

## **“Until the Guru Comes”**

### **HATHA YOGA**

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“Hatha Yoga”, oh my goodness, where do I start? “Hatha Yoga” is taught and practiced in the United States in most places and in most cases, is not taught as a religion, but as an exercise regimen. It is truly amazing how many people have told me that they could not do Yoga because it is forbidden in the Bible. Likewise I have been told that I will not proceed to a happy after life if I continue to practice Yoga. This usually does not disturb me because I look so much healthier than my accusers that I am quite confident my subsequent demise to whatever afterlife I proceed to, will be greatly delayed by my healthy lifestyle.

Hatha Yoga is a beautiful ancient system to care for total health of the body and mind. (And you can keep your sense of humor along with it.) The physical benefits of Hatha Yoga include muscle balance, skeletal alignment, muscle strength, muscle elasticity, increased range of motion, improved coordination and improved function of internal glands and organs. To address my adversaries who claim the practice of Hatha Yoga is a religion I proceed to explain the different types of Yoga and which of these disciplines relate to religious beliefs, and which relate to physical well being.

B.K.S. Iyengar says it best ‘Yoga is not for the person who gorges too much, nor for the person who starves themselves.

It is not for the person who sleeps too much, nor for the person who stays awake. By moderation in eating and in resting, by regulation in working by concordance in sleeping and waking, Yoga destroys all pain and sorrow.’ (Maybe not all, but a good amount.) “Yoga has also been described as wisdom in work or skillful living amongst activities, harmony and moderation.”

**“Hatha Yoga is a form of exercise evolved over some thousands of years dealing with the physical, moral, mental and spiritual well-being of man/woman as a whole. It has been called a “pragmatic science”.**

1. The word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit root YUJ meaning to bind, join, attach, to direct and concentrate one’s attention on, to use and apply
2. Ha Tha in Sanskrit means Sun and Moon. Hatha Yoga means the union of the female and male force, the union of the positive and the negative forces, the union of the equal opposites, and the union of the individual self with the universal self.
3. The yogis thought that there were three variations of energy, they were called; SATTVA, the creative force. RAJAS, the sustaining force. THAMAS, the destructive force. It is important to clarify that these forces are similar in concept to the energies of a magnet. You will have the positive end, the neutral middle and the negative end. The yogis did not think of the negative force as bad. Visualize a flower bud. The creation of that bud would be Sattva energy, and the sustaining of that bud in the bud state would be the Rajas. When the bud splits apart it would be Tamas. However, out of the Tamas comes the creation of the flower, the Sattva. The Ancients did not think of the destruction of the bud as bad because they had the wisdom and knowledge to know that the flower will follow. This concept can be viewed as the three cycles of change. Originally the asanas were done three times, symbolic of the three. In most Yoga classes taught outside of private studios the asanas are done only two times because of time and attention limitations. We know that the body learns through repetition. Repeating the same range of movement and holding the position allows the body to learn to free up to that range of motion just as it would learn a coordination skill like practicing scales on the piano.
4. The yogis thought that there were four states of matter: air, earth, fire, and water. They thought that these were naturally occurring states and that matter would make transitions through these states. For example: Water can be ice-solid, water can be fluid, or water can be steam. In it’s essence it is still water even though it can be represented in different states.

**The first book to systematize this practice of Yoga was the classic treatise the “Yoga Sutras” (or Aphorisms) of Patanjali dating from 200 BC.**

**There are eight limbs of Yoga or stages of Yoga for the quest of the soul.**

**1-Yama (universal moral commandments)**

**2-Nyama (self purification by discipline)**

**3- Asana (posture);**

**4-Pranayama (rhythmic control of the breath)**

**5-Pratyahara (withdrawal and emancipation of the mind from the domination of the senses and exterior objects)**

**6-Dharana (concentration)**

**7-Dhyana (meditation)**

**8- Samadhi (a state of super-consciousness brought about by profound meditation, in which the individual aspirant (sadhaka) becomes one with the object of his meditation-Paramatma or the Universal Spirit).**

**There are different paths (margas) to attainment.**

**1-Karma Margi -The active person realizes his own divinity through work and duty.**

**2- Bhakti Marga, -The emotional person realizes it through devotion to and the love of a personal God.**

**3-Jnana Marga- the intellectual person realizes it through knowledge.**

**4- Yoga Marga- the meditative or reflective person attains realization through his/her own divinity, by control of the mind.**

**Raja Yoga---- Mind is king of the senses. He who has conquered the mind is considered a King among men/women, he/she is fit for Raja Yoga. Raja Yoga means the complete mastery of self.**

**Hatha Yoga---Swatmarama, the author of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika (hatha=force or determined effort) called the same path because it demanded rigorous discipline.**

**Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga are different but complimentary.**

**Summing up I am happy to say laughing and breathing are likewise different but complementary which is good, because I prefer not to have to make a choice.**