

KAMINI'S BUSTING YOGA MYTHS

Over the many years of my conscious Yogic Life I have heard and observed all sorts of presumptive uneducated views of Yoga - What it is, What it does and Who it's for. This writing will attempt to address some of these in an understandable, pertinent way, starting with probably the heaviest topic. I'm sure there are more topics we could look at - please let me know of others you're aware of, questions you may have yourself, and feel free to add to or comment on how I've dealt with the current topics in this document. Thank you.

1. Religion. Yoga has often been avoided by those who think it is a religion, or is incongruent with their faith. It is not surprising that this view is held, as, though Yoga itself is not a religion, many religions, faiths and philosophies use Yogic methods in their practices and rituals. For instance, some Yogic Practices include prayer, chanting, singing, mantra (repetition of sacred power words); doing for others without expectation of return (service); giving reverence to natural forces, the elements, celestial influences etc.; looking carefully after the body, eating and living naturally, using herbs etc.; purifying mind, body, emotions..... etc. etc. Rather than being a religion, Yoga encompasses the myriad, vast, scientific and artful practices that a human can employ to grow in all ways, particularly spiritually, and can support any person in whatever faith or philosophy they personally follow. It is neutral and is here for us all.

2. Exercise. Probably the most common misconception about the science and art of Yoga is that it is purely physical, getting on a mat to do impossible poses, extending one's abilities physically so as to be able to stand on the head and 'tie oneself in knots', etc. Yogic science does include practices that help one purify, strengthen and tone the body, but these are side benefits to the real purposes of Yogic Science. The practices that are physical, though they are much more, are necessary too, as we all have a body which we need to look after in order for it to not be a distraction while on our path of life. The physical aspects of Yoga are part of Hatha Yoga, the science of aligning one's aspects, purifying energy body etc. They are an important beginning for most students which lead to feeling more comfortable in the body and enabling it to better accommodate our needs, wishes and purpose.

Worse for someone like me, this limited view of what yoga is means potential clients and the public don't realize that the field of yoga and what it can do for people is vast and includes such helpful aspects of life as diet, lifestyle, wellbeing techniques, psychological and emotional balancing methods, ways to heal and harmonize with others and the world, and especially spiritual (not religious) contentment to name a few.

3. Only for the young. Many believe they are too old for yogic practices, too far gone. It's never too late - unless you are dead! The commercialized view of yoga for profit has given a false impression that yoga is not only just physical, but that you have to achieve levels of achievement that are not necessarily (but could be) possible for older people - or the opposite - that older people can only do the quieter or meditative aspects only. It is true that for most people the latter years are more suitable for meditative rather than more physical practices, but the physical practices too are important to help retain mobility, strength, energy etc.

4. Only for the fit. Many presume that, because of what the mainstream commercial view of yoga projects, that one has to already be physically fit to be able to participate. This is far from the truth. Even if a person is very weak or incapacitated, aged or even infirm there are suitable practices of different kinds available. Yoga of all kinds, including Hatha, is appropriate for almost all people.

5. For those who are physically flexible. Similarly, the practices of Yoga, and not only Hatha Yoga, will encourage flexibility of body and mind. As long as someone practices gently and regularly their flexibility will improve, so don't be put off if you are physically stiff, which is a mental reflection. In fact this is one of the first benefits people notice when they start classes (after reduction of stress and better sleep).

6. Its too eazy - or - its too hard! Many are put off by seeing the iconic older woman in a leotard gracefully easing into particular stretches, or sitting in lotus meditating for extended periods and say that it is for old people, while others complain that the practices are not for them because they are too hard/difficult/strong etc. I've heard men in particular say that yoga is for women, and yet most of the yogis, swamis and gurus are men! Truly the practices of yoga are for everyone, totally adaptable to the individual. When attending a class one needs to be discerning about whose classes you attend and if you are not assisted and trained in a way that is helpful to you, go to another class.

7. You have to be vegetarian. We are all on a journey of evolution and are where we are meant to be at this time. Many who choose a Yogic Path are already living a healing, purifying lifestyle and augmenting that with Yogic practices can be a natural development. In any case, many or perhaps most who take up the Yogic lifestyle, as they move along on the path to union, do convert to vegetarianism, simply because they learn and grow in their understanding of other life forms and their journeys, while wishing to have greater physical health and higher energy vibration. It is not the choice of everyone on the Yoga Path, and that is fine.

8. It's about trance states and making the mind go blank. This is among the most bizarre of the accusations of yoga, that "meditation makes the mind go blank so that the devil can get in"! This I heard some 20 or so years ago from a religious figurehead, a Christian minister. Though some intense long term Tantric practitioners go into deep meditative states, which some may call 'trance', this is a long way off from the assumed 'mindless' states referred to and from the practices of regular Yoga Classes.

9. Involves self-denial, going without and extreme practices. This thinking comes from a line of ancient ascetics, that has also influenced some Christian lineages, that punishing and injuring oneself helps one increase the connection with spirit while reducing the distractions of the body and its needs, but this is not a true yogic view or a healthy one. We have been given what we have to use well and look after, not deliberately damage or take for granted. Hence, part of yogic philosophy includes imbibing in the correct quantity and quality of food and drink, balancing work and play with rest and so on. Balance is the key.

10. Modern people don't have time for it. It is not necessary to practice for two hours every day or continue with practices not appropriate for the season, constitution, health and time constraints. There are two sides to look at this equation of time available. One is the time we spend doing other things that may not be healthy or for our good, and the other is managing what time we do have to include appropriate time concise practices that suit us. So sometimes an adjustment of our lifestyle is required, and it can take some effort, especially if that has to work around others in your household.

I've taught busy people for more than three decades, mostly busy Mums and 9-5 five day a weekers. Consequently I have devised a Beginners' (**Yoga Buzz**) and an Intermediate (**Yoga For Busy People**) Courses with time constraints in mind, teaching logically, sequentially and sensibly Traditional authentic Yoga Trainings suitable for most that create flowing sequences that only take a few minutes each to do. Of course learning the practices needs to be done in person, and so regular classes are involved, but the value of the time spent in classes transfers multi-fold to your personal life, giving skills and health-giving routines for the rest of your life.

The Course content, especially in Yoga Buzz, is adaptable to you. **In person training is needed because:** not only knowledge and wisdom, teachings and practices are transferred to you from me, but also energy, atmosphere, sense of timing and pace and the importance and in-depth benefits of practices that cannot be easily transferred on paper or vision and sound only; in addition, in person I am able to help you immediately if there is any concern or adaptations, modifications or corrections to be made. **'Phone 8556 6563 (best) or email kashantea@gmail.com.'**

Yoga really is about helping us use the resources and skills and talents we have to live better lives, reflecting back to our own improved health on all levels while influencing for the good the lives of others and the planet.