

## **Introduction**

As yoga has evolved from its historically recorded roots in India (and from an even more ancient time that can only be construed from archeological finds), it has transformed many times. For some, the practice is primarily a physical one, with a heightened focus on asana or postures. For others, yoga is a spiritual practice and lifestyle.

The yoga that migrated from India to the West in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was influenced not only by Indian culture and spiritual philosophies but also by a larger, global phenomenon referred to as 'Physical Culture'. Globally, people (mostly men) were being encouraged to prevent moral decay (considered the consequence of the easier lifestyle that an industrialized world offered) by engaging in various forms of 'spiritual' exercise, such as gymnastics, martial arts and wrestling. India's answer to this way of life was the home-grown practice of yoga, previously considered a low-brow practice conducted by lower caste ascetics or followers of Tantra – a lifestyle and philosophy that was considered taboo by many.

Nonetheless, due to the all-encompassing presence of British colonial rule in India from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the yoga that became a national treasure was also heavily influenced by these European and Eastern practices. With the growing popularity of Eastern religions and practices in the West in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the yoga we know and love today transformed yet again to become a composite of these physical practices and Hindu philosophy.

*Hatha Yoga* rose out of the Tantric tradition which challenged the non-dual classical philosophy that believes only the Creator is real...all forms of matter are unreal distractions from understanding and experiencing the ultimate reality of nirvana. In the Tantric tradition, since everything comes from the Creator, everything is sacred, including matter and our very own bodies. Hatha Yoga continues to evolve to a system of self-care and discovery, a lifestyle, that has developed over a period of over 4000 years...and possibly much longer.

The earliest practitioners of yoga were well versed in Hindu philosophy and the workings of the subtle, energy body. They were not, however, well versed in anatomy and biomechanics. As such, some of the postures that have become popular in the West may actually do more harm than good. And some of the postures are taught and practiced in ways that set the stage for possible immediate or future injury.

It is our intention, as we offer this program, to give participating individuals an opportunity to explore the ancient traditions of yoga and cultures that influenced the practice we know today...for it is with an awareness of the past and the foundation that it has created that we can better understand how to practice and teach yoga in ways that can support one's health and wellness goals. In this 200-hour program, participants will be encouraged to question everything, trust their own lived-experience and learn about human anatomy and biomechanics so that they can both practice and teach yoga safely.

There are many paths explored across the globe that can lead one to self-realization. In fact, even in Hatha Yoga there are many approaches or traditions. Each of us has different needs, tastes and dreams. For some, Restorative Yoga might be most appropriate; for others a more vigorous practice is more suitable. Recognizing that one is not better than another but that the

appropriate path is a matter of personal preference, this program will expose you to a variety of lineages in order that you may find the tradition or style that best suits you.

As we make our way through the early stages of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are being asked to honour the many paths we as human and divine beings are called to take and to be fiercely compassionate towards all living things. The thousands of years of separation through 'divide and conquer' and an over-emphasis on a patriarchal and hierarchical view of life has caused much damage to all living creatures and the planet itself. We hope that this program of Hatha Yoga will help participants to recognize their own true nature and that all beings and things have value as expressed in the universal connection and interdependence of all things.

The primary focus of yoga, and in fact a common translation, is that of '*union*': union of body and mind; matter and spirit; light and dark; masculine and feminine to name a few 'complementary opposites'. The numerous ways to achieve this union are described in various sacred texts. However, the practice of yoga is, ultimately, a journey of exploration that each individual must make for themselves. The time has truly arrived where we are being called to honour and value the unique nature of all living things. It is our hope that your participation in this 200 Hour Yoga Teacher Training will deepen your own practice of yoga, your connection with your own body and your awareness and love of all that is.