

## Advanced Teacher Training Course at Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute

**K**aivalyadhama Yoga Institute was founded in 1924 by Swami Kuvalyananda (1883-1966). It is located on 160 acres on the outskirts of Lonavala, an old British hill station midway between Mumbai and Pune in the Western Ghats Mountains in Maharashtra, India. Swami Kuvalyananda, who was Yoga therapist to Mohandas Gandhi, believed that “Yoga has a complete message for humanity. It has a message for the human body. It has a message for the human mind and it has also a message for the human soul.” He went on to advise his followers, “I have brought up this Institute out of nothing. Even if it goes to nothing, I do not mind, but the Yoga should not be diluted.”

I chose to study at Kaivalyadhama because of the Institute's strict adherence to the teachings of the classical Yoga tradition; its 80 years of literary and scientific research into Yoga; and its decades of experience running a Yogic hospital. It was the first institute in modern India to teach Yoga according to the classical Sanskrit Yoga texts: Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the *Hathapradipika*, the *Gheranda Samhita*, and others. The Institute is divided into five sections: the Scientific Research Department (SRD); the Philosophico-Literary Research Department; the College of Yoga and Cultural Synthesis; a Yogic hospital; and an ashram.

Kaivalyadhama's Advanced Teacher Training Course is open to Yoga teachers who have at least three years of teaching experience. This one-month training is intended to provide experienced Yoga teachers with a deeper understanding of the classical Yoga tradition and training in its application to themselves and their students. The course comprises classroom lectures, reading assignments, research projects, and practical classes; it culminates with theoretical and practical examinations and teaching demonstrations. Depending on campus accommodation choice, the total cost is \$1,000-1,500 U.S., which includes meals.

Students attend daily lectures on Anatomy and Physiology of Yoga Practices; Ayurveda; Textual Understanding of Classical Yoga Texts; Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*; Psycholo-



gy of Yoga; Yoga and Value Education; and Yoga and Physical Education. In addition, there are twice-daily practical classes in which students learn to practice—exactly as they are described in the ancient Hatha Yoga texts—*kriyas*, *asanas*, *mudras*, *bandhas*, *pranayamas*, and meditation techniques.

At the end of the course, a three-fold examination is required. First is a two-part theoretical exam. This begins with a written exam requiring detailed essays covering all subject areas studied. Each student then sits before an oral examination board (in my case, an allopathic medical doctor, a psychologist, and a monk who is a Sanskrit expert) and answers all questions posed to the satisfaction of the examiners. In the practical examinations, students must demonstrate *asanas*, *pranayamas*, *mudras*, *bandhas*, and *kriyas*. Finally, teaching demonstrations are required in which students prepare lesson plans and handouts as well as lead classes. Students are graded and if they pass are awarded an Advanced Yoga Teaching Certification.

### The Scientific Research Department

During the training, students visit the SRD laboratories and study with the research staff who teach the classes on Anatomy and Physiology of Yoga Practices, Psychology of Yoga, and Yoga and Physical Education.

Kaivalyadhama was one of the first places in the world to begin scientific investi-

gations into Yogic practices. Since 1924, when Swami Kuvalyananda established the SRD, their team of researchers has used modern scientific equipment to study Yoga techniques from the perspectives of physiology, biochemistry, radiology, neuropsychology, and physical education. The SRD has worked to standardize Yogic research techniques to produce experimentally verifiable results.

The SRD has even at times invented special research equipment. A “nostril dominance apparatus” was invented to monitor the effect of various Yoga practices on nostril dominance in test subjects. Results showed that subjects with right nostril dominance tended toward hyperactivity and sympathetic dominance in the autonomic nervous system. Those with left nostril dominance tended toward hypoactivity and parasympathetic dominance. Certain forward-bending *asanas* were found to balance the flow of air through both nostrils, thus helping to balance hemispheric functioning of the brain.

*Pranayama*—with its special features such as an exhalation twice the length of inhalation, closure of one nostril and partial closure of the glottis—serves to slow the breathing rate. This in turn, raises the CO<sub>2</sub> level in the blood, which helps to lower the heart rate and metabolism; combined with the reduced O<sub>2</sub> levels, it is a sort of natural antioxidant therapy that may improve longevity. With the reduced cellular metabolism, cells use less oxygen, nutrients, and

endocrine secretions. This allows more energy to be available to the body, helps improve thinking ability and concentration, and produces a more introverted meditative state of consciousness.

One study that was discussed found that *kapalbhati* raised O<sub>2</sub> levels and reduced CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the blood. It is believed that this reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> is why classic Yoga texts categorize *kapalbhati* as a *kriya* and not a *pranayama*.

These and other findings of the SRD are published in the journal *Yoga Mimamsa* (since 1924) and are used to update the curriculum at the Yoga College and the Yoga therapy protocols at the Yogic hospital.

## The Kaivalyadhama Yogic Hospital

While students in the course were able to visit the hospital, observe Yoga therapy sessions, and were taught by therapists and doctors at the hospital, we did not actually work in the hospital.

The Yogic hospital at Kaivalyadhama is a residential hospital offering patients a Yoga therapy program based on the classical Yoga tradition combined with research results. into the therapeutic effects of Yoga. Yoga therapy is given in conjunction with Ayurvedic and Naturopathic treatments. The hospital has successfully treated numerous conditions, including: arthritis, asthma, back pain, diabetes, neurosis, obesity, and spondylitis.

The hospital's integrated system of Yoga therapy uses the *pancha kosha* model (physical, energy, mental, wisdom, and bliss sheaths) of human beings. The approach is to:

- Purify the *nadis* via detoxification
- Recondition the neuro-muscular system in order to increase immunity
- Cultivate a positive psychological attitude so that patients are better able to cope with the stresses of life

Patients are also taught the important role of proper lifestyle and diet in the treatment and prevention of disease.

## The College of Yoga and Cultural Synthesis

Through lectures and outside reading assignments on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and other classical Yoga literature, we learned that traditional Indian philosophy is not merely theoretical, it also provides a practical means for

overcoming suffering. Three types of pain or suffering are identified:

- Intraorganic (*adhyatmika*)—caused by oneself due to ignorance, ego, anger, overattachment, desire, etc.
- Extraorganic (*adhibhautika*)—caused by external forces such as disease-causing organisms, animals, and other humans
- Supernatural (*adhidaivika*)—caused by disasters such as floods, drought, fire, earthquakes, etc.

Yoga can help to remove the causes of intraorganic pain, and while it cannot prevent extraorganic and supernatural pain it may help to rehabilitate those affected.

Beginning in the *Upanishads*, one first encounters the Fourfold Theory of Caturvyuha, namely:

- *Heya*—also known as dukka or suffering from the cycles of samsara
- *Heyahetu*—the cause of suffering
- *Hana*—freedom from suffering
- *Hanopaya*—the means to achieve *hana*

This concept, with only slight variation, is also found in Ayurveda, The Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, and in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. This has led some scholars to consider Patanjali as the first Yoga therapist. According to Patanjali pain, depression, tremors of the body, and disturbed breathing are symptoms of psychosomatic disturbances. Disturbances arise when one or more of the five *kleshas* (misperception, egoism, overattachment, hatred, fear of loss) interacts with hereditary and environmental factors leading to mental agitation (*chitta vritti*). Left unchecked, these disturbances can develop into somatic or physical disorders, which in time can create new negative *samskaras* (lingering impressions and patterns) that can further adversely affect the mind and body of the individual.

By regular practice (*abhyasa*) and detachment (*viragya*), one can lessen the influence of the five *kleshas* and develop a more positive mind-body relationship, which improves one's response pattern to stress. For those unable to initially practice *abhyasa* and *viragya*, Patanjali recommends Kriya Yoga with its eight limbs (*ashtanga*): *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadi*. This will bring an integration of the body, speech, and mind, helping one to transcend the *kleshas*, still the mind, and establish oneself in one's own true nature, which is the ultimate remedy for suffering.

## The Philosophico-Literary Research Department

One of the world's largest and finest collections of Yoga texts, a 25,000 volume library, is housed in the Philosophico-Literary Research Department. Here, scholars work on collecting, critically editing, translating, and publishing ancient Yoga manuscripts. They also do the important work of reconstructing "extinct" Yogic texts, which were lost during the invasions of the last 1000 years. While most commonly available editions of the *Hathapradipika* contain only four chapters, recent discoveries have revealed that there are actually a total of ten chapters. In chapter five, one finds a description of remedies for the ill effects of improper Yoga practice. Elsewhere it is stated that from proper practice of Hatha Yoga one gains "stability of body and mind, freedom from disease (*aroga*) and lightness." The *Goraksa Sataka* states "*asana* removes disease." As an unhealthy body and mind are hindrances to Yoga practice, the ancient texts also recommend the use of Ayurveda to restore health so that one can regain health and progress on the path of Yoga. Students in the Advanced Teacher Training course are able to use the library in the course of their reading and research assignments.

One highlight of my time at Kaivalyadhama was being mentored by Professor G.S. Sahay of the Philosophico-Literary Research Department. Professor Sahay is a Sanskrit scholar and an expert in the ancient Hatha Yoga texts. He has conducted an in-depth study of Yoga therapy references in the classical Sanskrit Yoga literature (including the *Upanishads*, ancient Tantric Hatha Yoga texts, and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*). My mentorship with Prof. Sahay was informal, not part of the official curriculum. He saw my keen interest in the subject and took me under his wing. We had many wonderful discussions in his office after class and he continues to share with me his notes, papers, and many insights gained over a lifetime devoted to preserving the ancient Yoga tradition.

According to the ancient texts, the root causes of most disease stem from the following: (1) malfunctioning *vayu*, (2) weak *jatharagni* (digestive strength), (3) hyperfunctioning of *chitta* (mind), (4) unbalanced diet, (5) improper practice of Yoga, and (6) imbalance of the three *doshas* (*vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*).  
(continued on page 29)



Some references mention specific diseases by name, others use Ayurvedic terminology, while others describe physiological effects.

Of the 36 texts surveyed, 23 have mentioned the therapeutic value of Hatha Yoga practices. Of the 110 *asanas* described in the classical texts, 13 are said to have specific therapeutic value; four of these *asanas* are meditative poses, which suggests the psychosomatic origin of many diseases. Of the 23 varieties of *kriyas* mentioned in the ancient texts, all are said to have therapeutic value. Eleven varieties of *pranayama* are said to have therapeutic value. In addition, 13 *mudras* and three *bandhas* also have therapeutic value. The texts go on to recommend specific techniques for specific diseases. In addition, means for correcting imbalances of the three Ayurvedic *doshas vata, pitta, and kapha* are given. *Vata* disorders can best be treated with *asana, kriyas, pranayama, mudra, and bandhas*, while *pitta* and *kapha* disorders are best treated with *kriyas* and *pranayama*.

Obviously, we moderns are not the first to have considered the therapeutic potential of Yoga.

Each system of healing has its own unique system of anatomy, diagnosis, and treatment. Today some are superimposing an allopathic model upon Yoga therapy. However, if we study the classical texts of Yoga, we find that Yoga has its own unique system of anatomy. This system can be used in addition to the current scientific model of anatomy, which focuses almost entirely upon the physical level (*annamaya kosha*). Yoga also has its own unique treatment methods (*yamas, niyamas, diet, kriyas, asana, pranayama, mudras, bandhas, mantras, meditation, etc.*).

My studies at Kaivalyadhama reconfirmed my belief that if Yoga is to be established as its own system of therapy, it needs its own model of anatomy, disease, and standardized treatment protocols. Rather than trying to reinvent the wheel and risk diluting and distorting Yoga, modern-day Yoga teachers and therapists could use the vast store of wisdom and experience that the ancient Yogis left for us in the classical texts. In this way, innovation within the field of Yoga therapy would have a textual basis and remain true to the original teachings.

For those Yoga teachers interested in gaining a solid foundation in the classical Yoga tradition, Kaivalyadhama offers a unique combination of a scientific approach with roots in the ancient Yoga texts, and a teaching and therapy program that have proven successful over many decades of practical experience that is still evolving today. **YTT**



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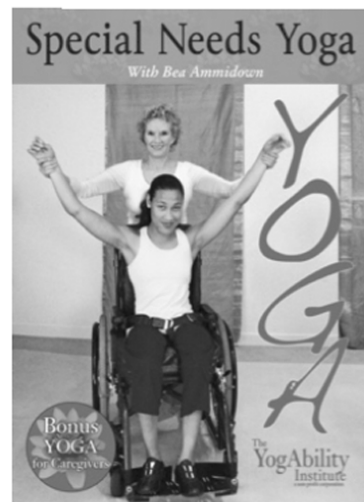
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