

YOGA

FIRST INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA
JUNE 21



Published by
High Commission of India,
Colombo

सत्यमेव जयते

YOGA

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The information and articles are collected from different sources and do not necessarily reflect the views of the High Commission

Suggestions regarding improvement of this publication may please be addressed to

Information Wing

High Commission of India
No. 36 -38, Galle Road, Colombo 03,
Sri Lanka

Tel: +94-11 2327587, +94-11 2422788-9

Fax: +94-11-2446403, +94-11 2448166

E-mail: cpiccolombo@gmail.com

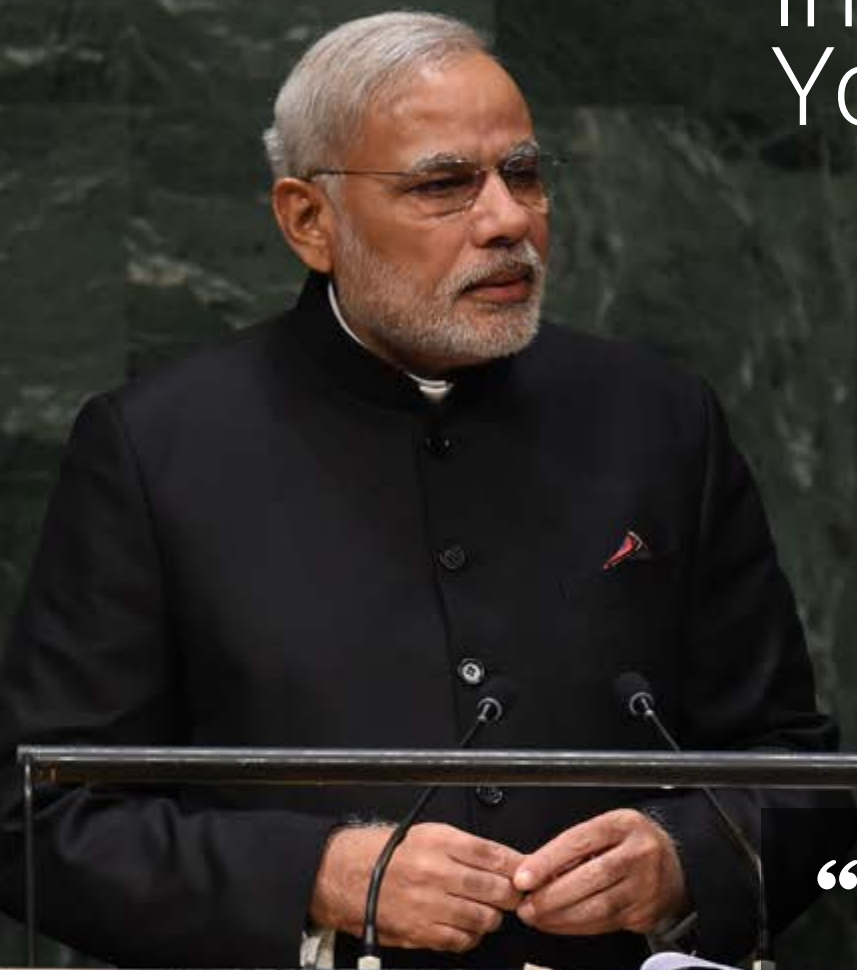


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High Commission of India

No. 36 -38, Galle Road, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka
Tel: +94-11 2327587, +94-11 2422788-9
Fax: +94-11-2446403, +94-11 2448166
E-mail: cpiccolombo@gmail.com
website: www.hcicolombo.org
facebook: www.facebook.com/hcicolombo

Shri Narendra Modi called for International Yoga Day



“We need to change our lifestyles. Energy not consumed is the cleanest energy. We can achieve the same level of development, prosperity and well being without necessarily going down the path of reckless consumption. It doesn't mean that economies will suffer; it will mean that our economies will take on a different character. For us in India, respect for nature is an integral part of spiritualism. We treat nature's bounties as sacred. Yoga is an invaluable gift of our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfillment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day.”

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addresses the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York on Saturday - September 27, 2014





UN declares June 21 as 'International Day of Yoga'



UNITED NATIONS: Less than three months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed the idea, the UN general assembly on Thursday adopted an India-led resolution declaring June 21 as 'International Day of Yoga', recognizing that "Yoga provides a holistic approach to health and well-being."

The resolution on 'International Day of Yoga' was introduced by India's ambassador to UN Asoke Mukerji and had 175 nations joining as co-sponsors, the highest number ever for any general assembly resolution.

It is also for the first time that such an initiative has been proposed and implemented by any country in the UN body in less than 90 days.

Through the resolution, adopted under the agenda of 'Global Health and Foreign Policy,' the 193-member general assembly decided to proclaim June 21 every year as the 'International Day of Yoga'.

It recognised that Yoga "provides a holistic approach to health and well-being" and that wider the dissemination of information about benefits of practising Yoga would be beneficial for the health of the world population.

In introducing the resolution, Mukerji quoted Modi's UNGA address in which he had asked world leaders to adopt an international Yoga day, saying that by changing lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us deal with climate change.

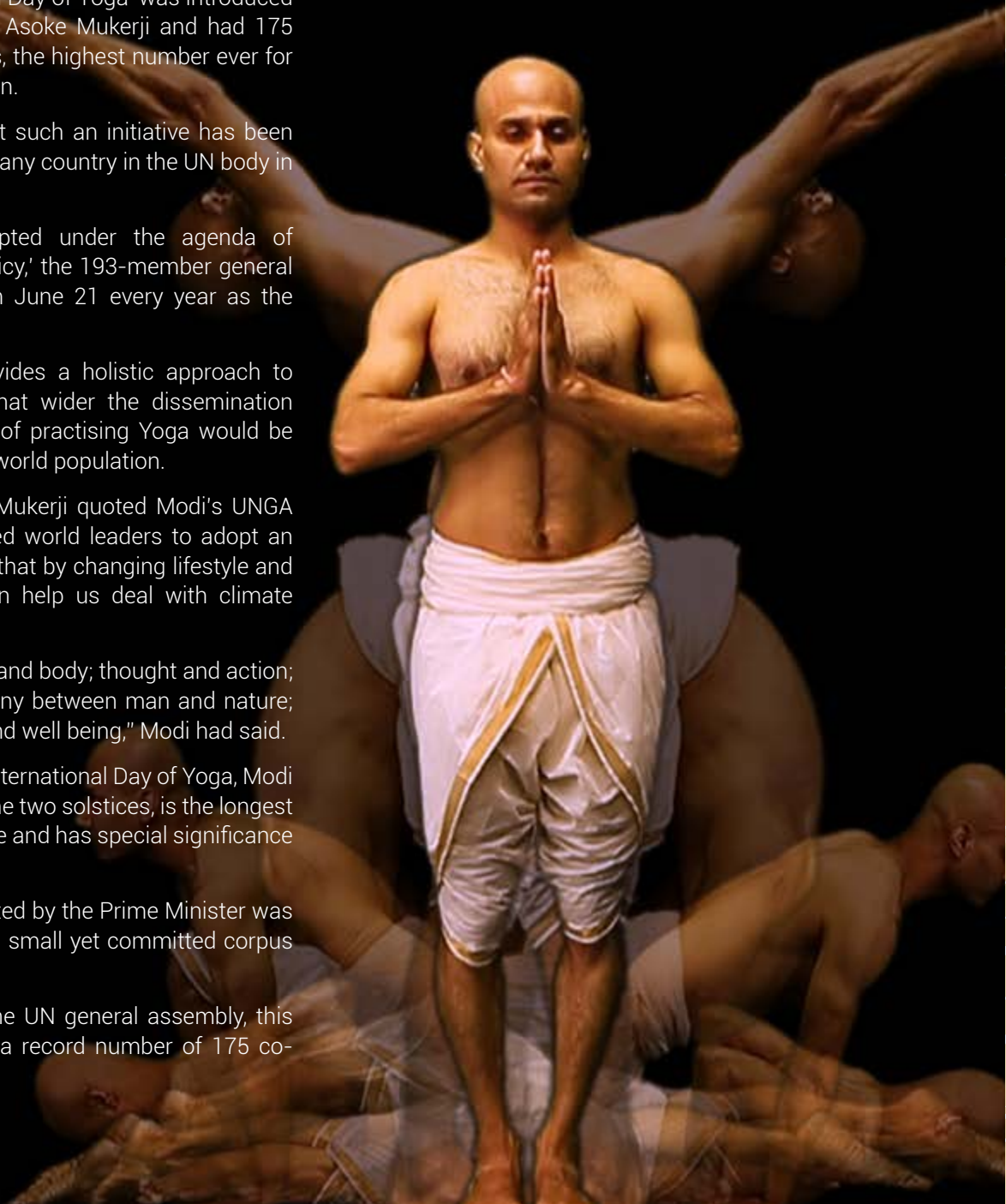
"Yoga embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfilment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well being," Modi had said.

In suggesting June 21 as the International Day of Yoga, Modi had said that the date, one of the two solstices, is the longest day in the Northern Hemisphere and has special significance in many parts of the world.

Mukerji said the vision articulated by the Prime Minister was warmly welcomed initially by a small yet committed corpus of nations.

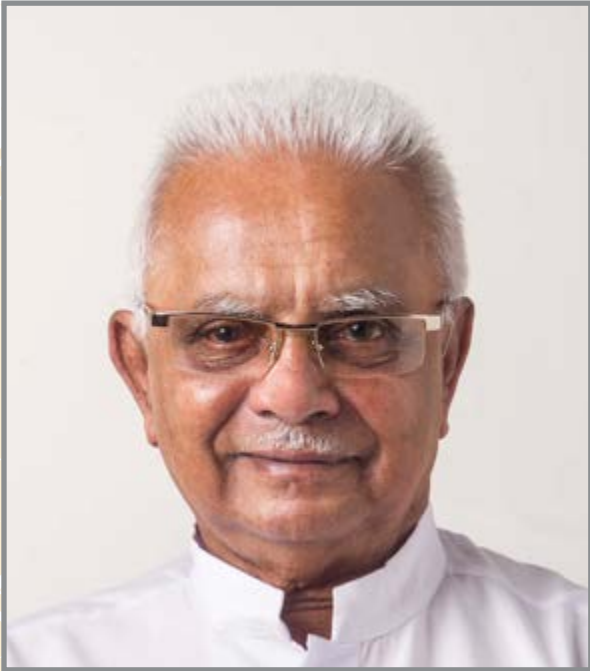
"The very fact that today in the UN general assembly, this draft resolution has garnered a record number of 175 co-

sponsors, including the vast majority of member states of all the regional and sub-regional groups of the general assembly, as well as all the five permanent members of the UN security council, is a testimony to the enthusiastic cross cultural and universal appeal that Yoga enjoys amongst members of the United Nations," Mukerji said.



Message from Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne

Founder-President Sarvodaya Shramadana



I'm inspired to understand that the United Nations declared 21st June as the International Yoga day followed by an appeal made by the Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

Yoga is one of greatest Mahabharat gifts to the world. According to ancient scriptures, the practice of yoga not only purifies ones body and mind but also help individuals, communities and the world coming together as one united family. There is no better time than today for this gathering of humankind who in turn will create the critical mass of spiritual consciousness that will help bring the divided world together. Yoga teaches the importance of cleanliness, contentment, truthfulness and non-violence - four essential virtues one must cultivate in developing mindfulness.

India has a leading role to play in directing the world into the right path based on the teachings of the Buddha and other great philosophers. Healing psychological wounds we suffer is critical and essential in this journey. Yoga can be a wonderful stepping-stone to attract the fast moving modern world to stop, take a deep breadth and look deep within before the next move.

I wish this timely initiative all the very best.

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne

Founder-President Sarvodaya Shramadana

Message from Ms. Upeksha Chitrasena

Vice Chairman – The Chitrasena Vajira Dance Foundation



Congratulations to the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka on behalf of the Chitrasena Vajira Dance Foundation, for inaugurating the first International Yoga Day and for the subsequent launch of this e-book.

As a dancer and dance teacher I know how very important it is to introduce Yoga to our younger generation of dancers, as well as to all students and teachers. Yoga is beneficial for gaining stamina, strength, flexibility and balance, which are essential qualities for any Dance form. Yoga also teaches breathing techniques, and most importantly for students, they learn the advantages and disadvantages of every Asana and how each Asana affects their day-to-day lives.

One of the most precious gifts Yoga offers is the mind/body experience, as it brings clarity and peace to the mind. At The Chitrasena School Dance classes Yoga and Dance come together, complementing each other to bring the spirituality of movement to our Dance.

One of the most valuable tools taught in Yoga is breath-control. Many dancers haven't been taught to use breathing to help power certain actions. Even worse, dancers sometimes forget to breathe at all! Learning to link breath to movement helps one to harness energy through breathing and use it to one's advantage, which is especially helpful during challenging movements like jumps and turns where extra power is required.

Focused breathing has other benefits as well; it helps to keep the mind from wondering and serves as a way to measure when individual limits are being exceeded. If one finds it too challenging to stay for at least three breaths in a pose then it's a clear indication of pushing too hard. Developing this awareness is a way to learn to tune into the body's pain responses so that injuries could be avoided.

The benefits of Yoga clearly go beyond the physical, as Yoga is also a way to soothe the spirit and find peace of mind. Most dancers envision yoga as being useful only for increasing flexibility, but in reality it is a unique balance of stretching and strengthening poses, as well as focusing the mind.

Yoga has a lot to offer dancers, as learning to align body, mind and spirit on the mat will optimize the quality of the individual's dance performance. The kind of confidence this generates improves performance and makes the very act of dancing a lot more enjoyable.

The therapeutic value of Yoga Asanas is well known the world over. But this can be harnessed only when it is practiced under right guidance and moral disciplines.

Upeka Chitrasena

Vice Chairman – The Chitrasena Vajira Dance Foundation

Message from Deshanethru Kalasuri Dr Arunthathy Sri Ranganathan



I am pleased to send this message on the occasion of celebrating the first International day of Yoga on 21st June 2015 the world over and Sri Lanka particularly. Yoga is defined as an Indian physical, mental, and spiritual practice or discipline. More than physical exercise program, and physical therapy routine, it has a meditative and spiritual core. Apart from the spiritual goals, the physical postures of yoga are used to alleviate health problems, reduce stress and make the spine supple in contemporary times.

June 21st which is the summer solstice has special significance in many parts of the world.

As an artist and broadcaster I see the bond among yoga, music and dance, as these fine arts also help reach the spiritual goals. Yoga, music and dance help individuals unify their body, mind, and heart. Commonness of yoga and fine arts embody unity of mind and body, a holistic approach to discover the sense of oneness with oneself to become a universal language of spiritual exercise.

Let us celebrate the international day of yoga with content of mind and body.

Kalasuri Dr Arunthathy Sri Ranganathan

Artistic Director

Aru Sri Art Theatre

Message from Mr. Chandana Wickramasinghe

Dance Choreographer



It is with great pleasure I wish to applaud and congratulate Honourable Prime Minister of India, His Excellency Shri Narendra Modi for proposing and persuading the United Nations General Assembly to call June 21 the International Day of Yoga.

I always like to link dance and yoga to my choreography. Whether it be traditional, ballet, belly dance, tribal, fusion or bollywood dance, every dancer relies on flexibility, confidence, balancing and centering of the body. Yoga is beneficial to all dancers and moulds the dancer to gain strength, correct posture, improve blood circulation and purifies the body from toxins.

The most precious gift yoga offers is the mind and body experience. It brings clarity and peace to mind, body and soul. At my dance classes, yoga and dance come together complementing each other bringing spirituality and movement with a series of postures and asanas. My dance steps imparts knowledge on the Natarajasan yoga pose known as the "Lord of Dance" and the Vrikshasana yoga pose known as the "Tree Pose".

While all dance classes focus on position and alignment, yoga takes this one step further. The slower pace of yoga naturally allows for greater precision. The body weight is equally distributed to all four corners of the feet and toes and anchored firmly onto the floor. Many of the standing poses in yoga develop the same muscles used for dancing and jumps. Balancing poses with dance partners help to fine tune the details of proper alignment with every movement building each pose from the ground to create a strong foundation. A combination of yoga and dance allows more opportunity to notice and correct habits that might create issues over time.

One of the most valuable learnt skills in yoga is breath control. Learning to connect breath to dance movement is helpful during challenging combinations like big jumps, twists, turns and fast strides where extra power and energy is used.

Yoga should not be seen as just an "Art of Living" but should take the form of a lifestyle that goes beyond so that people could relate to across races, religions, cultures and nations. This comprehensive awareness can be the decisive source and foundation to bring peace, reconciliation and healing to a hurting world.

I take this opportunity to convey my best wishes to the High Commission of India in Sri Lanka for the commitment and effort put in to celebrate International Day of Yoga memorably. May your good will create a remarkable impact on society.

Chandana Wickramasinghe

Dance Choreographer – Dancers' Guild/President - Santiniketan Friends

International Yoga Day

It was a landslide victory for India at the UN General Assembly when the United Nations declared June 21st as International Yoga Day (or World Yoga Day). This came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi had urged the world community to celebrate yoga at the international level, in his maiden speech at the UNGA in September 2014. He had said, "yoga is an invaluable gift of our ancient tradition. It is not about exercise, it's a path through which an individual can discover his sense of oneness with nature. It embodies unity, unity of the mind and the body, thought and action, restraint and fulfilment. On the whole, it's a holistic approach to health and well being."

March 22, 2015 by Sunil Daman
www.patheos.com/blogs/hindu2



ABOUT THE IDY Logo

- ⚙ *Folding of both hands in the logo symbolise Yoga, the union, which reflects the union of individual consciousness with that of universal consciousness, a perfect harmony between mind & body, man & nature; the holistic approach to health & well being.*
- ⚙ *The brown leave symbolise the Earth element, the green leave symbolise the nature, blue symbolise the water element, brightness symbolise the fire element and the Sun symbolise the source of energy and inspiration.*
- ⚙ *The logo reflects harmony and peace for the humanity, which is the essence of Yoga.*

Prepping for International Yoga Day

The resolution was prepared by India; informal consultations were convened in October by the Indian mission in the UN General Assembly, and views on the topic were expressed by other delegations. The idea of an International Yoga Day had garnered overwhelming support: 175 countries in the 193-member General Assembly had joined as co-sponsors as on December 9, 2014, the highest number of co-sponsors ever for any UNGA resolution. The initial official document circulated to the General Assembly, known as the L document, itself had 130 member states joining as co-sponsors, including the five permanent members of the Security Council, several Asian, European and Latin American countries and nearly 60 per cent of African nations. It could be concluded that India had managed to lay its golden paving stone to walk proudly through the gateways of the world and embrace yoga practitioners across the globe.

Overwhelming Support for International Yoga Day

Referring to the wholehearted support from the world over, India's Permanent Representative, Asok Kumar Mukerji told the UNGA, "This is a testimony to the enthusiastic cross-cultural and universal appeal that yoga enjoys amongst members of the United Nations." He expressed his hope that the impact of this resolution would give vent to India's efforts in the area of global health. Through the resolution, adopted under the agenda of 'Global Health and Foreign Policy,' it



acknowledged that practising yoga would be beneficial for the health of the world population and was adopted with ovation, without even going through the usual procedure of passing a vote. It is for the first time in the history of the UN that such a proposal has been recommended and implemented by any country in less than 90 days. Besides proclaiming June 21st as the International Yoga Day, the resolution invited all organisations of the UN system and other international and regional bodies to propagate the benefits of practising yoga and to observe the day in order to publicize it.

In his message on the passage of the resolution, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said, "yoga can bring communities together in an inclusive manner that generates respect. The diverse benefits it brings", he added, "includes helping people deal with stress in emergency situations." UNGA President Sam Kahamba Kutesa congratulated Modi for taking the initiative, saying that the adoption of the resolution with overwhelming support demonstrated how both the tangible and unseen benefits of yoga appealed to people around the world.

"For centuries, people from all walks of life have practiced yoga, recognizing its unique embodiment of unity between mind and body. Yoga brings thought and action together in harmony, while demonstrating a holistic approach to health and well-being," Portuguese Ambassador Alvaro Mendonca e Moura told the UNGA in a speech delivered on Kutesa's behalf.

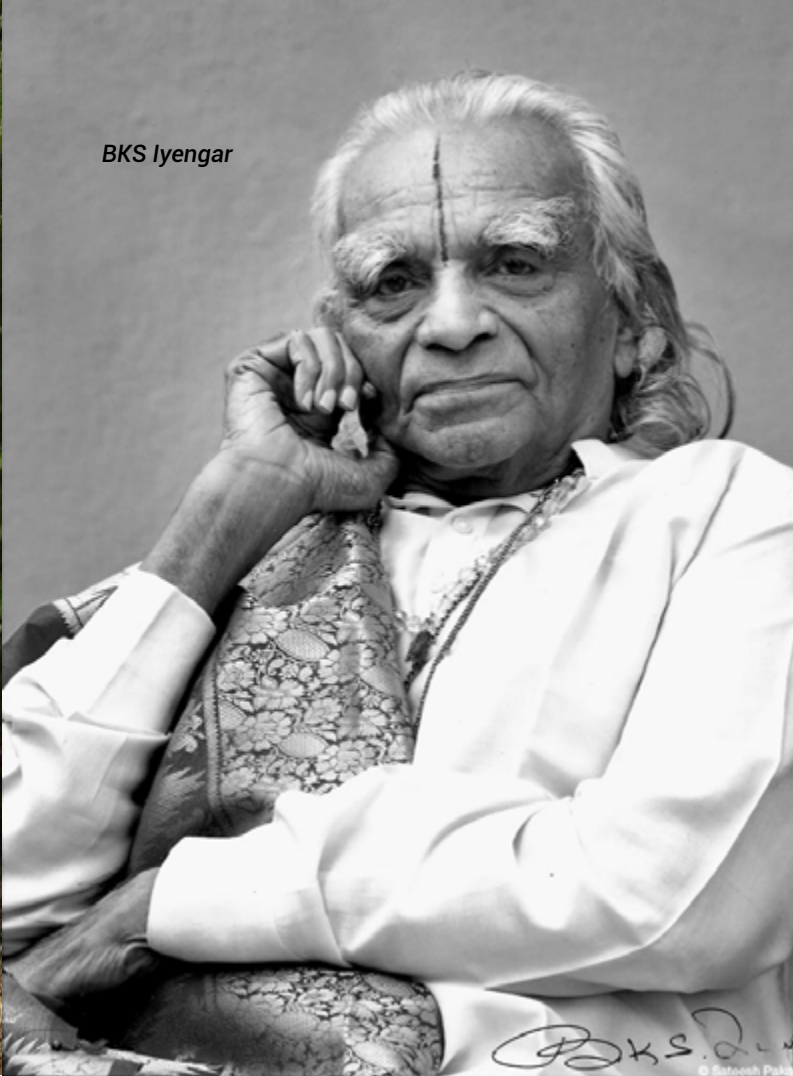
Messages on International Yoga Day Declaration

Renowned yoga teacher Baba Ramdev had also supported Modi in his move. Acclaiming the resolution he said, "By bringing yoga glory on the global stage, Modi has paid a tribute to the legacy of our erstwhile legendary Rishis. India owes its identity to yoga. This means honour to India and Indianness."

In Haridwar, eminent yoga exponent Swami Chidanand Saraswati told the media: "Today is a historic day. It illustrates that people from all walks of life and all backgrounds are embracing yoga all over the world." BKS Iyengar, one of great modern propagators of yoga was quoted: "yoga, an ancient but perfect science; deals with the evolution of humanity. Yoga means union – the union of body with consciousness and consciousness with the soul." The reason why June 21st was suggested was because it is the Summer Solstice, and from the perspective of yoga, it marks the transition in the Sun's celestial passage from north to south.

According to yogi and mystic, Sadhguru, speaking on the significance of International Yoga Day, "In the yogic lore, the first transmission of yoga by Shiva, the Adiyogi to his seven disciples, the Saptarishis is said to have been initiated on the first full moon after Summer Solstice, which is celebrated

BKS Iyengar



slow down the inevitable decay of the body organs. Yogic practices are complete in its revamping of the entire system – the physical body, the mental body and the energy body. Like every scientific theory; yoga also offers a very practical and systematically designed technique. The system of yoga maintains that every matter in this cosmos, from the most prevalent to the most subtle, is vibrant with life. Modern science agrees with it in that even inside the tiniest particle of atom, there is incredible movement. If there is movement, it is being caused by some energy and that energy, yoga stresses, is the basis of all life. According to yoga, each and every matter is throbbing with life energy – that energy is consciousness itself and that consciousness is just a part of the Super Consciousness or God Reality.

The same energy radiates forth from the lowest life form to the highest; it only varies in appearance. Man is considered to be the highest in the ladder of evolution because he is the only being whose awareness can be enhanced to the maximum level to reach the state of enlightenment, the stage where he identifies himself with the Super Consciousness. Yoga recommends that to reach that level, man has to attain the highest state of awareness or consciousness which can be accomplished by following a life structured on self discipline, based on the principles of a simple living and lofty thoughts, in which equal significance is given to the development of the physical, mental and energy bodies.

as Guru Poornima. This period, known as Dakshinayana is hailed as the phase when there is natural support for those pursuing spiritual practices."

The declaration of International Yoga Day was welcomed by the 53,000-member Yoga Alliance. Barbara Dobberthien, its chief operating officer, said: "The Yoga Alliance was created to spread the power of yoga, and International Yoga Day provides us with another very powerful platform from which to support our mission." Suhag Shukla, the Hindu American Foundation's executive director, said: "In addition to gaining appreciation for one of India's greatest contributions to the civilization, our hope is that this will introduce people around the world to its transformational power, its insistence on spiritual experience over dogma, its ability to make one realise the divine nature of man, and its power for bringing about both inner and outer peace."

Why International Yoga Day Matters

Without a minimal understanding of yoga, it is difficult to appreciate the significance of the resolution to celebrate an International Yoga Day. The ancient sages of India had developed an integral system called yoga to keep the physical and mental faculties fit and healthy and to





The physical body is meant to remain active. The lifestyle should be such that the muscles and joints obtain enough exercise, a kind of exercise that is not tiresome and at the same time, beneficial to the three bodies. Hatha yoga, in which the body is stretched to the maximum through slow movements and the specific time period with which each posture is maintained, is meant to increase one's body flexibility. As long as the body is supple, it remains young. Yoga mainly focuses on the spine, the axis of the physical body, the main "telegraphic" pole from where the entire nervous system emerges. If the spine remains agile and strong, there will be no disruption over the blood circulation and an adequate supply of nutrients and oxygen will be delivered to the nerves to keep them receptive and healthy. As age begins to catch up, the shoulders get hunched over due to lack of exercise and one has painful tension in the upper part of the back and neck due to the various nerves that have gone out of shape. Hatha yoga corrects one's posture, aiding him naturally to be alert and confident.

Prana is the vital force in the body. Pranayama is both a science and an art of purifying the channels along which the life stream of 'prana' flows. Pranayama, breathing practices, the process by which conscious control is achieved through synchronized breathing, are vital for increasing the capacity of the lungs. Through regulated breathing, by altering the rhythm of inhalation and exhalation, it is possible to control the prana. This kind of yogic breathing teaches a person how to use the lungs to their maximum capacity and how to control the breath. Deep, slow and rhythmical breathing increases vitality and mental clarity. Most people breathe shallowly, barely expanding the rib cage. Purifying the prana

is a preventive as well as a curative measure against a variety of physical and mental ailments. It increases one's overall immunity and resistance to diseases.

The body, mind and energies of an individual have to be in absolute harmony with the existence. Your creativity or your ability to perform depends upon the manner in which your energy functions. If you can gain some mastery over your energies, something like getting your batteries charged, there will be incomparable improvement in your performance without much extra effort from your side. Once you begin to activate your inner energies, your thought process, the swiftness with which your brain reacts and the implementations of your ideas happen in a different sphere altogether. There is a whole technology as to how to use this energy for higher possibilities and that is Kriya yoga.

The Benefits of Yoga

Whether you play a game or are busy in the work place, when there is perfect concentration, your participation is at its maximum, and productivity is at its best. This mental aptitude has to be developed. Man is forever running helter-skelter for a joyful existence, fulfilling his insignificant desires, hoping that it would offer him everlasting pleasure. All joys and gratifications in this world are momentary. To achieve that state of lasting happiness and absolute peace, the mind's focus has to be turned inward, upon the self. When the mind is thus fully focused on the self, time does not even seem to exist and you don't feel like coming out of that blissful state. That specific stage is called meditation. All

yoga practices essentially culminate at meditation, wherein one attains a state of consciousness, free from all forms of dynamic or disruptive thoughts, and of eventually attaining a state wherein consciousness is oblivious of the external world and is only aware of its own nature as Consciousness.

But for that, the ever active mind has to be stilled, though it is very difficult to rein in the racing thoughts. If one is adamant enough to carry the memories of a sixty year old burden over one's shoulders, thoughts relating to them and worries concerning the future, he would naturally look and feel old. On the other hand, if he could simply unburden all those illusory problems, he would remain like a child, happy and content. When man realises that in all its potentiality and learns to live in the present, the rubbish that hides his exceptionally potential mind from all probabilities is discarded progressively and in due course, flung off altogether. He would have learned to be the master of his mind. The yoga sadhanas are designed for that very purpose.

As he progresses in yoga, there is a big transformation in the individual though the world around him remains the same. His attitude towards life changes; he is able to free himself from all the entangling emotions and feelings that bind him to the world, he acquires a sense of detachment, all of which empowers him to still his mind and body, a prerequisite for meditation. On the physical level, meditation helps to prolong the body's anabolic process of growth and repair, and to reduce the catabolic or decaying process. Ordinarily, the growth stage predominates until the age of 18, from then onward, until one is 35, there is balance between the two, and after that the catabolic process dominates. Meditation can significantly reduce the catabolic decline.

Man is forever curious about his life. Some of the lurking doubts like, "Who am I? What is the purpose of life? What happens to me after death?" are glaring at his face without any conceivable answer. Though the truth is buried right within every being, drowning under the intoxicating sea of materialism, he refuses to delve into his spirit to find an answer. If he wishes to explore the spiritual realms and seek the eternal truth, he should realise that in this manner, he would never reach the shore. He should plunge out of the harsh waters and gasping for the precious fresh air, he should swim against the waves using all his might, because the magnetic pull of the materialistic world can be too powerful and irresistible. Yoga is ultimately, the union of the self with the Divine. It assists you to float with ease on the harsh sea which suddenly seems to be placid, not because the sea has become calmer, but because your physical body has turned healthier, the mental body has become more tolerant and the energy body has been fully charged. You have, in essence learned to be truly loving and compassionate. Your inner being would have turned receptive enough to receive the grace that is forever being showered upon you though you are not even aware of it.

One cannot learn to meditate, anymore than one can learn to sleep. One has to fall into both stages. After disciplining the body through Hatha yoga, Pranayama and Kriya yoga, when the conditions are conducive, one gradually gains that skill. Through meditation, you reach a stage wherein there is no duality, no subject or object, where the knower, the knowledge and the known are united into one. This knowledge brings a feeling of oneness with the whole world. The individual becomes one with the Super Consciousness. It is this oneness that yoga is aiming at. As Jesus had proclaimed, "I am in ye, as you are in Me, I am He."

International Yoga Day: 200 million and Beyond

It is estimated that close to 200 million people around the world practice yoga (of some form or the other), a majority of them in India, and over 20 million of them in the United States alone. With this resolution for an International Yoga Day, more people will become aware of the tenets of yoga and will be encouraged to follow a yogic life style, a life that is healthy, humble and devout. Let this be a great opening for the world community to realise the worth of oneness and then, there is no feud, no disagreement and no disparity. Man of every creed and colour will live as one – the world will become one.





About Yoga : Basics

What is Yoga?

The classical techniques of Yoga date back more than 5,000 years. In ancient times, the desire for greater personal freedom, health and long life, and heightened self-understanding gave birth to this system of physical and mental exercise which has since spread throughout the world. The word Yoga means “to join or yoke together,” and it brings the body and mind together into one harmonious experience.

The whole system of Yoga is built on three main structures: exercise, breathing, and meditation. The exercises of Yoga are designed to put pressure on the glandular systems of the body, thereby increasing its efficiency and total health. The body is looked upon as the primary instrument that enables

us to work and evolve in the world, and so a Yoga student treats it with great care and respect. Breathing techniques are based on the concept that breath is the source of life in the body. The Yoga student gently increases breath control to improve the health and function of both body and mind. These two systems of exercise and breathing then prepare the body and mind for meditation, and the student finds an easy approach to a quiet mind that allows silence and healing from everyday stress. Regular daily practice of all three parts of this structure of Yoga produce a clear, bright mind and a strong, capable body.

Yoga and Religion

Yoga is not a religion. It has no creed or fixed set of beliefs, nor is there a prescribed godlike figure to be worshipped in a particular manner. Religions for the most part seem to be based upon the belief in and worship of things (God or godlike figures) that exist outside oneself. The core of Yoga's philosophy is that everything is supplied from within the individual. Thus, there is no dependence on an external figure, either in the sense of a person or god figure, or a religious organization.

The common belief that Yoga derives from Hinduism is a misconception. Yoga actually predates Hinduism by many centuries. Ancient seals unearthed in the Indus Valley provide clear evidence of widespread Yoga practice earlier

than 3,000 B.C.E. The techniques of Yoga have been adopted by Hinduism as well as by other world religions. Yoga is a system of techniques that can be used for a number of goals, from simply managing stress better, learning to relax, and increasing limberness all the way to becoming more self-aware and acquiring the deepest knowledge of one's own self.

The practice of Yoga will not interfere with any religion. Many American Yoga Association students who have practiced Yoga intensively for many years continue to follow the religious traditions they have grown up in or adopted without conflict.



History of Yoga

No one knows exactly when Yoga began, but it certainly predates written history. Stone carvings depicting figures in Yoga positions have been found in archeological sites in the Indus Valley dating back 5,000 years or more. There is a common misconception that Yoga is rooted in Hinduism; on the contrary, Hinduism's religious structures evolved much later and incorporated some of the practices of Yoga. (Other religions throughout the world have also incorporated practices and ideas related to Yoga.)

The tradition of Yoga has always been passed on individually from teacher to student through teaching and practical demonstration. The formal techniques that are now known as Yoga are, therefore, based on the collective experiences of many individuals over many thousands of years. The particular manner in which the techniques are taught and practiced today depends on the approach passed down in the line of teachers supporting the individual practitioner.

One of the earliest texts having to do with Yoga was compiled by a scholar named Patanjali, who set down the most prevalent Yoga theories and practices of his time in a book he called Yoga Sutras ("Yoga Aphorisms") as early as the 1st or 2nd century B.C. or as late as the 5th century A.D. (exact dates are unknown). The system that he wrote about is known as "Ashtanga Yoga," or the eight limbs of Yoga, and this is what is generally referred to today as Classical Yoga. Most current adherents practice some variation of Patanjali's system.

The eight steps of Classical Yoga are

- 1) yama, meaning "restraint" — refraining from violence, lying, stealing, and hoarding;
- 2) niyama, meaning "observance" — purity, contentment, tolerance, study, and remembrance;
- 3) asana, physical exercises;
- 4) pranayama, breathing techniques;
- 5) pratyahara, preparation for meditation, described as "withdrawal of the mind from the senses";
- 6) dharana, concentration, being able to hold the mind on one object for a specified time;
- 7) dhyana, meditation, the ability to focus on one thing (or nothing) indefinitely;
- 8) samadhi, absorption, or realization of the essential nature of the self.

Modern Western Yoga classes generally focus on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th steps.

Yoga probably arrived in the United States in the late 1800s, but it did not become widely known until the 1960s, as part of the youth culture's growing interest in anything Eastern. As more became known about the beneficial effects of Yoga, it gained acceptance and respect as a valuable method for helping in the management of stress and improving health and well-being. Many physicians now recommend Yoga practice to patients at risk for heart disease, as well as those with back pain, arthritis, depression, and other chronic conditions.



Who the first yogi really was is lost in the sands of time, but the roots of Yoga can be traced as long as 5000 years back. The earliest reference to Yoga was found when archeological excavations were made in the Indus valley - the most powerful and influential civilization in the early antique period. This sophisticated culture developed around the Indus river and the long gone Sarasvati river in northern India, on the border towards Pakistan.

Archeological findings from two of the largest cities, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, revealed (among other things) a portrait of a human being or god meditating in what looks like a Yoga posture. The Rig-Veda work, that describes different Yoga methods, is believed to be derived from the Indus-Sarasvati people and has been dated to 3000 to 5000 B.C.

Yoga as we know it today, is thus the result of a complex evolution that has been going on for at least 5000 years. However, according to most scholars, Yoga can't be recognized as a complete and complex tradition before about 500 B.C.

Vedic Yoga

means to enhance the sensory and human ability is the root of all Yoga.

The Vedic teachings at this point were not reserved for a religious elite, but were instead transmitted to the people by Vedic prophets, called Rishis, who had gained insight in the origin of life and its existence. The hymns of these prophets witness of strong intuition, wisdom and knowledge about human beings that can inspire new levels of understanding even for the people of today.

The oldest written records of Indian culture and yogic activities is found in the Vedas, which are a compilation of hymns and rituals over 3000 years old. The Vedic Yoga, also known as Archaic Yoga, revolves around the thought of reuniting the visible material world with the invisible spiritual world by sacrificing certain things. In order to practice these rather long rituals successfully it was necessary to be able to focus the mind to a very high level. This inner focus as a

Pre-classical Yoga

This period in Yoga history spans about 2000 years, until year 200. The most central Yoga literature from this period are the Upanishades - a collection of texts revolving around metaphysical speculation - and are just like the Vedas considered as enigmatic revelations. As opposed to the public rituals of the Vedic period, the Upanishades were secret scriptures.

Some of these 200 gnostic texts are directly related to Yoga and are about the complete connectedness of all things. Yoga was now slowly finding its form. As Yoga and its secret teachings spread from teacher to student, or from guru to yogi, the concept of an individual system of thought began to take shape.

The Bhagavad Gita, that is the most well known and popular work among all Hinduic and Yogic literature was written during this period (about 500 B.C.). It is a beautiful story of a conversation between the god of Hinduism, Krishna, and a prince named Arjuna. The plot, ironically enough, takes place on a battlefield. This location is often interpreted as a





metaphor for the many distractions present in our turbulent world, which later on became the main foundation of yoga meditations. Prince Arjuna had put himself in a difficult

position, where he must fight parts of his family and friends. Prince Arjuna had put himself in a difficult position, where he must fight parts of his family and friends.

Symbolically speaking, this frustration conveys that prince Arjuna wanted some advice on how to fight the bonds that tie him to the material world, in order to set himself and his soul free. Krishna explained that it was Arjuna's destiny and task to face this situation. He then moved on to explaining to Arjuna how he could emerge from the battle victorious, by outlining a detailed yogic path for the prince to follow; Through devotion (bhakti Yoga), a keen mind (jnana Yoga) and by giving up the ego (karma Yoga), spiritual freedom (moksha) could be attained.

Needless to say, the Bhagavad Gita is a complex work, and is meant to be studied, pondered upon and then studied some more.

Classical Yoga

The eight-limbed Yoga described in the Sutras by Patanjali is usually referred to as Classical Yoga. The Yoga Sutras were most likely written around year 100-200 A.C. and consists of about 200 aphorisms (words of wisdom). Here Yoga is presented in a systematic and approachable way, and many yogis see it as an important source of yogic understanding. Almost all serious Yoga practitioners will at some point study this literature and it has been published with commentary many times since it was first published.

Patanjali thought that every individual consists of two parts - matter (prakriti) and soul (purusha), and that the goal of Yoga is to free the soul from the material world in order to take its original, pure form. This is often characterized as philosophical dualism, which is quite remarkable considering that most Indian philosophy is of a non-dualistic nature. The world as it is perceived is generally thought to be different aspects of the same pure, shapeless but conscious existence.

Post-classical Yoga

The great number of independent yoga schools and forms that were developed during the period after the Yoga sutras, is usually referred to as post-classical Yoga. As opposed to Patanjali's Yoga, the Yoga of this era was, very much like the post-classical and Vedic traditions, characterized by a non-dualistic nature.

A few hundred years after Patanjali, the evolution of Yoga took an interesting turn - the potential of the human body now became an interesting field of study. Yogis of the past had not paid very much attention to the (physical) body, as they focused all their energy on contemplation and meditation. Their goal was to leave their bodies and the world, in order to re-unite with the shapeless reality - the soul.

The new generation of Yogis however, developed a system where different exercises - in conjunction with deep breathing and meditation, would help keep the body young and prolong life. The human body was regarded as the temple of the immortal soul, and not just as a meaningless vessel to be abandoned at the first opportunity.



This paved the way for the creation of Hatha Yoga, and other branches and schools of Tantra Yoga.

Modern Yoga

Modern Yoga is said to have begun the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893. During this meeting the young Swami Vivekananda from India made a deep impression on the American he introduced to Yoga. Vivekananda became whom of the most popular members of the Parliament, and he subsequently toured the US giving lectures on Yoga. Many Yoga masters would later cross the ocean and follow in his footsteps, spreading Yoga to all corners of the continent. Yoga schools were founded and increasing numbers of people fell in love with the yogic forms of exercise. Many masters also went to Europe where the reception, for some reason, wasn't quite as warm.

Yoga, in the form of Hatha Yoga, debuted in the consciousnesses of the American masses when Russian born Indra Devi, of the called "the first lady of Yoga", opened a Yoga studio in Hollywood in 1947. She taught movie stars like Gloria Swanson, Jennifer Jones and Robert Ryan, as well as educating hundreds of Yoga teachers.

During the 1950s one of the foremost Yoga teachers of his

"Yoga is like a river that has been flowing for so many years. It has now entered the Western world. It will have many tributaries, it will swell. Our ancient people did a lot of research within themselves... One of the greatest gifts that yoga gives is observation; observation of the self and of others... Nothing is constant. Even science believes things will change"

T. K. V. Desikachar, "The role of yoga in the next millennium", Conference, Narbonne, France, 1999

time, Selvarajan Yesudian, wrote the book "Sport and Yoga", and it was through this book Yoga entered the world of sports. This book has been translated into more than fourteen languages and has sold more than half a million copies. Today we can observe many athletes and sports teams that have incorporated Yoga in their injury reducing, strengthening and focus oriented training regimens. One of the most well known examples are the NBA stars of the Chicago Bulls.

1961 Hatha Yoga was presented in American television by Richard Hittleman, and his book called The Twenty Eight day Yoga Plan sold in the millions. In the middle of the 60s, Yoga got a real promotional boost when the Yogi Maharishi Mahesh taught Yoga to the famous pop-stars in the Beatles. Many other artists and musicians were influenced to take up Yoga as well. During the 60s and 70s Yoga became a way of life for many people living on the American west coast.

On an interesting side note, Dalai Lama is a great yogi from Tibet, representing Buddhism and Tibetan Yoga. He was awarded the Nobel prize for peace and has inspired many westerners to learn more about Buddhism and Yoga.

Yoga today



Yoga has gained tremendously in popularity during the last few years, and today over 30 million people practice Yoga on a regular basis. Yoga is the most rapidly growing health

movement of today, despite having existed for thousands of years already.

People's attitude towards health, spirituality, way of life and our place in society have changed quite dramatically, as people are looking for answers for their everyday problems. In these chaotic times our environment is fighting for survival and we humans suffer more and more from physical and psychological stress, with new diseases developing while old ones, that we thought we could handle with antibiotics, returns with a vengeance in the midst of our society. We can't always control these developments, but we can learn to face them.

And to this end, Yoga is as good an invention it has ever been.

Courtesy: www.yoga-central.net



Pranayama

or Yogic Breathing

Excerpt from The Complete Illustrated book of Yoga, Swami Vishnu-devananda

Yoga has been broadly divided into four forms: Karma Yoga (path of action), Bhakthi Yoga (path of devotion), Raja Yoga (the science of mental control), and Gyana Yoga (the path of knowledge). The aim of these Yogas is realization of the brahman or the absolute even though they differ as to the means employed.

Karma Yoga (the path of action) removes mala or gross impurities of the mind, such as selfishness and egoism, and develops the giving hand of generosity. Bhakthi Yoga or path of devotion destroys vikshepa or tossing of the mind and develops the heart. Raja Yoga steadies the mind and makes it one-pointed and Gyana Yoga removes the veil of ignorance (avarana), develops will and reason, and brings in knowledge of self. Though it appears that these various Yogas are separate from one another, in reality they are not antagonistic to each other. Just as one and the same suit will not suit Mr. Smith and Mr. Shyam, so also one path will not suit all people. But students are advised by such great teachers as Sri Swami Sivananda to take up one of the Yogas as the main path and the other Yogas as auxiliary to the main one in order to achieve quick progress.

Again, Raja Yoga has been divided into three more subdivisions known as Mantra Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, and Hatha Yoga. These are all various modes of practice whereby the chitta vrithi or mental modifications are brought into control and the absolute is in various ways realized. Each of these branches of Raja Yoga has the same eight limbs (ashtanga):

1. Yama (internal purification through moral training preparatory to Yoga)
2. Niyama (cleanliness, contentment, mortification, study, and worship of God)
3. Asanas (postures)
4. Pranayama (breath control)
5. Prathyahara (making the mind introspective)

6. Dharana (concentration)
7. Dhyana (meditation)
8. Samadhi (the highest superconscious state)

These eight accessories may be divided into five exterior methods chiefly concerned with the body and prana (vital air) and three inner methods affecting the development of the mind.

Hatha Yoga gives first attention to the physical body, which is the vehicle of the soul's existence and activity. Purity of the mind is not possible without purity of the body in which it functions and by which it is affected. Through the practice of asanas and pranayama, the mind becomes one-pointed and thus one can progress quickly in concentration and meditation.

For the mind is by nature unsteady and it is at every moment being affected by sight, sound, and other factors of external objects, which mind perceives through the agency of the senses. In order to get control over the mind, Hatha Yoga prescribes various pranayama or breathing exercises. Before we proceed into the details of pranayama, the reader may do this simple experiment. It will convince everybody why Hatha Yoga emphasizes pranayama or breath control.

Place an alarm clock approximately twelve to fifteen feet away from you. Now concentrate on the ticks, keeping all other thoughts from the mind. You may find it hard to keep all other thoughts from the mind but apply a little more effort and you will succeed, at least for a few seconds. Repeat this experiment until you are successful in keeping the mind for a few seconds completely without distraction. After doing this experiment read the following explanation.

Now let us see what happened while hearing the ticking sound of the clock. The majority must have completely suspended the breath; the others, who have less concentration, must have had very slow breathing. Thus it proves that where there is concentration of the mind, the breath-

ing becomes very slow or even suspension may take place temporarily.

The Sage Patanjali, in his Yoga Aphorisms, defines Yoga as the suspension of the modification of the thinking principle, which is not practicable without controlling the prana or breath, which is intimately connected with the mind.

This connection is proved by our daily experience of life. When we are absorbed in deep thinking or meditation, the process of breathing becomes slow. The suspension of mental activity increases in proportion to the slowness of breath. In cases of asphyxia, mental activity ceases altogether until respiration is revived. Again, when the mind is afflicted by sorrow or anger, the breath becomes irregular and broken, the opposite of the slow, smooth flow of the breath when the mind is calm.

These considerations prove that the mind and prana or vital breath are interdependent, each unable to act independently of the other.

It has been said in the Siva Gita that the vehicle of mind is prana and therefore mind functions where prana moves.

The great Sage Vasishtha, in his Yoga Vasishtha, has thus described the relation between the mind and the prana:

O Rama! For the motion of the chariot, which is the physical body, the God has created the mind and prana (vital breath), without which the body cannot function. When the prana departs, the mechanism of the body ceases and when the mind works prana or vital breath moves. The relation between the mind and prana is like that between the driver and the chariot. Both exert motion one upon the other. Therefore, the wise should study regulation of prana or vital breath if they desire to suspend the restless activity of the mind and concentrate. The regulation of breath brings all happiness, material and spiritual, from the acquisition of Kingdoms to Supreme Bliss. Therefore, O Rama! Study the Science of Breath.

The word hatha is composed of the syllables ha and tha, which mean sun and moon: that is, prana vayu (the positive vital air) and apana vayu (the negative vital air). Prana (vital air) in the body of the individual is a part of the universal breath. The regulation of the harmonized breath helps the Yogi to the regulation and steadiness of mind. Similarly, by controlling the mind prana is also controlled. Prana is not something related to breath alone. Breathing is only one of the many exercises through which we get to the real pranayama. The breathing is a manifestation of a vitalizing force called prana. By regulating the physical breathing, the prana is controlled and this process of controlling the subtle prana is called pranayama.

This vital energy is found in all forms of life from mineral to man. Prana is found in all things having life. This prana is not the consciousness or spirit but is merely a form of energy used by the soul in its material and astral manifestations. The whole body is controlled and regulated by the force of prana. Every cell in the body is controlled by it. Prana is in all forms of matter and yet it is not matter. It is the

energy or force that animates matter.

Prana is in the air, but is not the oxygen, nor any of its chemical constituents. It is in food, water, and in the sunlight, yet it is not vitamin, heat, or light-rays. Food, water, air, etc., are only the media through which the prana is carried. We absorb this prana through the food we eat, the water we drink, and the air we breathe. Animal and plant life breathe this energy with the air and it also penetrates where the air cannot reach.

Prana is also known as universal energy. It is the prana that is manifesting itself as gravitation, electricity, as the actions of the body, and as the nerve currents and thought force. From thought down to the lowest physical force, everything is thus the manifestation of prana.

Knowledge and control of prana manifested in individuals is called pranayama, which opens to us the door to almost unlimited power. The control of prana being the one idea of pranayama, all the training and Yogic exercises advocated in Hatha Yoga are for that one end. This little wave of prana, which represents all mental and physical energies, is the easiest to control through the regulation of physical breathing.

There are people in every country who consciously or unconsciously have control over the prana. In the West there are spiritualists, mind healers, faith healers, the Christian Scientists, and the hypnotists who have some control over prana whether they know it or not. These healers of various sects have stumbled on the discovery of pranic energy and of manipulating it without knowing its nature. Yogis use this prana consciously for awakening the dormant spiritual force in man.

The finest and highest manifestation of all prana's action in the human being is thought. By the trained manipulation of this subtle force of prana, the Yogi is able to give a push to the mind to go higher up into the superconscious plane and to act from that plane.

The grossest manifestation of prana in the human body is in the motion of the lungs. If the motion of the lungs is stopped, all other manifestation of energy and movements of the body will stop automatically. In order to reach and control the subtle prana, the Yogi uses various breathing exercises. The motion of the lungs acts like the flywheel that sets the other forces of the body in motion. So pranayama means the controlling of this motion of the lungs, by which the subtle prana is controlled. When the subtle prana is controlled, then all other gross manifestations of prana in the body will slowly come under control. Every part of the body can be filled up with prana and when we are able to do this, the whole body will be under our control. All diseases of the body can be destroyed from the root by controlling and regulating the prana and it brings the secret knowledge of healing. If our body is strong and healthy with much pranic energy, we will have the natural tendency to produce health and vitality in those who live near us because the pranic energy of our body will be, as it were, conveyed to other bodies just as the water flows from the higher level to the lower.

Thus in the case of one man trying to heal another, a sick person, it can be done by transferring his own prana to the sick person. This can be successful only when one is able to recharge his body consciously with pranic energy through pranayama. This healing process can also be carried on at a distance. The prana can really be transmitted to a great distance, though such genuine healers are rare. Prana can be stored up in the body, especially in the solar plexus, as in a storage battery. This prana we constantly inhale through the air we breathe. Though prana is found in all elements, most of the prana we extract for our body is found in its freest state in the atmosphere.

In ordinary breathing we extract this prana only very little, but when we concentrate and consciously regulate our breathing, we are able to store up in our various nerve centers and brain a greater amount of prana.

Various powers of the advanced Yogis are due to the control of this stored-up prana. The main storage battery of the prana is the solar plexus, in the navel, and even the brain receives its energy for its function from this source.

He who has abundant pranic energy radiates vitality and strength, which can be felt by those coming in contact with him. Many psychic powers come to a Yogi through the practice of pranayama, though a real Yogi never demonstrates those powers. By demonstrating such powers, one not only loses the powers, but also one gets terrible reactions.

The pure man who has controlled the pranic energy has the power of bringing it into a certain state of vibration that can be conveyed to others, bringing in them a similar vibration. These kinds of powers are used purely for good purpose by the real Yogis. Magnetic healing, faith healing, are performed in this way without any selfish motive. Such great people will not even accept thanks in return for their service.

We knowingly or unknowingly use the power of prana in our various daily activities. When you visit a sick friend who is having pain all over his body and head, you often unconsciously put the palm of your hand on his forehead or stroke gently over his body. You are at this moment unconsciously trying to transfer your pranic energy through your palm to your sick friend. Just see what happens to you when you fall down and knock your knee accidentally. The first thing you do is to hold the breath and then you hold the knee tightly with your palms. This is an instinctive act. But the real fact behind this is that by holding the breath you are able to get an extra supply of pranic energy, which you unconsciously transmit to that knee through your hands. When you want to lift a heavy object you again hold the breath automatically, because lifting needs more energy, which you get by holding the breath. Thus it proves that breathing plays a great part in controlling and regulating the pranic movements in the body.

All of us know the fact that the speech of some persons penetrates to the heart of the hearers while the speech of another will bring no effect on the mind, though he speaks beautifully. In the former, the speech is charged with prana and in the latter it is merely intellectual. The great prophets

and saints had the most wonderful control of prana, which gave them that sort of tremendous will power that brought thousands toward them and made them think as the prophets. They could produce a tremendous amount of prana and their thought vibrations were charged with the pranic energy that gave them the power to sway the world. All will power arises from the control of prana.

All the functions of prana will have to be learned and mastered slowly and gradually under the guidance of a truly unselfish teacher. By proper training one can find out the fact that there is more or less supply of prana in one part of the body than in another part. The feeling will become so subtle that mind can feel where there is less supply of prana and also possess the power to supply it. This is one among the various functions of pranayama or Yogic breathing.

Sometimes the supply of prana in our body moves to one part, leaving the other parts partially empty. This brings various mental and physical illnesses. Through regulated breathing, the superfluous prana that is accumulated in one part is transferred toward other parts as well and thus brings energy and strength.

If we look at the vast ocean, we see big and small waves arise and dissolve with innumerable small bubbles. But the background of all these waves and bubbles is the same vast ocean. Everything from the smallest bubble to the biggest waves is connected with the ocean though in appearance they differ. Similarly every human being or animal or plant is connected with the infinite ocean of energy or prana. In reality, wherever there is motion and life, behind there is the storehouse of pranic energy.

The Yogi, using the method of pranayama, is able to absorb the energy from the infinite mass that exists behind, uses this energy for his quick spiritual growth, and within a short time is able to reach the highest perfection.

Pranayama teaches men how to intensify the power of assimilation of this great energy and thereby reach perfection quickly instead of progressing slowly with the retarded of the human race.

All the great saints, prophets, and Yogis, in one life span of time, lived the entire life of race, bridging the great length of time that it takes for a whole race to reach perfection. Through the power of concentration they are able to ab-





sorb and assimilate a tremendous amount of energy from the infinite storehouse, by which they are able to intensify the process of evolution in a short time. For ordinary people such power of concentration is not possible and therefore the science of Yoga teaches the science of pranayama in order to gain the power of concentration and energy.

Yogic breathing is that part of pranayama which attempts to control the physical manifestation of prana in the physical body. As the student progresses in the spiritual side, he is taught to control the prana manifested as mental power, which can be controlled only by mental means. This process of controlling the prana through mental concentration is called Raja Yoga. Therefore, Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga are like the obverse and reverse of the same coin.

For the vast majority of the people to attain perfection through Raja Yoga alone is very difficult. For such people the Hatha Yogic breathing brings quick results and they are able to understand the law of prana upon the mind and establish themselves quickly in the path of Raja Yoga or the process of controlling the mind.

Many people think Hatha Yoga is merely physical exercises. But in reality there is no difference between Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga.

In the Hatha Yoga Predeepika, the well-known, authoritative treatise on Yoga, the great author Swatma Rama emphasizes the necessity of Hatha Yoga "to those who wander in the darkness of the conflicting sects unable to obtain Raja Yoga, the most merciful Swatma Rama Yogin offers the light of Hatha Yoga" (Chap. I, Stanza 3). Here the author says that it is impossible to obtain Raja Yoga by any other means than the hatha vidya.

The way to higher paths is now smooth and easy after mastering body and mind through asana and pranayama

prescribed in Hatha Yoga. But the ground is hard to tread and very few have the patience to persevere after repeated failures. They read of the magnificent and stupendous results laid down as following the easiest physical processes alone for a short time and take to it with avidity for some months. But finding they do not see even a shadow of the glorious powers prophesied, they give up Yogic practices in disgust and perhaps become the bitterest enemies of Yoga. They do not realize the important fact (nor do their selfish pseudo-teachers who come to the public platforms showing some magic stunts, such as eating glass and lying on a bed of nails) that these tremendous powers are promised as a result of a course of pranayama only when it is practiced by one who has perfected himself in the moral and spiritual qualities prescribed in the Yogic lessons. In the following story from the Yoga Vasishta this point is brought out very beautifully.

A Yogi retired into the jungle and practiced pranayama (Yogic breathing) for many years but without realizing any of the powers foretold. He then went to a teacher and asked him to teach him the Yoga. The sage told him to remain with him. For the first two years the sage met all his pupil's eager solicitation for instructions with "Wait." Gradually the Yogi pupil got accustomed to the situation and forgot to trouble his master any more for instructions. At the end of twelve years the sage called his pupil and asked him to repeat mentally the sacred syllable Aum (Om). When the pupil came to the first syllable A, the process by which the air in the lungs is pumped out set in naturally. When he finished the second syllable, U (oo) the process of inhalation set in naturally. At the end of the third syllable (M) the process of retention set in.

As a spark of fire ignites a whole field of sun-dried grass and the whole is in flame in a few minutes, so the pronunciation of the sacred word OM roused into activity the spiritual faculties that lay dormant hitherto in the pupil and in a short time he had passed the initial stages of pranayama, concentration and meditation and settled into the super-conscious state.

This story illustrates the fact that the sage patiently waited for the natural unfoldment of the pupil's spiritual tendencies and the purifying of his nature through his association and surroundings. He chose the right time to initiate him only after many years, when the pupil was purified through preliminary exercises, pranayama, prayer, and the long association with the sage.

If purification of the mind as an essential part in the process of Yoga is understood and tried, through the prescribed method, then there would be fewer victims of failure.

Importance of Pranayama and Rules

Pranayama is one of the most important practices in all forms of Yoga. By practicing pranayama, the Yogi is able to control the nervous system and thereby obtains gradual control over prana or vital energy and the mind.

To breathe means to live and to live means to breathe. Ev-

ery living thing depends upon breathing and cessation of breathing is cessation of life itself. From the first cry of the infant to the last gasp of a dying man there is nothing but a series of breaths. Yogis count life not by number of years but number of breaths. We constantly drain our life force

or pranic energy by our thinking, willing, acting, etc. Every thought, every act of will, or motion of muscles uses up this life force and in consequence constant replenishing is necessary, which is possible mainly through breathing alone.

Just as oxygen is carried through the blood stream to all parts of the body, building up and replenishing, so is the prana carried to all parts of the nervous system. If we know that Yogis get most of their energy from the air, then the importance of proper breathing is readily understood. Whoever practices breathing regularly and systematically can feel in his own body this great effect of absorption of prana.

When one inhales, he is taking in prana and storing it in various nerve centers, especially in the solar plexus. The more prana one can take in, the more vitality he will possess. In the practice of pranayama, mind plays a great part and it is important to observe consciously everything that takes place in the phenomenon of breathing.

In the West there are numerous schools where correct breathing is taught for the sake of physical health. Even pregnant women are taught certain types of breathing exercises that resemble Yogic breathing for natural painless childbirth. During the birth of the child, with each contraction the expectant mother breathes rapidly in quick succession and holds the breath. This act of breathing relieves the pain and the child is born in a natural way while the mother is conscious of every process of nature's act of bringing her child into the world.

Yogis declare that the correct habit of breathing, with natural diet, would regenerate the race and the modern diseases of civilized man, such as blood pressure, heart diseases, asthma, tuberculosis, etc., would be only medical names in the dictionary. In addition to the physical benefits derived through breathing, Yogic teachings further show that through pranayama man's will power, self-control, concentration power, moral qualifications, and even his spiritual evolution can be increased.

Effect of Prana on the Nervous System

There are two nerve currents on either side of the spinal column and there is a hollow canal named sushumna running through the spinal cord. At the base of this hollow canal is the seat of the kundalini or the serpent power.

When the coiled power of kundalini awakes through various pranayama and concentration, it tries to force a passage through this hollow canal and as it rises from lower nerve plexuses to the higher ones, layer after layer of mind opens and many powers and visions come to the Yogi. And when the kundalini reaches the last and highest center, sahasrara chakra (thousand-petaled lotus) in the brain, he becomes perfectly detached from his body and mind and his soul is freed from all limitations caused by time and space. Here the Yogi realizes his eternal existence and enjoys the bliss of the superconscious state.

Yogis, through the pranayama, open the canal of sushumna in the spinal column, which is closed at the lower end, situated near what is called the sacral plexus. The six plexuses that have their centers in the spinal cord can very well stand for the six chakras in the sushumna.

We shall have to remember here from physiology that there are two kinds of action of the nerve currents—one afferent or sensory, which carries the sensations inward to the brain, and the other efferent or motor, from the brain outward to the body. Another point to be remembered here is that the center that regulates the respiratory system has a sort of controlling action over the nerve currents.



There are ten nadis (subtle nerve tubes) through which the nerve currents or prana moves. Out of these ten nadis, the principal nadis are three: ida, pingala, and sushumna. Again, among these three nadis the sushumna located in the spinal column is the most important for Yogis. Sushumna plays a great part in pranayama. Through certain pranayama and concentration, Yogis withdraw prana from the ida and pingala consciously and take it to sushumna, which will become active. When the ida and pingala nadis are devitalized by the operation of sushumna nadi, there is no night or day for the Yogi. When the sushumna is in operation, the Yogi can transcend the limitation of time and space.

We shall see now why pranayama has been taught in order to make the sushumna nadi function. The brain receives

all sensations through nerve fibers; similarly all the messages are telegraphed from the brain through the nervous system only. The ida and pingala nadis of the Yogins correspond to the column of sensory and motor fibers in the spinal cord through which the afferent and efferent currents are traveling. Now according to the Yogic system, the mind can send nerve currents without the use of ida and pingala. If we take the analogy of the telegraph system and wireless system, we can easily understand how the mind can send and receive nerve currents without the help of ida and pingala. For the telegraphic system the message is sent through the wires but in the wireless system there is no need of any wires. Yogis use the wireless method to send the nerve currents. Now the question arises, what is this use of it and

how is it done? The answer is that, by doing so, we will be able to get rid of the bondage of matter.

When the sushumna nadi in the spinal column is made active by pranayama and by certain other processes prescribed in Hatha Yoga, then alone can we get rid of the bondage of matter. By such practices, a Yogi makes his sushumna nadi active. By this the knowledge of his relations with the objective world is held in abeyance and he sees his self pervading the whole universe and becoming one with it.

In ordinary persons, the sushumna is closed up at the lower extremity and no nerve current passes through it. This canal of sushumna can be opened through pranayama. When the sushumna canal is open and active, the prana acts upon the coiled power kundalini at the muladhara and then the kundalini is consciously made to travel up the sushumna nadi. When the entire coiled power travels from center to center, layer after layer of the mind, as it were, will be perceived by the Yogi in its fine or coarse form. And when this tremendous mass of energy is made to move along the sushumna by the power of intense meditation and pranayama and strike on the last center sahasrara chakra in the brain, the knowledge and sensation are superior to the knowledge that comes through the ordinary senses. This direct per-

ception of the self without the help of ordinary senses is called illumination or superconscious perception wherein there is no limitation of self caused by mind or matter.

Thus the rousing of the kundalini through pranayama and other Hatha Yogic methods is one of the ways to the realization of the self or pure consciousness. This kundalini shakthi can be aroused through other methods also, such as through devotion and love for God, through intense meditation on the kundalini shakthi, through the power of the analytic will of the Gyana Yogis or Vedanta philosophers, etc.

Wherever there is supernatural power of wisdom or knowledge, there must have been at least a partial manifestation of kundalini. All kinds of worship, from the primitive man to the civilized man, lead to this one end of rousing this power and many of such worshipers had ignorantly stumbled onto some practice that set in motion a portion of this kundalini shakthi for a very short time.

Thus that supreme, universal mother nature whom men worship under various names and faiths, through fear and tribulations, the Yogi declares unto the world to be the living power that is lying coiled up in every being as kundalini shakthi, the giver of immortality and eternal happiness.

Five Principal Pranas or Five Types of Vital Force

Before the student takes up pranayama for awakening kundalini, he should have a proper understanding of the five major pranas or five types of vital forces and their functions. Though prana is one, it assumes five forms:

- (1) prana,
- (2) apana,
- (3) samana,
- (4) udana, and
- (5) vyana, according to the different functions it performs.

The seat of prana is the heart; of apana, the anus; of samana, the region of the navel; of udana, the throat; while vyana is all-pervading and moves all over the body.

The function of prana is respiration and its color is that of a red gem; apana does excretion and its color is a mixture of white and red; samana performs digestion and its color is between that of pure milk and crystal; udana does deglutation (swallowing of the food) and is plain white color. Udana prana also assumes the function that takes the individual to sleep. Vyana performs circulation of blood and it resembles the color of archil (or that of a ray of light).

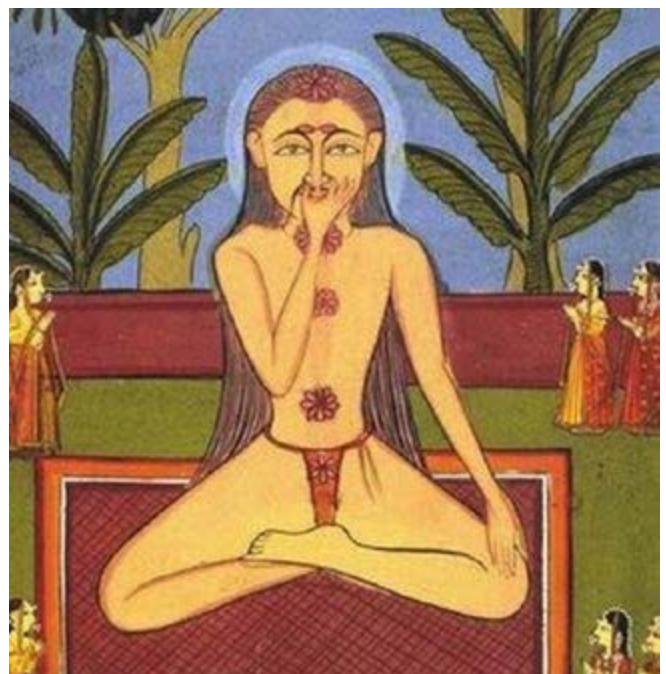
Thus, according to the Yoga philosophy, all visible and invisible happenings in the universe and in the body are the functions of one prana, which manifests in various forms. The activities of the human body automatically come under the control of prana and this cosmic prana as it functions in the body is named pancha pranas or five vital forces, according to the nature and function it performs.

These five pranas function through the five subsidiary nerve

centers in the brain and spinal cord.

Prana through the cervical portion of the autonomic nervous system governs the verbal mechanism and the vocal apparatus, the respiratory muscles, and the movements of the gullet.

Apana Prana controls mostly the autonomic action of the excretory apparatus of the body such as kidney, bladder, genitals, colon, and rectum through the lumbar portion of



the autonomic system.

Samana Prana controls such secretions of the digestive system as that of the stomach, liver, pancreas, and intestine through the sympathetic portion of the autonomic system in the thoracic region.

Udana Prana functions above the larynx and controls all the automatic functions that come under the cephalic divisions of the autonomic nervous system. It also functions as a psychic force that separates the astral body from the physical body at the time of death.

Vyana Prana pervades all the body. This prana controls the voluntary and involuntary movements of the muscles of the whole body and the movements of the joints and structures around them. It also helps to keep the whole body in erect position by generating unconscious reflexes along the spinal cord.

In addition to the five principal pranas, there are five more upa pranas or five minor vital forces: naga, kurma, krikara, devadatha, and dhananjaya. The naga vayu performs the function of belching and gives rise to consciousness; kurma opens the eyelids (drooping of eyelids before sleep) and causes vision; the krikara causes sneezing and causes hunger and thirst; the devadatha produces yawning, and dhananjaya pervades the whole gross body and does not leave the physical body even after death.

Every one of these five pranas is governed by five vayus or nerve impulses. These five vayus are also named in the same way as the five pranas:

- (1) prana vayu,
- (2) apana vayu,
- (3) udana vayu,
- (4) vyana vayu,
- (5) samana vayu.

The word vayu in the Yogic literature is used to describe a particular nerve current or impulse, which is one of the properties of a nerve. These vayus or nerve currents are either received or generated by pranas located in different plexuses of the sympathetic portion of the autonomic system. Each plexus is an independent nerve center, which can receive and generate a nerve impulse.

During pranayama exercises, prana vayu is generated by the intaking of breath and apana vayu is generated by the exhaling process. The prana vayu is an afferent impulse going to the brain or nerve centers and apana vayu is an efferent impulse that moves away from the brain and nerve centers. During retention time in pranayama, the Yogi unites these prana vayu and apana vayu (afferent and efferent nerve impulses) at the muladhara chakra (pelvic plexus). When the two impulses are united at this basic nerve center (pelvic plexus), then this center will act like a dynamo, sending tremendous amounts of pranic energy to stimulate the coiled power kundalini lying dormant at this center.

When the kundalini becomes active it will try to move upward through the canal in the sushumna. This is the first

awakening of the kundalini shakthi. When kundalini is awakened, various reactions can take place in the body. At first the canal of the sushumna in the spinal column is not well opened and there will be a great struggle to raise the kundalini upward.

Here I would like to add some of the initial reactions I had during my pranayama exercise, which will be helpful for advanced students in breathing exercises.

The first reaction, especially during the bhastrika pranayama, is a feeling of a pleasant warmth at the pelvic plexus (muladhara). This is due to the initial vibration caused by the partially united prana and apana nerve impulses. This feeling of heat is felt for several days during the pranayama exercise. Then one day the heat at the lower spine became very intense but very pleasant throughout the period of retention: This experience continued for some days. As the heat increased at the lower spine, a peculiar sensation is felt like a whirlpool in a river. This churning sensation is due to the reaction of the kundalini shakthi. Slowly and gradually this sensation of the coiled power of kundalini moving upward became intense. At first when the power started rising upward through the sushumna in the spinal column, it became active as though it were a high tension wire sending pranic current to every cell of the body throughout the nervous system. At first the body started trembling and quivering when the sushumna was active. At times the reaction was so intense that the body was thrown out of its seat. But all the time during the period of retention there was a peculiar joy that cannot be expressed in words.

As the pranayama exercises continued with proper diet for some months the prana started moving steadily in the sushumna, which can be felt with various kinds of sensations and joy while the trembling and quivering sensation of the body became less and less and finally stopped. The trembling of the body was due to the sudden striking of prana on the sushumna nadi and to forcing a way through it while still not completely purified. It took long practice of purificatory breathing exercises before the sushumna became fully opened and active. At first the control of the body when it started trembling was not possible consciously. This was due partially to impurities in the sushumna and partially to not using the locks or bandhas properly (moola bandha or the anus contraction and the jalandhara bandha or the chin lock), which will be described at the end of this chapter.

When these locks are done properly during the retention time and when the sushumna is free of impurities, then at will the prana could be taken to sushumna, which was not possible previously. It took several months before this control was possible. Purification of the nadis (physical and astral nerve tubes) is essential to get psychic experience, which may take several years of practice. This purification exercise for nadis is known as anuloma viloma pranayama or alternate nostril breathing.

These experiences are convincing and can be achieved by anyone who sincerely practices pranayama with proper diet and under direction of a teacher. Pranayama is important in the control of the body and mind.



Branches of Yoga

While hatha yoga is the most familiar kind of yoga practice in the West, there are five other distinct and individual practices for the purpose of unifying both body and mind.

Hatha Yoga

Called the “forceful path” this is the yoga of physical well-being. In the modern Western approach, hatha yoga is used primarily as a form of physical therapy. It consists of asanas (postures), pranayamas (breathing exercises), and meditation.

Raja Yoga

Raja yoga is considered the highest form of Yoga. Raja means “royal”, and meditation is the focal point of this branch of yoga. This approach involves strict adherence to the eight “limbs” or stages of yoga as outlined by Patanjali in The Yoga Sutras. Raja yoga is also known as “classical” yoga. The practice of raja yoga typically starts with hatha yoga, which gives the body the needed health and strength to endure the more advanced stages of training.

Karma Yoga

Karma yoga is the path of service. The principle of karma yoga is that what we experience today is created by our actions in the past. Therefore, all of our present efforts become a way to consciously create a future that frees us from being bound by negativity and selfishness. We practice karma yoga whenever we perform our work and live our lives in a selfless fashion and as a way to serve others.

Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti yoga describes the path of devotion. Seeing the Divine in all of creation, bhakti yoga is a positive way to channel the emotions. The path of bhakti yoga provides us with an opportunity to cultivate acceptance and tolerance for everyone we come into contact with.

Jnana Yoga

While bhakti yoga can be considered the yoga of the heart, jnana yoga is the yoga of the mind, of wisdom, the path of the sage or scholar. This path requires development of the intellect through the study of the scriptures and texts of the yogic tradition.

Tantra Yoga

Tantra yoga is probably the most misunderstood or misinterpreted of all the paths of yoga. Tantra yoga is the pathway of ritual. In tantric practice we experience the Divine in everything we do. A reverential attitude is therefore cultivated, encouraging a ritualistic approach to life.

Combining Yoga Paths

You need not be limited to one expression or path of yoga. You may practice hatha yoga, taking care of your physical body; while simultaneously including raja yoga by adding meditation to your practice; performing karma yoga by engaging in selfless service to others and cultivating the lifestyle of a bhakti yogi by expressing your compassion for everyone you meet.

What is Hatha Yoga?

The system of yoga used most often in the West is called Hatha yoga. The word Hatha is a composite of Ha, which means sun and Tha which means moon. Yoga is the union between them, suggesting that the healthy joining of opposites - in this case, the mind and body - leads to strength, vitality and peace of mind.

Hatha yoga is the physical aspect of the practice of yoga. Hatha yoga emphasizes asanas (practice of postures), pranayama (breathing techniques) and dhyana (meditation). It aims to balance different energy flows within the human body. As a form of exercise, hatha yoga consists of asanas or postures that embody controlled movement, concentration, flexibility, and conscious breathing. About half of the nearly 200 asanas are practiced widely in the West. The postures range from the basic to the complex, from the easily accomplished to the very challenging. While the movements tend to be slow and controlled, they provide an invigorating workout for the mind and body, including the internal organs.

Yoga exercises are designed to ease tense muscles, to tone up the internal organs, and to improve the flexibility of the body's joints and ligaments. The aim of proper yoga exercise is to improve suppleness and strength. Each posture is performed slowly in fluid movements. Violent movements are avoided; they produce a buildup of lactic acid, causing fatigue.

Hatha yoga is a complete fitness program and will release endorphins in the brain as well as any regular exercise program. Yoga postures stretch, extend, and flex the spine, while

exercising muscles and joints, keeping the body strong and supple. When done in conjunction with breathing techniques, hatha yoga postures stimulate circulation, digestion and the nervous and endocrine systems. As a workout, yoga can be intense, easy, or somewhere in between.

It can be practiced by anyone, regardless of age, to achieve a more limber body, increased physical coordination, better posture, and improved flexibility without incurring the potentially negative effects associated with high-impact forms of exercise. Hatha yoga remains different from newer or more modern types of exercise. It does not aim to raise the heart rate (although variations such as Ashtanga, Power Yoga, or the flow series taught by Bikram Choudhury may) or work on specific muscle groups.

Overall, the postures release stiffness and tension, help to reestablish the inner balance of the spine, renew energy and restore health. Some postures provide the added benefit of being weight-bearing which helps sustain bone mass (very important for women). Relaxation and breathing exercises produce stability and reduce stress and put you in touch with your inner strength. In addition, regular practice of hatha yoga can promote graceful aging.

Whether you are learning yoga singly or in a group, it is a good idea to be supervised by a qualified teacher. A teacher will demonstrate how to ease your body gently into and out of the yoga postures. He or she will ensure that you do not strain your limbs and will help you align your body in the asanas.

Styles of Hatha Yoga

There are several styles of hatha yoga, many of these have specific characteristics which reflect a particular teacher's approach to asanas; others reflect the characteristics or teachings of a particular organization. Like individuals, styles or schools of hatha yoga have their own personalities and approaches to practicing asanas. What distinguishes the different styles is what is emphasized, be it posture, breath, aerobics, dance, slow and rhythmic movements, philosophy or a combination of many factors. Although the basic asanas and breathing exercises remain the same, how they are done, in what order, and where

attention is focused while doing them constitute the main differences among the many schools. Regardless of your age or fitness level, you can find a style that will appeal to you and be most appropriate for your particular body or personality type.

Ananda Yoga

This method combines the physical and spiritual. The purpose of Ananda yoga is to clear and energize the system in preparation for meditation. Each posture is viewed as a way to expand, or heighten, self awareness. This process is enhanced through

the use of affirmation, a distinctive feature of this system. Ananda yoga also teaches a series of poses called "energenization exercises". These exercises involve tensing and relaxing different parts of the body, coupled with breathing exercises to send energy to them. Another characteristic of this technique is the emphasis it places on deeply relaxing into poses, keeping in mind that hatha yoga is a preparation for meditation.

Ashtanga Yoga

The Ashtanga yoga system is a rigorous practice comparable to the training of

an elite athlete. Consisting of specific postures done in six successive series linked by the breath, Ashtanga yoga represents the most intensive form of hatha yoga. The purpose of this continual flow of action is to create heat which produces a cleansing or detoxifying effect on the body. Ashtanga places equal emphasis on strength, flexibility and stamina. Many fitness enthusiasts who thrive on intense workouts like this style. This style is often called "Power Yoga".

Integral Yoga

Integral yoga combines all the paths of yoga - asana (postures), pranayama (controlled breathing), selfless service, prayer, chanting, meditation and self-inquiry - into one approach. It emphasizes a more meditative rather than anatomical approach. Practicers of this style of yoga are encouraged to be "easeful in body, peaceful in mind and useful in life". Integral yoga classes follow a set pattern and are 75 minutes in length. This includes 45 minutes of asanas, a deep relaxation, a breathing sequence and ends with a meditation. Although challenging, the feeling of the class is gentle and meditative and reflects a traditional approach that benefits all aspects of the individual.

Iyengar Yoga

Iyengar yoga is probably the most widely recognized hatha yoga technique in the Western world. Iyengar yoga is practiced in a manner prescribed by yoga master B. K. S. Iyengar. It is regarded mostly for its rigorous scientific and therapeutic approach, concentrating on correcting structural imbalances in the physical body. Iyengar teachers pay particularly close attention to the placement of the feet, hands and pelvis, as well as to the alignment of the spine, arms and legs. Because of this attention to detail, the pace of an Iyengar class tends to be slow to moderate. Classes typically focus in great detail on only a few asanas so as to refine movements. Standing postures are emphasized and, although you will be reminded to

breathe, specific breathing techniques are not emphasized as much in this style of yoga as in some of the other styles. Iyengar-style yoga also relies a lot on props - wood blocks, benches, sandbags, blankets, bolsters and straps as a support system to achieve greater symmetry and extension in the posture.

Kripalu Yoga

Less concerned with the structural detail of the postures, Kripalu yoga has been described as "meditation in motion." It emphasizes the student's mental and emotional states as the poses are held, while encouraging a gentle, compassionate and introspective approach. Postures are held for a long time so as to explore and release emotional and spiritual blocks. This inner-directed form of hatha yoga consists of 3 stages: willful practice, will and surrender, and finally, surrendering to the body's wisdom. Within each of the 3 stages, poses are offered in different intensities: gentle, moderate, and vigorous. In addition, spontaneous postures and sequences of postures are encouraged, guided by the body's internal awareness.

Kundalini Yoga

Kundalini yoga is an ancient practice designed to bring forth the "Kundalini", or reservoir of energy, stored at the base of the spine. Through the use of breath, posture, chanting and meditation, this energy is stimulated and consciously directed through the chakras or energy centers along the spine. Several breathing techniques are emphasized - alternate nostril breathing; slow, diaphragmatic breathing and a dynamic technique called breath of fire.

Sivananda Yoga

Sivananda yoga incorporates a five-point method of practice, which includes proper exercise, breathing, deep relaxation, vegetarian diet, positive thinking and meditation. Following a standard format, Sivananda hatha

yoga classes are based on a routine of breathing exercises, sun salutations, a series of 12 classic yoga postures and relaxation. A short mantra chant and prayers begin and end each class.

Viniyoga

The method of Viniyoga represents a kind of middle path between the exactness of Iyengar yoga and the physically demanding Ashtanga yoga. It is based on the principle of vinyasa krama, which means "an organized course of yoga study," and combines asana, pranayama, meditation, text study, counseling, imagery, prayer, chanting, and ritual. Yoga postures are tailored to the physical needs and limitations of each student, taking into account body type, emotional needs, cultural heritage, and interest. Emphasis is on the spine, and breath is considered more important than how the posture is done. Breath and movement are consciously coordinated and the inhalations and exhalations are articulated in varying lengths and ratios. Typically, classes are private one-on-one sessions.

Yoga College of India Choudhury Yoga Bikram Yoga

Choudhury yoga classes consist of a two-part series of 26 repeating postures with 2 pranayama exercises that are designed to stretch and tone the whole body. Most poses are done twice and held for a minimum of 10 seconds in a room with temperatures of 80 degrees or higher, often supplemented by moist air from a humidifier. Class concludes with a brief period of relaxation. An excellent routine for those already fit; it is not so easy for the beginner.

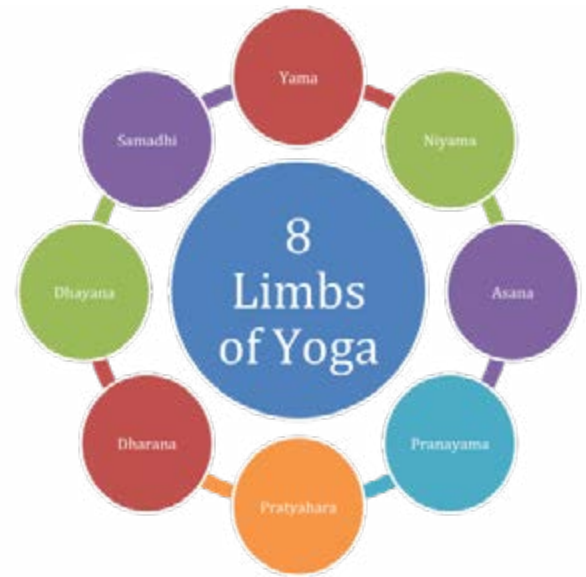
Raja Yoga

Raja Yoga Raja Yoga, literally means Royal or Kingly Yoga, is the system of yoga by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. It is primarily concerned with the cultivation of the mind and bringing balance to one's life through meditation or focusing directly to the Lord.

The concept of the Raja Yoga practice is to focus the mind, which is the "king" of one's psycho-physical structure. Since the whole body is interconnected with each other, with the mind ruling one's every thought and action, practicing hatha yoga will be an essential first step to prepare oneself in yoga meditation. Furthermore, other forms of self-discipline and purification of the physical self also includes getting rid of old addictions such as alcohol and cigarettes, and paying close attention to your actions, thoughts, and speech. Through practicing all these, one can be fit to engage in a deeper form of yoga, which is meditation.

The objective of Raja Yoga is to control all forms of thought-waves and mental modifications. It starts its Sadhana with the mind, and may also involve minimum asanas and pranayamas.

Raja Yoga is also called Ashtanga, or eight-limbed yoga. It refers to the eight aspects to the path one must undergo. The eight limbs of Ashtanga Yoga are the following: These scientifically arranged eight limbs are the upward steps that a person goes through to reach the real divine nature, which is the actual goal of Raja Yoga.



Raja Yoga may also require a teacher or a mentor to aide you during the process, and so as to guide you when you have easily shifted your thoughts, or are merely experiencing hallucinations. But if you're on the right track, Raja Yoga will take your focus up towards your third eye, or the ajna, which is situated in the center of your lower forehead. Through Raja Yoga, the body and mind will be balanced, until your thoughts become free of worries, converting these into pure consciousness, freedom, awareness and perfect bliss and union with the Almighty.

Eight-fold path of Yoga - Ashtanga yoga

In The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, which is a two-thousand-year-old collection of the oral teachings on yogic philosophy, there are one hundred and ninety-five statements which are a kind of philosophical guidebook for dealing with the challenges of being human. The Yoga Sutras provides an eight-fold path called ashtanga, which literally means "eight limbs". These eight steps are basic guidelines on how to live a meaningful and purposeful life. They are a prescription

for moral and ethical conduct. They direct attention toward one's health, and they help us to acknowledge the spiritual aspects of our nature.

The first four steps or stages concentrate on refining our personalities, gaining mastery over our body, and developing an energetic awareness of ourselves, all of which prepare us for the second half of the journey, which deals with the senses, the mind, and attaining a higher state of consciousness.

1. Yama

The first step deals with one's moral or ethical standards and sense of integrity, focusing on our behavior and how we conduct ourselves in our interpersonal life. These are, literally, the controls or don'ts of life. They include areas where we must learn to control tendencies which, if allowed expression, would end up causing us disharmony and pain. They are the same moral virtues that you find in all the world's great religious traditions. The five yamas are:

Non-violence (Refrain from harming or demeaning any living thing, including yourself, by action, word or thought.)

Non-lying (Control any tendency to say anything that is not truthful, including not being truthful to yourself)

Non-stealing (Curb the tendency to take anything that does not belong to you which includes not only material objects but also things such as praise or position.)

Non-sensuality (Learn the art of self-control; to control the tremendous energy expended in seeking and thinking about sensual pleasure and to abstain from inappropriate sexual behavior.)

Non-greed (Learn not to be attached to or desirous of "things"; to learn to discriminate between "needs" and "wants".)

2. Niyama

Niyama, the second step, are individual practices having to do with self-discipline, self-development and spiritual observances. These are the non-controls or the dos of the path. The five niyamas are:

Purity (Strive for purity or cleanliness of body, mind and environment.)

Contentment (Seek contentment and acceptance with what you have and with things as they are right now. But, also, seek ways to improve things in the future.)

Self-control (Learn to have control over your actions and to have the strength of determination to do what you decide to do; to replace negative habits with positive ones.)

Self-study (This requires introspection; studying our actions, words and thoughts to determine if we are behaving in a harmonious and positive manner in order to achieve the happiness and satisfaction we strive for.)

Devotion (Devotion is the turning of the natural love of the heart toward the Divine rather than toward the objects of the world.)

3. Asana

Asana, the postures practiced in yoga, are the third step. In the yogic view, the body is a temple of the spirit, the care of which is an important stage of our spiritual growth. Through the practice of asana, we develop the habit of discipline and the ability to concentrate, both of which are necessary

for meditation. If the body is in proper working order and comfortable in one position for a long time, it can ultimately become a vehicle for spiritual powers, instead of preventing progress by bothering its owner with physical distress.

4. Pranayama

Generally translated as breath control, this fourth step consists of techniques designed to gain mastery over the respiratory process while recognizing the connection between the breath, the mind and the emotions. The literal translation of pranayama is "life force". Yogis believe that it

not only rejuvenates the body but actually extends life itself. You can practice pranayama as an isolated technique (simply sitting and performing a number of breathing exercises) or integrate it into your daily hatha yoga routine.

5. Pratyahara

Pratyahara, the fifth step, means withdrawal or sensory transcendence. It is during this stage that we make the conscious effort to draw our awareness away from the external world and outside stimuli. We direct our attention internally. The practice of pratyahara provides us with an opportunity to step back and take a look at ourselves. This

can happen during breathing exercises, during meditation, during the practice of yoga postures, or during any activity requiring concentration. Detachment is a great technique for pain control and an excellent way to deal with uncomfortable symptoms or chronic conditions.

6. Dharana

The practice of pratyahara creates the setting for dharana or concentration. Having relieved ourselves of outside distractions, we can now deal with the distractions of the mind itself. In the practice of concentration, which precedes meditation, we learn how to slow down the thinking process by concentrating on a single mental object. The goal is to become aware of nothing but the object on which you are

concentrating, whether it's a candle flame, a flower, a mantra you repeat to yourself, a specific energetic center in the body, or an image of a deity. The purpose is to train the mind to eliminate all the extra, unnecessary junk floating around, to learn to gently push away superfluous thought. Extended periods of concentration naturally lead to meditation.

7. Dhyana

Meditation or contemplation, the seventh step of ashtanga, is the uninterrupted flow of concentration. Although concentration (dharana) and meditation (dhyana) may appear to be one and the same, a fine line of distinction exists between these two stages. Where dharana practices one-pointed attention, dhyana is ultimately a state of being keenly aware without focus. At this stage, the mind has been quieted, and in the stillness it produces few or no thoughts at all. Meditation occurs when you've actually become linked to

the object of your concentration so that nothing else exists. It is a keen heightened awareness, not nothingness. Your mind is completely focused and quiet but awake and aware of truth. Many methods exist to bring you to this state, but oneness with the object of your meditation, and subsequently, oneness with the entire universe, is the objective. It is quite a difficult task to reach this state of stillness but it is not impossible. This state is a goal to keep striving for and, even if it is never attained, there is benefit from each stage of progress.

8. Samadhi

Patanjali describes this eighth and final step of ashtanga as a state of ecstasy. All the paths of yoga lead to this stage. This stage is one which most of us are unlikely to attain in this lifetime. At this stage, the meditator merges with his or her point of focus and transcends the self altogether. When in this state, you understand not only that you and the object of your meditation are one, but that you and the universe are

one. There's no difference between you and everything else. The meditator comes to realize a profound connection to the Divine, an interconnectedness with all living things. What Patanjali has described as the completion of the yogic path is what, deep down, all human beings aspire to: joy, fulfillment, freedom and peace

Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga In this day and age, we will rarely find people doing things for the sake of doing them. Most of us do things because we expect to be rewarded in the end. For instance, we go to work and do our job well so that we will get compensated or have our salaries increased. But it shouldn't always be the case, as illustrated by Karma Yoga which a Hindu concept that refers to our attitude towards duty.

Karma Yoga is the concept wherein one must do an action selflessly for the Supreme Being. It means that we offer the fruits of our labor to the Lord instead of seeking to have them for our own. Doing so truly liberates us because we do not get tied to the consequences of our actions.

What does it mean to be liberated in the sense of Karma Yoga? It means that when we do not get attached to our action, we do not get burdened by it. When we become unburdened by the act, it brings forth ease in doing it.

This might come to those unfamiliar with the concept as a big and lofty but aimless talk. How then would Karma Yoga figure into our everyday life?

Take for example taking care of an elderly in a nursing home. Imagine yourself as being one of the caregivers. The most likely reason that you got that job is because you were expecting a financial compensation for the hours you worked there. By focusing on the compensation, you cease to care about what you're really doing there and everything becomes work to you.

However, if you start distancing yourself from the financial compensation and just focus on selfless service as taught

by Karma Yoga, things tend to become easier. What you are doing now ceases to become work. You begin taking good care of them instead of doing just the usual routine of attending to their needs.

Do not fret though, as you will also start seeing much more fruitful rewards here like a smile from the person that you are taking care of. Sure, it may not be a financial reward but a great reward nonetheless to top off the money that you are getting from your work.

As you might have observed, doing things selflessly not only makes things easier but also spreads goodwill among people. And with goodwill spreading around you, life will indeed be much easier to live. So waste no time, spread the love and learn how this yoga practice!





Bhakti Yoga

Bhakti Yoga Bhakti Yoga is essentially devotional Yoga. It is one of the oldest types of Yoga, and its roots can be traced back to the sacred Hindu text called the Vedas. In Hinduism, Bhakti Yoga emphasizes devotion to God. It is considered one of the ways to be personally connected with the Lord. The word "bhakti" itself is derived from the word "bhak", which means "to be attached to God."

The level of love and devotion that is practiced in Bhakti yoga makes this path appealing to the emotional. There are nine traditional ways in which one can develop one's closeness with God. A Bhakti devotee can choose any of these nine ways:

- ✧ Sravana is where the devotee hears about God's glories and virtues from a wise guru or teacher.
- ✧ Kirtana refers to singing hymns and dancing for the Lord.
- ✧ Smarana refers to constantly keeping God in one's mind through Meditation, preaching, and praying.
- ✧ Padasevana is serving the Lord by serving others like the sick.
- ✧ Archana refers to worship through a physical or mental image.
- ✧ Vandana is devoted prayer by bowing down low on the ground.
- ✧ Dasya Bhakti is serving God and other

devotees through Meditation and adherence to the scriptures.

- ✧ Sakhya-Bhava is forming and maintaining a loving friendship with the Lord. Atma-Nivedana refers to surrendering one's self to God by sacrificing one's personal desires.

How is Bhakti Yoga practiced? The yogi positions himself on a Yoga Mat and meditates deeply. Comfortable Yoga Clothes are recommended so one will be able to practice Yoga smoothly and focus one's energy on devotion.

The Bhakti yogi visualizes the Lord in front of him and pours out his love. Some Bhakti yogis are so filled with emotion that they shed tears. The connection of love between God and devotee builds a relationship that in turn creates a very peaceful mood that makes the yogi much more conscious of his surroundings.

The yogi may also chant "om" or keep it in mind. This word, according to the Hindus, has a powerful calming effect on the body. A devotee may also choose to chant a mantra with prayer beads as guides. Holding these beads includes the sense of touch in your routine, which in itself relaxes the mind.

Bhakti Yoga, as with some other types of Yoga, follows a vegetarian diet full of naturally grown foods. Aside from the nutritional value of such foods, the yogi chooses vegetarianism to keep the body calm and not overly stimulated. For this reason, devoted yogis also steer clear of coffee and alcohol.

Jnana Yoga

Jnana Yoga Jnana Yoga is the form of Yoga that aims to achieve perfect knowledge, that is, the knowledge to perceive the absolute reality beyond the mere appearances of the world.

Jnana means knowledge and by knowledge it isn't the one which students imbibe at school or by doing research. Knowledge here is spoken of in the sense that one would see the underlying reality in everything there is in the world.

In the practice of Jnana Yoga, reality is not that which is tangible and that can be perceived. Reality is not composed of the pleasures that one experiences and the material things that one sees and accumulates.

The reality being spoken of here is the so-called Absolute Reality which is also called the Sat. The Absolute Reality is the one which is not constrained by time or space; the reality that exists in the past, present, and the future; and it is the unchanging reality that has no beginning, middle, or end.

Seeing and realizing this Absolute Reality strips off the world of its appearances. Once stripped off of it, the world becomes less and less desirable and the desire to perceive the Absolute Reality becomes stronger.

But how does one see the Sat or the Absolute Reality? No, one doesn't have to retreat to the woods and literally leave the world, or at least the civilized world. There is a means to be lured away into the illusions of the world and cease to be worldly. The means is called Sadhana Chatustaya or the Four Means of Salvation.

1. **Viveka** – this the first stage of salvation. This is where one learns how to differentiate the real from the unreal, the permanent and the things that are passing, and the self and the non-self. Viveka is achieved by the Grace of God alone. The Grace is achieved by realizing and allowing oneself to be an instrument of God.
2. **Vairagya** – also called the stage of Dispassion, this is the stage where one learns how to detach himself or herself from things that are temporary.
3. **Shad-Sampat** – this is the stage of the sixfold virtue: the Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Sraddha, Samadhana.
 - ✿ Sama – tranquility of the mind when desires are eradicated.
 - ✿ Dama – rational control of the senses.
 - ✿ Uparati – the conscious effort to veer away from the desire for sensual enjoyment.
 - ✿ Titiksha – the endurance in bearing heat

and cold, pain and pleasure, among others.

- ✿ Sraddha – the faith in one's Guru, the Vedas, and the self.
- ✿ Samadhana – this is the part where one practices perfect concentration.

4. **Mumukshutva** – when all the three previous means of salvation have been achieved, the desire to be free from the wheel of births and deaths will come, the Mumukshutva.

When one achieves the four stages, he or she should approach the Guru who will then guide the person on the knowledge of his or her real nature.





1. pranamasana



2. hasta utthanasana

11. hasta utthanasana



10. padhasthasana



3. padhasthasana

surya namaskar



9. ashwa sanchalanasana



4. ashwa sanchalanasana



8. parvatasana



5. santolanasana



7. bhujangasana



6. ashtanga namaskara

Sun Salutation

"Surya Namaskar"

<http://www.patheos.com> - Sunil Daman

"Surya" means "Sun" and "Namaskar" means "to bow down." So why is this traditional sequence of postures called Surya Namaskar practiced? The logical conclusion is that the sun is the life or energy source for this planet and is an element in everything we eat, drink or breathe. The earth and the moon are significant in the way they affect life, but the sun is the source of all energy and when one is in tune with the cycles of the sun, physical health, well-being, vitality, and energy, are all yours.

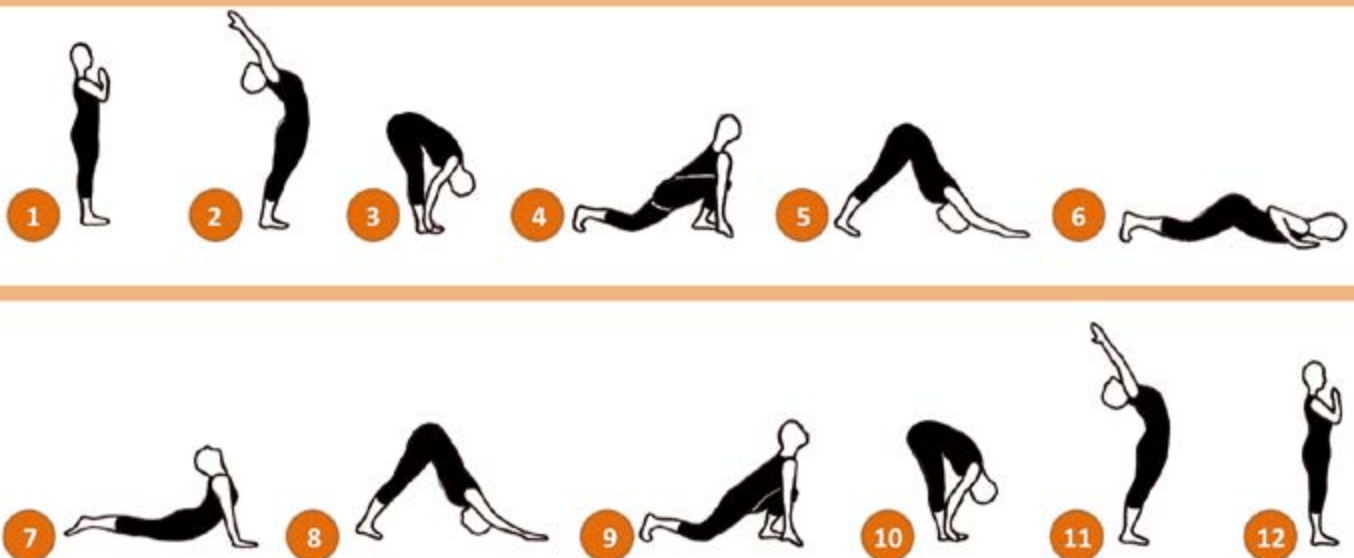
Sun Salutation There is no possibility of life in the absence of the Sun's rays. All life forms will cease to exist if the sun decides to disappear. Solar energy is fundamental even within your body. Your body is maintaining a certain temperature and all that generates heat upon this planet – whether in the form of life or in the form of inanimate material – all of it is solar energy, finding its expression in so many different ways.

Only through learning how to better

"digest" the sun, internalize it, and make it a part of your system, do you truly benefit from this process. Surya Namaskar, also known as Sun Salutation in the West, is therefore a process to harness this solar energy to build a dimension within you where your physical cycles become in sync with the sun's cycles of twelve-and-a-quarter years. So it is by design that Sun Salutation has twelve postures or twelve asanas in it.

Steps for Surya Namaskar

Surya Namaskar (Sun Salutation) is the combination of 12 different asana (Yoga poses).



1. Pranamasana

Stand straight and erect in such a way that your face is in the direction of the sun. Both feet should be touching each other. Bring your hands close to your chest by touching palm to palm called Namaskar (Salutation).

2. Hastauttanasana

Take a deep breath and raise your hand in upward direction.

3. Padahastasana

Now breathe out slowly and bend forward. Hands should be lined with

your feet and head touching your knees.

4. Ashwa Sanchalanasana

Inhale slowly and extend the right leg back and drop the knee to the ground. Bend the left knee and hands should be firm with the ground.

5. Parvatasana

During exhaling bring the right leg back to join the left leg. Raise your buttocks upwards forming triangle.

6. Ashtanga Namaskar

Exhale until your feet, knees, hands, chest, forehead touches the ground. Hold the breath.

7. Bhujangasana

On inhaling raise your head in an upward direction and bend in backward direction as much you can. It is called bhujangasana pose.

8. Parvatasana

Now exhale slowly and make upward arc as shown in fig.

9. Ashwa Sanchalanasana

Inhale slowly and extend the right leg back and drop the knee to the ground. Bend the left knee and hands should be firm with the ground.

10. Padahastasana

Now breathe out slowly and bend forward. Hands should be lined with your feet and head touching your knees.

11. Hastauttanasana

Take a deep breath and raise your hand in upward direction.

12. Pranamasana

Stand straight and erect in such a way that your face is in the direction of the sun. Both feet should be touching each other. Bring your hands close to your chest by touching palm to palm called Namaskar (Salutation).

Physical Benefits of Sun Salutation?

Sun Salutation comprises a sequence of 12 yoga postures, best done at sunrise. If done fast, it provides a good cardiovascular workout. If done at a slower pace, these postures help tone the muscles and can relax the system and

meditative. Regular practice of Sun Salutation improves the functions of the heart, liver, intestine, stomach, chest, throat, and legs – basically, the whole body. The process purifies the blood and improves blood circulation throughout the system



and ensures proper functioning of the stomach, bowel, and nerve centers. Practicing Sun Salutation daily helps balance the three constitutions – Vata, Pitha and Kapha – that the body is made up of, according to Ayurvedic science. Sun Salutation is also known to enhance the physical strength of a person.

Though pretty much a complete set of asanas in itself, Sun Salutation also forms an excellent link as a warm-up before other yoga asanas. An asana is a body posture and “Yoga” means that which takes you on to a higher dimension or higher perception of life. So, a posture which leads you to a higher possibility is called a “yogasana.” Among the yogasanas, there are 84 basic asanas through which one can elevate

his consciousness or awareness. These do not mean just 84 physical postures. They are 84 systems or in other words, 84 ways of attaining to mukti or enlightenment. Out of this, if you have mastery over even a single yogasana, everything that one is seeking can be known. If you happen to be sad or distressed, observe your posture and you will notice the body is slouched and head hung low. This can be reversed by consciously getting your body into a certain posture and thus elevating your system's situation and awareness. You can change the very way you feel, think, understand, and experience life by sitting in a particular way. Sun Salutation is one of these systems. Yogis say that doing 12 sets of Sun Salutation means doing 12 powerful yoga asanas within 12 to 15 minutes.

Going beyond Surya Namaskar

There are three processes to align with the sun, the most profound being Surya Kriya. Placing them in context, the widely practiced Sun Salutation may be called a close runner-up of Surya Kriya, while the process of Surya Shakti may be a further watered version. Surya Shakti is for those who want to get physically strong. But if you want to sprinkle your life with a spiritual element in it, you do Sun Salutation. Surya Kriya is for the sadhaka who is seeking strong spiritual process. Surya Kriya is the fundamental practice on which the other two are based and a powerful process of activating the sun within us.

Surya Kriya is a refined process that needs enormous attention in terms of the geometry of the body. Sun Salutation has evolved out of Surya Kriya. While Sun Salutation is largely a salutation to the sun and bringing balance between Ida and Pingala or the masculine and feminine within, it also activates Samath Prana which is the manifestation of the sun's energy in the body. But Surya Kriya has more spiritual intentions and more powerful connotations attached to it which needs to be taught carefully and learnt with a certain level of involvement. It is very important that it is practiced with precision and care because anything that is powerful has to be handled properly; otherwise, it will not be safe to handle them.

Benefits of Sun Salutation

- » Tones up the digestive system by the alternate stretching and compression of abdominal organs. It activates digestion and gets rid of constipation and dyspepsia.
- » Strengthens abdominal muscles.
- » Thoroughly ventilates the lungs, and oxygenates the blood.
- » Acts as detoxifying agent, by getting rid of enormous quantity of carbon dioxide and other toxic gases.
- » Promotes sleep and calms anxiety.
- » Tones up the nervous system and improves memory.
- » Normalizes the activity of the endocrine glands - especially the thyroid gland.
- » Refreshes the skin. Prevents Skin disorders.
- » Improves muscle flexibility.
- » In women, stimulates the breasts to help firmness normally. Restores any lost elasticity, through stimulation of glands and the strengthening of pectoral muscles.
- » menstrual irregularity and assists in easy childbirth.
- » Suppresses
- » Prevents loss of hair and graying.
- » Helps reduce fat.
- » Reduces abnormal prominence of the Adam's apple.
- » Eliminates unpleasant smells from the body.
- » Lends grace and ease of movements to the body.
- » Revives and maintains the spirit of youthfulness.
- » Broadens chest and beautifies arms.
- » Makes the spine and waist flexible.
- » Produces health, strength, efficiency and longevity.



Benefits of Hatha Yoga

Health Benefits of Yoga

Yoga has both preventative and therapeutic benefits. It has been shown to offer both physical and mental benefits to the body and the mind.

The many physical benefits of hatha yoga are: it improves flexibility and muscle joint mobility; strengthens, tones, and builds muscles; corrects posture; strengthens the spine; eases back pain; improves muscular-skeletal conditions such as bad knees, tight shoulders and neck, swayback and scoliosis; increases stamina; creates balance and grace; stimulates the glands of the endocrine system; improves digestion and elimination; increases circulation; improves heart conditions; improves breathing disorders; boosts immune response; decreases cholesterol and blood sugar levels; and encourages weight loss.

The mental benefits include: it increases body awareness; relieves chronic stress patterns in the body; refreshes the body by relieving muscle strain; relaxes the mind and body; centers attention; sharpens concentration; and frees the spirit.

Western doctors and scientists are discovering additional health benefits of hatha yoga. Studies have shown that it can relieve the symptoms of several common and potentially life-threatening illnesses; such as arthritis, arteriosclerosis,

chronic fatigue, diabetes, AIDS, asthma and obesity. Many believe it even fends off the ravages of old age.

Yoga Benefits as An Exercise

A near-perfect fitness routine, hatha yoga provides the means for people of any age not only to get and stay in shape but also to develop balance, coordination, and a sense of centeredness. It renews, invigorates, and heals the body - stretching and toning the muscles, joints, and spine and directing blood and oxygen to the internal organs (including the glands and nerves).

Yoga is distinctly different from other kinds of exercise. It generates motion without causing strain and imbalances in the body. When practiced correctly, hatha yoga has no such negative effects on either the inner or outer body.

When done with dedication and purpose, hatha yoga can be a quite demanding, yet an immensely rewarding type of exercise. While not inherently aerobic, it involves almost every muscle in the body and challenges the body to work in a different and often more passive way. Since the limbs function as free weights, resistance is created by moving the body's center of gravity. This strengthening gives way to endurance as poses are held for longer periods of time.

Unlike conventional forms of exercise, such as weight training, walking, biking or hiking, hatha yoga stresses quality of movement over quantity. A consistent hatha yoga practice can quiet the mind and refresh the body, bringing health, relaxation, and happiness.

Yoga Benefits For All Ages

Whatever your age, yoga can enhance your lifestyle...

As well as being fun for children, learning yoga develops self-discipline and can enhance their physical and mental health. Asanas are good for developing coordination and help to improve concentration and memory. Regular practice can enable young people to keep their natural flexibility for many years.

It can help teenagers to keep their youthful flexibility and give them the inner strength to say no to negative influences.

Older people often find that gentle yoga exercises allow them to retain mobility and may relieve problems such as arthritis and poor circulation.

During pregnancy, yoga promotes good health in both mother and unborn child. Yoga asanas lessen the effects of such problems as overweight, backache, and depression. Most women who practice yoga find that it can make labor easier and shorter. Although some asanas have to be modified during pregnancy, their essence is perfectly suited to this time of expanded self-awareness. Pregnancy is also a very good time for meditation.

Everyone can benefit from following a regular yoga routine, as it counteracts many of the problems suffered in modern life. Asanas release the physical tensions caused by hours of sitting, deep breathing gives vitality by increasing the supply of oxygen to the brain and meditation enhances the powers of concentration. Yoga improves strength and flexibility in the mind as well as the body, and aids relaxation. Yoga can enable one to relax fully, and promotes sound sleep; it also improves digestion and stimulates circulation. It frees the practitioner both physically and mentally, often heightening intuition and creativity.

Yoga Benefits and Sports

Yoga postures are the physical positions that coordinate breath with movement and with holding the position to stretch and strengthen different parts of the body. Asana practice is the ideal complement to other forms of exercise, especially running, cycling and strength training, as the postures systematically work all the major muscle groups, including the back, neck, and shoulders, deep abdominal, hip and buttocks muscles and even ankles, feet, wrists and hands.

By their very nature, asanas affect major and minor muscle groups and organs as they simultaneously import strength, increase flexibility and bring nourishment to internal organs. Although most poses are not aerobic in nature, they do in fact send oxygen to the cells in the body by way of conscious deep breathing and sustained stretching and contraction of different muscle groups.

Whatever sport you choose to practice, yoga can enhance and complement your ability. Most sports build muscular strength and stamina, often in specific areas of the body. Yoga can help to check any imbalance in muscular development and will enable both your body and your mind to function more efficiently. If your body is flexible and supple you will be less prone to sports injuries, as your joints will be kept lubricated.

Skiing demands mental alertness as well as good balance. Yoga asanas strengthen your muscles, release physical tension and improve your concentration and poise. Yoga makes your limbs balanced, strong and relaxed.

Golfers may be prone to one-sided or uneven muscle development. Yoga asanas can strengthen weak areas and ease muscular tension. The standing poses improve balance and muscle flexibility.

Yoga breathing techniques help swimmers to breathe in a relaxed way when exercising.

For bicyclists, back bends can relieve any stiffness caused by bending over handlebars. Because a cyclist's back stays in one position for long periods, the muscles may become tense. This can be remedied with stretches. Gentle stretching exercises also ease stiffness in the legs and shoulders. Yoga asanas will also improve flexibility.

Racket sports often involve intense physical effort. Yoga practice can help players to relax and replenish their energy after strenuous games. It also promotes calm, clear thinking, even in situations that call for fast reactions. Asanas for joint mobility can make hips and shoulders more flexible.



Natya Yoga (Dance Yoga)

Natya Yoga or most commonly known as dance yoga is the combination of Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and having some elements of Raja Yoga and Hatha Yoga. It is believed to conceptualize the transformation of one's soul, body, mind and heart. This type of yoga is rather complicated compared to others since it has a little of everything. Natya yoga is composed of traditional yoga exercises and yoga poses that greatly helps in preparing your body. However, it is not limited to those postures only because there are other animated exercises that are even similar to martial arts. This only shows how complex and interesting Natya Yoga really is.

People who are practicing Natya Yoga strongly believe that this is the fastest way to absorb every aspect of Bhakti. By means of mastering various emotional states and performing different religious songs you can absorb everything about Bhakti. In addition to that, it is also believed that people who practice Natya yoga is capable of doing anything, which results into the disunion from your mental, physical and emotional activities. Once you perform these yoga exercises, you are expected to be stoic and separate yourself from the audience and any kind of distraction. Self-control and focus are the two essential factors in order to successfully perform Natya yoga.



But without the meditation on sound or Nada Yoga, Natya yoga will never be successful because the said yoga helps the practitioner to concentrate on specific music or sounds that guides the body to move according to the sounds so as to reach the level of consciousness. The combination of Nada and Natya yoga is certainly the main reason why a practitioner can harmonize all the movements such as the movement of the hands, the ears listening intently to the sound, the feet moving in perfect timing, the eyes following the movement of the hands and the lovely singing. If all these movements are done flawlessly, the practitioner of this yoga will definitely experience clarity and have a peaceful mind.

The fusion of the ears, eyes, hands, feet and singing is the main goal of Natya Yoga. This may seem to be very hard to achieve but it is still feasible especially if you'll just focus hard and if you have a strong determination to finally experience peace. It's not really a requirement to have a talent in both singing and dancing in order to experience serenity. Anyone can definitely do this, just concentrate hard and isolate yourself from worldly distractions. In no time, you can reach a state of mind that is devoid of worries and distractions, which can finally make you feel relaxed and calm.



How Yoga Can Help You Become a Better Dancer

"Yoga at Sunset" by Dennis Yang. Licensed under CC by 2.0



All dancers are ultimately on the same quest: to become better, stronger dancers. But in order to reach beyond their limits, many dancers find they need additional training methods besides dance, and yoga is a popular choice.

But why?

Why is yoga one tool no dancer's survival kit should be without?

Increased body awareness

While all dance classes focus on position and alignment, yoga classes take this one step further. The slower pace of a yoga class naturally allows for greater precision. For example, instead of just putting your feet into a parallel position, you have time to check that the outside edges of your feet line up with the outside edges of your mat, your weight is equally distributed to all four corners of your feet, your toes are spread wide and your pinky toes are anchored firmly into the floor.

By taking the time to fine tune the details of proper alignment (including your pinky toes) you learn to build each pose from the ground up to create a strong foundation, and to stack the joints for greater stability and power. In this way, every movement is conscious and deliberate, a moving meditation. Moving slowly and deliberately allows more opportunity to notice and correct habits that might create issues over time, such as rolling in or out on your ankles as you balance.

Increased strength and flexibility

Many of the standing poses in yoga develop the same muscles that are used for développés, battements, and jumps, while other poses build strength in areas that are often overlooked. The upper body strength developed from downward dog and handstands is useful during promenades and lifts with a partner. Balancing poses have direct application in center floor (particularly during adagio) and backbends and back strengthening poses such as the locust pose help develop a killer arabesque.

Even though dancers are flexible, most of us have certain tight areas. Poses that focus on these areas will help you



unlock greater range of movement and since yoga stretches are generally held for longer periods, you get greater results and make the body less prone to injury.

Linking breath to movement

One of the most valuable tools you will learn in yoga is breath control. Many dancers haven't been taught to use the breath to help power certain actions. Even worse, we sometimes forget to breathe at all. Most yoga classes begin with tuning into the breath, focusing on lengthening the inhale and exhale, and working from there to maintain a slow, steady breath through the rest of class. Inhales are used for expanding movements, such as arching your back or lifting a leg, exhales are naturally suited for contracting actions such as stepping into a lunge or bending into a forward fold. Learning to link breath to movement helps you harness the energy of breath and use it to your advantage, which is especially helpful during challenging combinations like big jumps or long adagio sequences where you need extra power.



Focused breathing has a few other benefits: it helps to keep your mind from wandering, and serves as a way to measure when you have gone too far past your limits. If it's too challenging to stay for at least three breaths in a pose then that's a clear indication you are pushing too hard. Developing this awareness is a way to learn to tune into your body's pain responses so you can avoid injuries.

"A Bit More Balanced" by Mish Sukharev. Licensed under CC by 2.0

Health benefits

Aside from the more obvious physical perks, yoga also works on a subtle level that isn't immediately apparent. Spinal twists, for instance, not only keep the spine pliable, they also put gentle pressure on the internal organs, which has a detoxifying effect on the body. Inversions such as handstands and headstands reverse the blood flow, redistribute blood throughout the body, and improve circulation. This helps the mind feel clearer and calmer and may also ensure a healthier heart and lungs. Studies have found that regular yoga practice improves coordination, reaction time, memory, and even IQ scores.

Peace of mind

An important component of yoga is taking a break from the

chaotic pace of today's busy world through focusing on the present. Yoga encourages you to relax, slow your breath, and focus on the here and now; this breath, this pose, this moment. This shifts the balance from your sympathetic nervous system (the fight-or-flight part of the brain) to the parasympathetic nervous system (the calming and restorative part of the brain). It also lowers the heart rate and decreases blood pressure.

Yoga practice has also been shown to improve depression and increase serotonin levels. Yoga and meditation build awareness, and the more aware you are, the easier it is to break free of destructive emotions like anger and stress and add a little more calm wisdom to your thinking. Yoga poses were originally designed to prepare the body to be able to sit in meditation and many people who practice yoga find they carry the meditative quality of yoga with them throughout the rest of their activities. Some decide to add regular meditation to maintain and grow these peaceful feelings.

Become your best self

Clearly, the benefits of yoga go beyond the physical; yoga is also a way to soothe the spirit and find peace of mind.

Whether you are looking to build strength, improve flexibility and balance, or just recalibrate your brainwaves to a more relaxed state, yoga has a lot to offer dancers. By learning to align your body, mind and spirit on the mat you will bring your best self to your dance.



The Benefits of Yoga for Kids

By practicing yoga poses, children can learn how to exercise, develop confidence, and concentrate better. By Visi Tilak



Yoga (meaning union or yoke) is the practice of accessing and integrating all aspects of our true nature -- body, mind, and spirit -- in the pursuit of inner harmony, says Alexandra De Collibus, a yoga teacher and founder of Sweet Pea Yoga, a yoga studio for infants, toddler, and kids located throughout Massachusetts. As yoga becomes more popular in schools through physical education classes and after-school programs, that popularity comes with controversy. Although many adults like the benefits of yoga, some parents feel that the practice might have a religious association and, like prayer, shouldn't be allowed in a public space. They argue that yoga is an offshoot of Hinduism and that it disseminates religious and meditation principles with its use of "om" and "namaste" chanting. Some also believe that the asanas, or postures, such as the sun salutation, are a form of Hindu religious worship. To dispel this notion and avoid any religious or cultural messages, most yoga teachers focus on the benefits of the exercises and use generic terms, instead of the Sanskrit names, for the poses, renaming them cat, bridge, table, tree, downward-facing dog, volcano, and so forth. Yoga's rising popularity can be attributed to its basic stretching advantages and improved body awareness, with the added component of a mind-body connection.

Despite the controversy, yoga is beneficial to kids in many ways. Because children encounter emotional, social, and physical challenges or conflicts, a dedicated and intentional yoga practice that includes breathing techniques, behavioral guidelines, and physical postures can be incredibly valuable for them, De Collibus says. She also believes that yoga is something children can practice anywhere and that the breathing, the concentration, the poses, and the way kids learn to act or react to situations, will lead to constant self-discovery and inquisitiveness. Plus, yoga is portable, and no

mat, special clothing, or special pillow is absolutely necessary.

Shana Meyerson, the founder of mini yogis (miniyogis.com), a yoga studio Southern California that offers classes for kids, believes that yoga builds self-esteem and self-respect. "A child's yoga practice is a rare opportunity to experience play and focus without worrying about being wrong," she says. Meyerson believes that yoga is an option for children who shy away from physical activity or group activities for fear of failure or being picked last, and it helps athletic children excel in other physical activities and sports. Christina Enneking, the founder of Heart Happy Yoga, a studio in Los Gatos, California, believes yoga introduces cornerstone values "such as non-harming, truthfulness, moderation, cleanliness, gratitude, and self-discipline." There are five key areas where kids benefit from the practice of yoga, and each of them improves their overall well-being.

It Enhances Physical Flexibility Yoga promotes physical strength because kids learn to use all of their muscles in new ways. Whether a pose is done standing, sitting, or lying down,





it gives him confidence and self-esteem. Enneking often describes kids' yoga as "prehabilitation," a proactive action to ward off instability or sickness; yoga also provides tools for practicing compassion, mindfulness, generosity, focus, strength, and flexibility.

It Strengthens the Mind-Body Connection Yoga helps kids achieve a sound mind in a sound body by exercising the physical body and calming the mental spirit. "As parents we want our children to act and behave with mindfulness and with compassion, to be brave, to know love and happiness, and to find inner peace," De Colibus says. "Since the modern world moves very, very fast for children, it's not long before they feel all kinds of pressure (personal, parental, social) to keep up with everyone around them. Yoga functions as a release valve that alleviates pressure and as a foundation to nurture and develop a resilient and resourceful body, mind, and spirit," she says.

Yoga is beneficial to children of all ages, but it has been found to be particularly so for kids with special needs. Studies have shown that yoga benefits children with autism and ADHD. NPR has reported that researchers surveyed teachers at a

each one can challenge various muscle groups while helping a child become aware of his body and how it efficiently functions.

It Refines Balance and Coordination Balance is a key element of yoga. Balancing poses were created to promote mental and physical poise, as mental clarity and stability emerge from the effort of trying the poses. Even if a child has difficulty standing on one foot, she learns mental and physical balance if she can stay calm when she falls and when she gets up to try again. As children learn to improve their physical balance, they will be filled with a sense of accomplishment. Coordination is also closely tied to balance and promotes overall dexterity. Some yoga teachers and occupational therapists use finger yoga and other specialized techniques to help children with gross and fine motor coordination.

It Develops Focus and Concentration The act of practicing poses encourages children to clear their mind and focus on the effort. As a result of this single focus to achieve a particular pose or stay balanced, yoga helps children to focus and concentrate in school and get better grades, several studies note.

It Boosts Self-Esteem and Confidence Yoga helps to instill confidence and to bring learning to children on an experiential level, Enneking says. "It helps to provide building blocks for the future. It is our responsibility to develop our children's sense of wonder and to give them a strong sense of self so they know where they belong in this world and can contribute to making their community a better place." Yoga teaches them to persevere, be patient, and work toward their goals. A yoga teacher can only offer guidance; it is the child who has to work to succeed. Therefore, when a child masters a pose,



Bronx public school that had a daily yoga program and found that the program reduced kids' aggressive behavior, social withdrawal, and hyperactivity, compared with a control group of kids with autism who did not practice yoga. Kristie Patten Koenig, Ph.D., an associate professor of occupational therapy at New York University who led the study, says that yoga was effective because it seemed to play to the strengths of kids with autism while also reducing stress. Autism Key, an autism support website, says that yoga helps address kids' heightened anxiety, poor motor coordination, and weak self-regulation, something that otherwise is very difficult to do.

Parents may notice how yoga benefits their kids, but the best judges are the kids themselves. Children who have practiced yoga tell teachers and parents that they are able to concentrate better during the day, focus better on their activities, and pay attention to their tasks -- all the finest endorsements.

<http://www.abc-of-yoga.com/>



Sports Training and Yoga Practice

by Danielle Arin - www.yoga-age.com/

Yoga and sport are often seen in opposition, by nature of the quiet approach in yoga in contrast to the competitiveness of sport. In yoga we talk about practice, whereas in sport emphasis is placed upon training. What is most important however, is the attitude towards the development and the attainment of the individual's aim.

As a former athlete and runner for France, I was taught to win. When I took up yoga thirty years ago, that drive to push the body to its limits was still in me. It was only after several years into yoga that I understood the difference between training and practice: training is for the future; practice is for the now.

1. Different attitudes in yoga and in sport

Over the years, I have too often observed amongst the sports enthusiasts and end-gaining yoga students alike, a certain degree of aggression and eagerness that unavoidably led them to punishing the body and molesting the soul. The result is a tightness of the joints, a shortening of the muscles and an overall disharmony between the inner self and the outer body.

In any given sport there is a strong element of competition. I have also observed a similar attitude amongst certain yoga students. There is nothing wrong about competition, provided that it is healthy and ethical. But the minute it creates stress and inner aggression, then it loses its noble value.

It is the attitude of mind that makes the difference.

One has to learn to detach from oneself in order to re-integrate oneself with the whole SELF. Winning becomes an achievement instead of a defeat over the opponent. Furthermore if one measures oneself to oneself, winning does not mean beating oneself into submission, but entering a little space of heaven.

Instead of using one's body to tame and master a posture and bring the body into submission, one should allow the space between the limbs to create natural movement and body form; in this way an organic action and not a rigid representation of a certain shape can be achieved. Such a space concept does not mean emptiness, but a living element from which the innermost structure of the SELF can be expressed.

2. The relationship between self and SELF

In the Western approach to bodily health each action creates a reaction in the body (and mind; 'The Eastern approach is to act without causing a reaction in the body or mind.

At Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre near Marlow. Olympic teams are coached. I practice weight training, and teach Yoga at the Centre. Many of the people who I train with in the gymnasium exhaust themselves by making continuous strenuous effort without a break. As a yoga practitioner I balance my weight training with long period of quiet yoga practice. The result is that I come away feeling strong, light and calm.

On one occasion I was invited by the Sports Council to give a workshop for the Olympic gymnasts. Interestingly, they were much more able than I to get into certain postures, but their eagerness to achieve and master the postures was their shortcoming; they used repetitive force instead of progressive release. They experienced frustration where I would have experienced a fruitful obstacle and a surrender of the ego. I showed them how to observe, think, release and then to move in coordination with the breath. Something they had not considered in their training.

Most physical exercises are designed to strengthen the body; yoga builds strength in a non-aggressive and non-end-gaining manner. Yoga releases energy through a tensionless process, so that there is no wastage and misuse of precious inner power. It is that inner force that inspires a body to perform a yoga pose and not the extraverted will. Yoga teaches coordination of the movements of all the limbs from which emerges a sense of integrity and integration with the self and the breath. Out of that way of practising (and not training), grace and stamina develop with a resulting and unmistakable feeling of lightness and renewed energy.

3. Integrating yoga practice and sports training

The gymnasts, the weight trainer and the uninitiated yoga student should understand that a properly prepared and unabused body will always enjoy different moves and positions, and that it will continue to do so for years to come. One needs to maintain a constant balance between stretching and relaxing, between strengthening and yielding, and between the quietness of the inner SELF and the performance of outer body.

It is important to understand that failure to achieve or to finalise a certain move does not mean that one is a failure; the concept of "failing" should be seen as a reward and a further opportunity to learn. As an Eastern Zen master states:

"They say that once you are contented with what you are, you will have no growth, no progress. This is I think a superficial understanding. Real growth, true progress, begins when you get at the truth of what you are; when you can say "it is absolutely alright", even though it may be very poor and miserable. So please observe your unsatisfactory situation more and more, and take better care of it as it is. Then you may see the door open to the next world."

(Hogen-San; The Other Shore)

Therefore failure can become a stepping-stone into a brighter future.

Through the right attitude to yoga practice or sports training, one can understand how much the human body is made of



different structures, muscle formations and subtle energies. Yet each individual has a precious core that links his/her physical, mental and emotional self to the spiritual reality of the greater SELF.

This very precious core is called the soul. It is where attitudes form and where the power lies to integrate all parts of the self. However, the stronger and the more successful one becomes, the more easily that core can shrink. One has to learn to identify with such a phenomenon, in order to safeguard the soul. That could ultimately mean abandoning the protection of any structured and rigid system. By conforming only to the subtle voice of the SELF, and following the laws of that true SELF through clear mindedness, the individual's practice training will unveil the person's true wealth, because within the silence of any personal practice, there is the ever-expanding echo of creation and creativity, and in any training there is the striving and persistence that encourages matter to compete for space in the universal search for eternity.



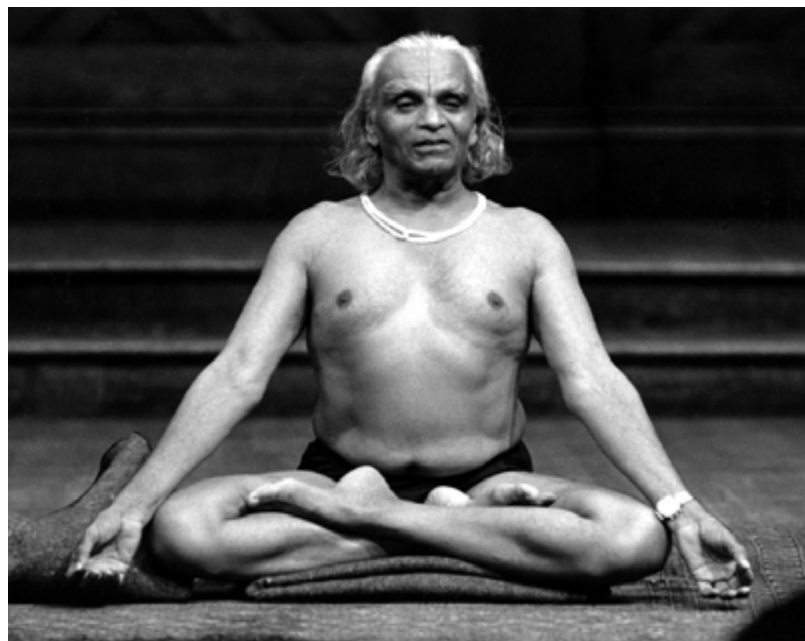
Yogacharya B.K.S. Iyengar

B.K.S. Iyengar is one of the foremost teachers of Yoga in the world and has been practicing and teaching for over sixty years. Millions of students now follow his method and there are Iyengar yoga centres all over the world. He has written many books on yogic practice and its philosophy including "Light on Yoga," "Light on Pranayama," "Light on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali" and more.

Mr. Iyengar was born in 1918 into a large poor family in the village of Bellur in Karnataka state in India under very difficult circumstances. His mother gave birth to him during an influenza epidemic leaving him sickly and weak and his father died when he was only 9 years old. As a result he went to live with his brother in Bangalore. His childhood was further marked by a variety of serious illnesses including malaria, tuberculosis and typhoid together with malnutrition.

At the age of 15 Mr Iyengar was invited to Mysore to stay with his eldest sister by her husband, the scholar and yogi Sri T. Krishnamacharya, who was visiting. Krishnamacharya ran a yoga school in the palace of his patron, the Raja of Mysore, where Mr Iyengar eventually received some basic instruction in asana practice to improve his health. His guru however, was an erratic and terrifying personality who drove him hard and so at first Mr Iyengar had to struggle from day to day. This diligence in practice gradually paid off as he mastered some of the postures and improved his health.

Then in 1937 Mr Iyengar was asked by his Guru to go to Pune to B.K.S. Iyengar in 1938 teach yoga. In Pune life was still very difficult as he was a stranger there with weak language skills, speaking only a little English and the local language Marathi. As he had left school before he could complete his examinations and had no skills, he was left with little choice but to continue to make his living through teaching yoga. Moreover as he felt he had little experience or theoretical knowledge, he decided to practice with determination and learn by trial and error. In the beginning his students were better than him so he would dedicate many hours a day to practice, sometimes surviving for days on only water and



Called the “Michelangelo of yoga” and the “king of yogis,” named one of Time magazine’s 100 most influential people, B. K. S. Iyengar is universally acknowledged as the world’s greatest yoga teacher.

perhaps some bread or rice. This was also a difficult time in his yoga and he would suffer great pains through incorrect technique, often having to place heavy weights on his body to relieve the aches. However through determination and a refusal to give up he gradually began to understand the techniques of each posture and their effects. The number of his students also began to increase, though financially times were still incredibly hard as yoga was not greatly respected or understood, even in India.

Then In 1943, his brothers arranged his marriage to Ramamani. Mr Iyengar had avoided marriage for some time as he felt he could not support a family, but on meeting her consented. Initially life continued to be very hard for them but bit by bit they worked their way out of poverty. They agreed that she would take care of their family while he would provide the income. Strangely it also fell upon her to introduce the subject of yoga to her children for some time.

Gradually Mr Iyengar’s recognition as a yoga teacher grew but it BKS Iyengar and Yehudi Menuhin was a meeting with the violinist Yehudi Menuhin in 1952 which led to Mr Iyengar’s eventual international recognition. It was Yehudi Menuhin who arranged for Mr Iyengar to teach abroad in London, Switzerland, Paris and elsewhere and so meet people from all over the world and from all walks of life.

Events continued to develop and grow, leading up to the publication of Light on Yoga in 1966 after many years of development. This book turned out to be an international best seller which continues to be reprinted in several languages all over the world and succeeded in making Yoga truly universal. This was later followed by titles covering Pranayama and various aspects of Yoga philosophy. His latest work “Yoga: The path to Holistic Health” was published in 2001.

Finally in 1975 Mr Iyengar was able to open the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, in memory of his recently departed wife, where he still resides and teaches. By this time Mr Iyengar’s eldest daughter, Geeta and son Prashant had also started teaching yoga under his guidance.

In 1984 Mr Iyengar officially retired from teaching though he continues to take medical classes and teaches at special events as well as being fully active in promoting yoga world wide and being involved in the institute and its charitable foundation. Though physically quite capable of continuing,

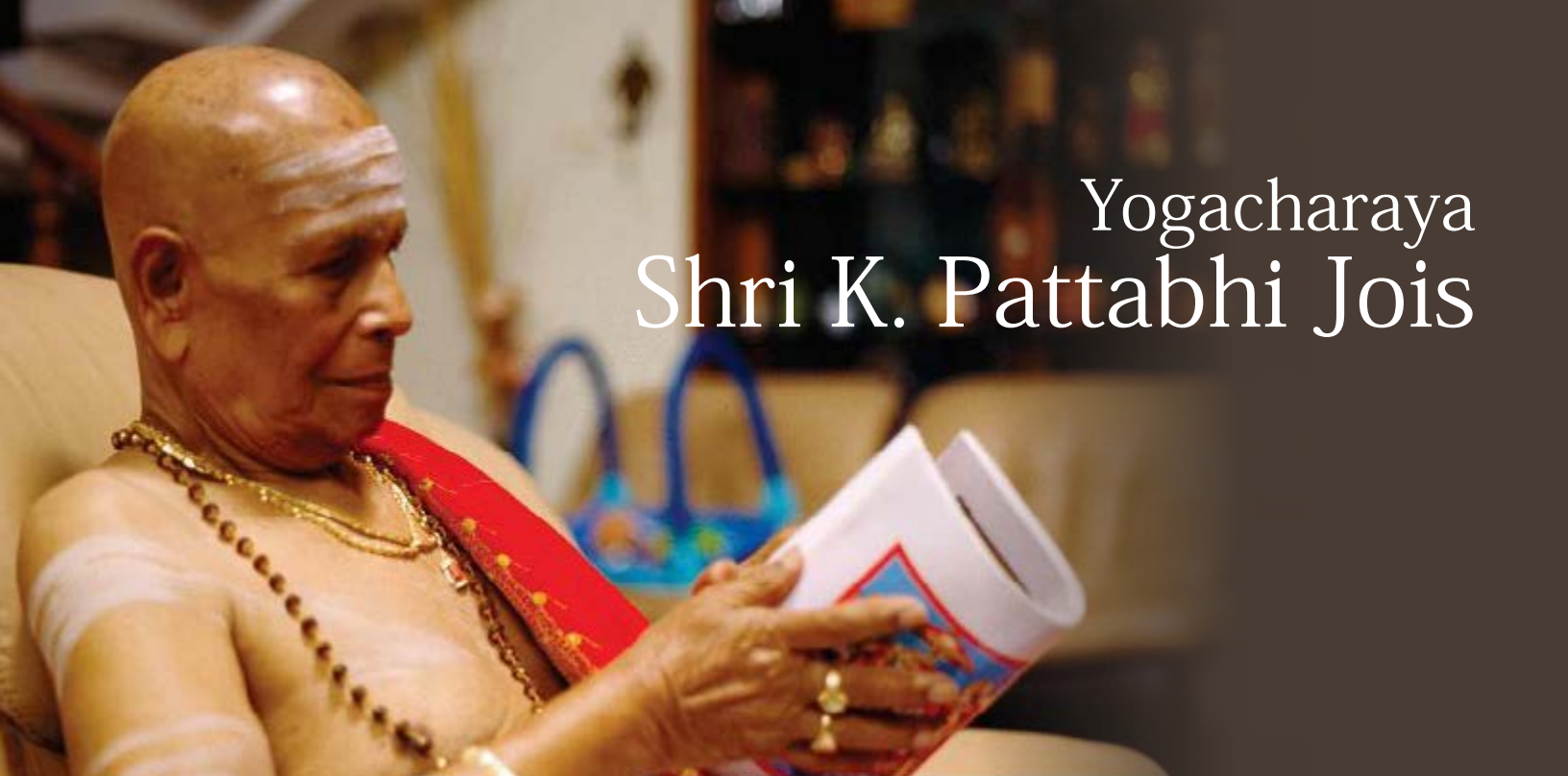
he felt it was time to “let the next generation come through” and did not want to become attached to his position there. Classes still run regularly which are hugely popular and oversubscribed and are conducted by Geeta, Prashant or senior teachers.

It can be said that Mr Iyengar is therefore one of the premier Yogis responsible for introducing yoga to the West and Iyengar style yoga is probably the most widely practiced form of yoga in Europe and America today.

Mr. Iyengar remained unsurpassed in his practice and teaching. Until a few weeks before his death at age 95, he practiced in public every day in the main hall at his Institute in Pune, India. Anyone who witnessed his practice could see the vitality and intense discipline that permeated every pose.

<http://www.iyengar-yoga.com/>





Yogacharaya Shri K. Pattabhi Jois

Yogacharaya Shri K. Pattabhi Jois (Guruji) was born on the full moon of July 1915, in Kowshika, a small hamlet located 150 kilometers from Mysore in the southern state of Karnataka. His father was an astrologer and a priest in the village of nearly seventy families. Guruji was the middle of nine children, and from the age of five, like most Brahmin boys, began to study the Vedas and Hindu rituals. At 12, he attended a yoga demonstration at his middle school that inspired him to learn more about the ancient practice. He was so excited about this new discovery, he arose early the next morning to meet the impressive yogi he had seen, Sri T. Krishnamacharya, one of the most distinguished yogis of the 20th Century.

After questioning Guruji, Krishnamacharya agreed to take him on as his student, and for the next two years, unbeknownst to his family, Guruji practiced under the great yogi's strict and demanding tutelage every day before school, walking five kilometers early in the morning to reach Krishnamacharya's house. He was ambitious in his studies and driven to expand his knowledge of yoga. When he would read the Ramayana and other holy books on the veranda of his house, his family members would say, "Oh, look at the great pundit. Why are you wasting your time with books? Go tend to the cows!"

Mysore

When Guruji turned fourteen, he was given the Brahmin thread initiation – the ceremony in which a Brahmin boy becomes a man and is initiated into the spiritual life. Soon after the significant ceremony, and with two rupees in his pocket, Guruji secretly ran away from home to seek Sanskrit study at the Sanskrit University of Mysore. After getting off the train, he went straight to the admissions department, showed his thread as proof of being Brahmin [this would gain him free admission], and was accepted to the school. He

dutifully attended classes and his studies, and continued his yoga practice, even giving demonstrations that secured him food privileges at the university mess. With little money, life in the beginning was difficult for Guruji, who also begged for food at Brahmin houses. It was three years before he wrote to his father to tell him where he was and what he was doing.

In 1932, he attended a yoga demonstration at the university and was pleased to discover that the yogi on stage was his guru, Sri Krishnamacharya. Having lost touch after Guruji left Kowshika, they recommenced their relationship in Mysore, which lasted twenty-five years.

The Maharaja

During this time, Mysore's Maharaja, Sri Krishna Rajendra Wodeyar, fell suddenly ill. Informed of a remarkable yogi who might help him where all others had failed, he sent for Krishnamacharya, who cured him through yoga. In gratitude, the Maharaja established a Yoga shala for him on the palace grounds, and sent him, along with model students like Guruji, around the country to perform demonstrations, study texts, and research other yoga schools and styles. Some one hundred students were schooled at the palace yoga shala.

The Maharaja was especially fond of Guruji and would call him to the palace at four in the morning to perform yoga demonstrations. In 1937, he ordered Guruji to teach yoga at the Sanskrit University, in spite of his desires to remain a student. Guruji established its first yoga department, which he directed until his retirement in 1973. The department was permanently closed after that.

The Maharajah died in 1940, bringing an end to Krishnamacharya's long patronage. By the time the esteemed teacher left for Madras in 1954, he had only three remaining, very dedicated students: Guruji, his

friend C. Mahadev Bhatt, and Keshavamurthy. Guruji was the only one who considered teaching his life's work, and carried on Krishnamacharya's legacy in Mysore.

Family

While Guruji was studying with Krishnamacharya, a young and strong-willed girl began to attend his yoga demonstrations at the Sanskrit University, accompanied by her father, a Sanskrit scholar. One day, after one of the demonstrations, Savitamma, who was only fourteen at the time, announced to her father, "I want that man in marriage." Agreeably, her father approached the 18-year-old Guruji and invited him to their home in the village of Nanjangud, twenty kilometers away. Guruji respectfully accepted. After learning more about the young yogi and his Brahmin and family background, Savitamma's father agreed to the union, as did Guruji's father despite the couple's horoscope report of unsuitability. "Suitable or not, I want to marry him," declared Savitamma, who later came to be affectionately known as Amma [mother]. They were married that year in a love match on the fourth day after the full moon of June 1933, Amma's birthday.

After the wedding, Amma returned to her family and Guruji to his room at the University. They didn't see each other for three to four years, until 1940, when Amma joined her husband in Mysore to begin their life together. They had three children – Manju, Saraswathi and Ramesh – each who became great yoga teachers themselves. Amma was Guruji's first yoga student, and was also given a teaching certificate by Krishnamacharya. Amma was like a mother to Guruji's students, both Western and Indian; her presence cherished as much as his. She was kind and loving, always ready with an invite for coffee or an encouraging word. Because she was also well-versed in Sanskrit, she was often nearby to correct Guruji's mistakes or remind him of a forgotten Sanskrit verse – much to the amusement of all present. She passed away suddenly in 1997. Her loss was devastating to the entire family, as well as to the family of yoga students.

Teaching

K. Pattabhi Jois' life during the early years was not easy. Although Guruji had a yoga teaching position at the Sanskrit University, his ten-rupee-a-month salary was barely adequate to maintain a family of five. [Their circumstances eased somewhat in the mid-fifties when he became a professor.] In 1948, Guruji established the Ashtanga Yoga Research Institute in their tiny two-room home in Lakshmipuram with a view toward experimenting with the curative aspects of yoga. Many local officials, from police chiefs to constables and doctors, practiced with him. Local physicians even sent their patients to Guruji to help with the treatment of diabetes, heart and blood pressure problems and a variety of other ailments.

In 1964, Guruji added an extension to the back of his house, consisting of a yoga hall that held twelve students, and a resting room upstairs. That same year, a Belgian named Andre van Lysbeth arrived at the AYRI on the recommendation of Swami Purnananda, a former student of Guruji's. For two months, Guruji taught this foreigner the primary and intermediate asanas. Soon after, Van Lysbeth wrote a book called *Pranayama* in which Guruji's photo appeared, and introduced the Ashtanga master to the Europeans. They eventually became the first Westerners to seek him out and study in Mysore. Americans followed soon after in 1971.

Guruji had already traveled widely in India with Krishnamacharya and with Amma, meeting yogis, debating with scholars and giving yoga demonstrations. He met with Swami Sivananda, and the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram, and befriended Swami Kulyananda and Swami Gitananda, both renowned for their scientific research in yoga. Guruji's ashtanga had extended throughout India, but didn't reach the overseas community until 1973 (the very same year he retired from the Sanskrit University), when he was invited to Sao Paulo, Brazil. The following year he went to Encinitas, California, the first of many teaching trips abroad, including France, Switzerland, Finland, Norway, England and Australia.

Over the next twenty years, word of Pattabhi Jois and ashtanga yoga slowly spread across the globe, and the number of students coming to Mysore steadily increased. In 1998, Guruji shifted his residence to Gokulam, a suburb of Mysore, but continued teaching from the Lakshmipuram institute. By then, he was receiving more international students than the small room could handle, so he began construction of a much larger hall, just opposite his house in Gokulam. The new shala officially opened in 2002, with several days of pujas and ceremonies. Four years later, his dream of opening a school in the United States was realized with the launch of an institute in Islamorada, Florida. Guruji conducted the opening ceremonies there in 2006, which served as his final trip abroad.

The Passing of the Lineage

In 2007, Guruji became gravely ill, bouncing back just enough to teach a bit more yoga. By the end of the following year, after seven decades of continuous teaching, he had gradually retired from his daily classes, leaving the institute in the capable hands of his daughter Saraswathi and grandson Sharath.

Guruji passed away at home in Mysore on May 18th, 2009 at the age of 93. His death came as a tragic loss to the worldwide yoga community. His entire life was an endeavor to imbue his students with commitment, consistency and integrity – and to actualize in his own life the conduct of a householder yogi. It is by virtue of his undying faith and enthusiasm that the practice that he learned from Krishnamacharya has remained alive. And thus, by his devotion to the daily teaching of yoga, his legendary works will remain alive too.

Quotations about Yoga

When this body has been so magnificently and artistically created by God, it is only fitting that we should maintain it in good health and harmony by the most excellent and artistic science of Yoga.

~*Geeta Iyengar*

Yoga teaches us to cure what need not be endured and endure what cannot be cured.

~*B.K.S. Iyengar*

The yoga mat is a good place to turn when talk therapy and antidepressants aren't enough.

~*Amy Weintraub*

The yogi will tell you that you feel and look as young as your spine is elastic.

~*Richard Hittleman*

Yoga is the fountain of youth. You're only as young as your spine is flexible.

~*Bob Harper*

You cannot do yoga. Yoga is your natural state. What you can do are yoga exercises, which may reveal to you where you are resisting your natural state.

~*Sharon Gannon*

Yoga is possible for anybody who really wants it. Yoga is universal.... But don't approach yoga with a business mind looking for worldly gain.

~*K. Pattabhi Jois*

By embracing your mother wound as your yoga, you transform what has been a hindrance in your life into a teacher of the heart.

~*Phillip Moffitt*

Yoga is 99% practice and 1% theory.

~*K. Pattabhi Jois*

I would like for people to realize that yoga is not about touching your toes.

~*Gary Kraftsow*

I like the physical part, but I'm also drawn to the spiritual. For me, yoga is not just a workout—it's about working on yourself.

~*Mary Glover, "Health Profile: Yoga leaves aches and pains behind," Arizona Republic, 2004 April 6*

In our uniquely human capacity of connect movement with breath and spiritual meaning, yoga is born.

~*Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa*

A photographer gets people to pose for him. A yoga instructor gets people to pose for themselves.

~*Terri Guillemets, 2002*

I do yoga so that I can stay flexible enough to kick my own arse if necessary.

~*Betsy Cañas Garmon, www.wildthymecreative.com (2009 tweet, @wildthyme)*

The beauty is that people often come here for the stretch, and leave with a lot more.

~*Liza Ciano, co-owner & co-director of Yoga Vermont, yogavermont.com*

Yoga in Mayfair or Fifth Avenue, or in any other place which is on the telephone, is a spiritual fake.

~*Carl Jung*

Yoga is the practice of quieting the mind.

~*Patanjali*

Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape.

~*Author Unknown*

Vogue and Self are putting out the message of yoginis as buff and perfect. If you start doing yoga for those reasons, fine. Most people get beyond that and see that it's much, much more.

~*Patricia Walden*

When asked what gift he wanted for his birthday, the yogi replied: "I wish no gifts, only presence."

~*Author Unknown*

While doing yoga we are more ourselves, and more than ourselves.

~*Valerie Jeremijenko*

The aim of yoga is to eliminate the control that material nature exerts over the human spirit, to rediscover through introspective practice what the poet T.S. Eliot called "the still point of the turning world."

~*Barbara Stoler Miller*

Without proper breathing, the yoga postures are nothing more than calisthenics.

~*Rachel Schaeffer*

If I'm losing balance in a pose, I stretch higher and God reaches down to steady me. It works every time, and not just in yoga.

~*Terri Guillemets, 2002*

Yoga is not about self-improvement, it's about self-acceptance.

~*Gurmukh Kaur Khalsa*

Anyone who practices can obtain success in yoga but not one who is lazy. Constant practice alone is the secret of success.

~*Svatmarama*

Hatha yoga is a powerful tool for self-transformation. It asks us to bring our attention to our breath, which helps us to still the fluctuations of the mind and be more present in the unfolding of each moment.

~*Cyndi Lee, "Yoga 101: A Beginner's Guide to Practice, Meditation, and the Sutras," YogaJournal.com, 2014 October 7th*

Yoga accepts. Yoga gives.

~*Terri Guillemets, 2002*

Asanas attune the body to meditation, just as a guitar is tuned before a performance.

~*Author Unknown*

Yoga is the study of balance, and balance is the aim of all living creatures: it is our home.

~*Rolf Gates*

Yoga is the perfect opportunity to be curious about who you are.

~*Jason Crandell, quoted in Yoga Journal, November 2005*

Yoga is difficult for the one whose mind is not subdued.

~*Bhagavad Gita*

Yoga is essentially a practice for your soul, working through the medium of your body.

~*Tara Fraser*

In truth, yoga doesn't "take time" — it gives time.

~*Ganga White, Yoga Beyond Belief: Insights to Awaken and Deepen Your Practice, 2007*

“Yoga, an ancient but perfect science, deals with the evolution of humanity. This evolution includes all aspects of one’s being, from bodily health to self-realization. Yoga means union—the union of body with consciousness and consciousness with the soul. Yoga cultivates the ways of maintaining a balanced attitude in day-to-day life and endows skill in the performance of one’s actions. “

B.K.S. Iyengar, Astadala Yogamala

