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# Chapter 1 – Introducing Yoga

Out of the many things that India is known for in her contribution to the world, 'Yoga' is perhaps one of the most important and popular exports. From the ancient times, the ascetics, the 'rishis' and the 'munis' of India have been practicing this form of art and science and deriving the benefits of enlightenment that accompany yoga.

What is Yoga and why is it important in today's world?

The importance of yoga in today's world has a lot of definitions floating around; however, if we go back to the roots of the word, we find that the term 'Yoga' has its origins in Sanskrit. It means to unite - Yoga helps the body to unite with the other vital metaphysical aspects of the mind and spirit. It is also often defined as a lifestyle which aims to have a healthy mind within a healthy body.

Most simply defined, yoga is a set of poses or 'asanas' , coupled with breathing techniques, which help impart strength and flexibility to the body while helping to balance the mind and its' thinking. Unlike other physical forms of exercises, like the aerobics, by practicing yoga, one can not only achieve physical health, but also mental and spiritual well-being.

The aim of yoga is to promote overall well-being of the body. And though, it is found beneficial for a variety of conditions, it is not considered a therapy for specific illness. Unlike other forms of exercises, yoga has a more holistic approach to teach the people

the right way to lead their lives disease free and stress free. In today's world, all of us suffer from stress and a perpetual anxiety to perform well, leading to a plethora of diseases that we expose ourselves to. Yoga aims to calm and compose our minds and help us focus clearly on what really matters - good health and the happiness that accompanies it!

## **Benefits of Yoga**

### **Mental health**

- Let us first begin with the benefits of Yoga on mental health. After all, good mental health is of paramount importance for being healthy physically as well. As advised above, breathing technique forms an integral part of Yoga. Do I hear you asking 'how?' It really is very basic - by breathing deep and right, something that you would be doing when you practice Yoga, you are inhaling more oxygen and allowing the cells of your body to have access to that oxygen for a longer period of time.
- A common practice in yoga is to breathe only from one nostril at a time, while holding the other one closed with the tip of your finger. Medical research has shown that this boosts increased activity of the opposite side of the brain, leading to better cognitive performance and tasks associated with the other side of the brain. Regular yoga practice helps children with attention deficit disorder and people suffering from anxiety, depression and mood swings. It also helps keep the mind calm and reduce stress and thereby increase the general well-being of the person.

### **Strength**