but there are many forms of Yoga. The types that I shall teach is the mental variety. I studied under Narainswamey, one of the greatest teachers of Yoga in India". In this way, Cabral situates herself as a unique authority by being part of a lineage and playing into ideas of authenticity, tradition and what Chow (1995: 22) refers to as "fantasies of an origin". She was also identifying a specific approach to yoga, one which she knew (due to the letters) would have local appeal. Cabral's cultural translation of yoga can therefore be seen as one which is shaped by her own contextual experience of yoga, one which she recognises value in for her audience, which she is tailoring to appeal to that audience, and one which she is uniquely positioned to teach.

Less than a fortnight later, in another potential example of national press using regional content as a source, the *Daily Mirror* (Jack Stoneley, 9 November 1960: 12) picked up the story in the article "Mind Over Natter", which suggested housewives might "try a spot of yoga" if they kept giving their husband "that nag-nag-nagging treatment" and spoke of how Cabral had dozens of women visiting her home for yoga classes in how to relax, adding that it did not require headstands or difficult acrobatics. A photograph of a sari-wearing Cabral sitting surrounded by housewives in Western attire and the description of her as a "pretty young mother from Bombay" simultaneously illustrates her difference and a level of approachability. Cabral's willingness to engage with the media played an essential role in her version of yoga gaining regional and national prominence; she also seems to have had a good idea of what news angles would appeal to a large British audience. By overcoming the distanciation or cultural difference which existed between her audience and prior understandings of yoga, Cabral demonstrated she was an adept cultural translator. She

presented a relaxation-focused yoga which had appeal in the contextual setting of 1960s Birmingham.

Cabral's presentation can also be seen to employ the sort of understandings of India that Inden (1986: 430) says can see it as spiritual and idealistic. Though this could be seen as her playing into stereotypes and adapting the yoga she taught, it does not necessarily mean this was inauthentic to her. Dressing and presenting herself in a certain way to appeal to potential students and the media could also be seen as an act of self-orientalism which Goto-Jones (2014: 1455) notes can be used in "commercial activities, where the importance of being recognizably (that is, stereotypically) from a particular country or tradition is a market asset". However, Sunita could also have used it to express, or perform, what she held as another aspect of herself. Bowman (2021: 86) draws on Butler (1990) and Chow (2002) to note the performative nature of cultural identity and dressing in cultural clothing, irrespective of one's cultural origin. In our interview Audrey Maric, who practised with Cabral around this period and went on to teach yoga herself, said she was initially prompted to seek out Sunita's classes after seeing her on television and thinking she "looked exotic and would therefore be a good person to learn from about yoga as an ancient eastern tradition". This confirms the suggestion of Foxten and Kuberry (2021: 190-191) that the popularity of gurus in the West was in part "they fulfilled Western fantasies of the "mystic from the East," seen as a carrier of ancient and universal wisdom" and "often played to such stereotypes". Indeed, Ranjit Sondhi, who attended lessons in Sunita's lineage of yoga and then himself taught yoga in Birmingham in the 1960s and 1970s, said in our interview that some of his students came to classes partly because "it was a spectacle to them to see this young man from India with long hair doing all sorts of poses".

By March of 1961,the *Birmingham Sunday Mercury* (Joyce Robins, 12 March 1961: 11) reported Cabral had over 2,000 pupils, with many travelling from as far as London and Manchester to see her, and had plans to open her own yoga studio, referred to as "the first of its kind in this country". Reports in the *Birmingham Post* (25th April 1961: 9) and *Sutton Coldfield News* (28th April 1961: 1) detailed how now known as "Yogi Sunita" she had arrived at the official opening of her "Yoga Parlour" in a Rolls Royce and had been guided along a red carpet by a uniformed doorman, with a young girl bearing a garland of roses, repeatedly for photographers. Press interest in the opening was also such that several journalists and

photographers were in attendance and were guided in a yoga relaxation. In addition to the name change from Bernadette Cabral to Yogi Sunita (she would later use Yogini Sunita), the media management of the event – the *Birmingham Post* article noted the presence of a "public relations man" who introduced Sunita to the press – demonstrates that Sunita was aware of what could capture popular media attention. She had the opportunity to articulate her version of yoga to a journalist from *ATV Midlands News* (25 April 1961), telling him it could,

> Help you rid yourself of the everyday tensions completely, each one of us has our own tensions, some are physical, some are just mental, but nevertheless simple exercises of the mind done (muffled) helps one to rid oneself of tension completely.
>
> (Bernadette Cabral/Yogini Sunita on *ATV Midlands News*, 1961)

A follow-up question was then asked about the lack of headstands and contortions, showing the popular connection between headstands, complex physical postures and yoga, with Sunita reiterating that she focused on the mental side of yoga and not the physical. In terms of yoga's cultural translation this can be seen to be one of the "deliberate, purposeful acts of interpretation that aim to impact specific audiences in specific ways" (Maitland, 2017: 53). It is a contextual interpretation of yoga which is being operationalised to create demand for classes within an identified audience demographic. While Sunita's space in Birmingham city centre was called a "yoga parlour" at launch, a few months later, it was called a "Yoga Studio" in advertising by Sunita, which said it offered "Mind Relaxation" (*Birmingham Sunday Mercury*, 9 July 1961: 13). This pre-dates what had been thought to be the first use of the term to refer to a UK-based yoga studio by several years and demonstrates a change, or a testing of marketing approaches, by Sunita, who emerges as a capable marketer, in making her commercial yoga product appeal more to her desired audience.

Sunita also coordinated other high-profile events, such as a press reception she held in London to launch an LP record on the art of relaxation. This gained coverage in multiple newspapers, including the *Daily Herald* (Henry Fielding, 26 September 1961: 4), which noted "she arrived in London wearing a tangerine silk sari and accompanied by her public relations man (even yogis have them now)". An advert placed in the *Observer* (1 October 1961: 22) for her LP stated, "No physical contortions. For housewives, exhausted executives" and added some of her radio and television appearances. In doing this Sunita is distancing her yoga

teaching from other understandings of yoga. Stating there would be “no contortions” separates her teaching and yoga from those previously detailed ideas of performance, while drawing on the credibility of the media she has featured in to situate herself as a respected authority. A certificate held by Alessandra Quaglieri also shows that Sunita appeared on the BBC TV programme *What's My Line?* (11 March 1963). Furthermore, around the same time, journalist Wendy Cooper wrote in the *Birmingham Daily Post* (16 March 1963: 9) that she had “as a result of the widespread interest resulting from her recent article on Sunita” started a course of lessons with the yogini and was writing up her reactions in a series of reports for the paper's *Saturday Magazine*. These articles give insight into the relaxation techniques and basic physical exercises which Sunita taught at the time.

Organisations in the Midlands and around the country
who have listened to the lecture on Pranayama Yoga.

The friendliness extended to me on every lecture is tremendous.

200 Rotary Luncheon Meetings, ~~one each day in 1963.~~
124 Innerwheels
100 Round Tablers
84 Ladies Circles.
324 Womens Institutes throughout the Midlands.
212 Towns Women's Guilds.
50 Masonic Ladies Night Lectures and demonstration.
39 Soroptmist Clubs.
20 Professional and business Women's Federations.
1 Streetly Social Evening Organisations.
50 Youth Centre Groups.
Organisations that raised money for Charities(Yoga lectures and demonstrati
Nurses.2
Schools.90
Grammar Schools.40
Many visits to the B.B.C. Radio and T.V. and A.T.V.
4 Wives Fellowship, afternoon and evening Groups.
To members of the Forces.
Spastic Organisations.
To members of the Theatre World.
To the Art Centre.
It would be impossible for me to give you the width of the numerous lectures
the interest of the National and Local Press. But the record of these activi
fill the pages of three huge scrap books.

The unforgettable incident of the meeting of Group Captain C
as the card shows, is an experience one can never forget. His greatness radi
itself in his unassumingness. Within the eyes of such a man one reads the he
depth of his tremendous work.

The Chairman & Management Committee of
THE WARWICKSHIRE CHESHIRE HOME
have pleasure in inviting
Madam Sunita
to the Official Opening of
"GREENACRES"
39, Vesey Road, Sutton Coldfield
by Group Captain G. L. Cheshire, V.C., D.S.O., D.F.C.
SATURDAY, MAY 1st. 1965 at 3-0 p.m.

R.S.V.P. Secretary, "Greenacres" 39 Vesey Road, Sutton Coldfield.

FIGURE 4.2: Document held in the collection of Alessandra Quaglieri in which Yogini Sunita documented her presentations of Pranayama Yoga. Courtesy of Alessandra Quaglieri.

Documents held in the collection of Alessandra Quaglieri, which were given to her by Sunita's son after she edited the 2012 (4th) edition of Sunita's book *The Lotus and the Rose* (1965), illustrates that the above coverage represents a fraction of the promotional activities being undertaken by Sunita at this time. There are dozens of press clippings, the provenance of which have not all been identified, along with flyers and typed lists of groups or organisations she had addressed (see Figure 4.2, above), including Rotary meetings, Women's Institute (WI) events, schools, and professional organisations. This suggests Sunita was undertaking several such events each week and that her rise to media prominence came as a result of her personal hard work and drive as well as her media savvy, and her presentation of herself and yoga. Other material held by Quaglieri includes typed-up copies of Sunita's teaching and teacher training documentation, notes made by Sunita's direct students, and documents which go into more detail about her guru and lineage of yoga. The contents of this collection reiterates the roles of authenticity and tradition in understandings of yoga, as does the way Quaglieri considers herself a de facto guardian of Sunita's documents. However, in noting that she shares access to this material with other members of the community of her lineage, and that it is known about by some those based in other yoga lineages, the personal collection is also placed within an ecology of connections which are significant themselves. I now turn to the case study of B.K.S. Iyengar whose alternative approaches to gaining media attention are considered.

4.2.2 Media attention through networks of influence

B.K.S. Iyengar can be understood to have risen to popular prominence during this same period as Yogini Sunita predominantly through the work of his personal network and community of students who, it is suggested, can be seen as fans. This differs from Yogini Sunita who engaged with the media directly to generate media coverage. As detailed by Newcombe (2019), in the early 1960s, B.K.S. Iyengar travelled to the UK each summer with violinist Yehudi Menuhin and began teaching public classes; therefore, his exposure in the UK media is primarily limited to those months. His first identified national press coverage came from an appearance at a pre-Wimbledon tennis event held by Lady Crossfield, with images of him demonstrating postures, sometimes alongside female tennis players, appearing in several national newspapers. Images of B.K.S. Iyengar, wearing only a pair of white shorts,

instructing the female tennis stars were used along with headlines in the *News Chronicle* (John London, 13 June 1960: 3) "The Yogi ties the tennis girls in knots" and the *Daily Mail* (13 June 1960: 3) "Milady's Mixed-up Guest". This set a tone that this was not a yoga which had been adapted for the West but was a case of Westerners (the tennis players) attempting a still foreign yoga, reiterated through B.K.S. Iyengar's appearance, and still bound up with ideas of contortion. In considering the role B.K.S. Iyengar played as a cultural translator of yoga, aspects of his contextual experience, and the traces of those translators before him, can be recognised. Having studied yoga with Krishnamacharya in Mysore, B.K.S. Iyengar had been used to giving demonstrations of asana to visiting dignitaries (Iyengar, 2005: xix) and to attract more students (Singleton, 2010: 192), even pushing himself so much he injured himself performing the postures Krishnamacharya demanded (Newcombe, 2019: 87). Performing asana at the event can be seen as a continuation of this. However, while such performances in Mysore could have been seen as demonstrations of a physical aspect of yoga, here it was presented as yoga in its entirety. In the articles, B.K.S. Iyengar is also given a level of authority which comes from those who have endorsed him, with Lady Crossfield inviting him to perform yoga at the event (*News Chronicle)* and mentions of his "very high-class clientele" (Henry Fielding, *Daily Herald,* 13 June 1960: 2)*,* including Queen Elizabeth of the Belgians (*Daily Mail)* and Yehudi Menuhin (*Daily Herald)*. Therefore, this network not only put B.K.S. Iyengar in a situation (the annual tennis event) where the press would be present, but also lent a level of credibility and authority through an establishment endorsement.

The following year B.K.S. Iyengar's relationship with Menuhin again played a role in his media appearances. A *Daily Mail* (Shirley Flack, 16 June 1961: 8) article detailed the violinist's yoga practice, with a photo of him in a headstand and announcing that his teacher, B.K.S. Iyengar would be visiting the UK. It stated he would give demonstrations and teach private lessons, which were in high demand, resulting in would-be students needing to be vetted. Documents held in the archive of Iyengar Yoga London (IYL) reveal the role of B.K.S. Iyengar's network in orchestrating this coverage and potentially a level of media manipulation. A transcript of an interview from 1999 saw early B.K.S. Iyengar student Angela Maris[26] reflect

[26] The transcript of the interview with Angela Maris (recorded 6th July 1999) is part of a collection of documents including interview transcripts, correspondence and typed memories complied and held by Iyengar Yoga London after B.K.S. Iyengar said he wanted new members to know about the history of Iyengar Yoga in the UK.

on how, as part of the Asian Music Circle (the organisation responsible for B.K.S. Iyengar's lectures and private group lessons), they had struggled to get people interested in taking yoga classes with B.K.S. Iyengar (as requested by Menuhin) when he started teaching, and how despite some of the demonstrations being well received they did not generate much in the way of popular media coverage. Another interview with Diana Clifton (also from 1999) showed how she had contacted the Asian Music Circle about studying with him after reading in a follow-up article in the *Daily Mail* (17 June 1961: 8) that the organisation was responsible for his lectures and private group lessons and how those early lessons had just three students. Clifton also spoke about B.K.S. Iyengar's exacting precision when it came to asana and how they used to go for picnics, where B.K.S. Iyengar would talk to them about the philosophy of yoga. While the wider IYL archive is discussed in more detail in chapter six, its relevance here serves to illustrate the importance placed by the community on the tradition and authenticity of its practice through the connection not only to B.K.S. Iyengar and his lineage, but the early period of his teaching in the UK. A 2021 issue of the IYL annual magazine *Dipika*, exemplifies this, where editor Korinna Pilafidis-Williams wrote about her long quest to find the house where B.K.S. Iyengar taught his first public yoga classes in the UK and hold a class there herself, recreating one of the photos from their archive (see Figure 4.3 below).

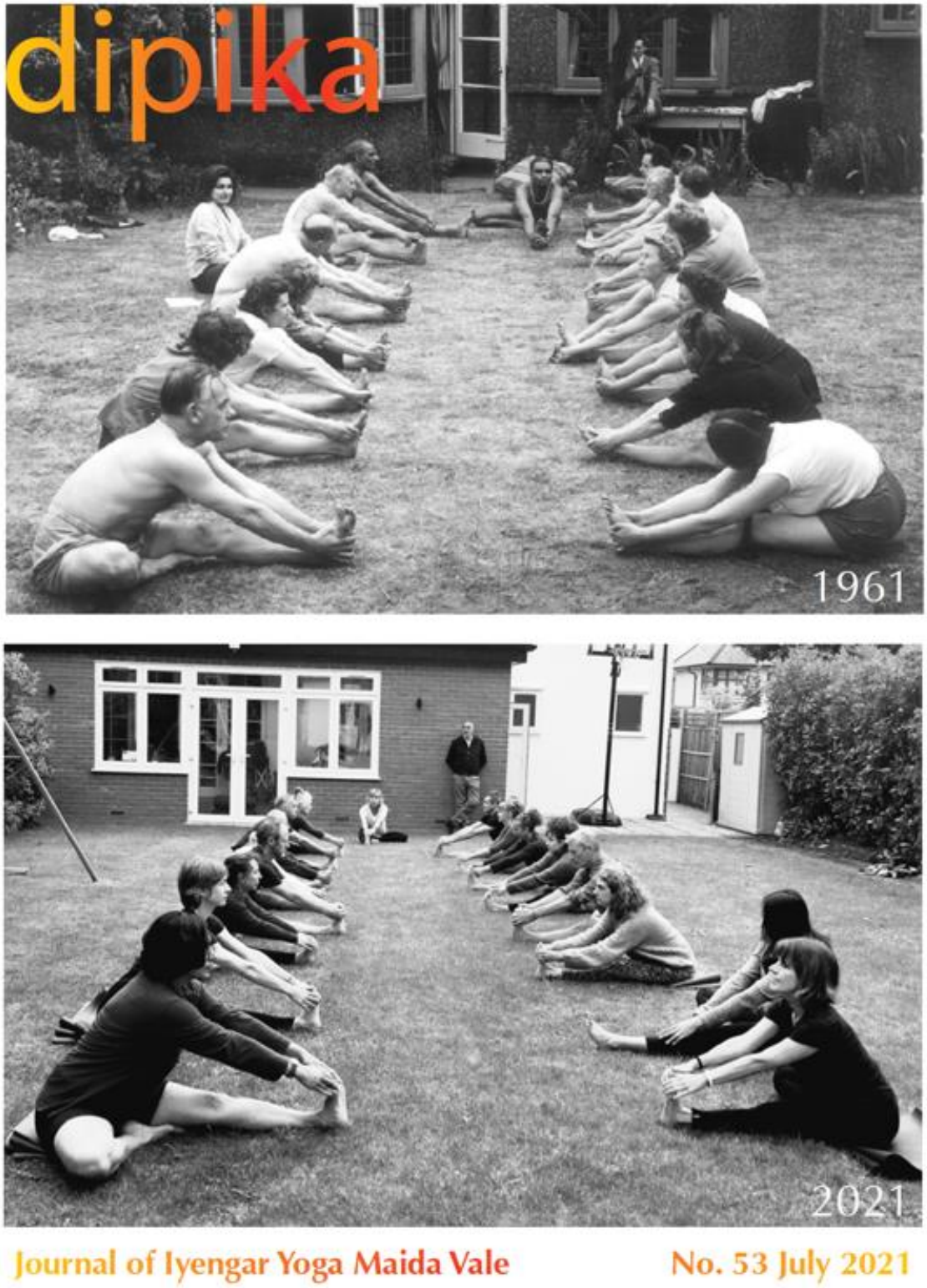

FIGURE 4.3: The cover of *Dipika* No 53, July 2021, recreating a photograph from 60 years earlier. Courtesy of Iyengar Yoga London.

B.K.S. Iyengar's highest-profile appearance during the period came in 1963, on the *BBC TV* programme *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru*. During this programme which aired at 10:25 pm on Wednesday the 21st of August 1963[27], B.K.S. Iyengar and his celebrity student Yehudi Menuhin were interviewed by David Attenborough. Though I have identified this as a significant moment for B.K.S. Iyengar, there are no available viewing figures by which to address the reach of the show. Silvey (2018) also notes that people in the UK were at the time watching television for only 12 hours per week on average. I have written about the uncovering of 'lost' VHS footage of *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru* during this research in more detail elsewhere (Crisp, 2023), noting that the TV programme had been known about for many years, and senior figures within Iyengar and other yoga communities had unsuccessfully tried to locate it. It was only uncovered after I had a chance meeting with a yoga teacher during a visit to the IYL archive and upon telling her about my research she mentioned that she had been given an old VHS tape about yoga from one of her students who had been a BBC producer, knowing she had an interest in yoga's history. We arranged to have the tape digitised and upon finding what it contained it is now held in the IYL archive and has been provided to the BBC Archive, where it had been on a list of lost TV programmes. I suggest this finding of the footage therefore demonstrates the informal connections which can exist between archival spaces within the proposed community archive ecology model detailed in chapter three. However, here it is considered in terms of how B.K.S. Iyengar's network again played a role in achieving this national television coverage and how it allowed him to articulate and demonstrate yoga as presented by him to the West, to a broad audience. In correspondence with David Attenborough after uncovering the recording of the programme, he said it originated from Yehudi Menuhin, who knew the head of the Talk department at the BBC (where Attenborough was a producer) and suggested viewers might be interested in a programme about yoga. In a letter Attenborough recalled,

[27] This information comes from the BBC Programme Index (https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk) formerly known as the BBC Genome project. The accompanying description of the programme reads "Introduced by David Attenborough. The practice of Yoga is older than Christianity. Until this century, its disciplines and purpose have been known to few people in the Western world. Yehudi Menuhin has practised Yoga for thirteen years. Tonight he talks about its value, and the effect it has had on him personally, with his Guru, or teacher, Shri. B. K. S. Iyengar. A Monitor presentation See page 29. Contributors Presenter: David Attenborough. Interviewee: Yehudi Menuhin. Director: Melvyn Bragg".

> One morning in 1963, the Head of the Department, Mrs Mary Adams, telephoned me to say that Yehudi Menuhin, who she knew socially and who at that time lived in London, had contacted her to say that his yoga teacher, Mr Iyengar, was briefly in London. Mr Menuhin wondered whether viewers might be interested in knowing something of yoga from one of its most prominent practitioners.
>
> (David Attenborough, 2022)

He added that it was agreed that a twenty-five-minute programme on the subject would be appropriate and that he was asked to produce it, so he started by visiting B.K.S. Iyengar at the hotel in London where he was staying and agreed on a format where Attenborough would guide a conversation about yoga with Menuhin and B.K.S. Iyengar, who would also be able to demonstrate postures. It was, therefore, not B.K.S. Iyengar's status or renown that prompted the BBC to make the editorial decision to feature him on a programme about yoga, but rather his network connection to Menuhin, whose societal connections to people of influence had even allowed him to suggest the idea of a programme about yoga in the first place. This can be seen as different to the previously detailed self-directed media engagement of Yogini Sunita; however, the outcome was the same, the chance to articulate his cultural translation of yoga to a broader audience.

The 25-minute programme begins with footage of B.K.S. Iyengar performing a series of complex asana, as Attenborough offers a dictionary definition of yoga (See Figure 4.4 below), for a selection of stills from the programme. Notably, the asana being demonstrated are more advanced and precise than that from Sir Paul Dukes' 1949 BBC appearance, if images (held in the Hoover Institute Archives) represent what was in that programme. The combination of a BBC voice reading a dictionary definition of yoga as the complex asana are shown on screen also suggests that yoga 'is' the physical asana, even if it is also something else. By opening with the visual spectacle of B.K.S. Iyengar performing complex asana[28] with such mastery the programme is also positioning him as an expert and authority about yoga, giving his wider accounts of yoga more credibility in the eyes of the viewer. Yehudi Menuhin is then introduced as one of the most distinguished yoga followers in the West and interviewed about his introduction to and practice of yoga, how he uses it and whether what he "as a European" gets from it is the same as what Indians get from yoga before B.K.S.

[28] The opening of the programme *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru* (1963, BBC) can be viewed by my research adjacent blog https://yogamemories.com/yehudi-menuhin-and-his-guru-on-the-bbc/ until September 2025 (in accordance with BBC permissions).

Iyengar is introduced. This once again introduces the issue of binaries and power relationships. B.K.S. Iyengar is questioned about how he became a yogi, telling the story of how he turned to yoga under the guidance of his brother-in-law Krishnamacharya after being ill with suspected tuberculosis. B.K.S. Iyengar's experience of using yoga to treat his sickliness as a youth can again be seen to play a role in the creation of his cultural translation of yoga and how asana could be used for health and to cure disease.

FIGURE 4.4: Stills from the TV programme *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru*. (BBC, 1963) Courtesy of the BBC.

Several common understandings of yoga are proposed and challenged throughout the programme, with Attenborough asking if yoga is a Hindu belief and how it relates to spiritual enlightenment rather than curing ailments through exercises. B.K.S. Iyengar states yoga is "a philosophy of its own which is suitable to the community on the whole". The suggestion that yoga has been "bowdlerised" to meet the tastes of Europeans, meaning those aspects of the yoga practice considered improper or offensive by a European audience could (and had)

been removed from the yoga promoted and practiced in Europe, is also raised. However, towards the programme's end, Attenborough asks, “supposing I had decided that I, for simply my body's fitness, wish to take up yoga, what sort of exercises would I start with?” This question, along with the following expert demonstration, once again acts to propose an understanding of yoga which is predominantly physical and for the purpose of health and fitness. It suggests while a broader understanding of yoga was articulated during the interview; that yoga can be taken up purely for fitness. In this way the translation of yoga in the programme is one which can be shaped or transformed into a physical-only practice, if that is what viewers want it to be. While B.K.S. Iyengar can be seen as a key agent in the process of yoga’s cultural translation into the UK at this time, it is therefore important to also recognise that his translation of yoga is in-turn reinterpreted or transformed in the act of mediation. In this case it is being joined by, or potentially superseded by, Attenborough’s proposed translation of yoga which is one which can be adopted purely for fitness, which B.K.S. Iyengar did not object to, but rather used the question to begin a likely prearranged four minute demonstration of postures, as Attenborough and Menuhin continued to talk.

This section has established how in the early 1960s the media understanding about, and knowledge of yoga became shaped in part by engagement with yogis who were positioned as authoritative experts on the subject. This process, I suggested, allowed popular representations of yoga to move beyond those which relied heavily on orientalist views and were shaped, in-part, by those yogis who achieved repeated press coverage, often based on discourses of authority and authenticity. Therefore, it has been essential to consider which yogis attained this coverage, the methods they used to do this and how the economy of teaching yoga was related to their work of educating people about yoga, and the understandings of yoga they perpetuated.

4.3 Conclusion

Between the years of 1955 and 1963 yoga’s popular mediation in the UK underwent an abrupt change, with a transition from diverse interpretations of what yoga was and who practiced it, towards presenting a more unified understanding. In this chapter, I have drawn on my analysis of media texts, interviews and archive collections, demonstrating how popular understandings of yoga were transformed through its cultural translation and identified the role played by specific power dynamics in this process. I positioned high-profile yogis, the

media, and those who engaged with this teaching or mediation as all participating in yoga's cultural translation. Therefore, I have broadened the scope of who can be seen as having played a role changing how yoga was understood and practiced. I used Bowman's (2021) concept of discursive contours to identify two key features of yoga's popular mediation in the UK between 1955 and 1963. Firstly, media texts were used to illustrate the varied understandings of yoga which circulated in the media at the start of this period, and secondly, I showed how media interaction with specific yogis began to change such representations, introducing their cultural translations of yoga.

The newspaper articles, newsreels, radio shows and television programmes cited in this chapter have illustrated a lack of consensus at the start of this period within the popular UK media regarding the definition of yoga, its methods, and practitioners. While some of these texts relied on explicit definitions of yoga, others used varied understandings within their representations, drawing on existing conceptions and knowledge of yoga. Distinct, sometimes competing, sometimes complimentary, understandings were evoked from within the broader discursive entity of yoga, in turn shaping that discursive entity. It was shown how these interpretations of yoga were frequently based on historical contexts and an overriding orientalist discourse, suggesting Britain's colonial relationship with India continued to play a role in shaping how yoga was seen. There was a reliance on understandings of yoga as exotic and mystical, an example of Said's (1978) orientalism whereby it is seen as a binary opposite to the supposed rational and superior West. I highlighted this in coverage which depicted yogis performing extraordinary feats and performers claiming yogic powers, demonstrating how this also undermined ideas of yoga as a spiritual, philosophical, or religious entity. The yoga represented in the media was also shown to change depending on who practiced it, whether a Hollywood star, a sportsperson, or a member of the public hoping to relieve stress or improve their everyday performance, showing the malleability of the concept of yoga and how it could be applied in cultural translation. However, in one of our interviews Tony Crisp challenged the media coverage, suggesting people attended his classes for reasons other than those reported on, highlighting the value of using ethnohistorical methods and triangulation to challenge such reports. I demonstrated how yoga became more frequently considered through aspirational discourses of health, beauty, and both mental and physical well-being, while still relying on orientalist understandings which became subverted to being

more in line with those Inden (1986: 430) says can see India as spiritual and idealistic, rather than superstitious and mystic. This incorporation of yoga into existing discourses demonstrated the act of (re)creation within yoga's cultural translation.

The second discursive contour of this chapter considered how media interaction with yogis accelerated changes in how yoga was understood in the West. I demonstrated this through case studies of yogis who were able to bring their cultural translations of yoga to a wider Western audience through media interaction. Yogini Sunita positioned herself as an expert through her yoga lineage which suggested authenticity and tradition to an audience which had a fascination with the idea of origins (Chow, 1995). Her cultural translation of yoga overcame the dimension of distanciation between her audience and yoga by incorporating it into their lives in a way which did not challenge their sensibilities, addressing their concerns of stress and relaxation. I also demonstrated how a media-savvy Sunita presented herself in a way which played into an orientalist fantasy and could be seen as the sort of act of self-orientalism noted by Goto-Jones (2014: 1455). This, while potentially strategically necessary, perpetuated certain power dynamics rooted in colonial history. I used this to draw attention to the way that even when yogis played a role in shaping representations of yoga, rather than simply being reported on, the legacy of orientalist and colonial understandings meant they were required to work within such framings. It was then explored how the network of students around B.K.S. Iyengar allowed him to present his yoga within the media, where his postural mastery and celebrity students became key markers of his expertise and authority. In doing this I demonstrated that while B.K.S. Iyengar is often focused on for his role in shaping how yoga was understood, those around him also played roles in this cultural translation, and as agents of this process.

The status these yogis were given to contribute to the mediated understanding of yoga can be understood to come from a combination of four distinct features. First, the authority of the yogi, which could come from various sources including their claiming a knowledge of yoga and demonstrating of these practices, or the status of their students. Second, a perceived authenticity of the practice they were teaching which could come through lineage, a perceived long-standing tradition, or their status a being of South Asian heritage. Third, a willingness to use their difference to meet the needs of the media, and finally, to promote a version of yoga which media outlets were comfortable presenting for

potential practice by its audiences. The case-study of the TV programme *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru* was used to demonstrate that B.K.S. Iyengar was able to articulate his cultural translation of yoga to a new audience, but how this was also influenced by the process of mediation wherein it was repeatedly suggested people might take up yoga simply for fitness. In doing this I argued the cultural translation of yoga being presented by such yogis was also being reinterpreted or transformed in the act of its popular mediation. The translation presented to an audience can be seen as a hybrid creation of the yogi translator and the media, with an incorporation of their sensibilities.

In the next chapter I argue that as the media became more comfortable with the concept of yoga and articulating its understanding of it, in part because of the engagement with yogis discussed here, it further incorporated yoga into Western discourses of health and fitness. I suggest that by frequently focusing on specific features within the broader discursive entity of yoga, and making associations with other discourse and ideas, the media contributed to shaping how yoga was understood contextually in the popular consciousness, and that this yoga was one which the media was better able to sell and teach itself.

Chapter 5: Mediating an increasingly visible yoga (1964-68)

Picking up from 1964, this chapter analyses how representations of yoga frequently drew on specific features of yoga's discursive entity, contributing towards a narrowing of how yoga was contextually understood. Such understandings are also demonstrated to have emerged through the incorporation of yoga into the contemporary discourses of self-improvement, physical health and fitness and mental well-being, in turn recreating yoga as something suitable for people in the UK to practice. The role of celebrities in broadening knowledge of yoga practices and making them more socially acceptable through celebrity endorsement and a process of meaning transfer is also explored via the Beatles' case study. This builds on the work of the previous chapter which illustrated how, between 1955 and 1963, yoga was represented and discussed on television, radio and in newspapers saw significant changes. In that chapter I showed, through identified 'discursive contours' (Bowman, 2021), how at the start of that period, representations of yoga were often built on colonial and orientalist ideas, but how media interaction with yogis and their contextual cultural translations of yoga began to challenge some of the previous understandings.

The representation of the growing number of people practicing yoga within national, regional and local press is the discursive contour addressed first in this chapter. This is achieved by examining coverage relating to the practice's growth, questioning which teachers' classes or teaching featured in newspapers, and how their translations of yoga were represented. It is posited those translations of yoga, which could be presented in such a way to appeal to a broader Western audience and fit into the discourses of physical health and fitness and mental wellbeing, were more likely to attract positive press attention. As a result, the focus on certain yoga practices by publications can be seen to further contribute towards the narrowing of the understandings of yoga, which were developing in the public psyche. The way newspapers used this understanding of yoga to produce content wherein it taught postures and sold advertising space around it is then explored. It is concluded that it suited media outlets for yoga to be understood primarily through the discourses of health and fitness because it was commercially appealing. The case study of the Beatles' involvement with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his Transcendental Meditation (TM) practice is then used to explore the role of celebrity endorsements, another identified

discursive contour, in broadening knowledge of yoga practices and making them more socially acceptable through acts of celebrity endorsement and meaning transfer (McCracken, 1989: 310). However, it is suggested that not all aspects of yoga move between cultures with the same ease, with the guru figure and the business of the guru demonstrated to be more resistant to the process of cultural translation than the wider practice of yoga and in particular its physical practices.

5.1 Reporting on and teaching yoga in the media

Whereas some of the media coverage highlighted in the previous chapter focused on the novelty of someone practising yoga, during 1964-68, an increasingly frequent news angle was the popularity of yoga practice in the UK. This is relevant alongside consideration of the journalistic aphorism of "'A dog bites a man'—that's a story; 'A man bites a dog'—that's a good story" which Weldon (2009: 592) says demonstrates the newsworthiness of events that are out of the ordinary. Because this period saw a growth in the number of people practicing yoga (Newcombe, 2019: 178), individuals practicing it ceased to be as interesting a news story. Instead, the number of people practicing yoga along with where and how they practised it became increasingly newsworthy. This trend is considered as the first discursive contour of this chapter, raising questions of which yoga classes gained coverage in local, regional and national newspapers and why, and how such media publications incorporated the developing understanding of yoga into something it could teach and sell.

5.1.1 The news of yoga's UK popularity

A notable trend across media coverage of yoga during the period 1964 to 1968 was the presentation of it as an increasingly popular practice in the UK. Regional and local newspaper articles covered the establishment of new yoga classes or groups, or the success and popularity of existing ones. Considered discursively, this raises questions about how representative of the cacophony of yoga practices and classes the articles were, and the decisions made about which were covered, and how. For example, a *Lichfield Mercury* article (21 January 1966: 8) reported on the start of a 12-week beginners' yoga course. However, the novelty of an accompanying image of the leotard-wearing teacher demonstrating a headstand in front of a group of onlookers will likely have played a role in the editor's

decision to make the article the page lead. Equally, the *Liverpool Echo* (3 January 1964: 9) commented that a yoga teacher's "36-24-37 figure testifies to what yoga can do" while articles such as "Keep slim the Yoga way" in the *Reading Evening Post* (Yvonne Thomas, 4 October 1966: 3) were illustrated with images of women performing exercises in a leotard and tights. Such coverage begins to create an understanding of yoga situated in a discourse of health and fitness. Spatz (2015: 83) states that by the start of the twenty-first century the "embodied technique of yoga is inextricably bound up with the biopolitics of health and healthism" and this coverage can be seen as a movement towards that. Newcombe (2019: 86) discusses how despite yoga classes in adult education facilities being in "gender-neutral categories" between 70 and 90 percent of those attending were women. Such newspaper coverage also positions yoga as a practice primarily for women, aiming to improve their physical appearance, therefore contributing to the gendering of it as a practice of physical culture. I suggest these representations be considered new statements within a longer conversation about yoga. This is not in a micro-contextual approach where they are a direct response to a proceeding text, such as Heritage's (1984: 242) conversation analysis. Rather, in the sort of macro-contextual sense, Van Brussel et al. (2019: 10) suggest "discourses circulate within the social". There is also significance in these representations of yoga, not because of any specific feature of the cultural translation per se, but because of the way in which it resonated with the media and was, therefore, amplified within coverage.

Interest in the physical nature of yoga asana practice can be seen in newspaper coverage of classes, where the prominence of articles within publications such as in *The Times* (25 June 1966: 13) or *Kensington Post* (26 August 1966: 6) is likely to have been based on the visually striking nature of the photograph, with the performance of headstands by teachers. As Van Brussel et al. (2019: 15-16) make the case, their discourse theoretical analysis approach allows consideration of media organisations and practices. This can be used to draw attention to how the newspapers or journalists had a predetermined way in which they expected to represent yoga and yogis. The cultural translations of yoga the media encountered were further incorporated through their representation. In the previous chapter I established how photographs of yogis in postures such as lotus and headstand had become visually striking established signifiers of a yoga practice, and that continues to be the case here. They still act as a visually interesting hook for an article, and indicate that it is about

yoga, but because the postures in these articles are being demonstrated in front of other yoga students they present a practice of yoga, as something which can be done, or aspired to, by a wider audience (see Figure 5.1 below).

FIGURE 5.1: Photographs of a headstand being performed in front of yoga students. Clockwise from top left *The Guardian* (19 November 1965: 7), *Kensington Post* (26 August 1966: 6), *Lichfield Mercury* (21 January 1966: 7) and *The Times* (25 June 1966: 13). Images redacted from the version of this thesis submitted to University's e-repositories and made available online due to copyright.

Several of the yoga teachers I interviewed said they had adhered to journalists requests to perform complex asana for the camera. Therefore, the press expectation of yoga and how to represent it was fulfilled through the actions of yogis who recognised acting a certain way or performing an asana for the camera could result in media coverage, which may influence the number of people attending their classes. There was an economic logic for teachers to comply with those discursive presentations of yoga with were going to help gain media coverage. It was an act of negotiation which contributed to framing yoga discursively and demonstrates how discursive portrayals of yoga were intertwined with the economy of its teaching and propagation. In one of our interviews Ken Thompson corroborated the way

yoga teachers would work with such requests in order to obtain media coverage, in doing so challenging whether the resulting coverage accurately represented the classes being taught and experienced by students. He even recalled how, on one such occasion, he injured himself getting into lotus at a local newspaper photographer's request, adding, “that’s all they wanted, something that looks spectacular”.

Many of the yoga classes which were being established and gaining media coverage during this period were within the adult education system, which Newcombe (2019) has written about including the role of charismatic gurus in adult education, the demographic of middle-class women who made up most attendees, and yoga’s institutionalization. One article in *The Times* (23 February 1965: 7) noted that over the previous two years, yoga had become increasingly popular in Birmingham, with the local authority teaching hundreds of pupils across its evening institutes, which could have more than 50 people in a single class. Such was the demand that one education department official was quoted as saying, “If we wanted to, some of our places could become yoga institutes overnight”. In our interview, Angela Thompson recalled how she was told in the late 1960s or early 1970s that yoga classes were popular within the institution of adult education because they were cheap to run (there were no specialist equipment costs) and in high demand, making them some of the most profitable classes on the schedule. Many of those I interviewed recalled how in this period, before yoga mats were a thing, students might use gym mats which were already owned by adult education institutions, adding that you could still tell who was going to a yoga class because they would normally have their own sleeping bag with them for the relaxation at the end of the session.

The article in *The Times* (23 February 1965: 7) also said that an investigation was underway into what postures were taught and the question of the qualifications that instructors should have. The British Wheel of Yoga (BWY), as discussed later in this section and the following chapter, would offer a potential answer to these questions by first issuing certificates stating people were ready to teach yoga. *The Liverpool Echo* (12 October 1966: 12) reported on Lovette Edwardes receiving her certificate from the recently formed organisation. As discussed in more detail in the following chapter, the BWY would also be one of several organisations to develop a yoga teacher training syllabus and qualifications. Similar to teachers performing asana for media attention, yoga teachers were making concessions to

receive permission to teach yoga or be employed as yoga teachers. They were teaching yoga in a different way than they would have chosen. An illustration of this can be found in the celebratory nature of an article published by the BWY (*Yoga*, 12, 1972: 7), which noted that teachers in the previous decade had been forbidden from including meditational aspects within yoga classes, but that North London yoga teacher Velta Wilson had recently been invited to teach a meditation-only class by Haringey further education authority.

Several of the teachers I interviewed had memories of growing media and public interest in in yoga at the time. Velta Wilson recalled her early days of teaching in the 1960s when she initially taught from a room in her home in London, but she contacted the local adult education director about hiring a space when that became too small. He suggested she teach for them in the first adult education yoga class in London. However, Velta was keen to highlight the role played by Wilfred Clark in generating what she saw as much of the public interest in yoga within the UK at this time. She recalled how he used his knowledge as a journalist and took out adverts in local press to connect people interested in discovering more about the subject. Indeed, Newcombe (2019: 55-78) has written extensively on the history of Clark's role in establishing the Birmingham Yoga Club in 1962 and its development into the British Wheel of Yoga. During our interviews, Ken Thompson also repeatedly stressed that Clark had been a key reason yoga became popular in the UK in the 1960s because of his coordinating role, the establishment of the BWY, and his promotional activities. Ken said he initially responded to a call Clark had made on the letters page of a regional newspaper - Clark was said to have written letters to many local and regional newspapers - looking for people interested in yoga who wanted to connect with others who shared the interest. Ken recalled: "He was a prolific writer; you'd write one day and get a letter back the next. He was a great journalist and editor".

Clark's experience working as a journalist and knowledge of the news industry can also be considered through the discourse theoretical analysis approach as a contributing factor in his role as a key agent of yoga's cultural translation. For example, when gaining press coverage for British Wheel of Yoga events (*Birmingham Daily Post*, 28 May 1967: 2), what role was played by how he communicated the story's newsworthiness to news outlets in their decision to cover them? In the above article, the angles of "more than 1,000 yoga students" in the Midlands and Birmingham "becoming a Mecca for Yoga enthusiasts" support

the news that more than 200 yoga delegates held and attended an event. In this way, the cultural translations of yoga which were circulating at the time, were also being filtered through the act of obtaining media coverage; what was seen as newsworthy became what defined and represented understandings of yoga for some. Clark also promoted portrayals of yoga which did not necessitate the rejection of existing beliefs or significant changes to Western lifestyle. In a *Walsall Observer* article (1 July 1966), he suggested that reading ancient yoga texts would make people more readily accept the miracles of the New Testament. This challenged the notion that yoga was a religion, or at odds with other religions such as Christianity. Read discursively this can be seen as a reorientation of the orientalist discourse, the suggestion being that the other isn't that different after all, though it overlooks the act of re-creation in the cultural translation.

Private yoga studios also gained significant newspaper coverage during this period, with analysis of examples showing how yoga could be positioned differently discursively within such content. Stella Cherfas founded the London Yoga Studio, which opened in 1964. Early press attentional notably focused on the clientele the Kensington studio attracted, with the *Daily Mail* (Charles Greville, 13 November 1964: 4) commenting that Yoga was "in danger of becoming an O.K. pastime for smart Londoners", adding that the studio had attracted 100 members within two months of opening. The article was illustrated with images of Stella teaching the daughter of an MP, further positioning this yoga as aspirational. It also added that "Stella's Yoga" was a variety concerned with bodily exercises and had been invented by an Eastern potentate to help keep his wife young. Such coverage distanced the cultural translations of yoga at the London Yoga Studio from the orientalist discourses highlighted in the previous chapter by overtly contrasting them, as shown in the *Kensington Post* (19 February 1965: 8) article "YOGA…. And not a bed of nails in sight". The article trailed on the front page with a photo of a woman in a shoulder stand and was illustrated with photos of people in headstands, noting that students were not taught to "thrust swords painlessly into their bodies" but how to improve their health and feel younger. Noting that the studio featured a cartoon on the wall showing an Indian fakir with his bed of nails turned down and saying, "Personally, I find it more comfortable this way round", further distinguishes its cultural translation of yoga from some of those pre-existing ideas around performance and fakirs. Indeed, the teaching of the studio can be seen as a development of that practiced by

Sir Paul Dukes, who was the first person to demonstrate yoga exercises on the BBC in 1948[29] (for more see Newcombe, 2019: 179-184), and was Stella's teacher in South Africa before she moved to the UK. As articulated in his book *The Yoga of Health and Joy* (1960) and across appearances on BBC television[30] and radio, including *Desert Island Discs*[31] (22 February 1965) and *Woman's Hour*[32] (19 November 1965), Dukes' yoga was one identifiably adapted, for the West. In our interview, Stella recalled,

> The first thing he (Sir Paul Dukes) told me, he said, you are a Westerner, you are going to teach Westerners, they haven't got the vaguest clue if you say *Bhujangasana* to them, it doesn't mean anything, but if you say we're going to do the Cobra, that immediately brings an image in mind.

She said she never used Sanskrit and talked about postures rather than asana, adding that "I taught Hatha yoga for the West" and that she has always been against branded versions of yoga or teachers who positioned themselves as gurus. Here Stella is situating her teaching of yoga as a recreated cultural translation while at the same time voicing her objection to those who claim an authenticity or authority of their interpretations of the practice. Stella also recalled that at the height of the London Yoga Studio's success, she could teach up to seven classes per day, with typically around eight students per class, She said she had dozens of clients who were famous, high-society members or worked in the media, the latter often being responsible for generating news coverage of her teaching and the studio.

Several of my interviews about this period identified friction between yoga teachers whose lineages, traditions, and teaching styles could clash. For example, Ken Thompson said

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[29] *Fatigue and Relaxation***:** Broadcast: Monday 21st June 1948, 21:45 on BBC Television. (Runtime 15 min)
[30] Sir Paul Dukes hosted multiple shows on BBC Television featuring exercises based on the practices of yoga. These included *Fatigue and Relaxation* (Broadcast: Mon 21st June 1948, 21:45 on BBC Television, repeated Sat 25th September 1948, 21:30 on BBC Television), *Laughter and Life* (Broadcast: Sat 9th April 1948, 21:30 on BBC Television), *Aid to Laughter* (Broadcast: Sat 16th July 1949, 21:30 on BBC Television), and *Yoga for the Middle-aged* (Broadcast: Sat 1st October 1949, 21:30 on BBC Television). He also hosted a series of *Yoga* shows which started with *Yoga 1:What Yoga is* (Broadcast: Sat 1st April 1950, 21:30 on BBC Television) which was detailed in the *Radio Times* as "In the first of four demonstrations Sir Paul Dukes, assisted by pupils of Madame Nicolaeva-Legat, shows how the principles of Eastern Yoga can be applied to Westerners. Produced by S. E. Reynolds". Subsequent episodes were titled *Yoga: 2: Yoga for Office Workers* (Broadcast: Sat 22nd April 1950, 21:50 on BBC Television), Yoga 3 (Broadcast: Sat 20th May 1950, 21:30 on BBC Television), and *Yoga* (Broadcast: Sat 3rd June 1950, 21:50 on BBC Television).
[31] *Desert Island Discs*: Broadcast: Monday 22nd February 1965, 13:10 on BBC Home Service (Radio).
[32] *Woman's Hour*: Broadcast: Friday 19th November 1965, 14:00 on BBC Light Programme (Radio)

in our initial interview[33] that as yoga's popularity surged in the 1960s, more people who did not have any genuine interest in yoga tried to "get in on the act" and recalled how "a lot of the girls who were teaching keep fit in the 1960s when yoga started to take off, they just put a few Yoga asanas in workouts and call themselves yoga teachers. In fact, all they were really doing was teaching keep fit". In this way, Ken suggests that their teaching and practice was not "real" yoga, whereas his understanding and cultural translation of it was. This raises issues of perceived authenticity and tradition within the process of cultural translation where practices are being recreated contextually. It also illustrates the way a physical asana practice of yoga can be easily learned with little specialised knowledge and therefore becomes more easily adopted transculturally, as what Csordas (2009: 4) would describe as a "portable practice". In the lessons described by Ken, some Keep-Fit teachers were including physical yoga asana practices into their classes but branding them as yoga classes. This is significant in that the yoga asana served to make people think they were experiencing yoga instruction while most of the lesson could have been Keep-Fit. It is not clear to what extent those attending such a class would have distinguished these aspects. Therefore, attendees could easily have assumed that all of what was taking place in the class was yoga, shaping their understanding of yoga to become more physical and exercise-based. I address similar concerns in relation to supplementary practices in yoga classes within my own yoga practice in one of the examples of reflexive writing in Appendix A. In our interview Stella also recalled being critical of interactions with members of the BWY (which Ken was), saying that they "just absorbed everything" and were too prescriptive in how yoga should be approached and practiced. She also said that she thought some Indian yoga teachers were more like circus performers than yoga teachers. While such conversations illustrate some of the varied experiences of yoga at the time, yoga as represented in the popular UK media, was beginning to conform to a narrower understanding. How this enabled the media to teach and sell yoga, is my focus in the following section.

[33] A reflexive summary of this interview cab be found in Appendix I, while the full transcript can be seen in Appendix J.

5.1.2 Teaching and selling yoga in the media

Having analysed how the presentation of yoga as an increasingly popular practice in the UK saw media outlets frame and recreate yoga in the discourses of health and fitness, along with the mental well-being discourse detailed in the previous chapter, attention now moves to newspapers giving yoga instruction and promoting yoga products. The significance of this can be seen through how, in offering or reproducing yoga instruction, publications were selective about which cultural translations of yoga and yogis they were working with as their sources. Additionally, because the media representations and instruction of yoga focused on here as case studies were articles or features within newspapers, they were not likely being actively sought out. Instead, they were arriving through the letterbox or being picked up at a newsagent as part of that publication. In this way, they were being seen by a wider audience than those interested in discovering more about yoga, and from a source that buyers of a specific newspaper brand trusted.

As noted in the previous chapter, some yoga instruction had been given in popular news publications in the years preceding this period, such as the series of articles by Wendy Cooper in the Saturday Magazine section of the *Birmingham Post*, which focused on relaxation, diets, and muscle control as taught by Yogini Sunita. However, between 1964 and 1968, the yoga being taught can be seen to be positioned and understood differently discursively. For example, Wendy Cooper was again taking a course of classes with Yogini Sunita - who was also taking out paid advertising for her classes in the same newspaper (*Birmingham Post*, 14 March 1964: 1) – and relaying the teaching in a weekly series. In the first of these articles in the *Birmingham Post* (Wendy Cooper, 14 March 1964: 11), Cooper notes that much has changed in yoga since she took Sunita's yoga relaxation course 12 months earlier, adding that yoga has developed (at least in the Midlands) “from something a few people had vaguely heard of to a frankly popular cult”. She also added that in the prior six months, the first yoga lessons were taught in British schools, that Birmingham education authorities had started teaching mass classes, and were due to oversee a two-year course by Yogini Sunita training yoga teachers, which was “not only the first in Britain but also the first in Western countries”. This indicates to readers that by following along with the exercises at home, they are not partaking in something that is odd or unusual but something that is now mainstream and being practiced by more people.

The introduction to the article also states that the exercises from Yogini Sunita, described as a "course of physical yoga", have been "specially adapted to Western needs". Notably, this contrasts with the yoga as relaxation, as previously presented by Yogini Sunita, potentially to meet the changing demands or expectations of students. This also implies that the practice of physical yoga asana exercises can be called yoga. It also suggests that these exercises are intended to be practiced by the reader and have been developed by an authentic authority for them. Therefore, while the teachings are clearly a transformed or recreated cultural translation of yoga, there is the suggestion that because they have come from Yogini Sunita, who is positioned as an authority, they remain a somehow authentic practice. This also raises the considerations of Dalal (2023: 61) regarding the authority those from South Asia are seen to have in imparting a cultural form, and the act of granting permission for it to then be spread further. In this instance, the teaching of Sunita is granted a level of authority and perceived authenticity because she is of South Asian origin, but this can also be used to dismiss suggestions that what is then done with those teaching can be an act of appropriation. Dalal (2023: 79) argues that the "complex power dynamics of knowledge transmission within dominant cultures, with all its extractive selection, intentional omission, and cultural dislocation" should not be ignored. Therefore, Yogini Sunita's agency in participating in the production of such articles needs to be considered, along with whether this is an example of the "self-orientalism" (Goto-Jones, 2014: 1455) as discussed in the previous chapter.

The articles in Cooper's series are all illustrated with images of Yogini Sunita demonstrating the exercises or movements as they are described, with descriptions of how to do them provided by Cooper. It is unclear from attribution whether the images were provided by Yogini Sunita or taken by newspaper staff. However, many of these images would later be used to illustrate Yogini Sunita's (1965) book *The Art of Relaxation: The Lotus and the Rose*. In the images, Yogini Sunita is shown performing the postures wearing a crop top, shorts and fishnet tights in a carpeted space; the attire, postures and setting are reminiscent of some of those in the 1955 Indra Devi book *Forever Young, Forever Healthy*, which, as noted previously had been advertised in newspapers (see Figure 5.2, below).

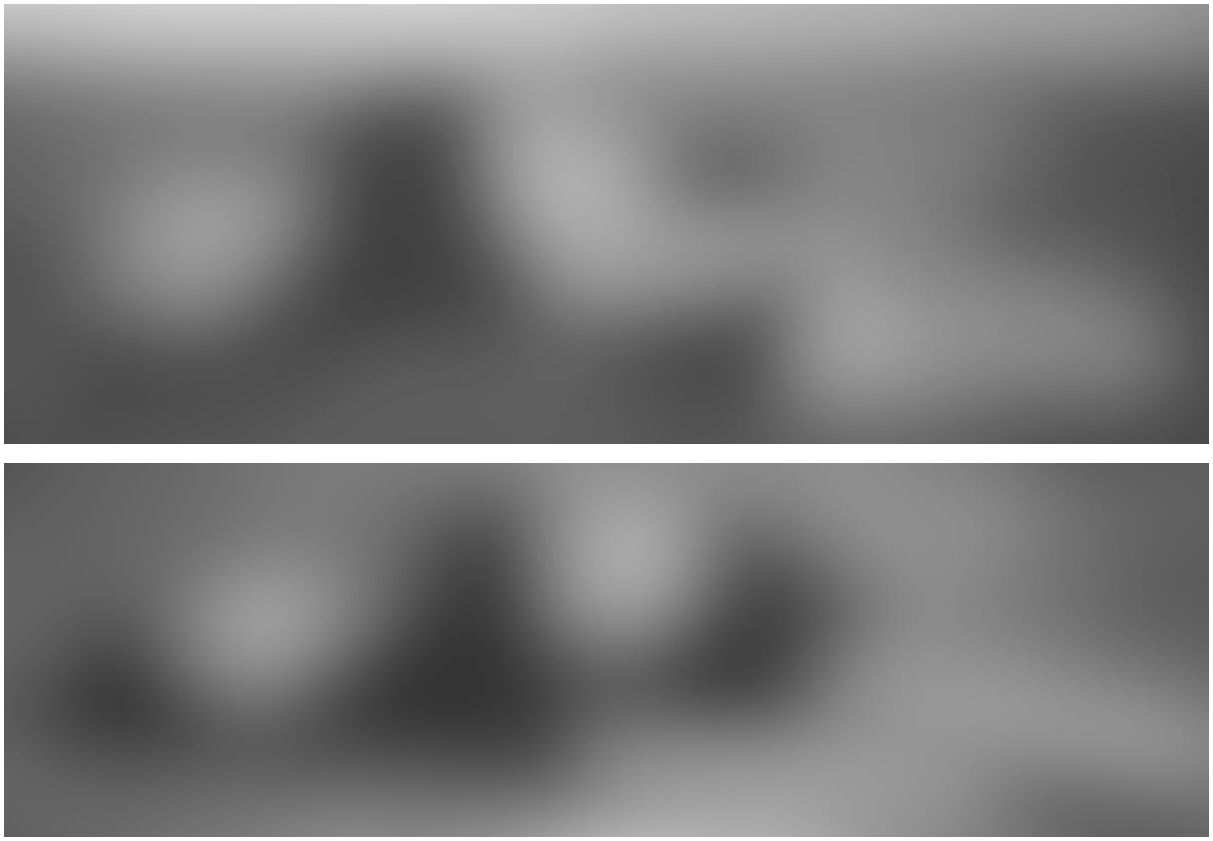


FIGURE 5.2: A comparison of Indra Devi (top) demonstrating “fish posture” in the book *Forever Young, Forever Healthy* (Devi, 1955: 153) and Yogini Sunita in her book *The Art of Relaxation: The Lotus and the Rose* (Sunita, 1965: 30). Images redacted from the version of this thesis submitted to University's e-repositories and made available online due to copyright.

While Sunita was presented as the authority and teacher in the articles, it is also interesting that her postures do not display the exacting precision seen by B.K.S. Iyengar on the BBC the year earlier, and in his book *Light on Yoga* (1966). However, as Spatz (2015: 80) has noted, the work of De Michelis (1995), illustrates how this period saw a move towards “ever-greater precision” in yoga posture alignment. Along with the descriptions of how to perform exercises, many of the articles also offered a particular purpose, such as “For rheumatism, fibrositis, arthritis of shoulders and top vertebrae”. However, it was said they should be performed whether you suffer from that condition or not. This adds a medical discourse to how yoga is represented and understood in the popular UK media. However, that is not to dismiss the long history of yoga and asana being used as therapy within South Asia.

Other examples include the *Daily Mail* (Harry Weaver, 28 November 1964: 5), which offered yoga instruction in an article titled “This is how she got so slim ... the upside down and outside in girl”. The article centred on quotes from Yehudi Menuhin's wife about his

practice and the wider popularity of yoga, stating that 6,000 people in the UK did it, including a list of famous people. Instructions at the bottom of the article then detailed how to do shoulder stand, corpse, and plough postures. However, it appears readers were more impressed by the main image of the article, which showed a slim woman in a leotard and tights performing a headstand as the following week, an article ran in the same section of the *Daily Mail* (5 December 1964: 7) stating that many readers had contacted the paper asking how to do a headstand themselves and gave an illustrated four step guide to getting upside down. A significance of such articles can be found in the authority (or lack of) in their teaching of yoga asana postures, the newspaper did not suggest in its copy that it was relaying the instruction of a particular yoga teacher, it was just teaching the pose. This is an example of the appropriation within cultural translation which Maitland (2017: 87) says is a "cognitive process of familiarization, a conscious embracing of the otherness of the other within the horizon of the own". By offering instruction the article overcomes the distanciation of the yoga practice. Of note, both the *Birmingham Post* and *Daily Mail* articles discussed above appeared in magazine-style sections of Saturday editions of the newspapers. These sections often target a demographic skewed towards female readers. As such they can be read as early examples of the sort of gendered representations of yoga that Lau (2000: 127) says occur when "women's magazines translate their dominant ideologies of beauty, health, sexuality, and gender to yoga and t'ai chi exercises". Such gendering of yoga in the popular UK media is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

At the same time that a more distinct discursive understanding of yoga can be seen to become more dominant in the public consciousness through continual media coverage, the portrayal of yoga practitioners shifted from those who were seen as doing something foreign and unusual also to encompass those who had an interest in doing something which was said to be good for their physical and mental well-being, and shown to be popular with a growing number of people in the West. Inclusion of yoga instruction in newspapers also removed the barrier of entry, which had previously required someone to buy a book on yoga, pay to attend a course/lesson or receive a correspondence course. The lessons were there in a newspaper, which was likely being purchased anyway, and gave people the chance to try postures out in the privacy of their own homes. Understood through Maitland's (2017: 123) concept of cultural translation, such coverage did "not seek to reproduce, but to transform"

the discursive understanding of yoga and aimed to move the intended audience of potential yoga practitioners. Because the established understanding of yoga in the popular psyche was becoming something that could be practiced in the UK for the purpose of health and fitness, it was also one publications were comfortable promoting and teaching to its audiences.

Some of the media coverage which gave yoga instruction also did so by incorporating yoga teaching from commercially available products. This can be seen in a *Belfast Telegraph* (Katherine Hickey, 20 May 1965: 5) article with the headline "Yoga and You". In it, the journalist writes about the Indra Devi (1965) book *Renew Your Life Through Yoga*, and how it has revised Hickey's views about yoga, which they had believed "was something to do with lying on beds of nails, tying oneself in knots and meditating on all things bright and beautiful". However, in noting that the exercises in the book are easy to follow, the suggestion is made that some aspects, such as the idea of cosmic breathing, could be seen as "frankly kinky" which leads to the suggestion that "it is possible to follow the exercises in the book while skipping all this philosophy". This reiterates the way cultural translations are constantly being recreated, Hickey is suggesting that the recreation of yoga as presented in Devi's book is open to selective interpretation, in turn recreating Hickey's own cultural translation of yoga. However, the article then concludes with reference to another product, a set of 25 yoga exercise wall charts, featuring Roma Blair, which had also gone on sale, and from which the page-lead images which illustrate the article (complete with step-by-step instructions of how to do them) come. An *Aberdeen Evening Express* article (15 June 1965: 6) also used images from Blair's wall charts – she was a well-known yoga teacher in Australia who had her own TV shows[34] there in the 1960s and 70s – to show how to perform a selection of yoga exercises. Using such products to demonstrate or teach aspects of yoga performs several discursive roles. They detach yoga from existing lineages of practice and teaching, and frame yoga as a commodity which can be freely traded. As the case is made by Lau (2000: 127), there is also relevance in how, through commodification, certain bodies can be idealised and become representative of a practice. In several of these cases, slim, white, and contextually attractive women were featured in the commercially available products or media coverage relating to them, to represent yoga and its teaching. This can be seen as a

[34] Roma Blair hosted multiple recurring TV shows about yoga including; *Yoga With Roma Blair* (1964-68) and *Relaxing with Roma* (1971-73), which both ran on Australia's GTV9 channel.

forebearer of the yoga videos in which Lau (2000: 127) suggests “it is clear that white women and their ‘lean,’ ‘perfectly shaped’ bodies have largely erased yoga's ethnic associations, at least through the ‘ideology of the image’”.

Yoga courses and books also continued to be advertised in the media. The book *True Yoga* (Zorn, 1965) was advertised in newspapers, including the *Daily Mirror* (30 April 1966: 27), with promises of being able to “build the body you want” and offered a free trial of the publication, which featured “100 expertly posed photographs” illustrating the exercises. Yogini Sunita also took out advertising in the *Birmingham Post* (12 February 1966: 11) following the publication of her book, which taught mind relaxation with breath control and physical exercises and billed her as “the only exponent of Pranayama Yoga in Great Britain”. B.K.S. Iyengar's (1966) *Light on Yoga,* which would go on to be one of the most influential yoga books published and played a significant role in the standardisation and demystification of the practice of postural yoga (De Michelis, 2004), was also published in this period. The *Daily Mirror* (29 December 1965: 9) ran a short article about the book, but with the news angle being that Yehudi Menuhin had written the introduction to the book by his teacher. This focus on celebrity extends to including some of Menuhin's quotes from the book's introduction. Three yoga tips from the book which are highlighted in the article are all also taken from Menuhin's two-page introduction rather than the following 500+ pages of Iyengar's teaching, showing that it was Menuhin's involvement, which was of interest to the journalist or newspaper at the time.

This section has demonstrated how, as the practice of yoga became increasingly popular in the UK, it necessitated a change in how it was covered in the media, with a common trend becoming the news angle of the popularity of yoga classes and practice. I have also drawn attention to how the process of cultural translation occurred at all levels in the act of mediation and practice. However, in adopting a discourse theoretical analysis approach, I consider which types of yoga classes and yogi featured across local, regional and national newspapers. Such coverage frequently highlighted features such as how specific postures, like headstands, were visually attractive to picture editors at newspapers and therefore gained additional coverage and prominence for the practice of, and increased popularity of yoga. Yoga, therefore, became more associated and even synonymous with these postures in the public consciousness. Notably, these postures were increasingly shown

in a class setting, rather than performed by a lone yogi as seen in the previous chapter, suggesting this yoga was one people in the UK could practice without going against cultural norms or expectations and done (though not necessarily) purely for health, fitness, and mental well-being. This illustrates the intertwining of a physical yoga practice with the discourse of "healthism" which Spatz (2015: 83) argues combine ideas of "body type and athletic fitness with other kinds of visible success, such as happiness and wealth". This coverage of yoga also acted to reinforce or recreate how yoga was understood contextually. Frequent focus on physical aspects of a yoga practice, and the incorporation of the above discourses raised the profile of those understandings, in turn also shaping the discursive entity of yoga. It was also shown how newspapers and magazines could use this changing understanding of yoga in the production of content offering yoga instruction and the relationship with commercial products. My focus now turns to how celebrity endorsement, explored through the case study of the Beatles, played a role in continuing to shape discursive understandings of India, yoga and gurus.

5.2 Meditating with the Beatles

In this section I use the case study of the Beatles' engagement with Transcendental Meditation (TM) to investigate how such celebrity endorsements of a transcultural practice or tradition can play a part in shaping how it is contextually understood and recreated. As Jain (2015: 21) discusses, the Beatles' fascination with aspects of Indian culture and relationship with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi is, in the popular imagination, commonly associated with the global diffusion of yoga beyond India. Straus (2005: 49) also contends that yoga achieved "increased international visibility" due to the Beatles, while Diamond (2013: 100) says the flower power of the 1960s, along with the "spiritual romance" of the Beatles "reinforced yoga's position in the popular psyche". The intention of this section then is not to argue whether the Beatles played a role in popularising yoga, but rather to consider the ways their celebrity endorsement of TM and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi played a role in the continuing shaping of public understandings of yoga.

This is achieved by first exploring news media coverage of their interest and interactions with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and TM, using aspects of celebrity endorsement theory to consider the power of the Beatles' celebrity, the meaning transfer resulting from their endorsement to understandings of yoga, and how this played a role in shaping how

yoga was understood in the popular psyche. Several other celebrities engaged with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and TM along with the Beatles including Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones, Mike Love of the Beach Boys, Donovan and Mia Farrow and her sister Prudence. However, I focus on the Beatles as a way of delimiting the case study, and because a disproportionate amount of the news coverage centred on their involvement. The enduring appeal of the Beatles is also highlighted throughout as an important factor in the ongoing interest in their involvement with meditation and yoga and a resulting body of archive material relating to it[35]. The second half of the section then looks in more detail at particular media interest in Maharishi Mahesh Yogi as a guru figure and the guru business of yoga and meditation. In doing this, it questions whether, due to a longstanding orientalist distrust and lack of understanding of the guru figure within Western modernity, it was more resistant to the process of cultural translation than the wider and physical practice of yoga.

5.2.1 Yoga gets a little help from its friends

Although the Beatles have been credited for their role in popularising yoga, meditation and broader Indian spirituality, their earliest encounters with these subjects can be seen as considerably less favourable. The Beatles' movie *Help!* (Lester, 1965), tells the fantastical story of the Beatles getting caught up in what Glynn (2011: 29) describes as an "Eastern plot of ritual sacrifice", which he says is problematic, contains crude stereotypes of a mystic East, and is overlayed with a colonial or imperialist code. Such representations rely on the orientalist understandings highlighted in the previous chapter and make for an unlikely introduction to a relationship between the Beatles and India which would become so influential. However, *Help!* also prompted two moments which would go on to influence the Beatles and their relationships with India. Hamelman (2020: 281) says that while the group were filming in the Bahamas, yogi Swami Vishnudevananda approached them between takes gifting them four copies of his (1960) book *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga*. Glynn (2011: 38) also says it was while shooting scenes in an Indian restaurant in London that George Harrison first encountered the sitar with Hamelman (2020: 281) adding that "From its seeds in Orientalist slapstick, Harrison's initial interest in the "funny sound" of a sitar on a

[35] Despite it being several decades since the Beatles visited India, numerous books and documentaries have been released on the subject in the past 10 years.

movie set evolved quickly into a lifetime immersion in Indian music, religion, and culture". It was also around this time members of the Beatles started using LSD, with Harrison saying in the documentary *George Harrison: Living in the Material World* (2011, Scorsese) that when he first took it (his dentist slipped it in his coffee over dinner) he had a sensation like someone whispering "Yogis of the Himalayas" saying "I'd never thought about them for the rest of my life, but suddenly this thought was at the back of my consciousness". Newcombe (2019: 136-139) has written about the Beatles' Indian musical inspiration, Harrison's interest in the sitar, his interactions with the Asian Music Circle in London, and his visit to India in 1966 to continue sitar lessons with Ravi Shankar, which he would later say was an "excuse" to search for a spiritual connection (Newman, 2006: 30).

In 1967, the Beatles attended a lecture at the Hilton Hotel in London by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi about TM. Speaking on the television documentary series *The Beatles Anthology*[36] (1995, ITV), Harrison said he had come to the realisation LSD was not the answer for him, and that he "really went for meditation" and wanted a mantra. After the lecture, he and fellow Beatles Paul McCartney and John Lennon (Ringo Starr did not attend the event) went backstage to meet the Maharishi, and Harrison asked him "Got any mantras?" Instead, he invited them to join him the following day in Bangor, Wales, where he was hosting a five-day TM event. A page-lead article in the *Daily Mirror* (Alan Gordon, 25 August 1967: 3) told how the three Beatles had been in the 1,500-strong audience with the "mystic from the Himalayas" who was also described as "the world's leading expert in transcendental meditation". Such attendance demonstrates that there was a growing interest in TM prior to the Beatles involvement. The article went on to detail how the Maharishi said twice daily 30-minute sessions of his meditation "can make you a healthier, happier person altogether" and included images of the Beatles in the front row of the audience and then kneeling on the floor listening intently to what the Maharishi was saying in their back-stage meeting. While the article did not describe what TM consisted of, Harrison's mantra question suggests those in attendance knew that it included silently repeating a mantra. Woodrum (1982: 93) has argued that the Maharishi previously presented this as "merely one component of a holistic program for spiritual development" alongside breathing exercises, hatha yoga postures, and

[36] *The Beatles Anthology*: Broadcast in six parts between 26th November and 31st December 1995 on ITV (TV). It was released as an eight-volume set on VHS and LaserDisk in September 1996.

mealtime prayer. However, as taught in the UK in 1967, TM was the mantra meditation. The Maharishi can, therefore, be seen to be culturally translating and recreating his teaching to appeal to his audience. The Maharishi would later say (in a video published posthumously by the Maharishi Foundation)[37] that TM was yoga but that he called it Transcendental Meditation because the word yoga at that time was commonly understood to refer to physical exercises. The Maharishi and TM had previously been featured in UK media, including; *The Guardian* (16 December 1959:6), *Daily Mail* (27 October 1960: 17) BBC TV's *Wednesday Magazine* (27 December 1961) and *Meeting Point: The Maharishi and the Abbot* (5 July 1964). However, it was the association with the Beatles during this, his ninth world tour, which instantly promoted him and his practice to front page news.

According to Roessner (2020: 260) the Beatles phenomenon was made possible by a broad set of technological advancements, growing the power of their celebrity beyond what had previously been imagined. Everything they did was newsworthy. In the same way Roessner (2020: 264) makes the case that Beatles' concerts were newsworthy spectacles "not for musical performance, but because they confirmed the band's celebrity status" the group attending events such as the TM lectures were newsworthy because of their presence. However, it can be argued that the Beatles did more than raise the prominence of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and TM by actively endorsing them. McCracken's (1989: 310) model of celebrity endorsement proposes an element of meaning transfer in which "meanings pass from celebrity to product and from product to consumer". While the Beatles' promotion of TM was not the sort of advertisement which McCracken used to define a celebrity endorsement, it does meet the updated definition proposed by Bergkvist and Zhou (2016: 644) where "a celebrity endorsement is an agreement between an individual who enjoys public recognition (a celebrity) and an entity (e.g., a brand) to use the celebrity for the purpose of promoting the entity". Therefore, the following media coverage and endorsements will be considered with this in mind, as well as how this played a role in shaping the discursive entity of yoga as it was understood in the popular psyche.

Goldberg (2010: 153) claims of the Beatles' relationship with the Maharishi: "For the youth market, this was the gold standard in endorsements". This was also recognised by the

[37] The video Maharishi on Yoga and Transcendental Meditation was posted to the Transcendental Meditation YouTube channel on 7th May 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPwQfr3kjLY [Accessed 12 October 2023].

Maharishi, who was quoted on the front-page of the *Daily Mail* (26 August 1967: 1) saying "I believe the Beatles will come out blowing the trumpet of transcendental meditation" after they arrived in Bangor to study with him. In an unidentified news interview[38] from the event, featured in the documentary *The Beatles and India* (2021, Bose), the Maharishi was asked "so do you think if the Beatles adopt your teaching, then they can spread it amongst others in England?" to which he replied that because younger people around the world were fascinated by them, they could help spread it wider than England. While Woodrum (1982: 93) observes the Maharishi was beginning to find counter-cultural and college followers in the US, the *Daily Mirror* (31 August 1967: 11) reported that his followers in India were typically middle-aged people at the time. The Beatles' interest in TM can, therefore, be seen to give it an added element of celebrity appeal with a younger audience. These examples also show how there was an instant recognition of the Beatles' potential influence in bringing TM to a broader audience. In our interview, Angie Donoghue said that while she was not prompted to do yoga because of the Beatles or to emulate them, she may have only become aware of yoga because of the media interest in it prompted by the Beatles.

Archive television news footage[39] shows the level of popular UK media interest in the Beatles attending the Maharishi's event in Bangor, with groups of photographers and journalists crowding the group when in public spaces. Several articles included descriptions of how TM was practiced to understand what the Beatles were doing in Bangor. An article in the *Daily Mail* (Michael Litchfield, 26 August 1967: 4) reported followers were given a word, which must be kept secret, to think about, which the Maharishi said would release inner tensions. A follow-up article (Arthur Redford, *Daily Mail,* 28 August 1967: 6) quoted McCartney and Starr, who held a press conference at the event after the group was initiated by the Maharishi. Of focus was how the Beatles were replacing drugs with meditation and had each given the Maharishi one week's salary. In McCracken's (1989) model of celebrity endorsement and meaning transfer, cultural meanings move from celebrities to endorsed products to consumers as a multi stage process. Applied to this example, meditation and through association yoga, can be seen to take on new meanings from the Beatles which can

[38] While audio from the news interview is played in the film *The Beatles and India* (2021) the source is not clearly identified. Archive footage, photos and audio are used in montage form in the documentary.
[39] Archive news footage used in the BBC News (2017) website article "The Beatles: When Beatlemania hit Bangor in 1967" (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-wales-41048700) [Accessed: 22 January 2024].

then be claimed by consumers, or those doing these practices. As celebrities, the Beatles evoked a range of cultural meaning which could be drawn upon by fans. Stark (2005: 4) stated that the Beatles' "came to embody the values of the counterculture" though Roessner (2020: 262) contends that in addition to being emblematic of "rock counterculture" the meanings associated to the Beatles were also grounded in their contextual setting. As such, due to their endorsement, meditation took on some of these meanings in how it was understood. For example, for some meditation became differently counter-cultural to those examples seen in the previous chapters. Continuing McCracken's model, this meaning could then be transferred to those engaging in or practicing meditation. For some, meditation became a countercultural way of opting out of aspects of society. However, it should be noted that such transfer of meaning is not a given, the consumer does not automatically see themselves as taking on those meanings, but "must claim the meanings and then work with them" McCracken (1989: 317). The Beatles' stay with the Maharishi was cut short after the death of their manager Brian Epstein, though before leaving, they answered questions about what the Maharishi had said to them after Epstein's passing.

Over the following weeks, the Beatles' interest in meditation continued to garner popular media attention, including the Archbishop of Canterbury giving his blessing of it (*Daily Mail*, 1 September 1967: 1). Lennon and Harrison appeared on ITV's *The Frost Programme* (29 September 1967, ITV)[40], for which the Maharishi had recorded an interview, to discuss how they practiced meditation, what it gave them, and how it related to their experiences with LSD and religion. Such was the interest in the show (Newcombe, 2019: 148) they returned to the show the following week (4 October 1967, ITV)[41] to respond to letters viewers had sent in. During the show, Harrison says, "We've known, I've been under the impression that meditation and yoga, things like that, have held the answer, personally, and yet I haven't actually had any formal teaching whereas when the Maharishi came around, there he was ready to teach us". This is an example of the sort of projection of desires and longing Heath and Potter (2006: 260) suggest countercultural rebels have done onto other cultures when they have "essentially constructed the exotic as a reflection of their own ideology". In this way the Maharishi's cultural translation of a yoga practice, which has been

[40] *The Frost Programme*: Broadcast: Friday 29th September 1967 22:30 on ITV (TV). Runtime 45 minutes.
[41] *The Frost Programme*: Broadcast: Friday 4th October 1967 22:30 on ITV (TV). Runtime 45 minutes.

recreated to appeal in the context of the UK in the mid 1960s, is interpreted by Harrison through his existing understandings and contextual longing, again being recreated as a new cultural translation in his articulation of it. This demonstrates how the process of cultural translation and the re-creation of what is being referred to occurs at all levels of the interaction. The two Beatles then talk about how their money and success "wasn't the answer" again highlighting how despite achieving everything they had, they felt the need to look elsewhere, and to an oppositional East, to find meaning. Discussing how TM can take you to another level of consciousness, Harrison also talks about those who have mastered this and can do "those things called miracles". These, he says, include yogis who have cured their own cancer or have lived for thousands of years, adding that, "It sounds pretty far out to the average person who doesn't know anything about this". Harrison is here making the sort of orientalist associations of magic and the East observed by Goto-Jones (2016) and displaying the lack of standards of rationality Heath and Potter (2006: 260) suggest can occur when evaluating foreign cultures. While the segment was only intended to take the first half of the show, Frost says after the advertisements that they have "scrapped the rest" to stay with the subject of meditation and the Beatles, which was mostly taken up by a studio discussion.

In early 1968, the Beatles and several other famous faces, including actor Mia Farrow and musicians such as Donovan, and Mike Love of the Beach Boys, would travel to Rishikesh, India, to meditate with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. However, these endorsements were not seen as positive by all media; the *Daily Mail* (Anne Scott-James, 25 January 1968: 6) questioned whether such associations made it challenging to take the Maharishi seriously. The Beatles' departed from Heathrow to India (*Daily Mail*, 16 February 1968: 1) and over the following weeks, dozens of news reports and articles would detail what they were doing with the Maharishi and how they were progressing. While the Beatles were not the only celebrities at the ashram, they were the focus of much of the media coverage. *The Times* (19 February 1968: 3) reported on the group meditating and "gradually initiating themselves into longer and longer spells of silent inward relaxation"' while a two-page spread in the *Daily Mirror* (Don Short, 19 February 1968: 12-13) gave more insight into what the Beatles were doing. Many more articles were published while the Beatles were in Rishikesh, including the

Maharishi stating that Harrison had achieved "the highest stage of Transcendental Meditation" (The *Daily Mail*, 21 February 1968: 1).

There were also several image-led page leads such as in the *Daily Mirror* (Don Short, 20 February 1968: 3) which focused on the celebrities who had been pictured at the retreat with "their leader". As discussed in the following section, this visuality within TV and newspaper coverage offered audiences the ability to experience this cultural encounter in a way which was not possible within text alone, Iwamura (2011). Such articles also illustrate what I propose is an additional stage in the process of celebrity endorsement and meaning transfer, where meaning associated with what is being endorsed also transfers onto the celebrity doing the endorsement. While the Beatles association has been shown to make meditation cool and differently countercultural, here, the Beatles are perceived by some as becoming increasingly spiritual through their association with India and meditation. Shearer (2020: 211) suggests that images from the retreat were either the result of "divine providence or a masterly stroke of PR", concluding that it was "probably a mixture of both".

In an unidentified TV interview at the ashram – featured in the documentary *Meeting The Beatles In India* (2020, Saltzman) – Lennon responded to a question about the Beatles propagating the teaching of Maharishi, saying, "We'll do anything we can, anything that's possible, everything we can, and we might be able to do a lot" illustrating those involved were aware of the exchange at play in the endorsement of TM and the Maharishi. In our interview, Jayne Orton recalled, "Because the Beatles went to India, and they were seen sitting with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Rishikesh, that had a massive influence in, you know, the hippie trail and people going to yoga. If it was cool for the Beatles, it must be good". However, others were less convinced the Fab Four understood or appreciated what they were doing, with Ken Thompson saying, "The Beatles advertised it (yoga) more than anybody, and yet I'm sure they didn't understand half of the things they were chanting". Jayne's comment about the hippie trail – written about by Newcombe (2019: 142) – raises another way in which to consider the Beatles' endorsement of meditation, and by association yoga. In proposing the Beatles as place makers, Kruse (2005: 89) draws on Herbert (1996) to consider how places associated with artists appeal to visitors who want to connect with their lives or the works they created. Indeed, many have followed the Beatles to the ashram in Rishikesh, where they penned dozens of songs (Hamelman, 2020: 284). However, fans could have also

emulated the meditative practices of the Beatles in attempts to visit the same mental location as the Beatles were when the songs were written for that same sense of connection to those works which were so publicly intertwined with their time in India with the Maharishi.

The Beatles' public endorsement of Maharishi, though not TM and meditation, would soon end after the remaining Beatles, Lennon and Harrison, left India (Brian Dean, *Daily Mail*, 16 April 1968: 7) after a rumoured falling out with their former spiritual leader. What this change in the relationship between the Beatles and the Maharishi meant for popular understandings of yoga and meditation are addressed within the following section, along with consideration of the media representation of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi as a guru figure, and the economy of the yoga guru, questioning whether these aspects of yoga were more resistant to cultural translation.

5.2.2 Shining a light on the guru business

In the previous section I explored how the Beatles' celebrity endorsement of TM, and the unique level of popular media interest in them played a role in refining how yoga was understood, and further shaped the discursive entity of how it was understood in the public psyche, due in part to meaning transfer between yoga and the Beatles. In this section I now move towards a consideration of this same endorsement but in relation to the guru figure. Singleton and Goldberg (2014: 1-2) have highlighted how the multifarious roles and functions of the guru have changed in non-traditional contexts and been "reconfigured and shaped according to the needs of the day", but also the complications of gurus operating in cultures where there is "no traditional infrastructure for their activities". Using the case study of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the latter is focused on here, considering whether the concept and business of a guru experienced more friction in the process of cultural translation than other aspects of yoga, which, as has been shown, were drawn from, recreated and understood through a filter of existing contextual discourses. In doing so I question popular understandings of the guru and whether a legacy of oriental ideas contributed to a distrust of gurus operating within the UK or seeking British followers, potentially contributing to the way Singleton and Goldberg (2014: 8) say some in both Asia and the West can see the guru system as "bankrupt, suspect, or intrinsically corrupt". The section also draws heavily on Iwamura's (2011: 6) use of the "Oriental Monk" concept, which covers a range of religious

figures who it is argued have been framed and understood through orientalist ideas and "absorbed by popular consciousness through mediated culture". The visual images made possible by the technology of cameras and video, Iwamura (2011: 7) asserts, gives an immediacy to such representations beyond that of text alone and as such the "Asian sage is not simply someone we imagine, but his presence materializes in the photograph or moving picture before us". Iwamura also suggests that, in the US context of the 1960s, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi offered Americans the chance to virtually experience oriental culture through his popular media representations, while his relationship with the Beatles resulted in him and his practice gaining legitimacy through an authorial framework defined by celebrity.

As detailed in the previous section, it was through his association with the Beatles that the Maharishi became a high-profile figure within the UK press. However, it should be noted that the founder of the Spiritual Regeneration Movement, headquartered in LA, had been featured in national newspapers on visits to the UK, including *The Guardian* (Michael Frayn, 16 December 1959: 6) and the *Daily Mail* (William MacLelland 27 October 1960: 17). The latter featured images from an event after his UK headquarters were established near Regent's Park, London, noting that he was "bearded and in a wrap-round robe of shimmering white" and his mission was to bring peace and happiness to the world through meditation. However, it also commented that this was a press conference and that while the Maharishi "does not concern himself with money", the headquarters had been provided by his followers, and that he had just been driven back from a lecture tour in Germany in a Rolls-Royce. Other articles, including one in the *Daily Mail* (Lionel Clay, 19 September 1961: 8), detailed the practice and intention of the Maharishi's meditation. These can be seen as examples of the reverent and critical portrayals Iwamura (2011: 65) says can be adopted towards the oriental monk figure, both of which rely on orientalist notions. On one hand, the Maharishi was presented as an embodiment of Eastern spirituality, bringing his mystical practices and promise to the UK from a Himalayan cave. On the other hand, he was someone who could potentially not be trusted, out for themselves and in the UK to make money.

The Beatles attending lectures by the Maharishi in London and then Bangor, Wales, was shown above to be a pivotal moment in generating television, radio and newspaper coverage about him and the practice of TM. An article in the *Daily Mirror* (Alan Gordon, 25 August 1967: 3) after they attended the Hilton lecture in London, can be characterised by its

portrayal of the Beatles' reverence towards the Maharishi. The full-page article, which runs under the text “when the idols find somebody to idolise …” features images of the three Beatles in attendance (Harrison, Lennon and McCartney) in the audience and then meeting the guru, who is referred to as “HH” or “His Holiness” throughout the article, with text describing them sitting “reverently” at his feet and noting that they “gazed” up into his face while listening “spellbound”. In also describing the Maharishi as “a mystic from the Himalayas” the article draws on orientalist ideas of the East while romanticising the relationship between the Maharishi and the Beatles in the way Iwamura (2011: 95) suggests can legitimise the transfer of “Eastern spiritual knowledge” to the West.

Days later, the *Daily Mail* (Michael Litchfield, 26 August 1967: 4) would take the more critical but equally orientalist approach to covering the relationship between guru and pop group. The article, which set out to address the “mystery shrouding the background” of the Maharishi, who it said had “descended from the hills of Kashmir”, can be seen to draw on an orientalist distrust of that which is different or not understood, and the guru as a conman who is capitalising on this knowledge gap. The article focuses on the money the Maharishi is making from celebrities and audiences in London, the fact that he has a PR firm representing him, and why he is called His Holiness. It also questions information in his “smart publicity brochure”, including the location of Jyotirmath, where it says the Maharishi’s master was from, going on to state that “the place does not appear in the World Gazetteer and it is not known to officials at India House”. In doing this the article challenges and calls into question other aspects of the Maharishi’s teaching. The town Jyotimath, also known as Joshimath, it should be noted, does exist. It is located in the Indian state of Uttarakhand and is used as a gateway to several Himalayan mountain climbing expeditions. Other media coverage also focused on the finances of the Maharishi, with the *Daily Mail* (Arthur Redford, 28 August 1967: 6) noting that he was “enjoying a very profitable weekend” in Bangor with the Beatles and that his followers would each be donating the equivalent of one week of their earnings. This demonstrates a cultural resistance to the economy of a cultural tradition or practice being translated from one location and culture to another.

Questioning of the Maharishi and suggestions he should not be trusted continued in articles such as the *Daily Mirror* (31 August 1967: 11), which reported from India saying that holy men there had been surprised at the way in which the Beatles had “succumbed to the

message of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi" suggesting it was something that could or should have been resisted. It also questioned his version of yoga by noting that "the earliest known authentic book on yoga, written by Patanjali in 2000 BC" advocates an eight-fold path and that other Indian yogis had criticised the Maharishi's focus on meditation. This is significant in that it questions his cultural translation of yoga and highlights opposition to it. By contrast, the same criticism had not been shown to the previously discussed translations of yoga, which focused on physical asana practices and which national UK newspapers had themselves taught in articles. Notably, it was only after the Archbishop of Canterbury gave his blessing to the Beatles' involvement with the Maharishi (*Daily Mail*, 1 September 1967: 1) that the paper would allow him to articulate his practice in a page-lead article (Rhona Churchill, *Daily Mail*, 1 September 1967: 6). This suggests that it had taken the authority of this institutional blessing to overcome the pre-existing distrust of the foreign guru.

The following February, the Beatles travelled to Rishikesh in India to join the Maharishi on a meditation retreat, prompting a flurry of media coverage, including television news footage and photo-led articles about them arriving in India and making their way to the camp. Speaking in the documentary *The Beatles and India* (Bose, 2021), journalist Saeed Naqvi said he was aware "the whole world and its media" was going to be there to cover the event and recalls there being hundreds of reporters outside the fortified gates of the retreat, illustrating the power of the Beatles celebrity as discussed by Roessner (2020: 260). TV news reports, and articles such as in the *Daily Mirror* (Don Short, 19 February 1968: 12-13) illustrated this fortification, while others used a now-iconic covertly taken image by photographer Ragu Rai to show the Maharishi addressing his followers including the Beatles (Don Short, *Daily Mirror*, 20 February 1968). This and other visual coverage from the meditation retreat demonstrates the way in which Iwamura (2011: 108) suggests "mass media" reports differ in their deployment of orientalism from that in literature, and the proliferation of photographic and televisual footage gave audiences "an illusory sense that they were experiencing Mahesh first-hand". Television and newspaper audiences were here able to put themselves in the imaginary position of attending a meditation retreat in India in a way that had not been possible before, but also, through identifying themselves with the Beatles as the focus figures, their imagined position was one of student or follower to the guru figure of the Maharishi. Articles featuring the Beatles embracing the culture of the

retreat, such as Lennon being photographed wearing flowing white robes (*Daily Mirror*, 23 February 1968: 3), also demonstrate Said's (2003: 26) suggestion that media resources are forced into standardised moulds of representing stereotypes. In this case, it is Lennon's adoption of something stereotypically Eastern, which is newsworthy and seen as suitable for a page-lead photo-based article.

Some of the news coverage from the Beatles' retreat in India continued to suggest that not all was as it seemed. The article mentioned above (*Daily Mirror*, 23 February 1968: 3) about Lennon wearing white robes for instance also noted that a cameraman had complained he was assaulted there and that "police have called to say the place is a hotel – and that the Maharishi should keep a register of foreign guests". From a media production perspective, this sort of news article could have resulted from a demand for coverage but a lack of official access but also made use of orientalist distrust of the guru figure. Such articles can be seen to increase after Ringo became the first Beatle to leave the retreat with the article "*Ringo quits* 'Butlins by the Ganges'" (Brian Dean, *Daily Mail*, 2 March 1968: 3) stating he had missed his children, did not like spicy food, and compared the centre to a holiday camp. Days later, the *Newcastle Journal* (Linda Matthews, 4 March 1968: 2) ran a syndicated article from the *LA Times* questioning in its headline, "Is the Maharishi a bit of a faker?" The article drew on quotes from Swami VishnuDevananda (mentioned previously, he gave the Beatles books about yoga while they were filming *Help!*) saying the Maharishi's yoga was not "true yoga", which takes longer and includes breathwork, physical movement and diet. He also describes the Maharishi's dress as "sideshow attires" adding that his beard is only for attracting attention. This friction between interpretations and differing cultural translations of the practice of yoga is here used as a way in which to criticise and undermine the Maharishi. It also reiterates a reluctance to embrace a plurality of yoga practices, with the suggestion being that if one understanding of yoga is correct the other is wrong. Other articles questioned the Maharishi's finances and how funds raised from "British followers" were being "transferred to India" (*Daily Mail*, 15 March 1968: 6), noting how money was being raised and that the Charity Commission were checking accounts. After the remaining Beatles (Lennon and Harrison) left the retreat, there were also reports (Brian Dean, *Daily Mail*, 16 April 1968: 7) featuring the Beatles spokesperson countering claims by the Maharishi that the group would be contributing "large sums" of money to establish meditation centres in

London. In the same way Iwamura (2011) considers representations of the oriental monk figure in relation to the context of American society, it should be noted here that it was only days after the Beatles left India to return home Enoch Powell made his infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech (Anthony Shrimsley, *Daily Mirror*, 21 April 1968: 1-2) in which he warned about unchecked mass immigration from the Commonwealth to the UK, potentially offering insight into a way in which a section of British society at the time would view those from India.

The Maharishi would again be front-page news (*Daily Mail* 15 May 1968: 1) when Lennon and McCartney spoke out about their relationship with him labelling it a "mistake" and adding, "He was human – for a while we thought he was not". Quoted the following day (*Daily Mail*, 16 May 1968: 9), Harrison said: "I have not broken with the thought of meditation. I have only broken with the Maharishi and his ideas of making the whole thing subject to mass-media. We believe that he took advantage of all the publicity that we gave him by going to him in the Himalayas". There has been much speculation about the falling out between the Beatles and the Maharishi, but that is not my focus here. Instead, such resulting media coverage is used to raise questions about whether the public nature of this souring of the relationship caused a negative perception of the concept of yoga in the public psyche, despite the fact that all of the Beatles continued to practice and speak positively of meditation. Erdogan (1999: 296) notes that when a celebrity endorser becomes embroiled in controversy, it can result in embarrassment for a brand. However, here, a suggested controversy is caused by the figurehead of a practice, and the celebrity endorsement acts instead to shine a light on this.

This section has shown how the Beatles' celebrity endorsement of the Maharishi and TM played a part in further refining how yoga was understood, and shaping the discursive entity of yoga, in the UK through a process of meaning transfer. Consideration of how the media interest in the Maharishi, because of his relationship with the Beatles, also highlighted how the guru figure and economy surrounding the guru business as a translated cultural practice were more resistant to the process of cultural translation than some of the previously addressed aspects of yoga.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated how discursive understandings of yoga in the UK were shaped, in part, as media outlets began to produce coverage focusing on the popularity of the practice. Through analysis of media texts, and corroborated via interviews and ethnographic data collection, I have been able to identify how presenting yoga as a predominantly physical exercise regime served key media interests. This generated newsworthy and visually striking content, leading to yoga being increasingly perceived in the UK as a practice accessible to individuals without the need for deeper spiritual understanding, and something that could be easily commodified. The case study of the Beatle's involvement with TM then showed how such celebrity endorsements can go beyond raising the profile of a practice, and incorporate a process of meaning transfer whereby the endorsed item or practice takes on discursive elements associated with the celebrity. However, I argued not all aspects of cultural practice move transculturally and can be culturally translated with the same ease, using the example of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi I demonstrated how there was cultural resistance to the guru figure and the guru business which was not present when considering yoga as a predominantly physical exercise.

While the previous chapter characterised a period when the media was attempting to understand yoga through its broad discursive entity, existing orientalist ideas and interactions with yogis, between 1964 and 1968, media outlets took a more active role in representing yoga. Much media attention focused on the popularity and growth of yoga classes, presenting it as a suitable practice for the audience. Cultural translations of yoga which were easily understood through existing Western discourses of physical health, fitness and mental well-being became more likely to garner media coverage. Those cultural translations of yoga which overcame its difference were promoted as a result of media interests and requirements. Increasingly visual representations of yoga, with yogis performing asana such as headstand or lotus were used as key signifiers of yoga, and to increase the newsworthiness of those articles. This further contributed to yoga becoming more commonly understood as a practice of health and fitness and, I suggest, an early example of what Wildcroft (2020: 16) calls the "visible yoga mainstream". Because these postures were frequently shown being demonstrated to students, it suggested yoga as a suitable practice for a wider audience, with the aspiration, not requirement to be able to do them. I also

identified the economy of teaching yoga as significant in this process, adding to the power dynamics at play which need to be considered in yoga's cultural translation. Yoga teachers recognised the role of media coverage in generating interest for their classes and adapted their teaching to appeal to media interests, prioritising marketability. For example, teachers including Yogini Sunita recreated their approach to yoga teaching in a bid to appeal to the media and wider audiences, while at the same time using acts of self-orientalism to invoke ideas of perceived authenticity and authority. In this way the framework of cultural translation allowed me to address issues of why and how yoga was culturally appropriated and commodified, rather than simply making a moral judgement that it was wrong. I suggest popular mediations of yoga not only favoured those cultural translations of yoga which were easily incorporated into existing Western discourse, but that there was an incentive for yogis to present yoga in ways which appealed to the media. Yogis who appeared in the media often did so because they presented a cultural translation of yoga which they knew would have media appeal. Such coverage, itself a cultural translation, then came to define yoga for some of the audience, illustrating the media's contribution to this process. As a result of this I argue yoga became, for many, a practice primarily of health, fitness and mental wellbeing. A narrowed understanding of yoga was one that was easily adapted to media use; it was used in the production of content that taught aspects of yoga in newspaper articles and allowed for the promotion of commercial products relating to yoga. This also separated yoga from existing teaching authority structures; a newspaper could teach a yoga posture with no reference to a teacher, lineage, or tradition. Instead, it became a cultural translation of yoga understood through existing discourses. A commodified representation of yoga, often relayed in the media coverage, was also suggested to contribute to the erasure of yoga's ethnic associations, as discussed by Lau (2000).

McCracken (1989: 310) contends that celebrity endorsements can be understood as a process of meaning transfer rather than a celebrity merely raising the profile of an endorsed product. I have demonstrated this was the case with the Beatles' endorsement of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and his practice of Transcendental Meditation. Through highly mediated acts including attending lectures with the Maharishi and traveling to his retreat in India, the Beatles made meditation (as an aspect of yoga) more appealing to a section of a younger audience. This was in part because meditation became differently countercultural through

this association, compared with its existing countercultural status as a product of its foreignness. The association of the Beatles as countercultural icons of the period gave meditation a sense of being a way to opt out, to search for meaning elsewhere, further enhanced by suggestions that the group had replaced LSD with meditation sessions. However, I also showed how the Beatles were seen to have become more spiritual in the public eye through their association with meditation, suggesting that there can also be a stage of meaning transfer from the endorsed product or practice back to the celebrity. This points to the way the cultural translation of yoga is not limited to the way it is understood and practiced, but that it can also change the destination culture. I made the case that the guru figure and the economy of the guru were more resistant to the process of cultural translation than other aspects of yoga, which were able to be framed by existing discourses. Using Iwamura's (2011: 6) understanding of the "Oriental Monk" concept, negative media representations of the Maharishi were shown to fall into reverent or critical portrayals, both of which relied on orientalist ideas to make their arguments. I now examine the discursive contours of yoga's mainstreaming through the medium of television and the role played by yoga communities from 1969-1975 to demonstrate their significant role in the process of yoga's cultural translation and how they helped shape popular understandings of the practice.

Chapter 6: Mainstreaming yoga in the media (1969-75)

The previous two chapters have demonstrated how yoga, as mediated in the popular UK media, underwent an abrupt process of cultural translation between 1955 and 1968. In chapter four I showed how popular understandings of yoga went from being varied but predominantly based on orientalist ideas and representations to being shaped more by yoga teachers who acted as key agents in the process and interacted with the television, radio, and news media. Chapter five then demonstrated how, as yoga became more visible, it was increasingly presented as a viable activity for people in the UK, grounded in a health, fitness, and mental well-being discourse. This chapter now explores the discursive contours of yoga's mainstreaming through the medium of television and the role played by yoga communities in shaping popular understandings of the practice. I find that yoga, as taught on television, was a specific cultural translation contextually shaped to appeal to a broader audience. This led to its increased commodification, resulting in gender and class-based implications for how yoga was seen and who practiced it. The role of yoga communities across the country in shaping yoga's popular understandings is then shown to come, in part, from their engagement with a range of media and external institutions. In this way, their cultural translations of yoga are hybrid entities shaped through notions of authority, tradition, and contextual cultural needs.

This chapter opens with a section on what is proposed as an epochal event in the mediation of yoga in Britain: the broadcast of Richard Hittleman's *Yoga For Health* on television in 1971. Up to 4.5 million viewers were reported to have tuned in to watch episodes of the series (*Yoga & Health*, 1972, Vol 2 No 8: 2). This section explores the cultural translation of yoga in the television programme, considering how it was shaped through the medium of the practice-along show, and the desire for yoga to appear to a broader audience. Using news reports, archive footage and the recollection of viewers, aspects including the show's production, the portrayal of Hittleman as an authority, and the centrality of physical postures demonstrated by female models are considered, along with how this contributed to Western understandings of yoga as a fitness-oriented and feminised practice. A case study of tie-in products associated with the show is then used to illustrate how this specific cultural translation of yoga contributed in part to the fast and wide-ranging commodification of yoga

in the UK, which occurred at the time, and how this, in turn, added to how yoga and those who practiced it were understood societally, particularly in relation to gender and class.

The second half of the chapter moves onto the contributions of yoga communities towards shaping the discursive understanding of yoga through their cultural translations. This is achieved by considering the previously identified BWY, along with Iyengar-based communities in cities including London and Manchester, in terms of their contributions to the production of news coverage, which emerges a site of cultural struggle to control how yoga is understood. The activities of these communities - identified by De Michelis (2004) as having been influential during the period of yoga's popularisation - and how they presented yoga between and to their members are also considered. Archive material and the recollections of members of those communities are therefore used to challenge and/or corroborate the media accounts as well as add additional context around things such as the development of yoga teacher training programs, yoga's professionalisation and to gain further insight into the logics of why and how people chose to practice yoga.

6.1 Yoga for the millions

Throughout the interviews conducted as part of this research, one media representation of yoga was referenced considerably more than all others: the broadcast of Richard Hittleman's *Yoga For Health* on ITV (1971-1974). The show, which the American yogi hosted, initially aired on Wednesday and Friday afternoons to an audience primarily made up of at-home mothers (Newcombe, 2019: 189). *Yoga For Health* was the first British television show that encouraged viewers to practice yoga along at home; it therefore gave people in the UK the same ability to practice "yoga as a body-maintenance regimen without ever coming into contact with a yoga guru or joining an elite or countercultural movement" that Jain (2015: 43) says those in the US had when Hittleman's yoga show started airing there. The practice-along nature of the show is also relevant in respect of Bhattacharya's (2023: 421) "doing seeing" understanding of televised yoga whereby "seeing acquired meaning only in praxis, or in doing, and doing acquired meaning in being seen" when considering discursive understandings of what yoga is and who practices it.

6.1.1 Transmitting and transforming yoga on TV

News that Britain was to get a regular "look-and-learn" yoga series on television was first reported in the national press in publications including the *Daily Mail* (Brian Dean, 11 September 1970: 10) and *Daily Mirror* (11 September 1970: 11) during the filming of the 65-part series. Both articles noted the show would be hosted by Richard Hittleman, with the *Daily Mail* referring to him as "a leading American authority on yoga" and the *Daily Mirror* using the fact he "taught yoga to heavyweight boxing champion Cassius Clay" as a marker of his expertise and authority. However, both articles also referred to the two women who would be his demonstrating students, the *Daily Mirror* noting Cheryl Johnson and Lyn Marshall were "glamorous ex-models". Throughout this chapter, I show how their role in this mediation contributed to the on-going feminisation of yoga as it was understood in the West. However, the *Daily Mail* article also commented that the "two attractive young instructors" were "an added bonus" for viewers, positioning them akin to Waugh's (1992: 14) "athletic alibi", (discussed later in this section) with the demonstrating of yoga promising to act as an excuse to view the leotard-wearing women suggesting a sexualisation of yoga, when performed by certain bodies.

When *Yoga For Health* began airing on Thames TV in London in early 1971, it was a success, and within months, the show was picked up by additional regional ITV broadcasters across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, where it was typically shown in mid-week morning or early afternoon time-slots. This is significant in terms of potential audiences who were typically at home during these times, but also because the show aired on independent commercial stations. The BBC had opted to give yoga on TV a "a good long rest" after the previously mentioned appearance of Sir Paul Dukes attracted complaints (for more on this see Newcombe, 2019: 149), though it would soon reintroduce it during other shows[42],[43]. By 1972, up to 4.5 million viewers were watching the *Yoga For Health* (*Yoga & Health*, 1972, Vol 2 No 8: 2), which was reported to often hold a majority audience share (*Yoga & Health*, 1972,

[42] Regular yoga instruction was incorporated into the weekday afternoon show *Pebble Mill at One* by the BBC in 1973, starting on 21 March. The sessions were led by Hazel Wills and took place on Monday shows until February 1974. An accompanying book *Yoga For All* (1973) by Hazel and Frank Wills was also published by the BBC.

[43] The 10-part series *Every Body Knows* with Arthur Balaskas was broadcast by the BBC in 1975 featuring yoga instruction. *Lyn Marshall's Everyday Yoga*, hosted by one of the demonstrators from *Yoga For Health* also first aired in 1983

Vol 3 No 1: 20) in its timeslot. The London-produced shows were also broadcast in more than 20 countries (*The Guardian*, 24 February 2005). Newcombe (2019: 177) observes that such televisual coverage at this time exposed a "much wider cross-section of the British public" to yoga. In this way the show functioned in a similar way to the newspaper articles teaching yoga in the previous chapter, it exposed yoga, or rather its understanding of yoga, to people beyond those who had intentionally sought out instruction on it from books, correspondence courses, or by attending classes. Because of its instructional and follow-along format *Yoga For Health* also differed in that it placed Hittleman as an authority on the subject into people's living rooms, and through the demonstrations those at home got to see people moving in and out of postures, rather than the static images in books. This new audience being exposed to yoga representations is explored here as an identified discursive contour of the period. The representation of yoga on television is also considered, including how Said (2003: 26) says electronic media such as television has resulted in an intensification of standardisation and cultural stereotyping and a reinforcement of how the Orient is viewed.

This section proceeds to consider how the discursive entity and cultural translation of yoga on the series were developed and shaped through the work of the show's producer, those on-screen, and popular interest. This discursive portrayal of yoga within *Yoga For Health* did not happen accidentally. Howard Kent, the journalist turned TV producer behind the show, played a significant role in shaping this through his personal experiences of yoga and his aspirations for the show, claiming that he spent three years "battling" to get it made (Kent, 1973: 4). He can therefore be seen as a key agent in the process of yoga's cultural translation through this significant moment of its mediation. Kent saw in the practice of yoga something he believed to be of value, primarily the benefits to physical and mental health, despite having been put off by the "terminology and abstruse worthiness" of yoga books (*Yoga & Health*, 1971, Issue 1: 18). He was quoted as saying that while having a longstanding interest in yoga, he had initially felt its appeal was limited because it was "enmeshed in Eastern thought and in terms which indeed had real meaning in its land of origin and in its period, but less validity in the twentieth century west" (Howard Kent, *Yoga & Health*, 1973,Vol 3, No 1: 20).

However, after bringing back some of Richard Hittleman's "practice-along" LPs from a business trip to New York, where the yogi also had a *Yoga For Health* show airing on

television (Newcombe, 2019: 188), Kent had identified a way to overcome the distanciation he had found in other yoga texts, and potentially a model for incorporating yoga into the socio-cultural context of 1970s Britain. Moving into what Maitland (2017) would describe as the transformation dimension of this cultural translation, Kent sought to present yoga as something which could offer the physical and mental health benefits he had experienced as being of value. Still, he detached it from other aspects, which could limit its appeal in the West. Speaking to *Yoga & Health* magazine after the show proved to be a success, Kent said:

> I felt the West needed Yoga to re-orientate and re-invigorate itself. I felt Yoga offered the one sure way of combatting the physical and mental diseases of contemporary society. This meant that yoga had to be translated into a simple relevant form which maintained the purity of the basic principles, while appealing directly to the mass of people who do not and will not care about the historical background and profound origins of the subject.
>
> Howard Kent, Yoga & Health, 1973, Vol 3, No 1: 20

Here, Kent affirms he was not attempting to create what Lucia (2020: 96) refers to as "transparent 'pane of glass' style translations" but rather, acting in a similar way to the American yogis she wrote about, a translation of yoga which was shaped by Kent's motivations. It was a cultural translation Maitland (2019: 123) would suggest "does not seek to reproduce but transform" and to impact a specific audience in a particular way. Kent (1973: 69) wrote in his book *Day by Day Yoga* "What is really important, I am convinced, is that Yoga in the West should adopt the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number", he is justifying his intentional cultural translation and appropriations of yoga through the increased audience it will bring to the practice, and the societal benefits it will, in his view, offer them. In this understanding, the transformation was intended to act as the sort of translation Maitland (2017: 111) says "brings a focus, and an audience, to the source text in ways which would not have been possible otherwise". Kent saw his translation of yoga as one that adds to the status of yoga and does not cause damage to the texts and practices from which it draws. For him, it is the kind of "forward-looking" practice "which proceeds from the text but does not overwrite it" (Maitland, 2017: 116). However, for Arjana (2020: 166), this transformation would be the sort of whitewashing it is suggested led to yoga's popularity in the West, whereby a Hindu origin is erased while "capitalizing on its Eastern

imagery". Focus now turns to how this intentional act of cultural translation was manifest on-screen and in performance.

Though the shows produced in London do not appear to have been officially preserved, several clips are available online and shared on forums, and unlicensed collections of complete episodes on DVD have been previously sold online[44], while the webpage is still online it is now quiescent. Such shared communication and economic enterprises are considered here as branches of the (yoga) community archive ecology model, as introduced in chapter three. Combined with more easily available licensed LPs, books, and magazines accompanying the show, they allow insight into its discursive representations of yoga. Comments posted on many online clips also highlight the importance of the programme in introducing people to yoga. The introduction to the show, seen in one of the preserved episodes, begins to illustrate its positioning of yoga. Musical pipes can be heard playing as a woman sits in a lotus meditation posture next to the sea; the footage then cuts to one of the show's demonstrators performing a sequence of postures in almost silhouette exposure before moving to a close-up of Richard Hittleman. At the same time, a voice-over states,

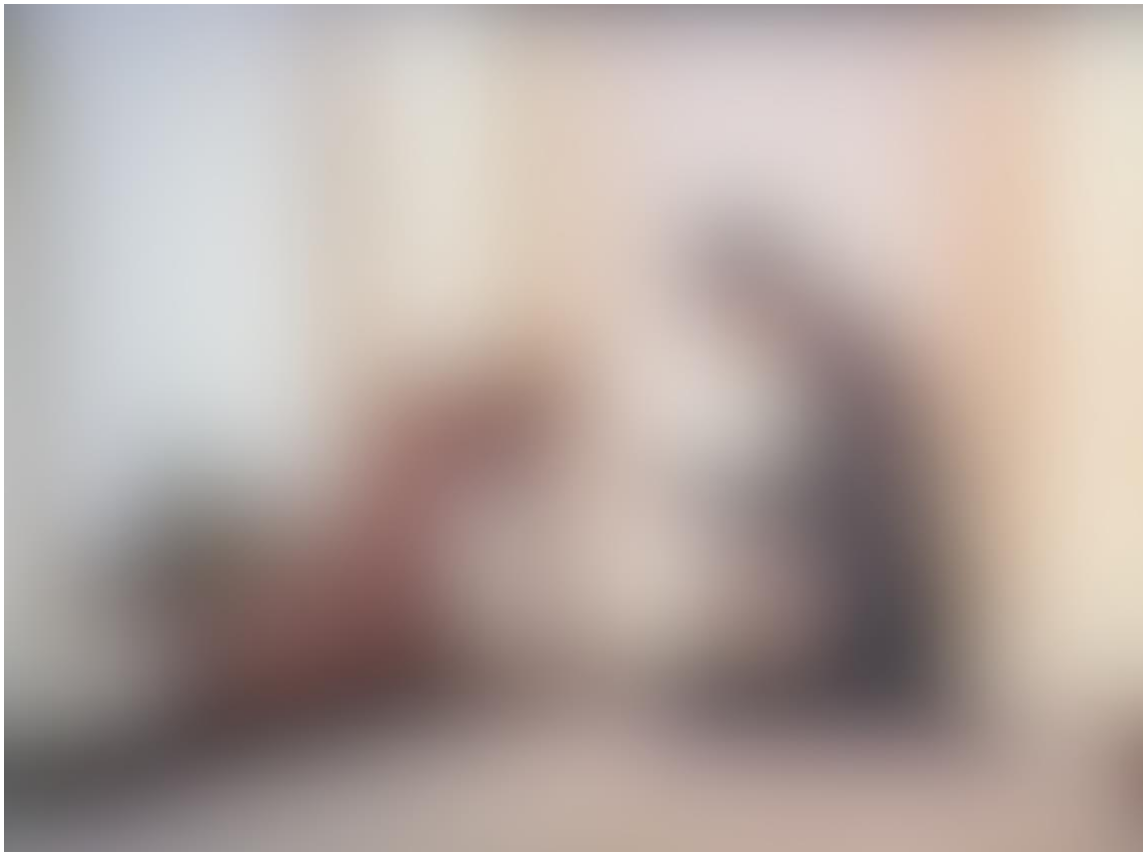
> Yoga has been practiced for countless centuries by millions of people throughout the world, these programmes will show how you can use yoga to achieve a high level of physical and mental fitness and experience an unparalleled sense of well-being. Your instructor is the man who, through his books, records, and television programmes, has introduced the benefits of yoga to more people than any living authority, Richard Hittleman.
>
> *Yoga For Health*[45]

Said (1978) notes that we rarely encounter the other naively, as experiences and knowledge shape expectations. Therefore, the use of the music, visually identifiable meditation, display of asana (postures) and the amalgamation of Eastern architectural styles of the set (as shown in Figure 6.1 below) all act to meet the sort of expectations Goto-Jones (2015) suggests we have during such cultural encounters. While many of the features of the set design draw on

[44] Though no longer functioning the website https://www.richardhittleman.com [Accessed 24 February 2024]. advertises collections of episodes of *Yoga For Health* on DVD, and discussion on other web forums indicates it was in operation until around 2020.

[45] As seen in clips from undated episodes of *Yoga For Health*. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SexGecvWCzI [Accessed 12 October 2023].

Islamic architecture[46], despite yoga being more commonly associated with Hinduism (as in the earlier news articles), this may have been influenced by the Taj Mahal (an example of Mughal architecture) being a familiar visual cue for India. Despite being what Arjana (2020: 5) would describe as "muddled orientalism", defined as a "careless mixing of images, terms and tropes from the imagined Orient", this suggests to viewers they are having an authentic experience of the foreign. So, while muddled, such mixing may not have been careless. Meanwhile, the voice-over positions yoga as simultaneously ancient and globalised, and Hittleman, described elsewhere as a "new style guru" and "the first television guru" (Ronald Hutchinson, *Yoga & Health*, 1971, No 1: 2), as an undisputed authority on the subject. The transformational cultural translation of yoga in *Yoga For Health* becomes what yoga is for its viewers, irrespective of the intentional selection and omission of various aspects and practices in its production and presentation. It borrows from the cultural capital of yoga to bolster its appeal and interpretation of the practice.



[46] According to Oliver Chapman, lecturer in architecture at Birmingham City University, via email correspondence.

FIGURE 6.1: A screenshot from an un-numbered episode of Yoga For Health. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SexGecvWCzI [Accessed 8 September 2023]. Image redacted from the version of this thesis submitted to University's e-repositories and made available online due to copyright.

Newcombe (2019: 177) has suggested that television presentations of yoga were "usually modelled roughly" on the form as seen in adult education in Britain with a focus on "safe stretching, relaxation and fitness with practical benefits", and this appears to be the case with *Yoga For Health*. However, while Hittleman was the expert on the show, he did not primarily perform the postures or exercises; his female demonstrators did this, on what appear to be thin rugs rather than specially designed yoga mats as discussed later in this chapter. Hittleman introduced the episode's theme and guided his models through exercises using English names for postures rather than Sanskrit ones. Also of note is that while viewers were encouraged to practice along, Hittleman frequently said, "I'll ask you to do that with us now" in a similar way to the likes of TV exercisers Jack LaLanne and Bonnie Prudden on their US shows in the 1950s and 1960s (Black, 2013) - and therefore in a manner which may have been recognised as physical exercise. Indeed, *Yoga For Health* aired in a similar timeslot to the previous BBC TV show *Keep Fit with Eileen Fowler* which had broadcast in the 1950s and 1960s, and the later *Boomph with Becker* which first aired in 1972 featuring more dynamic exercises to do at home. Given the similarity of potential television audiences at home during these shows, and viewers being asked to follow instructions with their body, *Yoga For Health* further discursively positioned yoga as a form of exercise.

According to Hittleman's instructions the practice was intended to be repeated when needed, such as at times of stress and tiredness. The above raises several discursive considerations. Though Hittleman is the instructor of the show, having two female demonstrators can suggest the practice is for women. While women were the predominant demographic attending classes at the time (Newcombe, 2019), it is not representative of yoga's more extended history of practice. It can be seen as part of the mediated translation, reinforcing the idea of yoga as a feminine practice. Indeed, in seeing Hittleman as a Western tour guide to the foreign practice of yoga, his assistants, therefore, act as a stand-in for the feminised other of the East. Watching yogis on TV rather than just viewing still images of them can also be seen to increase focus on the movement into and between postures compared to most yoga books at the time focused on the final positions of postures. Shearer

(2020: 215) notes Hittleman is now "rather unfairly" remembered as a teacher of physical body-yoga, despite having a solid spiritual interest, while Syman (2010: 246) suggests he felt the need to “play it straight” when teaching and focused on the exercise aspects of the practice to attract a wider audience. This again highlights how the cultural translation of the yoga show resulted from a negotiation between varied interests.

Throughout the show’s broadcast, it appeared frequently in newspapers; a series of 12 newspaper articles “prepared by Richard Hittleman” detailing how to perform various yoga exercises were syndicated to multiple regional newspapers (including the *Aberdeen Evening Express, Nottingham Evening Post* and *Birmingham Daily Post*). These served multiple functions; they acted as adverts for the show and allowed viewers and/or readers to follow instructions to practice yoga at home at their own pace. They conform to Wheatley’s (2020: 285) “promotional” category of news content channel. They can equally be seen as examples of the sort of “subsidised content” Boumans (2018: 2264) has written about, as they also provided cheap content for the newspapers, which did not need to find a suitable yoga instructor or dispatch a journalist to report back from lessons as seen in the previous chapters. However, more significantly, they again illustrate the sophisticated media strategies used to promote specific cultural translations of yoga, propagating the understanding that they are what yoga is.

Another trend concerning the show, as seen in the earlier pre-broadcast articles, was its focus on the female demonstrators. Photographs of Lyn Marshall demonstrating postures were frequently used to illustrate mentions of the show on TV and radio listings pages of newspapers, including the *Sunday Mirror* (James Pettigrew, 10 January 1971: 27) and *Daily Mirror* (4 June 1971: 16) rather than of host Hittleman. Lyn Marshall, who had not done any yoga before getting the role, had thought she was attending an audition for a yoghurt commercial (*Daily Mirror*, 5 July 1972: 7) was featured wearing a bikini in an article about the success of the show *Daily Mail* (Barry Norman, 28 April 1971: 6). She also appeared in the Frankie Howard movie *Up Pompeii* (Bob Kellett, 1971), where she played “Sutra” a slave girl who was said to be versed in the erotic arts of the East, and who demonstrated a shoulder-stand with lotus leg position while (again) wearing a bikini. According to one newspaper quiz, Lyn’s subsequent celebrity – she went on to become a yoga teacher herself with a yoga studio (*Marylebone Mercury*, 8 June 1973: 36) and TV show (Newcombe, 2019: 191) – was

such that she could even be identified from a photo of just her legs (*Daily Mirror,* 3 December 1975: 15). While striking, such examples need be considered as part of the cultural landscape of the 1970s as written about by Hunt (1998: 26) and the way in which such 'saucy' content "drew on a familiar popular mythology and transformed it into a 'never had it so good' sexual utopia." He notes that the first Page 3 girl had appeared in The Sun in 1970, and that for some at the time "sex was part of a discursive notion of 'fun" (Hunt, 1998: 26).

This sexualisation of yoga and female yogis continued with the 1972 release of the photography-based book *Naked Yoga* (Leigh & Adams, 1972), which features photos of naked women performing yoga asana along with a description of the pose and its purported benefits. In isolation the text of the books reads like any other yoga instruction manual of the period and with the exception of the instruction that "the body must be naked" (Leigh, 1972: 5) no mention is made of the 40 full-page images of naked women. The book was also featured in the film *Confessions of a Window Cleaner* (1974, Guest), where its discovery prompts an underwear yoga scene[47], part of the movie's "appropriation of sexploitation" (Hunt, 1998: 117), and it could be argued yoga. A film *Naked Yoga* (Paul Corsden, 1974) based on the book would also be released, getting nominated for the Academy Award for Documentary Short Subject (1975). These conform to Waugh's (1992: 14) "athletic alibi" whereby images of strongmen in the early twentieth century became a "shelter for homoerotic imagery in the modern age". Here, yoga is being used in a similar vein, as an excuse or alibi by which to view the naked female form, with the news media focus on the attractive women wearing form-fitting leotards on *Yoga For Health* having acted as a stepping stone to yoga's sexualisation. Such coverage can, therefore, be viewed similarly to how the perception of yoga and the yoga body was changed through the cheap availability of photography in the early 1900s, which also contributed to the growth of the physical culture movement (Singleton, 2010). With the broadcast of *Yoga For Health*, the yoga body in popular consciousness became, in the view of many who saw it, or media associated with it, that of a slim and flexible woman, thus further feminising the practice of yoga as it was being understood in the popular psyche.

[47] 45-minutes into the movie Robin Askwith's character Timothy Lea discovers the book in the home of one of his clients and after flicking through he pages receives a demonstration of postures from a resident Swedish maid (Anita Graham) who strips to her underwear, performing plough posture she tells Timothy that it's good for releasing tension, to which he replies, "You speak for yourself".

Regardless, it is not suggested that the above was the prominent reading of the show. Forster and Harper (2009: 2) say that television in the 1970s was "awash with varieties of escapism", and for some of those I interviewed, *Yoga For Health* appears to have been that. One interviewee, Blanka Peters, recalled how she used it to find moments of calm as a mother at home with her first baby, saying, "It was all serenity and peacefulness," adding that she remembers sitting on the carpet with her baby in her arms watching the show which she said challenged perceptions of yoga as being about "people sitting in weird positions not doing anything very beneficial to their body". Blanka added that the show offered people a way to increase their knowledge of yogic practices, adding, "You did these postures, but he talked about diet, he talked about way of life". Angela Thompson also recalled, "Richard Hittleman was one of the best programmes because he didn't just stick to asana" – noting that practices such as pranayama and nostril cleansing using a neti-pot were also featured. Several of those I interviewed also told me that it was after being introduced to yoga through *Yoga For Health* that they sought further information about the practice or in-person classes to attend. This mediation of yoga therefore not only acted to introduce (to some) the subject of yoga and prompt an interest in it, but the discursive framing of yoga it presented then became a marker of what people expected within classes they went on to attend.

As highlighted by the memories of viewers who remember Hittleman teaching more than asana and the discursive analysis work of this section, the presentation of yoga on the show allowed different readings. For those who wanted an accessible exercise workout, *Yoga For Health* could offer an easy-to-follow physical practice. For others who wanted something else, there was the potential to focus on the other aspects Hittleman spoke of, which they could learn more about through tie-in products (the focus of the following section) and their references to other books and sources of information.

6.1.2 Selling Yoga For Health

Alongside the broadcast of *Yoga For Health* on the commercial television network ITV, several tie-in branded products were released, including books, magazines, clothing, and yoga mats. While it is not suggested these products were unique – the purchase of products related to yoga, from correspondence courses and books to LPs and yoga organisation merchandise, had been happening for some time (Newcombe, 2019) – they offer a

demarcated case study by which to understand the ways yoga was commodified and commercialised during this period. It is proposed that the combination of the identified increased interest in and practice of yoga and the "wider cross-section" (Newcombe, 2019: 177) of people being exposed to yoga as the result of the airing of the show on television, here prompted what Jain (2015: 43) referred to as yoga's "shift from increased visibility to popularization," enabling yoga's commodification and commercialisation in the UK in new ways.

One of the first such *Yoga For Health* tie-in products was the monthly magazine *Yoga & Health*, which ran from 1971-1975 can be seen as an example of yoga's commodification and offers insight into it through the features and advertisements which ran in it. It is unclear whether tie-in products were featured on the British television show as they had been in the US version (see *Yoga For Health*, Episode 49, KTTV, 1961)[48], though it is unlikely given standard British TV practices. Therefore, the most common way people would have encountered *Yoga For Health* tie-in products was likely in these magazines. *Yoga & Health* was reported to have sold 130,000 copies per month by its third month (*Daily Mail*, 28, April, 1971), with many of those who remember buying it doing so because it was able to support their yoga practice away from the television screen by reproducing summaries of the lessons taught on the TV show, often using an edited version of Hittleman's script, illustrated with photos of leotard-wearing models performing the poses. In one of our interviews Jayne Orton recalled purchasing the 20p A4 glossy colour magazine, which stood in contrast to those from organisations like the British Wheel of Yoga which were black and white and mostly text, saying that *Yoga & Health* was always "very much sought after".

In addition to the illustrated articles detailing the televised Hittleman classes, *Yoga & Health* published many yoga-related articles. Under the guidance of consultant editor Ronald Hutchinson, a journalist and author of the book *Yoga: Health and Beauty* (1970), the magazine also published articles about yoga's history and philosophy. Also featured were organisations and figures such as 3HO, Ram Dass, and B.K.S. Iyengar, the latter of whom would go on to write articles for *Yoga & Health* about yoga teaching and the series of articles "My Guru the wall" which were still fondly remembered by some of those interviewed.

[48] Episode 49 of the 25-minute KTTV show features promotions for tie-in product at 12 and 21 minutes. YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkkIOLV7F54 [Accessed 8 September 2023].

Prominent teachers and yoga studios or centres were regularly featured on the magazine's pages, as were celebrities who practiced yoga. Although some of the featured teachers were male, images in the magazine predominantly showed female yoga practitioners wearing brightly coloured leotards, similar to those on the show, when demonstrating postures. This further reinforced the suggestion that yoga, as it was coming to be practiced and understood in the context of the UK, was a feminised practice. Examples of this included how-to articles and pull-out posters of “Classic Poses of Yoga”. However, as Ken Thompson noted in one of our interviews, many of those who appeared in yoga magazines and books in the 1970s were models or dancers with little if any yoga experience themselves, saying, "so many of the people who got involved in yoga in the 70s were people with flexible bodies and they would do what you wanted". He went on to describe how, despite occasionally being pictured in magazines himself, he would often act as an advisor on such photoshoots guiding models into the correct position for postures. Further connections between yoga and the female body beautiful are made in articles like “Shaping up to Summer” (*Yoga & Health*, 1971, No 4: 20-23), which was illustrated with a photo of a woman lying on a beach in a bikini and suggested beauty demands the same qualities which are integral to yoga philosophy, discipline and concentration. It stated, "Your summer shape is slim and lithe; muscles relaxed and controlled" before detailing a series of beauty routines. This can again be seen as an example of how the media, in this case, the tie-in publication of *Yoga & Health*, played a role in shaping a growing Western understanding of yoga as a feminised practice and the yoga body as a predominantly feminine one. It was associated with attractive, fit, and healthy female bodies, even if some of those bodies did not really practice yoga themselves.

While centred around yoga, much of the content in the magazine can be seen as yoga-adjacent or of interest to the same demographic, with features focused on subjects such as fasting, homoeopathy, nutrition, cooking, and fashion, with articles about how to make your own leotard, or which clothes are fashionable to wear “après-yoga”. Adverts in *Yoga & Health* also connect to health, beauty, fitness, and housekeeping discourses. Indeed, the range of products advertised in one issue (*Yoga & Health*, 1972, Vol 2, No 2) included a beauty magazine, a novel, vitamins, a hairdryer, a fashion catalogue, family planning products, yoghurt maker, leotards and tights, honey, a yoga holiday, a Good Housekeeping cookbook, and a knitting magazine. Angela Thompson recalled in one of our interviews how,

around this time, dance clothing brands started advertising in yoga magazines and at yoga events promoting their leotards to practice yoga in, introducing bright colours like those seen on *Yoga For Health*. Such articles position yoga as part of a broader lifestyle that can frequently be purchased, as do the increased number of adverts that appear in the magazine as sales increased. Later that year, the magazine also ran an advert for "Yoga Exercise Mats", describing it as a new product which had been developed and that it was manufactured in Yorkshire (*Yoga & Health*, 1972, Vol 2, No 7: 49). Costing £5.50, the mats retailed for 15% of the average weekly earnings of £36.60 for men in 1972, or 27% of the average weekly earnings of £20.50 for women at the time (Hansard, HC Deb 10 February 1983 vol 36 cc422-3W). At around this time, other yoga mats were also coming to market, with Ruth White recalling in our interview how she introduced "sticky non-slip" mats in the mid-1970s after repurposing some carpet underlay her husband had found in Germany. She would go on to sell the mats, which B.K.S. Iyengar used in some demonstrations through yoga centres and by delivery. Ruiz (2007) says that Angela Farmer, who also practiced with B.K.S. Iyengar in London before distancing herself from the Iyengar Yoga system (Wildcroft, 2020: 8) has equally claimed to have invented the modern yoga mat using carpet padding from Germany.

Ken Thompson said in our interviews he remembered the change from people taking blankets and towels to practice on, to many students bringing specifically designed yoga mats. That said, in the same interview Angela Thompson suggested this could also depend on the type of class, saying of one class, "you never got people to get their own mat because it was only a shilling a class at Barking further education". This illustrates how the mediation of yoga in the 1970s through the TV show and the associated magazine might have contributed towards changing people's expectations of yoga and classes they may have attended. There had been a shift from yoga being understood as something you could do without any external products, to a perceived expectation that you needed to have the yoga products and clothing to attend yoga classes. This introduces potential class-based implications, where some people might feel that they could not afford to practice yoga, or at least yoga in specific settings. Of note, while photos illustrating and reporting on yoga classes in *Yoga & Health* frequently featured practitioners on mats, this was not the case with instructional articles.

In addition to adverts for the above products, several more *Yoga For Health* tie-in products were also advertised in the magazine. Early issues included adverts for existing *Yoga*

For Health books, Richard Hittleman's practice-along, and meditate-with LPs. These can be seen as a continuation of existing yoga knowledge and practice products, as detailed previously and by Newcombe (2019), though in this case branded to appeal to television programme viewers. New products that used the *Yoga For Health* branding and Richard Hittleman's name soon joined these. These included *Yoga For Health* leotards, yoga mats with the "*Yoga For Health* mandala" and branded multivitamins advertised as "specially formulated by Richard Hittleman". The celebrity of Hittleman can be seen in response to his only appearance in the UK (*Observer*, 7 May 1972) at the Royal Albert Hall, where hundreds attended to see him speak and teach, with many using the centre of the hall, which had been cleared of seats, to practice along (*Yoga & Health*, 1972, Vol 2 No 8: 2). These products, and how they were branded, can be seen as a continuation of the sort of marketing strategies used by strongman Eugen Sandow in the early 1900s when he used the popularity he had built from his performances to market various products ranging from books, magazines, and exercise equipment and to miscellaneous health products including drinks and muscle rubs (Morais, 2013). The *Yoga For Health* products invited the public to emulate the body and practice of Hittleman or his TV models by dressing like them, consuming the same things as them, and practicing on their branded mats in addition to following their yoga instructions which could be accessed via television, magazines, books, and LPs. This can be seen as a commodification of yoga and the celebrity of the yogi. Even so, it is worth noting that the *Yoga For Health* products, including mats, leotards and vitamins, were products new to yoga in this era, and featured the *Yoga For Health* mandala. In this, they drew on the existing cultural capital of yoga beyond their association and use within a yoga practice. They can be seen as examples of the commercial co-opting of religious imagery Ajana (2020: 165) details raising the question of whether such inclusion makes these sacred or aesthetic items.

Instead of considering how this departs from any authentic or perceived original yoga, I therefore adopt Jain's (2020: 64) suggestion that it is "more constructive to focus on understanding how appropriating and commodifying practices privilege certain voices while silencing others". In this way, the cultural translation and commodification of yoga here privileged those in a financial position to purchase their way into this presented yoga lifestyle, which required mats, clothing, and additional branded items, not to mention the identified yoga-body which would look like those in the media when wearing the branded

leotard or practicing asana on the mat. While it is not suggested that this was an economic barrier to entry for a practice of yoga, for which such products are not required, it can be seen as a barrier to entry for the *Yoga For Health* practice of yoga which was being represented, and due to the scale of this mediation, was contributing to the common understanding of what yoga was, or its discursive entity.

However, it is posited that the motivation for those responsible for the early commodification of yoga should also be considered. For example, Howard Kent had told the *Daily Mail*, "Let's be honest, I hope to make money out of yoga. We all want to make money. Our lives are geared to it" (*Daily Mail*, 28 April 1971: P6). However, he added, "it's nice, for once, to think that one might make money and help people at the same time" suggesting that a public benefit can occur alongside making money. Indeed, he would later address claims of commercialising yoga, saying,

> This is utter nonsense. If it had not been for Richard Hittleman, for the TV series, and for the organisation we have set up, the vast majority of people interested in Yoga today would never even have heard of the subject. We have worked all out to bring the practical advantages of Yoga to the people of Britain in such a way that it is wholly relevant to their needs in the 1970s. I personally have now devoted myself to this objective for five years and I am delighted to see our success to date.
>
> Howard Kent, *Yoga & Health*, 1973, Vol 3, No 1: 21

Here, the benefit Kent sees yoga as being able to offer the public is used as a justification for (and outweighing) its commercialisation by him, in the same way as when he was promoting practical yoga for people in the West through a selectively transformed portrayal of a practice. In his 2005 obituary, *The Guardian* (24 February 2005) said that aged 85, Howard Kent had "devoted the last 35 years of his life to the advancement of yoga in Britain and worldwide". Much of this was through the non-profit organisation Yoga For Health Clubs (founded in 1972) and the later Yoga For Health Foundation charity (1976).

Ruth White also voiced a level of unease when talking about the successful sale of her yoga mats, saying in our interview that she used the sale of the mats to help fund her yoga retreats and teaching. She also added that after becoming known as "the mat lady" at events, she gave the business away to focus on her yoga teaching and teacher training. These examples illustrate that while some were finding commercial success through their commodification of yoga, the motive for such actions was not always profit.

6.2 Yoga communities and their discursive influence

The previous section of this chapter explored how yoga was mediated on television in the early 1970s and how its presentation lent itself to commodification. Between 1969 and 1975, the number of people in the UK practicing yoga continued to grow apace, with Newcombe (2019: 178) offering suggested numbers of practitioners in the UK at 5,000 in 1967, 50,000 in 1973, and up to 80,000 in 1975 (based on an estimation of BWY founder Wilfred Clark[49], Howard Kent in *Yoga & Health* magazine[50], and figures from BWY publication *Yoga[51],* respectively). Newcombe (2019: 109) also identifies the significant role played by adult education evening classes in attracting female yoga practitioners. Many of the budding yogis who began to practice at in-person classes did so under the guidance of the British Wheel of Yoga or Iyengar yoga teachers – two of the yoga communities introduced in the previous chapters and identified by De Michelis (2004: 191) as being notable for their ongoing influence on yoga in the UK. These yoga communities, whose influence and prominence were also identified as a discursive contour in the analysis of media texts, are considered here as key agents of yoga's cultural translation. I use interviews alongside publications and archive material from the time to demonstrate how they played roles in shaping, and attempting to control the discursive entity of yoga, and how yoga was understood contextually through shaping news media coverage about it, and promoting their own distinct cultural translations of it.

6.2.1 The British Wheel of Yoga and the question of British Yoga

The British Wheel of Yoga (BWY) underwent several critical developments between 1969 and 1975 regarding its growth and how it portrayed yoga and itself. 1969 saw the introduction of a quarterly magazine, *Yoga*, which took over from Wilfred Clark's originally typed monthly *Bulletin* newsletter, which had developed out of his custom correspondences, as detailed by Newcombe (2019: 60). The new magazine took the same format as the *Yoga Handbook* mentioned in the previous chapter with an early editorial from then chairwoman Margaret Ward noting the BWY had outgrown its *Bulletin* newsletter. It added that the new publication

[49] As estimated in a letter from Wilfred Clark to Ken Thompson (16 March 1967)
[50] *Yoga & Health,* March 1973, Vol 3, No 1 :21.
[51] *Yoga*, 25, 1975: 15.

would “tell its readers what is happening in Britain and various parts of the world” and “publish authoritative articles on aspects of Yoga and technique” (*Yoga*, 1: 2). In 1972, the BWY also began to publish the *Yoga Educational Supplement* (*Y.E.S).* as a companion to its magazine, the two publications would be combined in 1975.

Yoga allowed the BWY to articulate and communicate to its community of members what it organisationally understood yoga to be or what it believed it should be in the UK context. Varied understandings were offered in articles by a wide range of authors, and many different approaches were not seen as contradicting each other but rather co-existing. BWY publications covered many different yogis, including an article by Swami Shantananda (*Yoga* 1, 1969), “What is Yoga”, a report from Ken Thompson about talks given by Krishnamurti (*Y.E.S.* 1, 1972: 18-23) and coverage about the passing of Yogini Sunita (*Yoga* 3, 1970: 14) along with featuring dozens of other yogis. This promoted the ongoing vision of the BWY that yoga should not be limited to a single guru or style of yoga, which was expressed by early BWY member Velta Wilson, who is thought to have trained more yoga teachers in the UK than anybody else (Cain, 2020). In our interview, speaking about the acceptance of varied contemporary yoga practices, Velta said, “There are all kinds of yoga now; people invent things, and as long as they don’t do harm, it is fine. There is only yoga.” However, while this initially appears to be a more inclusive approach to yoga than *Yoga For Health*, questions can still be asked of which yogis were featured in the publications and whether their approach to yoga was required to broadly align with that of the BWY for inclusion. As such, this could be seen as the BWY acting as gatekeepers to the self-representation of the subaltern and their role in producing accounts of history (Spivak, 1994).

Other articles in *Yoga* covered aspects including the history and origins of yoga including but not limited to regular features which were introduced at the request of readers to give details on “some of the hundreds of forms of yoga” (*Yoga* 2, 1969: 9) and the translations of Sanskrit terms which frequently came up in yoga texts, and Sanskrit names for yoga asana (*Yoga* 3, 1970: 9-10). However, while such articles came from a position of cultural appreciation (the view of several of those interviewed), and at a time when the abundance of information we have now was not readily available, they can also be read more problematically. Articles such as “Yoga and Christianity” (*Yoga* 1, 1969: 9-10) exemplify the cultural colonialism that Arjana (2020: 71-77) writes about in its attempt to draw parallels

between aspects of yoga and Christianity. For Arjana (2020: 92), these would be examples of universalising a cultural tradition or religion and symptomatic of a whitewashing which allows white individuals to adopt a practice "as a style, therapeutic model, or form of spirituality".

Indeed, what Maitland (2017) would consider the transformation dimension of the BWY's cultural translation of yoga was something which generated debate and articles at the time. An article by Michael Hunt (a vice-president of the BWY), "Why Not British Yoga" (*Yoga* 6: 1970: 6), bemoaned British yoga practitioners dressing in "Indian attire" said the learning of Sanskrit names for postures was not essential, and asked the question "why cannot we stick to a Westernised version of Yoga?" A response to this article was published in Issue 8 of *Yoga* (1971), labelling this approach "disturbing". This illustrates the inherent difficulty of translating a cultural tradition or practice across locations and time. Adopting the dress and practices of a foreign culture could be said to be fetishising appropriation and commodification, though at the same time, omitting aspects such as the Sanskrit names of postures and creating a Western version of yoga could be criticised for appropriation through omission or whitewashing. The BWY attempted to balance such issues, stating in spring 1971 that it aimed to,

> Adapt the traditional Yoga of Mother India to the requirements of the West to protect the True Image of Yoga and to encourage its study in every form – physical and philosophical.
>
> *Yoga* 7, 1971: 2

The BWY was attempting to offer a cultural translation in the model of Maitland (2017) in that it had identified in yoga something of value, a text for translation and interpreted what it considered the true image of yoga, which it aimed to protect from the reading of alternative translations. However, it also aimed to overcome the distanciation between yoga and its sociocultural context by adapting, or Maitland's parlance, "transforming" this to the needs of its Western audience. As with the previous example of *Yoga For Health,* the BWY was aiming to promote a clearly transformed cultural translation of yoga, through what it considered an appreciative act of protection for what it would also call the "true nature" of yoga (*Yoga* 7, 1971: 2). In this way, the BWY was claiming are there was an authentic and traditional origin to yoga which is not only compatible with the culturally translated BWY understanding, but which is somehow protected by it. For Chow (1995: 196), this would represent a view of yoga

as an "idealized lost origin"; the BWY were attempting to engage with a previously existing practice and culture of yoga, not a contemporary one with which it co-existed.

Of particular interest to this investigation is the insight *Yoga* also allows into how the BWY and its members were able to further propagate their specific cultural translation of yoga to a broader audience and challenge what were described as "false impressions" via its "national machinery" (*Yoga* 7, 1971: 2). The BWY attempted to control the discursive understandings of yoga as evidenced in articles such as "True yoga is in danger" (*Yoga* 9, 1971: 11), which suggested an over-emphasis on the physical aspects of yoga was "blinding the eyes of the general public to the true image of yoga". Yoga teachers who did not include meditation and ethical and philosophical talks in their teaching were also criticised for leading yoga to be seen as "Indian PT" (*Yoga* 11, 1972: 2). Speaking of one non-BWY yoga teacher from the period that he recalled, Tony Crisp said in our interview "He didn't teach yoga, he just taught the postures" illustrating how he shared the BWY view.

Articles in *Yoga* about media coverage involving BWY members illustrate how the organisation was also able to shape the developing common understanding of yoga in the UK and in suggesting interpretations of yoga which were counter to their own were wrong, attempted to narrow the discursive entity of yoga. For example, the *Birmingham Post* (26 April 1971: 2) reported on the BWY Annual Congress meeting, noting the "Knotty problems of Yoga" and how the BWY campaign "Gentle Yoga with a smile" set out to challenge alternative presentations of yoga as a predominantly physical regime. The perceived authority of the BWY, which had played a role in generating the media coverage, had enabled the organisation to promote its understanding of yoga, and at the same time challenge the validity of others. This demonstrates how yoga, as it was becoming to be understood contextually, was shaped by both the actions of various cultural translators, and frictions between them. In this case the BWY was seen in the article as correcting a misunderstanding, which could also be read as an alternative cultural translation.

Articles also point to how media coverage reinforced the BWY's position of authority as more people interested in yoga sought out classes with it and joined the organisation. One example (*Yoga* 2, 1970: 2-3) detailed how several members had appeared on TV and radio, along with others who had achieved "fine publicity for yoga" through the publication of newspaper articles about themselves. The response to such media coverage was also

discussed with Clark writing in *Yoga* 3 (1970: 2-3) that after his address was given out in a BBC national network broadcast as the organiser of the Wheel, he received almost 600 letters, to which he replied with details of their nearest class and a copy of the Wheel's membership leaflet. He added that when the show was repeated a month later, he again received "quite as many" inquiries as the first time. Such examples show how the BWY gained media coverage by its status and membership, but also how this coverage led to what Wilfred had called a "swift influx of subscribing and active members". This reinforced the authoritative status of the BWY as a key agent in the process of yoga's cultural translation.

Talks and presentations by BWY members, in particular Wilfred Clark, also frequently made the media. However, the scale of Wilfred's visits to the regions and the talks he gave is only apparent when considering regular coverage in BWY publications such as *Yoga* 6, (1970: 3), which detailed several visits he had made along with the note that his diary was filling up and that if BWY branches wanted him to visit they should do so early. No recordings of Wilfred's talks are thought to exist. However, Ken Thompson did record him talking about *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses) and giving one of his regular guided meditations on a visit to Acacia House in London in the summer of 1972. As I have written elsewhere (Crisp, 2022), see Appendix K, this recording, kept in Ken's personal collection, is something he thinks could inspire people listening to it now in the same way Wilfred inspired people at the time, and indeed, in listening sessions with yoga teachers trained by the BWY, it did create an affective response.

The issuing of certificates by the BWY, deeming people "fit and proper" to instruct yoga, was another reason the organisation appeared in newspapers in 1969, such as Arthur Trotter, whom the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* (8 September 1969: 5) dubbed the only guru between Berwick and Norwich after he was awarded his. However, changes were afoot in the BWY certification process, which had, until that point, relied on Wilfred Clark deciding someone was good enough to teach. Newcombe (2019: 95-99) has written about the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) identifying the BWY as a possible authority for certifying yoga teachers before opting to work with Iyengar. However, Ken Thompson elaborated on this and suggested it was a pivotal moment for the BWY. He said that in 1969 or 1970, Wilfred Clark had requested that he meet with Peter McIntosh from the ILEA because it had been decided that only teachers trained by B.K.S.Iyengar would be allowed to teach within

the ILEA. Ken Thompson said, “As far as Wilfred was concerned, he was quite happy for Iyengar or anyone else to teach yoga. What he objected to was them stopping us from teaching”. He added that Monty Barnes (of the Montem Institute in Holloway, London) had the established (and non-Iyengar trained) yoga teacher Alan Babington teaching there and opposed introducing Iyengar style classes. Ken Thompson added that in the meeting, McIntosh expressed the view that the BWY was “too amateurish” with no formal requirements for certification of teachers and no training syllabus - Ken joked that a misspelling on his own certificate (kept as part of an extensive personal collection of correspondence and publications) probably meant McIntosh had a point. Adding that the way Babington had been teaching philosophy as part of his yoga classes throughout the sixties also went against what McIntosh wanted to see, he said in one of our interviews,

> McIntosh saw he had control over the Iyengar movement because he told them, and Iyengar agreed to follow, that he wasn’t going to mix the yoga philosophy up with the asanas. All you’re going to teach them, you teach them postures, don’t teach them philosophy. We used to call it Indian PT because that’s what it was. They’d stripped yoga of its philosophical content. The mental aspect was stripped, and it was presented as bend and stretch.
>
> Ken Thompson, 2023

The institutionalisation of yoga within the ILEA demonstrates how issues of authority and ownership of a cultural practice such as yoga can play out within the process of its cultural translation, again illustrating frictions and contests to control and shape the broader discursive entity of yoga. According to Ken's account, McIntosh found in Iyengar a version of yoga and yoga teaching that met or could be shaped into his vision of what yoga should be in the context of a British educational system. This one was physically focused and could be practiced and taught separately from the philosophy of yoga and with suitable rigor for its educational setting. It had been identified by the BWY that for its understanding of yoga to compete with this interpretation, it needed to be formally recognised.

An article in *Yoga* (Spring 1970: 3) stated that the demand for BWY certificates of teachers’ proficiency was so great that the document was “in danger of losing its value”. However, it was only a short time before the BWY addressed this by introducing a teacher training and certification process, which ran around the same time as the Iyengar-method training discussed by Newcombe (2019: 99-100). Ken Thompson recalled that following his

meeting with McIntosh, it was decided that the BWY should develop a formal teacher training and that the organisation of this fell to him, Velta Wilson and Chris Stevens. He said they decided what should be taught, how, and what texts should be referenced. Ken Thompson said he was particularly keen to see the syllabus focus on what he saw as the "original classical books" of yoga, such as *the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, and Hatha Yoga Pradipika* as he saw many people learning yoga from contemporary yoga books and not going back to these texts. He also felt the postures taught should focus on those in the older hatha yoga texts. In this way, the BWY, as a British organisation, was attempting to ensure its teaching of yoga conformed to what it perceived as a more traditional or authentic version of yoga, based on what it contextually understood as being "classical" than what it was seeing elsewhere through broader media portrayals and other teachers. While this may again have been motivated by an intention of cultural appreciation, it overlooks both the irrevocable transformation Maitland (2017: 92) suggests occurs when a text is separated from its contextual production and reception, adding that "interpretation is therefore both embodied and historical", and Bucar's (2022) observation that it can be difficult to find a way to teach yoga in a way that is not an exercise in colonialism. A copy of the resulting course syllabus (Fig 6.2 below) from the personal collection of John Cain, who attended it in 1971, shows a breakdown of the course into three key sections.

OUTLINE SYLLABUS 1971

PRACTICAL The practice and knowledge of a wide range of postures, breath control exercises and cleansings.

Minimum tutorial time - 36 hours.

Course Advisors; Tony Crisp, Author of 'Yoga and Relaxation' - regular contributor to 'Yoga and Health'.

Velta Wilson, M.C.S.P.

Yogipatni Veneka Devi, B.A.

Practice and knowledge of a wide range of Concentration and Meditation techniques.

Minimum tutorial hourse - 18.

Course Advisors: Wilfred A. Clark, U.K. Representative of the 'All India Board of Yoga'.

Swami Purnananda of Bhavat Savashan Sangha, Editor of 'Hinduism'.

THEORETICAL A knowledge of the main systems of Yoga, and a study of basic texts such as 'The Bhagavad Gita', 'The Upanishads', Patanjali's 'Yoga Sutras', and 'Hatha Yoga Pradipika'.

Minimum tutorial time - 12 hours.

Course Advisors: Wilfred Clark.

Dr. Karel Werner, Ph.D., Spalding Lecturer in Indian Philosophy, University of Durham.

The main systems of the body and the Physiological and Psychological effects of Yoga.

Minimum tutorial time - 12 hours.

Course Advisors: Cynthia Price, M.C.S.P.

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PROFESSIONAL Learning, Personality, Language and Teaching Methods.

Minimum tutorial time - 12 hours.

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FIGURE 6.2: The outline syllabus from a BWY training in 1971. Courtesy of John Cain.

The first BWY teacher training occurred at the Brentwood Evening Institute (commonly known as The Hermitage) in 1971. It was run by Ken Thompson, who noted that it was far from a money-making exercise as prospective teachers only needed to pay standard further education fees to attend the sessions held over a year. As an indication of demand, another 1971 course run by Velta Wilson is said to have had more than 100 people apply to attend (Hague, 2020). The BWY training would later become a two-year course with a five-page article in the Wheel's publication *Yoga* (24, 1975: 23-27) offering a comprehensive guide to the syllabus and expected standards for teachers taking the Wheel of Yoga teacher's diploma. The development of this formal certification process and a yoga teacher training scheme with a pre-defined syllabus shows how the BWY attempted to both professionalise the organisation and have an element of control over what yoga teachers were taught and then taught in their classes.

This section has shown how the BWY was able to play a role in influencing how yoga was understood in the UK using the authority gained by its growing membership and national network of members to present its understanding of yoga in the media. Through these ways the BWY promoted its specific articulation and cultural translation of yoga, it was one which while based on ideas of perceived authority and tradition, embraced various yoga practices and met the contextual requirements of yoga practitioners in the UK during this period. However, the BWY also acted to challenge understandings of yoga which it disagreed with, namely those practices which it saw as overly physical and not embracing certain elements of what yoga was for it. Popular mediations of yoga therefore became battlegrounds for control of understandings of yoga and its broader discursive entity.

6.2.2 Iyengar yoga communities and "Iyengar Yoga"

Whereas the BWY saw itself as a national organisation for yoga, the yoga communities which developed around the teaching of B.K.S. Iyengar took a different form during the same period. Localised Iyengar communities, often led by students of Iyengar, were established in cities including London, Manchester, Bristol, and Brighton[52]. As such, they illustrate another way in which yoga communities played a role in influencing how yoga was understood and

[52] Newcombe (2019: 86) has written about how the structure of the Iyengar network changed after 1976 when a newly established Iyengar yoga centre in Pune, India became the headquarters of an international Iyengar network.

practiced in the UK in the early to mid-1970s. My focus here is on how B.K.S. Iyengar and the communities around him – each identified as key agents in the process of yoga's cultural translation – were able to propagate their specific understandings and expressions of yoga through media interaction along with their own publications and practices. This enriches the historical contextualisation of how the Iyengar method was institutionalised (Newcombe, 2019: 97-99) by also highlighting the role played by these communities as agents of yoga's cultural translation in shaping popular mediations of yoga at the time.

Though B.K.S. Iyengar was the single figurehead of his practice and the communities which developed around it, he was not in the UK for most of the year, which can be seen as significant regarding the media coverage generated. This was also significant in regards to his relationship with students, though interviews, personal collections and archives show that many kept in contact with him, including sending photos of their postures, which he would write comments on and then return. When he was not in the UK, B.K.S. Iyengar's international activities received little, if any, popular UK media coverage. However, news of them still reached members of the UK-based communities. For example, news of B.K.S. Iyengar being granted an audience with the pope in 1969 (*Poona Herald*, n.d.) was understood by some of his students to have influenced the willingness of convents to host yoga classes (*Yoga & Health*, 1971, No 8: 12). Equally, activities such as demonstrating yoga before the United Nations Organization (*Poona Herald*, 25 April 1974) while boosting B.K.S. Iyengar's status internationally and with members of UK-based communities did not contribute to his popular representation in the UK.

Within national UK newspapers, B.K.S. Iyengar was still heavily associated with Yehudi Menuhin, with the violinist's taking lessons with his guru during a visit to India being reported in the *Daily Mail* (1 January 1969: 4, and 3 February 1969: 4) along with the *Sunday Mirror* (23 February 1969: 25). Of note, this was also before the growing number of white yoga teachers resulted in situations where Lucia (2020: 37) says "Indigenous and Asian spiritual leaders more broadly, are overwhelmed in the cacophony of dominant white voices, or silenced entirely". As such, Iyengar's difference could have made media outlets more likely to cover news and features relating to him. This can also be seen in the *Yoga & Health* (1971, No7: 22-27) article "Iyengar Teaches" (which took up the front page and six pages within the magazine). The article opened with the statement, "Love him or loathe him – and there's a

certain amount of evidence that people can feel either way – there is no doubt that B.K.S. Iyengar has had an impact on the English-speaking West like nobody else in yoga". In this way, the publication recognises B.K.S. Iyengar's influence on the development of yoga in the West but also suggests his methods differ from what many yoga practitioners in the UK have experienced or expected. This difference and otherness are also a visual feature in the article's photos; the cover image shows B.K.S.Iyengar expertly performing a complex asana wearing only his trademark shorts, while others in the magazine (see Figures 6.3 and 6.4, below) feature him in Indian attire or make a feature of his non-white torso in contrast to the (mostly) white women he is instructing. Such mediations corroborate the suggestion that yoga was becoming to be understood contextually as a female practice. Most of those interviewed who practiced at the time said classes they attended or taught were all women, or might have the occasional man, one even said they taught for several years before ever having a man in her class. In our interview Gill Lloyd made a connection between the mediation of yoga on *Yoga For Health* and who attended classes saying "I think it's not surprising if it had been stimulated by the TV series. It was a man teaching two women. It was the women who were doing things", adding that men often found flexibility more difficult.

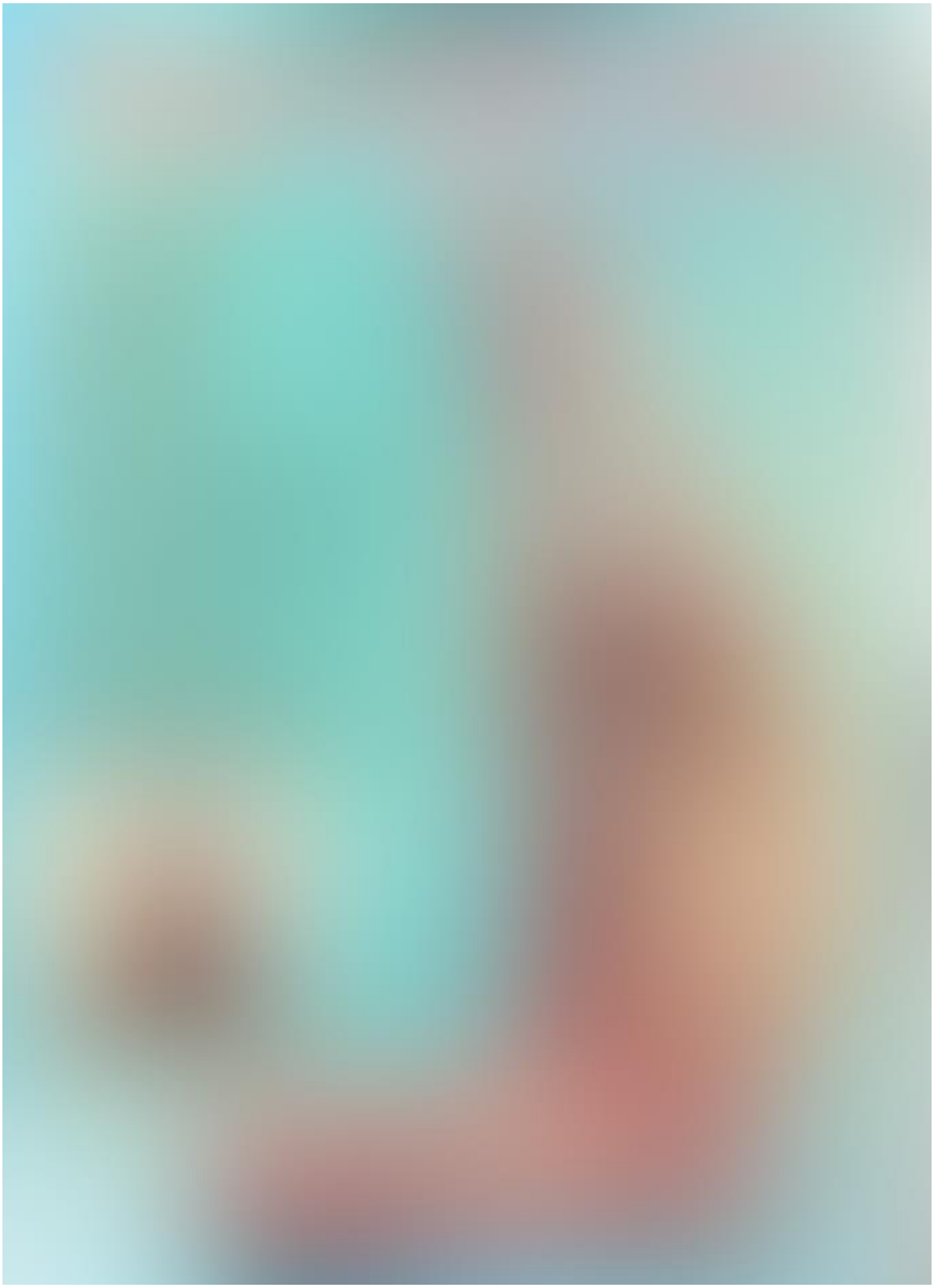

FIGURE 6.3: The cover of Yoga & Health (1971, No7) Featuring B.K.S. Iyengar expertly performing asana wearing only his trademark shorts. Image redacted from the version of this thesis submitted to University's e-repositories and made available online due to copyright.

Figure 6.4: A full-page image from *Yoga & Health* (1971, No 8: 2) showing the non-white torso of B.K.S. Iyengar in contrast to the (mostly) white women he is instructing. Image redacted from the

The article goes on to state, "The differences between an Iyengar class and others more common in the west soon become more apparent," noting features such as Iyengar's "sonorous voice" and his physical adjustments where "arms in the wrong positions are pulled into their correct positions, while bottoms which are stuck out get a hearty shove to show where they should be tucked in". Such presentations of Iyengar and his yoga can be seen as examples of Said's (1978) romanticised orientalist stereotypes and – in this case, notions that as an expert foreign yogi, he and his teaching have some essential teaching from which the West can learn – but still act to justify colonial and imperialist worldviews. However, Chow's (2002: 34) observation about how a "laborer becomes ethnicized because she is commodified in specific ways" raises questions about where the power lies in Iyengar's representation here. Was he acting in certain ways because he was expected to do so, and it was an unwritten requirement of the publicity he gained? Was he being celebrated because of some orientalist fantasy of authenticity, or was the coverage because he was a yoga teacher of unparalleled expertise? Ken Thompson also recalled during one of our interviews how much of the newspaper, radio and television coverage around Iyengar was orchestrated by his "well organised" network of students and followers, predominantly within London, which additionally raises questions about whether they were orientalising and ethnicising Iyengar so to generate publicity for a practice which they had found value in.

Irrespective of the logic of the media coverage B.K.S.Iyengar obtained, this publicity gave prominence to his teaching and cultural translation of yoga, which was also presented in his books, which have been written about extensively by DeMichelis (2004) and Newcombe (2019). This can also be seen in other articles he penned for *Yoga & Health* magazine and published between 1972 and 1974. These articles include "The Yoga way of Life" (*Yoga & Health*, 1971 No 8: 3-5), "The need for yoga in educational institutions" (*Yoga & Health*, 1972, Vol 2, No 12: 49-51) and "Is Hatha Yoga a cult of the body or a cult of the mind?" (*Yoga & Health*, 1973, Vol 3, No 9: 24-29), which focus on the position of yoga in society. Meanwhile, his series of "My Guru the Wall" articles taught people how to work on specific postures using a wall as an aid, with the following introduction clearly articulating how such teaching is a context-specific cultural translation of his experienced understanding and practice of yoga.

> Mr Iyengar understands very well that the western yoga pupil is not working under the same conditions as an Indian pupil. The Indian pupil will often enter an ashram and will be under supervision every day: the western pupils usually attend a weekly class and for the rest of the time they are on their own. It is mainly for westerners that Mr Iyengar has devised this system of using whatever mechanical means that are to hand.
>
> *Yoga & Health* Vol 2, No 12 January 1973

While such coverage is illustrative of how Iyengar was able to articulate his cultural translation of yoga within the popular media, the archives and memories of those communities and members who practiced with him, and the network of Iyengar teachers can also be used to corroborate and/or contrast these. For example, Iyengar's ongoing teaching efforts during his time in the UK each year generated little, if any, media interest during this period. However, many of these are documented in the Iyengar Yoga London archive collection through reel-to-reel audio recordings. More than 100 hours of these recordings were digitised for this project to allow additional insight into the classes, their structure, how yoga was presented and Iyengar's teaching. This mixture of asana and pranayama classes, which include ones for different levels of students and those for teachers, demonstrate the fast thunderous sound of Iyengar's teaching as he moves through his detailed cues for various postures and breathing techniques – though his physical movement around the room (away from the audio recorder) and the sound of students moving between postures makes much of the dialogue difficult to discern. The previously alluded to combination of teaching methods and humour is also heard in specific exchanges such as when, in one recording (31 July 1972), Iyengar is heard jokingly saying, "Mary, you are not sitting properly; I'll come and slap you" one of the many occasions where students in the room can be heard to burst into laughter with him. In another class recording (22 July 1972), where he instructs trainee teachers, Iyengar suggests one is being too quiet, saying, "I shout; it is part of my voice", with one student replying, "I think we don't shout so hard because we're not sure we're saying the right things," before the room again erupts with laughter. The physical focus of the classes would feel very familiar to those who have more contemporary experience of attending Iyengar classes.

How the Iyengar yoga community used these audio recordings also illustrates how Iyengar's postural teaching and precision in asana were regarded. An (apparently self-

published) book, *Yoga Darsana* (1977) held in the personal collection of early Iyengar student Diana Clifton and passed on to one of her students (Shelly Lea) after her passing, was compiled from the teaching within the recordings. The book, which also includes drawings of asana, proceeds to detail Iyengar's teaching cues for dozens of postures, with some including more than 200 such instructional comments per posture. An introduction reads,

> The text of these notes was taken verbatim from tape recordings made by Donna Holleman during lessons given by B.K.S. Iyengar. Remarks regarding the various positions, taken from different lessons, have been arranged in sequence in order to make them easier to follow.
>
> Yoga Darsana, 1977

This shows that the precision for postural detail that Iyengar was often referred to having in the media was seen as a, if not the, essential element of his teaching by some of his students. Considering how many of Iyengar's students from the period went on to become teachers themselves, this also makes relevant the queries of Dalal (2023: 61) about whether practitioners who receive cultural practices from South Asian agents are more likely to dismiss critiques of cultural appropriation, and consideration about how the agency of those agents is "entangled with colonialism, Orientalism and capitalism" (64). While a version of the self-published book has been issued to trainee Iyengar teachers, Jayne Orton noted in one of our interviews that she had been unaware that the audio of the classes from which the text originated still existed.

Other community publications and archive material from the period can be used to shed more light on B.K.S. Iyengar's cultural translation of yoga and how it was received by those practice communities which developed around him. For example, the Manchester and District Institute of Yoga (MDIY) produced an annual *Yoga Journal*. Newcombe (2019: 80-82) has identified and written about the role played by Iyengar students in Manchester in the propagation of yoga through the MDIY through their work of establishing a teacher training programme. The *Yoga Journal* publication included articles by B.K.S. Iyengar and, in its second issue (1973, March), included an article by Jeanne Maslen about B.K.S. Iyengar's visit the previous year detailing interviews with several local papers, including a "very lively interview" and B.K.S. Iyengar posing for photos in more advanced postures. It also detailed the BBC TV show *Look North* broadcasting an interview, part of one of B.K.S.Iyengar's classes in

Manchester, and the Institute recording of B.K.S. Iyengar's demonstration. Including detail of such media interest elevates the status of Iyengar.

Demonstrations and talks by B.K.S. Iyengar in cities including London, Manchester, and Bristol, often attended by hundreds of people, were another way his cultural translation of yoga was communicated to a broader audience. Audio recordings from several of these demonstrations are held in the collection of Iyengar Yoga London and show that B.K.S. Iyengar stuck to a standard pattern wherein he introduced yoga followed by described demonstrations of *pranayama* exercises and *asana*. When describing yoga, B.K.S. Iyengar conforms to that presentation, which Jain (2015) suggested affiliated his postural yoga with classical yoga texts such as the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. This also conforms to Maitland's (2019: 108) transformation process within cultural translation whereby new creations such as reboots "depend on the existence of already well-known source material". While his method, as it had come to be known, could be seen as an evolution if not something new, there were elements of history and tradition threaded through, which also acted to add to its perceived authenticity and authority. In one recording believed to be from Central Hall, Parliament Square, London, in 1972, he says,

> Unfortunately, yoga has been misunderstood, misrepresented, abused, giving different brands. God is one. People call it different names. Yoga is one, but people call it in different names. Yoga as I said is the union of the individual with the universal soul. It is a science which is a technique to take us nearer to that infinity which we call paramātmā.
>
> B.K.S. Iyengar, 1972

Here, Iyengar is using the freedom of the demonstration to mention more about spirituality than would perhaps have been permitted in the ILEA classes, though equally sticking to his view that the *asana* and *pranayama* can be used towards achieving a spiritual discipline. He also adds that without meaning and feeling, asana is physical gymnastics and makes several references to Westerners not thinking they can do the same yoga, but that "Yoga has no barrier". Coverage of what is believed to be the same demonstration in *Yoga & Health* (1972, Vol 2 No 8: 8-11) notes that it was the *asana* aspect of the demonstration that the audience was most interested in, saying, "This was what they had come to see and short of the place burning down they wouldn't leave until they had seen it" adding that, "People may argue as

much as they like about Mr Iyengar's teaching methods, but when he puts on a show of postures, it is something not to be missed". While Iyengar presents his yoga as more than just the postures and a route to something more meaningful, the representation in *Yoga & Health* focuses on his postural practice and teaching.

The previously mentioned presentations of the yoga taught by B.K.S. Iyengar within the popular media and the archive collections represent a distinct version of yoga. While popular mediation has been shown to have moved towards framing it as a predominantly physical practice situated in the discourses of health, fitness and mental well-being while being still recognisably part of yoga's discursive entity, the name Iyengar meant more than the man himself or his direct teaching; it was also used to reference his teaching style and understanding of yoga. Several of those interviewed said that Iyengar never initially referred to his teaching as "Iyengar Yoga" instead calling it "Hatha yoga". Jayne Orton noted in one of our interviews that the use of the term had developed within B.K.S. Iyengar's early students in the UK and the formalisation of teacher training saying, "it was called Iyengar Yoga because we had to have the methodology, distinct from the other ways of doing". This led to publications such as the *Manchester Evening News* (4 July 1973: 14) captioning a photo to note that Jeanne Maslen was teaching "the BKS Iyengar method of Yoga". Intentionally or not, Iyengar Yoga became a branded version of the practice (Jain, 2015), distinguished from others through its postural focus, biomedical dialect and name. Therefore, when Angela Marris told *Yoga & Health* (1973, Vol 3 No 2), "I stick entirely to Mr Iyengar's system" of her ILEA classes in Pimlico, London, she was distinguishing them from other yoga and hatha yoga classes. The headline of that feature, "Vintage Iyengar in Pimlico", equally stressed that these classes were like those taught by B.K.S. Iyengar. The yoga taught and practiced by B.K.S. Iyengar can therefore be seen as a transformed cultural translation of yoga (as all yoga practices invariably are). He developed it because of his experiences and tailored to perform a function in its contextual space and time, bearing what Benjamin (1999: 91) would call the "traces" of those previous cultural translators of yoga before him. However, for many who practiced something called Iyengar Yoga, it was the yoga.

It has been shown here how the dedicated following of B.K.S. Iyengar acted to propagate his yoga teaching and style through their community activities and engagement with the media. This yoga was one which had a solid postural focus and, through its branding

(Jain, 2012) stood apart from other yoga teaching which was popular at the time. It was also shown how B.K.S Iyengar, as a single figurehead who gained authority through his postural performance and the connections between his yoga and classical texts, attracted media attention, allowing him to present his specific understanding of yoga to a broader audience.

6.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored two significant ways by which specific cultural translations of yoga were propagated between 1969 and 1975: the broadcast of *Yoga For Health* on television and the activities of yoga communities (the BWY and those which developed around B.K.S. Iyengar). I demonstrated that these cultural translations of yoga each drew on and adapted previous translated understandings of what yoga is and how it should be practiced, with the intention of appealing to new practitioners. They built on those understandings of yoga which were developing due in part to the ways mediations frequently drew on specific features of yoga's broader discursive entity including its physical practices and South Asian origins, becoming what would be described by Jain (2015: 76) as "branded" versions of yoga. Using these case studies I illustrated how the popular mediation of yoga was therefore a site of cultural struggle to control the discursive entity of yoga as it was becoming to be understood.

I demonstrated how Richard Hittleman's *Yoga For Health,* understood as an epochal event in yoga's mediatisation and commodification in the UK, crafted a version of yoga to have mass appeal to those encountering it on TV. It consciously shaped the yoga presented to meet perceived audience preferences. The show fulfilled aspects of the audience's orientalist fantasies of what yoga was to allow them to feel like they were having an authentic experience while intentionally omitting other aspects which could be seen to put people off. Comments from Kent about which aspects of yoga would appeal to a broad audience show a conscious effort to shape the yoga presented, and his role as a key agent in this process. This highlights the importance of broadening consideration of who is seen, and focused on, as having played a role in the process of yoga's cultural translation. In this way, the yoga presented, irrespective of how it was received and interpreted by viewers who may have found it meaningful, was partly a product of orientalist and colonial thought. I do not suggest this means it is any less yoga than other understandings of yoga, but rather, the

illustration serves to highlight how the value of Maitland's (2017) concept of cultural translation is not about what it can reveal about a text, but what it can reveal about the society in which that translation is taking place. *Yoga For Health* was also shown to have reinforced understandings in the West of yoga as being a femininised practice due in part to its female demonstrators who were seen as aspirational role models. It was suggested that the packaged and branded yoga of *Yoga For Health* easily lent itself to commodification with yoga teachers from the time suggesting the leotard-wearing models on the TV show and in the glossy *Yoga & Health* magazine prompted women attending yoga classes to start dressing this way themselves. This commodification was also evidenced through the sale of *Yoga For Health* tie-in products along with the development of new yoga products, such as mats and leotards. Notably, these products were not about engaging in an ancient or traditional practice in a perceived historically authentic manner. Instead, they focused on imitating the televised yoga shown on TV and its hosts. Maitland's (2017) framework of cultural translation allowed me to consider not how such commodification damaged an essential yoga, but rather to question how it privileged those in a financial position to purchase their way into this presented yoga lifestyle, and how it contributed to shaping the discursive entity of yoga as it was contextually understood.

Finally, I used the case studies of the British Wheel of Yoga and B.K.S. Iyengar to illustrate how yoga communities gained authority and prominence for their cultural translations of yoga, thereby playing a role in shaping more popular understandings of it. The BWY used its size and organisation to articulate its cultural translation of yoga via its own publication and in the media. I drew on archive materials to corroborate interviews which suggested the BWY actively tried to shape how yoga was understood through engaging with the media to promote its own cultural translation. The popular media became a site of cultural struggle to control understandings of yoga and its broader discursive entity, with the BWY using its standing to challenge alternative understandings of yoga. While the BWY taught yoga postures and breathing exercises, there was the view that focusing too much on the physical aspects was not true yoga, raising issues relating to ideas of authenticity and who has the power or authority to define a cultural practice. Archive material also revealed contextual dilemmas within the organisation about using Sanskrit and wearing Indian clothing, as well as attempts to Westernise yoga, suggesting that too much transformation,

or not enough, were flip sides of cultural appropriation claims, despite being able to come from a place of appreciation. These concerns were also shown to have played out in the development of the BWY teacher training, where the need for a yoga teacher qualification can be seen as a eurocentric demand. B.K.S. Iyengar, and the communities which developed around him, were shown to have gained the authority to promote his cultural translation of yoga in the media from his postural mastery and celebrity students. However, I demonstrated how B.K.S. Iyengar's otherness and being a yogi from South Asia also played a part in allowing him media access to articulate his cultural translation of yoga to a broader audience, highlighting the importance of questioning the power dynamics at play. Whereas the BWY used claims of tradition to suggest their yoga was more valid than others, the communities around B.K.S. Iyengar employed his expertise to suggest that his method was better than others, with his background and incorporation of historic yoga texts also playing a role in making this appear more valid. In doing this I drew on the work of Dalal (2023: 61) to question how B.K.S. Iyengar's students considered his authority as a South Asian agent to impart a cultural form and grant permission for them to spread it further. This was also shown to be relevant in the institutionalisation of yoga alongside B.K.S. Iyengar's willingness to present a form of yoga which met the needs of educational authorities by being predominantly focused on postural and breathing practices, and the power dynamics at play in such interactions. The authority B.K.S. Iyengar was seen to hold meant he was able to develop an approach to yoga instruction which was not questioned in terms of its authenticity. The adoption of the Iyengar Yoga system and teaching in some educational authorities was also used to highlight the role played by the institutionalisation process, and how agents in the process of cultural translation fall beyond those prominent figures often focused on.

I now move to conclude the thesis where I argue that the cultural translations of yoga which permeated and the way yoga came to be understood in the UK between 1955 and 1975 were never intended to be a facsimile or replication of a pre-existing practice (even if they suggested they were), but contextual creations built upon discourse, experience, and cultural needs. In turn, this enables the work to address issues relating to yoga's appropriation and commodification from a new perspective.

Conclusion

Throughout my research of the processes of yoga's cultural translation during a period of its popularisation in the UK, I discovered that the dissemination and representation of yoga through media was not meant to be an exact copy or duplication of an existing practice, even if it was portrayed as such. Instead, it was an array of contextual creations built upon discourse, experience, and cultural needs. In this way, my research has explored the transcultural (re)creation of yoga as a cultural practice or tradition within the context of the UK between 1955 and 1975. As I have stated, rather than constructing a narrative of yoga in the UK, I have examined, through the lens of popular media, the cultural translations of yoga and their intricate relationship with cultural appropriation and commodification, seen as starting points from which to analyse issues of power rather than a moral judgement or conclusion. This work has, therefore, illustrated how the value of researching such representations lies in what they can reveal about the temporal and spatial context of their creation rather than fixating on aspects of a practice they foreground or omit. I identified five key features of yoga's mediated cultural translation. First, the researched cultural translations of yoga were not attempts to replicate an existing or essential practice but contextual transformations. Second, they were shaped through a complex interplay of existing discourse, experience, and cultural, commercial and media requirements. Third, the popular mediation of yoga became a site of cultural struggle to control the discursive entity of yoga as it was becoming to be understood. Fourth, mediation of, and interaction between, cultural translations of yoga contributed towards shaping progressively confined discursive understandings of yoga through frequent representations. Finally, this popular mediated understanding of yoga deliberately lent itself to commodification.

Chapters four, five, and six addressed chronological periods within the 1955-1975 timeframe of this research, highlighted by De Michelis (2004) as being significant for the popularisation of yoga within the UK. From chapter four, I employed Bowman's (2021) use of the concept of discursive contours to highlight how, at the start of the period 1955 to 1963, there was no one common understanding of yoga. There were many distinct understandings which drew on the discursive constellation of yoga's discursive entity, each recognisably

identifiable as something called yoga. The period was marked by a lack of consensus in the media as to what yoga was, who did it, and why. I demonstrated how popular mediated representations of yoga often drew on ideas rooted in colonial and orientalist notions, thereby imbuing yoga as exotic, mystical, and performative. This orientalist view of yoga also acted as a stereotype through which those from South Asia could be seen. However, yoga was also shown to be concurrently understood through different discourses in media coverage depending on who was doing it and how the media outlet wanted to portray them, be they a criminal, a high-performing businessperson, a sporting figure, or a Hollywood celebrity. Applying Maitland's (2017) framework of cultural translation, I also identified some of those I termed 'key agents' in this process, such as Yogini Sunita and B.K.S. Iyengar, because they were shown to have a formative influence on representations of yoga via interactions with the media. Their cultural translations of yoga, seen as contextual transformations – which drew on ideas of authority, authenticity, and tradition while being beneficial to people in the West – began to appear more frequently in the popular media.

As yoga became an increasingly popular and visible practice in the UK in the mid-1960s, the media portrayal of it also changed. Coverage began to focus on the popularity of its practice rather than its foreignness or difference, frequently framing it through the discourses of physical health, fitness, and mental well-being. In chapter five, I discussed how, from 1964 to 1968, this was intertwined with the economy of teaching and propagating yoga, wherein there was an economic benefit for yoga teachers in presenting their yoga in ways that would attract media attention. I showed how postures such as headstand and lotus continued to signify a yoga practice but with different meanings associated, these postures could, therefore, be seen as floating signifiers. I also considered how yoga was taught with or alongside other practices such as Keep Fit and how these adjacent or additional practices therefore shaped understandings of what yoga was. I described how commodified representations of yoga separated it from traditional teaching authority structures, allowing newspapers to teach yoga postures without reference to a specific teacher, lineage, or tradition, leading to an erasure of ethnic associations, as Lau (2000) discussed. The case study of the Beatles' relationship with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi illustrated two significant features of yoga's popular mediation. First, celebrity endorsement of a cultural practice not only raises its profile but prompts a process of meaning exchange. In this case, the Beatles made yoga

differently countercultural, and I suggest, yoga made the Beatles seen as increasingly spiritual and philosophical. Second, the case study demonstrated how certain aspects of yoga, namely the guru figure and the economy of the guru, were more resistant to the process of cultural translation than other aspects such as physical postures which moved as "portable practices" (Csordas, 2009: 4), because they did not easily fit existing models within the UK context.

Discursive contours of yoga's mainstreaming were given attention in chapter six. I described two significant channels through which specific cultural translations of yoga were disseminated between 1969 and 1975: the televised program *Yoga For Health* and the activities of yoga communities. I demonstrated how the yoga of *Yoga For Health* was a conscious transformational cultural translation which producer Howard Kent developed to broaden the popular appeal of yoga. It was shown that this mediated representation of yoga drew on orientalist notions of the East to offer what was deemed an authentic enough experience of yoga but was also selective in the yoga presented so as not to limit its appeal. In presenting yoga for broader consumption and as performed by aspirational role model figures, I argued it enabled a new level of commodification of the practice. This prompted the introduction of new yoga-based and yoga-adjacent products, some of which became seen as required for participation in this (re)creation of yoga, further separating yoga from its cultural origin. Yoga communities also traded on different forms of authority to propagate their specific cultural translation of yoga, narrowing its discursive understanding. Translations such as those involved in the development of yoga teacher training for the BWY were shown to often originate from a place of cultural appreciation, though they were problematised in terms of whether they could now be considered acts of cultural appropriation. The interplay between these different understandings of yoga also showed how popular mediations of yoga had become a site of cultural struggle where different agents of yoga's cultural translation sought to control the discursive entity of yoga as it was becoming to be understood.

Throughout chapters four, five, and six, I demonstrated how yoga as it was understood and practiced in the UK between 1955 and 1975 was continually re(created) contextually. I showed that through frequent mediations of yoga which repeatedly drew on specific features of yoga's broader discursive entity including its physical practices and South Asian origins and incorporated these within discourses of health, fitness and mental well-

being, how yoga was commonly understood in the popular psyche within the West and specifically in the UK changed. This also illustrated how the constellation of yoga's discursive entity also changed to accommodate additional features as they became more associated with yoga. I showed how a framework of cultural translation (Maitland, 2017), shaped by Chow's (1995: 177) consideration of all cultural translations as interactions of power, can be used as a starting point for an analysis of power structures rather than a judgement. In this way, I suggested that adopting a non-essentialist approach to yoga's history and practice does not inevitably result in the sort of arguments Dalal (2023: 57) suggests can mean the possibility of harmful appropriation is ignored. Instead, I used it to illustrate how a complex interplay of existing discourse, experience, and cultural, commercial and media requirements have contributed to the development of yoga's contextual practice and understanding.

This research, therefore, highlights some of the issues of cultural power which have played a role in the development of how yoga was represented and has come to be understood in the UK, but also shows how this understanding can and will continue to change. It does so by entering discussions of orientalism, cultural appropriation, and commodification in a way that enhances knowledge of yoga's continually transforming transcultural practice and understanding rather than using them to critique the legitimacy of yoga practices. However, this research has significant implications beyond yoga studies. It offers a way to view the transcultural development of other cultural practices and traditions not as an inevitable move away from some prized original form. Instead it proposes considering the range of cultural translators in this process, including the media and those who engaged with its representations, as a way of understanding the context of this translation discursively.

Contextually (re)creating yoga

This research enriches the historical contextualisation of yoga as a practice in the UK. However, its main contributions can be found in how I demonstrated yoga, as it became a more widespread practice in the UK, took on a series of overlapping and contradicting discursive understandings. In highlighting the interplay between transformational cultural translations of yoga and the media, which were shown to play a role in narrowing how yoga was understood and shaping its discursive entity, I demonstrated how yoga, throughout this

period of popularisation, was continually contextually (re)created. In doing so, I have shown the potential of a discourse-theoretical approach (Van Brussel, 2019) in contextually uncovering the transformative nature of cultural translations (Maitland, 2017) while retaining focus on issues of power dynamics such as cultural appropriation and orientalism, which can sometimes be dismissed when considering a non-essential practice or tradition as a hybrid creation.

To do this, I used a method which incorporated ethnohistorical methods of data collection and triangulated more than 900 media texts with archive material, 50+ hours of interviews with 28 yoga practitioners from the period, and their personal collections. The media texts were analysed to identify a series of discursive contours (Bowman, 2021), which were structured chronologically across three periods. In this way, I was able to move focus from the narrative history of select yogis and their yoga to the various discourses that cultural translations of yoga interacted with and the interplay between them. Therefore, what was addressed was not whether that which was represented in and retranslated through the media was yoga or not, but the power structures at play in this process of continual (re)creation. This was seen in considering, for example, whether South Asian yogis were under societal pressure and power to act and commodify themselves in a certain way, how media interests saw certain bodies performing yoga postures such as headstands and lotus more frequently, and what knowledge, authority, and commercial pressures those who developed yoga teaching syllabus were acting on. This approach added to the knowledge of the institutionalisation of yoga in the UK, as discussed by Newcombe (2019), and further highlighted the role of yoga communities and media producers in this process. It also demonstrated the value of combining the framework of cultural translation with an approach to cultural appropriation, which remains sensitive to the importance a practice can hold for individuals and groups. Identifying the cultural appropriation inherent in cultural translations, I used this as a starting point for analysis rather than a judgement, illuminating the relationship between transformations, societal dynamics, the media, and the economy of yoga's teaching and propagation. As such, its contribution is not limited to the field of yoga studies. This approach can be used to investigate the transformation or contextual (re)creation of other cultural practices, forms, and traditions as they move transculturally.

The value of academics beyond those fields usually associated with yoga studies contributing to and widening the disciplinary approaches used by the field of yoga studies has also been shown. Approaching the subject of yoga from a media and cultural studies perspective enabled this research to navigate issues relating to definitions of what is and is not yoga, as well as tensions between academic yoga studies and popular conceptions of what yoga is, taking into account arguments of cultural appropriation. This was also evidenced in my reflexive practice as a cultural studies researcher, as noted in chapter three and within extracts of the reflexive diary maintained alongside this research within the appendices. While the role of the yoga scholar-practitioner has previously been written about (Singleton and Larios, 2020), it is a rich subject that many yoga studies academics continue to shy away from. Positioning myself as a yoga practitioner, scholar, and journalist, I was able to draw on my positionality in all these regards when considering the role of media practices and interests in influencing popular media coverage relating to yoga. However, such an approach was not without its limitations. Throughout the research I was all too aware that I am a white male of UK origin, whose introduction to yoga came through the media and who has practiced yoga primarily in commercial yoga studios. While my position and practice within the local Birmingham yoga community were necessary for me to gain access (via network connections) to yoga community archives and many of those interviewed, I recognised the limitations of these connections and the vantage they allowed, attempting to navigate these as well as other ethical considerations as discussed in chapter three. Other research limitations include access to media texts, which, while improved in recent years thanks to digitisation projects, will always provide an incomplete record of media produced, and issues relating to the reliability of OCR of digitised texts. Additionally, the period researched was at the edge of living memory, a point all too poignantly illustrated through the death of 101-year-old yogi Velta Snikere Wilson (1920-2022), who contributed generously to this body of work. Many of those I would have liked to interview were no longer with us, and others were unable to participate due to ill health. Completing this research during COVID-19 and the added complications introduced is also discussed in chapter three.

Through the constant triangulation of media and archive texts with the lived experience, I have also shown the significance of considering community archives (Gilliland

and Flinn, 2013) as an ecology, or, as I termed them, 'community archive ecologies'. I used the term to conceptualise the often-informal connections between items relating to the history and historicised practice of yoga in the UK, suggesting that value can come from the investigations of these connections as much as the archival material itself. For example, how the collection of Ken and Angela Thompson was borrowed from by other yogis like a library, how, in the case of Diana Clifton and Shelly Lea, material was passed down from teacher to student, or how members of the British Wheel of Yoga knew of materials kept by members of Iyengar communities, and other community archives. I suggested such an ecology model of understanding, where the connections can be as meaningful as the materials, could therefore contribute to overcoming barriers to developing more unified community archival structures in instances such as (but not limited to) yoga communities with contested histories.

The contribution of this study therefore lies in its interdisciplinary approach to understanding the cultural translation of yoga, its critical analysis of media representations, and its implications for broader discussions on cultural appropriation, commodification, and power dynamics within the transcultural development of cultural practices and traditions. This approach then is equally applicable beyond the subject of yoga, it could prove valuable to those wanting to research the transcultural development of other cultural practices or forms in a way which recognise the inevitability of change and transformation in this process but remain sensitive and attentive to issues of power dynamics. This could include, but would not be limited to, other transcultural practices such as surfing, capoeira, or graffiti, each of which have histories of being culturally meaningful and have been transformed in their popular understandings as they have become increasingly popular and commodified around the world in recent decades.

New directions for researching transcultural yoga practices.

Researching the cultural translation of yoga during a phase of its popularisation in the UK has indicated the need to reconsider how the transcultural development of cultural practices such as yoga are considered in scholarship. In showing that yoga was continually (re)created through a complex interplay of its cultural translations with discourse, experience, and cultural needs, I have demonstrated the benefit of recognising the transformational aspect of yoga's cultural translation and the powers at play in this process. This research presents new

insights and draws attention to the roles played by issues of orientalism, authority, authenticity, economy, and the media in narrowing how yoga was being understood in the popular psyche, and shaping its discursive entity.

Such an approach was enabled by recent scholarship, which, as noted by Wildcroft (2020: 7), means we are beginning to see the end of the "persistent myth" that there is some singular, authentic, and primordial yoga. This has been the result of translations of historical texts such as Mallinson and Singleton (2017), who demonstrated the rich and varied history of co-existing yoga practices through translations of a wide range of texts, and Birch's (2024) treatment of the 12th century *Amaraugha* showing how an interplay of traditions saw once distinct methods of yoga combined. More contemporary investigations of yoga's transcultural practice (Jain, 2020; Miller, 2023; Newcombe, 2019) are equally reliant on understanding yoga as a transforming practice that can be practiced in different ways, for various reasons and objectives. However, as Dalal (2023: 57) has observed, arguments based on a non-essential understanding of yoga can also be at odds with and potentially undermine public and mainstream concerns about yoga's cultural appropriation. Meanwhile, Black (2021: 13) questions whether modern yoga needs decolonising to address whether the contemporary practice of yoga beyond South Asia constitutes a form of cultural appropriation and the politics of such decolonisation. My research has identified a potential way to bridge the gap between more mainstream concerns about yoga's cultural appropriation, often seen through acts of glamorisation and sterilisation (Barkataki, 2020) and yoga scholarship, which increasingly depends on the aforementioned non-essentialist approach to yoga.

I have suggested the framework of cultural translation (Maitland, 2017) and bringing a discourse-theoretical approach into the realm of media studies (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Van Brussel et al., 2019) is one way to address these issues while still recognising and even centring the entangled power imbalances which have played a role in the development of what is (currently) understood as yoga in the Western public psyche. Through researching cultural translations of yoga as socially constructed transformations – rather than fixating on aspects of the practice they foreground or omit – there is the ability to illuminate the temporal and spatial context of their creation. Such approaches, I suggest, will be able to offer more helpful insight than narrative approaches to the history of yoga's development.

This research lays the groundwork for future research to apply the framework of cultural translation and a discourse-theoretical approach to other aspects of yoga's transcultural history and contemporary existence, as well as periods of popularisation for other cultural practices. This, I suggest, could be particularly beneficial when considering those practices which can be seen as culturally appropriated.

As noted in chapter three, an early intention for this investigation was to consider yoga's cultural translation across digital spaces such as social media. This and other sites of yoga's popular proliferation could be avenues for further investigation with this approach, which moves the interest beyond specific practices and onto identified discursive contours. Equally, it could be used to investigate further those subcultural translations of yoga Wildcroft (2020: 16) highlights as existing outside of the "visible yoga mainstream". Another potential avenue of research could be, following the bi-directional meaning transfer suggested in chapter 5, to explore the ways in which yoga has played a role in shaping the UK culture, rather than how yoga was shaped in the UK cultural context. I would also suggest that yoga studies researchers attempt to address the disconnect between academia and the yoga mainstream regarding how they approach and articulate issues of cultural appropriation. As detailed above, this thesis is equally relevant beyond the field of yoga studies. It provides a method for scholars interested in researching the transcultural development of different cultural customs or expressions, acknowledging the inevitability of change and transformation in this process while also being mindful of power dynamics. Finally, beyond academia, this research has implications for those engaged in or with the teaching and practice of yoga in a transcultural context. The findings I have presented, seeing the cultural appropriation of yoga as a political but non-binary concern, can have practical applications and ethical considerations for those commercially teaching or practising yoga and those using images or understandings of yoga commercially.

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APPENDIX A.

Below is an example of the research diary I maintained throughout this project as part of my reflexive practice. This writing acted to connect my yoga practice with the academic concepts and theories I was encountering in my research. As an example, these particular entries consider how changes to practices can be seen as additions. More general example of my reflexive writing is included in Appendix B. As this writing was for myself, I was not focused on fixing typos and grammar, and have not retrospectively done this when including examples here.

Reflexive Research Diary Writing Example.

10/11/19 – When do we get to the yoga bit?

During the yoga class I just went to, I'm not sure how much yoga we actually did. It was a new class and new teacher to me, at a studio I've not been to before. We did a series of wrist warm-ups which the teacher said would make downward dog feel easier, we did Pilates and physio-style exercises for our shoulders, and then what she later described in conversation as ballet drills which would help improve our balance, then we did about 15 minutes of asana which was more recognisable to me.

Initially I wasn't sure whether these movements were yoga postures and movements I had just not come across before, so after the class I asked the teacher what tradition or lineage she was trained in. She said she mostly did Hatha yoga, but liked to bring in exercises from other training, as she thought it helped her students' progress faster in terms of being able to do the asana and balances they wanted to do.

This made me question the changing understanding of yoga in a different way. While I had been thinking about what new versions of yoga left out or missed from a wider yoga practice, I hadn't fully considered what they also add, and how this shapes understanding.

In this case the teacher was including additional practices which she thought would enable her students to better achieve the yoga asana which she felt was important, or that they wanted to do. However, in not spelling out what she was doing, it would be easy to attend that class and assume that the wrist exercises or ballet drills were yoga practices linked to a longer tradition of practice, especially as we maintained a yogic breath while doing them. Therefore, you could take away an understanding of yoga as being an even more physical practice, which arguably makes it a more physical practice.

I need to consider what this means in terms of my understanding of what is yoga, and how yoga changes. Afterall, given what I have been reading in Mark Singleton's Yoga Body, much of that which I am used to and understand as yoga through my Ashtanga based practice appears that it could have been added in much the same way, just 100 years earlier.

21/7/2024 – It wasn't yoga, but now it is, because it used to be yoga??

Okay, so given that I'm only a couple of weeks away from submitting, I'm not entirely sure reflexive diary entries are the most productive use of my time, but I've committed to it for this long, and there's a good chance this one gets added in an appendix somewhere, so here we go.

I've just seen on Instagram SOAS sharing public interpretations of old yoga postures. These are based on translations from the 16th century *Yogacintamani* as translated and recently written about by Jason Birch. Anyway, one of the posture descriptions (Monkey) is being interpreted as similar to a lying leg raise in Pilates.

Seeing people in the yoga community getting excited about practicing an old and (maybe lost?) yoga asana got me thinking, not just about this fetishisation of the ancient, but also about how, when these movement were included in yoga classes I attended I would have once got annoyed because they were Pilates and not yoga. I would have considered it an additional practice adjacent to yoga. However, given Birch's work and these interpretations would, they could now also be read as yoga, just without the teacher knowing it at the time.

APPENDIX B.

These are examples of the research diary I maintained throughout this project as part of my reflexive practice. Entries were a combination of things written in a physical journal, scribbled of scraps of paper as things came to mind, and those which were maintained using an online journaling system. As this writing was for myself, I was not focused on fixing typos and grammar, and have not retrospectively done this when including examples here.

Reflexive Research Diary Writing Examples.

18/2/2019 – Teacher/Gatekeeper

Having completed my M4C application, and not having got it, I feel like I am only now really beginning to get going with my research project. That said, the process of the M4C application has meant that I am much more comfortable in explaining it to other people, and have a clearer idea of where it is going. With this in mind I recently approached one of my senior yoga teachers and, wanting to get his advice on yogis I might want to contact with knowledge and first-hand experience of the yoga scene in the period I am looking at.

Jon was interested to know more about the project and gave me the names of a couple of people who he said would be worth talking to (Tracey West and James Critchlow) He also offered to contact them for me (acting as a sponsor) asking them if they would be willing to talk to me. I now have my fingers crossed that they will as I suspect (at least locally) these people, who have both been practicing yoga in the West midlands for the past 50ish years, would be able to act as gatekeepers and be able to put me in contact with others that I would be able to talk with.

2/5/2019 - Experimental form for PG Cert assignment

I started writing my second PG Cert assignment today, which looks at my professional and academic development. It felt very similar to a module from my MA, and to be honest I was slightly concerned about replicating that with sightly updated content. Reflecting on this, and some of the more innovative and practical research projects of colleagues on the PGCert, I decided to think about different forms the assignment could take.

Initially, I considered using my journalism background to produce a magazine-style article or maybe a self-interview as a way of doing something different, but when looking at the marking criteria for the assignment I decided that it wouldn't be the best fit and that to meet the marking criteria would mean shoe-horning in some aspects which would detract from the style, and make the result something less on both counts.

It was at this point I happened to be flicking through one of the old yoga instruction manuals (Light on Yoga) I have on my shelf and I realized that the format they often used to take would be a better fit for the assignment. I could use a yoga approach to the development plan. Rather than having a systematic approach to a form of yoga, I would focus on the overall program of professional development which needed to be detailed in the assignment. Then, in the same way asana or postures are detailed in terms of how to do them and the benefits they can offer, I could write about specific actions I had taken to progress my development.

I have started writing this now, and it seems to be working (to an extent) though I am not yet sure whether to illustrate the assignment with images of me completing the tasks, or to leave it text only.

28/2/20 Taking a break

Since my dad died and the world's gone crazy with covid I've not been able to read or write anything, so I'm going to take a bit of time out from attempting to be productive, just need to work out what this means in terms of my student financing and then contact Oli.

16/11/20 – Lockdown interviews

I just received a phone call while I was practicing at the studio during lockdown. It took me by surprise as it was [redacted] one of the possible research subjects I had contacted some weeks ago. She was phoning to let me know the she had spoken to Ken (Sunita's son) about my contacting her, and while she didn't have a problem talking to me, she wanted to do it with him there too. She told me this was because there are aspects of her story which she has not previously told people, and that she wanted Ken to hear it firsthand from her and not through me, my research, or someone else. While she wouldn't comment on what this might be, I got the impression (from her talking very positively about Sunita) that it wasn't going to be the sort of abuse revelation which there have been so many of recently.

In addition to wanting Ken there whenever we spoke, she said she would only agree to an interview if it was done in-person and after the lockdown. She made the point that at 84 years old (and with a 92 year old husband) she was not taking risks around Covid-19, but also that she does not do video calls, or have any interest in learning how to do them.

While [redacted] didn't want to go into detail and tell specific stories we spoke for around 30 minutes about both my research and her background. She said that her interest in yoga had been sparked by seeing Sunita on a local midlands TV programme (she couldn't remember which one but said it also featured a woman called Maureen) and that she had been taken in by this "incredibly interesting" woman, also commenting on the difference between east and west and how she spoke about yoga as an ancient Eastern tradition. Talking about one video of Sunita I mentioned MACE footage of Sunita's yoga parlour opening, interestingly she didn't remember the parlour, or the word parlour being used in this way. Was that a term applied by the media, for what is now a studio? She added that she also has also seen snippets about yoga and Sunita in local newspapers.

She then told me that she was one of the first yoga teachers trained by yogini Sunita, and the only remaining one of that intake, "I was the baby of the group" she told me. She said Sunita had started training other teachers because she could not keep up with demand for classes. Indeed, she says she herself taught many classes, often with around 80 students in one. She said Sunita had taught her and other teachers how to manage a room of that size and see what people were doing.

[redacted] said that while she did not now have much of a physical yoga practice, what Sunita had taught her had stayed with her. She said that Sunita had taught the art of relaxation, and that was something as important now as then. Asking me about what materials I had obtained (books and audio recordings) she added that when she had moved house she'd come across a drawer of lotus and rose material, and that she had kept that, and would be willing to show me when we meet. We exchanged details and said that we will keep in contact and revisit scheduling an interview (with Ken there) after lockdown has been eased and she feels safe.

Following on from this introduction I recognise the importance of maintaining a relationship with [redacted] as her interviews could offer valuable insight for my research. I will start this by sending a thank you card reiterating how grateful I was that she got back to me and my desire to pick this up again when she feels happy to do so (I'm not mentioning this now, but potentially pushing the idea of a video call down the line). Depending on what happens with Covid-19 and lockdown I will contact her again in a couple of months.

Reflecting on how this interaction has gone, I feel that given the direction I anticipated the conversation was going at the start (she sounded quite negative, and potentially apprehensive) I was pleased with where it ended. Despite her saying that she did not want to talk without Ken being present, we chatted for around 30 minutes and even within this interaction I was able to see aspects which when elaborated on will inform my research. I feel my journalism background and the skill of

not bringing a conversation to an end from my end helped me gain more information (and trust) from what could have been a brief call. While ideally she would have agreed to beginning the interview process remotely she had agreed to do it in a form that she is comfortable with. That said, I will have to consider what impact Ken being there will have on what is said, the 'truth' of her stories and his role in this negotiation of history. While I wish I could have recorded the call and pushed further, it was clearly not appropriate at this stage neither was getting permissions for this interaction, but it did reveal several topics to revisit in later interactions and with others.

1/7/22 - Teacher response to me being in class.

A bit of an unexpected response from a teacher at my new local studio today. She said she was always nervous when I was in her class. Given my current state of fitness and practice, and the other practitioners in the room I can't imagine she meant it was related to this. However, we have previously spoken about my work and ideas of cultural appropriation, so I can only assume it is related to this and her questioning things like the names she gives to postures, displays of authenticity and something I will call (for want of thinking it through better at the moment) a performative exoticism in relation to things like chanting, OMs and Namastes. While I knew many of the people I practice with are aware of my work, I hadn't really considered how this might be influencing their behaviour or embodied experience of yoga. That said, I have had two people in the last week (a studio owner I had not met before, and someone I used to practice with) who have asked to talk with me about my work having looked me/it up online. Maybe I really need to get a move on with the research adjacent blog.

APPENDIX C.

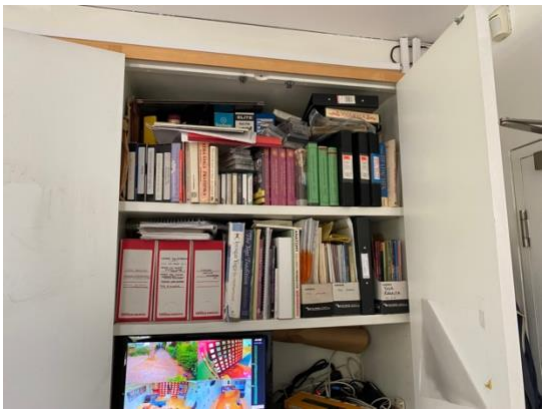
The following is a combined summary and reflection on my research visit to Iyengar Yoga London Maida Vale in April, 2022. While such writing was part of my reflexive practice, it also enabled me to detail what I had been doing to my supervisors, and make plans based on finding from the visit. Images author's own.

Research Visit Summary (+ reflexive notes) – Iyengar Yoga London Maida Vale

On Thursday 29th April (2022) I visited Iyengar Yoga London Maida Vale (formerly the Iyengar Yoga Institute) after communicating with the manager Alan Reynolds over the previous couple of months. As noted by Suzanne Newcombe, who previously spent time at IYMV, the institute and the teachers who formed it, played an important role in the popularisation of yoga in Britain. As a result of the growing interest in Iyengar yoga in the 1970s (it was taught under the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) students wanted a dedicated space to practice rather than the school halls and gyms which had been the case. The South East England Iyengar yoga Institute (SEEIYI) was founded in 1979, and after fund-raising and searching for a suitable space, Iyengar yoga Institute in Maida Vale was opened in 1983/4. While at first glance much of this history lies out of my period of enquiry, the teachers responsible for IYMV are those who practiced and taught yoga during that time, and those experiences are reflected in the archive.

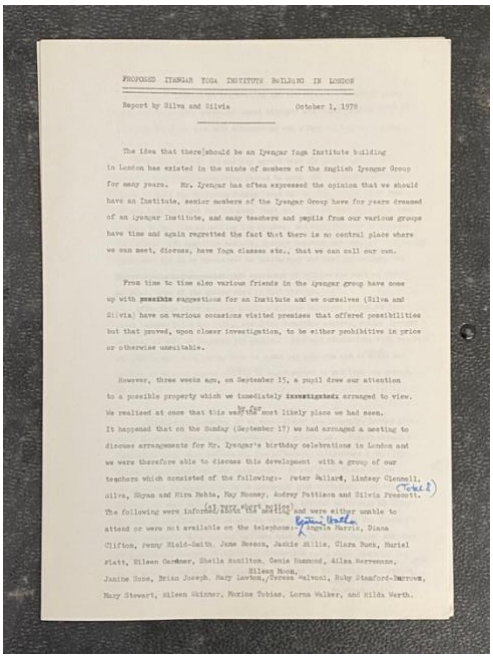
Prior to visiting I had been told that IYMV held several archive materials which might be relevant to my research. Alan had provided an overview of the materials including photos, and movie reels, and Suzanne had explained to me where things had been stored. In a session with Pedro we discussed how to approach the visit, with focus being things such as getting a copy of their catalogue and checking/getting permission to use any materials they provided in both my PhD and beyond. For me, I also knew IYMV could be a useful case study of the relationship (and potentially tensions) between yoga community archives and personal collections. Suzanne had told me that she was under the impression that the personal collection of Silvia Prescott (an early student of Iyengar in the UK) had been donated to IYMV after her death.

The day started off with an introductory chat (recorded) with Alan, we spoke about what archive material IYMV held, how it was stored (in boxes in the main office and cupboards in the men's changing room and studio) and how it was typically used (to produce/reproduce content for IYMV publications). He also told me how the pandemic had put plans to upgrade the building on hold, but they were still hopeful to doing these which include a new practice studio, but also a dedicated 'reading room' and archival space where they hope to improve both storage quality and use of the materials they hold. He then showed me the items stored in the main office space which included old copies of IYMV publications and newsletters, dozens of photo albums (not dated or labelled), and a selection of DVDs and VHS (mostly Masterclasses, and post-1984 footage) and audio cassettes (commercially available music recordings, from 1980s). Copies of the DVDs were made for me in case they included the use of archive clips or footage which might be relevant. Alan thought the donation from Silva Prescott was in this storage but could not find it (something I returned to later). It was also noted during our conversation that Alan does not, and has not practiced yoga, he saw the job advertised 10 years ago and moved from another non-profit. However, he is currently planning for his retirement and plans to volunteer with IYMV but focusing on certain aspects including building development and the archive.



We then moved onto looking at the material stored in a locked cupboard in the men's changing room at IYMV, where material which Alan was less acquainted with was stored. Archival quality storage this was not, the cupboard where boxes of loose items are kept is in the middle of a working changing room, while out of action due to Covid there is a shower in the changing room which must add to the humidity of an already sweaty room where mats and towels hang on hooks. As boxes were retrieved from the top three shelves (the bottom ones containing yoga props, items for sale by IYMV, and a defibrillator) it was clear the materials were a more varied assortment and included 35mm film reels, audio reels, photographs and documents relating to IYMV, some boxes had catalogue sheets from 2004/2008 on the top, though their contents did not always still match what was now in them.

All the documents in the boxes related to the development and running of IYMV, with most being minutes from meetings. While much of this was not relevant for my investigation the minutes from the first meeting in 1979 (which I copied) included discussion about what charitable status the organisation should aim to be with a number of members suggesting it should be religious, though it was suggested that because the BWY already had been designated 'education' following a similar path could speed thing up. This offers insight into how the practitioners/teachers viewed what they were doing, but also the pragmatic decision which was then made. Other copied documents include a 'Short history of Iyengar yoga in England' written my IYMV members in 1983.



PROPOSED IYENGAR YOGA INSTITUTE BUILDING IN LONDON

Report by Silva and Silvia October 1, 1978

The idea that there should be an Iyengar Yoga Institute building in London has existed in the minds of members of the English Iyengar Group for many years. Mr. Iyengar has often expressed the opinion that we should have an Institute, senior members of the Iyengar Group have for years dreamed of an Iyengar Institute, and many teachers and pupils from our various groups have time and again regretted the fact that there is no central place where we can meet, discuss, have Yoga classes etc., that we can call our own.

From time to time also various friends in the Iyengar group have come up with possible suggestions for an Institute and we ourselves (Silva and Silvia) have on various occasions visited premises that offered possibilities but that proved, upon closer investigation, to be either prohibitive in price or otherwise unsuitable.

However, three weeks ago, on September 15, a pupil drew our attention to a possible property which we immediately investigated; arranged to view. We realised at once that this was the most likely place we had seen. It happened that on the Sunday (September 17) we had arranged a meeting to discuss arrangements for Mr. Iyengar's birthday celebrations in London and we were therefore able to discuss this development with a group of our teachers which consisted of the following:- Peter Ballard, Lindsey Clennell, Silva, Shyan and Hira Mehta, May Mooney, Audrey Pattison and Silvia Prescott. The following were informed about the meeting and were either unable to attend or were not available on the telephone: Angela Farris, Diana Clifton, Penny Field-Smith, Jane Bevan, Jackie Allis, Clara Buck, Muriel Platt, Eileen Gardner, Sheila Hamilton, Genie Hammond, Ailsa Herveaux, Eileen Moon, Janine Rose, Brian Joseph, Mary Lawton, Teresa Calvosi, Ruby Stamford-Harrow, Mary Stewart, Aileen Skinner, Norine Tobias, Lorna Walker, and Hilda Werth.

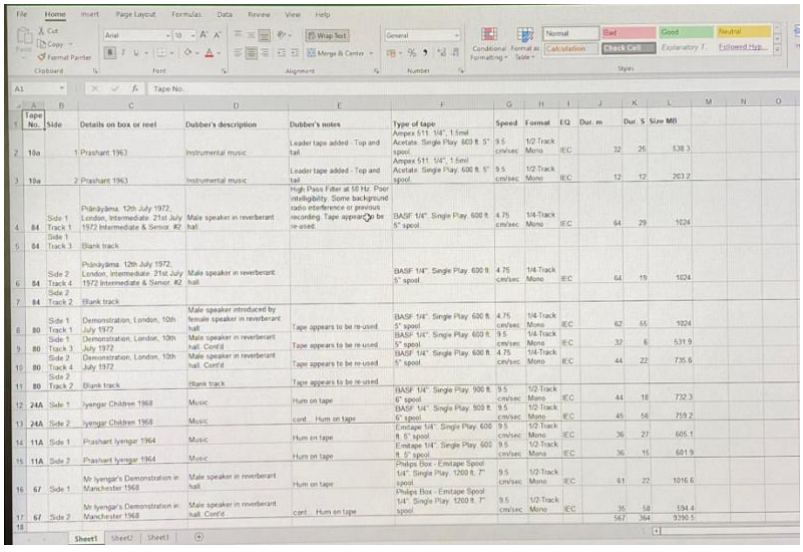
Though the film reels had dates on which indicated they where from either before or after my period of enquiry,

several of the audio recording looked like they could be relevant, some of which had been digitised onto DVD-R and were labelled with things like 'Demonstration London 1972', 'Iyengar Children 1968' and 'Mr Iyengar's Demonstration in Manchester 1968'. Alan allowed me to make digital copies from the DVD-R of the 13 audio recording from between 1963 and 72 (totalling 8+ hours of audio). The recordings of the Iyengar demonstrations will offer insight into the ways in which he, and his followers were presenting yoga at the time, and it will be interesting to compare these directly with the news articles I have about them.

As we were going through these files, a yoga teacher came out of one of the studios and Alan introduced her as Korrina, who had appeared in one of the VHS recordings he had talked about (an appearance on Blue Peter in the early 2000s). As we chatted, she mentioned that she had some materials at home which I might be interested in, before telling us (it was news to Alan too) that a previous manager of the institute had done a clear out of the archive roughly 15 years ago throwing materials away, but that after they had left, she would 'save' items from the bin and take them home. She also suggested that she may have recordings of some BBC television programmes about Iyengar Yoga from the 1960s but doesn't know for certain because she has not had them digitised. She also added that one of her students is/was a producer for the BBC and had given her some materials relating to Iyengar that she had or had found. We exchanged details and said we would arrange a meeting/video call to talk in more detail.

Within the archive boxes in the men's changing room cupboard, we also found several boxes of recordings which were labeled "Asana Classes mid-late 1960s (tapes from Dona Holleman" which Alan thought were audio recordings that has not been digitised. If these are as understood (and have not been damaged by their storage method) they could offer a great tool which to compare with the accounts and lived experiences of practitioners from the period and media reports.

As my time at IYMV came towards an end, I conducted a 30-minute de-brief interview with Alan where we revisited several of the conversations we'd had while going through the archive material. I also confirmed what permissions I had to use the materials he had provided, and how IYMV should be credited. I also used this as a chance to return to the issue of the Silvia Prescott collection donation which he had previously not been able to find. After a bit of hunting, he found several boxes of photographs from her behind a CCTV monitor in one of the store cupboards. While there were hundreds of photos included, and they were filed between dividers labelled "AV, AW, CF, CR…" Alan said there was not a key to this system, and it was hard to date the images, many of which showed yoga practitioners in setting which could have been from any time between 1960 and 2000. It appeared the main use of the collection has so far been to find and use images of BKS Iyengar. This also illustrates the problems faced by organisations working with and trying to incorporate people's personal collections, particularly when this only occurs after their death.



Follow-up actions.

I have scheduled a video interview with Korrina (May 10th) to discuss her collection of archive materials and the events of archive material being placed in the rubbish and her saving it.

My recording of the interview with Alan has been uploaded for transcription.

Alan is also going to check for an extended archive catalogue which he had told me existed but was not able to find on the day. There was a storage space in one of the studios which we could not access due to a combination of yoga classes and building work. He remembers seeing it in a carrier bag.

I need to follow up on the potential digitisation of the tapes labelled “Asana Classes’ I have emailed Pedro about any provision for this through BCU, and Alan has suggested if this is not possible IYMV would be interested in doing this themselves anyway, but was not sure when they would be able to do it.

APPENDIX D.

The following is a combined summary and reflection on my research visit to Ken and Angela Thompson in May, 2022. While such writing was part of my reflexive practice, it also enabled me to detail what I had been doing to my supervisors, and make plans based on finding from the visit. Images author's own or courtesy of Ken Thompson.

Research Visit Summary (+ reflexive notes) Ken and Angela Thompson.

On Tuesday 17th May I drove to Reepham, Norwich, to visit with Ken and Angela Thompson. Ken was a founding member of the British Wheel of Yoga (1965) having practiced yoga himself since 1955/6. As a founding member he had close contact with founder Wilfred Clarke, was the London representative for the BWY, meaning he was responsible for liaising with the regional education authorities, and, along with his wife Angela, acted as something of a hub for the BWY (their residential address was used for BWY phone calls, and they regularly had visiting swamis stay with them). Ken and Angela can therefore be seen as cultural translators of yoga themselves, offer invaluable insight into the role of Wilfred Clark in these processes, and house a personal collection of yoga related materials spanning 70 years. I have previously interviewed Ken via video call (27 September 2021) when he had shown me his extensive collection of books and files, and told me how much material they had recently binned (documents) and taken to a charity shop (commercial magazines) after downsizing to a smaller house after a period of ill health.

Following sessions with Pedro about how to plan for a multi-day visit such as this I had planned on a structure which would roughly see my first day (from 2pm... after a 4.5hr drive) taken up with a combination of relationship building conversations and scouting the materials of the personal collection, trying to develop a clearer picture of what there was, and where it was stored. The second day was then dedicated to scanning, copying, and digitising relevant materials, making sure to also collect an overview (such as photos of the bookshelves with legible spines) and having (long recorded) conversations about items and memories as they presented themselves. The final day (before heading back to Birmingham at 4pm) was to be focused around a more structured interview which would use things that had come up over the previous two days, and pointedly address each of my research questions and objectives (questions would be written the night before) with any free time dedicated to scanning any additional (not high priority) collected material. While this format was pretty-much adhered to, there were complications[…] this gave me an appreciation of both what I had read and written about working with people and personal collections in domestic spaces.

Conversation context and discoveries

Throughout my stay with Ken and Angela we had several wide-ranging conversations about yoga past and present. Many of these developed organically during times such as meals (not audio recorded) while others happened when exploring materials in their personal collections (audio recorded). Angela made it clear that while she was happy for what she said to be used in these conversations to be used as contextual information she did not want to be quoted anywhere as she felt much of it was personal and related to family and friends who would be identifiable. However, we revisited many of these topics in the final interview, which both consented to being recorded and quotes used in publications, to get something on the record, if not quite as colourful as the more organic conversations.

THE WHEEL OF BRITISH YOGA

This is to certify that

KENNETH J. THOMPSON

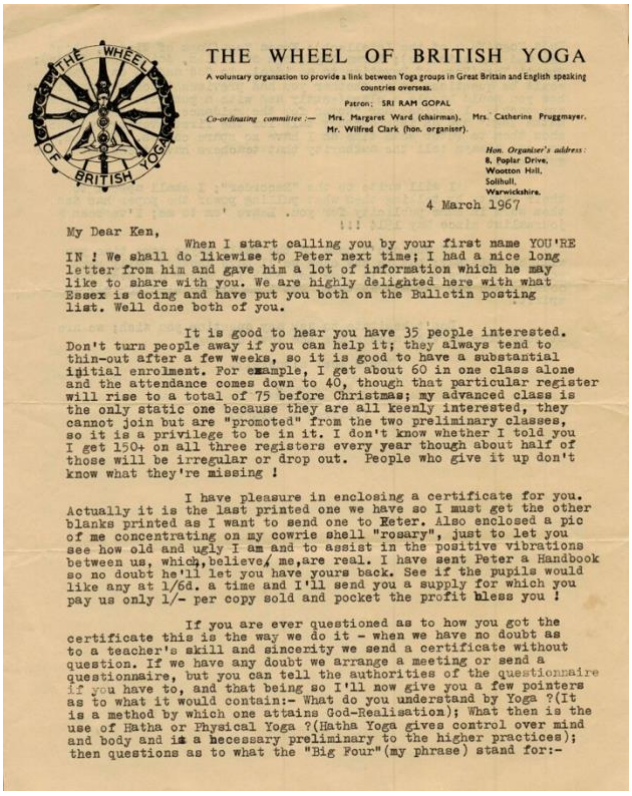
has been examined by the Board of the Wheel of British Yoga in the knowledge of the physical and higher planes of Yoga and is considered to be suitable to impart intruction in this subject.

Margaret Ward.

Wilfred M Clark

4 MARCH 1967

Some of the topics (of relevance to my investigation) included.



THE WHEEL OF BRITISH YOGA

A voluntary organsation to provide a link between Yoga groups in Great Britain and English speaking countries overseas.

Patron: SRI RAM GOPAL

Co-ordinating committee :— Mrs. Margaret Ward (chairman), Mrs. Catherine Pruggmayer, Mr. Wilfred Clark (hon. organizer).

Hon. Organizer's address: 8, Poplar Drive, Wootton Hill, Solihull, Warwickshire.

4 March 1967

My Dear Ken,

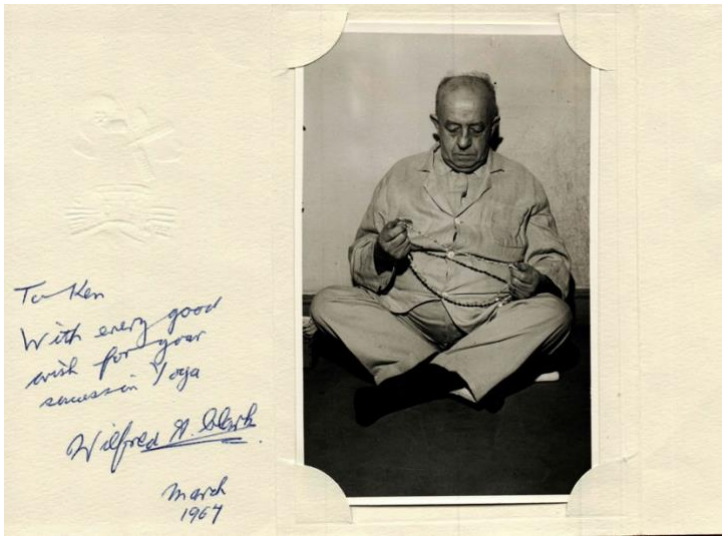
When I start calling you by your first name YOU'RE IN ! We shall do likewise to Peter next time; I had a nice long letter from him and gave him a lot of information which he may like to share with you. We are highly delighted here with what Essex is doing and have put you both on the Bulletin posting list. Well done both of you.

It is good to hear you have 35 people interested. Don't turn people away if you can help it; they always tend to thin-out after a few weeks, so it is good to have a substantial initial enrolment. For example, I get about 60 in one class alone and the attendance comes down to 40, though that particular register will rise to a total of 75 before Christmas; my advanced class is the only static one because they are all keenly interested, they cannot join but are "promoted" from the two preliminary classes, so it is a privilege to be in it. I don't know whether I told you I get 150+ on all three registers every year though about half of those will be irregular or drop out. People who give it up don't know what they're missing !

I have pleasure in enclosing a certificate for you. Actually it is the last printed one we have so I must get the other blanks printed as I want to send one to Peter. Also enclosed a pic of me concentrating on my cowrie shell "rosary", just to let you see how old and ugly I am and to assist in the positive vibrations between us, which, believe/ me, are real. I have sent Peter a Handbook so no doubt he'll let you have yours back. See if the pupils would like any at 1/6d. a time and I'll send you a supply for which you pay us only 1/- per copy sold and pocket the profit bless you !

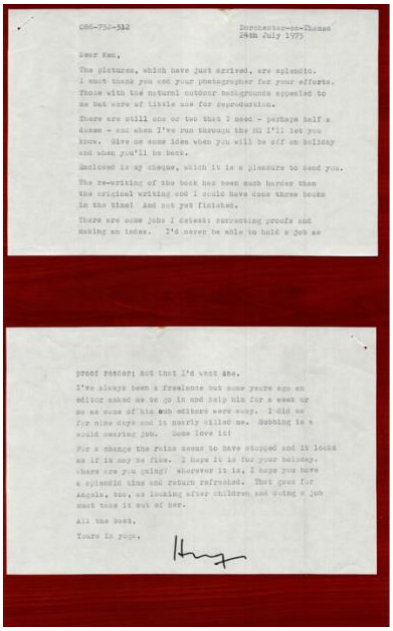
If you are ever questioned as to how you got the certificate this is the way we do it - when we have no doubt as to a teacher's skill and sincerity we send a certificate without question. If we have any doubt we arrange a meeting or send a questionnaire, but you can tell the authorities of the questionnaire if you have to, and that being so I'll now give you a few pointers as to what it would contain:- What do you understand by Yoga ?(It is a method by which one attains God-Realisation); What then is the use of Hatha or Physical Yoga ?(Hatha Yoga gives control over mind and body and is a necessary preliminary to the higher practices); then questions as to what the "Big Four"(my phrase) stand for:-

- How they (and in particular Ken) were seen in the 50s/60s as yoga practitioners. What Angela's parents thought about Ken and his career move from industry (electronics) to teaching yoga. Ken also noted that after mentioning that he practiced yoga it became a defining characteristic with colleagues at work introducing him as "that's Ken, if you give him a peanut he'll stand on his head".
- Ken's relationship with Wilfred Clark, what he did, how he as the founder of the BWY is considered, and his role in promoting and popularising yoga.
- The contests between different types of yoga, for example the institutionalisation of yoga in the adult education system and the process by which Iyengar became accepted by the ILEA because of the way the British Wheel of Yoga was seen as "amateurish" which in turn led to the introduction of teacher training and accreditation.
- How the name British Wheel of Yoga led (in the early years) to the organisation be seen as bigger than it was. Calls to the organisation came in on a residential phone line and visiting yogis from India often assumed that they would be put up and treated in certain ways.
- How a surge in yoga's popularity led to a fast commercialisation of it, to the dismay of early practitioners and teachers.
- The cost/commercialisation of hearing high-profile yogis speak, in particular TM and people being given the same mantra.



Material Finds

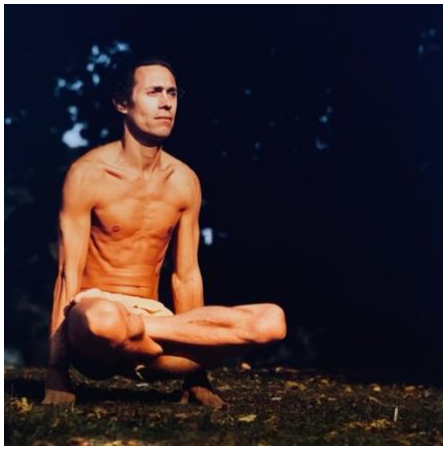
When I arrived to stay with Ken and Angela, they had prepared a selection of material for me to see and explore, this was in part because material had been stored around the house (garages, spare bedrooms, hallways) and they wanted to make it all available to me, their extensive book collection had been left on the shelves in a hallway (photos were taken with the spines of all books legible). On the kitchen table there were a bundle of letters, hundreds of 35mm slides, old floppy disks, video tapes, and a hand full of newspaper clippings. In Ken's office/den there were folders of letters, newspaper clippings, binders on BWY newsletters, Spectrum newsletters and commercial yoga magazines as well as a number of audio recordings (cassettes, CD and minidisc).



Some of the items (of relevance to my investigation) included.

- An audio recording of Wilfred Clark which Ken made in 1972, Ken thinks this is the only quality audio recording of Wilfred and that the current BWY administration does not appreciate its value.
- Missing newsletters and education supplements from the BWY archive (as I was able to see during my visit to Sleaford) complete with pull outs and letters which were missing from those held by BWY.
- Pamphlets produced and sold by Wilfred Clark outlining his views (and therefore those of the BWY) about the subject of yoga and yoga philosophy.
- Letters from Wilfred Clark to Ken about giving him BWY authority to teach yoga, his early certificates (complete with spelling mistakes).
- A letter from Wilfred Clark to the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR) outlining why he did not think yoga should be treated as an exercise/sport/hobby.

- Multi-year correspondence with Harvey Day (an author of many yoga books and newspaper articles) which include discussion of yoga's sudden popularity in terms of content demand and what sort of photo illustrations publishers wanted (Ken provided photos for Harvey, I have scans of contact sheets).



Interview consolidation

As noted above, the interview which was conducted on the final day of the visit was intended to consolidate the preliminary findings of the material search and the conversations which had been had. A series of 18 questions have been devised prior to the interview, structured to address my specific research questions and objectives. While answers were often not as specific as I would have liked, the interview was useful and covered topics including.

- Media coverage of yoga: How certain celebrities (Menuhin, Beatles, Paul Dukes) made yoga fashionable at different times and how these drew waves of interest in yoga, seen through increased contact to BWY and attendance at yoga sessions/classes.
- How models and dancers were often used to demonstrate yoga postures in print and on TV as they were more able to achieve 'full postures' than experienced yoga practitioners. Some of these went on to become recognised faces of yoga, including one model who went to an audition for a yoga TV show thinking it was an advert for yogurt.

- How certain yoga teachers such as Iyengar had easier access to the media because of their position within London and the people who practiced with him. The suggestion that his students/followers aided the proliferation of his style of yoga practice over others.
- The "land grab" for yoga classes, how Ken remembers being one of nine yoga teachers in the country, and how the interest in yoga (late 60s) and in particular the broadcast of Richard Hittleman's TV show (1971) caused many keep fit classes to be rebranded as yoga, with some yoga postures added to existing classes. We also spoke about how he remembers exercise classes where instructors taught yoga from a book on the floor next to them, and how much money yoga classes made for adult education institutes (they didn't require equipment like most other classes).
- How the availability of and demand for yoga related products grew after the Hittleman TV show and the publication of glossy yoga magazines (different colour leotards, music, lifestyle and nutrition products). We also mentioned The Mind Body Spirit events/exhibitions from 1971 in London and how Ken and Angela thought they became too commercial after a couple of years.
- Ken offered thoughts on why some yoga teachers found it easier to adapt or modify yoga practices and teachings, while others tried to restrict teachings to what they saw as classical teaching.
- How Ken and Angela had recently downsized both their home and personal yoga collection (including what they had been planning to get rid of, but had stored in the garage until my visit in case it was useful. We also talked about their on-going curation of their collections, and how much this was linked to media technology, while books were kept, VHS tapes were got rid of as DVDs became more popular.

Follow up actions

- Organise and file scans of documents
- Organise and file photos of documents and visit
- Clean up digitised mp3 audio recording of Wilfred Clark.

- Ensure transcripts of interviews (and conversations)
- Use these transcripts to identify preliminary coding.

- Organise (and store) newsletters and magazines
- Scan additional BWY newsletters from 1958-75
- Go through 1958-75 newsletters and magazines for inserts and letters.
- Look/search for references to products / events mentioned, based on conversation.

APPENDIX E.

Below is an example of the interview consent form which was supplied to all of my research interviewees.

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Mediating yoga: An exploration of the cultural translations of yoga in the UK through its popular representations

Simon Crisp. PhD researcher. Birmingham City University.
simon.crisp@mail.bcu.ac.uk

This research project explores the cultural processes at play during a period of yoga's popularisation in the UK (1960s and 70s), namely it's cultural translation as explored through examples of its media representations and the lived-experience. Interviews with practitioners from the period are used to investigate what popular representations and mediations of yoga can reveal (or hide) about the practice and development of yoga in the UK. It is hoped this work can contribute to knowledge about the history of yoga practices in the UK and offer insight into the discourses and ideologies which have shaped the development of the yoga practice and industry.

- I confirm that I have read the above information and have the opportunity to ask questions about this research project.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
- I agree to take part in the above study.
- I agree to my interview / conversation being recorded.
- I agree to my quotes being used in this study and related publications
- I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (and after it has been anonymized) in a specialist data centre an may be used for future research.

Name of Participant ……

Date ……..

Signed ……..

APPENDIX F.

The following article was published in *Dipika* the journal of Iyengar Yoga London (July 2023, No55) detailing some of my work with the organisation and in particular the uncovering of the BBC TV show *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru.*

WATCHING BKS IYENGAR ON THE BBC AFTER SIXTY YEARS

By Simon Crisp.

Sixty years ago, BKS Iyengar appeared on BBC TV with his celebrity student Yehudi Menuhin. The pair were interviewed by David Attenborough for the show *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru*, with BKS Iyengar demonstrating several asana with his usual exacting precision. The show has never been repeated, which means only those who tuned in at 10:25 pm on Wednesday the 21st of August 1963 have been able to see it… until recently.

As a PhD student researching mainstream media representations of yoga in the UK (1955-75), I was aware of the TV show *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru*. Many of the people I interviewed, who practiced yoga in the 1960s, had told me about it, either recalling watching it themselves or having been told about it by someone else. I didn't think I would get to see it for myself, though, as the BBC had informed me that it was no longer part of their archive. As with many old TV and radio shows, it appeared that it was not recorded, or the tapes were reused and recorded cover due to costs.

However, that changed one day during a research visit to IYL while I unpacked some archive materials on the benches in the men's changing room. I was introduced to Korinna Pilafidis-Williams, who had just finished teaching a class, and we started talking about my research and interest in media representations of yoga. Korinna said that she had an old VHS tape at home which might be of interest, saying that she had not seen it, but understood it was of an old BBC TV show about Iyengar and that it mentioned David Attenborough.

Instantly I knew (or rather hoped I knew) what was on the tape, which had been given to Korinna by a student who had worked as a producer for the BBC, and we arranged to have it digitised. Sure enough, this serendipitous meeting had uncovered the TV show I had been hoping to see. In this article, I provide a bit of context surrounding the show's production through correspondence with David Attenborough, detail what was covered in the show and the appearance of BKS Iyengar, and why I see it (particularly in the context of my research) as a critical text in yoga's mediation in the UK.

In the early 1960s, as today, mainstream media coverage of yoga often centred around celebrities who practice it. And in 1963, arguably the most significant celebrity proponent of yoga was violinist Yehudi Menuhin. Menuhin had been practising yoga since 1952 and had met BKS Iyengar while touring India. He later brought him to London in 1954 and again from 1960-1975, when he would spend much of the summer in the UK. As early as 1954, the weekly journal The Sketch featured a photo of Menuhin in a headstand, with articles also appearing in the Daily Mirror *Yoga, Yoghurt and*

Yehudi (1962), and the Daily Mail *Invirtuoso … or why Mr Menuhin stands on his head* (1961) and *Yehudi's Yoga* (1962).

While Menuhin, whose name made it to the show's title, was the draw from an audience perspective, BKS Iyengar was not unknown to the UK media himself. In 1960 during his visit to the UK with Menuhin, he appeared in image-led newspaper articles in the Daily Mail, News Chronicle and Daily Mirror after demonstrating yoga at the annual pre-Wimbledon tennis event held by Lady Crosfield in London. Iyengar had also been referred to as “India’s foremost teacher of yoga in the Daily Mail article *Invirtuoso … or why Mr Menuhin stands on his head* (1961).

David Attenborough, a producer in the 'Talk' department at the BBC in 1963, says he remembers being telephoned by the head of the department Mary Adams. He said she had been contacted by Yehudi Menuhin, who she knew, to inquire whether the BBC would be interested in a show about yoga and that his teacher BKS Iyengar, was briefly in London.
Of that meeting, Attenborough said, "We talked for some time, and I concluded that Iyengar would be able to explain yoga most interestingly, not by talking directly to the camera but in conversation with Menuhin. It would also be fascinating to hear from Menuhin about how he practiced the discipline and why he found it so valuable. Menuhin agreed but said he would find it easier if I were there to guide the conversation.” He added that it was also agreed that Iyengar should be there throughout to demonstrate some of the positions and exercises as they were mentioned.

A date for the broadcast was set, but even prior to its airing, there was newspaper interest. Promotional images featuring a bare-chested Iyengar in conversation with Attenborough and Menuhin (who were each wearing the sort of suit and tie which BBC viewers in 1963 would have been more accustomed to) featured alongside TV listings in several newspapers. The accompanying captions promised a show in which Menuhin would discuss the value he had found in yoga and feature his "Guru (teacher)", suggesting that, at the time, the word guru required an explanation. The Radio Times listing for the show stated: "The practice of yoga is older than Christianity. Until this century, its disciplines and purpose have been known to few people in the Western world. Yehudi Menuhin has practised yoga for thirteen years. Tonight he talks about its value and the effect it has had on him personally, with his Guru, or teacher, Shri. B. K. S. Iyengar."

While the above had been all I knew about the show, finally being able to view the footage showed how it opened with BKS Iyengar performing a sequence of advanced postures. During this, the camera pans to David Attenborough, who offers a dictionary definition of yoga, saying, "Yoga, according to the dictionary, is a Hindu system of ascetic practice, abstract meditation and mental concentration designed to achieve union between the human soul and the divine spirit. It has a very ancient history. It was first codified in Sanskrit texts some 2,000 years ago. The word yoga means 'union' and comes from the same root as the English word 'yoke'. A man who practises yoga is a yogi, and the master who teaches it is a guru."

Yehudi Menuhin is then introduced as one of the most distinguished yoga followers in the West and interviewed about his introduction to and practice of yoga, how he uses it and whether what he "as a

European" gets from it is the same as what Indians get from yoga. After this, the pair move from their seats to join BKS Iyengar, who wears dark shorts, a blanket over his shoulders and a necklace, and they all sit cross-legged on the floor.

Iyengar is questioned about how he became a yogi, saying, "When I was a boy of 15 years, I was suspected of tuberculosis. So, it so happened that in the hospital, they said that it may not be possible for me to survive. By chance, my teacher who is now my guru, is my own sister's husband. He learned this art on the borders of Nepal and Tibet and came back to his hometown, which is Mysore, in South India. So, on his way back he saw me, and he said, 'Why don't you join me in the house, and I can try to teach you something by which you can improve'. That's how my interest in yoga started."

The conversation then turns to the nature of yoga, with Attenborough saying: "It seems to me that yoga at least, I may have got the wrong end of the stick, that yoga is, after all, a Hindu belief, it is a, or a Hindu system, part of a religious belief, and I had rather gathered that it was working towards some sort of spiritual enlightenment, not simply curing indigestion or obesity or many of the things which we know that these exercises do cure?"

Iyengar responds to correct some aspects of the question while broadening others, saying: "Well, it is only a kind; it is not a Hindu system of philosophy, but it is a philosophy of its own which is suitable to the community on the whole. It deals with the physical, moral, mental, and spiritual upliftment. The mind is there. The mind is distracted due to the diseases, ailments, anything so reflected to the mind."

Following this, Arthur Koestler's book *The Lotus and the Robot* is used to build on the earlier question to Menuhin about whether he, as a European, gets the same from yoga as an Indian would, as the conversation then turns to whether yoga has been "bowdlerised" to meet the tastes of Europeans, meaning those aspects of the yoga practice considered improper or offensive by a European audience could (and had) been removed from the yoga promoted and practiced in Europe. The example of *Khechari mudra* in which the tendon at the bottom of the tongue is cut to enable the tongue to touch the bridge of the nose, is given.

The potential European notion of a connection between yoga and practices which might be considered improper or unpleasant is once more returned to when Attenborough suggests mention of yoga might raise in one ideas of "Indian mystics, solitaries; with long matted hair, sacred signs on their foreheads, perhaps unclean, typically lonely in the Himalayas somewhere, rapt in contemplation, probably not moving for months," and asking whether this is false. Both Menuhin and Iyengar strongly contend this is a false impression of yoga.

Towards the end of the show, Attenborough asks, "supposing I had decided that I, for simply my body's fitness, wish to take up yoga, what sort of exercises would I start with?" prompting Iyengar to go into a demonstration as the conversation continues with Menuhin. During this exchange, Attenborough comments that postures like Utthita Trikonasana (Triangle) look simple and questions whether Menuhin's practice looks similar to this.

As Iyengar goes into Mayurasana (Peacock), Attenborough asks Menuhin, "And can you do this?" prompting the violinist to respond, "No. I don't think I ever shall do that". He continues to praise Iyengar, saying, "there are few great teachers, and I would count Mr Iyengar as one of the great, great teachers in any field. Quite extraordinary" as the show draws to a close.

The show also generated some post-airing media coverage, including an article in the Belfast Telegraph, '*Yoga: a weird fascination'* which said the show had done little to answer the question of what yoga is, adding that "To describe how a series of exercises can help bring about a "union between the human soul and the divine" is like trying to bottle a sunbeam". A piece in the Liverpool Echo also suggested the show had not been able to explain yoga suitably and criticised the interviewing techniques of David Attenborough, saying he'd "spoiled what would have been an otherwise most enjoyable programme by his habit of asking a question and the cutting the reply short in order to put another query".

For my PhD research at Birmingham City University - which draws heavily on mainstream media representations of yoga between 1955 and 1975 - being able to finally see this show for myself has been fantastic. It is one of the earliest remaining TV portrayals of yoga in the UK. Seeing David Attenborough present and challenge, through conversation with Menuhin and Iyengar, mainstream understandings of yoga have also allowed me to explore the discourses of the period, considering what knowledge and assumptions understandings of yoga were based on at that time. Viewing the show has also illustrated the roles certain figures played in both the popularisation and cultural translation of yoga, particularly Menuhin and Iyengar.

I hope that people who either practiced with BKS Iyengar, or within the Iyengar tradition are also able to gain something from knowing about and seeing parts of the show themselves. While the BBC have kindly granted permission to share the featured selection of still images from the show in Dipika, video extracts can also be viewed on my research-adjacent website yogamemories.com.

ENDS

APPENDIX G.

Below is a copy of the interview consent form and questions to which attendees to a research screening of the recording *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru* were asked to supply written responses.

IYENGAR SCREENING INTERVIEW CONSENT HANDOUT.

Mediating yoga: An exploration of the cultural translations of yoga in the UK through its popular representations (1955-75)

Simon Crisp. PhD researcher. Birmingham City University.
simon.crisp@mail.bcu.ac.uk
yogamemories.com

This research project explores the cultural processes at play during a period of yoga's popularisation in the UK (1955-75), namely it's cultural translation as explored through examples of its media representations and the lived experience. Interviews with practitioners from the period are used to investigate what popular representations and mediations of yoga can reveal (or hide) about the practice and development of yoga in the UK. It is hoped this work can contribute to knowledge about the history of yoga practices in the UK and offer insight into the discourses and ideologies which have shaped the development of the yoga practice and industry.

- I confirm that I have read the above information and could ask questions about this research project.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

- I agree to take part in the above study.

- I agree to my interview / conversation being recorded.

- I agree to my quotes being used in this study and related publications

…….. I want my contributions anonymised (tick if required)

- I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (and after it has been anonymized) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

Name	
Date	

Signed	
Email	

Interview questions

If you have more to say than would fit in the space available, or would prefer to respond verbally, please let me know and we can talk through your responses.

What year did you start practicing yoga?

Has this always been Iyengar? If not what other forms/lineages have you practiced?

How long have you been a yoga teacher?

Did you ever practice with BKS Iyengar in person? If so when?

Have you ever watched or listened to recordings of BKS Iyengar teaching yoga?

Had you known about the TV show 'Yehudi Menuhin and his Guru' prior to his event? If so, what did you know of it?

The following questions are to be completed after viewing the BBC show Yehudi Menuhin and his Guru (BBC, 1963)

What did you think of the version of yoga presented in the show, how did it compare to what you consider yoga to be?

Did you find any aspects of the presentation of yoga in the show problematic, if so, what?

How do you think BKS Iyengar came across in the show? e.g., was he authentic, authoritative, knowledgeable…?

If you did practice with BKS Iyengar in person, how did his appearance here compare to your encounters with him?

Does seeing this show reinforce the tradition/history of your Iyengar yoga practice, or make you consider your practice in a different way?

Did you find viewing the show emotional at all? If so, please explain in what ways this was the case.

Would you be interested in seeing or hearing more archive material of BKS Iyengar? If so, what sort of material would you be interested in, please tick.

- Articles about yoga written by BKS Iyengar.
- Audio of BKS Iyengar delivering yoga lectures/demonstrations.
- Audio of BKS Iyengar teaching asana classes.
- Audio of BKS Iyengar teaching pranayama classes.
- Video of BKS Iyengar media appearances.
- Video of BKS Iyengar delivering yoga lectures/demonstrations.
- Video of BKS Iyengar teaching asana classes.
- Video of BKS Iyengar teaching pranayama classes.

Would you be interested in seeing or hearing more archive material about yoga from the period 1955-1975 if it did not relate to BKS Iyengar or Iyengar Yoga?

APPENDIX H.

This is an example of one of the permission forms which had to be complete for the BBC to grant permission for video and stills from the television show *Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru* to be used on my research adjacent blog, and in *Dipika* the journal of Iyengar Yoga London.

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TELL US ABOUT THE CONTENT YOU'D LIKE TO USE…	
What archive content do you want to use? If you have them, tell us the programme number and transmission date. Do you already have a copy? (If you can purchase a copy through a retailer, please do. If the content is not available commercially, we will discuss supply options with you)	Yehudi Menuhin and His Guru - TX 21/08/1963 Licensee already has a copy of the material. The footage is not currently held by BBC Archives.
When do you need it and for how long? Tell us when you need to start and end. At the end you will need to stop using it and remove it from further	A licence is being offered for a period of three years from 23/09/2022.

availability (e.g. take it down from display online)	
Where will the content be made available? Tell us the details, for example: UK only or international? screening - available to a closed audience or to the general public? • online – streamed? what's the URL? broadcast - on-demand for the end user to access at their time & place of choosing? charity or fundraising? PLEASE SEE THE INFORMATION AT THE TOP OF THIS FORM ABOUT REQUESTS FOR COMMERCIAL USE (WHICH INCLUDES PAID SCREENINGS).	Stills from the footage will be used to illustrate an article written, on a voluntary unpaid basis, for Dipika, the members newsletter of Iyengar Yoga London Maida Vale, where the footage was discovered. Dipika is a registered charity.
Will someone else be making the content available? Tell us about it or say not applicable.	N/A
How will the content be used for educational purposes? Have you checked if your ERA licence covers this? (For MOOCs please contact BBC Studios English BBCStudios.Learning@bbc.com. Or say 'not applicable'.	The article documents research activities in relation to this project at Birmingham City University.
Which clips do you want to use?	Stills 0:20 – Titlescreen
Tell us the timecode and words where each clip starts and ends, and the duration. Or say 'full programme'.	2:33 – David Attenborough speaking 3:39 – Yehudi Menuhin speaking 8:42 - Introducing Mr Iyengar to the show 11:36 – Mr Iyengar speaking 25:21 – All three people sitting cross legged 26:20 - BKS Iyengar demonstrates Triangle posture 26:29 - BKS Iyengar demonstrates Warrior 2 posture 27:43 - BKS Iyengar demonstrates Hero posture 28:27 - BKS Iyengar demonstrates Shoulder Stand posture 28:52 - BKS Iyengar demonstrates Plough posture 29:28 - BKS Iyengar demonstrates Headstand

	posture
If the content is to be used online, how will it be protected? For example: geo-blocking, digital rights management etc.	N/A
Is this request part of a formal BBC partnership or public space collaboration? Tell us about it or say not applicable.	N/A
Do you need any public performance licences (e.g. PRS)? Which licences have you got? Or say not applicable.	N/A
Please describe how the content will be used in context (or attach a copy of your work showing how) . Also show us how your audience or end users can make complaints to YOU if they're unhappy with your use of our content. (You must have this.)	The article would discuss the discovery of the footage, the portrayal of Mr Iyengar, the postures he demonstrated in the show and his comments about yoga, and how the show had contributed to his legacy. Dipika is a free newsletter available physically to members of Iyengar Yoga London Maida Vale and the wider Iyengar community online (as a downloadable PDF).

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APPENDIX I.

The following is an example of the summary and reflection writing which was generated after interviews were conducted. This example relates to the interview conducted with Ken Thompson on Monday September 27, 2021 via a Zoom video call.

Interview summary and reflection

Ken is someone I have been trying to get in touch with for several months. He was an early yoga teacher in London and is one of the founding members of the British Wheel of Yoga, he had strong ties to the organisation for several decades. He is now 86-years-old and living with his wife Angela (also a yoga teacher for many years) in Norfolk.

Interview: After 25 minutes of trying to get his Zoom camera and microphone to work, we spoke about his background, how he came to yoga in the early 60s and having an interest in fitness and understanding the human body. His early learning was based on books, primarily Theos Bernard's Hatha Yoga and he attended his first class in Loughton, Essex in 1961/2, in a local evening education setting. He said many yoga teachers in London at the time (early 60s) were keep fit teachers who "threw a few yoga asana into their normal keep fit class" and started calling themselves yoga teachers despite "not having a clue what yoga was all about" adding, "it was the blind leading the blind". For him the second boom in interest in yoga was after the introduction of Richard Hittleman's TV show in the late 60s/70s, he says this made yoga fashionable. However, he has strong views on the then influx of American yoga teachers, and suggests that the UK understanding of yoga was underpinned by its relationship with India, compared to that of America. He does not problematise this relationship and instead is of the opinion that it made Brits more receptive to yoga teachings and having lots to learn from people who have had "thousands of years of practice at it" while, "we are just beginning". He says he remembers hearing that one of the women who fronted a yoga TV show in the 70s new nothing about yoga before her casting "she thought she was going to a casting for yogurt" and was a model.

He notes that one of the biggest influences of the West on yoga is the way it is taught and the move to a class session rather than one-to-one guru and student and how yoga is paid for or bankrolled. Speaking about how he learned from Indian yogis, he talked about lectures given in the UK and a woman who was known as "The importer of Swamis". He has issues with the development of classes and styles where yoga became competitive, though says that if you have the right body they are designed for you. Talking about his involvement with the British Wheel of Yoga, he says he responded to a etter in his local paper, sent by Wilfred Clarke asking for like-minded people interested in yoga. Though this has previously been written about (Newcombe), Ken thinks the letter was in the Illford Recorder, and has given me a range of dates to try to locate an example of these letters. Ken also talked about how Wilfred was a prolific letter writer and would respond within a couple of days. The exchanged letters frequently included advice on how to teach certain people certain postures.

We also spoke about how this correspondence led to networking and meetings with education authority bosses, and from that the development of a BWY teacher training course, and a yoga syllabus (which is almost the same some 50 years later). We spoke about the development of this course between Ken, Velta and Chris Stevens, how certain texts were selected for inclusion, but also how they felt they could not get guidance from India because this (classes) was a new way of teaching

yoga. This conversation also highlighted the conflicts which existed between styles of yoga to control its institutionalisation - with contrasts of teaching style from Iyengar to BWY.

Of his own teaching Ken said that what he brought from the "modern era" was a knowledge of human anatomy and physiology. He tried to impart the wisdom and philosophy that he had experienced through meeting and lectures by respected Indian yogis in his classes. He said the early classes were 70-80 percent women partly because of the links to existing keep fit classes. But distinguished himself and other teachers who were "genuine seekers of truth who wanted to find out what yoga was about and read these classical books" from the keep fit yoga teachers. He also spoke about the difficulties of teaching yoga in new-build sports complexes, with a few amusing examples. He also mentioned that the only time he's injured himself doing yoga was when a newspaper photographer wanted a photo of him in full lotus (because that's how you showed he was a yoga teacher) and he went into it without warming up.

Personal Collection: Ken has an extensive personal collection amassed over his yoga journey, which he gave me a quick tour of on our video call. This includes hundreds of books, newsletters, photographs, magazines and correspondence. His wife also told me that she'd recently (the fortnight before our call) taken dozens of old yoga magazines from the 60s/70s to charity shops because they no longer have the space to store them. In light of our conversation she said she was going to try to get them back in case they are relevant to my research. Ken and Angela have said I am welcome to visit their home to access their personal collection, and offered to let me stay with them for a few nights while I do this. After our conversation Ken also told me via text message that he'd found an MiniDisc recording of a conversation with the late Wilfred Clarke which could be very interest to me (if he remembers the conversation correctly), but he no longer has a way of playing this himself to check it before I visit.

APPENDIX J.

The following is an automated transcript of my initial interview conducted with Ken Thompson on Monday September 27, 2021 via a Zoom video call, as such it contains some transcription errors. When quotes were used within the body of the thesis, these were first checked in audio recordings. While most interviews lasted less than an hour, this one ran over two hours. It was decided that this was acceptable because of several factors. These included the importance several other interviewees had suggested Ken could have given his role and knowledge, but also because I had been trying to speak to him for several months, and had been told this might be my only chance to speak with him because he had been suffering ill health.

Interview Transcript – Ken Thompson.

Monday September 27, 2021, 5:56PM
SPEAKERS Ken Thompson , Angela Thompson, Simon Crisp

Simon Crisp 00:00
Meeting recording with Ken and Angela Thompson, just waiting for them to connect.

Simon Crisp 08:37
Oh. Hello Ken, can you hear me? Hi Ken, can you hear me? Okay I'm not sure if you can hear me at the moment, but your microphone is muted and your videos off so if you're there and to do that you need to click on the little mute button which is a picture of a microphone to turn that off so I should be able to hear you and then you can click start video as well so then I might be able to see you. Obviously, that's only if you can hear me and I don't know if I'm just talking to no-one at the moment. Hi Ken, can you hear me?

Ken Thompson 19:55
Right, I'm looking at your face on my Mac. (Muffled sound) – Ken's Audio was only coming through from a phone call, not the video call.

Simon Crisp 19:57
Yes.

Ken Thompson 19:59
You can't see me? (Muffled sound) – (Ken's Audio was only coming through from a phone call, not the video call).

Simon Crisp 20:00
I can't, no. It's showing me that you've got your video turned off and your microphone muted.

Ken Thompson 20:15

Right, so at the bottom of the screen. (Muffled sound) – (Ken's Audio was only coming through from a phone call, not the video call).

Simon Crisp 20:16
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 20:17
There's a camera. (Muffled sound) – (Ken's Audio was only coming through from a phone call, not the video call).

Simon Crisp 20:18
Yes.

Ken Thompson 20:19
With a blue background. (Muffled sound) – (Ken's Audio was only coming through from a phone call, not the video call).

Simon Crisp 20:21
Okay, you should if you click on that it should be start video. Okay, so it's not that. So, I can try sending you a request to turn your camera on so that might then just give them a pop up. So if I click.

Ken Thompson 20:42
(Muffled sound) – (Ken's Audio was only coming through from a phone call, not the video call).

Simon Crisp 20:43
So I've just sent that so that should have popped up on your screen. Something that says turn a video on. Or has it not?

Ken Thompson 21
(Muffled sound) – (Ken's Audio was only coming through from a phone call, not the video call).

Simon Crisp 20:43
I've got no idea what that is. I've never seen that one.

Ken Thompson 21:12
By signing in, you've consented to being recorded, Fine. I've punched got it..

Simon Crisp 21:21
Possibly, I've never seen that one come up. Give it a go. And let's see what happens.

Simon Crisp 21:31
Yes.

Ken Thompson 21:33
Yes.

Simon Crisp 21:31
I can see.

Ken Thompson 21:35
Got it. So,

Simon Crisp 21:36
And I can hear you as well. Can you, can you hear me? I can see now. Yep.

Ken Thompson 21:40
Right. Fine.

Simon Crisp 21:43
Well move away from the phones onto the computer.

Ken Thompson 21:46
Okay, then. Okay. Thank you. Still hear me?

Simon Crisp 21:51
I can still hear you clearly. Hopefully, you can still hear me.

Ken Thompson 21:54
I can, yep.

Simon Crisp 21:57
Perfect, that's much better.

Ken Thompson 21:59
Okay, so we're recording anyway. So you can go back to it?

Simon Crisp 22:04
Yeah, that's it. It just means I don't have to scurry, like making notes constantly the whole way through. I end up with pages. I can't.

Ken Thompson 22:12
How are we going to do this? And you're the master. You're gonna ask me questions?

Simon Crisp 22:17
What I was going to do, okay, just tell you a bit about my research first, what I'm doing just so you've got a good idea of how anything you say might be used?

Ken Thompson 22.25
Okay. By the way, have you got the book by Suzanne?

Simon Crisp 22:32
I certainly do, yeah. So I've got this one here.

Ken Thompson 22:36
This one?

Simon Crisp 22:37
Yes. That's all my post for notes of references in it as well. Yes.

Ken Thompson 22:43

She was [a] very, very nice lady. And very, very helpful with her questions, and was able to give us a lot of information, you know.

Simon Crisp 22:53
Yeah. I've been speaking a bit with her as well.

Ken Thompson 22:53
Are you replicating her work or something?

Simon Crisp 22:59
Mine's hoping to build on hers a little bit. So I because I'm based in the School of Media, and, and I might

Ken Thompson 23:08
Do I show up better or worse, if I'm moving?

Simon Crisp 23:11
That's fine. I can see you perfectly there. That's great. Yeah. So because I'm based in the School of Media, my focus is media representations and also what's maintained within archives.

Ken Thompson 23:24
Right.

Simon Crisp 23:25
So what I'm looking to do is to sort of, obviously, Suzanne has given an amazing background of what happened at the time and sort of that social history of it. What I'm hoping to then do to sort of potentially hopefully build on that is to take the lived experience of people. So more interviews with people to see what their accounts were and compare that with what was in the media and what's been held in various archives as well.

Ken Thompson 23:51
Okay, so is my background making it dark?

Simon Crisp 23:56
A little bit, but.

Ken Thompson 23:59
Can you close that window down?

Simon Crisp 24:03
The problem with lighting, isn't it?

Ken Thompson 24:06
I mean, I can move, you know. I still want lights in the background because it's making my face down. Yeah.

Simon Crisp 24:18
That's much better. That's perfect now. Nice.

Ken Thompson 24:23

Yeah. Why don't you squinting trying to see me. Anyway, you're gonna try and enlarge on what Suzanne has done?

Simon Crisp 24:37
Yeah. So it's really about finding the gaps of where, sort of, what's presented in the media. So I say because I'm in the School of Media, a lot of mine is looking at media articles, newspapers, video, TV, all of that, within this time period. So I'm looking at then hopefully comparing that with the lived experience of people, sort of to ask them is the yoga that you were seeing portrayed in the media, is that what you experienced at the time, and to really sort of interrogate and find those gaps between, because there are some big, big gaps.

Ken Thompson 25:11
The 1960s, of course, was a totally different ballgame for what it is today because there was no videos and stuff like that floating around in those days. The phone call was all you hoped to get. So the ways, actual ways it's trying to talk now, I assume and stuff that wasn't around. In those days, you had go to class, you appreciate. And it's a different ballgame trying to teach. I personally, I'm an Alexander teacher as well.

Simon Crisp 25:46
Okay.

Ken Thompson 25:47
So, Alexander says you will have [to] put hands on people to find out what they're doing, how much tension he got across the shoulders, in the back of their neck, etc. No, you can't do that on a video.

Simon Crisp 25:59
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 26:00
On the first. So during the shutdown, recently, of course, most Alexander teachers shut work, because they put hands on people.

Simon Crisp 26:11
Yes.

Ken Thompson 26:12
On that sixth sense, if you like, the understanding of what they were doing.

Simon Crisp 26:16
Yeah, it's been, I'm predominantly an Ashtanga practitioner myself. So again, it's very adjustment based and you've got all that. Yeah, that transition online didn't didn't suit me.

Ken Thompson 26:34
No, there's a lot of things you can do, obviously, by Zoom. But the suits, other things you can't do.

Simon Crisp 26:43
Yes.

Ken Thompson 26:44
Like I say, you can't put your hand on the person and find out where their tension is that they shouldn't have, you know.

Simon Crisp 26:49
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 26:50
So adjusting people online is not on as far as I'm concerned. You've got to put your hands on them.

Simon Crisp 26:55
Yes.

Ken Thompson 26:56
Yeah. Does that make sense?

Simon Crisp 26:58
No, it does. Definitely. I think it's something that a lot of yoga teachers have been struggling with over the past two years. Now. It's really difficult.

Ken Thompson 27:09
Looking at a picture of those who don't know how much tension they're putting in their body to achieve a posture. And one of the things that I found in the early days, because I was with British Wheel of Yoga, as you probably know, and Wilfred Clark. And Wilfred was always for gentle yoga with a smile. He didn't believe in hitting people. We shouldn't punish, you shouldn't hit people.

Ken Thompson 28:07
But I'm remembering the words of Monty Barnes. Monty Barnes was a principal of Holloway institute. He was the guy who sponsored Alan Babington. Alan, has since died. A friend of mine, John Kane, you know, John Kane?

Simon Crisp 28:37
Yeah. I've had a couple of chats with John as well. Yeah.

Ken Thompson 28:41
Well he's got information that, you know, goes back to those periods. I sort of still try to hold on to a memory, but memory is fading fast at the moment. But I do my best.

Simon Crisp 28:55
Yeah, no, that's absolutely great. So if we can, I've got sort of a series of questions, but we can sort of chat around those as well. So the general,

Ken Thompson 29:03
I prefer to answer questions, because then I'm giving you what you want.

Simon Crisp 29:07
Yeah. Okay, that's great. So the big first one is, how did you very small was your very first introduction to yoga?

Ken Thompson 29:17
Well, a brief history of myself. I was born just before the Second World War. Survived the Blitz in Leighton East London. And eventually. After the end of the Second World War, I was very interested in fitness. My dad was a secretary of Sports Club, which had cricket and tennis now so tennis I was

very active in that way. When I started to look at yoga books, because that's all there was then there was no classes. And when I did find a class eventually in Loughton in Essex, I realised I knew as much as a bloke running the class.

Simon Crisp 30:13
What year would that have been roughly?

Ken Thompson 30:15
That would have been in the 60s, some 61, 1 or two. Yeah. And I realised that I knew as much about yoga from reading books, and particularly the one book that really caught my eye was Hatha Yoga by Bernard. First published in 1951. I've got a copy somewhere here. I was gonna get it for it to show you but

Simon Crisp 30:44
I've got one up on my shelf.

Ken Thompson 30:47
Because reprinted yes, if you look at that book, he illustrates it himself. And what he did, he stuck to the classical Hatha Yoga Pradipika. All the classic postures. He did all those. He didn't like Iyengar, start introducing triangle poses. You show me triangle in the classical text? It ain't there, and a lot of other things that you think as yoga, all that stuff that isn't there either. All I had in there was all the classic postures. The 32 classical postures. Yeah. And so I started off from that background, not doing them correctly, but just doing them how I felt, you know.

Simon Crisp 31:39
So what made you make that jump from sort of being interested in fitness to thinking, let's look at Yoga, you must have had an idea of what yoga was to make you interested?

Ken Thompson 31:49
From my limited understanding of anatomy and physiology. In those days, I learned a lot more in the process of being a yoga teacher. was the fact that people that were flexible, seem to be better all round. Yeah, natural flexibility is something I appreciate. When you try to force it on people, you're going against the natural understanding of themselves. So anyone who could move easily and freely, always had my respects. So I tried to do the best I could with the limited resources I had, I wasn't very flexible, I wasn't very strong, you know. you have got my book. "Are You A Natural Hatha Yogi?"?

Simon Crisp 32:49
No, I don't actually know.

Ken Thompson 32:53
Well we'll send one to you.

Simon Crisp 32:55
That'd be perfect. That would be fantastic.

Ken Thompson 32:59
That would be the best thing because in that I condensed about 30 years of yoga interest. And the main reason for the book was, as I said, on the outside the cover is that most people don't have a natural body for yoga. The occasional ones have, and they're your natural Yogi's, as I call them. And if you haven't got an actual gift, you're not naturally flexible enough to do the postures. Is it possible to

do them modified, of course, to fit your particular ability and so on. So, I started to take an interest in the human body and often wondered why some people came into the class and never done any yoga in their life straightaway they are in Chakrasana, wheel pose, they're doing all the postures that you'd be striving for years to do, because they've got natural, loose ligaments and it's ligaments that make the flexibility, not the muscles. In order of going down some stuff, what's someone's movement? Well, first of all, he goes through his bones. What isn't movement of a bone? You've got your wrist, you know, it bends so far. Yeah, you can't go any further, you'll break your wrist, but that's your choice. You will struggle to achieve a certain posture. You want to go as far as well as your body. You can do it like that. But only the natural, gifted, loose jointed people are going to be good. Now, most of the loose joints don't appreciate the fact that most people in their class 90% aren't loose jointed. They've got usual joints. Normal flexibility, which of course your doctors have got other ideas because they normally say what is the normal range of movement. But we know that with a finger, we can only bend so far forward inflection. If you try to bend in the extension, it won't go very far. But somebody was, you know, can put their hand on the table, and just bend right right back. And I've got that illustrated in the book as well. So what I do is I tried to say to people look, if you've got a natural looseness in your joints, through loose ligaments, you're going to find hatha yoga a piece of cake. If you haven't got it, you're training, spend all your life, you're never going to avoid what you've got naturally. It's your natural flexibility which counts. And that's what started me into a friend of mine, who was also a yoga teacher. And he had similar views. And he got involved in Alexander, have you come across Alexander?

Simon Crisp 35:59
I've not, no.

Ken Thompson 36:01
Well, Alexander was an Australian actor in the 1890s, who lost his voice on stage, didn't lose it in private conversations with people. So he concluded it was something he was doing to himself. He spent six or seven years looking at himself in mirrors. And he found that when he went to speak, when he opened his mouth, he pulled his head back very slightly, but it was enough to interfere with what he later discovered was primary control. That is, where your head sits up there on top of your spine plays a very significant and important role in how you function. If you leave it floating up there freely, right? Your body works much better. How can I describe it? You play sport, football, tennis, cricket?

Simon Crisp 36:50
A bit of tennis very badly.

Ken Thompson 36:53
So you know when you hit a good ball? You don't feel it. Yeah, you hit a good volley. You don't feel it. Why? Because at that moment in time, the timing was you didn't think about it, but the timing was absolutely perfect. And so the ball just whisked off your racket. But you can't do it every time. Because it's a classic one, you know, when you're doing some work at a desk, and you make a mistake. So you scrunch the paper up and say, "Oh, don't want that" so you throw it, just casually throw it into the bin and it fell straight in. Then you think "Bloody hell, that was a good throw" so you spend the next half hour and surely can't do it again. Why? Because now you're trying to do it. And the difference between its sailing into the bin, the waste bin first time where it's actually was you just spotted it like an animal does. There's the bin is a scrunched up bit of paper. And in some way, the judgement of throwing the first throw is so accurate, because you're not trying to do it.

Simon Crisp 38:04
Yeah. That's interesting.

Simon Crisp 38:10
It's yeah,

Ken Thompson 38:11
It’s interesting. It’s true. You see, can't you? So playing golf, or, you know, any sort of racquet sport. It's normally the people that can relax, while just, they just, you know, hit the ball, without any tension in their body and their body. In other words, it functions perfectly well, much better than when you put in tension. Because tension is the not only ruination of the shot you're trying to like, but it's also not doing your body any good. Too much tension in your body. All it does. It’s all about releasing tension from the body.

Simon Crisp 38:49
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 38:50
Because they’re right. The body is a wonderful efficient mechanism. It functions perfectly when well, if you leave it alone. The trouble with us is, as human beings, we don’t leave it alone enough. We're trying harder. You heard the coaches say put more effort in, trying harder. The harder you try, less you can get the ball to the back of the net. The best players are the ones that are more relaxed. So they're not putting too much tension in a movement. You're just allowing the body to make their own sensible arrangement and adjustment to do it for itself. So the human body is a well designed piece of equipment, if you like. We've all got the same piece of equipment but we keep messing around with it by putting in too much and trying too hard.

Simon Crisp 39:52
Yeah, it makes perfect sense. It's like you say about being instinctive, when you are just doing something in that moment. It's just natural and you're not questioning it, it comes easy. And then you spend the next, let's say lifetime trying to recapture that one moment.

Ken Thompson 40:10
So it's happened. It's been successful. Forget it, throw it away. That's so reading Alexander, you'll find him fascinating. But, again, he didn't offer a simple solution, or he did offer a simple solution, but most people want it more complicated. That's too simple. Listen, free your neck and think up. But freeing your neck and thinking up, reduced the conditions in his body, as it did in others. So the body started functioning normally.

Simon Crisp 40:49
Yeah. So you say, it was that sort of interest, initially, for you to attend a yoga class and realise that you knew as much as the teacher. How would you find that yoga class? Would that have been advertised in a newspaper?

Ken Thompson 41:05
That was an the institute

Simon Crisp 41:06
Okay.

Ken Thompson 41:09

In those days, that's where most of the teaching was done. What is interesting, though, is that in those early beginnings, prior to Hittleman coming over from America, which is a TV series, people were doing their yoga from books, which is how I started. Fortunately, I think, by picking up Hittleman's book. No. Theos Bernard It was a lucky choice to pick.

Simon Crisp 41:52
A good grounding that, isn't it?

Ken Thompson 41:55
As we'd go back to the classical books, the Hatha Yoga Pradapika the Bhagavad Gita all the classical books, and he used the classical postures, none of that Iyengar stuff, warrior and all that stuff. Nothing against that, if you've got the body that will do that, without straining it, do it because it's made for you. But it ain't made for everybody. Certainly, most people in Britain at the time, we're more than happy to do the classes they are getting. And the reason why they are selling well. That was most of the yoga teachers in London, I can only speak for London. I wasn't travelling all over the country. Most of the teachers in London, were ex, Keep Fit teachers, they've been teaching keep fit for 10, 15, 20 years. But what all they did in the first phase of popularity of yoga becoming fashionable was they throw a few yoga asanas into the normal keep fit class and call themselves yoga teachers.

Simon Crisp 43:11
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 43:12
It's true. At least five or six people who one year were keep fit teachers, and now they call themselves yoga teachers. They hadn't a clue what yoga was all about?

Simon Crisp 43:24
And that's what I find really interesting. Because obviously, once that begins to happen, people then look at those classes. And their only experience of yoga is that fitness classes.

Ken Thompson 43:35
Blind leading the blind, as I say the teaching was just one step ahead of the pupils in the class, you know. So those early beginning days in the early 60s, that was the first boom. The second boom came when Hittleman came over with a television show. And we got one or two people from America coming over. I was trying to think of the name of lady this morning. She's quite a big noise in America. And she came over here and she actually appeared on Radio Two. I think that at the time and she was telling us Brits, that's what yoga was all about. Somebody phoned in and politely told her that this country has had an association with India for 300 years, and we've had a lot of conversations with all the people out there about yoga. So we knew a lot more about yoga and in the work.

Simon Crisp 44:37
I mean, this was on radio?

Ken Thompson 44:41
Radio. In those days. Yeah.

Simon Crisp 44:44
Can you remember who was that you said was on there.

Ken Thompson 44:48
I can't remember who it was. It's like the mid-morning show and all that.

Simon Crisp 44:54
Okay.

Ken Thompson 44:56
But the important point about that was that Americans are getting yoga for the first time. Wilfred Clarke who founded the British Wheel of Yoga, he learned his yoga from Indian cavalry men in the First World War. We have had that association with India for 300 years. We governed the place, you know. So Americans come to this kind of stuff trying to tell us what yoga was all that was quite a joke, you know?

Simon Crisp 45:32
Yeah

Ken Thompson 45:33
Well, I found it quite funny. Because they seriously thought we didn't know who out yoga.

Simon Crisp 45:41
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 45:41
All the countries in Europe, we probably knew more, apart from say, the Dutch or they had colonies out in India, Dutch East Indies and so on. They would probably come across British people and all these to sort of Tai Chi on that sort of business would have picked it up from there. But the Americans, there's no way they have that trend of years of tuition.

Simon Crisp 46:08
And how do you think that sort of long relationship between India and Britain did impact how Brits took to yoga, do you think it meant they were more receptive to yoga at that point?

Ken Thompson 46:19
They were because, as I say, the culture and background of Indians was well known in Britain. I mean, Queen Victoria had audiences with some of the Swamis. I don't know fully, but I know she liked the quietness and the culture of these people who've had after all, thousands of years of practice at it. We were only just beginning, you know. Even now, with that, the emphasis on mindfulness, you know, well, they were doing it in India thousands of years ago.

Simon Crisp 47:02
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 47:03
So we've got lots to learn from the East.

Simon Crisp 47:07
Yeah, and do you think. This gets to one question I was going to ask on sort of this key moments of how you've seen yoga change in sort of your practicing lifetime. And obviously, you mentioned the development of Iyengar, and the creation of different postures, different routines, and I mean, now you've got to the extreme of goat yoga and beer yoga. And what's your take on that sort of yoga?

Ken Thompson 47:31
Well, I mean, I suppose you know, it just doesn't happen to yoga. It happens to karate. All the other martial arts are in corporate. I mean, I learned Tai Chi from a lady called Gerda Geddes, in The Place. The Place was a big dance centre near Euston station, it might have gone now. But this is in the 1970s and I learnt from Gerda Geddes, who was a Norwegian lady who went to the East and was taught Tai Chi by a guy that she met. He was doing the movements, you see…

Simon Crisp 48:27
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 48:27
By the riverbank and she was fascinated, but she was an ex-dancer herself. And she went to him and said could he teach her. And he had very little English so it was hard work. But he would say, "Watch me, missy, watch me, missy." And he'd do a movement and she'd follow it. And that's how she learns her Tai Chi.

Simon Crisp 48:51
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 48:51
And it was one to one, same as it was originally for yoga. It was Chela and Guru.

Simon Crisp 49:04
Yes.

Ken Thompson 49:06
And you see, we in fact, in the West have passed the class way of doing in a class - that's a western way - to India. So you went to India bck then there's no classes. It's the elders, no. It was one to one teaching. You had to find a personal tutor. A guru. That's how it was. We've introduced something to Indian yoga, that is the class system, not our class system you know?

Simon Crisp 49:39
Classes as in, attended classes. Yeah.

Ken Thompson 49:43
They didn't teach it in classes. It was taught on one-on-one basis. And as we all know, whether you're learning cricket or badminton or tennis, one to one teaching is by far the best. Because the teacher can watch the pupil, see where they're putting too much energy and effort in and get them to quieten down? Or they're not putting enough energy. But we all know that some, I was going say, some football managers are successful, and some aren't, mainly those who are bankrolled by some Middle Eastern or rich guy. like Abramovich at Chelsea, so you've got to have the money to get success. But let's stick to yoga because that's. One thing I could say about what I liked about yoga was I also was fortunate in meeting in this country, Krishnamurti. You heard of him?

Simon Crisp 51:04
Yes, yeah.

Ken Thompson 51:06
Well, a guy called, a guy who owned the Club Med, Blitz, what's his first name, it'll come to me. As soon as you get to 86. Your brain goes to pieces. And it's important, bring it back on the rails. Gerrard

Blitz. He, what he did, he was fascinated by Krishnamurti and the talks that he used to give and so he bought a place down in Sussex. Brockwood Park. Still there. And it's the Centre for Krishnamurti people who want to go watch the videos, because the one smart thing that the Krishnamurti people did. During the last 10 years of Krishnamurti's life, they videoed all the talks that he gave. Good old film. So unlike all the other avatars and great masters, they didn't have the advantage of being videoed. You can always misinterpret the written work. But you can't if you're watching the video of someone and what they're saying. That can't be really, you can't mess it up.

Simon Crisp 52:34
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 52:35
So all of Krishnamurti's last words. He died in 1986 I think it was. And I used to go down to Rockford Park most years and listen to him during the 70s. And for four or five years, I didn't go. The last time I went to listen to him at Brockwood Park was in 85. 1985. And the very next year he dies. So something clicked in my brain made me go. Wow. Because that was the last time he spoke I listened to him. Now, if you haven't come across him, as I say, you don't have to worry about individuals who have misinterpreted these words, because it's been videoed. And so you can hear it right from his lips.

Simon Crisp 53:35
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 53:37
There would be less confusion in Christianity if Christ has been videoed. It's true.

Simon Crisp 53:44
It's entirely true, yeah.

Ken Thompson 53:48
If the video equipment has been around them. You wouldn't have had all this confusion about this. No you didn't say this. It's there.

Simon Crisp 53:57
The fact checking.

Ken Thompson 54:01
Yeah, so I've been very fortunate in my life to have heard people and I was leaning towards the Shivananda group or swamis from Rishikesh. There was a lady called Lily in London, who used to bring them over. She was an importer of swans. And they used to talk to Paxton Hall or Westminster. Anywhere that she would hire. And I learned a lot from what she introduced us to.

Simon Crisp 54:43
Yeah, it's interesting. Like you say having that contact with those people who have been brought over must have been interesting. It feels like at the moment in yoga, people either don't even want that to engage with tradtion, or that's all they want.

Ken Thompson 55:06
It's fashionable. It was fashionable first, with Hittleman. And then it went quiet. And then the Ashtanga and the other. What's the Pattabhi who's a big Ashtanga teacher?

Simon Crisp 55:26
Pattabhi Jois.

Ken Thompson 55:27
Pattabhi Jois. He came over, and then yoga became competitive. People are going to try and do more and more. Well if you want to be that competitive, if you want to see that you should go see Cirque du Soleil and they can do all that with a smile on their face, not looking miserable. And, you know, so that's the thing that I didn't like, the fact that these people who are naturally gifted with a natural flexibility in their body are claiming, and I've seen it in class, “Oh it's easy. I'll show you.” Yeah, because you got the body for it. It is the same as someone swimming or running because they've got a body built for swimming. And you can find this in any activity. You can always find your natural swimmers. Because what you do is you throw 30 people into a pool, and the ones that are making it down to the other end of the pool, they're your natural swimmers. The ones that sinking to the bottom, and they're not your natural swimmers. Makes sense, doesn't it?

Simon Crisp 56:39
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 56:40
So you can see and put them on a running track? Yeah. Who gets around it first? They're your natural runners.

Simon Crisp 56:48
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 56:49
Those are collapsing halfway around. They're not your natural runs. It’s the same with yoga, there are natural people doing yoga who can make it look so effortless and easy, because for them, it is easy, because they got the body for it. And that's what my book was about, Are You a Natural Hatha Yogi? Will you take your address down, and then

Simon Crisp 57:14
I'll email it to you after.

Ken Thompson 57:18
I'll send you a copy of Are You a Natural Hatha Yogi? And that summarises in written word and illustrations, what we're talking about. If you've got the natural body for what you're trying to achieve, then you'll probably do it with very little effort.

Simon Crisp 57:37
Yes.

Ken Thompson 57:38
That’s the other important thing is that some people we'll try to make up for the unnatural issue of their body by doing yoga by pushing it. Well, they may do it, but they may damage joints. And a lot of people have.

Simon Crisp 57:56
I've seen so many people injure themselves quite badly.

Ken Thompson 57:59
Right. And because they're striving too hard, they are using the wrong body. If they were born with the right body, they wouldn't have any problem. But it's so obvious in all sports, your natural swimmer, your natural boxers, your natural pool players, you know, just got an eye for a sport. And you can't really teach people. They are born with it, or they're not. Most animals have got a natural ability to, well, one of course they've got their smell apparatus and dogs can smell about 10 times more than we can. And they're using their faculties to the best advantage because they're going to live if they can catch things for food. We haven't got that anymore. Perhaps when we had that for survival, our senses were much sharper, so that'd be otherwise we starved. Now you're just staring down through the Tescos or wherever and buy a tin of beans where you couldn't do that even 200 years ago. How far back do you go before we were out there hunting and fishing? Pioneers in the Americas journey 17th, 18th century's had to be good at that. Otherwise they'd starve but the whole world now is different. Not only are we ruining the planet, in a lot of ways. But you know, we're not able to keep the planet in pristine condition for next generations coming along. What's going to happen to yoga in the next generation? Well, I don't know, I won't be around. I've got a feeling that unless people begin to get a grip on, not trying to be better and making it competitive, unfortunately, a lot of it is competitive these days. Yeah, it was never intended to be a competition between is my Chakrasana better than yours and so on. It is now

Simon Crisp 1:00:26
it is completely, and you see that whenever you practice, you see other people looking around and just checking what everyone else is doing.

Ken Thompson 1:00:35
Exactly, and that's not what yoga is all about, you know? Exactly what is all that? Well, it's about you, you yourself. Yeah, finding harmony with yourself. Now, that's not unique to yoga, because there's a lot of other Eastern religions and practices like Tai Chi. Most of the martial arts have got a spiritual connotation inside them. It's either Japanese or Chinese. But they also had to protect themselves as a travelling monk through India. If you couldn't defend yourself, you'd probably get robbed and beaten up and so on. So a lot of their martial arts, they've got a spiritual nature to them.

Simon Crisp 1:01:28
How would you say your sort of interest moved from that initial fitness, sporting to that appreciation of the philosophical side of yoga?

Ken Thompson 1:01:41
Well, it didn't come purely from yoga. It came because I met people like Chris Stevens, who was a PhD in what was the learning group, I think. And Chris was the guy who introduced me to Alexander, the Alexander technique. And Alexander is about a natural aspect of your body and mind that if you keep your head sitting on top of your spine, and never let it slump and collapse, and when you speak, always close your lips at the end of each line. So that the breath has to come in through the nostrils. You don't develop breathing problems.

Simon Crisp 1:02:33
Okay, that's interesting.

Ken Thompson 1:02:35
Every time you show a speaker, when you get to the end of the line, close the lips. Make the breath coming through the nostrils. If you watch people where they're really talking, they don't stop. I'm talking to you now. I noticed that my mouth's open all the time.

Simon Crisp 1:02:58
Yeah, I am now becoming very aware of myself as I'm speaking.

Ken Thompson 1:03:03
And that way, it keeps the larynx and the voice mechanism from getting hoarse and dry. Because you're allowing an unnatural air in without through the nostrils, which is designed for purpose. Yeah, isn't it? Because it warms the air, it moistens it, filters it, and it hits your lungs in a good condition. If you're always talking with your mouth open, and you're sucking air through the mouth. You ain't doing your larynx any favours.

Simon Crisp 1:03:41
It does, yeah, definitely.

Ken Thompson 1:04:43
So my interest in the human body began in that period. When I got into yoga, I noticed that certain people in the class would find the postures too easy. They only joined last week, I'd been doing it for three years. And they were stretching it. They had a natural body for what they're trying to do. And there was no book out on the market. That's why I wrote this book. Are You A Natural Hatha Yogi? It went through all the things that they should test themselves for. Anyway, you'll see that when you get it.

Simon Crisp 1:04:22
Yeah, no, that'd be great. And if we could just talk about the British heel and sort of your involvement with the wheel.

Ken Thompson 1:04:30
In late or early 60s, I should say, I've become interested in doing yoga. And I picked up my local paper Ilford Recorder or whatever it was, for me whenever the author record had this letter from Mr. Wilfred Clark of Solihull, Birmingham, simpler country basic and virtually said "Are you interested in yoga? And if so, would you like to join with other people likewise interested?" And so I wrote back to Wilfred. And that started a correspondence.

Simon Crisp 1:05:15
Was it he'd posted a letter or was it an advert he'd taken?

Ken Thompson 1:05:17
It was a letter to the letters page. And in the letter it said, are you interested in yoga? Or are you doing? Are you in a class? Would you like to join a national organisation, which is acting like a, how can I put it, hub for people to get information on yoga. And so I was I started a correspondence, wrote to Wilfred and I got a letter back the next day. One thing with Wilfred, if you wrote to him the next day, well he's a journalist, he was an editor of some Solihull weekly mag or so he was a great journalist. And he was prolific for writing. And of course, back then there were no phones in your back pocket, it was letter writing. So I got on very friendly terms with Wilfred. And I liked him because I was able to help him. And the reason I was able to help him was at that time, there was a guy in London who was Peter McIntosh, he was, what was his title? Senior inspector for physical education, ILEA, Inner London Education Authority. And he came out with a stupid ruling that only Iyengar trained teachers could teach yoga in London. Well, there's only one problem with that. Alan Babington wasn't Iyengar trained and he was teaching in London before Iyengar arrived. And Monty Barnes, his principal, says, "Look, I've seen Iyengar teach. And I've seen his teachers teach, and their methods of

teaching are unacceptable to me. I will not have an Iyengar teacher teaching in the Holloway Institute" which he ran.

Simon Crisp 1:07:55
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:07:56
That was Iyengar, you see? Shouting at people, he talked like a Sergeant Major "Put your mind in what you're doing. You're stupid" and all that. Monty Barnes watched him do this and said, "That's not teaching, not teachers he knew it." He was seeped in, in traditional English work teaching. And it wasn't that way. Yeah. He backed Babbington because he didn't shout at people.

Simon Crisp 1:08:34
Yeah. Not as much.

Ken Thompson 1:08:39
And Wilfred also believed in gentle yoga with a smile because he said, you know, "There's no need to shout at them or to punish them, because they couldn't do something. If a person hasn't got a body to do a certain posture that's tough. Do something else." I tend, because I was in London, and Wilfred Clark was in Birmingham. Wilfred didn't have a car, he didn't drive I don't think in those days, I don't thin he had a car. As far as I know he only went by train. So he phoned me up and said, "Ken, will you go and have a word with Peter McIntosh who's stopping Babbington, trying to stop Babbington from teaching yoga. He only wants Iyengar trained teachers to teach yoga." And I agree with Wilfred for us, not only because Babbington was there first anyway, but because he was teaching in a humane sort of way. It wasn't he wasn't whipping people. Cracking the whip and all that. I mean, I'm not saying that Iyengar didn't get results, of course you got results. But at what cost? You know, you will often find with Iyengar teachers, what they used to do, they'd start a class in September in London, I don't know about the rest of the country, with about 45 people or 50. By Christmas, that was down to about 30. In January, they kicked off next term, and it's easier, it went harder in fact, so that by Easter, that class was now down to about 15.

Simon Crisp 1:10:44
Okay, that's interesting.

Ken Thompson 1:10:45
At the end of term in July we'd finished, they were probably down to about 11 or 12. All the teachers' were left with were the under 25s and all the fit people. The walking wounded, as usual, had left by Christmas. They realised the class was too tough for them. Now Iyengar teachers, in my opinion, were very smart cookies. They made the class so difficult, all the walking wounded left. They were left with people who could do it. Well anyone can teach. If you were teaching swimming or running or jumping. If you make it so bloody hard, Pupils will say, "I can't do this" and leave.

Simon Crisp 1:11:28
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:11:29
And the teacher gets the class he wants. Smart cookie.

Simon Crisp 1:11:36

It's an interesting approach, yeah. Obviously, up in Birmingham we had Yogini Sunita as the big name at the time.

Ken Thompson 1:11:48
Yeah.

Simon Crisp 1:11:50
So very different approach, her sort of relaxation slip second and second.

Ken Thompson 1:11:54
She's got quite a good idea, but she was a bit of a martinet too, wasn't she. She was demanding. And if anyone in a class wanted to go somewhere else. She, “No, no, you’re with me.” She was very domineering.

Simon Crisp 1:12:16
Okay. Yeah, like her line of only someone without a furrowed brow can ever teach yoga.

Ken Thompson 1:12:31
She came from traditions, with methods of teaching, the way they taught them out there.

Simon Crisp 1:12:45
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:12:46
And it might have been a good with, 1000s of years practicing. They knew what works and what didn't work, you know. So they got the pupil they wanted in the end, by the method of teaching. In the same way as Ferguson at Man United, he got close, he wanted to, you know, hold men solid if he wants to. Teaching as you, your teacher aren’t you?

Simon Crisp 1:13:16
Lectures, a bit, but yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:13:18
You know, if you're a smart cookie, you can get the pupils you want by making, like funneling sheep into a pen, you make the funnels exactly where you want them. So you get the right sheep, you don't get the ones that are no good to get those sheep, yeah. So you've got, as a teacher, a very privileged position.

Simon Crisp 1:13:45
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:13:46
Again, very, very. And of course, most people tend to abuse it. l must have done at times. Well, I tried my best to give people choices all the time. Didn’t force them to do things. If I could help them to do certain postures, I would help them and even show them PNF stretching ways, which came from the states. Proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation. Where you work the mechanism to get extra stretch.

Simon Crisp 1:14:23
You push against it, don't you and then back into it. Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:14:27
So, I picked up a lot of things by watching other people and reading about modern methods of stretching and tried to incorporate them without the anger or the violence of an Iyengar teacher. Somehow it didn't feel right to do that.

Simon Crisp 1:14:53
And did you ever feel a pressure to stick to a traditional or traditional teaching without bringing things in or were you always happy to bring other elements in and change your teaching for the audience?

Ken Thompson 1:15:05
No, I. What I did, what I brought in from the modern era was, was the advanced expertise and knowledge of human anatomy and physiology, which wasn't there in the old days. They knew a lot about the human body, but they didn't know a lot more. Because my experience of learning is the more you learn, the more there is to learn. You'll never stop learning, that's still true now, I still learn every day.

Simon Crisp 1:18:41
Definitely. So, to come back to Wilfred Clark and those early adverts or letters rather, in the newspapers. Can you remember when, roughly, when that would have been because what I really want to try and do as well is find in the archives of all these papers that are now online. If I can find any of them.

Ken Thompson 1:19:03
I think that we think it must have been in the 1960s I should imagine. Because that's when there was a really interesting coming into yoga.

Simon Crisp 1:19:21
Did he write a letter to was it structured in he was doing so many newspapers a week or was it a recurring?

Ken Thompson 1:19:30
It was probably a similar sort of letter to Newcastle, weekly or Solihull Times. And so each paper around, people from all over the country down in the west country are writing to Wilfred and he's got some words written down there. Where have I seen it? Recently? I think so. John Kane, the founding members of British Wheel of Yoga is about 27 of us. And they're all over the country. Most of them did what I did. Replied to his letter saying, "Yes, I was interested in yoga." And let's face it, the correspondence that I say he gave the most fantastic correspondence.

Simon Crisp 1:20:24
What sort of things would you talk about in those letters that you're exchanging?

Ken Thompson 1:20:30
I asked him. What do you do with certain people who couldn't do certain postures? Where did he find alternatives in the book? So, I used to say, Well, what I do is I try to modify posture. If it was a flexion, forward bending posture, I would try to get another flexion posture. If it's an extension, backward bending. I tried to do another simpler extension, backward bend. Same with rotational movements.

Simon Crisp 1:21:05
So at this point, is this just about your own practice or are you teaching?

Ken Thompson 1:21:08
No, that’s how to teach it.

Simon Crisp 1:21:12
Okay, so you are teaching classes?

Ken Thompson 1:21:15
Yeah. One thing I did do or tried to do was, I would never try to ask somebody to do something I wasn't prepared to do myself. So that's saying I would do a headstand. You know, if it was backward bending cobra pose to my limited ability. I wasn't super flexible at all. There's plenty of people coming to class who were much better, you know. So, I'd say, as you watch Susan now know she's got good, loose ligaments. So, she's not too strained to do that at all, what she's just done, you know. She can do a backbend and walk around the hall holding onto her ankles. And so, she can do that, because she's got the body to do it.

Simon Crisp 1:22:05
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:22:08
I haven't got the body to do it, so I can't do it.

Simon Crisp 1:22:08
So how did you make that transition from going to someone else's class in sort of 1962 to becoming a teacher yourself? Because I think from some people that I've spoken to that Wilfred was almost that catalyst. I was chatting to Velta Wilson the other week. Yeah, yeah. And she was saying that he told her she was ready to teach whereas someone else like talking to Tony Crisp as well and he was saying he was already teaching at that point.

Ken Thompson 1:22:37
Right, yeah. He was down in the West Country for a time, wasn't he?

Simon Crisp 1:22:41
Yes, is he still in Devon? No. is he's moved from Devon now kind of where he says he is.

Ken Thompson 1:22:51
He took the trouble to make me a tape, a tape recording, of some mantras. Real genuine character as far as I was concerned, yeah. I've asked him about wasn't just Omm, he did actually do a tape on his tape recorder and sent it to me on, can’t find it now, but he was a genuine guy would help you.

Simon Crisp 1:23:28
Really nice guy to chat to as well. He was very helpful.

Ken Thompson 1:23:30
Nice guy

Simon Crisp 1:23:36
So that transition thought it wasn't prompted by your correspondence with Wilfred to become a teacher. Were you already teaching?

Ken Thompson 1:23:44

What happened was that we in the British Wheel Of Yoga then. When I went to see McIntosh, Peter McIntosh. He got me into his office, somewhere in London, and he said, “The Wheel of yoga is a nonsense organisation. You've got no teacher training set up.” And of course he was right. There was none. See, what happened is Wilford got in correspondence with you, as he did with me. And he says, “I think you're able to teach now, Ken” He’d never checked me out. Never seen me teach.

Simon Crisp 1:24:24
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:24:26
It was all on a feeling that Wilfred had that these people are the right people, so he’s say “I'll send you a letter that you can take down to further education offices”. That yes, I’ve got that somewhere, I've got to dig it out for you. But he sent me a certificate, which wasn't spelt correctly in places. It was a right sort of club scouts sort of thing. But that was Wilfred.

Simon Crisp 1:25:20
So that was sort of your introduction to teaching?

Ken Thompson 1:25:25
So I got this piece of paper from Wilfred that I was okay to teach because he said so. So that was useful. But then when I went to see McIntosh, McIntosh said, “You've got no teacher training.” It's true, we didn't. So what happened then was we got Chris Stevens, who was a, as I say, doctor in learning. Anyway, he and me and Velta Wilson, three of us, put together the first teacher training. We're all contributed something. Chris Stevens did the admin side of it, the technical side of it. And Velta and I, we put the sort of yoga part of it. You know the, Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads. The classics, you should know something about these. Particularly because it's got the whole essence of the job over here, and these are the ones that didn’t cost much about six or seven. This one's 25p. I don’t know if you can see that. (Ken showed copies of the books to the camera).

Simon Crisp 1:27:27
Okay. Penguin Classics.

Ken Thompson 1:27:31
Penguin Classic. Yeah. It's a bit torn now on the Upanishads the same.

Simon Crisp 1:27:37
Okay.

Ken Thompson 1:27:39
Right at the back.

Simon Crisp 1:27:41
No, no, it's fine. I can see.

Ken Thompson 1:27:48
That was 5p as well at the time, you wonder how old they all are. But they had the essence of, of yoga in them.

Simon Crisp 1:28:01
So how did you pick which texts were going to be included on almost the syllabus?

Ken Thompson 1:28:07
Well, it wasn't. The whole book was given. And you read it and got the essence of yoga because the essence of yoga is in this book. You know, no two ways about it. You know. And that was the sort of Bible as it were. And this one's very badly worn. I've got another one somewhere. But so Chris Stevens decided that we'd have that book and that one, and How To Know God, which was potentially yoga sutras. They were the four books, three books that we used.

Simon Crisp 1:28:58
Yeah, I guess, never appreciated at the time, but the legacy that that syllabus would have because when you look at teaching syllabus now and the breakdown of how much is how much time is spent on asana or texts or pranayama. And it's impacted…

Ken Thompson 1:29:17
Professional, it's become too professional now, to the extent that the spirit of yoga is not there for a lot of people. Mainly because Shivananda school, Satchidananda. They all came over in the 60s and 70s. And will the old school if you like, they didn't want money, as such, for them the time as long as some of you put them up, give him three main meals a day so they would work for you. So, Lily, the importer of Swamis, she'd normally, in the summer months, bring somebody over and put them to work as it were. That's where I met some. When you lose your memory, you've had it. Dr. Mishra. Dr. Mishra was a wonderful guy. He was the best guy for mantra I'd ever come across. He could. I've never experienced that before, but he'd do a chanting session using Sanskrit stuff. Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama, Rama. Your spine would start to tingle. We'd be sitting there as upright as possible, and your spine will be vibrating with the chants. He was the first person that I experienced that with. I know it's not wonderful. A lot of Swamis can chant. But he was very good at it. Dr. Mishra is his mane, Ram Murta Mishra.

Simon Crisp 1:31:30
So yes, about that sort of development of that teacher training.

Ken Thompson 1:31:37
So when we, Chris and Velta Wilson, put this together, it was only a one year course. Yeah. 95 hours or something. One year course in those days now and it didn't cost. What are they charging now for teacher training?

Simon Crisp 1:31:59
And now he's about £2,500.

Ken Thompson 1:32:03
We didn't charge people more than about 40 or 50 quid for the whole thing, you know. So that's exploded, and increased enormously.

Simon Crisp 1:32:16
But I found it really interesting because I think it was in John's History Of The Wheel, in his short history of the BWY publication. He'd got the page for summarised of like, how those 95 hours were to be split up by different things. And I just find it really striking how that was 1971 …

Ken Thompson 1:32:43
Yeah, that was 71 when the wheel? I started the first educationally approved teacher training course at the Hermitage in Brentwood in 1971.

Simon Crisp 1:33:05
But yeah, looking at that list, and sort of that breakdown of it. You think that it feels like all modern teacher training still goes back almost to that breakdown of we will spend this much time on asana and philosophy. And, and I mean, would you obviously, never have guessed that at that point in when you're coming up with the syllabus that it would have such a lasting legacy?

Ken Thompson 1:33:32
Well, in fact, when we chose the Bhagavad Gita, we know that this book was originally published. Not too sure, but it was either 200 BCE or 200 AD, but it certainly goes back at least nearly 2000 years. And the whole essence. If you read it carefully, you'll find the word yoga is in there about 100 times. So I'll go through it and see what they talk about yoga. And the other one was How To Know God. For me, by Christopher Isherwood and his compatriot. It's called How To Know God. I shall look for a copy out. It's in the other room. I can't get it now. Okay. You can never find something when you want it. My experience, you come across it three days later when you're not looking for that.

Simon Crisp 1:34:40
Yeah, it is as soon as no longer needed.

Ken Thompson 1:34:43
How To Know God is all about the aphorisms of Patanjali.

Simon Crisp 1:34:48
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:34:49
And those, those four books, the Gita, the Upanishads. Were the four essential books of Wheel Of Yoga teachers.

Simon Crisp 1:35:04
Yeah. And that course of it the 95 hours, was that seen almost as a starting point for teachers rather than

Ken Thompson 1:35:12
Yeah. You must remember that there was no, we didn't have any guidance from India,because they didn't do it like that. As I said, it was guru and chela, teacher and student. And you learn through yoga, through it. You didn't have these classical, classical books there. But they were probably very rare. Because, you know, throughout history printing didn't hit this country until Paxton printers, you know, so we didn't have the average person in the streets didn't read, so well into the 17th 18th century sort of. In India, it was probably 10 times worse than that.

Simon Crisp 1:36:03
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:36:04
It was all done by word of mouth and. But, so nowadays, we didn't pick anything out from India in written form, except these classical books, and they were what we needed. That's what Chris Stevens and Velta Wilson agreed would be the core of where we're getting our information from. We go back to these books and readings.

Simon Crisp 1:36:34
Yeah, obviously, once the teacher training started, there was quite a boom of the number of people taking this, becoming teachers.

Ken Thompson 1:36:44
Yeah, but mainly, mainly Simon, the people were only interested in bend and stretch. They weren't really interested in philosophy, meditation, stuff like that. Only a very few. I don't know what the percentage would be. But out of 10 students, only one will be interested in the core of what it's all about. Finding your true self.

Simon Crisp 1:37:18
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:37:21
Most were bothered about losing something off their hips or adding something on the bust.

Simon Crisp 1:37:25
Yes, and I've been thinking. Obviously, looking at all of these media articles from the same time. And sort of in the 60s you do have this big flurry of so and so built their body, Miss World built her body doing yoga and yeah, so what are your memories of yoga in the media at that point in newspapers?

Ken Thompson 1:37:50
Well, you know, when the funny one I'm sure is true. That the girl who started with Hittleman. She thought she was going to yoghurt. Advertising. He receives us. What's the word? She was, that's what she did. She was a model.

Simon Crisp 1:38:23
Okay, so casting for something.

Ken Thompson 1:38:26
Yeah. So she thought she was going to model for a yoghurt advert in Scotland, she found it was doing yoga. But because she was an ex-dancer, she had reason flexibility for the things that Richard Hittleman wanted her to do, called Cheryl. No, I can't remember now.

Simon Crisp 1:38:52
Lynn, wasn't it. Lynn.

Ken Thompson 1:38:54
Lynn Marshall. And she died, didn't she? Unfortunately, but so the whole emphasis for the general public out there was it's good for the hips, it's good for the bust so on and so forth. There is no mention about it's good for spirituality and good for the mind. Except now of course, it's all about mindfulness. So, yoga is now coupled with stuff for the mind it was a 2000 years ago. It was mainly for the mind.

Simon Crisp 1:39:32
So how did you deal with that as students came to your classes and they just wanted that sort of physical improvement. How do you balance that interest?

Ken Thompson 1:39:47

What I tried to do is to, for my own personal satisfaction viewpoint, was I didn't give bum information. I didn't say, “Oh yeah, she will be able to do this in 2-weeks time or 10-weeks time or 2 years”. I had sufficient knowledge or understanding, I could see someone in the same way as you could say some of it was a natural swimmer and natural runner. Just see him run down the road and back here and see the way they move the quality of the movement. And you say, “Oh, he should be alright for that.” And then, of course, I would then work to bring that person to the best potential that she'd got or he’d got. Which was nothing to do with me, it was how much they put into it, you know. You'll only get back what you put in. You don't put anything in, you won’t get anything back.

Simon Crisp 1:40:49
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:40:50
It's the same with this stuff. No, there is only what you put in is what you get back.

Simon Crisp 1:40:56
But did you add any philosophical teachings within a physical class?

Ken Thompson 1:41:03
By that time when I was teaching in the 60s, I'd already gone down to Brockwood Park a number of times and listened to Krishnamurti. And what he spoke, as far as I was concerned, made sense. In fact, he’s one of a few people I've listened to, who I totally agree with what he was saying. You, as I said, can get videos on your computer, punch in J Krishnamurti Brockwood Park. Then you'll get a whole string of videos you can watch, you'll get the essence of what he's teaching. What he's teaching basically, was, your problem is in your brain. Your thinking. As soon as you stop thinking, freedom, total freedom. And then a thought comes in and then you're like, “I gotta pay the gas bill, on the car,” or whatever. As soon as your mind comes in, you've got all the problems the world. But as soon as you stop thinking, and it was his way of talking, to get you to see that it's your brain is causing the problem for you. It is true that we create our own problems. And as soon as you stop thinking, you're in freedom.

Simon Crisp 1:42:29
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:42:30
And then the thought comes in. So one of these books is called Thought Breeds Fear. That's true. Thought does breed fear.

Simon Crisp 1:42:37
Okay.

Ken Thompson 1:42:38
It’s in between so this is where that lady in Birmingham? Split second or something.

Simon Crisp 1:42:37
Yes. Split second.

Ken Thompson 1:42:47
Yeah, that's right. In between thinking. You're in total freedom. Yeah, but no one else is doing it for you, you must do it yourself. And that's why Krishnamurti gave up this, he was brought out of India by the Theosophical Society, and trained, rather taught, educated in England to a very high standard.

And that was the reason he spoke such good English, because he was taught in some of the best schools in England. He was just an ordinary boy that a guy called Leadbeater who was clairvoyant of the Theosophical Society, saw these two brothers on the beach somewhere in India, and you could see their auras, and he sees these, one of these boys is going to be a world leader. And he was true, he was Krishna, it did become a worldly, but not in the philosophical sense that they thought he was going to be. Because in 1929, in Holland, where he got a big following. He threw it all up and said, "No, following others is not the way to find truth. The way to find the truth is inside yourself."

Simon Crisp 1:44:15
Yes.

Ken Thompson 1:44:16
Only you can do it, you can't get it from somebody else. So he was against all people who claim they were the Messiah and so on and so on, he said it's all nonsense. The only real truth is inside yourself and you've got to find it for yourself.

Simon Crisp 1:44:36
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:44:37
If you find it for yourself, because you found it yourself no one can take it from you. Because it's not been given to you. You found it for yourself. And that makes a lot of sense to me. And that's why I started to become interested in Krishnamurti.

Simon Crisp 1:44:58
And how did you implant that into your students, was it through…

Ken Thompson 1:45:05
Best to follow up Krishnamurti I said in the talks. So I'd say to them, "Look, you got your problems, but you can solve them because you're in charge."

Simon Crisp 1:45:18
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:45:19
It's very much like these people like Tony Robbins and all that, who got a huge following. And he's just saying the same thing again. Your brain you use it well, or use it badly. Yeah, make money with it. Or you cannot make one. Push the ball right back to your court..

Simon Crisp 1:45:46
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:45:49
I like that because there's no arguing against it.

Simon Crisp 1:45:53
And the people who were coming to those early classes, what was your typical demographic? Was it mostly women who were looking for those physical changes?

Ken Thompson 1:46:02
70 to 80% women. And they were coming because, as I say, most of the yoga teachers that I knew in London, who became yoga teachers in a year, because last year, they were teaching Keep Fit. Suddenly, Yoga's become fashionable so they all become yoga teachers, they sprout out of the ground. At one time, we all in yoga, down in south London, we all knew each other in London, there were so few yoga teachers in 1970. By 1971, there were 1000s of yoga teachers, where did it come from? They were all keep fit teachers last year, now they were yoga teachers. It was as quick as that.

Simon Crisp 1:46:52
I look in Birmingham, and I look around now and across the yoga studios in Birmingham, they're generating something like 150 new teachers every year. And they're still trying to, then each of those trying to teach classes within Birmingham and it's completely saturated.

Ken Thompson 1:47:13
Yeah, because the people that are teaching are not like we were in those early days that felt we were genuine, call us genuine, seekers of truth. We wanted to find what was in this yoga. And we read these classical books, and it's all in the classical books. But you got to find it for yourself in it. No one gives it to you on a plate.

Simon Crisp 1:47:37
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:47:38
That's what Krishnamurti used to do. He made you think. My view was a I wanted students leaving my class thinking that I've done all I can really do for them. Not being brainwashed. Don't take my word for it, read the books for yourself. Pick it up for yourself and then you will get your version. Now the problem with that was, of course, that a lot of the Iyengar people in those days tended to feel that they copied what they saw Iyengar do, that would be best. Of course he was going around hitting people, giving little slapps, and doing things that Monty Barnes wouldn't allow in his Institute. They got away with it. Some of them did some. I remember I was in a class once. I don't know why I was there because I wasn't actually in the class. I was listening to it on the sidelines. And Iyengar was teaching, actually. He went round and he slapped this woman. So his argument was that it was to make her think. Part of their bodies did not work, that will wake it up. Well, this lady said, "I don't like that, so don't do it to me." He said, "What's the matter with you?" She said "That's it. They don't mind being slapped. But I do." And she got her mat, rolled out and put it under her arm and walked out of the class. They were all Iyengar people in there and they all, this has never happened before. Because they're all so devoted to him. They will accept all these punishing little slaps and this girl said, "No, I don't like it." And he couldn't believe it because for him it was the biggest insult known to roll up and leave the class.

Ken Thompson 1:50:08
That's what I've experienced with some people in Iyengar classes, but he's gone. Now it's with Pattabhi Jois or whatever his name is who's into the other version, which is on from Iyengar. It's even more vigorous. And it emphasises that. I'm not saying nothing wrong with it, because, you know, having a fit body and all that is great, you know. And they've got all sorts of types of yoga now. So sort of acrobatic yoga, but you can call it that and call it something else.

Simon Crisp 1:50:53
Oh, yeah, it's got all sorts, so many types now.

Ken Thompson 1:50:57
You find loads of teachers teaching different types of styles of yoga with vigorous postures. But you won't find it better than Cirque Du Soleil.

Simon Crisp 1:51:08
They do it with a smile.

Ken Thompson 1:51:12
Smiling, not making it look hard. In fact, when I was speaking to one Indian Swami, he said about Iyengar, he said, his face is not relaxed. He said, We shouldn't be able to do all these difficult postures with a smile on your face. And, you know, you'd see him and I've seen him in Westminster Hall during, in the 1960s, and he did have an aggressive look on the ground and one go and he pulled it. It's all on video. He's pulling and pushing until you get to a certain achievement with a posture. Now, the real Swamis. They never did that. If they did it with a smile on their face, and that's how it should be.

Simon Crisp 1:52:25
One last section, I'd like to just get to if that's okay, because I'm aware that I'm taking a lot of your time now.

Ken Thompson 1:52:32
I've got time to myself, I'm retired. If you're getting something from it, keep going.

Simon Crisp 1:52:41
Oh, yeah. So we have a bit that I'm looking at his then personal collection. So because I'm looking at archives, I'm going to visit the British Wheel and Iyengar London to look at what they've kept, what records they've kept of the development of yoga at that time. I'm also asking people about what throughout their time in yoga, what they kept. It could be letters, photos. One woman said a mat she practised on at a certain point just means so much to her if her house was on fire it'd be the one thing she'd pick up and leave with. Books. I've seen in Suzanne's, her book, quite a lot of the pictures in there came from you. So you obviously have…

Ken Thompson 1:53:20
In this one?

Simon Crisp 1:53:23
Yes. Yeah. So all of your pictures are the little blue marks in my copy.

Ken Thompson 1:53:28
Oh. Yeah. How is yogi from Birmingham?

Simon Crisp 1:53:36
Yes, yeah, Yogini Sunita.

Ken Thompson 1:53:41
I never met her. But when she said to the class once, I heard this from another, that hers is the only way. You got it. I think she wrote a book. "This is the only book you need, no one else's." I thought

there's something wrong there. Because if she's safe with the truth, as she sees it, she doesn't need to do that.

Simon Crisp 1:54:11
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 1:54:14
If a person is confident in what they're teaching, they haven't got to say, “No, I say read my book.” No, read all the books as you can. Because no one's got the whole truth. It’s spread around and chopped up into little pieces. So you will get some from the Gita, we get some from the Upanishads. Hatha Yoga by Benard. So, yeah, I liked Suzanne. She was very nice.

Simon Crisp 1:54:52
Okay. So, do you have a lot of photographs from the time?

Ken Thompson 1:54:58
I have got some photos, obviously. Whether I can actually, they’re disappearing now. I think what I'll have to do, what I’ll have to do, can’t show you, is to, I've got them in folders. And what needs to do is to perhaps get them together and have another zoom.

Simon Crisp 1:55:52
Yeah, that'd be great. If we could do that at some point. That'd be fantastic.

Ken Thompson 1:55:58
Well, I can use my, I can put them on the HP,

Simon Crisp 1:56:13
A scanner, scanner. Okay. Oh, that'd be fantastic if you could. It would be amazing to be able to see some of these photos.

Ken Thompson 1:56:26
So any photos you want to see, I'll try and dig out for it.

Simon Crisp 1:56:31
Yeah, I mean, what I'm really lacking and I don't know if it's just no one was taking photos at the time is of people actually in classes or sort of around those environments just to see what the, how they were set up at the time. And then obviously over key figures as well.

Ken Thompson 1:57:02
There's one thing we used to do, we'd let people make a big circle in the gymnasium. So everyone could see, you know, but I knew one teacher who made all classes in those days turn and face outwards, they do their yoga practice facing a wall. Why? The purpose was so they couldn't see what other people do. So it's pretty shrewd, but people didn't like it. Well, you wouldn't like to go to a class and be with 20 or 30 other people and you alternate all facing a wall, no. But his reasoning was sound

as far as I was concerned because he didn't want to be competitive with some of those, because I couldn't see anybody else. So that was interesting. I'm trying to think of some of the things. We didn't take many photos. The only time we got photos. I was doing a class in in those days, the beginnings. And a local reporter from a local paper came along with a camera and he was taking a picture. Well, I hadn't warmed up at all. So of course, I always, the classic one is in lotus. So I've pulled both feet to the opposite thighs, lotus. When of course, that's the only time I hurt myself because I'd pulled a muscle, something or a ligament in the knee and I never did it again.

Simon Crisp 1:59:02
So, what paper were they from, sorry?

Ken Thompson 1:59:06
What paper?

Simon Crisp 1:59:07
Yeah, you said a photographer came from.

Ken Thompson 1:59:12
Local paper, so local paper and I might have that as a in my in the bottom of the drawer. Sorry, I'm talking to my.

Ken Thompson 1:59:30
Introducing my wife, Angela.

Angela Thompson 1:59:32
Hello. Hi, Simon.

Simon Crisp 1:59:33
Hello. Are you okay?

Angela Thompson 1:59:36
Alight. You seem to be doing well today.

Simon Crisp 1:59:39
Yes. Really, really useful chat. Really good.

Angela Thompson 1:59:43
Goes back so long.

Simon Crisp 1:59:46
Just so much knowledge there.

Angela Thompson 1:59:49
Tremendous.

Ken Thompson 1:59:50
Might all be useless knowledge. Now, but I suppose. For history's point of view it has some value perhaps.

Simon Crisp 1:59:59

This is why I'm focusing on this time period, that is, because my concern is that most people who are practising teaching yoga at the moment don't appreciate the history of yoga even within Britain, let alone beyond that point. And it's getting to that point, but we're just on that cusp of living memory.

Ken Thompson 2:00:19
Yeah.

Simon Crisp 2:00:22
If it's left in over 20 years it's not going to happen. So that's why I'm just speaking to as many people who practised in this period as I can.

Ken Thompson 2:00:29
Velta is now 100.

Simon Crisp 2:00:32
Yes, yeah.

Angela Thompson 2:00:39
That's the good fortune of having so many Swamis. Thinking our home was British Wheel of Yoga headquarters.

Ken Thompson 2:01:00
More photos. So anyway, people, pictures from local newspapers.

Simon Crisp 2:01:06
Yeah, any sort of newspaper clippings that were relevant to you that you've decided to keep as well things like that would be really interesting to save.

Ken Thompson 2:01:13
First in 71, or 72. Picketts Lock Centre in London and Harringay. Picketts Lock, there was a 2 million pound construction of this badminton and netball complex. It was a lot of money in those days. Yeah. And it was part of the Harringay councils modernization. Anyway, they built this place. And I was the first guy teaching. Back then, I was earning my living teaching 15 classes a week you know. And so anyway, when I got to Picketts Lock, we had, I had to look around the place to find a suitable hall to do yoga in. See, there's lots of great places, huge, like a barn it was, and we went all around the place, trying to find somewhere that was quiet. So I could do yoga and see, because next door, there'd be a badminton match going on or netball or basketball. And it was noisy. It wasn't built for yoga at all, it was built for recreational sports. Anyway, in the end, I found a crèche, with mums bringing their children to put them somewhere while they do their class of whatever nature. So I got us to start and it's quiet in there and it had controllable lights. The other lights will not control the central control room that would switch the lights on and off for you. Modernisation. So then, we're going into this crèche and gone. Everything was going fine. No problem at all. And so, talk through relaxation came into the end of the class. So they've done the hour and a half. And they also get ready for relaxation and they'd all got their blankets out, covered themselves up and I made sure they were all lying in a nice, relaxed place and started to talk through relaxation. While I was about 20 minutes into this, so it's about halfway through and they were gone. They were really gone. John Kane always said, "Your voice could send anyone off to sleep." My mate, John. I was saying, "Relax" and now suddenly, the tannoy we hadn't heard, "Attention, attention. Will Mr. Jones please report." Well, literally they all lifted up off the floor. Almost levitating because this voice came from out boom from out the roof, and frightened life out of me.

Simon Crisp 2:04:48
And there was a split second between thinking that they'd reached enlightenment and realising it was an announcement.

Ken Thompson 2:04:55
So I had words with them and said that I don't mind. But in future, could you please cancel any tannoy messages in the class while I'm doing it, you know, that was the sort of thing.

Angela Thompson 2:05:14
You had to go to reception to ask them to turn the lights off.

Ken Thompson 2:05:18
Oh, yeah. Well, that was it. Oh, was it? And it was modern, purpose built, keep fit, exercise setup. And it was designed for noise and exercise. It wasn't designed for yoga. This one room, the crèche. That wasn't perfect.

Simon Crisp 2:05:47
I've just, you know, said about having you'd got photos and just wondered what are the things you'd collected during time? You obviously got a fair few books relevant to yoga around your house as well. What else have you had in what you would class as your collection of yoga?

Ken Thompson 2:06:04
Is this still working if I move it?

Simon Crisp 2:06:07
It is, yes. Get the till.

Ken Thompson 2:06:12
Here we are, we'll go for a little walk. You should be, I can't remember. I'm looking at you. Can you see? Can you see me?

Simon Crisp 2:06:23
I can see you. Yes. Yeah.

Ken Thompson 2:06:26
Okay. You see a hole here? Can you?

Simon Crisp 2:06:30
Yeah. Yeah.

Ken Thompson 2:06:32
So we're going along here. And at the end of the halls very close right in my library, because it was the only piece of flat wall and had enough space. And enough space to walk past it. So, can you see? Your light?

Simon Crisp 2:07:13

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Ken Thompson 2:07:15
Yeah. Can you see the books here?

Simon Crisp 2:07:17
Yes.

Ken Thompson 2:07:19
Yeah, I don’t think it’s gonna make much difference and I'll put the lights on. Can you see all the books?

Simon Crisp 2:07:28
Yeah, so they all, is that your yoga library?

Ken Thompson 2:07:32
This is my Alexander books here, here. And here is more. Down here there's more.

Simon Crisp 2:07:46
Wow.

Ken Thompson 2:07:49
And then there's anatomy and physiology. See those?

Simon Crisp 2:07:51
Yes, yes. Yeah.

Angela Thompson 2:07:54
Mainly the best of them really? Pushing us to 3000, aren’t you?

Ken Thompson 2:08:00
Light on yoga.

Simon Crisp 2:08:02
Did you say you used to have 3000 books?

Angela Thompson 2:08:09
Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We used to have.

Ken Thompson 2:08:11
I was in the RAF, by the way, where I did my national service. So I had a great interest in aircraft and so on. When I was stationed over in Northern Ireland, Aldergrove for two years.

Ken Thompson 2:08:47
I had the opportunity of learning what most people in this country don't know about the Irish problems, you know, but they did have a hard time. So you can understand them and the way they think about us. What am I looking for? I soon found Hatha Yoga by Benard, It's in here somewhere. But as you can see, if I go down here very slowly.

Angela Thompson 2:09:20
Got the best of every aspect here, in a way.

Ken Thompson 2:09:25
200 books here at least.

Angela Thompson 2:09:28
We also had, Ken had, 50 Years Of Spectrums. Nobody's got them in the whole country.

Simon Crisp 2:09:38
Oh, really.

Angela Thompson 2:09:29
Yes. Yeah. We've got every edition of the Spectrum British Wheel Of Yoga handbooks and news books.

Ken Thompson 2:09:54
I've tried to get them into the headquarters at Sleaford. because involved in in getting Sleaford. For them, yes.

Simon Crisp 2:10:01
Okay, because I'm meant to be visiting there next month because they've told me that they've got a lot of Spectrum, but they've not got all of them.

Angela Thompson 2:10:09
No, they have not, I offered.

Ken Thompson 2:10:12
Number one, first one.

Angela Thompson 2:10:15
Yeah, we advertised some to anybody who was really keen. Yeah. But no one wrote.

Simon Crisp 2:10:21
Do you still have them? Or?

Angela Thompson 2:10:22
Yes, I've, I've sent out two years or four years of the educational supplements in the 74 and 84, to just a student of yoga that responded and was keen as can be, because she came into yoga about that time, the 70s. And like, the more traditional and she's ploughing through them. And when she finishes them, I send her another one. Because she's so interested. I'm pleased to send them on to someone. There are some brilliant articles written by lots of Swamis and the yoga educational supplement that we had for a while, about three or four years. We did that, did we Ken, in the 70s. Changed its format, changed its fashion. But I just wanted to give them to anyone, because we've just moved here six months ago.

Ken Thompson 2:11:14
March this year.

Angela Thompson 2:11:15

And we felt its history.

Simon Crisp 2:11:18
Oh, it is completely. I mean, they need to go somewhere.

Angela Thompson 2:11:23
I've given away all the Yoga For Health, you know, the Hittleman 71 show?

Simon Crisp 2:11:26
Yeah. Yes.

Angela Thompson 2:11:27
All of these magazines. I've just given a pile like that to a charity shop. They're priceless really. 1970s, 1974.

Ken Thompson 2:11:38
Can you get that?

Angela Thompson 2:11:28
Nobody seemed to want that but I've given them to a charity shop.

Ken Thompson 2:11:41
Can you get that one out?

Angela Thompson 2:11:44
Merely because I didn't want them to get spoiled in the garage. Because we're now living in a smaller home?

Simon Crisp 2:11:49
Yeah.

Ken Thompson 2:11:50
Let's just see, though. Yes, I am. She's got it. She's holding it up at the moment. That is a series of articles I did for Yoga Health called yoga your way.

Angela Thompson 2:12:06
A year, wasn't it?

Ken Thompson 2:12:08
A whole year? From 82 to 83, right.

Simon Crisp 2:12:14
Okay. Yeah.

Ken Thompson 2:12:16
So one article a month.

Angela Thompson 2:12:20
You're taking different aspects

Ken Thompson 2:12:21

And it covers.

Angela Thompson 2:12:23
Things like this, Dr. Frank Chandra.

Ken Thompson 2:12:27
No, that's not mine.

Angela Thompson 2:12:29
No, that's not yours? Yeah. You're in them through? You're in them, aren't you? All these, "Yoga Your Way, new series."

Ken Thompson 2:12:38
That's when it started.

Angela Thompson 2:12:40
And you basically went through all the different manner and ways…

Ken Thompson 2:12:46
I covered all the things we used to do in class. So it's a positive history of a year, once a month.

Simon Crisp 2:12:54
Okay.

Ken Thompson 2:13:00
Now, what I'm going to suggest to you.

Angela Thompson 2:13:02
I wish you could have added

Ken Thompson 2:13:05
You can come stay here, we've got spare bedrooms upstairs, you're welcome to sleep a night or two and go through anything that's down there,

Angela Thompson 2:13:16
Need to be here for more than a night or two.

Ken Thompson 2:13:22
Take whatever, because it won't be around here forever.

Simon Crisp 2:13:26
It seems such a shame that you say you took those magazines to the charity shop as well. And how are they stored at the moment? Are they in boxes or, how are they stored the ones that you've still got.

Angela Thompson 2:13:42

Oh, they're in files with the dates on the big file, you know, the big ones, with the dates on them. So we've got, say, one or two years in each section. And I've still got most of those. And before it was this size, it used to be a5 paper. And we had 10 years of those, didn't we? If not 15, 20. And I've just sent two big ones, which is two years of the smaller scale one to a girl just because she's enthusiastic. And well, you've got to pass it on, no good sitting here. And not being used.

Angela Thompson 2:14:46
We were very sad because we had been teaching 50 years so we also had a background of knowledge and knew the people too. And we just had to let them go. But I could retrieve the two that are missing out the 15 years of Spectrum when it was small, I could retrieve those because I've got built up a good relationship with this woman who's just interested in all the old writings of Ken Reed, discussing the Gita or Ramayana, you know, the series you do. I could contact her and she would gladly send them back to me when she's read them. Because after doing that, if someone's passionate, you just feel it's got to move on, people. You just can't keep him.

Simon Crisp 2:15:34
Yeah.

Angela Thompson 2:15:35
No, no, put the advert in and she was the only lady that contacted me out of all the membership.

Ken Thompson 2:15:40
You can understand that people want to move on, they don't want to live in the past.

Simon Crisp 2:15:45
I don't know. I'm that person constantly searching on eBay for people's, like getting rid of old collections of yoga magazines and things.

Angela Thompson 2:15:54
I'd go to this, I'd go to about 13 charity shops, you know, so that we spread the situation. But I've got a good relationship with most of them because they know me. And I will personally go and see him and have a look to see if they're still around.

Simon Crisp 2:16:12
Yeah, I mean, if they are it'd be really interesting.

Angela Thompson 2:16:15
I looked through everyone before I gave them away because it brought back lots of memories of Hittleman's style of teaching. And I just thought we've got to let them go because they're getting damp. Make you score them all, you know, so I will go and if I could get them, I will wrap them up in paper for them. Oh, we've got Yoga for Health as well.

Ken Thompson 2:16:39
Is this costs you a lot of money to do Zoom?

Simon Crisp 2:16:42
No, no, this is fine. It's Yeah, well, if you've only got one other person, you don't pay for it. It's only if you're doing big groups that you pay.

Ken Thompson 2:16:50

Okay. At least we're not running up your bill.

Angela Thompson 2:16:54
We've also got Yoga For Health magazines, which was commercial. We've got quite a lot of those. We've got some others which were done monthly. Lately we just haven't bothered to keep them but at that time, we had a yoga centre and it was all there. And we had space. So this is a different stage in our life. This last six months.

Simon Crisp 2:17:25
Yeah. Well, if there's ever any risk of things ending up in the bin, please, please tell me. I mean, giving away to charity shops or something, let me know in advance.

Angela Thompson 2:17:36
I wouldn't do that. Now we've made contact, I'd drop your line straight away. In actual fact,

Ken Thompson 2:17:42
I think I offered Susanna, correspondents that I had with Wilfred Clark, and letters that we wrote, because that was before emails.

Angela Thompson 2:17:54
Yes. That would be in the late 60s. Mid 60s, wasn't it when we started?

Simon Crisp 2:18:01
Do you still have those or were they?

Ken Thompson 2:18:03
I think I showed one or two to show the girl that wrote that book. And a letter from Blitz, the club Mediterranean guy.

Simon Crisp 2:18:15
We've spoken about him. Yeah.

Ken Thompson 2:18:19
He put up the money to buy Brockwood Park for Krishnamurti.

Simon Crisp 2:18:25
Yes, yeah.

Ken Thompson 2:18:28
Where the Krishnamurti centre is now. He paid for that. I think he subsequently died though. Yes, yes. That's passed on. Yeah. Well known along the continent.

Angela Thompson 2:18:39
Very generous man. Holiday retreats in Zinal. With the top Yoga masters of the world, he used to say. We were very privileged to be invited to work with them really weren't we. That was unique because he had Club Mediterranean. Amazingly, we've lived through some fascinating times.

Ken Thompson 2:19:07

Yeah.

Angela Thompson 2:19:08
Particularly Ken, obviously, because he was a lot more involved. All the time. Really?

Simon Crisp 2:19:14
Yeah.

Angela Thompson 2:19:15
If you want these things, I'll keep them dry.

Simon Crisp 2:19:21
Oh, yeah. If you if you keep them dry, I definitely see.

Angela Thompson 2:19:25
I can go and see what I can do for Yoga For Health because when I gave them away. I had given them to a couple of young teachers in their 50s, sort of training locally, and they've just taken over my classes and so on. And I looked at them and I thought there's still something about these. And we were lucky because Yoga For Health.

Simon Crisp 2:19:49
Yeah.

Angela Thompson 2:19:50
Richard Hittleman. Really was connected to Howard Kent, yes, and he did all the director. He was the director of that programme that came on television, should in the early 70s. And I knew Howard Kent because I was a trustee for about 25 years at the Yoga For Health foundation. No, that the, yes. So we've been very fortunate it chose us more than we chose it.

Angela Thompson 2:20:20
And it becomes a passion doesn't it?

Simon Crisp 2:20:22
Yeah,

Angela Thompson 2:20:24
Ken wasn't, he didn't feel he was working because if you're…

Ken Thompson 2:20:27
If you're enjoying something you do, it's not really working.

Angela Thompson 2:20:35
Well, lovely to see your face. John's mentioned three and four times

Simon Crisp 2:20:40
Oh, okay.

Ken Thompson 2:20:41
We've known John Kane since the

Angela Thompson 2:20:43
70s.

Ken Thompson 2:20:44
1960s.

Angela Thompson 2:20:45
Yeah.

Simon Crisp 2:20:46
Yeah, I am actually going to have to be really rude. I've got to pick my son up in about 10 minutes but if we could have another chat again at some point it'd be really helpful and sort of.

Ken Thompson 2:21:00
When it's convenient for you, give us the number we do the same, or as I say if you want to spend a day down here. Stay overnight. You don't want to go back the same day.

Angela Thompson 2:21:13
Then you have time to explore Norfolk.

Ken Thompson 2:22:16
Right, we better shoot off.

Simon Crisp 2:22:17
I will speak to you soon. Thank you very much for your time.

Ken Thompson 2:22:22
No problem. Enjoyed it.

Simon Crisp 2:22:24
Cheers. Bye.

Ken Thompson 2:22:25
Take care.

Simon Crisp 2:22:26
Thank you

APPENDIX K.

Below is a blog post published on my research adjacent blog (yogamemories.com) about an audio recording of BWY founder Wilfred Clark, recorded by Ken Thompson and stored in his personal collection. In it, I detail the importance placed on the existence of such recordings by Ken, and the affective power they can play, shown through the response of current yoga teachers.

Listening to Wilfred 50 … years later

Credit: Ken Thompson

A little over 50 years ago Ken Thompson led Wilfred Clark into the basement of Acacia House in London. He recorded the founder of the British Wheel of Yoga talking about Pratyahara (withdrawal of the senses), his guided Lake of Peace meditation, and an introduction to the Bhagavad Gita. Ken thinks this audio could be the only studio-quality recording of Wilfred Clark that still exists.

I recently chatted with Ken (a founding member of the BWY himself) about how this recording came about. He told me that he doesn't know quite what motivated him to record audio of Wilfred in the summer of 1972, but he's glad he did. However, he now wishes that he had recorded a video of Wilfred too.

Ken later added music and an introduction to the recording – which he now has on CD and Minidisc – and says he would like more people who are interested in yoga, particularly those involved with the BWY, to be able to hear it.

He said this could help some of those people recognise the role Wilfred played in the popularisation of yoga in the UK, and the important works he did connecting yogis around the country. Ken also thinks the recording has the potential to evoke the same sort of reaction in new listeners as those

who heard Wilfred speak in the 1960s and 70s, saying, “It might help, someone might listen to that (the recording), and it might spark a certain chain reaction”.

Because of this, I listened to the recording with several current yoga teachers who were trained by the BWY or FRYOG, both organisations in which Wilfred played an important role. However, while these teachers were aware (to varying degrees) about the role Wilfred played in the popularisation of yoga, they had never heard him speak.

Matty, who trained with the BWY but didn’t know much about Wilfred said: “What I felt initially was just how relevant it is today. You know it’s 50 years ago, and yet he’s talking about things that you can just get. I could teach a class today saying what he was saying, and people would just get it straight away.

“It was a revelation to me; I’d heard the name (Wilfred Clark), but I didn’t know much about him. I can’t believe I missed it. But it’s never too late, it really has inspired me!”

Sumita added: “My teaching is FRYOG, so of course, I’ve known Wilfred Clark as the name of the father of FRYOG and one of the founders. And so, for me to hear that it was absolutely magical.”

“I’m really grateful firstly to hear his voice, because being a FRYOG teacher as well, it just took me back to my teachings. It makes you want to seek out more of Wilfred because it was powerful. He had real wisdom. I really heard wisdom in his voice and his knowledge.”

I’d also be interested to know what readers thought about hearing the recording. Had you ever heard Wilfred speak before? Did what he said resonate with you 50 years on?