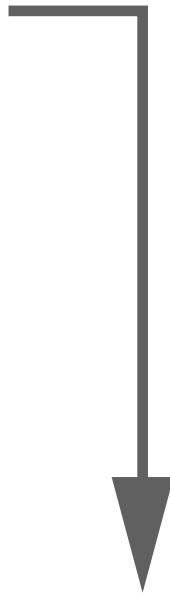
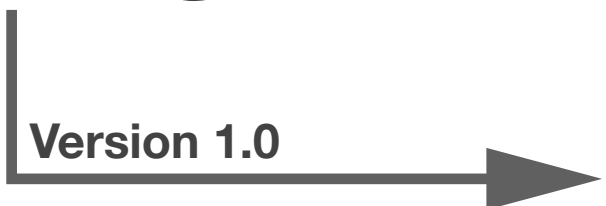


# **Moral Flowcharts For**



# **Modern Yoga**

**Version 1.0**



**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 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)

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

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



# Contributors List

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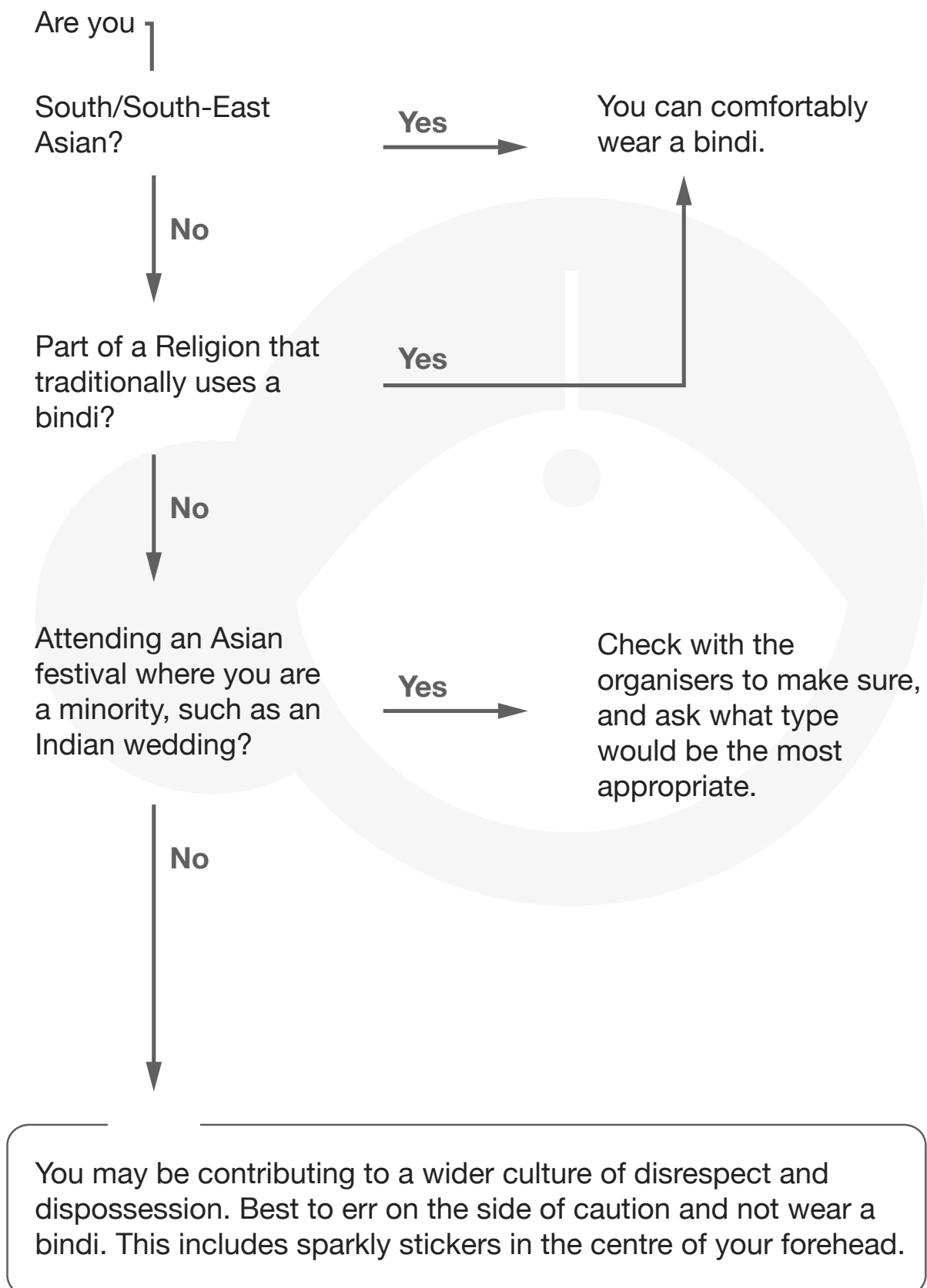
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# Bindi

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# 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.

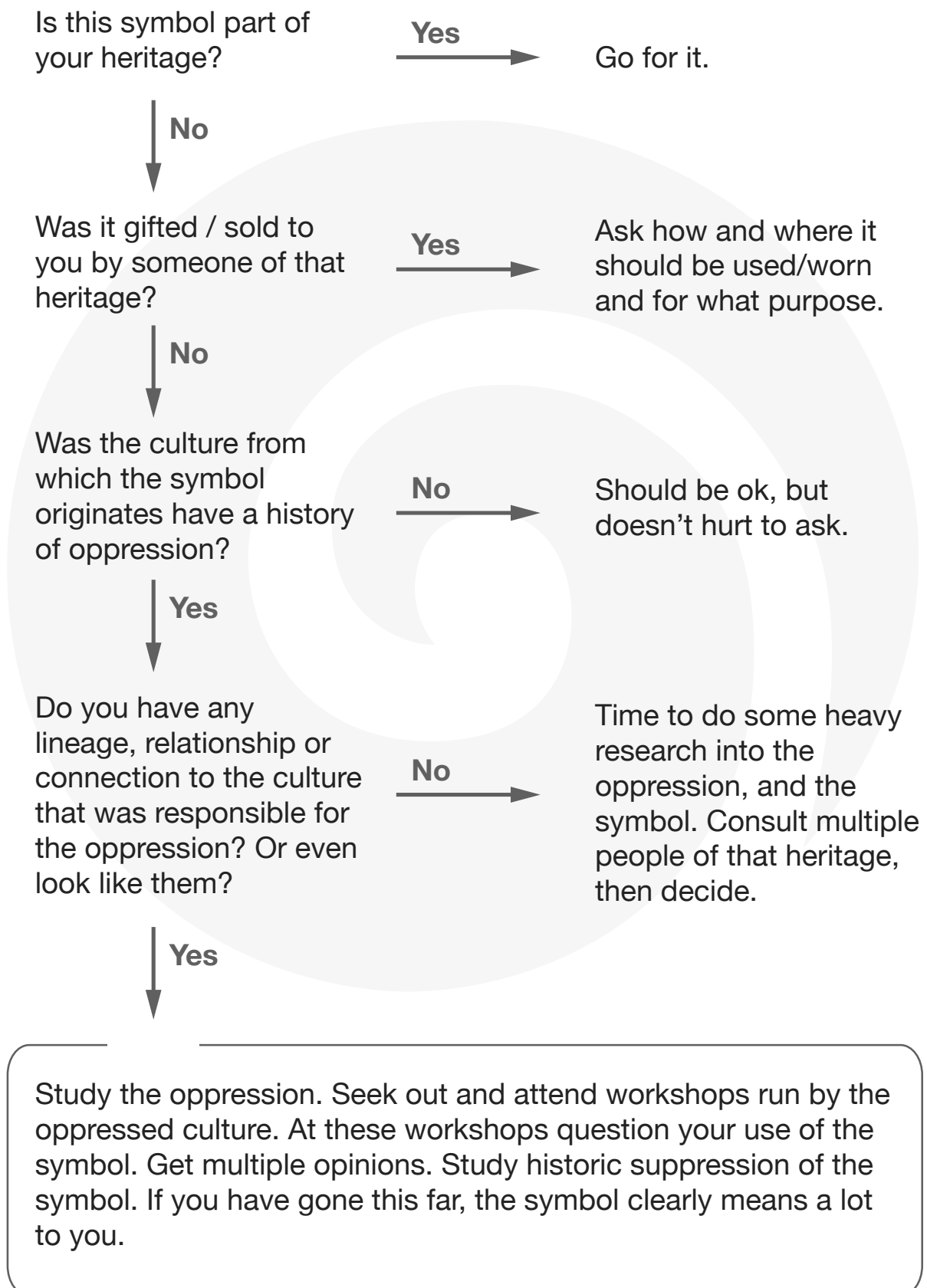
No

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.



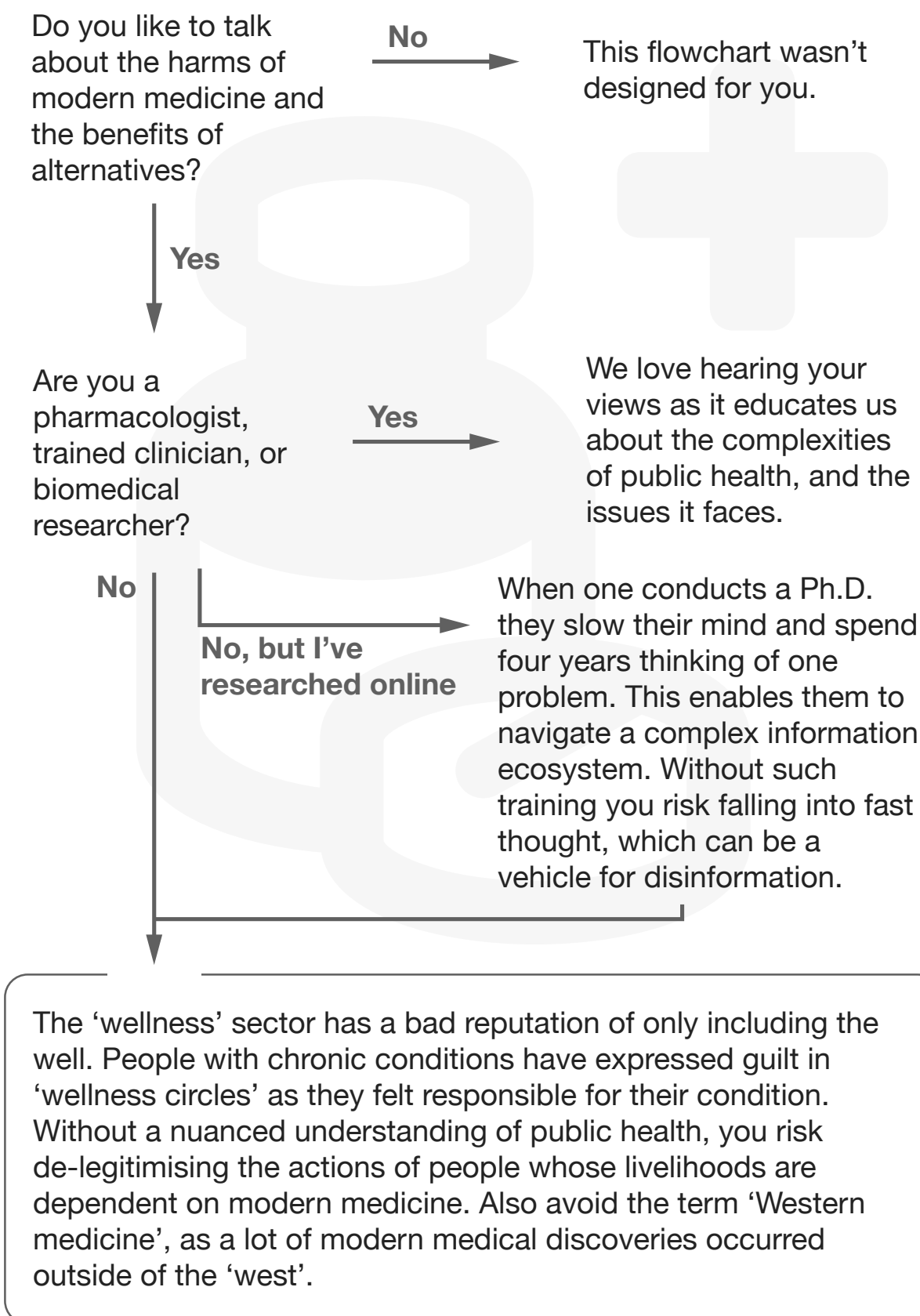
# Sacred Symbols

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



# Modern Medicine

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# Plant Medicine

Examples: ayurvedic tonics, cacao, kawakawa, sage

This plant medicine stems from your heritage or culture?

**Yes**

You probably know what you are doing. Go for it and teach us all.

**No**

Have you checked if this plant medicine has a history of oppression or appropriation?

**No**

**Don't know**

An online search of "[medicine name] cultural appropriation", will give you some nice info.

**Yes**

So does it?

**None that I could find**

You might be ok, but it's still good to check in with someone from that culture just in case.

**Yes**

Are you planning a ceremony or workshop using this?

**No**

If it's for your personal use then treat it with respect, study the oppression and enjoy its wisdom.

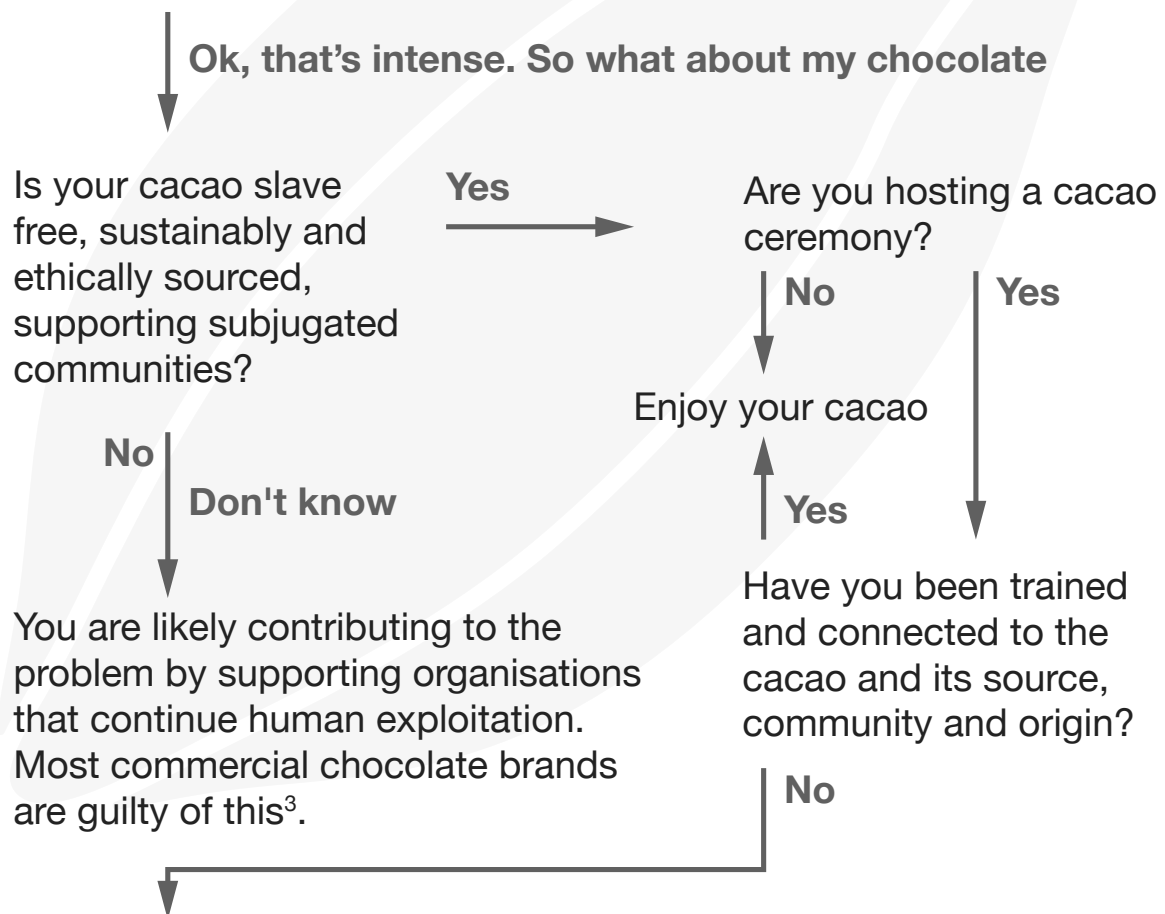
**Yes**

Most indigenous cultures from which plant medicine stem have had a history of oppression, and forced suppression of knowledge. Now, this ancient wisdom is making a renaissance. While it is good to support this, one must take care to not rewrite this reviving wisdom with our own narrative, or narratives that were passed down by the oppressors.

# 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.

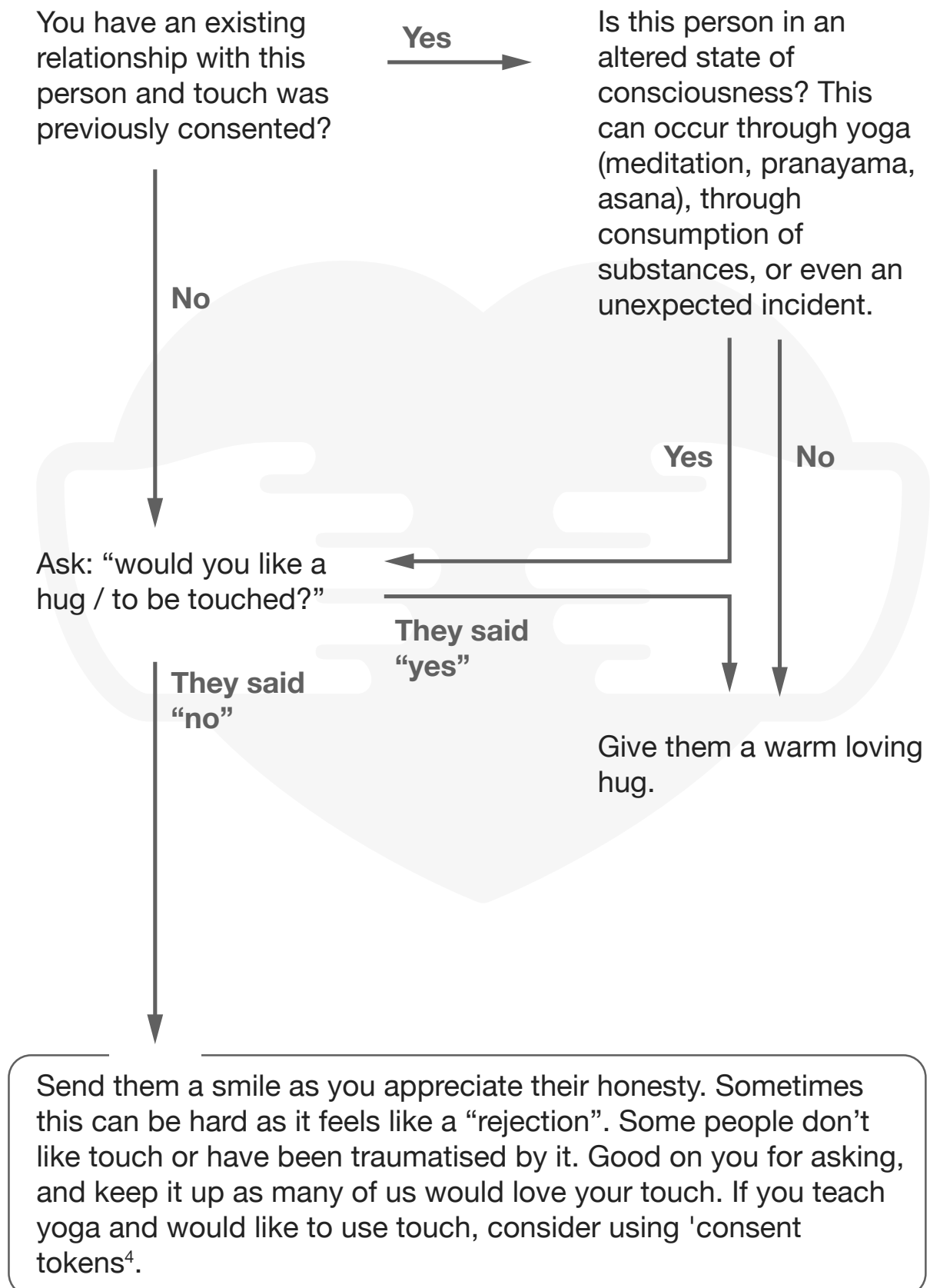
Exploitation of indigenous populations was not just during colonial times. The USA backed Guatemalan civil war, resulted in the Maya Genocide<sup>2</sup>. The war only ended in 1996. Up to 166,000 Mayans died /disappeared. This is also called the “Silent Holocaust”. The majority of Mayans still live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



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

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# Yoga Social Media

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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 followers subconscious in order to understand addictive patterns, and then use 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?

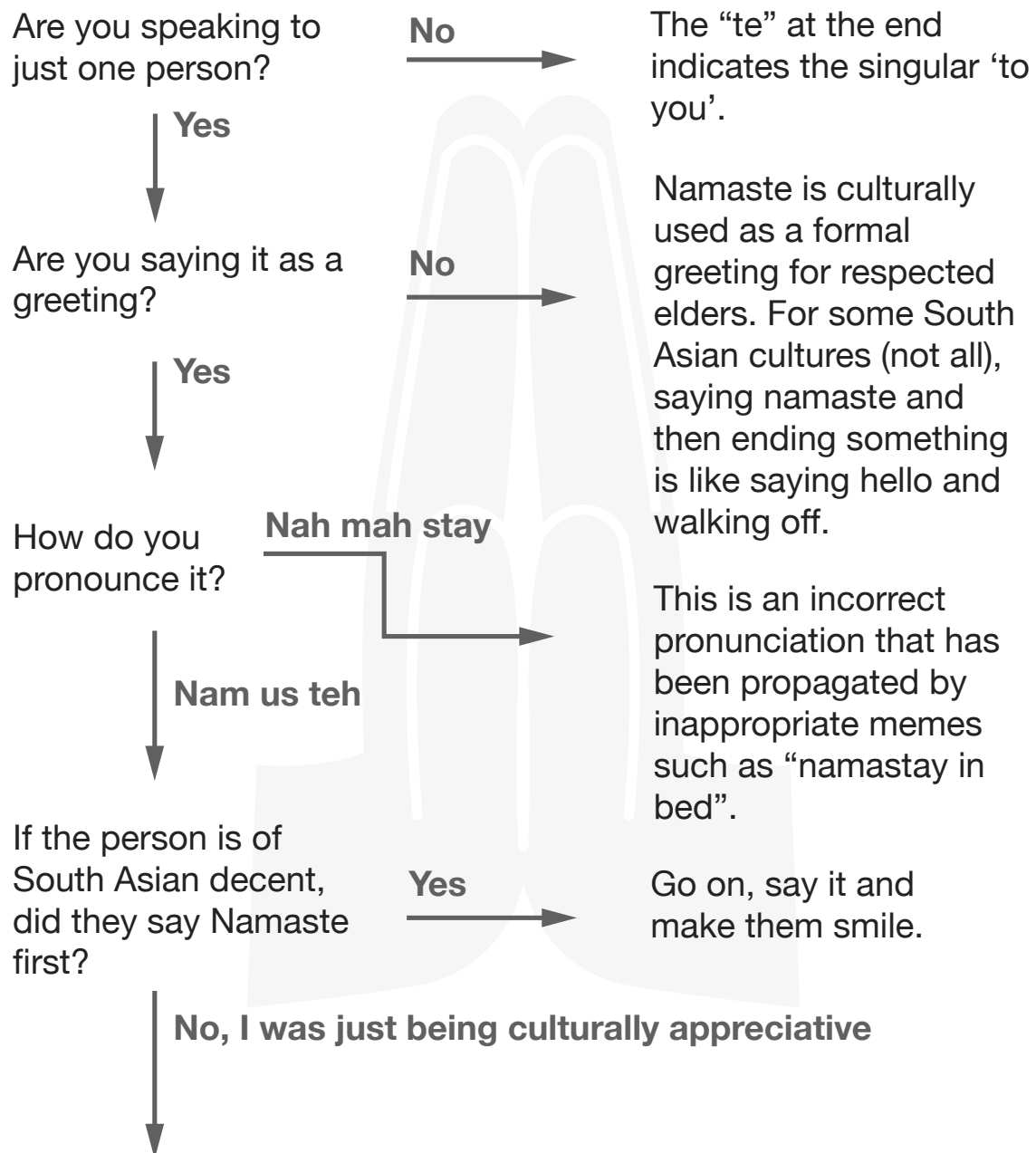
Yes

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

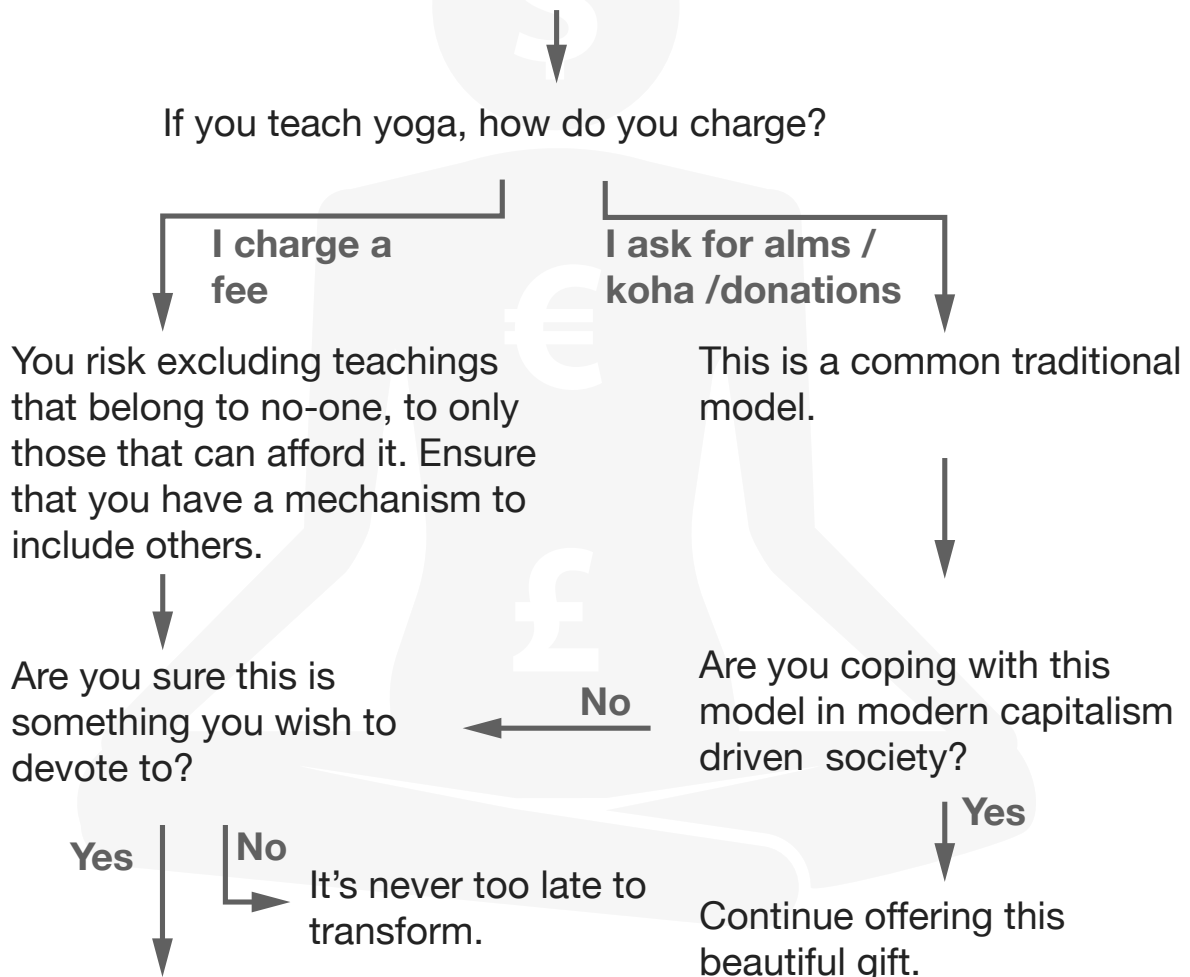
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The Indian subcontinent is a complex linguistic space of over 100 languages. For example, the equivalent of namaste in Bengal – nomoskar, Urdu – assalam ‘alaykum, Assamese – nômôskar, Tamil – vanakkam, Punjabi – sastriakal, Rajasthan – kbambha ghani, 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 a \$85 billion industry<sup>8</sup>? This is larger than New Zealand's national budget.

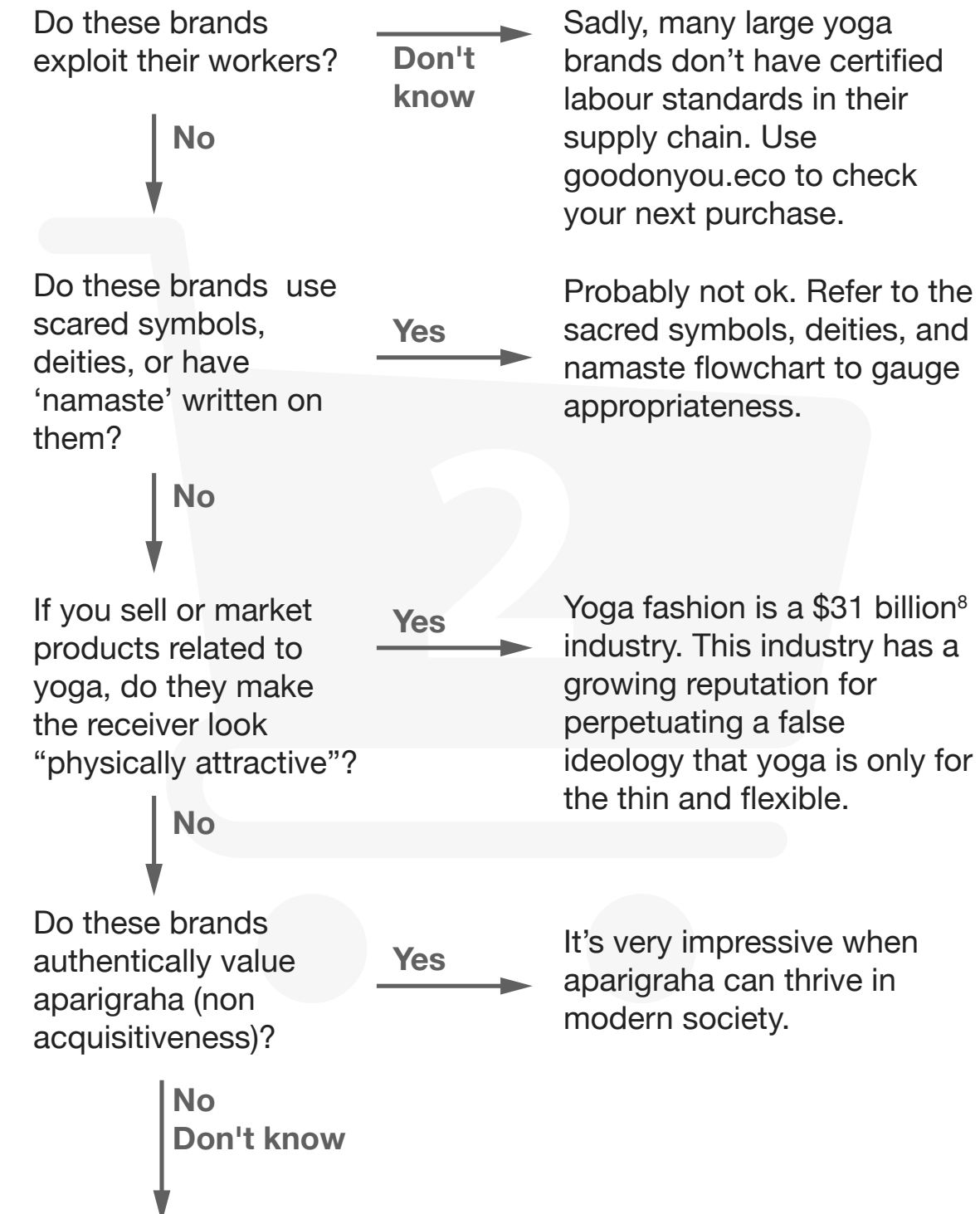


Charging for yoga is not a problem, it would be like taking spring water, a gift from nature and selling it as a commodity. You are providing a service to the dehydrated, which is great. But your goal is to guide people to the spring itself. Capitalism has a messy history of blocking the spring to maintain 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" Dattātreyayogaśāstra (49) 1300CE.



# Yoga Fashion / Branding

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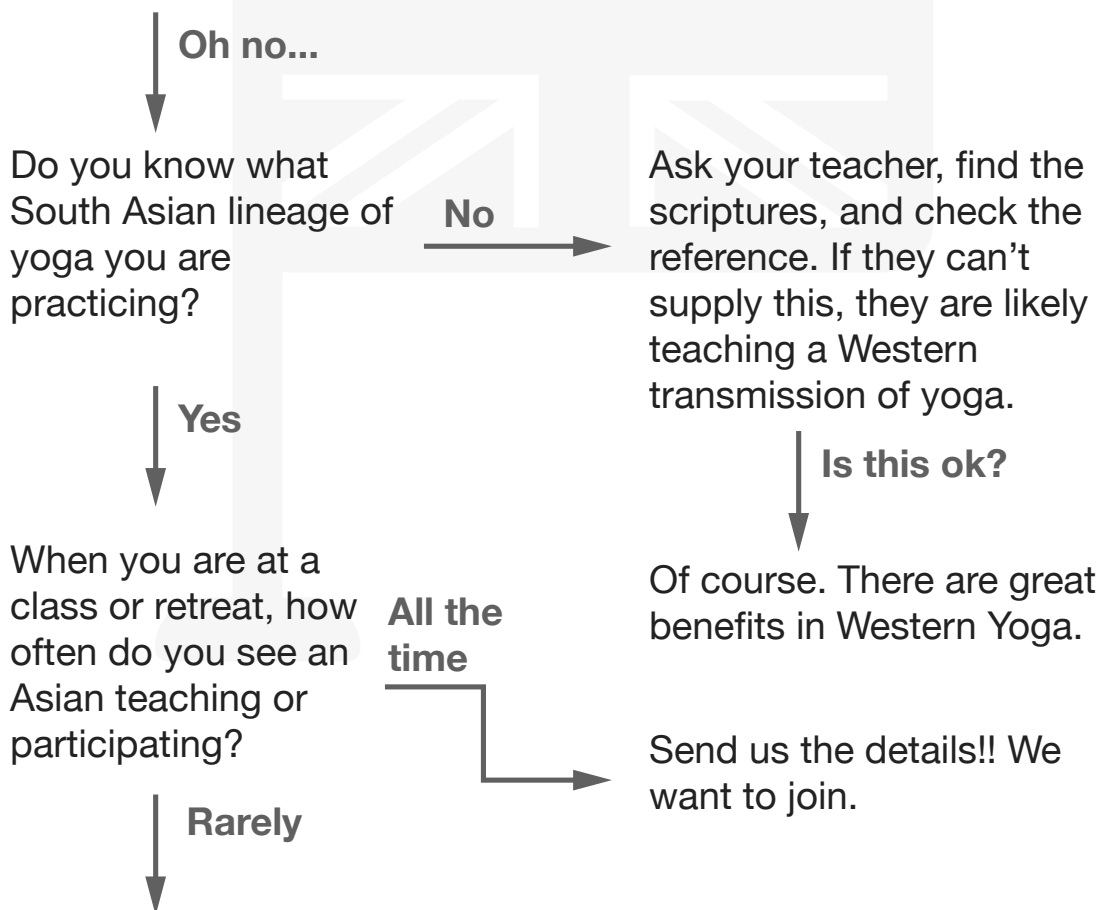


“Aparigraha is not taking for oneself the objects of the senses, because one sees the faults of acquiring, protecting, losing, being attached to or harming them” Pātañjalayogaśāstra (2.30) 800CE.

# 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 takes 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 decent are also teaching their rightful lineage.

# Decolonising Yoga

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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 to 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 bi-product 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 1900s where 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 practicing 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 stages 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 it's misogynistic past.

Yes, the Krama lineage of tantra for example was lead 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?

7

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 7. 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 were 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

**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.

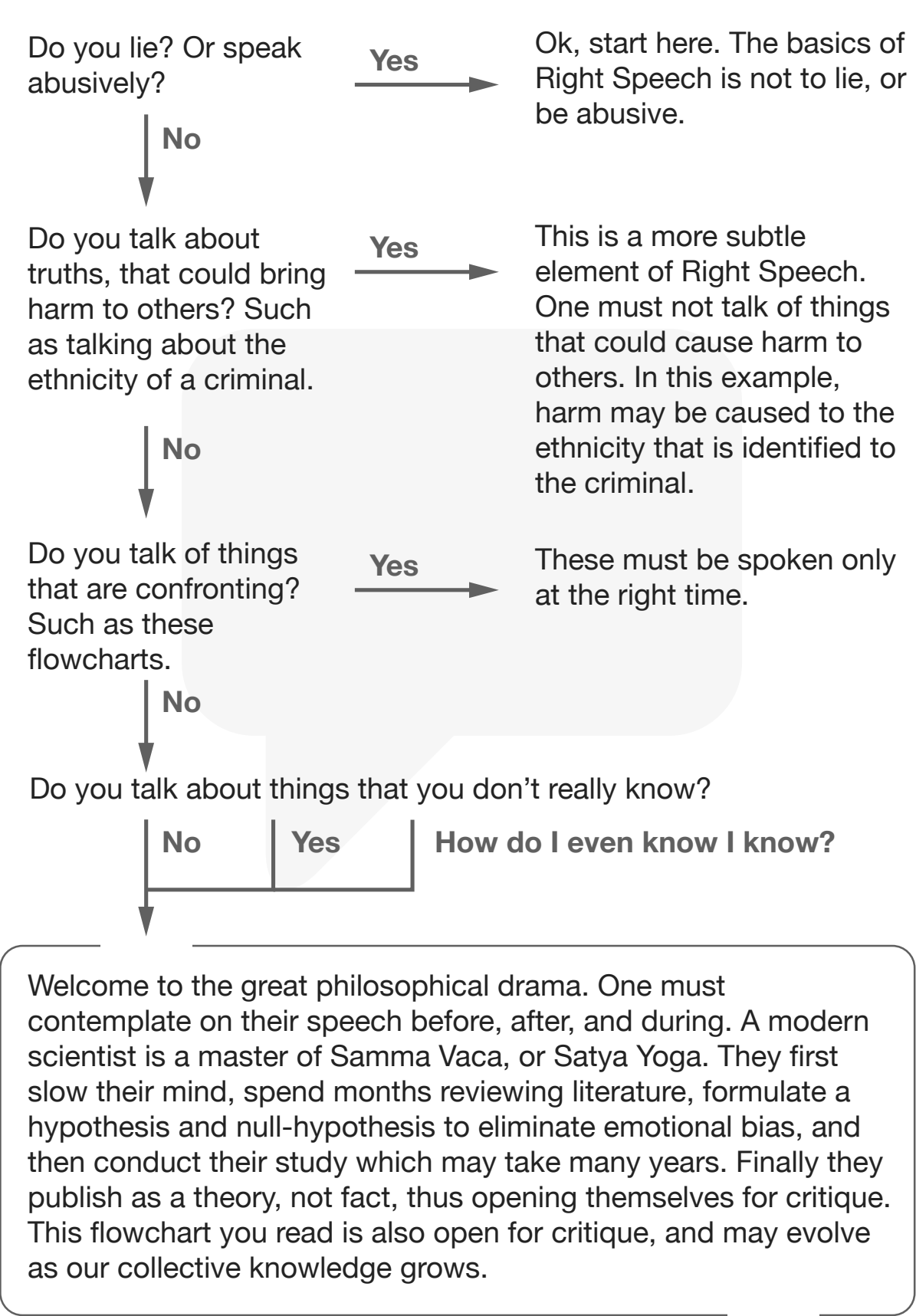
**How is it a 'bypass'?**

Your past experiences shapes 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.

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



# Right Speech (Samma vaca)



# Spiritual Ego

---

Do you identify with a spiritual belief. Buddhism for example.

Yes

This is one of the great causes of suffering. We could change our wording from “I am \_\_\_\_\_” to “I practice the teachings of \_\_\_\_\_”. While identification to spirituality is great for unifying groups, it also creates a division between different faiths that has lead to countless wars.

No

Do you use spiritual teachings to drive an alternative agenda, such as a business. Or use it to elevate your prominence in society.

No

Good, and keep asking this question. This is beautifully worded in Christian philosophy as the ‘tempts of the devil’. Unfortunately, the Roman Empire ended up culturally appropriating these teachings for their own greed and power.

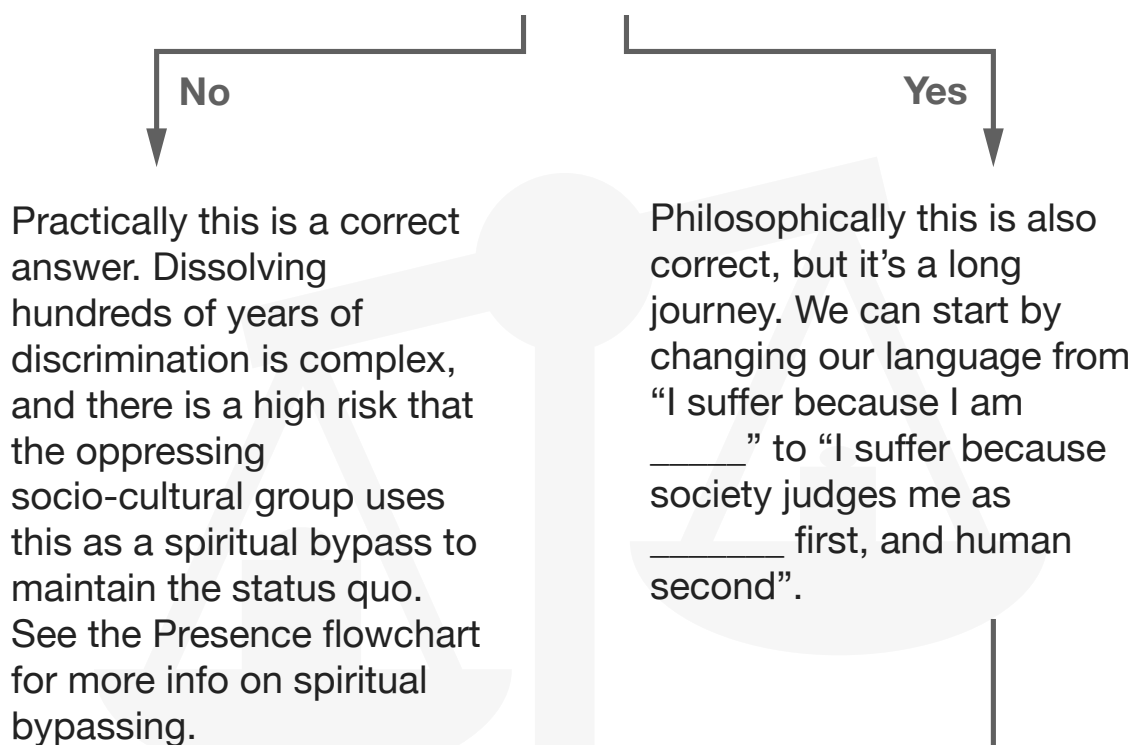
Yes

Not sure

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. In the same way, merging spirituality with business opens the gates of greed, not necessarily by you, but your descendants. See the Capitalism flow chart for more information.

# Identity and Discrimination

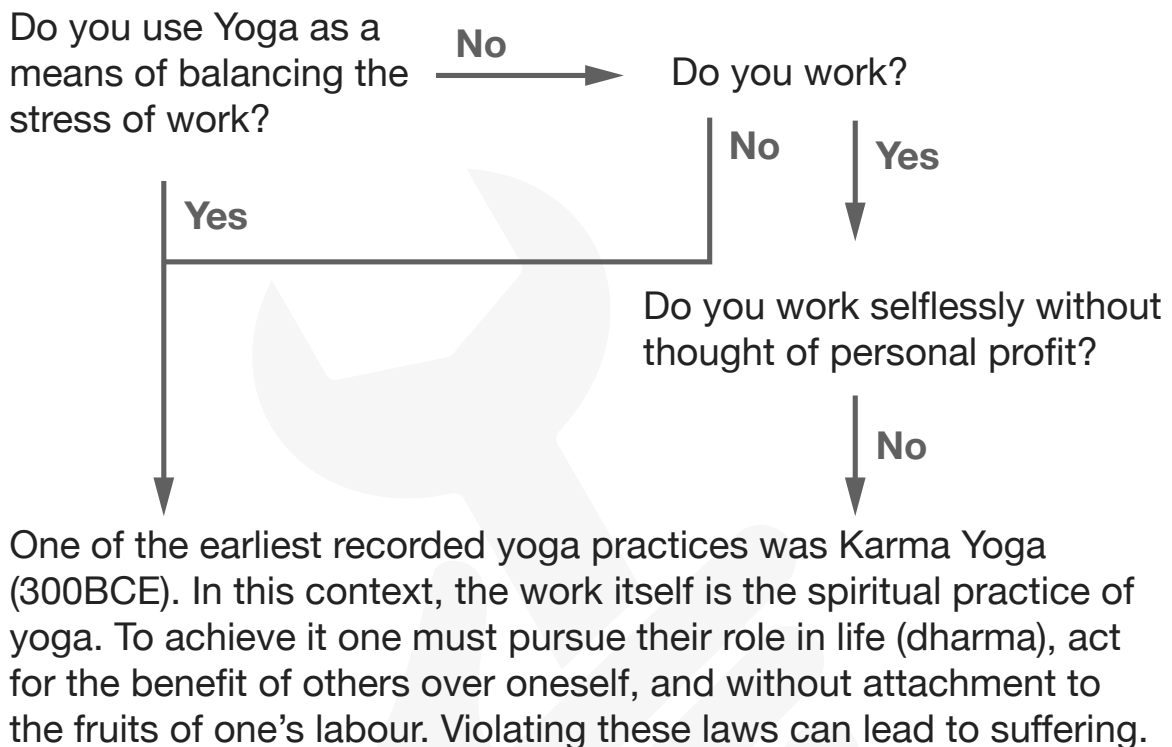
If our socio-cultural identity is just an artificial construct, can we use the practice of yoga to dissolve these constructs and live in a society of equality?



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 a first step towards an equitable society.

# Work

---



This is much better described in it's original text

“I declared two paths for the pure heart: Jnana 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. Fullfill 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

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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.

# References

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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)

**Instead of reading the back cover, why not open this book to a random page?**

