

Changing the experience

WORKSHOP Isha Yoga created “undercover yogis” through a six-day workshop for the police at Tihar Jail

First came the laughter. Then the words, ‘odda odde’ (‘Run, run’ in Tamil). You finally saw grown men standing in a circle, playing catch. An unlikely scene, even at the best of times. Adjacent to Tihar Jail, the language and scene were more than incongruous.

Isha Yoga recently conducted an Isha Inner Engineering Programme for the 1000 strong Tamil Nadu Special Police Battalion (TNSPB), which mans Tihar Jail. The six-day workshop began with a daily warm-up session.

The 90 participating policemen moved into a large auditorium following their workout. They practiced the surya namaskar and shambhavi maha mudra (a breathing process).

This combination exercised the body and mind. Swami Saran said at the culminating day of practice, “This is a simple kriya that can be integrated into any lifestyle.”

Describing the benefits he said that memory and concentration can be increased by 100 per cent, productivity and effectiveness can be enhanced and it can also prevent medical ailments like diabetes, asthma and blood pressure. “We cannot change what we do,” he asserted, “But we can change the experience of our life.”

Maheshwar Dayal, IPS Commandant (TNSPB) said that the yoga training would help build up psychological defences. Verg-

ing on the poetic he said that a policeman must possess “Shashtra and Shaastra” (Weapons and knowledge).

Spreading the word

Isha Yoga originated in Coimbatore. It has travelled and touched villages in the peninsula through Action for Rural Rejuvenation. Shiva, member of TNSPB participated in the workshop last November in his hometown of Coimbatore. He was so influenced that he decided to bring it to his colleagues in Tihar.

Speaking at the event in Tamil with smatterings of English, he said that his stress levels had decreased, energy had increased and he was as fresh in the morning as in the night. He said he could now focus better on the present, as worries of the past and future had been omitted. He was so convinced of the benefits that he went from constable to constable convincing them. They were also curious at his practice and impressed at the change in him.

Shiva works on the tower in Tihar. He said when prisoners enter they often tease and insult the cops.

After Isha Yoga, he found he never became angry.

Finally as Swami Saran said, yoga practice helps to change the context if not the content of ones life. And that’s what the police at Tihar Jail hope for.

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EXERCISE Participants train mind and body during the yoga session PHOTO: R.V. MOORTHY