

Introduction to Yoga and Yogic Practices

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The word Yoga is derived from Sanskrit word 'Yog', which means 'Jod' in Hindi or 'Joining' in English. This is joining of 'Jivatam' (Human) with 'Parmatma' (God). Through the practice of Yoga, one can have self-realisation and achieve God. 'Yog' word became Yoga in English. For a simple person, Yoga is another form of physical exercise. By doing physical exercises, one can develop only body muscles. But through Yoga, one achieves the conditioning of even all internal organs like heart, brain, spleen, liver, lungs. Apart from these vital organs, through yoga all the glands like thyroid, pituitary, and Pancreas gland of the brain, function better.

Yoga is practical aid, not a religion. Yoga is an ancient art based on a harmonizing system for development of the body, mind, and spirit. The regular practice of yoga will not only lead you to a sense of peace and well-being, but will also give you a feeling of being at one with the nature. In the present time, more and more people, especially the Westerners, are resorting to Yoga to find a cure for chronic health problems and attain a peace of mind. They are also curious about knowing what exactly is Yoga and what all are included in it. Although many of us are well aware of the health benefits of Yoga, not everyone knows about the origin and exact history and evolution of Yoga. There are many theories associated with Yoga. It is mentioned in Rig Veda, and its evidence was found in the oldest civilization of Indus-Saraswati, which is considered to be more than 5000 years old (3000 B.C.), it means Yoga is older than 5000 years. It was invented by 'Rishi Munis' for doing meditation, but apart from that, it has a very

good effect on the body. During the journey of more than 5000 years, Yoga evolved in many forms. As explained earlier, mainly it has following four paths.

1. Jnan Yoga
2. Bhakti Yoga
3. Karma Yoga
4. Raj Yoga

Journey of Yoga from India to the World For many, the practice of yoga is restricted to Hatha Yoga and Asanas (postures). However, among the Yoga Sutras, just three sutras are dedicated to asanas. Fundamentally, hatha yoga is a preparatory process so that the body can sustain higher levels of energy. The process begins with the body, then the breath, the mind to the inner self. Yoga is also commonly understood as a therapy or exercise system for health and fitness. While physical and mental health is natural consequences of yoga, the goal of yoga is more far-reaching. "Yoga is about harmonizing oneself with the universe. It is the technology of aligning individual geometry with the cosmic, to achieve the highest level of perception. Yoga does not adhere to any particular religion, belief system or community; it has always been approached as a technology for inner well-being. Anyone who practices yoga with involvement can reap its benefits, irrespective of one's faith, ethnicity or culture. Traditional Schools of Yoga: Different Philosophies, Traditions, lineages and Guru-shishya traditions of Yoga lead to the emergence of different Traditional Schools of Yoga e.g. Jnan-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Karma-yoga, Dhyana-yoga.

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