



All About Yoga

By Mary Beth Harnett

The Healing Power of Yoga

Yoga is a powerful healing tool for rejuvenating the body, mind and spirit. It has been proven to be especially beneficial in the treatment of stress-related illnesses. Recent studies have also shown it to be helpful in the treatment of:

- heart conditions
- asthma
- back pain
- arthritis
- rheumatism
- anxiety
- migraines
- insomnia
- cancer
- obesity
- diabetes
- ulcers
- addictions

Yoga exercises help purify the body and remove energy blockages so that nature can accomplish the task of curing disease. Once you begin to practice yoga, you may gradually experience the benefits in your everyday life. Some of these benefits can include improved health, better sleep, a sharper mind and a happier disposition. You may notice improved suppleness in your body and a calmness that was not there before. The beauty of Yoga is that it focuses on the entire being. Yoga poses work from the inside out, facilitating growth on several levels. Yoga can change your tastes and your habits. If you practice it frequently, you will discover that Yoga can be much more than exercise.

The History of Yoga

Yoga originated in India several thousand years ago. Some believe that Yoga is over 3,000 years old. The word “Yoga” is derived from the Sanskrit word “yuj,” which means to “yoke” or join. The ultimate purpose of all forms of Yoga is to unite humanity with Divine Consciousness, God, Truth, or whatever term one prefers for the Source of all. Yoga is not a religion, however, it ultimately supports the goal of all religions—uniting an individual with the Divine. There are actually several branches of Yoga:

- Karma Yoga: The path of service and action
- Jnana Yoga: The path of knowledge and study
- Bhakti Yoga: The path of selfless love and devotion
- Mantra Yoga: The path of chanting, invocation and sound
- Raja Yoga (Royal Yoga): The path of meditation and higher consciousness
- Hatha Yoga: The physical path.

The practice of Yoga usually starts with Hatha Yoga, which gives the body the necessary health, and strength to progress to higher levels. A goal of Hatha Yoga is to make the body strong, firm and supple so that it can remain comfortably seated in one position for extended periods of time in meditation.

The Sanskrit word Hatha consists of two letters, ha meaning “sun” and tha meaning “moon.” The sun represents the positive, heating, male energy in the body. The moon represents the negative, cooling, female energy. Hatha Yoga balances, integrates and harmonizes these two energy flows in the body, resulting in mental calm, vitality and inner balance.



Harmony Farm.

Westerners often equate Yoga with the asanas, or exercises for the body. While important, asanas are only one small part of Yoga. Hatha Yoga actually consists of eight limbs:

- 1) Yama: moral and ethical restraints such as nonharming, non-lying, nonstealing
- 2) Niyama: observances such as cleanliness, contentment, hard work, Self-study.
- 3) Asana: posture
- 4) Pranayama: breath control
- 5) Pratyahara: mind withdrawal from the senses
- 6) Dharana: concentration
- 7) Dhyana: meditation
- 8) Samadhi: the state of ultimate bliss and enlightenment

These eight limbs, practiced together, constitute Yoga. They represent a purifying process that eventually allows the mind to become one-pointed toward the aim of higher consciousness or Self realization.