

YOGA

ISSUE 264/ APRIL 2025

Jai
'Gurudev'

Yashika
Rubber Girl



**SURPRISING
FACTS
ABOUT YOGA**

YOGA &

- Clairvoyance •
- Addiction Recovery •
- Sustainable Living •

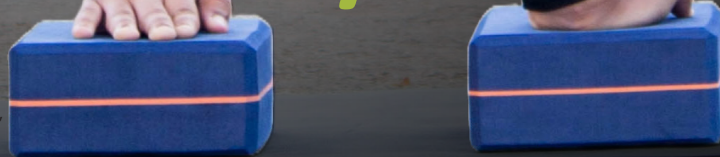
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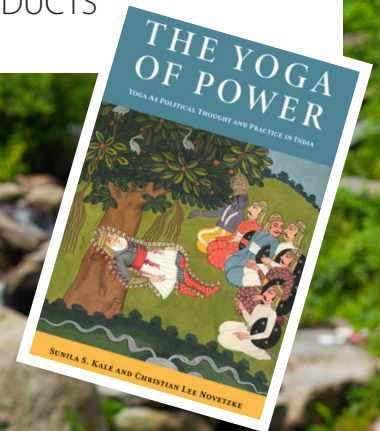
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A woman with curly hair, wearing a white tank top and patterned leggings, is smiling and looking down. Another person's hands are on her shoulders. The image is split into three color zones: yellow on the left, blue on the right, and orange at the bottom.

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NURTURING THE PLANET *with* Yoga

Words: Diana O'Reilly, BWY Chair and Environmentalist

Earth day, celebrated each year on April 22, offers a valuable opportunity to reflect on our connection with the planet and the impact of our actions on the environment. Yoga, with its focus on mindfulness, harmony and unity, provides a powerful way to honour and care for the Earth.

By cultivating self-awareness, yoga helps us recognise how our choices affect the world around us, inspiring more mindful and sustainable living. This deepened connection to both ourselves and the planet encourages us to embrace practices that support a healthier, more balanced world.

BWY's Yoga in Action campaign, launched in 2023, embodies these principles by bringing yoga into everyday life. One facet of the campaign highlights the importance of environmental stewardship, encouraging sustainable practices within our yoga journey.

This article explores how yoga can strengthen our bond with nature and inspire meaningful steps toward living in greater harmony with the Earth.

Yoga and nature connection

Yoga, at its core, is about unity and interconnectedness. It reminds us that we are a part of the natural world, not separate from it. Practising yoga outdoors, surrounded by the rustle of leaves or the warmth of sunlight, can enhance this sense of oneness. Even if we practice indoors, we can invite nature into our space through visualisation or by setting an intention to connect with the Earth.

According to the 'Goraksha Samhita', a medieval text attributed to the sage Gorakhnath, Nath yogis spent much of their time immersed in nature. They believed that practising postures inspired by animals and natural

surroundings could help cultivate qualities such as strength, grace, and stability.

The natural world continues to provide endless inspiration for our yoga practice. Poses like Tree pose (*Vrkshasana*) mirror the rooted strength of trees, while Downward-facing dog (*Adho Mukha Svanasana*) evokes the instinctive movements of animals. By tuning into these natural elements, we cultivate gratitude for the Earth and an awareness of our place within its ecosystem.

The Yamas

Our yoga practice teaches us mindfulness and respect, values that can be extended to how we live and interact with the world. The *yamas* are ethical principles from the ancient Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, guiding us towards a more conscious way of life. Two key *yamas*, *ahimsa*, (non-

harming) and *asteya* (non-stealing) remind us to take only what we need and to tread lightly on the Earth.

We can bring these yoga principles into our environmental choices by opting for eco-friendly yoga mats made from natural materials, wearing sustainable activewear and supporting brands that prioritise ethical practices. At BWY, we partner with trusted organisations to offer members discounts on eco-friendly products, helping to make sustainable choices more accessible.

Caring for our yoga props and clothing is another way to practise *ahimsa* or *asteya*. Instead of discarding worn-out items, we can repurpose or recycle them. A friend of mine, a painter, recently used his old yoga mat as a canvas for his artwork. His mat now hangs on my wall. Yoga encourages us to live with intention, reducing waste and choosing quality over quantity. Practising mindfulness through





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ahimsa and *asteya* extends beyond the yoga mat. By being aware of what we consume – whether it’s food, products, or energy – we can reduce our ecological footprint. Eating seasonally and locally supports sustainable farming practices and lowers carbon emissions from transportation.

In Ayurveda, a sister science to yoga, this aligns with *Ritucharya* — the practice of eating in harmony with the seasons to maintain balance in the body and environment. For example, favouring cooling foods like cucumber and coconut in summer and warming foods like root vegetables and spices in winter helps us stay in sync with nature while reducing the need for out-of-season imports. Choosing reusable water bottles, bags and containers helps cut down on single-use plastics. By aligning our daily choices with these yogic principles, we learn to tread more lightly on the Earth. A mindful approach to consumption fosters a gentler, kinder and more connected relationship with our planet.

Top five poses to connect with the Earth

Certain yoga poses can help us feel more grounded and connected to the Earth. To honour Earth day, try incorporating the following poses into your practice:

- **Corpse pose** (*Savasana*): Lie on your back with your legs either bent at the knee or extended, arms comfortably resting by your sides, palms turned upward. Close your eyes and allow your body to fully relax, feeling the support of the Earth beneath you. Breathe naturally surrendering any tension with each exhale. As you rest, feel your energy emanating from you, merging with the Earth’s energy, and in return, feel the nourishing prana (lifeforce) from the Earth flowing back into you.
- **Tree pose** (*Vrkshasana*): Stand tall with your feet together, grounding

evenly through both feet. Shift your weight onto your left foot and place the sole of your right foot on your ankle, shin or inner thigh. Find a focal point to help with balance. Engage your core and lengthen through your spine. Feel rooted in the Earth through your foot while extending your arms like branches reaching toward the sky. Hold for several breaths before switching sides.

- **Mountain pose** (*Tadasana*): Stand with your feet hip-width apart or together, grounding evenly through all four corners of your feet. Engage your thighs, lift your kneecaps slightly and lengthen through your spine. Let your arms rest naturally by your sides, shoulders relaxed and palms facing forward. Soften your gaze or close your eyes. Embrace the stillness and stability of a mountain. Breathe deeply, feeling yourself steady, strong and present.
- **Downward-facing dog** (*Adho Mukha Svanasana*): Start on all fours with your wrists under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Tuck your toes under and lift your hips up and back, straightening your legs as much as comfortable. Press firmly into your palms and spread your fingers wide, distributing your weight evenly. Allow your head to relax between your arms and your heels to gently sink toward the ground. Feel the deep stretch through your spine and legs as you ground through your hands and feet, reconnecting with the Earth.
- **Cat/cow pose** (*Marjaryasana*): Begin on all fours with your wrists under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Connect to the Earth through broad hands. Inhale, arch your spine, drop your belly toward the Earth and lift your gaze (Cow pose). Exhale, round your back, tuck your chin to your chest and press through your hands (Cat pose). Move fluidly with your breath, using the stability of the ground beneath you to guide

the natural rhythm of your spine. Repeat several rounds, embracing the dynamic connection between movement, breath and the Earth

Earth visualisation – welcoming Spring

After your physical practice, it's nice to lie down and let your body digest the movement. This is a perfect time to connect deeply with nature.

Step outside, if you can, and tune your senses to the sounds, smells and sights of the natural world around you. Feel the gentle touch of the Spring breeze, listen to the rustling of new leaves and notice the freshness in the air. Allow the vibrancy of nature to fill you and internalise this experience.

Alternatively, you can visualise yourself in a beautiful Spring garden. Imagine the ground beneath you, soft with fresh grass and vibrant flowers blooming all around. The warm sun kisses your skin, while the air is filled with the scent of blossoms and earth. Picture the trees with new leaves shimmering in the breeze, birds singing in the distance and the subtle hum of nature's life all around you.

What do you see? The colours of nature bursting forth – bright greens, rich blossoms and the delicate petals of flowers.

What do you feel? The Earth is supporting you, cool beneath your body, yet full of life. The air is warm and fresh, filling your lungs with new energy.

What do you hear? Birds chirping, the rustling of the leaves in the wind, and the peaceful sounds of a nearby stream or a gentle breeze.

What do you smell? The earthy scent of freshly turned soil, the perfume of



flowers and the refreshing coolness of the morning dew.

What do you taste? The refreshing breath of nature, as though every inhale nourishes you.

Allow this connection to nature to deepen your awareness and remind you of your interconnectedness with the Earth. As you lie there, feeling the energy of Spring all around you, know that just as nature renews itself, so do you – with every breath.

Celebrate Earth Day

Earth day offers a unique opportunity to unite as a global community in celebration and conservation. Yoga can be a powerful tool to cultivate a deeper respect for the Earth and inspire meaningful action.

BWY's Yoga in Action environment campaign has already made an impact, with BWY volunteers planting over 1200 trees in the last year – a testament to the collective power of yogis working together for the greater good.

Yoga has always been about connection – to ourselves, to each other, and to the world around us. By participating in community tree-planting events, beach clean-ups or conservation projects, we can embody the principles of yoga in action. These activities not only benefit the planet but also strengthen our bonds with fellow yogis and nature lovers.

Let's find ways to make a difference in our own communities. Whether it's organising a group hike and meditation, hosting an outdoor yoga workshop or simply committing to reducing waste in your daily life, every effort counts.

Through yoga, we can cultivate mindfulness and a deeper connection to the Earth. Let's use our practice to inspire positive change, ensuring a brighter future for generations to come.



To find out more about the BWY Yoga in Action campaign, visit:
<https://www.bwy.org.uk/>

Diana O'Reilly, originally from Toronto, Canada, turned to yoga after having children, initially for fitness, but it soon became a life-changing practice. After moving to South Wales in 2004, she trained as a BWY teacher and has taught for 19 years. Diana is a Foundation Course Tutor for the BWY and was also elected as BWY Chair in 2022. She plays a central role in supporting yoga teachers and practitioners across the UK and is also an environmental activist.

Join Diana on her Foundation Course One on Sunday 14 September: <https://portal.bwy.org.uk/user/trainings/449>