

The relevance of yoga in the 21st Century

By Marichen Mortimer

I am a mere mortal carving out a living in the “normal” humdrum of day-to-day living, perhaps no different to you, the reader of this article. I have dreams and wishes, needs, likes and dislikes and in the course of an average day my emotions run a broad spectrum- in a kaleidoscope of colours. I used to ride all the emotive waves, with my mind running around from time –to-time, especially when experiencing ongoing work pressures and deadlines, like a wild monkey jumping from topic to topic. Until one day I decided that there must be a different way of doing things, that perhaps experiencing all the ups and downs in life so intensely was not so great after all.

My first exposure to yoga came when I was a sixteen year old teenager, suffering from the typical symptoms of the onset of puberty. The homeopath I used to go to prescribed some yoga exercises and made some nutritional adjustments and in the course of a few weeks I felt the difference. This was to leave a lasting impression on me.

During the course of my studies and later when I started working I recalled the feeling of tranquility that stayed with me long after I did my yoga exercises and breathing practices – and before long I knew that I needed to join a yoga class and start practicing in earnest.

The rest as they say is history... So why is yoga – the ancient art and science – founded probably 10 000 years ago more relevant today than ever before?

We live in a continuously changing and demanding world, with the advance of technology has come 24/7 pressures, we think we need to be available for all and sundry 365 days a year, with computers, cell phones and television we are for ever bombarded with messages – how to dress, think, eat, live, work, dream...What has happened to just sitting under a tree and watching the sun set? Going for a walk at the end of a long day and looking at the night sky, trying to pick out the Southern cross. We rush every where, we don't listen to each other never mind tuning into our inner quiet voice, desperately trying to be heard. We abuse ourselves daily, through our thoughts and our actions and then we wonder why the world feels upside down...

Well, the practice of yoga provides this beautiful serene tranquility to anyone wishing to try it. A typical integral yoga class consists of a balanced approach which addresses all aspects of a person – literally mind, body and soul. The class can start with a talk on yoga philosophy(satsang) – to lift the mind and awareness to set the tone for the class, this is followed by the exercises (asanas)

to loosen the body and improve physical wellbeing, next up is the breathing practices(pranayama) to bring tranquility to the mind and body and finally relaxation and meditation. At the end of a yoga class, the individual feels at peace with him/herself and with time (and regular practice) comes the manifold blessings of improved health and overall wellbeing.

Many books have been written about yoga, from the lay person to the serious yogi, the virtues of yoga are praised by all – the best way to find out is to join a yoga class today and experience it for yourself. You can start your road from beginners and gradually with time progress – the sky is the limit, one thing is for sure though – you will make contact with you inner voice, also known as your intuition and as it comes alive you may find that the course of your life becomes clearer even amidst our so-called chaotic world. In Yoga you may just find your sacred haven.

A friend shared the following words with me – I do not know who the original author was, but the sense of these words encapsulates the essence of what I have experienced through yoga:

“ I looked at you today and never felt so proud before.
I listened to you dream out loud and wanted to make your dreams come true so you didn't have to wait.
For there is nothing I wouldn't do for you, if I could.

If I could, I would make sure you never lost at anything.
But what would you learn from winning all the time?
Losing keeps you humble.

If I could, I would catch you when you fell.
But then you'd never know the power of rising up again.

If I could, I would take you directly to your life's destination.
But then, you'd never know the thrill of getting lost along the way.

If I could, I would find the love you long for, the love of your life.
But then you'd never know that the joy of true love is in the journey it takes to find it.

If I could, I'd make your days all sunny.
But then you'd never know the cleansing of the rain.

If I could, I'd surround you with the treasures of the world you live in.
But then you'd never appreciate the value of the treasures of the world within you.

If I could, I'd put happiness within your reach.
But then you'd never learn that real growth comes only from reaching for things
beyond your grasp.

If I could, and I will...I'll love you until my last breath of life and through eternity.

I believe in you!"

Through yoga we reconnect with ourselves in the most special way and step by
step we learn to appreciate each moment for what it is, we learn to live in the
now and most importantly to believe in ourselves.

For more information on yoga please contact:
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