Yoga takes us close to true nature. Yoga with its techniques helps us to harmonize with nature. Peace is our very nature, and Yoga leads you to inner peace. To remain healthy we need to follow the rules of nature. The more harmonized we are with nature, the more we can enjoy good health and longevity. Yoga is a path towards total harmony of body, mind, and spirit. The word Yoga comes from the Sanskrit word *yuj*, which means union. Union of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness.

Yoga is the journey as well as the goal. There are many paths of yoga described in the scriptures. Just as all rivers lead to the ocean, all paths of Yoga lead to Self-realisation. Though the journey may begin on any single path of yoga, but for full blossoming and fulfilment an integrated approach is essential.

"Those who honour the imperishable, the indefinable, the non-manifest, the omnipresent, the unthinkable, the immovable and the eternal, fixing their mind on God, ever steadfast and endowed with supreme faith, are the best in Yoga." ~ *The Bhagawad Gita*

Yoga is not merely a form of exercise for the body. It is an ancient wisdom - for a healthier, happier, and more peaceful way of living - which ultimately leads to union with the Self.

It is an inherent desire in humans to be happy. The ancient sages, through inquiry about life, were able to reach a state of consciousness in which the secrets of healthier, happier, and meaningful living were revealed to them. Its application is universal!

Our behavior depends on the kind of lifestyle and kind of food we eat. It is effected by three gunas or qualities. They are Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas.

- **Sattva**: This guna brings the knowledge, interest, and joy in everything.
- **Rajas**: This guna brings desires, selfishness, restlessness and sadness.
- **Tamas**: This guna will bring delusion, attachment, lack of knowledge, lethargy.

These gunas may cause imbalance in the Vata, Pitta and Kapha doshas. Yogic diet and yoga practices can help us balance these gunas and doshas. Doing some mudras daily will keep our digestive system fit and proper. These result in mental, physical, and spiritual misbalance. Simple pranayamas and Yoga asanas keep us away from all harms related to these three gunas and doshas.
**YOGA AND PANCHA MAHA BHUTAS:**

The five senses have five dimensions in the universe. We can classify the entire Universe as five elements:

- Smell with Earth element.
- Taste with Water element.
- Touch with Air element.
- Sound with Ether element.
- Shapes & forms with Fire element.

Each of these five elements is present in each other in a very small way, subtle way. Like this world, Universe is made up of five elements, so also this body, so also this mind. Our mind is also made up of these five subtle elements. It is a natural law that each element takes its turn. One dominates at some time and then the other dominates. None of the element remains dominant for ever. Rain comes, you can’t stop the rain, wind blows, you can’t stop the wind, Sun shines, and you can’t stop the Sun - it is all happening. All these five elements reign in the mind also. It is very interesting. When they reign in the mind, different moods and sensations come up in the mind. This is a very precious knowledge.

Mainly five types of sensations arise:

- Feeling of consolidation, love, discomfort, total comfort, heaviness: Earth element is dominant.
- Fiery feeling, feverishness: Fire element is dominant.
- Movement, feeling of wanting to run away: Air element is dominant.
- Feeling of togetherness, oneness, floating feeling: Water element is dominant.

Different elements reign in the system and create such different sensations, feelings, emotions, and actions in the body.

**YOGA IN A WORLD OUT OF BALANCE:**

Yoga is a way of harnessing the secret powers of nature within us to manifest our own higher natural potentials for a greater awareness. This requires a deep connection to the world of nature in body, mind and heart. And it requires an individual orientation to the living world, which is not just human society, but all that is animate and inanimate.

Our current civilization is easily the most environmentally unfriendly ever to have arisen on the planet. It promotes various forms of exploitation both socially and environmentally that are undermining the very foundation of life for all creatures. Under its spread, the natural balance continues to fall off in a dramatic way in the world around us. We can observe the dying of the trees in the forests and the uncertain and changing climate and rainfall patterns. Our culture is more and more dependent upon oil and other hydrocarbon artificial energy sources that damage the air we breathe. Whether it is global warming, tidal waves, droughts, floods or hurricanes, Mother Nature does seem to be protesting, and this trend is likely to increase in the years to come. Some
of these problems may occur because we now have extensive and growing human populations in areas that are not normally safe for habitation like deserts, flood planes, beach areas or earthquake-prone regions. But more and more it appears that our own human actions are disturbing the forces of the weather and geology, setting in motion energies that we may not be able to control. Global warming, for example, is just an indication of a whole range of imbalances going on in our world today that should cause us to awaken, take action and make changes while it is still possible.

On top of this external environmental crisis, our current culture has a growing problem in our internal psychological environment. This is easy to observe by such factors as the epidemic of depression striking young and old and the hyperactivity and attention deficit disorders rampant among children. We may have escaped the crippling physical disorders of previous generations only to become psychologically crippled or emotionally disturbed instead. Our culture overall is becoming more and more dependent upon drugs, whether prescription drugs for physical and psychological problems or recreational drugs taken for fun. It is now estimated that around 25% of children are taking regular medications, extending to nearly 90% for the elderly. Even our blood chemistry is no longer natural. Our food similarly is largely processed and contains little natural prana (life force) in it to maintain a natural balance in our own digestive systems.

In our entertainment culture, we spend much more time with the media than with nature, so there is also little that is natural left in our field of impressions as well. Our minds are full of disturbed media images of car wrecks, violence, not with the mountains, sky, water or plants around us. We have little of what yoga calls pratyahara, the ability to gather our energies and look within. We are over-stimulated and externally driven, which in turn makes us feel empty and unstable, particularly when our entertainment is not available.

Our urban environments are largely denaturalized as well, with few of us living on the ground or in touch with it, leaving us in a situation very different from a natural life on Earth. Many people have never planted a garden and don’t know the names of even the most common plants around them. Our society has isolated itself from nature and left very little sacred space anywhere. Each generation seems to be more progressively infected with these anti-natural tendencies.

Working with the nature occurs at both internal and external levels. Internally, we need to balance the forces of our own nature as body, mind, breath and spirit. Externally, we need to harmonize ourselves with the world of nature and with the Cosmic Spirit behind it. Each one of us is a manifestation of the entire universe, and only when we discover the universe within ourselves we can really understand our purpose in life.

Both yoga and ayurveda are all about working with the forces of nature. These are not just material energies, but powers of consciousness. Yoga and ayurveda define this working with nature according to various factors. These include the five elements, the three doshas, the seven chakras and various gods and goddesses which themselves reflect the powers of nature from sexuality to consciousness itself. Attaining our own higher nature, the atman, or purusha--the true Self that is one with the Cosmic Being, or Brahma--is the goal and focus of this process.
Yoga traditionally was practiced in retreat in nature, in the mountains and forests or by the riverbanks and seashores. Yoga students cultivated gardens, took care of cattle and learned how to live in the wild. This lifestyle was an integral part of their training and allowed the natural power of yoga to grow within them as part of their daily lives.

However, yoga’s connection with nature and its concern for the environment is easily obscured, if not lost, in the modern yoga movement and its urban and commercial orientation. Such a yoga of nature is hard to fit into our modern, hectic lifestyles that have little time or space for something sacred to unfold of its own accord, though this is the real movement of yoga.

But in the context of the current global crisis, yoga’s concern for nature is more relevant than ever. It is a crucial factor in the future of the planet and of our species. This yoga of nature is not just a matter of getting everyone to practice asanas, but bringing a yogic way of integration into how we live, balancing the outer and the inner, nature and spirit on a planetary level.

A YOGIC ALTERNATIVE:

Those of us who work in the greater yogic field would be wise to ask: How does yoga view the current state of affairs in the world, and is there a yogic way of action for dealing with it? Clearly our current society is not yogic nor are the political, economic or even religious forces that dominate the world today. Their concern is not with protecting the natural balance or developing any higher awareness. They are mainly concerned with promoting their own vested interests that depend upon the exploitation of both human populations and the world of nature to maintain their own power and hegemony.

A yogic way of action to restore the natural balance is something that is seldom explored, though yoga is all about balance. As the Bhagavad Gita states, *samatvam yoga uchyate*-yoga is the state of balance. We cannot truly think or live yogically without doing so in an ecological way as well.

A truly yogic lifestyle does, of course, minimize our negative impact upon the environment. The yogic emphasis on a vegetarian diet greatly reduces cruelty to animals and exploitation of natural environments. Yogic values of simplicity and self-restraint have their outer ramifications as well, removing us from the consumer world and its excesses.

But yoga is primarily about bringing a higher consciousness into the world. This has a powerful effect even when it is not recognized outwardly and, given the current general spiritual blindness, we cannot expect that it will be, even by our friends and families. The prana that we bring in through yoga has a healing effect upon our environment as well as ourselves. By bringing in these higher energies, yoga has its benefits, without recourse to external actions, which however do have their place. If we simply meditate but don’t change how we live, our meditation may only be a form of escapism or self-indulgence.

Yoga can contribute a higher consciousness and an integral way of working with the forces of life to aid in this process. It can provide a practical philosophy and spiritual methodology for the ecological movement.
True yoga works with nature and is able to awaken the higher powers of nature within us. Bringing out the ecological and planetary importance of yoga and Ayurveda is the real mission to be taken up—and one that has benefits far beyond any boundaries or measurements not only for ourselves, but for future generations.

AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO YOGA:
Each aspect of Yoga relates to a particular ‘loka,’ meaning a layer of world-experience on the many layers of this multi-strata universe. Each aspect of yoga connects us to a corresponding realm of consciousness relative to that loka.

- Yoga postures are about becoming one with the Earth—connecting our body with the forces of the mineral kingdom and its inherent strength and stability. Our spine itself is the Earth or bedrock of our being.

- Yogic breathing practices are about becoming one with the Atmosphere—connecting our breath with the great power of the wind and the bio-electrical forces of nature. Our own breath is also our atmosphere or energy of our being.

- Yogic meditation is about becoming one with the Heavens—having a mind as vast as the sky, which can illumine the world like the Sun. Our own mind is the light of our inner world.

Yoga practices use the forces of nature on an internal level as the powers of fire (speech), wind (breath), water (feeling), earth (body) and space (the empty or silent mind). Yoga also works with the deities (powers of the universal soul or Cosmic Person) behind these elements, linking us to Nature’s inner intelligence. Yoga practices constitute an inner technology of consciousness, the main purpose of which is evolutionary. They show us how to systematically develop the higher potentials latent within our deeper minds and hearts.