

YOGA – THE FUNDAMENTAL INFORMATION

The word Yoga for the uninitiated has many meanings, most of which can better be described as misconceptions, rather than coming anywhere close to the real comprehension of this ancient practice. In reality, Yoga is the discipline of attaining perfect coordination of mind and body.

Yoga is the art and science of achieving ideal harmony between mind, body and spirit of the human being with his environment. It is a practice that is based on the belief that everything in this universe has a certain flow of energy. For a happy and serene existence this energy flow between the individual with his surroundings needs to be perfectly integrated. The methodology of integrating this flow of energy between mind, body, spirit and environment is essentially what forms the basis of Yoga.

Yoga is a scientifically designed ancient system that dates back about five thousand years. The word 'Yoga' is derived from a Sanskrit word 'Yuj', which means to unite. It is a practice of learning to merge the human consciousness with the divine consciousness.

A most common misconception about Yoga is that it is a way of exercising the body to get a desired level of fitness. This is true, but up to a certain extent only. Various exercises do form a part of Yoga though their aim is to target total wellbeing of the mind, body and spirit. It is believed in the ancient mythology that the human body is the seat of all divine consciousness, and it is the ultimate aim of human existence to arouse it. Yoga provides the methodology of doing this. This is done through the various forms of Yoga described in details a little later. The methodology also emphasizes the need for a true *guru* or teacher to guide and sustain an individual through the entire stringent process.

In the modern times with the availability of faster modes of communication, proper knowledge can be propagated in many ways. This website aims to attain just the purpose. Right from imparting undiluted knowledge to the people who are new to this area, to providing guidance and expertise to all, this is a one stop shop that provides information on the subject in a holistic way.

Yoga targets the mind for all kinds of healing. Mind is the seat of all thinking process so Yoga is targeted towards healing of the thought process of the mind before trying to attempt outer healing of the body. Stress is one factor that greatly afflicts the modern human existence. In Yoga, it is believed that all diseases can be traced back to stress. And stress related diseases cannot be simply treated by treating external symptoms. In order to combat stress modern human beings resort to outlets like smoking, drinking and usage of sedatives among others. These may seem to relieve the symptoms for a short duration, by temporarily fogging the thinking ability, but in the long run they act as fuel to the fire. Tension can be relieved by learning to control the mind. These control techniques are sufficiently covered by no other practice than Yoga.

Yoga is basically divided in six categories for ease of understanding and practice. This categorization is based on the methods most commonly used for mind and body coordination.

Main branches of Yoga Tradition:

- **Bhakti Yoga through Devotion:** It is the branch of Yoga that teaches an individual to see divinity in every living and non living creation of the universe. It is all about seeing God in every entity. It is mainly practiced in India, but is on decline because of the modern pace of life.
- **Hatha Yoga or Yoga through Postures:** It is the curative science of body along with the mind. Various physical exercises form the basis of this type of Yoga. These days, with the advent of consciousness about lifestyle diseases this type of Yoga has become very popular in many Western countries as well.
- **Raj Yoga or Yoga through Self Control:** This is a form of Yoga that teaches restraint and self discipline. The person here envisions himself as the centre of the universe and in perfect harmony with the creator of the universe. Meditative practices are used strongly by Raj Yogis. It is considered a royal form of Yoga as many practitioners are from higher spiritual and social backgrounds.
- **Karma Yoga or Yoga through Service:** This branch of Yoga emphasizes the path of service in any situation of life. They believe that one's destiny is molded by one's present actions. Also present miseries are a result of bad actions of the past. Thus the only way to improve one's destiny is to take corrective measures regarding one's present actions. It emphasizes virtues of selflessness and positive actions.
- **Gyana Yoga or Yoga through Knowledge:** The practitioners of this methodology firmly believe in cultivating the intellect of a human being. This is one attribute that is solely a part of human existence only. It is basically the Yoga of mind and aims to synchronize the wisdom and intelligence of human mind with that of the Creator.
- **Mantra yoga or yoga through recital of mantras:** This is the practice of yoga by way of reciting certain mantras which are believed to be powerful sources of pure energy. By voice modulations the sound energy is used to activate the energy entrapped in these mantras for communication with God.
- **Tantra Yoga or Yoga through Rituals:** This is a methodology of Yoga that uses rituals to restore the sanctity of human existence and to align it with that of the divine. This is a misunderstood path of Yoga because of the interpretations given by various practitioners. In many rituals human body is used as a tool to attain a state of communication with God. Sex is often used as an instrument in the whole process. In this age of various sexually transmitted diseases, it is imperative for true practitioners to have a certain sense of humility, purity and devotion.
- **Kundalini yoga or yoga through arousal of serpentine energy of the ethereal system:** Some people consider this form of yoga as a part of Tantra yoga. Here certain epicenters of energy called chakras are envisioned in the ethereal system operating in the body. These control all the bodily functions.

Kundalini is the serpentine form of energy that is aroused and taken to all chakras for complete and efficient functioning of the body as well as for merger with the divine.

Yoga practiced in any way leads to better coordination of mind and body. The practice generates good health and is also believed to focus on longevity. So whatever one's ultimate aim is, practice of any branch of Yoga would definitely give desired results to the direction chosen.

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