

# Why We Need Yoga

By Swami Krishnanand

Over 5000 year's ago the sages and saints of what is now India saw the suffering of Humanity and sought out a way by which it could be alleviated. Through inner contemplation and divine Grace a philosophy of life called Yoga, based on scientific principles, was developed. It sought to lay out a path by which an individual could unite with their true essence and thus transcend personal limitation and ultimately suffering. Although Yoga Philosophy is tied with Hindu metaphysics, it is not a religion in of itself. My teacher, Swami Kailashanand (aka Yogi Gupta), always taught that anybody of any caste, creed, religion, or sex could practice Yoga and achieve the goal.

What is the goal of Yoga? The goal is to transcend our personal limitations so that we may experience our true nature. What is our true nature? Our true nature is we are made in the image of God and are rightful heirs to experiencing this. When I was first introduced to the teachings of Yoga I had some concerns on how God was being defined. Having had my own upbringing and ideas on this topic, I was skeptical of these new ideas. My teacher lovingly and correctly defined God as being Truth, Bliss, Knowledge, Love and Light. He taught that, if we are not experiencing this consciously in our daily lives, then we have not experienced what life truly has to offer us. We are living as the animals do. Securing our means to eat, procreate, and sleep. Although in our present condition, we are often times worse than our brother and sister animals. With our superior intellect we have overridden instinct and taken our pursuit of external pleasures to such a high level that we are seemingly on a path of self-destruction, individually as well as a society. Our minds have evolved to allow us to experience the external world through various sensory inputs so that we could perform our necessary functions in this material world. However, when left unchecked this externalization will cause us to lose our discrimination and ultimately lead to our ruination. Our mind, the very instrument that has allowed man to become the pinnacle of known creation, is also proving to be our downfall. Swami Kailashanand always liked to give the analogy that unchecked fulfillment of sensual desires is like pouring oil on a fire. The more you pour the bigger fire and the more you have to keep pouring. An example of this is the advent of the TV. When first invented we had a few television shows that were family oriented and the selection and diversity was limited. Black and white gave way

to color. We now have access to 100's of stations with often dubious content. Three-dimensional movies have become the norm and are quickly gaining popularity in our homes. I recently saw an advertisement for a movie calling itself 4-D. Aroma was going to be sprayed into the theatre during a 3-D movie. I have no doubt that in the not so distant future; we will be offered the ability to plug our minds directly into a virtual computer world where we can be entertained without leaving the comfort our couch. Our super satiated material culture tells us to enjoy what we want when we want. If you get sick, do not worry, as we will sell you a pill that will take care of the problem. To quote the Dalia Lama, "These are times of fast foods, but slow digestion; Tall men but short character; steep profits but shallow relationships. It's a time when there is much in the window, but nothing in the room." Many of you may read this and say yes I agree with this, but is life not to be enjoyed? Yoga says yes, enjoy life, but make sure life is not enjoying you. We just have to balance our external life with our internal spiritual life. My teacher gave the analogy, the world is an ocean and you must be an expert swimmer. If the ocean gets inside of you, you will drown. Yoga teaches us how to be expert swimmers. It is only then that we are truly living.

To practice Yoga is to live Yoga. One need not retire to a cave or live a life of seclusion. It is to be practiced and perfected in everyday life. My own practice started seventeen years ago, when I lived down in Florida in a small beach town. As my teacher was travelling from Rishikesh, India to New York, I naturally wanted to be closer to him for personal instruction and guidance. I moved to New York 13 years ago and was shocked to see the hustle and bustle of big city life. I thought how is it going to be possible to swim in these waters! My teacher just replied that New York was the best place to practice Yoga. When I asked him why, he merely smiled and said "it is because it is the hardest". You want to be a strong swimmer, than you have to swim where there are big waves! Apparently the saying that if you can make it in New York you can make it anywhere, also applies to Yoga. All you need is right knowledge and technique.

Right knowledge comes from studying under the personal guidance of one who is accomplished. I was fortunate to study with Swami Kailashanand, a great Yoga Master

from the Himalayas. Before starting his own Yoga Practice, he was a successful lawyer in the High Court of India. When it was his time, he left the practice to study with his teacher in seclusion high in the Himalaya Mountains. After 12 years of intense practice, he emerged a fully self-realized saint. At the request of his teacher he came to America in the 1950's to begin teaching Yoga with the goal of raising health standards and imparting the knowledge to lead a fulfilling and joyful life. In the West, most people equate Yoga with the physical exercises (asanas) or meditation. However, these practices, in and of themselves are limited. We are complex beings comprised of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects. To be complete, we must be complete on all four levels. Swami Kailashanand taught his disciples the time proven techniques needed to balance and integrate all these levels. Hatha Yoga and Nature Cure techniques for a strong and healthy body. Kundalini Yoga to balance our internal energies and emotional states. Concepts of right diet for Yoga practice. Psychic Development and Healing techniques to tap the creative powers within are to name just a few of the techniques he taught. The emphasis was always placed on incorporating the techniques in everyday life. In this way, a person lives a Yoga Life; evolving and unfolding their own inner beauty and talents as they work towards the ultimate goal of complete Self-awareness. In my own life I have seen dramatic changes. On just a physical level, I have enjoyed very good health. In my 17 years of practice, I have not needed to consult medical doctors and have had no need for any medications. Not even aspirin. Physical and mental cravings, which previously seemed impossible to give up, effortlessly dropped away. It was as if a wellspring of new life and joy was released within and sought to expand itself into all areas of my being. My life has been enriched with a purpose, and that purpose has given me an inner strength and peace that I had previously not known. Regardless of an individual's current situation, it is my observation that those who are taught and practice the techniques quickly achieve remarkable benefits. Yoga meets the student at their level. It holds the fruit for those who wish to achieve radiant health and long life. For those that have awakened to the knowledge that material existence will not bring ultimate satisfaction, well then, the sky is the limit.