

THE
LOTUS
AND THE
BUD

Cannabis, Consciousness, and Yoga Practice

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Robyn Griggs Lawrence

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, cultural and evolutionary forces converge to demand that a book be written—now—and further stipulate that there is only one person on the planet who should write it. *The Lotus and the Bud* is one of those books, and Chris Kilham is that author.

Over the past decade yoga and cannabis have emerged separately but simultaneously to become important components of many Westerners' health and wellness regimens. Consequently, and perhaps inevitably, we're finding that the two practices complement each other. In states and countries where adult cannabis use is legal, yogis are discovering what Chris, an ethnobotanist and yogi, has known for decades—that thoughtful cannabis use can enhance yoga practice.

I've had the honor of practicing yoga with Chris. It was an extraordinary experience. Chris is not just another yogi with a certificate from a corporate teacher training program. He's been studying yoga in depth for 50 years, and he's practiced asana and meditation with some of the greatest teachers in the world. The depth of his yoga wisdom is vast, yet he always approaches the practice as he approaches everything—with a wide-open mind and voracious curiosity.

When it comes to cannabis, Chris is the OG—and he's been my go-to guy for insight and information since I met him twelve years ago. The *New York Times* called Chris “[p]art David Attenborough, part Indiana Jones,” and his plant knowledge—based not just on academics (in which his base is thorough) but on experience—is immense. Chris has been

chasing the cannabis plant for over 40 years, from the southern steppes of the Himalayas to the beaches of Jamaica. He has smoked bhang with Indian sadhus and picked cannabis flowers along the Silk Road.

Chris considers cannabis a sacred plant, along with coffee, chocolate, chiles, and kava, and he also happens to be an excellent cannabis chef. When I wrote *The Cannabis Kitchen Cookbook*, he was the first person I called on to help. His delicious recipes based on ancient traditions, from chai to pasta “pottanesca,” are among my favorites in the collection, and we spent a most hilarious day making and testing them with several new strains that were just emerging during the early days of the “green rush” in Colorado.

Chris’s sharp wit, scholarly rigor, and effortless encouragement make *The Lotus and the Bud* a joy to read as he enlightens you not only about the origins of cannabis-infused yoga in ancient India but also about how to practice safely and effectively in the modern world. You feel yourself getting lost in a fascinating tale that covers Chris’s early days as a self-described “yoga lunatic,” averaging six to eight hours of yoga practice every day, and his accidental discovery of the synergistic effects of yoga and cannabis after he fractured his seventh cervical vertebra.

I share Chris’s belief that plants call us to serve them; we’ve both heeded this master plant’s siren song. Similarly, as Chris points out, yoga seeks out humans to convey its wisdom and carry its illumination forward through consistent practice. With this book Chris shows how humbly answering both calls paves the way for a life of peace, health, and well-being.

There’s a damn good cannabis-infused cookie recipe in there, too.

Namaste.



ROBYN GRIGGS LAWRENCE, a certified yoga instructor, is the author of the *Cannabis Kitchen Cookbook* and *Pot in Pans: A History of Eating Cannabis*. She is a contributing editor for *Sensi* magazine, was editor in chief of *Natural Home* magazine for eleven years, and was an editor with *Mother Earth News*, *Mountain Living*, *The Herb Companion*, and *Organic Spa*. She is also the author of *The Wabi-Sabi House* and *Simply Imperfect: Revisiting the Wabi-Sabi House*.

Elevationists, are employing cannabis as a sacrament in services.

Since its first use by humans thousands of years ago, cannabis has proven an unstoppable force. Eradication efforts have failed miserably, as they run counter to the natural human tendency to seek satisfying pleasure through friendly plants. Today cannabis is employed by hundreds of millions of people. Times have changed and continue to change, and a more sane attitude toward cannabis prevails.

*Fragrant smoke from the Arabian plant's brown juice
creates a swirling dance of powerful fantasies.*

MORITZ VON SCHWIND

CANNABIS AS MEDICINE

Cannabis has been employed as a valuable medicine since antiquity. Today the medical marijuana movement is steadily gathering steam, even as some lawmakers are cautious about their reelection if they follow suit. Since 1996 thirty-three states and the District of Columbia have legalized cannabis to some extent or another. Eleven states have legalized recreational cannabis, allowing for personal use, transport, and cultivation of this beneficial and safe plant medicine.

Though the U.S. government denies any known medical value of whole cannabis, this is just sleight of mouth. In fact, the federal government has run a medical marijuana program out of the University of Mississippi since 1978. Called the Compassionate Investigational New Drug program or Compassionate IND and administered by the National Institutes of Drug Abuse, the program provides cannabis joints in large cans on a monthly basis to a limited number of people who qualify for the program. Each can contains three hundred pre-rolled joints of cannabis grown, dried, and prepared by this federal program at Ole Miss. Today Compassionate IND is on the wane with

only four remaining patients, and no new patients accepted into the program. Go Feds.

Cannabis is the single most versatile herbal remedy, and the most useful plant on Earth. No other single plant contains as wide a range of medically active herbal constituents.

ETHAN RUSSO, M.D.

In poll after poll a majority of Americans support the medical use of marijuana. At this point hundreds of medical organizations, educational centers, nurse associations, and other health bodies support greater access to cannabis medicine. The full legalization of cannabis for personal medical use would alleviate a lot of suffering.

If it is perceived that the Public Health Service is going around and giving marijuana to folks, there would be a perception that this stuff can't be so bad. It gives a bad signal.

JAMES MASON, M.D., FORMER HHS ASSISTANT
SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND HEAD OF
THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

In traditional systems of medicine such as India's Ayurveda, cannabis has enjoyed millennia of use as a valuable medicine. Cannabis is recommended for relief of pain and headaches, for increasing appetite, for promoting sleep in cases of insomnia, for subduing hysteria, and for easing painful menstruation. Until 1941 marijuana was listed in the U.S. Pharmacopoeia as an approved drug. Today cannabis is listed as a Schedule I drug, on a par with crack and heroin. This designation is not only fundamentally unfair, but is incorrect. Cannabis is not a narcotic, and it shows great benefits as a medicine. But the conversation about medical cannabis is intensifying as research from around the globe demonstrates significant benefits. Medical cannabis research focuses primarily on the efficacy of cannabis in analgesia, relieving nausea and

vomiting, counteracting wasting syndrome by means of appetite stimulation, and inhibiting the progress of glaucoma. In each of these areas cannabis demonstrates real and significant value. In this cause Israel is a science leader. U.S. drug authorities prohibit studies of cannabis except those designed to show harm, whereas Israel supports good science wherever it may lead. At present the United States is left way behind in the careful study of the most widely beneficial plant on Earth, due to inept politics.

The two primary types of *Cannabis sativa*, psychoactive cannabis—let's use the term *ganja*—and hemp, yield different compounds in different concentrations. Ganja is rich in THC, the most abundant of all the cannabinoids. Known for promoting a high, THC relieves pain and is widely employed for this purpose. For many, THC promotes relaxation and greater ease. Ganja typically heightens the sense of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. It also significantly enhances sexual pleasure, a use for which it is very widely employed. For some, ganja is a stimulant. I find that I can apply myself to hard or repetitive tasks with greater ease with ganja. But many people find that ganja aids sleep. And since so many people suffer from inadequate sleep, this is a sought-after effect. A famous effect of ganja for some is the munchies. Many people crave snacks when they consume ganja. This makes it helpful for chemotherapy sufferers. Chemotherapy most often kills appetite, but ganja can help to restore that. Additionally ganja promotes peace and reduces aggression. There are good reasons that so many people turn to cannabis as medicine, especially psychoactive ganja.

In the burgeoning cannabis market, CBD products derived from hemp have soared in popularity. Cultivation of non-psychoactive hemp is legal nationwide and CBD supplements are now the most popular herbal supplements in the United States. And while CBD products lag behind ganja in the market, the rush is definitely on, with everything infused with CBD, from beverages to gummies to tinctures to vapes. CBD also relieves pain, and it is a first-rate anti-inflammatory. Pain is virtually epidemic, and CBD provides real relief. Many people turn to CBD-based products for joint pain and to relieve pain from injuries. For mild to moderate anxiety, CBD-based products help greatly in

many cases, and make a safer and preferred alternative to the benzodiazepine class of drugs, which includes Valium, Xanax, Serax, Ativan, and Klonopin. CBD demonstrates blood-sugar-regulating properties and is of value in relieving nausea. For children with seizure conditions, CBD can help to significantly reduce the total number and severity of seizures. CBD is somewhat antidepressant as well. CBD-based products help makers to avoid running afoul of narcotics laws, and thus CBD products are only increasing in popularity.

In a review of sixty articles, a paper in *Clinical Psychology Review* in 2017 detailed the beneficial use of cannabis for treating PTSD and substance abuse disorders, notably addiction to opioids. Not only is cannabis not the much-feared “gateway drug” that critics deride, but it can actually be of medicinal value in the fight against addiction to dangerous and potentially lethal opioids, including a host of toxic prescription drugs. The same paper found benefits for depression and social anxiety.

Analgesia

Pain is one of the most common conditions for which drug treatment is sought. Pain comes in varied forms. Neuropathic pain is caused by damage or abnormality anywhere along a nerve. Nociceptive pain originates as a result of inflammation around an injury. The two types can occur at the same time, depending on the nature of physical damage. Postsurgical pain is very common, affecting almost everybody who undergoes any kind of surgical procedure. Cancer pain is caused by tumor growth into sensitive areas, and by cancer surgery and radiation. Whatever the cause, pain can range from mild to completely debilitating. Any agent that can help is valuable.

*In almost all painful maladies I have found Indian Hemp
by far the most useful of drugs.*

J. RUSSELL REYNOLDS, M.D.,
PHYSICIAN TO QUEEN VICTORIA

Cannabis is an excellent, time-tested analgesic. This was first brought to light to Westerners by Dr. W. B. O'Shaughnessy in the 1840s. O'Shaughnessy studied the uses of cannabis for pain in Indian traditional medicine and conducted both animal and human experiments for this purpose. In the nineteenth century tincture of cannabis was commonly used as an analgesic. Since the mid-1800s hundreds of articles on the analgesic uses of cannabis appeared in British and American journals.

The cannabinoids appear to be both central nervous system (CNS) pain depressants and anti-inflammatory pain relievers. The mechanisms for these activities are complex. While THC is the primary cannabinoid studied, others including cannabidiol and hexahydrocannabinol have also been the subjects of research. When all results are eventually tallied, I do not doubt that whole cannabis resin, rich in THC, will prove superior for pain relief than any single isolated agent.

In animal studies THC produces decreased sensitivity to pain and reduced inflammation in a variety of tests. In live, hurting human beings, THC reduces pain in cases of cancer. Nabilone, a synthetic version of THC (Eli Lilly), has demonstrated relief of pain in cases of multiple sclerosis, spinal injury, peripheral neuropathy, and malignancy. But nabilone is just a path for a pharmaceutical company to cash in on cannabis. A full-spectrum THC and CBD-rich flower extract will not only function similarly from a benefit standpoint, but the entourage effect of all the support compounds in the extract make it superior in efficacy and overall health value. Plus, nabilone offers a host of potentially nasty negative effects, and whole cannabis extract offers few. As the cannabis market explodes with multibillion-dollar products and campaigns, remember that the whole plant and its full-spectrum extracts, not isolated molecules, are the real deal for health and healing.

By far the greatest number of people who find pain relief in cannabis either smoke or eat the drug and its preparations. Entities such as the Oakland Cannabis Buyers' Cooperative and the San Francisco Cannabis Buyers' Club have dispensed medical marijuana to numerous people, including those in pain, for decades. Reports from the field far exceed in volume the results yielded by small, clinical tests.

Cannabis relieves pain. For suffering humanity this is a good and valuable thing.

Nausea and Wasting Syndrome

There's nothing like a toxic dose of chemotherapy to put you on your knees, clutching the rim of the toilet, head in the bowl, puking your guts out. Chemotherapy makes all your hair fall out, causes tremendous nausea and vomiting, kills appetite, causes serious wasting, and puts people in the grave. Plus, it costs a fortune. And it's legal. Cannabis makes people feel good, does none of the above, and kills nobody. It's illegal in many places, and in some countries and states you can still be thrown in prison for its use.

As far as mitigating nausea and stemming vomiting caused by chemotherapy is concerned, the jury is back on cannabis. In whole cannabis form or as nabilone, the cannabinoids have been shown in several dozen human studies to reduce nausea and vomiting in patients suffering from chemotherapy poisoning. The cannabinoids perform as well as or better than other prescription drugs for the same purpose. Some studies show—no surprise—that smoked cannabis works better than orally ingested THC pills. This route of ingestion is quicker in action and produces a superior nausea-quelling effect. There is no question whatsoever that cannabis reduces vomiting in chemotherapy sufferers.

Another effect of chemotherapy, and a typical effect of AIDS, is wasting due to loss of appetite. For this condition cannabis is a tremendous boon, promoting appetite in individuals who otherwise have no desire to eat. In studies of chemotherapy sufferers, cannabis improved appetite. Countless AIDS patients have used cannabis for the same purpose, with good results. For patients suffering from chemotherapy poisoning or AIDS, cannabis improves appetite, prevents weight loss, and improves mood. What compassionate human being on this Earth would deny cannabis to these people?

Glaucoma

The most common cause of blindness in the Western world, glaucoma is characterized by increased intraocular pressure. This pressure

is caused by a blockage in the channels that regulate the eye's internal fluid. An even balance of fluid maintains the healthy spherical shape of the eye. But increased fluid and pressure can damage the optic nerve, resulting in blindness. In both animals and humans, smoking or eating cannabis results in reduced intraocular pressure. A few studies and numerous anecdotal reports indicate that cannabis can play a valuable role in stemming the progress of glaucoma.

Epileptic Seizures

A few studies point to anti-epileptic activity with cannabis, notably with CBD-rich preparations. A 2016 article in *Lancet* investigated the effects of CBD on patients aged one to thirty with treatment-resistant severe epilepsy, and found that “cannabidiol might reduce seizure frequency and might have an adequate safety profile in children and young adults with highly treatment-resistant epilepsy.” Today the CBD drug Epidiolex is approved in the United States to treat treatment-resistant severe epilepsy. This is another pharma offering, a highly purified CBD product derived from cannabis. A CBD-rich hemp oil offers a more wholesome, nutritious, and effective option.

Antioxidant

In October of 2003 our own United States government filed a patent entitled “Cannabinoids as Antioxidants and Neuroprotectants” making the case that “[c]annabinoids have been found to have antioxidant properties, unrelated to NMDA receptor antagonism. This new-found property makes cannabinoids useful in the treatment and prophylaxis of a wide variety of oxidation associated diseases, such as ischemic, age-related, inflammatory, and autoimmune diseases. The cannabinoids are found to have particular application as neuroprotectants, for example in limiting neurological damage following ischemic insults, such as stroke and trauma, or in the treatment of neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and HIV dementia.”

The government can't just get a patent because they think it's a good idea. They have to demonstrate that there is validity to any claims made for such a patent. To support the potential use

of cannabinoids for inflammatory and auto-immune disorders, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and more, they backed up their patent with high-quality scientific references. The patent was filed so that the government could profit by assigning rights to different companies and garnering royalties for cannabinoid-based drugs they might develop for the above purposes. Canny U.S. officials, certain that cannabis would be a multibillion-dollar industry, set themselves up to profit from the great cannabis green rush.

Alzheimer's Disease

Apropos of the government's cannabis patent, there is some intriguing science around cannabis and Alzheimer's. A study published in *Molecular Pharmaceutics* reported that THC reduced the formation of amyloid plaque in the brain, which is associated with the progression of the disease. Amyloid plaque is not presumed to cause Alzheimer's, but it does co-occur and increase as symptoms progress. The inhibition of plaque and its elimination are considered valuable to overall brain health.

Anxiety

In 2017 researchers at the University of Illinois and the University of Chicago reported that low level intake of THC helped to quell anxiety, while higher doses tended to exacerbate anxiety. This was the conclusion of a study of forty-two volunteers aged eighteen to forty. Psychiatrist Emma Childs, who supervised the study, commented, "Our findings provide some support for the common claim that cannabis is used to reduce stress and relieve tension and anxiety. At the same time, our finding that participants in the higher THC group reported small but significant increases in anxiety and negative mood throughout the test supports the idea that THC can also produce the opposite effect."

*The biggest killer on the planet is stress, and I still think
the best medicine is and always has been cannabis.*

WILLIE NELSON

Multiple Sclerosis

A study in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* reported on thirty MS patients with treatment-resistant muscle spasticity. In patients who smoked cannabis, spasticity dropped by about 30 percent, while there was no drop among those in the placebo group. Today the full-spectrum cannabis drug Sativex is approved among twenty-five countries including the UK, Canada, Spain, and New Zealand to treat MS-related spasticity.

Other Healing Experiences

Though some people accept only double-blind, placebo-controlled crossover clinical trials as evidence of medicinal efficacy, others accept real-life human experience as valid for sorting out what works and what doesn't. Too many reports to ignore indicate that cannabis can provide valuable relief in cases of menstrual cramps, hypertension, anxiety, muscle spasms, epilepsy, asthma, rheumatic pain, and anxiety. Without question cannabis offers real help to many people who suffer from various health disorders. Cannabis is in many cases as effective as other medications. In many instances it is far safer. Medical use is not the primary use of cannabis worldwide. But for those who turn to cannabis for relief, it is good medicine indeed.

CANNABIS PLANT SPIRIT

Everything that exists possesses a unique energetic signature, by virtue of its composition, weight, size, and other characteristics. The unique energetic signature of living entities of all types represents the spirit of that thing. Spirit is essence, the fundamental and primary nature. Plants all have spirits, and it is possible to commune with plants in such a way as to garner knowledge and to harness healing power. I have spent decades with shamans, most notably in the Amazon and the Andes, where communing with and harnessing the healing power of plants is a common approach to healing practices.

Cannabis is not only a very popular plant much beloved and broad in healing power, but it is what is known as a master plant,