

# Authors Corner

## FINDING OM: AN INDIAN JOURNEY OF RICKSHAWS, CHAI, CHAPATTIS AND GURUS

Readers of OnSite Fitness have long appreciated contributor Elizabeth Kovar's articles, inspiring greater levels of wellness, appreciation of self and (a fan favorite!) making sure pets stay fit too!

Kovar is a regular contributor to OnSite Fitness, ACE, AFAA and many others. With a focus on health, the great outdoors and a life well lived, it is no wonder that Shape.com called her one of 2014's "50 Hottest Female Trainers."

Recently, Kovar published a book, travel memoir and reflection on her personal transformation as she finds yoga, and in turn, herself. Through

a journey of self-assessment, maturity and yoga, Kovar is introduced to the person she was to become and a fulfilling career where she educates and coaches others on the many benefits of a healthy life.

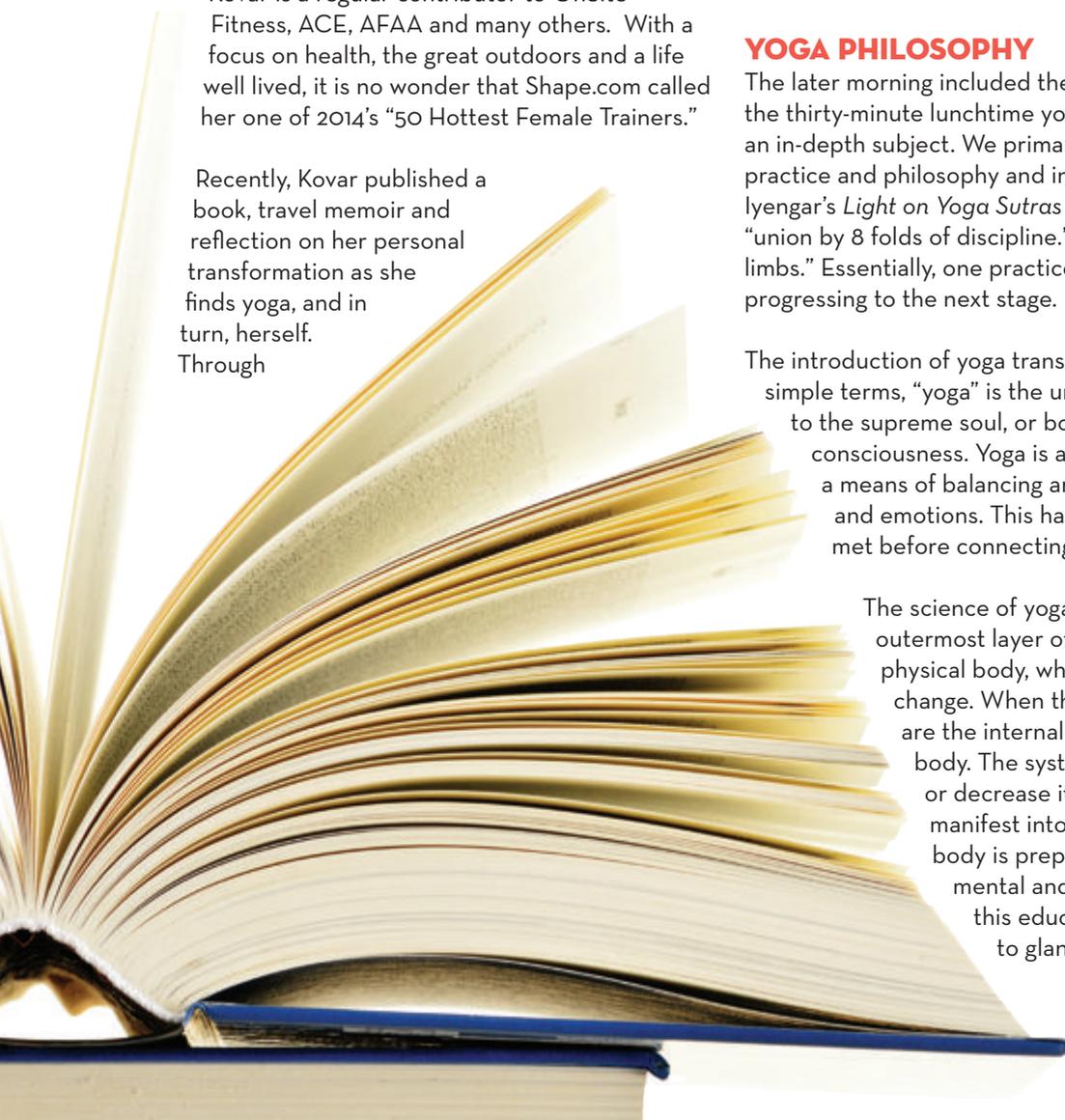
Below is an excerpt of "Finding Om: An Indian Journey of Rickshaws, Chai, Chapattis and Gurus," jumping right into her time in India. Readers can find Elizabeth, links to her articles, fitness tips and her book at [www.elizabethkovar.com](http://www.elizabethkovar.com).

### YOGA PHILOSOPHY

The later morning included the first philosophy class before the thirty-minute lunchtime yoga. I did not realize that yoga is an in-depth subject. We primarily followed an Ashtanga-based practice and philosophy and incorporated readings from BKS Iyengar's *Light on Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* text. Ashtanga is a "union by 8 folds of discipline." It is also known as "the eight limbs." Essentially, one practices one step, or "limb," before progressing to the next stage.

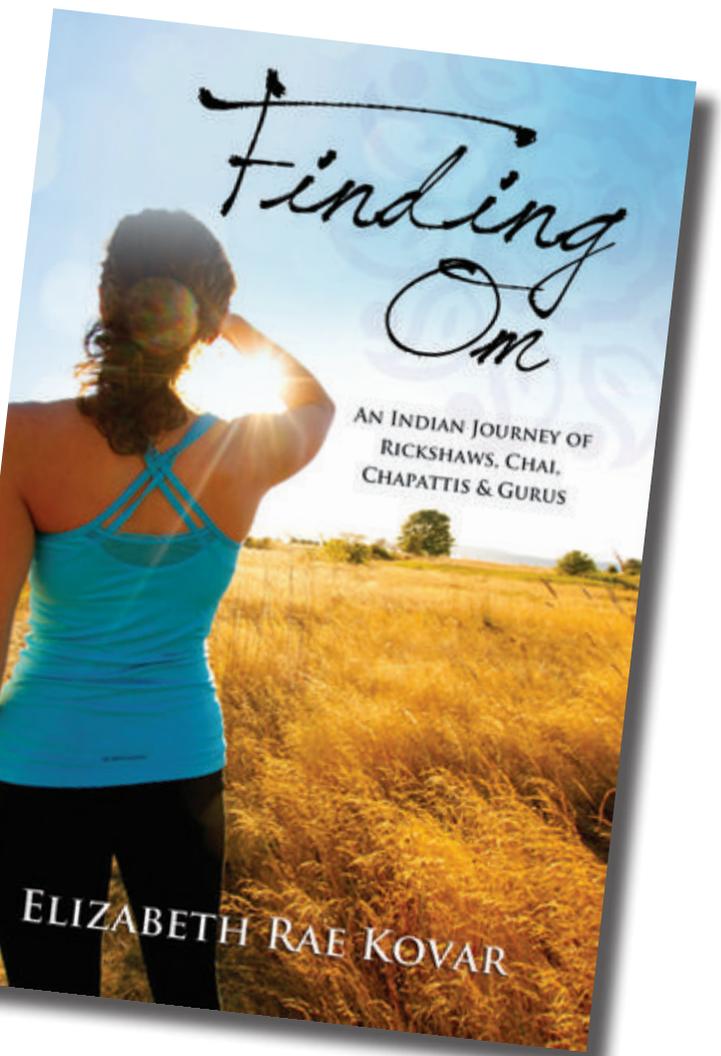
The introduction of yoga translates into many meanings. In simple terms, "yoga" is the union of man's individual soul to the supreme soul, or body, mind, spirit, intellect, and consciousness. Yoga is a science of rightful living and is a means of balancing and harmonizing the body, mind, and emotions. This harmonization or balance must be met before connecting with higher reality.

The science of yoga begins to work on the outermost layer of humans, the personality and physical body, which is a vital starting point for change. When this aspect is out of balance, so are the internal functioning structures of the body. The systems of the body compensate or decrease its function, which in turn will manifest into a disease. Once the physical body is prepared, yoga moves toward the mental and emotional levels. Intrigued with this education from the guru, I continued to glance down the page. The manual



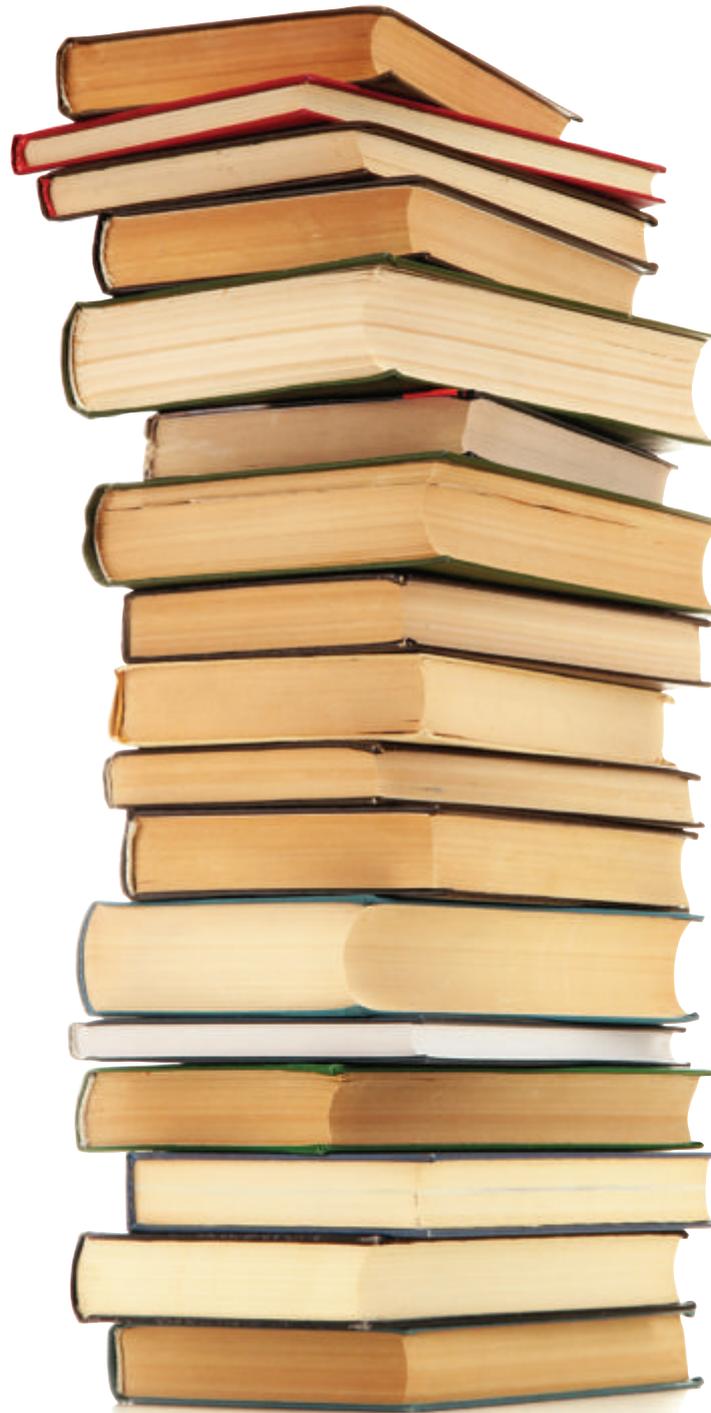
stated, "People suffer from phobias and neuroses as a result of the stresses and interactions of daily living. Yoga cannot provide a cure for life, but does present a proven method for coping with it."

The manual had a special quote from Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, who explained yoga as, "integration and harmony between thoughts, words, and deeds or an integration between head, heart, and hand." When one's body is out of balance, it will affect the other bodies, and with a gradual awareness, people can understand the more subtle areas of human existence.



The guru made us flip to page 133 in our text and explained, "There are five things to know about yoga. First, yoga means union of five kosas or layers. Although there are seven kosas, you only experience the first five. So you must move through the physical, physiological, psychological, and intellectual bodies before reaching the fifth layer, the body of joy. When you reach joy, you reach the soul, the center of permanent happiness."

This humbling notion touched me in a way that felt like it raised my conscious being immediately. My neurosis integrated a fear of the future and a drive to succeed and make everything perfect. And constant worrying of the future drove me mad. My mind basically time-traveled at all hours of the day. All I desired was a crystal ball to say, "Yes, do this" or "No, don't do that." Maybe my happiness was dependent on these life outcomes and situations. **OSF**



## YOGAFIT INSPIRES KARMA, HEALTH AND HEALING

With the release of Beth Shaw's third edition of YogaFit, fans of this safe and accessible style of yoga find more detailed descriptions, full color photos and an enjoyable journey through the mountains and valleys that make YogaFit so special.

OnSite Fitness spoke with author, and OSF editorial board member, Beth Shaw about how YogaFit stays fresh, how she finds time to continue growing in her own yoga practice and provides inspiration to entrepreneurs everywhere, that a hugely successful empire can grow from the trunk of your car!

**OSF:** YogaFit is able stay fresh while maintaining the key focus on safety. How has that focus guided your instruction of both participants and new YogaFit instructors?

**SHAW:** In YogaFit®, we express hatha yoga postures using our Seven Principles of Alignment (SPA). These principles help to create the optimal biomechanical position for the body

during movement and while holding the poses. As YogaFit® instructors, we use SPA to determine the safety of our participants in poses, as well as the overall safety of additional poses we learn.

1. Establishing Base and Dynamic Tension
2. Creating Core Stability
3. Aligning the Spine
4. Softening and Aligning Knees
5. Relaxing Shoulders Back and Down. The shoulders are drawn naturally back and down in poses to help reduce tension in the neck and shoulders.
6. Hinging at the Hips
7. Shortening the Lever

**OSF:** How do you continue to evolve in your personal practice?

**SHAW:** Throughout my life I have suffered from anxiety so for me daily practice is key for balance and being even keeled. Working out almost daily is crucial, as is meditation. I find meditation to be an amazing way to reconnect the mind and body.

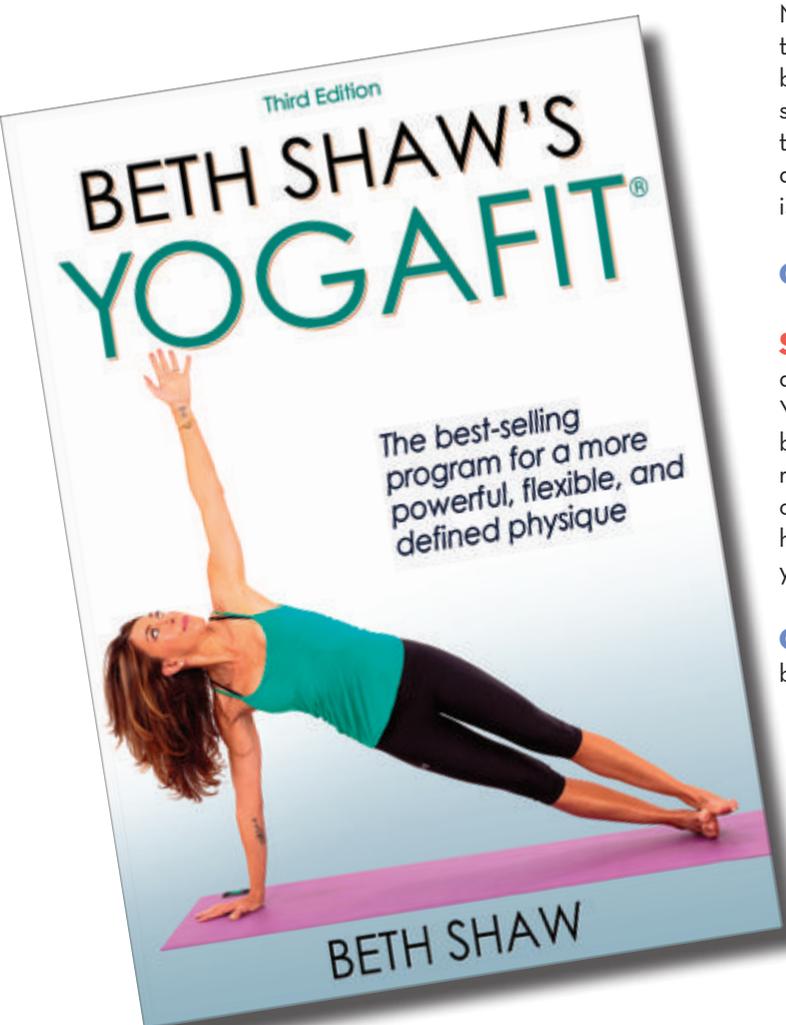
My entire life has focused around wellness - my own and the wellness of others. Health is our most valuable asset. I believe this to be a basic spiritual truth, because we are spiritual beings living in human bodies. Our bodies are our temples. This is Yoga. Everything I do originates from my desire to maintain my health and create perfect health daily. It is my baseline, my foundation, it is who I am at the core.

**OSF:** How would you describe YogaFit?

**SHAW:** The cornerstone of the YogaFit Ethos is without a doubt a Community Service, Commitment and the Karma Yoga in which we engage. As a company we take giving back very seriously. YogaFit not only gives a lot of time and resources to animal and human rights charities but we require community service as part of our Level One Training - YogaFit has initiated over a million hours of service work teaching yoga.

**OSF:** Could you have imagined when you started your business the dedicated following you would attract?

**SHAW:** My first business venture in Los Angeles was simultaneously a cable TV show, mail order clothing company, and Yoga studio within a health club - the first ever in the United States. I started writing for fitness industry trades on "yoga as a profit center" for health clubs, got some ad space in trade, and our Training Division was born. I received 250 responses to my first ad on training, hiring and certifying yoga



instructors – and off we went to Fargo North Dakota to do our first training.

I started YogaFit in 1994 – the name came to me spontaneously on a bike ride by the beach. Most of my good ideas have come to me while in motion: biking, walking, running, yoga. Movement for me creates flow and creativity. By this time I had been selling my logoed clothing out of my trunk for a few years, and managed to attract the attention of one of my students who saw YogaFit as a worthwhile investment, helped me incorporate, and invested \$100,000 in seed money.

By 1997 we were operating out of my living room, I had by that time been fired from my long-time ad sales job that had allowed me the flexibility and financial stability to grow YogaFit on the side. In truth, “People don’t get fired, they fire themselves,” as a good friend and neighbor of mine said to me once. I did not get fired as much as I lost interest and focus because I had found my true passion in my budding YogaFit business.

With the seed money we opened our studio in downtown Hermosa Beach. Our studio was packed from the day we opened. Of course it did not hurt that classes were by donation only, and we also offered parking validation – a huge plus in beach towns where the city’s greatest revenue derives from parking tickets.

Getting multiple book deals, press, internationally presenting has all been great but the opportunity to continue to learn about health, wellness and anti-aging as well as spiritual practice is the beauty of life for me. My work as a philanthropist also gives me great pleasure.

**OSF:** When did you know that what you had built was a success?

**SHAW:** Many people define success by achievements, degrees or financial gain. I have a different measuring stick.

Here is how I define success:

1. Are you healthy?
2. Are you happy?
3. Are you making a positive contribution to the world?
4. Are you prosperous (and not just in a material way – but abundant in spirit)

You cannot have # 2 or # 3 for very long if you don’t have number one. Our health is the greatest

gift that we have, and like any gift we must treasure it, care for it and not take it for granted.

I know that my job on this planet is to educate, share and help people find their most true and authentic selves.

**OSF:** From where do you get your inspiration for new programming and partnerships?

**SHAW:** I look at what inspires me – often from other fields of study – right now I am obsessed with cognitive function, serotonin enhancers and neuroscience.

**OSF:** How has the third edition of YogaFit been updated?

**SHAW:** Full Color, more formats, new science, more advanced postures. People who LOVE yoga and have a great knowledge of fitness and the workings of the human body are best suited to teach yoga. But anyone who wants to deepen their practice should take a Yogafit Training- we have over 50 different specialty courses to choose from! **OSF**

*Fans of YogaFit will also enjoy Beth's other books such as YogaLean, (See OnSite Fitness Magazine Winter 2014 issue) and her upcoming YogaFit Athlete, scheduled for publication in 2016.*

