



YOGA AND AMERICA

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Western People and Yoga

Yoga has been popular in the West for many years. I do not see that Yoga has done any bad in the West, but only good. To truly understand its impact on the Western mind and culture one has to come to the West and experience it oneself. I repeatedly ask people to visit and live in India, in its holy places for some time, if possible, to deeply appreciate the yogic wisdom and yogic life. All human beings are essentially the same in all countries, but still people are different in each country according to their social, cultural and political structure and environment.

The life-style of Western people is extremely different from those living in India. Not only their life-style, but their habits and nature is also quite different. It has many reasons. For instance, their diet, educational system, working system, religious influence and the structure as such, so then when a Western person studies Yoga in the West is one thing, but when the same person goes to study in India is quite different. There are very many limitations which one encounters to study Yoga under an advanced and well-versed Guru and to live a yogic life without much hassle from their friends and family. In the West people tend to think a student is corny or wierd if they are religious or in a yogic frame of mind, and also the practical approach of Yoga and Indian Spirituality is so different from the way the Western people are brought up that large numbers of them find it truly difficult to practise all the different codes and morals of Yoga, described in our Yogic text-books, for instance, many will find it difficult to understand why the mind, body, and nerves should be cleansed and purified and restrained to reach the Ultimate Spirit. Spirit here is considered very apart from the body; though it is very true that it is apart from the body, but a student of Yoga is taught that the body is the temple of God and Spirit and you must treat it properly, and feed it healthy vegetarian diet. Here in the West, all types of meat, especially beef, is consumed by all to a large quantity right from the age of two. Which naturally makes the body and mind very *Tāmasik* and *Rājasik*. *Sattva* quality of the mind is very little known to the Westerner.

I find most Western people are very simple, honest and straight-forward in their dealings and learning Yoga science. They will do exactly what is taught by the Gurus. They have the ability to be sincere and thus grow fast. There are many areas of deep understanding, high meditation and complete devotion and surrender to Guru that they find difficult to accept and understand.

The West is filled with many nervous and psychic tensions all over because of their extremely fast moving and stressful life-style. Yoga is really doing them a great deal of good in calming their mind and nerves, giving them a deeper meaning of life and ultimately showing them the true purpose of living, and as a result of this, many have given up using drugs, stop being alcoholics. Now they are eating a healthy diet and loving each other much more.

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