

Origins of Yoga

Today's society is much faster paced than ever before. People have more stress problems which lead to more health problems, mental and physical. There are more concerns with toxicity in the food we eat and the air we breathe. Millions of Americans today live a sedentary lifestyle, which is associated with obesity. The body, the cavities of our soul, was not meant to deteriorate in such a way that leads to disease. Yoga was developed over 5,000 years ago in India and it included spiritual beliefs, physical techniques, and scholarly philosophy.

There is a growing trend to practicing Yoga for many different reasons, which include attaining the yoga body or physique, relaxation and peace of mind, or to prevent injury and ailments. Americans mainly practice Hatha Yoga, which focuses on postures and stretching the body.

Yoga, which is derived from the sacred Sanskrit language of India, meaning *union* or *to yoke or harness*. Yoga is a way or path to transcendence and liberation from the self and the ego by purifying the mind and body. Practicing yoga leads to a union with the mind and body or the individual and universal consciousness. In other words, yoga is the union with the Individual Self and the Universal Self. Yoga predates all other religions and has influenced and inspired many other traditions and philosophies. Yoga is better understood as a union of the physical, physiological, mental, emotional, and intellectual bodies, which leads to a purposeful and balanced life.

There is simply no other discipline quite like yoga because it utilized the body, mind and spirit, all in one practice. Yoga is indeed a spiritual path that is based on ancient sacred philosophy, but one does not need to make an ethical decision when practicing yoga, rather finding your own path is wholly accepted. The holistic benefits of yoga are suitable for the young or old, sick or well, with any religious background. The secrets of yoga are inwardness, concentration, and purification of mind and body with cleansing thoughts and food. Indian philosophy states that within man is the spirit that is the center of everything. *Internal equilibrium is the basis and the ground for the higher illumination,* The cultural Heritage of India (Vol. I) - published by The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, India