

SWAGAT

Feb 2004

OF BODY AND SOUL

Besides initiating many onto the path of spirituality, the organisation has taken up projects of national and social significance, writes **Aditi Bishnoi**

According to ancient yogic principle, the body is the temple of the spirit and good health is fundamental to spiritual development.

Isha Foundation, the international public service organisation, primarily works on this principle and is dedicated to imparting the life

transforming science of yoga. The organisation also stresses on the fact that a spiritual life does not deny social and family responsibilities, but rather uses them as vehicles for personal growth and self-realisation.

The Isha Yoga Centre, run under the aegis of Isha Foundation and started by Guru Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, is located at the foothills of the Velliangiri mountains in Coimbatore and spread over an area of 50 acres. Surrounded by thick forests, it is part of the Nilgiris Biosphere, a forest reserve with abundant wildlife. The Centre has a large residential facility, a yogic hospital, Dhyanalinga (a multi-religious temple and the Spanda Hall), a 64,000 sq ft meditation hall and programme facility.

The foundation conducts several yoga workshops on a regular basis in over 75 centres in the country. Specialised workshops are organised for schools, hospitals, government offices, corporates and sports organisations. There are 10-to-13-day general

programmes for adults and children where yogic postures such as pranayams and kriyas are taught. The children's programme is aimed at improving concentration and memory. Bhava Spandana is a f

four-day residential programme for advanced meditation while the Teacher's Training Programme is spread over a period of five years and focuses on imparting yoga in its purest form to practitioners all over the world. Other courses include the two-day Hata Yoga, the Samyama, where the participants spend seven days in complete silence, and Wholeness- an eight-day residential programme that teaches asanas, meditation, energy balancing systems and kriyas.

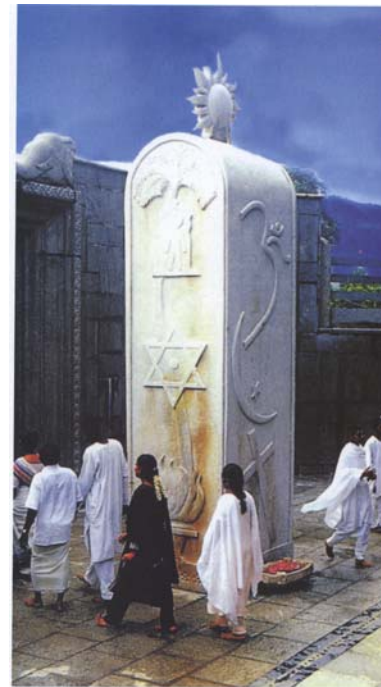
Yoga is taught in full depth and dimension in all these programmes, allowing the learner to feel its vital spirit and fostering optimal health and inner peace. It also enables the practitioner to lead a life that affirms wholeness, vitality and divinity.

The foundation also runs a hospital which treats ailments such as cancer, heart and nervous diseases and spinal disorders effectively by yogic and natural methods. Easily integrated into everyday life, yoga can boost the body's immune system and help find long-term relief from chronic ailments such as asthma, obesity, hypertension, sinusitis, migraine, arthritis and many other conditions, which modern medicine can only help manage temporarily. Yoga also enhances a person's memory and decision-making capacity.

Apart from these, the foundation offers several programmes that play a vital role in the upliftment of the masses and preserve the rich cultural and ecological heritage of the country. It firmly believes

in the principles of peace and universal brotherhood.

In fact, in association with the United Nations, several members of the foundation participated in a Silent Peace Rally in Coimbatore in September 2002 to commemorate the



Sarvabharatus Sthambha in the Dhyanalinga temple at the Yoga Centre

International Day of Peace.

There is a multi-religious Dhyanalinga temple at the Isha Yoga Centre. The temple serves as a doorway to liberation for people from different social and religious backgrounds. Several meets are organised here which help spread the message of peace and religious harmony.

The foundation has also pioneered prisoner-reform work with its Prison Outreach Programme, wherein yoga classes were conducted for life-term prisoners in several central prisons of south India. The Foundation has also helped in setting up a library, computer centre, yogashala, gymnasium and a herbal garden in many villages under its Rural Rejuvenation Programme. Restoring indigenous and local health care traditions, afforestation and empowerment of women also form an integral part of this programme.

In its bid to preserve our ecosystem and forests, Isha Foundation has established the Vanashree Eco Centre. In the past two years, several measures have been undertaken to conserve the ecology of the Velliangiri mountains and create facilities for the pilgrims visiting the temple situated therein. Cleanliness campaigns, focusing on removing plastic wastes and educating the visiting pilgrims on the hazards of toxic wastes being dumped in the mountains, form part of the efforts to inculcate awareness about nature amongst the masses.

The foundation also reaches out to the neglected sections of society through its various health outreach programmes. Free monthly medical camps, dispensary and special programmes for the handicapped, rural and tribal communities are regularly conducted. It also supports destitute children and organises youth development work for the tribals. Isha Foundation Educational Scholarships have gone a long way in creating educational opportunities for children deprived of education due to financial, social and caste restrictions. Education is also imparted to tribal women through free camps. Advocating the cause of women's equality, Isha Foundation assigns equal responsibility to women in the care of the Dhyanalinga temple. It has set a new social standard for women by reviving this Vedic tradition of women taking care of temples and performing sacred rituals. There are also awareness campaigns conducted to stop female infanticide in India.

Through these numerous efforts, Isha Foundation has made significant contributions towards creating a better social and spiritual environment.

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