



Episode 1

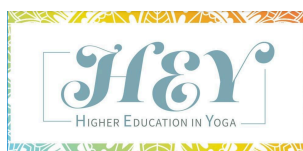
00:01 Alanna Kaivalya: Welcome to the Modern Mystics podcast. I'm your host, Alanna Kaivalya, the yoga doctor. I'm here to help you realize your potential as a spiritual leader, and elevate your work in the realm of yoga, mysticism and spirituality. This podcast covers all of our favorite topics: Yoga, Alchemy, Astrology, Divination, Spirituality, Psychology, Ritual. And mystical practices, both ancient and modern. Get ready to up level your status as a modern mystic.

[music]

00:35 AK: Alright, I'm so excited everybody, this is an amazing day for me, because I am officially back into podcasting. As it turns out, I was actually the very first yoga teacher back in 2005 to have a podcast, if you could believe it. That's a long time ago, we still think of right now is the early days of podcasting. So you can imagine, I've been at this for a while, but the podcast has gone through its highs and its lows and its lulls, and I've decided to pick it back up again. So, this iteration of the podcast will be devoted all to modern mysticism.

01:16 AK: Now, if you know me at all, and it's okay if you don't. But if you know me, then you know that I've been immersed in yoga and teaching yoga for the last 20 years or so. But I don't want this to dissuade you or to put you off if you are not exclusively a yoga practitioner or a yoga teacher. The Modern Mystics podcast will cover all realms of mysticism. And I want to start this podcast by giving you a bit of an overview as to what exactly mysticism is. I figure that's a good place to start.

01:50 AK: I have a couple of goals with this podcast, and one of them is to be honest and real with you, there's no scripted anything here, this is off the cuff, it's just me chatting into my microphone and delivering what I hope is a positive and uplifting message that will help you hone your skills as a mystic in this crazy modern day world.





02:16 AK: The other thing is that I want to bring on some guests in the future to also add to the conversation here as modern mystics, because it's not just me talking about this topic, this is a broader topic, and I want to really hammer home the importance of your work as a modern mystic. So without further ado, let's get into our topic of discussion today, which is the question, what is a modern mystic?

02:44 AK: Now, let's just unpack the first word here, "modern". So that means that it's somebody who lives today, right? Somebody who's not alive last year, even 50 years ago, hundreds of years ago, those types of mysticism, and I'll get into that in just a moment as to what they entail, and what they were like the historical types of mysticism. They're not necessarily relevant for us in this modern day age. And what I'm really interested in, is working with people like you, working with people today. Working with people in this time.

03:26 AK: And yes, of course, ancient practices have a lot of merit, and are incredibly important and we will use and talk about ancient practices. Of course you all know that I'm hugely in love with yoga, which is a very ancient practice, but I'm also in love with other things like alchemy, which is another ancient practice. Astrology, also ancient. But the application of these things needs to be done in a modern context. That is so important because if you apply the wrong medicine to a person, it's just not going to work. If you apply the right medicine to the wrong type of person, it's also not going to work.

04:09 AK: So one of the things you'll hear me talk about a lot in this podcast, is how and why things are applicable for us today right now. It means we may need to update the way we utilize it, the way we talk about it, we may need to think outside the box a little bit about what we do. So let me give you an example. We all love yoga, and it's a 5,000-year-old practice. And it's often thought of as the silver bullet or the panacea for anything that ails us in this day and age. But the reality is it's actually not. There are some things that yoga does really well, and there are also some things that yoga does not do well.



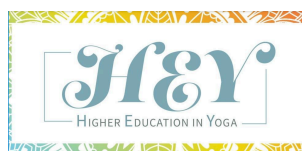


04:53 AK: So, yoga was created over the course of thousands of years it was primarily initially a ritual and meditative practice, our asanas, the poses that we all love are very, very new. In fact, they're about 100 years old. So the pieces of yoga that have longevity are the rituals of the practice much of the chanting or the mantras of the practice as well as the meditation. Those are the really old important pieces of yoga. Now, meditation is beneficial and it's not just yoga that has meditation.

05:31 AK: In fact, most all spiritual traditions around the world have a type of meditation practice. But meditation in terms of yoga is a very, it's actually a very masculine practice. You must sit very still, you have to clear your mind of all thoughts, you're trying to essentially create space between the thoughts and the conscious mind and that can actually be very frustrating for a modern day person. [chuckle]

06:00 AK: Now, hopefully you're kind of nodding along with me. As I started my meditation practice many years ago, I found that it was very difficult, but I was told that I was supposed to do it, as a yogi, these are the things you have to do. And so I did it, and I developed a very, very consistent meditation practice twice a day for 20 minutes, for years and about seven years into this. I realized that nothing was really happening to me, that I was getting very good at sitting still and putting a wonderful facade on my face to the world to portray myself as a yogi. That all this stuff was working. But I was still just as angry and hurt and dealing with some of the old emotions inside, as I had been when I started the meditation practice seven years prior.

06:49 AK: Now the reason is because, yoga as an ancient practice, it doesn't necessarily have some of the modern technology that we do, which is things like psychology, modern psychology, introduces us to other parts of our psyche. Yoga primarily looks at the conscious mind, which is what we're trying to create space in, in meditation, doesn't really have a lot to say about the unconscious mind. It does talk about our habits and patterns. We see some talk about that, for example, in Yoga Sutra, chapter four, but it doesn't really address the power of the unconscious and the





fact that our emotions, all of our triggers are driven by the unconscious. So if we are truly to apply yoga, an ancient mystical practice, to ourselves as modern day people, we need to do a couple of upgrades in order for it to work.

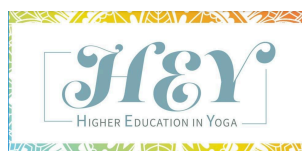
07:42 AK: And maybe that sounds outrageous, right? Why would we want to change something that seems so perfect? Well, the reason is that the book on yoga has not been closed, it is still being written, and we are still writing it. And as modern day practitioners, we need to write it in such a way that it's truly applicable and works for us. So that's one of the things that I wanna do with you all here in this Modern Mystics podcast.

08:13 AK: And this is something that I do every day with the mystics in my community inside my highereducation.yoga membership, and I just wanna put an invitation out there for all of you if you're interested in checking that out, I offer a \$1, 14 day trial. Super easy, just go to highereducation.yoga/trial.

08:36 AK: So let's get to the second part of the term that we're exploring right now. Modern mystic. We unpacked "modern" a little bit, we want things to work for us as people who are practicing these spiritual practices today. And how about the "mystic" piece? So first of all, I just wanna throw this out there that a yogi is always a mystic but mystics are not always yogis. So, mysticism is a practice that exists across many different types of spirituality.

09:11 AK: So for example, Christianity has a mystical side, it's called Gnosticism. Islam has a mystical side, it's called Sufism. And Judaism has a mystical practice, which is the Cabala. So there are mystical arms of almost any type of spiritual or religious practice that you can think of out there. Yoga is the mystical arm of the Hindu practice. What it means to be mystical is that we turn inward for the source of our wisdom, expertise, inspiration, we don't look outward for it.

09:55 AK: So rather than pray to something, or rather than hope that something





outside of you is going to come to the rescue when you need them, it's more that mystics turn inward and pray to that element within. So let me give you another example. Yogis love Ganesh. Ganesh is a very popular deity, and is known for removing obstacles. So let's say we have a problem. And on any given day, all of us people have, I don't know, about five to seven problems operating. [chuckle] So we've always got a handful of problems happening. Let's pick one. And we'd love help resolving this problem, so we could sit down and we could say, "Hey Ganesh, I really need help with this issue."

10:45 AK: And in our mind what we're doing is we're putting the problem out there, and we're also putting the ability to resolve it outside of us. We're saying, "Alright Ganesh out there, will you swoop in and help us with this issue." And by some force of magic, Ganesh is supposed to do that. Now it doesn't really work that way, unfortunately. And for mystics it really doesn't work that way. So for mystics when we talk about an aspect like Ganesh. And it could be any... I'm using yogic examples, but I could be using examples from any faith spirituality or religion.

11:28 AK: For the mystic, we're not praying outwardly to Ganesh, we would say, "Alright, Ganesh," within, right? The part of me that has this element of problem solving, I wanna invoke that. I wanna invoke the part of me that is connected to that essence, that spirit, and I want to figure out how to solve this problem, that's what it means to be a mystic. Essentially, we are looking to be our own problem solvers here. It's a pretty wild and radical practice. What it does is it gets rid of the intermediary between you and spirit, there's nothing between you and spirit, you recognize spirit is within you, it flows from you, it is all... It's embedded within all of your molecules it is who you are, and at any time you need assistance, support, inspiration, resources, answers, the only place you have to go is within.

12:35 AK: So that's the mystical path. As a modern mystic we all need to learn to go within and understand and recognize our own expertise, our own supports, our own connection to source. Now this becomes incredibly important for us as modern people,





because right now we are at a very fascinating and interesting time in human history. In fact, we've never seen this particular time in human history ever before. So about 150 years plus ago everyone that you lived with and around, would have the same belief system as you did and the idea of saying no to that belief system to rejecting it, to walking away, to saying, "We're not doing that belief system anymore. Oh, you know what, I'm gonna go explore this other one. Oh, I kind of like parts of it, but I'm gonna choose parts of this other... "

13:36 AK: That never happened, it wasn't thought of, it wasn't even an option. So we live in a very interesting time and we have a very new, very modern problem, which is that we grow up in this time and place where we have options. Perhaps we were raised with a particular belief system, or perhaps we were raised with a particular religion. Sometimes we're not. And then as we grew older in growing and growing numbers, the numbers statistically on this are increasing. We are walking away from whatever practice we may have grown up with. And as adults, we essentially end up with what is often and wonderfully described as a God-sized hole. [chuckle]

14:27 AK: So as our psyche is, which means the entirety of our psychology, our psyche is a very interesting place. And about 25% of it is dedicated and reserved to the mystery. About 25% of it wants answers to questions like, "Why am I here? What's my purpose? How did this all come to be? What does it all mean?" We spend a lot of time wondering about the answers to these bigger metaphysical, mystical questions. And if we don't have the support of some type of spirituality, religion, or other such practice, we suffer from it, we suffer greatly. We suffer from apathy, we suffer from a lack of direction, we start to suffer from things like anxiety, depression.

15:25 AK: We feel disconnected from the world, we feel disconnected from each other, we feel disconnected from any sense of purpose. We don't know why we're here, and why would we do anything positive, because there's no sense of this fundamental source that is bigger and beyond us. So this is an interesting problem, and this is a brand new problem that we as humans in this modern day age face. Now, the other





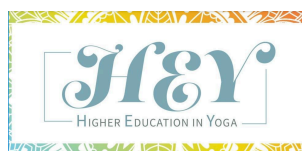
issue is that it's not easy to solve. We can't just go back to our old religions. There's a reason why it didn't work for us in the first place. There's a reason why we're seeking something different, but the reality is we all are seeking it. And the reason I know that is because there are about 30 million people in America alone who practice yoga.

16:18 AK: Now, I wanna get super honest with you right now. And it may feel like blasphemy, but yoga itself, the Asana practice, is actually not that great of an exercise. Let's be real. It's not cardio, it's not gonna build your cardiovascular ability. I don't care how fast you do your sun salutations. It's quite repetitive, and there are actually entire muscle groups that are not worked during Asana. In fact, you'd be hard pressed to find an Asana that works your biceps and that works your upper back. Very, very few that actually work your hamstrings.

16:53 AK: Okay, so we can talk about those types of Asana problems later. And I just want you to sit with that for now that if we think of yoga Asana, it's got its strengths, it's great at relaxation, it's great at changing your brain, changing your attitude, but it's not got the physical benefits of other physical practices, like circuit training or cycling or even running. So, why do 30 million people go to yoga?

17:27 AK: Well, they go because it makes them feel better, no matter what type of yoga they practice, they feel better afterward and unbeknownst, perhaps unbeknownst to them, it is scratching this itch that they have within them to try and fill this God-sized hole. As much as we may try to strip yoga of its spiritual background, we really can't. That's what it is, and people feel it, they know it, even if it's never mentioned in the class. So when I was going through my doctoral work, and doing my dissertation, I did research on this, and I realized that yoga is trying, yoga is being asked to solve this problem of this gaping God-sized hole that many modern people have.

18:23 AK: So that's one of the reasons why I work so hard, why I wanted to restart this podcast, why I've developed my community of mystics and yoga teachers, why I remind people everyday that they are more than just yoga teachers, they are spiritual





leaders. And that's because we need that today. You are being called into that role, and I know that, because there are 30 million people going to yoga or other types of spiritual practice, they don't really wanna go back to their old or original religious or spiritual practice, they want something that satisfies who they are now, and who is it that they're going to, with all of their questions? They're going to their yoga teacher.

19:12 AK: Well yoga teachers who are trained generally go through a standard 200 hour program, maybe they have more training beyond that, but it's not likely that they are trained as what would essentially be a modern day clergy member. The clergy of any religious organization are there to support the public. They're there to help answer the questions. Why am I here, what's my purpose, what am I doing? And we don't really have that for our modern day people who are flocking to yoga or other forms of spirituality, and who are looking to scratch that deep metaphysical and mystical itch within them, which is why we need to have that. We need to create that.

20:01 AK: This is definitely been my work for the last 20 years, and even more so now that all of my courses and things are online. But it's something that I want you to consider and think about, because for thousands of years there was something called mystery schools. There were mystery schools in places like Egypt and Rome and Greece and Babylonia and Mesopotamia. They had literally schools where mystics would be trained in the spirituality of the day, in order to support the public, in order to hold rituals on the most important holidays for them. In order to counsel them through their individual problems, in order to celebrate them during a birth or a marriage, or a new career, or even a death.

21:01 AK: The mystics were the ones who held that wisdom, and there were schools to train them so that they could help and assist the public. So that's the importance of mystery schools. And that's what I do online today. I try to help you become more adept as a modern mystic, by training you in arts like; astrology, tarot, which is a Western form of divination, psychology, ritual, yoga of course, alchemy, which is a Western form of a spiritual practice. And anything else I can bring to the table in order





to help you support others with your spiritual work.

21:48 AK: That's what this podcast is for. And that's what I'm... That's why I'm excited to be back on the podcast, bringing all this information to you as freely and as openly as I possibly can. So I mentioned a lot of different things, right? And in my show header, I also list out a bunch of different things mystics do, and maybe overwhelming: Yoga, astrology, divination, psychology, ritual, alchemy. Oh my. But the reality is that, historically, mystics have always had a conglomeration of practices, they've always had many different things in their tool kit in order to assist the public, in order to assist their clients, their students, their people.

22:34 AK: It's not just about one thing. So yoga, unfortunately, is not the silver bullet, it's not the panacea, it's not the cure-all, it's one thing in our tool-kit. It's a very important thing, it's a huge thing, it does a lot, it goes a long way, but it doesn't take us all the way as modern mystics and that's why we have to take a look at some of the other tools we might add in order to truly be the most supportive spiritual leader for the people that we have around us. So we'll be talking about all of those things in this podcast.

23:11 AK: I'm excited to bring you just a whole heap of crazy mystical stuff in the future because you are so important with the work that you do now. Remember, if you're not a yoga teacher, no problem, if you're not even a yoga practitioner no problem. I am glad that you're here. We're gonna talk about all the things and I invite you in to our community and I'm excited to have you listening.

23:35 AK: So I will be back next week with another podcast, and if you have enjoyed this one, please do me the favor of ranking me in iTunes, or whatever listening place you are finding this podcast in. It really helps other people to find this podcast as well. If you wanna know more about me, or my work, feel free to check out my website. AlannaK.com. That's A-L-A-N-N-A K dot com. And remember, I'd love to invite you into our community at highereducation.yoga/trial. If you enter that address in, you'll





get the opportunity for a \$1, 14 day trial into the [highereducation.yoga](https://www.highereducationyoga.com/) membership, where we explore all of these things every single month, and you will meet a community of people who are just like you.

24:24 AK: So thanks again so much for listening. I look forward to getting this podcast going. It's a bit an honor and a pleasure to speak to you about this topic today. And can't wait for more in the future. Namaste.

