Title: Yoga...New To Yoga? Learn All About Yoga..

Yoga is the journey of self, through the self, to the self.

* The Bhagavad Gita

I don’t think I know a single person who hasn’t heard of Yoga. and want to know what it’s about?

It is assumed that yoga is stretching and breathing and by practicing it you will become healthier, calmer and generally a better person. That is all very true but what does Yoga really mean? Where did yoga come from? And what exactly are we doing when we say “oh yeah, I do yoga.”

So, learn about what Yoga is, its history, different types of Yoga, its benefits and more with me.

What is Yoga?

What is Yoga, exactly? Is it just an exercise form? Is it a religion, a philosophy ? Or is it something else totally? Yoga literally means Divine union. From the Sanskrit root verb yuj (to yoke, join or unite.)

The word yoga was developed from the Sanskrit word yuj which means ‘to join’ or ‘to unite’. This union is not purely, about your nose touching your knees as you bend to touch your toes! The union referred to is that of your mind with your body. You organize with your surroundings and nature. And, finally, your individual alertness with the universal consciousness.

History of Yoga

1. Pre-Classical and Vedic Yoga

The births of Yoga was developed by the Indus-Sarasvati civilization in Northern India over 5,000 years ago. the word ‘yoga’ is in the ancient Indian text, the Rig Veda. The Vedas were a set of texts containing songs, mantras and rituals to be used by Brahmans, the Vedic fathers. Yoga was slowly refined and developed by the Brahmans and Rishis (mystic seers) who documented their practices and beliefs in the upanishads, a huge work containing over 200 scriptures. The most renowned of the Yogic scriptures is the Bhagavad-Gîtâ, composed around 500 B.C.E.

1. Classical Yoga

In the pre-classical stage, yoga was a mishmash of various ideas, beliefs and techniques that often conflicted and contradicted each other. The Classical period is defined by Patanjali’s Yoga-Sûtras, the first systematic presentation of yoga. Written some time in the second century, this text describes the path of RAJA YOGA, often called "classical yoga". Patanjali set up the practice of yoga into an "eight limbed path" containing the steps and stages towards obtaining Samadhi or enlightenment. Patanjali is often considered the father of yoga and his Yoga-Sûtras still strongly guide most styles of modern yoga.

Commentaries on the Yoga Sutras by Veda Vyasa were also written at this time. Here, he has explained the relationship between the yoga school of philosophy and the Samkhya philosophy, one of the six systems of Indian philosophy. This period emphasized the importance of the mind in yoga.

1. Post-Classical Yoga

In this era, many gurus and philosophers such as Adi Shankaracharya contributed to the development and extension of Raja Yoga and Jnana yoga, adopting and building upon the teachings and techniques of yoga. With his teachings, and yogic rituals, like the Jnana Yoga, one can achieve Nirvana or liberation. Additionally, meditation was also considered vital to help clear the mind. Tulsidasa and Purandaradasa also added to the science of yoga. Hatha yoga was popularized in this period. Most of the asanas that we practice today are part of Hatha yoga.

1. Modern Period

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, yoga masters began to travel to the West, attracting attention and followers. In the 1920s and 30s, Hatha Yoga was strongly promoted in India. Swami Vivekananda was largely responsible for the spread of yoga to western societies. Raja yoga was further developed by Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, BKS Iyengar, K Pattabhi Jois, Paramhansa Yogananda, and Vivekananda.

Krishnamacharya opened the first Hatha Yoga school in Mysore in 1924 and in 1936 Sivananda founded the Divine Life Society on the banks of the holy Ganges River. Yoga spread to the West in the mid-nineteenth century. Vedanta, Bhakti and Hatha yoga multiplied at this time. Such was the long and illustrious journey that yoga undertook to reach the 21st century! It has had various contributors and undergone many changes. Despite all this, the essence of yoga remains becoming one with yourself, spirit and the world around you.

TYPES OF YOGA

There are as many ways to practice yoga as there are to unite with bliss and enlightenment. However, current practice involves four primary types of yoga: karma, bhakti, jnana, and raja.

THE EIGHT LIMBS OF THE ROYAL PATH

1. LIMB 1 : Yamas [YAAH-muhs] - guidelines for ethical standards and moral conduct

2. LIMB 2 : Niyamas [nee-YUH-muhs] - observances and disciplines

3. LIMB 3 : Asana [AAH-suh-nuh] - practice of physical postures

4. LIMB 4: Pranayama [praah-naah-YAAH-muh] - special breathing techniques used to control the life force, or energy, in the body

5. LIMB 5 : Pratyahara [pruht-yaah-HAAH-ruh] - withdrawal of the senses as part of the transcendence of constant nervous stimuli

6. LIMB 6 : Dharana [dhaahr-UHN-aah] - concentration and focus

7. LIMB 7 : Dhyana [dhahy-AAH-nuh] - meditation

8. LIMB 8: Samadhi [suh-MAAHD-hee] - state of ecstasy, bliss, and enlightenment that transcends the Self and merges with the Divine

Benefits of Yoga

No matter what style of yoga you choose to practice, you will likely see improvements in many areas of your health. By practicing regularly you can:

1. increase your flexibility

2. increase muscle tone and strength

3. reduce injuries

4. upgrade your circulatory and cardio health

5. improves anxiety and depression

6. Help to improve your posture

7. support you sleep better

8. increase your energy levels

9. develop athletic performance

10. detoxify your organs

11. release endorphins that improve your mood and so much more...

Myths about Yoga

Yoga being an ancient practice, there are several myths in the minds of people and on the occasion of `World Yoga Day' let us demystify the same.

1. Yoga belongs to one religion

Body , mind and soul exist in all human beings irrespective of religion. Yoga helps one to bring these aspects together and does not concern itself with any labels .

2. Yoga is only bodily postures

Yoga is comprehensive. In the great Patanjali Yoga Sutra only one Sutra talks about Asanas. Patanjali advocates the practice of eight unique branches called Ashtanga Yoga for development of one's true personality. so, Yoga is not particularly only about postures!

3. You can learn it through books .

Today, if you enter any bookstore, you will find a minimum of 15 to 20 different yoga books. How to learn yoga in 7 days, how to become a yogi in 21 days… and many more ! People think that learning Yoga is as simple as referring to innumerable books available in the book store. It is not that much simple. Many people have caused immense damage to themselves by learning yoga through these books. It seems to be very simple, but when you do it, you will see it is a very subtle aspect. It is a systematic process to be learnt from an able guide or guru.

1. You can practice Yoga only at every morning and evening

Yoga is not something that you do morning-evening. If it’s morning-evening yoga, the rest of the time entanglement – this is not yoga, this is only yoga practice.

1. You should be flexible

As one ages, bodily movement becomes more rigid. It is not necessary that to start with the practice of Asanas one's body should be flexible. Every person has there own extent of flexibility. The practice should be with a combination of strength, balance, flexibility and concentration.

1. Yoga is time-consuming

It is not mandatory that one should spend a lot of time. Initially, 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes before going to bed will be ok! If you have more time, you can extend this.