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Rave Parties, Yoga, Fashion

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NARAYANI GANESH reports on a yoga trend biting the Big Apple. It's high on meditation, asanas, beats and lights

NEW YORK: How does a 5,000-year-old keep up with the times? Ask yoga. It would be no exaggeration to say that perhaps more than 5,000 interpretations of yoga are now practised around the world, in a process of re-invention that seems an organic feature of the ancient system whose USP is to strengthen the body and clear the mind. You can find yoga's latest *avatar* at New York City, where 'Yoga Rave' is the new buzzword. And it's catching on in other American cities as well. Before you know it, your friendly neighbourhood disco in New Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai or Bangalore may well have re-imported a 'Yoga rave party' from across the shores. With music, meditation and yoga as stimulants, you get the rave effect without having to seek highs through substance abuse.

Art Of Living

The idea comes from Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living Foundation whose youth-oriented Yes! and Yes-Plus! programmes are directed at stress relief through yoga and inspirational motivation. Says an AOL spokesperson: "All proceeds from Yoga Rave go to support Yes!" For schools to bring stress reduction techniques to achieve a healthy lifestyle to promote wellbeing among youth — AOL calls it "Breathing Life into Education" — their experiential curriculum includes stretching and exercise, targeted breathing techniques, life skills in conflict resolution, and life lessons on human values such as responsibility, respect, friendliness, kindness and cooperation. As students learn how to manage their stress in a healthy way, they exhibit greater confidence and motivation to succeed in school and make healthy choices when faced with life's challenges.

A New Kind Of Energy

Coming back to Yoga Rave, this is how it works: it's a new way of partying, **without depending on alcohol and drugs**. *Youngsters dance to the "beats of thousand-year-old mantras spun to electronic beats, crazy lights, a sound system that will blow you away, with breaks of yoga and deep meditation," says a participant. "The whole thing fills you with energy and you get intoxicated without alcohol or drugs!"*

Yoga Rave began in 2007 in Buenos Aires, where AOL musical partners from Argentina, Nicolás Pucci and Rodrigo Bustos have been leading Yoga Rave parties for thousands of people in São Paulo, Berlin, London and other cities in Latin America, Europe, and Africa. What started as a house party feature has now grown to larger scale and has now come to North America and yoga is being seen not only as something you do at home or at class but at **parties** as well.

And so Pacha, a nightclub in west Midtown Manhattan, came alive to the beats of ancient chants with partygoers downing mocktails and jiving to 'rock mantras' while some opted to get

their faces painted by face artists. Shephali Agrawal, a lawyer and a volunteer director at AOL, New York, said: *“Meditation is really discovering the love and bliss within, and dancing is such a natural expression of that... Just connecting to the pulse, to the music allows energy that’s inside to explode outside.”*

In another genre, artist Robert Sturman from California has found great creative expression in focusing on a series of portraits that capture the aesthetics of yogasanas. Sturman’s photographs of 93-year-old yoga master, Tao Porchon Lynch, wearing a red flowing gown doing asanas has been doing the rounds of the web.

Aesthetics Of Asanas

Sturman says he discovered his new interest in 2003, when he began to practise yoga. “I wanted to really go deep into it to make a personal transformation, but I noticed everything around me was so beautiful, and I started to make art out of it. Yoga offered me an opportunity to change my life, but it was also something that was so beautiful to study, the poetry of asana.” His portraits of practitioners in yogic pose reveals something more than what the lens allows him to see. “When someone is very deep into the asana and reaching out with their hands, in the midst of nature or wherever they are, there is something extremely human about it. I think that’s what moves people more than anything. That’s what moves me.”
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