



YOGA -



Is This The New Wave of Fitness...

AND Will it Take Over The World?

According to Bikram Choudhury, it is and it will. Bikram's "Hot Yoga" caused a heated controversy by becoming the first copyrighted yoga practice, reports US Today in the Money section. Nevertheless, hundreds of students can be found in a single Bikram class, which is taught in 105° heated studio and uses a patented formula of a 26-posture sequence. Bikram's personal students include the rich and famous, while folks with less glitz but just as much desire to sweat fill Bikram franchise studios across the country.

Meanwhile, Entertainment Today recently featured a piece on yoga, and one can hardly walk into a grocery store without seeing at least one magazine specifically devoted to yoga. People spend \$3 billion a year on classes and yoga-related products, and there are an estimated 16.5 million people practicing this discipline. It seems that everyone has tried yoga, plans to try it, or knows someone who does it. Initially made popular by stars such as Sting, Madonna, and Woody Harrelson, yoga continues to flourish across the country.

Not to be left behind, St. Louis has seen a noticeable growth in yoga studios and classes offered in community centers, gyms, and fitness centers. Just in case you are as yet unfamiliar with Yoga, here is some information on this ancient yet trendy practice:

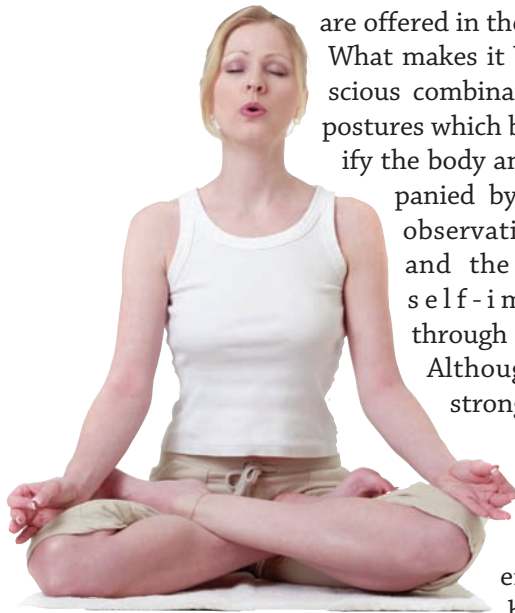
Most Americans practice Hatha Yoga, which consists of eight parts or limbs ranging from rules of personal and social conduct, physical postures, breathing disciplines, to inward focus of the senses, one-pointed concentration, meditation, and an elevated state of total peace. Yoga comes from India's Hindu philosophy; the first written description



was Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, dated 700 BC, with Sanskrit the oral and written language of the practice. Hatha Yoga as practiced in this country often focuses exclusively on the third limb, physical postures, but commonly Hatha Yoga classes will also include one or all of the following: breathing exercises, philosophy, chanting and meditation.

The word Hatha literally means "adamant, strong, and powerful". "Hatha" can be split into two components ("Ha" meaning sun and "Tha" meaning moon) to promote the concept of opposing yet complimentary energies, with a balance created between them. The word "Yoga" means to yoke or unite, so Yoga encompasses many practices of self-control, physical health, breathing and meditation, with the intention of creating a union of body, mind, and spirit in each individual, as well as with all beings. Other types of yoga include Bhakti, Jnana, and Karma yoga; Bhakti yoga is devotional yoga which generally focuses on chanting and meditation; Jnana yoga is philosophic and focuses on gaining knowledge, especially knowledge of the True Self; Karma yoga is the yoga of service and action.

Some styles of Hatha Yoga are very specific about the order and the means of practicing the postures, while others vary the routines or even combine them with other forms of therapeutic exercise (Yogalates, for example, is a combination of Yoga poses and Mat Pilates exercises). Some classes are very physically demanding while others focus on relaxation and restoration. There are specialty classes for children, for moms-to-be, for those with physical or mental challenges, for weight loss, for those with addictions, etc. (See next page for descriptions of types of Hatha Yoga which



are offered in the St. Louis area). What makes it Yoga is the conscious combination of physical postures which balance and clarify the body and mind, accompanied by the consistent observation of breath, and the philosophy of self-improvement through self-acceptance. Although there are strong spiritual overtones in many Hatha Yoga classes, Yoga is not considered a religion, but rather a systematic approach to realizing one's full potential.

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People love Yoga. Ask any regular partaker and they'll tell you how good it makes them feel: they discover increased vigor and mental concentration, strength through flexibility, and they are more relaxed. The discipline creates a sense of empowerment, while de-emphasizing competition. Yoga practitioners find themselves kinder and more compassionate towards others, while gaining a deeper appreciation for their own innate worthiness. Yoga can have a profound effect on the individual, which in turn affects the world in which we live. While the initial attraction of Hatha Yoga may be to the physical benefits, in the end practitioners feel that they can change their world, one breath, one OM, one down dog at a time.

-Lucy T. Holmes, E-RYT (Experienced Registered Yoga Teacher). For more information you can contact Lucy at YogaSource, 1500 S. Big Bend Blvd., 2nd Fl Richmond Heights, MO 63117 www.stlouisyogasource.com 314.645.9642 ext. 2 expyoga@juno.com

Styles of Hatha Yoga which can be found in St. Louis area studios:

Anusara – Created by John Friend, the name means “Opening to Grace” and it is a heart-centered approach to the practice of postures, breath, and philosophy. There is a strong emphasis on alignment principles and the spirit of the postures. This style appeals to those in good physical condition who desire empowerment for body and spirit.

Ashtanga (Ashtanga) - Created by Sri K. Pattabi Jois, the name is the Sanskrit word meaning “eight limbs” and it comes from the tradition of vinyasa or flow yoga and is a very physically challenging practice. There are five series in ascending order of difficulty; each consists of a set group of postures, beginning with a challenging warm-up of sun salutations and including a connecting trio of postures between every held pose. This practice strongly emphasizes breath, energy retention, and gaze points.

Bikram – Bikram Choudhury designed a set series of 26 classical postures based on the style of Hatha Yoga taught at the Yoga College of India. Taught in a 105°F room, the series begins with breathing exercises (pranayama) and each posture is held for a count of ten and repeated. This style of yoga is extremely cleansing for the body and supports the endocrine system. (Synergy is Perri Ness' version of the Yoga College of India's posture sequence and is very similar to Bikram).

Iyengar – named for B.K.S. Iyengar, who has wielded tremendous influence on Hatha Yoga as it is practiced in this country. It has a very strong emphasis on alignment and precision in the postures with support from the breath. Iyengar yoga introduced the use of props such as belts, blocks, blankets, etc. It is extremely therapeutic and disciplined and is appropriate for all types of physical capacities.

Kripalu – Yogi Amrit Desai named his style of Hatha Yoga after his Indian Swami, after going into a spontaneous posture flow while teaching. Kripalu Yoga is extremely user-friendly and usually focuses on basic postures. It is ideal for beginners or those wanting a gentle, more relaxed approach. This style can include holding postures for long periods and going into an individualized spontaneous flow.

Kundalini – This style of yoga is designed to bring a higher level of consciousness through practices of breathing, simple postures, chanting, and meditation; a combination called kriya. The focus is on raising the Kundalini (core or serpent power),

and the breathing is done in a particular manner to bring about this effect. It is an active practice that creates health in the body while building a connection to inner wisdom.

Power/Vinyasa – These are American adaptations of Ashtanga yoga. There is a strong emphasis on the work-out aspect of this yoga, and it appeals to athletes or those who like consistent movement in their practice. A Power or Vinyasa class will always include Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar) and connecting, breath-oriented posture flows. Some Power classes are held in a heated studio; this movement-oriented yoga can be challenging and fun.

Sivananda – This practice consists of twelve basic postures, plus instruction in a yogic lifestyle of positive thinking (Vedanta), breathing, diet, and meditation/relaxation. The emphasis is less on performance of postures but rather on a holistic approach to all aspects of Hatha Yoga. Sivananda is named after an Indian guru.

Viniyoga - This style links breathing, movement and postures that are adapted to each student's individual needs. There is less emphasis on precision or performance of the postures in a particular manner than the use of breath to take the student both into and out of the postures. Viniyoga often incorporates meditation, chanting, and ritual to create balance in body, mind (emotions) and spirit. Rod Stryker's version is called “Pure Yoga”.

Restorative, Pre-Natal, Kids – Restorative can be very healing for those with chronic fatigue, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc; it requires the practitioner maintain stillness in supported postures. Pre-Natal is a modified approach that builds a community for pregnant moms-to-be. YogaKids™ uses postures as games for children to improve balance and general body awareness, while also touching on basic positive social and personal behavior.

NOTE: Many teachers blend a number of the above styles to create an eclectic approach to teaching. Each of the above styles has its own particular teaching methodology and a yoga instructor may study several of them with the result of a blended or multi-layered approach to teaching. Drawing on some of the best aspects of these styles can make for a more flexibility in guiding students through a yoga practice. For information on where to find yoga classes and yoga-related activities in the St. Louis Metro area, please contact Spirit of Yoga in St. Louis (SOY) www.spiritofyogastlouis.com