

Stretching, Exercising, and Hatha Yoga

Spiritual Wisdom

In the practice of Yoga, every cell is consciously made to absorb a copious supply of fresh blood and life-giving energy, thus satiating the embodied soul.

—B.K.S. Iyengar

One field of spiritual practice in India is called hatha yoga. Hatha yoga includes the physical postures and exercises that prepare your body for meditation and the ultimate yoga, which is a conscious experience of union with the divine. (*Yoga* means union, and *hatha* refers to balancing the sun and moon energies within your body.) Hatha yoga consists of various movements, breath control exercises, and physical postures that can produce a profound state of inner union, vitality, and harmony.

The ancient wisdom of hatha yoga has trickled into modern-day life mostly in the form of exercise videos and health-club courses that help you lose weight and get your body in better shape.

Yes, these positive effects are available through practicing hatha yoga, however many hatha yoga practitioners lack a solid understanding of the deeper spiritual purpose of hatha yoga. One yoga magazine reporter told me that the hottest thing around the hip Hollywood crowd is to get what they call a “yoga butt” — proving that modern society can make a junk-food version of anything, including sublime ancient wisdom!

Don't Forget

The deeper purpose of yoga exercises is to uplift you spiritually. One yoga scripture describes those who practice exercises without a higher intention as “mere holders of bones.” Hatha yoga postures are intended to be a support for your journey to the *real* yoga — union with the divine!