

EDUCATION

Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram  
An ISO 9001-2015 Certified Institution



31, 4th Cross Street  
Ramakrishna Nagar  
Mandaveli  
Chennai - 600 028

A Sanctuary  
of Healing  
and Holistic Wellness:  
Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram



The need to overcome one's dukkham, or suffering, drives one toward therapy - may perform one's duties. In this regard, Krsna is perhaps the greatest listener, healer, and teacher, showing Arjuna the path of Yoga on the battlefield of Dharma. Similarly, we awaken to our suffering when it hinders our duties, prompting our search to alleviate it. "Let my actions today not be corrupted so that I can avoid suffering in the future" heyam dukkham anagatam is the motto of Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram.

"Yoga is a psychology subject. Each person has a different perception, and the essence of Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram (KYM) depends on what each person benefits from. Mandiram means temple, and that is what it has meant to me over the years. Those who come to KYM have found relief in many ways and, more importantly, they get healed," says Shri Sridharan, one of the oldest associates and senior-most teachers at Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram, Chennai. The busy lane in RK Nagar in Chennai sees many people reverentially leaving their footwear outside KYM (as it is widely known), making one wonder what creates such respect for a place that teaches yoga

and conducts consultation sessions. "Yoga is a serious subject—dealing with the health of the people. We cannot afford to make any mistakes. It is like performing surgery without using a knife, and there is no room for speculation or mishaps," stresses Shri. Sridharan.

The legendary Shri T. Krishnamacharya, a yoga teacher to the then King of Mysore, had a yogashala at the Mysore palace. He was a great scholar, went to the Himalayas to study under revered ascetics, and was proficient in Vedic texts and chanting, Ayurveda, and was one of the pioneers in adapting yoga for therapy. A prolific writer and orator, he picked up the tenets of yoga therapy, studied the ancient texts, and dedicated his life to yoga.

Krishnamacharya Yoga Mandiram was officially started on April 15, 1976, by TKV Desikachar, the son and long-time student of Shri Krishnamacharya, and was registered as a public non-profit charitable trust. The famous J. Krishnamurthy took yoga lessons from Desikachar and told him to learn everything from his father. For 30 years, every single day, Desikachar sat with his father and learned all about yoga and therapy. Shri Desikachar established

KYM as Guru Dakshina to his father and did not take money from this institution, putting any money he received back into the KYM corpus. Desikachar said that whatever he learned from his father was to give back to the people—to create teachers and heal people. His vision and mission were to establish an institution to serve the public at large and bring solace at a holistic level through the teachings of yoga and yoga therapy.

Shri Sridharan confirms, "For every teacher, KYM is a temple, and for those coming to KYM, the teacher is the God. For the public who come and find relief, it is a place for solace."

This is evidenced by the fact that KYM has no advertisements of any kind. It is only through word of mouth and references, including doctors, that people come to KYM. Doctors now write prescriptions recommending yoga therapy, and people come with the mindset to get healed, which is half the treatment done. KYM stresses on feedback- they feel it is very important and that each teacher is a conduit to pass on a scientific methodology that has come down through the times. KYM is found to be the safest therapeutic yoga programme, with one-on-one sessions as the main way to go forward. Group sessions are not encouraged, as each person's needs and healing process are different. KYM is part of the Indian Yoga Association, and the Bureau of Indian Standards has been introduced to bring quality control for a level playing field and to enforce safety standards. Shri Sridharan explains, "I learned everything at my Guru's house. There was no certification then, and I still don't have any! In the 80s, certain demands led to the creation of a formal syllabus, with textual basis and case studies, and KYM established a wing called the Studies Department. KYM now offers two courses—the Yoga Teacher Training Program and the Yoga Therapist Training

Program. Both are highly regarded, and those graduating from the course are sought after. Our specialty is mentoring—a way to pass on the tradition of Gurukulam. Each student says they are linked to KYM.

This is the importance of a mentor, who shapes and influences you, not just being a mere teacher," says Shri Sridharan.

The Teacher Training program is very demanding, and KYM is clear that they do not enrol more than 30-40 students per batch, which runs for a year and a half. New online programs have also been introduced, but the students are asked to come to the centre for interactive sessions.

KYM has consultations from Monday through Saturday, about 500 consultations a month. Sundays are reserved for special children where no public is allowed. The focus on child-health makes KYM one of the very few institutions that uses Vedic chanting for therapeutic use, and they collaborate and associate with other institutions for special children.

When asked about the change in perception towards yoga over the years, Shri Sridharan explains, "The shift to Yoga happened thanks to PM Modi—before International Day of Yoga and after. It was a game changer. The Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga in Delhi found no support from the government then, and yoga practitioners were looked down upon. Now, all officials take interest, a lot of research is encouraged, and papers are presented. Yoga has entered the doctor's domain, and evidence-based research is given, which doctors now accept. "There has definitely been a sea change in the thought process." Shri Sridharan proudly says that the whole world is looking up to India, and yoga has gained great value and respect now. The challenge now for us is to uphold this.

Regarding new variations of yoga like Hot Yoga and Aerial Yoga, Shri Sridharan quips, "The emergence of different varieties



of yoga is thanks to the West, just to attract more people. It is more of a marketing gimmick. But please be careful and try to follow more traditional ways of yoga.”

On being asked to comment on the journey and future of KYM, Shri Sridharan asserts that KYM will play a large role in improving the mental and physical health of people, and that there is no better place for mental health than yoga. “KYM has been serving society for 48 years now, and the holistic approach of KYM makes a productive and positive contribution to society. The best way to show someone the gains of yoga—mental peace, calmness, concentration, focus, memory booster—is by the impact it makes on you. You will feel the change in just 15 days of daily yoga! Share that with your family and friends, and spread the word of yoga,” challenges Shri Sridharan.

Talking about his journey of being a yoga teacher for close to 40 years now, and counting, Shri Sridharan is full of gratitude. He says, “I am blessed to have come in contact with a great teacher, Desikachar. KYM is playing an important role in our society, in spreading the knowledge of Yoga, and will continue to do so. Yoga traces its origins to the Vedas, which are timeless and as old as civilization,

and it is a matter of great pride for us. The crux of yoga is preserved in a pristine pure way, but there have been a lot of changes in civilization outside, which affects it positively and negatively. The central theme of yoga will continue. We should read texts to preserve it, and that’s why the traditional Gurukulam way of schooling is important.”

Yoga, as a tool and technique in either therapy or the teaching process, is essentially a transfer of power or a flow of energy from the teacher to the taught. This is referred to as Svatantriyam in classical yoga texts. Enabling this is the commitment of a Yoga teacher—to empower the student to handle their suffering or sorrow. While the student might come in looking for symptomatic relief, or a desire to just feel fit, or have profound existential questions, every session at the Mandiram is a small step towards self-empowerment.

The selfless service to the community over decades with yoga as therapy, following age-old techniques and traditions, makes KYM a unique institution that champions the well-being of whoever comes to their door.

*By Shobana Ravi*