

# Philosophy on the mat

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## Yoga Teacher Book Reviews



**Sue Baker**

RYT 500



“Philosophy on the Mat” is beautifully written with sensitivity and respect for the culture and traditions of yoga philosophy. As a lover of yoga philosophy I have always wanted to try and share this passion with my students but often struggled with the practical aspects. This book is full of great ideas for incorporating yoga philosophy into my classes and it will be an essential part of my yoga teaching tool kit.



## **Victoria Adamson**

Yoga teacher trainer,  
Apanaveda School of Yoga



I received this amazing book today! Thank you for writing it so clearly and beautifully! I run a school of yoga, and would like it as a book for all my students to buy, to help them understand the sutra. I'm going to ask them to buy a copy each. Then from the next course, I'll make it the pre course reading book!!! I love it...

I've been teaching yoga full time for nearly 30 years, trained in India and I feel I am still learning, and this book is encouraging me to study more!



## Kaye Oakley

Yoga teacher/therapist



The first thing I thought when I started reading this book was how much I wished it had been written about 20 years ago. This is an incredibly useful book, and definitely should be in the collection of every serious yoga teacher. The breadth of material that is covered is extraordinary and makes this book a truly remarkable achievement. But more importantly - the author makes the ideas of these great texts comprehensible to we mere mortals with stunning clarity and succinctness.

The practical advice that she gives is perfect - she really tells us how to bring the philosophy to the mat - but in a way that doesn't tell yoga teachers how to teach, and still provides space for individual teaching styles and contexts.



The description of the chakras is so clear and elegant - she makes what can be a bit of a difficult concept really grounded and easy to understand. Her recommended reading list could also keep you going for the rest of your life. What's particularly great about this book is that it makes you excited to get back into the source texts again with fresh eyes. I can't recommend this highly enough.



## Revital Baron

CYT 500



I loved reading Philosophy on the Mat. I wish I had this book before, as it would have saved me so much time and confusion. The author did an excellent job summarising most of what you need to know about the Hindu scriptures chronologically as they unfold from the early days of the Vedas to the latest Hatha Yoga Pradipika. From the eternal ideas to rituals, mantras, mudras, and meditation guides, I loved how this book takes us through this ancient wisdom as it evolved through the centuries. This is a must-read book for every yoga lover ready to delve into deeper levels of the spiritual aspects of yoga and for every yoga teacher looking to incorporate more of the philosophy in their lessons.





## Cynthia Davis

500+RYT and plant-based coach



As a yoga teacher I have a full library of yoga history and philosophy reference books. I am a sponge for this information to weave into my yoga classes. I have to say if I just had this one book in my library, it would it would probably be enough. Barbara has taken so many complex yoga concepts and organized the information it in a way that is so easy to understand and digest. I sat down to read a chapter and could not stop reading. This is a must have book for any new or seasoned yoga teacher or anyone wanting to understand the history and philosophy behind yoga teachings. Barbara also offers helpful ways for teachers to use the information by providing teacher tips and guidance through thoughtful question and action prompts, meditations, mantras, and so much more. I am truly so grateful to have this book as a resource.



**Agnes Kru**

Yoga Teacher



So many books have been written on how to bring yoga philosophy OFF the mat yet I have seen none on how to teach it ON the mat.

This is an important book for yoga teachers and avid students. The topic is vast. All main scriptures are covered: Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali's Sutras, Tantras, Purana and Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Yet it's very clearly and simply summarized.

If you haven't read all the scriptures (who has time for that!?), this is an indispensable book in helping you to find clarity on the topics covered and the core teachings. And the most important part: How to teach those essences on the mat, in your yoga class.

I recommend this book to all teachers to read from beginning to end first, and later, use it as a reference book and pick the topics you wish.

Hopefully, this book helps to bring more philosophy into yoga classes nowadays.

Thanks to the author for helping teachers to include the essence of yoga in our sessions.



## Sarah Wenz Elliot

Yoga Teacher



Philosophy on the Mat is a clear and beautifully written summary of all the important historic texts of yogic philosophy that serves as a fantastic resource helping yoga teachers to elevate their teaching skills beyond just the teaching of asana practice.

As a yoga teacher myself, I am fascinated with the ancient wisdom but often feel overwhelmed with the length and language of the pieces.

The author offers a concise version of the ancient texts in simple and easy-to-understand language. She outlines the essence of the teachings, applies them to modern day context and gives many options to apply that knowledge to practical teaching.





The book is filled with gems; you will find different mantras, mudras and meditations, teaching tips and a great resource for self-exploration. It will not only benefit your teaching, but also your personal practice. I wouldn't be surprised if many teacher trainers around the world will start to use this book.

It is truly a pleasure to read and a source of information so valuable that I will often come back to. I highly recommend *Philosophy on the Mat* for every yoga teacher that is passionate about the origins of the practice, the importance of it today and how to apply this knowledge and wisdom to their own practice and teaching.



## Lisa Fabry

Yoga Therapist



Philosophy on the Mat offers a clear and concise overview of the key texts of yoga: perfect for teachers wanting to deepen their own understanding and offer inspiration to their students.

The book covers important texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Sutras, Tantras, Puranas and the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Each chapter explains the key philosophical principles of the text and provides teacher tips for practices like meditations, sacred rituals, and self-enquiry.

This book helps readers understand the deeper roots of yoga and answers important questions such as why the Vedas are revered as 'shruti', the origins of revered mantras like the Gayatri, Shanti and Mahamrityunjaya, the meaning of yoga terms like 'brahman', 'atman', 'maya', 'samskaras', 'viveka', 'abhyasa', 'vairagya' and more.



It also explains the 4 paths to 'moksha' (liberation), the 3 gunas, and key concepts from the Yoga Sutras such as the Eight Limbs, the Siddhis, and Kaivalya. We learn about Tantra terms such as 'trataka', 'maithuna' and 'nyasa', and delve deeper into chakras, yantras, mudras and mantras. If you've ever wondered how the chariot metaphor explains the relationship between body, mind and soul, what the 12 lotus petals of the heart chakra mean, or how we can use ancient stories of gods and goddesses to connect with modern students, this book will illuminate you here.

Philosophy on the Mat is easy to read, well-written, and full of ideas for teaching strategies. It also includes a valuable bibliography for those who want to study the texts further.



## Linda Moncur

Yoga & Meditation Teacher/Guide



This is a book that yoga teachers will want to keep on their bedside tables to have at their fingertips: a vast wealth of yogic teachings and traditions, all in one place.

Reading through the chapters of yoga: history, traditions, and texts I felt humbled and at the same time, empowered by the rich yoga heritage that is the foundation of modern yoga of today.

Western yoga has become more secular in its offerings. This book reminds teachers that traditional yoga is a spiritual practice with a guide to holistic living. The author is inviting teachers to dig into the teachings, to infuse asana practice with other elements like ceremony, ritual and mythology and to pose questions to students, leading to personal growth and spiritual development.

Returning to the roots of yoga can only inspire and enrich the yoga experience for both students and teachers. Thank-you Barbara Courtille for writing this book! It is a great service to the yoga community.





## Candela Derqui

Himalayan Yoga & Meditation Teacher



This is a fantastic book for yoga teachers who want to blend philosophical ideas into their yoga classes. Whether you're new to teaching or have been doing it for a while, you'll find this book really helpful.

What I love about it is how easy it is to understand. The author explains things in a clear way that anyone can follow, no matter how much experience you have. The book is also really well organized, so you can find what you need quickly.

Looking back on my own journey as a yoga teacher, I wish I had this book when I was starting out. It would have given me so much more confidence and direction in my classes. Overall, "Philosophy on the Mat" is a must-have for any yoga teacher who wants to add more depth to their practice and teaching.





**Amy Scully**  
Yoga Teacher



Philosophy on the Mat is a comprehensive Guide to navigating the complex terrain of Yoga Philosophy traditions and approaches.

A deep dive exploring systems of thought including the Vedas, Upanishads and unpacking the Sutras, Tantric Mudras and Mantras.

As a teacher of Yoga I have been searching for a text that gives such an overview and know that the teacher tips from the author will light up the path to sharing yoga philosophy on the mat with my students.



## **Anna Vasudevan**

Yoga Teacher



An essential and needed companion for yoga teachers.

Yoga in the west is in most cases a synonym of asana. “Philosophy on the mat” came right on time to give yoga teachers the missing link of yoga philosophy’s practical applications.

Yoga has far more to offer than just exercise to the physical body and this book helps us understand or remember that. You will find here, not just philosophy, but also teacher tips and meditations that any yoga teacher can use in their lives and in their classes.



## **Manu Molina**

Biz & Marketing Mentor for  
Yoga & Wellness Experts



Philosophy on the Mat offers an invaluable resource for yoga teachers seeking to deepen their understanding of yoga philosophy and to integrate it into their teaching and personal practice. Packed with rich insights and practical guidance, this book serves as a comprehensive guide to not only grasp the essence of yoga philosophy but also apply it meaningfully in everyday practice and instruction. Whether you're a seasoned teacher or just starting your journey,

Philosophy on the Mat is a must-have companion for anyone passionate about infusing their teachings with the transformative insights of yoga philosophy. I wholeheartedly recommend it to all yoga teachers looking to elevate their teaching and practice and enrich their students' experiences on the mat.



**Martine Johannesson**  
Yoga Teacher



This book resonates with the target audience, capturing the essence of the practice while also inviting readers to explore and deepen their understanding of yoga.

Clean lines and an uncluttered layout, along with great tips on how to teach, make it truly valuable.

This book is filled with authenticity and depth, reflecting the rich history and philosophy of yoga. I highly recommend it to practitioners seeking a genuine understanding of the practice.



## **Delphine Leblanc**

Yoga Teacher



The sub-title of the book “an essential guide for yoga teachers,” is in fact a jewel for all seasoned yogis. You can use this book for your personal practice, and to enhance your teachings.

The title reminds us that yoga is not just asana but the richness of the book goes beyond the Yoga Sutras, the main text studied in yoga teacher trainings.

The author exposes several important philosophical texts (more in the Samkhya camp) and some entries in the tantric tradition.

The book is well structured with some history and context, and how to apply yoga philosophy on and beyond the mat.

What I found most important is the advice to do our own self study: this is not frivolous folkloric stuff... it's a serious affair!

In a nutshell, “Philosophy on the Mat” is for self study, and it shows that the path is not that difficult. As for asana, practice, study, and all is coming !