

DAJES JUVELIER KEATES

"With intellect, discipline, and generosity, Dages makes the esoteric pragmatic, presenting theory and practice and inspiration. I am so grateful to Dages for writing such a wonderful, articulate, beautiful guide to the Katonah material."

Nevine Michaan, Founder of Katonah Yoga

"This long-awaited definitive guide to Katonah Yoga advances the cause of working with our students intelligently, skillfully and comprehensively. From the wisdom of Katonah Yoga, we learn to refine our attention, navigate our polarities, evolve our techniques and refine our vision. Thankful to share this with interested students worldwide who've been touched by the insight of Nevine's work."

Elena Brower, Mother, Author of Art of Attention and Practice You

"Our SKY TING team is so thrilled to partner with Dages on this manual that is designed for anyone interested in Nevine's material or learning practical tools to enhance one's life through yoga. Dages shows the reader how powerful it is to have a wellbeing practice, articulates Nevine's esoteric dialogue in a practical way, and it's written with insight, love, and authenticity. We're so excited to share this book with our community!"

Krissy Jones, SKY TING

"This book is a true gift for any student or teacher interested in the Katonah Yoga practice. Nevine Michaan created the magical maps, wraps and theories of Katonah Yoga, and now Dages has figured out how to articulate the work in a clear, easy to follow way. Speaking from experience, this work will challenge you, soothe you, and be an infinite resource to utilize practical tools and techniques to enhance your wellbeing. An absolute must for your library!"

Chloe Kernaghan, SKY TING

"Dages is a truly brilliant teacher. She is informed by her rigorous study of multiple disciplines, her personal mission to dissolve gender stereotypes and inequalities, and, most importantly, by her experience as a student and teacher. I feel lucky to call her a friend, and have her as a well of inspiration from which I can regularly dip. Prepare to view the practice of yoga through an entirely new lens!"

Kyle Miller, LOVE Yoga

"Dages has an understanding of the mind body and spirit that is rare to find in any kind of teacher. Her personal understanding of the Katonah material is so accessible and masterfully communicated."

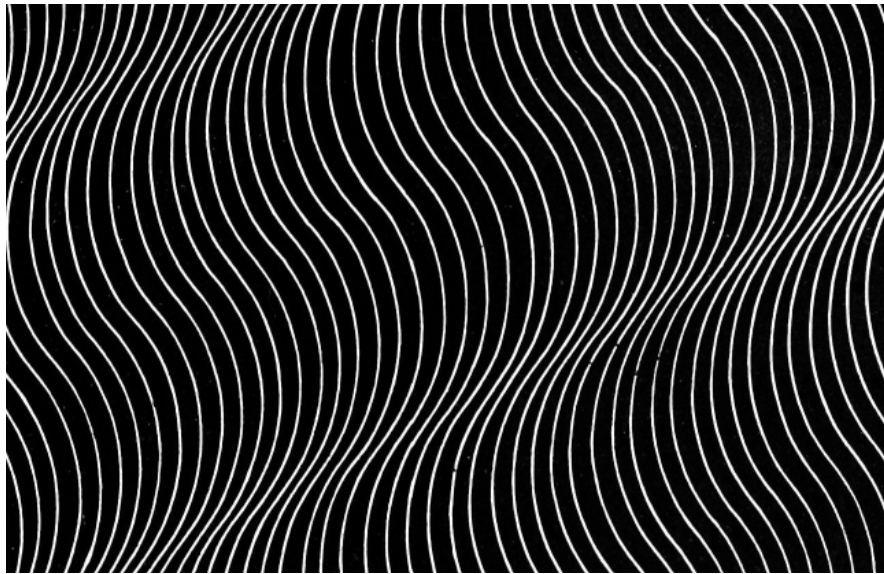
Sian Gordon, LOVE Yoga

RADICAL ACTS OF EMBODIMENT

TEACHING AND PRACTICES OF KATONAH YOGA®

SKY TING

**RADICAL ACTS OF EMBODIMENT:
TEACHING AND PRACTICES OF KATONAH YOGA®**



Written by DAGES JUVELIER KEATES
Katonah Yoga® Philosophy & Material by NEVINE MICHAAN

WHAT ARE WE DOING
WHEN WE ARE “DOING YOGA?”

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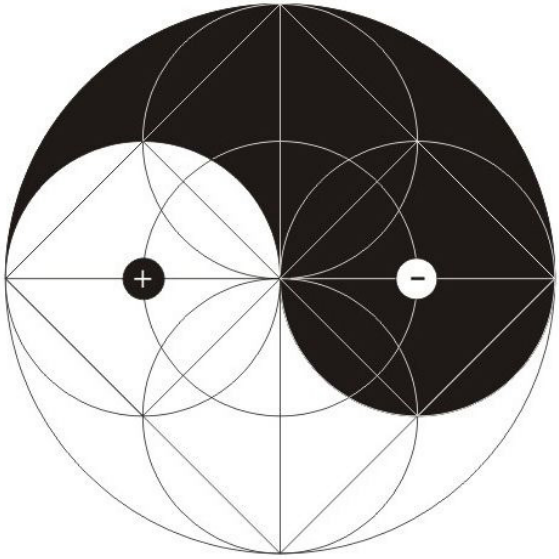
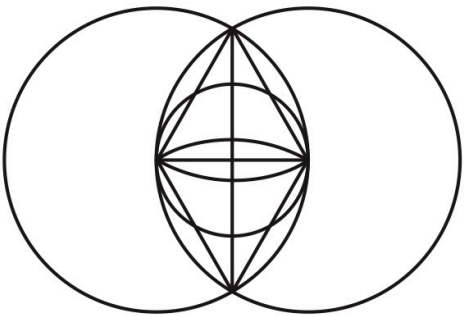
For me, a yoga practice is technical, durational, and alchemical. The myriad experiences and distractions of daily life can leave me feeling scattered and disorganized. I turn towards structural habits to protect and potentiate myself.

Many seek ways to define or describe yoga. I understand yoga to be a very broad category for many types of practices that combine concepts of mind, bodily comportment, and breath. Of course, all of these concepts are inextricably physically linked. By mind, I mean imagination, narrative, and metaphor. Bodily comportment can be about shapes, moving through shapes, or approaching stillness. Breath is all about timing: the breath works as a metronome, enabling one to manipulate timing, measure, and duration. Combined awareness of these facets of being enables the practitioner to make choices about attending to

life as it is, without intervention, or changing one's circumstances through use of technique.

One's body is not a project or a problem: it is the place each of us is always and already living from. Embodied practice can turn us toward this reality and away from tendencies to dissociate. To live in each of our changing, growing, yearning, dying, aging bodies is to be in touch with what is profoundly human. Practice is not to degrade oneself or aggrandize oneself but to find the complexity of life as it is on a human scale.

Self care is deeply altruistic. When I am able to attend to my life with focus and attention, I am less likely to seek out what I might need in others. More specifically, when a person is feeling good and grounded in themselves, a seemingly natural empathy and curiosity about others tends to



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present itself, as does the desire to touch and be touched, to make contact.

The abiding Katonah Yoga metaphor of center and circumference goes directly to this point: when I am organized in the center of my own circumstances—my sphere of influence—I can look both in and out. When another is similarly centered, our interactions are neither invasive or evasive. Rather, when these two spheres interact, a third space is created, like a Venn diagram or a vesica piscis. This overlap is a fertile portal through which something new can be born: a project, a conversation, a relationship, a person.

This is why I believe practice to be magical rather than medical. Medical dialogue seeks to categorize and diagnose, to refine and differentiate in order to better know. Of course there is value to this, but

I am not a doctor nor have I ever been interested in becoming one.

My body is not made of different parts. My body is inseparable from the ancestry, culture, social norms, and biology that give rise to and determine its legibility as it moves through time. Nothing about a self is static.

My goal in practice and teaching is personal and political. I want to turn towards the life that is here in all of its complexity. I want to decolonize the way I live in my own skin. I want to teach others to empower themselves, to make choices, to radically embody themselves. And these acts are political.

Radical acts of embodiment through making the unconscious conscious are not decorative: this is how we effect real change.

WHY PRACTICE? MY MANIFESTO:

The political is personal. The personal is practical. The practical is related to embodied daily life: it is reflected in how you carry out your life and acts. Many of us go about our lives in a disembodied/dissociated way, feeling that our bodies are somehow split from our minds. We exist at different locations on a spectrum of dissociated/disembodied to embodied/integrated.

Social forces and personal trauma split us apart, rendering us zombie-like and feeling distant from embodied, emotional existence.

But our bodies are not abstract, nor are they delusional: they are the home of reality. All of our lives happen right here—there is nowhere else to live from. Our bodies and minds have never been split, although we have felt them to be. We are not institutions, we are not museums, we are not abstractions, and we are not sites of occupation or projects of improvement.

Nor are we discrete. We live in the larger social surround and the structural oppression of that surround is real and violent. Racism is violent. Patriarchy is violent. Late capitalism is shot through with violence. These are the forces that act on each individual and culture. To disavow

this uncomfortable complexity is a delusion that serves the split. Violence runs through us, in us, and out of us; part of the collateral effect of these traumas is a breakdown of narrative, of a sense of cohesiveness. Our metaphors for this state have to do with unraveling, falling apart, or coming undone and reflect an experience of shattering something that was previously whole.

Every body is a series of open-ended questions—a third space complicating the inherited binaries of nature/culture, self/other. What might be possible if we turn towards the queer assemblage of ourselves, towards the complexity of being a “self” born of various people’s genetic material, ancestral archives, social forces, gendered and racialized paradigms, and myriad viruses and bacteria? What might happen when we uncontrol our sociability, unhold our delusion of discreteness?

A practice involves time spent doing, being, and weaving the narrative of ourselves into cohesion through making the unconscious conscious, emotionally and somatically. It is not about boundaries. It is about the capacity for integration within the self and an enhancement of our authentic connection to others.

TEACHING YOGA

I consider Katonah Yoga to be a kind of frame or a lens. It can be applied to an ashtanga or kundalini practice, to swimming laps, hiking in the woods, or smoking a cigarette. It is a way of organizing embodied narrative and can be used in conversation with almost any activity a person engages in.

The teachers take this frame and apply it to whatever their deal is. Katonah Yoga is, by its nature, non-dogmatic, so people teach all kinds of things when they are "Katonah Inspired" or "Katonah Aligned" or "Katonah Yoga Teachers."¹

It's hard to pin down what it is exactly because the methods are open source and in dialogue with the happening thing that is life. A teacher may hook onto a metaphor for months and then you never hear it again. Depending on what Nevine is reading or learning, her own references will range from Proust to preparing an oven for baking. The material is constantly informing, as well as being formed by, practitioners.

A Few Teaching Principles:

Many people are excited by the new information in Katonah Yoga but wonder how it can be applied to their teaching. Don't worry too much about trying to understand everything before teaching anything. Follow your curiosity, embody what resonates, and teach your practice.

Everyone has an angle. Each of us are only able to teach from our own subjectivity. While you may see common threads in students' weaves and similar foibles in their forms, try not to universalize—you too are only seeing things from your point of view. One of the reasons we practice in a circle is to see that everyone is up to something, everyone has technique, and the community holds vital complexity. How we as individuals relate to others is an embodiment of ethics.

I believe that it is important to know what your angles are when you are teaching. Each of us comes into the studio and each encounters with our own implicit biases—it is crucial, as a teacher, to interrogate these. This is especially true when it comes to diagnostics, adjustments, and the "seat of the teacher." When I am looking at someone as a teacher, my question is: What does this person need to get them to where they want to go next? How do I help orient them towards it?

Seat of the Teacher: Question the Assumption of Objectivity

The goal of the teacher is to share technique and teach skills. However, the role a teacher occupies varies subtly if you are teaching a private versus teaching a group class. In all cases, you do not need to have all of the answers nor do you need to pretend to. A valid answer to a student's question is always "I don't know." Use community to bolster the skills you already own and feel free to bring another teacher in for their opinion. Students are not clients even if they are privates.

What can be tricky about being a yoga teacher is navigating personal boundaries ethically. The role of a teacher carries authority. Many students will put their teachers in a "power position"; it is our obligation to know that and take responsibility for our behavior.

Some overall considerations:

- Offer your insights into what you can measure when you read someone
- Don't pathologize/diagnose your students
- Know that *they* are "showing" and *you* are "seeing"
- Know you are always coming from your own angle, which is why it can be so helpful to get another teacher's opinion
- Communicate what you see is working beautifully before pointing out "foibles"

- Be mindful of how/who/when you offer to touch
- Find stillness, quietude, and embodied presence everyday to recalibrate your own sense of being grounded, centered and contained within yourself



² See footnote on previous page.



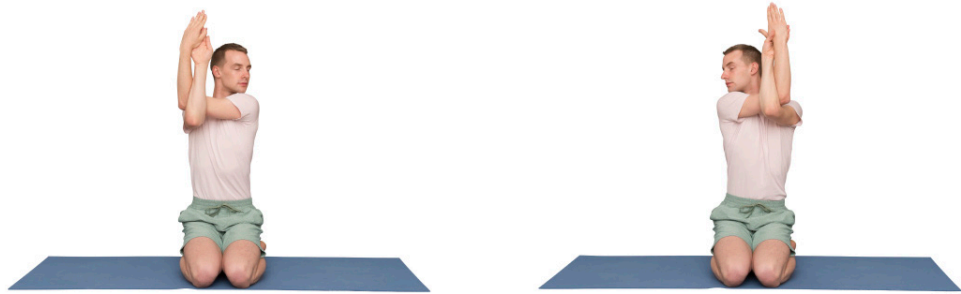
COW FACE POSE (Gomukhasana)

- Stirring
- Twists
- Up and down
- Swimming
- Switching sides by spiraling
- Standing on knees



ARM WORK

- Pole work
- Cow Face Pose (Gomukhasana)
- Reverse namaste
- Shoulder vinyasa



S/HERO'S POSE

- Thyroid flush
- Hands in tennis racket
- Cow Face Pose



STAFF POSE

- Twists
- Fold into forward fold



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TWISTS

- Wide angle forward fold
- Head-to-Knee Forward Bend (Janu Sirsasana)
- Bound angle
- Half Lotus
- Supported reclining





PIGEON

- Twists to 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock, elbow variations, block variations
- Backbend, block in the pubis, upward twists
- Double pigeon
- Lotus variation



COW FACE POSE

- Feet in sacrum
- Strap adjustment
- Twists
- Standing: Put them on their spit. Establish the perineum as a plug in the socket.



ARM WORK

- Pole work
- Cow Face Pose
- Eagle
- Reverse prayer
- Shoulder vinyasa

ABOUT DAGES

As a teacher, Dages prizes clarity, compassion and depth of practice. She emphasizes open transmission of knowledge and draws from a wide and various background in yoga, dance, herbalism, language, Judaism, and academic theory.

Raised in Jackson Hole, WY, Dages attended Bard College, where she received a BA in Dance. Undertaking formal yoga studies in 2002, she earned accreditations in both the Bihar and Kundalini lineages. These models of interiority led her to a study of her own lineage of Judaism, and yielded time spent absorbed in Jewish study and extended stays in Jerusalem's Ultra-Orthodox seminaries.

Dages enrolled in graduate school in 2010 to study feminist, queer, and psychoanalytic theories. She attained her M.A. in interdisciplinary gender and performance studies from NYU.

Her syncretic teaching style has been profoundly affected and enriched by immersion in studies with her mentor Nevine Michaan, founder of Katonah Yoga. Today, Dages is recognized as a senior teacher within the Katonah Community, distinguished for her insight, her ability to push through the boundaries created by patriarchal thinking, and her empowerment of students with precision, empathy and strength. She is on the staff at both The Studio and SKY TING in Manhattan. Recent collaborations include a series of workshops with Elena Brower, and retreats and teacher trainings with Abbie Galvin, Sacred Fig founder Anton Brandt, and Sky Ting co-founder Chloe Kernaghan in Bali, Canada, Dominican Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Panama, Morocco, Switzerland, and Vancouver. Her accomplishments were recently acknowledged in Yoga Sleuth and Live the Process. Dages contributes to teach.yoga.



Image by Alex Kikis

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