SPIRITUALITY
Sadghuru, Isha Foundation

Does Yoga Have a Religion?

Yoga is not a religion, a belief system or a philosophy. It is a technology for inner evolution, to hasten human evolution to its ultimate possibility. Yoga was expounded as a science well before any religion was even thought up. As there are physical sciences to create external well-being, yoga is the science for inner well-being. Because yoga evolved and was developed in the civilization, which grew on the banks of the river Sindhu, people started identifying yoga as Hindu. We need to understand that Hindu is not an "ism"; it is not a religion. You can worship a man-god and be a Hindu, you can worship a woman god and be a Hindu, you can worship a cow and be a Hindu, you can give up all worship and be a Hindu. It does not subscribe to any particular belief system. You can do whatever is best for you and still be a Hindu because it is a geographical and cultural identity not a religious identity.

So, yoga has nothing to do with any particular religion. It is the science of inner well-being. Irrespective of the culture or religious background, a certain scientist came from, you do not identify that aspect of science with that religion. Similarly, yoga should not be identified with any religion or culture.

Fundamentally, every religion started as a process of unification, of experiencing your unbounded nature. You can call that the presence of God, the ultimate nature or whatever you like. Unfortunately today, religions have become a process of division. The greatest number of wars, killing and injustice in the world happen in the name of religion. When you have your belief, and someone else has his belief, these two beliefs will quarrel all the time. But yoga does not approach the ultimate as belief. It approaches this dimension as science, so there is no possibility to quarrel. Yoga has been on for over 15,000 years without any organised head driving this force. Never in the history of humanity did somebody put a sword to someone's throat and say, "You must do yoga!". But today, nearly two billion people practice some form of yoga across the planet. In pursuit of human well-being, the yogic science is the only thing that has lived for over 15,000 years. My effort is to make people realise the potential of what yoga is.

As human beings, we are who we are on this planet only because of our ability to use tools. We dominate the planet only because of this ability, because we could walk and move, we came up with a bicycle. Similarly, we can speak, we can come up with technology, technology for physics and all kinds of things. The yogic tools are internal tools. A few of them are physical, dealing with the body, breath and mind, but the rest are all subjective.

If I ask you to remove a little screw in a chair, you can try as much as you want without a screwdriver, but you are not going to be able to do it. But if I give you a simple tool, the job becomes so easy. The same is true with life. Yoga is a phenomenal tool on the physical, psychological and subjective level. It is a technology of taking charge of every aspect of your life—the way you live, think, feel and experience your life. It is the science of taking your destiny into your own hands.

"The only way to experience true well-being is to turn inward. This is what yoga means—not up, not out, but in. It is the only way out." —Sadhguru

(Shadguru is a yogi, mystic, a bestselling author and poet. He was conferred the Padma Vibhushan in 2017. Isha sadhguru.org)