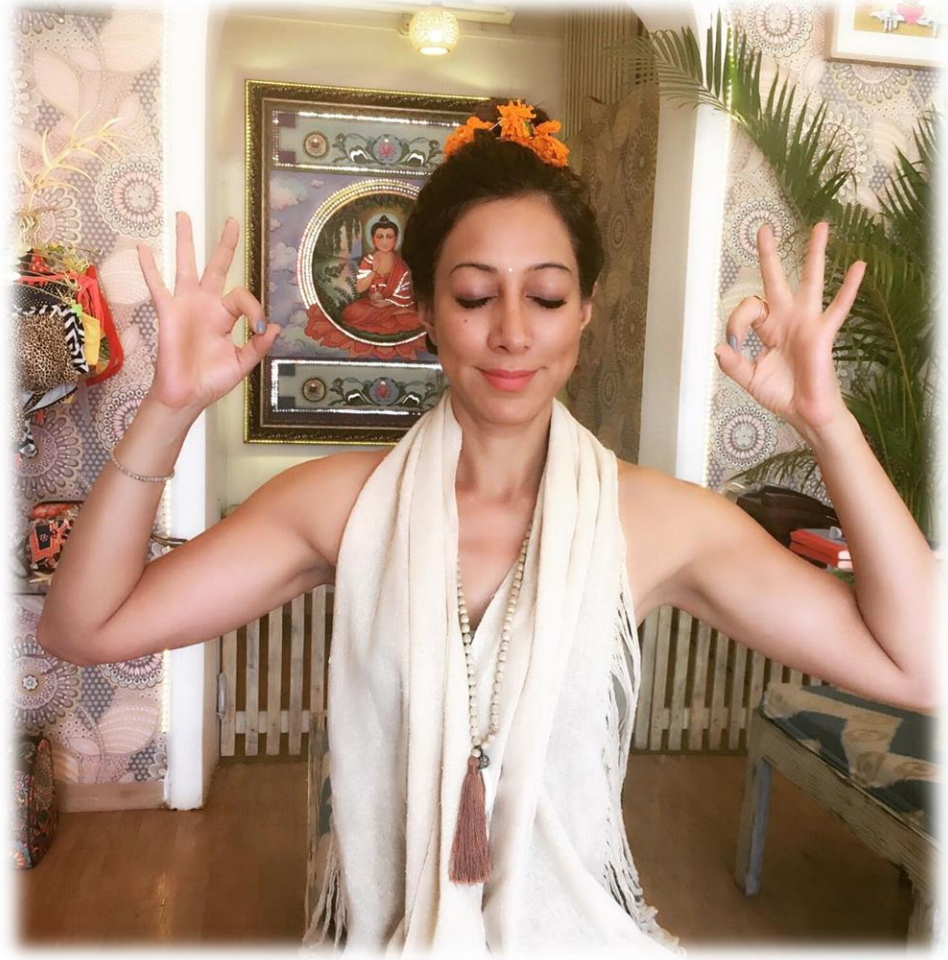


# YOGALINI



To say that I have had an erratic lifestyle would be an understatement. I have always pushed myself mentally and physically, burning the candle at both ends. I have partied like crazy and worked like a maniac. There was a time when I didn't get enough sleep and was always tired. Of course, this kind of lifestyle leads to mental stress, and eventually, a deep unrest within. It happened with me as well-I was often depressed and felt like I wasn't fulfilling my potential. But I'm not the only one. These feelings are so common these days. Nobody wants to miss out on anything. And slowing down is an option that people seldom choose.

But everyone also has their own form of release—a way to disconnect from the chaos within. Yoga is a popular choice these days, and I have practiced it since childhood. But while it kept me physically fit, I was still on a search, trying to find the missing piece that would complete me. My interest in the practice started at the age of six, when my mother bought me a children’s yoga book. It had pictures of gorgeous kids in complicated postures. I wanted to be just like them. I began practicing those poses every day until I managed to do them all. In boarding school, I became obsessed with gymnastics, practicing for many hours on end. Afterwards, I went to New York, just in time for the yoga explosion in the early ‘90s



I was well and truly hooked. Over the course of the last decade, I have been to many ashrams—The Art of Living Foundation in Bengaluru, the OSHO International Meditation Resort in Pune, to Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Ashram in Coimbatore. I also went to various retreats around the world, including a commune in Ojai, California, where I tried Ayahuasca, a hallucinogenic, native American plant that is used by shamans to open their minds.

Still, there was an emptiness. A feeling that there was something more waiting for me. And it had all started with a slip of the tongue.

At a press conference last year, a journalist asked me what was next for me. Without thinking I answered that I wanted to be a yoga teacher. Before I knew it, it was printed in many newspapers. Now that I had said it, I had to do it.

The perfect opportunity came when I went with a friend for her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday to Bali last year. The island is a well-known yoga destination, and it was like killing two birds with one stone. Or so I thought. I was looking for a training programme from mid-July to mid-August, the only time I was able to take an entire month off from work. But locals told me that it was a difficult time of the year to find a teacher training course. Because Bali in July/August is what Goa is in December. Such an opportunity would be rare, if not impossible.



Sad, but still hopeful, my friend and I spent one afternoon walking through rice fields in Ubud, lighting incense sticks in the shrines. We took turns to pray and make wishes. As the day wore on, we found ourselves standing outside a bamboo gate which had a colourful sign that read 'Naya Ubud'. We decided to explore what was behind the gate and came upon a bevy of beautiful, tanned, and toned female students in the midst of a raw food cooking class. When I asked about what other courses were available, I was told that there was also a teacher training course that I could take for the exact dates that I had hoped for—mid July to mid-August. We took a lift from one of the receptionists on her scooter and rushed to the room we had rented to get cash as an advance for the course.



From then on began the most magical time of my life. I remember my seven-year-old nephew had whispered to me in New York just a month earlier, “*Masi*, you’re in heaven and, you just don’t know it”. That sentence played over and over in my mind when the training began in July. We learnt all about the science of kundalini (as taught by Yogi Bhanjan), yoga philosophy, and human anatomy. We danced, we laughed, and we cried. The course wasn’t just about the technicalities of yoga—we were encouraged by our wonderful and brilliant teacher to be creative. She had an alternative method of teaching and made us direct small skits about yoga-related subjects, such as what happens when your root chakra is out of balance. We had meditations where we would dance and learn to move our bodies in ways that would energize us.





We were encouraged to open ourselves and share our deepest, darkest secrets that taught us how to trust. We learnt how to nourish ourselves with food and love. It was a release for all of us. My teacher met the love of her life a day after the course was over.

These days I mostly practice kundalini yoga. It's a perfect fit for me because it gives instant results. It activates the kundalini energy located at the base of the spine. When this energy is activated, you can live life to your highest potential. Because it helps to expand awareness—life becomes rich, meaningful, entertaining, and fulfilling. I love the combination of the music-mantra-kriya-breath work, and the energy created in kundalini yoga. It is perfectly suited to who I am. When I finish a class, I feel stronger physically and mentally. I am now a kundalini yoga teacher and I absolutely love it.



After this experience, I see magic every single day. They say only those who believe in magic 'see it', and I see it all the time.

My beloved dog passed away two weeks ago and I was heartbroken. The night after she left her body, I prayed in bed, "Vita, send me a sign that you can hear me, and know that I love and miss you." The next morning, I opened my door to discover a big, fluffy white feather at the centre of my doormat. That was Vita for sure.



Kundalini yoga is the reason behind this new experience. It works 60 times faster than other forms of yoga to bring about positive changes. So every class is magical. I can visibly see the difference on the faces of my students when we finish class. For me, teaching has been the most enriching experience of my life. I would love to teach as much as I can. I can't say I will take it up full time, but it is one thing that helps me detach from situations. I feel joyous and high on my own supply. These days I feel stronger and more awakened. Little things don't bother me as much as they used to. I feel my decisions have also changed. I make choices based on my intuition and what is good for my higher purpose. In kundalini yoga we chant '*sat nam*' a lot. It means 'I am my truth'. So to help someone find their truth is rewarding to say the least. As for me, my ultimate aim is to live a yogic life—a life where I am united with my truth. I don't know when I will reach this destination, but I'm happy that the magical journey has begun.

