

THE OTHER FACE OF YOGA

by GW Hardin

Yoga wears many faces ... to a bewildering degree. Trying to define yoga these days is like trying to decide which kind of pizza fits your taste: New York pizza? Chicago-style? Australian Pizza? Porco Pizza? (don't ask) ... you get the idea. What's equally interesting in today's yoga is the differing opinions that border on factionalism. Is yoga a spiritual discipline? A spiritual practice? Good exercise? Mind-body oriented or wellness-oriented? Or is it a good way to pick up a date? Answers vary widely, and in some cases passionately.



Huffington Post's Carolyn Cregoire wrote an eye-opening article entitled "How Yoga Became A \$27 Billion Industry — And Reinvented American Spirituality." She quotes American yoga master Rodney Yee who complains that yoga in the West compromises the authenticity of the practice while also ignoring its traditions, which he says is "ass-backwards. It dumbs down the whole art form." He is one of a chorus of voices participating in the in-fighting to define yoga of today.

On the other hand, there is a rising number of forward-thinking yoga teachers and studio owners who question yoga leaders who cause division in a spiritual practice that encourages oneness. Indeed, Cregoire's definition of traditional yoga (a Sanskrit word for "divine union") as "one single aim: stilling the thoughts of the mind in order to experience one's true self, and ultimately, to achieve liberation (*moksha*) from the cycle of birth and death (*samasara*), or enlightenment."

The obvious question ought to be, does one achieve "divine union" when its teachers are creating separation through criticism? Cregoire then quotes spiritual teacher Philip Goldberg, author of *American Veda*: "If you value yoga and the traditions it comes from, it's a good problem [opposing conversations and in-fighting] to have." Goldberg is implying that all are welcome to feast — as it should be.

In the middle of all this dancing of definitions around the banquet table is a new face coming on the scene. And it is sure to tweak the noses of traditionalists. The name adorning this new face is "corporate yoga." If I am to continue the allegory, this is the Porco Pizza of yoga. This "other" face is already showing the potential of yoga to change our modern world by staring into the teeth of the dragon, while at the same time forever changing yoga itself. From the point of view of "divine union," what could be better?

A growing number of yoga studios are joining ONE Yoga of Denver in this respect. ONE Yoga embraces several forms of yoga in its programs in the name of "divine union," to the point where its banquet of classes has already moved into the corporate environment. Like the traditional definition of yoga, these new voices are fully evoking the many faces of yoga that help its students to fully "experience one's true self."

Through 5,000 years of history, not only yoga, but many avatars and teachers have called for humanity to realize its inherent Oneness with Source, the Creator, the Name-That-Has-No-Name. And the primary path to finding such Oneness is through self-awareness that leads to self-realization that leads to self-integration: "divine union." Indeed, this very notion will be the

heart of my upcoming workshop at ONE Yoga, “DEEP WELLNESS: Embracing the Science of Harmony.”

As a *New York Times* bestselling author, I have spent years addressing the marrying of science and spirituality on the very topic of “divine union.” Union cannot exist without harmony, and as a mathematician, I have discovered a vast landscape few have seen that I now call the “Science of Harmony,” which allows us to witness the mysterious when we move into Oneness.

Traditionalists have only to re-examine the true heart of yoga to recognize it is through harmony and not in-fighting that yoga will bring great change to our world ... one individual at a time.