



Yoga Unveiled Reviews.

We are just delighted by the enthusiastic response to Yoga Unveiled. As they become available we will share reviews here on our website. If you would like to bring a review to our attention, please write to info@yogaunveiled.com.

Natasha Rizopoulos, October 2008.

Yoga Works, Los Angeles, CA.

Yoga Unveiled is an extraordinary documentary that captures the essence of Yoga in all its myriad forms, illuminating the history and evolution of the practice in a way that is sophisticated, revealing and accessible. The collected knowledge and wisdom in the film is astounding, and I would recommend it to anyone who is passionate about Yoga and its applications in modern life.

Swami Yogatmananda, August 2008.

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Society, Providence, RI.

Yoga Unveiled is a joyous, educational and uplifting experience from beginning to end. All the aspects of Yoga are harmoniously discussed herein. It is, as far as I know, the only comprehensive audio-visual production available. The renowned authorities, Eastern and Western, have given the message in a telling way. The script, production, photography, music, direction, editing - all bear a mark of high-level professional skill. It will be of immense use to students, practitioners, and teachers of this age-old and yet modern science of total development of life. I was very much impressed by the fact that the ultimate goal of Self-Realization was emphasized throughout. Starting from strengthening of the body, we are guided on to reach the finer and finer levels of our being, unfolding the potential of each and organically uniting it to the goal of life.

Yoga International, July 2005.

Review by Jon Janaka.

Yoga Unveiled is a video documentary of the yoga tradition. Early on, the observation is made that yoga is not intended to promote the teacher, but to support the student. This is a fitting and humble orientation - but of course one should not forget the teacher entirely. In this spirit, first-time videographer Gita Desai and her husband, Mukesh, have produced a unique testimony to the countless teachers who brought yoga from the remotest reaches of India to the main streets of America.

The documentary covers a lot of ground, from cities along the Indus River abandoned sometime around 2000 bce to glimpses of the future of medicine. Desai has gone to great lengths to interview a large number of yoga's most visible living faces. Although the final version of the documentary relies heavily on the opinions of only a few specialists (a cherubic Georg Feuerstein is never long off-screen) in a field that is enormous, most of the views expressed would resonate positively with knowledgeable mainstream yogis.

The two DVDs consist of five chapters which present the development of yoga within India, its transmission to the West in modern forms, and its therapeutic use for a wide range of health concerns. Chapter one, "Origins of Yoga," is directed toward students who may not know much of India's spiritual heritage. With help from well-written narration, recognized scholars cover 4,000 years of history without overwhelming the novice. Admirably, this introduction establishes meditation at the heart of the yoga experience right from the beginning.

"Passage from East to West" and "Modern Yoga" are the other two chapters on disc one. The towering figure of Vivekananda gets a great deal of attention, as does Krishnamacharya, the founder of modern asana practice. Interviews with his most recognized students [B.K.S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, and T.K.V. Desikachar] give a human face to the tradition and convey the great joy of sustained yoga practice. Rare recordings of Indra Devi and a discussion of her relationship with Krishnamacharya offer a brief exploration of gender issues in yoga. Originally something of a chauvinist,

Krishnamacharya seems to have realized early on what is now undeniable: modern yoga would not exist without the efforts of some very capable women.

The second disc, dedicated entirely to "Yoga as Therapy" 60 minutes], is ample food for reflection on the ways we think about illness and health. Much of this comes from the eloquent champion of mindfulness in medicine, Jon Kabat-Zinn. The Desais also document the work of Father Joe Pereira's Kripa Foundation [India's largest NGO]. Although it is a Christian organization, Kripa uses the tools of yoga - including asana and meditation - to address problems of chemical dependency and HIV/AIDS in patients from all ages and social, occupational, and religious backgrounds. This is a remarkable example of yoga's capacity to transform and enrich lives and is perhaps the most inspiring section of the entire video.

In **Yoga Unveiled**, Gita and Mukesh Desai followed an unusual vision to complete a project unlike anything either had worked on before. The result is a clearly organized, accessible overview of what yoga was, is now, and could become as it continues to inch its way into the collective Western consciousness. It is easy to watch and very informative.

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ascent magazine, Summer 2005
Review by Anurag Dhir.

Yoga Unveiled: The Evolution and Essence of a Spiritual Tradition [DVD]
Produced by Gita and Mukesh Desai.

Written by Gita Desai.

According to yoga historian Dr. Georg Feuerstein, "While there has been a great interest in the discipline of yoga, we don't yet have the proper context for an authentic engagement of yoga in the West. And that is why it's not working."

Such insights, calls to action and an attempt to articulate the place of yoga in a Western culture context is the basis of the illuminating documentary *Yoga Unveiled: The Evolution and Essence of a Spiritual Tradition*. From the most basic first question, "What is yoga?" prominent Eastern and Western yoga scholars, teachers and medical experts are asked to comment on the theoretical, historical and philosophical elements of the oldest spiritual practice in the world. There is no lack of passion and reverence in their discourse. In fact, one gets the sense that many of them have been waiting a long time for a chance to speak about a tradition that has profoundly transformed many lives, is India's gift to the world, and is frequently misunderstood.

At just over three hours, *Yoga Unveiled* interweaves five thousand years of yoga history and evolution with insightful and accessible contemporary analyses. A daunting task, no doubt, but under the direction of filmmakers Gita and Mukesh Desai, the story that unfolds is educational, entertaining, and at times humbling. From its roots in the ancient Harrapa civilization of the Indus Valley to the Indian yoga renaissance spearheaded by Sri T. Krishnamacharya, to the gradual rise of yoga in the West, the documentary shows a yoga that is never static, but rather an ever evolving product of its times, the pervading culture, and most profoundly and consistently, of our relationship with nature.

Early man's dependence on nature caused its elements to become the first objects of worship, and asanas - literally translated from Sanskrit as "the seat upon which a yogi sits to meditate" - were postural representations of objects found in nature. Yoga practice was created as a way of preparing for meditation, because it was there where deep insights came. It was how the earliest yogis began exploring the self, which they discovered had the capacity to somehow understand the outer world. Adoption of the practice and rituals presented this mystery of change in a dramatic way, becoming a kind of sacred theatre through the connection of mind, body and spirit.

I especially enjoyed these stories of the "first yogis" whose practice started because they were simply fascinated by the world around them, wondering how was it possible that they saw what they saw and felt what they felt. Why did the seasons change? Why do we change? Who are we in relation to this vast natural world that feeds us, moves us and takes us closer to death? What is death? What is life? The ultimate beginner's mind. The questions haven't really changed, but our relationship to nature has. Fed by a reverence to and bewilderment by nature, yoga's goal has always been the realization of the innermost self, but now in the West we seem to have divorced ourselves from this mystery for the comfort of intellectual, rational fact.

In *Yoga Unveiled*, there is hope that a new context, and interpretation of this union is possible. In India, the questions preceded the postures. In the West, however, the opposite seems to be the case. This does not mean we have it all wrong, but there seems to be a consensus that - through trial and error - more work and study are necessary if we are to offer anything to yoga's dynamic heritage.

The filmmakers and panelists don't offer any cut and dried answers, but one is left charged with questions and excitement for the possibilities. I was also reminded that, like its history, yoga is a long, transformative process, and only through a synthesis of practice, study, and most importantly, a sense of wonder can we hope to renew our relationship with nature, create a more authentic context for yoga in the West, and continually encounter our true selves.

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Yoga Studies - The Online Journal of IAYT, September-December 2004
Review by Trisha Lamb.

Yogins and *Yoginīs*, this is a documentary you must not miss, and it is remarkable that it is available for only \$36.99. If I had to summarize this film in one word, it would be, "Wow."

Through interviews with a broad spectrum of experts, exquisite art and graphics, rarely seen archival footage, just-right music, and beautiful narration, Gita and Mukesh Desai have created a magnificent gift honoring the great tradition of Yoga.

In the first two hours and fifteen minutes, while tracing the history of Yoga from its origins in India to its taking root in America, the film movingly communicates Yoga's core purpose: transformation and realization. It informs every frame of the film, and that is an extraordinary achievement.

Yoga's Indic origins and its literature and philosophy are explored via beautiful visual displays and interviews with Yoga scholars and Yoga teachers in the United States and India. Among the scholars are Prof. Edwin Bryant, Dr. M. S. Dhavlikar, Dr. Georg Feuerstein, and Prof. Subhash Kak. The teachers include T. K. V. and Kausthub Desikachar, B. K. S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Swami Tyagananda, Patricia Walden, and Rodney Yee, plus musician Krishna Das.

The film next turns to some of the great *yogins* and *yoginīs* responsible for Yoga's passage to the West: Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda, Aurobindo, Sri Krishnamacharya, and students of Krishnamacharya, including Indra Devi, B. K. S. Iyengar, Pattabhi Jois, and T. K. V. Desikachar. Biographies are presented, accompanied by commentary from teachers who studied with these masters. T. K. V. Desikachar reminds us of his father's prophetic words, "One hundred years from now, people will acknowledge Yoga as the greatest gift from India" [*note*: Sri Krishnamacharya [1888-1989] is T. K. V. Desikachar's father.]

The final hour, titled "Yoga As Therapy," jumps straight to the present and examines Yoga's growing contribution to Western medicine. Interviewed are Herbert Benson, M.D., Bernard Clark, M.D., Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., S. V. Karandikar, M.D., Vasant Lad, B.A.M.S., M.S., Timothy McCall, M.D., Dean Ornish, M.D., Mehmet Oz, M.D., Father Joe Pereira, and Martine Ziska, M.D. Each describes the profound positive benefits that Yoga, and in some instances Ayurveda, has brought to their patients. Regarding the recent increase in Yoga research in the West, Dr. Oz indicates that its purpose is not so much to prove that Yoga works [implying that anyone who has practiced it at any length knows that it does], but rather to translate how it works into a language mainstream physicians can understand and thereby make Yoga's benefits available to a wider audience. Jon Kabat-Zinn beautifully and accessibly explains the purpose and benefits of mindfulness meditation, pointing out that the realization of our true nature brings the ultimate healing from pain and suffering.

Watch this magnificent film and rejoice.

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LA YOGA, November - December 2004.
Review by Amit Gotti.

This is everything, it's all here. This is the moving image encyclopedia of yoga. Everything the left side of the brain ever wanted to know about yoga is clearly expressed by the world's leading experts and beautifully illustrated through images of ancient texts and artifacts, archive film footage, the sights and sounds of India and yoga practitioners from both the east and west.

The DVD set was written, directed and produced by Gita Desai, from her home base in Connecticut . She and her production team traveled the world spending considerable time in India. Their mission: to bring to the west what Gita calls "the real story of yoga. I wanted to bring that story to as many people as possible in a beautiful way." And indeed she has. There are two discs here with over 3 hours of video. The first disc gives us the background, the meaning, branches, philosophy and the people behind the practice of yoga - how yoga came to the west and biographies of the masters. We learn about Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga, Raja yoga, Tantra yoga and Hatha yoga.

Disc two however is where yoga not only begins to live for us, but we see the real value of yoga in everyday life, and especially in health and medicine. This is yoga as therapy. This is yoga applied to health and wellness.

Jon Kabat-Zinn speaks at length and other western physicians like Dr. Dean Ornish, Dr. Vasant Lad, Dr. Timothy McCall, and Dr. Herbert Benson tell us how they are using yoga as an adjunct to the practice of western medicine. We learn about yoga and AIDS, stress and heart disease. We learn how yoga teaches us through the mind to first own up to our own sense of limitations. We learn how to love our body back to life. The body is a temple, a dwelling place of god where we can have some control over our disease and our recovery.

All in all there are a lot of talking heads here, but they don't really bother us because there is so much to talk about; and these commentators express themselves in such an illuminating way, people like: Georg Feuerstein, Krishna Das, Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, Swami Sivananda, Dr. Martina Ziska, and others.

The music is especially delightful throughout the DVD set which comes with an especially helpful Directory of Contacts for those who want more information. I'm not sure there is any more information to get, however.

By the end of the 2 disc video viewers have had a complete introductory course in yoga, even longtime yoga practitioners will have a wider perspective on the practice.

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