

# The Synthesising Influence of Eustace Miles: Breath Culture and the Assimilation of Yoga in Fin de Siècle Britain

*Friday 24 May 2024 12:15 (30 minutes)*

## Outline:

This paper will explore the significance of breath control as an early pre-cursor to contemporary commercialised yoga in the context of fin de siècle Britain. It will examine how socio-cultural features of Edwardian London had a role to play in furthering a construction of 'better breathing' as a route to health; and how one historical actor – physical culturist and famed food reformer Eustace Hamilton Miles (1868-1948) – assimilated and disseminated the teachings of Swami Vivekananda as part of his popular ethos of 'all-round' health. It considers the selective processes of knowledge exchange that occurred at a formative period of modern yoga's construction and the extent to which the neo-Vedantic teachings of Vivekananda inspired a new elevated and sacralised understanding of health in the broader Western context.

## Bio:

Victoria is an independent scholar and researcher. She completed the SOAS MA Traditions of Yoga and Meditation in 2022, for which she was awarded distinction, and was part of the SOAS Centre of Yoga Studies and YDYS organising committee 2021-22. Her research focuses on early twentieth century therapeutic culture, including the introduction and dissemination of modern yoga, and the cross over with both established and new religious movements. Specific areas of interest include the significance of vegetarianism and the role of the breath in contemporary models of belief, health and wellbeing.

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**Session Classification:** Inspiration