

CHINA:

the new super power of yoga

China is embracing yoga rapidly, but what are people searching for? And what is causing a population with an ancient Taoist tradition to turn to yoga?



Practicing yoga in China is a symbol of modernity. And it's growing fast. The data gathered suggests that, in less than a decade, 10 million Chinese have begun regularly practicing yoga. This number is on the rise, and could soon be approaching the number of Americans who now practice yoga (estimated to be around 16 million).

Indeed, much like the USA, yoga arrived in China mostly as a physical practice, geared

to honing the beauty of the body and the stillness of the mind, as well as for general health and wellness benefits.

It's also an activity of the newly rich and modernised Chinese. In many places, yoga is practiced in studios that resemble five star hotels, while the cost of some lessons surpasses the cost of a yoga class in the West.

It is a sophisticated and eager market and there is a great interest too in cool new yoga gear and accessories, just like the West.

The Chinese brand, Li Ning (shop-lining.com), for example, with its super grip yoga mats and small blocks, produces a range of 'must have' accessories for the country's trendy yogis.

But, is this all that yoga is in China?

The way

In reality, there is much more beneath the surface. Under the modernity veil, Taoism is still breathing, as is traditional Tai Chi: it is saturated in every pore, in every breath,

in every movement in China. Thus, a yoga practice that reflects this movement of energy, the concept of perpetual flux, of living in the present, is extremely potent in this new and rising yoga super power.

Students' eyes are illuminated when they encounter these concepts; they reflect an ancient culture that is always by their side. And so yoga returns to being a 'way' and not mere physical 'work' on a mat.

Tai Chi, Qi gong and yoga all focus on the balance between body and mind through the movement of energy. They are practices that complement each other and help to focus within, without losing the perception of what is happening around us.

China is a fusion between modernity and tradition. It is transformation without disowning one's roots. This is yoga in China.

Y-zone Wellness

Y-zone Wellness, founded by Master Gilbert Ng, is a leading light in China's emerging yoga world with studios spread throughout the country. In just five years, Master Ng has opened numerous high-end yoga centres creating a community with over 8,000 students. Every year, he produces hundreds of qualified teachers.



His approach merges ancient Chinese tradition with the Western method of teaching, and provides a modern management system for supporting teachers and new graduates. He says yoga is now increasingly seen as a way for people to live in good health and harmony and to balance

the fast and modern lifestyle in China today.

"Yoga is regeneration; it helps us to fight disease while improving our general health," he says. "China grew rapidly and already has people who are more interested in wellness and stress management and yoga is the most natural remedy for these ailments." ॐ



OPEN HEARTS

ITALIAN YOGA INSTRUCTOR ROBERTO MILLETTI, ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF ODAKA YOGA (ODAKAYOGA.COM), HAS BEEN RUNNING TEACHER TRAININGS IN CHINA WITH Y-ZONE FOUNDER MASTER NG. HE TOLD OM THAT CHINESE STUDENTS - LIKE ALL YOGA STUDENTS - ARE KEEN TO EMBRACE COMMUNITY

"The interaction with a vast and infinitely complex culture like China leaves its mark. The first thing you notice is the notion of 'community', the need to be part of something even while searching within. Teaching in China is an experience: people smile at you, hug you, as if communicating beyond linguistic barriers; it is their way of being with open hearts. It's difficult to enter into their community but once you become part of it, they open their hearts to you.

There is a desire to go beyond the physical movement, a deep desire to rediscover the meaning of life - this is what allows us to feel close to our Chinese students. The Western point of view is at times complementary and, at other times, innovative to the student. What is truly appreciated in China is the way in which to move into a pose as a median and not as a perfect, pre-fixed achievement - to embrace the journey rather than the destination; to be present now, fully and completely, in order to rediscover and become aware of oneself. To be yoga and not do yoga."