

Cultural Stewardship

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Today – Cultural Stewardship

- Introduction, Learning Objectives & Disclaimers
- Why this topic?
- What is Cultural Stewardship?
- Why is it important as Yoga Instructors, Teachers and Educators
- Discussion

“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”

-Sealth, Chief Seattle

Learning Objective

1. Trainees will begin to define for themselves what Cultural Stewardship while staying open for evolving wisdom to inform their definition.
2. Trainees will be able to reflect on their role as a Yoga guide, teacher, and/or educator in a personal and communal way through a lens and model of stewardship.
3. Trainees will be inspired to look into their own genealogy and cultures of influence to notice the similarities and differences between Yoga philosophy and practices.
4. Trainees will feel more informed and comfortable talking to their students and clients from a place of stewardship.

Why this topic for Yoga Teachers?

- Many people outside of South Asia are practicing/learning/applying Yoga as a first generation student.
 - Did your ancestors practice Yoga?
 - Did you grow up learning Yoga philosophy?
- ***Why and how did you end up here, in a Yoga Teacher Training?***
- Cultural pressures - consumerism, capitalism, branding, “your style” of yoga, fear based marketing strategies, other people’s definition of success and achievement apply to you as a Yoga Teacher
 - **Erasure** of language, symbols, beliefs, values, artifacts, and rituals
 - Cherry picking and rebranding
- ***When teaching yoga, who do you work for?***
- ***What is your role (beyond scope of practice) as a Yoga Teacher?***

Dynamic Definitions

Many definitions that do not all agree with each other

- **Cultural:** “of or relating to culture or culturing” ([Cultural Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#))
 - See next slide
 - Culture: “the symbols, language, beliefs, values, and artifacts (material objects) that are part of a society” [3.1 Culture and the Sociological Perspective – Sociology \(umn.edu\)](#)
 - Rituals

Culture Definitions

[Culture Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#)

- 1 **a** : the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group
also : the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time
 - | popular *culture*
 - | Southern *culture*
- b** : the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization
 - | a corporate *culture* focused on the bottom line
- c** : the set of values, **conventions**, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic
 - | studying the effect of computers on print *culture*
 - | Changing the *culture* of materialism will take time ...
 - Peggy O'Mara
- d** : the **integrated** pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations

Does “Yoga” have its own culture?

How? Or Why not?



Dynamic Definitions

Many definitions that do not all agree with each other

- **Stewardship:** “People taking care of the earth. The concept encompasses a range of private and public/private approaches to create, nurture and enable responsibility in users and owners to manage and protect land and natural resources” [italics mine] (Saltman & Ferroussier-Davis, 2000).
 - To steward
 - To tend to

Cultural Stewardship...

- People/stewards taking care of cultural wisdom that is not yours but flows through you in a unique way.
- *“A range of private and public/private approaches to create, nurture and enable responsibility in users.”* (Saltman & Ferroussier-Davis, 2000)
- More than “cultural appreciation”

Cultural appropriation → cultural appreciation → cultural stewardship

Why this topic for Yoga Teachers?

- *Idam na mama* - there is nothing to be owned
- Cultural appreciation is more than a feeling in your heart and knowledge. It requires action.
- Svadhyaya (self inquiry and learning), Tapas (action, effort), Satya (Truthfulness) in action
- ***How often do you use the word “Yoga” when you are speaking of “yoga asana”?***
 - Yoga is not asana. Asana is not Yoga.
- Sanskrit is new to many Yoga teachers - Language is important to original cultures
 - Make an effort to learn the basics
 - “Chakra”
 - “Asan/Asana”

This is not mine.

Idam na mama





Why is it important to act as a steward of cultural wisdom?

What happens if we don't act as stewards of cultural wisdom?

Your turn

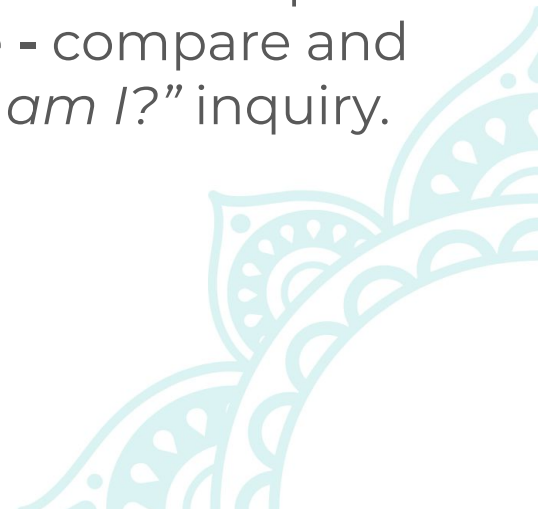
- Time for you to create your own or your own working definition
- How do you tend to cultural wisdom?
- ***Why is it important to consider “this is not mine” and how that informs who I am as a teacher and how I share/teach?***

A Model of Stewardship

- **None of this is mine** - *Idam na mama*
- **You do not need to know it all** - be a lifelong learner. Digest information.
 - Learn about different lineages of Yoga
 - Learn about Yoga history
 - Learn about South Asia
 - Understand the context of what you learn
- **Do your best** to honor your teachers and the teachings
- **Cite your sources**
- **Support South Asian Yoga Teachers and communities**

A model of stewardship cont...

- **Deepen your connection with the Land you live on** - the history, the flora and fauna — the original Yoga Teachers
- **Own up to your mistakes.** Learn from them. Implement what you learned. Keep growing. This is Satya in action.
- **Tending to** - takes action, not just words. Takes time. Tapas.
- **Learn about your own cultures of influence** - compare and contrast. Let what you discover inform “*Who am I?*” inquiry.
 - Biological - it’s in your bones
 - Familial / community
 - National
 - Religious



References

[3.1 Culture and the Sociological Perspective – Sociology \(umn.edu\)](#)

Brown, J. L., & Mitchell, B. A. (1998). Stewardship: a working definition. *Environments*, 26(1), 8.

[Culture: Definition, Discussion and Examples \(thoughtco.com\)](#)

Ginzberg, E. (2017). Seeking order in chaos: A definition of culture. *GSTF Journal of Law and Social Sciences (JLSS)*, 5(2).

[Culture Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#)

Saltman, R. B., & Ferroussier-Davis, O. (2000). The concept of stewardship in health policy. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 78(6), 732-739.

Yunkaporta, Tyson. *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World*. First edition. New York, New York, HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins Publications, 2020.

Recommendations

[Let's Talk Yoga Podcast](#) by Arundhati Baitmangalkar

[Indu Arora](#) - any of her books or podcasts

[Yogaprasad Institute](#) by Prasad Rangnekar

[Embrace Yoga's Roots](#) by Susanna Barkataki

[Michelle Cassandra Johnson](#) - any of her books

[Sand Talk](#) by Tyson Yunkaporta

Thank you!

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