

Yoga and its meaning

There is a major misconception of what yoga really is in the West - do we understand its true power?

The origins of Yoga are found in the ancient Vedas, which are scriptures that are sacred to all Hindus. There are a number of teachings of yoga and they can range from a specialized secular framework to a highly religious structure. Even though yoga and Hinduism share common roots, people who practice yoga do not have to be Hindus and Hindus do not have to practice Yoga. The underlying philosophy of yoga is the influence of mind over body.

There's been a popular misconception that yoga only means the physical postures. In fact, yoga is a whole lifestyle that includes yoga postures as one of its many components. Yoga is more than going to the gym and stretching the muscles - yoga is about re-uniting and re-creating our direct connection with the Divine. There are laws and commandments to follow which include things like non-violence, purity, truth and seeing the Divine in everything and every one. As much as the postures have its many physical benefits, these are part of the purification process required to meditate with full focus. Paramhansa Yogananda described meditation as the 'jet plane to God.' But to meditate, we first have to clear the body of all the junk we carry - worry, stress, neglect, grudges.... once we have freed ourselves of these deadly sins can we truly evolve spiritually.

If this is the case, then why has the West prostituted this Divine process? Why do some religions call it 'the devil's work'? As much as we are living in an environment of wellness awareness with the desire to balance mind, body and soul, most yoga instructors and practitioners I come across have no interest in meditation, are often highly strung and do not know of scriptural study. These questions have baffled me and I'm hoping we can discuss and come to a resolution to help settle my mind.

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