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The Correct Approach to Learning and Practicing Yoga

John C. Kimbrough

Over the last ten years, the practice of Yoga, especially in the west, seems to have exploded in popularity.

This is a good thing, as anyone who has been involved with Yoga and its practice for any period of time will testify to its many benefits.

In Yoga sessions, it is not unusual for individuals to ask questions about the various systems and practices that make up the discipline and science of Yoga.

It seems difficult for some people to build on their initial interest and enthusiasm for Yoga in ways that lead to further benefits from its practice.

Some people might say that these people are not yet "ready" for the practice of Yoga, while others will just say they can not make put forth the constant effort that is involved.

Many Yoga teachers sometimes suffer from a crisis of self-confidence and self-esteem because attendance in their Yoga classes may fluctuate so wildly.

Different people are coming to learn Yoga, at different stages of their life experience, at different ages, and with different expectations.

Some have serious mental and physical health issues, disorders and addictions to work on.

Others want to lose weight or be fashionable or have a crush on their Yoga teacher.

Others hope to gain some kind of spiritual enrichment and deeper insight into their lives and the experience of life.

It is understandable that the physical practice of Yoga is so immensely popular and what most people associate Yoga with and to be.

As individuals, we seem much more capable of working with the body than in working with our thoughts, mind and consciousness.

In most situations and cases, individuals begin their practice of Yoga and exploration of themselves through it with the physical practices of Yoga, in what is known as Hatha Yoga.

They are then expected to further learn and understand Yoga through an examination, study and practice of the morals and ethics of Yoga, what are known as the Yamas and Niyamas, in addition to cultivating the practice of meditation.

Yama means universal vows and niyama means personal observances.

These morals and ethics are not always examined in any great detail in some Yoga sessions.

Some teachers have come to a point where they think that the practitioners who come to their classes are not interested in learning them.

There may be some truth to this.

In being exposed to the Yamas and Niyamas, some Yoga practitioners may resent this, thinking or feeling that they are being lectured or preached to. Others think that the postures are most important and their regular and diligent practice, and progress in them, plus a regular meditation practice, will bring about all of the changes that the yamas and niyamas will.

A better way to learn Yoga and the correct way would be to teach, learn and understand the Yamas and Niyamas first and then from there go to the postures and meditation practice.

As a result, instead of seeing the practice of postures and meditation as something that leads into the yamas and niyamas, one would be exposed to the fact that postures and meditation are actually one of the practices that makes up the yamas and niyamas.

This approach introduces the potential Yoga aspirant and practitioner to Yoga and it's practice in a more holistic manner, so in addition to learning and practicing the standing or sitting forward bend, they also learn and understand the importance of such virtues as contentment.

In addition to learning and practicing the standing or sitting spinal twist, they also learn and understand the importance of non-greed.

In addition to learning and practicing the bow, cobra and camel poses, among others, they also learn and understand the importance of austerity, non-violence and self-study.

It is understandable that those people who are new to Yoga may find this a bit too much to explore.

We live in countries and cultures that allow us to be individuals and for better or worse, we grow on that experience of individuality, so we are living a skillful and compassionate life, or a life marked by unskillfulness and an insensitivity to the life experiences of others.

Some people are just confused and lost and can only make a connection to something higher through the senses.

Yoga is easy to learn and practice.

Any sincere and diligent effort put forth in learning and practicing it will be beneficial to the aspirant, as they will be cultivating a tool, that is their mind, body and consciousness, that will be an asset to them as they continue down the path of life.

John teaches Yoga, Buddhism and English and lives in Bangkok, Thailand. He can be reached at johnckimbrough@yahoo.com

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