

The Path of Denial and the Path of Intimacy

“Note the difference between the path of denial and the path of intimacy.

In the past, yoga was the domain of males who practiced a particular asana toward life-sannyasana, "throwing down, laying aside, giving up, resignation, renunciation of worldly concerns." Those who practice this posture toward life are called sannyasin, or renouncers, and they generally take vows of celibacy, poverty, and obedience to their superiors in the tradition. The ideal is to be poor and homeless and yet free within, as well as free to practice yoga and meditation all day. This is the ancient path, and it was profound; the energy that would otherwise go into raising children and running a business goes into practicing and preserving the knowledge of meditation. Historically, almost all meditation texts were composed by male renouncers, and so the language system and techniques were shaped for their lifestyle of detachment and denial. All of us who practice meditation today owe these renouncers a debt of gratitude. They kept the faith.

“In the modern Western world, yoga is practiced mostly by women and men who live in the world and have families and jobs. This is the path of intimacy, and in many ways, it is the opposite of renouncing. Those on the path of intimacy work with attachment, desire, and responsibility, honoring and embracing each aspect of life, as time, energy, and ethics permit; their yoga evolves through love, work, play, and honoring the bonds of friendship and family. Instead of taking vows of celibacy, poverty and obedience, those on the path of intimacy experience sexual relationships, work to generate wealth, and explore the play of independence and cooperation with others.”