



# INDIA NO. 5



Saturday, February 23, 2019 . . . The Divine



PEOPLE WORSHIPPING AT 1000 YEAR OLD BATHING WELL



LOCAL WOMAN WITH COW AND GOATS



OUTSIDE OF TEMPLE IN MELKOTE

## The Divine, continued . . .

Yoga means union. Union of breath, body, and mind. More importantly the purpose of yoga is to connect to the Divine, the universe, to the supreme consciousness, to God. This is the teaching that I have heard over and over again from the Indian scholars I have been studying with. Yoga was created as a way to quiet the churning of the self, mind or *manas* (Sanskrit word referring to individual consciousness) enough, so that the divine within can be heard and connected with. Yoga has many, many physical benefits as we all know and appreciate. But this quieting, is the purpose of yoga, and especially Ashtanga Yoga, as described by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras.

As I've been here, I've been thinking a lot about this connection to God. I've also been contemplating many questions. What about folks who struggle with a concept of God? What about folks who don't believe in God? What happens for them as they practice yoga? What happens for them as they cultivate the 8 limbs in their lives? Whether we believe in God or not, we can all believe in the miracle of the ocean waves or a rainbow or the clean smell after the rain. Maybe that delight or faith can be anchored from within, and doubt about a higher power can be set aside. It does not matter what Divine energy you believe in, what it looks like or sounds like, only that it's an energy that comes with love, compassion, unwavering support and no judgment.

Many of us have struggles with religion and the God of our childhood. This is not that. This is something that resonates with you and supports you. Since being here, I have tried to suspend my own doubts about the Divine and to

trust in this teaching, to trust in how I feel on this path, how I feel in my body and how Yoga has positively affected my life.

I have had some completely ordinary asana practices here. I've also had some of the best practices in my life. I had an experience this week after practice and pranayama while lying in savasana. I felt like I dissolved into the universe. I was awake and present, but at the same time I could feel the edges of myself soften and my mind open without limitation. I could feel the ground underneath me, and at the same time I also felt suspended and completely free. There was an incredible feeling of support caring for me. Wow.

I am still integrating and understanding all of my experiences here. India has many layers to delve into. At its core, it holds mystical qualities and magic. The mind can get pretty tangled up with all of the cultural differences, or it can drop into the magic and be at peace.

I will keep living this Yoga on and off my mat. I will keep doing my asana practice and challenging myself physically. I will continue a daily practice of pranayama that creates the ultimate control of breath, and in turn quiets the *vritti*. I will also keep questioning the purpose of it all as a means for growth and personal evolution and also so that I can continue sharing this path as a teacher to all who want to learn. The gratitude I feel for my yoga practice and my teaching is incredibly deep. I am trying to find the words to adequately convey this feeling.

Steeped in immense gratitude. Om Shanti.