



POWER YOGA IS EARNING BAD KARMA

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SUCCUMBING TO THE BANDWAGON EFFECT? Thoroughly research your health choices

It's vigorous and it melts fat fast. So, why are yoga experts crying foul over the power yoga fad that has taken over city gyms? **Kasmin Fernandes** finds out

Backed by the likes of Bollywood actresses Kareena Kapoor, Kangna Ranaut and Geeta Basra, power yoga is to today's urban Indian woman what aerobics was in the '80s. Practically every gym and fitness centre in the city offers weekly 60 to 90-minute power yoga classes to members. But power yoga — an aggressive and physical take on the traditional discipline — has upset the normally tranquil world of yoga.

Purists dismiss it as a "commercial, supermarket" version of the practice. There have even been claims that, in encouraging beginners to try and push their bodies into quick movements, this and other sport versions

cause injury.

"Power yoga is like any cardiovascular activity, which means that if you stop practicing it you will regain the weight you've

lost. Yoga participants work up a serious sweat. "Power yoga was simply a name I came up with in the late '80s to let people know that *Ashtanga* yoga practice, unlike most of the yoga taught in 70s America was a serious workout," says Beryl Bender Birch on his official website. He is one of the two American yoga teachers, who nearly simultaneously coined the term. Los Angeles-based Bryan Kest is the other — both students of *Ashtanga* guru Sri K Pattabhi Jois. Their version has poses followed up with strength training while synchronising one's breathing patterns to each *Vinyasa*

story. Says yoga columnist and teacher Shameem Akhtar, "Static poses are very difficult while fast-paced ones are for beginners. This may explain the peculiar culture of the misnamed power yoga in Mumbai, where people are made to do *asanas* faster."

Patanjali and *Hatha* yoga teacher Dharam Choudhry puts this fad down to lack of training. He says, "Quickie courses teach poses but not the nuances of proper alignment and intentional correct breathing." Since the instructor does not need to invest much time to learn or teach the form, he/she can tag the glamorous label of yoga to any set of stretches.

"So, essentially, it is like doing warm-ups for the entire workout session!" says Akhtar.

Compare that to tra-

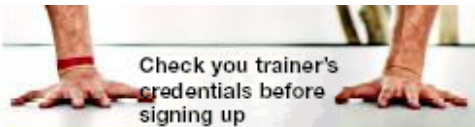
ditional schools of yoga that lay a good foundation for long-lasting and all-round fitness and wellbeing. Says Duggal, "Whether it's *Ashtanga* or *Bihar*

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weight you've lost," says yoga therapist Samanta Duggal. In her 20 years of teaching, she has seen many such cases. "Doing repetitive *asanas* and 100 *Surya Namaskars* with no emphasis on alignment is a sure-shot way to injury — to the neck, shoulder, toes, knees, hips and lower back."

Where traditional forms of yoga, as practiced by Lara Dutta and Abhay Deol, encourage mindful, breath-controlled movement, power



What is power yoga?

A sporty, commercial derivative of *Ashtanga* yoga, power yoga is essentially an up-tempo aerobic workout, where yoga poses are done faster and in continuation.

Since power yoga is a widely used term that was never trademarked, instructors usually lend their personal interpretation to classes.

(movement), with attention to *Tristhana* (posture, breath, and focal point for the gaze).

But the kind taught in gyms out here is a different

Sivananda, Binar, Iyengar, *Vini* yoga from the Krishnamacharya lineage, they all have a holistic approach." If combined with the right diet, weight loss in traditional yoga is quite amazing and just as immediate, according to Choudhry. Besides, traditional and classical forms have long-lasting benefits not only in muscular tone and endurance but also your endocrine system.

Still want to sign up for power yoga? Check the trainer's credentials.