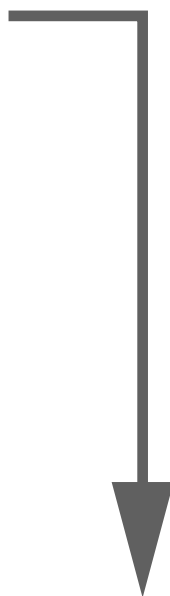
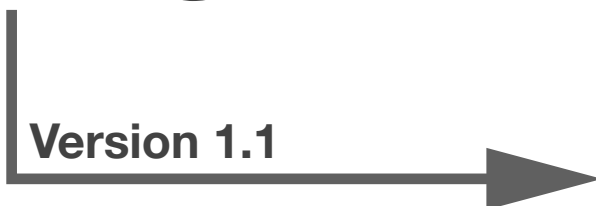


# Moral Flowcharts For



# Modern Yoga

Version 1.1



Compiled by  
Prageeth Jayathissa



*For our ancestors for preparing this  
wisdom*

*and our descendants for whom we  
**prepare the world.***

*To heal the traumas of recent  
injustices*

*so we can move towards a world  
**that is indeed just.***

# Open Source + Creative Commons

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This book is open source and creative commons.  
This means you can:

- Translate it to your own language
- Use it for a yoga class/training
- Start a debate on a chart you disagree with
- Request modifications
- Propose new charts
- Download, share, print, and distribute for free

↓  
You may sell it to offset print and distribution costs, or as a fundraiser for a charity.

Start by submitting an issue at [github.com/pjayathissa/yoga](https://github.com/pjayathissa/yoga)

↓  
All proposed changes go through review, and can be distributed once accepted.

↓  
Once a new version is published, you can join the contributors list.



# Contributors List

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Raquel Minh  
Wendy Douglas  
Tāne Mete  
Sandra Palmer  
Alesha Mehta  
Christin Caplan  
Shamin Yazdani

+ 1 Anonymous Contributor

and many more to come



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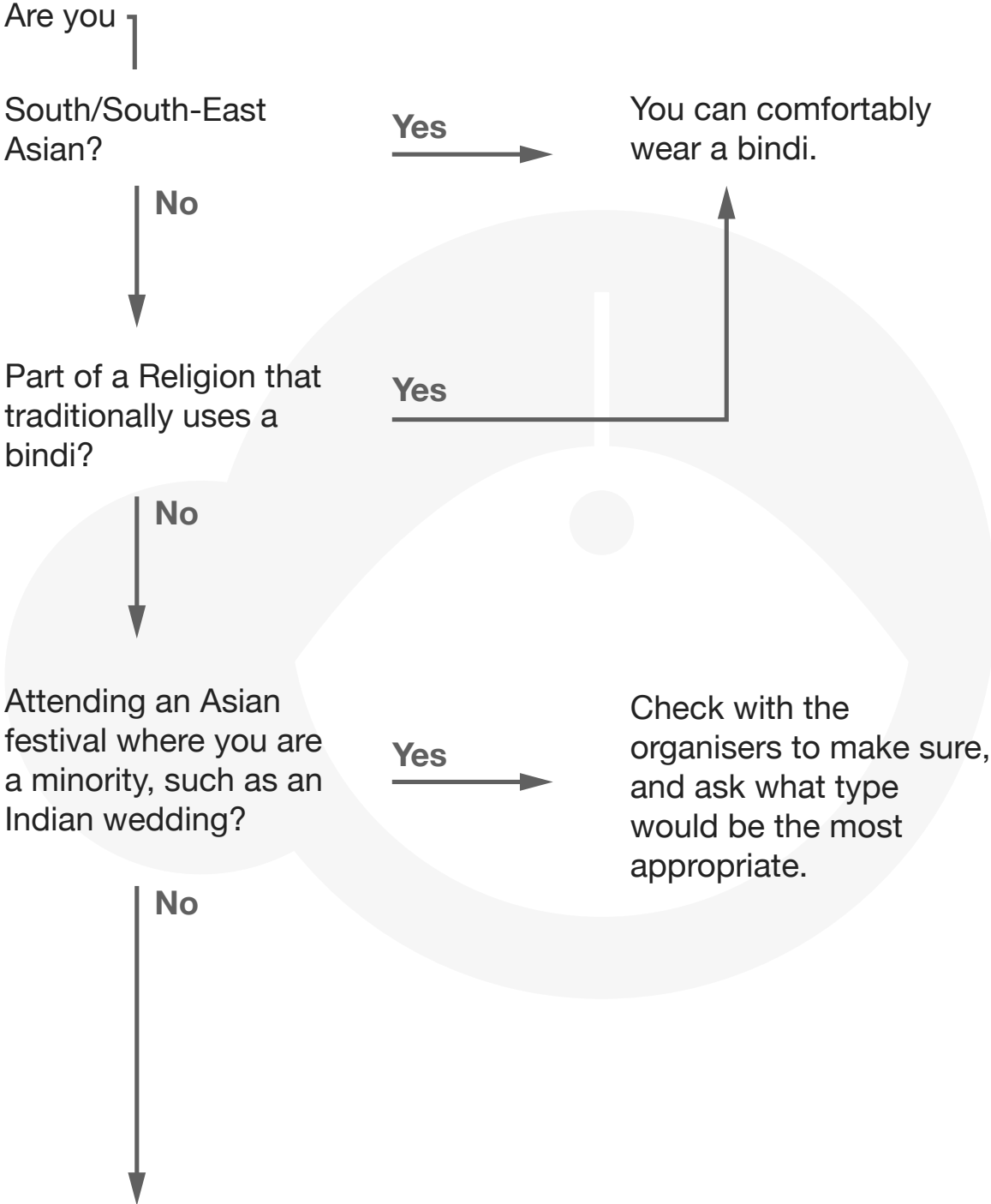
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# Bindi

---



# Use of Deities

Examples: Buddha, Papatūānuku, Maui, Śiva, Krishna, Ganesha

This deity plays a role in your heritage?

Yes →

You probably know what you are doing.

No ↓

You have a regular practice that worships or calls upon this deity?

Yes →

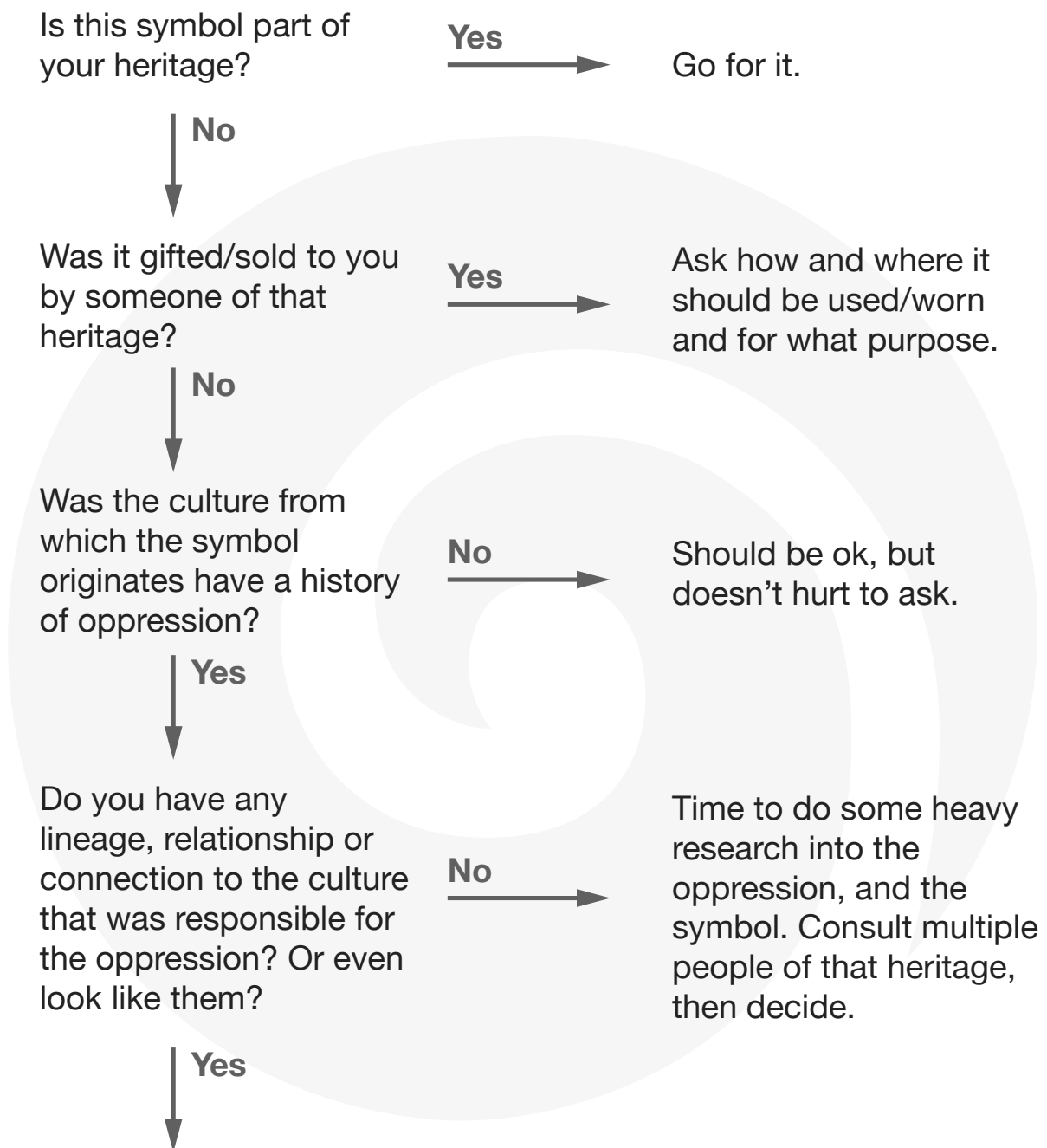
Place the deity in a respectable and high position so others can pay respect in the same way that you do. Usually in a calm area with space.

No ↓

Best not to use/wear a representation of that deity. Remember that **deities are not decorations**. If you have Christian ancestry, a good test is to imagine replacing that deity with an image of Jesus. Would it feel strange? If so, it's probably an inappropriate place to show that deity.

# Sacred Symbols

Examples: Koru, Tiki, Matau, Hamsa, Aum, Yin Yang, Cross, Yantras



Study the oppression. Seek out and attend workshops run by the oppressed culture. At these workshops question your use of the symbol. Get multiple opinions. Study historic suppression of the symbol. If you have gone this far, the symbol clearly means a lot to you.

# Modern Medicine

Do you like to talk about the harms of modern medicine?

Yes

Are you a pharmacologist, trained clinician, or biomedical researcher?

Yes

We love hearing your views as it educates us about the complexities of public health, and the issues it faces.

No

No, but I've researched online

When one conducts a PhD they slow their mind and spend four years thinking of one problem. This enables them to navigate a complex information ecosystem. Without such training, you risk falling into fast thought, which can be a vehicle for disinformation.

Have you experienced the 'harms' of modern medicine on yourself?

Yes

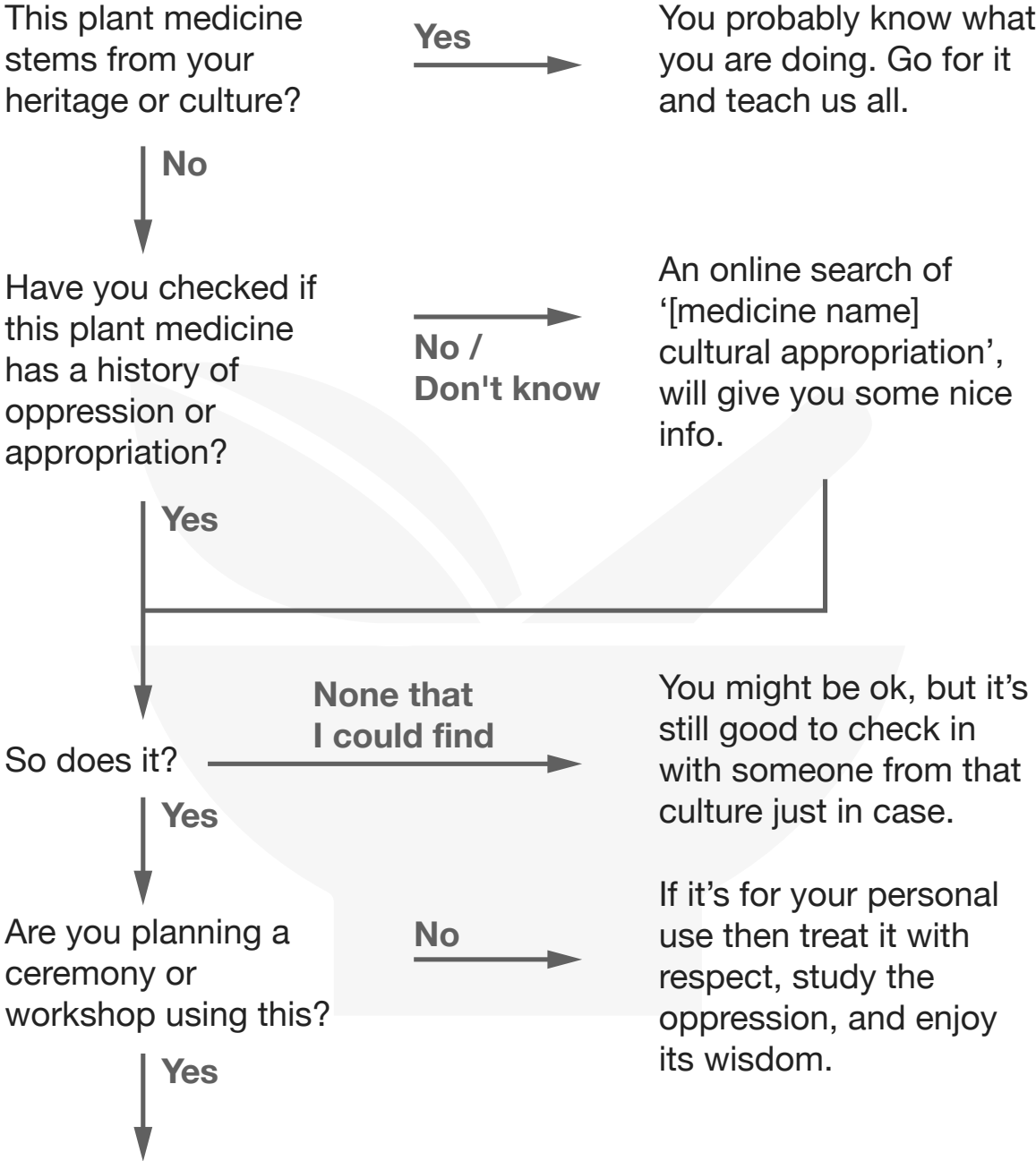
Modern medicine has its limitations, such as its symptom-orientated approach which sometimes misses the individual as a whole. Integrative medicine is a new field trying to bridge this gap.

No

The 'wellness' sector has a bad reputation for only including the well. People with chronic conditions have expressed guilt in 'wellness circles' as they felt responsible for their condition. If the information we have on a certain topic is limited (due to lack of direct experience or superficial studying) we may make false conclusions as our perception lacks the reality of the bigger picture, and we risk de-legitimising the actions of people whose livelihoods depend on modern medicine.

# Plant Medicine

Examples: ayurvedic tonics, cacao, kawakawa, sage



# Cacao

Did you know that more than 2 million children<sup>1</sup> were engaged in dangerous labour in the harvesting of cacao beans? Slave labour still exists to this day.



Exploitation of indigenous populations was not just during colonial times. The USA backed Guatemalan civil war, resulted in the Maya Genocide<sup>2</sup>. The war only ended in 1996. Up to 166,000 Mayans died/disappeared. The majority of Mayans still live in poverty.



**Ok, that's intense. So what about my chocolate**

Is your cacao slave-free, sustainably and ethically sourced, and supporting subjugated communities?

**Yes** →

Are you hosting a cacao ceremony?

**No** ↓      **Yes** ↓

Enjoy your cacao

↑ **Yes**

Have you been trained and connected to the cacao and its source, community and origin?

**No**

**No** ↓      **Don't know** ↓

You are likely contributing to the problem by supporting organisations that continue human exploitation. Most commercial chocolate brands are guilty of this<sup>3</sup>.



While cacao is traditionally used as part of greater ceremonies, the modern 'Cacao Ceremony' is likely a western concept. Without an understanding of the origins, you risk rewriting a culture that is still recovering.

# Touch

---

You have an existing relationship with this person and touch was previously consented?

**Yes** →

Is this person in an altered state of consciousness? This can occur through yoga (meditation, pranayama, asana), through consumption of substances, or even an unexpected incident.

**No**

**Yes**

**No**

Ask: "would you like a hug / to be touched?"

**They said "yes"**

**They said "no"**

Give them a warm loving hug.

Send them a smile as you appreciate their honesty. Sometimes this can be hard as it feels like a 'rejection'. Some people don't like touch or have been traumatised by it. Good on you for asking, and keep it up as many of us would love your touch. If you teach yoga and would like to use touch, consider using 'consent tokens<sup>4</sup>'.

# Yoga Social Media

---

Do you use social media to promote or display yoga?

No

Teach us how you do this without social media!

Yes

Are you aware that the 'free' service you use is feeding an algorithm that mines your follower's subconscious to understand addictive patterns, and then uses these patterns to direct targeted advertising? Or as Jaron Lanier words it "sell the ability to create gradual, slight, imperceptible change in behaviour and perception"<sup>5</sup> to the highest bidder.

Yes, but this is how I reach out to my community.

No

The Center for Humane Technology is a good place to start.

Have you also considered community noticeboards, local library, a website that doesn't have trackers, speaking at local events, email newsletters?

Yes

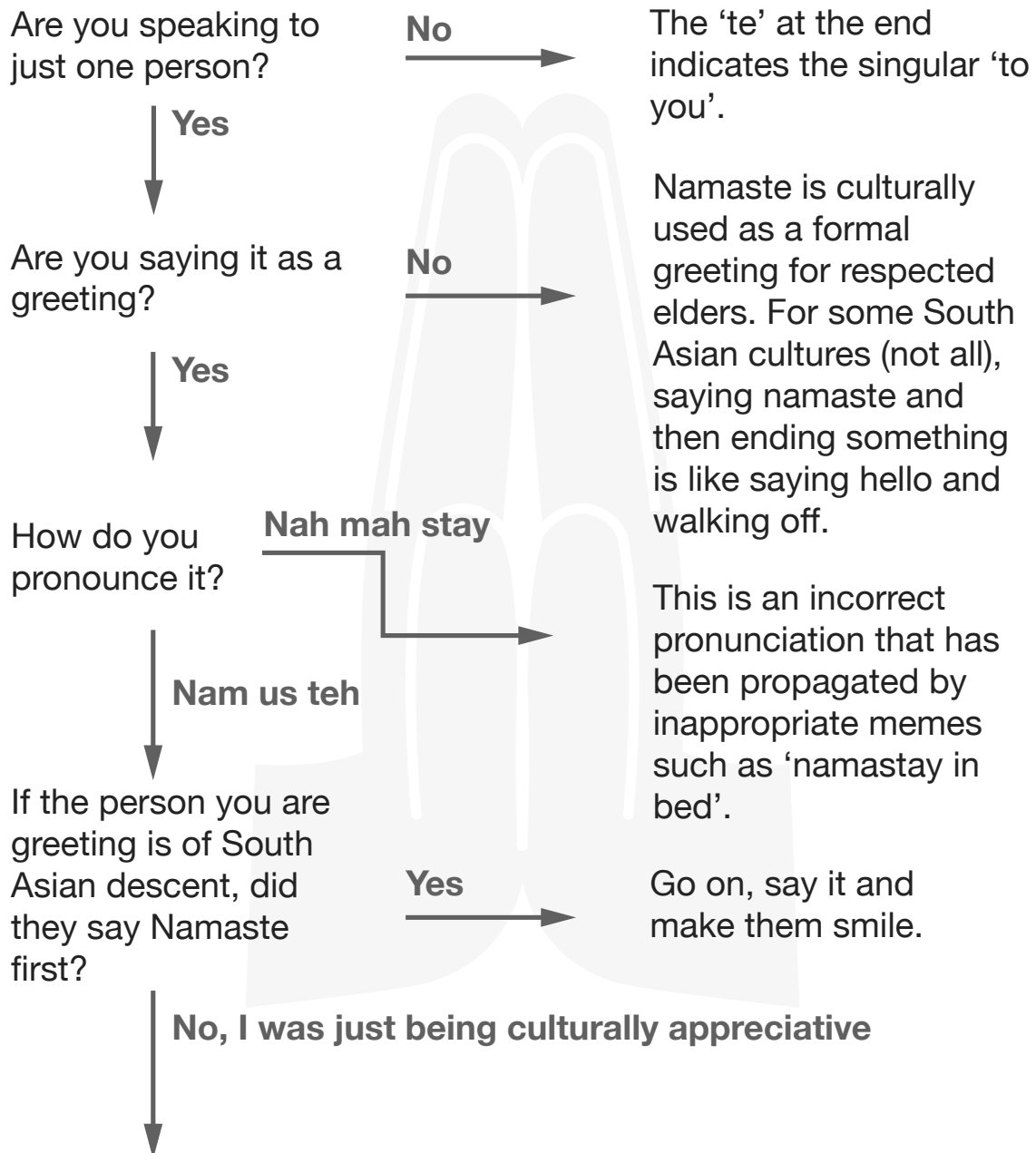
I need the dopamine kick from people liking my posts

Artificial intelligence can manipulate time, money, and attention. The average human spends 3 hours 15 minutes<sup>6</sup> in front of their smart-phone. Online interactions can be hijacked by complex psychological design techniques such as the ludic-loop<sup>7</sup>, to fund a multi billion dollar attention economy. The practice of yoga aims to bring a greater understanding of our consciousness by dissolving samskaras (psychological imprints), not by allowing artificial intelligence to plant them for profit.



# Namaste

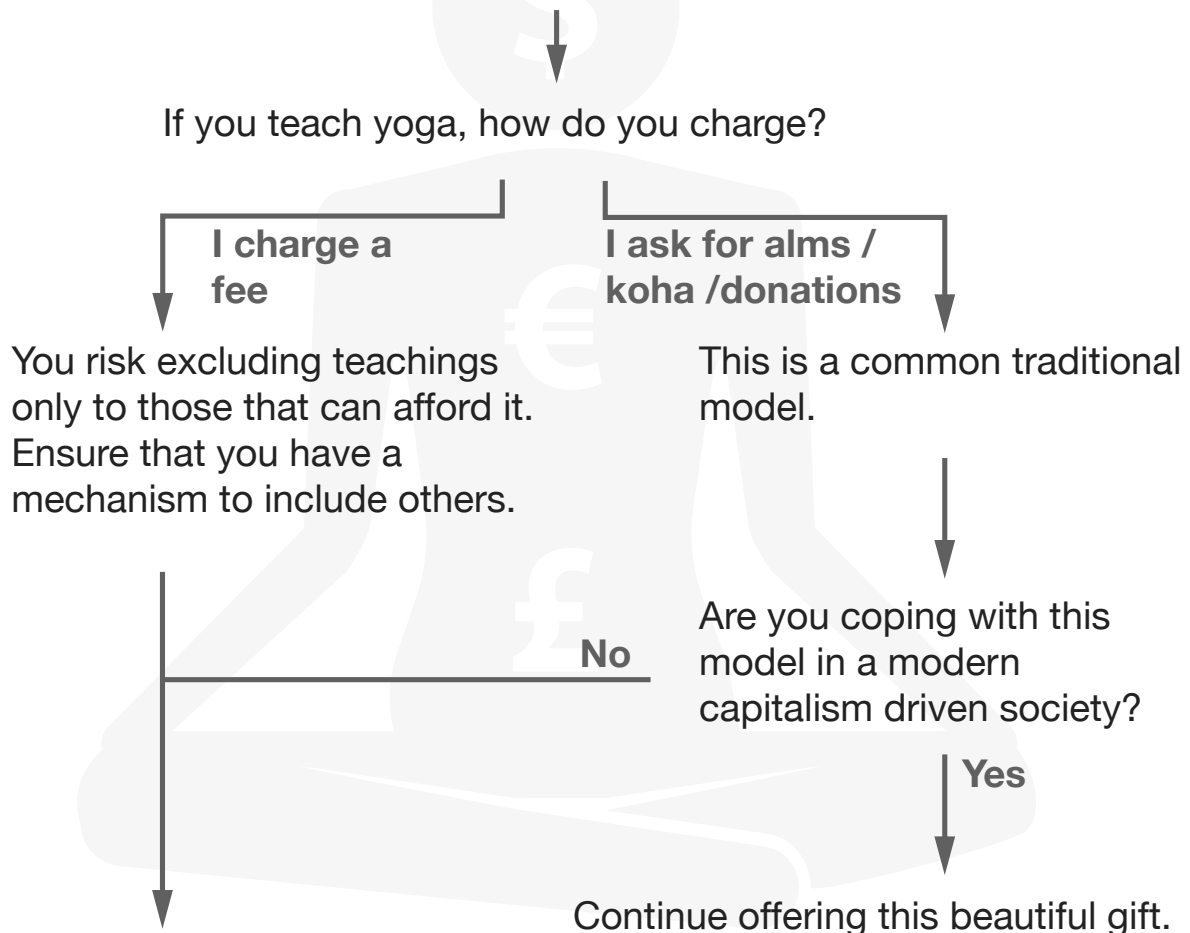
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The Indian subcontinent is a complex linguistic space of over 100 languages. For example, the equivalent of namaste in Bengal – nomoskar, Urdu – assalam ‘alaykum, Assamese – nômôskar, Tamil – vanakkam, Punjabi – sastriakal, Rajasthan – kbambha ghani, Karnataka – namaskara, Sinhala – ayubowan. Assuming that the person you are talking to speaks Hindi compresses a complex culture into the colonial mindset of a single entity.

# Yoga Capitalism

Did you know that yoga has transformed from a gift that is passed down generations to an \$85 billion industry<sup>8</sup>? This is larger than New Zealand's national budget.



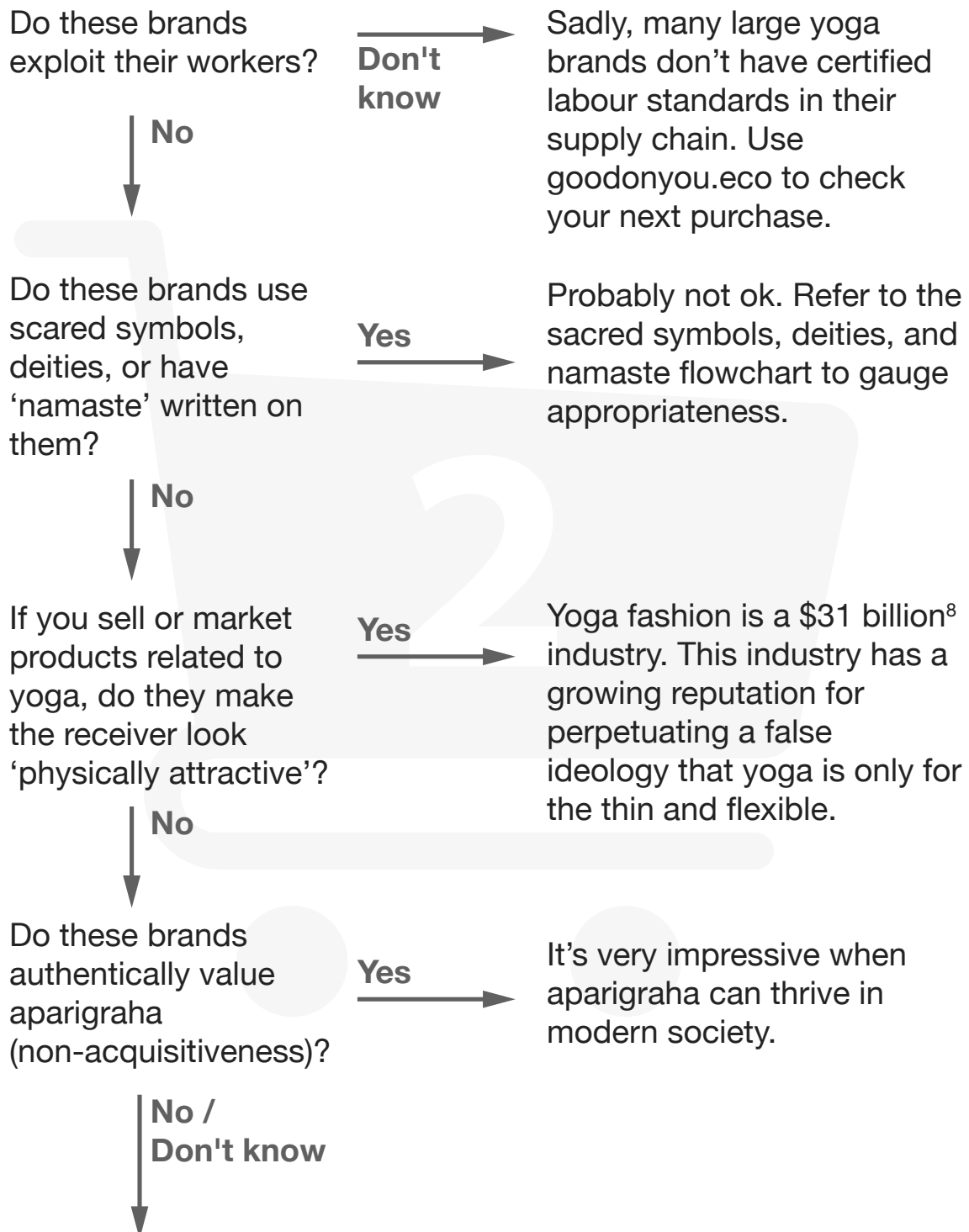
Charging for yoga is not a problem, it would be like taking spring water, a gift from nature and selling it as a commodity. You are providing a service to the dehydrated, which is great. But your goal is to guide people to the spring itself. Capitalism has a messy history of blocking the spring to maintain commodity value. This has begun in some yoga studios that offer a means to 'relieve stress' so we can function better as producers in a consumerist society.

*"Crafty men try various deceits, declaring 'we are yogis', they are fools intent on nothing but their own satisfaction"*

Dattātreya yogaśāstra (49) 1300CE.

# Yoga Fashion / Branding

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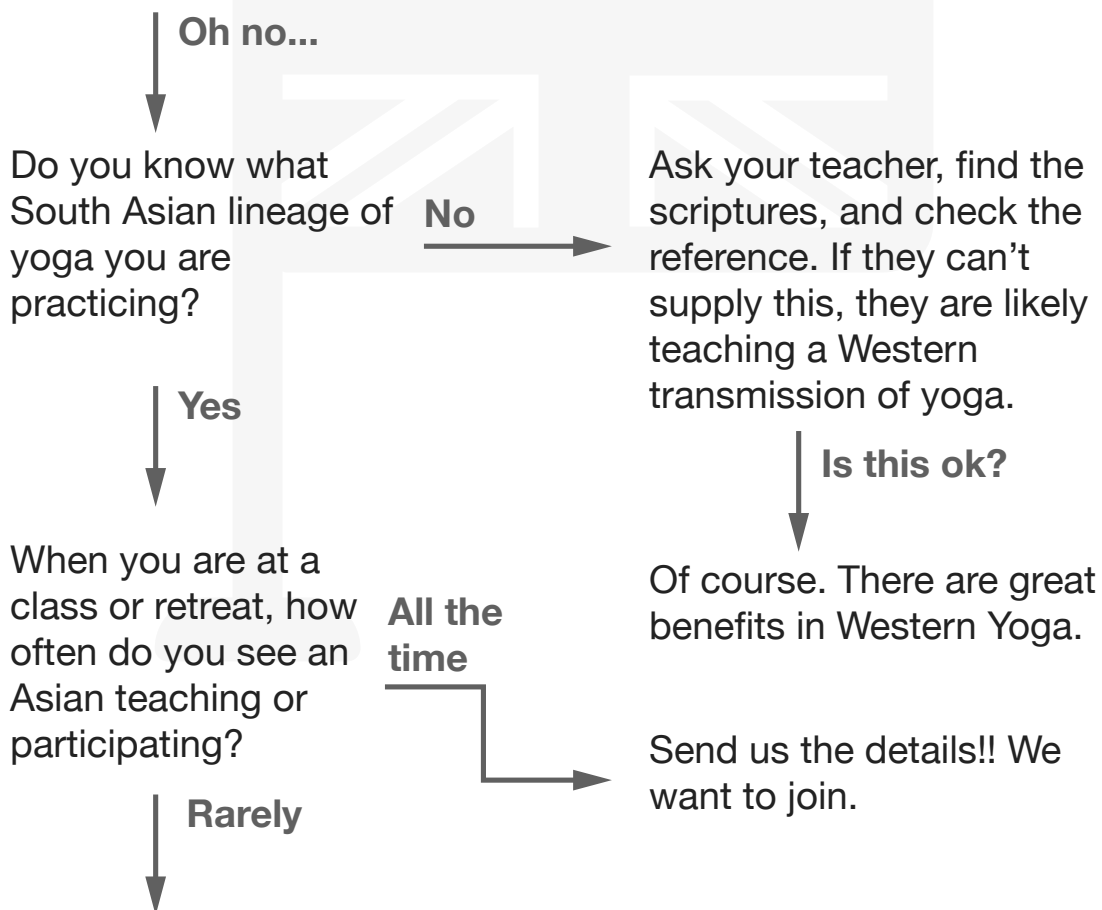
*"Aparigraha is not taking for oneself the objects of the senses, because one sees the faults of acquiring, protecting, losing, being attached to or harming them" Pātañjalayogaśāstra (2.30) 800CE.*

# Yoga Colonisation

---

Yoga, ayurveda, angampora, and many other cultural elements of South Asia were made illegal during colonisation. Even the word 'Hinduism' was a construct that emerged in the 1830s as a means of resisting colonial rule<sup>9</sup>.

While South Asian practices are slowly emerging from the underground, there is a risk that they are being rewritten without cultural understanding. See *Tantra flowchart* for an example.



Like most colonised cultures, this is sadly the norm. Thousands of years of wisdom take time to recover. Fortunately the wisdom was stored in scripture. It is recovering, and we will know that things are right when those of Asian descent are also teaching their rightful lineage.

# Decolonising Yoga

---

Decolonising yoga, or any spiritual practice, is a complex process of removing veils created by historical empires that appropriated spirituality for means of greed or power. We can begin by asking questions such as:

Why do I practice this?

Who created this practice?

Why did they create this practice?

What cultural norms influenced them to make this practice?

For example, these questions may lead to explorations such as:

Why did ancient cultures build lavish temples for Buddha, when his teachings taught against it?

Why did ancient cultures build cathedrals full of treasures when Jesus specifically said "sell your possessions and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven"?

Why do South Asians pray for blessings that favour themselves over others in exchange for flowers, incense, and rice?

What has caused sexual abuse to exist in some modern Yoga schools, even though Brahmacharya (sexual self-conduct) is a foundational rule (yama) of Yoga?



**This is not a flowchart, it's a monologue**

It's a flowchart now



No civilisation that we know of, was pure and untainted. Decolonising one empire often leaves us with another. This journey of decolonising forces us to unpack complex societal layers, for which there are no flowcharts.

# Tantra

---

When you hear 'tantra' do you think of the thousand-year-long practice that stemmed from Buddhist philosophy, brought non-dualism and set the foundations for Hatha yoga, modern Buddhism and Hinduism(s)?

**No. I think of the practices of intimacy and connection**

**Yes**  
Yay

You might be thinking of Western 'neo-tantra'<sup>10</sup>. A byproduct of colonisation, where classical tantra was ripped from its roots and heavily culturally appropriated.

**But I love and cherish these 'neo-tantric' practices**

**I'm feeling defensive**

Yes, they are beautiful. So just call it for what they are: 'Mindful intimacy', 'Sacred Sensuality'. You are no longer living in the Western 1900s when sexual expression was suppressed. You no longer need the guise of 'tantra' to hide your desires.

Western neo-tantra has a 100-year history, so this can be understood. However being humble, and having the flexibility to relinquish your position is also a practice of yoga.

The translations of ancient tantric works such as the Pratyabhijñā-hrdaya, or the Tantrāloka is enabling a reinvigoration of this ancient tradition. Decolonising tantra still has a long journey to revival. And you can support it by practising its Asian history, as opposed to its modern Western version.

# Yoga Diaspora

---

Did you know that there were Middle Eastern lineages of yoga?

↓ **What?**

↓ **Of course**

Yoga's inclusivity allows it to easily merge with other cultures. In the Middle East it merged with Islam. The Bahr al-Hayat written in 1600 is likely the first illustrated textbook of yoga<sup>11</sup>.

↓ **Cool, so where are you going with this?**

In the Western world, yoga has merged with therapy, fitness, corporate resilience, Western philosophy, capitalism, harmonic gymnastics, and shamanism amongst others.

↓ **Is this an issue?**

Provided that the base culture is recognised, as the Arabic and Persian lineages did, it is fine. When it is used as a profit-making machine, it is not.

↓ **Are there benefits?**

Yes. The uptake of yoga in the West has created new knowledge of mental health, therapy, and even novel spiritual practices that may even stand the test of time.

Spiritual practices are often taught locally in the community, in the local language, in exchange for alms. The Western transmission of yoga however can be taught with high fees, thus resulting in the propagation of this business throughout South Asia for foreigners. This causes a conundrum where people travel to South Asia, learn the western transmission, and then return home thinking they have learnt traditional yoga.

# Women in Yoga

Including those that identify as women

Should women practice yoga?

No

Unfortunately this was the common view for numerous yoga lineages. Hatha yoga in particular tends to shun the presence of women.

Yes

Of course. The rise of female presence in yoga sets the stage for a new chapter in its history.

Can I still practice Hatha?

But weren't there female practitioners beforehand?

Yes, modern Hatha Yoga has diverted (for the good) far from its misogynistic past.

Yes, the Krama lineage of tantra for example was led by female gurus.

Gender equality in Yoga has fluctuated through the ages. Ancient texts, such as the Mahavamsa speak of female Buddhist lineages, while Trika, Kaula, and Krama sects of tantra initiated women as full practitioners. Abrahamic ideology from the west, combined with the rise of hegemonic masculinity lead to the slow decline and extinction of many of these lineages. The modern revival of yoga driven through female leadership and full spectrum gender inclusivity sets a bright future for this ancient practice.



# Chakras

---

How many chakras are there? **Seven** → This is largely based on work by Anodea Judith from the USA, who wrote the book 'Wheels of Life'.

↓ **There is not just one model**

There are numerous chakra systems of varying numbers, including seven. Some systems even have chakras outside the body. The number generally depends on the type of practice. For example, an elemental chakra practice will only have five chakras as there are five elements.

↓

Are chakras a seat of emotion? For example, is fear stored in the root chakra? **Yes** → The combination of chakras with psychological states was invented by Carl Jung in the late 1900s. This includes the colours associated with the chakras.

↓ **No**

Chakras are not descriptive. For example, saying that the “root chakra holds fear, has the earth element, and is red” is a modern Euro-American construct.

↓ **So how do I practice chakras?**

There are many great ideas from Jungian psychology. You are welcome to practice them, just don't call it a chakra. Find another word, such as an 'energetic centre'. Otherwise you risk overwriting centuries-old traditions with modern western constructs.

# Presence

---

Does being present mean avoiding past and future thought?

**No**

Correct. It is being attentive to the whole of your experience, which the past and future are part of.

**Yes**

Almost, but not quite right. This is an over-simplified concept of presence that has been propagated through modern self-help books. It has turned into a form of spiritual bypassing.

**How is it 'almost'?**

Dwelling on the past or future, and getting lost in mental images is a cause of suffering.

**How is it a 'bypass'?**

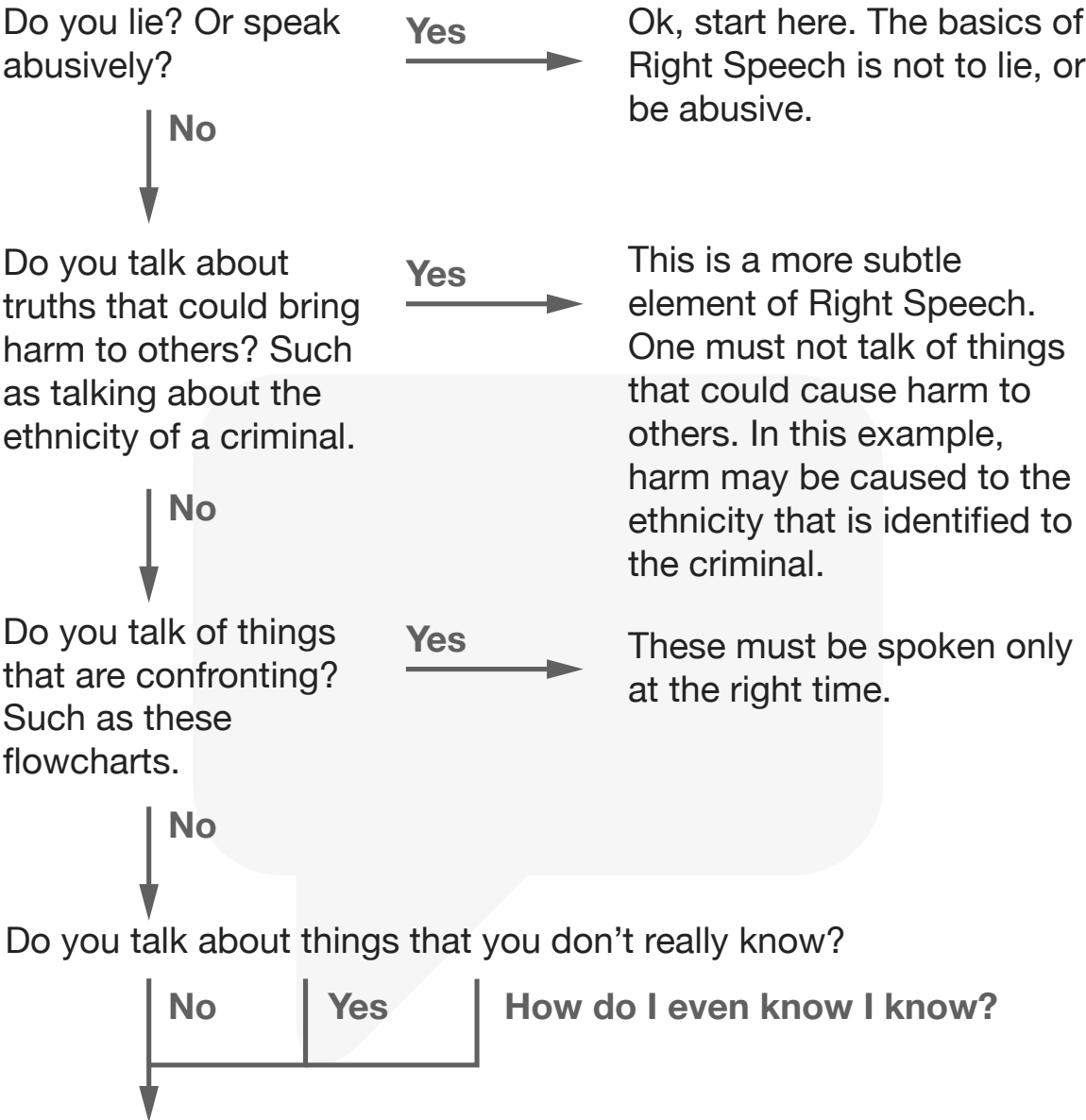
Your past experiences shape your present through samskaras (psychological imprints). It is a bypass as one is using the concept of 'presence' to avoid facing unresolved issues. One may also think of the future to be a good ancestor.

**What if I want to 'manifest' my future?**

'Manifesting a future' by thinking about it is not attributed to South Asian philosophy. In fact it's a primary cause of suffering, through the second noble truth of Buddhism. One should rather relax personal will directed towards an imagined future.

When listening to music, it is the past experience of the previous sounds, combined with the anticipation of what is coming next that makes the present sound so beautiful. One may also treat life in similar stead.

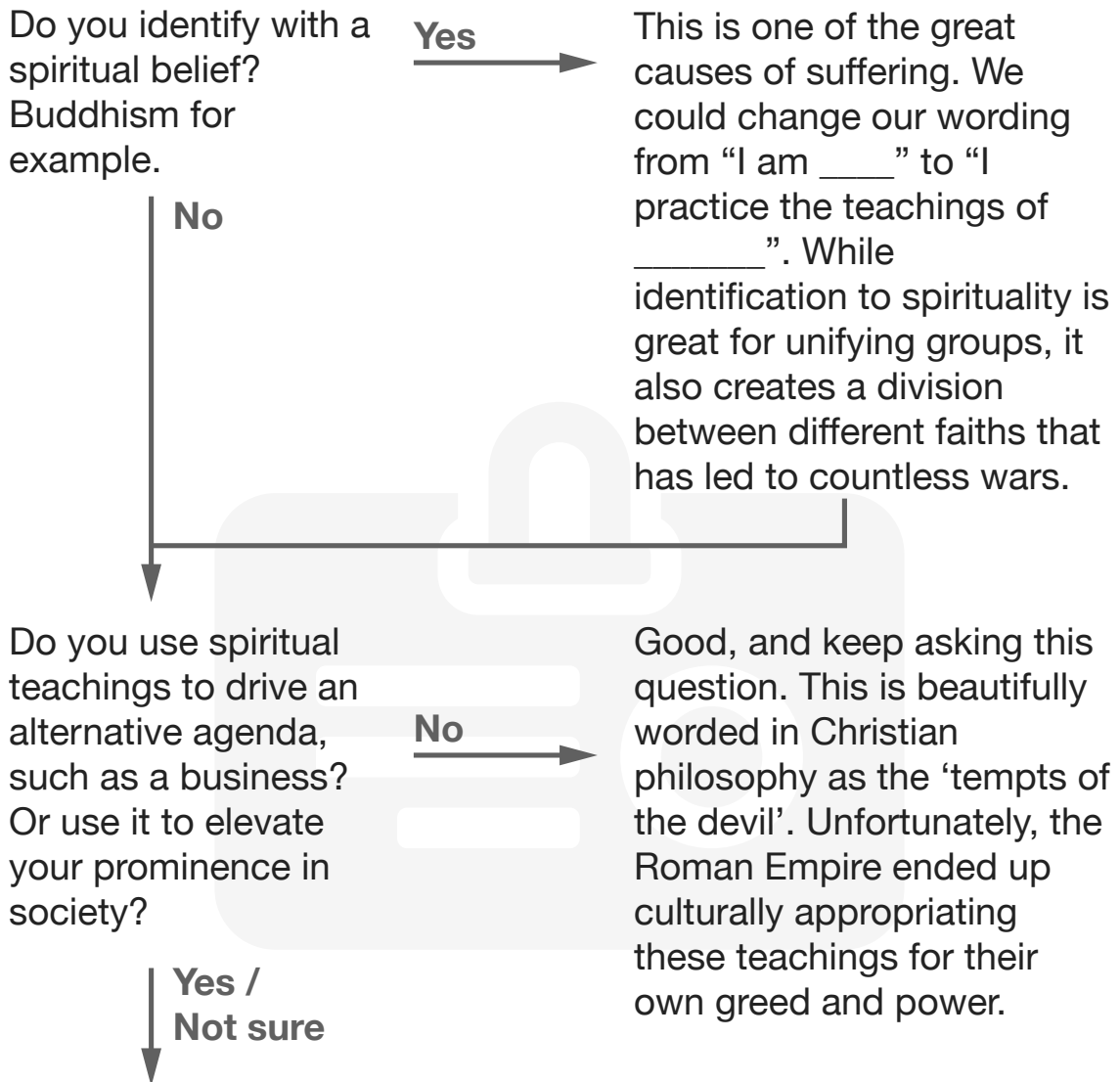
# Right Speech (Samma vaca)



Welcome to the great philosophical drama. One must contemplate on their speech before, after, and during. A modern scientist is a master of Samma Vaca, or Satya Yoga. They first slow their mind, spend months reviewing literature, formulate a hypothesis and null-hypothesis to eliminate emotional bias, and then conduct their study which may take many years. Finally they publish as a theory, not fact, thus opening themselves for critique. This flowchart you read is also open for critique, and may evolve as our collective knowledge grows.

# Spiritual Ego

---



Be very careful. While you may be ‘authentic’ in your ways, you do not know how your teachings will be interpreted in seven generations from now. Even the words of the Buddha have been corrupted by power and greed. ‘Buddhist Extremists’ burning down Mosques in the name of Buddhism starts with false identification, such as the ‘Sinhala Buddhist Identity’. This opens the identity to manipulation for power, and can lead to tragic crimes, see *Influence on Politics flow chart*. In the same way, merging spirituality with business opens the gates of greed, not necessarily by you, but your followers. See the *Capitalism flow chart* for more information.

# Identity and Discrimination

If our socio-cultural identity is just an artificial construct, can we use the practice of yoga to dissolve these constructs and live in a society of equality?



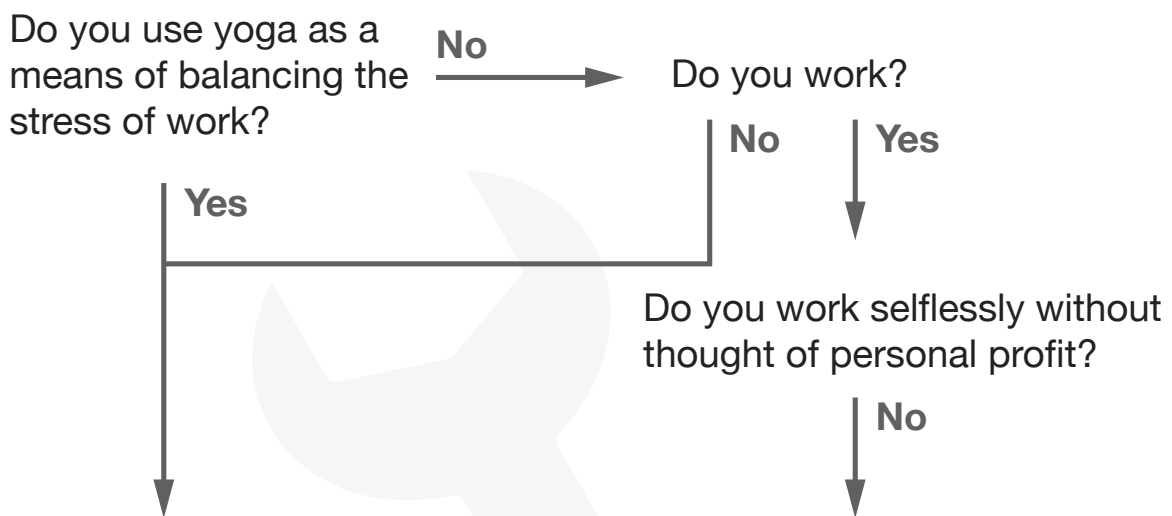
Practically this is a correct answer. Dissolving hundreds of years of discrimination is complex, and there is a high risk that the oppressing socio-cultural group uses this as a spiritual bypass to maintain the status quo. See the *Presence flowchart* for more info on spiritual bypassing.

Philosophically this is also correct, but it's a long journey. We can start by changing our language from "I suffer because I am \_\_\_\_\_" to "I suffer because society judges me as \_\_\_\_\_ first, and human second".

Phrases such as "We are all equal", and "I don't see colour" are known in Buddhism as Near Enemies. It is almost the reality that we are all humans navigating a shared universe. But it's slightly off as we have had a history of seeing each other as unequal, and therefore are marked by socio-cultural traumas that exist to this day. Acknowledging that our society is unequal, is the first step towards an equitable society.

# Work

---



One of the earliest recorded yoga practices was Karma Yoga (300BCE). In this context, the work itself is the spiritual practice of yoga. To achieve it one must pursue their role in life (dharma), act for the benefit of others over oneself, and without attachment to the fruits of one's labour. Violating these laws can lead to suffering.

This is much better described in it's original text

*"I declared two paths for the pure heart: Jñāna yoga, the contemplative path of spiritual wisdom, and karma yoga, the active path of selfless service.*

...

*Those who abstain from action while allowing the mind to dwell on sensual pleasure cannot be called sincere spiritual aspirants. But they excel, those who control their senses through the mind, using them for selfless service. Fulfil all your duties, action is better than inaction, even to maintain your body... Selfish action imprisons the world. Act selflessly, without any thought of personal profit... Those who violate these laws, criticising and complaining are utterly deluded and the cause of their own suffering."*

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 3 (Karma Yoga) 300CE.

# Trauma

---

If you teach yoga:

Do you teach specific populations with a history of trauma as an adjunct treatment to therapy?

Yes

Ensure that you strictly adhere to Trauma Sensitive Yoga principles and are trained appropriately.

No

Do you like to tell your students that they are in a 'safe space'?

Yes

This can be triggering as it is not your decision to tell what others should feel. Try instead to just make the space as safe as possible, such as providing a safe exit if required.

No

Are you sure that people in your class do not have a history of trauma?

Yes

How can you really be sure?

No

We never really know who is in our class, and what histories they bring. While yoga has many benefits to the majority, we must also think of the minority that may be triggered by a yoga practice. Make sure you offer choices, use inviting language, are mindful of touch, and have a strategy in place when students become overwhelmed. Take special care with practices that involve a sole focus on the breath.

*"Nowadays, one should never practice hatha yoga. Many diseases arise from the retention and inhalation of air my dear"*

Mahākālasamhitā 11.100c-105d, 1500CE.

# Student-Teacher Relationship

Did the teacher touch you without consent?

Yes

This is not ok. Prior agreements made during consultation, consent tokens<sup>4</sup>, or classes labelled with 'hands-on adjustments' gives power back to the student to decide what touch is most appropriate.

No

Has the teacher made an intimate advance on you?

Yes

Be very careful. The power imbalance means that authentic consent can't be given even if you say 'yes'.

No

**But I'm attracted to my teacher and we are both mature adults**

Try to meet in an environment where there is no power imbalance. Like in a different hobby/activity where the level is equal.

Is the teacher inducing fear, shame, or secrecy while performing acts of kindness?

Yes

These are common methods used to manipulate a victim's belief system based on 'Brandl Heisler Stiegel stages of undue influence'<sup>12</sup>. It is even more dangerous if the victim is isolated from others, or recovering from past trauma.

No

Sexual abuse in spiritual circles is often attributed to a sense of power a teacher has over students. By letting go of this power, a teacher can be a better vessel for the divine.



# Influence on Politics

Does a spiritual influence, such as a religion, have an influence on politics?

↓ Yes

Does it result in laws that favour one group (ethnicity, gender, culture, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status or belief system) over another?

Yes

This is an immoral manipulation of spirituality. It should cease immediately.

← ...this

↓ No

Does the spiritual influence take steps to ensure that those who disagree with the spiritual philosophy are not intimidated to participate politically and instead are given equal or elevated access to participate?

No

This is more subtle. Lack of awareness of non-inclusivity can lead to echo chamber effects and gas-lighting.

This could result in...

↓ Yes

Does the spiritual influence have a safe exit strategy? Such as when a new spiritual influence arrives.

No

Many wars have started due to this. Ensure that the spiritual influence has a safe exit strategy from politics.

Spirituality and politics have been interwoven throughout our history, resulting in both prosperity and tragedy. Separation may only be temporal. As they reintegrate, such as with politicians openly following yoga philosophy, proactive care must be taken as malicious and discriminatory power can arise to control a political agenda. Such as the 2020 influence of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Islam in Iran.

# Light Supremacy

Adapted from @ethos.deleon

Do you create a hierarchy of love and light over suffering and darkness?

No

Nice one, just don't go too far and let darkness override, otherwise we will have to do another pesky flowchart on Dark Supremacy.

Yes

This is a foundation of Light Supremacy where human elements like anger, trauma, racism, phobias and politics are deemed 'lower vibrations' where they are vilified and exiled.

but...

If we are not present with the spectrum of human emotion, we cannot authentically be of service to others and humanity as a whole. Much like White Supremacy, this will lead to a marginalisation of yoga to the privileged.

Do you proclaim to be divines, gods, goddesses, shamans or any other archetype 'above' being human?

Yes

Be careful, this can lead to a deep lack of accountability, especially for those that are racist, sexual abusers, or just simply not nice. See the *Student-Teacher Relationship flowchart*.

See *Identity and Discrimination flowchart*.

what if we are all equally divine?

Light Supremacy is an escape from the human experience, led by privilege and resulting in delusion. Denying the reality of an oppressive society removes accountability from the oppressors and abusers leading to a lack of intersectionality and diversity. This is reflected in modern yoga communities that are predominantly white, cis-gendered and heteronormative.



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Moral Flowcharts for Modern Yoga is a step into the complex space of decolonisation, cultural appropriation, capitalism, inclusivity, and safety within yoga practices. It is an evolving text that will undergo numerous iterations, initiate conversation, and postulate the future of yoga traditions. Suggestions for new flowcharts, edits, or removals can be requested at [github.com/pjayathissa/yoga](https://github.com/pjayathissa/yoga)

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