

# Yoga

By Tamar Kelly

***“Yoga is an art, a science and a philosophy. It touches the life of a man at every level: physical, mental and spiritual. The very essence of yoga is practice of asana and pranayama. Attention to detail trains the mind to focus, discipline is behind all paths to inner peace and freedom.”***

**- B.K.S Iyengar**

Dating back 5000 years, yoga is the oldest defined practice of self-development. Ancient Yogis had a belief that in order for man to be in harmony with himself and his environment, he had to integrate the **body** (action), **mind** (intelligence) and **spirit** (emotion). The yogis formulated a way to achieve and maintain this. The results of which we know today as classical yoga, which include **ethical disciplines, physical postures, breath control** and **meditation**. Yoga is a practical philosophy, not a religion, and requires no allegiance to any particular system of belief.

**Hatha** Yoga, the most common form of yoga in the western world, concentrates on the physical postures, or asana practice. While stretching is an important factor of this physical practice, and a good place to begin, **asana** is really about creating **balance** in the body through developing both **strength** and **flexibility**.

Strength building poses give us a sense of both internal and external strength, and as we become flexible in our bodies, we become flexible in our attitudes. Inversions help us to find our internal balance and composure when our lives are upside down. Backbends open us up to experience all life has to offer.

In the beginning it can be helpful to think of Yoga as being a means of **creating space**; space in joints, length in muscles, space in our lives. It starts by just becoming aware of our bodies in space, and extends to becoming aware of our souls in the world, how we operate and what impact we have on ourselves, and others.

Yoga is an ancient practice, which has stood the test of time to become a most valuable tool to navigate modern life.

***“Be the change you want to see in the world.”***

**- Mahatma Gandhi**

