

## Just How Many Kinds of Yoga Are There?

*By Carolyn Reynolds*

Whenever a new student calls me about the possibility of attending a yoga class, usually one of the questions asked is, “What kind of yoga do you teach?” That question always throws me a little because I’m not sure how to answer it. Yoga is called by many different names in the yoga periodicals and that lends to a great deal of confusion around this subject. Kripalu Yoga, Anusara Yoga, Jivamukti Yoga, Bikram Yoga, Ashtanga Yoga, Tri-Yoga, Power Yoga, Yin Yoga, and Sivananda Yoga are some of the names. These are all Hatha Yoga, a step on the path of Yoga that leads us to the ultimate goal of self-realization. All these names are merely a person’s name or method of delivery to teach asanas, or postures. At the end of this article it states that I teach Kripalu yoga. That means that I lived at the ashram called Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health for a month and studied how to be a hatha yoga teacher. The ashram was named for Swami Kripalu, the teacher of Yoga Desai, the center’s spiritual leader at that time.

It was with the introduction of yoga into America that all of these names came into existence. They have nothing to do with the true science of yoga as codified by Patanjali or even with the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. I have been to many yoga classes taught by the teachers whose pictures are in Yoga International and Yoga Journal magazines. The only real difference is the tempo of the class, how much time is allotted for introspection and integration, the temperature of the room, the length of the holding of the postures, the integration of the breath with the postures, the repetition of postures with breath to enhance energy flow, and the teaching of physiological techniques to enhance safety. The asanas are the same, with some variations. So first of all, decide what it is that is drawing you to take a hatha yoga class. Next, find several that suit your schedule. Attend and do only what feels right for you. It will probably be more of a personality match, along with the fulfillment of your desires and needs that will encourage you to settle with a teacher, not a “kind of yoga.”

The ‘real answer’ to the question, “What kind of yoga do you teach?” would be one of the following: Jnana (path of transcendental knowledge), Bhakti (path of devotion), Karma (path of selfless action), Laya (path of the Universal Body), Raja or Ashtanga (eight-limbed path to enlightenment) and Kundalini (path of awakening the subtle energy channels). These paths all lead to the same goal of self-realization. Each is better suited to certain personalities. To learn about the science of Yoga one does not even have to do hatha yoga. But it is recommended that you find a teacher. Essentially, there is only one mind-body-spirit union, only one Yoga.