

Acharya Mirabai: a profile

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles which will present profiles of some Acharyas of Babaji's Kriya Yoga who are making unusual contributions based upon their knowledge of Yoga)

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Mirabai (Lourdes Planas Calvo) lives in Barcelona, Spain. She began to practice Yoga in 2002 and was initiated into Babaji's Kriya Yoga in 2004. Subsequently she participated in the second and third initiation seminars, and completed her certification in Babaji's Kriya Hatha Yoga. She has also made three Kriya Yoga pilgrimages to India, two in the South and one in the Himalayas, plus the Kriya Yoga Kumba Mela pilgrimage in 2010. She is the mother of three children, and her husband is a retired physician.

She completed her graduate degree in Nursing during the 1970's. She is also a physiotherapist since 1984, and she received a degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology in 2003. Now she is studying for a Masters degree in naturopathy.

She has worked as nurse in hospitals and in outpatient departments. From 1977 to 1981 she worked in health services for children under the age of five in Sierra Leone, Western Africa.

Yoga therapy workshops

During the past two years Mirabai has been conducting special workshops which introduce the practice of yogic techniques to deal with stress for groups of people that suffer from anxiety, depression and other psychosomatic problems, specifically fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue. Mirabai developed these workshops because she often observed that many patients suffering from anxiety also suffered from the ignorance of health workers whom they visited. Modern medicine attempts to eliminate the symptoms of pain, stress and anxiety with drugs. But while these may give some temporary relief, they have damaging side effects, create drug dependency, and they deprive the body of its capacity to develop its resistance to the disease or to develop optimal health. Mirabai realized that “disease” is really the body's natural and appropriate response to protect itself from conscious or unconscious abuse.

Based upon her experience as a nurse, she realized that Yoga is one of the most powerful systems of health, prevention and overall and well-being. In her opinion, most diseases, whether physical, emotional, or mental, have their origin in a lack of inner peace, or an excess of worries. Health is viewed from the perspective of western medicine as the absence of the symptoms of disease. But Yoga views health as the optimization of the function of all the body's systems: circulatory, muscular, digestive, immune, respiratory. It is also about an emotional well-being, a spiritual elasticity and optimism. Yoga teaches that only when these elements are aligned will healing and optimal health be gained.

One of the main differences between Yoga and many other approaches to healing is that Yoga builds upon itself. That is, the more one practices, the more it is effective. So a regular daily practice is the key to good health.

She emphasizes however, that “Yoga therapy must be approached as a holistic science of life, remembering that it is a complement of the medical treatments. But Yoga can be practice all the time and everywhere.”

Some measured results

During the past two years, sixty-one persons have attended her workshops. Each participant was first examined and diagnosed by a physician. All of them suffered from the conditions mentioned above. Their degree of anxiety, pain, disease symptoms and self-esteem were measured according to validated scales. Tests of these were made at the beginning of the workshop, at its end, and six months after the end. The overall results were as follows:

- During the workshop almost everyone reached states of relaxation;
- There was a significant decrease in the degree of anxiety in most cases;
- There was a significant increase in self-esteem in everyone;
- There was significant improvement in the management of symptoms among those suffering from fibromyalgia.

Upon completion of the workshop, participants expressed appreciation for:

- changes in their way of thinking and day to day management of their condition;
- acquisition of relaxation skills;
- new skill in confronting conflictive situations.

In continuing to help those suffering from anxiety and related disorders through Yoga, Mirabai is inspired by the following quotation from Sri Aurobindo:

“To wait for a change in the human life without a change in the human nature is an irrational proposition, and not spiritual: it is to ask something unreal and unnatural; an impossible miracle.”

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