

A FIELD GUIDE FOR PRACTITIONERS & TEACHERS

PETER WALTERS YOGA  
— *Begin Again* —

# The *Begin Again* Methodology.

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What I've learned from fourteen years of teaching. Brought  
back like a scout who went ahead.

PETER WALTERS

BEGIN AGAIN PRODUCTIONS · FAIRFAX, CALIFORNIA

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*Each day we come together to practice, we start over. We let go of yesterday and also tomorrow in an effort to train ourselves to continuously re-arrive in the present moment.*

A NOTE BEFORE WE BEGIN

# Why I wrote this down.

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I've been to too many yoga experiences that felt sadly a little flat. Missing the spark of aliveness that I first felt in Rusty's class and have felt with other teachers on rare occasions since. I don't think that spark demands much of us as teachers or facilitators other than our deepest presence, our surrender, and our care. Our understanding that everybody in the room carries so much. Somebody in that room just fell in love. Someone just lost someone. Someone is having the best day of their life. And someone is just dragging themselves through the door to be there. Our quiet acknowledgment of that as facilitators -- just to ourselves, before we open our mouths -- will help us become more skilled at sharing the practice with compassion, with strength, with reverence.

I try to show up to each class like it could be my last. Like the people sharing this one-hour experience with me... this may be their last class too. Give it your all. This is not a job. This is a vocation. This is a life. This is a calling.

Throughout the years I've had some success doing this, and I wanted to share some of the recipes that I think make a great class and a great teacher. This isn't a step-by-step guide or a format to follow. It's just some things I try to keep in mind. Take what's useful. Leave the rest.

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# Inside this guide.

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SECTION ONE



# What this *is*.

Devotional flow. A practice you can recognize from the back of the room.

## WHAT THIS IS

# The version that moved through me.

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I teach vinyasa yoga in the bhakti tradition. Devotional flow. I learned it from my teacher Rusty Wells, who learned it from his teachers, and their teachers, all the way through me and into your open hands and heart.

After 1,500+ days of teaching and more than a thousand recorded classes, the patterns have become specific enough to share. I call it the Begin Again Methodology, but it's not really mine. It's what I've found to work after fourteen years of practicing and teaching, brought back like a scout who went ahead and is reporting what he saw. My sufi teacher Johnny would say it that way. I just happen to sit at the front of the room for this experience. We're all teachers and students in there.

Here's what it feels like to be inside it. You walk in and Stevie Wonder is playing. Or Cat Stevens. Or Fleetwood Mac. The room is already alive. People are talking, laughing, hugging, catching up. The energy is electric before anyone touches a mat. This is not a quiet, serene, shhhh-we're-meditating situation. It's a room full of people who are genuinely happy to be there.

Then I start talking. I don't say "let's begin." I greet you. I tell you where I am and how I'm doing. The music fades. I give you one instruction that has nothing to do with a pose: rest your eyes. Picture someone you love. Find yourself in your own company. Then I chant something. The body wakes up. The teaching arrives between the cues, not in a lecture. The flow builds toward one peak shape I've been setting up for twenty minutes without you noticing.

A group of people in a dance studio, smiling and moving in a synchronized pose. The studio has large arched windows and a brick wall. The lighting is warm and soft. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

*The whole thing is a dance, honestly. A prayer disguised as a workout disguised as a dance.*

## WHAT THIS IS (CONTINUED)

# The prayer underneath.

The whole thing is a dance, honestly. A prayer disguised as a workout disguised as a dance. Pigeon goes long enough that something softens. Savasana is mostly quiet. And the class ends the same way it always ends:

*Thank you for this day. Thank you for this practice. Thank you for these teachings.  
Thank you for the opportunity to begin again.*

## CLOSING PRAYER

I've said those words a thousand times. I'll say them a thousand more. The repetition is the point. It's been a weird and beautiful ride. What a magnificent life it is.

SECTION TWO



# What this *isn't.*

The refusals that define the method as much as the moves.

## WHAT THIS ISN'T

# Same root. Different fruit.

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This is not generic vinyasa. Most vinyasa classes pick a pose sequence and stick a quote on top. I pick a theme and the poses flow from the theme. The order of operations is opposite.

This is not CorePower. There's no "yoga sculpt with weights," no relentless cardio, no Instagram-ready body-as-product bullshit. My classes are physically demanding -- sometimes brutally so -- but the challenge is the door, not the destination. We're not here to perform difficulty. We're here to feel something real.

This is not yoga as fitness. Sweat is a side effect, not the goal.

This is not yoga as therapy. I'm not in the room to fix anyone. I'm in the room because the practice is what I'm currently doing, and inviting people to do it with me is the only honest way I know how to teach it.

This is not religion. Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Rumi, Ram Dass, your grandmother, the divine, the universe, your truest self... all welcome at the same altar. The bhakti vocabulary is non-dogmatic. Always.

This is not a brand-first product. The brand grew out of the practice. The practice did not grow out of the brand. And if you ever catch me selling you a \$200 crystal water bottle, you have my permission to throw it at me.

SECTION THREE



# Where it *comes from.*

The lineage, the inheritance, and what I've made my own.

## THE ROOTS

# Where it came from.

I feel fortunate to be able to share practices that have been passed along from my teachers and their teachers and their teachers, all the way through me and into your open hands and heart.

## SOURCE

## WHAT IT CONTRIBUTES

Rusty Wells / Bhakti Flow	The chassis. Devotional vinyasa as a real category. <i>Still body, clear mind, open heart.</i> The 9th Limb prayer that became Begin Again.
Ashtanga (through Rusty)	Sun A and Sun B as the structural backbone. Vinyasa as breath-bound movement.
Iyengar	Cueing precision. Naming knuckles, inner heels, the V between your fingers.
Krishna Das, Govind Das, Ram Dass	The kirtan voice, the Hanuman through-line. <i>Love everyone, serve everyone. Sub ek.</i> It's all one.
Buddhist meditation	The literal phrase <i>begin again</i> as an instruction. When you notice you've drifted, you come back.
Philosophy, stoicism, motorcycle accident	Death consciousness. Mortality as fuel, not morbidity. <i>Holy shit, we're alive.</i>
Tulsidas / Hanuman Chalisa	Forty verses of devotion designed for ordinary people. The 18-inch leap from head to heart.

CARRIED, DIVERGED, MINE

# The inheritance, the break, the addition.

## WHAT I'VE KEPT FROM THE LINEAGE

The heart-first orientation, kirtan as integral, the non-sectarian frame, accessibility as principle, character over flexibility, the willingness to revise rather than perform authority.

## WHAT I'VE LET GO OF

The need to compare myself to others. Big yoga brand sponsorships and the need to be someone special. The token yoga-teacher voice and vocabulary. I honor the Hindu tradition at its roots and use the Sanskrit when it's applicable, but I'm not performing someone else's culture. I show up as I am. Human. Messy. Whatever I've got that day.

Even "begin again" is not mine. It's a traditional Buddhist meditation instruction. I didn't invent the phrase. I just kept saying it until it became the spine of everything I do.

## LIFE AS TEACHER

From a full life: love, loss, abundance, intoxication, psychedelics, addiction, craving, aversion, longing, lust, temperance. The yamas and niyamas weren't things I studied first and then applied. I lived them in reverse -- broke most of the rules, felt the consequences, and then found the texts that explained what had happened. Life was the teacher. The books were the confirmation.

*Same root. Different fruit.*

ON THE LINEAGE

SECTION FOUR

# IV

## The eight things I'm always *doing*.

Not pillars, exactly. More like the stuff I'm always reaching for in the room. The moves that make a class mine regardless of what shape we're in.

ONE

01

**Begin again.**

THE NAMESAKE · THE BRAND OF THE CLASS

The namesake. Every class ends with some version of "begin again." Sometimes it's one phrase. Sometimes it's a paragraph. Sometimes it's the full metta prayer. The repetition is the point.

Students who've been with me for years hear it the way you'd hear a prayer you grew up with. It's the moment the class becomes mine, no matter what happened in the previous fifty-five minutes.

There are three layers in those two words and I never pick one. The micro: you drifted, come back to the breath. The personal: you fell off, you're forgiven, start again here. The macro: this thing died, and that's the practice, and the next thing begins. I say the words and let the room hear whichever layer they need.

*Thank you, thank you, thank you for this day, for this breath, for this heartbeat, for the opportunity to begin again.*

CLOSING PRAYER

However many times we fall, stumble, lose, fail, mess-up, forget, snap, or say or do all the wrong things... may we have the courage and presence to get back up and begin again.

*Come, come, whoever you are. Ours is not a caravan of despair. Although you've broken your vow ten thousand times, come again, come again, come again.*

RUMI · 13TH CENTURY

Rumi said it eight hundred years ago. That's begin again. That's the whole thing.

TWO

# 02

## The 3-Second Gap.

THE SMALLEST UNIT OF THE METHODOLOGY

The smallest unit of the whole thing. That micro-moment between stimulus and response where freedom lives. Three seconds, sometimes less.

In class it sounds like: notice before you react. Take one more breath before you move. Pause between the cue and the doing.


This is basically the Buddhist noting practice in my language. Begin Again is the macro philosophy. The 3-Second Gap is the rep. Every transition in a flow is an invitation into the gap, whether I name it or not.

THREE

# 03

**Devotion as  
the engine.**

BHAKTI · THE ORIENTATION OF THE HEART



*I picture someone I love, someone I love to represent this divine. This quality of freedom, of truth, of absolute wholeness and grace. And I dedicate my practice to that one.*

## DEVOTION

# Joy. Awe. Gratitude so big it makes you want to cry and laugh at the same time.

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Bhakti. The orientation of the heart toward something larger than yourself. Not religion. Not earnestness. Not effort masquerading as virtue. Joy. Awe. Gratitude so big it makes you want to cry and laugh at the same time. That's bhakti. That's the engine.

Here's how it works in a class. The physical work creates heat and challenge. The challenge surfaces resistance and fear. The devotional container (the mantra, the music, the dedication, my voice) gives the room somewhere to put the fear down. And what remains is closer to love. Closer to celebration. My teacher Rusty puts it perfectly: substitute unconditional love for fear.

What does this actually look like? I almost always ask the room to dedicate the practice to a specific person. Not "the divine in the abstract." A name. A face. Someone you can picture.

The dedication is the engine that makes a hard pose meaningful instead of grueling. If you are feeling a little lost... do this for someone else. You find courage, you find strength, you find fortitude for another. My dirty little secret is that I teach yoga for me. The dedication keeps me honest about that. The practice goes outward or it's just exercise.

FOUR

# 04

**Surrender,  
not collapse.**

THE OPPOSITE OF GIVING UP

The opposite of giving up. The relief of stopping the fight. The willingness to let the pose hold you instead of you holding the pose. The moment you stop performing pigeon and land in it.

I teach surrender most directly in the floor sequence... pigeon, sphinx, half-split, lizard. Long holds. Less talk. Music drops. The body has been worked enough that the defenses are down. This is where the deepest teaching lands, because the body is too open to defend itself.

*Surrender to everything. For the whole life. To my wants, to my likes, my dislikes, to all of my opinions, I throw them into the fire, toss them away.*

SPHINX POSE · 2020

Letting go may just be the most direct, however difficult, path towards freedom. And letting go is hard. To release things, people, ideologies, the past, or an unrealized future is painful and every ounce of our being resists. We crave solidity and permanence. But of course, the nature of things is to change. Everything we know is impermanent. Thank god we have the yoga practices to act as a toolkit and context to investigate this... to practice letting go in real time, moment to moment.

FIVE

05

Presence.

BEING HERE WITHOUT NEEDING TO BE ELSEWHERE

Being here without needing to be anywhere else. Stripped of philosophy and tradition, this is what I'm pointing at. The breath is the vehicle. The body is the doorway. The class is a structured opportunity to stop, notice, and land.

This is what I am primarily after in my personal practice and dance with yoga. Here and Now is where life happens, yet most of our lives we're either ruminating on the past or planning for the future. It's tough to be right here and now. Yoga acts as a metaphorical and literal pause from the busyness of our daily lives and perpetually occupied minds. It gives us the spaciousness to be in the present moment, finally.

The healing, stretching, and strengthening qualities of the practice are just byproducts of showing up, and not the goal or end. So the invitation is to practice presence, as much as you're able... whether you're chopping vegetables, walking down the street, watching a movie, taking a bite of food. Bring complete attention to that. Be in the breath, in the moment, totally immersed in whatever you're up to, as much as possible.

*I am loving awareness.*

RAM DASS

I come back to it all the time. What if we live from that space? Instead of I am Peter, I am a yoga teacher, I am this or that... what if just, I am loving awareness? That's presence at its simplest.

SIX

# 06

**Practice as  
relational, not solo.**

THE ROOM IS A SANGHA, NOT AN AUDIENCE

**This is not a self-improvement project. It's relational. The dedication goes outward. The metta prayer names the room. The chant is for someone.**

Even on Zoom, I call students by name across classes. "Maria." "Julia." "Matt." I reference their lives. The room is not an audience. It's a sangha.

We use our time on the mat to send any goodness, any wisdom, any gratitude that we may feel or receive from being in the practice and doing this good work to someone else. Or to maybe even to all beings. Loka Samasta Sukino Bhavantu.

This is why the methodology scales the way it does to retreats. The container is built for relationship. Twelve to eighteen people. Long dinners. Off-site adventures. Another magical day on planet earth with beautiful humans. And dogs. The retreat is not a longer class. It's the same practice, given a longer container, where the relational pillar gets to fully express. Retreats are just pure, raw magic. If people would sign up, I'd lead them every single month.

SEVEN

07

**Teaching from  
inside, not above.**

TEACHING THE QUESTION, NOT THE ANSWER

## Most yoga teachers teach from the position of having figured it out. I teach from the position of currently working on it.

I say "I" a lot. I name what I'm going through. I admit when my practice has been off. I read the news into my teaching. I tell the room when I'm tired.

The vulnerability is calibrated. I'm not trauma-dumping. The disclosure serves the room, not me. But the calibration is tight enough that students feel like they're practicing with a person, not a brand. I complicate my life. A lot. And I'll tell you about it while you're in warrior two.

The rule underneath: never teach from a position you haven't actually lived. If you haven't let go of the thing you're asking the room to let go of, don't ask. Find a different cue. Wait until next class.

*Your instructor needs to be skillfully present. They need to embody these qualities as much as they tell you to be with them. Are they open and present with you, their eyes bright and illuminated? Or are they clearly in the midst of their own drama and somehow throwing it on you accidentally?*

INGREDIENTS OF A GREAT YOGA CLASS · 2026

This is the teacher that I aspire to be. Because anything less is doing yourself and those that you're blessed to serve a disservice.

EIGHT

08

Humor and  
irreverence.

FUNNY IS NOT BYPASS

**I'm a rascal. I know that about myself. "Bingo." "Holy guacamole." "I see some twerking back there." "That was disgusting, do it again."**

When the class gets too serious about itself -- and yoga classes love to get too serious about themselves -- I interrupt with the texture of actual life. When a hard pose is coming, I defuse the room's anxiety with a one-liner. When someone farts in a twist, I acknowledge it. When something is real, I name it. Sometimes the naming involves a swear word. Sorry not sorry.

The irreverence does three jobs: it punctures spiritual performance (which is just another form of spiritual materialism, and I have no patience for that), it lowers the stakes of difficulty, and it tells the truth about me. If the room can laugh, the room can also cry. Humor is not bypass. It's the ground that makes the depth safe. A room that's too reverent is a room that's performing. A room that's laughing and sweating and occasionally saying "what the fuck" under their breath? That room is alive.

## SECTION FIVE

# V

## How I build *a class.*

Six phases. The boundaries between them are felt, not announced. Default container is 60 minutes on Zoom, 75-90 minutes in a studio.

## THE SHAPE OF THE HOUR

# Six phases, felt not announced.

I should be honest: I don't plan my classes. No dharma talk prepared, no mantra chosen, no sequence written down. I freestyle everything. I walk in, I read the room, I feel what's there, and I go. Part of what makes the yoga experience special is honoring present-moment awareness -- who is actually in this room and what does the energy actually feel like right now.

That said, there is a shape that emerges almost every time. Six phases. The boundaries between them are felt, not announced. Much of this method was built during the Zoom years (2020-2025), which forced everything to become verbal. I couldn't adjust your body or walk the room. Every cue had to be specific enough to land on a body I couldn't see. That constraint made the teaching sharper.



## 1. ARRIVAL (3-7 MIN)

Before I even start: the pre-class music is already bumping. Stevie Wonder. Cat Stevens. Fleetwood Mac. Sonny and Cher. Old soul. People are chatting, catching up, hugging at the door. The room feels like a party you showed up early to. That's intentional.

Then I start. There is no "okay, let's begin." I greet the room from wherever I am and almost always tell you where that is. The party music fades. One specific instruction that isn't a pose: rest your eyes. Scan the year. Find yourself in your own company. Set down the politics. Picture someone you love.

*Just take a moment to find yourself quiet. To find yourself at peace in your own company.*

ARRIVAL CUE

## 2. INVOCATION (1-3 MIN)

A chant. A mantra. A dedication. The choice tracks the day's theme. Shiva when something needs to be destroyed. Ram when reunion is the dharma. Hanuman when we need strength and devotion. Durga when fierceness. Ganesha for beginnings.

I chant live, in my own voice, off-key as often as on. I don't press play on a recording. I sing. Badly, joyfully, with my whole chest. The kirtan is intimate but it's not quiet. When the room sings back, it's one of the most alive sounds I've ever heard.

The chant is the thesis statement of the class. If it's Shiva, the practice is going to ask you to let something fall apart. If it's Hanuman, you're going to be asked to find courage in a shape that scares you. Students who've been with me for years read the chant as the headline.

## 3. BODY WAKE-UP (5-10 MIN)

Child's pose. Cat-cow. Slow neck circles. Wrist circles. Hip circles. I call it "waking up" the body, not stretching it. The pace is unhurried. I layer the teaching in here, while the body is in low-stakes shapes. By the time you're in pigeon forty minutes later, the philosophy has already been planted.

We are breathing, feeling things... muscles that need to be awakened, body parts that need to be realigned from all the ways that we mess up our bodies sitting at desks and staring at screens. The physicality is the doorway. Never the goal.

#### 4. FLOW (25-40 MIN)

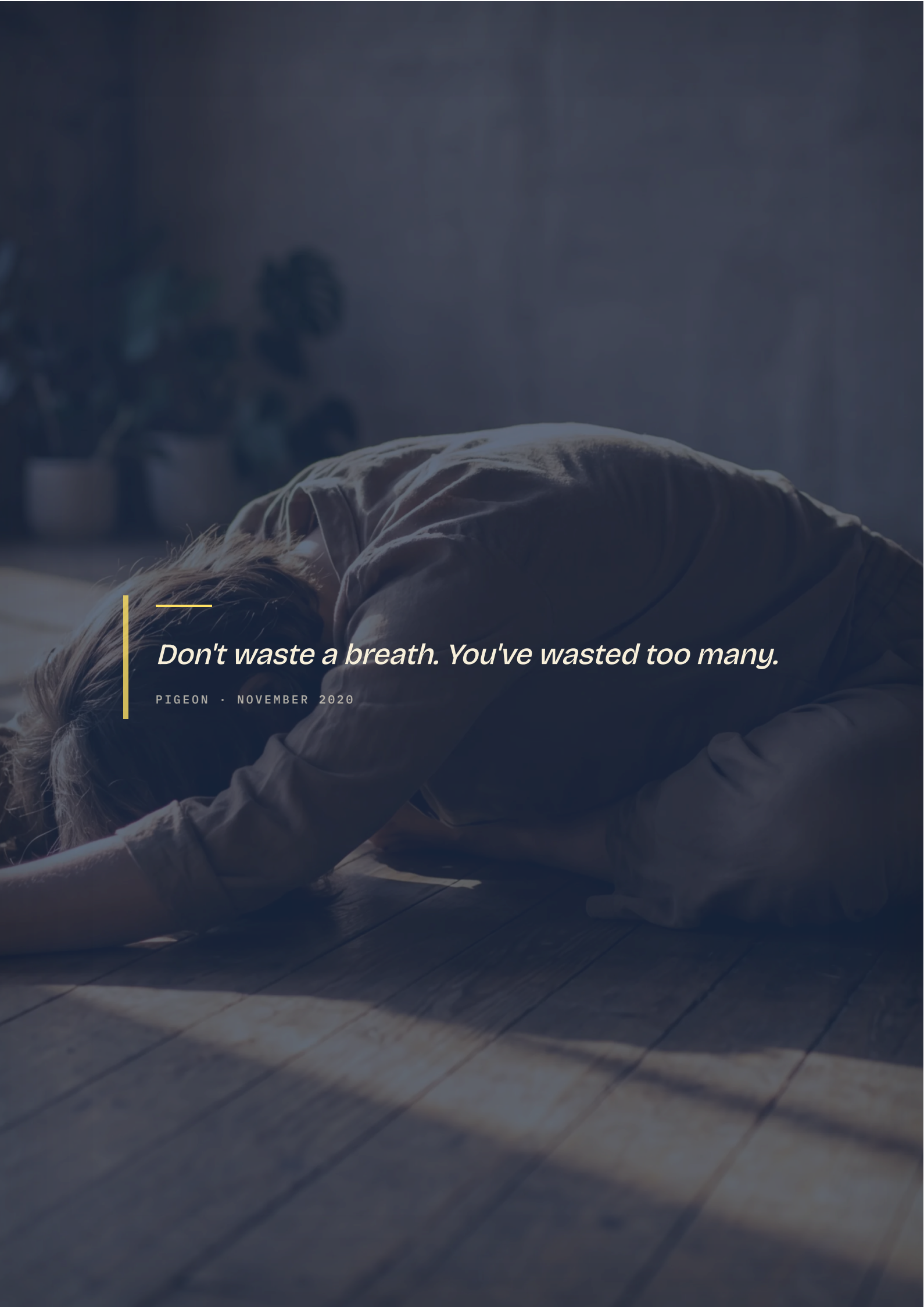
Sun salutations. Standing series. Twists. Balances. Peak shape. This is where it gets explosive. The physical heart of the class and the part that makes people sweat through their shirts and grin about it.

The chassis is Sun A and Sun B, often built into what I think of as "the wave"... a flowing chain that lets the room synchronize without thinking. Right side, left side, repeat with a layer added. One peak shape per class, named through metaphor before it arrives. Modifications spoken aloud, not gestured. The music is loud here. The energy is up. People are moving together and you can feel it -- thirty bodies breathing at the same time, building toward something. It's a dance. A prayer disguised as a workout disguised as a dance. On a good day it feels like church.

*If you start to fall, kick a little bit more. It'll kind of catch you.*

DANCER 'S POSE CUE · 2020

That was a cue for dancer's pose and it's maybe the best life advice I've ever given accidentally.

A person with long hair is lying face down on a wooden floor. The scene is dimly lit, with a strong light source from the side creating long shadows and highlighting the texture of the floor and the person's clothing. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

*Don't waste a breath. You've wasted too many.*

PIGEON · NOVEMBER 2020

## 5. FLOOR AND SURRENDER (10-15 MIN)

Pigeon. Half pigeon. Lizard. Half-split or full split. Seated forward folds. Twists. A back bend or two. Long holds. Music drops. The teaching I've been threading the whole class lands here in concentrated form.

This is where the class earns its name. The body is too open to defend itself.

I said "don't waste a breath, you've wasted too many" during pigeon in November 2020. Pandemic. The breath was not a metaphor.

## 6. SAVASANA AND CLOSE (5-8 MIN)

Knees to chest. Roll down. Savasana, which I almost always call "welcome home." As Ram Dass says, we're all just walking each other home. Music shifts to chant... Hanuman Chalisa, Aadyam, Govinda, something long and sustained. I'm mostly silent during savasana, which is unusual for vinyasa teachers. Then the wake-up. Press up to seated. The closing prayer.

*Thank you for this day. Thank you for this practice. Thank you for these teachings. Thank you for all the teachers in my life that show up in the most beautiful and the most challenging ways.*

### CLOSING PRAYER

*May you be happy. May you be healing. May you be free from harm and free from suffering. And may my life touch your life always for the better.*

*Again and again, I intend to begin again.*

SECTION SIX

VI

# How philosophy becomes *physical*.

Turning ideas into something the body learns before the mind names it.

## IDEA AS POSTURE

# The part I care about most.

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**BEGIN AGAIN → THE CLOSING PRAYER**

I end every class with the same words. The repetition is the teaching. A student who's practiced with me for a year has heard "begin again" in their body four hundred times before they ever read the philosophy on a page.

**THE 3-SECOND GAP → THE BREATH AT THE TOP OF THE INHALE**

The micro-pause between inhale and exhale is the gap, taught in the body. I cue breath retention (kumbhaka) explicitly in the camel sequence. I cue implicit pauses in every transition: "stay here for one more breath." "Before you move, notice."

**SURRENDER → PIGEON HELD LONG ENOUGH THAT THE FIGHT STOPS**

I don't lecture surrender. I let the room hold the pose past the point where the muscle gives up trying to control it, and then I name what's happening. The body learns the word *surrender* in the hip before the mind learns it in the dharma.

**THE 18-INCH LEAP → HANUMANASANA**

The full split is the body learning the leap. I say the line... "the greatest leap of faith we will ever need to take is eighteen inches, from our heads to our hearts"... while the room is in the prep, and the muscle associates the felt sense of the split with the felt sense of the leap. The pose is not a metaphor. It is the metaphor's body.

**DEVOTION → DEDICATION OF EFFORT**

Before the peak, I ask the room to dedicate the effort to a specific person. The body now has someone in mind. The hard pose has a recipient. The effort becomes offering. Bhakti taught through asana directly.

**PRESENCE → "WELCOME HOME" AT SAVASANA**

Naming savasana as "welcome home" reframes the pose. You're not lying down because you're tired. You're lying down because this is where you live. It's a simple, sweet life. And for that we are very, very lucky.

# VII

## Levels of *inquiry.*

Body, breath, mind, heart, spirit. Five layers, each a deeper invitation than the last.

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**01** **Body**

The doorway, not the goal.

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**02** **Breath**

The anchor to right now.

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**03** **Mind**

The witnessing function.

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**04** **Heart**

Dedication outward. Practice as offering.

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**05** **Spirit**

The layer that resists language.

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## THE LADDER

# From body to spirit.

## 1. BODY

The doorway. We are breathing, feeling things. Muscles that need to be awakened, body parts that need to be realigned. Stretchiness and sweat are real benefits, but they're the entry-level offer. A class that stops here is what most yoga classes are.

## 2. BREATH

The anchor to right now. Pranayama for its physiological effects, yes, but more importantly because attention to breath collapses the gap between rumination and now.

*So much of yoga is about helping us wake up to the perfection, the wholeness of the present moment. Because in the present moment, everything's okay. We don't spiral. We don't push and pull. We land. We are.*

ON BREATH AND PRESENCE

## 3. MIND

The witnessing function. Watching the mind volley between past and future. Training the muscle of returning to now. One of the signs of an advanced practitioner is their ability to wield this tool wisely, which is to say, to keep reining the mind back to now, to now, to this stretch, to this breath.

#### 4. HEART

Dedication outward. The practice as offering, not self-improvement. This is where the bhakti kicks in at the level of intention. We send any goodness, any wisdom, any gratitude that we receive from the practice to someone else. Or to all beings. The metta prayer is the heart layer at full extension.

*We use our time on the mat to send any goodness, any wisdom, any gratitude that we may feel or receive from being in the practice and doing this good work to someone else. Or to maybe even to all beings. Loka Samasta Sukino Bhavantu.*

ON THE HEART LAYER

#### 5. SPIRIT

The untouchable, unstruck cord, rippled lake, blue sky mind. The layer that resists language. I'm direct about this: some days I can tap into it because I'm so clear and free and awake. Other times I'm still muddled in the stuff of my life and if I'm lucky I can get people to breathe in the present moment. To be with their breath in the now.

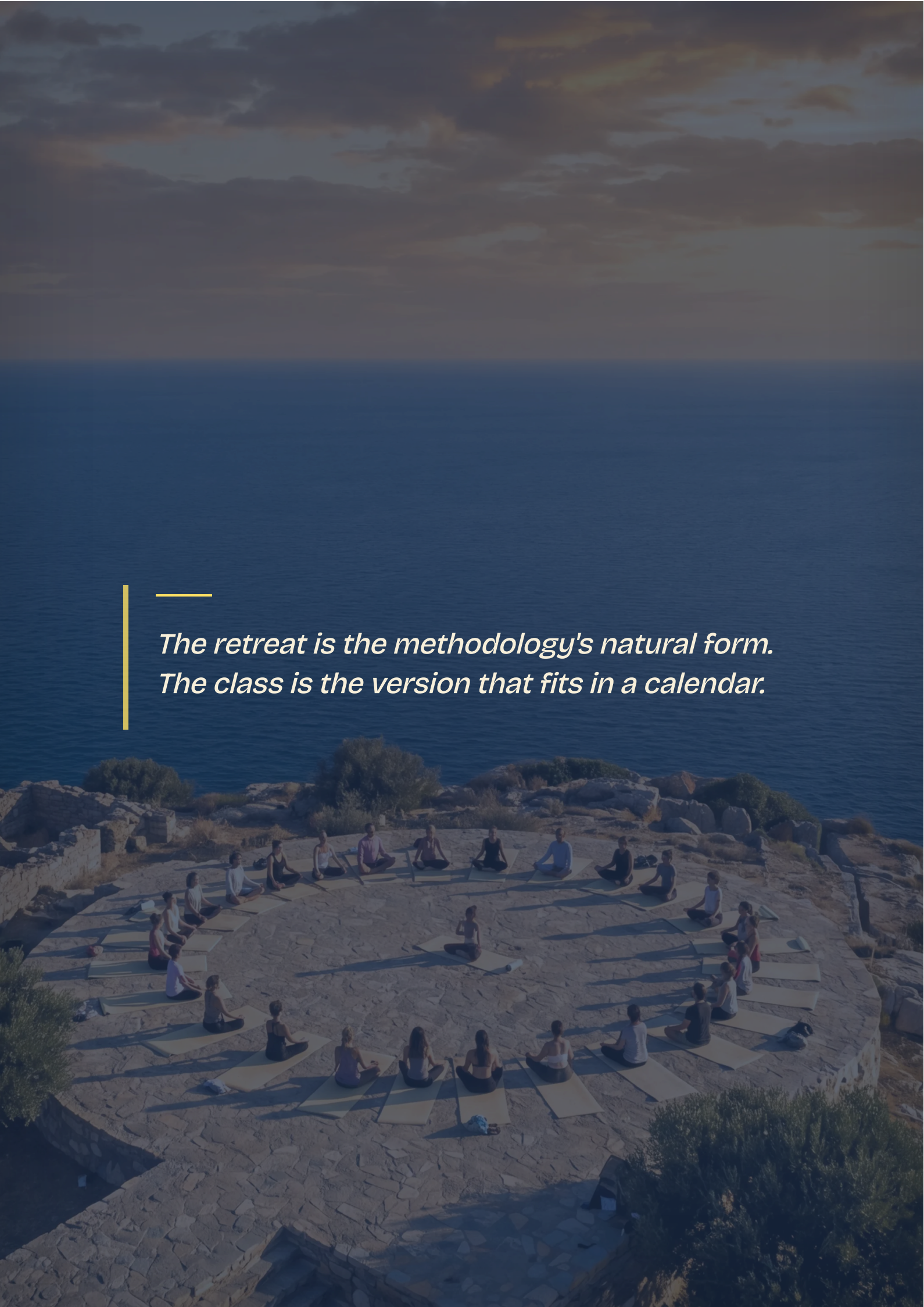
That honesty about availability is part of the method. A teacher who claims constant access to the spirit layer is performing it. A teacher who admits when it's not available teaches the room that the practice is real.

SECTION EIGHT

# VIII

## The arc of a *retreat.*

Same practice, scaled to a week. What changes when the method gets to breathe over multiple days.

A group of approximately 25 people are sitting in a circle on a stone platform, practicing yoga. They are positioned on mats, and the scene is set against a backdrop of a vast ocean and a sunset sky with soft, golden clouds. The lighting is warm and natural, suggesting the time is either early morning or late afternoon. The stone platform is built on a rocky outcrop, and some greenery is visible in the foreground and background.

*The retreat is the methodology's natural form.  
The class is the version that fits in a calendar.*

## THE WEEK SHAPE

# What the practice does when it gets to breathe.

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Two practices per day. Long morning, shorter evening. Never three. The morning is asana, pranayama, sometimes chant. The evening is yin, restorative, kirtan, or yoga nidra. Afternoons are open. The retreat is paced to recover from itself.

**DAY 1**

Light. Welcome circle, gentle stretch, dinner, early bed. Don't overprogram. People are tired.

**DAY 2**

First full day. Establish the rhythm.

**DAY 3**

People drop in. The first real laughs. The first long dinner conversations. The first time someone says "I needed this." I start knowing names and reading the room.

**DAY 4**

The deepest practice of the week. Long kirtan, temazcal, peak hike, a 45-minute yoga nidra. The day people remember. Also usually the day someone ugly-cries in pigeon and then thanks me at dinner. I love that day.

**DAY 5**

The off-site adventure. The big dinner. The sunset chapel practice in Greece. The volcano hike. The market run. The day that feels like a gift.

**DAY 6**

Softer. People are processing. Cut a session short if the room is heavy. Read the floor more than run the playbook.

**DAY 7**

Final long morning practice. Closing circle. The metta prayer in full.

## THE RETREAT AS NATURAL FORM

# What only the longer container can do.

What the retreat lets the practice do that the class can't: themes carry across days. The "begin again" of Day 6 references the falling-apart of Day 4. The peak is a peak day, not a peak pose. The teaching arrives in dinner conversations and on hikes, not just on the mat. Fifteen people who showed up as strangers leave with two friends and a memory that becomes a reference point.

I've watched it happen in Mexico, Bali, Turkey, Greece, Iceland, Hawaii, Northern California. Every time. It's the most beautiful thing I get to do.

*The retreat is this methodology's natural form. The class is the version that fits in a calendar. The retreat is the version that changes people's lives. I don't say that lightly.*

ON RETREATS

SECTION NINE

IX

# Sequences I keep coming *back to.*

No brand names. No marketed sequences. Just working labels  
for the shapes I reach for most.

## THE SHAPES

# The shapes that hold the rest.

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## THE WAVE

Three to five rounds of Sun A flowing into Sun B, the room synchronizing on the breath. This is the chassis for 80% of my classes. The teaching has somewhere to land while the muscles do the work. The wave is the runway, not the peak.

## THE SKANDASANA PIVOT

Standing flow on the right → easy twist → Skandasana to the back of the mat → easy twist → standing flow on the left. I use this in nearly every class as the side-to-side flip. It resets between sides without breaking the flow.

## THE HANUMANASANA BUILD

Low lunge → half-split → quad stretch → low lunge → settle into full split over five to ten breaths. The peak shape is the theology: head to heart. I use this on Hanuman-themed days, on my birthday class, and whenever the teaching is about the leap.

## THE CAMEL-KUMBHAKA SEQUENCE

Three rounds of camel, each held longer than the last, with breath retention on the third. I built this for the Unwavering Self class. The peak when the dharma is courage, not surrender.

## THE LONG PIGEON

Pigeon held for ninety seconds to two full minutes. Music drops. I speak one short line and stop. The room earns the silence. This is where the teaching lands hardest because the hip is open and the defense is gone.

SECTION TEN

# X

## Music.

A co-teacher, not background. A class-design surface. People who've been to my class always mention the music. Always.

## THE SONIC ARC

# Music as co-teacher.

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Music in my class is a co-teacher, not background. I treat it as a class-design surface. A song lands at exactly the right emotional point, or the music ends and I cue something into the silence. I reference tracks in real time, dedicate songs to students, change the song mid-flow if it isn't working.

The pre-class playlist sets the whole tone. Stevie Wonder, Cat Stevens, Thin Lizzy, Billy Paul, Isley Brothers, Fleetwood Mac, Sonny and Cher. Soulful, celebratory, warm. People walk in and the room already feels like something good is happening. That's not an accident.

Default class playlist arc: the pre-class soul and indie fades → I chant or go ambient for arrival → the flow builds with Nala Sinéphro, Lindstrøm, Pippi Ciez, Beautiful Chorus, Emmit Fenn, Peter Gabriel, Lord Huron → floor drops to something spacious and quiet → long sustained chant for savasana (Simrit, Aadyam, Hanuman Chalisa). Some classes are 90% music. Some are no music at all. But when the music is on, it's on.

## CHANT AS STRUCTURE

# The chant is the thesis statement.

## SHIVA

"Shiva Shiva Shamba, Mahadeva Shamba" for destruction days, reset days, change-the-room days.

## HANUMAN CHALISA

For devotion, strength, courage. This has been showing up more and more since late 2025, especially since the 40-day training with Govind Das.

## RAM

"Ram bolo Ram" for reunion, return, the prodigal energy.

## GURU STOTRAM

Full long version on slow days, for gratitude and lineage.

## AADYAM UDGITAM MANGALAM

During savasana.

*If the chant is Shiva, the practice is going to ask you to let something fall apart. If the chant is Hanuman, you're going to be asked to find courage in a shape that scares you.*

## ON CHANT AS THESIS

The rule: the chant is the thesis statement of the class. The students who've been with me for years read the chant as the headline.

SECTION ELEVEN

XI

What I  
*don't do.*

Just as important as the moves.

## REFUSALS

# The anti-methodology.

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- x No "hold space," "sacred container," "healing journey," "manifest," "raise your vibration," "divine masculine/feminine," "good vibes only." None of it. If it could go on a Lululemon bag, I don't say it. Spiritual materialism is one of the great diseases of modern yoga and I want no part of it.

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- x No breathy yoga teacher voice. My voice in class is the same voice I use on Instagram and at dinner. Warm, direct, sometimes loud, frequently profane. I say "shit" sometimes. I say "holy shit" when something is beautiful. I'm not performing purity. I'm a person.

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- x No spiritual bypass. When something is hard in the world, I name it. Election week, pandemic, war, studio closures. I don't spiritualize the pain away.

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- x No sectarian Hinduism. Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Rumi, Ram Dass... same altar.

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- x No alignment policing. I cue alignment, but I don't correct from a doctrinal position.

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- x No "today's theme is..." up front. The theme is felt through the body and named only later.

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- x No fake guru posture. I admit when I don't know. I revise mid-class. I say "I don't know" as a position, not a dodge.

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- x No closing music montage. The end is quiet. You leave on my voice or on a chant, not on a curated playlist crescendo.

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- x No three-activity days on retreat. Two anchors max. The third breaks the room.

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SECTION TWELVE

**XII**

# Who this is *for.*

The room has a shape. Here's who walks in and stays.

## CALIBRATION

# The room and its shape.

## WHO IT'S FOR

People who want yoga that actually means something, taught by a teacher who is in the practice with them.

People who've been to enough classes to know what a Lululemon vinyasa feels like and want a different room.

People comfortable with devotional language used non-dogmatically.

Beginners who can be patient with a class that isn't built around alignment policing.

People who want the bhakti tradition without converting to anything.

People who want to sweat and laugh and maybe cry a little and leave feeling like they just had the best hour of their week.

## WHO IT ISN'T

Students who want a pure power-yoga workout.

Students who want stadium-scale kirtan. Go to Rusty, seriously, he's incredible.

Students who want strict alignment teaching. Go to Iyengar.

Students who are uncomfortable with any Sanskrit.

Students looking for explicit therapeutic framing.

Students who want a teacher who has it all figured out.

It works especially well for people in transition, people grieving, people in creative work, people who want their practice to be relational rather than solitary, and people who like a teacher who is funny, irreverent, a little bit wild, and not afraid to be unguarded.

SECTION THIRTEEN

# XIII

## If you want to teach *this way*.

I haven't led my own teacher training yet. But if I were training a senior teacher to lead inside this methodology, here's what I'd tell them.

FOR OTHER TEACHERS

# The hours don't matter.

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I need to say this up front because the yoga world is obsessed with credentials. How many hours of training you've done, how many years you've been teaching, which lineages you've studied under. None of that makes you a great teacher.

What makes a great teacher is the spark of aliveness, care, generosity, joy, and deep, deep aliveness in the way they share the practice. Do they have it? You can feel it in the first five minutes.

I've met people fresh out of a 200-hour training, brand new to yoga, and I can already see this beautiful spark in them that's going to make them incredible. I would fully trust them in a room. On the other end, I've met teachers who have been at it for twenty years. They know all the details about the philosophy, the anatomy, the sequencing. They are not skillful facilitators. They are lecturers. It feels like they memorized things and are just resharing them.

Certifications don't matter. What matters is the spark in your eyes, the aliveness in your heart, what you've been through in your life. The sooner you understand that the poses are just vehicles for much deeper inquiry of self, just a tiny little piece of the puzzle and not the full thing, the sooner you can become an extremely powerful facilitator of the practice.

## THE SKILLS

# What I'd tell a senior teacher.

## READ THE ROOM BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE.

This is the most important skill. You may have a plan, but you need to be willing to throw it out. Honor that particular moment and those particular humans. Great teachers read the room well. The methodology is calibrated to the bodies in front of you, not to a lesson plan.

## BE PRESENT. ACTUALLY PRESENT.

Your students can feel the difference. Are you open and present with them, your eyes bright and illuminated? Or are you clearly in the midst of your own drama and somehow throwing it on them accidentally?

## TEACH BETWEEN THE CUES, NOT IN A BLOCK.

The biggest mistake new teachers make: stopping the flow to deliver the philosophy. Don't. Teach it inside the cue. While the room is in low lunge, while they're walking the hands forward in pigeon. The mouth keeps moving. The body keeps moving. The teaching is the hum underneath the instruction.

## CUE FROM THE JOINT, NOT FROM THE POSE NAME.

"Triangle pose" is not a cue. "Spread your toes, micro-bend the front knee, lift the inner arch, reach the right arm long, let the left hand land where it wants" is a cue. Pose names sound authoritative. Specific cues actually teach.

## BUILD YOUR CLOSING FIRST.

Pick the words you will end every class with. The same words. Whatever they are, make them stable. Students remember the close more than the peak. Once you have a closing, every class becomes a vehicle for delivering it.

### TEACH FROM INSIDE WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY WORKING ON.

Don't wait until you've figured something out. Teach the question. The room can feel the difference between a teacher who has resolved the topic and a teacher who is currently inside it. The teacher inside the practice is more trustworthy.

### LEARN ONE CHANT WELL ENOUGH TO SING IT SOLO.

One. Hanuman Chalisa, Guru Stotram, a Shiva chant, anything. Sing it for a year. Then learn the second one. Don't try to learn the catalog. The depth of one chant carries more weight than the breadth of ten.

### TREAT MUSIC AS A CO-TEACHER.

Curate every playlist. Know which song lands where. Be willing to change the song mid-flow if it isn't working. The music is a class-design surface, not wallpaper.

### DON'T PRACTICE ALONG.

My teacher Rusty would say: "We are lifeguards when we are teaching yoga, and when we are in the water doing our own practice, we can't be of service to the collective." Unless you are demonstrating something very specific and difficult, resist the urge to practice along. You are there in that hour to be of service. It's not for you. It's not about you.

*It's not about me.*

JANET STONE · ON PREPARING FOR A RETREAT

My teacher Janet Stone shared this with me when I asked how she prepares for a retreat when she's feeling nervous. That's been one of the most helpful teachings I've received. This experience is for the group, for the collective. May you be just a vehicle for the teachings to come through you gracefully.

SECTION FOURTEEN

# XIV

## What I'm still figuring *out*.

The live edges as of mid-2026. Thank god it's still moving.

## STILL FIGURING IT OUT

# What is moving.

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I don't have this all worked out. Thank god. Here's what's still moving.

My teaching voice has changed. In 2020 it was more frenetic, more emotionally unguarded, more "leave it all on the mat." Now there's more air. More space between instruction and philosophy. Same core. Bigger container. The method is still moving and so am I.

The Hanuman Chalisa has become more central than anything else in the last year. The 40-day training with Govind Das, the app I'm building, the verse-by-verse teaching. The practice is shifting toward more direct devotional content and I'm letting it.

Most of my documented teaching is from Zoom. The in-studio version has adjustments, bigger classes, louder music, faster transitions. Same arc, different proportions. I need to capture that more explicitly as I teach in studios more.

The retreat arc could be its own document. Themes-across-days is a methodology layer that the class arc can't capture.

And the shadow of the whole philosophy: the permission to restart can also normalize never finishing. The 85% pattern. I need to account for that honestly if I ever train other teachers. The shadow is real and pretending it isn't there is exactly the kind of bypass I'm supposed to be against.

There's more to you than your thoughts. There's more to you than your feelings. There's more to this creature than meets the eye. We come into contact with that again, maybe for just a minute we remember who and what we are beneath all those layers of me and mine.

## CLOSING

# *Ombolo Sri Sadguru Bhagavanaki Jai.*

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I close most of my classes with this line. It's the last thing you hear before you roll up your mat and walk back into your life.

*Ombolo* -- I bow. Not to a statue or an idol or a guru on a stage. I bow to the thing I can't name. The hum underneath everything. *Sri* -- with reverence. With awe. With the full weight of gratitude that I'm alive and here and breathing. *Sadguru* -- to the true teacher. And the true teacher is not me. The true teacher is the one inside you that already knows. *Bhagavanaki* -- to the divine in all its forms. God, universe, nature, love, the thing you felt when your kid was born or when you stood at the edge of the ocean and forgot your own name for a second. *Jai* -- victory. Not victory over anything. Victory as celebration. As praise. As the sound you make when you realize, again, that you get to be here.

I bow, with reverence, to the true teacher, to the divine. Victory. Celebration. Jai.

*I've said it over a thousand times and it still catches in my throat sometimes. That's how I know it's real.*

# PETER WALTERS YOGA

## Begin Again

IF YOU'D LIKE TO KEEP PRACTICING

# Four doors, *one method.*

If something in here landed, the easiest way to keep practicing together is to pick one of the doors below and walk through it. No funnel. No course pitch. Just the actual rooms where the work happens.

## I. **Again, Begin Again -- the Substack** [peteryoga.substack.com](https://peteryoga.substack.com)

Long-form essays, voice memos, weekly notes from inside the practice.

## II. **Practice with me -- monthly online class** [peteryoga.com](https://peteryoga.com)

Bhakti Flow on Zoom. Monthly-ish. Open to everyone. The methodology in real time.

## III. **Greece, October 2026** [peteryoga.com/greece-2026](https://peteryoga.com/greece-2026)

The one retreat this year. Sail + Flow through the Dodecanese Islands. Small group.

## IV. **Tools for the practice -- peterwalters.app** [peterwalters.app](https://peterwalters.app)

Apps and tools I'm building for the yoga and wellness community. Technology that gets out of the way so the practice can come through.

## V. **Everything else --** [peteryoga.com](https://peteryoga.com) · [@peterwaltersyoga](https://twitter.com/peterwaltersyoga)

[peteryoga.com](https://peteryoga.com)

The home base. Class schedule, retreats, writing, contact.

*Thank you for this day, this practice, these teachings, the opportunity to begin again.*