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YOGA:

VINYASA FLOW INSTRUCTION



INTERNATIONAL
SPORTS SCIENCES
ASSOCIATION





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SUBJECTS
COVERED

YOGA

The History of Yoga

Yoga Philosophy

Functional Yoga Anatomy

Poses

Class Design and Preparation

Yogic Breathing

Instructor Communication and Cueing

Inclusive Yoga Instruction



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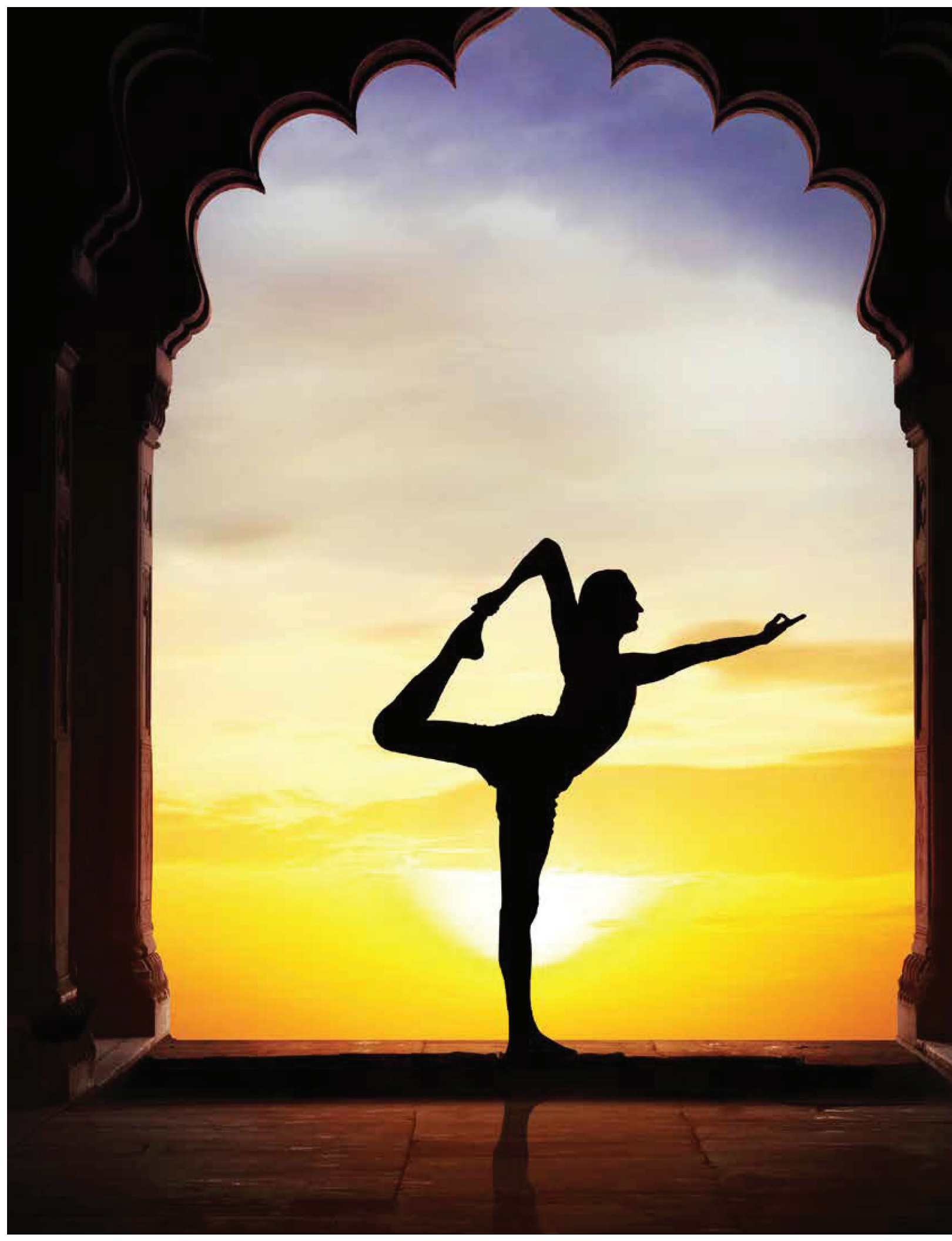
INCLUSIVE YOGA INSTRUCTION

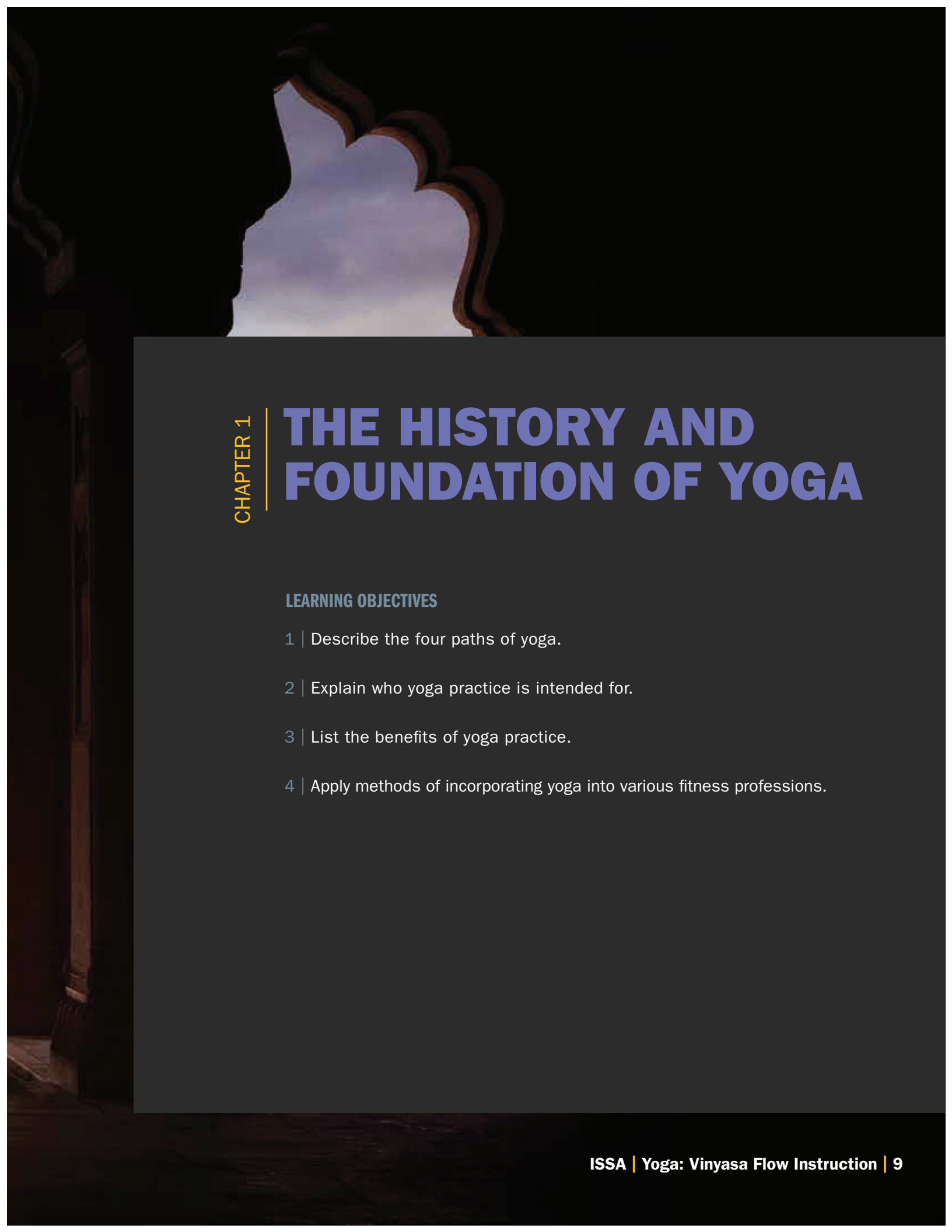
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CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORY AND FOUNDATION OF YOGA

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 | Describe the four paths of yoga.
- 2 | Explain who yoga practice is intended for.
- 3 | List the benefits of yoga practice.
- 4 | Apply methods of incorporating yoga into various fitness professions.

CHAPTER 1 | The History and Foundation of Yoga

HATHA YOGA:

A common yoga practice of breathing, asanas, and meditation.

DID YOU KNOW:

That the Sanskrit language is an ancient Indian language serving as the basis of most Hindu and Buddhist philosophies and texts?

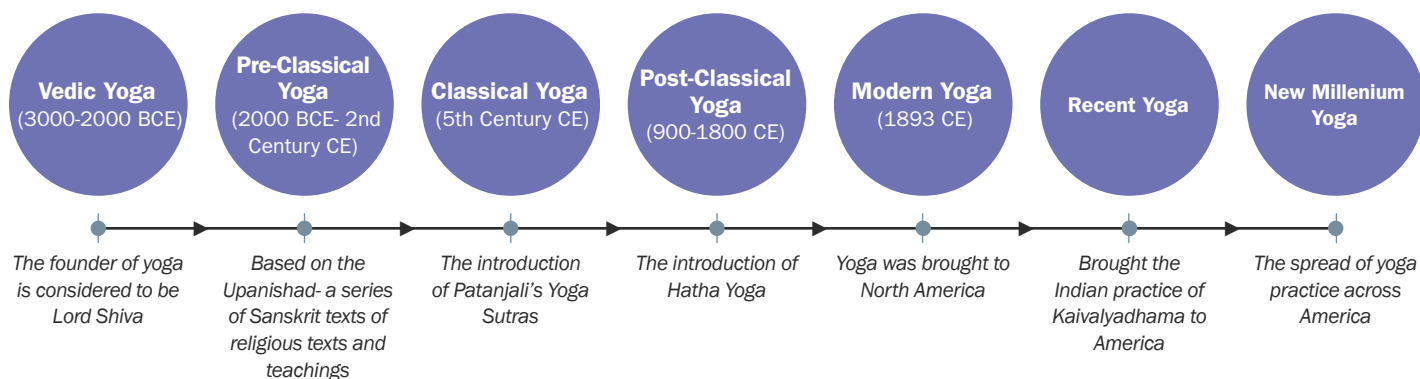
YOGA DEFINED

Yoga means to “yoke,” or to join together. Modern **hatha yoga** is a combination of the “ha,” or sun (right), and the “tha,” or moon (left), sides of the body. It is the intertwining of body, mind, and spirit through breath, poses, and meditation.



Yoga is also considered a state of being—remaining present in the current task without distraction. It is a philosophy and a science facilitating, through practice, a connection with the spiritual aspects of life. Though associated with Hinduism and Buddhism, it is not a religion or a religious practice. All stated, the most important thing about yoga is breath, and the goal is to increase connection by decreasing avidya (disconnection) and to eliminate impurities.

Yoga has ancient roots and has seen modern transformation.



FOUR YOGA PATHS

Each person practicing yoga has a reason for doing so. Every individual has unique thoughts, feelings, and goals for their practice. Yoga in its true form has the goal of seeking true and lasting bliss—**ananda**. There are four paths of yoga that are meant to work toward this unifying goal: jnana, karma, bhakti, and raja yoga.

Jnana Yoga

Known as the philosophical path or the path of wisdom, **jnana yoga** appeals to those who are reflective in nature. This path of yoga focuses on gaining knowledge not through factual information but from self-study, meditation, and detachment.

Karma Yoga

Karma yoga is a path of action and selfless service. It thrives under the principle that every action has a reaction on one's body, mind, and consciousness. Karma yogis are **altruistic** in nature; they perform service to others with no expectation of return, like Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi.

Bhakti Yoga

The **bhakti yoga** path is centered on love and devotion to all things—animals, humans, and nature. People with a more emotional nature will appreciate this yoga path. Those who practice bhakti yoga often use prayer, worship, chanting, and rituals to center and enlighten themselves.

Raja Yoga

Raja yoga is the more common form of yoga known as the path of self-discipline. It features many of the familiar yoga asanas (poses) in yoga practice, breathing control (**pranayama**), and technique (**kriya**). Often referred to as “the royal road” or an eight-fold path, it offers a comprehensive method for controlling thought by turning mental and physical energy into spiritual energy. Raja yoga focuses heavily on meditation and on the relaxing effects of the yoga asanas.

YOGA'S ROOTS

Many yoga instructors speak of yoga practice dating back thousands of years in India. In part, this is correct. The practice of yoga philosophy, breathing, focus, and meditation dates to the 1600s. However, the modern asanas used in yoga arose in the nineteenth century. They are said to have been derived from the Danish primitive gymnastics exercise system that revolutionized the way Europeans exercised as early as the 1500s. The system of dynamic body-weight exercises was used to train military personnel and schoolchildren alike.

ANANDA:

The state of true, realized enlightenment.

JNANA YOGA:

A yoga path focused on gaining knowledge not through factual information but from self-study, meditation, and detachment.

KARMA YOGA:

An altruistic yoga path focused on action and selfless service.

ALTRUISTIC:

Showing unselfish concern for the well-being of others.

BHAKTI YOGA:

A yoga path centered on love and devotion to all things.

RAJA YOGA:

A yoga path focused on self-discipline featuring breathing, poses, and technique.

PRANAYAMA:

Yogic breathing.

KRIYA:

Yoga technique.

CHAPTER 1 | The History and Foundation of Yoga

When the British went to India and began to colonize in the early 1600s, the exercise techniques followed. By the early 1920s, reports named the techniques of primitive gymnastics as the most popular form of exercise in India. The practice focused on the physical body as well as on the “whole person” and mental health. Little or no machinery was required for this style of exercise. As needs changed, the practice was coopted into a combination of gymnastics, calisthenics, and bodybuilding. Yoga as it is known today is heavily influenced by the fusion of the East and the West. Postural yoga centered around asanas grew in popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, and yogi Swami Vivekananda is credited with bringing yoga practice to the United States in 1893.



The ability of yoga asanas to build physical strength and mobility made them an ideal tool for training soldiers and revolutionaries. Throughout the early 1900s, yoga practice was used around the world in combination with European gymnastics as techniques for combat and strength.

The American vinyasa flow and power-based yoga systems are credited to T. Krishnamacharya (1888–1989). Though the asanas were a small part of his knowledge and teachings, he is widely known for training some of the most influential yoga teachers of the twentieth century, including K. Pattabhi Jois, Indra Devi, and T. K. V. Desikachar.

WHO CAN PRACTICE YOGA

Yoga requires only an individual to show up to practice. It is an inclusive, rewarding, and rejuvenating practice that is available to anyone regardless of age, gender, or physical limitations. Yoga is a deeply personal practice without judgment of any kind and without competition. The purpose is to do what feels good; every pose can be modified to fit specific needs, injuries, or ailments.

YOGA GROUP SIZES

Yoga can be practiced in a group of virtually any size—large group, small group, or individual practice. Those who enjoy the company of others and who are interested in sharing their practice may opt for large- or small-group yoga. For those looking for more intense training with asanas or for help focusing their practice, individual sessions either alone or with a yoga teacher may be best.



The type of yoga practiced will also dictate the best group size. For example, bikram yoga is performed in a heated space (105 degrees and 40 percent humidity) and may best support a small group of five to ten students to maintain the optimal temperature. Meanwhile, traditional yin yoga is designed to work on the flexibility of the connective tissues and thus is performed at normal ambient room temperature. Larger groups can successfully practice this style.

DID YOU KNOW:

That male yoga students are known as yogis and that female yoga students are called yoginis?

WHAT IS NEEDED TO PRACTICE YOGA

Traditionally, there was no yoga equipment. Practice required only the body, mind, and spirit. For modern yoga practice, most students are more comfortable with a few basic items that can easily be obtained.

Table 1.1 Modern Yoga Equipment

EQUIPMENT	CONSIDERATIONS
Yoga mat	Materials, length, thickness, texture
Yoga towel	Size, material, absorbency
Props (straps, blocks, blankets)	Comfort
Breathable clothing	Fit, ease of movement



BENEFITS OF YOGA

People are drawn to yoga for a few reasons: first, for the prominence of modern asanas; second, for the ease of practice for laypersons; and third, for the incorporation of Eastern contemplative practices, Western psychology, and mind-body discipline. Most Americans, however, use yoga for exercise. Many practice yoga not as a way to build the hard, toned body so prized in the media but to find solace, comfort, and peace from the social, financial, and mental stresses of life.

Yoga has been found to do all of the following:

- Reduce mental and emotional stress
- Improve muscle tone
- Relieve physical tension
- Increase flexibility and joint mobility
- Calm the mind
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Strengthen the immune system
- Slow the heart rate
- Increase blood circulation
- Improve internal organ function
- Promote relaxation and inner contentment

DID YOU KNOW:

That research has suggested that yoga practice can also slow the body's aging process?

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The main benefits of yoga are directly related to overall health and wellness. More than the physical being, the emotional state of an individual and how they handle frequent stress can affect organs and organ systems like the immune system, the circulatory system, and even nerve function. Including yoga as a part of a balanced physical activity regimen can be beneficial for anyone.

DISEASE PREVENTION

The benefits of healthy yoga practice include reducing stress, lowering blood pressure, and promoting a healthy body weight. Each of these indicators in a healthy range is key for the prevention or remedy of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.

PSYCHOLOGY

Some psychologists are beginning to recommend yoga as treatment or incorporate it into their practice. Studies suggest that yoga may help reduce stress and anxiety, strengthen social attachments, and relieve depression and insomnia.

STYLES OF YOGA

There are many styles of yoga depending on where one practices and what their goal may be. Table 1.2 outlines several current popular styles in the United States, including the seven major styles: ashtanga, iyengar, bikram, jivamukti, vinyasa, sivananda, and yin yoga.

Table 1.2 Common Western Yoga Styles

Ananda: This style provides a tool for spiritual growth while releasing unwanted tension. It was developed in the 1960s in California by Swami Kriyananda.	Ansura: Founded in 1997 by John Friend, it combines a strong emphasis on physical alignment with a positive philosophy expressing intrinsic goodness of all beings.
Ashtanga: This is a fast-paced, intense yoga style moving through six strenuous pose sequences following the breath. This type of practice requires a thicker mat. In Sanskrit, it means “eight limbs.”	Hatha: A common modern yoga with a basic, classical approach to yogic breathing exercises and postures. A classic warm up for this practice will include the commonly known Sun Salutation A.
Hot Yoga: This refers to yoga performed in a heated room, typically ninety-five to one hundred degrees Fahrenheit.	Integral: Founded on the ideas and principles of Sri Swami Satchidananda, this practice integrates the mind, body, and spirit through breathing, chanting, and meditation.
Iyengar: Founded by B. K. S. Iyengar, this style uses props like blocks, straps, incline boards, and harnesses to achieve the desired positions. Asanas are typically held for longer periods of time.	Kripalu: A compassionate practice placing an emphasis on meditation, physical healing, and spiritual transformation. It focuses on looking inward and moving at the student's unique pace, making it ideal for those with limited mobility.
Prenatal: This style features asanas adapted for expectant mothers in all stages of pregnancy.	Kundalini: Featuring constantly moving, invigorating poses, this style is intended to release the kundalini (serpent) energy in the body. It uses dynamic breathing, chanting, and meditation to draw energy through the seven chakras.
Restorative: This relaxing style uses four or five simple, restful poses with strategically placed props such as blankets, bolsters, and pillows to encourage the deepest relaxation.	Sivananda: An unhurried yoga practice focusing on the same twelve asanas bookended by Sun Salutation and Corpse Pose. It focuses on the five-point philosophy of breathing, relaxation, diet, exercise, and positive thinking
Bikram: Founded by Bikram Chodhury, it consists of a sequence of twenty-six asanas repeated twice in a sauna-like room. The space is heated to 105 degrees and 40 percent humidity in official classes.	Vinyasa: Known as power yoga and meaning to “move with breath,” this active and athletic style was adapted in the late 1980s. The asana selection and flow vary by teacher, and the postures are synchronized with the breath. It uses the characteristic Chaturanga, up dog and down dog. This type of practice will require a thicker mat.
Yin: A quiet, meditative practice, yin focuses on stretching and lengthening the body. Developed by Paul Grillery, it centers on the joints and connective tissue, with postures held for several minutes at a time.	Viniyoga: Founded by T. K. V. Krishnamacharya, it is a highly individual practice where the student learns to adapt poses and goals to their own needs.
Jivamukti: Created by Sharon Gannon and David Life, this physical and limit-pushing yoga style uses a flow while teaching Westerners a traditional spiritual element. Classes are themed and use Sanskrit chants.	Forrest: Taught by Ana Forrest in Santa Monica, California, this style uses poses intended to strengthen and purify. It places an emphasis on abdominal strength, inversions, and deep breathing.

INTEGRATING YOGA INTO YOUR CURRENT PROFESSION

There is so much flexibility in many styles of yoga that it is easy to incorporate into other fitness routines. Personal trainers, group fitness instructors, and even nutrition and wellness coaches often include yoga practice or asanas into their practice for a well-rounded, mental, and physical approach to overall health.

DID YOU KNOW:

That there are more than one hundred styles of yoga in practice?

PERSONAL TRAINERS

A large part of personal training programming includes corrective exercise, flexibility, and balance. Personal trainers often employ techniques such as foam rolling, passive and active stretching, and balance training to keep clients functionally strong and as mobile as possible. Adding yoga into the program design will benefit the client not only by addressing these aspects of their fitness program but also by promoting stress relief and an outlet for anxious energy. Clients also appreciate the diversity of training to prevent burnout and exercise fatigue over time.



GROUP FITNESS INSTRUCTORS

Group exercise classes are becoming more popular in modern fitness. Students enjoy the camaraderie and excitement of large- and small-group classes, participating in classes such as kickboxing, cycling, core work, and Latin dance. Group fitness instructors can use their teaching skills to incorporate yoga into warm-ups, cooldowns, and throughout class to prevent injury, focus class participants, and promote healthy recovery from intense exercise. Participants of all ages and abilities can adapt to basic yoga in a group setting.



NUTRITION COACHES

Nutrition coaches not only deal with individuals' nutrition and dietary needs but also encounter clients with anxiety, depression, and other emotional and mental ailments preventing them from making the behavior changes they desire. The centering, calming, and focusing aspects of yoga have been found to help reduce the mental blocks that can keep clients from achieving success. Regular practice can also promote healthy relationships with food and handling stress appropriately.

SPORTS COACHES AND TEAMS

High-level college, semiprofessional, and professional sports teams are consistently incorporating sports psychology, visualization, meditation, and yoga to improve sports performance, mental focus, and physical mobility. It can be done individually or as a team and is typically tailored to the needs of the specific athletes and their sport.

Some recognizable athletes and professional sports teams use yoga, such as the following:

- Aaron Rogers of the Green Bay Packers pro football team
- LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers pro basketball team
- The entire Seattle Seahawks pro football team
- Evan Longoria of the Tampa Bay Rays pro baseball team
- The entire Los Angeles Clippers pro basketball team

Sports coaches can use yoga as an opportunity to bond with their team, promote mobility, and relax from the stresses of daily practice and frequent competition. Even individual sports like golf use yoga between rounds of play to recenter, refocus, and reduce the anxiety of competition.

FACILITIES OFFERING YOGA

The popularity of yoga in the United States has made it a staple, offered everywhere from health clubs to small yoga studios. Yoga chains have begun to emerge that feature small, personable yoga studios, focusing on one or more styles of yoga and featuring a variety of teachers to appeal to any student. Big-box gyms often offer group yoga classes of various styles to gym members daily.



Ultimately, there is no shortage of locations for an educated and well-versed yoga teacher to share their craft. To be the most successful instructor possible, a yoga teacher should focus on a few yoga styles and master the art of adapting the asanas and practice to remain inclusive, educational, and supportive to each student they encounter.

DID YOU KNOW:

That one in three people have tried yoga at least once, and Americans spend more than \$16 billion a year on yoga classes and equipment??