

# YOGA IN INDIA

WELLNESS SPECIAL

DIGITAL EDITION



**INDIA**  
PERSPECTIVES

Surya Namaskar installation at the T3 Terminal, Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi





# CONTENTS

A WAY OF LIFE	05
A PANACEA FOR ALL ILLS	07
YOGA PRACTICE AT RISHIKESH	11
FOR HEALTHY LIVING	13
MASTER OF ASANAS AND THERAPY	15
YOGA AND THE BHAGAVAD GITA	19
BUDDHI YOGA	23
WAY OF ACTIONS	25

WAY OF LOVE	27
WAY OF KNOWLEDGE	29
A MASTER GOES WEST	31
CHAMPIONING THE MESSAGE	35
WIDENING RIPPLES	37
YOGA THROUGH THE AGES	41
YOGA IS THE WAY	43





*Yoga physiology described humans as existing of three bodies (physical, subtle and causal) and five sheets (food sheet, prana-breath, mind sheet, intellect and bliss) which cover the atman and energy flowing through energy channels and concentrated in chakras. The living, dynamic nature of yoga can be seen from how it has changed through time, reinterpreted and transmuted according to the needs of the age.*

**INDIA**  
PERSPECTIVES

## A way of life

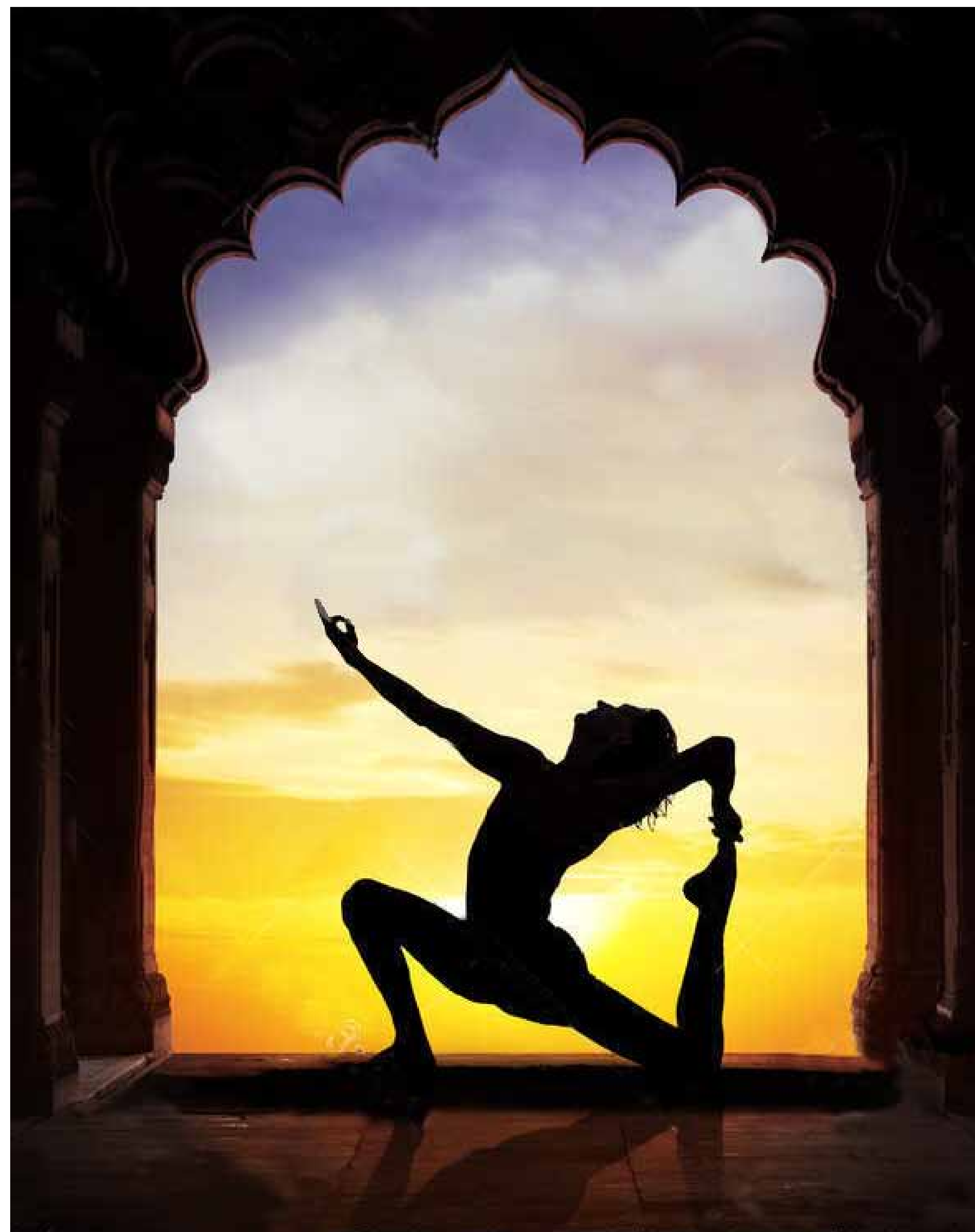
Over the last 2,500 years, yoga has touched nearly every aspect of contemporary global consciousness. Over centuries, this physical, mental and spiritual practice or discipline that aims to transform the body and mind has responded to the practical and philosophical needs of seekers in myriad ways that has kept alive its freshness and relevance.

Yoga symbolises many schools, practices and goals with the best-known being Hatha Yoga and Raja Yoga. Though there is no exact date of its origin, yoga is speculated to have been born during the pre-Vedic Indian era, mainly during the 5th and 6th centuries BCE. The earliest accounts of yoga practices are in the Buddhist *nikayas* (classes). Around the same time, parallel developments were recorded around 400 CE in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali.

Yoga physiology described humans as existing of three bodies (physical, subtle and causal) and five sheets (food sheet, prana-breath, mind sheet, intellect and bliss) which cover the *atman* and energy flowing through energy channels and concentrated in *chakras*. The living, dynamic nature of yoga can be seen from how it has changed through time, reinterpreted and transmuted according to the needs of the age. Later, yoga gurus from India introduced it to the West. During 1980s, yoga became popular as a system of physical exercise across the Western world and was often termed Hatha Yoga.

In this special digital edition on yoga, we bring various aspects of this way of life that has been compiled from the last 25 years' issues of *India Perspectives* with an update from *The Great Indian Yoga Masters* by Birad Rajaram Yajnik.

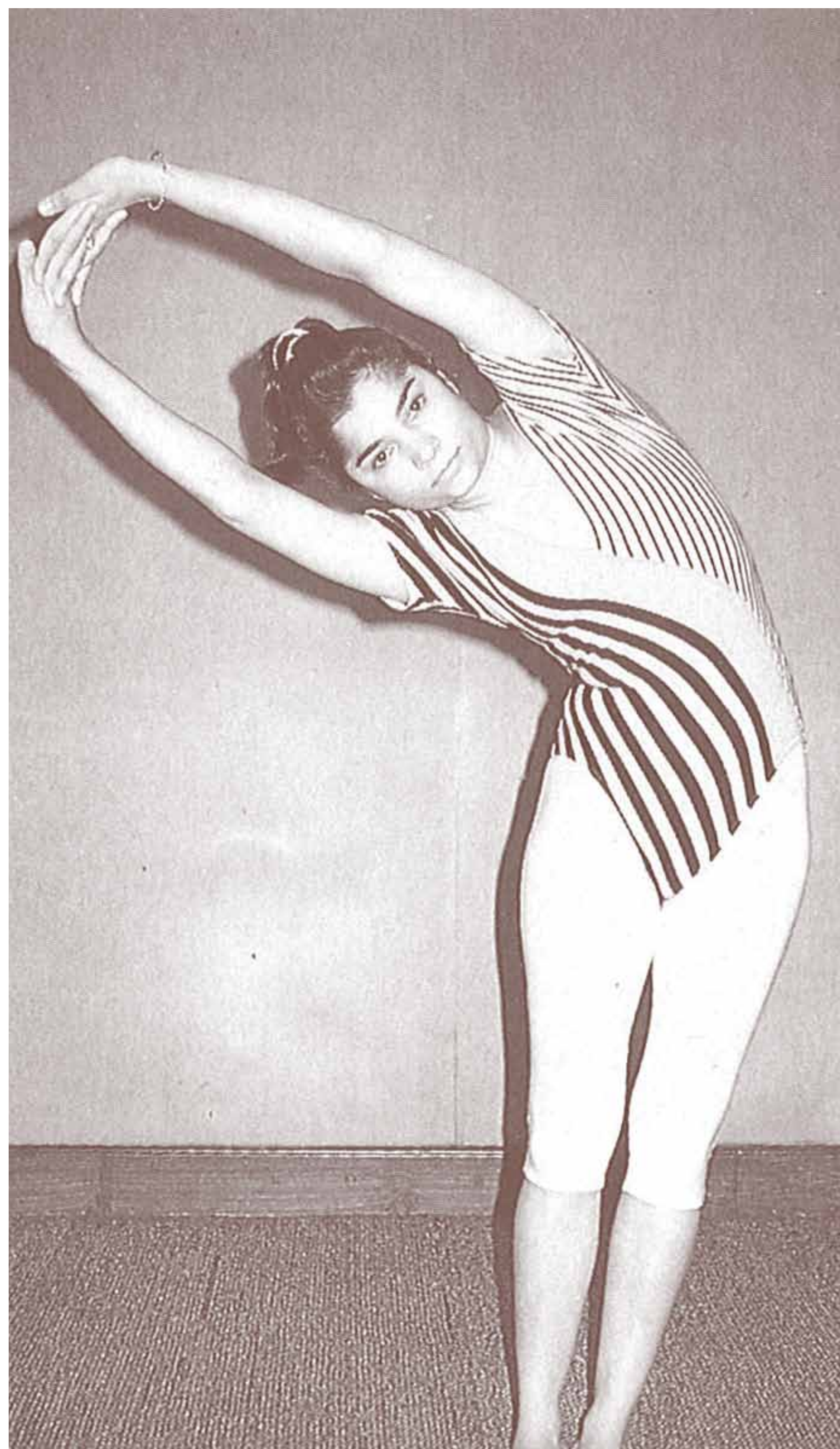
Syed Akbaruddin







All physical exercises are primarily designed to increase blood circulation and the oxygen intake. This purpose is served by any exercise, may it be moderate such as yogic exercises or violent like boxing



HEALTH PLUS

# A panacea for all ills

Yoga has the power to cure many diseases, ensuring a healthy body and mind

text | Yash Pal

It has been rightly said that a healthy body contains a healthy mind and a healthy mind makes the body healthier. Yoga promises the same to its practitioners. By way of their actions on musco-vascular and endocrine systems, yogic exercises act upon the Central Nervous System (CNS) rendering it more pliable and active. They help in curbing emotional upheavals such as anger, excitement, depression, etc.

According to sage Patanjali, Yoga has eight stages or limbs and that is why it is known as Ashtanga-Yoga. These eight stages are Yama (moral values), Niyama (self-purification), Asana (physical postures), Pranayama (control of breath), Pratyahara (withdrawal of senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation) and Samadhi (contemplation or a state of superconsciousness).

Observance of Yama and Niyama helps in controlling the emotions and passions. Asanas keep the body strong and healthy in a natural way. Pranayama, the fourth stage, teaches the aspirant to regulate the breathing through prescribed

techniques which provide immense help in control of mind. Pratyahara enables one to control the senses and ensure freedom from worldly desires. The last three stages – viz Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi deal with mental faculties and help aspirant achieve the ultimate goal ie the realisation of the true self.

Yogic exercises provide the body with adequate action required for its natural development. Their action on the body is manifold. These, through their action on the musculo-vascular system provide necessary stimulation to the endocrine system (a ductless glandular system which secretes hormones required for the coordination and harmony of various body functions). In this way, they also help achieve coordinated functioning of the Central Nervous System (CNS).

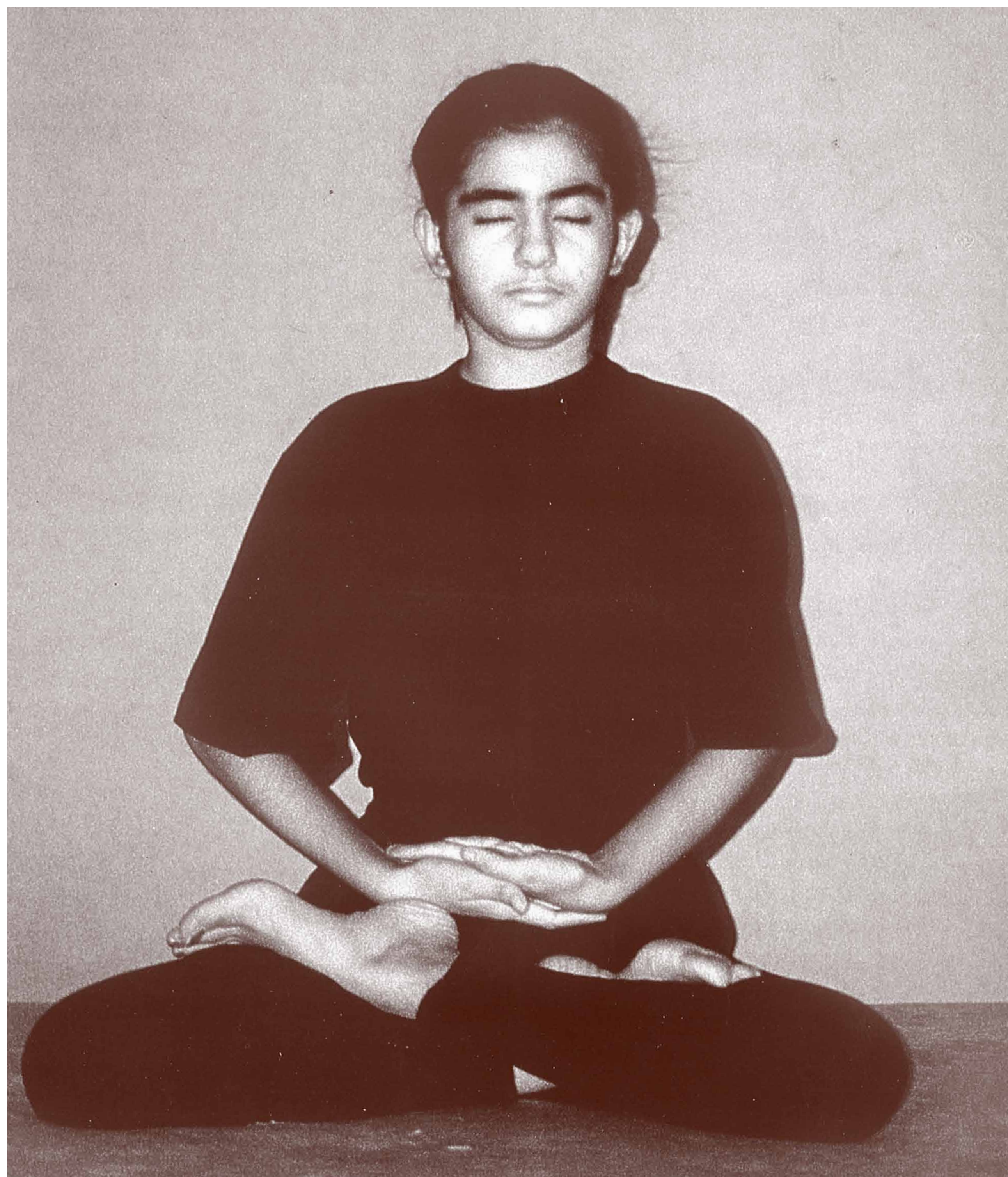
As may be seen, all physical exercises are primarily designed to increase blood circulation and the oxygen intake. This purpose is served by any exercise, may it be moderate such as yogic exercises or violent like boxing or wrestling. The skeletal muscles go through a series of motions under any type of exercise.





Any imbalance in the functions of one or more glands leads to serious mental and physical disorders. Yogic exercises provide suitable solutions

**INDIA**  
PERSPECTIVES



These motions are constituted of stretching, contraction and relaxation in the given order. When muscle contracts during the exercise, the glycogen stored in the activated muscle breaks down to lactic acid causing an additional release of energy. It is then utilised for various chemical changes in the body. Yogic exercises cause metabolic changes in the muscles but owing to their moderate and scientific nature, they produce a small quantity of lactic acid in the muscles involved. The lactic acid which requires to be reconverted into the glycogen readily does so, for deep and rhythmic respiration supplies sufficient quantity of oxygen needed to oxidise it. It is for this reason that one does not feel fatigued or lethargic after practising yogic exercises. Unlike violent exercises, they provide evenly distributed stretch to the muscle involved and activate them in a manner suitable to their proper development. Long before the scientists discovered the endocrine system, the yogis knew about the existence of certain secretions which were responsible for the regulation of various mental and physical functions of the man. These secretions have been rediscovered by the modern scientists and are termed as Hormones. It is now scientifically established that the endocrine glands called Pituitary, Thyroid, Parathyroids, Pancreas, Adrenals and Gonads (ovaries in females and testes in males) secrete various hormones which are responsible for harmonious coordination for various bodily functions. For instance, hormones secreted by the Thyroid glands are responsible for the growth, that of Pancreas for maintaining the blood sugar level. These glands also function in coordination with each other and are interdependent and complimentary to each other. Any imbalance in the functions of one or more of these glands leads to serious mental and physical disorders. Yogic exercises provide suitable mental and physical conditions required for normal functioning of these glands. ■

*The author is a teacher of Yoga*





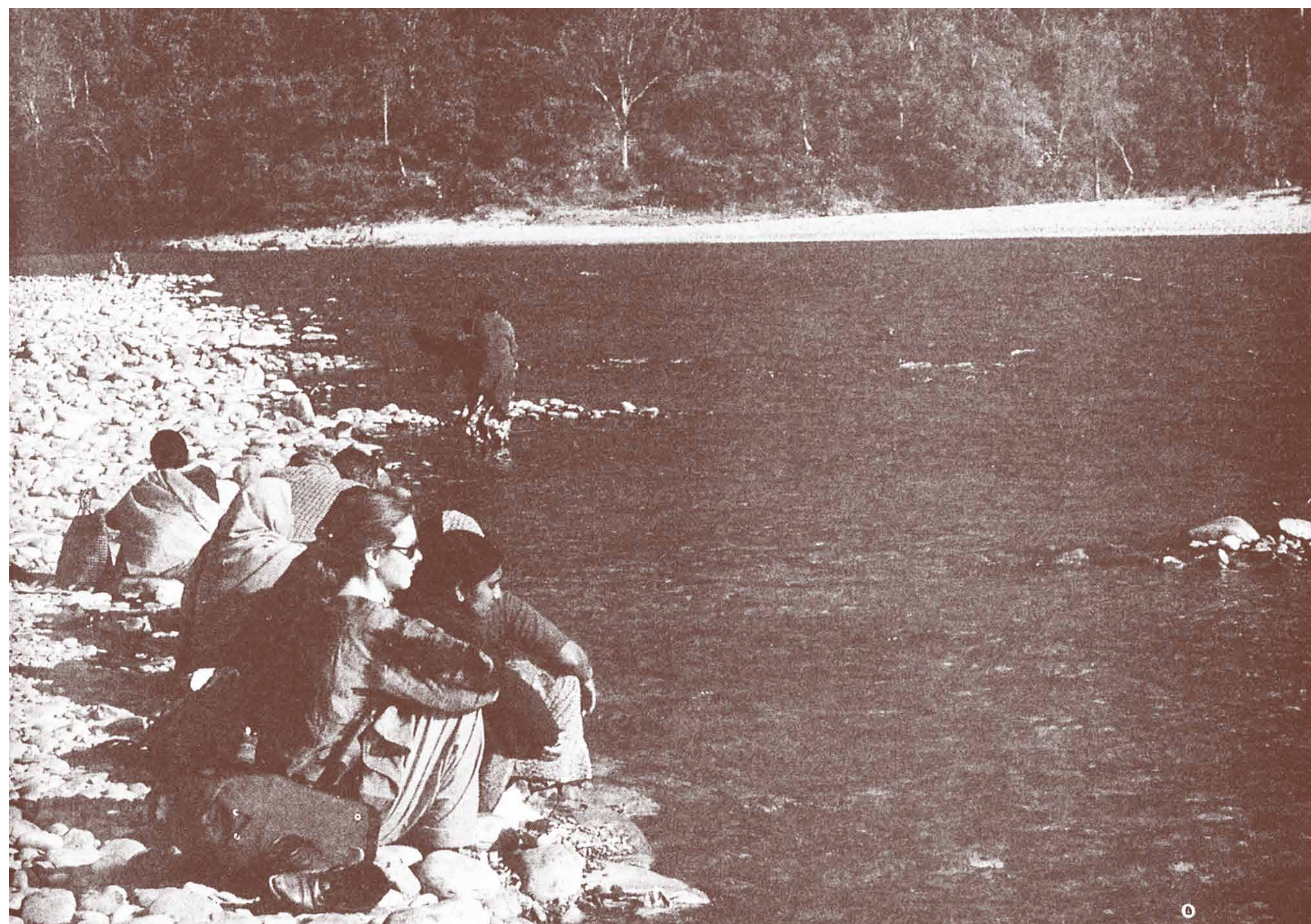
In many religious institutions of Rishikesh, yoga is taught by learned gurus for the benefit of its followers. The philosophy of yoga has been evolved by learned sages through generations

DESTINATION

# Yoga practice at Rishikesh

The city is ever-growing with spiritual centres and yogic institutions

text | PK De



The role of yoga towards achieving self-realisation, as well as international understanding in the cause of humanity, has gained appreciable momentum in recent years. Throughout the world, numerous spiritual centres and yogic institutions have been established for the purpose, and their numbers are ever increasing.

Rishikesh, India, lies on the banks of the sacred River Ganga and since time immemorial, this religious place has been the seat of meditation for the revered sages and ascetics seeking self-realisation. In many religious institutions of Rishikesh, yoga is taught by learned gurus or masters for the benefit of numerous followers. The philosophy of yoga and the “asanas” (yogic postures) of the body in unison with the mind, have been evolved and developed by the learned sages through the generations. As old as civilisation, the practices are purely of Indian origin. In Sanskrit, the term “yoga” conveys union, and according to the Upanishads and religious scriptures, or the individual soul with the divine “paramatma” or God. In the modern concept, however, yoga may be understood as the union of the body of an individual with his mind and soul, in total harmony with one another that makes him a perfect creation of God. It has been well established that by practicing the yogasanas or yogic postures the correct way, one can keep blissfully healthy, effecting clarity of mind and intelligence.

Rishikesh, the holy township, lies at the foothills of the majestic Himalayas. Surrounded by tranquil forests, it is the perfect venue for purifying and upgrading one’s mind and body. ■

*The author is a freelance photo-journalist*





Mahida suggests the use of household items like chairs and blankets as props to make the body perfectly healthy



The author's interaction with medical practitioners has resulted in yoga therapy for various ailments

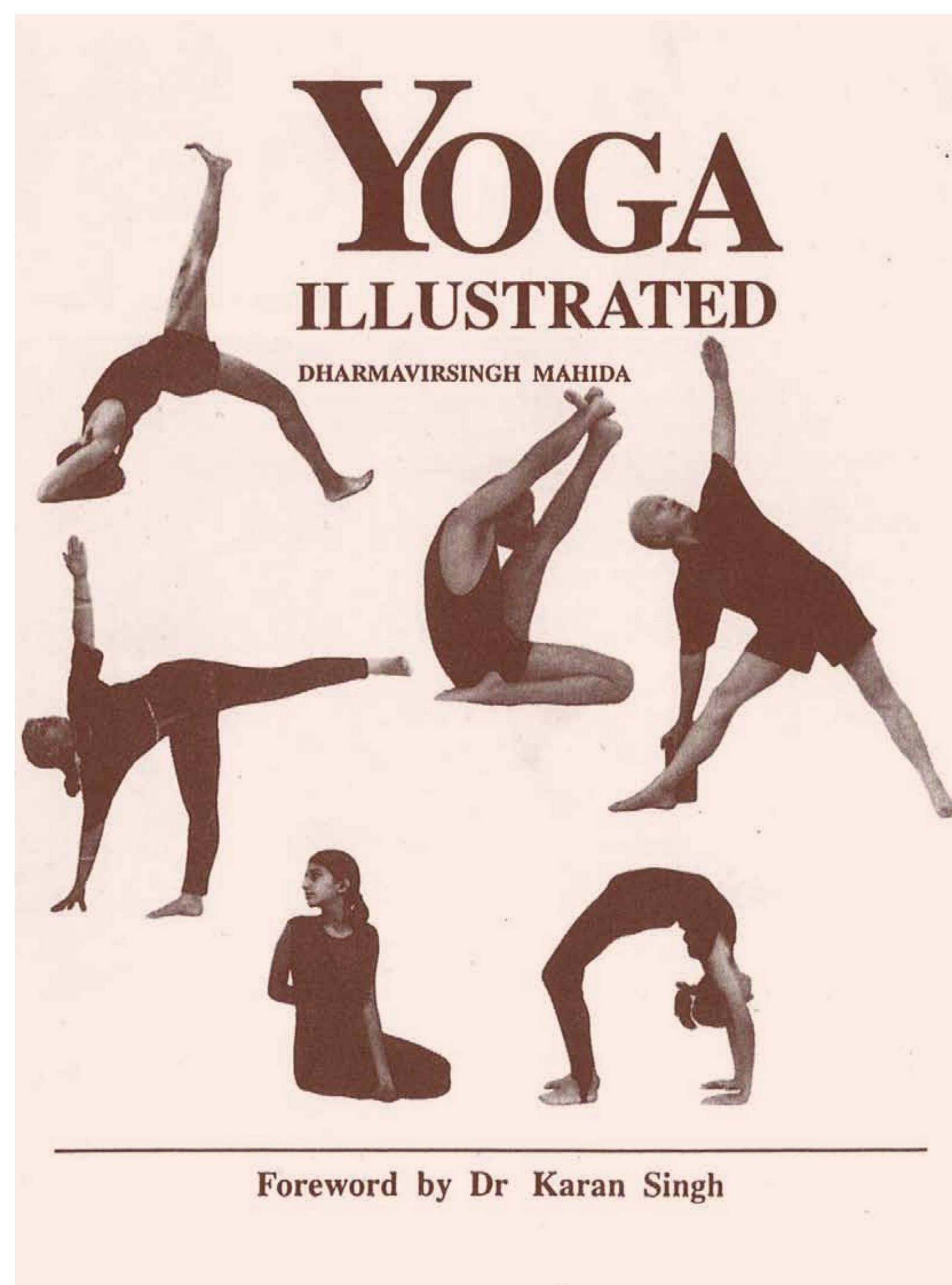
**INDIA**  
PERSPECTIVES

## BOOK REVIEW

# For healthy living

Dharmvir Singh Mahida presents asanas in an easy-to-follow style

text | Naveen Joshi



The students of Yoga are generally familiar with the practices which are denoted by the word Asanas. In fact many people who do not know anything about Yoga confuse it with these physical exercises. Asana or posture is the third limb or the third component of Yoga. It answers the question: In what pose or posture of his body a yogi should proceed with his accomplishment in the field of Yoga?

In Hatha Yoga, the subject of Asanas is treated at great length. There is no doubt that many Asanas, by affecting the endocrine glands and other bodily currents, tend to bring about very marked changes in the body and if practised correctly and for a sufficiently long time, promote health in a remarkable way.

Hatha yoga is based on the principle that changes in consciousness can be brought about by setting in motion currents of certain kind of subtler forces (*prana*, *kundalini*) in the physical body. The first step in realising the deeper levels of consciousness is, therefore, to make physical body perfectly healthy and fit.

In the book under review, Dharmvir Singh Mahida, who has been teaching Yoga and its manifestations for the past ten years, has done a remarkable job by presenting these Asanas in such a way that a person who is less fit but keen on learning Asanas does not feel discouraged by their complexity and instead develops a

motivation to try and begin from the simplest Asanas gradually shifting to the more difficult ones.

In his innovative methodology, Mahida suggests the use of various household items like chairs, blankets, beds etc and walls as props so as to make the body perfectly healthy, resistant to fatigue and strain and bring about an extraordinary influx of that spiritual force which we know as willpower.

The evils of modern civilisation are not only affecting the body; they are disastrous to the mental make up of mankind too. In order to understand the interconnection and interdependence of mind and body, Mahida's profusely illustrated manual gives sufficient guidance and inspiration to understand both body and mind better. Yogic exercises are both preventive as well as curative of many body ills if followed in a right way. The author attempts to bring about every step and nuance of Asanas with more than 630 illustrations.

Innovative concepts like "Dynamic Yoga" and "Yogaerobics" have been introduced in the book. Mahida claims that dynamic yogasanas are more comprehensive than most of the aerobic exercises.

The author's interaction with medical practitioners and his long experience of Yogasana practice have resulted in what he describes as yoga therapy for various ailments. Yogic asanas can help one get over many chronic ailments like spondylitis, arthritis etc. These asanas also provide tremendous relief from the ailments relating to cardio vascular, endocrinal, digestive and other systems.

One of the highlights of the book are the weekly plans in which Mahida suggests the type of asana for each day of the week and its practice duration.

*Yoga Illustrated* by Dharmvir Singh Mahida; Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1995, pp 133, Price: ₹200. ■

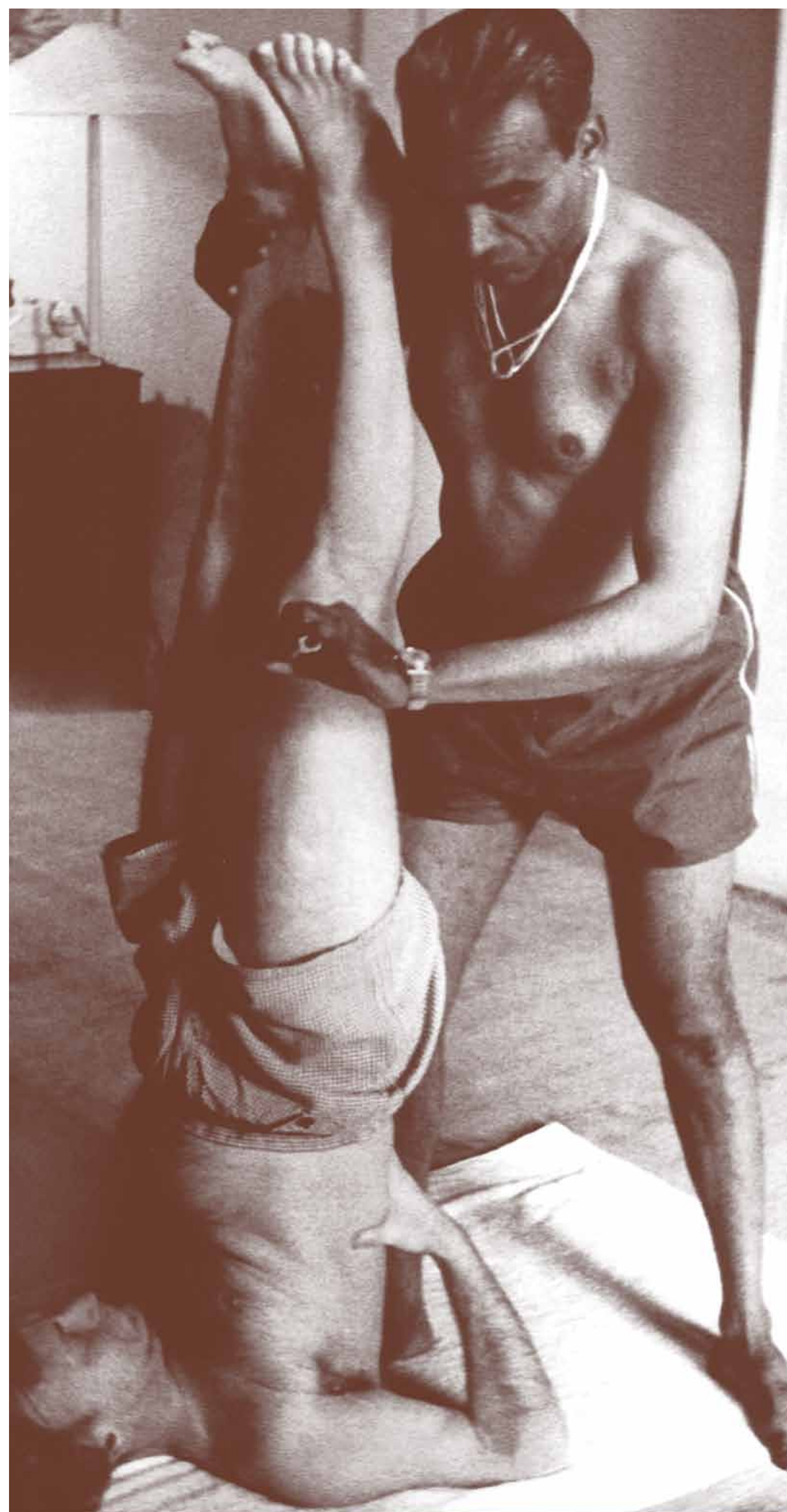
*The reviewer is a freelance writer*





His unique style called Iyengar Yoga has inspired the establishment of several centres all over the world, both for teaching as well as training and certifying teachers

**INDIA**  
PERSPECTIVES



TRIBUTE

# Master of asanas and therapy

BKS Iyengar, credited for the spread of yoga culture globally, passed away in August this year, but his legacy lives on...

text | Birad Rajaram Yajnik

The architect of Iyengar yoga was a virtuoso of the modern yoga world, both at home and abroad. Belur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar can perhaps be chiefly credited for the spread of yoga culture in the Western world, beginning in the mid-1960s.

His unique style called Iyengar Yoga has inspired the establishment of several centres all over the world, both for teaching as well as training and certifying teachers. The Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune, Maharashtra, is the hub of Iyengar yoga, and coordinates diverse activities including yoga research, therapy classes, fund-raising through publication of printed and multimedia materials and sale of yoga props and philanthropic works.

## Iyengar and yoga therapy

Having personally experienced the curative power of yoga, Iyengar believed deeply that this healing knowledge is essential to the happiness and well-being of society. From the vast storehouse of his understanding of the human body and its responses to asana therapy, he formulated specific programmes of healing practices for various ailments.

He was undoubtedly successful in solving a truly diverse assortment of ills in thousands of patients. His books *Light on Yoga*, and *Yoga: The Path to Holistic Health* have considerable sections devoted to yoga therapy with specific asana sequences for each ailment.

To quote him on yoga therapy, "The four pillars of yoga therapy are the physician, the medication, the attendant and the patient. In yogic world view, sage Patanjali is the physician, asanas are the medication, the yoga instructor is the attendant and the student is the patient. Asanas are recommended to patients according to their ailment and their physical and emotional condition. This has to be done with care... The process of yoga therapy is based on selecting and sequencing asanas which stretch specific parts of the body, and block others... The aim is not to cure the specific symptom but to target the cause."

## Ascendancy of Iyengar yoga

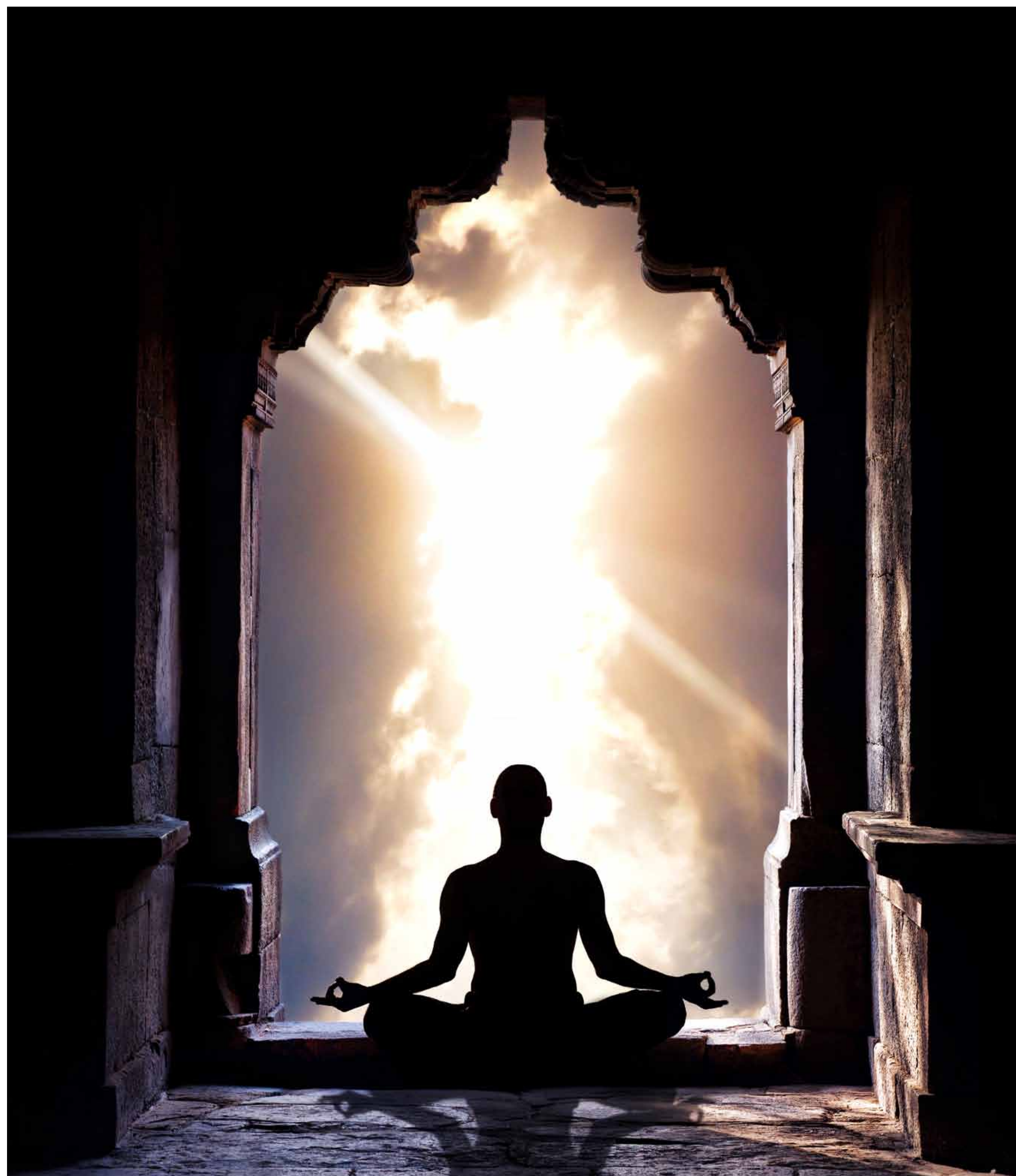
In 1943, he married Ramamani who was to become a perfect partner, advisor and source of support in his pursuit of achieving excellence in his chosen field. Though the





BKS Iyengar taught members of Indian aristocracy, prominent business, political and sports personalities including surgeon Dr Rustom Jal Vakil

INDIA  
PERSPECTIVES



couple initially led an impoverished life, his popularity slowly but steadily began to rise. Newly-Independent India was hosting a large number of eminent visitors and heads of state. Iyengar was often invited to give demonstrations to many of them. First Indian President Dr Rajendra Prasad and Pope Paul IV were some before whom Iyengar held demonstrations of yoga.

He taught members of Indian aristocracy, prominent business, political and sports personalities including surgeon Dr Rustom Jal Vakil. It was through Vakil that in 1952 he was introduced to violinist-conductor Yehudi Menuhin. The story goes that at first, Menuhin gave Iyengar a five-minute appointment which, upon their meeting, extended to a three-and-a-half hours! Upon Menuhin mentioning that he had been feeling too fatigued to sleep soundly, Iyengar apparently had him dozing within a few minutes. Both men became close friends till Menuhin's death 47 years later. Under Iyengar's tutelage, he became a regular yoga practitioner. Menuhin was instrumental in making Iyengar travel with him to Britain, France and Switzerland. He taught yoga to some of the most famous names of the day and had an audience with Queen Elisabeth, the Queen Mother of Belgium in 1958. But his teaching was not reserved for the rich and famous. The healing therapy of Iyengar's yoga with its attendant physical, emotional and spiritual benefits was available to all.

As the ordinary public became aware of his expertise, Iyengar was increasingly asked to teach in Britain and other European countries. Each year ever larger numbers would await his return and his classes. The demand for his yoga was such that he began to train and certify instructors in his methods so that they could continue classes in his absence. Today, Iyengar yoga classes and instructors are available in every continent of the world. ■

*Extracted from The Great Indian Yoga Masters published by Visual Quest Books*



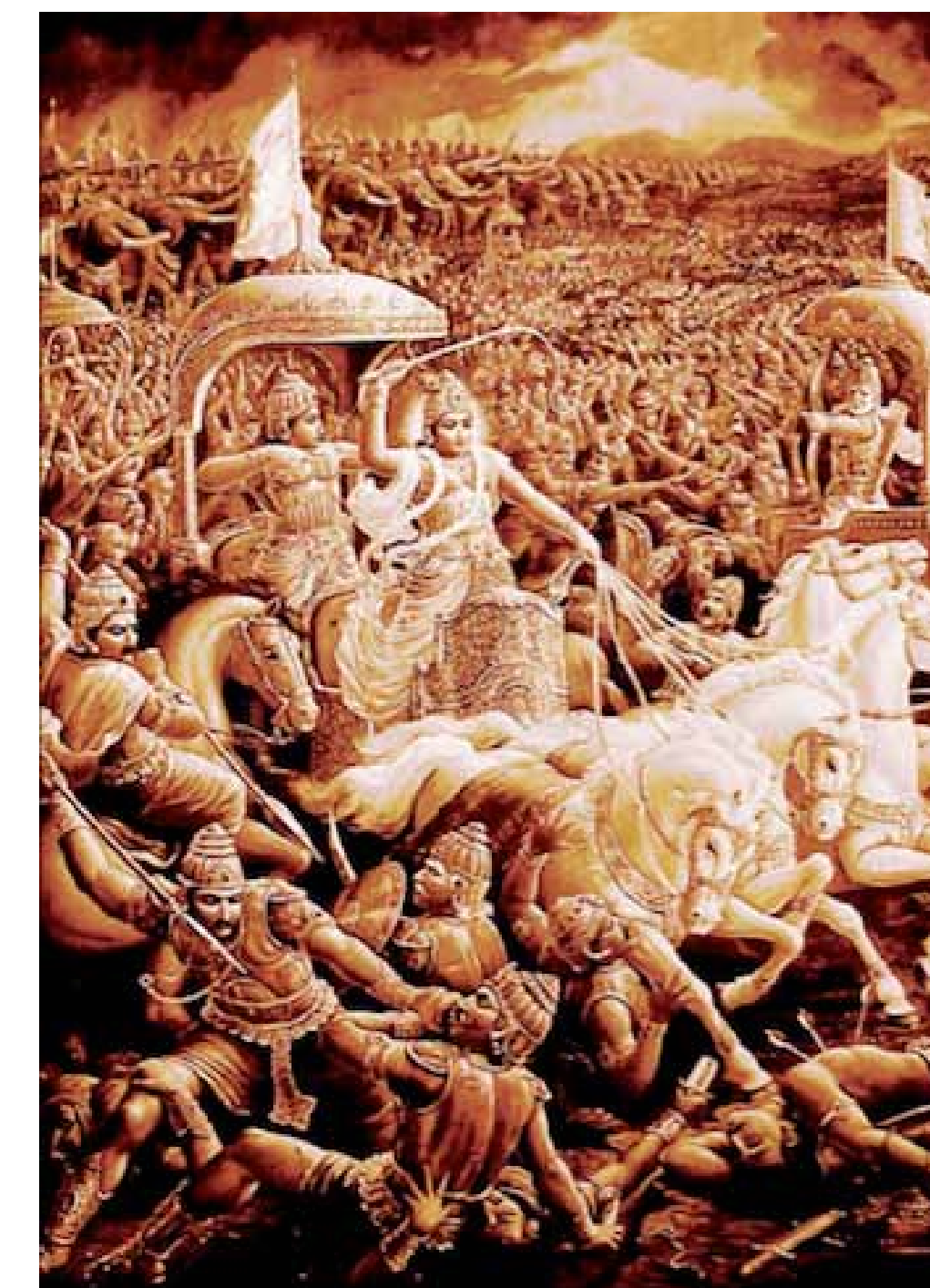


In the *Bhagvad Gita* Lord Krishna outlines three Yoga paths that lead to the shedding of bad *karma* - reincarnation in Indian religion and philosophy

**INDIA**  
PERSPECTIVES

# Yoga and the Bhagvad Gita

The Bhagvad Gita is a great verse talking about yogic and Vedic philosophy



## Bhagvad Gita

The *Bhagvad Gita* (Song of the Lord) is a brilliant 700-verse summation of Yogic and Vedic philosophy delivered by Lord Krishna on the Kurukshetra battlefield in the *Mahabharata* epic. In it, he counsels the Pandava prince, Arjuna, who is paralysed by confusion over the *dharma* (moral rightness) of the war about to commence between them and their Kaurava cousins. Composed about 3 millennia ago, it remains a masterpiece, combining intricate spiritual philosophy with supremely practical advice for union (i.e. yoga) of the human soul with the Absolute Brahman. The theory is Sankhya, the practice is Yoga. As such, it is regarded more as a *Yoga Sastra* (guide for yogic attainment) rather than as a *Dharma Sastra* (law-giving text).





*Tesam  
satatayuktanam  
bhajatam  
priti purvakam  
Dadami buddhi  
yogam tam yena  
mam upayanti te*  
(Bhagvad Gita, X:10)

“To those steadfast  
in love and service  
I confer the Yoga of  
wisdom, so that they  
may attain Me.”



### Definitions

The word Yoga embraces a variety of interpretations in the Gita.

Derived from the root *yujir yoga*, it implies “eternal establishment in God.” Lord Krishna gives one definition of yoga as *samatvam yoga ucyate*, or “yoga is balance or equanimity” (Gita, II:48). Yoga is maintaining inner equilibrium in the face of victory or defeat. The perfect yogi who is free from attachment (to pleasure) and aversion (to sorrow), and exists in constant union with the higher Self or Godhead, has achieved evenness of mind or yoga.

This detachment from the results of action leads, in turn, automatically to the next definition: *yogah karmasu kausalam*, or “yoga is skill in action” (Gita, II:50). Thus the yogi who is established in the higher Self at all times, performs action with dexterity, drawing upon resources greater than the individual ego.

From the root *yuj samadhau*, it signifies stability of *citta* (mind), when the mind achieves perfect stillness during meditation. *Yatroparamate cittam niruddham yogasevaya*, or “In the still mind the Self reveals itself” (Gita, VI:20),

refers to when the mind, disciplined by meditation, becomes tranquil. The concentration of the mind on the single-pointed goal of the innermost Self is *dharana*, while the continuous flow of mind towards the Self, disregarding all other thoughts is called *dhyana* (meditation).

Deduced from the root *yuj samyamane*, it also alludes to the power that directs divine process. When revealing his true form as the Lord of Creation to Arjuna, Krishna says, *Paysa me yagam aisvaram*, “Behold my supreme power of Yoga” (Gita, XI:8). He does not mean yoga in the more limited sense, but instead as being the Eternal creative energy that continually regulates the balance of opposing realities. These are progressively nuanced meanings of yoga. First the yogi has to practice mindful equanimity and withdrawal from the senses. Upon teaching a state of mental equipoise, the attainment of divine prowess (*siddhis*) and spiritual absorption (*samadhi*) follow. In the final stage, there remains only the death of the individual ego and the soul’s final merging into the Supreme Consciousness or *Paramatman*. ■





Gita classifies *buddhi* and *dhriti* (fortitude or firmness) as having three qualities or *gunas*; *saatvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*

# Buddhi yoga

This form of yoga mainly talks about soul consciousness

It is important to note that the *Gita*, while giving emphasis to *karma*, *jnana* and *bhakti* yogas, also elevates soul consciousness (*buddhi*) and its cultivation. *Buddhi* is accorded a high position in its relative importance in the human persona.

*Indriyani paranyahur indriyebhyah  
param manah  
Manasastu para buddhir yo buddheh  
paratas tu sah* (Gita, III]:42) .

“The senses are said to be superior (to the physical body); the mind is superior to the senses; the intelligence is superior to the mind; but the *Atman* (the Self) is superior to the intelligence.”

*Buddhi*, personifying divine wisdom, is thus the highest spiritual element. The rational intellect is next only to this spiritual consciousness, and should be guided by it. This enlightened understanding is a prerequisite for all other paths of Yoga.

## The Three Gunas

Gita classifies *buddhi* and *dhriti* (fortitude or firmness) as having three qualities or *gunas*; *saatvic*, *rajasic* and *tamasic*. The *Gita* mentions intellect and fortitude jointly, since having mere intellect without the requisite firmness to control the mind and senses is to no avail.

*Pravrttim ca nivrttim ca karyakarye bhayebhaye  
Bandham moksham ca ya vetti buddhih sa partha  
sattviki* (Gita, XVIII:30)

“The discriminative intellect that discerns between the paths of egocentric action and renunciation, of what is right action and what is wrong, of what causes fear and what brings security, and what brings bondage and what liberation: that intellect is *sattvic* (of harmonious balance and goodness).”

*Yaya dharmam adharmam ca karyam  
cakaryameva ca  
Ayathavatprajanati buddhih sa partha rajasi*  
(Gita, XVIII:31)

“The *rajasic* intellect confuses right and wrong actions, distorting righteousness (*dharma*) and unrighteousness (*adharmam*).”

Krishna explains the nature of the *rajasic* (passionate and restlessly active) intellect, as one which is wrongly led by excitement and attachment, lacking clarity in vision and acting without discrimination. Such a materialist is beset by worries and self-doubt, and being frequently disillusioned, tends to build an ever-stronger fortress of blind ego.

*Adharmam dharmam iti ya manyate tamsaurta  
Sarvarthan viparitamsca buddhih sa partha  
tamasi* (Gita, XVIII:32)

“The *tamasic* intellect is shrouded in darkness, utterly reversing right and wrong wherever it turns.”

The *tamasic* (inert, ignorant and dull) intellect, being enveloped in darkness, regards wrong values as right, and sees all things in a perverted manner.



From these explanations, we may derive the conclusion that without being guided by *sattvic buddhi*, the paths of Karma Yoga will result only in rash and foolish action,

Bhakti Yoga in obtuse superstitious worship, and Jnana Yoga in abstract polemical debates. The insistence on the foundation discipline of *Buddhi* Yoga is to ensure a fully-developed, well-integrated and dynamic soul.

This is symbolised by the Hindu worship of Ganesha, the personification of *Buddhi*, at the outset of any endeavour. ■





*Karmanyevadhikaraste ma  
phalesu kadacana  
Ma karmaphalaheturbhurma  
te sangostvakarmani  
(Gita, II:47)*

**“You have the right to  
work, but never to the fruit  
of work. Do not consider  
yourself the creator of  
the fruits of thy activities,  
neither allow yourself  
attachment to inaction.”**

**INDIA  
PERSPECTIVES**

# Way of actions

The karma yoga is about one's actions in today's world

In explaining the path of Karma Yoga, the *Gita* indicates how the sincere spiritual aspirant should act in the illusory world. There is no escape from the necessity for action, but Karma Yoga is the path of selfless action, i.e. action undertaken with no attachment to its fruits or rewards.

However, a distinction is made between external awards and internal rewards. The internal spiritual development resulting from Karma Yoga is completely different in quality and lasts beyond any material recognition garnered in the outside world.

*Nehabhikramanasosti pratyavayo na vidyate, Svalpamapyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat* (Gita, II:40)

“On this path effort [Karma Yoga] never goes to waste, and there is no failure. Even a little effort toward spiritual awareness will yield protection from the greatest fear [cycle of rebirth].”

God has bestowed upon man this human body so that by performing actions in the form of selfless service to others, he may achieve salvation within himself.

If the seeker shifts the goal of existence from the outside world to the inward self, and strives only for the sake of the spiritual value of his actions without a care for its worldly consequences, he is truly on the path to God-Realisation.

*Vyavasayatmika buddhirekeha*, or inner determination, (Gita, II:41) is essential in

the spiritual candidate for liberation. In this quest, there is no failure or loss of effort.

To such a person, the physical world exists only peripherally and not as an end in itself. His actions, thus unalloyed by transient manifold distractions and fixed by single-pointed resolve, lead his consciousness to the experience of the Reality within. With this divine perspective, the yogi enters a state of deep joy which, as the *Gita* says, “not even the heaviest of affliction can take away.”

“When your mind has overcome the confusion of duality, you will attain the state of holy indifference to things you hear and things you have heard. When you are unmoved by the confusion of ideas, and your consciousness is completely anchored in inward bliss, you will attain the final union (yoga).” (Gita, II:52-53)

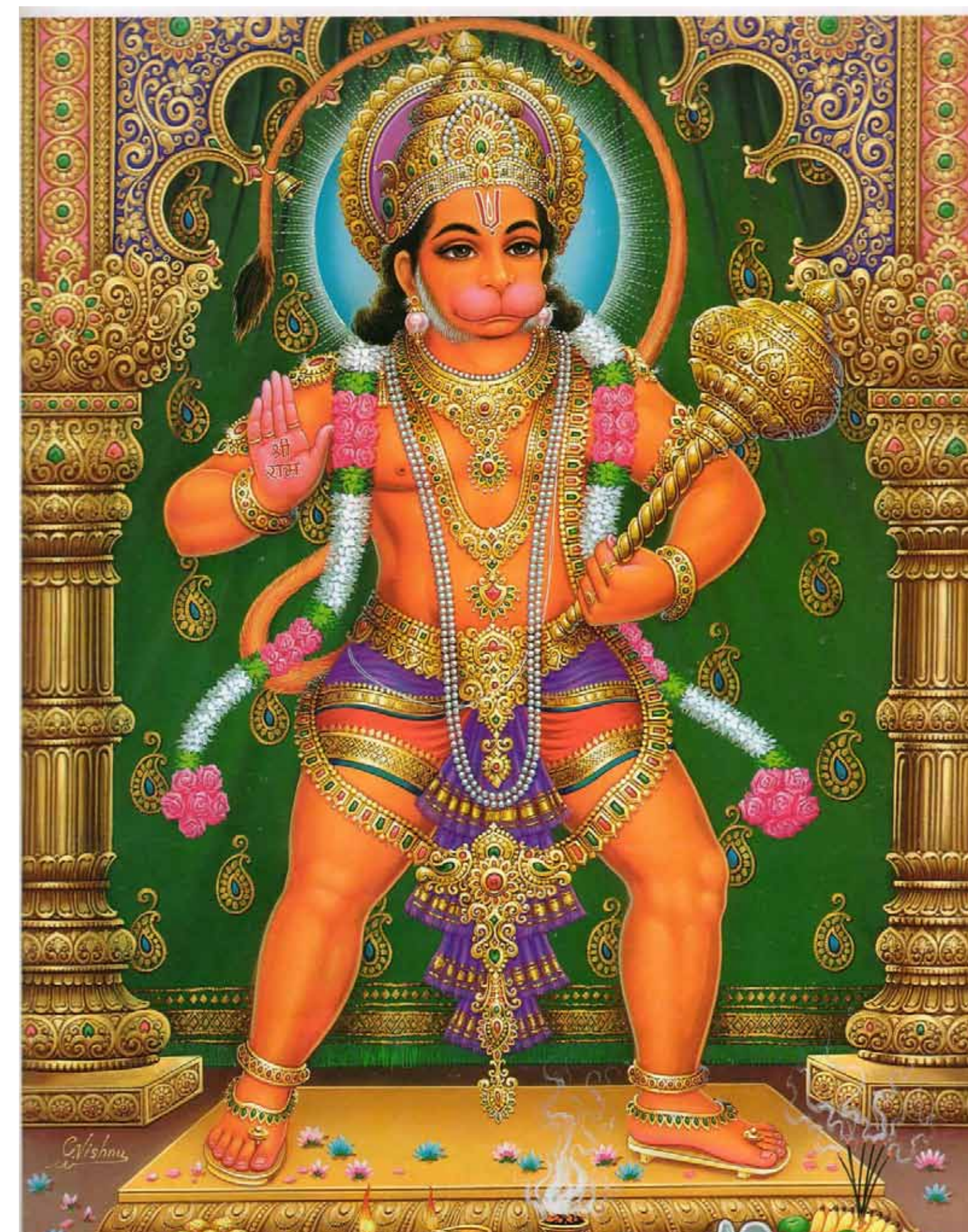
Thus Karma Yoga does not mean that the practitioner reaps no results.

God Himself in the *Gita* is portrayed as the Supreme Karma Yogi, as can be seen when Lord Krishna says:

*Na me parthasti kartavyam trisu lokesu kincana, Nanavaptam avaptavyam varta eva ca karmani* (Gita, III:22)

“O Partha (Arjuna), there is nothing in the three worlds for me to gain, nor is there anything I do not have. Yet I continue to act, though not driven by any need of my own.”

Though God needs nothing for Himself, and there is nothing left incomplete or yet to be attained, He engages in constant selfless action. He always performs His duty, never



abandoning it, working through the human conscience and through Realised Masters to awaken each soul to its true heritage. So also a Karma yogi must offer the body, senses, mind, and intellect in the disinterested service of the world.

He continues, “If I ever refrained from this continuous work, everyone would immediately follow my example. If I ever stopped working, I would be the cause of cosmic chaos, and finally of the destruction of this world and these people.” (Gita, III:23-24)

Hanuman, the devoted lieutenant of Prince Rama in the Ramayana, is an example of yoga through service. ■





The external world is perishable and kaleidoscopic, while the *atman* (soul) is eternal and unchanging



*Yoginamapi sarvesam madgatenantaratmana, Sraddhavan bhajate yo mam sa me yuktatamo matah* (Gita, VI:47)

“Even among yogis, that man or woman is dearest to Me who has become completely absorbed in Me, and worships Me with perfect faith.”

The Lord declares that He is most attached to the devotee who follows the path of whole-hearted devotion or Bhakti Yoga. The *atman* (soul) and the *Paramatman* (God) are qualitatively one, but this truth is incredibly difficult to realise. The individual soul is enslaved to the external world through chains

# Way of love

Bhakti yoga talks about becoming one with the creator

created by the ego, senses and mind.

A *bhakta* (devotee) of God redirects this flow toward the *Paramatman* instead by offering the Lord his selfless and overwhelming love. Such deep surrender culminates eventually in blissful union with the object of devotion, thereby destroying all duality forever. The liberated Bhakti Yogi has no individual ego left; he and the Beloved are one eternally.

*Brahmabhutah prasannatma na socati na kanksati,  
Samah sarvesu bhutesu madbhaktim labhate param,  
Bhaktya mam abhijanati yavan yas casmitattvatah*

*Tato mam tattvato jnatva visate tadanantaram* (Gita, XVIII:54-55)

“United with the Lord, ever joyful, beyond the reach of self-will and sorrow, he serves Me in every living creature and attains supreme devotion to Me. By loving Me he shares in my essence (*tattva*) and enters into my boundless being.”

The external world is perishable and kaleidoscopic, while the *atman* is eternal and unchanging. As long as the soul identifies with the impermanent world, it exists in delusions of duality and mortality. These desires (*vasanas*) and psychic links (*samskaras*) lead to the karmic cycle of rebirth.

Through the practice of any of the disciplines of Action (Karma Yoga),

Knowledge (Jnana Yoga) or Devotion (Bhakti Yoga), the soul can realise its true immutable nature (Love), and is no longer subject to subsequent births. While all the paths are great, the greatest of these is Love (Devotion) for God. It must infuse the spirit of the actions of the Karma Yogi and the intellectual inquiry of the Jnana Yogi.

*Yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam ca mayi pasyati Tasyaham na pranasyami sa ca me na pranasyati* (Gita, VI:30)

“He who perceives Me everywhere and beholds everything in Me never loses sight of Me, nor do I ever lose sight of him.”

Yogis of Action and Knowledge become free from egoism and attain spiritual realisation with the passage of time. But the ego of the Yogi of Devotion is surrendered at the very outset in loving the Lord. This love is unique in that it neither attenuates, nor withers nor is it satiated. The Lord also longs for such devotion, and this desire is fulfilled by His devotee. The devotion of Krishna and Radha is the personification of this mystical bond.

Ramana Maharishi, the great sage of Arunachala, explains, “Once the devotee has completely surrendered, nothing remains but God or Self, and the ‘I and mine’ cease to exist. Only the Self exists, and this is spiritual jnana (wisdom). Thus there is no difference between *bhakti* and *jnana*. *Bhakti* is *jnana mata* or the mother of *jnana*.” ■





All functions of the world, such as birth, growth and death, physical forces of nature, as well as powers of perception are accomplished through the three primary qualities (*gunas*, modes) of matter (*prakriti*)



The path of wisdom, culminating in the intuitive knowledge of being is Jnana Yoga.

*Prakrteh kriyamanani gunaih karmani sarvasah, Ahamkaravimudhatma kartahamiti* (Gita, III:27)  
“All actions are performed by the *gunas* of *prakriti*; deluded by his identification with the ego, a man thinks, ‘I am the Doer’.”

All functions of the world, such as birth, growth and death, physical forces of nature, as well as powers of perception are accomplished through the three primary qualities (*gunas*, modes) of matter (*prakriti*).

# Way of knowledge

Jnana yoga focusses on strengthening wisdom and intuitive knowledge

But the unenlightened man, deluded by ego, divides all activities performed by cosmic energy into two parts: involuntary ones that occur automatically, and deliberate actions which he thinks he controls. However, the intellect, ego, mind, five subtle elements, ten organs of perception and action and five objects of senses. These are also fashioned from the three modes (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*). The *Gita* affirms that all actions are performed by the modes of nature and not by individual direction.

*Nanyam gunebhyah kartaram yada drastanupasyati*  
*Gunebhyas ca param vetti madbhavam so dhigacchati* (Gita, XIV:19)

“The wise see clearly that all action is a product of the modes (*gunas*). Knowing that which is above the *gunas*, they enter into union with Me.”

The seer (*jnani*) perceives that there is no doer other than the modes. When he experiences the Self that is beyond the *gunas* (*nirguna Paramatman* or Transcendent Soul), he merges with Pure Being.

There is no agent other than the modes, which alone are responsible for all actions and modifications. The Self, the Illuminator of the modes is only a Witness that is unaffected by the actions of the *gunas* at any point. The meditative yogi who attains

the knowledge of this Transcendent Self becomes absorbed by it.

Arjuna asks:  
“What are the characteristics of those who have gone beyond the *gunas*, O Lord? How do they act? How have they risen above the three modes?” (Gita, XIV:21)

In his reply, Krishna describes the distinguishing marks of a Jnana yogi in Chapter XIV, verses 22-25.

“They are unmoved by the harmony of *sattva*, the activity of *rajas*, or the delusion of *tamas*. They feel no aversion when these forces are active, nor do they crave for them when these forces subside. They remain detached, undisturbed by the actions of the *gunas*. Knowing that it is the *gunas* which act, they abide within themselves and do not vacillate. Established within themselves, they are equal in pleasure and pain, praise and blame, kindness and unkindness. Clay or a rock are the same to them as gold. Alike in honour and dishonour, alike to friend and foe, they have given up every selfish pursuit. Such are those who have gone beyond the *gunas*.”

Such a seeker is truly illumined (*prakasa*). The modes of nature, the senses and the mind no longer have any power over him. He is perfect, disinterested, compassionate, and exists in *sahaja samadhi* (perpetual bliss) as a *jivanmukta* (liberated while still in a mortal body). ■





“Calmness is the living breath of God’s immortality in you”

INDIA  
PERSPECTIVES

# A master goes West

Paramahansa Yogananda is known to have taken Yoga to the western world and also introduced the concept of self-realisation

The 20th century saw the advent of yoga and philosophical concepts in the West through the works of one of India’s best-known contemporary yogis, Paramahansa Yogananda. He introduced the concept of self-realisation through Kriya Yoga to the western audience, when he went to the United States in 1920 as the Indian delegate to the International Congress of Religious Liberals. Today, his work in America is carried on by the self-realisation fellowship, which he founded in 1925 in Los Angeles to help spread the philosophy of Kriya Yoga.

In 1946, he published the now classic *Autobiography of a Yogi* which evoked immediate popular interest. It has been translated since into 18 languages and gone through many editions and reprints. More than 60 years later, this book endures as an introduction for the modern global audience to a more holistic understanding of Vedic philosophy, of which Hatha yoga forms only a part.

## Initiation

He was offered an executive position with Bengal-Nagpur Railway after graduation, which he promptly refused, and instead requested Sri Yukteswar to initiate him into monkhood. In July 1915, he was initiated into the Swami Order by his Guru.

Draping a newly-dyed ochre silken cloth around him, Sri Yukteswar said, “Some day you will go to the West, where silk is preferred. As a symbol, I have chosen for you this silk material instead of the customary cotton.”

Sri Yukteswar, always preferring simplicity, dispensed with elaborate rites and made him a *swami* in the *bidwat* (non-ceremonious) manner. Mukunda was given the privilege of choosing a new name for himself in his new ashram of a yogi. He chose the name of Yogananda meaning “bliss (*ammda*) through divine union (*yoga*).”

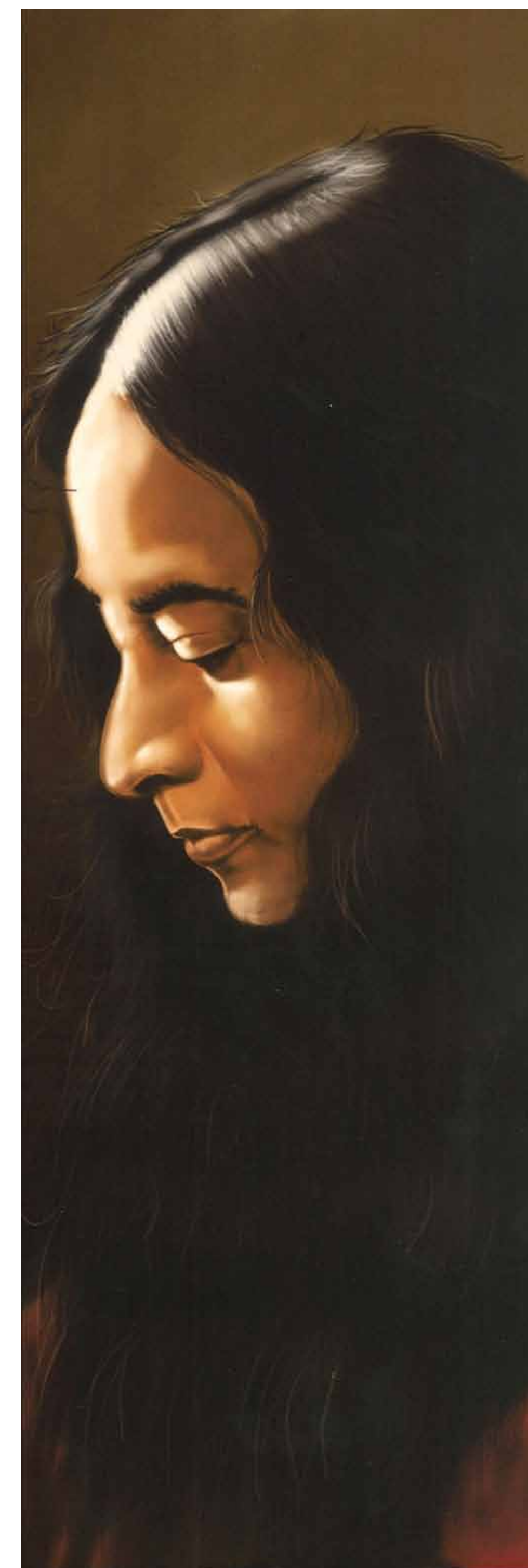
“Be it so. Forsaking our family name of Mukunda Lal

Ghosh, henceforth you shall be called Yogananda of the Giri branch of the Swami Order.”

In the 8th century, Adi Shankaracharya formally organised the monastic order into ten subdivisions or *dashanamis*; *Giri* (mountain), *Sagar*, *Bharati*, *Puri*, *Saraswati*, *Tirtha*, *Aranya*, *Ashrama*, *Parvata* and *Vana*. In order to become a monk in any of these orders, one must be initiated by a swami in that order. To their new monastic name, usually ending in *ananda* (supreme bliss), is added a title signifying affiliation with one of the ten orders. Their vows of poverty (non-attachment to possessions), chastity, and obedience to the spiritual Master, naturally entails the renunciation of personal attachments and private ambitions.

A swami’s monastic name signifies his aspiration to attain emancipation or moksha through a particular path or divine trait — devotion, knowledge, altruistic work, and yoga. In order to fulfill the principle of selfless service to all mankind, most swamis devote themselves to humanitarian and educational work. They must go wherever their work leads them, whether in India or abroad. Rejecting boundaries based on nationality, colour, caste, religion, and gender, a swami seeks to serve all creation. Only thus can he evolve toward the supreme goal of merging the individual ego in the Absolute Spirit. A swami need not necessarily be a yogi. A yogi is one who practises a scientific method for Self-realisation. There are no prerequisites for the path of a yogi — married or single, whether occupied with worldly duties or with a religious vocation.

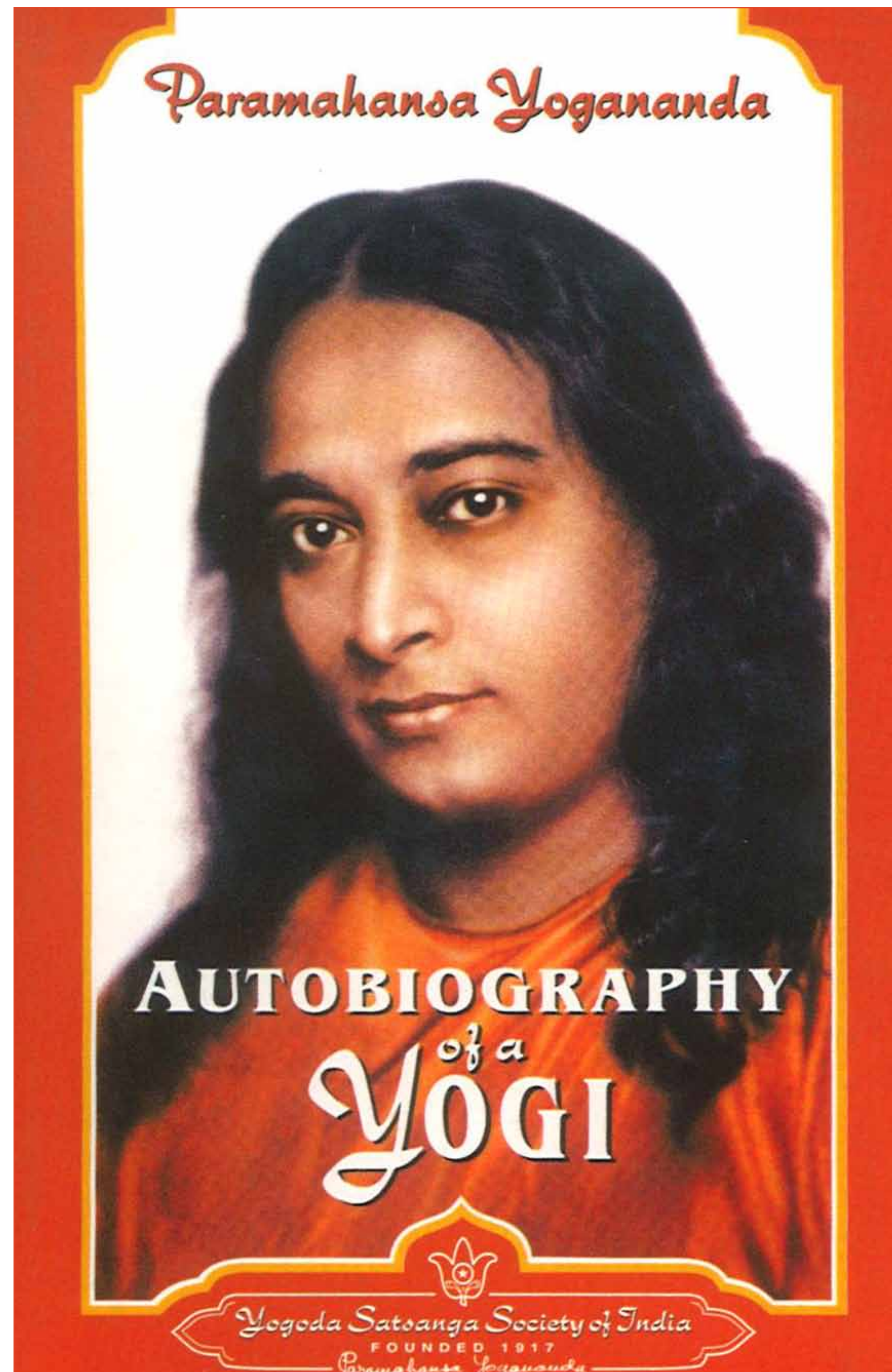
While a swami may choose to pursue the course of arid reasoning and aloof renunciation, the yogi must practice a defined series of spiritual exercises that progressively purifies body and mind, leading to liberation. Without relying solely on blind dogma or simple emotional







Neither path can claim superiority over the other. The ultimate goal is the same; of oneness with God, and once this is achieved, all distinctions between the paths dissolve



faith, a yogi practises a systematic discipline, discovered, tested, and codified by ancient rishis.

Neither path can claim superiority over the other. The ultimate goal is the same; of oneness with God, and once this is achieved, all distinctions between the paths dissolve. The *Bhagvad Gita*, however, favours the path of Yoga as being within reach of all, since its techniques are not reserved for specific types and temperaments. Yoga requires no particular avowal of faith or creed; its direct relevance to a universal quest ensures its timeless appeal.

#### Science of Kriya Yoga

In *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Paramahansa Yogananda provides a brief insight into the science of Kriya Yoga, the practical or applied part of his teachings.

Attributing the spread of this spiritual science in modern India to Lahiri Mahasaya, the guru of Sri Yukteswar, he defines Kriya yoga: "The Sanskrit root of Kriya is *kri*, to do, to act and react; the same root is found in the word *karma*, the natural principle of cause and effect. Kriya yoga is thus 'union (yoga) with the infinite through a certain action or rite (*kriya*)'... Kriya yoga is a simple, psycho-physiological method by which the human blood is decarbonised and recharged with oxygen. The atoms of this extra oxygen are transmuted into life current to rejuvenate the brain and spinal centers. By stopping the accumulation of venous blood, the yogi is able to lessen or prevent the decay of tissues; the advanced yogi transmutes his cells into pure energy."

The origin of the science of Kriya Yoga goes back millenniums. Yogananda describes how Lahiri Mahasaya's mystical Guru, Babaji, recovered and restored the technique from its virtual extinction during the preceding centuries. In Babaji's own words to Lahiri Mahasaya, "The Kriya Yoga which I am giving to the world through you in this nineteenth century, is a revival of the same science which Krishna gave, millenniums ago, to Arjuna, and which was later known to Patanjali, and to Christ, St. John, St. Paul, and other disciples."

Lord Krishna refers to Kriya Yoga in the *Bhagvad Gita*-

*Apane juhvati pranam pranepanam tathapare*

*Pranapanagati ruddva pranayamparayanah*

*Apare niyataharah pranaprane su juhvati*

*Sarvepyete yajnavido ygnakspitakalmasah*  
(IV:29-30)

"Some offer the forces of vitality, regulating their inhalation and exhalation, and thus gain control over these forces. Some offer the forces of vitality through restraint of their senses. All of them understand the meaning of service and will be cleansed of their impurities."

Yogananda's interpretation: "The yogi arrests decay in the body by an addition of life force (*prana*), and arrests the mutations of growth in the body by *apana* (eliminating current). Thus neutralising decay and growth, by quieting the heart, the yogi learns life control." ■

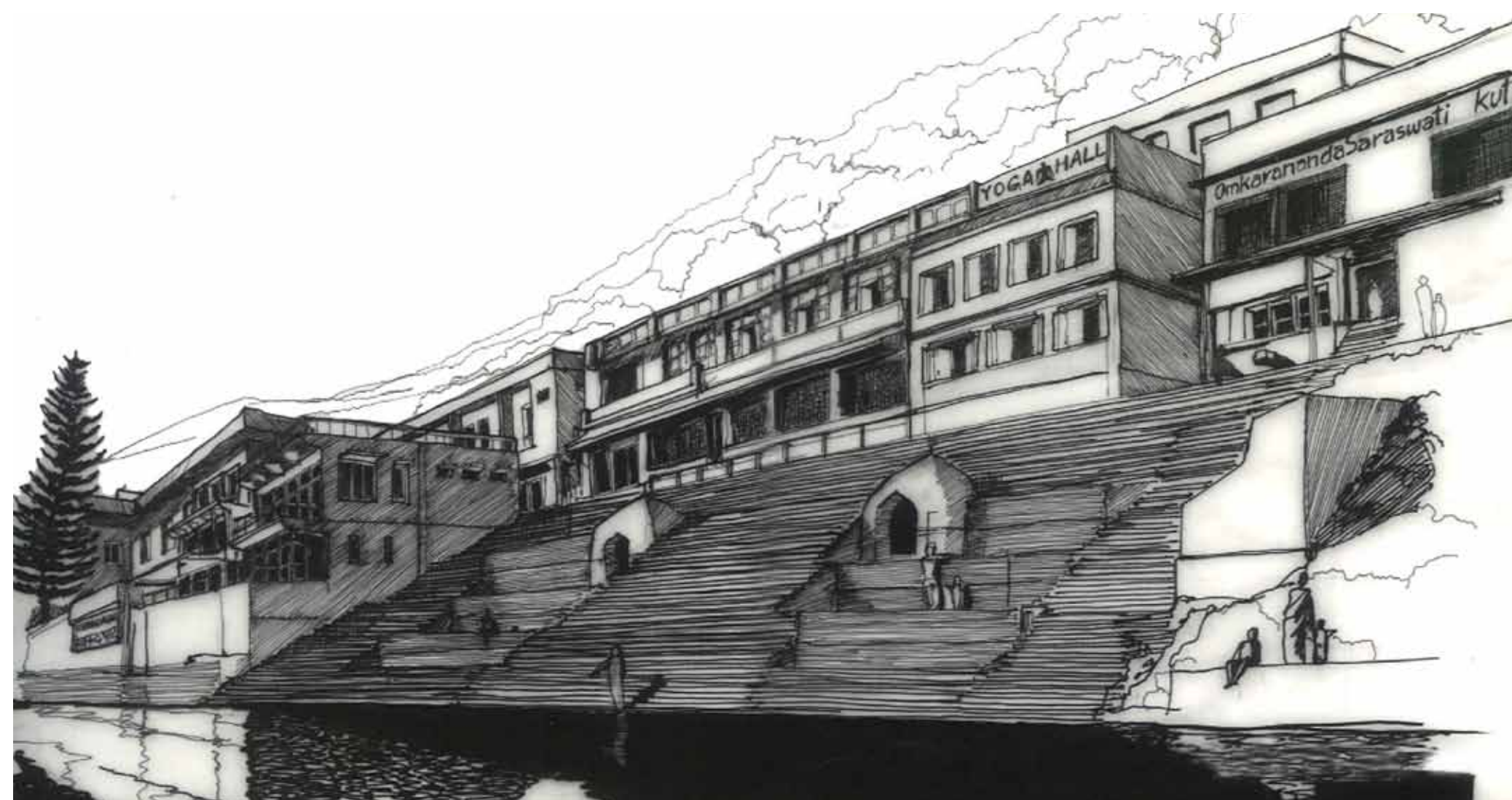




### The song of the Yoga of Synthesis

Eat a little, drink a little  
 Talk a little, sleep a little  
 Mix a little, move a little  
 Serve a little, rest a little  
 Work a little, relax a little  
 Study a little, worship a little  
 Do Asana a little, Pranayama a little  
 Reflect a little, meditate a little  
 Do Japa a little, do Kirtan a little  
 Write Mantra a little, have Satsang a little  
 Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate,  
 Realise  
 Be good, Do good; Be kind, Be  
 compassionate  
 Enquire 'Who am I?', Know the Self and  
 be Free

**INDIA**  
 PERSPECTIVES



# Championing the message

Yogic guru Swami Sivananda Saraswati renewed and re-energised the study of yoga philosophy

Some masters are undeniably larger-than-life. Perhaps Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati's towering figure was needed to contain the gigantic intellect, compelling charisma, and deep compassion that he is remembered for today. He renewed and re-energised the study of yoga philosophy in the 20th century, more remarkably and endearingly to those who knew him. His scholarly brilliance never prevented him from setting an example of practical service grounded in simple kindness.

### Divine Life Society

By the time Swami Sivananda Saraswati returned to Rishikesh in 1936, he had begun to attract disciples who wished to follow the spiritual path. He began to dictate articles for spiritual guidance to his students, which, when published, brought more seekers in its wake. To enable the dissemination of philosophical knowledge and message of selfless service to all, he decided to found an organisation called the Divine Life Society. It was registered as a Trust in 1936.

The first ashram of the Divine Life Society was established in a derelict cowshed on the banks of Ganges, which he and his followers had cleaned and made habitable. From these simple beginnings grew a world-wide organisation,

which produced many fine spiritual minds such as Swami Satyananda Saraswati (Bihar yoga and Satyananda Yoga), Swami Chinmayananda (Chinmaya Mission, which in turn has fostered other institutions), Swami Satchidananda (Integral Yoga), Swami Vishnudevananda (Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres) and others. Each of them created stellar organisations for carrying on the work of revitalising yoga philosophy in all its aspects.

Swami Sivananda was a prolific writer, who wrote every day on whatever scrap of paper fell his way. By the end of his life, he had produced nearly 300 books on a staggering variety of subjects including yoga, metaphysics, psychology, health, and ethics; and in a variety of genres. Underlying all of them was the practical application of yoga philosophy to daily life in order to gain subtler insight. The doctor in him always came out in his emphasis on service. He stressed the importance of the yoga of action (Karma yoga) above all. He had a tremendous love for music, and often expounded on 'sangeeta yoga,' or music as yoga, and would encourage anyone who could sing to perform.

He organised the various departments of the Society to provide suitable fields of activity that would enable each person's individual talent

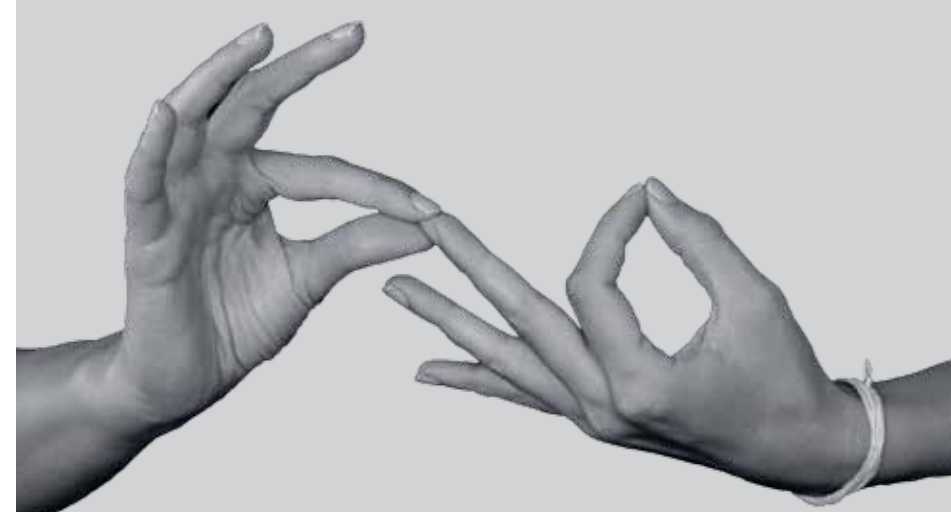
and skills to blossom. The publication of the monthly journal, *The Divine Life*, began in September 1958.

Though he himself had been an allopathic (conventional modern medicine) practitioner, he felt the need to develop Ayurvedic medicines, which could be manufactured from the herbs abundantly available in the Himalayas. He started the Sivananda Ayurvedic Pharmacy in 1945 that initiated renewed interest and awareness of holistic treatments.

Though Swami Sivananda rarely traveled, he undertook a tour of India and Ceylon in 1950 to deliver his message of spiritual and moral awakening. His magnetic personality had a tremendous effect. In 1951, the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy Press was created to meet the increasing demand for his works. In 1953, he convened the world Parliament of Religions at the Sivananda ashram.

Swami Sivananda spread his life-long message of public service, personal practice and Self-Realisation through his books, periodicals and letters. The Sivananda Literature Research Institute came into being in 1958, in order to research his writings, and to translate and publish them systematically in all the Indian regional languages. ■





“Silence of water  
above a sunken tree:  
The pure serene of  
memory in one man,  
A ripple widening  
from a single stone  
Winding around the  
waters of the world.”

*The Far Field* by  
Theodore Roethke,  
American poet,  
1908-1963

**INDIA**  
PERSPECTIVES

# Widening ripples

Equally for all in every age, yoga reveals an ancient path to  
peace in our earthly jungle



Virtually unknown to the rest of the world until the mid-20th century, today yoga is a recognised discipline, practised by millions of people around the globe. It has become big business, with licensing, certification and franchises and billions of dollars spent annually on classes, books, clothes, DVDs and products.

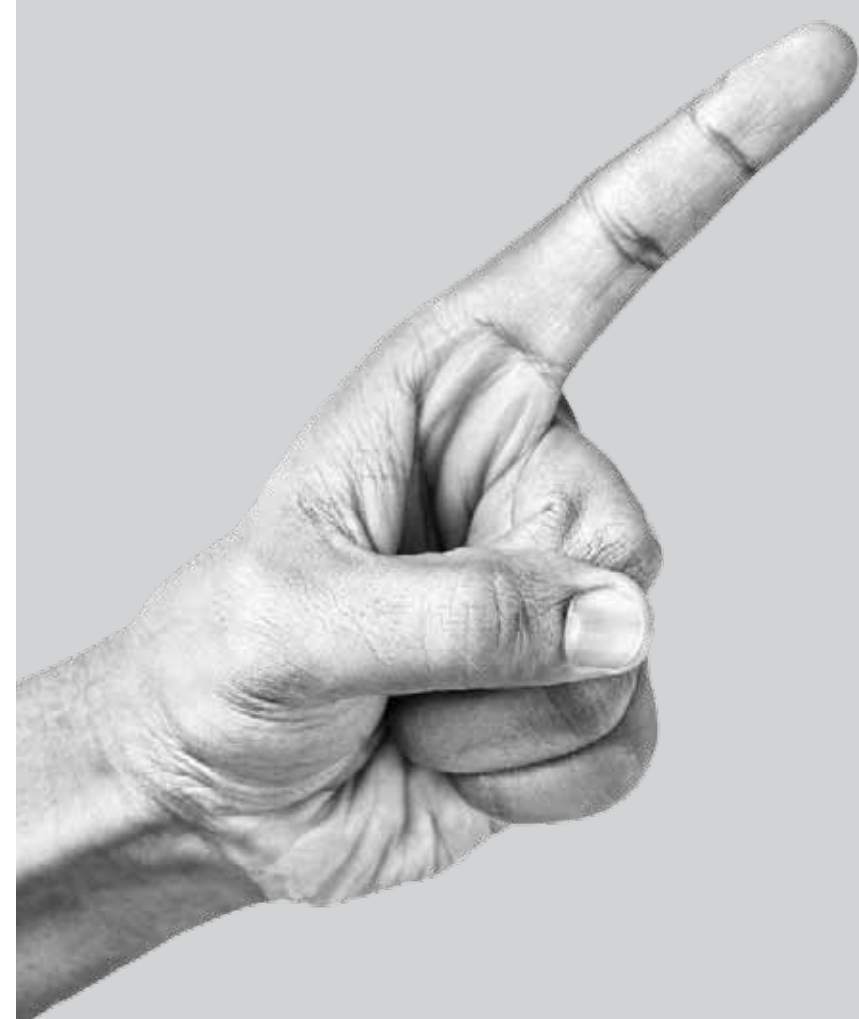
If we search for the word ‘yoga’ on the Internet, we are flummoxed with over 75 million entries from which to choose. The number of schools, teachers and the variety of yoga styles being taught are enough to overwhelm the most enthusiastic practitioner.

The confusion is only intensified by conflicting assertions from many teachers that theirs is the one ‘true’ yoga. While some hold that yoga should be a strenuous physical exercise that conditions the body, another school might advocate that yoga should be done in a gentler fashion. One might emphasise pranayama and meditation, while the other barely touches upon those aspects. Then there are the books and DVDs which profess to teach without the need for an instructor or class. The aspiring yogi might be forgiven his or her bewilderment when trying to sift through these options and information.

The simple fact is that yoga is open to many interpretations, and that it derives its strength, relevance, longevity and dynamism. It has been the aim of this book to show yoga from its earliest documented beginnings through its more recent developments. Yoga was revealed, transmitted, revived and re-taught by masters through the centuries; it is their touch and their humanity that has re-interpreted and reinvented it to fit the needs of each age.

It should be clarified that the masters mentioned in this book are but some among many who have brought yoga into mainstream life in India and abroad. Swami Rama (Himalayan Institute), Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (Art of Living Foundation), Guru Jaggi Vasudev (Isha Yoga Centre), Yogi Bhaan and Swami Ramdev (Divya Yoga Mandir)





The present day popularity and practices of Yoga would not have been possible without the magnificent contributions of India's yoga masters

**INDIA**  
PERSPECTIVES



are some other popular teachers who have brought their own practise and revelations to bear on the yogic experience.

Yoga has been existence for over 2,500 years. It flourished in India, Tibet and other parts of East Asia, till its decline under Moghul rule and during British colonisation. Its current revival is in response to the varied needs of the present generation; and thus yoga is also varied in its manifestations. It can satisfy different requirements:

- As a physical exercise to tone the body and muscles.
- As a therapy to cure a particular disease or injury.
- As a sport or athletic discipline for challenging the practitioner.
- As a philosophy of life.

- As a means for spiritual awakening to a higher consciousness.

Amid today's multi-billion-dollar sports industry built around exercise gear, gyms, specialised sporting equipment, sports medicine and psychology, physiotherapy, marketing, media and management; yoga stands apart in its exceptional simplicity. Its requires no special clothing or gadgets... no more, in fact, that the space required to lay a body down. Remarkably, non-reliant on modern technology, yoga continues to redress a lack in the modern world.

Indeed, in its full-fledged form, it includes not just physical and mental fitness, but rehabilitative, diet, healing, ethics, psychology, philosophy and spirituality. These aspects have given it a place in many advanced

therapies and sports training programs, and of course, the sports industry has not been far behind in devising marketing ideas and chains of yoga centres.

Not many things that existed over two millennia ago have practical application in modern day life. Hatha yoga is one such practise that not only survives but has more reach and relevance now than it perhaps did centuries ago. Like everything else in nature that evolved in order to survive, yoga exists today precisely because of its adaptive nature. Since it was rooted in oral tradition, and passed directly from teacher to student, it is the unique characteristic of yoga that each master has left his or her particular imprint upon its character, rather as a river picks up traces from all that its flows past. ■





The author has painstakingly compiled and photographed yogic postures across nine countries which he terms “fascinating”. One thing stands out: the mammoth following of yoga

INDIA  
PERSPECTIVES

# Yoga through the ages

*The Great Indian Yoga Masters* is an expression of the ancient art of yoga and talks about its well-known practitioners

text | Seema Sondhi



The success of yoga has been its acceptance across the world. This is due to its adaptability to any region or culture. If practiced every day with faith and patience, yoga can help us change. Although the inception of yoga may have deep roots in Hindu mythology and religion, it does not in any way propagate Hindu religion. It is almost an SOP or standard operating procedure for life. It is a way of life.

This and much more has been included in *The Great Indian Yoga Masters: Tracing 2500 years of Yoga 500 BCE to 21st Century*. Written by Birad Rajaram Yajnik, the book is a tribute to the great yoga masters. Written in a simple lucid style with captivating photographs, it takes off from a chapter on the origin of yoga, goes on to talk about the gurus of olden times including Paramhansa Yogananda, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Tirumalai Krishnamacharya to modern masters like K Pattabhi Jois, BKS Iyengar, TKV Desikachar, Bikram Choudhury and Master Kamal and ends with a chapter on its future.

The author has painstakingly compiled and photographed yogic postures across nine countries which he terms “fascinating”. “The one thing that stands out is the mammoth following of yoga across the world. Yoga has been adapted in various regions and is now a worldwide phenomenon. It may have originated in India 2,500 years ago but today it is owned by the world,” pens the author in his preface.

What sage Patanjali, considered the father of yoga, wrote in his *Yogasutras* has been fully explained in the book, including the paths of yoga, bhakti, gyaan and rajayoga. The author has explained everything such that anyone can comprehend the subject. There is also an in-depth analysis of the eight limbs or steps to yoga including *yama* (universal morality), *niyama* (personal observances), *asanas* (body postures) right up till *samadhi* or union with the divine.

The author also draws readers’ attention to the fact that despite the multi-billion dollar sports industry built around exercise gears, gyms, equipment, sports medicine and psychology, physiotherapy and more, yoga stands apart in exceptional simplicity. Remarkably non-reliant on modern technology, yoga continues to redress a lack in the modern world.

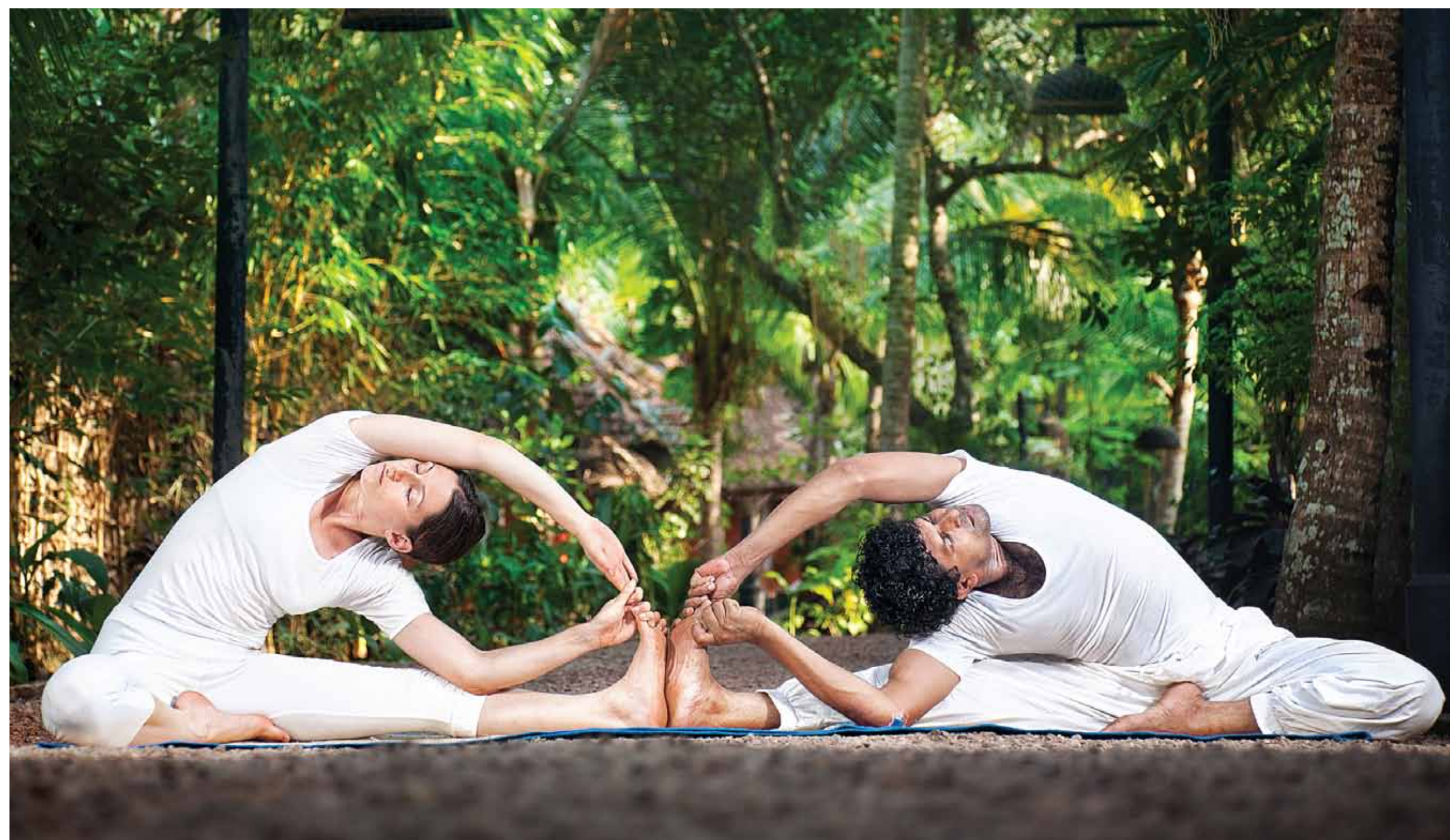
Surely, a must-have on your bookshelf.





As the world shrinks into a seamless entity of interaction, with social media networks, mobile phones and the internet, I cannot agree more that we need an International Day of Yoga

INDIA  
PERSPECTIVES



# Yoga is the way

In his speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2014, Indian Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi has called for observance of an International Yoga Day

text | Birad Rajaram Yajnik

My interest in yoga started in 2005 when I embarked on a journey around the world to capture this ancient art form through my camera. From the islands of Koh Phangan to the streets of New York, Los Angeles and Frankfurt, meeting people from every continent and hearing them speak about their passion for yoga made me search

deep within myself. It provided me with an insight that yoga is a global practice and its worldwide adoption is due to its affinity to change. Yoga is flexible not only in its asanas but also the way and method it is practiced. Yoga has this unique quality that it can be adapted to any region, culture and a period in time.

Recently, *The Huffington Post* announced that yoga today is a US\$27 billion industry. “People are taking charge of their spiritual lives in a yogic way. That’s changing the face of spirituality”. *Travel and Leisure*, a Time Inc. publication, lists top 25 global destinations. Interestingly at these locations, you can practice yoga in 11 international languages: Khmer, Japanese, Spanish, Thai, French, Italian, German and Danish to name a few. A google map of yoga shows its presence from the farthest city in the east, Kamui, Japan to Halibut Cove, Alaska in the West. From Norge, Norway in the north to Antartica Chilena, Chile in the south: An undisputable global footprint.

Perhaps witnessing the potential of this billion dollar brand of India can bring to the world, Indian Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi called for observing an International Yoga Day at the UN General Assembly, describing the ancient science as India’s gift to the world.

Over the last few years, my personal interactions have been diverse: from meeting seven time WWE champion Trish Stratus who is a nine-year yoga veteran and runs one of Toronto’s largest yoga studios to Mari Myllykoski from Finland, a yoga practitioner for more than half-her-life. Every time I enter a Lululemon store, a yoga clothing company, it amazes me. Taking off in Vancouver in 1998, it has 2,800 employees and US\$ 1.3 billion as revenue. Last week in Thailand, I came across a yogurt cup with a yoga asana on the packaging. I am yet to visit a city in the world where I don’t find a yoga studio.

As the world shrinks into a seamless entity of information and interaction, with social media networks, mobile phones and the internet blurring the lines of differentiation, I cannot agree more that we need an International Day of Yoga, a day when the entire world reflects on this ancient art form and furthers its adoption.





A PUBLIC DIPLOMACY INITIATIVE OF  
THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS