

## Yoga and Yoga Therapy in Japan

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### General Information

In Japan, interest in Yoga has been growing since 1970s. As a result, we now estimate practitioners to number between 500,000 to one million, or about one percent of the Japanese population. According to Dr. Robin Monro of the Yoga Biomedical Trust in England, this is about the same percentage as in the United Kingdom.

As is true elsewhere, there are more women practitioners than men. Many Yoga classes are taught in private Yoga schools and centers, each of which has its own method, but fitness clubs in big towns have recently begun Yoga lessons as well. The latter is due to Yoga having becoming associated with many Hollywood stars and other U.S. celebrities.

The Yoga practiced in fitness clubs consists primarily of physical, Iyengar-style Yoga exercises for the healthy, younger generation. The membership fee for these clubs is around \$100US per month, and once you become a member, you can use the swimming pool and other facilities and take other classes, including jazz dance, aerobics, and so on.

Most of the Yoga classes in Japan are taught at regional community centers. Lessons are usually given once a week and are 90 minutes in duration. Most of the participants are women, but we also see a few retired men. The lesson fee for these classes is quite inexpensive, ranging from \$5?10US per month. The average number of participants in these Yoga classes is 10?20. Yoga instructors at these regional centers are primarily volunteer housewives who teach simple Yoga physical exercises or simple pranayama and meditation.

Japanese people practice Yoga for many reasons: to increase health, for beauty, for therapy, for rehabilitation, and for healthy, active childbirth. Some are also very much interested in spirituality. In addition to learning Yoga directly from Yoga instructors, students learn from the many books and videos available at bookstores.

## About Japan Yoga Niketan

Japan Yoga Niketan has been conducting a Yoga Instructors Certificate Course (YICC) and a Yoga Therapist Instructors Course (YTIC) using the sVYASA (Swami Vivekananda Yoga Research Center of Bangalore, India) method since 1986. From 2000 to 2004, we have trained c. 850 Yoga instructors through YICC.

YICC is provided by the Japan Vivekananda Yoga Kendra (head office: Yonago City; director: Kazuo Keishin Kimura). This course is conducted in many cities in Japan, including Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Fukuoka, Kanazawa, Kitakami, Sapporo, Okinawa, etc.

We have had great success in providing the YTIC training as well. More than 400 graduates of the YICC training have moved on to YTIC. This type of education is very helpful for Yoga instructors, enabling them to work with various types of psychosomatic disorders in their Yoga classes.

The duration of the Yoga Instructors Certificate Course (YICC) is 10 days, seven hours per day, and the duration of the Yoga Therapist Instructors Course (YTIC) is 20 days, seven hours per day. Students also are assigned research papers and individual training.

The duration of the original sVYASA programs in Bangalore, India, is one month for YICC and six months for YTIC. When we first introduced the sVYASA program in Japan, we invited instructors from Bangalore, and the YICC training took 24 days because it required English interpretation. This doubled the time, and the speed of Indian teaching was very slow. Now we are able to provide the lectures in Japanese, which has allowed us to shorten the training period.

Total training hours might look short compared to similar programs in other countries. We believe, however, that our program is sufficient because Japanese people already have experience in Indian spiritual culture. As is well known, Japan has been under the influence of one Indian spiritual practice?Buddhism?for more than a thousand years. As a result, we are quite familiar with the Indian system of mental control, i.e., Yoga, and we are generally experienced in controlling our mind, surviving in our stressful society, developing good relationships with others, cultivating detachment from worldly things, concentrating on various kinds of works, and sitting for meditation for a prolonged period of time.

I have come to this conclusion after spending nearly 30 years with my Raja-Yoga mahatma and my Indian gurubais (senior disciples) in the Himalayas. In addition, participants in our programs are highly educated (90 percent of participants are women, and they have all finished high school, with 30,40 percent having also graduated from college), which allows us to begin the training at a more advanced level.

## Japan Yoga Therapy Society

The Japan Yoga Therapy Society (JYTS) was established in August 2003. This academic society has about 500 members, including medical doctors, nurses, Yoga instructors, and various types of therapists. There are no governmental regulations for Yoga therapy at this time. JYTS aims to develop standards for Yoga therapy and to maintain the quality of Yoga therapy through research and training. We believe this will help to gain confidence in Yoga therapy by Japanese society.

## International Activities and Others

Beside these Yoga trainings for the general public, Japan Yoga Niketan also provides various traditional Yoga teaching classes in several big cities in Japan, including lectures on the Yoga-Sutra, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanishads, the Brahma-Sutras and the Mahabharata. We also provide several Hatha-Yoga and Raja-Yoga meditation classes for advanced Yoga instructors.

We have a close relationship with the Korean Yoga Teacher ' s Association, having exchanged speakers and participants for Yoga conferences every year since 2001. We hope to establish an international Yoga therapy research and education program in cooperation with Yoga therapists in the United States, Europe, and other developed countries where many people are suffering from various types of psychosomatic and mental disorders.

We hope that IAYT ' s work is a great success