

Swami Kunalayananda His Life And Mission

by Dr. M. L. Gharote

On 18th April 1966 India lost a great Educationist—one of the pioneers of Indian Physical Education—and the first of the greatest exponent of Scientific Yoga.

Swami Kunalayananda, alias J. G. Gune, was born on 30th August 1883.

He had to struggle hard for his education.

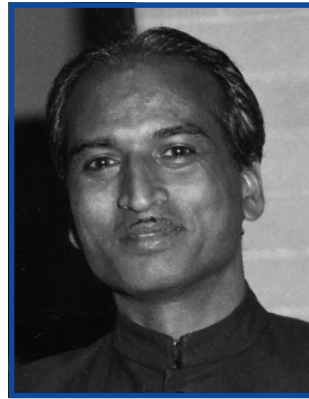
During his student days he was very much influenced by the personalities of the political leaders like Lokmanya Tilak and Shri Aurobindo and his national idealism and ardent patriotism prompted him to give up his studies early to be able to contribute his might in India's struggle for freedom.

But owing to the persuasion of many well-wishers he started his studies again and finally graduated in Arts in 1910.

Even in his student days he had adopted the following ideals of life:

- 1) To prepare a patriotic young generation through suitable secondary and higher education.
- 2) To master the Indian system of Physical Education and integrate it with general education.
- 3) To bring together science and spirituality by co-ordinating with modern science the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of Yoga.

Now, after he has left us, if we review the achievements of his life, we shall find that he had attained those ideals to a great extent.



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He was associated with the Khandesh Education Society from 1916 to 1923, during which period he taught high school and college students how to develop love for Indian culture, maintaining perfect catholicity towards all other cultures, so that ultimately a universal culture may come into being.

He was the Principal of the National College, Amalner when it had to be closed down in 1920 due to the displeasure of the British Government on account of the national spirit prevalent in that institution.

Swamiji received his training in the Indian system of Physical Education from the perfect master of that system--Rajratna Prof. Manikrao of Baroda.

During the period of this training 1907 to 1910, he realised more than ever that the classroom and the

playground must fuse and form one unit if anything like world-citizenship was to be realised; and he could give concrete shape to this idea when he was elected Chairman of the Physical Education committee appointed by the Bombay Government in 1937.

This was a great event in the history of Indian Physical Education because the recommendations of this Committee were accepted forthwith by the Government of Bombay and the first Training Institute for Physical Education, based mainly on indigenous methods, was established in 1938 at Kandivali (Bombay) and was run under the sole guidance of Swamiji. Simultaneously, a Board of Physical Education was formed to advise the Government on physical education and Swami Kunalayananda worked as the Chairman of this Board for twelve long years.

Swami Kunalayananda's methods of physical education were based on sound scientific principles and great emphasis was laid by him on indigenous physical exercises, on idealism and patriotism.

The programme of physical education suggested by him included all the nation-building activities. Through his speeches as the President of different conferences and functions he successfully propagated his belief about the significant role of physical education.

Swamiji was nominated a member of the Central Advisory Board of



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Physical Education and Recreation in 1948. Since then he continued to be a member of this Board till August 1964. While he was a member of the Board, he worked on various sub-committees including the Research Sub-Committee.

Introduction of Yogic exercises in the programme of physical education was his great contribution to Education in India.

On being initiated by Paramahansa Madhavadasji Maharaj, a great Yogin of Malsar, into the secret realms of Yoga in all its aspects, Swamiji was deeply impressed by the uncanny psycho-physical effects of Yogic practices, and the rationalist in him sought a scientific explanation for them.

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by individuals and institutions who
received inspiration from him.*

Consequently in 1924 he founded Kaivalyadhama with the main object of conducting and propagating scientific and textual research in Yoga and published his researches in the journal called "Yoga-Mimamsa."

His interpretation of the old science on modern scientific lines attracted the attention not only of great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Malaviyaji, Lala Lajapatrai, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, but also of foreign scholars.

Yale University of U. S. A. sent Mr. K. T. Behanan for his doctoral study in Yoga to work under the guidance of Swami Kuvalayananda. Josephine Rathbone, an American leader of Physical Education, from Columbia University also came to him to receive training in the Yogic aspect of physical education.

In India too, as early as 1928, the U.P. Government deputed Dr. A. Souza, the Director of Public Instruction, to assess the suitability of introducing Yogic exercises in the schools of Uttar Pradesh. He submitted his report in 1928 strongly recommending introduction of these exercises in the curriculum

and approving the scheme of training teachers in Yogic exercises submitted by Swamiji who was invited by the U. P. Government in 1932 for initiating the scheme.

For the first time in history, Swami Kuvalayananda formulated a graded syllabus of Yogic exercises to be introduced in the physical education programme. These exercises were officially included in the syllabus vide Report of the Physical Education Committee of Bombay State in 1937. Later many Indian Universities approached him for help in introducing Yogic exercises in their respective Universities.

Swami Kuvalayananda was the first person to start research in the Yogic aspect of physical education in the country and he was a great source of inspiration to many who took up this work. His efforts have gone a long way towards eliminating from Yoga all the superstitions and irrational elements and contributed much to a rational understanding of this great art and science of Ancient India.

Gradually Swamiji realised that the cause of Yoga will not be served only by introducing Yogic exercises in the syllabi. It is also necessary to have personnel properly trained in Yogic methods. Therefore, at the suggestion of the Government of India, a short course in Yogic exercises for giving the required knowledge, both theoretical and practical, was instituted at Kaivalyadhama, Lonavla. It is now held every year in the month of May.

Apart from this, for those who want to go into the deeper aspects of Yoga, Swamiji established a College named G. S. College of Yoga and Cultural Synthesis at Lonavla in 1950. All the facilities like free tuition, free board and lodging and stipendary arrangement in limited cases, are provided to those aspirants who seek admission to this College.

Though he has left his mortal coil, Swami Kuvalayananda is still alive in his mission which is being carried on by individuals and institutions who received inspiration from him.

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