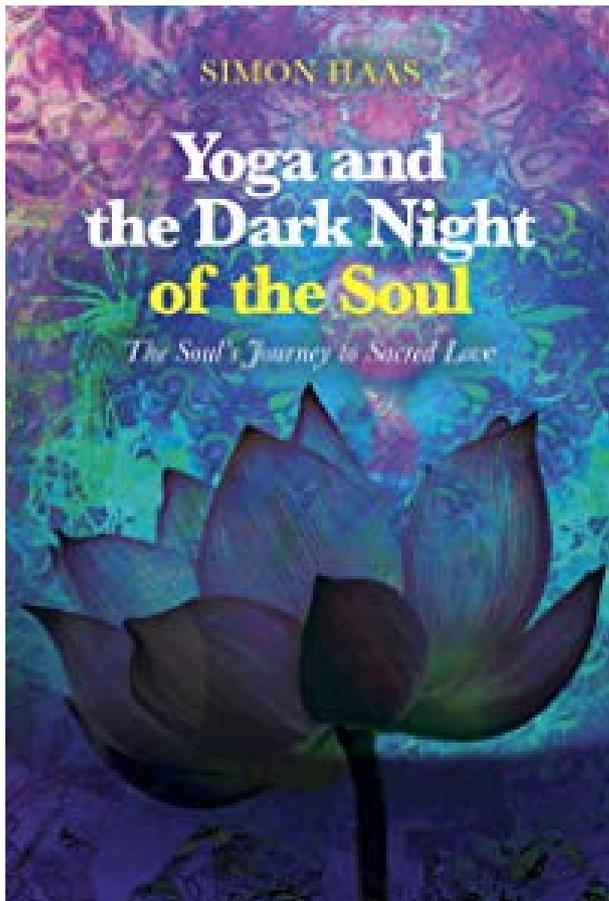


Yoga and the Dark Night of the Soul: The Soul's Journey to Sacred Love



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In the middle of a battlefield, the warrior Arjuna, the greatest of his time, has an unexpected life crisis. The imaginary identity he has been holding on to in his story is shattered, and he is cast into a “dark night of the soul”.

Arjuna turns to Krishna, his dear friend and charioteer, who teaches him the Bhagavad Gita, a classic on yoga. Instead of being a “warrior” or “hero” in his small, imagined story, Arjuna now becomes a seeker, a traveller at the beginning of his yoga journey. Yoga and the Dark Night of the Soul is a book about difficulty and darkness.

Not a temporary setback or a bad day at work, but a period in our life of intense suffering.

Almost all of us will go through one or more periods like this in our lifetime. We live in a society that conceals crisis or despair, that looks upon it with fear and repulsion; a society that medicates it out of sight. There’s nothing in our education to help us navigate crisis. In ancient India, soul-searching crisis was viewed as an important time of transition, a deep rite of passage. In India, such an experience was known as vishada,

which in Sanskrit means “despair”. Yogis and mystics studied these descents into the crisis, regarding the journey as a system of yoga—“the yoga of despair”. They noticed common attributes of dark night experiences. These experiences were not looked upon with shame and concealed; they were regarded as potent spiritual experiences, leading to spiritual awakening. Yoga and the Dark Night of the Soul examines what deep existential crisis really is, how it unfolds, what its common features are, and how best to navigate such an experience to allow it to transform us. In doing so, it focuses specifically on the yoga teachings of the Bhagavad Gita, making these time teachings easily accessible for contemporary readers and yoga practitioners. Krishna’s teachings to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita can be summarized as four agreements that take us on a yoga journey of discovery. They not only help us navigate the dark night of the soul, but bestow upon us yoga’s greatest gift—sacred love. The dark night of the soul is a unique opportunity, a sacred juncture, for addressing the soul’s true need, sacred love.

As the Bhagavad Gita illustrates, crisis and despair are really our call to love; and yoga is the way we get there. The purpose of this book is therefore to lead readers to sacred love, yoga’s ultimate aim.