

## What is yoga?

Already in the seventies of the previous century WIFRIED INGELS, a pioneer of yoga in Flanders (Belgium) and a yoga teacher trainer defined yoga as “the individual application or personal practice of a particular discipline such as postures, breath exercises and meditation, which have a psychosomatic effect on the individual and the final purpose of which is the realization of his own self”.

Yoga teaches that the human system is a holistic unit comprised of several dimensions or levels. We are not just a physical body. Our human system is much more complex than that. We have a breathing body that keeps us alive. We are made up of senses, which help us feel and perceive the world around us. We have a mind or intellect, which allows us to perceive and analyze things in a particular way. A philosopher will look the same situation in one way, for example, while a scientist will look the same situation in an entirely different way.

We are also made up of different personality traits. For example, some of us are extroverted, others are introverted.

And we have emotions. Holding an infant in our arms, we are immediately filled with inexplicable joy. When we are stuck in a traffic jam for a long time, we may begin to feel agitated and frustrated. Some people even become enraged. All these feelings are a part of who we are.

All aspects influence each other and so are interrelated. They are interactive and interdependent.

Yoga practices may be used in a wide variety of purposes such as

- serving as a tool to better achieve our goals: a happy life, relationship and family life, a successful career, higher sports capacities, and so on
- promoting and maintaining physical and mental health
- relieving stress and promoting efficiency
- aiding to face and deal with challenging life situations
- serving as a complimentary system of holistic health care - both preventative, and curative

It means that yoga is a personalized appropriated health management. Yoga is no medicine. It does not give answers about diseases and does not interfere in the medical system and the medication. The yoga-student, who is experiencing problems with his physical, mental, emotional or psychological health, will be advised to visit his doctor even more. It is complementary.

See the included article: medical science and yoga.

- Providing and guiding us in spiritual transformation.

Yoga is a holistic healing discipline that addresses the needs of the whole person through continuous adaptation of its many tools to suit the student's unique and changing abilities and needs.

Yoga is as appropriate for the young as it is for the old, as appropriate for the stroke victim lying immobile in a hospital bed, as it is for the flexible, athletic dancer. This is why it may be said that Yoga is for everyone.

The purpose of all the techniques possible is to establish consciousness of one's own self: to be with the body, the breath and the mind. It is considered essential for health and wellness. Ignorance causes suffering in all its forms.

Sources of most of the texts in this folder

- TKV Desikachar: The heart of yoga – developing a personal practice
- TKV Desikachar with Kausthub Desikachar and Frans Moors: The viniyoga of yoga, applying yoga for healthy living
- Kausthub Desikachar: The Yoga of the Yogi - The legacy of T. Krishnamacharya