

YOGA RESEARCH

The Yoga Research Society Newsletter

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Yoga from the Viewpoint of Modern Medicine

"The human organism is an earthen pot – bake it in the flames of Yoga"
(Gheranda Samhita)

Hatha Yoga is an elaborate and reliable empirical system leading to the homeostasis of the regulatory processes. This aspect of Yoga became a constituent of Ayurveda, the traditional Indian system of medical sciences. Ayurveda is characterized by its everlasting "modern" approach – an emphasis on prevention and viewing the human organism as a whole.

One of the most merited personalities, who knew how useful Hatha Yoga could be for the modern man, was Swami Kuvalayananda. He was the founder of Kaivalyadhama, a world-renowned Yoga institution, and he initiated the journal YOGA MIMAMSA. He himself studied medicine and – what is most important – introduced systematic scientific Yoga research using modern medical approaches.

Hatha Yoga involves scales of exercises graded according to difficulty, beginning with the very easy ones suitable to seriously ill patients (e.g. Shavasana or Anuloma Viloma), up to the most difficult ones, for which the performer needs longlasting preparation. The latter enables the extreme stability of regulatory processes.

Swami Kuvalayananda designed different sets of exercises according to the capacity of pupils and created a new Asana (Vakrasana) to help beginners.

For medical purposes the following categories of Hatha Yogic exercises should be taken into account:

1) Asana (posture), 2) Bandha (lock), a defined arrangement of contracted muscles pressing, as a rule, reflexogenic areas, 3) Mudra (gestures), similar to Bandha, but with some symbolic meaning, 4) Kriya (cleansing processes),

stimulating reflexogenic areas and mucoses, 5) Pranayama (Yogic breathing exercises), including breath holding, and 6) Mantra (pronounced or mentally recited syllables or texts), according to special prescriptions of old tradition.



DR. CTIBOR DOSTÁLEK

Hatha Yoga includes both relaxation (inhibitory) and activation (excitatory) exercises. A prototype of relaxation Asanas is Shavasana. Through its myorelaxatory impact an anxiolytical effect is being achieved. This was used in the classic works using Hatha Yoga to manage hypertension. Yogic exercises, if properly used, are without any side effect in contrast to synthetic pharmaco.

The relaxation effect can be reached by means of Mantra Yoga, if the Mantra is mentally repeated in a calm way. On the other hand, an exalted repetition of Mantras produces excitation.

A calming recitation of Mantras introduces a slight autohypnotic state which can be used for health supporting auto-instructions (as well as other auto-instructions). Investigation of the simplest forms of Mantric meditation are in accord with our experiments on attention: monotonous and longlasting tasks lead to a restriction of consciousness within a limited part of the central nervous system.

Similarly, in EEG measurements during meditation, stimuli (producing alpha-blockade in EEG in a relaxed normal state) became ineffective as a consequence of restricted excitability.

The beginning of meditation produces in EEG, as a rule, an alpha rhythm of high amplitude developing into theta rhythm, and eventually delta. This activity begins

A calming recitation of Mantras introduces a slight autohypnotic state...

sometimes in frontal leads, and seems to be specific for meditation. Frontal theta activity can be connected with a pleasant feeling. High voltage beta rhythm together with vegetative arousal has been observed in well-trained Yogis at the supposed culmination of meditation.

A set of relaxing Hatha Yoga exercises was proved successful in secondary prevention of myocardial infarction. An important mechanism of Hatha Yoga relaxation is extended expiration, during which the level of excitability of the organism is lower.

Appropriate use of Asanas together with Yogic breathing exercises can release muscular contractions related to vertebral problems and can improve the function of the vertebral column in general.

excerpted from a paper
by Ctibor Dostálek, M.D.

Dr. Dostálek will be a featured speaker at the October 15 & 16th Yoga Research Society Conference

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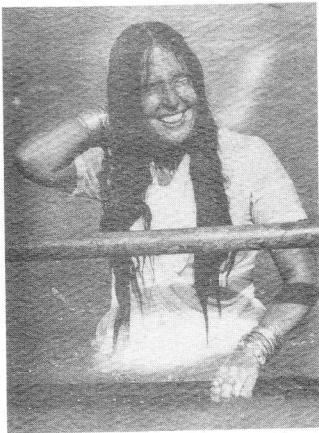
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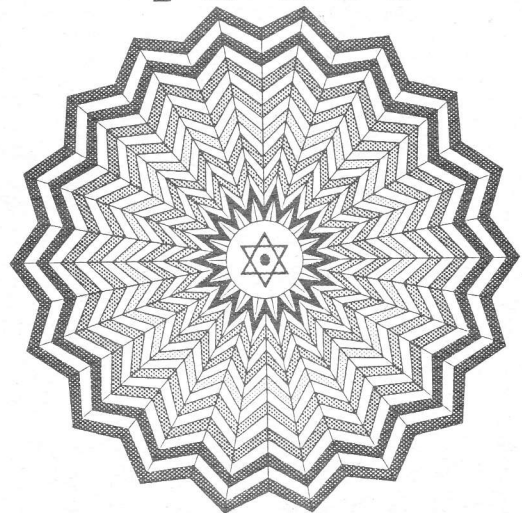
*Children play by my River
Sadhus stay by my River
Cities old by my River
Temples made of gold by my River
Cows stray all the day by my River
Young men and women now die by my River
We are all the widows who cry by my River
1008 candles drift on the leaves that float on my River
They light the hope of the many by my River*

*River, River, I am thirsty
I am burning, my River
Quench my thirst, my Mother*

*I need the River to know her own
Ganga take my children home
Let them feel your abundance
Let them know your tears
Let them know that you, the Ganga, are always near*

excerpted from THE RIVER
by Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati

YOGA



SEARCH FOR PEACE

**The 20th Yoga Research Society Conference
October 15 & 16, 1994, Philadelphia**

Presenting The
Swami Kuvalayananda Yoga Research Prize

Featured speakers include:

MA JAYA BHAGAVATI
Kashi Ashram, Vero Beach, Florida

CTIBOR DOSTÁLEK, M.D.
Charles University, Prague, Czechoslovakia

DAVID FRAWLEY, O.M.D.
American Institute of Vedic Studies, Santa Fe

LEE LIPSENTHAL, M.D.
Dean Ornish Research Institute, Sausalito

G. RAMAKRISHNA, Ph.D.
The National College (Ret.), Bangalore, India

VIJAYENDRA PRATAP, Ph.D.
Sky Foundation, Philadelphia

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