

# Modern Styles of Yoga

A brief description of some examples of, mainly hatha, yoga styles currently popular in the West, most of which originate in the USA.

Please note that the names of these styles or schools of yoga are often actual Sanskrit words. The definitions provided here only refer to the popularised use of the terms in the West and not to the actual meanings of these Sanskrit words or to their usage in classic Indian yogic traditions.

- **Ananda Yoga:** Developed by Swami Kriyananda a disciple of Paramahansa Yogananda, the focus is on gentle poses, alignment, controlled breathing, affirmations and relaxation with the intention to move energy to the brain and prepare for meditation.
- **Astanga Vinyasa Yoga:** A fast-paced series of sequential poses that focuses on strength, flexibility, and building heat. This style was developed by Sri Tirumala Krishnamacharya, who taught yoga to the young soldiers of the army of the Marharaja of Mysore. His student the late Krishna Pattabi Jois and now Pattabi Jois's grandson, Sharath continues his teaching, which attracts many western students.
- **Bikram Yoga:** Founded by Bikram Choudhury, is also known as 'hot yoga' because Bikram Yoga studios are heated to approximately body temperature in order to cause sweating. This yoga practice focuses on 26 poses always repeated in the same order. The aim is to increase flexibility and promote detoxification.
- **Integral Yoga:** This traditional type of yoga combines postures, breathing exercises, selfless service, meditation, chanting, prayer, and self-inquiry. The founder is Swami Satchidananda, one of the disciples of Swami Sivananda.
- **Iyengar Yoga:** Poses are held whilst making detailed adjustments. This type of yoga is renowned for its attention to body alignment. Props such as straps, blankets, and wooden blocks are commonly used. Iyengar Yoga creates body awareness, strength and flexibility. BKS Iyengar also invented restorative yoga using props and, with his teachers, pioneered the use of yoga as therapy as well as for general health.
- **Jivamukti Yoga:** This type of yoga also has Ashtanga roots. It was developed by David Life and Sharon Gannon in 1986. Chanting and breathing exercises are also incorporated in Jivamukti classes. Life and Gannon run a popular yoga studio in New York City with franchises in other major cities.
- **Kriya Yoga:** Brought to the west by Paramahansa Yogananda, who wrote *Autobiography of a Yogi*. It's focus is on special breathing techniques, mudra and mantra, said to accelerate spiritual development and are revealed in stages as one progresses along the path.
- **Kripalu Yoga:** This gentle, introspective practice urges practitioners to hold poses to explore and release emotional and spiritual blockages. Some time is often given to free form practice in which the student allows themselves to be spontaneously moved by a natural impulse or energy flow.

- **Kundalini Yoga:** This practice concentrates on awakening the energy at the base of the spine and drawing it upward. In addition to postures, a typical class will also include chanting, meditation, and breathing exercises. "Breath of fire" is fundamental to Kundalini classes.
- **Power Yoga:** Essentially the same as Ashtanga, but with an Americanised label. This type of yoga became popular after Beryl Bender Birch published her book Power Yoga in 1995.
- **Restorative Yoga:** Passive poses held for long periods, while supported by props and aimed at deep relaxation.
- **Satyananda Yoga:** Also from the lineage of Swami Sivananda, Satyananda set up the Bihar School in northern India and developed and taught the traditional techniques of yoga, including yoga nidra and wrote a number of influential books.
- **Scaravelli yoga:** named after Vanda Scaravelli who was a student of both Iyengar and Desikachar. She evolved a gentle approach to yoga based on releasing the body by surrendering to gravity and enabling the rebounding effect to elongate the spine.
- **Sivananda Yoga:** Similar to Integral Yoga and from the same lineage, Swami Sivananda, but via another disciple, Swami Vishnu Devananda. This Northern Indian tradition of yoga combines postures, breathing, dietary restrictions, chanting, scriptural study, and meditation.
- **Viniyoga:** This is a gentle, therapeutic practice that is uniquely tailored to each person's body type and special needs. It was developed by Krishna Macharya's son, TKV Desikachar.
- **Yin Yoga:** Superficially resembles restorative yoga, in that the poses are static and held for long periods, but the aim is to stretch connective tissue, so props are not a major feature.